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WORKING PAPER ON

Capturing impacts of Leader and of measures to improve Quality of Life in rural areas

July 2010

Findings of a Thematic Working Group established and coordinated by the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BPS	Bounded Priorities Scaling
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CEQ	Common Evaluation Question
CMEF	Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
CoE	Council of Europe
CoR	Committee of the Regions
DG AGRI	Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
FG	focus group
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HNV	High Nature Value
ICT(s)	Information and Communication Technologies
LAG(s)	Local Action Groups
LDS	Local Development Strategy
Leader	Actions for Innovative Rural Development (Community Initiative)
LM3	Local Multiplier 3
MA	Managing Authority
MTE	mid-term evaluation
MS	Member State
MSC	Most Significant Changes
NEF	New Economics Foundation
NGT	Nominal Group Technique
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNU	National Network Unit
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PBA	Potential and Bottleneck Analysis
QoL	Quality of Life
RD	Rural Development
RDP	Rural Development Programme
SAP	Systématisation de l'auto-évaluation participative
SD	sustainable development
SE	self-evaluation
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timed
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SPSA	Systematisation of Participatory Self-Assessment
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TWG	Thematic Working Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VA	value added
WP	Working Paper

1 Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005[1] on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) sets the legal framework for the preparation and implementation of Rural Development Programmes for 2007-2013. The preamble to the regulation identifies the need to *carry out investments making rural areas more attractive in order to reverse trends towards economic and social decline and depopulation of the countryside* and to *enhance the human potential in this respect*. EAFRD support should also be granted for *other measures relating to the broader rural economy […] having regard to the multi-sectoral needs for endogenous rural development* [whereas] *measures relating to the broader rural economy should be preferably implemented through local development strategies*. Leader was therefore considered to have *reached a level of maturity enabling rural areas to implement the Leader approach more widely in mainstream rural development programming* with a *substantial share of the contribution of the EAFRD* to be *earmarked for this Axis*.

The promotion of these approaches for local development along with supporting measures and activities cannot be seen as ends in themselves, but only as means of achieving sustainable rural development, more sustainable livelihoods and enhanced Quality of Life and liveability in rural areas.

Measuring the impact of Leader and Leader-supported interventions has presented enduring challenges to evaluators throughout the previous three generations of the programme. The reasons for this are documented in the evaluations themselves and in other literature, even though they might be sometimes overstated. The principal limitations arise through the local level of the interventions and their sometimes disperse spatial and temporal effects. The qualitative and process related effects of the implementation of the Leader method make it difficult to capture the full range of effects. Due to the strong bottom-up approach the reporting sometimes tends to be incomplete and not consistent. Additionally, measuring aspects as intangible as Quality of Life is an inexact science and particularly when undertaken over relatively short time horizons. This is also a challenge for evaluation, not only in terms of the attribution of intervention effects but also in arriving at a common definition of what Quality of Life is, what represents improvement and what methodologies are most appropriate for capturing change.

The need for support to assess the impacts of Leader and Quality of Life measures was recognised in the design of the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF), agreed by Member States. The establishment of Thematic Working Groups (TWG) by the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development (hereafter 'Evaluation Expert Network') in preparation for the mid-term evaluation of the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) was identified as an early priority. Subsequently, Member States also articulated, through focus groups conducted by the Evaluation Expert Network in 2008 and 2009, the need for methodological support.

Significant synergies with regard to methodologies are expected from a combined approach to methodologies addressing elements of Leader and Quality of Life. On the one hand, the Leader

[1] See also Council Decision 2006/144/EC pertaining to Community strategic guidelines for rural development (programming period 2007 to 2013)

actions and the measures to improve the Quality of Life in rural areas are very well suited for the development and utilisation of qualitative approaches in evaluation. On the other hand, the resulting impacts and their assessment are highly influenced by territorial and local specificities and contexts; these should be duly reflected and judged in the evaluation reports. Furthermore, as Leader is playing a prominent role in delivering Quality of Life (Axis 3) measures, the links and common issues between these axes need to be carefully reflected.

1.2 Purpose

This Working Paper is targeted primarily at practitioners and provides a core of practical methodological approaches and tools suggested for capturing the impact of Leader and of the measures to improve the Quality of Life in rural areas. These are based on state-of-the-art methodologies and current practices in Member States. The tools and methods suggested are sufficiently flexible to respond to the specificities of the programmes and programme areas where they will be applied.

This Working Paper is not intended to prescribe specific evaluation tools but should provide a resource for evaluators and responsible administrations to guide their evaluation activities. Therefore, it complements the CMEF guidance notes and other CMEF-related evaluation methodological guidance (particularly the Working Paper "Approaches for assessing the impacts of the RDPs in the context of multiple intervening factors") and further operationalises the assessment of impacts.

1.3 Structure of the Working Paper

This Working Paper consists of 8 chapters and two annexes. **Chapter 1** provides an overview of the rationale, purpose and genesis of this document. **Chapter 2** contains a summary of the evaluation requirements of the CMEF for the subject at hand and further specifies the scope of the Working Paper. It is followed by the concepts of evaluating the impacts of Leader and Quality of Life measures that are presented in Chapters 3 to 6. In **Chapter 3**, the definition of Quality of Life in the context of Axis 3, the elements of the Leader approach and the link between these two are examined. **Chapter 4** considers concepts and expected impacts of RDPs in relation to four fields of observation: socio-culture, rural environment, rural economy, and governance. In **Chapter 5**, a three step methodological approach is proposed, taking into account the specificities of Axes 3 and 4 measures as well as the challenges faced by Managing Authorities and evaluators in dealing with the complexity and inter-relationships of the two axes. **Chapter 6** provides an overview of relevant impact categories, assessment criteria, related-impact specific evaluation questions and main indicators.

Whereas **Chapters 1** to **6** are composed as a conceptual and stepwise development of (i) the main ideas on expected impacts and assessment criteria of Axes 3 and 4 measures and (ii) a recommended overall methodological approach, Chapter 7 has been composed more as a rapid overview of different methods and tools that could be relevant to appreciate Quality of Life and to assess the expected impacts as defined in Chapter 4. The methods and tools may be applied at different points in the three step methodology outlined in Chapter 5.

Finally, the Working Paper also includes a comprehensive bibliography (Chapter 8) followed by two annexes, one with the list of the CMEF evaluation questions and the second presenting a multi-criteria rating tool.

2 The scope of this Working Paper

This document focuses on impacts which are linked to the objectives of RDPs, therefore aiming at integrating the different projects and actions of the various measures into a whole perspective. Its main scope rests with impact and other wider evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability), which might be of use in explaining impacts.

2.1 Overall objective of the Leader approach and Quality of Life measures

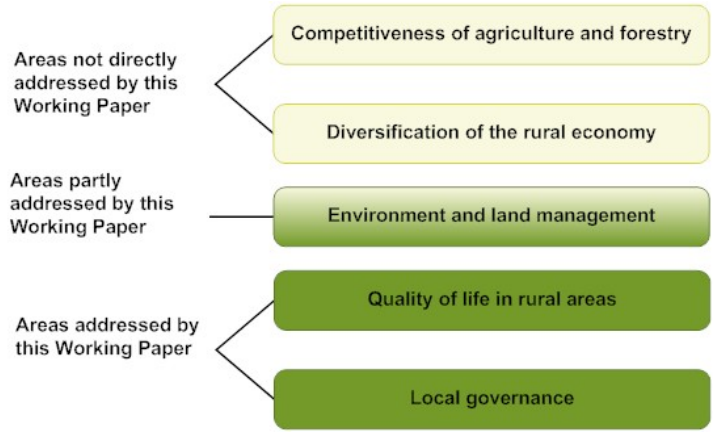
The starting point of the assessment of impacts is the definition of a clear set of overall objectives towards which all measures and actions should in part contribute. In the case of the EU Rural Development Programmes, Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 refers to the following four general objectives:

- improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector;
- improving the environment and the countryside;
- encouraging diversification of the rural economy and
- improving the Quality of Life in rural areas.[2]

However, according to the Community strategic guidelines 2007-2013 *the resources devoted to Axis 4 (Leader) can contribute to the priorities of Axes 1 and 2 and in particular of Axis 3, but also play an important role in the priority of improving governance and mobilising the endogenous development potential of rural areas*. This therefore represents a fifth general objective which aims at improving local governance capacity.

The present Working Paper focuses on the objectives of the EU Rural Development Policy to various degrees, as shown in the following diagram.

Figure 1 Scope of the Working Paper in terms of RD policy objectives



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

This underlines the importance of Quality of Life and local governance as overall objectives of Axes 3 and 4. Section 3.2 below explains the basic assumption made that improved local governance is not

[2] http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm

an end in itself but is a major contributor to improving Quality of Life, i.e. Leader actions integrated in the RDP, directly and intrinsically lead to and facilitate the wider objective of improving Quality of Life.

2.2 Summary of measures and actions foreseen under the 2007-2013 RDP

According to **Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005, Art. 52** the support under Axis 3 should involve:

(a) *measures to diversify the rural economy, comprising (i) diversification into non-agricultural activities for members of the farm household (ii) support for the creation and development of micro-enterprises of less than 10 employees as defined in the Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC and (iii) encouragement of tourism activities;*

(b) *measures to improve the Quality of Life in rural areas, comprising (i) basis services for the economy and rural population, (ii) village renewal and development, (iii) conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage;*

(c) *a training and information measure;*

(d) *a skills-acquisition and animation measure.*

Articles 53-57 of the same Regulation further specify that:

> *Aid for diversification into non-agricultural activities will be granted to members of the farm household (Art 53);*
>
> *Tourism activities will include small-scale and recreational infrastructure as well as services for rural tourism (Art 55);*
>
> *Basic services will include cultural and leisure activities related to small-scale infrastructure (Art 56);*
>
> *Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage will include the drawing up of protection and management plans relating to Natura 2000 and HNV sites as well as cultural features of villages and the rural landscape (Art 57).*

However, it needs to be emphasized that measures to improve the Quality of Life are not restricted to the above mentioned fields.

2.3 Requirements for the assessment of impacts as defined by EC Regulations and the CMEF

The **CMEF** and its Handbook make only brief reference to the specificities of assessing the impacts of Leader and of measures to improve the Quality of Life within RDPs. For each RDP measure, the Handbook defines a hierarchy of objectives which underpins the respective intervention logic. Baseline, output, result, and impact indicators contribute to the assessment of impact. *For this reason the focus should be on the bottom-up estimation of impact*[3]:

- *In a first stage, impact should be estimated at the level of direct and indirect beneficiaries by programme evaluator on the basis of output and result indicators, survey data, experience and evaluations from previous programming periods.*

[3] Handbook on CMEF, General Guidance, DG Agriculture and Rural Development (2006)

- *In a second stage, the evaluator should make an estimation of the contribution to general trend at programme area level (baseline trend), where programme impact is feasible/statistically significant compared to other factors. Where this is not possible the evaluator should make a qualitative assessment in general terms.*

The main reference made to the assessment of specific impacts in terms of Quality of Life measures and Leader arises in the measure specific Common Evaluation Questions, and these are qualitative in nature (see Annex 1).

In relation to Quality of Life, each Axis 3 measure fiche contains a specific evaluation question regarding the extent of the contribution of the measure, support, supported investments, activities or services provided to improving the Quality of Life in rural areas. In the case of measures 321 (Basic services for the economy and rural population) and 322 (Village renewal and development), subdivision of the contribution by sectors is specified. However, no definition of Quality of Life is proposed.

For Leader, six of the eight evaluation questions identified in the Handbook on CMEF, Guidance note B, relate solely to qualitative assessment of the effects of the Leader approach in terms of the specific measure concerned, i.e. they focus on the specificities of the Leader method. The other two evaluation questions under Measure 41 (Implementing local development strategies with a view to achieving the objectives of one or more of the three other axes) relate to the extent to which the Leader approach has *contributed to the priorities of Axes 1, 2 and 3*; and under Measure 421 (Implementing co-operation projects) to the extent to which co-operation projects and/or transfer of best practices based on the Leader approach have *contributed to a better achievement of the objectives of one or more of the other three axes?*[4]

2.4 Major scope and approach of this Working Paper

The major scope of this Working Paper is to suggest a common approach and framework for assessing the impact of Quality of Life measures and Leader. With regard to the evaluation of the impact of Leader, the Handbook on CMEF refers to the establishment of a Thematic Working Group, thereby confirming the need to continue and adapt the guidance stemming from the 2000-2006 period on the basis of experience and the requirements of the new regulation. For Leader, there is specific guidance available from the previous Leader II and Leader+ programmes. For Quality of Life, there is limited guidance from the previous 2000-2006 period and it mainly relates to the Article 33 measures (Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 - promoting the adaptation and development of rural areas).

In order to provide such a common approach and framework, this Working Paper first needs to assess and define the concepts and implications of Quality of Life and the Leader approach under the present 2007-2013 programming period. Based on this and the wider objectives assigned to Axes 3 and 4 (see Section 2.1 above), a series of impact categories will then need to be defined and linked to the various dimensions of Quality of Life.

This definition of the Quality of Life, its interaction with the Leader approach and the adoption of a series of impact categories will contribute significantly to the setting-up of a framework of reference for impact evaluation. Without some indications on how to proceed, this framework alone will be of limited

[4] Handbook on CMEF – Guidance note B: Evaluation Guidelines; DG Agriculture and Rural Development (2006)

assistance to the Managing Authorities (MA), evaluators and evaluation steering groups. This Working Paper therefore suggests such an overall methodological framework.

This framework is closely interlinked with the CMEF monitoring and evaluation indicators and questions. Furthermore, as it will address both Quality of Life and Leader, it seeks to integrate as much as possible the previous Leader participatory evaluation methods. The suggested overall methodological framework will be based on a three-step approach:

1. **Step 1**. Based on the monitoring information provided by the CMEF indicators **a framework of reference** will be completed. This framework addresses the various Quality of Life impact categories and is designed and developed in this Working Paper to assist Managing Authorities, evaluators and evaluation steering groups.

2. **Step 2**. A series of **group meetings (round tables)** with a selected panel of stakeholders (MA, LAG executive, private stakeholders, main beneficiaries of measures, etc.) at programme level should be organised. During these group meetings, the various evaluation criteria will be considered and discussed and complementary qualitative information (i.e. complementary to step 1) collected as appropriate.

3. **Step 3**. **Judgement and validation**. During this final step, participants in these group meetings should be asked to provide their judgement for each impact criterion. These judgements will be consolidated by the group reflecting progress in terms of the baseline situation (presented in the RDP document or where necessary reconstructed in parts by retrospective assessment). In order to facilitate this method, the use a multi-criteria ranking tool is suggested.

The three-step approach has been designed to provide a methodology which may either be implemented in full, used as a resource to guide or inform the evaluation design or from which elements may be taken to inform those mid-term evaluations which are already underway.

As regards the application of quantitative methods, which might feed into the framework of reference, as well as the establishment of the baseline and the counterfactual situations, respective information is provided in the Working Paper on "Approaches for assessing the impacts of the Rural Development Programmes in the context of multiple intervening factors"[5].

[5] http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=6999FF39-0307-D7F3-EE33-16D47E2C2144

3 The definition of Quality of Life and link to Leader

3.1 Quality of Life in the context of Axis 3 of the RDP

Currently, there is a great deal of interest in exploring policies and practices that enhance well-being rather than economic growth. The standard approaches to measure economic progress solely in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) have been criticised by many, including the Stiglitz report to the French Government (Stiglitz et al 2008), which argues that *conventional, market-based measures of income, wealth and consumption are insufficient to assess human well-being. They need to be complemented by non-monetary indicators of Quality of Life*. Quality of Life is a function of people's life circumstances, which of course have an economic dimension, but also includes their social networks, their health and their sense of worth, and the sustainably of the environment on which they depend.

Quality of Life emanates from having the capability to flourish. In an environment where those factors that enhance well-being are being augmented, people can be expected to flourish more. It is clear that the targeted actions of Axes 3 and 4 do provide means to contribute to a rather broad notion of well-being.

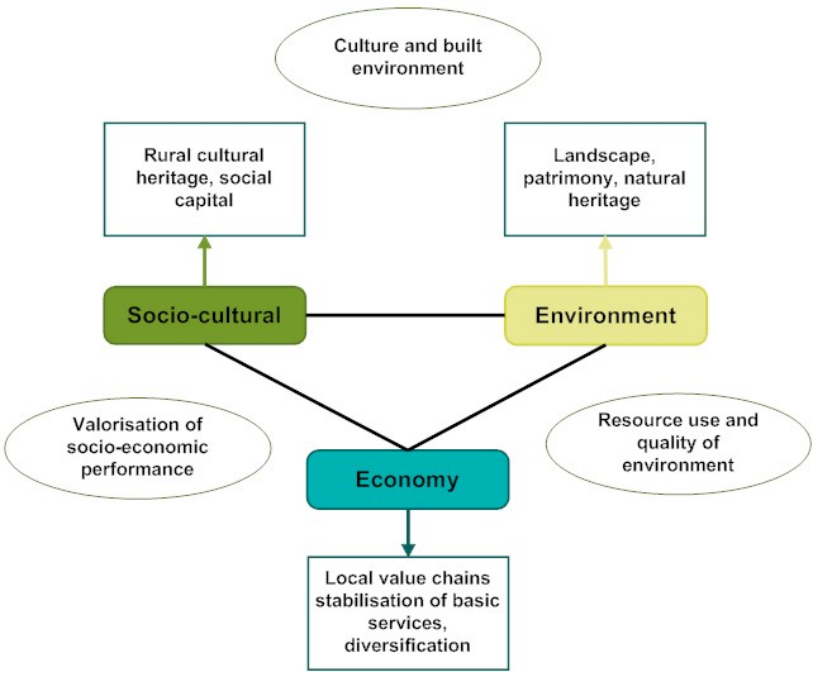
There are different ways of exploring Quality of Life. Some view it in terms of subjective well-being, others argue that it is represented by a 'capability to flourish' based on people's ability to pursue the goals they value. This suggests some basic entitlements that support a capability to flourish: from democratic rights; to physical and mental health; to education; to meaningful employment and to participation in society (Jackson 2009). A third approach is based on allocating the non-market goods and services fairly across different groups. Both the Stiglitz and Jackson reports make the case that Quality of Life can only be maintained if the resource set is used sustainably – there must be an environmental component. There is no simple and easy way to measure Quality of Life. It clearly needs a range of indicators.

Quality of Life is multi-dimensional. This is why measures under Axes 3 and 4 of the Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013 are closely and often interlinked. Because these measures are social, economic and environmental in character, but undertaken with a desire to stimulate progress towards sustainable rural development, the relationship between measure and economic impact or outcome is not always easy to identify.

Altogether an improvement of **Quality of Life** in rural areas is anticipated through the various national/regional RDPs. **In the context of RDPs,** Quality of Life consists of several aspects, e.g. economic welfare through diversification activities, provision of basic living conditions, a social network of relationships and associations as well as the cultural environment that makes life enjoyable and satisfying. The composition and content of RD-measures in the Member States indicates which logical framework (objective levels vis-à-vis outputs, results, impacts) forms the basis for identifying Quality of Life indicators in Axes 3 and 4. During the structuring phase of the evaluation, clarifications on the existence and completeness of such a logical framework need to be obtained.

This implies that Quality of Life can be considered in the following **dimensions** as shown below.

Figure 2 Dimensions of Quality of Life in rural areas



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

The **socio-cultural and services dimension** of Quality of Life implies that aspects of social capital and cultural capital/heritage are important. This includes both soft factors such as community life, traditions, social infrastructure and cohesion, and material or hard factors, e.g. buildings or other infrastructures in the context of village renewal. It also includes basic services for cultural and leisure activities and for the rural population in general.

The **environmental dimension** of Quality of Life encompasses the human well-being arising due to the conservation and upgrading of the environment and the rural heritage. It takes into account the impact that the evolution of the environment will have on the activities of the population and global well-being in the area. The concept of environment includes not only biophysical factors and their interaction, but also the built environment and the interaction between different systems. In the last twenty years, the concept of "environment" has been enhanced to embrace the concept of sustainable development (SD), including consideration of system vulnerability and resilience.

The **economic dimension** of Quality of Life implies an adequacy and security of income, sufficient to meet both basic needs and the availability of entitlements such as access to education, self-determination, democracy etc., in the absence of major disparity with incomes of others in society (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). The economic dimension should, however, remain consistent with the RDP foci, i.e. *tourism, crafts and the provision of rural amenities are growth sectors in many regions and offer opportunities for on-farm diversification outside agriculture and the development of micro-*

businesses in the broader rural economy.[6] These provide rural households with new economic opportunities.

This illustrates that the use of the term Quality of Life implies a multi-dimensional character embracing social, environmental and economic dimensions. It includes the twin ideas of ***'liveability'*** – the services, environmental quality and social networks that make rural areas places in which people want to live and ***'livelihoods'*** – how people gain livelihoods and diversify their land-based and other activities to sustain those livelihoods. A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living (Chambers and Conway 1992). Livelihoods are often considered in relation to different types of capital. *The presence of ecological, economic, social and cultural capital translates into Quality of Life (*Van der Ploeg and Long 1994). These different forms of capital are often mutually dependent and closely linked to each other.

The logic of this subdivision also refers to the **concept of well-being** which is a notion that people and policymakers generally aspire to improve. However, it is an ambiguous concept, lacking a universally acceptable definition and often faced with competing interpretations. Well-being is generally viewed as a description of the state of people's life situation (McGillivray et al 2006). The theme is still evolving, but it already strongly underpins the various human and development indexes developed by the UNDP. In this context there are several publications which have been taken into account[7].

In Council of Europe (2008) Samuel Thirion synthesizes empirical studies in the course of which the people participating in the survey have been invited to define their well-being indicators themselves. The resulting frameworks are quite convergent, and all of them can be related to six categories of indicators:

- economic goods (infrastructure, equipment, businesses, markets, etc.)
- environmental goods (soil and subsoil, water, the biosphere – namely, living beings, biodiversity and ecosystems – and air)
- human capital (population, knowledge, skills, etc.)
- social capital (human relations and bonds, trust)
- cultural capital (shared values, knowledge of history, sciences, etc.)
- institutional and political capital (democratic institutions, human rights, rules, regulatory arrangements, etc.).

This clearly indicates the strong overlap between the different dimensions of Quality of Life with the various concepts of well-being. The final Council of Europe document puts a strong emphasis on empowerment and participation in decision-making; this in the case of the EU RD Programmes is in part catered for under the Leader interventions.

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6 Council Decision 2006/144/EC pertaining to Community strategic guidelines for rural development (programming period 2007 to 2013)

7 Several references may serve as sources here: i) Council of Europe (2005): *Concerted Development of Social Cohesion Indicators – Methodological Guide*. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg; ii) Council of Europe (2008): *Well-being for all. Concepts and tools for social cohesion*. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg; as well as (iii) the UN Millennium Assessment Reports (http://www.millenniumassessment.org).

3.2 Leader in relation to Quality of Life

The Community strategic guidelines for rural development 2006[8] set out the objective for the Leader approach as follows *Leader should contribute to the priorities of Axes 1 and 2, and in particular of Axis 3, but also play an important role in the horizontal priority of improving governance and mobilising the endogenous development potential of rural areas*.

Governance in its various forms is a highly important theme when evaluating the impacts of Leader measures. According to the CMEF documents the Leader approach should contribute to improve governance in rural areas. In several policy documents (EC, CoE, OECD and UNDP) the topic of good governance has been discussed[9] and associated with the following aspects:

- transparency
- participation
- horizontal and vertical integration
- legitimacy
- subsidiarity
- high quality of communication and conflict management
- high quality of learning mechanisms.

Good governance is not only important for the successful implementation of Leader projects, but it also contributes to improving the Quality of Life. Governance can thus be considered as an additional fourth dimension of Quality of Life. This is inherent in the Leader approach which seeks to develop the 'links between actions for the development of a rural community' (being the basis of the acronym which gives Leader its name) by involving local stakeholders and citizens in the process.

Leader therefore represents a method to implement measures that improve the Quality of Life. As the "Leader Approach. A basic guide." (DG AGRI 2006) indicates *the difference between Leader and other more traditional rural policy measures is that it indicates 'how' to proceed rather than 'what' needs to be done*.

The Leader method, by mobilizing local actors, allows to act on the local perception of the environment, landscape and heritage and to initiate action at local level using local knowledge. Leader can thus contribute to the local acceptance and ownership of environmental and cultural heritage and amenities as well as the creation of added value within the rural economy.

The figure 3 below provides a visual representation of the inter-relationship between the four dimensions of Quality of Life and Leader.

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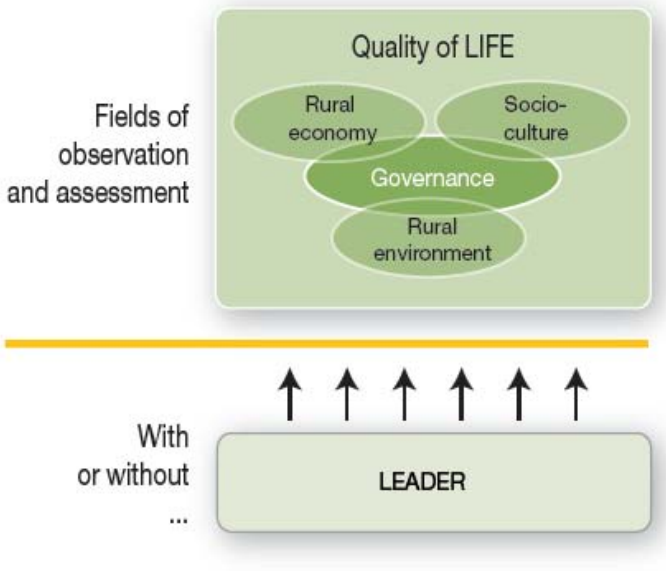
8 See Council Decision 2006/144/EC

9 See: (i) European Commission (2001*): European Governance. A white paper*.; (ii) Directorate of Democratic Institutions. (2008). *The Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg' (iii) OECD (2006). *The new rural paradigm: policies and governance*. OECD Rural Policy Reviews. Paris; (iv) UNDP (2004): *Governance for sustainable human development*. A UNDP policy document.

Figure 3 Leader in relation to Quality of Life



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

The Leader approach is however not the only way to implement measures to improve the Quality of Life. Various Member States adopt a leader-like approach without calling it Leader (such as PRODER in Spain or ILE in some German Länder). On the other hand, the application of Leader-like approaches is not only limited to Axis 4. In some programmes, the Axis 3 delivery applies all or some of the key features of the Leader method (e.g. existence of a local group, a consultative body or partnership).

Key features of Leader and how they relate to Quality of Life

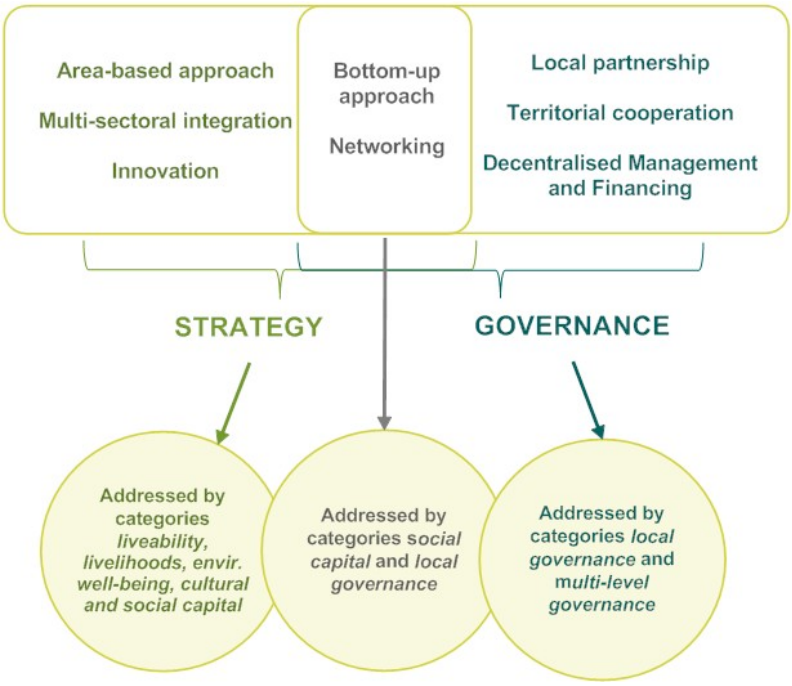
For the 2007-2013 period, the Leader approach is defined within Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 (Art. 61) as comprising the following key features (see figure 3):

- Key features pertaining to strategy
  - area-based approach
  - multi-sectoral integration
  - innovation
- Key features pertaining to governance
  - local partnership
  - inter-territorial and transnational co-operation between rural areas
  - decentralised management and planning
- Key features pertaining to both
  - bottom-up approach
  - networking.

Figure 4 below illustrates the link between the Quality of Life categories and the eight key features of Leader. Overall impacts of Leader may thus be assessed through the four dimensions of Quality of Life, as Leader is implemented as means to improving Quality of Life. For governance aspects, this is self-evident. For strategy issues, they are distributed between the Quality of Life dimensions: socio-cultural (social and cultural capital); environment (environmental well-being); rural economy (liveability

and livelihoods) and governance (multi-level and local governance). These various dimensions will be further developed in the following Chapter 4.

Figure 4 Link between Leader features and Quality of Life categories



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

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4 The four dimensions of Quality of Life: Concepts and expected impacts

4.1 Social and cultural capital and services

4.1.1 The concept of social and cultural capital and services in relation to Quality of Life

Social capital as a theoretical concept, applied to an area, is helpful for understanding (and like a roadmap for finding) some otherwise invisible impacts regarding Axes 3 and 4 strategies. There is a wealth of literature discussing social capital including Coleman (1988), Putman (1993) and many more. Putnam interprets social capital as features of social organization such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions. The components of social capital can be both self-reinforcing and cumulative resulting in "virtuous circles", with high levels of co-operation, trust, reciprocity, civic engagement and collective well-being. Social capital can also create a barrier to the involvement of outsiders. Social capital has several dimensions; an important distinction can be made between bonding and bridging capital (Knudson 2006). A consideration of other relationships, e.g. to human capital (representing an individual's skills and abilities), is also necessary:

- bonding capital, e.g.
  - increases coherence, local clustering;
  - builds trust;
  - enables taking on changes in common resource management;
  - sets up rules that groups feel committed to.
- bridging capital, e.g.
  - helps to integrate otherness;
  - enables the new to be welcomed;
  - looks towards other cultural expressions;
  - connects to other groups and stakeholders.

A relevant research question since the 1990s is whether regional differences in economic growth are related to social capital in the form of generalized trust and associational activity (Beugelsdijk/van Schaik 1993). Analysis suggests that it is not the mere existence of network relationships that stimulates regional economic growth, but active involvement in these relationships. More open-minded communities appear to grow faster (Florida et al 2007). Therefore the scope of measures in Axes 3 and 4 should be investigated with a view to "involvement" in these relationships.

There is a close relation to capacity building and networking too. There may be merit in asking programme evaluations to trace as far as possible, "what kinds of social capital (bonding/bridging, understood broadly as relationships and connections within and between networks) are being fostered in the context of RDPs, Leader and Axis 3 measures", and "to what extent"? Overall, it should be taken into consideration that social capital might also have a negative impact, e.g. if there is an overbalance or excessive bonding vis-à-vis bridging capital and resistance to change, when change might bring wider benefits.

Cultural capital, which is the long-term aspect, is very important for resilience and adaptability of areas. Things like identity, belonging, etc. might connect to that term. Local identity as an important

part of social capital could be shaped by combining local traditions, cultural (intangible) assets and human resources. Trust and reciprocity should also be included. Present RDPs, funded under Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005 aim to valorise cultural heritage and rural "amenities", to enhance services and to explore new (innovative) ways of improving socio-economic viability and the Quality of Life in the rural areas. The rural environment provides a great range and number of attractive possibilities for recreation, using the countryside amenities, touristic and cultural facilities as well as services linked to natural resources. RD measures may contribute to the enhancement of cultural life, and the territorial capacity for setting up a cultural agenda (literature, performance and visual arts) and to the access to cultural rural amenities (rural libraries, theatres, exhibition centres...).

Socio-cultural values are multidimensional and cannot be explained by a single (technical) term alone. Rather, one has to deal with various dimensions in the context of RD projects, e.g.:

- community life: common experiences, traditions and bonding (e.g. family and social structures);
- habits and practices (e.g. special food culture; cuisine, culinary traditions, rituals);
- knowledge and training: skills, capability, competences (common and territorial learning);
- social participation: linkages, organisations, associations;
- culture performance (products, buildings, art, handicraft);
- cultural landscape and the ways of using resources, etc.

The first of the above-mentioned dimensions are rather non-physical (soft factors) and the latter ones are rather material (hard factors). Some are very enduring, while others are very mutable. So it is possible to distinguish between "flow figures", which are characterized as soft factors, and "stock figures" corresponding to their visibility and material property.

4.1.2 Expected impacts

The generation or utilisation of social and cultural capital does not necessarily feature as explicitly stated aims of RD measures. The concepts of social and cultural capital are brought into evaluation as possible and potentially applicable categories to discuss the non-tangible impacts of Axes 3 and 4 measures when the explicit aims may cover matters such as village renewal and development, conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage, promoting co-operation or networking. RD measures may foster these social and cultural capital assets and make progress along these dimensions for example in the following ways.

- **Social Capital**
    - Reinforcement of regional identity and coherence: Regional and local identity is closely connected with the intensity of living together and the communication between members of social (sub-)groups. ***Relevant aspects of impacts in this regard*** could be ***increased interaction,*** the corporate sense of actors involved, the extent or growth of solidarity between different local or regional interest groups and the density of communication structures in regions. At a wider level, the utilization of local specificities and the valorisation of area-specific characteristics concerning the rural residents and their (hi)stories can arise as a result of rural development activities. The **awareness and strengthening of identity and image characteristics** (corresponding with cultural capital assets) or special competences can enhance an area's popularity as a destination.

- Involvement, networking and openness: The community life, the local forces that increase coherence and the capabilities based on common living and working processes (including voluntary work) can be mobilised by bottom-up approaches. Therefore the extent and intensity of "involvement" in information-, participation- and co-operation-structures can be considered as a result or manifestations of stronger social relationships (upgrading). Additionally, the linkages between different stakeholders inside or outside the area, including the actor's capacity to deal with new or different people and ideas are expected to augment the social capital of supported areas.

Cultural capital

- Enhancement of cultural rural amenities: The rural environment provides a great range and number of attractive possibilities for recreation, using the countryside amenities, touristic and cultural facilities as well as services linked to natural resources (see under Section 4.2 "Rural environment"). Moreover, the expected impacts often include the improvement of housing and living circumstances in villages, often characterised as "putting heart back into villages". The direct renewal of buildings or roads is not an impact as such (rather a result in CMEF terms), in contrast to **energising and revitalising villages** through the **stimulation** of businesses and residential use as well as the recreational and leisure offers.
- Valorisation of cultural assets: Architectural, natural and cultural heritage in rural areas are considered as important assets. Different impact categories concern the enhancing of touristic, natural and cultural activities by utilising the local heritage. Therefore not only the maintenance but also the **valorisation of cultural assets** will demonstrate the value of this heritage for rural society. This suggests that the specific impact category ought to be considered as increasing **attractiveness** of rural areas for recreation, living and cultural activities. Therefore the readiness of people to stay in or to move into the area – attracted by cultural assets among other things – illustrates the impact of valorised rural assets.

In general the assessment of social and cultural capital issues requires thorough access to the beneficiary level in the different Member States and RDPs, using the monitoring data as a basis for identifying potential types of expected impacts and for selecting case studies and in-depth inquiries. An important aspect in the assessment of social and cultural capital is data on informed perceptions, e.g. perceived improvements among the benefiting people, level of satisfaction or involvement, (see Chapter 6 below). To arrive at a balanced judgment, it is equally important to capture the perceptions of informed non-beneficiaries. This is because an abstract impact category like social capital is not a solely positive concept. For example, support for selective groups may enhance bounding social capital among the benefiting group, but may not be considered legitimate by territorial stakeholders.

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4.2 Rural environment

4.2.1 The concept of rural environment in relation to Quality of Life

"Rural environment" as such is not defined in the EU policy framework. Therefore it is proposed to refer to the definitions of "environment". In the political debate, environment is closely related to the ecology movement starting in the 1970s. It has been used synonymously with nature and ecology. This makes the word somehow fuzzy, but it clearly refers to the world surrounding human beings. The concept of environment[10] includes not only biophysical factors and their interaction, but also the built environment as well as the interaction of different systems by exchanging mass, energy, or other properties. In the last 20 years, the concept of environment has been broadened to the concept of sustainable development (SD) including aspects like vulnerability and resilience. Embedding environment into the SD concept (based on the three pillars of ecological, economic and social sustainability) builds a strong bridge to Quality of Life approaches which are based on the existence and valorisation of the ecological, the economic and the social capital, as defined for example in the Leader+ seminar on Quality of Life[11].

In the various CMEF documents (including regulations and the Handbook on CMEF), (rural) environment is mentioned in different contexts. Sometimes, the term environment is used alone, sometimes in combination with "rural".

In Axis 2, environment is mainly linked to the physical place. This means that it covers the usual environmental components like water, land and soil, flora, fauna habitats and ecosystems, waste and pollution, air, climate, protected areas as well as issues like cultural landscapes, sustainable agriculture and forestry, and the sustainable use of local (natural) resources, biodiversity and climate change (mainly mitigation). Also the ex-ante evaluation guide puts its focus on these issues (Handbook on CMEF, Guidance note C, page 15).

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10 http://www.biology-online.org/dictionary/

11 http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/events/25102004_en.htm

In Axis 3, environment is mentioned in the context of rural heritage, which includes natural and cultural heritage (Natura 2000 and other places of High Nature Value); in addition, there is a link to education and training.

Linking environment with Quality of Life

Leader and measures to improve Quality of Life bring a new component to the traditional physical environment approach: the one of humankind and of the presence of population. Such measures indeed put humankind at the centre of the approach, and the environment thus becomes one major element of population well-being (CoE 2008).

Linking environment with Leader and Quality of Life tends to turn the question around: instead of assessing the impact of the implemented actions and projects on the environment (i.e. the approach of a classical environmental evaluation), it also means taking into account the impact that the evolution of the environment will have on the activities of humankind and on the global well-being in an area, i.e. on health, on possible economic activities, on landscape and amenity use, on the feelings people have of the area they live in, on the possible uses of local resources, etc. This differs greatly to the approach one can be faced with under Axis 2 and it has far reaching consequences with regard to evaluation methods (see below). In essence, we can see man and nature as components of a socio-ecological system, where culture shapes the use of the natural resources (not always for the better) and where Quality of Life is inextricably bound up with how the environment is managed. The Leader method helps to mobilise local actors and their knowledge and to enhance the awareness of local people with regard to landscape and environmental heritage.

The ecosystem service approach

When linking environment with human well-being in the context of Leader and Quality of Life, the ecosystem service approach seems to be suitable: *Ecosystem services are the benefits provided by ecosystems that contribute to making human life both possible and worth living. Examples of ecosystem services include products such as food and water, regulation of floods, soil erosion and disease outbreaks, and non-material benefits such as recreational and spiritual benefits in natural areas. The term 'services' is usually used to encompass the tangible and intangible benefits that humans obtain from ecosystems, which are sometimes separated into 'goods' and 'services'. Some ecosystem services involve the direct provision of material and non-material goods to people and depend on the presence of particular species of plants and animals, for example, food, timber, and medicines. Other ecosystem services arise directly or indirectly from the functioning of ecosystem processes. For example, the service of formation of soils and soil fertility that sustains crop and livestock production depends on the ecosystem processes of decomposition and nutrient cycling by soil micro-organisms*.[12]

While in this context different definitions of "ecosystem services" have been suggested the following definition was reached by consensus, established at the different Millennium Assessment Reports[13] (called for by the UN in 2000 to assess the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being):

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12 http://www.defra.gov.uk/

13 http://www.millenniumassessment.org/

The ecosystem services are the benefits people obtain from ecosystems. These include provisioning, regulating, and cultural services, which directly affect people, and supporting services needed to maintain the other services. Changes in these services affect human well-being through impacts on security, the basic material for a good life, health, social, and cultural relations. These constituents of well-being are, in turn, influenced by and have an influence on the freedoms and choices available to people.

Since ecosystem services are defined in terms of their benefits to people it should be recognised that ecosystem services are context dependent, that is, the same feature of an ecosystem can be considered an ecosystem service by one group of people but not valued by another group. This means that for assessing the improvement of the well-being of a rural community, it is important to consider not only the ecosystem services available for the population, but the perception of these services and the involvement of the population in their management.

4.2.2 Expected impacts

The main expected impact is **to enhance the well-being of the population due to the improved environmental situation**. This includes two main aspects:

- Improved ecosystem services and environmental amenities

  The stability of the environment and the ecological equilibrium of the territory are of high relevance for the Quality of Life of the rural population. Stable ecosystems and ecological sustainability are an important basis for environmental amenities and ecosystem services like clean water, air, and soils as well as for the prevention of natural hazards and risks like floods, drought, fire, etc.

  The proper functioning of ecosystems is directly related to the amount and quality of services and amenities they can offer, these services are key to sustainable development since they involve the origin and sustenance of all human activities that can take place in rural areas.

  Ecosystem services have a direct impact on human well-being through the direct provision of goods or through the direct results of regulatory ecosystem services and supporting ecosystem services. Besides this direct impact on the factors that influence the human well-being, there are other impacts that depend on the subjective perception that the rural population and visitors have. These include services such as the beauty of the landscape, the overall image of the territory, the spiritual and inspirational values, etc.

  The valuation of these services does not depend exclusively on their “objectively” measurable quality, but also on how this quality is perceived by residents and visitors. This perception depends on multiple factors, such as the knowledge and education of the population, the degree of identification with the territory, the cultural traits, the traditions of the area and the way they are offered to visitors.

  Links and relevance to economy, socio-culture and governance:

  - Stable ecosystems and a sustainable use of regional natural resources like water, forests, agricultural land, etc. are key resources for the economic development of rural areas.
  - The perception people have of environmental services is directly related to the possibility of launching new economic activities and new sources of employment (ecotourism, recreational activities, etc.).
  - The minimization of natural hazards and risks is an important prerequisite for economic development and a key aspect of individual and collective safety and social well-being.
  - (Cultural) landscapes and rural environment of high quality and beauty as well as natural heritage are one of the most important aspects of regional identity.

- A good environmental perception can be the origin of strong rural bonds that allow new ways of working through co-operation and collaboration.

- Enhanced and improved involvement of the rural population in environmental management

  The active participation of rural population in environmental management and environmental care leads to increased awareness, responsibility and identification with their own region, its natural resources and environmental qualities. Enhanced local and regional responsibility and identity are an important contribution to Quality of Life since it can motivate further involvement and encourage rural residents to further their own development.

  Links to economy, socio-culture and governance:

  - Good environmental management can be an important driver for the local and regional economy in terms of sustainable use of local and regional resources, contribution of protected areas and other elements of natural heritage to regional added value.
  - The active participation of rural population in environmental management leading to the enhancement of local and regional responsibility and identity are important for the governance capacity of rural areas.

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Weblinks:

- www.defra.gov.uk
- www.millenniumassessment.org
- www.biology-online.org/dictionary

4.3 Rural economy

4.3.1 The concept of rural economy in relation to Quality of Life

Measures available under Axes 3 and 4 of the Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013 are closely and often explicitly connected. Because these measures are social, economic and environmental in character, but are undertaken with a desire to stimulate progress towards sustainable rural development, the relationship between measure and ***economic*** impact or outcome is not always easily identified.

Quality of Life emanates from having the capability to flourish. It is reasonably well established in the scientific literature what factors make people happier (Layard 2005). The key factors are family relationships, financial situation, work, community and friends, health, personal freedom and personal values. In an environment where factors that enhance well-being are being augmented, people can be

expected to flourish more. It is clear that the targeted actions of Axes 3 and 4 do provide important means to contribute to a rather broader notion of well-being.

From an economic perspective, Quality of Life is about a combination of liveability and livelihoods. Axes 3 and 4 can augment both liveability and livelihoods. If economic dimensions at times stress the contribution to livelihoods, spending needs to enhance liveability also occur. And if spending is supported by public money, there is a case for asking whether there is value for money in that spending.

Quality of Life can also be enhanced by adding to stocks of capital held by rural people or by improving the flow of benefits from those stocks. Van der Ploeg (2004) has pointed out the importance of different forms of capital, from social and cultural capital to economic and ecological (or environmental) capital. These are interwoven to create living conditions. Actions and interventions can enhance the stocks or release an enhanced sustainable flow of benefits from these stocks.

Economic dimensions influence and shape Quality of Life, but do not determine it alone. Below we indicate for some of the measures, the type of assessment criteria, related evaluation questions, the possible indicators and the tools to capture them. They are illustrative rather than comprehensive. Without an underlying economic rationale, livelihoods can be compromised, there needs to be an economic motor driving the rural economy; but to have a stable or growing population, rural areas also need to be good places to live. The quality and nature of services are also likely to shape Quality of Life by enhancing **liveability**. Some of the indicators below tell us about diversified **livelihoods**. Where employment in a core sector such as agriculture is in decline, diversified employment is one factor enhancing livelihoods, so too is the improvement of working conditions. The new employment can entail diversification of employment on farm or off the farm. Both are relevant. We should also be concerned about the demographic 'barometer' of the net migration balance. In looking at net migration balance, we may want to focus on young adult out-migration, as this is a critical group in sustaining or enhancing local/regional capacity. Young adult population retention may be a very good barometer of the Quality of Life in an area. Without employment prospects and good liveability conditions, this retention is unlikely to occur. A high quality local environment may also contribute beneficially to liveability.

The interventions to support services and renew village infrastructures and protect the environment can be construed as means of place-making and enhancing liveability. Enhanced liveability for citizens may also lead to enhanced opportunities for tourism and recreation activities by visitors. Many interventions by Leader are linked to developing and enhancing the distinctiveness of particular places. The sum of these interventions in place-making create a more liveable environment, a place to which people feel a sense of affinity, a place to which there is a sense of belonging. The stronger these attachments to place the more likely people are to resist enhanced economic opportunity somewhere else which might create the negative migration streams of skilled young adults so typical of disadvantaged rural areas. This points to the need for place making activities that meet the needs of different groups.

The interventions to support individuals in developing businesses or enhancing skills through training are directed towards livelihood enhancement. The diversification of the economy engenders resilience and the enhanced skill base of the population enhances flexibility. These are more individualistic interventions to build on the natural assets of the area and create new value added. Of course, there is a need to balance the desire for diversification with enhancing the efficiency of leading sectors. Axes 3 and 4 measures are more focussed on enhancing resilience and diversification than increasing productivity in the land based industries, which is the responsibility of Axis 1 measures.

As noted already, an economy can be enhanced by having higher stocks of capital. This will tend to increase resilience and adaptability. But we may need to make the existing capital stocks work better to deliver enhanced livelihoods and this can be achieved through diversification or through creating new markets for local products. These are the flows of goods and services created by transformative actions based on the building blocks of different forms of capital.

Liveability can only be measured by reference to the residents of an area. The challenge with evaluating the impacts of Axes 3 and 4 measures is to assess the gains in subjective happiness with living space attributable to these measures rather than to other factors. A raft of interventions by both central and local government also seeks to enhance liveability. It may also be relevant to consider different groups' happiness and sense of well-being.

Livelihood changes can be measured at an individual, business level or aggregated at a (sub-) regional level. We can measure livelihood changes in a number of ways, e.g. through changes in profits, income, and net value added. It is harder to measure the impacts of enhanced human capital, because human capital (like other capitals) is a stock. It is the 'activation' of that stock in a work-place or business, or even social enterprise that creates economic outcome and impact, not the stock per se.

Ultimately, Quality of Life will be enhanced if people sense higher levels of well-being and their economic and social activities are enriching, resilient and sustainable. The extent to which Axes 3 and 4 measures constitute an effective deployment of public money to enhance Quality of Life is contingent first, on the selection of measures and second, on the ability to apply those measures efficiently. The evaluator's ultimate responsibility is to be a kind of "critical friend" of the policy instruments, and ask whether they deliver value for money in the particular policy arena of interest and whether a better alternative could have achieved a greater effect in enhancing the livelihoods and liveability of rural Europe.

Two types of economic concern: impact and equity

In any economic evaluation, economists can ask two types of question. First, they may want to know whether the intervention has increased impact. Are people better trained? Has the economic output of the local/regional economy increased? Is the level of value added in the regional economy higher than before the intervention? Second, they may want to know about distributional effects such as: are the most disadvantaged households better off? Are disadvantaged individuals strongly represented in human capital interventions? Can women access rural labour markets better or develop new enterprises within farm households? Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) present compelling evidence that more equal societies experience a greater sense of well-being.

In the evaluation of economic impacts on project interventions in relation to Quality of Life, the starting point is the following: (a) the economic impacts must be measured in part through an analysis of the economic effectiveness of project management – essentially the transaction costs of delivery of the Quality of Life measures/Leader process; and (b) in part through an assessment of the economic impacts of the project interventions supported by RDP funds**.** Thus we need to consider both how the project is managed and the impacts of the project.

4.3.2 Expected impacts

There are five types of Axis 3 measures: those relating to diversification and business development, including tourism; those relating to more effective service provision, including village renewal; those

relating to the upgrading of rural heritage; and those relating to training and human capital development. They are separate categories in the policy 'menu' but they often generate cross-connecting benefits.

- **Liveability**
  - Work-life balance and job environment: This includes additional local employment opportunities for farm households outside the agricultural sector, improvement of working conditions for rural population as well as job satisfaction.
  - Access to basic services and access to infrastructure and services: Axis 3 measures provide some means for creation/enhanced provision of (basic) services for the economy and rural population (measure code 321), including services offered by small or newly established enterprises or diversifying farms (311, 312). The improvement of basic services, including local access to ICTs, provision of childcare facilities and other public services as well as local basic economic fabric can be supported. All these factors can contribute to the upgrading of rural attractiveness. The improved accessibility and attainability of such infrastructures and services demonstrates the benefits of funding measures on the beneficiary population.
- **Livelihoods**
  - To enhance the human capital: capacities for local actors required for the diversification of the local economy and provision of local services (link to the theme socio-culture and services).
  - Utilization of entrepreneurial and human potential: to diversify (farming) activities towards non-agricultural activities, to stimulate small enterprises and develop non-agricultural activities and promote employment.
  - Valorisation of socio-economic performance: to increase economic activities linked to resources and potentials specific to the area (rural tourism, local products, value-link partnerships etc.).

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4.4 Governance

4.4.1 The concept of governance as relevant to the RDP

The New Rural Paradigm (OECD 2006) is a widely accepted model of rural development, based on partnership, programming and local participation, aiming at the realisation of integrated rural development, in order to achieve a more efficient use of resources, and a reduction in regional and social inequalities (Nemes and Fazekas 2007). In this paradigm, governance is understood as a system of continuous negotiation among nested governmental and non-governmental actors at several territorial tiers (Marks 1993). This is a complex process involving the interaction of multiple stakeholders, often with different definitions of the challenges being addressed, working at different political levels, and therefore a multiplicity of values and viewpoints become relevant.

To avoid confusion, an analytical framework for the evaluation of governance should start with two important distinctions: one about seeing governance as a process or a product of RDP, and the other about understanding the difference between multi-level and local governance.

Governance – impact of process versus impact of product

Governance is highly relevant to RDP, since it can be understood as the appropriate delivery mechanism of policies for the enhancement of local development. This applies for Axis 3 measures and even more so for Leader. Local governance is the major concern of the Leader methodology. At the same time, good governance, or improved governance capacity is (at least supposedly) one of the main results of RDP implementation, that can allow for structural changes and for the maintenance of socio-economic improvements far beyond the time period of the policy itself. Thus, governance is both a special delivery mechanism / pre-condition and a product of (and for) the RDP.

Evaluating governance as *special delivery mechanism* can help us to understand how the registered effects of projects under the RDP have come around and what sort of Quality of Life or socio-economic impacts shall be expected. Evaluating governance as a *product* of the implementation of RDP can give us an indication on the improvements of institutions, networks, participation, and empowerment, in other words of structural changes within the societal and institutional system that can create the basis for further development in the future.

Governance - the vertical and horizontal dimensions

In the context of Axes 3 and 4 of the RDP, governance should be approached in two complementary ways, considering both its vertical and its horizontal dimensions.

- *The vertical dimension* refers to the policy and/or political domain, based mainly on redistribution, formalised rules, normative control and an interconnected, co-operating system of various level development institutions, and will be referred to below as **multi-level governance** (CoR 2009). Multi-level governance is the political administrative co-ordination of the development system, defining the institutional, regulatory and procedural environment as external circumstances for the operation of Leader- or territorial-based projects. It can greatly influence the style of interaction between (and within) different levels and institutions of the development system, the degree of autonomy of the local level, the administrative procedures applied, and the autonomy of local partnership in general. Beyond shaping the overall governance framework, multi-level governance needs to be dynamic; and therefore facilitate the co-operation between local partnerships, be it at regional, national or community levels. This will contribute to local-level governance levels keeping an open window to other ways of doing, thereby stressing "bridging" rather than "bonding" and eventually developing joint actions[14] with others to the benefit of the rural communities.
- *The horizontal dimension* refers to the local/heuristic domain, based on networks, endogenous action, and the integration of development resources in a local territorial framework, and is recognised below as **local governance**. Local governance, with respect to the Leader Programme, is the co-ordination or the way of operation at local level to achieve local development. It can be defined as a network-like collaboration (partnership) between three classes of local actors (public administration, private/economic sector and civil society) aimed at: harmonising interests; solving conflicts and problems; co-ordinating efforts for the protection of local values and their revalorisation as resources for socio-economic development.

  Typical attributes are participation, local initiatives and innovation, voluntary involvement (so actors always have an exit option), and horizontal modes of interaction between partners instead of hierarchical modes of steering (Pollermann et al 2008).

These two dimensions are closely interconnected and for a successful, structural development they should form an integrated system. Whereas, the main principles (participation, subsidiarity, democratic decision-making, etc.) are very similar in both domains, the ways in which they are implemented can be quite different.

Governance - the principles of good-governance

One of the overall objectives of the Leader approach is to contribute to improved governance in rural areas. The various principles of good governance (GG), as defined by the OECD and the World Bank, can be addressed more specifically at multi- and local levels in the following way:

[14] Actions being jointly implemented (between transnational levels (as suggested by the Integrated European Co-operation guide – ENRD) between regions or even within regions.

- Multi-level
  - *Vertical integration*: bringing together different hierarchical levels (decision-makers at local, regional and national level) and fostering openness and interactions (*co-operation*) between all actors and partners at whichever level (regional, national and Community).
  - *Subsidiarity*: decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen, keeping in mind the level of effectiveness of implementing these decisions as regards to other levels of decision-making (national, regional, county…).
- Local-level
  - *Transparency*: visibility of structures and procedures, access to information, etc.
  - *Participation*: involvement of concerned stakeholders and local population.
  - *Horizontal integration*: bringing together different sectors like agriculture, tourism, and culture, etc., different types of organisations like administration, private businesses, and civil society organisations.
  - *Legitimacy*: the acting of the different players of the governance system gets recognition because it is estimated as appropriate to the legal and other institutional frameworks.
  - High quality of *communication and conflict management*: ensuring professional structures and procedures for information, consultation and joint decision-making.
  - High quality of *learning mechanisms*: installing professional structures and processes for reflection and mutual learning among the different members of the governance system.

4.4.2 Expected impacts

The main impact of Quality of Life measures and Leader is to improve 'good governance' in rural areas by strengthening both the vertical (multi-level) and horizontal (local level) dimensions. In the context of the present WORKING PAPER, it is suggested that impact evaluation be streamlined according to four assessment criteria, focusing on the above-mentioned good governance principles:

- **Multi-level governance:**
  - *Level of decentralisation*. This concerns the way in which Quality of Life measures and Leader are contributing to either developing or strengthening the MS's decentralisation framework. Beyond the various given national decentralisation frameworks, it is important to assess their 'dynamic' and innovative contributions to improved regional rural policies and empowerment of local actors (*vertical integration and subsidiarity GG principles.*)
  - *Coordination between different levels of governance*. This refers to any coordination networks or joint actions that have been developed or supported by the vertical level (between local partnerships and higher political levels), as a result of RDP supported co-operation opportunities.(*vertical integration and co-operation GG principles*).
- **Local governance:**
  - *Partnership composition and empowerment of local actors*. The Local Action Group (LAG) or partnership thrives on the support of the most important socio-economic partners and the public administration. Empowering people and developing the physical, mental and social framework for common learning and acting is central: the common commitment to cooperate in an integrated strategy is a decisive step for establishing connections between hitherto isolated stakeholders. However it is essential that the partnerships not only reflect the principal socio-economic actors but also try and involve local vulnerable groups.

Continuation of local partnership activities beyond the programming period is crucial as this can indicate term commitment, which can be seen as another major impact (*participation, horizontal integration, legitimacy and high quality of learning mechanisms GG principles*).

- *Quality of governance*. In addition to involving the right range of key and representative actors, local governance needs to be conducted in an open and transparent manner, in order to maintain the commitment of all actors working together on a basis of common trust, to address and defuse conflicts in due time and to enable a dynamic and interactive implementation process *(transparency and high quality* of *communication and conflict management GG principles*).

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5 Overall Methodological Approach

5.1 General methodological considerations

Etic and emic approaches: complementary concepts

In the implementation logic of the RDPs, the expected territorial impacts are produced at the level of various and widely scattered projects. Projects of different kinds (co-operation vs. individual business; hard vs. soft investments), pertaining to different measures of Axes 3 and 4 can have impacts on the social, cultural, environmental, and economic capital in rural areas. Moreover concerning Leader, the operational features of LAGs as institutions, their efforts to promote co-operation inside and outside the organisation, their striving to develop capacities in their area, they all generate combined social, cultural, environmental, and economic impacts.

Anthropologists describe two different methods of analysis: ***etic*** and ***emic***. Etic perspectives are based on outsiders (in this case evaluators) applying their external judgement and assessment. Emic assessment, on the other hand, is based on insiders' internal perceptions and judgements (in this case the local communities in Leader areas, or communities where Quality of Life measures have been implemented). Leader and Axis 3 measures can be argued to create a demand for emic knowledge and evaluations of impact and outcome – as judgements upon Quality of Life undisputedly presuppose subjective perceptions. Since funding agencies and programme bodies seek to normalise evidence across a range of projects or programmes, this may require also etic assessment. Both are entirely legitimate forms of evaluation and are complementary rather than conflicting.

The evaluation questions and the hierarchy of indicators and objectives of the CMEF and its Handbook cater up to a certain point for the etic side of analysis. One of the major strong points of the Leader approach is to involve beneficiaries and stakeholders in participatory evaluation, providing the emic side of the analysis. Participative approaches provide an opportunity to:

- gain additional, mainly implicit (emic, but sometimes also etic) information, possibly not accessible through analytic research,
- instigate conversation processes during which new collective insights take shape, and
- generate feedback loops (reflexive learning) with and among local actors and stakeholders.

Participatory evaluation

Participatory evaluation has been developed as a means of better understanding how beneficiaries value interventions on their behalf. In contrast to formal and conventional evaluation, such approaches cede a significant degree of power to the beneficiaries to engage in self-evaluation. Where an explicit objective of rural development interventions is empowerment, it seems legitimate that this should also extend to the field of evaluation. Participatory evaluation is challenging, confronts power structures and features uncertain outcomes. On the other hand, it takes the evaluation process into the communities which have been targeted as the recipients of support, rather than externalising it. Those who have engaged with the project may be better able to assess the perceived benefits which may reside both in the processes and the outcomes and impacts. Participation can be organized:

- on the basis of personal interviews, often semi structured or in the form of in-depth conversations;

- as structured large or small group discussions and dialogues (open space conferences, focus groups, steering groups...);
- around web-based platforms;
- on-site visits or walks;
- calling for unconventional, possibly non-verbal or artistic contributions (e.g. from children, students, unemployed youth, amateur photographers...).

All in all, there are no limits to creative approaches, as long as the method chosen is in line with the terms of reference and bears the potential to deepen the understanding of social processes instigated by co-funded activities. We know that social capital is a powerful source of Quality of Life as perceived by the people, and its intangible and relational character often requires unconventional ways to raise relevant – emic – information.

A selected number of participative approaches will be discussed more in detail in Chapter 7.

Mixed solutions

Capturing impact of Leader and Axis 3 measures on Quality of Life remains difficult and has certain limitations: in particular, the time horizon of a programming period is quite short in terms of determining the extent to which Quality of Life has been enhanced in a deep and sustainable sense. Improvements in areas such as provision of services, enhanced employment, etc. that can usually be assumed to impact positively, can largely be measured by quantitative data. However, less tangible aspects of Quality of Life require more qualitative assessment as part of the evaluation process. Ideally, some forms of qualitative processes would be in place at the outset of the programme (case studies, longitudinal studies, etc.). If these processes have not started at the outset of the programme, it is to a certain extent possible to reconstruct baseline situations or perceptions (by asking interviewees or focus group participants, “how things were three, five or seven years ago...”), but there is a constraint which should be taken into account: shifting baselines. What we perceived three years ago and what we think today that we perceived three years ago can strongly differ! This can be empirically shown in asking this type of questions in periodic surveys, for example using the repertory grid technique. Confronting the interviewees with their own shifts of perception is a good means to instigate discussions on values – and by virtue of this on programme objectives and strategies.

In all events, this Working Paper advocates mixed solutions. The chapter on triangulation in Chapter 7 provides further explanations on this.

The importance of high quality monitoring data

Effective evaluation of impact ideally requires high quality baseline, monitoring and reporting data. Among the challenges to the effective evaluation of the impact of Leader and Quality of Life measures frequent reference is made to the difficulties around the completeness and consistency of monitoring and reporting data at programme level. This arises for a variety of reasons however a key concern is the diffuse and diverse nature of the data and how it is generated (often from a large number of projects delivered at a local level by intermediary bodies) and the variations in monitoring and reporting which arise as a consequence. Although not an impact evaluation tool in its own right, a well ordered and structured monitoring and reporting data management system is of great value in providing a robust basis for the evaluation. This value is enhanced when it is accessible and user friendly at all levels from local to programme level, the example from Wales in Box 1 below is one such approach, Sweden also has a highly developed system which builds the data sets through local, regional and national levels.

Monitoring data are structured in an evaluation-friendly way if

- they are complete over the whole programming period;
- they are measured on the basis of the same algorithm during the whole period and across all sub-divisions (territorial, and if possible also sectoral ones);
- the database allows for a flexible re-combination, or re-categorization, even if not all of the conceivable combinations or categories are used for monitoring purposes.

Box 1 Enhanced data capture in the context of the Wales Performance Framework (United Kingdom)

The Welsh RDP performance framework provides a detailed measure by measure guide or checklist for all those involved in delivering and reporting the programme. It seeks to ensure that data capture and entry is properly informed, that the indicators are properly understood in terms of their use and definition and that there is a resultant high degree of consistency of approach with resultant benefits to the reliability of what is captured. A glossary with detailed definitions of terms is provided.

The approach is quite simple. For each measure, a summary table is prepared listing the EC and additional indicators with reference codes. This has separate sections for outputs and results indicators which are colour coded differently and is followed by the EC and specific evaluation questions. Following this, are further more detailed tables using the same colour coding which cover six points of information for each indicator:

Indicator reference code, EC or Wales, output or result;

Indicator title with additional information, e.g. re the period to which it refers, timing, frequency, etc;

Indicator definition;

Indicator defining characteristics (e.g. the type of training course, or subdivision by environmental reason for support);

A worked example of what one recorded entry would comprise, e.g. one unit of advice or training; and

The required supporting evidence.

Axis 4 is addressed differently although the basic format is broadly the same. For measures 41 and 421, it is explicit in indicating that all projects under Axis 4 must have EC Measure specific outputs and results thus contributing to the programme as a whole. It goes on to provide Welsh Leader specific output, result and long-term result indicators which are tabulated as per the other axes. Measure 431 is restricted to the EC Axis 4 indicators and a number of Wales specific examples.

The level of detail is very substantial and comprehensive and the document is therefore some 200 pages in length, it is nevertheless quite clear and accessible as a reference.

Source: Welsh Assembly Government

Box 2 Current practice example of an evaluation design developed for the ex-post evaluation of Leader+ in Saxony (Germany)

This evaluation design has been developed for the ex-post evaluation of the Leader+ programme in Saxony, a Federal State of Germany with 9 LAGs.

The workflow was organized in co-operation with those involved at both programme and LAG level. This was done during the evaluation kick-off meeting. In addition to the specific questions from the Leader+ Evaluation Guidelines, further programme specific topics were identified. Four general themes were identified for structuring the answers to the various evaluation questions. These additional themes are:

- ✓ Programme design and implementation;
- ✓ Local Strategies: organisational issues, use of endogenous resources, involving and empowering of actors and working processes (mobilisation, co-operation, innovation);
- ✓ Direct and indirect, as well as tangible and intangible effects of Leader actions;
- ✓ Learning through Leader at local and programme level, i.e. lessons learned by various stakeholders through the implementation of the Leader method.

A series of different steps involving different tools were identified and carried out to address the additional themes and the evaluation questions. The "standard" tools were supplemented by other tools designed to capture more intangible effects such as local actors' involvement and views, and the quality of the partnership. By means of these tools relevant local trends, local perceptions of achievements and the relevance and value added of the Leader method could be made explicit. The following tools have been used, although the list is not exhaustive:

- ✓ a SWOT analysis focusing on territorial trends in order to identify external and internal influence factors;
- ✓ validating and improving the relevance and applicability of the indicator set to the evaluation questions;
- ✓ analysis of monitoring data; including data at LAG and project level;
- ✓ baseline survey with face-to-face interviews with LAG managers and administrative officials responsible for funding;
- ✓ in depth analysis of impacts at project level (more than 40 project promoters and beneficiaries in 9 Leader areas using standardized questionnaires);
- ✓ standardized written questionnaire for 70 members of LAG decision-making boards;
- ✓ case study: a comparative cost-effectiveness analysis with four matched projects.

The combined application of these tools provided a sound basis for judging not only on project impacts but also on the perceived changes in social capital, and local competences.

Source: http://www.smul.sachsen.de/laendlicher_raum/download/L_Ex_post-Bewertung_Sachsen_15-07-2008.pdf
also available at www.fg-art.de/publications

5.2 Suggested overall approach

The adoption of the following **three-step methodological approach** is recommended (see figure 5 below). This accords with the distinction between etic and emic approaches, the need to rely more on qualitative assessments and the desired involvement of stakeholders in addition to the quantitative assessment of the common impact indicators (see European Evaluation Network for Rural Development, 2010):

- **Step 1**. Based on the monitoring information provided by the CMEF indicators (baseline, output and result) and on further information collected: **Complete the proposed framework of reference** for evaluation that will address the various Quality of Life criteria defined in Chapter 4. The purpose of this framework, presented hereafter in Chapter 6, is to arrange the available information in the proper order for the preparation of the next steps. The framework relates each impact category to appropriate evaluation questions, judgement criteria and indicators. The evaluation questions operationalise the generic evaluation questions laid down in the CMEF.

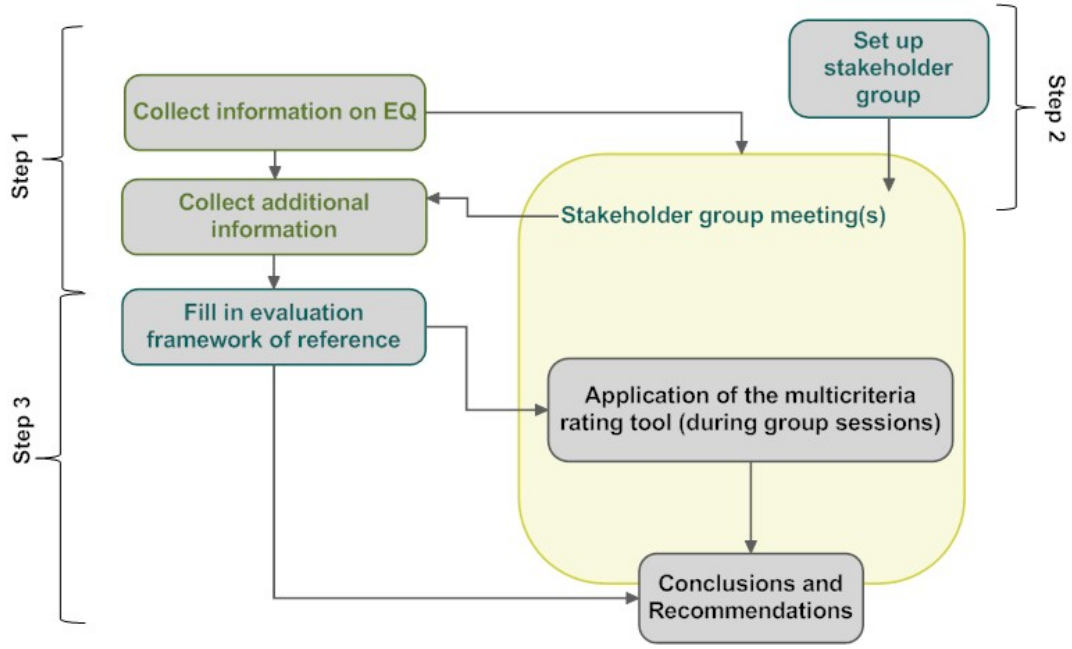
  Information collected to fill in the framework of reference should come from a variety of sources, embody a variety of viewpoints and perspectives, and reflect data on states as well as on trends. This may have been raised in the course of participatory self-assessments, surveys, stakeholder interviews, case studies or specific approaches combining "objective" data collection with dialogue-based generation of collective knowledge.

  Some factors can be measured quantitatively, others need interpretations, again others systemic or network analysis. On the other hand, a well informed and methodologically well grounded expert opinion can cut many corners and make analysis much more trenchant than it possibly would be if based merely on quantitative data collection. Thus, we suggest a mixed approach for research, based on the collection of quantitative and qualitative, emic and etic information, primary and secondary analysis, carried out by geographic (country/regional) experts. This combined approach would generate quantitative results comparable at EU level and qualitative analysis and interpretation at the same time.

  Chapter 7 of this Working Paper provides a selection of recommendable methods and tools ***which are currently used in the evaluation of socio-economic programmes in Europe and beyond***.

- **Step 2**. Organise **a series of group meetings (round tables)** with a selected panel of stakeholders (MA, LAG executive, private stakeholders, beneficiaries of measures, etc.). During these (perhaps two or three) stakeholder group meetings – the composition of which should remain as stable as possible – the various evaluation criteria will be highlighted. Additional information can be collected between the meetings, if the participants deem the judgement basis still to be unsatisfactory. It is possible that the participants themselves give useful hints about where to find new information (e.g. workshop minutes or self-evaluation results, accompanying research...).

Figure 5 The three step process to evaluate impact of Quality of Life measures and Leader



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

There are two ways to convene this stakeholder group. The stakeholder group should represent a 'microcosm' of the programme, necessarily integrating diverse interests, viewpoints and philosophies. Where there is a steering group for the evaluation they may, with the consent of the Managing Authority and other involved parties, be utilised as a stakeholder group of the type described. Alternatively, the evaluation approach can involve the convening of a focus group specifically for this purpose. An approach to set up and work with a focus group is described in Chapter 7. It is strongly recommended that one of these two approaches be followed. An evaluation team's own view alone may not be sufficient for grasping the complex reality of rural development programmes, this is especially so in assessing Axes 3 and 4 measures.

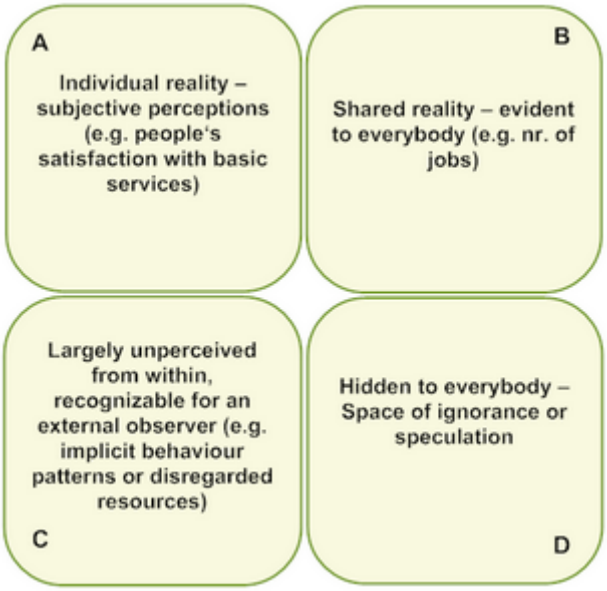
The integration of etic and emic information requires a multiplicity of sources and approaches. To consolidate this diverse and possibly fragmented or inconsistent information into meaningful propositions, an integrative approach to facilitation is needed addressing the full scope of the programme. Facilitating such a meeting is challenging involving diverse interests and organisational cultures as administrative officials, experts, entrepreneurs and farmers, NGO representatives, each with their distinctive perspectives and interpretations. High-level facilitation skills and extensive practical and contextual experience are therefore important attributes in the evaluation team in optimising this involvement. It is therefore recommended that these skills be included as an essential element in the team of evaluators. Diversity beats competence, if the diversity is properly harnessed (see for example Hong, Page 1998).

- **Step 3**. The final step is to make a final judgement on the evaluation questions and confront these judgements with the baseline situation: the suggested approach here is to **use or adapt a multi-criteria rating tool** such as proposed in Section 7.7.

  For this step, the above mentioned stakeholder (or focus) group members are asked to provide their judgement(s) against each impact criterion (as defined in Chapter 4 and set out in the framework of reference in Chapter 6). The ranking tool is an intersubjective method for relational assessment. It is intersubjective, because the scoring results are generated by synthesizing individual assessments into a negotiated group conclusion. It is relational, because what counts, are the observed changes in relation to a baseline situation. If the baseline situation has not been properly described in the RDP, it may be possible to reconstruct it in parts by retrospective assessment. This reconstruction procedure is justifiable at least for the emic part of the information required.

This three-step process is recommended not only because it usefully integrates stakeholders' perceptions into the evaluation process. It is also recommended because the relational character of the exercise makes it possible to compare impacts across different European regions. Relative changes can be more easily compared with each other than absolute attributes. A certain measure may for example engender more positive impacts in certain regions whereas in others it performed less well. If such a difference materialises, the contextual factors which may have caused it can be further explored.

Figure 6 Four windows of perception

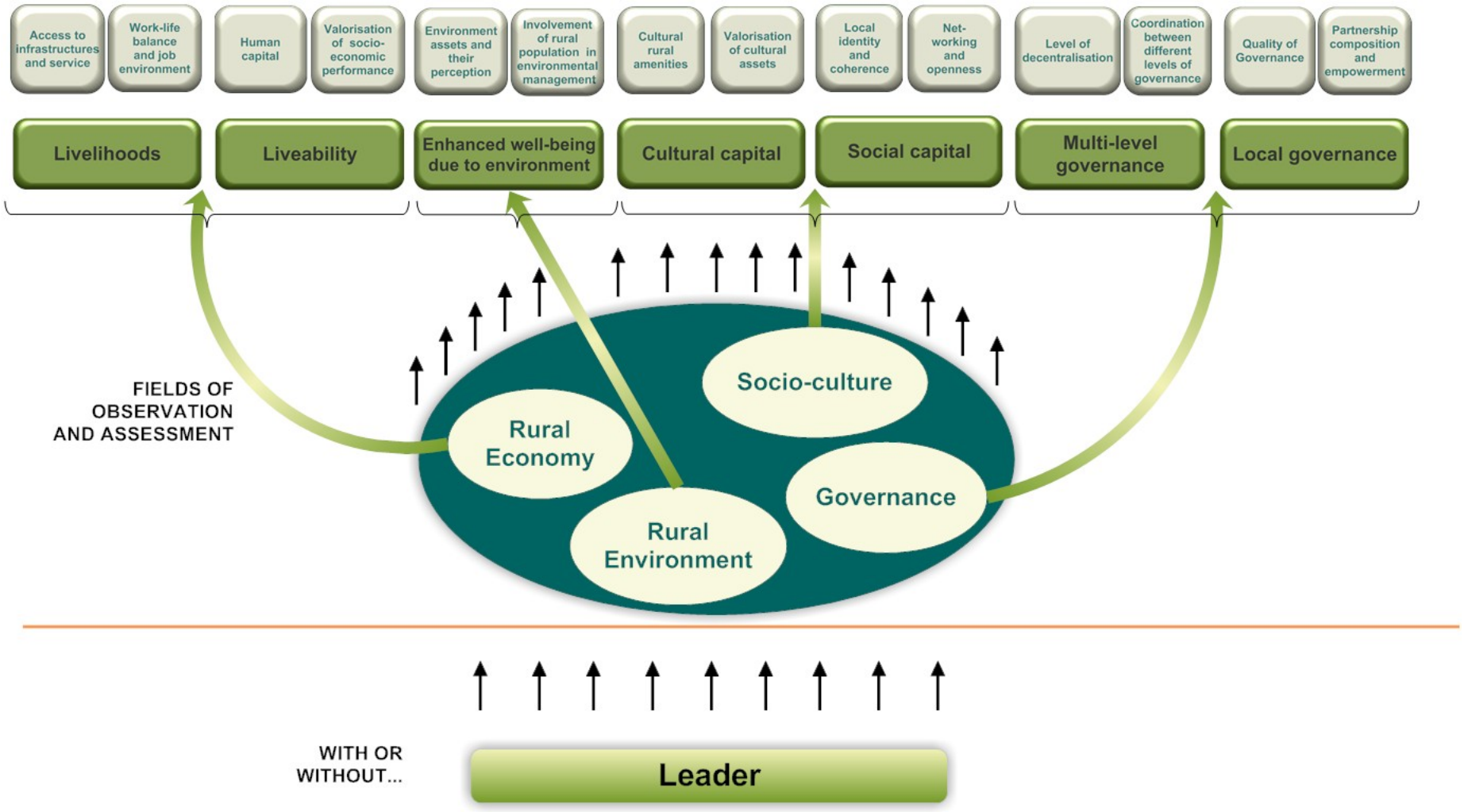


Evaluation usually deals with windows A, B and C. The fourth window (D) becomes accessible only by chance, but chance favours the prepared mind, as Louis Pasteur reportedly used to say. Intelligent dialogue settings may improve the probability of drawing hidden realities (D) into the other windows (at least A or B).

Chapter 7 presents a series of methods and tools (toolbox) that MAs and evaluators are invited to draw on to facilitate the implementation of the above three evaluation steps. These steps are necessary in order to sufficiently address and integrate at least three of the four windows of perception (A, B and C).

Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

Figure 7 Defining judgement criteria for the 4 dimensions of Quality of Life and Leader



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

6 Assessment criteria and indicators (framework of reference)

In Chapter 4, the four themes (socio-culture, rural environment, rural economy and governance) defining Quality of Life relating to European RDP are discussed in terms of further defining the concepts which lie behind them and the impacts which may be expected to arise in these areas in the context of Axis 3 and Axis 4 measures, thereby suggesting a total of seven impact assessment categories:

- social capital
- cultural capital
- environmental services and amenities
- liveability
- livelihoods
- multi-level governance
- local governance

The four fields of observation and the seven impact categories and the various relations and linkages between all these elements are illustrated in figure 7 on the previous page.

Quality of Life remains in essence multi-functional and can only be approached through a multi-criteria evaluation matrix. Leader as such has been viewed in the present framework as a means to improving Quality of Life in rural areas and not as a separate and independent end or objective. Its contribution to planning and mobilising local and territorial actors has therefore been integrated to the governance field of observation. This will in turn provide a framework that can be used to assess other types of local planning and development.

Quality of Life is and remains highly dependent on local conditions and the way and manner in which activities are planned and implemented. Stakeholder participation and empowerment are essential elements of appreciation and therefore it is recommended that impact evaluation strongly integrates participatory methods.

In order to further operationalise the various impact categories, a **framework of reference** has been developed and is provided in the following sections.

This framework can be used by the evaluator in the overall methodological approach outlined in Chapter 5 to guide the structuring, observation and analysis phases of the evaluation. The framework is intended as a guide to which further additions or amendments may be made to meet the specific characteristics of the individual programmes. It may be regarded as a checklist to help ensure that the necessary data requirements and sources are identified and that relevant tools are deployed. The framework should not be handled in a mechanical way. It should rather be regarded as a tool to stimulate and guide the evaluator and responsible bodies in designing and undertaking the evaluation.

The frameworks do not include baseline indicators or targets, but clearly these are also essential in assessing impact. They should have been addressed at the ex ante stage. What is clear however is that the mid-term evaluations should identify the gaps in this regard and the framework of reference may help to identify these. Looking forward to the ex-post evaluations, the framework helps to ensure that these issues are addressed at least at an advanced stage.

The framework of reference is presented in this chapter in a way that:

- It is **structured in 5 sections** (6.1 to 6.5). While 6.1 gives an overview over the common EQs of Axes 3 and 4 measures relevant for all 4 themes (socio-culture, rural environment, rural economy and governance), Sections 6.2 to 6.5 are addressing respectively socio-cultural, environmental, economic and governance related impacts.
- Each field of observation is first **introduced by the relevant CMEF evaluation questions** pertaining to this part, indicating that during the overall monitoring and evaluation process of the RDP, indicators have been collected and assessed to provide answers to these CMEF EQ. These elements will be taken up as foundation material for the relevant impact categories (overall context and results obtained).
- Then, each field of observation is **operationalised into four columns showing** (from left to right): **the impact categories, the relevant assessment criteria, suggested specific evaluation questions related to these criteria and suggested impact indicators** to find evidence for the respective judgement.
- Finally, each part is endowed with a table providing **suggestions for the possible sources of verification** for these indicators.

The specific evaluation questions are understood as optional questions, which give the Common Evaluation Questions of the CMEF more depth and precision with regard to the impact categories of Leader and Quality of Life.

Not all the indicators specified in the framework are impact indicators; they also include a number of result indicators. The CMEF states that the use of result data is essential as a basis for assessing impacts. A number of such indicators has therefore been included where their use is essential to understanding what impact may have arisen and how it may be assessed.

6.1 Common Evaluation Questions relevant for all four themes

The four themes (socio-culture, rural environment, rural economy and governance) defining Quality of Life relating to European RDP are addressed by the following Common Evaluation Questions of Axis 3 and Axis 4 measures:

Table 1 Common evaluation questions covering all four themes (socio-culture, rural environment, rural economy and governance)

Measure codes	Common Evaluation Questions
313, 322, 323, 341	To what extent have the services provided contributed to improve the Quality of Life in rural areas?
321	To what extent have the services provided increased the attractiveness of the areas affected?
322	To what extent has the measure improved the attractiveness of rural areas?
323	To what extent has the measure maintained the attractiveness of rural areas?
331	To what extent have supported training and information activities contributed to improve the Quality of Life in rural areas?
341	To what extent have supported activities contributed to improve the Quality of Life in rural areas?
41	To what extent has the Leader approach contributed to the priorities of Axes 1, 2 and 3?
421	To what extent have co-operation projects and/or transfer of best practices based on the Leader approach contributed to a better achievement of the objectives of one or more of the three other axes?

6.2 Capturing impacts on socio-culture

The socio-cultural impacts are addressed by the following CMEF evaluation questions (numbers refer to the measure code):

41 To what extent has the Leader approach contributed to mobilising the endogenous development potential of rural areas?

323 (2) To what extent has the measure maintained the attractiveness of rural areas?

313 (1) To what extent has the measure contributed in increasing tourism activities? Distinguish between activities taking place on agricultural holdings and other activities.

Table 2 below illustrates how the suggested impact indicators are deducted from the assessment criteria and specific evaluation questions which have been defined for social and cultural capital. Possible sources of verification are suggested in table 3.

Table 2 Suggestions for specific evaluation questions and impact indicators for the socio-cultural theme

Impact categories	Assessment criteria	Specific evaluation questions related to social capital	Suggested impact indicators
Social capital	**Local identity and coherence strengthened (usually more associated with bounding social capital)**	A. To what extent have the RDP measures increased the interaction amongst actors to promote a sense of place and to strengthen community ties?	• Number of people participating in collective investments and composition of participants in projects of this type.
		B. To what extent have co-operation and networking increased the economic performance of the area?	• Relative number and volume of business/employment arising from co-operation and networking relationships .
	Networking and openness fostered (usually more associated with bridging social capital)	C. To what extent have RDP measures enhanced the actors' capacity to identify and take up new ideas, tacit skills, etc. and turn them, into innovation?	• Number of newly established external relationships to key stakeholders , defined as such stakeholders playing a dominant role in: - flows of knowledge; - flows of finance; - bestowing legitimacy.

Impact categories	Assessment criteria	Specific evaluation questions related to cultural capital	Suggested impact indicators
Cultural capital	**Enhancement of cultural rural amenities (hard)**	A. To what extent has the rural heritage (built, immaterial, artefacts etc.) been enhanced or revitalised?	• Use of revitalized or upgraded areas (for recreation or living), e.g. % of vitalized village structures / heritage operations (by businesses, by residential use, by other private services and communal facilities).
		B. To what extent has the area gained in cultural attractiveness?	• Level of satisfaction with /recognition of cultural amenities and life.
	Valorisation of cultural assets (soft)	C. To what extent has cultural life been enhanced?	• Change of involvement, participation, membership in cultural activities and/or events? (eventually specify involvement of youth or other specific groups); • Number and type of new (cultural) performances enhancing endogenous resources / human potentials (theatres, events, festivals, etc.); • Number and type of cultural related start ups/enterprises, contributing to the increase of popularity.
		D. To what extent have cultural events, activities, initiatives, enterprises attracted people from outside the area?	• External image, number of people from distant places (1) knowing and (2) having a positive image of the area or specific assets which are representative for the area.

Table 3 Sources of verification for socio-cultural impacts

INDICATORS	Sources of verification
Local identity/coherence, networking and openness	
Social capital **(A to C)**	• Use of monitoring data (*Track breakdown of projects by types of investment (e.g. private business/collective investments), number of people participating in collective investments, composition of participants etc.*); • Documentary review (*LAG-level (annual) reports or equivalent, self-evaluation reports …);* • Surveys (*incorporate perceptional and interpretative questions (statements) pertaining to social capital into beneficiary surveys*); • Interview check-lists (*from beneficiaries and from non-beneficiaries/secondary stakeholders*); • Use overall triangulation between data verification sources.
Enhancement of cultural rural amenities and valorisation of cultural assets	

Cultural Capital
(A to D)
	• Analyzing monitoring data and project data analysis;
	• Survey: (sample 5-10% of total beneficiaries) to gather data concerning initial and current situation, as well as improvements;
	• Case studies:
	  • Capture the specific change in local circumstances (i.e. what social groups are more involved)?
	  • Population development
	• Optional: Local self-assessment method (i.e. Potential and Bottleneck analysis) could illustrate the increase of impacts concerning cultural rural amenities.

6.3 Capturing impacts on rural environment

The rural environment impacts are addressed by the following CMEF evaluation question (number refers to the measure code):

323 To what extent has the measure contributed to the sustainable management and development of Natura 2000 sites or other places of High Nature Value and to environmental awareness of rural population?

Table 4 below illustrates how the suggested impact indicators are deducted from the assessment criteria and specific evaluation questions which have been defined for enhanced wellbeing due to environment. Possible sources of verification are suggested in table 5.

Table 4 Suggestions for specific evaluation questions and impact indicators for the rural environment theme

Impact categories	Assessment criteria	Specific evaluation questions related to rural environmental impacts	Suggested impact indicators
Enhanced well-being due to improved environmental situation	**Improved environmental services and amenities and their perception**	A. To what extent have QoL measures and Leader generated new services or contributed to improve the existing ecosystem services and environmental amenities of the territory? B. To what extent have the QoL measures and Leader contributed to improve the public perception (by inhabitants and by visitors/guests) about environmental amenities and ecosystem services?	• Increased share of people actively using new opportunities created to experience, watch, make use etc. of environmental amenities; • Increased satisfaction of rural population with environmental situation, environmental amenities and ecosystem services.
	Enhanced and improved involvement of rural population in environmental management	C. To what extent have QoL measures and Leader increased the participation of the rural population in actions related to environmental management? D. To what extent has Leader facilitated a better integration of environmental governance aspects into the decision-making process?	• Increased environmental responsibility and environmental awareness of rural population; • Increased involvement of environmental interest groups in the decision-making body of the Local Action Group

Table 5 Sources of verification for environmental impacts

INDICATORS	Sources of verification
Improved environmental services and amenities and their perception Enhanced and improved involvement of rural population in environmental management	
Enhanced well-being due to improved environmental situation (A to D)	• Focus groups, SAP; • Most significant changes (MSC); • Case studies, surveys; • Baseline studies and other regional studies.

6.4 Capturing impacts on rural economy

The rural economy impacts are addressed by the following CMEF evaluation questions (numbers refer to the measure code):

Human capital:

331(1+2) To what extent have supported training and information activities improved the human capital of the rural populations to diversify their activities towards non agricultural activities? Focus the analysis on the most important aspects. To what extent has the knowledge gained from supported training and information activities been used in the area affected?

341 (1) To what extent have supported activities contributed to reinforcing territorial coherence and synergies between the measures intended for the broader rural economy and population?

Valorisation of socio-economic performance:

311 (1 -2) To what extent have supported investments promoted the diversification of farm households' activities towards non agricultural activities? Focus the analysis on the most important activities in this respect.

To what extent have supported investments promoted additional employment opportunities for farm households outside the agricultural sector?

312 (1-3) To what extent has the support contributed to promote diversification and entrepreneurship? Focus the analysis on the most important activities**.**

To what extent has the support promoted additional employment opportunities in rural areas?

To what extent has the support contributed to improving the diversification and development of the rural economy?

Access to basic services and infrastructure:

321(1-3) To what extent have the services provided contributed to improve the Quality of Life in rural areas? Distinguish between the different sectors concerned (such as commerce, health services, transport, IT…).

To what extent have the services provided increased the attractiveness of the areas affected? Distinguish between the different sectors concerned (such as commerce, health services, transport, IT…)

To what extent have the services contributed to reversing economic and social decline and depopulation of the countryside?

Work-life balance and job environment:

311 (4), 312 (4) and 313 (4) To what extent has the support contributed to improving the Quality of Life in rural areas?

Table 6 below illustrates how the suggested impact indicators are deducted from the assessment criteria and specific evaluation questions which have been defined for livelihoods and liveability. Possible sources of verification are suggested in table 7.

Table 6 **Suggestions for specific evaluation questions and impact indicators for the rural economy theme**

Impact categories	Assessment criteria	Specific evaluation questions related to Livelihoods	Suggested impact indicators
Livelihoods	**Human capital enhanced**	A. To what extent has the enhanced skill set of local entrepreneurs improved their adaptability, resilience and productive capacity?	• Successful business start ups still trading after- 1 year, 5 years, etc.; • Related to RDP interventions directly – indirectly.
		B. To what extent have RDP interventions enhanced people's readiness for innovation? *(through removing barriers, encouraging brilliant ideas, bringing the right people together, grafting (pairing perhaps?) local with external knowledge/skills etc (leading to confidence, enabling)*	• Successful business enhancement, diversification, re-launch, etc.; • Own financial contribution; • Voluntary work, own time, in kind contribution.
	Valorisation of socio-economic performance	C. To what extent has new value added been produced from resources and potentials specific to the area?	• No of businesses / jobs created through valorisation of specific resources. • Contribution of sectors to regional VA.
		D. To what extent have businesses been developed / adapted to increase the economic resilience of rural households?	• No of businesses/jobs created through linking sectors and actors.

Impact categories	Assessment criteria	Specific evaluation questions related to Liveability	Suggested impact indicators
Liveability	**Access to basic services and infrastructure**	A. To what extent has the level of satisfaction improved with respect to infrastructure and services such as: ✓ *Health care* ✓ *Public transport* ✓ *Basic economic fabric and retail (grocery, craftsmen, direct sales, financial services, mail)* ✓ *IT* ✓ *Childcare and primary education* ✓ *Elderly care* ✓ *Energy provision, etc.?*	• Change +/- in satisfaction levels regarding a selected range of infrastructures and services addressing specific target populations.
		B. To what extent do people feel better connected/less isolated? ✓ *Young/elderly* ✓ *Women/men* ✓ *Other groups.*	• Migration balance of: ▪ 15 – 30; ▪ Working people 20 – 60; ▪ Gender.
	Wor- life balance and job environment	C. To what extent have people been able to fulfil their potentials? ✓ *Skills* ✓ *Aspirations* ✓ *Family friendliness.*	• Change in job satisfaction.
		D. To what extent has people's job environment improved in terms of proximity/locality?	• Increase of % of people with less than e.g. 15, 30, 60 min. from workplace; • Increase of % of people working from home.
		E. How has the work time (employed and unpaid work)/ personal time ratio developed?	• Change in work time/income; • Change in work hours/day.

Table 7 Sources of verification for rural economy impacts

INDICATORS	Sources of verification
Human capital, enhanced socio-economic performance	
Livelihoods (A-B)	• Tracer studies with trainees after two years • Derived data-sets on new business formation • Surveys of formal/informal clusters or other collaborative activities.
Livelihoods (C-D)	• CMEF monitoring • Sample surveys • Local multiplier analysis • Triangulation.
Access to basic services and infrastructure, work-life balance	
Liveability (A-B)	• Focus groups, SAP • Surveys • Case studies • Triangulation.
Liveability (C-E)	• Evaluation of official data from regional employment statistics • Survey of employment trends by sector • Census data analysis of net migration in and out of region using national records (incl. information on age, gender, inter-censual change) • Surveys on job satisfaction, including employees and self-employed persons in supported businesses • Triangulation.

6.5 Capturing impacts on governance

The governance impacts are addressed by the following CMEF evaluation questions (numbers refer to the measure code):

41 (1) To what extent has the Leader approach contributed to improving governance in rural areas?

421(1-2) To what extent has the support contributed to promoting co-operation and to encouraging transfer of best practices?
To what extent have co-operation projects and/or transfer of best practices based on the Leader approach contributed to a better achievement of the objective of one or more of the three axes?

431(1-2) To what extent has the support increased the capacities of Local Action Groups and other partners involved for implementing local development strategies? *(MULTI-LEVEL and LOCAL GOVERNANCE)*
To what extent has the support contributed to increase the capacity for the implementation of Leader? *(MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE)*

Table 8 below illustrates how the suggested impact indicators are deducted from the assessment criteria and specific evaluation questions which have been defined for multi-level governance and local governance. Possible sources of verification are suggested in table 9.

Table 8 Suggestions for specific evaluation questions and impact indicators for the governance theme

Impact categories	Assessment criteria	Specific evaluation questions related to multi-level governance	Suggested impact indicators
Multi-level governance	**Level of decentralisation**	A) To what extent have QoL measures and Leader contributed to decentralisation?	• New initiatives or innovations initiated under Axes 3 and 4 that have directly inspired or contributed to new or improved regional or county level approaches; • Change in decision-making that resulted in more equitable representation at county or regional levels of non-public development stakeholders.
		(B) What were the direct and indirect benefits of QoL measures and Leader interacting beyond borders (intra- and inter-regional)?	• Appreciation of how far border-crossing activities have evolved from ad-hoc to regular features; • Lessons learned and changes driven by these exchanges/collaborations.
	Coordination between different levels of governance	(C) To what extent have vertical coordination mechanisms been established between the various institutional levels in policy definition and management as a consequence of Leader and QoL measures?	• Number and types of new relationships and links developed with other levels of governance (between the local partnership and higher political levels); • Level and type of coordination mechanisms developed.

Local governance	**Quality of governance**	A) To what extent have QoL measures and Leader contributed to an improved transparency of the decision-making and implementation process?	• Specific procedures developed that could assure transparency of decision-making and implementation procedures (number, types and level: *fairness of decisions, and interest of different groups.*
		B) To what extent have QoL measures and Leader contributed to address and facilitate the resolution of conflicts?	• Reporting on intra-local conflicts identified? Addressed? Leader contribution and lessons *(for example: rurals versus neo-rurals, agri/non agri, unauthorised camping, travellers, tourists and environment…);* • Stakeholder conflicts addressed and solved *(for example: overwhelming municipality, advocacy versus action groups …).*
	Empowerment of local actors and partnership composition	(C) To what extent have QoL measures and Leader contributed to involve relevant actors of the socio-economic spectrum of the areas targeted in the decision-making process?	• Balance between public sector/-politicians and private sector and civil society/ associations/ advocacy groups; • Parties contributing to fund mobilisation and ways of contributing; • Improved and effective involvement of vulnerable groups *(specify what is the nature of their involvement – beneficiary – stakeholder – active members, etc.).*
		(D) To what extent did the QoL measures and Leader create decision and implementation structures for regional strategies or enhance wider sustainable local partnerships?	• Existence of a phasing out or continuation plan indicating how the partnership will continue *(number or percentage of activities emerging from projects and continuing beyond the subsidised project period…);* • Number of new/ or existing structures taking over the activities after the subsidised project period; • Number and type of spin off projects/ organisations or networks inspired by QoL measures or Leader *(other initiatives having adopted elements of Leader/ QoL).*
		(E) To what extent have reflection and learning mechanisms increased the management capacities of the local partnership members and lead to a more professional management of the local partnership?	• Level of satisfaction of beneficiaries regarding the performance of all local partnerships involved with the RDP; • Satisfaction of the members of all local partnerships with the collaboration; • Fluctuation of staff of all local partnerships.

Table 9 Sources of verification for governance impacts

INDICATORS	SOURCE OF VERIFICATION
Multi-level governance (A to C)	• Monitoring • Documentation analysis (LAG self-evaluations and yearly reports), • Targeted interviews (different governance levels) • Overall triangulation.
Local governance (A to D)	• Documentation analysis (LAG self-evaluations and yearly reports), • Short best practice case studies.

7 Overview on Methods and Tools

The programme evaluation should identify and select appropriate methods and tools to substantiate the changes which may be observed in the social, cultural, environment and economic capital due to Axes 3 and 4 activities.

There is no single best way of assessing impacts, specifically those of a non-tangible character. Methods such as (statistical) surveys, case studies and focus groups are generic in nature. They are applicable in many kinds of research settings: basic and applied research or evaluation studies and widely discussed in social science methodological text books. Therefore this Working Paper refrains from lengthy descriptions and concentrates on a brief discussion of selected methods and tools, highlighting and illustrating, by means of examples, how aspects/improvements of Quality of Life and local governance can be accommodated with appropriate evaluation methods. These may be applied at different points in the three-stage methodology outlined in Chapter 5, principally in step 1 in addressing the information requirements highlighted through the use of the reference framework. A wide range of stakeholders (MA, LAG executive, private stakeholders, main beneficiaries of the measures, etc.) should be involved in order to avoid biased information.

7.1 Main standard tools

Expanding the applicability of the range of existing tools should be a priority. The main standard tools remain valid. These are principally:

- standardised written questionnaires addressing project participants, stakeholders at programme level (administrative bodies, experts, intermediary agents), local committee members (LAG or other local groups[15]) as well as mayors and other key representatives and individuals in selected communities;
- expert interviews managements addressing the common evaluation questions. These should be conducted with stakeholders involved in programme delivery such as managing and certifying authorities, LAG members mainly with the aim of securing or covering the qualitative information required;
- structured face-to-face open interviews with those individuals directly involved as representatives of the Managing Authority, provinces or regions etc, LAGs, national rural network and relevant ministries;
- telephone interviews with project staff using a structured questionnaire covering procedures including project applications, management, reporting and claims, project innovation, relationships and networking of actors, co-operation;
- scoring models for impact indicators[16]: The scoring can be undertaken (by various types of involved actors) using scales ranging from 0 (no effects) to some figure (5, 10 etc.) indicating strong effects. Otherwise, it can range from a negative pole (--) to a positive one (++), with a “neutral” element in the middle (0), indicating “no effects”. Some scales use a

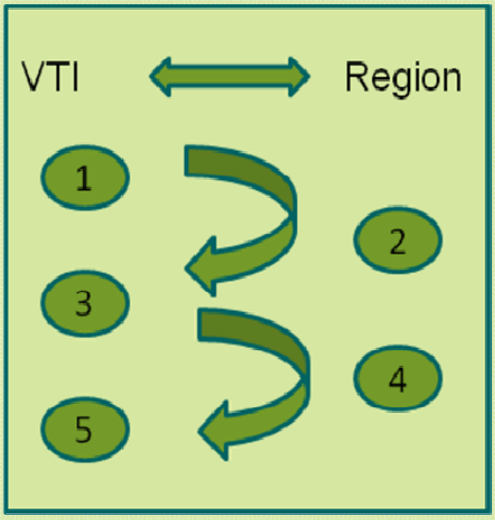
[15] Such as natural parks, territorial development groups, rural development committees, etc.

[16] The website http://www.hkadesigns.co.uk/websites/msc/reme/likert.htm provides a good overview on the pros and cons of different kinds of assessment scales.

central neutral point, but there are also arguments to deliberately avoid a middle point, and to offer an uneven number of choices: 5 and 7 choices are most common in semantic differential and Likert scales.

Box 3 provides an example of how the German von Thünen Institute (vTI) linked self-evaluation to programme evaluation based on a set of questions to be answered by rating scales. The model has been applied in Leader evaluations in seven German Länder.

Box 3 Excerpt from questionnaire for LAG-members - as a linkage between self-evaluation and programme evaluation (Germany)



1. Development of questions (in discussions with authorities and LAG-Managers)
2. Conducting survey (distribution with support of the questionnaire, answers sending directly to vTI)
3. Analysis of the answered questionnaires (results of counting)
4. Discussion of the results (in self-evaluation workshops prepared by LAG-Management (without vTI)
5. Feedback about the discussions (as a self-evaluation report, used for further work of the LAGs as well as for the vTI-program-evaluation)

The full questionnaire counts 10 pages. For most questions a six-point rating-scale was used (level of satisfaction), but there are also open-ended questions.

Development strategy

- *In which way did you participate in design process of the local development strategy:*	*a) full* *b) partial* *c) (nearly) not at all*				
- *The development strategy:*	*Level of approval:*				
• *fits to the specific situation of the region*	*O O O O O O*				
• *is worth the effort of making it*	*O O O O O O*				
• *offers possibilities for participation for everyone interested*	*O O O O O O*				
• *I support the content of the strategy*	*O O O O O O*				
- *Do you have experience from Leader+?*	*Y/N*				
- *How do you estimate the consideration of interests of different groups in connection with the implementation of the strategy?*	*Too much*	*Rather too much*	*Adequate*	*Rather too little*	*Too little*
• *Families*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*
• *Seniors*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*
• *Youth*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*
• *Women*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*
• *Agriculture*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*
• *Tourism*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*
• *Nature conservation*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*
• *Handicraft and business*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*
• *Local/ regional administration and politicians*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*	*O*
- *Which themes should get more/less consideration?*	*More:* *Less:*				

- Are all important actors involved in the process?	Level of satisfaction: O O O O O O
- Which additional actors should join the process?	List
- What is your satisfaction with these aspects working together:	Level of satisfaction:
availability of relevant information	O O O O O O
process of decision-making	O O O O O O
content of decisions	O O O O O O
working atmosphere	O O O O O O
constructive way of problem-handling?	O O O O O O

Projects (way of decision-making, satisfaction with the selected projects)

- What kind of problems make the implementation of projects difficult	*Level of relevance:*
• *administrative problems*	*O O O O O O*
• *financial problems*	*O O O O O O*
• *bureaucracy*	*O O O O O O*
• *lack of information?*	*O O O O O O*

LAG management

- What is your satisfaction with these aspects:	*Level of satisfaction:*
• *attainability*	*O O O O O O*
• *consultation/technical support (for projects)*	*O O O O O O*
• *networking*	*O O O O O O*
• *public relation?*	*O O O O O O*

Estimations about the impacts of Leader

- What is your appreciation of these effects:	*Level (low-high):*	
• *improving of understanding views from other groups*	*O O O O O O*	
• *better conflict solving*	*O O O O O O*	
• *improvement of co-operation between different groups*	*O O O O O O*	
• *co-operation beyond administrative borders*	*O O O O O O*	
• *recognition in public?*	*O O O O O O*	
- What is your appreciation about changes from start to now in the relationships to different groups:	*Level (good-bad)* *Start period*	*Now*
• *administrations*	*O O O O O O*	*O O O O O O*
• *business*	*O O O O O O*	*O O O O O O*
• *civil society*	*O O O O O O*	*O O O O O O*
• *politicians?*	*O O O O O O*	*O O O O O O*

Summary (overall satisfaction, advantages/disadvantages of Leader approach)

- General impressions:	*Level (low-high):*
• *general satisfaction with Leader-process*	*O O O O O O*
• *feeling of connection to your region*	*O O O O O O*
• *readiness for further engagement*	*O O O O O O*
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of the Leader approach (in comparison to other support schemes)?	*Advantages:* *Disadvantages:*
- What are your proposals for changes for the Leader-setting (from EU / program authority)?	*Explain*

Source: "Kim Pollermann (based on the full questionnaire, developed by Kim Pollermann, Petra Raue & Gitta Schnaut and used 2009/2010 in context of the "7-Länder-Evaluierung" in Germany)"

7.2 Surveys

Surveys are a standard method used in quantitative social or economic research. The questions are usually structured and standardized. The structure is intended to reduce bias. For example, questions should be ordered in such a way that one question does not influence the response to subsequent questions. Surveys are standardised to ensure reliability and validity. Every respondent should answer the same questions and in the same order as other respondents. The main advantages of surveys are their amenability to statistical analyses. Surveys can for instance be used to gather information on a sample of project beneficiaries concerning their perception of

- how their participation in Axes 3 and 4 projects has influenced their lives in general;
- how their commitment to participate in local development, civic life or local politics has changed;
- how their professional/business related networks may have been enhanced;
- how these effects might have influenced their sense of belonging and trust in the local community.

The downside of standardisation is that surveys are not likely to capture complex phenomena. They should therefore not be considered as the sole form of data gathering to answer evaluation questions relating to Leader and Quality of Life.

7.3 Case studies

Like surveys, case studies are widely used in social science and evaluation. The term ‘case study’ is commonly used to identify a specific form of inquiry contrasting with two other types of social research: survey and experiment. Case studies tend to have a much more qualitative character than surveys. However there is a broad range of possibilities to mix quantitative with qualitative methods: from comparative cost-effectiveness analyses to heuristic narratives.

A case study is a meta-method: One can use different methods within a case study. There are numerous different ways of designing a case study. “Issues-specific case studies” refer to the thematic investigation of issues that call for closer look in order to address particular evaluation concerns. The following Boxes 4 and 5 feature two examples: one pertaining to services development in Germany, and the other regarding evaluation of the involvement of youth and women in Leader+ measures in Finland.

At every stage, a case study involves a good deal of interpretation and judgements by evaluators: what makes up a relevant issue for case study, how to select the specific cases, what models to apply in order to put the empirical results into an explanatory frame, and finally, which generalised lessons the findings would allow for. Case studies are appropriate means to complement surveys and to deal with the more difficult questions: why and how things are as they turn out to be, be it the influence of social partners on local decision-making or the kind of benefits generated by new infrastructures and services.

Box 4 A case study addressing youth and female involvement in Leader (Finland)

The reasons to embark on a case study can be triggered from non-availability of data to need for a deeper understanding of a particular aspect of a programme. For example, in the MTE of Leader+ in Finland in 2005, the programme evaluation team decided to embark on a case study on the youth and gender projects to better address the (Leader+) Common Evaluation Question 3.3.2: " What has been the Leader+ - contribution in order to improve the situation of women in beneficiary areas? What about the situation of young people?" The case study was a complementary approach undertaken along with analysis of indicators and other secondary data, including LAGs annual reports etc. To that end the evaluation team asked each LAG (25 at the time) to identify one completed or ongoing project labelled as a "youth" or "gender" project. The LAGs then provided between 1-3 project cases each for consideration, supported by relevant background materials: project application and progress reports for example.

The evaluation team then drew on secondary data on some 50 projects and conducted telephone interviews of 5 projects for each sub-theme (youth/gender) selected on the basis of their interesting features to generate lessons vis-à-vis the learning objectives of the evaluation.

In such a case, the programme level evaluation and the LAG levels /other intermediary bodies can work in concert to come up with reasoned opinion regarding the selection of cases. There is always the possibility of drawing on random cases from project lists or data bases. Sometimes better outcomes may result from informed consultation with relevant stakeholders. The evaluator ultimately needs to trade off and balance between different interests in each situation, for example if she/he is to minimize bias via random selection of cases or maximize information yield through informed choice of productive cases and interviewees to be addressed.

Source: Mid-term evaluation report of Leader+, Finland

Box 5 Potential of case studies for capturing different aspects of social and cultural projects (Germany)

In some German rural areas "agencies for voluntary help" were established; these can be considered as bureaus organizing the work of volunteers. Both, the demand and supply of voluntary services are managed. A case study can provide the following dimensions of quantified or qualitative information:

- To what extent there is an offer of voluntary services (e.g. the amount of hours for babysitting or shopping for elderly people)? Maybe it's possible to calculate the value of voluntary work with a model-based calculation tool (e.g. social benefit analysis).
- To what extent has the Quality of Life improved for the customers of such voluntary work? This should be quantified by means of survey (e.g. a computer assisted telephone interview), which shows the share of people and their volume/size/degree benefiting from voluntary work.
- To what extent has a "social marketplace" emerged, e.g. which demonstrates that interlinkages between generations or citizens were established (to explain the contribution to "bridging capital")?

Such issues have to be evaluated in many Leader strategies or RD measures. This case study emphasizes the contribution to "quality and awareness of social relationships".

Source: Forschungsgruppe Agar- und Regionalentwicklung Triesdorf (ART)

7.4 Matching complexity with triangulation

In social science the term ‘triangulation’ or ‘cross-examination’ generally indicates that more than one method is used in a study with a view to double (or triple) checking of results. Triangulation is highly relevant in connection to evaluating the impacts of Axes 3 and 4 measures.

For example, during the MTE of Leader+ in Finland, three types of triangulation were used:

1. **methodological triangulation,** which means using more than one method to gather data (such as interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and documentary analysis);

2. **data triangulation** in respect to space and people; and

3. **evaluator triangulation** involving a broad range of competences within the evaluation team.

Triangulation produces information originating from different epistemological assumptions. This makes it difficult to aggregate the information generated and to come to generalisable conclusions. The diversity of data alone is no guarantee of validity. The programme evaluation team should therefore juxtapose, scrutinize and weight the information stemming from different sets of data, so as to come to robust judgements. However, few evaluators will come to definite judgements regarding complex issues such as social or cultural capital, unless they respond to explicit and stringent criteria for a restricted field of observation. Good description and illustration of the different patterns and views will allow the reader to make his/her own judgements. Narrative skills are indispensable to produce catchy pictures which are not biased by the narrator.

The programme authorities are in charge of monitoring and collecting data on indicator values at beneficiary, programme and context level, and of storing them in a reliable data system. In spite of enhanced efforts to obtain relevant information, data on some indicators will remain unavailable for a variety of reasons. To overcome this gap, the evaluator may revert to the primary (raw) data (e.g. such as information on project applicants, project plans, budgets, progress reports etc.). These data are stored by the programme implementing authorities and to varied degrees inserted in electronic databases. The “triangle” is now made up between the evaluator’s mind, the primary and the secondary data. Only those data which complement and confirm each other can be considered as reliable. Contradictory findings are far from being obsolete: they are important entry points for further exploration: it may turn out that both are valid – at certain times, in certain places, with certain people. Intelligence is the ability to draw useful distinctions, and not to produce sweeping statements.

Reverting to the primary project data allows for a re-expression and re-aggregation of project and programme characteristics. When it comes, for example, to evaluation questions pertaining to the social and cultural dimensions of Axes 3 and 4 measures, activities may be re-categorized according to specific target groups and beneficiaries (e.g. distinguishing between public and non-public beneficiaries; filtering projects mainly based on co-operation; focusing on thematic issues like youth, or on projects involving large contributions of voluntary work). This can be carried out relatively readily if primary data are stored in an electronic data base with an efficient thesaurus and key word search system.

Box 6 Illustration on use of triangulation to evaluate questions on social capital and collaboration (Finland)

This relates to two sets of questions. Evaluation Question(s) pertinent to social capital as set by the national authorities: "To what extent Leader measures have built social capital and how it has been further utilised"? A number of Evaluation Questions addressing aspects of co-operation as suggested under the Evaluation Guidelines for Leader+ (DG AGRI, 2002), (particularly questions 2:2.1, 2:2.2, and 2:2.3) appeared to overlap with aspects of social capital as interpreted by the evaluation team. Consequently, the two sets of questions were operationalised and analysed side by side.

For evaluation purposes, the notion of social capital was operationalised through multiple surveys and interviews into questions regarding co-operation, networking, and, to some extent, perceptions of trust and identification in the local area/community. Complementary secondary data of a more factual character was used as available from various documents and reports of LAGs and national authorities; this included the comprehensive project register/database. A brief overview of the operationalisation via triangulation between types and levels of information and informants is presented below.

The building blocks of the evaluation approach/triangulation were:

(I) Implementation of four **master questionnaires,** i.e. a comprehensive and concerted respondent administered survey using questionnaires – applying mainly Likert rating items or multiple choice items – this followed up various evaluation questions of MTE at once, and targeted four kinds of informants at various levels of inquiry:

  (a) an electronically managed questionnaire to **all completed projects** funded by LAGs, differentiated questions for private business investments and collective development projects. (Informants: project managers);

  (b) an electronically managed questionnaire to **all LAG board members** (of that time, 25 Leader LAGs) (Informants: on average 12 -15 board members from each LAG);

  (c) an electronically managed questionnaire to **territorial stakeholders of LAGs** (Informants: on average 10 regional/sub-regional level respondents with a variable, mainly indirect stake in Leader: regional officials, municipal (local government) authorities and elected governors, managers of local non-governmental associations);

  (d) a mailed questionnaire to **a sample of project level participants** (Informants: beneficiaries/non-employed participants of collective investment or training/capacity building projects mainly drawn from village level).

(II) Use of standard sources of secondary data to identify relevant issues, formulate interview questions for follow-up or to test and cross-check proxy indicators etc.

(III) A "master table" in electronic format into which the evaluation team would systematically report on preliminary findings from the various sources of data.

Source: Mid-term evaluation report 2003 and 2005 of Leader+ in Finland

Every set of data and information needs to be critically analysed and assessed vis-à-vis its relevance in addressing the evaluation questions. Most information on monitoring and additional data have to be crossed with supplementary information (e.g. in-depth case analysis of typical or extreme cases; focus groups of experts, or any type of relevant qualitative information gathered with specific methodologies (see below). Based on a structured tabulation and aggregation of data, the evaluator can combine physical, local, personal or project data and qualitative (background) information. See for example, the following cross-tabulation relating to the mid-term evaluation of Leader+ in Finland, which is described more in detail in Box 6 further below.

Table 10 Evaluation of social capital via triangulation between types and levels of information and informants

Level of inquiry (and informants)	Primary data produced by the MTE *Examples for specific questions addressing subjective views and perceptions*	Secondary data of rather 'factual' character *Examples of how these data have been used*
National level (Managing Authority)		Overview of allocation of projects/ funding by type of projects, for identifying structural differences between LAGs.
LAG as institutions or associations (LAG committees and management staff)	Questions addressed to LAG committee members regarding perceived level of internal and external bonds and trust. Questions addressing LAG managers on aspects of co-operation, networks and trust.	Systematic review of LAG development plans and annual reports to track the emphasis given on aspects of collaboration and networking etc.
Territorial stakeholders (a mix of respondents comprising administrative officials, local council members, local NGOs)	Questions addressing territorial stakeholders (usually not members of LAGs) on i) quality of co-operation with the LAG, ii) the LAGs contribution (or not) to enhancing territorial co-operation, iii) perceived role and legitimacy of the LAG committee and LAG activities.	
Projects funded by LAGs (project owners or managers, local promoters and supporters)	Questions addressing project owners or managers pertaining to aspects of collaboration and networking at project level: the extent to which those are acknowledged as objectives in themselves; the extent to which the project is seen to make a difference in that regard; the extent to which the LAG is credited (or not) regarding co-operation, etc.	Case study/documentary review of a small sample of projects explicitly addressing co-operation, by screening project files and reports, at times supported by a telephone interview; analysis of project networks by applying the Social Network Analysis at project level.
Project participants (beneficiaries of development or training projects)	Questions addressing community members pertaining to benefits experienced (or not) at personal and community level; both closed and open-ended questions are included.	

References and further reading for Sections 7.1 – 7.4:

- Denzin, N. (2006): *Sociological Methods: A Sourcebook.* Aldine Transaction. ISBN 9780-202308401. (5th edition).
- Gomm, R., Hammersley M., and Foster, P. (2000): *Case study method*. London: Sage Publications.
- Hummelbrunner, R. (2002): for the European Evaluation Society "*Vive la difference" – Learning from differences in regional policy evaluation*.
- Hummelbrunner, R. and Williams, B. (2010): *Systems Concept in Action. A Practitioner's Toolkit*. Stanford University Press. ISBN-13: 9780804770637

7.5 Selection of participatory evaluation tools

This chapter of the Working Paper proposes six methods or tools which could be of use in the course of self-evaluation practices, ongoing evaluations, as well as in contributing to summative evaluations either directly or in conjunction with the first two evaluation types. These are: i) focus groups (FG); ii) Leader type self-assessment; iii) the self-assessment method: Systematization of Participative Self-assessment (SPSA); iv) Most Significant Changes Monitoring (MSC); v) Potential and Bottleneck Analysis; and vi) "Plugging the leaks".

Focus groups

Focus groups enable the simulation of a social system at micro level: focus groups consist of representatives from programme authorities, beneficiaries, intermediary agents, experts, Local Action Group members and staff, but they should also feature a sound balance in terms of gender, age, place, etc.

The setup in which experts and social actors come together is less artificial than that of interviews; and the dialogue space generated during the focus group discussions reflects collective views and tendencies rather than individual ones.

Focus groups should comprise no fewer than 5 and no more than 12 participants. For optimum performance in process and outcomes, three elements should be kept in mind and addressed: a diverse composition, an impartial facilitation, and a clear and motivating function in respect to the overall evaluation process.

The way in which focus groups are used depends on the circumstance and purpose; they may be convened on a single occasion or in a sequence. For example, a LAG may use a series of focus group meetings as part of an evaluative approach. The use of the outcomes after two or three meetings depends on the goals and expectations agreed upon in the outset. The results may lead to improvements in the steering structure and processes, to a shift in the local development strategy, to a new networking approach, and to proposals addressed to important partners such as the programme authorities.

As pointed out in Chapter 5 (and illustrated in Box 7[17]), focus groups are indicated as a main means of reality checking during step 2 and 3 of the methodology proposed in this Working Paper. As noted there, an evaluation steering group could act as such a focus group, if appropriate.

The rating tool proposed for step 3 requires a focus group setting. This is described in more detail in chapter 7.7.

References and further reading:

- Marshall, C and Rossmann, G. (1999): *Designing Qualitative Research*. p. 115 3rd Ed. London: Sage Publications, ISBN: 9780761913405
- There is a concise description of focus groups in the accompanying research for the German pilot initiative „Regionen Aktiv" (2002-2008): available in German language. - Editors: Böcher,

[17] This Box refers mainly to focus groups and suggests that they can also be used when carry out triangulation work.

Michael/Krott, Max/Tränkner, Sebastian: „Regional Governance und integrierte ländliche Entwicklung. Ergebnisse der Begleitforschung zum Modell- und Demonstrationsvorhaben "Regionen Aktiv" - 2008. ISBN: 978-3-531-15277-6

The literature distinguishes between focus groups in social sciences on one side and in market research or for marketing purposes on the other: although they have common roots, the latter is not applicable in participatory evaluation in rural evaluation.

Box 7 Illustration of the use of focus groups (Austria)

For the mid-term Evaluation of Leader+, the external evaluation team proposed a participatory approach. The evaluation was based on three pillars: (i) analysis of monitoring data and other material such as regional development strategies and other regional concepts, baseline data etc.(ii) an electronically managed questionnaire used with all LAGs and all responsible administrative units in the different provinces as well as at national level; and (iii) a Leader "Evaluation Core Group" (participatory element).

The Leader Evaluation Core Group

Aims and tasks: The Evaluation Core Group should build the bridge between the top-down and bottom-up approaches. The tasks of the group were to (i) contribute to the evaluation design iii) give critical feedback to the findings of the external evaluators (iii) exchange the different points of view (horizontally and vertically) and (iv) to support the external evaluators with regard to regional or sectoral specifities.

Participants: The aim was to mirror the main structures and elements of "the Leader system" in Austria and to represent the different Austrian regions. The 18 participants of the Evaluation Core Group were:

- 1 representative of the programme Managing Authority (national level)
- 2 representatives of federal governments of Austrian provinces
- 8 LAG representatives (one from each province)
- 2 representatives of regional management organisations (intermediary organisations dealing with Leader and other regional development programmes and issues)
- 1 representative of the Austrian Leader network unit
- 1 representative of the European Leader network unit in Brussels
- 2 members of the external evaluation consortium
- 1 facilitator (who was also member of the external evaluation consortium)

Work programme and outputs: The Leader Evaluation Core Group held 3 workshops (1-1,5 days each): in the beginning of the MTE process (2003), in the midpoint of the programme period (2004) and in a later phase of the programme (MTE update 2005). The meeting results were integrated into the findings and reports of the external evaluators.

Lessons learned and transferability:

The feedback of the participants of the Leader Evaluation Core Group was very positive. The group discussion helped all concerned parties considerably in interpreting the analysis of the monitoring data and the results of the surveys. In addition, the Evaluation Core Group presented a unique opportunity to bring together the representatives of the whole "Leader system" in Austria. The participants appreciated, that through the group discussion they learned to better understand the specific interests, needs and also dilemmas of the different actors in the system: LAG managers, project holders, administration officials, policy-makers etc. Thus, the Evaluation Core Group brought valuable insights and helped to strengthen the coherence of the Leader system in Austria. This approach to participatory evaluation could be readily transferred to other European countries.

Source: Wolfgang Pfefferkorn, Rosinak & Partner, member of the external evaluation consortium of Leader+

7.5.1 Leader-type self-assessment

According to the Leader method, the steering structure and processes of a LAG are the heart and the brains of local development in rural areas. The assessment of the two features: multi-level governance and local governance (in other words: decentralised management and financing, and local partnership) can justifiably be said to constitute the major building blocks of a sound Leader evaluation; the other six Leader features can be quite prominent also in Axis 3 delivery, but they principally emerge as consequences of governance processes.

Self-assessment should be a self-evident practice for a learning organisation to undertake within a learning rural community or territory. It is therefore paramount for a LAG to integrate self-assessment and self-reflection as a centrepiece of local capacity development. Systematic self-assessment can be built into an evaluation process; it can be organized in the course of ongoing formative evaluation.

The self-assessment should not be organized as a one-off operation, but orchestrated as a continuous cycle of events periodically involving different actors at different times: stakeholder gatherings, civic sounding committees/boards and citizens' panels (occasional); focus groups (fast cycle: ranging between several weeks and months); large-scale open space or future search conferences (medium cycle: between several months and years), needs assessments via sweeping surveys (slow cycle: several years), and so on.

The positive effects of systematic Leader-type self-assessments suggest that it should be firmly embedded within the range of a regional Managing Authority, implementing body or network. As such, it can be orchestrated at three levels: at LAG level, at project level and at programme level, with corresponding feedback loops linking the three learning cycles. The programme authority should ensure excellent facilitation (as described in the Lower Austrian case example in Box 8 and in the Salzburg case example in Box 9). This illustrates what double-loop learning looks like in the context of Leader.

The method of Leader-type self-assessment should be adapted to the needs and requirements of the parties involved as well as to the specificities of the socio-economic and governance contexts. The time availability of local actors is a crucial issue; this is more dependent on local and regional actors' awareness of its usefulness than with "objective" reasons. As more advanced self-assessment methodologies are consistent with the principles of action learning, the linked bibliography will help to identify further methodological inspiration[18]. The following tool (SPSA), can be considered as a distinct form of Leader-type self-assessment.

Self-evaluation practices can be found on several websites, all using distinctive, but all in all similar approaches, as illustrated by the construction of a self-evaluation process for LAGs in Italy in Box 10. It is however recommended to choose and adapt a methodology that has been specifically developed and tested for territorial development rather than relying on methodologies for sectoral interventions or organisational development.

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[18] http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:byzP-6XjAPsJ:ugconnect.net/action_research/arp/al-biblio.html+action+learning+bibliography&cd=1&hl=de&ct=clnk&gl=at

Ultimately, a Leader-type self-assessment should include the eight Leader specificities as criteria explicitly assessed by the method. This is for example the case in the *Systematisation of Participatory Self-Assessment (SPSA)* described in the next section.

Box 8 Example of a self-assessment, Province of Lower Austria (Austria)

Based on the Austrian guideline for self-evaluation of LAGs, the province of Lower Austria has adopted its own system of quality assurance for its 18 LAGs. This system was originally initiated in the Leader II period and was developed further in the Leader+ period. The system consists of 2 elements:

(i) self-evaluation of LAGs;

(ii) accompanying guidance.

Self-evaluation of LAGs

Self-evaluation is based on a periodical monitoring and reporting system. In each LAG, a "quality assurance team" has been established. The key elements of quality assurance are (based on the "balance score card" method):

Perspectives	Aspects of self-evaluation
Clients (results and impacts)	Projects
Resources	LAG resources: finances, personnel, etc.
Learning and development	Leader management: leadership, organisation, co-operation, learning
Processes	Quality of processes: programming, project management, marketing, etc.

An external consultant provides assistance and support to the LAGs in order to implement quality assurance at regional level and to define quantitative measurements for the indicators in each region.

Accompanying guidance

The 18 LAGs meet twice a year in a regional platform, this is facilitated by an external moderator. The main aims of this platform are: joint reflection, exchange of experience, networking, evaluation, feedback and joint elaboration of key topics and tools for programme implementation. The idea of a quality assurance team and regional platform for the exchange of experiences with regard to self-evaluation of the LAGs seem to be a helpful approach also for other regions and provinces.

Source: Gottfried Angerler, Federal Government of the Province of Lower Austria

Box 9 Examples for a self-assessment Province of Salzburg (Austria)

The quality assurance system of the Province of Salzburg is based on the Austrian guideline for self-evaluation of LAGs and has been adapted to the regional needs by the LAGs and the responsible authority at the province level; it is a two-step process with external facilitation.

In each LAG, a quality assurance team has been established (5-8 persons). The quality assurance team runs an annual evaluation meeting. This meeting is facilitated by the manager of another LAG. This is a win-win situation for both sides: the LAG gets the additional view from the external LAG manager, and the external LAG manager gets valuable insights concerning the performance of another LAG.

The evaluation results are delivered in a report (using the same structure for all LAGs) to the responsible programme authority for the Province and to the LAG itself.

If necessary, the LAGs exchange their evaluation experiences in joint meetings.

The principle of mutual facilitation of evaluation meetings between the LAGs is an interesting and easily transferable idea to gain additional insights and to strengthen the relations between the LAGs on province level.

Source: Stephan Maurer, LAG Lebens.Wert.Pongau, Salzburg

Box 10 The construction of a self-evaluation process for LAGs through bounded priorities scaling (Italy)

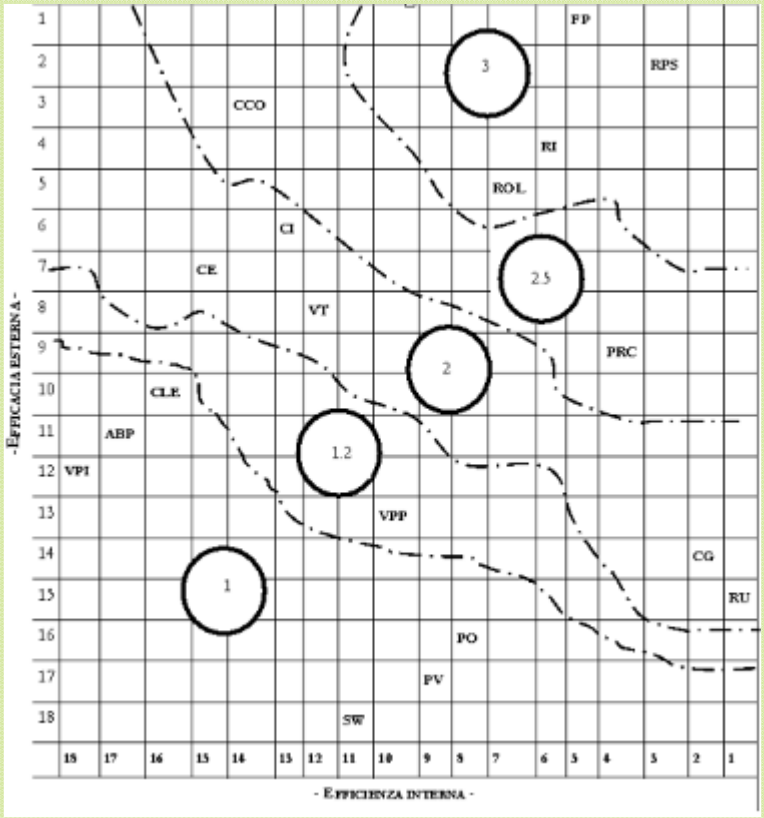
This method involves the design and use of participative self-evaluation tools in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Local Development Strategy (LDS) implementation. It involves the combination of two-expert-based techniques, brainstorming and Bounded Priorities Scaling (BPS) and requires 2 days work facilitated by an evaluator with representatives from the group of LAGs concerned. It seeks to strengthen self-evaluation findings plausibility and to enhance learning through participation.

Brainstorming allows exploration of the subject of evaluation (evaluand) to detect all the different dimensions linked to it. Here the evaluand to be explored in the brainstorming sessions is represented by the LDS implementation process. The BPS is an expert-judgement-based technique, it can be perceived as a variant of Nominal Group Technique (NGT). In the NGT, the aim is to obtain a common judgement with respect to different items, BPS differs conceptually from NGT since the expert judgment is not applied to establishing "the value of each item" but the "hierarchy" across items.

The combination of the two techniques allows the construction of the self evaluation tool. Through the brainstorming sessions a set of indicators are identified, these can then be ordered hierarchically in terms of effectiveness and efficiency through the BPS. The real importance of this technique rests in the LAGs involvement, this helps to avoid semantic misinterpretation of indicators and consequently produce a common lexicon for subsequent LAG self-evaluation sessions.

The Brainstorming is applied to the identification of evaluand dimensions and from this developing a breakdown into conceptual indicators. The BPS is articulated in three sessions: the creative session, a string (or synthetic concept) classification session; and an indicator identification session.

In the BPS phase, the participants should develop a hierarchy based on two dimensions (to be defined according to the specific evaluation needs of the programme). This enables the representation of indicators in a so-called 'concept map' (below). The BPS is implemented by asking LAGs to order indicators firstly with respect to the first dimension and secondly looking at the second dimension of the scale.



In the example, the concept map has been divided in several areas according to a different degree of strategic relevance. Each indicator can be weighted according to its strategic relevance: the indicators falling above the upper dotted line, drawn to delimit maximum relevancy area for effectiveness and efficiency, have been associated with the maximum weight.

The self-evaluation questionnaire construction is best undertaken on the second day, since all concept indicators must be associated to a grid of SMART() indicators that has to be selected by LAGs as support to the self-evaluation (SE) sessions. This task must be accomplished by the evaluator in order to be able to show the grids in the first session as described below.

The building of SE questionnaire consists of three steps:

- the grid presentation and LAGs indicator selection;
- the self-evaluation questionnaire presentation;
- the self-evaluating commitments.

Though self-evaluation is mainly carried out through a qualitative assessment on the selected topics, the evaluator nevertheless has to propose a battery of SMART indicators to support the LAG evaluation process. This choice has two implications: from one side LAGs can create a sort of internal audit system with specific indicators that has to be monitored during implementation, from the other side evaluator has an additional secondary data source available, since most of the information requested will not be included in the standard RDP monitoring system.

The questionnaire structure must enclose all the concept indicators, their meaning, the associated SMART indicators and a rating scale (i.e. Likert Scale) in order to express a synthetic assessment of the performance. All scores are weighted and the final score represent the "health condition" of LDSs implementing process.

Programming such self-evaluation commitments must take into account the cycle of LAGs activities during the year. Possible approaches include encompassing the self-evaluation within the production of the LAGs annual reports or otherwise by promoting an annual meeting to demonstrate the results of LAGs self-evaluation sessions.

Source: Fabrizio Tenna, Agriconsulting S.P.A

References and further reading:

- Estrella, M, Blauert, J, Campilan, D, Gaventa, J, Gonsalves, J, Guijt, I, Johnson, D and Ricafort (2000): *Learning From Change: Issues and Experiences in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation* - ISBN 1 85339 469 6

Weblinks:

- http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/idspublication/who-counts-reality-participatory-monitoring-and-evaluation-a-literature-review
- The comprehensive area assessment (CAA) from the I&DEA agency: http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=14702870
- The strategic area assessment (SAA) from ÖAR Regionalberatung GmbH: http://www.oear.at/media/downloads/InnovationCompass-V5-2009.pdf
- The self-assessment tool of ICLEI (Local Agenda21), available in nearly all languages of the EU: http://www.localevaluation21.org/
- Tenna F. (2006): L'autovalutazione con la tecnica della scala delle priorità obbligate. Rivista dello sviluppo rurale n. 5 – available as pdf on the website of the Italian Rural Network http://www.reteleader.it

7.5.2 Systematisation of Participatory Self-Assessment

This method of self-assessment was adapted from similar concepts by the Portuguese NNU and several Portuguese Local Action Groups in the final phase of Leader II. The Systematisation of Participatory Self-Assessment (SPSA) methodology implies an approach which is flexible and which develops over time. It aims at acquiring more and better knowledge about the local area, of the local partnership and the implementation of the Leader method. SPSA has an explicit purpose in developing local actors' capacities for local governance and for assessing the "soft factors" of local development, which are often neglected by classical forms of evaluations. It focuses not only on the activities undertaken in the course of programme implementation, but also on all the operational and relational features of the Local Action Group and its wider network.

- **In a first step**, the participants focus on eight aspects of their territory: Quality of Life, external relationships, diversification and integration of activities, internal relations and democracy, know-how and technologies, identities and images, demography, as well as local heritage and natural resources. These aspects are appraised periodically (e.g. annually in the course of Leader implementation). The rating scores for each aspect can be visualised utilising a cobweb diagram.

- **In a second step**, the participants focus on the steering structures and processes: the discussions are centred on the eight specificities of the Leader method: innovation, multi-sectoral approach, inter-territorial co-operation, networking, the local partnership, the area-based approach, the bottom-up approach, as well as decentralised management and financing. These rating scores can also be visualised as a cobweb profile, and the appraisal can be made periodically, e.g. annually.

- **In a third step**, the performance of the local partnership and its wider networks are checked in respect to the functional criteria: physical and financial properties, human resources, competencies for animation, consultancy and management, identity and internal cohesion, diversification of activities, programmes and funding streams, external relationships, as well as legitimacy and image of the LAG in the face of the local communities.

The results of these steps produce conclusions and recommendations for changes. The SPSA can be institutionalised as a permanent tool linking self-assessment of the local group, local development monitoring (through citizen's panels) with external evaluations.

References and further reading:

Weblink:

- http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leader2/forum/docs_evaluation/thirion_en.pdf

7.5.3 Most Significant Changes Monitoring

This assessment method is based on a narrative approach and can be integrated in participative and ongoing self-evaluation or local development monitoring processes. It operates without indicators.

Most Significant Changes Monitoring (MSC) stories are about important or significant changes: they give a rich picture of the impact of development work and provide the basis for dialogue over key objectives and values of development programmes. MSC does not replace other methods of monitoring and evaluation – in fact it works well in conjunction with methods like content analysis and quantitative analysis – but it comes into its own where outcomes are unexpected and meanings are disputed.

MSC is carried out through focus groups, it is specifically useful in cascading focus groups: meaning that the "most significant changes" observed at one level (e.g. project or LAG) are fed into the next higher level (e.g. LAG or programme level). It is advisable to invite delegates from "lower" focus group levels to participate in the "higher" level focus group as to assure that the results at "lower" levels do reach the ears of policy-makers.

MSC draws on the power of face-to-face communication. The storytelling enhances communication and encourages people to interact.

One of the key stages of MSC is the selection of areas of focus or "domains". However the MSC domains offer a lot of flexibility: a domain for negative changes can be included to counteract bias towards positive stories; or an 'open window' domain – what else has changed? – can be included. The domains can even be left to emerge during the story selection process. The key point is that the selection process is documented, especially, if MSC is organized as a multi-tier process (for example: in local communities, at the level of the local area and at regional level): participants at all levels are expected to say why they deem one set of stories more significant or relevant than another.

All stories remain significant for their authors, but some stories will have more significance at regional or national level – these are the ones that get filtered up through the levels of authority, up to the funders of a project or programme.

When using MSC for reporting to funding authorities, contextual information should be provided along with each story – where it comes from, who gathered it, and when – making it clear that a coherent valid method has been used to generate and select the stories. This will increase the chance of the stories being understood as relevant evidence.

References and further reading:

Davies, R; Dart, J. (2005): *The Most Significant Changes Monitoring Technique. A Guide to its Use*. http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf

Weblinks:

- http://www.adb.org/Documents/Information/Knowledge-Solutions/Most-Significant-Change.pdf
- Outcome Mapping: www.adb.org/documents/information/knowledgesolutions/outcome-mapping.pdf
- Storytelling: www.adb.org/documents/information/knowledge-solutions/storytelling.pdf

7.5.4 Potential and Bottleneck Analysis – example of a multi-factorial analysis as an additional tool for evaluation

This multi-factorial approach was developed and used in several areas in Germany and Luxembourg during past periods of Leader II and Leader+ implementation.

The Potential and Bottleneck Analysis (PBA) is based on the assumption that local and regional development efforts can be improved if qualitative and quantitative aspects are considered as interlinked and contributing to a comprehensive picture of the whole[19]. The assessment focuses on the respective potentials and bottlenecks affecting local development using eight key aspects. These aspects are operationalised and assessed with approximately 90 specific questions. The assessment should be carried out during a workshop involving at least 30 participants using rating scales:

- spatial upgrading of living conditions
- new employment opportunities / rural dynamics
- strategic exploitation of new markets
- co-operative capacity building / knowledge
- appropriate structures and partnership
- inspiring regional identity and culture
- pleasant character of region / Image
- attractive living and working ("balance").

The method can be used for ex ante evaluation, ongoing evaluation and participatory impact evaluation. After answering the 90 questions, the results can be visualized as cobweb profiles or bar graphs (see Box 12). Changes are expressed in terms of differentials from the baseline situation.

In combination with other program evaluation tools (case study, participative evaluation), the PBA practitioner can gather deeper insights for answering the question, to what extent specific issues of local well-being have improved according to the actors involved.

References and further reading:

Weblinks:

- http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leader2/forum/docs_evaluation/seibert_en.pdf
- http://www.netzwerk-laendlicher-raum.de/service/veranstaltungen/dvs-archiv/2009/selbstevaluierung/materialien/
- http://www.leaderplus.de/leaderplus/download.cfm?uuid=00080C4C1CBC13E29A216521C0A8D816

[19] The concept picks up the principle of minimum factors according to the growth of plants by balanced fertilizing.

Box 11 Example of a Potential and Bottleneck Analysis from Bavaria (Germany)

A Bavarian LAG was established in 2000 with the objective that strategic goals should be brought into relation with the area's assets. A first analysis was carried out in 2000 with the support of the ex ante evaluator. Initially, the plan was to evaluate the progress every two years, but implementation difficulties and running projects impeded the local actors' ability to do this.

Finally, on the conclusion of the programme and re-start of Leader-activities in 2007, the regional manager organised a workshop in cooperation with the evaluator. The same method was used again, in a way to provide evidence on the soft improvements (qualitative changes) by comparing the initial and the current bottlenecks. This, in turn, made it clear that certain obstacles have been overcome and reflected the "performance" of the action group.

The types of development bottlenecks changed *during the course of time* (see figure: change between 2000 and 2007; improvements are shown by the growing length of bars in the figure provided below). The LAG decision committee discussed the results and identified three types of key areas for their future development strategy (numbers showed in the figure):

1. Key areas with **strategic relevance**: Cooperative capacity building and knowledge, appropriate structures and partnership, inspiring regional identity and culture; this led to a restructuring of LAG procedures (participation, coordination, decision-making) and a stronger selection of projects which could valorise the resources and capital assets of the region.
2. Key areas with a **special need of development**: New employment opportunities / rural dynamics, Strategic exploitation of new markets, character of region / image; this caused a concentration on socio-economic projects and establishment of new partnerships with rural enterprises.
3. Key areas with **cross-sectional development impacts**: Attractive living and working ("balance"), upgrading of living conditions; this comparative strengths of area should be ensured by improvement of basic infrastructures and social orientated projects (e.g. promotion of multi-generation living).

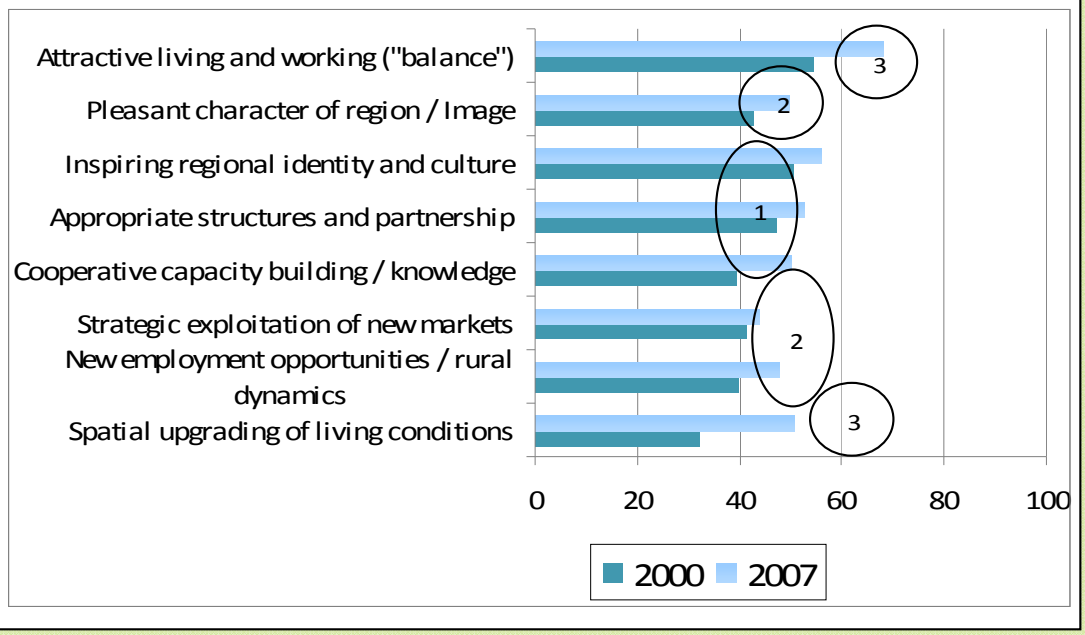
It was found that no key areas are less important than others; rather, it underlines precisely the need for harmonious interaction between all eight key areas. They each just need to be advanced at the right time. Thus, all eight key areas have to be developed in synchronisation, with the potential and bottleneck analysis merely helping to set the priorities correctly in terms of time.

The information provided by the analysis contributed to the re-structuring and rearrangement of the territorial strategy and priorities within it, in order to prepare the new RD measures starting from 2007.

Evaluation at programme level could readily use such information in order to judge the Leader features such as the territorial approach and social cohesion of areas.

Source: Manfred Geissendoerfer, Forschungsgruppe Agrar- und Regionalentwicklung Triesdorf (ART), in collaboration with LAG Auerberaland and Walk Management (2009)

Box 12 Potential and Bottleneck Analysis – carried out and provided by LAG Auerbergland, Bavaria 2000/2007 (Germany)



Source: LAG Auerbergland, Walk-Management, 2009.

7.5.5 'Plugging the leaks' and 'Local Multiplier 3'

The New Economics Foundation (Ward and Lewis 2002) has developed a simple-to-use approach to appraisal and evaluation in local economic development which uses the analogy of a leaky bucket to explain economic flows in a local economy. When money is spent in a local economy some flows out as people buy goods and services elsewhere. The more money that stays and re-circulates, the greater the retention of benefits will be in the local economy and the greater will be the likelihood that the re-circulating money will create more jobs. Economists tend to express this type of economic effect using the term 'multipliers' but, rather than constructing an elaborate economic model, a pared-down version using the same underlying principles can help throw light on changes in the local economy arising from project interventions. In order to evaluate impacts and outcomes, it should be used in a 'before and after' situation.

The technique is straightforward, but first the scale of the analysis must be decided. In the case of economic dimensions of Quality of Life we could be interested in a Leader area, an individual community, or even, potentially, a funded project such as a local food network. The first task is to assess the leakiness of say a food system. This entails establishing the amount by value of food produced locally and the amount of food shipped in. The effectiveness of the project intervention can be assessed by the increased market value of local food as a share of the total food market, using before and after survey.

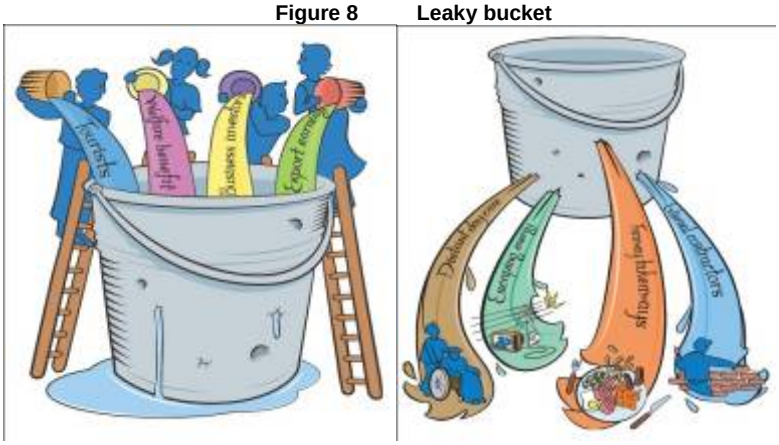
Instead of money flows, the same technique can be applied to the assessment of employment effects.

The great thing about this approach is that it can be used by the community itself to build up a picture of the flows in and around a local economy. It is a tool for both self-assessment and evaluation and external assessment. Used as a self-evaluation tool it becomes a vehicle for community-based

learning. It can thus be used as a think-piece to get the community thinking about how it could increase local spending and plug the leaks in the leaky bucket. It can then be used as a means of assessing the effectiveness of the project as a means of developing the local economy.

The technique is robust and should be able to pick up the strength of local linkages. Strong linkages are associated with a large local multiplier. Most of the time strong local multipliers are good, but if the driving sector of the economy experiences declining demand, the effects of this will knock on throughout the local economy. Depending on the level of data required, the first three rounds of spending including the initial injection of spend are often explored in what NEF term the Local Multiplier 3 or LM3. An on-line tool is available to use to conduct such analysis, which could be of a supported firm or other organisation or a group of supported firms in an area (NEF Consulting n.d.).

Figure 8 Leaky bucket



Money coming into the local economy The local economy – a leaky bucket?

Source: New Economics Foundation. (http://www.pluggingtheleaks.org/resources/plm_ptl.htm)

Box 13 Plugging the leaks, Example Emilia Romagna (Italy)

The area in question has not used this method, but it would be suited to analyse the impacts and outcomes of such a project. Supported by the Local Action Group, the Borgotaro community of Emilia Romagna has developed a trail based around the Porcino mushroom (Boletus sp.). It attracts tourists and day visitors to the area by advertising when and how to pick the mushrooms. In addition, it has supported the marketing of tourism facilities and restaurants. The whole area is given a thematic unity through this natural product of the forest. But much more than that, many ways are created of adding value, through the accommodation and restaurants. The mushroom becomes a coherent symbol of the area to help in the marketing. Many types of firm selling local products advertise on the website which offers to send interested parties a newsletter and indicates the full range of services. In this way, the different economic actors are trying to capture the value of the local place in a commercial sense. This type of action can be described as territorial embedding of a local food system. The plugging the leaks approach to this creates a means of assessing the economic benefits through ratio analysis in a before and after situation.

Source: Bill Slee

References and further reading:

Weblink:

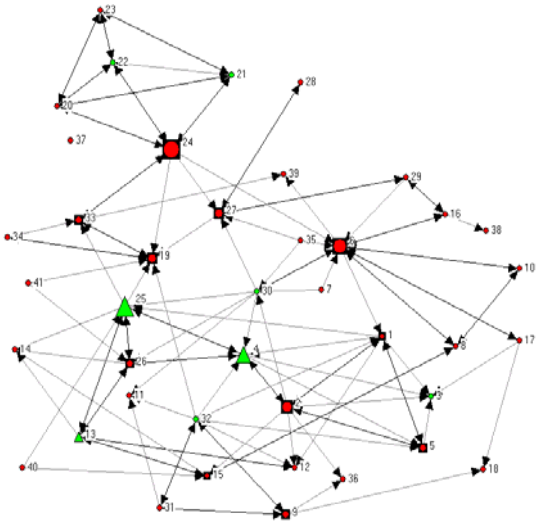
NEF Consulting (n.d.): Local Multiplier 3 (LM3) Measuring the impact on your local economy: www.pluggingtheleaks.org

7.6 Methods for in-depth research

7.6.1 Social Network Analysis

The Social Network Analysis (SNA) helps to assess the density, quality and robustness of communication structures between partners in formal or informal networks. The partners to be included in the SNA can either be defined by the involved actors or by the evaluators, in accordance to the purpose of the investigation. The SNA provides insights on bonding capital in a stakeholder network, on structural characteristics such as centrality or peripherality of specific actors, or on emerging sub-networks which are only loosely linked to other parts of the network, as well as on specific roles of actors within the network (e.g. boundary spanners between distinct sub-groups or between the network and external partners).

Figure 9 Social Network Analysis – an exemplary illustration



Source: "Martina Kauffeld-Monz (2006): "Funktionen der öffentlichen Forschung in regionalen Innovationsnetzwerken", Vortrag zur Jahrestagung der DeGEval, Lüneburg

The different types of organization that take part in the networks of integrated rural development can be illustrated by different symbols (as in figure 9: circle in quadrate = administration, triangle = civil society stakeholders). The size of each node characterizes, for example, the relative importance of an actor in terms of the number of links. Whereas the width of lines shows how intensive interactions are between organizations, the arrows indicate in which direction the relevant information flows. The SNA provides a rather “holistic” image of social networks. Interpretation and judgements have to be handled with care because the picture can be very ephemeral, as communication structures may shift with time and circumstances. SNA diagrams can act as strong stimulants for group discussions, as they unveil patterns which may be ignored by the individual members of a social network.

References and further reading:

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- Wasserman, S.; Faust, K. (1st edition 1994): *Social Network Analysis. Methods and Applications*. Cambridge University Press. ISBN-13: 978-052138707

Weblinks:

- Regionalwissenschaftliche_Theorieansatze_und_Analyse_der_Governance_Strukturen.pdf“ (Abschlussbericht Module 3 & 4):
  http://www.regionenaktiv.de/03_ergebnisse_de.html
- A comprehensive overview on the available software tools:
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_network_analysis_software

7.6.2 Social accounting and audit at LAG-level

Social accounting is the process of collecting information about the activities an organisation carries out which affect its stakeholders. These activities may be intended ‘outputs’ or just the day-to-day internal operations. Organisations do not exist in a vacuum and the impact they have on their environment can be measured according to three dimensions: social, environmental and financial (hence the term “triple bottom-line accounting”). Financial reporting has been in use for hundreds of years and can be used to show both what has happened and as a planning tool. Social accounting enables this process to be carried out for social and environmental outputs.

Social accounting has been developed as an external, quality-assured audit process so that an organisation’s claims can be credible (proved) and used to demonstrate organisational development (improvement). Social accounting is of great interest for organisations achieving results that cannot be reduced to numbers but can be verified objectively.

Social audit is best applied at project or LAG level, although it can also be carried out in businesses. Its benefits over other approaches such as free format annual reports or ad-hoc self-evaluations lie in its higher credibility and verifiability due to its systematic and traceable approach.

Box 14 Example of social accounting and audit (Finland)

Some Local Action Groups and other rural organizations in Finland have utilized the so-called social accounting and audit to account for their activities and acceptance in their operational areas. One early adopter of the social accounting method in the Finnish context has been LAG Aisapari in the west of Finland. Social accounting and audit in general can be relevant to organisations achieving results that cannot be reduced to numbers but can still be verified objectively. Social auditing imitates financial auditing in its system and it also involves a social auditor who will conduct a social audit trail. In Aisapari LAG social audit is a tool used to capture and document activities and effects regarding LAG activities in Leader implementation, effects resulting from funded projects, including the LAG’s activities to further co-operation, and stakeholders’ perception of the Aisapari LAG as a partner. The Social Audit is conducted annually and it serves as the LAG’s optional self-evaluation tool besides regulatory monitoring and annual reporting required by the programme authorities.

Source: www.aisapari.net (only in Finnish)

References and further reading:

- Pearce, J. (2001): *Social Audit and Accounting* – Manual, CD and Workbook. CBS Network with Merseyside Social Enterprise Network

Weblinks:

- http://www. Socialauditnetwork.org.uk
- The New Economics Foundation (NEF) is the main source for this method. A direct link to a toolkit is the following:

  http://www.locallivelihoods.com/Documents/Social%20Audit%20Toolkit.pdf

7.7 Assessing the impacts of Leader and Quality of Life measures with a multi-criteria rating tool

(applicable to step 3 of the proposed methodology)

Section 5.2 outlines the proposed methodology in order to come to an overall assessment of evaluation questions relating to seven impact categories. The framework of reference depicting impact categories, evaluation questions, judgement criteria and indicators is presented in Chapter 6. This framework provides a matrix which the stakeholder group may use for assessing the overall impact of the RDP using this type of rating tool.

7.7.1 The rating process

The appraisal process is to be carried out in the following way:

- During the previous (two) steps, the focus group members should have acquired sufficient information on the various aspects of the rural development programmes performance. This will not always be the case in reality, but the multi-criteria rating tool does not require one hundred percent of coverage of all evaluation questions.
- At the outset of the stakeholder meeting, the facilitator explains the rating process, which starts immediately after. If the stakeholder group is small (like a focus group), the group may split in just two sub-groups, if the stakeholder group is a larger one, it can also divide into three or four sub-groups.
- The stakeholder group should not divide itself into homogenous sub-groups, diversity counts. No sub-group should have fewer than four participants in order to ensure that different viewpoints are represented in the rating exercise.
- Each sub-group should work on a part of the whole spectrum of evaluation questions (see the framework in Chapter 6). The participants now start to validate the degree of fulfilment of the evaluation questions and the corresponding judgement criteria.
- The rating is done over a scale from 0 to 5. In this case 0 signifies the lowest possible level of performance: bad performance indeed. In contrast, 5 signifies the highest possible level of achievement: excellent performance indeed. For instance: *To what extent has additional added value been created through new links between sectors or new forms of co-operation between different actors?* 0 would mean: no link has been created, maybe the local population is more deeply divided than ever. 5 would mean: there are a number of excellent co-operation projects, joint ventures, alliances etc. whose origins can be directly related to the activities funded under the RDP. And these links seem to be sustainable and generative.
- The benchmark should be intrinsic: the state of failure or excellence should be related only to the imagined possible state of failure and excellence of the respective territory. There is no use in measuring area x against another area y. Each area is unique and can only be assessed against its own potentials and capacities.
- In many cases the participants are likely to have to negotiate the score. In some, probably rare cases, the scoring will even be polarised (one gives 0, the others 5 ...). These are very bright moments, as they instigate lively discussions about different values and world views.
- The facilitator might deem it useful to ask two sub-groups to rate the same set of evaluation questions in parallel. Of course, these ratings will differ, but also here, the perceived difference will trigger lively discussions. In the end, scores will have to be “re-negotiated” between the two sub-groups.

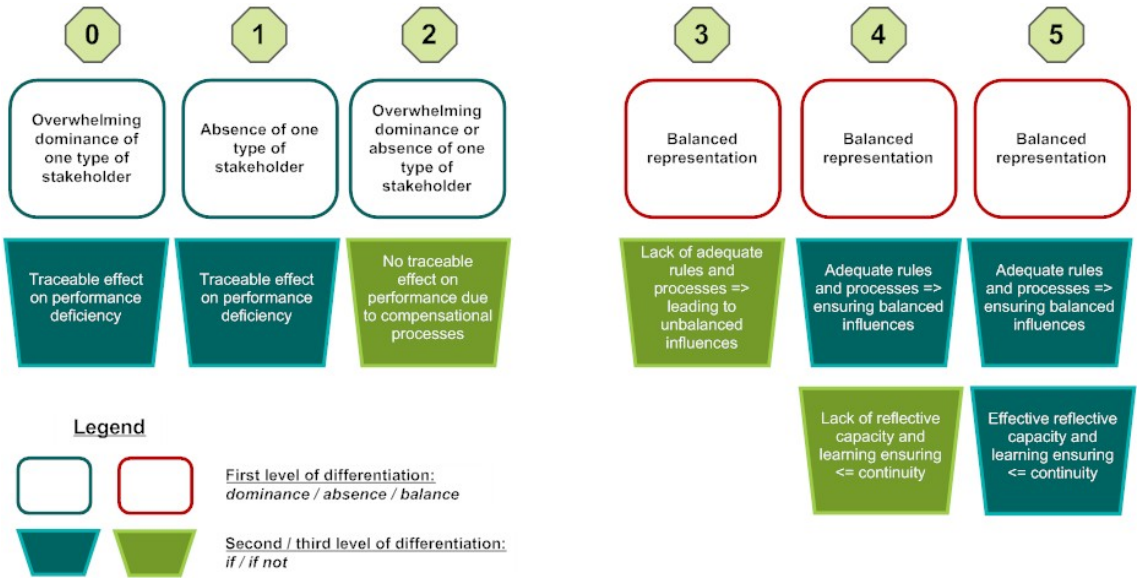
Figure 10 below illustrates the application of a multi-criteria rating process to the following indicator of local governance: *Balance between public sector/-politicians & private sector & civil society/associations/advocacy groups*[20]

The link to the framework of reference is as follows:

- ☞ **Related CMEF Common Evaluation Question:**
  To what extent has the Leader approach contributed to improving governance in rural areas?
- ☞ **Assessment criterion:**
  Empowerment of local actors and partnership composition
- ☞ **Impact specific EQ:**
  To what extent have QoL measures and Leader contributed to involve relevant actors of the socio-economic spectrum of the areas targeted in the decision-making process?

The 6 rating scores from 0 to 5 are built up through three levels of differentiation: The first level differentiates dominance, absence and balanced representation of stakeholders. The second level distinguishes between traceable effects of this representation of stakeholders on the performance of the partnership in the case of 'unbalanced representation' and between lack and existence of adequate rules in the case of 'balanced representation'. On the third level a further differentiation is done according to the lack or existence of reflective capacity.

Figure 10 Illustration of the multi-criteria rating process



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

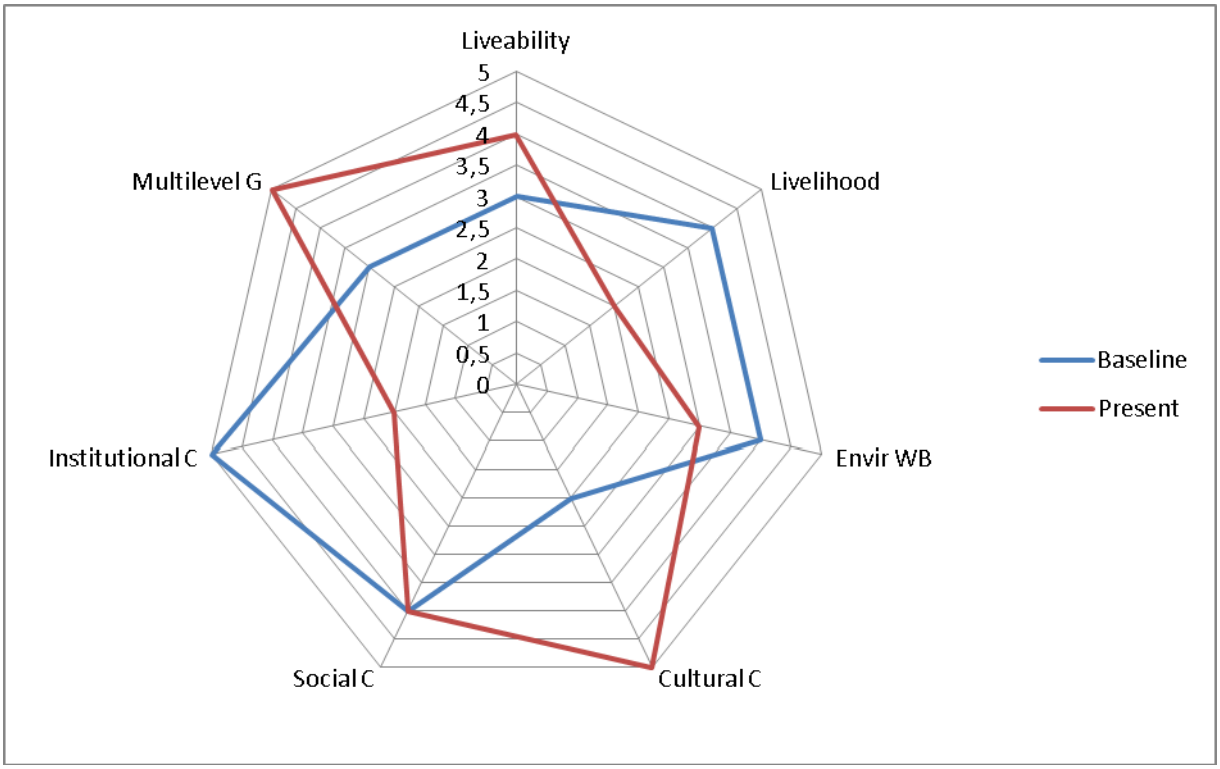
Annex 2 comprises suggestions for the full application of the multi-criteria rating process to the governance dimension of Quality of Life.

[20] The application of the tool has been inspired by the « Leaderability Index », a tool which was developed by the ItalianRural Network in order to check the fitness to work for Leader groups

A current practice of a rating system as a part of a participative programme evaluation design is provided in Box 15.

- Finally, the scores for each of the evaluation questions are summed up over the judgement criteria and for each of the 14 impact categories.
- If the multi-criteria rating was not carried out at the outset of programme delivery, there will be no baseline. However, the missing baseline can be replaced, to a certain extent, by the appraisal of the past state as imagined by the stakeholders involved. This only makes sense if there are enough stakeholders who are sufficiently informed about the reference time.
- The average scores for the 14 categories can be visualized in a cobweb profile. The following figure 11 gives an example of how this profile could look. One of the profiles represents the present state, the other one the (imagined) past state. Improvements and deteriorations can be clearly recognized.

Figure 11 The web profile – a fictional example



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

- Those Evaluation Questions which relate to the Leader method (they can be found in each category, but they specifically dominate both governance categories), can be earmarked and assessed separately. A distinct cobweb diagram could be created only for “Leader markers”. This would allow not only for assessing the degree to which Leader has been implemented following the principles of the Leader method, but also to what extent Axis 3 delivery has – tacitly or otherwise – been “leaderised”.
- Finally, the rating results are projected on a screen. Once more the stakeholders have the occasion to express their views on the overall picture. The evaluators will take these results into due account while finalising their conclusions and recommendations.

7.7.2 Potential and limits

The framework of reference, at least in large parts, can be used in ex-post evaluations, during self-assessments of LAGs and in process-oriented impact monitoring at programme level. When considering the changes observable over time (if the rating is done repeatedly), the fact that the rating numbers do not have any background in quantitative socio-economic analysis should be taken into account. These are relational values symbolizing a certain state or trend perceived at a certain time and under certain circumstances, perceptive baselines are likely to shift over time: The assessed state of one year ago will never be identical to the state of one year ago as imagined here and now. However it is even useful sometimes to compare these two scoring results with each other. The comparison could instigate a discussion on why and how and in which respect the baselines have shifted in our minds.

Finally, if the assessment method is accepted and applied by a sufficient number of Member States and regions, cross-regional comparisons can be drawn. For example in some areas governance aspects may be rated rather negatively, whereas in other regions, they may score the highest values. This could then be explored more in depth: which of the observed changes really make a difference? What drives them and how can obvious gaps be remedied?

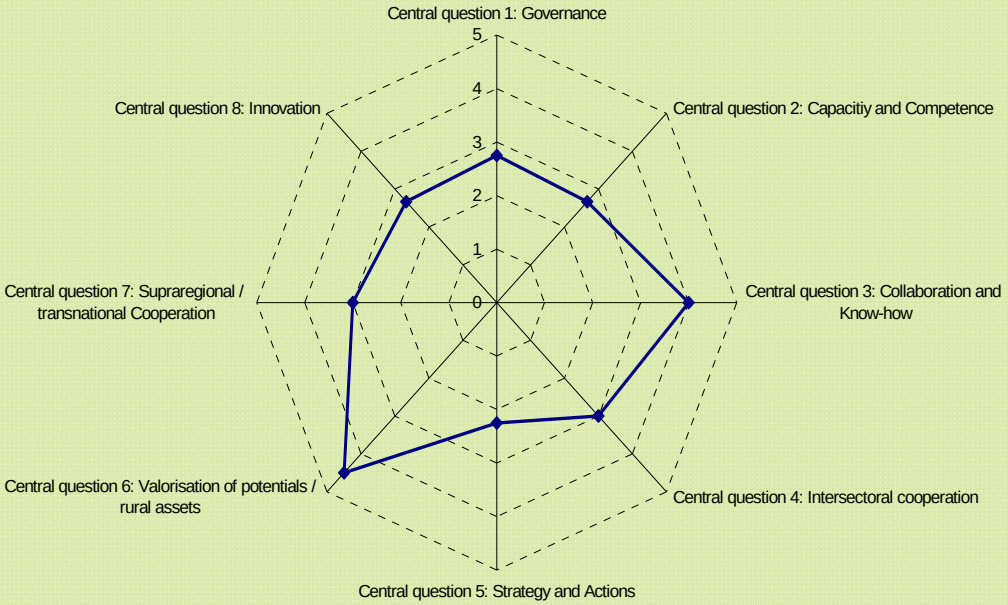
Regardless of these comparative explorations taking place or not, the multi-criteria rating tool produces one immediate outcome for the evaluators and the Managing Authorities: it provides an operationalised assessment of the issues addressed by the Common Evaluation Questions.

Box 15 Assessment of value added of Leader actions – A tool to assess Leader specific impacts in the context of RDP evaluation - RDPs Thuringia and Rhineland-Palatinate (Germany)

Complementary to an indicator-based programme assessment some „soft impacts“ will be captured by local self-evaluation in LAG in Thuringia and Rhineland-Palatinate. The method provides a common assessment basis with homogenous questions and indicators within a questionnaire (according to the CMEF Evaluation Questions for Leader axis) and an excel-based scoring tool. One the one hand, the tool can be used for self-assessment of LAG activities; on the other hand, the programme evaluators also can explore the Leader-approach in context of overall programme design (RDP) by analysing and combining the local scoring results at regional programme level. The programme evaluator organized one-day training event for all LAG managers to guarantee a minimum level of skills for the assessment procedure. The self-assessment has to be carried out in all regions by a team, which can be considered as a quality management team. For this reason, most of the Leader areas established a special board or a committee consisting of various core members including the LAG manager. This team is asked to conduct an (annual) assessment according to the pre-determined dimensions of the questionnaire. It is important that a communication between members of LAG and others involved and the quality team starts in order to obtain a realistic and objective judgement. The result of discussions in quality team, the rationale of results and the findings should be documented in the self evaluation questionnaire.

The tool is structured with 8 central questions and each of them is enclosed with 3 or 4 sub-questions. All sub-questions have to be assessed with rating scales. The rating is done from 0 to 5 (0 = no impact; 5 = highest level), whereas each scale is described with an explanation.

The average of scores in all sub-questions will result in a final score of the eight central questions, which is illustrated in a web-profile in the figure below.



The scoring procedure is only a technical application. More important is the way to gain the insights about the rationale for the scores awarded and the qualitative description of "why and to what extent". The programme evaluator and an administrator in charge support the regional managers to undertake the self-evaluation. In a first analysing step the evaluation assessments of quality teams are discussed within the LAGs at local level. In a second step, a feedback procedure (similar to a focus group session with miscellaneous programme stakeholders) is planned with discussion of combined assessment results and the findings are taken into consideration to assess the Leader approach in context of overall programme design.

Source: Manfred Geissendoerfer, Forschungsgruppe ART Triesdorf (www.fg-art.de) in collaboration with Jörg Schramek, Institute of rural development research, Frankfurt (www.ifls.de)

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Annex 1 CMEF Common Evaluation Questions

AXIS III: to improve Quality of Life in rural areas and encourage the diversification of economic activities

Measure 311: Diversification into non-agricultural activities (Article 52 (a) (i) of Reg. (EC) No 1698/2005)

Evaluation questions

To what extent have supported investments promoted the diversification of farm households' activities towards non agricultural activities? Focus the analysis on the most important activities in this respect.

To what extent have supported investments promoted additional employment opportunities for farm households outside the agricultural sector?

To what extent have supported investments contributed to improving the diversification and development of the rural economy?

To what extent have supported investments contributed to improving the Quality of Life in rural areas?

Measure 312: Support for business creation and development (Article 52 (a) (ii) of Reg. (EC) No 1698/2005)

Evaluation questions

To what extent has the support contributed to promote diversification and entrepreneurship? Focus the analysis on the most important activities.

To what extent has the support promoted additional employment opportunities in rural areas?

To what extent has the support contributed to improving the diversification and development of the rural economy?

To what extent has the support contributed to improving the Quality of Life in rural areas?

Measure 313: Encouragement of tourism activities (Article 52 (a) (iii) of Reg. (EC) No 1698/2005)

Evaluation questions

To what extent has the measure contributed to increasing tourism activities?

Distinguish between activities taking place on agricultural holdings and other activities.

To what extent has the measure promoted additional employment opportunities in rural areas?

To what extent has the measure contributed to improving the diversification and development of the rural economy?

To what extent has the measure contributed to improving the Quality of Life in rural areas?

Measure 321: Basic services for the economy and rural population (Article 52 (b) (i) of Reg. (EC) No 698/2005)

Evaluation questions

To what extent have the services provided contributed to improve the Quality of Life in rural areas? Distinguish between the different sectors concerned (such as commerce, health services, transport, IT …).

To what extent have the services provided increased the attractiveness of the areas affected? Distinguish between the different sectors concerned (such as commerce, health services, transport, IT …).

To what extent have the services contributed to reversing economic and social decline and depopulation of the countryside?

Measure 322: Village renewal and development (Article 52 (b) (ii) of Reg. (EC) No 1698/2005)
Evaluation questions

Evaluation questions

To what extent has the measure contributed to improve the Quality of Life in rural areas? Distinguish between the different sectors concerned (such as commerce, health services, transport, IT, environment …).

To what extent has the measure improved the attractiveness of rural areas? Distinguish between the different sectors concerned (such as commerce, health services, transport, IT, environment …).

To what extent have the measure contributed to reversing economic and social decline and depopulation of the countryside?

Measure 323: Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage (Article 52 (b) (iii) of Reg. (EC) No 1698/2005)

Evaluation questions

To what extent has the measure maintained the attractiveness of rural areas?

To what extent has the measure contributed to the sustainable management and development of Natura 2000 sites or other places of High Nature Value and to environmental awareness of rural population?

To what extent has the measure contributed to improve the Quality of Life in rural areas?

Measure 331: A training and information measure for economic actors operating in the fields covered by Axis 3 (Article 52 (c) of Reg. (EC) No 1698/2005)

Evaluation questions

To what extent have supported training and information activities improved the human potential of rural population to diversify their activities towards non agricultural activities? Focus the analysis on the most important activities.

To what extent has the knowledge gained from supported training and information activities been used in the area affected?

To what extent have supported training and information activities contributed to improve the Quality of Life in rural areas?

Measure 341: A skills-acquisition and animation measure with a view to preparing and implementing a local development strategy (Article 52 (d) of Reg. (EC) No 1698/2005)

Evaluation questions

To what extent have supported activities increased the capacities of rural actors for preparing, developing and implementing local development strategies and measures in the field of rural development?

To what extent have supported activities contributed to reinforcing territorial coherence and synergies between the measures intended for the broader rural economy and population?

To what extent have supported activities contributed to improve the Quality of Life in rural areas?

AXIS IV: LEADER

Measure 41: Implementing local development strategies as referred to in Article 62(1)(a) with a view to achieving the objectives of one or more of the three other axes defined in sections 1, 2 and 3 (Article 63 (a) of Reg. (EC) No 1698/2005)

Evaluation questions

To what extent has the Leader approach contributed to improving governance in rural areas?

To what extent has the Leader approach contributed to mobilising the endogenous development potential of rural areas?

To what extent has the Leader approach contributed to introduce multisectoral approaches and to promote co-operation for the implementation of rural development programmes?

To what extent has the Leader approach contributed to the priorities of Axes 1, 2 and 3?

Measure 421: Implementing co-operation projects involving the objective selected under point (a) (Article 63 (b) of Reg. (EC) No 1698/2005)

Evaluation questions

To what extent has the support contributed to promoting co-operation and to encouraging transfer of best practices?

To what extent have co-operation projects and/or transfer of best practices based on the Leader approach contributed to a better achievement of the objectives of one or more of the three other axes?

Measure 431: Running the Local Action Group, acquiring skills and animating the territory as referred to in article 59 (Article 63 (c) of Reg. (EC) No 1698/2005)

Evaluation questions

To what extent has the support increased the capacities of Local Action Groups and other partners involved for implementing local development strategies?

To what extent has the support contributed to increasing the capacity for the implementation of Leader?

Annex 2 Multi-criteria rating tool for multi-level governance and for local governance

The multiple-rating tool as presented in section 7.7 has been developed and adapted to the assessment of the Governance dimension of Quality of Life, as an example. It is based on the assessment criteria, specific evaluation questions and indicators that have been suggested in Section 6.5.

For each of the two governance impact categories, the example is structured as follows:

- A reminder of the framework of reference for governance where specific evaluation question have been referenced by capital letters and indicators numbered to facilitate cross-referencing
- A number of rating tables offering six states: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Participants may admit intermediate ratings (e.g. 4.3 or 3.7) in order to allow for more differentiated arguments and/or to compute more precise averages for each EQ.

a) Multi-level governance

Assessment Criteria	Specific Evaluation Question related to impact category / criteria	Proposed indicators
Level of decentralisation	A) To what extent have QoL measures and Leader contributed to decentralisation?	1. New initiatives or innovations initiated under Axes 3 and 4 that have directly inspired or contributed to new or improved regional or county level approaches; 2. Change in decision-making that resulted in more equitable representation at county or regional levels of non-public development stakeholders.
	(B) What were the direct and indirect benefits of QoL measures and Leader interacting beyond borders (intra and inter regional)?	1. Appreciation of how far border-crossing activities have evolved from ad-hoc to regular features; 2. Lessons learned and changes driven by these exchanges/collaborations.
Coordination between different levels of governance	(C) To what extent have vertical coordination mechanisms been established between the various institutional levels in policy definition and management as a consequence of Leader and QoL measures?	1. Number and types of new relationships and links developed with other levels of governance (between the local partnership and higher political levels); 2. Level and type of coordination mechanisms developed.

MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE / LEVEL OF DECENTRALISATION – Specific evaluation question A

Proposed indicators	0	1	2	3	4	5
A1 *New initiatives or innovations initiated under Axes 3 and 4 that have directly inspired or contributed to new or improved regional or county level approaches*	• There has been no attempt to adapt programme delivery to area-specific needs; • There is no increased capacity to do so further on.	• There has been no attempt to adapt programme delivery to area-specific needs; • There is increased capacity to do so further on (skills and will).	• There have been attempts to adapt programme delivery to area-specific needs, though the governance context impeded it; • There is increased capacity to do so further on (skills and will).	• There have been successful attempts to adapt programme delivery to area-specific needs in some cases; • It is unlikely that this capacity will remain in place (e.g. due to local constraints or reasons originating in the governance context).	• There have been successful attempts to adapt programme delivery to area-specific needs in some measures of Axes 3 and 4; • It is likely that this capacity will remain in place, but there is no formal arrangement assuring it.	• There are formal arrangements to customize programme delivery to area-specific needs in Axes 3 and 4; • It is likely that this capacity will remain in place or even be enhanced on the basis of formal arrangements.
A2 *Change in decision-making that resulted in more equitable representation at county or regional levels of non-public development stakeholders*	• The level of information, consultation or participation in decision-making of non-public stakeholders has been very low and continues to be so.	• The level of information, consultation or participation in decision-making of non-public stakeholders has been very low, but there have been scattered attempts to build capacities for non-public participation.	• There have been systematic attempts to increase capacities of non-public stakeholders through information, consultation or participation in decision-making, but local circumstances or the governance context are not favourable for further enhancement.	• There have been systematic attempts to increase capacities of non-public stakeholders through information, consultation or participation in decision-making; • The local capacities and readiness to go on in this direction are enhanced to a limited extent.	• There have been systematic and successful attempts to increase capacities of non-public stakeholders through information, consultation or participation in decision-making; • The local capacities and readiness to go on in this direction are well enhanced.	• There have been systematic and very successful attempts to increase capacities of non-public stakeholders; • There are new formal arrangements for assuring non-public participation in decision-making.

MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE / LEVEL OF DECENTRALISATION - Specific evaluation question B

Proposed indicators	0	1	2	3	4	5
B1 *Appreciation of how far border-crossing activities have evolved from ad-hoc to regular features*	• There have been no attempts for border-crossing activities; • There is no enhanced capacity to do so (skills and will).	• There have been attempts for border-crossing activities, but they failed due to local circumstances or an unfavourable governance context; • There is increased capacity to go on in that direction (skills and will).	• There have been scattered attempts for border-crossing activities with positive results, but they remained very limited due to local circumstances or an unfavourable governance context; • There is increased capacity to go on in that direction (skills and will) and plans for this do exist.	• There have been systematic attempts for border-crossing activities with positive results; • There is increased capacity and a strategic purpose to go on in that direction (skills and will); • External relationships are improved, although not systematically fostered.	• There have been systematic border-crossing activities featuring positive impacts for local development; • There are increased capacity, a strategic purpose and suitable formal arrangements to go on in that direction; • External relationships are improved and systematically fostered, but lack of decisional and functional autonomy set narrow limits.	• There have been systematic border-crossing activities featuring positive impacts for local development; • There are increased capacity, a strategic purpose and suitable formal arrangements to go on in that direction; • There is a strong will, and decisional and functional autonomy to develop border-crossing relationships and activities.
B2 *Lessons learned and changes driven by these exchanges/collaborations*	• There has been no reflection on (inexistent) border-crossing activities; • There is no enhanced capacity to reflect upon this issue.	• There has been some reflection on border-crossing activities; • There is no enhanced capacity to learn from these.	• There has been some reflection on border-crossing activities; • There is enhanced capacity to learn from these among a few stakeholders.	• There has been systematic reflection on border-crossing activities; • There is enhanced capacity to learn from BC activities among a few stakeholders; • Some lessons have already been drawn for improvement.	• There has been systematic reflection on border-crossing activities as part of an overall learning concept; • There is enhanced capacity to learn from BC activities, shared by a wider spectrum of stakeholders; • There is systematic monitoring and feedback for improvement.	• There has been systematic reflection on border-crossing activities as part of an overall learning concept; • There is enhanced capacity to learn from BC activities, shared by a wider spectrum of stakeholders and with external co-operation partners; • There is systematic monitoring and feedback for improvement.

MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE / COORDINATION BETWEEN DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GOVERNANCE - Specific evaluation question C

Proposed indicators	0	1	2	3	4	5
C1 *Number and types of new relationships and links developed with other levels of governance (between the local partnership and higher political levels)*	• There is strong hierarchical superposition between local and higher levels of governance; • Programme delivery means strict executive routine.	• There is strong hierarchical superposition between local and higher levels of governance; • Programme delivery is strict executive routine; • Some consultation takes place between local and higher levels of governance.	• There is strong hierarchical superposition between local and higher levels of governance; • Some lessons have been drawn here and there due to unsystematic feedback on programme delivery.	• Some deliberation power has been delegated to the local level of governance (concerning strategic fit and content of projects); • Some lessons have been drawn due to joint reflections on programme delivery.	• Some decision-making power has been delegated to the local level of governance (concerning decision-making on projects); • Some lessons have been drawn due to joint reflections on programme delivery; • There are, apart from formal arrangements, trustful personal relationships favouring quick and flexible solutions.	• Decision-making power has been largely delegated to the local level of governance (concerning decision-making on projects and implementation); • Lessons are drawn on the basis of a joint monitoring and learning system; • There are, apart from formal arrangements, trustful personal relationships favouring quick and flexible solutions; • There is a strong commitment to networking and learning at and between all levels of governance.
C2 *Level and type of coordination mechanisms developed*	• In the absence of coordination, there is active blockade (by intent or negligence).	• There is no systematic coordination, but there are arrangements which ensure a minimum level of functioning.	• Bureaucratic coordination ensures an ordinary routine of hierarchical programme delivery, but sectoral divide sets narrow limits.	• Reliable administrative (vertical and cross-sectoral) coordination ensures good standard routine of programme delivery, but there is no leeway for flexible adaptation.	• Reliable administrative (vertical and cross-sectoral) coordination ensures good standard routine of programme delivery, leaving leeway for flexible adaptations; • Unsystematic capacity building has taken place.	• Reliable administrative (vertical and cross-sectoral) coordination ensures customized programme delivery; • Capacity has been systematically built for further decentralised management and financing.

b) Local governance

Assessment Criteria	Specific Evaluation Question related to impact category / criteria	Proposed indicators
Quality of governance	A) To what extent have QoL measures and Leader contributed to an improved transparency of the decision-making and implementation process?	1. Specific procedures developed that could assure transparency of decision-making and implementation procedures (number, types and level) *(decision-making, fairness of decisions, and interest of different groups...).*
	B) To what extent have QoL measures and Leader contributed to address and facilitate the resolution of conflicts?	1. Reporting on intra-local conflicts identified? Addressed? Leader contribution and lessons? (for example: rurals versus neo-rurals, agri/non agri, unauthorised camping, travellers, tourists and environment …); 2. Stakeholder conflicts addressed and solved (for example: overwhelming municipality, advocacy versus action groups …).
Empowerment of local actors and partnership composition	(C) To what extent have QoL measures and Leader contributed to involve relevant actors of the socio-economic spectrum of the areas targeted in the decision-making process?	1. Balance between public sector/-politicians and private sector and civil society/ associations/ advocacy groups; 2. Parties contributing to fund mobilisation and ways of contributing; 3. Improved and effective involvement of vulnerable groups (specify what is the nature of their involvement – beneficiary – stakeholder – active members etc).
	(D) To what extent did the QoL measures and Leader create decision and implementation structures for regional strategies or enhance wider sustainable local partnerships?	1. Existence of a phasing out or continuation plan indicating how the partnership will continue (number or percentage of activities emerging from projects and continuing beyond the subsidised project period …); 2. Number new or existing structures taking over and continuing activities after the subsidised project period; 3. Number and type of spin off projects/ organisations or networks inspired by QoL measures or Leader. (Other initiatives having adopted elements of Leader or QoL).
	(E) To what extent have reflection and learning mechanisms increased the management capacities of the local partnership members and lead to a more professional management of the local partnership?	1. Level of satisfaction of beneficiaries regarding the performance of all local partnerships involved with the RDP; 2. Satisfaction of the members of all local partnerships with the collaboration; 3. Fluctuation of staff of all local partnerships.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE / QUALITY OF GOVERNANCE - Specific evaluation question A

Proposed indicators	0	1	2	3	4	5
A1 *Specific procedures developed that could assure transparency of decision-making and implementation procedures (number, types and level) (decision-making, fairness of decisions, interest of different groups...)*	• Apparent inexistence of formal rules; • Isolated, non transparent decision-making in local group.	• Existence of formal rules, but little transparency in decision-making in local group; • Lack of auditable records and written documentation.	• Existence of formal rules, and fairly good auditability of decision-making and implementation procedures; • No or very little information and participation of people outside decision-making bodies.	• Existence of formal rules, and excellent auditability of decision-making and implementation procedures; • There are approaches to involve (inform, consult) people outside decision-making bodies.	• Existence of formal rules, and excellent auditability of decision-making and implementation procedures; • Systematic involvement (information, consultation, participation) of people outside decision-making bodies.	• Existence of formal rules, and excellent auditability of decision-making and implementation procedures; • Systematic involvement (information, consultation, participation) of people outside decision-making bodies; • Successful implementation and capacity building for advanced participatory approaches.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE / QUALITY OF GOVERNANCE - Specific evaluation question B

Proposed indicators	0	1	2	3	4	5
B1 *Reporting on intra-local conflicts identified? Addressed? Leader contribution and lessons? (for example: rurals versus neo-rurals, agri/non agri, unauthorised camping, travellers, tourists and environment…)*	• Potential or actual conflicts systematically ignored and left unaddressed.	• Potential or actual conflicts at least partly recognized, but addressed in occasional and unsystematic manner; • No projects or measures designed in response.	• Potential or actual conflicts recognized in general; • Projects or measures have been designed in response, but not as part of the territorial strategy.	• Potential or actual conflicts recognized in general; • Projects or measures have been designed as integral part of the territorial strategy; • The main thrust of the strategy goes toward mitigation.	• Potential or actual conflicts recognized in general; • Projects or measures have been designed as integral part of the territorial strategy; • The main thrust of the strategy goes toward innovative solutions turning the conflict into a driver for local development.	• Potential or actual conflicts are recognized and systematically monitored and analyzed; • Strategy, projects and measures bearing forth innovative solutions turning the conflict into a driver for local development; • There was consistent capacity building for enhanced conflict sensitivity of local actor.
B2 *Stakeholder conflicts addressed and solved (for example: overwhelming municipality, advocacy versus action groups …)*	• Actual conflicts between stakeholders systematically ignored and left unaddressed; • Programme implementation disturbed.	• Potential or actual conflicts between stakeholders recognized, but left unaddressed; • Programme implementation disturbed.	• Potential or actual conflicts between stakeholders recognized, but unsuccessfully addressed; • Programme implementation disturbed.	• Potential or actual conflicts between stakeholders recognized and neutralized; • As a consequence: undisturbed programme implementation.	• Potential or actual conflicts between stakeholders recognized and solved; • As a consequence: enhanced programme implementation.	• Potential or actual conflicts between stakeholders recognized and solved; • Programme implementation improved by conflict-sensitive structural arrangements and enhanced conflict prevention and mediation skills of local actors.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE / EMPOWERMENT OF LOCAL ACTORS AND PARTNERSHIP COMPOSITION - Specific evaluation question C

Proposed indicators	0	1	2	3	4	5
C1 *Balance between public sector/politicians and private sector and civil society/ associations/ advocacy groups*	• Overwhelming dominance of one type of stakeholder group (public/private or civic); • Traceable effect on performance deficiency.	• Absence of one type of stakeholder group (public/private or civic); • Traceable effect on performance deficiency.	• Overwhelming dominance or absence of one type of stakeholder group (public/private or civic); • No traceable effect on performance due to compensational processes (consultations, involvement etc. of other stakeholders).	• Balanced representation of public, private and civic stakeholders in decision-making and consultative bodies; • Lack of adequate rules and processes in deliberation and decision-making leading to unbalanced influences in practice.	• Balanced representation of public, private and civic stakeholders in decision-making and consultative bodies; • Rules and processes in deliberation and decision-making ensure balanced influences in practice; • Lack of reflective capacity and learning to ensure continuity and improvement of structures, rules and processes.	• Balanced representation of public, private and civic stakeholders in decision-making and consultative bodies; • Rules and processes in deliberation and decision-making ensure balanced influences in practice; • Reflective capacity and systematic learning processes ensuring continuity and improvement of structures, rules and processes.
C2 *Parties contributing to fund mobilisation and ways of contributing*	• No access to relevant resources (finance, knowledge, legitimacy) embodied in involved partners.	• Access to relevant resources (finance, knowledge, legitimacy) partly embodied in involved partners; • Network links not exploited; • Governance context unfavourable to fully harnessing local resources.	• Access to relevant resources (finance, knowledge, legitimacy) embodied in involved partners; • Network links well exploited; • Governance context unfavourable to fully harnessing local resources.	• Access to relevant resources (finance, knowledge, legitimacy) embodied in involved partners; • Network links well exploited; • Governance context favourable to fully harnessing local resources; • No strategy or corresponding processes for increasing autonomous financing and decision-making.	• Resources (finance, knowledge, legitimacy) embodied in involved partners; • Network links well exploited; • Governance context favourable to fully harnessing local resources; • Emergent strategy and corresponding processes for autonomous financing and decision-making.	• Access to relevant resources (finance, knowledge, legitimacy) embodied in involved partners; • Network links well exploited; • Governance context favourable to fully harnessing local resources; • Explicit strategy and corresponding processes for autonomous financing and decision-making.

Proposed indicators	0	1	2	3	4	5
C3 *Improved involvement of vulnerable groups involved in participation as effective partners (specify what is the nature of their involvement – beneficiary – stakeholder – active members, etc)*	• No consideration of vulnerable groups neither in strategy nor in practice.	• In spite of consideration of vulnerable groups in strategy, no practical consequence or just symbolic activities.	• Consideration of vulnerable groups in strategy and practice (projects, measures); • Mainly defensive character of these projects/measures (projects *for* vulnerable people); • Poor outcomes due to lack of capacity, quality, follow-up, etc.	• Consideration of vulnerable groups in strategy and practice (projects, measures); • Integrative and empowering character of these projects or measures (projects *promoted by* vulnerable people); • Poor outcomes due to lack of capacity, quality, follow-up, etc.	• Consideration of vulnerable groups in strategy and practice (projects, measures); • Integrative and empowering character of these projects or measures (projects *promoted by* vulnerable people); • Quality assurance through capacity building, monitoring, learning, etc.	• Consideration of vulnerable groups in strategy and practice (projects, measures); • Integrative and empowering character of these projects or measures; • Quality assurance through capacity building, monitoring, learning, etc; • Creation of transferable models of intervention in this field by codification of acquired knowledge and structures.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE / EMPOWERMENT OF LOCAL ACTORS AND PARTNERSHIP COMPOSITION - Specific evaluation question D

Proposed indicators	0	1	2	3	4	5
D1 *Existence of a phasing out or continuation plan indicating how the partnership will continue (number or percentage of activities emerging from projects and continuing beyond the subsidised project period …)*	• No plan existing; • Continuation unlikely.	• No plan existing as yet; • Continuation conceivable.	• There is an explicit intention to continue; • Resources and structures are uncertain.	• There is a plan to continue; • There are local resources secured and structures established; • Local capacities are not well prepared; • The governance context is unfavourable.	• There is a plan to continue; • There are local resources secured and structures established; • Local capacities are developed and well prepared; • The governance context is unfavourable.	• There is a plan to continue; • There are local resources secured and structures established; • Local capacities are developed and well prepared; • The governance context is favourable.
D2 *Number new or existing structures taking over and continuing activities after the subsidised project period*	• Most of the projects and structures put in place will probably stop after programme support.	• Some of the projects and structures put in place will survive after programme support; • There is no real promoter of local development.	• Most of the projects and structures put in place will survive after programme support and generate further development impulses; • There is no real promoter of local development.	• Most of the projects and structures put in place will survive after programme support and generate further development impulses; • There are emergent local networks taking over the role of promoting local development.	• Most of the projects and structures put in place will survive after programme support and generate further development impulses; • There are established networks and designated structures taking over the role of promoting local development; • Governance context and resource availability is not favourable.	• Most of the projects and structures put in place will survive after programme support and generate further development impulses; • There are established networks and designated structures taking over the role of promoting local development; • Governance context is favourable and there are resources available for independent continuation.
D3 *Number and type of spin off projects/ organisations or networks inspired by QoL measures or Leader. (Other initiatives having adopted elements of Leader or QoL)*	• No knock-on effects traceable or even new blockades emerging.	• Sparse knock-on effects which might possibly fizzle out without further impulses.	• Some self-propelling projects and activities put in place, but little innovation.	• A number of self-propelling projects and activities with innovative character; • Local structures are not strong enough to ensure external support for these innovative activities.	• New and innovative development poles emerge out of funded projects and activities; • Local structures continue to support these innovative activities; • Governance context is not favourable for continuing external support for these activities.	• New and innovative development poles emerge out of funded projects and activities; • Local structures continue to support these innovative activities; • Governance context is favourable for continuing external support for these activities.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE / EMPOWERMENT OF LOCAL ACTORS AND PARTNERSHIP COMPOSITION - Specific evaluation question E

Proposed indicators	0	1	2	3	4	5
E1 *Level of satisfaction of beneficiaries regarding the performance of all local partnerships involved with the RDP*	• Utterly disappointed with the outcomes.	• Generally not satisfied about the outcomes.	• The attempt is appreciated, but the outcomes are not sufficient.	• There is some satisfaction, but there could have been more.	• Overall positive appreciation of outcomes, there is a wish to continue in the same way.	• Full satisfaction, overshooting expectations.
E2 *Satisfaction of the members of all local partnerships with the collaboration*	• Utterly disappointed with the level of trust, the quality of processes and the partners‘ skills of co-operation.	• Generally not satisfied about the level of trust, the quality of processes and the partners‘ skills of co-operation.	• There was some progress, but in general the level of collaboration is dissatisfying.	• Collaboration has worked, although there is visible room for improvement.	• Overall positive appreciation of the level of trust, the quality of processes and the partners‘ skills of co-operation; • There is a wish to continue in the same way.	• Full satisfaction, overshooting expectations.
E3 *Fluctuation of staff of all local partnerships*	• High staff turnover in local group due to unsatisfying working conditions.	• Some fluctuation and lack of perspective to remain after programming period.	• Fairly stable and committed staff with no or little perspective to remain after programming period.	• Stable, committed and collaborative staff, with a good chance to remain after the programming period.	• Stable, committed and collaborative staff, having a good chance to remain after the programming period; • No major focus on qualification and capacity development on job.	• Stable, committed and collaborative staff, having a good chance to remain after the programming period; • Qualification and capacity development is constitutive part of work profile.

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