



Rural development

AEIDL with ELARD in China

Enrique Nieto (AEIDL) was among the 10 experts in rural development that formed the first mission to China of the European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD). Public authorities there are interested in implementing the LEADER participative approach.



Figure 1: Experts of the Mission with Zhang Jianguo, deputy minister of science and technology

After signing a partnership agreement between ELARD and SAFEA (State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs), the European delegation of experts in rural development and poverty reduction visited China to strengthen the future cooperation between China and the EU.

President of China Xi Jinping emphasised at the 19th Communist Party Committee (CPC) the importance of revitalising rural areas for the future of the country.

Based on the success of LEADER in stimulating rural development in Europe for more than 25 years, the government

has begun exploring how this bottom-up approach could be implemented in the country by partnering with ELARD, the European association of LEADER local action groups.

A memorandum of understanding was signed in March 2018 and describes how SAFEA-ELARD cooperation will promote rural revitalisation, alleviate poverty and improve coordination between urban and rural areas.

“ELARD is the first and only international organisation or institution that has signed a memorandum with SAFEA to support the rural revitalisation programme in China. The government has valued ELARD's experience in rural development and poverty reduction in Europe for almost 20 years.”

Petri Rinne, Head of the ELARD experts Delegation



On 14 October 2018 an ELARD delegation, accompanied by the AEIDL expert Enrique Nieto, met with Zhang Jianguo, deputy minister of science and technology in Beijing.

Mr Zhang welcomed Maria João Botelho (ELARD President), Petri Rinne (Head of the Delegation) and all the other experts to exchange views on the challenges faced but also opportunities available in rural China. It was also an opportunity to reinforce the commitment of the government to support rural areas, agriculture and farmers to ensure the sustainable development of the country.

The expert mission provided a new perspective to strengthen and deepen the future cooperation between China and Europe.



“China intends for this partnership to become an example of an EU-China cooperation in the field of rural development that will be further promoted in the future. We felt the strong interest of the national and regional authorities in exploring how LEADER can put the foundations for a completely new rural development model in China.”

Enrique Nieto, expert, AEIDL

The experts had direct interaction and exchanges with relevant national, regional and public administrations, research institutes, local businesses and rural citizens.

Some of the challenges identified concern the competitiveness of the agricultural sector, the lack of territorial branding that could support tourism development and add value to local products, the lack of basic services, and the brain drain as young talent moves to the cities.

By the end of the year ELARD will make a concrete cooperation proposal to SAFEA to be launched in 2019. This proposal could include expertise exchange, training programmes, Local Action Groups pilots and study visits.

Also, the next steps will include a meeting in Brussels on 26 November 2018 of the deputy minister Zhang Jianguo and the European Commission.

More information: <http://www.elard.eu/what-s-going-on/news#id=2131527>

30/10/2018