

II.4a GEOGRAPHICAL REPORT DENMARK

Contents

1.	General introduction	131
2.	Report on focus group	132
3.	Report on national and regional programme evaluations	133
3.1	Evaluations	133
	3.1.1 Interim evaluation 16.07.98	133
	3.1.2 Ex post evaluation August 2001	133
3.2	Overall assessment	136
	3.2.1 Learning at local and institutional levels	136
	3.2.2 Future evaluations	138
3.3	Capitalisation	138
4.	General appreciation	139
4.1	General appreciation of the LEADER II initiative	139
4.2	Critical reflection of the evaluation process	140

1. General introduction

The EU ex-post evaluation of Denmark started in November/December 2002. The LEADER II programme in Denmark was a small programme, with a total budget of 29 million EUR, encompassing one national programme and 11 Local Action Groups in objective 5b area.

The focus in LEADER II Denmark was on projects which aimed to improve the environment and the living conditions in rural areas. Examples include the enhancements of small town centres and village meeting halls. Rural tourism and conservation of the local architectural heritage were other main features of LEADER II. Examples are the restoration of traditional windmills on the island of Bornholm.

The evaluation-work was carried out by geographical expert Ulla Herlitz, Sweden. Although LEADER II Denmark was a small programme, it was a challenge in each case to find the right person involved in a programme that was closed many years earlier. Another challenge was to collect the financial data from the three different funding authorities, and to have them summed up for LAGs and for the whole OP in a way that had not been done before.

In order to get a quick start of the overview of LEADER II in Denmark a visit was made, December 4th 2002, to the national authority in charge; the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. Mr Anders Årup, who was responsible for co-ordination of LEADER II in Denmark, offered very good help through the whole evaluation process. Now he was working with LEADER +. In this first meeting in Köpenhamn he gave an introduction to the Danish LEADER II system; including the programme, organisation, funding, LAGs, evaluations etc. The programme, the interim evaluation, the ex post evaluation, LAG-addresses etc were handed over to me. Additional information was collected later from the other funding authorities, LAGs etc. Some information was also extracted from the website of the LEADER Observatory.

After the meeting with the evaluation team in Brussels January 14th 2003, and when the grids were ready for use an intensive period with many contacts through telephone and mail with persons involved in the LEADER II implementation started. Also fax and regular post was used in collecting and processing the information needed for the report. Sometimes the work was like a detective's work, searching for missing people and information. The national ex-post evaluator had become a pensioner in France, and the manager for one of the selected LAGs "had nothing to do with LEADER". As time went on the problems were solved. And in the end, all of the persons were found and to different degree also willing to co-operate in the evaluation. But some of the factual questions could not be answered, although we tried hard to manage.

Another visit to the co-ordination unit at Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries was made the April 28th when also the interview (Q 34) with mr Årup was carried out. All other interviews were made by telephone and mail due to practical reasons.

The following materials have been delivered to the evaluation core team:

- OP 102; one national programme
- LAG 1000; 11 LAGs
- Q 34 key persons interviewed:
Anders Årup, national co-ordinator/ Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries
Ulrick Moos, ex post evaluator
Henrik Brask Pedersen, LAG member/Regional Authority
- Q 202 Aktionsgruppen for Nordjylland Amt
Carsten Mogensen
- Q 202 Aktionsgruppen for Sammanslutningen av Danske Småøer
Tom Asmussen
Agnethe Nørgaard

2. Report on focus group

No focus group was selected in Denmark.

3. Report on national and regional programme evaluations

3.1 Evaluations

3.1.1 Interim evaluation 16.07.98

Anne-Mette Hjalager from consultant enterprise Advance/1 undertook the interim evaluation of the LEADER II programme. The evaluation highlighted some special conditions in relation to the implementation and the principles of the programme.

The programme design

The LEADER II programme, according to its objectives and contents, and the objective 5b programme were overlapping. From the beginning the LEADER area was too extent in relation to the economic resources the programme could offer, and a concentration of the LEADER area was a demand from the Commission for making a better balance between area and budget. To take measures to implement this demand on concentration was a difficult process. The concentration led to that only the rural areas could be eligible for EU funding, which in some cases could bring LEADER II in contradiction to the national laws regarding planning and environment.

The administrative set-up

The organisation of administration at local level was experienced as complicated, and in addition to that the speed of processing of the project-applications was slow.

Programme implementation

The programme started very late, as the approval from the Commission was not ready until 13.06.96. At the time of the interim evaluation it was obvious that not so many projects had started. Also due to the late start the payments were extremely slow at the time of interim evaluation, only 1,3 % of the overall EU-funding had been paid. Still, at that time, many projects were in process.

Programme effects

Due to the late start of the programme no results or effects could be measured.

3.1.2 Ex post evaluation August 2001

In August 2001 the Teknologisk Institut/Kompetence og IT/ Analyser completed the ex post evaluation. The start of the evaluation was in January 2000. The evaluation was sent to the EU Commission September 25th 2001.

Results and recommendations:

- LEADER II 1994-1999 with EU funding of 62,6 million Dkr had during the implementation period funded 483 projects, of which 158 had been in priority Tourism.
- The LEADER II programme had a special profile according to the bottom-up approach, with a more innovative approach and broader qualitative development strategy than objective 5b. The programme was technically well designed, but a greater distinction between different kind of indicators would be desirable.
- The European approach – background in international research, professional programme administration, contacts to the European LEADER Observatory etc – has made the LEADER programme an important contribution to the national rural development programmes. However the central funding authorities have only to a very small extent forwarded European experiences to the Danish LAGs and LEADER actors. The experiences collected at the LEADER Observatory have been only sporadically used as the LEADER actors on regional and local levels did not have knowledge about the Observatory.
- The national Managing Authority had not organised a national co-operation or change of experiences between the LAGs. In the later part of the LEADER II period an important co-operation was organised on initiative by regional LEADER actors.
- There has been no inadequate overlapping to other programmes. Funding from LEADER II had been a crucial prerequisite of the implementation of 87 % of the projects.
- The co-operation of the three funding authorities – with different cultural backgrounds – was not a success. The programme only supported 10-20 multi-funding projects, even though the three boards made a common marketing. Especially during the first year the integration-effort created administrative and mental barriers and processing the applications took a long time.
- The programme period started in 1994 but due to late approval of the Danish LEADER II programme, the projects did not start until 1997. This caused problems with the flow of projects during the rest of the period.
- During a long period of time, rural actors had the wrong understanding of LEADER II, they believed it was an appendix to Objective 5b. This also contributed to a slow use of LEADER funding. However by the end of the period the budget-frame was almost used. When the evaluation was undertaken mid 2001, approximately about 100 LEADER II projects were not ready with their final report. This was regarded as an expression of uncertainty of the use of the total budget-frame.

- A questionnaire to all projects indicate that nearly 80 % of the projects had reached or nearly reached their planned objectives. This was highlighted as the key-result of the national ex-post-evaluation and showing a positive expression of an overall satisfactory result of the implementation of LEADER II programme.
- The projects have, however to a varying degree, developed the region and the local area in a broader sense. One result is the creation of readiness for development in the form of new networks and partnerships, new local services, a better environment as well as new knowledge and competence, new ideas and methods for solving problems, new optimism and willingness to take action.
- In comparison to programmes like Objective 5b with a more clear focus on job-creation, LEADER II was not mainly aimed at job-creation, but the programme also contributed to 250-300 jobs.
- The total regional effects of LEADER II are difficult to measure in statistics, as it is hard to isolate the effects of LEADER II from other influences, e.g. development of the state of market. However, a study of the socio-economic indicators for LEADER II areas shows the following key-trends over the programme-period:
 - decrease of population, but not so fast
 - unemployment rate is falling
 - income is increasing
 - decrease in agriculture and fishery, services status quo
 - the work force are more qualified
- Regarding the nature of the LEADER II programme, with bottom-up and network approach, nearly 75 % of the projects were developed in co-operation between several local actors. In this sense the results from the LEADER evaluation are quite different from the Objective 5b evaluation, which was carried out during the same time. The decentralised organisation of the LEADER II programme and creation of LAG has been successful.
- 75 % of the answers of the questionnaires indicate that the projects were innovative for the area.
- 72 % of the projects were planning for a continuation after LEADER II. This is a positive expression of sustainability.
- Most of the answers indicate that the rules for funding were too complicated, but at the same time they were satisfied with how the programme administration was functioning. On the other hand the regional field-officers criticised the programme authority's mediation of LEADER principles and the absence or lack of initiatives for trans-national and national/regional change of experiences.

- In a total valuation of the effects of the projects – related to both project level and programme level – 21 % of the projects had “great effect”, 61 % “middle effect” and 18 % had “less effect”. As a whole the effects of the programme was characterised as satisfactory.
- Describing such a fulfilment of total effects – not only the objective of a single project but also combined with the overall objective of the LEADER II programme – shows that more extensive projects have a higher rate of success than smaller projects. It turned out to be difficult for the small projects to produce effects that could be visible in the local area. In the LEADER programme – in opposite to the Objective 5b programme – this cohesion could be noticed in projects up to “middle-size”.

3.2 Overall assessment

3.2.1 Learning at local and institutional levels

In consideration of the national evaluations, the Managing Authority – the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fishery / Directorate for Food, Fishery and Agri Business – undertook measures to bring the proposals into the planning and start up process of the new LEADER+ initiative.

- *Start up of LEADER*
In LEADER II the start was delayed three years. The Managing Authority had an ambition to start up LEADER+ as early as possible after approval from the Commission; before the end of year 2001.
- *The LEADER idea and administration*
In the evaluation it was found that LEADER specificities were not adequate mediated by the funding authorities. Steps should be taken in LEADER+ to reduce this problem. The funding authorities have gained a much better understanding of the LEADER idea through their participation in LEADER II and in the planning of LEADER+ initiative. Now the administration of LEADER+ will be decentralised to 12 local action groups. This will presumably constitute a better conditions for organising the support to and implementation of projects, in relation to LEADER's idea of bottom-up and area-based approach.
- *Development in the local area*
The evaluation pointed out that many projects were aimed at developing tourism in the local area. In LEADER+ there is now a more overall view of development, and development of the local area should be about a lot of aspects, not only tourism.
- *Co-operation and networking*
The evaluation claimed that the LEADER II central administration had introduced too few initiatives regarding national and trans-national co-operation, that there was lack of information about the European LEADER Observatory and that the dissemination of

experiences from other countries was not sufficient. In the future, these activities should be put in focus. The new LEADER+ programme is designed to reduce the problems highlighted. E.g. the programme has a measure funding co-operation both on national and European level. Furthermore there is a measure "participation in the LEADER+ network" and it is obligatory for all LAGs to participate in the national LEADER+ network, which will have a close contact to the new European Observatory. Networking will be an important part of the new LEADER initiative.

■ *Complementarity*

The Managing Authority will follow the LEADER + initiative in relation to other EU funded or national rural programmes.

■ *Increased information*

August 17th 2001 a conference about rural development was carried out. The LEADER+ programme was a part of that conference. The representatives from the media participated in the conference and LEADER+ was also highlighted in the media. In addition LAGs are presumed to give information to the local people about funding of projects within the LEADER+ programme. The LAGs have that responsibility and the Managing Authority will follow the LAG's activities in order to ensure a good flow of information.

■ *Simplifying the funding process*

The national evaluation found the rules for funding too complicated. The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fishery will simplify the process of funding, also making the process more transparent. One example is the law for integrated rural funding, which show that it is possible to administer a tool with a better overview than was before. The monitoring committee will also follow the funding process, making the process as flexible as possible.

■ *Monitoring the effects of the programme*

A better monitoring of the macro-economic effects in the local area is planned during this new programme-period. The statistics that LAGs delivered to the central administration about the situation in LAG areas will be followed in order to explore if some effects have been gained and how the process is developing according to the objectives. The monitoring indicators that the Commission prepared will be used to produce the annually based reports. The expectation is that these indicators will give the central administration a better assumption to evaluate the objectives of the programme. The effects on environment protection and improvement and also equal opportunities will be followed.

According to the above mentioned assessments the evaluations have been successful. The experiences and recommendations have been transferred to the new LEADER + programme. Actors in all levels involved have recognised and learned about the LEADER idea.

3.2.2 Future evaluations

- Ex-post evaluations at national and EU level should include a set of questions in common to make it easier to provide EU ex-post evaluations with basic facts and valuable information of implementation, funding etc. If these questions were known in the beginning of the programme it could also help the projects, LAGs and funding authorities etc. in presenting annual reports. Makes it easier also to follow/compare the development of the programme at LAG level and national level.
- It should be of great value with a deeper penetration of each of the LEADER specificities.
- In the national ex-post evaluation a study was made of all the 483 projects (44 % answered the questionnaire), also interesting could be analysis based on a geographical approach with focus on the LAG areas.

3.3 Capitalisation

Experiences from implementation of LEADER II programme show weaknesses on two points:

- The broad variety of measures/priorities possible for funding created a sprawling mix of projects.
- The strategy of implementing had difficulties to live up to LEADER ideology and to some extent reduced the programme to a “mini – 5b”.

(See corresponding grid)

4. General appreciation

4.1 General appreciation of the LEADER II initiative

The LEADER II programme was several years delayed, as it did not start until 1997. The Commission wanted the programme to cover a LEADER II area which should cover 50 % of the population of 5b-area, not the whole 5b area as proposed by Denmark. The negotiation ended up with the 5b-area excluding all towns/villages down to 600 inhabitants, which posed difficulties for the daily administration of LEADER.

In spite of a late and slow start, confusion between LEADER II (mini-5b) and Objective 5b, limited information from the Managing Authority, no highlighting of the LEADER specificities, no national LEADER network, sparsely trans-national contacts and a complicated funding process with three different funding authorities, LEADER II managed quite well. The national ex-post evaluation found that the effects of the projects (483 projects) funded within the programme had been “satisfactory”. At local level many projects were developed through co-operation between local actors, they were innovative in the area and also sustainable.

LEADER II was brought out in a quite easy way and the administration used the ministries, municipalities, counties etc. already existing groups for the implementation, e.g. there were no selection process of LAGs as the regional 5b groups were appointed as LAGs. A close contact between LEADER II and 5b was then also easily established.

The national ex-post evaluation criticised the non existing networking, TNC and also decentralised management and funding (opinions from persons interviewed; in comparison to Objective 5b there was a quite notable decentralised system in LEADER II with the LAGs, the local co-operation in projects etc.) The critical points have been taken into consideration by the responsible ministries and integrated in LEADER+ . The LEADER spirit has increased over the years and it is not until now in LEADER+ that actors from all levels have “discovered” / are “discovering” the LEADER spirit.

I argue that actors at project level, some “fire-spirits” at all levels and the evaluations – especially the national ex-post evaluation – have been very important in putting emphasis on the LEADER specificities and development of the LEADER spirit. That process took about ten years. This development process – including change of behaviour – took a long time. Perhaps the Danish example – when things don’t change too fast – with new impulses in combination with some resisting elements of mainstreaming (use of the already functioning structures) will be a success in the long run.

4.2 Critical reflection of the evaluation process

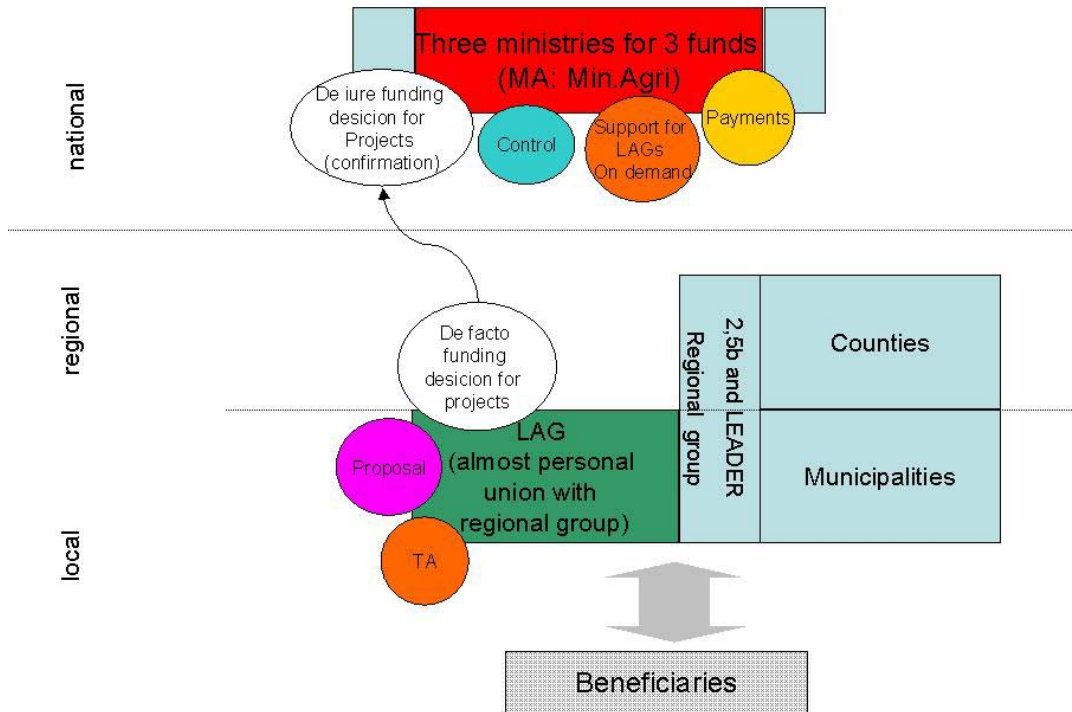
- It is not easy to ask questions about a programme that took place several years earlier.
- Far too many questions to the LAGs.
- The factual questions took too long time in relation to the time planned; three different funding authorities and the data was not delivered or earlier published for the categories asked for in our evaluation; e.g. LAG level.
- To collect factual comparable data is not an issue for evaluators at EU level, the data should be provide by the Observatory or by the Commission via national Managing Authority.
- More time should be planned for the geographical evaluator to comment on national evaluations etc.

SUMMARY APPRECIATION FROM THE NATIONAL EVALUATION REPORT**Operational Programme: DANMARK**

	Implementation (methods, practices, limits, obstacles)	Intended or unintended effects	Recommendations
Area-based approach	The LAG areas were selected from above with some consultation between central and regional administrations and local actors.	At the beginning some rural actors were not aware of the specific LEADER idea, the programme was for a long time regarded as "mini-5b". However at the end they had learned that LEADER II programme was more of a method than a traditional funding source.	Bottom-up approach when appointing the members of LAGs.
Bottom-up approach	75 % of the projects had been developed in co-operation between local actors.	Readiness for future development; the local actors have learned a method how to work for local development. The issue of rural development had been put on the Agenda, it had been visualised not only among authorities but also among rural people.	
The local group	In many cases the 5b regional group (Indstillningsudvalget for Mål 5b) was identical to LAG. Some LAGs were more professional than others.	Some rural actors were not aware of the specific LEADER idea, the programme was for a long time regarded as "mini-5b". Professional guidance to projects and networking seemed to be the most important conditions for success.	To make a real bottom up approach the LAG could be elected by the people in the area; in a general election.
Innovation	75 % of the projects were innovative for the area.		Keep some funding for a national competition of innovative projects at the national level.
Multisectoral integration	–		
Networking	No national LEADER network was set up by the managing authority. Later some LAGs organised ad-hoc co-operation. A study circle "From idea to practise" put focus on the process.	Networking and professional guidance to projects seemed to be the most important conditions for success.	Experiences transferred and considered in LEADER+.

	Implementation (methods, practices, limits, obstacles)	Intended or unintended effects	Recommendations
Trans-national cooperation	The managing (funding) authorities had to a very limited extent informed the LEADER actors of trans-national co-operation and LEADER Observatory.	Only one trans-national project was carried out. The LAGs did not participate in the exchange of experiences as frequent as the LEADER idea assumed.	Experiences transferred and considered in LEADER+.
Decentralised management and financing	It was not easy to implement a programme that intended to decentralise and at the same time kept the decision making at a superior level.		Experiences transferred and considered in LEADER+.
Other important issues	The LAGs used area-based, bottom up and innovative approach as most important issues in the selection process of projects.		

Model of implementation



II.4b GEOGRAPHICAL REPORT SWEDEN OP LEADER II OBJECTIVE 5B

Contents

1.	General introduction	147
2.	Report on focus group	148
3.	Report on national programme evaluations	149
3.1	Overview and synthetic description	149
3.1.1	Interim report	149
3.1.2	Final report – implementation	150
3.1.3	Final report – results and objectives	151
3.1.4	Final report – white book	153
3.1.5	LEADER II Network	153
3.1.6	Processing at national level	154
3.2	Overall assessment	155
3.3	Capitalisation and recommendations	156
4.	General appreciation	160
4.1	General appreciation of the LEADER II initiative	160
4.2	Critical reflection of the evaluation process	161

1. General introduction

The evaluation-work was carried out by geographical expert Ulla Herlitz, Sweden. Although LEADER II Objective 5b Sweden was a small programme it was a challenge find the right persons involved in a programme that was closed many years earlier. Another challenge was to collect the financial data from the three different funding authorities, and to have them summed up for LAGs and for the whole OP in a way that had not been done before.

LEADER II was carried through in the Swedish Objective 5 b area between 1996-1999. The programme comprised measures B – Rural Innovation Programme, measure C – Transnational Co-operation and measure D – Technical Assistance. Compared to other EU funded programmes, LEADER II was a small programme. The LEADER II programme with nine LAGs in Objective 5b area was budgeted (paid) 65 million ECU compared to 793 million ECU for Objective 5b.

In order to get a quick start of the overview of LEADER II in Sweden the ex-post evaluation work started in November 2002. First of all the key-persons were informed about the coming ex-post evaluation. They were asked to participate with factual information and some of them to be interviewed. I wanted them to be prepared for further contacts later on in 2003.

After the meeting with the evaluation team in Brussels January 14th 2003, and when the grids were ready for use an intensive period started with many contacts through telephone and mail with persons involved in the LEADER II implementation. Also fax and regular post were used in collecting and processing the information needed. Sometimes the work was like a detective's work, searching for missing people and information.

Glesbygdsverket (The National Rural Development Agency) was the managing authority for both LEADER II 5b and 6, and handed over the programmes, interim and ex-post evaluations, annually reports, information on the LEADER Network etc. The financial information had to be collected from each of the three different funding authorities. This process to gather the financial data as well as some other factual information took too long. The officials were busy with new tasks and it was complicated and time-consuming for them to look for data from the LEADER II period, but anyhow they were rather polite and tried to do their best during the present situation.

The delay of data for the LAG 1000 was due to the fact that the three funding authorities also worked and prioritised the final LEADER II report to the Commission, and data at LAG level was not included in that report. Another problem was that the LAGs had sent all their documentation to a national archive and overall the financial data was not easy accessible to fit in the grids for this ex-post evaluation. All LAGs were contacted and they helped giving and/or checking the information in the LAG 1000 grid.

The former Objective 5b area was eligible for LEADER +. The LAG "LEADER Värmland" was selected for the Q202. That LAG did apply for LEADER + but was not selected. They still existed as an organisation as they were not ready yet with the financial issues. As all the other LAGs they had sent the documentation to the national archive, which was to some degree a problem when looking for answers to the factual questions. Nevertheless, the manager for the was very helpful and willing to co-operate. The manager also assisted to select the two projects for the CEA study; Dirty Dancing from Objective 5b and Total Musikal from LEADER II.

The following materials have been delivered to the evaluation core team:

- OP 102; one national programme
- LAG 1000; 9 LAGs
- Q 34 key persons interviewed:
Agneta Spetz, Ministry of Industry
Nils Lagerroth, LEADER Network
Tim Brooks, National Rural Development Agency
Lars Larsson, Uppsala University, Dep. Of Social and Economic Geography
Staffan Bond, Popular Movements Council for Rural Development
- Q 202 LEADER Värmland/Kjell Toreld, County of Värmland
- CEA; comparative study on Dirty Dancing and Total Musikal

2. Report on focus group

No focus group was selected within this programme.

3. Report on national programme evaluations

3.1 Overview and synthetic description

3.1.1 Interim report

The interim report was made by Euro Futures AB and dated October 1997. LEADER II in Sweden had hardly begun at that time and the programme was very delayed. In September 1997 only 10% of the total budget was reserved. One important conclusion of the interim evaluation was that the speed must increase considerably in order to ensure the implementation of the programme within the given time.

The LAG plans focused on the improvement of a good environment for activities and development. The evaluator pointed out the importance to focus the project towards more commercial activities in the priorities small enterprises, rural tourism and valorisation of agricultural products. To have success with these projects, the evaluator suggests in addition to the LAGs to include an active supporting function (mobilising, planning and coaching projects) as a natural part of the project.

Another suggestion was to supplement the existing indicators in the LAG plans with qualitative indicators that could show the soft development issues such as:

- willingness for change
- ambition of autonomy
- knowledge about enterprising
- willingness to start an enterprise.

The implementation of LEADER II during the evaluation period was characterised by start-up problems. Many of the problems in the beginning were due to the complex decision making structure. Gradually these problems were solved within the existing structure, and no recommendation was given to change the structure at present. In the future – with a possible LEADER III – there could be reason to change the structure to some extent.

Ordering from EU-funds had not been functioning. Only one project had so far (12.9.1997) been paid. Glesbygdsverket, the Managing Authority, should be given a commission to co-ordinate and streamline the three funding authorities management of orders and payments to the LAGs. In addition the LAGs must themselves more actively take part in the financing process.

The national co-financing had so far not been a problem for the majority of LAGs in objective 5b area, but some LAGs had great problems to find co-financing actors and announced doubts if it was possible to implement the plans.

An important part of development work is that the information to and from the LAGs is functioning. A problem implementing LEADER was that no one had an overall responsibility for handling the information. The Monitoring Committee was recommended to arrange the possibilities for such a function.

3.1.2 Final report – implementation

In December 1999 Ledningskonsulterna i Stockholm AB was given the commission to carry out the national ex-post evaluation of LEADER II in Sweden. Glesbygdsverket, the Managing Authority, ordered the evaluation on commission of the Monitoring Committee. The work was divided in to two separate parts. This first part handles evaluation of the implementation and was finished in May 2000.

This first ex-post evaluation report concentrated on needs of changes during the time left for the LEADER programme and also to contribute with recommendations for LEADER+.

The evaluation made following conclusions:

- The establishment of LAGs took a long time, it was a process that continued also during the first years after the formal establishment was done. Many problems occurred; uncertainty with partnerships, local LEADER offices, funding of technical assistant, understanding of innovation, prohibition against activities within single firms etc.
- The activities carried out were as a whole according to the programme and LAG plans, with the exception of the problem to have single enterprises as beneficiaries in the priorities adopted to them. Important prerequisites were the possibilities to fund ideas and projects not streamlined for traditional measures or EU programme and also that LEADER opened up for beneficiaries to use voluntary work and for entrepreneurs to use own working time as private co-financing. This kind of contribution injected the national local development work with considerable resources.
- The resources needed to establish and implement a programme parallel to the existing regional and national structures and also introducing new methods were underestimated.
- The establishment of local partnerships, involvement of local actors/ beneficiaries, accessibility etc, developed according to the programmes and LAG-plans. However, the LAGs had problems with the public co-financing at county level. "The LAG autonomy in relation to the traditional public actors is an explanation why it has been difficult to establish a close co-operation at county level.
- A problem in implementing the programme was the complex and slow administration of the funding procedure. It was very resource-consuming at all levels.

- Analysis made by the evaluators show shortages in managing and monitoring of the programme. After approval of the LAGs no management by objectives was done. No qualitative indicators were introduced as was recommended in the interim report. The LEADER Network had been given the task also to identify, analyse and estimate qualitative results for dissemination, but no systematic information was brought back to the policymaking bodies. An important conclusion was that the Managing Authority, if they choose to delegate the dissemination, should not give up the managing and monitoring of the LEADER activities and should keep the responsibility to bring back information to policymaking levels.
- The flow of project-ideas and results between LEADER II and other structural funds were limited due to lack of knowledge and understanding of the LEADER mission and also lack of co-operation between the LAGs and the decision groups for Objective 5b.
- Analysis show great difficulties to handle the horizontal objective in terms of equal opportunities. Managing this issue at programme, LAG and project level have been more of a formal character. The lack of success often related back to weak management.

3.1.3 Final report – results and objectives

In December 1999 Ledningskonsulterna i Stockholm AB was given the commission to carry out the national ex-post evaluation of LEADER II in Sweden. Glesbygdsverket, the managing authority, ordered the evaluation on commission of the Monitoring Committee. The work was divided in to two separate parts. This second part of the evaluation dealt with results and objectives and was published in October 2001.

The following conclusions were made by the evaluation team:

- The overall assessment of the qualitative analysis show that the background, chosen strategies, organisational set up etc influenced in a quantitative perspective, while the qualitative objectives found in the LEADER plans have had less influence on the results. The start of LEADER was slow and the first part of LEADER period had constantly recurring disturbances. In fact the time for project implementation was too short which strongly contributed to the possibilities to carry out the activities focusing innovation, dissemination and influencing methods for rural development.
- The partnership-model has been established and is today an accepted method to organise rural development work. The voluntary actors have been accepted as legitimate actors within rural development work. The co-operation within the municipalities has developed. Especially the co-operation between the voluntary sector and the municipal sector had advanced and deepened. The business' sector

participation in the local partnership had been limited, which show the difficulties of establishing genuine 3-partnerships.

- The innovative objective according development and establishment of the LEADER method at LAG level has not fully been implemented. The concentration has been more on problem solving activities instead of development of different methods for rural development. Bottom up perspective, local mobilisation and to start and run projects have been the main focus. Due to this readiness, consciousness and resources in the local responsibility and future development work have reinforced.
- The projects have had a relatively weak market orientation as well as meeting the needs which influenced the possibilities to meet important objectives as innovation and market orientation. The activities have not in an obvious way resulted in new solutions that could be used in a rural development strategy more concentrated on structural change of rural areas. Nevertheless, many innovative projects have been carried out because of LEADERs accessibility for new and not so streamlined actors, projects whose results are important to take care of.
- The projects have developed from a bottom up perspective and were based on earlier mobilisation processes and further developed processes during the start up of LEADER. One weakness observed was that not many farmers had been participating in LEADER.
- The interest and knowledge about the LEADER method have increased. The voluntary and municipal sectors have contributed to the dissemination of knowledge and experiences from LEADER. A more planned dissemination and influence have been limited due to shortages in the monitoring and management system. The distribution of roles and responsibilities were blurred, which hindered the possibilities for an effective system for dissemination and influence. The division of responsibility between the Managing Authority and the LEADER Network also influenced the dissemination in a negative way. The Network was the one that in a more systematic way had disseminated important experiences about examples of good projects.
- The LEADER programme has engaged many thousands of people. Together they constitute a unique knowledge about development work in rural areas. This knowledge must be taken care of as soon as possible, as it also can disappear rapidly when people are going further to other jobs and tasks.
- The women in Swedish rural areas have been strongly engaged in implementing LEADER II. LEADER has given them a base and resources to develop their competence and engagement. However this has not led to much influence of female aspects of the implementation of the horizontal objective for equal opportunities.
- The horizontal objective on environmental protection and improvement was clear and it was rather common with environmental projects in a broad sense.

- The youth as a prioritised target group in the programme had a clear impact. Many projects were completely or partly concentrated on this group. However it was hard to identify results and therefore hard to judge if the objective was achieved or not.
- The trans national co-operation was extensive, but only a few projects were implemented at C-level. The co-operation resulted in many contacts and the projects were mostly concentrated on different common activities. Less in focus were activities about increased business relations and trade. For the LAG members and staff the contacts at LAG level have been important sources for stimulation and knowledge, and their view of how a successful LEADER work can be implemented have also been influenced.

3.1.4 Final report – white book

In connection to the ex-post evaluations of LEADER 5b and 6 a white book was published. The sub- title was “Experiences to learn from – Innovative project-results from the implementation of LEADER II” (August 2001). This publication is not an evaluation of projects, but an interesting example of how to disseminate the experiences from LEADER projects and to reflect upon the use of and relevance of some the experiences made in about 20 different projects.

3.1.5 LEADER II Network

An evaluation on the Swedish LEADER II Network (August 2000) was carried out according to the recommendations from the Commission. The evaluator stated the Swedish LEADER Network had organised activities according to the planned objectives. In general, the network succeeded very well with the actions. Good relations were established between LAGs and the Network which facilitated an effective dissemination of information.

The very short evaluation report consist mostly of presentations of the activities, in fact very few analytic viewpoints were made. The presentation comprised:

- gathering of information
- dissemination of information
- conferences, seminars and workshops
- networking
- measures to promote rural development.

Some results:

- More seminars were organised than initially planned and all seminars had many participants from the LAGs.
- A web-site was developed, including a database of LEADER projects.
- Analysis of innovative projects was going on in close connection to the Swedish Agriculture University. The reports were published at the web-site.

Regarding the networking, the evaluator had found that the LEADER II Network had played an important role for the co-operation and contacts between LAGs. Change of experiences between the groups had facilitated the implementation of the programme and also inspired finding different solutions of rural area problems. The board of the network were representing a wide range of the most important and widespread popular movements in the rural areas as well as the public national rural development agency (Glesbygdsverket). Together they had access to very short and fast channels to disseminate experiences from the LEADER activities to the rest of the country.

The evaluator also made a special comment that all activities made by the Swedish LEADER II network aimed at promoting rural development. In addition to the networking activities they also tried to influence the rural policy; e.g. the Network was asked to give its view on the new national rural programme and other new official measures for rural development.

The board also took initiative to a programme to develop methods for development in rural areas, inspired by the LEADER method. The programme was named "Method LEADER" and was carried out in the Objective 6 area. The board was the same for the new programme as for the network which enabled an interplay in change of experiences and networking. A special evaluation of the programme took place.

3.1.6 Processing at national level

The evaluations were commissioned by the Managing Authority and also processed within their normal routines. They were presented at the web-page and could be ordered from the MA. Press-releases were also made. The evaluations were sent to the Commission and distributed to MC, different important actors etc.

The evaluation as a development method was new in Sweden. Earlier it was common to report programme/project results in a more descriptive way and they were often also made by the persons involved. Evaluations made in a professional and systematic way was something new for Swedish local development activities. In fact these evaluations were "dutifully" made because they were a part of the LEADER concept, they had to be done within the programme.

The persons in charge of LEADER were informed through newsletters, web-page etc. about the evaluations and hopefully ordered and read them. At least the responsible ministry and national authorities had to take care of the recommendations etc. The MC had ongoing discussions with the evaluators, which were presented in the interim report, followed by the ex-post evaluation. As the MC did not exist when the ex-post evaluation was ready there was no organised follow up and discussions about the findings.

There is a time-problem related to processing of the evaluations and the usefulness in a short perspective. Even the interim evaluation was in practice too late to influence the ongoing LEADER II, and the ex-post evaluation was too late to give feed-back for those involved in LEADER II. E.g. the recommendation in the interim evaluation of developing qualitative indicators was not implemented in LEADER II. But in fact another recommendation on limited information co-ordination did influence the establishment of the LEADER network.

The experiences and recommendations from the interim evaluation and the experiences from the ex-post evaluation in progress did however influence and were taken into consideration when processing the LEADER + programme.

Two officials, "firespirits", within the Managing Authority and the Ministry had in mind to mainstream the LEADER method into the Government bill on regional policy. They were involved in that work and could also bring some methods about 3-partnership, bottom-up etc in the draft, but as the Swedish Government did not have their own majority and was dependent of two smaller parties of which one insisted not to bring these methods in the bill, they were withdrawn.

3.2 Overall assessment

The usefulness and relevance of the the national evaluations for learning at local level seems to have had an indirect learning effect. Experiences and recommendations from the national evaluations have had a clear influence on some features in the LEADER + programme and implementation that effects the learning processes at local level. E.g. the claim that all LAGs should prepare an annual report in which the strategy and achievement of the LAG plan should be described and commented. These annual reports are aimed at highlighting and learning about how development plans based on LEADER principals can be implemented. Also in LEADER + the aim is to broaden the project data-base to have a learning process perspective by both describing the project and the experiences made.

NUTEK, the national authority in charge of making the final national report on LEADER II to the Commission made a special comment on this relevance-issue. They argued like this: The evaluations were not ready when LEADER + programme was processed and from that point of view results of evaluations seemed to be of no value, but they explained Glesbygdsverket

during the time the evaluations were carried out had discussed with the evaluators and used their findings and views. NUTEK also mentioned that many of the problems which the evaluations stressed in the written reports were already known by Glesbygdsverket. The managing authority was well aware of the problems. Through the LAGs they were informed about the difficulties and also the possibilities.

This reflection show the difficulties to judge who really “owned” the origin of the problem, conclusion and solution. Perhaps many technical/administrative problems could have been solved without the evaluations, but when it comes to the analysis of development strategies, methods etc that can impact rural policy evaluations are of great value.

All evaluations, except for the LEADER II Network evaluation which was more of a short description, were professionally conducted and interesting; giving relevant recommendations and highlighting important problems, both technical problems and also difficulties in a wider sense in relation to national policy and global development.

I have studied the six evaluations mentioned earlier and what is striking when discussing with officials at the Managing Authority as well as the responsible Ministry is that none of them has analysed the whole bunch of evaluations in order to make conclusions and proposals to bring back to the national rural policy. The attempt to mainstream some LEADER elements in the Government bill on regional policy was ad hoc. The NUTEK report of LEADER II in Sweden is a well prepared summary, but as it is a report on a programme it was not designed to suggest changes in the national rural policy and it was also not their taks. My recommendation for future evaluations has nothing to do with the evaluations as such, it is the processing of the results at national level that has to improve. The experiences of LEADER II have influenced LEADER + , but the evaluations could be used for further discussions of the possibilities of mainstreaming the LEADER specificities in the development policy in general and how this can be done.

3.3 Capitalisation and recommendations

In the ex-post evaluations, the recommendations are based on the evaluations carried out but also the general knowledge of experimental programmes that the evaluation team possessed. The recommendations are divided in five categories; recommendations on the implementation, recommendations to LEADER +, overall recommendations, necessary conditions of experimental programmes and finally recommendations on the managing authorities (managing authority, MC and LAGs) and its structure and commission.

Implementation

- Managing the programme the Managing Authority and the LAGs ought to focus on follow-up and evaluation of closed and ongoing projects.
- A more systematic analysis of the implementation should be carried out, based on the information from evaluations of LAGs and programmes already available.
- The responsible Ministry and Glesbygdsverket ought to initiate methods how to use and bring back results and experiences to the policy making level, from the implementation process as well as the innovative projects.
- A functioning database for documentation of the implementation etc. must be set up.

LEADER +

- LEADER II LAGs not continuing in LEADER + ought to be given two years to close their programme.
- This could be arranged with resources from Objective 1 and 2.
- In the Objective 1 area, where LEADER + is excluded, a global grant-programme could be a solution,
- Managing LEADER +, besides administrative and economic management, ought to focus implementation of strategies and objectives in the LAG plans.
- A possible improvement of management could be "calls for proposals" which makes it easier for a LAG to manage the flow, administration and decision making of applications according to LEADER strategy, objectives and indicators.
- Developing of a more programme oriented view of development (instead of projects) by the involved public actors.
- The new programme have to be better established among public authorities at county level.
- For a better relation (co-operation and flow) between LEADER and other EU funded programmes the programme should give clear instructions and objectives.
- A need for developing methods for mainstreaming of equal opportunities, which also could be used in other structural fund programmes.
- A claim on the LAG officials to have good administration and economy-competence.
- A functioning database for documentation of the implementation etc. must be developed.

Overall recommendations

- Introduce qualitative indicators at all levels.
- The quantitative objectives should not be superior to qualitative objectives.
- The qualitative objectives should be set up at all levels with connected indicators.
- MC and Managing Authority should make the programme with its objectives, strategies and measures deeply rooted in authorities, organisations etc involved at regional and national level.

Necessary conditions

- Management takes time – the Managing Authority and the LAGs must be given enough resources to fulfil their tasks.
- The officials must concentrate on implementing plans, projects etc. The administration and funding systems have to be easily functioning.
- Only the two last years in LEADER II were effective time for implementing the programme, plans and projects. This was not enough time for a sustainable establishment of the LEADER method in the areas concerned. The LAGs should be given opportunities to continue their activities in LEADER + or in other programmes.
- The LEADER method and programme ought to be well known and accepted at all levels to ensure the projects to focus on the innovative objectives. Until now, the projects have been focusing more of traditional rural development areas. The bottom up approach has been very clear through the whole implementation, but has not fully supported the innovative objectives as these were not understood to be the main objectives at local level.

Managing

- Visualise the traditional rural actors' view of development-needs.
- The rural actors have to analyse their own activities in relation to the objectives of the programme; to identify own needs and find out how they could fit in the programme.
- MC and MA have to be organised to focus on the results both on programme level and LAG level, making clear distinction between how objectives, strategies and measures are achieved.
- The LAGs have to constantly follow the achievement of the plans/strategies and the projects. The MA have to insure that this is done.

- MA should make corrections in one way or another when limits occur according to the planned results and objectives.
- The main responsibility of dissemination and influence should rest on the MA, even if some information tasks are delegated to e.g. the LEADER Network. The MA should also be responsible for analysing of what kind of change in rural policy should be proposed based on experiences of the implementation of LEADER programme. The LAGs should have the responsibility to disseminate and bring back the results to actors at local level. All levels/actors involved in LEADER should take an active interest in the results. That is an important part in disseminating and influencing the activities.

(See also corresponding grid)

4. General appreciation

4.1 General appreciation of the LEADER II initiative

The main outcome according to my opinion was the empowerment and increased competence among the local people involved in managing and participating in LAGs and projects, and the opportunities for them to meet in different networks, seminars and conferences was a very important tool. Another important circumstance was the established contacts between people from different levels. LEADER enabled “fire-spirits” from all levels (from EU level to village level) and from different sectors (voluntary, private and public) to work together. It was obvious that those contacts played a role in creating the very positive feeling of belonging to the “LEADER family” or the “LEADER spirit” as some of the people interviewed named it. Perhaps the national LEADER programme, the MA, the MC, the LAGs, evaluations etc. should more than what was done have stressed these unique elements and the other LEADER specificities.

Even though the evaluations very much focused on serious problems and recommendations how to avoid or overcome these obstacles, the interviews showed people with a great enthusiasm for the LEADER method. The problems faced did not destroy their trust in the LEADER method, in their opinion it was not the LEADER method but the traditional structure that should be changed.

A problem with evaluations is that they naturally evaluate the outcomes in relation to the programme. But in these evaluations where the methods were in focus, it would have been interesting with assessments comparing the LEADER method with methods used e.g. in Objective 5b and 6, with traditional national methods for rural development and also with methods used in the voluntary village action movement.

A question discussed in Sweden when introducing LEADER was whether it was fair to support 12 LAGs and leave the rest of the Swedish rural areas behind or with the same total amount of money support as many village partnerships as possible. Now, when the Government has excluded former Objective 6 from LEADER + this question can be on the agenda again, but put in a different way. The challenge is how to implement the LEADER method without a LEADER programme; how to mainstream the principles to the rural development activities at national, regional, municipal and village level.

Strong recommendations

The focus group meeting was one of the highlights in this evaluation work. I strongly recommend a focus group meeting should be offered to all LAGs as a part of the evaluation process and learning process, planned from the beginning and funded in the LAG budget. As both the evaluations carried out and the focus group stressed the lack of “LEADER understanding” I also strongly agree with the focus group recommendation to educate actors at

all levels involved in LEADER in the LEADER method so that they also can act according to the principles in the programme they are a part of.

Most astonishing

The most astonishing experience was reading the evaluations, there was so much of knowledge and so many experiences. The evaluations constitute a great potential for those who would like to analyse rural development and make proposals to improve the traditional development policy. Until now it seems like the evaluation results have settled “between the chairs”.

4.2 Critical reflection of the evaluation process

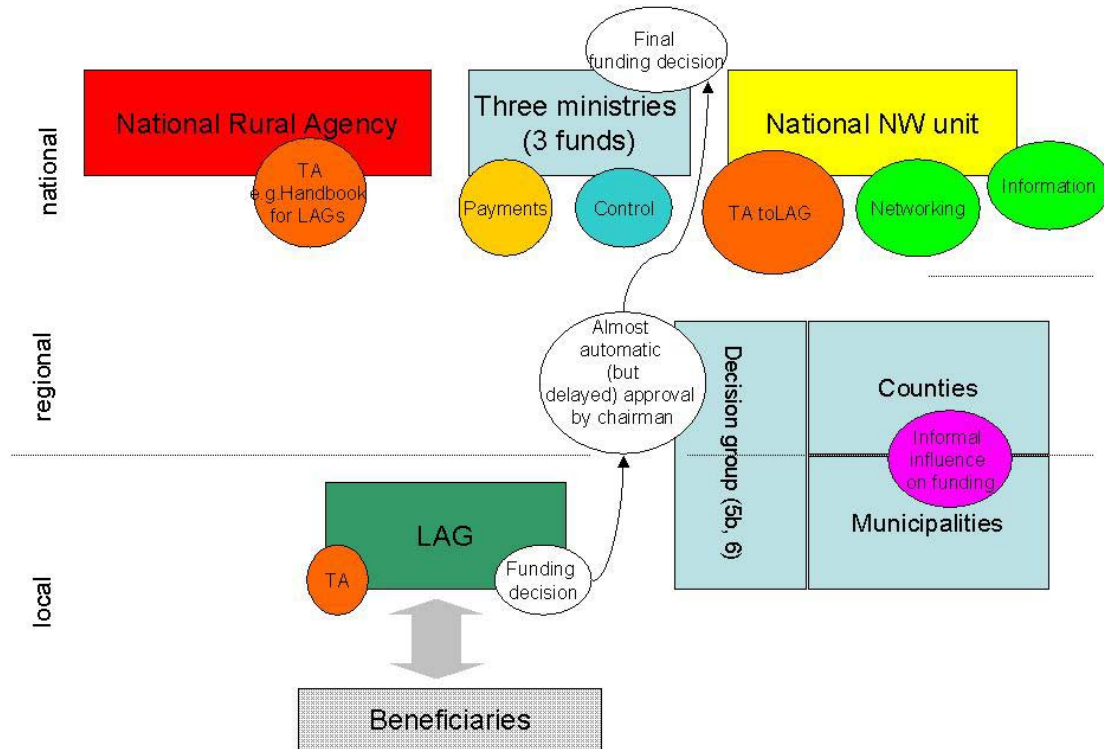
- It is not easy to ask questions about a programme that closed several years ago.
- There were far too many questions to the LAGs.
- The factual questions took too long time in relation to the time planned; three different funding authorities and the data was not delivered or earlier published for the categories asked for in our evaluation; e.g. LAG level.
- To collect factual comparable data should not be the task of the evaluators at EU level, the data should be provided by the Observatory or by the Commission via national Managing Authority.
- More time should be planned for the geographical evaluator to comment on national evaluations etc. This part should be in the very beginning of the evaluation.
- The focus-group, TNC and CEA studies were like a learning process for those interviewed, and it was very appreciated, as well as it was interesting for me as an evaluator. The guidance for the focus group and the two studies were very instructive, easy to understand and worked out very good in practice.
- Many thanks to the core-team for a stimulating and interesting co-operation.

SUMMARY APPRECIATION FROM THE REGIONAL EVALUATION REPORT**Operational Programme: LEADER II Objective 5b**

	Implementation (methods, practices, limits, obstacles)	Intended or unintended effects	Recommendations
Area-based approach	It has been very clear in the implementation	The projects have been more like traditional development projects to meet the local needs	–
Bottom-up approach	<p>It has been very clear in the implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ voluntary work and private work were accepted as private co-financing ▪ based on earlier mobilisation which also developed during the start up of LEADER 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The projects have been more like traditional development projects to meet the local needs ▪ The voluntary work and entrepreneurs using their own working time as private co-financing have injected rural development with considerable resources. ▪ Many thousands of people engaged ▪ Empowerment and increased knowledge ▪ Women strongly engaged ▪ Readiness and consciousness reinforced to take on local responsibility and future development work 	–
The local group	LAG autonomy in relation to traditional public actors was a new element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The autonomy made it difficult to establish a close co-operation at county level ▪ The autonomy – but not traditionally based in a democratic sense – also caused problems with co-financing ▪ The private sector participation in the partnerships were limited. 	–
Innovation	Positive possibilities to fund ideas and projects not streamlined for traditional measures could be funded.	Has not been fully implemented (see area-based and bottom-up) bottom-up, local mobilisation and to start and run projects were in focus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Call for proposals can ensure a more close relation to the strategy, objectives and indicators ▪ develop a more programme orientated view of development, instead of projects oriented, by the involved actors

	Implementation (methods, practices, limits, obstacles)	Intended or unintended effects	Recommendations
Multisectoral integration	The partnership model has been established.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Farmers and businesses have not participated as much as planned. ▪ Co-operation between local actors and municipalities have developed 	–
Networking	LEADER II Network was established and good relations developed between the LAGs and the network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More seminars were organised than planned ▪ Facilitated the implementation of the programme and inspired finding solutions of rural area problems. ▪ A fast channel to the whole rural Sweden ▪ Initiated and run the programme Method LEADER. ▪ unclear roles/responsibilities according analysis and bringing back (influence) experiences to the policy making level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More clear roles; MA keeps the role to analyse and influence, the network handles the information
Trans-national cooperation	Extensive co-operation but only a few projects at C-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less focus on business projects than expected ▪ important source for stimulation, knowledge and experiences how to implement LEADER 	–
Decentralised management and financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The LAG autonomy – not based on democratic principles – sometimes caused problems in relation to traditional elected local and regional actors and the voluntary sector as well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ complex and slow funding administration with three different funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MA and LAG must be given enough resources ▪ funding adm. problems solved in LEADER+
Other important issues	–	–	–

Model of implementation



II.4C GEOGRAPHICAL REPORT SWEDEN OP LEADER II OBJECTIVE 6

Contents

1.	General introduction	167
2.	Report on focus group	169
3.	Report on national programme evaluations	176
3.1	Overview and synthetic description	176
3.1.1	Interim report	176
3.1.2	Final report – implementation	177
3.1.3	Final report – results and objectives	178
3.1.4	Final report – white book	180
3.1.5	LEADER II Network	180
3.1.6	“Method LEADER”	181
3.1.7	Processing at national level	185
3.2	Overall assessment	186
3.3	Capitalisation and recommendations	187
4.	General appreciation	190
4.1	General appreciation of the LEADER II initiative	190
4.2	Critical reflection of the evaluation process	191

1. General introduction

The evaluation-work was carried out by geographical expert Ulla Herlitz, Sweden. Although LEADER II Objective 6 Sweden was a small programme it was a challenge to find the right persons involved in a programme that was closed many years ago. Another challenge was to collect the financial data from the three different funding authorities, and to have them summed up for LAGs and for the whole OP in a way that had not been done before.

LEADER II was carried out in the Swedish Objective 6 area between 1996-1999. The programme comprised measures B – Rural Innovation Programme, measure C – Transnational Co-operation and measure D – Technical Assistance. Compared to other EU funded programmes, LEADER II was a small programme. The LEADER II programme with three LAGs in Objective 6 area had a total budget of (paid) 13 million ECU compared to 776 million ECU for Objective 6.

In order to get a quick start of the overview of LEADER II in Sweden the ex-post evaluation work started already in November 2002. First of all the key-persons were informed about the coming ex-post evaluation. They were asked to participate with factual information and some of them to participate in interviews. I wanted them to be prepared for further contacts later on in 2003.

After the meeting with the evaluation team in Brussels January 14th 2003, and when the grids were ready for use, an intensive period started with many contacts through telephone and mail with persons involved in the LEADER II implementation. Also fax and regular post were used in collecting and processing the information needed. Sometimes the work was like a detective's work, searching for missing people and information.

Glesbygdsverket (The National Rural Development Agency) was the managing authority for both LEADER II 5b and 6, and handed over programmes, interim and ex-post evaluations, annually reports, information on the LEADER Network etc. The financial information had to be collected from each of the three different funding authorities. This process, to gather the financial data as well as some other factual information, took too long. The officials were busy with new tasks and it was complicated and time-consuming for them to search for data from the LEADER II period, but anyhow they were rather polite and tried to do the best during the present circumstances.

The delay of data for the LAG 1000 was due to the fact that the three funding authorities also worked and prioritised the final LEADER II report to the Commission, and data at LAG level was not included in the report. Another problem was that the LAGs had sent all their documentation to a national archive, in general the financial data was not easy accessible for the questions in

this ex-post evaluation. All LAGs were contacted and they helped giving and/or checking the information in the LAG 1000 grid.

The former Objective 6 area was excluded from LEADER + and therefore none of the LAGs were able to continue. Nevertheless, the manager for the selected LAG for Q202, Inlandslaget, was very helpful and willing to co-operate. Inlandslaget participated in a focus group meeting in Arvidsjaur 2003-05-26. It was also selected to the TNC-study and the personal TNC-interview was made 2003-05-27.

The following materials have been delivered to the evaluation core team:

- OP 102; one national programme
- LAG 1000; three LAGs
- Q 34; key persons interviewed:
Agneta Spetz, Ministry of Industry
Nils Lagerroth, LEADER Network
Tim Brooks, National Rural Development Agency
Lars Larsson, Uppsala University, Dep. of Social and Economic Geography
Lennart Larsson, Lycksele Municipality
- Q 202 Inlandslaget/Leopold Sjöström, Sorsele Municipality
- Focus-group Inlandslaget
- TNC study on Rural Tourism Network

2. Report on focus group

Inlandslaget SE – 02

Arvidsjaur 26.05.03, one –day-workshop

I. Introduction

Evaluator/senior expert: Ulla Herlitz

Evaluator/assistant: H el ene Marlot

Participants:

Kenneth Eklund, Arvidsjaur, LAG-chairman

 Ake Cederberg, Arjeplog, LAG-member

Lotta Svensson, Arvidsjaur, LAG-member, project

Johnny H ogberg, Arvidsjaur, LAG-member

Bo Lundmark, Glommerstr ask, project

Leopold Sj ostr om, LAG-manager

Inlandslaget was one out of two Q202 LAGs in Sweden. At an early stage in the evaluation process they agreed on being a focus group. Former Objective 6 area, where Inlandslaget is situated, was excluded from LEADER + by the Swedish government (against EU's wish according to Inlandslaget) and therefore it was not obvious to get a positive answer on the request. Inlandslaget still exist as an association. They have tried, without any big success, to get funding for a LEADER-like continuation of LEADER II.

However, I got a lot of positive support from the LAG-manager Leopold Sj ostr om in arranging the focus group and they selected May 26th. Mr Sj ostr om, in close contact with me, sent the information/invitations, introduced an evaluator/assistant from the area and arranged all other practical things. Mr Sj ostr om was the man to give me all necessary information/reports etc. (he had made the Q202 Inlandslaget) and he was also the Swedish co-ordinator of Q-TNC project RTN.

The focus group was held between 9.30 – 15.30 with lunch 12-13.30. First we made presentations around the table. I followed the manual, but added in the beginning – after LAG chairman and my introductions – a small questionnaire regarding the LEADER principles. The reason was that I wanted from each of them their genuine view, before the discussions took place. In addition to this I also had some minutes for the group to discuss the TNC- learned lessons (Carlos question).

II. Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 – **The capacity and competence of local actors increased**

The most important behavioural change that occurred.

A) The way that took form/happened

The evaluator proposes some features and the participants agree or complete with other points:

- Three persons were the driving forces thanks to their competence in the field of projects. They were not isolated but supporting the others of the network
- meetings
- learning by doing
- role of the advisers/instructors in each municipality to prepare applications
- existing networks before LEADER and the experience in SOS (network of municipalities in the region) which was an important background
- training

The participants agree that this was the way competence mainly developed in all the area.

B) Context variables facilitating/impeding this change

Facilitating:

- commitment
- driving forces

Impeding:

- “Jantelagen”: the “ten commandments” inspired by envy and parochialism that can be summed up by a “don’t think you are somebody” attitude. The participants agree that this attitude was in the cultural background of the Local Action Plan, but that they did not meet it in the work during the programme.
- traditional attitudes and thinking
- rules and regulations

The participants reacted strongly on the rules and regulations. They described it as the biggest restrictive issue and commented that local actors have to learn to know and understand them

better, to adapt themselves to them and to evade them, but also to influence them and propose improvements and changes.

The actual rules and regulations correspond to the organisation of 1866 when the municipal structure was created. Then Sweden had 2500 municipalities which gradually developed a high degree of autonomy. In modern time, concluding 1974, a merge of the municipalities was forced by a government decision decrease the number to approximate 300 municipalities. Hence decision-making was centralised. The participants proposal was to transfer(to give back) decision and financial power to the local level.

Another aspect pointed out is that the share of money dedicated to administration for the management and control of LEADER II is too large.

C) Results

The increased local capacity and competence led to many other projects and networks, thanks too raised self-confidence.

The participants quote a few examples where the experience acquired in LEADER and the connection with other networks was important: an education network "Akademi Norr", a project to support local farm production and transformation along the Vindel River, a project on bio energies, the establishment of a transport company, etc.

D) Operational principles of the LEADER method concerned

- Bottom-up approach
- Area-based
- Local Action Group
- Network

The participants agree that these principles were the pillars for this change and that the results obtained would not have occurred without them. Since the participants were already very critical against regional policies, they welcomed these principles and used them as criterion to select projects.

Hypothesis 2 – The power and influence of local actors did not increase

The most important behavioural change that did not take place.

A) Description

With LEADER II, the local level expected to be able to decide more about its development but that did not happen.

The LAG made decisions, but was not entrusted with the task of making formal decision.

The decision process and the payments for the projects were too complicated and took too much time making.

The LAG actors were like “hostages”. The projects apprehended the decision of the LAG as a decision but that was not the case. It took long time to get the formal decision, which caused problems for local projects/actors.

The intentions of the European Commission were warmly welcomed as they corresponded well to the local needs and hopes, but the blockage came from the regional and national level.

Together with the evaluator, the participants present these levels as a sluggish big grey cloud between the European and local level that understand each other. In this slow-moving cloud, a few driving forces (“fire-spirits”) are making the link with the upper and lower levels with the risk that they get disillusioned. (figure 1)

B) Context variables that impeded the power and influence of local actors to increase

- the separation between fields of actions
- the fact to have three different European funds and ministries
- the fact that the LAG did not have direct financial resources
- the rules regarding taxes
- the fact that the two different County Administrations involved had some times different views on applications
- the bureaucracy of the County Administration to make formal decision
- the differing perspective between actors

The participants agree that the Finnish system is more effective regarding LEADER and rural development in general. One reason proposed is the absence of County Administrations in Finland.

C) Operational principles of the LEADER method concerned

- Bottom-up approach

III. The four questions

A. What are the mechanisms, the driving or inhibiting forces which influence the effective implementation of which operation principle? In which specific way does it express itself in the local context?

Area-based approach, bottom-up approach and LAG/Partnership were the most important principles according to the participants. In the project-selection process the LAG used some of the LEADER principles, which were a strong driving forces. One or several of the following criterion should be fulfilled:

- bottom-up
- innovation in a local context
- local partnership/co-operation/networking
- trans-national co-operation

The most inhibiting force was the “old” structure of power.

For more answers look at Q202 Inlandslaget question 2332 and hypothesis 1 and 2.

B. What should be changed locally in order to improve the effectiveness of programmes such as LEADER II?

More power on financing should be given to the LAG group and politicians must participate more in the process (particularly at the municipal level). They should follow the projects with at least one account given every year to the municipal board. The trade and industry offices of the municipalities should also become more involved.

The diversity of fields of action must be maintained, even if that means many small projects, because LEADER must be seen as a forum for projects to start up in a first stage. On the other hand, focusing must be a concern in other programmes for the development of these projects started in LEADER. Each municipality must also select pillars for its economy. They have to concentrate on fields as in which they have an advantage in.

Centres could be set up for specific competence fields represented in the LAG area and make them interact to have a stronger impact on the programme activities.

C. What should be changed at the level of programme administration (nationally/regionally) and LEADER network in order to improve the effectiveness of programmes such as LEADER II?

Regionally, the guidance of the County Administration must be improved.

Nationally, it is important to have local representatives in diverse networks to multiply contacts and opportunities for local projects. These networks have to be always maintained and developed.

The difficulty remains in making use of the possibilities offered. Those offered in the European LEADER network were perceived as more attractive than those of the national network because the European one was more “exotic” and it was a bigger arena for the marketing of the area.

D. What are the key criteria for a rural development programme to take positive effect on the specific territorial context?

The State has an important role to play in adapting the central regulations for rural areas. Trips must not be limited due to high taxes on fuel; flights subsidies must be available also in the north of Sweden; the rationalisation of the social insurance offices and their concentration on the coast and in the south of Sweden must stop; tax relief must be granted to companies and individuals to settle in rural areas; the State must guarantee the banks so that it is easier for them to offer loans to companies. Why should rules be the same all over the country if that generates inequality?

The problem of the grants given to be able to live in cities will also have to be reconsidered.

Moreover, efforts have to be done to educate and support entrepreneurship.

But first of all, the question “do we need rural areas?” has to be asked and answered nationally, as the survival of rural areas, since the demographic trend changed, is a political issue. It is also necessary to agree upon the definition of and distinction between rural and sparsely populated areas (“landsbygden/glesbygden”).

The sector-based policies have to be changed into a “honey-comb” system and a real long-term strategy for rural areas has to be adopted. There are already examples showing that towns need to be surrounded by healthy rural areas to be healthy themselves. The role of nature resources must be more stressed.

The actual government “inland delegation” aiming at supporting rural areas will be an illusion if no new policy is applied.

The National Rural Development Agency is of minor importance if it remains hand in hand with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Rural areas have to be more represented in the Parliament. How can their needs be taken into account if no more than 8 or 9 parliamentarians live farther than 20 km outside the Parliament in Stockholm?

IV. Personal impression

First I got the impression that this could be a very challenging task, would they at all be positive and agree to take part in the evaluation as a focus group. These busy people, arguing about taking a lot of time, can you fund this event etc. I meet very committed people and they stayed the whole day, they did “never” want to end the meeting, having a lot of experiences and opinions to express. Very positive response to the meeting itself. “I did not believe the evaluation should be of any interest to me, but I was mistaken. I recognised in a new way what we really had been doing, and learned a lot.”

My suggestion is that all LAGs should be able to make a sum-up evaluation/analyses like this, with an expert from the outside. It is good to read the written evaluations but they are more addressed to external people, but a focus-group is a learning process for the local actors themselves.

Very early – almost immediately – in the focus-group process the hot issues were discussed and highlighted. These were not the issues that I had expected. All participants expressed their opinions and none of them had a diverse opinion. They were like a river – going in one direction – all participants gave small or big contributions on the different issues.

The manual was very instructive and made it more easy to organise the session. My assistant criticised the many examples in the introduction – about the behavioural change – but I think they were necessary to give the participants a strong indication what was the focus – and they did also concentrate the discussions on that.

To sum up:

The participants have confidence in the LEADER method, but they very strongly recommend the authorities at all levels involved in LEADER also to use the method.

3. Report on national programme evaluations

3.1 Overview and synthetic description

3.1.1 Interim report

The interim report was made by Euro Futures AB and dated October 1997. LEADER II in Sweden had hardly begun at that time and the programme was very delayed. In September 1997 only 10% of the total budget was reserved. One important conclusion of the interim evaluation was that the speed must increase considerably in order to ensure the implementation of the programme within the given time.

The LAG plans focused on the improvement of a good environment for activities and development. The evaluator pointed out the importance to focus the project towards more commercial activities in the priorities small enterprises, rural tourism and valorisation of agricultural products. To have success with these projects, the evaluator suggests in addition to the LAGs to include an active supportive function (mobilising, planning and coaching projects) as a natural part of the project.

Another suggestion was to supplement the existing indicators in the LAG plans with qualitative indicators that could show the soft development issues such as:

- willingness for change
- ambition of autonomy
- knowledge about enterprising
- willingness to start an enterprise.

The implementation of LEADER II during the evaluation period was characterised by start-up problems. Many of the problems in the beginning were due to the complex decision making structure. Gradually these problems were solved within the existing structure, and no recommendation was given to change the structure at present. In the future – with a possible LEADER III – there could be reason to change the structure to some extent.

Ordering from EU-funds had not been functioning. Only one project had so far (12.9.1997) been paid. Glesbygdsverket, the Managing Authority, should be given a commission to co-ordinate and streamline the three funding authorities management of orders and payments to the LAGs. In addition the LAGs must themselves more actively take part in the financing process.

The national co-financing had so far not been a problem in objective 6 area, but some LAGs announced probable future problems.

An important part of development work is that the information to and from the LAGs is functioning. A problem implementing LEADER was that no one had an overall responsibility for handling the information. The Monitoring Committee was recommended to arrange the possibilities for such a function.

3.1.2 Final report – implementation

In December 1999 Ledningskonsulterna i Stockholm AB was given the commission to carry out the national ex-post evaluation of LEADER II in Sweden. Glesbygdsverket, the Managing Authority, ordered the evaluation on commission of the Monitoring Committee. The work was divided in to two separate parts. This first part handles evaluation of the implementation and was finished in May 2000.

This first ex-post evaluation report concentrated on needs of changes during the time left for the LEADER programme and also to contribute with recommendations for LEADER+.

The evaluation made following conclusions:

- The establishment of LAGs took a long time, it was a process that continued also during the first years after the formal establishment was done. Many problems occurred; uncertainty with partnerships, local LEADER offices, funding of technical assistant, understanding of innovation, prohibition against activities within single firms etc.
- The activities carried out were as a whole according to the programme and LAG plans, with the exception of the problem to have single enterprises as beneficiaries in the priorities adopted to them. Important prerequisites were the possibilities to fund ideas and projects not streamlined for traditional measures or EU programme and also that LEADER opened up for beneficiaries to use voluntary work and for entrepreneurs to use own working time as private co-financing. This kind of contribution injected the national local development work with considerable resources.
- The resources needed to establish and implement a programme parallel to the existing regional and national structures and also introducing new methods were underestimated.
- The establishment of local partnerships, involvement of local actors/ beneficiaries, accessibility etc, developed according to the programmes and LAG-plans. However, the LAGs had problems with the public co-financing at county level. "The LAG autonomy in relation to the traditional public actors is an explanation why it has been difficult to establish a close co-operation at county level.
- A problem in implementing the programme was the complex and slow administration of the funding procedure. It was very resource-consuming at all levels.

- Analysis made by the evaluators show shortages in managing and monitoring of the programme. After approval of the LAGs no management by objectives was done. No qualitative indicators were introduced as was recommended in the interim report. The LEADER Network had been given the task also to identify, analyse and estimate qualitative results for dissemination, but no systematic information was brought back to the policymaking bodies. An important conclusion was that the Managing Authority, if they choose to delegate the dissemination, should not give up the managing and monitoring of the LEADER activities and should keep the responsibility to bring back information to policymaking levels.
- The flow of project-ideas and results between LEADER II and other structural funds were limited due to lack of knowledge and understanding of the LEADER mission and also lack of co-operation between the LAGs and the decision group for Objective 6.
- Analysis show great difficulties to handle the horizontal objective in terms of equal opportunities. Managing this issue at programme, LAG and project level have been more of a formal character. The lack of success often related back to weak management.

3.1.3 Final report – results and objectives

In December 1999 Ledningskonsulterna i Stockholm AB was given the commission to carry out the national ex-post evaluation of LEADER II in Sweden. Glesbygdsverket, the Managing Authority, ordered the evaluation on commission of the Monitoring Committee. The work was divided in to two separate parts. This second part of the evaluation dealt with results and objectives and was published in October 2001.

The following conclusions were made by the evaluation team:

- The overall assessment of the qualitative analysis show that the background, chosen strategies, organisational set up etc influenced in a quantitative perspective, while the qualitative objectives found in the LEADER plans have had less influence on the results. The start of LEADER was slow and the first part of LEADER period had constantly recurring disturbances. In fact the time for project implementation was too short which strongly contributed to the possibilities to carry out the activities focusing innovation, dissemination and influencing methods for rural development.
- The partnership-model has been established and is today an accepted method to organise rural development work. The voluntary actors have been accepted as legitimate actors within rural development work. The co-operation within the municipalities has developed. Especially the co-operation between the voluntary sector and the municipal sector had advanced and deepened. The business' sector

participation in the local partnership had been limited, which show the difficulties of establishing genuine 3-partnerships.

- The innovative objective according development and establishment of the LEADER method at LAG level has not fully been implemented. The concentration has been more on problem solving activities instead of development of different methods for rural development. Bottom up perspective, local mobilisation and to start and run projects have been the main focus. Due to this readiness, consciousness and resources in the local responsibility and future development work have reinforced.
- The projects have had a relatively weak market orientation as well as meeting the needs which influenced the possibilities to meet important objectives as innovation and market orientation. The activities have not in an obvious way resulted in new solutions that could be used in a rural development strategy more concentrated on structural change of rural areas. Nevertheless many innovative projects have been carried out because of LEADERs accessibility for new and not so streamlined actors, projects whose results are important to take care of.
- The projects have developed from a bottom up perspective and were based on earlier mobilisation processes and further developed processes during the start up of LEADER. One weakness observed was that not many farmers had been participating in LEADER.
- The interest and knowledge about the LEADER method have increased. The voluntary and municipal sectors have contributed to the dissemination of knowledge and experiences from LEADER. A more planned dissemination and influence have been limited due to shortages in the monitoring and management system. The distribution of roles and responsibilities were blurred, which hindered the possibilities for an effective system for dissemination and influence. The division of responsibility between the Managing Authority and the LEADER Network also influenced the dissemination in a negative way. The Network was the one that in a more systematic way had disseminated important experiences about examples of good projects.
- The LEADER programme has engaged many thousands of people. Together they constitute a unique knowledge about development work in rural areas. This knowledge must be taken care of as soon as possible, as it also can disappear rapidly when people are going further to other jobs and tasks.
- The women in Swedish rural areas have been strongly engaged in implementing LEADER II. LEADER has given them a base and resources to develop their competence and engagement. However this has not led to much influence of female aspects of the implementation of the horizontal objective for equal opportunities.
- The horizontal objective on environmental protection and improvement was clear and it was rather common with environmental projects in a broad sense.

- The youth as a prioritised target group in the programme had a clear impact. Many projects were completely or partly concentrated on this group. However it was hard to identify results and therefore hard to judge if the objective was achieved or not.
- The trans national co-operation was extensive, but only a few projects were implemented at C-level. The co-operation resulted in many contacts and the projects were mostly concentrated on different common activities. Less in focus were activities about increased business relations and trade. For the LAG members and staff the contacts at LAG level have been important sources for stimulation and knowledge, and their view of how a successful LEADER work can be implemented have also been influenced.

3.1.4 Final report – white book

In connection to the ex-post evaluations of LEADER 5b and 6 a white book was published. The sub- title was “Experiences to learn from – Innovative project-results from the implementation of LEADER II” (August 2001). This publication is not an evaluation of projects, but an interesting example of how to disseminate the experiences from LEADER projects and to reflect upon the use of and relevance of some the experiences made in about 20 different projects.

3.1.5 LEADER II Network

An evaluation on the Swedish LEADER II Network (August 2000) was carried out according to the recommendations from the Commission. The evaluator stated the Swedish LEADER Network had organised activities according to the planned objectives. In general, the network succeeded very well with the actions. Good relations were established between LAGs and the network which facilitated an effective dissemination of information.

The very short evaluation report consist mostly of presentations of the activities, in fact very few analytic viewpoints were made. The presentation comprised:

- gathering of information
- dissemination of information
- conferences, seminars and workshops
- networking
- measures to promote rural development.

Some results:

- More seminars were organised than initially planned and all seminars had many participants from the LAGs.
- A web-site was developed, including a database of LEADER projects.
- Analysis of innovative projects was going on in close connection to the Swedish Agriculture University. The reports were published at the web-site.

Regarding the networking, the evaluator had found that the LEADER II Network had played an important role for the co-operation and contacts between LAGs. Change of experiences between the groups had facilitated the implementation of the programme and also inspired finding different solutions of rural area problems. The board of the network were representing a wide range of the most important and widespread popular movements in the rural areas as well as the public national rural development agency (Glesbygdsverket). Together they had access to very short and fast channels to disseminate experiences from the LEADER activities to the rest of the country.

The evaluator also made a special comment that all activities made by the Swedish LEADER II network aimed at promoting rural development. In addition to the networking activities they also tried to influence the rural policy; e.g. the Network was asked to give its view on the new national rural programme and other new official measures for rural development.

The board also took initiative to a programme to develop methods for development in rural areas, inspired by the LEADER method. The programme was named "Method LEADER" and was carried out in the Objective 6 area. The board was the same for the new programme as for the network which enabled an interplay in change of experiences and networking. A special evaluation of the programme took place.

3.1.6 "Method LEADER"

Method LEADER was not funded within LEADER II programme, but as it was initiated and managed within the LEADERII Network committed people, based on LEADER principals, could fund pilot-projects, was a compensation for areas not elected for LEADER II etc. I found the Method LEADER evaluation (May 2001) relevant for our ex-post evaluation. It gave an extra dimension on the rural development issues. Especially the recommendations based on project case studies and analysis of the political and global context for rural development in Sweden.

Method LEADER was a programme concentrating on developing methods and was planned and implemented during April 1998 to December 2000. It encompass the Objective 6 area and the county of Dalarna, and was enabled through reallocation of funds from Objective 5a to

Objective 6 and others. In total, the budget was 2,05 million ECU, including the co-financing. Funded by Method LEADER, 26 projects were carried out to develop and pilot new ideas and methods of local development work. The initiative to the programme was taken by the board of the LEADER Network, which also became the board of the new programme. They also managed the programme within the administration of the network. The focus in this programme was HOW to do development, not WHAT to do.

The four aims of the programme were:

- extension of local partnerships
- empowerment; capacity and competence
- facilitate enterprising
- less bureaucracy/more flexibility at local level implementing e.g. labour market measures etc

The evaluation was led by the Swedish Agricultural University and had the striking title “Methods for rural development – is that enough?” The overall assessment made by the team of evaluation was that the project had delivered many positive results, but also negative results. The project got a “cautious positive assessment” regarding the first two aims and about the other two aims it was too early to see any results. The team found that the circumstances for implementing the programme was not too good. Anyhow, the positive results were starting off positive processes in many of the pilot-villages and to some extent also on regional and national level. The methods were implemented in a way that the board had not really expected; the process started making more specific what to do, which was a help for the question of how to do it.

The team of evaluation found the programme board had made some misjudgements according to the prerequisites for the project, and they also had difficulties to manage the project in the final stage. The team praised the LEADER II Network board in taking initiative to the programme, their important work etc. They also stressed the positive support to some projects which were exiting and creative, but in spite of the good intentions, the board was to rush with its planning and analyses. The process itself was regarded as the most positive and valuable results of the programme, because it could probably contribute to a positive development in the long run. Nevertheless, the team could not assess if the started processes or the results of the different projects could contribute to sustainable development in the rural areas or not. This was to a great extent a question of local conditions, especially structural and political conditions.

In the analysis of the political and global context for rural development in Sweden the team noticed the following tendencies:

- Focus on competitiveness on an economic perspective in agricultural, environment and rural development sector lead to prioritising of large scale production and effectiveness. Marginal areas (e.g. objective 6 area) are not interesting.
- Development of a more liberal global agricultural trade can have great effects on development in rural areas in Sweden. Measures to meet this development tends to have low priority among Swedish authorities, e.g. important EU programme as LEADER + was excluded from objective 6 area and the “Swedish Programme for rural development 2000-2006” priorities areas outside Objective 1.
- A positive development can be possible in the field of rural/wildlife tourism. This focus on the owner structure of the nature (forest) resources, whereas a change of owner structure gives a greater influence for the local society and the region, which can generate interesting ideas to joint co-operation between local societies, regional and national level.
- “The region, according to our assessment, ought to have a more fair reimbursement for the natural resources.....” The history of the area reminds of the exploitation in the colonial time in Africa and the post colonial African states exploitation of the rural areas (Prof. Kjell Havnevik, head of the evaluation team, is an expert on rural Africa development).

Developing methods for the Swedish rural areas must be based on a realistic assessment of structural and global restricting forces and also possibilities. The work to develop and make accessible existing or new methods for long term and sustainable development seems only to be possible in connection to such a deeper analyses.

In a future global context the evaluation team could view a tendency that the people in the area evaluated to a greater extent have to take their own responsibility for development and establishment of sustainable ways of living. This new responsibility opens up for new processes and movements where people and organisations in the rural areas to identify and implement new ways of living. According to the evaluation team such a mobilisation have to be based on democratic principles.

Recommendations from the evaluation team – local level:

1. The methods must develop in a local context. The HOW question must go with the WHAT and also the WHY questions.
2. The local actors themselves have to identify, chose, develop and adopt the methods to their own activities and the chosen way of living. The existing methods must be

available for the local actors, the commercial elements must be reduced. The study-organisations must take a greater responsibility for development and dissemination of the methods and the experiences of using them.

3. The nature of mobilisation have to be deeply analysed as it influence the choice of methods and how they develop.
4. The consequences of the growing institutionalisation of Swedish rural development work, including development of methods, have to be discussed. Today a small, but very competent group, have too much influence over the initiatives and funding possibilities promoting rural development. It is very important to widen the farmer's activities and responsibilities to comprise also a greater interest in the local village and rural area development. It is worrying that nearly all funding in the national rural development programme is reserved for improving the farm-enterprises.

Recommendations from the evaluation team – regional, national and global level:

1. Analysis of how local influence regarding management of local nature resources can increase.
2. Analysis and identification of mechanisms to give marginal areas a more fair reimbursement for local/regional resources that the whole of Sweden can take advantage of.
3. Analysis of the consequences of not including Objective 6 area in LEADER + and concentration of the national rural programme 2000-2006 to the middle and south Sweden.
4. Analysis of the development of WTO negotiations.
5. The Saamis right to land must be highlighted.
6. Analysis of decreased public and private service sector.
7. Some studies and knowledge already exist in fields suggested, but missing is the overview and synthetics. Studies of development possibilities in the marginal areas in northern Sweden needs to be deeper. It is also important to analyse is the possibilities for development and introduction of different methods into rural development.
8. National and local training activities are very important to create meeting-places for different actors, e.g. where village action groups and officials can meet.

The evaluation team stressed the importance to link analysis from different levels to create a view of what is realistic to bring about under the existing circumstances of structure and power. Their assessment is that the area studied is in great need of change related to national, regional and global levels. This change is needed to make the positive results of the programme

sustainable, and too increase space for local participation and development, including methods, aiming to change the negative trend the area show. The team also recommend the National Authority to establish a permanent analysing-team.

3.1.7 Processing at national level

The evaluations were commissioned by the Managing Authority and also processed within their normal routines. They were presented at the web-page and could be ordered from the MA. Press-releases were also made. The evaluations were sent to the Commission and distributed to MC, different important actors etc.

The evaluation as a development method was new in Sweden. Earlier it was common to report programme/project results in a more descriptive way and they were often also made by the persons involved. Evaluations made in a professional and systematic way was something new for Swedish local development activities. In fact these evaluations were “dutifully” made because they were a part of the LEADER concept, they had to be done within the programme.

The persons in charge of LEADER were informed through newsletters, web-page etc. about the evaluations and hopefully ordered and read them. At least the responsible ministry and national authorities had to take care of the recommendations etc. The MC had ongoing discussions with the evaluators, which were presented in the interim report, followed by the ex-post evaluation. As the MC did not exist when the ex-post evaluation was ready there was no organised follow up and discussions about the findings.

There is a time-problem related to processing of the evaluations and the usefulness in a short perspective. Even the interim evaluation was in practice too late to influence the ongoing LEADER II, and the ex-post evaluation was too late to give feed-back for those involved in LEADER II. E.g. the recommendation in the interim evaluation of developing qualitative indicators was not implemented in LEADER II. But in fact another recommendation on limited information co-ordination did influence the establishment of the LEADER network.

The experiences and recommendations from the interim evaluation and the experiences from the ex-post evaluation in progress did however influence and were taken into consideration when processing the LEADER + programme.

Two officials, “firespirits”, within the Managing Authority and the Ministry had in mind to mainstream the LEADER method into the Government bill on regional policy. They were involved in that work and could also bring some methods about 3-partnership, bottom-up etc in the draft, but as the Swedish Government did not have their own majority and was dependent of two smaller parties of which one insisted not to bring these methods in the bill, they were withdrawn.

3.2 Overall assessment

The usefulness and relevance of the the national evaluations for learning at local level seems to have had an indirect learning effect. Experiences and recommendations from the national evaluations have had a clear influence on some features in the LEADER + programme and implementation that effects the learning processes at local level. E.g. the claim that all LAGs should prepare an annual report in which the strategy and achievement of the LAG plan should be described and commented. These annual reports are aimed at highlighting and learning about how development plans based on LEADER principals can be implemented. Also in LEADER + the aim is to broaden the project data-base to have a learning process perspective by both describing the project and the experiences made.

NUTEK, the national authority in charge of making the final national report on LEADER II to the Commission made a special comment on this relevance-issue. They argued like this: The evaluations were not ready when LEADER + programme was processed and from that point of view results of evaluations seemed to be of no value, but they explained Glesbygdsverket during the time the evaluations were carried out had discussed with the evaluators and used their findings and views. NUTEK also mentioned that many of the problems which the evaluations stressed in the written reports were already known by Glesbygdsverket. The Managing Authority was well aware of the problems. Through the LAGs they were informed about the difficulties and also the possibilities.

This reflection show the difficulties to judge who really “owned” the origin of the problem, conclusion and solution. Perhaps many technical/administrative problems could have been solved without the evaluations, but when it comes to the analysis of development strategies, methods etc that can impact rural policy evaluations are of great value.

All evaluations, except for the LEADER II Network evaluation that was more of a short description, were professionally conducted and interesting; giving relevant recommendations and highlighting important problems, both technical problems and also difficulties in a wider sense in relation to national policy and global development.

I have studied the six evaluations mentioned earlier and what is striking when discussing with officials at the Managing Authority as well as the responsible Ministry is that none of them has analysed the whole bunch of evaluations in order to make conclusions and proposals to bring back to the national rural policy. The attempt to mainstream some LEADER elements in the Government bill on regional policy was ad hoc. The NUTEK report of LEADER II in Sweden is a well prepared summary, but as it is a report on a programme it was not designed to suggest changes in the national rural policy and that was also not their task. My recommendation for future evaluations has nothing to do with the evaluations as such, it is the processing of the results at national level that has to improve. The experiences of LEADER II have influenced

LEADER + , but the evaluations could be used for further discussions of the possibilities of mainstreaming the LEADER specificities in the development policy in general and how this can be done.

3.3 Capitalisation and recommendations

In the ex-post evaluations, the recommendations are based on the evaluations carried out but also the general knowledge of experimental programmes that the evaluation team possessed. The recommendations are divided in five categories; recommendations on the implementation, recommendations to LEADER +, overall recommendations, necessary conditions of experimental programmes and finally recommendations on the managing authorities (managing authority, MC and LAGs) and its structure and commission.

Implementation

- Managing the programme the Managing Authority and the LAGs ought to focus on follow-up and evaluation of closed and ongoing projects.
- A more systematic analysis of the implementation should be carried out, based on the information from evaluations of LAGs and programmes already available.
- The responsible Ministry and Glesbygdsverket ought to initiate methods how to use and bring back results and experiences to the policy making level, from the implementation process as well as the innovative projects.
- A functioning database for documentation of the implementation etc. must be set up.

LEADER +

- LEADER II LAGs not continuing in LEADER + ought to be given two years to close their programme.
- This could be arranged with resources from Objective 1 and 2.
- In the Objective 1 area where LEADER + is excluded a global grant-programme could be a solution,
- Managing LEADER +, besides administrative and economic management, ought to focus implementation of strategies and objectives in the LAG plans.
- A possible improvement of management could be “calls for proposals” which makes it easier for a LAG to manage the flow, administration and decision making of applications according to LEADER strategy, objectives and indicators.
- Developing of a more programme oriented view of development (instead of projects) by the involved public actors.

- The new programme have to be better established among public authorities at county level.
- For a better relation (co-operation and flow) between LEADER and other EU funded programmes the programme should give clear instructions and objectives.
- A need for developing methods for mainstreaming of equal opportunities, which also could be used in other structural fund programmes.
- A claim on the LAG officials to have good administration and economy-competence.
- A functioning database for documentation of the implementation etc. must be developed.

Overall recommendations

- Introduce qualitative indicators at all levels.
- The quantitative objectives should not be superior to qualitative objectives.
- The qualitative objectives should be set up at all levels with connected indicators.
- MC and Managing Authority should make the programme with its objectives, strategies and measures deeply rooted in authorities, organisations etc involved at regional and national level.

Necessary conditions

- Management takes time – Managing Authority and the LAGs must be given enough resources to fulfil their tasks.
- The officials must concentrate on implementing plans, projects etc. The administration and funding systems have to be easily functioning.
- Only the two last years in LEADER II were effective time for implementing the programme, plans and projects. This was not enough time for a sustainable establishment of LEADER method in the areas concerned. The LAGs should be given opportunities to continue their activities in LEADER + or in other programmes.
- The LEADER method and programme ought to be well known and accepted at all levels to ensure the projects to focus on the innovative objectives. Until now, the projects have been focusing more on traditional rural development areas. The bottom up approach has been very clear through the whole implementation, but has not fully supported the innovative objectives as these were not understood to be the main objectives at local level.

Managing

- Visualise the traditional rural actors' view of development-needs.
- The rural actors have to analyse their own activities in relation to the objectives of the programme; to identify own needs and find out how they could fit in the programme.
- MC and MA have to be organised to focus on the results both on programme level and LAG level, making clear distinction between how objectives, strategies and measures are achieved.
- The LAGs have to constantly follow the achievement of the plans/strategies and the projects. The MA have to insure that this is done.
- MA should make corrections in one way or another when limits occur according to the planned results and objectives.
- The main responsibility of dissemination and influence should rest on the MA, even if some information tasks are delegated to e.g. the LEADER Network. The MA should also be responsible for analysing of what kind of change in rural policy should be proposed based on experiences of the implementation of LEADER programme. The LAGs should have the responsibility to disseminate and bring back the results to actors at local level. All levels/actors involved in LEADER should take an active interest in the results. That is an important part in disseminating and influencing the activities.

(See also corresponding grid)

4. General appreciation

4.1 General appreciation of the LEADER II initiative

The main outcome according to my opinion was the empowerment and increased competence among the local people involved in managing and participating in LAGs and projects, and the opportunities for them to meet in different networks, seminars and conferences was a very important tool. Another important circumstance was the established contacts between people from different levels. LEADER enabled “fire-spirits” from all levels (from EU level to village level) and from different sectors (voluntary, private and public) to work together. It was obvious that those contacts played a role in creating the very positive feeling of belonging to the “LEADER family” or the “LEADER spirit” as some of the people interviewed named it. Perhaps the national LEADER programme, the MA, the MC, the LAGs, and the evaluations etc. should more than what was done have stressed these unique elements and the other LEADER specificities.

Even though the evaluations very much focused on serious problems and recommendations how to avoid or overcome these obstacles, the interviews showed people with a great enthusiasm for the LEADER method. The problems faced did not destroy their trust in the LEADER method, in their opinion it was not the LEADER method but the traditional structure that should be changed.

A problem with evaluations is that they naturally evaluate the outcomes in relation to the programme. But in these evaluations where the methods were in focus it would have been interesting with assessments comparing the LEADER method with methods used e.g. in Objective 5b and 6, with traditional national methods for rural development and also with methods used in the voluntary village action movement.

A question discussed in Sweden when introducing LEADER was whether it was fair to support 12 LAGs and leave the rest of the Swedish rural areas behind or with the same total amount of money support as many village partnerships as possible. Now, when the Government has excluded former Objective 6 from LEADER + this question can be on the agenda again, but put in a different way. The challenge then is how to implement the LEADER method without a LEADER programme; how to mainstream the principles to the rural development activities at national, regional, municipal and village level.

Strong recommendations

The focus group meeting was one of the highlights in this evaluation work. I strongly recommend a focus group meeting should be offered to all LAGs as a part of the evaluation process and learning process, planned from the beginning and funded in the LAG budget. As both the evaluations carried out and the focus group stressed the lack of “LEADER understanding” I also strongly agree with the focus group recommendation to educate actors at

all levels involved in LEADER in the LEADER method so that they also can act according to the principles in the programme they are a part of.

Most astonishing

The most astonishing experience was reading the evaluations, there was so much knowledge and so many experiences. The evaluations constitute a great potential for those who would like to analyse rural development and make proposals to improve the traditional development policy. Until now it seems like the evaluation results have settled “between the chairs”.

4.2 Critical reflection of the evaluation process

- It is not easy to ask questions about a programme that closed several years ago.
- There were far too many questions to the LAGs.
- The factual questions took too long time in relation to the time planned; three different funding authorities and the data was not delivered or earlier published for the categories asked for in our evaluation; e.g. LAG level.
- To collect factual comparable data should not be the task of the evaluators at EU level, the data should be provide by the Observatory or by the Commission via national Managing Authority.
- More time should be planned for the geographical evaluator to comment on national evaluations etc. This part should be in the very beginning of the evaluation.
- The focus-group, TNC and CEA studies were like a learning process for those interviewed, and it was very much appreciated as well as it was interesting for me as an evaluator. The guidance for the focus group and the two studies were very instructive, easy to understand and worked out very good in practise.
- Many thanks to the core-team for a stimulating and interesting co-operation.

SUMMARY APPRECIATION FROM THE REGIONAL EVALUATION REPORT**Operational Programme: LEADER II Objective 6**

	Implementation (methods, practices, limits, obstacles)	Intended or unintended effects	Recommendations
Area-based approach	It has been very clear in the implementation	The projects have been more like traditional development projects to meet the local needs	–
Bottom-up approach	<p>It has been very clear in the implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ voluntary work and private work were accepted as private co-financing ▪ based on earlier mobilisation which also developed during the start up of LEADER 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The projects have been more like traditional development projects to meet the local needs ▪ The voluntary work and entrepreneurs using their own working time as private co-financing have injected rural development with considerable resources. ▪ Many thousands of people engaged ▪ Empowerment and increased knowledge ▪ Women strongly engaged ▪ Readiness and consciousness reinforced to take on local responsibility and future development work 	–
The local group	LAG autonomy in relation to traditional public actors was a new element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The autonomy made it difficult to establish a close co-operation at county level ▪ The autonomy – but not traditionally based in a democratic sense – also caused problems with co-financing ▪ The private sector participation in the partnerships were limited. 	–
Innovation	Positive possibilities to fund ideas and projects not streamlined for traditional measures could be funded.	Has not been fully implemented (see area-based and bottom-up) bottom-up, local mobilisation and to start and run projects were in focus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Call for proposals can ensure a more close relation to the strategy, objectives and indicators ▪ develop a more programme orientated view of development, instead of projects oriented, by the involved actors

	Implementation (methods, practices, limits, obstacles)	Intended or unintended effects	Recommendations
Multisectoral integration	The partnership model has been established.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Farmers and businesses have not participated as much as planned. ▪ Co-operation between local actors and municipalities have developed 	–
Networking	LEADER II Network was established and good relations developed between the LAGs and the network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More seminars were organised than planned ▪ Facilitated the implementation of the programme and inspired finding solutions of rural area problems. ▪ A fast channel to the whole rural Sweden ▪ Initiated and run the programme Method LEADER. ▪ unclear roles/responsibilities according analysis and bringing back (influence) experiences to the policy making level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More clear roles; MA keeps the role to analyse and influence, the network handles the information
Trans-national cooperation	Extensive co-operation but only a few projects at C-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less focus on business projects than expected ▪ important source for stimulation, knowledge and experiences how to implement LEADER 	–
Decentralised management and financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The LAG autonomy – not based on democratic principles – sometimes caused problems in relation to traditional elected local and regional actors and the voluntary sector as well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ complex and slow funding administration with three different funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MA and LAG must be given enough resources ▪ funding adm. problems solved in LEADER+
Other important issues	–	–	–

Model of implementation

