Title: Ex-post evaluation of LEADER +

Subject: Ex-post evaluation of LEADER +

Author: Metis GmbH and subcontractors AEIDL and CEU

Company: European Commission

Category: Evaluation

Keywords: Evaluation, Common Agricultural Policy, Rural Development, LEADER, Local Development

Final Deliverable

Submitted by Metis GmbH with AEIDL and CEU as subcontractors

Ex-post evaluation of LEADER+

Contract N° 30-CE-0321257/00-26

Metis GmbH

Donau-City-Straße 6, 1220 Vienna, Austria

Tel +43 1 997 1570

Fax +43 1 997 1570-66

email: office@metis-vienna.eu

www.metis-vienna.eu

Vienna, 15.12.2010

Final Deliverable
Submitted by Metis GmbH with AEIDL and CEU as subcontractors

Ex-post evaluation of LEADER+
Contract N° 30-CE-0321257/00-26

Content

metis

AEDL CEU

metis

AE DL C E U

metis

AE DL C E U

Tables and Figures

metis

AE DL · C E U

metis

AEIDL C E U

Abbreviations

ADS	Administrative and delivery systems
ARD	Agricultural and rural development
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CEE	Central and Eastern European Countries
CEU	Közép-európai Egyetem; in English: Central European University
CMEF	Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EAGGF	European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund
EEIG	European Economic Interest Group
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
EQ	Evaluation Question
GO	Government Organisation
INTERREG	Community initiative which aims to stimulate interregional cooperation in the EU
ISPA	Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession
LAG	Local Action Group
LAU	Local Administrative Unit
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LEADER	Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale
MA	Managing Authority
MCA	Multi-criteria analysis
MCDA	Multi-criteria decision aid
MS	Member State
MTE	Mid-term Evaluation
NMS	New Member State
NNU	National Network Unit
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OP	Operational Programme

PA   Paying Authority

QCI   Question-criteria-indicator (grid)

RD   Rural Development

RDP   Rural Development Programmes

SAPARD   Special accession programme for agriculture and rural development

Synthetic Summary

The objectives of the ex post evaluation were to provide an overview of the utilisation of resources and the effectiveness and efficiency of the assistance and its impact in relation to eight themes. In order to answer the specific evaluation questions, substantial fieldwork was required. The field-work revolved around four main tools. These were: a survey of 10% of all Local Action Groups (LAGs); a survey of Managing Authorities (MAs); interviews with National Network Units (NNUs) and ten case studies. The results of the data analysis in relation to the evaluation questions and the ensuing recommendations are summarised below according to the themes.

Theme 1: Relevance and Community Added Value: LEADER+ addressed a large number of needs of rural areas. It has been an important complement to mainstream policies and agencies and has contributed to economic diversification, quality of life and preservation and enhancement of the natural and built environment of rural areas. In these fields of activity, flexibility, sensitivity to local needs, small scale have distinguished LEADER from other governmental structures and ad-dressed needs and exploited potentials considered 'unreachable' by larger and more traditionally run organizations.

Recommendation:
- In recognition of the strength of the LEADER approach in promoting as well as harnessing di-versity and diversification, it should be used as an instrument to foster the local development potential, i.e. for in-creasing the adaptive capacity and resilience of the area, rather than for boosting short term productivity and market success for local value chains.

Theme 2, Action 1: Integrated territorial rural development strategies of a pilot nature: The pilot nature of the strategies fostered innovation particularly by reconfiguring and enabling local actors to embark on new activities, by combining existing activities in new ways and by linking lo-cal competences to external sources of knowledge and technology.

Recommendations:
- LEADER should maintain its 'laboratory' character, with a strategic perspective.
- Meeting particular needs of minority groups, disadvantaged or marginalized people, not automatically catered for by the provisions of the LEADER approach, requires additional arrangements.

Theme 2, Action 2: Support for cooperation between rural territories: The LEADER+ pro-grammes and LEADER+ type measures brought local actors together who would otherwise not have come together to pursue common goals. Whilst co-operation with LAGs from other countries brought inspiration, cooperation with neighbouring LAGs gave strong encouragement to joint projects. Co-operation activities principally channel information and ideas on better project man-agement amongst peers within countries.

Recommendation
- Territorial co-operation should continue to be a keystone of the LEADER approach, for more experienced LAGs as well as for beginners.

Theme 2, Action 3: Networking: LAGs drew on both the national networks and the LEADER Observatory. Networking could be enhanced if benefits were clearly articulated and geared to solving common problems. NNUs had a strong role in both identifying such needs and working with partners in other countries to create appropriate fora to engage with interested LAGs.

Recommendation
- Targeted opportunities for peer learning for LAGs, whether within or between countries should be further developed.

Theme 3: The implementation of the LEADER method: The implementation of the LEADER method promoted multi-sectoral and integrated development and contributed to strengthening the local economy and the social capital in rural areas. Mobilisation of entrepreneurs was a key suc-cess factor.

Recommendations
- LEADER Programmes should continue to focus on multi-sectoral development of rural areas, enhancement of social capital and increased territorial competitiveness, and at the same time increasingly integrate local responses to global social and environmental concerns.
- The autonomy of LAGs should be further developed.

Theme 4: Impacts: LAGs promoted small scale and craft enterprises directly which contributed directly and indirectly to the creation and maintenance of employment.

Recommendation
- To achieve demographic balance, both the productive and the reproductive side of life, the creation of employment opportunities and income on one hand and the improvement of the rural environment on the other should be given due consideration.

Theme 5: Governance and rural citizenship: LEADER+ had significant positive effects on local governing capacities and through this considerably promoted territorially based forms of rural development and the participation of local actors. LEADER+-type measures significantly enhanced the capacities of rural communities in the NMS. Autonomy was considered an important aspect of the ability of LAGs to implement local development strategies effectively.

Recommendation
- The establishment of effective public-private partnerships with a clear allocation and understanding of the respective roles needs to be actively promoted and supported.

Theme 6: Managing, controlling and financing systems: The arrangements for administration and finance as part of the LEADER+ strategy appears to have worked well and to be a strong model. Elements of this have translated well into the new programme period; continuity of LAGs and staff and effective partnership between MAs and LAGs are key contributors to this.

Recommendation
- The administrative procedures for ensuring transparency and accountability must not impede LAGs from carrying out their development work nor exclude local actors with lesser administrative capacities from participating in the programme.

Theme 7: Monitoring and evaluation: European wide comparison and aggregation of LEADER+ monitoring data for the purposes of evaluation is very seriously compromised by systemic weaknesses. A substantial proportion of LAGs report that they had no established systems of structured observation and local development monitoring. Progress in developing evaluation capacity appears rather limited as is the basis of evidence.

Recommendations
- The capacity of LEADER to enhance social capital is central but steps need to be taken to adopt reliable approaches and methodologies to assess success or failure.
- The LAGs should develop and employ high quality and dynamic local territorial strategies which they actively monitor, update and improve through ongoing reflection and revision.
- Building evaluation capacity, awareness, structures, resources and commitment needs active management and real accountability at all levels.

Theme 8: Rural activity/excellence clusters: Although virtually no LAGs explicitly described their activities as being clustering, sustaining wide ranging networks that opened up new economic opportunities was a primary objective for over 75% of the LAGs in the survey.

Recommendation
- LEADER areas and LAGs need to link more effectively to the wider development context and to network with other actors and stakeholders.

metis

AEIDL   CEU

Executive Summary

The ex post evaluation of LEADER+ (2000-06) was carried out by Metis GmbH in association with AEIDL (European Association for Information on Local Development) and CEU (Közép-európai Egyetem/Central European University) for DG Agriculture and Rural Development.

The objectives of the ex post evaluation were to provide an overview of the utilisation of resources and the effectiveness and efficiency of the assistance and its impact in relation to eight themes and altogether 24 evaluation questions allocated to the themes[1]. It was expected to build on the previous programme level evaluations and their updates. However, in order to answer the specific evaluation questions, substantial fieldwork was required in the form of surveys, interviews and case studies.

The fieldwork revolved around four main tools. These were: a survey of 10% of all Local Action Groups (LAGs); a survey of Managing Authorities (MAs); interviews with National Network Units (NNUs) and ten case studies.

The results of the data analysis in relation to the evaluation questions are summarised below according to the themes.

Theme 1 (Evaluation Questions (EQs) 1, 2 and 3): Relevance and Community Added Value

The distinctive feature of LEADER is the approach or LEADER method based on small scale, area based and multi faceted activities. MAs and LAGs are almost unanimous in the view that LEADER+ has complemented mainstream programmes in a number of different ways, most significantly as a means of experiment with reduced concerns about failure ('laboratory' aspect), by mobilising small local groups unreachable by the main functional structures of Government, and by supporting investments which by virtue of sector or scale were not covered by the main state agencies.

Although innovation was intended to be an important feature of LEADER activities, it was not a main focus of the LAGs. Notwithstanding, many LAGs have supported technology projects ranging from the facilitation of access to computers among the local population to advanced technology projects in the IT area and other sectors.

Improving the quality of life was the most popular theme selected by LAGs. It included development of tourism facilities, promotion of services to old people and the young and preservation of the environment, both built and natural.

A further aim of LEADER was to accelerate diversification of the rural economy through adding value to local products and exploiting natural and cultural resources. This is a constituent of the Lisbon and Göteborg Agendas. Although adding value to local products was not a high priority for LAGs, a relatively large number of projects were in this category.

While many LAGs have initiated projects in the agricultural sector, on the whole these have been aimed at on farm or off farm diversification, including adding-value through on-farm processing, rather than raising agricultural productivity at primary production level.

---

[1] Theme 1: Relevance and Community Added Value
Theme 2: The actions of LEADER+
Action 1: Integrated territorial rural development strategies of a pilot nature
Action 2: Support for cooperation between rural territories
Action 3: Networking
Theme 3: The implementation of the LEADER method
Theme 4: Impacts
Theme 5: Governance and rural citizenship
Theme 6: Managing, controlling and financing systems
Theme 7: Monitoring and evaluation
Theme 8: Rural activity/excellence clusters

Recommendations

- The multi-dimensional meaning of innovation should be sharpened in LEADER and more strongly embedded in and driven through the approach and the pilot strategies. The recognition of the strategic character of multi-dimensional territorial innovation brings with it that the financial and technical support should be sufficiently diverse to meet requirements of different kinds and stages of innovation.

- In recognition of the strength of the LEADER approach in promoting as well as harnessing diversity and diversification, it should be used as an instrument to foster the local development potential, i.e. for in-creasing the adaptive capacity and resilience of the area, rather than for boosting short term productivity and market success for local value chains.

Theme 2, Action 1 (EQs 4, 5 and 6): Integrated territorial rural development strategies of a pilot nature

There is widespread consensus that the LEADER approach and the formation of LAGs brought actors together who would not otherwise have met or cooperated. This holds both for the operational level (joint projects) and the strategic level (participation in the design of the local development strategy and implementation).

The participation of women in LAG activities was strong, although they remained underrepresented on LAG boards. It was, however, a challenge to get young people on the LAG board, and 10% can already be considered as a significant achievement. Organisational autonomy correlates positively with openness and the ability to draw benefits from relationships with external partners. It is less obvious that the LAGs succeed in integrating more fragile parts of the population into development processes.

The pilot nature of the strategies fostered innovation particularly by reconfiguring and enabling local actors to embark on new activities, by combining existing activities in new ways and by linking local competences to external sources of knowledge and technology. There are many examples that local specificities could be turned into competitive advantages, although tangible economic effects were rather reported from more experienced LAGs (those operating since LEADER II or I) than from 'beginner LAGs'**.**

Regarding obstacles and success factors for implementing innovative LEADER strategies, most of the obstacles were ascribed to framework conditions which were beyond the sphere of influence of local actors, whereas the success factors and proposed solutions are perceived as pertaining to the quality of the social capital, the capacity to co-operate and the collective ability to translate a shared vision into real projects. Autonomy and the decentralisation of project approval and funding were broadly advocated. Room for manoeuvre in financing was also considered essential for success: upfront payments allowed the LAGs to get going quickly and avoid delay to project start-ups.

There was a clear link between the LEADER approach and the enrichment of local social capital, as well as networking links around certain themes and activities. Connecting people and activities is the quintessence of the LEADER approach.

Recommendations

- LEADER should maintain its 'laboratory' character, with a strategic perspective. Area-based rural development strategies should stand on two pillars: (i) a thematic focus ensuring the concentration of resources on developing local potential having been identified

as promising; (ii) seed money for supporting emerging ideas and projects, harnessing unforeseeable opportunities for change.

- Meeting particular needs of minority groups, disadvantaged or marginalized people, not automatically catered for by the provisions of the LEADER approach, requires additional arrangements.

Theme 2, Action 2 (EQs 7, 8, 9 and 10): Support for cooperation between rural territories

The amount of resources devoted to inter-territorial co-operation activities varied between 2-10% of the total resources. In some countries, there were no funds at all for both inter-regional and transnational co-operation, whereas in others, there were no matching funds to pay for this.

The majority of MAs surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that projects would not have been implemented without inter-territorial co-operation. For LAGs, contact between neighbouring groups was cited as being most productive for coming up with new projects.

Meeting LAGs from neighbouring territories and from other parts of the country was positively rated for helping improve management whereas co-operation activities with LAGs from other countries were much less important in this respect. Most LAGs said that co-operation had little or no effect on identifying alternative funding.

Co-operation activity was positively correlated with LAG's views that they had reinforced local identity and helped create lasting rural networks that would enable future co-operation.

LAGs mentioned that co-operation was time consuming and sometimes there was an over-expectation for actions to quickly take the form of projects rather than be allowed to develop over time.

Recommendation

- Territorial co-operation should continue to be a keystone of the LEADER approach, for more experienced LAGs as well as for beginners. Fostering relations between these should be particularly considered.

Theme 2, Action 3 (EQs 11, and 12): Networking

While not all LAGs used the National Network Units (NNUs), most LAGs said they had either frequent or regular contact. The most popular form of contact was training and study visits organised by the NNUs. The majority said that the NNU was an important source of information about the activities of other LAGs and the second most popular assessment was that the NNU was a source of good practical advice for developing new projects. Just over a quarter of LAGs said that the NNU was useful in identifying and making introductions to new partners.

On the whole, the LEADER Observatory was less used than the NNUs. The vast majority described their contact as occasional and one quarter said they had never been in touch with the LEADER Observatory. Half the group said that they had used the LAG database and 40% said that they had used the LEADER Observatory to find out about co-operation projects. 41% said that they had searched for partners using the facilities of the LEADER Observatory.

The NNU and the LEADER Observatory were considered a useful source of information on LAG activities and on the different regulatory contexts in which the different LAGs were working. An up-to-date database of LAGs and their activities is a key tool in the search for partners. Given that the

linguistic proficiency of the LAG staff cannot be taken for granted, due efforts are necessary to ensure that translation and interpretation are available if needed.

Recommendation

- Targeted opportunities for peer learning for LAGs, whether within or between countries should be further developed. The networking units at regional, national and European level are of great value to stabilize the flows of exchanging and creating knowledge at larger scales.

Theme 3 (EQs 13 and 14): The implementation of the LEADER method

The implementation of the LEADER approach promotes the integrated and multi-sectoral development of rural areas. (Re)discovering variety in the endogenous cultural and natural potential of the area and generating innovation through entrepreneurial endeavour belong to the highest rated outcomes of LEADER+.

There is evidence that social capital and territorial competitiveness were enhanced by LEADER+. In many cases, the initiative complemented mainstream programmes as it provided 'soft support' such as animation, feasibility studies, consultancy, etc. as indispensable backing for the 'hard investments' carried out with the help of the ERDF or other funds. The appreciation of social capital enhancement seems to be higher among new LAGs, whereas pre-existing LAGs report stronger effects on the local economy.

The relatively limited area size (between NUTS IV and III) – which is not too small in terms of achieving critical mass but also not large enough to dissipate the personal interactions between stakeholders – is one of the main advantages of LEADER.

Identity seems less a prerequisite than a corollary to successful local development. Identity can emerge with time, crystallising around a common purpose or action (through forward bonding).

More autonomous LAGs show better results in awakening dormant skills and potentials, in strategic thinking and in monitoring the development of their area in a structured way. An element of choice is however necessary in order to ensure that LAGs do not take on more responsibility than they have the capacity to deal with.

Inter-regional and trans-national co-operation and networking under LEADER+ also contributed to sustainable human resource use as they enabled local stakeholders to learn from peers how to develop, integrate and apply new techniques using endogenous resources. Accompaniment by professional staff is an indispensable instrument to awaken the local potential as well as to tap the resources offered by partners from abroad.

Recommendations

- LEADER Programmes should continue to focus on multi-sectoral development of rural areas, enhancement of social capital and increased territorial competitiveness, and at the same time increasingly integrate local responses to global social and environmental concerns. This vision entails a stronger emphasis on rural-urban relationships and partnerships which go beyond the remit of rural policies.

- Autonomy or the decision making power of Local Action Groups should be further developed. Decision making power makes sense if the LAG is willing to exert it, if it is capable to master it and if it is allowed to do so by the managing authority and the programme administration.

metis

AEiDL · CEU

Theme 4 (EQs 15, 16 and 17): Impacts

The overall impact of LEADER+ programmes on the economic, environmental and social capital of EU rural areas covers a very broad range of outputs, many of them central to the question of the success of the LEADER concept.

With regard to employment effects, even if it is not possible to have a comprehensive estimates of the numbers of jobs created and maintained in the whole LEADER+ programme, the types of support given and the innovative nature of many of the LEADER+ interventions, the sectors in which they intervene (especially small scale craft type and tourist activities), the fact that they operate in areas of underemployment make a prima facie case for the conclusion that both directly and indirectly LEADER+ activities contributed to the creation and maintenance of employment in their respective areas. The case studies provide examples of job creation, e.g. the North Pennines and North Northumberland where a total of about 38 full time and 15 part time jobs were created or Maiella Verde in Italy where 32 jobs were created directly and 280 jobs were maintained.

LEADER+ groups have promoted small scale and craft enterprises directly which have helped to create or sustain employment and income. In other cases the impact was indirect via marketing and promotional activities organised by LEADER+ groups. These types of activities benefitted particularly small scale manufacturing, food processing and tourism. Exploitation of local natural resources of agricultural products, fish, and timber were often important in these types of initiative. LEADER+ was also prominent in creating new facilities and services for local people, for example in the areas of education, sports for young people, cultural activity and elder care. These contributed to the amenities of local areas and enhanced their attractiveness for local people. Thus LEADER+ played a small role in combating out migration and increasing age dependency in rural areas.

Recommendation

- To achieve demographic balance, both the productive and the reproductive side of life, the creation of employment opportunities and income on one hand and the improvement of the rural environment on the other should be given due consideration.

Theme 5 (EQs 18 and 19): Governance and rural citizenship

LEADER+ had significant positive effects on local governing capacities and through this promoted territorially-based forms of rural development and the participation of local actors. This included structural improvements and long lasting effects far beyond the importance of financial resources represented by LEADER+. The process of setting up LAGs and the creation and implementation of local strategies contributed to the accumulation of social capital and social learning (learning effect).

The development of the LAGs, the professionalism, local knowledge and contacts of their staff are the most important results of the programme. Interregional and transnational experiences, adapted innovations, behavioural models and social learning achieved through LEADER+ also helped to develop local actors' capacities for self organisation.

The findings suggest that the multi-level governance environment of LEADER+ had a significant effect on its implementation. In general, the more autonomy enjoyed by the LAGs, and the better the service they were provided with by the MA and the Paying Agency, the more participation, structural changes, and real rural development results they could achieve.

There is evidence to suggest that LEADER+-type measures significantly enhanced the capacities of rural communities in the New Member States (NMS) to conceive and implement local rural development strategies. A close reading of the data suggests that for many LAGs in NMS

LEADER+-type measures provided sufficient resources to build local capacities and prepared them to implement the LEADER approach.

Recommendation

- The establishment of effective public-private partnerships with a clear allocation and understanding of the respective roles needs to be actively promoted and supported. It is not in the interests of the LAG to exclude potential beneficiaries who are often the more motivated and innovative actors; however their involvement must be governed by robust procedures to avoid any conflict of interests and roles.

Theme 6 (EQs 20 and 21): Managing, controlling and financing systems

The appraisal of the arrangements for administration and finance as part of the LEADER+ programmes and their inclusion within the contractual agreements put in place between LAGs and MAs appears to have worked well and to be a strong model.

LEADER+ was generally seen to have had a positive effect in the current programming period. The continuity of LAGs and of the staff concerned is highly valued and was seen to contribute to the success of the approach. The concerns expressed in some cases about the burden of the increased complexity of LEADER+ by comparison with previous approaches appears likely to be deepened in the current programming period (2007-13). This suggests that there may be differences in the requirements placed on LAGs and the support given to them which may indicate the need for some greater flexibility to take account of these variations.

The greater fiscal autonomy of the more highly developed LAGs appears to have encouraged a higher degree of scrutiny of value for money, and thus contributed to the value added.

The ability of the LAGs to operate in the support of development activity rather than as just a source of funding contributed considerably to their customer and development centred approach. They and their staff played an important and valued role as an interface between the various development actors and project promoters.

The more autonomous LAGs displayed a higher degree of flexibility and appeared to be more effective in swiftly and flexibly serving client needs. This is highly consistent with the LEADER method objectives.

The principal issues over the flow of funds seem to have arisen in those countries with additional (regional) tiers of administration which sometimes resulted in serious cash flow difficulties and considerable costs for LAGs impeding their ability to act.

There is a considerable deficit in structured monitoring activity which is likely to have limited LAGs' ability to target their funds on strategic priorities on an ongoing basis, this is most pronounced in low autonomy LAGs and even in these higher autonomy cases, this still represents a significant gap.

Recommendation

- The administrative procedures for ensuring transparency and accountability must not impede LAGs from carrying out their development work nor exclude local actors with lesser administrative capacities from participating in the programme.

metis

AE DL CEU

Theme 7 (EQs 22, 23 and 24): Monitoring and evaluation

European-wide comparison and aggregation of LEADER+ monitoring data for the purposes of evaluation is very seriously compromised by systemic weaknesses. A substantial proportion of LAGs have no established systems of structured observation and local development monitoring. This proved to be a major challenge for the conduct of this evaluation where it has proved impossible to compile a fairly basic data set (inventory) of LEADER+ and LEADER+-type measures.

There appears to be considerable scope and a need to extend the implementation of structured monitoring approaches as a means of improving local development strategy performance. The greater prominence of this amongst more autonomous LAGs suggests that the potential for improvement is real and that there is a relationship with the maturity of LAG and integrity of the LEADER approach. NNUs appear potentially to have a strong role to play here in facilitating exchange between the more highly autonomous LAGs and the less so, and in delivering technical support, training and advice.

A high dependency on the formal evaluations at programme level remains. LAG and other ongoing monitoring and evaluation activity appears to have the potential to complement this, but at present seems to be limited by a lack of focus and coherence of approach.

Overall it appears that progress here has been rather limited. Innovative LAG evaluation activity appears not to have been greatly developed or extended throughout the course of LEADER+ and such as there is, has been restricted to the development of local and self evaluation.

Recommendations

- The capacity of LEADER to enhance social capital is central but steps need to be taken to adopt reliable approaches and methodologies to assess success or failure.

- The LAGs should develop and employ high quality and dynamic local territorial strategies which they actively monitor, update and improve through ongoing reflection and revision. This should lead to a culture of greater accountability and ownership of the process of continuous improvement.

- Building evaluation capacity, awareness, structures, resources and commitment needs active management and real accountability at all levels. Evaluation should be seen as an integral part of policy making and programming which implies that the final evaluation of LEADER activities should be mandatory.

Theme 8: Rural activity/excellence clusters

Potential relationships between thematic priorities under LEADER+ and Priority Axis 1, 2 and 3 of the current EAFRD programmes were explored in order to examine the contribution of LEADER+ to the achievements of the current rural development programmes and, more widely, its role in the process of cluster development. Although virtually no LAGs explicitly described their activities as being clustering, sustaining wide ranging networks that opened up new economic opportunities was a primary objective for over 75% of the LAGs in the survey. In terms of the numbers of LAGs that carried out activities that are akin to clustering, the survey showed that 77 out of the 103 described themselves as playing a practical role in starting up new products and services, mainly through brokering new relations between diverse actors. The smallest common denominator of all these examples seems to be that LEADER areas played a role of interface between an area-based perspective and a consideration of business clusters or between local heritage and the global economy.

LAGs can be viewed as intermediary support structures for helping small projects to raise their income. They facilitated and sometimes coordinated the emergence of local value chains. The necessary condition seemed however to rely upon the recognition by the LAG of the potential social capital in the area, even where small and scattered initiatives never managed to sustain themselves over time.

Recommendation

- LEADER areas and LAGs need to link more effectively to the wider development context and to network with other actors and stakeholders. There should be links between LAGs and similar and like-minded development partnerships in urban and coastal areas in matters such as climate change, mobility, food chains, landscape functionality, public goods and other aspects of quality of life. The development of clustering activity is predicated on such wider scale and linkages.

Résumé

L'évaluation ex post de LEADER+ (2000-06) fut commanditée par la DG Agriculture et Développement Rural à Metis GmbH, en association avec AEIDL (Association Européenne pour l'information sur le Développement Local) et CEU (Közép-európai Egyetem/Central European University).

Les objectifs de cette évaluation ex post visent à fournir une vue d'ensemble sur l'utilisation des ressources, sur l'efficacité et l'efficience des interventions et sur l'impact décliné en 8 thématiques[2] et couvertes par 24 questions évaluatives. Le travail est parti des évaluations existantes des programmes et de leurs mises à jour. Afin de répondre aux questions spécifiques, il a fallu toutefois mener un travail de terrain sous la forme d'enquêtes, d'entretiens et d'études de cas.

L'enquête de terrain s'appuie sur 4 outils méthodologiques: une enquête auprès de 10% des Groupes d'Action Locale (GAL), une enquête auprès des Autorités de Gestion (AG), des entretiens avec les réseaux nationaux (RN) et 10 études de cas.

Les résultats de l'analyse des données, liés aux questions d'évaluation sont résumés ci-dessous par entrée thématique.

Thème 1 (Questions Evaluatives (EQs) 1, 2 et 3): Pertinence et Valeur Ajoutée Communautaire

Les caractéristiques de LEADER portent sur sa méthode, fondée sur des activités à multiples facettes, développées localement sur des territoires organisés.

Tant les autorités de gestion que les GAL sont unanimes sur la contribution de LEADER+ aux programmations classiques, et ce par de nombreux aspects, le plus significatif étant sa fonction d'expérimentation ou sa dimension de laboratoire, permettant de mobiliser des groupes locaux de petite taille, éloignés des circuits de programmation, sans oublier le soutien à certains types d'investissements habituellement non couverts par les financements sectoriels.

Malgré le fait que l'innovation représentait une des caractéristiques de LEADER+, ce ne fut pas une préoccupation majeure des GAL. Cela étant dit, nombre d'entre eux ont soutenu des projets technologiques, allant de l'accès aux technologies de l'information et de la communication jusqu'à des opérations de technologie de pointe dans différents secteurs.

L'amélioration de la qualité de la vie fut la priorité thématique la plus sollicitée par les GAL. Elle comprend le développement des services touristiques, la promotion des services de proximité et la préservation de l'environnement, qu'il soit naturel ou bâti.

L'un des buts de LEADER+ était d'accélérer la diversification de l'économie rurale au travers de la valorisation des produits locaux et l'exploitation des ressources naturelles et culturelles. C'est l'un des objectifs des stratégies de Lisbonne et Göteborg. Bien que la valorisation des produits locaux ne soit pas la plus importante des priorités pour les GAL, un nombre élevé d'opérations se trouvent dans cette catégorie.

---

[2] Thème 1: Pertinence et Valeur Ajoutée Communautaire
Thème 2: Les Actions de LEADER+
Action 1: Stratégies territoriales intégrées de développement rural, à caractère pilote
Action 2: Coopération entre territoires ruraux
Action 3: Mise en réseau
Thème 3: La mise en œuvre de la méthode LEADER
Thème 4: Impacts
Thème 5: Gouvernance et citoyenneté rurale
Thème 6: Systèmes de gestion, contrôle et financement
Thème 7: Suivi et évaluation
Thème 8: Pôles d'excellence rurale / clusters d'activités

Alors que de nombreux GAL ont initié des projets dans le secteur agricole, dans l'ensemble ceux-ci étaient destinés à la diversification dans les activités agricoles et extra-agricoles, comprenant la valorisation à travers la transformation agricole plutôt qu'en augmentant la productivité agricole au niveau de la production primaire.

Recommandations

- La signification multidimensionnelle de l'innovation devrait être affinée dans LEADER et être intégrée dans et dirigée par l'approche et les stratégies pilotes. Reconnaître le caractère stratégique de l'innovation territoriale multidimensionnelle suppose que l'aide financière et technique soit suffisamment diversifiée pour répondre aux différents types et stades de l'innovation.

- En reconnaissance de la force de l'approche de LEADER pour la promotion ainsi que la maîtrise de la diversité et de la diversification, il convient de l'utiliser comme un instrument qui encourage le développement local potentiel, c'est-à-dire pour augmenter la capacité d'adaptation et la résilience d'un territoire plutôt que de stimuler la productivité à court terme et le succès commercial des filières locales.

Thème 2, Action 1 (EQs 4, 5 et 6): Stratégies territoriales intégrées de développement rural, à caractère pilote

De manière consensuelle, la méthode LEADER et la formation des GAL permet le rapprochement des acteurs locaux autour d'actions communes. Cela vaut aussi bien au niveau opérationnel qu'au niveau stratégique (participation à la conception de la stratégie de développement local et à sa mise en œuvre).

La participation des femmes aux activités des GAL fut importante, bien qu'elle demeure sous-représentée au niveau des comités de direction. La participation des jeunes aux travaux des GAL reste insuffisante, le meilleur des cas atteignant 10% de jeunes de moins de 25 ans dans les comités de direction. L'autonomie organisationnelle est en corrélation avec une approche ouverte et la capacité à enrichir le GAL de ses relations avec les partenaires extérieurs. Le principe d'intégrer des représentants de populations fragilisées dans le processus de développement semble moins évident.

Le caractère pilote des stratégies a encouragé l'innovation, en donnant notamment la possibilité d'investir des champs d'activités en émergence, en les combinant à l'existant et en reliant les compétences locales à des circuits externes de connaissances ou de technologies. De nombreux exemples illustrent la manière dont les spécificités locales peuvent se transformer en avantages compétitifs, bien que les résultats économiques tangibles soient plus souvent rapportés par les GAL ayant plus d'ancienneté dans le programme (LEADER I et LEADER II) que par les GAL 'débutants'.

En ce qui concerne les écueils et les réussites des stratégies LEADER innovantes et leur mise en œuvre, la plupart des obstacles sont liés au contexte, au-delà de la sphère d'influence des acteurs locaux, tandis que les réussites et les solutions adoptées proviennent de la qualité du capital social, la capacité de coopérer et l'aptitude collective à traduire une vision partagée en projets concrets. L'autonomie laissée à la validation et au financement des opérations sont très fortement appréciées. La marge de manœuvre financière est considérée comme un facteur essentiel de réussite: le système d'avances a permis aux GAL de se mettre rapidement au travail et d'éviter le retard au démarrage des opérations.

metis

AEIDL CEU

Le lien entre l'approche LEADER et l'enrichissement du capital social local est clairement établi et renseigné, de même que les liens en réseau autour de certains thèmes ou activités. Connecter les gens et leurs activités est la quintessence de l'approche LEADER.

Recommandations

- LEADER doit conserver sa dimension de "laboratoire" dans une perspective stratégique. Les stratégies territorialisées du développement rural devraient s'appuyer sur deux piliers: (i) un programme thématique assurant la concentration des ressources sur un développement local potentiel identifié comme prometteur; (ii) un capital initial pour encourager les idées et projets émergeants en maîtrisant les possibilités imprévisibles en matière de changement.

- Il convient de procéder à des aménagements supplémentaires pour répondre aux besoins des groupes minoritaires, des personnes défavorisées et marginalisées auxquels les dispositions prévues par l'approche LEADER ne s'adressent pas de manière automatique.

Thème 2, Action 2 (EQs 7, 8, 9 et 10): Coopération entre territoires ruraux

Le montant alloué aux projets de coopération interterritoriale varie entre 2 et 10% de l'enveloppe globale. Dans certains Etats Membres, ces fonds n'étaient pas disponibles et dans d'autres le cofinancement n'existait pas.

La plupart des autorités de gestion interrogées confirment que certaines activités n'auraient pas vu le jour sans le volet de la coopération interterritoriale. Pour les GAL, les contacts avec les territoires voisins sont considérés comme étant les plus productifs pour monter de nouveaux projets.

Les rencontres entre GAL voisins et ceux des autres régions du même Etat membre reçoivent un avis positif pour l'amélioration de la gestion, tandis que la coopération transnationale est considérée comme moins pertinente de ce point de vue. La plupart des GAL pensent que la coopération a eu peu ou pas d'effet sur l'identification de financements alternatifs.

Les activités de coopération reçoivent un avis favorable sur le renforcement de l'identité locale et l'aide à constituer des réseaux durables de coopération rurale. Toutefois, les GAL soulignent que la coopération est chronophage et les résultats concrets en découlant sont souvent surestimés.

Recommandation

- La coopération territoriale doit rester une pierre angulaire de l'approche LEADER, à la fois pour les GAL expérimentés et les débutants. Il convient particulièrement d'encourager les relations entre ces deux groupes.

Thème 2, Action 3 (EQs 11, et 12): Mise en réseau

Bien que tous les GAL n'aient pas fait appel aux réseaux nationaux (RN), beaucoup d'entre eux avaient des contacts réguliers et fréquents. Les formes de mise en réseau les plus appréciées furent la formation et les visites de terrain proposées par les RN. La majorité des GAL pensent que les RN représentent une source d'information importante sur les activités des autres GAL. La seconde meilleure appréciation porte sur l'utilité des RN comme source de bonne pratique pour développer de nouveaux projets. Plus d'un quart des GAL estiment que les RN sont utiles pour identifier de nouveaux partenaires et se faire introduire auprès d'eux.

Dans l'ensemble, l'Observatoire fut moins sollicité que les RN. La plus grande majorité des GAL l'ont utilisé occasionnellement et près d'un quart n'est jamais rentré en contact avec lui. La moitié des GAL interrogés confirment avoir utilisé la base de données des GAL et 40% d'entre eux ont recouru à l'Observatoire dans le cadre de la coopération transnationale en utilisant les outils de recherche.

Les réseaux nationaux et l'Observatoire européen sont considérés comme une source utile d'information sur les activités des GAL et leur contexte institutionnel. Une base de données à jour des GAL est un outil essentiel pour la recherche de partenaires. Etant donné que les compétences linguistiques des équipes de terrain ne sont pas nécessairement très développées, les services de traduction et d'interprétation sont considérés comme très importants.

Recommandation

- Il convient de développer davantage des opportunités ciblées d'apprentissage en équipe pour les GAL, que ce soit au sein d'un même ou de plusieurs pays. Les unités d'animation au niveau régional, national ou communautaire représentent un avantage considérable pour stabiliser le flux des échanges et construire une base de connaissance à plus grande échelle.

Thème 3 (EQs 13 et 14): La mise en oeuvre de la méthode LEADER

L'approche LEADER met en avant le développement intégré et multisectoriel des zones rurales. (Re)découvrir la variété du potentiel endogène pour générer l'innovation multidimensionelle est l'un des résultats les plus plébiscités de LEADER+.

De nombreux témoignages indiquent que le capital social et la compétitivité territoriale furent renforcés par LEADER+. Dans plusieurs cas, l'initiative abondait les interventions classiques en fournissant de l'appui immatériel comme des moyens d'animation, de services de conseil, etc. jugés indispensables pour maintenir ou développer les investissements matériels soutenus par le FEDER ou d'autres instruments. L'appréciation favorable du renforcement du capital social semble plus élevée auprès des GAL débutants, tandis que les GAL plus anciens rapportent des effets plus importants sur l'économie locale.

La taille relativement limitée des zones géographiques (NUTS4 et parfois NUTS3) - ni trop petite pour atteindre une masse critique, ni trop grande pour dissiper l'interaction entre acteur locaux – est l'un des principaux avantages de LEADER.

La question de l'identité semble moins un pré-requis qu'un corollaire pour un développement local réussi. L'identité peut émerger avec le temps en se cristallisant autour d'un but commun (au travers de liens sociaux avancés ou « forward bonding »).

Les GAL plus autonomes enregistrent de meilleurs résultats en ce qui concerne la stimulation des compétences et potentiels inactifs, et de la pensée stratégique mais également pour le suivi du développement de leur territoire de façon structurée. Un élément de choix est cependant nécessaire pour s'assurer que les GAL ne prennent pas plus de responsabilités qu'ils ne peuvent en assumer.

La coopération et la mise en réseau dans LEADER+ ont aussi contribué à l'utilisation durable de cette ressource puisqu'ils ont permis aux acteurs locaux d'apprendre de leurs pairs comment développer, intégrer et appliquer les techniques idoines à l'utilisation des ressources locales. L'accompagnement professionnel indispensable à l'émergence du potentiel endogène est facilité par les ressources de partenaires étrangers.

Recommandations

- Les Programmes LEADER doivent continuer à se concentrer sur le développement multisectoriel des zones rurales, l'amélioration du capital social et l'augmentation de la compétitivité territoriale, tout en intégrant graduellement les réponses locales aux préoccupations sociales et environnementales mondiales. Cette vision implique davantage des relations rurales-urbaines ainsi que des partenariats qui vont au-delà des politiques rurales.

- Il convient de développer davantage l'autonomie ou le pouvoir de décision des Groupes d'action locale. Le pouvoir de décision n'a de sens que si le groupe d'action locale désire l'exercer, s'il est capable de le maîtriser et si l'autorité de gestion et l'administration du programme le lui permettent.

Thème 4 (EQs 15, 16 et 17): Impacts

L'impact général des programmes LEADER+ sur le capital économique, social et social des zones rurales de l'Union Européenne couvre une grande variété de produits et services, et reste une question centrale du succès de LEADER.

En termes d'emplois, bien qu'il ne soit pas possible de fournir une estimation rigoureuse du nombre d'emplois créés ou maintenus par le programme LEADER+ dans son ensemble, les types de soutien apportés, la nature innovante des interventions sectorielles (en particulier les activités liées à l'artisanat et au tourisme) et le fait que ce soutien opère dans des zones de sous-emploi, sont autant d'arguments pour conclure que les activités soutenues par LEADER+, directement et indirectement, contribuèrent à la création et au maintien de l'emploi dans les zones concernées. Les études de cas donnent des exemples de créations d'emplois, par exemple, le nord des Pennines et le nord du Northumberland où on a créé 38 emplois à temps complet et 15 emplois à temps partiel ou dans la région de la Majella (Maiella Verde) en Italie où 32 emplois ont été créés et 280 maintenus.

Certains GAL ont soutenu directement les petites entreprises artisanales, lesquelles ont créé ou maintenu leurs revenus et l'emploi. D'autres ont obtenu des résultats indirects au travers d'activités de commercialisation et de promotion. Ce genre d'opérations concernait essentiellement la fabrication artisanale, la transformation alimentaire et le tourisme. L'exploitation des ressources naturelles et agricoles comme la pêche et la filière bois y jouent aussi un rôle important. LEADER+ a également tenu un rôle proéminent dans la création de nouveaux services à la population, par exemple dans le domaine de l'éducation, des sports pour les jeunes, de l'offre culturelle et des soins aux personnes âgées. Ces éléments contribuent à la qualité des installations pour les populations locales et augmentent l'attractivité du milieu rural. De cette manière, LEADER+ participe, bien que modestement, à la lutte contre l'exode et à la prévention de la dépendance des personnes âgées.

Recommandation

- Afin d'atteindre l'équilibre démographique, à la fois sur les plans productif et reproducteur, Il faudrait tenir compte d'une part de la création d'opportunités d'emplois et de revenus et d'autre part de l'amélioration de l'environnement rural.

Thème 5 (EQs 18 et 19): Gouvernance et citoyenneté rurale

LEADER+ atteint des résultats extrêmement positifs en matière de gouvernance locale, et conforte les formes territorialisées de développement rural ainsi que la participation des acteurs locaux. Ces résultats comprennent des améliorations structurelles et des effets à long terme très

supérieurs au volume financier représenté par le programme. La procédure de constitution des GAL, la conception et mise en œuvre de stratégies locales contribuent à l'accumulation de capital social et d'apprentissage de la gouvernance.

Le développement des GAL, leur professionnalisation, l'accumulation de connaissances et de relations entre techniciens sont les résultats les plus probants du programme. Les expériences interrégionales et transnationales, les innovations, les modèles comportementaux et l'apprentissage de la gouvernance pratiqués durant LEADER+, sont autant d'éléments qui ont mené les acteurs locaux vers une meilleure autonomie.

Les conclusions suggèrent qu'un contexte de gouvernance multi-niveaux pour la mise en œuvre de LEADER+ a eu un effet important sur sa mise en œuvre. De manière générale, plus les GAL avaient d'autonomie, plus la qualité fournie par les autorités de gestion et de paiements était satisfaisante, plus les résultats en matière de participation, de changement structurel et de développement rural effectif étaient probants.

De nombreuses preuves confirment que les mesures de type LEADER+ ont renforcé les capacités des communautés rurales des nouveaux Etats membres à concevoir et mettre en œuvre des stratégies de développement rural au niveau local. Un examen approfondi des données relate que, pour la plupart des GAL des ces pays, ces mesures ont fourni suffisamment de moyens pour mettre en place des dispositifs locaux et les préparer à programmer selon l'approche LEADER.

Recommandation

- Il convient de promouvoir et de soutenir activement la mise en place de partenariats public-privé efficaces grâce à une répartition et une compréhension claires des rôles respectifs. Les GAL n'ont aucun intérêt à exclure des bénéficiaires potentiels qui souvent sont des acteurs plus motivés et innovants; cependant pour éviter tout conflit d'intérêts ou de rôles, leur engagement doit être régi par des procédures solides.

Thème 6 (EQs 20 et 21): Systèmes de gestion, contrôle et financement

L'expertise réalisée sur le fonctionnement administratif et financier de LEADER+ et l'intégration de ces modalités dans les accords contractuels entre GAL et autorités de gestion révèle un modèle ayant plutôt bien fonctionné.

LEADER+ est considéré comme ayant eu un impact positif sur la période actuelle de programmation. La continuité des GAL et des équipes concernées est jugée comme un atout favorable au succès de l'approche LEADER. Cependant, les préoccupations exprimées dans certains cas à propos de la charge administrative et de la complexité accrue de LEADER+ par rapport aux périodes précédentes semblent s'intensifier pour la période actuelle de programmation (2007-2013). Ceci indique que les requêtes administratives adressées aux GAL et l'assistance technique qui leur est fournie pourraient faire l'objet d'une plus grande flexibilité afin de prendre en compte ces variations.

L'autonomie fiscale plus importante des GAL les plus développés semble avoir encouragé un niveau d'exigence plus élevé en matière de rentabilité, apportant ainsi de la valeur ajoutée au programme.

La possibilité d'opérer en soutien du développement plutôt que de distribuer simplement des aides financières a largement contribué à l'approche "orientée client". Les équipes des GAL ont joué un rôle important et reconnu d'interface entre les différents acteurs du développement et les porteurs de projets.

Les GAL les plus autonomes se caractérisent par un niveau élevé de flexibilité face aux besoins locaux exprimés et paraissent être plus efficaces dans la relation aux clients. Cet indice est en cohérence avec les objectifs de la méthode LEADER.

Les questions liées aux circuits financiers semblent être plus prégnantes dans les Etats Membres ayant un niveau intermédiaire d'administration (régionale) qui a conduit, dans certains cas, à des problèmes de trésorerie et des difficultés considérables pour certains GAL, les empêchant parfois de fonctionner.

Les défaillances d'une activité de suivi structuré ont pu être constatées. Celles-ci ont réduit la possibilité des GAL de cibler leurs dépenses sur les priorités stratégiques de manière continue. Ces situations sont plus prononcées parmi les GAL à faible autonomie, mais même parmi les GAL à forte autonomie, ces défaillances sont significatives.

Recommandation

- Les procédures administratives visant à garantir la transparence et l'obligation de rendre des comptes sur les activités financières ne devraient pas entraver l'exécution du travail de développement des GAL ni exclure des acteurs locaux avec moins de capacités administratives de participer au programme.

Thème 7 (EQs 22, 23 et 24): Suivi et évaluation

A des fins d'évaluation, l'agrégation et la comparaison des données de suivi de LEADER+ à l'échelle européenne fut sérieusement compromise par une faiblesse systémique du système de renseignement des données. Un nombre important de GAL n'avait pas établi de tableaux de bord de suivi du processus de développement local. Ce fut un véritable casse-tête pour la conduite de l'évaluation lorsqu'il s'est avéré pratiquement impossible de faire l'inventaire des opérations mesure par mesure.

Les marges de progression dans ce domaine sont importantes afin d'étendre le suivi structuré de la mise en œuvre comme outil d'amélioration de la performance pour les stratégies de développement local. La présence différenciée des GAL plus autonomes en la matière suggère que le potentiel d'amélioration est réel et qu'il existe une relation entre le niveau de maturité des GAL et l'intégrité de la méthode LEADER. Les réseaux nationaux semblent avoir une place à prendre ici, en facilitant les échanges entre les GAL les plus autonomes et les autres et en fournissant de l'assistance technique, des formations et du conseil.

La dépendance forte de l'évaluation européenne par rapport aux évaluations formelles de chaque programme persiste. L'activité d'évaluation et de suivi au niveau GAL pourrait venir compléter ce niveau, mais à l'heure actuelle, l'exercice reste limité du fait du manque de ciblage et de cohérence dans les approches.

Globalement, le progrès en la matière reste relativement limité. La culture de l'évaluation ne semble pas s'être considérablement développée au niveau des GAL, et s'est principalement cantonnée à des démarches d'auto-évaluation.

Recommandations

- La capacité de LEADER à renforcer le capital social est cruciale toutefois il convient de prendre les mesures nécessaires pour adopter des approches et des méthodologies fiables afin d'évaluer une réussite ou un échec.

- Les GAL devraient mettre au point et utiliser des stratégies territoriales de haute qualité et dynamiques qu'ils pourraient suivre, mettre à jour et améliorer activement par une ré-

flexion et une révision continues ce qui conduirait à une augmentation de la culture de la responsabilité et de l'appartenance pour le processus d'amélioration constante.

- Renforcer la capacité d'évaluation, la prise de conscience, les structures, les ressources et l'engagement requièrent une gestion active et une réelle responsabilité à tous les niveaux. Il convient d'envisager l'évaluation comme partie intégrante de l'élaboration et de la programmation des politiques ce qui implique que l'évaluation finale des activités de LEADER devienne obligatoire.

Thème 8: Pôles d'excellence rurale / clusters d'activités

Les liens potentiels entre les priorités thématiques de LEADER+ et les Axes prioritaires 1, 2 et 3 des programmes actuels du FEADER furent explorés afin d'examiner la contribution de LEADER+ aux objectifs des programmes de développement rural en cours, et, plus largement, son rôle dans le processus de développement de "clusters". Bien que virtuellement aucun GAL n'ait décrit ses activités comme relevant de 'clusters', leur inscription dans des réseaux plus larges permettant d'ouvrir de nouvelles possibilités économiques était l'objectif affiché de 75% des GAL interrogés. Le nombre de GAL ayant été impliqué dans des activités proches de clusters peut s'illustrer par les 77 GAL – sur un total de 103 – se décrivant comme parties prenantes dans la création de nouveaux produits ou services, essentiellement par le courtage d'informations et la mise en relation entre différents partenaires. Le plus petit dénominateur commun de ces exemples réside dans le constat que les zones LEADER ont joué un rôle d'interface entre une perspective territorialisée et le monde des affaires, ou entre le patrimoine local et l'économie globale.

Les GAL pourraient être considérés comme des structures intermédiaires de soutien pour aider les petits projets à augmenter leurs revenus. Certains GAL ont favorisé, voire coordonné, l'émergence de nouvelles filières de production. La condition nécessaire semble toutefois d'avoir suffisamment confiance dans capital social au niveau local, même là où les initiatives minuscules et dispersées n'avaient jamais réussi à se maintenir dans la durée.

Recommandation

- Les territoires LEADER et les GAL doivent se mettre en relation de manière plus efficace avec un plus grand contexte de développement et tisser un réseau de relations avec les autres acteurs et intervenants. Les GAL devraient s'associer à des partenaires similaires et au développement analogue dans les régions urbaines et littorales pour des sujets tels que le changement climatique, la mobilité, les chaînes alimentaires, les fonctions du paysage, les biens publics et les autres aspects de la qualité de vie. Le développement d'activités d'assemblage (clusters) est fondé sur une telle échelle et de tels liens.

Introduction

This is the Final Deliverable of the ex post evaluation of LEADER+ commissioned by DG Agriculture and Rural Development from Metis GmbH in association with AEIDL (European Association for Information on Local Development) and CEU (Közép-európai Egyetem/Central European University).

The objectives of the ex post evaluation were to provide an overview of the utilisation of resources and the effectiveness and efficiency of the assistance and its impact in relation to eight themes and altogether 24 evaluation questions allocated to the themes[3]. It was expected to build on the previous programme level evaluations and their updates. However, in order to answer the specific evaluation questions, substantial fieldwork was required in the form of surveys, interviews and case studies.

The fieldwork revolved around four main tools. These were: a survey of 10% of all Local Action Groups (LAGs); a survey of Managing Authorities (MAs); interviews with National Network Units (NNUs) and ten case studies. The questionnaires provided a comprehensive picture of obstacles and factors of success. The patterns are quite similar across Member States and regions and the responses of the different bodies generally corroborated each other. It was felt that a larger number of interviewees would not have yielded much more relevant information. The case studies were found to be very useful sources of specific information and were used extensively in the answering of the evaluation questions.

The Final Deliverable is the culmination of the results of all phases of the research and includes the conclusions and recommendations as well as an executive summary and a synthetic summary. The report provides a short description of LEADER+ and of the LEADER+-type measures in Chapter 1. This is followed by an overview of the challenges met when trying to establish an inventory of the LEADER+ programmes and LEADER+-type measures in Chapter 2. The methodology and tools are presented in Chapter 3 and the answers to the Evaluation Questions in Chapter 4.

The answers are structured according to the Evaluation Questions. For each Evaluation Question a succinct answer is provided, and then the rationale of the Evaluation Question is outlined in a brief introduction. The findings are described in some detail and the conclusions are drawn for all the Evaluation Questions pertaining to each particular theme.

Chapter 5 contains the conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 6 includes the ten case studies. These were included in the main body of the report as they were considered to contain very useful and highly relevant details.

---

[3] Theme 1: Relevance and Community Added Value
Theme 2: The actions of LEADER+
Action 1: Integrated territorial rural development strategies of a pilot nature
Action 2: Support for cooperation between rural territories
Action 3: Networking
Theme 3: The implementation of the LEADER method
Theme 4: Impacts
Theme 5: Governance and rural citizenship
Theme 6: Managing, controlling and financing systems
Theme 7: Monitoring and evaluation
Theme 8: Rural activity/excellence clusters

1 LEADER+ and LEADER+ type measures

1.1 LEADER+

The Community Initiative LEADER+ was the third phase of the programme and designed to encourage the implementation of integrated, high quality and original strategies for sustainable development. It had a strong focus on partnership and networks promoting the exchange of experience. A budget of € 5 billion for the period 2000-2006 was provided, of which approximately € 2.1 billion was funded by the EAGGF Guidance section and the remainder by public and private contributions.

LEADER+ was structured around three actions, in addition to technical assistance.

Table 1. The actions of LEADER+

	million EUR	Share (%)
Action 1: Support for integrated territorial development strategies of a pilot nature based on a bottom-up approach	4.377,6	86,75
Action 2: Support for cooperation between rural territories	504,8	10,00
Action 3: Networking	68,7	1,36
Technical assistance	95,4	1,89

Implementation of **Action 1** was through LAGs selected in an open procedure based on the criteria laid down in the programmes. These included the rural nature of the territories, their homogeneity in physical, economic and social terms, and integrated and innovative development plans. Economic and social partners and associations had to make up at least 50 % of the local partnership, and the relevance and effectiveness of this partnership was also taken into account.

Action 2 applies to rural territories selected under Action 1 (integrated rural development strategies) and was implemented under the responsibility of a coordinating LAG. It expressly provided for the encouragement and support of cooperation between rural territories, and foresaw cooperation taking place between regions in the same Member State (interterritorial cooperation) and between at least two Member States (transnational cooperation). Cooperation was also possible with non-EU countries.

In the framework of **Action 3**, a National Network Unit existed in each Member State to collect, analyse and disseminate information at the national level on good practice; organise the exchange of experience and know-how; and provide technical assistance for cooperation (as above). Active participation in the network was mandatory for LEADER+ LAGs.

The priority themes laid down by the Commission were:

- making the best use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value of sites;
- improving the quality of life in rural areas;
- adding value to local products, in particular by facilitating access to markets for small production units via collective actions;
- the use of new know-how and new technologies to make products and services in rural areas more competitive.

Member States could propose additional themes in the light of their particular situation.

The following tables provide information on the LEADER+ LAGs per Member State (EU15), a financial overview and total public funding.

metis

AE DL CEU

Table 2. Overview of LAGs per Member State (EU15)

Member State	N° LAGs selected	Total area covered by LAGs (km²)	Percentage of National Territory	Population of the LAGs area	Percentage of the whole national population	Average LAG area population density (inhabitants / km²)
UK	57	115,802	47	4,186,879	7	65.9
Ireland	22	40,400	58	1,500,000	37	37.1
Finland	25	124,238	41	1,595,000	31	12.8
Sweden	12	56,700	13	703,000	8	12.3
Denmark	12	11,675	27	592,837	11	50.7
Germany	148	129,629	36	10,483,350	13	80.9
NL	28	16,980	50	1,889,000	11.6	111.25
Belgium	20	7,016	23	743,769	7	106
Luxembourg	4	1,403	54	87,436	19.5	62.3
France	140	435,265	69	7,832,000	12.7	18
Spain	145	251,186	50	5,921,318	14	24.6
Portugal	52	80,588	88	3,409,000	32.5	42.3
Italy	132	161,601	53	10,290,294	18	63.6
Austria	56	46,996	60	2,175,000	26.8	46.2
Greece	40	82,668	63	2,212,549	20	25.6
Total	**893**	**1,562,147**		**53,621,432**		**34.33**

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/pdf/country_sheets

metis

AEIDL   CEU

Table 3. LEADER+ budgets per Member State (EU15)

Member State	Indexed budget, 2000-2006 (EUR)	EU share (EUR)	Percentage of budget	Other public funds (EUR)	Percentage of budget	Private funds (EUR)	Percentage of budget
Austria	178,787,280	76,833,274	43	29,800,067	17	72,153,939	40
Belgium	35,261,361	16,180,784	46	16,180,784	46	2,899,793	8
Denmark	62,577,832	17,300,208	28	17,300,208	28	27,977,416	45
Finland	167,858,644	56,378,322	34	56,378,322	34	55,102,000	33
France	545,668,888	272,834,444	50	241,795,836	44	31,038,608	6
Germany	513,172,391	262,910,244	51	162,498,240	32	87,763,907	17
Greece	368,693,321	186,129,877	50	69,648,523	19	112,914,921	31
Ireland	110,017,890	48,745,878	44	25,351,012	23	35,921,000	33
Italy	490,413,493	287,996,869	59	202,416,624	41	0	0
Luxembourg	9,274,263	2,137,084	23	6,285,839	68	851,340	9
NL	206,878,444	83,864,854	41	66,931,579	32	56,082,011	27
Portugal	273,309,696	164,453,735	60	63,259,199	23	45,380,761	17
Spain	811,057,791	505,674,879	62	305,382,912	38	0	0
Sweden	147,841,575	41,215,200	28	59,737,500	40	46,888,875	32
UK	266,711,020	114,690,197	43	120,199,456	45	31,821,367	12
Total	**4,187,523,889**	**2,137,345,849**	**51**	**1,443,166,101**	**34**	**606,795,938**	**14**

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/pdf/country_sheets. The figures in the table above include a limited degree of error due to the effects of rounding and indexation when the source data are aggregated.

Table 4. Total public funding value and total EAGGF value[4]

Member State	Total public funding value (million EUR)	Total EAGGF value (million EUR)
Austria	6896.07	3208.10
Belgium	1003.66	749.10
Denmark	48.09	21.50
Finland	2987.49	1267.88
France	0.00	0.00
Germany	10614.85	5148.30
Greece	2686.40	993.40
Ireland	944.50	348.80
Italy	11300.13	4865.79
Luxumbourg	12849.40	4994.90
NL	227.33	83.76
Portugal	2007.60	1516.80
Spain	3021.80	1975.25
Sweden	23.97	10.50
UK	4635.00	1888.30
	59,246.29	**27,072.36**

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/countries/index_en.htm

Table 5. Total EAGGF Guidance expenditure EU15 (December 2010)[5]

Member State	Financial Plan	Commitments	Payments incl. Advances	Payment / Financial Plan
AT	76.833.274	76.833.274	72.991.610	95,0 %
BE	14.326.747	14.326.747	11.815.331	82,5 %
DE	255.874.055	255.874.054	242.303.749	94,7 %
DK	17.300.208	17.300.208	15.261.415	88,2 %
ES	497.080.370	497.080.370	466.336.568	93,8 %
FI	56.378.322	56.378.322	47.898.886	85,0 %
FR	259.909.081	259.909.081	246.913.626	95,0 %
GB	114.690.197	114.690.197	108.734.748	94,8 %
GR	186.129.877	186.129.877	176.823.383	95,0 %
IE	45.927.997	45.927.997	43.631.597	95,0 %
IT	281.553.068	281.553.068	248.408.314	88,2 %
LU	2.137.084	2.137.084	1.991.135	93,2 %
NL	81.787.596	81.787.596	77.037.758	94,2 %
PT	164.453.735	164.453.735	156.231.048	95,0 %
SE	41.215.200	41.215.200	39.154.439	95,0 %
Total	2.095.596.811	2.095.596.810	1.955.533.607	93,3 %

---

[4] We have assumed that in Belgium's figures there is a decimal point missing. Sardenga is missing from Italy. This table includes modulation Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is missing from Germany.

[5] This table presents the state of play at end November 2010 (not including all final payments, which are still pending for the majority of programmes)

1.2 LEADER+ type measures

The Accession Treaty (OJ L 236 23rd September 2003) provided that NMS could introduce their own LEADER+ type measures as part of the specific additional supports to help rural restructuring. Article 33 included measures to support the development of semi-subsistence farms, help create producer groups and help farmers comply with additional community requirements in animal welfare and occupational safety. Under article 33(f) and the heading LEADER+ type measures, it was provided that 'Support may be granted for measures which are related to the acquisition of skills intended to prepare rural communities to conceive and implement local rural development strategies'.

Article 33f (2) stated that support could be forthcoming for integrated rural development strategies drawn up by LAGs, to be constituted in the same manner as in the EU15 and set out in the Commission Notice No. 2000/C 139/05 of April 14 2000. However, there was an explicit qualification that 'support shall be limited to regions where there is already sufficient administrative capacity and experience of local rural development type approaches'. As with LEADER+ in the EU15, LAGs were encouraged to participate in inter-territorial and transnational co-operation, although practices as well as budgets allocated varied considerably between the countries.

The majority of countries joining the EU in 2004 chose to include LEADER+ type measures as part of their Structural Funds programming. Those that did not – Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus and Malta – claimed to have rural development initiatives that followed an area based partnership approach. Nevertheless, each of them declared that they had built up administrative capacity for administering the LEADER axis for the 2007-13 period. The other six countries that introduced LEADER+ type measures were the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, and Poland. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary included LEADER+ type measures in their rural development Operational Programme, whereas in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia LEADER+ type measures were part of the Single Programming Document.

Those **countries that did include LEADER+ type measures** provide differing justifications for its inclusion. All mentioned the importance of extending the participation of local actors in developing territorial plans, but some mentioned other considerations that reflected specific problems in the rural contexts. In Hungary, for example, the objective was that LEADER+ type measures could help in reversing the 'erosion of rural communities' and the generally low levels of co-operation between and within communities.

The **organisation of LEADER+ type measures** followed the same approach as in the EU15, although there was more emphasis on initial capacity building and on implementing pilot strategies. Action 1 focused on the Acquisition of Skills that would help lay the basis for promoting local development partnerships, introducing the LEADER approach and leading to the creation of LAGs. Action 2 provided support for the actual implementation of approved territorial development plans. The third and fourth Actions encouraged inter-territorial and transnational co-operation and networking for communication at European, national and regional levels. As with LEADER+ in the EU15, local development plans receiving support under Action 2 needed to show how they would take into account one or more of the four priority themes identified by the Commission – promoting the use of know-how and new technologies, improving the quality of rural life, adding value to local products and making the best use of natural and cultural resources. In some cases, Member States added additional objectives; in the Czech Republic, for example, the fifth priority area was the increase in the qualifications of rural inhabitants, in particular women, young people below 25 years of age and socially handicapped persons. In Hungary, specific and global objectives included job creation, retention and the improvement in the quality of local services.

In the first Action, support provided included funding studies of areas, training on how to encourage active participation and how to build representative partnerships. The animating bodies were

centrally accredited training bodies, consultancy groups, non-profit associations or foundations. They could also be local self-governing authorities. Animating bodies were responsible for identifying and equipping local individuals and groups with the skills that would enable them to start LAGs. In terms of the experience of promoting local development partnerships and eventually creating LAGs in the NMS, there were significant variations between countries. In Lithuania, in the first phase, 29 groups were given funds to help draw up territorial development plans, and in the second phase, 10 groups received funds for implementation. In Latvia, 11 local development strategies were created in the first phase, whilst in the second phase, 17 LAGs were selected for implementing their strategies. In the Czech Republic, there were two nationally funded LEADER+ type measures, the first managed by the Ministry of Agriculture, the second by the Ministry of Regional Development. From the 30 groups that applied to have their plans funded, ten were selected in 2004. In Estonia, the selection of the training bodies for carrying out Action One was not complete until June 2005 and LAGs themselves were not chosen until January 2007.

In terms of themes that were preferred by LAGs in the NMS, promoting improvements in the quality of rural life, followed by development of natural and local resources were the most popular in the Czech Republic. In Poland, measures that aimed to develop natural and cultural resources were the preferred theme, followed by improving the quality of rural life. The latter was the favourite also in Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. In Hungary, LAGs were split between improving the quality of life, developing local products and developing natural and cultural resources. The theme that attracted the lowest number of adherents was the use of new technologies and know how, scoring highest in Poland with 45 out of 150 LAGs but only one in Latvia and Lithuania combined.

In most countries, the structure of administration emphasised the central role of the Ministry of Agriculture within implementation support coming from National Paying Agencies under their supervision. In Hungary for example, the Rural Development Programmes Department within the Ministry of Agriculture had responsibility for selecting LAGs, approving territorial plans, and providing technical assistance and advice. The Agricultural and Rural Development Agency had responsibility for financing the project phase. In Poland, LAGs were selected by the Foundation of Assistance Programs for Agriculture, which was the implementing agency for the Ministry of Agriculture. They gave approval for any projects included in the LAGs territorial development plan, although the power to select individual projects was transferred to LAGs for the 2007-13 period. In the Czech Republic by contrast, once a LAG had been selected and their strategy approved, the choice of which projects to approve was theirs, with the qualification that they then submit ones chosen for approval by the Ministry of Agriculture. Estonia followed a similar path with the LAGs identifying projects that conformed to their approved plan, and then submitting selected projects for central verification.

The budgets that were allocated to LEADER+ type measures in the 2004-06 period varied from the highest of just over 30 million Euros in Poland to the lowest of 1.84 million in Estonia. There were significant variations in the amount of funds that were allocated to each of the two phases. In Latvia, for example, out of a total of just over 3 million Euros under a quarter was allocated for the first phase and the rest set aside for implementation of the pilot strategies. In Lithuania, 2.7 million Euros were allocated for the period with a full 60% being spent in the first phase. Similarly in Estonia, the preference was to invest in initial acquisition of skills with 70% of the total funds being allocated to the first part of the programme. In Hungary where the budget was almost as high as Poland (25 million), the vast majority of this was earmarked for the implementation of strategies, and, unlike some of the other NMS, significant proportions of the total funds were reserved for the development of a communication network.

The implementation of LEADER+ type measures supported co-operation and networking between rural areas in a number of ways. In Poland, it helped improve the capacity of an informal network of rural NGOs – the Polish Rural Forum for the Animation of Rural Areas and many of the original civic members were able to establish themselves at LAGs. In the Czech Republic, the National

metis

Rural Observatory was established in 2005 to link LAGs, provide support and training and otherwise promote rural development issues. Both bodies were informal rather than formal information and support providers. In Estonia by contrast, following a public tender, a National Network Unit was created in 2005 to facilitate co-operation between rural areas. In Hungary, there were two LEADER associations encouraging co-operation and partnerships amongst rural areas, one was centrally funded, following selection after tender, the other was a civic association.

Table 6. Synoptic table of LEADER+ type measures in the EU10

	Poland	Estonia	Lithuania	Latvia	Hungary	Czech Republic
Total public budget allocated in Action 1 - Acquisition of Skills (in EUR) –	5 575 000	1 290 700	1 628 800	696 700	400 000	1 530 000
Number of LAGs supported in Action 2 - Implementation of Territorial Plans	150	3	10	17	70	10
Total public budget allocated (in EUR) for Action 2	24 870 000	553 200	1 085 800	2 347 700	21 200 000	5 000 000
Total public budget allocated to Action 3 (in EUR)	None	None	None	None	1 400 000	None
Total public budget allocated to Action 4 (in EUR)	None	None	None	None	2 000 000	None
National Network Unit	Yes, Consortium led by Foundation of Assistance Programmes for Agriculture	Yes, LEADER Information Centre run by Consortium of the Institute for Rural Development and Partnership NGO Estonian National Rural Network Unit started during implementing period of Leader type measure	No, but functions carried out by Centre of LEADER programme and Farmers' Training Methodology established within the Ministry of Agriculture	No	Yes, National LEADER Center	No
Informal body recognised as carrying out the (related) functions to the NNU	Polish Rural Forum for the Animation of Rural Areas	NGO Estonian Village Movement Kodukant	Union of Rural Communities of Lithuania and Informal LAG network (2004)	Latvian Rural Forum	Hungarian LEADER Public Association	National Rural Observatory
Total public budget (in EUR)	30 440 000	1 843 900	2 714 600	3 044 400	25 000 000	6 530 000

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/memberstates/index_en.htm

metis

AEIDL   CEU

1.3 The LEADER method, a specific evaluation challenge

Designing the evaluation approach requires a thorough understanding of the core elements of the European multi-tier programming system and the intervention logic of the three LEADER+ actions. The following figure shows the intervention logic of LEADER+ in the wider evaluation context. This model is based on the basic intervention logic as depicted in EC documents and the improved model drawn up for the EU synthesis of mid-term evaluations. It takes into account the enhanced focus on capacity development for local governance and its interlinkages with multi-level governance.

Figure 1. The intervention logic of LEADER+ and of LEADER+ type measures in the wider evaluation context
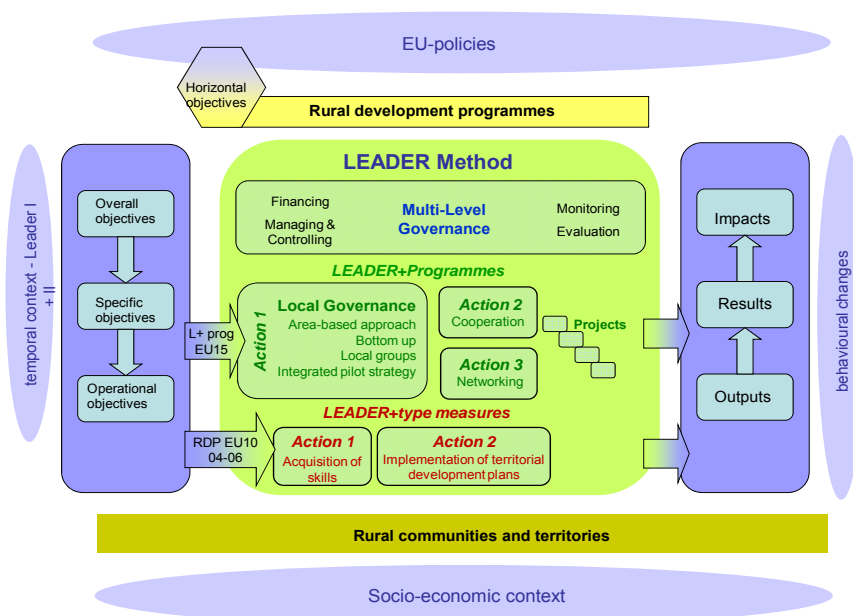
Figure 1 shows the relations between objectives and impacts (blue boxes at the left and right side) as well as the actual intervention in form of LEADER+ programmes (green colour) and LEADER+ type measures (red colour) which get realised through the input of human and financial resources, mediated by multi-level governance and translated into actions and projects. The specificities of the LEADER method:

- developing local governance capacities
- area-based approach
- bottom-up approach
- the local group
- the integrated (= multi-sectoral) pilot (= innovative) strategy
- cooperation
- networking

are essential components of programme implementation, along with the administrative functions of financing, managing, controlling, monitoring and evaluating.

The LEADER specificities should be regarded as ideal types, whose degree of fulfilment may vary from one programme to another as well as from one local partnership to another. Although it is doubtful that the majority of LEADER programmes and LAGs have implemented all these features to full extent, they serve as a yardstick against which the degree of implementation of the LEADER method and the benefits presumably related to it can be assessed.

The two LEADER+ type measures – acquisition of skills and implementation of territorial development plans – can be seen as the incipient steps of what should grow into a full-fledged LEADER approach, as characterised by the above mentioned LEADER specificities. The third and fourth action (territorial co-operation and networking) have not been activated in the EU10, although in some countries (e.g. Poland) actions 1 and 2 have been also used to build up networking and co-operation structures.

Regardless of the programme context – LEADER+ type measures or LEADER+ – the LEADER method introduces a systemic perspective into the programme logic which does not allow constructing linear cause-effect relationships for assessing the performance of single measures or the programme as a whole. To put it simply: in 'conventional' programmes the core process (supposed to produce the policy added value), consists of the performance process alone. In LEADER or LEADER-type measures and programmes, co-operation and learning processes are also considered as core processes.

Although social capital is implicitly addressed in 'conventional' rural development measures (for example in measures addressing the quality of life in rural areas), the outcomes of interventions are hardly assessed in these terms. The intervention logic links programme support with defined rural development objectives (e.g. increased income and new jobs, diversification of the rural economy, environmental improvement). This means that the core processes of 'conventional' programmes focus solely and directly on these objectives. The 'core process' of the programme is its 'performance', i.e. the efficient and effective implementation of measures and project support.

Figure 2. 'Conventional' policy delivery: Focus on programme performance in view of rural development objectives
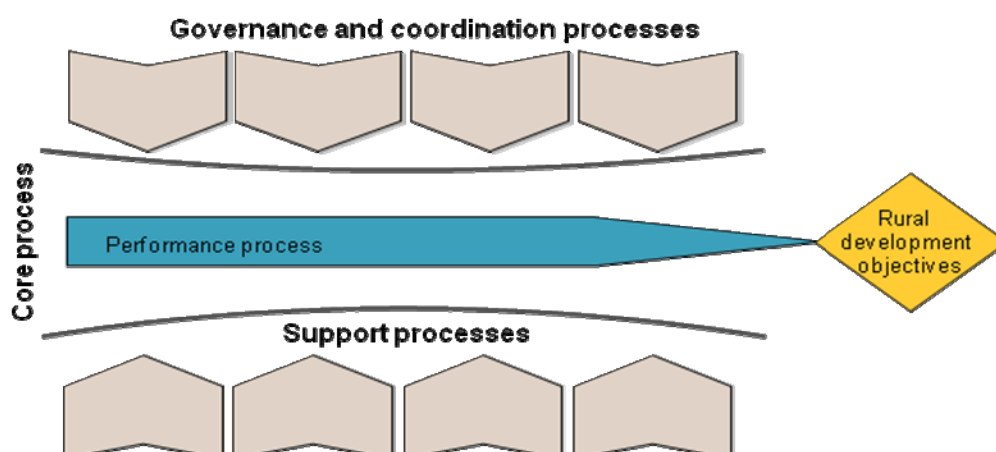
Figure 3 depicts the performance process accompanied by two types of 'horizontal' activities:

- governance and coordination processes: they embed the programme into the wider policy context and into the Member State's regulatory framework, whereas
- support processes mainly refer to technical assistance activities.

Conversely, LEADER introduces integration, participation, networking, right up to 'local governance capacities' as rural development objectives. They can be put as constitutive elements of what is understood as 'social capital' in the widest sense. Among a host of definitions, that of Pierre Bourdieu frames the use of the term in this context quite well:

According to Bourdieu, social capital is *'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition'.* Social capital can be attributed to individual persons (e.g. in terms of number and density of social contacts); however it is an intrinsically collective property, as networks and institutions cannot be 'owned' by individuals. They are by definition 'relational goods'. James Coleman defines social capital as *'anything that facilitates individual or collective action, generated by networks of relationships, reciprocity, trust, and social norms'.*

The LEADER approach addresses the enhancement of social capital as an objective in its own right, and furthermore its intervention logic presupposes an additional knock-on effect on the achievement and sustainability of rural development objectives. According to the LEADER method, the 'process landscape' features three core processes which are inter-related in non-linear feedback relationships (see figure 3).

Figure 3. Policy delivery according to the LEADER method: focus on programme performance, co-operation and learning processes in view of rural development objectives
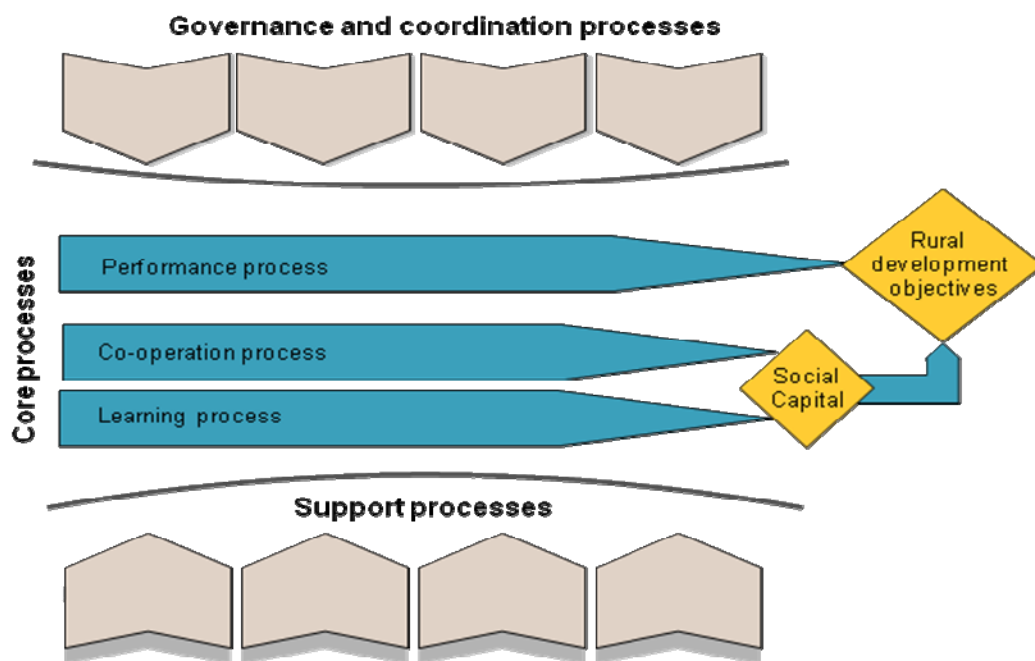
This is the specific challenge in evaluating LEADER+ and LEADER+ type measures.

2 Inventory of LEADER+ programmes & LEADER+-type measures

2.1 Background

The **inventory of the LEADER+ programmes and of LEADER+-type measures**, was designed to include the actions implemented, the respective financial allocations, the number of LAGs selected, the priorities set up in the local development plans, the projects applied (detailed by priority, and by action: pilot, transnational and inter-territorial cooperation), and the beneficiaries addressed. The inventory tool was designed to inform a chapter of this report describing the characteristics of the LEADER+ programmes and LEADER+-type measures and how the LEADER+ budget was used and providing a reference base for the wider analysis and the development of relevant charts and graphics illustrating key common and differentiating characteristics, features and trends. The inventory tool proved impossible to complete on the basis of the available data and it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to resolve the issues underlying this. The difficulty in compiling this basic data set at the programme level appears to represent a fundamental flaw in the system. The issues which caused the difficulties in completing the inventory are of direct relevance to LEADER+ Monitoring and Evaluation at local, regional, national and EU levels. Further reference to this is therefore made in theme 7 of this report (in chapter 4.7). The following sections of this chapter provide a description of the methodological approach pursued and the resultant findings.

2.2 Methodological approach

The methodological approach applied to the preparation of this inventory was to screen relevant available information sources with help of a Data Collection Grid tool for which a draft specification was provided in the tender. As a first step in this task a review was undertaken of the availability, completeness and reliability of these data sources as provided to the evaluators by the Commission with the intention of ensuring that the full programme period is covered and that any gaps are identified. The main data sources anticipated included the Annual Implementation Reports and Closure Reports and the CAP-IDIM/LEADER+ Monitoring Indicator Database fields in order to ensure consistency with the Commission working document, 'Common indicators for monitoring LEADER+ programming 2000-2006'.

2.3 Initial findings

2.3.1 Availability of documents

In undertaking the initial review it was immediately apparent from a first sift of the material that there were a significant number of gaps in the reports provided. Further investigation highlighted that a large proportion of documents were incorrectly or inconsistently titled. Documents were given titles to fit a consistent and structured framework and were reorganised on that basis. A summary spreadsheet was then developed which detailed what was available for each year of the programme. This initial spreadsheet provided a structured basis for filling the identified gaps and this work was developed progressively over the period of the evaluation. The summary of the final spreadsheet is provided below in table 7.

Table 7. Overview of available reports (CAP IDIM and AIR) in the EU15 Member States

		Year of CAP IDIM and Annual Implementation Report (AIR)																
	EU15	2001		2002		2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		Final Reports
Total No. of Programmes	MS	CAP IDEM	AIR	CAP IDEM	AIR	CAP IDEM	AIR	CAP IDEM	AIR	CAP IDEM	AIR	CAP IDEM	AIR	CAP IDEM	AIR	CAP IDEM	AIR	
1	AT			1		1		1		1		1	1		1			
2	BE	1		1		2		2		2		2		1	2	1	1	1
14	DE			8		14		14		14		14	1	5	2	7	1	7
1	DK			1		1		1		1		1		1	1	1	1	
18	ES			11		17		18	4	18	7	18	8	2	8	11	5	12
1	FI		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			
1	FR					1		1		1	1	1		1	1			
1	GK			1		1		1		1		1		1				
1	IE					1		1		1		1						1
22	IT	1		20		22		22		22		22		7	7	2	2	3
1	LU					1		1		1		1		1				1
4	NL			3		4		4		1		1	1	1	2		1	
1	PT		1	1		1		1		1	1	1	1	1	1			
1	SE			1		1		1		1		1		1	1	1		1
4	GB	1		3		4		4		4		4		3	1			2
	Total	3	2	52	1	72	1	73	5	70	10	70	13	26	28	23	11	28

metis

For the six NMS which implemented LEADER+ type measures a single table was used containing a more limited list of common indicators mainly focusing on skills acquisition: number of application and financial indicators for studies, information and training actions, creation of partnerships, elaboration of strategies and other preparatory tasks There are gaps in the availability of reporting information in relation to these and marked differences in the scale and scope of the implementation of these measures between these Member States. In these Member States the evaluators have therefore utilised teams of national experts to identify and collate available information. The results of this were of limited value for the following reasons:

- Information was only made available for four of the six countries;

- In the four Member States where information was available this is rather limited and lacks consistency between MS. The available data therefore neither lent themselves to aggregation nor did they represent a good fit with the inventory tool;

In some MS it was necessary to approach the LAGs directly as no relevant data appeared to be held centrally.

2.3.2 Intervention Codes

The investigation of intervention codes was considered to represent a practical way to highlight where the highest proportions of spend were targeted through LEADER+. In reporting the programme MS were asked to assign the amount of realised expenditure and number of projects to approx 60 intervention codes. The reports produced in the CAP IDIM tables were completed for the year the report was submitted only, i.e. the figures were not cumulative.

In order to get a reliable result it would therefore have been necessary to produce a table for each MS showing the spent and projects over the 8 years of LEADER+ expenditure. This would have required data on 60 intervention codes x 73 programmes x 8 years. This became slightly more complicated when some of the programmes entered cumulative figures with 2008 data. The potential to compile and aggregate these data was further complicated by the identified gaps in the CAP IDIM reports by year for each MS and the inconsistencies evident in their completion. It was therefore agreed not to proceed with this.

2.3.3 Reference years of the reports

Following consideration of the available material it was decided that the inventory should be collated on the basis of the latest available CAP IDIM report for each region and country. For National Programmes this is quite straightforward but is rather more problematic for the MS that have multiple regional programmes where in order to show the maximum impact the latest CAP IDIM report has been used for each region also. This has resulted in the national data presented comprising regional data from different years. This nevertheless appears to be the best possible way to show the maximum impact. It does however make 'like for like' comparison between different MS impossible. The latest year for which these data are sufficiently reliable for 'like for like' comparison is 2004.

Table 7 provides an overview of what was available in total by the end of the updating activity. From this it can be seen that

- **the number of closure reports available is extremely limited** and although more Annual Implementation Reports are available these still represent only a small proportion of the possible total;

- the **CAP IDIM reports are more generally available** but there are still gaps and inconsistencies e.g. there is considerable variation between Member States with regional programmes in the consistency of reporting by years;
- the only years for which there is **full coverage of all programmes are 2003 and 2004**, Years 2005 and 2006 are now complete with the exception of 3 Dutch programmes, the data for these years have not been validated however and present a certain level of errors for some programmes. 2004, the latest fully validated year is too early in the programme to be of value for the final evaluation as the data to be considered must include cumulative figures;
- availability of all classes of reports in 2007, 2008 and 2009 is limited.

The inventory was amended in accordance with the decision to drop the intervention codes and to use the latest reports for each operational programme. The final version included:

- The split of funding by source;
- LAG territories including Natura 2000 zones;
- The presence of environmental NGOs as members of the LAG;
- The participation of economic actors as members of the LAG; and
- The participation of women in the LAG at the decision making level.

Further improvements were made with a view to adding value to the tool as a resource for the evaluation. Figures for numbers of beneficiaries were not captured on a cumulative basis in the reports examined, additional tables were included in each sheet to summarise these data from the annual reports.

Comment boxes were also added to the tool in order that any anomalies or points of interest or of wider relevance which became evident in the data capture process were not lost and were highlighted for the later analysis.

The inventory comprised a 'summary page' presenting the aggregate data for each Member State and individual 'country-pages' presenting the data for each programme within each Member State.

In completing the tool it was clear that there was a need to interpret or exclude some data which were clearly inconsistent, inconsistencies were more evident in countries with regionalised programmes. Only those data which were clearly consistent or, where there was a clearly understandable error or misinterpretation such as in order of magnitude which could be corrected were to be included. The extent of this work was however outwith the scope of the evaluation and the available resources.

Further explanation of the processes which were employed within DG Agriculture and Rural Development is provided at Theme 7 of Chapter 4.

3 Methodology

3.1 The Objective and Evaluation Questions

The objectives of the ex post evaluation are to provide an overview of the utilisation of resources and the effectiveness and efficiency of the assistance and its impact and to draw conclusions regarding policy on economic and social cohesion. It also had the aim of looking at the factors contributing to the success or failure of implementation and the achievements and results, including their sustainability.[6]

The key approach in the Commission's evaluation strategy was to provide common evaluation questions (with judgement criteria for the MTE) across the programmes in accordance with the recommendation of paragraph 34 of the Commission Notice to the Member States of 14 April 2000 laying down guidelines for the Community initiative for rural development (LEADER+).

The Evaluation Questions are listed in table 8.

Table 8. The evaluation questions

Theme 1: Relevance and Community added value		E.Q. 1: to what extent have LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) contributed to the achievement of Community and national/regional social, environmental and economic priority objectives for rural development?	E.Q. 2: to what extent have LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) contributed to supporting broader Community objectives, including Lisbon and Göteborg priorities?	E.Q. 3: to what extent have LEADER+-type measures prepared the NMS for an effective and efficient management of territorially based, integrated and participative forms of rural development?	
Theme 2: The actions of LEADER+	Action 1: Integrated territorial rural development strategies of a pilot nature	E.Q. 4: to what extent have LEADER+ programmes and LEADER+-type measures promoted and developed complementarity between actors in rural development at the local level through a bottom-up approach and an integrated pilot strategy?	E.Q 5: to what extent has the pilot nature of the strategies fostered innovation in the Community rural areas (e.g. in terms of emergence of new products and services, better use of indigenous potential, combination of economic sectors traditionally separated, original forms of organisation and involvement of the local population etc.) ?	E.Q. 6: what have been the most recurrent factors of success and/or problems/critical points positively or negatively influencing the design and the implementation of innovative strategies under the LEADER+ framework?	
	Action 2: Support for cooperation between rural territories	E.Q. 7: to what extent have cooperation activities contributed to reach the necessary critical mass for the implementation of effective territorial-based development projects?	E.Q 8: to what extent have cooperation activities encouraged the transfer of information, good practices and know-how between rural areas in the field of rural development?	E.Q. 9: to what extent have cooperation activities strengthened the territorial cohesion and integration across the European Union and the integration with neighbouring countries?	E.Q. 10: what have been the most recurrent factors of success and/or problems/critical points positively or negatively influencing interterritorial and transnational cooperation under the LEADER framework?

---

[6] Article 43 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/99

	Action 3: Networking	E.Q. 11: to what extent have national networks and the LEADER Observatory supported and facilitated cooperation between rural territories and the transfer of information, good practices and know-how between rural areas in the field of rural development?	E.Q. 12: what are the main lessons learnt, critical points, good practices and useful recommendations that can be drawn from the LEADER experience, in particular in view of the implementation of the National and European Rural Networks for Rural Development set up under articles 67 and 68 of Council Regulation EC 1698/2005?		
Theme 3: The implementation of the LEADER method		E.Q. 13: to what extent has the implementation of the LEADER method promoted a multi-sectoral and integrated development of the rural areas of the Community?	E.Q.14: to what extent has the implementation of the LEADER method promoted a more efficient use of endogenous (physical, human, environmental) resources in the Community rural areas?		
Theme 4: Impacts		E.Q. 15: to what extent have LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) enhanced job opportunities in the Community rural areas?	E.Q. 16: to what extent have LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) enhanced activities for women and young people in the Community rural areas?	E.Q. 17: to what extent have LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) contributed to fostering the economic, environmental and social capital of the Community rural areas?	
Theme 5: Governance and rural citizenship		E.Q. 18: to what extent have LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) enhanced local governing capacities effectively promoting territorial-based forms of rural development and the participation of rural actors in the development process?	E.Q. 19: to what extent have LEADER+-type measures enhanced the capacities of rural communities to conceive and implement local rural development strategies?		
Theme 6: Managing, controlling and financing systems		E.Q. 20: to what extent have the arrangements for the management and financing which were set up by the authorities, the administrators and the local partners helped maximise the impact of the LEADER+ programmes and LEADER+-type measures?	E.Q. 21: to what extent have the managing, controlling and financing systems which were set up by the authorities, the administrators and the local partners ensured an efficient use of public and private funds under the LEADER+ programmes and LEADER+-type mea-sures? Are there exam-ples of good practices in this respect?		

metis

AE DL   C E U

Theme 7: Monitoring and evaluation	E.Q. 22: to what extent have the systems set up by the Member States for the monitoring of LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) ensured a comprehensive and relevant set of data for evaluation purposes?	E.Q. 23: to what extent has the evaluation of LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) contributed to fostering evaluation capacities, and the ownership of the evaluation process in the rural areas, and to improving the quality of the programmes?	E.Q. 24: to what extent has the eva-luation of LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) promoted innovative approaches to the evaluation of area-based forms of rural development? Are there examples of good practices in this respect (e.g. permanent or periodical self-evaluations at LAG level, other forms of participatory eva-luations, innovative data collection systems for evaluation, etc)?	
Theme 8: Rural activity/excellence clusters	Excellence clusters will be identified in relation to activities developed by the LAG around areas of work reflecting local needs and priorities, for which the application of the LEADER method has provided a concrete added value by pooling local resources within an integrated partnership.			

This ex-post evaluation at Community level was expected to build to a large extent on the previous programme level evaluations and their updates. Therefore the guidelines for the LEADER+ evaluation[7] which constituted the basis for the national, regional and network programme evaluations, provided a relevant basis also for this ex-post evaluation. The guidelines propose an evaluation based on the intervention logic defining the relations between objectives and impacts.

---

[7] EC (2002): Guidelines for the evaluation of LEADER+ programmes, European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, Document VI/43503/02/Rev.1

Figure 4. Relations between objectives and impacts in the programming cycle[8]
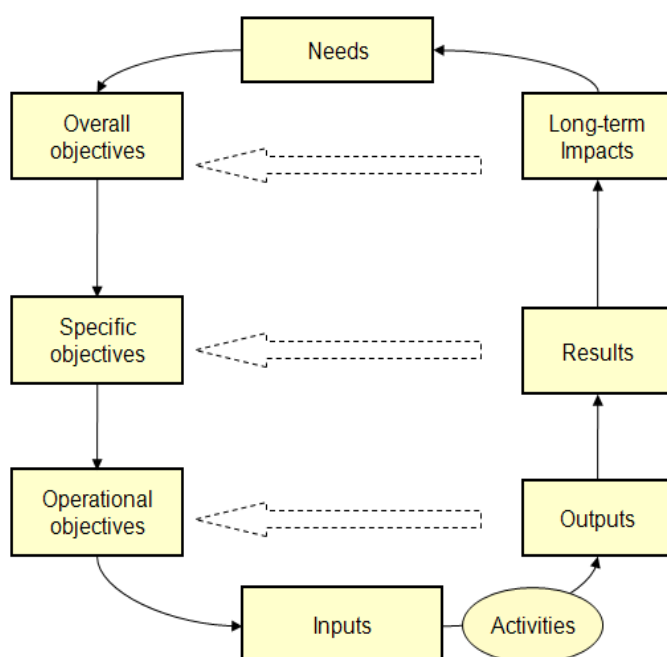
The ex-post evaluation focuses in particular on the results and impacts of the programmes. The reconstruction of the links between the inputs, outputs, results and impacts of the programme (figure 4) is called the 'intervention logic' and shows how assistance generates impacts in beneficiary areas.

3.2 The intervention logic of LEADER+ and LEADER+ type measures: the matrix for the evaluation methodology

The intervention logic of LEADER+ and LEADER+ type measures as outlined in chapter 1.4 (see fig. 1) constitutes the premise on which the evaluation methodology is built. In the following figure 5 the eight evaluation themes and respective evaluation questions are put in relation to the intervention logic serving as reference matrix for analysing the 24 evaluation questions.

---

[8] The (perceived) needs of rural areas are the starting point of a virtual cycle. The governance system prepares an intervention in response to these needs, formulated as overall objectives, in harmony with general development aims expressed at EU and Member States' level. These objectives originate from the governance context. Specific and operational objectives are defined by breaking down the overall objectives, and by translating them into activities which can be implemented in rural areas. In the course of implementation, the governance-born input stimulates local input (local finance, voluntary work etc.). Projects are put in place, constituting the direct output of the activities. The results will certainly be strongly influenced by the specificities of the rural area, but should be, as far as possible, be attributed to a specific intervention. Finally, long-term impacts are expected to emerge and are influenced by local effect chains and many other factors from inside and outside the area.

Figure 5. Locating the evaluation themes in the LEADER context
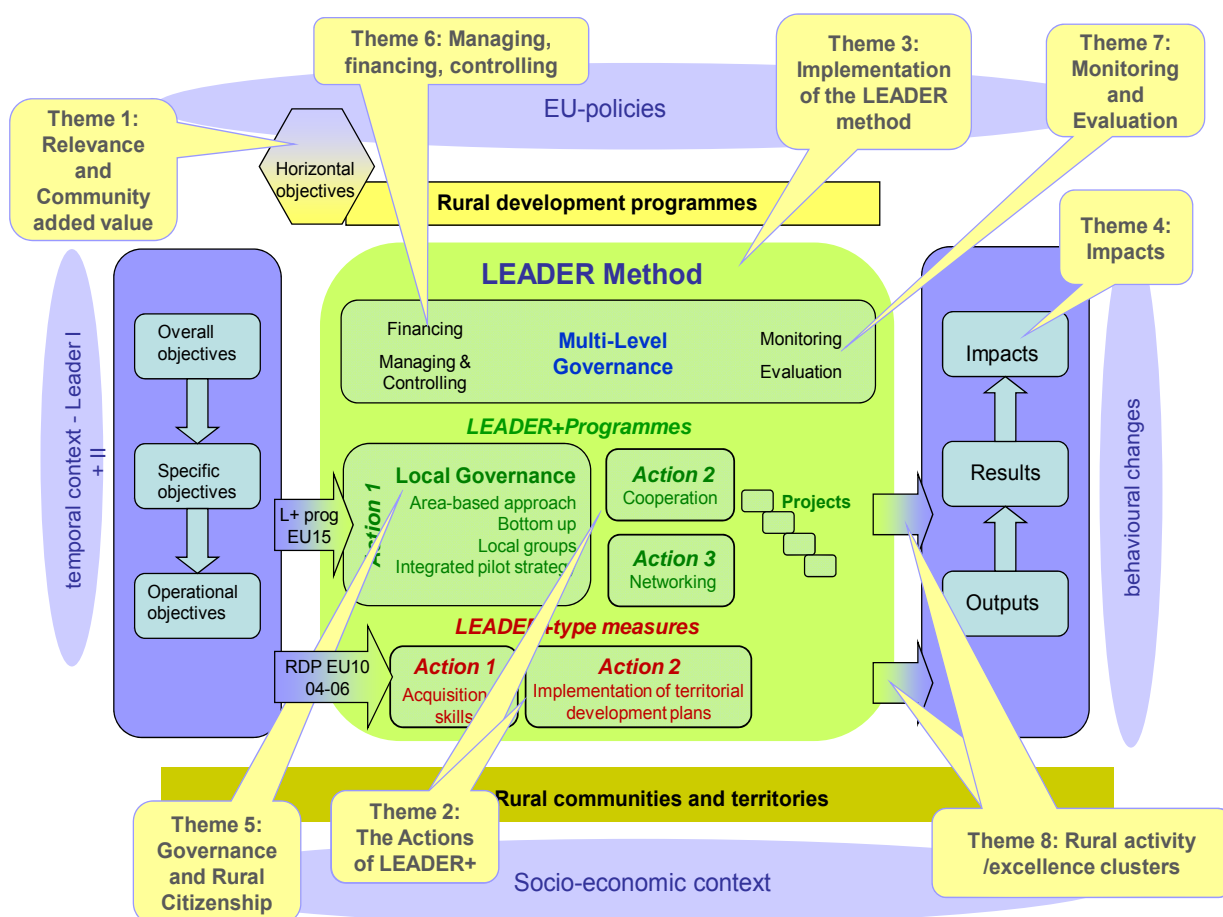
The evaluation questions (see table 9) refer to the following elements of the programme cycle:

Table 9. Relation between themes and evaluation questions

Theme	Evaluation Questions
Theme 1: Relevance and Community added value	1, 2, 3
Theme 2: The actions of LEADER+	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
Theme 3: The implementation of the LEADER method	13, 14
Theme 4: Impacts	15, 16, 17
Theme 5: Governance and rural citizenship	18, 19
Theme 6: Managing, controlling and financing systems	20, 21
Theme 7: Monitoring and evaluation)	22, 23, 24
Theme 8: Rural activity / excellence clusters	-

Enhanced social capital as a basis for economic development

The LEADER initiative allows for a broad range of investments, those considered as 'hard' or 'soft'. Most people will agree that LEADER is, compared to mainstream programmes, more often used to enhanced 'soft factors', such as access to know-how, increased operational skills, or forging networking relationships and institutional ties. Most of these things can be subsumed under the notion of 'social capital' (see chapter 1.3). The effectiveness of the LEADER initiative is assumed to lie in what is called the 'LEADER method' or 'approach'.

Referring to the conceptual framework developed in chapter 1.3, the LEADER method can be defined as the combined application of a number of operational principles, which are characterised as the 'specific features of LEADER' or 'LEADER specificities' in the literature[9] They provide orientations on HOW to act, rather than a vision of WHAT to achieve. They build on the presumption that

- only the change of behaviour and interaction patterns of key actors and stakeholders will lead to lasting changes in the social and economic fabric of rural areas;
- the operational principles of the LEADER method introduce alternative patterns of interaction which may be assimilated and become new individual and collective beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, routines, relations, institutions and rules;
- these new beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, routines, relations, institutions and rules constitute an enrichment of the social capital of the area into which the positive effects of technological, organisational and other types of innovation get encoded.

This means that in addition to the programme objectives there are objectives related to social capital which should be achieved by implementing the LEADER method. To measure these achievements in LEADER+, a distinct evaluation approach was required. It was assumed that changes in social capital could be assessed by exploring changes in mindset, behaviours, relationships and organisational capacities of key stakeholders:

- the beneficiaries (project owners)
- the territorial partnership (LAG and related structures, e.g. regional networks)
- the implementing administration (national/regional authorities in Member States) and related intermediary structures, e.g. national networks.

The term social capital is used here in its widest sense. In the literature, a distinction is often made between social, cultural and institutional capital, notwithstanding the difficulty in drawing clear linesbetween these. For instance, the Working Paper 'Capturing impacts of LEADER and of measures to improve Quality of Life'[10] makes the distinctions presented in table 10:

---

[9] Assessing the added value of the LEADER approach. Rural innovation – Dossier of the European LEADER II Observatory Nr 4 – AEIDL, June 1999.

[10] Produced in July 2010 by the Helpdesk of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development to provide guidance for evaluators in fulfilling the requirements of the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF) accompanying the Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013.

metis

Table 10. Dimensions of social capital

Impact category (Working Paper for CMEF 2007-13)	Judgement criterion	Semantic space of social capital such as used in this evaluation
Social capital	Local identity and coherence (= bonding capital)	yes
	Networking and openness (= bridging capital)	yes
Cultural capital	Cultural rural amenities	partly
	Valorisation of cultural assets	partly
Multi-level governance	Level of decentralisation	yes
	Coordination between different levels of governance	yes
Local governance	Quality of governance	yes
	Partnership composition and empowerment	yes

Table 10 also shows that the concept of social capital used here includes institutional capital and, at least in parts, the notion of cultural capital.

Following these considerations, figure 6 depicts a simplified version of the intervention logic (see figure 5) applicable to LEADER+ and LEADER+ type measures. The changes in social capital are expected to contribute added value to the output, and even more to the results. Accordingly the contribution of the results to achieving the overall objective (impacts) should be significantly enhanced.

Figure 6. The simplified intervention logic of LEADER+ and of LEADER+ type measures
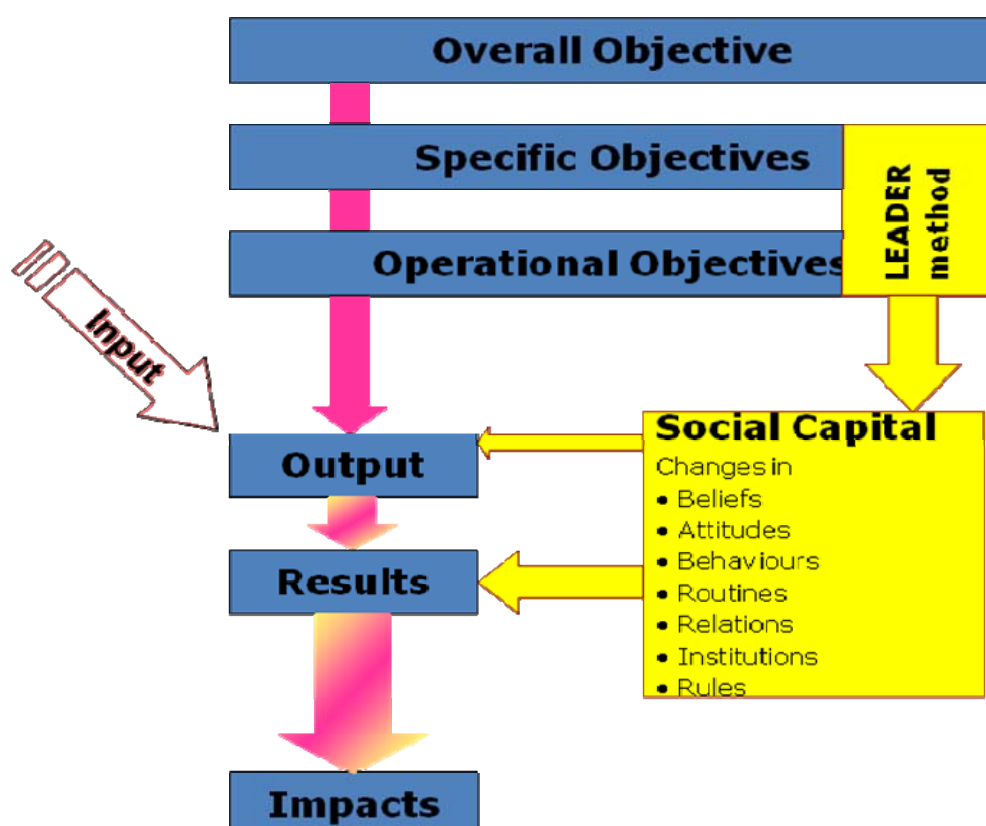
Implementing the LEADER method does not only mean investing in the natural, human and economic territorial capital of the area. It also means investing in its social capital, through aiming at changing beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, routines, relations, institutions and rules. These changes can be regarded both as outputs and – should they persist – as results. They somewhat blur the distinct elements along the result chain.

Processes of social interaction can be observed and validated from the very beginning. This is an advantage, as possible deviations from expected results (e.g. if the outputs are not used by the beneficiaries in the intended ways) may be already recognised at an early stage. However, the blurred distinction between implementation, output and results also carries with it a disadvantage in that the assessment always remains somewhat preliminary: evaluation in progress. That is the reason why process monitoring addressing the added value of LEADER+ should be firmly embedded in ongoing evaluation. Assessing the impact of LEADER+ in one summative evaluation would belie the complexity of this approach.

The evaluation questions address all the described components of social capital, although not in a systematic way. By translating them into appropriate judgement criteria and (mostly qualitative) indicators the evaluation team aimed to advance towards a comprehensive assessment of the LEADER method, and hence of the Community Initiative LEADER+ and the LEADER+ type measures of the RDPs of the EU10.

3.3 Key terms, judgement criteria and indicators for all evaluation questions

3.3.1 The review of the evaluation questions

It is the ultimate aim of this evaluation to assess the LEADER+ programmes by answering all evaluation questions based on appropriate judgement criteria and indicators which can be sufficiently supported by reliable data and which are capable of capturing and assessing the full range of intended impacts of the LEADER+ programmes.

In order to identify the data sources (e.g. available evaluation reports, external secondary sources or through primary means, such as surveys), it was necessary to carefully review the evaluation questions and define strong judgement criteria and reliable indicators.

3.3.2 Defining the link between evaluation questions, judgement criteria and indicators

For the exercise of defining judgement criteria and indicators, we followed the Commission's recommendations for developing criteria and indicators, as indicated for the Common Evaluation Questions during the mid-term-evaluation. In Annex III of the Guidelines for the Evaluation of LEADER+ Programmes (STAR-Document: VI/43503/02-Rev.1) the process of linking evaluation questions with judgment criteria and appropriate indicators is demonstrated.

To accomplish this task with due regard for the principle of continuity, we screened the corresponding grid from the synthesis of LEADER+ mid-term evaluations and transferred as many items as possible into the new grid. In a second step, the existing judgement criteria and indicators were adapted wherever necessary and the gaps, specifically concerning new questions, were filled accordingly. The updated intervention logic and its strengthened focus on social capital were duly taken into account.

Lastly, the existing list of key terms (also from the synthesis of LEADER+ mid-term evaluations) was revised and complemented by additional terms. The definitions of key terms were also updated in the glossary.

The complete grid, including all judgement criteria and indicators serves as the matrix for the development of tools for the desk research, LAG survey, interviews with MAs and NNUs and the case studies. An effort was made to ensure that all evaluation questions were covered by at least one tool.

3.4 Tools for quantitative and qualitative analysis

The tools needed to answer the Evaluation Questions under the eight evaluation themes were elaborated by the core team of researchers and formed the basis for the work of country experts. The tools are designed to operate in a semi-open manner to allow for flexibility and responsiveness to the various levels of detail. The tool box consisted of the following tools for the observing phase. Table 11 also shows the programme level to which they are addressed.

Table 11. Tools for data collection (methods / territorial level)

Method/tool	EU	national	programme	LAG	project
Documentary analysis	Inventory of the LEADER+ programmes and LEADER+-type measures				
		Questions-Criteria-Indicator Grid			
Surveys				LAG Questionnaire for 10% of all LAGs	
		MA Questionnaire			
Interviews		NNU Interview Guidelines			
Case studies		Case Study Template			

3.4.1 Inventory of the LEADER+ programmes

The Inventory of the LEADER+ programmes was tested against the specification of the data sources and was amended to include additional fields of relevance. The amendments included adding additional categories for the split of funding by source; the LAG territories including Natura 2000 zones; the presence of environmental NGOs as members of the LAG; the participation of economic actors as members of the LAG; and the participation of women in the LAG at the decision making level. There are only two years for which these complete data sets were available on a consistent basis.

The inventory of LEADER+-type measures was compiled by the geographic experts on the basis of the data that was available from the MA or even LAGs themselves. For this reason, it cannot be considered a reliable tool. The completion of the inventory tool was therefore suspended as it was incomplete and could not be used as a reliable and robust basis for the analysis.

3.4.2 Questions-Criteria-Indicator Matrix

The Questions-Criteria-Indicator Matrix (QCI) was the central working tool used for identifying for each evaluation question appropriate judgement criteria and indicators. On the basis of this detailed tool it was decided which indicators were covered by existing information sources (to be further complemented by desk research) and which information needed to be covered by additional information sources (additional desk research, LAG survey, interviews with MAs and NNUs and case studies).

3.4.3 LAG questionnaire

The LAG questionnaire was drafted on the basis of the Questions-Criteria-Indicator-Matrix and sought to cover the maximum number of indicators across the first 7 evaluation themes. This was compiled in an SPSS and in an Excel database and then the individual data extracted, including cross-tabulations between questions.

The questionnaire was sent out to 10% of all LAGs chosen randomly. 102 LAGs *responded.*

3.4.4 MA Questionnaire

The questionnaire for MA sought to cover those questions which could not be addressed by the LAG questionnaire and which related more to the programme than to the LAG level. The questionnaire contained multiple choice questions but a space for specific evidence for each question. Geographic experts were asked to follow up this evidence in interviews with the MA or to research the evidence themselves in the reports. 57 MAs were surveyed.

3.4.5 NNU interview guidelines

The NNU interview guidelines contained more open questions and gathered useful context information on networking and cooperation and highlighted key success factors and hindrances to the networking. Based on these guidelines 19 interviews with the NNUs were carried out.

3.4.6 Methods used for data analysis

The methods used for data analysis in the three sets of questionnaires were as follows:

- The first stage was to create a database of descriptive statistics that showed the breakdown of responses to the three questionnaires, followed by a subsequent stage that used cross tabulations to test certain hypotheses. The hypotheses were derived from the evaluation questions themselves, from discussions that took place at the Steering and Planning meetings, as well as from a reading of the secondary literature.
- Cross tabulations were used to identify associations between two factors, and then to establish the degree of significance of that relation. Depending on the evaluation theme, a series of cross tabulations were conducted. The basic information gathered at the beginning of the LAG questionnaire allowed for classifying according to shared characteristics, such as location, previous experience, budget size and thematic priorities. LAGs were grouped into three main geographical areas, EU15 North and Central, EU15 Mediterranean and EU 10 and, in some cases, these were used as a basis for exploring variation within the sample.
- A final method for analyzing the material was triangulation. As each of the three questionnaires included similar or sometimes identical questions, it was possible to corroborate certain findings and compare perspectives from the MA, the NNUs and the LAGs themselves.

- Each of the three surveys contained sections that allowed for the respondent to eleorate on a given answer or to add in further comments at the end of a subject section. These comments were supplied to the core team without any additional grouping or tabulation. Each of the report writers referred to these comments as illustrative of trends, points of difference or innovation. In all cases, comments and responses were used on their own as well as in comparison with relevant comments offered in the other surveys.

3.4.7 The Case Studies

The 10 case studies were used to cover either the indicators at EU level which were difficult to gather (e.g. impacts) or for which illustrative examples were needed. The case studies were developed as narrative documents and allowed an in-depth analysis of the effects of LEADER+ in the various themes.

Identification of case study areas

Approach

The case studies are an important part of the research as they represent the most reliable source of information on the impacts of LEADER+ in selected areas. For comparative purposes, the same issues were analysed across a number of different LAG case studies. This allows an assessment of the effects of different institutional contexts, approaches to LEADER+ implementation and socio-economic environments. In order to be sure to capture this diversity in our choice of case studies, we used two sets of criteria by which to classify the national and regional programmes within which the proposed LAGs were operating. The first set of criteria (referring to the administrative model of the programme) was based on a classification of LEADER implementation according to the degree of autonomy given to LAGs in relation to project selection, approval and payment[11]. We based these on the explicit definitions of project selection and project approval provided by the Commission[12].

- **Project selection**: project qualitative assessment: projects are chosen by the LAG after an assessment for consistency with the strategy objectives, against the LAGs local project selection criteria and comparative assessment in the case of several project submissions (e.g. through local calls).
- **Project approval**: aid commitment: legal commitment towards the beneficiary to provide the support (decision taken, signing the contract with the beneficiary and/or issuing the grant letter). This implies a legality check including both the eligibility criteria (admissibility criteria) and selection criteria.

The first set of criteria was as follows:

Criterion 1: Administrative model

1. Low autonomy, i.e. LAG only **selects** projects; formal project approval and payments of EAGGF support towards the beneficiaries are made by MA (basic model)
2. Medium autonomy, i.e. LAG **selects** the projects and receives the payment claims and **makes payments** to the projects subject to formal approval by the MA (intermediary model)
3. High autonomy, i.e. LAG **selects**, **formally approves** and **makes payments** to the projects ('global grant' type model)

---

[11] Working document for the focus group on the implementation of the bottom-up approach under the LEADER axis, JMC/G1 15.4.2010
[12] Ibid

The second set of criteria related to the directiveness of the programme, i.e. the degree of autonomy in relation to the development of the local strategy. The criteria were as follows:

Criterion 2: Directiveness of the programme

1. Highly directive, i.e. little autonomy for the LAGs to develop their local strategy (where the national or regional programme introduced **additional constraints** on top of the EC Regulation on what LAG strategies were able to address, e.g. only a specific segment or aspect (such as young people, IT, specific business sector etc)

2. Medium, i.e. local strategy can be developed taking account of **some limited additional national guidelines** or prescription going beyond the normal considerations of complementarity and demarcation e.g. by directing L+ towards addressing more innovative projects than those in fields which could otherwise be financed by other national policies.

3. Low, i.e. **total autonomy** in developing local strategy within the provisions of the EC Regulation.

Selection of LAGs

The geographic experts were asked to suggest reasonably representative LAGs which were particularly interesting or demonstrated key learning points in relation to the themes 1-5 of the evaluation and which provided a good mix with regard to our administrative model.

The proposed LAGs and the position of the programmes in relation to the above mentioned criteria are shown below.

Table 12. Case studies according to selection criteria

MS	criterion 1 Administrative model	criterion 2 Level of directiveness in the programme	LAGs
Germany	1	2	ErLebenswelt Roth (Bavaria)
Spain	2	2	Jerte Valley
Finland	1	1	Oulujärvi LAG
France	3	2	Périgord vert
Greece	3	2	North Peloponnisos (ANVOPE)
Hungary	1	1	Sümeg Térségi Marcal Forrásvidék Fejlödéséért
Italy	3	2	Maiella Verde, Abruzzo
Luxemburg	2	3	Redange-Wiltz
Poland	1	3	Wrzosowa Kraina
United Kingdom	1 & 3	2	North Northumberland and North Pennines

The method for carrying out the case studies

A template was developed for the case studies to ensure comparability across the ten areas chosen. Each case study drew on existing studies and literature, evaluation reports, brochures, websites and other documentation published by the technical assistance offices. The information collected was enriched and validated by interviews with key actors for the designated area or for the management of the programme (on the ground and at regional or national level).

metis

AEIDL CEU

The case studies are included in this report (chapter 6) as they allow an in-depth analysis of the effects of LEADER+ in the various priority themes treated.

3.4.8 The classification of LAGs according to their level of autonomy

The consideration of the degree of LAG autonomy and the effects of this in terms of their responsibilities, operations and activities emerged in the course of the ex post evaluation as a factor of considerable importance. This reflected the wider interest in this facet of LEADER as evidenced by the focus group undertaken by the European Network for Rural Development, Focus Group 1 'Implementation of the bottom-up approach under LEADER Axis' the basis of which was established at the LEADER Sub-Committee meeting of 25 November 2009[13]. This reports that there are three major LEADER implementation models currently used by the Member States under the LEADER axis (2007-2013): this typology involves different responsibilities and levels of decision making and may be seen as differing degrees of autonomy. These are:

- First model: Decentralisation of project selection competence (low autonomy);
- Second model: Decentralisation of project selection and payment competence (medium autonomy); and
- Third model: Decentralisation of project approval (local global grant), (high autonomy).

The focus group report classifies these implementation models and their degrees of autonomy by Member State or Rural Development programme as appropriate.

This typology was not directly applicable to LEADER+ as it was based on the current programme period and the EU27. In order to examine the effects of LEADER+ LAG autonomy a specific question was therefore included in the LAG questionnaire which used the same basic definitions under which LAGs were asked to categorise themselves[14.] This therefore provided a measure of the extent of autonomy which the LAGs perceived themselves to have, the 'felt' or 'perceived' autonomy. The results of this could then be used as the basis for undertaking cross tabulations with other queries to examine the effects of the degree of LAG autonomy.

Comparison of the analysis of this perceived autonomy along with the 'Focus Group 1' classification suggested that there might be some inconsistencies i.e. differences between the degree of autonomy afforded by the MAs and that which the LAGs asserted. This indicated the need to check the formal status of the implementation models used in LEADER+ in order to confirm the actual variance and provide a robust basis for this element of analysis. Cross tabulations were then prepared on the basis of both the formal and the perceived (felt) autonomy. In those cases where there is a clear difference, this is addressed in the text.

The reasons for these differences are explored in chapter 4.5.1 and, where relevant under the individual themes. It was clear that actual autonomy or freedom to act is not solely governed by the degree of perceived or formal autonomy but that both and the interaction between them are relevant and that consideration of both highlights more clearly some of the critical issues.

---

[13] European Network for Rural Development, Focus Group 1 - Bottom Up Approach, Draft Report for Publication on the Implementation of LEADER Approach September 2010

[14] The definition used in the LAG questionnaire is somewhat more detailed than that used in the FG1 report.
- Low autonomy, i.e. LAG selected projects but the formal project approval and payments towards the beneficiaries were made by the Programme Authority
- Medium autonomy, i.e. LAG selected projects, received claims for payment and made payments to the projects but with formal approval from the Programme Authority.
- High autonomy, i.e. LAG selected, formally approved and made payments to the projects

3.5 Theme 8: Rural excellence clusters

3.5.1 Preliminary screening

In general, the aim of excellence clusters is to promote and boost local knowhow, foster innovative sectors and cross-sector activities of critical success, with a special focus on small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Almost all cluster programmes have private businesses as their target group. The other major target group is research and development institutions.

A preliminary screening in the EU LEADER+ database on best practice[15] revealed that very few examples highlight LAGs' cooperation with universities and/or research centres. Therefore, it was agreed to use of fairly tight definition of clusters (not all kinds of cooperation although in areas with very low organisational capacity, cooperation may well be the first step towards clustering) and a fairly loose definition of excellence (not just R&D based).

3.5.2 Redefining rural excellence clusters

Tentatively, **rural excellence clusters** could be described as:

> Innovative local development initiatives aiming at pooling local resources in order to increase employment and growth in rural areas. Partnership is a key principle. Private stakeholders, SMEs and the business community from different economic sectors join forces to transfer knowhow and develop a common chain for designing, processing, producing, marketing and delivering innovative products and services. Rural excellence clusters are characterized by a common reference framework in terms quality insurance and economic intelligence. This process is often supported by public stakeholders in the provision of networking tools, external expertise, specialized advice, training and publicity.
>
> Rural excellence clusters can either be '**compositional**' (with an overall strategy of generating new income for the area), or **sector-based** (with a role in the formation of local chains for instance).

3.5.3 Learning from mainstream analysis

In addition, the study on *Methods for and Success of Mainstreaming LEADER Innovations and Approach into Rural Development Programmes*[16] was reviewed from the angle of clustering and in relation to the current Rural Development Plans.

3.5.4 LEADER+ and the current RDP (2007-2013)

For the purpose of this ex-post evaluation, cluster analysis is expected to assess the role of LEADER+ in the process achieving the objectives of Axis 1, 2 and 3 of the current rural development programmes, that is:

- Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector (Axis 1);
- Improving the environment and the countryside (Axis 2);
- The quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy (Axis 3).

---

[15] http://leaderplus.ec.europa.eu
[16] ÖIR Managementdienste GmbH - commissioned by European Commission DG Agriculture and Rural Development, Unit G4 (2004) http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eval/reports/leader/index_en.htm

metis

AE DL · C E U

The following graph tries to establish the correlation between thematic priorities in LEADER+ and Priority Axis of EAFRD – outside Axis 4 LEADER.

Figure 7. Correlation between thematic priorities in LEADER+ and the Priority Axes of the EARDF
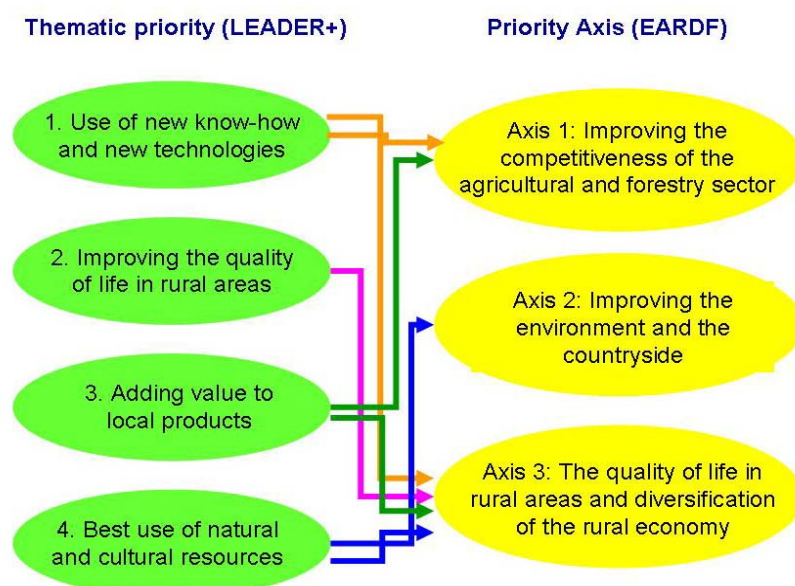
Based on the assumption that thematic priorities are leading to pre-clustering activities, whether the thematic activity of a LAG may be linked to one axis of the current rural development policy framework can be checked in three distinct ways.

a) **Exploiting the survey of 102 LAGs**, with the following steps:

- Step 1: Use two responses in the LAG survey as proxy indicators of clustering activity , namely

    - *We saw our role as supporting the emergence of brand new sectors through start up finance, advice and assistance.*

    - *We wanted to make new connections between different local producers, suppliers and customers*

- Step 2: We would then go on to detail specific characteristics of this group. *For example, was there anything significant about the areas in which they worked in terms of population? Were clustering LAGs more likely to be more established and experienced? Were there any significant differences in the geographical distribution of clustering LAGs?*

- Step 3: *To what extent did those LAGs that could be said to be carrying out clustering activity see their actions as being successful?* We would examine this question in two respects – the strength and quality of networks created and the perceived impact on the local economy.

    - *The LAG led to the creation of sustainable development partnerships between stakeholders from different sectors*

    - *It generated lasting networks and a willingness to co-operate with groups outside the area*

    - *The territorial development strategy and the implementation activities of the LAG helped to increase the sustainability of the local economy.*

b) **Checking the case studies** in which LAGs activities are likely to have supported the development of clusters

The challenge is to identify whether LAGs have facilitated and/or implemented local delivery mechanisms allowing cluster development. Examining further the case studies from the angle of rural clusters, we started by cross-tabulating their thematic priority with the related priority axis from EARDF (cf. supra 3.5.4).

Table 13. Thematic priorities of LEADER+ and related Priority Axis in the case studies:

LAG's name (+ programme)	LAG code	Thematic priority (LEADER+)	Related Priority Axis (EARDF)
ErLebenswelt Roth (Germany)	L+DEBAY-36	2. Improving the quality of life in rural areas	Axis 3
Jerte Valley (Spain)	L+ESEXT-09	2. Improving the quality of life in rural areas; 3. Adding value to local products	Axis 3 Axis 1
Oulujärvi LAG (Finland)	L+FINAT-03	3. Adding value to local products	Axis 1
Périgord vert (Aquitaine, France)	L+FRNAT-AQ06	Target groups (women and young people)	Axis 3
North Peloponnisos (Greece)	L+GRNAT-30	4. Best use of natural and cultural resources	Axis 2
Sümeg Térségi Marcal Forrásvidék Fejlödéséért (Hungary)	LTM-HU-62	1. Use of new know-how and new technologies; 2. Improving the quality of life in rural areas; 3. Adding value to local products; 4. Best use of natural and cultural resources	Axis 3 Axis 3 Axis 1 Axis 2
Maiella Verde (Italy)	L+ITABR-006	1. Use of new know-how and new technologies; 3. Adding value to local products	Axis3 Axis 1
Redange-Wiltz (Luxemburg)	L+LUNAT-04	1. Use of new know-how and new technologies	Axis 3
Wrzosowa Kraina (Poland)	LTM-PL-004	3. Adding value to local products; 4. Best use of natural and cultural resources	Axis 1 Axis 2
North Northumberland (England, UK)	L+GBENG-14	3. Adding value to local products; 4. Best use of natural and cultural resources	Axis 1 Axis 2
North Pennines (England, UK)	L+GBENG-15	2. Improving the quality of life in rural areas	Axis 3

From the knowledge gathered in reading the case studies, we focused our attention on two LEADER areas where evidence of clustering activities emerged, that is:

- Maiella Verde (Italy) and their strategies around local products (Axis 1)
- Wrzosowa Kraina (Poland) for their activities in the field of environment (Axis 2)

For each case study, we analysed the role of the LAG in the clustering process, having two questions in mind: was it a deliberate strategy? Was it a facilitating tool to an emerging trend? The analysis is reported in a narrative form, with examples extracted from each case.

c) **Draw specific features** related to rural clusters, comparing theoretical approaches with empirical evidence stemming fro the different sources.

These features will determine the role of LEADER in terms of strategies, processes and tools. They should also inform the conditions underlying the emergence of rural clusters, such as critical mass, governance and social capital.

metis

AE DL C E U

4 Themes

4.1 Theme 1: Relevance and Community Added Value

4.1.1 Evaluation Question 1

To what extent have LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) contributed to the achievement of Community and national/regional social, environmental and economic priority objectives for rural development?

☛ **LEADER addressed a large number of needs of rural areas. It has been an important complement to mainstream policies and agencies and has contributed to economic diversification, quality of life and preservation and enhancement of the natural and built environment of rural areas.**

Introduction

The EU's objectives for rural development in which the programme is located are outlined in Section I. This evaluation question addresses a number of important dimensions of the intended contributions to these objectives of the specific approach embedded in the LEADER programme. They reflect the new agenda for rural development which has gradually emerged since the CAP shifted from support to farm production to support for a diversified concept of rural development. These dimensions of development are explored through reviewing the extent to which LEADER+ activities complement mainstream regional and national policies, develop synergies with them and ultimately become generalised by regional and national agencies. The Evaluation Question also embraces the extent to which LEADER+ exploits neglected resources at local level to add value to locally produced products and to enhance the value of local natural and cultural resources. Innovation is an important element in the LEADER approach and in the search for new exploitable resources in the rural economy and society. It is evaluated here in terms of how the LAGs promoted new products and services, including social services, and in terms of innovative methods of implementing activities.

Findings

Complementarity

The progressive shift in emphasis in EU agricultural policy from direct supports for agricultural production to a more general concept of rural development is the policy context in which LEADER programmes have been situated. This shift has seen a broad diversification in policies at both Community and national level from purely economic development to include also social, cultural and environmental objectives. In terms of resources, the main means of delivery of these policies have been vertically organised ministries - agriculture, social security, industry and so on - with some devolution to regional authorities. LEADER shares many of the objectives of the national and regional bodies in terms of job creation, environmental sustainability and social protection, and so can accurately claim to be complementary to national policies - in principle at least. The distinctive feature of LEADER is the approach based on small scale, area based and multi faceted activities rather than the vertical, single functionality of state ministries and agencies. MA (MAs) are almost unanimous in the view that LEADER+ has complemented mainstream programmes. LAGs see this complementarity working in a number of different ways:

- As a means of experiment with reduced concerns about failure ('laboratory' aspect) (Redange-Wiltz LAG, Luxembourg);
- By helping distribution of government services at local level (Jerte Valley LAG, Spain);
- By mobilising small local groups unreachable by the main functional structures of Government (Oulujärvi LAG, Finland);

- By supporting investments which by virtue of sector or scale were not covered by the main state agencies (Maiella Verde LAG, Italy);
- By adding to projects financed by regional development programmes in order to extend them in some dimensions or by providing a stimulus (e.g. feasibility studies, animation meetings) to prompt applications for main stream funding. (Jerte Valley LAG, Spain)

The latter example is elaborated in the following quotation from the case study of the Jerte Valley LAG:

For example, while the local Fruit and Vegetables Producers Organisation invested rural development funds in larger scale projects such as infrastructure or cooling systems for the fruit producing cooperatives, LEADER+ supported related projects such as studies to develop new products and training for farmers, agricultural advisers and the presidents of the cooperatives in, for example, quality standards (ISO), auditing, log book keeping etc.

The importance of complementarity in LEADER+ is clear in the answers by LAGs to a series of questions seeking to summarise the essential contribution of the LEADER+ programme. From a selection of eight key dimensions of LEADER+, 74% of respondents, the highest response rate among the eight, chose complementarity, as the most important contribution of the LEADER, in terms of the ability of Programme to address needs neglected by regional or national programmes.

From the foregoing examples it can be seen that, other than in Luxembourg, the laboratory aspect was not perceived to be a strong feature of the complementarities of LEADER with mainstream programmes. As the discussion under Evaluation Question 5 (*see chapter 4.2.2)* notes below, innovation in the LEADER context has to be understood as referring to approaches and methodologies rather than technologies and products. Nonetheless, the element of experiment was not entirely absent from the activities of the LAGs, as the Luxembourg example testifies. The computerisation of shepherding by MEDINET LAG in Spain is another striking example.

Table 14. The Added Value of LEADER+

LAG Questionnaire: Respondents' Perception of Added Value of LEADER+	Number of responses
We were able to address needs that were not being met by other schemes or programmes	74
It encouraged people who would not have otherwise got involved	68
It generated lasting networks and a willingness to co-operate amongst local stakeholders	62
It made people think more positively about the future of the area	59
We were able to encourage alternative views of the future of rural areas	58
It helped to create or reinforce local identity within the LAG territory	57
We were able to take a long term view of the needs and potentials of our area	54
It generated lasting networks and a willingness to co-operate with groups outside the area	43
Total Respondents	**101**

LEADER/Mainstream Synergies

In this context synergies exist when personnel involved in or activities undertaken by LAGs are also involved in other developmental organisations and activities and this overlapping facilitates greater overall results than would be expected if their roles were completely separated. Personnel in this case can be LAG Board members, executives or beneficiaries. Though distinct in concept, complementarities and synergies are not easily distinguishable in practice. Consequently, it

would be difficult to identify that portion of the outputs of LEADER+ that can be attributed to synergy. However, it can be said that MAs, LAGs and observers believed that synergistic effects did occur. The MAs were of the opinion that synergies emerged between the LAGs and mainstream activities: over 84% believed strongly or very strongly in this. At the same time, in relation to a similar question, 75% of LAGs believed that the LAG led to the creation of sustainable partnerships with different sectors in local development. A common structure was the delegation to LAGs of local administration of non LEADER activities which mainstream agencies could not deliver locally or could not deliver as effectively. As the case study of the ErLebenswelt Roth LAG, Bavaria, Germany notes:

In the area of LAG Roth there was a good cooperation with another authority in charge of land consolidation and village renewal, because staff members of this authority were involved in working groups of LEADER+. Moreover, the LEADER-manager in the district 'Middle Franconia' (civil servant) had to provide the coordination between LEADER and other mainstream measures. A strict separation between programmes was necessary. LEADER+ therefore funded measures which couldn't be supported by mainstream programmes. In this context LEADER+ was able to provide synergies between LEADER+ and mainstream programmes.

Another dimension was LAG participation in direction of mainstream activities as exemplified by Oulujärvi LAG (Finnish case study).

Some examples of national level work groups in which Oulujärvi LEADER participated: LEADER and the Environment theme group of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; LAG Division of the Village Action Association of Finland; Rural Living theme group of Rural Policy Committee. Some examples of regional level work group in which Oulujärvi LEADER participated: Strategy Group of Kainuu Region, Rural work group of Kainuu, the steering group of Kainuu village coordination project, Bioenergy group of Kainuu, Monitoring group of Kajaani rural programme and the thematic group of rural livelihoods and employment in Kajaani.

Synergy can also be derived when activities overlap. Activities like animation, training and feasibility studies are often too small to be funded by mainstream programmes but are an appropriate size for LAGs. These activities more than added value to projects which mainstream bodies had decided to aid: they helped to promote projects and thus fill the 'development pipeline' and ensure that a larger number of activities applied for, or qualified for assistance from the mainstream agencies thus augmenting the total flow of activity beyond what it would otherwise have been. A case in point is the experience of Jerte Valley LAG, Spain where animation led to synergistic effects with regional water management programmes:

For example, a study conducted by the Regional Government in the area on possible irrigation plans recommended that each village should set up an 'irrigation community' which would build a reservoir to store water and undertake to start using drip irrigation systems in order to minimise water wastage. However, the cost and effort that this implied to farmers and the villages to continue using a commodity which had traditionally been free and unlimited met with significant resistance. It was intense work on the ground by the LAG along with its awareness-raising campaigns that eventually persuaded local actors to invest in the long-term sustainability of their water usage. As such, most villages in the valley now have an 'irrigation community' in place.

A sense of how the LEADER+ approach works to produce complementary and synergy benefits is given by the North Pennines and North Northumberland LAGs, England.

The local partnerships were seen to offer distinctive and more generic benefits. These related to the partnership process itself and the way in which it engaged and empowered local actors. The breadth of LAG community engagement on the basis of a coherent rural area, coupled with the links with public, social and economic actors, provided a basis of developing, building on or extending networking. This is thought to benefit the local complementarity between actions. In this

respect, the approach is seen to engage and work locally on the same basis that local people do, enhancing local relevance of wider approaches. This is supported by the value added through the combining of partner resources and, in particular, the community expertise, skills, knowledge and time in influencing and guiding the programme and projects. The important role of staff and LAG members in animating and supporting partnership involvement and activity was stressed.

Mainstreaming LEADER Activities

There does not seem to be evidence that projects pioneered at LAG level have been adopted by regional or national agencies as part of their programmes. Obviously, if LAGs are successfully performing certain tasks there is less need for larger entities to take over the same activity, especially if the rate of EU funding for such institutions would be less than in the LEADER+ programme. In any case many LEADER activities are of a scale and nature that they cannot easily be implemented by national organisations. Indeed that is one of the reasons LEADER was invented. However, one form of mainstreaming which has taken place has been the spread of the LEADER approach itself. In some cases this has been a matter of creating LAGs with most or all of the features of LEADER, though formally outside the Programme. In other cases existing non-LEADER LAGs have been equipped with the LEADER approach. In some cases too, national or regional programmes have acquired some LEADER features. In the Périgord Vert LAG, France, there was a learning process in which initially the LAG was relatively isolated from other programmes. However, by the end of the LEADER+ programme a new local entity, the Pays, had come into existence and has approximated to the LEADER LAG. In Spain, the Government set up the PRODER programme to fund bottom up rural development carried out by LAGs.

…we can say that LEADER has had an important impact on the national thinking towards rural development and indeed the legislative context. The 2007 law that was introduced for the 'Sustainable Development of Rural Areas' was strongly influenced by LEADER. This is based on the production of integrated area-based strategies which cover slightly larger areas than LEADER and deal with a far wider range of investments including transport, schools, health, spatial planning and so on. In this case, the Jerte LEADER Group has cooperated with the PRODER group in the neighbouring valley of la Vera to produce the strategy (Jerte Valley LAG, Spain).

In Finland, the case study for Oulujärvi LAG reports that the approach was extended to new regional theme programmes (e.g. village and nature tourism programmes) which had structures capable of incorporating elements of the LEADER+ approach, especially the characteristics of being area based and involving local consultation.

In summary, the unique character of the LEADER approach, local strategies, consultation and implementation by local groups, cooperation between public and private bodies at local level, have enabled it to implement rural development actions and a range of public services at a level and scale and with a degree of effectiveness which regional and national development agencies cannot match.

LEADER and New Know How and Technology

The 'use of know how and new technologies' as a theme was not selected by many LAGs. It is true that a higher proportion (40%) agreed with the proposition that they were able to suggest *new and innovative ways of producing and marketing*. Furthermore, 58% allocated more than 25% of their resources to the *promotion of novel products and services* which would seem high. But it seems likely that the latter responses were based on a more general concept of novel while the first focused on technologies per se. Nonetheless, if regard is had for the case studies and other material, it is clear that while only some LAGs formally adopt the promotion of technologies as a theme, many LAGs did promote technologies to at least some degree and a few gave it considerable emphasis. In the main, the technology in question was information and

communications technology (ICT). The relatively low cost of ICT equipment, compared with, say, manufacturing equipment, together with its ability to access information and annihilate distance make it an attractive technology to promote in small, somewhat (or very) underdeveloped areas with scattered populations.

Table 15. Main themes selected by LAGs

Main Themes Selected by LAGs	No Replies	% Total
Use of know how and new technologies	21	16.0
Improving quality of life in rural areas	48	36.6
Adding value to local products	27	20.6
Best use of natural and cultural resources	35	26.7
Total	131	100.0

Among the case studies, an example of a LAG which gave a high priority to IT was Oulujärvi LAG, Finland which emphasised the need to disseminate ICT skills and equipment throughout rural areas and to encourage its use by individuals, enterprises, NGOs and public bodies. Another case was Redange Wiltz, Luxembourg which claimed that a real plus of LEADER

...was the capacity to tap into the major Government plan e-Luxembourg, by organizing and planning a coherent delivery of Internet services on behalf of the municipalities and their rural communities. Internet 'parlours' ('Internetstuffen') were opened with the technical support of the LEADER+ staff...

An example of support for other types of technology is in the Jerte Valley LAG, Spain. There, five R&D projects were promoted in the food sector. These included sophisticated projects which researched methods of eradicating pests and enhancing post harvest conservation of fruit. Likewise in Hungary, the Sumeg LAG supported some advanced projects including one for a gene bank for saving and recultivating traditional apple species of the region.

Case study Redange Wiltz LAG, Luxembourg

In the follow-up of the LEADER project TRIPTICON (2002-2005) aiming at gathering and promoting local offers in IT training under a single web portal and training room, the idea was to build an integrated offer of informal and vocational training courses so that people from the rural community would not need to go to a major town-centre to get trained. The project started to take shape after an exploratory visit to the Cham 'learning region' in Bavaria (D). It was then refined with the involvement of Ministerial services (Education, Internal affairs and Land Planning) and content providers (Secondary schools, Economic boards, Vocational Training Institute, University of Luxemburg, NGOs, etc.).

Since the start of 2007, a database of learning offers is available on **www.landakademie.lu.** It gathers all kinds of proposals, from silk painting to accounting or Spanish courses. In order to meet local needs, additional requests for training can be posted and if there is sufficient demand, the course can be organized.

The Landakademie became even more popular during the 'Learning fair' ('Lernfest'), organized with the support of LEADER+ in June 2007, where more than 4,000 visitors attended the Hosingen park and discovered over 60 information stands dedicated to vocational training and apprenticeship.

A good example of the ability of LEADER LAG to implement new technology in a traditional occupation was Medinet LAG Spain where computers and specially tailored software were distributed to shepherds to enable better control of the numbers, status and yields of their flocks[17].

LEADER and Quality of Rural Life

In the wider context of the EU's approach to rural development, local identities, sustainable natural environment, landscape diversity and cultural endowments are major assets of rural areas to be preserved, promoted and enhanced. LEADER+ was not framed, therefore, as an instrument exclusively for economic development in terms of directly created and generated employment and incomes. As noted above, the most popular theme selected by the sample of LAGs was *improving the quality of life in rural areas*: this accounted for 37% of all themes selected (it was possible to select more than one theme). A number of questions in the LAG questionnaire addressed different aspects of this and returned affirmative verdicts. Thus 78% of respondents considered that their LAGs had a positive effect on the environment in that they had *helped to turn environmental heritage and beauty into competitive advantages* while 80% considered that they *had helped to turn cultural heritage and traditions into competitive advantages*. It should be emphasised that there is a social as well as physical aspect to quality of life. From eight summary results of LEADER+ as perceived by respondents and tabulated in table 14, 57% of respondents agreed that the programme ...*helped to create or reinforce local identity with the LAG territory* and 62% endorsed the conclusion that *it generated lasting networks and a willingness to cooperate amongst local stakeholders.*

While in principle promoting quality of life and economic development are separate, in the context of the type of activities favoured by the LEADER+ programme there was considerable cross over between the two. Many activities were targeted at protecting the environment. But this adds to the physical endowment of the area and strengthens its competitiveness in relation to tourism. By the same token, many actions to promote tourism, including such things as nature trails and leisure facilities, promote quality of life of the inhabitants as well as attracting tourists from outside. Even projects which promote such things as retailing, accommodation and craft industries for economic reasons, improve the range of services available in rural areas thus obviating the need to travel to centres or even to leave the area for want of access to basics of everyday life.

Examples of these are given in Evaluation Question 17 (*see 4.4.3)* where the effect of LEADER on the provision of services and improving the attractiveness of areas are also addressed. In summary these include

- refurbishment of old buildings for social uses (Oulujärvi LAG, Finland),
- rehabilitation of historic village centres (Jerte Valley LAG, Spain),
- recreation of the Provençale culture and the tradition of the troubadour through children's activities (Périgord Vert LAG, France).
- Projects serving both quality of life and economic potential (ErLebenswelt Roth LAG, Bavaria, Germany).

The construction of the historical walking trail 'Via Historica', the establishment of a network 'nature experience' with five themes (135 places of interest), the reconstruction and valorisation of a 'Stone age village', the creation of standardized and labeled walking and bicycle route networks show the wide spectrum of specific regional activities. The projects cause an increase in life quality and recreation quality for inhabitants and visitors, considering the walking trails and the bicycle routes for example.

---

[17] Best Practice, 2008/2, page 82.

metis

AEIDL CEU

To these should be added projects which can be regarded as almost exclusively aimed at quality of life or residents such as services to old people (Oulujärvi LAG, Finland), sports facilities for young people (Flevoland LAG, Netherlands)[18] children's activities (Redange Wiltz, Luxembourg).

Adding Value to Local Products

Adding value to local products was one of the four themes proposed to the LAGs and attracted a relatively small election. From the table above it can be seen that about one fifth (21%) adopted this as their theme (or one of them). Nevertheless, case study and other sources indicate that most LAGs did promote projects which, in some respect or another comprised some form of added value to locally produced goods. Indeed, being locally based organisations with a remit for innovative development of local resources, it would be surprising if many LAGs activities did not embark on at least some activities to promote local value added. Thus of the sample of ten case studies, five specifically set out to add value to local food and craft manufactures.

- Oulujärvi LAG, Finland, aided the set up of networks of small manufacturers and about one sixth of aided enterprises were specifically based on processing of locally produced fruit, vegetables and fish;
- Wrzosowa Kraina LAG, Poland, created a brand for locally produced honey from heather and products of the forest (berries, mushrooms);
- Majella Verde LAG, Italy, adopted a programme for the promotion of small craft and food enterprises building on local skills and agricultural resources;
- Jerte Valley LAG, Spain, promoted quality and standards in production for a variety of locally produced foods including cherries, cured ham, confectionary, bread and cakes;
- Sümeg-Marcal LAG, Hungary, made investments in small scale manufacturers and created a network for marketing, research, training and tapping external investment.

Natural and Cultural Resources

The preceding section dealt with the extent to which LAGs made use of local physical resources, particularly food resources, for adding economic value. This section addresses the use of natural environmental resources and historical structures for improving quality of life and developing sustainable tourism. In this sense making the best use of natural and cultural resources was chosen as a theme by over one quarter (27%) of LAGs. It was a more important priority than either promoting use of know-how and new technologies adding value to local products. Supporting this as a priority were responses to the proposition that LAG strategies had 'helped to turn cultural heritage and traditions into competitive advantages': 80% of respondents reported that they had done so. Only 1% thought that they had no such effect. In fact examination of the case studies and other material reveals that projects based on developing tourism, primarily on the basis of resources like forests, lakes, river, mountains and unusual physical features of the countryside were amongst the most widespread of all LAG activities. For example, seven of the ten case studies included areas of important natural resources, including Natura 2000 sites, around which tourist activities were promoted.

- LAG Roth prioritised the themes 'valorisation of nature and culture' (museum, thematic pathways, nature trails etc.) including the environmental education and utilisation of cultural heritage, 'enhancement of touristic activities' and improvement of 'liveability' (leisure, tourism and sports).
- The North Pennines and North Northumberland LAGs promoted tourism based on the particular landscape of the region and on historical features (e.g. Hadrian's wall).

---

[18] Best Practice, 2008/2, page 71

AE DL   C E U

- Wrzosowa Kraina LAG, Poland: 70% of the LAG belongs to landscape park containing several areas of high natural value (including two Natura 2000 areas and one area on the 'shadow list'); Promotion of tourism in the region was an important priority for the LAG.
- Maiella Verde LAG, Italy: The LAG area has a number of historical sites, a national park and some preserved areas (amounting to 17% of the territory). The LAG gave a high priority to projects aiming to improve tourism including support for facilities and marketing and promotion.
- Jerte Valley LAG, Spain rehabilitated black spots and built access to areas of natural beauty like viewing areas, parks and bathing places. Also the LAG funded small scale projects around rubbish collection and the recuperation of degraded areas. These improved the impact on the landscape of the Jerte Valley and made it more attractive for residents and visitors.
- North Peloponnese LAG, Greece: The area of the LAG is characterized by a variety of geographical and physical features (mountains, forests, lakes, rivers, cliffs, caves etc) and a number of Natura 2000 sites. The area also has folkloric and mythological traditions. The LAG supported development of touristic resources and the development of HACCP and ISO standards for the sector.
- Sümeg-Marcal LAG, Hungary: The territory of this LAG possesses a significant built heritage including castles, fortress ruins, churches, and cottages, industrial monuments, and a beautiful natural environment including a Natura 2000 site and other protected areas of national importance. The LAG promoted the development of a network of tourist enterprises with the aim of raising standards, organising marketing and accessing investment resources.

4.1.2 Evaluation Question 2

To what extent have LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) contributed to supporting broader Community objectives, including Lisbon and Göteborg priorities?

☞ **Lisbon addressed itself to the competitiveness of the EU in global terms. The impact of LEADER on competitiveness in this context is likely to be muted. But LEADER has been an important tool for diversification and for promoting sustainability in rural areas in line with the Gotbeurg Council conclusions.**

Introduction

The Lisbon Agenda was drawn up in 2000 to address the perception that Europe was lagging behind its competitors and as a consequence economic growth was slow and unemployment high. It aimed to make the EU *the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*. The Agenda set out a large number of key objectives, mainly relating to improved market structures, expanded training, better infrastructure and the adoption and dissemination of high technology. The Agenda was renewed in 2005. The Göteborg Council in 2001 set out the contribution of the CAP to the Agenda in terms of improving quality and environmental sustainability of agriculture. As has been noted elsewhere, the tendency of EU agricultural policy since Göteborg - if not before - has been to reduce market supports for agriculture and, amongst other things to promote LEADER as an initiative to diversify the rural economy from excessive dependence on the production of agricultural commodities while at the same time preserving the environment and addressing problems of equality.

metis

Findings

Competitiveness

The context of the Lisbon Agenda is the global competitiveness of the EU economy. This is a challenging standard against to which to measure the activities of LEADER. Although almost any economic activity of LEADER could be construed to have some effect on competitiveness, it seems reasonable to focus on the LEADER contribution to new technologies as a measure of its impact on economic competitiveness. As has been noted above, of the four themes proposed to LAGs, a minority, 16% selected use of know how and new technologies as their priority. The themes focusing on quality of rural life attracted a higher priority. While there is evidence from case studies and other surveys suggests that some LAGs have promoted high technology principally, though not exclusively in the form of ICT, in the overall rural sector, these cases could not be taken to constitute a major feature of the LEADER approach. The potential of LEADER to contribute to the competitiveness element of the Lisbon Agenda is small in relation to the capacities of national research institutes and corporations.

Diversification

In terms of Lisbon and Göteborg, the dissemination of technology has had a smaller part in LEADER than its contribution to the diversification of the rural economy. In this context diversification should be taken to mean adding value to animal and plant resources as well as promoting non agricultural activities such as tourism, craft manufacture and services. In these sectors LEADER has played a relatively important role in identifying possibilities, animating local entrepreneurship, providing training and finance. LEADER can be judged to have contributed to offsetting some of the decline in on farm employment resulting from the reformed CAP.

Examples of Typical LEADER Diversification Projects Austria: LAG Verein Steirisches Salzkammergut. In an area dependent on traditional tourism, this LAG helped to diversify the area's touristic offer with holiday facilities specialized for and targeted at disabled persons. Facilities included accommodation, multi functional buildings, meeting hall and gardens,

Belgium: LAG Brugse Ommeland. The LAG assisted in the development of an organic farming activity in the area around the city as an important diversification from traditional horticultural production. A common marketing cooperative organization was promoted and a 'brand' adopted as well as development of marketing and promotional materials.

Sweden: LAG Smålandsgruppen. In order to arrest decline in population, and to diversify away from dependence on traditional activities, the LAG promoted a cooperative which aided the development of a range of leisure and business activities in the region. These included a new hotel, petrol station, spa, golf course, and a fruit farm. Other activities were aimed more specifically at improving quality of life in the area.

Greece: LAG Olympia Development SA. This LAG is in Frixa, north Peloponese, an area dependent on basic agriculture and tourism. The LAG promoted the development of two related industries: collection and packaging of locally grown aromatic plants and the manufacture of cosmetics from aromatic plants for sale throughput the country. The two projects have helped to provide employment and their success has encouraged local interest in enterprise and start ups.

Environment

Preservation of the environment was an important element in the Göteborg Council's conclusions. The citations in the pages preceding make it clear that protection of the natural environment and landscapes have been important activities of LAGs. They form essential resources on

which tourism, as well as quality of rural life depends. Activities have included promotion of environmental awareness and education, sustainable energy technologies, rehabilitation of damaged landscapes and economical use of water resources.

4.1.3 Evaluation Question 3

To what extent have LEADER+ measures prepared the NMS for an effective and efficient management of territorially based, integrated and participative form of rural development?

> ☛ **LAGs in the NMS had sufficient resources to build local capacities to implement the LEADER approach. In terms of the types of projects which were adopted, and the degree of success attained, the NMS experience resembled that of the EU 15 LEADER Programmes. However, LEADER approach has to be situated in appropriate regional and national structures and it could be that some overly bureaucratic traditions persist in some of the NMS.**

Introduction

For countries which have relatively recently transited from centralised command type governments, the LEADER approach can be expected to represent a challenge. Countries which have learned the principal forms of democratic governance have a further step to take to absorb the principles of participative, bottom up, integrated rural development. The journey can be measured by the reflection that the LEADER approach started at about the same time as most of the NMS were entering the transition to democracy and market economy. The EU 15 were therefore considerably ahead in terms of developing the philosophy underpinning LEADER+. Various aspects of how the LEADER approach has been absorbed by the NMS are evaluated in several of the Evaluation Questions following including Evaluation Questions 4, 18 and 19. What follows here is a brief summary of the main points of relevance

Findings

Six of the ten NMS opted to implement the LEADER programme and two others implemented their own LEADER-like programme. Implementation varied with some countries starting up well into the Programme period. However, balancing the fact that not all NMS participated in LEADER, elements of the LEADER approach, such as participation, integrated strategies and local initiative, were concepts that had been in circulation during the PHARE preparation period. Some of these elements had been incorporated in SAPARD. On the other hand, when national institutions were only just assimilating to western standards the complexity and relative novelty of LEADER was an additional burden at a time when there were higher priorities in the task of nation building.

Notwithstanding all of that, the data suggest that many LAGs in the NMS had sufficient resources to build local capacities to implement the LEADER approach. In some countries (e.g. Hungary) establishment of LAGs and development of the LDSs was somewhat rushed and for that reason may not have been the result of full participation by all stakeholders. In other NMSs (e.g. Poland) the approach was more gradual and for that reason truer to the bottom-up characteristic of LEADER. In terms of the types of projects which were adopted, and the degree of success attained, the NMS were well within the framework which bounded the projects of the EU 15 LEADER Programmes. However, the LEADER approach has to be situated in appropriate regional and national structures and it could be that some overly bureaucratic traditions persist. In Hungary reshuffling of personnel and reorganisation resulted in the loss of important corporate memory of LEADER threatening the smooth implementation of the next programme.

metis

4.1.4 Conclusions Theme 1

Complementarity, Synergies and Mainstreaming

In the course of its evolution, and as a consequence of its perception as a successful pro-gramme, LEADER has grown in importance. It now figures as a strategic asset in the whole range of rural development processes. It has been relatively strong in complementing and gen-erating synergies with mainstream rural development strategies. It seems to have been less successful in generating ideas which have been adopted by mainstream agencies, other than the LEADER approach itself, which has been widely disseminated. Innovation is intended to be an important feature of LEADER activities. Although experience varies from LAG to LAG, as a generalization innovation as specific topic did not attract priority attention of the LAGs. It at-tracted priority attention in 11% of the LAGs, the highest shares being found in Luxembourg, the UK and Ireland. Most of the technology projects supported by the LAGs have been the promo-tion of the installation and use of computers in the home or in local centres, and a small number of LAGs have sponsored genuinely advanced technology projects in the IT area and other sec-tors. But overall, it cannot be said that technological innovation has been a significant result of LEADER.

Quality of Life

Improving the quality of life was the most popular theme selected by LAGs. 'Quality of life' is ac-corded a broad definition by LAGs and included development of tourism facilities (available to locals as well as visitors), promotion of services to old people and the young and preservation of the environment, both built and natural. Even the promotion of economic activities like local re-tailing and crafts can contribute to 'quality of life' of locals. However defined, improving rural quality of life has been an important priority amongst LAGs and the survey showed that LAGs had positive views about the contribution of LEADER+ to this objective.

Adding Value to Local Resources

The LEADER mission included the diversification of the rural economy through adding value to local products and exploiting natural and cultural resources. This is a constituent of the Lisbon Agenda and contained in some detail in the outcome of the Göteborg Council. In fact adding value to local products was not a high priority for LAGs, but, as in the case of technology, a rela-tively large number of projects, some of them very imaginative, were in this category. Mostly these involved support for various forms of local craft industries and food processing. Exploita-tion of natural and cultural resources was probably the most common form of economic promo-tion engaged in by LAGs. Almost all tourist projects - and they were numerous - come into this category since the vast majority were based on natural or historical features of the locality.

Competitiveness, Diversification, Sustainability

In the context of the Lisbon Agenda, enhanced competitiveness cannot be judged to be signifi-cant output of the LEADER programme. Adoption of new technologies was not a popular priority among LAGs and though there were some technology projects, the total effect cannot be judged to be very great. LEADER can be judged to have been more successful in promoting diversifica-tion of agriculture as urged by the Göteborg Council and in encouraging sustainable activity in agriculture, manufacturing and services in rural areas.

LEADER and the NMS

The sections covering Evaluation Question 4, which follows and Evaluation Questions 18 and 19 at the end, examine the extent to which LEADER has prepared the NMS for participative, locally

democratic, integrated type of structures and rural development. The summary anticipated here is that while the rate of implementation varied, and some countries did not participate at all, overall, the NMS have been able to successfully progress the LEADER approach to rural development. The importance of building capacity slowly and surely and the necessity for stability in the institutional framework needs to be more widely accepted by local and national administrations. But the essence of the LEADER approach was realised: local structures were created, local participation was elicited, identity and cooperation were fostered and a wide range of projects were identified and implemented

In summary, LEADER addressed a large number of needs of rural areas. In some areas, like technology and innovation, performance, through useful, has fallen short of expectations. But overall, it has been an important complement to mainstream policies and agencies and has contributed to economic diversification, quality of life and preservation and enhancement of the natural and built environment of rural areas. In these fields of activity flexibility, sensitivity to local needs, small scale have distinguished LEADER from other governmental structures and addressed needs and exploited potentials 'unreachable' by larger and more traditionally run organizations.

4.2 Theme 2: The Actions of LEADER+

Action 1: Integrated territorial rural development strategies of a pilot nature

4.2.1 Evaluation question 4

To what extent have LEADER+ programmes and LEADER+-type measures promoted and developed complementarity between actors in rural development at the local level through a bottom-up approach and an integrated pilot strategy?

☞ **The LEADER+ programmes and LEADER+ type measures brought local actors together who would otherwise not have come together to pursue common goals. There is a clear link between the LEADER approach and the enrichment of local social capital, as well as networking links around certain themes and activities. Connecting people and activities is the quintessence of the LEADER approach.**

Introduction

The evaluation question addresses both the bottom-up approach and the pilot strategy (which in turn reflects the LEADER features: 'multi-sectoral approach', 'innovation' and 'networking'). Complementarity is understood as: (i) widening the scope of actors and increasing their functional diversity, and (ii) the ability of local actors to join forces and collaborate for producing synergetic added value for the benefit of their territory. In this line of thinking, complementarity between local actors links the bottom-up approach with the possibility to implement an integrated pilot strategy as a practical short-term outcome, and with social capital formation as a long-term investment.

Translated into judgement criteria, the EQ explores the degree to which (i) the LAGs have provided appropriate mechanisms for participation, awareness raising and organisation of local actors; (ii) joint projects have been established in response to this encouragement; (iii) networks around different themes and tasks have been created and continue functioning.

metis

Findings

Connecting people

LEADER connects people. 3/4 of all LAG respondents confirmed *that 'the LAG led to the creation of sustainable development partnerships between stakeholders from different sectors'*. Remarkably, this answer was given by 69% of the EU10 respondents in spite of the short duration of the LEADER-type measures. Hence the 'liaising' function of LEADER+ is undisputed. 47% (EU15) and 43% (EU10) of LAG respondents confirmed that the formation of the LAG *'connected groups and individuals that otherwise would have not known each other'.* 27% (EU15), respectively 34% (EU10) said that the formation of the LAG *'successfully mediated between local interests'*.

The statement: *'there is evidence that LEADER+ has created new links between sectors and local actors'* is the one which met the strongest agreement among MA interviewees (4.47 of 5 points); the bottom-up approach has been deemed effective in helping to identify development needs and facilitating adequate responses to these needs (4.44 of 5 points). Similar acclaim is paid to the area-based approach (4.42 of 5 points). These three statements are the top three out of 49 on which MA interviewees expressed their views[19].

It is confirmed by LAG respondents that '*encouraging people who had otherwise not got involved'* and *'generating lasting networks and a willingness to co-operate amongst local stakeholders'* are important achievements of LEADER+. 74% of LAG respondents stated that *'the LAG led to the creation of sustainable development partnerships between stakeholders from different sectors'*, and those who confirmed this had more contacts with NNU and LEADER Observatory than those who denied this statement.

Joining forces

Making '*connections between different local producers, suppliers and customers'* has been confirmed as the main role of the LAG with respect to jobs and income. The German LAG Erlebenswelt Roth has established funding rules promising higher rates of co-financing for area-wide and co-operation projects.[20]

48% of the LAGs stated that *'there were many occasions and events organized by the LAG in which people met for the first time'*, only 16% answered that *'many people who worked with the LAG already knew each other.'* This means added value concerning harnessing the diversity of human potential. Enhancing co-operation has been overwhelmingly chosen as the most critical success factor of LEADER+ (see chapter 4.1.3 discussing EQ 6). In Sümeg-Marcal (Hungary), *'one of the major priorities of the strategy was the marketing and improvement of local products and services, moreover, the networking of producers and craftsmen, and this may be the most successful area'.*[21] The Italian case study from Maiella Verde reports the emergence of seven networks (of food and wine producers, food marketing associations, gourmet guides, didactic farms and associations managing cultural and natural heritage).[22] In the French Périgord Vert, *'44% of the projects implemented within the LEADER+ programme have required the setting up of partnerships which may be called unusual. People who did not know each other and/or were not used to developing things together thus worked together which enabled to create new links inside the area between people, activities and objectives as theirs and with whom they shared*

[19] They rank 1st, 4th and 3rd in the respective list after weighting the number of interviewees (each country's overall weight equaling to 1).
[20] German case study
[21] Hungarian case study
[22] Italian case study

ideas and were able to successfully implement projects and actions did indeed contribute to increasing trust amongst local people, actors and stakeholders.'[23]

It seems that the four themes proposed by the Commission proved helpful especially for those LAGs which had difficulties finding a common focus around which local stakeholders could start their joint activities. As an example, one Spanish MA respondent from La Rioja stated: *'The strict application of the priority themes, as well as the LAG strategies, has promoted synergies between sectors, such as heritage signposting and heritage renovation, or heritage and rural tourism activities.'*

Case study North Northumberland/North Pennines LAGs, United Kingdom

The whole process of the creative nurture of projects was seen to be embedded in the LEADER ethos. Benefits were identified in terms of:

- *enabling projects to get to the starting grid;*
- *providing links to other funding sources;*
- *linking to other projects;*
- *improving project design;*
- *converting planning into doing;*
- *timely and responsive problem solving;*
- *monitoring and reporting; and*
- *linking to the process of review and continual improvement.*

This was characterised as the 'ethos is to try to reach the end together rather than present hurdles to be jumped'. This was clearly contrasted with other funding streams e.g. the RDP funded 'Regional Enterprise Scheme which allows you to go the whole hog then reject and rework; LEADER+ works towards achieving success'. This was seen to deliver clear benefits in terms of project sustainability and cost effectiveness: there is a handholding mentoring approach that is more cost effective in the long run; it 'enhanced the likelihood of success'. Activity supporting coordination, complementarity and networking also raised project potential and enhances sustainability. Fullness of engagement in the project cycle was therefore seen to be of fundamental importance. Programme benefits lay in the clear identity and enhanced accessibility, the higher success rates achieved and through greater control of strategic coherence.

*The **multi sectoral** approach working at local level was highly thought of in terms of its bridging effect between actors and sectors in getting people to think beyond the job and and institutional boundaries. Viewed positively, multi-sectoral thinking has encouraged LAGs to address some new areas e.g. health and food and drink. Notwithstanding this, there are issues over **complementarity** and synergy where the partnership effect was not seen to be as strong as it might be. Further, there are significant difficulties identified in not engaging formally with wider strategic frameworks, which remains a substantial and important challenge. It appeared that the contribution to local complementarity and integration might be stronger than it was in relation to the wider context.This finding is consistent with wider LEADER experience in England. At the project level, the perspective was that complementarity was supported by the facilitation and animation process and is strong; this has contributed to sustainable development approaches within projects.*

---

[23] French case study

metis

AEIDL CEU

In Extremadura (Spain)*, 'a true network of different actors, social and economic interest groups and representatives from public and private institutions has sprung up around LEADER, interacting at different levels but all sharing the basic concept of LEADER as an instrument for economic and social development.'*[24]

The case study on North Northumberland and North Pennines (UK) makes an important differentiation which might also be relevant elsewhere. LEADER seems to be very successful in creating complementarities at local level, but is less effective in creating complementarities to wider economic frameworks, beyond the local horizon (see box).

In any event, the creation of new links and the intensification of existing links between local actors is seen as the quintessence of the LEADER approach, as a French MA respondent puts it: *'These links were an obligation for the LAGs. These public-private partnerships are recognized as a success in France.'*[25]

4.2.2 Evaluation question 5

To what extent has the pilot nature of the strategies fostered innovation in the Community rural areas (e.g. in terms of emergence of new products and services, better use of indigenous potential, combination of economic sectors traditionally separated, original forms of organisation and involvement of the local population etc.) ?

☞ **The pilot nature of the strategies fostered innovation particularly by reconfiguring and enabling local actors to embark on new activities, by combining existing activities in new ways, and by linking local competences to external sources of knowledge and technology. LEADER acts as a mind-opener. There are many examples that local specificities could be turned into competitive advantages, although tangible economic effects were rather reported from more experienced LAGs (those operating since LEADER II or I) than from 'beginner LAGs'.**

Introduction

The evaluation question explores the leverage effect the (re)combination of hitherto separated sectors or strands of activity have on the local culture of change. It is not just about doing new things in new ways. It is also about doing things that stimulate or strengthen people's capacity to do new things in new ways. The trigger effect may lie in the introduction of a new technology, a new enterprise, a new nature protection scheme, but it may also lie in a new perception of traditional ways of doing things, abilities or community features (labelled local potential), or in a market opportunity which can only be tapped if individual actors act in concert. 'Pilot nature' development is geared towards uniqueness and not towards global standards, as well as towards diversity instead of assimilation. Risk and failure are intrinsic to this endeavour. Two barriers have to be overcome: the first is social and economic isolation combined with low self-esteem; the second is the natural risk-aversiveness of public administrations. The first obstacle manacles the local project promoter; the second one stifles the programme implementer responsible for the diligent use of public funds. The LAG is supposed to be a 'transformer' for providing peer support for innovative local actors, and for giving assurance concerning the validity of eligible projects towards the authorities.

Translated into judgement criteria, the quest for innovation refers to (i) the contribution of LEADER+ with respect to the emergence of new products and services; (ii) the softening of so-

---

[24] MA interview Extremadura (Spain)
[25] MA interview France (nat.)

cial and cultural barriers to innovation; (iii) the support for activities which would not have been supported by other sources.

Findings

Connecting people triggers new ways of doing things

Most MA respondents acknowledge the *'creation of new links between sectors and local actors'* (scoring 4.47 out of 5), as well as the *'contribution of LEADER+ to diversifying rural areas towards non-agricultural activities'* (scoring 4.35 out of 5) and the *'contribution to the emergence of new products and services'* (4.09 out of 5).

The direct link between 'connecting people' and 'innovation' is illustrated in the French case study: *'In the Périgord Vert area,...LEADER has*

- *brought together in an operational manner public and private actors both in terms of governance and of the implementation of projects;*
- *enabled to strengthen the institutional links between the different levels of stakeholders, from local to European;*
- *been an incubator and has enabled to test some experimental actions which have been included in the 2007-2013 LEADER strategy...or developed at a wider scale...;*
- *enabled to go beyond the usual ways of thinking and the actions traditionally implemented;*
- *invited local actors to develop new services, new activities and new ways of (local, national and trans-national) co-operation;*
- *strengthened the territory of the Pays.'*[26]

Case study Valle del Jerte LAG, Spain

'LEADER+ succeeded in consolidating a common identity for the Valley based upon its central crop-cherries. In doing so it built far closer links between farmers, tourist operators, public authorities and local NGOs who began to realise their individual actions had knock on effects on the others and they could all benefit by working together.

More importantly, LEADER+ helped the different actors in the Valley to realise that they could only compete by offering distinctive high quality products and services (including social and cultural services) and an excellent environment. It has broadened people´s horizons by linking a very remote rural area with European developments and provided practical examples of how they can go beyond the village to develop projects which work across entire sectors and mountain ranges. These changes in people´s mentalities and ways of doing things are likely to grow in future years.

There is no doubt that the LEADER method has become firmly embedded parts of both regional and local public administrations and that it has earned the respect of the private sector and civil society organisations. On the other hand it can be seen that some of the main advantages of the LEADER method are being threatened by a more bureaucratic and costly administrative system. The area still has some way to go before it can genuinely be said that it has not only 'caught-up' but also offers something special that attracts people to work, live and visit the area. But it is getting there and hopefully future EU programmes will correct past mistakes and allow areas like this to develop their full potential."

---

[26] French case study p. 2.

The MA respondents generally confirmed the innovative character of the LEADER projects, most notably in Spain, Germany, Luxemboug, notwithstanding skeptical remarks from France (*'it's difficult to identify LEADER as being the initial factor'*), Sweden (*'no real evidence...'*) and the Czech Republic (*'a very rough estimation could be about 10%'*). One German respondent said: *'Innovation was not always a strict criterion (for project selection), but the actions should deal with local distinctiveness and provide a benefit for the rural community. In difference to the parallel ELR-programme (mainstream) the cooperation requirements between public and public or private and public were higher.'*[27]

Fostering innovation

40% of the LAGs reported that they were able *'to suggest new and innovative ways of producing and marketing';* only 14% observed that *'there was no or little emergence of new products and services';* 16% (all of them being LAGs from EU15) spent more than 50% of expenditures *'to improve and/or promote novel products and services'*. Most strategies were not explicitly innovation-oriented in the strict meaning of the term. The LAGs rather invested in the social and infrastructural conditions to foster the emergence of innovation, and it seems that this observation is specifically true for LEADER 'beginners'. 49% of LAG respondents concede that *'the LAG is an important source of ideas and initiative'*. This rate drops to 34% for the EU10, which raises questions about the institutional processes prevailing in their starting phase.

The tools and instruments put in action around the local strategy seem to ensure a typical LEADER effect: to reach project promoters who would not have got support for their endeavour from other schemes due to being too small, not being able to provide sufficient guarantees, too new and therefore too risky in what they aspired to, or showing too little experience in the field they stepped into; as the Finnish case puts it: *'The micro-enterprises which got funding from LEADER+ would not have got funding from other sources; e.g. micro-enterprises in the nursing business were eligible only for LEADER funding. These projects generated several job opportunities for women in rural areas and without funding these micro-enterprises would have likely moved to centres.'*[28]

MA respondents were quite sure about the enhancement of local specificities and competitive advantages of rural areas (scoring 4.32 out of 5 points) and confirmed the role of LEADER+ as a *'laboratory for integrated and sustainable development of rural areas'* (same score), but they were less certain about the innovativeness of the adapted approaches with respect to self-evaluation and local development monitoring (3.21 out of 5). Some MA respondents estimated the share of funding really living up to the 'laboratory' metaphor at 10% (e.g. Austria), some at 100% (e.g. Spain). Some albeit rare responses blame risk-aversive bureaucracies for jeopardizing innovative approaches: *'I personally do not know about any LAG, where new know-how and new technologies would have been an issue or a viewpoint in the local strategy. The exaggerated power of the paying agency prevents the LAGs to invent new processes or products.'*[29]

In lagging areas of the EU10, innovation started with agricultural diversification: *'One of the visible results of LEADER is the production of a wide range of agricultural products: honey, jams, cakes, sweets etc.'* (Hungarian MA respondent). In more affluent and already diversified areas, business development was geared towards capturing new markets and improving the competitive edge of the area: '*Some LEADER+ projects have contributed to develop and strengthen the local business life. 31 % of the LEADER+ projects have created new markets and have attracted new customers'* (Danish MA respondent).

---

[27] MA interviewee from Baden-Württemberg/Germany.
[28] Finnish case study
[29] MA respondent from Hungary.

This means that the notion of 'innovation' has to be understood in a systemic sense. The innovation principle of the LEADER approach is not about a narrow, technological definition of innovation, nor is it just about innovative projects; it is first and foremost about innovative approaches and governance styles: *'LEADER I was very experimental. LEADER II and LEADER+ have had more projection and have gone further than being a laboratory. They have trialled new approaches to rural development'* (Spanish national MA respondent).

An important aspect of innovation goes in the direction of increased quality awareness which needs time to grow, and thrives on relentless feedback. The Spanish case study (Valle del Jerte/Extremadura), operating since LEADER I, provides a good example (see box).

Opening minds

LEADER brings together locals with people from other areas. 48% of LAG respondents confirmed that *'there were many occasions and events organised by the LAG in which people met for the first time'*. As presented above, meeting other LAGs encouraged the emergence of new projects. However, opening minds does not only mean looking beyond geographical borders. It also means perceiving 'otherness' in one's own area in new ways, as the Polish case study reports: *'The strengthening of local identity had an impact also on the ethnic minorities – thanks to the increased activity and better organisation'* of a certain minority in the area'.[30]

Those who confirmed that the LAG has been able *'to suggest new and innovative ways of producing and marketing'* showed a stronger tendency to appreciate meetings with other LAGs; this correlation is specifically significant with respect to contacts with LAGs in other countries. A German MA interviewee stated: *'LEADER+ has enhanced new methods, new co-operations, new networks between sectors and local actors and more synergy effects in rural development. In LEADER+ innovative projects and or innovative approaches with added value for the rural regions could be supported. LEADER+ was the only possibility to support them'*.

Actively participating in LEADER requires self-esteem, the ability of risk-taking, communication skills and other virtues which are not the typical features of what we consider as disadvantaged groups. There are some indications that there could be a potential bias towards the local 'elite', which might even gain momentum with increasing LAG autonomy. The UK case study gives a hint in this direction: *'In both areas (North Northumberland and North Pennines), a tendency to mainly engage the active, funding- or LEADER-aware elements of the community was identified. This was perhaps inevitable given the limits to the breadth of effective engagement which is possible...with a population of well over 100.000 spread over a large geographical area...This did, however, mean that excluded groups or areas may have been overlooked'.*[31]

4.2.3 Evaluation question 6

What have been the most recurrent factors of success and/or problems/critical points positively or negatively influencing the design and the implementation of innovative strategies under the LEADER+ framework?

---

[30] Polish Case study

[31] United Kingdom case study

☞ **The most recurrent problems have been identified in bureaucracy, administrative rules and procedures, dysfunctional financial flows and political interferences. The most recurrent success factors are considered to be virtues of local co-operation, networking, participation and encouragement. Communication among local stake-holders and between them and the programme authorities, as well as wider net-works are seen as crucial. The quest for autonomy and independent decision-making is widespread among LAGs, but formal autonomy is not the same as the felt, the perceived autonomy.**

Introduction

The evaluation question explores the barriers and the main levers of improvement as perceived by the LAG respondents. Both may root in endogenous features (socio-economic environment) or in context conditions (governance environment).

The question yielded a large number of responses which we treated in the following way:

1) The evaluation team grouped the answers to these questions into five categories:

   a. Administration and funding

   b. Governance (= steering structures at both programme and LAG level)

   c. Strategy (= the national/regional strategy, the local development strategy, and the territorial context)[32]

   d. Know-how (= capabilities of local actors and stakeholders, know-how transfer and capacity development at local and regional level)

   e. Local co-operation (= culture and capacity of local stakeholders, hence the social capital of the area)

Sometimes it was difficult to attribute single mentions to one of the categories. But the categorization was not meant to produce clear-cut clusters. The main issue is to bring the categories into a meaningful relationship with each other, according to the degree to which one or the other factor can be influenced by local actors.

2) We only picked the issues first-mentioned by the LAG respondents (sometimes there was just one answer, but the majority of those who answered mentioned several issues). This reduction was based on the assumption that the respondents deem those issues most relevant which come into their minds first.

3) Finally we produced the synthesis shown in figure 8.

Findings

Asked for the most critical obstacles as well as success factors for a good implementation of the LEADER approach, the LAG responses[33] revealed an interesting pattern:

---

[32] The EQ explores success of failure of strategies. These factors may root within the realm of strategic issues as well as in other realms (governance, know-how…). 'Strategy' is therefore explicitly mentioned as one causal category.

[33] Examples for typical answers are provided in table 8.

Figure 8. The categories of success factors and obstacles for a good LEADER+ implementation
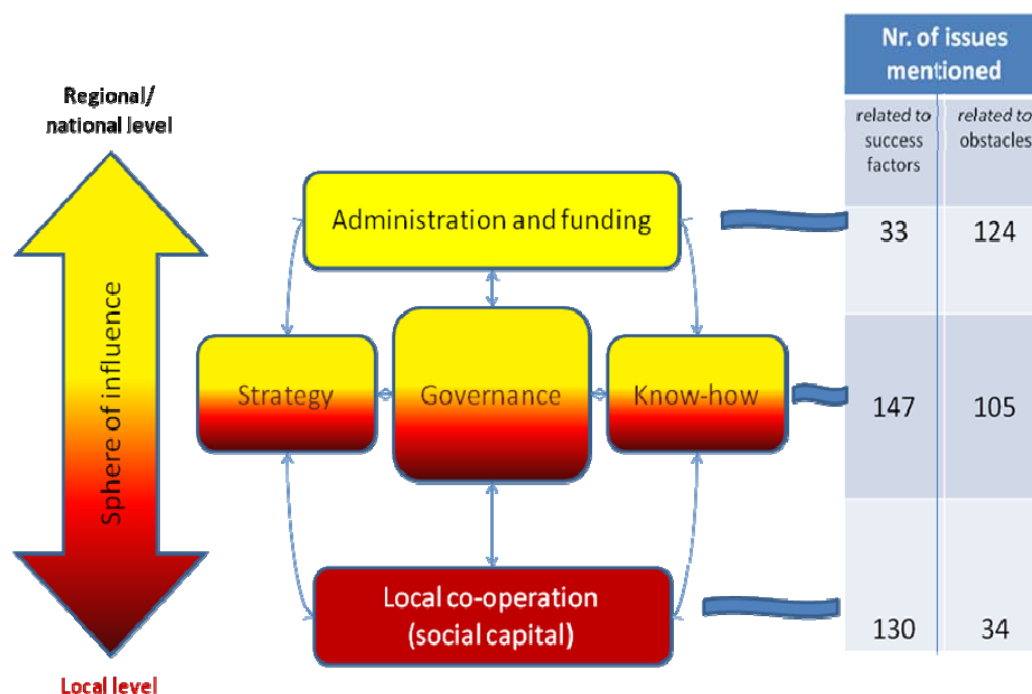
The upper box concerns the politico-administrative and financial framework on which local stakeholders have no or very little influence. The lower box concerns the local social capital, on which programme authorities have no or little influence. The middle range where the boxes 'strategy', 'governance' and 'know-how' are arranged is a zone of overlapping influence.

Among the 147 mentioned **success factors** from the middle range,

67	Issues related to strategies
41	Issues related to governance
39	Issues related to know-how.

Among the 105 mentioned **obstacles** from the middle range,

57	issues related to governance
27	issues related to strategies
21	issues related to know-how.

This distribution shows that

- negative influences (obstacles) are rather ascribed to external determinants;
- positive factors, but also levers of improvement, are rather ascribed to the own social potential.

In table 16 we provide a selected number of **quotations for typical obstacles**, verbatim from the LAG questionnaires. As we pointed out above, these quotations have all been mentioned in first position so we can conclude that they are of high relevance to the respondents.

Table 16. Examples for critical obstacles to designing and implementing LDSs

Administraton and funding	Clarity	There is uncertainty of co-funding sources, of project eligibility criteria, of legislation, of responsibilities...
	Procedures	Payment delays, bureaucratic project approval, excessive red tape; huge bureaucracy; lengthy evaluation and decision-making processes...
	Communication	Language barrier between non-governmental, public and business partners; 'double talk' between LAG and authorities about the prerogative of local decision making; different opinions about the LEADER approach
	Resources	Poor and fragmented resources; global financial crisis; LAG is reliant on public resources; small money – difficulties with liquidity; lack of local funds...
Governance	Political support	Lack of political support; the institutional hostility to any method that is not totally controlled by the state; gradual reduction of LAG autonomy; lack of coordination by MA; relationship between LAG and local authorities...
	Rules and regulations	Complicated, centralised; too many rules prevent some individuals/groups from applying for grant aid...
Strategy	Rural context	Lack of critical mass in rural areas; inadequate LAG area; no clear identity of the area; little diversification of economic activities...
	Vision	Lack of sophisticated vision for rural development; local character of some projects; still a sectoral approach...
Know-how	Experience	Lack of experience of MA and social partners; the advantage of co-operation and networking is difficult to explain...
	Human resources	Insufficient staff; loss of HR between programmes...
Local co-operation	Attitudes	Introversion; lack of local funds; consciousness of people; little civil participation; local rivalries...
	Participation	Bad/difficult access for private organisations/companies;

In table 17 we provide a selected number of **quotations for typical success factors**, verbatim from the LAG questionnaires. Again, these quotations have all been mentioned in first position. They are considered as being of high relevance to the respondents.

Table 17. Examples for critical success factors to designing and implementing LDSs

Local co-operation	Networking	Network management; communication; open system of information and communication; networking and exchange among LAGs; versatile information giving...
	Bottom-up	Back to base; approach to take decisions; local approach; initiative taken by grass-root operators; great number of activists; co-operation takes time; local people know what they need; animation of the NGO sector to action; focus on involvement of local public in the projects; time between project idea generation and implementation...
	Partnership and management	Co-operative staff and board; quality of recruited staff; a sufficient animation team; establishment of an open and co-operative spirit within the LAG itself; the LAG is composed of a majority of the private sector; the involvement of representatives of the civil sector; voluntary work...
	Attitude	Change of attitude of the people; breaking the passive attitude of the community; rural communities realised that they are able to change their surrounding environment and living conditions; Europe came into the picture in a positive way...

Strategy	Appropriateness	Local strategy that can react to changes; financial capacity of bodies running projects; assuring that the projects have positive impacts not only for the project leader but for the area as a whole; proximity; improvement and starting-up of economic activities; creating employment; umbrella projects for small initiatives (<10.000€)...
	Innovation	Laboratory experience; number of innovative products or performances; pilot projects and innovation experiments; new radical approaches; a flexible instrument in rural territories for technical and financial support for entrepreneurs and other actors. ...
Know-how	Local knowledge	Very good knowledge about the problems of the community; human capital to build up social capital...
	Professionalism	Experience in rural development; good advice from colleagues...
Governance	Political support	Support from local authorities; strong public sector lead; lowering the influence of local governments...
	Rules and regulations	Same rules for every country...
	LAG autonomy	Subsidiarity; territorial budget locally managed; the LAG is the only responsible for the granting of subsidies; independence of LAGs...
Administration and funding	Clarity	...of instructions from MA and of task assignments of each committee; well structured guidelines; transparent, stable, consistent legal background; financial resources; managing of finances from local level...

Notes on funding

Apart from the wish to decentralise decision making and of the quest for the autonomy of LAGs we find very little reference to administration and funding processes among the success factors mentioned in table 18.

There is an important element which comes out more prominently in the case studies than in the list of critical obstacles and success factors: the benefits of upfront payments ensuring a smooth and swift project start, helping to avoid additional cost for interests on credits and long delays due to late payments. The Spanish case study reminds us that in LEADER I the conditions used to be much better in this respect: *'At that time, 80% of the LAG's Community budget was trans-ferred at the beginning of the period, affording LAGs in Extremadura significant autonomy and flexibility to act. Pre-financing in the LEADER+ period stood at 7% of Community funds making financial flows problematic.'*[34] This practice can still be found in LEADER+, although rather as an exception than as the rule: the LAG Redange-Witz/Luxemburg received an advance of 20% of the EAGGF and national budget already in 2001, after legal registration of the LAG.[35]

Local co-funding such as practised in the German LAG Erlebenswelt Roth (Bavarian case study) can provide stopgap assistance. This co-funding was provided for projects following specific co-operation criteria, which encouraged *'a high share of project promoters and municipalities...(to build up) partnerships and co-operation between public and private groups in order to obtain the granted aid of the district administration (Kreisverwaltung).'*[36] Municipal financial contributions, mostly calculated as a fee per inhabitant, are widespread practice for ensuring a minimum ma-noeuvrability of the LAG management.

---

[34] Spanish case study
[35] Luxemburg case study
[36] German case study

The LAG Redange-Witz stated that *'these two financial commitments (the initial 20% advance and the contributions from the municipalities) allowed smooth management of operating costs and provided a working capital immediately available to final beneficiaries.'[37]*

Notes on public authorities in their role as local stakeholders

There is an ambiguity in the perception of local authorities as local stakeholders. For some LAG respondents, they have a special mission in taking the lead, bestowing the required democratic legitimacy to the deliberative processes. Other respondents believe that the dominant presence of public authorities curbs innovation, impedes change, and imports local rivalries into the group. These respondents rather want them to reduce their influence. This standpoint is certainly in-stilled by negative experiences. However, there is no standard recipe for avoiding difficulties originating in the participation or non-participation of public actors in the LAG. It is clear that

- the deliberative space opened up and occupied by the LAG has to have interfaces with the institutions of representative democracy, and these interfaces will have to be or at least include public bodies;
- public bodies follow their own logic like any other organisation; their self-interest paired with political power can become an obstacle to the LEADER approach if the respective stakeholders act either below or beyond their required level of participation.

Each LAG has to find navigable channels through uncharted waters. No solution will ever be definite. Sometimes everything depends on the attitude of very few individuals: *'the learning effect within the partnership was the insight that collaboration and co-operation depend on atti-tudes of single responsible persons.'[38]* The Hungarian case study provides a catchy example: *'The mode and success of the establishment and operation of LEADER is often linked with the skills, personality and enthusiasm of key local actors. This has been the case in Sümeg as well, where the leader of the later Gestor organisation played a very important role in organising the local networks, the foundation of the LAG and in setting up a strategy.'[39]*

4.2.4 Conclusions Theme 2, Action 1

LEADER connects people. There is widespread consensus that the LEADER approach and the formation of the LAG brought actors together who would otherwise not have met or started a joint activity. This judgement holds both for the operational level (joint projects) and the strategic level (participation in LDS design and implementation). LEADER encourages civil society partici-pation, although LAGs are mostly composed of delegated partners. The participation of women is strong concerning the development activities and projects, as well as in the technical staff, al-though they remain underrepresented on LAG boards. Concerning the youth, it is still a chal-lenge to get young people on the LAG board, and 10% can already be considered as a signifi-cant achievement; however, activities involving young people are quite widespread.

It is also evident that **LEADER+ has brought forth new products and services**, but it is less innovation in products or technologies than the concentration on 'soft measures' and the enrich-ment of social capital which finally generates economic effects through a two-pronged mode of action: backward bonding (strengthening local identity and awareness of local potential) and for-ward bonding (creating synergies and complementarities between local actors around a common purpose and vision). These effects are less significant in the LEADER+ type measures of the EU10 due to the short running time. Investments in social capital take longer to engender meas-urable effects in the economic area than 'hard investments' in economic infrastructures and

---

[37] Luxemburg case study
[38] German case study
[39] Hungarian case study

businesses. The priority of collective, co-operative and immaterial investments is evident in LEADER+. This entails that technological or economic innovation at enterprise level is not a major focus of expenditures.

It is less obvious that the LAG succeeds in integrating weaker parts of the population into development processes. This requires additional efforts often accompanied by separately funded projects with explicit equity goals. In general, mind-opening activities, such as co-operation with other territories seem to foster learning processes favouring a more differentiated view and therefore a balanced approach towards social and ecological sustainability; but this effect is non-linear and not amenable to planning.

Asked about the **principal obstacles and success factors** for implementing innovative LEADER strategies, the LAG respondents located most obstacles in the framework conditions lying beyond the influence sphere of local actors, whereas the success factors and proposed solutions are perceived as pertaining to the quality of the social capital, the capacity to co-operate and the collective ability to translate a shared vision into real projects. The quest for autonomy and the ownership of LAGs concerning their local development strategy is a recurrent topic. Decentralisation of project approval and funding are broadly advocated, not least as a reaction to bureaucratic excesses experienced in the current period 2007-2013. As a conclusion, sufficient room for manoeuvre is necessary, but formal autonomy alone does not suffice to unfold the virtues of the LEADER feature 'decentralised management and financing'. There are a number of additional financial, technical and social capital-related factors which may either paralyze or dynamize the LAG, as the case may be. If the multi-level governance context is not really prepared to provide an enabling environment for the LAG in its role as fully fledged local development agency, the model of 'medium autonomy' could represent a better choice for the LAG to fulfil its role as the promoter of local development in rural areas.

To increase their room for manoeuvre, some LAGs proposed upfront payments and local per capita fees allowing the LAG managing staff to carry out their essential tasks from the very beginning, thus helping to avoid delayed project start-ups. The endowment with human resources for local animation and networking is considered as insufficient by many respondents, some of them complaining about the burden of administrative, auditing and reporting tasks which divert the technical staff from their core business.

Action 2: Inter-territorial and transnational cooperation between rural territories

4.2.5 Evaluation question 7

To what extent have cooperation activities contributed to reach the necessary critical mass for the implementation of effective territorial-based development projects?

  ☞ **Co-operation activities offered varying sources of inspiration for LAGs. Whilst LAGs tended to view co-operation with neighbouring LAGs as a strong encouragement for joint projects, the benefits of co-operation with LAGs from other countries was more through inspiring alternative ideas for rural development or for enhancing their outreach with local stakeholders.**

Introduction

The focus of this evaluation question was on investigating the contribution of co-operation activities within countries and between countries. The question examines the practical significance of co-operation as a source of inspiration and support, and generating projects that would other-

wise not have been started. The effects of co-operation might also be examined to see whether it contributed towards improving internal management.

Findings

Almost three quarters of MA in the survey agreed or strongly agreed that projects were implemented that either would not or could not have been implemented without inter-territorial co-operation. For LAGs, contact between neighbouring groups was cited as being most productive for coming up with new projects; the highest number of respondents said that this kind of co-operation 'frequently' led to new projects. The survey did show some significant variance in terms of the significance of neighbourly relations for LAGs. In some countries, (Ireland, Finland) LAGs in neighbouring areas were rated very favourably as sources of new projects, whilst in Lithuania and Latvia for example, none of the LAGs said that neighbourly co-operation was a frequent source of inspiration. However, there were very few who said that contacts with neighbouring LAGs made no contribution to project formation.

Table 18. Emergence of new projects by meetings

| | Emergence of new projects by meetings | | |
	with neighbouring LAGs	with LAGs in the same country	with LAGs in other countries
frequently	40%	35%	13%
to some extent	54%	64%	71%
not at all	5%	7%	14%

The majority of LAGs positively rated co-operation within countries. One difference was that there were fewer who said that co-operation activities were a frequent source of new projects. Although there are several possible explanations, it might also lend some credence to the view that different operating methods between LAGs might inhibit easy co-operation. First and foremost, these meetings seem to have had strengthened the LAGs ability *to "suggest new and innovative ways of producing and marketing":* 47.5% of those for whom the emergence of new projects has been a *"frequent"* outcome of these meetings, gave this explanation; and still 38.2% of those for whom this outcome has surfaced believed this *"to some extent"*. This effect outweighs the direct impact on sales promotion (the statement: *"products that we helped launch are now sold in larger quantities and further away"* was confirmed by 22.5% of the ones who answered *"frequently"* and by 20% of the ones who answered *"to some extent"*).

Outcomes from co-operation activities varied depending on whether the partner was a neighbour, a co-national or a LAG from abroad. For example, although almost 90% of the LAGs surveyed said they co-operated with LAGs from other countries, compared to co-operation with neighbouring LAGs, transnational co-operation was almost three times less likely to be a frequent source of new projects and three times more likely to have no impact on project formation.

Practice varied within and between countries. In Asturias, Spain, for example, the MA said that there were no co-operation mechanisms, although other Spanish regions spoke positively of the contribution of both transnational and inter-territorial co-operation. The National Authority, for example, said that 'the introduction and spread of new technologies into the rural work would not have been possible without cooperation between territories'.

There were several observable characteristics for those LAGs who, compared to their peers, saw greater benefits coming out co-operation. For example, LAGs who said that their work had helped promote alternative views of the future in their rural areas also tended to see transnational co-operation as an important means for generating new projects. Similarly, those who said

that transnational co-operation was important for them also tended to be those LAGs that considered themselves successful in mobilising local stakeholders.

The amount of resources devoted to inter-territorial co-operation activities varied between 2-10% of the total resources. In some countries, there were no funds at all for both inter-regional and transnational co-operation, whereas in others, there were no separate funds to pay for this (Poland, Latvia). In Bavaria and Hessen, for instance, around 5% of all LAG projects were co-operation activities between groups, whilst in other regions, MAs said there were only 'several' co-operation projects or none at all. In Abruzzo, the MA said that there were 'only a few co-operation projects between territories', whereas in Emilia Romagna, there were 18 co-operation projects between territories, albeit amounting to only 2% of the total number of projects.

4.2.6 Evaluation question 8

To what extent have cooperation activities encouraged the transfer of information, good practices and know-how between rural areas in the field of rural development?

> ☞ **Co-operation activities principally channel information and ideas on better project management amongst peers within countries. A clear benefit of within country co-operation was that those that were involved with co-operation projects were also more likely to possess alternative sources of funding for LAG activities.**

Introduction

The evaluation question investigates co-operation activities as a source of information that was considered valuable for the LAGs. Addressing this question involves analysing what LAGs expected to come out of meeting with other LAGs and whether or not these expectations can be connected to specific outcomes, so for example, whether or not LAGs saw co-operation activities as helping identify complementary sources of funding.

Findings

Meeting LAGs from neighbouring territories was positively rated for helping improve management. 80 of the 88 responses stated that these meetings either helped to some extent or frequently helped. Meeting with LAGs from other parts of the same country was even more highly regarded with only 3 from 97 responses saying that co-operation activities had no impact on how they managed their own LAG. Co-operation activities with LAGs from other countries were much less important for learning new ways of management, with over a third saying that the activities made no difference to their management. However, the majority of MAs tended to see co-operation activities as an important, if limited means of passing on good practice.

Table 19. Emergence of better management practices by meetings

	Improvement of LAG management by meetings		
	with neighbouring LAGs	with LAGs in the same country	with LAGs in other countries
frequently	31%	31%	12%
to some extent	60%	65%	49%
not at all	9%	4%	38%

Compared with the importance of co-operation for improving management or producing new projects, co-operation activities were not as highly rated for finding new funding.   Most said that co-operation had no effect on identifying alternative funding. Where co-operation did help find funding, this was most likely to come out of meetings with LAGs in other parts of the country, rather than with neighbours. Only a very few found transnational co-operation to be a frequent source of inspiration for new funds.

Do LAGs that rate co-operation as a good way of identifying alternative income also tend to be those that have secure additional and non-programme funds? Here, at least in respect of inter-territorial co-operation there was a positive correlation between LAGs considering co-operation important and those who possessed additional, non-LEADER funds. There was less clear evidence of more specific contributions, for instance, no positive relation was in evidence between co-operation with different LAGs and whether or not a LAG had secured funds from national government, regional or local authorities, or the private sector.

Outcomes of co-operation sometimes varied according to the proximity of the partner. Within country LAGs are more important than neighbouring LAGs for finding alternative sources of funding which suggests that neighbouring LAGs might be in competition for the same local and regional funds. When it comes to addressing common management issues, then proximity is not a significant consideration.

4.2.7 Evaluation question 9

To what extent have cooperation activities strengthened the territorial cohesion and integration across the European Union and the integration with neighbouring countries?

> ☛ **Co-operation across territories not only led to the involvement of new actors, the networks created were held as being lasting by a majority of LAGs and contributing to the reinforcing of local identities. Further afield, there was strong evidence that LAGs pursued cross-border co-operation in conjunction with existing institutional structures, such as INTERREG as well as working autonomously to forge co-operative ties across borders.**

Introduction

The evaluation question explores how far integration and cohesion were fostered through the joint activities of LAGs within and between countries. It focuses on the work of the LAG as a means of overcoming social and cultural barriers through contact and co-operation with similar groups across borders. It looks for connections between LAG efforts at cross border co-operation and other programmes aiming for similar goals.

Findings

LAGs were asked what they thought the impact of their co-operation activities were in respect of situations where there were significant social or cultural differences. Over half those surveyed said that their actions created contacts that would not otherwise have been made, whilst just under a third said that according to the numbers of people involved, there were a lot of people in both areas who were interested in co-operation. Only in 5% of cases, did LAGs report that people were not interested in co-operating. A second indicator of the contribution of co-operation activities to territorial cohesion was whether LAGs felt that lasting networks had been built and that there was a willingness to co-operate with groups outside the area. 60% of LAGs said this was one of the results of their work, which made it the third most popular achievement.

Did co-operation activities contribute to the **visibility and promotion** of the area? LAGs were asked whether their co-operation activities had influenced how people in partner areas viewed their region. Most said that the views of people in their partner countries had changed, although the slight majority said that these views had changed 'a bit' rather than 'a lot'. There is a positive correlation with one of the outcomes of the LAG work – reinforcing local identity - with one outcome of co-operation – that it frequently led to new projects.

In respect of co-operation activities established with territories **outside the programme** practices varied significantly. In some countries (Belgium, some parts of Italy), the MA said that there were no co-operation activities outside the programme. However, over half of the group said that they were involved in activities with existing **cross-border co-operation structures** such as INTERREG and Euroregions. The most frequently cited programme was INTERREG (28) followed by initiatives organised by Euroregions (20). The MA concurred with the view – 36 responses agreed (23) or strongly agreed (13) that there was evidence that co-operation activities have been established with territories outside of the programme. Involvement in cross border co-operation was positively associated with being able to say that LAG work had helped to reinforce local identity, to the same extent with INTERREG and Euroregion programmes.

There was a clear divide between those who pursued co-operation across borders within established institutional frameworks and those who said that they pursued co-operation without the involvement of any particular programme or cross border institution. Euroregions were more likely to be partners for the EU 15 than they were for the EU10, but INTTERREG was cited as a partner in equal measure for both groups. However, regardless of whether co-operation was pursued within the framework of LEADER or with another institutional arrangement co-operation activity was positively correlated with LAG's view that they had reinforced local identity and helped create lasting rural networks that would enable further, future co-operation.

4.2.8 Evaluation question 10

What have been the most recurrent factors of success and/or problems/critical points positively or negatively influencing inter-territorial and transnational cooperation under the LEADER framework?

> ☞ **LAGs sought timely, targeted and specific information on the possibilities for greater co-operation both within and between countries. Opportunities for face to face meetings, without necessarily having specific outcomes required, were particularly valued, and reforms to the financing of the kinds of meetings that could be supported was frequently mentioned. Particular difficulties were identified in the realm of diverging working practices, between countries and within them, and there were recommendations for making organising co-operation more of a profession within LAGs. Successful co-operation worked best where there were common interests and concerns, and this was something in which national networks and the LEADER Observatory could play a critical brokering role.**

Introduction

The evaluation question explores how LAGs reflected on their experience of co-operation. It analyses and offers a ranking of topics that contribute to successful networking as well as those that appear to be detrimental.

Findings

LAGs were asked to say how they thought co-operation might be improved, both with LAGs in the same country and LAGs in others. Almost all the LAGs had something to say about the functioning of co-operation in the LEADER+ programme. Their answers can be grouped into six main categories, which necessarily have some overlaps, and also some double entries. By far the most frequent set of observations (60%) concerned the provision of information that would better enable successful exchange of experience and lead to more co-operation. The fact that so many wanted more opportunities to learn about others in similar situations points to a high value placed on co-operation between LAGs. Suggestions focused on improved databases for partner search, the provision of databases in national languages and that facilities to enable participation for those who do not speak the language of their would be partners. The responses offered many ideas on the ideal means of transmitting know-how – monthly newsletters, videos on projects, regular meetings, annual European meetings and transnational fairs scheduled earlier enough to allow for longer term co-operation.

The second most recurring theme was the importance of different kinds of face to face meeting for enabling useful co-operation; there were 44 responses that explicitly stressed the need for this kind of meeting to enable co-operation. Most did not specify whether these meetings should be with LAGs in their own country or abroad; when they did, over twice as many wanted there to be more meetings with LAGs from other countries.

The third most common set of observations dealt with financial matters, including both specific and general comments. The majority of the 32 responses were requests for increased funding to pay for co-operation projects. Specific suggestions concerned introducing greater flexibility in the funding of early 'match making' phases, funding of the travelling to meetings whether for the purpose of study visit, exchanges or to take part in transnational events. Related rules changes include greater clarity on the eligible costs within co-operation projects, and the removal of 'financial borders' as one respondent put it, between funding ordinary projects and co-operation projects.

A fourth category was concerned with regulatory matters. Differences between LAGs both within and between countries were explicitly mentioned as a problem in 8 of the 27 responses in this category. Some recommended that there should be a harmonisation of the rules, for instance, concerning the selection criteria for co-operation projects. Others preferred the better provision of information on rule differences, so that they could find out for themselves what was different about their would be partner. A third suggestion on this topic was that the rules relating to (trans-national) co-operation should be simplified. Some were aware that there were guidelines on co-operation, but complained that they were too 'theoretical', ignoring the different administrative constraints on transnational co-operation. Other problems cited with the administration of co-operation projects were that the bureaucracy was too slow or too inflexible. Several respondents wanted LAGs to be given more autonomy over decision making power for instance, being able to commission organisations other than the LAG itself to run cooperation projects.

This last point echoes a recurring theme that co-operation projects, especially between countries, requires particular kinds of skills that need to be both acquired and retained within the LAG. In some cases, LAGs suggested that there should be external facilitators whose responsibility was to find matching partners, organise programmes and handle the administration of joint activities. In other cases, there seemed to be a desire to keep the work in house. So, for example, one LAG wanted board members to be involved in exchanges, rather than just the LAG managers, another said that there should be a professionalisation of workers who were specialised in co-operation projects. One related suggestion was that it was vital that animators that were recruited to help regional networks were kept beyond the end of the programming period 'to avoid the turnover which makes it compulsory to re-start everything from the start [...] at the beginning

of each programming period'. They should be encouraged to meet up regularly with animators in their own country and from others.

The fifth most frequent category of responses addressing supporting and constraining factors focused on the importance of co-operation being first and foremost between those who shared common interests. As one put it, 'co- operation grows out of good networking activities and the personal relation between people with strong and powerful interest in co-operation.'   From the 15 responses given in this category, over two-thirds used the word common, most in the context in achieving common aims, but a fair number referring to co-operation as an important way of solving common problems.

A final, albeit small category was created for those that singled out time as being a relevant con- sideration. There were five responses that explicitly mentioned time. All wanted more of it, some because the bureaucracy was too slow, some because everyday work left them with no time and others because the business of finding partners, especially ones abroad 'was not easy and that co-operation takes time'.

Whilst the majority were positively inclined towards the benefits of co-operation with other LAGs, there were a number of off-putting problems, most specifically, problems with the amount of money allocated, what it could and could not be spent on and the different ways in which LAGs were governed. Not knowing in advance about some of these differences clearly frustrated some LAGs. At the same time, there were many requests for more regular face to face meetings, both within country and outside. Prospective partners looked for those sharing common interests and for information to be easily available to help them make informed decisions about where to in- vest their energies. Co-operation was time consuming and sometimes there was an over- expectation for actions to quickly take the form of projects rather than be allowed to develop over time.

4.2.9 Conclusions Theme 2, Action 2

There was a great deal of variation concerning co-operation between LAGs in LEADER+ from being a 'key factor to their success' (Estonia) to the view that 'co-operation did not represent a value added for projects, since they could have been executed by LAGs individually (Calabria, Italy). The overall amounts of designated resources for co-operation varied between 2-10% of the total resources, however, in some countries, there were neither funds nor mechanisms for inter-regional and transnational co-operation. In the new member states, for instance, only Hun- gary offered a separate budget for inter-LAG co-operation, although others did find ways to fund co-operation activities between groups. It was not just in the NMS though that co-operation was more limited. In parts of Spain and Italy, for instance, there were no specific funds nor provisions to encourage inter-territorial co-operation.

The motivations for contacting and co-operating with other groups encompassed open curiosity, problem solving, experience exchange as well as more instrumental considerations. As the MA in Aragon, Spain put it there are some projects which, because of their nature, need to go be- yond a single LAG's area, for example, particularly, establishing distinct leisure trials, or market- ing products from a certain area. This tendency is illustrated in the responses to the question on outcomes from co-operation, LAGs were much more likely to come up with new projects with groups that were close by rather than ones from further a field. Meeting LAGs within a country was positively rated for helping improve management whereas trans-national co-operation was much less important in this respect. Most LAGs said that co-operation had little or no effect on identifying alternative funding, it was also very seldom mentioned as a 'principal tool' for improv- ing implementation of territorial development plans.

Co-operation activity was positively correlated with the view that the LAG had helped reinforce local identity and helped create lasting rural networks that would enable future co-operation. There did appear some evidence that engaging in bridging between areas enhanced local ties, and whilst its contribution to improving social relations between areas was relatively modest, the majority believed that they had helped create lasting networks, and enhance the propensity to collaborate between rural populations.

One related theme was that co-operation was time consuming and that sometimes there was an over-expectation for actions to quickly take the form of projects rather than be allowed to develop over time. One suggestive finding in this respect was the degree to which LAGs pursued co-operation activities in the company of existing institutional structures or whether they acted independently. Of those surveyed, almost half had worked on cross border projects with Euroregions or INTERREG, whereas almost the same proportion said they had collaborated with groups from other countries but they had done so on their own. Although there is not enough evidence to establish exactly what might explain this difference, triggering factors could include the absence of co-operation mechanisms, shortage of funds or limited human resources, all of which were cited as obstacles to greater co-operation.   Alternatively, the ability to work autonomously might be connected to the quality and strength of co-operation within a country. In Estonia and France, for example, where the MA rated co-operation as particularly strong, almost all cross border work was pursued independently.

A final issue relates to the question of the skills and resources needed for better co-operation. Some LAGs felt that co-operation was valuable but required dedicated staff and resources, and that the requirements for successful co-operation were substantial enough to warrant professional support, including the ability to outsource project management. Animators for instance, might be encouraged to pursue co-operation activities as part of their professional responsibilities, sharing experience on a regular basis through national and European networks.

Action 3: Networking of all rural areas in the Community

4.2.10 Evaluation question 11

To what extent have national networks and the LEADER Observatory supported and facilitated cooperation between rural territories and the transfer of information, good practices and know-how between rural areas in the field of rural development?

> ☞ **LAGs drew on national networks and the LEADER Observatory for different purposes. Whereas the former tended to provide information on LAG activities and broker introductions within countries, the LEADER Observatory was more used for finding partners outside the country. A significant minority of LAGs made little or no use of the two groups for either information purposes or for finding partners.**

Introduction

The evaluation question explores the relationship between two programme supports and the LAGs. It investigates the kinds of interaction, their frequencies and develops an assessment of support by all parties involved.

Findings

Most LAGs said they had either frequent or regular contact with their National Network Unit. The most popular form of contact was training and study visits organised by the NNUs.   Did NNU contribute to the success of cooperation projects? In terms of the actual use of NNU services, LAGs said that they frequently relied on the NNU for exchanges of experience with LAGs within

the country as well as with networks in other countries. The majority said that the NNU was an important source of information about the activities of other LAGs and the second most popular assessment was that the NNU was a source of good practical advice for developing new projects. Just over a quarter of LAGs said that the NNU was useful in identifying and making introductions to new partners.

Just over half the LAGs said that they participated in working groups organised by the NNU, and over three quarters said that they had taken part in training programmes and study visits. LAGs were positive in terms of the usefulness of the NNU supported networking, but they were much less likely to rate the importance of the NNU in terms of advice on implementing horizontal objectives, for example. The LEADER+ hotline was also not considered relevant with only 13 singling it out as a service they had used.

Not all LAGs used the NNUs. Over a quarter described themselves as having only a very limited relation with the NNU, saying that they only made use of it occasionally and that it was not important for their work. MA were asked whether they believed that the NNU had fostered effective co-operation between diverse sectors in the rural economy, with other levels of sub-government, with other rural networks and with disadvantaged groups. Just over one half agreed with the statement, 11% said they strongly believed that this was the case whilst the rest either disagreed (8%) or expressed no opinion on the matter (29%).

In terms of contact with the LEADER Observatory, half the group said that they had used the LAG database and 40% said that they had used the LEADER Observatory to find out about co-operation projects. 41% said that they had searched for partners using the facilities of the LEADER Observatory. In other respects, LAG use of the LEADER Observatory was mixed, only 6 of the 103 said they used the Infobank and 12 used the Monitoring indicators database. The database on LEADER+ good practices was used by 43 LAGs. On the whole, the LEADER Observatory was less used than the NNUs. Whereas 17 LAGs said that they contacted the NNU on a frequent basis, only one LAG (UK) said that it was in frequent contact with the LEADER Observatory. The vast majority described their contact as occasional and one quarter said they had never been in touch with the LEADER Observatory. When it came to describing their relation, the most popular self assessment from LAGs was that the LEADER Observatory was not important for their work and they only made use of it occasionally. The second most popular answer was that the LEADER Observatory was a good source of information concerning what other LAGs were up to, but the third most frequent answer was that the LEADER Observatory 'was not important for our work'. What received the lowest number of responses was the assessment that the LEADER Observatory offered good advice and practical support for developing new projects.

Less than half of the MAs thought that the LEADER Observatory helped launch new projects, in fact, 20% of those interviewed disagreed with the proposition and the biggest category was those who gave no opinion. There was greater willingness to say that the LEADER Observatory had been instrumental as a source of relevant information and as a means of transmitting good practices to others.

It was clear that services like the LAG partner search were well regarded. A majority also took part in the working groups and training offered which suggests a well targeted and effective relationship. There were other services though that were almost routinely ignored. The LEADER Observatory was, perhaps predictably, less well used than the NNU; MAs for example, did not think it had a great role to play in brokering between potential partners. However, as a source of information on what other LAGs were doing, both LAGs and MAs rated the LEADER Observatory as useful.

4.2.11 Evaluation question 12

What are the main lessons learnt, critical points, good practices and useful recommendations that can be drawn from the LEADER experience, in particular in view of the implementation of the National and European Rural Networks for Rural Development set up under articles 67 and 68 of Council Regulation EC 1698/2005?

☞ **Funding for co-operation was raised as significant in terms of the kinds of supported activities and the amount of resources allocated. Co-operation between groups sometimes became more complicated and time consuming because of unforeseen variations in internal management. This might be avoided if prompt and reliable information could be accessed on significant differences between and within countries. Networking could be enhanced if benefits were clearly articulated and geared to solving common problems. National networking units can have a strong role in both identifying such needs and working with partners in other countries to create appropriate fora to engage with interested LAGs.**

Introduction

The evaluation question further examines the effective functioning of national and European networks as sources of support and inspiration for LAGs.

Findings

As mentioned in the answers to EQ10, LAGs identified two main difficulties for further developing co-operation activities. One was the amount of funding that was made available for this, including some of the items that could or could not be funded. The second was the sheer variety of internal mechanisms for running groups, which created difficulties that were initially unforeseen. Many respondents said that they valued co-operation in the broadest sense and not necessarily tied to carrying out joint projects together. By far the vast majority looked to co-operation as a source of inspiration for dealing with situations in their own contexts, particularly where they might face similar or common challenges. Funding was not only insufficient in the eyes of some, but it did not reflect the open ended nature of early stage meetings that might or might not lead to concrete projects. In fact the vast majority of requests for more meetings did not mention them in respect of producing new projects, but in learning about others experience and promoting LEADER+ to different audiences, whether at national or transnational levels. Many LAGs saw great virtue in study visits to other LAGs, a small number saw this as peer learning, and others as a way that the newcomers could gain insight from the more established LAGs, but the most frequent criticism was that the funding for travel was limited or too heavy in its administrative requirements. As one respondent put it, co-operation would be furthered if there were 'not too high expectations in regard to measurable/tangible objectives'.

Co-operation between LAGs was not simply something that was added on to the list of LAG activities, it worked better where the benefits were clearer. Many respondents talked of the importance of networking being targeted, information being relevant, and meetings being organised in which it is easy to identify those who shared common goals, interests or problems. In order to enhance the contribution that networking could make, it was important for a number of LAGs that either NNUs or perhaps EU based information providers, could identify in an easy to use and easily solvable way, where there were important differences in the rules governing co-operation activities.

Key recommendations from the LAGs for improving the networking devices for rural development were that co-operation needs to be well thought out in terms of its timing and its demands on staff and member time. Unforeseen complications could be avoided if prompt and reliable in-

formation could be accessed on significant differences between countries, and in some case regions in the same country.

Transnational co-operation would be well served by transnational fairs organised early in the programming period. These could be supported by partner search facilities that were available in national languages. Some wanted additional language support such as simultaneous translation.

There was a strong sense that co-operation was a skilled activity that required people who were committed to it and who would be a constant in the process. Some mentioned professionalisation, others identifying those who would particularly benefit from strong networks, such as animators. Others though wanted the experience to permeate beyond the useful core suspects to take in other members of the LAG.

Networking and cooperation were seen as a source of inspiration and know-how for making improvements to LAGs domestic efforts. Study visits and thematic workshops were considered a useful input to the LAGs' own work. A crucial aspect seems to be that the NNU should be well informed of the LAGs needs and interests and that they have a very professional approach to networking and cooperation with due consideration for LAG managers' time and costs.

The NNU and the LEADER Observatory were considered a useful source of information on LAG activities and on the different regulatory contexts in which the different LAGs were working. An up-to-date database of LAGs and their activities is a key tool in the search for partners. Given that the linguistic proficiency of the LAG staff cannot be taken for granted due efforts are necessary to ensure that translation and interpretation are available if needed.

4.2.12 Conclusions Theme 2, Action 3

While not all LAGs used the NNUs, most LAGs said they had either frequent or regular contact. The most popular form of contact was training and study visits organised by the NNUs. A majority agreed that the NNU was an important source of information about what other LAGs were up to whilst the second most popular assessment was that the NNU was a source of good practical advice for developing new projects. Just over a quarter of LAGs said that the NNU was useful in identifying and making introductions to new partners.

On the whole, the LEADER Observatory was less used than the NNUs. The vast majority described their contact as occasional and one quarter said they had never been in touch with the LEADER Observatory. Amongst MAs, there were strong differences of opinion. In Germany for instance, there was a consensus that the LEADER Observatory was unimportant as a source of information for co-operation projects, with some going as far to say it was 'without an visible or practical benefit' By contrast, the Danish MA believed that 'The LEADER Observatory has been the main factor in creating cooperation projects between member countries', whereas in Cantabria, Spain, the MA Spain felt that the work of the LEADER Observatory in terms of cooperation is not deemed to have been decisive. The groups and the territories are the ones that have given an added value to cooperation, with the support of the different administrations, through their economic contribution and fostering trade'.

Amongst the LAGs, almost half said that they had used the LAG database and 40% said that they had used the LEADER Observatory to find out about co-operation projects. 41% said that they had searched for partners using the facilities of the LEADER Observatory. Both the NNU and the LEADER Observatory were considered useful source of information on the different regulatory contexts in which the different LAGs were working, although there were sometimes criticisms that the information was too 'theoretical'. An up-to-date database of LAGs and their activities is a key tool in the search for partners. Given that the linguistic proficiency of the LAG

metis

staff cannot be taken for granted, due efforts are necessary to ensure that translation and inter-pretation are available if needed.

There were clear strong calls for more faxce to face meetings, that could address common prob-lems and goals that were adequately funded and were early enough in the progamming period to enable more recurring co-operation activities. National networking units can have a strong role in both identifying such needs and working with partners in other countries to create appropriate fora to engage with interested LAGs.

4.3 Theme 3: The Implementation of the LEADER Method

4.3.1 Evaluation question 13

To what extent has the implementation of the LEADER method promoted a multi-sectoral and integrated development of the rural areas of the Community?

☛ **The implementation of the LEADER method promoted multi-sectoral and integrated development and contributed to strengthening the local economy in rural areas. The LEADER approach addresses economies of scope by emphasizing variety and uniqueness. Success is directly linked to the degree to which the LAG is able to mobilise private entrepreneurs for investing and becoming part of the common en-deavour. Weaker points are still the local capacities for development monitoring and self-reflection.**

Introduction

This evaluation question analyses the changes in strategic capabilities, organisational capaci-ties, economic, cultural and environmental improvements which have been achieved by the combined application of the operational features of the LEADER method.

Previous evaluations[40] have shown how difficult it is to provide reliable (let alone quantified) data on the degree to which projects funded are truly multi-sectoral: for instance, the project itself may be sectoral but trigger multi-sectoral effects, whereas a multi-sectoral project may produce gains only for beneficiaries of one specific sector. Moreover, the judgement about what is multi-sectoral will always be highly subjective, depending on individual perspectives. It is therefore not useful to produce statistics about the area-based or mutli-sectoral character of projects funded; we rather try to elaborate on the appreciation of variety, strategic focus, the coupling with main-stream programmes, the overall effect on the local economy, as well as the self-reflective capac-ity of the LAG. These observation fields should give plausible answers to the question.

If we translate the structuring effects of the LEADER method into judgement criteria, we focus on the following: (i) local people show raised awareness of the specific features and values of their territory; (ii) the socio-economic, environmental and geographical perception of the territory amongst rural actors have improved through the implementation of the strategies; (iii) multi-sectoral projects have been carried out for pursuing a shared vision in a concerted endeavour.

Findings

Discovering the virtues of variety

Self-esteem is closely related to the idea of one's own image in the eyes of others. Therefore the triangulated question: *'How has the knowledge of people in the partner country or area about your country changed?'* is a clue to explore attitudes related to self-image and self-esteem. 46%

---

[40] E.g. the ex-post evaluation of LEADER II (2003).

answered that this has *'changed a lot'*, 51% *'a bit',* but only 3% thought that no change has occurred at all. The EU10 point towards even more significant changes, reported by all respondents, 50% *'a lot'* and 50% *'a bit'.* '

A majority of *'high formal autonomy LAGs'* denied that LEADER+ *'helped to create or reinforce local identity'* (51,4% answered with *'no',* compared to 60,4% *'yes'* from *'low formal autonomy LAGs').* Things are different if we look at the results from *'high'* and *'low felt autonomy LAGs'.* Here we get 58,8% *'yes'* from the *'high'* and 65,6% *'yes'* from the *'low felt autonomy LAGs'.* As was said earlier (chapter 4.2, under Theme 2), it is not possible to discern if this effect can be attributed to the 'seniority' of the LAG or to the autonomy status. It seems plausible that 'beginner LAGs' put more emphasis on strengthening local identity than more experienced ones. This would fit to the finding that investment into local co-operation and social bonding is more tangible among 'beginner LAGs' whereas economic outcomes and bridging capital are more strongly emphasized by experienced LAGs.

Strengthened identity is linked to the increased ability to draw useful distinctions. Consequently, many LAGs stress the virtues of diversity. The motto of the German LAG Erlebenswelt Roth goes: *'variety as strength, contrasts as specificities'[41].* Variety can be enhanced in many ways, but most of these ways originate in a combination of two main approaches:

- (re)discovering variety in the existing cultural and natural potential of the area,
- generating novelty and variety through entrepreneurial endeavour.

Case study Périgord Vert, France

'LEADER+ has been one of the first tools at the scale of the Périgord Vert development area which was a zone bearing a strong identity. It enabled the elected representatives to work with local actors, notably from local NGOs, and for all to realize that there were things which they could contribute to but also things which they could learn.

The LEADER+ priority theme (i.e. youth, women and new population) chosen for the strategy came as a step forward after LEADER II and enabled to gather and organise different ideas, projects and actions. It has enabled (and in some cases perhaps also obliged) the local actors to have or to build a common vision for the area on this theme.

LEADER has also enabled to change the approach people have to public financing: from what is called in French an 'approach of counter' (where one goes to a counter to get money for something one would somehow do anyhow), the local actors have moved to a 'project approach' (where one is aware of the general strategy and builds one's projects according to the main strands of this strategy, which enables one to get financing)."

Different LAGs put different emphasis on one or other aspect, but many LAGs combine both. The LAG SOPRODEVAJE (Extremadura/Spain) combined a politico-strategic approach to develop *'trust and reciprocity'* among the main stakeholders with the provision of cutting-edge technical expertise for project promoters. Apart from running additional funding schemes (EQUAL), the LEADER+ actions were implemented through calls for proposals. This integrated approach required more investment in strategic planning, which in turn builds on long-standing experience (back to LEADER I). In the end LEADER+ helped to create or consolidate 247 jobs (making up for 5% of the area's employment), but it also *'contributed to a change in attitude within the local population towards the natural resources they possess. This has been undertaken, for example, by awareness-raising campaigns on recycling, environmental issues and water management, which have contributed to building a clear and more attractive area and en-*

---

[41] *'Vielfalt als Stärke, Gegensätze als Besonderheiten.'*

metis

AEIDL CEU

couraging a more sustainable use of the area's landscape. Indeed, the LAG also funded a course on Agenda 21 which resulted in an action plan being developed for each village by multi-sectoral participative fora'.[42]

Strengthening the strategic focus

MA respondents strongly confirmed that *'the LAGs have successfully designed and implemented the local development strategy in full ownership'* (4.27 out of 5 points), and yet more strongly supported the statement: *'the local development strategies enhance the local specificities and competitive advantages of rural areas'* (4.32 out of 5).[43] 16% of the LAG respondents agreed that *'the territorial development strategy and the implementation activities of the LAG helped to increase the sustainability of the local economy most significantly',* a further 35% *'considerably'.* The French case study provides an excellent example of the benefits of focusing on a few strong themes (empowering young people and women) and trajectories (see box).

However, these achievements are less evident in the EU10 where 74% conceded this outcome only *'to a little extent'.* Moreover, the MA respondents did not broadly support the statement*: 'pilot integrated strategies of the LEADER+ type measure have improved rural development implementation in NMS'* (3.25 out of 5 points). This is no surprise, as in most EU10 member states the local development strategies did not become operational during that period.

Leveraging mainstream programmes

In addition to pursuing niche strategies, LEADER+ has often been used to complement and reinforce mainstream programmes. The LAG Redange-Wiltz (Luxemburg) gives a good example for this coupling: *'A real 'plus' of LEADER+ in Redange-Wiltz area was the capacity to tap into the major Government plan 'e-Luxembourg', by organizing and planning a coherent delivery of internet services on behalf of the municipalities and their rural communities. Internet 'parlours' were opened with the technical support of the LEADER+ staff in terms of a feasibility study (during the preparatory phase) and content development (during the implementation phase). A major output in this field is the creation of an educational and training platform in co-operation with the neighbouring LAG Clerveaux-Vianden.'*[44] The Italian case study from Maiella Verde reports complementarities with the PIT ('Integrated Territorial Projects') funded by the ERDF. Whereas material investments were supported by the latter, the LAG directed LEADER+ funds *'to immaterial actions of enhancement of natural and cultural heritage'* including feasibility studies.[45]

Strengthening the local economy

Many LAGs saw their role in strengthening the local economy, and introduced activities explicitly aimed at supporting micro-enterprises, SMEs and co-operation projects between them. Asked for the main role of the LAG in respect to jobs and incomes, the most frequent answer related to *'making new connections between different local partners'*, followed by *'supporting the emergence of brand new sectors through start-up finance, advice and assistance'*; *'the development of new markets for local goods',* and *'encouraging people who were not so economically active'.*

LAGs confirming that they had *'turned environmental and cultural heritage as well as local knowledge and dormant skills into competitive advantages'* were more likely to agree to the statement that *'the LAG helped to create or reinforce local identity within the LAG territory'.* LAG respondents who more strongly agreed that *'the territorial development strategy increased the sustainability of the local economy'* were more focused on usefulness and needs-orientation.

---

[42] Spanish case study
[43] These two statements are the 6th and 7th most strongly confirmed ones. After weighting (each country's overall weight = 1) they come in 6th and 9th place.
[44] Luxemburg case study
[45] Italian case study

This correlation could be explained in the following way: environmental and cultural activities strengthen the sense of community and belonging, whereas actions directly focused at business improvement and innovation address people's aspirations for individual attainment. The UK case study confirms the causal link between social and economic outcomes: *'the wider consultations endorsed the view that the economic outcomes were of much less importance than the long-term capacity building that LEADER projects created and nurtured. There was a strong sense of LEADER as the primary means in remote rural communities of creating social and economic platforms on which development actions could be built.'[46]*

After all, the successful implementation of the strategy hinges on the degree to which the LAG is able to mobilise private entrepreneurs: *'it is necessary to increase the mobilization of economic actors in order to generate more productive projects'* (MA respondent from Madrid/Spain). This also applies to the farming population wherever they contribute to rural diversification: '*the development of alternative economic activities has been encouraged which has contributed to generating new sources of employment. Actions have been linked mainly to the quality of tourism, the creation of new commercial establishments and using and adding value to natural and cultural resouces. However, the primary sector continues to account for an important part of rural economies and jobs'* (MA respondent from Spain, national level).

Self-reflective capacity

The probability of a strategic focus (hence the pursuance of a truly multi-sectoral and integrated approach) increases with the capacity for self-observation and reflection: strategic focus requires navigation. Apart from the obligatory monitoring imposed by programme authorities, many LAGs used methods of self-reflection for learning and improvement. The existence of such a routine can be taken as a proxy indicator of the stability or resilience of the development process steered by the LAG: those who do not monitor their strategy do not think strategically.

32% of the LAGs *'employed a structured system for monitoring the performance of the territorial development strategy';* a further 40% at least *'partially'*; and 28% *'not at all'*. If we look at the EU10 separately, we discover that only 15% used such a system, 47% *'partially'* and 38% *'not at all'*. Those who implemented such a monitoring system were mostly supported by the programme authorities (35%), private consultants (24%) or local authorities (20%). The share of private consultants was slightly higher among the EU10.

Table 20 juxtaposes the results of 'formal autonomy' with those of 'felt autonomy'. Again the difference seems striking.

Table 20. Percentage of LAGs having reported that they did not monitor the relevance of the territorial development strategy to changing local socio-economic circumstances

	Low autonomy	Medium autonomy	High autonomy
Formal autonomy	35,4%	38,9%	21,6%
Felt autonomy	50,0%	22,6%	26,5%

The 'felt autonomy' seems to be a stronger pointer towards ownership and commitment than the formal 'autonomy'. 'Felt heteronomy' is a clear disincentive for strategic thinking.

MA respondents see the self-reflective capacity of LAGs in need of improvement (only 3.21 out of 5 points), but they are slightly more optimistic about the LAGs' efforts to monitor local development (3.54 out of 5).

---

[46] United Kingdom case study

Concerning learning effects, 64% of LAG respondents stated that *'most of the experience in terms of personal, institutional know-how, and contacts has been retained and is utilised in the current programme in an extended form'; a* further 25% still kept *'some'* of these resources. The ratio is more or less the same in the EU15 and EU10. Differences can be identified at Member State level: the Latvian and Polish respondents reported full capitalisation, Germany and the UK almost full capitalisation with the exception of one LAG in either case. Asked *for 'innovative ap-proaches (that) have been mainstreamed in the current period'* the MA respondents were more skeptical (scoring 3.25 out of 5). The Wallonian (Belgian) MA interviewee said: *'not much (not to say nothing) has been mainstreamed in the current period. Indeed, in order to integrate some innovative approaches which arose in LEADER in the regional policies, it takes time... more than the time available between two programming periods.'*

4.3.2 Evaluation question 14

To what extent has the implementation of the LEADER method promoted a more efficient use of endogenous (physical, human, environmental) resources in the Community rural areas?

☞ **The implementation of the LEADER method promoted a more efficient use of en-dogenous resources by strengthening local value added systems and providing a test ground for less resource-intensive production processes and products at small scale. In this sense it contributed to a valorisation of local resources in rural areas, be they material or immaterial, human or physical. It is less obvious that LEADER is an instrument to take the needs and interests of marginalized groups into account. This would require a particular focus and specific resources.**

Introduction

The evaluation question explores the contribution of LEADER to sustainable development with emphasis on the input side: making the best use of local resources. Rural areas bear a special responsibility concerning environmental and cultural values, and therefore rural development is unthinkable without integrating a new sense of stewardship and a pioneering role of rural stake-holders in that respect. The term 'endogenous resources' is used in its widest sense here. It in-cludes human resources (voluntary and paid work force, knowledge and skills) as well as local supply chains and short range economic circuits. This question explores how the operational features of the LEADER method have or have not produced economic and environmental effects contributing to the sustainability and resilience of rural areas.

Translated into judgement criteria, the evaluation looks at (i) a more efficient use of the endoge-nous resources of the beneficiary areas due to a consequent area-based approach and innova-tive pilot strategy; (ii) an improved identification of and response to development needs at local and regional level through the bottom-up approach; (iii) the use of co-operation and networking for a better identification and utilisation of endogenous resources.

Findings

The benefits of proximity

The MA respondents confirmed that *'the area-based approach has encouraged a more efficient identification and use of the endogenous resources of the beneficiary areas'* (scoring 4.42 out of 5 points, the third highest score of all their statements[47]). Similar consensus has been achieved on the sentence: *'The local development strategies enhance the local specificities and competi-*

---

[47] Before weighting, but the rank remains the same even after weighting (one country's overall weight = 1).

tive advantages of rural areas' (4.32 out of 5). Presumably this effect refers to the connecting function of the LEADER method which is discussed under EQ 4 (sub-chapter 4.2.1).

The Wallonian (Belgian) MA respondent stated: *'Even if the Wallonian region is not very large, there are territorial specificities which LEADER enabled to take into account. The solutions found and implemented are specific to an area and sometimes even not transferable to another zone because too specific; the bottom-up approach has been well developed and has enabled to develop relevant answers.'*

67% of the LAG respondents agreed that *'the territorial development strategy and the implementation activities of the LAG helped to turn local knowledge and dormant skills into competitive advantages'* (14% *'most significantly'* and 53% *'considerably')*. The EU10 share this view, with some reservation. No one stated *'most significantly'*, but 63% *'considerably'*. Focusing on the environmental as well as the cultural heritage and values, more than three quarters of LAGs confirmed that the implementation activities helped to turn these into *'competitive advantages',* to a lesser extent these changes have been brought forth through the revitalization or reuse of disabled or dilapidated infrastructures (11% *'most significantly'* and 36% '*considerably'*, 34% *'to a little extent'* and 19% '*not at all')*. These ratios are more or less identical in the EU15 and EU10. *'High autonomy'* (both *'formal'* and *'felt'*) also makes a clear difference concerning this issue.

Case study LAG Erlebenswelt Roth, Germany

'The impacts perceived by the stakeholders of the LEADER+ strategy are captured by a LAG survey and a regional forum. Summarized findings were that improved tourism infrastructures and activities combined with enhancement of cultural and environmental assets have increased the attractiveness of the area. Simultaneously the territorial image was strengthened ...

But there were both positive attitudes towards the LEADER process and difficulties. The opinions of respondents showed that in the beginning of the process it had been very difficult to recognize the area as a whole and not only its individual parts. It is necessary to obtain a balance of results in respect to geographical spread as to make sure that more partners ... join in. The bottom-up approach ... was working well, however the persons engaged were already members of associations, societies or other organisations. Nevertheless, they began to inspire voluntary participants who had never got involved before.

The LAG management tried to summarize the voluntary work in order to evaluate the high involvement of civil society partners during the implementation of actions. The outcome of a field enquiry (only a small sample) was an astonishing number of more than 16.000 hours of voluntary work in only four realized projects. This showed that local forces could be mobilised by bottom up approaches ...

Therefore the LAG stated in the final conference that 'sustainable development was launched and a certain sense of belonging has emerged'."

'Beginner LAGs' report stronger effects on the local social capital than experienced LAGs: 74.1% of the 'beginners' confirmed that LEADER+ *'encouraged people who would not have otherwise got involved'* (against 60% of pre-existing LAGs), or that it made *'people think more about the future of the area'* (67.2% against 46,7% of pre-existing LAGs). There is also a slightly higher effect on the sense of identity (60.3% against 51.1%). This relationship is inverse when it comes to assessing economic effects. 26.7% of pre-existing LAGs confirmed that *'the territorial development strategy and the implementation activities of the LAG helped to increase the sustainabil-*

ity of the local economy most significantly' (against 6.9% of 'beginner LAGs'). Concerning questions about *'turning natural and cultural heritage into competitive advantages'* or *'valorising endogenous resources'* there is no significant difference between new and pre-existing LAGs. Concerning the recognition that LEADER+ *'helped to give marginalized groups an opportunity to contribute to rural development'* there is some disenchantment among pre-existing LAGs: 20.5% stated *'not at all'*, against 6.9% among new LAGs.

The importance of animation and continual advice

Connecting people to people (the unknown neighbour), and people to resources (so near but undiscovered for such a long time) often requires third parties to step in, taking an undimmed look on the local potential. This is what local development agents are usually hired for. There is consensus from case studies and from the LAG survey that sufficient time and expertise of the LAG management staff for following and accompanying project promoters can make a real difference.

Indeed, there is a need to invest in local human resources, coordination and networking capacity to save resources in the long run. The German case study (see also box) closes with the words: *'For LAG members it is evident that the contribution of LEADER actions to stabilise and improve the area's resilience cannot be quantified solely with (tourism related) economic indicators. The continuation of co-operation activities between the private and public sector, inside ('bonding forces') and outside ('bridging forces') the area, the focusing on other themes (like youth, culture, demography and social issues or agricultural pluriactivity)...are crucial for the current development process. Furthermore, the upgrading in relationships of local actors and the fund raising for important local and regional actions emerged as a challenge for the LAG. Therefore the rural district (Kreisverwaltung) decided to introduce an additional local development agency (Regional-management) to reinforce the management capacity.'*[48]

Local economy, green economy

'Generally speaking, the main influence of LEADER+ in the protection of the environment stems from the inclusion of environmental parameters in the development strategies of each territory which have encouraged new lines of action that take sustainable development into consideration when promoting new activities and methodologies/techniques and has guaranteed the sustainable use of resources' (Quotation from a Spanish MA respondent from Extremadura).

As LEADER+ integrated environmental concerns into economic development, alternative technologies and practices saving energy and reducing material flows became a common topic in projects funded by LEADER+. A German MA said: *'A new theme emerging as highly relevant for LEADER areas was the 'uptake' of measures with regard to renewable energy. During the funding period the programme design was adapted, therefore the LAG could use some directives of other ministries in order to implement some projects like biomass heating systems and networks in villages, or production of bio-fuel'.* We know that some of these innovations have already been mainstreamed under Axis 3 in the current RDP period.

The Finnish case study gives an example of valorising existing resources instead of building new ones from scratch. *'The beneficiary areas have become more attractive for residents and non-residents. E.g. in the measure 'development of tourism' several small-scale development projects were implemented. An example is the utilisation and renovation of closed-down school premises and other empty buildings as village houses where various events, gatherings, training,*

---

[48] German case study, See also box for theme 2, chapter 4.1.1 (United Kingdom case study).

etc. can be organised...the projects also increased the use of local natural food and other materials.'[49]

The MA respondents agreed that *'LEADER+ has contributed to preserving the natural environment and landscape' as well as to protecting and improving natural resources'* (scoring 4.25 out of 5 points). There is a causal relationship linking these effects to a strengthened sense of belonging and emotional ties addressed by the area-based and bottom-up approach (see the box).

However, MA respondents rather deny further-reaching effects such as reducing the ecological footprint or the emission of greenhouse gases, understandably due to the insignificant duration and size of intervention (3 points out of 5). *'Proximity, local strategies, knowledge of the region and the local actors'* were cited as key factors of success by LAG respondents, as well as *'local presence, local knowledge, co-operation, major valorisation of endogenous resources, not too big an area...'*[50]

LAGs agreeing to a higher extent that *'the territorial development strategy and the implementation activities of the LAG increased the sustainability of the local economy'* reportedly used both the services of the NNU and of the LEADER Observatory more extensively. The NNU contributed to reduced resource use in a wider sense, namely through capacity development: most LAG respondents strongly supported the statement that the NNU activities *'contributed to LAG and local actors' capacity building'* (69%) and *'to knowledge transfer'* (76.5%).

Taking into account the needs of specific groups

Talking about human resources, the needs of specific groups come into focus. The MA respondents conceded that *'the needs and potentials of young people'* have been addressed (3.89 out of 5 points, although with a standard deviation of almost 1) and that the *'needs of women in rural areas are taken account of in the selection of activities'* (3.79 out of 5). All in all, *'new sustainable sources of income have been created'* (3.89 out of 5).*[51]

More difficult was the integration of young people. This would require specific skills among LAG staff members.[52]

Still more challenging than integrating young people is *'giving marginalized groups an opportunity to contribute to local development.'* Only 9% of the LAG respondents said that this has happened *'most significantly',* 38% answered *'considerably'*, 40% *'to a little extent'* and 13% *'not at all'.* These results do not emerge as 'side products' of local development; they require specific attention, funds and human resources.

4.3.3 Conclusions Theme 3

The implementation of the LEADER approach promotes integrated and multi-sectoral development of rural areas. Fostering economies of scope and aiming at a competitive edge through promoting uniqueness, means

- (re)discovering variety in the existing cultural and natural potential of the area,
- generating novelty and variety through entrepreneurial endeavour.

---

[49] Finnish case study
[50] The citations stem from the answers to Question G63 of the LAG questionnaire: 'three major success factors'.
[51] French case study
[52] Polish case study

metis

The first approach strengthens a sense of identity and belonging, and increased awareness of common values. The second approach instils hope for a better future, justified by a sharpened socio-economic, environmental and geographical perception of the territory and fuelled by increased confidence in the area's resources and the local people's capacity to improve.

Both effects, a strengthened identity and a positive, shared vision of the future, belong to the highest rated outcomes of LEADER+. Of course, these outcomes are mental constructs. However we know that belief changes precede socio-cultural effects, and socio-cultural effects precede economic effects.

There is evidence that social capital and territorial competitiveness have been enhanced by LEADER+. In many cases, the initiative complemented mainstream programmes, as it provided 'soft support', such as animation, feasibility studies, consultancy, etc. as indispensable backing for the 'hard investments' carried out with the help of the ERDF or other funds.

The appreciation of social capital enhancement seems to be higher among new LAGs, whereas pre-existing LAGs report stronger effects on the local economy. Like all policy interventions, also LEADER has a life cycle. LEADER sparks off with inspiration and ardour, and moves along with more mundane result orientation.

More autonomous LAGs show better results in awakening dormant skills and potentials and turn them into competitive advantages. They are also more likely to think strategically and to monitor the development of their area in a structured way.

The respondents also confirmed that **LEADER+ has promoted a more sustainable use of endogenous resources**, but direct links to corresponding approaches at global level (climate change, green economy) can hardly be made due to the small scales of LEADER interventions in terms of volume and duration of projects.

Closeness or proximity is a trump card of LEADER. The blessings of proximity accrue from a relatively limited area size which is not too small in terms of achieving a critical mass, but also not too large as to dissipate the personal interactions between stakeholders, dreamers and do-ers, promoters and supporters. LEADER areas ranged between NUTS 4 and LAU 1. This size range can be related to institutional economies of scale: face-to-face communication and personal networks still play a leading part, whereas the achievable critical mass (concerning the number of people and stakeholders, the territorial scope and diversity, the volume of mobilisable funds...) already allows for investing in formal organisations and semi-formalised networks.

It is also reported that the LEADER approach fosters the sense of identity, specifically among 'beginner LAGs' compared to more experienced ones which tend to shift their focus to economic outcomes. Identity seems less a prerequisite than a corollary to successful local development. It is certainly useful if there are motivating local identities and other common references from the very beginning; however these references may only emerge with time, crystallising around a common purpose (through forward bonding). The challenge lies in finding attractive pretexts for common action.

The strongest resource lies in the skills and capabilities of local people who become aware of what they are able to achieve together. Self-esteem consolidates co-operation, trust and reciprocity, and the readiness for change. This discovery sometimes requires long journeys. Therefore inter-regional and trans-national co-operation and networking under LEADER+ has also contributed to sustainable resource use as it enabled local stakeholders to learn from peers how to develop, integrate and apply new technologies saving energy and resources. Accompaniment by professional staff is an indispensable instrument to awaken the local potential as well as to tap the resources offered by partners from abroad.

There is a risk that LAGs gradually tip into an elitist approach meaning that growing parts of the population do not have real access to the funding opportunities of LEADER, and that the LAG disregards large parts of the creative potential of its area. This risk seems to increase with the size of the area[53], but it can also be influenced

- by the 'seniority' of the LAG (as time goes on, the LAG tends to blend into the socio-economic context and its patterns of inequality);
- through the intervention (or not) of a third party (mostly a regional or national authority) in favour of disadvantaged groups: notably expressed in funds earmarked for these target groups;
- by the necessity to survive on its own funds which brings more affluent contributors and sponsors into a more dominant position;
- by the growing institutional complexity associated with the later stages of programme life cycles.

4.4 Theme 4: Impacts

4.4.1 Evaluation question 15

To what extent have LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) enhanced job opportunities in the Community rural areas?

☛ **Employment creation per se has not been universally adopted as a priority by LAGs. Nevertheless, LAG activities did create some employemnt directly. Perhaps more importantly LEADER promoted training, group marketing, quality pro-grammes and other 'infrastructural' activities which indirectly enhanced job num-bers, incomes and sustainability of employment in rural areas.**

Introduction

In its simplest and most important dimension, this evaluation question explores the result of actions of the LEADER+ programmes in increasing the number of people employed in their respective areas. However, in principle the term job opportunities should be taken to include situations where existing employment is preserved which otherwise would have disappeared due to competition or other reasons; and where the long term viability of employment is strengthened. Situations where the net effect is to increase earnings of existing employment, through, for example, upgrading the quality of the product or the service provided, should also fall within this category. LEADER+ programmes have produced employment effects directly, as when assistance is given to a start up artisan activity such as pottery making or furniture manufacture. But they also had indirect effects through the results of promoting producer networks, collective marketing and promotion, branding, standards and training. It is also increasingly recognised that activities which help create a physically pleasant and socially cohesive environment - important objectives of LEADER+ activities - can help regional economic viability. LEADER+ activities can also be important in leveraging resources from other funding agencies and the private sector via initiatives started by LAG contributions in the form of seed capital, project preparation and feasibility studies. It has to be accepted that measuring these impacts, even in the case of the direct effects, is not easily done. Statistics are not available from Eurostat at the NUTS IV level. Even if they were, it could be difficult to isolate the effects of the LAG. But issues of the availability of statistics apart, there are conceptual problems identifying deadweight and displacement effects as well as assessing long term viability in the context of a programme of relatively short duration. Indirect employment effects can only be inferred in the most general way.

---

[53] As mentioned in the United Kingdom case study

Findings

Pro Employment Activities

About two thirds of LAGs (67%) believe that LEADER has 'considerably' or 'very considerably' helped turn local knowledge into competitive advantage and over half (51%) believe that the programme has helped increase the sustainability of the local economy. Nearly two thirds (62.5%) thought that it had had a 'considerable' or a 'very significant' effect on valorising other endogenous resources'. About three quarters (77%) of MA were of the opinion that the programme had created or sustained quality employment. Innovation was one of the main tools for employment creation: 62% of LAGs reported that they supported innovation in production or marketing and those products thus assisted enjoyed greater sales as a result. The balance conceded that they enjoyed little success in innovation. The LAGs certainly concentrated a fair amount of resources on innovation (though not necessarily all in the sphere of employment creation). Nonetheless it is striking that 42% of LAGs allocated between a quarter and one half of their resources to the promotion of novel products and services and another 15% allocated between 50% and 75%.

Employment Creation and LAG Strategies

In interpreting these figures it should be borne in mind that not all LAGs explicitly set out to directly create employment. Of the four themes prescribed for LEADER+, 'Use of Know and Technologies' and 'Adding Value to Local Products' could be expected to result in direct employment effects. The other two themes could also lead to jobs, but are more concerned with non-economic effects. Only 16% of LAGs specified the first theme and 21% the second. As a generalisation, creating (or maintaining employment) could not be described as a priority in LEADER+. It could not even be said that the peripheral economies (Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Greece which have the biggest economic challenges) gave these themes a particularly high priority.

Case study Maiella Verde, Italy

The role of job creation in LEADER strategy is exemplified in this extract from the Maiella Verde Case Study which reported 32.2 jobs created directly and 280 preserved

'Nevertheless the LAG technical staff has underlined that the creation of new jobs as a direct effect was not the main attended result. This for several reasons:

a) *The main aim of the plan is to help local small firms, mainly in the sector of local products, to change in order to become more competitive. From this point of view they estimate that the LDP has firstly contributed to maintain about 280 already existing jobs and that about 63% of these is representing both a local small farm or firm (that risks to stop) and a family (that risk to move far away).*

b) *The second aim is to make the area more competitive in attracting visitors (effects in this field are exposed in a following paragraph), but this is a field in which several programmes cooperate locally and the task of the LAG is not supporting business (this is done through FEDER) but mainly qualification of sites and 'research and development". This is very important but has a very low direct impact in job creation. A good example is the described case of 'Sangro-Aventino card".*

c) *The last point is about quality of created jobs. The LAG estimates that among the 21/22 new jobs created in local products about 18 of them are related to new small business. Meaning with this not necessarily new company (for example a craft beer producer) but also new activities in existing companies (for example a small bakery in an existing farm). The effect of the creation of jobs of this kind is very different from that of job creation in industry: on the one hand it is not so much for young people but on the other it is self employment contributing to the attractiveness of the area.'*

Some LAGs emphasised economic viability in terms of improving the general physical and social environment, or concentrated on improving infrastructure and training in the expectation that employment would follow indirectly. Examples of different approaches are Redange-Wilz LAG in centrally located Luxembourg, and Oulujärvi in Finland which is 600 km from Helsinki, itself a peripheral capital.[54] In the former, unemployment is low and average incomes are high by European standards. In the other location, unemployment is high and the demographic structure is very unfavourable. In the former, the LEADER method was an end in itself rather than a tool for leveraging local resources into employment opportunities, though some jobs were created. But in Finland, there was an emphasis on entrepreneurship; product development and enhanced marketing which were intended directly or indirectly to create employment. The results were summarised as '*76 new permanent and 137 temporary jobs were created in Oulujärvi LEADER LAG funded projects. Also dozens of local companies expanded or rationalised their activities'*.

A perhaps intermediate position were two LAGs in the North of England (North Pennines and North Northumberland) where unemployment is high and incomes low, but priorities of the LAGs favoured long term capacity building rather than direct or indirect job creating. In these LAGs a total of about 38 full time and 15 part time jobs were created.[55] This is also true of Maiella Verde in Italy where indirect job creation was considered to be the objective but 32 jobs were created directly and 280 jobs were maintained.[56]

Difficulties in comparing reported results

With respect to the estimates of employment impacts mentioned in the case studies, it has to be remembered that it is difficult to be sure of the accuracy of these for a variety of reasons including the short implementation period of LEADER programmes relative to the time it takes to create and ensure the sustainability of employment. Also, displacement and dead weight effects are difficult to assess. Without a common methodology for calculating employment creation there must be some doubt about the comparability of some of the figures cited. Obviously, some degree of caution should be attached to reliance on assessments of their own performance by organisations and individuals, especially when the organisations are the beneficiaries of external aid. Overall, however, it seems clear that LEADER activities did have positive direct and indirect effects on employment and incomes.

Table 21 gives some employment results gleaned from the case studies. They encapsulate most of the problems of estimating employment effects stemming from different LAG objectives, availability of data and non standardisation of response. The German and (as already noted) the Luxembourg LAGs quite explicitly did not aim to create employment and so record little in terms of employment. The others which have reported figures include full time, part time and 'temporary' (i.e. seasonal) employment, both created and maintained. Complete funding data is not available for some countries. It needs to be emphasised that the money figures are totals for all activities of the LAGs including administration and non-economic activities which, as noted elsewhere, actually constitute the bulk of LAGs' activities.

---

[54] Luxemburg case study p age 2 ; Finnish case study p 11
[55] United Kingdom case study
[56] Italian case study

metis

AE DL CEU

Table 21. Analysis of Employment and Funding from 10 Case Studies

LAG		Jobs	Funding (€ mio)			
			EU	Other Public	Private	Total
Germany			1.34			2.69
Spain		274	2.73	1.37	2.75	6.85
Finland		213	3.43	0.86	1.76	6.05
France		238	1.62	1.37	0.57	3.56
Greece		156	6.28	1.72	3.45	11.45
Hungary		175	NA	NA	NA	0.40
Italy		312	2.47	2.47	4.94	9.88
Luxembourg		11	0.56	1.82	0.18	2.56
Poland			0.14	0.36	NA	0.50
UK	NP	18	2.00	2.70	1.30	6.00
	NN	45	1.76	NA	NA	3.52

Ability to Leverage Funds from Non LEADER sources

The ability of LAGs to generate a kind of multiplier effect by accessing or otherwise mobilising funds from other sources for themselves or for beneficiaries of their activities is difficult to determine across the participating countries. The multiplier can be considered to have two forms: funds mobilised by the LAG itself from other sources, and funds mobilised by beneficiaries of LAG activities. Thus, a number of typical LAG measures such as animation, training, funding of feasibility studies and pilot projects are calculated to arm the beneficiaries with the means to tap other sources of project funding. At the same time the LAGs, given their limited financial resources, will have a similar incentive at programme level. Examination of activities of the thousands of LEADER+ beneficiaries is beyond the resources of this evaluation, but the multiplier at LAG level is explored in some detail in Evaluation Question 18 following. In summary, about three quarters of LAGs (73%) did access external funds, and in half of these (36%) the funding is significant. (i.e. more than 30%). A wide variety of sources were accessed.

4.4.2 Evaluation question 16

To what extent have LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) enhanced activities for women and young people in the Community rural areas?

☞ **Promoting opportunites for young people and women was an important activity for many LAGs. It would seem that they had rather more success with involving women than with young people: women tended to be highly active participants in LEADER promoted activities. Activities for young people tended to attract less participation, possibly because promoters need special training for work with young people.**

Introduction

The evaluation question explores the role of the three actions of the LEADER+ approach in addressing issues of two categories of marginalised groups in rural areas. The Commission, in its guidelines of April 2000, expressed itself as follows:

'The Commission concerned about equal opportunities and convinced that women and young people represent a key to the development of rural areas, would like support to be given as a priority to strategies which seek to enhance the job opportunities and/or activities for these target

groups. Consequently, the evaluation criteria to be established by the Member States for select-ing pilot strategies must reflect this Community priority.'

As the quotation suggests, rural women, as a result of the nature of the rural economy, are less likely to have been in full time employment than their urban counterparts. Young people present a challenge as well as an opportunity. A challenge in that they are difficult to retain in rural areas when account is taken of the attractions of urban areas. But a resource in that they are more adaptive and more easily trained than older age cohorts.

Findings

Women and Young People as Priorities

LAGs claimed that addressing the situation of the marginalised was an important priority: about half of the LAGs reported giving a high or very high priority to marginalised groups in their territo-rial development strategies and only 13% claimed that none of their activities were targeted at the marginalised. That said, as far as women are concerned, 62% of LAGs reported that there were not very many activities targeted at women, though most of the remainder were successful at attracting the participation of women. In terms of sector about one quarter of the projects tar-geted at women were in job and income creation and another quarter in education. Other sectors - transport, environment, child care etc. - were rather insignificant. The MAs were more con-vinced that LAGs addressed women's needs: 70% of them reported that LAGs took account of women's needs.

An illustration of the finding of low priority for women's projects, but high response by women, is in Finland:

Oulujärvi LEADER did not implement any special actions that would have addressed women di-rectly. However, women capitalised well on the possibilities of LEADER+ programme. Of new permanent jobs 58 (76%), of preserved jobs 40 (36%) and of temporary jobs 55 (40%) were for women. There were also 18 (67%) new enterprises founded by women. In informative meetings 1,213 (51%) participants were women and in training sessions 377 (54%) participants were women'[57]

This was somewhat the same experience in Jerte Valley LAG in Spain, a remote agricultural area. There, it is reported that while participation of women at management level is limited, their participation in projects was very high. In Italy, the case study notes: '*...all the calls published by the LAG contained criteria giving priority to women and young people; nevertheless, in the opin-ion of the LAG people what makes the difference in this field is the typology of the investments promoted. In general the investments to diversify agriculture and to add value to local products encounter a good appreciation and participation of women.'*[58]

The picture was somewhat better in respect of priorities for young people (usually meaning peo-ple under 26). Only about one third of LAGs reported that less than 10% of their activities were aimed at young people but 45% reported that between 10% and 25% of activities were targeted at the young and 16% reported that between one quarter and half of all activities were directed at the young. Likewise, only 22% agreed that there were not many activities for young people. Most of the remainder agreed that LEADER+ activities attracted a good deal of interest by young people.

One LAG where women as well as young people were important targets was Redange-Wilz in Luxembourg (cited above) where one of the lessons learned from LEADER II was the need for

---

[57] Finnish case study
[58] Spanish case study, Italian case study

metis

more attention to women and young people, consequently both received a heavy emphasis in LEADER+. Over 400 women attended training courses (about 75% of which were for computer training) and nearly 4,000 young people benefitted from LAG supported activities.[59] This was also true of the Périgord Vert LAG, in Dordogne, France which assigned two of its three axes to women and young people respectively.

An intermediate position in terms of priority and success is given by the Polish LAG, Wrzosowa Kraina sited in an area of poor agricultural and touristic potential. Here some priority was given to women's and young people's projects but with mixed results as far as young people were concerned.

'Attempts to involve young people were not so successful, apparently because the leaders of the partnership lacked the necessary skills. Several workshops on environmental issues, music, self-presentation were organised for youth, as well as painting and sculpture workshops for younger children. Some training was provided that potentially might strengthen the employment chances of young people (e.g. how to become a guide), and several school competitions, but these activities seemed to be short lived. One interviewee thought there was good response from children up to a certain age, but later they seemed to give up; however, one informal youth group formed in connection with the LEADER+ implementation seems to be still active and has now been formalised into an association.'

Women and Young People in Decision Making

An example of the inverted hierarchy of participation which typifies the position of women in LEADER+ is given by this table from Redange Wiltz (Luxembourg) LAG.

Table 22. Participation of women in the LAG Redange Wiltz (Luxembourg)

Percentage of women in working-groups	*41%*
Percentage of women in the LAG committee (main delegate)	*30%*
Percentage of women in the LAG committee (second delegate)	*21%*
Percentage of women in the LAG executive board	*14%*

In less than one fifth of LAGs (19%) were women in a majority in decision making in about 38% of LAGs, women constituted less than 25% and in another 42% of LAGs women constituted between 25% and 50% of the decision makers. Partly offsetting any bias that this would imply, women are reported to have a stronger representation in operating staff.

Understandably, given that young people have less experience, the participation of young people in management was low. But making all allowances, and bearing in mind the priority given to young people, it could be considered that their participation in decision making should have been higher: 92% of LAGs reported that less than 10% of the decision makers were young people. On the other hand, an example of what can be done when young people are involved is given by Eferding LAG, Austria (See Evaluation Question 17 below).[60] There, a project in which young people were involved in the design of recreational facilities enjoyed a good response. The experience of Périgord Vert seems similar: young people were targeted, few participated at programming level, but it was possible to involve them at activity level. Overall, however, 'the involvement of young people (at Board level) has sometimes proved problematic'.

Demographic Impacts

---

[59] Luxemburg case study
[60] Best Practice, 2007/1, page 5

The object of targeting young people was to help prevent migration, retain young people and thus help sustain a healthy demographic structure, via an improved local economy. But there was not much evidence that positive demographic impacts are occurring. Only a minority (37%) of MAs believed that the demographic structure of the assisted areas had improved. Indeed, demographic forces being the long term consequences of fundamental economic and social pressures it would be unlikely that LEADER+ activities would have sufficient scale to produce by themselves a more balanced population structure. The typical LEADER+ programme with a budget of perhaps €670,000 per annum is not equipped to deal with demographic movements in a population of about 58,000[61].

4.4.3 Evaluation question 17

To what extent have LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) contributed to fostering the economic, environmental and social capital of the Community rural areas?

> ☞ **Generalisations are difficult to make about such a diverse and extensive range of activities. But there is evidence that LEADER+ programmes have had success in promoting economic activity, protecting the environment and creating 'social' capital in the form of willingness and capacity of local people to cooperate.**

Introduction

The evaluation question explores the impact of LEADER+ on improving the stock of physical, human and intangible social capital in rural areas and is central to the rationale of the LEADER+ programme. The forms of 'capital' envisaged are broad and range from assistance with 'hard' i.e. physical investments in private commercial enterprises to 'soft' actions which encourage trust and reciprocity amongst local people - an important resource when many actors have to be mobilised to act cooperatively. In between these two extremes are investments of both types in collective capital like community facilities, human capital (training) and activities which result in environmental sustainability.

Findings

New Income

Well over half of the LAGs believed that non-agricultural employment and income had increased in their respective areas, though gradually rather than rapidly. MAs were also of that opinion. In fact it is clear from evaluation reports and case studies (see table 22 above) that jobs were created in many LAGs though, as noted above, not all LAGs assigned a high priority to direct job creation and it was not the objective of the programme. Obviously, it is difficult to assess the sustainability of employment created by LEADER+ (though no more so than in the case of other job creation schemes). Much of the employment created by LEADER+ is linked to the exploitation of touristic or agricultural resources. As these jobs are anchored in areas of natural advantage of the LEADER territories it would be reasonable to be optimistic about their sustainability.

New Services

An important concentration of LEADER+ activities has been on the provision of improved or better adapted services for local people. About 40% of LAGs allocated between one quarter and one half of their resources to providing new or improved services while another 12% allocated between half and three quarters of their resources in the same way. Concrete examples are in the areas of education, training, child care and elder care. Also there were improvements in so-

---

[61] Based on the LAGs in the case studies.

cial, cultural and sporting facilities to provide performance space, leisure pursuits and meeting places. The following typify what has been done:

- Oulujärvi LEADER, Finland: '*Projects included e.g. renovation of a cultural historically valuable protected building for various cultural events and other uses; construction and expansion of dance hall, several theatre productions for children and young people; enhancing of photography art. In all, about a dozen projects addressing cultural aspects were implemented*.' [62]
- Eferding LAG, northern Austria: A participative exercise with young people resulted in the creation of a number of open air meeting places equipped with open air furniture, shelters, viewing platforms, sun decks and barbeque areas.[63]
- In the Netherlands: Following an initiative of the local sports club, the Flevoland LAG aided a multipurpose sports centre with facilities for children up to 12 and for older people (jogging track, boules pitch).[64]

Enhancement of the Locality

A high proportion of the activities undertaken by LEADER+ LAGs have centred on conservation and enhancements of the natural and built environment and on the elaboration of local cultural heritage. 78% of LAGs reported that their activities had helped turn environmental heritage into a competitive advantage and 80% thought that cultural heritage and traditions had also been enhanced. In fact, tourism facilities, which are a common type of LEADER supported project, are equally attractive to local residents as to visitors from elsewhere. Examples of conservation projects include

- LAG Asociación Grupo de Acción Local Peña Trevinca, Viega, Ourense, Spain: Restoration of historic and ethnographic buildings and artifacts including three water mills, a bridge and rural domestic equipment (ovens, sewing machines, agricultural machinery).[65]
- Carpe Mare LAG, Carpe Mare, Sweden: Restoration of a lighthouse in southern Sweden.[66]
- LAG Ornain et Saulx, France: Support for the development of the site of the Gallo Roman town of Nasium, in the Ornain valley, north east France.[67]
- ADRIMAG LAG, Canelas, Northern Portugal: Creation of geological museum in Canelas[68].

Demographic Effects

As noted elsewhere, it would be difficult to credit LEADER+ with tangible improvements in demographics such as a reversal of population decline and a reduction in dependency ratios as a result of the retention of young people and halting of out-migration in rural areas by LEADER+ programmes. Demographic forces are too deep seated to be greatly affected by the resources of LAGs. Besides, the periodicity of censuses in relation to the six year span of LEADER+ makes it difficult to discern demographic trends which exhibit themselves over long periods. (This is apart from the problem cited above, that NUTS IV data are not reported by Eurostat). However, the LAGs are confident that LEADER+ activities have contributed at least something to the overall

---

[62] Finnish case study
[63] Best Practice, 2007/1, page 5
[64] Best Practice, 2008/2, page 71
[65] Best Practice, 2009/4, page 82
[66] Best Practice, 2009/4, page 85
[67] Best Practice, 2008/2, page 29
[68] Best Practice, 2008/3, page 75

sustainability of their communities and 51% think that this effect has been considerable (pre-sumably in relation to the resources deployed).

Diversification

Improvements in tourism facilities, enhancement of natural attractions, and training in quality production, are typical of activities supported by LEADER+ and which strengthen the competi-tiveness of local goods and services. At the same time, since LEADER+ operates to complement and not to duplicate activities of municipalities and development agencies, LAGs tend to be pushed towards the promotion of new approaches. A review of the activities of the LAGs reveals considerable diversity:

- In Luxembourg, Redange-Wiltz LAG helped to set up an internet site and gathered a comprehensive data base on training services.[69]
- In Spain, Jerte Valley LAG in Extramdura: supported development of anti pest and post harvest conservation technologies which helped add value to locally produced cherries.[70]
- In Finland, Oulujärvi LAG, responding to the unbalanced demographic structure of the area, helped set up enterprises providing home helps and visiting nurses primarily for older people.[71]
- In the UK, the North Northumberland LAG set up a micro business support centre - BizzFizz - to provide assistance to small businesses and start ups which was not avail-able from established training and development agencies.[72]
- In North West Poland, Wrzosowa Kraina LAG supported the development of a local brand, thus giving a marketing identity to locally produced honey, berries and mush-rooms.[73]

Environmental Effects

There were some LEADER+ projects which sought to promote alternative energy. An example is the network set up under the leadership of Kop Van Nord Holland LAG (see below). But by and large LEADER+ cannot be considered to be significantly contributing to the reduction of green house emissions. In fact in stimulating economic activity and tourism it is likely that LEADER is contributing to these emissions, though probably less than other types of development, espe-cially large scale industrial developments. Certainly, the survey of MAs did not reveal any strong conviction that LEADER+ programmes were important in decreasing emissions and the ecologi-cal footprint. Nearly a quarter (24%) disagreed with that proposition and 44% had no opinion.

With respect to other environmental impacts, however, the results are more positive. A high pro-portion of the LAGs believe that their activities protected and enhanced the local environment. Over three quarters (78%) of the LAG respondents and a larger proportion (91%) of MAs, con-sidered that LAG activities had a significant or a very significant positive impact on the environ-mental heritage. A high proportion of LEADER+ projects had environmental protection as their objective and in many others environmental protection was at least a subsidiary objective. In general, all LEADER+ activities adhered to high environmental standards. A few examples will give a sense of the LEADER+ impacts in this area:

- Ourthe Moyeneen LAG, Belgium: The concept here was to ensure sustainable recrea-tional exploitation of the Ourthe river which otherwise was under threat from overuse.[74]

---

[69] Luxemburg Case Study
[70] Spanish Case Study
[71] Finnish Case Study,
[72] United Kingdom Case Study
[73] Polish Case Study
[74] Best Practice, 2009/4, page 12

metis

AEIDL CEU

- Kelheim LAG Southern Germany: This project helped to promote the implementation of a master plan for the conservation of water. The LAG organised consultations and training among farmers about improved water use and coordinated activities of farmers and suppliers to enhance sustainability of the resource. [75]
- Olympia LAG, Frixa, the Peloponnese, Greece: The LAG organised an information programme raising the sensitivity of locals and tourists about the need to respect the flora and fauna of a Natura 2000 site. [76]
- Montagna Vicentina LAG, northern Italy: The LAG promoted adoption of EU environmental standards for three sectors: food and agriculture, hotels and restaurants and municipalities in a mountainous area of high environmental quality. The project has raised consciousness amongst local producers and standards and has helped the attractiveness of the area for environmentally aware customers and tourists.[77]

Bonding and Bridging Capital

According to the interviews almost three quarters of the LAGs (74%) agreed that LEADER+ helped to create sustainable partnerships between different stakeholders in different sectors. Similar questions to MAs elicited even more positive views. Evidence of this is abundant from case studies and project reports.

The LEADER+ LAGs rarely have enough financial resources to carry out entire projects by themselves, but must rely on others, be they municipalities, NGOs, enterprises or individuals to achieve their objectives. At the same time, at least for projects of a certain scale, LEADER+ does have enough resources to make cooperation by these others worth their while. Thus LEADER+ has opened doors, accustomed official and unofficial entities to cooperate with each other, and cemented relationships which will help to generate benefits after LEADER funding disappears.

Extracts from some of the case studies illustrate what has been happening:

- North Northumberland and North Pennines LAGs, England: *The engagement of small players, groups and communities is generally thought to be strong in both LAG areas, as evidenced by the profile of project applications. There is evidence of strong engagement around particular themes in both areas. The connectedness of LAG members in the community and local accessibility of the programme supported through staff were key elements in this engagement*[78]
- Wrzosowa Kraina LAG, Poland: *The social effects have been even more impressive: it seems that the diverse communities have learnt to work together and developed trust. The LAG has played an important role in helping to set up local NGOs, and now in approximately 50% of villages, small local organisations are active.*[79]
- Redange Wiltz, LAG, Luxemburg: *The partnership shows a strong commitment from rural municipalities to engage with their local charities and associations into collective and participative actions in order to unleash the local potential of their communities to bring a better quality of life in this rural area*[80]

Indeed, examples of the role of cooperation are widespread. Organic farming in Bruges, Belgium, educational and promotional films in Pays de la Touraine, France, promotion of local prod-

---

[75] Best Practice, 2009/4, page 40
[76] Best Practice, 2008/2, page 45,
[77] Best Practice, 2008/2, page 61
[78] United Kingdom Case Study
[79] Polish Case Study
[80] Luxemburg Case Study

ucts in Monts du Lyonnais, also in France, and food, crafts and agricultural producer chains in Piedmont, Italy, all illustrate additional examples of how close cooperation stimulated by LEADER+ between entrepreneurs, NGOs and public authorities can generate good results. This in turn has reinforced the confidence of people and of authorities in the value of collaboration and laid the groundwork for further cooperative endeavours.

Almost half of the LAGs (47%) thought that LEADER+ had given opportunities for marginalised groups to participate in local development. But most of this represented women, young people and the elderly, often not the most marginalised. Only a small proportion of activities aimed at marginalised groups targeted ethnic minorities. The fact that ethnic and linguistic minorities are more often found in urban than rural environments may help to explain this low level of activity with minorities. Nevertheless, the Wrzosowa Kraina (Poland) and the Sümeg-Marcal (Hungary) LAGs comprised ethnic minorities, notably Romas who benefitted from LEADER+ activities.[81]

There has not been not been much transnational activity among LAGs. The small scale of LAGs, and limited resources would explain why most groups concentrate almost exclusively on their own areas. Nevertheless there have been several examples of LAGs cooperating across borders with other LEADER+ groups or other forms of NGO.

- Ballyhoura, County Limerick, Ireland: This LAG set up cooperation between local communities in Limerick and communities in Uganda with the object of sharing technical expertise, creating linkages, and providing support to local groups to identify financial support for projects arising from the initiative.[82]
- Westmeath LAG, Ireland and two LAGs in Finland, Keskipiste and Rieska: The activity consisted in meetings and exchanges concerning traditional food, crafts and music.[83]
- European LEADER Renewable Energy Network: A network of four core partners of which the lead is Kop Van Nord Holland LAG in Netherlands, Ireland, Italy and Spain was formed to explore possibilities of alternative energy. Outputs included a website, training and field visits. The network is open and has attracted widespread participation by other LAGs.[84]
- LEADER+ regions of Nordschwarzwald and Westallgäu, Germany and Vorarlberg, Austria: These three LAGs are in an area that is 80% forest and where the silver fir is an important and characteristic element of that forest. The three LAGs came together to devise methods for promoting the silver fir among builders, designers and craftsmen.[85]

4.4.4 Conclusions Theme 4

The extent that LEADER+ programmes enhanced job opportunities in the Community rural areas.

The importance of direct job creation varied from LAG to LAG. Some attached a high priority to it and reported reasonable levels of success. Others focused more on creating general conditions for economic viability through training or through promoting networks, marketing activities and producer cooperatives of different types. Others saw attainment of community viability through preserving the environment and promoting means for an improved quality of life. For these LAGs tallies of jobs created were not possible. Even for those which did claim success there must be some doubt about the comparability of the numbers given the well known difficulties in identifying genuine net additions.

---

[81] Polish Case Study, Hungarian Case Study
[82] Best Practice, 2008/3, page 49
[83] Best Practice, 2009/4, page 51
[84] Best Practice, 2009/4, page 70
[85] Best Practice, 2008/3, page 37

metis

That said, many LAGs do have a clear idea of the number of jobs they have created directly.Even if it is not possible to have a comprehensive estimates of the numbers involved in the whole LEADER+ programme, the types of support given and the innovative nature of many of the LEADER+ interventions, the sectors in which they intervene (especially small scale craft type and tourist activities), the fact that they operate in areas of underemployment make a *prima facie* case for the conclusion that both directly and indirectly LEADER+ activities contributed to the creation and maintenance of employment in their respective areas.

The extent that LEADER+ programmes enhanced activities for women and young people in the Community rural areas.

Priorities

With respect to the specific cases of women and young people, the overall conclusion is that LEADER+ programmes did formally target some of their activities at women and young people and so can be judged to have complied with the spirit of LEADER+ programme as envisaged by the EU and with the formal requirements of participation in the programme. But the relative importance of these groups in priorities varies a lot from LAG to LAG.

Women and Young People

There is some evidence, however, of extensive take up by women of LEADER+ activities. It may well be that the scale of projects, the sectors in which they take place (e.g. food, catering), may make them attractive to rural women with domestic duties or those returning to the work place. The participation of young people seems to have been more problematic. A more even distribution of decision making as between men and women, and a formal place for young people could be helpful. Attracting the participation of young people, especially adolescents, may need specially trained animators.

Demography

It would be hard to conclude, and questionnaire respondents did not conclude, that LEADER+ had much impact on demographic structure. However, activities which are targeted at young people, and more general measures to improve the social and cultural attractiveness of rural areas (including sporting and educational activities) can complement larger initiatives taken by national or regional development agencies or municipalities. Thus LEADER+ can play a role in combating out migration and increasing age dependency in rural areas.

The extent that LEADER+ programmes contributed to fostering the economic, environmental and social capital of the Community rural areas.

The overall impact of LEADER+ programmes on the economic, environmental and social capital of EU rural areas covers a very broad range of outputs, many of them central to the question of the success of the LEADER concept. As is to be expected from the wide range of LEADER+ activities, most of them small scale distributed throughout the European Union, it is difficult to make generalisations. Similarly, quantified measures of outputs and results, many of which are intangible (e.g. willingness to cooperate), are difficult to come by.

New income

LEADER+ groups have promoted small scale and craft enterprises directly which have helped to create or sustain employment and income. In other cases the impact was indirect via marketing and promotional activities organised by LEADER+ groups. These types of activities benefitted particularly small scale manufacturing, food processing and tourism. Exploitation of local natural

resources of agricultural products, fish, and timber were often important in these types of initiative.

New services and Enhancement of then Locality

LEADER+ was also prominent in creating new facilities and services for local people, for example in the areas of education, sports for young people, cultural activity and elder care. These contributed to the amenities of local areas and enhanced their attractiveness for local people. Many LEADER+ projects had protection of the environment as their main or subsidiary objective - be it conservation of rivers, improved management of water supplies to farmers, or promotion of higher standards of environmental protection among enterprises, households and municipalities.

Social capital

Across all these activities is bonding between local groups that may create a resource for further local development. This even extended, in several cases, to cross border cooperation between LAGs.

In summary, and despite the usual data problems from such a diverse and extensive range of activities, there is evidence suggesting that there has been success in promoting economic activity, protecting the environment and creating 'social' capital in the form of willingness and capacity of local people to cooperate.

4.5 Theme 5: Governance and Rural Citizenship

4.5.1 Evaluation Question 18

To what extent have LEADER+ programmes (EU15) enhanced local governing capacities effectively promoting territorial-based forms of rural development and the participation of rural actors in the development process?

> ☞ **LEADER+ had significant positive effects on local governing capacities and through this considerably promoted territorial-based forms of rural development and the participation of local actors.**

Introduction

Governance is highly relevant to LEADER+ since it can be understood as the appropriate delivery mechanism of policies for the enhancement of local development. At the same time, good governance, or improved governance capacity is (at least supposedly) one of the main results of the implementation of the LEADER Programme that can allow for structural changes and for the maintenance of socio-economic improvements far beyond the time period of the programme itself. Thus, governance is a pre-condition, a process and a product of rural development. Evaluating governance as a process (or as a special delivery mechanism) can help us to understand how the registered effects of projects under LEADER+ have come about and what sort of socio-economic impacts can be expected. Evaluating governance as a result of the implementation can give us an indication of the improvements of institutions, networks, participation and empowerment, in other words of structural changes within the societal and institutional system that can create the basis for further development in the future.

Governance should be considered from both its vertical and its horizontal dimensions. The vertical dimension refers to the policy and/or political domain, based mainly on redistribution, formal-

metis

ised rules, normative control and an interconnected, co-operating system of various levels of de-velopment institutions, and could be referred to as *multilevel governance*. The horizontal dimen-sion refers to the local domain, based on networks, endogenous action, and the integration of development resources in a local territorial framework, and can be referred to as *local govern-ance*. These two dimensions are closely interconnected and for a successful, structural devel-opment they should form an integrated system. Whereas, the main principles (participation, sub-sidiarity, democratic decision making, etc.) are very similar in both domains, the ways in which they are implemented can be quite different. This evaluation question primarily concentrates on the horizontal dimension; multi-level governance is however also taken into account.

When talking about 'rural actors', again various levels or groups of people and institutions should be considered, according to how deeply they were involved in the design and implementation of the programme: (1) the small circle of those actors who initiated and/or practically worked in the design and the implementation of the programme, representing the 'engine' of local development (LAG manager, paid project managers, president, (some) members of the board, enthusiastic local activists and volunteers); (2) those who had some sort of personal contact with the pro-gramme (beneficiaries or at least project applicants, less active LAG members, etc.); (3) the wider local population (municipalities, associations, businesses, individuals), i.e. the beneficiar-ies or the end users of the results of the programme (improved services, infrastructures, job op-portunities, networks, social clubs, etc.).

Governance and related issues were not discussed in the national reports or in other available sources of information. Most of the information used to answer this question, therefore, comes from the LAG questionnaires complemented by the MA and NNU interviews and the case stud-ies.

Findings

Self-organisation and the management of common goods and affairs

A close reading of the data suggests that LEADER+ provided sufficient resources to build local capacities and organisation. The vast majority of LAGs (95%) stated that LEADER+ had a posi-tive effect on the organisational capacity of the region (the rest already had good organisational capacities and did not need LEADER+ for that, mainly as a result of previous LEADER experi-ence). According to 74% of all respondents to the LAG questionnaire, this effect was significant, and the LAG connected social groups that would not have met otherwise, or mediated between different local interests. According to the MA questionnaires, the programme authorities also thought the programme to be successful in this regard (96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement). One could say that in the opinion of the most important and in-formed actors, LEADER+ added significantly to the results of previous development efforts. There is evidence of spin-off organisations as well. For example, some Spanish LAGs assisted the creation of a number of associations (youth, women, service providers), local producer groups, co-operatives, etc. Nevertheless, these are only ad-hoc examples and to uncover the full potential of LEADER in this regard, further research would be needed.

According to the findings of the questionnaire, LAGs assessed the activities and impacts of the programme in this regard quite positively, albeit with some variations and ambiguities. Three quarters of the LAGs agreed that LEADER+ met needs not addressed by other programmes and two thirds with the statement that it helped to get people involved in local development who oth-erwise would not have done so. Therefore, the programme generally enhanced at least some sort of development capacities. Nevertheless, when we asked if LEADER reinforced local iden-tity, or a long term view of problems and potentials in the local area – both needed for strategic planning and action – just a little over the half of the groups responded positively. If we look at the answers to all questions about the perception of LAGs on the impact of their work, we can

find some telling variations between the different countries. The most satisfied with the results of their work (assuming they have made the most positive impact) are, in general, the north-western countries. These have long tradition in LEADER, a high level of funding and, at the same time, a strong local political and decision making culture and volunteer work (such as Finland, Ireland, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands). The second most satisfied group, some-what surprisingly, are some of the NMS, for which LEADER was a new experience, supposedly bringing completely new aspects and a big improvement to the rural development arena (Latvia, Czech Republic). The least satisfied group, encountering very few positive impacts on issues strongly connected to local development capacities, is a mixture of some EU15 and some of the NMS.

Looking at the three lowest scores coming from Belgium, Spain and Poland is also telling. These countries are very different both in their circumstances and their relationship with LEADER. In Belgium, LEADER is not a major scheme, there are very few LAGs and there are probably more alternative funding possibilities than in other less developed and organised countries. Also, un-derdevelopment and rural poverty is less of a problem, therefore it might be more difficult to make local (and central) actors interested in implementation. The most relevant comments on main obstacles for the implementation in the Belgian LAG questionnaires included: *the constitu-tion of the LAG; lack of involvement of some of the operators; the LAG itself; lack of continuous effort; complexity of administrative and financial management; administrative obligations; local rivalries; payment delays*[86].

In Spain where LEADER has been crucially important for the rural economy and society, there were high expectations for LEADER+, which might not all have been fulfilled by the programme. Therefore, the low score might be the result of a comparison with the old scheme, or rather with high expectations. '*The administrative complexity created a lot of bureaucracy and meant that flexibility and 'agility' has been lost; lack of trust by the administration in the LEADER methodol-ogy; civil society crisis, low levels of participation and coordination of this participation; the finan-cial system; not enough time available for work on the ground; difficulties in overcoming the de-velopment issues of those areas which are particularly deprived; excessive will by the public administrations to intervene in the design and make-up of the LAGs*[87].

For Poland, LEADER+ was the first experience of the approach and based on the case studies and qualitative information two reasons for such a low score could be cited. One is that although LEADER had not been implemented in Poland before LEADER+, there was a lot of 'word' about it, and high expectations were generated amongst rural actors. Another strongly connected rea-son could be that in Poland LEADER+ in principle stayed in the capacity building phase and few actual development projects were financed. That could and did generate a certain disappoint-ment. The most relevant comments on the main obstacles for the implementation in Poland in the LAG questionnaires included: *bureaucracy; lack of experience of the MA; poor National Ru-ral Network in the region; long wait for payments; long period when applications were consid-ered, too many requirements imposed on the LAGs; too frequent changes of principles (regula-tions) concerning implementation and LAG functioning.*[88]

Case studies and other more qualitative information sources support the finding that the most positive and valuable result of LEADER+ lies in the process of setting up LAGs and creating and implementing local strategies. These greatly contributed to the accumulation of social capital and social learning (learning effect) in the LAG regions that is crucially important for creating govern-ance capacity at various levels. The LAG harmonises interests, enables common decisions, en-courages networks, the flow of information and a developing culture of mutual help and respect amongst local actors beyond the LAG. The development capacity, embodied in the local agen-

---

[86] Comments from the LAG Questionnaires
[87] Comments from the LAG Questionnaires
[88] Comments from the LAG Questionnaires

metis

cies (LAG offices), the professionalism, local knowledge and contacts of their staff are one of the most important results of the programme as they promote territorial-based forms of rural development and the participation of rural actors especially in those countries/regions where local political culture is somewhat less developed. Last but not least, interregional and transnational experiences, adapted innovations, behavioural models and social learning achieved through LEADER+ can be mentioned as helping to develop local actors' capacities for self organisation.

These results at the same time had different effects on different groups of local actors. In general terms, the more a rural actor (particular institutions/people) invested in the design and the implementation of the programme, the more they profited from the process-type results, especially in terms of organisational capacity. For example, those (1) acting as the 'engine' of local development (LAG managers and office staff, president, certain board members, enthusiastic local activists and volunteers) accumulated embedded local knowledge, information and contacts enabling reflexivity, proactivity and flexibility in local implementation of the programme. This circle of actors benefited the most, and should at the same time be considered the most beneficial for local development; (2) a much wider circle of actors who had some sort of personal contact with the programme (beneficiaries or at least project applicants, less active LAG members, etc.). They provided the local socio-economic environment for LEADER+, acted as members of different networks, filled the programme with meaning, and often became potential members of the direct actors mentioned in (1). The wider rural population (3) might not even have been informed about the programme, or did not get interested in it; however, they also might have enjoyed general improvements in social networks, infrastructure, thus they can also be seen to have benefitted from the results of the programme.

Multi-level governance and the level of autonomy of the LAGs

According to the MA questionnaires, the programme authorities were generally satisfied with the system. Nevertheless, there were three exceptions (Hungary, Portugal and Estonia) where respondents from MAs thought that the system was far from adequate for the implementation of the LEADER approach since the LAGs did not have enough autonomy to act. For the purpose of the analysis we used two different indexes: felt or perceived autonomy and formal autonomy. We also applied our country grouping categories (EU15 North and Central states, EU15 Mediterranean, EU10) to analyse the results.

The LAG questionnaire had a direct question on the administrative system and the level of autonomy (low-medium-high) regarding the payments to the beneficiaries (this we call perceived autonomy below). According to the answers 33 % of LAGs had low, 33% medium and 35% high autonomy, with very apparent differences between country groupings, shown in table 23. In EU15 North and Central (countries with high culture of multi-level governance, volunteer work, etc.) there are no huge differences in the number of LAGs falling in the different categories of autonomy. At the same time, Mediterranean LAGs mostly fall in the high autonomy category (with 24% in medium and none having low autonomy). There is also a clear tendency showing that LAGs were significantly more autonomous in the EU15 than in the New Member States. Almost half of New Member State LAGs had low autonomy and only 9% high. In Hungary, all five responding LAGs fall under low autonomy. According to the Hungarian case study, this was due to tight central control that tried to influence local selection criteria and other aspects of the implementation. According to the case studies and other qualitative information, the actual level of autonomy and organisational patterns varied greatly throughout different countries and regions.

Table 23. Country grouping by geographical location* National administration system of the LAGs

Which of the following would you say best describes the national administration system for your LAG? (C11)									
			low autonomy		medium autonomy		high autonomy		Total
Country grouping by geographical location	EU15 North and Central	Count	17		19		16		52
		% within C11	53%	33%	61%	36%	47%	31%	54%
	EU15 Mediterranean	Count	0		5		16		21
		% within C11	0,0% /	0%	16%	24%	47%	76%	22%
	EU10	Count	15		7		2		24
		% within C11	47%	62%	23%	29%	6%	9%	25%
Total		Count	32		31		34		97*
		% within C11	100,0%		100,0%		100,0%		100,0%

It is interesting to see how the picture changes if, instead of the autonomy perceived by the LAGS, we consider 'formal autonomy', an index based on the legal and operational system of LEADER in the different EU countries and regions. According to this index, autonomy was, in general, on a significantly lower level, classifying nearly 90% of EU10 LAGs and over 43% of the North-Western European LAGs participating in the research as having low autonomy. At the same time all Mediterranean LAGs were classified as having high autonomy. These suggest that the level of autonomy (the margin to act) is almost completely defined by circumstances defined by the legislative and institutional framework of the particular country, that is an external condition for the LAG. Perceived autonomy seem to be providing a more nuanced picture, nevertheless, it is based on subjective opinion, rather than hard facts.

Table 24. Country grouping by geographical location* Formal categorization of the LAGs

Formal categorization of the LAGs by their autonomy (European Commission)									
			low autonomy		medium autonomy		high autonomy		Total
Country grouping by geographical location	EU15 North and Central	Count	24		15		16		55
		% within Formal autonomy	50,0%	44%	83,3%	27%	43,2%	29%	53,4%
	EU15 Mediterranean	Count	0		0		21		21
		% within Formal autonomy	0,0%	0%	,0%	0%	56,8%	100%	20,4%
	EU10	Count	24		3		0		27
		% within Formal autonomy	50,0%	89%	16,7%		,0%	11%	26,2%
Total		Count	48		18		37		103
		% within Formal autonomy	100,0%		100,0%		100,0%		100,0%

The quest of LAGs for autonomy and room for manoeuvre is unmistakeable. It is therefore useful to cross-check if the autonomy of LAGs (both the formal and the perceived autonomy) features different outcomes in respect to the quoted obstacles and success factors. First it is noteworthy to remark that among the LAGs with 'high autonomy' the Mediterranean group of the EU15 is strongly over-represented, whereas among the LAGs with 'low autonomy' the EU10 are strongly over-represented. Respondents from the EU10 and Mediterranean EU15 LAGs showed a slightly stronger inclination towards blaming obstacles on the administrative context than the North and Central EU15. It is interesting to see that the EU10, with no LAG in the 'high formal autonomy' category and the Mediterranean group from the EU15, with all their LAGs in the 'high formal autonomy' category gave a similar response. Furthermore, among the LAGs with 'high autonomy' there is a significantly higher share of 'experienced LAGs' (dating back to LEADER II or even LEADER I). This should be kept in mind when dealing with the question which perform-ance differences can be attributed to the degree of autonomy of LAGs.

The influences of either autonomy or experience can only be analysed and understood together; however, from our results, it seems that the experience and learning factor should be more influ-ential than the formal autonomy. Most probably, the 'perceived autonomy' is biased by the ex-perience factor: 'beginner LAGs' may not notice the lack of autonomy because they want guid-ance and backing. On the other hand, 'experienced' LAGs may be particularly sensitive towards interference by public authorities. Consequently, both categories differ concerning the 'formal' and the 'perceived autonomy'. 'Perceived autonomy' implies a lot more mixed emotions ('me-dium autonomy') than the formal categorization (see table 25).

Table 25. Formal and perceived autonomy

	Low autonomy	Medium autonomy	High autonomy	Total
Formal autonomy	46.6%	17.5%	35.9%	100.0%
Perceived auton-omy	33.3%	32.3%	34.4%	100.0%

If we cross-tabulate the degree of (formal and perceived) autonomy with the issues mentioned as factors of success and obstacles, a relatively large number of *'high formal autonomy LAGs'* (32.4%) blame the governance context as a hindrance (in contrast to 20.8% of the *'low formal autonomy LAGs'*). This is not the case with *'high perceived autonomy LAGs'* (26.5% against 25.0%). One explanation could be that more experienced LAGs are less tolerant facing problems with public authorities, another explanation could be that in the countries, where the *'formally autonomous LAGs'* are situated (EL, ES, FR, IE, IT, PT, UK), informal governance arrangements (or their dysfunctions) de facto reduce the degree of formal autonomy. A third one could be that formal autonomy does not really mirror the real room for manoeuvre of the LAGs.

One could conclude that just the formal (regulatory) aspect of autonomy is certainly not sufficient to define the actual room for manoeuvre for individual LAGs. 'Autonomy' in the sense of inde-pendence and self-determination unfolds its virtues in a context of shared responsibility and lived subsidiarity. Thus a formally autonomous LAG may face enormous dependencies, if:

- funds are not allocated in time by the MA;
- national co-funding has not been packaged in advance so that the LAG runs into difficul-ties to fulfil its financial duties;
- the LAG does not have sufficient financial capacity to cope with the administrative work without neglecting its core business, local animation, strategic orientation and project support;

- the political and administrative duties and liabilities are not properly explained and the LAG does not get sufficient technical support and guidance;
- LAGs are closely and strongly controlled through frequent and demanding tasks given by the MA and their funding is dependent on their fulfilment;
- there are brittle relationships and lack of trust between programme officials and local stakeholders;
- relevant parts of local stakeholders (economic sectors, municipalities) do not support the endeavour and leave the LAG out in the rain;
- the LAG grows apart from local people and their actual needs and aspirations.

Two further important general points emerged from the interviews, case studies and qualitative remarks in the questionnaires. The first is that broadly speaking, the more autonomy and the less bureaucracy LAGs had, the more participation, structural changes, real rural development results they could achieve. The second is that although at the time of LEADER+, central control and bureaucratic requirements seemed harsh to many actors, looking back from the point of view of the current, mainstreamed programme, it was a much more liberal and user friendly system than that LAGs have today.

Summing up, autonomy is aspired to by many LAGs, it is a recurring factor of success. Nevertheless, preparedness or the level of local development capacity has a significant effect on how the level of autonomy actually affects the work and the possibilities of a particular LAG. Low formal autonomy is definitely hindering local development work and even building up local development capacities for the future. The *'medium formal autonomy'* can be considered as a comfortable position as it combines strategic autonomy with relatively limited financial and administrative obligations: *'the LAG selects projects, receives claims for payment and makes payments to the projects but with formal approval from the Programme Authority.'*[89] (This can be the case for newly created LAGs.) If LAGs want to go one step further, in direction of a local development agency and implementing body, which means growing beyond the horizon and periodicity of a LEADER programming period, provisions must be taken (i) to enable the LAG itself; (ii) to prepare the whole setup of multi-level governance, the quality of which is always determined by its weakest link. Nevertheless, for most LAGs with experience and good, sustainable results in strategic and structural local development work a liberal and well functioning multi-level governance environment with a high level formal (and perceived) local autonomy seem to be the best working environment.

4.5.2 Evaluation question 19

To what extent have LEADER+-type measures enhanced the capacities of rural communities to conceive and implement local rural development strategies?

☛ **There is evidence to suggest that LEADER+-type measures significantly enhanced the capacities of rural communities in the NMS to conceive and implement local rural development strategies.**

Introduction

The evaluation question explores the specificities of LEADER+ in terms of local governing capacities in the NMS which joined the EU during the course of the implementation of the programme. It also explores how successful the implementation of the special measure for capacity building within the LEADER+-type Programme for the EU10 was. Only six of the NMS decided to implement LEADER (the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and the three Baltic states). Slovenia

---

[89] The definition used in the Survey questionnaire.

and Slovakia implemented their national LEADER-like programme. The level of programme implementation varied greatly amongst countries from LAGs not being selected until the very end of the programming period in Estonia to 70 LAGs selected and 12,600 local projects carried out in Hungary. A comparative, synthesizing evaluation is therefore not easy. On the other hand, many of the aspects discussed above, under EQ 18, are relevant here too. As stated above, governance is both a precondition and a product of LEADER+. Nevertheless, NMS, coming from centralised socialist dictatorships, tend to have a weak culture of multilevel governance, civil society, and a somewhat lower level of culture for harmonising interests, achieving consensus, volunteer work and other important conditions for the LEADER method. When policies designed for a strong existing governance system (with a culture of volunteer work, common decision making, a strong civil society, partnerships, functioning institutions, subsidiarity and genuine decentralization efforts throughout the development system) are implemented in a different political and social context, there is scope for problems and distortions during implementation. This can be true for both the vertical (policy environment) and the horizontal (local implementation) dimensions of governance. On the other hand, the news about LEADER arrived to the NMS much earlier than the programme itself and created great expectations amongst rural population. Therefore, though LEADER+ in the NMSs was intended as an experiment and a preparation and capacity building for the 'real implementation' of the LEADER approach in the subsequent programming period, some countries (especially Hungary) went quite far in its implementation and had results and experiences beyond the experimental phase.

Findings

Design and implementation of the local development strategy (LDS)

Much of this issue has been discussed under 4.5.1. Nevertheless, as a result of the limited time remaining in the programme period, limited resources and the experimental nature of the LEADER+-type measures in the NMS, one could expect some marked differences to the EU15.

Since in the EU10 there was very little or no previous experience of LEADER, there were no established local institutions to plan for the imminent LEADER+ programme. Skills and experience in participatory planning was lacking at both the local and the central level. Actors were still learning about the LEADER approach when local and central institutions had to be built up. Some countries (Poland, Czech Republic) chose to develop skills and the LAGs and LDSs in a slower, possibly more organic way. Others (Hungary) sped up the process to be able to implement the full range of the programme and realise projects on the ground. All this was in the time of the huge transition and changes in the wake of EU accession in which LEADER+-type measures were actually low priority. At the same time, help from established LAGs and programme authorities from the EU15, at least during the preparation phase when it would have been the most needed, was scarce[90]. Knowledge transfer in a better structured resourced form only started well after accession, in the organisation of the European LEADER Contact Point and the National Network unit.

Programme authorities, according to the MA questionnaires were normally satisfied with the performance of LAGs designing and implementing LDSs in the NMS – with the exception of the Hungarian MA which was very critical of the programme implementation and strongly disagreed with this statement. According to the questionnaire, financial resources for establishing LAGs and drawing up LDSs were rather poor in NMSs. Some two thirds of the respondent LAGs stated

---

[90] There were some attempts to achieve the transfer of existing LEADER knowledge from the West to the East during the run-up to enlargement. The two most notable of these were (1) various workshops and trainings of the PREPARE Network (Partnership for Rural Europe - http://www.preparenetwork.org/); and (2) a series of events organised by ELARD (European LEADER Association for Rural Development - http://www.elard.eu/)

that financial resources available for drawing up the local strategy were not sufficient, and for more than a quarter of them there was no available financial support for local planning at all.

Table 26. Availability of financial assistance for drawing up the local strategy

	Availability of financial assistance for drawing up the local strategy		
	Sufficient finance was accessible	Finance was accessible but it was insufficient	There was no finance available for drawing up the territorial development strategy
Czech Republic	1	1	2
Estonia	1	2	0
Hungary	1	2	1
Latvia	0	2	3
Lithuania	1	2	0
Poland	1	1	0
Total	7	10	6

Nevertheless, from the Hungarian case study we learned that alternative sources of finance (from regional development, civil associations and private funds) were at least sometimes available. Regarding professional advice from programme authorities we found a similar picture as in the EU15 although on average it emerged as being somewhat easier to get advice in the NMS. However, if we consider that LEADER+-type measures were more regulated and the LAGs less autonomous, their questions may have been easier to answer. (It should be noted that the level of what is considered 'sufficient advice' may differ between countries.)

Table 27. Perceived Autonomy in the NMS

	Recoded Autonomy Index			
	Low autonomy	Medium autonomy	High autonomy	Total
Czech Republic	2	3	0	5
Estonia	0	1	2	3
Hungary	5	0	0	5
Latvia	3	2	0	5
Lithuania	0	3	2	5
Poland	2	1	1	4
Total	12	10	5	27

According to 'Formal Autonomy' with the exception of Estonia all LAGs had low autonomy, and even according to the perceived autonomy, the vast majority of NMS LAGs had low or at most medium autonomy, with the exception of two Baltic States, Lithuania and Estonia. Concerning the freedom of setting their own priorities for the strategy, all New Member State LAGs fall into the medium range. The reason for this could be that as the programme was in an experimental phase, LAGs were reasonably free to create their own strategy (setting priorities, etc.). Nevertheless, during implementation they were strongly controlled through the administration and thus had low autonomy.

metis

Sustainable development capacity to implement the LEADER approach

A close reading of the data suggests that for many LAGs in the NMS LEADER+-type measures provided sufficient resources to build local capacities and organisation and prepared them to implement the LEADER approach. Programme authorities, with the exception of Hungary, were in general satisfied with the results of the programme and all New Member State MA respondents agreed with the statement that 'LEADER+-type programmes have contributed to enhanced capacities of local actors to organise themselves'. LAGs were finally established, at least some LDSs were accepted and local institutions were established in every country. Nevertheless, there were huge differences between different EU10 countries in terms of their approach towards the capacity building phase of the LEADER+ type programme, having significant effects on how LAGs could develop their capacities for the implementation of the LEADER method. The two basic types could be represented by the approach of Poland and of Hungary.

In Poland LEADER+ was largely devoted to capacity building and the preparation for the next programming period. Here LAGs received most of their financial support for these sort of activities, they had to undertake all the projects and thus realise their own strategy. It was theoretically forbidden for them to give local grants, nevertheless, this confinement was often overcome through subcontracting. Nevertheless, the implementation of practical development projects was certainly very limited. Hungary followed the opposite strategy to this. There the main objective was to start the full range programme as soon as possible and support local projects (see the boxes, based on the case studies). Both strategies have advantages and disadvantages.

Case study Wrzosowa Kraina LAG, Poland

The Leader+ Pilot Programme in Poland (i.e. the Leader-type measure in the RDP 2004-2006) was implemented in two stages or schemes: the first one provided funding to entities that declared the intention to set up a local partnership (LAG) and design a local strategy; the second scheme then provided funding for the implementation of the strategies. Both schemes were aimed at: establishing Local Action Groups (LAGs); analysing development potential of territories; and working on integrated development strategies. In order to achieve these goals the following actions were supported: training; information and consultancy activities with a view to get local populations involved in the process of thinking about the development directions of rural areas; and setting up of public-private partnerships. The maximum level of aid amounted to 100% of eligible costs, and an individual project could receive up to EUR 37 000. Beneficiaries of this support were self-governments of rural and urban-rural municipalities or their associations as well as legal persons: foundations, associations, unions of associations and non-governmental organizations (acting as LAGs). Therefore, LAGs were implementing these measures themselves, and get financed for organising and holding trainings, consultancy, etc. Wrzosowa Kraina LAG, the protagonist of the Polish case study got funded under both schemes.

Due to the specific character of the Pilot Leader+ measure in Poland, LAGs were not able to select and finance projects, all activities had to be carried out by the LAG itself. Nevertheless, the Wrzosowa Kraina LAG made all efforts to involve local partners. Re-granting of LEADER funding was formally not allowed however, though subcontracting local stakeholders could still contribute to the implementation of the strategy. The programme also provided many opportunities for training and capacity building for the staff of the LAG. Today, when the same people are involved in LEADER Axis implementation and there is much less time for training, this seems as an especially valuable feature in LEADER+.

---

*One of the most successful results is the birth of a **distinct local identity** and its promotion it throughout the country. The name "Wrzosowa Kraina" (not existing before LEADER+) and some high value traditional local products (such as heather blossom honey, local products based on wild berries and mushrooms growing in the Dolnoslaski Forests) are gaining national recognition. The "Festival of Honey and Wine" has become an annual event and attracts a growing number of tourists from Poland and even from other countries. S**ocial** effects are even more notable. Diverse communities developed mutual trust learnt working together. The LAG has played an important role in helping to set up local NGOs, and today in approximately 50% of villages, small local organisations are active. LEADER+ also resulted in the establishment of contacts with other LAGs in the Dolny Slask region, resulting in a dense network, still functioning today, both in the professional and in the personal domain.*

Sources: Polish case studyhttp://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/memberstates/poland.htm

In Poland there were sufficient time and resources for the establishment of LAGs, local organisation and social animation and the working out of the local development strategy. There were also good possibilities for training of LAG staff. All this was organised by the LAG itself, they could make independent decisions and prepare well for the next, much extended current round of LEADER. Considering that according to the LAG questionnaire *'most of the experience in terms of personal, institutional know-how, and contacts has been retained and is utilized in the current program in an extended form'* in all responding Polish LAGs, this seem to be a good and sensible investment. Nevertheless, LAGs in this model could not reallocate funds locally and independent local projects could not be subsidised from LEADER funds. According to comments from Polish rural development actors, this could hinder social animation and buying into the local community. This is reflected by the LAG questionnaires, where according to our satisfaction index, Polish LAGs expressed low or medium satisfaction about how they perceived the results of their work[91].

Table 28. Recoded satisfaction index in the NMS

	Recoded Satisfaction Index		
	Low satisfaction	Medium satisfaction	High satisfaction
Czech Republic	0	3	2
Estonia	1	1	1
Latvia	1	2	2
Lithuania	3	2	0
Poland	2	2	0
Hungary	1	3	1
Total	**10**	**17**	**9**

---

[91]The 'Satisfaction index' is composed of two parts calculated from question B7 (Self assessment of the LAG's communication efforts) and G59 (Self assessment of the results of the work of the LAG) of the LAG questionnaire. The value of the Satisfaction Index falls between 0 and 11. In principle, the higher the index, the higher the level of satisfaction with the LEADER+ programme and its results.

metis

AEIDL   CEU

Case study Sümeg Térségi Marcal Forrásvidék Fejlődéséért LAG (Sümeg LAG), Hungary

In Hungary the 'Acquisition of skills' measure under LEADER+ was implemented centrally, by a consortium, (consisted of PROMEI Public Company and the Hungarian Rural Parliament) selected on open tender at the beginning of 2005. All centrally financed training and capacity building activities were undertaken by this consortium, resulting in: (1) a textbook mainly compiled of translated material, (2) a short training for LEADER trainers with an exam at the end, (3) two one day trainings on regional level, for each micro-region's Gestor organisation based on mainly lectures, and (4) a very loosely organised mentoring system. These activities were available for any rural communities wanting to become LAGs, but NO additional support directly for LAGs was available for training, capacity building, or writing the local development strategy. According to many opinions by LAGs the appointed consortium performed rather poorly and the centrally provided opportunities were very far from being sufficient to build appropriate capacities in rural areas for the implementation of LEADER.

Nevertheless, some local communities were able to find alternative possibilities. In the Sümeg LAG, t**he preparation for the programme** started long before the actual launch of LEADER+. The strategic plan and the LAG agency was prepared (and latter run) by a civil association, led by a young lady, having robust experience and excellent contacts in regional development and the trust of all important local actors. They won various programmes to assess local planning, such as: the model programme promoting micro-regional co-operation and community planning financed by the Regional Development Agency (20 million HUF – approx. 80.000 EUR); to form the Regional Civil Forum (44.000 EUR support of the National Civil Fund; the local employment pact was prepared with the professional and financial help of the Regional Labour Centre; and a research project to map renewable resources, financed again by the Regional Development Agency and executed by a university (value: 15 million HUF – approx. 60.000 EUR). All in all, from various alternative sources, more than EUR 200.000 was gathered and spent during the run-up to LEADER+ in the region, on studies, strategy building, communication, awareness raising and socialisation of development ideas.

The implementation of the programme was accompanied by many difficulties. Financial resources were very low for organisation and administration as well as for project support (some EUR 317.000 altogether). The original two year timeframe was further tightened by central administration and finally there was only one summer month available to set up LAGs and another one (a year later) for making local applications. This extremely tight timeframe created many difficulties, and could lead sometime to non-organic, distorted development or/and unsustainable results. Nevertheless, good preparation, volunteer work and a local culture of co-operation in the case of the Sümeg LAG allowed for successful implementation.

Finally, 29 projects were realised and some EUR 317.000 spent under LEADER+ in the Sümeg LAG, nevertheless, **results and impacts** have been far more important than one could expect from these dimensions. Before LEADER+ the region practically had not profited from the EU resources for development, except for some infrastructure investments and 4-5 larger entrepreneurs' tenders. LEADER+ has achieved a multiple of this amount individually, and was able to ensure resources for small scale projects that would have had no chance elsewhere. One could understand that as an evidence proving that LEADER was much more successful in achieving development objectives than other EU funded programmes, reaching down to backward, under-developed localities, generating entrepreneurship, co-peration and solidarity. One of the major priorities of the strategy was **the marketing and improvement of local products and services**; moreover, the networking of producers and craftsmen, and this may be the most successful area. The marketplace in Sümeg, various shops, improved services, better machinery, workshops and knowledge for production could be mentioned as tangible results. Two enterprise networks were also formed: Sümeg Térségi Marcal Forrásvidék Hálózat and Marcal Nyitott Porta

Hálózat. The former connected producing and general service provider enterprises, the latter being service providers in tourism.

LEADER+ has had a lot of other positive results in addition to the winner tenders. It has mobilised the population of the whole region and fuelled co-operation. A lot of project ideas have been collected as a result of community planning, that did not have a source in LEADER, but in other operative programmes they finally did. LEADER+ and the LAG itself also acted as a pump primer, helping innovation, networking inside and outside the micro-region and the acquisition of funds from alternative sources (see 5.1.). The local development capacity established by LEADER+ played a significant role in the collection and compilation of these ideas (the president of FAMULUS wrote, as a professional compiler of tenders, numerous successful applications, mainly for local governments). The material resources drawn into the region amount to billions of HUF, in other words, the indirect effects multiplied many times over the amount sourced from LEADER+.

In order to strengthen enterprise culture, to research potential resources and to be able to reach potential investors which are the foundation of the micro-region Sümeg (Sümeg Kistérségért Közalapítvány), the leader organisation of the LAG applied for an investment stimulating programme. During the project which consumed a mere 2 million HUF an inventory of resources and a connected publication were compiled, and several highly successful businessmen's meetings were organised. As a result of the project various investments are in the preparatory phase on billion HUF scale (mineral water bottler, medical ingredients manufacturing plants, etc.).

One could say that LEADER+ was a successful programme in the Sümeg region; first of all, it created good circumstances and capacities for the further implementation of the LEADER approach. Also, the development capacity (human resources, networks) has persisted and it supports the implementation of the current LEADER Programme, though in a different geographic framework. On the other hand, tangible improvements are not too numerous and horizontal objectives of the programme (support for disadvantaged social groups, environment, etc.) were somewhat dismissed during planning and implementation.

In Hungary, training and capacity building was organised centrally, through a consortium. Consequently, LAGs had no finance for capacity development or the writing of the strategy. Since the training consortium, according to many opinions, performed rather weakly, the official capacity building scheme did not prepare LAGs for the implementation of the programme. Some local groups, like the Sümeg LAG (see box) gathered enough strength and resources for building capacities. Nevertheless, this was 'accidental' rather than derived from the system and did not work in every location either. On the other hand, the fact that in Hungary more than 12,600 local projects were supported in a decentralised way means that a working system of the LEADER method had to be set up and applied. In this case, LEADER once again acted as a *'real life laboratory'* and capacities were built alongside implementation. According to the 'satisfaction index' the majority of the respondents expressed medium satisfaction with the results of their work and connection to the local population.

Nevertheless, the differences encountered between the results in the questionnaire of the two models described above are by no means huge. Therefore, more detailed research into the topic would be needed to give concrete policy recommendations.

Accessing and handling alternative sources of funding

The question that whether LAGs were able to access and handle resources alternative to LEADER+ or not, could be considered as another indicator of development capacity (sustainability, financial autonomy, etc.). The majority of New Member State LAG respondents (78%) were able to do so. This shows their ability to act and is promising in terms of sustainability of acquired

metis

capacities for the next programming period. These alternative resources were in general very small; on the other hand they were essential, since LEADER+ resources themselves were small too.

Satisfaction with results

Looking at how New Member State LAGs reflected on their own work (based on the satisfaction index), they seem to be somewhat less satisfied with it than the LAGs in EU15. According to LAG respondents' qualitative remarks in the questionnaires, this can be explained with reference to some crucial obstacles for the implementation of the LEADER method, mainly concerning finances, bureaucracy, lack of decentralisation and understanding of LEADER by programme authorities.

'Low financial resources; huge bureaucratic burden; lack of clarity in legislation; lack of experience of the MA; poor National Rural Network; misunderstanding of the 'LEADER method'; politicization of 'the LEADER method' and the Programme; too many formalities and requirements imposed on the LAGs; too frequent changes of principles (regulations) concerning implementation and LAG functioning; the legal background was very complicated, not transparent at all; the negative approach and inconsistency of the Paying Agency, inconsistent regulations, delays in payments; local conflicts, political (including local politics) influence; not enough flexibility to modify the original strategy; not enough importance of professional knowledge...'[92]

At the same time, according to New Member State LAGs, the main success factors were connected to process type results of the programme, such as improved local identity, communication, local initiative, the development of local networks, awareness raising, empowerment, mutual help and responsibility.

'Rise in local initiative; local strategy development and implementation; inhabitants are more active, more think about local needs and solutions; change of attitude of the people; increase of local identity and solidarity; cooperation of three sectors; managing of finances from local level; providing possibility for participation in every stage of the development; readiness of people to take responsibility; interest group based and territorially based networks in local area; improved autonomy; local strategy that can react to changes (possibility to modify the development strategy); transparent, stable, consistent legal background and implementation rules; good communication with the management bodies; employing real professionals in the implementation of the tasks of the LAGs; cooperation strengthened among local actors; rural communities realised that they are able to change their circumstances; understanding that everybody is working for the same purpose; partnership, cooperation and respect between LAG stakeholders; implementation of the LEADER approach gave a huge impulse to rural communities; a lot of projects were written to funds other than LEADER+ and significant resources came to the region for development.'[93]

All this shows that though with much reduced resources and timeframe compared to the EU15, LEADER+-type measures on the local level achieved their purpose in spreading the LEADER methodology and preparing rural areas in the NMS for the implementation of integrated rural development policies.

---

[92] LAG questionnaire, comments on Question 62.
[93] LAG questionnaire, comments on Question 63.

AEIDL   CEU

4.5.3 Conclusions Theme 5

The basic conclusion on this theme (concerning governance, rural citizenship, participation and the building of local development capacities) is LEADER+ had significant positive effects on local governing capacities and through this considerably promoted territorial-based forms of rural development and the participation of local actors. Moreover, the improvement of governance and local development capacities continues to be a crucially important result of the programme. This includes structural improvements and long lasting effects, far beyond the importance of financial resources represented by LEADER+. The process of setting up LAGs and the creation and implementation of local strategies (the essence of the LEADER method) greatly contributed to the accumulation of social capital and social learning (learning effect) in the LAG regions - which is crucially important for governance capacity. The most important results can be encountered on various levels and in various groups of actors. In general terms, the more a rural actor (particular institutions/people) invested in the design and the implementation of the programme, the more they profited from the process-type results and the more capacity could they represent later in the development process. Regarding the different fields for capacity development, one important arena is the LAG itself, with its function in harmonising interests, enabling for common decisions, etc. Networks, information flow, a developing culture of mutual help and respect amongst local actors (wider than the LAG) are other important dimensions. The third factor, the development capacity, embodied in the local agencies (LAG offices), the professionalism, local knowledge and contacts of their staff should be mentioned as the most important results of the programme. They are essential for effective promotion of territorially-based forms of rural development and the participation of rural actors especially in those countries/regions where local political culture is somewhat less developed. Last but not least, interregional and transnational experiences, adapted innovations, behavioural models and social learning achieved through LEADER+ can be mentioned as helping to develop local actors' capacities for self organisation.

Our results suggest that the multi-level governance environment for the implementation of LEADER+ (the autonomy of LAGs, the preparedness of central institutions, the level of functioning of the administration, control and financial system) had a significant effect on the programme, in particular on the possibilities of local governance. In general, the more autonomy LAGs had, and the better service they were provided with by the MA and the Paying Agency (unambiguous, simple rules, fast administration with no delays, etc.) the more participation, structural changes, and real rural development results they could achieve. Concurrently, the closer the control, and the more complicated the administrative and financial rules the less able LAGs and central institutions were to apply them and the larger the proportion of human and financial resources were spent on administration rather than on development activities at the local level. Another frequent finding was that though at the time of LEADER+ central control and bureaucratic requirements seemed harsh to many actors, looking back, it was a much more liberal and user friendly system than the current, mainstreamed 2007-13 programme.

The ability of LAGs to access and manage alternative funding to the LEADER+ budget has also given some indication about the (financial) autonomy and sustainability, paid human capacity, and the local governing capacity of LAGs. According to the gathered data **only a small minority of LAGs accessed and managed significant amounts of non-LEADER funds, suggesting that a governing capacities developed on the local level are still very far from being able to allow them to fend for themselves** without the 'umbilical cord' of LEADER funding. To achieve this long term objective, a conscious strategy on central and local level would be needed.

There is evidence to suggest that LEADER+-type measures significantly enhanced the capacities of rural communities in the NMS to conceive and implement local rural development strategies. A close reading of the data suggests that for many LAGs in NMS

metis

AE DL ⁞ C E U

LEADER+-type measures provided sufficient resources to build local capacities and prepared them to implement the LEADER approach. Different strategies in different NMS brought slightly different results. In Hungary, where LEADER+ was implemented fully (70 LAGs were established and 12,600 local projects realised), the process of establishing LAGs and developing LDSs was somewhat rushed and, according to the MA questionnaire and qualitative information, was not always 'organic'. On the other hand, LAGs in Hungary could get the full experience of both planning and implementing their strategies, dealing with administration, control, local conflicts, harmonisation of interests, developing a common identity, building networks, etc. This can be seen not only as a rushed evolution of the programme, but also as creating a real life laboratory – which was the original approach to LEADER. In the Polish experience, where efforts were concentrated on capacity building rather than projects, there was much more time for establishing, learning, organising, planning; however, this approach missed out on experiencing the successes and difficulties of practical implementation. The approaching mid-term review of the current programming period might give some indication of the consequences of the two approaches.

There is evidence to suggest that capacity building have worked on the local level, and according to the LAG survey, most experiences gained in LEADER+ were maintained for the current programme period. Nevertheless, local development and governing capacities can only be understood and judged in the wider context of multi-level governance. Political changes (general elections, changing ministers and state secretaries) and/or simply changing staff and/or approaches (in the MA and in the Paying Agency) can easily result in reduced social learning and reduced sustainability of knowledge, skills and experiences on the higher levels of programme administration. Bureaucratic institutions were often not capable or not willing to internalise the LEADER approach and initiate genuine decentralisation. In Hungary, for example, all important persons dealing with LEADER+ were dismissed or replaced by the time the next programme started. Institutions (the NNU) were abolished, and most of the experience lost. Though local level knowledge was maintained to a great extent, changing rules, and changes in institutions and in multi-level governance could deprive the local experience of much of its value.

4.6 Theme 6: Managing, controlling and financing systems

4.6.1 Evaluation question 20

To what extent have the arrangements for the management and financing which were set up by the authorities, the administrators and the local partners helped maximise the impact of the LEADER+ programmes and LEADER+-type measures?

☞ **Both LAGs and MAs were generally satisfied with the management and administration arrangements for LEADER+. Elements of this have translated well into the new programme period, continuity of LAGs and staffs and effective partnership between MAs and LAGs are key contributors to this. There were concerns expressed over the perceived greater bureaucratic burden and complexity of the EAFRD.**

Introduction

Evaluation Question 20 considers the extent to which the arrangements established for the management and financing of the programme contributed to the maximisation of the impact of the programmes. This links directly with Evaluation Question 21 which considers the effect of these arrangements in terms of the efficiency of use of public funds. The question specifically addresses the effects of arrangements for the management and financing of programmes, public funding, co-funding rates, eligibility of funding and mechanisms for various forms of participation including vertical partnership, local governance, communications and the division of responsibilities.

This theme has relevance for many other evaluation themes as these systems interact with and underpin all the main aspects of the delivery of LEADER. This directly affects the people involved at all levels of the programme from the project beneficiary to the MA. Systems differ between the Member States, regions and at the local level placing different demands and requirements on LAGs. These reflect management and delivery considerations, the variety of needs and capabilities e.g. between new LAGs and old LAGs, the degree of LAG autonomy or devolved responsibility, LAG capability to deliver and the resources required.

Findings

The beginning, appraising the arrangements

MA respondents were the principal source consulted in this regard and were asked to assess the extent to which they considered that the local arrangements for financing and management were appropriately weighted and addressed in the selection process which they applied.

The evidence from the MA responses shows that a variety of approaches was adopted to establishing the local financing and management arrangements. This ranged from rather prescriptive approaches where the detailed requirements and systems were handed down by the MA, e.g. in Emilia Romagna and Bolzano, to a more open approach based on the need to demonstrate the consistency and plausibility of the arrangements with the overall strategy as occurred in Bavaria. Generally however there appears to have been a fairly high degree of direction from the MA to which the LAGs had to respond in setting out their proposed approach.

The normal approach adopted appears to have been that these arrangements be considered as an integral part of the strategy, these were therefore generally considered within the selection process. Strategies which did not include such arrangements would have been considered incomplete or un-receivable e.g. in Bavaria; as such the weighting is absolute. In some cases such as Scotland, following the appraisal of the proposed arrangements LAGs were provided

---

Case study Maiella Verde LAG, Italy

In Abruzzo LAG strategies could score a maximum of 300 points split equally between three evaluation areas: 1) the disadvantage of the territory; 2) Features of the partnership and the LAG; and 3) Features of Local Development Plan. Of the 15 criteria which were applied to the assessment of the partnership 5 could be seen to directly relate to the partners' capability to manage the partnership and its finances effectively representing 33% of the score for this section. For the LAG development plan 2 of the 15 criteria (13%) were of high relevance here. In total therefore 23% of the available points were linked to consideration of aspects linked to finance and management.

---

with feedback on the suitability of their proposals and subsequently made amendments. The Italian case study highlights the way in which these were weighted within the overall strategy appraisal process in the Abruzzo region of Italy.

The approval of these arrangements within the strategies led directly to them forming part of the contractual basis between the MA or regional intermediary and the LAG or locally accountable body. As such these were then subject to follow up and systems audit of varying degrees of formality.

Overall MAs express a relatively high level of satisfaction with the appropriateness of these aspects of the LAG selection process, a 78% ranking on a scale from 1-5, the third highest satisfaction ranking in this theme.

metis

AE DL CEU

Findings in relation to the extent to which the resources for managing, controlling and financing were proportionate and appropriate show similar levels of agreement and therefore suggest that these had been adequately addressed in the LAG appraisal process.

Impact of LEADER+ on the current programming period arrangements

MA have a rather positive perspective of the impact of LEADER+ arrangements for financing and management on those for the current programme period. Some 68% of those consulted either agree or agree strongly that there has been a positive effect with only 12.5% disagreeing to any extent, there were no MAs who disagreed strongly.

Comments from MAs suggest that the experience of LEADER+ built valuable capacity and experience in this area although the differences between the LEADER+ Community Initiative and the mainstreamed LEADER place some restrictions on the relevance of this in the current period. This ranges from the more general positive contributions in terms of building on and drawing on LAGs previous experience and the MAs experience of working with LAGs to more specific and direct continuity.

The trust and working relationships established between LAGs and MAs was also highlighted as an important factor which has been subject to further development as occurred for example in Wallonia where the positive experience of the LAGs informed and contributed to the further development of the overall systems with the MA.

Case study Périgord Vert LAG, France

The French case study highlights the challenges and benefits of establishing trust. 'there was some kind of suspicion from the MA towards the LAG regarding the fact that they had the ability and the will to soundly manage a public budget. Just like in any other type of partnership, it did take some months before enough trust was there to make things easier and before the common working habits were taken.'

A significant proportion of the LAGs sampled had previous LEADER experience, 15 had LEADER I experience, 44 had experience of LEADER II. Spain, Greece, Portugal and Ireland had the highest proportion of previous LEADER experience in the sample and it is quite marked that the Spanish, Portuguese and Greek MAs all ranked the impact of LEADER+ on the current period highly with an average of 4 as opposed to an overall average of 3.75.

Case study North Northumberland/North Pennines LAGs, United Kingdom

The UK case study draws on a number of evaluations which were undertaken at national (England) and (English) regional level which were designed to build on the lessons from LEADER+ in the new programming period. The case study focuses on the experience of two different systems of LAG management in neighbouring areas with differing degrees of autonomy and continuity from LEADER II. One of the key findings was that the more experienced LAG with the greater continuity and higher degree of development and autonomy were able to manage a large and complex programme in an effective bottom up manner with a high degree of engagement and identification with the local communities.

Those LAGs surveyed report that a high proportion of LEADER+ development capacity has been retained and is contributing to the current programme. Some 64% indicate that most of the experience has been retained and is being implemented in an extended form in the current programming period. A further 25% report that there has been some carry over in terms of personnel, institutional knowledge and contacts. This appears to relate to both the organisations and

people involved, the MA in Denmark cited the very strong contribution of the local LAG managers to the implementation of the new strategies.

In some cases there appears to be a relatively high degree of continuity e.g. in Spain building on or learning from LEADER+ experience as in Cantabria, Navarra and Extremadura or in some cases direct continuation e.g. as in the Basque country. A number of the Spanish regional MAs also identify that whilst there were differences between the requirements of the EAFRD in the current period and the EAGGF under LEADER+ that there had nevertheless been a substantial degree of continuity with the LEADER+ arrangements. In some cases this had also applied to (the domestically funded) PRODER II groups which had followed a similar model and were now active in LEADER.

Whilst the LEADER+ approaches were generally seen to have been successful there are however some difficulties in the transition to the EAFRD approach. The current requirements and the way in which they are being implemented are seen by a number of MA to have become much more complex and bureaucratic, some suggest local autonomy has been eroded and the approach has become more top down. The French MA suggested that *'The current period is even more complex for LAGs and allows less flexibility and less innovation capacity''*; in the Netherlands *'things are now more complicated because it's more bureaucratic'*.

The division of labour, a vertical partnership, guaranteeing the implementation of a bottom up area based approach.

The answers to the previous two questions suggest that MAs were satisfied with the overall arrangements proposed and that this is reflected in their positive influence on the current period, this in turn implies their satisfaction with the division of labour and the role of the LAGs. The MA in Aragon considers that *'The success of the LEADER+ period has meant that the new agreements have been based on existing ones in the period 2000-2006'*. In Navarra *'The way of working and management under the LEADER+ approach has been transferred to the current period'*. A specific question in the LAG survey which was designed to inform this judgement criterion was poorly completed and consequently no reliable findings could be made.

By way of proxy the questions to the MA relating to the flow of funds and to the proportionality of resources for managing, controlling and financing to the number of projects and types of organisations involved provide some relevant findings. In relation to the former a review of the qualitative responses indicates no difficulties arising from the division of labour between individual partners, any issues at the local level related to the slowness of transfers from the programme level. The majority of MA either agreed or strongly agreed that resources were proportional to the types of organisation and numbers of projects.

Similarly, answers to questions to LAGs regarding the proportionality of resources for managing, controlling and financing and the support which they received from MA have some relevance here. Some 72% of LAGs indicated that they were either completely or considerably satisfied with the proportionality of resources, only 3% were not at all satisfied. In 6 MS LAGs were either completely or considerably satisfied with the proportionality of resources. This is broadly consistent with the findings of the MA consultation which shows a similar satisfaction rating: 73% were either completely or considerably satisfied with the proportionality of resources.

The support provided to LAGs by the MA was found to be important or very important by 54% of LAGs with a further 23% ranking it as being somewhat important.

Consideration of the degree of LAG autonomy provides a typology of responsibilities which deepens the understanding of the position. Some 80% of LAGs who assert medium autonomy are satisfied or very satisfied with proportionality of resourcing for managing, controlling and financing, low and high autonomy LAGs are very similar in the satisfaction rankings they accord,

68% and 70% respectively, very similar proportions emerge when considered by the formal categorisation of LAG autonomy. *Mechanisms for information, participation and assistance of local populations in the implementation of the programme have been operational and adequate at local level.*

Responses to the survey questions demonstrates that the involvement of the local community has been of high importance in the preparatory stages of developing LEADER+ strategies suggesting that their participation is valued. A range of different techniques or mechanisms are reported to have been employed. The main sources of information in strategy preparation which were ranked as important or highly important involved consulting the LAG members by 70% of LAGs, focus groups by 74% and surveys 62%.

Table 29 lays out the LAGs' assessment of their own communication efforts; this shows a generally high level of satisfaction with the success of the approaches adopted

Table 29. Assessing the LAG's communication efforts

	% of LAGs responding
We used many different means to promote our work and, on the whole, we were happy with the results	31
We had a good local visibility and we were confident that the different target groups we identified were reached	44
We had a good local visibility and we were confident that we managed to reach more different groups than we thought we would	18
We were in competition with a lot of other groups trying to communicate their work and it was difficult to get over a distinct message	-
On the whole, we did not manage to reach as many of the target groups that we wanted to	6
Total	**99**

The sample LAGs report a very high degree of frequency of people being brought together for the first time at LAG organised activities or events with 48% saying this happened on many occasions. A total of 68 of the sample LAGs consider that their activities encouraged people who would not otherwise have become involved to engage in development related activity.

An interesting counterpoint to these more subjective responses may be seen in the responses to questions on the proportion of targeted groups involved in the decision making of the LAG. This shows only 19% of LAGs with over 50% women and 42% between 26 and 50%. Some 91% of LAGs report less than 10% involvement of young people in the LAG at decision making level. There is some interesting differentiation evident in the level of these groups' involvement when the size of LAG population is considered. In the case of women this is significantly stronger in the largest LAGs with over 80,000 population, 67% have between 26 and 75% women involved vs an average of 57%. A similar pattern emerges in relation to the scale of budget. As far as the involvement of the young is concerned, this is generally low. Those LAGs with populations between 20,000 and 40,000 have markedly the highest levels with 18% having between 10 and 25% (average 7%). LAGs with the smallest budgets, under €350,000, have the highest level of youth involvement. The largest LAGs in both population and budgetary terms have the lowest level of this target group's involvement. Both these groups were explicit targets of LEADER+.

An effective mechanism for programme management feedback was operated.

MAs were clearly of the view that effective programme management feedback mechanisms were operated in LEADER+, some 89% of those responding either agreed or agreed strongly that this was the case.

Group meetings of LAGs and programme managers were the most common form of feedback reported by 93 LAGs with a quarterly interval being most common (55 instances). Regular programmed meetings, e.g. at the regional level or nationally, were common in the countries with smaller numbers of LAGs or non regional programmes. These appear to have been both operational and regulatory in nature and had varying degrees of formality in their programming and organisation from ad hoc approaches in e.g. the Czech Republic to a more programmed approach in France or some of the Spanish regions. Some of these meetings were programmed to address specific issues or needs such as guidance, reporting, monitoring etc. Other countries such as Greece have gone a step further by introducing topic based working groups. In some cases, e.g. the UK (Scotland and England) and Denmark, these coordination meetings were facilitated by the NNU involving the MA and LAG staffs.

Monthly or weekly feedback was most commonly provided in the form of either telephone calls (83% of cases) or in writing (52% of cases).

Some MA responses suggest that some are rather top down in approach, giving information and guidance or referring to how feedback is delivered, e.g. the IT system employed, others are much more iterative in approach e.g. Cantabria where coordination meetings from part of an on-going approach with a suite of other communication activities between the regional authority and LAGs.

4.6.2 Evaluation question 21

To what extent have the managing, controlling and financing systems which were set up by the authorities, the administrators and the local partners ensured an efficient use of public and private funds under the LEADER+ programmes and LEADER+-type measures? Are there examples of good practices in this respect?

☞ **The resourcing of these functions needs careful consideration to reflect the specificities associated with the scale of the LAG and the administrative and management systems and structures associated with the programmes and MA. If the focus is on achieving real value added through the implementation of LEADER a simple pro-rating of LAG budget is inadequate to support this.**

Introduction

Following on from Evaluation Question 20 which also treats this theme, EQ 21 considers the extent of the effects of the managing, controlling and financing systems on efficiency of the use of public and private funds in LEADER+ and LEADER+ type measures. The question again concerns arrangements for the management and financing of programmes, public funding, co-funding rates, eligibility of funding and mechanisms for various forms of participation including vertical partnership, local governance, communications and the division of responsibilities. In this case the focus is on the effects of this on how well the funds were used. As with the previous question, this EQ has broad relevance to the other themes and many other EQs. Here we are principally able to focus on whether the approaches adopted were appropriate and likely to contribute to the achievement of such efficiencies.

This EQ draws on both LAG and MA survey responses. Where there is evidence of good practice this is highlighted.

metis

AEIDL ⋮ C E U

Findings

Proportionality of resources for managing, controlling, financing in relation to type of organisations and number of projects.

Overall 72% of LAGs considered that the level of resources available to them for managing, controlling and financing were proportionate to the type of organisations involved and the number of projects concerned i.e. they were appropriate and proportionate. The majority of countries demonstrate a spread of degrees of satisfaction and there is no clear trend apparent here. The largest LAGs in population terms i.e. > the 80,000 inhabitants and the smallest LAGs i.e. <20,000 inhabitants are the most satisfied with the proportionality of these resources to their circumstances (over 80%). Those LAGs with populations from 20,000 to 40,000 appear to be least satisfied overall. When viewed from the perspective of the budgetary allocations a slightly different pattern emerges in relation to the smallest LAGs who are then least satisfied. This implies that it is small LAGs with small budgets who are the most challenged. This may reflect the effects of the prorated capping of financial allocations for management and administration.

Medium autonomy LAGs had the lowest level of complete satisfaction but were most satisfied when the considerable satisfaction ratings were taken into account, a total of 80%. LAGs who considered that they had low autonomy had the highest level of complete satisfaction, 23%. Dissatisfaction levels of the low and high autonomy LAGs were broadly similar although LAGs who perceived themselves as low autonomy were the least satisfied overall.

73% of MAs consider that they would agree or strongly agree that the resources were proportionate to the type of organisations involved and the number of projects concerned. This is highly consistent with the LAGs perspective although levels of high agreement or satisfaction were higher for MAs (18%) than LAGs (13%).

Case studies Maiella Verde LAG, Italy and Oulajärvi LAG, Finland

In Italy: The Maiella Verde LAG team does not believe that, on the whole, financial and administrative control procedures were excessively heavy, compared with other experiences. The breakdown of staff resources shows that 40% of staff time was devoted to expenditure control and reporting and auditing. However, this represents 1.8FTE from a total of 4.6 FTE.

In Finland: The Oulajärvi LAG is relatively small, approximately 30% of the population of the Italian example. Resource consumption for controlling, auditing, reporting (in % of LAG time) was as folows:

Approximately 13 % of the programme budget was targeted at LAG administration. A notable problem in implementing the programme was the insufficiency of resources for administration. When the LAG's own strategic projects became possible, they were also used. Without this possibility the LAG workers would have been dismissed temporarily for couple of months a year and this would have paralyzed the activities.

The perception of LAG managers was that the fund for administrative tasks did not go only to administrative functions but that also activating (animation) activities, maintaining networks and regional, national and international cooperation were part of these administrative actions. Resources for all these administrative actions were far too low.

The qualitative MA feedback indicates a range of issues regarding management, control and financing, this illustrates some marked differences within and between Member States. The principal issue which emerges relates to the overall adequacy of the available financial resources in terms of the 15% maximum budgetary allocation for LAGs. It appears that France, Greece and some of the Italian regions have exceeded this in some cases. Perspectives here range from those who consider it to have been restrictive or inadequate to those who report that the full allocation was not required. Interestingly two of the UK programmes have contrasting views on this. Scotland found that a number of LAGs were able to vire funds allocated for management and administration to support project activity, England on the other hand highlighted that some LAGs were constrained by the budgetary allocation.

Concerns over the adequacy of resources raised by a number of MAs (including Bavaria, Luxembourg, Estonia, some Italian regions, Spain and a number of its regions) highlighted high administrative and bureaucratic demands placed on LAGs under LEADER+ by comparison with previous periods; some indicated that this had been extended into the current programme period. Many of the concerns raised over the adequacy of these resources relate to the levels of staff which LAGs were required to carry in order to cover these tasks and mechanisms. These appear to vary widely from 2 to 5 or more. National or regional systems and requirements may have had a significant effect here and explain some of the differences in perspective. The scale and budget of LAGs is also an issue here as highlighted in England where small budget LAGs were thought to be disadvantaged by the pro-rated basis of funding allocation which meant that a greater proportion of staff resource was necessarily committed to core administrative tasks rather than the strategic and value adding activities of promotion and animation of high quality project activity. In the Polish case study the fact that 50% of staff time was spent on administration was seen as a constraint. The challenges of this balance are highlighted in the contrast between the Italian and the Finnish case studies.

Proportionality of the level of funds awarded to projects in relation to costs and benefits

Consideration of the proportionality of funds awarded to project costs and benefits is ranked as being of considerable importance by 63% of LAGs. Only 4% of LAGs (4 in number) do not consider this factor in their decision making, 3 of these are located in EU 10 countries.

The majority of LAGs (over 63%) take the cost benefit ratio in project selection into consideration to a considerable degree; some differentiation arises in relation to the degree of formal and perceived autonomy of the LAG. This increases in direct correlation with the degree of perceived LAG autonomy, some 58% of low perceived autonomy LAGs consider this in project selection, 62% of medium perceived autonomy LAGs and 72% of high perceived autonomy LAGs. When considered in relation to the formal autonomy classification the position is rather different, medium autonomy LAGs (77%) give this the highest degree of consideration as opposed to 66% of those with high autonomy. In terms of absolute numbers the differences are very small and therefore when considered overall it is clear that those LAGs with higher degrees of autonomy give cost benefit greatest consideration.

Customer orientation

Unfortunately it was outside the scope of this evaluation to test this criterion with the beneficiaries concerned and we must therefore rely on MAs and LAGs who may respectively be less well informed and less objective. LAGs were therefore consulted with regard to the time it took for applications to progress to final decisions on their approval as an indicator of the customer orientation of their service; MAs were asked the question directly from their own perspective.

The results of the MA consultation indicate that 80% either agree or agree strongly that project promoters were served in a customer oriented, swift and flexible manner. The qualitative responses provide interesting perspectives which go some way to justifying this high rating. The

two key elements identified in contributing to this level of service are the institution of the LAGs themselves and the way in which they operate and the LAG staff, particularly the coordinators or managers.

With regard to the LAGs, their multifunctional nature going beyond just providing a source of funding and actively supporting the development process is perceived to be of high importance. Key contributions to this identified by MAs include the LAGs local knowledge, the technical support they provide and their flexibility in dealing with applications. That this LAG involvement often goes beyond the simple implementation of LEADER+ and focuses on problem solving approaches to the development needs of the territory and project promoters is clearly highly valued. This was perhaps most comprehensively captured in the response from the Spanish Castilla La Mancha MA who stated that *'One of the strengths of the LAGs is their orientation towards the promoter, as well as the flexibility and rapidity of these to attend to promoters. Most of the LAGs not only receive and evaluate the promoters' applications, but they assess and help the promoters to obtain the administrative permissions for the implementation of their projects, they also inform them about those programmes complementary to LEADER that can be of interest to their project'.*

An interesting counterpoint was provided in the reponse from an EU 10 MA, Hungary who suggested that *'flexibility is not a characteristic of LEADER'.* The other EU 10 response of note was from the Czech Republic MA who saw the value and effectiveness of this wider LAG role but also saw a need to extend this further in future.

LAG staff clearly form much of the interface between LAGs and project promoters and there are some distinctive elements of their role which are worthy of separate discussion. In many respects it appears that it is this very interfacing and facilitation role which is most highly valued by project promoters. In interfacing with the range of public sector organisations, funders, the regulatory considerations etc. they perform a highly valued role in facilitating project promoters entry to the support networks, LEADER and otherwise. In facilitating they are highly involved in providing applicants with guidance, developing and building on local connections, encouraging local participation and energising the territorial development process.

LAGs report that in 40% of cases the turnaround time on project applications from submission to ultimate approval is under 3 months, in a further 44% of cases the turnaround time was between 3 and 6 months; 10% took 6 to 9 months and the remaining 6% over 9 months. Of the 16 LAGs taking over 6 months, 10 were located in the EU 10. Ireland was the only Member State who managed to deal with all applications within 3 months with all 9 LAGs indicating that this was achieved.

Consideration of the scale of the LAG in terms of its budgetary allocation shows that those LAGs with the largest budgets were turning applications around markedly more quickly than those with smaller budgets. The largest LAGs with budgets of over €8m expected all applications to be fully processed within 6 months with 53% of these taking 3 months or less. LAGs with total budgets of between €4.5m and €8m saw 75% of applications processed in 3 months, 19% in 6 months and only 6% taking over 9 months. By way of contrast a far larger proportion of the LAGs with smaller budgets fell into the longer turnaround categories with a much smaller proportion seeing applications processed within 3 months, 7% for LAGs with budgets of less than € 350,000 and 21% for those with budgets between € 350,000 and €2m.

Perhaps unsurprisingly a significant difference also emerges in relation to the degree of perceived LAG autonomy: 63% of high autonomy LAGs achieve a turnaround time of less than 3 months compared with 42% of those of medium autonomy and 16% of those of low autonomy, 44% of low autonomy LAGs report a turnaround time in excess of 6 months. The results of con-

sideration by degree of formal autonomy are very similar and strengthen aspects of this differentiation with all high and medium autonomy LAGs a turnaround time of under 6 months.

Modalities and delays in the flow of funds

Here once again, and for similar reasons the evaluation criterion was approached through different survey questions posed to MAs and LAGs. MAs were asked to consider the criterion directly in terms of the extent to which they agreed that the flow of funds had been adequate in terms of modalities and delays, LAGs were asked about the average length of time taken from a project's satisfactory completion to the receipt of the final payment.

The proportion of MAs consulted who either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the flow of funds had been adequate was 77% with only 18% disagreeing and 2% disagreeing strongly.

The qualitative responses from the MAs did however reveal some concerns over delays in the flow of funds. A number of the Spanish MAs comment on the difficulties associated with the multiple tiers of administration involved. Although it might appear that this might be linked to regional programmes this was clearly less of an issue in Italy which has a similar regional structure, national and regional systems appear to be a more likely factor here.

A number of the Spanish regional MAs indicate that there were cash flow issues and associated credit costs relating to the flow of funds to the groups which the 7% advance of EU funding and the advance of domestic funds paid to their LAGs was insufficient to offset. In the UK case study the issue of the additional tier of regional administration for the less autonomous type of LAG was clearly an issue in slowing down financial flows.

The release of regional co-funding caused delays in Belgium and further issues arose relating to the relatively low priority placed on LEADER scale projects by the Ministries involved in payments. German MAs in Baden Wurttemberg and Brandenburg cite the EC implementing and control regulations as causal factors in payment delays in their regions.

Other than these there were no major difficulties identified. By way of best practice examples Denmark reports that in 'normal cases' payments were made within 10 days of receipt of the completed documentation, in Greece the period was 20 days.

Overall 73% of LAGs report that payments were completed within six months of satisfactory project completion, 23% took over 6 months and 4% over a year. When LAGs degree of autonomy is considered some clear differentiation emerges. The proportion of least and most autonomous (perceived) LAGs achieving this was 68% and 69% respectively. A greater proportion of LAGs of medium autonomy (81%) were able to achieve this. When viewed by degree of formal autonomy this picture is slightly more polarised with low autonomy LAGs performing oven more poorly (including all LAGs where claims payments were taking over 9 months).

When considered from the perspective of the budgetary scale of the LAG it is very evident that those LAGs with the largest budgets were the most likely to achieve payment within 3 months of satisfactory project completion; some 68% were in this category. Where payments were taking over 9 months, those LAGs falling into the second highest funding bracket (31%) and those with the smallest budgets (36%) were most strongly represented.

Use of funds for both enhancing strategic priorities and instigating new, experimental projects in a balanced manner

Evidence for this evaluation criterion is best drawn from questions relating to the processes for monitoring and evaluating the relevance of the strategy. A review of responses to these ques-

metis

tions gives some indication of the extent of consideration by LAGs of how their funds are being used in addressing strategic priorities.

The MA and LAG consultations show that a considerable degree of strategic monitoring was undertaken but that there were some evident gaps. Amongst MAs responding 58% indicate that evaluation had become the usual standard for LAGs improving the implementation of their development strategies. Some 68% of LAGs reported that they monitored the continuing relevance of their strategies against changing economic circumstance; in 57% of LAGs this was a responsibility of the board. This was most common in high and medium autonomy LAGs as might be expected where over 70% of LAGs were involved in such activity.

High autonomy LAGs were most likely to have some degree of quantified targets, medium autonomy LAGs were most likely to have these to a significant degree (by formal autonomy 91% and 44%, by perceived autonomy 85% and 53% respectively). However, overall only 31% of LAGs had a significant degree of quantified targets in their strategies with a further 53% reporting that they had these to some extent. This suggests deficits in the planning of the use of funds in pursuit of strategic priorities and appears likely to have compromised the measurement of performance against these priorities to a considerable extent and thus the future targeting of funds.

Overall 32% of LAGs sampled report that they employed a structured system for monitoring the effects of their development strategy, 40% report that they partially did so and the balance, 28% not at all. There was considerable differentiation of this by degree of formal LAG autonomy: low autonomy LAGs were least likely to employ any such system, 36%, LAGs who perceive themselves to have low autonomy even less so, 45%. Significant minorities of medium and high autonomy LAGs do not employ such a system. There is a considerable deficit in structured monitoring activity here and even in the two higher autonomy categories this still represents a significant gap.

There was no significant differentiation evident between EU15 and EU10 LAGs in these regards.

Perhaps unsurprisingly there was little evidence of formal or regular approaches in the LAG responses to the query into what the principal tool used to improve the implementation of their strategies was. A wide variety of response was given by the 76 LAGs who responded. Examples given were largely participative approaches, there were some instances of self evaluation and some limited use of external evaluators, working groups with the LAG and other local stakeholders. The most consistent incidence of monitoring to improve strategies was in Italy.

The level of resources applied to the instigation of new and experimental projects can best be assessed through LAG responses to the query into the extent of their budgetary expenditure on novel products and services. Overall 42% of LAGs have spent up to 25% of their budget on novel products and services and a further 42% have spent between 26% and 50%. This suggests a degree of conservatism either with LAGs unwilling to overextend themselves in these areas or in project proposals in the number of innovative initiatives coming forward.

4.6.3 Conclusions Theme 6

The appraisal of the arrangements for administration and finance as part of the strategy and their inclusion within the contractual agreements put in place between LAGs and MA appears to have worked well and to represent a strong model.

LEADER+ and its management and administration arrangements were generally seen to have had a positive effect on the current programming period. There was a generally high degree of

satisfaction on the part of both LAGs and MAs over the management and administration arrangements for LEADER+ and elements of this translated well into the new programme period. There were some considerable difficulties however over the perceived greater bureaucratic burden and complexity of the EAFRD. The continuity of LAGs and of the staff concerned is highly valued and seen to contribute to the success of the approach.

The consideration of division of labour raised no major issues but did serve to highlight the benefits of effective partnership between MAs and LAGs.

Whilst LAGs seem to consider that they have been generally successful in reaching out to inform and involve local populations, there do seem to be some issues over the extent to which they have succeeded in directly involving the two main target groups of women and young people; this may require closer monitoring and targeted action.

That effective and proactive facilitation and start up support, e.g. by the MA or NNU, is essential if cooperation activity is to be well developed and successful is the main lesson to draw in relation to this activity.

No major issues were evident over feedback mechanisms with meetings between LAGs and the MAs being the main format and telephone feedback the most frequent. There does however appear to be scope for some fine tuning towards more targeted approaches and iterative approaches. Coordination is of high importance here.

That the largest and smallest LAGs are most satisfied with their allocation of resources suggests that their needs are most clearly defined. The smaller LAGs in budgetary terms face difficulties in terms of their freedom to deploy staff resources to higher level functions such as animation, a greater proportion of their available staff resources were necessarily devoted to core administrative functions. This arose as a result of the level of resources available for employing staff falling within the 15% allocation of LAG budget available for management, i.e. staffing is proportionate to budget. There are interesting differentiations in the degree of satisfaction in the different member states and regions too.

The concerns expressed in some cases about the burden of the increased complexity of LEADER+ by comparison with previous approaches appears likely to be deepened in the current programming period. This suggests that there may be differences between programmes and MA in the requirements placed on LAGs and the support given to them which may indicate the need for some greater flexibility to take account of these variations.

The greater fiscal autonomy of the more highly developed LAGs appears to encourage a higher degree of scrutiny of value for money, and thus contributes to the value added.

The ability of the LAGs to operate as actors in the support of development activity rather than as just a source of funding contributes considerably to their customer and development centred approach. They and their staff play an important and valued role as an interface between the various development actors and project promoters.

The more autonomous LAGs display a higher degree of flexibility and appear to be more effective in swiftly and flexibly serving client needs. This is highly consistent with the LEADER method objectives.

The principal issues over the flow of funds appear to have arisen in those countries with additional (regional) tiers of administration; this can result in serious cash flow difficulties and considerable costs for LAGs impeding their ability to act.

There is a considerable deficit in structured monitoring activity which is likely to limit LAGs ability to target their funds on strategic priorities on an ongoing basis. This is most pronounced in low autonomy LAGs and even in these higher autonomy cases this still represents a significant gap.

4.7 Theme 7: Monitoring and Evaluation

4.7.1 Evaluation question 22

To what extent have the systems set up by the Member States for the monitoring of LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) ensured a comprehensive and relevant set of data for evaluation purposes?

☛ **European wide comparison and aggregation of LEADER+ monitoring data for the purposes of evaluation is very seriously compromised by systemic weaknesses, in order for such an approach to be effective active management with clearly defined responsibilities is required. A substantial proportion of LAGs have no established systems of structured observation and local development monitoring.**

Introduction

Evaluation Question 22 considers the extent to which the systems set up by the Member States for the monitoring of LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) ensured a comprehensive and relevant set of data for evaluation purposes. The question specifically addresses the utility and appropriate-ness, completeness and reliability of the data sets produced and the extent to which these may be used for Europe wide aggregation and comparison. A further consideration is the extent and nature of the structures and systems for local and regional observation and monitoring of local development. The question seeks to assess; the extent to which

- the national and regional monitoring data sets are complete, reliable and can be used for European-wide aggregation and comparison, and the

- local and regional stakeholders have established systems of structured observation and local development monitoring.

Findings

The Commission paper, Common Indicators for Monitoring LEADER+ Programming 2000 – 2006[94] that 'Using a common structure will provide a minimum level of harmonised information on the implementation of the programmes which can be aggregated at Community level. This information can serve as the basis for the annual implementation reports, and the data collected will provide a solid foundation for evaluation.' The working document provides the background to the overall approach and detailed guidance on the completion of the monitoring tables. A further guidance document, 'Guidelines for the Evaluation of LEADER+ Programmes'[95] provides sup-porting information including further detail on data and indicators. The intention was therefore clearly stated and the implementing systems set out.

The evaluation question directly targets the effectiveness of this approach and the way and ex-tent to which a robust basis of monitoring evidence has been provided for aggregation and com-parison ultimately feeding in to evaluation. In answering the evaluation question the first two of these judgement criteria necessarily require verification through consideration of the reports pro-duced such as the CAP-IDIM and annual implementation reports for their completeness, consis-

---

[94] Commission Working Document
VI/43625/02-rev1: 18.12.2002
[95] DOCUMENT VI/43503/02-REV.1

tency, reliability and thus the extent to which they are suitable for European-wide comparison and aggregation. Without this basis in evidence to reflect against the survey responses from LAGs and MAs cannot be adequately justified. These very considerations have proved to be a major challenge for the conduct of this evaluation where it has proved impossible to compile for task 1.3, a fairly basic data set similar to that used in the LEADER Observatory Contact Point Monitoring Indicators Database (MIDB).

Programme monitoring and reporting data sets provided to the evaluators by DG Agriculture and Rural Development have proved to contain significant gaps, inaccuracies, errors and inconsistencies which render them unreliable as a robust basis for this evaluation. Multiple attempts have been made by the evaluators to compile a consistent, complete and coherent set of data but this has proved impossible. The main issue is that a range of issues have contributed to the failure of the system to provide the aggregated data intended. This has compromised the evaluation effort in terms of its timing, conduct, resourcing and in terms of providing a robust basis of data upon which to base the quantitative elements of the evaluation.

These deficiencies appear to have been recognised by DG Agriculture and Rural Development in the course of the delivery of LEADER+ and the need for active management of the reports submitted by Member States, data cleaning and the rectification of errors was foreseen. A validation exercise was undertaken on 2003 and 2004 annual reporting data and partially on 2005 annual data, this formed the basis of the LEADER+ Monitoring Indicators Database developed by the LEADER Observatory Contact Point. The validation activity was mainly undertaken in 2006 by an external contractor as part of the LEADER Observatory Contact Point's contracted activities. The contractual arrangement ended in April 2008 and was not extended under a further contract. It appears that there was no dedicated resource within DG Agriculture and Rural Development to support this activity. Consequently the initiative has not been followed through and the database contains only two fully complete years of programme data, 2003 and 2004.

Recurrent inaccuracies were evident in the work to establish a Monitoring Indicators Database, (MIDB). This was prepared on the basis of data submitted by the National/Regional MA to DG Agriculture and Rural Development. The indicators were extracted from the European CAP-IDIM database and transmitted to the Contact Point by the DG Agriculture and Rural Development. The issues which the LEADER Observatory Contact Point reported included:

- Cells were not filled in or were completed in text rather than numerically;
- Population and financial data were expressed using the wrong scale (i.e. not in thousands as specified);
- Data provided for programming year rather than cumulatively for the programming period;
- Incorrect data type entered e.g. year rather than number of projects, financial data rather than beneficiary;
- Inconsistencies between cumulative and annual data e.g. annual total exceeding cumulative total;
- Expenditure declared but no activities, beneficiaries reported;
- Incorrect units applied; and
- Double counting of LAGs.

These issues are highly consistent with those which were experienced by the evaluators in attempting to complete the task 1.3 inventory.

Steps were taken by DG Agriculture and Rural Development to further develop and upgrade the reporting function including a self-correction function within the CAP-IDIM application however it is reported that a certain rate of errors persisted.

metis

AEiDL CEU

MA were questioned over the extent to which they considered that these national and regional monitoring data sets were complete, reliable and could be used for European wide aggregation and comparison. Responses indicate that some 65% of MAs agree that this was so, 19% disagreed and 16% offered no opinion. Although many MAs assert the completeness of their approach this is often accompanied by criticism of the applicability of the indicators or reference to the implementation of alternative indicator sets, this was particularly evident in Italy and Spain. A number of MAs indicate that the definitions of some indicators lacked clarity causing difficulties in their application. This suggests that the application of the framework of indicators presented challenges to MAs which may have contributed to some of the errors and inconsistencies which arose. The level of satisfaction expressed by MAs is surprising however given the extent of the difficulties experienced.

The extent to which local and regional stakeholders have established systems of structured observation and local development monitoring was explored with LAGs and MA. The MAs (61%) are noticeably less confident that this is so than the LAGs themselves (72%). Reports of full implementation are most prevalent amongst those LAGs who perceive themselves to be highly autonomous (47%) and conversely least likely amongst those perceiving themselves to have least autonomy (42% indicate they have no such approach), when considered in terms of formal autonomy the balance of positive responses shifts more towards the medium autonomy grouping (39%). This suggests a link between such monitoring activity with LAGs' perception of their ownership, accountability and responsibility.

The most significant concern here is that overall some 30% of LAGs across all categories have not implemented such a system. This is likely to result in incomplete and inaccurate reporting by these LAGs and to their having a poor overview of the performance of their strategies, their use of resources, the value they are adding to the territory and their overall effectiveness. This is a substantial proportion of the population of LAGs surveyed and indicates a considerable gap.

A review of the MA responses suggests that in fact many LAGs were implementing national or regional systems of observation and monitoring rather than establishing their own approaches, these had varying degrees of prescriptiveness and formality. There is also evidence of differentiation between project monitoring and LAG level monitoring. Italy utilised an integrated on-line approach, the Monitweb programme that allowed the recording of data at the LAG level and their transfer to the Italian Governement's Economic and Finance Department. Specifically, Monitweb allowed data updating both directly from the perspective of the Management Authority and from the LAG. The LAG inserted monitoring data at measure level and transmitted them to the Management Authority who ratified them. The system collected and transmitted financial data (each 3 months), physical data (annually), procedures monitoring data (each 6 months). The MA then validated these data before communicating them to the Economic Department, the Italian Government coordinator for Structural Funds.

4.7.2 Evaluation question 23

To what extent has the evaluation of LEADER+ programmes (EU-15) contributed to fostering evaluation capacities, and the ownership of the evaluation process in the rural areas, and to improving the quality of the programmes?

    ☛ **There is evidence of some success in this area but it is limited. This is strongest amongst those LAGs who assert the greatest ownership of their programmes, otherwise there is a tendency to rely on the main programme evaluation intervals. The scope for further development of LAG capacity is significant and important.**

Introduction

This Evaluation Question focuses on the extent to which the evaluation of LEADER+ programmes contributed to the fostering of evaluation capacities and the ownership of the evaluation process in rural areas. The extent to which this contributed to the improvement of the quality of programmes is also considered. The concern here is to establish how and to what extent participation in LEADER+ and its evaluation has strengthened the role and participation of LAGs in evaluation and the effective use of evaluation as an improvement tool. In evaluating this we are therefore concerned with what was done by whom and how.

The 'Guidelines for the Evaluation of LEADER+ Programmes' highlight the need for a common evaluation strategy and within that the direction that this should 'follow an overall bottom up approach'. This is further developed in indicating that 'although the LEADER+ Notice does not explicitly provide for evaluation at the local level, it may be worthwhile to undertake it...'. This is justified in terms of the benefits which it was expected would be achieved i.e. the 'better understanding of the usefulness of evaluation at the local level; improvement of local management by identifying and correcting shortcomings during implementation; reinforcement of the local actors' participation within the LAG or the territory; facilitating data collection and availability for the evaluation at the programme level; validation of the evaluation exercise through the application of two of LEADER+ specificities: the bottom-up and the participatory approach'. The Commission therefore accepted 'LAG-level evaluation activities as eligible for co-financing under Action 1 of LEADER+'.

Findings

The use of the evaluation activities to continuously improve programme implementation

LAGs surveyed report that 68% of them regularly undertake ongoing monitoring of the relevance of their strategies, this primary or fundamental evaluative activity is more common still in the more autonomous LAGs. A similar proportion of LAGs, in this case 72% report that they implement some form of structured system for monitoring the performance of their Local Development Strategy, once again this is markedly strongest amongst the more autonomous LAGs with, circa 80% of the high autonomy LAGs doing so to some degree. The medium autonomy LAGs are those most likely to fully implement such structured approaches, some 39% report that they do so. Viewed positively a clear majority of LAGs therefore have a structured approach in place. A less positive perspective however is that the strongest performing grouping of LAGs sees only 39% implementing such approaches fully, in the sample overall some 40% do so only partially and 28% of LAGs do not do so at all. In absolute terms therefore only 32% of LAGs have fully implemented such a structured system.

It is noted that it has not been possible to comment on the quality or effectiveness of these approaches. The finding that only 29% of LAGs had a significant degree of quantified targets in their Local Development Strategies (with a further 53% reporting that they had these to some extent) appears to present something of a challenge to their effective monitoring of programme performance.

Of the MAs surveyed 79% agree that evaluation activities have been used to continuously improve programme implementation. The MAs responding made only limited reference to LAGs either commissioning external evaluations or undertaking self-evaluations. When considered against the extent of structured approaches applied by LAGs clearly the perceived level of activity seems to be significantly higher than the apparent reality. It therefore appears that the MAs are referring principally to the formal programme evaluation moments rather than LAG activity. Qualitative MA comments suggest that the programme level MTEs were of the greatest significance here. There are also reports of some ongoing evaluation activity in e.g. some of the Ger-

man and Spanish regions, others such as Wales and Scotland preferred to focus on the importance of ongoing monitoring in this regard. In France the MA advised LAGs to undertake two formal evaluations in the course of their LAG programmes.

The review of the qualitative answers provided by LAGs regarding the principal tool they have employed to improve their strategies shows little consistency. There is a wide variety of response little of which refers directly to formal or more recognised evaluation approaches. In total there are only 4 references to the use of self evaluation, there are 3 references to performance monitoring approaches whilst only 2 refer to formal evaluation activity being employed. The main approaches identified are much less formal, tools mentioned include the use of working groups and LAG meetings, 12 instances and more general community or stakeholder consultations (26 instances). This therefore suggests a high degree of informality with little by way of clearly structured approaches evident. This is likely to lead to outcomes which cannot be readily consolidated, aggregated or coordinated.

In terms of the application of these evaluation tools as a standard approach for improvement 72% claim to have applied the tool regularly and 25% say they do so sometimes; this suggests a 97% application rate. These figures must be considered to be somewhat questionable as only 76% of LAGs responded in providing examples of the tools they employed. Even if these LAGs were employing these tools regularly then clearly a not inconsiderable proportion are not doing so. This suggests that LAGs may have overstated the extent of this activity.

MA responses to the survey question which directly addressed this criterion saw 58% either agreeing or agreeing strongly that this is so. Within this however only 5% agree strongly, this may reflect a more acute perspective on LAG activities here. These MAs' qualitative responses demonstrate a high degree of variation in approaches between countries and regions and even within regions. This ranges from examples of regions where LAGs have built evaluation into their strategies as part of a cycle of continuous improvement to regions where it was considered that the LAGs were the subject of evaluation rather than actors. In one case the MA stated *'We are not aware that evaluation is a usual line of work of LAGs'.* In some cases reference was made to difficulties arising from the incompatibility of the LAGs independent approaches with the overall system in limiting the value of the approach. There appeared to be some awareness amongst the MAs of a need for further and continued improvement but this was not particularly strongly articulated.

A number of cases which might be considered to represent good practice were reported. In Bavaria LEADER+ evalution was reported to have become the usual standard for many LAGs, consequently in LEADER 2007-2013 all Bavarian LAGs are required to have their own monitoring and evalution system. In Finland the MA report that many LAGs had self evaluation plans which they implemented. The MA supoported this as part of the mid term evaluation providing LAGs with consultant support for self evaluation activities, this appears as one of the most highly developed approaches to self evaluation. [96]

Evaluation capacity within LAGs, MAs, MS administrations

Overall 70% of MAs agree or agree strongly that evaluation capacity has been built up but it appears that this may be mainly within the public sector. The feedback from MAs suggests that greater importance is being placed here but there is no clear evidence of widespread or systematically developed capacity being built in the LAGs. The evidence of difficulties experienced in MA reports, CAP IDIM reporting etc suggests that significant difficulties remained even in the lat-

---

[96] Experiences in Finland on self-evaluation of Local Action Groups, Päivi Pylkkänen, University of Helsinki, Seminar on Monitoring and Evaluation of the LEADER Approach, Brussels, 25 September 2005

ter stages of the programme. The LEADER Observatory contributed to an 'Expert meeting on guidance for Common Monitoring and Evaluation framework (CMEF), DG Agriculture and Rural Development, 25 September 2006' focused on the common LEADER+ monitoring tables and the generic errors which were still emerging.

In fact the clearest references to such improvement relate to improvements in the capacity of the MA be those regional or national. This is consistent with the findings of the LAG survey which indicate that where LAGs are employing a structured performance assessment approach support capacity appears to be lodged in three main groups, programme authorities, private consultants and local authorities, in descending order of importance.

Case study Oulujärvi Leader LAG, Finland…

A report into self-evaluation experiences in Finland found that the approach involved:

- Self-evaluation recommended for all LAGs in the Finnish LEADER+ Programme (2000-2006)
- Training on methods for (self-)evaluation provided by the MoA and the NNU training sessions as from 2002, also training for individual LAGs by evaluation specialists
- Occurrence of planned and documented systematic self-evaluation grown from 25% of LAGs in 2003 to over 50 % by 2005, while all LAGs conduct some kind of evaluative self-reflection
- Varied focuses of the LAGs' self-evaluation activities cover e.g.:

    - LAG's internal board working processes
    - Client satisfaction and feedback on the LAGs' services
    - Stakeholders' assessment on the LAGs' impact

Initial findings revealed that:

- Only about one fourth of the LAGs' self-evaluations were sufficiently documented from the point of view of programme level MTE
- As a result of the different key focuses of the self-evaluations and programme level evaluation, the former proved to be of limited usefulness for the MTE
- Measures were required to improve the usefulness of the LAGs' evaluative activities for future evaluations.

This resulted in interventions to:

- Further develop LAG capacity through training
- Develop guidelines to coordinate input from self evaluations

It was concluded that:

- LAGs' self-evaluations and the programme evaluations can be mutually complementary but that self-evaluations should be:
    - Better documented (in terms of methods and results)
    - Focused on (selected) common evaluation questions e.g. related to the LEADER method and the value added
    - More systematic in their evidence basis
- Valuation plans should include both elements in order to be effective
- Self evaluation interests should not be subjugated to programme level concerns.

The identified trends regarding the prevalence and formalisation of monitoring and evaluation approaches in the more autonomous LAGs suggests that this capacity tends to develop along with LAG capability and maturity.

The only clear examples given of systemic approaches being implemented were in France and Denmark. In both these Member States the NNU has been active in capacity building through training, dissemination of information and guidance and advising.

4.7.3 Conclusions Theme 7

It is clear that there were systemic failures which prevented the effective European-wide aggregation and comparison of data based on national and regional data. Data in national and regional reports were incorrectly or inconsistently entered or were missing. Issues also arose in relation to the applicability and definition of indicators altrhough detailed guidance had been provided early in the programme. These issues were evidently identified by DG Agriculture and Rural Development in the course of the delivery of the programme and steps were taken to rectify them through the LEADER Observatory Contact Point. This work was not completed and consequently the outstanding annual data sets and the whole programme set are incomplete and lack reliability. Responsibilities for this rest not just at the level of compiling and validating the aggregated data but at all levels of programme monitoring and reporting which fed into this system. If such data are to be aggregated, consistent and capable of meaningful interpretation there is a need for active and consistent management of such a monitoring and reporting structure with cleatrly identified responsibilities and adequate resourcing.

A large proportion of Managing Authorites (65%) believe that the data sets were complete, reliable and capable of aggregation, their responses suggest that in many cases adequate systems were in place. The concern which arises relates to the substantial minority (35%) who do not believe that this was the case. This evidently high degree of disagreement and uncertainty is clearly contradictory with the views of the majority and cannot be reconciled within the meaning of the statement. Furthermore it begs questions over the overall levels of awareness, knowledge and accountability and the minority's apparent acknowledgement that there are defficiencies which may go some way to explaining the levels of inaccuracy and error in the reports submitted.

LAGs who assume a high degree of ownership and accountability for their own actions appear to be the group most likely to fully implement a monitoring system at the local level, there is a clear link here. Once again the greates concern arisies in relation to the proportion of the sample, in this case the 30% LAGs who were not engaging in such activity. Cleary any system which aggregates data is only as good as the weakest link, and again it appears that there were significant gaps here.

From the evidence presented it can be seen that there were significant issues at each tier in the system of monitoring and reporting, it therefore must be concluded that in this respect the answer to the Evaluation Question 22 is no, the systems did not ensure a comprehensive and relevant set of data for evaluation purposes.

The intention to extend bottom up (LAG) involvement in monitoring and evaluation was explicit in the evaluation guidance and LAGs were provided with the opportunity to become more involved in this activity. There has been some limited success in fostering evaluation capacity and the local ownership of the process but on the basis of the survey evidence it appears that there may be a tendency for LAGs to overstate the extent of their involvement in monitoring and evaluation activity. It therefore appears that there is considerable scope and need for extending the implementation of structured monitoring approaches as a means of improving local development strategy performance.

The greater involvement in evaluation related activity amongst more autonomous LAGs suggests that the potential for improvement is real and that there is a relationship with the maturity of LAG and integrity of the LEADER approach. The experience of LEADER+ suggests that NNUs have a strong potential role in facilitating exchange between the more highly autonomous LAGs and the less so and in delivering technical support, training and advice.

A high dependency on the formal evaluations at programme level remains but, there is evidence of some good practice being developed in self-evaluation. LAG and other ongoing monitoring and evaluation activity appears to have the potential to complement this but at present appears to have been limited by a lack focus and coherence of approach. This does not appear to have become assimilated as a core part of the LEADER method.

Although not directly explored in the MA or LAG survey it appears that the lack of a formal requirement for ex post evaluation of LEADER+ programmes may have resulted in some loss of motivation and momentum in the development of evaluation capacity and activity. The early stage in the programme at which the MTEs were conducted may also have impacted on this. The Finnish example highlighted the need for further development and support for what was already one of the more highly developed and committed approaches, this suggests that there is a continued need for support for the development of these capabilities.

4.8 Theme 8: Rural activity/excellence clusters

4.8.1 Introduction

According to the Terms of Reference, this theme should be developed by drawing on the conclusions of the previous evaluation themes. Excellence clusters are identified in relation to activities developed by the LAGs around areas of work reflecting local needs and priorities, for which the application of the LEADER method has provided a concrete added value by pooling local resources within an integrated partnership.

Potential relationships between thematic priorities under LEADER+ and Priority Axis 1, 2 and 3 of the current EARDF programmes are then explored in order to examine the contribution of LEADER+ to the achievements of the current rural development programmes and, more widely, its role in the process of cluster development.

The methodology for identifying rural clusters is explained in Section 3.5 of this report.

4.8.2 Building on empirical evidence

Preliminary screening

A first sample of LEADER actions was used to test the definition and feed the discussion during the course of elaboration of this chapter:

- **Food chains and small-scale food enterprises**

Best practice: in Styria (Austria), the Almo culinary region consists of two actions: firstly, the Almenlandwirte is an initiative of 25 regional restaurants and inns - most of them also offering accommodation for tourists - which have developed joint branding and offer regional cuisine, based on quality products. Secondly, the cooperation around the Leitmotiv Almo, i.e. the production and marketing initiative which covers the entire production chain for quality beef. This has been developed increasingly closely with Schirnhofer, a regional producer of delicacies. Both actions are embedded in a broad partnership of municipalities, agricultural and tourist operators.

- **Bio-fuel and renewable energies**

Best practice: in Finland, the government's energy policy aims at increasing the production of bio energy at the local level. In addition to plans to produce rapeseed protein feed for the Finnish market, a Finnish LAG[97] supported a local farmer to produce biodiesel as a by-product of rape-seed oil. Biodiesel can be used in all diesel engines and devices using heating oil. The purpose of this pilot project was to produce Finnish protein feed for cattle farms in an environmentally friendly manner and to produce ecological fuel for the neighbouring areas. Another objective is to make rural areas thrive and to maintain a pleasant environment (beautiful rapeseed fields).This pilot was made possible with the support of the local Business Incubator and the District Business Services.

- **Green building**

Best practice: in Luxemburg, the LAG Redange-Wiltz helped create the conditions for the emer-gence of a green building sector gathering expertise from various fields such as energy saving, water management, wood construction, etc. in order to develop joint marketing and increase the local quality landmark.

- **Territorial branding for tourism destinations**

Best practice: The Fuchsia destination quality brand, West Cork, Ireland, provided a support sys-tem which fostered an environment conducive to knowledge sharing amongst the tourism ser-vice providers applying for brand membership. This was mostly as a result of the policy of com-pulsory training for brand applicants.

In conclusion, all of these examples were considered informative regarding on 'pre-clustering activities'.

4.8.3 Learning from mainstream analysis

The study on *Methods for and Success of Mainstreaming LEADER Innovations and Approach into Rural Development Programmes*[98] was reviewed from the angle of clustering and in relation to the 2000-2006 Rural Development Plans.

It appears that Articles 26 to 29 (processing and marketing)[99] of the Council Regulation 1698/2005 have been selected by the LAGs in Spain, Finland and Ireland, as well as in the Inte-grated Territorial Programmes in Italian Objective 1 regions. 'At least the local groups (Portugal, Hessen/Germany) can play a role in the analysis and pre-assessment of the proposals. These measures can act as levers for innovation and multi-sectoral integration wherever it is empha-sised in the Programming document (Hessen/Germany, Luxemburg, Netherlands). This meas-ure plays a key role in the PIF (Integrated Food Chain Projects) of southern Italy, which focus on the whole added value chain and combine the territorial and sectoral perspective for building up business clusters, some of which bear a high potential for long-distance commercialisation.'

Another set of measures governed by Article 36 (afforestation) of the same Regulation play a role in the mainstreamed LEADER-type programmes in Spain, Ireland, Italy and Finland as be-ing selected and implemented by LAGs. 'Forestry measures are also integrated in the area-based approach in the Greek national programme for mountain areas. The French 'forest char-

---

[97] L+FINAT-04 - Nouseva Rannikkoseutu Ry
[98] ÖIR Managementdienste GmbH - commissioned by European Commission DG Agriculture and Rural Development, Unit G4 (2004) http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eval/reports/leader/index_en.htm
[99] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2005:277:0001:0040:EN:PDF

ters', created to apply the Orientation Law on Forest Development 2001, are area-based, bottom-up and partnership-based and even show elements of innovation and multi-sectoral integration. They are voluntary and laid down in several years' long contracts. They focus on the whole added value chains, contributing to employment and environmental improvement in a sustainability perspective.' There is a clustering component in the value chain, with high potential on employment development.

4.8.4 LAG survey screening

In terms of the numbers of LAGs that carried out activities that are akin to clustering, our survey showed that 77 out of the 103 described themselves as playing a practical role in starting up new products and services, mainly through brokering new relations between diverse actors. The charts opposite show the profile of these LAGs in terms of their location, budget and the population density in the area in which they operated. In this respect there was little to distinguish clustering LAGs from LAGs pursuing other goals. Previous experience in the LEADER programme was not a predictor of whether or not the LAG would be a clusterer, nor did it seem to be influenced by the proportion of private sector representatives on the LAG board. Neither was the degree of administrative autonomy relevant for predicting those who would do clustering. However, the size of the budget did appear significant. LAGs with budgets of less than 350,000 euros were much more likely to say that they were not involved in clustering, whereas those whose total budget was over 4.5 million were much more likely to be involved in clustering activity.

When it comes to offering an assessment of the success of these activities, then three quarters of the group said that they believed their work created sustainable partnerships amongst different stakeholders. A slightly higher proportion claimed that these networks were lasting and that there was a clear willingness to co-operate. In this respect, there were higher proportions in the cluster group than the non-cluster group, which might suggest that where clustering is actively promoted, the network effects are more profound. Over two thirds thought that the territorial development strategy and the implementation activities of the LAG either considerably or most significantly helped turn local knowledge and dormant skills into competitive advantages, A little over 53% of the cluster group felt their activities had either considerably or most significantly helped increase the sustainability of the local economy and this was around 15% higher than amongst the non-cluster group. One final finding from the investigation of the cluster group was that they seemed to see their work as more effective in the EU15 North and Central group and in the EU 10 group than in the EU 15 Mediterranean group. The belief that the LAG had created lasting networks between diverse stakeholders was held by considerably fewer in the latter group.

4.8.5 Examples from the case studies

Maiella Verde (I)

This mountainous area of central Italy was involved in LEADER since the beginning. Their sustained strategy always was the support of small farms and handicraft enterprises that pursued strategies of diversification and improvement of their productions.

The following spin offs can be attributed to LEADER+

- Local network of producers of Galleria del Gusto (Taste Gallery). About 100 producers joined this network, and adopted a voluntary production regulation. This accreditation system allowed participation in all different initiatives of food and wine marketing in the territory, promoted by the Taste Gallery, and receipt of a periodic feedback on organoleptic quality of products.

- National Network Terre Ospitali (hospitable lands). This network involves 12 Italian LAGs and the Slow Food Association (a big NGO with almost 80.000 members that works on food biodiversity preservation). This network, promoted for the first time by Maiella Verde after the experience of Galleria del Gusto, was created in 2009 and is now preparing a cooperation project.
- The consortium of cooked wine producers. The cooked wine is a typical product of local rural culture (it is an alcoholic drink obtained from fermentation and maturation of a mix of wine and cooked must). In 2008 the LAG, in collaboration with the municipality of Roccamontepiano (where this tradition is very strong) supported the creation of the network through eight technical seminaries. The association composed of 38 producers, has approved a regulation and works actively to preserve and enhance this product.
- The association of presidium of Salsicciotto Frentano (small typical sausage). In Italy, Slow Food presidium is absolutely the most efficient distinction in the scope of enhancement of niche products. The Salsicciotto, a typical salami that was no longer being produced much, obtained the distinction in 2010 thanks to a LEADER+ project. A small local association was founded to preserve that distinction.

The LAG strategy in the sector of local produce is based on development of short distribution circuits: supporting single actors in developing small productions and farm shops; promoting systemic initiatives to make local typical foods and their region well known to the public through events, publications, taste training and other initiatives for each product of the local range. This is part of a larger strategy promoted together with other local agencies in order to make the area more attractive. In this kind of region, in fact, the gastronomic offer became one of the most important factors in determining attractiveness. The implementation of this strategy is described below through two tables of output indicators, one for single projects and the other for territorial (systemic) initiatives.

Table 30. Outputs in the field of local products (single projects)

Outputs in the field of local products (single projects)	Number
Company quality system implemented	6
Introduction of innovations in productive processes and/or products	115
New farm or firm shops	14
Catalogues	4
Realization of new specific packaging	4
Realization of new web sites	13
Start up of new e-commerce	9
New labels including local specificities	9

Table 31. Outputs in the field of local products (territorial initiatives)

Outputs in the field of local products (territorial initiatives)	Number
Studies and research	32
New voluntary production regulations	4
Producers involved in communication initiatives	115
New territorial communication tools	3
Potential consumers reached by qualified information	59,000
Participants in taste training	10,080
Producers involved in the experimentation of a local system of accreditation	105
Hours of technical training on processes and products	2,000

Wrzosowa Kraina (PL)

Citing the case study, 'in this Polish LEADER area, the initiative to create a local partnership came, in the first place, from people involved in environmental and nature protection issues, notably those from the Landscape Park, some local businesses (one of them, an organic farm, provided office space to the emerging partnership) as well as some NGOs supported by experts from the 'Green Action' Foundation and animators trained by the Polish Rural Forum.'

'One of the most spectacular successes appears to be the creation of a distinct local identity and promoting it throughout the country. The name 'Wrzosowa Kraina' is gaining a national recognition, together with its key products, notably honey based on heather flowers, which has been traditionally produced in the region for centuries, as well as products based on berries and mushrooms growing in the Dolnoslaski Forests. The Festival of Honey and Wine has become an annual event and attracts a growing number of tourists from Poland and even from other countries.'

The strengthening of the Wrzosowa Kraina 'trademark' has had two types of effects: economic and social. For many of the economic effects, one cannot provide specific data (such as increase in turnover) – partly because it is not available, and partly because it is too early. However, it appears clear that the local producers have increased their sales, found new wider markets, and – perhaps most importantly – have learnt to cooperate. It is now possible, for instance, to order a 'basket of local products' which contains specialities made by different producers, who work together to obtain better results. Three products have been registered at the regional level (there are only six such products in the whole voivodship), and one at the European level. One restaurant now has local products on offer (although they are not particularly well advertised), and two bars serve a locally made, honey-based drink (mead). Local producers and leaders have gained confidence and they even take part in international congresses and events.

4.8.6 Conclusions Theme 8

Although virtually no LAGs explicitly described their activities as being clustering, sustaining wide ranging networks that opened up new economic opportunities was a primary objective for over 75% of the LAGs in our survey. Furthermore, over 75% of this group believed that they had made a lasting impact on the rural economy. The smallest common denominator of all these examples seems to be that LEADER areas play a role of interface between an area-based perspective and a consideration of business clusters or between local heritage and the global economy.

metis

This role is close to the economic model of 'innovative milieux'[100], defined as environmental, cognitive and organisational places within which local firms have access to technological resources and operate within networks. The idea of 'innovative milieux' allows us to understand how certain LAGs innovate and manage to create new economic activities.

However, it seems even closer to the notion of '**local productive systems'** referring to more diversified forms of aggregation of local firms and of 'core or distinctive competencies', rather than the notion of cluster, mostly because of the small size of operations. This option argues in favour of LEADER+ acting as a support and coordination mechanism between local enterprises in order to promote interactions and joint actions with other enterprises and institutions.

Links with EARDF axis 1, 2 and 3

Further research would reveal additional LEADER+ features which contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the axis 1, 2 and 3 of the rural development programmes 2007-2013.There is clear evidence that agri-environmental (Art. 22 to 24) and forestry measures (Art. 29-32) have been integrated in area-based regional programmes as flanking mechanisms for agri-rural strategies, e.g. for organic food production and cluster strategies based on the timber value added chain[101].

LEADER as a lever for dynamic cluster development?

Even where the strategy was strongly geared towards the development of business networks and local value chains, the LEADER approach *de facto* offered restricted financial support to economic projects, thus encouraging small projects through 'soft' support and collective action such as innovative vocational training, marketing and communication, or events organisation. It very much relied upon the personal skills of the recruited staff to manage human resources beyond the LAGs premises, and develop public relations in all types of circles, including research and development, business and industry, etc.

A pre-clustering process

LEADER+ seem to influence the pre-clustering phase when it intervened in the networking process (web site creation, one-stop-shop for local entrepreneurs, coordination of territorial branding), unleashing the bonding social capital on one hand, and creating the favourable conditions to boost social bridging capital.

Brokering tools behind 'small is beautiful'

LAGs can be viewed as intermediary support structures for helping small projects to raise their income. There strength lies in facilitating and sometimes coordinating the emergence of local value chains, like in the Polish case. In terms of critical mass, the Italian case informs us about the spin off effects resulting from dynamic governance structures, which are open to the outside world. The necessary condition seems however to rely upon the recognition by the LAG of the potential social capital in the area, even where small and scattered initiatives never managed to sustain themselves over time.

The words of the president of the Italian LAG Maiella verde are pleading for this 'small is beautiful' metaphor: '…a vision of development based on people, on small enterprises, on small 'amenities' and on small projects that altogether form the wide tissue whereby, as a small miracle, our rural territories stay alive'.

---

[100]   Groupe de Recherche Européen sur les Milieux Innovateurs (GREMI) : Aydalot 1986, Camagni 1991, Maillat et Perrin 1992, Maillat, Quévit & Sen 1993
[101]   Citing study on Methods for and Success of Mainstreaming LEADER Innovations and Approach into Rural Development Programmes (cf. supra)

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Theme 1: Relevance and Community Added Value

5.1.1 Conclusions

(see chapter 4.1.4)

Overall **LEADER has grown in importance** and now figures as a strategic asset in the whole range of rural development processes. **Complementarity and synergies** with mainstream rural development programmes have been successfully created by LEADER, whereas the main-streaming of newly generated ideas (other than the LEADER approach itself) has been less successful.

The LEADER mission included the diversification of the rural economy through **adding value to local products and exploiting natural and cultural resources.** While many LAGs have initiated projects in the agricultural sector, on the whole these have been aimed at on farm or off farm diversification, including adding-value through on-farm processing, rather than raising agricultural productivity at primary production level. .

Innovation, intended to be an important feature of LEADER activities, did not attract priority attention of the LAGs as specific topic. Interpretation of this term ranged widely from region to region; it can be stated, however, that the LEADER method is broadly seen as an innovation in development processes and local governance. There is a common understanding of innovation addressing the social capital and dormant potentials which in turn would, at a later stage, facilitate business innovation in the narrow sense. The leeway required to address the local potential is reflected in the attempt of the majority of programme authorities and local actors to **keep the thematic scope of local development strategies as wide as possible**: hence **improving the quality of life** was the most popular theme selected by LAGs. But there is also a downside which in some areas expresses itself in the lack of strategic focus and vagueness of local development strategies.

As a corollary of the last two points, enhanced **agricultural competitiveness of the local economy** cannot be judged to be a significant output of the LEADER programme whereas it was more successful in promoting **diversification of agriculture and in encouraging sustainable activities** in agriculture, manufacturing and services in rural areas.

LEADER has prepared the New Member States for participative, locally democratic, integrated type of structures and rural development. While the rate of implementation varied, and some countries did not participate at all, in general, the NMS have been able to successfully promote the LEADER approach to rural development.

5.1.2 Recommendations

Overall recommendation

Innovation in LEADER should be more strongly embedded in and driven through the approach and the pilot strategies.

There is a need to sharpen the multi-dimensional meaning of innovation as a characteristic of the LEADER approach: it relates to individual projects, to local development strategies as well as to local development support as a component of local governance. The conceptual framing of territorial innovation which was successfully done during the nineties in the light of the experiences made under LEADER I and II might need an update or even a reshaping to match the experiences of today. The recognition of the strategic character of innovation brings with it that the financial and technical support should be sufficiently diverse to meet requirements of different kinds and stages of innovation. A universal approach to project generation and approval would negatively impinge on innovation.

Specific recommendations and actions

- ☞ The European Commission, together with the Member States and the rural development networks at either level, should make a new effort to lead the debate on innovation in the context of the LEADER approach – in other words on multi-dimensional territorial innovation in rural areas – to eventually come to an improved framing of what it could mean in the everyday practice of local development.

- ☞ The programme authorities at regional and national level should be more stringent in defining the meaning and scope of territorial innovation – without narrowing it down to concepts addressing innovation in business and technology. In any event, a better framing, in accordance with the state-of-the-art in cross-European debate, would allow for better criteria in selecting and monitoring local development strategies. It is hard to conceive institutional learning without such an approach.

- ☞ The LAGs should keep the debate among local actors going about the concept of innovation regarding their territory and the circumstances people live in, and how this concept could be translated into a pilot strategy which really makes a difference. This means that the local development strategy must be regularly monitored and revised by the local partnership which by virtue of this will achieve stronger ownership on the development process they are formally accountable for.

Overall recommendations

In recognition of the strength of the LEADER approach in promoting as well as harnessing diversity and diversification, it may be wise to acknowledge that it can better be used as an instrument to foster the local development potential, in other words rather for increasing the adaptive capacity and resilience of the area than for boosting short term productivity and market success for local value chains.

Although there are interrelationships between the LEADER approach and the latter, it would not be appropriate to assess its results just by measuring changes in productivity and efficiency. LEADER interventions can be superbly complemented by interventions in territorial value chains, clusters and competitiveness-oriented business support; but these interventions may better be suited to larger territorial scales (e.g. the scope of regional development agencies). In the ideal case, both strands of support (at more than one scale) are cross-linked and jointly orchestrated. This is not easy to achieve in the context of disjunct (rural and regional) policies and funds (EAFRD and Structural Funds).

Specific recommendations and actions

- ☞ Improve complementarity among support systems in the context of designing the new regulatory and administrative framework for the five funds (EAFRD, FF, ERDF, ESF and Cohesion Fund).

- ☞ The programme authorities at regional and national level should coordinate and design strategic frameworks in which the LEADER approach in rural development fulfils an explicit and active role, primarily aiming at nurturing the innovative potential, the social capital, the diversity, resilience and sustainability of local territories in rural areas.

- ☞ The LAGs should resist the temptation to let diversity be eroded in the local partnership, to neglect the search for really new and – why not sometimes – even maverick ideas.

metis

5.2 Theme 2: Action 1: Integrated territorial rural development strategies of a pilot nature

(see chapter 4.2.4)

5.2.1 Conclusions

LEADER connected people and the formation of the LAG brought actors at the operational and strategic level together who would otherwise not have met or started a joint activity. It has **brought forth new products and services**, but less through the novelty of products or technologies rather than through the enrichment of social capital. These effects are less significant in the LEADER+ type measures of the EU10 due to the short implementation period. The **pilot nature of the strategies fostered innovation** in terms of reconfiguring and enabling local actors to embark on new activities, by combining existing activities in new ways and by linking local competences to external sources of knowledge and technology.

However, due to their inclusion as the basis of LAG applications for support, **local territorial strategies have in some cases tended to become almost like bid proposals** which may then be ignored once they have been accepted. Strategies which deserve this designation should be actively monitored, updated and improved through an ongoing, self-organised system of reflection and feedback loops in a process of continuous evaluation.

While the **participation of women** in LAG activities was strong (with the considerable exception of their underrepresentation in the decision making bodies of LAGs), it was a major challenge to involve young people. While there are a number of innovative projects and approaches addressing the needs of marginalized groups, this cannot be seen as a major strength of the LEADER approach itself.

Local actors located the **principal obstacles** for implementing innovative LEADER strategies in the framework conditions lying beyond their influence sphere, whereas they perceived the **success factors and proposed solutions** as mostly internal, pertaining to the quality of the social capital, the capacity to co-operate and the collective ability to translate a shared vision into real projects. A strong and recurring topic is the **autonomy of the LAGs** as perceived by local actors, particularly in respect to the **decentralisation of project approval** and the **room for manoeuvre in financing**. However, where the multi-level governance context is not prepared to provide an enabling environment for the LAGs the model of 'medium autonomy' could represent a better choice for the LAG to fulfil its role as the promoter of local development in rural areas.

5.2.2 Recommendations

Overall recommendations

LEADER should maintain its 'laboratory' character, with a strategic perspective.

At European level there is no other programme which adequately fulfils this function. The need for such a method-based incentive continues to be strong, for the increasing influence of changes at larger scales can only be absorbed by adaptive changes in local communities and regions. However it would be too shortsighted to just see the virtues of seeding variation. Rural areas also need connecting and structuring interventions, which can be achieved by a focused thematic approach. Therefore sound area-based rural development strategies should stand on two pillars: (i) a thematic focus ensuring the concentration of resources on developing local potential having been identified as promising by local stakeholders and associated experts (the thematic focus should also work as an attractive 'narrative' for local people); (ii) seed money for supporting emerging ideas and projects, harnessing unforeseeable opportunities for change.

This 'money at call' should deliberately not be earmarked for pre-established purposes, themes or target groups.

Specific recommendations and actions

- ☛ The regulatory and administrative framework at European level as well as the budgeting and control mechanisms of Member States should take the multi-faceted character of integrated local development strategies into account. Investments in experimental actions (e.g. for testing out new products) cannot justifiably be assessed and audited in the same way as investments into marketing activities for already established value chains.

- ☛ The programme authorities at regional and national level should ensure and support truly cross-sectoral thematic approaches as the main pillars of local development strategies; and as additional options an innovative seed funding mechanism. It should be considered that the latter is made available through competitive calls for proposals at regional level. There should be better monitoring to ensure that LAGs develop and employ high quality and dynamic local territorial strategies, instead of just using them as bid proposals and forgetting about them for the rest of the time.

- ☛ Local development strategies should clearly focus on the local social capital. This cannot really be done by focusing on THE one and unchanging local identity. The opposite is true. A closer and undistorted look into the local reality reveals 'the elusiveness of the obvious', the multiplicity of facets and features, the diversity of people, potential and stories of life. The local development strategy should respond to and enhance diversity in all these aspects. Enhancing diversity and a thematic approach are not precluding each other, as the artful practice of many LAGs shows.

Overall recommendation

Meeting particular needs of minority groups, disadvantaged or marginalized people, not automatically catered for by the provisions of the LEADER approach, requires additional arrangements.

The needs of minority groups can be central not only from an ethical point of view, but also as a source of innovation, resilience and cohesiveness of the area. In the long run, it is advisable to entrust this concern to particular institutions, networks and programmes with which the LAG should co-operate on occasion.

Specific recommendations and actions

- ☛ Addressing additional target groups besides women and young people should be taken up in European frameworks, but not explicitly translated into eligibility criteria for LAGs and strategies.

- ☛ Programme authorities should include specific target groups such as elderly people, migrants, transit populations (such as residential tourists, professionals working on a time contract, asylum seekers), etc. according to the challenges identified in rural areas. However it is possible that the explicit focus to address these groups, specifically disadvantaged ones (e.g. by positive discrimination or specific infrastructures and advisory services) overstrains the capacity of the LEADER approach and the local partnership. The generalist character of the LEADER approach should not be altered for the sake of an apparently convenient particular governance arrangement. Specific institutions and delivery mechanisms– with which the LEADER partnership may closely co-operate – might be more appropriate in many of these cases.

- ☛ Local partnerships should increase their sensitivity toward these issues and, all things considered, promote corresponding programmes or projects, adequately endowed with proper staff and funding.

metis

AE DL CEU

5.3 Theme 2: Action 2: Support for cooperation between rural territories

5.3.1 Conclusions

(see chapter 4.2.9)

The overall amounts of designated **resources for co-operation** varied between 2-10% of the total programme resources; however, in some countries, there were neither funds nor mechanisms for inter-regional and transnational co-operation. **Cooperation within a country** helped to improve management, to reinforce local identities and to create lasting rural networks that enable future co-operation. The contribution to improving social relations between areas was relatively modest. **Trans-national co-operation** was much less important in this respect.

LAGs mentioned that co-operation was time consuming and sometimes there was an over-expectation for actions to quickly take the form of projects rather than be allowed to develop over time. Co-operation was valuable but required dedicated staff and resources.

5.3.2 Recommendations

Overall recommendation

Territorial co-operation continues to be a keystone of the LEADER approach, for more experienced LAGs as well as for beginners. Attention needs to be given to the unforeseen costs of cross country collaboration, particularly where internal decision making processes or regulatory requirements might diverge. International co-operation and learning in the field of rural development is especially important for New Member States, and therefore needs particular consideration. International co-operation activities could be designed to reflect the particular challenges of New Member States where, for historic and economic reasons, the culture of co-operation can be low. New Member States can undoubtedly benefit from the experience (successes and failures) of other Member States. However it is also clear that in the 2004-06 period, some NMS were more active in successfully pursuing inter-territorial co-operation than others and this could be a valuable learning experience to build upon. It would be desirable to incentivise and support (possibly through especially targeted financial resources) co-operation between old and new Member States' LAGs.

Specific recommendations and actions

☛ The task of enhancing and supporting territorial co-operation, particularly that occuring between different Member States and non-EU countries, should be reloaded as a European responsibility. Although the European Commission cannot influence Member States' ways and practices to implement co-operation projects, it can help interested territories and programme administrations in identifying suitable partners, subsidizing initial stages of co-operation, capitalising and disseminating experiences and last but not least in fostering a European culture of co-operation between rural areas.

☛ Programme authorities should strengthen their technical and financial support specifically for the early and later stages of co-operation, as well as trying to dismantle bureaucratic burdens to make regulatory requirements for LAGs more bearable. Support at an early stage would include costs incurred for initiation (travel, translation) which may be organised as individual support or as larger events (e.g. 'co-operation days'). Support in later stages would involve self-evaluation, the organisation of learning events (which can be coupled with initiation events) and the transfer of lessons learnt, which is specifically important for regions where the LEADER approach is not yet well known, let alone rooted.

- NNUs might offer practical advice to areas where individual country practices are known to vary. In turn, the European Rural Observatory might incorporate this information into its partner search and best practices databases. An additional recommendation would be that LAGs have the possibility to subcontract the management of cross country collaboration to external service providers.

- Even less experienced local partnerships should be encourage to give co-operation projects a trial. Co-operation partners can be, apart from the expertise they might have, useful feedback providers; however, human resources should be available to assume the responsibility with sufficient emphasis and skills, at both the technical and the stakeholder level.

5.4 Theme 2: Action 3: Networking of all rural areas in the Community

5.4.1 Conclusions

(see chapter 4.2.12)

The NNUs were a valuable source of information and of good practical advice for developing new projects. They were less useful in identifying and making introductions to new partners. The **European LEADER Observatory** was in general less used than the NNUs. In terms of cooperation the Observatory was not deemed to have been decisive, although its services had been frequently used amongst the LAGs to find out about co-operation projects. Both the **NNU and the Observatory** were useful sources of information on the different regulatory contexts in which the different LAGs were working, although there were sometimes criticisms that the information was too 'theoretical'. There were clear strong calls for more **face to face meetings**, that could address common problems and goals, that were adequately funded and were early enough in the progamming period to enable more recurring co-operation activities.

5.4.2 Recommendations

Overall recommendation

Targeted opportunities for peer learning for LAGs, whether within or between countries must be further developed. The networking units at regional, national and European level are of great value to stabilize the flows of exchanging and creating knowledge at larger scales.

Specific recommendations and actions

- The presumptive future European Rural Observatory be provided with resources to support effective networking and co-operation. Co-operation is an entry gate to networking and networking brings forth co-operation. Fostering co-operation can be seen as a supporting function for learning and exchange, know-how transfer and dissemination which should be enhanced on a much larger scale than in LEADER+. Peer learning is essential for LEADER stakeholders and managers, but similar opportunities should be provided for programme officials.

- MAs should ensure that NNUs take the lead in identifying common needs and interests as well as helping to broker first contacts; however, these may bear more fruit if the outcomes are not overly prescribed. Together with official regional networks in some Member States, the NNUs are the hubs linking nation-wide with European information exchange and learning. NNUs should also pick up innovative ideas and invite local actors from different rural areas to work on them in task groups. They may even provide small budgets for these task groups which could be joined by researchers and other experts. In

metis

the same way, NNUs should also operate as boundary spanners in the fulfilment of their strategic foresight function. They scan the horizon to bring in new ideas which could spark new activities in their own countries.

☛ Local partnerships should harness the opportunities in accumulating bridging social capital provided by the NNUs and the European Rural Observatory (if they work in the above described way). Although networking should by nature not be made compulsory (and by no means depends only on the networking hubs produced by the programme), a common stance should be cultivated among LEADER stakeholders that investing in these relationships is an ultimately rewarding part of the game. Particular measures could include best practice dissemination on establishing new contacts, on finding common ground between groups, on collaborating with non-LEADER partners, and on widening the scope of involved parties, particularly board members that do not usually take part in co-operation activities. Project animators might especially benefit from structured opportunities for peer learning.

5.5 Theme 3: The implementation of the LEADER method

5.5.1 Conclusions

(see chapter 4.3.3)

The implementation of the LEADER approach promotes **integrated and multi-sectoral development of rural areas** by fostering the diversification of a broad range of complementary products and services which create synergies. It aims at a competitive edge through promoting uniqueness, (re)discovering variety in the existing cultural and natural potential of the area, and generating novelty and variety through entrepreneurial endeavour. **LEADER+ has promoted a more sustainable use of endogenous resources**, but direct links to corresponding approaches at global level (climate change, green economy) can hardly be made, due to the small scale of LEADER interventions.

There is evidence that **social capital and territorial competitiveness have been enhanced** by LEADER+. The initiative complemented mainstream programmes as it provided 'soft support' as indispensable backing for the 'hard investments' carried out with the help of the ERDF or other funds. **Closeness or proximity** is a trump card of LEADER. The relatively limited area size is not too small in terms of achieving a critical mass, but also not too large as to dissipate the personal interactions between stakeholders, dreamers and doers, promoters and supporters.

More autonomous LAGs – meaning more decision making power – show better results in awakening dormant skills and potentials, in strategic thinking and in monitoring the development of their area in a structured way. Concerning the question of which degree of autonomy the local actors actually need and want, it makes sense to provide an element of choice. Some LAGs may find that they would like to shift from low to medium or from medium to high autonomy (like in the UK where LAGs could choose between either *medium* or *high* autonomy). Others may judge that *high* autonomy entails increased attendant risks which may in turn constrain their room for manoeuvre. The alternative for consolidated LAGs should be the one between *medium* and *high* autonomy, whereas *low* autonomy should be an option only for beginner LAGs. Persistence of low autonomy status over several programming periods would mean that learning processes, if they occur at all, bypass local governance. Thus the local partnership would remain contingent on programme continuation. It would stay an instrument of programme delivery and not an endogenous institution which it ought to be according to the LEADER approach.

LEADER+ has promoted a more sustainable use of endogenous resources, but direct links to corresponding approaches at global level (climate change, green economy) can hardly be made due to the small scales of LEADER interventions in terms of volume and duration of projects. **The LEADER approach fosters the sense of identity**, specifically among 'beginner

LAGs' compared to more experienced ones which tend to shift their focus to economic out-comes. Identity seems less a prerequisite than a corollary to successful local development.

However, there is a **risk that LAGs gradually tip into an elitist approach** meaning that grow-ing parts of the population do not have real access to the funding opportunities of LEADER, and that the LAG disregards large parts of the creative potential of its area. This risk seems to in-crease with the size of the area but it can also be influenced by the 'seniority' of the LAG, through the intervention of a third party in favour of disadvantaged groups, by the necessity to survive on its own funds and by the growing institutional complexity.

5.5.2 Recommendations

Overall recommendation

Programmes funded under LEADER should continue to focus on multi-sectoral develop-ment of rural areas, enhancement of social capital and increased territorial competitive-ness, and at the same time increasingly integrate local responses to global social and en-vironmental concerns. Among the ideas and concepts tested out and selected at local level, some may become viable at local level, and a few may even spread to larger (regional, national, transnational) scales. This vision entails a stronger emphasis on rural-urban relationships and partnerships which go beyond the remit of rural policies. However there are a good many ap-proaches in urban and metropolitan areas which perfectly match these concepts (LA 21, transi-tion towns, resilient cities, slow food etc.).

Specific recommendations and actions

- ☛ The European Commission should consider LEADER as an opportunity to try out local responses to global problems (climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion…). This means that the laboratory function would not only pertain to rural development and the improvement of living and working conditions of people in rural areas, but would also address the potential contribution of rural areas to society as a whole. Supporting these initiatives and bridging the rural-urban divide should be a concern of rural and comple-mentary policies (e.g. regional policy, employment and social policy, environmental pol-icy, research policy) and institutions (DG Regio, DG Employment, DG Environment, DG Research).
- ☛ The programme authorities should integrate the above mentioned considerations in their strategies and programmes, without being overly prescriptive.
- ☛ The LAGs should assume responsibility to thematize global concerns which sooner or later affect local conditions. This is part of their strategic foresight function. Social and en-vironmental funding criteria should be distinctively marked out from conventional growth oriented funding.

Overall recommendation

Autonomy, or put more precisely: decision making power of LAGs must be considered and further developed. Consideration needs to be given to the drivers, constraints on and ef-fects of differing degrees of autonomy particularly in terms of responsibility, accountability and empowerment. Decision making power makes sense if the LAG is willing to exert it, if it is capa-ble of mastering it and if it is allowed to do so by the MA and the programme administration. As one of the eight features of the LEADER approach it constitutes a value in itself and should be a learning objective in its own right.

metis

AEIDL CEU

Specific recommendations and actions

☞ The European Commission should put more emphasis on the local delivery systems which should not only be in line with efficiency and accountability requirements, but also with goals explicitly addressing social capital, learning and local governance. This can be done ex ante by specifying the quality criteria for the regional and national programmes, and on-going by the European Rural Observatory in its networking, exchange and learning activities.

☞ The programme authorities should consider the decision making power of LAGs as a keystone for fostering local governance capacities in rural areas, inseparably linked to the goal of sustainability. Although the evaluators have identified good examples for high autonomy, bureaucratic hindrances sometimes set the frame so narrowly as to annihilate the room for manoeuvre in the perception of local actors. It is therefore paramount to assure that

- the political leaders are in line with this purpose;

- there is a fair contract-based division of administrative duties, reporting requirements and control tasks between the programme administration and the local partnership;

- the LAG can resort to sufficient human and financial resources for in-house expertise (management) and for accompanying support (e.g. from the programme administration, network units, hired consultants or intermediary development agencies);

- there are provisions for awareness raising and capacity development for local stakeholders.

Ensuring these conditions should be of the highest priority for programme administrations. The investment might appear high in the beginning, but the pay-off for the administration could be rewarding: partnerships enjoying high autonomy gain the capacity to govern local development in more elaborate ways, and this implies the ability to tap on additional funds, independently from the LEADER programme. LAGs would grow from clients to partners.

☞ Concerning the capability of local partnerships to take on responsibilities in deciding, funding and managing local development strategies, the LAGs should integrate these issues as learning goals and subjects of regular self-evaluation. Self-evaluation can be organised individually, but it can also be orchestrated in peer settings, within regional networks of LAGs, encouraged and supported by programme administrations and NNUs.

5.6 Theme 4: Impacts

5.6.1 Conclusions

(see chapter 4.4.4)

The **overall impact of LEADER+ programmes** on the economic, environmental, social and human capital of EU rural areas covers a very broad range of effects (e.g. *new income, new services and enhancement of then locality, social capital)*, many of them central to the question of the success of the LEADER concept. LEADER+ activities contributed to the **creation and maintenance of employment in rural areas** although the importance of direct job creation varied among LAGs: some attached a high priority to it and reported reasonable levels of success whereas others focused more on creating general conditions for economic viability. Many LAGs do have a clear idea of the number of jobs they have created directly, even if it is not possible to have a comprehensive estimate of the numbers involved in the whole LEADER+ programme. LEADER+ groups have promoted **small scale and craft enterprises** directly which have helped to create or sustain employment and income. In other cases the impact was indirect via market-

ing and promotional activities organised by LEADER+ groups. LEADER+ was also prominent in **creating new facilities and services for local people**, for example in the areas of education, sports for young people, cultural activity and elder care. It is not possible to confirm any influence of LEADER+ on **out migration** and **increasing age dependency** in rural areas.

5.6.2 Recommendations

Overall recommendation

To achieve demographic balance, both the productive and the reproductive side of life, the creation of employment opportunities and income on the one hand and the improvement of the rural environment on the other should be taken into consideration. It will depend on the specific situation (distance from agglomerations, population density, competitive advantages) which mix of activities would meet the needs and demands of local people and areas more effectively. The bottom-up approach helps to find the right track. Therefore the full integration of target groups into decision making should be promoted. Addressing target groups effectively and inclusively implies their full participation in and ownership of the development process, this should therefore include integrating target groups into decision making as well as targeting them through projects. This also means that managing diversity and intercultural competence should become essential virtues in future local development in urban and rural areas.

Specific recommendations and actions

- ☛ The European Commission and programme authorities should put more emphasis on the positive discrimination of other target groups as well as women and young people: older people, migrants, ethnic and national minorities, people with disabilities, but also people from the primary sector, e.g. farmers, farm workers and foresters. Social groups with poor capacities for investment, administration and the representation of their interests should be given a chance to participate in the programme, to achieve social learning, develop social skills and gain experience in 'the project game'. However, in accordance with recommendations under point 1.2.2, it is better to entrust corresponding activities to specific institutions and delivery mechanisms– with which the LEADER partnership may closely co-operate.

- ☛ The programme authorities should set quality standards for local development strategies so that women, young people and social groups at risk of getting marginalized are not only included as target beneficiaries of LEADER activities but also involved as equal partners in conceiving, planning, decision making, implementation and evaluation. In some cases it will be helpful to stipulate quotas (for women, youth, minorities…) in decision making bodies.

- ☛ In pursuance of finding a common perspective, local stakeholders should not only search for 'common identities' originating in the historical past or in the vintage traditions of local residents, but to a greater degree adopt an undistorted view of the reality and the future scenarios. They will discover that in many cases it will not be possible (and it may *never have been) to find a common 'vanishing point' in the past. The truth is that rural areas increasingly become home to immigrants, part-time residents, people in transit. New blends and lifestyles emerge. The only aspect which local people will always have in common is the place in which they live and the future they will possibly share. The extent to which they are ready to invest their individual resources and talents for the common future will depend from the attractiveness of the development perspective which they are allowed to have – together. Hence the deeper meaning of the word 'respect':to look twice.*

metis

AEIDL   CEU

5.7 Theme 5: Governance

5.7.1 Conclusions

(see chapter 4.5.3)

LEADER+ had positive effects on **local governing capacities, social learning** and the accumulation of **social capital**. The area-based approach, the participation of local actors and the creation of local strategies were central in this process. Overall, the development of local partnerships, the professionalism, local knowledge and contacts of their staff are the most important **results of the programme**. Experiences from interregional and transnational co-operation and networking, innovations in their threefold manifestation as imitation, adaption and invention, new behavioural models helped to develop the local actors' capacities for self organisation. In many cases this process was confined to the LAG and the network of stakeholders promoting the local partnership, but in at least as many cases these processes spread out to a wider circle of local actors.

The findings suggest that the **multi-level governance environment** for the implementation of LEADER+ had a significant effect on the implementation of the programme. **Decision making power of LAGs in combination with advisory services provided by the MA and the paying agency** favoured participation, structural changes, and the achievement of effective results. Broadly speaking, the more autonomy and the less bureaucracy LAGs had, the more participation, structural changes, real rural development results they could achieve.

LEADER+-type measures significantly enhanced the capacities of rural communities in the NMS to conceive and implement local rural development strategies.

5.7.2 Recommendations

Overall recommendation

The establishment of effective public-private partnerships with a clear allocation and understanding of the respective roles needs to be actively promoted and supported. This aspect is essential for the success of LAG management and administration approaches and is further enhanced through the continuity of the systems, organisations and individual actors. Balancing conflicts of interest within LAG decision making under the condition of a minimum of 50% non public sector involvement needs careful consideration. This applies to all potential beneficiaries be they businesses, community organisations or the public sector. Particular care is needed in relation to local lead bodies. It is not in the interests of the LAG to exclude potential beneficiaries who are often the more motivated and innovative actors; however their involvement must be governed by robust procedures to avoid any conflict of interests and roles.

Specific recommendations and actions

☞ The European Commission should maintain its stance on the participation of >50% non-public partners in decision making bodies, knowing that the 'shadow of hierarchy', a normal functioning of the public sector (according to the principles of 'good governance') is a prerequisite for the LAG (essentially a public-private partnership) to function normally. Apart from these principal considerations, the EU Commission should, in its Regulation, put more emphasis on fostering local governance and according capacity development. Low autonomy should not be a perspective for more than one programming period, except in extraordinary circumstances. Medium autonomy should be the bottom line for consolidated LAGs, and high autonomy should be an explicit objective accompanied by appropriate capacity development measures. The ultimate aim is not just to establish a

partnership-based programme delivery mechanism at local level, it is rather to generate and to nurture the social competencies and skills to put up and run LAGs capable of surviving, adapting and flourishing on their own resources, supported by local people and stakeholders, and being able to tap into a wide range of funding opportunities in order to translate its strategic visions into real change.

☞ The programme authorities should translate the above mentioned approach into approval criteria for the local group and their development strategy, as well as into accompanying support measures which it may, at least in parts, delegate to network partners. It should monitor possible conflicts of interest (such as private project beneficiaries involved in decision making regarding their own project) on the one hand or the seizure of the LAG by any interest group (municipalities, farmers…) on the other. This can only be done if there is an ongoing debate between LAGs and the programme administration or intermediary bodies acting on their behalf. This involves networking relationships, regular face-to-face contacts, focus group meetings, facilitated self-evaluation etc. Support and control functions should be separated within the programme authority's hierarchy. Learning to manage complex relationships only happens in a climate of trust.

☞ Local actors should be conscious of the local partnership's role as a hub in the competence network of local and regional governance. Nurturing relationships, fostering diversity and managing the balance of power is not a trivial task. It is by definition uncomfortable. Change is always uncomfortable. The LAG should ensure that voluntary engagement and spare time spent on the common cause be highly regarded. It should also ensure that its technical staff gets sufficient resources and leeway for accomplishing its genuine tasks instead of serving particular interests.

5.8 Theme 6: Managing, controlling and financing systems

5.8.1 Conclusions

(see chapter 4.6.3)

The **arrangements for administration and finance** as part of the LEADER+ strategy and their inclusion within the contractual agreements put in place between LAGs and MAs appear to have worked well and to be a strong model. The concerns about the **burden of the increased complexity** of LEADER+ by comparison with previous approaches appears likely to be deepened in the current programming period (2007-13).

The greater **fiscal decision making power of the more evolved LAGs** appears to have encouraged a higher degree of scrutiny of value for money, and thus contributed to the value added. LAGs could thus play an important role as an interface between the various development actors and project promoters. The more autonomous LAGs displayed a higher degree of flexibility and appeared to be more effective in swiftly and flexibly serving client needs. This is highly consistent with the LEADER method objectives.

The principal **issues over the flow of funds** seem to have arisen in those countries with additional (regional) tiers of administration which sometimes resulted in serious cash flow difficulties and considerable costs for LAGs impeding their ability to act.

There is a considerable **deficit in structured monitoring activity** which is likely to have limited the LAGs' ability to target their funds on strategic priorities on an ongoing basis, this is most pronounced in low autonomy LAGs and even in higher autonomy cases; this still represents a significant gap.

metis

5.8.2 Recommendations

Overall recommendation

The administrative procedures for ensuring transparency and accountability must not impede LAGs from carrying out their development work nor exclude local actors with lesser administrative capacities from participating in the programme. All this can create exclusion and alienation and make co-operation very difficult, going against the very principles of the programme. Continuity should be ensured to maintain the development capacity, skills and experiences of LAGs throughout and between programming periods. These capacities, connections and mutual trust relationships of the management team of LAGs are crucial for local development processes and are one of the most important results of LEADER. Adequate resources need to be provided for the management and administration of the LAGs if higher level functions such as animation, monitoring and evaluation are to be undertaken effectively. LAGs with small budgets are disadvantaged by the pro-rating of budget basis used for allocating such resources as their smaller allocation leads to a greater proportion of their available resource necessarily being committed to core or fixed administrative tasks. The fundamental role of the LAG as a development actor rather than funding or delivery scheme needs to be respected and further strengthened. The customer orientation and focus on the development of the territory are highly valued and differentiating elements of the LEADER approach.

Specific recommendations and actions

- ☞ The European Commission and the programme authorities should ensure a seamless transition between funding periods. This applies to the publication of the Regulation as well as to approval procedures (of programmes and LAGs), as well as to the networking coordination units (Rural Observatory and NNUs).

- ☞ The programme authorities should find viable solutions to reconcile accountable managing arrangements with the required autonomy of LAGs. There are several practical models which seem to provide useful solutions for the respective governance context: (i) the LAG is certified to become an implementing body in its full right; (ii) the LAG includes *a public partner which holds the funds and acts on behalf of the MA; (iii) this public body acts as an external partner of the LAG at the same territorial scale. The more the administrative function diverges from the decision making bodies of the LAG, the more it is necessary to ensure that the public body does not interfere in the strategic orientation or into project selection processes. A standard allocation for all LAGs to cover common core administrative costs with a separate allocation for development activity prorated according to LAG scale would strengthen the development capacity and quality of the smaller LAGS.*

- ☞ The LAGs should be aware of the importance of taking real ownership over the development strategy it has decided to pursue. Autonomy does not only mean room for manoeuvre in respect of imposed bureaucratic requirements; it also means independence from pressures from local stakeholders to serve their particular interests: the capacity to say no to inappropriate requests is an indicator of maturity. Regular self-observation (of the LAGs' own governance performance) and structured observation of changes in the local and wider environment are reliable means to maintain independence.

5.9 Theme 7: Monitoring and Evaluation

5.9.1 Conclusions

(see chapter 4.7.3)

European-wide comparison and aggregation of LEADER+ monitoring data for the purposes of (this) evaluation is seriously compromised by systemic weaknesses. First, there is still **a methodological gap in respect to monitoring and evaluating the impact of LEADER on the social capital**, which the LEADER approach stipulates as the major trajectory of change. Secondly, **ongoing monitoring and evaluation activity shows a lack of focus and coherence** and has not become assimilated as a core part of the LEADER method. **The lack of a formal requirement for ex post evaluation** of LEADER+ programmes may have resulted in some loss of motivation and momentum in the development of evaluation capacity and activity.

There has been **limited success in fostering evaluation capacity and the local ownership of the monitoring and evaluation process** although the intention to extend bottom up (LAG) involvement was explicit in the evaluation guidance and LAGs were provided with the opportunity to become more involved in this activity. **There has been greater involvement in evaluation related activity amongst more autonomous LAGs** which suggests that the potential for improvement is real and that there is a relationship with the maturity of LAG and integrity of the LEADER approach. A substantial proportion of LAGs had no established systems of structured observation and local development monitoring. **A high dependency on the formal evaluations** at programme level remains but there is also evidence of some good practice in self-evaluation.

NNUs have a strong potential role to in facilitating exchange between the more autonomous LAGs and the less so and in delivering technical support, training and advice.

5.9.2 Recommendations

Overall recommendation

The capacity of LEADER to enhance social capital is central but there are still steps to be taken to adopt reliable approaches and methodologies to assess success or failure in that respect. To measure achievements related to social capital enhancement distinct evaluation approaches and specific evaluation methods (e.g. focus groups with external facilitation, surveys based on repertory grid techniques etc.) will be required.

Specific recommendations and actions

- ☛ A revised Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF) at European level should take up indicators and observation parametres referring to the social capital of an area; their assessment poses epistemological and methodological problems which should be discussed and solved, as far as possible, through dialogue and learning processes in the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development. The appraisal of current practice in social and anthropological research should be part of this task.
- ☛ Programme authorities should support LAGs in observing the development of their own governance structures and demeanor. Structured self-observation should also apply for the programme authorities' own relationships with the LAGs and other partners, e.g. other administrative departments relevant for programme implementation. Sufficient funds for local evaluation and accompanying social and anthropological research would be helpful in this respect.
- ☛ Local actors should avoid downgrading the local development rhetoric to merely the pursuit of funding. The LEADER approach implies double loop learning, which requires a re-

metis

AEIDL CEU

flection and ongoing debate on the approach and the instruments being applied in local development in rural areas. This debate does not have to be academic, it certainly must not be academic, but the support of external partners in research and consultancy can be helpful if an enduring relationship of reciprocal trust can be established.

Overall recommendation

The LAGs should develop and employ high quality and dynamic local territorial strategies which they actively monitor, update and improve through ongoing reflection and revision. Ongoing monitoring and self-evaluation should be linked with the process of developing evaluation capacity within LAGs. This should lead to a culture of greater accountability and ownership of the process of continuous improvement. Projects which are funded under LEADER by the programme administration in order to absorb all the LEADER funding ('cuckoo egg projects') should be excluded with a view to maintaining a coherent strategy. The self-reflection and self-assessment capacity of LEADER needs to be strengthened with a view to establishing strong democratic structures and increase performance. There is a need for an effective strategic monitoring at LAG level in order to avoid a mere 'waving-through' of project-applications.

Specific recommendations and actions

- ☛ The European Commission and the programme authorities should ensure a distinct regulatory framework for LEADER in order to prevent its subjugation to the logics of alien schemes such as the Rural Development Programmes. Under the protective screen of appropriate legal and procedural provisions the LAGs should be able to optimize the strategic fit and the relevance of selected projects. Under these favorable circumstances high quality standards for the local development strategies should be explicitly called for.
- ☛ Programme authorities should dedicate resources to strengthen the self-reflective and monitoring capacity, self-evaluation (in peer settings and/or with external facilitation) and appropriate knowledge management at LAG level. While they demand high quality local development strategies from the LAGs, they also need the capacities to assess them and to give advice for improvement.
- ☛ The LAGs should plan at least yearly meetings (in an undisturbed retreat setting) with all stakeholders in order to check progress against the strategy. Deviations may prove necessary and should be included.

Overall recommendation

Building evaluation capacity, awareness, structures, resources and commitment needs active management and real accountability at all levels. Evaluation should be finally seen as an integral part of policy making and programming and not as a disjunct exercise. Ex-post evaluation at LAG and programme/Member State level should be mandatory for all future Leader activity with a view to give continued importance to evaluations throughout the programming period and to foster an effective assessment of programme impacts. This should directly involve the LAGs.

Specific recommendations and actions

- ☛ The European Commission should stipulate mandatory ex post evaluation as well as ongoing evaluation which in turn should mainly be based on dialogue formats, facilitated focus groups and external support (e.g. accompanying research, thematic studies, surveys…). Whereas the ex post evaluation should conform to the revised CMEF guidelines, the design of ongoing evaluation would be, except for a common synthetic reporting format, up to the member states' own discretion.

☛ The programme authorities should go beyond merely conforming to the European CMEF and treat monitoring and evaluation practices as paramount components of good policy and programme implementation. This implies an active involvement in European evaluation networks fostering the exchange and dissemination of good practice.

☛ The LAGs need to build on the best practice available to become more consistently active in target setting and monitoring the ongoing relevance and performance of their strategies to ensure effective prioritisation and the achievement of added value. An essential part of the strategic capacities of the local partnership is the provision of resources and instruments for continuous local development monitoring and regular self-reflection.

5.10   Theme 8: Rural activity/excellence clusters

5.10.1 Conclusions

(see chapter 4.8.6)

Although **virtually no LAGs explicitly described their activities as being clustering**, sustaining wide ranging networks that opened up new economic opportunities was a primary objective for the majority of LAGs in the survey. **LAGs carried out activities akin to clustering**, such as playing a supporting role in starting up new products and services, mainly through brokering new relations between diverse actors and providing soft support in the form of training, marketing and communication. **LAGs played a role of interface** between an area-based perspective and the global economy.

There is evidence that agri-environmental (Art. 22-24) and forestry (Art. 29-32) measures have been **integrated into area-based regional programmes** as flanking mechanisms for agri-rural strategies thus suggesting that LEADER+ contributed to the achievement of the objectives of axes 1, 2 and 3 of the rural development programmes 2007-13.

LAGs can be viewed as intermediary support structures for helping relatively small projects to get started or to widen their scope of activity. They prepared the ground, facilitated and sometimes coordinated the emergence of local value chains, opening up new sources of income.

5.10.2 Recommendations

Overall recommendation

LEADER areas and LAGs need to link more effectively to the wider development context and to network with other actors and stakeholders. There should be links between LAGs and similar and like-minded development partnerships in urban and coastal areas in matters such as climate change, mobility, food chains, landscape functionality, public goods and other aspects of quality of life. For example the development of clustering activity is predicated on such wider scale and linkages. The ability of LEADER to go beyond administrative boundaries provides a strong basis for such development and should be pursued.

Specific recommendations and actions

☛ In respect to clustering activities, the LEADER approach and the LEADER areas deserve the European Commission's and the programme authorities' attention as seedbeds and nuclei of emerging value chains. Most of these value chains, in order to expand to dimensions commonly regarded as economic clusters, interventions on the scale of regions (remit of regional development agencies) is much more asked for. However, appropriate interfaces and transmission paths are required to support this expansion. A mere mutlipli-

metis

cation or inflation of an activity which is successful on a small scale does not by itself guarantee its success on a larger scale, let alone make sense at all.

☞ The LAGs should use their networking abilities in order to help emerging value chains becoming self-sustaining in terms of organisation and funding. A large part of this networking will relate to external contacts (market relationships, research institutions, patenting and certification institutions…) and what is called the bridging social capital. Considering value chains representing the core of the thematic orientation of the local development strategy, it is advisable that the LAG hires technical staff with this bridging competence and embark on territorial co-operation projects in the respective domain of activity.

6 The case studies

The following case studies were selected on the basis of the methodology described in Chapter 3.4.7.

Table 32. Case study overview

MS	LAGs
Germany	ErLebenswelt Roth (Bavaria)
Spain	Jerte Valley
Finland	Oulujärvi LAG
France	Périgord vert
Greece	North Peloponnisos (ANVOPE)
Hungary	Sümeg Térségi Marcal Forrásvidék Fejlödéséért
Italy	Maiella Verde, Abruzzo
Luxemburg	Redange-Wiltz
Poland	Wrzosowa Kraina
United Kingdom	North Northumberland and North Pennines

6.1 Germany: ErLebenswelt Roth, Bavaria

Basic Information ERLEBENSWELT Roth

- Database code: L+DEBAY-36

- Official name: ERLEBENSWELT ROTH

- Experience in L I: No

- Experience in L II: No

- Objective 1 or 2 zone: No

- Population (inhabitants): 83 600

- Surface area (in km²): 661

- Density (inhabitants/km²): 126

- Number of municipalities: 10

- Employment rate: 55.6 % (average 2001-2006 ca. 46 400 employees)

- Unemployment rate: decrease of unemployment rate 2002-2007 (-1.3 %), unemployment rate 2007: 4.9 %

- Total funding (€): ca. 1 054 m € public funding (EU+national); approx 2.5 m. Total investments, thereof 2 139 155.56 eligible costs

- EU share (€): 847 487.00 €

- Public funds (€): 1 866 510 (EU+national+regional+local / communal funds)

- Private funds (€): 272 646 € (without additional non-eligible costs)

- Breakdown of expenditure: Overheads/administration/animation etc approx. 179 700 € (= Share of public funding, additional 50 % Co-financing of municipalities (LAG-Management, adminstration of LAG/office, personal and non-personal costs)

- Number of LAG employees: fulltime/part-time 1 fulltime, 1 part-time (total 1.5 FTE)

- LEADER+ theme chosen: Improving the quality of life in rural areas

- LEADER+ other theme(s) chosen: No

- Level of autonomy: (counter check with programme complement): 1 = low autonomy, LAG only **selects** projects; formal project approval and payments of EAFRD support towards the beneficiaries are made by MA (basic model)

- Level of directiveness: Level 2 Medium

metis

6.1.1 Object of the case study

The LAG ErLebenswelt Roth consists of 10 municipalities in rural district Roth (in the district of Middle Franconia, Bavaria, Germany) with a population of approx 83 000 inhabitants and a surface area of 661 km². The population density of 126 inhabintans/km² is less than the Bavarian average of 177 inhab./km².

Organisation(s) in charge: association of ErLebenswelt Roth (e.V.), founded in 5/2003; operational tasks are carried out by a management office (LAG management), established in the rural district administration (city of Roth); the most important members of the LAG are the 10 municipalities, and the rural district and various actors from associations and unions.

The agency in charge of approval is embedded in the regional agriculture department of Middle Franconia.

6.1.2 Summary

The area of LAG ErLebenswelt Roth enclosed 10 municipalities between Nuremberg and the Franconian Alp in rural district Roth with good traffic conditions and a lot of diversity.

The approach by the region was an integrated strategy with the following aims;

- to make sustainable improvements to living conditions in the area of ErLebenswelt Roth ('liveability');
- and to offer both citizens of the region and local visitors and holidaymakers an attractive living, business and leisure area;

The motto chosen for ErLebenswelt Roth was "variety as strength, opposites as specificities". The LAG was established as an association of public and private partners in 2003 and is running still today. A source of great support is a financing regulation of the rural district, which facilitates the basic funding of LAG management and area wide projects.

During the funding period of LEADER+ the number of association members increased from 30 to 80, due to the active involvement of actors in (small) public-private actions and because of a dynamic within the LAG.

LAG Roth prioritised the themes "valorisation of nature and culture" (museum, thematic pathways, nature trails etc.) including the environmental education and utilisation of cultural heritage, "enhancement of touristic activities" and improvement of "liveability" (leisure, tourism and sports).

A crucial point was the continuity of initiated processes when funding period finished.

Capturing of impacts has to follow the priority themes and are identified in the categories "social capital", "cultural capital" and "liveability". Additionally, the case study tries to give a picture of the contributions of LEADER to tourism enhancement.

6.1.3 LAG design and planning

The initial situation in the area is briefly described in the following paragraphs:

The economy and infrastructure are benefiting from proximity to Nürnberg/Fürth/Erlangen agglomeration (but the directly neighbouring municipalities are excluded from the LEADER area, there is a difference in structure from north to south with development disparities); good trans-

port connections; a good level of infrastructure provision; varied economic sector structure; in some places heavy traffic congestion; and large number of commuters. In terms of population and social qualities there are: positive demographic trend; a high proportion of young people under 18 years of age; good level of provision by social services; high level of competence in the disabled sector; and suburbanisation pressure. With regards nature and environment there is: a varied landscape (e.g. crown forest, Jura, hilly country); areas of ecological value; relatively small proportion of protected areas; rapidly declining importance of forest as economic factor. Cultural aspects include: interesting historical towns; tourist attractions (castles, museums, etc.) available; municipal cooperation showed shortcomings in the past; and, insufficient networking of existing amenities, which should be improved with the LEADER strategy.

Figure 9. Proximity of LEADER area
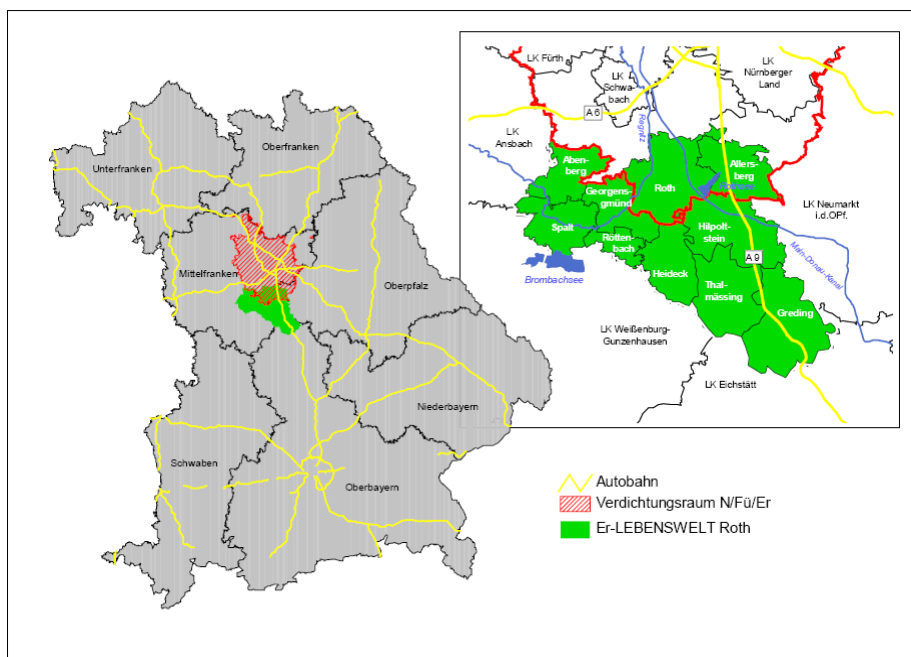
Source: Regional development concept ErLebenswelt Roth, 2001.

The initiative was taken by the rural district administrator, who mandated a member of the administration to conduct negotiations with certain municipalities. Some of them were enthusiastic, some of them rather doubtful. An external consultancy with experiences in regional planning and rural development were asked to support a bottom up development strategy in the 3rd quarter of 2001. After a presentation of structure- and SWOT-analysis by the consultancy in a kick off meeting with more than 120 people, four working groups were established to elaborate relevant themes in 3 sub-regions (Lake of Brombach, Lake of Roth, Franconian Jura) and for the overall area of LAG. The stakeholders from different sectors were invited to involve themselves in these integrated working groups; no sector specific meetings were organized. There had been no process like this at a regional level in previous times; therefore quite a high motivation of some stakeholders affected the initial phase.

The regional development concept, which was required from the Bavarian MA in order to participate in the Bavarian competition for selection of LAG, was completed in 9/2002. Many negotiations and meetings with mayors, councils and committees took place to meet the needs of 3 subregions with different initial situations.

metis

AE DL C E U

The LAG successfully passed the selection process in spring 2003. The LAG started the operational activities in 9/2003 with the constitution of a decision making board, building up of a management office and hiring a LAG manager. The decision making board consisted of 11 governmental members and 11 non-governmental members (social partners). Meetings took place 4 times per year.

The approach by the region was an integrated strategy with following aims

- to strengthen 'quality of life'
- to make sustainable improvements to living conditions in the area of ErLebenswelt Roth ('liveability')
- and to offer both citizens of the region and local visitors and holidaymakers an attractive living, business and leisure area;

The motto chosen for ErLebenswelt Roth was 'variety as strength, opposites as specificities'.

In its development plan, the LAG concentrated on 5 sectors of activity:

- regional management, marketing and cooperation;
- leisure, tourism and sport;
- nature, environment and agriculture;
- youth and social;
- cultural variety and art;

The focus of the strategy was tourism and culture. Development objectives were implemented with regard to sustainable development of tourism activities without damage to nature. Certain groups of the population (young people, the disabled) were to be given particular consideration through target group orientation. An enhancement of cooperation and networking between municipalities, tourism and culture actors as well as associations of honorary people (such as people who are interested in nature and bird protection or local history/cultural heritage) was expected to contribute to increase the attractiveness of the area by development of new leisure and cultural activities. Expected outcomes were the stabilisation of overnight stays and the attraction of new visitors (same day and long term) interested in specific rural amenities of ErLebenswelt Roth.

Furthermore the strategy focused on reinforcing the linkage between municipalities in the South of the area, which already benefitted from tourism (Lake of Roth, Lake of Brombach in "New Franconian Lakeland"), and the municipalities at the rear of the lakes (back-country).

6.1.4 Management, controlling and financing systems

The MA was embedded in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. However, the Ministry of Economics and Infrastructure as well as the Ministry of Environment were implementation partners.

In each Bavarian district a civil servant within the administration of agriculture was in charge of the coordination of the LEADER-program, called LEADER-manager. The tasks covered advising the LAG, the cross-sectoral coordination of project funding with other ministries and involved administration departments at regional level of these ministries. Because of the larger surface the districts "Upper Bavaria" and "Swabian" had two LEADER-managers. The coordination procedure provided advantages for the LAG, because the coordination within different administra-

tion departments (e.g. regional department of economy and infrastructure or department of culture) was facilitated and better identification and dealing with intersections were (pre-)arranged.

A department of a local agriculture authority was in charge of approval (called "structure development agency"), but with authorization of regional commitment and payment of LAG-projects. The above mentioned LEADER-manager was a staff member of this department.

The LAG decision board in LEADER area Roth had no explicitly written down selection criteria for project promoters. After a preliminary inquiry and coordination concerning eligibility between LEADER-manager, LAG-manager and project promoter, the projects were proved by LAG decision making board by way of two criteria:

- The project idea had to be proved fit according to the regional development concept (with 5 sectors of operation),
- Additionally the project should comply with the association articles of LAG Roth.

After decision within LAG (quarterly) the project promoter applied for a subsidy at the "structure development agency" (see above).

The funding rules of the LAG were (positively) affected by a decision of the rural district board, which was one member of LAG. The rural district offered co-financing in order to permit municipalities and associations to save money. The regulation distinguished the following priorities:

- Highest priority for area wide projects (in own responsibility of LAG-association)
- Second priority for common cooperation projects of municipalities
- Third priority for projects of associations and (social) institutions
- Single actions of municipalities.

Projects corresponding to the above mentioned "cooperation rules" were sponsored by additional aid from the rural district. This aid amounts to a share of 3/13 of costs (after deduction of subsidies). Therefore a high proportion of project promoters and municipalities built up partnerships and cooperation between public and private groups in order to avail of the granted aid of rural district. Additional funds were acquired by the LAG-management or members of the decision making board, i.e. the local savings bank, a charitable and public trust or an environmental and culture fund of district Middle Franconia.

The LAG decision making board constributes an annual financial contribution for each municipality (and an abated contribution for private members) to ensure the basic funding of the LAG (management, office, general expenditures). The financing power of municipalities was not restrictive for implementation of management structures.

Furthermore, the rural district supports the LAG association with an annual fee (triply as much as the single rate of each municipality).

Altogether these rules helped to include many ideas and actions of honorary people and to create a new type of approach to mobilise and combine public and private funds with complementarities and synergies. The adjustment of single (isolated) projects in a broader integrated strategy with coherent projects was promoted by the LAG and the funding rules. However, the resource consumption that accompanies project applications and procedures utilises a lot of management staff's time. It is considered a success of the LAG manager that no project was unapproved or cancelled by the local authority in charge of granting the LEADER funding.

6.1.5 Governance and rural citizenship

The LAG ErLebenswelt Roth has established itself as a registered association in May 2003 and the management started in September 2003. The legal status as an association allows involvement of some social partners and provided no obstruction for participation in LAG membership. The LAG management office was embedded in the rural administration with links to other relevant departments such as the bureaus of tourism, building, business development, environment and nature protection. The establishment of the management office was considered a neutral and matter-of-fact decision by all stakeholders.

The executive board of association consisted of 22 persons; 10 representatives of municipalities, plus the rural district and 11 from relevant social groups. The comparatively large board ensured a high information level for all municipalities and partners, which resulted in a well-structured and inter-sectoral collaboration. In prior periods there was no structure like the LAG organisation, with the majority of the interest groups acting in isolation and most of the administration activities carried out without the participation of other stakeholders. Valid proof of intensive discussions, motivation, and generation of ideas and implementation of actions with a high workload of honorary people are illustrated by the 55 projects with different project promoters.

A special approach of ErLebenswelt Roth was the organization of 3 working groups in sub-regions. This contributed to the core strategy "Diversity as strength – differences as specificity". The themes in these 3 sub-regions (Lake of Brombach, Lake of Roth, Franconian Jura) differed from each other, but in the course of the area wide actions (network of thematic walk routes or a new route called "Via Historica") the actors build up linkages and networks.

The meetings of the LAG normally took place quarterly if there was a need to make decisions about the project ideas and upcoming challenges and missions.

In general the project promoter prepared a presentation. In the beginning most project promoters did this alone. During the LEADER+-phase it emerged as a good practice that project partners were invited to support each other and to highlight the complexity of schemes (e.g. the networking between local groups to provide coherence or the establishment of private public partnership models). LEADER+ addresses a lot of small but networking projects in the area of ErLebenswelt Roth.

During the funding period and still to this day the executive board of association was stable and continuing. This is a sign of the constructive working atmosphere. Although a mayor of a member municipality operated as the chairman of executive board, the chief administrative officer of the rural district participated in all meetings and supported the strategy implementation of LAG.

One municipality proved to be a difficult partner and brakeman even if some project promoters in this village were able to launch several projects. Mostly the chairman had to deal with this problem and to put matters right. The mayor of this municipality criticized the financing system (annual contribution of municipalities, see chapter 1.4) and inter-communal approach with (possible) disadvantages for the cooperation partners. Because of the good influence of other mayors and actors the conflict solving capacity was "well-trained". The learning effect within the partnership was that collaboration and cooperation depend on attitudes of single responsible persons.

Due to the large executive board and the representativeness of social partners a high "flow" within the decision making committee was created. The mutual "drive" caused impulses and actions similar to a competition for best ideas. In the first few years the character of actions shifted from municipal investments to public private partnerships and to community actions of interest groups (mostly dedicated people of civil society).

In correspondence with project realisation some public relation activities accompanied the strategy implementation. As a result, the public interest increased and more and more attention was given to the LEADER partnership. During the funding period of L+ the number of association members increased from 30 to 80. The LAG management stated that in the second half of the funding period the search for sponsors and funding streams was facilitated in the course of this (e.g. sponsoring by the Regional bank trust (Sparkassenstiftung), which neighbours the rural district administration offices).

Finally three municipalities in the north of rural district (called Schwabachtal) applied for membership in the new funding period (since 2007). High "pressure" in the municipal councils led to this decision.

The LAG established no specific monitoring system, but the authority in charge of approval asked for project indicators. These indicators were filled in an appendix of the application sheet. Often the LAG used the indicator "benefiting inhabitants" because the nature of the projects aimed to increase the liveability level within the area.

To the end of funding period, the LAG decision making committee carried out a self evaluation by written questionnaires of the members of LAG. The findings were discussed in a workshop and the conclusions were considered in the new strategy (2007-2013)[102.]

6.1.6 Relevance and Community added value

In Bavaria LEADER+ has enhanced new methods, new co-operations, new networks between sectors and local actors and more synergy-effects in rural development. In LEADER+ innovative projects and / or innovative approaches with added value for the rural regions could be supported. The LEADER+ programme "opened a window" for many interest groups and actors, but with high programme requirements (sometimes, the LEADER+ programme was the only opportunity to put forth the ideas of local actors).

LEADER+ in Bavaria was formed as a programme with a "niche character" in order to address the specific needs of LEADER areas in addition to the running mainstream-programmes. Depending on local use of other programmes (village renewal, nature protection, support of SME enterprises or farms) more or less synergies emerged as a result of the LAG capacities to combine different funding sources. In the area of LAG Roth there was good cooperation with another authority in charge of land consolidation and village renewal, because a staff member of this authority was involved in working groups of LEADER+.

Moreover, the LEADER-manager in district "Middle Franconia" (civil servant) had to provide the coordination between LEADER and other mainstream measures. A strict separation between programmes was necessary. LEADER+ therefore funded measures, which couldn't be supported by mainstream programmes. In this context LEADER+ was able to provide synergies between LEADER+ and mainstream programmes.

LAG Roth prioritised the themes "valorisation of nature and culture" (museum, thematic pathways, nature trails etc.; approx. 40 % of expenditure) including the environmental education and cultural heritage, "enhancement of touristy activities" and improvement of liveability (leisure, tourism and sports; a further 40 % of expenditure). In contrast the theme "know-how and new technologies" was not emphasized considerably. But to the end of period the theme "demography and social issues" emerged as a new challenge within the area.

---

[102]See LAG Roth: LEADER+ Evaluation report of Local Action Group ErLEbenswelt Roth, 2007

The contribution to adding value to local products was restricted by the annex I (of the EU treaty), because these should be funded with measures in European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) according to EU reg. 1257/99. Therefore the direct and regional marketing ideas of actors were adjusted and harmonized with guidelines of local agriculture authorities and, if eligible, the projects was realised outside the LEADER-funding (e.g. a marketing project for pumpkin and pumpkin seeds).

Another value added of LEADER+ in area of ErLebenswelt Roth was a high contribution regarding the strengthening of regional identity and coherence. This was because the rural district was re-organized in the 70s and the former district borders remained a 'mental handicap' until now (rural districts Schwabach and Roth). The above mentioned "flow" within LAG decision making committee made this evident and the activities of associations increased strongly. LEADER and established LAG management provided the pre-conditions for the capacity building and augmentation of "initiative power" (of honorary people).

6.1.7 Impacts

Since 2003 many projects were successfully implemented thanks to the funding of LEADER+. While the whole Bavarian region applied in average for 25 projects per LAG, the "LAG Erlebenswelt Roth" was able to apply and realize 55 projects. This great number of projects makes it clear that a wide range of sustainable development processes were initiated by LEADER+ with many different project partners. Besides the cities and municipalities the LAG was mainly the project executing organisation that was responsible for the application and implementation of the project's cooperation with the municipalities. In addition to all municipalities that took part at least one more project could be realised in these areas. In a spatial and thematic regard a well-balanced development was achieved.

The initiative of several associations and trusts was an especially positive manner that took over the co-financing and the sponsorship of twelve projects in the LAG-area. This appreciation was also confirmed by members of the LAG that emphasized the good cooperation with private partners as well as their engagement and innovative spirit.

Table 33. Number of projects by type of project promoter

Number of projects by type of project promoter		
LAG	Municipalities	Associations, Trusts, Unions
16	27	12

The "LEADER+-REK" of the "LAG Erlebenswelt Roth" enclosed the five spheres of action: "Regional management, -marketing and cooperation", "Youth and social affairs", "Leisure, tourism and sports", "Nature, environment and agriculture" and "Cultural variety and arts". The projects that were realised are dispersed in each sphere of action but there were two focuses in the fields of "Leisure, tourism and sports" and "Cultural variety and arts".

Table 34. Spheres of action

Spheres of action	Number of projects
Regional management, regional marketing and cooperation	8 (inclusive 2 cooperation projects)
Youth and social affairs	4
Leisure, tourism and sports	15
Nature, environment and agriculture	9
Cultural variety and arts	20

In the balance of the LEADER+ funding period – carried out as a self evaluation by questioning the LAG members - you can see that the processes were considered as very successful by the steering committee.

The following reasons were crucial for the good assessment result:

- Improvement of the cooperation between public partners
- Consolidation of the cooperation with private partners
- High degree of realisation of planned projects
- Implementation of projects with wide varieties.

The implementation of the projects aims to improve infrastructural weaknesses, e.g. tourism. The construction of the historical walking trail "Via Historica", the establishment of a network "nature experience" with 5 themes (135 places of interest), the reconstruction and valorisation of a "Stone Age Village", the creation of standardized and labelled walking and bicycle route networks show the wide spectrum of specific regional activities. The projects caused an increase in life quality and recreation quality for inhabitants and visitors, considering the walking trails and the bicycle routes for example.[103] From the point of view of the decision board members the following topics had a central importance:

- Leisure and tourism,
- Nature and environment,
- Local history, cultural heritage and geography.

Nevertheless the projects with participation of youth or disadvantaged people (e.g. leisure map for children, "Media-Factory" for youth in the countryside, holidays for families with a handicapped child) played an important role in the strategy implementation. Two members of decision making committee represent the youth and the social welfare sector (charity trust).

Some quantified data underpins the results of the implemented actions:

- Signposting of walking trails, preparation and creation of maps with a length of approx. 1.000 km.
- Compilation of map materials, (cartographical material) in order to establish a homogenous and consistent web without gaps for bicycle routes.
- Establishment of new bicycle tracks in order to close the gaps between existing tracks; thereby links to two other rural districts were made: 5 km,
- 10 thematic path- and walkways were built up with a length of 200 km. Most of them were set up as nature and heritage trails ("Lehrpfad").

---

[103] For more information about projects see URL http://www.erlebenswelt-roth.de, sub-category "realized projects".

Additionally seven new facilities for inhabitants and visitors were established (museums, camping site for youth, community and event rooms, "Kneipp basin" etc. (see list of actions at the end of the case study)).

Furthermore, 4 events with distinct characters were initiated, these included an Oldtimer-rally along the Via Historica, a thematic year with events around the topic "from ore to iron" and an area wide "nature event day".

Table 35. Implementation of LEADER actions LAG ErLebenswelt Roth (2008)

	LEADER+ funding
A. Approval of projects:	
1. Number	55
2. Total investment amount	2.5 m€
3. Amount of funding	1.2 m€
4. Original budget of LEADER+ REK	2 m €
B. Total sum of approved and applied projects	
8. Number	60
9. Total investment amount	2 687 598 €
10. Amount of funding	1 343 797 €
C. Success indices of funding[104]	
Total investment amount (no.2) per inhabitant	28.5
Amount of funding (no. 3) per inhabitant	14.25

Source: LAG Management, ErLebenswelt Roth, 2008.

The LAG and its funding partners of the LAG provided a balance with financial indicators, which illustrates that the original budget (2 m €) was exceeded with a total investment sum of 2.5 m €. The success indices per inhabitant (funding 14.25 €, investments 28.5 €) provides an argument for the associated municipalities to continue the support of basic funding (for LAG management and cooperation projects).

After the LAG had focused on the implementation of area specific projects, an inter-regional co-operation of five Middle-Franconian LAG was founded by the LAG "ErLebenswelt Roth" and neighbouring LAG "Aischgrund" in 2004. The implementation of two common projects in 2006 and 2007 has led to a sustainable networking of the LEADER-regions in the agglomerated area of Middle-Franconia.

The impacts perceived by the stakeholders of LEADER+ strategy are captured with a LAG survey and a regional forum. Summarized findings were that improved tourism infrastructures and activities combined with enhancement of cultural and environmental assets increased the attractiveness of the area. Simultaneously the territorial image was augmented (by the "strengthening of strengths" as one stakeholder remarked). As a result of extensive information publishing with new layout for print and electronic media, a homogenous corporate design was established. Correspondingly the rural district adopted its print materials, too.

But there were both positive attitudes towards the LEADER process and difficulties. The opinion of the respondents has shown that in the beginning of the process it was very difficult to recognize the region as a whole not alone the individual parts of the area. Furthermore it is necessary to obtain a balance of results achieved by means of a geographical spread and to make sure

---

[104]No. of inhabitants 82.100 (as shown in the territorial analysis).

that more partners and also the inhabitants will join the projects. The bottom-up approach in the different project groups and working teams was working, however the persons engaged were the same that were already members in associations, societies or other organisations. They did however begin to inspire persons to honorary offices who had never got involved with any kind of voluntary activities before.

The LAG management tried to summarize the voluntary work in order to evaluate the high involvement of civil society partners during the implementation of actions. The outcome of a field enquiry (only a small sample) was an astonishing number of more than 16.000 hours of voluntary work by honorary people in 4 realized projects. This showed that local forces could be mobilised by bottom up approaches. The capabilities "to act collectively" enhanced community life and the willingness to pull together upgraded the social relationships in the LEADER-area ("Social capital").

Therefore the statement of a LAG in a "balance conference" was that "sustainable development was launched and a certain sense of belonging has emerged". The retrospective judgement shows the perception of LAG members (see following figure). Therefore the continuation of working processes (with corresponding funding) is a very important factor of such approaches with intensive participation of civil society partner.

Figure 10. Self-Assessment of LAG members*

(Question: "How do you judge the LEADER-process from a retrospective view?")
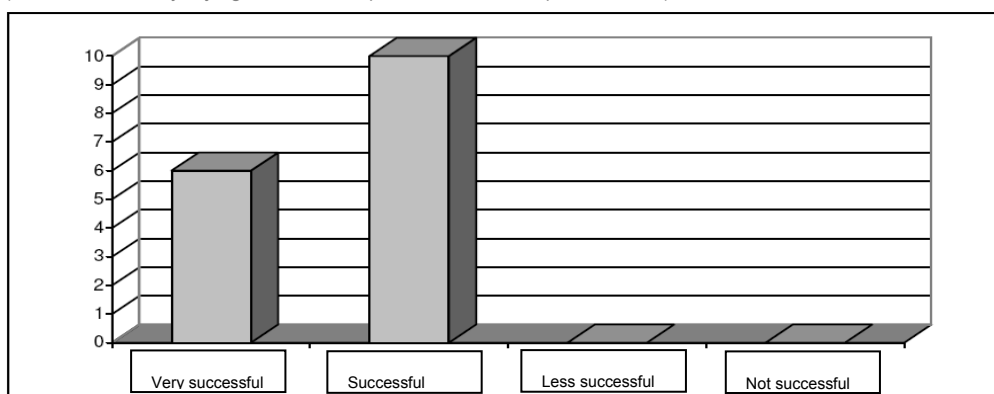
Source: Evaluation report of LAG Roth, 2007.

Enhancement of tourism

Based on interviews with restaurateurs and caterers along the pathways and bicycle routes the LAG management stated that the number of visitors increased (especially same day visitors).

Correspondingly a growing of overnight stays in rural district Roth could be observed, although other influences are unquestionably noticeable (not exclusively affected by LEADER actions). This increase is in contrast to many other holiday areas in Bavaria or Germany. The increase of overnight stays can be clearly seen in the figure below. From 2000 to 2008 the amount rose by about 100 000 guest-nights. During the last years the growth was slower and a level of 775 000 overnight stays was reached.

The economic importance of tourism has been proved by the German Economic Institute for Tourism (DWIF)[105.] The per-day expenditure of guests in private accommodation as well as

---

[105] DWIF: Wirtschaftsfaktor Tourismus in Franken, 2010;

guests in commercial accommodation generates a turnover of approx. 25 m € (growth 3.2 m €)[106] in the rural district of Roth.[107] According to the calculation of DWIF an income contribution of 7.87 m € (growth +1 m €) is ascertained (including direct and indirect impacts) and corresponding employment effects are assumed. In addition to this the expenditures of same-day visitors should be added, but there is no exact data base. Only one project of LAG Roth could provide a number of visitors (barefoot pathway) of a value averaged at 12 500 per year.

To what extent there is a propulsive force and influence by LEADER projects cannot be identified reliably because there is much cross-over with other trends and funding streams. The complexity of inter-relations between LEADER actions and measures supported by national or European programs (ERDF) is multifarious.

Figure 11. Alteration of tourism data (overnight stays)

Overnight stays in rural district Roth
(1995 bis 2008)

Year	Overnight stays
1995	531.535
1996	532.864
1997	543.790
1998	597.081
1999	603.647
2000	670.047
2001	717.620
2002	719.672
2003	732.400
2004	736.317
2005	740.735
2006	772.587
2007	760.226
2008	781.512

Explanatory note: accomodation facilities with more than 9 beds, inclusive extrapolation of smaller facilities
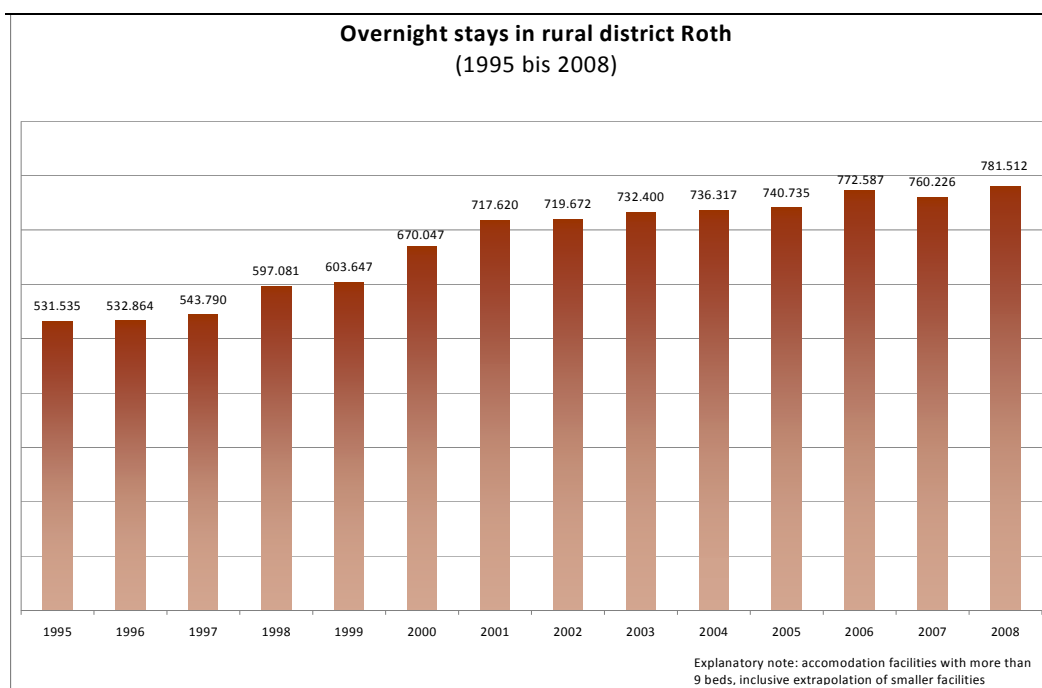
Source: Agency for tourism and culture, rural district administration Roth, 2009

For LAG members it is evident that the contribution of LEADER actions to the stabilisation and improvement of resilience of the area cannot be quantified solely with (tourism related) economic indicators. The continuing of cooperation activities between private and public sector, inside ("bonding forces") and outside the area ("bridging forces"), the focusing on other themes (like youth, culture, demography and social issues or agriculture pluriactivity) and stressing of new partnerships who were not yet involved, are crucial for the current development process. Furthermore, the upgrading in relationships of local actors and the fundraising for important local/regional actions emerged as a challenge of the LAG. This is a reason why the rural district decided to introduce an additional regional management to reinforce the management capacity.

URL: http://www.frankentourismus.de/franken_intern/wirtschaftsfaktor (see Download)

[106] Numbers in brackets show the calculated increase of turnover and income relating to the rise of overnights (100.000).

[107] Own calculation based on DWIF-figures: Total accomodation days in Franconian Lake District (5,8 mio.) with turnover of 186,4 mio. €. The value for rural district Roth (member of tourism association Franconian Lake District) was calculated on a pro-rata basis of 775.000 days.

Table 36. List of realised actions and projects

Realisierte Projekte in den Handlungsfeldern

Handlungsfeld	Projekt
Regionalmanagement, -marketing und Kooperation	Geschäftsführung 2003-08
	Regionalmanagement 2003-08
	Ausflugstipps für Schulklassen und Jugendgruppen
	Ausflugstipps für Vereine
Jugend und Soziales	Jugendplatz
	Kräuterlabyrinth
	Medien aufs Land
Freizeit, Tourismus und Sport	Radwegelückenschluss Ebenried - Freystadt
	Tagesbetreuung behinderter Urlaubsgäste am Rothsee
	Gredl-Weg Konzeption und Faltblatt
	Nordic Walking Park
	Radwegelückenschluss Pflugsmühle - Spalt
	Jakobsweg - Wissenschaftliche Expertise
	Öffentlichkeitsarbeit Weitwanderwege
	Beschilderung und Infotafeln Gredl-Weg
	Radwegekarte
	Via Historica
	Wanderwegenetz - Karten und Wanderjournal
	Wanderwegenetz – Beschilderung
	Wanderwegenetz – Wandertafeln und Bänke
	Kinderfreizeitkarte
Natur, Umwelt und Landwirtschaft	Fränkische Landschau
	Lehrpfad am Wasser
	Mostanlage
	Biberlehrpfad
	Netzwerk Natur erleben 1-5
Kulturelle Vielfalt und Kunst	Chorfestival
	Museum Eisenhammer Herrenhaus
	Dauerausstellung „Vom Erz zum Eisen"
	Heimatkundl. Themen-Jahr „Vom Erz zum Eisen"
	Infofahrt Keltendorf
	Geschichtsdorf – Steinzeithaus
	Michael-Kirschner-Kulturmuseum
	1. Deutscher Spaßwanderweg
	Gesundheitswege Brombachsee
	Fähre Unterbreitenloher Weiher
	Kneippanlage
	Erweiterung Kneippentour
	Mühlenweg
	Gredl-Weg Konzeption und Faltblatt
	Neues Leben um alte Mauern
	Erschließung Heidecker Burgen
	Quellenwanderweg
	Museumskonzept Mensch und Natur
	Stein an den Wassern
	Heimatspiel Sybilla von Allersberg
	Landleben erleben

metis

AEIDL CEU

Information sources

LAG ErLebenswelt Roth

- Evaluation report of LAG 2007
- Annual report of association "ErLebenswelt Roth" 2007/08 and 2008/09
- Account report LEADER in ErLebenswelt Roth
- Regional development concept of ErLEbenswelt Roth, 2002
- Documentation of regional forum/conference 2007 (including self evaluation
- Print material (Flyer, booklets, maps etc.) according the funded measures

TV Franken

- Economic factor "Tourism" in Franconia (DWIF expertise)

Rural district administration, department of Tourism and Culture

- Statistics: Accommodation, overnight stays

Bavarian State Office for statistics and data processing

List of contacted persons

- LAG-management: Mrs. Menchen
- Chairman of LAG: Mr. Böckeler (mayor of Allersberg)
- LEADER manager (coordination authority): Mr. Stapf
- Head of MA: Mr. Dr. Koepfer

6.2 Spain: Jerte Valley

Basic Information Jerte Valley

- Database code: L+ESEXT-09

- Official name: Sociedad para La Promocion y Desarrollo del Valle del Jerte, S.L.

- Experience in L I: Yes

- Experience in L II: Yes

- Objective 1 or 2 zone: Objective 1

- Population (inhabitants): 11 720

- Surface area (in km²): 375

- Density (inhabitants/km²): 31

- Number of municipalities: 11

- Employment rate/unemployment rate: 6.9% (5.75% among men & 8.22% among women) - However these official rates significantly under-represent the actual situation as they do not include people claiming "REASS", a social security benefit which workers carrying out seasonal agricultural work can claim for the remainder (approx 9 months) of the year. This would bring the number of people on unemployment benefits to 23.92% (compared to the regional figure of 18.59% and the national figure of 12.44%)

- Total funding (€): 6 844 000

- EU share (€): 2 731 000

- Public funds (€): (non-EU) 1 374 000

- Private funds (€): 3 278 000

- Breakdown of time spent:

  - 25% local animation

  - 50% administrative tasks (management, control, financial work, reporting)

  - 25% assessing and handling project applications.

- Number of LAG employees: 4.5 FTE (4 full-time and 1 part-time)

- LEADER+ theme chosen: Improving the quality of life in rural areas (theme 2)

- LEADER+ other theme(s) chosen: Adding value to local products (theme 3)

- Level of autonomy: (counter check with programme complement) 2

- Level of directiveness: 2

metis

AEIDL CEU

6.2.1 Object of the case study

- LAG name: "SOPRODEVAJE", La Sociedad para la Promoción y Desarrollo del Valle del Jerte S.L. (Company for the Promotion and Development of the Jerte Valley)
- Area where it is active: The Jerte Valley, Extremadura. The administrative unit is a district or "comarca" covering 11 municipalities (approximately NUTS 4).
- Organisation(s) in charge: SOPRODEVAJE is the legal entity, it is composed of 6 representative community shareholders:
- Data base code: L+ESEXT-09

6.2.2 Summary

The following study examines the implementation of LEADER+ in the mountain valley of Jerte, in Extremadura, Spain. This is an area of high environmental value, heavily dependent on agriculture and with low levels of employment and entrepreneurial spirit. The area is now starting to get known as a tourist destination within Spain. As with many rural areas, population loss and the lack of competitive services are an issue.

SOPRODEVAJE´s strategy aimed to enhance coordination between local actors and organisations with a view to consolidating the area´s image as the "Cherry Valley" while raising the quality of its products and services to reinforce the competitiveness of its main economic sectors: agriculture, the agro-food industry and tourism. Integrating environmentally friendly practices into business practice and the lifestyle of its population and creating employment, especially for women and young people were also key elements of its development strategy.

In terms of management, control and financial practices, the evaluation describes an effective and efficient LAG team that works closely with its board to ensure maximum impact of activities. Strong communication and coordination has meant that SOPRODEVAJE has been successful in delivering a truly integrated local development plan. However, it also reveals that a lower level of autonomy in terms of financial management compared to previous funding periods has had a negative impact on flexibility, efficiency and the motivation of LAG members and the general public.

This study shows that LEADER+ has played a fundamental role in fostering local governance and capacity to undertake development activities. Indeed, one of its main successes was its ability to bring different actors together to organise work around common goals. The development of inter-sectoral projects and the trust and reciprocity that has been developed between, for example, the agricultural sector and the tourist sector bear testament to this and have contributed significantly to creating a more dynamic and competitive area.

The LAG´s actions also demonstrate a high level of complementarity with other funds, having contributed directly to the development of larger projects funded by ERDF and the mainstream regional rural development programme as well as carrying outside activities to add value to other development investments implemented. Moreover, the study highlights 3 examples of how the LEADER methodology has been mainstreamed into rural development policy in Extremadura or at national level in Spain.

Finally, we see that over the 2000-2006 period, 270 projects were implemented in the Jerte Valley. A total of €7.4 million was invested under LEADER+, of which €2.731 million was EU money, €1.374 was other public funds and €3.278 was private co-financing. Women and young people figured particularly strongly among the beneficiaries.

At the end of the programming period, the Jerte Valley was still largely dependent on the agricultural sector. However, economic diversification which started in previous funding periods had seen significant consolidation, 274 non-agricultural jobs had been created or consolidated (equivalent to 5% of the area´s total employment) and the area´s drive to raise quality standards of local products, services and the environment meant that the Jerte Valley was, in 2008, a more attractive place in which to live and visit than it was at the outset of LEADER+.

6.2.3 LAG design and planning

The Jerte Valley is situated in northern Extremadura, an Objective 1 region in western Spain. Lying between the Sierra de Gredos and Sierra de Bejar in the Cáceres province, Jerte is a mountain valley of high environmental value, characterised by the predominance of cherry trees which are cultivated on plots or terraces rising to altitudes of over 1,000 metres. The relief of the area has given rise to a particular Mediterranean and Subtropical microclimate which, along with its extensive network of underground reservoirs, has also given rise to a range of other vegetation from thinned woods of cork oak, the *dehesas*, to riverside vegetation. This rich ecosystem has favoured the presence of much wildlife and in some places, such as the nature reserve, La Garganta de los Infiernos, enjoys protected status.

Agriculture plays a fundamental role in the economy of the Jerte Valley, accounting for 47.16% of employment in 2001, and is overwhelmingly structured around cherry production. However, on top of the risks associated with such a reliance on a single crop, productivity tends to be low due to structural problems such as high costs and difficulties in mechanising such work. It is largely thanks to its established culture of cooperatives within the valley´s agricultural sector, and its specialisation in cherries, that the activity has remained profitable.

Industry has almost no history in the area and continues to be remarkably absent. However, and thanks largely to rural development programmes and the cooperatives, the agri-food industry is one exception. It has developed significantly in recent years as the area has started to diversify into processing and the development of new products, quality labels and Protected Denominations of Origen (PDOs) such as the "Picota" cherry. Small-scale initiatives to process jams, cheeses, hams, olives and liqueurs from local products are starting to become established. The construction sector also accounts for a significant part of the economy while the service sector – and in particular rural tourism – has started to develop in recent years.

With a population density of just 30 inhabitants per km2, the Jerte Valley´s population stood at 11,791 in 2001, down from 17,419 in the 1950s. Depopulation – especially of the old village centres – has slowed since the 90s but an aging population, low education levels and a lack of entrepreneurial spirit are serious challenges to the future viability of many of these villages. Employment rates are extremely low, the work available in both agriculture and tourism is seasonal and a culture of "localism" and subsidies has become ingrained. The villages remain dependent on the nearby town of Plasencia for many services and yet public transport has proven extremely difficult to organise.

SOPRODEVAJE was set up in the first round of LEADER in 1991. At that time, it aimed to take advantage of the culture of cooperation within the agricultural sector and transfer this approach to other sectors in the area. It also aimed to bring together representatives from the 11 different villages of the valley so as to overcome village rivalries and address common challenges together.

For the LEADER+ programme, SOPRODEVAJE aimed to build on progress made under LEADER I and II in terms of organisational capacity of local actors as well as addressing the area´s heavy dependence on agriculture, its continuing depopulation and low employment. The idea was to prevent a rural exodus by improving the quality of life in the Jerte Valley both in

metis

terms of services which made the villages more self-sufficient and creating jobs and raising family incomes.

Objectives

SOPRODEVAJE chose two priority themes: quality of life and adding value to local products. With this in mind, its development strategy laid down the following specific objectives:

1. Creating a mechanism to improve involvement, communication and social cohesion in the area, with a view to improving the internal structure of organisations and establishing real channels for cooperation between local institutions for integrated development of the area ("improving governance and mobilising the endogenous development potential").
2. Providing the area with sufficiently competitive social and cultural services according to new needs, in order to offer the rural environment the same opportunities as can be found in urban areas.
3. Improving the general competitiveness of the main economic sectors so that the main centres of activity and new initiatives are guaranteed minimum conditions of competitiveness.
4. Taking advantage of the potential of the area with regard to natural and environmental resources with a view to converting environmental potential into a "driving" and "distinguishing" element in the area.
5. Using experience and cooperation as a springboard for engaging in more ambitious activities.

Expected Outcomes

With regards to the territory itself, the LAG predicted an enhanced coordination between local actors and organisations, the fostering of business excellence and the consolidation of the area´s image as the "Cherry Valley" with the environment as a central element. It put forward integrated training and employment plans which it expected to improve competitiveness and increase economic activity, particularly among young people and women.

In terms of boosting the main economic sectors, SOPRODEVAJE foresaw significant improvements to the quality of its products, the application of environmentally friendly practices, the diversification of its production as well as the development of commercial links with other areas.

The LAG also aimed to ensure that basic services for most of the population were covered, including old people´s homes, health services, sports monitors and cultural services. Educational programmes were also expected to bridge the gap between school education, professional training and entry into the labour market.

Major stakeholders in the LAG

SOPRODEVAJE was set up as a non-profit, limited company made up of six representative community shareholders and with a board of 15[108,] most of whom are shareholders. The board not only acted as the decision-making body in terms of project selection but was fully involved in all work of the LAG from the development of its strategy to ongoing monitoring of the socio-economic needs of the territory and success of projects funded.

---

[108] The "Consejo de Administración"

These board members included:

- representatives from the federation of municipalities (the "Mancomunidad") which covers all eleven village municipalities in the area: 3 representatives
- representatives from the two secondary agricultural cooperatives which cover 17 village cooperatives (more than one in each village) and more than 3,500 farmers: 3 representatives
- the tourist association with 80 firms: 1 representative
- the SME association with 60 firms: 1 representative
- the women´s association with associations in all villages: 1 representative
- an environmental association (Montañana Gredo Sur): 1 representative
- the nature reserve, La Garganta de los Infiernos: 1 representative
- the Union of Small Scale Farmers[109] : 1 representative
- the PDO Regulating Council of the Jerte Cherry[110] : 1 representative
- the youth association[111:] 1 representative
- the Regional Savings Bank, Caja de Extremadura: 1 representative

The overarching motivation for these different stakeholders to be part of the LAG was a belief that by working in partnership towards a common goal more could be achieved than the sum of their individual efforts. Most partners understood the benefit of being able to count on the support of other important actors in the area and, of course, the fact that EU funds were available to help implement their ambitions was another decisive factor.

6.2.4 Management, controlling and financing systems

Contribution of the arrangements for the management and financing to the impact of the programme:

SOPRODEVAJE employed a staff of 4.5 full-time equivalents including a Manager, two Rural Development Officers (outreach project and community development workers – which are essential in areas of low entrepreneurial spirit), one trainer/adviser who provided training in new technologies and advice to SMEs, and a part-time Administrative Assistant. The team worked in close contact with the board which met at regular intervals (every 1-3 months) to monitor progress and decide on further work to be done.

An external accountant was also contracted to ensure the LAG complied with legal and fiscal requirements and a public financial officer from the Mancomunidad was paid to oversee all procedures and expenditure related to the projects.

Depending on the evolving needs in the area, and always in line with the local development strategy, thematic calls for tender were published and advertised and were generally open for a period of 2-3 months.

The technical team played a vital role in generating interest and fostering project ideas on the ground before, during and after such calls. Following the publication of calls for tender, the team would provide advice to potential beneficiaries on whether and how to apply as well as direct technical support on project development. They also played a role in directing local actors towards other, more suitable funds when relevant.

---

[109]UPA (Unión de Pequeños Agricultores) – one of the main agricultural trade unions in Spain
[110] PDO= Protected Designation of Origin or *Denominación de Origin* "Cereza del Jerte"
[111] The youth association joined later in the programming period

When projects had been presented, the LAG staff would study the proposals and issue a technical report on each project which, along with the seal of approval from the local financial officer, would be submitted to the Regional Government for a viability check. Projects receiving a favourable response would then be considered by the LAG board for selection. The time frame from the close of a call to the communication of the final decision to project promoters was approximately 1 month. Following the final approval of a project, the LAG would transfer funds to the promoter.

The LAG´s combined role in providing expert advice as well as funds and the strong participation of the relevant socio-economic interest groups in the strategy of the LAG´s work positioned it in a unique position work as an authoritative and effective development agency. Moreover, the autonomy with which the administrative and financial arrangements allowed it to work contributed significantly to its efficiency and credibility.

Assessment Criteria and Weighting

SOPRODEVAJE´s system of opening periodic calls allowed for the flexibility necessary to publish calls that reflected the current situation which may have evolved since the beginning of the period. In this way, it could address specific needs at a particular time as well as increasing the impact of the individual projects as they would all be focused towards overcoming a common problem. It also meant that the LAG and its staff gained significant topic-specific knowledge as they would focus all their efforts on a specific area or theme at any one time. Their ability, therefore, to act as credible and effective consultants was heightened and no doubt enhanced the impact of projects implemented.

Moreover, the selection criteria served to reinforce the LAG´s strategy of creating employment (especially among women and young people), developing the image of the valley as an area of quality products and services and fostering cooperation among local actors. For example women and young people would receive an additional 5% funding for projects they presented. Projects that would create jobs were also prioritised; among the tourism projects presented, priority was given to those with an emphasis on quality standards; and from the agro-industry projects there was a biais towards members of the cooperatives. Indeed, the strategy remained central to the LAG´s work and projects were seen as integrated components of this strategy.

Another feature of SOPRODEVAJE´s operational system was the strong and continuous implication of the board in the ongoing work of the technical team and the full life cycle of the projects funded. Interviews with board and team members revealed a high level of communication between them, and the sharing of information was clearly commonplace. Both the President of the board and the LAG manager insisted that this type of relationship led to better decisions taken in terms of projects supported thanks to an intimate knowledge of the territory from different perspectives (public, agricultural, tourism etc). Moreover, thanks to good communication flows between LAG partners and with the technical team, decisions were invariably consensual (the representative from the tourist agency remarked that he could not think of a time when they had to vote on a decision). This meant that all actors were solidly behind the direction that the LAG took, and the momentum which this generated, again, contributed significantly to the impact of the LAG´s work.

Finally, the fact that this work – from the development of the strategy to the decision making vis-à-vis project selection – was undertaken in full ownership and autonomy by local actors for their own area was considered fundamental in ensuring maximum impact of the programme as it could be tailored to the precise needs of the territory that only local actors knew so well.

Synergies and Complementarities

Given that LEADER+ funds were significantly smaller than Regional or other rural development funds, the LAG tended to focus on smaller scale projects, innovative actions and training and played a vital role in creating the social conditions necessary to implement some of the larger infrastructure investments that other funds supported.

For example, a study conducted by the Regional Government in the area on possible irrigation plans recommended that each village should set up an "irrigation community[112] " which would build a reservoir to store water and undertake to start using drip irrigation systems in order to minimise water wastage. However, the cost and effort that this implied to farmers and the villages to continue using a commodity which had traditionally been free and unlimited met with significant resistance. It was intense work on the ground by the LAG along with its awareness-raising campaigns that eventually persuaded local actors to invest in the long-term sustainability of their water usage. As such, most villages in the valley now have an "irrigation community" in place. Reservoirs have been built in 2 of the villages with ERDF money – an investment of over €5 million – and 2 more villages are now in the process of creating a reservoir. SOPRODEVAJE played a fundamental role in ensuring that that these projects and investment went ahead.

This is just one of many examples of how SOPRODEVAJE developed synergies with and complemented work already taking place as well as mobilising other public and private funds for further work to be carried out. This was seen as its ongoing responsibility: to explore new opportunities for the territory, generate and support ideas - sometime by funding specific studies – and subsequently to assist and fund potential LEADER projects while channelling others towards more relevant funds (often with bigger budgets).

Not only did the LEADER+ funds the LAG managed have a clear multiplier effect (with €4.105 million of public money during 2000-2006, €3.278 million of private funds were levered in) but its work also contributed directly or indirectly to numerous other investments in the area.

Management

SOPRODEVAJE´s strong knowledge of the area and the social capital generated has allowed the LAG to mobilise local resources (time and man hours) to undertake work which would otherwise have implied a financial cost and in this sense, SOPRODEVAJE´s management system gained significant efficiencies. Moreover, by fully involving the members of the board in ongoing work and ideas, the group effectively gained an extra 14 members of staff for free. Of course, they did not work full time on LEADER+ but practically all of their work, be it environmental, social or commercial was complimentary to the objectives of the LAG given the common strategy that motivated each party. Information flows and regular contacts allowed each party to ensure that duplication of efforts and resources in the territory were minimised.

A recent example of this type of area-wide coordination can be seen with two "escuela talleres"[113] that have been set up in the area – one for tourism and one for the rehabilitation of degraded areas. The former had planned to ask its students to design a tourism website for the area. Good information flows meant that the tourist association and the LAG learnt of this plan and could propose an alternative activity to the school that was considered more useful for the area as a whole. The tourist association already had a website for the area so the activity would have been purely academic. On the other hand, there was a need for geo-referencing of all the local resources which could add value to the territory as a tourist destination. Discussions ensued and led to a change of programme involving the students in geo-referencing the local resources ranging from natural springs to health centres and viewpoints. As the work was carried

---

[112] "comunidad de regantes
[113] Action orientated professional training schools

metis

out by students it minimised any financial costs, and at the same time the students gained prac-
tical experience and satisfaction in contributing to a project with real value. Indeed, the work they
undertook was then used to develop a network of walks and signposting. They have also devel-
oped valuable contacts within the local tourist association. This project took place in the current
funding period (2007-2013). However, it is thanks to work that has been developed over succes-
sive LEADER programmes that such working practice and efficient use of local resources has
become common place.

At its close on 30.11.08, the programme had committed 102.51% of its predicted budget (a total
investment of €7,383,058) and the programme can therefore be considered to have been man-
aged effectively. Indeed, during the period the Provincial Government committed additional
funds to the LAG which explains why the LAG was able to spend more than its original budget.
Moreover, out of 322 projects presented, only 9 were turned down, demonstrating the efficacy of
advice provided by the technical team and efficiencies made by concentrating time in supporting
projects with a high chance of being successful.

Financing

However, in terms the efficiency of the system´s control mechanisms and financial flows, analy-
sis demonstrated rather more mixed results. The financing systems set up with the Regional
Government were considered by the board members interviewed and the LAG Manager to have
got progressively worse over the programming periods since LEADER I. At that time, 80% of the
LAG´s Community budget was transferred at the beginning of the period, affording LAGs in Ex-
tremadura significant autonomy and flexibility to act. Pre-financing in the LEADER+ period stood
at 7% of Community funds making financial flows problematic.

Indeed, upon approval of projects, the LAG would wait for between 4-6 months for funds to be
transferred from the Regional Government. This meant it needed to have a credit line perma-
nently open with the bank in order to be able to avoid losing interest and/or momentum of project
promoters. This credit line allowed the LAG to transfer funds more or less immediately to project
promoters on approval of a project, and in this sense the LEADER+ financial system was con-
sidered more efficient (or at least more flexible) than the current period of mainstreaming. How-
ever, as highlighted in their final report, "the programme´s financing system forced the group to
be permanently in debt with the resulting financial costs and the lack of payment agility that had
been another of the added values of the programme".

Finally, the LAG considered that their budget for running costs was insufficient given the growing
administrative burden, placing significant strain on the structure and jeopardizing its future viabil-
ity and therefore one of the key added values of the programme: that of having a local body in
place to facilitate the development of integrated and coordinated actions that were tailor made
for the area.

Controls

The checks and controls in place were deemed to be satisfactory in that the checks by the local
financial officer completed at various stages of the selection process were relatively quick thanks
partly to him attending committee meetings and, as such, being on top of the subject matter. The
checks by the Regional Government added a double layer of public control of how LEADER+
funds were being spent. However, all in all, and assuming actors stuck to their time frames,
these control mechanisms were not considered by the LAG Manager to jeopardise project de-
velopment.

That said, she estimated that only 25% of the technical team´s time was spent working with the
local community to encourage participation in developing projects, and that 50% was spent on

management, control, financial work, auditing and reporting[114]. She insisted that many more projects could have been generated if the bureaucratic demands were not so high. Assessing and dealing with project applications accounted for the remaining 25% of the LAG´s work.

In fact, SOPRODEVAJE´s final report for the LEADER+ period points to "excessive administrative bureaucracy of the programme resulting in the technical team being constantly overloaded and with not enough time to implement its communication and promotion programme as planned."

Moreover, the report indicates that, "uncertainties in the face of the numerous procedures in the management of the programme had reduced the motivation and confidence of both the technical team and the board as well as that of the population in general."

Another aspect of the LEADER initiative in general, and including LEADER+ is the laborious and lengthy process of opening and closing each programme. One LAG member estimated that they "lost approximately two years worth of project work" due to this. SOPRODEVAJE´s final report underlines the "serious difficulties" that were caused due to the delay in signing the contract which made it extremely difficult to complete the actions they had planned. Moreover, an interview in June 2010 revealed that the LAG was still waiting for the 2000-2006 period to be officially closed before the Regional Government could transfer the remaining 5% of the programme funds. In the meantime, the LAG Manager pointed out, interest on loans they had had to take out to fund approved projects within the programming period, had reached €12,000. Interest on loans is not an eligible expense so it is unclear how the LAG is going to pay them.

6.2.5 Governance and rural citizenship

Enhancement of local governing capacities, effectively promoting territorial-based forms of rural development and the participation of rural actors in the development process:

LEADER+ has played a fundamental role in enhancing local capacity to undertake development activities and foster local and participative governance in the Jerte Valley. With two previous LEADER programmes under its belt, SOPRODEVAJE designed and implemented its local development strategy in full ownership and with broad participation from the social, economic and environmental actors of the area. Its SWOT analysis of the territory and its past LEADER experience were key to this process.

The Regional Government´s role was restricted to double checking the eligibility and viability of projects (and then transferring the relevant funds) and apart from a few specific cases of commercial projects that the LAG would like to have funded, SOPRODEVAJE was able to support projects as it saw fit.

Both the LAG board and the technical staff were involved in mobilising local actors – with the different members of the board responsible for ensuring that the sector they represented was informed about the LAG´s work while at the same time communicating the current situation in their sector to the rest of the board and the technical staff. The permanent team acted as a source of advice for the board as well as carrying out all technical and administrative work. Although they did not have a decision-making role, there was a high level of trust between the board and the permanent staff which meant their advice bore substantial weight.

---

[114] 30% on management, control and financial work and 20% on auditing and reporting

metis

AEIDL · CEU

Increasing Organisational Capacity

One of the main successes of LEADER that interviewees highlighted was its ability to **bring different actors together to organise work around common goals.** There was consensus that by the time of LEADER+, the group had already mediated successfully between different parties and conflicts were rare.

Indeed, they insisted, the tourist and agricultural sectors no longer see each other as competitors – but rather as partners. This can be witnessed in the development of a number of **inter-sectoral projects** such as the valley´s promotional campaigns linked to the cherry season which bring in actors from the agricultural, tourism, gastronomy and public sectors. Activities range from tasting days, to special menus in the restaurants, to promotion of the valley in the spring when tourists can witness the cherry trees in blossom or at the end of the season with the spectacular red and golden leaves of autumn.

These inter-sectoral activities and the LEADER approach in general have been effective in **developing trust and reciprocity**. Indeed, the social capital that the programme has generated was considered by the board and the technical team to be the main benefit of the programme. "Localism" is said to still exist but substantial advances are felt to have been made and people are starting to think in terms of the valley rather than just their village. Changing such mentalities, however, requires constant work on the ground.

Working groups around the main groups of actors in the district (cooperatives, town halls, associations, education etc.) also became formalised and open to any interested parties from the valley. These working groups would often involve thematic seminars.

Another example of the impact that the LAG has had in terms of governance and local participation can be seen in the fact that during the LEADER+ period, it became common place for a copy of the LAG´s **meeting notes and agreements to be distributed among participants of the local council meetings** (of the Mancomunidad) at which a representative of each village would be present along with a considerable number of members of the public. Moreover, the President of the LAG now gives an update on the LAG´s activities in these council meetings. This was an important improvement in terms of work practice in local governance and representativeness.

Finally, another concrete result of these enhanced capacities of local actors to organise themselves is the **success of the local tourist association.** When founded in 1994, largely thanks to the LEADER I LAG, it brought together just 4 different tourist companies. This figure has now grown to 80 and, according to its President, Ernesto Agudiez, this success is directly attributable to LEADER. Thanks to working through the LAG, the tourist association has been able to support the creation of many new tourist companies and enjoys close relations with the Mancomunidad with which it shares information, staff and office space (the Mancomunidad provide them with an office) – as well as working on common projects.

Different Funding Streams

In the LEADER+ period, SOPRODEVAJE worked on two EQUAL projects, thus managing European Social Fund money as well as its LEADER+ budget. The LAG had already gained experience handling other funding streams in the LEADER II period (NOW, YOUTHSTART and ADAPT) and it did not pose any difficulties to incorporate additional funds. These particular ones were quite small scale and included providing training and advice to SMEs and the main economic sectors such as agro-industry and tourism, as well as working on professional training and insertion into the work place.

Monitoring System

The LAG took a number of measures to monitor progress of their work and ensure that it was effective and that the details of their activities were transparent. These included the following:

- Details of all projects funded were posted on the LAG´s website with a short description and the financing given.
- Periodic monitoring of projects funded through site visits and discussions
- Ongoing discussions and reflections with the board (approximately once per month)
- Quarterly reports to the Regional Government, indicating all the projects approved, which measures they targeted, level of financing and whether they had been paid and certified.
- Annual report which was drafted by the technical team, submitted to the Regional Government and distributed to all LAG partners.
- The annual reports would also form the basis for further reflection internally in terms of progress in meeting targets, where they had failed to do so, and how they should adapt their approach to overcome any shortcomings. These discussions were sometimes followed by a report.
- At their own initiative, SOPRODEVAJE´s board undertook periodic self-evaluations (more or less every two years).

6.2.6 Relevance and Community added value

Contributing to Regional Development Objectives

The Integrated Operational Programme for regional development - including that of rural areas - highlighted the following priority objectives: tackling unemployment and improving the region´s productive base. On top of these key priorities, two mainstream objectives were included: the conservation and regeneration of environmental resources as well as encouraging equal opportunities for men and women.

As we will see in section 1.7 on impacts, the LEADER+ programme contributed significantly to the two main objectives of the regional development strategy. 53% of the LAG´s budget was spent on its two productive bases with most potential: the agro-food industry (29% of the budget) and the tourism industry (24% of the budget). And, the LAG was successful in both creating and consolidating employment in the area.

Moreover, 7% of its budget was allocated to training and new technologies, a vital component of its strategy to enable the Jerte Valley´s population to better compete on a national and international level. This measure had two main lines: 1) to support all sectors in acquiring IT equipment and 2) a training programme for local people, including courses for professionals, to encourage the use of ICTs.

In terms of equal opportunities for women, as mentioned previously, positive discrimination was introduced into the selection criteria as a way of promoting the participation of women. As we will see in section 1.7, jobs created, projects funded and uptake of activities all saw strong participation by women.

As for the environmental theme, given the lack of industry and the low population density in the Jerte Valley, the LAG allocated just 2% of its budget specifically to environmental measures. However, in terms of its strategy, environmental concerns and resource sustainability were central to decisions on selecting all projects. Moreover, its awareness raising activities and work on Agenda 21 have meant that care for the environment has gained a more central place in local

development and planning. In the current period 2007-2013, SOPRODEVAJE has made the environment one of its priority themes.

The Customisation of LEADER+ for context-specific goals

SOPRODEVAJE has clearly customised LEADER+ for the very specific context of the Jerte Valley. Based on its thorough SWOT analysis and identification of what differentiated the valley from other rural areas, the LAG focused its strategy strongly around an integrated approach to promoting the area as a whole, creating a strong image around the cherries that characterise the valley and all the products stemming from this identity. As such, resources were invested in parallel to improve the quality and competitiveness of the cherries, create new products based on cherries (e.g. jams, liqueurs, juices…) and attract tourists to visit in the cherry blossom season and autumn, as well as organising fairs, tasting sessions and special menus with the local restaurants.

Indeed, one of the main added values of the LEADER approach is the presence of a local and dedicated team who can capitalise on the specificities of the area when designing its socio-economic development strategy for the territory.

Complementing the mainstream programmes as a laboratory for integrated and sustainable development of rural areas

Given LEADER´s small budget and eligibility criteria, the demarcation of what LEADER funded and what other rural and regional development programmes supported was clear and coordination between them effective. LEADER+ sometimes built on projects already being funded to take them further (e.g. by adding quality), or sometimes provided the stimulus for bigger projects to be undertaken, e.g. by funding studies or bringing together the relevant actors needed to implement them.

For example, while the local Fruit and Vegetables Producers Organisation invested rural development funds in larger scale projects such as infrastructure or cooling systems for the fruit producing cooperatives, LEADER+ supported related projects such as studies to develop new products and training for farmers, agricultural advisers and the presidents of the cooperatives in, for example, quality standards (ISO), auditing, log book keeping etc.

In terms of investment in tourism, for example, while the Regional Government was giving funds for the creation of tourist accommodation in rural areas, the LAG worked on improving the quality of such accommodation as well as developing tourist attractions and activities and supporting promotional campaigns to attract the tourists in the first place - through online promotion, leaflets and attending fairs in urban centres to promote their area (taking advantage of the Region´s stand).

Section 1.4 described another example of the LAG´s role as a laboratory for integrated and sustainable development through its work to persuade farmers and other stakeholders to set up "irrigation communities" to better manage their water resources. The reservoirs that were built were funded through ERDF.

Transfer of the LEADER approach into national mainstream rural development policy

There are a number of examples of the LEADER approach having been mainstreamed into rural development in Spain. Some of these go back prior to the LEADER+ period.

For example, following the success of LEADER I, the Spanish Government set up a national programme, PRODER[115,] to fund more bottom-up rural development, carried out by LAGs, following the LEADER methodology. This programme started in 1994-1999 and continues today.

In Extremadura specifically, and directly after the LEADER+ period, the process of participation developed by the Extremeñan LAGs led to the Regional Department of Rural Development to start up a specific project to encourage local participation, called "Extremadura habla" ("Extremadura speaks"). This started in 2009 and the LAGs were put in charge of managing the programme, receiving an annual budget of €30,000 per group.

Finally, we can say that LEADER has had an important impact on the national thinking towards rural development and indeed the legislative context. The 2007 law that was introduced for the "Sustainable Development of Rural Areas"[116] was strongly influenced by LEADER. This is based on the production of integrated area-based strategies which cover slightly larger areas than LEADER and deal with a far wider range of investments including transport, schools, health, spatial planning and so on. In this case, the Jerte LEADER Group has cooperated with the PRODER group in the neighbouring valley of la Vera to produce the strategy.

6.2.7 Impacts

€7.4 million was invested over the LEADER+ period, of which €2.731 million was EU money, €1.374 was other public funds and €3.278 was private co-financing. With these funds, a total of 270 projects were implemented in the Jerte Valley, focusing in particular on their priority themes: improving the quality of life and adding value to local products.

Economic capital and diversification

The primary sector continues to be the central element to the valley´s economy. However, in recent years the agro-food industry and the service industry (in particular rural tourism) have seen a significant increase, thus consolidating to some extent the economic diversification which started in previous funding periods. Moreover, a drive to raise quality standards has had an important impact on the competitiveness of local products and support to non-agro-food and tourist companies has supported, to some extent, the emergence of new activities.

Agro-food industry

In terms of the agro-food sector, the projects funded under LEADER+ were mainly aimed at improving processes and meeting quality standards in companies and the cooperatives. 29% of SOPRODEVAJE´s budget was invested under measure 105, "adding value to local products", in other words, €2,041,794 of public funds. This in turn attracted a further €1,288,929 of private co-financing.

Within this axis, five R&D projects were funded aimed either at improving quality and competitiveness or developing new products. One project, for example, worked on improving the post-harvest conservation of cherries, another investigated ways of eradicating a specific insect,

---

[115] PRODER: Operational Programme for Development and Economic Diversification of Rural Areas
[116] La Ley para el desarrollo sostenible del medio rural, 2007

metis

AE DL · C E U

lasioptera sp. New products developed thanks to these research projects included: dried cherries, juices and therapeutic cushions filled with cherry stones.

Moreover, LEADER+ supported the modernization and improvements of 14 companies and the creation of two new companies. Together, these companies generate an annual turnover of €56 million.

The 2 projects that were implemented to set up new agro-food companies included the creation of a company in the village of Piornal that processes and sells cured ham ("jamón iberico") products with an annual turnover of €353 000; and an artisan bakery in the village of El Torno, with an annual turnover of €40 832.

Jams, pâtés, olives and sweets are just some of the new products which are now adding value to local primary products. 5 new jobs were also created under this measure and 120 jobs were consolidated.

Tourism

Tourism was the other main area of economic development that LEADER+ supported, and again, the focus was in improving the quality of the tourism offer rather than the quantity. Given the characteristics of the Jerte Valley and its high environmental value, the LAG made the strategic choice not to pursue mass tourism but rather to invest in promoting high quality rural tourism, including the introduction of new technologies and better access to internet. Indeed, in certain calls for proposals, support for any new accommodation was explicitly excluded for all villages except Cabrero which offered no places for tourists to stay. With this in mind, some of the projects funded were:

- 4 restaurants, with a total of 150 tables, received support – three of which were new, and the other received investments to improve its offer.
- 10 projects were funded to improve quality standards in rural accommodation (260 places in total) as well as increasing the number of places for tourists to stay.
- Innovative campaigns to promote the valley as a place to visit were funded, such as the campaign around the "Otoñada" to attract visitors in the autumn as the leaves are changing colour but also to raise awareness of local products and heritage.
- 11 footpaths (104 km) were also created
- 1 adventure park in El Torno

The following actions were undertaken under measure 104 for "enhancing natural heritage", and 107 for "adding value to cultural and architectural heritage". However, they have had a direct impact on the attractiveness of the area for tourists.

Measure 104 for "enhancing natural heritage"

- recuperation of environmental black spots and other areas to create five viewing points
- 2 areas of natural rock pools
- 1 park was rehabilitated

Measure 107 for "adding value to cultural and architectural heritage" which contributed to integrated programmes aimed at improving the villages, restoring the old historic town centres and facades, improving public areas and supporting town planning and management. In total:

- 10 restoration projects
- 100 restored buildings were equipped

Finally, in terms of value that has been added to the tourist sector in the Jerte Valley, much work has also been carried out by the LAG to raise the quality of tourist services by encouraging up-take of a national certification scheme known as the SICTE, "Integrated system of tourism standards"[117] and which guarantees the quality of services in a given area. At the time of the update of the mid-term evaluation, 45 local companies – ranging from hotels to restaurants to hairdressers – had applied to scheme, thus committing themselves to ensuring minimum standards. This sort of initiative has an important impact on the image of the area with the resulting improvements in quality, and at the same time competitiveness, of the area´s products and services.

A recent survey by the tourism association indicates that farmers that also offer rural accommodation in the Jerte Valley estimate the percentage of their revenue that comes from rural accommodation to have increased by approximately 10% over the 2000-2006 period.

Other sectors

In terms of sectors other than the agro-food industry and tourism, SOPRODEVAJE supported 8 SMEs, including the creation of three new ones: a photo studio, a carpenter and a ceramics company. The approximate annual turnover of these 8 SMEs is €418 265. There were certain other SMEs that the LAG would have liked to have supported but which were deemed non-eligible by the Regional Administration.

Thanks to the LAG´s work, an action plan to improve the coordination within the entrepreneurial sector of the area has also been approved.

Social Capital

The strengthening of social capital was defined by all those interviewed as one of the key success factors of LEADER. This has been covered in more depth in section 1.6 on governance and rural citizenship. However, it is worth mentioning that the independent mid-term evaluation points to LEADER´s effect on making the Jerte Valley "significantly more dynamic, thanks to the social organization which has increasingly strengthened since the first LEADER programme in 1991. This has led to effective collaboration between the different actors in the territory." Indeed, many of the projects undertaken, the jobs created and the new services developed under LEADER+ were a direct result of improved social capital in the area – in particular the inter-sectoral projects such as the promotional campaigns of the Jerte Valley and its products.

Bridging Capital

Localism is a strong feature of the villages in the Jerte Valley which is not characterised by its openness or strong connections with the rest of Spain or Europe. That said, LEADER+ provided a good incentive to work to build closer relations with neighbouring LAGs – especially for actions under the cooperation axis. Equally, SOPRODEVAJE worked closely with the regional rural development network, REDEX, which helped the LAG connect to with partners outside their area.

SOPRODEVAJE´s final report indicates delays in the Regional cooperation regulation being published as well as difficulties in working with PRODER groups who had particularly small budgets. However, good relationships were established with these other areas that together make up what is known as the Northern Sierras of Extremadura, covering a total of 6 LAGs (2 LEADER+ and 4 PRODER II).

---

[117] SICTE Sistema Integral de Calidad Turística en Destino

In total, we can list the following cooperation projects supported under LEADER+:

- Transnational project to improve the local resources throughout the network of footpaths of the Central Iberian Mountain Range[118,] in which 11 LAGs participated (4 from the region of Castilla-León, 1 from Portugal and 6 from Extremadura). SOPRODEVAJE was the lead partner in this project
- The Integrated system of tourism standards, which SOPRODEVAJE introduced in the Jerte Valley, was extended to the rest of the LAGs in the Northern Sierras of Extremadura.
- A rural development fair in Madrid for all Spanish LAGs to present activities, products and services.
- A biomass study to investigate the potential for generating energy from the areas forestry resources (joint project with 5 other groups neighbouring)
- Other cooperation activities with the LAGs in the Northern Sierras of Extremadura for which it has become common practice to share stands at fairs and seek common branding initiatives e.g. an online promotion campaign for PDOs that SOPRODEVAJE and a neighbouring LAG shared for Gata Hurdes olive oil and "Jerte Cherries".

These projects, along with the tourist promotion campaigns that the LAG has supported under LEADER+, have all had an impact on increasing the Jerte Valley´s connection with partners from outside the area. The competitiveness of its agro-food products, many of which are supported under LEADER, has also had an impact on the Valley´s access to global markets.

Services

While the size of budget we are talking about for LEADER does not stretch to large infrastructure projects, 9% of the LAG´s budget went into measure 103 for "services to the population". Under this measure, time was invested in local "animation" work to identify key needs in terms of improving services. 9 projects were funded and included:

- improvements to social centres
- the creation of one and improvements to another childcare nursery
- the creation of one telecentre and IT equipment for others which are now present in every village
- a new rural heritage museum in Casas del Castañar the "museo legado de Sayans"
- The modernization of a local adult education centre, the "Universidad Popular".

Environmental Capital

As an area with a relatively low human impact on the environment, the LAG´s aims with respect to the environmental were relatively modest and focused mainly on making better use of their environmental resources. Indeed, the large scale investments for improving the environmental capital of the area, especially around water management, were carried out by the Regional Government.

That said, LEADER+ funded small scale projects around rubbish collection, the recuperation of degraded areas, and the other actions (e.g. rehabilitating natural bathing areas) mentioned above, under measure 104. These have undoubtedly had a positive impact on the landscape of the Jerte Valley and made it more attractive for residents and visitors.

---

[118] *Sistema central*

Moreover, SOPRODEVAJE has contributed to a change in attitude within the local population towards the natural resources they possess. This has been undertaken, for example, by awareness-raising campaigns on recycling, environmental issues and water management, which have contributed to building a cleaner and more attractive area and encouraging a more sustainable use of the area´s landscape. Indeed, the LAG also funded a course on Agenda 21 which resulted in an action plan being developed for each village by multi-sectoral "participative forums".

Enhancement of Job Opportunities

LEADER+ projects in the Jerte Valley led to the creation of 28 new jobs and the consolidation of 246 jobs, making a total of 274 jobs that were supported by the programme.

Of the 28 created, 17 (or 61%) were permanent jobs (compared to 45.9% of the 246 consolidated jobs), 50% were in tourism (and of these, 57% were permanent contracts), 14% were in non-agricultural SMEs, and 18% were in adding value to local products. Of the jobs created or consolidated, 100% were outside the primary sector.

With the agricultural sector accounting for 47% of employment in the Jerte Valley in 2001 and with seasonal work making up a high proportion of employment, these are important achievements in terms of providing more varied job opportunities. Moreover, a good proportion of them (47% of the total number of jobs created or consolidated) permanent, long term jobs.

In fact, with 4 674 people employed in 2001, the 247 that LEADER+ helped to create or consolidate is equivalent to 5% of the Valley´s employment.

Enhancement of Activities for Women and Young People

The positive discrimination measures included in the LAG´s selection criteria seem to have met with some success given the good participation of both women and young people in the area´s LEADER+ programme. It is likely that both the age and gender profile of the population benefiting from assistance contributed, to some extent, towards combating the aging population and loss of women in these rural areas. However, certainly we can say that a good proportion of activities addressed the needs and potential of young people and women.

Women

The participation of women as decision-makers in the Jerte Valley remains relatively poor. Ten out of eleven village mayors, for example, are male. In this respect, the LAG Manager insisted there remains a lot of work to be done. Indeed, only 3 out of 14 board members from SOPRODEVAJE were women, reflecting the fact that few directors of the member associations were female.

And yet, economic and political participation of women in general is considered to be improving with a number of female Deputy Mayors and growing participation in the labour market. In fact, all five of the members of the technical team were women and fulfilling functions that demand high levels of expertise.

In terms of the LEADER+ programme, women were particularly active in both presenting projects and taking advantage of activities organised. This suggests that their needs played a strong role in the design of LAG activities.

For example:

- of the 7,707 participants that attended courses funded by the LAG, 54% were women
- 82% of the 2,015 participants on the one-day courses and seminars organised by the LAG were women.
- Of the jobs created 68% were filled by women.
- Of the total number of jobs created or consolidated, 54% were filled by women
- Of the projects presented by individuals, 59% of the beneficiaries were women.
- Certain services to the population, such as the nurseries funded, were designed to have a direct impact on women, in this case by facilitating the combination of work and family duties.

Young People

The implication of young people in the work of the LAG proved somewhat more difficult. However, the update of the mid-term evaluation points to the incorporation of the Jerte Valley´s Youth Association[119] into the LAG´s board which marks a step forward in the process of giving young people more weight in local decision-making.

In terms of uptake of activities funded by the LAG and jobs created, the results from the final report are very positive. We must point out that young people in Spain are defined as under 40 year olds. This is a vital section of society with the potential to inject energy into the area. Through the following figures, and some of the services that SOPRODEVAJE funded, such as leisure centres and internet centres, we can see that LEADER+ played an important role in addressing some of the needs of young people:

- 74.5% of all jobs created or consolidated were filled by young people
- 83% of the jobs created were filled by young people.
- 73% of the participants on courses financed by the LAG were under 40.

Evaluator´s comments

LEADER+ succeeded in consolidating a common identity for the Valley based upon its central crop-cherries. In doing so it built far closer links between farmers, tourist operators, public authorities and local NGOs who began to realise their individual actions had knock on effects on the others and they could all benefit by working together.

More importantly, LEADER+ helped the different actors in the Valley to realise that they could only compete by offering distinctive high quality products and services (including social and cultural services) and an excellent environment. It has broadened people´s horizons by linking a very remote rural area with European developments and provided practical examples of how they can go beyond the village to develop projects which work across entire sectors and mountain ranges. These changes in people´s mentalities and ways of doing things are likely to grow in future years.

There is no doubt that the LEADER method has become firmly embedded parts of both regional and local public administrations and that it has earned the respect of the private sector and civil society organisations. On the other hand it can be seen that some of the main advantages of the LEADER method are being threatened by a more bureaucratic and costly administrative system. The area still has some way to go before it can genuinely be said that it has not only "caught-up"

---

[119] El Grupo Comarcal de Jóvenes del Valle del Jerte

but also offers something special that attracts people to work, live and visit the area. But it is getting there and hopefully future EU programmes will correct past mistakes and allow areas like this to develop their full potential.

Information sources

- Mid-term Evaluation of LEADER+, 2003,
  Evaluación Intermedia de la Iniciativa Comunitaria LEADER+ en Extremadura
  ECOTONO S.L. –Equipo Consultor en Medio Ambiente, Turismo y Desarrollo
- Update of the Mid-term Evaluation of LEADER+, 2006
  Evaluación Intermedia de la Iniciativa Comunitaria LEADER+ en Extremadura
  ECOTONO S.L. –Equipo Consultor en Medio Ambiente, Turismo y Desarrollo
- Final Report on the LEADER+ Initiative (2008), SOPRODEVAJE, 2009
  INFORME FINAL (2008) Iniciativa Comunitaria LEADER+
- Summary of SOPRODEVAJE´S Application for LEADER+ 2000-2006
- Summary of SOPRODEVAJE´S Application for LEADER 2007-2013
- Integrated Operatational Programme of Extremadura, 2000-2006

Programa Operativo Integrado de Extremadura 2000-2006

http://www.juntaex.es/consejerias/admin-publica-hacienda/dg-financiacion-autonomica-fondos-europeos/fondos-europeos/fondos2000-2006/common/poi/POI2000_2006.pdf

List of contacted persons

- Elisa Esteben, LAG Manager SOPRODEVAJE (2000-2006 and present)
- Victor Manuel López Muñoz, Current President SOPRODEVAJE and public representative - Mayor of Valdastillas
- Ernesto Agudiez, President of the Tourist Association of the Jerte Valley

metis

6.3 Finland: Oulujärvi LEADER ry

Basic Information Oulujärvi LEADER ry

- Database code: L+FINAT-03

- Official name: OULUJÄRVI LEADER RY

- Experience in L I: No

- Experience in L II: Yes

- Objective 1 or 2 zone: 1

- Population (inhabitants): 37 000

- Surface area (in km²): 7 700

- Density (inhabitants/km²): 4.8

- Number of municipalities: 5 in 2000–2006 (currently 4 because of the consolidation of two municipalities)

- Employment rate/unemployment rate: Unemployment rate in March 2000 was 22.1 % and in September 2005 16.4 %. Employment rate was 54.3 % in 2005 which is clearly lower than in whole Finland.

- Total funding (€): 6.05 M€

- EU share (€): 3.43 M€ (incl. funds from EU and the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)

- Public funds (€): 0.86 M€ (funds from municipalities)

- Private funds (€): 1.76 M€

- Breakdown of expenditure: Overheads/administration/animation etc Axis 1. Regional rural development: Administration 0.81 M€, Development of rural villages and their activities 1.01 M€, Development of tourism 2.02 M€, Exploiting and upgrading natural resources and products 1.51 M€, Rural areas and information society 0.50 M€; Axis 2. Interregional and international cooperation 0.20 M€

- Number of LAG employees: fulltime/part-time 2 persons, LAG manager and project secretary

- LEADER+ theme chosen: 3. Adding value to local products

- LEADER+ other theme(s) chosen: *Is there missing information or should there be "None"?*

- Level of autonomy: (counter check with programme complement): The level of autonomy of Oulujärvi LEADER is at low level. LAG only selects projects; formal project approval and payments are made by TE-keskus (the local MA).

- Level of directiveness: The level of directiveness of national LEADER+ programme was at high level (program was highly directive).

6.3.1 Object of the case study

- LAG name in the national language and in English: Oulujärvi LEADER
- Area where it is active (including geographic/administrative unit): The LAG's activity area is located in the central part of Finland around Lake Oulujärvi, Finland's fourth largest lake, reaching Kainuu's fell region in the north. The activity area comprises the municipalities of Paltamo, Puolanka and Vaala as well as the rural areas of the city of Kajaani. The area's surface area is some 7 700 km2, of which water areas total 1 208 km^2 i.e. over 15 %. The activity area's population is some 34 000. The distance to Helsinki, Finland's capital, is some 600 km. Kainuu region's administrative unit is the Joint authority of Kainuu Region. This activity area is located in Kainuun region. Kainuu region's administrative unit is the Joint authority of Kainuu Region. Kajaani is the biggest city in Kainuun region.
- Organisation(s) in charge: Oulujärvi LEADER is a joint rural development association of local inhabitants, associations and companies, with also the region's municipalities as members.

6.3.2 Summary

The population density in Kainuu has decreased. Although the decline has slowed down in recent years and has been diminished by immigration, Kainuu is still a region of negative net migration. The number of foreign immigrants there is still quite low. The dependency ratio in Kainuu is among the worst in Finland. In some municipalities in the LAG's operational area, over third of the inhabitants are retired.

Despite these challenges in the region the Oulujärvi LEADER LAG has operated quite well during the last programme period. Due to its activities, the LAG has been recognised as a partner in regional development processes. Also, the LAG`s role in developing the area is unique and the group has produced added value in the region. For example, the micro-enterprises which got funding from Oulujärvi LEADER LAG and LEADER+ programme would not have got funding from other sources. Micro-enterprise projects in the nursing business were funded by LEADER and these created several job opportunities for women in rural areas. Without funding the enterprises would likely have moved to urban centres. Many micro-enterprises in tourism also got funding only from LEADER. After LEADER, regional officials (TE-keskus=Employment and Economic Development Centre) started to become interested in funding these small scale operators in tourism in Oulujärvi region.

Several supported projects were very visible, including the construction and renovation of buildings. The use of the buildings has diversified and increased. The stakeholders are satisfied with the projects' positive effects which can be observed in the increased interest towards the local micro-enterprises.

Local inhabitants and municipalities were satisfied with the LAG's activities and the implementation of the programme. There were nevertheless opinions in the region that money allocated to the Oulujärvi LEADER should have been allocated elsewhere and the LAG's resources should have been in the hands of officials.

One problem for the LAG was the lack of resources for administrative and co-operative activities. Administrative functions are multiple and crucial for implementing LEADER methods successfully. Activating activities, maintaining networks and regional, national and international cooperation were part of these administrative actions.

6.3.3 LAG design and planning

The number of inhabitants in the LAG's operational area was in the end of 2005 approximately 34 000. The whole operational area consists of sparsely populated rural areas with the exception of the rural areas of Kajaani with 13 965 inhabitants. In the summer time the number of inhabitants increases considerably because there are almost 4 000 summer cottages and houses in the LAG's operational area. The population density in Kainuu has decreased since the population has decreased. However, the decrease has slowed down in recent years. Although Kainuu is still a region of negative net migration this has been diminished by immigration. The number of foreign immigrants increases constantly, however, the number is still quite low. The dependency ratio in Kainuu is among the worst in Finland: the ratio in Kainuu was 1.8 in 2004 while in the whole country it was 1.0. The share of pensioners in Finland is 10.7 % and in Kainuu 15 %. In some municipalities in the LAG's operational area over third of the inhabitants are retired. The unemployment rate in Kainuu is among the highest in Finland. In September 2005 the unemployment rate was 16.4 %. However, at the end of the programme period the unemployment rate in Kainuu decreased proportionately more than in the whole Finland. A typical characteristic in Kainuu is that a significant amount of the unemployed are over 50 years old. The employment rate in Kainuu is around 55 % which is notably lower than in the country as a whole. The most significant sources of livelihood are public and private services, agriculture and tourism.

Kajaani city is the biggest city in Kainuu region. In Kainuu region there is a self-government experiment that runs from 2005 until the 2012. In Kainuu there is a new elected board. It is the first time, in the history of Finland that autonomous status has been given to a mainland region. Health care and social services, as well as vocational and upper secondary education and continuous adult education are now the responsibility of the self-governing authorities in Kainuu. Three principles steer the experiment: regional democracy, increased responsibility given to the region for its own development (decision making has been devolved from the national to the regional level) with the provision of certain basic services now taking place at the regional level. In Kainuu there is also one university consortium (Kajaani University Consortium, co-ordinated by Univerisity of Oulu) operating in Finland and there is its own university of applied sciences (Kajaani University of Applied Sciences)

Oulujärvi LEADER was founded December 3rd 1996 and it implemented the LEADER II Programme for 3 years. Based on the experience in LEADER II the board, the members, the stakeholders, municipalities and other cooperation partners agreed that the activities should be continued. In the summer of 1999 the project implementers and village associations were asked about the meaning and the necessity of LEADER activities in future. All the respondents thought the activities should be continued.

The strategy aims at responding to livelihood-related, social and structural changes in the region. The development need of the rural area is significant based on the region's current situation and socioeconomic structure. The LAG has chosen a strategy which aims to achieve its objectives through the development of livelihoods and entrepreneurship.

LAG's strategy and expected outcomes

The vision 2006 of the LAG's strategy has the following components:

- A region full of life, a region that has national and international networks and that makes use of information network possibilities
- The villages with different age and occupational groups having a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship and cooperation, people utilising the possibilities available for information technologies

- Versatile region serving domestic and foreign tourists, availability of rural accommodation and programme services of good quality based on the region's history, culture and nature
- Villages with versatile entrepreneurship, the use of local materials and immaterial goods, common marketing and trademark of products and services
- Information technology, e-mail and Internet available to all, IT used in entrepreneurship, distance education, public services, marketing and distribution in national and international networking
- Village, municipality and state borders are broken down

With regard to axis 1 the expected outcomes for development of entrepreneurship in rural areas are at least 60 full-time and 120 part-time jobs with collaboration and networking to create the factors necessary to encourage for the small profitable companies. The expected outcomes for development of rural villages and their activities are: villages have active and spontaneous development activities and cooperate with other actors; the villagers participate in setting up the objectives and the selection of implementation measures; the villagers participate in the LEADER projects and in entrepreneurship; the women in villages have found jobs that match their education; public and private services are easily accessible for the inhabitants; the elderly people have the possibility to remain living in their own homes as long as possible with the help of new services; the increase in the number and use of cottages as well as the activation of close markets; young people participate in development work; information technology facilitates mundane tasks.

As for development of tourism the expected outcomes are: workable cooperation between small tourism companies; functional programme services in each municipality; 15 new accommodation units and 150 beds; 10 new companies in programme services; 4 large events gathering thousands of visitors to the area organised in collaboration by actors; the entrepreneurs participate in common marketing and sales; the realization of Oulujärvi and Paljakka strategies; increase in the business, customer service and quality consciousness; improvement in all-year-round activities; cooperation between entrepreneurs working in Oulujärvi–Paljakka area; organization of training for actors in nature tourism. In the fields of exploiting and upgrading natural resources and products the expected outcomes are: 6 network companies in production and marketing; handicraft companies that operate in cooperation; 6 new local raw materials in processing; creation of direct sale systems (5) of local food to institutional kitchens and food circles; cultivation of special plants for health products and all the regions producers in cooperation in processing; use of information technology in production chain.

With regard to rural areas and information culture expected outcomes were: the option to use information technology in every household; e-mail and Internet services accessible to all; the use of Internet marketing in business activities; information technology is used in company cooperation; public services are available through information networks; "Tietonuotta" as rural actors information network; associated agri-businesses have started to connect with information technology; distance learning has increased; highly educated people move to live full-time or part-time in the countryside. In the end IT related projects were few, only one project was implemented addressing Internet television coordinated by Kainuun Nuotta.

As for axis 2 expected outcomes were: cooperation of LEADER stakeholders in Kainuu, funding for shared projects; rural developers' cooperation is active in the region; functional national cooperation between villages; entrepreneurs and stakeholders added value and the operational preconditions have improved through cooperation; international activities with Ireland, Italy, Austria and Russia. In fact, international cooperation did not take place with those countries instead it was implemented with Denmark, Great Britain and France.

Major stakeholders in LAG and motivation to engage in the LAG

Local inhabitants, associations, entrepreneurs, municipalities, regional development organisa-
tions and officials were invited to participate in the preparation of the local strategy. Oulujärvi
LEADER association had in the beginning of the programme period 2000–2006 over 200 mem-
bers. The board had 15 members throughout the programme period. Each municipality had
three representatives and their deputy members. Each municipality was represented by one
public and one private sector representative as well as one voluntary/enterprise sector represen-
tative.

In total, 34 people were board members and 33 people were deputy members in 2000–2006.
Altogether 56 different persons were involved in the board.

Local inhabitants and municipalities were satisfied with the LAG's activities and the implementa-
tion of the programme. Municipalities made good profits on the money they invested in the
LEADER projects. Officials were not always satisfied with the LAG. It was sometimes thought
the money allocated to the LAG should have been allocated elsewhere and the LAG's resources
should have been in the hands of officials. In the beginning of the programme period, the LAG
was not asked to contribute to the programme or asked to become a member of one of the pre-
paratory boards. During the programme period 2000–2006 this, however, changed. The change
was because of the LAG's own activities. The members wrote comments and statements about
the programmes even if they were not asked to do so. As a result, officials started to invite the
LAG staff to different process and working groups and to ask for their comments on pro-
grammes.

6.3.4 Management, controlling and financing systems

The LAG board makes the decisions and puts forward proposals regarding the projects that will
be funded based on the preparation made by the LAG staff together with project applicants (local
inhabitants or entrepreneurs). The proposal will then be delivered to the regional administration
office (TE-keskus=Employment and Economic Development Centre, the local MA). In the pro-
posal the board assesses the project's expediency. All projects go from the board to TE-keskus.
Those project applications which are rejected also go to TE-keskus where the official decision
not to fund the project application is made. The approved projects by the board are sent to TE-
keskus where the project's eligibility is assessed. If project fulfils the legal requirements, TE-
keskus makes an official decision to fund the project. The level of autonomy of Oulujärvi
LEADER is at low level. LAG only selects projects; formal project approval and payments are
made by TE-keskus (the local MA).

The national LEADER+ programme in Finland was highly directive. However, there was only a
little autonomy for Oulujärvi LEADER (the case LAG of Finland) to develop its own local strategy.
The national programme introduced additional constraints on top of the EC Regulation on what
the LAG strategy was able to address. There were no contradictions between local strategy and
local needs and national programme, so the level of autonomy of Oulujärvi LEADER did not
negatively affect LAG`s capacity to achieve impacts. Co-operation with local MA worked quite
well and only some interpretation disagreements occurred, but by negotiating the local MA and
LAG Oulujärvi LEADER solved them.

Oulujärvi LEADER`s distribution of funding did not changed from the first period (LEADER II –
period 1997 – 1999) to the second period (2000-2006). There was funding for capacity building
and for animation in both periods.

Controlling and financing system

As for the LAG board, its members evaluate the implementation of the programme and the financial framework annually and make the necessary amendments to the general assembly. The LAG board also monitors the projects' implementation. The board members can participate in the projects' steering groups. The board keeps in contact with other LAGs. Concerning the operation of the LAG itself, it operates following certain values: openness, democracy, versatility, objectivity, localization, cooperation, sustainable development, tolerance, responsibility, reliability and entrepreneurship. The board members' possibility of bias was to be taken into consideration in decision making. Board members' own projects can be funded but in that case particular caution must be followed regarding expenses and bias. The LAG's board chose the funded projects based on the jointly agreed criteria. The funded projects must: implement the region's development programme; support directly or indirectly the development of livelihoods; implement the Commission's and the national LEADER criteria; be efficient (clear and realistic timetable, defined inputs); be economical, good expense/benefit ratio; be effective (applicant's background, idea and objectives are in order, ability to implement the project); be concrete and have continuity after the project has ended.

The project applications were expected to include a maintenance plan on how to keep up the projects' results and effects after the end of the project. E.g. the funded applications for renovating village houses were expected to explain how the village house will be maintained after the project funding has ended. This approach advanced the long-term planning and the sustainability of the projects' results. The micro-enterprises which got funding from LEADER+ programme would have not got funding from other sources. E.g. micro-enterprises in the nursing business were only eligible for LEADER funding. These projects created several job opportunities for women in rural areas and without funding these micro-enterprises would have probably moved to urban centres. The micro-enterprises in the field of tourism also only got funding from LEADER.

Regarding appropriate controlling mechanisms, the LAG, the Regional Employment and Economic Development Centre (TE-keskus, the local MA) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry monitored the use of funds and the achieved results. The Ministry reported twice a year about the use of funds. The Ministry also made inspection visits. A project register maintained by the officials (TE-keskus) monitored the projects. Also the achievement of a requested amount of private funds was monitored. The results of the monitoring done by the Ministry had an effect on the financial framework. The annual funding for the LAG increased twice in the programme period according to the results of the monitoring.

In the programme period 212 project applications were received. 9 applications of these expired or were recalled and one application was directed to the Employment and Economic Development Centre. In total 38 project applications were rejected. 23 of them were rejected by the LEADER board but 15 project applications approved by the LEADER board were rejected by the Employment and Economic Development Centre. Some of these applications were estimated to be borderline cases and the rejection from Employment and Economic Development Centre was anticipated but in some cases the different decisions in LEADER board and in Employment and Economic Development Centre were surprising. Occasionally this raised questions about the difference between the legitimacy control and the means test.

Financial monitoring was done daily and for the funded projects in the phase of invoice preparation. The LAG monitored the results and effects of the programme through indicators such as new and maintained jobs, new companies, new services, beds in accommodation, overnight stays, changes in operational environment, etc. Monitoring focused also on the qualitative effects such as development in the lines of business in focus, creation of new job opportunities, devel-

opment of know-how and cooperation etc. Self-evaluation with the help of an external evaluator was done in the middle of programme period.

As for resource consumption for controlling, auditing and reporting, approximately 13 % of the programme budget was targeted at the LAG's administration. A notable problem in implementing the programme was the insufficiency of resources for administration. When the LAG's own strategic projects became possible, they were also used. Without this possibility the LAG workers would have been temporarily dismissed for a couple of months a year and this would have paralyzed the activities.

Perception of LAG managers

With regard to the perception of LAG managers, the funding for administrative tasks was not spent only on administrative functions; activating activities, maintaining networks and regional, national and international cooperation were all part of these administrative actions. Resources for all these administrative actions were far too low.

6.3.5 Governance and rural citizenship

Local inhabitants, associations, entrepreneurs, all municipalities, regional development organisations and officials are involved in the LAG activities. Each municipality is represented in the board by one public and one private sector representative as well as one voluntary/enterprise sector representative. The number of members in the association in the beginning of the programme period was 210 members and in 2006 280 members with 215 persons and 65 community members.

The Ministry was easy to communicate with and the LAGs were listened to. E.g. the LAGs' wish for introducing the LAGs' strategic projects was approved. This was a great help for the LAGs since the resources for administration costs alone were insufficient. The NNU's activities were inconsistent apparently because of several changes in personnel. The information flow was sometimes sufficient, sometimes insufficient.

The regional rural development programme prepared by the Rural Department of Employment and Economic Development Centre was invisible for the whole programme period. However, the cooperation with the region's Employment and Economic Development Centre was good throughout the programme period. The cooperation become tighter and increased especially when preparing the new programme period. The Entrepreneurship Department of Employment and Economic Development Centre was an important partner in cooperation when dealing with micro-enterprises' projects. The department also guided the project applicants (micro-enterprises) which were not applicable for the funding from the Employment and Economic Development Centre. Oulujärvi LEADER also directed applicants to the ProStart and PostStart processes of the Employment and Economic Development Centre. The cooperation with the Rural Department of the Employment and Economic Development Centre was fluent in processing the project applications as the decisions for the applications were made in few weeks the furthest.

With municipal funding there were no problems. The municipalities paid their share of the funding to Oulujärvi LEADER twice a year.

The office premises of Oulujärvi LEADER and the neighbouring LAG Kainuun Naisyrittäjyys LEADER were next to each other in the same building as also the premises of Employment and Economic Development Centre. Because of the proximity, the cooperation with the other LAG was daily. This enabled close and versatile cooperation which increased during the programme

period. Thanks to the cooperation, the overlapping activities were eliminated and the use of re-sources was intensified.

With regard successful design and implementation of the local development strategy (LDS) it can be stated, that the implementation went ahead as planned, independently and according to objectives.

The LAG monitored the use of the financial framework, the achieved results and the realization of the programme. Once a year the LAG board presented how the programme had succeeded.

The activities and work went smoothly and conflicts were avoided. The inspector from the minis-try agreed the LAG work had come off exceptionally well.

Oulujärvi LEADER LAG did not control different funding streams other than LEADER+.

6.3.6 Relevance and Community added value

Perception of LAG regarding complementarity

Regarding the perception of the LAG concerning complementarity, approximately 35 % of the support was allocated for the rural enterprises. In comparison to the previous programme period, support for rural enterprises increased considerably. The supported enterprises were nearly without exception non-agricultural enterprises and because of this and their size the enterprises were not applicable for the support for enterprises granted by the Employment and Economic Development Centre's (TE-keskus). Therefore LEADER+ support was very important and it complemented the other programmes. For several micro-enterprises and non-profit organisa-tions the LEADER funding was the only means of accessing funding. The supported projects were unlikely to get funding elsewhere.

Oulujärvi LEADER was a member in several working groups at the end of the programme pe-riod. The participation in the working groups benefitted both the LAG and the working groups. Local, grass root level know-how and opinions have been taken into account in the working groups, development programmes and measures. Also the LAG was able to increase its know-how and gain information as well as new contacts. The cooperation has created new methods of cooperation and ways of action.

Some examples of national level working groups in which Oulujärvi LEADER participated are: LEADER and the Environment thematic group of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; LAG Division of the Village Action Association of Finland; Rural Living thematic group of Rural Policy Committee. Some examples of regional level working groups in which Oulujärvi LEADER partici-pated are: Strategy Group of Kainuu Region, Rural working group of Kainuu, the steering group of Kainuu village coordination project, Bioenergy group of Kainuu, Monitoring group of Kajaani rural programme and the thematic group of rural livelihoods and employment in Kajaani.

The previous programme period served as groundwork and in the new programme period the LEADER method was spread to other areas. The experiences of LEADER are in the background as an incentive for the new regional thematic programmes (for example village and nature tour-ism programmes, in which there were similarities to the LAG systems). Traditional farming was delimited outside the LEADER activities. However, the farmers were represented e.g. on the LAG board.

With regard funding by LEADER, 4 % of the funded projects aimed at developing the information sector. In the biggest project addressing information technology professional and other content providers were trained. 49 % of the funded projects aimed at developing the village activities (in-

cluding also the support of enterprises in service sector). The majority of projects can be seen as improving the rural life either directly or indirectly. 31% of the funded projects aimed at developing tourism in the region. Finally, 16% of the funded projects aimed at developing the exploiting of natural resources such as mushrooms, berries, fish, and other food stuffs as well as local stones. LEADER+ activities were a part of national rural policy. The activities and projects brought added value to the development of tourism and travelling by supporting local micro-enterprises. After this other financiers started to become interested in the development of the micro-enterprises in the lake Oulujärvi region. LEADER activities also supported the objectives of the provincial (regional) development programme.

6.3.7 Impacts

In the programme period 2000–2006 Oulujärvi LEADER LAG granted 3.3 M€ to different projects through the LEADER+ programme. Each project also included the project implementers' own funding. There were 167 funded projects; over 60 of them were rural enterprises' projects.

There is no evidence that the LAG projects were more successful than other projects funded by other programmes or sources. Neither is there evidence that LEADER+ functioned as a 'pump primer' (i.e. helped areas to attract or apply for other sources of funding). Indeed many micro-enterprises in tourism got funding only from LEADER. This motivated other organizations. After LEADER, regional officials (TE-keskus=Employment and Economic Development Centre) started to fund these small scale operators in tourism in Oulujärvi region.

Job opportunities created or maintained in the area

76 permanent and 137 temporary new jobs were created in Oulujärvi LEADER LAG funded projects. Also dozens of local companies expanded or rationalized their activities. Oulujärvi LEADER did not implement any special actions that would have addressed women directly. However, women capitalized well on the opportunities of the LEADER+ programme. Of new permanent jobs, 58 (76 %), of preserved jobs 4 (36 %) and of temporary jobs 55 (40 %) were for women. There were also 18 (67 %) new enterprises founded by women. In informative meetings 1 213 (51%) participants were women and in trainings 377 (54 %) participants were women. The young people were addressed in the projects in many ways. There were for example four projects implemented by young people themselves and one project where the young people took part in the implementation of the project. Young people were a main target group in two projects and among several target groups in two projects. In addition, two projects had direct influence on the young peoples' lives.

Young people under 30 started up four enterprises. Of new permanent and temporary jobs 14 and 10 respectively of these were for young people. Young people comprised 371 (16 %) of the participants in information meetings and 123 (17 %) in training sessions. According to the LAG final report women were much harder to get as board of directors members than men. Some young people were as members of the Oulujärvi LEADER association. In the board in 2006–2007 one member was approximately 20 years old with a deputy member of same age.

Table 37. Number of full-time jobs created

Created full-time jobs, number	**76**
Men	18
Women	58
Young people	10
Created full-time jobs, man-years	**63**
Men	11
Women	52
Young people	10
Preserved full-time jobs, number	**11**
Men	7
Women	4
Young people	0
Preserved full-time jobs, man-years	**6**
Men	2
Women	4
Young people	0
Full-time jobs in the projects, number	**137**
Men	82
Women	55
Young people	14
Full-time jobs in the projects, man-years	**40**
Men	26
Women	14
Young people	4
New enterprises	**27**
Founded by women	18
Farm-connected	0
Founded by young people	3

Source: The table of quantitative results of Oulujärvi LEADER activities in 2000–2006, received from the LAG manager

The total budget of Oulujärvi LEADER in 2000–2006 was 6,05 M€. EU share including funds from EU and the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was 3,43 M€. Public funds which are funds from municipalities were 0,86 M€ and private funds were 1,76 M€. Therefore the cost for creating a single full-time job was **79 605 €** (=6 050 000€/76 jobs). If the cost is calculated using the man-years the number is slightly higher: 96 032 € (=6 050 000€/63 man-years)

Age profile of population in the region of Oulujärvi LEADER

The population in Kainuu continued to decrease in the programme period. In particular the number of young people and the population of working age diminished, while the number of people near the age of retirement and the elderly increased. Overall, the population decreased in the LAG's operational area in 2000–2006 (table 38). The LAG's potential to have an effect on the population structure was quite limited. The activities and measures have only a partial indirect effect on the number and structure of population. The activities aimed at the development of rural micro-enterprises, local livelihoods such as tourism and the development of villages and their

metis

AEIDL CEU

activities have a positive impact and create an incentive for people to stay and work in the area and for others to possibly move to the area. The support for women and micro-enterprises in peripheral, rural areas has supported, on a small scale, the population to remain in these areas.

Table 38. Population

Municipality	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Kajaani	38 912	38 739	38 562	38 345	38 318	38 217	38 027
Paltamo	4 420	4 348	4 217	4 220	4 219	4 183	4 093
Puolanka	3 846	3 706	3 602	3 560	3 472	3 408	3 337
Vaala	4 041	3 976	3 894	3 829	3 751	3 718	3 612
Whole LAG area	**51 219**	**50 769**	**50 275**	**49 954**	**49 760**	**49 526**	**49 069**

Increase in non-farm jobs and incomes, impacts on enterprises

Of the micro-enterprises' projects a significant portion were related to setting up private nursing services. These included nursing homes for elderly people, a nursing home for disabled people, a day nursery, a child welfare unit, an enterprise for home visiting nurses and home help service enterprises. Enterprises have been started up in sparsely populated areas in unoccupied buildings. Jobs have been created for dozens of women in the caring professions. Nursing services have also been started up for animals such as expanding the veterinarian services and the setting up of two dog nursing services. Other micro-enterprise projects include for example investments in equipment for a picture framing enterprise.

The funded projects also contributed to the development of tourism related companies in Oulujärvi area and increased the cooperation between companies. Several unoccupied buildings were brought into use for business or other activities. Tourism related projects included for example investments such as a watching tower for aurora borealis, canoeing equipment, construction of a building for events, expansion of catering services, improving the accommodation and camping services and support for boating and fishing service micro-enterprises. The projects in exploiting and upgrading of natural resources and products included for example mapping of the natural stone deposits and their exploitation possibilities. In one project, a machine for chopping and grinding natural products was developed. Start-up investments were granted for an enterprise in food industry producing snacks from berries and grain. The establishment of new enterprises has diversified the region's service and production structure. Also the existing enterprises have developed and diversified their services. Economic sustainability has been improved by increasing the extent of value added and the use of local ingredients. The funded projects renovated and equipped village houses and other meeting places, hundreds of participants of educational events increased their know-how, the villagers improved the cosiness of the villages, renovated the buildings and created new possibilities for leisure activities. For instance there were 12 projects in developing village houses and villages and 8 projects for renovating and equipping the village houses. Micro-enterprise projects included new nursery services for elderly and children as well as for animals. Tourism related projects (altogether 46 projects) developed and improved various tourism services and facilities that are also available for the local people. Children's and young persons' home and a nursing home for elderly disabled persons were founded with the LAG support.

Impacts on beneficiary areas attractiveness and enhancing cultural heritage

The beneficiary areas have been developed and are more attractive for residents and non-residents e.g. in the measure 'Development of tourism' several small-scale development projects were implemented. The utilization and renovation of closed down school premises and other

empty building as village houses where various events, gatherings, trainings, etc. can be organised, can be mentioned as possible examples. Development of accommodation facilities and different services also contributed to make the area more attractive. Projects included renovation of a cultural historically valuable protected building for various cultural events and other uses; construction and expansion of a dance hall, several theatre productions for children and young people; and enhancing of photography art. In all, about a dozen projects addressing cultural aspects were implemented.

Impacts on demographic changes (counterfactual)

The demographic situation in terms of age distribution and depopulation did not improve in the assisted area. The depopulation still continues and the population is getting older as the young age groups are continuously decreasing and older age groups, especially retired people, are increasing.

Impacts on local economiesand sustainable development

Thanks to the LAG support, new micro-enterprises were established and existing micro-enterprises were developed and expanded in the fields of tourism, nursing and welfare, handicrafts and local natural resources. Furthermore, new and improved local products were created and developed by support of the LAG in the fields of tourism, nursing and welfare, handicrafts and local natural resources. The measures and the implemented projects advanced the sustainable development e.g. by using existing buildings and facilities. In particular private nursing care businesses have been started up in empty buildings such as closed schools, a former dormitory, a camp site, etc. Exploiting and upgrading natural resources and products was one of the focuses of the Oulujärvi LEADER LAG. This measure had 21 projects, of which 9 projects were implemented by micro-enterprises. Over half of the projects were implemented in the municipality of Puolanka. In slate stone projects, the extent of stone deposits and the deposits' exploitation possibilities were mapped. Thanks to the implemented projects, a couple of enterprises assured their scope for operation and some new job opportunities were created. The local inhabitants' know-how on local stones was increased with one project. Local foodstuffs were promoted by training the producers and institutional kitchens' staff. Investments for the start up of one micro-enterprise increased the use of local berries and grain for the production of snacks for the institutional kitchens' use. In one project, new methods for treating the nettle plant were created as well as new products of the nettle. The measures and the implemented projects supported sustainable development e.g. by using existing buildings and facilities that would have been otherwise unused and empty. The projects also increased the use of local natural food and other materials.

Increasing Bonding Capital

The networking has brought several effects and benefits. Gatherings and events have been easier to organise with the extra support that was available through LEADER+. Certain measures were possible to implement with the help of partners and the use of their know-how. Cooperation partners also brought along new contacts. The radius of influence is wider when working in networks rather than alone and it can be observed that the networks and the partnerships have increased considerably during the programme period. The networking and the partnership was seen among LAG members and the local stakeholders as so important that it was raised as focus in the following programme 2007–2013.

Increasing Bridging Capital)

During the programme period, 9 international projects were implemented. Some examples of the projects: InnoEurope – International Virtual Network for Innovators focused on developing the cooperation and the exchange of knowledge among inventors. In one other project possibilities for cooperation were looked at between a Finnish village association and a Hungarian region. This also led to another project addressing the development of cooperation between enterprises and the young peoples' activities with Internet television.

The responsibility has increased in the new programme period (2007–2013) thanks to the positive feedback of LAG's activities. The feedback gathered at the end of the previous programme period (2000–2006) was supportive and encouraging and in the new programme the themes which were started in previous programme will be developed further and there was no need to change these themes for new programme. The themes' effectiveness will be improved since the groundwork has already been done earlier.

Several supported projects were very concrete including e.g. the construction and renovation of buildings. The buildings still exist and their use has diversified and increased. E.g. the use of the dance site in Jormua has increased considerably since the funding; this also has positive social effects (for example profits go to supporting youth football activities). The stakeholders are satisfied with the projects' positive effects. The interest in the local micro-enterprises has also increased. According to a study on the programme's results and effects, permanent jobs have been created moderately cheaply compared with state employment subsidies. Also municipalities have benefitted from the LEADER activities and the input-output ratio is good.

Information sources

- Oulujärvi LEADER development plan 2001–2006
- LAG final report 2000–2006
- Oulujärvi LEADER Internet pages: http://www.oulujarvileader.com
- Oulujärvi LEADER development programme 2007–2013
- Oulujärvi LEADER self-evaluation report 2004
- Statistics Finland 2010 http://www.stat.fi

List of contacted persons

Ms Pirjo Oikarinen, LAG manager, interviewed on 17.6.2010.

6.4 France: Périgord vert

Basic information Pérgord vert

- Database code: L+FRNAT-AQ06

- Official name: PÉRIGORD VERT

- Experience in L I: Yes

- Experience in L II: Yes

- Objective 1 or 2 zone: Objective 2 zone

- Population (inhabitants): 83 899

- Surface area (in km²): 3169

- Density (inhabitants/km²): 26

- Number of municipalities: 174

- Employment rate/unemployment rate:

- Total funding (€): 3 558 500

- EU share (€): 1 623 000

- Public funds (€): 1 367 035

- Private funds (€): 568 465

- Breakdown of expenditure: human resources internal to the LAG (animation and coordination): 36.5%, - human resources provided by the Conseil général: 26.5%, - animation and management overheads (frais généraux): 32%, - evaluation (2 external contracts): 5%

- Number of LAG employees: fulltime/part-time

- 3 full time staff over the LEADER+ period : 1 animator paid with the LEADER+ budget and 2 managers left by the Conseil Général at the disposal of the LAG

- LEADER+ theme chosen: Target publics (young people and women)

- LEADER+ other theme(s) chosen: none

- Level of autonomy: (counter check with programme complement) High

- Level of directiveness: 2

metis

6.4.1 Object of the case study

- The LAG of the case study is the Périgord Vert LAG (Green Périgord). The Périgord is an historical area located in the South West of France. It comprises the Green Périgord, the Black Périgord (famous for its built heritage and its gastronomy), the white Périgord (the color being linked to that of the local limestone) and the red Périgord which is well known for its wine.
- The Périgord Vert LAG is located in the extreme North East of the Aquitaine administrative region and of the Dordogne département, South West of the Limousin region.

Figure 12. Location of the Périgord Vert LAG

Figure 13. Location of the Périgord Vert area inside the Dorogne départment

In green: the Périgord Vert area inside the Dordogne département

- Organisation in charge: Pays du Périgord Vert (local development agency which was created in December 2003 as a non-profit association). The Presidents of the LAG and of the Pays are not the same.

6.4.2 Summary

The area of the Périgord Vert is characterized by an ageing population, by women facing major difficulties in terms of access to services and of employment, and by a low level of qualification of young people. All this combined tends to:

- make the local population and actors have a bad image of the area which they tend to communicate to the outside
- develop a lack of confidence which does not enable the development of new projects or new ideas in the area despite the strong need for these.

The choice has been made to use the LEADER+ framework in order to work on human resources, on the people, the services they can access, the image they have of the area and of themselves. The general objective is to develop trust, confidence, and new networks and to improve the image of the area. Since women and young people were the most fragile in the area, the whole strategy has been organised around these target groups. This has resulted in a coordinated, cross-cutting approach and the implementation of several types of actions:

- development of services targeting young people and families
- supporting initiatives carried out by young people and women
- employment of young people and women
- training to favour development
- development of cultural projects for young people
- welcoming of new populations
- cooperation to promote innovation.

The Pays (which was being set up) was in charge of the definition of a global strategy which was a wide one aiming at setting up the general framework. The LEADER programme was much 'closer to the ground' and tangible around a precise working theme (target public) which enabled it to support projects more quickly and in a perhaps more operational manner.

Things have of course evolved over the programme (and even more in the 2007-2013 period) with the Pays settling and starting to support projects also. This meant that dialogue has had to be developed for the LEADER programme to keep its specialization and its innovative character.

The themes included in the strategy have represented real challenges for the Périgord Vert area and it took time and energy to bring the population to support the strategy and believe it can lead to results.

In the Périgord Vert area, as put forward in the final report of the LAG, LEADER+ has:

- brought together in an operational manner public and private actors in terms of governance and the implementation of projects, by enabling them to cooperate in the definition and management of the strategy as well as the implementation of some projects
- enabled the strengthening of institutional links between the different levels of stakeholders, from local to European

metis

- enabled the testing of some experimental actions that have proved useful (e.g. some projects concerning young people or the role of women farmers) and have been included in the 2007-2013 LEADER strategy (on the theme 'welcoming of new populations') or developed at a wider scale such as at the level of the entire territory, the *Département* or further afield.
- encouraged local actors to move beyond the usual ways of thinking and the actions traditionally implemented
- invited local actors to develop new services, new activities and new ways of (local, national and transnational) cooperating
- strengthened the territory of the Pays.

There have been three types of impacts from LEADER+:

- **development of local capacities** and the acquisition of skills and methodologies both in the management of the whole LEADER strategy and of each project individually. The LEADER method has been an influential source for the local development agency set up when the Pays was launched.
- **added value and evolution of the area**: The direct results of the strategy on the 'classical' themes (environment, employment, new technologies, local products) are difficult to measure. The results of strategy framework, as dictated by choices made and the setting of the priority theme, can be observed in terms of the social and human context. While quantification of these in the short term is difficult the impacts create the conditions for a long term quality development scheme.
- **inspiration source for other local development policies**: some LEADER+ (local and cooperative) actions have been included in the strategy of the Pays from 2005 onwards. The Périgord Limousin natural regional park has also taken on board the LEADER+ priority theme 'young people and women' and developed specific cooperation projects on its area not covered by the Périgord Vert territory.

6.4.3 LAG design and planning

The Périgord Vert LAG covers an area of about 3200 square kilometres and presents various types of landscapes: farming plains to the South, forest covered zones, limestone cliffs, and plateaux where breeding is common. The rural characteristics of the area are strong and of the 171 communes covered by the LAG only 11 have more than 1 000 inhabitants (of which only 4 are over 2 000 inhabitants), the rest of the area being remote and representing over 73% of the population.

In terms of administrative organisation, before the launching of the LEADER+ programme, the area of the Périgord Vert LAG was organised in 12 communities of communes (specific legal gathering of communes) and part of the Périgord Limousin Natural Regional Park. This organisation led to a diversity of local development procedures which made it difficult to recognize the territory as a specific entity.

Between 1990 and 1999, the population of the Dordogne département slightly increased whereas during the same time, the population in the Périgord Vert area decreased by about 2 000 inhabitants. This decrease concerned mainly the category of under 40 years old, the 40-53 years old age group having on the contrary increased quite significantly (notably with the arrival of people coming from other French regions and foreign countries – Northern Europe). This means that the traditional outgoing population movements and image of a retirement area have changed: despite a still ageing population (35% of the population is over 60 years old in 1999),

the Périgord Vert can now be considered as a zone attracting families and people of working age.

The job distribution per activity shows that services were the most important activity in 1999. Agriculture, even if not dominant in terms of economical weight (17,86%), still plays a major role in terms of land use and of induced actions (agro-food and forest industry in the North of the *Département*).

Table 39. Job distribution per sector

Activity sector	Number of companies	%	Employment assessment	%
Agriculture	4.015	42.03%	4.558	17.86%
Industrie / BTP	1.541	16.13%	8.772	34.39%
Commerces	916	9.6%	2.563	10.05%
Services	3.079	32.24%	9.620	37.70%
TOTAL	9.551	100%	25.513	100%

In terms of employment, the situation in the Périgord Vert area is difficult: between 1990 and 1999, the unemployment rate went up by 1,44%. In 1999, 11,8% of the total population was unemployed. The unemployment rate of women was 15,8% which was nearly two times higher than that of men (8,54%). If this average rate is across the *Département* (which is 11%), it remains below the regional average (12%). Yet, this does not mean that the situation is better in the Périgord Vert than in the rest of the region. It simply reflects the fact that the territory is not as attractive as other zones for companies. There are therefore only a few jobs locally and job seekers who can afford it tend to leave the area, thus bringing the unemployment rate down a little.

If the area presents interesting potentials, these are not exploited as they would be in the rest of the *Département* or of the region. Concerning tourism, for instance, structuring the organisation of the sector has started (notably with the natural regional park of Périgord Limousin and the rural tourism pole) but there is not enough marketing of the local resources and local know-how (agriculture, forest, craft, gastronomy, culture, traditions etc).

The proportion of women in the area was 51,23% in 1999. Between 1990 and 1999, the decrease of the male population had been higher than the decrease of the female population, which lead to a higher female population in relation to the total population. 18% of the population is under 19 years old in the area. Many young people who are older than 15 years do not have any diploma at all or only first level diplomas.

Process of LAG design and planning

Just before the idea came about to build a LEADER+ project, 18% of the Périgord Vert population was under 20 years old and the theme chosen for the LEADER II programme implemented in the area had been 'l'Enfant au Pays' ('*the child in its home area*') which enabled the development of projects for children and young people. This has led the Périgord Vert area to slowly take into account the needs of young people in its local development strategy and to acquire specific skills linked to this target group. Yet, a lot of the actions implemented have concerned very young children, leaving a lot left to do for teenagers. Furthermore, many devices and equipments developed (for instance under LEADER II) were not fully used and were in need of an innovative animation programme.

metis

In parallel, some LEADER II cooperation contact had been carried out on the theme of young people which opened up new horizons on the theme of women and lead to women being chosen as a priority theme for the local development strategy.

When wanting to prepare a LEADER+ application form for the area, the President of the LEADER II LAG took the initiative and started building the strategy with the animator. In doing so, the LEADER II achievements were taken into account and adjustments were made to make women a priority target group. This approach allowed for the matching of both the needs of the area and the national requirements related to the theme 'young people and women'.

In addition to what has been said above about the situation of young people in the area, the territorial diagnosis showed that half of the population in the area are women and that they experience twice as much unemployment as men. Women constitute a local resource (because of their abilities, skills and knowledge) which is not valorised to the extent that it could be.

Also, during the LEADER II cooperation project implemented with Greek partners on the theme of young people, the local actors from Périgord Vert discovered how cooperative women worked and the social, cultural and economic dynamic it lead to. It was the starting point for the development of a strong local will to do the same in the Périgord Vert area which meant working for and with women.

Finally, there was a will not to go on 'classical' projects which would mean, for instance, investment initiatives or refurbishment of small local buildings. The personalities of the LEADER II LAG President and the animator, who both worked on the LEADER+ project, was such that they always attempted to approach matters or operate in a different manner than others would have. They were also very strongly involved in and committed to the LAG. This enabled them to convince local stakeholders and actors that the human aspect of local development is essential for a long term approach to organising the strategy around target groups.

The idea of being able to continue the cooperation project launched with the Greek partners (on the theme of women) was also a further motivation.

Objectives and expected outcomes

Apart from measures concerning technical assistance the local strategy was built around 3 main axis representing 7 measures:

- Axis Services for young people
  - Develop welcoming places for young people
  - Create an animation network targeting young people
  - Encourage the events targeting young people

- Axis Women, actors of the rural world
  - Build networks of women solidarity
  - Encourage the participation of women in the local economic life
  - Raise awareness amongst economic actors on the development potential which women represent

- Axis Development-training in the Périgord Vert area

The general idea was to build trust inside the area:

- In terms of image: showing that the territory is not as bad as some local people had in mind, showing that there is some local richness and developing a positive image
- For people to be proud of their area: even if they leave, they should be able to communicate something positive about it

Furthermore, when people are attached to their area, they are motivated to do something in their area or for it. This tends to develop a local spirit of entrepreneurship and is an incentive for the development of projects. The LAG had quantified objectives.

Description of major stakeholders in LAG and motivation to engage in the LAG

In France, the LAG had to be composed of at least 50% of representatives from the private sector, as in other Member States. On top of this, there was a rule which was called the 'double quorum': for any decision to be made, at least half of the members of the programming committee (decision making committee) had to be there and at least half of the members there had to be representatives of the private sector. This was initially made to ensure correct participation of a wide scope of local actors in the decision making process and the presence of a minimum of private representatives at each sessions. In many French LAGs, it was difficult to have this rule respected for every programming committee, notably because the motivation of the private sector often decreased from the beginning of the programme towards its end.

In the Périgord Vert area, the 'double quorum' rule has never been a problem, perhaps for 2 main reasons:

- The (locally) elected representatives were not very motivated in participating with the LAG and its Programming Committee. This was partly because of the theme chosen for the strategy but also for two other reasons: first they tended to trust the President of the LAG for decisions to be made and therefore felt their presence as not compulsory and second they tended to participate when one or more of the presented projects concerned their area.
- The representatives of the private sector on the other hand were very motivated and their participation was both constant and high. However, regarding their role and composition, and further to their status, it is possible to ask ourselves if they are 'real' private representatives. Indeed, apart from some local bottom-up associations (set up by a group of private people), other private representatives were also under the form of associations (non-profit making organisations) but they had an 'official' social role of public service and their budget was made of public subsidies to develop actions within a general framework defined at the level of the *département*.

In terms of participation, the LAG had decided to be rather firm: if a member of the programming committee did not show up at three different sessions, he was struck off the committee. This rule which had been planned when the LAG was launched was however never applied.

The Programming committee counted 27 members selected according to 4 major criteria:
- Persons who are professionally active in the Périgord Vert area
- Persons involved in the development of the Périgord Vert
- Persons available to ensure the programming and the monitoring of the projects
- Persons with a good ability to analyse projects

The members of the Programming committee represent, apart from the elected people (considered as public), the structures at local and *départemental* level in charge of children, youth and women: *Missions locales* (network existing at the national level in which the structures welcome

young people aged 16-25 who need advice and support to start their professional life and find a job), *Caisses d'Allocations Familiales* (child benefit allowance structure), *Union départementale d'aide aux familles* (*Département Union* for family support), *Centre d'information du droit des femmes* (Centre for the information on women's rights), etc.

It is to be noted that some of the structures, even if closely concerned with the theme, were not able to participate as much as they wanted. This is for instance the case of the *Caisse d'Allocation Familiale* (child benefit allowance structure) which was very much involved in the LEADER II LAG but which saw its budget reduced under the LEADER+ period. The employees in this structure thus had less time to participate in the programming committee (and this also led to a decrease in the number of day nurseries in the area).

The high level of autonomy of the LAG did have a strong effect on the impact it was enabled to have. The strategy and the objectives had been defined locally which made it easier to set clear targets and to keep the direction. The high level of autonomy also enabled to be free of all external pressure which might have made difficult the support to this or that project. The only external pressure came from some structures which were asked for co-financing. Yet, this never has been a problem: if one structure refused to co-finance for this or that reason, the LAG managed to find the required money elsewhere.

The *Mission Locale* of the Haut Périgord area has been a true leader in the development of the programme. The Director of the structure, a woman, was very much concerned with the theme which was her daily working theme. She also wanted to work in cooperation and pushed things forward in this area.

Evaluation Activities

The evaluation exercise carried out by MC2 consultancy concluded that the types of stakeholders and project promoters had been rather well balanced during the LEADER+ programme. This may be explained by the fact that a lot of work has been done by the LAG staff in terms of mediation, communication and finding new projects. The structures involved in the LAG (and members of the programming committee) also developed some projects. It is perhaps these projects which have been the most experimental and corresponded to the LEADER approach. They have not constituted an important part of the budget but have contributed to 'showing the way' to other potential project promoters. The expectations of the Programming Committee for projects implemented by the LAG or by some of the LAG members were very high in terms of quality and relevance regarding the LEADER approach, these projects were therefore good projects which acted as a showcase for local actors, for the local population and for LEADER people outside the area (at regional or national level).

The following evaluation activities have been carried out:

- Ongoing evaluation: each project had its own indicators which were defined prior to the implementation and added as an appendix to the contract signed between the LAG and the project promoter. This had different objectives: to monitor each project, to gather figures for the programme and give local actors the habit of evaluation and a tool to analyse the way their action was implemented (when there were significant differences between the targets and the final results, the project promoters were asked to explain these differences, even if there were no risk that they would not be awarded the money on this basis).

- Mid-term evaluation: this exercise was carried out by students of a school. Interviews were carried out (project promoters, members of the LAG etc). It created a picture of the programme at a certain time, notably capturing the feeling people had about the LEADER programme, of how they felt things should evolve, on things which were to change/improve (communication notably), etc.

- Final evaluation: this evaluation was carried out by a private consultancy and concerned all the LAGs in the Aquitaine region in order to be able to compare some local situations.

6.4.4 Management, controlling and financing systems

Managing and financing arrangements

It is to be noted that the LAG changed management status mid 2003. Prior to this date, it was under a convention linking three structures (called 'convention tri-partite' in the French procedure guide): the MA, the local development association and the *Agence Technique Départementale* (Technical Département Agency, public structure providing technical assistance –financial, legal & technical- to local authorities for the implementation of their projects). This formal agreement between 3 structures was necessary since the local development association (similar to most of the other associations carrying LAGs in France) was not able to provide sufficient evidence of its capacity to soundly manage public funds.

The financing system was launched this way but when the first payments were to be made to the project promoters, the office in charge (general paymaster) of the payments realized that the status of the Agence Technique Départementale did not allow them to pay subsidies to a third party. In order to not financially penalise the project promoters, the choice was made to avoid any administrative procedure and to develop a new administrative partnership. In parallel, the Pays had been set up. It became the formal LEADER+ project promoter (of the whole strategy) and its capacity to manage public funding (the capacity which the association did sufficiently have for the MA) was recognized / established. The contract therefore turned into a contract between the Pays and the MA only (convention de 'gestion directe': direct management contract).

It is also to be noted that the animators and employees in charge of the management of the programme inside the LAG are paid by structures external to the LAG: the Agence technique départementale for the animator and the Conseil Général (elected structure at the level of the département) for the people in charge of monitoring and management.

Selection procedures and scope

The selection procedure comprised 2 complementary steps:

- The first one concerned what were called the 'emerging projects'. The project promoter was invited to come and present his project idea (which had to match the global strand of the strategy) in front of the Programming committee members. The idea behind this was to enable the programming committee not only to learn about the project but also to measure the implication and the degree of motivation of the project promoter (in order to make sure that the idea was not to only get money from the programme). Members of the Programming Committee gave their opinion and formulated recommendations which were sent in writing to the project promoter for him to finalize his idea taking these into account.
- The second one was for more mature projects which were presented for programming. This second step was the true selection procedure and selection time for the projects.

2 to 3 weeks before the programming committee, the members received a short presentation of each project (emerging or to be programmed) as well as a comprehensive presentation of the projects presented for programming.

For each project approved by the programming committee, one member of the LAG was designated as being 'in charge of the monitoring of the implementation of the project' and called the 'référent'. His name was mentioned in the letter sent to the project promoter to notify the ap-

proval of his project and he was to act as the contact person of the project promoter. However, this proved difficult to implement because it required time and commitment from both the member of the Programming committee and the project promoter. Furthermore, for most technical issues, the member of the Programming committee did not have sufficient knowledge about the procedures and the project promoter had to make direct contact with the animation team of the LAG. This raised questions about the role and efficiency of his 'référent'.

Finally, the Programming committee could invite project promoters to come and present a report on the actions carried out in order to confirm the programming of the budget or to envisage a further financial support, for instance for a second year.

Assessment criteria and their weighting

In the initial application form for the LAG, there was a list of criteria for projects to be eligible, (called 'terms of reference for an eligible action'). This list comprised the following items:

- Coherence with the LEADER+ programme
- Innovative character of the project
- A project which had not received any support under LEADER II (the improvement or extension of existing activities not being excluded)
- Complementarities with the actions implemented on the whole area and non-competition: the action should be new in the area and fill an existing gap
- Local partnership, notably when the project completes local activities
- Intercommunity approach (intercommunity projects should be coordinated where there is a structure in place to do so) Investments projects should have, in parallel, an animation project, whether eligible for LEADER+ or not
- Project promoters submitting an application form to the LEADER+ programme should present information on: the local context, the identified needs (after a study or a survey) and the objectives, an action plan, provisional budgets, internal and external monitoring indicators. The objective is to develop, inside the area, some expertise in terms of project development and an evaluation culture to make the local actors more professional.

These selection criteria were rather general and, despite the fact they had been defined at the very beginning of the programme, they have never been used in a systematic and fully objective way.

Indeed, the general approach of the LAG was to say: "We have a strategy. You have a project which matches this strategy. We will try to support you with the implementation of your project". The objective of the Programming committee was therefore not to act as 'censor' or to evaluate the opportunity of a project using a list of criteria but more to help the project promoter in the development of his idea in coherence with the LEADER+ strategy.

One of the main elements which was looked at in detail was if the target groups identified were directly concerned by the action. For instance, if the action aimed at organising a festival, the programming committee would look at how many young people and/or women would be involved in the preparation of the event and would make sure that a system was foreseen in order to count the number of participants in view of the evaluation exercise. When things were unclear on this issue during the 'emerging project' presentation, recommendations were made to the project promoter, which could include giving him the contact details of another structure having organised a similar event and having developed interesting counting systems.

Although the programming committee had an open analysis of the projects presented not all projects were approved. It is true that, given the important communication work done beforehand,

only a few projects submitted did not correspond to the general strategy. Yet, some projects have notably been refused because not enough technical details were provided that would have enabled the committee to understand how the project was to be implemented (e.g. such as in the case of a grouping of employers in order to provide services at people's home). In one specific case, a project was refused because it promoted a military approach which did not correspond to the ethic and moral values the LAG members wanted to promote.

Perception by national bodies

The members of the Programming committee were in direct contact with project promoters every 3 months which enabled them to stay up to date with what was happening in the area but which also enabled them to always have in mind the strands of the strategy and the objectives of the programme. This organisation made the global quality of the projects and of the programme better, maintaining the 'LEADER spirit' throughout the period. It was a tangible example of participative democracy development.

The participative and bottom-up approach has also been reinforced by the financial procedures. LEADER II had initiated a leverage effect by securing financial counterparts at the level of the local communities, of the Département or of the region. Private financial partners also participated both in investment projects and in the animation of the projects.

These facts have given the Haut Périgord LAG the means to develop a structured approach to deal with issues related to young people and women with a longer term vision. Many of the local public structures have developed specific knowledge on these themes and have taken the legal responsibility in order to be able to make the social policies for these target groups sustainable.

Appropriate controlling mechanisms (scale/nature)

The controlling system consisted of two main steps:

- For each project, the project promoter had to submit an annual activity report describing what he had done and how
- Then, the invoices submitted for payment were checked. If the checking is done thoroughly enough, each item in the invoice can be easily explained in parallel to the action which was to be implemented (action as approved by the Programming committee). If one or more of the items in the invoices do not seem clear regarding the action carried out, this means that there is a coherence problem between what was implemented and what was initially foreseen. If a problem was encountered during this invoice-checking task, the project promoter was called in order to make explanations. If he could explain things clearly, these explanations were recorded in writing in the file to keep tracks of them. If the explanations seemed somehow vague, a more formal procedure was launched (by a written exchange between the LAG and the project promoter).

A monitoring system was also developed: each project has its own evaluation sheet which presented quantified indicators. For the final payment, it was possible to compare the results which had been initially planned and the ones which had been achieved. This had a double advantage:

- firstly it enabled to control the efficiency of the implementation of the project. If the final figures were very different to (and very much under) the initially foreseen ones, it meant that a problem had been encountered at some point.
- Secondly to have some figures for the evaluation of the project. The figures available for each one of the projects having received support were put together which enabled to have some evaluation results at the level of the programme.

Resource consumption for controlling, auditing, reporting (% of LAG time)

Controlling, auditing and reporting was conducted by one person employed full time which represented around 50% of the total LAG time.

The animator was not involved in this work: once a project had been selected by the programming committee, the 'management' service of the LAG took things in charge for the signing of the contract, the preparation of the different administrative documents, the structure for the submission of the invoices, etc. It is also in this service that the controlling, auditing and reporting tasks were performed.

Perception of LAG managers

The LAG managers have implemented the programme in close partnership with the project promoters. From the beginning, the decision has been made to work in a context of trust and to trust project promoters. They were given the framework in which they were to develop their project, and had the rules, the possibilities and the limits explained to them before the formal submission of the project. It was made clear that if anything went wrong, it was to be the project promoter who would have to deal with the problems and not the LAG.

The moral contract which existed between the LAG and the project promoters also invited them to make contact with the programme manager as soon as they had a question or a doubt about what they were to do. When anything unexpected arose during the implementation of the project, a decision common to the LAG manager and the project promoter could be made which could lead (with the approval of the programming committee when required) to a modification of the initial contract if needed.

This seems to have allowed the avoidance of major problems during the life of the programme and also facilitated matters during external controls. Indeed, since they knew the projects very well and had been in direct contact with the project promoters at every major stepping stone of the project, they were able to explain why a modification had been introduced which made things clearer and more straightforward.

6.4.5 Governance and rural citizenship

Organisational patters of LAG and LAG offsprings

The implementation of LEADER (notably of LEADER II but also the preparation of the LEADER+ generation) has created the conditions for the development of the Pays and has enabled its setting up. Today, the LEADER axis is (as the LEADER+ programme was) one of the tools which the Pays uses for the development of the local area.

LEADER has been the forerunner in terms of public-private governance in the Region and on the Périgord Vert LAG. However, as pointed out in the synthesis of the final evaluations of the 6 LEADER+ programmes of the LAGs in the Aquitaine region (MC2 Consultants), after an important period of mobilisation to prepare the different local development documents (the ones related to the Pays and, sometimes, even to the LEADER programme), the local decision making committees linked to the Pays (called *Conseil de développement*) tended to run out of steam much more than the LEADER+ programming committee. Several reasons can contribute to explaining this:

- The *Conseil de développement* vary a lot, from one area to the other in terms of number of members, of profiles, of sub-committees, etc. Such disparities exist also in the LEADER Programming committee but to a lesser extent, firstly, because the number of members is not as high in LEADER (the Périgord Vert *Conseil de développement* counts 142 members when there are less than 30 members in the Programming Committee). Furthermore, the Pays seeks to implement a mainstreamed programme and therefore seeks to involve a very wide variety of people. On the contrary, the Programming committee is composed mostly of structures and people very active on the area and very much involved in the issue which has been chosen as priority theme (i.e.: structures in charge of young people, support structures for women etc.). This makes it easier to maintain their interest throughout the implementation period and to keep their strong motivation.
- Representatives of the civil society participate in the *Conseil de développement* and the Programming committee. They have only an advisory opinion in the first case whereas they have full voting rights in the second case.
- The time when the civil society representatives are involved in the procedure is also very different from one approach to the other: in the 2 cases, they are involved from the first steps for the building of the strategy; yet, for the Pays, they are not as 'needed' once the programme is launched whereas for LEADER, they are an important (and legally compulsory) part of the decision making structure for the whole programming period.

LEADER+ has been one of the first tools applied at the scale of the Périgord Vert development area which was a zone bearing a strong identity. It enabled the elected representatives to work with local actors, notably from local NGOs, and for public and private participants to realize that there were things which they could contribute to, but also things which they could learn.

The LEADER+ priority theme chosen for the strategy came as a step forward after LEADER II and enabled the gathering together and organising of different ideas, projects and actions. By making it compulsory to build a common vision for the area on this theme it has enabled the local actors to work together in a constructive way for a long term vision of the territory.

LEADER has also enabled a change in the approach people have to public financing: from what is called in French an 'approach of counter' (where one goes to a counter to get money for something he would somehow do anyhow), the local actors have moved to a 'project approach' (where one is aware of the general strategy and builds his projects according to the main strands of this strategy, which enables him to get financing).

Developing the LEADER approach takes time and perhaps only today, in 2010, it is possible to see the results of the LEADER+ programme in terms of local organisation (and this despite the fact that a previous generation of the programme had been implemented).

LEADER had increased the capacity of local actors to work in partnership with other actors which they did not know and with whom they were not used to working.

Taking into account that often the same actors get involved and carry out projects, about 10 projects have been initiated by the LAG to cover the whole area. It is not possible, given the size of the Périgord Vert territory to work with everyone at the same time (it takes more than 3 hours to drive from one end to the other) but it is important to reach everyone and to have everyone involved.

The effects of LEADER+ were fundamental in terms of structuring the actors and in terms of training the project promoters (to national and European procedures).

metis

Allocation of Tasks

The allocation of tasks at the local level (LAG staff, LAG members) has been rather clear from the start of the programme. There has been a little more confusion at the beginning in terms of allocation of tasks and responsibilities between the LAG and the MA. Three major facts can contribute to explain this:

- Firstly, since the LAG did not have a legal structure sufficient to guarantee a sound use of public funding, the first contract signed with the MA involved a third structure, the Agence technique départementale (Département technical agency) who was in charge of the animation, financial management and evaluation of the LEADER+ programme.
- Secondly, the general legal framework linked to procedures was set very early in the programme by the MA (and a procedure guide issued before the contracts with the LAGs were signed). Yet, further to these general guidelines, legal approaches for specific projects, actions and types of management were detailed as time went by and as experience grew. Jurisprudence was progressively defined which clarified the 'rules of the game' on a series of issues. On cooperation matters on the other hand, things were more complicated since a procedure guide was only available rather late in the programming period.
- Thirdly, there was some suspicion from the MA towards the LAG regarding the fact that they had the ability and the will to soundly manage a public budget. Just like in any other type of partnership, it took some months before enough trust was there to make things easier and before the common working habits were taken.

Design and implementation of the local development strategy (LDS)

The LAG designed and implemented the local development strategy in full ownership. The fact that the President of the LAG is also elected to the Conseil Général (elected structure at the level of the Département) might have helped in building trusting relations between the 2 structures.

Within the 2007-2013 programming period on the other hand, the local actors have not always been fully understood and supported in their approach. For instance, there seem to have been some difficulties with the chosen priority theme and the representatives of the *Conseil Général* who would have felt more comfortable with themes like tourism or forest. Despite this general understanding problem, the local actors are still able to move forward in their process.

Involvement of local actors in the definition of the LAG's strategy

During the definition phase of the LEADER+ strategy, workshops were organised around 4 themes: children, youth, women and cooperation. All the actors in the territory who could be interested were identified and invited. The LEADER animator and her President organised meetings in all the sub-areas of the LEADER territory in order to have discussions about a first choice for the priority theme. At the end of each one of these meetings, people were invited to participate in one of the 4 workshops.

For each of the workshops, 3 meetings were organized in three months (which means a total of 12 meetings) in order to exchange information on the theme, build the diagnosis, to identify potential ideas, define goals and to understand the expectations of the local actors regarding the area.

After this phase, a meeting was organised to which all participants of the workshops were invited as well as any other person interested. The objective was to present the feedback of the work done in the workshops, to define the LEADER+ strategy and its axis and to designate a first draft of a list of people who could be involved in the future Programming committee.

This enabled widespread involvement of, and the chance to inform, the local population. The idea behind it was to ensure implementation of the LAG which would be transparent for everybody in the area and to avoid anyone blocking the process because of a lack of information.

Establishment of a continuous and transparent local monitoring system by the LAG

There has not been any monitoring system developed for the area.

The monitoring systems used and/or developed were the following:

- The PRESAGE national database: this national tool, made compulsory by the management authority, was the formal national monitoring and management tool. Yet, the final nationally consolidated list of indicators was only made available late in the programme (about 2005) which made it difficult for LAGs to adapt both the indicators which they had already chosen locally and to find nationally defined indicators which perfectly matched the implemented projects.
- Specific dashboards which enabled the monitoring of the annual programmed amount, the programming rates, the paid amounts, etc: It is to be noted that one of the dashboards developed by the LAG allowed projects to be followed by date in order to be able to send reminders when some major deadlines were not met (this for instance enabled the receipt of invoices at the level of the LAG much quicker than before the tool existed).
- Projects' quantitative indicators: these were defined for each action before the project was launched to follow the success regarding the pre-defined indicators. These indicators were listed in 'evaluation sheets' which came as an appendix to the contract linking the project promoter to the LAG.
- The evaluation exercises (a mid-term evaluation has been carried out between December 2003 and March 2004 by a group of engineer students from the ENITA school located in Clermont Ferrand and the final evaluation was carried out by MC2 consultants) comprised a series of indicators.
- Some specific studies which were carried out in order to chose which development path would be the most suitable: for instance, in 2005, a study was carried out to understand who the people moving to the area were (newcomers).

These systems were nevertheless very transparent: the results of the evaluation and the content of the annual reports (built notably using the indicators mentioned above) were put on the web site of the LAG and therefore available to the greater number. The results of the study were presented during a public meeting to explain which orientations were chosen and why.

Effective conflict solving capacities

Apart from the conflicts which arose with the MA at the beginning of the programme, there has not been any local conflict.

These conflicts with the MA were linked to the difficulty of an initial lack of trust and of sometimes very different interpretations of the national and/or European texts.

Things eventually settled when the procedures were more clearly defined (see the mention of jurisprudence above) and when the roles of the LAG and the MA were clearly separated.

Independent handling of different funding streams and support schemes

No other funding sources were dealt with apart from the LEADER+ budget.

The Périgord Vert could benefit from 4 main procedures during the 2000-2006 programming period: three European ones (LEADER+, the Objective 2 and EQUAL) and one national (called the *Contrat de Plan Etat-Région* – Planning contract which combines national and regional funding and is signed with the territorial development agencies).

It was important to find articulation between the three first procedures in terms of objectives and target public. The fourth procedure could complement and complete any of the European procedures on the same projects and actions.

The distribution of actions and funding between LEADER and the Objective 2 was rather straightforward since the types of projects which may be covered are different. It is to be noted that there has not been any articulation built with the EQUAL programme despite the fact that the issues covered could be similar to those dealt with under LEADER, for instance in the project developed by the *Conseil Général* of Dordogne and called '*Ruralité employabilité saisonnalité objectifs 2006*' (rurality, employability, seasonality, objective 2006). Some of the actions covered by this programme dealt with training (to better match the needs of companies, for a better match of isolated women's competencies to job requirements, for farming diversification and creation of a network of farms for the taking over of farms. All these themes are similar to those worked on by the Périgord Vert LAG.

The articulation with the *Contrat de Plan Etat-Région* will be dealt with in part 1.6 (under the question: 'Were synergies developed between L+ and the mainstream rural development activities in the area'.

Each project had to be co-financed. This means that for every euro brought by the European level, there had to be 1 euro at least brought by the national level. This approach means that of course, LEADER did function as a pump riser. Further to this straightforward approach, it is also possible to say that LEADER+ helped develop the capacity of local actors to submit application forms and requests for funding. This also lead to LEADER being, indirectly this time, a pump primer.

6.4.6 Relevance and Community added value

Perception of LAG of complementarity

The length of the programming period gave enough time to allow the projects move from very local projects to projects at the level of the département or even to cooperation projects. This would have been difficult, not to say impossible, within another framework.

It is perhaps even the cooperation projects lead by the Périgord Vert LAG which encouraged reflection at the level of the département, which lead to specific measures for young people and women.

The added value of the LEADER programme in this area lay in the fact that it enabled the taking up of challenges. The general objectives set in the strategy were clearly defined. Yet, the local stakeholders were rather unclear which tangible actions had to be implemented in order to achieve some of these objectives. Through LEADER approaches and actions for these objectives were tested.

LEADER has another advantage: it is implemented over a 6 year period which is neither too short nor long. This makes it necessary to always keep the expected results in mind, to stay vigilant and to keep the pressure on in order to always move forward. As it is one of the only opportunities to finance non-investment programmes, some project promoters who require this type of investment to implement their project feel they must do so during the LEADER programming period while the opportunity is available. For other types of frameworks, for instance EAGGF, things are different. Indeed, even if the programming period changes, the general framework stays rather similar. This means that a project promoters who would not have submitted his project under the 2000-2006 programming period will be able to apply for funding under the 2007-2013 period. This is a very positive thing about LEADER, notably for LEADER+ since it was very clear that the rules of the game would change completely at the end of the programme.

LEADER+ was a sort of 'limited time contract' for the project promoters and for the local strategy but over a period long enough to see the first results of the actions carried out and to be able to plan a further step. It enabled rural areas to practice true development logic. One further thing which ought to be pointed out: 6 years of implementation period is a good thing, provided that things can actually start from the beginning and not be delayed. If the administrative (and legal) procedures take too much time, the whole system can start only with a 1, 2 or even 3 years delay. At the end of the programming period, this means that the only concern will be to use the available funding. Quantity will then tend to override quality making it possible to miss the initially defined targets.

Synergies between LEADER+ and the mainstream rural development activities:

Coordination between programme officers/agents

The territorial axis of the *Contrat de Plan Etat Région* (Contract between the local development structures and the region securing regional and national funds for the implementation of a multi-annual strategy in which –most- projects are already pre-defined) favoured 4 intervention strands:

- development and diversification of economic activity and employment,
- maintaining services and improving the population's living conditions,
- reinforcing the offer in terms of accommodation and housing,
- building and strengthening the local identities of the territories.

The results of the first evaluation of the Pays contracts which were presented to the July 2005 *Assises des Pays et des Agglomérations* (Conference of the Pays and Towns) pointed out, as noted by MC2, that LEADER+ has generally taken into account pilot and the most innovative actions and/or the ones which could not be covered by the mainstream programmes (for instance, the first budget heading of EAGGF-Guidance is animation and operating which represent 31% of the total programmed budget). It has thus played its role as an "experience laboratory" and in promoting innovative financial approaches.

This general remark is also very true for the Périgord Vert LAG where LEADER+ took into account the experimental projects which could only with difficulty match the framework of the *Contrat de Plan Etat-Région* (because of the requirements of the procedure or of limited budget for some measures).

In financial terms LEADER+, as LEADER II before that, has constituted a lever to mobilise national and regional co-financing, as well as budgets at the level of the Département and/or of private actors for both investment and animation actions. The LAG had decided from the start that it was necessary for LEADER+ to be able to take into account all the components of projects,

including investment and animation in order to make processes simpler and matters more transparent to have a better chance of success.

In terms of human resources, the service in charge of the implementation of LEADER+ comprised three people for the animation, monitoring, management and evaluation tasks, all employed by an external structure, the *Agence Technique Départementale*, which made this staff available for the LAG. Further to these three persons (who represented an average of 2,53 full time equivalent over the whole programming period), some other people were appointed on specific tasks (i.e. in 2005 to carry out a study to better understand the local state of the art and to pre-define the development axis for the Pays).

The idea was to preserve the LEADER characteristics and to keep in mind that LEADER had something to bring to the area and also to the Pays. However, the Pays was then a young structure and the risk was that this fragility would make it difficult to implement all the aspects of the LEADER+ programme.

It was in 2005, when the Pays Contract was renegotiated with the regional authorities that things started to sort out: bridges and linkages were clearly built between LEADER+ and the strategy of the Pays and some actions launched and tested under LEADER+ were integrated in the actions which the Pays would implement. This enabled the building of better articulation between the two approaches and to strengthening the Pays in its role as a local development agency.

The idea was for the *Agence technique départementale* to take a step back and to let the role of the Pays gradually grow regarding the implementation of LEADER. A partnership was maintained for the building of the LEADER 2007-2013 application form but the Pays had full ownership of the strategy and the Pays has progressively hired directly the required members of staff for the implementation of its own strategy as well as for the implementation of LEADER (director, thematic programme managers, etc.). All this took time but things are now quite well structured.

Under the 2007-2013, the *Agence technique départementale* still provides technical assistance to the 4 *Pays* for the emergence of new projects and the support of local and cooperation projects and actions.

With regard to the question if LAG projects were more successful than other projects funded by other programmes or sources it is difficult to compare projects developed within LEADER and projects developed inside other financial frameworks for different reasons:

- Projects supported under LEADER could often not match the thematic requirements and requirements in terms of objectives of the other programmes. This means that what was financed under LEADER+ could often not be financed elsewhere which made these projects successful under LEADER+ when they would not have been able to exist in another framework.
- Projects supported by the LEADER programme were of reasonable financial size when other programmes sometimes set minimums much too high for some rural project promoters.
- LEADER took into account 'soft' costs which could not be covered elsewhere, notably animation which has been an important part of the Périgord Vert strategy.
- LEADER made territorial cooperation possible whereas other programmes did not open this possibility.

Transference of the LEADER+-approach or activities into the regional/national mainstream rural development policy

Often, the term of 'LEADER bubble' has been used in order to describe the relative isolation of this initiative regarding the other local development approaches and policies. In the case of the Périgord Vert LAG, a rather good understanding has been built, over time, with the Pays approach with which there has been an interesting coordination both in terms of the area covered (territory), in terms of structure and in terms of development strategy. However, this has only been possible after some time since it has been necessary to settle the Pays in terms of structure and of organisation. Throughout the whole LEADER+ period, the organisation of the LAG was much more evolved and better known than that of the Pays. It is only at the very end of the programme that the two strategies and organisation started to 'merge' effectively and enabled to a new structure for the 2007-2013 period.

Enhancement of the use of new know-how and new technologies

LEADER+ did not enhance the use of new know-how and new technologies. The whole programme was focused on other issues: how to develop the entrepreneurship capacity and how to build a more positive image of the area for specific target publics.

Improvement of the quality of life in rural areas

LEADER+ perhaps improved the quality of life in rural areas in an indirect (and non measurable) way. This has been done by developing citizenship and the feeling of belonging to an area. It has also been done through projects aiming at providing services to families.

Contribution to adding value to local products

LEADER+ has not contributed to add value to local products to a certain extent via the theme linked to women.

Despite the fact that it was not the objective of the strategy, it is possible to put forward that a project has been launched under LEADER+ which is called 'au fil des *fermes'* ('as farms go by'): tourism products (such as '4 O'Clock Snacks') are developed on farms. This project has been initiated during the 2 last years of LEADER+ and still goes on today.

The transnational cooperation project launched with Greek partners (from cooperatives of women) has also raised awareness around local products, marketing, collective organisations, etc. It is this cooperation project which has lead to the implementation of the above mentioned '*au fil des fermes*' project. A local network of producers / products has been developed and experiments have been carried out around tourism products available from a webpage and from which people can chose in order to create something which interests them (i.e. they could pick a meal on one farm, a visit on the other, a night stay in a third one, etc. creating their own specific menu which also presented the advantage of not requiring any administrative and legal authorisation).

Contribution to making the best use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value of Natura 2000 sites

LEADER+ did not contribute to making the best use of natural resources.

Regarding cultural resources, some projects were carried out, notably one on the valorisation of the Occitan culture and of the *troubadours* (minnesingers). The starting point was an action to be carried out throughout the territory and proposing animation for leisure centres: the historic heritage was transmitted to children using arts (singing, music, dance...). The children were trained

by professional artists and a show was organised every year bringing together the creations of all the leisure centres in a playing and contemporary way. This approach also led to a cooperation projects which enabled actors to go deeper in the theme and to touch other issues linked to it.

A total of 8 projects have been implemented on the theme of culture of which 2 are truly based on the cultural heritage and linked to the above mentioned approach. On top of this, an inter-territorial cooperation project has been carried out.

Occurrence of LEADER+ having been customised for context-specific goals

LEADER+ did not contribute to any nationally or regionally defined development objectives. It was not conceived as such. However, it allowed the opportunity to demonstrate the fact that new experimental approaches could lead to interesting results and some projects developed at the level of the LAG have been integrated in wider policies notably at the level of the *Département.*

6.4.7 Impacts

Creation and maintenance of high quality, sustainable job opportunities

The LEADER+ programme has not specifically targeted the creation of employment. However, given the types of actions supported, there have been some direct and indirect jobs maintained and created for which any quantitative evaluation is difficult to carry out.

The estimations made by the LAG are the following: LEADER+ has directly supported the creation of 238 jobs[120], 162 concerning women and 76 concerning men.

The LEADER strategy has contributed to maintaining jobs by giving projects and actions another dimension. Furthermore, many of the project promoters were NGOs and of associative types (non-profit making organisations) in which voluntary work is important (and where there are no employees).

Some of the projects which have not led to direct employment have contributed to further knowledge and competencies of the people involved. This is for instance the case of the '*fermes ouvertes'* project in which women farmers are trained (communication training) in order to be able to welcome people on their farm and present an exhibition of pictures showing what farming is.

One specific project was to launch a solidarity vegetable garden which should have led to the creation of a significant number of direct jobs. However, the promoters of this project were weak and the project was abandoned.

Another point which can be pointed out is the role of the farming advisor: she is specialising in area based projects and this territorial approach is starting to be taken into account as such in the agricultural division she works in. It is interesting for these sector-based structures to integrate a territorial (and cross-cutting) approach. Of course, this has not created any new job (without LEADER, her job would have been maintained) but it has given her job and the projects she supports, the possibility to touch on other dimensions than the purely farming one, perhaps opening the door to the 2007-2013 Axis 3 and 4.

---

[120] This figure takes into account the number of persons concerned and not the number of full time equivalents. It is slightly over the figure of 218 mentioned in the final evaluation and taken from the Presage national monitoring tool

Selection of activities and needs of women in rural areas

During the definition of the LEADER+ strategy, a survey was used which focused on the 'situation of women seeking a job in the Northern part of the Dordogne département'[121.] This survey focused on different topics: situation of the family, qualification and professional experience, reasons why it is difficult to find a job and professional and private projects. From this survey, 4 major issues have been taken into account in the Périgord Vert LEADER+ project:

- The will to undertake an economic activity
- The will to find a manual or craft job
- The will to be in direct contact with customers
- The will to get involved in the social and education fields

LEADER+ has also involved women farmers who wanted to develop the network '*fermes ouvertes'*. As mentioned above, this is a project in which women farmers are trained in communication in order to be able to welcome people to their farm and present an exhibition of pictures showing what farming is.

At the beginning of the LEADER+ programme, there had never been a programme directly addressing women and their needs in the area. When the LEADER+ application form had just been written, representatives of the LAG sent to present its content and main axis in different places of the territory. Many people participated to these meetings in order to know what was going on and because they knew that there was some money available. Most of the participants were puzzled when presented with a strategy working specifically on women and did not understand why these choices had been made.

It was important not only to take into account the needs of local women to build the application form but also to involve them in the LAG and in the programming committee. In the Programming committee (27 incumbents and 27 substitutes), there were 17 women (including 9 incumbent) at the end of the programme. The women participating can lead the way and act as drivers for the other women in the area. It was compulsory to try and have a wider involvement of women.

In total, 36 projects (on the 174 programmed) concerned the woman axis of the strategy (composed of 3 measures: building networks of women solidarity, encourage the participation of women to the local economic life, and raise the awareness of economic actors to the development potential which women represent). These projects mobilized 26% of the total EU budget of the LAG. Figures linked to a cooperation projects developed with Greek partners should also be added as well as first exchanges and contacts with potential partners from Poland.

On top of these figures, it should be kept in mind that the third axis of the strategy (organising development-training in Périgord Vert), which represented 8 projects and 5% of the EU budget, targeted both young people and women. However, the indicators for this third axis takes into account the number of target public persons concerned by the axis, making no distinction if this person is a young person or a women. It is thus not possible to give further detail.

It is to be noted that some important transfer of budgets have been made between some of the measures. Two of these major transfers concern women:

---

[121] Survey carried out by the Etude Conseil Marketing Nouveaux Armateurs consultancy in November 1999 and based on 675 questionnaires and a rate of answer of 42%

- The less programmed measure has been to 'encourage the participation of women to the local economic life': only 4% of the initially planned budget has been programmed
- The most programmed measure has been to 'raise the awareness of economic actors to the development potential which women represent' which has been programmed nearly three times as much in amount as initially planned (278% of the initial budget have been planned).

These figures show that when the initial strategy has been written, the lack of working experience on the theme of women did not enable to make any clear plan on how the local actors and project promoters would react. Indeed, the part of the programme linked to women initially foresaw investment projects. During the implementation of the programme, it turned out that women rarely implement investment projects and that they tend to concentrate on animation and 'soft' work. Adjustments enabled actors to better take into account these reactions during the life of the programme.

Needs and potentials of young people

Before the programme was launched, a survey was carried out on the LAG area in order to make sure that the orientations proposed by the working group matched the expectations of the young people. 59 young persons were interviewed (30 who were between 14 and 16 years old and 29 between 17 and 23), either at school, in professional training, in training periods or working. The questionnaire concerned what the young people liked in terms of actions carried out, what they would have liked, what they would like to see developed in the area in terms of school and professional orientation, of insertion in the working life, of leisure, of participating in the activities of a group or of an association.

The results of the survey were taken into account in the final definition of the content of the axis of the strategy focusing on young people and declined in the 3 following measures: to develop welcoming places for young people, to create an animation network targeting young people, and to encourage the events targeting young people.

Furthermore, the programming committee has always been very careful for this specific public to always be either actor of the actions implemented or beneficiaries (target).

Representation of women and young people in the decision-making process

No person under 25 years was a member of the Programming Committee. The LAG tried to invite young people at the beginning of the programme and during its implementation but it proved to be difficult to have them participate on a regular basis over the whole life of the programme and to get actively involved (which for instance meant to read the project presentations prior to the meetings). Instead of a direct participation of young people, the choice has been made to have structures which represent young people and defend their interest.

Some women were involved in the Programming Committee: 17 women (including 9 incumbent) were members of the Programming Committee (which counted 27 incumbent and 27 substitutes) at the end of the programme.

The challenge was a difficult one to take up in a rural area: giving a chance to women to express themselves, limit the prejudgements by showing some projects implemented by women and their results, prove that the needs regarding children can be met at the local level, and demonstrate that educational leisure can also be accessed in non-urban areas. All these themes have been successfully covered by the LAG as shown by the number of projects carried out on each one of them (as presented in the document presenting all the LEADER+ actions developed), projects which, for most of them, still exist today, 2 years after the closure of the LEADER+ programme.

Contribution of the age profile of population benefiting from assistance towards maintaining/promoting a balanced population structure

The area of the Périgord Vert area is one of the most ageing in France. It is partly because of this issue that the choice has been made to make demography one of the central points of the programme with the taking into account of 2 of its main components, young people and women.

However, the actions supported have not directly contributed to the maintaining/promoting of a balanced population structure, notably to a balance between men and women. Indeed, in Périgord Vert, the percentage of women in the area is higher than the one of men and the percentage of women leaving the area is lower than the one of men. The programme nevertheless aimed at improving the quality of life of the women staying.

To a certain extent, the actions carried out towards young people, by contributing to improve the image they have of the area, have contributed to motivate them to stay in the area (see below).

Provision of incentives to young people to stay in rural areas

Some incentives were provided for young people to stay in the area. For instance, some support and training was provided for project promoters being young people or women.

Some local structures have also been implemented with LEADER+ money actions which aimed at inviting young people to stay for instance by:

- Helping with better orientation of young people by helping them discover the jobs and companies which existed in the area
- Supporting young people who were newly settled in the area in order to assist them to stay in a good condition
- Helping young people to express what they wished to do and supporting the development of their project (on this last theme, a cooperation project with Ireland has been an interesting framework to push the ideas forward).

However, even if these projects have been carried out, the general objective of the LAG was not to absolutely maintain the young people in the area. The idea was to act in order for young people to have a positive image of their area. If they then were to leave, they would be able to communicate this positive image to people they would meet outside the area and perhaps one day to come back and live in the area with a project to implement.

Creation of new, sustainable sources of income

In the synthesis of the final evaluations of the 6 LEADER+ LAGs of the Aquitaine Region, MC2 mentions the following figures in terms of percentage of the total programmed EU amount per theme:

Table 40. Percentage of EU funding per theme

Valorisation of farming products	Trade and craft	Environnement and building planning	Culture and heritage	Services to the population	Tourism
3%	10%	6%	30%	45%	6%

The figures in the table above may lead to several conclusions:

- 85% of the budget concerned only 3 themes which means that the strategy is somewhat precisely targeted
- Only 3% directly concerns the traditional farming production which means that the other 97% concerns activities which explore other domains.

Yet, further to these figures, we must once again keep in mind that the strategy of the LAG did not cover the commercial or competitive sectors. Perhaps if the legal framework had been a little less strict the LAG would have supported more projects within this field.

Creation and development of new/better services, adapted to the needs of local populations

LEADER+ has contributed to develop new/better services adapted to the needs of local populations.

As pointed out in the table above, actions on the theme of services have mobilized 45% of the total programmed EU budget. In the document presenting all the actions developed by the LAG under LEADER+, services to young people and to family constitute a specific category which represents 35 projects and is divided in 5 sub-categories:

- Playing areas
- Environment and heritage
- Multimedia
- Animation structures for children
- Animation structures for young people

The services targeted to families and young people were one objective of LEADER+ in continuity with what had been done under LEADER II.

Creation and development of anti-discrimination activities or measures for disadvantaged groups

LEADER+ did not support any anti-discrimination activities or measures as usually understood. It favoured fragile groups and can thus be seen as rather discriminative against the non-fragile public.

Enhancement of the landscape and cultural heritage

There has not been a direct impact on the enhancement of the landscape.

The cultural heritage has been enhanced, notably the knowledge of the Occitan culture and civilisation.

One crosscutting objective of the programme was to make the area more attractive for residents and non-residents by improving the image which local people, notably young people and women, have of their zone. The area is surely attractive to non-residents but it is difficult to measure to what extent LEADER has directly contributed to this result.

Some small actions might have had a direct impact, for instance the one concerning the welcoming of English speaking incomers.

It is anyhow something which can only be built on the long terms and to which the Pays and the 2007-2013 LEADER axis continue to contribute to.

Improvement of the demographic situation in terms of age distribution or depopulation

There is a difficulty here to provide figures demonstrating the evolution since the figures are available for 1999 and will be available for 2009 soon. Yet, the diagnosis set up in the 2008-2013 LEADER application form uses the 2004-2006 partial update of the census which covers 92 communes.

- It can be estimated that the population in Périgord Vert has increased by about 2000 in-habitants between 1999 and 2006 which would mean that the total population in 2006 is about 82 000.
- Between 1999 and 2006, of the 92 communes for which figures are available, there were 4 686 newcomers (a newcomer being defined as a person having lived in the commune for less than 5 years). An extrapolation would mean that the total Périgord Vert area counts 8 000 newcomers which is 10% of its 1999 population.
- Without these newcomers, the number of inhabitants would be under that of 1999 falling to 74 000 inhabitants instead of the 82 000 estimated.

Diversification and consolidation of local economies

The following table shows the development of the numbers of employers and jobs for the 14 first sectors of activity, ranked by importance, in the Périgord Vert area over the 2001-2005 period[122].

Table 41. Development of the numbers of employers and jobs by sectors of activity

Sector (by rank of importance in 2005)	Number of employers in 2005	Evolution of the number of employers since 2001	
1. Agriculture	4501 employers for 5005 jobs	less 357 employers	↓
2. Trade	1549 employers for 4257 jobs	plus 70 employers	↗
3. Construction	1411 employers for 3966 jobs	plus 104 employers	↗
4. Collective and personal services	1026 employers for 1659 jobs	plus 155 employers	↗
5. Services for companies.	903 employers for 1670 jobs	plus 171 employers	↗
6. Health	690 employers for 5265 jobs	plus 42 employers	↗
7. Hotels and restaurants	623 employers for 1273 jobs	plus 33 employers	↗
8. Other industries	401 employers for 3239 jobs	less 22 employers	↓
9. Transport and communications	324 employers for 1583 jobs	plus 12 employers	↗
10. Agri-food industries	261 employers for 1925 jobs	less 24 employers	↓
11. Financial activities	186 employers for 525 jobs	less 12 employers	↓
12. Wood industry	126 employers for 1135 jobs	less 14 employers	↓
13. Leather industry	33 employers for 1031 jobs	less 19 employers	↓
14. Textile industry	31 employers for 400 jobs	less 11 employers	↓

Farming remains the first sector in terms of number of companies, despite an important decline in the number of farms between 2001 and 2005.

---

[122] Source: Source PAMID diagnostic Nord Dordogne 2006

metis

AEIDL CEU

Services constitute the sectors where most companies have been created. It is possible that LEADER+ has contributed to this increase but, as mentioned above, given the priority theme chosen by the LAG and the content of the strategy, it is difficult to evaluate to what extent this might have been possible.

LEADER+ may have more directly contributed to the increase in the number of companies involved in construction and building: LEADER has supported actions aimed at developing better welcoming conditions, notably for English speaking people and many of the newcomers need persons to refurbish old houses which they wish to move in.

Other elements related to economic activities in the region can be put forward:

- As pointed out in the 2007-2013 LEADER application form, at the end of the LEADER+ programme, it is in the Périgord Vert area that the density of craft companies seems to be the highest in the region. Also, farming, crafts, industry and building companies are more strongly represented in the Périgord Vert zone than in the rest of the *département* and the activities linked to accommodation and to the increasing number of secondary homes create a dynamic in the area.
- Tourism has developed and the Pays (who had an employee dedicated to tourism issues) and LEADER might have contributed to this, notably via projects of development of tourism products in farms. For instance, between 2002 and 2007, the number of beds has significantly increased (+15% of commercial beds, +6% of non-commercial beds). Unfortunately, no further data is available which could elaborate the explanation of this fact better. The Pays probably had the most significant impact and LEADER was 'the icing on the top of the cake'.
- The LEADER+ project promoters are mainly private structures (associations and one company). This is a specificity of the LEADER programme in the Périgord Vert area where the usual beneficiaries of public funding are mostly public structures. The fact that support has been given to associations and that they have also been involved in the decision making partnership is to be noted. This has certainly contributed to some strengthening of the general economic background of the area.

Competitiveness of new, improved local products

The LEADER+ strategy did not contribute to this objective and had very little impact on this issue. Perhaps the cooperation project developed with Greek partners did have some impact in showing actors that it was possible to organise and to structure something at the local level.

Environmental Capital

Within the framework of the LEADER+ final evaluation, LAG managers were asked to complete typologies indicating the impact of each of the supported project on the different crosscutting priorities. The result of this exercise was that 83% of the projects supported in Périgord Vert did not contribute to the improvement of the situation of the environment (11% contributing directly and 6% contributing in an indirect manner). This has to be put in context to the fact that this was not one of the central objectives of the development plan.

The combination of activities supported under LEADER+ can therefore be considered as not generating any positive environmental effect in the Périgord Vert area. LEADER+ did not attempt to directly enhance natural resources in the beneficiary area, or contribute to reducing greenhouse emissions and to decreasing the ecological footprint in Périgord Vert.

Social Impacts: Bonding Capital

44% of projects have been built on existing partnerships[123,] 12% have required no partnership for their development. This means that 44% of the projects implemented within the LEADER+ programme have required the setting up of partnerships which may be called unusual. People who did not know each other and/or were not used to developing things together thus worked together which enabled the creation of new links inside the area between people, activities and sectors. The fact that local actors discovered local people and/or structures which had the same objectives as theirs and with whom they shared ideas and were able to successfully implement projects and actions did indeed contribute to increasing trust amongst local people, actors and stakeholders.

The programming committee also played a part in this issue by developing regular contacts and enabling exchanges on the core of the strategy during every meeting.

From the beginning, even in the initial application form, the programme had the objective of developing partnership pedagogy with 3 complementary aims:

- Bring together different structures and actors in order for them to act for the common good and for territorial cohesion
- Organise regular contacts between the LAG and the actors on the ground
- Avoid project promoters to be focused on their action only by involving them in the monitoring of the wider territorial project and of the strategy.

This approach lead to a kind of collective and dynamic appropriation of the programme and of the theme which has reduced the risk that project promoters would come only as budget consumers and led to a true involvement in a new local network.

Furthermore, LEADER+ enabled many project promoters and smaller structures to access EU financing for the very first time and thus understand the requirements for the building of their application form and the monitoring of their project and develop appropriate answers. This has favoured the development of a working method which makes local actors more professional in the presentation of their projects. This aspect is also important in terms of trust building with local co-financers.

Social Impact: Bridging Capital

It is a fact that the LEADER+ programme and supported actions have contributed to increasing openness and tolerance in the area. It has been a constant concern when implementing the programme.

There has been a change between LEADER II and LEADER+: under LEADER II, interesting activities have been implemented which had not been spotted by anyone outside the area. One of the objectives of LEADER+ was to have the LAG better integrated in the networks at regional, national and European levels in order to be more visible and to better valorise the area, the actions developed and the project promoter (which was another motivation for them to get involved and to go further to what they had initially planned).

Another initial objective was to implement cooperation projects which were seen as a complete part of the local development strategy. In total 7 cooperation projects have been developed (4 inter-territorial and 3 transnational) which involved a large number of local actors.

---

[123]: When mentioning 'partnership' here, we do not mention the financial partnership which leads to the building of a budget but the 'operational' partnership

metis

Information sources

- LEADER+ 2000-2006 application form of the Périgord Vert Pays (Word document sent by the LAG)
- GAL LEADER PLUS PERIGORD VERT - FR-AQ 06 - Rapport final d'exécution – Validated by the Programmign committee of the LAG on 13 January 2009 (Word document sent by the LAG)
- Recueil d'expériences des porteurs de projets – programme LEADER+ Périgord Vert – 2000-2008 – Pays Périgord Vert (http://www.europe-en-aquitaine.eu/system/files/u1/ATD24-recueilBD2.pdf)
- Synthèse des evaluations finales de 6 GAL LEADER+ de la region Aquitaine – MC2 consultants – Juin 2007 (http://www.perigord.tm.fr/leader/pdf/Synthese_Regionale_LEADERAQ_02.pdf)
- « Accueillir en Périgord vert -nouveaux habitants et nouvelles activités….au coeur des mutations rurales » (welcoming in Périgord Vert – new inhabitants and new activities… in the heart of rural mutations) - LEADER 2008-2013 application form for the Périgord Vert (http://www.perigord-vert.com/depot_fichiers/adminppv/UserFiles/File/Dossier%20de%20candidature%20LEADER%20P%E9rigord%20Vert%202008.pdf)
- Evaluation finale du programme européen LEADER+ en Aquitaine – Périgord Vert – MC2 Consultants (http://www.perigord.tm.fr/leader/pdf/Rapport_Evaluation_GAL_Perigord_Vert.pdf)

List of contacted persons

- Valérie Valles, ex-animator (and programme manager) of the LEADER+ programme
- Marie-Cécile Mariaud, manager of the Pays du Périgor Vert, in charge of LEADER (LEADER+ and LEADER 2007-2013)

6.5 Greece: North Peloponnisos (ANVOPE)

Basic Information North Peloponnisos (ANVOPE)

- Database code: L+GRNAT-30

- Official name: NORTH PELOPONNESE DEVELOPMENT S.A. (ANVOPE S.A.)

- Experience in L I: No

- Experience in L II: Yes

- Objective 1 or 2 zone: 1

- Population (inhabitants): 78 851

- Surface area (in km²): 4 397.90

- Density (inhabitants/km²): 17.92

- Number of municipalities: 25

- Employment rate/unemployment rate: Unemployment rate 5%

- Total funding (€): 13 378 400.05

- EU share (€): 7 118 931.63

- Public funds (€): 2 005 220.07

- Private funds (€): 4 254 248.35

- Breakdown of expenditure: Overheads/administration/animation etc

- Administration: 1 748 496.41 € (According to closure report, December 2009)

- Animation: 9 473.24 € (According to closure report, December 2009t)

- Number of LAG employees: fulltime : 5/part-time : 3

- LEADER+ theme chosen: 4 . Best use of natural and cultural resources

- LEADER+ other theme(s) chosen: -

- Level of autonomy: (counter check with programme complement)

- Level of directiveness: 2

metis

AEIDL CEU

6.5.1 Object of the case study

LAG name in Greek: ΑΝΑΠΤΥΧΙΑΚΙ ΕΤΑΙΡΙΑ ΒΟΡΙΑS PELOPONNISOU (ΑΝ.ΒΟ.ΠΕ),

LAG name in English: NORTH PELOPONNESE DEVELOPMENT S.A. (ANVOPE S.A.)

6.5.2 Summary

The LAG's area lies around the central mountainous territory of Peloponnese, covering a total surface of 4 397.9 Km^2. Its population amounts to 78 851 inhabitants, with a mean density of 18 h/square kilometres.

The intervention area of the local LEADER+ programme of North Peloponnese was located in the mountainous bordering regions of the prefectures of Argolida, Arcadia and Corinthia. It was geographically extended to other disadvantaged areas in these prefectures which were facing structural problems, but had development prospects linked to the mountainous areas and were socio-economically connected.

This area is characterized by a variety of geographical and physical features (mountains, forests, lakes, rivers, caves etc), folklore and mythological tradition, while its history goes back to pre-historic times. The area has a good international reputation of production of high-quality agricultural products (mainly oil, wine, milk products, etc).

In order to exploit the natural and cultural resources, including Natura areas, the strategic objective of the local project of the N. Peloponnesus Development Company (ANVOPE) was to exploit this comparative advantage; thus, 3 priorities were set: 1. Creation, improvement and upgrading of existing infrastructure and tourism services offered in the area; 2. Establishment of quality and enhancement of local traditional products; 3. Synergy among sectors and activities (accommodation, food, natural and cultural resources, manufacturing, handicraft) in order to reinforce and achieve the added value of the local identity, local production and therefore tourism.

The main lesson learnt from the implementation of the local L+ programme is that the diversification of the economy of rural areas is a long process that goes beyond the strict timeframe of seven years as there are many other factors that affect it. For Greece, the improvement of accessibility is one of the most important factors as well as a general progress for economic development. The development of mountainous rural areas was based on the establishment of accommodation places and other small-scale tourist infrastructure, catering for the demands of residents from urban centres during the winter (usually weekends). If this trend continues, even with the demand remaining stable, then the observed changes will remain viable.

6.5.3 LAG design and planning

The LEADER area

The intervention area is characterized by a variety of geographical and physical features. It has beautiful natural landscapes, rare species of Greek flora and fauna, mountain lakes, gorges, areas of outstanding natural beauty and Natura 2000 areas. It also has a significant number of large and interesting caves, protected natural monuments and delimited game sanctuaries. Its mountainous nature combined with significant road infrastructure deficiencies makes travelling to and from the proposed area extremely difficult. Finally, the area's history goes back to pre-historic times, while it has a good international reputation of production of high-quality agricultural products (mainly oil, wine, milk products, etc).

Brief socioeconomic situation of the area

The intervention area is qualified as a rural area; population aging, a low educational level and a gradual abandonment of agricultural land are its main socio-economic characteristics. These characteristics are common to many internal rural territories in the whole country.

- The main economic activities for the residents of this area were in the primary sector, exceeding half the total economically active population. More specifically, 54% of the population was employed in the primary sector, 30% in the tertiary sector and only 16% in the secondary sector.
- Declining population in the area of application with population weakening and abandonment. The population decreased by 24% during the 1971-2001 period.
- Significant gap in education levels, with the majority of local residents being primary education graduates.
- The overall unemployment rate was 5% of the economically active population. The unemployment rate was greater among young people and especially in women (twice the rate as men).
- Internal migration of local population, especially women, to urban centres. The lack of social benefits (education, health etc.), the low cultural level, and few employment opportunities in the area forced a part of the productive age residents (19 to 28year-olds) to seek a better standard of living in urban centres of the country.

Process of LAG design and planning

The Development Agency of North Peloponnese S.A. operates as a company with the status of *Societe Anonyme*. It was founded in 1995 within the framework of the Community Initiative LEADER II and has as its shareholders 24 Municipalities and 1 Community (from three Prefectures of the Peloponnese region), 2 Prefectures, 2 Local Authorities' Unions, 30 socioeconomic partners (cooperatives, chambers, local associations, etc.) and 56 individuals (persons and companies). The main motivation for the involvement of these actors was the need to create a body that could undertake and coordinate initiatives for the development of the intervention area and to reverse its decline. During the previous programming periods the company has dealt with the implementation of development programmes in mountainous and disadvantageous areas, aiming at their upgrade, lifting of isolation, supporting economic and cultural growth, improvement of quality of products and finally, new job creation.

The LAG's development strategy was based on the priority theme *"Culture throbs through the hospitable districts in the heart of the charming Peloponnese".* The main objectives of the local strategy were:

- The exploitation of the area as a significant tourism destination,
- The upgrade of tourism services and infrastructure,
- The improvement of the quality of products,
- The promotion of local traditional products,
- The development and enhancement of synergies between local sectors and activities (tourism, natural and cultural resources, handicraft, etc) in order to support the local value added and the local identity.

metis

AEIDL CEU

6.5.4 Management, controlling and financing systems

The local programme was in line with point 12 of the EU Notice about the nature of the partnership by allowing socioeconomic partners and associations to represent over 50% of the local partnership. Specifically, the Management Committee of the local LEADER+ programme (E.D.P.), which was the decision-making body of the programme, was composed of seven members, three of which represent the primary local authorities (percentage 42.85%), while the remaining four are socioeconomic partners (percentage 57.15%). Moreover, the fact that all members of both E.D.P. and LAG staff come from the area of intervention (origin, work, residence, etc.) provided a high degree of identification between them in the design and programme management processes and guaranteed the adequacy of strategic planning on the basis of the specific strengths and weaknesses of the area. The Management Committee of the local LEADER+ programme, throughout the duration of the programme, met 91 times and took a total of 669 decisions relating to the local programme.

Furthermore, the LAG set the necessary preconditions for effective programme management at the local level, by creating a service and establishing a series of procedures and checks in order to ensure maximum transparency and managerial control of all operations in all stages of the local programme.

The LAG had specific internal procedures in order to ensure maximum **transparency and objective evaluation** of the project proposals, such as non-participation of members of the "Projects Evaluation Committee" in the "Project Objections Committee", the autopsy and interviewing with all potential investors as additional evaluation criteria for project proposals, etc. The degree of autonomy in the decision-making process had been ensured by the complete division of the two decision-making levels (Management Board of LAG and EDP) and with the establishment of the EDP's operation rules, in which were clearly set out the responsibilities of the committee and its members.

A total of four calls for proposals were published: one in 2003, one in 2005 and two in 2006. Under those calls:

- Publicity actions (in print and electronic media) were effectively carried out, as well as local briefings throughout the intervention area.
- Four informative guides were printed and distributed to potential investors in order to help the interested parties to co-finance their business operations and simplify legislative procedures regulations:
  - Brief Guide of the necessary procedures for the creation of rural tourism accommodation and other tourism facilities, through which it was attempted to classify the required procedures and basic pre-conditions and minimum requirements set by the legislation for the creation, expansion and modernization of tourism and other similar facilities.
  - Brief Guide for certifying products as organic, Protected Designation of Origin, Protected Geographical Indication, Traditional Specialities Guaranteed.
  - Brief guide for installing quality assurance systems (ISO – HACCP)
  - Guide of minimum quality standards for rural tourism and craft facilities

The evaluation process, the final integration of projects and their contracting were done in accordance with the regulatory framework of the National LEADER+ in the version applicable to the facts.

Selection criteria for the evaluation of submitted projects

The selection criteria used for the evaluation of the submitted projects were classified in two categories. The first category consisted of the exclusion criteria which included the project's implementation timetable, no funding by another programme, the ability to cover own contribution of the beneficiary, and fulfilment of "institutional responsibilities". The second category included the "grading criteria" which were:

Table 42. Selection criteria for the evaluation of projects

A. Criteria relating to the proposed investment (weight 70%)
1. Reliability of the financial project plan: 1 - 20
2. Maturity of the project: 1 - 20
3. Innovation / Technology transfer: 1 - 10
4. Sustainability: 1 - 10
5. Effectiveness: 1 - 5
6. Complementarity: 1 - 5
Subtotal Points: 6 - 70

Table 43. Criteria for the assessment of the applicant

B. Criteria relating to the applicant investor (weight 30%)
1. Age: 1 - 10
2. Residence (premium for local residents): 1 - 5
3. Experience of the applicant in connection to the proposed investment and the   future successor state: 1 - 5
4. Encouraging women entrepreneurs: 1 - 10
Subtotal Points: 4 - 30

**TOTAL POINTS 10 - 100**

The criteria were generally applied depending on the nature of each project.

The LAG in order to ensure efficient, high quality and smooth implementation of its local programme, made the necessary arrangements for the public evaluation of its programme (mid-term evaluation).

In addition, the LAG acting as the responsible party for the implementation of the local programme promoted regular and systematic monitoring of the tangible results arising from the integrated projects with frequent "autopsies" accompanied by reports and photographs.

Following the completion of certain parts of projects, and after the autopsy by the staff of the LAG, the beneficiaries were submitting invoices for any works done to be checked for their legitimacy, method of payment, compatibility with the approved project budget and in the end to be certified in order to allow the disbursement of the relevant public expenditure.

The LAG followed and complied with the national legislation, the provisions of the programme and the instructions of the MA and the Ministry in general. At the same time records for all projects (payments - verifications- budgets) were kept in paper (dossier) and electronic format (Excel, Word).

All these contributed to the effective implementation of the local programme and the efficient use of the resources.

6.5.5 Governance and rural citizenship

LAGs were created in Greece based on a structured institutional system of local bodies which are the Development Agencies that operate as non-profit limited companies, with local authorities, rural cooperatives, local chambers and associations as their major shareholders. Those agencies had been established, particularly in rural areas, out of the necessity for local development schemes that would become the implementing bodies of the Community Initiative LEADER in the early 1990s.

The need to overcome the restriction (at least 50% of shares at the decision-making level should be privately owned) set by the regulatory framework, has led to the adoption of a distinctive role by the local programme Management Committee which had the responsibility for taking decisions on all matters concerning the programme.

The staff engaged in the implementation of the local programme basically came from the Development Agency that covered the administrative boundaries of the local programme's implementation area.

The Development Agency of North Peloponnese has a widely recognised role in the local community as a development mechanism, which started in the past with the management of LEADER II programme and expanded to the management and implementation of other actions financed by the Structural Funds and particularly from the European Social Fund.

The allocation of tasks and responsibilities between the MA at national level, the LAG and its members which formed the partnership was completely distinctive and there was no confusion. The MA was responsible for the regulatory and institutional framework for the implementation of LEADER+ programmes by bringing all of its duties arising from Regulation 1260/99. Greece, during the whole programming 2000-2006 period, was an Objective 1 region and therefore the management and control issues followed the standards that were identified in the Management and Control System applied to all actions financed by the Structural Funds. Undoubtedly, the roles and responsibilities between the partners were clear and transparent; however their effectiveness is an issue under discussion. The general perception of all stakeholders is that too much emphasis was put on controls and bureaucratic processes, and much less on the key features of the Community Initiative such as innovation and development strategies of pilot nature.

The implementation of the local programme was the absolute responsibility of the LAG. Furthermore, the programme design which reflected local specificities, the distribution of funding among different activities, the animation and provision of technical support to potential beneficiaries, the preparation and publication of calls, the project selection, monitoring, auditing and verification of expenses were the sole responsibility of the LAG.

With the exception of the programme's monitoring system, the LAG did not set up a local socio-economic monitoring system. Similar systems have not been developed either by the competent local administrative bodies (regions, prefectures and municipalities). Overall there is a large deficit in Greece regarding the monitoring of socio-economic trends and data at local level.

Conflicts at local level in Greece mainly occur on matters of land use and location of major infrastructure projects, issues that cannot be solved by the LAGs. Potential conflicts that may arise between the partners were related usually to management issues regarding the local programme rather than strategic issues that could be solved by the LAG.

Internal conflicts and disputes were common during the early years of LEADER's implementation that sometimes led to the dissolution of the LAG. Nowadays, over the course of time and because of increased experience at local level and in conjunction with the continuous improvement of the institutional framework, such conflicts are very rare exceptions.

As mentioned above, the LAG originates from the Development Agency that operates in the same local level which covers the implementation area of the local programme.

Over the course of time, Development Agencies have grown and expanded their scope beyond the implementation of LEADER. In most cases they also had additional funding sources from the implementation of projects financed by EU Structural Funds and Community Initiatives. Such examples are the projects "Assistance at home", Community initiative "EQUAL", "Local Employment Agreement" and the management at local level of the "Integrated Programmes of Rural Development".

6.5.6 Relevance and Community added value

During the 2000-2006 programming period great emphasis was put on the development of mountainous and less-favoured areas of the country. The initial plan was that the National Rural Development Programme (sectoral) and the 12 Regional Operational Programmes would apply in selected rural areas (Integrated Programmes of Rural Development). In total, 80 such programmes were funded based on areas of intervention under Article 33 of EU Regulation 1257 / 1999. LEADER+ programmes would work complementary to the Integrated Programmes of Rural Development, given the fact that many areas overlap. There were specific demarcation criteria as well as certain central directions in relation to the type of interventions that could be financed by LEADER+ and the Integrated Programmes of Rural Development. More specifically, in the Integrated Programmes the proportion between public and private projects should have been 50% - 50%, while in the LEADER+ programme, only 15% of funds could have been allocated to public projects. Therefore, there was full complementarity between the LEADER+ programmes and the objectives of agricultural policy.

Synergies were developed between LEADER+ programmes and mainstream rural development activities in the area which is mainly reflected in networking. Furthermore, the managing / implementation bodies of the Integrated Programmes of Rural Development at local level were the same bodies that implemented LEADER+ which was a central decision by the Ministry of Rural Development and Food. In general, LEADER+ approaches or activities were transferred into the national mainstream rural development policy, with particular emphasis on the interventions of Article 33.

There was no significant contribution by the local LEADER+ programme to the use of new know-how or new technologies. The local programme mainly focused on diversifying local economy and supporting entrepreneurship.

About 20% of the local programme's resources were allocated to investment projects contributing to adding value to local products. 17% of the programme's expenditure was allocated for the best use of natural and cultural resources.

The creation of new jobs, the support of women's entrepreneurship, the reduction of the dependence of rural areas -in terms of income and employment- on the primary sector, were objectives of the local programme that were also national policy objectives for the development of rural areas. The system of indicators (outputs, results and impacts) of the local LEADER+ programmes was common for the whole country, reflecting this way the national targeting.

metis

6.5.7 Impacts

The quantification of the local LEADER+ programme is presented in the tables below.

Measure 1.2: Aids to investments – support to entrepreneurship

Table 44. Output indicators Measure 1.2

Indicators	Target 2009	Value 2009
Number of investment plans in agrotourism (new)	26	24
Number of investment plans in agrotourism (modernization)	6	2
Number of investment plans of small enterprises in the rural sector (new)	8	6
Number of investment plans of small enterprises in the rural sector (modernization)	2	3
Number of investment plans of small enterprises in the rest sectors (new)	16	12
Number of investment plans of small enterprises in the rest sectors (modernization)	5	3
Number of investment plans using new technologies	12	24
Number of new beds in the tourism sector	305	263
Number of beds modernized	20	-
Number of clusters	2	2

Table 45. Result indicators Measure 1.2

	Target 2009	Value 2009
Women (beneficiaries of investment plans)	16	20
Young people (< 30) (beneficiaries of investment plans)	17	18
Job creation during the project delivery period (in equivalent man-years)	140,35	132,15

Table 46. Impact indicators Measure 1.2

	Target 2009	Value 2009
New permanent jobs	89	87
New seasonal jobs	82	61
Job maintenance:	47	8

Measure 1.3: Supporting actions

Table 47. Output indicators Measure 1.3

	Target 2009	Value 2009
Number of studies	0	0
Number of informative actions	2	8
Number of promotion actions	3	1

Table 48. Result indicators Measure 1.3

	Target 2009	Value 2009
Number of people participating in informative actions	100	269
Municipal departments in which informative actions took place as percentage of the total municipal departments of the intervention area	4,2	5,3

Measure 1.4: Protection and exploitation of the natural and cultural heritage

Table 49. Output indicators Measure 1.4

	Target 2009	Value 2009
Number of interventions for the exploitation and protection of natural environment	7	4
Number of interventions for the upgrading of the residential environment and the exploitation of the architectural heritage of rural space	9	11
Number of museums and cultural centres (new or modernized)	7	5
Number of cultural activities (new or maintained)	10	7

Table 50. Result indicators Measure 1.4

	Target 2009	Value 2009
Job creation during the project delivery period (in equivalent man-years)	43.50	34.65

Table 51. Impact indicators Measure 1.4

	Target 2009	Value 2009
New permanent jobs	2	2
New seasonal jobs	3	-
Job maintenance:	-	-

Needs of women and young people

Regarding the needs of women and young people in the specific rural area it should be mentioned that they were taken account of in the selection of activities. The option to enhance female and young entrepreneurship was explicitly chosen by Greece. However, there were no actions in the local LEADER+ programme exclusively addressing women or young people. Priority of young people and women was given to the project selection criteria. Regarding the specific local programme 72 investment projects were implemented in the area, out of which 20 were implemented by women and 18 by young people.

Furthermore, women were represented appropriately in the LAG's operating staff, but not in the decision-making body (E.D.P.).

Contribution to demographic balance

Taking into consideration that the local LEADER+ programme was a relatively low budget programme implemented in an area where other interventions were implemented simultaneously by EU Structural Funds (ROP Peloponnese and interventions funded by FEOGA) it is really difficult to draw conclusions as to whether the programme has contributed to the demographic balance

of the intervention area. Undoubtedly the number of 18 beneficiaries aged under 30 (25% of all businesses financed), is a very important statistic in an area with high population decline. Nevertheless, the local programme's contribution to the demographic situation of the region cannot be measured for two main reasons. First, at the local level the most recent demographic statistics are from 2001, while the next census will take place in 2011. Second, the low contribution, in financial terms, of LEADER+ to the total resources allocated to the Peloponnese region by the ERDF.

Job creation

The most easily measurable economic outcome is employment creation. The local LEADER+ programme enhanced job opportunities in the specific area. More specifically, the implementation of the local programme led to the creation of 89 permanent jobs, 61 seasonal jobs as well as the maintenance of 8 jobs. However, there is no evidence on the number of high quality jobs or green jobs or of non-farm jobs.

Job creation is probably one of the most significant impacts of the local programme's implementation. As mentioned above, through the programme 89 new permanent and 61 seasonal jobs were created, 8 were maintained, while during the implementation of the programme 167 jobs were created. There is no doubt that the establishment of 40 new enterprises has increased local incomes and given the fact that 9 companies are engaged in the primary processing of local agricultural products (wine, oil, honey) access to a local products' market was facilitated. All projects financed and all jobs created are not related to enterprises in the agricultural sector.

Impact on local economies

In average two years after the completion of the investment projects, all business is operating despite the fact that they are very small and that they are most vulnerable to the current economic crisis. Income data are treated as personal data and thus are not provided.

In Greece, the implementation of LEADER+ programme since the adoption of the Community Initiative was mainly focused on the diversification of the local economies and no measures to provide social services to local population were adopted. Given the fact that most of the mountainous rural areas financed by LEADER+ have diversified their economy by focusing on tourism, the majority of financial resources were used for the development of the relative infrastructure (accommodation, dining, and recreation establishments). This investment category represents 34% of the total public expenditure of the LAG's local programme. The adoption of quality standards such as HACCP and ISO by businesses in the area has contributed to the improvement of services provided to both local residents and visitors. In this investment category 24 projects were implemented with a total budget of 185 314 € or 2% of the local programme's public expenditure.

At NUTS IV which is the level of the area that the local LEADER+ programme is implemented, no statistical data on income generation by sector and activity are available. Taking into consideration that the intervention area according to the programme is within the administrative boundaries of three prefectures (NUTS III) which is the lowest administrative level with available statistical data, it is impossible to draw any conclusions. Nevertheless, the examination of the co-financed investment projects makes clear the local programme's contribution to diversifying the economy of the region, since all the businesses that were financed belong to the secondary and tertiary sector (processing of agricultural products, accommodation, restaurants, etc.).

Furthermore, there are no available data on the shift in % of agricultural income per farm household. In addition, although no data are available regarding the turnover of businesses that were co-financed, the fact that all those in the area of food production have HACCP certification provides them with the opportunity to better utilise their production. Financed businesses are mainly

very small with small production that covers local needs and is aimed primarily at the "demand generated by visitors to the area". The creation of modern manufacturing facilities, and the modernisation of existing ones, undoubtedly helped to improve the quality of local products.

The 60% of the local programme's public expenditure was solely focused on the enhancement of development / production capacity of the region.

Anti-discrimination activities

Anti-discrimination activities or measures for disadvantaged groups were not created or developed due to the fact that in local LEADER+ programmes no such activities were listed. Based on the design culture that exists in Greece the relevant activities were financed solely by the European Social Fund.

Impact on natural environment and cultural heritage

The 17% of the programme's public expenditure was allocated to activities related to protection and enhancement of the landscape and local cultural heritage. Natural environment and cultural heritage were the main comparative advantages of the area, so the local programme's strategy was based on the enhancement of cultural heritage and protection of landscape and environment. The area of intervention was highly under-populated (18 residents / km2), facing rapid population decrease. The implementation of the local programme in the area of rural tourism (accommodation and infrastructure, dining and recreation) from the previous programming period (1994 - 1999) in conjunction with the improvement of basic infrastructure funded by the ERDF, has elevated the area in recent years to a popular tourist destination especially during the winter. LEADER+ is credited for the improvement of the region's image and its greater visibility.

The natural environment of the area, as mentioned above, is one of its major advantages. There are no measurements of greenhouse emissions or specific sources of pollution, so no relative actions/ interventions were financed by the local LEADER+ programme.

Mobilization of local authorities and development of partnerships

Undoubtedly the local LEADER+ programme has contributed to the mobilization of local authorities and had a catalytic effect on the development of partnerships between social and economic partners in the region. The ANVOPE LAG was mainly composed of staff from the local development company of Northern Peloponnese, with the participation of local authorities and economic stakeholders which implement the LEADER+ programmes for about twenty years. In terms of quality and based on the interviews conducted and the overall experience of the implementation of the LEADER+ Programme in Greece, the main contribution of the project is to the creation of bonding capital.

The long-term experience from the implementation of LEADER+ shows a great difficulty in implementing actions of transnational cooperation, so the contribution of the programme in bridging capital was limited.

The Community Initiative LEADER+ has been a very successful tool for the diversification of rural areas. This success has contributed to the adoption of its principles to the mainstreaming in rural development programmes such as the Integrated Development Programmes of Agricultural Territories during the 3rd programming period (2000 - 2006). The diversification of the economy of rural areas is a long process that goes beyond the strict timeframe of seven years as there are many other factors that affect it. For Greece, the improvement of accessibility is one of the most important factors as well as the general progress of economic development. The development of mountainous rural areas was based on the establishment of accommodation facilities and other small-scale tourist infrastructure, meeting the demand of residents from urban centres during the

winter (usually weekends). If this trend continues, even with the demand remaining stable, then the observed changes will remain viable.

Information sources

- Initial local L+ programme, ANVOPE S.A., June 2002
- Final local L+ programme, ANVOPE S.A., December 2002
- Final closure report, ANVOPE S.A., December 2009

List of contacted persons

- George Kostouros, Manager and coordinator of the local L+ Programme, ANVOPE S.A.
- George Apostolopoulos, LAG's staff, ANVOPE S.A.

6.6 Hungary: Sümeg Térségi Marcal Forrásviék Fejlödéséért

Basic Information Sümeg Térségi Marcal Forrásviék Fejlödéséért

- Database code: LTM-HU-62

- Official name: Sümeg Térségi Marcal Forrásvidék Fejlődéséért

- Experience in L I: No

- Experience in L II: No

- Objective 1 or 2 zone: Obj. 1.

- Population (inhabitants): 22 103

- Surface area (in km²): 381

- Density (inhabitants/km²): 58

- Number of municipalities: 22

- Employment rate/unemployment rate: 8.5

- Total funding (€): 317 000   (EUR 1 = HUF 260)

- EU share (€): 317 000

- Public funds (€): 317 000

- Private funds (€): 0

- Breakdown of expenditure: Overheads/administration/animation etc

    - 48.000 – for administration, animation, etc. of which:

    - 63% - salaries and their costs

    - 23% - material costs

    - 14% - tools (computers, etc.)

    - 269 000 – for project support

- Number of LAG employees: fulltime/part-time: 2 full time

- LEADER+ theme chosen: *should this be filled in or should there be a 'none' added?*

- LEADER+ other theme(s) chosen: To increase welfare and quality of life. To strengthen the performance of the rural economy

- Level of autonomy: (counter check with programme complement): low

- Level of directiveness: 1.

metis

6.6.1 Object of the case study

Hungary was the only Eastern-European member of the EU where the LEADER+ Programme, although with significant time and financial constraints (for 2 years, EUR 350 000 for each LAG), was fully applied. While in other Member States actions often stopped at the capacity building phase, here 70 LAGs were set up and 2600 local development projects realised during LEADER+. All this was possible based on experience from two previous rural development programmes funded by Hungarian resources: the Rural Development Objective Supports (1999 - 2003), and the Experimental LEADER Programme (2002 - 2004).

The objective of this case study is to show, through the example of one of the working LAGs, a glimpse of how LEADER+ has been implemented in Hungary. The **name of the LAG was** Sümeg Térségi Marcal Forrásvidék Fejlődéséért Akciócsoport (LAG for the Development of Sümeg-Marcal Region). The **LAG** region covered 21 municipalities of the statistical region of Sümeg (LAU2 level) and the small town of Devecser. During LEADER+ in the Hungarian system LAGs were not legal entities, **the official leadership of the group** was carried out by one of its member organisations (Sümeg Micro-Region Multifunctional Association in our case) **the** management **and agency duties** were looked after by another member of the partnership (FAMULUS Association for the Micro-Region Sümeg). The LAG continues to work with a different name and territorial framework in the present planning period (more than double-sized, with three micro-regional offices, etc.), but the centre of the working organisation is still in Sümeg, and the main actors from LEADER+ still participate in the implementation.

Figure 14. Map of the LAG region
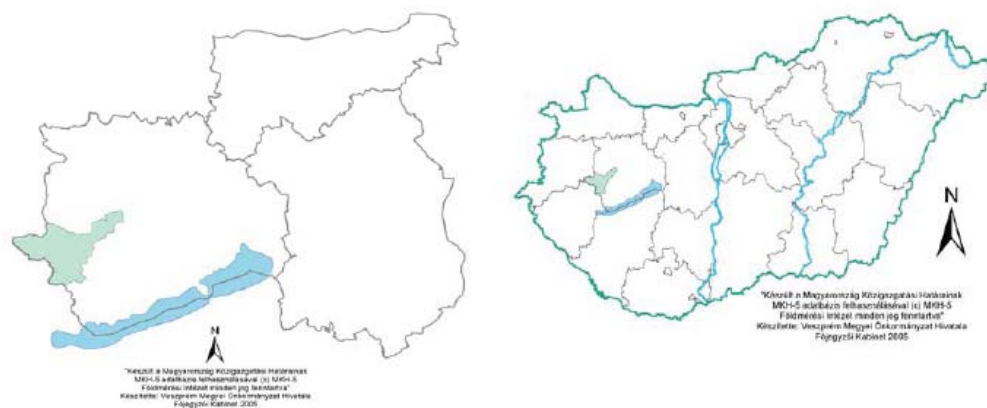
6.6.2 Summary

On many occasions the LAG for the Development of Sümeg-Marcal Region was identified as a good example for LEADER implementation in Hungary (LEADER Magazine, conferences, exhibitions, etc.). This case study intends to explore the reasons for their achievements.

The examined region at the time of LEADER+ had many socio-economic disadvantages, high unemployment, low education and a serious lack of capital and spending capacity. Nevertheless, natural and cultural heritage, a reasonably strong civil society and a rising culture of co-operation for local development meant significant potential for the successful implementation of LEADER+. The leading role for setting up the LAG and the preparation of the local development strategy was taken up by FAMULUS, a civil association specialized in local development and co-

operation. The civilian, participatory and co-operative orientation was maintained during the implementation, since FAMULUS later became the main local agent of the programme.

The preparation for the programme started long before the actual launch of LEADER+ in Hungary, and involved significant financial resources (coming from alternative sources) and the professional help of regional level institutions and a university. This assistance greatly contributed to the exploration of local resources, the development of networks and a culture of trust, participation and co-operation within the LAG region. (Capacity building resourced from LEADER+ in Hungary was restricted to a range of centrally organised events, prepared by a professional consortium; LAGs could not get direct support for training, capacity building or any work in connection with their establishment or the development of their strategy – see 1.2.)

The most important aim of the local strategy was the strengthening of micro and small enterprises, the promotion of co-operation of civil society and public bodies, and the overall reinforcement of the economic and social texture of the region through networking. The aim was to promote local products and services, and to stop, or possibly turn back the outflow of (both material and human) resources from the region. Without these, economic, infrastructure and social development would remain fractured and isolated; there is no link between the various attempts that would make them coherent.

The implementation of the programme was accompanied by many difficulties. Financial resources were very low for organisation and administration as well as for project support (EUR 317.000 altogether). The original two year timeframe was further tightened by central administration and finally there was only one summer month available to set up LAGs and another one (a year later) for making local applications. This extremely tight timeframe created many difficulties, and could lead sometimes to non-organic, distorted development and/or unsustainable results. Nevertheless, good preparation, volunteer work and a local culture of co-operation in the case of the Sümeg LAG allowed for successful implementation.

Finally, 29 projects were realised and EUR 317.000 spent under LEADER+ in the Sümeg LAG, nevertheless, **results and impacts** have been far more important than one could expect from these dimensions. Before LEADER+ the region had practically not profited from EU resources for development, except for some infrastructure investments and 4-5 larger entrepreneurs' tenders. LEADER+ has achieved a multiple of this amount individually, and was able to ensure resources for small scale projects that would have had no chance elsewhere. One could perceive that as evidence proving that LEADER was much more successful in achieving development objectives than other EU funded programmes, reaching down to backward, underdeveloped localities, generating entrepreneurship, co-operation and solidarity. One of the major priorities of the strategy was **the marketing and improvement of local products and services**; moreover, the networking of producers and craftsmen, and this may be the most successful area. The marketplace in Sümeg, various shops, improved services, better machinery, workshops and knowledge for production could be mentioned as tangible results. Two enterprise networks were also formed: Sümeg Térségi Marcal Forrásvidék Hálózat and Marcal Nyitott Porta Hálózat. The former connected producing and general service provider enterprises, the latter being service providers in tourism.

LEADER+ has had a lot of other positive results in addition to the winning tenders. It has mobilised the population of the whole region and fuelled co-operation. A lot of project ideas have been collected as a result of community planning, that could not receive funding in LEADER, but in other operative programmes they finally did. LEADER+ and the LAG itself also acted as a pump primer, helping innovation, networking inside and outside the micro-region and the acquisition of funds from alternative sources. The local development capacity established by LEADER+ played a significant role in the collection and compilation of new ideas (the president of FAMULUS wrote, as a professional compiler of tenders, acted in numerous successful applica-

metis

tions, mainly for local governments). The material resources drawn into the region amount to billions of HUF, in other words, the indirect effects multiplied many times over the amount sourced from LEADER+. The lead organisation of the LAG led a project aimed at stimulating investment in the micro-region in order to strengthen enterprise culture, to unfold potential resources and to be able to reach potential investors. During the project (which consumed a mere 2 million HUF altogether) an inventory of resources (dynamic database and published booklet) were compiled, and several highly successful businessmen's meetings were organised. As a result of the project various investments are in the preparatory phase on billion HUF scale (mineral water bottler, medical ingredients manufacturing plants, etc.).

One could say that LEADER+ was a successful programme in the Sümeg region; first of all, it created good circumstances and capacities for the further implementation of the LEADER approach. Also, the development capacity (human resources, networks) has persisted and it supports the implementation of the current LEADER Programme, though in a different geographic framework. On the other hand, tangible improvements are not too numerous and horizontal objectives of the programme (support for disadvantaged social groups, environment, etc.) were somewhat dismissed during planning and implementation.

6.6.3 LAG design and planning

Short description of the socio-economic environment

The LAG area is characterised by a fragmented settlement system, similar to the surrounding regions, with two small towns (Sümeg and Devecser) and 20 villages, the smallest one (Megyer) inhabited by a mere 48 people. The population of the micro-region is 22,103 persons, which is decreasing, while the average age increases. Outmigration is still characteristic in the smallest villages, though it is decreasing. The Sümeg is the least advantageous area of the county, unemployment at the planning stage of LEADER+ was high (with 8.5%, 1.5 times the average of the county), many permanently unemployed. The employment structure is based on primary industries, people have low education levels, and in certain municipalities social problems and poverty can accumulate. The development of the economy was strongly hindered by a lack of capital and spending capacity, underdeveloped entrepreneurship skills, and a lack of co-operative skills. At the planning stage of the LEADER+ programme companies were fractured and isolated, the majority of the 1098 registered business units were self employed or family businesses, while only 1.5% of all businesses employed more than 20 people. There were few business and trade service providers as a consequence, and additionally the small existing spending capacity flew out of the region.

However, a significant built heritage (castles, fortress ruins, churches, and cottages), industrial monuments, a beautiful natural environment, Natura 2000 and other protected areas of national importance carry great potential for tourism. The number of civic organisations (associations, foundations, etc.) was more than 100, and local governments regularly co-operated in various issues. Due to the local governments, civic organisations and various associations, foundations were established on the micro-regional level to promote the development of the region. These had already had projects going on for years, with the aim of promoting local co-operation and regional development based on various national and EU sources, so both local governments and civil organisations had the disposition to step forward. All these issues (natural, cultural resources, willingness for co-operative action, specific problems, etc.) represented a firm foundation for the launch of the LEADER+ Programme.

Establishing the action group and local planning

The mode and success of the establishment and operation of LEADER is often linked with the skills, personality and enthusiasm of the key local actors. This has been the case in Sümeg as well, where Zsuzsanna Szabados, the leader of the later management organisation played a very important role in organising the local networks, the foundation of the LAG and in setting up a strategy. Szabados, after graduating from college as an economist, moved to the town and started to work as a regional manager for the Micro-Region Multifunctional Association (Többcélú Kistérségi Társulás). Her tasks included writing applications for calls, managing and reinforcing the co-operation between the villages and towns, and organising a review of the existing local development strategy. Local governments were pleased with her work, however, her enthusiasm and professional aspiration soon outgrew the narrow opportunities of the local government sector. She left her job in harmony with the Micro-Region, and became a professional writer of tenders, at the same time she was elected president of the then forming Foundation for the Development of Sümeg Region (Sümeg Térség Fejlesztéséért Közalapítvány). In the following years she wrote and won several dozen tenders for the local governments of the region, as a result of which important public buildings, village and town centres were renovated based on EU and Hungarian resources. Meanwhile, mutual trust with local governments strengthened, and Szabados established a close professional relationship with the financing Regional Development Agency, where she was appointed as local development advisor at the beginning of 2006 in the programme 'NFT házhoz jön' (The NDP Comes to the House). The voluntary work done at the Foundation opened a pathway for local civic organisations, and, in 2005 as an initiative of the previous regional manager and led by the same, the FAMULUS Association for the Micro-Region Sümeg (Sümeg Kistérségért Egyesület) was formed, with the participation of 22 young local adults. This Association soon became a major driving force of local co-operation.

Thus, the call of the LEADER+ Programme in June 2005 arrived in a well prepared environment in Sümeg. In fact, preparations had already been started well before the call for tenders. After the call there was only a month available for entering the first tender, which would not have been sufficient for the gradual organisation of the group, the preparation and socialisation of the strategy. The preparation was supported in the Sümeg region by several regional level organisations and programmes bringing significant financial support, the majority of which arrived into the region through personal contacts of the president of FAMULUS. Probably the most important such programme was the model programme promoting micro-regional co-operation and community planning financed by the Regional Development Agency (20 million HUF – approx. 80 000 EUR); but also the Térségi Civil Fórum (Regional Civil Forum) was formed during this period (with the 44 000 EUR support of the National Civil Fund - Nemzeti Civil Alap); the local employment pact was prepared with the professional and financial help of the Regionális Munkaügyi Központ (Regional Labour Centre); and another project supported by the Regional Development Agency (Regionális Fejlesztési Ügynökség) aimed at mapping the renewable resources, which was executed by the College for Modern Business Sciences (value: 15 million HUF – approx. 60 000 EUR). All in all, from various alternative sources, more than EUR 200 000 was gathered and spent during the run-up to LEADER+ in the region, on studies, strategy building, communication, awareness raising and socialisation of development ideas[124].

---

[124]   In Hungary the 'Acquisition of skills' measure under LEADER+ was implemented centrally, through a consortium. For this task a training consortium (PROMEI public company in consortium with the Village Workshop Foundation) was selected through a tendering procedure (open, international public procurement) in the first half of 2005. It provided preparatory trainings starting in mid-2005 until the end of 2006. Activities, organised by PROMEI were available to any rural community, as well as any interested organisation or association, therefore no additional support directly for LAGs was available for training, capacity building, establishing LAGs or writing the local development strategy. Nevertheless, according to many opinions by LAGs the appointed consortium performed rather poorly. The result of their work: a textbook mainly compiled from translated material, a short training for trainers, two days of training for each micro-region's management organisation based on lectures, and an unorganised, ad hoc and ineffective mentoring system. All this was not sufficient to build appropriate capacities in rural areas for the implementation of LEADER. In some micro-regions (as in Sümeg, for example) local communities could gather enough strength, know-how, financial resources and

metis

AEIDL CEU

The formation of the LAG started with a common statement of intent by the 22 participating local governments. After that three persons were delegated by all municipalities (an entrepreneur, a civilian and one person from the local government) to the LEADER Forum to be established. This has become a defining scene of planning, and most of the participants of the future LAG also came from here. FAMULUS held an informative, planning meeting in every village. These were organised with the help of the local governments, and held usually with the intense participation of local entrepreneurs, organisations and many private individuals. Also meetings by professional groups were held for the individual thematic areas (e.g. tourism, producing craftsmen's items, issues of the underprivileged). The ideas and issues collected were processed and brought before the Forum, where four separate working groups were formed to analyse the most important topics: (1) local products and services; (2) open home network along Marcal river (tourism services); (3) issues of the underprivileged; (4) marketing of the region and the settlements. During the planning phase the Forum assembled three times. The assemblies were open and announced in local TV programmes, newspapers and on billboards, and among members some important local players were personally invited. The co-operative atmosphere was apparent, as local governments, civilians and entrepreneurs did not come in separate cars from the villages to the assembly in Sümeg, but together in village-cars.

As a result of the process the **local partnership was established** with 54 members, where the public organisations (local authorities and regional bodies) had a proportion of 50%, being the strongest actor. At the same time the participating 22 local governments accepted during the planning phase that the resources of LEADER+ did not serve the financing of their projects in the first place, and there was a common agreement that if enough tenders arrived from entrepreneurs or civilians, local governments would withdraw their submitted projects. This agreement was made possible by careful preparation and the fact that incoming project ideas from the local governments were collected separately and ordered under various operative programmes, demonstrating that alternative sources may be found for these, while in the case of smaller projects there was no chance to do so. The collected project lists served later as a basis for a handful of successful EU tenders in the governmental area. Along local governments also some **regional and national level state institutions** took part in the partnership, e.g. the labour centre of Veszprém County, the cultural institute of the county, the agricultural chamber and the regional development agency of Central-Transdanubia. These institutions had an opportunity to get to know the LEADER programme, which meant substantial professional and financial help and prestige for the LAG. The comparatively high number of the participating entrepreneurs (18) showed that the basic message of the strategy reached the target groups. Civilians had the lowest number of representatives in the partnership, but the participating organisations were very active, and the leadership of FAMULUS also meant an assurance that interests of the civilians would be considered extensively.

Local development strategy

The **most important aim of the local strategy** established on a partnership and participation basis and widely advertised amongst local actors, was the strengthening of micro and small enterprises, the promotion of co-operation of civil society and public bodies, and the overall reinforcement of the economical and social texture of the region through networking. The aim was to promote local products and services, and to stop or, possibly turn back the outflow of (both material and human) resources from the region. Without these economic, infrastructure and social development remains fractured and isolated, there is no link between the various attempts that would make them coherent.

---

expertise appropriate for starting LEADER. Nevertheless, this was the result of local initiative rather than the possibilities provided by the system, therefore many micro-regions were much less successful in the preparation phase than the Sümeg LAG.

Particular objectives formulated in the strategy:

Overall objective: To strengthen the population retaining power of the region and sustain economic growth.

Special objective: To improve the organisation of the co-operation, in order to utilise possible sustainable sources of income and economical potential of the region with the aim to elevate the quality of life.

Direct objective: To create the opportunity to utilise the economic potential of the region based on self-organised co-operation, through the exploration of the region's unique values and development.
The three main groupings for action:

1. A network-like linking of the products and services of Marcal Forrásvidék micro-region

2. Creation of Marcal Nyitott Porta (Open House) network (tourism, built and natural heritage);

3. Strengthening of regional and settlement marketing (awareness of identity, networking, marketing).

Table 52. Quantified objectives of the strategy:

	Planned	achieved
Type of enterprises to be supported		
Micro enterprise	35	5
Small – enterprise	4	7
Women entrepreneurs	15	1
Young entrepreneurs	15	4
Roma entrepreneurs	4	0
Disabled entrepreneurs	4	0
Municipalities supported	13	7
NGOs	13	10
Non-investment-related developments	Appr. 21	11
Investment-related developments	Appr. 43	23
New or enhanced economic activities	Appr. 51	15
New or improved (non-economic) activities	Appr. 13	13
Created and/or retained jobs -	Appr. 22	23
Of which related to		
Tourism	4	4
Crafts and trade	2	3
Specific local / traditional / quality food production	4	1
Under 30 years old	11	No data
Women	13	No data
Romany	4	No data
Disabled	4	No data

metis

AEIDL   CEU

6.6.4 Management, controlling and financing systems

Some critical issues and problems concerning the tender system during the realisation of the LEADER+ Programme in Hungary arose during implementation due to a lack of trust, time and resources. The programme, in theory, started straight after the EU enlargement, at the end of spring 2004, but in fact operation only started a year later with the phase for "acquisition of skills" and building capacities. Another year passed before a two-round invitation for the creation of LAGs was finally published on 28th of June 2005. The LAGs had to be formulated and a preliminary draft of the local strategy had to be presented by 1st of August. Some 182 applications arrived, though this month alone had to be sufficient for groups, who, similarly to the group in Sümeg, started preparations for the tender well before the call. It took 3 months for MARD (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development) to prepare the final tender inviting only some 50% of the applicants for the second phase. The tender was published on 25th of October, again with a deadline of one month. After a further 4 months pause the list of the winner groups was published in March 2006, but the contracts were signed with them only at the end of May.

Different to the European practice, action groups were not allowed to decide when and for how long they would open local tenders, the Management Authority (MA - the department responsible for rural development of MARD) reserved this right for itself. At the same time the paying agency (Agricultural and Rural Development Agency – ARDA) closely controlled the preparation of the local tenders, in order to avoid possible later legal complications. The calls for local tenders were expected for June, but finally, they were published in August, for one month, with an extremely short application deadline in September. Only those who had already had a well prepared project had a chance to submit an application. This short time allowed only rewriting the projects according to the text of the final calls defined by ARDA, there was definitely no time to generate projects or to organise activities for the animation of local society. Where there were not enough tenders (this was in many instances the case due to unpreparedness, the short deadline, and the centralised regulations and language forced upon the local calls for tenders) there was a possibility to open them again in December, though with no opportunity to change bad or ineffective calls. The haste was understandable, as according to the EU regulations all EU resources would have had to be secured with a contract by December 2006. Hungary finally got some prolongation of this deadline; the contracts were closed by March of the following year.

Evaluation and scoring of tenders

The evaluation and scoring of the tenders was done in a quite centralised form. The tenders arrived at the LAGs (in hard copies and on a CD, as files), the LAGs passed a hard copy further to the ARDA and fed all applications into the central electronic processing system (IIER). Some 80 points from the total of 100 points could be given based on a central scoring table. According to many, this table was prepared based on professionally well considered viewpoints (with a logical structure, LEADER-like concept, expected effect, sustainability) and it gave a place to local issues, however, it did mean a central regulation of decision making. The remaining 20 scores could be decided on local considerations. These were the following in Sümeg: network membership, regional product, regional service provider, partnership and regional marketing.

The tender was scored and processed both by the LAG and the ARDA; where there was a difference between the two scores, the management organisation and the authority negotiated. Final ranking was theoretically decided by a local decision making and monitoring committee (LSMC), to the assemblies of which the representatives of the ARDA had to be obligatorily invited. The main issue here was the lack of capacity within ARDA. Though the management organisation of the Sümeg LAG finished the processing of the 43 tenders received within a few weeks, the two employees of the controlling county-level office of ARDA dealing with LEADER had to tackle the tenders of all the ten LAGs of the region. This explains how it could happen that feedback from ARDA concerning the tenders did not arrive the assembly of the LSMC in Sümeg.

This caused major disruption and disappointment, since ARDA made many objections to the tenders on the meeting (according to them more than half of the tenders gave reason for concern) that practically restrained decision making. Eventually, this did not cause serious problems. The decision was postponed and with the professional support of the management organisation LSMC could successfully defend applicants against representatives of the ARDA. The president of FAMULUS prepared each member of the LSMC individually for the debate and on the second (and final) assembly of the LSMC the vast majority of the projects were accepted.

Financing system

The funding system, though with very low resources, operated transparently and relatively smoothly. LAGs got 90 or 100 million HUF (approx. 360.000 to 400.000 EUR), depending only on whether they were on the centrally defined list of very disadvantaged micro-regions or not. They could spend 15% on management, which was barely enough for the modest salary of 1.5-2 employees along with upkeep costs of the office[125]. In Sümeg two members of FAMULUS were employed, the president (Szabados) worked as a volunteer in the programme. She received salary as a regional development advisor, and was paid an expert's fee for some of her work in assessing LEADER+ tenders. Without the voluntary work of members of FAMULUS necessary tasks could not have been done. The FAMULUS got 20% of management cost as advance payment at the beginning, and rolled this amount in front until the end of the programme. The accounting system was reasonably simple and transparent. Professional reports had to be handed in every half a year, financial accounts only when the amount paid in advance was running low. LAGs had to be cautious about this, because the transfer of the money often took 4-5 months. They had to account for each payment and bill towards ARDA, and during the final period they also had to apply for credit (because they got a rolling advance payment of only up to 80% of the total amount), but the system worked out basically well.

As the projects were financed through the ARDA the money aimed at supporting them did not appear on the account of the LAG. Beneficiaries also could get 20% in advance (if they applied for it), and by including more milestones projects could execute projects theoretically with only a small amount of credit. Delays in payments, however, often hindered this, and beneficiaries tended to try to reduce the number of milestones and took loans from banks to pre-finance their projects instead.

The tender, financial and control system of LEADER+ in Hungary was built on European examples, but the autonomy of the action groups suffered severely on many points, due to the unprepared regulations and low capacities of the central institutions. A general lack of a culture of trust in Hungarian administration (and particularly in the operation of the MARD) and a lack of genuine decentralisation further worsened the circumstances for the implementation of the LEADER approach. The pattern was that MARD and ARDA normally took 3 to 4 months to make any decision or to prepare the next stage of the programme, action groups, however, had only one month to realise what they could in haste, under a strong central control. Though it was possible to make preparations before calls were published, it was hard to predict whether the work invested would pay off, since important details of the tender regulations (support rate, eligibility criteria, etc.) changed even after the publication of the tenders or a few days before their submission deadline. The most problematic issue was that during the whole programming period there was only one month available for the preparation and submission of local applications. This meant that important elements of the LEADER method could not prevail. The one-round tender in Sümeg had the result that, even though there were loads of prepared projects and a huge

---

[125] The 15% of budget for administration and social animation for NMS was, in general, very low, one could say insufficient. Nevertheless, we should also note that in fact, not the 15%, but the overall budget was insufficient for the programme. It would be very difficult to justify a higher percentage of resources spent on implementation and administration in a local development programme.

demand for support, 17% of the whole source was finally withheld because of withdrawals (8 applicants backed out of the successful tenders because of delays and other issues).

All in all, and looking back from the sea of regulations of the present LEADER the general opinion within the Sümeg LAG was, that the system of LEADER+, with its anomalies and restricted sources, was still much more appropriate for the enforcement of LEADER policies and for developing rural areas than the present system.

6.6.5 Governance and rural citizenship

Multi-level governance, institutions, competencies, responsibilities

The major institutions established for the execution of LEADER+ are shown in the illustration below. The main controlling organ of the Programme was the Management Authority (MA – Department for Rural Development, MARD), though the central LEADER department of the national paying agency – ARDA took part in the most important decisions. The MA was in direct contact with the LAGs (through directives and accounts), but everyday control happened through the county offices of ARDA. These also had special departments responsible for LEADER+ with 2-3 employees. A further important central player was the Hungarian LEADER Centre, responsible for education, information, the organisation of the co-operation of regions and international contacts. It also maintained active, lively contact with the majority of the action groups.

Figure 15. Organigram of the LAG
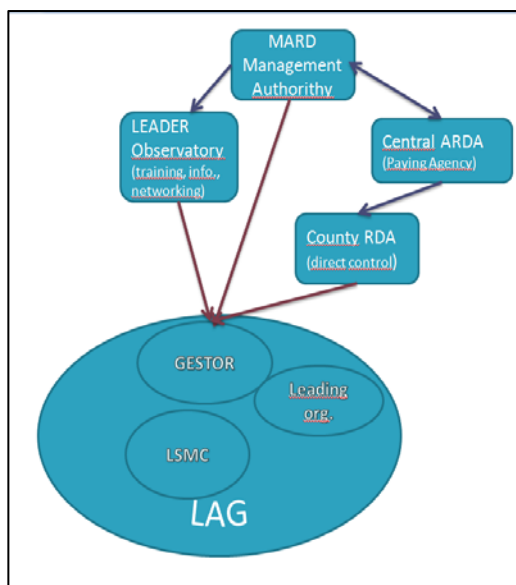
A crucial problem of the central institutional system was that it was not built on mutual trust and genuine decentralisation efforts. As a result of this, LAGs did not get enough autonomy – a significant part of control remained with central institutions. At the same time these institutions (mainly the paying agency) were not prepared to control and manage several thousand small value tenders, nor, in general, to support the management of a development programme based on multiannual programming, partnership and local participation. Accordingly, they tried to shape everything to the simplest form for the central bureaucracy, and to pass on risks to lower levels (to LAGs and beneficiaries). However, even this centralised, less 'LEADER-type' system worked in quite a staggered way (rules were changed underway, deadlines were exceeded, payments were late, etc.). All this resulted, in very varied results. Successful local development could still be possible (as it was in the case of the Sümeg LAG, for example), but success was contingent, did not really follow from the system and was subject to the preparedness and enthusiasm of the local players, the level of the local developmental and co-operational culture in Hungary even more than in EU15 countries.

Local Governance

The structure of the local institutions differed from European practice too. As a result of the lack of time and the complicated Hungarian regulations, LAGs had no opportunity to transform into a legal entity. Thus they submitted a consortium tender and one of the participating organisations signed the contract of the LAG as a Leading Organisation (mostly one of the local governments). In practice this meant an end to the distinguished role of the leading organisation. The LAG itself, that should have been the major place for the reconciliation of interests, local responsibility and decision making, got a minimal role in the execution of the programme too. An average LEADER+ action group assembled only once in Hungary during the whole programme, when accepting the local strategy and the organisational structure and electing the local selection and monitoring committee (LSMC). The narrower decision making organ of the LAG, the LSMC also assembled only a few times (twice in Sümeg), to define the order of the tenders. The only operational unit with real functions of the quite complicated local institutional system was the management organisation.

As the LAG was not a legal entity, it could not have any employees, and the programme did not hold enough money to be able to establish a new organisation (a small development agency) for the execution of the programme. So, there was a need to choose a management organisation amongst member organisations that looked after the local management of the LEADER+. Later this organisation had become the most important local agent of the programme, the face of LEADER+ both inwards and outwards. In the case of many Hungarian LEADER+ the role of a manager was played by a local government, which in some cases narrowed down the chance of LEADER-like operation.

In Sümeg, however, a different pattern prevailed, due to the strong pressure from the civil society, the openness of the local governments and the careful professional preparation for the programme, described above. The core of the LAG, the LEADER Forum, assembled several times, common work continued in thematic workgroups later on, and regional level member organisations participated in the work intensively for a long period. Mutual trust is shown by the fact that though the organisation work of the LAG was originally started by the above mentioned public foundation of the local governments, it was seamlessly handed over to the FAMULUS Association, which had also played the role of the manager later on. Thus the organisation and control of the programme continued based on civil organisation foundations. This was a determining factor during the execution of the whole programme, and allowed for wide social acceptance, much more voluntary contribution than usual in Hungary, a total lack of political issues, and made a co-operative and trusting atmosphere possible. FAMULUS, as a management organisation achieved the following:

- it established appropriate capacities and contacts;
- it helped to reinvent local values as resources for development and the organisation of co-operative networks;
- it represented the interests of the applicants and the whole region towards the authorities in a reflexive and proactive way;
- it functioned as an interpreter between central expectations and local skills, and successfully utilised central support for local socio-economic efforts.

The local institutional system was, as evident, quite complicated and had many actors, but the management organisation was a key actor executing the programmes, the others did not get too much to do. On top of this, as we have already seen, the management organisation was not an organisation created to execute LEADER+. LEADER+ therefore arrived as an additional method and project into an existing organisational and institutional culture that could easily ruin a LEADER-like approach. In Sümeg, luckily, the young civil association FAMULUS succeeded in fully adopting the LEADER principles, and in executing the programme according to and beyond

the LEADER methods that the central requirements had prescribed; this was a major force be-hind the undeniable success of the Sümeg region during LEADER+. (This, however, did not logi-cally arise from the structure of the system, but was rather incidental, and did not happen in all regions.)

In spite of the fact, that the planning was not supported by substantial training or mentoring, and no central financial support was ensured, the Sümeg LAG encountered considerable success during the preparation and planning phase. As a result of the personal contacts and volunteer work of the leader and members of the FAMULUS Association, significant financial resources were obtained for the preparation work. Also, much local participation and enthusiasm was gen-erated, and all this helped to create and realise a strategy well fitted to the issues and capabili-ties of the region. In all the panes of the local call for tenders quality applications arrived, and the programme contributed significantly to the main objectives of the strategy during the realisation (with special regard to the most important objective, namely the formation and development of co-operative networks). The majority of development capacities set up could be maintained also for the present programming phase in spite of the altered geographical and institutional frames. Those members of FAMULUS, actively working in LEADER+ are still important actors and em-ployees of the current, much larger LAG. The centre office of the LAG agency is still in the same building in Sümeg and the local networks, inherited from the previous programme, still provide significant help in the implementation of the current one.

6.6.6 Relevance and Community Added Value

LEADER+ was executed in Hungary with very modest resources, and in a very tight timeframe. There were only a few months available for local development and social animation. In such cir-cumstances significant results cannot be expected. On the other hand, LEADER had been prom-ised and expected by the rural society to be a saviour for a long time. One of the programme's characteristics is, that the results due to the utilisation of local resources, the starting of co-operation, the synergies and secondary effects are sometimes more significant than the invested money would suggest. This was even more evident in the case of Sümeg.

The LAG Sümeg Térség Marcal Forrásvidék Akciócsoport was formed in May 2006. It called for local tenders in August, with decision about the final order to be by December. 43 tenders were submitted, 38 won, 29 were finally realised (8 resigned because of delays, the application for payment of one tender was rejected). The support value was HUF 82.5 million (EUR 317 000), HUF 12.5 million (EUR 50 000) was spent on the management of the programme; the rest was spent on financing the projects. Thanks to the LEADER Programme the awareness of identity has strengthened in the region, economic co-operation and community programmes were set up, investments developing the activities of local entrepreneurs were realised. The flow of infor-mation has accelerated, a common regional marketing and networking has started. Projects, workshops, forums and businessmen's meetings were organised in this framework. An interna-tional co-operation was signed with the renewable energy centre of Güssing, Austria, where the LAG gained experience on the utilisation of renewable energy.

Before LEADER+ the region practically had not profited from the EU resources for development, except for some infrastructure investments and 4-5 larger entrepreneurs' tenders. LEADER+ has achieved a multiple of this amount, and had a lot of other positive results in addition to the win-ning tenders. It has moved the population of the whole region, it has fuelled co-operation. A lot of project ideas have been collected as a result of community planning, that did not have a source in LEADER, but in other operative programmes they did. The local development capacity estab-lished by LEADER+ played a significant role in the collection and compilation of these ideas (the president of FAMULUS wrote, as a professional compiler of tenders, numerous successful appli-cations, mainly for local governments). The material resources drawn into the region amount to

billions of HUF, in other words, the indirect effects multiplied many times the amount of the sources of LEADER+.

Ensuring resources for small scale projects

At the same time LEADER+ was able to ensure resources for small scale projects that would have had no chance elsewhere. In the Hungarian system (unlike the usual way in Europe) the complementary nature of the regulation was interpreted in a way that in order to eliminate double financing, the opportunity to access support from various programmes must be strictly detached by either geographical or statistical borders from each other. For example, the tenders for small and medium enterprises in GOP (Gazdasági Operatív Program - Economic Operative Program) were only available for enterprises with their premises at a place with more than 5 000 inhabitants. LEADER+, on the other hand, was only open for enterprises based in settlements with less than 5 000 inhabitants. So, rural enterprises were at a serious disadvantage, but there was still an emphasis on the value and role of LEADER for enterprises that could participate. One of the main aims of the Sümeg LAG was to improve enterprises and support their co-operation. Therefore they formed two networks: Sümeg Térségi Marcal Forrásvidék Hálózat and Marcal Nyitott Porta Hálózat. The former connected businesses in production and general service provision, the latter tourism enterprises. In order to strengthen enterprise culture, to unfold potential resources and to be able to reach potential investors the lead organisation of the LAG led a project aimed at stimulating investment in the micro-region. During the project (which consumed a mere 2 million HUF altogether) an inventory of resources (dynamic database and published booklet) were compiled, and several highly successful businessmen's meetings were organised. The project was a great success and received attention from the regional and national media, but, unfortunately, the activities stopped at the end of the project due to the lack of human capacity and further financial support. Still, as a result of the project various large investments (on the scale billion HUF) arrived to a preparation phase (mineral water bottler, medical ingredients manufacturing plants, etc.). Also, entrepreneurs of the region educated during LEADER+ have established an independent association, with aims and rhetoric very similar to the original project, subsidised by the LAG in the first place.

LEADER+ has also helped to increase the quality of local products and services. One of the objectives of the programme was to set up a network of specialised shops in the region for food and craftsmanship, but Hungarian business regulations did not make this possible. Still a local marketplace and a craftsman's shop were opened. A greengrocer's, a hunter's and a bakery, where local producers' milk is available, also got support and are still in operation. In addition, there were progresses made as far as tourism services are concerned, the offer has been significantly broadened, contributing significantly to a better quality of life in the region.

During the programme a study was conducted on the regional opportunities of renewable resources by the College of Modern Technical Sciences. It was financed by another source, but was run in practice by the LAG and FAMULUS. Partly as a result of this study, the creation of several biogas power plants is in a preparation phase. Some other investments into machinery also concerned new technologies (CNC mill, mobile ultrasound and X-ray). There were some further projects concerning sustainable environment, the most interesting being the establishment of a gene bank by general co-operation, that resulted in saving and re-cultivating traditional apple species of the region. This project (Bazsalma) served as an example, linking sustainability with social development, by saving and utilising the cultural and natural heritage.

We may conclude that the LEADER+ had a lot of results at local level, it had synergic effects, it drew significant additional financial sources to the region, it improved the co-operative skills of local players, and, finally, it established a significant rural development capacity still functioning to this day. Central and regional institutions, however, did not learn from the previous programme, based on the experience of the current LEADER. At higher levels of the system practi-

metis

cally all important players were exchanged due to the political drivers, reorganisations and fluc-
tuation of staff, and the experience accumulated was lost. During the planning phase of the new
programme and the reorganisation of the institutional network not the rational, developmental,
economical and social issues played a predominant role but political, bureaucratic and fiscal
considerations.

6.6.7 Impacts

The LEADER+ was applied in Hungary as an experiment. Since the programme only operated
for two years and had quite narrow resources, a structural rearrangement of socio-economic and
environmental conditions, or other very apparent effects cannot be expected. On top of this, dur-
ing the programme relevant horizontal indicators were not measured centrally in Hungary (see
the table below with regard to the realised projects in the Sümeg region). Directions and some
examples serving as an illustration of these, however, are visible from the execution of the pro-
gramme.

Table 53. Results and output indicators of the local rural development plan

Results and output indicators of the local rural development plan	
Number of tenders submitted	48
Number of successful tenders	38
Number of contracts closed	30
Micro enterprise	5
Small enterprise	7
Female entrepreneur	1
Young entrepreneur	4
Local government	7
Social organisation, foundation	10
Non-investment type development	11
Investment type development	23
New or improved economic activities	15
New or improved non-economic activities	13
Number of jobs created/preserved	23
Tourism	4
Craftmanship, small scale industry	3
Local food production	1
Other activities	2

Due to the pressing unemployment rates a priority during the planning phase of the strategy was the creation of jobs and the support of self-employment. 23 of the incoming 43 tenders mentioned the preservation of jobs as a central role, 13 included tar-geted creation of jobs in co-operation with the management organisation, and 12 aimed at the improvement of working conditions. With nine excep-tions all introduced a new service of its kind. The largest enterprises in preparation as a result of the invest-ment-promoting project will prospec-tively employ 150-200 persons alto-gether.

The special support of **females and the youth** were not a priority in the strategy, but there were some inter-esting and useful projects at the area
of community development and marketing connected to schools. There is no special association
for the safeguarding of the interests of females or the youth in the region, consequently, these
could not be drawn into the decision making process. A local foundation working on issues of the
youth, however, was part of the LAG. The interests of the **underprivileged population** were
represented by several organisations in the decision making process (Centre for Social Care,
Gipsy Minority Government, the Catholic Church, Hope Foundations, etc.). This target group had
no priority in the strategy either, but they were an important target of job creation, support for en-
terprises and community organisation.

One of the major priorities of the strategy was **the marketing and improvement of local prod-
ucts and services**, moreover, the networking of producers and craftsmen. This may be the most
successful area of the programme. The marketplace in Sümeg, shops, an enterprise network, a
business association could be mentioned as tangible results. At least in the economic sphere a

movement and co-operation has been started. The local civil society also underwent significant development. More than ten new, active associations were established and the regional civil forum was formed, that helps the co-operation of the various organisations and organises common actions as a screen organisation.

Three years after the execution of the programme, compared to the minimal amount of invested central financial resources, significant changes can be experienced in the social and economic state of the region. Most of these effects come in an indirect way, they are not directly linked to the tenders or the financing of the realised projects, much more to the preparation, the capacity building, to the development of the community and the local identity, in other words, to the results arising from the process of the LEADER method. There are also tangible results though. An example of such a result is the high amount of realised projects (renovation of public buildings and village centres, infrastructure investments) that were realised utilising other resources, but emerged and were initiated in connection with LEADER+.

Information sources

- AVOP LEADER+ INTÉZKEDÉS, 1. TEVÉKENYSÉG, AKCIÓCSOPORTOK KIVÁLASZTÁSA ELSŐ PÁLYÁZATI FORDULÓ - PÁLYÁZATI ADATLAP - SÜMEG TÉRSÉGI MARCAL FORRÁSVIDÉK FEJLŐDÉSÉÉRT AKCIÓCSOPORT
  (The original application of the LAG for the LEADER support

- Sümeg Térségi Marcal Forrásvidék – A VIDÉK FORRÁSA - Helyi Vidékfejlesztési Terv
  (The source of the rural – Local development strategy - LAG for the Development of Sümeg-Marcal Region)

- A helyi akcióterv végrehajtásának zárójelentése - Sümeg Térségi Marcal Forrásvidék Fejlődéséért Akciócsoport
  (Final report on the application of the local development strategy (2008)- LAG for the Development of Sümeg-Marcal Region)

- LEADER+ program, mint a vidékfejlesztés komplex eszköze- Sümeg, 2006. május 24. – PPT
  (LEADER+ programme, as a complex tool in rural development – ppt)

- Civilek a vidékért - Összefogással, partnerséggel … Pápa, 2006, November 9. – ppt
  (Civil society for the rural – with cooperation and partnership – ppt

- Fieldwork notes, video diaries, presentations of the Participatory Video - Self Evaluation Project conducted with the LAG in June 2006.

List of contacted persons

Szabados Zsuzsanna– the president of FAMULUS
Miklósi Sikes Levente – LAG manager in LEADER+
Czapári Róbert - beneficiary in LEADER+
Simon Lajos – mayor of Dabronc, the president of the Leading Organisation of the LAG
Horváth Viola – Veszprém Megyei Közművelődési Intézet (Adult Education Institute of Veszprém County) – member of the LAG
Csurgó Rafael – local entrepreneur, wood-carver, LAG member
Apáti Zoltán - Sümegprága Jövőjéért Egyesület (Association for the Future of Sümegprága) president – LAG member

6.7 Italy: Maielle Verde, Abruzzo

<u>**Basic information for Maielle Verde, Abruzzo**</u>

Database code:

Official name: Maiella Verde

Experience in L I: Yes

Experience in L II: Yes

Objective 1 or 2 zone: Obj. 2

Population (inhabitants): 97 287

Surface area (in km²): 1 290.8

Density (inhabitants/km²): 75.37

Number of municipalities: 55

Employment rate/unemployment rate: 41%/7.4%

Total funding (€): 9 579 082

EU share (€): 2 394 745

Public funds (€): 4 789 491

Private funds (€): 4 789 591

Breakdown of expenditure: Overheads/administration/animation etc 1, Measures extra LAG 6 305 000 2, Cooperation 2 312 290.33 3

LAG (including animation): 961 791.88

Number of LAG employees: fulltime/part-time Employees part time: 3

External consultants: 8

LEADER+ theme chosen: enhancement of local products

LEADER+ other theme(s) chosen: enhancement of natural and cultural resources

Level of autonomy: (counter check with programme complement) 3

Level of directiveness: 2

6.7.1 Object of the case study

- LAG name: Maiella Verde soc. cons. a r. l. (Green Maiella limited consortium)
- Province of Chieti (north west and central part)

6.7.2 Summary

The LAG Maiella Verde, a consortium owned by a large public-private partnership, has operated since 1992 in a big (1290.8 square kilometres) mountainous and hilly region of central Italy in Abruzzo. This area suffers socio-economic problems common to many other territories of the same kind such as depopulation, crisis of farming (ageing of farmers and loss of value of raw materials), low female employment etc.

The first LEADER experience in the nineties animated a local movement for bottom up development and produced spin-off effects with the creation of several specialized institutions: a big agency in charge of extra rural issues, a public-private partnership specialized in tourist development and an association of municipalities which design and propel shared public services.

The LEADER+ LDP strategy aims to promote "sustainable ways" to support the smallest business, rural, handcraft, tourist and typical food enterprises of internal areas. It focused on two complementary themes: the main one is "the enhancement of local products", and the other one is "the enhancement of natural and cultural resources".

On the one hand the LEADER+ programme of the Region Abruzzo and its management system gave the LAGs enough decisional and functional autonomy to maintain a genuine LEADER approach. On the other hand there were some critical points in the management of the implementation phase. The most important of these was the length of the time it took for the LDPs to start (44 months).

This caused widespread use of pre-existing projects of public beneficiaries (that had eligible expenses) which were funded through other sources, and were replaced by the LEADER+ Funds (the beneficiary was then committed to re-investing this contribution in a coherent initiative).

This practice was intended to avoid the adoption of disengagements (N+2 rule) and a general delay in the start up phase (it took more than one year of work).

The LAG has applied the LEADER approach carefully with strong involvement of local actors and these generated appreciable effects in improving good governance and determining spin-off effects in terms of local networks.

While, no relevant mainstreaming effect of LEADER on rural development programmes has been detected, the action of the LAG made an interesting contribution to local and regional development objectives. In particular the LEADER+ experience can be considered as a good practice in the coordination of different programming tools (LEADER+, ERDF OP and EQUAL) and local agencies to pursue a unique strategy to improve the attractiveness of the region.

Although the information required to prepare a quantitative evaluation of the net impacts of LDP investments is not available, several effects have been detected in addition to the physical output indicators that have been monitored:

- A small number (32) of new high quality jobs have been created and a higher number of existing jobs have been maintained.
- The promoted actions were able to involve a high rate of women.

metis

AE DL C E U

- Recognition of the territory's typical products has increased, augmenting the marketing potential of involving producers and operating in short distribution circuits.
- The ability of the area to attract tourists and visitors has improved.
- Bonding (above all) but also interesting bridging effects have taken place.

6.7.3 LAG design and planning

The LEADER area

LEADER+ area includes 54 Municipalities, located in the central and northern part of the Province of Chieti, with a surface of 1290.8 square kilometres, 97287 habitants and a mean density of 75.37 h/square kilometres. Its territory, formed by mountains and hills, surrounds the eastern part of the Maiella Massif and goes down until the coast, touching the suburban area of Chieti, and the industrial area (cluster) of Lanciano/Atessa. The main peculiarities appear in figure 16.

Figure 16. LEADER+ zone

The characteristics, which are reported in the following table, are common to many internal rural territories in central and southern Italy.

Table 54. Characteristics of the LAG area

Sectors	Fundamental Characteristics	Trends
Population and settlements	Two cities and many small villages Low density on the mountain Job commuting from internal areas to industrial zones	Demographic dynamic negative in mountain and constant in hills Ageing increase Immigration increase (from East Europe)
Agriculture and food chains	Small farms and aged farmers The most important products in hills are wine and olive oil In mountains cows and sheep farming prevails The main economic actors in the food sector are cooperative cellars that process 92% of grapes. The best producers are small and private.	Decrease of farms and cultivated surfaces A crisis of market value of agriculture raw materials, especially milk, has begun. Small farms and handcraft, producing local products, increase. Farms working on tourism sector and other services increase Drastic decrease of cattle farmers
Economic system and jobs	Relevant presence of industries of automotive sector The second industrial sector is the food sector. Good level of male occupation and low level of female occupation	Real value of family income is decreasing Decrease of small enterprises (for closing down or outsourcing)
Natural and cultural heritage	A National Park and some preserved areas (17% of the territory is preserved) Some historical or artistic sites (ancient villages, archaeological areas, castles) but not even one big attraction. Low developed tourism and no links between tourism and typical foods producers.	The management of cultural and natural resources is becoming too much expensive for local administration. The territory is not perceived as a touristic destination Increase of 'enogastronomic' demand

The local governance and the LAG partnership

It is interesting to read the words of the LAG President, reported in a recent article:

"…the LAG "Maiella Verde" was born in 1992, thanks to the initiative of a local group formed by economic actors and technicians of Eastern Maiella. The LEADER adventure started in our territory in this way. At that time, we did not have a good knowledge about local development theories and bottom-up approach, so popular today. We had a program based on a simple vision, made by practical things. Nor, least of all, did we know what was going to happen in the following years, so we couldn't imagine we were creating a real "bottom-up movement for local development" in the Province of Chieti, composed of local institutions, associations and private operators, as well as by people convinced that it is possible to work together and to "take the initiative". Today many things have changed, the most important of them is the Territorial Pact, and many things have succeeded to transform our territory into a national or European "case" in matters of local development. Just think that in 2009 Vastese Inn[126] and Maiella Verde, the two LAGs of the Province, have terminated the third LEADER cycle (LEADER+), achieving 500 financed projects! In the last edition we tried again to preserve the principles that are part of our DNA: a

---

[126] Vastese Inni s the second LAG of the province and is based in a small southern area. In 2007-2010 decided to join Maiella to present a unique LDP for the axis 4.

vision of development based on people, on small enterprises, on small "amenities" and on small projects that altogether form the wide tissue whereby, as a small miracle, our rural territories stay alive".

The Sangro-Aventino territory, for a long time, is promoting a governance model for local development based on partnerships (not only based on LAGs). The different stakeholders carry out complementary roles, and they learned to join strategies, and to collaborate concretely to achieve them.

Table 55. Main relevant actors in the LAG territory

Actors	What they do	Members
Sangro Aventino Pact Consortium Society (Limited responsibility)	• It's the first "spin off" of Maiella Verde. It was born in 1998 to put into practice the Territorial Pact, and it works as a development agency. It works on extra-rural business of a wide area (the territory includes Lanciano city, the industrial cluster and coast municipalities): • Industrial investments • Local administration efficiency improvement • Scholar and social projects (EQUAL and Learning Area) • Territorial Integrated Projects (EFRD for tourism and cultural and natural heritage)	• Public partners have 67% of capital • There are 8 of them, between them there is the association of Municipalities of Sangro-Aventino and the Province of Chieti. • Private partners have 30% of the capital: • - 11 unions • - 5 associations • - 3 banks • - 1 fair management society
Local Institutions Association	• It was born in 1998 to deliver public associated services. The first service, successfully achieved with territorial Pact funds, was the window for production activities.	• All Commons (unions of Commons) and Mountain Communities of Sangro-Aventino
Sangro Aventino Touristic development	• It was born in 2000 to promote tourism in the area, although its activity stopped after a few years because of internal management conflicts.	• Same makeup of the Pact, except from a lower number of private members.

Maiella Verde is a public-private company with a large social base. This is due to specific rules that were included in the company statute:

- All actors of the territory, individually or associated, can be partners of the consortium company;
- Share capital: altogether, public institutions cannot detain more than 20% of the share capital, individually, local institutions and professional associations, represented at national level (NCLI[127]), cannot detain more than the 4%, and other operators (enterprises and cooperatives) cannot detain more than the 2%.

The achievement is a company which represents relevant public and private actors, in both, the social weave and council of administration. It facilitates professional associations of agriculture and handcraft, cooperating actors, local institutions (one member of the Mountain Community and one of the Province) and economic actors to meet each other.

---

[127] National Labour Council

AEIDL   CEU

Table 56. Categories of LAG members

Categories of Members	Number of Members	Detained Capital
Economic and Social single Actors (38 farms between them)	68	73.8%
Local Administrations (4 Mountain Communities and the Province of Chieti)	5	13.6%
Unions (2 agricultural, 2 handcraft and SMEs and 1 of cooperatives)	5	12.7%
Total Members	78	100%

The board (council of administration) is formed by seven members: the president is a farmer (he represents individual members), four councillors represent unions and cooperatives, two councillors represent public institutions.

The Local Development Plan design

In the general scope of governance, plans promoted by Maiella Verde since 1992, have always aimed to animate the economic system of one of the most underdeveloped (economically and socially) and internal areas of the Province. Plans were directed at the promotion of innovative strategies of rural development, with a special care on the enhancement of local identity and on the support of small farms and handcraft enterprises that pursue strategies of diversification and improvement of their productions.

The MA has fixed rules to define the LEADER+ area. Only internal commons were eligible and the perimeter of each area could not crossover Provincial borders.

For this reason, Maiella Verde (a LAG since the first LEADER edition) had to modify its reference territory, involving some new commons of the northern part of the Province. This fact has caused a small imbalance between the old area, the Sangro-Aventino, where private and public actors were more used to working together and the new one with less experience in partnership and none in the LEADER approach.

The bottom-up planning activities started in 2001, with participation in the Integrated Territorial Projects (ITP) design, promoted by the Province of Chieti (funded by ERDF), and terminated in May 2002. This bottom up design work allowed the definition of a development strategy to improve tourism in the internal part of the territory, and the integration of different programmes (above all ITP and LEADER+) within it. Straight after, when the Region published the call for tender (May 2002), specific planning activities were implemented to prepare the LEADER+ LDP. In two months, actions have included different initiatives of local animation and of involvement of the territory: a website, some information articles on local press, a presentation meeting, 3 Partnership Assemblies, and 9 public meetings.

LEADER+ strategy has a main aim: the identification of "sustainable ways" to support the smallest business, rural, handcraft, touristic and typical food enterprises of the rural part of the province. They represent, more than an economic reality, a vital factor for the territory making it attractive for visitors and residents.

According to the LDP the main reasons to focus on this target are:

- These enterprises tie the territory with some important elements of local identity and traditions that are at risk of disappearing.

- Thanks to the strong link with the market (mostly based on direct sales) and with the image of the territory they come from, as well as with the enhancement of its natural and cultural heritage, these enterprises are pushed to improve the quality of the territory's offerings. As much as the territory's image is pure and precious, so too will be the image of its products, and vice-versa. The enhancement of both of them will be able to create a new demand through a synergic communication.

- These enterprises, together with other services and new products directed to the enhancement of the territory, are able to involve and gratify specific groups of the population that often suffer from lack of opportunities, especially young people and women who are ready to innovation and to self-employment.

Two of the four unifying themes have been chose for the plan: the main one is "the enhancement of local products", and the complementary one is "the enhancement of natural and cultural resources". Objectives and expected results are illustrated in the table below:

Table 57. Objectives and expected results of the LEADER strategy

Specific Objective	Expected Results	No.
Qualification, innovation and integration of local productions	No. of established or operating Portals	2
	Innovations on products, services and production processes	12
	% of enterprises with their own website	20
	No. of new guides or production regulations	2
	No. of new brands including local specificities	3
Improvement of the integrated usability of natural and cultural attractions of the area	Increase of sites usability	3
	Increase of extra agricultural services usability	20%
	Increase of initiatives or enterprises able to manage local heritage	15%
	Recovery and implementation of sites with natural environmental value	15%

6.7.4 Management, controlling and financing systems

The selection procedures for LAGs and LDP

The selection procedures for LAGs and LDP took place in two phases: 1) a collection expressions of interest; 2) a call for groups that expressed interest (in the phase 1) to present the LDP.

This double phase was devised to limit possible local conflicts that, in any case, in some areas of the Region, have taken place.

In the second phase each project has been evaluated with a multi-criteria table, giving up to a maximum of 300 points (100 for the area characteristics, 100 for the LAG and 100 for LDP).

The competition took place in the same territory, where more than one proposal was made, and at regional level, between all territories to achieve a financial award, restricted to the first three classified LAGs.

The score attribution modalities were set according to three evaluation areas: 1) disadvantage requirements of the territory (Max 100 points); 2) Features of the partnership and the LAG (Max 100 points); 3) Features of Local Development Plan (Max 100 points).

The financial rewarding has been a strong incentive for Maiella Verde that had no local competitors. In general the score criteria adopted by the Abruzzo Region were perceived by the LAG team as strict in principle but not always very effective in practice.

For example there were six criteria endeavouring to evaluate LAG ability based on the experience of LAG partners, but the fact that partners are expert in doing something does not mean that they will necessarily transfer this experience to the LAG. Therefore, asking LAGs to explain what resources they had, and to answer queries about mentioned requirements, would have been probably more effective.

Nevertheless the most important problem that has been highlighted is that the evaluation commission has actually accepted the self-evaluation of applicants' LAGs. Therefore, since each LAG self evaluated the quality of its partnership and LDP at the top, the final ranking of each competitor has respected, mostly, the objective differences deriving from the scoring based on territorial disadvantage indicators.

Selection of projects by the LAG

Most of the projects of the LAG, funded through public calls for tender, concern small investments. The selection has worked at two levels: eligibility and priorities criteria. The first is based on the consistency with the strategy of the local development plan, more than on compliance requirements with community and regional programmes and regulations. LAG coordinators say that it is necessary to be strict with these criteria, in order to avoid the presentation of a big number of projects and the disappointment of expectations. The second level, in the case of private beneficiaries, concerns overall the quality of the project and features of the beneficiary (with a priority for women, young people and disadvantaged categories).

In the case of projects promoted by local administrations, LAG directors explain that the selection is done through the animation, trying to provide an adequate technical assistance to improve the quality of proposals. The support is mostly directed to the most innovative initiatives, which can demonstrate an important value.

An example of successful practice

Feasibility studies represent a special case. Maiella Verde always verifies the existence of three kinds of requisites in order to promote and finance the studies: the use of active methods to involve target beneficiaries, the existence of a local collective subject (not necessarily a legal person) able to mobilize a community of actors, the inclusion within the study of an experimental part (such as experimentation of prototypical services and/or products).

This approach, as the LAG explains, has totally modified the concept of investigation, that before seemed to be actually a waste of paper and money.

Sangro-Aventino card is a typical example: the networking of the disseminated heritage elements composed of historical, artistic, ethnologic and natural sites of the area was one of the strategic objectives. A weave of small infrastructures and visitors services has already grown around them, but on the other side, these activities have been working unconnected, in many cases without planning, with generally low visibility, unable to achieve an acceptable level of economic sustainability.

metis

Maiella Verde provided funds (approximately 60 000 Euros) and technical assistance to conduct a feasibility study for the "Management Network of natural and cultural amenities of Sangro-Aventino". The study was based on two main activities: experimentation with a prototype visitor card in a small portion of the territory; and the shared design with local actors.

The prototype card was fine tuned at the beginning of 2006 and experimented with in the summer, thanks to LEADER+ funds. The analysis of the results allowed the launch of a shared planning activity with three groups on the Sangro-Aventino territory: site managers, economic operators of hospitality, catering and traditional products, and information points for tourists. The activity was principally aimed at sharing the approach of the card system and establishing commitments to subscribe to the system, as well as ascertaining how each type of operator would participate in the initiative.

Organization and management procedures, that regulate relationships within the network between managers, information points and economic operators, were designed according to the results of the test executed in 2006, and to the input received during meetings with operators.

Figure 17. The area of Sangro-Aventino Card
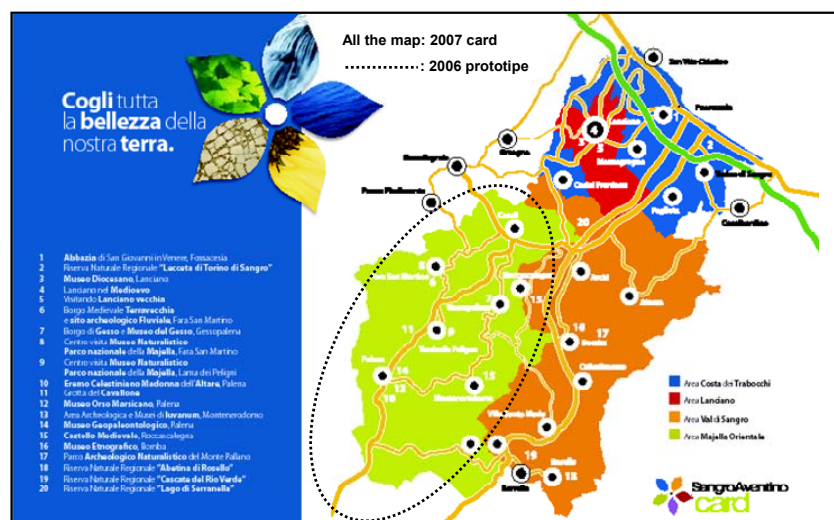
The "prototype" experimented with by LEADER has become the main organizational strategy and usability tool for visitors in the area: the card has been repeated 5 times from 2007 to 2010, and it has been completely sustained with extra-LEADER funds using mainly local resources.

Figure 18. Card monitoring data
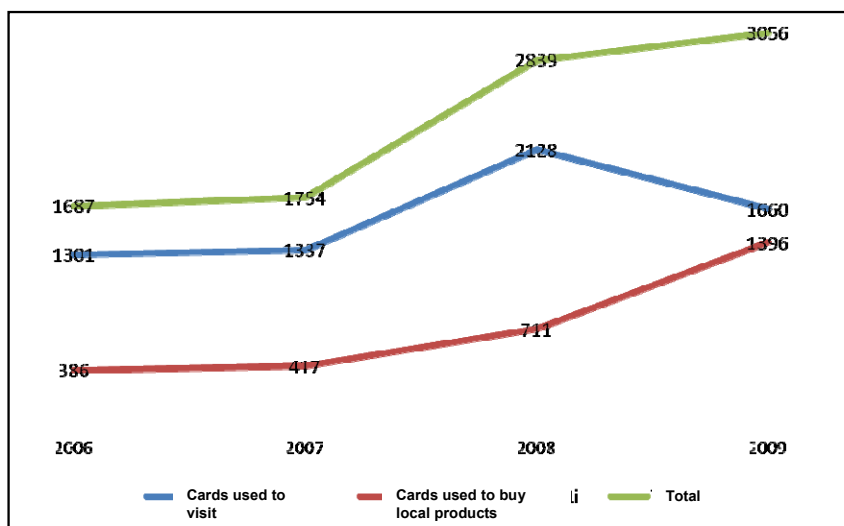
The point of view of the MA

The Management Authority thinks that management procedures, ascribed to LAGs, have stimulated participation in the programme and with LAGs from different socio-economic categories, through adequate information and dissemination actions. Nevertheless it has been underlined in the MA evaluation report that in some cases the bureaucracy of these procedures was too heavy for the LAG and above all for final beneficiaries, as there were excessive requirements to be fulfilled both in the project preparation phase and also when demonstrating eligibility of expenses.

Other effects of managing, controlling and financing systems

Abruzzo Region organized a strict managing and controlling system. Its main actors and their tasks are described in the following table.

Table 58. Management and controlling system

Organism	Description	Main Tasks
Central MA Office	It is a service of agriculture Department of the Region. It is responsible for the implementation of the program and is run by 4 units. The communication plan is entrusted to an external agency.	LDP selection It authorizes financial engagements for LAGs monitoring and evaluation relationships with the Commission Communication Plan It approves control tracks it sanctions irregularities It provides technical assistance to LAGs It examines calls and projects of LAGs monitoring of the Program It evaluates proposals for changes in LDPs

Organism	Description	Main Tasks
Payment Authority	This role is managed by a Financial resources department and accounting service of Abruzzo Region.	It gets payments from EC
		It provides funds to LAGs
		It cooperates in redacting and presenting the expenditure declaration and payment requests to the EC
		Estimates forecasts about payments requests
Technical and administrative control Commissions	They are established by the Agricultural department. They work at Province level, so that each Commission follows one or two LAGs. Usually they execute controls twice a year, analysing all expenditure documents and relative acts (project selection etc.). Each control can take from 2 to 4 days.	Technical support to payment Authority
		They verify following aspects of LAGs expenditures:
		expenditure declarations
		consistency between engagements and payments
		coherency with LEADER+ Program
		coherency between expenditure declarations and monitoring system
Special Control Structure	It is a team of Financial Resources Department and Accounting Service.	It verifies the efficiency of managing and controlling systems of LAGs through sample controls on expenditure regularity

LAG's perception is that this system works very well for expenses control and managing systems. Monitoring and evaluation activity is perceived as less efficient, because of poor and sometimes wrong results. The utility of activities of the communication plan is perceived as totally insubstantial.

The following table shows the tasks in different kind of activities of human resources employed in the LAG. It is a team composed of three semi-full time entities (70%) (the technical coordinator, administrative controller, secretary), two constant support experts (who work from 3 to 7 days a month for the LAG), and one group of four external technicians who control the projects of beneficiaries. Altogether this structure with LEADER+ has implemented controls on 272 projects. It is noted that the LAG has directly realized some projects (for example three cooperation projects) and this allowed the employment of additional human resources who, working closely w target beneficiaries, have remarkably strengthened the action of local animation.

Table 59. Types of activity engaged in by the LAG staff in full-time equivalents

Type of activity	FTE	%
Coordination and management	1.43	31%
Technical assistance to beneficiaries	0.79	17%
Products analysis and expenditure control	1.27	28%
Reporting and auditing	0.54	12%
Monitoring and evaluation	0.54	12%
Total	4.57	100%

The LAG team does not believe that, on the whole, financial and administrative control procedures were excessively heavy, compared with other experiences. Here we briefly describe those that were perceived as the main critical points in the programming process

The most critical point is the time factor. It took 44 months to allow LAGs to start their work. LAGs received official approval in the spring of 2004, at the end of the same year the deadline N+2 was fixed for the first two cumulated years.

Figure 19. Time to put the LEADER+ program in Abruzzo into practice
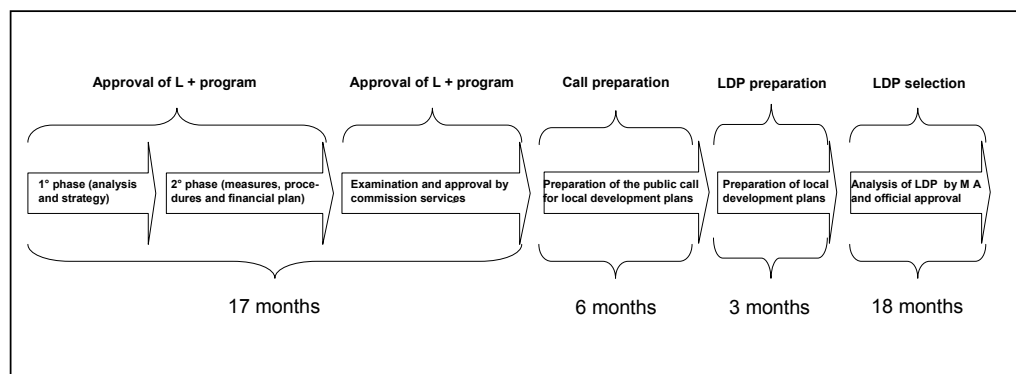
This caused widespread use of already existing projects of public beneficiaries (with eligible expenses) funded through other sources, which were replaced by the LEADER+ Funds to avoid the adoption of disengagements (N+2 rule) and a general delay in the start up phase (it took more than one year of work). In general there was a hasty implementation of activities designed and planned for periods longer than those actually available. Other critical points noticed by the LAG are:

- Planning procedures and technical and administrative controls were too heavy for beneficiaries, especially for small projects (paradoxically in some cases controls cost more than the LEADER contribution);
- Too much attention on administrative aspects rather than on quality of actions;
- Overlap (duplication) of roles of administrative control between MA and LAG;
- Lack of technical support from the Region, and absolute ineffectiveness of the communication plan.

6.7.5 Governance and rural citizenship

LEADER+ contribution to local governance

LEADER contribution to the development of local governance can be analyzed on three different levels:

- Direct effect of mobilization of local actors, thanks to the bottom-up approach used to implement LDP;
- Direct effect of spin off, in terms of governance, deriving from the implementation of the plan's actions
- The role of Maiella Verde in local governance in general, besides the direct scopes of the LDP;

The following table can give a concrete idea of the intensity of participation promoted in the five years of LDP implementation.

Table 60. LAG activities

Type of activity	No.
Seminaries and workshops	66
Working groups meetings	1065
LAG participation to other's meetings	270
Participation in TV programs	64
Newsletters	41

The concrete example of "Filière studies" can be more useful than numbers to understand the operating method used by the LAG. In autumn 2005, the LAG, in collaboration with associated professional organizations, promoted 13 studies on the main food-farming and handcrafts filières of the LEADER area, in order to identify a new strategic orientation to LDP projects, relative to local products.

The LAG chose, for each study, a technician responsible, and established a Steering Committee, composed of 3 to 5 members, chosen from local actors employed in different sectors (technicians, farmers, public administrators) of the reference filière. Every study, during five months, has been executed in four phases: 1) definition of work plan; 2) description of the local filière/production system, and formulation of intervention hypothesis; 3) check on the field of strategic hypothesis through interviews of operators in the sector; 4) preparation of a final version of the study, with description of operating modalities of LDP and types of innovative actions to promote. At the end of each phase, the person responsible had to present a report and a work plan for the following phase to the Steering Committee, which could suggest indications or additions to the work or to the operating tools.

During the preparation of studies, tens of meetings took place, involving more than 100 participants and hundreds of local actors, through the interviews. This work has been used to guide the preparation of calls for tender and, especially, to define a strategic project, Galleria del Gusto (Taste Gallery), which was the framework scheme and had a remarkable impact on the organization and the visibility of food and wine supply of the territory.

Local collective organizations, created or strengthened mostly thanks to LDP, can be considered a spin-off effect, in terms of governance. Therefore, the following spin offs can be attributed to LDP LEADER+:

- Local network of producers of Galleria del Gusto (Taste Gallery). About 100 producers have joined this network, and have adopted a voluntary production regulation. This accreditation system allows participation in all different initiatives of food and wine marketing in the territory, promoted by the Taste Gallery, and receipt of a periodic feedback on organoleptic quality of products.
- National Network Terre Ospitali (hospitable lands). This network involves 12 Italian LAGs and the Slow Food Association (a big NGO with almost 80 000 members that works on food biodiversity preservation). This network, promoted for the first time by Maiella Verde after the experience of Galleria del Gusto, was created in 2009 and is now preparing a cooperation project.
- Taste guides network. This network accredits the experts able to guide groups in tastings and visits on a wine/food theme. Currently the network is formed of 70 people who trained to become guides and 12 accredited guides. In the last three years, more than 10 000 people have participated in sessions and visits guided by taste guides.
- The consortium of cooked wine producers. The cooked wine is a typical product of local rural culture (it is an alcoholic drink obtained from fermentation and maturing of a mix of wine and cooked must). In 2008 the LAG, in collaboration with the municipality of Roc-

camontepiano (where this tradition is very strong) supported the creation of the network through eight technical seminaries. The association composed of 38 producers, has approved a regulation and works actively to preserve and enhance this product.

- The Association of Presidium of Salsicciotto Frentano (small typical sausage). In Italy, the Slow Food Presidium is absolutely the most effective distinction in the scope of enhancement of niche products. The Salsicciotto, an endangered typical salami, obtained the distinction in 2010, thanks to a LEADER+ project. A small local association has arisen to preserve that distinction.
- Didactic farms network. This network is promoted by a regional agency in all Abruzzo. The LAG promoted it in its area where it was not represented, in order to improve didactic skills of some farms. Today in the area there are 12 farms offering education services and sharing the network.
- The network of natural and cultural sites managers. This network is composed of 28 small associations and cooperatives (involving almost only young people and women) that manage touristic sites. It was born after the study on Sangro-Aventino card, promoted by Maiella Verde, and it is now animated by a touristic development company from Sangro-Aventino.

Furthermore, the impact on the LAG itself, considered as a local organization of governance, has to be noted.

The role of LAG in territorial governance, beyond LDP actions, has been already described above. It is noted that this model, where many agencies, gathering all local operators to the same discussion table, cooperate to pursue one local strategy has a remarkable political capability to enhance bottom-up approach.

Vertical governance

The following table reports the allocation of responsibilities between the MA and the LAG.

Table 61. Distribution of tasks and responsibilities between LAG and MA

Tasks and responsibilities	M A	LAG
a) Animation and technical support for potential beneficiaries		+ + +
b) Preparation and publication of calls	+	+ + +
c) Projects assessment and ranking		+ + +
d) Control of payment claims	+ +	+ + +
e) Monitoring	+	+ + +

Calls and projects, made directly by the LAG, had to be submitted to the MA before their approval. The LAG has usually executed control on payments but, before approving LDP progress, a regional technical commission had to repeat documental control on all projects and physical control on a sample of 5%. Therefore, controls on the documentation of each project were executed twice: once by the controller nominated by the LAG, and once by a commission nominated by the MA.

The LAG's monitoring and evaluation activities

The LAG executed a self-evaluation activity based on three points:

- Collection and assessment of quantity and quality data from implemented operations
- Interviews of the actors directly involved, in different ways, in the LDP
- Preparation of case studies

With regard point a), the LAG is provided with software to manage data collection for each project of LDP, in all cases, if it is executed through a call, through direct management or with a convention; the software collects personal and operating data (proceedings, physical and financial). An abstract describing the operation that will be used is attached to each project

Individual or collective interviews, according to the phase of progress of the plan, act as shared planning tools or self-evaluation. This tool was used especially to analyze the work on local products.

Conflicts

Specific conflicts were not detected during LDP implementation.

Funding stream management

Before LDP implementation, Maiella Verde promoted and executed some local projects funded with other sources. Also during the implementation, when the activity has been concentrated on plan actions, LAG has received public funds from local administrations (Province of Chieti), in order to implement some strategic projects, such as the Galleria del Gusto.

LAG has actively cooperated with other agencies in executing extra-LEADER initiatives, in order to produce common effects and create synergies. The following chapter shows this aspect better.

6.7.6 Relevance and Community added value

LEADER+ and mainstream programmes

The complementarity of LEADER+ with mainstream rural development programmes has been perceived at different levels:

- At the level of investment typology LEADER+ supported small and immaterial investments of farms, small firms and public administrations;
- At territorial level LEADER has been conceived as a tool to promote area based strategies in the inner part of the region Abruzzo while the RDP was more active in forestry and productive "filieres".

Nevertheless a real intention of the MA to integrate mainstream rural development programmes with LEADER has not been perceived by the LAG: while a good integration at local level was found with the ERDF programme (it is explained in the next paragraph) no synergies were found with the RDP excluding what happened at the level of single farm when it benefited of both programmes.

In the same way in the RDP 2007-2013, the LEADER approach has been interpreted in a correct way (using also specific LEADER measures) but no real LEADER contamination can be observed in the axes 1, 2 and 3.

The experience of coordination between agencies in the Sangro-Aventino inspired the programming department and the president of the Region Abruzzo that in 2008 conceived an agreement between the Region and the four Province on how to coordinate local development initiatives and funding programmes in 2007-2013. After the sudden political change of the regional administration at the end of 2008 and the earthquake of April 2009 this agreement was completely forgotten.

Contribution of LEADER+ to specific national or regional development objectives

In 2001, on the occasion of preparation of PITs (Integrated Territorial Projects) (EFRD), public administrations of the area, enterprises, citizens, local development agencies (Pact and LAG), prepared a new strategy for tourism in 2000-2006, through intensive work of bottom-up planning. The main objective of this plan was: "to achieve a better organization of identity, culture, environment and economic activities into an integrated system, able to attract bigger flows of visitors and, therefore, to get an increase of consumers using and visiting the territory".

As the PIT could provide only material investments for public and private infrastructures, additional agreements between partners have been stipulated in order to support immaterial actions, including an engagement to use available resources in following years to improve the fruition services and communication. In 2004, while most of the actions of PIT had already been implemented, LEADER+ started and, using the strategic diagnosis, prepared in planning phase of the PIT, Maiella Verde has directed most of the measure 1.3 of LDP to immaterial actions of enhancement of natural and cultural heritage. In this scope, the "feasibility study for the creation of a unique network of cultural and natural goods in Sangro-Aventino" has been funded.

Table 62. Objectives, action lines and possible funding sources of Integrated Territorial Projects

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	ACTION LINES OF PIT	POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES
1. enhancement of range and quality of local touristic services	1.1. development of private free time services consistent with local supply	LEADER+, DocUp ERDF Actions 3.3.1 e 3.3.2
	1.2. enhancement of range and quality of accommodation	DocUp ERDF Actions 3.3.1 e 3.3.2
	1.3. creation of a network of services for visitors	Resources of Local Institutions and privates - LEADER+. Equal.
2. enhancement of visit destinations	2.1 improvement of usability of natural emergences	National and Regional resources. DocUp ERDF Actions Actions 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.4.1 e 3.4.2 of DocUP. LEADER+
	2.2. experimentation of an integrated system of touristic mobility	National and Regional resources.
3. enhancement of local touristic supply perception	3.1 development of marketing consistent with supply system	Funds of Local Institutions. LEADER+.
	3.2. execution of information tools consistent with supply system	Funds of Local Institutions. LEADER+.
4. enhancement of local contest	4.1. preservation of natural resources	Resources of Local Institutions and action 3.1.1 of DocUP.
	4.2. enhancement of productive vocations of the area	Aid Schemes established in National and Regional Programmes to support enterprises. Actions 2.1.1, 2.2.1, 2.2.2 e 2.3.1 of DocUP. LEADER+.
	4.3. execution of collective actions of research and business development	Action 2.2.2 of DocUP, LEADER+

6.7.7 Impacts

Employment creation

A general evaluation of the direct effects of the LEADER+ LDP on job creation is reported in the following table.

Table 63. Direct employment effects of the LEADER+ LDP

	Total	Women	Men	Under 40	Under 25	Farm	Not farm
Job creation in the sector of local products	21.7	11.7	10.0	20.9	2.2	12.21	9.50
Job creation in the sector of natural and cultural resources	10.5	8.1	2.4	10.5	3.7	0	10.5
Total	32.2	19.8	12.4	31.4	5.9	12.2	20.0

The sector partition is coherent with the rate of investments devoted to the two catalyser themes. Nevertheless the LAG technical staff have underlined that the creation of new jobs as a direct effect was not the main result. This was for several reasons:

a) The main aim of the plan is to help local small firms, mainly in the sector of local products, to change in order to become more competitive. From this point of view they estimate that the LDP has firstly contributed to maintain about 280 already existing jobs and that about 63% of this representing both a local small farm or firm (that risks to stop) and a family (at risk of moving faraway).

b) The second aim is to make the area more competitive in attracting visitors (effects in this field are elaborated in a following paragraph), but this is a field in which several programmes cooperate locally and the task of the LAG is not supporting business (this is made through FEDER) but mainly qualification of sites and "research and development". This is very important but has a very low direct impact in job creation. A good example is the described case of "Sangro-Aventino card".

c) The last point is about quality of created jobs. The LAG estimates that among the 21/22 new jobs created in local products about 18 of them are related to new small business. This does not mean necessarily with a new company (for example a craft beer producer) but includes also new activities in existing companies (for example a small bakery in an existing farm). The effect of the creation of jobs of this kind is very different from that of job creation in industry: on the one hand it may be less dynamic but from another perspective its self employment contributing to the attractiveness of the area.

The story of the craft beer project may explain further: the owner was employed in a factory in the industrial cluster and had a hobby producing home beer and had an aim to make this work. In 2005 he was contacted by the communication of the LDP and was supported in producing an application for the investment that would realize the plant (the total cost was € 37.000 with 40% LEADER contribution). At the end of 2007 the plant was finished, production started and the owner left his old employment. In 2008 thanks to the LAG support it was visited by the editor of the unique Italian guide of craft beers and in the 2009 edition it was one of the two beers from Abruzzo described (and recommended) in the guide.

Satisfaction of women and young people needs

From the formal point of view, all the calls published by the LAG contained selection criteria giving priority to women and young people; nevertheless, in the opinion of LAG people what makes the difference in this field is the type of investments promoted. In general the investments to diversify agriculture and to add value to local products encounter a good appreciation and participation of women. The data shown in the previous chapter refer to job creation but in general, the participation of women in beneficiary's farms and companies is about 50%. On the other hand this kind of small business is not easy for very young people. In the Maiella Verde area the target farmer or entrepreneur (when is not an enterprise creation) is old - between 27 and 50 years.

Besides these data, an evaluation of the extent to which the age profile of population has benefited from the LDP is difficult. Nevertheless, the opinion of interviewed people is that more than the physical data (number of projects, age of beneficiaries etc.) it's important the general trust effect, as the president said "you have to give to the people the idea that it's not a trap but a place where you can plan a future".

The gender asset of the LAG decisional process is more traditional: among the 7 members of the board just one is a woman; in the company management there is more equilibrium: the technical coordinator is male but the administrative responsible is a woman.

Income creation and other effects in adding value to local products

The LAG strategy in the sector of local produce is based on development of short distribution circuits: supporting single actors in developing small productions and farm shops; promoting systemic initiatives to make local typical foods and their region well known to the public through, events, publications, tasting trainings and other initiatives for each product of the local range. This is part of a larger strategy promoted together with other local agencies in order to make the area more attractive. In this kind of region, in fact, the gastronomic offer became one of the most important factors in determining attractiveness. The implementation of this strategy is described below through two tables of output indicators, one for single projects and the other for territorial (systemic) initiatives.

Table 64. Outputs in the field of local products

Outputs in the field of local products (single projects)	Number
Company quality system implemented	6
Introduction of innovations in productive processes and/or products	115
New farm or firm shops	14
Catalogues	4
Realization of new specific packaging	4
Realization of new web sites	13
Start up of new e-commerce	9
New labels including local specificities	9

metis

AEIDL CEU

Outputs in the field of local products (territorial initiatives)	Number
Studies and researches (nr)	32
New voluntary production regulations (nr)	4
Producers involved in communication initiatives (nr)	115
New territorial communication tools (nr)	3
Potential consumers reached by qualified information (nr)	59.000
Participants in tasting trainings	10.080
Producers involved in the experimentation of a local system of accreditation	105
Hours of technical training on processes and products	2.000

In the perception of producers this has been effective. It is shown by the results of an enquiry that Maiella Verde has realized in the spring of 2010 (about one year after the end of the LDP interventions) interviews of 90 producers of local products involved in LEADER+. The main results about effects are the following:

- 92 % of producers believe that the firms and the products of the LEADER area became more well-known. The following marketing action promoted by the LAG have been perceived as very useful in this:
  - publications by 84%
  - thematic events by 85%
  - Slow Food presidia by 75 %
  - public tastings by 70 %

- 98 % of producers believe that the fame of its own name and products in the region has increased. The main factor has been word passing among people followed by thematic events and publications.

Improvement of attractiveness

As has been explained already, in the improvement of attractiveness LEADER+ cooperated with other programmes (above all FEDER regional OP). In general the investments supported by LEADER+ involved 93 different sites. A detailed report of outputs in this field is in the following table.

Table 65. Output in the field of natural and cultural resources

Output in the field of natural and cultural resources	Number
Investments in historical buildings	6
Realization of spaces for museums and exhibitions	48
Public tourist office	11
Other kind of public tourist infrastructures (cycling routes etc.)	56
Networks of tourist sites	10
Tourist routes	11
Tourist catalogues	9
Nature 2000 sites involved (nr)	26
Improvement and restoring of natural conditions (nr of projects)	4
Protection of fauna and preservation of specific habitat (nr of projects)	5

The gross effect of the combined intervention of LEADER+ LDP and ERDF integrated project (about 2,5 millions of public contribution for the first and about 7,5 for the second) in the Sangro-Aventino area has been estimated (it's a first attempt) as follows.

Table 66. Estimated gross effect of the combined intervention of LEADER+ LDP and ERDF integrated project

Criteria	Indicator	A (2000)	B (2007)	B - A	%
Tourism improvement	Nights spent in the area	76,851	10,593	25,742	25.10 %
	Arrivals	19,310	23,479	4,169	17.80 %
	Arrivals excluding high season	10,607	13,236	2,629	19.86 %
Increase of sales due to visitors	Tickets sold in sample visited sites	12,300	18,647	4,169	34.00 %

Creation of bonding and bridging capital

The analysis of LSP effects in the creation of bonding and bridging capital has to take into account the sectors in which the plan intervened: adding value to local products and using natural and cultural resources to improve attractiveness.

Regarding the creation of bonding capital, consider what has already been explained about the creation of local networks aimed at the enhancement of local identity and heritage. In particular the bonding effect seems very strong in the local products' sector where a big community involving private citizens has been created and a new trust arose among producers in a very difficult moment for farming activity.

Bonding effects has been described with regard governance where the cooperation among institutions and projects in local development has really marked a difference in comparison to many other territorial contests where this does not happen. In some way an indicator of this bonding effect could be detected from the response of local actors to the campaign launched by the LAG at the beginning of 2010 in order to enlarge its social base: in one month the number of members increased from 78 to 131 and the company capital from 25.000 to 110.000 €.

In the field of bridging capital the most interesting evidence also is related to the typical food sector. In particular the cooperation established with Slow Food proved to be very effective, renouncing some decisional autonomy the LAG had gained to a very powerful partner that could communicate its gastronomic identity to a wide public of people keen on these topics, mobilize voluntary energy at local level and facilitate the acquisition of fame outside the region.

As has been mentioned before, this experience has stimulated the birth of a new network of LEADER areas that is growing fast all over Italy.

Information sources

1. Regione Abruzzo. Operational Programme LEADER plus Abruzzo and annexes
2. Regione Abruzzo. Call for tender for the selection of LDP in the framework of LEADER plus programme of Region Abruzzo
3. Local Development Plan – Maiella Verde for the LEADER plus programme
4. Regione Abruzzo – Evaluation Service for the programme LEADER+. Final Report
5. INEA – LEADER+ National Network. Collection of LEADER+ good practices: "Tourist card"

metis

6   INEA – LEADER+ National Network. Collection of LEADER+ good practices: "La Galle-ria del Gusto" (taste gallery)

7   Maiella Verde – News letters

8   Maiella Verde – draft of LEADER+ self evaluation report

9   Maiella Verde – financial monitoring files

10   Maiella Verde - LEADER+ projects repertory

11   Maiella Verde – Enquiry on local producers of food and craft

List of contacted persons

- Tiziano Teti – LAG President
- Sandra Di Loreto – Administrative Responsible
- Domenico Francomano – Technical coordinator
- Bruno Coletta – consultant in charge of self evaluation reports
- Franco Di Paolo, Assunta Travaglini, Mario Verna, Tommaso Masciantonio (local farmers and typical foods producers)
- Antonio Innaurato, Major of the Municipality of Gessopalena, member of the LAG board
- Francesco Bozzelli – MA

6.8 Luxemburg: Redange-Wiltz

Basic information Redange-Wiltz

- Database code: L+LUNAT-04

- Official name: LEADER+ REDANGE-WILTZ

- Experience in L I: Yes

- Experience in L II: Yes

- Objective 1 or 2 zone: neither

- Population (inhabitants): 19 114

- Surface area (in km²): 391

- Density (inhabitants/km²): 48

- Number of municipalities: 13

- Employment rate/unemployment rate: NC

- Total funding (€): 2 562 750

- EU share (€): 563 805

- Public funds (€): 1 819 553

- Private funds (€): 179 392

- Breakdown of expenditure: Overheads/administration 9,3%

- Coordination, advise and local counselling (animation): 31%

- Number of LAG employees: 2 fulltime agents

- LEADER+ theme chosen: 1. Use of new know-how and new technologies

- LEADER+ other theme(s) chosen: Human capital, training and communication

- Level of autonomy: 2 = medium autonomy, i.e. LAG selects the projects and receives the payment claims and makes payments to the projects formally approved by the MA (intermediary model)

- Level of directiveness: 3 = low, i.e. Total autonomy in developing local strategy within the provisions of the EC Regulation

metis

6.8.1 Object of the case study

The object of the case study is the LAG Redange Wiltz which includes the two counties (cantons) Redange and Wiltz encompassing 13 municipalities.

6.8.2 Summary

 "*Human capital, training and communication*" was the motto of the LAG Redange-Wiltz for LEADER+. The LAG's strategy clearly spelled out its willingness to enhance the capacity of the local community to influence the development of the rural area by investing in its social capital.

In terms of job creation, 12.5 jobs were directly created with the support of LEADER+, mostly in the leisure, educational and social fields. Furthermore, 422 women enrolled in training courses, 73% of which were computer courses.

An important finding at the end of the LEADER II period was that the needs of young people and women were not sufficiently been taken into account. In addition, the strong differences in population (language, social class, education level), were not addressed. The LAG was asked to take on board these difficult integration tasks. LEADER+ gave an opportunity to support exploratory projects in which partners could engage with no fear to fail.

The final report states that "*human, cultural, economic and political resources could be exploited thanks to decentralized training offers as well as to new forms of communication and cooperation. (…) Special attention was given to young people and women. Self-discovery played an important role. (…) A 2004 survey revealed that LEADER was popular among 65% of the LAG's population*[128]" This was made possible by the presence of local 'multipliers' as the LAG manager says, that is motivated people in each and every village, caring for the future of their community and area.

The LAG's partnership showed a strong commitment from rural municipalities to engage with their local charities and associations into collective and participative actions in order to unleash the local potential of their communities to bring a better quality of life in this rural area. The fact that municipalities act as net contributors in programming committees where the not for profit sector represents the majority of partners illustrates this good will. The capacity of the LAG to motivate the voluntary sector in becoming decision makers next to local elected people is a good example of the partnership principle promoted by the LEADER method.

From an administrative point of view, the LAG is directly placed under the responsibility of the Chamber of Agriculture (which falls under the NUTS I category), in charge of the global grant formed by local, national and EU money, with the LEADER-office in Eschdorf , composed of two full time agents detached from the head office. The particularity is that all decisions, including project approval, are taken at LAG level (NUTS IV). Here, the Chamber of Agriculture acts as a clearing house by endorsing decisions taken by the LAG committee on a yearly basis. This double function – managing a global grant at NUTS I level and operating the LAG through detached personnel at NUTS IV level – conveys a genuine feature ensuring the full autonomy of the LAG in developing the local strategy by selecting, approving and proceeding to payments for the projects, in perfect synergy with monitoring rules coming from upper levels of decision.

The combination of supported activities on one hand, and well thought institutional arrangements on the other, generated positive effects on bonding capital (building trust) as well as bridging capital (increase tolerance and openness).

---

[128] LEADER Forum nr. 19, 2008.

6.8.3 LAG design and planning

The area covers 13 municipalities from two counties (cantons).

Table 67. LAG area

Redange County	Beckerich, Grosbous, Rambrouch, Redange
Wiltz County	Boulaide, Eschweiler, Goesdorf, Heiderscheid, Kautenbach, Lac de la Haute-Sûre, Neunhausen, Wiltz, Winseler

The organisation in charge is the Chamber of Agriculture with the LEADER-office in Eschdorf, composed of two full time agents detached from the head office.

The LAG partners are formed by the 13 municipalities' delegates and 21 representatives of the following organisations:

- Chamber of Agriculture (lead partner)
- Initiativ Liewensufank a.s.b.l. (NGO specializing in family issues)
- Fraeforum a.s.b.l. (NGO specializing in women's issues)
- Service à l'Égalité Redange a.s.b.l.
- Caritas Jeunes et Familles a.s.b.l. (NGO specializing in youth issues)
- Lëtzebuerger Landjugend a.s.b.l.
- d'Frënn vun der Lee a.s.b.l. (NGO specializing in cultural issues)
- Thé Citron & Co a.s.b.l.
- Conservatoire de plantes médicinales de Winseler a.s.b.l. (NGO specializing in culture and tourism)
- Happ a Malz a.s.b.l.
- Groupement des Sylviculteurs a.s.b.l. (foresters' group)
- Groupement Forestier Wiltz a.s.b.l. (local foresters' group)
- Réidener Energiatelier a.s.b.l. Sonstige (renewable energies)
- CIGR (Centre d'Initiative et Gestion Régional) Wiltz plus a.s.b.l. (social affairs)
- Forum pour l'Emploi a.s.b.l.
- Coopérations a.s.b.l. (social and cultural affairs)
- Coraly Wooltz a.s.b.l. (youth voluntary media)
- International Institute for Art & Environment (INIFAE) a.s.b.l.
- Päerd's Atelier a.s.b.l.
- Rural Tourism Association
- Federation of tourism offices of the Haute-Sûre lake

SWOT analysis of the area

In order to describe the situation of the rural area at the starting point of the LEADER+ pro-gramme, we extracted and translated the SWOT analysis included in the business plan submit-ted to the Ministry.

Table 68. SWOT analysis of the LEADER area

Strengths	Weaknesses
Population	
• Slight but steady population growth • Increased interest for local development	• Lack of citizen's involvement in community affairs • Lack of fora for debates and discussions • Insufficient integration of newcomers and foreigners.
Economic structure and labour market	
• Community syndicates for operation of business areas • Support structures for SMEs (Pépinière d'entreprises) • Overall, low unemployment	• Shortly services in the areas of training, consultancy and education • Too few qualified staff in the secondary sector • Too few skilled jobs in the tertiary sector • Decentralization of state agencies unsatisfactory • Lack of jobs with flexible working hours (especially for women) • Lack of innovation-companies
Housing and property	
• Available land • Village centres' revival • Renewal of old buildings	• Sprawling trends in some localities • Loss of village character in some residential areas
Infrastructures and services	
• Development of local agro-food products Good telecommunications infrastructure • Good use of renewable energies (wind, biomass) • Improved bus services	• Lack of childcare facilities • Lack of day care for seniors • Lack of specialized care centres • Little availability of jobs for young people • No specific structures for adult education • Very high mobility of the population (commuters) • No existing transport links to town centres or Luxemburg-city in the evening
Leisure, Culture and Tourism	
• Active social life • Natural assets • Geological features • Some valuable cultural initiatives • Gastronomic traditions • River and nature parks' management driven towards culture and tourism	• Missing tourism offers for bad weather • Missing indoor activities for sport • Lack of cultural offers • No proper structure for congress tourism
Environment and Agriculture	
• River and nature park management as motors of sustainable development • Drinking water and source protection zones • Targeted agro-environmental measures	• Increase of waste land • Erosion hazards in intensively cultivated slopes • Decrease in the number farming households leading to more rational management practices (monoculture, larger plots)

Source: Berwerbung zum LEADER+ programm 2000-2006 für du Region Redange-Wiltz>

Process of LAG design and planning

The LAG was already involved in LEADER I and LEADER II. Back in 2000, when the LEADER II partners decided to continue into LEADER+, they organised a large consultation process in order to collect and gather all ideas rising from the local communities, which could become grass-root projects supported by LEADER+. All these ideas were then regrouped into key actions according to their targets and outputs. Those key actions paved the way to the LEADER+ development plan.

An important finding at the end of the LEADER II period was that the needs of young people and women were not sufficiently being taken into account. Indeed, the number of women contributing to the development of the rural area and building momentum was rather high. In the same way, young people often expressed their concerns which were not met. There were no meeting places for them. The environment of the only secondary school of the area located in Wiltz could be improved by allowing new socio-cultural initiatives and by supporting the School Radio. Discussions with the school located in Redange were then held in order to investigate the possibility of creating support structures for young people.

In addition, the strong differences in population (language, social class, education level), were not addressed. The LAG was asked to take on board these difficult integration tasks.

"*Human capital, training and communication*": was the motto of the LAG for LEADER+. It summarized the main fields of its strategy, illustrated by the following graph.

Figure 20. Redange-Wiltz development strategy

Source: LEADER Forum nr.19

6.8.4 Management, controlling and financing systems

The legal basis of the LAG takes the form of a binding agreement signed by all parties, determining the allocation of management tasks (decision-making processes, financial responsibilities, control tasks), as well as the identification of human resources for the running of the LEADER+ office.

As per the LEADER+ Terms of Reference prepared by the Ministry, the LAG had to assign a co-ordinating body for managing the programme at local level. This legal entity must comply with solvency criteria recognized by all stakeholders. In this case, the Chamber of Agriculture is chosen. The binding agreement specifies its role and tasks for implementing the action plan and representing the LAG in civil society.

The convention binding all parties under LEADER+ contains a special provision allowing the LAG to engage and "*participate in other programmes and actions of rural development as far as they aim at developing the LEADER area of Redange-Wiltz*". This special clause allowed the LAG to engage into the eLuxembourg Government plan for instance (see below).

After legal registration of the LEADER+ contract with EU services, the Ministry and the other decision-making assemblies (municipal councils, NGOs' board meetings, etc.) in 2001, an advance of 20% from EAGGF-Guidance and the national rural development fund was paid to the LAG.

The 13 municipalities commonly agreed to allocate 6 € per inhabitant per year (over 7 years) in order to cover operating costs of the LEADER+ office, the co-financing for local projects (commonly called "regional projects" by the LAG) and for inter-regional/transnational projects. This money was deposited on the LAG's account at the Chamber of Agriculture on a yearly basis.

These two financial commitments (the initial 20% advance and the contributions from the municipalities) allowed smooth management of operating costs and provided a working capital immediately available to final beneficiaries.

Financial reporting is prepared by the staff from the LEADER office detached from the Chamber of Agriculture, and approved by the LAG executive committee at regular intervals (from quarterly to twice yearly). In compliance with the financial rules of LEADER+, every project's closure clearly establishes the amounts and types of expenditures by a cost control and a certification of accounts, aggregated in a yearly report to the Ministry, showing the breakdown per origin of the financial contribution. Every partner from the LAG gets a clear monitoring board of its contribution to the overall exercise during the whole programming cycle.

The following graph illustrates the various steps of the project engineering circuit, starting from a simple idea, ending in a LEADER+ innovative action.

Figure 21. From the idea to the LEADER+ project
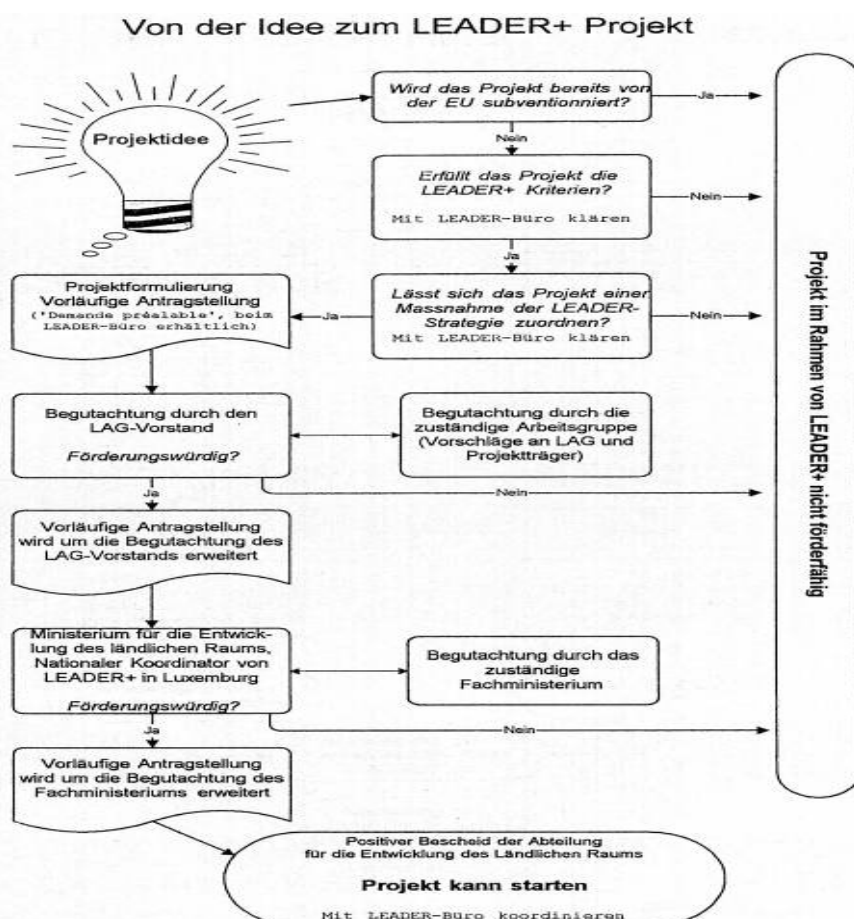
Source: Mid Term Evaluation of LEADER+ in Luxemburg, OEKO Bureau and Bureau ZILM, 2004

Most of LEADER+ officers' workload is geared towards engineering, counselling and coaching of project holders, with the objective of submitting the most comprehensive project proposal, including precise indicators on its aims and targets, its duration, a work plan and a balanced financial plan to the programming committee. Of the 30 projects proposals examined under LEADER+, not one was rejected.

Scrutinizing the workload dedicated to project administration at the LEADER+ office (controlling the project documents and account papers, preparing documentation for approval by the LAG Committee and the MA), it is estimated that the part concerning administrative and financial clearance procedures amounts to 8 days per project, in average.

Programme reporting and monitoring tasks (progress reports, financial breakdowns, quality control) are estimated to approximately 10% of the total workload.

The next figure shows the monitoring process of a project once it has been approved.

Figure 22. Monitoring process of an approved project
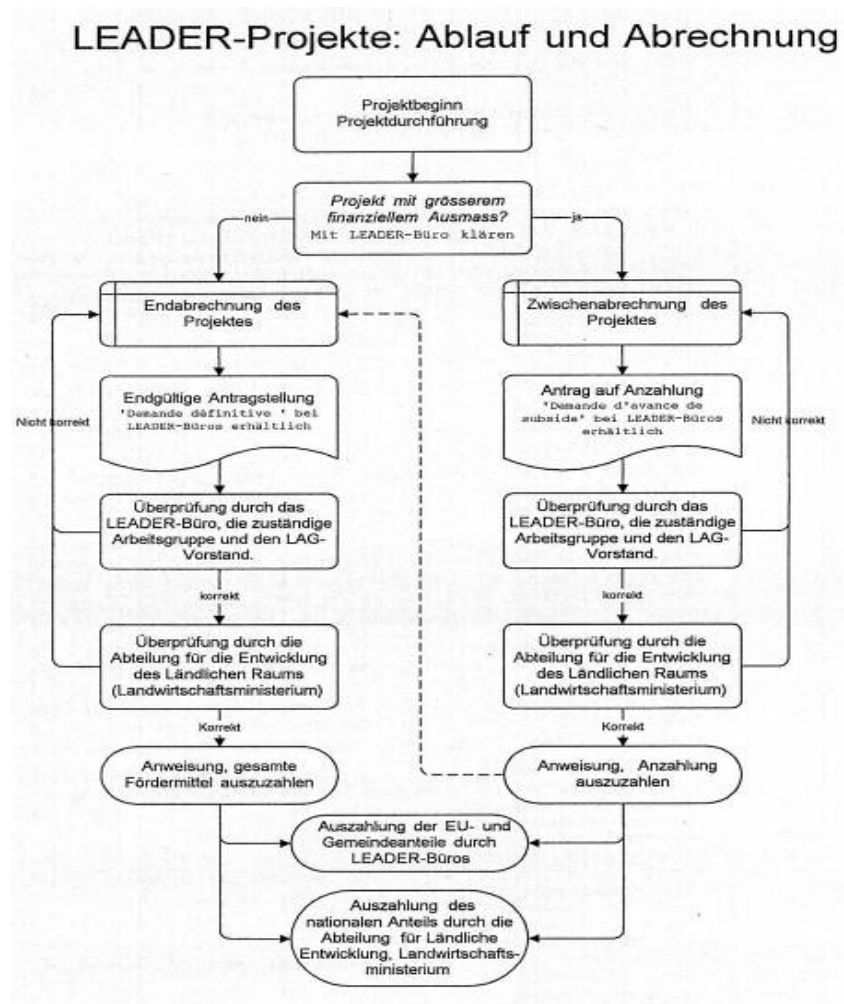
Source: Mid Term Evaluation of LEADER+ in Luxemburg, OEKO Bureau and Bureau ZILM, 2004

6.8.5 Governance and rural citizenship

The LAG has taken all the necessary measures to guarantee a fair and transparent governance system. Day-to-day operations are reported to an executive committee formed by 3 representatives of the municipalities, 3 representatives of the not for profit sector and 1 representative from the lead partner (professional chamber).

The partnership shows a strong commitment from rural municipalities to engage with their local charities and associations into collective and participative actions in order to unleash the local potential of their communities to bring a better quality of life in this rural area. The fact that they act as net contributors (see below) in programming committees where the not for profit sector represents the majority of partners illustrates this good will. The capacity of the LAG to motivate the voluntary sector in becoming decision makers next to local elected people is a good example of the partnership principle promoted by the LEADER method.

Every partner from the LAG gets a clear monitoring board of its contribution to the overall exercise during the whole programming cycle.

On a total expenditure of 2,509,735.45 €, it is interesting to note that the LAG stakeholders financially contribute for more than a third of the programme.

Table 69. LEADER+ expenditure

EU – EAGGF-Guidance (LEADER+)	22,86%
National rural development Plan (Ministry of Agriculture)	38,92%
Municipalities (LAG)	31,36%
Other (local NGOs and private companies) (LAG)	6,86%

The following figure illustrates the financial flows down to the final beneficiaries at project level, highlighting the NUTS level at which the funding intervenes.

Figure 23. Funding flows from the EU to the project level
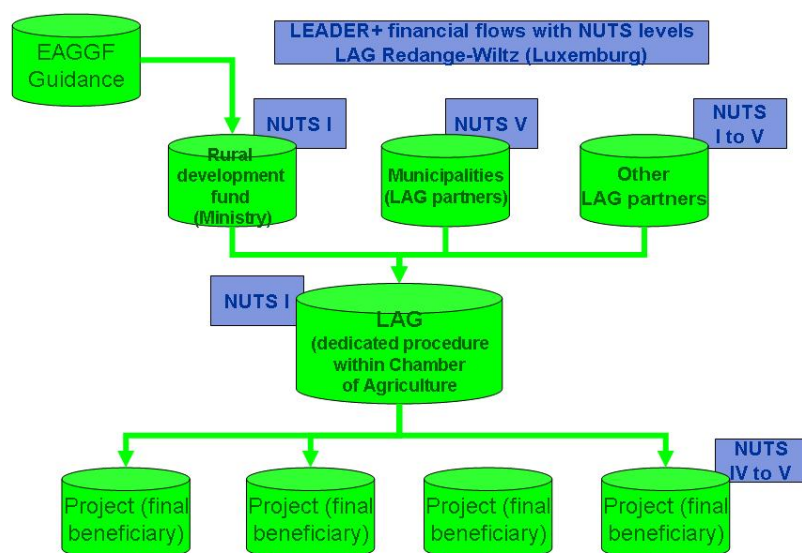
This diagram reveals specific patterns, seen as key success factors of LEADER+ by local stakeholders:

- A direct relationship between the LAG and the MA (Ministry);
- The capacity to work with cash flow from the very start. It even occurred that the LAG steering committee decided upon cash advances to some final beneficiaries right after approval of the project (at project start) ;

From an administrative point of view, the LAG is directly placed under the responsibility of the Chamber of Agriculture (which falls under the NUTS I category), in charge of the global grant formed by local, national and EU money. The particularity is that all decisions, including project

approval, are taken at LAG level (NUTS IV). Here, the Chamber of Agriculture acts as a clearing house by endorsing decisions taken by the LAG committee on a yearly basis.

This double function – managing a global grant at NUTS I level and operating the LAG through detached personnel at NUTS IV level – conveys a genuine feature ensuring the full autonomy of the LAG in developing the local strategy by selecting, approving and proceeding to payments for the projects, in perfect synergy with monitoring rules coming from upper levels of decision.

The speed of the circuit is well performing: between 3 or maximum 4 months from the initial introduction of a grant request (from a project holder to the LEADER+ office) to the formal agreement.

Steering committees gathering all LAG partners are organized on a regular basis during the whole programming cycle. On these occasions, progress reports are presented by the LEADER office and new projects proposals are voted. Minutes of the meetings are circulated and filed with the LEADER secretariat. These meetings were usually attended by a representative of the Ministry, on a consultative basis.

Thematic groups are also established, in order to gather expertise around project promoters according to the field of activity. These groups are therefore set for the life cycle of the project only. This is a lesson from LEADER II were thematic groups installed for the programme duration led to demotivation and lack of interest over time. The formula installed with LEADER+ allows the working group to be operational on a temporary basis.

6.8.6 Relevance and Community added value

There is a particular situation in Luxemburg with regard to rural development and Community added value. Since the country is very small and the Gross Domestic Product per head rather high (nr. 1 worldwide in 2008[129]), the government budget in favour of rural development is rather generous and local authorities are able to collect the relevant funds to become full partners in the LEADER dynamics.

In fact, the Community Added Value is mostly expressed in the methodology and the delivery mechanism, rather than in the EU financial contribution. According to the LAG manager, the 20% contribution from EAGGF Guidance gave way to serene decision making at local level, as it was a sort of risk capital next to their own funding, allowing failures without putting the partners in uncomfortable situations within their hierarchies. In other words, the laboratory function of LEADER+ is considered as a positive asset and should be maintained. Indeed, a few projects did not meet expected results (for instance the creation of a networking unit gathering all the local NGOs in the field of social work could not be maintained) and led the steering committee to reconsider their action in this direction. LEADER+ gave an opportunity to support exploratory projects in which partners could engage with no fear to fail.

But a real "plus" of LEADER+ in the Redange-Wiltz area was the capacity to tap into the major Government plan e-Luxembourg[130,] by organizing and planning a coherent delivery of Internet services on behalf of the municipalities and their rural communities. Internet 'parlours' ('Internetstuffen') were opened with the technical support of the LEADER+ staff in terms of feasibility study (during the preparatory phase) and content development (during the implementation phase). A major output in this field is the creation of an educational and training platform called "Landakademie", in cooperation the neighbouring LAG Clervaux-Vianden.

---

[129] The Economist : pocket world in figures, 2008.
[130] In compliance with the Lisbon Council decisions of January 2000 and the launch of the eEurope initiative. More details on http://www.eluxembourg.public.lu

Description of the Landakademie

In the follow-up of the LEADER project TRIPTICON (2002-2005) aiming at gathering and promoting local offers in IT training under a single web portal and training room, the idea was to build an integrated offer of informal and vocational training courses so that people from the rural community would not need to go to a major town-centre to get trained. The project started to take shape after an exploratory visit to the Cham 'learning region' in Bavaria (D). It was then refined with the involvement of Ministerial services (Education, Internal affairs and Land Planning) and content providers (Secondary schools, Economic boards, Vocational Training Institute, University of Luxemburg, NGOs, etc.).

Since the start of 2007, a database of learning offers is available on www.landakademie.lu. It gathers all kinds of proposals, from silk painting to accounting or Spanish courses. In order to meet local needs, additional requests for training can be posted and if there is sufficient demand, the course can be organized.

The Landakademie became even more popular during the «Learning fair» («Lernfest»), organized with the support of LEADER+ in June 2007, where more than 4,000 visitors attended the Hosingen park and discovered over 60 information stands dedicated to vocational training and apprenticeship.

Project holder

LAG Redange-Wiltz

Partners

LAG Clervaux-Vianden, LEADER municipalities

Duration

3 years (2005-2008)

Budget

19 995.81 € (concept)
225 457.57 € (implementation)
EU 20%, National 40%, Municipalities 40%.

This example illustrates the way LEADER+ has complemented a mainstream programme (in this case the e-Luxembourg Government Plan) and created economies of scale for efficient delivery of services, in compliance with users' needs.

Rural areas in Luxemburg are attractive, as is demonstrated by population movements from urban to surrounding areas. In relation to rural development measures stemming from EAGGF-Guidance, it has to be remembered that Luxemburg was an early adopter of the second pillar of the CAP, with the aim of "*implementing a multi-functional agricultural model, which is competitive and sustainable, able to apply organic production methods, able to produce healthy and high quality food products and able to provide a more harmonious development of rural areas*"[131]

---

[131] EUROPA: Rural Development Plans: Luxemburg

metis

The LAG strategy had little or no direct outputs on agro-environmental activities, except for one awareness raising project on water management entitled 'Pédag'eau', providing didactic material about the Kautenbach wastewater treatment plant located in one of the LEADER municipalities.

Overall, the LAG mainly concentrated its activity at enhancing the use of new know-how and new technologies (around 8% of total expenditure) and at improving the quality of life of its communities (around 40% of total expenditure).

In doing so, LEADER+ in the area of Redange-Wiltz contributed to the national objectives of the rural development plan whereby inter-disciplinary and integrated participative actions at local level constitute the backbone of the Local Development Plans (PDC or "Plan de Développement Communal") co-funded since 1990 by the Ministry of Agriculture. The tradition of local concerted planning has been encapsulated into the subsequent Rural Development Plan as of 2000 and allowed a swift coordination process as most of the stakeholders had already gone through their participative audits and could easily produce sound and robust strategies for their areas.

In other words, LEADER+, and before that LEADER I and LEADER II, came as an additional mechanism to already existing rural planning and delivery mechanisms of the same vein. It was an opportunity to strengthen and widen the scope of support to bottom-up and partnership planning and delivery methods for rural areas.

6.8.7 Impacts

The final report states that "*human, cultural, economic and political resources could be exploited thanks to decentralized training offers as well as to new forms of communication and cooperation. (…) Special attention was given to young people and women. Self-discovery played an important role. (…) A 2004 survey revealed that LEADER was popular among 65% of the LAG's population[132].*" This was made possible by the presence of local 'multipliers' as the LAG manager says, that is motivated people in each and every village, caring for the future of their community and area.

The following graph shows the allocations of expenditure by type of activity. It reveals a large part delegated to counselling and coordination (31%).

Indeed, the core business of the Redange-Wiltz LEADER office is rural development in its widest understanding: providing support to any local initiative which is believed to add value to the local community, whatever the sector, the size, the colour or the risk. For this purpose, the LEADER premises have become a "one-stop-shop" displaying information coming from other sources than LEADER, e.g. how to get direct investment support from the Ministry of Economic affairs and Trade, how to participate to national campaigns targeting young people, etc.

---

[132] LEADER Forum nr. 19, 2008.

Figure 24. Distribution of tasks according to fields of activity

Ausgabenaufteilung LEADER+ Redange-Wiltz 2001-2007 nach Handlungsfeldern
Répartition des dépenses LEADER+ Redange-Wiltz 2001-2007 par champs d'action

Interregionale und grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit
Collaboration interrégionale et transnationale 9,5%

LEADER-Netzwerk Luxemburg
Réseau LEADER Luxembourg 1,1%

Beratung & Koordination
Conseil & Coordination 31,0%

Verwaltung
Administration 9,3%

Freizeit & Tourismus
Loisirs & Tourisme 3,5%

Kultur
Culture 13,6%

Chancengleichheit
Égalité des chances 6,2%

Jugend
Jeunesse 2,8%

Kommunikation
Communication 9,2%

Bildung & Beratung
Formation & Conseil 13,8%

Satisfaction of women and young people needs

The scope of action is wide, and targets any person or group living in the rural area. For instance, LEADER+ provided an opportunity for a local NGO to launch a "Gender House" project[133], which is run now on a regional basis with financial input of different municipalities and replicated to other rural areas in the country.

Description of 'Gender House' project

It is well known that socializing between gender classes is a learning process ("gender doing"). This process goes through a dynamic phase during puberty, when girls and boys develop their sexual identity. They are subject to increased pressure in order to adapt their behaviour according to their gender, along the other sex's expectations. This can result in restrictive stereotypes which can influence the overall behaviour.

Gender Haus started in 2004 by organising a 'Boys' Day' during which the mainly feminine profession of child carer in a day-nursery centre was presented to a group of teenagers from a vocational school. The Boys' Day was repeated with a wider scope in May 2005, and extended into a 'Young Gender' project involving young people between 12 and 24 years old in a variety of creative workshops such as stress management at school, cooking lessons for boys, or even self-defence courses for girls and young women.

In total, 52 girls and 35 boys took part to this initiative.

---

[133] http://rw.leader.lu/fr/young_gender_projekt

metis

Project holder

"Service for equal chances" (Redange / Attert) (NGO)

Partners in launched activities

LEADER municipalities, Youth Centre Redange, etc.

Duration

3 years (2003 – 2006)

Budget

Total cost service: 136,500 € (20% EU, 40% National, 40% Private) – activities costs: 49,974 € (20% EU, 40% National, 27% Municipalities, 13% Private)

Women and young people represented a priority target of the LAG strategy.

From the quantified outputs provided by the LAG manager at the end of the programme, we can say that:

- 10.5 jobs were directly created with LEADER support, mostly in the leisure, educational and social fields.
- 422 women enrolled in training courses, 73% of which were computer courses.
- 4,987 children and young people (under 23) benefitted from LEADER+. This high figure is mostly due to the cross border project "Joujoumobile", a mobile facility travelling from one crèche to another with toys and child attractions, involving 3,410 children during 24 months. The 'Kiddies' project also got a high turnover with 888 participants attending 7 events organised with local schools (e.g. debate on children's rights, football match for girls, etc.)

So the least we can say is that the needs and potentials of young people – including children – and those of women have been very well addressed by LEADER+.

Another instance of this is the presence of women in the decision-making process, summarized in the following table.

Table 70. Women in the decision making process

Percentage of Women in working-groups	41%
Percentage of Women in the LAG committee (main delegate)	30%
Percentage of Women in the LAG committee (second delegate)	21%
Percentage of Women in the LAG executive board	14%

The same cannot be said for young people, although they have been largely represented by the sport, culture, leisure and education spheres acting as go-between between the LAG and their target public.

The LAG's strategy clearly spelled out its willingness to enhance the capacity of the local community to influence the development of the rural area by investing its social capital.

As a conclusion, we can say that the combination of supported activities generated positive effects on bonding capital (building trust) as well as bridging capital (increase tolerance and openness).

Information sources

- LEADER+ Business plan submitted 24 June 2002 to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.
- Summary of the LEADER+ strategy 2001-2007, August 2004 (French version).
- LEADER FORUM nr.19, June 2008 (German, French), LAG quarterly web magazine, presenting results and projects for the LEADER+ programme period.
- Ministry of Agriculture, Winery and Rural Development, Activity Report 2008, section VII 'Rural Development'.

List of contacted persons

Mr. Fons Jacques, manager
Bureau LEADER Eschdorf
23, an der Gaass
L-9150 Eschdorf
Tel. +352 89 95 68-1
Fax: +352 89 95 68-40
Email: rw@leader.lu
Web: http://rw.leader.lu

6.9 Poland: Wrzosowa Kraina

Basic information Wrzosowa Kraina

- Database code: LTM-PL-004

- Official name: Funadacja Wrzosowa Kraina

- Experience in L I: No

- Experience in L II: No

- Objective 1 or 2 zone: 1

- Population (inhabitants): 27 355, 00

- Surface area (in km²): 589,73km2

- Density (inhabitants/km²): 46

- Number of municipalities: 3

- Employment rate/unemployment rate:

- Total funding (€): 179 994.73

- EU share (€): 143 995.78

- Public funds (€): 35 998.94

- Private funds (€): *Please complete the information or write a zero*

- Breakdown of expenditure: Overheads/administration/animation etc

- Number of LAG employees: fulltime/part-time

- LEADER+ theme chosen: 3. Adding value to local products;

- 4. Best use of natural and cultural resources *Should this be under the topic of LEADER+ theme chosen?*

- LEADER+ other theme(s) chosen: *Please add the information or write 'none'*

- Level of autonomy: (counter check with programme complement)

- Level of directiveness: 3

6.9.1 Object of the case study

The case study covers the LAG Wrzosowa Kraina (Land of the Heather) which covers the east-ern part of the geographical region of Bory Dolnoslaskie (the 'Forests of Lower Silesia'), primarily known for its long tradition in copper mining industry. The LAG is one of the first Leader-type partnerships established in Poland before EU accession, and is known for the genuine involve-ment of a wide range of stakeholders from all sectors.

Figure 25. The LAG area of Wrzosowa Kraina

Figure 25. The LAG area of Wrzosowa Kraina

6.9.2 Summary

The LAG Wrzosowa Kraina is situated in the northern part of the Dolnoslaskie Voivodship (in the South-West of Poland). The area consists of three municipalities (Przemkow, Chocianow and Gromadka), belonging to two powiats (counties) of Polkowice and Boleslawiec, and with a population of approximately 28.000 inhabitants.

The area has a number of characteristics which make it stand out from the majority of rural areas in Poland, notably:

- it has a relatively low proportion of arable land (31 %) of rather low quality, and the major city of the area is covered with forests; the population density is very low, with 46 people per square km (in the whole voivodship it is 145 people per km);
- a large proportion of the area (nearly 70%) belongs to a landscape park: Przemkowski Park Krajobrazowy, and it contains several areas of high natural value (including two Natura 2000 areas and one area on the „shadow list");
- the population of the area is of relatively recent origin, and – in addition to traditional Polish communities – it consists of Polish people repatriated after the Second World War from what was then Yugoslavia, as well as the Lemka minority (originating from the South-Eastern borders of Poland which post-1945 were incorporated into the Soviet Union); and a Roma population; each of these ethnic groups tries to maintain their separate cultural identities.

The name 'Wrzosowa Kraina' (The Land of the Heather) was not known before the LAG was created and the area was not widely recognised as an attractive place, or a place of origin of interesting local products. There were few tourists and fewer tourist facilities. For many years large parts of the area had been closed off due to the stationing of the Soviet army.

The history of the area's partnership dates back to the early 2000s, before Poland's accession to the EU and long before the Pilot LEADER+ Programme was developed. The initiative came from the Environmental Partnership Foundation, which has helped to implement local partnership principles in several places around Poland. In Dolnoslaskie Voivodship, the work of the Environmental Partnership Foundation (which is based in Krakow) was promoted primarily by the Ecological Foundation 'Green Action' in Legnica.

6.9.3 LAG design and planning

The initiative to create a local partnership came, in the first place, from people involved in environmental and nature protection issues, notably those from the Landscape Park, some local businesses (one of them, an organic farm, provided office space to the emerging partnership) as well as some NGOs supported by experts from the 'Green Action' Foundation and animators trained by the Polish Rural Forum. Significant support was from the beginning provided by the Przemkow local authorities, which later on helped to convince the other two municipalities to join the partnership. The Przemkow municipality also formally put forward the proposal to the Ministry of Agriculture to obtain funding from the First Scheme[134] of the LEADER+ Pilot Programme – the initial grant to set up the LAG and develop a strategy.

The implementation of the LEADER+ Pilot Programme in Poland was a long process in which the understanding of the complexity of this measure was slowly achieved by all the stakeholders, including the MA, the Intermediary Body, the Paying Agency and many of the local actors. At the local level it was facilitated by a large-scale preparatory action undertaken by the Cooperation Fund together with the Polish Rural Forum (a national platform of rural NGOs), which consisted of intense training of nearly 90 local partnership animators, as well as a series of information and awareness raising activities involving approximately 3500 stakeholders.

Nevertheless, at the MA level, the preparation of the necessary legal framework and the process of evaluation and selection of potential LAGs took a long time. The two-stage process (in which the groups could apply first for capacity building, and approximately one year later apply again for funding of the strategies) provided the groups with support to formally register the LAG and prepare the strategy, but, on the other hand, it introduced additional delays at administration level and created a period of uncertainty when the groups – having completed the capacity building and spent all the money – had to wait many months for the second stage of selection to be completed, without knowing whether their application will be approved. As a result, the time left for the implementation of strategies was very limited; most groups had little more than one year before the end of 2008, when all the activities had to be completed and accounted for.

The formal establishment of the Wrzosowa Kraina Foundation was linked to the requirement that all groups applying for funding from the Second Scheme of the LEADER+ measure had to have a separate legal entity (at that time it could be a foundation, an association or a 'union of associations' – these are the three major forms that NGOs can take in Poland).

The motivation behind setting up the LAG and applying for LEADER funding was primarily to promote the area and its products on a wider scale. The initiators believed that the area had a good potential to develop products with a special character (due to the above described unique characteristics), which could attract the attention of tourists and other consumers from other

---

[134] The LEADER+ Pilot Programme in Poland (i.e. the LEADER-type measure in the RDP 2004-2006) was implemented in two stages or schemes: the first one provided funding to entities that declared the intention to set up a local partnership (LAG) and design a local strategy; the second scheme then provided funding for the implementation of the strategies. Two separate calls for proposals were organised (the first one with deadline in 2006, the second in 2007), and there were some groups that took part in Scheme One and did not submit an application for Scheme Two, as well as those which did not get First Scheme funding but successfully submitted an application to the Second Scheme. Wrzosowa Kraina got funding from both Schemes.

parts of Poland (and possibly also abroad) and thus provide additional income to the local in-habitants, many of them owners of small size farms or unemployed. The unemployment rate in the area was 16.1% in the powiat of Polkowice and 25.6% in the powiat of Boleslawiec[135,] com-pared to the national average of 19%. The number of business entities per 1000 inhabitants var-ied from 49.9 in the Gromadka municipality to 62 in the municipality of Chocianow, compared to 86 as voivodship average.

An additional consideration was that the LEADER funding could help strengthen the sense of local identity, build trust between the diverse communities and animate the dormant potential of civil society. The three municipalities had not previously cooperated with each other, and neither had the producers of the various local products. It was also difficult to involve farmers into any cooperative activity.

Objectives

The initiators decided to focus their strategy around two themes: the **use of natural and cul-tural resources** in the development of Wrzosowa Kraina, and **adding value to local products**, in particular through improving market access of small businesses through collective action. Three main objectives were defined in the strategy, each of them with several specific objec-tives:

- maintaining the high natural and landscape value of the area, through:
  - efficient protection of natural resources and landscape
  - enhanced environmental awareness of the inhabitants and tourists
  - good management of solid and liquid waste.
- community development and maintaining cultural heritage, through:
  - increasing community action and cooperation in the region
  - promoting Wrzosowa Kraina and creating an attractive offer for different target groups
  - maintaining the cultural heritage.

- economic development based on natural and cultural assets, through:
  - increasing community action and cooperation in the region
  - promoting Wrzosowa Kraina and creating an attractive offer for different target groups
  - maintaining the cultural heritage
  - increasing skills of the local population.

6.9.4 Management, controlling and financing systems

Due to the specific character of the Pilot LEADER+ measure in Poland, the LAGs were not able to select projects, so all the activities envisaged in the strategy had to be carried out by the LAG. However, the group took care to involve the partners as much as possible, and also to find local subcontractors. In this way the stakeholders could contribute to the implementation of the strat-egy, although formally re-granting of the LEADER funds was not allowed.

This programme set-up meant that the LAG's autonomy and flexibility in reacting to needs was highly limited, as all its activities had already been pre-defined at the time when the strategy was presented for funding. However, in view of the short time of implementation, this did not prove to reduce significantly the impact, since the application contained "projects" or actions that were considered necessary by the local community in the course of designing the strategy. The exact

---

[135] in Poland employment data are mainly available at the powiat (i.e. county) level.

impact of these activities is difficult to assess, partly because the objectives in the strategy are formulated in a very general way (e.g. "increasing awareness...", or "enhancing cooperation"), without quantifiable objectives.

The administrative requirements of LEADER+ were at the time thought to be quite heavy (e.g. the need to physically submit the originals of all financial documents to FAPA), but they appear relatively easy, even taking into account the increase in staff experience, compared with the present period[136]. Approximately 50% of staff time was used for administrative functions, including reporting, monitoring, controlling etc. (compared to an estimated 80% today); this – according to the respondents – left sufficient time to animate the community and do projects in the field. It also provided many opportunities for capacity building for the LAG staff, which is considered very valuable now, when the same people are involved in LEADER Axis implementation but there is less time for training them. Another result of LEADER+ considered of particular value was the establishment of contacts and networking with other LAGs in the Dolny Slask region – these contacts and friendships are still maintained today, both in the professional and in the personal sphere.

The decision making process appears to have been smooth, with most decisions taken unanimously by the LAG. A professional mediator was contracted, whose services were never used. The national regulations were quite flexible in terms of the contents of strategies, so the group felt it was free to implement whatever was most needed for the area; attention was taken to take into account and reconcile the views of different sectors. Additional funds were obtained from other sources, including the National Fund of Environmental Protection and the Fund for Civic Initiative (the main funding source for NGO projects in Poland). The funding was used to create synergy with the LEADER+ money.

6.9.5 Governance and rural citizenship

One of the most spectacular successes appears to be the creation of a **distinct local identity** and promoting it throughout the country. The name "Wrzosowa Kraina" is gaining national recognition, together with its key products, notably honey based on heather flowers, which has been traditionally produced in the region for centuries, as well as products based on berries and mushrooms growing in the Dolnoslaski Forests. The "Festival of Honey and Wine" has become an annual event and attracts a growing number of tourists from Poland and even from other countries.

6.9.6 Relevance and Community added value

The implementation of the Pilot LEADER+ measure in Wrzosowa Kraina is considered a great success (all the interviewees were unanimous in this respect, and one said LEADER was "the best thing that could happen to the area"). This was particularly emphasised as a contrast with the present version of LEADER (i.e. the "mainstreamed" one funded from RDP 2007-2013), which is considered extremely bureaucratic and complicated in comparison to the previous one. In the Pilot measure, according to the LAG manager, the responsibilities and functions of all the actors were clear and there was good communication with the intermediary body (Foundation of Assistance Programmes in Agriculture, FAPA[137]).

All the 62 activities envisaged in the strategy were carried out, and all the funds were spent and accounted for without major problems. It is said (by the LAG president) that not all activities

---

[136] This was a point stressed several times by all the three people interviewed.
[137] In the 2004-2006 period the implementation of LEADER was managed at the national level, which is not the case in 2007-2013 when the intermediary role is played by voivodship (regional) authorities.

AE DL   C E U

proved a success, in the sense that they did not bring about the expected "snowball effect" – but for most of the actions the results can still be observed today.

6.9.7 Impacts

The strengthening of the Wrzosowa Kraina "trademark" has had two types of effects: economic and social. For many of the economic effects, one cannot provide specific data (such as increase in turnover) – partly because it is not available, and partly because it is too early. However, it appears clear that the local producers have increased their sales, found new wider markets, and – perhaps most importantly – have learnt to cooperate. It is now possible, for instance, to order a "basket of local products" which contains specialities made by different producers, who work together to obtain better results. A total of some 50 local products and services have been identified and are being promoted, including 20 food products. Three products have been registered at the regional level (there are only six such products in the whole voivodships), and one (a local type of honey) – at the European level (PGI). One restaurant now has local products on offer (although they are not particularly well advertised), and two bars serve a locally made, honey-based drink (mead). Local producers and leaders have gained confidence and they even take part in international congresses and events.

According to the interviewees (although there is no hard data to support it), the number of local producers is growing, as well as the scale of their production, revenues and investments. An important role in promotion and cooperation between producers has been played by the website financed from LEADER+. The eco-museums are not an important source of income in the household budgets, but they tend to receive more and more visitors each year.

The social effects have been even more impressive: it seems that the diverse communities have learnt to work together and developed trust. The LAG has played an important role in helping to set up local NGOs. In the course of the LEADER+ implementation the LAG supported the creation of 8 new local associations, and 6 more were created in early 2009 (i.e. after the end of the project period). As a result, in approximately 50% of villages, small local organisations are now active. It is worth noting that the Wrzosowa Kraina Foundation, which no longer plays the role of LAG (in the new period, a special legal form was created in the Polish law for LAGs, better adapted to the LEADER principles, and most groups decided to take advantage of this possibility), still exists and has – as its main function – the support for the creation of NGOs and animating civic initiative in the area. Regional level funding was obtained for this purpose.

In the period of effective implementation of the strategy, i.e. in the period from June 2007 to March 2008, a total of 240 people were trained in the LAG area.

Even farmers were to a certain extent included in the LAG activities, through the implementation of projects such as an offering to farmers who receive RDP payments e.g. for the maintenance of meadows a training on the management of biomass. In this way the LAG made a contribution to the use of other RDP Axes by beneficiaries (pump-priming).

The strengthening of local identity had an impact also on the ethnic minorities – thanks to the increased activity and better organisation of the Lemka community, the area has hosted the "Watra" meeting of Lemkas from all over Poland and even Europe. However, workshops to promote the production of traditional Eastern eggs painted in Lemka patterns did not turn out to be particularly successful from the business point of view.

Satisfaction of women and young people needs

Typically in Polish rural areas a major role is played by rural women – in some projects they were the main beneficiary, e.g. workshops on putting together books with traditional recipes (one man attended). Attempts to involve young people were not so successful, apparently because the leaders of the partnership lacked the necessary skills. Several workshops on environmental issues, music, self-presentation were organised for youth, as well as painting and sculpture workshops for younger children. Some training was provided that might potentially strengthen the employment chances of young people (e.g. how to become a guide), and several school competitions, but these activities seemed to be short lived. One interviewee thought there was good response from children up to a certain age, but later they seemed to give up; however, one informal youth group formed in connection with the LEADER+ implementation seems to be still active and has now been formalised into an association.

Contribution to abating greenhouse emissions and to decreasing the ecological footprint

It is not possible after such a short time to say that LEADER+ contributed to making the area more attractive for residents and non-residents, and the effect on greenhouse emissions is considered to be neutral.

There was not enough time (strategy implementation had to be completed within a little more than one year) to develop a proper monitoring system. However, it is generally considered that the effects of LEADER+ implementation are highly sustainable at the local level, and the group (in cooperation with some neighbouring municipalities) has applied both to the LEADER Axis in RDP 2007-2013 and to Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund. These results are considered to be less sustainable at the national level, where the mainstreaming of LEADER caused a considerable increase in the administrative burden – partly because of involving regional authorities (for whom LEADER was a completely new approach) as intermediary institutions.

Sources of information:

Strategy of Wrzosowa Kraina

website www.wrzosowakraina.pl

Interviews with:

- **Barbara Sulma**, president of the LAG

- **Krzysztof Szustka**, animator from Green Action Foundation helping to establish the LAG, subsequently its vice-president

- **Anita Smolag**, animator, employee of the municipality and chairperson of the LAG board

All the above were key people for the early days of the Wrzosowa Kraina LAG, and they remain still active in the present period. Anita Smolag was recently nominated Animator of the Year (2009) of the Partnership Groups.

6.10 United Kingdom: North Northumberland and North Pennines

Basic information North Northumberland

- Database code: L+GBENG 14

- Official name: North Northumberland LEADER+

- Experience in L I: No

- Experience in L II: Yes

- Objective 1 or 2 zone: 2

- Population (inhabitants): 58 471

- Surface area (in km²): 2051

- Density (inhabitants/km²): 29

- Number of municipalities: 2 counties

- Employment rate/unemployment rate: unemployment rate: 3.9%

- Total funding (€): 3 522 006

- EU share (€): 1 761 003

- Public funds (€):   *Please add the information*

- Private funds (€):*Please add the information*

- Breakdown of expenditure: Overhead and administration: £194 276 (EAGGF)

- Number of LAG employees: 1 fulltime, 1 part-time

- LEADER+ theme chosen: Making the best use of natural and cultural resources; and Adding value to local products.

- LEADER+ other theme(s) chosen: *Please add the information*

- Level of autonomy: (counter check with programme complement)

- Level of directiveness: *Please add the information*

Basic info North Pennines

- Database code: L+GBENG 15

- Official name: North Pennines LEADER+

- Experience in L I: No

- Experience in L II: Yes

- Objective 1 or 2 zone: partially 2

- Population (inhabitants): 116757

- Surface area (in km²): 5064

- Density (inhabitants/km²): 23

- Number of municipalities: 6 counties

- Employment rate/unemployment rate: unemployment rate: 1,7%

- Total funding (€): 6 000 000

- EU share (€): 2 000 000

- Public funds (€): 2 700 000

- Private funds (€): 1 300 000

- Breakdown of expenditure: Overhead and administration: £341 201 (EAGGF)

- Number of LAG employees: 3 fulltime

- LEADER+ theme chosen: Improving the quality of life

- LEADER+ other theme(s) chosen: *Please add the information*

- Level of autonomy: (counter check with programme complement)

- Level of directiveness: *Please add the information*

6.10.1 Object of the case study

The two LAGs concerned are:
- North Northumberland; and
- North Pennines

6.10.2 Summary

This case study focuses on the differences between the two different models of LAGs which were used to implement LEADER+ in England. The approach to LEADER+ in England differed from the rest of the UK in that there were two types of LAG. These were known as Action Plan

Groups and Strategic Plan Groups, Action Plan Groups had greater autonomy and a greater level of financial responsibility than the Strategic Plan Groups. The implementation of the LEADER+ Programme in England was based on a three- way partnership between Defra (the Programme MA), the regional Government Offices and the LAGs themselves.

In the application process prospective LAGs were asked to select which model they intended to implement locally. These are differentiated on the basis of their business plan and its delivery and the project approval processes. Of the 25 groups in England eleven LAGs opted for "Action Plan" status, whilst 14 opted for the "Strategic Plan" approach. These two models had clear distinctions in relation to the degree of LAG autonomy they afford and provide a clear illustration of a number of associated effects within a single LEADER+ Programme.

The example examined here focuses on the North East of England region which had two LAGs under the LEADER+ Programme, one of each type. This allows a direct comparison of the effects of the two systems to be made between neighbouring LAGs within a single region and a common regional administrative infrastructural context. The case study draws on three main pieces of research each of which addressed aspects of these two models; these are

- the England LEADER+ Programme mid-term evaluation update;
- the 2005 study undertaken for Defra to provide and Evidence Base for the Mainstreaming of LEADER in England under the 2007 – 2013 RDP; and
- An in depth evaluation of LEADER+ activities within the North East region of England undertaken on behalf of the regional development agency (RDA) ONE North East with a view to informing the regionalised implementation of LEADER under the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme in England.

In the conduct of these aspects of the effects of the two systems of LAG management were examined and discussed from forward looking and from retrospective evaluative perspectives and including implications at LAG, regional and national levels.

The two LAGs concerned are:
- North Northumberland; and
- North Pennines.

North Northumberland LAG was constituted as a Strategic Plan group; North Pennines LAG operated on an Action Plan basis.

Both these LAGs were located within a complex administrative structure which involved local authorities at District level and at County level, the Government Offices (GO), the regional tier of national government (effectively the local arm of the MA and payment agency) and the Regional Development Agencies, RDAs who are responsible for development and regeneration actions within the regions of England.

The North Northumberland LAG was wholly located within the operational area of GO NE, whilst the other, the North Pennines LAG straddled the boundary between two GOs, GO NE and GO NW. As the RDA areas are coterminous with the Government Office regions there was a similar split between two RDAs, ONE North East (ONE) and the North West Development Agency (NWDA). The North Pennines LAG was administered through GO NE as this was the region in which the majority of its area fell.

North Northumberland's area was wholly within Northumberland County Council and comprised two District Council areas, Alnwick and Berwick upon Tweed. The North Pennines LAG area included parts of six District Councils, Tynedale, rural Carlisle, Eden, Teesdale, Wear Valley, Derwentside and three County Councils, Northumberland, Cumbria and Durham.

The lead organisation in North Northumberland was The Community Council of Northumberland; a voluntary organisation, registered as a charity, which has been providing a service of support and development for rural communities in Northumberland for fifty years. The Community Council of Northumberland took responsibility for administration and financial accountability on behalf of the wider partnership; while responsibilities for driving the development plan forward and co-ordinating local action were the responsibility of the LAG Executive Group.

The lead organisation in North Pennines was Durham County Council (DCC). The relationship between the LAG and DCC was intended to be the same as that between all core funding partners and the LAG, one based on equality between core funding an non-core funding partners. However, DCC undertook an additional role and responsibility acting as the employing authority for LEADER+ Programme staff and providing the necessary administrative back up.

The two LAGs concerned and their associated delivery teams and organisations no longer exist in their LEADER+ form.

6.10.3 LAG design and planning

There are important differences in the rural geographies of the two LAG areas. The North Northumberland LAG covers almost all of rural Northumberland outer surrounds, the coalfield and urban areas, and comprises a number of relatively distinct and not especially large catchments areas running into the North Sea. Meanwhile, the North Pennines LAG is larger and includes parts of three major river systems, the valleys of which dissect the plateau of the North Pennines and a number of scattered market towns and villages. In both cases, the levels of aggregate disadvantage vary from poorer isolated villages in the more remote parts to much more prosperous villages located closer to the larger market towns and urban hubs of the region. In general, North Northumberland is more disadvantaged than North Pennines, but the key message from a brief exploration is how poorly off the rural areas of the North East of England are compared to national averages, with almost 40% of all Single Outcome Agreement areas (the then statutory sub regional planning designation) in the region falling in the poorest 20% on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) nationally.[138]

The North Northumberland LAG

The North Northumberland LAG is a coastal LAG whose other boundaries are the Scottish Border, Cheviot Hills and the administrative boundary of Alnwick District Council. The area is traditionally rooted in livestock farming and fishing, predominantly micro-businesses which form significant sources of employment and income. There is an economic and cultural coherence within the area around these traditional industries of farming and fishing which differentiates it from the former mining area to the south.

The area had the highest proportion of unemployment of any LAG area in England and the GDP was in the bottom three in the country. The area contains designations of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, heritage coastline, a national park and 23 Natura 2000 sites.

The Membership of the North Northumberland LAG is based on involving 'all the key community groups and organisations responsible for the instigation, provision, management and delivery of community services in North Northumberland. This includes the County and District Councils, the Rural Community Council and locally based Development Trusts with interests in young people, women and the environment.' A distinctive feature of this membership is the involvement of the local development trusts.

---

[138] http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/443/Indicesofdeprivation2004summaryrevisedPDF154Kb_id1128443.pdf

The LAG operates through a smaller decision-making body known as the Executive Group, which is drawn from within the LAG membership and comprises a maximum of 14 members. The membership of this group is detailed in the table below.

Table 71. North Northumberland LAG Membership

Public sector	Social and economic partners
Alnwick District Council	Amble Development Trust
Northumberland Coast AONB	Community Council of Northumberland
Northumberland County Council	Fourth Action
Northumberland National Parks Authority	Glendale Gateway Trust
	North Sunderland & Seahouses Trust
	Princes Trust
	Tweed Forum
	Hands on Help for Communities

Northumberland Strategic Partnership and ONE NE attend meetings of this group as observers.

The **target groups** identified in North Northumberland were women and young people.

The specific **objectives** identified included:

- Environmental enhancement and opportunities;
- Cultural celebration; and
- Skill development

The LAG identified a specific focus on the following project types;

- Tourism initiatives;
- Education opportunities;
- Supporting and developing entrepreneurial activity in arts and crafts; and
- Developing micro business support structures in food and drink.

The LAG also sought to directly address their target groups

The North Northumberland LAG partnership elected not to opt for the Action Plan approach for LEADER+. This decision was prompted by the fact that 58% of the area was new to LEADER and the partnership had been structured to allow for capacity building within its membership, as part of the LEADER process. The more experienced partners in the LAG had managed public and European funds as part of a range of ambitious project development, which were largely localised in the communities they serve. The model of a wide based strategic partnership for the whole of North Northumberland was, however, new to this area. Partners were committed to the strategic approach but felt that they needed to prioritise development into a stronger and more unified unit as part of the LEADER+ process.

The view of the partners was that they should strengthen their skill base, develop further experience working at a strategic level and build on networking opportunities before they assessed the appropriateness of full Accountable Body Status.

metis

AEIDL CEU

The North Pennines LAG

The North Pennines LAG territory was the largest in England and was situated in one of the most extensive and remote areas of upland in England, it was also one of the most sparsely populated. The LAG territory includes extensive areas of high quality landscape designation and a World Heritage site in Hadrian's Wall the environment and heritage of the area are key concerns. The Northumberland National Park also overlaps with the LAG area. The area was defined on the basis of its remoteness, its natural features and its common social, economic and geographical issues; the cross-border aspect was seen to bring a coherent focus centred on this rural area.

Upland agriculture and in particular livestock farming, mainly sheep and beef cattle traditionally formed a major part of the local economy, the other principal element was in extractive industries. Both these sectors have been subject to structural changes and decline with significant local effects. Unemployment in the area appears to be relatively low but the statistics were thought to mask significant amounts of hidden unemployment and seasonal unemployment, there is also thought to be a high level of commuting to the urban centres. The GDP figure was also in the bottom three areas in England.

North Pennines LAG had a **membership** structure that involved area representation through three area-based groups and an overarching Programme Coordination Group (PCG), this reflected its overall scale. This LAG was one of the larger groupings in England. Responsibilities were split between the two tiers and the membership of the PCG was drawn from the three area groups. The principle of the membership split was respected at both levels. The membership of the LAG, effectively the membership of the three area groups, was drawn from four groupings across the area, public sector organisations, the private sector, community sector and the voluntary sector. There were;

- 10 community sector partners (drawn from community action, heritage and arts and culture interests);
- 13 voluntary sector partners (drawn principally from community development, environment and heritage interests);
- private sector partners (representing business networks, tourism, recreation, arts and culture and agriculture); and
- 19 public sector partners (3 County Councils, 6 District Councils, 1 National Park, parish councils and local partnerships).

On this basis, the partnership comprised 9 members with 39% public sector involvement and 61% social and economic partner involvement. The PCG membership split is 45% to 55%, a proportion almost exactly mirrored in Cumbria and Durham area groups. The Northumberland group splits more in favour of the social and economic partners with 67% of its membership in this grouping. The quorum required for each group ensures that the 50% principle is respected at all levels. One point of note is the view that the community involvement in this partnership under LEADER+ has been significantly strengthened in comparison with the previous LEADER II programme.

The **target groups** identified in North Pennines were women, young people, the unemployed and the underemployed.

The North Pennines LAG had an extensive range of **objectives**, these included;

- Empowering people to be active in developing their communities;
- Job creation and micro-business support;

- Using underutilised skills, addressing skills gaps through training etc;
- Access to services and health and wellbeing initiatives;
- Environmental initiatives; and
- Developing cultural opportunities.

With strong experience in previous LEADER activity the North Pennines group adopted and implemented the Action Plan approach.

6.10.4 Management, controlling and financing systems

The two types of LAG in England, the Strategic Plan and Action Plan approaches were differentiated on the basis of their plan delivery and project approval processes. Action Plan groups such as North Pennines were fully responsible for all aspects of the delivery, decision-making, administration and reporting in relation to their business plan. In this case, the partnerships included a locally accountable body that was responsible for the administrative and financial compliance of the programme. Strategic Plan groups like North Northumberland were differentiated by their requirement to submit annual plans to the Government Office, who acted as the accountable body. Otherwise LAG responsibilities are similar other than that the ultimate responsibility for the approval of projects rests with the GO, the GO are also responsible for the processing of claims and making payments.

Decisions as to the type of approach a group employs were made at the original bidding stage of the Programme. Eleven LAGs in England opted for "Action Plan" status, whilst 14 opted for the "Strategic Plan". Provision was made for groups to change this basis when business plans were reviewed, should it be demonstrated to be beneficial, although no group exercised this option. During the MTE update process one LAG reported that it was in the process of moving to "Action Plan" status. This LAG had wished to follow this route from the start of the programme, but circumstances at the time prevented this.

In their guidance to prospective LAGs Defra indicated that there were advantages and disadvantages associated with the two approaches. The table below summarises this guidance.

Table 72. Guidance provided on the advantages and disadvantages of the two types of LAG approach

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Action Plan	Greater ownership of the strategy by the LAG	Finding a willing accountable body with the necessary experience and capacity
	Greater autonomy over project selection and use of funds	Higher administrative load
	Easier coordination between projects	Higher level of responsibility and accountability with attendant risks for LAG and accountable body
	Shorter turnaround for project assessment and approval	

Strategic Plan	LAG need not appoint a legally accountable body	Less ownership of the strategy by the LAG
	Smaller administrative burden on the LAG and their lead body	Less control by LAG of approval and implementation
	Less risk associated with project or administrative failures	Likely to be a longer assessment and approval cycle due to additional administrative tier.

The Evidence Base for Mainstreaming LEADER consultations addressed the issue of the two LAG types directly and indirectly in seeking to establish whether there were any differentiating operational effects. When addressed directly, there was a clear preference for Action Plan approach, although as awareness of the difference was limited amongst those consulted, this tended to be more clearly held and expressed by those with most direct knowledge.

Project selection criteria were developed by the each of the LAGs within a guidance framework provided by the MA, these were then agreed at the regional level prior to being implemented. LAGs were then responsible for the appraisal and selection of projects in line with their strategies. Under the Action Plan approach decisions on project approval were then taken by the local accountable body. In the case of Strategic Plan groups recommendations for were made by the LAG to the regional secretariat (the GO) for approval or rejection.

North East Position

With strong LEADER II links and an existing active partnership, North Pennines LAG was well equipped to adopt the greater responsibility and accountability of the Action Plan approach. North Northumberland had less direct continuity from LEADER II and opted for the Strategic Plan approach, as it was felt this would allow them to develop their wider partnership and associated capacity, strengthen their skill base, develop further experience working at a strategic level and build on networking opportunities.

In probing the relevance and effectiveness of LEADER in the two LAG areas, a significant degree of differentiation became evident which appears to be linked to the two modes of operation. This was most clearly demonstrated in discussion in a joint LAG focus group where the differences between the approaches became more clearly apparent to those involved.

In North Northumberland, the necessary involvement of the GO in the project appraisal process was seen to result in a number of effects; it was thought that these compromised the effective functioning of the LEADER approach. Issues that emerged were the direct influence on LAG decision-making, a reduced speed of response, a perceived constraint on innovation and a diminution of local ownership and decision-making. This was seen to have a negative effect on the credibility of the programme and the LAG's ability to act. In North Pennines, the GO had responsibility for signing the global grant to the LAG and officers expressed themselves to be happy with the systems developed and implemented.

It may be argued that the fundamentals of eligibility and accountability that underpin both approaches are common and, as such, there is, in effect, only a difference in the level of the LAG's accountable body within the multilevel governance system. The Strategic Plan approach is designed to lighten the administrative load on smaller LAGs, where capacity and resources are restricted (a large LAG such as North Pennines is better able to carry the specific capacity and skills to cover this function to the accountable bodies satisfaction), this should afford a greater direction of resource to development rather than administrative activity.

A number of issues around the accountable body role in Action Plan LAGs were identified in both the Mid Term Evaluation Update and the Evidence Base for Mainstreaming LEADER study. In some cases there was thought to be a tendency to equate the responsibilities of the role of

administrative and financial leader with some degree of ownership of the programme and its operation. The Strategic Plan approach is seen to have had a positive effect in some areas by mitigating any undue influence by an interested locally accountable body on the LAG through the GO acting an honest broker. In other cases, as in North Northumberland, it allows a new LAG to function in an 'institutionally thin' area where other bodies, such as local authorities, may not have the capacity to service this role, in this case an NGO, the Community Council of Northumberland acted as the lead.

There was a strong view expressed in both national studies that the GOs were relatively apolitical in the regional context i.e. they were seen to be neutral and not concerned with 'governability' or ownership, this perceived neutrality is valued by LAGs.

Clearly, strong communication and articulation between the GO and LAG was vital in the effective operation of the Strategic Plan approach. Otherwise, there was a danger of introducing what is effectively a further tier of regulation and control on the local process, which could place additional demands on LAG staff, partner and community capacity. This might result in a vicious circle where LAGs may seek to avoid committing too much investment of time etc before projects are submitted for initial appraisal; the resultant under-developed applications in turn require greater scrutiny and referrals for clarification etc. Clearly, this places a strain on finite resources. In North Northumberland early difficulties in project development resulted in a high rejection rate, which may have continued to influence the strategic approach by both GO and LAG.

Summary

The situation regarding the operation of the Strategic Plan groups had lessons for any regional administration of LEADER groups in future. There was considerable satisfaction with the Action Plan approach in North Pennines. Whilst not without its frustrations, the Strategic Plan has allowed the North Northumberland LAG to be developed and function despite their being no local organisation willing or able to take the role of accountable body. There was a common perception of the need to ensure a significant degree of separation between involvement in programme delivery and the administrative responsibilities for the programme.

In delivering the programme effective support from the local administrative and financial leader or the GO is highly important in allowing the LAG to concentrate on addressing needs and opportunities. The enabling aspect of this activity is clearly seen as being very important by both LAGs and project promoters. In the studies conducted the key role of the locally accountable body was discussed with LAG staff, members and other stakeholders mainly with respect to the differentiation of the two types of LAG.

These organisations have the systems and processes to help facilitate the operation of the LAG and delivery of the programme; it is thought best that this is provided at the most local level possible. The locally accountable body's role as a facilitator is therefore of high importance and the understanding of this enabling function is key. It was suggested that greater attention be paid to this role supporting its development and implementation and providing guidance for groups and such organisations. This would be most beneficial in helping to develop consistency of approach and the adoption of best practice. In particular this would aid the clarification of the confusion between facilitation and ownership of the Programme (whether real or merely perceived) which it was thought could occur in some cases.

The MTEU concluded that a hybrid of the two approaches which incorporates the best elements of both giving new groups' confidence but affording them independence of operation might offer the best approach in future. In particular, the speed of response, local accountability and ownership of the Action Plan and the Strategic Plans annual review of business plans were thought to

be effective and compatible. Purely administrative functions could be effectively addressed as a regional service function.

Clearly there are merits to be found in both systems and these are summarised in the table below. This is based on the findings from the stakeholder consultations in the MTE Update and shows how experience developed and is more nuanced by comparison with the predictions in the LAG guidance. The independence and flexibility of the Action Plan approach were particularly highly valued by LAGs across a wide range of activity. The freedom to concentrate on LAG development and development activity were valued by Strategic Plan LAGs. In both cases the advantages appeared to outweigh the disadvantages suggesting that the important lesson here is enabling LAGs to make informed choices within the programme framework allows them to address their local circumstance. There may have been advantages however for local governance development in an approach which encouraged transition from Strategic Plan to Action Plan.

Table 73. LAG structures: Advantages and disadvantages

LAG STRUCTURES: Advantages and Disadvantages		
	Advantages	Disadvantages
Action Plan	Greater independence for the LAG	Less guidance and support is provided
	More ownership by the LAG	
	Greater speed of response	
	The accountable body is often happy to underpin a risk	But sometimes not
	Approach is less dependent on other organisations and their capacity e.g. GO	LAG and locally accountable body capacity is variable
	Locally accountable bodies have local capacity	
	The approach is more accountable, flexible and dynamic	The MA don't get as much data on what's going on
	There is a higher degree of local discretion	
	The administrative function is devolved to the Accountable Body	There is greater likelihood of administrative error and being caught out at audit.
Strategic Plan	Provides a safety net with less risk	Weaker local ownership
	Allows better range and mix of organisational involvement	
	System should be cheaper to run	Slower project approval processes
	More hand holding and support – more security	
	Better for those with limited resources	
	Greater flexibility within agreed parameters and less risk	Slower project approval processes
	More by way of safeguard e.g. re state aids	Can be restrictive
	GO does the administrative donkey work	Results in more direct GO involvement
	Better quality of information for the MA.	Variability in reporting

A single form of LAG was therefore recommended in the MTEU building on the bottom up strengths of independence, ownership and self determination the Action Plan approach and the greater security, reduced administrative burden and more consistent reporting, greater partner confidence and freedom of operation which the Strategic Plan approach provided.

6.10.5 Governance and rural citizenship

The membership of the two LAGs is addressed in Section 1.3; there are clear differences between the two areas. The differences between the memberships and committee structures of the two LAGs reflect the different nature, make up and scale of the two areas.

The North Northumberland LAG has the simpler structure, operating on a pan-area basis. The programme is managed by an Executive Sub-group of the wider LAG, which is responsible for decision-making; operational management is undertaken by the staff team and chair. The LAG makes use of topic-related sub-groups, including a project appraisal group.

North Pennines LAG was significantly larger in area and membership and had a substantially more complex structure, which links to the scale and administrative entities within its area. The basic structure comprised three area-based groups, one for each of the three County Council areas, each of which had a common remit. In particular, these groups were directly responsible for project assessment in their area and making recommendations for approval directly to the GO. Each of these groups elected representatives to the overarching Programme Coordinating Group, which oversaw the programme as a whole managing staff, finance and overall strategy and monitoring. Each of these groups respected the minimum of 50% social and economic partner membership. There was some variation between areas. North Pennines LAG also made use of thematic or tasked sub-groups as appropriate.

There was an evident contrast in the level and pattern of involvement of LAG members in the two LAG areas. In both areas, the involvement of those who were paid as part of their employment to be involved was strong. In North Pennines, community and voluntary sector involvement was also relatively strong, this was more challenging in North Northumberland. Social and economic partners in the North Pennines area who are not paid for the time they contribute were offered payment of up to £25/meeting to cover their attendance and any preparatory work. This appears to reinforce the quorum arrangements and is a relatively innovative approach not widely applied elsewhere in England. Such an approach requires very careful and transparent management if community trust is to be maintained.

The engagement of small players, groups and communities is generally thought to be strong in both LAG areas, as evidenced by the profile of project applications. There is evidence of strong engagement around particular themes in both areas. The connectedness of LAG members in the community and local accessibility of the programme supported through staff were key elements in this engagement. Important factors in this lay in helping to enhance the local relevance of both LEADER and wider strategies and in building links between the developer and developee.

The large LAG membership and county group structure in North Pennines was important in providing a wide range of connections or routes into the process, thus avoiding issues over community or organisational gatekeepers. This helps to address and balance both the diversity of the area and the thematic interests. The LAGs formal links with the development trusts in North Northumberland are fundamental to local engagement in that area but engagement was best amongst those who are already best connected; this was supported by the profile of project applications. This may also have been affected by the scale and reach of the programmes and the extent of engagement which it was realistic to expect.

There was a high degree of reliance on key individuals and the LAG manager in North Northumberland, thought to be a function of the institutional thinness of the area. Staff input in North Pennines was also of high importance in order to service involvement through the county group structure.

There were relatively consistent gaps in engagement or involvement in thematic, sectoral and geographic areas in both LAGs, the LAGs actively monitored this. The links with the business and agricultural sectors in both areas were weak. In relation to business the main issue was the high opportunity cost of involvement and relatively slow perceived pace of progress, more of an issue in North Northumberland. The tendency to deal with agriculture and businesses at arm's length through collective schemes is also thought to have had an adverse effect. Whilst there has been some success in involving **the target groups** of women and young people in projects, the involvement of the young in the programme itself has proved problematic.

Questions also arose with regard to gaps in the **quality or depth of involvement** and the extent of commitment, particularly on the part of public sector organisations. There was some evidence of opportunistic involvement of other public bodies, which effectively exploit the LEADER funding pool, but offer rather tokenistic subsequent support for the LEADER approach. Nevertheless, the net public support for rural development activities may still have been enhanced, especially where there was a paucity of other projects being brought forward.

The quality or depth of engagement was also seen to be an issue in two other respects: the achievement of true community involvement on the one hand; and senior organisational involvement on the other. There was considerable variation in the extent of both wider horizontal and vertical articulation of involvement between the various partner organisations.

Both LAGs had experience of LEADER II however the fullness of expression of the **bottom-up approach** and its degree of success was perceived to be stronger in the North Pennines than in North Northumberland. The key influencing factors were broadly consistent with experience seen elsewhere in England.

North Northumberland LAG was new to the bottom-up process and the requirement for a bottom-up approach to strategy development, there was less continuity from the previous LAG with a significant change in area. Implementing such an effective bottom-up process is challenging even in experienced areas requiring a highly structured, appropriate and coordinated approach at the right scale and a high level of resource with an associated high management demand. In North Pennines, the proper management of this process was found to be effective in linking the very local concerns to the wider area strategy, thus widening perspectives and goals, building local credibility and motivating the release of community energy and buy-in to the process.

There was a clear view expressed in both areas that a funding-led approach was detrimental to the development of effective bottom-up involvement. The development of strategies based on the identification and agreement of local objectives and priorities had greater credibility.

Animation of local involvement is another aspect where experienced areas have an advantage either in building on existing community involvement or through the experience and skills of LAG members and staff. Individuals who are initiators or who provide community leadership are vital contributors to the process and their absence is a limiting factor on bottom-up involvement. There were concerns over deficits in community leadership in specific areas in North Pennines and more generally in North Northumberland. Clearly, continuity between programmes is an important in retaining this engagement and these people and skills. The original North Northumberland post holder was absent on long term sick leave for a prolonged period early in the programme and the appointment of a new manager saw an immediate increase in animation and engagement.

This highlights the further issue of the effects of administration and staff budgets being pro rated against budget, this results in smaller LAGs having to cover the same fixed cost of core administrative functions as the larger LAG and thus having less flexible resource for higher level functions or to cover eventualities such as sickness.

In both areas, a tendency to mainly engage the active, funding- or LEADER-aware elements of the community was identified. This was perhaps inevitable given the limits to the breadth of effective engagement which is possible e.g. in North Pennines LAG members and staff identify that with its population of well over 100,000 spread over a large geographical area, this LAG is at the limit of what is manageable. This did, however, mean that excluded groups or areas may have been overlooked.

Bottom-up involvement in **decision-making** was highly valued and thought to be very effective by all consultees. It is thought to result in intelligent, locally informed decision-making and results in a high degree of local confidence. Local decision-making on projects also afforded the opportunity to enhance projects where the wider experience of those making the decision enabled wider opportunities or potential difficulties to be foreseen. Examples were cited where projects had been awarded additional funding, where that was thought necessary and worthwhile. In other cases, projects that may have appeared to be strong in the wider context were rejected when exposed to local knowledge, scrutiny and rigour. Thus local involvement in decision-making played a key role in risk mitigation.

Both areas employed a process of community consultation in the development of their **strategies** and both benefited through the involvement of the previous LEADER II managers in the process. North Pennines benefited from wider community engagement as a result of the area having wider LEADER experience and where the motivating effect of local action on local involvement was stronger. The consultation process was therefore significantly more highly developed and engaged as observed elsewhere in England in the other studies cited.

Both LAG strategies were developed around specified LEADER+ core themes although coherence with these was seen to be loose by the time of the study. Both groups identified their own more specific sub-themes to strengthen the local relevance of the core strategic theme.

The central themes did not, therefore, lead to clear thematic vision, definition, cohesion or distinctiveness; rather the strategies appeared to be somewhat broadly based and rather fragmented, with no strong central thematic focus. Their distinctiveness appeared to lie primarily in their area basis with bottom-up identification of local issues, opportunities and potential solutions. Issues of poor connectivity to large-scale and priority rural issues such as housing and social exclusion were cited by respondents along with specific sectoral problems e.g. in relation to food. The study found that the need for wider engagement within the new institutional and funding arena in which LEADER was to operate would be critical.

The LAGs **monitored** the extent to which projects were consistent with the local strategy e.g. in North Pennines projects were required to address at least three of the sub-themes. The project monitoring procedures employed by the two LAGs were viewed positively by project managers and formed part of the overall package of project support. This was viewed as being developmental and part of the overall support for the project life cycle. The feedback that was provided was particularly valued. Smaller projects found the reporting element of monitoring to be demanding reportedly exceeding that required under other programmes e.g. Lottery, for projects of a similar scale. The discipline of the process was thought to be helpful in developing best practice, which was transferable to other funding regimes.

metis

AEiDL CEU

6.10.6 Relevance and Community added value

The importance of the coherent rural area basis to LEADER and its contribution to rural development is confirmed and clearly evident from the wider research considered. This is clearly identified in the North East where, in placing rural areas at the centre of the focus, it is a primary factor in differentiating LEADER from other approaches. This appears to work best where the areas are 'organic' in nature, that is to say areas which have a natural coherence and with which the local people identify. This was very highly rated in the English mainstreaming study. Identification with the area, its own local cultural identity and local resources was thought to be highly motivating, engaging local actors, and contributing to the sustainability of approach and actions. It contributed particularly to the establishment of new groups. This area identification and its effects are clearly strong in North Pennines and are continuing to develop in North Northumberland. Both areas identify scope for improvement, but strongly supported the view in the joint LAG focus group that the ability to cross borders and 'convert peripherality into centrality' was of the highest value.

Social Impacts

In both areas, the LEADER experience is seen to have promoted wider partnership working through LAG involvement and the positive influence of this experience in demonstrating that local influence is possible. This effect was more apparent in North Northumberland, where there was limited previous LEADER involvement. In North Pennines, the benefits of continuity helped to ensure strong and committed partnership involvement from the outset. This is thought have resulted in a more empowered approach than under LEADER II.

The engagement of the rural communities in the activity of the two LAGs differs and demonstrates the benefits of a more highly structured approach to bottom-up involvement. Consequently, in North Pennines, such engagement was more extensive and the LAG more representative whereas in North Northumberland it was seen to be improving.

The local partnerships were seen to offer distinctive and more generic benefits. These related to the partnership process itself and the way in which it engaged and empowered local actors. The breadth of LAG community engagement on the basis of a coherent rural area, coupled with the links with public, social and economic actors, provided a basis of developing, building on or extending networking. This is thought to benefit the local complementarity between actions. In this respect, the approach is seen to engage and work locally on the same basis that local people do, enhancing local relevance of wider approaches. This is supported by the value added through the combining of partner resources and, in particular, the community expertise, skills, knowledge and time in influencing and guiding the programme and projects. The important role of staff and LAG members in animating and supporting partnership involvement and activity was stressed.

The role of LAG staff in animating and supporting project development was extremely highly regarded and much valued in both areas. This was a common perspective, which was apparent from all elements of the consultation. In both areas, there was a notably strong reference to the role of LAG members in this activity. This appears to offer significant added value to LEADER in comparison with other programmes or funding streams in rural areas (although similarities with some Single Regeneration Budget approaches were noted). This represented a distinctive strength of the North East approach in comparison with many other LEADER areas. This was thought to add significantly to the critical mass and energy of the development effort on the ground, particularly in the institutionally thin areas. The potential to target officer activity to these areas or use them to develop LAG involvement was highlighted. The effectiveness of this is most clearly demonstrated in North Northumberland where more active animation by a new manager who came in to post resulted in the application success rate rising from 20% to 80%.

The support provided for project development and implementation was possibly the most highly rated aspect of the whole LEADER approach amongst beneficiaries. This may be characterised as 'whole life cycle' or nurturing support throughout the various stages of project initiation, development, implementation and aftercare. This whole process of the creative nurture of projects was seen to be embedded in the LEADER ethos. Benefits were identified in terms of:

- enabling projects to get to the starting grid;
- providing links to other funding sources;
- linking to other projects;
- improving project design;
- converting planning to doing;
- timely and responsive problem solving;
- monitoring and reporting; and
- linking to the process of review and continual improvement.

This was characterised as the 'ethos is to try to reach the end together rather than present hurdles to be jumped'. This was clearly contrasted with other funding streams e.g. the RDP funded 'Regional Enterprise Scheme which allows you to go the whole hog then reject and rework-LEADER+ works towards achieving success'. This was seen to deliver clear benefits in terms of project sustainability and cost effectiveness; 'there is a handholding mentoring approach that is more cost effective in the long run' as it 'enhances the likelihood of success'. Activity supporting coordination, complementarity and networking also raised project potential and enhances sustainability. Fullness of engagement in the project cycle was therefore seen to be of fundamental importance. Programme benefits lay in the clear identity and enhanced accessibility, the higher success rates achieved and through greater control of strategic coherence.

Bridging and Bonding Capital

The **multi sectoral** approach working at local level was highly thought of in terms of its bridging effect between actors and sectors in getting people to think beyond the job and able to cross funding and institutional boundaries. Viewed positively, multi-sectoral thinking has encouraged LAGs to address some new areas e.g. health and food and drink. Notwithstanding this, there are issues over **complementarity** and synergy where the partnership effect was not seen to be as strong as it might be. Further, there are significant difficulties identified in not engaging formally with wider strategic frameworks, which remains a substantial and important challenge. It appeared that the contribution to local complementarity and integration might be stronger than it was in relation to the wider context. This finding is consistent with wider LEADER experience in England. At the project level, the perspective was that complementarity was supported by the facilitation and animation process and is strong; this has contributed to sustainable development approaches within projects.

Links with other partnerships was an area of some difficulty in both areas, given the large number of these and their various topical or area interests. This crowded patchwork of partnerships required multiple efforts to engage, making their wider involvement difficult to achieve. Where this did occur, it tended to be on the basis of common membership through individual involvement rather than planned integration, there was little active joint working. Levels of synergy may have been suboptimal contributing to an identified tendency for LEADER to be involved in plugging the gaps rather than addressing targeted priorities. Where synergy was strongest this appeared to have been fostered by national sectoral bodies.

There was a clear suggestion from some quarters that LEADER partners and partnerships need to become more challenging if they are to add real value. Questions were raised about the tendency of LEADER partnerships to be too funding-and process-focused, rather than being con-

centrated on an additionality- or results-orientation. There was a danger that the partnership process became an end in itself rather than a means to an end. Partners needed to focus on where they might contribute best and, through partnership working, add value to what they individually were doing, effectively ceding responsibility or suspending their organisational ego in favour of the additionality to be achieved through effective partnership working. There was a need to focus on enabling the delivery, breaking barriers and using links and networks to facilitate the achievement of results.

LEADER has an important role in developing local innovation and local solutions to locally perceived needs. As such, this may be expected in some cases to emerge in advance of wider strategies and actions. Work in the food sector is a prime example of this. Bottom up involvement must connect and articulate with mainstream approaches, strategies and actors. This is the area where an effective LAG can play a pivotal connecting and intermediary role, linking the bottom-up aspiration and involvement with the wider contextual and operational frameworks and supporting a cross sectoral approach. Such a role should acknowledge higher-level strategies and actions (where they exist), whilst developing a relevant and appropriate strategy for local partnership involvement to feed into local priorities and engage at the local level. LEADER, in effect, can operate outside the 'institutional bunkers' but as a consequence of this very cross-sectorality must articulate with the wider frameworks.

Crucially the effective implementation and management of a bottom-up approach requires serious public sector commitment to the process in order to enfranchise the partnerships, enable involvement and build local involvement in governance. If LEADER is to deliver more widely this may ultimately need interdepartmental commitment from Government.

6.10.7 Impacts

The ONE NE research found that the overwhelming majority of the projects funded by LEADER would not have gone ahead in the absence of LEADER funding, or, had they gone ahead, would have been much reduced in form and scale. Only in one case did the respondent suggest that the project would have gone ahead at a similar scale and 10 out of the 26 projects which were surveyed would not have gone ahead at all.

The added value of LEADER funding was strongly evident. Even where in some projects there were other funding sources used, the LEADER funding provided the decisive funding base that enabled the project initiators to access other funding sources. LEADER funding was described as a 'helpful lever' by one respondent. About a third of the project respondents suggested that there might have been other possible funding sources, but many noted that these might be harder to obtain.

A number of consequences were hypothesised by respondents about the effects if the project had not been funded. Often the response suggested that the activity would not have happened. Terms like there would have been 'a lack of platform for engagement' and 'the network would not have developed between actors' suggest that the LEADER funding made a real difference for some projects and that no endogenous response would have arisen in the absence of funding.

Economic Impact

Enhancement of job opportunities

The most easily measurable economic outcome is employment creation. However, LEADER+ projects can create employment in the project delivery period or create more durable employment beyond the end of the project. At the point of the evaluation eleven projects in the North

Northumberland LAG had created only 2 full-time and one part-time job directly in the beneficiary organisation. In contrast, in the North Pennines LAG, 10 full-time and 6 part-time and 7 spare-time jobs were created in the respective organisations by 13 projects. In terms of wider employment impacts, it was asserted that the North Northumberland LAG projects generated some 11 full-time jobs and 3.5 part-time jobs and two seasonal jobs. The North Pennines LAG figures suggest 15 full-time jobs, five part-time jobs and two spare time jobs. The evaluation did not gross up these sample figures across the LAGs. In all except four cases, the LEADER support has increased the likelihood of the business or organisation's survival.

There was little evidence of LEADER's ability to protect existing jobs, with the notable exception of one project in North Northumberland, the Bizfizz Business support project. This project was widely praised by stakeholders for addressing the particular needs of micro-businesses, which were seen to fall largely outside the scope of normal enterprise support schemes. However, it is impossible without detailed drilling down to final beneficiaries to know the extent to which Bizfizz interventions made a significant difference and protected jobs, or developed businesses.

The ONE NE evaluation estimated that the cost per job created under the LEADER programme is in the region of £15-20,000 per FTE job but recognised that this would be very variable between projects. Given the wider benefits accruing to the communities as a result of the range of LEADER projects, and the fact that LEADER is not only about job creation, it was considered that this constitutes good value for money for the public expenditure involved.

Economic capital

Due to the nature of the beneficiary organisations, it is not always easy to assess the impact on turnover of those organisations arising from the LEADER intervention. In the case of capital injections into building developments such as village halls or premises for a NGO, there is a temporary increase arising from capital projects that should be followed by a longer-term increase as the LEADER investment begins to work for the organisation. This can be very clearly seen in about 15-20% of projects. In other cases, for example a healthy eating project, the issue of turnover change is totally irrelevant. In five out of 24 projects there was no expectation that any turnover increase should carry on beyond the end of the project, but in the majority of projects an increase in the organisations' turnover was anticipated.

The increase in the number of visitors ranged from an additional 20,000 people in Alnwick at a food festival to an anticipated 3000 visitor nights in a remotely located residential centre. However, in many cases, there was a lack of a baseline from which to measure change, so any change is often estimated. In almost all cases where a discernible increase in visitor numbers was anticipated, it was expected to last beyond the end of the funding period.

In most projects, the market for the good or service provided was local or regional. However, as might be expected, the tourist projects drew people from further afield, with several projects reaching out into national and international markets, particularly those relating to key attractions, such as Hadrian's Wall. The varying profiles of the different projects suggest that the social projects supported often cater for a more local clientele, whereas tourism projects in particular have a much wider reach.

Over 80% of projects expected revenue flows and paid employment increases beyond the boundaries of the project. These effects arose not only through a local/regional multiplier, but also because there would be increased numbers of visitors spending money in a range of destinations. General perceptions of respondents were that displacement was not a significant issue.

It was also clear that a very wide range of new skills was developed across a range of projects and, in addition, individual and community-wide confidence was much enhanced.

metis

Network Creation

Respondents were asked about the extent to which the project either created or strengthened business networks. In many instances, there was solid evidence of local networks being enhanced, sometimes involving the project actors, but sometimes a much wider range of beneficiaries. For example, in local food projects an event often provided the starting point for increased local sourcing of speciality food. The nature of the networks created varies enormously from project to project. Some networks are business to business; others involve public-private sector and still others involve the voluntary sector. There is no standard pattern, but as expected, the significant economic networks tend to be business-to-business and business to public sector. The widespread perception was that network developments added value to the projects in a myriad of ways from building local supply chains, to creating a greater 'buzz' between actors, and 'creating synergies between communities'. This perception was evident amongst beneficiaries and all those associated with the LAGs including board members, as well as many of the wider stakeholders.

The wider consultations endorsed the view that the economic outcomes were of much less importance than the long-term capacity building that LEADER projects created and nurtured. There was a strong sense of LEADER as **the** primary means in remote rural communities of creating social and economic platforms on which development actions could be built. However, in both North Northumberland and North Pennines, the selected priorities were less about overtly economic outcomes and more about cultural and social development. Further, on a number of projects the scheme was designed to engage actors who had not previously used public funds to support projects, thereby enhancing their capacity to bid to public and voluntary sector sources for future funds.

Social Outcomes

About two thirds of the projects examined had obvious social and community dimensions. One important facet of consultation is the degree of consultation undertaken. In most cases, there was discussion with community actors before projects were submitted, although only in six projects did the respondent indicate that there was a great deal of community consultation. In a small number of cases, this consultation had changed the direction of the project quite significantly. Often what was being sought in the consultation phase was endorsement. On other occasions, a bouncing of ideas occurred between the LAG and the project proposer, with the LAG members acting in effect as a *de facto* community sounding board for the project proposal.

Most beneficiaries argued that the project has strengthened the capacity of their organisation as a social and community entity. A variety of responses yield evidence of increased activity by community groups, increased voice for young people in rural communities, increased volunteer involvement etc. etc. Phrases such as 'increased motivation of social actors', 'increased buzz' and 'showing new ways of getting people working together' indicate a range of ways in which LEADER projects have contributed beneficially to social and community development. Most respondents saw these social and community benefits as durable rather than bounded by the time frame of the projects.

Respondents argued that, in the majority of cases, their projects contributed to building social capital. In about two thirds of the cases examined, this amounted to a great deal or quite a lot and in four cases a little. Two project respondents suggested no social capital building, though their respondents' possible unfamiliarity with the term 'social capital' may have elicited this answer. Most social capital building was within the project area and including inter-institutional social capital (bridging capital) as well as bonding capital between similar actors. The multiple responses from a range of respondents indicate that LEADER has made a very substantial contribution to social capital in some areas.

The extent to which LEADER+ has addressed the needs of socially excluded and disadvantaged groups varied enormously from project to project. While for some projects, dealing with disadvantaged groups was a core objective (e.g. healthy eating), in other cases it was an inadvertent spill-over benefit (some young disadvantaged participants in a theatre production). In many ways, the bottom up nature of LEADER lends itself to inclusive projects. The biggest potentially disadvantaged groups targeted by LEADER projects include rural women and young people although some projects explicitly address a wider range of disadvantaged groups.

About half of the respondents felt that LEADER had contributed to social and community leadership to a degree, but a number were unsure, others thought that the impact was modest. The development of relationships with LAG members was seen as important in developing local leadership. Further, the LEADER programme was seen by about half of the beneficiaries as providing a platform for local empowerment and capacity building. In particular, it was asserted that LEADER connects to people who could not or would not access mainstream funds.

Environmental Outcomes

The environmental outcomes of LEADER+ in North East England were not a priority issue for many projects, in spite of the targeting of the North Northumberland LAG on natural resources. However, eight project beneficiaries sampled saw their projects as generating a significant contribution to environmental sustainability. The breadth of contributions was highly variable from green tourism projects, to reducing food miles through supporting local food, to biofuel schemes, to deepening support for agri-environment schemes.

Impacts on soil, water and air were seen as rather insignificant, with only one project saying these were very significant. Several projects had a bigger impact on biodiversity, with many schemes actively supporting conservation initiatives either as a core or ancillary part of the project. A majority of project beneficiaries saw their project as having positive impacts on visitor attitudes, through a wide variety of means. Most projects had at best a modest impact on resource use but often provided exemplar projects for example with respect to biofuels. Some projects had other beneficial effects, for example through modest landscape enhancement.

Conclusions on Delivery Effects

The principal difference in delivery efficiency and effectiveness found in the ONE NE study was in respect of the high initial project rejection rate and assessment delays for the North Northumberland LAG attributable at least in part to the Local Strategic Plan approach. Otherwise the approach appeared to meet many of the LAGs development needs. The MTE found that differences in efficiency had arisen according to whether the LAG is operating on the Action Plan or the Local Strategic Plan approach, as was anticipated and noted in Defra Guidance Note 2. Some LAG members clearly underestimated the additional difficulty of approval and other communication inherent in the Strategic Plan approach and felt in the light of their experience that there were strong grounds for choosing the Action Plan approach in future.

The LEADER Mainstreaming study found that the vast majority of LAGs were happy with the basis of their plan i.e. action plan or strategic plan, only two LAGs indicated a desire to change from the strategic approach to the action plan. The action plan approach was seen by LAGs to be of significantly greater importance as a feature of how LEADER is delivered than the strategic plan and to have had a very much more significant positive effect on the success of the programme in those areas. Some strategic plan LAGs would in theory prefer this greater perceived autonomy of the action plan but are not prepared to take the associated risks, others are too small to 'bank roll' the programme. The governing factor appears to be the degree of autonomy desired and afforded, Action Plan LAGs indicated that they would not want to change as they like the autonomy, the ownership and the more hands on approach it gave.

There was no clear perspective evident from any of the studies as to whether one approach is better than the other, clearly there is a balance to be drawn between the apparently greater autonomy of the action plan and the apparently more prescriptive strategic plan. It may be however that the strategic plan groups were protected from undue influence of individual partners and in fact have greater strategic integrity. They appear however more heavily burdened with administration than action plan groups and more frequently reported central processes to represent a real burden on their project development activities.

It is suggested that the action plan approach is only possible with the backing of a strong and financially robust lead partner. Notwithstanding this many strategic plan groups reported that a strong relationship with their GO gave them sufficient autonomy without the constraints of the burden of risk or need for a major institutional lead organisation.

Information sources

North Northumberland LAG Business Plan

North Pennines LAG Business Plan

Defra Guidance LEADER+ notes for guidance (for applicant LAGs)

The England LEADER+ Programme Mid Term Evaluation (Defra)

The England LEADER+ Programme Mid Term Evaluation Update (Defra)

The Evidence Base for the Mainstreaming of LEADER in England under the 2007 – 2013 RDP (Defra)

The evaluation of LEADER+ activities within the North East Region of England (ONE North East)

Glossary of key terms

Annual Implementation Reports	Under the provisions of Article 37 of COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 1260/1999, which laid down provisions for the Structural Funds for multi-annual assistance, each MA was required to submit to the Commission an annual implementation report (AIR) within six months of the end of each full calendar year of implementation. The AIR had to be examined and approved by the Monitoring Committee before being sent to the Commission. This AIR was required to include; • any change in general conditions which is of relevance to the implementation of the assistance, • the progress in the implementation of priorities and measures quantified against the appropriate indicators, • the financial implementation of the assistance summarised for each measure, • the steps taken by the MA and the Monitoring Committee to ensure the quality and effectiveness of implementation, • the steps taken to ensure compatibility with Community policies and to ensure coordination of all the Community structural assistance, • and, when appropriate, a separate section on the progress and financing of the major projects and global grants.
Area-based approach	The area-based approach consists in defining a development policy starting from the current strengths, potentials and challenges particular to an area. The area-based approach is considered as one of the eight features of the LEADER method. Under LEADER, the concerned area is supposed to be a sufficiently coherent rural territory which forms an homogeneous unit in geographical, economic and social terms. The local stakeholders are supposed to focus on forging a common vision for the future of the area and the people living and working there. The rural area should not be too small, so it can provide sufficient critical mass in terms of human, financial and economic resources to support a viable development strategy. And on the other hand, the area should not be too large, in order to keep its local dimension.
Balanced representation of local interests	The LEADER approach is implemented by Local Action Groups (LAGs). These are local partnerships whose decision-making bodies require a minimum representation of non-public actors (private sector and civil society) of at least 50% of the voting power.
Bottom-up approach	The bottom-up approach, which is one of the eight features of the LEADER approach, involves the citizens in participatory decision-making at local level for all those concerned with development policies. The involvement of local players includes the population at large, economic and social interest groups, and representatives of public and private institutions. The approach relies on good communication and mobilisation of the local potential, as well as on training local communities. It addresses and aims at strengthening the local social capital.
Common Agricultural Policy - Improved Data and Indicators Management (CAP-IDIM)	The CAP-IDIM is a web-based common repository and management tool designed for the transfer, storage and processing of the rural development monitoring data, submitted by national and regional authorities across the EU Member States. Its objective was to assist the European Commission and Member States to fulfil the legal requirement expressed in the relevant European Council Regulation, namely to 'ensure effective monitoring of implementation of rural development programming'. National and/or regional authorities in charge of the rural development programmes had to collect indicators describing the financial and physical implementation of these programmes on the ground. These indicators had to be sent to the Commission on a yearly basis and a number of mechanisms were provided for their entry to the system.
National co-funding	As for all EU funds handled under the EAGGF, the LEADER+ programme required national co-funding. As regards the total public support the ratio was 50% EAGGF and 50% national funds. In Objective 1 areas it was 75% EAGGF and 25% national funds.
Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)	The overall objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy are to ensure a fair standard of living for farmers and to provide a stable and safe food supply at affordable prices for consumers in a manner that meets citizens', taxpayers' and consumer needs and expectations and that does not distort world trade. Its priorities are to: • ensure food quality and safety, • protect the environment and animal welfare, • make European Union farmers competitive globally without distorting world trade, • and to preserve rural communities and boost their dynamism and sustainability.

Common evaluation questions	Common evaluation questions are pre-established by the EC in its Guidelines for the Evaluation of LEADER+. They apply to all LEADER+ programmes and reflect the objectives of the LEADER+ initiative at Community level. In contrast, programme specific evaluation questions are formulated for the purpose of evaluating a specific programme in view of providing a deeper insight into the overall implementation of that programme or for reflecting specific objectives of that programme.
Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF)	In response to the growing need for cross-country and European-wide assessment of the relevance, usefulness and effectiveness of rural development programmes, the CMEF has been set up as a mandatory framework for the budget period 2007-2013 according to Article 80 of Council Regulation 1698/2005. The CMEF is based on a coherent hierarchy of objectives and intervention logic comprising the 42 measures funded by the EAFRD. Constitutive elements are the common indicators for measuring outputs, results and impacts, as well as the common evaluation questions that addresses measure-bound outcomes and horizontal objectives. Apart from the mandatory framework, Member States are encouraged to establish additional indicators and evaluation questions in order to meet the specific needs and development potential of countries and regions. For supporting Member States and national evaluators in accomplishing the requirements prescribed by the CMEF, and for further developing the framework towards practicable methodologies, the Commissioni has established the European Evaluation Network (EENRD) as a part of the European Network for Rural Development. The EENRD is facilitated by the Evaluation Helpdesk.
Complementarity between actors/complementarity of actions	Complementarity is a general principle of the Structural Funds: two or more sources of funding should never duplicate each other but rather work in a way as to mutually reinforce their individual positive effects. This principle can be applied at the level of actions (e.g. between two projects; one organising local food producers and another one promoting local products) or at the level of actors (e.g. between a training institution and the chamber of commerce).
Co-operation between rural areas	Co-operation between territories within the same Member State or between territories belonging to several Member States (and beyond under some conditions) is one of the eight features of the LEADER+ method aiming at achieving the critical mass necessary for joint projects to become viable, or at producing synergies through combining complementary strengths inherent to different territories. Territorial co-operation works by pooling human and financial resources otherwise dispersed in the areas concerned, but already the mere effect of exchange, learning, knowledge transfer and building relationships is likely to generate knock-on effects on the people involved and the areas they represent. It was implemented as a specific action of the community initiative (Action 2).
Decision making power for the LAG	One of the features of the LEADER approach. In a fully decentralised approach, the LAG operates as the holder of a global grant and is responsible not only for the design and implementation of the local development strategy, but also for selecting, approving and funding the development projects. See: Management and financing of programmes
Eligibility conditions	Eligibility conditions are defined as the criteria by which potential beneficiaries gain access to funding from a development programme; these criteria must be fulfilled by potential beneficiaries already prior to application. In this respect eligibility conditions are a keystone of programme design.
Endogenous resources	Endogenous resources are elements of material, immaterial, human and social capital within a territory which can be turned into assets for local and regional development by innovative and concerted endeavour.
Environmental capital	Environmental capital stands for all the renewable and non-renewable natural resources of a territory, including the immaterial features and values such as the beauty of landscape or the diversity of a habitat. Although substitutes for some natural resources may be found through technology, most of the natural resources are non-substitutable.

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	Following the reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of June 2003 and April 2004 a new financial instrument and a single programme were introduced in order to pursue a more stra-tegic approach to European rural development: the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Devel-opment (EAFRD). The EAFRD was established by Regulation (EC) <u>1290/2005</u> and aims at strengthening the EU's rural development policy, simplifying its implementation, and in particular improving the management and controls of the rural development policy for the period 2007-2013. This Regulation lays down the general rules governing Community support for rural development, financed by the EAFRD. It also defines the aims of rural development and the framework govern-ing it. The Fund contributes to improving: • the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry (Axis 1), • the environment and the countryside (Axis 2), • the quality of life and the diversification of the rural economy (Axis 3), • and the mainstreaming of LEADER with its specific focus on local governance (Axis 4).
European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF)	Until 2006, the EAGGF served as the main financial instrument for implementing the Common Agricultural Policy. Since 1964 it was composed of two sections: the Guidance section and the Guarantee section. Within the framework of European economic and social cohesion policy, the EAGGF-Guidance section supported rural development and the improvement of agricultural structures. LEADER+ was funded throughout the Union by the Guidance section of the EAGGF.
the LEADER Observatory	Instrument led by the Commission responsible for organising the networking at Community level between local action groups , other beneficiaries and national networks and administrations
Evaluation activities at LAG level	Evaluation activities at LAG level are defined as ranging from informal self assessment and reflections to more formal structured evaluation activities examining specific aspects or features of LEADER+.
Ex-ante evaluation	Ex-ante evaluation supports the preparation of new or renewed community actions. Its purpose is to gather information and to carry out analysis which helps to ensure that the policy objectives will be delivered successfully, that the measures used are cost-effective, and the reliable evaluation will be subsequently possible.
Horizontal partnership	A co-operation system between partners at the same level of hierarchy or territorial scale. The LAG is a horizontal partnership. The use of this term is increasingly replaced by the concept of 'multi-level governance' which addresses the real complexity of vertical, horizontal and diagonal relationships which make traditional concepts of hierarchical control more and more obsolete. By the same token, the LAG is considered as an instrument for 'local governance'.
Innovation	Innovation is one of the eight features of the LEADER approach. It has been explicitly emphasized during LEADER II and is incorporated in the notion of the 'pilot strategy' in LEADER+. As it is stated in the Commission notice of the 14th of April 2000, a pilot concept could be assessed in terms of: • the emergence of new products and services which incorporate the distinctiveness of the local area, • new methods permitting the combination of the area's human, natural and/or financial resources, resulting in better use of indigenous potential, • the combination of and links between economic sectors which are traditionally separate, • original forms of organisation and involvement of the local population in the decision-making process and in implementing the project.
Integrated approach or strategy	By integrated approach or strategy is meant that the local partnership adopts a comprehensive approach based on the interaction between actors, sectors and projects.The integration has to go hand in hand with focussing on certain topics or priorities in order to gain leverage on real socio-economic change.
Inter-territorial co-operation (in the Member State) and transnational cooperation between rural areas	See: Co-operation between rural areas.

metis

AE DL C E U

LEADER Approach/Method	LEADER, originally the acronym for 'Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale',a Community Initiative for developing rural areas which has been in operation since 1991, has become a synonym for a certain intervention philosophy or programme approach. It has its roots in approaches practised in the Member States since the late 1970s. The approach or elements of the approach have been emulated or transferred to rural development and regional development programmes in various Member States of the EU15. The LEADER approach is defined as the combined application of seven operational principles: the area-based approach; the bottom-up approach; the local partnership; innovation; multi-sectoral integration; co-operation between rural areas; networking;. In practice, these features are realised to varying degrees. Their full implementation constitutes the 'ideal type' against which the implementation of LEADER is assessed.
Leader+ type measure	LEADER+ type measure was built into the Objective 1 programmes of six out of the 10 Member States who joined the EU in 2004 (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) for the years 2004-2006. The LEADER+ type measure was a possibility not compulsory and therefore not activated by all NMS. The measurereflected the LEADER approach (except networking); Apart from some exceptions, support was granted for capacity building (usually 'scheme 1') and pilot implementation of local strategies with a short duration and a very small budget (usually 'scheme 2' .
Learning effect	The strengths and weaknesses of the former programming phase are identified and can be taken into account by the programming authority and the LAGs when preparing the next phase of the intervention. Ex-post evaluations would have a crucial role in here, but they come too late for the following phase. Mid-term evaluations are more useful in this respect, but they do not provide information on the impact of the actions undertaken. Ongoing evaluations focussing on implementation processes and on the result chain (specifically on the ways and degree to which the programme outputs are used by the beneficiaries) foster collective and institutional learning provided the right mix of stakeholders is actively involved in this exercise.
Local development initiatives	Local development initiatives are area-based integrated strategies mobilising local people and stakeholders using specific methods, such as a local partnership, transparent and participatory deliberation processes, and round tables. The purpose of such endeavour is to work out and to agree on a territorial strategy focusing on socio-economic change and better living conditions. The LEADER approach can be considered as an elaborate instruction for local development in rural areas; however in principle the LEADER approach can be extended, mutatis mutandis, to local development in urban and metropolitan areas.
Local governance	The structures and processes represented and promoted by a local co-operation system consisting of public, private and civil society partners. The aim of local governance is to promote socio-economic development and well-being of the respective area. A LAG, a horizontal partnership, is considered as an instrument for local governance provided it enjoys sufficient autonomy and legitimacy to act. Public authorities are not necessarily the only actors in governance systems; they may even be in a background position, but they provide the 'hierarchy' without which governance systems would lack legitimacy in democratic societies.
Local partnership/local action group (LAG)	The local partnership is one of the eight features of the LEADER approach and involves a public-private partnership; non-public partners hold at least 50% of the voting power in decision-making bodies As it is stated in the Commission notice of the 14th of April 2000,local action groups must consist of a balanced and representative selection of partners drawn from the different socioeconomic sectors in the territory concerned.
Local governance	Founded on the principles of participation, transparency and responsibility, democratic local governance is understood as an inclusive decision-making process which allows for development strategies to be adapted to local needs and to take into consideration local socio-cultural nuances. Democratic local governance is manifested in a participatory approach through the preparation, implementation and management of local development strategies and local development projects. Local governance requires a negotiated balance between public authorities and other stakeholders working together for the common good which is defined in terms of prosperity and quality of life, environmentally sound development, social cohesion and inclusion of a territory, embedded in a concept of global sustainability.

Mainstreaming	Mainstreaming involves the consideration, integration and upscaling of an innovative measure or intervention into policies, programmes and regulative practices at all relevant political, institutional or administrative levels. As an example, after the expiration of LEADER+, the LEADER method has been mainstreamed in the form of Axis 4 of the rural development programmes according to the Council Regulation 1698/2005 (2007-2013). According to this Regulation, at least 5% (EU15) respectively 2.5% (EU12) of rural development funds (EAFRD and national public funds) have to be implemented according to the LEADER approach. As it is stated in Article 63(a) of the Regulation 1698/2005, the support granted under the LEADER axis shall be for implementing local development strategies as referred to in Article 62(1)(a), with a view to achieving the objectives of one or more of the three other axes.
Monitoring (systems)	In the case of LEADER+, Monitoring systems refer to arrangements and devices for keeping record of the implementation at both programme and project level. The information is collected, processed and stored on the basis of a wide range of channels and sources including reports, reviews, indicators, etc.
Multi-level governance	Multi-level governance signifies the complex vertical and diagonal relationships between various levels and scales of decision-making which are typical for most political spheres and crucial for territorial policies. They feature network relationships and negotiation platforms complementing government hierarchies; they express the growing role of non-public stakeholders in governing common goods, and the multitude of partnerships and co-operation systems which emerge in this regard; they finally express shared responsibilities of different governance tiers for the intricately linked social, economic and territorial policy issues. Public authorities are not necessarily the only actors in governance systems; they may even be in a background position, but they provide the 'hierarchy' without which governance systems would lack legitimacy in democratic societies.
Multi-sectoral approach	Multi-sectoral approach is one of the eight features of LEADER. It is almost synonymous with the term 'integrated approach' and is, in LEADER+, embodied in the 'pilot strategy'. Multi-sectoral approachis aiming at creating new links between hitherto separated strands of activity, with the expected effect of generating innovation and new opportunities for territorial development. It aims at economies of scope rather than at economies of scale. New links between sectors (economic sectors, but also between public and private spheres, between economic and environmental interests and so on) entail new co-operation and partnerships between key stakeholders, thus fostering the social capital of the area.
National network unit (NNU)	The NNU is the formal LEADER+ networking structure established at national level (Action 3) to coordinate networking activities. The NNUs were set up in the EU15 with the objective of working for all the LAGs and Leader+ stakeholders in the country concerned; they collaborated with each other and the Contact Point of the LEADER Observatory on European key themes and transnational co-operation.
NATURA 2000	Natura 2000 is the centrepiece of EU nature & biodiversity policy. It is an EU wide network of nature protection areas established under the 1992 Habitats Directive. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. It comprises Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated by Member States under the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21.05.1992), and also incorporates Special Protection Areas (SPAs) which are designated under the 1979 Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2.04.1979). The establishment of this network of protected areas also fulfils a Community obligation under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.
Networking	Networking is one of the eight features of the LEADER approach. At local level it is an operational principle, which addresses the social capital of the area, notably the 'bridging' capital to foster learning, innovation and capacity development. At national or regional level it is addressed by Action 3 of the programmes to support national networking, particularly by the the NNUs. At EU level networking activities are carried out by the Leader Observatory. Networking includes the exchange of achievements, experiences and know-how between all interested parties in the Community, whether or not they are beneficiaries under the initiative. The objective is to stimulate and achieve co-operation between territories, and provide information and draw lessons concerning territorial rural development via the exchange and transfer of information. Active participation in the network is mandatory for all LEADER+ participants.
Priority target beneficiaries	Women and young people are designated as priority target beneficiaries of LEADER+. This priority should be reflected in the strategic orientation, in the representation in decision-making bodies, in the information and communication policy, and in the choice of projects.

metis

AE DL : C E U

Priority theme	The four priority themes the Commission considered to be of special interest at Community level in LEADER+ were: • the use of new know-how and new technologies to make the products and services of rural areas more competitive, • improving the quality of life in rural areas, • adding value to local products, in particular by facilitating access to markets for small production units via collective actions, • and making the best use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value of sites of Community interest selected under Natura 2000.
Programme specific evaluation questions	Programme specific evaluation questions are formulated for the purpose of evaluating a specific programme in view of providing a deeper insight into the overall implementation of that programme or for reflecting specific objectives of that programme. In contrast, 'common' evaluation questions apply to all the programmes and tend to reflect the objectives of the LEADER initiative at Community level.
Public funding	Public funding refers to the part of the expenditures spent from public budgets (EU, national and regional levels) contributing to support eligible costs of an approved project.
Resilience	Resilience is the ability of a system to absorb external changes or disturbances through adaptation or transformation. The larger these can be without irreversibly pushing the system out of its stability domain, the more resilient it is called. As a practical consequence, resilience reflects the degree to which a complex adaptive system is capable of self-organization (versus lack of organization or organization forced by external factors) and to preserve the achieved levels of self-organization, as well as the degree to which the system can build and sustain the capacity for learning and adaptation
Rural-urban interaction	In contrast to LEADER I and II, all rural areas of the EU were eligible for LEADER+ funding. This has led to the inclusion of rural areas closer to urban agglomerations and of rural towns. These rural areas face different challenges and opportunities. LEADER+ can therefore be used to initiate rural-urban partnerships around a wide array of topics, but it is not properly designed to promote them.
Self-evaluation	Self-evaluation refers to the structured collection and analysis of information on themes and issues selected by the LAG. By drawing its own conclusions, the LAG is able to redirect its local development strategy and select new projects appropriately. Self-evaluation processes include focus groups or similar dialogue settings in order to capture diverse perspectives and create a common understanding out of qualitative information and observations.
Social capital	According to Pierre Bourdieu, social capital is '*the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition*'. Social capital can be attributed to individual persons (e.g. in terms of number and density of social contacts); however it is an intrinsically collective property, as networks and institutions cannot be 'owned' by individuals. They are by definition 'relational goods'. Another sociologist, James Coleman, defines social capital as '*anything that facilitates individual or collective action, generated by networks of relationships, reciprocity, trust, and social norms*'.
Sustainability	Sustainable development means the entirety of actions taken in the present that are intended to maintain and enhance the current and future resilience of desired trajectories of development of the social-ecological system, while meeting a range of more immediate goals that are important for social, economic and ecological persistence at short time scales and over smaller areas.
Target public	The population in the LAG area addressed by the the local strategy should be involved in two ways: (i) as beneficiaries of the programme interventions; (ii) as stakeholders/ decision makers in the management/conduct of the programme in the area.
Transfer of information, good practices and know-how	This concept was central to the Structural Funds, and especially to Community Initiatives. Since these are supposed to explore new ways of policy implementation (with the perspective of getting included in mainstream policies at a later stage), there should have beenways of 'codifying' and 'extracting' the experience made and the knowledge gained in order to make it available to other people and territories facing similar problems.
Vertical partnership	This term refers to the sharing of responsibilities between different levels of competencies: European, national, regional, and local. This sharing and the procedure for exchanging information can be integrated in a contract linking the partners. It is a concrete application of the concept of subsidiarity. The use of this term is increasingly replaced by the concept of 'multi-level governance' which addresses the real complexity of vertical, horizontal and diagonal relationships which make traditional concepts of hierarchical control more and more obsolete.

Bibliography

EU documents & regulations

Council Decision 2006/144/EC pertaining to Community strategic guidelines for rural development

Council of the European Union (2005): Presidency Conclusions, Brussels March 23, 2005, 7619/05

Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EARDF) (5), and for the fisheries sector, namely a European Fisheries Fund (EFF)

European Commission (2001): European Governance: A White Paper, COM (2001) 428, Brussels, 25.07.2001

European Commission (2002): Guidelines for the evaluation of Leader+ programmes. Commission working document No VI/43503/02-REV.1. DG Agriculture and Rural Development. Brussels

European Commission (2003): MEMO/03/236 (EC DG AGRI) - Conclusions of Second European Conference on Rural Development in Salzburg ("Planting seeds for rural futures – building a policy that can deliver our ambitions"). Bruxelles, 21 November 2003.

European Commission (2005) - Regulation EC No 1290/2005.

European Commission (2006): Handbook on Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, Guidance Document. DG Agriculture and Rural Development. Brussels

European Commission (2008) DG RDT (2008) - New Sources of Employment to Promote the Wealth-Generating Capacity of Rural Communities

European Commission (2009: DG EMPL/E2 (2009) - Poverty and social exclusion in rural areas

Structural Funds Regulation 1260/99

Scientific studies and papers

AEIDL (1999): Assessing the added value of the LEADER approach. Rural innovation – Dossier of the European LEADER II Observatory No. 4.

Agra CEAS Consulting (2005): Synthesis of Rural Development Mid-term Evaluations. Brussels; http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eval/reports/

Annette Aagaard Thuesen/CFUL (2008): Partnerskapsorganisering av landdistriktsudviklingen

Annette Aagard Thuesen/CFUL (2003): Det handler om att få en plan til at virke

Barca F., (2003): "Co-operation and Knowledge-pooling in Clusters: Designing Territorial Competitiveness Policies", in Co-operation, Networks and Institutions in Regional Innovation Systems,

Benz, A. and Meincke, A (2007): Regionen Aktiv – Land gestaltet Zukunft Begleitforschung 2004 bis 2006. Endbericht der Module 3 und 4. Regionalwissenschaftliche Theorieansätze. Analyse der Governance Strukturen. Dortmund

Cecilia Waldenström/SLU, Lars Larsson/Umeå Universitet; (2009): Leader som metod för att stödja landsbygdens långsiktiga utvecklingsförutsättningar

Chambers, R. et al. (2009): Designing impact evaluations: Different perspectives. International Initiative for Impact Evaluation 3ie. Working Paper 4

Coleman, J.S. (1988): Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. American Journal of Sociology.

CpKP (2009): Metodika k hodnocení monitorovacích indikátorů místních akčních skupin v Programu rozvoje venkova 2007 – 2013

Earl S., Carden F., Smutylo T.: Outcome Mapping. Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs. IDRC Ottawa, 2001, p. 1.

ECORYS-NEI (2003): Evaluatie- indicatoren, LEADER+ Nederland

European social, legal and economical projects (2008): BPD 4 prioriteto kaimo plėtros priemonių bendrųjų ir specialių projektų atrankos kriterijų vertinimas

Evaluation Helpdesk of the European Network for Rural Development (2010): Working Paper on Capturing impacts of Leader and of measures to improve Quality of Life in rural areas.

Evaluation Helpdesk of the European Network for Rural Development (2010): Working Paper on Approaches for assessing the impacts of the Rural Development Programmes in the context of multiple intervening factors.

Fischer Boel, Mariann (2005): Rural development and the Lisbon Strategy, SPEECH/05/22, Member of the European Commission responsible for Agriculture and Rural Development

Florida, R. et al. (2007): Inside the Black Box of Regional Development: Human Capital, the Creative Class and Tolerance. University of Toronto

French Leader+ national unit (2004): Leader+ evaluation in France - National panorama and zoom on some experiences

Fürst, D. (2006): Regional governance – a short introduction into the subject. Leader+ Observatory Seminar "Leader in the New Member States". Presentation. Tihany

High, C. and Nemes, G. (2007): Social Learning in Leader: Exogenous and Hybrid Evaluation in Rural Development. Oxford. Sociolgia Ruralis 47(2) 103 -119 ISSN: 0038-0199

Hong, L. and Page, S.E. (1998): Diversity and Optimality. Santa FE Institute for complexity Research

IEEP (2009): How is rural development tackling the biodiversity challenge?

Knudsen, B., Florida, R. and Rousseau, D. (2006): Bridging and Bonding. A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Regional Social Capital. Rotman School of Management. University of Toronto

Kova Kft (2006): AVOP "LEADER+" jogcím-csoport elméleti hátterének és gyakorlati hazai előzményeinek elemzésén alapuló, és az EMVA-ra vonatkozó adatokat, következtetéseket és javaslatokat tartalmazó tanulmány

Leader II European Observatory (1999): Assessing the added value of the Leader approach.

Leader II European Observatory (1999): Seminar on Quality of Life, environment and landscapes.

Leader II European Observatory (2000): Environmental competitiveness. Rural innovation Dossier No 6. Part 3, Ch 2., Chapter 2.3 Landscape and rural land

Leader II European Observatory (2000): The SPSA method in Portugal 'Systematisation of Participatory Self-Assessment'

Leader II European Observatory (2001): Improving the quality of the Leader ex-post assessments.

Lückenkötter, J., Kroes, G., Fekade, W. (2002): Methodological Challenges to Conducting Impact Studies – A Guide to the FACT Approach. Arbeitspapier 176, Institut für Raumplanung an der Universität Dortmund (IRPUD). Dortmund.

Lukesch, R. (2008): "Improving delivery, successful governance and networking". Presentation held during the European conference on "Europe's rural areas in action: facing the challenges of tomorrow" Limasol

Mantino, F. (2010): Typology of Governance models. Assessing the impact of rural development policies (incl. Leader). RUDI FP 7 Project no. 213034, Deliverable D3.2

Metis GmbH (formerly ÖIR-Managementdienste GmbH) (2004): Ex-post Evaluation of the Community Initiative LEADER II (EC DG AGRI 2003), Final Report, volume 3 (Case Studies)

Metis GmbH (formerly ÖIR-Managementdienste GmbH) (2004): Methods for and Success of Mainstreaming Leader Innovations and Approach into Rural Development Programmes, commissioned by DG Agriculture, Unit G4

Nemes, G. and Fazekas, Z. (2007): A paradigm shift - new ways of rural development in Europe In: Journal of Comparative Economic and Social Systems 2007/2, ISSN 10036-3947

OECD (2006): The new rural paradigm: policies and governance. OECD Rural Policy Reviews. Paris, OECD Publications

Public policy and management institute (2008): ES struktūrinių fondų poveikio užimtumui įgyvendinant Lietuvos 2004-2006 m. BPD vertinimas

Public policy and management institute (2008): Horizontaliųjų prioritetų įgyvendinimo įsisavinant ES struktūrinę paramą vertinimas

Putnam, Robert D.: Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community. Simon & Schuster Publishing, 2000.

Sweco Eurofutures June (2007): Analys av transnationella projekt inom Leader+

metis

AE DL · C E U

Tenna F. (2006): L'autovalutazione con la tecnica della scala delle priorità obbligate. Rivista dello sviluppo rurale n. 5 – available as pdf on the website of the Italian Rural Network http://www.reteleader.it

The University of Agriculture of Lithuania (2008): LEADER+ priemonės įgyvendinimo monitoringas, ataskaita

University of Liège (2007): Local participative forward thinking: 4 scenari for 2022

Van der Ploeg, J.D. (2004): Quality of Life – experience and co-operation, Leader+ Observatory: Seminar Brussels

Vilnius centre for business consultations (2006): Pasirinktų paramos priemonių ir jų įgyvendinimo atitikimas visuomenės lūkesčiams

Ex-post evaluations of the Leader programme

Departamento de Economía Aplicada, Universidad de Valladolid (2008): Evaluación expost del Programa Regional de Castilla y León en la Iniciativa Comunitaria LEADER+ (2000-2006). Informe de Evaluación (Consolidación 2007); 2000-2006

ETCHARRY (2007): Regional synthesis of the 12 LAGs in Midi-Pyrénées region; 2001-2006

Forschungsgruppe Agrar- und Regionalentwicklung Triesdorf (2008): Ex post-Bewertung der Gemeinschaftsinitiative LEADER+ im Freistaat Sachsen; 2000-2007

Institut für ländliche Strukturforschung Frankfurt (2009): Ex post-Bewertung des rheinland-pfälzischen LEADER+-Programms; 2000-2007

Kolosy (2008): Final evaluation of LEADER+ in Pays de Dinan; 2001-2007

MC2 (2007): Final evaluation of LEADER+ in Perigord vert; 2001-2006

MC2 (2007): Regional synthesis of the 6 LAGs in Aquitaine region; 2001-2006

Sitelle (2007): Final evaluation of LEADER+ in Monts et Montagne d'Ardèche; 2001-2007

Internet-links

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eval/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/index_en.htm

http://www.leaderplus.de/leaderplus/download.cfm?uuid=00080C4C1CBC13E29A216521C0A8D816

Leader+ implementation and closure reports

Annual Implementation Reports and closure reports from the following Member States and years were consulted:

Total No. of Programmes	EU15 MS	2001 AIR	2002 AIR	2003 AIR	2004 AIR	2005 AIR	2006 AIR	2007 AIR	2008 AIR	Final Reports
1	AT						1	1		
2	BE							2	1	1
14	DE						1	2	1	7
1	DK							1	1	
18	ES				4	7	8	8	5	12
1	FI	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
1	FR					1		1		
1	GK									
1	IE									1
22	IT							7	2	3
1	LU									1
4	NL						1	2	1	
1	PT	1				1	1	1		
1	SE							1		1
4	GB							1		2
	Total	2	1	1	5	10	13	28	11	28