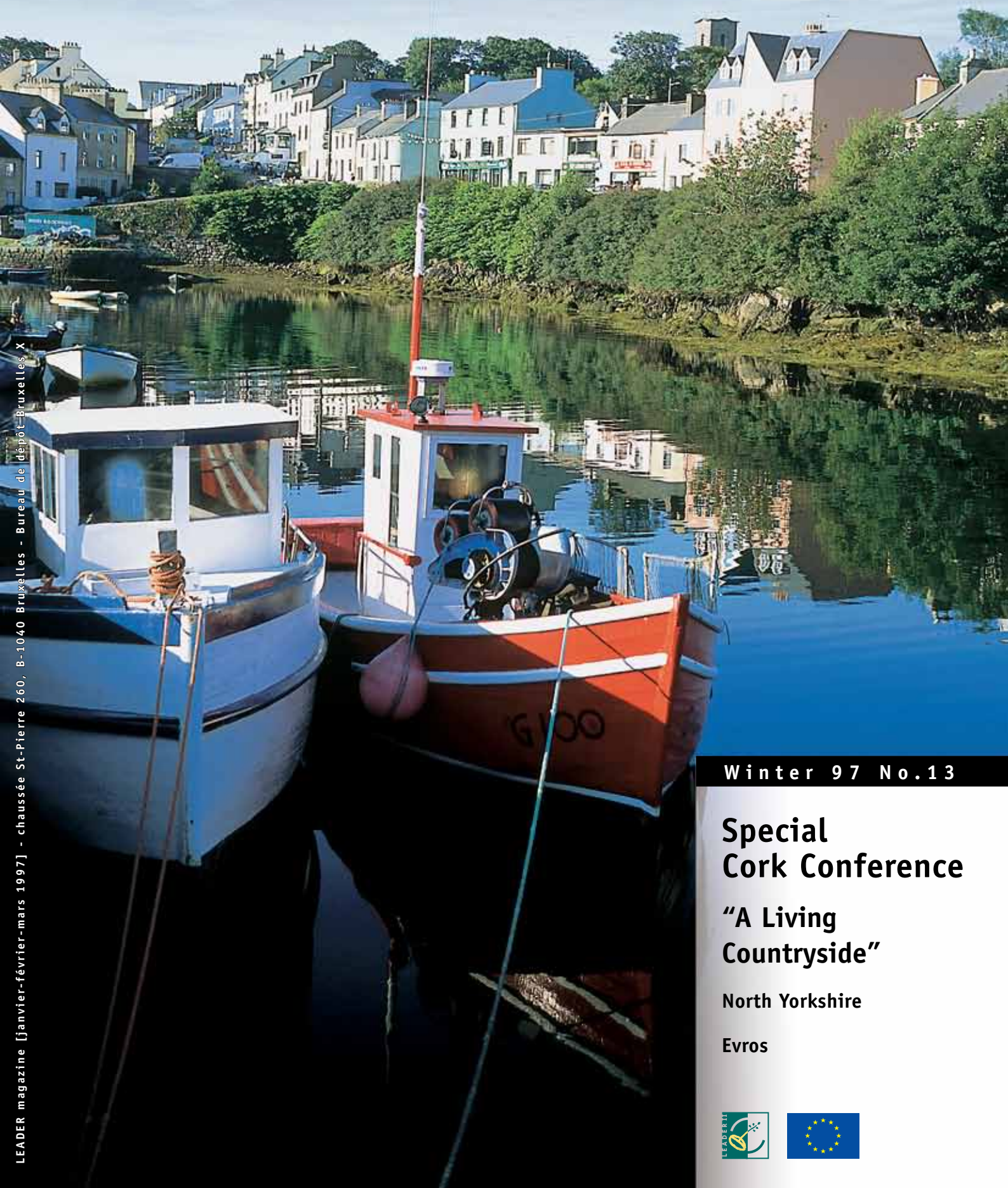


Quarterly journal of the LEADER II European programme

LEADER II magazine



Winter 97 No.13

Special Cork Conference

"A Living
Countryside"

North Yorkshire

Evros





Country: Spain
Action carried out: organisation of "Medieval fairs"
Cost: ECU 25 000
EU: ECU 12 500
Other public funds: ECU 6 500
Private: ECU 6 500

The organisation of "Medieval fairs" in the various towns of our area with activities in the street and people in costume transforms the direct sale of quality craft products into a real show. These "different" festivals offer local producers a market and better visibility. The local community particularly appreciates these original cultural events which also attract numerous tourists."

Javier Velazquez,
LEADER official



Country: Germany
Action carried out: ongoing training for women entrepreneurs
Cost: ECU 20 000
EU: ECU 7 000
Other public funds: ECU 3 000
Private: ECU 10 000

"Women play a very important role in family agri-cultural concerns or holdings: they are often responsible for management, bookkeeping, customer relations, etc. However, it is not always easy to master these responsibilities which are as diverse as they are complex. This is why our LEADER group came up with an advanced programme for women entrepreneurs. The training sessions are very popular and the contacts made through them have led to the creation of an informal network of women entrepreneurs throughout Vogelsberg. Not only have small family businesses become more competitive, but the women have a sense of greater recognition as fully-fledged economic actresses."

Thomas Schaumberg,
LEADER coordinator



Country: Austria
Action carried out: support for wool sector
Cost: ECU 1 087 500
EU: ECU 112 500
Other public funds: ECU 382 500
Private: ECU 592 500

"Here at the foot of 'Austria's roof', wool-making is an ancestral activity. We undertook the task of revitalising this declining sector, in particular by participating in the construction of a plant to process wool and manufacture a complete range of clothes and blankets. Built with local materials using traditional methods, the building also serves as a point of sale for other products of the valley and houses the offices of the LEADER group."

Kurt Rakobitsch,
LEADER coordinator



Country: Italy
Action carried out: packaging of medicinal plants
Cost: ECU 300 000
EU / Other public funds: ECU 150 000
Private: ECU 150 000

"For several years, diversifying agriculture in the Bormida valley has meant growing medicinal plants. 46 farmers are members of the 'Agronatura' cooperative which offers two types of products benefiting from an ecological label: essential oils (19 varieties) and vacuum-packed dry plants. LEADER has helped finance the purchase of equipment to create a production and packaging line and has provided financial support for tests to introduce new varieties and to improve the quality of the products."

Massimo Strapazzon,
LEADER coordinator



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The conference held in Cork (Ireland) from 7 to 9 November 1996 presented the major guidelines of Europe's future policy on rural development.

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The Cork Conference held six workshops corresponding to as many challenges for rural development. Summary of work.

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The Yorkshire coastline is a rural area whose three traditional activities - fishing, agriculture and tourism - are in crisis. Having arrived at exactly the right time, LEADER II is the special instrument for identifying local needs. With the local participation.

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The integrated development model implemented by the municipality of Tycherio and reproduced little by little in the other parts of the LEADER area of Evros (Thrace) anticipates a redevelopment of this long-neglected border region, provided, however, that the private sector picks up where the public initiative leaves off.

In a word...

Yves Champetier, Director,
LEADER European Observatory

This issue of LEADER Magazine is primarily devoted to the European conference on rural development held in Cork (Ireland) from 7 to 9 November 1996.

This event and the resulting declaration represent a particularly important phase for all those involved in the implementation of the LEADER Initiative. The "local approach" and "networking" dimensions were at the centre of this.

Hence, the "Cork Declaration", presented below, states that rural development policy "must promote the participation of actors and initiatives from the bottom which enhance the creativity and solidarity of rural communities." It also indicates that "rural development must be local and conducted by rural communities within a coherent European framework."

Concerning the "network" aspect, several aspects were highlighted in the summary of the workshop devoted to this topic:

- > networks are an essential element of Community enhancement, facilitating exchanges of know-how and experiences between the European Union's rural actors, and even beyond the Union's borders with the Central and East European countries and Mediterranean non-member countries;
- > the local development approach and networking play a part in mobilising citizens, contributing to the necessary strengthening of local democracy without which European construction is not possible;
- > networks are places of creativity and anticipation that participate in the design, implementation and transfer of the indispensable innovations needed by rural areas;
- > it is at the heart of these networks that a new culture or European vision of rural development is gradually being invented.

For all those involved in LEADER at the local, regional, national and European levels, this recognition of the work accomplished over the past several years now goes hand in hand with the absolute necessity of "making LEADER II a success".

The success of LEADER I created many expectations among communities and among institutions and organisations involved in rural development. The budget devoted to LEADER II is four times that of LEADER I and today, nearly 700 areas are concerned by this Community Initiative.

At the local level, LEADER II's success requires the growing involvement of citizens, businesses and rural communities in defining and carrying out local projects, enabling rural areas to embark on the road to sustainable development outlined in Cork. For this, local action groups must have autonomy and sufficient capacities to support as effectively as possible and with a maximum amount of flexibility and at the appropriate time one another's projects.

This nevertheless requires - and we put emphasis here because of the difficulties in implementing LEADER II in certain Member States - **good coordination** between the various levels of support (local, regional, national, European) as well as **a quest to simplify administrative procedures and responsibilities**. Most of the participants at the Cork Conference placed particular emphasis on these two points, and LEADER II can pave the way forward.

Facilitating the task of local action groups by allowing them to be more effective in supporting community and business initiatives and in enhancing the potential of rural areas is today one of the major challenges for all those concerned by the success of this Initiative and the new rural development policy proposed in Cork, and more generally speaking, by all those who for many years have been investing in the renewal of rural Europe. <

Rural Europe in the year 2000 towards an integrated policy of

The conference that took place in Cork (Ireland) from 7 to 9 November 1996 outlined the major guidelines of Europe's future policy on rural development. It led to a "Cork Declaration" which, in many aspects, reinforces in a new dimension the strategy already experimented in LEADER: the integrated and sustainable development of a living countryside based on the participation of every man and woman.

Roughly 500 people from the European Union's fifteen Member States but also from a number of Central and East European countries, the Mediterranean basin, Canada, the United States and Japan participated in this conference on "**Rural Europe - Future Perspectives**" organised at the initiative of Commissioner Franz Fischler who is responsible for agriculture and rural development.

Be they ministers, members of Parliament, European, national, regional or local officials, representatives of international bodies, voluntary associations, professional organisations, be they experts, researchers,

"actors in the field", etc., all the participants had in common the fact that they were involved at various degrees in rural development.

Presided over by Lord Henry Plumb, Member of the European Parliament, the objective of the Cork Conference was to outline the major guidelines of European rural policy in the year 2000 and beyond.

Mr Jimmy Deenihan, Irish State Minister responsible for rural development, first recalled the context of what he called "*the most important conference on rural development ever organised in Europe*" and the major challenges facing European rural society, notably: the internationalisation of the economy - and its political corollary, the new round of negotiations in the framework of the World Trade Organisation - the introduction of the single currency and the European Union's future enlargement.

Agriculture at the heart of rural development

In his opening speech, Commissioner Franz Fischler began by insisting on the importance, diversity, dynamism and potential of rural areas. He also underscored the preponderant place occupied by agriculture and forestry and the place that they will continue to occupy, while indicating that the importance of these two activities "*goes well beyond these purely sectoral*



2000:

of sustainable development



aspects. Agriculture and forestry are multifunctional. They have a strong impact on the appearance of the countryside and they contribute to: keeping the social and economic fabric intact, preserving the beauty of the countryside, and diversifying economic activities in rural areas."

After recalling the structural weaknesses of rural areas ("gaps in the infrastructure, too few jobs, inadequate services, not enough opportunities for basic or further training"), Mr Fischler indicated: "We do not have the right to sit back and watch this happening. We must secure the future of European agriculture, but we must also go far beyond this. All rural development policy must consistently foster the creation of jobs outside agriculture and the improvement of the infrastructure and the range of services on offer, and encourage still greater efforts to improve the condition of the environment."

An integrated development policy for all rural areas

"Rural society is a socio-economic model in its own right which must be preserved in the interests of European society as a whole," the Commissioner said before defining the rural policy that he would like to see introduced. It is a policy based on:

- > an integrated, multi-sectoral approach tailored to individual areas;
- > greater cohesion between the instruments of policy and greater effectiveness of policies that "enable the best use to be made of public resources";
- > simplification and greater transparency of administrative procedures;
- > improvement of the partnerships between the institutions of the European Union and the national and regional authorities. The Commissioner also recalled that the involvement of local players was a condition for the effectiveness of rural development actions ("the advantages of the bottom-up approach are self-evident and in line with European construction based on the principle of subsidiarity.").

But one of the great innovations of this "integrated policy of sustainable rural development" proposed by the Commissioner is that it should concern all rural areas: "is it not the case that all rural areas are facing more or less the same challenges and threats? Are they not all affected by the problems of agriculture? Must not all rural areas offer the services our society is in such need of? In this light, I think it is no longer logical to restrict our rural development policy to a selected number of areas."

Mr Fischler's speech was followed by a whole series of presentations by European, national, regional and local experts and officials.

One of the most noteworthy addresses was by Mr Guy Legras, Director General of DG VI, on the balance and perspectives of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Two strategic guidelines were of particular note:

- > future agricultural policy should be much more oriented towards environmental protection and rural development objectives;
- > a genuine rural policy should be defined which incorporates market policy and rural development and which is comprised of a set of instruments that are too scattered and which leads to a decentralised management of its implementation.

Eight years after the publication of **"The Future of Rural Society"**, the Cork Conference marks a new decisive phase in European rural policy, a phase that some of the journalists and observers present did not hesitate to call a "cultural revolution". <



The LEADER labora

LEADER was one of the "stars" in Cork, a concrete example for European rural development policy in the year 2000.

"Mr Hyland, you are apparently quite in favour of the LEADER programme. Do you think that LEADER is the model of the future policy of integrated development advocated by Mr Fischler?" - "Yes, Mr. Chairman."

Preparation of LEADER stand



This exchange between François Grosrichard, special correspondent for the French newspaper "Le Monde" and chairman of the workshop on "Quality of life in Rural Areas", and Liam Hyland, rapporteur for the European Parliament ("Report on European rural policy and the creation of a European rural charter"), perfectly illustrates the considerable place that LEADER held at the Cork Conference.

A number of speakers, beginning with the Irish State Minister, Mr Jimmy Deenihan, recalled LEADER's success both in terms of strategy (area-based approach, "bottom-up" approach, partnership, integration, innovation, etc.) and concrete achievements.

The presentation in plenary session of the major guidelines proposed by Commissioner Fischler and which correspond to a large extent to the "LEADER philosophy" was illustrated by two accounts on local innovative actions: Professor Dimitrios Pantermalis, Member of the Greek Parliament, underscored the support of the Pieriki LEADER programme in Central Mac-



Beara peninsula
[West Cork LEADER area]

History

edonia for the action of some one hundred farmers who mobilised around the idea of enhancing the archaeological heritage of the village of Dion near Mount Olympus; Mr Jean-Louis Chauzy, President of the Economic and Social Council of the Midi-Pyrénées Region (France) explained the process which led to the revitalisation of the small-scale cutlery industry in Laguiole (see LEADER Magazine no.5).

Each of the six workshops had at least one panel member who was directly involved in the implementation of LEADER, either in the capacity of a European, national or regional official or as member of a local action group. Presentations were made by the LAGs of **Maestrazgo-Teruel** (Aragon, Spain), **Pays Cathare** (Languedoc-Roussillon, France), **Probasto** (Norte, Portugal) - these three groups also each had a stand -, **Clairvaux-Vianden** (Luxembourg) and **Natur-und Lebensraum Rhön** (Hesse, Germany), not to mention the Irish LEADER Network.

The LEADER European Observatory also played a very important role before and during the event: participation in the conference steering committee, preparation and summary of the workshop on transnational cooperation networks, operation of a stand enabling direct contact with participants and distribution of LEADER publications, "continuous" demonstration of the "Rural Europe" Internet site, etc.

The "local" LEADER group, West Cork, which also set up a stand at the entrance to the meeting site to present the products from its area, was the destination of one of the three trips organised for the event: some fifty participants at the conference were greeted at the LAG headquarters and were able to discover "in vivo" the implementation of LEADER, having the opportunity to see several projects involving the valorisation of agri-food products.

The day before, the local action group received Commissioner Fischler for the official kick-off of the "West Cork" label.

It should be finally noted that some twenty LEADER groups in Ireland and the United Kingdom took advantage of the Cork Conference to convene and to discuss the means to be implemented to strengthen the local and "bottom-up" dimension of their programme and to engage in steady cooperation on this topic (the organisation of a seminar "bringing the two islands together" is envisaged for the first quarter of 1997). <

Commissioner Franz Fischler and Mr Jimmy Deenihan, Irish Minister of State responsible for rural development, received by the members of the **West Cork** LEADER group



For "a living countryside" one objective



Rural market
in Connemara [Ireland]

The Cork Conference had six workshops corresponding to as many challenges for rural development. A certain number of recommendations from these working groups were included in the "Cork Declaration". A summary of the work is presented below.

"A Living Countryside", the title chosen by Mr Richard Simmons for his presentation at the beginning of the conference, soon became the slogan in Cork, the leitmotif that set the rhythm for the second day of work. This day comprised six workshops devoted respectively to integrated rural development, jobs and equal opportunities, the environment and sustainable development, the quality of life in rural areas, cooperation and transfer of good practice and strategies for local development based on the "bottom-up" approach.

"Integrated development: realising the concept"

It was Mr Jean-François Poncet, Chairman of the Committee on Economic Affairs of the French Senate, who presented the conclusions of this workshop, noting first that although the integrated approach to development was an imperative acknowledged by all, it was unfortunately *"preached more than it was applied"*... Rather than to define an already well-known concept, the aim was more to examine how to really implement the integration in the new European policy of rural development. The solution could be to set up a regional global programme for all rural areas without exception. Such an instrument has many advantages, particularly in terms of simplification and subsidiarity, provided nonetheless that:

de”: ve, six workshops

- > the still primordial role of agriculture is recognised in the rural economy;
 - > disadvantaged areas continue to benefit from specific financial aid in the name of cohesion;
 - > the regions are not partitioned so that financial solidarity, the fundamental principle of the Community's financial support, is not broken.
- “Integration is the way, diversity is the wealth, solidarity is the cement,” the rapporteur concluded.*

- > the concept and implementation of future rural policy must to a large extent rely on local and regional human resources;
- > support for rural development must favour small-scale projects rather than target heavy investments (*“today's saplings will be tomorrow's trees”*);
- > women must be fully-fledged partners of rural development.

“Jobs, equal opportunities and entrepreneurship in rural areas”

Like Mr Jan Douwe Van der Ploeg, Professor at the University of Wageningen (Netherlands), the participants at this round table concluded that rural society is a specific socio-economic entity dominated more often than not by self-employment, small family businesses, job flexibility and contact with nature.

These specific rural features must be the main elements of a development based on the endogenous capital of each area and on diversification of the local economy, diversification that facilitates the establishment of more equal opportunity between women and men.

The essential place of agriculture in rural society was also underscored: *“without men and women farmers, there will be no rural development.”* The agricultural sector must nonetheless undergo a radical change to achieve the four main objectives: jobs, equal opportunities, product quality and environmental protection. In her workshop report, Mrs Ursula Stenzel, Austrian Member of the European Parliament, insisted on the need to adapt Community instruments to better meet the challenges of rural society.

This adaptation involves the observance of five principles:

- > the introduction of an integrated rural policy, sectoral measures proving insufficient to solve complex and multidimensional rural problems;
- > the total financial appropriation devoted to agriculture and rural areas should remain at least at the same level, but the mechanism of the Structural Funds should be recast and the region should be the area-based unit of intervention, the latter being an entity that enables modulating financial support according to the diversity of rural areas;





"Treasure chest" containing binoculars, compass, guide books, etc. to help visitors staying in rural cottages discover the natural park of Livradois-Forez [France]

— "The environment and sustainable development in rural Europe"

The workshop began by reviewing the global context in which a "European policy of sustainable development" must be redefined: the multiplicity of strengths present, the brief decision-making timetable (1999) and the public's increased awareness of environmental issues. On this last point, however, a gap is observed between Northern Europe and Southern Europe: *"of the 17 workshop presentations, only 3 were from the South,"* the rapporteur, Michele de Benedictis, Professor at the University of Rome, pointed out.

The participants then wondered what the best level of intervention would be to manage the relationship between the environment and the economy: *"it is cer-*

tainly the area-based approach that is the most effective in the case of, for example, environmental and farming problems, particularly if the existing dichotomy between intensive farming and extensive farming is to be solved and the multifunctionality of the agricultural sector is to be taken into account."

As far as the policies to be implemented are concerned, area-based institutional support is therefore recommended, although it is clear that this method gives rise to certain problems: higher costs for information, monitoring and control and environmental training programmes which are still insufficient.

That is why institutional support must be strengthened through a "horizontal" and "vertical" integration of the instruments (horizontal integration: encourage a partnership between the public and private sectors, for example; vertical integration: redefine the institutional responsibilities and powers of each level of intervention). Indicators that are reliable at the local level are also needed. In fact, it is not a question of creating new policies but of adjusting existing policies, with more transparency. Finally, with regard to agricultural policy in particular, the workshop's speakers called for the application of the "polluter-pays" principle while providing for compensatory payments to encourage environmentally friendly production methods.

| Activities in a rural school of Pays Cathare [France]



“Quality of life in rural areas”

“To say ‘development and quality of life’ is a pleonasm”; “if in the 19th century, the city represented access to wealth, in the 21st century, the countryside well thought out could be the place of regained happiness”... Such were the expressions that could be heard during this working group which from the start laid down two essential parameters for the discussion on the quality of life in the countryside: human beings (“people, families...”) must be the main concern of the interventions; the countryside must not be idealised by rural people or by people in the city (*“beware of romantic ‘neo-ruralism’”*). *“A large group of small things”, the quality of life in rural areas may nonetheless be summed up by three main factors: the intensity of social links in villages, access to information and training and the availability of services (transport, social action, health, recreational activities, shops, etc.) whose quality must attain a level comparable to that of the city.*

The quality of life must benefit both the local community and visitors from cities who must nonetheless *“recognise the countryside for what it is and not for what they dream it to be”, a farmer emphasized.*

In the countryside, *“where all services cost more”,* political intervention and public aid play a preponderant role. The action of the voluntary sector is also decisive as is voluntary help (which should benefit from a clearly established legal status).

The workshop participants therefore proposed the following strategy:

- > absolute need for a “bottom-up” approach to mobilise the area’s “living strengths”;
- > appraisal of needs that takes into account the expectations of all categories of the community (a young woman pointed out, for example, that *“young people are not necessarily in search of peace and quiet”*!);
- > support for tailor-made target actions generating income and jobs;
- > simplification of administrative procedures (the idea of creating a single “Rural Fund” was put forward by some of the speakers);
- > regular publication of “local assessments of quality of life”.



The 1994 Grand Prize of Portugal at the Equestrian Centre of Ponte de Lima [Vale do Lima LEADER area]

“Sharing experiences: cooperation and transfer of good practice as a means of promoting rural development”

This round table, which was attended by a number of European associations, first took stock of 7 types of needs that the networks may satisfy: information, mobilisation of people in the countryside, the acquisition of skills and training, innovation, transnational cooperation, the collective organisation of rural actors for the advancement of common proposals, the opening to countries in the East and South.

These networks are very diverse in terms of rural problems, the people concerned, centres of interest, etc. and this diversity is a form of wealth that expresses the complexity of the new processes of development to be implemented in the countryside. Several participants spoke of the importance of searching for complementarities between the various networks and thereby avoiding overlapping. The desire to create a “Forum” for the various networks to meet and for greater dialogue with the European institutions was also expressed, as was the urgent need to legally recognise the notion of “European association”.

In a rapidly changing rural society, the networks will be compelled to play a growing role, mobilising the diversity of European actors concerned by the future of rural Europe and facilitating exchanges and cooperation between Europe’s areas. Hence, particular emphasis was placed on the role played by the LEADER network and the rural Carrefours.

- The networks will have to be at the heart of the new policy on rural development, and European impetus will remain a fundamental element for their action, because the networks may make several important contributions:
- > they are a fundamental element of "Community enhancement";
 - > they are places of creativity and anticipation that participate in the indispensable innovation and its transfer;
 - > an interface between the "local" and "global", they facilitate the opening up of rural areas.

"Strategies for local development in rural areas and the bottom-up approach"

The rapporteur, Mrs Patricia O'Hara, rural development consultant, first recalled the advantages of development based on the "bottom-up" approach: local democracy, inclusion of the diversity of European rural areas, subsidiarity between the "local" and "global", effectiveness of working in partnerships, etc.

Although the bottom-up approach is already a common practice in a number of programmes, certain conditions are necessary if it is to progress and be applied to European rural policy as a whole. These conditions are:

- > better coordination between the different levels of support (local, regional, national, European);
- > integration of policies and programmes that are too often designed according to sectoral interventions;
- > simplification of administrative procedures and responsibilities;
- > a fairer balance between "participatory" democracy and "representative" democracy (*"local authorities can impede development just as they can facilitate it"*);
- > greater emphasis on the importance of voluntary work, especially that of women, which is often insufficiently recognised for its true value;
- > capacity building and training in local development.

Other challenges inherent in the bottom-up approach were also emphasized: mobilisation of local savings and the role of financial institutions; differences in resources and power within the same partnership; the constraint of duration (*"development is a long process"*); the lack of dynamic human resources due to the exodus of young people; the indispensable support for agriculture in order to keep young people on agricultural holdings.

Participants also examined the necessary encounter between the "bottom-up" approach (local actors) and the "top-down" approach (institutional support): far from clashing with one another, they are complementary and may even strengthen one another if they are properly coordinated and if there is a good balance between the different levels of support.

Finally, attention was drawn to the need to include everyone in the development process: *"cohesion must be more than ever the rule, between individuals and between regions."*

It is worth noting that Professor Joe Mannion from University College Dublin (UCD) wrote the preparatory document for this workshop which largely corresponds to his article published in LEADER Magazine no.12. <



Sharing one's experiences:
LEADER seminar in
Kalabaka [Greece]

The Cork Declaration:

“A Living Countryside”

The European Conference on Rural Development having met at Cork,
Ireland from 7th to 9th November, 1996,

Aware that rural areas - which are the home of a quarter of the population and account for more than 80% of the territory of the European Union - are characterised by a unique cultural, economic and social fabric, an extraordinary patchwork of activities, and a great variety of landscapes (forests and farmland, unspoiled natural sites, villages and small towns, regional centres, small industries);

Believing that rural areas and their inhabitants are a real asset to the European Union, and have the capacity to be competitive;

Mindful that by far the largest part of rural Europe is covered by agricultural land and forests, which have a strong influence on the character of European landscapes, and that agriculture is and must remain a major interface between people and the environment, and that farmers have a duty as stewards of many of the natural resources of the countryside;

Recalling that agriculture and forestry are no longer predominant in Europe's economies; that their relative economic weight continues to decline, and that, consequently, rural development must address all socio-economic sectors in the countryside;

Conscious that European citizens pay growing attention to the quality of life in general, and to questions of quality, health, safety, personal development and leisure in particular, and that rural areas are in a unique position to respond to these interests, and offer grounds for a genuine, modern development model of quality;

Recognising that the Common Agricultural Policy will have to adapt to new realities and challenges in terms of consumer demand and preferences, international trade developments, and the EU's next enlargement; that the shift from price support to direct support will continue; that the CAP and the agricultural sector will have to adjust accordingly, and that farmers must be helped in the adjustment process, and be given clear indicators for the future;

Expecting that the justification for the compensatory payments of the 1992 CAP reforms will be increasingly challenged;

Persuaded that the concept of public financial support for rural development, harmonised with the appropriate management of natural resources and the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity and cultural landscapes, is increasingly gaining acceptance;

Recognising that, while successive reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy and European rural development policies have improved transparency and effectiveness, a number of inconsistencies and overlaps have developed and legal complexity has grown;

Determined to promote, in all possible ways, local capacity building for sustainable development in rural areas, and, in particular, private and community-based initiatives which are well-integrated into global markets;

Announces the following ten point rural development programme for the European Union:

Point 1 - Rural Preference

Sustainable rural development must be put at the top of the agenda of the European Union, and become the fundamental principle which underpins all rural policy in the immediate future and after enlargement. This aims at reversing rural out-migration, combating poverty, stimulating employment and equality of opportunity, and responding to growing requests for more quality, health, safety, personal development and leisure, and improving rural well-being. The need to preserve and improve the quality of the rural environment must be integrated into all Community policies that relate to rural development. There must be a fairer balance of public spending, infrastructure investments and educational, health and communications services between rural and urban areas. A growing share of available resources should be used for promoting rural development and securing environmental objectives.

Point 2 - Integrated Approach

Rural development policy must be multi-disciplinary in concept, and multi-sectoral in application, with a clear territorial dimension. It must apply to all rural areas in the Union, respecting the concentration principle through the differentiation of co-financing for those areas which are more in need. It must be based on an integrated approach, encompassing within the same legal and policy framework: agricultural adjustment and development, economic diversification - notably small and medium scale industries and rural services - the management of natural resources, the enhancement of environmental functions, and the promotion of culture, tourism and recreation.

—➤ **Point 3 - Diversification**

Support for diversification of economic and social activity must focus on providing the framework for self-sustaining private and community-based initiatives: investment, technical assistance, business services, adequate infrastructure, education, training, integrating advances in information technology, strengthening the role of small towns as integral parts of rural areas and key development factors, and promoting the development of viable rural communities and renewal of villages.

Point 4 - Sustainability

Policies should promote rural development which sustains the quality and amenity of Europe's rural landscapes (natural resources, biodiversity and cultural identity), so that their use by today's generation does not prejudice the options for future generations. In our local actions, we must be aware of our global responsibilities.

Point 5 - Subsidiarity

Given the diversity of the Union's rural areas, rural development policy must follow the principle of subsidiarity. It must be as decentralised as possible and based on partnership and co-operation between all levels concerned (local, regional, national and European). The emphasis must be on participation and a 'bottom up' approach, which harnesses the creativity and solidarity of rural communities. Rural development must be local and community-driven within a coherent European framework.

Point 6 - Simplification

Rural development policy, notably in its agricultural component, needs to undergo radical simplification in legislation. Whilst there should be no renationalisation of the CAP, there must be greater coherence of what is presently done through many separate channels, a limitation of EU law on general rules and procedures, more subsidiarity in decisions, decentralisation of policy implementation and more flexibility overall.

Point 7 - Programming

The application of rural development programmes must be based on coherent and transparent procedures, and integrated into one single programme for rural development for each region, and a single mechanism for sustainable and rural development.

Point 8 - Finance

The use of local financial resources must be encouraged to promote local rural development projects. More encouragement must be given to using financial engineering in rural credit techniques in order to mobilise better the synergies between public and private funding, reduce financial constraints on small and medium size enterprises, promote productive investment, and diversify rural economies. Greater participation by the banking sector (public and private) and other fiscal intermediaries must be encouraged.

Point 9 - Management

The administrative capacity and effectiveness of regional and local governments and community-based groups must be enhanced, where necessary, through the provision of technical assistance, training, better communications, partnership and the sharing of research, information and exchange of experience through networking between regions and between rural communities throughout Europe.

Point 10 - Evaluation and Research

Monitoring, evaluation and beneficiary assessment will need to be reinforced in order to ensure transparency of procedures, guarantee the good use of public money, stimulate research and innovation, and enable an informed public debate. Stakeholders must not only be consulted in the design and implementation, but involved in monitoring and evaluation.

Conclusion

We, the participants at the European Conference on Rural Development assembled in Cork, urge Europe's policy-makers:

- > to raise public awareness about the importance of making a new start in rural development policy;
- > to make rural areas more attractive to people to live and work in, and become centres of a more meaningful life for a growing diversity of people of all ages;
- > to support this ten-point programme and co-operate as partners in the fulfilment of each and every one of the goals, which are embodied in this declaration.
- > to play an active role in promoting sustainable rural development in an international context.

9th November 1996



North Yorkshire Heritage Coast [United Kingdom]

Getting going

The Yorkshire coastline in Northeast England is a rural area whose three traditional activities - fishing, farming and tourism - are in crisis. An integrated development strategy was recently developed to diversify and bring vitality to the area's economy. LEADER II first focuses on the involvement of local people in the identification of local needs from which to develop local plans and strategies.

"It's like playing Monopoly!", exclaimed a member of the "Whitby LEADER group", pinning onto the large map spread out on the floor a small flag indicating that at this place there was an unsatisfied need or a problem to be solved.

It was the second meeting of the group, one of the five committees set up in the LEADER area. On the agenda were the adoption of the terms of reference for the group and an initial assessment of the town's problems. *"A map or model enables clear visualisation of the situation, gives a fun aspect to the assessment and is a good media prop with which to mobilise the*

community" explained Ingrid Salomonsen, the meeting's co-ordinator. Ingrid co-ordinates LEADER on the North Yorkshire Heritage Coast, one of the two areas benefiting from the regional LEADER II programme "North of England Heritage Coast" which was approved at the end of 1995. As its name indicates, the programme concerns the coastal areas of Northern England listed as "Heritage Coasts" (*) which involves the counties of Northumberland and North Yorkshire.

This regional programme is managed by the "Coastal Zone North of England LEADER Trust" created in Spring 1996 which is a partnership between the local authorities of the area, the Rural Development Commission and the National Trust, which is the most important voluntary organisation for the protection of Britain's natural and cultural heritage.

→ Diversification

With its 14 000 inhabitants, Whitby is the “large” town of this LEADER area, a narrow strip of land stretching some fifty kilometres along the North Sea between Flamborough Head and the Tees estuary, not including, however, Scarborough (103 000 inhabitants), the regional administrative seat. Much of the area also coincides with the North York Moors National Park, a vast area of sparsely populated heathland (499 km²). Like many of the 17 Parishes in the area, Whitby is both a fishing port and a seaside resort. But the non-industrial fishing is in decline and inexpensive holidays in exotic places with warm climates have hurt the tourist sector. As John Smith the Mayor of Whitby explained, *“the number of visitors has been steadily declining for the past few years, and we have an excessive amount of accomodation on offer.”* Since the 1960s, tourism has been the driving force behind a local economy accustomed to operating without substantial public aid: *“we were neither an urban area in crisis nor a disadvantaged rural area,”* Ray Williamson of the Scarborough Borough Council explained. *“But the situation was no longer tenable and we decided to mobilise to diversify the economy. In 1995, we created a partnership with the North Yorkshire Training and Enterprise Council and private sector agencies.”*

Initially operating with an annual budget of ECU 250 000, the “Yorkshire Coast Economic Development Partnership” came up with a local action plan and as a direct result the area soon benefited from two major sources of funding, the Objective 5b programme and the Single Regeneration Budget (roughly ECU 6 million for the area), a national programme which for many years was reserved for urban areas but which is now accessible, upon competition, to any type of area. In 1996, two Community Initiatives strengthened these resources, PESCA for the restructuring of the fisheries sector and LEADER, both exclusively devoted to the coast. *“LEADER is a very important instrument for coastal villages. It will first enable us to identify local needs with the communities concerned by organising ‘community appraisals’ (see inset, ed.). The projects that come out of this will then either be funded by LEADER - I am especially thinking about small-scale projects - or by the other programmes for larger scale initiatives.”*

Renovation operation supported by the North York Moors National Park





Sculpting a boundary marker of the "Heritage Coast" |

Raising awareness

LEADER's prime objective is to improve the future viability and sustainability of coastal communities. To initiate local involvement, LEADER has put funding in place to fully finance village appraisals with a ceiling of ECU 2 500 per appraisal, *"a sum that should be largely sufficient, because village appraisals do not have to be very expensive"*, says Ingrid Salomonsen, *"as involving local people and using local resources e.g. village halls, the costs can be kept down."*

Since September 1996, Ingrid has been holding public meetings and giving presentations to all the Parish Councils in the Yorkshire Coast LEADER area to raise awareness of the programme. *"In an area which is not used to community development practices, it can be difficult mobilising local people. But on the whole there is a lot of interest in LEADER and local people are getting involved."*

Like Will Terry, a young farmer and a Fylingdales Parish Councillor who is involved in the programme. *"As a young person, I feel it is my duty to be involved especially since the local authorities have recently been successful in achieving funding for local development and it's important that young people are involved in decision making that will affect the area's future."*

Comprised of representatives from the public, private and community sector organisations, the five LEADER committees have the organisation of the appraisals as their first task (by March 1997). Then, as projects are identified through 1997, they will become responsible for the selection and management of the projects to be put forward for funding from the "North of England

Coastal Zone LEADER Trust" which manages the regional programme. Ingrid is hoping for the best and expects local people will want to make the most of the opportunities that LEADER can provide. *"We are now implementing the Yorkshire Coast LEADER business plan through a process of raising awareness of the potential benefits of community or village appraisals."*

Arriving at her office the other morning, she found a very encouraging message on her answering machine: *"Hello, this is the Chair of Hawsker cum Stainsacre Parish Council. We thought over your presentation last night and we want to organise a community appraisal as soon as possible..."*

(*) Since the early 1970s, 45 coastal areas have been listed as "heritage coasts" by the Countryside Commission in England and Wales.

Surface area of the region: 668 km²
Population: 39 062 inhabitants
LEADER II financing: ECU 1 875 000

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Development for real:

“village appraisals”



*A map helps
identify local needs
[meeting of Whitby
LEADER committee,
North Yorkshire
Heritage Coast]*

A democratic tool in the service of development, “village appraisals” or “community appraisals” are an excellent way to mobilise the local community, to identify issues that are of common concern and projects to meet local needs. Their success is such that, first designed for rural society, this type of operation is increasingly applied in urban areas.

The principles of this British speciality are based on the “Planning for Real” model developed at the turning point of the 1970s and 1980s by Tony Gibson, an English expert in community development. In 1987, “The Local Jigsaw” was published. It was the first guide on conducting an appraisal. In 1994, the rural development research unit of Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education came out with a computer tool (*) facilitating the operation (preparation of a questionnaire, data processing, etc.).

12 steps are necessary
for the successful completion of the appraisal:

1. in agreement with the local authorities, organise an information meeting, sound out the community and set up a steering committee for the operation (approximately ten persons representing all the sectors concerned by community development);
2. identify the objectives and decide the geographical area of the appraisal (will it cover the entire area? Part of it? A village in particular? Etc.);
3. identify the possible sources of financing for carrying out the appraisal (private sponsors, local authorities, regional, national, European programmes - LEADER, PACTE -, etc.);
4. together set a realistic timetable and determine the most effective way to publicize the appraisal process;
5. become acquainted with the village appraisal methods;
6. draw up a list of the issues the community considers important and that need to be examined in greater detail;
7. prepare a questionnaire based on the priorities identified;
8. distribute this questionnaire in the area concerned;
9. analyse the answers obtained;

10. bring the objectives of the appraisal in line with the results of the analysis and produce (in the most appealing manner possible) a report containing a series of constructive recommendations for action;
11. publish this report and identify the most appropriate authorities with which to negotiate the implementation of the identified projects;
12. review the situation after one year to see how things are progressing.

The example of “village appraisals” is beginning to be emulated and a number of LEADER groups in the United Kingdom but also in Ireland, France, Belgium and elsewhere in Europe are conducting local consultations based on this model (**)

(*) “Village Appraisals”, manual and software published by The Countryside and Community Research Unit, Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, Francis Close Hall, Swindon Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 4AZ (UK). Tel: +49 1242 532 912.

(**) see also “Consultation villageoise et développement rural”. Published by the Fondation rurale de Wallonie. 1996. FRW, 11 rempart de la Vierge, B-5000 Namur. Fax: +32 81 224 577.



Evros [Greece]

The fruits of voluntarism

The integrated development model implemented by the municipality of Tychemo and reproduced little by little in the other parts of the LEADER area of Evros (Thrace) anticipates a redevelopment of this long-neglected border region, provided, however, that the private sector picks up where the public initiative leaves off.

"Our action is beginning to bear fruit," Christos Hatzopoulos stated with a touch of pride. The mayor of Tychemo, a town of 2 500 inhabitants located a few kilometres from the Turkish border, could not put it any better: the scene takes place next to one of the rasp-

berry fields that the municipality planted in 1995 and which have just produced their first crop: 50 tonnes. *"The aim was to diversify agriculture by introducing new, more profitable productions,"* the mayor explained. *"We began in 1990 with asparagus, whose production currently benefits 70 local farmers; it is now the turn of raspberries, a crop that has the advantage of bringing in substantial income for a relatively limited amount of land."*

More than the creation of a new agricultural sector (the fruit is made into jams, packed and marketed by a local cooperative), it is first and foremost the approach adopted that is of interest. It is a perfect example of the development strategy implemented in Tychemo: the municipality takes the initiative of the project and takes charge of all the necessary investments; interested individuals then utilise the infrastructure created. In the case of the raspberries, for example, the municipality, owner of the 10 ha planted, provided the plants, technical assistance, irrigation system, etc. —



Waiting for the first raspberry crop...

—→ (cost: roughly ECU 116/are), leaving the producers who joined the project (15-year lease; total amount of the “rent” corresponding to the expenses incurred by the municipality) to take care of their plot (pruning, weeding, etc.)... and to harvest the valuable red fruit for their profit.

It is the same strategy that prevails for all of the projects carried out by the municipality: e.g. on the outskirts of the village, a marsh was turned into an artificial lake. The site is a concentration of an impressive number of buildings and facilities: a cultural and recreational centre, swimming pool, 15-room hotel, cafeteria, playground, etc. 34 social dwellings were also built along the lake, and nearby a former agricultural holding was reconverted into an “educational farm” and riding school. There are also plans to develop a marina. At present, the collective facilities of this very recent complex are run by municipal employees and volunteer workers, but the eventual goal is to turn over its management to private operators.

Egnatia

The private sector’s participation is nonetheless a sizeable challenge in this traditionally disadvantaged rural area, because the central authorities for many years showed little interest in developing this region which shares a border with Bulgaria and Turkey.

Greece’s entry to the European Community and the collapse of the Soviet empire have helped make the situation less strained and further open up the north-eastern part of the country to the outside. This opening is also beginning to materialise, literally, with the construction of “Egnatia”, a large European road that, like the old Roman way whose route it follows, will make the link between Rome and Istanbul much easier while reducing the region’s isolation.

Also in the past few years, Thrace has been for the European Union and for the Greek Government a priority area of intervention, with aid for enterprises covering as much as 50% of investment costs.

The upheavals of the international political situation in this part of the world have also affected local demogra-

phy: thousands of Greeks living in Russia or Georgia are gradually moving back to the motherland, and the Greek authorities are encouraging many of them to establish themselves in Thrace, thereby offsetting the rural exodus from which the region has suffered for a long time. *“The repatriates represent an injection of living strength,”* the mayor of Tychemo underlined. *“They are one of the main target groups of our action. As a result, 14 households are concerned by the raspberry operation and were given priority when the plots were distributed, as were homeless families and young unemployed people wanting to stay in the country.”*

Two others actions conducted by the municipality of Tychemo also concern them directly: the creation of a weaving cooperative involving 115 women, many of whom are repatriates, and the construction of new social housing. *“Our objective is to build 130 dwellings,”* explained Christos Hatzopoulos, *“not only for the repatriates but also for the young families. My greatest wish is to be able to double the town’s population over the next few years...”* →

Packing asparagus at the Tychemo cooperative





Path of a leader

The haphazard development of the municipality of Tycherio owes a lot to the will and charisma of its mayor, Christos Hatzopoulos.

As a student of political science at the University of Perugia at the turning point of the 1960s and 1970s, he was extremely impressed by the so-called phenomenon of the "Third Italy" which was then emerging in Umbria (*): "I began to dream of seeing this model applied where I lived in Thrace. After all, we share a number of cultural similarities with the Italians, and the areas of the 'Third Italy' were in the beginning, like in Greece, areas that were neglected. Why wouldn't this type of development based on local initiative and the dynamism of small family businesses working in networks be successful in our country? I was convinced that it was worth a try..."

He was 25 years old when he returned to Filakto, his native village, where he became mayor in 1978.

"I was then able to put my ideas into practice," he says. "We had no paved roads or sewers. I proposed the following: 'the town will buy the materials and the village men will build the road.' The people accepted, everyone rolled up his sleeves and two years later, we finally had a decent road and an effective sewerage system."

In 1984, the Greek Parliament voted a law encouraging, for reasons of efficiency, small municipalities to group together. Convinced of the advantages of such a change, Christos Hatzopoulos called for Filakto's union with Tycherio. It was achieved the following year, making Tycherio the first municipal merger carried out in Greece. The operation, and its promoter, drew the attention of the media throughout the country.

Elected mayor of the new entity in 1986, Christos Hatzopoulos took advantage of the reputation that he acquired to contact, consult and even invite a number of local development experts and specialists to visit Tycherio, to participate in the development of projects and, during information evenings, to convince the population of their worth.

"Of course, a lot of work first had to be done to change mentalities: people were resigned, demotivated by years of political indifference on the part of the central government. But the experience of Filakto, the road, the sewerage system, these very visible achievements demonstrated that by 'taking the bull by the horns' it was still possible to surmount obstacles... On the other

hand, what was obvious and a lot harder to overcome was the structural weakness of the private sector." The initiative therefore had to be taken by the municipality. It came up with a development plan targeting three objectives: increase the productivity of the agricultural sector, which occupied 60% of the working population; improve the quality of life; create jobs.

LEADER 1 gave Christos Hatzopoulos and his collaborators the means for their ambitions: in December 1991, a development agency ("Dimossineteristiki Evros S.A.") was created in collaboration with 10 other local authorities and 3 agricultural cooperatives in order to manage the Initiative.

In Tycherio itself, two "municipal enterprises" were set up to oversee the various projects. Social action is also a major concern of the municipality, which is responsible for school transport (a first in Thrace), preventive medicine for the elderly (a doctor is on duty once a week; a coach is hired once a month to take people to the medical services in Alexandroupolis) and certain cultural and recreational events (festival of folk performances; trips organised for the local population). Municipal jobs are also reserved for the disabled.

Two figures reflect the magnitude of the development actions that were conducted in the municipality by combining local, national and European support: between 1986 and 1995, Tycherio's annual budget rose from ECU 105 000 to ECU 2 800 000.

In December 1995, the Academy of Athens rewarded the efforts of the municipal team by awarding the municipality of Tycherio its "Sustainable Development Prize".

(*) see article by Giuseppe Canullo in LEADER Magazine no.5 (1993).

→ The voluntarist policy of the various government agencies and the “*injection of live strength*” which the repatriates represent are both reasons that make the members of the development agency “Dimossineteristiki Evros S.A.”, the local action group, and its director, Dimitrios Karavassilis, optimistic about the involvement of the private sector: “*supposing that it never existed, defeatism is behind us. People see all that has been accomplished, they feel that things are changing, and they are beginning to become involved... While LEADER I was mainly financed by the public initiative, between 70% and 80% of the investments earmarked for LEADER II come from private participation.*”

The small village of Feres (6 000 inhabitants) currently has a park organised around an old aqueduct which welcomes 9 000 visitors a year. LEADER I helped develop walking trails and build an amphitheatre as well as a café managed by the “Ekavi” women’s cooperative. Its



One of the many training sessions organised by the local action group

Surface area of the region: 1 522 km²
Population: 28 351 inhabitants
LEADER II financing: ECU 4 740 000
EU: 2 473 000 ECU - **Public:** ECU 593 000
Private: ECU 1 674 000

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34 members (farmers’ wives, women wanting to resume a professional activity, etc.) make and sell all kinds of non-industrial products: candied fruits and traditional baked goods but also earthenware and woven goods. A place of social interaction for women and the village families, the café also serves as a point of sale for the cooperative’s products. “*Between June and September 1996, we made about ECU 17 000 in sales,*” Korda Fotini, one of the Ekavi directors, indicated.

Integration

This experience presents in reduced form the other important feature of the local action group’s strategy: the integration of the different sectors of activity. “*We are still trying to interlink agriculture, traditional know-how, local products, culture, tourism and service infrastructures,*” development agent Thanassis Gouridis insisted.

The development agency of Evros is currently putting together a YOUTHSTART programme in Soufli, a town famous for its silk. In concrete terms, this means setting up a youth cooperative in the restored buildings of an old silk farm. The cooperative will organise one-week tourist holidays incorporating the area’s main curiosities (archaeological sites, craft centres, etc.), not to mention the two major natural attractions: the delta of the Evros river and the Dadia bird reserve (15 000 people visit this 28 000-ha forest annually; WWF equipped it with a range of facilities, and through LEADER an accommodation area was created).

This type of operation should also be repeated on the island of Samothrace, which was included in the new LEADER II area. “*Samothrace can become a ‘showcase’ of sustainable tourism,*” Thanassis Gouridis said. “*This still rarely visited island conceals an infinite number of natural and cultural treasures: the highest mountain of the Greek islands, a wild coastline, numerous ancient vestiges, very picturesque villages, thermal springs of great potential...*”

Water cures are precisely a sector that the LAG particularly plans to develop as part of LEADER II, as Evros has an abundance of thermal springs. These springs are especially easy to exploit, because nearby there are often very old Roman or Ottoman thermal buildings that have been abandoned.

“*To utilise this resource again, to increase the still insufficient number of accommodations on offer, to find new marketing channels for local products, to introduce a real communication policy for our area while complementing already existing facilities... These are the major orientations of our LEADER II programme,*” Dimitrios Karavassilis pointed out.

And among the actions planned, which is the most innovative in his opinion? “*Impossible to answer this question,*” Dimitrios said, “*because all the actions are in some way connected to one another... Perhaps, in the final analysis, that is the real innovation.*” <

Programme of activities 1997

For 1997 the LEADER European Observatory is proposing ten seminars divided into three cycles on innovation, transnational cooperation and quality respectively.

Each of these meetings (*) is being organised in an area whose LAG has relevant experience in the topic covered. Because the dates and venues of most of the seminars had not yet been decided when this article was written (December 1996), interested readers are requested to contact the LEADER European Observatory.

INNOVATION CYCLES:

"DEVELOPING INNOVATION DYNAMICS IN ONE'S AREA"

> "Innovating by creating complementarities between sectors of activity"

Combining the resources of several different sectors - tourism, agriculture, crafts, community services, training, transport, etc. - helps create new opportunities for each sector individually, thereby strengthening the area's competitiveness. (Dates: 12-16 March 1997; Languages: German/French/Greek; Venue: Hittisau (Vorarlberg, Austria).

> "Selecting local projects"

How does one establish selection criteria that are part of the strategic and operational objectives of the rural innovation programme? How, through these criteria, can innovative projects or approaches be promoted? How can the project's feasibility be evaluated and its continuation assured?

> "Training and local development"

Many people often participate in the training programmes organised by LEADER, as they are essential for facilitating the shift "from idea to project", for becoming involved in community approaches, for acquiring the complements of the expertise necessary for the project's success, for strengthening the community's skills and for favouring its active participation in the local development approach.

QUALITY CYCLE:

"IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LOCAL INITIATIVES"

> "Marketing local products in short networks"

Using concrete examples, the seminar will examine the problem of direct selling and selling in short networks for different types of local products, be they agri-food, processed, non-industrial or tourist.

> "Collectively marketing agri-food products in long networks"

For most LEADER areas, access to supermarket networks means improving the quality of the product and its presentation, achieving, more often than not through a collective approach, a sufficient volume and range to ensure the interface with distribution groups.

> "Protected areas, an asset to energise the area"

The creation of protected natural areas often raises major concerns on the possible limits that they may impose in economic activity matters. Using examples, the seminar will on the contrary show that the creation of protected areas can result in the creation of new activities and attract enterprises seeking to benefit from the "ecological" image of the area and any environmental quality label that it may be awarded.

> "Developing tourist products based on trails and paths"

The natural potential of many LEADER areas leads local action groups to want to develop products around the theme of trails and paths (walking, horse-riding, cycling, etc.). To develop original and quality products around this theme nonetheless constitutes a major challenge which the seminar will examine from its main angles.

TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION CYCLE:

"ASSISTANCE FOR TRANSNATIONAL PROJECTS"

> "Stakes and methodology of transnational cooperation"

Transnational cooperation is a new field of LEADER intervention: measure C of the Initiative provides for over ECU 100 million to finance this type of operation. The Observatory has a budget of ECU 4 million to help LEADER beneficiaries define the specifics of their transnational cooperation project. What contribution does the cooperation project make to the area-based project? How is it possible to ensure that the fruit of the cooperation will genuinely benefit the local population? How are the most relevant partners chosen? How is the cooperation project managed at its various stages?

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"European Community Actions and Rural Development" Directory

Presented in the form of a loose-leaf binder containing some one hundred double-sided fact sheets, this directory presents all the programmes, actions, measures, etc. implemented by the European Union and of possible interest to rural actors. It will be complemented or updated according to programme changes, additions, etc. (Price: BEF 1 800 inclusive of tax / about ECU 45).

It should also be noted that a LEADER II poster (62 cm X 93 cm) is now available. (Price: BEF 700 inclusive of tax / about ECU 18; additional poster sent to the same address: BEF 200 inclusive of tax / about ECU 5).

Name: LEADER

("Links between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy")

Programme type: Community Initiative

Target areas: Objective 1 regions (development lag), Objective 5b areas (fragile rural areas) and Objective 6 areas (Nordic areas of very low population density) of the European Union. However, up to 10% of the allocations in Objective 5b areas can be granted to non-eligible contiguous areas.

Objectives: providing continuity with LEADER I (1991-1994), LEADER II is intended to:

- > encourage model local rural development initiatives;
- > support innovative, demonstrative and transferable measures which illustrate the new directions that rural development can take;
- > increase exchanges of experiences and transfers of know-how;
- > support transnational development projects proposed by those active at local level in rural areas and which express their solidarity.

Recipients: LEADER II can assist two categories of final beneficiaries:

- > principally, "Local Action Groups", i.e. a combination of public and private partners jointly devising a strategy and innovative measures for the development of a rural area on the scale of a local community (less than 100 000 inhabitants);
- > other rural collective bodies, public or private, (for example, chambers of agriculture, industry, commerce or crafts, cooperatives, business groups, local authorities, non-profit-making organisations), provided that their more specific activities relate to a plan for the rural development of a local area.

Types of measures: acquisition of skills in rural development, rural innovation programmes (vocational training, rural tourism, support for small firms, increasing commercial value locally and marketing of agricultural, forestry and fisheries products; improvement of the environment and living conditions, etc.), transnational cooperation.

The various elements of LEADER II are organised around a "European Rural Development Network", permitting wide dissemination (through seminars, meetings and publications) of innovative measures implemented for the benefit of rural areas and fostering transnational cooperation. The network is coordinated by the "LEADER European Observatory".

Duration of the programme: 6 years (1994-1999)

Community grant: around 1 755 million ECU, of which over 1 000 million ECU are for Objective 1 regions, financed by the three Structural Funds.



**LEADER
European Observatory**



**European Commission
DG VI Agriculture**

LEADER magazine is the quarterly journal of the rural development programme LEADER II. **LEADER** ("Links between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy") is a Community Initiative launched by the European Commission and coordinated by its Directorate-General for Agriculture (Unit VI-F.1.1.). - The contents of LEADER magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union Institutions. - **Editorial board:** A.E.I.D.L. - **Person responsible at law:** William Van Dingenen, A.E.I.D.L., chaussée St-Pierre 260, B-1040 Bruxelles - **Journalism:** Jean-Luc Janot - **Contributors to this issue:** Yves Champetier, Maria-Christina Makrandréou - **Photos:** LEADER groups, Francisco Botelho, Campagne Campagne, Patrice Cartier, John Sheehan, North York Moors National Park, Nicholas Petrou, Bengt Weiler - **Cover photo:** Campagne Campagne - **Production coordination:** Christine Charlier - Graphic design: Kaligram - Printed in Belgium - **LEADER magazine** is published in the eleven official languages of the European Union and has a print run of 37 500 copies - **For further information:** LEADER Magazine, A.E.I.D.L., chaussée Saint-Pierre 260, B-1040 Brussels. Tel: +32.2 736 49 60. Fax: +32.2.736 04 34. E-Mail: leader@aeidl.be - WWW: <http://www.rural-europe.aeidl.be>