Implementation of LEADER: some experiences from Poland and elsewhere

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The two worlds of LEADER

- For rural actors in Poland and many other New Member States, LEADER exists in „two worlds”:
  - One is the LEADER approach, as implemented since early 1990: integrated, bottom-up, partnership-based etc.
  - The other is the LEADER delivery: how it actually works, including implementation rules and procedures
- The local actors generally have a positive view about the effectiveness and importance of the approach; there are many arguments and questions concerning the delivery
## Leader principles and the two worlds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Leader approach</th>
<th>Leader delivery</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Territorial</td>
<td>Focus on self-defined area not projects</td>
<td>Area self-defined but with admin. borders; often focus on projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td>Looking for synergies between projects</td>
<td>Synergies welcome but mechanisms lacking</td>
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<td>Bottom–up</td>
<td>Initiative and decision in local hands</td>
<td>Initiative often local, rules and formal decisions often central/regional</td>
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<td>Partnership</td>
<td>Common objectives</td>
<td>Often limited to local level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>Local definition of innovation</td>
<td>National or regional views on innovation</td>
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<td>Decentralised funding</td>
<td>Global grant mechanisms</td>
<td>Emphasis on control not speed or flexibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Broad range of actors, learning</td>
<td>Narrow definition of cooperation</td>
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<td>Networking</td>
<td>Natural process</td>
<td>Managed process</td>
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Leader in Poland: a short story

- Preparations at local level – since early 2000
- 2002–2003: 80 animators trained, informal network and data base established, information meetings for 7000 people
- Numerous study visits to EU–15, involvement of other stakeholders (e.g. cooperative banks)
- Good exchange with other NMS thanks to PREPARE (Partnership for Rural Europe)
- Since 2008: sharing the experience with candidate countries (Serbia, Croatia, Turkey...)

Leader in Poland: a short story (2)

No. of LAGs

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<td>150</td>
<td>400</td>
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Leader in Poland: a short story (3)

Average budget per LAG

- 2004–2006: 0
- 2007–2013: 220,000,000
Some observations

- Initial enthusiasm of local actors – part of the overall democratisation and decentralisation process
- Increase in scale meant changes in the administrative setup
- Partial continuity on the ground, lack of continuity at administrative level (interrupted learning process)
- Strategies of local actors:
  - Try to retain the Leader character but continuous frustration and disappointment
  - Adaptation by becoming another administrative agency (focus on papers and procedures)
Summary of recommendations from the Polish debate on Leader

Debate in regions, summed up in May 2011

- Planning the approach well in advance
- Less bureaucracy, rules adapted to specific character of Leader, advance payments
- More autonomy to the LAG, including formal checks
- Possibility to combine different funding
- More focus on objectives and value added
- General principles of eligibility instead of detailed lists
- Need for supporting software
Learning from each other

- Many common points (and problems) observed between most NMS and candidate countries
- „Peer learning”, especially at the local level – possibility to extend this to MAs?
- Learning at civil society level usually precedes the „official channels” by at least 2–3 years
- It’s mainly about the method, not contents!
- Enormous learning potential in network meetings, exchanges and study visits, often underestimated
Thank you for your attention!