

# Transnational cooperation under LEADER II

Lessons from the past, tools for  
the future



LIAISON ENTRE ACTIONS  
DE DÉVELOPPEMENT  
DE L'ÉCONOMIE RURALE

LINKS BETWEEN ACTIONS  
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE RURAL ECONOMY



COMMISSION EUROPÉENNE  
DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE  
DE L'AGRICULTURE

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the future**

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# Foreword

The LEADER European Observatory's survey on the impact of transnational cooperation and related best practice has brought to light important lessons for the future. The experiences of the LEADER II groups on which this study is based confirm that cooperation between rural areas is an important tool for the development of these areas.

This validates the prominent role given to transnational cooperation under LEADER+, especially with regard to the new possibilities opened up by the Notice to the Member States, namely, inter-territorial cooperation within a single Member State; transnational cooperation between areas located in several Member States; and cooperation with areas situated outside the European Union (provided that they are organised according to the LEADER approach and the funding is only to pay the costs of the LEADER groups themselves). The preliminary signs from examining the proposals for LEADER+ programmes received by the Commission appear to show that in general the Member States have chosen to allocate substantial resources to cooperation. The European steering committee for monitoring projects, which did not exist under LEADER II, should facilitate the implementation of the LEADER+ "Cooperation" strand.

During the new LEADER programming period several countries applying for accession will become fully-fledged Member States of the European Union. It is hoped that the opportunities that LEADER+ will open up for cooperation between rural areas, will lead to fruitful exchanges of methodology with rural areas in these countries. The Europe-Mediterranean dialogue should also help to promote cooperation in the Mediterranean basin, a process to which the LEADER+ programme is also expected to contribute.

As we can see, ambitions for LEADER+ cooperation in the future are high. Hence the importance of this well-timed new Observatory study, which will help to enhance the quality of future cooperation projects and to give them the means to fulfil their ambitions.

*Andreas Korakas, Director Agriculture DG / F.II*



# Table of contents

Transnational cooperation, the “third dimension” of local development	7
Chapter 1	11
Activities and benefits of LEADER II cooperation.....	13
1.1 Tangible outputs (short term) .....	14
1.2 Intangible benefits (long term) .....	19
Chapter 2	29
Difficulties encountered .....	31
2.1 Internal problems .....	31
2.2 External obstacles .....	35
Chapter 3	37
Some recommendations and tools.....	39
3.1 Internal factors .....	39
3.2 External factors .....	49
Conclusion	57
<i>Annex 1: LEADER II transnational cooperation: state of play</i> .....	61
<i>Annex 2: List of the projects that were the subject of an interview</i> .....	65



# Transnational cooperation, the “third dimension” of local development

Whether it acts as the catalyst for an innovative idea or as the final stage in a carefully nurtured local development project, cooperation between rural areas in different countries is a long-term process, which, though often difficult, always brings added value. As a result, more than half of the areas benefiting from LEADER II funding have become “European partners” in over 250 projects.

The LEADER I Initiative (1991-1994) focused on networking skills as a tool for the development of an area. The LEADER network was considered as a source of know-how and valuable information for the local action groups (LAGs), which helped to break the isolation of many rural areas.

A “LEADER Coordinating Unit” was set up to optimise the circulation of these information flows and to ensure wide dissemination of the most “exemplary” actions carried out by the 217 LEADER I LAGs. However, unlike other Community Initiatives (INTERREG, NOW, HORIZON, etc.), LEADER I was not built on transnational cooperation; it was first and foremost a local development programme, applied to a specific area, not to be unnecessarily “complicated” by a transnational dimension.

However, it quickly became apparent that many local action groups from different countries were establishing contacts with one another spontaneously, or even embarking on much more in-depth exchanges. A 1994 survey showed that at least one LEADER I group in four was involved in some form of cooperation: exchange of experience, innovation transfer, joint business venture, participation in a thematic network, etc.

In view of this interest, the European Commission decided to allocate a portion of the resources for the LEADER II Initiative (1994-1999) to transnational cooperation. The Member States earmarked around 140 million EUR<sup>[1]</sup> for transnational cooperation projects to a special transnational cooperation measure “Measure C”<sup>[2]</sup>. The aim was to assist LEADER II groups and other

collective actors with the “joint design, production and marketing of goods or services in any area of rural development”<sup>[3]</sup>.

## A “plus factor”

LEADER II transnational cooperation is designed to be a “plus factor”. Though not compulsory, groups are encouraged to engage in transnational cooperation if it is likely to boost their local activities, which is LEADER’s on-going objective.

The experience of LEADER I groups had showed how difficult it can be to set up a joint project between areas that are separated not only by geography, but also by culture, language and other factors. Even where a cooperation idea may at first sight seem clear and plain, it is often difficult for the transnational partners to agree on a joint plan of action that also meets the expectations of their respective local partners.

The European Commission therefore set up a support system to help LEADER II groups to prepare their transnational cooperation project fully prior to implementing it. The LEADER European Observatory was made responsible for coordinating this system by widely disseminating the correct procedure, by organising seminars specifically on transnational cooperation and by providing cooperation applicants with personalised technical assistance (analysis of needs, finding partners, etc.).

[1] To make it easier to understand, the currency unit used in this study is the euro (EUR), even though the ECU was the European currency unit in application prior to 31/12/98.

[2] LEADER II was based on three measures: Measure A (“Capacity building”), Measure B (“Rural innovation plan”, the LEADER II local projects proper) and Measure C (“Transnational cooperation”).

[3] Notice to the Member States, OJEC no. C 180 of 1/7/94.



The partner groups had received Commission funding totalling EUR 4 million, administered by the Observatory. This involved a maximum of EUR 5,000 for the first phase ("from idea to project") plus a maximum of EUR 20,000 for a possible second phase ("from project to action") to enable them to take the key steps for jointly defining their transnational project: first meetings of partners to determine the joint objectives; feasibility studies in each of the areas concerned by the transnational project; development of the joint project; and search for funding to gain entitlement to Measure C funding.

In implementing their development project, the LAGs understandably began by focusing on purely

local activities (organising the partnership, identifying the area's strengths and weaknesses, defining the required actions, etc.), which is why LEADER II transnational cooperation started up so slowly. However, things speeded up and by 1998-99 cooperation had become an important aspect of the LEADER II programme. By September 2000, 46% of LEADER groups were involved in one or more of the 255 transnational cooperation projects known to the Observatory. Nearly half of these projects had received financial support under three specific support measures: EUR 5,000, EUR 20,000 and/or Measure C (variable amounts).

### **Why this guide?**

At a time when all of these initiatives are now well under way, or even completed, the Observatory has decided to review the progress of transnational cooperation, with the objectives of:

- > gaining an overview of the different types of activities carried out;
- > examining to what extent the concept and content of transnational cooperation have evolved since LEADER I;
- > assessing the benefits, problems and lessons to be learned from cooperation in order to optimise the outcome of transnational cooperation in the future.

The aim of this study is therefore to analyse LEADER II transnational cooperation in the light of the information gathered from the 255 projects that had been allocated EUR 5,000 and/or EUR 20,000 under the LEADER European Observatory's technical assistance scheme. Interestingly, whilst some groups followed the step-by-step process of Observatory funding, culminating in the finalisation of a concrete project under Measure C, many

took direct action by paying for their transnational activities directly out of funding for their local project activities. This study does not cover these latter projects.

In no way is this study meant to be an "evaluation report". It does not set out to paint a definitive picture of LEADER II transnational cooperation, but instead to promote a better understanding of the "latest developments" in transnational cooperation among rural areas and to help local bodies develop the most creative and fruitful form of transnational relationship possible.

## **SURVEY METHOD**

This study is based on a three-stage methodology:

1) Firstly a short questionnaire requesting key information was sent to each of the LAGs responsible for coordinating<sup>[4]</sup> the transnational cooperation projects known to the Observatory, in order to identify the principle benefits, problems and lessons to be drawn from their cooperation. A total of 148 LAGs answered the questionnaire.

2) Based on a number of criteria (representative sample of cooperating LAGs, themes, progress, etc.), a working group selected forty or so projects from the different European Union Member States. These projects were analysed in terms of processes, activities and results. A personal interview was held at the actual project site (usually the coordinating group's area), with the aid of a common interview guidance form that included the following elements:

- > general information (title of the project, number of partners, number of languages represented, geographical scope, etc.);
- > description of the project;
- > main steps of the project in line with the identified stages of progression (defining needs, finding partners, jointly defining common objectives, establishing an action plan, implementing the actions, assessing activities and disseminating the results, and moving from one phase to another phase or to another project);

- > analysis of the impact of transnational cooperation in relation to the seven specific features of LEADER (innovation, integrated development, networking and cooperation, local partnership, bottom-up approach, area-based approach and decentralised financial decision-making), as well as its impact on the project team, local actions and the local community;
- > budgetary issues and project funding;
- > overall self-assessment of the project;
- > identification of the key elements specific to the project.

In view of the limited time available for the study, it was often possible to interview only one representative from the transnational partnership (in most cases the coordinating LAG), which gives only a partial view of project activities and of the lessons to be drawn from transnational cooperation.

3) Finally, the initial findings were presented and debated at a seminar held in the Alto Tâmega LEADER area (Norte, Portugal), between 23 and 25 October 2000. New information was included in the study as a result of the discussions and consultations that took place during this seminar.

*N.B. Appended are some statistical data on LEADER II transnational cooperation.*

*[4] The LAG coordinating the project plays a central role in technical assistance for transnational cooperation. Often this LAG is the project initiator, it arranges contacts between the partners, collects all the information relating to the project (including the funding application) and acts as the official interface for the LEADER European Observatory.*



## **Chapter 1**

# **Activities and benefits of LEADER II cooperation**



# Activities and benefits of LEADER II cooperation

LEADER II transnational cooperation has produced a number of both tangible and intangible, long- and short-term results that vary in importance depending on the sector of activity and project phase arrived at.

An assessment of the transnational cooperation ventures carried out under LEADER I<sup>[5]</sup> identified five possible types of cooperation based on the specific benefits gained by the participants:

Types of cooperation	Principal benefits for the participants
1) Exchange of experience	New perspectives Awareness-raising on a particular theme Confidence
2) Training and human resources	Better qualifications of the people involved
3) Innovation transfer	Application of new expertise, technology and/or working methods
4) Joint business management	Access to new markets
5) Participation in a thematic network	Definition of common norms and methodologies Collective management

Although concrete benefits had been achieved in these various key fields, the overall impact of LEADER I cooperation initiatives was chiefly felt as part of a general learning strategy encouraging the LAGs to consider and analyse broader and more specific rural development themes. LEADER I cooperation heightened the motivation of the actors involved and broadened their horizons.

The concern of LEADER II was to go further in developing and implementing collective actions that would lead to concrete and visible results in local communities, in which transnational groups could actively help “devise, develop and market together”<sup>[6]</sup>. The aim therefore is to find out how much of a “qualitative leap” has been made under LEADER II.

Indeed, since LEADER I, considerable experience has been amassed on how to tackle the initial phases of

transnational cooperation, as well as on how to conduct such cooperation in a “professional”, effective and successful way.

To form a preliminary idea of the “added value” of LEADER II transnational cooperation, a distinction has been made within each cooperation area between short-term **tangible outputs** and long-term **intangible benefits** in the various project fields and stages (with special reference to the seven specific features of LEADER).

[5] “Implementing transnational cooperation projects: the lessons of LEADER I”, LEADER/AEIDL Coordinating Unit, October 1994.

[6] Notice to the Member States, OJEC no. C 180 of 1/7/94, op. cit.

## 1.1 Tangible outputs (short term)

The great majority of LEADER II cooperation projects analysed revolve around five sectors of activity:

- > food and agricultural production
- > rural tourism
- > information technology
- > heritage and the environment
- > other miscellaneous services.

The survey has shown that the concrete results achieved during the different phases of the cycle of transnational cooperation projects depend in great measure on the sector in which they are implemented, if only because it is “easier” to achieve key outputs in some sectors than in others.

However, in all sectors, it is usually the very first phases of the project cycle (development of new products and services and technical assistance to producers/service providers), as well as activities to jointly promote products and services, that are quickest to result in tangible outputs.

### 1.1.1 Development of new products/services and technical assistance to producers/service providers

All sectors show major results in this area. In this case, transnational cooperation projects use **exchange** and **transfer** of information and experiences to evaluate their current methods and to take advantage of the “best practice” available from the projects carried out in the partners’ various countries.

The most common output in all sectors is the joint design of customised training courses.

a) In the **environmental sector** much emphasis was laid on joint training courses (including visits and modules for comparatively assessing methodologies). This may be due to the great deal of common ground shared by environmental projects in terms of approach and context.

*The LAGs of RaJuPuSu (Finland), Norra Bohuslän (Sweden), Nord-Saarland (Germany), Maremma, Alto Casertano, Carnia, Meduna Cellina and Comunità Montana del Grappa (Italy), which support environmental education centres, joined forces in a cooperation project called “ECONET” for networking these centers and organising joint training courses.*

b) In the **food and agricultural** production sector, the joint design of products and services makes it possible to plan and implement experimental programmes and to carry out tests in the areas involved in the project.

*The aim of the “Crocus Sativus” project, launched by two Italian LEADER groups (Eugubino Gualdese Perugino in Umbria and Arca Abruzzo in the Abruzzi region) together with the Greek LAG Kozani (Western Macedonia), is to develop a new method for cultivating and processing saffron and to improve product quality by encouraging collaboration between the research world and agricultural producers from these areas. In Umbria, saffron production died out 50 years ago, but young farmers working in a cooperative wanted to diversify their current crops. By contrast, in the Kozani LEADER area, saffron is one of the most valuable commodities in the local economy: the area grows 1,000 hectares of saffron and employs around 5,000 seasonal workers to harvest and process it. With the support of Perugia University (Umbria, Italy), which for many years has been working to genetically improve saffron, the project aims to find technical solutions for breeding homogeneous, better quality bulbs. The plan for the Greek area is to devise cultivation methods for optimising the traditional technique, coupled with technical assistance for developing the product further. In exchange, the project is expected to lead to the reintroduction of saffron growing in inland areas of Italy, through the transfer of “improved” traditional Greek know-how.*

The development of quality management methods and systems is a concern common to both the food/agriculture and tourism sectors. In these sectors, transnational cooperation has led to a qualitative leap forward in establishing common standards, procedures and methodologies, which have had a major impact on quality systems.

*“BIORED” and “CLUB BIORED” are the labels of a telematic network of five Spanish LEADER areas (including two island areas: the Balearic and Canary Islands), two from Portugal (including Madeira) and one from Germany. The network’s objective is to promote quality standards for local products. In each area the network supports the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT) and the creation of an Intranet network between the project partners. It also facilitates relations and the exchange of environmental information between public and private development players involved in exploiting the natural and cultural resources of the participating areas. The BIORED partners are building a database to document the natural and cultural heritage of the five areas, whilst at the same time facilitating user access to other databases, networks and telecommunication services, etc. in fields of interest to the development of each of the areas – legal, fiscal, administrative, financial, etc.*

c) The main achievements in the **new technology** sector have been to jointly develop and use software, Internet sites, computer systems, etc.

*In 1997, four European Union regions (Andalusia, Western Greece, Rhône-Alpes and Vorarlberg) set up, under Article 10 of the ERDF, an Internet network specialised in marketing local products. Since this network was launched, a large number of rural areas, including the Oderbruch (Germany) and Marsica (Italy) LEADER groups, have joined the “Rural Market Place”, which has become a label in itself. The LEADER II cooperation project consisted of setting up a joint Internet server (<http://www.rmp.at/>) to focus on three areas (general information, business-to-consumer relations and business-to-business relations) and explaining notably the processes of on-line negotiation, electronic payment, logistical integration and customised packaging of special packages.*

d) In the **other services** sector, joint design appeared more problematic due to the very differing contexts and needs. However, there are examples of projects for exchanging experiences between areas involved in developing services for a specific category of the population (the elderly, young people, mobility-impaired people, etc.).

*The Valsesia (Italy) and Creuse (France) LAGs participating in the project “New Elderly Service” are situated in mountain areas characterised by an ageing population, a deteriorating level of services and a decline in the cultural, civic and economic fabric. They wish to work together to capitalise on the experience and know-how of the oldest citizens in their areas and to develop services targeted at this particular section of the population.*

e) Another example of tangible outputs from the joint design of products and services and joint technical assistance to producers/service providers is the creation of operational networks of producers/service providers to facilitate exchanges of ideas and experiences in the fields concerned (e.g. case of the “ECONET” project in the environmental field).

### **1.1.2 Joint production of goods and services**

The results achieved in the phase of joint production of goods and services are clearly more limited, in view of the current level of progress of cooperation projects. Furthermore, the long-term viability of many of the products and services concerned is not yet known.

Even though LEADER II had stressed the importance of joint production by all of the partners in a project, clearly in real life there are logistical, economic and legal obstacles that make it very difficult to implement a joint approach.

Of all the cases examined, there is only one clear example of joint production: the “Autochthonous wool” project, which has now resulted in the creation of a new product: a woollen throw<sup>[7]</sup>.

*The project is being conducted by two Italian LEADER groups (Valle Elvo in the Piemonte region and Anglona-Monte Acuto in Sardinia), together with two Spanish groups (Montana del Teleno and Valladolid Norte from Castilla-León), which are seeking to exploit the wool from native breeds of sheep that is too coarse for conventional industrial use. New products have been devised to make use of this wool: throws, environmentally friendly insulation panels, wall hangings, etc. However, since the necessary investment for research & development, updating the design, marketing, etc. was too expensive for each area working in isolation, the four areas pooled*

[7] See the article entitled “From community revitalisation to transnational cooperation”, LEADER Magazine no. 24 (Autumn 2000), LEADER European Observatory.



their efforts, dividing responsibilities in line with their individual facilities. For example, since the Valle Elvo LAG is situated in a textile-producing industrial district (Biella), it has forged contacts with a number of research & development organisations and specialist companies. The Anglona-Monte Acuto LAG organised a production branch among breeders, craftspeople and others. It has been possible to preserve the individuality of each partner area because activities to update product design and to develop a range of products were inspired by the traditions and environment of each of the four areas concerned.

Certain LEADER II groups have used transnational cooperation to consolidate production in the local area.

*The aim of the "Sustainable Agriculture" project, which brings together seven fragile rural areas from Spain, Italy and Portugal, is to exploit new market niches for environmentally friendly products of certified quality. The project was developed by the coordinating LAG (Macizo del Caroig, Spain) with the aid of external consultants. The initial goal of the project was to implement a complete integrated development programme to cover the production, processing and marketing of products in different sectors. When this goal proved over ambitious, the focus of the cooperation was altered to adapt it more closely to each partner's local situation.*

The examples of jointly produced products or processes in the **information technology** sector often involve the creation of new transnational Internet sites, generally to enable small-scale local producers/service providers to gain access to regional and transnational markets. They may also include the joint production of goods and services through teleworking.

With regard to **cultural and heritage** projects, initial cooperation is generally aimed at restoring and redeveloping a heritage product that has fallen into disuse.

*The "palomares", traditional dovecotes or pigeon houses, which abound along the border between Spain and Portugal, are popular works of art that are falling into neglect. The fact that they are dispersed means that individually they are of no particular tourist or economic interest. Yet, these resources "locked away" in remote areas are loaded with history and meaning. The objective of the four partner LEADER groups from Castilla-León (Spain) and one LAG from Tras-Os-Montes (Norte, Portugal) is to draw up an inventory of these palomares and to promote them by creating tourist routes and by encouraging pigeon to feature in the local gastronomy.*

*This involves improving quality controls during the processing stage.*

Finally, in the **tourism** sector, projects with a well-defined geographical basis have been more successful at developing new products (this applies to projects where partners live along rivers or historic routes).

*A cooperation venture between the LEADER groups Portodemouros (Galicia, Spain) and Appennino Parmense e Piacentino (Emilia-Romagna, Italy) involves using the Camino de San Juan de Compostella and the Via Francigena to explore ways of promoting pilgrimage and tourist routes. The development of a joint logo comprised of a shell (symbol of the Camino de San Juan) and a pilgrim (symbol of the Via Francigena) has underlined the idea of the two areas being "twinned". The logo also incorporates the symbols of the Council of Europe (which has granted both routes the title of "European Cultural Itineraries") and highlights the product's uniqueness. A leaflet (in Italian, English and Spanish) serves to jointly promote the two routes in the European market, capitalising on the recent fad for travelling along former pilgrimage routes. In terms of local action, a common strategy is being defined for offering similar, standardised services all along the two routes.*

### **1.1.3 Joint promotion of products and services**

With regard to promotion, it is evident that activities in virtually all sectors have been "conventional": production of leaflets, videos, CD-ROMS, logos; Internet sites; fairs and conferences, etc.

Clearly the **tourism** sector lends itself best to promotion approaches. The LAGs cooperating in this field have developed a huge array of tangible outputs, perhaps because the nature of the sector and the use of information technology for promoting tourism are particularly conducive to this.

Another reason might be the relative ease with which this sector is able to design promotional tools around a joint theme or geographical site.

*Twenty-five Italian, one Swedish (Inlandslaget) and one German (Mittlere Elbe) LEADER group are organising the commercial promotion of small rural tourism structures via a permanent "tourist exchange" on the 'Internet ("RTN / Rural Tourism Network") (www.ruraltourism-net.com). The exchange aims to boost the areas' presence in international markets by adapting promotion to*

*the needs of local businesses, cutting down the number of middle men and increasing the circulation of information and knowledge among tourist operators. Their tourism promotion includes package holidays as well as individual services. Each area has its own interactive Web home page to facilitate communication between the service providers, who have all adhered to a quality charter.*

In the **food and agricultural** production sector, the diversity of products, contexts and outlets often seems to restrict the effectiveness of joint promotion endeavours. Most such projects have adopted a more generic type of promotion.

*By way of example, the “Sustainable Agriculture” project has led to the joint production of leaflets on the processes and advantages of organically-produced olive oil, as well as to the organisation of an international fair on this type of production.*

#### **1.1.4 Joint marketing of products and services**

In the sector of joint marketing of products and services, a stark contrast can be seen between the sectors of **tourism** and **food/agricultural** production.

Whereas there are several examples of joint marketing of tourism packages, the sample cases analysed failed to reveal a single example of LEADER groups having jointly marketed food or agricultural products. If we extend the scope of the study, we see that, of all the LAGs that have benefited from technical assistance, only one project genuinely planned to jointly market food and agricultural products.

This is due mainly to the food sector's major problems with coordinating production, quality management and logistics. In fact buyers are only rarely consulted or involved in projects, which can lead to serious discrepancies between supply and demand.

However, in view of their more generic nature and lower investment requirements, tourism-marketing networks are easier to develop.

*The “Paralelo 40” network, coordinated by the La Manchuela LAG (Castilla-La Mancha), brings together fifteen Spanish, Portuguese and Italian LEADER areas situated on and around the 40th parallel. These local action groups have set up an Intranet system for rural tourism to handle accommodation facilities as well as various local activities and events. This data is integrated into the data systems of travel agencies nation-*

*wide and internationally via the Internet. The participating LEADER groups are responsible for collecting and updating the information and training users, as well as for supervising and providing technical assistance to local partner operators. The objective is to make information about this type of tourism more widely available to agencies and holidaymakers, so as to be less dependent on traditional commercial channels, i.e. chiefly tour operators, fairs and regional and national shows.*

In the **information technology** sector, a single project – “Rural Market Place” (see above) – has genuinely reached the stage of jointly marketing local products at transnational level.

#### **1.1.5 Conclusion**

The exchange and transfer of information that has taken place under LEADER II led to a series of tangible results during the first two phases of the project cycle: the development of new products and services and technical assistance to producers/service providers, notably by setting up networks. Advances in the other three phases (production, promotion and joint marketing of products and services) have been made only in narrowly focused projects with realistic goals, usually in the tourism sector.

**SUMMARY OF THE TANGIBLE OUTPUTS OF COOPERATION  
IN LINE WITH THE SECTOR OF ACTIVITY AND PROJECT PHASES**

Tangible outputs					
Sectors	Design	Technical assistance	Production	Promotion	Marketing
Tourism	Design of a joint venture or joint thematic image Setting up training programmes	Design and promotion of common packages Creation of an active network	Design of the initial phases of new products and services	Joint promotion: > Internet sites > Leaflets and brochures > Logos and labels	Creation of joint packages: Agri-tourism
Produce and agricultural products	Design of training programmes Design of pilot field programmes Design of quality management systems	Improvements in farming techniques and methods Creation of an active network	Design of new products Consolidation of existing provision	Joint promotion: > Internet sites > Videos > Leaflets > Logos and labels > Trade fairs	Seek new market outlets
Information technology	Design of training programmes Design of software	Development of tools for marketing over the Internet	Creation of transnational servers	Promotion: > CD-ROMs > Web sites > Links with other sites	
Environment and heritage	Design of and/or participation in training programmes Joint research on key themes	Creation of an active network	Inventory of heritage products	Some joint promotion: > Internet sites > Leaflets	
Other services	Contrast of training content and methods Design of services tailored to certain population groups (the elderly, etc.)				

## 1.2 Intangible benefits (long term)

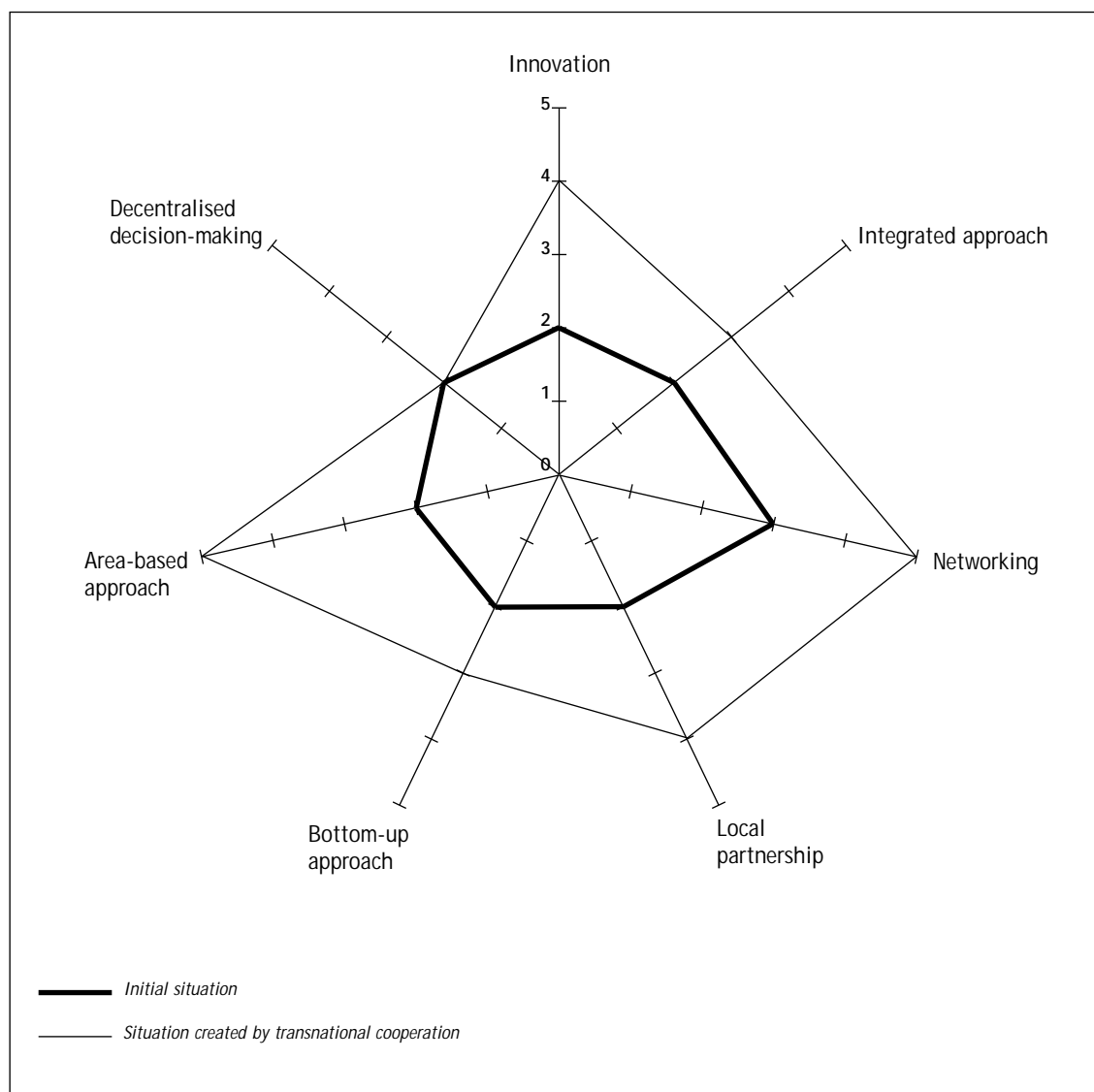
In the survey on LEADER II transnational cooperation, representatives of the selected projects were asked to assess the impact of their transnational cooperation project in relation to each of the seven specific features of LEADER (area-based approach, bottom-up approach, local partnership, integrated development, innovation, decentralised financial management and networking)<sup>[8]</sup>, and to compare the impact of cooperation on the project team, local development initiatives and the community of the partner areas.

The sample projects studied highlight three main levels on which cooperation has a significant impact:

- > **Strategy** (innovation, area-based approach, integrated development).
- > **Funding** (decentralised decision-making and financial management).
- > **Local development players and the community** (partnership, networking, bottom-up approach).

[8] For more details, consult the guide "Assessing the added value of the LEADER approach", LEADER European Observatory/AEIDL, 1999.

### FICTIONAL EXAMPLE OF THE IMPACT OF A TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROJECT IN RELATION TO THE SEVEN SPECIFIC FEATURES OF LEADER



### 1.2.1 Impact of cooperation on strategy

#### a) Innovation

The primary impact of transnational cooperation under LEADER II is innovation. Transnational cooperation allows the partners in a project to establish direct contacts and engage in discussions on a specific thematic field, as well as to learn about new approaches, strategies, methods and activities.

The principal impact on **tourism** projects has been the gradual adoption of best practice. This has included considerable innovation in activities for involving the local community and for links between tourism and adding value to the local culture.

*Through their cooperation initiative “Terrasses de culture”, the LEADER groups Châtaigneraie and Sucs d’Ardèche (France), Serra de Tramuntana (Spain), Ipiros (Greece) and Alta Langa (Italy) have been able to introduce new, highly innovative mechanisms to improve the image of their areas. For instance, they have introduced bold advertising methods (such as land art) and new techniques for engaging the local community.*

Transnational cooperation can also create innovative momentum in the **food and agriculture** sector by allowing groups to try out new types of product under the umbrella of the transnational image in order to allay local scepticism about the “riskiness” of innovation (a throw made from previously unused wool is one such example).

In the **environment and heritage** sector, most of the LAGs involved share a common approach and outlook. There is a marked interest in environmentally friendly architecture and new organisational methods, as well as links between environmental and economic considerations, which look set to grow in importance in the future.

In **information technology** cooperation projects, where innovation relies primarily on local groups’ using new types of technology, the challenge has been to integrate the technology into an area-based approach (see for example the project “Rural Market Place” presented earlier).

#### b) Area-based approach

Transnational cooperation often raises local actors’ awareness of the importance of the “product” as part of a broader area project.

For projects in the food sector, this usually means linking the product to the area and vice versa. However, for tourism projects, it means convincing local people of the need to extend the scope of work more than in the past, or to link their product to other products from the area.

*The LEADER groups Feldbach (Austria), Capo Santa Maria di Leuca (Italy), Parnonas (Greece) and North Pennines (United Kingdom) are seeking to curb the decline of their villages. They have united around the common aim of renovating traditional farms for tourism and later jointly promoting and marketing the concept of “European villages”. The exchanges resulting from the project “**Vacation in our European Village**” have enabled the partners to improve their ability to perceive their own area’s needs and issues and to re-evaluate the role of tourism in the development strategy of the region as a whole.*

#### c) Integrated development

Transnational cooperation has broadened the understanding and practice of the integrated development concept. Although it generally forms part of the **tourism project** from the outset, transnational cooperation has often made it possible to consolidate the local strategy, particularly the links between tourism, local products and the area.

In the **food sector**, cooperation projects also tend to take a more generalised approach, for example by integrating the principles of ecological and organic production.

Finally, the integrated approach has also been considerably broadened in **environment and heritage** projects, which focus on consolidating the links between environment and tourism (e.g. the “ECONET” project).

### 1.2.2 Impact of cooperation on funding

Transnational cooperation frequently leads LAGs to resort to new funding sources and try out new methods of financial management.

The groups involved in transnational cooperation projects have often had access to other types of public funding under European procedures for other initiatives<sup>[9]</sup> (other transnational European programmes) or national procedures (e.g. sectoral programmes to promote tourism).

They have also been able to familiarise themselves with methods for attracting new private funding to a project. In this respect, LEADER is often a first funding source for such projects, acting as a lever for attracting new backers or as a substantial “plus factor”.

Once such funding is available, exchanges are set up for learning more effective management and promotion methods.

*The goal of the “European Wilderness Challenge” project, by the Western Isles (United Kingdom), Skogsländet (Sweden) and Kalambaka-Pyli (Greece) LEADER groups, is to transfer methods for organising wilderness races. The objective is to turn these events into a tourism and recreational activity in the very remote areas involved. The partners’ vastly different starting points in terms of funding sources has resulted in a constructive exchange about ways to attract public and private sponsorship to such events.*

In the environment and heritage sector, where the groups share common approaches, there have been exchanges on new ways of managing public funds.

*An important part of the mutual learning process of the partner LAGs in the “ECONET” project has been how to diversify sources of funding for the environmental education centres involved in the cooperation initiative, which had hitherto been publicly funded, and to channel the new funding into relevant local and transnational activities.*

[9] It being understood that a single project may not be financed by several European procedures.

### 1.3.3 Impact of cooperation on the local development players and community

#### a) Local partnership

Nearly all of the groups questioned stressed the importance of transnational cooperation in developing local partnerships:

- > The ambitiousness of many transnational cooperation projects often requires wider local involvement.
- > The LAGs learn about other structures and methods of participation used by different groups of actors.
- > Finally, the broader involvement reinforces the LAG’s position in transnational negotiations.

Within each sector, transnational cooperation brings various new members into the partnership:

- > For many **tourism projects**, this primarily involves extending participation to other tourism organisations and local entrepreneurs. The need to promote a new cultural tourism association, for instance, brings new operators into the game (cultural, educational and other service providers).
- > A number of transnational cooperation projects in the tourism sector have resulted in the creation of geographical networks, rather than merely thematic networks. This has created a need to expand involvement to other political and institutional bodies so as to enable the project to cross local area boundaries.
- > *The five Spanish and six Portuguese areas involved in the “Promotion Douro” project are situated along the banks of the river Douro. They share similar features due to the presence of this structurally important river section and wanted to develop a strategy for jointly promoting tourism in this little known and visited region. The project consisted of collectively examining each of the 10 partner groups’ tourism initiatives in order to coordinate their measures all along the river. A report on the structural, economic, financial and other characteristics of local tourism served as the basis for understanding the tourism sector’s dynamic in the areas as a whole. The partners went on to develop a joint promotion and marketing strategy for the region and to inform local social and economic figures and the community about the areas’ tourism potential and their natural and cultural resources.*

- > The chief impact on the **food and agriculture** sector has been vertical and horizontal integration and consolidation of the various branches. In many cases, transnational cooperation has enabled groups of usually inward looking producers to establish preliminary contacts with a wider network of complementary interests (practitioners, distributors and consumers).
- > Projects from these sectors were also some of the first to forge contacts with universities and research centres. Putting producers into contact with mainstream intellectual resources may turn out to be crucial to the long-term viability of projects and to their credibility both nationally and transnationally (see the “Crocus Sativus” project mentioned earlier).

Whilst some projects in the **other services** sector have had trouble in arousing local interest, others have shown that the involvement of new partners in a local steering group can be a very important “plus factor”.

*The participation of local architects in the project “New Elderly Service”, to provide better housing for elderly people, has allowed the transnational cooperation initiative to focus on the transfer of new designs for old people’s housing.*

## b) Networking and cooperation

Better networking should be one of the most important added value factors of transnational cooperation. However, not all transnational cooperation projects result in lasting, active networks whose scope of activities extends beyond the planned activities themselves.

On the whole, transnational cooperation has made it possible to:

- > consolidate and broaden local networks
- > create new transnational networks for exchanging information
- > establish new marketing networks
- > improve the effectiveness of networking through the use of new technology tools
- > involve non-LEADER partners in the networks (universities and/or research centres).

Generally speaking, the primary impact of transnational cooperation on the **tourism sector** has been to strengthen local networks, with transnational cooperation often being used to consolidate actions undertaken with local operators.

*The “Villages de Tradition” network, involving ten LEADER areas from Portugal, Italy and the Netherlands, is the culmination of a long-standing cooperation process that began in the early eighties. This eighteen-year initiative offers an example of the potential long-term development of a sequential cooperation process, in which there is a very clear succession of cycles:*

- > *A first cycle of national cooperation between 1983 and 1985, to assert the concept of quality rural tourist accommodation (“Solares de Portugal”).*
- > *A second cycle of European cooperation between 1985 and 1990, to unite similar projects by integrating them into a broader concept (“Europe des Traditions”).*
- > *A third cycle of regional cooperation between 1991 and 1997, to move on from the concept of quality rural buildings to one of quality villages (“Villages du Portugal”).*
- > *A fourth cycle of European cooperation, since 1997, to group together similar concepts in other countries (“Villages de Tradition”).*

*Transnational cooperation has injected new dynamism into the process thanks to a well-designed promotion effort and to the participation of local businesses (farmers, craftworkers and tourism providers).*

In other areas where there is virtually no history or experience of networking, transnational cooperation encourages the formation of local networks in order to take full advantage of the transnational relationship.

*The project “SaS” (“Spain and Sweden”) involves the Noreste de Granada (Spain) LAG, together with the Småland and Dalarna (Sweden) LEADER groups. The Swedish areas have a lot of know-how in working with wood, metal and, above all, glass (with world-famous companies), whilst the Spanish group works in an area producing timber, olive oil and vegetables. During a LEADER seminar, the practitioners of the LAGs concerned realised the potential for exchanging experience and know-how between the three areas, in particular on the issue of small-scale production. The groups each worked locally to gather craftworkers into representative associations and, together with these associations, they organised exhibitions and cross-training. The next stage was to set up joint marketing channels and create a database of craftworker contact details. For the first time in the areas concerned, local craftworkers are actively involved in a network that facilitates their work whilst at the same time conferring a certain image of quality on all three areas.*

The use of new technology and Internet-based systems often enables projects to network more effectively and sometimes to develop a joint marketing package, as in the case of the **“Rural Tourism Network”** mentioned earlier.

### c) Bottom-up approach

The development of a bottom-up approach is rightly considered to be one of the corner stones of the LEADER strategy and is essential in enabling the development players and communities of partner areas to “take ownership” of the transnational project. Attempts to impose transnational cooperation that nobody understands or is deemed irrelevant to local needs often leads the planned project to fail.

Even though there are some examples of cooperation projects springing from a spontaneous expression of local need, it is more usual to observe “top down” behaviour during the initial phases of project development. Indeed it is nearly always the LAG managers or those directly interested by the project who are first to perceive the need to consolidate local action by introducing a transnational dimension.

However, for a number of local projects, transnational cooperation has led to a significant improvement in the bottom-up approach, where contacts with more advanced LAGs in other countries has led some groups to revise their procedures for involving the local community. Moreover, in many cases the project’s success hinges on such improvements.

In a number of sectors, notably **food and agricultural production** and **environment and the heritage**, the bottom-up approach appears to be more integrated into the project right from the early phases. This is particularly the case with projects that are narrowly targeted on needs and markets, where cooperation can, for example, help to resolve a problem in the production process, find a new outlet or product, etc.

*The aim of the project “Improving the Quality of Beef and Lamb for Import and Export” by the South Kerry (Ireland) and Garfagnana (Italy) LAGs was to find new outlets for meat by taking the interests of producers and buyers more systematically into account. Starting from an initially narrow focus – finding new markets - the project’s impact was greatly enlarged. Livestock farmers were encouraged to adopt a European outlook and to learn about traceability and integrated economic practices.*

For projects in the environment and the heritage sector, the bottom-up approach is generally a strategic principle and a group norm. When a more “traditional” organisation embarks on transnational cooperation in this sector, the bottom-up approach is strengthened by the need to involve local operators in implementing transnational cooperation projects.

*The initiative for the project “La richesse en eau au cœur d’un développement diversifié, innovant et durable” stemmed from personal contacts between the practitioners from the two LAGs concerned, Pays du Val d’Adour (France) and Redange-Wiltz (Luxembourg), two somewhat institutional LEADER bodies. The two partners were interested in an exchange that would contain a series of elements from the start. However, in order to genuinely involve local operators and rapidly engage the local community, the leaders of the two LAGs had to modify their project approach. The local operators then went on to take charge of defining and developing the programme themselves with the support of the LEADER organisations. After a first visit to each area, two potential cooperation action areas were identified: implementation of common methodologies for maintaining riverbanks using “green” plant-based engineering and so-called “soft” technology; and development of educational tools, promotional activities and awareness-raising about water protection.*

In the **tourism sector**, one of the effects of transnational cooperation on the bottom-up approach comes from the need to raise awareness among local operators of the importance of the joint promotion and marketing networks set up as part of these projects.

Even though **new technology** projects have a “top down” side, due to their technical nature, the need to adapt this technology to the real needs of the local community encourages more explicit forms of consulting and involving local actors. The use of examples with a demonstrative character and the extension of consultations beyond managers and practitioners alone, are key factors here.

*In the case of “Rural Market Place”, after a first transnational cooperation project consisting mainly of an exchange of practitioners, a second project was set up with Sweden aimed at introducing a more bottom-up approach. The Swedish set an example by including representatives from the local community in the local steering group. This prompted the project to ensure that more priority was given to the needs of the communities concerned.*



By contrast, projects that tend to “impose” ideas and concepts from outside are liable to lose all credibility for the exchange and to jeopardise implementation of the cooperation project.

*Working in areas with an ageing population and an out-flow of young people, the Bugey (France) and Los Vélez (Spain) LAGs, together with a PRODER group<sup>[10]</sup>, are conducting a series of joint measures to increase young people's involvement in their area's local development and to encourage job and business creation. However, the project, developed by an external consultant, failed to genuinely involve local figures, who were annoyed at having it “foisted” on them externally and made very little effort to implement the planned measures.*

#### **d) Project team, local development initiatives and local community**

At local level, the primary impact of transnational cooperation is clearly on the project team - the development agents who launched the project and are responsible for implementing it.

The changes in approach and perspective resulting from the transnational relationship also find their way into the local actions managed by the project team.

The impact on the local community is generally somewhat limited and more the result of a gradual process of “filtration” than of their direct involvement in the project.

Nevertheless, several projects consider transnational cooperation to have played an important role in “awakening local interest” and in validating and conferring new status on local initiatives. Transnational cooperation can also be an excellent means for bringing the LAG closer to the local community.

*In the North Pennines LAG's area, with the problem of its isolated rural population, the coordinator of a small local organisation responsible mainly for supporting environmental projects, wished to initiate collective projects to contrast the local culture with other cultures. The main aim of the “River Management” project, is to organise jointly with its partner, the Spanish La Serranía-Rincón de Ademuz LAG, educational youth workshops on maintaining and restoring water-courses. These special holiday packages enable representatives from the two communities to remain in direct contact. The project demonstrates the desire of the coordinating LAG's area for openness, involving the establishment of a large num-*

*ber of local initiatives to “disseminate” the advantages of cooperation (talks with audio-visual aids in schools, hosting groups of young people from the partner area and so on.). The result has been real local enthusiasm, shored up by the transnational dimension of the initiative.*

The extent of this impact depends less on the theme of the project itself, or the process used to launch the project, than on the methodology used throughout the negotiation and implementation phases:

- > the extent to which local partners are involved in the local cooperation steering group;
- > the extent to which local partners participate in transnational activities and the “productivity” of such activities;
- > the effectiveness of promotional and lobbying methods in making the local area aware of the importance of transnational cooperation.

*The LAGs of Alto Tâmega (Portugal), Calatayud, Alto Palancia-Alto Mijares (Spain), Thermenregion Stegersbach (Austria), and Les Volcans and Montagne Ardéchoise (France) are cooperating on a project to promote and/or revitalise their spas. The emphasis placed on the participation of political, institutional and local operators in the local steering group has increased the project's impact on the local community. The methods for encouraging the participation of local operators in transnational meetings, as well as the publicity given to local and national activities, have been carefully thought out. This has improved the status and viability of the project “Thermalisme en milieu rural” in the eyes of the local community.*

*In the case of the “Crocus Sativus” project, through effective operations to raise the awareness and encourage the participation of producers in transnational meetings, the Greek and Italian partners have helped local saffron producers to overcome their initial fears. Transnational cooperation has in a way made local farmers aware of their own skills, by showing them that they were just as great as those of producers from the partner country.*

[10] PRODER (“PROgrama de Desarrollo Rural”) is a national programme based on similar principles to those of LEADER.

Three Greek LAGs (Viotia, Parnassos-Oiti and Phokida) and one French LAG (Montagne-Hérault) have joined forces in the project **“Produits agro-alimentaires et gastronomie méditerranéenne”** to jointly examine how to boost the image and identity of their areas. Firstly they chose to promote local gastronomic products by emphasising the Mediterranean dimension. As the project progressed, the objectives focused on the quality of the hotel and catering products and services available in each area. The LAG practitioners strove to promote the transnational cooperation project through lobbying and promotion activities and by raising the awareness of the local community, in particular by setting up a local “quality” working group involving representatives of producers, middle-men and outlets in the hotel and catering field. This quickly had a genuine local impact, in particular by developing a new culture based on improving quality and local services.

**INTANGIBLE BENEFITS OF TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION IN RELATION TO THE SEVEN SPECIFIC FEATURES OF LEADER, TO THE PROJECT TEAM, TO LOCAL INITIATIVES AND TO THE COMMUNITIES OF THE PARTNER AREAS**

Fields	Tourism	Food and agricultural production	Environment and heritage	Information technology	Other services
Innovation	New approaches particularly to the concept of area-based tourism New organisational methods New types of tradition-based activities	Not limited to approaches, techniques, products and outlets Essential role of transnational cooperation in tackling the issue of "risk" associated with new products	Less impact amongst environmental groups adopting common approaches Strong impact on traditional organisations "breaking into" environmental issues	Technology that is itself innovative, involving various types of know-how, approach and techniques The way in which it is used in an area-based approach is just as important	New perspectives on the role of local authorities (with special regard to the elderly and young people) Little impact as yet
Area-based approach	Principal impact on the links between products and tourism within a new approach to the area New sense of creating an area-based identity beyond borders	Impact on the form in which local products are promoted, adopting a broader approach	Revalidation of heritage that has fallen into disuse and of related products Reinforcement of the area at local level	How can information technology be effectively used as a tool in an area-based approach?	
Integrated approach	Consolidation of the local partnership, local initiatives and the links between tourism, products and the area.	Promotion of a broader approach to food production Integration of ecological principles for sustainable development	Consolidation of the links between tourism and the environment	Use of information technology as part of an integrated development tool	Reinforcement of the role of services in the rural development strategy
Decision-making and financial management	New methods of raising finance: Combining public and private sources With new financial marketing ideas	Transnational cooperation sometimes represents only a small part of a far-reaching local strategy	New ways of managing public finances	Leverage effect to bring in other backers	
Local partnership	Geographical widening of tourism organisations Creation of links with educational institutions and needs	Strong impact on vertical and horizontal integration: practitioners, producers, distributors and consumers	Creative linking between public (local and regional) structures and private firms	Bringing together of technical solutions and local needs	

**INTANGIBLE BENEFITS OF TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION IN RELATION TO THE SEVEN SPECIFIC FEATURES OF LEADER, TO THE PROJECT TEAM, TO LOCAL INITIATIVES AND TO THE COMMUNITIES OF THE PARTNER AREAS**

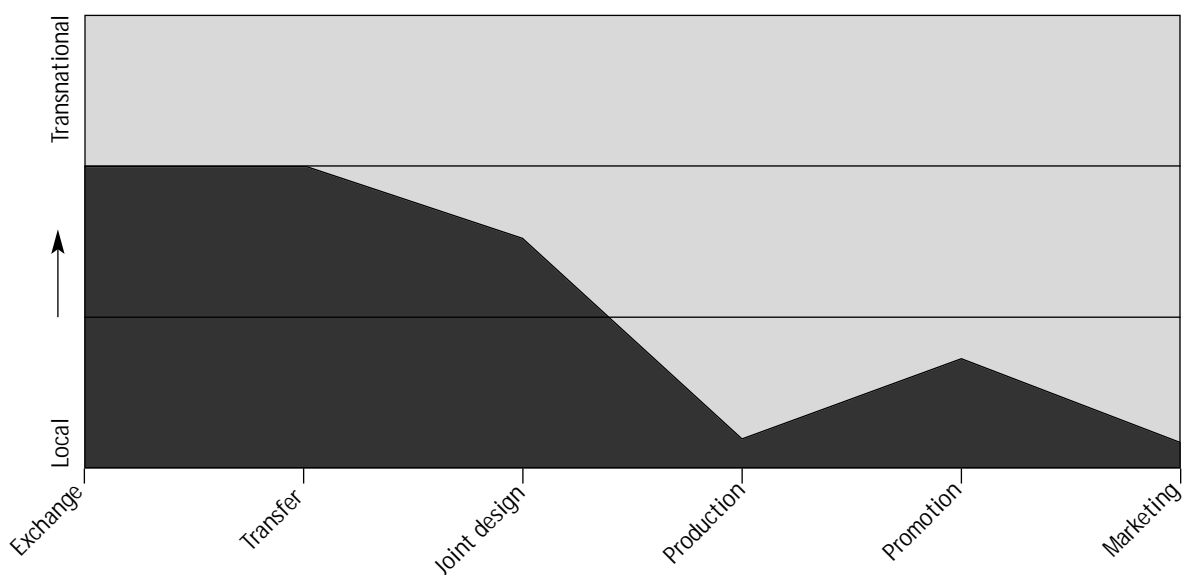
Fields	Tourism	Food and agricultural production	Environment and heritage	Information technology	Other services
Networking and cooperation	Creation of networks and reinforcement of existing networks	More innovative networking as a result of narrower general focus Consideration of supply and demand	Main impact for some groups: transnational activities prompts them to network more effectively at local level	Reinforced technological networking with physical links Use of Internet as a networking tool	
Bottom-up approach	Strong impact of the increased participation of local actors and entrepreneurs	Less obvious impact, since projects are more market sensitive Big increase in vertical and horizontal integration	Little change for environmental groups engaged in a conventional bottom-up approach Major impact on more traditional organisations required to integrate the bottom-up approach into their local strategy	Inevitably a rather top down approach Emergence in the projects of second phases where a need is felt to involve local operators and to adapt technology to needs	
Project team, actions and local community	Principal impact on the project team and local actions through new products and strategies Transnational cooperation also arouses a new interest from the local community, in particular where initiatives are aimed at directly involving the local community	Same principal impact on the project team and local initiatives Transnational cooperation helps to overcome local scepticism about innovation, bridging the gap between LAGs and the local community	In more "traditional" organisations, transnational cooperation is a real factor motivating the local team and the project Little direct impact on the local community Heavy involvement of local volunteers and operators	Principal impact on the local team, but efforts to forge links with local actors	Impact more problematic, remaining at the level of the local team with little local impact In one project: possible negative effects with loss of credibility for transnational cooperation

## Cycle of a cooperation project

Since the majority of LEADER II transnational cooperation projects were launched only after 1998, it is still too early (December 2000) to judge their long-term tangible impact. Indeed, hardly any of the projects have been formally evaluated as yet and generally it is not possible to identify any tangible impact from cooperation initiatives on specific indicators such as employment, production, markets, sales, etc.

Moreover, most of the activities that have so far been carried out under LEADER II transnational cooperation relate to the initial phases of the project cycle, i.e. exchanges, know-how transfer and the joint design of products and services (see diagram below). Although, compared with LEADER I, there has been a sharp increase in the number of activities for jointly promoting products and services, there are still relatively few cooperation initiatives for jointly producing or marketing products and services.

### STAGES AND COOPERATION LEVELS IN A COOPERATION PROJECT



*In **black**: proportion of transnational cooperation in the project.*

*Note that the stages of "production" and "marketing" of goods and services have the smallest transnational cooperation component.*

## **Chapter 2**

# **Difficulties encountered**



# Difficulties encountered

Since it involves partners with different cultures, language and experience, as well as sometimes irreconcilable expectations, transnational cooperation is a process fraught with difficulty and even conflict. Not only do LEADER groups face internal problems (an over-ambitious project, unsuitable partnership, insufficient coordination, etc.), but sometimes they also come up against external obstacles: legal constraints, administrative delays or a poor support system.

However, many of these difficulties can be surmounted by making certain improvements in the way the project is managed and the methods used within it and, to a greater or lesser degree, in the external bodies involved in the project.

Local action groups often focus on the most immediate and easily explained problem areas, in most cases blaming them on external factors – the other partners, financial and legal constraints, etc. – when very often the cause of the problem may have more to do with attitudes or the methodology and management of the project itself.

The aim of this chapter is to summarise the points of view expressed in the answers to the questionnaire by nearly 150 groups and to compare them with the key project development areas.

## 2.1 Internal problems

### 2.1.1 Problems at the level of the transnational partnership

The groups questioned cited the relationship between the partners as the primary area of difficulty. Indeed 20% of them saw relationship problems with their partners as a major issue. Initial meetings between transnational groups are frequently beset by misunderstanding, as the participants come up against language and cultural problems and even prejudice and stereotyping, before they are able to genuinely appreciate their partners' assets, expertise and expectations.

The main causes of such difficulties appear to be:

#### a) Language barriers

15% of the groups questioned experienced communication problems, either due to the number of different languages used in the project, or because of the lack of language skills among the different partners, or else because of insufficient translation/interpretation support.

Even the decision to choose a single working language can cause resentment over the varying levels of language proficiency. This can also lead to the project being dominated by the partners whose mother tongue is chosen as the working language.

## MAIN OBSTACLES TO TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

Internal problems	Partnership: unproductive and unconstructive relationships Project content: unclear or over ambitious Management and coordination: inexperienced and ineffectual Local/transnational links: transnational cooperation project not very relevant to the local area
External problems	Financial, administrative and legal constraints Support systems: not enough help at the required stages



Translators and interpreters often find it hard to master the inevitable technical terms used, or to adequately convey the real expectations and intentions of the partners.

It is better to avoid relying solely on the language skills of partnership members to provide interpretation during meetings. This is a task that calls for great concentration, which conflicts with their effective involvement in the partners' meeting.

#### **b) Cultural differences**

Each partner brings their own cultural identity into their international dealings, which can create misunderstandings about the precise aim of the project, planned methods and social forms of relating. Prejudice and stereotyping, whether implicit or explicit, are common, giving rise to lack of understanding and mistrust between partners, which can be fatal to a project.

#### **c) Distance**

Some partner LAGs mentioned the problem of geographical distance. Even though most day-to-day exchanges can be carried out by telephone, fax or electronic mail, all of the groups questioned acknowledged face-to-face contacts to be essential. The further away a partner is, the less frequent the contact. Geographical proximity often promotes a more active relationship between the partners.

#### **d) Different expectations and degree of involvement**

Several projects reflect the difficulties that arise when the partners involved embark on a transnational relationship from contexts that differ too markedly, with different aspirations and/or a false idea of what they can contribute to the project.

Resentments arise about disparities in the involvement of each partner in the project. Low involvement is often the result of a failure to appreciate the partner's varying human and financial resources. Resentments can also arise where the transnational project is deemed to be unsuited to local needs or to the objectives of the local development plan.

#### **e) Unequal skills and experience**

Resentments can also arise where there are wide disparities between the possible benefits each partner can bring to the transnational cooperation project. Differing levels of know-how can have a negative impact if the various skills and experiences are not valued by all the members of the partnership. The fact that one partner appears to "bring everything", with the others merely "copying" their initiatives often reflects an initial misunderstanding or else a lack of explicitness about the very nature of the partnership.

*The initial meetings between the Spanish and Italian partners in the "Sustainable Agriculture" project were ridden with conflict as to the respective roles of each partner in the production and marketing of the product concerned (olive oil). Although each partner more or less understood each other's language, communication was limited. Later, although the initial conflicts were smoothed over and the managers able to convince the participants of strong common interests, certain resentments arose over what was seen as the dominant role of the Spanish promoting organisation which felt that it was taking more than its fair share of responsibility. The introduction of a clear mechanism for coordinating the project through periodic meetings made it possible to smooth over these differences by allowing each partner to go at its own pace and by taking the specific local contexts into account.*

### **2.1.2 Problems over project content**

#### **a) Defining objectives**

Several LAGs acknowledge that the objectives they had defined in the initial action plan were overly ambitious. Their lack of experience of transnational cooperation had led the groups to underestimate the inherent difficulties. There may also be an important local, regional or national issue specific to one or more of the partners that induces the transnational cooperation project to set itself objectives that maybe exceed the capabilities or expectations of the other project members.

*The Livradois-Forez LEADER group (Auvergne, France) coordinates the project “Abbayes casadéennes” involving the partners Antico Frignano LAG (Italy) and the district council of Burgos (Castilla-León, Spain). Joint historical research was undertaken on the relationship between the various sites, with a view to creating a “Fédération des sites casadéens” (association of casa dei sites). The district of La Chaise-Dieu in the Livradois-Forez area has centred its local development project on the cultural “amenity” that its abbey represents. This has led to it recruit someone to carry out complementary research and to continuously monitor the project, unlike the other partners.*

In other cases, conflict can arise over project priorities as a result of different expectations. This is why a key part of the transnational negotiation is to adapt the objectives to the needs or expectations of all of the partners, usually by prioritising short-term objectives.

## b) Actions and activities

With regard to the action plan itself, some LAGs remark on the difficulty of agreeing clear actions to be undertaken by all members and getting partners to adhere to them. This problem may be tied to over-ambitious objectives that not all of the partners are able to fulfil. This is because they do not always have the same level of resources (time, money, personnel) to devote to the transnational part of the project, which may lead to unequal commitment to the project, exchanges and knowledge transfer.

In some projects this can also reflect confusion over the dividing line between local cooperation actions (measures implemented in each partner’s area) and genuine transnational actions.

## c) Methodology

Many of the difficulties encountered are exacerbated by the disparate methodologies used within a single transnational partnership. Stemming partly from management and coordination issues, the methodology problems cited are mainly in the areas of:

- > planning and programming the project (at local and transnational level)
- > implementing the action plan
- > decision-making method
- > partners’ degree of mutual trust
- > methods of conflict management
- > whether or not there is a monitoring and evaluation system.

Most transnational projects are based on the partners’ widely varying ways of operating, in terms of planning, organising and implementing their work, as well as in working relationships. The poorly negotiated imposition of a particular operating method rarely creates a good long-term relationship. The groups questioned stressed the need to be open, so as to gradually promote new ways of acting and working.

## d) Time

All of these considerations require **time** first and foremost. Several LAGs complained that lack of time forced them to speed things along before the partners had even been able to mature their relationship. Conversely, other groups complained of delays in implementing their project. These opposing viewpoints reflect disparities in the groups’ level of experience, in the degree of progress of the different projects and, most commonly, in the coherence between the objectives to be achieved and the planned deadlines.

*Conducted jointly by the Austrian LAGs, Norische Region and Carnica Rosental and the Italian LAGs Appennino Forlinese and Basso Ferrarese, the project “Via dei Romei” aimed to create and promote a combined cultural tourism package along the ancient Roman road linking Rome to the Norische region across the Alps in Austria. One of its major problems was to adapt the objectives and action plan to the partner groups’ different phases of activity and needs. This reflected above all a dual approach to the project, reflecting the two different national cultures. Whereas the Austrian partners*

[11] Associated with La Chaise-Dieu, an abbey that enjoyed certain pontifical powers and privileges in the Middle Ages.

*wanted to immediately embark on a project in order to rapidly consolidate the transnational relationship, the Italians preferred to allow more time to get to know and trust one another before getting involved in a specific project. Although at first they were a source of misunderstanding, conflict and implementation delays, these differences were finally acknowledged and accepted, leading to mutual enrichment and more dynamic cooperation.*

### **2.1.3 Management problems**

#### **a) Coordination**

Even though each LAG has its own system for managing and coordinating its local and national activities, many groups questioned appear to have had problems in applying or adapting their system and methods to the transnational context.

In fact, many groups operate without any formal coordination mechanisms, relying on meetings between partners to resolve matters of management and content, sharing out responsibilities pragmatically. This method of working can lead to resentment, particularly where one of the partners is required to take on greater responsibilities than the others without specific resources for accomplishing these extra tasks.

For groups that have formally appointed a cooperation administrator or called in an external practitioner, problems are more to do with participation and control, with some LAGs fearing to lose control of the situation. Too much dependence on the administrator can also make groups vulnerable when there is a team changeover, as often happens in transnational cooperation projects.

#### **b) Division of responsibilities**

The questions “Who does what?” “How?” and “When?” are of key importance to many groups. Care must be taken to ensure that all partners share the responsibilities and work equally within the project. Although many recognised that the more experienced partners contributed more to the project, this should not remove all management responsibilities from the other partners.

#### **c) External technical assistance**

Even though the groups had used the available external technical assistance in highly diverse ways, they all reported the same difficulties in deciding when, where

and how to make the most effective use of such external technical assistance.

For some groups, the problem lay in excessive use of such external support, which could end up usurping the partners' control over the project.

Other groups regretted the lack of quality professional support, which would have facilitated matters at crucial stages in the implementation of their cooperation initiatives.

#### **d) Monitoring and evaluation**

Even though the LAGs did not mention it as a major problem, the lack of clear monitoring and evaluation procedures established right from the start of the project leaves the partner groups not only without a solid basis on which to make a final evaluation of the project, but also without a method for quickly spotting when an activity diverges from its initial objectives or when changes need to be made to the programme.

In cases where they felt that a transnational cooperation project was not evolving very well, the groups generally tended to wait for it to “die a natural death”, so that they were spared having to examine causes and responsibilities. However, effective monitoring procedures can really help identify weaknesses and provide quick solutions to ensure that the project can continue.

### **2.1.4 Linking local and transnational levels**

Transnational cooperation will be all the more effective if it meets locally defined needs and objectives.

Some projects have experienced problems because the local operators had wrongly assessed the relevance of their cooperation project. This can be attributed primarily to:

- > too little local involvement (for instance, overly technical projects will tend to remain chiefly in the hands of the professionals in the project team);
- > overly “top-down” methods, seen as having been externally “imposed” and as out of touch with local needs;
- > a lack of effective marketing (too little time and energy spent on promoting the transnational cooperation project effectively), for example through the local or national media.

## 2.2 External obstacles

### 2.2.1 Financial, legal and administrative problems

#### a) Financial constraints

Nearly half of the LAGs answering the questionnaire pointed to financial problems, which for the most part were structural in nature. The most frequent complaints were:

- > differences between national funding mechanisms over the method of allocating Measure C. This had led to serious coordination problems and long delays, as well as to a centralising tendency in contradiction with LEADER principles;
- > lack of clarity and possible overlaps between funding from the LEADER European Observatory (EUR 5,000 and 20,000) and Measure C funding;
- > delays in approving funding applications, sometimes holding up project implementation;
- > overlaps or even conflict between supplementary funding and mainstream funding (LEADER or other);
- > specific problems with co-funding (difficulty in reconciling different criteria of eligibility and sources of funding).

#### b) Legal constraints

Five groups reported problems with legal restrictions. Some complained of the disparity between financial norms and procedures, whilst others pointed to key problems they had faced in carrying out specific transnational actions. Criticisms chiefly concerned the lack of clear advice on creating transnational associations and networks or on establishing a joint label or compulsory quality control procedure.

#### c) Bureaucracy

Nine percent of projects said they had encountered bureaucratic problems that had absorbed a lot of management time: incomprehensible documents, difficulty in contacting the right person and changes in national and community contact persons, with all these elements undermining the efficient management of projects.

#### d) Delays and lack of continuity

Generally speaking, the transnational cooperation projects had taken longer to develop than local projects, due chiefly to the reasons stated above. Predictably, transnational projects are established well after the launch of local projects. Many groups encountered coordination problems as a result, in many cases meaning that they had to finish their local projects at precisely the time when their transnational projects were peaking.

Many LAGs also feared that quality projects would not get the opportunity to pursue their development in the future.

### 2.2.2 Problems with the support system

Many LAGs bemoaned the lack of a properly defined and effective support system to match the different phases of the project cycle.

The support system has been established at a number of different levels. In addition to the generalised support system administered by the LEADER European Observatory, there was also a service at national level run by the network's National Coordination Units and sometimes also at regional level.

There was a lot of very positive feedback from the groups about the LEADER European Observatory's attempts to advise and support partner groups, not only by means of direct contacts, forums and seminars, but also through publications and databases, frequently going beyond its initial remit.

However, the groups would have appreciated regional and national assistance that was more in tune with local concerns and met their primary expectations. The coordinators pointed to the following key problem areas:

- > **Support was not always active enough due to a lack of resources** – many LAGs felt that they had lacked active support, particularly during the early phases of the project cycle (finding partners, preparing funding applications) or for resolving immediate problems. The personalised technical assistance from the Observatory was deemed highly positive but the groups were sorry that there was no support system closer at hand to their area, one that would have helped the groups to optimise the Observatory's assistance.

- > **Not enough technical assistance** – the Observatory had provided valuable technical assistance during the preliminary project phases (finding partners, putting together funding applications and so on). However, apart from such direct technical assistance, they had found it difficult to gain access to more thematic expertise, since there was no database of experts specialising in the most common cooperation topics.
- > **Unclear procedures** - the groups had often wasted valuable time and resources trying to find out exactly what could and could not be included in the various funding application phases.

## **Chapter 3**

# **Some recommendations and tools**



# Some recommendations and tools

The benefits and problems of transnational cooperation, gathered in the field, allow a list of key questions to be defined:

- > Is it possible to learn from past mistakes and model future projects on the successes?
- > Is there a way of shortcutting the process by improving the structures, organisation and external assistance and support systems?
- > Or, on the contrary, do transnational cooperation projects have to operate on a longer term basis to enable them to change direction where required, to evaluate the effectiveness of the project, or even to terminate the activities if necessary?

These questions are examined in more depth below, based on the six problem issues identified in the previous chapter.

## **3.1 Internal factors**

### **3.1.1 Getting the partnership right**

As a reminder, the key problems mentioned earlier are: language, cultural/nationality differences, distance, differing expectations and degrees of involvement, as well as unequal skills, knowledge and know-how.

These five problem areas can be grouped under three key considerations to be taken into account when setting up a new partnership:

- > How to find the right partner and forge effective links?
- > How to create a positive working atmosphere?
- > How to be clear about transfer and exchange of know-how?

#### **a) Finding the right partner(s)**

The general rule is to jointly use all available resources both from within and outside of LEADER, in particular:

- > own national contacts related to the theme to be developed;
- > national contacts related to the LEADER programme and other programmes;
- > databases and publications by the LEADER European Observatory and the network's National Coordination Units;
- > Internet searches and specialised publications;
- > above all, attendance at thematic seminars (LEADER or others), providing a key opportunity to meet potential partners face to face.

#### **b) Establishing a positive relationship**

It is important to devote time and attention to the first meetings. They are fundamental and should provide opportunities to:

- > meet potential partners as early as possible and confirm the desire to work together;
- > agree on a common language or sort out language problems by arranging for the necessary interpretation/translation (avoiding informal arrangements using team members);
- > allow time during the initial meetings for getting to know one another, for finding out more about the projects and areas, for understanding the problems and for broad-ranging discussions on the theme of cooperation;
- > brainstorm possible project areas;
- > avoid narrowing down the discussions too early to specific objectives and action plan;
- > be creative about ways of establishing trust between the partners;
- > be aware of the cultural divide that can sometimes separate different European countries, despite the many advantages.



*The first activity of the “Via dei Romei” project was to organise an “International Herb Fair” in Austria right at the start of the project, in order to establish mutual trust between the partners, in the belief that getting to know one another and carrying out certain tasks together would develop the trust needed for their future cooperation.*

*In the project “La richesse en eau au cœur d'un développement diversifié, innovant et durable”, the friendship established between the leaders of the two LAGs proved decisive. Once satisfied with their transnational relationship, they were very enthusiastic in promoting the project.*

### c) Being clear about transfer and exchange of know-how

Different skill levels result in tendencies towards a transfer or exchange relationship. Both types of relationship are fine as long as they are recognised and planned for early on and the consequences are considered right from the start:

- > In a transfer relationship, it is important to guarantee sufficient benefits for the project promoter. This may take the form of recognition or financial remuneration and/or by phasing in joint activities where all of the partners have the requisite expertise.
- > In an exchange between inexperienced partners, external technical input will certainly be vital. It must therefore be planned for.
- > In exchanges between complementary and experienced partners, skilful “facilitators” can help to bring out the best in all of the inputs. When developing the project, it is a good idea to “mix” the partners well and to explicitly recognise each of their different contributions during the different phases.

**EXCHANGE:** Where the partners have real skills to exchange, the project creates a fruitful synergy that can be one of the project’s most important added value factors. Complementarity of contributions and recognition of the input of each partner are therefore essential.

In the project “Vacation in our European Village” for example, one group had financial expertise, another had experience of local integration, whilst a third had marketing experience.

**TRANSFER:** The Scottish promoter of the project “European Wilderness Challenge” was the trailblazer in introducing wilderness races as a lever for promoting a very peripheral and difficult to access rural area. Right from the outset, the transfer element was recognised and planned for, with the UK group supplying models for application to other areas. A more global action aimed at increasing the project’s critical mass was planned but proved too difficult to implement in the time available to the partners.

**EXCHANGE OR TRANSFER: TYPES OF COOPERATION, POTENTIAL, RISKS AND NEEDS  
IN LINE WITH THE PARTNERS' LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE**

Scenarios	Exchange/ Transfer	Potential	Risks/Needs
<b>Partners of an equivalent level:</b> (relationship of equals)	<b>Exchange:</b> Common starting point	Sharing problems, perceptions, stages Bottom-up type of development	Blind leading the blind Weak motivation leading to few tangible results apart from an exchange of experiences Long development phase <b>Need</b> to integrate skills through external technical assistance
<b>Partners different but of an equivalent level</b>	<b>Exchange:</b> Different but complementary skills, knowledge and methods	Genuine exchange of skills Improvement in all areas Strong motivation to implement results Short development phase for local implementation of the project	Too many differences between partners Too much of a cultural divide Possibility of undervaluing the input of others Narrow focus on local needs Slow development of the joint product <b>Need</b> for a good facilitator to bring out the best in the project
<b>Unequal partnership</b> (one partner is more advanced than the other(s))	<b>Transfer:</b> The more experienced partner passes on its know-how to the other(s)	Valid and effective learning process Harmonisation of methods and products Clear common objectives Dynamic leadership and implementation Short development phase for local implementation Dissemination of good practices	Abuse of the skills and knowledge of the more experienced partner Risk of resentment/ disenchantment Possible top-down imposition of a cultural approach Difficulty in creating a genuine transnational product <b>Need to</b> > Recognise the transfer > Phase in transfer and exchange initiatives gradually so that all sides can benefit from the project

### 3.1.2 Getting the project content right

As a reminder, the key problems mentioned earlier are unclear and ineffective objectives, activities, methodology and time.

#### Key considerations:

- > make a clear distinction between the “core” transnational cooperation project and related activities
- > match objectives to needs
- > define a realistic action plan
- > Improve methodology and time management.

#### a) Making a clear distinction between the core project and related activities

At the heart of the tricky process of transnational cooperation, many LEADER groups voiced the need to distinguish between the baseline activities of a transnational cooperation project (the “core”) and the more open, developing activities that could be included in the project at a later date (“related activities”).

The core of the project needs to rely on very clear objectives, action plans, criteria and coordination. It must be defined for all of the partners to take into account their individual local situations. It involves only local or transnational initiatives directly related to the cooperation project.

“Related activities” allow for a certain flexibility. They include all the local activities in existence prior to the project, upon which the cooperation project will have an impact. Their emergence as the main project developments must be recognised because they could form the basis for further projects in the future. However, they are normally given less priority, since the success of the core project is considered paramount.

#### b) Matching objectives to needs

The most effective projects are needs-led. They have a single primary objective that has been clearly defined by consensus between the partners. The produce sector, where there is a need for outlets, provides some good examples of this.

However, general objectives are not enough in themselves. Clear operational goals must be defined, leading to “visible and measurable outputs” that realistically take into account problems of geographical distance, language communication and time inherent in any transnational relationship.

Short- and long-term goals must be agreed and it is useful to start by developing the simplest goals first by prioritising consensus.

In the area of “related activities”, needs and approaches are less clear and take more time. This can only be done using a step-by-step methodology.

*The promoters of the “Eurotuber” project, the LAGs of Reatino (Italy), Luberon-Pays de Giono (France) and Albarracín (Spain), were concerned to improve truffle-growing techniques and to consolidate the production and sale of truffles. A certain disparity between the interests of the partners had arisen due to differences between wild and cultivated truffles. For instance, the French wished to improve the quality of cultivated truffles, whereas the other partners were less interested in this aspect. This forced the partner groups to limit the project to the chief activities of common interest: introduction of a quality label and measures to protect European truffles as well as the officialisation of the truffle market to counter the black market, etc.*

*The project “Improving the Quality of Beef and Lamb for Import and Export” brought together producers and buyers seeking to meet two specific needs: to find new outlets and to create a new sustainable import source for a quality product. Clear objectives allowed a “pilot” export venture to be launched.*

### c) Defining a realistic action plan

The action plan must include four key elements: What? When? Where? Who? It must also take into account the following:

- > decide what type of activities – local and transnational – the project wishes to carry out;
- > make the actions as concrete as possible, then organise them into different phases and establish a work schedule with clear deadlines;
- > respect these phases: allow time for getting acquainted, context-sharing and swapping views on broader issues before embarking on a specific information and know-how transfer or any further joint actions;
- > allow for both “horizontal” and “vertical” development of the project: this means working on parallel and complementary actions at the same time, such as training, production and promotion;
- > decide who is responsible for each of these actions;
- > clarify how the actions should be evaluated and reported back.

A “step by step” approach, whereby the project objectives are first clarified before seeking out a similar or complementary project with which to agree a joint project, looks good in theory. However, experience has shown that things are never as simple as this in practice. Seeking to define the objectives and action plan before finding partners can lead to a somewhat rigid bargaining environment later. This can hinder the effective development of joint transnational projects, particularly in groups with little experience.

Two distinct approaches have been shown to work, depending on the:

- > experience and expertise of the groups
- > clarity of the need and its suitability for transnational cooperation.

#### *With an experienced promoter or partner:*

The initial contacts may well have already been established through previous work. The partners' transnational cooperation experience enables them to establish clear objectives from the start, whilst being conscious of the obstacles that could beset their project. Such partners will need to consolidate and build on existing contacts, as well as to receive support for integrating other complementary projects.

#### *With relatively inexperienced partners:*

The first step is to choose a fairly broad scope of action, as well as compatible partners. Next, the partner groups can instigate a decision-making process through which to develop a genuine joint project.

If the partners are inexperienced or if the projects have a mix of partners with different levels of experience, it is important to set up a more flexible process to allow more time for the initial phase of sharing information on local contexts, views and know-how prior to planning joint actions.

*The partners in the project “Terrasses de culture” came from very different backgrounds and had their own individual expectations. They spent a long time developing their project. They respected the phases of exchanging views and contexts, followed by an exchange of know-how and finally launching a cooperation project to develop a joint marketing strategy.*

In general, a large proportion of the cooperation projects launched under LEADER II were from partnerships with relatively inexperienced groups. In the future many more transnational projects will be led by more experienced groups.

The following table summarises the possible first five steps in an action plan, according to the experience of the partners involved:

Experienced partners	Inexperienced partners
Step 1: Clarify project area for transnational action	Step 1: Clarify theme for transnational action
Step 2: Define a project proposal, objectives and a draft action plan	Step 2: Find complementary partners interested in the same theme via the LEADER European Observatory or other networks
Step 3: Drawn on known contacts (LAG or others) and adapt the proposal	Step 3: Organise an initial meeting in order to confirm the partners' compatibility and brainstorm specific project areas
Step 4: Identify new partners through networks and gather comments on the proposal	Step 4: Second meeting to prioritise a project area consensually
Step 5: Meet to approve the details of the proposal and strategy	Step 5: Appoint a steering group to draw up the project proposal

#### d) Choosing an appropriate methodology

Often differences in context and perspective are themselves a factor of cooperation added value, provided that the partners take the time to establish a relationship, build trust, focus on the areas they have in common rather than on what divides them and experiment with different methods and organisational forms. Groups have used a variety of methods to productively work on their project, including:

- > Defining priorities and reaching consensus – in some projects, the choice of themes was used to prioritise and reach consensus over key areas of action. *The “Eurotuber” partners started by brainstorming themes of common interest. They went on to examine and rank their respective local priorities, resulting in agreement to focus on the main priorities of the planned actions. This method was seen as essential in focusing on common elements rather than on differences and conflict.*

- > Setting up thematic working groups – some projects have achieved good results by dividing the work into key themes, each of which is later fleshed out by a separate transnational working group.

*The aim of the cross-border partnership “Via Claudia Augusta”, involving the Landsberg (Germany) and Prealpi e Dolomiti Bellunesi e Feltrine (Italy) LAGs, is to jointly establish practices applicable to the key fields of local rural development. Working groups were set up, each actively focusing on a theme such as tourism, culture, local products, etc. Though working independently, these groups all reported to a transnational steering committee as their central coordinating structure. This resulted in highly dynamic exchanges and close working relations between the transnational partners, all focused on the practical aspects of the project. The working groups were also authorised to include new members with a particular interest or expertise, which helped to make them even more responsible.*

In other projects, each working group was coordinated by a different partner, each taking responsibility for implementing the measures relating to their own particular theme.

*From the outset, the project “Thermalisme en milieu rural” was beset by a number of problems as a result of the partners' very different contexts, local needs and legislation. Each LAG agreed to carry out a detailed analysis of the spas in its own area, in line with a series of common criteria, before deciding to co-ordinate a working group around a concrete theme. These working groups covered diverse themes such as modernising the spas, promotion, new products, problems with thermal water, quality control, training, launching marketing operations, etc. This methodology proved to be very effective, because the idea of involving a much larger number of partners than the project team allowed for a global reflection whilst leading to concrete proposals and actions.*

- > Optimising the use of electronic mail - several LAGs stressed the importance of using electronic mail for day-to-day contacts, rather than merely for sending and receiving information. By establishing a routine of exchanging comments, news and ideas on a regular basis the internal communication within projects was vastly improved.

### 3.1.3 Getting the management process right

As a reminder, the key problems mentioned earlier are: unclear management and coordination, division of responsibilities, monitoring/evaluation and technical assistance.

Explicit coordination of the project is very important. Transnational cooperation projects are very time-consuming and frustrating to coordinate. Inexperienced groups often underestimate the time and commitment needed to make transnational relationships work. Indeed, once they have returned to the local arena it is easy for them to relegate transnational cooperation tasks to a secondary position and to give priority to more immediate local concerns.

In order to avoid this, a primary role must be explicitly given to the management and coordination of the cooperation project.

### a) Selecting the management and coordination model

The selection can be made in four successive stages:

- > Discuss in detail:
  - each partner's human, time and economic resources
  - skills and experience
  - pros and cons of the different models
  - motivation and possibilities for compromise.
- > Arrive at a consensus on the management method to be adopted.
- > Draw up detailed documents specifying:
  - how the management will be carried out
  - how much time should be committed to the activities and the planned deadlines
  - how expenses will be covered and monitored.
- > Regularly review how the chosen management method is working.

### DIFFERENT MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION MODELS WITH THEIR ADVANTAGES AND DRAWBACKS

Model/Example	Advantages	Drawbacks
Internal coordinator: selection of one partner	Clear areas of responsibility Greater organisational capability	Unequal involvement of the partners Work overload for the coordinator Disparate levels of interest and commitment
Shared coordination: each partner takes on responsibility for specific tasks	Involvement and responsibility shared amongst the partners Individual responsibility for key themes	Each theme relies on a single partner Possible competition between themes
Joint transnational steering group: a joint management committee of representatives specially assigned from the different partner groups	Shared involvement and responsibility Joint responsibility for managing and coordinating joint actions	Possible work overload Too much time spent on decision-making
Use of external management professionals	Clear areas of responsibility Paid higher quality professional management Management efficiency	Dilutes sense of shared involvement and responsibilities Partners can lose control of the process

Some LAGs have adopted a mixed method to suit the requirements of their project as well as their partners' resources. Below are two examples:

*When the three "Rural Market Place" partners got involved in the project, they decided to entrust project management to a permanent steering group made up of LAG project managers. This steering group crystallised into a European Economic Interest Group (EEIG), which acts as the formal operational base of the European Rural Market Place network. The presidency of the EEIG is rotated and the operational agency is entrusted to a private consultancy firm. Tasks are agreed by the partners at each meeting. A list of agreements and tasks to be accomplished is signed by each partner after the meeting.*

*Having defined a number of key elements for managing and coordinating their cooperation activities, the six LAGs involved in the "Thermalisme en milieu rural" project used an external adviser during the early stages in order to draw up the Measure C application and organise the project into two levels:*

- > a steering group comprised of the six LAG coordinators responsible for project design, implementation and work methodology;*
- > working groups comprised of distinctive local operators, focusing on agreed themes and coordinated by each of the different LAGs.*

### **b) Sharing out tasks**

Due to the specific needs of the project, management and coordination may be "dominated" by one partner, or even a single person. In their answers to the questionnaire, there was strong consensus among the LAGs that the greater the extent to which responsibilities and practical tasks are shared among all partners, the better the project works.

Responsibilities and tasks are generally distributed in two ways:

- > at the start of the project: responsibilities for the key areas or themes are shared equally between the partners;*
- > during the project: tasks are allocated as they arise, according to each partner's capabilities (time, equipment, etc.).*

### **c) Monitoring/evaluation system**

Many LAGs recognise the need to address the monitoring and evaluation issue right from the start of the cooperation project. Indeed, effective evaluation is needed to enhance the quality of the project, as well as to respond to the external demands imposed by LEADER funding systems.

Monitoring and evaluation are two sides of the same coin. The system that is put in place should be clear, be centred on the main objectives and be easy to operate and understand. Above all, it must have been developed jointly by all of the partners.

The chosen system must also be able to combine the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the project:

- > Quantitative assessment - some groups choose to adopt a detailed action plan that includes milestones, ie, clear objectives translated into specific actions that must be achieved by a pre-arranged date. These are then reviewed by the steering group. In this case, the evaluation is simply an extension of the monitoring procedure.*
- > Qualitative assessment – there are also examples of special evaluation exercises to assess the more tangible effects and changes brought about by cooperation. These are usually based on specially designed discussion tools used with the partners' representatives at the beginning and end of the project. For example, some LAGs have used the star diagram featured earlier to measure their project's local impact in the key areas of innovation, integration, area-based approach and partnership.*

It should be noted that assessing the project's local impact based on the seven specific features of LEADER forms part of a more general evaluation conducted by the LAG. This should be supplemented by an assessment of the transnational cooperation project itself. For this second point, only the aspects of effectiveness and perhaps efficiency (whether the initial objectives have been achieved) should be taken into account.

#### d) Whether or not to use external technical assistance

The survey among LAGs showed that technical assistance has been used in various ways for two main reasons:

- > to provide “professional” management
- > to provide technical support at key stages in the project.

Deciding whether it is appropriate to use external technical assistance, and when and how to do so, is an important management decision that depends on:

- > the partners’ existing skills
- > the time and resources partners can commit to transnational cooperation
- > the ambitiousness of the objectives.

Strong partnerships pursuing clear objectives that match local needs do not necessarily require external support, since they are able to rally sufficient expertise from within their own ranks.

The use of external technical assistance can bring important benefits, but it can also have negative consequences:

- > The use of external technical assistance is often positive in cases where LAGs have clearly defined the need and role of the technical assistance structure, which usually covers an area of expertise not available in the groups. This relationship gives rise to a specific contractual commitment or a well-defined written list of tasks.

Very positive results have been seen both where the technical assistance was used at certain specific points or for specific tasks, and where it was integrated into the project later as part of a longer-term relationship.

*In the project “Thermalisme en milieu rural”, specialists were consulted for the production of technical reports on water purification problems and on the creation of Internet sites.*

*The partners in the “Crocus Sativus” project decided to establish a longer-term relationship with research centres and universities in order to carry out the advanced studies needed to develop their saffron-based products.*

- > The use of external technical assistance is often negative where it emphasises a top down approach, and where local involvement is elicited unwillingly or at too fast a pace.

*In the case of a chestnut project involving ten LAGs from Italy and France, the external technical assistance personnel wished to gear the work to creating local tourist routes on the theme of cooperation. The partners chose a different priority for their joint work: to get the chestnut recognised by the European authorities as an agricultural product in its own right and thus to be covered by the Common Agricultural Policy.*

In general it is best for the partners to jointly agree on whether or not external assistance is needed, to clearly specify the tasks to be accomplished and to carefully avoid handing over control to the external operator.

#### 3.1.4 Ensuring that the transnational project has a local impact

As a reminder, the key problems mentioned earlier are: too much of a top-down approach, too little local involvement and the local community view that the project is not relevant to local needs.

A large majority of LEADER groups feel that the cooperation project will bring no added value and will lose its credibility if it is not based on local needs, fails to involve local operators and is not promoted as widely as possible.

Ensuring the local relevance of transnational cooperation projects is perhaps the key area where new tools are needed. Such tools must be adapted to the following three key considerations:

- > linking local needs
- > promoting local involvement in transnational cooperation
- > promoting the transnational cooperation process and results.



### a) Linking local needs

Most groups agree that few transnational projects are truly “bottom-up”. However, even though transnational cooperation is generally “top down” this does not mean it cannot be turned into a genuine bottom-up project.

To a large extent, this will require the partner LAGs to:

- > fully realise that transnational cooperation is a real instrument of local development;
- > defend the “pilot and experimental” function of transnational cooperation;
- > continually adapt the project to local needs;
- > spend the necessary time and effort to ensure that the local actors participate in developing the project.

### b) Promoting and involving the local area

There is a wide variation in the extent and form of local actors’ involvement in transnational cooperation. These two factors depend mainly on the type of coordination or management used and on the willingness to adopt a bottom-up approach.

Too many projects rely on the participation of one or two practitioners or group coordinators in overly technical exchanges. This has inevitably led to a lack of interest and commitment from local actors. The wider and more complete is the involvement of local operators at the different levels, the greater the project benefits will be.

There are at least four different ways of involving the area:

- > **Setting up a local steering group** - some groups have overcome the above problem by working hard to include local political and institutional partners in managing the project.
- > **Tiered exchanges** – in order to overcome the problem of information overload where a large number of local operators are involved in diverse management tasks, some LAGs have advocated a two-tier system aimed at two distinct target groups:
  - practitioners and official coordinators (in charge of management)
  - local operators concerned with project content contribute to a wider debate.

Regular exchanges are encouraged between the two levels.

- > **Encouraging the participation of local operators in physical visits and exchanges** – the enthusiasm and interest of local operators in transnational cooperation grows when they actively participate in visits and exchanges.

- > **Implementing special measures to involve local operators** - other projects have implemented measures designed to engage key local players, for example by jointly organising training courses, seminars, conferences, trade fairs, and so on.

### c) Promoting the transnational cooperation project

Not all LAGs take the time to advertise the activities and successes of transnational cooperation. Those that have done so have not only reaped the added value of improved status and increased interest from the local community, but have also found it easier to secure financial and institutional backing for their future activities.

The LAGs questioned stress the importance of promoting transnational cooperation above all in relation to its innovative or pilot function, even if this is not understood locally at the start. The real value of transnational cooperation lies in the prospects that it offers for the future, in other words, it offers a “window on the future”.

Different promotional methods can be used:

- > **Using the media at the local**, national and transnational level – many groups have found that newspapers, radio and television are willing to advertise their transnational cooperation, whilst no media coverage was given to their local project.
- > **Disseminating promotional material**: brochures, leaflets, reports, booklets, videos, CD-ROMS, etc., as well as badges, calendars, T-shirts, etc.
- > **Using the Internet** - the network of networks has considerably increased dissemination possibilities through the creation of Web sites.
- > **Promotional events** – the wide distribution of publicity during conferences, seminars and trade fairs, aimed at an audience wider than that of the participants alone, raises the project’s profile in the area.
- > **Educational promotion** - taking the time to promote the project through the educational system, or through educational events and talks, often reaches out to hitherto untouched sections of the local community.

In the “*Palomares*” project (see Chapter 1), one of the partner groups’ key concerns was to involve the local community, particularly in helping defray the considerable costs involved in renovating the buildings. The partners resolved the problem at two levels:

1) *Dynamic involvement of the key players in all meetings (practitioners and presidents of the LAGs, practitioners from two nature reserves, representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and individual private companies – including the owner of the only legalised pigeon slaughterhouse).*

2) *Public awareness-raising and a publicity campaign aimed at the key socio-economic players in the area (owners of dovecotes/pigeon houses, hotels, restaurants, tour operators, etc.) - the partners created a common image and logo for the project. They also produced videos and other audio-visual material, plus brochures, and organised a number of events: conferences, fairs and local and national media campaigns.*

In the “*River Management*” project, the key partner organisation of the North Pennines LAG was well established locally and had made great efforts to actively involve large numbers of local workers and volunteers in the project through visits, exchanges and information and training sessions. As a result, the local community became enthused by transnational cooperation. They also used effective dissemination of project activities and results. In particular, the coordinator organised educational displays and talks with audio-visual aids on the activities carried out jointly with local organisations and schools.

Originally only the coordinators of the partner LAGs took part in the meetings organised for the “*European Wilderness Challenge*” project (see Chapter 1). The cooperation promoters were conscious of the problem of lack of direct involvement of the local community. The Scottish LAG therefore set up a non-LEADER funding procedure to enable local residents or companies to visit other European communities in order to gain and exchange know-how useful to the local area, provided that their project was of direct interest to their local community. This fund was meant to cover the travel and accommodation costs of fifty people over three years and, as a result, the LAG hoped to attack the problem of the local community’s insularity and lack of interest in transnational cooperation.

## 3.2 External factors

### 3.2.1 Getting the financial, legal and administrative structures right

As a reminder, the key problems mentioned earlier are: contradictory national funding mechanisms in the various Member States, transnational legal obstacles, uncoordinated and sometimes bureaucratic administrations and the issue of the continuity of LEADER II projects under the new programme.

#### a) Financial structures

The LAGs highlighted three key needs:

- > better transnational funding mechanisms.
- > integration of other funding sources (public/private).
- > coordination and administration.

#### *Better transnational funding mechanisms*

Most of the LAGs feel that the LEADER II system poses a series of problems, in particular:

- > serious differences between the national funding mechanisms for administering Measure C;
- > overlap between different measures and a lack of clarity over which actions can be funded and by whom;
- > over-complex administration;
- > sometimes insufficient funding for the initial project phases;
- > delays in approving funding applications which jeopardise the progress of the projects.

#### *Recommendations*

- > Reserve a fixed baseline budget from the local budget for the entire process of transnational cooperation (e.g. between 2% and 10% of the budget of local development bodies).
- > Allocate a supplementary flat-rate amount to all projects to cover exchange and transfer costs.
- > Use national instruments to finance the very first stages of transnational cooperation.

### **Integration of other funding sources (public/private)**

The lessons learned by LEADER groups on how to broaden the funding base of their transnational projects set an example for developing long-term projects. These include a number of different ideas:

- > Integration of transnational cooperation into LEADER' score funding.
- > Coordination with other public programmes.
- > Securing private sponsorship.

*The "Sustainable Agriculture" project involving Italian and Portuguese partners was developed using money from core LEADER funds. This was used to cover part of the local implementation, with the transnational cooperation money being reserved to cover genuine joint activities (meetings, promotion, visits, etc.). At the later project stages, the funding base was broadened still further to include financial support from local cooperative organisations, trade unions and the regional government for key locally-implemented actions: trials of experimental plant varieties and organic production, training and promotion.*

*One of the key elements of the "European Wilderness Challenge" project was its funding, a point on which the partners initially took a very different stance. The Scottish and Swedish partners both looked to private sponsorship for achieving the key objective of the project: wilderness races. These events were to be partially organised by private firms hoping to profit from the event by sponsoring brands of drinks, sportswear and sports equipment. By contrast, the Greek partner saw the project first and foremost as a public investment, which local businesses could profit from at a later date. Later the Greeks secured major sponsorship from a leading international beverage company whose director came from the region.*

#### **Recommendations**

- > Explicitly recognise and promote funding for the transnational elements at national and transnational level.

### **Coordination and administration**

Most of the LAGs questioned had experienced problems in calculating budgets for transnational cooperation projects, establishing links with other programmes and coordinating the different types of funding used by the partners.

#### **Recommendations**

- > Develop clear guidelines and advice lists regarding the elements that should be included in the budget of a transnational project (key budget headings, pitfalls to be avoided, etc.), to ensure that budgets are more realistic.
- > Conclude formal financial agreements, where necessary stipulating equal financial commitment from all partners and detailing how the project is to be financially managed.
- > Facilitate transparency and accountability of each group for its own funding by providing pro-forma models.
- > Exchange information about financial constraints and problems.

### **b) Legal structures**

Many of the LAGs questioned pointed to a real legal vacuum in the field of transnational cooperation and put forward three general recommendations.

#### **Recommendations**

- > Develop and disseminate legal models for creating transnational networks, organisations and associations.
- > Disseminate best practice regarding legally approved common procedures.
- > Develop a mechanism to channel legal problems related to transnational cooperation up to European level.

### c) Administrative structures

As a reminder, the key problems mentioned earlier are: bureaucracy, lack of effective coordination and uncertainty over the continuity of projects started under LEADER II.

The LAGs' main reasons for complaint apply to almost any publicly funded programme: remoteness of the local level from the administration, bureaucracy and delays in processing funding applications, as well as a lack of effective systems of coordination and communication between the different levels.

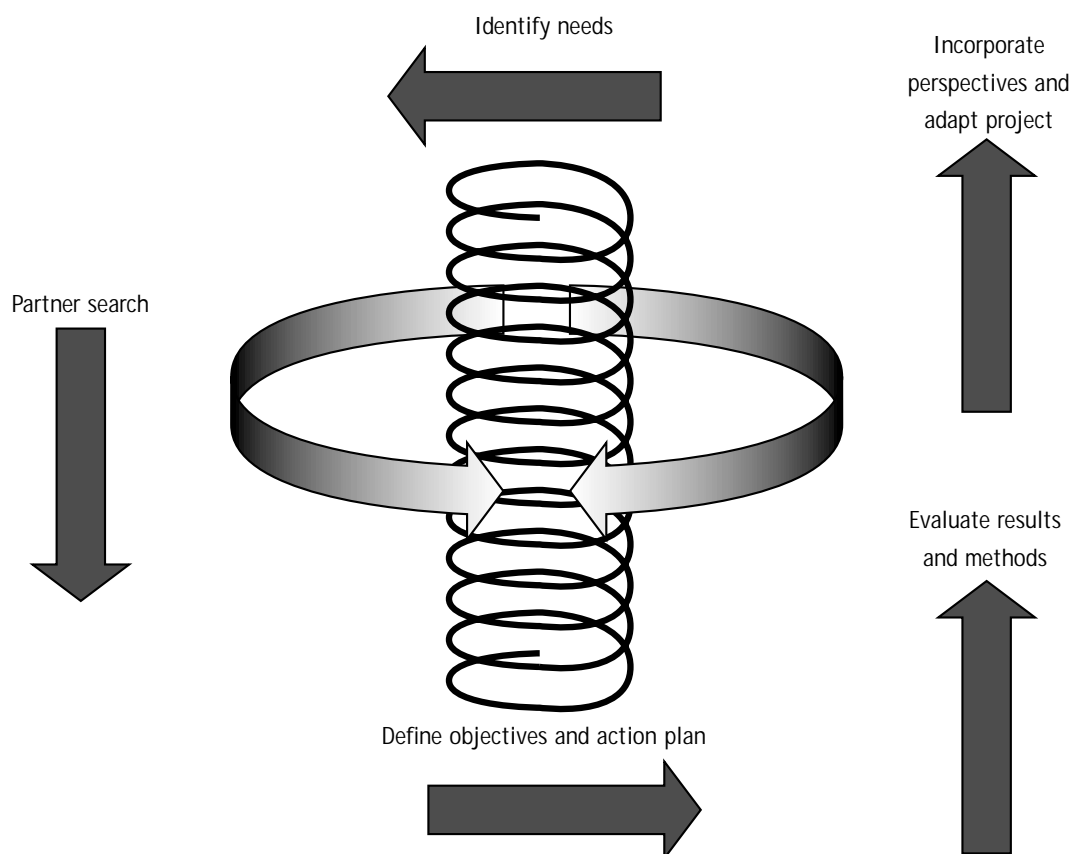
#### **Recommendations**

> Coordinate the different levels – the LAGs clearly state that the most important prerequisite is a clear system of coordination between the different administrative levels (European, national, regional and local). Effective communication between these levels is essential to avoid overlaps and often conflicting demands from the various levels.

- > Produce user-friendly documents and brochures – official forms must be made clearer and more comprehensible and be backed up by guides to help applicants complete their funding applications.
- > Establish transparent procedures and set deadlines for both sides – the procedures should be clear and accessible to all applicants.
- > Set up permanently available databases and a personal help line to provide accurate and up-to-date information in web databases and a remote advisory system for resolving administrative problems.
- > Plan for the continuity of projects initiated under LEADER I and II.

The projects pass through a development “spiral”, where the learning experience that comes from evaluating project progress and results can be incorporated into new action phases.

### DEVELOPMENT SPIRAL IN COOPERATION PROJECTS



This spiral process, which for many transnational LEADER II cooperation projects started belatedly, takes more time for transnational cooperation projects than for local development projects, due to the special problems that partners have to overcome.

If nothing is done to evaluate quality projects and help them move forward, including outside of LEADER II, a good deal of the experience gained is liable to be lost.

In practice this means:

- > acknowledging the time required to develop transnational cooperation projects;
- > encouraging the launch of new projects, as well as facilitating the continuity and expansion of existing quality projects so as to secure their long-term development "spiral".

### **3.2.2 Getting the support systems right**

The groups questioned reported their experiences of the technical assistance for transnational cooperation, notably the LEADER European Observatory's support system, as well as support from the National Units and in some cases, from regional cooperation support units.

#### **Recommendations for a support system**

##### ***Provide individual technical advice and support***

The establishment of a dynamic and pro-active advice and support team to guide and support the LAGs throughout their cooperation project, particularly in:

- > finding partners
- > developing the project and budget
- > seeking common administrative and legal frameworks
- > resolving problems of project content.

This service should be provided at different levels (regional, national, European), depending on the type of request to be handled. It should be available as a help line (by phone and e-mail), backed up by web page databases, and offer the possibility of face-to-face encounters.

##### ***Provide and promote information***

Generally the LAGs applaud the current information systems and point to their expansion, chiefly in terms of accessibility and creating more effective links between national and EU information. Three measures are proposed:

- 1) Establish up-dated, easily accessible databases to provide information about partners, projects, procedures and best practice at transnational and national levels.
- 2) Produce supplementary guides and information packs to aid the partner groups in the key phases of developing their project (management, coordination, monitoring and evaluation).
- 3) Coordinate the information function between national and Observatory offices.

##### ***Provide a "methodological lookout" function***

The different organisations responsible for networking (at regional, national and European levels) should have a clearer role in identifying best practice and recommendations. Such best practice and recommendations should be continually disseminated to the LEADER groups and the administrations in order to influence their cooperation practices and the type of support provided by the different levels.

The role of these organisations could include the following areas:

- > Research (analysis of current practices and the lessons to be drawn from them).
- > Training (organisation of special training sessions on the trickiest issues: management, coordination, monitoring and evaluation).
- > Organisation of thematic meetings (seminars, workshops and videoconferences) targeted at key areas for future project development.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED TOOLS

PROBLEMS	RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED TOOLS
<b>1. Partnership</b>	
Language	Give more prominence to quality interpretation/translation
Cultural/nationality-related misunderstandings	Devote more time to initial face-to-face meetings Plan social/cultural events to present all aspects of the area Accept conflict management and problem-solving as an inevitable part of a transnational relationship
Distance	Reduce the geographical scope of projects If distance is required, earmark extra financial resources for more visits/contacts
Differing expectations and level of involvement	Spend more time and care on selecting partners From the outset establish open exchanges about contexts, needs, resources and skills
Unequal skills, knowledge and expertise	Clarify what is wanted (exchange or transfer?) Agree on a clear division of roles, tasks and phases
<b>2. Project Content</b>	
Unclear objectives	Agree general objectives, then prioritise a limited number of operational objectives Allow time for discussion
Ambitious goals that seem to conflict with limited objectives	Distinguish between the core project and “related activities” Build in flexibility in order to broaden the discussions and leave room for other project areas
Actions/activities	Limit and phase actions clearly Confirm the different cycles of local and transnational actions Agree deadlines and responsibilities Review first phase and adapt planned activities if necessary Ensure that a real consensus is reached between the partners and that local backing exists
Methodology	The process is often more important than the initiative itself Pay attention to the form of meetings, particularly in terms of participation, problem-solving and decision-making Share responsibilities and be open to experimenting with different ways of organising activities and evaluate them Involve external technical assistance where skills and/or time are lacking
Time	Adapt time schedules to needs and to the level of groups Devote more time to the initial phases and fix clear deadlines. If the partners are inexperienced, double the time needed and review regularly

PROBLEMS	RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED TOOLS
<b>3. Management</b>	
Unclear management/ coordination	Decide from the start who is responsible for what Choose whether the project should be managed by an Internal/external administrator or a joint steering group
Division of responsibilities	Draw up a document defining responsibilities and ensuring that everybody shares tasks Check later that this arrangement is working well
Monitoring and evaluation	Agree simple procedures from the start, based on what must be achieved by when
External technical assistance	Ensure regular reviews and do not hesitate to change the method if necessary Agree on what type of external technical assistance is needed and the right time to use it Draw up a clear contract and work programme
<b>4. Local/transnational links</b>	
Little local involvement	Ensure that the transnational cooperation project responds to a genuine local need and that the direct operators are involved Link the local and transnational levels by continually adapting the project to local needs Review who is involved: broaden the participation to include different partners, particularly political representatives and “prime movers” in the partner areas
Not seen as relevant by the local community	Devote time and resources to promoting the project at local, national and transnational levels

PROBLEMS	RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED TOOLS
<b>5. Financial, legal and administrative problems</b>	
Structural constraints in funding mechanisms	<p>Allocate a fixed basic amount for all of the groups wishing to be involved in transnational cooperation</p> <p>Follow this by launching an application procedure for funding the implementation of the projects themselves</p> <p>Ensure coordination and evaluation at European level</p> <p>Check whether it is possible to combine different sources of funding (national programmes and private funds)</p> <p>Ensure that a clear support system is set up to provide specific advice and documentation, as well as direct personal contacts</p>
Legal constraints	<p>Set up mechanisms to channel legal problems up to European level</p> <p>Create a European legal advisory centre</p>
Administrative problems	<p>Establish effective coordination between EU, national, regional and local levels</p> <p>Produce clear documents in everyday language</p> <p>Publish brochures explaining the procedures and formalities for obtaining funding</p> <p>Set up a support system of direct personal contacts</p> <p>Establish transparent procedures and set deadlines for both sides</p>
Late start-up / Lack of continuity	<p>Ensure that quality projects get the chance to continue on from projects initiated under LEADER II</p>
<b>6. Support</b>	
Insufficient help available in finding partners, preparing projects and trouble-shooting	<p>Set up a dynamic and pro-active support system</p>
Difficulty in more clearly targeting thematic areas related to common needs	<p>Organise more targeted thematic platforms (e.g. at seminars)</p>
Unclear instructions for completing funding applications	<p>Disseminate easy-to-digest information, packs and guides</p>
Overlapping and conflicting demands from the different levels	<p>Coordinate the different levels, particularly national and European ones</p>





# Conclusion



# Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to draw some preliminary lessons from the transnational cooperation experience of LEADER II groups and to pass them on to rural operators wishing to embark on a cooperation project.

However, at the time this study was conducted the state of progress of LEADER II transnational cooperation projects did not reflect the full added value that one might expect from transnational actions. The survey therefore focused on the problems encountered by partners and on the solutions they have adopted to resolve such problems.

However, it would be totally wrong to conclude from this that transnational cooperation is such a difficult task that it would not be wise to engage in it at all. On the contrary, the groups questioned unanimously agreed that if they had to do it all over again they would not hesitate, but that, with the benefit of hindsight, they would tackle it differently next time. Every one of them firmly intends to prepare new cooperation projects under a future procedure, either with the same or with other partners.

The added value of cooperation, as described in Chapter two of this study, is very considerable for rural areas, which must at all costs keep pace with the accelerating changes taking place in our "globalised" world. Cooperation provides them with a unique opportunity to put their activities into perspective, to contrast their practices with other cultures and to achieve the critical mass they need in order to make an activity, product, service, etc. viable. In short, it offers them a chance to benefit from the experience of others for developing their own local assets.

Although the tangible outputs to date have not been spectacular, LEADER transnational cooperation has clearly had a very positive impact on local strategies. Their experience of cooperation has allowed LAGs to enhance their practices and skills, in some cases leading them to critically reassess certain issues at a time when a new phase of rural development support is just beginning.



## Appendix 1

# LEADER II transnational cooperation: state of play

255 transnational cooperation projects, involving nearly half of LEADER II groups, have used the LEADER European Observatory's technical assistance system. Of these, 148 answered the questionnaire.

Of these 148 projects, nearly 50% benefited from successive financial support from the three support measures (EUR 5,000, EUR 20,000 and finally Measure C).

Twenty-one projects benefited from the "from idea to project" support measure (EUR 5,000) only and a further 17 received both EUR 5,000 and then EUR 20,000 ("from project to action").

A small number of groups leapfrogged from the "from idea to project" phase or the "from project to action" phase directly to Measure C.

Many projects received funding directly from Measure C without receiving European technical assistance beforehand. However, since the Observatory has very little information on such projects, they are not covered by this study.

Transnational cooperation has attracted nearly 50% of LEADER II groups and most cooperation ventures have gone on beyond the initial contacts stage to a fully-fledged transnational cooperation project.

### Coordinating countries, participating countries

Each transnational cooperation project was managed by a "coordinating group". The project coordinator plays a key role in providing technical assistance for transnational cooperation:

- > Firstly, it is often the coordinator who initiates the project. The coordinator sets out a series of expectations from a potential partnership in line with identified local needs. Next the coordinator actively seeks other organisations willing to cooperate on a selected theme.
- > Secondly, in most cases the coordinator is the prime mover of the project. It is the group that arranges contacts between the partners and centralises all the information relating to the project.
- > Finally, the coordinator is the Observatory's official interface. It is the coordinator that draws up the funding application, collects the necessary technical documents (letters of intent from the partners, certificates, proof of expenditure, etc.) and replies to any requests for further information. The coordinator receives the financial reimbursement and redistributes it to the partners.

In general it is the coordinator who keeps the momentum going and ensures that the project continues to move forward in spite of any problems encountered.

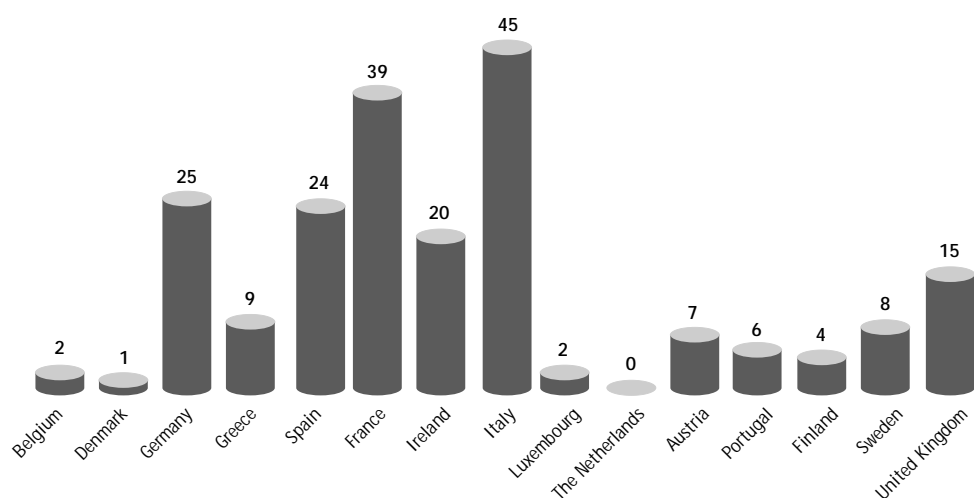
It is therefore important to distinguish the role of project "coordinator", which is more demanding in terms of time, management and sometimes skills, from the role of "partner" in the broader sense (involvement in the project, whatever the role).

### a) Project coordination

Whereas under LEADER I, the promoters and coordinators of transnational cooperation projects came chiefly from Northern European countries, under LEADER II the Southern countries have really come into their own.

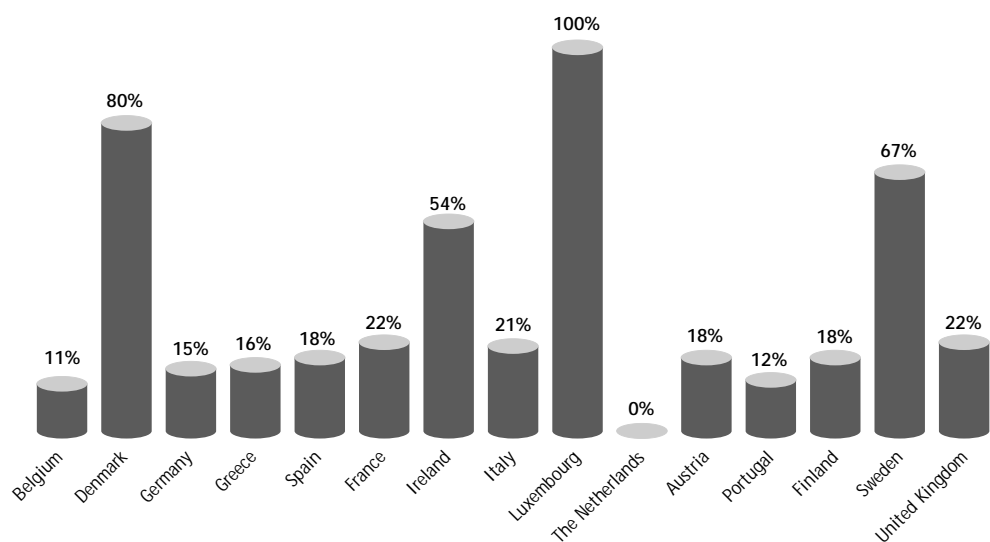
The coordinators of the projects examined came mainly from Italy (22% of projects), France (19%), Spain and Germany (12% each).

#### NATIONALITY OF LEADER II GROUPS COORDINATING PROJECTS (IN NUMBERS OF PROJECTS)



However, this participation reflects very different situations for each country.

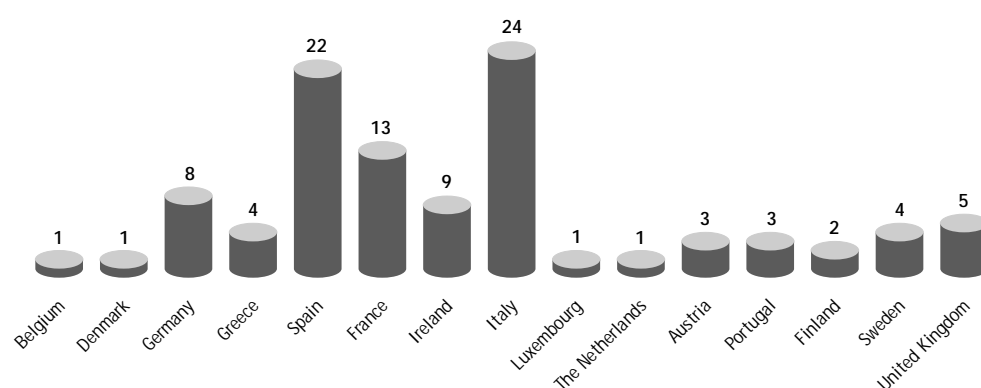
#### COORDINATORS OF TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROJECTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL THE LAGS FROM EACH COUNTRY



## b) Project participation

In terms of participation in transnational cooperation projects, Italy and Spain, followed by France and Ireland, are the countries with the highest percentages of groups involved in transnational cooperation.

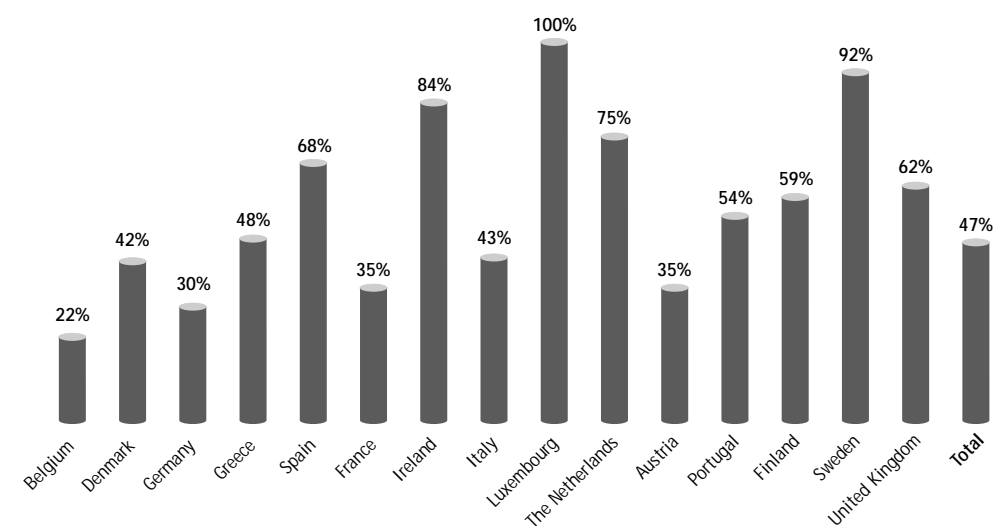
### INVOLVEMENT OF LEADER II GROUPS IN TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION BY NATIONALITY



The Mediterranean countries are the most active participants in transnational cooperation projects, frequently in association with their closest continental neighbours.

There are also clear disparities between the different countries in terms of their LAGs' involvement as promoters and/or partners of transnational cooperation projects:

### PERCENTAGE OF EACH COUNTRY'S LEADER II GROUPS INVOLVED IN TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION





## Project size

If one considers all projects having received Observatory technical assistance (EUR 5,000 and/or EUR 20,000), the number of partner groups in each transnational cooperation project is generally low, with more than 70% of projects having only two or three partners. However, a significant number of projects (around 15%) have more than four partners. The LEADER II transnational cooperation project with the largest number of partners includes 14 groups from three Member States.

### NUMBER OF PARTNERS PER PROJECT

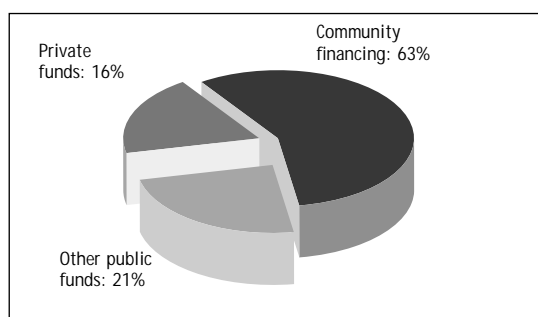
Number of partners	2	3	4	5	6	7 +
Number of projects	116	64	35	22	5	10
Total percentage	46%	25%	14%	9%	2%	4%

The percentages in the above table are approximate since it is quite common for the number of partners to change as the project progresses. In fact the number of participating groups is rarely the same in the “from idea to project”, “from project to action” and Measure C phases.

## Funding mix

Here we are interested in the implementation of projects under Measure C of the Community Initiative. Even though the information on this subject is rarely complete, it seems that on average, the Community financing provides 63% of the funding for cooperation projects, followed by other public funds with 20% and private funds with 16%.

### BREAKDOWN OF FUNDING FOR IMPLEMENTING LEADER II TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROJECTS, BY SOURCE



## Appendix 2

# List of projects that were the subject of an interview

Title of the transnational cooperation project	Name of the project's coordinating group (Observatory code for the LAG)
Qualität ohne Grenzen	Norische Region [AT-KT02]
Vacation in our European village	Feldbach [AT-ST02]
Via Claudia Augusta	Landsberg [DE-BA43]
Rural Market Place – RMP	Oderbruch [DE-BR06]
Wadden Sea Regions	Leer [DE-NI16]
Aufbau eines Kooperationsnetzes europäischer Umwelt- und Naturschutzzentren in ländlichen Regionen	Nord-Saarland [DE-SL01]
Produits agro-alimentaires et gastronomie méditerranéenne	Viotia [EL-SE01]
Mise en réseau des acteurs et des producteurs de vins VQPRD avec d'autres pays de l'Union européenne	Samos-Ikaria [EL-VA03]
Marca de calidad territorial	El Condado de Jaén [ES-AN10]
SaS, cooperation between Sweden and Spain	Småland [SE12]
Valorización del Patrimonio Popular Rural – Palomares	Campos-Pan [ES-CL14]
Red de cooperación transnacional para la promoción del turismo rural en la región fluvial del Duero/Douro	Almazán – Arcos de Jalón [ES-CL11]
Promocion de las comarcas paralelo 40	La Manchuela [ES-CM02]
La sostenibilidad de los sistemas agrarios en la zonas deprimadas de la cuenca del Mediterraneo	Macizo del Caroig [ES-VA05]
Fédération des artisans salaisoniers de l'Europe du Sud	Pays Basque Intérieur [FR-AQ06]
Abbayes Casadéennes	Livradois-Forez [FR-AU04]
La richesse en eau au cœur d'un développement diversifié, innovant et durable	Pays du Val d'Adour [FR-MP05] Redange-Wiltz [LU02]
Impliquer les jeunes dans le développement local de leur territoire	Bugey [FR-RA01]
Mise en valeur des terrasses de culture	Châtaigneraie et Sucs d'Ardèche [FR-RA03]
Integration of environment and tourism potential	East Cork [IR11]
Joint Development of Electronic Identification System for Marketing and Quality Assurance of Farm Livestock	Waterford [IR28]
Improving the Quality of Beef and Lamb for Import and Export	South Kerry [IR24]
Rural Tourism Network	Marsica [IT-AB05]

Title of the transnational cooperation project	Name of the project's coordinating group (Observatory code for the LAG)
Eurotuber	Reatino [IT-LA05]
Lumber for construction and restoring buildings	Colli Tuscolani [IT-LA03]
Lana autoctone	Valle Elvo [IT-PI15]
New elderly services	Valsesia [IT-PI01]
Eurorganic Network	Ecosviluppo Sardegna [IT-SA02]
Crocus Sativus	Eugubbino-Gualdese [IT-UM02]
Valorizzazione delle zone umide	Valle Umbra [IT-UM03]
Valorisation des races menacées ardennaises au profit des régions rurales des Ardennes Belgo-Luxembourgeoises	Redange-Wiltz [LU02] Bastogne [BE-WA04]
Villages de Tradition	Vale do Lima [PT-DM02]
Thermalisme en milieu rural	Alto Tâmega [PT-TM01]
Working horses in the XXIst century	Småland [SE12]
Fishing tourism	Sommenbygden [SE10]
Community Capacity Building, exchange on the management of rivers	North Pennines [UK-EN02]
European Wilderness Challenge	Western Isles, Skye & Lochalsh [UK-HI04]
Conocer Europa	Poniente Granadino [ES-AN18]

The Internet site "Rural Europe" (<http://www.rural-europe.aeidl.be>) provides:

- > Short descriptions of the actions which these projects are implementing with technical assistance for LEADER II transnational cooperation (see the database of current projects at:  
<http://www.rural-europe.aeidl.be/cgi-win/suivicoop.exe>).
- > The full contact details of the groups involved in the various projects (see the contact database at:  
[http://www.rural-europe.aeidl.be/cgi-win/t\\_adresse.exe](http://www.rural-europe.aeidl.be/cgi-win/t_adresse.exe)).

**Leader II** est une Initiative communautaire lancée par la Commission européenne et coordonnée par la Direction générale de l'Agriculture (Unité VI-F.II.3).

Le contenu de ce dossier ne reflète pas nécessairement les opinions de l'Union européenne.

***Leader II** is a Community Initiative launched by the European Commission and coordinated by its Directorate-General for Agriculture (Unit VI-F.II.3).*

*The contents of this dossier do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union Institutions.*

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