

# LEADER as an opportunity structure for creating success-potentials and improving regional governance

## 1. The LEADER approach

One part of the Rural Development Programmes funded by the European Community is LEADER, which is a bottom up-oriented opportunity structure for collaboration of different stakeholders in regional development processes. These cooperations have to fulfil certain requirements and are equipped with their own budget. In every LEADER-region organisational structures are established: in a local action group (LAG) stakeholders come together and make decisions about the financial support for projects in connection with an integrated concept for regional development.

To make estimations about the impacts of LEADER, two especially interesting aspects will be discussed (general success-potentials and improving governance).

## 2. Creating success-potentials?

In this context it is important to consider:

- A funding program can not create success for regional development, but it can give a support and a framework, that success has a high probability
- It will be possible to judge whether LEADER can contribute to a successful development by observing the influence of LEADER on the “strategic success-potentials”

In order to combine the factors which determine the success of a collaborative planning for regional development, six strategic success-potentials can be identified. It will be possible to judge whether LEADER can contribute to a successful development by observing the influence of LEADER on the following success-potentials:

1. Quality of concept (planning contents)
2. Organisational structure (regional networks, working groups, coordination)
3. Commitment of the participants
4. Abilities of the participants (social skills, knowledge)
5. Level of acceptance and cooperation
6. Access to material resources

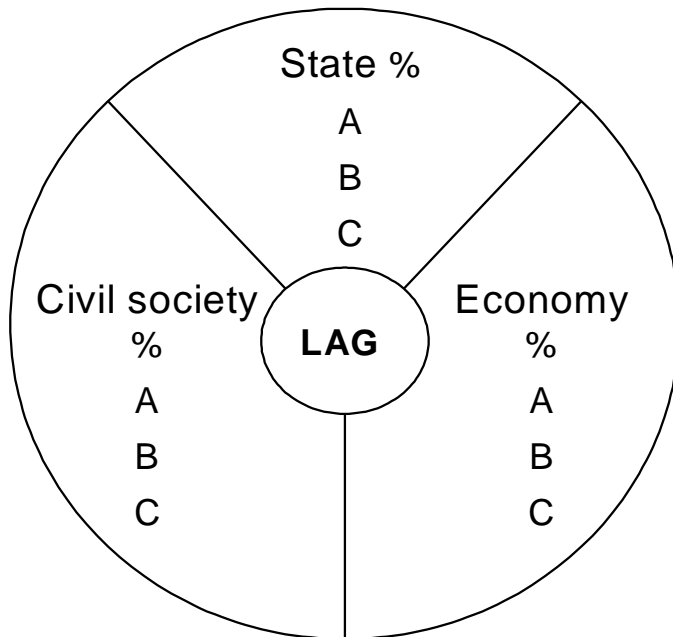
In general LEADER can contribute in different ways to all of the six success potentials:

Success potential	Support via LEADER
1 Quality of concept	Key contents
2 Organisational structure	Financing staff: LAG-manager; 50-50% for decision-making body (LAG)
3 Commitment of the participants	Support through LAG-Management (important for volunteers)
4 Abilities of the participants	Learning by doing; special measure for qualification, rural networks (seminar, publications); exchange between different LAGs (also international)
5 Level of acceptance and cooperation	Additional money supports collaboration (no problems with “hard interest conflicts”; nobody loses)
6 Access to material resources	Money for projects and staff

### 3. Improving regional governance?

In this context *regional governance* can be defined as a network-like collaboration of actors from three different groups (the state, the private sector (economy) and the civil society) with the aim of coordinating actions and regulating processes of common problem solving in regional development processes. A typical attribute is the voluntary involvement (so actors always have an exit-option). Obviously, it is important to what extent each of the three different groups contribute to the LAG (expressed by %-rate). But in addition three aspects are crucial:

- A) Estimation about further engagement in the LAG (danger of exit-option)
- B) Satisfaction with fairness of decision-making (input legitimation)
- C) Satisfaction with outcome of decisions (output legitimation)



To get good impression about the conditions of governance in the LAGs a questionnaire<sup>1</sup> was used in 100 LEADER-Regions in Germany (with more than 2000 LAG-Members). In this questionnaire the individual LAG-members answered questions on a six-point scale and now it is possible to compare averages and distributions of the results (sorted by type of actors / by aspects A, B and C).

### 4. Advantages & Disadvantages of the LEADER approach

To get an impression about the implementation in practice it is interesting to look on the results of the following question in a written questionnaire for LAG-members: „Please do name the advantages and disadvantages of the LEADER-approach in comparison to other support/funding possibilities“. This was asked as an open question, answers were sorted in categories afterwards. Alltogether more advantages (144) than disadvantages (100) were announced by answering LAG-members (180) [of one federal state].

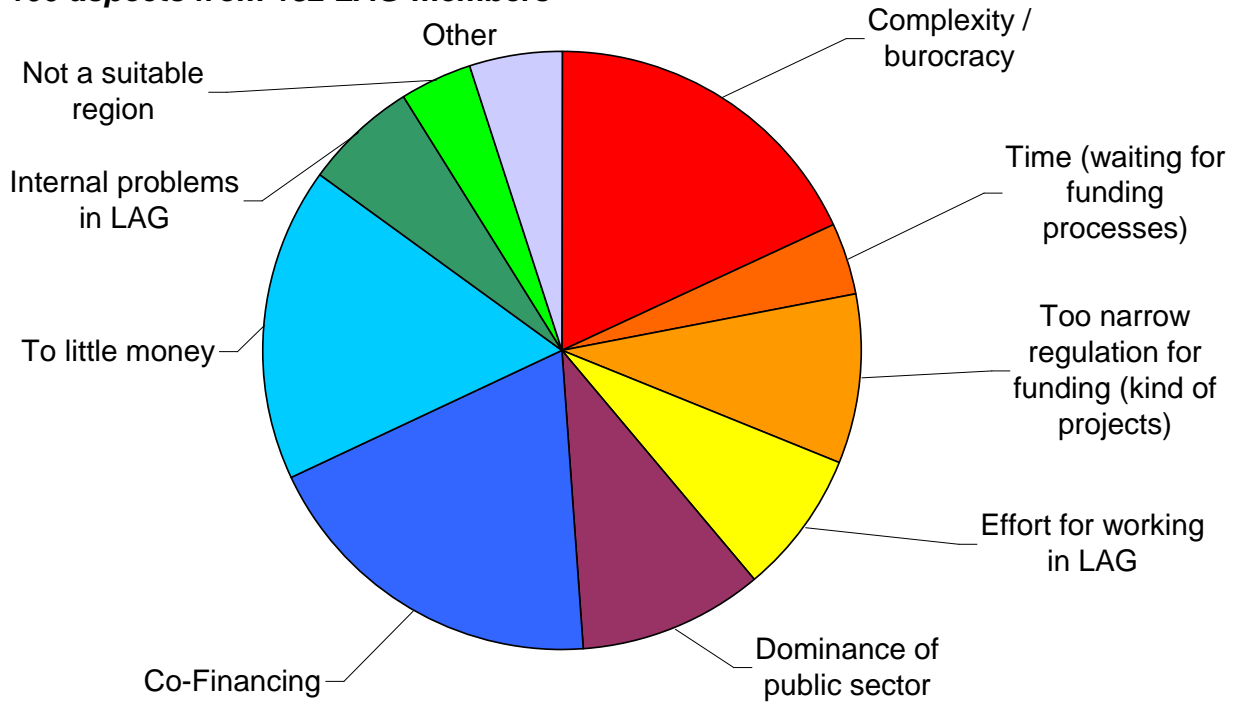
The distribution of the mentioned aspects on the different categories of answers is shown in the figures below:

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<sup>1</sup> This survey is part of the evaluation of RDPs in seven federal states in Germany, which is conducted together in a working group with Petra Raue and Gitta Schnaut at the Johann Heinrich von Thünen-Institut.

**Disadvantages of the LEADER approach:**

**100 aspects from 182 LAG-members**



**Advantages of the LEADER approach:**

**144 aspects from 182 LAG-members**

