The impact of LEADER on balanced territorial development, 2014-2020

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Evaluation Methodology

All online - Covid

14 Evaluation Study Questions on the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU value-added of LEADER

Document and literature review, EU-level data and indicator analysis

Case studies
- **36 LAGs, from 14 RDPs in 10 contrasting Member States**

Online Surveys
- **Managing Authorities (56, in 27 MS-** *no response from Finland***)**
- **LAGs (511 complete, in all 28 MS-** *about 800 replied in total***)**

285 Interviews:
- **LEADER personnel + beneficiaries**
- **local + regional stakeholders**
- **EU experts**
- **Validation workshops** *at draft report stage, in each Case Study*

Data analysis
- **Comparing MA & LAG surveys**
- **Comparing Case Studies with survey between MS, factors and outcomes**

Validation webinar with EC

Case study LAGs

Materials collected:

Interviews
- LAG managers
- MA (& PA if needed)
- 3-5 Beneficiaries per LAG
- LAG member / other stakeholder, per case

DATA / factual information
- RDP documents
- Standard indicators
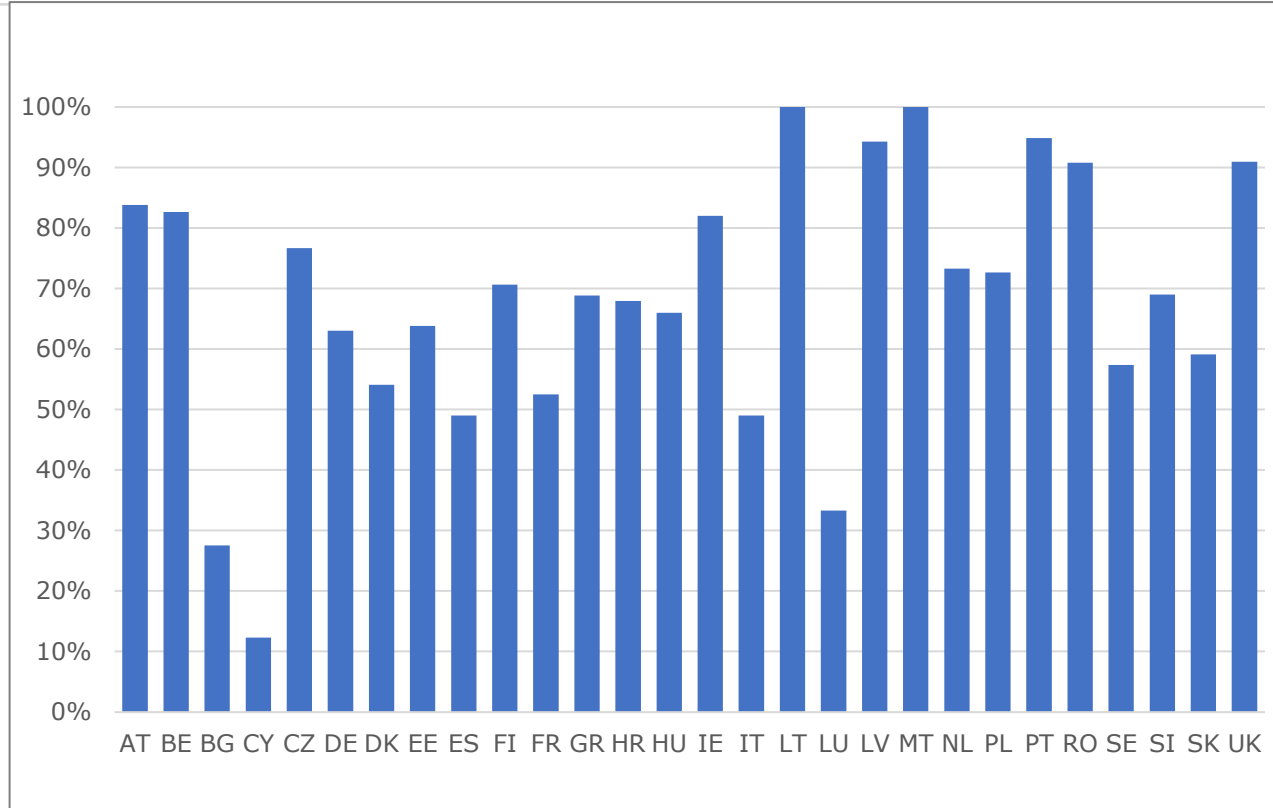- Evaluations (& self-evaluations)
- Scientific studies

No	Local Action Group
1	Terre Pescaresi
2	Maiella Verde
3	Prealpi e Dolomiti
4	Alto Bellunese
5	Montagna Appennino
6	START
7	Westerwald-Sieg
8	Hunsrück
9	Oberlausitzer Heide- und Teichlandschaft
10	Sächsische Schweiz
11	Mancha Norte
12	Don Quijote
13	Asociación para el Desarrollo del Valle del Alagón
14	ARJABOR
15	DIVA- Valle del Ambroz
16	Linné Småland
17	Astrid Lindgrens hembygd
18	Nordvästra Skaraborg
19	GAL Culturalité
20	GAL des Plaines de l'Escaut
21	MAS Frýdlantsko, z.s.
22	Hlučínsko
23	Brána Vysočiny, z.s.
24	Clare Local Development Company Ltd
25	Wexford LCDC
26	Cork–North LCDC
27	Napoca Porolissum
28	Ţinutul Bârsei
29	Valea Baseului de Sus
30	L.A.G Razim
31	Srce Slovenije
32	med Snežnikom in Nanosom
33	Eisenstraße Niederösterreich
34	Weinviertel Ost
35	Regio³ Pillerseetal-Leogang-Leukental
36	Regionsmanagement Osttirol

LEADER - extent

LAG budgetary spending to 2020 and 2021, EC data

Legend: ■ M19 execution rate (15/09/20) ■ M19 execution rate (15/09/21)

EUR 7.01 Billion planned, 2014-2020 (7% EAFRD)
Uptake accelerated (ave 49%, by Sept '21)
Expenditure Sept 2021 includes transition (2014-22), set against 2020 budget

LAG coverage of rural population (Source: AIRs 2020)

2,784 LEADER LAGs in the EU-28
Cover a significant share of EU rural population – more than half, in 23 countries
Mostly 2019 data (AIRs 2020), some 2018 (AIRs 2019)

LEADER Outputs

LAG projects by main EAFRD Focus Area

Source: Project team, taken from AIRs 2020
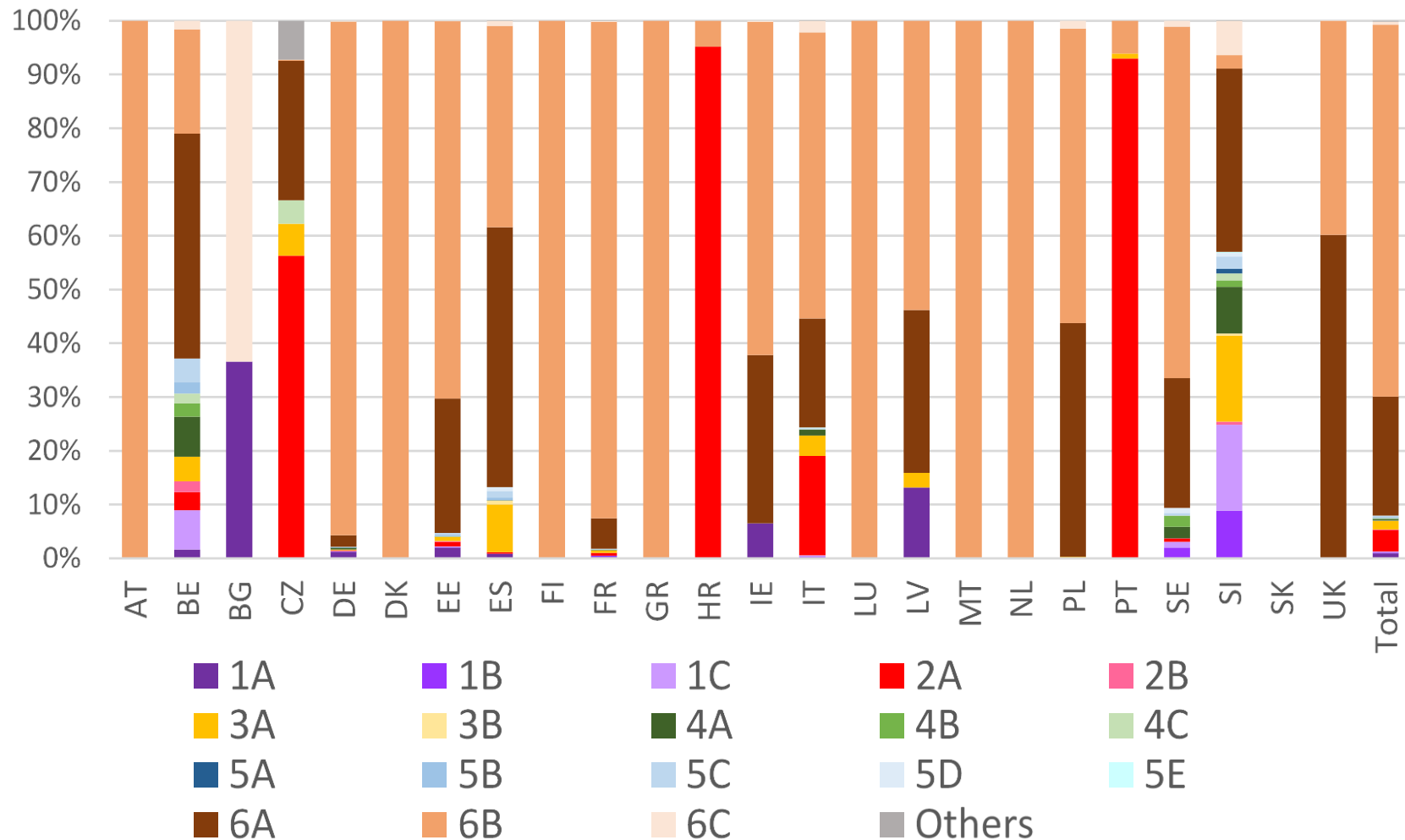
LEADER Projects across EU = 68,611
source: AIRs 2020 (2019 data)

Most LAGs focus on local development (FA 6B)

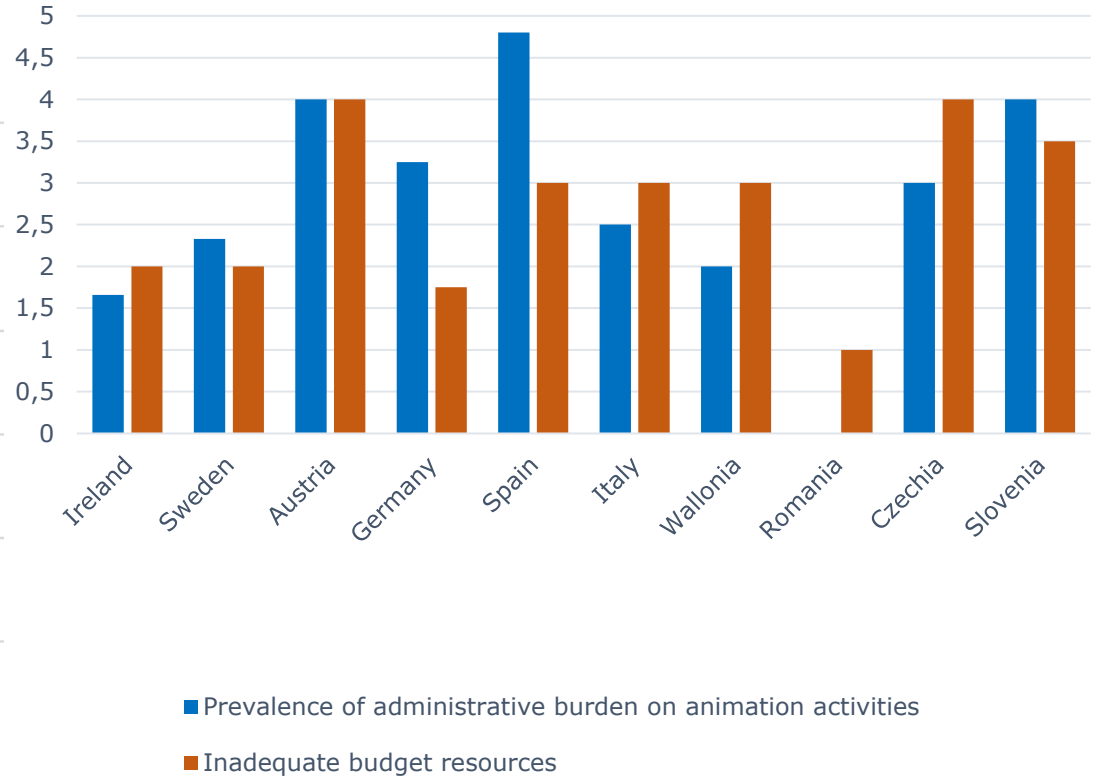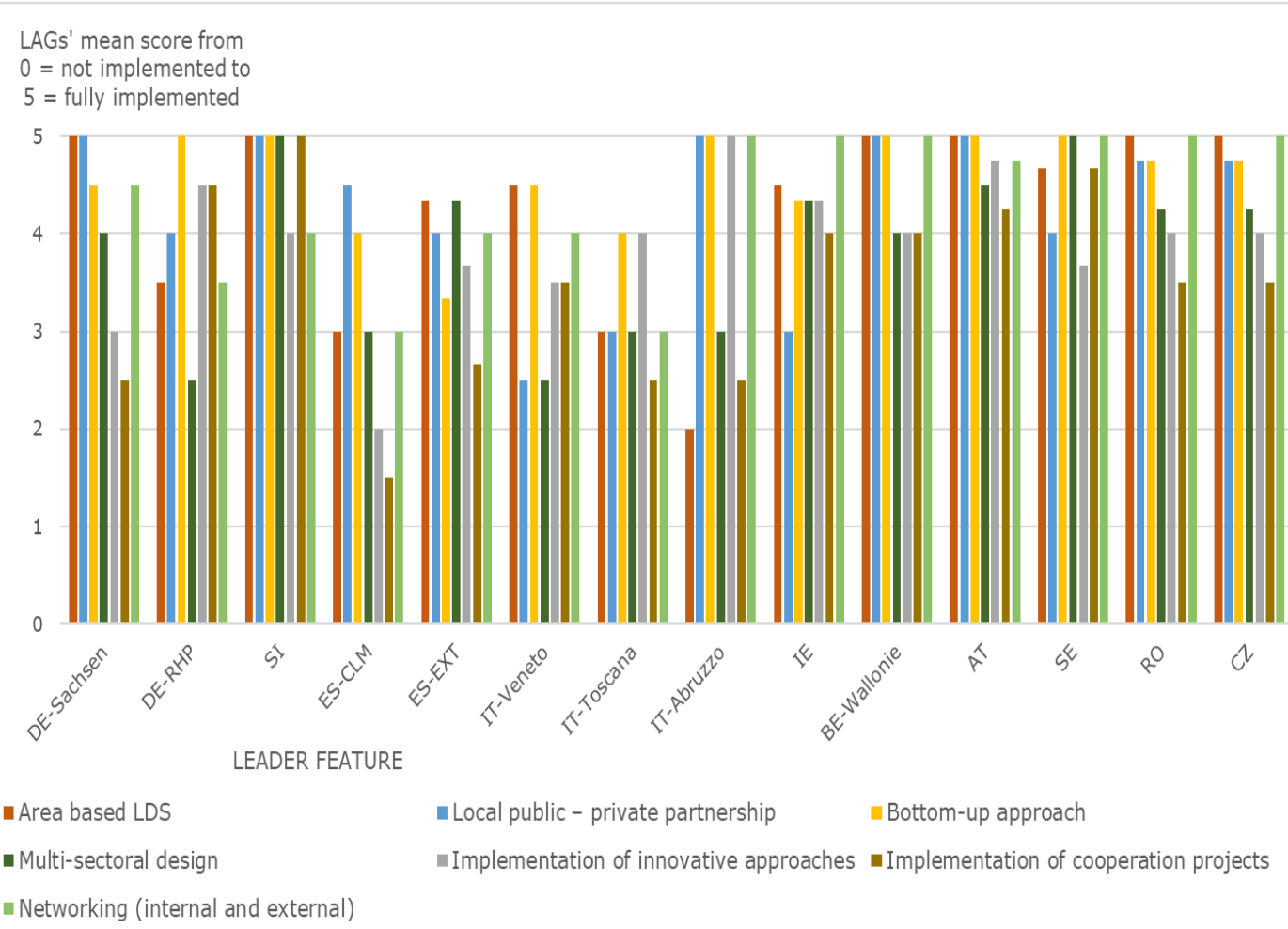Those reporting other FAs show important contributions to:

- Knowledge and advice (FA1, 2)

- Biodiversity (FA 4A),

- Farm and business development, diversification and job creation, (FAs 2A, 3A, 6A)

- Cooperation (FA 6C)

LEADER projects by type of promoter

Legend: LAGs, NGOs, SMEs, Public bodies, others
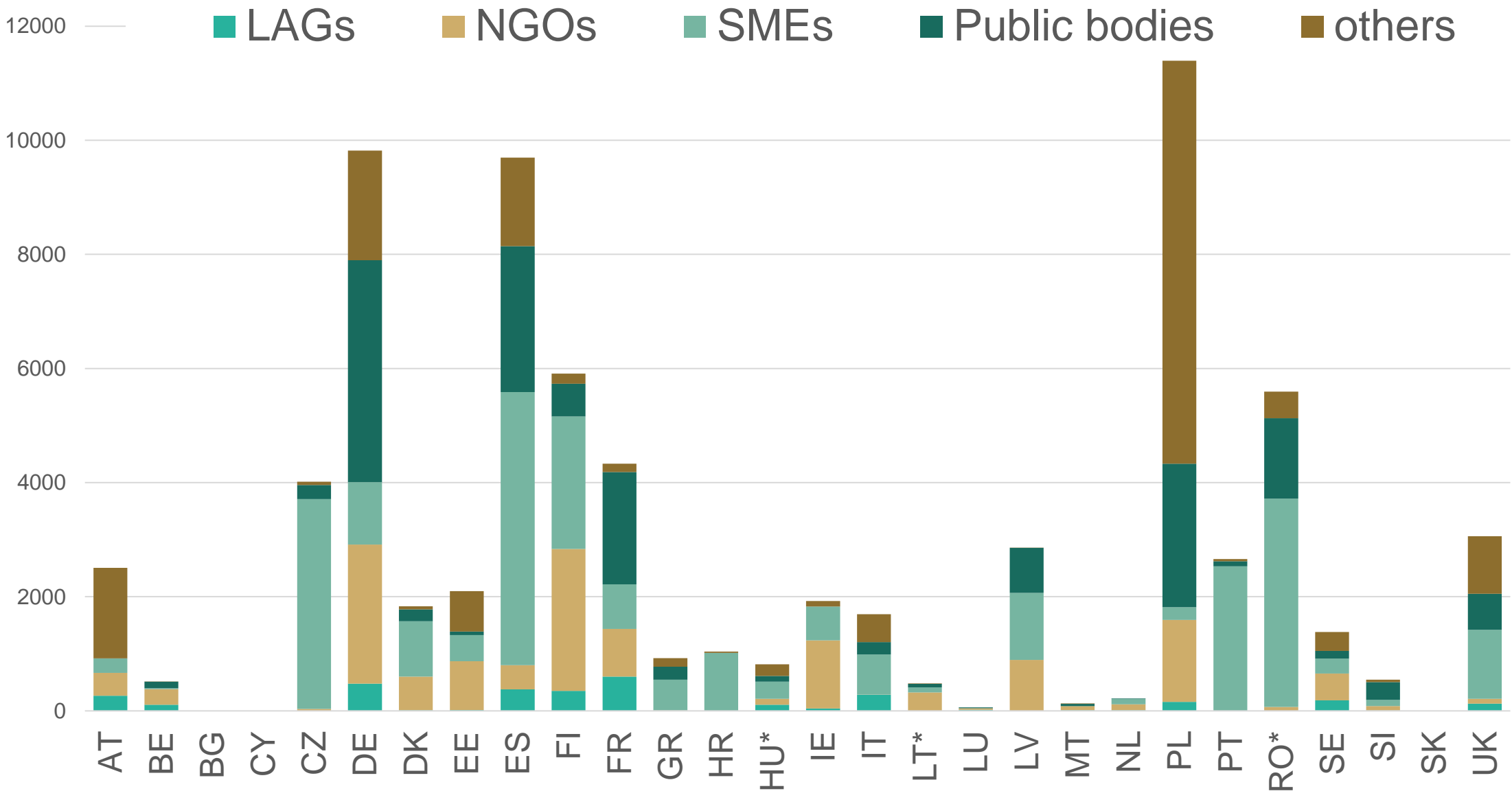
Source: AIRs 2020, and * AIRs 2019

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LEADER implementation- Case studies evidence

LAGs' mean score from
0 = not implemented to
5 = fully implemented

LEADER FEATURE

- Area based LDS
- Local public – private partnership
- Bottom-up approach
- Multi-sectoral design
- Implementation of innovative approaches
- Implementation of cooperation projects
- Networking (internal and external)

- Prevalence of administrative burden on animation activities
- Inadequate budget resources

0 to 5 Scale where: 0 = No effect; 1 = Very low level of effect on LDS implementation; 5 = Very high level of effect on LDS implementation as a likely cause of failure

Causal analysis – LEADER mechanisms

Key result: LAGs' impacts are positively correlated with fuller implementation of the 7 LEADER features

- **Local decision-making (LAG autonomy**) is essential to LEADER performance

- **Achieving wide participation** was evident in almost all case studies

- **LEADER enabled participation** of actors who would otherwise not be involved, in developing the territory

- **Networking** was the most effective mechanism for social innovation

- **Animation** was essential for effectiveness and efficiency, but not always sufficient (e.g. Ireland, Romania, Spain), e.g. due to reduced budgets/resources; strong influence of local power élites; or MA/PA restrictions on LAG activity

LAG survey, n=511

LEADER feature implementation was:
■ High level   ■ Medium level   ■ Low level
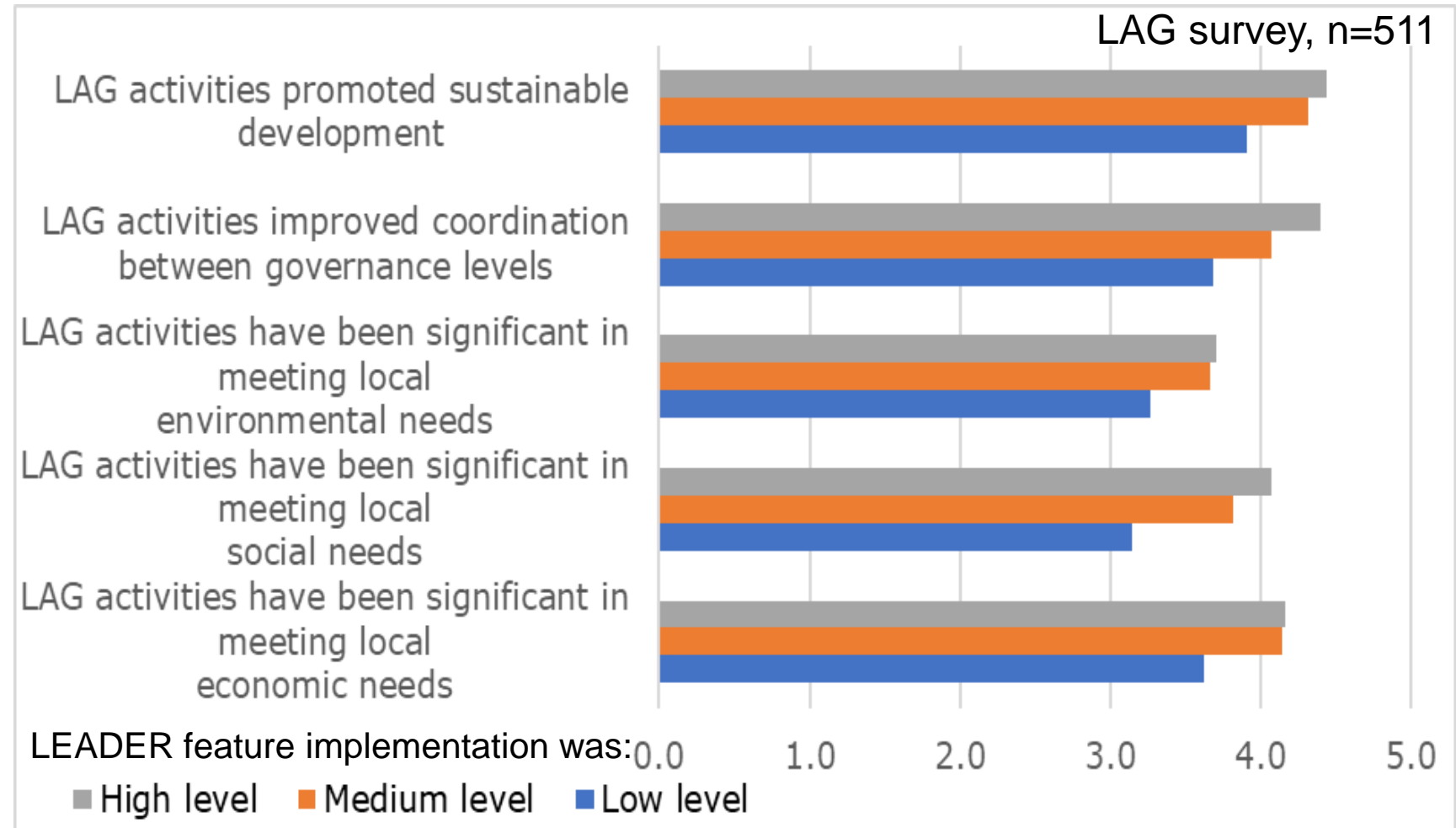
LEADER addresses needs at a local scale: Case study evidence

Economic

- Improving quality of jobs
- creating jobs
- adding value to products
- modernising or reorienting businesses
- identifying new linkages within the local economy, especially between products and tourism / marketing the area

Skills and networks

- Building capacity for entrepreneurship,
- increasing service skills
- creating business networks (e.g. supply chains, producers)
- (re-)skilling unemployed and young people
- diffusing a positive mind-set to generate capabilities to change things for the better

LAGs prioritise local area needs and develop actions to achieve goals at a local scale, in integrated ways

Social inclusion

- Examples - encouraging young people to stay by providing infrastructure and services e.g. early years care, health facilities
- elderly - support services
- reaching out to excluded groups/ immigrants with networks, activities, events, training and education

Environment

- Protecting and restoring natural and cultural assets
- recording local histories
- creating spaces and opportunities to contact nature and learn / enjoy
- Improving community infrastructure (e.g. community centres; renewable energy

LEADER impact

- **LEADER's impact is strongest for Local Economic Development and strengthening social fabric and governance**

- **It is positive for social inclusion and social innovation**

- **It is positive but less prioritised / direct for environment**

LEADER job creation 2016-2019 (AIRs 2020, 2019)
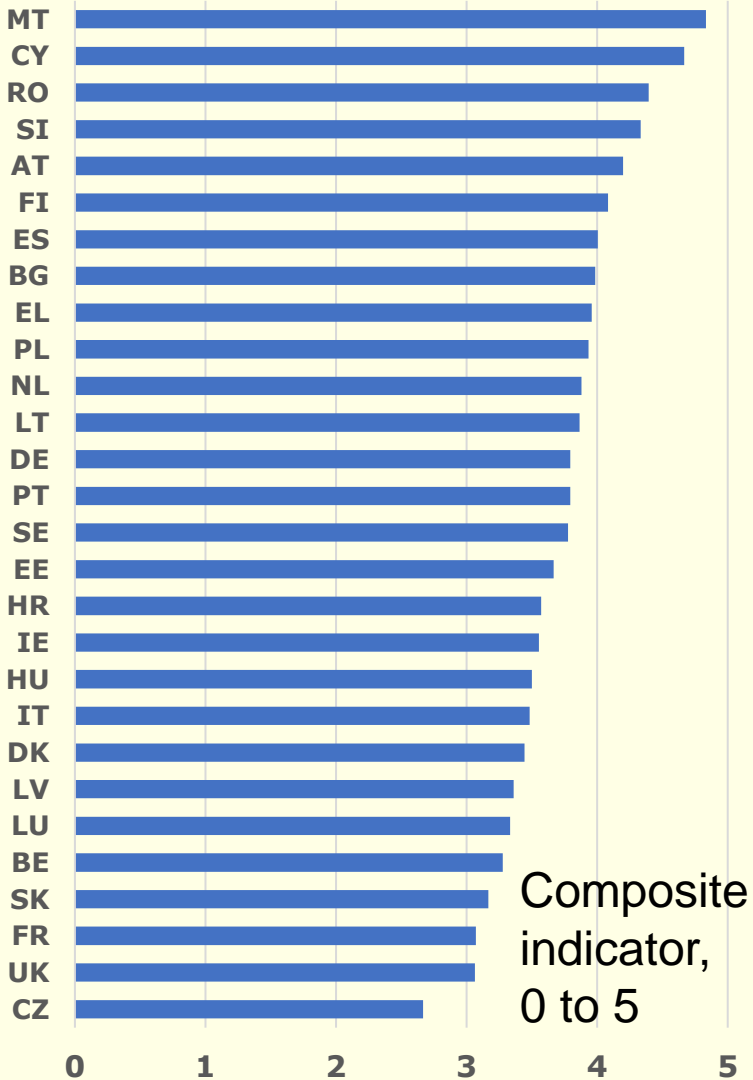

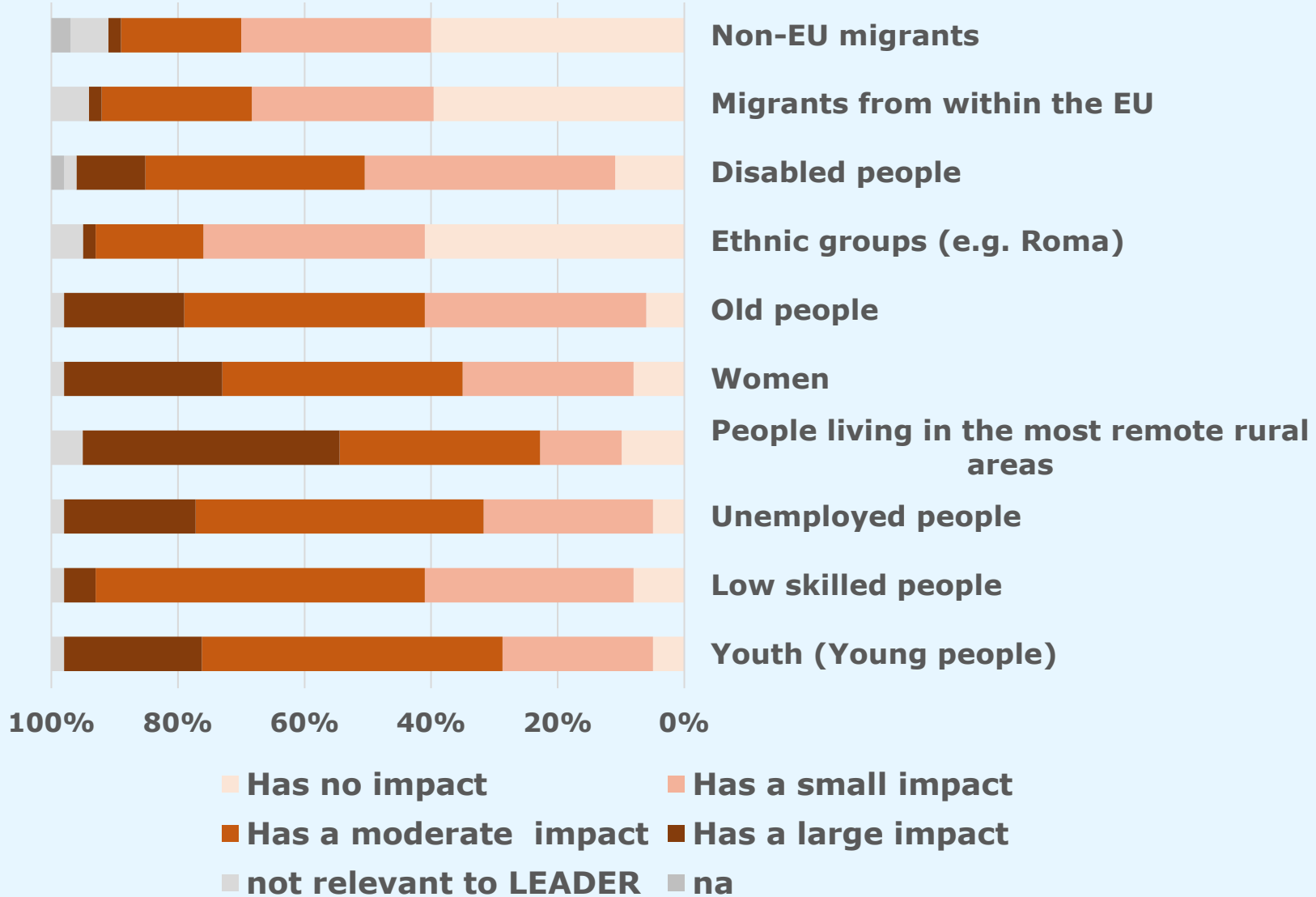New FTE jobs created
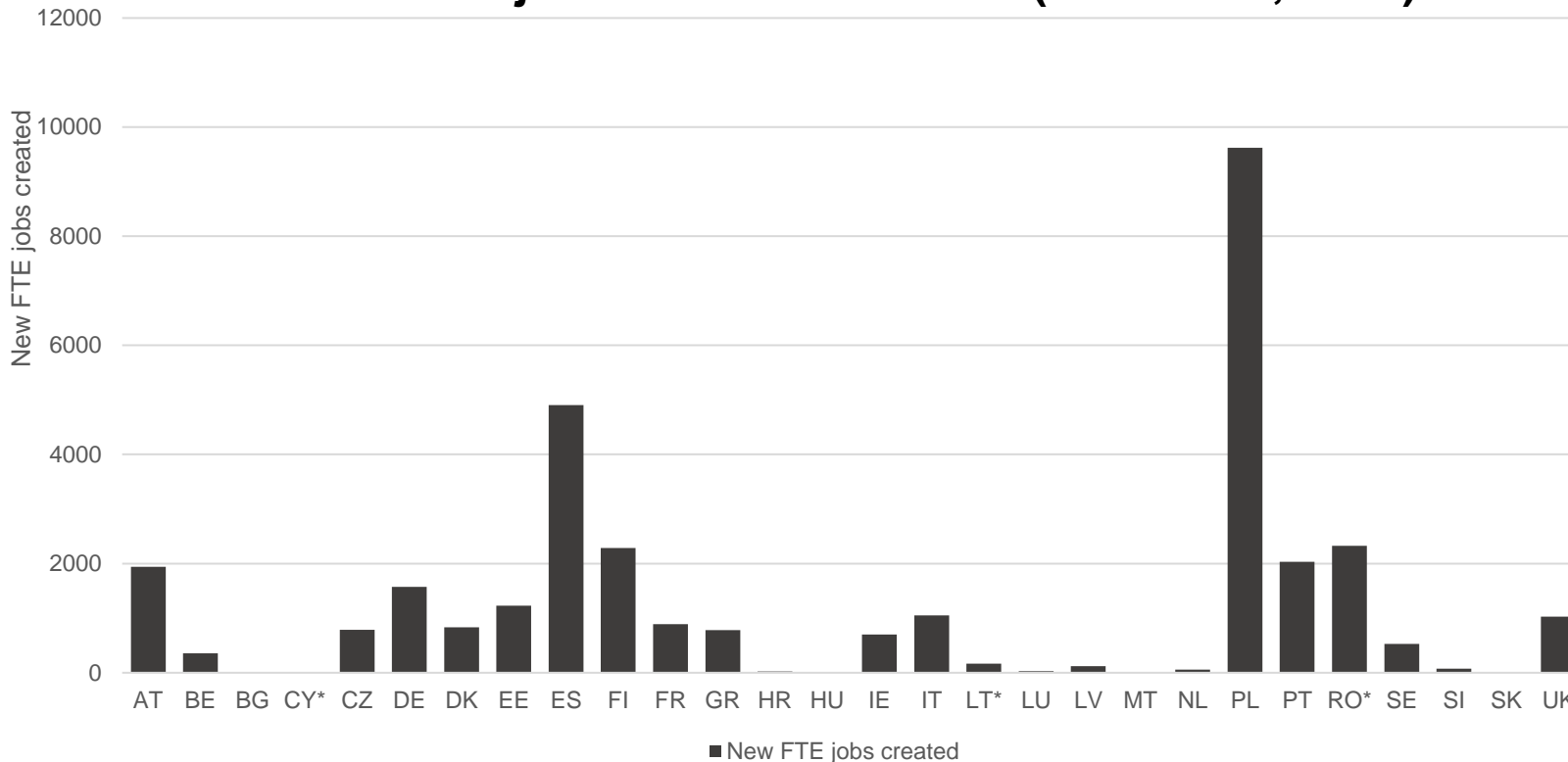
LEADER is effective in:

- **job creation and maintenance**

- **local added-value** of products and enterprise modernisation, supply chain and tourism projects

- **enhancing local governance** capacity and knowledge in LAG areas

LEADER impact on social inclusion

LAG survey: Social inclusion impact, average score per Member State

Composite indicator, 0 to 5

(Member States, top to bottom: MT, CY, RO, SI, AT, FI, ES, BG, EL, PL, NL, LT, DE, PT, SE, EE, HR, IE, HU, IT, DK, LV, LU, BE, SK, FR, UK, CZ; scale 0 to 5)

MA survey: impact of LEADER on social inclusion

- Non-EU migrants
- Migrants from within the EU
- Disabled people
- Ethnic groups (e.g. Roma)
- Old people
- Women
- People living in the most remote rural areas
- Unemployed people
- Low skilled people
- Youth (Young people)

Scale: 100% 80% 60% 40% 20% 0%

Legend:
- Has no impact
- Has a small impact
- Has a moderate impact
- Has a large impact
- not relevant to LEADER
- na

Effectiveness – case study findings

Enabling factors

- addressing local needs by supporting local actors

- participatory mode of operation

- integrated projects, also linking different projects and funding sources to better meet aims

- multi-annual funding, flexibility to transfer allocation between measures

- supported project beneficiaries with animation and capacity building

- built increased social capital via a lot of networking

- supported and participated in cooperation / joint activities – locally, regionally, nationally, providing advocacy

Hindering factors

- insufficient resources (human and financial) for animation and capacity building

- lack of capacity (time) among staff and board members

- inadequate skillset of LAG management teams

- increased administrative burden compared to previous period, reducing resources for animation

- lack of public awareness and difficulties in motivating LAG's population

LEADER Efficiency

LAG efficiency was highest where there were:

- clear distribution of tasks between MA, PA and LAGs
- agreed and stable rules
- Responsive support instruments for LAGs (guidelines, manuals, websites, co-ordinators, FAQ sessions, working groups)
- regular communication and meetings, collaboration (e.g. specific joint commissions)

- **The average animation and running cost is EUR 11,600 per project** (approved + implemented), **but**

- **Animation has value which goes beyond the individual projects funded**

- **Several LAGs reported insufficient resources for animation due to high administrative burdens**

Animation and running costs per project (Euro) in EU countries (AIRs 2020)
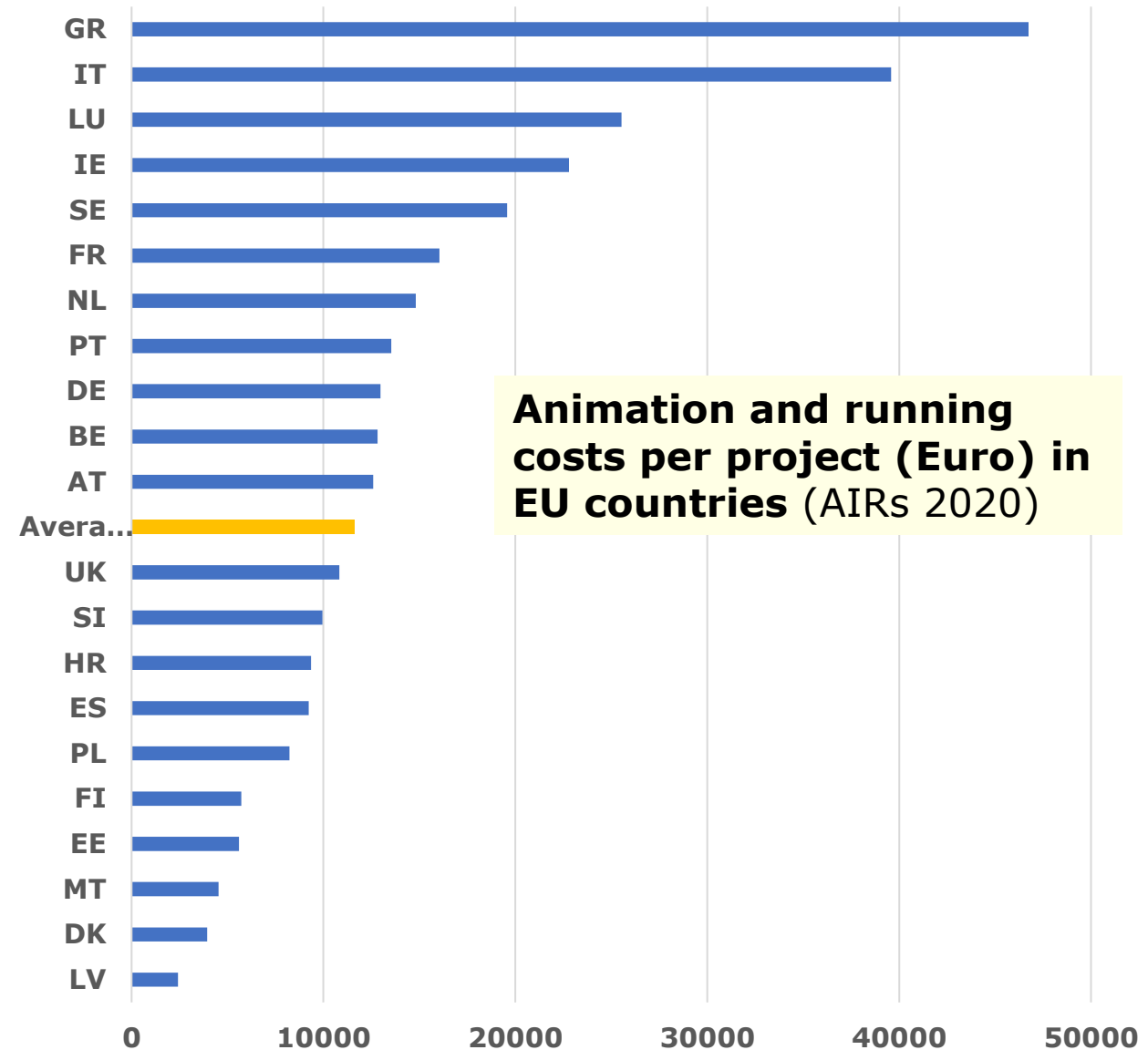
LEADER / CLLD efficiency and administrative burden

- Efficiency and effectiveness are not in tension – both are possible simultaneously

- Shifting from a **mono-fund to CLLD-multi-fund approach meant increasing administrative burden** in some countries (Sweden, Slovenia and Czechia) both for LAGs and MAs.

- **In some cases, administrative burden was reduced by innovations:**
  - Simplification of CLLD management through a single lead MA (Sweden, Germany-Sachsen)
  - Management arrangements based on strong cooperation / collaboration between MA and LAGs (Belgium- Wallonie and Italy-Veneto)
  - Wider use of SCOs (but simplification has not occurred in all cases of SCO use).

Study recommendations

What to Do?	By Whom?	Details
Confirm the importance and value of LEADER	Commission, Council and Parliament	**The LEADER approach should be maintained** as a distinct strand in future rural policy at EU level
Enhance roles for networks, promote a more enabling institutional framework	EU network actors	**ENRD should deliver enhanced training & skill-sharing** to LAG networks and MAs, **expanding participation to multi-fund CLLD authorities and Paying Agencies**, emphasizing engagement
	European Commission	Independent EU LEADER networks should be enabled to participate in key policy discussions. **Ensure MAs understand, fully uphold and promote the 7 LEADER features** in LEADER design and implementation, with more attention to cooperation, innovation, good governance and future resilience
	Managing Authorities, Rural networks	**National and Regional Rural Networks should be sufficiently funded** to enable strong support for LEADER
	LAG boards and LAG management	**Recruit, retain and train LAG members and staff with broad skills and experience in local development** **Ensure balanced, open discussion among members, inclusive, balanced leadership**, alert to local needs

What to do	By Whom?	Details
Improved communication and clarity in roles	European Commission	Guidelines or implementing regulations should **require dialogue between current LAGs and MA in designing new CAP strategic plans, ensure they learn from LEADER experience** in 2014-2020
		Recommend MS and Regions to identify dedicated LEADER teams in Paying Agencies
		Work with ENRD and ELARD on **new guidance to highlight LEADER's role in key priorities of Green Deal and Farm to Fork** strategies
	MAs and LAGs	Commit to **regular, open liaison between MA/PA and LAG** personnel, **before, during and after** LAG selection and implementation
Simplify procedures and new requirements	European Commission	Specify a **minimum budget for animation as a share of total EU LEADER + ESIF CLLD funding** per region/MS, + stronger guidance on min. (EUR 2.5 million) LAG budget.
		Encourage MAs not to apply standard EAFRD Measure conditions and controls, **promote use of flexible / bespoke measures**, and more extensive use of Simplified Costs Options, learning from best practice
		Apply stronger proportionality in obligatory financial controls and checks.
		Streamline the 'lead authority' approach for multi-funding: devise **common rules / procedures for all CLLD funds and a common implementing regulation**
	MS / Region Authorities / LAGs	**Ensure MA/PA guidelines and LAG/MA division of roles are carefully drawn and understood** by all actors, **reduce administrative burden on LAGs** – especially for eligibility checks and simple controls

What to do	By Whom?	Details
Ensure enhanced Collaboration	European Commission	Promote ways for LAGs and MAs to access and establish cooperation projects – **harmonise rules for transnational cooperation**
	MS / Region Authorities	**Improve communication between Authorities (MA/PA) and LAGs, to enable problem-solving early** in the implementation period. Consider funding a dedicated LAG support agency or network, separate from the NRN
New indicators and monitoring to better capture LEADER outcomes and measure relevance	European Commission	**Identify new social indicators to measure improved governance, social capital, and social benefits**. Develop simple indicators and reporting protocols to **record projects and actions that deliver multiple goals** simultaneously. **Expand work on local-scale context indicators** for rural development: **learn from LAG self-evaluations**

Thank you for your attention!

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