



ECA Audit on LEADER/CLLD and where do we go from here?

Evaluation of the impact of LEADER
on 'balanced territorial development (state of play)

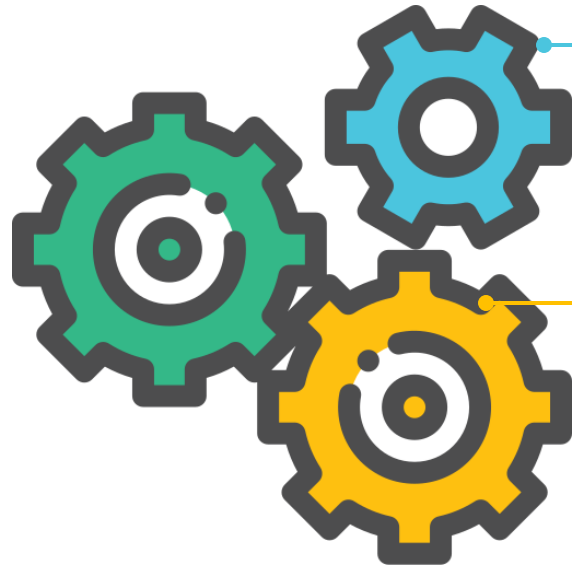
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Today's map

Key findings and
recommendations
of the ECA on
LEADER



Commission's reply

Policy actions by the
Commission (DG
AGRI) so far
Evaluation of LEADER
on balanced territorial
development



“LEADER and community-led local development facilitates local engagement but additional benefits still not sufficiently demonstrated”

EU Court of Auditors 2022.



ECA's findings in more detail:

- Selection of LAGs not always selective on quality
- Project applications complicated and slow
- Not enough women and young people in LAG' decision making
- Little data on improvement of social capital and local governance (intangible benefits)
- Many projects could be delivered (cheaper) via non LEADER or statutory tasks of local government
- Multi-funding CLLD is complicated

ECA's recommendations (1)

Fully **evaluate the costs and benefits of LEADER:**

- Quality of selection of LDS (**EC: OK*)
- Actions to reduce administrative complexity (**EC: OK*)
- Gender and age balance in decision making bodies (**EC: OK but later*)
- Benefits of LEADER projects compared with non LEADER delivery / other sources (**EC: OK*)
- Extent to which LEADER projects fund statutory tasks of EU, national, regional or local bodies (*Partly*)



Deadline: 2023

ECA's recommendations (2)

Assess the costs and benefits of CLLD

(the same aspects as above to the degree possible)

Deadline: 2025 (ex post evaluation)

*COM: OK





Added value of LEADER/CLLD approach:



- **Increases social capital**
- **Improves local governance**
- **Delivers projects with enhanced results compared with non LEADER delivery.**
- **Brings the EU closer to citizen**

Guidelines for LEADER/CLLD evaluation (2017)

https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/evaluation-leaderclld_en



Commission's reply (1)

The added value of LEADER: better local governance, improved social capital and enhanced projects results compared with non-LEADER delivery.

Network of 2,800 LEADER LAGs engaging tens of thousands of local authorities, social and economic organisations, businesses and citizens in most parts of rural Europe communicating the EU to the citizen.

Funding to LAGs is investment in human capital at the local level (not just “a cost”)

Networking of rural communities at EU and Member state level for better resilience and take up of green, digital and social



Commission's reply (2)

The Commission will facilitate the understanding and methodologies for demonstrating the intangible contributions of LEADER (eg via CAP network)

Quality of LDS is mainly assured via preparatory support – some communities start from a low base

LEADER projects can have a variety of enhanced results (e.g., cooperation of actors, valorization of local assets, innovation, inclusion, etc.) but some more targeting could be needed whilst keeping sufficient space for bottom-up



Commission's reply (3)

Simplification: simplified costs options, focus of LAGs on core tasks especially animation and capacity building

Full application of LEADER method by all LAGs is crucial and the added value of LEADER to be more in the centre of policy discussions



Commission's actions so far (1): in negotiating the CAP Plans 2023-27:

- Highlight the full application of the LEADER method for each LAG
- Attention to appropriate participation of women and young people in LAG's decision making
- Target the scope of LEADER on areas with added value whilst still leaving sufficient space for bottom-up
- Describe the added value of LEADER
- Simplification: SCO, tasks of LAGs

In line with the Council AGRIFIN
conclusions (January 2023)

EC actions so far (2)

Evaluation and communication:

- An additional evaluation study commissioned to address the ECA's questions (now in progress, by Evaluation Helpdesk)
- Planning the Thematic Working Group on the Added Value of LEADER (within Evaluation Network) to look at the methodology of evaluating social capital, local governance and enhanced project results.
- Communication with the member states to enhance the understanding of LEADER's added value

In line with the Council AGRIFIN conclusions (January 2023)

EC actions so far (3):

Improved reporting for monitoring and evaluation (at LAG level) (Reg.1475/2022)



Social capital local networks.

- Number of members by type (public, private, social, economic etc)
- Number of operations by type of promoter

LAG's identification:

ID, name, geographical coverage, population, use of multi-fund



Source of photos: www.galmuntiimacinului.ro/

Local governance participation in decision making

- Number of members in the board by type
- Members in the board by gender
- Young persons in the board
- Financial information (budget, budget use)

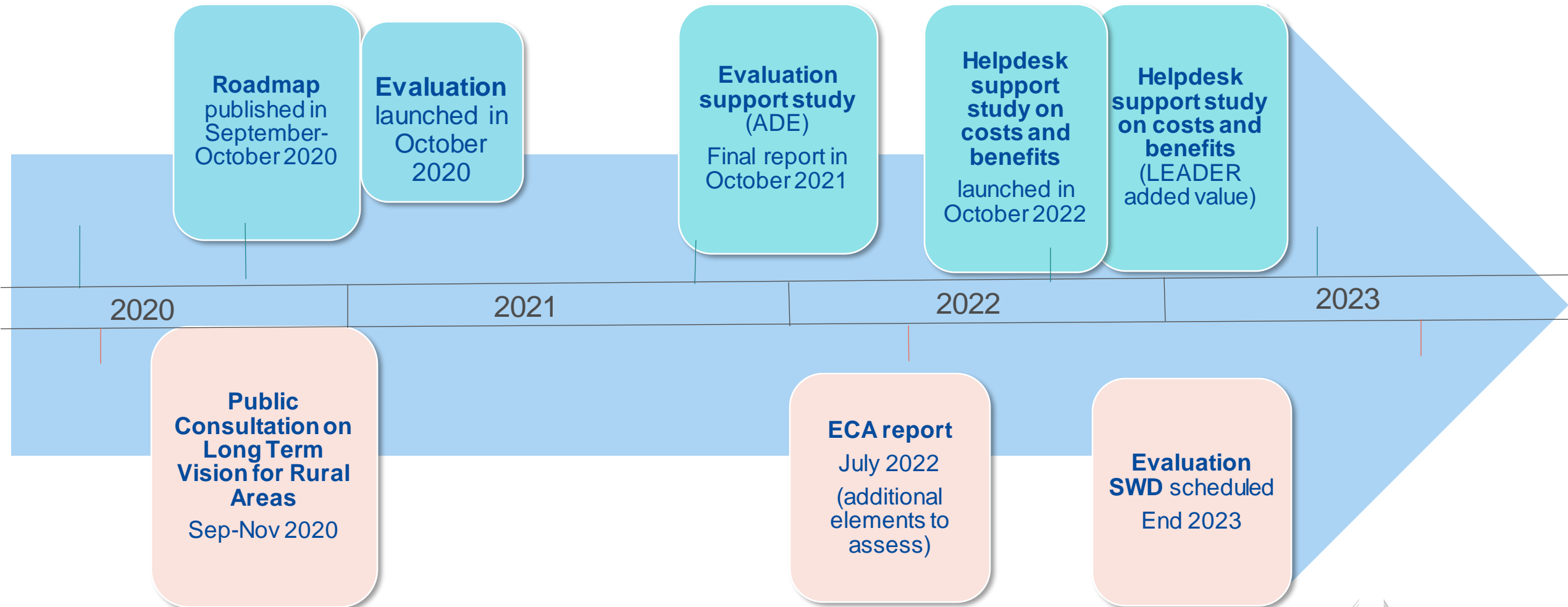
*When? – in 2026 and 2030+
some just after selection*



Project (results).

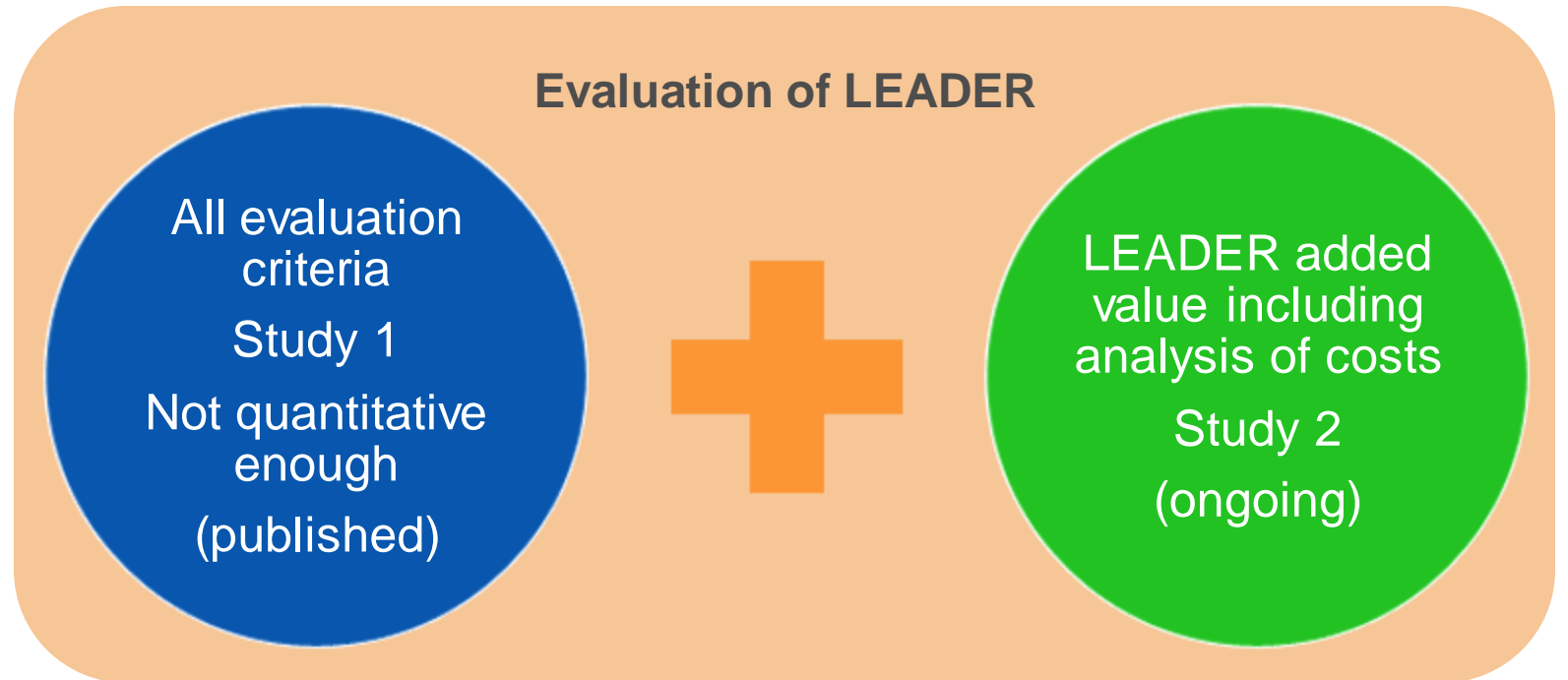
- Number of operation by area
- Number of operations with local innovation
- Number of cooperation projects
- Result indicators (only those selected)

Evaluation of impact of LEADER on balanced development - overview of the evaluation process



Methodological approach to evaluation

- Rich qualitative approach completed with dedicated study on LEADER added value



- Use of any quantification available (including not at EU level)
- Report will highlight good practices

Methodological approach to evaluation

Study 1

Evaluation support study ADE (2021)

- Quantification and analysis of CMEF indicators
- Qualitative analysis and quantification of qualitative evidence at EU level (EU surveys for LAGs and MAs)
- Qualitative and quantitative analysis at MS/RDP/LAG level: Case studies + triangulation workshop

Study 2

Support study EH (2023)

- Quantification and analysis of costs (LEADER and non-LEADER measures)
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of additional benefits
- Analysis of benefits and costs (comparison with non-LEADER measures)
- 2 levels of analysis:
 - MS/RDP level: EU survey for MAs
 - MS/RDP/LAG level: Case studies



Thank you



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