Assessment of LEADER principles and LEADER added value: the case of Lithuania

Good Practice Workshop „How to assess the LEADER added value"
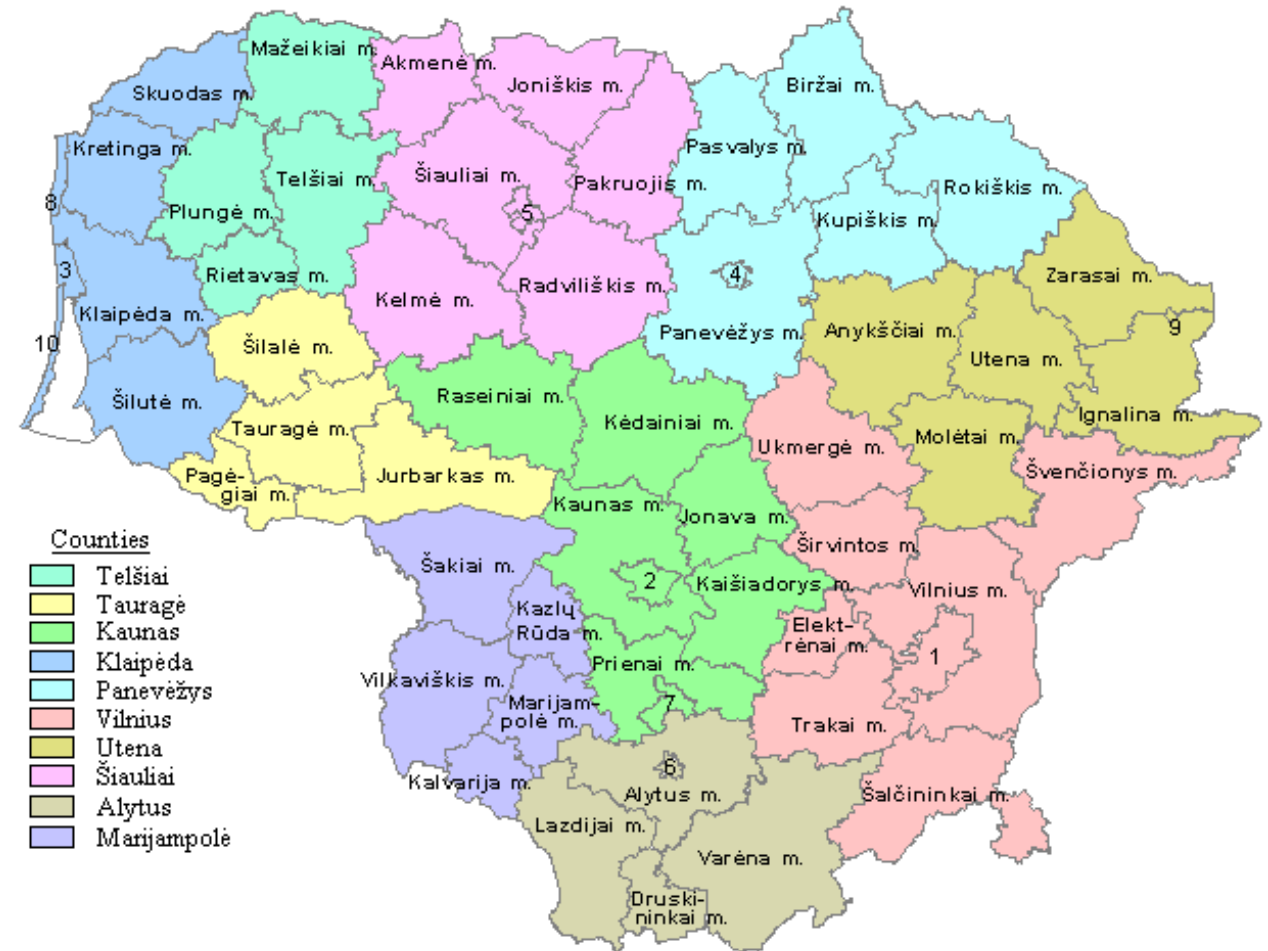
23-24 November 2023, Luxembourg

Neringa VIRSILIENE, evaluation manager

Evaluation

- **Title:** Study "Impact of the LEADER program - a measure of 2014-2020 Lithuanian Rural Development Program - on social inclusion, poverty reduction and rural economic development in 2014-2020"

- **Client:** Ministry of Agriculture (Managing Authority)

- **Duration:** January – July 2021

- **Time frame covered by evaluation:** from the approval of LDSs till 31/12/2020 (RDP 2014-2020).
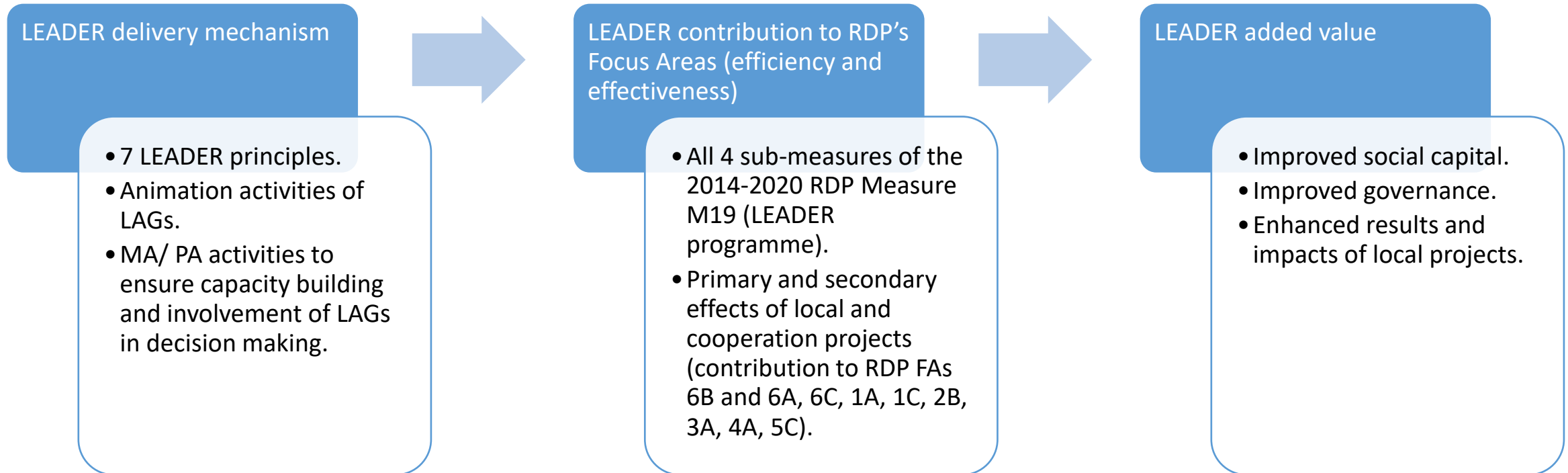
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Administrative territories and rural LAGs in Lithuania

- 10 counties/ regions
- 60 municipalities (8 cities, 52 districts)
- 49 rural LAGs
- 100% of rural population covered by LEADER

Evaluation scope

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2017): Guidelines. Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD.

LEADER delivery mechanism

- 7 LEADER principles.
- Animation activities of LAGs.
- MA/ PA activities to ensure capacity building and involvement of LAGs in decision making.

LEADER contribution to RDP's Focus Areas (efficiency and effectiveness)

- All 4 sub-measures of the 2014-2020 RDP Measure M19 (LEADER programme).
- Primary and secondary effects of local and cooperation projects (contribution to RDP FAs 6B and 6A, 6C, 1A, 1C, 2B, 3A, 4A, 5C).

LEADER added value

- Improved social capital.
- Improved governance.
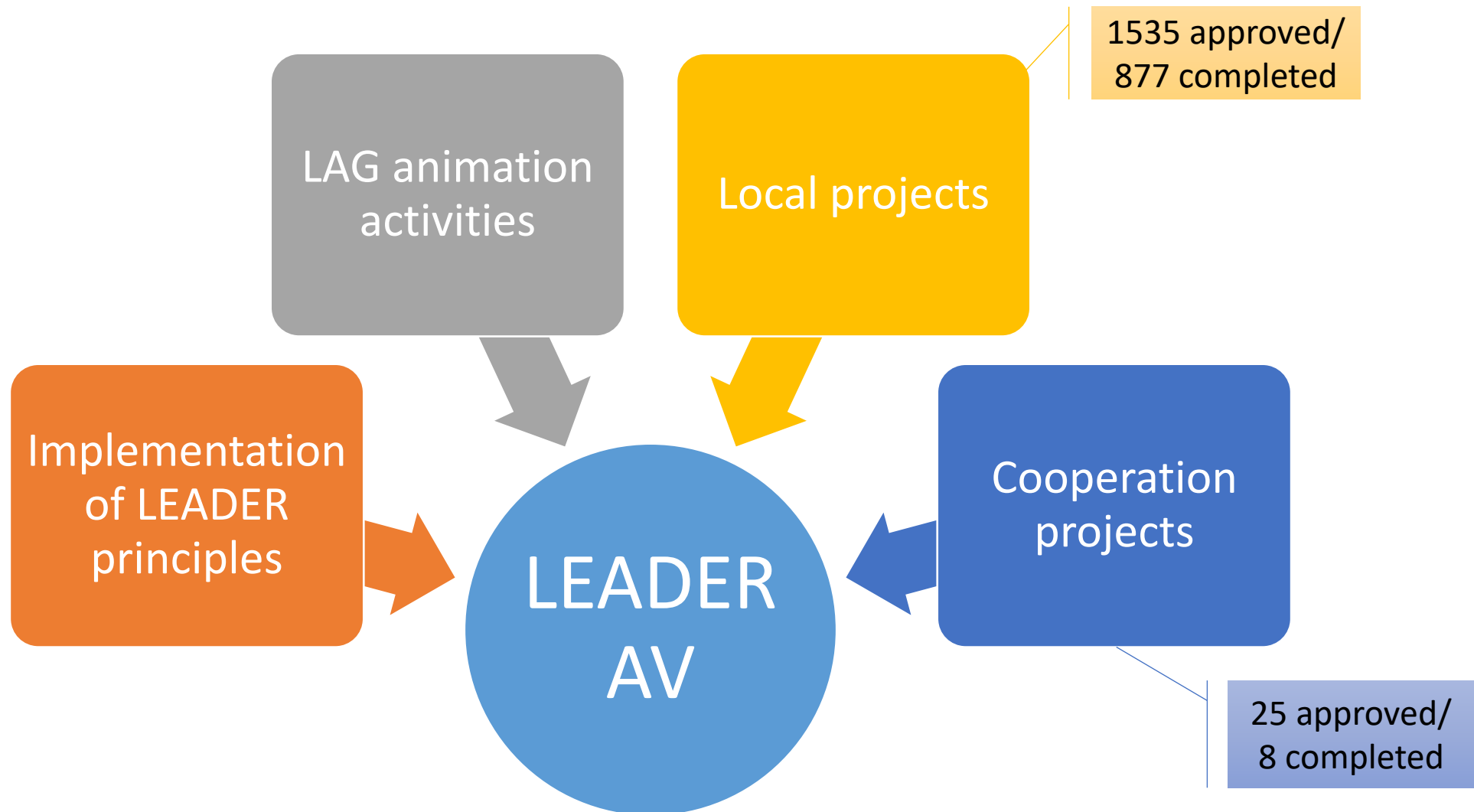- Enhanced results and impacts of local projects.

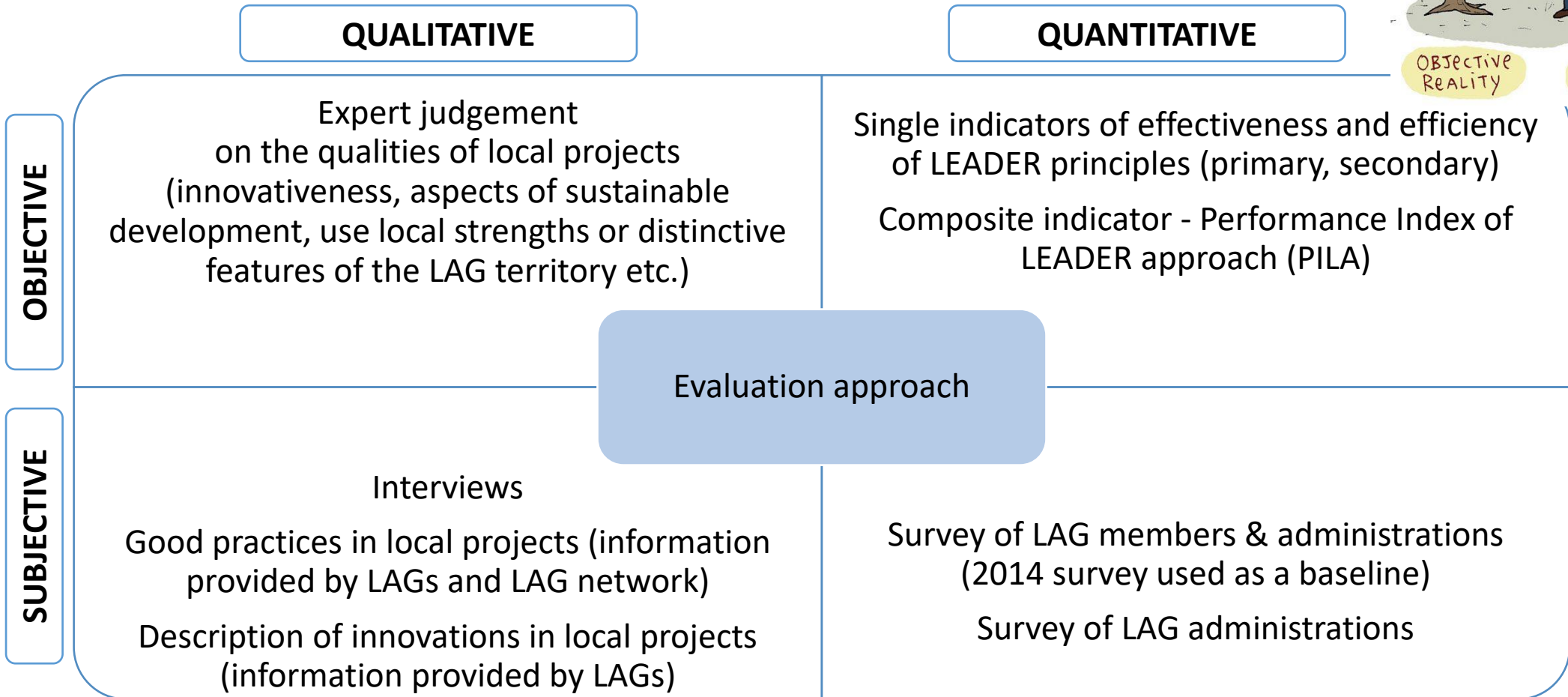23 EVALUATION QUESTIONS (9 COMMON AND 14 PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC).

Programme level + LAG level

Evaluation framework

(focus on LEADER principles and LEADER added value)

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Sources of LEADER added value

LAG animation activities

Local projects

1535 approved/ 877 completed

Implementation of LEADER principles

LEADER AV

Cooperation projects

25 approved/ 8 completed

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Evaluation approach

	QUALITATIVE	QUANTITATIVE
OBJECTIVE	Expert judgement on the qualities of local projects (innovativeness, aspects of sustainable development, use local strengths or distinctive features of the LAG territory etc.)	Single indicators of effectiveness and efficiency of LEADER principles (primary, secondary) Composite indicator - Performance Index of LEADER approach (PILA)
SUBJECTIVE	Interviews Good practices in local projects (information provided by LAGs and LAG network) Description of innovations in local projects (information provided by LAGs)	Survey of LAG members & administrations (2014 survey used as a baseline) Survey of LAG administrations

Evaluation approach

Previous evaluations of LEADER in Lithuania – served as a baseline, simplified data collection, improved data quality and availability

2014:

- MoA **internal evaluation** "Evaluation of the impact of LEADER method on partnership and "bottom-up" approach"
  - Included survey of LAG members and administrations.
  - **Results of the survey were used as a baseline for the 2021 survey.**

2019:

- Preparation for the **interim evaluation** of LDSs:
  - Included preparation and piloting of data collection tools (Excel based) and pilot interim evaluations (4 LAGs/ LDSs).
  - Development of the new reporting template (Excel based) for AIRs of the LAGs/ LDSs - **simplified collection and analysis of data on local projects, improved data quality and availability.**

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Data sources and data collection

Primary:

- Surveys of LAG members and administrations (online)
- Interviews (MA, PA, LAG network)
- Data extracted from the IT systems of the PA (on special requests of evaluators).
- LAG websites and social media (Facebook)
- Minutes of the LAG assemblies and meetings of LAG decision making bodies

Secondary:

- Desk research (relevant evaluations and research reports)
- Quarterly and annual reports of LAGs (LAG level and consolidated)
- Applications and final reports of local and cooperation projects
- Special summary reports (Excel) prepared by the PA about local and cooperation projects.

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Surveys

LAG members & administration:

- **Purpose:** Views and opinions on implementation of LEADER principles and LEADER added value.

- **Questionnaire:** 75 questions (247 sub-questions), at least 45 min

- **Responses:** 511 answers:
  - 396 answers of LAG members (17%)
  - 164 answers of members of LAG decision-making bodies (26%)

- **Baseline:** Some questions identical as in 2014 survey (comparability of results).

LAG administrations:

- Factual data on different aspects of LAG activities related to the implementation of LEADER principles, animation activities and other aspects.

- 105 questions (177 sub-questions), at least 30 min

- 49 answers (100%)

Implementation of LEADER principles

- **Efficiency of LEADER principles:**

- 34 primary indicators

- 9 secondary indicators (values calculated form the primary indicators)

Effectiveness of LEADER principles:

- 61 primary indicators

- 12 secondary indicators (values calculated form the primary indicators)

- 7 sub-indices (for each LEADER principle)

- 1 performance index of LEADER approach (PILA)

COMPOSITE INDICATORS

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Number of indicators per LEADER principle

LEADER principle	Effectiveness		Efficiency	
	No. of primary indicators (out of them – available for all LAGs)	No. of secondary indicators	No. of primary indicators (out of them – available for all LAGs)	No. of secondary indicators
Area-based approach	9 (3)	3	2 (0)	1
Bottom-up approach	9 (1)	1	4 (2)	2
Local partnership	4 (2)	1	14 (14)	2
Innovation	8 (3)	3	2 (2)	1
Integrated and multisectoral approach	13 (5)	1	2 (0)	1
Cooperation and networking	10 (7)	2	5 (0)	1
Local financing and management	8 (8)	1	4 (4)	1
Total	**61 (28)**	**12**	**33 (22)**	**9**

- 94 primary indicators (50 – data available for all LAGs, 44 – data available for selected cases).

- 21 secondary indicators (5 – data available for all LAGs)

- All indicators – quantitative (some yes/ no); some objective, some subjective.

- Not all indicators equally relevant/ important/ meaningful (number could be reduced).

- Data collection for some indicators – extremely time consuming.

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Examples of indicators on LEADER principles and their links with LEADER added value (1)

LEADER principles, factors of success	Indicators and data availability	Links with LEADER value added
Area-based approach: It is ensured that local projects are implemented in the whole LAG territory	1. Share of neighbourhoods of the LAG territory in which local projects were implemented (<u>all LAGs</u>).	**Enhanced results and impact:** LAGs ensure that investments reach areas in which no investments would be made in the absence of LEADER.
Area-based approach: It is ensured that local projects use local strengths or distinctive features* of the LAG territory	1. Share of local projects that use local strengths or distinctive features of the LAG territory (selected cases). 2. Share of support to local projects that use specific local strengths or distinctive features of the LAG territory (<u>selected cases</u>).	**Enhanced results and impacts:** LAGs ensure that local projects use the local strengths or distinctive features of the LAG territory (such projects are seen as better meeting local needs and being more sustainable).

* Description of local strengths and distinctive features of the LAG territory is a mandatory component of each LDS.

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Examples of indicators on LEADER principles and their links with LEADER added value (2)

LEADER principles, factors of success	Indicators and data availability	Links with LEADER value added
Bottom-up approach: The degree of engagement of local population is growing	1. No. and share of local **population** participating LAG events, events of cooperation projects and events of local projects (<u>selected cases</u>). 2. No. of **young people** participating <...> (<u>selected cases</u>) 3. Young people as a share of all participants of the LAG events, events of cooperation projects and events of local projects (<u>selected cases</u>). 4. No. of **volunteers** participating <...> (<u>selected cases</u>) 5. No. of people experiencing social exclusion participating in local projects (<u>selected cases</u>). 6. People experiencing **social exclusion** as a share of all participants of local projects (<u>selected cases</u>). 7. Expenditure per one participant of LAG events (<u>selected cases</u>) – only **expenditure** for LAG activities and animation is considered.	**Improved social capital:** More active engagement of local population ensure networking, development of shared mental models and beliefs. **Improved governance:** More active participation of local population in decision making, development and implementation of local projects. **Enhanced results and impact:** Innovative, inclusive projects.

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Examples of indicators on LEADER principles and their links with LEADER added value (3)

LEADER principles, factors of success	Indicators and data availability	Links with LEADER value added
Local partnership: Right proportions (set by national legislation) of sector representation are ensured not only in LAG membership, but also during the actual decision making (at the meetings of LAG assembly and LAG decision-making body)	1. Share of LAG decision making body meetings and LAG general assemblies with the right proportions of sector representation (all LAGs).	**Improved governance:** Balancing of different interests is ensured in decision-making.
Local partnership: LEADER contributes to stronger partnerships between the sectors in the LAG territory and outside the LAG territory, i.e., with other LAGs in the country and abroad	1. Attitude of the LAG members towards different forms of partnerships in the LAG territory and outside the LAG territory (all LAGs).	**Improved social capital:** New networks are built.

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Examples of indicators on LEADER principles and their links with LEADER added value (4)

LEADER principles, evaluation questions, factors of success	Indicators and data availability	Links with LEADER value added
Innovation: Innovations are part of local projects and LAG activities	1. No. and share of local projects with innovations (<u>all LAGs</u>). 2. Amount and share of support to local projects with innovations (<u>all LAGs</u>). 3. Share of calls for local projects and number of selected local projects meeting selection criteria related to innovations (<u>selected cases</u>).	**Enhanced results and impact:** Implementation of local projects with innovations that are new in LAG territory or for the project promoter.

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Secondary indicators for effectiveness of LEADER principles

- Area based approach:
  - (K1) Degree of territorial coverage of local projects
  - (K2) Degree of utilization of local strengths or distinctive features of the LAG territory
  - (K3) Availability of information on local needs and resources
- Bottom-up approach:
  - (K4) Degree of involvement of the local population
- Local partnership:
  - (K5) Sectoral representation in the LAG (membership and participation)

- Innovation :
  - (K6) Innovativeness of local projects
  - (K7) Diffusion of innovation
  - (K8) Use of innovative ICT tools
- Integrated and multi-sectoral approach:
  - (K9) Multi-sector and integrated projects
- Cooperation and networking:
  - (K10) Level of cooperation in local projects
  - (K11) Dissemination of knowledge and good practices
- Local financing and management:
  - (K12) Contribution of local funding

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Secondary indicators for effectiveness of LEADER principles: data available for all LAGs

- Area based approach:
  - (K1) Degree of territorial coverage of local projects
  - (K2) Degree of utilization of local strengths or distinctive features of the LAG territory
  - (K3) Availability of information on local needs and resources

- Bottom-up approach:
  - (K4) Degree of involvement of the local population

- Local partnership:
  - (K5) Sectoral representation in the LAG (membership and participation)

- Innovation :
  - (K6) Innovativeness of local projects
  - (K7) Diffusion of innovation
  - (K8) Use of innovative ICT tools

- Integrated and multi-sectoral approach:
  - (K9) Multi-sector and integrated projects

- Cooperation and networking:
  - (K10) Level of cooperation in local projects
  - (K11) Dissemination of knowledge and good practices

- Local financing and management:
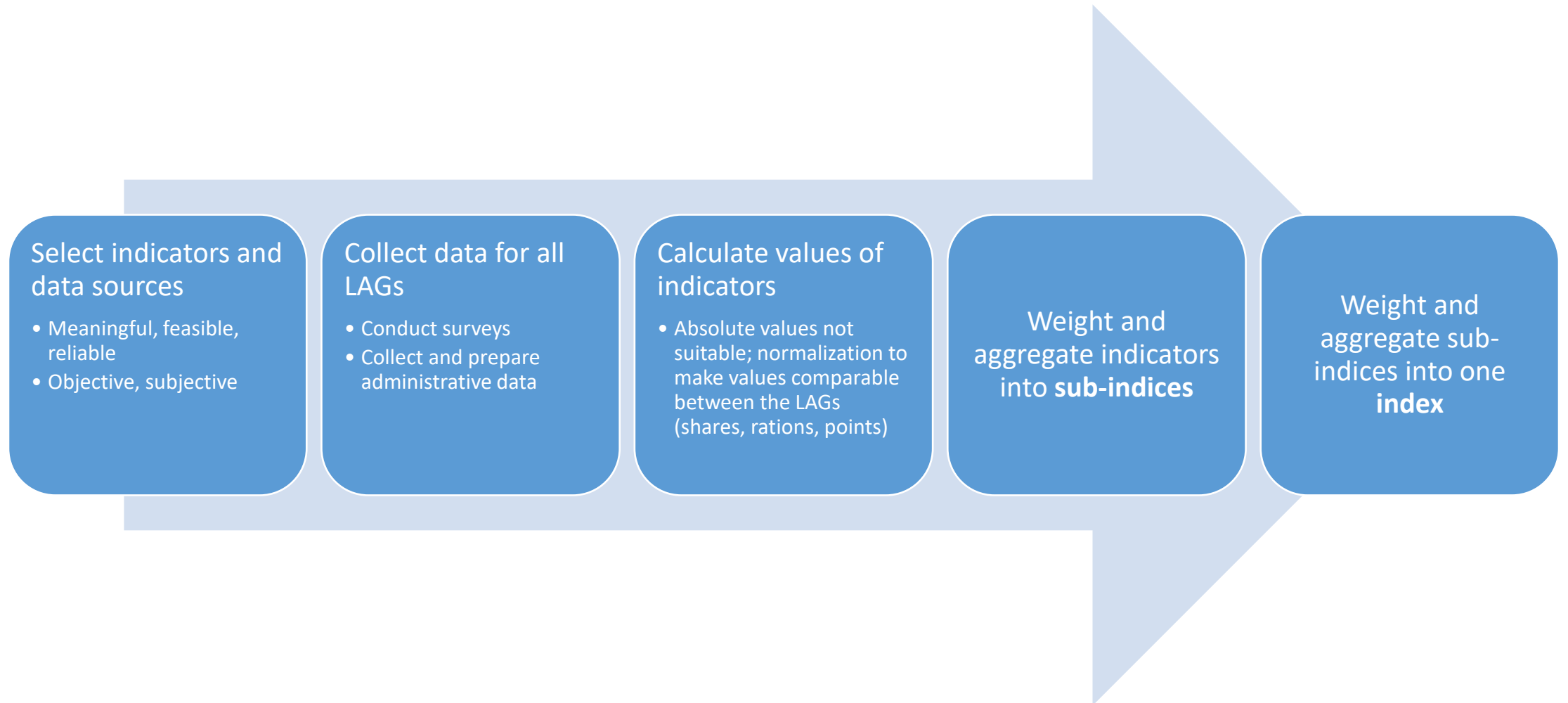 - (K12) Contribution of local funding

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Performance Index of LEADER approach (PILA)

(composite indicator for data analysis and reporting)

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Composite indicators (CIs): advantages and warnings

- CIs can **summarise** complex concepts in an easy way
  - Require resources, skills and knowledge to develop, understand and judge.

- CIs make it easy to **compare** LAG performance in general and over time
  - Utility of CI for decision making is limited (separate values do not mean much).

- CIs are easy and attractive to **communicate**, can be used for **ranking** the LAGs
  - Risk of sending misleading messages and (or) making simplistic conclusions.

- It is **easier to follow the trend of CI** than explore large number of different datasets and single indicators
  - Difficult to interpret (values depend on weighting and aggregation methods).

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Development of PILA: steps

Select indicators and data sources
- Meaningful, feasible, reliable
- Objective, subjective

Collect data for all LAGs
- Conduct surveys
- Collect and prepare administrative data

Calculate values of indicators
- Absolute values not suitable; normalization to make values comparable between the LAGs (shares, rations, points)

Weight and aggregate indicators into sub-indices

Weight and aggregate sub-indices into one index

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Results of PILA: example (aggregated)

	Šilutė	Alytus	Kaunas
Performance Index of LEADER approach [0,14*(P1)+ 0,14*(P2)+ 0,14*(P3)+ 0,14*(P4)+ 0,14*(P5)+ 0,14*(P6)+ 0,14*(P7)]	0.52	0.60	0.76
(P1) Sub-index for the effectiveness of the **area-based approach**	0.54	0.36	0.65
(P2) Sub-index for the effectiveness of the **bottom-up approach**	0.08	0.12	0.15
(P3) Sub-index for the effectiveness of **local partnership**	0.74	0.67	0.91
(P4) Sub-index for the effectiveness of **innovation** principle	0.59	0.40	0.48
(P5) Sub-index for the effectiveness of **integrated and multi-sectoral approach**	0.74	0.42	0.37
(P6) Sub-index for the effectiveness **networking and cooperation**	0.45	1.20	1.00
(P7) Sub-index for the effectiveness of **local financing and management principle**	0.49	1.06	1.72

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Results of PILA: example (detailed)

Vertinimo kriterijus	Šilutė	Alytus	Kaunas
(P1) Teritorinio principo įgyvendinimo rezultatyvumo indeksas 0.3*(K1)+0.5*(K2)+0.2*(K3)	0.54	0.36	0.65
(K1) Vietos projektų teritorinės aprėpties laipsnis (R1)	1.00	0.67	0.96
(R1) Seniūnijų, kuriose įgyvendinami vietos plėtros projektai, dalis	100%	67%	96%
(K2) Vietos išteklių panaudojimo lygis 0.4*(R2)+0.6*(R5)	0.48	0.32	0.73
(R2) Vietos projektų, siejamų su vietos specifinių pranašumų ar išskirtinumų panaudojimu, dalis (R3)/(R4)	47%	29%	67%
(R3) Vietos projektų, siejamų su vietos specifinių pranašumų ar išskirtinumų panaudojimu, skaičius	7	8	20
(R4) Vietos projektų, potencialiai galėjusių panaudoti vietos specifinius pranašumus ar išskirtinumus, skaičius	15 iš 32	28 iš 28	30 iš 47
(R5) Paramos projektams su vietos specifiniais pranašumais ar išskirtinumais, dalis (R6)/(R7)	48%	35%	77%
(R6) Parama projektams su vietos specifiniais pranašumais ar išskirtinumais, tūkst. Eur	473	628	2094
(R7) Parama projektams, potencialiai galėjusiems panaudoti vietos specifinius pranašumus ar išskirtinumus, tūkst. Eur	978	1795	2731
(K3) Informacijos apie vietos poreikius ir išteklius prieinamumas 0.5*(R8)+0.5*(R9)	0.00	0.00	0.00
(R8) VVG požiūris, ar reikia reguliariai atnaujinti informaciją apie VVG teritorijos išteklius ir plėtros poreikius	Nereikia	Nereikia	Nereikia
(R9) VVG požiūris, kaip dažnai reikia atnaujinti informaciją apie VVG teritorijos išteklius ir plėtros poreikius	Naujai VPS	Naujai VPS	Naujai VPS

Lessons

(on surveys, evaluations, indicators, data and indices)

Lessons

- **Surveys** of LAG members and administrations: questionnaires should be short, surveys – regular, standard, questions – simple, concepts – well explained and understood by the respondents.

- Surveys of local/ rural population – only at LAG level or as Standard Rural (Euro)Barometer.

- **Evaluations** of LEADER added value need to be ongoing (framework contracts, improved over time, changes instead of "pictures"), focused and in depth (one LEADER principle/ component of LEADER added value, relevant expertise, mixed methods/ indicators), national (centralized).

- **Indicators** and evaluation frameworks should be linked to legal requirements and everyday activities of LAGs, useful, meaningful, debatable and actionable.

- **Data** should be easy to collect, comparable between the LAGs at national and (desirable) at the EU level.

- **Indices** can be used to summarize, simplify, communicate, compare and rank the LAGs (in general and over time).

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Thank you for your attention

Neringa VIRSILIENE

(n.virsiliene@estep.lt, neringa.virsiliene@gmail.com)

Report (LT)

Tyrimas "Lietuvos kaimo plėtros 2014–2020 m. programos priemonės „LEADER programa" įtaka skatinant socialinę įtrauktį, skurdo mažinimą ir ekonominę kaimo plėtrą 2014–2020 m."

Study "Impact of the LEADER program - a measure of 2014-2020 Lithuanian Rural Development Program - on social inclusion, poverty reduction and rural economic development in 2014-2020"

Executive summary (EN)

Reports of the three case studies (LT)