plan of the chapter

references

LEADER II dossiers

Innovation notebooks
No. 6: Creating a territorial development strategy in light of the LEADER
experience – Part 1: Local competitiveness (2000)

Observatory dossiers
No. 3: Mainstreaming LEADER in future rural policies (1999)

Guides
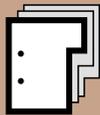Methodology guide for the analysis of local innovation needs (1996)

LEADER MAGAZINE
No. 16: Special LEADER Symposium
"Towards a new Community Initiative for rural development:
800 leaders give their views" (Winter 1997-1998)
No. 20: Creating jobs in rural areas (Spring 1999)

references

Examples

9 reports from LEADER MAGAZINE
the photos from the reports are available in the illustrations directory

| COUNTRY	LEADER REGION OR AREA	SOURCE
Germany	Anhalt-Zerbst	LEADER MAGAZINE No. 14
Greece	Kalambaka-Pyli	LEADER MAGAZINE No. 23
Spain	Montaña Palentina	LEADER MAGAZINE No. 21
France	Pays de Gâtine	LEADER MAGAZINE No. 19
Ireland	Duhallow	LEADER MAGAZINE No. 25
Italy	Alto Casertano	LEADER MAGAZINE No. 20
Netherlands	Noordwest Friesland	LEADER MAGAZINE No. 17
Finland	Keski-Häme	LEADER MAGAZINE No. 23
Sweden	Skogslandet	LEADER MAGAZINE No. 21

"Innovative actions" factsheets
M25 – E24 – E10 – P17 – S26 – T06

LEADER: an approach to rural development

**LEADER: an approach
to rural development**

II / 1

Issues at stake for rural areas
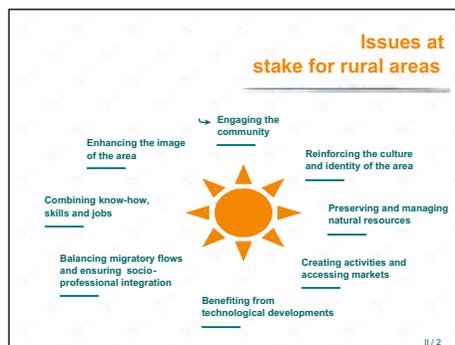
From a sustainable development perspective, the LEADER approach seeks to take into account the internal opportunities and constraints of rural areas as a result of the environmental, economic, social and cultural factors of an area's past, as well as the external opportunities and constraints arising from opening up local economies.

The situation of each rural area can be analysed in relation to issues that overlap in some respects,:

- **Engaging the community and reinforcing social cohesion**
  Keski-Häme, Finland

- **Reinforcing the culture and identity of the area**
  Noordwest Friesland, Netherlands

- **Preserving natural resources and managing the environment and land**
  Montaña Palentina, Spain

- **Creating activities, reinforcing competitiveness and accessing markets**
  Alto Casertano, Italy

- **Benefiting from technological developments in all fields (agriculture, transport, etc.), especially information and communication technology (ICT)**
  Pays de Gâtine, France

LEADER Magazine reports

LM 23

LM 17

LM 21

LM 20

LM 19

II.5

Issues at stake for rural areas
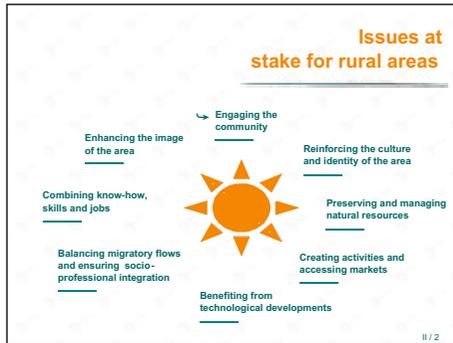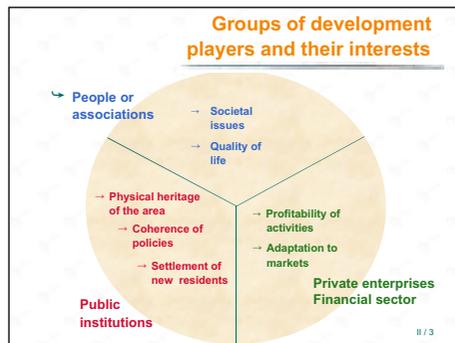
- **Balancing migratory flows and ensuring socio-professional integration**
  Duhallow, Ireland

- **Combining know-how, skills and jobs**
  Anhalt-Zerbst, Germany

- **Enhancing the image and perception of the area**
  Skogslandet, Sweden

LM 25

LM 14

LM 21

II.6

The groups of development players and their interests

Groups of development players and their interests

Implementing an approach to suit rural areas calls for a new local development approach but, above all, for an approach that corresponds as closely as possible to the concerns and expectations of local development players. By advocating an integrated bottom-up approach, as well as the decentralised management of public policies, LEADER helps to give renewed consideration to the prime movers in a rural area.

An overview of the diverse players involved is required in order to achieve a coherent partnership approach.

Potential players and partners belong to three main groups:
- **People or associations of people** concerned primarily with issues of society, employment and quality of life.
- **Private enterprises and the financial sector** concerned primarily with business growth and profitability, as well as with the local economy's adaptation to markets.
- Regional, national and European **public institutions** concerned with regional policy, employment, the area's environmental, economic, social and cultural "heritage", the settlement of new residents and coherence between sectoral and area-based policies.

V/5

V/9-12

**II.7**

LEADER's specific contribution
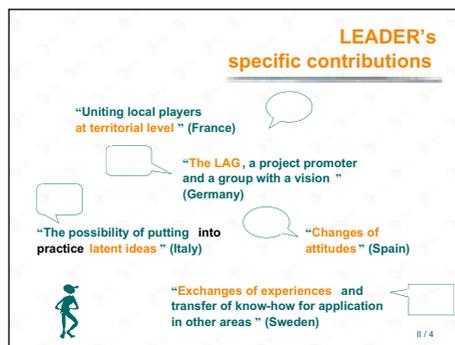
According to the LEADER groups, the four main contributions of the Community rural development Initiative are:

- **A decentralised, integrated, bottom-up, area-based approach:** by focusing on the benefits of (re)considering a rural area in its entirety (i.e. ignoring classic thematic or sectoral boundaries), by putting different sectors of activity into contact with one another and by adopting an approach that allows local players to express their views and help to shape their area's destiny in line with their own desires and vision for the future, the LEADER Initiative is a particularly suitable means of fostering the social and economic revitalisation of rural areas;

- **Community engagement:** inherent in the LEADER approach, the aim of engaging the community makes it possible to collectively tackle the area's future by overcoming fatalism and traditional divides, fighting exclusion and ensuring a balance between the know-how, opportunities and needs of all sectors of the community. Ultimately LEADER helps to define new or revive existing local identities;

- **Uniting development players at local level:** LEADER encourages the establishment of new partnership and local management structures. Depending on the local context, LEADER facilitates the development of new forms of collective organisation, knowledge organisation and political organisation. LEADER focuses on a local approach and encourages greater local "governance";
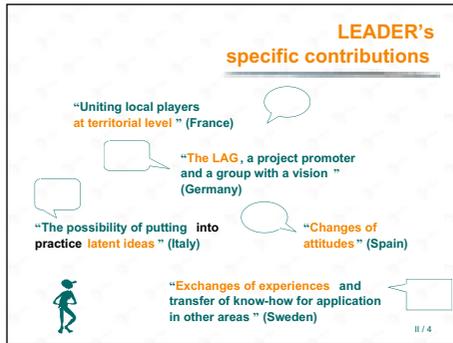
- **The possibility of putting latent ideas into practise:** the project selection procedures applied in LEADER have enabled potential project leaders, who in the past might have been overlooked, to publicise their ideas and to collectively develop and secure support for implementing them. LEADER caters for modest-sized projects and can back "risky" projects that tend to be of no interest to "classic" administrative, technical and financial bodies;

In some countries there are other strong LEADER characteristics. Thus:
- in **Spain**, the emphasis is on **changing attitudes;**
- in **France**, there is a major concern to **bring together all local players** in a given area;
- in **Sweden**, **exchanges with other rural areas and transfers of experience** are often prioritised;
- in **Italy**, LEADER makes it possible to **put latent ideas into practice;**
- in **Germany,** it is the **role of the LAG.**
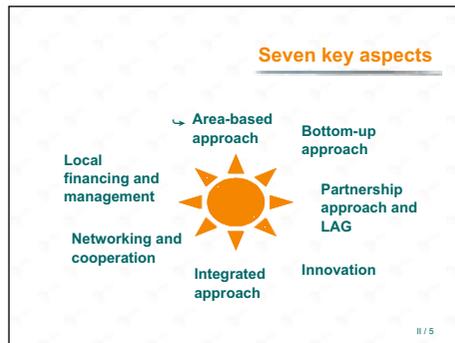
Seven key aspects

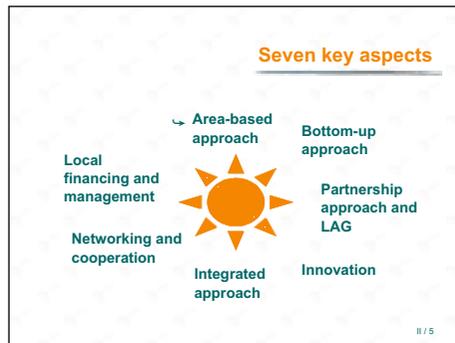The LEADER approach can be analysed according to **seven key aspects**:

- **The area-based approach** – This entails defining a development policy on the basis of an area's own particular situation, strengths and weaknesses. In LEADER, this area is a fairly homogeneous local rural unit, characterised by internal social cohesion, a shared history and traditions, a sense of common identity, etc. The *raison d'être* of the area-based approach stems from the growing awareness by and for the prime movers in the local area of the role of endogenous resources in achieving sustainable development.

- **Bottom-up approach** – This aims to encourage participatory decision-making at local level for all development policy aspects. The involvement of local players is sought, including the community as a whole, economic and social interest groups and representative public and private institutions. The bottom-up approach relies on two major activities ("animation" and training of local communities) and comes into play at different stages of the programme.

- **Partnership approach and the "local action group" (LAG)** – The LAG is a body of public and private players, united in a partnership, that identifies a joint strategy and a local action plan for developing a LEADER area. The LAG is one of the most original and strategic features of the LEADER approach. Endowed with a team of practitioners, decision-making powers and a fairly large budget, the LAG represents a new model of organisation that can considerably influence the institutional and political balance of the area concerned.
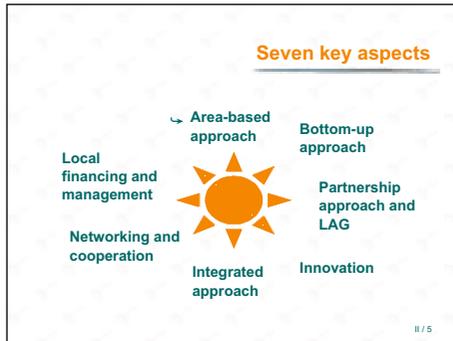
III

IV

V

II.10

Seven key aspects

Seven key aspects

Area-based approach
Bottom-up approach
Local financing and management
Partnership approach and LAG
Networking and cooperation
Integrated approach
Innovation

II / 5

- **Innovation** – Even though the LEADER concept and its implementation in the field are innovative in themselves, the LEADER Initiative stresses that the actions must also be innovative. They may be actions to promote local resources in new ways, actions that are of interest to local development but not covered by other development policies, actions providing new answers to the weakness and problems of rural areas, or else the creation of a new product, new process, new form of organisation or new market. Innovation is also embodied in the programme's demonstrative and net-working components: disseminating information to other groups of play-ers wishing to gain inspiration from achievements elsewhere or to carry out joint projects.

- **Integrated approach** – The actions and projects contained in the local action plan are linked and coordinated as a coherent whole. Integration may concern actions conducted in a single sector, all programme actions or specific groups of actions, or, most important, links between the dif-ferent economic, social, cultural, environmental players and sectors involved in the area.

Seven key aspects

Area-based approach
Bottom-up approach
Local financing and management
Partnership approach and LAG
Networking and cooperation
Integrated approach
Innovation

II / 5

- **Networking and cooperation between areas** – By facilitating the exchange and circulation of information on rural development policies and the dissemination and transfer of innovation, the LEADER network aims to break the isolation of LAGs and to establish a basis of information and analysis on the actions. To complement existing European and national networking, some LAGs have spontaneously organised themselves into informal networks. Cooperation between areas can be transnational but may equally take place between neighbouring areas.

- **Local financing and management** – Delegating to the LAG a large proportion of the decision-making responsibilities for funding and management is another key element of the LEADER approach. However, the LAGs' degree of autonomy varies considerably depending on the Member State's specific mode of organisation and institutional context.

VIII

IX

II.12

The development triangle
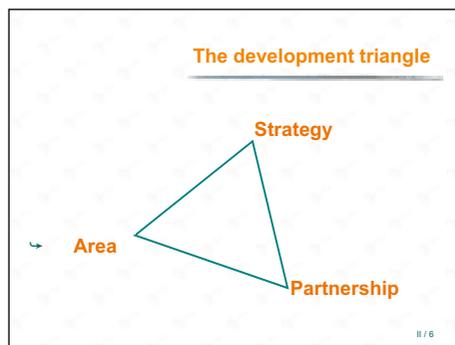
The **local area**, characterised by the eight components of its "territorial capital", is the cornerstone of the LEADER approach.

The term "territorial capital" refers to an area's assets (people, activities, landscapes, heritage, know-how), not in the form of an inventory but of unique features that can be developed.

Analysing these unique features and the key points identified during the area-based analysis will lead to diversified **strategies** specific to each rural area. These elements can serve as the basis for creating unifying themes.

Due to its proximity to the area and to the representativeness of its diverse membership, the local **partnership** (**the LEADER local action group**) is in charge of this strategy.

Even though each rural area requires a tailored strategy, it is possible to distinguish possible strategic lines for five types of area:

Type 1: Areas where there are numerous project leaders, many of whom work together for production, promotion and information-gathering purposes.

Suitable strategies: strategies of complementarity (emphasising the integration of local players and sectors); fringe-activity strategies aimed at boosting the existing dynamism still further.
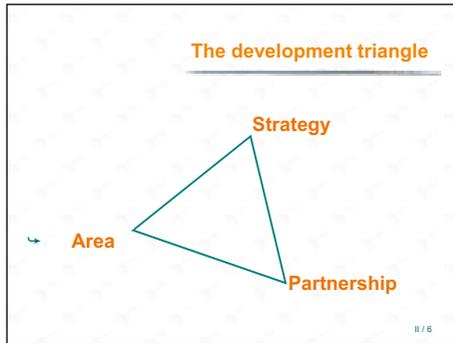
III/4-5

III/9-10

V/5

P17

II.13

The development triangle

Type 2: Areas where there are also numerous project leaders. However, they work in a dispersed manner, have few links with the area and no mechanisms for working together.

Suitable strategies: strategies of integration, aimed at creating links between existing scattered elements – reliance on a cross-disciplinary unifying theme to help overcome reluctance to engage in collective action.

Type 3: Areas where there are only a few dispersed project leaders but where a sector, an activity, or a historic or natural element can be restored to serve as the basis for a local regeneration strategy.

Suitable strategies: strategies for recovering and redeveloping neglected resources (this is the most common type of LEADER strategy).

Type 4: Areas characterised by social or geographical imbalances in the distribution of businesses and a lack of differentiated measures.

Suitable strategies: strategies for restoring even access to opportunities. A choice of project leaders to support must be made: either the most enterprising or, on the contrary, those whose circumstances prevent them from creating or defending a project.

M25

E24

E10

II.14

S26
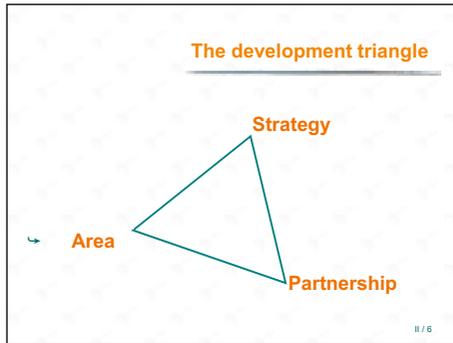
Type 5: Areas experiencing serious rural depopulation or isolation, where there is a strong tendency to abandon farming and/or close down remaining businesses (which for the most part are run by elderly entrepreneurs). The area is becoming deserted and it is considered vital to find new resources or activities to inject new dynamism into the area.

Suitable strategies: "Kick-start" strategy (support for the few innovative players that exist) and/or a strategy of injecting dynamism across the board (wide-ranging, area-based coordination measures to promote innovative individual or collective ideas or projects). Strategy for attracting and helping new residents settle in sparsely populated areas.

Stages of a programme
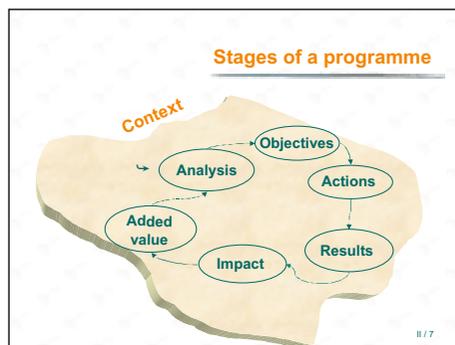
To implement the programme itself, the LEADER approach adopts a step-by-step policy:

- Implementation of an area-based **analysis** that commits all of the local players to a medium and long-term vision of the area;
- Formalisation of the **objectives**, definition of strategic priorities and ranking of the actions to be undertaken;
- Implementation of **actions** in the field, with the LAG also providing a system of support and guidance for project leaders;
- Production of direct **results**;
- Quantitative and qualitative assessment of the **impact** of the local project;
- Analysis of LEADER's **added value** at local level (this takes the form of, for instance, enhanced local dynamism and/or greater overall ability to take initiatives).

The analysis of its impact and added value is then fed back into a new **analysis**, which is the reference tool for the area strategy.

III/6-9

III/6-7

II.16

Dynamics of the approach
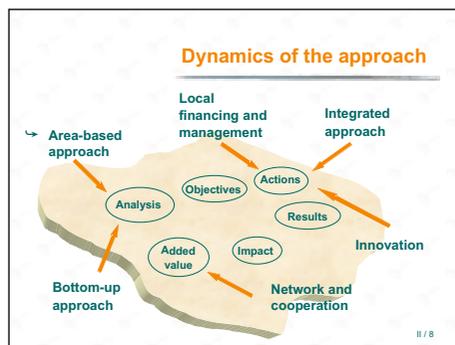
A few examples show how **the stages of the programme (Slide 7) correlate with the LEADER approach (Slide 5).**

The dynamics of the approach rely on these links:
- The **area-based approach** starts off the process (analysis), based on the resources and specific needs of each rural area and allowing local communities to express their views.
- The **bottom-up approach** allows local players to take part, whilst taking into account the specific circumstances of each rural area. It creates a new perception of the area's strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities, which will influence the definition of objectives, the implementation of actions, the anticipated results and the impact on the area throughout the programme.
- An **integrated, multi-sectoral approach** and innovative actions influence the way in which the actions are implemented. This approach also influences the results and impact of such actions.
- **Local financing and management** influence the flexibility of the programme throughout its implementation, and, in many cases, also the type of projects that can be financed (for example, inappropriate payment procedures can discourage the most vulnerable project leaders and sometimes even the most innovative ones).
- **LEADER networking and cooperation** intensify exchanges between the local level and the outside world (circulation of information and knowledge, development of joint projects) and contribute to the programme's added value.

T06

II.17

LEADER's added value

LEADER 's added value

- A new concept of rural development
  based on convergence and the creation of
  links

II / 9

LEADER is based on a new concept of rural development which is built upon:
- **"Convergence" between players, activities and local components** – Such convergence, which forms part of LEADER's general philosophy and concept, is facilitated by implementing an integrated, bottom-up, area-based approach.
- **The creation of "links" between players, activities and areas** – This is achieved through the organisation and management of a "horizontal" local partnership to complement existing structures, the decentralised definition of financing and management procedures, networking and the establish-ment of local or transnational cooperation ventures between rural areas.

These two key concepts of the LEADER approach can be found at the various stages in the implementation of development measures. Here we simply sum-marise them in the form of two diagrams *(following slides)*.

Effects of convergence
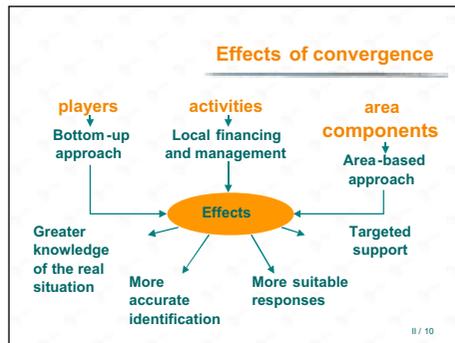
At the start of this presentation we described the characteristics of "classic" development methods. We emphasised the distance that often separates those responsible for support policies from the beneficiaries of such policies (centralised, vertical management, decisions taken far away from the grass roots level, etc.), which throws up a number of obstacles when providing support to distressed areas, such as, the standardised definition of the needs of rural areas and beneficiaries, "clerical" processing of applications with no direct knowledge of what's happening in the "field", uniform treatment of needs, sometimes lengthy delays in decision-making, and approval mechanisms ill-suited to the time available to project leaders, etc.

LEADER has endeavoured to take a different approach by putting decision-makers and administrators in direct contact with the grass-roots level, by seeking to shorten decision-making cycles, by providing customised support and guidance to projects, etc. This has been done by setting up teams of practitioners *in situ* to coordinate work directly in the field. This has made it possible to vary the type of support to suit the individual characteristics and conditions of each rural area.

IV/8-10

| Convergence offers:	With players (bottom-up approach)	With activities (financing and management procedures)	With rural areas (area-based approach)
Closer, more detailed and accurate knowledge of the real situation	Direct knowledge about local communities	Real-life knowledge of the history of projects	Real-life knowledge of the complexity of the rural area
More accurate identification	Direct identification of: - project leaders and local know-how - groups in difficulty	Identification of ideas and projects	Identification of imbalances and assets/resources in the area
More suitable responses	Introduction of forms of support suited to the needs of local communities	Introduction of more appropriate methods of selecting projects	Creation of an area project based on a global view of local resources
Targeted support	Direct communication and frequent contacts	Support and guidance for funded projects rather than mere clerical follow-up	Ongoing assessment and gradual adjustment of support measures

The effects of creating links
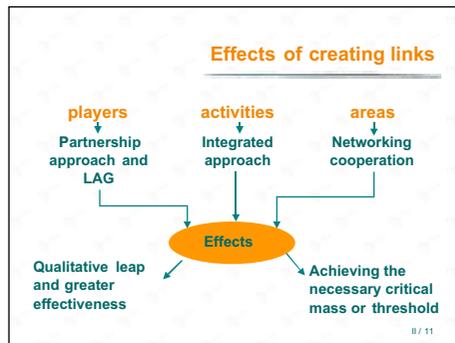
By adopting the opposite approach to the sectoral, geographical, service-based, beneficiary-based and other types of approach taken by classic public policies for rural development, LEADER facilitates local links between players and sectors of activity that often work in isolation, as well as links between rural areas.

The local approach will be all the more effective where such **convergence** and **links** operate in as complementary a fashion as possible. Innovation also relies on the ability to combine or integrate the concepts of "area-based approach", "participatory process", "partnership management", "multi-sectoral approach", "networking" and "appropriate financing and management procedures".

VI/6-7

II.21

Establishing links between: makes possible:	Players (local partnership)	Activities (integration)	Areas (networking and cooperation between areas)
A qualitative leap and greater effectiveness by associating different and complementary forms	Harnessing different and complementary resources from the public sector, the private sector and the civic and voluntary sector. Integration of isolated beneficiaries into a collective process	Creation of new products, promotion of the area's unique features by uniting local players and dispersed activities	Exchanges, transfer of experiences and know-how between areas
Achieving the necessary critical mass or threshold	Uniting local players around joint projects and common actions	Collaboration between enterprises in order to gain access to more lucrative markets	Cooperation between areas in order to enhance local projects or implement projects that require a larger scale of intervention
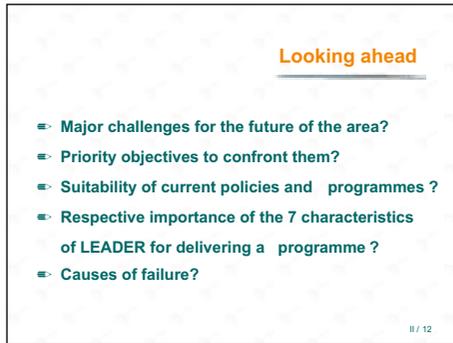
Looking ahead

☞ **Major challenges for the future of the area?**
☞ **Priority objectives to confront them?**
☞ **Suitability of current policies and   programmes ?**
☞ **Respective importance of the 7 characteristics of LEADER for delivering a   programme ?**
☞ **Causes of failure?**

II / 12

> Based on the area's characteristics, what are its **major challenges** for the future?

> How and by whom are they voiced?

> **What are the priorities for meeting these challenges:**
  1. Reinforcing the internal cohesion of the area?
  2. Making better use of local resources?
  3. Improving the way the local partnership works?
  4. Diversifying and integrating development initiatives?
  5. Improving budding skills?
  6. Seeking an economic impact (jobs, businesses)?
  7. Seeking community engagement?
  8. Boosting the local identity and image?
  9. Introducing innovation?
  10. Encouraging exchanges with the outside world and opening-up to the global community?
  11. Enhancing complementarity with other rural development actions and/or programmes?

> Do the **development policies and programmes implemented to date** provide a satisfactory response to these challenges?

> How do you judge the **importance of each of the seven key aspects** in the success of a LEADER programme? Based on each of the elements, what are the **factors of success** or the causes of failure?

II.23