

Approach to evaluate "LEADER added value" within the framework of the Austrian CSP 2023-2027

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Overall evaluation concept for Austrian CSP 23-27

- **36 selected evaluation themes** in the evaluation plan for the CSP
- "**Added value of LEADER**" was defined as **one of them**:
 - **Evaluation planned two times** in the period: **2027** and **2030**
 - **Impact model** forms the basis for effective evaluation
- **Many interlinkages** with other evaluation topics are given, e.g. rural innovation systems, provision of social services, revitalisation of towns, tourism

Empowerment of the local population through local development driven by them (LEADER/CLLD).

Impact

Positive changes in socio-economic dynamics in local areas

- A positive understanding of the region was achieved among the local population
- Better local services are offered in the areas of health, culture, local supply, education, recreation
- Existing enterprises have increased their revenues and developed new sources of income through diversified activities; new enterprises have been established and are developing sustainably (positive employment development)
- Population development in the area has been stabilised
- Contributed to environmental protection, climate change mitigation and adaptation

Longer-term results

Implementation of initiatives / projects with high acceptance and local/regional benefit

- Strategic actions could be initiated which were funded by LEADER/CLLD and which have local / regional impact
- Activities could be initiated that are funded from other sources (e.g. ERDF, national) or are implemented on private initiative without funding

Additional benefits were achieved through local development tools and process work

Accountability

Improving social capital in the local environment

- Local actors have a better common understanding of how positive development can be achieved.
- Relationships between actors have been improved, leading to greater cooperation.
- More actors and groups than before participate in local development, especially women and young people.
- Local actors benefit from the knowledge brought in by external actors.
- Local actors know that overcoming parochial thinking brings concrete benefits.
- Local actors are willing to become more innovative and take a pioneering role.

Improving local governance

- There are structured mechanisms and more transparency for joint opinion-forming in the local area
- There is a strategic basis that helps to align the activities of the different actors towards common goals
- In the region, the influencing administrative bodies of different spatial levels are better coordinated
- Access to various sources of funding for the implementation of strategic projects has been improved.

Short-term results

Local development tools are operational and active process work is being done

- A functioning local action group has been established with active participation of stakeholders.
- A Local Development Strategy (LES) was designed through a bottom-up process with the active involvement of a representative cross-section of the local community
- Local actors were sufficiently informed, inspired, mobilised, consulted to set up a broad process.
- Local actors have networked with actors outside the region to fill knowledge gaps.
- The local public is informed about the progress of LEADER/CLLD through media work

Assumptions (A)

A: There is sufficient potential of stakeholders in a given area to initiate and accompany a LEADER/CLLD process.

Assumptions (A) for the success of LEADER/CLLD

A: External shocks do not undermine development work

A: Positive change can only be achieved through the interaction of different instruments

A: There is enough potential for project development

A: The administrative handling of LEADER/CLLD funding is not an obstacle for the project promoters.

A: The CLLD added value is perceived by the actors and is not a fiction.

A: CLLD added value is a powerful lever for project development

A: LEADER/CLLD is supported by political actors and not seen as a competitor.

A: LDS complements well with other relevant strategies

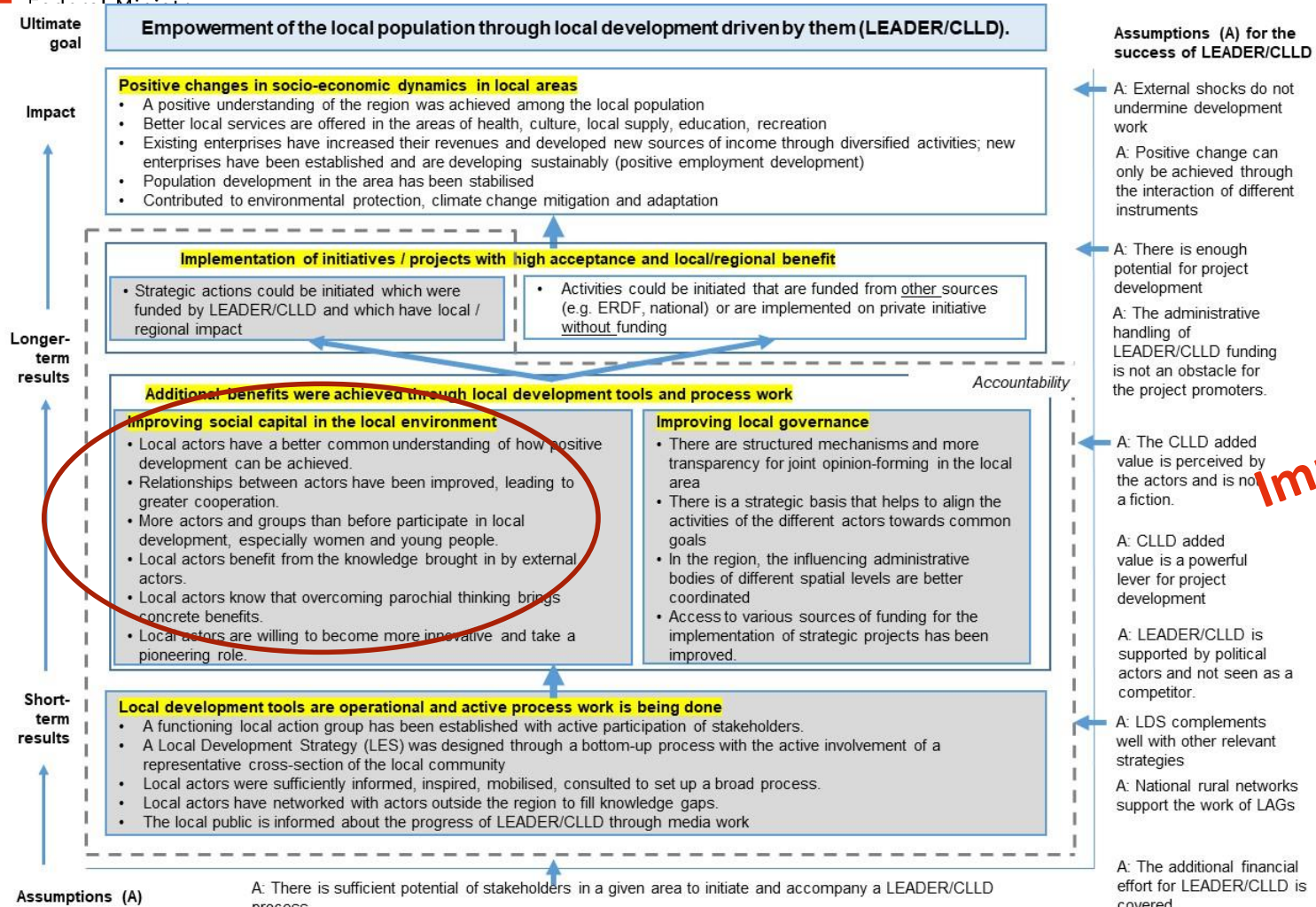
A: National rural networks support the work of LAGs

A: The additional financial effort for LEADER/CLLD is covered

Impact model

Conditions for success in local development work

- **Eight conditions for success**, to be checked in the course of the evaluation, e.g.
 - A **functioning local action** group has been established with the active participation of stakeholders
 - A local development **strategy** was designed through a **bottom-up process** with the active involvement of a "representative" cross-section of the local community
 - **Local actors** have been sufficiently **informed**, inspired, mobilized, consulted to set up a broad process.....
- External evaluators should specify in their offer **how these conditions for success can be checked**, methodological suggestions are welcome



Impact model

Conditions for success in improving social capital

- **Seven conditions for success**, to be verified (e.g. through surveys, focus groups).....
 - Local actors have a better **common understanding** of how positive development can be achieved
 - **Relations** between the actors have been improved, which has led to stronger cooperation
 - More actors and groups than before **participate** in local development, especially women and young people
 - Local actors benefit from **knowledge** brought in by external actors (e.g. on new topics such as the bioeconomy)
 -

Assumptions (A) for the success of LEADER/CLLD

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Improving local governance

- There are structured mechanisms and more transparency for joint opinion-forming in the local area
- There is a strategic basis that helps to align the activities of the different actors towards common goals
- In the region, the influencing administrative bodies of different spatial levels are better coordinated
- Access to various sources of funding for the implementation of strategic projects has been improved.

Accountability

Local development tools are operational and active process work is being done

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Ultimate goal

Impact

Longer-term results

Short-term results

Assumptions (A)

A: There is sufficient potential of stakeholders in a given area to initiate and accompany a LEADER/CLLD process.

Impact model

Conditions for success in improving local governance

- **Five conditions for success**, to be verified
- There are structured mechanisms and more transparency for **joint opinion-forming** in the local area
- There is a strategic basis that helps to **align the activities** of the different actors towards common goals
- The different levels of **administrative bodies operating** in the region have been better coordinated
- The involvement of **non-institutionalised groups** and individuals has been successful
- Access to **different funding sources** for the implementation of strategic projects has been improved

Quantitative data for the evaluation

- Standardized **added value indicators** for all LAGs (mandatory use)
- Standardized **action field indicators** at project level (suitable indicators must be selected)
- Common **PMEF indicators**: R.27, R.37, R.39, R.40, R.41, R.42
- **Context indicators** at municipality level (source municipality database)
- Data from LAG management **performance reports** that can be analysed by evaluators...
 - Personnel capacity and costs for animation
 - Number of activities related to animation and support of regional development
 - Composition of the LAG board by function, age, gender
 - Composition of the LAG management according to function, age, gender, qualification

Qualitative data for the evaluation

- Collection of **in-depth information** in selected regions (e.g. 10% sample)
- Programm managers and intermediate should provide information on how LEADER/CLLD is **communicated** on an ongoing basis (e.g. press conferences, website, network, regional strategy, ministerial press team, videos).
- Survey on the efficiency of the **administrative handling** of the LEADER implementation model in the course of the evaluation

Summing up

- The development of the **new set of indicators** with mandatory added value indicators, **the internal evaluation concept** and structured **performance reports** can ensure a comprehensive LEADER evaluation in terms of effectiveness
- It is important to **embed the LEADER topic** in the overall evaluation of the CAP-SP and to consider interactions with other interventions (LEADER evaluation is not an isolated topic)
- The **efficiency question** of whether the costs of LEADER/CLLD implementation are proportionate to their benefits is addressed in **another evaluation topic**:
"Interaction of regional management systems" (managements in the areas of local, urban and regional development, village renewal, innovation, nature parks, LEADER, AKIS)



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