

ELORO LAG

The Eloro LAG, which includes the Municipalities of Noto, Avola, Pachino, Rosolini and Portopalo di Capo Passero, has as its main objective the valorisation and development of its district in every sector of socio-economic life.

In terms of surface, the area is extended 766.87 Km² and represents approximately 46% of the province (total province 970.95 km²) and in terms of population, with 99,330 residents, about 56% of the provincial population (total province 426,143 inhabitants).

The ELORO Local Action Group was established in 1998 in the form of MIXED CONSORTIUM COMPANY with limited liability; the company is no-profit oriented, acting as “public equivalent body” (Directive 2004/18/EC, Art. 1 par. 9), and aims to realise all those actions aiming to the integrated and sustainable development of its reference area, and particularly:

- to get out the Municipalities of the district of economic isolation and cultural stagnation;
- to develop and consolidate and / or create income and jobs;
- to valorise as much as possible the endogenous resources through the local actors activation;
- to promote the maximum of connections among business, institutional, social, scientific and cultural actors of the territory with those of other European areas;
- to promote in the territory the maximum of synergies and interactions between Community Initiative Projects and the Support Community Framework of the Sicilian Region;
- to interact with other experiences of development in the adjacent areas and in the rest of Sicily.

The company intends to pursue its objectives also through:

- local territorial diagnosis and elaboration of development plans in all the economic sectors;
- sensitisation of the population;
- technical assistance for the establishment of local partnerships;
- technical assistance for the elaboration of local strategies for integrated development;
- technical assistance for research funding by the potential beneficiaries;
- promotion of projects that contain innovative and demonstrative elements;
- technical support and animation of rural development, identifying the necessary initiatives for the revival of agricultural enterprises;

- feasibility studies, technical advice in favour of SMEs and other activities of farmers, artisans and services operators, also through the research of potential markets, both domestic and international ones;
- creation of desks to guide, advise and support young people, women and other disadvantaged social groups who wish to start a business and technical assistance to enterprises;
- sensitisation of schoolchildren and teachers towards the identity and the perspectives of their territory.

Since ELORO is a LAG already established and with operational experience in the management of N. 3 LEADER programmes and other European programmes, also in the field of transnational cooperation, it uses to take care of the direct management of public subventions. In particular, the ELORO LAG presents an organisational structure characterised by a coordinator director and a financial and administrative responsible (RAF) who, flanked by the structures of administration and secretariat, ensure the allocation, management and accountability of public resources.

Almost all of the mentioned staff, has played and plays a constant activity of technical assistance, management and animation of integrated development programs.

As for the financial capacity, the ELORO LAG, thanks to the activities carried out on the territory since 1999, won the confidence not only of the population, but also of public institutions and economic operators, including the most important local credit institutes. For this reason, the LAG presents very good chances of custody and access to the credit capital for both management activities and the management of public subventions, of which it has financial responsibility.

All the Eloro LAG's activities are implemented by the use of the bottom up approach, in order to involve population in the most participative way. In fact, the staff of socioeconomic animators is fully engaged in informing, sensitising and making participating in all its activities local population, entrepreneurs, potential tourists and consumers also through local forums, focus groups, conferences, meetings, publications, audiovisuals, multimedia, participation in fairs and information on media, help-desks, workshops. Another strategic element of the ELORO LAG's method is the application of the integrated approach, because it is convinced, as well as all the most important international institution and organisations, that all the sectors (i.e.: economy, politics, social matters, etc.) are not independent one each other, but, on the contrary, they are interconnected; so, development, to be really sustainable in all senses, has to be integrated.

ELORO's area analysis shows a very rich and complex background in historical, economic, social and cultural terms, even in comparison with the entire Sicilian island. So, in the choice on how to prosecute LEADER experience, it has been decided to concentrate attention and energies on some specific ambits. LEADER II programme had played a very important role in proposing a method to local population and enterprisers of the district, who have learned to manage European funds, to associate themselves and to work together with foreign entrepreneurs and to invest also in transnational cooperation projects; LEADER + programme allowed a significant quality improvement, with synergic actions aiming to integrate different specific sectors, which are connected among them through different transversal actions, also in order to strengthen, develop and extend these relationships favouring stable collaboration forms for an integrated and innovative management of sight of cultural, landscaping and environmental interest.

The territory, indeed, is continuing, in last years and also in the LEADER Programme, which is still in progress in the ELORO District, to propose this development model as the only really decisive one, which is shared starting from the

bottom and towards which the territory is addressed to for the planning of any kind of socioeconomic and cultural intervention.

Nevertheless, the strong sharing and active participation of local population in relation to the definition of the operational contents of the present strategy, along with the very high potential of active transferability in similar fields of the Euro-Mediterranean context, give to this strategy a very high innovative content.

The proposed strategy, thus, being characterised by an high degree of integration and interconnection, foresees high levels of interaction and complementarities among different sectors that, if considered as a whole, as an *unicum* to be jointly valorised and promoted, will be able of generating that added value which is necessary to the territory operational re-launching.

Also in the case of transnational cooperation activities, the ELORO LAG has, over the years, built a strong management structure that includes in its ordinary mode of action, the involvement of partners at various levels of the design, preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation steps of the development initiative carried out. Besides that, the partner uses other bottom tools, such as in the case of the activation of technical tables on agro-food chains and drafting of memoranda of understanding with trade associations, consumer associations, local authorities and institutions to support the productive chains and the integration of the stages of production-processing-marketing of agro-food products.

Some former experiences:

- ENPI CBC Programme “Italy-Tunisia” 2007-2013: *SERVAGRI Project: Italian – Tunisian Observatory at the SERVICE of Sustainable Quality Agriculture*. Nov. 2011 / Nov. 2013. Creation of an Italian – Tunisian Observatory on the Agro-food Safety and Quality Policies, inaugurated on 21st September 2012; creation of Euro-Mediterranean clusters/productive districts; pilot actions; diffusion of quality brands, etc. **Lead Partner**.

- ENPI CBC Programme «Italy-Tunisia» 2007-2013: *‘Les Voyages de la Connaissance’ Project*. Nov. 2011 / Nov. 2013. Enhancement of the resources related to territorial identities, especially the immaterial cultural heritage and the handicrafts of excellence; proposition of innovative routes at the discovery of the heritage based on the traditions and common roots of the two areas; providing concrete information on the two territories through a modern communication system all over the year, etc. **Project Partner**.

- SICILY 2007-2013 RDP; SICILY 2007-2013 EAFRD OP: *District of Quality Fruits and Vegetables of the Noto Valley (D.O.Q.V.N.)*. Jan. 2008/ongoing. Creation of a District/Cluster grouping 102 enterprises of excellence, more than 37 among universities, research centres and other services, public institutions for the enhancement and increasing of the District’s fruits and vegetables production competitiveness; integration and internationalisation of enterprises and operators of the sector in the concerned areas; promotion of investments, research and technological innovation, etc.

Lead Partner and Legal representative.

- LEADER + CIP, *Rediscovery and Valorisation of the Mediterranean Rurality* transnational cooperation Project. 2007 – 2008. Promotion, strengthening and consolidation of the rural-tourism system offer, stimulated by a public opinion that is increasingly sensitive to environmental issues, environmental sustainability, diversity themes; promotion of the knowledge of the DOC, PDO, PGI, TSG, VQPRD certified quality products from the European Union rural areas, in order to stimulate the demand; to promote the access for products of LAG areas on international markets, where the “made in Europe” product is perceived as a guarantee of quality of the whole territory. The initiative was proposed by the Alto Casertano LAG, from Campania Region (Italy), in partnership with LAGs from other parts of the Mediterranean (Campania, Sicily, Greece). **Project partner.**

- LEADER II CIP, *AGROBIOTOUR* transnational cooperation Project. 2000-2001. Creation of an international network of organic producers for the promo - commercialisation in network of a common basket of organic products; joint participation in international fairs; promotion of tourist – wine – gastronomic itineraries linked for the tasting and the buying of organic and/or typical products. **Lead partner.**

- LEADER II CIP, *INOVATOUR* transnational cooperation Project. 2000-2001. Consolidation and eco-sustainable re-use, with the experimentation of anti-seismic techniques, of rural buildings with tourist – cultural ends. **Lead Partner.**

- PRINCE transnational cooperation Programme, *EUROYOUTH* Project (E.C. - DG ECOFIN). 2000-2001. Dissemination and increase of the knowledge of the Euro among students, along with the opportunities coming from its introduction in the markets; favouring, through the use of the information society technologies, the practical application of the Euro in the electronic commerce of the typical, handicraft and agro-food products of the cultural identity of the participant Countries. **Lead Partner.**

- EUROMED III Youth Programme, “*Prevention of violence against young women*” Project. 2008. Promotion of gender equality and preparing young people for a couple's life more respectful of human rights and dignity of others. Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of activities of transnational cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean context. **Expert partner.**

- LEADER II CIP, *ELORO Local Action Plan*, 1999 – 2001. Experimentation of a common methodology with local stakeholders and promotion of development initiatives aimed primarily at individual and associated entrepreneurs, especially in agriculture, tourism and the protection and promotion of sites of natural interest , proving the benefits of actions made at the district level. **Lead Partner.**

- LEADER + CIP, *ELORO Local Development Plan*, 2004-2009. Creating an integrated production system, where agriculture, handicrafts, SMEs, tourist – receptive offer and services in general can contribute to the enhancement of the territory's resources, improving its attractiveness and quality of life of its inhabitants. Application of the chains approach, with the stipulation, with major producers, of three "Chain Pacts". **Lead Partner**.

- SICILY 2007-2013 RDP; SICILY 2007-2013 EAFRD OP, *Eloro 2013 Local Development Plan*, ongoing. Implementation of a strategy of connection and completion, which in some respects is intended to cover potential areas of development that have remained outside of the initiatives promoted in the District of Quality Fruits and Vegetables of the Noto Valley, and also to strengthen the tourism sector in an integrated way with the promotion of the 'short chain' in agriculture and agro-food processing industry. **Lead Partner**.

- SICILY REGIONAL PROGRAMME OF DECENTRALISED COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT, "AGECAVA" project: Agents for the promotion of holiday houses and B&Bs. 2005-2006. Transfer of know-how and good practices for the creation of a transnational sustainable network of a local tourist-cultural offer linked to the strengthening of the local families' income. **Project partner**.
