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Meridaunia (Italy)

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Loris Servillo: Expert in charge of the survey

A. Summary table

LAG name	Meridaunia
Lead partner: Meridaunia	LAG director
Piazza Municipio, 71023 Bovino (FG), Italia	Daniele Borrelli, Director direzione@meridaunia.it

LAG financial structure	Main European and Structural Investment Fund	Part of another territorial delivery mechanisms
Multi-fund	ERDF	-

	CCI number	Financial allocation (EUR)	Priority axes concerned	Programme Thematic objective(s) concerned
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Programme	2014IT16M20P002	3,000,000.00	Axis VI Axis III	Promote competitive repositioning of touristic destinations through integrated development of resources and territorial skills Promote internationalization of local business
European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD)	2014IT06RDRP020	8.630.000,00	Mis. 19.2 and Mis. 19.4 of Puglia Rural Development plan	Strengthen the receptivity and Valorize the cultural and natural heritage to improve usability; Foster innovation, diversification and competitiveness of small agricultural enterprises,

LAG Strategy				LAG Implementation Current situation (June 2017):
Population covered by the strategy	Specific thematic focus and challenges of the strategy	Specific territorial focus of the strategy	Specific social target of the strategy	
93,806	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Economic development o Social inclusion o Demographic retention / support o Access to services 	Mainly focused on rural development / rural areas	Youth initiatives Small agricultural enterprises	LAG selected – The selection of Lag's proposals is in progress. Every LAG's strategy will be selected at the end of the evaluation process.

Strategy

B.1. Area of the CLLD

a. Area and population covered by the strategy

The area of Monti Dauni covers **2286.56** square kilometres in the province of Foggia, in the north-west part of Puglia. It is predominantly hilly and partly mountainous, rich in forests, streams and natural - environmental resources, mainly classified as "rural areas with overall developmental problems" (areas D) under Rural Development Plan criteria (RDP PUGLIA 2014-2020 -EAFR Fund), and characterized by small villages.

The local institutional structure comprises **30 municipalities**, with an average population density of **29.57** inhabitants / kmq in the D areas and **81.10** inhabitants / kmq in the B areas for a total of **93,806 inhabitants** (31/12/2014), with a high percentage of elderly people (over 30% in most of the municipalities). In recent decades, the area has been subject to a **process of migration** of youth and active segments of the population.

The local economy is predominantly agricultural and low-income (of 9,639 active companies, 5,460 are agriculture related) and crops are mainly extensive (arable). The GDP per capita is lower than the regional average. Essential services are scarce especially for the difficulties related to mobility and transport, all elements that affect the quality of life of the inhabitants.

b. Development needs and potential of the area

The analysis shows the following points:

The social system is very fragile, characterized by depopulation, falling birth rates, resulting in loss of social capital. The productive system has an agriculture-related structure that suffers from problems related to **generational change**, the shortage of labour, depopulation and the consequent **abandonment of the territory**, generating low-income effects. The 'tourist' offer is still embryonic with poor accommodation and lack of networks among operators.

However, Monti Dauni can count on intact historic villages that have gained numerous certifications. Moreover, it is the area with the highest natural value in the region, counting 5 Areas SIC, the highest peak of Puglia, Lake Occhito: a real park for natural vocation that would allow to develop a green and outdoor tourism. There is an architectural and cultural heritage and archaeological resources of great value. From an economic point of view, there are high quality agricultural productions and a high percentage of Utilised Agricultural Area / Total Agricultural Area that could allow the revival of the agricultural system.

B.2. Strategy of the CLLD

a. Thematic scope of the strategy

The macro-objective of the strategy is to stop the abandonment and the depopulation of the territory by strengthening the economic capacity of the area and creating new jobs, especially in younger age groups,

connecting tourism and agriculture, which represents the future development potential of the Monti Dauni Area.

b. Objectives of the strategy and their priorities

The strategic lines of the strategy are:

- **Strengthen social capital**, to stimulate change in the community and create the basis for innovation;
- **Providing systematization of the tourist offer**, to create integrated visiting experiences;
- Strengthen the **receptivity of the territory**, to intercept aggregate demand;
- Valorise the cultural and natural heritage to improve usability;
- Foster **innovation, diversification and competitiveness of small agricultural enterprises**, to encourage change in agriculture and to recover and maintain biodiversity in the territory;
- **Strengthen the extra-agricultural production system**, in particular in the field of typical handicrafts, tourism and personal services.

c. Targets and results

The main result indicators to be used are:

- Youth employment index in the agricultural sector;
- Farms that diversify activities;
- Companies that carry out the processing and marketing of products;
- Entrepreneurs and non-profit institutions that carry out activities with social content;
- Tourism rate;

An ex-ante analysis was carried out to monitor the data to identify the baseline of each indicator and forecasts were made to 2020. The survey data will be carried out through the analysis of statistical data (ISTAT, Detections on Regional Agency tourism - Pugliapromozione).

d. Maps





B.3. Place-based approach

a. Territorial coherence

The strategy is tailored on the needs and vocations of the area. It pursues the following goals:

- to remedy to the lack of generational renewal and lack of innovation in the field of agriculture, the main economic sector of the area. It promotes the recovery of cultivars and species to reinforce the peculiar biodiversity of the area, with the collaboration of the Research Centres. In addition, the calls for projects, will be included award criteria for projects submitted by youth enterprises, aged up to 40 years.
- To reinforce the historical, cultural, archaeological and natural beauty of the area, in order to create an integrated touristic supply, and to make tourism a truly productive sector. The creation of new accommodation offers will facilitate flows of tourism, and the branding of Monti Dauni will facilitate the promotion of the area abroad.

b. Legacy with previous experiences

The strategy relies on the previous experience of the LAG (100% of the programming in the current territory involved). We have learnt from the good results and mistakes of the previous local development

plan. For example, even if the territory is rich in forests and agricultural waste, no interventions for small biomass plants are included in the strategy because of the limited connection to the energy grid. This decision comes from the hard lessons from the last programming period, when these problems obstructed the realization of projects in this business area.

Moreover, the experience of the previous Leader program taught us that the LAG should be directly involved in tourism promotion and incoming because privates are too weak (at the moment) to face this challenge.

The main difference from the past is the value attributed to agriculture (especially for small farm), the connection with tourism, the activities aimed at strengthening the social capital of the area and creating networks.

b. Synergy with existing local development strategies

The Strategy is connected and complementary to the Internal Area Strategy of the Monti Dauni (Italian ministerial agenda). The Meridaunia LAG has actively participated in the workplaces of the Governance of the Internal Strategy Area together with the ERASR-FSE-EAFRD Management Authorities, the representatives of the relevant Ministries, the Directors of the Department for Development and Economic Cohesion and the mayors of the Municipalities of the Monti Dauni.

B. Management

C.1. Financial structure

a. Budget

The EAFRD through Measure 19.2 and 19.4 of the PUGLIA Rural Development Plan 2014-2020 and the ERDF through the POR PUGLIA 2014-2020 fund the strategy.

In particular, the Monti Dauni Area benefits 5,500,000 euros from the Local Action Plan, an additional 17,000,000 euros for the implementation of the SNAI (National Strategy for the Internal Area) and 3,000,000 euros for the PO ERDF.

Measure 19.2 of RDP EAFRD AMOUNT	€ 5.500.000,00
Measure 19.2 of RDP ADDITIONAL AMOUNT From SNAI	€ 16.100.000,00
ERDF - CLLD MONTI DAUNI	€ 3.000.000,00
Measure 19.4 of RDP MANAGEMENT AND ANIMATION	€ 4.231.000,00
TOTAL	€ 28.831.000

b. Running costs and animation

The EAFRD (lead fund) - on the extent of the RDP 19.4 PUGLIA 2014-2020 – covers the LAG's operating costs.

C.2. Administrative structure

a. Local Action Group

Meridaunia LAG is a consortium company with limited liability, incorporated on 11/03/1998.

The company is composed of 74 members:

- 30 municipal administrations;
- 5 public bodies other than municipal administrations (Chamber of Commerce, Agriculture Research Council and Agrarian Economy Analysis, Consortium for the Reclamation of the Capitanata University of Foggia, Province of Foggia);
- 4 agricultural employer organizations;
- 7 trade associations represented in the CNEL;
- 28 companies and other private organizations.

The shareholders, the Board, and the President compose the organizational structure. The operating structure consists of the following roles: a Technical Director, a chief administrative officer, a secretarial

office, a programming and design office, a communications office, animation, territorial marketing and cooperation, an external consultant for monitoring and evaluation.

LIST OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS.

Public members

A) Municipal Administrations

Comune di Accadia; Comune di Alberona, Comune di Anzano di Puglia, Comune di Ascoli Satriano, Comune di Biccari, Comune di Bovino, Comune di Candela, Comune di Carlantino; Comune di Casalnuovo Monterotaro; Comune di Casalvecchio di Puglia; Comune di Castelluccio Dei Sauri; Comune di Castelluccio Valmaggiore; Comune di Castelnuovo della Daunia; Comune di Celenza Valfortore; Comune di Celle di San Vito; Comune di Deliceto; Comune di Faeto; Comune di Lucera; Comune di Monteleone di Puglia; Comune di Motta Montecorvino; Comune di Orsara di Puglia; Comune di Panni; Comune di Pietramontecorvino; Comune di Rocchetta Sant'Antonio; Comune di Roseto Valfortore; Comune di San Marco La Catola; Comune di Sant'Agata di Puglia; Comune di Troia; Comune di Volturara Appula; Comune di Volturino.

B) Public bodies other than municipal administrations

Foggia Chamber of Commerce; Agriculture Research Council and Agrarian Economy Analysis; Capitanata Land Reclamation consortium; University of Foggia; Province of Foggia.

Private Members

C) Agricultural Employer Organizations: Federazione Provinciale Coltivatori Diretti di Foggia, Unione Provinciale Agricoltori di Foggia, Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori (CIA) di Foggia, Confederazione Produttori Agricoli di Foggia (COPAGRI);

D) Trade Associations represented in the CNEL.

Confcooperative Foggia; Confesercenti Foggia; Confederazione Nazionale Artigianato (CNA); Compagnia delle Opere, Associazione Industriali di Capitanata Foggia, Lega Regionale delle Cooperative; Confcommercio.

E) Companies and other Private Organizations

Amef Multiservice s.r.l.; I.F.O.P. ; INFINITY Società Cooperativa; D'Alessandro Agata "Terra e sapori" ; Associazione Crescere; Banca Popolare dell' Emilia Romagna, Società cooperativa; Banca Popolare di Milano; Consorzio Di Sperimentazione, Divulgazione E Applicazione Di Biotecniche Innovative (CONSDABI) ; Soc. Coop. "Sipario"; C.S.S. Cooperativa Servizi Sanitari Onlus; Soc. Coop. Sociale "L'Arca"; Cotturelli Felice; Diomede s.r.l.; Ente Nazionale per la Formazione Professionale (ENFAP); Euromediterranea SPA; Federazione Pugliesi in Ontario; Glocal - Consulenza e Servizi - Società Coop.; Integrimi Onlus Associazione Socio Culturale Multietnica; Pro Loco Bovino; Pro-Loco Castelluccio dei S.; Pro-Loco Monteleone; Telenorba spa; KOINE' SRL ; Colli della Daunia soc. coop. cons. a r. l.; Consorzio "Daunia & Bio"; La Croce – Farascuso soc. coop. Agricola; Soc. Coop. "Monti Dauni 2000; San Michele Soc. Coop. sociale.

b. *Networks and Cooperation*

There are no structured offices for technical support for CLLD. However, EAFRD and the ERDF Managing Authorities were very helpful in clarifying meetings and in answering to our questions.

Meridaunia LA, since 2012, has been strongly committed to participate to the EU debate on CLLD and Participatory Local Development to stress the Local Action Groups' strategic role. We made contribution paper on the EU policies 2014-2020 and, particularly, on the Regulation proposals about the next cohesion policies and the coming Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), to be adopted by the Parliament and Council by the end of 2013. We participated to several meetings with DG AGRI and DG REGIO to discuss the needs of rural areas.

Also in the drafting phase of the Puglia Operational Program 2014-2020 on ERDF there has been a strong involvement with proposals and requests. The MA of ERDF has been always available to listen our proposals, provide clarification and involve us in the process.

The strong point of MERIDAUNIA LAG has been to seek, from the stage of writing EU regulations, to understand the processes at European and National level. The result was that we managed to aggregate a European policy (CLLD) and a National policy (Strategy Of Monti Dauni Internal Area) as well as the local (Local Action Plan) all in one single plan, in order to avoid the presence of different governance structures on the same territories that confuse citizens.

We are also participating to the workshop "Capitalising on CLLD experiences – Building resilient local communities" held in Győr, Hungary from 8 - 10 November 2017.

C. Implementation

D.1. Strategy design

a. Strategy design

In order to define the Local Development Strategy, Meridaunia LAG made use of a participatory approach, by consulting stakeholders and encouraging local communities to bring out their needs and to share opportunities.

The consultation of the local community took place through two communication cycles. The first cycle had mainly an informational character with a total participation of 540 people.

The second consisted of 11 strategy participatory planning tables, with about 150 participants. After a technical presentation on the CLLD approach, the participants were divided into working groups to analyse the main issues of the area, opportunities, catalyst issues considered more appropriate for territorial growth, and to analyse possible proposals. At the end of the working group, moderators presented the results of the meeting to the full assembly. All proposals were taken in great consideration for the drafting of the Local Action Plan.

b. Support and guidance

During the process of defining the strategy and the identification of actions in compliance with Community legislation, there have been many technical meetings with regional support structures to the Managing Authorities of the EAFRD and the ERDF.

In order to harmonize the strategy Local Action Plan with the strategy of Internal Area Monti Dauni, there were also meetings with the representatives of the National Committee of Internal Areas and with CREA. The biggest effort made was to integrate two funds (EAFR and ERDF), the European instrument (CLLD), a National policy (Strategy Of Monti Dauni Internal Area) and a local one (Local Action Plan) in order to ensure more effectiveness and avoid overlapping on the same territory.

D.2. Strategy implementation

a. Implementation progress

The Local Action Plan is under evaluation. The evaluation should be closed in September 2017 with the signature of the agreement between LAG and Management authority.

b. Animation and participation

The foreseen initiative to involve community participation will start as soon as the Local Action Plan is approved. Since Monti Dauni areas covers 30 municipalities with structural mobility and transport limitations, the animation is a key (and critical) challenge for the success of the strategy. We are going to plan a very busy calendar of appointments in each Municipality.

In order to effect young people and reduce the **process of migration** of youth and active segments of the population, we will take meetings in each secondary school, to inform young people (before they move

out of the area for University) of the opportunity of the area, so they can decide to come back after their studies. In addition, we will reach each municipality to inform public and private stakeholders about the calls and all the opportunities. We think we will reach each municipality 4 times for each year: about 120 meetings!

Very important for us is also the 2.0 communication, which will allow us to communicate with young people through social networks (especially Facebook that is the most used network in our areas) and web communication.

In order to involve farmers, we will involve farming associations in all the process.

c. Monitoring system

All the activities will be constantly monitored and controlled by an external subject that will also have the task of developing independent reports on the implementation of the program, proposing any corrective actions in case of delays and / or threats. Evaluations will be made in the various stages of implementation of the Strategy.

D. Added values and constraints

a. Added value and bottlenecks

The greatest added value of the CLLD is the ability to respond with an integrated and unified approach to the different needs emerging from context analysis. For the local community, in addition, the CLLD facilitate the use of Structural Funds and make easier the planning of the projects.

The registered bottlenecks are primarily related to the bureaucracy and the management of the 30 municipalities, with two different Management Authorities, with consequences on the time of approval of the strategy.

CLLD approach brought a new way of conceiving the local development because it has enabled integrated planning with the involvement of various development sectors (agriculture on the EAFRD and tourism on the ERDF). Moreover, the participatory design method has allowed to express in a structured way needs and aspirations and to realize their own potentialities and difficulties.

The implementation procedures are however too rigid. LAG should be a smart tool for local development, with big autonomy in the implementation phase, in compliance with legislation, and with a strong role of the MA in controlling procedures and monitoring the implementation of the strategy.

Instead is becoming like a public authority with same implementation procedures (sometimes even more limiting) of public bodies and very far from citizen needs.

b. Multiple targets

The greatest risk is the bureaucratic burden: different times in the programs implementation could lead to a disharmony in the implementation of CLLD. This would result in a loss of effectiveness. For example, it is appropriate to create integrated tourism packages involving farms that have already initiated innovation processes (EAFRDs) before participating in fairs and events (ERDF).

c. Adequacy

The funds adequately cover the needs of the territory. However, considering that the area is the one with overall development problems, it should benefit from more resources.

d. Good practices

An example of good practice is that the territory has been structured with a governance capable of designing and implementing the CLLD through activities that have begun in the past and have gone through participation in both LEADER and other funds.

An example of good practice: the territory, despite being very broad and including 30 municipalities, most of which small villages, has been able to create a form of governance that originated from a bottom-up approach on territory. This allowed territories to participate in various community programs (Leader, IPA, etc.), to implement the planning and design of CLLD, and to build a development strategy using the national program for the Internal Areas in synergy with the CLLD.

This new design model has triggered a land governance model that has created a breaking point with the past, overcoming the isolation of individual municipalities and laying the foundations for a constantly evolving process of development.