



# Evaluation support study of the costs and benefits of the implementation of LEADER



**Good Practice Workshop**  
**«How to assess the LEADER added value»**  
**23-24 November 2023, Luxembourg**

## Background to the evaluation study

- Assessing the added value of LEADER high on EC agenda
- Many evaluation studies on LEADER but only few focusing on assessment of LEADER added value
- European Court of Auditors (Special Report no 10/2022): not sufficient evidence that the benefits of the LEADER approach outweigh LEADER's higher costs; comprehensive evaluation needed
- *The evaluation study took almost one year, completed in June 2023*

# Objectives and scope

EU27  
2014-2020 period

Assess **added value of LEADER** and **extent to which the increased costs of implementing LEADER are justified by its additional benefits**. Focus on:

- Additional benefits (both tangible and intangible) compared to non-LEADER projects
- Relationship between benefits and LEADER specific costs

## Challenges

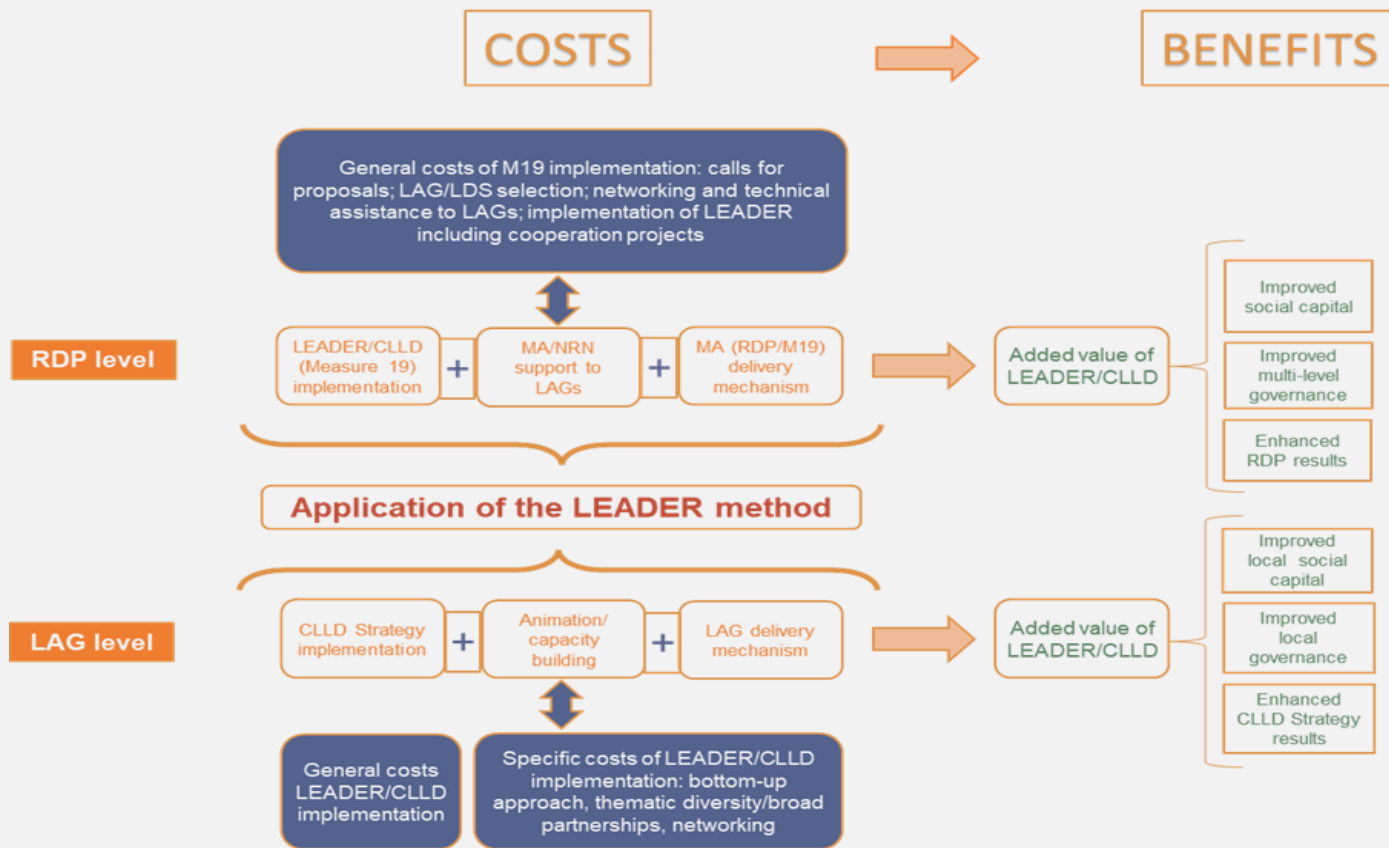
- Quantification of intangible benefits
- Comparability of LEADER and non-LEADER projects
- Find (or confirm) positive relationships between higher LEADER costs and generated benefits

# Conceptual framework

## Added value of LEADER as combination of 3 elements:

- Improved governance
- Improved social capital
- Enhanced results and impacts

*(Helpdesk Guidelines for evaluating LEADER/CLLD, 2017)*



## Conceptual framework: Features of LEADER added value

AV element	Added value features (factors of success)
<p><b>Non-tangible benefits in terms of <u>improved governance</u></b></p>	Improved coordination between different levels of governance
	Improved quality of interactions between relevant institutions
	More involvement/participation of the local population in design and implementation of LDS
	More involvement/participation of women and young people in design and implementation of LDS
	Promoting involvement of new actors in LEADER who would not normally apply for EU funding
<p><b>Non-tangible benefits in terms of <u>improved social capital</u></b></p>	LEADER brings the EU closer to citizens
	Improved relations and social trust within the LAGs
	Improved relations among local actors in the LEADER areas Improved relations through inter-territorial and transnational cooperation (sub-measure 19.3)

## Conceptual framework: Features of LEADER added value

AV element	Added value features (factors of success)
<b><u>Enhanced results of LEADER projects</u></b>	Promote collaboration among local actors, cooperation or collective process to reinforce local production and local assets
	Promote projects with innovation at the local level
	More sustainable or cheaper projects due to knowledge of local conditions (e.g., diversification)
	Better performance of funded projects thanks to LAG assistance/training
	Valorisation of unique territorial assets to contribute to the socio-economic dynamics thanks to the integrated territorial approach

## Evaluation Questions

- **EQ 1** - To what extent are the **implementation costs under LEADER different from the implementation costs of similar non-LEADER projects**? To what extent (if any) do the governance choices of the LEADER approach at the RDP and LAG levels affect its **administrative complexity**?
- **EQ 2** - To what extent LEADER implementation brings **additional benefits** in terms of **improved governance** and **social capital** at local level?
- **EQ 3** - To what extent LEADER funded projects bring **additional benefits** in terms of **better results compared to analogous non-LEADER projects** funded by RDPs?



To what extent are the additional costs of implementing LEADER justified by its additional benefits?

# Methodology

- Mixed-method approach: quantitative and qualitative techniques
- Analysis at three levels:
  - EU27 all RDPs,
  - 10 selected RDPs (AT, DE-Mecklenburg VP, DK, ES-Cataluña, ES-Navarra, FI-Mainland, FR-Auvergne, IT-Veneto, PL, RO),
  - 13 case study LAGs from the selected RDPs
- Data sources: desk research; survey of RDP MAs; interviews with PAs, LEADER experts; case study LAG interviews and focus groups
- Evaluation framework for each EQ: Judgement Criteria-Indicators-Sources

**Added value elements → Added value features for each element → Indicators**



# Methodology

	Documentary research	Primary data collection	Secondary data
All RDPs	LEADER evaluation reports and other relevant literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaire-based survey of RDP MAs / Measure managers / PAs (Paying Agencies)</li> </ul>	DG AGRI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Implementation Reports of RDPs</li> <li>Delivery cost survey - 2021</li> <li>ESIF 2014-2020 Finance Implementation Details (ODP) (2022)</li> <li>EAFRD declared expenditure by measure and year (Q2/2022)</li> <li>Number of controls EAFRD (CY 2020)</li> </ul>
Selected RDPs	RDP documents, M19 call for applications, AIRs, Evaluation reports (annual, interim, thematic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaire based survey of RDP MAs / Measure managers + Interviews</li> <li>Interviews with PAs</li> <li>Interviews with LEADER experts (NRN, evaluators)</li> </ul>	
Case study LAGs	LDS; LAG websites; LAG statutes; LAG annual monitoring reports to MA; LAG self-assessment reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with LAG management and LAG members</li> <li>Focus Groups</li> </ul>	

# Methodology - Primary data collection

All RDPS	55 completed questionnaires via e-mail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response rate for the RDP survey 61.3 %</li> <li>114 persons provided their contribution to the 65 completed questionnaires</li> <li>Large proportion of M19 implementation:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 77 % of total allocated financial resources, including EAFRD and national co-financing;</li> <li>✓ 81 % of total public expenditure (EAFRD + national co-financing);</li> <li>✓ 77 % of all LAGs; 78 % of the total rural population covered by LAGs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>														
	10 questionnaires completed through in-depth interviews															
Selected RDPS	14 interviews with LEADER experts, one interview with a vice-president of ELARD	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Focus Groups - Participant typology</th> <th>Number</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Actors that are representative of the territory but not involved in the LAG/LDS</td> <td>28</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Actors who submitted project applications to the LAG but were not financed</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Direct beneficiaries of supported projects</td> <td>37</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Members of the LAG partnership</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>LAG Manager / LAG staff</td> <td>17</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total Focus Group participants</b></td> <td><b>112</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Focus Groups - Participant typology	Number	Actors that are representative of the territory but not involved in the LAG/LDS	28	Actors who submitted project applications to the LAG but were not financed	10	Direct beneficiaries of supported projects	37	Members of the LAG partnership	20	LAG Manager / LAG staff	17	<b>Total Focus Group participants</b>	<b>112</b>
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17 in-depth interviews with LAG managers and members of LAG partnerships covering 13 case study LAGs																
12 Focus Groups																

## To what extent does LEADER implementation bring additional benefits in terms of IMPROVED GOVERNANCE? *Selected indicators*

Added value features of LEADER	Indicators
Improved quality of interactions between relevant institutions	Number and types of animation activities undertaken in cooperation with other regional businesses, social, cultural, environmental organisations and public authorities
	LAG linkages with established national and European networks
More involvement / participation of the local population in design and implementation of LDS	Judgements on LAG's legal/organisational form contributing to i) inclusive governance; ii) inclusive partnership composition; iii) the possibility for the general population to take part in governance (appointed or elected partners); iv) mobility in the decision-making group
Promoting involvement of new actors who would not normally apply for EU funding	Number of projects from actors who have not applied for funding before
	Number of platforms for change that have been developed / consolidated / sustained

## To what extent does LEADER implementation bring additional benefits in terms of IMPROVED SOCIAL CAPITAL?

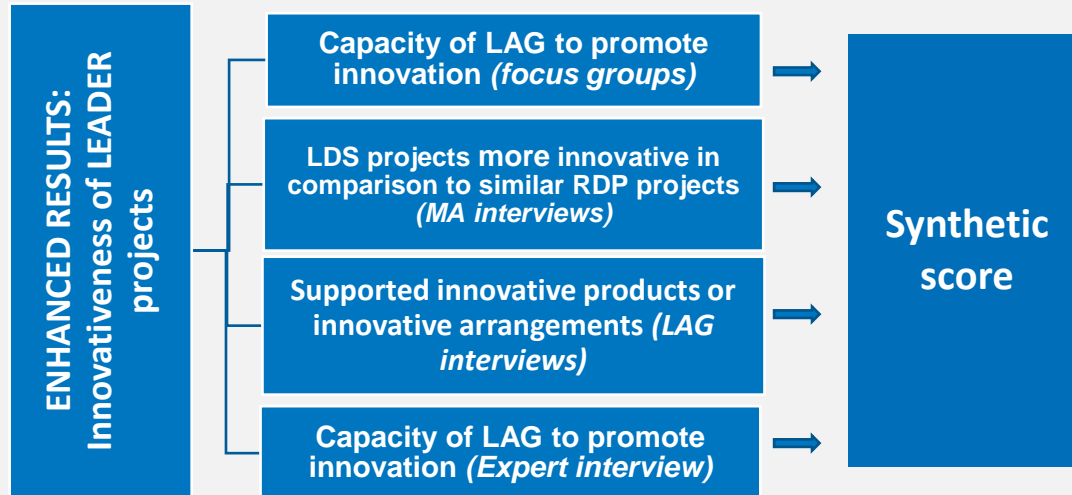
Added value features of LEADER	Indicators
<b>Improved relations and social trust within the LAG</b>	General indices of change of social capital of the LAG: structural social capital of the LAG; improvement of normative social capital of the LAG
<b>Improved relations among local actors in LAG area</b>	General indices of change of social capital in LEADER areas: structural social capital of the area; improvement of social capital in the area
<b>Improved relations through inter-territorial and transnational cooperation (sub-measure 19.3)</b>	<p>General indices of change of social capital among LEADER areas within and among Member States:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incidence of cooperation projects (M19.3) in case study LAGs</li> <li>• <i>Network diversity index</i> of inter-territorial and transnational cooperation projects in case study LAGs</li> <li>• Capacity of inter-territorial and transnational cooperation projects to create added value for LEADER areas</li> </ul>

## To what extent does LEADER implementation bring additional benefits in terms of ENHANCED RESULTS? *Selected indicators*

Added value features of LEADER	Indicators
<p><b>Better performance of funded projects thanks to LAG assistance &amp; training</b></p>	<p>Projects improved through consulting within the LAG</p>
	<p>Focus group judgements on the extent to which animation, networking and technical assistance provided by the LAG have improved the performance of local enterprises in the area concerned</p>
<p><b>More innovative projects compared to non-LEADER projects</b></p>	<p>Judgement of RDP MAs on innovativeness of LEADER projects in comparison to similar non-LEADER projects financed under the RDP</p>
	<p>Number of supported innovative products or innovative arrangements through LEADER projects</p>
	<p>Focus group judgements on the capacity of the organisation to promote innovation</p>

# Analysis

- ❑ **Computation of average scores across indicators for each LEADER added value feature and each case study LAG / selected RDP (scale 1=very low to 5=very high)**



- ❑ **Correlation analysis** between average scores calculated for LEADER added value features and LEADER additional costs (across case study LAGs / selected RDPs)

## Overall estimation of the added value generated by LEADER implementation

Element	Added value features of LEADER (Factors of success)	Average score
<b>Non-tangible benefits of LDS in terms of <u>improved governance</u></b>	Improved coordination between different levels of governance	<b>4.04</b>
	Improved quality of interactions between relevant institutions	<b>4.29</b>
	More involvement of local population in the design and implementation of LDS	<b>4.43</b>
	More involvement of women and young people in the design and implementation of LDS	<b>3.52</b>
	Promoting involvement of new actors who would not normally apply for EU funding	<b>4.33</b>
	LEADER brings the EU closer to citizens	<b>4.21</b>
<b>Non-tangible benefits of LDS in terms of <u>improved social capital</u></b>	Improved relations and social trust within the LAGs	<b>3.55</b>
	Improved relations among local actors in the LEADER areas	<b>3.36</b>
	Improved relations through inter-territorial and transnational cooperation (sub-measure 19.3)	<b>2.79</b>
<b><u>Enhanced results of LEADER projects</u></b>	Promote collaboration among local actors, cooperation or collective process to reinforce local production and local assets	<b>3.60</b>
	Promote projects with innovation at the local level	<b>3.04</b>
	More sustainable or cheaper projects due to knowledge of local conditions	<b>4.27</b>
	Better performance of funded projects thanks to LAG assistance/training	<b>4.05</b>
	Valorisation of unique territorial assets to contribute to the socio-economics dynamics thanks to the integrated territorial approach	<b>4.22</b>

## To what extent are the increased costs of implementing LEADER justified by its additional benefits? *Selected correlation coefficients*

Element	Added value features	Cost items				
		LAG personnel (FTE / M EUR)	LAG staff employs M&E / Communication / Transnational coordinator (Y/N)	Total 19.4 animation & running costs / Financial allocation M19 (%)	Decision making costs (Board members: hours per year)	Additional specific costs / Financial allocation M19 (%)
Improved governance	Improved quality of interactions between relevant institutions		0.31		0.30	
	More involvement / participation of the local population in the design and implementation of LDS	0.46		0.35	0.29	0.38
Enhanced results	Promote collaboration among local actors, cooperation or collective process to reinforce local production and local assets	0.51	0.70	0.40		0.29
	Projects with innovation at the local level	0.16	0.27	0.53		0.61



## Key findings

- Results suggest that higher costs are justified to ensure wide participation of the local population in LEADER governance systems, but more can be done to ensure participation of young people and women.
  - ▶ Better coordination between different levels of governance and quality of interactions between relevant institutions are ensured by the presence of specific skills in LAG staff, size of LAG staff and time dedicated by the Board of Directors to decision-making.
- Thanks to the activities undertaken by the LAG and its network, the level of trust towards the LAG increases. LAGs are able to activate social capital and establish networks inside and outside the LAG area beyond project support.
  - ▶ Time used for networking by LAG members contributes to improved mutual learning, which is the necessary pre-condition for local development to take place and to improve over time.

## Key findings

- The more effective the LAG is in promoting collaboration among local actors to reinforce local production and local assets, the better the project performance and the results compared to non-LEADER projects
  - ▶ Such benefits justify higher costs: Time dedicated by LAGs to decision-making; presence of specific professional figures in the LAG dedicated to animation, cooperation coordination, M&E; share of running and animation costs on the total budget of the LAG.
- Animation, networking and technical assistance provided by LAGs are effective in supporting potential beneficiaries to obtain LEADER financing, improving the quality of supported projects and the performance of local enterprises
- Despite small scale/limited financial resources, LEADER projects are more effective in terms of public expenditure per job created compared to similar projects at RDP level
  - ▶ Achieved thanks to animation, technical assistance and networking by LAGs.

## Challenges to be addressed

- Further improve LAG evaluation capacity to valorise the results of LDS and the added value of LEADER
  - ▶ Taken into account in section 7 of evaluation plans, hopefully MS will be able to identify capacity building needs of LAGs early on
- Further improve LAG monitoring system to collect the required data/info from early on, e.g., detailed cost data, animation costs
  - ▶ Trade-off between (cost) simplification and detailed (cost) monitoring
- Difficult to compare LEADER and non-LEADER projects for identifying added value, what can we do for this?

# Thank you for your attention!

## Contacts

[Carlotta.Valli@bip-group.com](mailto:Carlotta.Valli@bip-group.com)

[Paola.Torcia@bip-group.com](mailto:Paola.Torcia@bip-group.com)

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