Evaluating enhanced results of LEADER: the Danish experience

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Good Practice Workshop: "Showing the added value of LEADER/CLLD through evaluation"

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Outline

- **Introduction:** LEADER implementation in Denmark

- **Background and needs:** Why evaluate added value of the LEADER/CLLD in Denmark?

- **Process and methods** of the applied triangulated qualitative evaluation:

  - What are the evaluation questions it aimed to answer?

  - What is its conceptual framework?

  - How was it implemented?

- **Evaluation findings, and lessons learned** from the findings

- **Reflections** on the evaluation approach

Introduction

1. In Denmark, LEADER is managed and implemented separately from the main RDP, and with a total of 78 million € in public support 2015-2020

2. LEADER implementation and M&E are supported by PROMIS (LAG operations database)

3. LEADER principles are used as core criteria to prioritize/select projects:
    *   Innovation
    *   Sustainability (Economically, Environmentally, Socially)
    *   Cooperation
    *   Partnerships
    *   Local anchoring
    *   Impacts

4. LEADER is designed to generate enhanced results (and impacts) thanks to the selected criteria

Background and needs

- **Why?** The evaluation was initiated in order to:
  - ensure involvement of the LAGs in reporting on the AIR submitted in 2017 (AIR17)
  - to provide better documentation for the enhanced results of LEADER than documented via AIR17 (sustainability, leverage effects, indirect effects)
  - to assess the effects of enhanced focus of LEADER on 'economic growth and employment', and reduction in number of LAGs from 55 to 26, compared with the 2007-2013 program period
  - to establish a platform for the LAGs to express their views on the on-going prioritization of funds for LEADER

- **Who?** Danish Business Authority, Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs

- **How have these needs been addressed?** Through an external independent evaluation based on multiple activities: analysis of PROMIS data, workshops with LAGs, interviews with project beneficiaries, case studies, desk research. The evaluation was finalized 30 June 2017

The evaluation approach (1):
EQ related to the LEADER principles

1) Local partnerships: To what extent have local partnerships contributed to solve challenges in the local community?

2) Area based approach: To what extent has the involvement of local resources (social, cultural, natural) contributed to local development?

3) Bottom-up: To what extent has the bottom-up approach contributed to local anchoring?

4) Cross-sectoral approach: To what extent has this approach been used? And what are the effects of the approach?

5) Networking approach: To what extent has this approach been used? And what are its effects?

6) Innovation: To what extent has LEADER contributed to innovation in the local community?

7) Cooperation projects: To what extent have cooperation projects been developed and implemented by LAGs, nationally and/or internationally? And what did the project contribute to?

The evaluation approach (2):
A qualitative approach with multiple components

1.   The components:
     - Data from PROMIS – The Danish project database
     - Workshops with all LAGs (LAG coordinators and chairmen/women)
     - Case studies
     - Interviews with project beneficiaries and stakeholders
     - Desk research, LDSs and annual reports from LAGs

2.   This approach was appropriate as a *qualitative* complementary approach to the *quantitative*-data driven evaluation based on physical and financial indicators collected from PROMIS and reported in the AIR submitted in 2017

3.   The approach supports leverage mapping and indirect effects as well as the quality of networks and partnerships

4.   In this way the approach contributes to map the scale and scope of LEADER's added value

The evaluation approach (3)

Workshops:

- 5 distinctive workshops to cover all 26 LAGs distributed geographically in Denmark

- LAG coordinators and chairmen/women invited plus LAG board members, if relevant

- Workshop put forward as a voluntary proposal to LAGs, and presented as a platform for participation and involvement

- LAGs invited to present their progress on the implementation of the CLLD strategies and the contribution of the LEADER principles

- Presentations discussed during the workshops

- Discussion of factors undermining or obstructing future enhanced results of the LEADER approach

- Common conclusions summarized by the facilitator and agreed upon

The evaluation approach (4)

Case studies:

- 10 case studies elaborated based on a common template

- 5 reported in the main report

- Each case study illustrates and documents the enhanced results of different LEADER principles

- Cases are identified by the LAGs

- Data is collected from PROMIS and beneficiaries through interviews

- Case studies are assessed and reported by the evaluators

The evaluation approach (5)

Validation of findings:

- Findings from workshops and case studies are validated via desk research
  - CLLD strategies and annual reports from LAGs
  - Evaluations and studies related to the topics covered (LEADER principles and project related)

- PROMIS data

- Stakeholder interviews: 5 semi-structured interviews of relevant representatives of national CSO, Business NGOs and public representatives

- 3 level assessment: **"To a High extent"**, **"To a Medium extent"** and **"To a Low extent"** subjectively based on a combined judgment of all data sources

Findings and lessons learned (1)

Contribution of LEADER principles	Assessment level
Local partnerships: To what extent have local partnerships contributed to solve challenges in the local community?	**TO A HIGH EXTENT**
Area based approach: To what extent has the involvement of local resources (social, cultural, natural) contributed to local development?	**TO A HIGH EXTENT**
Bottom-up: To what extent has the bottom-up approach contributed to local anchoring?	**TO A HIGH EXTENT**
Networking approach: To what extent has this approach been used? And what are its effects?	**TO A HIGH EXTENT**
Innovation: To what extent has LEADER contributed to innovation in the local community?	**TO A HIGH EXTENT**
Cross sectoral approach: To what extent has this approach been used? And what are the effects of the approach?	**TO A MEDIUM EXTENT**
Cooperation projects: To what extent have cooperation projects been developed and implemented by LAGs, nationally and/or internationally? And what did the project contribute to?	**TO A LOW EXTENT**

Case-study 1 - Mosgaard Whisky

Innovation and local resources

- Local food and beverage products with story telling. High quality

- Micro whisky distillery, shop & café

- Organic products and Scottish Highland cattle

- Gin and young malt

- Innovative product development, complementary to whisky, also in cooperation with other local producers

- Partner of The Local Whisky Route with local beverage distilleries and producers

- 2 new jobs established. More to come!

- Support: 41.000 € / budget 102.000 €

http://mosgaardwhisky.dk/

Case Study 2: The Regional Game Factory

Leverage effects

- Big growth in game development in DK: Industry turnover in 2016 was 150 million €, similar to the Danish Film industry

- The regional Game Factory

- Has established a game development education, where focus is an asset

- Incubator environment for young entrepreneurs in game development

- Established close cooperation with important operators in the game and film industry in Denmark

- Support: 50,000 € / budget 100,000 €. Total investment of more than 1 Mil €

Case-study 3: Mountainbike track in the Egebjerg Hills

Public-Private Partnership

Skovhuggeren

- Mountain biking in explosive growth

- Is an attractive mountain bike track in the forests of a private estate

- Attractive for Special Interest Tourists

- Supports the strategy to make the local area be Denmark's Outdoor Area nr. 1

- Support: 54.000 € / budget 250.000 €

Findings and lessons learned (2)

Conclusions:

1. The LEADER approach works well (so far) and generates enhanced results, in particularly regarding:
   - Innovation
   - Area based development
   - Local partnerships
   - Networks
   - Leverage and indirect effects beyond the direct effects of the projects

2. The benefits of the LEADER approach may be challenged by reduced resources to LEADER and negative prioritization of LEADER in the DK RDP:
   - Administrative requirements take a relative increasing share of the funds
   - Less time for LAG coordinators to develop projects with potential beneficiaries
   - CSOs and local communities experience *volunteers fatigue*

Findings and lessons learned (3)

1. Follow up actions taken after the implementation of this approach:
   - Further development of the PROMIS (LAG operations database)
   - Stronger discipline among LAG managers and LAG board members in their assessment of project applications and reports
   - Stronger discipline among project beneficiaries in applications and in reporting, facilitated by LAG coordinators

2. Limits of the findings:
   - More resources could be used to validate the findings and to bring other perspectives into the evaluation

Reflections on evaluation approach

1. It is always a big challenge to measure the un-measurable - the added value of LEADER

2. It must be recognized by all involved parties that the approach is *qualitative* and to some extent indicative, therefore not absolute

3. The approach is resource demanding and it is important to find the balance between resources and political awareness/focus of the topic

4. The approach can easily be transferred to other Member States: No rocket science here!

5. The overall ability of the approach to show the added value of LEADER is HIGH

6. Possibility to upscale the approach at RDP level: YES

7. Higher involvement of LAGs will lead to an even better mapping of enhanced results

Thank you

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