

Developing rural services

"RURAL INNOVATION"

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- > a working group on services in rural areas set up by the LEADER European Observatory and the **CELAVAR** (Comité d’Etude et de Liaison des Associations à Vocation Agricole et Rurale/Study and Liaison Committee for Agricultural and Rural Associations, France). Co-ordinated by **Gilda Farrell**, Deputy Director of the LEADER European Observatory, the group was composed of **Jacqueline Mengin**, **Pascal Vin** and **Alain Chanard** (CELAVAR), **André Faggion** (TELIDE, France), **Helga Jäger** (Germany), **Jan Olson** (LEADER national training unit, Sweden), **Claudio Tassoni** (Institute of Management of Social Services of the municipality of Castel San Pietro (Emilia-Romagna, Italy)).*

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Foreword

Similarly to employment and the creation of activities, local services are today an essential factor for maintaining people in rural areas. Furthermore, services also generate new forms of solidarity and social cohesion. The introduction, upkeep and renewal of local services in low population density rural areas makes it necessary to search for appropriate solutions.

The problem of organising services is prevalent, be that in rural areas situated far from towns or the urban hinterland, but the possible solutions vary. The solutions may require the provision of supplementary services or an amalgamation with the services supplied in urban areas or in the different rural areas.

Local services should be adapted to the new needs that arise as a result of changing consumer lifestyles, particularly in terms of quality and the specific categories of clientele such as the elderly, commuters, young couples, etc.

The changes are related to new functions of rural areas e.g. resettlement services, the setting up of decentralised services by large companies, exploitation of the natural habitat, development of sporting and leisure facilities, etc.

These different possibilities place local services at the centre of a strategic reflection that concerns each area according to the sector that the area aims to develop in the future.

The reflection exercise concerns local authorities, private and not-for-profit bodies as well as the service users.

In facing these challenges, this document proposes:

a) a general analysis of the problem

This first part of this document aims to:

- > define the ground covered by the services sector and its general characteristics in the rural areas (section 1.1);
- > analyse the new demographic, institutional, technological and economic situations and the ensuing possibilities (section 1.2);
- > highlight the leverage effect that local services can have on rural development (section 1.3);

b) methodological elements for implementing local services

Support for the upkeep or creation of services in rural areas is often carried out in a sectoral fashion as part of a specific policy. The approach put forward here starts from an area-based approach where local services form part of a overall local development strategy. The second part of this document focuses on several stages, i.e.:

- > analysis of the gaps between supply and demand (section 2.1);
- > adjustment of the supply to the demand (section 2.2);
- > proposals for reflection on the role of LEADER groups in the approach put forward (section 2.3);

c) examples of tools for the different phases, i.e. identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of local services

In this part of the document, five tools are proposed with a view to contributing towards:

- > turning an analysis of rural services into an “animation” tool (tool sheet 1);
- > taking stock of available resources (tool sheet 2);
- > fine tuning the improvement of services (tool sheet 3);
- > evaluating the quality of services (tool sheet 4);
- > setting up training programmes to enhance quality (tool sheet 5).

Part 1

Local services in rural areas

Local services in rural areas

The challenges

1.1 What is meant by local services in rural areas?

Local services cover a wide range of activities that are essential to the lives of individuals and families. Services are a key element in maintaining communities in the rural areas where, in general, the population density is low. This raises questions such as service proximity and accessibility to users, the frequency of use, the remoteness of service providers and competition from urban services faced by service providers in the rural areas.

1.1.1 The range of local services

Local services refer to all services supplied directly or indirectly to individuals and/or families and which respond to individual and/or collective needs of an economic, social and cultural nature. They include:

- > basic economic services such as water and electricity supply for domestic consumption, collection of household waste, treatment of used water, etc.;
- > basic social services such as education (schools) and health care (doctors, pharmacists, hospitals, ambulance service, etc.);
- > other social services such as homehelps, support for child care, the elderly, etc.;
- > security services (police, caretakers, etc.);
- > transport services;
- > communication services (post offices, telephone services, etc.);
- > information services;
- > fixed or mobile shops (grocer's shop, bakeries, etc.);
- > cultural and leisure services.

The various services are different in nature both in terms of the cost for the users and in terms of the providers or suppliers.

a) In terms of cost for the users, there are:

- > **market services**, i.e. sold at prices determined by the market;
- > **market services with public authority intervention** in fixing prices and ways of organising provision, e.g. the post office, pharmacy, water and electricity supply, etc.;
- > **free-of-charge services** financed by the public authorities, such as schools, upkeep of public roads etc.
- > **services whose costs are partly subsidised by the public authorities and partly paid for by the consumer** (often on a means-tested basis), such as crèches and other social and cultural services.

b) In terms of suppliers, the different types of services can be supplied by:

- > national, regional and local authorities;
- > the private sector;
- > the not-for-profit sector.

In the past, the provision of free services was the preserve of the public sector, whereas the private sector was confined to supplying market services. Today, this compartmentalisation is fast becoming a thing of the past with each of the three sectors being able to supply market services, market services with public intervention and free-of-charge services. For instance, there are now contractual arrangements for sub-contracting between the public sector and the private or not-for-profit sectors for carrying out functions which had exclusively been the role of the public sector. Furthermore, in some cases, the public sector has entered the commercial domain, providing tailored quality services that are paid for by the consumers.

This distribution of services between the three sectors varies from one country to another, depending on each individual country's own history and traditions.

For example, community transport services may be: public but partly paid for by the consumers; public and free-of-charge; private but with public authority intervention; or of a private/commercial nature. The services can be supplied by private or public companies, associations or local authorities.

The supply-demand relationship for each of the three types of services is evolving in a different way. With regard to market (profit-making) services, supply depends, above all, on the financial solvency of the demand and on a minimum profit threshold to ensure the activity's financial viability, in the case of shops for example. As for market services where there is public intervention, supply corresponds to a "protected" demand and sometimes depends on a minimum financial threshold, decided on by the public authorities. For instance, the viability of a post office in an area depends on the number of users. Finally, with respect to non-market services, service provision depends on the availability of the resources to be distributed or managed for the collective well-being. In addition, service provision here also depends on a minimum threshold decided on by the public authorities. For example, the number of pupils considered as sufficient for maintaining a school, or the voluntary resources available in the case of certain cultural services.

1.1.2 The specific feature of rural areas with regard to services

As a result of the low levels and scattered nature of the population, services in rural areas are faced with a certain number of difficulties that are particular to rural areas.

Certain difficulties concern the service users and are relative to:

- > proximity;
- > accessibility.

Other difficulties are related to the suppliers of services and are linked to:

- > frequency of use;
- > isolation;
- > competition from urban services.

1.1.2.1 The difficulties concerning the consumers

a) Proximity

The proximity of a service in rural areas is, above all, linked to how frequently it is used, i.e. on a daily, one-off or exceptional basis. People in rural areas are inclined to travel longer distances for exceptional or higher quality services. In France, for example, it is estimated that for services used everyday, consumers travel on average within a 20 minute radius, whereas for exceptional services, consumers are willing to make a journey of about one hour.

In France, a certain order of priority given to facilities is noticeable with regard to the type of service and frequency of use, as the table below demonstrates. The most often used services manage to sustain themselves in the most isolated areas, whereas the least frequently used services have to be located in more urbanised areas in order to be viable. In this logic, the rural areas are dependent on urban centres. However, for certain services, other solutions can be envisaged as we shall see in the next chapters of this guide.

A DIFFERENT SECTOR, A DIFFERENT APPROACH

Type of sector	Market	Market with public intervention in fixing prices and modes	Non-market (non-profit making)
Evolution in the supply	according to the financial solvency of demand	according to a protected demand	according to the availability of resources to be distributed or managed for the collective well-being
Minimum threshold	financial profit threshold	decided on by public authorities	decided on by public authorities or depending on the volunteer resources available

ORDER OF PRIORITY IN ATTRACTING FACILITIES, SHOPS AND SERVICES IN FRANCE

55 facilities, shops and services are classified between 1 (least frequent/widest covered area) and 9 (most frequent/smallest covered area).

Level 1: URBAN CENTRE 1 Hospital Maternity hospital 2 Medical analysis laboratory Cinema open on a regular basis Large do-it-yourself shop Clothes shop (for men) = 6 facilities/services	Level 2: MARKET TOWN CENTRE 3 Private school Music school Savings bank Supermarket Dry cleaning shop Clothes shop (women, mixed) Furniture shop Shoe shop Camera shop 4 State school Police station Tax office Fire brigade/emergency service Retirement home Solicitor Banking service Dentist Physiotherapist Veterinary surgery Ambulance service Retailer's shop Bookshop Hardware shop Haberdashery Household appliances shop Flower shop = 26 facilities/services	Level 3: VILLAGE-CENTRE 5 Doctor Nurse Pharmacist Hairdressing saloon Taxi service 6 Petrol station Diesel station Fuel distribution 7 Post office Butchery Grocer's shop Bakery Decorator's shop General electricity Plumbing Car repair = 16 facilities/services	Level 4: MINIMUM SOCIAL LIFE SERVICES 8 Masonry Carpentry Weekly religious service Daily newspaper outlet 9 Pub Tobacconist Gas distribution = 7 facilities/services
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Source: INSEE and the Ministry of Agriculture (France)
 - Inventory conducted in 1988 at the district level
 (cited by Bernard Leurquin in "La France et la politique du Pays", Syros/CNFPPT, Paris, 1997)

b) Accessibility

The problem of accessibility in rural areas is even greater than that of proximity.

In some cases, it occurs in terms of transport facilities by which consumers can travel to service centres. From this point of view, public transport is an essential basic service. When transport facilities are not available, the only possible alternative is privately owned transport, a means that is not accessible to all groups of the population.

In other cases, accessibility is realised through home delivery services, which entail extra costs in terms of investment for the equipment used and running and maintenance. This is the case with the supply of electricity, water and gas, post office services, telephone services, meals-on-wheels, home medical care, etc.

Other services needed to ensure accessibility are information and communication. Through these, it is possible to find and access a service; to contact an emergency help service (by telephone or the Internet) or quickly obtain advice or information that is needed immediately.

Transport facilities for delivering services and means of communication make it possible to push the limits of accessibility beyond proximity, that is, to make a service accessible even if the point of supply is not situated nearby.

1.1.2.2 Difficulties encountered by suppliers

a) Frequency of use

The concentration of people in towns guarantees the services installed in urban areas a certain regularity in the flow of clients, thus facilitating return on investment both in terms of materials and human resources.

In rural areas on the contrary, due to the low population density, services are confronted with irregular demand and must, therefore, find other ways of operating to compensate for this disadvantage, such as grouping services together or providing more than one type of service.

Another way of overcoming this difficulty would be to increase the number of clients in order to attain a sufficient level of demand to ensure the service's viability.

For instance, for a service delivering cooked meals at home to be viable, it needs to produce a certain number of meals per day, which in the rural areas requires a good distribution network. This requirement can be met by supplying several types of clients e.g. school canteens, meals delivered to the homes of the elderly, etc.

b) Isolation

The remoteness of certain services may cause problems in terms of securing and supplying a service. A small shop in a village can, for instance, encounter difficulties in stocking certain products or goods.

c) Competition from urban services and the cost

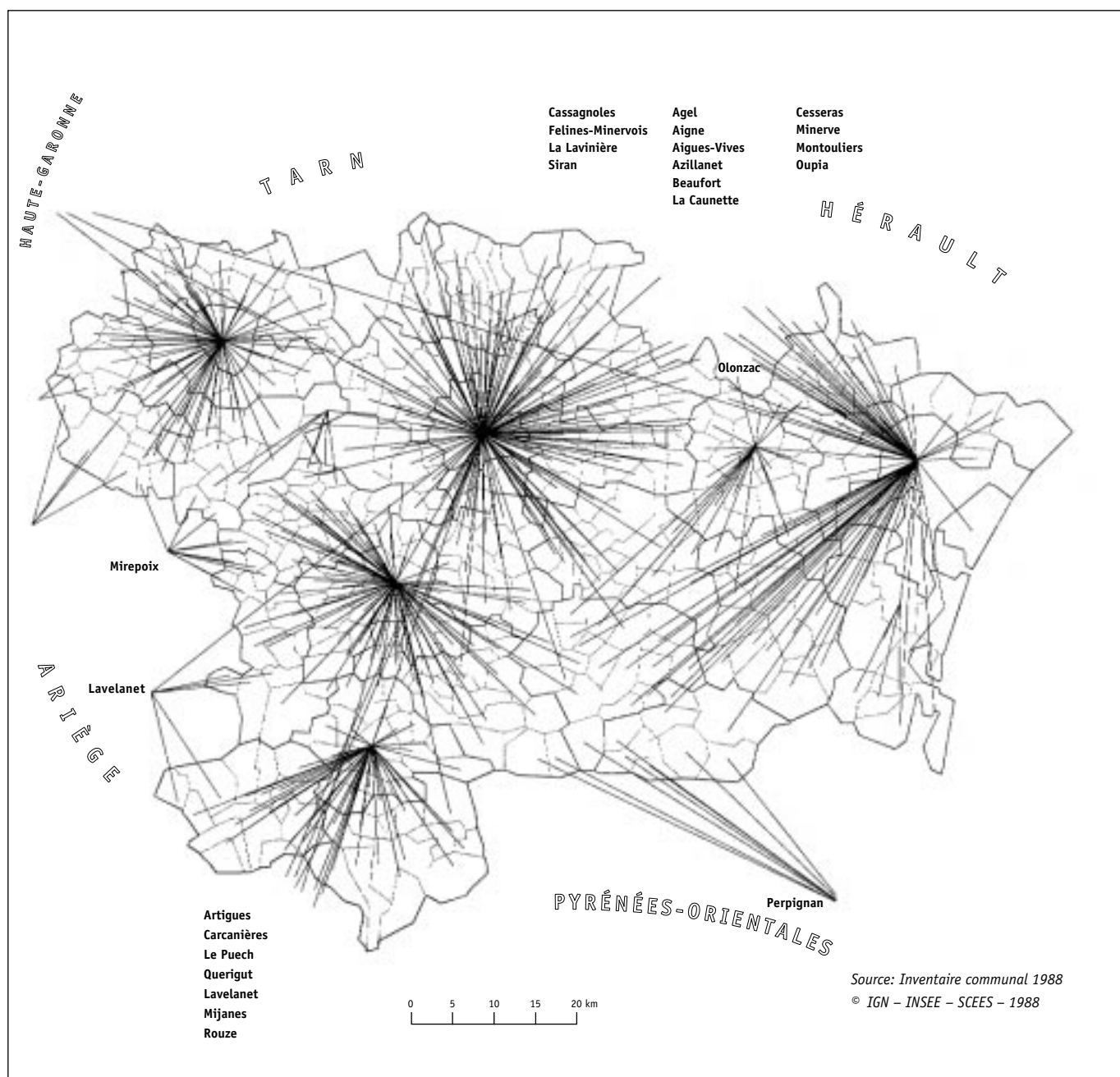
Transport and communication put services in rural areas in competition with urban services. Competition is heightened by the fact that services in urban centres benefit from comparative advantages linked to the concentration of consumers. Moreover, commercial urban services in particular attract customers more easily because they are grouped together, function on a daily basis and are wider in the range of services on offer.

This general trend compels local authorities to reflect on policies that can alleviate the problems. One of the solutions that could be investigated is the supply of rural services that are at least of an equivalent quality to that of urban services.

In the small rural municipality of Castel San Pietro (Emilia-Romagna, Italy), the only existing school was insufficiently equipped in comparison with the schools situated on the outskirts of the nearest town. The parents gradually deserted the local school and enrolled their children in the towns schools in spite of the distance. With the support of the district authorities, the local school was restored and re-equipped. It has progressively become more popular and is now attracting not only the local village children but also the children living in some neighbourhoods close to Castel San Pietro.

ATTRACTIVE TOWNS AND MARKET TOWNS IN THE COUNTY OF AUDE (LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON, FRANCE)

A line links each district to the frequently visited town



1.2 New contexts, new challenges

Presently, profound changes are taking place at the economic, demographic, institutional and technological level with decisive, and at times conflicting, implications for local services in rural areas.

1.2.1 The new economic context

Historically, there have been two successive and contradictory types of evolution relating to services in rural areas:

- > Firstly, there was a tendency to bring services closer to the people by installing basic services in villages, e.g. schools, post office services, health care, electricity and water supply etc. This trend, based on the planning policies for rural areas, was predominant in the 19th century and first half of the twentieth century;
- > Then, with the development of new means of transport, the first trend was replaced by another, which is inclined to concentrate services away from town centres. It is based on the search for reduced costs and greater efficiency and is often accompanied by an improvement in the general quality of services.

As a result, in the sector supplying local services, there is a general trend to concentrate services:

- > in terms of the size of service production units. In most European countries, for example, the distribution sector is dominated by hypermarkets;
- > in terms of area, through the grouping together of service supply centres in towns and surrounding areas, rather than through an area-wide distribution logic.

Against a background of growing competition, the tendency to concentrate services responds to the need for greater competitiveness between services, notably via:

- > the search for higher levels of productivity bringing about reduction in the cost of production and in the price paid by the consumer;
- > easy access to consumers, making it possible to reach more people and, as a result, to generate considerable economies of scale;
- > the provision of services with an improved degree of performance. In the health care sector, for instance, large hospitals have put in place special high technology services and, as such, can provide highly technical and secure services in mother and child care, intensive care, specialised surgery, etc.

Concentration in terms of size and space, therefore, brings about a more competitive value for market services, endangering geographically scattered and small sized service suppliers, as in case of rural areas. The latter are obliged to concentrate on particular services in such a way as to overcome the competition of concentrated services:

- > by taking advantage of the remoteness of rural communities from urban service centres (the further away from urban centres the greater the advantage);
- > by promoting quality criteria that concentrated services could not easily provide, notably, more human than technical criteria such as human contact, the social environment, etc. which form a particularly important dimension in the sector of local services.

Evolution, therefore, has important implications for the supply of services in rural areas. It very often forces the functioning and organisation of services to be totally revised. To this end, there is often a search for forms of complementarity, combination or indeed association agreements, regarding representation and distribution networks for instance, with services situated in towns.

Nevertheless, the general tendency to concentrate services is today being called into question in certain areas of service provision. Additionally, a closer relationship with consumers is progressively being sought. This is the case with services provided at home for the elderly or the sick, or libraries and information centres, etc. in the form of mobile or teleservices. Also, certain services such as sporting and cultural services, tend to follow the population distribution in an area, even in very small districts, because every local administrative authority is required to provide a minimum of such services.

Another important aspect of the economic evolution in recent years is the increase in under-employment, making the fight against unemployment a political priority in both urban and rural areas. Local services are often considered as an unexploited source of employment. To this effect certain policies at the European Union and individual Member State level aim to provide frameworks that are adapted to the search for innovative solutions, notably through a combination of official support and consumer participation, in order to cater for unsatisfied demand.

1.2.2 A new demographic context

The demographic evolution of rural areas obviously has a decisive impact on the supply, demand and organisation of services. Today, this evolution has three characteristics, i.e.:

- > rural depopulation;
- > population movements within rural areas;
- > settlement in rural areas by new categories of people.

a) Rural depopulation

Rural depopulation is an ancient phenomenon which has intensified since the Second World War, leading to a demographic context that is much less favourable to retaining local services. As a result, services whose sustainability requires a minimum threshold of local users have tended to disappear thus accelerating the depopulation process.

According to a survey conducted in 1997 in England (United Kingdom), out of about 9 500 parishes with less than 1 000 inhabitants, 42% no longer had shops, 43% no longer had a post office, 49% no longer had schools, 75% had no daily public transport, 56% had no petrol filling stations, 91% had no day care service for the elderly and 92% had no police station. In order to do their shopping, rural families without private means of transport (20% of the population) had to travel a distance of 35 kilometres per week as opposed to the 20 kilometres made by an urban household in similar circumstances.

In France, 1 050 mayors of small districts (with less than 1 000 inhabitants) replied to a questionnaire drawn up in 1996 by the Institut Mairie Conseils. Twenty-six per cent were of the view that the local services supplied in their districts were satisfactory, 56% thought the services were barely sufficient and 3% were totally dissatisfied with the services. The smaller the population of a district, the less satisfied it is with the services. The services that the mayors most fear will disappear locally are, in descending order, the post office (for 21% of the mayors), the village shop (11%), the railway station (11%), a primary school (9%), the hospital (7%) and the pub (3%). The services that are most lacking in the small rural districts are a shop (28%), public transport (19%), health care services for the elderly (10%), a crèche and a day nursery (7%) sporting facilities (5%), a pharmacy (5%) and a youth club (4%).

b) Population movements within rural areas

The migration of people can also take place within the rural areas themselves. Today, small villages are increasingly being deserted for the benefit of market towns where services tend to be concentrated. The trend is exacerbated by the fact that a majority of the active rural population in much of the European Union is today made up of wage earners who are less attached to a specific place than farmers, who represent only a small part of the active population.

In countries where districts have been grouped together such as Sweden, the population tends to concentrate around service centres. The phenomenon is a cause for concern because these population movements are especially made up of younger people with a higher level of education.

c) Settlement in rural areas by new categories of people

Another aspect of the evolution of the rural demographic context, especially in recent years, is the settlement in rural areas by new categories of people, e.g. old age pensioners, commuters, unemployed people from the towns, etc.

In France, the elderly move to rural areas more than any other age category. The 55-69 age group forms 42% of departures from urban areas. From the age of 70 years onwards, mobility is motivated by the search for proximity of services and equipment, which implies a certain return to urban areas¹. Presently, the rural population is distributed as follows²:

- > 50% of the rural dwellers were born in the rural areas and have never left;
- > 27% of the rural dwellers are originally from rural areas but have spent part of their lives in towns and then returned to the rural areas;
- > 23% of the people living in the rural areas are newcomers, i.e. people from the urban areas who have settled in the rural areas.

The newcomers are an opportunity for repopulating the villages and maintaining or recreating services in the rural areas. To this end, some districts operate a policy aimed at enticing people to settle in rural areas, such as the provision of housing and specific services for the elderly, etc.

[1] Source: INRA, INSEE: *Les campagnes et leurs villes – Contour et caractères 1998* – p.62

[2] Source: Association des Maires de France

In Upper Swaledale (England, United Kingdom), the population in the village of Muker has risen by 23% in 4 years, thanks to the reinstatement of a multi-service centre catering for the elderly and providing child care, sporting and leisure amenities for young people, meeting rooms, etc³.

d) Qualitative changes

Demographic changes also occur at the qualitative level, if the changes in lifestyles, activities, forms of social and family organisation, etc., are taken into account. Along with these changes, the notion of need also varies. Basic needs, whose importance was essential in the past, have now been relegated to a secondary level (except for the poorest people and families). Today there is, in general, demand for new types of services, which attaches greater importance to the quality and form of the services, notably in terms of the modes for use such as timetables, accessibility, flexibility, personalisation, possibility to be assisted at any time even for remotely located consumers, etc.

Some of the changes in demand in the last 20 years constitute employment generating opportunities in the services sector. As a result, there is a growing tendency to delegate certain tasks which, traditionally were performed within families. The tasks:

- > are linked to baby-sitting, assisting school children with home work, assisting the elderly, care for sick people, etc.;
- > relate to specific domestic chores such as laundry, ironing, preparation of meals, etc.

This new type of demand has brought about an enlargement and diversification in the range of services, and at the same time sought to establish functional complementarity. In the past, for example, the problem of the elderly was solved via the creation of collective housing structures e.g. old people's hostels and homes, for those who were not being cared for by their families. Today, there is a propensity to keep old people in their homes. This trend is associated with the use of distance forms of assistance such as delivery of cooked meals, etc., combined with one-off services supplied by specialised centres. Currently being developed, particularly in the Scandinavian countries, are services that combine assistance for people of different age categories e.g. the elderly and young children, thus paving the way for the recreation of social links and providing a service with a more human face.

1.2.3 A new institutional context

The sharing of responsibilities and activities between the public, private and not-for-profit sectors is also undergoing profound changes.

Traditionally, a public service was expected to be accessible and identical for all the citizens, irrespective of their place of residence. Organised according to public interest, inexpensive for users (sometimes free-of-charge), public services were for a long time one of the main mechanisms for redistributing national wealth and a symbol of equality. Today, the relationship between the state and the citizen is four-dimensional in terms of service delivery, i.e.:

- > privatisation and deregulation of services so that they can also be supplied by the free market;
- > outsourcing of service provision (notably for people) to external operators (private or not-for-profit) with the public authorities maintaining general planning functions;
- > financial contributions that users are asked to make to cover a substantial part or indeed the totality of costs in return for adapting services to meet new quality demands and diversifying the range;
- > discontinuation of non profitable services, leaving local partners the freedom to reorganise the services according to the local conditions.

a) Privatisation and deregulation

Privatisation and deregulation of services formerly supplied by the state engender specific effects on rural areas due to the structural characteristics particular to rural areas, e.g. the scattered nature of households and businesses. The market mechanisms progressively gaining ground can function only if there is a minimum concentration that ensures a sufficiently attractive economic interest for the suppliers of the service. In the rural areas where these conditions do not exist, basic services are either abandoned or tariffs are increased in relation to distance.

Nevertheless, where the local authorities are dynamic, these policies could be opportunities for new forms of collaboration and consultation at local level.

[3] Source: *Ruralfocus – Rural Development Commission – Spring 1998 – p.24*

In the county of Angus (Scotland, United Kingdom), following the privatisation of public transport, transport provision in rural areas has considerably diminished, leading to situations of isolation for people without private means of transport. As a result, the LEADER group, in partnership with the municipal authorities and some local associations, has set up a service organised around already existing means of transport such as milk, mail and school vans. This service is run by a full-time worker and conducted on the ground by associations who register the requests for transport and facilitate contacts. The mobilisation of the different entities (the post office, dairy, etc.) was made possible through municipal support.

Deregulation also has an impact on service delivery to businesses. Certain forms of intervention in this sector serve as a reference to local services.

In Scotland (United Kingdom), the Stirling LEADER group, managed by a local development body, has encouraged businesses in rural areas to group together to purchase gas and electricity, so as to obtain more advantageous financial conditions from the newly privatised companies supplying the services in question. In addition, a consultant has been contracted to study the possibilities of saving energy and of reducing the harmful effects of energy on the environment.

b) Outsourcing to external operators

Outsourcing to external operators is conducted, in certain cases, through sub-contracting or service supply contracts of a fixed duration. In most cases, these contracts are concluded through the establishment of regulatory frameworks or invitation to tender procedures.

The tendency to outsource to external operators the provision of certain services, hitherto supplied by the public sector, has given rise to the emergence of new structures and public/private relationships. The public sector now plays the role of designer and guarantor of service quality, and the private sector that of supplier/executor in a cost/profit perspective.

In Italy, in the 1980s, it was recognised that volunteer organisations, social co-operatives, associations, etc. were providing public utility services, notably for population groups in difficulty. As a result, negotiations lasting more than ten years were undertaken during which the organisations concerned grouped together to form a national lobby. The process led to the promulgation in 1991 of law 266/91 on social organisation, and law 381/91 on social co-operation. As a consequence, in

Italy today, there are 2 000 social co-operatives, composed of remunerated and voluntary workers. The co-operatives are usually born of the desire of a group of citizens to respond to a local need, or of local authorities to sub-contract a service provided by the local authorities themselves in the past. Each social co-operative is managed by its remunerated and voluntary workers. This democratic form of management enables the co-operatives to maintain good collective vitality and to tackle local problems that too often are not fully taken into consideration. The concession of markets is accompanied by clauses on modes of quality control.

However, the social co-operatives have noticed that the markets outsourced by the state do not generate real possibilities for viable activities unless demand is sufficient. As such, the co-operatives are based especially in the towns. In the rural areas, a sufficient level of demand was reached thanks to the creation of consortiums bringing together several areas, making it possible to overcome the limits of local markets.

In other cases (for example Sweden, a country where the grouping together of districts has been considerable), outsourcing has been realised through support for the formation of local autonomous groups, capable of organising and delivering services to the population according to local demand and in replacement of services formerly supplied by the districts. This approach is based on public financing and on a strong mobilisation of voluntary work (see sheet M19 of the directory **"Innovative actions of rural development"**, LEADER European Observatory, 1997).

Sub-contracting can sometimes be a problem in terms of the durability of services supplied by non-public structures. The success of the sub-contracting system depends on the public authorities' capacity to finance the sub-contracted functions in the long-term and/or on the capacity of the sub-contractors to generate, through their action, sufficient demand. In the case of Italian social co-operatives, grouping together in a wider geographical area, for example at the regional level, has enabled them to consolidate their presence in certain services sectors by becoming structures with a capacity to provide a service at good value for money.

c) Financial contribution by the consumers

This contribution brings about diversification of supply and improvement in the quality of certain public services, thus placing them on the same level as private services. It also ensures that supply does not concentrate solely on the most solvent clients, thanks to social redistribution mechanisms.

With a view to diversifying the range of leisure services for young people, the municipality of Castel San Pietro (Emilia-Romagna, Italy) has undertaken to organise every summer, in collaboration with sports organisations, youth centres and parishes, and with the financial contribution of the consumers, a full programme of activities for young people aged between 3 and 16 years old. The programme covers sporting and cultural activities, nature discovery activities, language tours in France, England and the United States, which are sometimes fully financed by the users. With regard to child care, the town has introduced new paying services such as games, crèches, flexible day care services, etc. For all these services, the financial contribution from families is means-tested.

d) Discontinuation of non-profitable services

This tendency is a result of the shift from a concept of service access for all, to one of efficiency/rationalisation in the supply of the services. In this perspective, the discontinuation of services appears to be the most immediate and efficient solution. Consequently, post offices, train and bus services have gradually been discontinued in the rural areas due to pressure from the rationalisation of public expenditure and new ways of organising the area. Nevertheless, in certain cases and for certain types of services, notably social and cultural services, the state has been encouraging people to find alternative solutions of self-management, through awareness-raising campaigns and provision of funding to this effect.

In Sweden, following the process of grouping districts together, a national campaign ("Hela Sverige Ska Leva – All Sweden shall live"), was launched in the early 1990s encouraging Swedish citizens to participate more actively in the organisation of community and social services in the villages by forming local groups. In 1998, 3 500 local groups were active in rural areas and have taken charge of developing local services. Their task is to find solutions adapted to the very low population density in those areas. The groups rely mostly on voluntary work but also generate a considerable amount of investment and several thousand waged jobs.

However, certain policies designed at the national level with the aim of improving the quality of life can contribute to the deterioration of the situation for rural communities, if they are not accompanied by specific measures.

In the United Kingdom, the Royal Commission on Environment Pollution in 1994 recommended an increase in the price of petrol in real terms between 1995 and 2005 until the price had doubled, with a view to reducing the use of privately owned cars. The Environmental Change Department at Oxford University conducted a study on the problem of transport and poverty, thus creating the concept of "travel poverty", suggesting that the policies aimed at reducing vehicle emissions should be concentrated above all in the areas where public transport services are sufficient. Policies aimed at assisting the poorest, especially in the rural areas, should focus on putting in place adequate bus services. This could be done using the revenue generated by the increase in the price of petrol.

1.2.4 A new technological context

The advance in information and communication technologies that has taken place in the last twenty years has made it possible to overcome partially or totally certain constraints that are particular to the rural areas and, as such, to reduce the obstacles in relation to towns:

> **in terms of distance** – in the LEADER area of Rajupusu in Finland for instance, a telematics network enables the inhabitants of small isolated villages to access official forms, for obtaining official certificates, building licences, etc., to fill them in and return them without having to travel to town. The points of access to these services are situated in the village shops. The shopkeepers concerned are trained in the supply of the services. The project is an outcome of an agreement between the government, municipal authorities and shopkeepers. Apart from maintaining people in rural areas, the objective of the project is to encourage rural shopkeepers to diversify their field of activity;

> **in terms of scale** – the threshold necessary for making certain services viable can be reduced. A publication service, for example, requires considerable investment and, therefore, a relatively large market that can only be found in town. Thanks to micro-computer facilities, this service can function on a minimum amount of equipment and, consequently, adapt itself to a smaller market. Modern technologies can even produce a small print run, of a news-

paper for example, at a unit price that is hardly different from that paid for newspapers printed in greater numbers;

- > **in terms of quality** – thanks to new technologies, quality constraints linked to distance are being done away with. By virtue of the Internet, a country doctor, for instance, can have information and technical assistance that would enable her/him to supply a service of a quality that is nearly equivalent to that of an urban medical practice staffed with several specialists. In the medical field, however, these new technological possibilities do not necessarily compensate for the growth in regulations and for consumers' heightened expectations as far as quality of treatment is concerned. For reasons of safety, for instance, maternity centres tend to be concentrated in urban areas, near hospitals.

Use of certain new technologies can sometimes be problematic in terms of cost, which is often prohibitive for remote areas with a low population density. The level of expected technological advancement should, however, make it possible to progressively overcome this problem in the future.

1.2.5 Diversity of local contexts

Economic, demographic, institutional and technical changes occur in different forms depending on the country and area. As such, there are considerable differences depending on the density and distribution of the population and depending on how far away they are situated from urban centres:

- > **depending on population density and distribution** – the obstacles encountered in providing services to the population are very different depending on whether the population density is above 80 inhabitants per km² or below 10 inhabitants per km². But more than the average population density, it is the geographical distribution of the population that is decisive. In an area with a low population density for instance, the people may be in particular places e.g. market towns, which supply a whole range of services to rural communities. In general, there is a direct relationship between the size of a parish and the number of services available, as shown by the following survey conducted in England.

Size of parish	Parishes with at a least one shop
0-99 inhab.	8%
100- 199 inhab.	18%
200- 299 inhab.	33%
300- 499 inhab.	51%
500- 999 inhab.	78%
1000-2999 inhab.	96%
3000- 9999 inhab.	99%
Total	58%

Source: "1997 Survey of Rural Services",
The Rural Development Commission.

- > **depending on the distance from urban centres** – a rural area situated near a town is subject to greater competition from services supplied by the town and greater demographic pressure, e.g. a large number of commuters, old age pensioners, etc. In this context, the development of local services is a major challenge in the effort to prevent the area from becoming a "dormitory zone". In this regard, the introduction of services adapted to the demands of newcomers and of an acceptable quality of life that enables the area to compete with the services supplied by the town nearby, could form a basis for recreating local vitality.

On the contrary, in the areas that are situated far away from towns or to which access is difficult, and for which the absence of a demographic critical mass is a real handicap, the problem of prioritising the services to be maintained arises in two different ways:

- > in terms of the essential services to be maintained in order to avoid depopulation;
- > in terms of the development of specific services aimed at catering for or attracting certain categories of the population, e.g. young couples, the elderly, etc.

1.3 Local services as a leverage for rural development

In the current context, the adaptation and upkeep of local services is not only a new challenge for rural communities, but also a genuine lever for rural development, notably with regard to the creation of jobs and new activities, mobilisation and social cohesion, new ways of utilising resources and linkages with other areas. Together, these form a local development project.

1.3.1 Job creation

New types of demand for services are currently emerging in rural areas. They are the result of:

- > a willingness to extend access to personal assistance services to the entire population, even in isolated areas;
- > an aspiration for a better quality of life that takes account of needs, other than the basic ones. This implies extending access to cover cultural and leisure services, etc.

The demand offers employment opportunities in different domains including:

- > administrative and intermediary tasks between structures and citizens;
- > flexible management of mobile and distance services;
- > creation of cultural and leisure services, etc.

There are two approaches to job creation in the services sector, i.e.:

- > an approach that is specifically centred on the fight against unemployment (a short-term perspective). The sector providing services to the population is indeed often perceived as a source of employment opportunities capable of absorbing unemployed people with low qualifications or young people just entering the labour market.
- > an approach aimed, above all, at making up for a certain deficit in service provision and carried out on a long-term basis.

A combination of these two approaches is necessary in ensuring a certain efficiency in terms of job creation and a certain quality in the services supplied. It is important to avoid creating underpaid work.

This combination can be conducted through:

- > more flexible modes of partnership between the public, private and not-for-profit sectors;
- > greater legitimacy for the not-for-profit sector to manage public funds;
- > support through further education.

LOCAL SERVICE PROVISION: TWO APPROACHES IN TERMS OF JOB CREATION

Approach	Programme for combating unemployment	Project for the creation of services
Objective	Creating means of integration into the labour market	Creating services through new arrangements combining paid and voluntary work, responses to social needs and the market economy
Legal arrangements regarding employment	Dispensatory measures for work of short duration, with reduced employers' charges	Jobs governed by common law Legislation on voluntary work
Types of activities concerned	Socially useful activities in non-competitive domains, implemented by the public or not-for-profit sector on the initiative of public authorities	Collective interest activities, implemented in autonomous non profit entities
Financing	Public financing	Combination of financial resources

Source: Jean-Louis Laville, "Les services de proximité en Europe", Syros Alternatives, p.114.

1.3.2 Creation of new activities

Many examples show that setting up a service can be a lever for launching other activities (e.g. creating a service centre in a rural area can produce a snowball effect and attract other activities); that synergies are possible between transport or information services and other services and that launching a new service can raise the profitability of another.

In Lozère (Languedoc-Roussillon, France), the village of Massegros (321 inhabitants in a district of 833) no longer had any shops, which forced the inhabitants to do their shopping in a market town situated 15 km away. Fearing loss of part of the population, the municipal authorities transformed some office space belonging to them into a grocer's shop. The shop is a branch of the supermarket situated in the market town and, therefore, has the same prices. Nevertheless, the absence of a petrol outlet in the district forced the inhabitants to continue travelling to the market town, using the occasion to do their shopping, thus threatening the grocery's existence. As a result, the municipal authorities decided to open a petrol filling station in the village, assuming the responsibility to cover eventual running deficits. The station is able to cover its running costs and the grocer's shop is now profitable⁴.

1.3.3 Mobilisation of the population and social cohesion

Saving a service that is in danger of disappearing or creating a new service to respond to a local need can be the driving force for the collective awareness of the inhabitants. It is a way of reinforcing their common identity references and a certain social cohesion. The safeguarding or creation of a service can lead to a consumer behaviour that not only responds to economic choices but also to feelings of belonging to a local community.

In the Stirling (Scotland, United Kingdom) LEADER area, the inhabitants of a village decided to take over the only shop in the village, which was on the verge of being closed down. They bought shares in the shop (15 EUR each) and turned it into a co-operative. Keen to ensure the co-operative's viability, the members undertook to mostly shop at the co-operative, thus making the business profitable. The shop also provides a post office service and has progressively become a meeting point and enhanced social interaction. For instance, the window display is dressed in turns by the different local associations, village school children, etc.

1.3.4 New ways of exploiting resources

Local service provision uses resources until then non-exploited or under-exploited, e.g. the infrastructure, labour, skills, etc.

Several districts in Emilia-Romagna (Italy), starting with Parma in 1991, have set up "time and solidarity banks". The members of the banks give their time free of charge to supply services in exchange for other services. Time is, therefore, the currency. Through these banks, certain needs can be met free of charge via the creation of a network of individual skills based on reciprocity and equality. The creation of time banks is underpinned by a feeling of belonging to the same community, and by the existence of current unresolved problems.

Two types of time banks have been developed i.e.:

- > "geographical" time banks bringing together the inhabitants of a small area where multiple services are exchanged;*
- > "thematic" time banks which are organised around a group, a place or a specific concern such as the exchange of school services between the parents of school children, etc.*

1.3.5 Linkages with other areas

Making a service viable in rural areas sometimes involves organising it in a network to bring about an improvement in the quality and a reduction in the cost of certain services. In this way, the area concerned benefits from linkages with other areas which, in turn open new development perspectives. Networking can group the needs together, i.e. by making demand viable particularly in low population density areas and by modernising the supply, i.e. by increasing access to appropriate technological solutions.

In the Stad-Och Land (Sweden) LEADER area, the prospect of a village school closing down galvanised the inhabitants into creating in 1996 a network of the local schools. The network has facilitated the sharing of distance learning services and improved the quality of education for schools with only a small number of pupils. At the moment, co-operative links are being established with areas in Scotland confronted with similar difficulties.

[4] Source: CRIT Lot et Garonne (France)

1.3.6 Integrating services in an area development project

The provision of local services in rural areas stands to gain from integration in a comprehensive area development strategy, which at the same time plays the role of lever. Integration opens other horizons in terms of identity and common objectives, notably with regard to quality. It also facilitates the co-ordination of services, provides relevant complementarities and guarantees a better geographic distribution of services. Furthermore, improved co-ordination also leads to a more sensible use of resources, in some cases reducing start up and/or viability thresholds. Finally, an overall strategy facilitates the identification of certain key services for the area's development.

a) Consolidating and enhancing cultural identity

The structural constraints of rural areas make it difficult to guarantee the same levels of diversity and quality of services achieved in towns. The development of new technologies contributes towards reducing the gap between towns and the countryside, but could never completely remove it.

However, rural areas have assets that are linked to their specific area and identity. The values inherent in rural areas, such as calm and space, could also be promoted. Moreover, customised services, quality in the human relations and greater participation of users in the services can often to be found in the countryside.

This much wider notion of a service's quality, based on the specific characteristics and identity of a rural area, opens innovative perspectives in terms of development. In this way, the sector providing services to rural communities is no longer considered as being in difficulty and inefficient, with defects that need correcting, but as a vehicle for the expression and assertion of the identity of an area. It is a development lever bringing together people around a certain image and quality of life and a renewed and modern local identity.

In this way, the quality of life has become a widely used concept in promoting the image of rural areas.

The district of Aichach-Friedberg (Bavaria, Germany) is an area with no particular characteristics, situated between the neighbouring towns of Munich and Augsburg. The local players have been brought together in a partnership with LEADER and are creating a new local identity on the basis of the historical origins of the Wittelsbach dynasty

of Bavarian kings, whose birthplace is Aichach-Friedberg. Aichach-Friedberg's slogan is now: "Land of the Wittelsbachs: a good, modern place to live in and love".

b) Co-ordinating services, seeking complementarities and ensuring a certain balance

Integrating service delivery in area strategies also facilitates the co-ordination of services and the search for complementarities between them, leading to an improved service for the community.

Complementarities at a rural area level can be established in terms of transport services by integrating the latter in the wider service and sold as such to the customers.

In certain rural areas in the Netherlands, there is a transport system combining train and collective taxi services, which transports passengers between their departure/destination point and the railway station. The users of this form of transport buy special tickets that cover the whole service.

Complementarities of this kind can also be established between services of a different nature.

In Bregenzerwald (Austria), on the initiative of the LEADER group, local business players e.g. farmers, hoteliers, restaurant owners and transport companies have agreed to combine their services and sell them as a package to tourists. The service is sold in the form of a card at a set price and gives tourists access to a wide range of existing services in the area during their stay there.

Even more than complementarity between services, a comprehensive area-based approach brings about a certain balance in the geographical distribution of services. The approach can be discussed in a concerted manner with the different key players concerned and thus become a factor of mobilisation and development. This is notably the case with services relating to young people such as music schools, cultural and sports centres which can be distributed, on mutual agreement, in the different villages, thus providing each one of them with a nerve centre.

c) Ensuring a more sensible use of resources

An area-based approach also makes it possible to take stock of available resources and to seek more judicious ways of using them. This may concern existing infrastructures e.g. schools, post offices, local authority headquarters, etc. or under-utilised human resources e.g. the unemployed, young people, professional people living in the area but working elsewhere, etc. A more beneficial way of utilising available resources

helps lower the financial thresholds for starting up activities and sometimes helps increase the viability of essential services that did not exist before or that were on the verge of disappearing.

On the small island of Holmon (Sweden), an old people's home is being run with a staff of just 7 employees thanks to local solidarity that has made it possible to reduce service costs: a doctor who hails from the island provides a free of charge service when he returns for the weekend, the manager of the home is replaced by local volunteers in case of illness, etc. The introduction of this service was made possible thanks to a concerted approach at the local level, making it possible to identify and mobilise certain resources that were until then not being utilised, especially the doctor skills.

d) Identifying and implementing key services for the development of an area

Certain services are particularly important for the development dynamic of an area. Such is the case with information services (local media), which can play a fundamental role, not only in terms of local information but also in the mobilisation of people and the creation of common references, such as collective awareness and promoting aspects of the area's identity, common reflection, exchange of information and points of view, etc.

Part 2

Implementing local services in rural areas

Implementing local services in rural areas

Part 1 demonstrated to what extent meeting the service needs of rural communities can be complex and difficult.

In this second part, some proposals are put forward for methodological reflection regarding the implementation of local services that form part of an area project.

Section one (2.1) is especially concerned with analysing the situation in terms of supply and demand. This is the starting point for defining objectives and a strategy at the rural area level. Section two (2.2) presents methodological elements relative to implementation with a view to filling in the gaps between supply and demand. Section three (2.3) provides some elements for reflection on the role of LEADER groups in the implementation of local services.

This part analyses the existing room for manoeuvre for the creation and safeguarding of services in the face of structural constraints in rural areas and of the general contextual changes. In addition, it reflects on the priorities and on the possibilities of establishing complementarities with urban centres.

2.1 Identifying supply and demand

The implementation of local services in a rural area requires an analysis of the trend in the demand and prospects for services in the area as a whole. This first step aims to identify existing gaps between supply and demand, which is the starting point for defining the objectives and a strategy for an area project.

Both supply of and demand for services and the gaps between the two can be analysed from four complementary viewpoints:

- > in terms of distance;
- > in terms of adaptability;
- > in terms of quality;
- > in terms of price.

2.1.1 Analysing real and potential demand

Demand for local services depends firstly on the general behaviour and lifestyles that are to be found everywhere and that change with the passing of time. For example, it is now completely natural to be in contact with the outside world via the television and telephone and yet fifty years ago, this link with the outside world was mostly via writing and reading, e.g. newspapers and letters. Certain particularities may exist as a result of the income levels and the cultural identity of a rural area.

As a result, the identification of demand in a rural area consists, above all, of determining the lifestyles. These are the references for the people of the area in question and to which the inhabitants of the area remain attached. For instance, in many rural areas, the existence of a pub in an area is an expression of the pub's importance as a social and meeting place. Attachment to a village school or local pharmacist are other examples of social reference.

It is important to take account of the changes in terms of perception of needs and of constraints and opportunities that result from more general changes that were briefly analysed earlier in this guide.

Consideration of these factors leads to the identification of priorities, which are to a certain extent expressed and explicit. One way of making them more explicit is by giving the people concerned an opportunity to confront their needs. This could be conducted via a participatory analysis (village audit) or classic interviews exercises, or by using existing services to detect new needs, such as information and host structures, etc. An analysis of these priorities leads to the analysis of the demand from four angles already mentioned above i.e. distance, adaptability, quality and price.

a) Analysing demand in terms of distance

Demand is relatively exacting in terms of distance according to the type of service, frequency of use and availability of transport. In some cases, the proximity of a service is indispensable for meeting the demand; in others, a certain distance to be travelled by the user becomes an acceptable condition.

More than the distance itself, the criteria to be considered are the time spent in travelling and the possibility to access several services in the same place. In this way, as a result of their lifestyles, consumers regard the geographical concentration of services as being very important.

b) Analysing demand in terms of adaptability

Several elements are involved in the demand for the adaptability of a service:

- > the periodic or irregular nature of demand, for instance, the need for access to a library can be monthly or bi-monthly, the purchase of meat can be weekly, etc.;
- > demands in terms of timetables.

Demand in terms of adaptability is linked to the trends of modern life and emerge from the needs of one parent families, working women, young people in search of social integration, etc.

The demand for adaptability is not always an obvious matter and can be expressed in the form of an unspecified general demand. Some people may, for example, ask for a full-time day nursery in a village and yet this need can be met by a nursery that opens only on market days. Demand should, therefore, be interpreted with a view to identifying the relevant level of adaptability.

Furthermore, situations of isolation can generate particular demands in terms of adaptability, such as the grouping together of information, linkages with other people or institutions, organisation of means of transport on demand, etc.

c) Analysing demand in terms of quality

Demand in terms of quality comes in two types, i.e.:

- > the **technical quality** of a service, established according to recognised standards and accepted by the communities on the basis of comparisons with the outside world and
- > the **human qualities** of a service, that is, everything relating to the relationships between those concerned, the type of welcome the user receives, the customisation of the service, etc.

d) Analysing demand in terms of price

Demand for services may be more or less solvent: even when it is relatively explicit, consumers may not always be able to fully afford a service. In this regard, the question of price, conditions and quality of the service arises.

e) Analysing real and potential demand

An analysis of the demand of services available does not only concern the inhabitants of the area but also people that are potentially interested in the area, e.g. tourists, people on short stay, new residents, etc. Tourist information services can play a role in identifying this type of demand.

This is the case with South Pembrokeshire (Wales, United Kingdom), where simple questionnaires are distributed to tourists in pubs, shops, etc., places that also play the role of information centres. The questionnaires serve to identify the service needs of people passing through the area. This approach facilitates the development of adequate responses by local operators, in an area whose development depends heavily on tourism.

2.1.2 Analysing real and potential supply

Similarly to demand, the supply of services in a rural area can be analysed at four levels.

a) Analysing supply in terms of distance

An initial approach could consist of identifying the existing supply in terms of proximity i.e.:

Which services are still being provided locally?

Which services have been centralised? Where and for what reason?

What are the threats to the services still provided locally?

Which services have disappeared and for what reasons? How has it been compensated for?

Which services have moved closer to the service centres as a result of new technologies, mobility of services or other reasons?

What local distribution policies have been put in place to improve the quality of the life in the area as a whole?

The question arises also with regard to the accessibility of these different types of services, and as such, to the provision of existing collective transport. How many people are cut off from a service because they do not have appropriate transport services?

b) Analysing supply in terms of adaptability

How flexible is the service *vis-à-vis* particular types of demand? For instance, are different types of services being grouped together within the same structure? Do multi-service providers exist?

How has service provision evolved in terms of adaptability? What are the examples of the evolution? What are the prevailing trends in the area: adaptability of services to new (demographic, economic, etc.) demands or rather discontinuation/concentration?

c) Analysing supply in terms of quality

To what extent do consumers participate in developing the services provided? How are their demands taken into consideration?

Which quality characteristics do local services have in comparison with those in nearby towns? In some cases, this question arises in terms of competition between a local service and a more concentrated one. For example, parents often prefer to send their children to schools farther away because they provide a higher quality education than the local school.

In other cases, the question occurs in terms of complementarity between a local service and a centralised service, making it possible to obtain a higher quality of life. For instance, a local medical service and a town hospital can work together in mutual complementarity.

d) Analysing supply in terms of price

At what prices are the different types of services sold in the area? Who are the main competitors? In what way can the difference in price between what is paid locally and what is paid in town for the same service compensate for the cost of travel to town?

The price competitiveness of a service depends largely on the combination of resources that the service uses, i.e. public resources, voluntary work, existing infrastructure, etc. Which mechanisms or policies ensure, at the local level, an optimal combination of available resources, e.g., the participation of users, consultation between suppliers, etc.?

In short, the provision of services follows different trends depending on the type of supplier as the table below demonstrates.

ANALYSING SUPPLY ACCORDING TO TYPE OF SUPPLIER

Supplier	Public sector	Private sector	Not-for-profit sector
Distance	Decentralised in the past, the service now tends to follow a profitability and concentration approach	Centralisation of services aimed at the achievement of a sufficient critical mass for an economic balance	For certain services, voluntary resources and associations make it possible to maintain services at the local level
Adaptability	Rigidity of structures Special nature of the service reproducing the urban model. Nevertheless, there is search for adaptability when the decision-making capacity is closer to the area.	Mobility of certain services (especially mobile traders and weekly markets; and occasionally mobile banks).	Greater adaptability, personalisation and consideration of particular demands.
Quality	Search for a standard quality. New mechanisms for taking consumers' demands into account. Quality can remain low in monopolistic situations or where there are no mechanisms through which consumers can exert pressure.	Adaptation to quality standards, but even more to diversification as a result of competition. Lack of involvement of users. The growing precariousness of job security with negative repercussions on the quality of services.	Extremely variable quality depending on the level of recognition, available resources, etc. More than the structure, quality depends on the level of personal involvement of those providing the service. Effort to involve suppliers and consumers.
Price	Standard prices or free of charge services. The price varies according to the level of income of the consumer. Subject to competition.	The closer services are to scattered populations the more expensive they are.	Free services or services priced according to the consumer's level of income. These services are mainly aimed at palliating deficits.

2.1.3 Identifying the gaps between supply and demand

Following the same logic as the one used in the analysis of demand and supply, the gaps between supply and demand can appear in four ways:

- > in terms of distance: there is a gap when the service sought by the consumer is to be found at a distance beyond the acceptable limit for the consumer due to the cost, time involved in travelling or lack of access to adequate means of transport. In general, the geographical distribution of services does not respond to consumer expectations.
- > in terms of adaptability: there is a gap if service provision is not capable of meeting the needs of the users in terms of the diversity of proposed services, modalities made available, timetables, rigidity in the design and use of the structure or a specialised approach (the only response to a scarcely populated area is the discontinuation of the service);

- > in terms of quality: there is a gap when there is no adaptation to the content of the service, when the opinion of consumers is not taken into consideration and when a scattered demand makes it impossible to provide a service of acceptable quality;
- > in terms of cost: gaps in terms of price appear when the prices are incompatible with the purchasing power of consumers, e.g. disadvantaged social groups.

Identifying the gaps between the supply and demand of services requires consultation of the inhabitants through surveys, participatory analyses, an office to receive complaints, etc. Here also, the establishment of an order of priority is particularly important for identifying the elements that are decisive in maintaining people or for attracting newcomers.

QUALITY-DISTANCE AND INTENSITY-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIPS: TWO CONCLUSIONS

> Quality-distance

In a similar way to products (in the agri-food or tourism sectors for example), services are subject to a quality-distance analysis by the consumer. If the quality of the service is low, its proximity is not a determining factor of demand, even if access to the service does not involve travel.

> Intensity-distance

The intensity of using a service (on a daily, periodic or exceptional basis) is also a factor determining demand. For services used only exceptionally, e.g. obtaining a building licence, passport, etc., the consumer is inclined to travel longer distances, whereas for the services linked to everyday life, proximity is an important factor. Thanks to appropriate technologies, however, certain exceptionally used services can be supplied locally, thus improving the quality of life of rural dwellers.

2.2 Closing the gaps between supply and demand

Redressing the balance between supply and demand in rural areas requires a new outlook on mobility, distance services and multifunctional facilities in order to reach a larger proportion of people, and to reduce profitability thresholds through a more rational use of resources. Such solutions often involve bringing together different between different individuals and resources, which may go beyond the local type.

2.2.1 Closing gaps in terms of distance

Three types of approaches are currently being used to overcome distance as an obstacle between supply and demand:

> **mobile services** – a mobile games' unit in Portugal, French bus libraries, mobile banks in Ireland are but a few examples of how widespread the use of this solution is.

The objective of the Mertoza (LEADER Serra de Caldeirão area, Alentejo/Algarve, Portugal) mobile games' service is to develop children's creativity. For four days a week and in two villages a day, the service provides support to school teachers in isolated areas by enabling them to develop team work and to renew their educational tools. In this hilly area with a poor transport network, the games' service also serves as a meeting and communication place for the teachers and children who are isolated due to the scattered nature of the local population.

Created in 1995, the mobile day nursery in Hond-schoote (Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France) is composed of an equipped caravan. The service spends half a day per week in each of the 7 villages involved in the project with a view to providing a nursery service for children aged between 3 and 6 years on the weekly market day. In each of the villages, a hall is prepared and made available to supplement the space provided by the caravan. As an extension of the system, a baby-sitting service has been made available for a maximum of 20 hours a week for women who are prepared to travel to where the service is provided within the different villages. The tariffs are calculated according to each participating family's income level.

In order to facilitate the search for employment for unemployed people, a travelling service has been put in place in the Toulouse (France) area: the "Bus pour l'Economie et l'Emploi/Bus for the Economy and Employment" goes round all the small villages situated within a radius of about 20 kilometres from the town. The bus is open at set hours, advertises job vacancies, provides a wide range of information linked to the search for employment, etc.⁵

The introduction of these types of services requires either partnership between several villages in the neighbouring areas with the same type of needs or an organisation or business that is prepared to offer part of the services in a mobile manner in order to be more accessible to the users.

> **using new communication technologies** – the "teleservice" or "distance service" concept is today applied in a growing number of fields e.g. telemedical care, telework, distribution of administrative forms via the Internet, telebanking, etc.

As part of its policy to regenerate the inland areas of the island, the LEADER group in Corsica (France) has contributed to the setting up of a "video-kiosk" in the isolated village of Levie so that the inhabitants can accomplish certain administrative formalities, concerning for example, marital status, family allowance, job search, etc., which in the past required four hours of travel to the administrative centre. This system, which combines computer and video facilities, also provides services to businesses, notably access to databanks and the possibility to organise teleconferences with the consular chambers. Plans are under way to set up video-kiosks in each of the micro-regions of Corsica.

> **amalgamation of several types of services within a public** (e.g. the post office) **or private** (e.g. a shop) **institution**, i.e., the "multi-service" notion.

In the Creuse (Limousin, France) area, the post office also provides other services such as the distribution of propane gas bottles, reservation and sale of train tickets, collation of job vacancies and searches, etc.

In Germany, the new "Nachbarschaftsladen" (neighbourhood shops) act as mini supermarkets, local branches for mail order, post office, bank, dry cleaner, repair service, etc. The shops sometimes have a small bar and a lottery kiosk⁶.

[5] Source: CRIT Lot et Garonne (France)

[6] Source: LEADER Magazine, n°9, summer 1995

In the Blackdown Hills (Somerset/Devon, England, United Kingdom), the village shops have been organised into information office networks for use by the inhabitants and tourists. The shops provide information on local transport, leisure activities, health centres; information on the business opportunities; key information for visitors such as over night stay facilities, leisure activities (e.g. walking routes and bicycle renting), local products, etc. The "Public Points" in France operate along the same lines. In scarcely populated rural areas, the public points group together district, county and/or national services such as the National Employment Agency, French Gas, French Electricity, the Family Allowance Office, the Social Security Service for the Agricultural Sector, local associations, etc. 62% of the services provided involve given advice, information, guidance and distributing documentation. 28% concern file processing and 10% issuing of deeds, 50% employment, training and vocational insertion, 25% social action, 10% paying public services, 4% equipment and housing and 5% agriculture, small and medium sized enterprises, economic and fiscal matters⁷.

- > **a balanced geographical distribution of the range of services supplied** – an overview of the area (obtained through inter-district or area partnership agreements) makes it possible to plan the distribution of services in such a way as to improve response to a scattered demand. Leisure (cultural, sporting, etc.) services, for example, can be distributed in an area in a way that enables each village to both run and benefit from a specific service.

2.2.2 Closing the gaps in terms of adaptability

Today, there is a noticeable willingness to adapt supply to the demand of services, notably, with regard to:

- > **timetables**, which are now established according to the needs of consumers and users.

In the Arcos de Valedéz (North, Portugal) area, a service providing assistance to the elderly is now open during the night. It is, indeed, during the night that isolated old people most feel the need for support and safety. In this way, the old people can carry out their usual occupations, e.g. keeping a few domestic animals, gardening, etc. in their homes during the day and then retire to the centre in the evening where they each have a private room for the night. The centre provides various other services such as laundry, preparation of meals, health services, etc.

- > **several services under one roof** – improving the quality of services requires diversification in and complementarity between the different types of services, often grouped together in the same place.

The amalgamation of services is a formula that is becoming increasingly popular in Swedish villages. In Trångsviken (Jämtland), an area with 600 inhabitants, an "Association House" was created with the aim of regenerating the area. To this end, a number of local socio-economic players got together and undertook to convert a building in the village centre into a multi-service hall, with a post office, library, crèche, restaurant, show room, gymnastics room and medical service. In all, 14 activities have been grouped together on a modifiable surface of 1 700 m².

2.2.3 Closing the gaps in terms of quality

This objective can be attained through:

- > **a tailored service with human contact**

In Italy, certain rural districts have set up a video system in old people's homes enabling them to be in direct contact with an operator. This is a very important element in the human environment of the people concerned, it gives them a sense of security.

In Naverbyn (Sweden), the amalgamation of services for the elderly and children in the same multi-service centre has fostered stronger inter-generational relations and improved the human environment of those involved. The meals and certain leisure activities are shared, but each old person may retire at any time to her or his room. Also, the children have their own place for games. Apart from improving the quality of the service, especially from the human perspective, this grouping together of services has made a structure in an area with a low population density viable.

[7] Source: Letter from DATAR – French Ministry for Planning and the Environment – October 1997

> improving quality in terms of content

In Val de Bruche (Alsace, France), two women formed an association and launched a bookshop in a rural area. In order to make the project workable, they needed to be able to attract readers who normally got their reading material from towns. To this end, the two women played on the quality of the service by launching a readers' association which organises debates on the books sold and constitutes a real cultural forum and place for social interaction for the local community. As the bookshop is in direct contact with the inhabitants, it can adapt its supply to the expectations of the consumers and play the role of cultural facilitator at the local level.

> the creation of multi-functional meeting places
also responds to a concern relating to the quality of services in rural areas.

In several rural districts in Sweden, local groups from the rural campaign Hela Sverige Ska Leva (All Sweden must live) have rehabilitated existing structures by grouping several functions in them, among them, leisure activities and group meetings, and certain basic services such as a post office and a health centre. The structure has been made viable by the contribution of the different users.

2.2.4 Closing the gaps in terms of price

With regard to the price of services, reducing the gap between supply and demand requires, above all, a decrease in the cost of services. Three types of solutions are possible:

> a more rational utilisation of available resources
– the resources available are often devoted to only one type of use when it is possible for them to be put to other uses. Grouping several services together makes it possible to reduce the overheads:

> infrastructure – *in a Norfolk (England, United Kingdom) village, a school building was designed in such a way as to be used as a school for children during the day, as a theatre during the evening, as a medical centre twice a week and even as a place of worship on Sundays. The initiative's key to success lies in the centre's interior architecture which is modulable thanks to a system of detachable partitions. The multi-service complex is used by 2000 people making the school viable in this village of 900 inhabitants⁸;*

> means of transport – using mail transporting services to transport medicines and food, for example;

> human resources – *in another Norfolk (England, United Kingdom) village, a garage owner has taken over the activities of the post office which had closed for reasons of unprofitability. The garage has also been turned into a shop and thanks to the amalgamation of the three services, none of which is individually viable (the post office, for example, was only conducting 150-200 transactions per week, 70-80 of which were pension payments), the business now provides full-time employment for the garage owner and a member of his family⁹;*

> grouping scattered demand – Thanks to transport and communication, a service can meet a geographically scattered demand and be profitable.

In Emilia-Romagna (Italy), several small villages are, at the impetus of the local authorities, using the canteen services of a public enterprise to deliver hot meals to the elderly on a daily basis. In this way, the central unit is more profitable. The meal deliveries and quality control exercise are also organised collectively;

> flexible management through a combination of public resources and voluntary work – Management of services by the users themselves is a means of obtaining considerable gains in terms of productivity and efficiency.

There are many examples in Europe of leisure and cultural services where the infrastructure is provided by public authorities and managed by the users themselves.

2.2.5 Creating synergies between suppliers with a view to balancing the supply and demand equation

Public authorities, private companies and the not-for-profit sector each have their own outlook and are subject to particular constraints. Each sector also has specific capacities in terms of the type of services, knowledge, management and cost reduction, as the table on next page shows.

[8] Source: Malcolm Moseley and Gavin Parker – The joint provision of rural services – The Rural Development Commission – Rural Research Report n° 44 – p. 67-69

[9] Source: Malcolm Moseley and Gavin Parker – The joint provision of rural services – The Rural Development Commission – Rural Research Report n° 44 – p. 75-76

**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUPPLIERS
INVOLVED IN THE ORGANISATION OF LOCAL SERVICES**

Type of supplier	Public sector	Private sector	Not-for-profit sector
Financing of services	Grants Public funding	Private capital	Contributions
Approach	Redistribution, equity	Market forces	Reciprocity, social cohesion
Constraints	Administrative rigidity Generalised management of budgets	Financial profitability	Legal and legitimate recognition
Greater capacity in terms of:			
> Types of services	Basic social services	Supply of specialised services	Personalised assistance Culture Leisure
> Knowledge	Knowledge of the area	Knowledge of the market	Knowledge of the people
> Management	Management of facilities/infrastructure	Management of goods	Management of human resources
> Reduction in costs	Cost of infrastructure	Management costs	Labour costs (voluntary)

Traditionally, these different types of suppliers work separately, (administrative, legal, ideological, cultural, etc.) creating barriers which reduce partnership possibilities between them.

Partnership between suppliers can be a way of overcoming the limits of service provision and of closing the gap between supply and demand, in particular, in low population density areas. As the table above suggests, partnership between the public, private and not-for-profit sectors enables those concerned to create networks of the different skills and knowledge (among people, markets, areas, etc.) and to have access to several types of resources, at a reduced cost.

Working in partnership can also enable the suppliers to respond to types of demand which, taken separately, are not solvent and whose fulfilment implies gradual adjustments in financial terms.

In Italy, an agreement between rural districts, a super-market chain ("COOP") and a voluntary association has enabled the elderly to have food delivered to their homes at no extra cost: the supermarket receives the orders, packs the goods and provides a vehicle, and the delivery is carried out by the voluntary association, which receives a financial contribution in return from the districts.

Nevertheless, partnership working between the public, private and not-for-profit sectors is often confronted with difficulties, particularly of a legal/regulatory nature. At the local level, for instance a private enterprise cannot manage public funds and vice versa.

In Italy, in order to overcome this difficulty in part, a law was passed in 1990 (Law 142/90: legislation on local autonomy) enabling local authorities to directly allocate funds of a private origin (for example, from sponsors) for specific ends, without passing them through the general district budget. This is achieved through an autonomous semi-public body, which is created for a specific purpose and can manage funds from different sources.

The integration of voluntary workers in the organisation of collective services can also create legal or contractual problems: associations are governed by particular rules and fiscal and labour legislation which are not always adaptable, etc.

Difficulties relating to partnership can also arise between public institutions. When the public service approach is sectoral and specialised, the decisions are often taken centrally by the different ministers concerned, in general according to a global plan and financial viability defined in sectoral terms. The closing down of schools, hospitals, railway lines and post offices are examples of this approach. Whenever this type of action is taken, the question that arises is: what means are to be made available at a local level to influence or find alternatives to these decisions?

2.3 The role of LEADER groups

Due to their specific nature, LEADER local action groups (LAGs) can play a key role in integrating local service provision in an area project in the analysis, design, implementation and evaluation phases. Through their contacts, LAGs can also support the setting up and organisation of inter-area networks.

Local services have, so far, not been a priority for LEADER action. Nevertheless, many local action groups have realised that their key position presents possibilities for intervening in this field. Indeed, the LAGs have played a recognisable role in rural areas with regard to the identification of community needs, the creation of social links, the search for adapted solutions and control of these by the inhabitants. By bringing together the active forces in rural areas in local partnerships and maintaining close relationships with other groups at the institutional and area level, LAGs can take action in the field of local services in several ways.

2.3.1 Analysing existing services and available resources

The analysis of the existing services and available resources is the first stage of a facilitator's work with regard to services at local level. This approach can be conducted, for example, through the **mapping out of the services and resources**, which could serve as tools for collective reflection between the various partners concerned (see the map produced by the LEADER area Millevaches in France in the part on "tools" in this guide). This exercise helps to establish an initial picture of the area's assets and difficulties. It can also help to ascertain the degree of service concentration in the market town centres, the situation with regard to competition or complementarity, possible agreements between suppliers for new services, etc.

This critical analysis is based on public and private services whether present in or outside the area. The **historical dimension** of this analysis (for instance, services that had disappeared and those that have been altered) facilitates the assessment of the changes currently taking place.

The analysis could also investigate the **rate** at which infrastructure and facilities in place are **used**, thus providing an initial reflection on possible alternative uses.

In any case, the objective is to fuel local reflection on (public or private) services that need to be enhanced, co-ordinated in a different manner, created, etc.

2.3.2 Identifying unmet needs and emerging demand

The identification of unsatisfied needs and emerging demand involves direct contact with the communities concerned and is part of the LAGs' work as facilitators.

Indeed, only by listening to the inhabitants is it possible to detect their unmet needs and prioritise them with a view to maintaining the people already living in the area and attracting new families there.

Beyond this analysis, it is a question of understanding the lifestyles desired by the inhabitants of an area. For young people, for example, possible access to certain types of leisure facilities, e.g. pubs, discos, cinemas, etc. could be determining criteria for remaining in the area.

Such an analysis should also be able to take into consideration the needs expressed by the people living in relatively marginalised areas or areas unlikely to provide a profitable market. It is also worth identifying new expectations arising from sociological changes experienced by rural areas, for instance, changes in the family set up, changing lifestyles, population ageing, new residents, etc.

Dialogue can help to specify the needs and demands of various social groups. The exercise can be conducted around the question: how do we want to live in this area? It can take on more or less collective forms such as debates, role acting, etc. This type of work can play a key role in the assertion of a local identity and of a project that is common to the inhabitants in the area.

2.3.3 Participating in the definition and sharing of new criteria and objectives

At this stage of analysis, differences appear between the existing services and what the inhabitants desire in terms of priority, distance, accessibility, adaptability, quality and price.

These differences lead to the definition of certain criteria and objectives, both for the evolution of existing services and for the creation of new services that are likely to serve as a reference for the different actors concerned. For instance, in terms of adaptability and quality, if having quality child-minding services after school is an important condition for families, a criterion could be the capacity of the schools to propose extra-curricular activities such as sports, recreation, etc. LAGs can play an important role in this respect, not only in the definition of adaptability and quality criteria but also ownership of these by service suppliers by carrying out awareness raising and capacity building work with the people involved and/or likely to respond to the exercise.

2.3.4 Supporting the design of innovative solutions

This first phase of awareness raising and capacity building can lead to the design of solutions aimed at responding to identified objectives and criteria either by improving existing services or by creating new ones. Design work often involves the mobilisation of people and the creation of links between the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

Closing gaps in terms of distance can mean setting up a new service. In this respect, the action of the local authorities could be decisive.

In order to respond to the demand of young people wanting to have access to different types of leisure facilities, e.g. cinemas, swimming pools, skating rinks, night clubs, etc., that were concentrated in the nearest town (Metz, 40 km away), the district of La Chasse (250 inhabitants, situated in Lorraine, France) organised a bus for young people from the area who came together to form an association. The young people use this service on a shared basis. They manage the time use of the bus up to a fixed number of kilometres granted each month.

In order to close the gaps in terms of adaptability and quality, putting new players and new references in contact can be particularly important: a local shop can, for example, through contacts with the local producers organised with the support of a LEADER group, sell local quality products and in this way respond to the demand from certain categories of the population such as newcomers, tourists, etc.

Finally, gaps in terms of price also lead to the need for innovative solutions in order to reduce costs. These solutions may be found in the utilisation of new technologies or in the exploitation of a more judicious combination of existing resources and structures. For instance, different types of services could be concentrated in one place or new contractual links between public services and private businesses could be created. Also, a service using a relatively high level of voluntary work could be put in place.

At this stage also, the LAGs' role as facilitators could prove decisive. This could be achieved by introducing a new idea in the area e.g. a mobile service, by bringing together the people likely to play a complementary role, by organising the necessary technical support, or by providing assistance in securing funding, etc. LAGs can also play a determining role in the mobilisation of voluntary work.

2.3.5 Evaluating the feasibility of envisaged solutions

The design of innovative responses is obviously accompanied by an analysis of the feasibility and viability of the envisaged solutions before they are implemented.

Apart from carrying out feasibility studies, the role of the LAGs at this stage can also be to assist the individuals concerned in the evaluation of risks, to find risk-reducing solutions and to find forms of compensation, especially of the financial type.

This feasibility and risk evaluation exercise goes beyond the strictly economic and financial aspects of the service concerned, e.g. solvency of the market, investment costs, possibilities of funding the running costs of the service, long-term prospects, capacity to mobilise start-up capital, etc. The exercise also concerns issues of a legal nature, e.g. status of the envisaged structure, status of the service providers, respect for competition rules, etc. The exercise also looks into the local situation, for instance, does the project in question not risk clashing with certain local interests and, in this way, provoke reactions of rejection?

2.3.6 Supporting the setting up of new services

Introducing new services is always a delicate phase. Quite often, the initial project does not work according to plan due to, for example, withdrawal from the project by certain partners, unexpected problems, etc. As such, it is important to find replacement solutions, because some problems may require rapid responses. This is a time when those carrying out the project need to be supported and to create a network of relations to consolidate their project.

LEADER groups, being part of a diversified network at a local level and also at a more global level, can facilitate the networking process and the forging of new relationships. Furthermore, support from LEADER groups can take on various forms, e.g. assistance in the preparation of information dossiers for the public on the new service, fund raising or appraisal of certain technical points, etc..

2.3.7 Supporting project continuity

Once the take-off phase has been accomplished, projects often experience difficulty in carrying on. The critical phase may occur within the first three years, at a time when initial enthusiasm starts falling off, when volunteer workers start losing their motivation, when the initiative no longer benefits from the type of financial support enjoyed in the early days, etc. This is a time when those carrying out the project need a certain amount of autonomy, and yet at this stage the project will not have fully established itself on the market.

It is, therefore, important to find solutions that can enable the project to regain its momentum and to surmount the obstacles in this difficult phase. This can be achieved through a combination with other services.

In Alentejo Centro (Portugal), the Terras Dentro LEADER group had supported the launch of a certain number of restaurants to respond to a growing demand for quality restaurant services from tourists. A year later, in the small relatively isolated village town of Moura, one of the restaurant owners concerned explained to the LAG that, due to a lack of clients, he was going to have to close down his restaurant. In order to avoid this eventuality, however, he thought of organising on a weekly basis in the restaurant, a debate around a dinner on a theme linked to local development for a period of three months. The LEADER programme organised the invitations and financed the meal on the days the debate took place. This cultural activity, which has also played an important role in bringing people together in the area, gave the restaurant the added exposure which enabled it to attract a number of new clients that was sufficient to make it viable at the end of the operation.

As the example above shows, an efficient way of supporting the continuity of projects is to assist them in their integration in the local market through **promotion**. This can be organised for a particular service, or for the local services as a whole, for instance, by producing a guide on the existing services in the area, targeting the local population and those passing through the area such as tourists.

2.3.8 Evaluation with a view to moving on

Evaluating the services put in place is a key to success. It makes it possible to:

- > identify the weaknesses, difficulties and other elements relative to success and on which improvement of the viability and quality of the service can be based;
- > anticipate the measures to be taken on the basis of the evaluation;
- > draw lessons from the success or failure of a project and use them in the launch of other services.

Often, evaluations are either non-existent or carried out sporadically, empirically and unsystematically. LEADER groups can, therefore, play an important role here by mobilising the various individuals concerned around a joint evaluation.

For an evaluation to be fruitful, it needs to be shared by the persons and groups concerned e.g. service suppliers, funding agencies users, etc. In this way, a joint evaluation can play a particularly interesting facilitation role by enabling those concerned to re-think their position. This would mean that users specify their demand, suppliers their difficulties and opportunities, and possible funders their expectations and commitments, thus creating a consensus (by overcoming the misunderstandings or latent conflicts) and giving the service a new élan.

2.3.9 Training professionals and volunteers to carry out the new services

Training is a fundamental element in improving and rendering a service viable. The need for training may appear at the moment of launching the project but also at a later stage, notably during evaluation.

Analysing training needs is important and can play a decisive role in the success of the initiative. If these needs have been discussed between service suppliers, users and trainers, the objectives of the training are shared, making the training more relevant.

Training needs can be related to many questions such as *savoir-faire* and *“savoir-être”* (e.g. empowering those involved).

The training can be taken in many different forms. Providing part-time training, for example, is particularly interesting because the teaching provided can be verified and corrected, as the course proceeds, in relation to the needs, and a certain amount of support in the improvement of targeted services can be ensured. Further education is a tool for updating knowledge that is essential for good management in service delivery.

2.3.10 Organising inter-area networks

Thanks to their contacts and participation in several networks (starting with the LEADER network itself), LEADER groups can give an inter-area dimension to local services. This dimension is necessary for facilitating the viability of services or for improving their quality. LAGs can, for instance:

- > establish relations with urban services, in order to supplement or adapt the viability threshold or improve the quality of a local service. A local health centre can, for example, be twinned with a large hospital situated in town;
- > set up a joint service with several rural areas, making it possible to reach a critical mass that would otherwise be impossible.

Part 3

Some tools

Turning the analysis of rural services into a capacity building tool

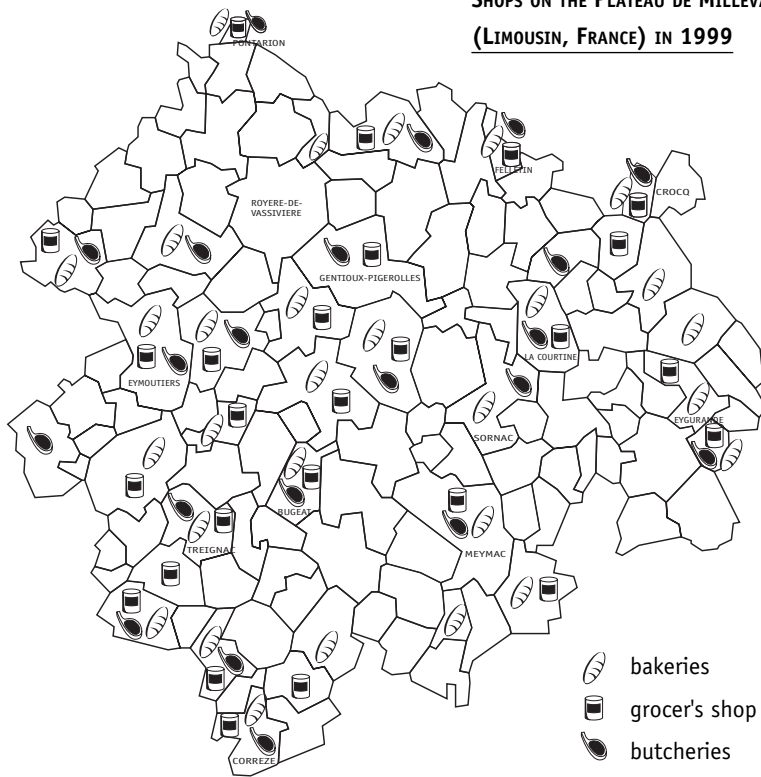
The tool presented here was prepared by the Mille-vaches (Limousin, France) LEADER group. The original document, to be analysed with the inhabitants, consists of a set of maps indicating the evolution of the population and of the services present in the area.

The document is accompanied by maps indicating distances between different points, whose purpose is to highlight the amount of travel involved in accessing services situated in urban centres.

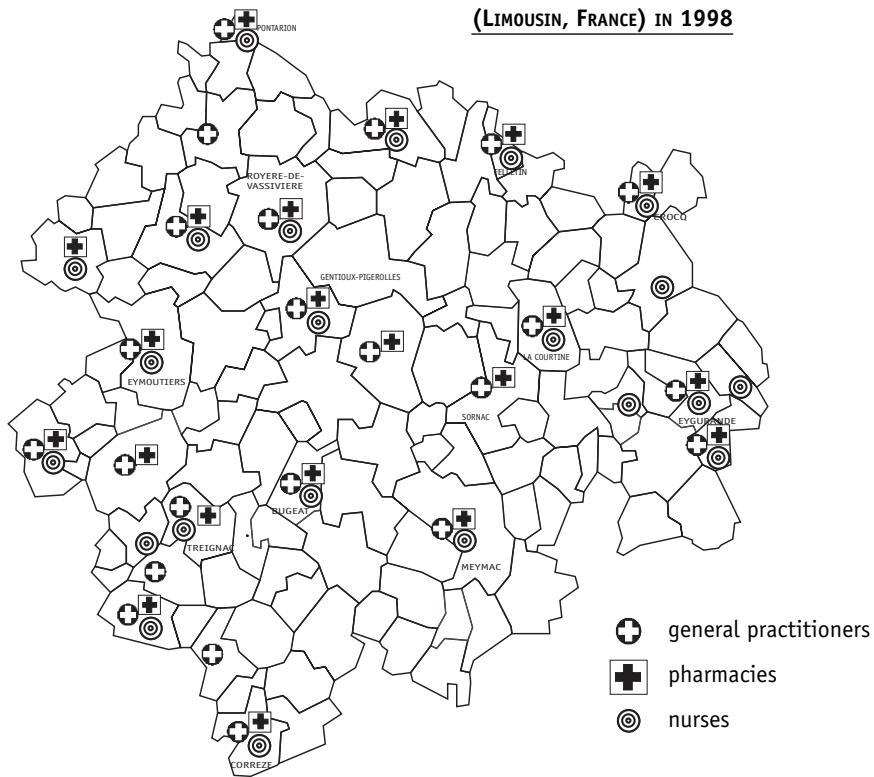
The objective of the maps is to identify with the population:

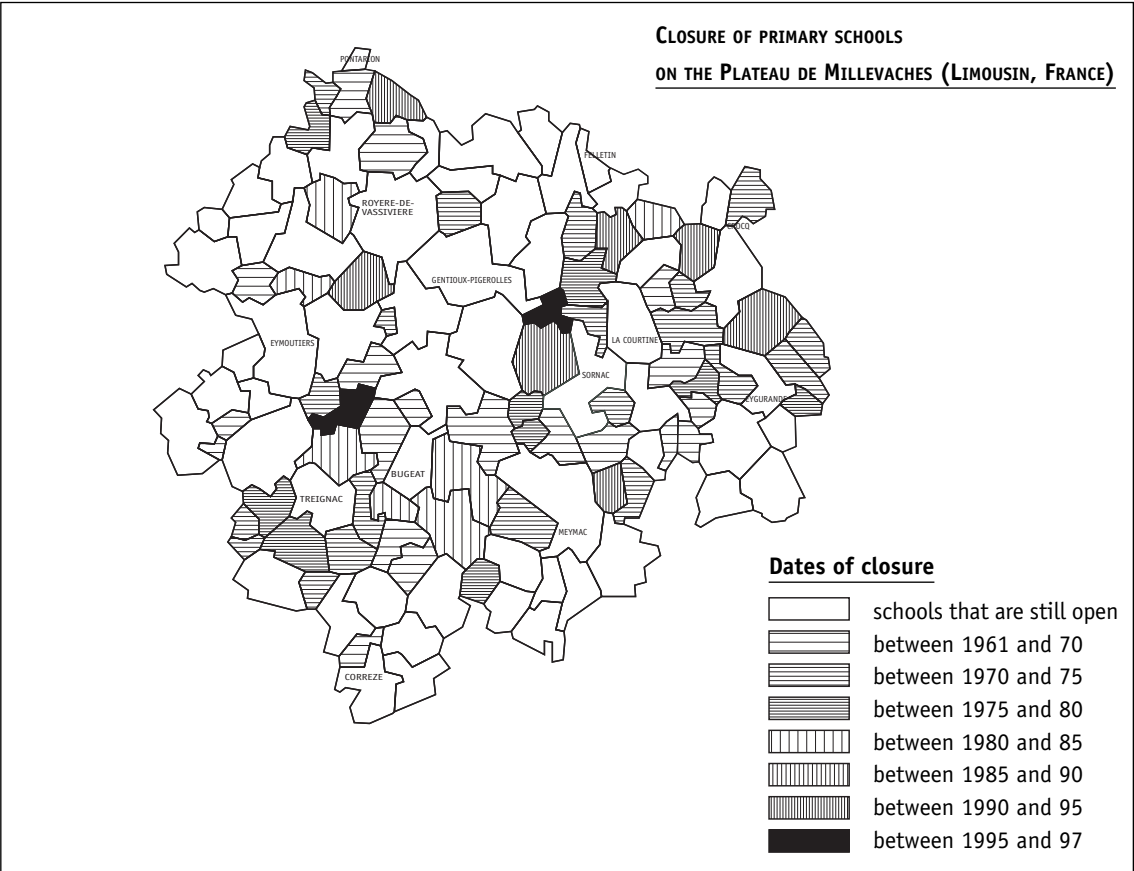
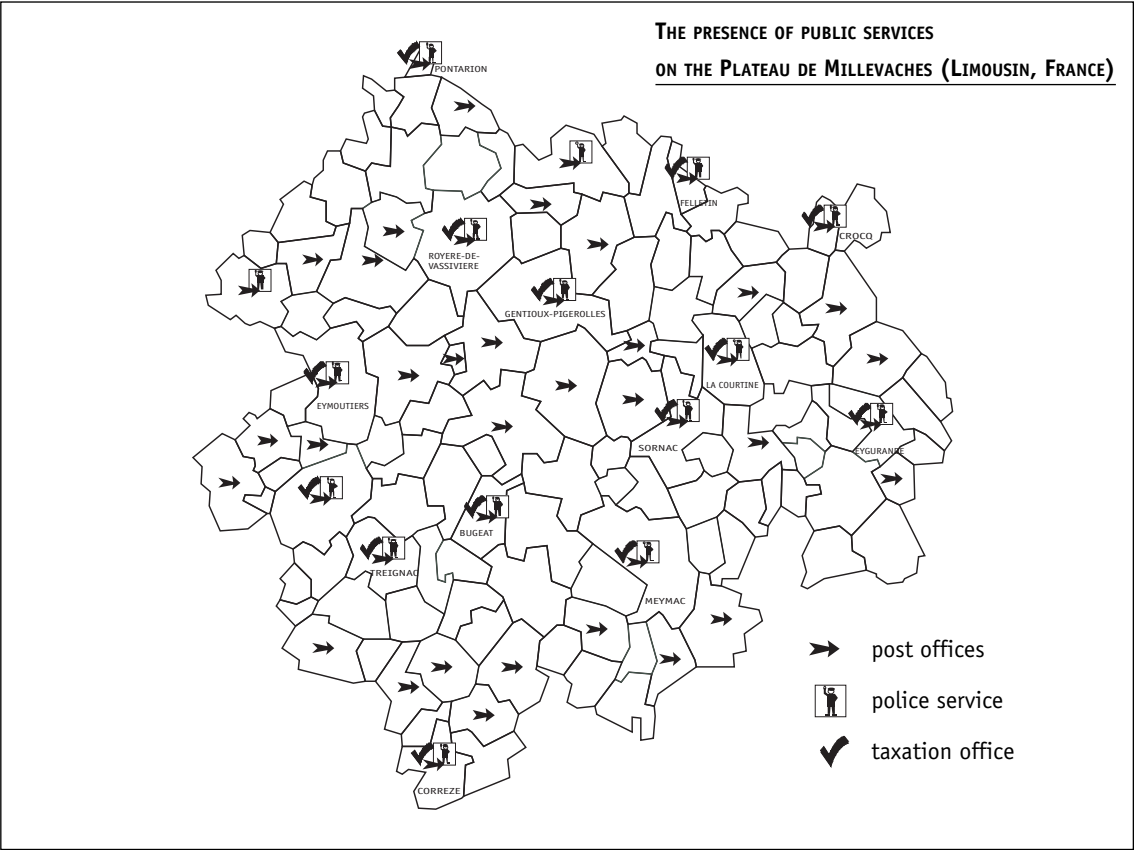
- > eventual gaps between supply and demand in terms of distance;
- > the evolution of the services in the last 10 or 20 years and to draw conclusions in terms of improvement or deterioration of the services supplied;
- > solutions allowing certain services in remote rural areas to be retained, e.g. by grouping the demand of several districts or introducing mobile services, etc.

**SHOPS ON THE PLATEAU DE MILLEVACHES
(LIMOUSIN, FRANCE) IN 1999**



**MEDICAL SERVICES ON THE PLATEAU DE MILLEVACHES
(LIMOUSIN, FRANCE) IN 1998**





TOOL SHEET 2

Taking stock of the available resources

This tool makes it possible to improve understanding of the degree of use and accessibility (infrastructure, means of transport, distances, timetables, etc.) of the services available in the area. The aim is to render the resources more multi-functional and varied, with a view to reducing the viability threshold of each service.

The tables below can be used to this end, for example:

FOR THE INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure	Current use	Availability (timetables, distances)	Possible uses	Necessary changes
Schools				
Town hall				
Churches				
Libraries				
Sports centres				
Post office				
Shops				
etc.				

FOR THE MEANS OF TRANSPORT

Type of transport	Current use	Availability (timetables, available seats)	Possible uses	Necessary changes
School transport				
Mail van				
Home delivery of products, e.g., milk van.				
Mobile traders				
etc.				

Each type of solution is studied according to its viability.

Fine tuning the improvement of services

This tool makes it possible to carry out a more in-depth analysis of the gaps between supply and demand, notably in terms of quality and personalisation of services.

Step 1: Analysis of specific needs and of the degree of satisfaction of each socio-professional category, age group, etc.

This analysis can be conducted through:

- > a survey of the community;
- > the setting up of meeting points, offices (fixed or mobile) for centralising people's opinions, wishes, complaints, suggestions, etc.

Step 2: Processing and codifying gathered data

Giving form to a certain number of the types of demand expressed, in terms of:

- > types of services demanded;
- > particular expectations (flexibility of timetables, customisation of the service, etc.);
- > number and distribution of the services.

Step 3: Identifying the possibilities of putting in place a service that corresponds to each type of demand and to the quality required

- > who could provide the services?
- > can existing services be used to reduce costs?
- > what agreements, investment in equipment, training, etc. would be required?

A centre providing services and counselling for citizens was opened within a police station in Newstead (England, United Kingdom), an area with high levels of unemployment and crime as a result of the closure of a local coal mine in 1987. The centre comprises an education and training section for adults and a mobile health service. It enables the police to establish a feeling of trust with the community, to develop preventive measures and to guide the users of the centre to other social services. Certain services are also provided during the night, especially those relating to assistance for young people¹⁰.

Step 4: Attaining the critical mass needed to make the service viable

Reaching multi-area agreements between several public authorities.

"Samaritel" provides a distance personalised service to the elderly in the province of Luxembourg (Wallonia, Belgium). The service functions 24 hours a day in several districts from one single centre of operation. The users of the service can alert the centre simply by pressing a button on a bleeper that they carry with them and the centre immediately alerts the nearest and most suitable help¹¹.

[10] Source: Malcolm Moseley and Gavin Parker - op.cit.

[11] Source: LEADER Europe Observatory - Innovative actions of rural development - factsheet n° S05

Evaluating the quality of services

The “quality tree” is a tool for monitoring and evaluating the quality of services. It takes account of all those concerned, i.e. users, service providers, employees, etc.

The example used here is the quality tree applied in the retirement homes in Castel Pietro Terme (Emilia-Romagna, Italy). However, the example can be transferred to other contexts and/or types of services.

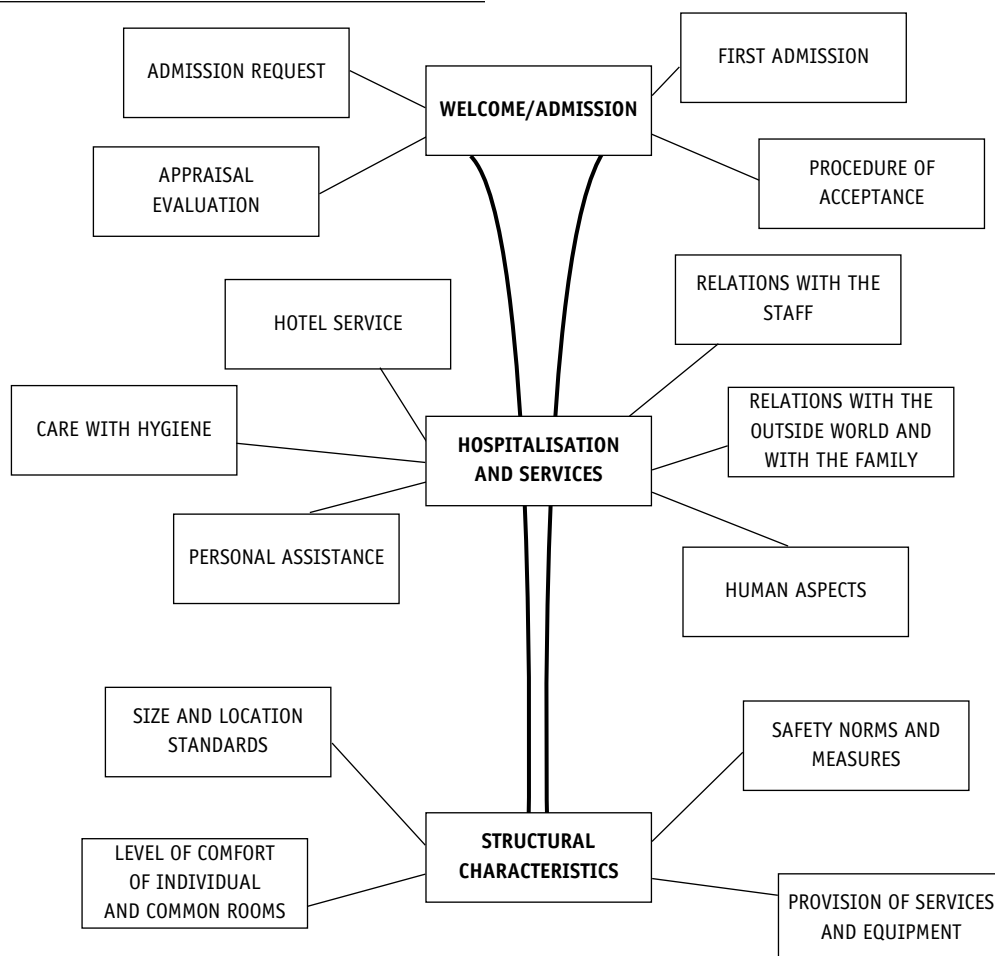
The quality indicators used along with this “quality tree” are, for example:

Welcome/admission: Efficiency of administrative services: conditions of access to offices and opening hours; clarity and simplicity of the forms to be filled in; personalisation of the telephone response and identification of operators, etc.

Hospitalisation and services. Rapidity of geriatric services; rapidity and courtesy in connection with home visits; rapidity in assigning somebody to follow-up a case; rapidity and objectiveness in evaluating the socio-economic situation of a person, etc.

Structural characteristics. Rapidity and transparency with regard to waiting lists; information for users and involvement of the person’s family; simplicity and clarity of the administrative and accounting aspects; updating of waiting lists; integration of the newcomer in the network; introducing the newcomer to residents and staff; visiting the residence and room; personalisation of the environment and of the stay, and concerted definition of the individual assistance programme.

QUALITY OF THE SERVICE IN A RETIREMENT HOME



Training to improve quality

In order to support the development of public or private activities in the services sector, the Region of Emilia-Romagna (Italy) set up a vocational training programme for all levels: it caters for assistants starting in the sector right through to those who already have some experience, by further education and retraining.

This type of training is one of the priorities of the Region. Before launching the different types of training, a needs appraisal of the local structures and businesses is carried out by the municipal authorities.

Some of the modules used during the training have been reproduced here as examples of an approach aimed at improving the quality of services through staff training.

Example 1 – Training assistants to provide care for the elderly

Each training course brings together about 25 participants for a total duration of 350 hours, of which 130 are devoted to practical work. The programme targets potential operators in the sector who have not yet received any specific training. Possession of a vocational qualification certificate is one of the essential requirements for getting a job in this sector.

The training includes:

Module A (40 hours): institutional context and professional profile of the assistant/operator. The module includes elements of sociology, social and hygiene legislation, organisation of services, etc.;

Module B (68 hours): users of the service, typology and major problems. The module contains social work methods, some elements of psychology, psychiatry and geriatric care;

Module C (48 hours): assistance for people and their families. The module contains training on nursing assistance among them rehabilitation therapies and home economics;

Module D (64 hours): management of inter-personal relations. This module targets the user of the service, his or her family and relations between staff members. The module provides facilitation techniques.

Finally, practical training is carried out within existing structures (130 hours).

Example 2 – Vocational training for operators providing services in child care

This training programme consists of laboratories managed by several districts in the framework of an agreement for coordinating education.

A standard training course concerned with providing an update of information for suppliers of services to children between 0 and 6 years is based on three modules:

Module A (20 hours): leadership, responsibility and decision-making capacity within groups of operators working together. The contents of this module include inter-personal communication and listening skills; educators are made aware of the need for circulating information and of problem resolution mechanisms;

Module B (18 hours): music, sound and fantasy. The module includes analysis, experimentation, design and invention of thematic games based on music and sound exploration. The aim is to integrate music in the processes of learning, socialising, contact, collaboration and communication between children;

Module C (18 hours): laboratory of psychomotricity, communication and prevention, psychomotor games and practices.

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