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Cooperation in Leader+
**The actual benefits for the local
areas...**

**by Dorothee Duguet,
for the Leader+ Observatory *Contact Point***

Leader+ Observatory *Contact Point*
81, rue du Marteau
1000 Bruxelles/Belgium
Tel : +32 2 235 20 20
E-mail : contact.point@leaderplus.org
<http://ec.europa.eu/leaderplus>

Cooperation has been, from the beginning of the Leader programme, one of its major components. Firstly developed on an informal basis (Leader I), it has then become more official (Leader II transnational cooperation) and, even if never compulsory at LAG level, turned into one of the priorities and one of the three actions of the programme dedicated to local actors under Leader+ (with both transnational and interterritorial cooperation).

Many contacts have been made throughout Europe and many projects have been developed on a wide variety of theme, from general tourism to local products, or from renewable energy to local cultural heritage.

Local actors who have been involved in cooperation projects have gained a rich experience and the method used to define, build and carry out a project have been improved over the years.

In order to keep record of this experience and of the best practices, many documents have been produced on cooperation: Leader II guides at national and European level & national documents under Leader+. Today, there are methodological guides (on a 'how to' model), presentations of good practices (either with a specific selection amongst cooperation projects or some cooperation examples within all types of Leader projects - local or further) and other types of document available mainly at a national level (written by the NNU in most cases), in only 1 or sometimes 2 languages and which present cultural specificities. All these documents are based on concrete examples of projects which are either described in a very comprehensive (and long) way or from which have been extracted elements on how to best proceed, of methods, etc. Reading a document on cooperation is, in most cases, somehow technical or quite long which contributes to making people at the local level think that cooperation is a lengthy and heavy process. Further to this, even if some theory has classified the types of results cooperation could bring, transforming this theory into very clear and tangible examples is not always close at hand for local actors, LAG managers or local decision makers.

Also, the documentation published addresses mainly cooperation questions that are of direct interest to LAG managers and scarcely those of interest either to local actors not familiar with the EU jargon or to decision makers, sometimes reluctant to getting involved in cooperation actions.

Cooperation, either interterritorial or transnational, therefore tends to be reserved to the ones who are motivated and have experienced it at some point. It is not easily accessible to all rural areas and rural actors, as it should be given its importance.

The objective of the current document is to overcome the problems listed above by avoiding the theorizing of cooperation (which is available in several documents published under Leader II or Leader+ at national and European level) and by trying to put forward only **tangible elements**.

The Leader II European Observatory had, in its dossier "Transnational cooperation under Leader II: lessons from the past, tools for the future" (rural innovation - Dossier n° 11 - March 2001) and Leader Magazine n° 21 "Transnational cooperation in rural areas" (April 1999) proposed some objectives that could be reached through (transnational) cooperation:

- take advantage of similarities (geographical characteristic, specific production, cultural asset, historic context...)
- take advantage of complementarities (geographical assets, natural complementarities, management of complementary know-how)
- reach critical masses (new markets, economy of scale...)
- bring a tangible value added to the areas & actors involved

These cooperation objectives are still very up-to-date and apply to interterritorial as well as to transnational cooperation.

The current document aims at going one step forward by concentrating on the **tangible results** that cooperation enables to reach for the rural areas concerned. Its objective is, based on some strong project examples, to propose some answers to the questions "**why should rural areas cooperate?**", "**why is spending time and money on cooperation useful?**" The idea is not to propose development of theory but to give food for thought by presenting the points of view of people involved in cooperation directly (at local level) or having a great experience of cooperation projects (for instance at the level of the national networking units). Presentation of some **concrete outcomes** of projects developed under Leader+ and under Equal will come and illustrate the text.

Finally, using these good reasons, this document draws out some key lessons and factors that make a cooperation project successful. These points are included in the text with a specific and visible format.

*Dorothee Duguet
External Expert
Leader+ Contact Point
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Method used to elaborate the current document

This document has been elaborated in several steps.

The projects selected as good practice through the Leader+ Observatory or those registered in the database of approved transnational cooperation projects as well as the partner search ads in the Partner Search Tool of the Leader+ Observatory were initially planned to serve as a basis for the analysis. Yet, at a very early stage in the process, it has been identified that:

- the number of cooperation projects in the good practice database (http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/gpdb_en.htm) is rather low, either looking at transnational or interterritorial cooperation. It can also be noted that cooperation was not a predominant aspect in the analysis work that has been undertaken for the elaboration of these data sheets, but only considered as a criteria among all Leader+ criteria,
- the ads in the Partner Search Tool (http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/partnsearch_en.htm) are rather project ideas, projects which are seeking partners and do therefore not contain any tangible results of cooperation,
- the cooperation project database (http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/coopdb_en.htm) presents transnational cooperation projects in which the financing has been approved for all partners. These projects are at a later stage of development and the description of the actions is often very detailed but doesn't focus on tangible results or local impact of the projects.

Given the elements above, it has been necessary to consider the building of a new sample with examples which present the information needed to fulfil the needs of this study. The national network units of EU 15 are the structures where there is the most information about cooperation projects at national level. Indeed, these network units have the tasks to assist LAGs in building their cooperation projects at every stage of the process. They also have the role of gathering information on the state of the art of cooperation projects and are in regular contacts with LAG representatives on cooperation issues. This means that they have a lot of valuable information about the development of projects and, what is of prior interest in the framework of this study, of their results.

Therefore, all national network units from EU 15 have been contacted from end of December 2006 onwards. They have been asked 3 questions:

- *Could you please indicate which are these 2 or 3 (interterritorial or transnational cooperation) projects which are most relevant in terms of their tangible outputs and results for the area(s) and local actors involved and why do you think that they are relevant?*
- *Which are, according to your experience, the most interesting and/or most common tangible results and outputs of cooperation for the areas and actors involved?*
- *In your opinion, what are the main reasons that make LAGs and/or actors decide to launch a cooperation action (what objectives do they have in mind before they actually start) and what do they get out of it?*

On 15 structures contacted 9 answered with interesting points and proposed some case studies (from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, France, Italy and the UK)

The answers to questions 2 and 3 have been used to build the basis of the next part of this document.

The case studies have been completed with some projects described in the good-practice data-base of the Contact Point. As a whole, it is a total of 18 different interterritorial and transnational projects that have been processed through a systematic reading grid. The complete list of case studies is presented in appendix, as well as the results of the processing through the reading grid of the examples available in a comprehensive Contact Point 'good practice' format (10 projects out of 18).

What is interesting at this stage is that, on the 18 projects read and analysed, only 3 concern interterritorial cooperation (which is only 16%). Yet, it seems that the benefits of cooperation can be brought equally by transnational or interterritorial actions and that there is no main difference on the 2 types of cooperation in what their tangible impact on rural areas, actors and population is.

The following document uses and analyses all the elements received and proposes a classification of some tangible results that cooperation can contribute to achieve.

Result of the survey and of the study: The benefits of cooperation for rural areas

As we will develop below in point 1, some LAGs do not question themselves about what cooperation can bring to them. They know that it exists and participate in the process because LAGs should to it. This approach exists, yet, it is rather rare.

People from LAGs, local actors, representatives of national network units and other people having been involved from near or far in a cooperation process put forward some tangible results that cooperation can bring to the local areas involved. These tangible results can be organised under several themes:

- tangible results of cooperation on the development of local areas,
- tangible local results of cooperation regarding social capital and administrative procedures: on which issues does cooperation have a direct visible impact?
- tangible results of cooperation on networking, evaluation and preparation of the area to the future: cooperation as a strong tool contributing to the local strategy

1/ Cooperation because it exists and LAGs should do it!

When asked about the reasons that made LAGs and local actors cooperate, come LAG representatives and national network unit members answered "because they have to". This sentence can be interpreted in two different ways:

Firstly, in some scarce cases, LAGs were pushed into cooperation by their managing authority, by a strong top-down incentive. The managing authority's ambition in terms of cooperation was sometimes felt by the LAGs as turning cooperation into a compulsory part of their development programme. Afterwards, these LAGs say that they have learnt a lot during the cooperation process.

Secondly, and most common, many LAGs were aware that cooperation, even if not compulsory, was recommended by the Leader+ programme. From the Commission's Communication to Member States on Leader+, cooperation was mentioned as one priority of the community initiative. Some LAGs therefore considered the building of partnerships with other areas as a way to give another dimension to their local development strategy, as a strong opportunity for local development. They therefore decided to integrate a cooperation aspect in their action plan

Also, some LAGs initially not involved in cooperation actions, have quickly realised that other LAGs were... which made them want to participate too. The question 'if others can do it, why can't I?' sometimes acts as the starting point to initiate a cooperation action.



Cooperation is not compulsory. Yet, it has been foreseen in the Leader+ programme and is part of the rural development regulation of 2007-2013. From the very beginning, LAGs should include cooperation as a specific dimension of their programme which comes and extends their local development strategy.

2/ Tangible results of cooperation on the development of local areas

2.1/ Through the exchange of experience and know-how for actors involved

To acquire knowledge new to an area,... a process of learning...

Cooperation enables participating LAGs to learn from the know-how of a partner which is more experienced in a specific topic. It indeed enables to learn from the partner's experience, improve the local knowledge and benefit from outside experiences.

It also enables to seek for answers outside one's own region when it is not available there. This first feature and result of cooperation is of prior importance.

It can apply to very specific themes where cross-fertilisation can lead to a quicker, more structured and more ambition evolution.

It can also apply more generally to the whole development strategy for instance for new or inexperienced areas. It is indeed through cooperation that some kind of mentoring schemes can lead new-comers to work with more experienced areas for a better definition and implementation of their local development strategy. They can for instance receive advice on the do's and don'ts, learn about what their partners has done well, what has been problematic, which solution have worked, etc.

↓	<i>Example</i>	↓
	<i>Concerning a project between a French and a Belgian area on the promotion of the use of natural stone ("Eclats de pierre et de marbre"), the project managers says that the cooperation action has enabled to develop an exchange between the partners on the possible uses of stone. The French LAG has been able to see what the Belgian partner had experience in and apply some of the methods in its area. (source: French national network unit)</i>	



key point

Before trying to develop a new action at a local level, it might be useful to find a partner who has already experienced this action in his area. This will enable to learn about how to proceed though it doesn't provide a "win-win situation" for all the partners. It might help the process by proving (notably to reluctant decision makers) that the action has worked elsewhere!

To exchange good practice, spread new ideas on common issues and find new solutions...

Cooperation projects are in the great majority of cases, built upon a central common issue or problematic of the involved partners. It can be valorisation of wood, enhancement of agriculture training systems, development of land-art, promotion of a common specificity...



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In order to lead to tangible results, it is important that something strong links the partners. This link can be based on complementary resources, on a specific geographic resource or cultural heritage, on similar field of interest, or simply on... strong human links between LAG managers, local actors (associations, companies, industries...) or representatives of the population!

Within this context, cooperation also results in transmitting of good practice, in spreading of new ideas and in finding new solutions to stubborn local development problems.

Example

Within a transnational cooperation project between one LAG from Austria and one LAG from Finland on Outdoor tourism, the partnership enabled an exchange on training systems to mutually benefit from the different strengths of the training approaches thus balancing out any local weakness.

To widen one's horizon,... and consolidate the European feeling...

Many representatives of National Network Units put forward that, further to sharing best practice and learning from each other, cooperation has learnt valuable lessons just by enabling to visit other areas (located in the same country or not) with similar economic and rural development challenges. This reinforcement of exchanges between European rural areas has contributed to giving a better visibility to Europe in remote areas.


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This opening of local people to Europe works very well when the cooperation projects implemented are, at least in their first steps, rather simple, 'easily' accessible and very tangible. For instance, the project between a French and a Greek area aiming to promote women entrepreneurship has started by some common work on typical recipes local women were familiar with. It is only in a second step, once local actors feel at ease with the partners, that the project can be more ambitious.

Example

The "Supporting women's entrepreneurship - promoting entrepreneurship of local products and of the regional tourism products" involves women from Greece and France. Around a rather immaterial theme (how to support women entrepreneurship), the partners chose to proceed step by step and started on the idea to create a book gathering recipes from the 2 areas and organise events around local products and culinary heritage. Having put women's cooking experience and knowledge is the centre of the first common actions had a double direct effect: it motivated their participation and it raised their self-confidence, making it possible to develop the cooperation action plan further.

Example

The transnational cooperation 'Learning from Europe' between LAGs from Germany and Austria aims at improving the practical education of future farmers through exchange programmes between pupils from the two Member States and placements in innovative farms. The project has tangible outcomes both on the educational system and for the young people concerned:

- *at a regional level, it enabled to compare the agriculture training proposed in the 2 partner regions and, by cross-fertilisation, leads to a mutual enrichment of the systems in place*
- *the young people involved in the training get, through the exchanges occurring in this cooperation project, a better practical education. The project also gives them a sometimes unique chance to study (for the German pupils) or work outside the family farm on innovative farms on the themes of energy, product processing and tourism.*



Cooperation is first of all a story of people who feel like consolidating a link between areas and building a project together. It is possible to build a

key point | *cooperation project only if there is a good relationship between people. Many cooperation projects are successful because there is friendship between the people who work together. Once you find the right partner, you might want to develop several other cooperation projects with him!*

Developing a common action nevertheless stays important...

Learnings from Leader II put forward that a cooperation project goes through different development phases:

- definition (design of the project),
- technical assistance,
- production,
- promotion,
- marketing.

The first steps (definition and technical assistance) are characterized by transfer and exchanges of experience between the different partners involved. It is only after the promotion step that the cooperation project enters into a phase of common action. This means that, in most cases, as the project develops and becomes more mature, common actions take the place of 'simple' transfers and exchange.

It is true that the very first steps of Leader cooperation, which have taken place in an informal way under Leader I, consisted mainly in 'just' exchange of ideas. As the programme moved on to Leader II and Leader+, cooperation projects became more formal but also much more complete. Many of them lead to tangible common actions in various fields like the development of new products and services, the joint production of goods and services and their joint promotion and marketing.

Following this idea would mean that:

- exchange and know how are to be seen only as the very first steps of a cooperation project,
- a successful cooperation project should always lead to the implementation of a common action.

The common action can indeed be considered as the real added value of Leader+ interterritorial or transnational cooperation. It enables, to go one step further than exchange and transfer, to be more concrete and, on top of all, to develop actions that will have greater chances to continue even after the Leader financing is gone. This common action, even if not compulsory in cooperation under the Rural Development Regulation 2007-2013, should stay one main objective of cooperation projects.

Yet, it is true that defining a common product or service is difficult and that LAGs, especially with little experience in cooperation, should not hesitate to start by exchanging in order to get stronger and envisage later to build something common with one partner.



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Initial high ambition is hard to achieve in one time! Reasonable ambition in the beginning with quick tangible first results gives better chances for the project to work...

Partners should not hesitate to agree on a general action plan and then to proceed step by step, to envisage a project that grows slowly, either in the type of actions carried out or in the number of partners.

Also, it is important to keep in mind one issue mentioned above: the new or less experienced areas need to cooperate with more experienced LAGs even in order to

exchange ideas and learn about how to implement projects or, more generally speaking, a local development strategy. This specific point has to be kept fresh in mind especially for the 2007-2013 programming period where the goal of cooperation cannot only be the common product or service but should also cover the possibility to develop mentoring schemes.



Above transfer, exchange or development of common action, it is cooperation which leads to local innovation!

2.2/ By finding new solutions to local problems

Through cooperation, LAGs representatives discover new approaches and new tools. Once they deeply understand these approaches and take over the methods, they can apply them to local projects in their areas and find solutions that would have been more difficult to elaborate in another context.

↓ Example **↓**

In Austria, summer nature tourism is important leading to a need for many outdoor guides. In Finland, winter tourism is most important, leaving outdoor guides with little activity in the summer. The transnational cooperation project between the Austrian Verein-Pillerseetal-Leogang and the Peräpohjolan kehitys ry Finnish LAG on Outdoor tourism manages to compensate seasonal employment fluctuations by exchanging trained guides.



Before launching the cooperation project (or even before starting to look for a partner), it is in most cases needed to strongly prepare the project locally by, for instance:

- *a detailed inventory of what exists locally around the theme is needed,*
- *enquiries carried out by local experts of the theme,*
- *etc.*

2.3/ By improving the quality of offers



↓ Example **↓**

The "Meisterstrasse Salzkammergut" interterritorial cooperation project between several Austrian LAGs is making several of the best local craftsmen work together. The companies are exchanging and spurring each other on which makes this collaboration lead to an increase in the quality level of the products proposed.

2.4/ By giving access to certain resources, means, services or products

The getting together of LAGs within inter-territorial or transnational cooperation projects sometimes gives them access to resources, technical assistance, equipment that they could have not afforded on their own. The possibilities of what cooperation makes accessible are diverse, depending on the need of the partners. It can for instance be:

- the joint buying of **technology** or **equipment** that would have been too expensive for isolated areas (for instance, some LAGs in the Brittany region of France gathered in order to buy computer equipments which enabled them to develop a common service centre making accessible different services to public located in remote rural areas)
- the access to **expertise** by developing exchanges of project managers or of local actors



 Example 

The "Youth Eye" transnational cooperation project involves 7 LAGs from France, the UK and Greece. Its objective is to network Leader+ rural areas with similar characteristics and to exchange young people from these areas and have them participate to the study, development and implementation of development actions. The level of the participating young people enables to areas involved to benefit from external expertise they could not afford otherwise. The cooperation actions enable an access to voluntary expertise in areas where resources are rather narrow. It can be considered as a real "voluntary service of grey matter".

2.5/ By making the area and its products more visible



Inter-territorial and transnational cooperation is a means to give local resources (cultural, geographic, economic...) a better visibility. This enables a reinforcement of the identity of the area and its image and has a direct impact both at local level and further.

Indeed, locally, people can discover the area they live in under a different light. If an external partner finds their region interesting and wish to collaborate with them, this means that their region has something to offer, that, even close at hand, they had never considered.

 Example 

By working together on a common project of linking trails from different areas and jointly market them as a tourism offer, the PromEUregion project enables, in the 7 partner areas, the visualisation of strengths otherwise poorly known, even locally.

But the valorisation of the image of an area through cooperation can also have a direct impact towards the 'outside world', which can lead to local changes, for instance in the number of visitors coming to the area.

 Example 

The "Meisterstrasse Salzkammergut" interterritorial cooperation project between several Austrian LAGs presents the areas' best craftsmen to customers both inside and outside the regions involved through targeted marketing campaigns and an inter-regional brand. The regions, previously known mostly because of their high level of unemployment, benefit, thanks to this project, of a higher level of recognition. There is a deep change in the image external people have of the region and the area now attracts new visitors.

3/ Tangible local results of cooperation regarding social capital and administrative procedures: some issues where cooperation has a direct and visible impact

3.1/ The strengthening of local human, technical and management capacities

3.1.1/ Strengthening of human capacities


Opening local people's mind...

One key value of co-operation, notably of transnational cooperation, is the increase in understanding between local people from different European regions and countries when they work together towards common goals. To meet the other, discover other ways of thinking and acting enables to broaden local people's minds. It makes them more open to the 'external world' and enables them to renew their ideas, to escape from their daily approach of their locally implemented actions.

↓	<i>Example</i>	↓
<i>About a project on music linking LAGs from Sweden, the UK and France, Emmanuel Martin from the French area says: "It is very clear, and the young people involved in the project tell it by themselves: the action has opened their eyes on other European cultures and ways of living. They have taken conscience of the European space and its potentialities". (source: French National Network Unit)</i>		

Acquiring technical skills...

The most certain tangible results of cooperation are the skills and competences acquired among the persons directly and indirectly involved in the process. Through cooperation, people indeed discover new approaches, new tools... The skills and competences gained within cooperation projects have been extremely important in making LAG managers, LAG members and numerous people involved on project level better equipped to handle rural problems and possibilities.

 *Cooperation leads to the acquisition of skills and competences → local people are better prepared to handle rural issues!*
key point

Cooperation is also a tool that enables to locally acquire technical skills (either for population, local actors, LAG members or even decision makers): learning languages, put together and animate working groups with many different members, manage a 'big' project with a lot of partners elaborate clear documents, organise multi-cultural events in different languages, etc. It enables to reinforce and animate the existing local human resources in order to motivate them into continuing to work on the development of their area.


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When it comes to management skills, all agree that a strong lead partner with competences and communication skills are very important

↓	<i>Example</i>	↓
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In the "Youth Eye" transnational cooperation project, young people from 7 European areas bring expertise to areas involved in the partnership. One direct result of this exchange programme is the sensibilisation of young people to rural development issues. Their participation to the project raises their confidence and their awareness to Europe and local development issues.

Cooperation brings satisfaction, makes people proud ... of themselves

For organisations, cooperation has a certain prestige and an image of adventure: it is like a new fascinating experience.

It is nice to have external contacts and projects, especially with partners located in another Member State. It enables the visibility, reputation and notoriety of the area (and of people involved!) to grow. People having participated to a cooperation project, whatever their role (LAG member, decision maker, local actors...), feel some kind of pride in having done so and it increases their self-confidence and motivation to get involved in the local development plan.



Quote



For the Danish national network unit, it is interesting and encouraging that all the LAGs in Denmark that actually started a cooperation project have been very proud and happy in doing that.

... of their area

Once "reassured" on the internal potential of their areas, another motivation arises to participate to cooperation projects: the will to present their area, its resources, its specificities and its projects to partners and local actors from other regions.

3.1.2/ Strengthening technical and administrative capacities

Working with partners situated in areas elsewhere in the country or even in another State (inside out outside EU) enables to compare methods and learn about the other functioning's of rural development programmes. This can be a rich source of inspiration for LAG managers, for local decision makers and even sometimes for participating managing authorities at regional or national level.

This has led, under Leader+, to some tangible improvements in the way the participating people, for instance from local governments, handle rural development issues.



Example



The transnational cooperation project "Supporting women's entrepreneurship - promoting entrepreneurship of local products and of the regional tourism products" developed between the Greek LAG Pilio Development Agency E.A.P. S.A. and the French Périgord Vert LAG has clearly led, through bilateral exchanges, to broadening the approach of stakeholders, enriching their experience and optimizing their work methods.



One of the main difficulties encountered under the Leader+ programme was the different administrative rules related to the implementation of cooperation

key point | projects. The rules vary according to Member States and sometimes within one Member State, according to regions. This will certainly continue tomorrow and a solution has thus to be found: it is important to start early enough to learn about the administrative context of the partner region in order to anticipate on any difficulty that might arise either in the way things have to be presented or in the delays that might be necessary for approval or to receive funding.



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The early involvement of local decision makers and regional authorities and the early information of managing authorities in charge of the approval of cooperation projects can enable them to give their ideas and be an enormous facilitation for the implementation of the project.

3.2/ Some examples of direct economic impacts of cooperation

Cooperation brings further financing to the partners...

Since an envelope of the Leader+ programme was dedicated to interterritorial and transnational cooperation, with sometimes very high level of public co-financing (95% in the Belgian Flanders region), some LAGs used cooperation as an opportunity to raise their financial means.



key point

In some Member States, the envelope for cooperation was pre-allocated to LAGs who knew that, if they did not use the money, they would have to give it back to their Managing authority. This was a strong incentive for them to plan cooperation at a very early state and get involved actively in common projects.

Cooperation can give better access to employment to some actors...

The creating of working habits between people and businesses in different areas has sometimes been successful in creating new and hopefully permanent jobs.



Example



The already mentioned transnational cooperation 'Learning from Europe' between LAGs from Germany and Austria, through improving the practical education of future farmers, changes the image of agriculture pupils who become interesting employees and do not face any difficulty in finding a job at the end of their training.



key point

There is a need for the local actors, notably of the economic sector, to cooperate with each other (and secure work placements) rather than for the cooperation to be limited to the level of LAG members. Yet, the presence of local elected people and Leader technicians, for instance as resource persons supporting the process, is important too!

Cooperation can lead to a direct economic return...

Some specific target groups, notably cooperatives, SMEs, farmers, tourism or service providers., the objectives of cooperation projects become more financial and focus on the markets. Cooperation is then used to:

- consolidate existing markets



Example



The "Meisterstrasse Salzkammergut" interterritorial cooperation project between several Austrian LAGs presents the areas' best craftsmen to customers both inside and outside the regions involved. The targeted marketing campaigns, the inter-regional brand and the participation to major national and international crafts event have contributed to increase the value of local craft and to increase also the sales of partner businesses..

- enable to develop new markets

Example

The Silver Fir is an important ecological stabiliser and is used as construction timber, appreciated for its patterns and its great versatility. The distribution of this tree has decreased to 10% of its original covering in 200 years. Three LAGs which were working locally on the issue decided to build a transnational cooperation project in order to promote the use of this species. Already during the project duration, decisions on which construction wood to use was taken in favour of the silver-fir. On the lumber market, the demand for lumber of the silver-fir increased up to 10%. And the project is just starting!

- enable to reach critical masses and make economy of scale

Example

The transnational cooperation project "The pilgrimage routes of Europe: Via Francigena and Cammino di Santiago de Compostela" involves around 15 LAGs from Italy, Spain and France who have the will to promote their area situated along very important pilgrimage trails. The result of the project for the local areas involved is their marketing around 'I Cammini d'Europa' trademark tourist product. This enabled the organisation and development of the local tourist offer notably through promotion on an international scale and the development of territorial showcases. To work in cooperation made it possible for the partners to obtain a critical mass that reduces the cost of the operations. It also introduces a necessary coherence all along the concerned paths.



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Management systems lead to payments taking time... It can be a good idea and a future factor for motivation of the actors to plan, from the very start of the project, a quick and flexible financing system of actions contributing to the cooperation project.

Cooperation can turn local competition into positive collaboration...

Businesses located in different areas do not have the same target public. This enables to easily overcome the competition approach and contributes to learning that working with others can bring in new ideas and be a factor of enrichment.

Networks of companies, businesses, industries... have been developed at international, national, regional or even local level as a direct result of cooperation projects. See the following part on networking.



factor
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success

Involving local businesses, especially small businesses, in cooperation is both useful and... a real challenge! They are not interested, they do not have time, they are not sure they want to work with potential competitors... It is possible to overcome these difficulties by:

- *an early information of all local businesses which have links with the theme of the project*

- *carrying out the actions preferably over week-ends for better availability (people in small businesses are often alone and they cannot afford to close)*

4/ Tangible results of cooperation on networking, evaluation and preparation of the area to the future: cooperation as a strong tool contributing to the local strategy

We have already seen above that cooperation gives another dimension to local work and enables to push the local development plan one step further by opening to other approaches, other ideas and new projects.

After several generations of the Leader programme, it now represents a strong tool which contributes actively to the local development strategy. The following examples will show how cooperation has been used successfully not only in tangible actions as seen above but also in 'difficult' fields: networking (at a local level and at a wider scale), evaluation, and preparation of the future.

4.1/ Tangible results of cooperation on networking: a tool to build links between people, actors and areas

4.1.1/ A direct impact on networking at local level: cooperation helps people get together

Putting together the similarities or complementarities of local actors of different areas, or the idea that there are people elsewhere that have similar problems enables the building and consolidation of local partnerships between people at local level.



In some areas, local relations between actors can be difficult. Launching a well animated tangible cooperation projects can make local people get together and talk in order to prepare collectively the presentation of the area to people from elsewhere. Even if in day to day life the actors disagree, their will to present their home region and actions in a tangible way can make them overcome their disagreements.

- Develop local partnerships



↓	<i>Example</i>	↓
<i>Although it was initially carried out in only one sector, the transnational project aiming at promoting the use of Silver Fir as construction timber has succeeded in integrating the efforts of diverse actors in the wood production and supply chain. This was made much easier through cooperation.</i>		

↓	<i>Example</i>	↓
<i>Within the project "The pilgrimage routes of Europe: Via Francigena and Camino di Santiago de Compostela", it is the transnational aspect which has contributed to building Local partnership of institutions, people and industrial factory with a unique aim: the supporting of the common structure (GEIE) in its role of effective instrument for the promotion and marketing of tourist products and services.</i>		

- **Reinforce local cohesion**



 Example 

The results of the transnational cooperation project "Festival EuroLandArt" project between a German and a French LAG is a growing team work both at the level of the project and at local level. The added value of the project is directly visible for the population in the two regions involved which motivates their participation. Such a local enthusiasm to work with other actors in the region has not existed in the German region before.

 Example 

Aase Riek-Sørensen, from the Danish Equal project "Youth, Gender and Career", says "Foreign speakers always attract more people". "Persons in charge or experts from our transnational partnership have presented their achievements and their results which were concerning more particularly our area. You valorise your local partnership when you add an international dimension to an event: it makes it more interesting for the decision makers... who then tend to listen more to you!". (source: Racine via the French national network unit)

- **Start discussions with actors in the areas usually not involved in the development process**



 Example 

The already mentioned transnational cooperation 'Learning from Europe' between LAGs from Germany and Austria, lead local farmers, usually scarcely involved in the development processes, to getting together to work on the project and also, more widely, motivated their active involvement in the local development of the regions involved.


factor
for
success

Wide local information about the future or the ongoing cooperation project is important. The dissemination of information has to be planned and organised. This is also a means to both consolidate the project and involve new local actors. Within the Argantonio cooperation projects, dissemination seminars are organised in the local villages of the areas involved to provide information to people about the project and the added value it brings to local products.

- **Overcome competition**

 Example 

In the interterritorial cooperation project involving the LAGs North Antrim, Fells and Dales, Cumbria and Glasu on the theme of adding value to wool and natural fibres, collaboration allowed businesses to network, share info and ideas and find new contacts. This has added value to the areas and contributes to the sustainability of the project.

↓	<i>Example</i>	↓
	<i>In the Austrian and Finnish territories involved, it is only the transnational cooperation on Outdoor tourism which enabled the local companies, otherwise competing, to build local partnerships and to start regular cooperation between them but also with other local companies not directly working on the theme of nature tourism.</i>	

4.1.2/ A direct impact on wider networking: cooperation helps areas gather around a common local specificity

On the 18 projects analysed to create the current document, 12 can not be considered as networking actions or as a first step towards networking. This means that for 7 projects out of the initial 18, which represents 39%, there exists a direct link between the cooperation action and some kind of networking:


- either the cooperation project is already some kind of networking project (in 4 cases, which represents 22% of the initial 18 projects)
- or the cooperation action is a first step that aims at consolidating a partnership that has the vocation to widen and to become a network (in 3 cases, which represents 17% of the initial 18 project).

This cooperation approach of networking occurs for different reasons:

- ***On specific themes...***

↓	<i>Example</i>	↓
	<i>The transnational cooperation project "The pilgrimage routes of Europe: Via Francigena and Cammino di Santiago de Compostela" involves around 15 LAGs from Italy, Spain and France who have the will to promote their area situated along very important pilgrimage trails. It is by getting together that this area can develop a strong marketing plan and envisage an efficient promotion of all members of the network.</i>	


Other projects mentioned in appendix, like the Geopark project or the Wetlands project can also be considered as networking actions around geographical similarities.

 *Building, through cooperation, a strong thematic network that is recognized (either informally or more formally like the Geopark network which is recognized by UNESCO) enables to have a strong working basis and acts as a means to convince people of the relevance and importance of the project.*

key point



- ***To overcome administrative of geographic barriers...***

This is very true for cooperation projects developed between neighbouring LAGs and in the case of cross-border cooperation actions.

 *For every cooperation project, and maybe even more for cooperation projects that lead to networking and which have a higher level of partners, the early signing of a cooperation agreement defines the roles of each partner and his financial participation. It can only be positive!*

factor for success

- ***To defend common interest or similar issues...***

 Example 

The European association of LAGs, ELARD, was initially set up within a transnational cooperation project!





factor
for
success

Involving research institutes in the partnership and in the networking process for the conception of the project and on the new products, services and methods can only be positive when it comes to triggering innovative subjects.

4.2/ Cooperation as a tool contributing to the evaluation of local projects and local strategies

- *By local people*

Because it is a specific process that requires adapted methods, cooperation is a means for local people (from the LAG or, more widely, from the area) to take some time to think about the actions they are implementing and the way they are implementing them. To prepare the contacts with external partners, there is a need to analyse your own processes in order to be able to present them in a logical and coherent way. This analysis takes place both at the level of the LAG, at the level of the actors who will be involved in the cooperation process and by cross-analysis LAG-local actors. This 'step back' from day to day work can be considered as a specific and precise evaluation, either of a one-off type or for more complex projects or one implemented on the longer term, of a continuous type.



 Example 

Concerning the Equal project 'une nouvelle dynamique: le processus d'inclusions', Brigitte Pilois Choquet, person of contact, says: "The added value of our transnational partnership is certainly the step back that it enables us to take regarding the work done within the framework of national projects. The confrontation of methods and approaches offer the partners a different view on their national actions and enable them to analyse more precisely the methods that they use." (source: Racine, French technical assistance for Equal, via the French National Network Unit)

- *By people from outside the area...*

... either members of other LAGs

By members from other LAGs, we mean representatives of other Leader structures. To be submitted to understanding that other local development specialists have of your own area points out issues that could not be seen locally. Being in contact with others also means being able to compare results and impacts of actions, projects and programmes in different regions.

 Example 

The Swedish LAG Smålandsgruppen and the Limfjordsgruppen Danish LAG are building, within a wide transnational cooperation project a global link around the theme of rural development, strategy building and cooperation in order to exchange ideas, cross experience and develop tangible cooperation projects. The work carried out in common enabled in each partner area the introduction of an external eye able to point out things that locals are not always aware of. Cooperation therefore acts as a means for local people (actors and decision makers) to take a step back and analyse, with the help of their partners, what is going on in their area.

... or local people from other regions

In the framework of the "Youth Eye" transnational cooperation project involving 7 LAGs from France, the UK and Greece, it is young people from the partner areas who participate to the study, development and implementation of development actions. These young people carry out some kind of territorial diagnosis with their own vision of the area which acts as an evaluation of how the local development strategy and its actions are implemented.

4.3/ The influence of cooperation on regional and national policies

Exchanges between areas can lead to discover ways of proceeding that it would be relevant to transfer to other areas. In some cases, this means that the local, regional or national systems or regulations have to be modified in order to enable this transfer. Cooperation, through the involvement of decision makers and through intensive communication with representatives from managing authorities or ministries, can enable the necessary changes.



Example



The Equal cooperation project "travailler et être parents en milieu rural: un défi à l'espace et au temps" has linked areas from Luxemburg and France. The exchanges have enabled the partner from Luxemburg to import the gathering of different types of child keeping (at home or collective) within a unique structure. This makes it possible to offer more flexible services and to enhance the quality by the organisation of common training sessions for the two types of staff. Six months after the end of the project, the Ministry for social affairs in Luxemburg to issue a national regulation acknowledging these new types of child keeping. (source: French national network unit)



Example



Within the already mentioned transnational cooperation project between one LAG from Austria and one LAG from Finland on Outdoor tourism, the exchange that occurred on the training systems enabled to put in light the inadequacy that existed in Austria where nature tourism is covered by many different courses which are often not compatible one with the other. The Finnish example is somehow simpler and more

transparent. The project leads to the common development of a curriculum for education of outdoor guides based on Austrian and Finnish experiences and standards. The Austrian partner hopes that this project will lead to an evolution of the Austrian training and recognition system for outdoor activities. This would mean the setting up of standardized training formats, similar to the ones in Finland, or even of governmental training centres triggering all outdoor and nature activities.

4.4/ Cooperation as a tool to prepare the future

The richness of cooperation makes participating areas stronger and more capable to fight against increasing competition between rural areas. Some links established under Leader will be maintained tomorrow and some partners, even if located not close from one another, are writing their local strategies together for them to be more complete. Cooperation is one of the tools they have chosen to be more competitive under the 2007-2013 programming period.



Example



Thanks to the implementation of an interterritorial cooperation project and to the common work habits it led to, the French LAGs Combraille en Marche and Combrailles decided to initiate a common reflection on their two EARDF application.

Indeed, in front of the other neighbouring potential applications, the technicians and the (elected) decision makers of these two areas have a strong will to coordinate their actions in order to be as efficient and relevant as possible and therefore have most chances for the future. Each area of course keeps its own strategy but a common strategy is also developed. Within this framework, other cooperation projects might arise around themes like 'welcoming of new population' or 'valorisation of local products', on which there is still a lot that can be done together. Source: French National Network Unit



Example



The above mentioned link between the Swedish LAG Smålandsgruppen and the Limfjordsgruppen Danish LAG on the definition of their local strategy and of the orientation that their collaboration should take is also envisage as a way to prepare the implementation of the cooperation projects to be implemented in the 2007-2013 programming period.

Summary and conclusion

The report above shows that, even if the action of cooperation has covered basically the same issues under Leader+ as under Leader II, it is the maturity of projects that has enabled to push results one step forward. Indeed, people have been more experienced in how to work with others. The projects that resulted were more complete, sometimes more complex too, but also much more concrete and with better visible tangible results than in the previous generations of the programme.

Yet, the difficulties encountered by LAGs which are beginners in the cooperation process are often the same. Each newcomer seems to make the same mistakes and to have to overcome the same pitfalls as his colleagues who have been through the process before.

The first difficulty is to understand what cooperation can bring. Here is a summary of the main reasons for cooperation that are developed in the text above. They are put one behind the other hereafter. This list can of course not be complete since reasons for launching a cooperation project are to each partner, they prove that the reasons. Yet, it shows that there are many good reasons for cooperating and proves that cooperation can be an interesting and efficient solution to problems faced locally.

1/ Summary

1.1/ Summary of the tangible results of cooperation

Tangible results on the development of local areas

- Through the exchange of experience and know-how for actors involved
 - . *To acquire knowledge new to an area, a process of learning...*
 - . *To exchange good practice, spread new ideas on common issues and find new solutions...*
 - . *To widen one's horizon,... and consolidate the European feeling...*
 - . *Developing a common action nevertheless stays important...*
- By finding new solutions to local problems
- By improving the quality of offers
- By giving access to certain resources, means, services or products
- By making the area and its products more visible

Tangible local results of cooperation regarding social capital and administrative procedures: some issues where cooperation has a direct and visible impact

- **The strengthening of local human, technical and management capacities**
- **Strengthening of human capacities**
 - . *Opening local people's mind...*
 - . *Acquiring technical skills...*
 - . *Cooperation brings satisfaction, makes people proud ... of themselves*
... of their area
- **Strengthening technical and administrative capacities**
- **Some examples of direct economic impacts of cooperation**
 - . *Cooperation brings further financing to the partners...*
 - . *Cooperation can give better access to employment to some actors...*
 - . *Cooperation can lead to a direct economic return...*
 - ... by consolidating existing markets*
 - ... by enabling to develop new markets*

- ... by enabling to reach critical masses and make economy of scale
- . Cooperation can turn local competition into positive collaboration...

Tangible results of cooperation on networking, evaluation and preparation of the area to the future: cooperation as a strong tool contributing to the local strategy

- **Tangible results of cooperation on networking: a tool to build links between people, actors and areas**
 - . A direct impact on networking at local level: cooperation helps people get together
 - Develop local partnerships*
 - Reinforce local cohesion*
 - Start discussions with actors in the areas usually not involved in the development process*
 - Overcome competition*
 - . A direct impact on wider networking: cooperation helps areas gather around a common local specificity
 - On specific themes...*
 - To overcome administrative or geographic barriers...*
 - To defend common interest or similar issues...*
- **Cooperation as a tool contributing to the evaluation of local projects and local strategies**
 - . *By local people*
 - . *By people from outside the area...*
 - ... either members of other LAGs*
 - ... or local people from other regions*
- **The influence of cooperation on regional and national policies**
- **Cooperation as a tool to prepare the future**

This list of tangible results can be used as a source of inspiration both for those who question themselves about what cooperation can bring to their area and by those who need some arguments to convince people locally (either local actors, decision makers or people in charge of the financing of projects) that cooperation is not 'just for fun'.

1.2/ Summary of the key factors of success and key points for successful cooperation

Many 'lessons' are given in the 'how to' guides edited by the national network units and it does not seem useful for a European publication to re-publish what others have already put forward and which stays very accurate, complete and rich. Yet, as a result of the current study, many key factors for success and key points are put forward. These are more than 'just' questions of methodology. They are based on tangible partnership examples and concern both local approach to cooperation and deep questions concerning things to improve in order to better work together. These key factors for success and key points are gathered and summarized in the table below:

Key factors for success:	Key points:
- Cooperation is not compulsory. Yet, it has been foreseen in the Leader+ programme and exists in the rural development regulation of 2007-2013. From the very beginning, LAGs should include cooperation as a	- Before trying to develop a new action at a local level, it might be useful to find a partner who has already

<p>specific dimension of their programme which comes and extends their local development strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In order to lead to tangible results, it is important that something strong links the partners. This link can be based on complementary resources, on a specific geographic resource or cultural heritage, on similar field of interest, or simply on... strong human links between LAG managers, local actors (associations, companies, industries...) or representatives of the population! - Initial high ambition is hard to achieve in one time! Reasonable ambition in the beginning with quick tangible first results gives better chances for the project to work... Partners should not hesitate to agree on a general action plan and then to proceed step by step, to envisage a project that grows slowly, either in the type of actions carried out or in the number of partners. - Before launching the cooperation project (or even before starting to look for a partner), it is in most cases needed to strongly prepare the project locally by, for instance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a detailed inventory of what exists locally around the theme is needed, - enquiries carried out by local experts of the theme, - etc. - When it comes to management skills, it is very important to have a strong lead partner with competences and communication skills. - The early involvement of local decision makers and regional authorities and the early information of managing authorities in charge of the approval of cooperation projects can enable them to give their ideas and be an enormous facilitation for the implementation of the project. - Management systems lead to payments taking time... It can be a good idea and a future factor for motivation of the actors to plan, from the very start of the project, a quick and flexible financing system of actions contributing to the cooperation project. - Involving local businesses, especially small businesses, in cooperation is both useful and... a real challenge! They are not interested, they do not have time, they are not sure they want to work with potential competitors... It is possible to overcome these difficulties by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an early information of all local businesses which 	<p>experienced this action in his area. This will enable to learn about how to proceed. It might also help the process by proving (notably to reluctant decision makers) that the action has worked elsewhere!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperation is first of all a story of people who feel like consolidating a link between areas and building a project together. It is possible to build a cooperation project only if there is a good relationship (friendship) between people who are working together. Once you find the right partner, you might want to develop several other cooperation projects with him! - Above transfer, exchange or development of common action, it is cooperation which leads to local innovation! - Cooperation leads to the acquisition of skills and competences → local people are better prepared to handling rural issues! - One of the main difficulties encountered under the Leader+ programme was the different administrative rules related to the implementation of cooperation projects. It is important to start early enough to learn about the administrative context of the partner region in order to anticipate on any difficulty that might arise either in the way things have to be presented or in the delays that might be necessary for approval or to receive funding. - In some Member States, the envelope for cooperation was pre-allocated to LAGs who knew that, if they did not use
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<p>have links with the theme of the project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - carrying out the actions preferably over week-ends for better availability (people in small businesses are often alone and they cannot afford to close) - Wide local information about the future or the ongoing cooperation project is important. The dissemination of information has to be planned and organised. This is also a means to both consolidate the project and involve new local actors. - For every cooperation project, and maybe even more for cooperation projects that lead to networking and which have a higher level of partners, the early signing of a cooperation agreement defines the roles of each partner and his financial participation. It can only be positive! - Involving research institutes in the partnership and in the networking process for the conception of the project and on the new products, services and methods can only be positive when it comes to triggering innovative subjects. 	<p>the money, they would have to give it back to their Managing authority. This was a strong incentive for them to plan cooperation at a very early stage and get involved actively in common projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a need for the local actors, notably of the economic sector, to cooperate with each other (and secure work placements) rather than for the cooperation to be limited to the level of LAG members. - Building, through cooperation, a strong thematic network that is recognized enables to have a strong working basis and acts as a means to convince people of the relevance and importance of the project.
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These key factors for success and key points are the most important that cooperation project holders ought to keep in mind during the different phases of the project building and implementation. Of course, some of the element above relates either to a specific stage of a project or to a specific situation. Yet, most of them are general and of importance whatever the project implemented. They are scattered throughout the text of the present report if there is a need for the reader to relate them to a specific example. They are also repeated, often with a different phrasing, in the reading grid of the projects presented in appendix of the current document.

2/ Conclusion

Of course, there are numerous reasons that make inter-territorial and transnational cooperation useful and worth getting involved in. The reasons listed in this document are not the only ones. Yet, they give an interesting overview which concerns many types of projects already implemented. According to their area, to the theme they wish to trigger, to the type of cooperation they envisage and, maybe... to the people they want or need to convince, LAGs will be able to pick in the following document some 'good reasons to cooperate'. Their experience will also perhaps serve to enrich the never-ending list of these good reasons!

The key elements (success factors and key points) given in the document are also some of the many that can be useful in cooperation. Further to methods which can be found elsewhere, the elements given are perhaps the ones which are the most common and they can help and overcome some frequent difficulties. The hints that they give will certainly be useful to (less experienced) LAGs who wish to start something in the field of cooperation.

In the next programming period, cooperation still exists. It is up to each rural actor and to each LAG representative to seize the opportunity to build strong cooperation projects that will contribute to pushing Europe one step forward.

Appendix: List of the 18 projects used to carry out this study and completed reading grid

List of the 18 projects used to carry out the study:

Projects not available in a Contact Point 'good practice' format (and not shown in the reading grid) but which, when the link is shown, can be found in the European cooperation database:

- Supporting women's entrepreneurship - promoting entrepreneurship of local products and of the regional tourism products (cooperation database:
<http://leaderplus.cec.eu.int/cpdb/public/project/CopDbDatasheet.aspx?projectid=419>)
- Youth Eye: "jeunes européens acteurs du monde rural" (cooperation database:
<http://leaderplus.cec.eu.int/cpdb/public/project/CopDbDatasheet.aspx?projectid=400>)
- Geopark: an ideal destination for the development of alternative tourism and educational activities in rural areas of Europe (cooperation database:
<http://leaderplus.cec.eu.int/cpdb/public/project/CopDbDatasheet.aspx?projectid=424>)
- "Argantonio" - Local quality trademark for improved goods and services
- The pilgrimage routes of Europe: Via Francigena and Cammino di Santiago de Compostela (cooperation database:
<http://leaderplus.cec.eu.int/cpdb/public/project/CopDbDatasheet.aspx?projectid=121>)
- A network of European wetlands (cooperation database:
<http://leaderplus.cec.eu.int/cpdb/public/project/CopDbDatasheet.aspx?projectid=119>)
- Sculpture and landscape in the Atlantic arc
- Developing the wool and sheepskin industry

Projects available in a Contact Point format (and shown in the following reading grid)

Transnational education for cultural guiding and management for regional museums	32
Learning from Europe	33
Outdoor Tourism Cooperation Tyrol-Lapland	34

Meisterstrasse Salzkammergut.....	36
Valorisation and preservation of the Silver Fir	38
PromEUregion	39
Local community planning.....	40
Possibilities with hardwood.....	42
Women into enterprise	44
Festival EuroLandArt 2006.....	46

Completed reading grid for the 10 projects available in a format that enables the reader to have all the information about the development and implementation of the project

Transnational education for cultural guiding and management for regional museums

Good practice database code: PA-AT02-L+ATNAT-705

Link:

<http://intranet.leaderplus.org/cpdb/public/gpdb/GpdbDatashet.aspx?otype=padb&appId=2e0a9b79-e3f7-4ad8-a4e6-7eb9161d655b&objectId=0071f180-b46e-46d3-9d42-f38401c79e6c&ShowAllLanguages=>

Link to the project in the Transnational cooperation project database:

<http://leaderplus.cec.eu.int/cpdb/public/project/CopDbDatashet.aspx?projectId=31>

Type of cooperation: *Transnational cooperation within Europe, 3 neighbouring LAGs and German speaking countries (Austria and Germany)*

Why did the partners decide to launch a cooperation project (the starting issue, the foreseen results, the initial concrete objectives)?

- *Very strong local will (from LAGs & regional programme authorities) from the very beginning*
- *Will to exchange experience around a very clearly defined topic: improving the connection of history and culture with a qualification strategy in tourism*

The tangible outcomes and results of the cooperation action:

- **'for the project':** *Planning and implementation of marketing activities*
- **for the partners and areas involved:** *Planning and implementation of marketing activities*
- **for local actors/population:** *Qualification and professionalisation of local people*

Major obstacles encountered: -

Added value of cooperation (what has cooperation brought that a local action would not have been able to?):

Benefit of past experience of the partners, notably of Leader II cooperation experience → enabled to have enough knowledge, motivated and experienced people to build something strong

Key lessons put forward by the lead partner:

Need for a firm common conviction that cooperation will bring a significant added value for all partners involved

Other lessons drawn from the reading:

Strong local preparation of the project with detailed inventory around the theme, inquiries with local experts on the needs

Factors for success (what made the process of cooperation work):

The early involvement of the regional authorities in charge of the approval of cooperation projects → enormous facilitation of the implementation of the project

What has cooperation helped to strengthen locally (local strategy, bottom-up approach, local partnership, others):

Training of local people (notably women and young people) on cultural guidance (how to communicate in a well-founded and exciting manner) and education for management of regional museums

Can the cooperation action be considered as a step towards some kind of network (N / Y, if yes, why?):

NO, even if the experience can be transferred to other areas.

Learning from Europe

Good practice database code: PA_RD2_AT08-L+ATNAT-503

Link:

<http://intranet.leaderplus.org/cpdb/public/gpdb/GpdbDatasheet.aspx?otype=padb&appId=2e0a9b79-e3f7-4ad8-a4e6-7eb9161d655b&objectId=39ce5103-97c9-4b6e-b92e-e5d567bef790&ShowAllLanguages=>

Link to the project in the transnational cooperation project database:

<http://leaderplus.cec.eu.int/cpdb/public/project/CopDbDatasheet.aspx?projectId=27>

Type of cooperation: *Transnational cooperation (non neighbouring EU areas)*

Why did the partners decide to launch a cooperation project (the starting issue, the foreseen results, the initial concrete objectives)?

Will of all partners to find a good way to develop agricultural businesses & to educate children in innovative agricultural branches in order to increase the changes and opportunities of sustainable agricultural development in the regions. In the area of the Austrian coordinating LAG, there already existed a strong cooperation between the LAG and farmers' associations

The tangible outcomes and results of the cooperation action:

- **'for the project':** -
- **for the partners and areas involved:** *Comparison of the agriculture training systems and mutual enrichment*
- **for local actors/population:**
 - *improve the practical education of future farmers*
 - *train young farmers outside the family farm on energy, product processing and tourism*
 - *give young trainees a chance to work on innovative farms*

Major obstacles encountered:

- *Differences in the agriculture training systems in the 2 partner Member states*
- *Difficulty for the farmers to make the pupils available for the whole sessions → financial incentive*

Added value of cooperation (what has cooperation brought that a local action would not have been able to?):

- *enables pupils from Austria to learn about and experience innovative approaches in agricultural development in Germany and vice versa*
- *create a network of farmers in both areas and also between both areas around this project and the mentoring idea*

Key lessons put forward by the lead partner: *Need for an in-depth planning and preparation*

Other lessons drawn from the reading: -

Factors for success (what made the process of cooperation work):

- *The common interest for innovative activities for agriculture and the will to work with agriculture pupils*
- *Early involvement of all stakeholders in the project to give their ideas: LAG, agriculture schools & farmers → high level of commitment to the project*

What has cooperation helped to strengthen locally (local strategy, bottom-up approach, local partnership, others):

- *development of a network of farmers and motivation for their active involvement (financial incentive)*
- *the image of agriculture pupils who become, through this course, interesting employees*

Can the cooperation action be considered as a step towards some kind of network (N / Y, if yes, why?):
NO, even if the experience can be transferred to other areas.

Outdoor Tourism Cooperation Tyrol-Lapland

Good practice database code: PA_RD2_AT02-L+ATNAT-703

Link:

<http://intranet.leaderplus.org/cpdb/public/gpdb/GpdbDatashheet.aspx?otype=padb&appId=2e0a9b79-e3f7-4ad8-a4e6-7eb9161d655b&objectId=e6871b60-9388-410e-afc1-6b69a04af954&ShowAllLanguages=>

Link to the project in the Transnational cooperation project database:

<http://leaderplus.cec.eu.int/cpdb/public/project/CopDbDatashheet.aspx?projectId=31>

Type of cooperation: *Transnational cooperation (non neighbouring EU areas)*

Why did the partners decide to launch a cooperation project (the starting issue, the foreseen results, the initial concrete objectives): *After having met, representatives from the region became friends and wanted to work together? The first common theme that arose was family tourism. Both sides decided straight away to activate the local contacts and develop the theme further.*

The tangible outcomes and results of the cooperation action:

- **'for the project':** -

- **for the partners and areas involved:**

Adapt the partner's tourism landscape to the new demands of the customers

- **for local actors/population:**

- *intensive and practical exchange of experiences between the small companies leading to a thematic cooperation on outdoor and adventure tourism*
- *creation of partnerships between companies which are otherwise in competition + open to other companies in the areas (not working directly on the theme) to enable the access to larger scale international marketing*
- *exchanging on training systems to mutually benefit from the different strengths of the training approaches thus balancing out any weakness*
- *compensating seasonal fluctuations for instance by exchanging guides (need for summer guides in Austria when Finnish guides are most available)*
- *customer commitment through customer exchange*

Major obstacles encountered:

- *Structures and administration in Austria and Finland are managed differently → problems of coordination. I.e. in the harmonisation of the financing of the homepage of the website with Leader financing guidelines.*
- *Call for standardized financing guidelines for transnational Leader projects*
- *Also: distance between partners has to be overcome!*

Added value of cooperation (what has cooperation brought that a local action would not have been able to?):

- *Cooperation between companies otherwise competing*
- *A hope for the evolution of Austrian training and recognition system for outdoor activities guides (set up governmental training centres or at least standardized training formats in Austria, similar to the ones in Finland)*

Key lessons put forward by the lead partner:

Need for the local actors (in this case the companies) to cooperate with each other (and secure work placements) rather than for the cooperation to be limited to the management level

Other lessons drawn from the reading:

Interesting local will on both sides with clear direct impact to the areas and a clear mutual benefit

Factors for success (what made the process of cooperation work):

- *The previous cooperation experience of some of the partners had been positive!*

- *Pilseetal and Lapland LAGs are linked since their meeting in 99 & friendship (strong personal relations) has developed*

What has cooperation helped to strengthen locally (local strategy, bottom-up approach, local partnership, others):

- *Cooperation between companies otherwise competing*
- *Making training structures and systems change, notably in Austria*
- *Increase the connections of employees to their companies*

Can the cooperation action be considered as a step towards some kind of network (N / Y, if yes, why?):

NO, even if the experience can be transferred to other areas.

Meisterstrasse Salzkammergut

Good practice database code: PA_Rd2_AT06-L+ATNAT-405

Link:

<http://intranet.leaderplus.org/cpdb/public/gpdb/GpdbDatashet.aspx?otype=padb&appId=2e0a9b79-e3f7-4ad8-a4e6-7eb9161d655b&objectId=0c437998-da21-4ad5-baf9-bb2960535ca0&ShowAllLanguages=>

Type of cooperation: *Territorial action and interterritorial cooperation*

Why did the partners decide to launch a cooperation project (the starting issue, the foreseen results, the initial concrete objectives)?

Need to increase the value of the craft, to stop the migration and decline of craft businesses and to find successors to the businesses → Tracking down of as many of the best Austrian craftsmen as possible and present them to a wider public.

Project first at the scale of 1 LAG and then at the scale of 3 LAGs

The tangible outcomes and results of the cooperation action:

- **'for the project':** *Common catalogue, internet portal, organisation of events, participation in national and international exhibitions*
- **for the partners and areas involved:**
 - *Presentation of the areas' best craftsmen to customers both inside and outside the region through targeted marketing campaigns and an inter-regional brand*
 - *Contribution to a new regional image (level of recognition of the products and the regions was increased) → attraction of new target group guests*
- **for local actors/population:**
 - *Contribute to increase the value of the craft*
 - *Provide a platform which supports people in the exchange of experiences with craft businesses of other communities and regions and to collectively address new customers target groups*
 - *The sales of partner businesses have increased*

Major obstacles encountered:

- *how to combine the requirements of companies from different industries, sizes and personalities into one common project?*
- *how to find the right balance between commercial and regional interdependence*

Added value of cooperation (what has cooperation brought that a local action would not have been able to?):

- *The quality level of crafts is increasing as the companies are spurring each other on.*
- *Some cooperations within the project have independently developed*

Key lessons put forward by the lead partner:

The Meisterstrasse project was built in a sound way: growing slowly and incorporating the participating regional partners into the project development in a very intensive way → this made it possible to develop a comprehensive long-term project approach

Other lessons drawn from the reading: -

Factors for success (what made the process of cooperation work):

The building of links between craft and innovation which leads to the preservation of the local culture (contributes to the motivation of local actors)

What has cooperation helped to strengthen locally (local strategy, bottom-up approach, local partnership, others):

- *A transregional, cross-industry network of outstanding Austrian craft businesses*
- *A network of complementing porters in craft, tourism and cultural institutions*

Can the cooperation action be considered as a step towards some kind of network (N / Y, if yes, why?):

YES. The comprehensive long-term project approach could be transferred and further partners could be included on the basis of what has been built.

Valorisation and preservation of the Silver Fir

Good practice database code: PA_RD2_DE03-L+DEBDW-03

Link:

<http://intranet.leaderplus.org/cpdb/public/gpdb/GpdbDatashet.aspx?otype=padb&appId=2e0a9b79-e3f7-4ad8-a4e6-7eb9161d655b&objectId=10f6c813-ef8c-4291-860c-474e471f18e6&ShowAllLanguages=>

Link to the project in the Transnational cooperation database:

<http://leaderplus.cec.eu.int/cpdb/public/project/CopDbDatashet.aspx?projectId=36>

Type of cooperation: *Transnational cooperation (non neighbouring EU countries)*

Why did the partners decide to launch a cooperation project (the starting issue, the foreseen results, the initial concrete objectives): *The Silver Fir is an indispensable ecological stabiliser and is used as construction timber, appreciated for its patterns and its great versatility? The distribution of this tree has decreased to 10% of its original covering in 200 years → 3 partners who were working locally on the issue met and decided to share this common resource for a joint project.*

The tangible outcomes and results of the cooperation action:

- **'for the project':** *Information of customers, forest-owners, architects and planers on the different possibilities to use silver-fir for construction works.--> brochure + homepage + publicity measures*
- **for the partners and areas involved:** *Already during the project duration, decisions on which construction wood to use was taken in favour of the silver-fir. On the lumber market, the demand for lumber of the silver-fir increased up to 10%*
- **for local actors/population:** *Professionalisation of public-relation work and of general information policies*

Major obstacles encountered: -

Added value of cooperation (what has cooperation brought that a local action would not have been able to?): *Although the project was carried out in a single sector, it succeeded in integrating the efforts of diverse actors in the production and supply chain. This would have been much more difficult on a local basis only.*

Key lessons put forward by the lead partner:

An early cooperation agreement was signed defining the role of the partners and their financial participation --> positive aspect

Other lessons drawn from the reading: -

Factors for success (what made the process of cooperation work):

- *As a coordination project, participative decision was ensured since the beginning. All 3 partner LAGs had a voting power and jointly elaborated and decided strategies*
- *The wide involvement of local actors*

What has cooperation helped to strengthen locally (local strategy, bottom-up approach, local partnership, others):

The capacity to organise and agree strategies over the regional development path was strengthen.

Can the cooperation action be considered as a step towards some kind of network (N / Y, if yes, why?): *NO. The action is in principle transferable to other areas but the specificity of the topic (silver-fir) does not enable to widen the partnership much. Nevertheless, the joint effort to re-activate a traditional construction material may be a model in a wider context.*

PromEuregion

Good practice database code: PA_Rd2_LU02-L+LUNAT-01

Link:

<http://intranet.leaderplus.org/cpdb/public/gpdb/GpdbDatasheet.aspx?otype=padb&appId=2e0a9b79-e3f7-4ad8-a4e6-7eb9161d655b&objectId=1db6549c-8584-4e23-b81a-605698bdf5ff&ShowAllLanguages=>

Link to the project in the Transnational cooperation database:

<http://leaderplus.cec.eu.int/cpdb/public/project/CopDbDatasheet.aspx?projectId=316>

Type of cooperation: *Transnational cooperation (non neighbouring EU areas and areas from the New Member States)*

Why did the partners decide to launch a cooperation project (the starting issue, the foreseen results, the initial concrete objectives)?

First idea was to link existing trails from all EU countries and to jointly market them as a tourist offer + market the related regional projects in the best possible way.

The tangible outcomes and results of the cooperation action:

- **'for the project':** *a web-site for information on joint transnational offers*
- **for the partners and areas involved:**
 - *organisation of & participation to regional markets + marketing training seminars*
 - *an added value through the marketing of tourist offers.*
 - *the visualisation of strengths otherwise poorly known, even locally*
- **for local actors/population:** *development & direct marketing of tourism packages*

Major obstacles encountered:

Differences in the administrative rules for implementation in cooperation projects (i.e. the partner from Luxemburg will have to stop the project mid-2007 whereas other partners will be able to go on until end of 2008)

Added value of cooperation (what has cooperation brought that a local action would not have been able to?):

- *possibilities for collaboration on a specific theme*
- *developing in common offers aiming at exploring the involved regions*
- *developing innovative public relations*

Key lessons put forward by the lead partner:

Initial ambition sometimes hard to achieve in one time → need to proceed step by step

Other lessons drawn from the reading:

The project is implemented by a local structure and the LAG only acts as a trouble-shooter which is most important for results and sustainability

Factors for success (what made the process of cooperation work):

- *the experience of one LAG (from Luxemburg) in the field of new technologies (its local strategy is around this theme)*
- *the local will to move away from the isolation of individual LAGs*

What has cooperation helped to strengthen locally (local strategy, bottom-up approach, local partnership, others):

- *Link between tourism providers and regional producers. I.e. in Luxemburg, several regional producers have been equipped with an internet site. This site will be linked with the ProEuregion site.*
- *Other existing interrelation for instance in the tourism sector will be used to improve the project's effect which will in return strengthen them.*

Can the cooperation action be considered as a step towards some kind of network (N / Y, if yes, why?):

YES. Indeed, the initial idea of an EU 27 partnership still exists. The partners develop some tools which will enable them to reach this objective in the longer term. The project should therefore grow step by step.

Local community planning

Good practice database code: PA-DK01-L+DKNAT-A076

Link:

<http://intranet.leaderplus.org/cpdb/public/gpdb/GpdbDatashet.aspx?otype=padb&appId=2e0a9b79-e3f7-4ad8-a4e6-7eb9161d655b&objectId=1f55f883-aecb-453d-8a1a-12a4efd584b4&ShowAllLanguages=>

Link to the project in the Transnational cooperation project database:

<http://leaderplus.cec.eu.int/cpdb/public/project/CopDbDatashet.aspx?projectId=40>
<http://leaderplus.cec.eu.int/cpdb/public/project/CopDbDatashet.aspx?projectId=243>

Type of cooperation: *Transnational cooperation (not neighbouring EU)*

Why did the partners decide to launch a cooperation project (the starting issue, the foreseen results, the initial concrete objectives)?

Will to build a global link around the theme of rural development, strategy building and cooperation in order to exchange ideas, cross experience and develop cooperation projects today but also under the next programming period

The tangible outcomes and results of the cooperation action:

- **'for the project':**

Creation of new strategies and tools that can contribute to the development and accomplishment of more coherent and strong actions for development in the rural areas

- **For the partners and areas involved:**

- *strengthen rural development by promoting the working process for the rural areas participating in the project*
- *decide which possibilities the rural areas have for meeting the local people, interest groups and other actors in their development programme*
- *clarify the challenges for the rural areas and give inspiration for strategies and initiative that can promote development*

- **For local actors/population:**

- *development needs of local governments and groups identifies with the use of a common framework*
→ *action plans developed for the use of local governments: forms of cooperation, organisation of resources, priorities*

Major obstacles encountered:

- *Need to identify the problems rural areas have and the possible solutions*
- *Need also to have an influence on local decision makers which is difficult if they are not involved at a very early stage*

Added value of cooperation (what has cooperation brought that a local action would not have been able to?):

The introduction of an external eye able to point out things that locals cannot point out (because they do not see it or because they cannot talk)

Key lessons put forward by the lead partner:

This strong project of strategy enabled to structure the 2 partner areas and initiate tangible projects around a strong link (and deep mutual knowledge of structures, people, contexts...).

Other lessons drawn from the reading:

There is a long list of examples of innovation just by learning from each other

Factors for success (what made the process of cooperation work):

Work with all actors, either decision makers, businesses and population in order to define a common action plan that suits all local needs and expectations.

What has cooperation helped to strengthen locally (local strategy, bottom-up approach, local partnership, others):

- *Through the project, regional and local authorities and other actors (organisations, associations, businesses, project holders...) have become more active.*
- *More money is also put into projects for co-financing.*
- *Associations, businesses and other actors are active in an increasing way with ideas, money and practical work*

Can the cooperation action be considered as a step towards some kind of network (N / Y, if yes, why?):

NO. This project around strategy has been built between 2 areas. It has the objective of creating a very strong link that will last over time. It is not envisaged to widen the partnership which would be difficult given the challenges set.

Possibilities with hardwood

Good practice database code: PA_Rd2_SE05-L+SENAT-L11

Link:

<http://intranet.leaderplus.org/cpdb/public/gpdb/GpdbDatashheet.aspx?otype=padb&appId=2e0a9b79-e3f7-4ad8-a4e6-7eb9161d655b&objectId=51670bb1-843f-4d80-863e-7f60525d730d&ShowAllLanguages=>

Link to the project in the Transnational cooperation project database:

<http://leaderplus.cec.eu.int/cpdb/public/project/CopDbDatashheet.aspx?projectId=39>

Type of cooperation: *Transnational cooperation (not neighbouring EU)*

Why did the partners decide to launch a cooperation project (the starting issue, the foreseen results, the initial concrete objectives)?

Based on the global very strong relationship established between the 2 areas (see project DKNAT-A076), this is one of the concrete tangible projects that it has been decided to implement

The tangible outcomes and results of the cooperation action:

- **'for the project':**
 - *creation of new opportunities for using hardwood*
 - *promotion of development within the wood-related sector*
- **for the partners and areas involved:**
 - *More broadleaved trees contribute to a more beautiful landscape that can tempt more people out to visit the forest*
 - *Exhibitions of different hardwood products*
- **for local actors/population:**
 - *Increase of the economical potential for the forest owners as well as for the hardwood industry (enterprises production the products and enterprises producing the components) by producing different garden products for instance*
 - *Better landscape for local population and visitors*
 - *Hardwood products buyers who can communicate with sales people who have a better knowledge of the material*

Major obstacles encountered: -

Added value of cooperation (what has cooperation brought that a local action would not have been able to?):

- *Strengthening of international and national cooperations concerning products development and production methods*
- *The cooperation aspect makes the project stronger and enables to motivate business centres and companies → more involvement, notably financial involvement, and participation from the private sector*

Key lessons put forward by the lead partner:

Further to the work and actions implemented in common, it is easier, quicker and also good to have the participating group's shares of the overall project carried out independently

Other lessons drawn from the reading:

Interesting to have started from a global exchange on rural development strategies and to have set up some global objectives before launching the project: the partners trust each other and know exactly what they will bring in and get from the project

Factors for success (what made the process of cooperation work):

- *Work with research institutes and universities on the project concept and on new products, ideas and processes (i.e. wood heating system)*

- *To find a partner which is strong and renowned makes things easier*
- *Small local enterprises have been visited in order to understand their needs and to have their opinion → opportunity for these enterprises to get in contact with other networks and other people working with the same issue*

What has cooperation helped to strengthen locally (local strategy, bottom-up approach, local partnership, others):

Local perception of the forest and its assets

Local economy based on hardwood

Can the cooperation action be considered as a step towards some kind of network (N / Y, if yes, why?):

NO. The partnership intends to grow in order to include partners with complementary experiences and ideas (i.e from Finland from other MS, including in NMS). Yet, there is not the will to build a real wide network on the subject.

Women into enterprise

Good practice database code: PA_Rd2_UK08-L+GBNIR-07

Link:

<http://intranet.leaderplus.org/cpdb/public/gpdb/GpdbDatashet.aspx?otype=padb&appId=2e0a9b79-e3f7-4ad8-a4e6-7eb9161d655b&objectId=4f67ac4f-0341-42b1-b0da-abd87603a11f&ShowAllLanguages=>

Type of cooperation: *Interterritorial cooperation cross region (UK-NI & EN)*

Why did the partners decide to launch a cooperation project (the starting issue, the foreseen results, the initial concrete objectives):

Common interest in supporting women in developing businesses & needs for new ideas

The tangible outcomes and results of the cooperation action:

- **'for the project':** -
- **for the partners and areas involved:**
 - *To strengthen the local partnership around business and / or women*
 - *To build the expertise of the local business agencies*
- **for local actors/population:**
 - *Gain of confidence and motivation for the businesses*
 - *identifying business opportunities*
 - *business to business networking*
 - *transferable knowledge*
 - *support links*
 - *→ for the participants, improvement in at least one of the areas mentioned*

Major obstacles encountered:

- *difficulty in recruiting participants for the first experience*
- *different approach to enterprise development in each area*
- *too rigid rules set in the beginning to match similar businesses: need for flexibility*

Added value of cooperation (what has cooperation brought that a local action would not have been able to?):

- *new ideas brought to local businesses because of the linking with another area and other businesses*
- *no economic competition but real cooperation between businesses since their target public is in 2 different areas*
- *improvement of the business infrastructure in the 2 areas*

Key lessons put forward by the lead partner:

Importance of the local partnership built around the project: LAG is the centre + it works with the local businesses and the local business centres. Important factor for success

Other lessons drawn from the reading:

- *If difficult to convince in the beginning, the participants then played a very active role (definition of the themes for training, evolution of the programme...). This means that the project was useful.*
- *Always difficult to take people from small businesses out since they often are alone (no information on if a service was there to overcome this difficulty)*

Factors for success (what made the process of cooperation work):

- *Project carried out over the week-end → more availability*
- *Working with partners far away → avoid any type of direct competition between businesses*
- *Facility to have a quick and flexible financial system to support the projects which arose*

What has cooperation helped to strengthen locally (local strategy, bottom-up approach, local partnership, others):

- *The local networks around businesses (between the businesses themselves 1 with the associated structures)*

- *Develop links between the local women entrepreneurs.*
- *Make women entrepreneurs aware of new ideas and make them develop innovation locally (building confidence).*

Can the cooperation action be considered as a step towards some kind of network (N / Y, if yes, why?):

NO, even if the experience can be transferred to other areas.

Festival EuroLandArt 2006

Good practice database code: PA_RD2_DE02-L+DESAN-07

Link:

<http://intranet.leaderplus.org/cpdb/public/gpdb/GpdbDatasheet.aspx?otype=padb&appId=2e0a9b79-e3f7-4ad8-a4e6-7eb9161d655b&objectId=087dcf7b-96e4-43d9-9cd0-94b4e26f4bad&ShowAllLanguages=>

Link to Cooperation project database:

<http://leaderplus.cec.eu.int/cpdb/public/project/CopDbDatasheet.aspx?projectId=9>
(Festival Euro LandArt 2005)

Type of cooperation: *Transnational cooperation (not neighbouring inside EU)*

Why did the partners decide to launch a cooperation project (the starting issue, the foreseen results, the initial concrete objectives)?

Interesting experience in France initiated by local farmers and citizens to change the image of farmers by integrating art in the agriculture landscape. Wish of the German area facing the same issue to learn from the experience and common will to develop this action jointly.

The tangible outcomes and results of the cooperation action:

- **'for the project':** -

- **for the partners and areas involved:** *Offer a forum for artists and attract a broader public as well as tourists → change of the poor image of the regions (unemployment) & promotion of the names of the involved regions through an art festival all over the countries and further → reveals the creative potentialities of the region.*

- **for local actors/population:** *Local residents have the chance to see their surroundings from a different and new perspective.*

There has also been, on both sides, an improving of the local organisations capacity in collaboration with a variety of actors in the area and also outside the area

Major obstacles encountered:

The main difficulty was to make compatible, at a local level, art and administrative requirements (for building, concerning colours...)

Added value of cooperation (what has cooperation brought that a local action would not have been able to?):

Without the experience from the French partner, it would have been difficult for the German area to build a local project around art so quickly. The German participation enabled to build a partnership of exchange of ideas leading to a common project richer than the French initial one.

Key lessons put forward by the lead partner:

The transfer part was very important in the first step. It helped to prove to local actors and decision makers that the project could work and have direct positive results

Other lessons drawn from the reading:

Easier to proceed when you can prove that the project has worked elsewhere at a local level → it is quicker and enables to reach another dimension

Factors for success (what made the process of cooperation work):

Early involvement of farmers, politicians and artists even before the Leader funding was achieved. Local residents also voluntarily participated in the first steps of the organisation of the project.

What has cooperation helped to strengthen locally (local strategy, bottom-up approach, local partnership, others):

- The involvement of a wide panel of different actors (farmers, decision makers, population) in a single project. "The project, because also of its transnational component, led to a cooperation of

the resident farmers, artists, tourist operators and decision-makers at the local level and thus revealed regional capacities that may last far beyond the project duration".

- The concentration of financial and non-financial resources for a specific cooperation project and around a specific common event helped to activate resources that have not been visible before

Can the cooperation action be considered as a step towards some kind of network (N / Y, if yes, why?):

NO but technical assistance might be provided to other areas interested by the project and the approach. Events might then include the other partners' cultural dimensions