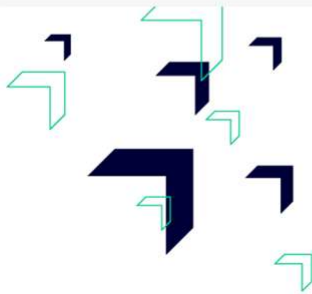




GOVERNMENT  
OF MALTA



## Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014-2020



Monitoring Committee  
30 October 2025

Evaluation



Co-funded by  
the European Union

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### Objective of Presentation



- Thematic Evaluation on LEADER (Focus Area 6B)
- Ongoing evaluations
- Ex-post evaluation

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## Thematic Evaluation on LEADER



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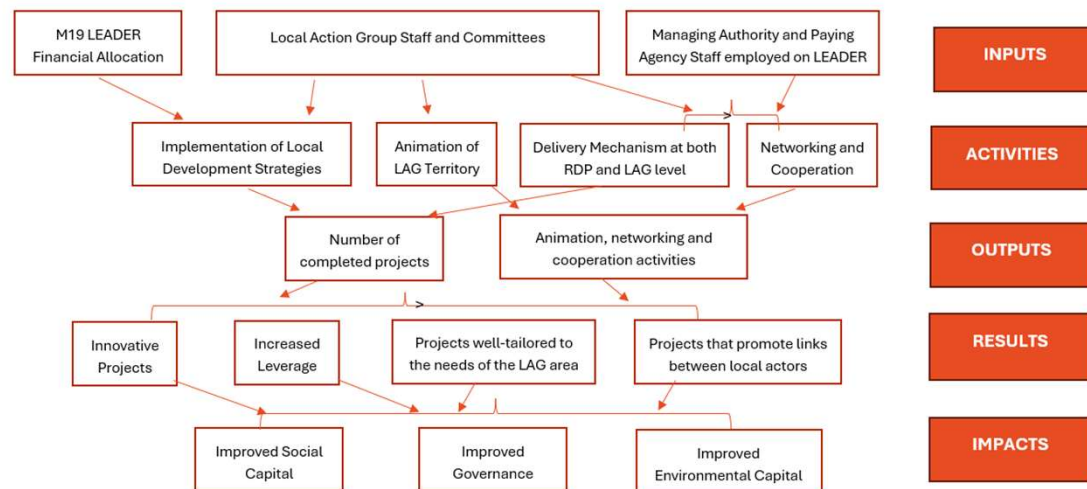
## Methodology



- **Theory of Change** - allows for a thorough understanding of the LEADER measure and how expected outcomes are achieved.
- **Evaluation framework and matrix** - Seven evaluation questions (EQs) with judgement criteria, indicators, evidence sources, and an evaluation rubric to convert mixed evidence into comparable ratings.
- **Data Collection Tools** - A combination of primary and secondary data sources was used to support the analysis.
- **Analytical Tools** – (i) Descriptive statistical analysis (ii) Contribution Analysis used to assess causal relationships and inferring causality based on a step-by-step approach (iii) output and result indicators (iv) Social Capital indices and (v) Case Studies

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## Theory of Change of the LEADER measure



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## Overview of Data Collection



	Survey: Ultimate beneficiaries (actual and potential beneficiaries) under LEADER	Survey: Members of the LAG Decision Committee	In-depth interviews with each of the three LAGs	In-depth interviews with the Managing Authority and Paying Agency	Data on LDS indicators collected for evaluation purposes	Project Closure Reports
<b>Total Potential Responses</b>	Beneficiaries: 157 Non-Beneficiaries: N/A	25	3	2	3	238
<b>Responses Received (including incomplete)</b>	77	11	3	2	3 (but only 1 was updated up to 2024)	186
<b>Responses Completed</b>	20 Beneficiaries 4 Non-Beneficiaries	4	3	2	3	186
<b>Response Rate</b>	Beneficiaries: 13% Non-Beneficiaries: N/A	16%	100%	100%	100%	78%

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## Evaluation Questions



- **EQ1** – How do the **implementation costs under LEADER** in Malta compare to the implementation costs of LEADER under other RDPs? To what extent (if any) do the governance choices of the LEADER approach at the RDP and LAG levels affect its administrative complexity?
- **EQ2** - To what extent do the LEADER strategy and LAG actions meet **specific local needs** and territorial objectives?
- **EQ3** - To what extent has LEADER contributed towards conserving and increasing the valorisation of **cultural assets**?
- **EQ4** - To what extent does LEADER generate **leverage**?
- **EQ5** - To what extent has LEADER contributed towards the improvement of **environmental capital**?
- **EQ6** - To what extent has LEADER contributed towards an improvement in **social capital**?
- **EQ7** - To what extent has LEADER contributed towards more **effective local and multi-level governance**?

Derivation of EQs based on previous thematic evaluation on LEADER, CAP Evaluation Network Guidelines on LEADER (Assessing the added value of LEADER 2024), Evaluation support study of the costs and benefits of the implementation of LEADER (EC, 2023)

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**EQ1** – How do the **implementation costs under LEADER** in Malta compare to the implementation costs of LEADER under other RDPs? To what extent (if any) do the governance choices of the LEADER approach at the RDP and LAG levels affect its administrative complexity?



**At programme level, costs are largely in line with other EU countries.** Administrative expenditure under LEADER accounts for approximately 5.9% of total committed expenditure (2024), which is only marginally above the EU median of 5.5%.

**At LAG level, costs are somewhat higher than the European average,** particularly for the preparation of Local Development Strategies (LDSs) and for running and animation activities. These account for an additional 7.6 and 5.5 percentage points respectively compared to other Member States.

**Governance choices for implementation of LEADER influence both costs and the administrative burden.** Results from the interviews and survey with the LAG DC members show that while there is a multi-level governance system in place, the LAGs exercise a considerable degree of autonomy in a number of tasks. Overall, the judgements of LAG Managers, DC Members, the MA and the PA indicate that there is scope for further improvements when it comes to the administrative complexities and burden.

**Overall, LEADER in Malta performs well in terms of cost-effectiveness and governance, though the evaluation identifies room for improvement in reducing administrative burden and simplifying procedures. Efforts at reducing the administrative burden are being adopted in the CAP SP.**

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**EQ2 – To what extent does the LEADER strategy and LAG actions meet specific local needs and territorial objectives?**



**LEADER's area-based and bottom-up approach has enabled a high degree of alignment between local needs and funded actions.** Survey results show that 100% of respondents believe that the LDS for their area adequately reflects the needs of their locality, confirming that strategies were designed through genuine participatory processes.

The evaluation highlights that 64% of beneficiaries reported improving their project applications following consultations with LAGs, and over 70% rated LAG assistance as "Good" or "Very Good." This underscores **the value of local-level animation and technical support in enhancing project design and implementation quality.**

However, while the participatory model has been effective in mobilising civil society actors, **the profile of project promoters suggests a limited diversity in participation.** Secondary data show that approximately 65% of all projects were implemented by representatives of social local interests, predominantly non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This highlights the need to encourage greater involvement from a broader range of stakeholders, including economic and public sector actors.

**In summary, the LEADER approach in Malta is performing strongly in responding to territorial and socio-economic needs.** Local Development Strategies have effectively targeted rural priorities, diversified economic activities, and strengthened community involvement.

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**EQ3 – To what extent has LEADER contributed towards conserving and increasing the valorisation of cultural assets?**



**LEADER has played a significant role in preserving and enhancing Malta's rural and cultural identity.** Both the Xlokk and Majjistral LAGs exceeded or came close to their original targets in relation to cultural restoration and investment. The measure has therefore contributed tangibly to improving the physical and cultural landscape of rural Malta.

Moreover, **investments in cultural heritage and social amenities have fostered a greater sense of community ownership and civic pride.**

**The overall conclusion is that LEADER has substantially contributed to cultural valorisation and community identity through targeted investment and restoration initiatives.** Continued efforts are required to expand outreach, promote cultural participation, and link heritage projects more closely with rural tourism and local economic activities to ensure long-term sustainability.

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#### EQ4 – To what extent does LEADER generate leverage?



**The evaluation finds that LEADER in Malta has been moderately successful in mobilising additional resources and promoting innovation at local level.** Evidence from the survey and monitoring data indicates that around 32 hours of voluntary work per year were contributed by each LAG Committee Member, reflecting a high degree of community engagement. Approximately 37% of projects involved voluntary work, while 24% were implemented by new promoters who had not previously benefitted from RDP support.

**In terms of innovation\*, 58% of projects were classified as innovative by the beneficiaries, and these accounted for 57% of total LEADER expenditure.**

\*Rather than conceiving innovation solely as technological advancement or productivity gains, LEADER positions it as a systemic, place-based process that emerges from the interaction of local actors, institutions, and networks.

**LEADER Case Study: The use of an ICT media platform for the valorisation of a region's lifestyle concept**

**LEADER Case Study: The development of green infrastructure in schools**

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#### EQ5 – To what extent has LEADER contributed towards the improvement of environmental capital?



**While environmental sustainability is a cross-cutting principle within the Local Development Strategies, its concrete integration across LEADER projects has been mixed.** Quantitative results show that 20% of supported projects contributed directly to the transition towards a carbon-neutral economy, while only 2% of projects explicitly aimed to increase environmental awareness. Nonetheless, **performance against specific environmental indicators was strong:** both Xlokk and Majjistral LAGs exceeded their targets for green infrastructure projects, with Majjistral delivering 18 additional initiatives beyond the planned number.

These projects have improved the quality of rural spaces, restored biodiversity areas, and supported small-scale environmental infrastructure. **However, environmental themes have not yet been mainstreamed across all project types, and awareness-raising remains an underdeveloped component.**

Therefore, the evaluation concludes that **LEADER has made meaningful progress in enhancing environmental amenities and supporting climate adaptation through targeted projects, though its overall environmental contribution remains secondary to cultural and social objectives.** Future interventions should embed environmental considerations more systematically across all measures and project types.

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#### EQ6 – To what extent has LEADER contributed towards an improvement in social capital?



The LEADER approach has delivered clear results in strengthening social capital, though its effects remain moderate and uneven across dimensions. **The Local Action Groups (LAGs) display a well-balanced structure between public and private actors, reflecting strong structural social capital.**

**LEADER has generated tangible benefits in skill development and capacity-building**, with 85% of beneficiaries reporting new competencies in areas such as project management, leadership, and communication, and half of the LAG Decision Committee members confirming improved decision-making and local awareness. However, these gains have not translated into widespread joint project implementation, indicating that **while LEADER effectively strengthens individual capacities, it is less successful in fostering collective collaboration and long-term partnerships.**

**The measure has facilitated networking beyond local areas:** Cross-territorial initiatives remains limited, particularly among LAG members. This points to the need for stronger mechanisms to encourage inter-LAG cooperation and knowledge exchange.

Finally, **while LEADER has moderately enhanced trust and mutual support within rural communities, Malta's normative social capital index (0.69) remains below the EU benchmark (0.76).** This suggests that participatory practices are taking root but require further consolidation. Overall, LEADER's key contribution lies in empowering individuals and institutions through capacity-building and participatory governance, while future efforts should prioritise broader inclusiveness, more collaborative networking, in order to foster deeper trust-building across the LAG territories.

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#### EQ7 – To what extent has LEADER contributed towards more effective local and multi-level governance?



The evaluation finds that Malta's Local Action Groups (LAGs) are widely perceived as inclusive, trusted, and effective governance structures. **The composite diversity index of 0.58 reflects moderate inclusiveness:** while sectoral and occupational diversity are well established, gender and youth representation remain weak.

LAGs are recognised for providing personalised and trusted support, which beneficiaries value highly. **Outreach methods remain traditional and insufficiently digitalised, limiting visibility among younger and more digitally engaged audiences.** While 63% of surveyed respondents were first-time applicants, only half became aware of LEADER through LAG animation activities.

**Governance arrangements function effectively, ensuring a sound balance between local ownership and financial accountability.** Communication among the LAGs, the MA, and the PA is frequent and collaborative, supported by regular meetings and clear divisions of responsibility. **Nonetheless, challenges such as staff turnover within LAGs exist.**

Overall, the findings portray LEADER governance in Malta as transparent, participatory, and responsive, yet constrained by limited diversity with scope to develop further digital communication.

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## Evaluation Judgement using Evaluation Rubric

### Example: Evaluation Question 3



Indicator	Result	Weight	Rating	Total Score	Overall Score and Performance
Target indicator on the number of participants to the cultural activities per year, up to end of programming period	Target is falling short by 47%	30%	2 (Adequate)	0.6	3.7 (Good to Very Good)
Percentage of operations (projects) that have contributed to an increase in the value of projects of an important cultural value (ex: through their restoration and/or promotion)	40%	10%	2 (Adequate)	0.2	
Target indicator on number of restoration projects of important cultural value	Target of Majjistral is achieved, Target of Xlokk is falling short by 7%	30%	4.5 (Very Good to Excellent)	1.35	
Target indicator on number of new/improved quality cultural and/or social investment in the LAG area	Both Xlokk and Majjistral targets are achieved	30%	5 (Excellent)	1.5	

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## Overall Results



Evaluation Question	Overall Performance	Strengths	Weaknesses
EQ1: Cost Efficiency and Administrative Complexity	3.25 - Good	General administrative costs at RDP level broadly in line with EU peers. Clear, complementary multi-level roles (LAG local delivery; MA oversight; PA financial control).	Specific LAG costs (M19.1, M19.4) higher than EU averages. • Administrative burden noted (documentation, procurement, permits, payments).
EQ2: Responsiveness to Local Needs	3.5 – Good to Very Good	LDSs reflect local needs (very high agreement). Balanced funding across measures; LAG support improves projects and enterprise performance; ongoing beneficiary engagement.	Participation skewed toward a narrow set of promoter types.
EQ3: Cultural Capital	3.7 – Good to Very Good	Restoration and cultural/social investment targets achieved or surpassed (strong cultural asset valorisation).	Cultural participation below target (Xlokk average below LDS target; missing Majjistral data).

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## Overall Results



Evaluation Question	Overall Performance	Strengths	Weaknesses
EQ4: Leverage and Innovation	2.95 – Adequate to Good	Majority of projects/expenditure rated locally innovative; LAGs reasonably empower new promoters; evidence of voluntary contributions.	Leverage remains moderate: limited decisive support for new promoters; modest incidence of voluntary work within projects.
EQ5: Environmental Capital	2.2 – Adequate to Good	Green infrastructure targets exceeded—clear structural environmental improvements.	Low share of projects raising environmental awareness; only moderate contribution to carbon neutrality.
EQ6: Social Capital	3.5 – Good to Very Good	Strong structural social capital (high Network Diversity Index); high share reporting new skills; at least one cooperation project achieved; positive trust signals.	Very few jointly implemented operations; limited external networking; small survey samples constrain robustness.
EQ7: Governance and Delivery Mechanism	3.85 – Good to Very Good	Inclusive decision-making perceptions; 100% of LAGs publish key documents; LEADER seen as bringing the EU closer; effective MA/PA–LAG coordination	Diversity index moderate (gender/youth under-representation); low involvement in LDS design; traditional/limited digital comms; staff turnover affects continuity.

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## Recommendations

### Short-term



#### R.1: Simplification of administrative and procedural requirements

- Introduce proportionate and risk-based administrative procedures adapted to the scale of projects.
- Streamline the verification and payment processes to reduce delays in payment claims

#### R.2: Capacity strengthening and widening funding for LAG

- Widen the scope of the LAGs given their strong role in the adoption of a bottom-up approach within the rural community

#### R.3: Enhance communication and outreach through digital tools

- Improve the online presence of LAGs through active social media use, digital newsletters, and project storytelling.
- Train LAG staff in digital engagement and visual communication.

#### R.4: Strengthen gender and youth representation

- Introduce diversity targets or guidelines for LAG boards.
- Include dedicated calls or sub-measures encouraging youth and women-led projects.
- Lower participation barriers for underrepresented groups (ex: hybrid participation, brief onboarding training).
- LAGs should also reinforce their animation and outreach activities.

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## Recommendations

### *Medium-to-Long Term*



#### **R.5: Develop a robust monitoring and evaluation system at LAG level**

- Define a set of common qualitative and quantitative indicators to track governance, social cohesion, and innovation.
- Establish a harmonised digital monitoring platform shared by all LAGs and the Managing Authority.
- Introduce regular capacity-building sessions on data collection and use of evaluation tools

#### **R.6: Foster innovation and cooperation**

- Provide training and knowledge exchange to strengthen LAG innovation management capacity
- Support participation in EU-wide LEADER networks and exchange platforms.

#### **R.7: Environmental and Climate Mainstreaming**

- Embed climate criteria across more LEADER measures.
- Provide guidance and capacity building to LAGs on eco-innovation and sustainable practices

#### **R.8: Strengthen LEADER's strategic role in territorial development**

- Promote a national dialogue on the role of LEADER in rural governance

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## Thematic Evaluations and ex-post evaluation

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CEQ	Area	Timeframe
1	1A	Mar-26
2	1B	
3	1C	
4	2A	Mar-26
5	2B	Updated Dec-25
6	3A	Dec-25
7	3B	NA
8	4A	Completed
9	4B	Mar-26
10	4C	Completed
11	5A	Mar-26
12	5B	NA
13	5C	Mar-26
14	5D	NA
15	5E	Mar-26
16	6A	Completed
17	6B	Completed
18	6C	NA
19	Operational Performance	Mar-25
20	Technical Assistance	Completed
21	NRN	Completed



*Challenges faced:*

**Focus Area: 2A**

Limited use of FADN data

Data limitations to determine the impact of rural roads on adjacent holdings

**Focus Area: 5A**

Project still ongoing

Data at the level of holdings is limited

Project impact likely to be felt in future years following the ex-post evaluation

**Focus Area: 5C**

Limited number of projects directly contributing towards this focus area

**Focus Area: 5E**

Main project contributing to this FA is still underway.

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CEQ	Area	Questions	Timeframe
22	EU 2020 Headlines	population aged 20-64 to at least 75%?	May-26
23		research and development and innovation?	
24		headline target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% compared to 1990 levels, or by 30% if the conditions	
25		living below the national poverty line?	
26		of halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services, and to restore them?	
27	CAP Objectives	27. To what extent has the RDP contributed to the CAP objective of fostering the competitiveness of agriculture?	
28		and climate action?	
29		economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment?	
30		30. To what extent has the RDP contributed to fostering innovation	
Ex-post Evaluation			

*Based on Reporting Template for the Ex-Post Evaluation of RDPs 2014-2022 (CAP NETWORK)*



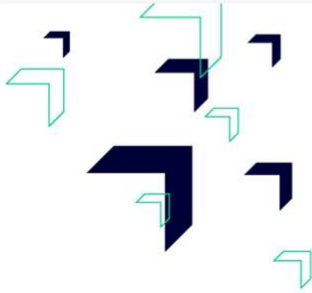
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**Thank you for your attention**



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