

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

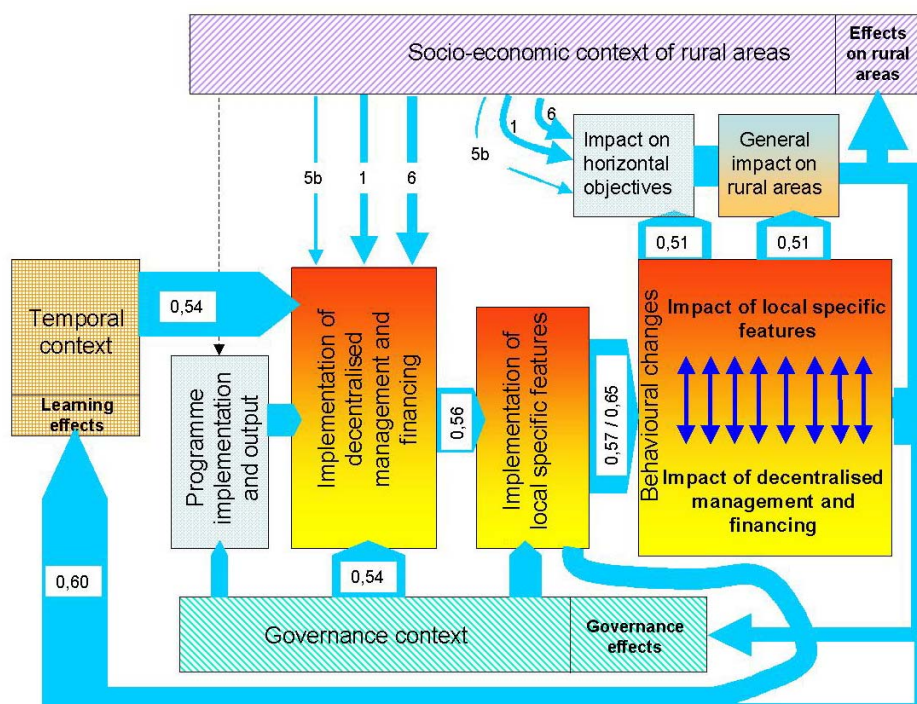
9.1 The influence of the LEADER II method on the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of rural development processes and measures (TOR 2.1.1)

The statistical analysis of 52 core indicators (scoring rates from the Q202 survey), attributed to the different boxes of the framework set up for this evaluation, gave strong pointers towards a positive answer to the question if the LEADER II method contributed to the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of rural development processes and measures (see figure 47).

Figure 47 is the model for the evaluation framework according to figure 7 (chapter 3.1), enriched with the results of the correlation analysis of the 52 indicators. The correlations do not indicate the direction of a cause-effect-relationship, but the model does, at least on a hypothetical basis. Therefore the correlation analysis of the 52 indicators, applied on the recursive evaluation framework, can be regarded as an impact analysis, visualising the cause-effect-cycles between different contexts (temporal, socio-economic and governance context), the development programme and the specific features of the approach.

Figure 47

Impact analysis based on the evaluation framework



Source: Statistical processing of subjective valuations of local actors (Q202). The numbers indicate correlations.

The 52 core indicators from a full set of 171 LAGs were then reduced to 22 by eliminating redundant and highly inter-related variables in an iterative operation. The final set of 22 indicators was processed in a multi-criteria analysis. The MCA resulted in five main components explaining the variance of outcomes:

- the implementation and the impact of the LEADER method (17,4% influence);
- the institutional context and the attitude of local stakeholders (10% influence);
- the adequacy of the area and employment effectiveness (9,4% influence)¹;
- the socio-economic context (8,2% influence);
- networking at national and European scale (8% influence).

This result seemed to corroborate the hypotheses drawn from qualitative investigations: the significance of the LEADER method, the relationship with local governance, and the rather low influence of the socio-economic context on the success or failure of the local programme.

The cluster analysis brought forth five types of groups, clustered according to their performance in respect to the five components:

- a) **Successful appliers of the LEADER method in a favourable governance context (24,6% of the groups).** High scores in the implementation and impact of the LEADER method; favourable, decentralised administrative environment; mixed partnerships with the lowest share of public partners; sufficient animation staff; highest leverage effect on private capital; experience from LEADER I; good impact scores on the horizontal objectives.
- b) **Successful appliers of the LEADER method with high private participation, in a less favourable government context (21,0% of the groups).** High scorings in the implementation and impact of the LEADER method (highest score in innovation and multi-sectoral integration); rather decentralised, but less favourable administrative environment; the most favourable socio-economic context; mixed partnerships with a relatively low share of public partners in the LAG; best endowment with animation staff; high leverage effect on private capital; most extensive users of measure C (trans-national cooperation); good impact on the horizontal objectives.
- c) **Successful appliers of the local features in a favourable governance context, with little networking and trans-national cooperation (18,7% of the groups).** Fairly high scores on the implementation of the LEADER method; favourable governance context and support from the administration specifically in the starting

¹ This component is quite inconsistent and can not be sufficiently interpreted.

phase; less decentralisation; mixed partnerships with a relatively low share of public partners; less networking, less trans-national cooperation; less impact on horizontal objectives.

- d) **Fairly successful users of the initiative with little implementation of the LEADER method (22,2% of the groups).** Lower scores on the implementation of the LEADER method; rather decentralised management, but less favourable governance context; less viable local partnership; relatively high leverage effect on private capital; relatively low impact on horizontal objectives.
- e) **Less successful groups in less favourable socio-economic and governance contexts (13,5% of the groups).** Low scorings on the implementation and lowest scores on the impact of the LEADER method; unfavourable, centralised governance context and administrative environment; highest percentage of public partners; lowest users of trans-national cooperation; least networking; least viable local partnerships, least animation staff, lowest rate of private funds; lowest scores on horizontal objectives.

The result lets conclude that around half of the groups have implemented the LEADER method (a,b and parts of c) to a certain extent and that the implementation of the method is highly related to the satisfaction with the outcomes of the initiative. Some groups (d) have used the initiative as a funding instrument without “buying” the LEADER method. There was a number of nature parks among them. Low performers (e) were particularly frequent in centralised governance contexts, crowded insertion spaces and among weak local partnerships.

LEADER II and its influence on the efficiency of rural development processes

- LEADER II proved to be a very adaptive programme. It accomplished different functions according to the socio-economic environment and to the prevailing system of governance. In remote Objective 6 and less structured Objective 1 areas, it strengthened social cohesion and the capacity to act in common; it led to a re-assertion of local identities. It generated confidence between local actors and institutions. In diversified and more accessible rural areas, LEADER II was used to integrate hitherto separated strands of activities, to create local and to link up to global networks, and to consolidate local value added chains by multi-sectoral integration and public-private cooperation.
- LEADER II brought administration and local actors closer together. In decentralised systems the contact between beneficiaries and programme administrators was better than in mainstream programmes. But even in these contexts superior hierarchical levels or external influences could cause considerable delays in funding decisions and payment flows.

- The comparative cost-effectiveness case studies revealed that the relationship between cost and direct output tended to be better in projects funded by LEADER compared to those funded by mainstream programmes, except in experimental, innovative projects, or if social and cultural factors not measurable in money terms were taken into consideration. The territorial ripple effects, which can be related to the application of the LEADER method, enriched the area's human and social capital.
- LEADER played a triple role, as a programme, a method and a philosophy. It had the capacity to raise spirits in a way as to mobilise local capital, voluntary work and community support which lowered the social and economic risks of people stepping forward on an unbeaten track.
- LEADER was able to unearth hidden potential in small niches; this was a marked difference to mainstream programmes and triggered the involvement of new actors in local development.

Summary answer to TOR question 2.1.1.a:

To what extent was the efficiency of rural development processes and measures influenced at all levels by the LEADER II method as defined by its specific features?

LEADER II was an efficient initiative. Its efficiency is grounded in four factors:

- its adaptability to every rural socio-economic and governance context;
- its capacity to bring local actors, administrations and support structures closer together;
- its ability to mobilise additional efforts of committed local actors;
- its responsiveness to small-scale activities and projects.

When it was not efficient, it was due to:

- a too short implementation time of the rural innovation programme;
- a disempowering administrative environment;
- the prior existence of similar initiatives at local level.

LEADER II and its influence on the effectiveness of rural development processes

- The effectiveness of LEADER II was very high in respect to the aims set by the European Commission: it has stimulated innovative measures at local level in all sectors of rural activity. The array of achievements was extremely wide: in IE there was less agriculture than tourism, in Scotland/UK there was more information technology than food processing, in the New Länder of Germany there was more village renewal than SME promotion. Many projects have differed from mainstream projects concerning their experimental character, their newness to the area and their capacity to mobilise unused potential.
- The effectiveness of LEADER II was rated higher by local actors in Objective 1 and 6 areas than in 5b areas. This can have to do with the more complex and less visible role of LAGs in Objective 5b areas, focusing more on immaterial investments.
- The successful implementation of the LEADER method was a success in itself, for it meant behavioural change.
- LEADER II has shown that the territorial approach can be very effective with modest amounts of money. It could provide solutions in terms of income and employment where other and more costly initiatives had failed. It introduced in the rural debate concepts such as transfer of know how, human capital, intangible factors, participatory approaches, innovation, integration between actions, networks, that were previously absent in the sectoral function and could stimulate a less assisted and defensive mentality, reducing the isolation of single rural areas.²
- The comparative cost-effectiveness analysis case studies showed that the direct effects on employment and income tended to be better than in mainstream programmes, due to the promotion of micro-enterprise start-ups and of new services in the social and environmental sector. The same can be presumed upon the indirect effects on employment and income.
- The results of LEADER II have been widely disseminated and made known to the public interested in rural development and beyond that. In IE, one third of the rural population outside Dublin knew about LEADER. In PT, a ship chartered by the national network was selling local products from LEADER areas, anchored in the river Tejo during the EXPO in Lisboa. In some countries, LEADER has become or is on the way to become a brand name for endogenous, inclusive and sustainable rural development.

² The paragraph is a quotation from SARACENO E.. 2002 : Rural Development Policies and the Second Pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy. Discussion Paper, Bruxelles. We could not have expressed this in a better way.

- There was a growing flow of knowledge exchange and transfer between regions and across Member States, fostered by the European and national networking bodies put in place by the European Commission. Local actors learned to conceive local development in terms of projects, and they got used to strategic thinking, connecting the individual logics of projects for a common purpose.
- Local actors and programme administrators considered the initiative as a nursery for learning to co-operate; this was experienced at project level, in the local partnership, and in the administrative concertation process between three European funds and national co-funding.

Summary answer to TOR question 2.1.1.b:

To what extent was the effectiveness of rural development processes and measures influenced at all levels by the LEADER II method as defined by its specific features?

LEADER II was an effective initiative. Its effectiveness is grounded in four factors:

- the closing of the gap between a top-down programme and the local people, their needs, aspirations and potentials;
- a mentality change from passive to active attitude;
- the responsibility conveyed to local partnerships;
- direct and indirect effects on strategic issues: The pilot function for innovative diversification; a roughly estimated 100.000 jobs created or safeguarded in Europe's rural areas; environmental concerns integrated into social and economic development; income effects through new investments, employment, and an increase of tourist visits and stays; opening up new avenues for rural women to become lead actors in rural development.

When it was not effective, it was due to:

- a too short implementation time;
- a disregard of the bottom-up approach;
- a weak and unrepresentative local partnership.

LEADER II and its influence on the sustainability of rural development processes

- Local actors and even more so, programme administrators saw LEADER II as highly contributing to the sustainable development of rural areas.
- LEADER has proved to be applicable in all types of rural areas, regardless of the socio-economic or governance context. A distinction can be made between less or more diversified and structured rural areas.³
- The territorial approach contributed significantly to the re-valuation and exploitation of non-material and material local resources, which served as a fulcrum for innovation.
- The viability of measures has been ensured, where long term technical assistance close to the needs of beneficiaries was provided, which means up to 5 years in genuinely innovative projects.
- LEADER II contributed to diversifying the local economy in rural areas, particularly in connection with the agricultural sector and rural tourism.
- Although in many areas parts of the population were under- or overrepresented in the local partnerships, almost everywhere the LEADER initiative contributed to a relative enlargement of the public actively involved in rural development. LEADER II contributed to the integration of new participants and beneficiaries into the process of local development in rural areas, specifically the non-profit sector, which contributed to networking skills and contacts.
- In some regions the dominance of public authorities and the under-representation of the private, entrepreneurial sector was the cause for a lack of dynamics.
- Mixed partnerships striking the balance between the interests of the public, the private and the non-profit sector, ensured both organisational viability and transformative power in the best way.
- Learning to negotiate and to manage local development programmes can be regarded as one of the main effects of the LEADER initiative, but it depended from the extent to which the decentralised approach was applied.
- This learning effect at local level has been partly dissipated by the disruption of many groups after LEADER II and the subsequent depletion of staff; the practice applied in

³ Less structured areas rather belong to type 1,2,3,9 and (partly) 4, more structured areas to type 5,6,7,8 and (partly) 4. There are more Obj. 1 and 6 areas in area types 1,3,4 and 9, whereas the others more likely are Obj. 5b areas. From a governance point of view, free insertion spaces are more likely to be found in less structured rural areas, whereas crowded spaces for insertion can rather be found in more structured and diversified rural areas.

some countries to drop LEADER II LAGs and to endow new ones in LEADER+ proved to be dysfunctional in this respect.

- However, the lessons learnt during LEADER II concerning inter-departmental coordination was capitalised in administrations, where the staff remained in place.

Summary answer to TOR question 2.1.1.c:

To what extent was the sustainability of rural development processes and measures influenced at all levels by the LEADER II method as defined by its specific features?

LEADER II initiative contributed to the sustainability of development processes at local level. This effect is grounded in four factors:

- opening up new avenues for creating added value in rural areas and creating synergies between existing value added chains;
- capacity building at local level in and around the local partnership: *“Learning for accountability.”*⁴
- the integration of environmental concerns into social and environmental development projects and the increased cooperation between public and private actors.
- the European, yet global perspective which was conveyed by the initiative. Local and regional agenda 21 processes were combined with LEADER programmes.

If the initiative did not contribute to sustainable development processes, it was due to:

- the disruption of the local partnership and of technical assistance through cutting funds abruptly at the end of the period, as well as a high fluctuation rate of key actors;
- the continued dominance of a single sector or of public actors in the local partnership;
- the relatively small size and impact of the intervention compared to other influence factors.

⁴ Expression coined by Elliot STERN during his key note address at the Fifth European Conference on Assessing Structural Funds in Budapest/HU, 26/27 June 2003.

9.2 The role of the local features of the LEADER method

According to the survey (Q202), the area-based strategy, bottom-up and partnership were the most “popular” features among local actors. The three features were also enhanced by a decentralised governance environment. Multi-sectoral integration and networking were more “advanced”, but less “popular” features. Innovation kept a middle position, as it integrates aspects of both sides.

9.2.1 Area-based approach

The local stakeholders’ own choice of the area was an important success factor, specifically in respect to multi-sectoral integration. The rigid delimitation of eligible areas has caused disturbances, as the boundaries cut apart territories with a common identity and separated rural towns from their surrounding areas.

Shared identities were among the most powerful driving forces for mobilising extraordinary efforts for local development.

Local actors saw the boost of the image of their territories as a remarkable outcome of the LEADER method.

9.2.2 Bottom-up approach

LEADER II has fostered participation and the inclusion of local initiatives into local development. This effect has been stronger, where decentralised management and financing has been implemented.

LEADER II has brought programme delivery (top-down) and the needs and aspirations of the local people (bottom-up) closer together than other rural development programmes.

LEADER II has raised awareness, but did not significantly contribute to the inclusion of the weakest parts of the population into the development process; however, many local partnerships were able to take up the challenge, to bring in and to manage complementary measures to meet those needs.

LEADER II was an investment in the social and human capital of rural areas; it raised the capacity for self-organisation and for harmonizing divergent interests; it broke mental models of helplessness and created confidence in the people’s own capacity to open new paths for the future of their territory.

9.2.3 The local group

906 Local Action Groups and 92 Other Collective Bodies were the fulcra of programme implementation under LEADER II, although a small number of groups in countries, where there were no effective procedures of selection or negotiation, never got started.

The partnerships, more than a half of which have been newly created for LEADER II, were the heart and the brains of the initiative at local level; the local group is the anchor point of collective learning and the memory of past experiences of success and failure.

In countries with less diversified and less structured rural areas, the LEADER groups tended to institutionalise as multifunctional local development agencies, whereas in more diversified and more structured rural areas, the LEADER groups, apart from some difficulties to find a functional niche, became coordination nodes and fora of concertation amidst a multitude of different programmes, initiatives and agencies.

The new role in local governance, which local partnerships acquired in decentralised systems, increased their accountability as a key player in local development; but it also put a burden on them. They had to reconcile administrative functions entrusted by the public authorities, with the transformative function close to the people; it was evident that a lack of resources led to a depletion of the animation staff whereas the administrative functions were inescapable: Action suffers, while administration persists.

9.2.4 Innovation

Innovation has been interpreted in a most pragmatic way as to provide “new answers to the problems of rural areas”.

There is a great number of outstanding projects, new to the own area and model-like to others, created under LEADER II.

The two major avenues of innovation were the (re-) discovery and valorisation of local (human, natural, technological) resources and the empowerment of people and organisations in rural areas.

In some areas, information and communication technologies have been successfully used to create new employment and to diversify qualification of rural people, specifically women.

9.2.5 Multi-sectoral integration

Multi-sectoral integration was difficult to achieve because of the sectoral logic of funding authorities and the dispersion of funding sources; it could best be achieved in already diversified areas and by a mixed, dynamic and dialogue-oriented partnership in the core of the development process; hence multi-sectoral integration was rather a consequence of a strategic focus than the cause.

It seems that agricultural diversification served as a basic pattern for multi-sectoral integration. It functioned better in areas where there was a living tradition of pluriactivity than in monocultural or economically dependent areas. In other words: where the production function of agriculture was too successful for a too long period of time, multi-sectoral integration is difficult to achieve. Where agriculture was practically abandoned and does not play any role in the local economy any more, it is difficult to achieve, either. Multi-sectoral integration meets better conditions in environments, where agriculture has been strong enough to survive, under conditions of vertical and horizontal integration and the maintenance of short distance distribution channels.

9.3 The role of the trans-local features of the LEADER method

9.3.1 Networking

Networking was an issue of the “master class” of LEADER groups; its fruits could be reaped by those having more experience in local development, which had consolidated partnership structures and “knew what they wanted”. The less experienced groups benefited more from regional networks and vicinity exchange.

The services of the European Observatory and the national networks were appreciated among more experienced and more qualified LEADER groups, because the Observatory could bring rural actors and programme administrators together to learn, to exchange and to create common views on the evolution of rural areas; seminars and dossiers of the Observatory have been widely appreciated, utilised and replicated by national networks.

The European Observatory conveyed what local actors and programme administrators called the LEADER “spirit” or “ethos” across national and cultural boundaries; it was a driving force for creating a common understanding and a common language for rural development and the LEADER method, which is the precondition for successful knowledge transfer.

The European Observatory, and to a certain degree also the national networking units, were not so successful in providing their services to the less experienced, less qualified LEADER groups.

Networking practices between local actors and administrators, but also between members of different hierarchical levels of the programme delivery chain, contributed to circumvent administrative burdens and avoid undue delays.

Networking is (an underestimated) vehicle for mainstreaming the methodological approach and the achievements of the LEADER initiative.

9.3.2 Trans-national cooperation

Measure C, trans-national co-operation, was appreciated as a fascinating field of activity, but too ambitious in the design; measure C did neither support intra-regional nor intra-national cooperation between LAGs; it aimed at joint projects, whereas the primary purpose of the LAGs was exchange, learning and know-how transfer. The technical assistance funding from the European Observatory was helpful, but deemed over-bureaucratic.

Deliberate administrative support for trans-national co-operation was more an exception than the rule; measure C was generally delayed and its budget was reallocated to measure B in many countries.

Although many projects have failed in respect to their official, too ambitious targets, trans-national cooperation was successful in respect to the implicit aims: Opening minds, fostering exchange, enhancing learning and transfer of knowledge.

9.4 Conclusions on the contribution of the specific financing and management procedures to the added value of LEADER (TOR 2.3.4)

9.4.1 The complexity of LEADER II

According to the opinion of national and European evaluators, based on many interviews and on the majority of case studies, LEADER II was, taking into account its relatively small budget, a rather complicated way to get funded. The complexity seemed to have filtered out applicants with a low level of commitment to their purpose. In some reported cases they either desisted or turned to other funding sources. On the other hand, the complexity was accepted because it was attributed to the specific characteristics of the project which would not get other funding from standardised large scale funding schemes. Ironically, the complexity of programme delivery acted as an invisible hand in favour of complementarity and for selecting the most committed project promoters.

There was complementarity with mainstream Structural Funds programmes, as the LEADER projects were mostly small-scale, more experimental and included new types of beneficiaries, e.g. from the non-profit sector. At local level, some LAGs acted as local development agencies operating on other Community initiatives (INTERREG II, ADAPT, NOW).

The quality of programme delivery was influenced by three main criteria:

- the relative socio-institutional distance between different players of the programme delivery chain (e.g. between beneficiaries and the LAGs; between the LAGs and the managing and payment authorities; between the LAGs and the networks and other support structures). The respectively weakest link determined the total quality of programme delivery;
- the concentration or dispersion of funding sources (the three EU funds, and the corresponding national matching funds). Programme delivery was better, if funding sources were concentrated in the lowest possible number of decision nodes, and if the matching funds were negotiated in advance;
- the ability to shortcut the administrative complexity by more or less informal intra-hierarchical networking, with the responsible programme manager as the spider in the web; LEADER II triggered a learning process for administrative stakeholders in respect to horizontal and inter-departmental coordination.

9.4.2 Coherence between the LEADER method and the available resources

In general, the coherence between the LEADER method and the available resources was not at its optimum because of:

- the complex, multi-tiered decision making processes;
- the management of three funds plus local part-funding to be dealt with for a relatively small programme. The management of three funds caused considerable coordination problems;
- a too short time for implementing the rural innovation programmes (measure B) due to cumulative delays in the start-up period;
- gaps between the funding periods from LEADER I to LEADER II to LEADER+, which led to the depletion of staff and the disruption of many LAGs with subsequent loss of the gained experience.

On the other hand, the programme was sufficiently adaptable in order to fit into the governance systems of Member States and regions, although there was not always a seamless integration. In some countries and regions, pre-existing functioning schemes were replaced, and in others

the LEADER initiative was simply absorbed by the pre-established structures, losing its particular thrust.

9.4.3 Cost-effectiveness of LEADER II compared to other Structural Funds or rural development programmes

The findings from 10 in-depth studies on the cost-effectiveness of LEADER II (see Volume 3) in which LEADER-funded projects have been compared with projects funded from mainstream Structural Funds or national programmes, revealed the following features⁵:

- less investment and less public funding per direct output in general, but more investment per direct output in very new, innovative projects than in mainstream programmes (DE, GR, IT, NL, SE);
- more intensive technical assistance, but less continuous and sometimes less embedded in established structures than in mainstream programmes (AT, DE);
- more private share, more commitment and voluntary work of the project promoter than in mainstream programmes. (GR, IT, NL, SE);
- same or more complicated approval and payment procedures than in mainstream programmes (AT, IT, SE);
- territorial effects and side benefits larger than in mainstream programmes (FR, IT, NL, SE);
- personal qualification of project promoter much better than in mainstream programmes (DE, NL, SE);
- more area-based and innovative than in mainstream programmes (AT, DE, IT, NL);
- more model-like than in mainstream programmes (FR, IT);
- more permanent employment and income effects than in mainstream programmes (DE, GR, IT, NL);
- more impact on behavioural change than in mainstream programmes (IE).

⁵ For the detailed analysis, go to Volume 3 and see the studies whose locations are indicated in brackets.

9.4.4 Contribution of decentralised management and financing to the added value of LEADER II

There is a clear relationship between the extent to which the vertical feature was implemented and the extent to which the local features were implemented. The latter can be seen as a consequence of the former. The approach instigates institutional and organisational learning. Once some experience acquired, the approach leads to much better results.

The decentralised management and financing has shown more direct effects in Objective 6 and 1 areas, less so in Objective 5b areas. This can have to do with the fact that it has been less implemented in 5b areas, but also, that in more structured and diversified areas the message of this approach is overheard, at least for some while.

Summary answer to TOR question 2.3.4:

To what extent did the specific financing and management procedures contribute to the added value of LEADER II? (The answer to this question must include a selected number of comparable projects from among the activities most financed under LEADER II and a cost-effectiveness analysis of those projects in relation to comparable mainstream activities).

The quality of programme delivery was influenced by (i) the frequent interaction between different key actors in the LAG and the administration at different levels; (ii) the concentration or dispersion of funding streams, i.e. the three EU funds, and the corresponding national matching funds; (iii) shortcutting the administrative complexity by more or less informal intra-hierarchical networking, with the responsible programme manager as the “spider in the web”.

The decentralised management and financing has proved to be the main trigger for organisational and institutional learning at all levels. It created the seedbed on which the LEADER method could be implemented in local development of rural areas. The partnership played the pivotal role in transforming the principle down to the local level, where it manifested itself as the bottom-up approach.

The comparative case studies on cost-effectiveness revealed a number of advantages of the LEADER initiative, concerning (i) the investment required to achieve a certain output, (ii) the leverage effect on private investment, (iii) the employment effect, and (iv) the impact on behavioural change. LEADER projects required more technical assistance and were more sensitive regarding its premature expiration. They laid more emphasis on capacity building and qualification of project owners and were more innovative than the compared projects funded by mainstream programmes.

9.5 Mainstreaming LEADER

Following a definition of the European Commission,

“Mainstreaming generally describes the transfer to and integration in the wider policies of the European Union, the Member States and/or the regions, of the lessons drawn from a particular experience or innovation. ‘Mainstreaming LEADER’ is the phrase used to describe the transferring of part or all of the LEADER approach to mainstream rural development programmes...” (EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2003, p.1f.)

Mainstreaming can mean:

- the transfer of HOW a programme was designed and carried out, or
- the transfer of WHAT has been developed or achieved as an outcome of the programme.

Mainstreaming may happen on a

- macro-scale: The area-based approach, policies, strategic orientations, measures;
- micro-scale: Individual or combined features of the method, tools and pilot projects.

Mainstreaming is a broader term than transfer, although the terms are often used synonymously. Transfer of programme elements is a component of mainstreaming, which means replication, multiplication, diffusion, dispersion...

Although a thorough evaluation and reflection process may lead to the explicit transfer of successful approaches and practices, mainstreaming can also be the outcome of good intra-hierarchical networking, driven by a common commitment for a specific governance approach. It is also conveyed by officials who climb up the hierarchical ladder or who switch to other services, where they find a new space for applying what they learned at their former work place. Last but not least, it follows trends and fashions. It is the magic of words – and words like bottom-up sound very well in the ears of the public. If they are proclaimed again and again, they may turn into real action, although it is observable in many cases that the discourse is well adopted, but not the practice.

The following overview, referring to the macro-scale type of mainstreaming, is based on interviews with national and regional interviewees (Q34), including most national and regional evaluators. The overview does not pretend to be complete. It is rather exemplary and indicative.

Country	Mainstreaming of LEADER method in national programmes	Observations
AT	Article 33 of the Rural Development Plan Specific regional programmes (Tirol) Regionalmanagement (Tirol)	Innovative and multi-sectoral integration was adopted to promote village renewal, landscape preservation, processing and marketing of local, farm-based products. Regional institutions replicated the start-up of IT-based enterprises and qualification schemes. Long term contractual arrangements between LEADER+ groups and the mainstream "Regionalmanagement" system (partnership-based, permanent local development agencies)
DE	Territorial competitions like "Zukunftsregionen" or "Region Aktiv", promoted by Federal Ministries Bavarian competition for sustainable land management Saxonian village development programme Regionalmanagement (Hessen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Saxonia) INTERREG IIIA (Sachsen/DE)	The competitions took up the innovative approach at a strategic level. Village development based on local partnerships. Creating lasting partnerships and coordination nodes, independent from funding periods. INTERREG IIIA uses the same structural set up as LEADER II.
ES	PRODER: LEADER type programmes, using EU resources.	PRODER groups ensure the territorial coverage with local action groups. PRODER took up all features but trans-national cooperation.
FI	POMO and ALMA: LEADER type programmes for rural development, both using EU resources. There are now 25 LEADER+ and 34 POMO or ALMA groups	All features except networking and trans-national cooperation were transferred.
FR	Politique des pays Global budgets in Objective 2	The bottom up approach was already used before LEADER. The pays and LEADER mutually influenced each other. Multi-sectoral integration proves to be difficult. The logics of different funds are always difficult to reconcile.
GR	Mountain area special programme within the Rural Development Programme (Thessalia)	All features but trans-national cooperation, networking and decentralised management and financing, which continues under LEADER+

Country	Mainstreaming of LEADER method in national programmes	Observations
IE	<p>Other local development programmes, structures and agencies</p> <p>National mainstream rural development measure funding LEADER type action groups</p> <p>Area Partnership Programme</p>	<p>The tripartite structure of partnerships and the concept of community participation have been adopted by other local development programmes and structures</p> <p>The trans-national cooperation has been also taken over by the national mainstream rural development measure.</p> <p>Multi-sectoral integration has not been widely understood, and also networking is not widely adopted, except on an informal basis.</p> <p>The Area Partnership Programme has adopted the decentralised approach. Other local partnerships are reluctant to take over financial responsibility.</p>
IT	<p>Parts of Objective 2 programmes: Territorial Integrated Project (indirect mainstreaming via the Territorial Pact)</p> <p>Rural Development Plan (Reg. 1257/99)</p> <p>Territorial Pacts</p> <p>Regional Plan for Employment (Sardegna)</p> <p>Integrated Area Plans (Piemonte, Sardegna)</p>	<p>The Integrated Area Plans are carried out by intermunicipal partnerships, but there is no animation and no proper management of funds. Administrative and financial management is not decentralized. The result is underspending.</p>
SE	<p>Government bill on regional policy: Local programme for entrepreneurship and local development (Bennypengarna).</p>	<p>Some components (bottom-up, innovation) were integrated into the programme.</p>
UK	<p>Rural development programmes, e.g. Rural Enterprise Scheme</p> <p>Some Objective 1 (Community Economic Development/CED) and Objective 2 programmes</p>	<p>There are already too many overlapping partnerships, and there is an attempt to rationalise the roles and to improve communication between them.</p> <p>Multi-sectoral integration is hampered by bureaucratic restrictions.</p> <p>European Rural Exchange in Objective 2 programmes took up the networking.</p> <p>Scottish Objective 1 implementation (innovation, multi-sectoral integration) hampered by excessive administrative demands and rigid application of SF regulations.</p> <p>Networking was generalised in the Scottish Highlands with the local economic fora.</p>

9.6 From LEADER II to LEADER+

The interviews with programme administrators and the focus groups with LAGs were held during LEADER+ implementation. Obviously the participants saw their experiences through the lens of the current situation. Their indications concerning the changes from LEADER II to LEADER+ provide hints on how the lessons of LEADER II have been capitalised in the different Member States. The following theses integrate the views of the evaluation team and of the interviewed programme administrators and experts at national and EC level.

Thesis 1:

LEADER+ procedures became easier for the programme administrators but more bureaucratic for the LAGs.

The administrators have drawn their lessons from the previous period. As professionals they have rationalised their systems and improved cross-departmental coordination. The processes are shorter and more concentrated (DE). Administrative tasks have been moved to the LAGs. Specifically smaller groups are struggling with the requirements, for which they have not been really prepared (FI). Some of them complain that they have been assigned as animators and developers, ending up as accountants. Projects get shifted to other funding lines or applicants drop them at all to avoid the burdensome procedures (AT). In GR, the monitoring and payment responsibility passed from the Prefectural Committees to the LAGs, thus marking a further step towards decentralisation, which was meant to speed up programme delivery. But it turned out to be a two-edged sword: the monitoring and reporting requirements multiplied and administrative work increased for the Greek LAGs.

Thesis 2:

The processes of local development become more professionalized, sometimes technocratic so that the decentralised approach gets reversed in some countries.

The relationships between local actors and programme administrators on one side and local beneficiaries on the other side become more technical, professional, and less driven by a common commitment (FI).

There is less local mobilisation and village development, LEADER projects are now much more similar to mainstream projects than before (SE). PT reports a loss of strategic orientation in spite of the thematic approach, which was felt as too much top-down also in NL, and as a hindrance to multi-sectoral integration in IE.

Another consequence is a better coordination of different services (PT), the stricter orientation on quality indicators and more competition in the selection of groups and projects (DE). The administrative simplification and more formal approval procedures lead to a re-centralisation (DE). Strong top-down orientation in the selection of local groups is reported from NL. In GR, the

choice of the area, under the LAGs' responsibility in LEADER II, has been carried out by the regional administrations in LEADER+. In contrast to LEADER II, they excluded rural towns from the programme (GR).

Thesis 3:

Mixed private-public local development partnerships become a standard concept.

LEADER groups – or similar partnership-based local development agencies – become standard institutions operating within a growing complexity of local development programmes, initiatives and agencies not only in rural, but also in urban areas. Partnership-based intermediary local/regional development agencies – descended from LEADER or not – take over tasks from LAGs and regional administrations (e.g. monitoring, technical assistance etc.). The integration of relevant stakeholders has become more complete and more intensive so that partnerships become more representative (DE, GR). Mono-sectoral collective bodies are no longer supported by territorial funding lines.

In some countries the authorities supported new groups and let the others be funded by other means or just left them alone. This strategy produces negative effects: the new groups cannot draw on the experience of the others (Sachsen/DE), or are excluded from trans-national cooperation, which they already had started (FI).

Thesis 4:

The European dimension is damaged by the absence of the European Observatory.

In spite of its mandatory character, trans-national cooperation seems to overload the coordination capacities of national networking units (NL, SE). The attempts of national networking units to help in partner search, to organise meetings, and to support early phases of common planning, cannot substitute the European dimension. Most cooperation projects started at European seminars, with the help of the Observatory database, or with an advertisement in the "info-Leader" .

9.7 The value added of the Community Initiative LEADER II

■ **Cohesion added value**

The local actors and the programme administrators at all levels conceded a high value added to the Community Initiative LEADER II, both compared to other Structural Funds programmes and to other national funding schemes. LEADER provided useful, tangible and sustainable answers to the specific needs of rural areas.

The European value added of the initiative is seen in the trans-national dimension, in other words in European networking and border-crossing territorial cooperation.

■ **Operational added value**

The LEADER initiative has unleashed hidden and abandoned potential in rural areas. It empowered local actors to meet the challenges of a globalised economy by experimenting new ways on a small scale with relatively small funds, but great visibility and demonstrativeness.

It has helped to establish local partnerships in several hundred European rural areas, which could become fulcra for future rural development strategies, following a consistent area-based approach.

■ **Learning added value**

The LEADER Initiative can be regarded as a “learning software”, flexible enough to be translated to all rural areas; according to the needs it can be used to dynamise and to structure the area, as it provides tools for each of these functions.

Respondents at all levels regretted the non-existence of a European Observatory. Its absence poses barriers to trans-national cooperation in LEADER+. The advent of an enlarged European Union makes a networking node at European level indispensable for disseminating the rich experiences in endogenous rural development gained in the EU15.

■ **Policy added value**

The specific features of LEADER have not been invented by the initiative; but it applied them in rural development for the first time, in an integrated and consistent manner. In many Member States the operational principles of the LEADER method or the whole approach (except the trans-local features) have been generalised in rural development mainstream programmes. They have also been emulated by other initiatives using a territorial approach for tackling specific problems, e.g. unemployment.

The ultimate value added of LEADER II might lie in its capacity to trigger a mind shift regardless to national, cultural or language barriers. The LEADER II initiative helped a European-wide school of thinking to arise, connected through a common “ethos” or “spirit” which is based on a set of principles and beliefs how local development should be done in rural areas. Summing up in the words of a Finnish official,

“one of the most remarkable accomplishments of LEADER II is the change of attitude. The level in consciousness has increased from grass-root actors to regional or state officials.”

9.8 Recommendations

In conformity with the terms of reference, the evaluation team addresses the recommendations to the Community level. The recommendations concern three levels:

- The specific features of LEADER
- LEADER, a self-learning programme
- Integrating the lessons of LEADER II into future rural development programming

9.8.1 The specific features of LEADER

R1: Area-based approach: Apply a flexible definition and handling

The size and delimitation of the area should be adapted to functional criteria defined by project requirements and identities activated by different types of projects. Rural areas are theatres of multiple identities. This word should not be used in singular. The growing complexity of programmes, initiatives, measures and development agencies makes it possible to tailor the size and delimitation of the territories according to the logic of projects.

Rural towns and urbanised parts should be included. An alternative way would be a mutual participation on development boards of the rural and the urban part of the territory.

The plausibility and feasibility of pilot projects which are essential for the strategic choices made by the group, should be examined in advance.

There is no area and no strategy which cannot be divided into sub-areas with sub-strategies. This axiom should be sufficiently taken into account.

R2: Bottom-up approach: Focus on bottom-up strategy development rather than on detailed top-down planning.

The bottom-up principle should be strengthened. Local groups need to be encouraged to specify their own development themes, and this needs time. Time is the most valuable resource for the bottom-up approach. A funding period should not be less than five years, but each local programme should be embedded in a strategic vision reaching over ten years or more.

Thus there would be two time frames: One for the operational programme, and one concerning the strategic vision to which the operational programme contributes. Both the strategic vision and the operational plan need to be regularly revised in a rolling process. Planning and implementation should be seen as parallel, not sequential processes. This type of planning is highly communicative. Plans serve as communication tools which need to be understood by the public. Moreover they should not be too deterministic, prescribing a path to be followed, but rather remain flexible in order to offer options or alternatives if conditions change. The local partnerships should therefore put their focus of attention more on “steering” than on “planning”.

R3: Local groups: Capacity building for enabling to act as leaders in local development strategies.

The evaluation has shown that local action groups have developed substantial capacity in strategy building, project development and coordination. Local groups should be supported in capacity building to act as leaders in local development strategies. The evaluation has shown that local action groups have developed substantial capacity in strategy building. Two essential functions of partnerships can be identified:

- a local coordination node and agency for a multitude of area-based, sectoral or other specific initiatives, measures or funding schemes;
- a vanguard for innovation and for experimenting new paths of development.

The two functions follow different logics and they might, in more diversified and complex rural areas, be better achieved by different, but well coordinated entities.

The first function requires permanence and independence from specific programmes, initiatives or funding periods. Partnership-based local development agencies should be both co-financed by mainstream programmes and by local contributions. They would take over decentralised administrative functions, e.g. in approving projects and monitoring programme advancement.

The second function might be embedded in or connected with the permanent structure, but not necessarily. It may operate on a lower territorial scale, closer to the people. It should be funded by a new Community Initiative for rural development. It should focus on sensibilisation, animation and technical assistance for project promoters, and not be charged with

administrative tasks detracting their attention from the activities on the ground, or with control tasks which could collide with their role at the side of local actors.

An average LAG (30-70.000 inhabitants) integrating the two functions, should include 4 – 6 people for both animation and administration. The group's budget should reserve at least 25% for management, administration, technical assistance, sensibilisation and supervision. The regional networks should be better endowed for continuous peer learning and creative exchange. Support and guidance on the tasks of LAGs should be provided in order to transform them into learning organisations.

R4: Innovation: Make the initiative a true laboratory for rural development.

- The new initiative should become a true laboratory for rural innovation. Innovation needs an enabling environment and time. Like mentioned above, the funding period should last at least five years, counted from the starting date of the contract with the local group. Separate budgets should be held for risk funding for very experimental projects. Project promoters should receive advance payments of at least 30% and benefit from simplified application procedures. After funding, innovation has to be capitalised upon by appropriate follow-up and learning mechanisms.

R5: Multi-sectoral approach: Let the local partnership become a representative picture of the local society.

The local partnership should become a seedbed for real multi-sectoral integration. The partnership should have a tripartite structure including the public, private and non-profit sector. The supervising board should comprise between 30 and 40 partners, the executive board between 3 and 7 members. Flexible working groups operate at the second level, as a fluid transition zone between the institution and the local population.

The partners in the LAG should always ask themselves whom they do not or not enough represent. At times “forgotten” partners might be uncomfortable contemporaries, but their inclusion would possibly boost the innovative capacity of the group. The partnership should maintain good communication links with its institutional environment and use the networking circuits of the individual partners.

Multi-sectoral integration is co-created by dynamic entrepreneurs from bottom-up and by flexible, solution-focused administrators from top-down. Networking, training and qualification measures should aim at bringing these people together as often as possible.

R6: Give more resources to demand-oriented networking at all levels.

Demand-oriented networking at all levels should be given more resources. Regional networks should be supported to become the primary address for mutual learning, exchange and cooperation between adjoining territories. National networks should work on specific themes which interest a minimum number of local stakeholders and which may vary over time. They should serve as hinge-joints between local groups and programme administrations, catalysing institutional learning. Before the start of the operational programmes in the Member States, a European Rural Observatory should be established, in the form of a service contract which integrates information and communication, learning and exchange, networking, thematic and methodological reflection and technical assistance to trans-national cooperation. The Observatory would act in a more demand-oriented mode concerning the old Member States and in a more pro-active mode for building up networking structures with and between new Member States.

Administrations should be more actively involved into all networking structures.

Apart from the internal orientation, networks should be used as gateways for rural areas, to affirm and to promote specific skills and know how, products and authentic images of rural areas to the urban and global society.

R7: Decentralised management and financing: Simplify procedures along the whole delivery chain.

A sound simplification strategy involves the whole chain of bureaucratic procedures instead of shifting the burden to the lower level of programme delivery.

■ **General principles**

Common standards – or rather: principles, not to be applied in a formalistic way – for programming, monitoring and evaluating are helpful for comparison of experience, results and innovation transfer, and to make the “Community nature” visible.

At programme level, different funding programmes aiming at similar objectives should be pooled and be operated by the same administration within not too narrow boundaries of eligibility. European and national or regional match funding should be packaged in advance. It should be possible to combine the funding instruments with one another, e.g. labour market or environmental preservation schemes. Appropriate common formal rules for eligibility and financial management are necessary to reduce the risk of arbitrary decisions or actions, thus providing legal security for the Commission, the Member States, the regions and the local action groups.

The basic set of formal rules should be established before starting work and remain as stable as possible, to avoid confusion, irregularities and misunderstanding. This applies for both uniform EU rules (in the interest of Member States and regions) as well as national variations (in the interest of the European Commission).

The necessity to keep administrative efforts (= cost) practicable, framework programmes for a future initiative should be set up at national level, defining the boundaries of relevance for LAG proposals. The regions should play a strategic role in LAG selection, programme implementation and monitoring. Harmonisation between regions should be fostered by coordination meetings at national level.

■ **Revised distribution of responsibilities and tasks**

The EC should provide a framework for programming, evaluation, partnership, sound and efficient financial management and eligibility rules. This framework should be uniform, but there should be room for variation in how to meet these standards in different (national, regional, geographical and institutional) contexts and for programmes and local action plans of different volume and content.

The Member States should define detailed standards on cost eligibility, financial procedures and control mechanisms. These should be translated into clear, understandable national guidelines, which then should be operationalised by the LAGs wishing to participate in the initiative, in collaboration with the regional administration and other intermediary agencies.

Financial procedures should be decentralised. LAGs meeting the accountability criteria for local partnerships should receive a global grant to be allocated according to their approved business plans, with five years minimum duration, embedded in a strategic orientation looking beyond a 10+ years horizon. The Member States would control and supervise the process.

Control procedures should be standardized and certified by the Commission, but actual control should be the sole responsibility of the Member State.

■ **Capacity building, transparency and simplification**

Training and support should be provided for the LAGs to enable them for financial management and administrative tasks as mentioned above.

Clear guidelines on procedures, eligibility and timing should be given in form of a LEADER handbook for Member States and LAGs.

Administrative procedures should be accelerated by concentrating competences and by assigning help desk officers in each region for urgent issues raised by LAGs.

A small set of common core indicators should be defined and guidelines provided on their operationalisation, so that trans-regional comparison is possible.

9.8.2 LEADER, a self-learning programme

R8: Separate learning from impact evaluation.

Learning should be separated from impact evaluation. Learning should be organised in focus groups meeting regularly at LAG and programme level from the mid term review on. At LAG level these groups contribute to continuous self-evaluation and adaptive learning. They should be consistently supported by qualified facilitators via the regional networks and be paid from the programme budget. In the final phase of the funding period, external evaluators would join the focus groups to lead a strategic reflection whose outcomes feed directly into the programme level, where a similar focus group is set up. The focus group at regional level should play a central role in the on-going evaluation which might focus on specific themes, such as the sustainability of projects. We could call the described structure a two-storey focus group architecture. Their observations and recommendations should be synthesised at national level and eventually lead to structural changes, to be immediately introduced into the follow up programme.

There is a strong demand for more methodological guidance for **self-evaluation**, which the Commission should provide like it did with the MEANS handbooks for good evaluation practices.

Impact assessment should be carried out between two and three years after the end of the programme. This evaluation would serve for assessing the implementation and the results and for estimating the impact of the initiative. The assessment would be based on a few relevant process and result indicators. The records of the focus groups and the learning process, which happened two years before, should be taken into account, as well as the monitoring data collected at programme level, accounted for each group. Surveys on LAGs should not comprise more than a number of 40 questions regarding indicators. The regional impact evaluations should then be synthesised at European level. In addition, the European impact assessment could be complemented by comparative case studies, for which programme administrations and LAGs could be approached. The European evaluation should not address the LAGs with questionnaires for representative surveys.

The results of the impact analyses at programme and EU level would feed into the next but one programme. Ideally, the impact assessment can be combined with the mid-term review of the immediately following period. If this were possible due to timely coincidence, it should certainly be done.

R9: Ensure a consistent framework of monitoring, learning, assessment and control.

The impact assessment as described above is part of a consistent architecture which starts with the ex ante evaluation. It should serve to establish a coherent framework of a few process and result indicators which should constitute a systematic, robust basis for monitoring and the mid term and ex post evaluation.

There should be a **consistent framework of monitoring, learning, assessment and control**. At the outset, the European Commission should, after consultation with Member States, set up a restricted core set of, say, 12 to 16 qualitative and quantitative indicators and give guidance to Member States for monitoring as an integral part of their call for programmes. The core indicators⁶ should relate to:

Territory: (i) Population; (ii) Area size; (iii) Location (country, region) and type (Structural Funds objective, geographical type);

Governance context: (i) Degree of autonomy; (ii) Quality of administrative support;

Strategy: (i) Bottom-up methods; (ii) Networking; (iii) Learning practices (Self-evaluation, internal qualification measures, % of qualification measures in local programme); (iv) communication policies;

Financial data: (i) Initially budgeted and final expenses per measure and priority; (ii) Share of private co-funding;

Partnership: (i) Years of existence and type (composition, legal form); (ii) Nr. and qualification of staff (management, animation); (iii) gender composition of board and staff;

Impact: (i) Employment; (ii) Value added (sales, visitors).

Additionally, the Member States enrich the list with indicators they find indispensable for their own purposes, and put them down in the ex ante evaluation. Finally, the LAG, that finds it useful and significant, may add its own indicators .

Each business plan will then operate on a threefold, onion-type set of not more than 40 European, national and local indicators, the monitoring of which is shared by national, regional and local partners.

⁶ The list should be read as a first approximation to a "balanced scorecard" for local development in rural areas. The indicators should consist of quantitative data (i.e. population, expenses, gender composition), types (i.e. type of area, type of partnership) and inter-subjective judgments from focus groups (i.e. bottom-up, networking, learning practices), accompanied by their and their evaluators' qualitative interpretations.

Indicators systems have to be examined and revised for each programme period. The networking bodies should play a role in explaining and instructing all stakeholders to obtain satisfactory use of evaluation tools and results from both learning and assessment cycles.

There should always be a meta-evaluation and strategic reflection at national level, even in case of regional programming. This would foster the dissemination of structural innovations to other regions. The European Commission would be better informed about the lessons learnt in the different countries.

9.8.3 Integrating the lessons of LEADER II into future rural development programming

R10: The question is not whether the Community Initiative should be continued or be built into the Rural Development Programmes. Both should be done.

With regard to the

- needs of the diversified, more prosperous rural areas of the old Member States, an experimental, forward thinking programme is needed in order to encourage activities which combine the mission to preserve natural and cultural resources and to provide a viable living space for the population with strengthening the economic competitiveness and benefiting from and contributing to the global knowledge society,
- needs of still disadvantaged rural areas of the Old Member States and the overwhelming majority of rural areas in the New Member States,

a **Community Initiative for Rural Development** should be maintained. It provides funds for experimenting new ways of development, according to the respective situation in the rural area; new solutions to existing (and future!) problems should be enhanced by a deepened implementation of the LEADER method. In order to ensure that the more advanced, diversified and mature groups can serve as models for others, a European networking body should be established, that, together with its national counterparts, provides the nodes and channels for intensive exchange, knowledge transfer and learning. With regard to the double function of local partnership-based development agencies – action and administration –, it should be ensured that the local action groups are not stifled by administrative tasks linked to the new responsibilities. In principle three types of structures are imaginable:

- (i) The decentralised management and/or financing is carried out by a body completely separated from the local group responsible for animating local development activities.
- (ii) One or more local action groups entrust certain standardised tasks (administration, funding, monitoring) to other, more or less connected partnership-based bodies.

- (iii) There is one local action group fulfilling all, administrative and activating functions, keeping those functions independent from each other, both being endowed with sufficient resources.

The LAGs should continue to function as focal points where common visions emerge and strategic thinking prevails, where projects are conceived and supervised, and where local people are welcome and get attention whenever they come up with more or less unconventional ideas. This requires sufficient management and animation staff, capable to sensitize the local society, to unearth new ideas that can be turned into development projects, to capitalize on the innovations made, and to provide space for a continuous strategic dialogue between local stakeholders and a growing part of the population willing to participate in local development.

The new Rural Development Programmes should at least comprise two measures that would make the new Community Initiative more effective:

- (i) Mainstreaming the results: Co-funding projects whose experimental and start-up phases have been tested out under the new Community Initiative, provided they have been proven feasible and useful to be enlarged, continued or replicated at a wider scale;
- (ii) Mainstreaming the partnership principle: Co-funding permanent partnership-based local development structures in rural areas accomplishing the above mentioned tasks linked to decentralised management and financing, such as project monitoring, accounting, information management, as well as on-going training for programme administrators and local stakeholders, communicating rural development issues and achievements to the public.

The Rural Development Programme should include a LEADER prime, which means, that the budgetary endowment is increased according to the extent to which the country or region builds the LEADER method into the mainstream programme, specifically the bottom-up, the multi-sectoral approach, networking and accompanying qualification instruments.

R11: New Member States need a space for experimenting new and authentic ways of development.

Instead of trying to focus on the development of the own potentials, the immediate reaction of rural stakeholders in the new Member States will, in many cases, be the imitation of “successful models” of old Member States. This assimilation process would not enhance the richness and diversity of these areas. In fact, there is a real danger that in a few years much of the cultural, human, social and productive potential of the rural areas in new Member States will have vanished.

The new Member States need a space for experimenting new and authentic ways of development. Instead of trying to imitate the “successful models” of old Member States, a LEADER-type initiative would be an excellent, and maybe the only effective instrument to create this space of experimentation in their rural areas.

R12: Rural development must transcend the rural.

The future of rural areas is determined by evolutions in the metropolises. Therefore it is necessary to extend the dialogue, partnerships, the transfer of innovative practices, multi-sectoral integration, networking and inter-territorial cooperation to cities and semi-urban agglomerations.

Rural initiatives should try to forge new alliances with consumer initiatives relating to food, land and resource use, transport and energy issues, migration and other challenges which require new solutions beyond the rural. This movement should be supported by appropriate means of funding.

