

II.10 GEOGRAPHICAL REPORT ITALY

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1. General introduction

To carry out the tasks of the ExPost Evaluation of the LEADER II EU Initiative in Italy, the following working team was organized:

- Rossella Almanza and Carlo Ricci: They were in charge of the evaluation team. They supervised the overall organisation of the evaluation tasks, and coordinated the rest of the evaluation team. In particular they took care directly of interviews at program level, focus groups animation (with the assistance of Danilo Ciampella and Bruno Coletta), case studies on trans-national cooperation and geographical report.
- Bruno Coletta and Vincenzo Molinari followed the LAGs in order to receive the answers of the Q-202 questionnaires.
- Alessandra Pesce prepared the Cost Effectiveness Analysis on Casizolou cheese.
- Danilo Ciampella supported the group in research of documentation.
- Kristiina Salmela supplied language assistance.
- The whole group was involved in numerous and repeated contacts with Regional and National Authorities in order to relieve data from all the Italian LEADER II programs.

The evaluation work started right after the official communication of the approval of the ex-post evaluation partnership by the EU Commission. The work team immediately has established contacts with the program authorities both at national and regional level with the purpose to inform them around the activities of evaluation in progress and to require their collaboration to track down the documents and the necessary information. Such contacts occurred both formally (through letters) and through informal telephone contacts with the different responsible officials. Following step consisted in contacting LAGs that would be asked to participate directly in the evaluation by answering the Q-202 questionnaire. This was made through intensive phone contacts, presentation letters and delivery of a copy of the questionnaire and guidelines to complete it. In order to motivate participation and elicit interest of LAGs, it was emphasised the importance of the work to give answers useful to design the future EU rural development policies and programs. Parallely with the contacts with LAGs, interviews at program level have been effected. The final phase of the work concerned the focus groups organization and the realization of case studies.

Altogether the evaluation work effected in Italy has included the following tasks:

- General scanning of all the Italian LEADER II Operational Programs (grid OP-102 and grid L-1000) and many connected documents including all the evaluations and final reports, with contacts with program managers to collect the available information and data.

- Detailed analysis of 5 Italian OP according to a standardized analysis grid for data.
- Interviews with LEADER interlocutors at national and regional level.
- Verification, regional analysis and synthesis.
- Analysis of documents, organisation of interviews and written questioning (distribution, animation, collection and verification of Q 202-questionnaire) of 40 selected LAGs and collective bodies in five regions: Calabria, Toscana, Emilia-Romagna, Piemonte and Sardegna.
- Participatory evaluation of LAGs: Organization of focus groups in 5 LAGs in each sample region.
- Preparation of three case studies (two on trans-national cooperation and one cost effectiveness analysis).
- Preparation of the present Geographical Report.

2 Report on Focus Group

a) VALLE DEL CRATI (CALABRIA)

a) 1 Introduction

LAG name	LAG Valle del Crati
Place and date	Torano Scalo (CS) – 06/11/2003
LAG interlocutors	
A	Mrs. Fagiani – President
B	Mrs. Annamaria Rosa – animator and secretary of the LAG
C	Mr. Riccardo Bruno – technical responsible of the LAG
D	Mr. Ettore Chimento – councillor of the commune of Luzzi and member of the local board
E	Mrs. Marinella Tedeschi – member of the local board
F	Mr. Giovanni Boscarelli – beneficiary (farmer and breeder)
Evaluator	Mrs. Rossella Almanza
Assistant	Mr. Danilo Ciamparella

The first contacts took place between Mrs. Rossella Almanza and Mrs. Valeria Fagiani. The reason to select this LAG as a focus group derived from the double need from one side, to substitute the LAG « Alto Jonio Cosentino », already selected as a focus object, because its president had too many business engagements and therefore would not have been able to meet us before the end of June, and from the other side to acquire a new LAG within the regional sample because the LAG « Presila Krotonese » did not answer to the questionnaires Q202 (as a matter of fact, the evaluators received this documentation afterwards).

The members of the LAG « Valle del Crati » provided an interesting documentation containing :

- a descriptive videocassette about the area and about some realised interventions; it was utilized by the president for the initial recreation about the LAG's history ;
- the final report about the activities carried out during the Leader II;
- a sampling of the cultural productions realized with the project ; in particular is to point out the publication edited by the LAG and the University of Calabria entitled « Environment – landscape – territory – Val di Crati ».

The focus group performed as follows :

- 1 After the presentations, the evaluator illustrated briefly the contents and the aims of ex-post evaluation of Leader II in order to contextualize the day's job referring to the entire process.
- 2 All the participants presented themselves and described briefly their activity and the role played during the Leader II experience.
- 3 Then the evaluator invited the president of the LAG (Mrs. Valeria Fagiani) to « guide » a « recalling » about the Leader II experience through the presentation of the main stages of this experience ; this activity was carried out with the help of the realized CD-ROM.
- 4 Moreover the evaluator invited all the participants to intervene and asked them all the questions : For what the realization of Leader II could be remembered ? In which fields/sectors/behaviours was it mostly impressive? What kind of continuity will have the action carried out in these years with Leader II?.

Through the dialogue that followed some issues on change which were felt as the most significant ones were identified by the group:

- 1) For the first time the territory identified within the area of the LAG was able to express specific and autonomous development lines.
- 2) The local community acquired major confidence in the institutions and in the development tools.
- 3) The dialogue and the integration found space within the system of the local institutions and the entrepreneurial world

The group had therefore worked around these " key matters", in order to explore mechanisms, driving or inhibiting forces, specific ways of expression of the operational principles, criteria and recommendations.

a) 2 Description of partnership and activities

The LAG "Val di Crati" was constituted as a not-profit making cooperative association in 1996 to realize specifically the LEADER II programme in the area of Crati. The social base is formed by 11 members, public and private ; two mountain communities and various trade associations joined to the LAG without becoming members of it in all respects.

The area of reference for the interventions foreseen by LAP extends for 387.85 Km² between the urban area of Cosenza and the Sibaritide. It is characterised by a precious, but scarcely safeguarded, woodland (beechwoods, Turkey oaks, chestnuts) and environment that presents, in some cases, forms of environmental deterioration determined by the same geomorphic

conformation and by anthropic interventions. The structure of the territory is strongly marked by the course of the river that shows dishomogenous situations on its opposite riversides, also in terms of economical development : some communes – situated on the left side of the River Crati at the altitude between 450-600 metres – classified in the 2nd category, present a socio-economic situation more underdeveloped in respect of those communes classified in the 1st category, located on the right side of the River Crati. The expansions and the most recent interventions, moreover, were localized, progressively always more towards the valley, and favoured by the absence of a precise development plan; thence it arises disordered settlements, characterised by the contemporary presence of residential and productive functions and remaining agricultural areas.

The primary sector is still the most important of the area with the 23,5% about the employees and is characterised by the backwardness of management and productions methods and by the poor mechanization of the farms that are more or less small or micro ones. Only few farms practice modern agriculture. The principal productions of the area are : oil (presence of a IGT (=typical geographical indication) ; wine (1 DOC = denomination of controlled origin); market gardening and orchards. At national level is relevant the saddle-horse breeding. Significant are also the traditional handicrafts : the art of making lutes (school of Bisognano), pottery, wrought iron manufacturing and weaving.

The valorisation of such local specificities was the strong point on which the LAP worked in order to stimulate the economical development, also by taking into the consideration a certain propensity towards the small and micro enterprises demonstrated during the last years from the part of this territory.

The Local Action Plan LEADER II realised by the LAG bases on the following objectives :

- valorize the rural environment through integrated interventions in different sectors;
- reach acceptable levels and quality of life;
- create the basis for the diffusion of an environmental culture lacking in the whole area.

The operative strategy adopted in order to reach the described objectives foresaw the following actions:

- Interventions of environmental valorization in synergy with various sectors (rural tourism, cultural heritage, promotion of typical products) with the spin-offs for the employment;
- Technical support (information desks) for small and medium concerns of the manufacturing and agro-industrial sectors targeted to the valorization and the diffusion of the typical local products;

- Promotion of interventions for environmental and cultural sensitizing in more internal centres targeted to the development of the rural tourism;
- Courses for young people to learn the traditional handicraft forms.

a) 3 Hypotheses on the main issues concerning the Leader II implementation in the area

Hypothesis N.1 a new territorial ambit, endowed with history and identity, appeared on the scene of the regional programming

The poor relationships between the two riversides of the River Crati represent a historical custom that had influenced the development of the settlements present on both sides of this river : the river was considered more a separating element than unifying. This territory, included between the strong area represented by the conurbation of Cosenza and the wide, agricultural plain of the Sibaritide, was always, until the most recent planning experiences, aggregated alternatively to the urban or to the agricultural system, by sharing involuntarily the respective destinies. In this sense the Leader programme was an occasion of liberation for the area of the Media Valle del Crati that finally was able to establish the independent and specific development directions : the LAG was the first reality to call the forces of this territory for the self-planning.

It is opportune to highlight the prevailing condition of passiveness of the territory, the scarce habit to elaborate plans and strategies, that made it necessary to have, in the first place, a substantial consulting contribute and animation activity in order to guide the planning phase, shared with a gradual and always more awareness by the local actors. Once passed the start-up phase the participation was so wide to get also the same beneficiaries involved in the planning of the single interventions.

The general conviction was that the reason for the unrealized development of the region was in the first place more a cultural problem than economical, the LAG and its animators provided for a rereading in a positive way about the territory and the geographic elements present there by enhancing the similarities between two riversides and by interpreting the differences, where present, as a common heritage to be considered a source for mutual enrichment. In general it was tried to catch the weaker realities represented by the communes of the 2nd category in front of those more dynamic and productive realities of the valley floor. In this context and as an excellent example, it is significant to point out the presence of an ancient Albanian community settled on the left riverside of the Crati, still today not very inclined to a real integration : the intervention of the LAG to valorize the age-old tradition of the embroidery was important above all in order to break the isolation and the typical distrustfulness of those realities and the hope to see them always more involved with the life of the territory.

The evidence attributed to the specific territorial reality, united to the work of the LAG's animators that knew to realize a good involvement of the local actors in the planning process, permitted not only to recognize the existent resources but also to attribute them the right value: local productions, traditional trades, landscape elements considered always passively as a collective heritage with poor valorization perspectives were finally perceived as resources on which to intervene and to be able to count on in order to generate a new development process. At the same time, in working on the existing resources and in considering duly the needs of the local population it was possible to elaborate a strategy capable also to generate new forms of coordination and of net-working among the actors, condition strongly innovative for this territory.

The different participants of this focus group agreed greatly to recognize that the obtained considerable results, synthesized here above, were strongly favoured explicitly from the territorial Leader planning that, in the contrary of the previous experiences of planning, was able to put unitary and specific emphasis on this territory.

It was, anyway, pointed out with regret that this lesson learned, by the LAG and by the territory, was not acquired in the same way by the region that in the new planning for 2000-2006 defined again zonings according to the logic completely unconnected with the vocations and with the endogenous forces of the areas. It is, in fact, precised that in the integrated projects included in the POR (= Regional Operative Plan) the methodology and the experience of LEADER II were only formally of reference for the planning. Also the new zoning foreseen for LEADER+, not only provides a substantial enlargement of the territory of the LAG "Valle del Crati", but most of all corresponds to an area on which will be carried out more than 4-5 integrated projects. The reading of the territory is notably more complicated and a return to a centralized political management took place. It is still impossible to perceive a plan if not as an increase only in quantitative sense, without comprehending that the environmental sustainability of the interventions in a long term will be the discriminating element between the winner areas and the loser areas.

Hypothesis N.2 the local community acquired more trust in the institutions and in the development tools

The area in which the LAG carried out its activity is characterized by a strong cultural inertia and by an endemic distrust in the public institutions. The area is in financial difficulties which reflect the incapability from the part of the bodies of the public administrations to comprehend the real needs of the territory and the consequent impossibility to assist these needs correctly; from the other part the old-age divisions, the exaggerated local pride and a certain passivity prevented the local forces from the autonomous mobilization in sight of the attainment of common objectives.

In this socio-economic and cultural context the specificities of the “LEADER II” programme were adopted entirely by the LAG that intervened in the area by operating as a real and proper development agent, above all through an assiduous informative activity and a territorial animation.

The LAG in question is particularly proud of the fact that it managed to create a good relationship with the entrepreneurial realities and with the trade associations. At the beginning these last were very distrustful and interpreted the Leader programme as one of the public interventions from the top not able to meet the real territorial needs. The territorial animation and sensitizing performance realized by the LAG managed to gain credibility towards the programme and the persons who were carrying it out coherently in the area; and another important fact was that after the initial sense of distrust, progressively took place a willingness to collaborate that was concretized then with numerous interventions realized and with good response for the local operators

The result of this approach was the creation of a new atmosphere of trust in the institutions and in the development tools. The LEADER method, in fact, is able to ignore some bureaucratic procedures that make the realization of any kind of action difficult and slow. With the activation of the programme Leader, the territory perceived a certain difference in the management of public funds, particularly in the method: definitely a certain change was perceived from the part of the inhabitants of the territory, particularly what concerns the clearness in the realization of the interventions, the clear rules and the efficiency. This begot trust in methods and new persons, who did not share the age-old and predominant logic of patronage favours in the area, but favoured a new kind of positive approach from the part of the local populations towards the institutions. The LAG precises, however, that the four-year period of the realization of the LEADER programme risks to be too short in order to allow to get over those historical, behavioural conditions.

Hypothesis N. 3 The dialogue and the integration found space within the system of the local institutions and the entrepreneurial world

With the LEADER II planning the environmental and cultural specificities of the area in question were taken for the first time into consideration. Around them it was possible to mobilize the existing forces in the area and from this identification of typical products, traditional handicraft manufacturing, environmental resources and local culture was originated the label “Valle del Crati” that meant for the area a passage from a condition of “not existence” to its valorization.

The LEADER method naturally favoured a planning for the first time integrated, harmonized and shared by the local people: the system of the programme realization foresaw the comparison, the constant and systematic verification about the validity of the interventions proposed with the local population and eventually the predisposition of harmonized and shared variants. From the

information desk, “ a real and appropriate open door to the territory” and therefore a contact place between the LAG and the local operators, with the passing of time the LAG’s office was considered a privileged place to meet: the entrepreneurs, who did not know each other, were able to verify to have in common same needs and strategies. In the LAG’s office were put into effect real and appropriate collaborations that then followingly developed toward interventions marked by the tendency to form associations and organization of food chains, in the area hostile towards any kind of activity to form associations. A LEADER effect was the formation of two associations for the protection and of a PIF (= integrated territorial project) in the fields of agriculture and agroindustry (PIAR = integrated plan for the rural areas) and PIF (= integrated territorial project) for the fig of the Cosenza area).

The activating of LEADER, moreover, gave rise to many behavioural changes also within the local institutions, in particular within the communes of the area, generally very little inclined not only to have close relationships among them but also to be compared with each other. The representative of a commune of the LAG (the participant n° D) precised that “ the collective awareness noticed the necessity/opportunity to dialogue with the other communes: the LEADER experience gave birth to a district of communes and to an association of “Valle del Crati”. Also a new mentality took place that searches for the complementarities: none of the communes would nowadays create on its territory an activity present in the neighbouring areas because then it would be a question about a “specialization” of other commune.

a) 4 Conclusions and recommendations

The role of the LAG appears decisive for the effective implementation of the operational principles because the LEADER approaches were not at all habitual for the area and were introduced gradually during the course of the programme activating. For nothing was granted the delimitation of the LAG area, traditionally considered a “peripheral area”, appendice of other realities.

The possibility to put into practice the operational principles appears, anyway, in this context, strictly connected to the capability of the LAG – or of the development agency – to realize a strong animation action and acquisition of consent around the fundamental strategies. It emerges from the considerations explicitly made within the focus group that the “willingness of renovation demonstrated by the LAG” could have been transmitted with major facility and success if the region would have offered a wider support.

The LAG highlighted that the fundamental element for the programme’s success is the necessity to have “ a good and solid partnership characterized by a good internal balance”.

During the conversations was principally named the role of the region. The disappointment was emphasized towards the actual regional planning that does not seem to have really interiorized

the LEADER experience. This consideration is verifiable in the actual planning. Such a condition does not guarantee the action continuity of LEADER II that, instead, still needs reinforcement if you do not want to make the carried out work fruitless.

The LAG states that the main problem of the territory of the Valle del Crati is more of cultural character than economical. In this sense it appears strategic to intervene by modifying the atavic behavioural rules, rooted both in the entrepreneurial world and in the institutions.

It seems evident that this is a pre-condition for any type of development programme and it was the field on which the LAG intervened prevalingly, although, as it is natural, the realization of the programme also pursued and obtained concrete results in terms of physical realizations of the projects. The LAG, in fact, carried out most of all material interventions because the local actors, and in the first place the trade associations, had the necessity to see physical realizations in order to trust in the programme and in the LAG.

In short, for the next future, the planning still needs to invest strongly on the animation that should in particular be aimed to diffuse a mentality of productive chain, by starting from the work carried out since here and by stimulating the relationships between the operators already activated.

b) DELTA 2000 (Emilia Romagna)

b) 1 Introduction

LAG name	Delta 2000
LAG interlocutors	Paola Palmonari ; Giancarlo Malacarne
Date:	The meeting was held in Ostellato on 9th June 2003. It started at 10 a.m. and ended at 4 p.m.
Participants:	
A Giancarlo Malacarne	Responsible for tourism of the LAG 'Delta 2000'. As a first thing he highlighted the fact to not have utilized the Leader as a simple funding instrument but as a formation process for a development agency.
B Roberto Ugolini	Beneficiary entrepreneur and owner of a camping place. Mr. Ugolini is very satisfied because the participation to this project marked a turning point of 360° for his business activity, in synergy with the other local leading actors.
C Silvia Forlani	Ex collaborator of the LAG, at the moment responsible for formation and tourism. Mrs. Forlani offered support for the beneficiaries and was one of the four animators working for the LAG
D Menotti Passarella	Tourist guide specialized in birdwatching involved from time to time in different initiatives activated
E Angela Pezzoni	Leader of a cooperative for environmental education called Atlantide (this cooperative operates in Cervia, outside of the Leader area, and although it was very involved in the most important activities of the LAG, it did not benefit from any kind of funding)
F Stefania Loia	Colleague of Mrs. Angela Pezzoni
Evaluator	Carlo Ricci
Assistant	Bruno Coletta

The preliminary contacts took place between Mr. Carlo Ricci e Mrs. Paola Palmonari (administrative responsible) who, together with Mr. Giancarlo Malacarne, took care to organize the meeting and to invite the participants.

The members of the LAG 'Delta' provided an interesting documentation, including:

- the report about the activities performed during the Leader II;
- a settle of samples about the cultural productions realized together with the project;
- documentations concerning the local self-evaluation;
- documents relative to the project of trans-national cooperation.

Thanks to this material, together with the replies provided from the Q202, the evaluators were able to learn to know the history of the LAG and of the Local Action Plan. The Local Action Plan LEADER II realized by the 'DELTA 2000' for the area Basso Ferrarese (in the province of Ferrara), intervened initially over an area of seven municipalities. This territory is strongly characterized by the great delta of the river Po. The delta, anyhow, comprises a wider territory that includes part of the provinces of Ravenna and of Rovigo (Venetian Region).

As you can figure out from the participant list, for various reasons regional officers and local administrators did not participate to the meeting. The group represented different kinds of figures (animators, technicians and beneficiaries) prevalingly connected to the tourist and environmental sectors. This aspect, did not compromise the interest of the meeting because the tourist and environmental valorization of the delta of the river Po was the "leading idea" on which was designed and implemented the Local Action Plan.

The Focus group operated in a following way:

- 1 All the participants introduced themselves and described briefly their activities and the role played by them during this LEADER 2 experience.
- 2 The evaluator illustrated shortly the ex-post evaluation of the Leader II in order to contextualize the day's job referring to the entire process.
- 3 Then the evaluator invited the responsible of the LAG (Mr. Giancarlo Malacarne) to lead a "recalling" about the Leader II experience with the help of a presentation. The evaluator specified that the presentation should not be for the benefit of the external evaluators, but for the benifit of the participants in order to "recall" those common experiences shared years ago. He also invited as well the other participants to intervene and asked them all these questions: For what the realization of the LEADER 2 could be remembered? In which fields/sectors/behaviours it was mostly impressive? Where the impact was inferior to the expectations?

Through the dialogue that followed some issues on change which were felt as the most significant ones have been identified by the group:

- 1) The perception of the territory with its specific characteristics and development potentials got stronger among the public actors as well as among the private ones. They considered it as a system of resources on which is possible to intervene in an integrated way.
- 2) Public and private actors experimented and learned methods of local networking by producing coordinated action able to improve the competitiveness of the local system.
- 3) The GAL assumed the function of development agency for the delta of the river Po.

The group therefore worked around these "key matters", in order to explore mechanisms, driving or inhibiting forces, specific ways of expression of the operational principles, criteria and recommendations.

b) 2 Description of partnership and activities

The LAP was based on the objective to valorize in an integrated and coherent way the resources and the territory of the Basso Ferrarese in order to prevent phenomena of abandoning from the part of the local population, especially from the part of the young people, that often do not manage to find out the "environmental, cultural and economical" conditions sufficient to justify to get rooted with their own territory and collectivity.

The plan was concentrated on the qualification and promotion of the tourist, environmental and agricultural products. It was determined to reach first the setting up of a package of qualified products and more on the whole of the Park territory in its complex. The interventions were consequently concentrated on the prevailing economical sectors: the agriculture and the tourism.

The LAP of the LEADER II intended to pursuit two specific objectives:

1. to promote stronger relationships between the resources and the more important economical activities of the territory;
2. to promote an atmosphere of stronger and stable trust and collaboration between the economic operators and the local institutions.

The adopted operative strategy in order to reach the described objectives was:

- to make more efficient and coherent the relation between the agriculture and the environment;

- to make more articulated, capable and rich the relation between the tourism and the environment;
- to improve and to qualify the relation between the landscape and the environment.

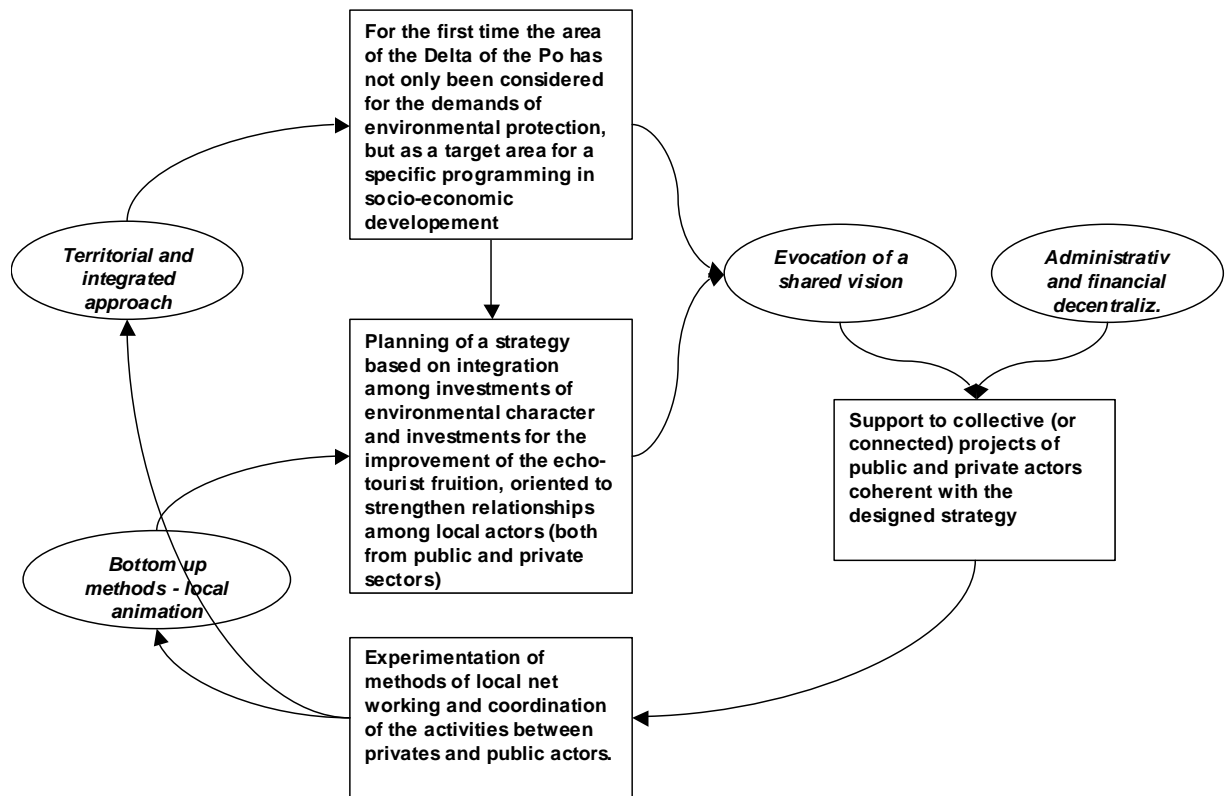
b) 3 *Hypoteses on the main issues concerning the Leader II implementation in the area*

Hypothesis N.1 The common perception of local potential increased.

The combination of the territorial and intergrated approach and the participative technics based on the local animation allowed to perceive the potential and the identity of the territory in a new way: in case of the delta of the river Po, for the first time the area was not considered only from the point of view of the needs of the environmental safeguard, but as a territorial system of reference for a specific socio-economic programmation.

According to A “ ... thanks to the Leader the perception about the territory changed from the part of many subjects. The arrangement is now more complete and the reflector is pointed to light the emergencies of the territory which are considered very important and a decision made to do an integrated project by putting the resources to a system”.

In this way, particularly performing on the needs of the local actors it was possibile to elaborate a shared strategy, that facilitates the promotion of initiatives and of coordination and net-working among the actors and the phenomenon of learning that generates from these experiences by strengthening the identification with the territory and by improving the capacity to promote integrated strategies.



Naturally this stimulus to work together was facilitated by the administrative and financial decentralization because the requirements of consistency with the strategy and connection among more subjects became important selection criteria for the projects.

Determinative for the efficaciousness of the process was the individuation of a largely shared vision about the future development of the area

Hypothesis N.2 Public and private actors learned to work together to improve the competitiveness of the local system

The public and private actors started a common programming and it became a diffused habit to work together:

- the local public administrations adopted partecipative working methods;
- the local actors created new tourist products based on the environmental fruition and on the net-working activities among the economic operators.

This was possible thanks to the combination of two main functions of the LAG:

- Animator and networker that work constantly for the facilitation of the contacts between the operators;
- Manager of financial resources that encourages concretely the projects coherent with the strategy and innovative in method (collective dimension) and in contents (new tourist environmental products for example).

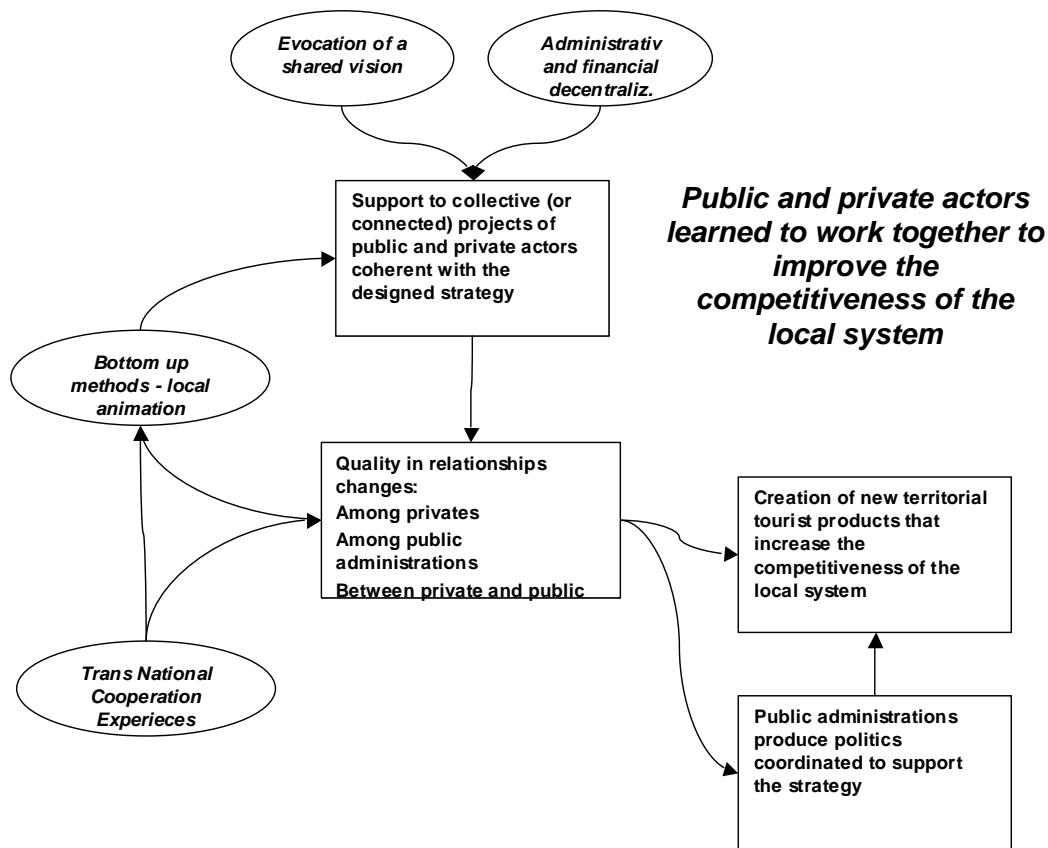
This “experimentation” made with the Leader II produced effective behavioural changes. From this point of view the reply of the private was perhaps better, as B states: “... the way to relate among themselves in order to face together the market changed completely between the economical actors. From the point of view of the investments, we private operators built up territorial communication instruments in which the single companies were only a part of territorial networking system. The Leader helped us to understand that it is necessary to sell the territory and it permitted us among the other things to carry out efficacious promotion also to smaller companies. The manifestations were synergic also with the other public bodies

The reply of the public administrations was slower also because their times are slower. But they adopted the same coordination practises for the interventions.

The last interesting aspect of the local networking is that to create a connection between the public and the private, as E notices (from the cooperative for tourist services): “... the work of the LAG facilitated the relationship with the local administrations. This meant to relate with the higher part of the territory of the delta of the river PO, that really important one under the naturalistic aspect. We were facilitated with the building up of the product both with the public and the private.

This stimulus to the coordination produced concrete effects in terms of adjustment and marketing of innovative tourist offers, as E remarks: “ We averagely, during the period of excursions, verified a very very notable peak of growth of presences, about 27.000. In that period we had good 93 collaborators

In this work, the trans-national cooperation gave a noticeable contribute in terms of know-how and innovation (the LAG cooperated with an Irish group for the adjustment and marketing of the bird-watching products). E describes: “...We had at disposal a new, great product created by the trans-national cooperation on which to invest and to count on also in future”.



This change happened in local relationships can be interpreted as a learning phenomenon because it demonstrated its capacity to keep going on also after the Leader. The following was confirmed by all the participants: “ The operators went on working together, something that was unthinkable before, and it was also functional for other initiatives. These agreements (those that took place with the Leader) led to the real and proper temporary associations of enterprises in order to realize other initiatives. The territory had an increase of collaboration in the sector of environmental tourism that obtained good results which then had effect distributed and acknowledged over the whole territory..... nowadays, who has money to invest, pushes himself and obtains results.First the communes worked only for themselves, but now their approach is more territorial.....”.

In order to describe these phenomena the local animation and the adoption of bottom up methods revealed to be as one of the concurrent factors. It is anyway good to highlight that the constant operating of the animation represents, in effect, the essential condition for success.

More than on specific methods, the efficaciousness of this activity depends, in order of importance:

- on the motivation of the animators, on their identification with the vision and the mission of the LAG;
- on the knowledge of the territory, understood above all, as local subjects that interact in a system;
- on the synergy with the work of administrative and financial decentralization in which the results can increase or decrease the animator's credibility.

Hypothesis N.3 The LAG assumed the function of Delta's local development agency

The method and the adopted approach, together with the obtained results allowed to the LAG to assume the function of local development agency. According to A: " The LAG in a long term transformed into a development agency that worked with the local operators, also thanks to the attitude of local bodies. So they kept on working not only with Leader but also with other initiatives that were assisted from every point of view, starting from that planning one..... Another role of the LAG is to do in that way that everything around it keeps on working and substantially the LAG imposed itself as a meeting place for the public and the private, where it is possible to discuss and to confront each other. The LAG also assumed the role of "sensitizer of the public administrations."

These last involved the LAG also in other initiatives that required an ability of local animation.

The involvement of the administrations needs anyhow more time and work, it is necessary that in some way takes place a process of acknowledgement of legitimacy for the role of the LAG.

In effect, the LAG appears on the territory without a proper identity, so it is easy that it is perceived as a forward project diffused by some local actors. With time and work this perception changes and the local function, that represents the whole territory, is recognized.

This is happened to the 'Delta' cooperative during the passage from the Leader II to the Leader +.

b) 4 Conclusions and recommendations

ONE

An important, propelling factor was represented from the strong identification of the territory with the development vision

but

the vision of the delta of the river Po belongs to a wider area than that of the Leader II (its borders were defined within the provincial territory). When on the territorial marketing projects were under the work this “geographical imbalance” manifested its limits. This question was solved with the Leader + by extending the area to cover the whole regional delta and by starting interterritorial cooperation actions with the Venetian delta.

TWO

The integrated approach (between sectors, kinds of action and local actors) determines the creation of new relationships or better said of relationship established on new bases. This helps the promotion of innovative actions. The LAG manages to become a “guarantor” of such relationships; i.e. guarantees that they develop so that they can carry out a specific mission.

but

the multi-sectorial approach of the Leader II, where the “priorities” were proposed like a grid of measures and actions, can offer space for local lobbies that try to allocate financial resources also for initiatives with no priority (or strong coherence) in respect of the development strategy.

THREE

The possibility to combine territorial and integrated, bottom up approaches, and administrative and financial decentralization produces powerful synergies to stimulate the innovation and the participation to the project.

but

the decentralization can produce boomerang effects because the length of times jeopardizes the local credibility of the LAG and foments conflicts, meanwhile the excessive bureaucratic load requires human resources that will be taken away from the the animation.

FOUR

The Leader approach helps to set up a local function of development agency

but

this process requires inevitably a great investment in terms of animation and a time of necessary maturation until the local actors can recognize this role beyond the project.

It is necessary that within the administration of the programme would verify a learning process similar to the one that interests the LAG. The decentralization is a delicate and strategic function. In Emilia there were a good assistance to the LAGs from the part of the region, but it is still necessary to draw lessons from the past in order to find a right balance in terms of:

- streamlining of bureaucratic procedures;
- shortening the times.

The system of decentralization of financial and administrative responsibilities (similar to a mini global grant that is typically Italian) is still considered valid. According to A: “.....It was an advantage, it allowed us to close a circle: from the animation to the allocation. Some problem is referable to the region that could, we hope for that, to speed up its procedures that evidently must be heavy for them. For instance, we started with the Leader+ some actions by taking out a loan for that. The same happened for the allocation of the 50 % in settlement of the Leader II contributions for the private. This all, I mean the delays, is not compatible with the territorial planning.”

A further worrisome element in terms of learning of the vertical partnership is that it looks out that in Leader+ all the attention is concentrated on the problems connected to the distribution of the financial resources (with increasing complexities); this makes to lose the sight of the LAG's role and the nature of its mission.

The actual inputs do not give the sensation that the management authorities are “learning organizations”.

The local work of a development project is a learning process:

- in the knowledge of the territory and the relationships that insist on it;
- in the ability to move inside the system (to animate, to manage the resources and the bureaucracy, to cultivate relations ecc.).

In order to reach interesting levels of quality a great investment on such elements is necessary.

So the main lesson here is that it is necessary to be able to capitalize this work in terms of learning of the organization (LAG). This learning capital can be acquired only in small part through traditional formation systems, it is mainly a question about a ‘learning by doing’.

c) GARFAGNANA (TOSCANA)

c) 1 Introduction

LAG name	GAL Garfagnana
LAG interlocutors	Stefano Stranieri
Date:	The meeting was held in Castelnuovo Garfagnana on 23rd June 2003. It started at 10 a.m. and ended at 4 p.m.
Participants:	
A Stefano Stranieri	He has been the LAG co-ordinator since the LEADER I.
B Luigi Favari	LAG's president. He was an animator during the LEADER I implementation. He is also a local administrator deputy in the local "Comunità Montana" (= municipalities association which is typical Italian institution gathering together communities of the mountainous areas)
C Paola Aloisi	She runs an agro-tourism business and was a beneficiary of LEADER II
D Stefano Marchi	He runs an agro-tourism business and was a beneficiary of LEADER II
E Sandro Pieroni	He was the co-ordinator of a local consortium "Garfagnana produce" formed by farmers (producers and agro-tourism entrepreneurs) during Leader II.
F Piero Biagioni	He is a consultant, strongly committed in projects for the development of the local culture, he is also an expert in projects held by public administrations.
G Donatella Ciofani	She is a student at the university of Pisa and has prepared a degree thesis on the Garfagnana LEADER II experience
H Irene Annuzzi	Researcher at the Pisa University in the department of economy of the agriculture of the agri-forest environment and the territory. The department had a contract with the LAG for the monitoring system.
Serena Da Prato	She's attending a stage in Garfagnana
Evaluator	Carlo Ricci
Assistant	Bruno Coletta

The preliminary contacts took place between Carlo Ricci and Stefano Stranieri (technical co-ordinator) who took care to organize the meeting and to invite the participants.

The LAG "Garfagnana" provided an interesting documentation, including:

- Report about the activities performed during the LEADER II;
- Study about the implementation of LEADER II in the area (elaborated in the ambit of preparing a degree thesis).

Thanks to this material, together with the replies provided from the Q202, the evaluators were able to learn to know the history of the LAG and of the Local Action Plan.

The Focus group operated in a following way:

- 1 All the participants introduced themselves and described briefly their activities and the role played by them during this LEADER II experience.
- 2 The evaluator illustrated shortly the ex-post evaluation of the LEADER II in order to contextualize the day's job referring to the entire process.
- 3 Then the evaluator invited the co-ordinator of the LAG (Mr. Stefano Stranieri) to lead a "recalling" about the LEADER II experience with the help of a presentation. The evaluator specified that the presentation should not be for the benefit of the external evaluators, but for the benefit of the participants in order to "recall" those common experiences shared years ago. He also invited as well the other participants to intervene and asked them all these questions: For what the realization of the LEADER II could be remembered? In which fields/sectors/behaviours it was mostly impressive? Where the impact was inferior to the expectations?

Through the dialogue that followed two main issues on change, a positive and a negative one, were identified by the group:

- 1) The LEADER approach modified the perception of the local potential and it stimulated network dynamics among the territorial actors changing their behaviours.
- 2) During the passage from LEADER I to LEADER II the load of the bureaucratic and administrative fulfillments in charge of the LAG, necessary for the funding of the projects, increased remarkably, for both the LAG and the beneficiaries with different repercussions on the implementation of the plan and the relationships between the LAG and the actors of the territory.

The group therefore worked around these "key matters", in order to explore mechanisms, driving or inhibiting forces, specific ways of expression of the operational principles, criteria and recommendations.

c) 2 Description of partnership and activities

The LAG "Garfagnana Ambiente e Sviluppo" was one of the ten selected LAGs by the Tuscan regions and operated in a mountainous area of the province of Lucca, entirely interested by the Objective 5b, including 25 communes and about 80.000 inhabitants.

The limited company "Garfagnana Ambiente e Sviluppo" was instituted in 1991 with the aim to put a LEADER I plan into practice. At the moment it is formed by 17 partners, seven of them are public bodies: two communes, three municipalities associations, a park body and the Chamber of Commerce of Lucca; four trade associations and four private organizations on behalf of four trade associations, a banking company and the official cooperative limited company of the

Community Initiative LEADER II "Leader Appennino Pistoiese e Pratese" (recently joined for the realization of the LEADER +).

The technical-organizational structure of the LAG consists of a manager, a person in charge of the administration, four animators and a person in charge of the secretarial office.

The Local Action Plan was approved for the first time in 1997 and, definitely, in 1999. The period of time available for its realization was not therefore very long.

The strategy of local development promoted by the LEADER II was strongly steered into the environmental valorisation and the tourist development with the particular reference to the agro-tourism sector and to the promotion of the local products.

As you can figure out from the participant list, the group represented different kinds of figures: animators, technicians, evaluators and beneficiaries. The regional officials in charge of LEADER II could not participate.

c) 3 Hypotheses on the main issues concerning the Leader II implementation in the area (2 pag.)

Hypothesis N.1 the LEADER approach has modified the perception of the local potential and it has stimulated network dynamics among the territorial actors changing their behaviours.

All the participants, with different expressions, agreed on the fact that two essential changes which took place in the territory were determined or at least facilitated by the LEADER approach:

- The perception of the local potential of development. The importance attributed to all the elements of local identity in the development strategy of the territory increased (the natural and cultural heritage, the local products, the gastronomic culture and the rural-tourism hospitality).
- The relationships of collaboration between the local public and private actors improved.

Through the animation work the LAG managed to awaken the territory to the above mentioned elements of identity, in order to say as A says: "After a serious economic crisis, the Community politics reversed the awareness about the most general themes of environment, development and local resources. These resources, first lived with the critical state, successively they became strong points on which to build the restarting through a change of mentality". The bottom-up approach was a determining factor for the building on such themes a shared strategy, according to D: "... The area was used to be interested by periodic funding on standardized themes. LEADER changed radically this custom by increasing the territorial

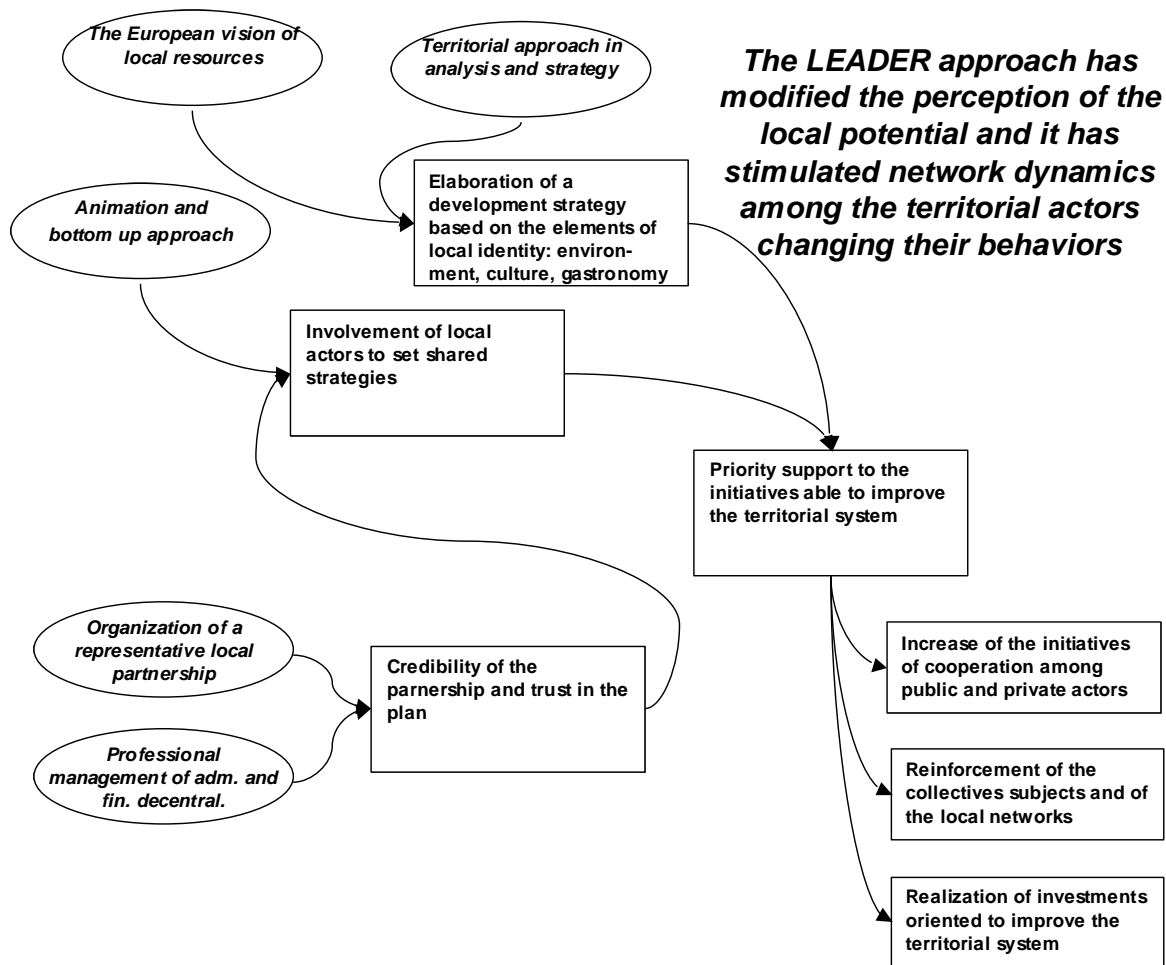
participation to the development politics...”, and, more again, from the point of view of F: “.....the local identity was reinforced and if you today propose rural development projects, nobody considers you crazy.”

The logical consequence putting on the basis of the development strategy the territorial identity characteristics was that to support in the first place those initiatives capable to obtain improving effects of the territorial system in respect of the interventions of individual type disconnected from the others.

This logical passage, that can seem banal, encouraged in fact considerably the behaviours of collaboration and of networking.

An emblematic example was the formation of a consortium between agro-tourism and local products enterprises called “Garfagnana produce”. For the first time these local operators started a series of collective initiatives: promotion activity of the products, a booking centre for the agro-tourism accommodations etc... But perhaps, the main effect was that to give a different dimension for the relationships, as some entrepreneurs stated during the focus group meeting: “.....A new young entrepreneurial class was born that reacquired and reaffirmed the awareness of belonging.we pass the clients, we have made an analysis together and everyone decided to promote particular aspects in such a way that the overall offer would result adequately complete.....Differently from us, the local hotelkeepers act separately among them. The same agro-tourism enterprises of Lucca are not organized as we are.”

A similar effect was obtained also with the public administrations that started a set of common activities and interventions in network.



In this process of change, beyond the animation and the territorial approach, also the other specificities of the LEADER approach played an important role:

- the acquired credibility of the local partnership that has been obtained by making the resources available for the local initiatives in a transparent and efficient way represented a change that contributed to create an atmosphere of confidence;
- the same trans-national cooperation turned out to be an important stimulating factor, as D explains with easiness and efficiency: “.....We made a stage in Ireland where we observed the network of connections that they had created and then we tried to reply it.....”

The network dynamics baited make it simpler to communicate with the local actors; the realized initiatives, through demonstrative effects strengthen the strategy and the image of the partnership.

The consortium experience led to integration and its office became a sort of information centre. Through this kind of organization many initiatives and a team spirit has been created with a constant process of relationships between the operators that, by these last, is considered as a strong point.

This has given to local public and private actors the awareness that in five/seven years the capacity of the territory to seize the opportunities has increased. As A says:

“The interesting mechanism is that the LAG can not hide the fundings, but on the contrary, it must be active to find them, otherwise the punishment will be the failure of the same local programme. The LAG has to find the beneficiaries because it must realize the packages. Otherwise it would not manage to spend”.

Today in Garfagnana the LAG is recognized, also by administrations as the Province and the Region, as a kind of local institution that represents the point of reference for development, research of opportunities and management of local programs.

Hypothesis N.2 the excessive bureaucratic load weights the functions of financial decentralization reducing the potential of innovation of the LEADER method

The question about the relationships “program manager (Region) – LAG – beneficiaries” revealed to be since the beginning of the focus group as the most relevant one for the participants. The motive for this is that the major part of them, in particular the persons involved in the LAG, lived with frustration the evolution of such relationships, from LEADER I to LEADER II and to LEADER +, towards always a major bureaucratic load.

In substance the impression is that the region, with the aim to make clear and univocal the interpretation of the regulations of the Community funds, has built a system gradually more detailed of procedures that the LAGs must have adopted for the administrative and financial management of the funds. The inconveniences connected to this problem increased by the fact that procedures and general rules were modified during the implementation of the programme. This led to different consequences:

- Reactions of intolerance from the part of the beneficiaries in respect of the required bureaucratic performances and therefore the change of the image perceived of the LAG. The beneficiaries present in this focus group, for example, sustained that the bureaucratic executions required by the LEADER II were much more tiresome than those of the other contemporary regional measures. As C said: “...if I had known since the beginning all the executions, I would not have participated”.
- Increase of the requirements of human resources dedicated to the administrative and financial decentralization to the disadvantage of the work of local animation.

- Reduction of the margin of manoeuvre in respect of the typologies of admissible interventions;

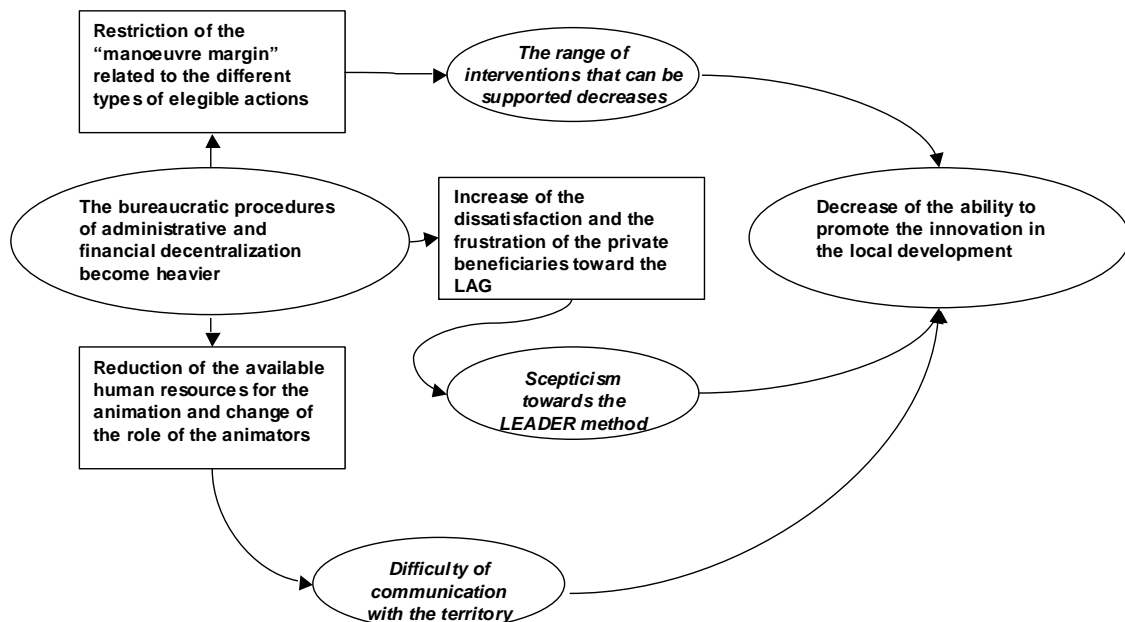
This phenomenon influenced remarkably the image of the LAG and its relationships with the territory:

- The LAG is perceived more “bureaucrat controller” than “promoter of innovation”. It is an effect particularly frustrating for the animators obliged, against their will, to assume the role of “controller” as states the co-ordinator of the LAG.
- LEADER becomes notorious as a “difficult programme”. In this regards the words of D are representative: “.....Also who has participated, says: yes, they look out nice things, but be aware because they make you crazy! The rumours of this type go round and the image circulates and spreads becoming the characterizing mark for the programme.”

These aspects came out also from the monitoring and self-evaluation work, as H tells: it was scared strongly that the message of the innovative method of LEADER, would end instead to be known for its exasperated bureaucracy and complication of the procedure.

In the following scheme is described how this process becomes a disadvantage for the potential of innovation of the programme.

An excessive bureaucratic load weights the functions of administrative and financial decentralization reducing the potential of innovation of LEADER method



During the duration of the focus group it was not possible to analyse thoroughly the topic of the reduction of the potential of innovation (what really it means), anyhow some signs came out:

- 1 Difficulty to reach the population and specific categories of local actors. The coordinator expressed clearly his dissatisfaction in the capacity of the LAG to communicate the LEADER approach “beyond” the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the initiative and to reach and to sustain better determined strategic targets like for instance the young people.
- 2 Difficulty to supply an adequate technical support for the single projects in order to promote their quality, to support their start-up and to take care of the connections between the initiatives and the beneficiaries.

c) 4 Conclusions and recommendations

Many of the elements emerged from the focus are emblematic in respect of some of the main mechanisms which influence the effective implementation of the operational principles of LEADER II.

- 1 The different operational principles strengthen among themselves

With the practices of participative programming coupled with the network activities and the cooperation are characterized new ways of intervention which then have been made practicable thanks to a correct management of the financial and administrative decentralization. The “capacity to realize” grants credibility to the partnership and therefore stimulates in its turn the local actors to participate more. From the other part the “necessity” to realize (i.e. to put into practice the own business plan) induces the local partnership to search continuously the contact with the other local actors and to stimulate initiatives.

- 2 Among the operational principles and the behaviours that they stimulate a circuit of reinforcement will be created.

If from one side, as it has been illustrated in previous chapters, the LEADER implementation leads naturally to favour the collective initiatives and the work in the network among local actors, from the other side the reinforcement of these relationships of network between the operators facilitates a lot the dialogue and so the application of participative methods.

- 3 The relationships with the programme authority have repercussions on the nature and on the identity of the partnership

The question about the bureaucratic and procedural load can have deep repercussions also on the identity of the partnership. If the procedures become the “the critical point” all the attention will be focused on them. The LAG will be considered as a local expert of funding procedures and not as an organization capable to “mobilize” the territory. This, from one side can have the

positive aspect to activate locally a specialized function in the management of the Community funds that allows to the territory to seize better the existing financial opportunities, but from the other side, in a long term, risks to alter the partnership because the skills of financial management become “dominating” in respect of those of bottom up, animation and strategic analysis. In substance there is the risk that the LAG becomes a “Europe Office” of the territory, but loses the capacity to implement economical animation dynamics and to promote the innovation.

It is necessary to guarantee a widespread animation process that reaches different actor categories. For this sake must develop the animation activity with adequate resources and methods. This implies an active role in the animation process of private collective subjects, like the unions operating in the territory, and of the public administrations.

The question about the procedures of administrative and financial decentralization must be dealt with in a more strict way: from one side the region has to give clear indications about the eligibility of the expenditure and the responsibility and to organize an effective (and frequent) control system, from the other side has to allow a major liberty about the choice of the initiatives to carry on at local level. But it is also necessary a different approach from the part of the programme authorities in their relationships with the LAGs, as the co-ordinator of the LAG says: “They have to finish considering us as dangerous subjects if not put into a cage with maximum operational rigidity they would cause you many problems ...”

Another aspect regards the critical mass: if at local level must be organized an efficient and professional structure, it must be justified by a “critical mass of the programme” and that’s to say territories and investments of adequate dimensions in respect to the mobilized energies.

As regards the procedures, the participants wanted to precise also their importance to guarantee the quality of the projects; what emerged from the dialogue was not therefore an attitude of generic protest against the procedures, but more a sign of danger to point out the problems that can be generated by the bureaucratic load. The decentralization is a very delicate issue, there is a risk to build a bureaucratic cage that, if from one side it facilitates some operations from the other it makes extremely muddled the whole process and precludes a series of action opportunities.

d) VALLE ELVO (PIEMONTE)

d) 1 Introduction

LAG name	GAL Valle dell'Elvo
LAG interlocutors	Dott. Mosca
Participants and dates	Biella, 16/06/2003
Participants:	
A	Dott. Mosca – coordinator of the LAG
B- provincial spokesman for agriculture
C	Dott. Gerardi – administrative responsible
D	Dott. G. Carpa – responsible for cooperation project
E	Gianni Bonino – beneficiary, mayor of the commune of Donato
F	Albertini – beneficiary – farmer
G	PL. Perinotto – beneficiary – tourism
Hrepresentative of the association 'Ecomuseo'
Evaluator	Rossella Almanza
Assistant	Danilo Ciampanella

The preliminary contacts took place between Mrs. Rossella Almanza e Mr.Mosca who demonstrated to appreciate and to share the initiative and collaborated with enthusiasm to organize the meeting.

The focus group performed as follows:

1. All the participants presented themselves and described briefly their activity and the role played during the LEADER II experience.
2. Then the evaluator invited the president of the LAG to « guide » a « recalling » about the LEADER II experience through the presentation of the main stages of this experience; this activity was carried out with the help of the presentation.
3. Successively the evaluator invited all the participants to intervene and asked them all the questions: For what the realization of LEADER II could be remembered? In which fields/sectors/behaviours was it mostly impressive? Which innovative approach was promoted in the territory? Which was the main change introduced by the LEADER II in the territory?

Through the dialogue that followed some issues on change, which were felt as the most significant ones, were identified by the group:

1. The perception about the territory reinforced both among the public and private operators and about its specific characteristics and potential of development as a system of resources on which it is possible to intervene in an integrated way.
2. Public and private actors experimented and learned methods of local networking by producing coordinated action able to improve the competitiveness of the local system.
3. The actions put into effect with the LEADER II found continuity within the local initiatives.

The group had therefore worked around these "key matters", in order to explore mechanisms, driving or inhibiting forces, specific ways of expression of the operational principles, criteria and recommendations.

d) 2 Description of partnership and activities

The group was founded in 1997 as a limited consortium company by 12 promoting partners in order to put into practice the LAP (= Local Action Plan) of the LEADER II. The main promoter of the initiative in the area was the province of Biella.

The LAP area is corresponding to the mountain communities of "Alta Valle Elvo" and comprehends 12 communes in the province of Biella. The Biellese area is characterized by the strong industrial tradition (textile, mechanical) supported by a good infrastructure. It is possible, in particular, to individuate two distinct socio-economic areas: the first one is that of the "valley" that consists of Biella and communes around it, characterized by a high density of population and by low ageing and unemployment rates, which is due to the driving productive articulation of the Biellese industrial division; the second one is that of "hills and mountains" characterized, contrarily to the valley area, by a low density of population, by a high ageing rate and by an accentuated abandonment of the productive activities most of all relative to the agriculture. The strong points are expressed above of all from the valley areas and can be summed up in the good sensitive capacity of the Biellese industrial sector that, in front of the crisis of the last years, has managed to stand up both from the occupational and productive viewpoint in respect of the rest of Piemonte and of the diffused entrepreneurial culture and mentality.

In spite of the potential of the territory, the tourist facilities and services structures are insufficient and need therefore absolutely structural interventions to be realized prevalingly through the renovation of the pre-existing rural buildings.

The basis for the LAP is the conception about the territory as a unique and integrated unit of resources and potentials that can be activated with more efficiency thanks to a major involvement of the population on the development themes.

For this reason was individuated a series of actions characterized by a high level synergy and complementarity:

- Support experimental and innovative initiatives concerning the tourist facilities and services;
- Create innovative and demonstrative occasions concerning the cultural and environmental heritage;
- Boost the bovine and sheep farming and promote the relative products – meat, wool – through an area marketing activity.

d) 3 *Hypoteses on the main issues concerning the Leader II implementation in the area*

Hypothesis N. 1. The perception about the territory reinforced both among the public and private operators and about its specific characteristics and potential of development as a system of resources on which it is possible to intervene in an integrated way.

The programme LEADER II favoured the improvement of the relationship system among the local actors, by intensifying and qualifying their activities. In particular, it allowed 1) a major knowledge and collaboration between public and private subjects; 2) a major knowledge about the mutual initiatives and coordination possibilities between these; 3) to embark on new collective actions and to put at disposal common resources; 4) the insertion of the initiatives realized into the future planning of the public bodies in order to guarantee the partnership beyond the Programme.

Under this aspect, the LAG, preceded by a wide work of diffusion of information and of territorial animation, built up the contact between institutions and territory. On the basis of the formation of a balanced and solid partnership there was a good interaction between the consultancy and the social parts. The LAG members in their turn were members of the different local trade associations and, some time, too, presidents of these associations. Every member of the partnership contributed to the realization of the interventions in the measure of his own competences. Most of all for the agricultural associations this was very significant and some concrete success were reached. In particular what concerns the question of the quality certifications of the products and the adjustment of the equipments according to the regulations in force it was possible to involve actively in the projects the local health department that carried out an activity of assistance and consultancy for the operators. This produced new trust among

the users that did not perceive the institution only as controller subject and contributed to the diffusion of good practices about the certification of the products: the beneficiaries were object of the convincement that it is convenient to get the certification because the product's image will be reinforced and could be also more easily marketed. As Mr. Gerardi affirms (participant C): "This is a good example how the public-private partnership can activate virtuous circles and to be a starting point for the realization of good practices".

A single citizen felt, in this manner, the institutions closer and this made the initiative successful. Also in a context like that Piemontese, characterized by a good functioning of the public administration, still the difference between the traditional bureaucratic procedures and those of the LAG, without doubt easier and more direct, was perceived.

Hypothesis N. 2 a project that returns identity to the territory by generating participation

One of the most important projects carried out by the LAG was the 'Ecomuseo' that is considered the symbol of the territorial capacity to aggregate different local actors around the cultural and environmental identity of the area. It was possible to realize the 'Ecomuseo' only thanks to the LEADER II: the project assumed such characteristics that permitted to obtain good results because the intervention was programmed from the bottom in mobilizing energies that still then were present and not expressed in the area. The project, in fact, generated the meeting of different groups of local actors operating autonomously, everyone in its own sector and gave them unity and motivation to work together.

The museum is structured in sites and this naturally amplifies its visibility and impact on the territory. The I° site is the 'Museo dell'oro' (= Museum of Gold), situated near to the archaeological site of the "Bessa" and makes up an accurate reconstruction about the story of gold, the gold diggers in the area and the techniques utilized to dig for gold. A II° site is that relative to the iron production with two examples of industrial archaeology represented by two forges with relative machineries. Inside of these forges is told – through the recorded voice of the men who worked there – the story of the factory, of the production techniques adopted and of the utilized technologies on placing side by side this reconstruction with the story of the territory that naturally influenced its development. A III° site is that of the folk wisdom organized thanks to the involvement of the Association "Amici di Bagneri" (= "Friends of Bagneri"). Bagneri is a reconstructed alpine village where is active a didactic area and a new joiner's workshop next to an old one, an age-old monastery which own Romanesque specificities, as of many other buildings present in the area, have been valorised. The monastery has already become an international destination for the Boy Scouts who sleep there in the guest quarters.

The strong integrated character of the initiative is evident and it has invested manifold sectors of activity of the territory present and still characterizing for the area. This allowed a unitary

rereading of the territory and of the work of its inhabitants and a rediscovery of memories and practices that represent the heritage of small communities different among them, but that together make the history of this territory and contribute to the development. On this basis and on these contents the project was able to develop a strong participative character, by bringing the local actors into constructive communication and reached the popular and didactic objectives, most of all in front of the younger generations whom were given the possibility to recognize and to maintain the contact with their own roots.

The authenticity of the contents of the project and the effective results obtained in terms of involvement, participation and reinforcement of the identity awareness of the local communities led moreover to another important objective, certainly not priority in a project without marketing purposes. The 'Ecomuseo' , in fact, was the promoter for the origin of the "area trademark", identification symbol between the territory and its peculiarities, between the environment and its products.

Hypothesis N.3 The actions started with LEADER found continuity in local initiatives

For the area of the 'Valle Elvo' the LEADER II was not only a financial opportunity, but it made possible a new and interesting experience of territorial and participative planning. Notwithstanding the poor financial endowment, the LEADER II represented a real pilot experience: the modest resources at disposal obliged the LAG to reward the projects that corresponded mainly to the programme's specificities. This is why the community initiative LEADER was successful not only because it represented a financial opportunity, but most of all thanks to the philosophy behind it. The direct involvement of the local actors into the planning favoured the individuation of initiatives that still proceed autonomously and promise to obtain concrete effects also what concerns the increase of employment rate and therefore on the income of the area.

According to this point some initiatives are to be emphasized as examples:

Within the intervention line in favour of the agro-industrial productions the LAG had thought to go forward with a project relative to the slaughter of the sheep meat in base of the methods in accordance with the precepts of the Islamic religion. From one side the reason for this were the difficulties faced by this product on the market and from the other side the considerable number of Islamic immigrates. The project presented also evident cultural consequences by promoting a major knowledge and integration of different traditions and cultures; actually this project was not realized by the LAG, but it was then put into effect by the local operators that already had noticed a substantial sale rise.

Also in this way the initiatives rose with the LAG in favour of the dairy-industrial productions created new relationships between the operators and new ideas. One of the hypotheses to be

concretized is the founding from the part of a mixed company (mountain communities, province, trade associations) of a dairy-laboratory, or rather a school specialized in formation of new professional figures capable to give a further stimulus for the typical local productions. The representativeness of its public and private partners, what's more, should also stretch to attribute further functions for the company that, in a certain sense, can be interpreted as the heir of the LAG, particularly in the light of the non-funding with the new LEADER + programme. The idea is to feed a development process able to prepare the ground for a prosecution with time, independently from the supports of a public funding.

d) 4 Conclusions and recommendations

The action of the LAG was certainly facilitated by the territorial homogeneity of the area that coincides with the territory 5b of the province of Biella, from which were excluded the communes with the respect to the parameter of the "concentration of resources". The LAG pointed out that at least for one of the communes the exclusion was particularly penalizing and in this the LAG recognized a not opportune rigidity of the community and regional regulations. To give value to such a consideration was mentioned the relative limit to the rate of inhabitant density which is a reference for the planning of LEADER +: in order to respect the required parameters of density could be necessary to unify territories not homogenous by complicating noticeably the definition of a coherent strategy. For instance, characteristics completely different, notwithstanding the territorial proximity, can be found in the 'Alta Vall'Elvo' and in the 'Dora Baltea Canovese'.

The bottom-up approach involved the local actors and beneficiaries into the planning and positioned in the middle of the programme the local population called, for the first time, to be the leading actor of their own development model. The local actors acquired major awareness of their belonging to the territory and it improved their capability of planning intended as active participation to the construction of an environment more liveable and near to the real needs of the population. The correct carrying out of the LEADER approach was facilitated by the good relationship at political level of the provincial administration: the LAG, in fact, emphasizes that frequently the major obstacle was represented by the unwillingness to share the bottom-up approach from the part of the administrations.

Furthermore, the application of a planning from the bottom is strictly connected to the existence of a good partnership, which formation, in case of the 'Valle dell'Elvo' LAG, was made possible by the detailed animation and sensibilizing work carried out on the territory before the predisposition of the LAP.

Mr. Dr. Gerardi (participant C) affirms that "the animation of LEADER really provided the occasion to rehearse forces never expressed before on the territory, it permitted to the local actors to develop their own capacity to activate and to build up visions".

The integrated and multi-sectorial approach was without doubt put into practice by the LAG in its plan: the valorisation of the environment and the improvement of the quality of life on the territory were always strictly related to the initiatives aimed to improve the awareness that the territory itself had about its potential and resources; the rural development was intended in a wider sense, with the conviction that only an increase of the system as a whole could be a solution for the problems of the fragile and marginal rural areas. In this sense also interventions of recovery of the historic-cultural heritage were not ever before been considered to be an end in themselves but, like for example in the recovery project of the historical residence "Franco Antonicelli", functional for the birth of a circuit of cultural tourism in the area, the theatre and exhibition activities of different kinds were realized side by side with the actions of promotion and valorisation of the local handicraft and agro-industrial products. An obstacle to the realization of the integrated approach can be recognized in this specific territory in the presence in the valley area of the strong specialization and the preponderance of the industrial sector: the traditional vertical and specialized organization of the Biellese industrial sector can be an obstacle, also psychological and cultural one, for the realization of integrated interventions of rural innovation which are often considered particularly dispersive instead to be capable to carry out in strategic manner and in a long term the potentials of the area.

Even though the partnership of the LAG "Valle Elvo" was judged solid and balanced, it seems opportune a major involvement of private subjects that could guarantee an important support, also in the decisional phase, to the definition of strategies strictly connected to the needs of the territory.

At regional level the model of interaction between the local bodies functioned well. The LEADER planning, notwithstanding the feasibility of the resources at disposal, allowed the start of virtuous circuits of collaboration and exchange of information between the local and regional actors. This model should be reinforced, by amplifying and by institutionalizing it also through a major coordination between the LAGs.

The stimulus effect generated by the initiatives put into action, the new awareness about the potentials, the habit and the capacity to project together were the achievements of the LEADER programme. Even though the mountain communities conceived their own plans of socio-economic development in base of the methodology proposed by the LEADER and the same DOCUP (=Document Unique de Programmation) placed itself as a piece to the puzzle of the programmes of integrated development carried out in the area. It must be said that the complete transfer of the method into the procedures of the public administration would require longer times: the limited period of the realization of the programme risks to remain an important experience only for the few officers participants. The non-funding of LEADER + is surely a serious handicap for the growing process of the territory and the LAG intends to find adequate modalities to carry out equally the initiatives hoping that the learning process tested by the LAG

could be transferred to the local public administration in order to favour a strategic continuity of action in the next future.

The capacity to individuate integrated projects with strong potential of involvement of the public, private actors and of various sectors resulted fundamental.

An important element for the success of the LAP is to attribute to the role played by the province that supported the LAG's action by making it credible on the territory.

The deep knowledge of the territory and the efficient animation action carried out made possible the identification of themes and subjects particularly vocative and predisposed to carry into effect development actions: the project of trans-national cooperation entitled "Valorisation of the autochthon wools" (confront the TNC case study), is an example about the taking root of the project in the territory.

e) ANGLONA MONTE-ACUTO (SARDEGNA)

e) 1 Introduction

LAG name	GAL Anglona Monte Acuto
LAG interlocutors	Pietro Brundu
Date:	The meeting was held in Ozieri on 6th June 2003. It started at 11 a.m. and ended at 6 p.m.
Participants:	
A Pietro Brundu	LAG's president. He had also an operative role of co-ordination.
B Leonardo Vargiu	Member of the Board of Directors as a representative of the mayors' assembly. Actively participant to the activities of the LAG.
C Lucio Fazi	Responsible and administrator of the LAG. He is also the secretary of the municipalities association.
D Marisa Sanna	Employee of the LAG: she was responsible for the secretary's office and the accounting.
E Tiziana Buscarino	Beneficiary of Leader II – member of the Anglona Country
F Piero Usai	Beneficiary of Leader II – president of the Anglona Country
G Gavino Sechi	Member of the Board of Directors as a representative of the municipalities association, he is ex-mayor of a village in the area
H Antonello Poddighe	Member of the Board of Directors of the LAG as a representative of the Chamber of Commerce, Artisans and Agriculture of the province of Sassari.
I Giovanni Galleu:	Beneficiary of Leader II in the ambit of an action connected to rediscovery of ancient flours grinded with millstones
L Irene Melis	Co-ordinator of the LAG – assisted to the meeting in the afternoon
Evaluator	Carlo Ricci
Assistant	Bruno Coletta

The preliminary contacts took place between Carlo Ricci and Pietro Brundu (President of the Local Action Group) who took care to organize the meeting and to invite the participants.

The LAG provided an interesting documentation describing the experience of LEADER II in the area and the main activities implemented within the Local Action Plan.

The Focus group operated in a following way:

- 1 All the participants introduced themselves and described briefly their activities and the role played by them during this LEADER 2 experience.
- 2 The evaluator illustrated shortly the ex-post evaluation of the Leader II in order to contextualize the day's job referring to the entire process.
- 3 Then the evaluator invited the President of the LAG (Mr. Pietro Brundu) to lead a "recalling" about the Leader II experience with the help of a presentation. The evaluator specified that the presentation should not be for the benefit of the external evaluators, but for the benefit of the participants in order to "recall" those common experiences shared years ago. He also invited as well the other participants to intervene and asked them all these questions: For what the realization of the LEADER 2 could be remembered? In which fields/sectors/behaviours it was mostly impressive? Where the impact was inferior to the expectations?
- 4 All the dialogue that followed was influenced by a sort of paradox that came out from the experience of LEADER II in the Anglona Monte Acuto: notwithstanding the realization of LEADER was a great success both in the area and in the ambit of the network, when it was the moment to get organized for the LEADER + the local administrations and the principal unions of the territory did not want that the LAG would carry on a new experience and so they formed a new partnership in order to prepare an action plan. Naturally this fact was a shock for both the administrators and for the persons who had worked in the LAG and, inevitably, this "failure after the success" represented a recurrent theme during the whole focus. For this reason the evaluator, reacting to the group's entreaties, decided to not evade the theme, but to animate the dialogue also with the aim to study in depth the mechanisms and the forces which determined this outcome.

In substance therefore, two issues on change which were felt as the most significant ones, were identified by the group:

- 1) The adhesion to the "vision" proposed by the LEADER produces "energy for change" and the combination of different elements of the LEADER approach is able to stimulate effects of motivation and of mobilization much stronger than those induced by the traditional programmes.

- 2) The innovative contents of the LEADER approach can determine a sort of “leap towards” of the promoters capable to provoke “reactions of rejection” from the part of the organisms representing the governance of the territory.

The group therefore worked around these "key matters", in order to explore mechanisms, driving or inhibiting forces, specific ways of expression of the operational principles, criteria and recommendations.

e) 2 Description of partnership and activities

The surface of the LEADER II area Anglona – Monte Acuto is 1.907 square kilometres and the total population counts 64.380 inhabitants distributed in 25 communes of which only one has more than 10.000 inhabitants (Ozieri) and well 6 that have less than 1.000 inhabitants. The prevailing economical sectors are in order: sheep breeding, commerce, industry, handicrafts and services. The demographic tendency can be summarized in a slow abandonment of the internal zones in favour of the coastal villages.

The LAG ‘Anglona Monte Acuto’ is a limited cooperative company, composed of 32 members: 20 of them are public administrations (17 of them municipalities) and 12 are private, constituted prevalingly by collective subjects (unions, agricultural cooperatives and associations).

The stable technical-organizational structure of the LAG was composed by an administrative responsible, a co-ordinator and three collaborators (a development agent and two office assistants).

The ‘Anglona’ was the first LAG in Sardinia to present an action plan and to organize a managerial structure. In general the strategy of local development promoted with LEADER II is steered to create a collaborative climate between the actors of the territory for the promotion and the starting of actions of integration between agriculture, handicrafts, tourism and environment in order to build, with the participation of the local forces, a system capable first to develop a strong sense of belonging to own territory, so to valorise its products and to utilize all those resources still neglected or poorly utilized. On this basis with the LEADER II were realized projects with strong innovative contents that interested different sectors of rural development. Among them can be individuated both single initiatives with a demonstrative value, like for example the first activity of fishing tourism in the area, and projects in network of wide territorial importance like that of the consortium ‘Anglona Country’ directed to institute a network of operators in order to realize a project of “diffuse hotel”.

Anyhow the initiative of major success, also in the ambit of the European LEADER network is represented without doubt by the consortium “Leaderfidi”. In the ambit of this project was activated a guarantee fund and honour loans for the support of small and medium enterprises.

The action became concrete with the creation of a cooperative of guarantee and credits "Leaderfidi" registered by the Italian exchange office that stipulated a convention with the Bank of Sardinia. The cooperative was formed by more than 250 members that could get bank loans, without interests, until 50.000 euro in order to boost existing activities or to create new ones. The loan is at zero rates and is paid back in the space of 5 years with quarterly instalments. In the ambit of this action were supported, with a very easy procedure, more than 60 projects of different sectors from the agro-industrial to handicraft, tourist and commerce, for a total investment of about 1.350.000 euro with a public expenditure of 200.000 (to cover the interests) that can be considered extremely low in respect of the help intensity degree diffused in the Objective 1 areas.

e) 3 Hypotheses on the main issues concerning the Leader II implementation in the area

Hypothesis N.1 The adhesion to the "vision" proposed by the LEADER produces "energy for change" and the combination of different elements of the LEADER approach is able to stimulate effects of motivation and of mobilization much stronger than those induced by the traditional programmes.

In the Anglona, before the LEADER II, existed already a group of local actors, operating both in the public sector as well as in the private one, and it had conceived a development strategy based on the rural tourism, on the valorisation of the local identity and on promotion of networking of the local public and private subjects (this became then the project of "diffuse hotel" of the consortium 'Anglona Country'). The forthcoming launching of the Community initiative was immediately interpreted by this group as an opportunity to not lose and therefore, still before that the Sardinian region issued activating procedures, the LEADER promoters of Anglona were already at work.

The good tuning between the local vision and the approach proposed by the European Union formed immediately a factor of confidence for these persons. From the other side the perception how much this approach would be innovative in respect of the fashionable habits in the local context represented a spur to individuate the "right way" to promote the initiative, as G says: "You had the pleasure to understand the mechanism that was functional for the start of a development idea that you already had. It was a thrilling instrument" or B: "The public administration should promote the ideas, but very often it is obliged to run after the problems. Therefore we from the LAG felt to be appointed to the mission to produce analysis and strategies for the territory". So, thanks also to the methodological support of an expert, the promoters, beyond the formation of the LAG, started an itinerary coherent to the LEADER approach:

- A wide and representative partnership of the collective interests of the territory was formed;

- to the work of social-economical analysis of the local context was coupled an activity of minute consultation of the area's actors that helped to collect more than 250 schedules relative to local initiatives;
- in order to give efficiency and clearness for the administrative and financial decentralization were defined some hypotheses of procedures.

The element that emerged very strongly during the dialogue was the "climate" of motivation that was created among the persons that lived close up the experience of the LEADER II. In Anglona this factor "contaminated" in the first place the members of the Board of Directors (the same presence to the focus is in some way a demonstration about it) who, in a volunteer way and substantially not remunerated, operated as a work team with continuous meetings (more than four times per month) following, also in the operative aspect, all the activities of the LAG. In the same way also the staff and the collaborators of the LAG interpreted their own activity with strong motivation.

This "recruitment" to the LEADER vision really did so that the local animation would be considered as a real and proper mission in which to lavish with conviction the maximum of the energies.

This way to operate, together with the elements of clearness and efficiency adopted in the administrative and financial decentralization allowed to the LAG to establish a privileged relation with the actors of the territory based on the direct support and on the credibility. As they stated during the focus: ".....there was an awarding mechanism and the projects were an instrument of demonstration and not a tool for a sort of "rain distribution" of EU funding.

In substance the LAG became a charismatic subject legitimated by different elements: to be a local expression of a European vision; to be holder of strategic indications collected directly on the territory; to be strongly innovative with the behaviours. These elements stimulated some significant changes at local level:

- Some new collective organisms like the consortium 'Anglona Country' and in the cooperative 'Leaderfidi' (mentioned in previous chapter) were born and widened;
- the way to invest of the public administrations, that today are much more sensible toward the themes connected to the identity;
- the language and the relations were changed most of all in the public organisms that introduced harmonizing methods and promoted initiatives in common by "emulating" LEADER.

You can say it with a couple of words: the LEADER approach convinced the territory. This process, according to the participants, was facilitated also by other factors:

- The good relationships with the region (authority of programme) that, also in front of procedural difficulties had an encouraging attitude of the LAG;
- the trans-national co-operation contributed to the process in different ways: it helped, through the comparison with other realities, to “see” actually that the local problems were the same in all the Europe; created confidence to verify that an area like Anglona, considered weak, could also assume a role of leadership in front of areas considered “advanced” (as was happened with the project of the Romanico area.)

Hypothesis N.2 the innovative contents of the LEADER approach can determine a sort of “leap towards” of the promoters capable to provoke “reactions of rejection” from the part of the organisms representing the governance of the territory.

As already said, in order to promote the initiative LEADER +, many of the same organisms that were the members of the LAG ‘Anglona Monte Acuto’ decided to form a new LAG; so they wanted completely to turn the page in respect of the precedent experience. This fact took place also even though none of them judged the LEADER II experience as a failure. What was the determinant fact that can be defined a failure after the success?

This argument was constantly present during the focus because also a great part of the participants had been administrators of the LAG.

Certainly the alternations in the top management of the main public administrations determined the willingness to change the leadership of the programme from the part of the new elected and from the part of the representatives of organizations who, in some way, considered themselves “excluded” (even though they were members of the LAG) during the precedent period. This movement took place also because the fame of the LEADER was increased and therefore to take part in its management was considered much more important in respect of the past.

But during the dialogue was tried to go beyond the simplest explanations. Why perhaps, the behaviour of local administrations and unions was not that to change the top management of a structure that substantially belonged to it but, paradoxically, to ignore completely such a structure in order to create a new one? This behaviour implies some reflections in terms of perception of the partnership:

- The LAG is not perceived as a proper instrument from the part of the partners;
- the know-how and the gained experience in LEADER II are not perceived as a local capital to conserve and consequently there is no realistic perception what does it mean to start from zero.

Starting from this kind of considerations the group dwelled upon the relations among which those that could be called the “activists” of the LAG (administrators and technical team) and the other partners and, in effect, it is recognized that during the period of frenetic activity that characterized the implementation of LEADER II there were some “black holes” in the communication. In particular two types of problems were found:

- 1) The energies of communication were invested exclusively to reach the actors of the territory, the potential holders of the innovative projects, the agents of the change. Paradoxically there were efforts to make comprehend the LEADER on the territory by taking for granted that it could be sufficient also for the partners.
- 2) In the ambit of the partnership a sort of division was created between the “followers” and the other partners.

A further influential factor in this sense was the time factor according to the opinion of all the participants: the three years at disposal for the implementation of the whole process were not sufficient. In a period like this it is possible to work to demonstrate that like those changes described can be reached, but it is not possible to work for their consolidation. In fact, when the LEADER II finished, all the most innovative initiatives realized in Anglona were just hardly started up and in this way they did not have the necessary support to get over the start up phase. The same happened also with the LAG, probably, if it had had more time, it could have worked better on the partnership relations and on the consolidation of its role as a development agency.

e) 4 Conclusions and recommendations

In order to sum up what emerged from the focus, the following elements influenced positively the implementation of the operational principles:

- The existence of a group of promoters that was able to be immediately “tuned in” the LEADER approach, to interpret it correctly and to move rapidly. This allowed to apply the bottom up approach since the first phases of conceiving the plan.
- The acquisition of a methodological external expertise allowed to prefigure a series of managerial problems of the financial and administrative decentralization and to individuate efficacious solutions.
- The adoption of clearness practice in the management of the resources helped the LAG to obtain credibility.

The following elements instead influenced negatively the implementation of the operative principles:

- The time factor in the first place limited the possibility to consolidate the innovative LEADER approach and all its principles.
- The contemporary presence of development programmes (LEADER and territorial pact) operative in the territory without any connection creates different disturbing effects.
- The excessively rigid and laborious procedures are not coherent with the limited time at disposal and the necessity to be able to re-modulate the programme.

Naturally the question that was discussed mostly regarded the management of the internal relations of the partnership. The LAG should cure with attention the involvement of all the partners, the growth of their sense of ownership and the communication with the territorial actors that were not direct beneficiaries of the programme.

Recommendations at the level of programme administrations and official networks (regional, national) in order to improve the effectiveness of programmes such as LEADER II:

- The uncertainty about the procedures is a great risk and it is necessary that they are defined first with clearness through an in depth study of the different problems.
- To ensure a sufficient time for a real implementation of the programme or “systems of continuity” after the end of the programme.
- Greater flexibility in the modalities of remodulation because these programs need a constant adjustment.

Key criteria for a rural development programme to take positive effect on the specific territorial context:

- Professionalism in the administrative and financial decentralization.
- Special care to manage the partnership relationship
- Intense activity of animation based on the direct contact with the local actors, both for the collecting of strategic indications, and for the involvement of the potential beneficiaries and for the support of the initiatives during the start up phase.

3. Report on national and regional programme evaluation

3.1 Overview and synthetic description of all evaluations carried out at national and regional level (4 pages)

a. The evaluation process of the regional LEADER II programmes in Italian regions

As it is known in Italy the Initiative LEADER II was put into practice through the Regional Operative Programmes and therefore the regions had the task to entrust the evaluation services of their respective programmes. All the regions fulfilled this obligation.

At national level, moreover, was elaborated, in June 2002, by the INEA (= National Institute of Agrarian Economics) on the behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry a report named "Evaluation of synthesis at national level of the programme of the Community Initiative LEADER II" concerning the examination of the carried out regional evaluations and their syntheses.

The same Ministry, moreover, commissioned the ISMEA (= Institute of Services for the Agroindustry) for the ex post evaluation of the National LEADER II Network, programme realized by the INEA (= National Institute of Agrarian Economics) in the course of the years 1996-2001.

Taking into consideration the evaluations of the regional programmes and referring to the three divided phases of the evaluation process – *ex ante evaluation*, *intermediate evaluation*, *ex post evaluation* – it comes out evident:

- **Ex ante evaluation:** the documents of the regional LEADER II programme do not present generally a formally identifiable analysis with the ex ante evaluation. Within themselves they develop, with very differentiated degrees of study in depth, territorial and socio-economical diagnosis often concerning the entire regional ambit (in case of the regions Objective 1) or the corresponding ambit to the territories 5b (in case of the regions 5b) but not regarding the area identified as eligible to LEADER II, whenever this present different perimeters. In this way also, the range of objectives of various level and the relative indicators are in major part of the cases handled in general terms since their precise determination referred to the Local Action Plans.
- **Intermediate evaluation:** In case of the Italian regions the evaluation tasks had as an object generally the intermediate evaluation and the in itinere evaluation, in a not a rare confusion of their specificities for reasons deriving, from one side, from a codification less strict of the evaluation instrument from the part of the same Community provisions for the programming period 1994-99 as regards the actual phase, from the other side, from a minor knowledge and awareness of this type of analysis from the part of the same administrations responsible for the realization of the LEADER programmes. The

evaluation tasks were entrusted by the regions to an independent evaluator selected through competitive procedures, generally object of calls specifically concerning the LEADER Initiative except some cases, prevalingly located in the regions Objective 1, where the evaluation of the LEADER II programme was jointed (and often overcome) to the evaluation of the Operative Programme Objective 1.

Approximately the evaluation activities were started with a certain delay, in some case the entrusting took place in 1999 close to the closure of the engagements. The activities were articulated, as the same methodology foresaw, in a first phase relative to the verification of the ex ante evaluation, in a report of intermediate evaluation relative to the state of realization of the programmes in December of 1997, and in a series of annual reports, sometimes with six-monthly updatings, of which the last relative to the date of closure of the programme, December 2001.

- **Ex post evaluation:** from the moment that the Community regulations of the period 1994-99 referred to a ex post evaluation of competence of the European Commission, the regions had not proceeded with the entrusting of this analysis and therefore, the tasks relative to the intermediate evaluation and in itinere at most referred to a conclusive phase of the activities named "preparation of the ex post evaluation". When in 1999 the European Commission stated that within September of 2001 the ex post evaluations of the programmes should be elaborated, only few regions were able to proceed with the entrusting of this specific activity, also because, frequently, the Monitoring and Evaluation Measure did have anymore resources available because the programme had already undergone the opportune re-allocations previous to the enclosure of the expense commitments. In the major part of the cases, so, the ex post evaluation was carried out by the same evaluators that had in course with the different regions the contracts of *intermediate – in itinere* evaluations. The ex post evaluations were elaborated and delivered between September and November 2001.

As regards that specific phase of the evaluation process, it is to precise that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, assisted by the INEA, took upon itself the coordination of the methodological aspects, by activating a work team together with the regions and the evaluators. All the regions were invited to participate in the activities and, successively to follow the common formulation defined for the evaluation process and for the articulation of the same report. This activity gave rise to homogenous reports concerning their contents and easily comparable. Only the regions Friuli Venezia Giulia, Sardegna and Liguria followed autonomous formulations.

In the ambit of the same coordination activities was suggested to all the evaluators the adoption, which as a tool for analysis, of the questionnaire elaborated by the European Observatory relative to the Evaluation of the added value of LEADER. Also this indication was accepted from the major part of the regions and therefore the Italian situation of the evaluations of the Initiative LEADER II presents itself particularly complete even though, as it is natural, the evaluations are different what concerns the

degree of study in depth and the priorities attributed to the different aspect of the analysis.

At the end of the 2001 the ex post evaluations of the regions Veneto, Campania, Puglia and Calabria resulted still not ready and successively they were consigned during the 2002.

b. **Encountered main problems** (*What problems and constraints, if any, were encountered?*)

The realized interviews with the regional administrations and the LAGs, as well as the personal experience gained by the evaluator in the ambit of the activities of evaluation of the programmes allow highlighting some problems and critical states:

1. The poor capability of the evaluation to influence on the realization of the programme.
The delay in many entrusted evaluations, the timing of delivery of the reports, necessarily successive to the elaboration of the monitorings and therefore, generally corresponding to a six-month period following to the state of progress taken into consideration, the excessive “diplomacy” of many evaluations made often poorly efficacious the evaluation activity that frequently commented upon the events already passed and found itself in front of the solutions already predefined. For certain reasons, it is possible to say that the value and the main utility of the evaluation is to find in its process, while the better results of the activity seem to reside in the formative role and of acquirement of awareness, reached in those cases positively distinguished by a participation widened to the administrations, the LAGs, the evaluator.
In the light of what said here above it would seem more profitable to accompany constantly with the evaluation the realization by producing thematic studies in depth ad hoc, adequate to the phase and to the specific problem that the programme is going through, rather than burdensome annual evaluations, usually temporarily dodged.
2. Difficulties with the acquisition of monitoring information. Frequently the evaluator encountered great difficulties in acquiring the data that in the best case regarded the financial advancement, rarely the physical monitoring. The problem was not uniquely the management of the monitoring system but in many cases of the original lacks of the regional programming documents approved by the Commission and of the local programmes, approved by the region. In both cases there were gaps in the definition of the objectives and in their quantification making extremely complex the evaluation of the results and the impacts of the programme. Often the evaluator had to reconstruct the needed information system by dedicating energy and time not foreseen and, naturally with the risk to reach results not perfectly reliable or often different from those reported by the official sources. This problem could be considered from one side, the effective cause of the weakness of some evaluations from the moment that the acquisition of the data is essential for the completion of the evaluations, from the other side the

justification which is used as pretexts of the same points of weaknesses as, it is known, the evaluation has to face also aspects and profiles of thematic and qualitative analysis that can be anyway produced in an independent way from the monitoring information.

3. Excessive load of information requests to LAGs. The surveillance system realized by various regions (in particular the monitoring activities), the network initiatives (in particular the various surveys and study cases carried out), the activities of the independent evaluator and of the ex post evaluator followed one another in a scarcely coordinated way to create in some cases the overlapping of surveys. The LAGs tried to face all the requests, often mixing up also the roles of the different subjects, by offering, sometimes, modest contributes because too loaded from many requests in front of few information. It is considered necessary, in order to optimize the whole system and to not make too heavy the work of the LAGs, to coordinate the process of the information gathering from the part of the numerous subject involved under different nominations with the realization: a solution could be found in the limitation of the direct relationships towards the groups and in the attribution to the regions the task to examine the opportunity of the requests and of the surveys also in distributing them in correct times that guarantee no overlapping with important phases of the realization of the programmes.

c. Ex post evaluations of the regional LEADER II programmes

(Complete overview per member state and OP)

In the ambit of the present study were gathered all the ex post evaluations of the regional programmes (in some cases, characterized by an extreme conciseness in the ex post evaluations also some evaluations in itinere were gathered), acquired partly at the regional administrations and partly at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Moreover the Ministry provided the evaluation of synthesis for the Programme of LEADER II Initiative.

The following represented table has been reconstructed on the basis of the analysis about the above mentioned documents and therefore it bases upon the contents of the ex post evaluations. In short it is to highlight that the ex post evaluations were carried out before the closure of the programmes and precisely they take into consideration the state of realization on 30/06/2001.

As already said, the adopted methodology and the articulation of the relationships, thanks to the coordination of the Ministry and of the INEA, are the character of homogeneity and allow therefore a comparative reading. So they return the main results of the realization deducible from the contents of the evaluations and from the document realized by the INEA "Evaluation of synthesis at national level of the LEADER II PIC" in which the information have been integrated as well as elaborated by the Institute in the ambit of the activity of the national network.

1. *The programming and selection phase of the LAGs.*

This activity of regional character, in Italy follows a preparatory phase centralized at national level (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry – MIPAF) and harmonized with the inherent regions: the allocation of the financial resources for the state member; the elaboration (October 1994) of the Guide Lines of the Community Initiative; the elaboration of technical-administrative procedures of surveillance, evaluation and attribution of tasks and responsibilities to different subjects and bodies operating for the realization of the Initiative (October 1996).

- The programming phase led to the first Community Decision of approval of the Regional LEADER Programmes lasted for a long time: the first approved programmes were those of Abruzzi, Campania and Basilicata (April 1995); the last ones were those of Sicily and Lazio (August and October 1996). These times extremely long are due to the complexity of the Initiative that required the application of its priority principles: *approach from the base*, that meant to pass to the gathering phase from the territory of the manifestations of interest that were the basis on which were constructed the strategies of the regional programmes; the *complementarity* with the other regional programmes that required numerous studies in depth at all the levels, local, regional and Community; the *definition of the territorial ambit* of realization of the Initiative that most of all in those cases in which it was considered opportune to express a more selective strategy it led to laborious harmonizing phases (for instance Umbria, Molise).

For this phase 753 days were necessary which were divided as follows:

I Phase: Programming	Date	Days for single sub-phase	Accumulated time
Communication to the Member States	01/07/94		
Invite for the presentation of manifestations of interest (average date for 6 regions)	23/08/94	53	53
Approval with Community decision (average date of 21 Regional LEADER Plan)	11/01/96	506	559
Formal formulation of the Partnership of Planning and decision (average date for 10 regions)	22/07/96	193	753
Total Phase I		753	

Source INEA Report "Evaluation of synthesis at national level"

- The selection phase of the LAP programmes turned out to be also complex and averagely long owing prevalingly to the great adhesion to the initiative from the part of the regional territories that put forward an elevated number of proposals (for example in Sicily: 80 manifestations of interest 57 LAP presented), all that was followed by a heavy proceedings work, and often the quality of the reached proposals was modest and required therefore long times of integrations and modifications.

II Phase: Approval	Date	Days for single sub-phase	Accumulated time
Publication of the approved RLP del PLR (average date 21 regions from the date of the Decision)	03/07/96	174	733
Deadline for the presentation of the LAPs (average date 19 regions)	02/01/97	184	917
Official approval of classification or first LAP (average date 21 regions)	18/07/97	197	1114
Total II phase		555	1114
Allocation I advance to LAGs (average date 6 regions)	21/10/98	460	1574

Source INEA Report "Evaluation of synthesis at national level"

The sent in and selected LAPs

	Manifestations of interest	Sent in LAPs	Selected LAPs
Total Objective 5b	148	95	81
Total Objective 1	295	206	122
Totale	443	301	203

Source INEA Report "Evaluation of synthesis at national level"

1. *The realization phase (for the financial aspects, please, look the bans).*

The realization procedures were contained in all the RLP (= Regional LEADER Plan), some regions (Emilia Romagna, Piemonte, Basilicata, Sicily) issued a specific document that rules in detail the tasks, obligations, responsibilities of the LAG, realization modalities of the Measure C, control and financial statement procedures.

The following most significant aspects are to be highlighted:

- The LAGs are organized in mixed (public-private) companies articulated as follows: 1) partners' general assembly; 2) board of directors (decisional body); board of auditors; administrative staff; technical staff; structures of support (of managerial character represented by the harmonizing tables etc.; of technical type like the structures of technical assistance, evaluation groups of the projects).
- The monitoring committees of the LEADER programme coincide with those of the Objective 5b in northern regions and of the MOP (=Multifund Operative Programme) or of the POP (=Plurifund Operative Programme) for the regions Objective 1.
- In order to realize the LAPs two procedural courses are to be found: 1) direct individuation of the projects and of the relative persons that realize them in cases which objective is both "of public nature" and in the projects which beneficiary is the LAG that,

frequently, adopted anyway examination procedures in order entrust the tasks to professional people and companies; 2) activation of competition procedures for the other typologies of project. The public expenditure announced results to be equal to 70 % of the total amount; the completion of the calls required averagely 4 months.

2. *The application results of the Initiative LEADER II (the LEADER specificities and other evaluations)*

In respect of the articulation of the ex post evaluations reports, agreed between the Ministry and the regions, almost all the evaluations deal with a) the analysis of the specificities and the added value induced by the evaluations; b) the evaluations of the impact of the RLP in respect of the objectives of the rural development; c) the evaluation of the impact of the RLP in respect of the objectives of the EU.

a) the evaluation of the added value of LEADER II was carried out on the basis of the questionnaires elaborated by the European Observatory and distributed to the LAGs; such an evaluation, certainly interesting, anyway rarely manages to read coherently the results of the realizations of the programme with the advantages deriving from the specificities.

Territorial approach: averagely the main results are to be recognized in the “better individuation of problems and local needs” and in the second place in the “individuation of the local needs”. The resources principally valorised in consequence of this approach were the “historical-cultural resources” followed by the “environmental” and “agricultural and forest”.

Bottom up approach: on the whole the results most significant are to be found in the “better individuation of problems and local needs” and in the second place in the capacity to “stimulate new ideas and projects” and to favour a “better organization of the local actors”. The participation was everywhere wide, particularly during the realization phase in respect of the programming phase and in case of the “farmers” and of the “local administrators”; less intensive from the part of the “associations” and of the “young people”.

Local Action Group:

Composition of the social basis of the LAGs/CB

	Objective 1	Objective 5b	Total
Public partners	823	810	1633
Private partners	1101	972	2073
Total	1924	1782	3706

Source INEA Report “Evaluation of synthesis at national level”

The LAGs were largely formed as limited companies of cooperative type. A recognized tendency of the LAGs is to privilege in their activity the phases of administrative management in respect of the animation. On the whole the groups managed to gain credibility in the territory so much to lead the same partnership towards new initiatives, most of all for the programming 2000-2006.

The innovative character of the actions. All in the entire LEADER favoured the individuation and the experimentation of new solutions for the development of the territory. The innovation invested prevalently and transversally the LAP, connected essentially to the method and in some cases assumed also characters more punctual, i.e. circumscribed to some projects. It was prevalently caused by the LAG. The ambit in which the innovations acted for all the LAGs was in the first place the diversification of the economical activities and in the second place the development of local and external networks. The main induced results of the innovative character can be recognized in the act of favouring to gain credibility of the LAG on the territory as development agency and in the effects of ability to demonstrate and to transfer. The main constraints were identified in the problems of coherence with the Community regulations and therefore of admissibility of the expenditure and in the factor time, too limited.

The integrated and multisectorial character. It deals with an approach all in all widely adopted by the LAGs and it based prevalently on the integrating theme for the promotion of the rural tourism that necessarily requires the adaption of integrated strategies. The most important result are to be identified in the creation of stable links between the operators, public and private that in cases more mature led to embark also on other initiatives and in the realization of synergies between the sectors. The main constraints are to be recognized in the difficulties to overcome the traditional individualism that distinguished the activity of the operators of many LEADER areas and in the times excessively long between the programming and the realization and in the calendars of the advancement of different funds.

The trans-national network and cooperation: In Italy operated the European network and the national network, beyond these, prevalently informal ones that arose in some regions (Abruzzi, Sicily, Tuscany, Liguria and Piemonte). The LAGs demonstrated averagely a good level of participation to the activities of the networks that anyway were conditioned by the very concentrated work load under which the groups were subjects for the delays with the starting of the programmes and limited their participation. Moreover is to highlight that the participation limited itself to the technicians of the LAGs and did not manage to involve the economical operators. The results: the European network favoured the surmounting of the isolation and allowed the actuation of the cooperation projects; the national network favoured the informative and methodological exchanges, improved the local skills.

The financial management: the regions followed parallel procedures of transfer of the resources to LAGs happened according to the successive advances following the presentation of bank

guarantees of the resources from the part of the LAGs. Two exceptions are to be pointed out: the autonomous Province of Bolzano that does not credit the financial resources to the LAGs but allocates directly to the beneficiaries, selected in complete autonomy by the LAGs, advances and settlement; the Tuscan region sets up a third subject “the cashier body” responsible for the financial management of the funds. In both cases, the LAGs express their satisfaction with the adopted solutions that streamline their work by guaranteeing at the same time their autonomy and power to decide.

What concerns the *Evaluation of the impact of the RLP in respect of the objective of the rural development* (development and improvement of the agricultural and forestal sector; improvement of the standards of life in the rural areas; the development of the handicrafts, of the commerce and tourism; protection and safety guard of the environment) and the *Evaluation of the impact of the RLP in respect of the objectives of the EU*, the evaluation reports deal with such aspects with methodologies prevalently qualitative, which results are in a difficult way to be synthesized, with some exceptions that adopt tools and methods directed towards the introduction of objectivity principles:

- In Piemonte is carried out an analysis swot regarding the RLP;
- In Liguria is carried out an analysis capable to demonstrate and to transfer the investments for single action and made a comparison between the indicators of final performance of the LAGs and the utilized selection system;
- In the autonomous Province of Bolzano, in Emilia Romagna, in Tuscany, in Abruzzi, in Sicily is proposed a reclassification of the investments in six macro-categories (functioning of the LAG, help to the private, formation, services, infrastructures, studies and researches), by distinguishing between public and private, material and immaterial and therefore comparison the weight of the LEADER investments with the resources of the provincial/regional budget destined to different sectors.

d. The diffusion of the evaluation results

(How were evaluations processed at national level?)

The intermediate and in itinere evaluations were transmitted by the regions to the monitoring committees and in this sense reached all its members, in particular the European Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. It seems, instead, that the diffusion of the evaluations among the LAGs was not particularly pursued.

The ex post evaluations were transmitted by the regions both to the Ministry than to the European Commission. In some cases these evaluations are available at the regional web site.

3.2 Overall assessment

The process of ex post evaluation carried out on the Operative Programmes of the Italian regions had the fortune to be initially coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (supported by the INEA) that suggested a common articulation of the relations and the application of common methodologies, in particular the utilization of the questionnaires defined by the European Observatory relative to the Evaluation of the added value of LEADER II. This co-ordination in the metodological formulation more to represent a significant advantage in terms of comparability of different evaluations was particularly oportune as it induced the evaluators to adopt an instrument of analysis (the questionnaires of the Observatory) that turned out to be extremely efficient properly for the learning process both at local and regional level. In fact, even though the work on the LEADER specificities was carried out in a different way in the ambit of the different evaluations, in some cases through a simple distribution of the questionnaires to the LAGs, in some cases assisting their elaboration with moments of debate and of more enlarged participation, somehow the treated arguments, prevailingly concentrated on the qualitative aspects and of process in relation to the realization of the Plans, were particularly appreciated by the LAGs as able to valorise at best their work and able to lead the Groups to the moment of reflection and of self-evaluation particularly oportune in an important period also for the new programmation 2000-2006.

On the basis of the information and knowledge acquired by the evaluator, in particular in the ambit of the studies in depth on the sample regions, can be summarized the following considerations:

- On the whole the evaluation process (both in itinere and ex post) seems to be experienced with major participation by the LAGs above all than by the regional administrations that seem to have had less utility because the evaluations did not always express clear conclusions and recommendations and presented temporal dislocations in respect of the needs of the realization phases of the programme; comes out moreover from the part of the regional offices preposed to the realization of the LEADER programme the sensation that the aspect connected to the advancement of the expenditure remains all the same the element of principal interest, inside the monitoring committee;
- In cases where the evaluations of the LEADER programme were entrusted in the ambit of an unique charge including also the evaluation of other regional programmes of major financial importance, in particular in the regions Objective 1, the LEADER programme did not receive enough importance.

For the future it seems opportune

- To set up the evaluation process since the first realization phases, by requesting to the evaluator in the course of his/her activities eventual thematic or sectorial studies in depth aimed at the evaluations of specific problems that appear during the course of the realization;
- To organize periodical meeting between regional administration , LAG and evaluator in order to acquire major awareness about the evaluation process in act and to individuate specific focus of the idoneous analysis to represent better the characteristics of the different programmes;
- To spread and in particular to transfer to the LAGs the evaluation results, also in the ambit of specific meeting debates;
- In the light of the experience of co-ordination of the ex post evaluations carried out by the Ministry, moreover it is considered useful that would be carried out an activity of address in respect of the regional evaluations aimed at guaranteeing a common base of information and of tools and methods.

3.3 Capitalisation on relevant conclusions and recommendations contained in the national and regional evaluation reports of the 34 selected programmes – (grid) (2 pag.)

Area-based Approach:

The individuation of the eligible territories to the LEADER II was carried out by the regions; inside of these ambits the local partnerships defined the perimeters of the areas of effectiveness of the LAGs. It is to highlight:

- the case of the Calabria region that individuated ex ante 22 areas on which to carry out the LAPs. In this way were created smaller areas and therefore the realisation of partnerships was easier;
- the case of the Tuscany region that, as the major part of the regions 5b, defined eligible the whole territory 5b and referred to the provinces the harmonizing preparatory phase to the birth of the LAGs.

The administrative criterion and the geographical criterion generally guided the choices of the perimetric action and in some cases was determinate the political will of the local bodies.

The area-based approach favoured the acquisition of a major awareness about the local resources, a more exact definition of the problems and of the needs, a general reinforcement of the sense of belonging to the territory. In the territories characterized by a major habit for the

local programming (Emilia Romagna, Tuscany), this approach favoured also the better utilization of the resources.

Bottom-up Approach:

Approximately a good participation was reached, in the cases of Emilia Romagna and Calabria more intense during the starting phases (analysis and definition of the strategies) and less intense during the course of the realization.

In Calabria was the entrepreneurial category to show itself more actively participative; in other cases the institutions, in unison with the economical operators, the associations, played an important role. The involvement of the population was not generally reached, if not in case of the Tuscan region during the activation, thanks to numerous actions aimed at the territorial knowledge and the valorisation of the local specificities.

The positive results of the bottom-up approach can be recognized in the capacity to individuate the local problems and needs, organizing them in an only model of territorial development and improving the organizing capacity of the actors. The harmonization made possible a strengthening of the decisional capacities and a major consent about the choices. The progressive participation led also to an increase of visibility of the initiative LEADER. The experience LEADER was transferred to other forms of intervention of harmonizing type, on becoming general rule for the territorial development.

The local group:

In the regions 5b, where the harmonizing habits more rooted are recognized, in particular Emilia Romagna and Tuscany, the partnerships of the LAGs represented the local realities; in these contexts the institutional subjects played decisive roles and frequently were promoters for the birth of the LAGs. In case of the Calabria region, on the contrary, during the starting phase the initiatives assumed by the private subjects like the agricultural organizations, the associations among professional figures, the cooperatives were prevailing whilst the local institutions demonstrated a modest participation deriving from an initial scarce confidence in the potentials of the programme.

In the contexts in which the system of relationships among the local subjects was already more consolidated the LAGs represented permanent harmonizing tables that facilitated the decisional process, the consent about the choices and the individuation of collective actions of innovative character, giving origin for important participative experiences, concerning for example the process of coordination of some bodies and the stimulus for the starting of cooperation experiences with the private.

The LAGs during the realization phase reinforced their role as a catalyst of the local development, assuming the function of local development agency, with effects of strengthening of connections between the territorial subjects so much that, in different cases, the partnership pursued the proper action also in other initiatives of local development. In all the experiences it is possible to recognize, anyhow, which main results the control of the consistency and integration of the interventions, the demonstrating role of the partnership model, the stimulus to the realization of initiatives of collective character.

Innovation:

The innovation regarded in the first place the development of the local offer through the introduction of new products and services (in all the experiences, new forms of marketing (in Emilia Romagna), the development of local networks, and an easier access to the new information and communication technologies (Tuscany). Prevalently the innovative interventions regarded the sector of agro-tourism, through proposals aimed at advertising the image and at rendering thematic the offer.

In Emilia Romagna the innovation was particularly favoured by the regional instructions that directed the Plans towards actions prevailing of immaterial and collective character excluding the financing of individual interventions of structural character.

On the whole the research of the innovation was principally stimulated by the LAGs with a good contribution also from the part of the project promoters. The main obstacles are to be recognized in the admissibility of the innovative interventions, in long times for the planning and realization of the interventions and in difficulties to find the resources for the co-financing of the projects.

The results prevailingly deriving from the realization of innovative actions, were the effect of demonstration and therefore of transferability, the better credibility of the LAG in the area where it operates as a promoter of new approaches. In some cases the projects favoured the formation of new forms of partnership and the individuation of new markets in particular for the action that mixes up the tourism (connection in the network of farms and tourist operators) and the artisans (Emilia Romagna).

Multisectorial Integration:

On the whole the Plans show a good state of application of the integration principle. The dominating theme around which were built integrated strategies, is almost everywhere the tourist development and of the linked services, which are followed by a driving force relative to the valorisation of the typical products and the environmental resources. In some cases (Calabria) the absence of a sector of economical activity dominating on the sector favoured the multi-sectoriality, whilst the individualism of the local actors represented an obstacle. Some

LAGs (Emilia Romagna) apply themselves with particular engagement to actions of programming and planning of territorial wideness and of support to the activities of the bodies operative in the area.

The main results of the integration can be recognized in the creation of stable connections between the actors, secondly in the best sustainability of the projects and in the development of synergies. It is presupposed therefore, that this action modality had triggered a positive process of collaboration between different subjects that could go on beyond the conclusion of the LEADER initiative and could spur the starting of other actions of integrated local development.

Networking:

The participation to the networks from the part of the LAGs was approximately high but regarded principally the technicians of the LAGs and in minor measure the operators and the populations. The exchange took place through the reinforcement of the connections with the national networks (INEA) and the connection with the European network of the Observatory. The networks were utilized for the search of partners both at local and trans-national level. During the establishment of the connections and links was of great utility the participation the seminars organized by the European network AEIDL. In the Tuscan region a local network was founded, with frequent meetings between the managers of the LAGs and in the framework of a feasible relation with the regional bodies.

The main obstacle for the participation to the activities of the LEADER networks is to be individuated in the load of engagement of the LAGs that were very pressed with their tasks to carry out in too strict times.

The work of networking stimulated processes of internal innovation and gave major visibility to the rural areas.

From the participation to the networks at different levels follows an improvement of the skills (application of innovative methods for the territorial valorisation) and of the offer, a major support for the innovative activities and the activation of co-operational projects.

Trans-national Cooperation:

Everywhere was decisive for the realization of the co-operational projects the work of the LAGs' technicians and in general little significant the contributions of the institutions, of the local realities etc. with the exception of the Emilia Romagna where was also profitable the relation with the subjects belonging to the economical world, with local bodies, with the cultural organisms. The lack of time hampered the origin of an effective harmonizing over the co-operational projects and this was the prevailing reason for the failures verified. The financial

support was judged approximately insufficient to the realization of projects effectively innovative and efficacious.

The main results regard the exchange of experiences, the stimulus to the definition of innovative actions and the involvement and the interaction between the subjects that unlikely would have been activated without this opportunity.

Decentralized management and financing:

On the whole the operational process was characterized by a high autonomy of the LAGs, in particular in the selection phase of the projects. In case of Tuscany there is the particularity of the institution figure called "Cashier Body", public subject in charge of collecting the regional advances and seeing, on behalf of the LAG and according to the indication of this last, to the payments to the final beneficiary. The most frequent problem is the slackness in the regional controls which follow the redemptions of the fidejussions of the LAGs.

The administrative and financial decentralization generated and stimulated the innovation and the participation widened to the project, allowing bureaucratic streamlining. In respect of the particular case of the Tuscan region, the figure of the Cashier body was judged positively by the LAGs: in some way the LAGs felt themselves more guaranteed not having the burden of the responsibility of the financial management and of the eventual bureaucratic complications.

4. General appreciation from the perspective of the geographical evaluator

4.1 General appreciation of the implementation and the effects of the Leader II initiative (1 pag.)

(Synthesis of the main outcomes and learning from the Leader II initiative in the area covered by the geographical evaluator)

Regione Sardegna

Impact of the LEADER method on sustainable rural development

The precedent LEADER I experience was considered of little importance for both the role played by the regional administration and for the reduced extension of the involved territory. LEADER II, however, represented the first real experience of harmonized local programming and supplied a concrete contribution in terms of method and of experience for the initiatives of territorial integrated programming actually in course in the ambit of the new programming of the structural funds, revealing itself therefore efficacious in terms of transferability of experiences also for the same region.

The local subjects, public and private, are, somehow, the main beneficiaries of the experience that provided the first real opportunity for the rising of local partnerships and enriched their skills in the field of decentralization and local development. From this point of view, technical support and training opportunities provided by the region to the LAGs through the animation of the regional network has been very effective.

The long time consumed to carry on the start up procedures of local action plans has reduced the period for the real implementation of Leader and the consolidation of the undertaken innovative actions has suffered for this.

Impact of LEADER on horizontal objectives

The non-structural characteristic of the investments realized with LEADER II in front of the considerable weak points of the local economical systems lead to individuate the principal effects of the initiative that had originated processes of integration between sectors and public and private subjects and above all to have originated and experimented local partnerships. Less evident result the direct effects on the horizontal objectives of the structural funds and in general on the economical various priorities in reason of the practicability of the funds if compared with the needs of the territory and the scarce level of the realization, not sufficient to the consolidation of the important changes induced by the programme.

Agricultural adjustment and diversification

Leader had an important effect to encourage the creation of added value inside the farms even though they were small ones. This process concerned at least three specific aspects on which the Leader effect was important: 1) valorization activities of raw materials (transformation and marketing); 2) farm holidays 3) the development of the food chains connected to the biological productions.

Employment

The perception of the effect on the employment regards: the preservation of jobs in the farms and very light creation of new jobs in tourism and in the valorization of the products; the creation of direct employment collegated to the realization of the projects; the activation of small business

Environmental protection and improvement

In this field the effects concern: the promotion of the biological methods in agriculture; few isolated interventions of the environmental protection; some important recovery interventions of the architectural patrimony; an important effect in sensitizing local actors

Income

The income increase was not a result explicitly attended from the initiative. Both the regional administration and the LAGs considered that partial and punctual improvements were reached; anyhow it is not possible to quantify them.

Equal opportunities

A specific effect in this field was not expressly foreseen in the program and in the local plans. A certain effect is visible comparing Leader with other programs. Nevertheless, the greatest involvement of women in the projects sustained by Leader is not due to a specific politics on the contrary it comes from its ability to mobilize the existing potential of the territory also in the field of human resources.

Complementarity to other measures

An important element of complementarity is connected to the cultural approach of the Leader 2 and particularly to its capacity to integrate typologies of interventions and different actors focused on a single object or product. From the point of view of structural funds invested in the region, Leader succeeded in intervening in the small local niches that could not be struck by the "great" programming of structural funds. Nevertheless a real complementarity has been hindered by the difficulty of the structural funds to put into practice integrated interventions.

Regione Calabria

Impact of the LEADER method on sustainable rural development

The precedent LEADER I experience was considered of little importance for both the role played by the regional administration and for the reduced extension of the involved territory. LEADER II, however, represented the first real experience of harmonized local programming and supplied a concrete contribution in terms of method and of experience for the initiatives of territorial integrated programming actually in course in the ambit of the new programming of the structural funds, revealing itself therefore efficacious in terms of transferability of experiences also for the same region.

The local subjects, public and private, are, somehow, the main beneficiaries of the experience that provided the first real opportunity for the rising of local partnerships and enriched their skills in the field of decentralization.

From the focus carried out by the LAG 'Valle del Crati' and by the interviews made with the regional responsible for the realization of the LEADER II programme, comes out in relation to the managerial aspects the presence of considerable difficulties deriving from the poor dimension of the regional offices, dedicated to the programme, which provided an assistance appreciated by the LAGs for the engagement of the single officers but anyhow not sufficient. In particular the slowness with the controls and procedures not very swift are to point out.

Impact of LEADER on horizontal objectives

The non-structural characteristic of the investments realized with LEADER II in front of the considerable weak points of the local economical systems lead to individuate the principal effects of the initiative that had originated processes of integration between sectors and public and private subjects and above all to have originated and experimented local partnerships. Less evident result the direct effects on the horizontal objectives of the structural funds and in general on the economical various priorities in reason of the practicability of the funds if compared with the needs of the territory and the scarce level of the realization, not sufficient to the consolidation of the important changes induced by the programme.

Agricultural adjustment and diversification

Inside of a logic of sectorial integration, the objective of the development and of the improvement of the agricultural and forest sector played certainly an important role and expressed itself in the first place towards the improvement of the quality of the productions, the consolidation of some market segments, the diversification of the enterprise activities, in particular in the direction to intensify the agro-tourist offer. The complementarity with the interventions realized in the ambit of other programmes is to be found essentially in a good

grade of innovation of some interventions, most of all in relation to the involvement and to the integration of more subjects and to the co-ordination carried out by the LAG on the territory.

Employment

In relation to the resources invested it can be recognized a local effect on employment that, anyway, at regional level, does not represent a significant value. LEADER created most of all professionalism through the qualification of the existing figures and the birth of innovative profiles.

Environmental protection and improvement

The effect of LEADER was consistent: together with punctual interventions of rediscovery and environmental valorisation, through numerous initiatives (animation campaigns, centers of diffusion and information, seminars) favoured the increase of the sensibility towards the environmental problems, were born agencies that operate in the sector of reutilization of alternative energies, were established good relations between the LAGs – and therefore their partnerships – and the park bodies.

Income

The income increase was not a result explicitly attended from the initiative. Both the regional administration and the LAGs considered that partial and punctual improvements were reached; anyhow it is not possible to quantify them.

Equal opportunities

The female participation was wide both in terms of participation to the partnership and of management of the activities, and in occupational terms as well as in terms of access to the fundings. The presence of women in the structures of the LAGs was very high.

Complementarity to other measures

A real complementarity of the investments made with the LEADER II in respect of those realized through other programming tools did not take place. Their value consists in the first place of the co-ordination and of the integration that they had inside the LAGs. This condition seems to derive partly from the dispositions of the same Community regulations that did not facilitate the complementarity and the innovation of the LEADER investments, from other reasons and most of all from the poor co-ordination of the regional programming.

Regione Emilia Romagna

Impact of the LEADER method on sustainable rural development

The LEADER II experience was lived with great participation and confidence from the part of the regional administration and the selected territories. Even though in the region was not put into practice the LEADER I, anyhow, forms of partnerial aggregation and experiences of harmonization were already present on the regional territory. The LEADER II was strongly connected to these traditions in order to assist for their consolidation giving major substance for the partnerships, by promoting a better co-ordination of the local programming and by developing innovative initiatives in relation to the needs of the different territories. On the whole the LEADER experience had a relevant impact : particularly, in the new regional programming activity where are evident the principles of the decentralisation of the programming and managing trusted to local partnerships.

Impact of LEADER on horizontal objectives

Agricultural adjustment and diversification

The effects of the LEADER should not been searched in the interventions directly intended to the agricultural sector but most of all in terms of diversification and of improvement of the marketing phases of the products. In particular some LAPs were able to identify innovative actions for the sector that originated initiatives that did not end with the LEADER; an example of this is the project of the LAG 'Delta 2000' for the reintroduction of the hemp cultivation, that initiated a process chain, determining the engagement of industrial enterprises of the textile and paper sector for the possible utilization of the finished product and for the formation of the 'Consortium Canapaltalia' for a possible development of the hemp cultivation in the province of Ferrara; the initiatives of the LAG 'L'Altra Romagna' favoured the growth of the farms dedicated for the biological and typical production and the origin of the networking of the educational farmyards.

Employment

The job creation should not be considered as an objective of LEADER due to the modest fundings foreseen from the programme. All the same the started activities contribute to the formation of conditions for the creation of new jobs in rural areas and for the preservation of those already existing. This thanks to the implementation of integrated and co-ordinated activities and to the settlement of new relationships between tourism, handicraft and agriculture. A significant result can be seen in a general improvement of professional skills.

Environmental protection and improvement

The environmental safeguard matters were widely considered in LAPs and in their targets. In particular, the actions targeted to the reintroduction of the tourist offer and those actions

directed to the agricultural sector contributed to the landscape improvement and the environment safeguard by acting respectively on the valorisation of the natural tourist resources and on the agricultural production processes of quality and environment friendly.

Relevant interventions were realized by the LAGs inside the protected areas: the LAG 'Delta 2000' in the park of the Po delta realized pilot projects targeted to the conservation and valorization of the naturalistic heritage and to the definition of recovery modality of the rural landscape in its architectural and ecosystemical acceptions; the LAG 'Soprip' sustained the start of the regional park "Cento Laghi".

Income

In general the LAGs do not manage to estimate the impact on the income of the realized initiatives that anyway generated a sensible increase of the investments from the part of the local operators and a light increase of the investments outside of the area. Moreover some initiatives above all in the tourist sector targeted to the lengthening of the tourist seasons favoured without doubt some occupational forms.

Moreover it must be pointed out that thanks to the LEADER initiative were reached such subjects that were not been involved by the other regional programmation tools and this naturally extended and diffused the benefits of the initiative.

Equal opportunities

In general the equal opportunities are not a problem in the Emilia Romagna region and therefore it was not represented, as an objective of the programme neither was not specifically taken into consideration by the single LAGs.

Complementarity to other measures

The regional administration favoured the complementarity of the LEADER II with the other programmes indicating the typologies of admissible interventions, clearly differentiated as much realizable for instance with the Docup Objective 5b. The LAGs highlight the difficulty to activate a real complementarity because of a traditional rigidity in the programmation that operated prevalingly for sectors or also because of temporal dislocations in the realization of the different programmes that hinder the originating of effective synergies. The best results are evident in the cases where was favoured and maintained active in the course of the LEADER activation a process of permanent consultation between local administrations and trade associations for the definition of the intervention lines (LAG 'Delta 2000).

Regione Piemonte

Impact of the LEADER method on sustainable rural development

The LEADER II was the first experience of local harmonization because the activation of the LEADER I was very circumscribed territorially and the region had a marginal role. The LEADER II experience permitted to the local actors to learn to know new programming forms and favoured their growth thanks to the harmonization.

The LEADER allowed to the regional structures to activate common planning processes and influenced the new planning: some LEADER II local partnerships started integrated projects. However the realised harmonisations outside the LEADER were weaker because they appeared "forced".

Leader brought a great benefit both to regional services and to local administrations because people involved in partnerships acquired many skills.

Impact of LEADER on horizontal objectives

Agricultural adjustment and diversification

The impact of the LEADER programme on the agricultural sector was approximately and particularly high what concerns the creation and the promotion of local productions of quality and of specialized sector in a vision of integration and of increase of the territorial characterization. The initiatives in the specific sector were particularly followed by the regional administration that favoured the research of the innovation and of the coherence between the actions of the LAPs.

Employment

The regional context does not present specific occupational problems. The LEADER seemed to be a suitable tool to influence in terms of professional qualifications and to foster the birth of right actions in order to constrain the flight from some areas where it is really a problem.

Environmental protection and improvement

Leader had a very relevant effect especially in creating a new environmental awareness in areas where the problem had not been faced before; moreover many interventions were dedicated to the reinforcement and to the valorization of activities characterized by a high environmental sustainability, in particular some interventions in the agricultural sector and those addressed to the tourism had effects on the environmental improvement.

Income

The LEADER had direct and indirect positive effects, notwithstanding the modest financial dimension of the initiative, because the financed enterprises were many and most of all because it offered the possibility to have access to the funds for small enterprises that would not have obtained easily funds from other programmes or financing regional lines, generally directed to the big enterprises. Moreover, as a result of the LEADER action was originated many initiatives that permitted a sensible revitalization of the areas confirmed by a tendency to the population stability and by positive migration movements.

Equal opportunities

It was not an explicit Leader objective but it gave all the same to all the interested subjects the possibility to bring development initiatives into effect. The interventions carried out, however, contributed to sustain and to qualify the skills and they had influence also among the female population. Moreover can be pointed out the high participation of women in the LAG structures.

Complementarity to other measures

The birth of permanent and durable partnerships allowed to embrace the planning entirely and therefore to be able to reflect on the synergies and the complementarity of different tools. This effect was particularly clear in those territories where the institutional organization did not provide intermediary bodies like, for example, the municipalities association. Moreover LEADER demonstrated to be complementary what concerns the number of beneficiaries because it was able to reach certain parts of population not usually reached from other programmes. The harmonization between the local bodies favoured the expression of complementarity and synergetic projects with other initiatives.

Regione Toscana

Impact of the LEADER method on sustainable rural development

The participation and the harmonization form an affirmed tradition in the Tuscan region also in the rural areas. The LEADER II, so, was applied into a context already mature to perceive one of the main strategic approaches of the initiative that in fact, assumes, most of all in the first phases, a character more structured in respect of other experiences and it is characterized for a institutional direction that saw the provinces to play a main role in the conduction of the harmonization that led to the selection of the LEADER territories and of the LAGs. In this context the LEADER II, that follows a precedent experience LEADER I of poor importance for the reduced extension of the interested territories and for the marginal role played by the regional administration, represents a valid tool for the consolidation of the system of already existing relations, by enlarging the adhesion of the partnership towards the private subjects and for the guarantee of a major co-ordination of the local programming also by favoring the

adhesion of the partnerships to new initiatives. The result is an affirmation of the LAGs in their role of catalyst of the local development and how they knew to pass from an initial involvement particularly of the institutions during the realization phase to a wide involvement also of the local population.

To the LEADER initiative is due the capacity to have introduced in the programming of the local bodies the concepts of rurality, sustainable development, immateriality of the intervention, reproduction of the initiative, networking and to have made more familiar the Community programming, inducing an increase of the projectual quality. The LEADER developed moreover, on the wave of the concept of integrated development and of the partnership, associative forms more or less structured to meet common needs. The LEADER method obliged with the facts the single local administrations to face themselves with the territorial context by predisposing inserted projects in a strategic context at over-communal level and above all with the enterprises in such a way to realize the maximum synergy and co-ordination between public and private interventions.

As emerged from the focus group, the load of bureaucratic procedures was very binding and time consuming both for LAGs teams and beneficiaries.

Impact of LEADER on horizontal objectives

Agricultural adjustment and diversification

It comes out more clearly that the development incentive more efficiently operated from the initiative Leader is referable to the synergy between agriculture and tourism, in a particular way rural tourism, in line with the delineated courses of the new Community politics, from Cork going on, that individuated in the multi-functionality of the farm one of the mainstays of economical development in rural areas.

The more relevant results concern the dimension of the development adhering to the improvement of the farms, in particular, in our case, with reference to the marketing, and that relative to the qualitative improvement and to the diversification of the productions. This last result is strictly connected to the numerous initiatives concerning the diffusion of the techniques of biological agriculture, the realization of some relevant infrastructures aimed at the allocation of services for the farms, the introduction of the quality trademarks and the widespread intervention of valorisation relative to the realization, in almost all the involved areas, of so called Wine Roads. It's also to highlight how various LAGs activated support interventions for the quality certification and the adjustment of the HACCP manuals at the farms.

Employment

The LEADER intervention in Tuscany certainly contributed to the starting of positive actions in favor of the improvement of the occupational conditions, and it really did it, thanks to the correct interpretation of the LEADER specificities, by acting, essentially, through two different operative modalities.

Beyond the direct action in favor of the occupational increase concerning the professional formation and the assistance for the professional insertion, numerous were the integrated and coordinated interventions, addressed to a local development that would stimulate the intersectorial relationships between tourism, agriculture and characteristic handicrafts.

Also in the management of the numerous initiatives for the creation of Wine Roads, or in the network points for tourist information, LEADER had a qualified occupation, not always at full-time, but certainly lasting, and therefore significant in a framework of pluriactivities.

At last we mention the occupational requirements generated from the activation of the telecommunication networks and the web portals.

Environmental protection and improvement

The LEADER action in relation to the safeguard of the environmental heritage and to its valorization resulted to be less incisive of that concerning the support for the productive sectors.

In any case almost in all the measures it's easily to notice an attention towards the themes of the environmental protection, with actions for the formation of operators specialized in the environmental recovery, creation of data banks and the GIS (= geographical informative system) relative to the wooded areas and to the management of the forests, interventions of valorization, with tourist intentions, of the naturalist areas. Numerous were the interventions for the recovery of degraded areas, the introduction of innovative systems of collection and treatment for the waste material, the depuration of the residual waters, the utilization of the alternative energies. The totality of the actions implemented presents the common result to contribute to the improvement of the forms of safeguard and valorization of the natural and social-cultural heritage and the rural landscape.

Income

In substance it can be pointed out how the intervention of the PLR (= Regional Leader Plan) contributes in a relevant manner to the improvement of living conditions, but also thanks to its overall action, at least in that measure in which the activated development processes give rise, in the middle-term, to the employment and income increases. For the attainment of an increase of the employment opportunities contribute the actions relative to the activation of the new

services, particularly in the tourism sector, enable to give rise to the jobs for secularised young people and those relative to the multifunctionality of the farms.

Equal opportunities

Not any particular importance was given to this objective. Somehow, frequently the LAGs during the selection process, attributed an increase of points to the projects that involved disadvantaged categories.

Complementarity to other measures

The regional programming paid particular attention to the aspects of the complementarity and of the synergy of the interventions. Also some LAGs operated to this direction in the ambit of the harmonization process. It is an example case of the LAG 'Garfagnana' that during the predisposition phase of the LAP defined with the delegated bodies the level of intervention of the LEADER plan in respect of the relative programmations (for instance the bodies made interventions in order to support productions, the LAG on the promotion and marketing, the bodies financed restructuring interventions for the creation of new agro-tourist farms, the LAG intervened on the quality of the hospitality service).

4.2 Critical reflection of the evaluation process (1 pag.)

(Recapitulation of the problems and difficulties encountered, of solutions found; comments on methods; proposals for improvement)

In respect of the foreseen methodology, the carried out work on the LEADER II experience in the Italian regions encountered the following difficulties:

- The activities of first phase, related to the compilation of the grids, of extreme engagement for the considerable number of the Operative Programmes and of realized LAPs, encountered a first obstacle in gathering information of financial character as for only few regions had then produced in the first three months 2003 the final statement of assets (in fact, it was possible to send it in within June 2003) and had still in course the controls by the LAGs. This meant from the part of the work team an intense activity in order to guarantee equally the maximum of information, in gathering in a first phase also provisory data that, somehow, required a successive punctual verification, carried out during the month of July. Also following upon this last gathering of information, anyway, it was not possible, to satisfy all the data requests in particular those relative to the composition of the expenditure because not all the statements of assets returned the advancement according to the required articulation: national funds, Community ones at their turn distinguished in Feoga, Fesr and Fse, and private; Measure A, B, C and D.

- The distribution of the questionnaires Q202 revealed itself particularly binding and not always really effective in terms of returned information. It is, in fact, well known that the LAGs were not operative during the period when they were contacted by us and that their technical structures, then still existing because engaged with the new programming of LEADER plus, worked solely thanks to the voluntary spirit of their technicians. Moreover, it must be brought to notice that the evaluation activities object of the present study followed the numerous surveys carried out in course of the realization years of the LEADER II that, naturally, identified in the LAGs the best resource of information. This meant a certain resistance from the part of the groups to accept this last request of survey and from our part an intense pression both on the LAGs and on the regional administrations so that they could play a role of sensibilization and solicitation. Moreover, as many times highlighted the carried out evaluations in many Italian regions foresaw the adoption, in quality of survey tool, of the questionnaires elaborated by the European Observatory, utilized abundantly over about 70 % of the LAGs. Such exercise has many analogies with the Q 202 one and this made worse the sensation of repetition and overcharge of surveys.

- Owing to all this, through a certain number of replacements of LAGs, we managed all the same to respect the work schedule but it seemed opportune to us to point out that from one side, the replies of some LAGs are certainly too synthetic and of scarce interest from the other side, the applied methodology did not foresee an effective re-elaboration (at regional level) of this information which seem notwithstanding little valorised. During the conclusive phase of the carried out activities much more efficacious are considered the working phases that foresaw direct contacts between the evaluator, the LAGs and the regional administrations in the ambit of the realization of interviews, focus groups and different study cases. In course of these activities assisted, in fact, to a great participation of different subjects, in general motivated to face a process of evaluation/self-evaluation carried out in an active way on specific aspects of the realization of the Plans. Such survey tools, beyond naturally the analysis of the reports of regional evaluations, provided the most important and significant elements for the realization of the present work.

Model of implementation

