

Experiences

regarding the handling of the COVID situation in rural areas

First 3 weeks:



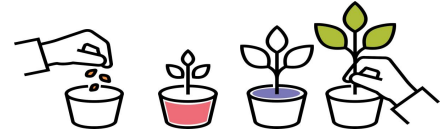
Next 2 weeks



Since then



The role of LAGs and why it worked



LEADER is good in the management of a crisis and transformation, because

- LEADER was and is the tool to find **solutions** together with effected persons/regions
- LEADER **educates the ability for self-organisation** and strengthen engagement
- LEADER uses **regional resources and Know-how** and combines it with top-down aspects
- LEADER has a 25 years long **approved** method, organisation and structure

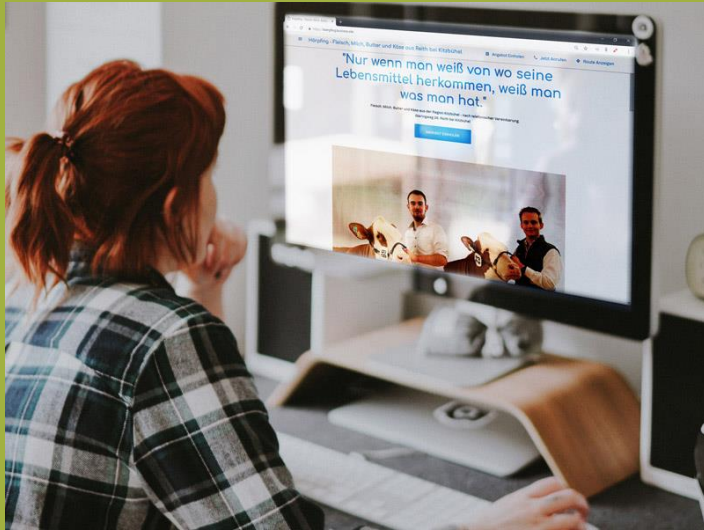
And LEADER has unique service propositions which are needed in times like this:

- Participation means **collaboration and co-financing** based on local needs
- has a public-private partnership **network center** with the LAG organisation
- is based on **voluntariness**
- and works within a **continuous system** from local to EU-level

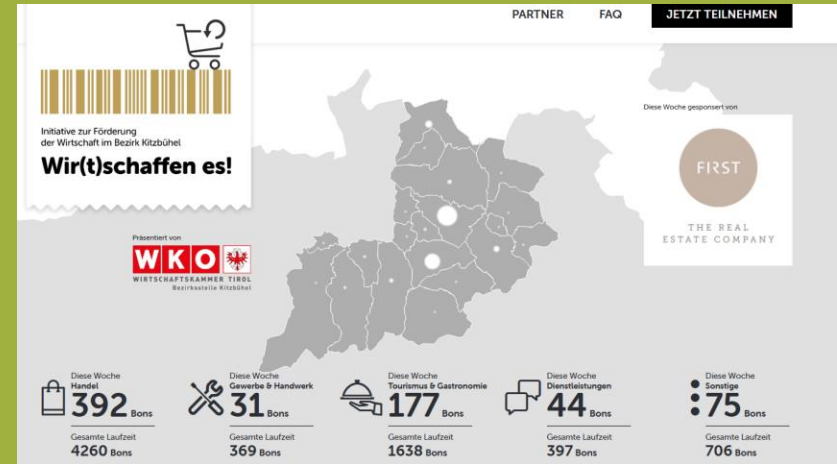
How the LEADER system adapted to the new situation??

Flexible, fast, efficient and target-oriented

Some project flashlights



Digital education and online marketing for local producers and farm shops



Buy regional, hand in your invoice and get some money back. Support of the local companies



Digital pilot action set for outdoor events with digital registration platforms, digital cameras to measure how many persons are present, signal light system at the entrances etc. to support the organizer, give maximum security and educate the visitors....

Lessons learnt

- LEADER delivers functions for the rural societies – especially in a crisis situation - which are far beyond the LEADER principles
 - Economic function, a democratic function, a socio-political function, an environmental and climate function and a European function
- Disadvantages became advantages: more space in rural areas, own garden with fruits, you know your neighbours,...
- Core-topics of LEADER are firstly needed in a crisis: regional supply chains, regional products, regional networks, regional solutions, ...
- A key to start endogenous development in the EU was the oilprice-crisis in 1973, and Covid-19 will be a catalyst to go on stronger!

But to deliver even better in future, we also learnt:

- LAGs must become regional development agencies or even the innovation broker in the region – not just funding agencies
- LEADER needs substantial and secured financial resources – beyond EAFRD funding-frameworks
 - e.g. separate „regional fund“ (with money from recovery fund) to face economic Covid-19 problems within the next 2 years
- we need to make the LEADER delivery-model easier and faster – control is necessary, but not the leading principle
- we need a constant development/education of our competences in the LAGs to coordinate this transformation in our regions
- Politicians need to give trust and responsibility to the regional level

And to ourselves (in imitation to JF Kennedy): Don't ask what LEADER can do for you, ask what you can do for LEADER – because it is a system, not a cash machine



Therefore:

if we strengthen LEADER, we strengthen regional resilience

and we will get healthy and vital rural areas
=> the LAGs are ready!