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Preface

Wolfram Tertschnig
Austrian Federal
Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry, Environment
and Water Management

In the course of implementing the European Biodiversity Strategy on a national level, we have just recently completed an evidence-based, transparent, participatory multi-stakeholder dialogue that was launched back in 2009 to revise and renew the old national strategy. In this new strategy we argue that the core challenge in halting the loss of biodiversity cannot be met by relying on rules and regulations, by applying a command-and-control approach, and by providing financial incentives only. Within the framework of the **vielfaltLeben** campaign, we have engaged in building alliances and partnerships with local and regional governmental agencies, the business community, NGOs, and individual VIP ambassadors to maintain and protect biodiversity. The result: A growing momentum of today well over 50 individual projects and an improved status of over 200 threatened species. One flagship initiative has targeted the Local Action Groups (LAGs) that engage in the LEADER rural development mechanism—a key element of our national programme under the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy. We do believe that the »Biodiversity & LEADER« project carried out in cooperation with Umweltdachverband and ÖAR Regionalberatung is a success story—with a couple of lessons learnt we would like to share, and of course also with room to improve by building our next steps on experiences and deliverables from related approaches from other European countries. To enjoy these merits as a group is the most important reason why we have convened this international meeting. Thank you, participants from Austria and abroad, for being part of it.

Preface

**Michael Proschek-
Hauptmann**
Umweltdachverband,
Austria

Since its initiation in 1991, the LEADER approach has enabled a lot of very positive developments throughout rural areas in Europe; its success is based on the commitment and the empowerment of local communities and representatives. The reconciliation of regional development and nature conservation is of great importance and it contains promising potential for economic development, especially in areas with great natural capital. There are many good examples of regional development players collaborating hand in hand with nature conservation, having established innovative concepts and practical solutions to specific problems, and giving perspective to both biodiversity preservation and regional growth. The primary intentions of the project »Biodiversity & LEADER«, conducted by Umweltdachverband and ÖAR Regionalberatung, were to raise a deeper understanding of the different perspectives among various local players and to bring these players together to promote networking. However, the overall objective was to give input to the programming process of the new Rural Development Programme and to work out concrete recommendations for decision makers and local players in order to better integrate biodiversity issues into the implementation of the LEADER approach. Finally, we also wanted to collect experiences from all over Europe and to encourage and crosslink ongoing initiatives, ideally leading to the successful realisation of further projects in the field of regional development and nature conservation in Austria as well as in other Member States.

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From LEADER to Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)—a promising approach

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Rural Development

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From its start, the LEADER programme has been based on seven key principles, namely: (i) area-based local development strategies that (ii) are developed and implemented in a »bottom-up« way, (iii) local public-private partnerships (as a basis of LAGs), (iv) integrated and multi-sectoral actions, (v) networking, (vi) cooperation, and (vii) innovation. These key features have been at the heart of LEADER and will also form the basis of the new Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) approach during the 2014–2020 programming period.

The 2007–2013 programming period saw the mainstreaming of LEADER within Pillar II of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and this has brought a number of new challenges. Important lessons can also be drawn from experiences accumulated during the past programming periods. For instance, it has been argued that the demarcation of funds often stood in the way of the development of integrated (multi-sectoral) strategies, and that therefore LEADER could not be exploited to its full potential. The increased administrative burden (especially in the case of small projects) as well as the evaluation of Local Development Strategies and the »measuring« of the—often intangible—outcomes of LEADER have been identified as some of the key weaknesses. The CLLD approach (and the future LEADER approach in some of the Member States) aims to build on these lessons learnt. The CLLD approach creates the opportunity to support integrated local development strategies through multiple funding (i.e. not only through EAFRD), as well as the integration and cooperation of different types of territories (e.g. urban, coastal and rural areas) within single development strategies.

Therefore, CLLD creates new opportunities, but also raises a number of new challenges. The coordination of funds and programmes is not without difficulties, and not all Member States and regions will chose the multi-funded

CLLD option. The Contact Point of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD CP) carried out a CLLD Mapping Survey in November 2013¹. According to the state-of-play at the end of 2013, thirteen (i.e. some 40 % of) Member States/regions decided or claimed to develop a multi-funded approach. Six out of these were planning or decided at the time to apply for EAFRD or EMFF »only«. Two Member States were planning to use EAFRD and ERDF to fund their CLLD approach, whereas four Member States were developing a CLLD approach funded through all four funds. Overall, the contribution of ESF to the multi-funded CLLD approach was expected to be limited compared to other funds.

Despite the difficulties and challenges LEADER had to face during the 2007–2013 programming period, there is a wide consensus about the added value of the LEADER approach in local development, and in particular about the fact that there are certain types of problems that can best be addressed through LEADER-type approaches. Biodiversity is one of them. An example of this is the integrated and multi-sectoral project (idea) of Koppanyvolgye LAG in Hungary that aimed at developing an integrated and sustainable farming system. In parallel to the development of a new strategy to stop severe soil erosion through planting crops and—as a side-effect—produce biomass for energy production, the LAG also works together with a number of partners to develop training for biomass-based renewable energy technology operators and it also has various initiatives aimed at awareness-raising of biodiversity issues in schools. This strategy is a demonstration of how integrated strategies, i.e. different sectoral approaches (such as agricultural, biodiversity/environmental and social policies) can contribute to the development of local areas.

1 Mapping Report: The State of Play of CLLD Planning and Implementation in Member States. Background document in relation to the NRN thematic cluster on CLLD, revised version, December 2013. http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/clld/CLLD_mapping_report_update_171213.pdf



LEADER in Austria—future prospects

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Even though the LEADER method can already look back on a twenty-year history, it still offers a great deal of creative freedom for rural regions with its key features ranging from a focus on local partnerships to a multi-sectoral approach.

In the period 2014–2020 LEADER will be once again part of the Austrian rural development programme and programmed as a separate measure. In spring 2014, a call for regions to apply as Local Action Groups (LAG) will start. Groups will be selected in a two-step approach. In phase one, LAG applicants will hand in their Local Development Strategy (LDS) and receive feedback by the selection board. In phase two, LAG applicants have the possibility to adapt and resubmit their strategy before the LDS is finally assessed and selected. As a new element, with the recognition as LAG, each LAG gets a budget allocated. This budget must be used for projects which help to implement the LDS.

Indicative timetable of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) selection process in Austria

Period	Phase	Task
05/2014 to 09/2014	LDS call	LAGs prepare and write LDS
10/2014 to 12/2014	LAG selection phase 1	LDS are checked; individual written feedback is given (suggestions for improvement, approx. budget allocation)
01/2015 to mid-02/2015	Feedback	LAGs adapt LDS (incl. financial plan)
mid-02/2015–03/2015	LAG selection phase 2	Adapted LDS are checked, esp. improvement suggestions from feedback phase
04/2015	LDS selection board selects LDS	
05/2015	Start of newly approved LAG	

In the future, LAGs have to provide high quality strategies that show a clear positioning of the region. Based on an analysis of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and risks, each LAG defines specific objectives and priorities that respond to their local needs. Furthermore, the strategy should be of integrative nature, multi-sectoral, and show an innovative character. To ensure the bottom-up approach, different partners from rural society must be included in the development process and should also take part in the implementation process.

To enhance the community-led approach, more power and responsibilities regarding the implementation will be given to the LAGs. The decision-making process—about whether a project is chosen for funding or not—lies entirely within the LAG. It is thus essential that all decisions are made in a transparent and non-discriminatory way.

To improve the quality of information about LEADER in the region, more emphasis will be put on the animation of potential beneficiaries. Moreover, LAG management will be provided with more resources to support stakeholders with their project proposals.

The use of monitoring tools will make the progress of the LDS more transparent and should also be used by the LAGs to steer the implementation in the right direction.

In the new period, the regions will face greater autonomy with regard to the content of projects and financial aspects. This means that the LAGs themselves get the chance to work on their future challenges and implement a suitable strategy.



Regional benefits from biodiversity vs. »Nature is not for sale«

Magnus Wessel

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Nature provides a wide range of values way beyond an economic point of view and direct usability for mankind. The ongoing conflict between the aim to guarantee the existence of biodiversity and future possibilities of sustainable use and short-time financial interests is far from being solved. A strong public debate is necessary to gain momentum towards a sustainable way of living, meeting the needs of a growing population world-wide as well as the long-term conservation of biodiversity.

The aims are clear: to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services within the EU by 2020 and restoring them as far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss. But the successful implementation of nature conservation and sustainable land use strategies is far from being secured. The decline of pollinators due to intensive agriculture, the heavy loss of farmland birds, reduced water retention and increased flooding risks due to the destruction of wetlands are examples for ongoing damages.

Analysis shows that successful conservation and restoration measures do often not fail due to missing instruments, as most of the EU-member states have, in comparison to other regions world-wide, a large network of experts on biodiversity, as well as NGOs promoting citizen science and strongly advocating nature conservation. Also, major legislation instruments like the Natura 2000 Directives are in place; spatial planning instruments and funding schemes like LEADER or LIFE+ are in use. With the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), another powerful tool with the potential to promote biodiversity is available that is, however—even after the most recent reform—, still supporting a system of contra-productive subsidies for industrialised unsustainable agriculture.

LEADER needs to play a major role in activating stakeholders to care for biodiversity issues by providing stronger participation opportunities and by promoting the integration of participatory work into decision-making processes. Priorities need to be set, ideas developed, and obstacles named and overcome to take biodiversity protection within regional development to the next level. This is the point where a bottom-up project approach and top-down instruments like National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans need to meet in order to set priorities and help to focus regional activities around the support of European biodiversity as a whole.

The European Green Belt serves as an outstanding positive example of how regional approaches, traditional land use, nature conservation, and European visions work together for biodiversity and regional development. Along the former Iron Curtain and along a distance of 12,500 kilometres the Green Belt is a significant contribution to the European »Green Infrastructure« that connects 16 EU countries, four candidate countries (Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Turkey), two potential candidates (Kosovo, Albania), and two non-EU countries (Russia and Norway), as well as almost 150 governmental and non-governmental organisations from these countries. Besides its extraordinary ecological importance, the initiative is a living example of how Europe and its diverse cultures can truly grow together. From the European Green Belt, we can learn that biological diversity goes hand in hand with cultural diversity. It is a symbol of a bottom-up approach, of transboundary cooperation and of Europe's shared natural and cultural heritage.



Incorporation of biodiversity into a local development strategy— a success story

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The LAG »Sources & Vallées«, located in Northern France in the Picardie region, is a mostly rural territory well connected to Paris whose natural environment is characterised by many forests, rivers and wetlands. After a LEADER+ program focused on culture and following two major floods in 2001 and 2007, local stakeholders chose to tackle water management issues. Thus in 2009, the LAG »Sources & Vallées« obtained a LEADER allocation of 1.85 million Euro to »make management of water, as a resource and heritage, a factor of sustainable development«, to apply global water policy to the territory through both risk prevention and enhancement of the territory’s attractiveness.

The LAG »Sources & Vallées« supports actions to preserve and promote watercourses, wetlands and their biodiversity on the one hand and to enhance the fluvial patrimony on the touristic, cultural and educational levels on the other hand. For instance, the LAG supports actions in connection to urban and agricultural runoff diagnosis and control, restoration of formerly artificialised river banks, or wetland inventory work all over the watershed. The fluvial heritage promotion has been based on the rehabilitation of La Cité des Bateliers (a bargemen museum), cultural events related to water and the creation of educational nature trails. To this day, about 13 studies and four interventions concerning natural heritage preservation have been supported to preserve and restore wetlands and rivers as well as control water flow. Two of these exemplary actions will be presented in the following.

Restoration of the ecological continuity of the Broyette river in a village centre

Thiescourt—like several other villages on the LAG territory—is regularly flooded in case of heavy rainfalls. In the 70s, artificial channelling of the Broyette river was conducted in the village, creating a bottleneck effect. Initiated by

the river federation, the re-opening of the river has been financially and technically supported by LEADER to remove the piped black spot and restore the ecological continuity by unearthing the river and re-establishing natural banks. After a preliminary study, the actual intervention is going to start this summer, rendering this operation a pilot project on the territory.

Restoration of the Quint Marsh

The Regional Conservatory of Natural Areas, the expert organisation for wetland studies and restoration in Picardie, intervened on the Quint Marsh, a floodplain of 17 hectares strongly modified by poplar plantations. After a diagnosis identifying three protected aquatic plant species, the Conservatory set up an action plan on behalf of the site's private owners to restore damaged reed banks and pre-existing wetlands, starting with an emergency intervention to clear the brushwood and dig the former ponds to reconnect them. To determine the next steps on a way to a complete restoration of the site, a full analysis of its present state and hydro-ecological functioning is currently being conducted.

The LAG successfully took up the challenge of implementing such a specific LEADER strategy on water management, securing effective and long-term water policy on the territory. Despite the complexity of water regulation, the involvement of all local stakeholders and the recruitment of a water specialist by the LAG made this LEADER programme a real springboard for an even more ambitious commitment with the LAG's main financial and technical partner, the Water Agency: a Global Contract on Water will start next year with dedicated public findings.







POSTER SESSION 1

»Preservation and protection of cultural landscapes«

Hemma Burger-Scheidlin
Umweltdachverband,
Austria

Four LEADER projects focussing on biodiversity and cultural landscapes were presented in this session. It did not come as a surprise that the motivation of volunteers was mentioned to be most crucial for the successful implementation of the projects presented. Especially the Dutch »Little Owl« project succeeded in mobilising volunteers who helped to construct and install nest boxes. The Slovenian project »Traditional orchards« even demonstrated how to involve a whole community.

Motivation and passion for the topic/project was identified as a key to overcome one of the main challenges of LEADER projects in general: how to continue the project after the end of funding and how to secure it in the long run. The bottom-up approach LEADER should—in principle—guarantee that processes started in the frame of a LEADER project continue after their official ending.



Another way to make LEADER projects long-lasting is to make the project profitable, for instance by creating new income possibilities or job opportunities, as was shown in the German project »Allgäuer Streueverwertung« (diversification of income for farmers) as well as the »Little Owl« project (a new beer was created and is successfully marketed), or in the Polish project »Old cherry varieties« (putting old varieties of sweet cherry trees up for sale in local garden centres is planned). A challenge not to be forgotten in this context is to promote the (economic) use of biodiversity but, at the same time, guarantee its protection!

To use animals/plants as ambassadors for a region and connect them to daily life (e.g. Little Owl beer) is seen as a way to successfully promote biodiversity and could be one of the strategies for future biodiversity-related LEADER projects.



**Marta Janczak-
Pieniażek &
Wojciech Pikuła**
Kraina św. Anny, Poland



Analysis of biodiversity in old cherry varieties in »The Land of St Anne«

LEADER REGION
Poland,
Opole Voivodeship
PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Association
»The Land of St Anne«
TOTAL COST
7,500 EUR
LEADER FUNDING
PROW 2007–2013, 100 %
PROJECT DURATION
2010–2012
CONTACT DETAILS
www.annaland.pl

The project »Analysis of biodiversity in old cherry varieties in »The Land of St Anne« was implemented in cooperation with the Silesian Botanical Garden in Mikolow (Poland). The work was divided into three stages. In 2010–2012 a detailed inventory of the sweet cherry trees and identification of their varieties were conducted. This inventory showed that the oldest trees date from the 1920s and the youngest are more than 40 years old. Genetic material of all the varieties was collected and preserved. An important part of the project was to obtain scions which were grafted onto rootstocks at the Silesian Botanical Garden. The outcomes of the project include: the promotion of old varieties of sweet cherry trees through the publication of a brochure including information about the resources within the avenue, the preparation of a list of points of gardening, providing a seedling catalogue, organising the Cherries Blossom Festival with the active participation of the local community, and the creation of a new avenue of 100 sweet cherry trees. A seminar to inform about and promote the project was conducted after each stage in order to outline the work done and to present the possibilities of using sweet cherries in cosmetology, design, and landscape architecture.

**Paul Haustraete
& Roeland Cappon**
LAG »Flemish
Ardennes«, Belgium



The Little Owl as an ambassador for the small-scale landscape of the Flemish Ardennes

LEADER REGION
L-BE001-003
Vlaamse Ardennen
PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Regional Landscape
Flemish Ardennes
TOTAL COST
146,479 EUR
LEADER FUNDING
95,211.64 EUR
PROJECT DURATION
February 2009–
June 2011
CONTACT DETAILS
Paul Haustraete,
paul.haustraete@rlva.be

This project consisted of different actions aiming at preserving the Little Owl and hence increasing public awareness and appreciation for the Little Owl as well as for the small-scale landscape elements in the region. Inhabitants were encouraged to plant willow trees and fruit trees through the annual tree planting campaign. The project was realised through the efforts of a broad field of actors; a great number of volunteers were engaged in the establishment of 400 nest boxes (in order to make up for the lack of cavities in pollard trees) and yearly monitoring of the existing populations. Also, companies (a brewery), farmers, hunters, municipalities, and a secondary school (constructing the nest boxes) were tightly involved in all aspects of the project. In order to sensitise the public for these issues, a mobile exhibition was constructed. Communication still takes place through the Little Owl clay house number plaque and the developed local beer called »Steenuilke« (the Dutch name for the Little Owl). This beer contains three territory-specific herbs and is nowadays a widely distributed, very popular and awarded beverage. Now we realise that we have succeeded in making the Little Owl the ambassador for the typical landscape of the Flemish Ardennes and the mascot for our regional landscape.



Uwe Kießling

Allgäuer Streuprojekt,
Germany

The Allgäu-wide LEADER co-operative project »Allgäu meadow recovery«

LEADER REGION

**Allgäu (counties:
Ostallgäu, Oberallgäu,
Unterallgäu, Lindau)**

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

**Landscape Management
Association Ostallgäu**

TOTAL COST

194,267.70 EUR

LEADER FUNDING

105,782.40 EUR

PROJECT DURATION

January 2010–May 2013

CONTACT DETAILS

**Josef Freuding,
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lra-oal.bayern.de**

Due to the structural change in agriculture (larger farms, animal husbandry without bedding), the meadows (wet alkaline fens, which were mowed for the production of straw replacement) were no longer being farmed in the Allgäu region. The result was a gradual breakdown of the landscape and a high loss of important animal and plant species.

As all the Allgäu counties suffered from the same problem, a common LEADER project was initiated in January 2010 by the counties of Ostallgäu, Oberallgäu, Unterallgäu and Lindau.

The goal was to preserve and develop the Molinia meadows with one side effect being the preservation of the typical Allgäu landscape as well as many endangered animal and plant species native to these wet, alkaline fens.

After a five-month extension, this cross-county project ended very successfully in May 2013. Due to the positive process and results, the follow-up project »Sustainable use of alkaline fens and Molinia meadow management« was launched in June 2013, and is currently being promoted through federal and state funds.

**Jolanda Gobec
& Marjan Gobec**
LAG »Posavje region«,
Slovenia



Opportunities in traditional orchards

LEADER REGION
Posavje, Slovenia
PROJECT MANAGEMENT
**Private enterprise
and farm Verbena Ltd.,
Kozjanski Park
Public Service Agency,
Institute Svibna and
Cultural Society Svibno**
TOTAL COST
56,017.65 EUR
LEADER FUNDING
43,953.87 EUR
PROJECT DURATION
**February 2013–
January 2014**
CONTACT DETAILS
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gobec@gmail.com**

The project area Posavje in Slovenia is known as a former excellent area for fruit growing. Due to economic reasons, the old fruit growing practice has been abandoned resulting in the degradation of the environment. However, revitalised meadow orchards have become an opportunity for the survival of both humans and all other creatures in limited agricultural areas. All it takes for people is to improve their knowledge ...

Throughout the project various professional trainings were offered to acquire professional skills in the field of sustainable fruit growing and fruit processing, to learn about business opportunities including social enterprises, permaculture designs, etc. Furthermore, four training orchards providing shelter for beneficial organisms were established in different places of the region.

We observed positive biotic effects of meadow orchards supported by the efforts to maintain the old, more resistant fruit varieties; self-sufficiency and local services are friendly to environment and nature, too. Work in the orchard, based on sustainable methods, also offers healthy leisure activities, prevents overgrowth of rural farmland and preserves cultural landscapes, positively effects social cohesion, interdependence, and care of various groups.

POSTER SESSION 2

»Conservation— species and habitat management«

Ivana Milakovic

University of Applied Life
Sciences, Vienna, Austria

Five inspiring showcase projects were presented by biodiversity experts from all over Europe. In those highly diverse projects, we saw how to protect bees, river channels, wet meadows or sea birds through LEADER, and how to act on a municipal or on an international level, with a small or a high budget. Raising awareness and achieving one's goals by involving many different stakeholders, linking nature conservation with education and fun, and using voluntary work were especially highlighted. The project presentations were followed by a lively discussion about challenging situations the participants are facing in their everyday conservation practice and during administrative procedures. Most participants shared the concerns about finding co-funding, measuring outputs, dealing with conflicts of interest and maintaining management measures after the end of the project.



Besides coming up with many practical hints and ideas that could be implemented in their own regions, the session participants commonly concluded that LEADER projects work best when they are built upon an existing initiative, confirming the bottom-up spirit of LEADER.





Bernhard Ferner
Umweltbundesamt
Andreas Zeman
LAG »Nordburgenland
Plus«, Austria

A network of nature conservation areas at municipal level

LEADER REGION

Nordburgenland Plus

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

**LEADER management
Nordburgenland Plus,
Umweltbundesamt**

TOTAL COST

ca. 700,000 EUR

LEADER FUNDING

**brochure 85%,
ecological network 50%,
purchase of land
and maintenance
measures 80 %**

PROJECT DURATION

2010–2014 (ongoing)

CONTACT DETAILS

**Andreas Zeman,
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umweltbundesamt.at**

Biodiversity protection needs small-scaled measures on a local level. Important habitats are scattered and very often isolated in the landscape. It is therefore important that regions as well as municipalities take ownership of their natural values. To support biodiversity on a local level, the federal state government of Burgenland adopted a LEADER directive for »Municipal Conservation Areas« (MCA).

The LAG »Nordburgenland Plus« took up this issue and promoted the idea in their region. The idea got support by 25 municipalities which nominated at least one site per council. In each MCA specific measures were implemented, among which purchase of land was very important. Besides, conservation measures like clearing, mowing, or grazing were executed.

Currently, the biotopes are being mapped, conservation objectives set up, recommendations for necessary conservation measures elaborated; an analysis of how the MCA are to be embedded in the existing network of conservation areas (national park, nature parks) of Northern Burgenland is running. A training programme for »area caretakers« addressing volunteers, municipal councillors, and council workers will start in fall 2014. Finally, a brochure will inform about the 25 MCA in Northern Burgenland (to be published in winter 2014).

Dorothee Le Gal
Pays de Morlaix
Yann Jacob
Bretagne Vivante-
SEPNB, France



Improving biodiversity in Morlaix Bay

LEADER REGION

**Pays de Morlaix,
Brittany, France**

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Bretagne Vivante

TOTAL COST

63,800 EUR

LEADER FUNDING

20,800 EUR (33%)

PROJECT DURATION

3 years

CONTACT DETAILS

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Morlaix Bay is a huge natural area located at the entrance to the English Channel on the Northwestern coast of Brittany in France. Its maritime landscape made up of two estuaries, an archipelago of small islands and islets, and rocky cliffs present many rich natural habitats as well as a high density of fauna and flora. Nesting sea birds, wintering and migrating water birds, and marine mammals are among the most precious natural elements. We can also find submarine fauna and flora living in and around the rich natural coastal and underwater habitats.

The main aim of this programme is to accumulate natural data for migrating water birds and sea mammals all year round, so as to better understand their time and space use in Morlaix bay. In order to realise this, monthly countings are organised with the use of validated scientific protocols and with the help of volunteers skilled to determine and count the animals. In order to better understand the relationships between the inhabitants of Morlaix Bay, the animals' natural surroundings and the perception of their conservation, a survey has been created by students from Brest University.

All of the data collected will enable to prepare for a Natural Reserve project to protect the Morlaix Bay's natural habitats in a shared vision with the local population.



**Katie Crowley &
Nuala O’Riordan**
IRD Duhallow, Ireland

A biodiversity approach to golfing in Duhallow

LEADER REGION

**North West Cork
and South East Kerry,
Ireland**

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

**Community
Development Working
Group IRD Duhallow**

TOTAL COST

10,000 EUR

LEADER FUNDING

9,000 EUR

PROJECT DURATION

1 year

CONTACT DETAILS

**IRD Duhallow,
duhallow@eircom.net**

This project entailed the development of a pitch and putt course and circular waling route applying ecological principals to protect and enhance the native biodiversity in the area with the assistance of LEADER 2007–2013 funding. The course is located on a gently sloping hill, bordered by a plantation coniferous forest and a stream (Rampart Stream). This stream was severely degraded due to historic drainage to facilitate the forestry development. A plan was drawn up which included the protection and enhancement of biodiversity associated with the site. A »treatment train« of wetlands was constructed to intercept potential nutrient runoff from the course and provide habitat for dragonflies. The stream was restored by creating a meander, reprofiling stream banks, importation of spawning gravel for salmon and trout, placement of weirs for oxygention and placement of boulders for fish to hide under. Adult salmon and trout spawned in the site there months after the restoration.



**Karin Hochegger
& Renate Mayer**
Natura 2000 site
manager, Austria

Mowing of wet meadows with horses

LEADER REGION
Ausseerland, Styria
PROJECT MANAGEMENT
**Naturschutzbund,
Gebietsbetreuung**
TOTAL COST
15,000 EUR
LEADER FUNDING
7,500 EUR
PROJECT DURATION
2014
CONTACT DETAILS
**Karin Hochegger,
karin.hochegger@
gmx.at**

Wet meadows are species-rich ecosystems. They provide habitats for many rare and endangered species. With ongoing structural changes in agriculture, a great number of wet meadows are abandoned because their management requires a lot of manual work. Therefore, today's challenge is to find sustainable management practices that are not very time-consuming and have a low environmental impact.

The use of horses with modern equipment for mowing was established for wetland management in Natura 2000 sites in Salzkammergut, Styria.

The use of workhorses supports small-scale grassland farming and creates awareness for ecological sustainable landscape management practices. Mowing with horses has a low impact on wet soils and maintains the high biodiversity of wet meadows preventing forest and scrub encroachment. The ecological benefits are minimal noise, no emissions, no fossil fuels involved, and insects and birds can easily escape. Apart from mowing, horses could be used in versatile ways such as thinning of forests, clearing of bushes or dwarf shrubs, cultivation of potatoes and transport services. Working with horses also has positive effects on children, teenagers and people with mental problems.

POSTER SESSION 3

»Biodiversity awareness raising«

Stefanie Schabhüttl
Umweltdachverband,
Austria

»We only protect what we know.«—Increasing people's awareness of their immediate natural surroundings is a key aspect for the protection of biodiversity. In their effort to raise awareness for the preservation of local natural and cultural heritage, each of the four projects presented in this poster session follows a very unique approach: From straight-forward educational activities like the establishment of a learning path and an ecomuseum in Slovenia to the artistic translation of a Scottish river catchment's ecological mysteries and the brave undertaking of teaching Spanish farmers how to coexist with wild animals like the wolf.

For all their individuality, these projects share a few overarching features: the attempt not only to bring people closer to nature, but to bring people together with people; the focus on communication on a local scale with a strong demand for bottom-up processes;



the fusion of nature/science with cultural appeals, and—as a highlight—the attempt to get people to think out of the box and take on new and fresh perspectives of their every-day natural environment. However, a few issues seem to be particularly challenging: How to keep up one's project partners' and volunteers' interest and motivation beyond the project's official runtime? And: How to convince funders of the contribution and relevance of a project idea as a non-environmentalist, e.g. as an artist? Yet, these obstacles should not keep you from trying out your own LEADER/biodiversity awareness raising project: arts with wolves and bears, a learning path to connect a protected area with cultural heritage, or cultural events around a lake to bring people to share food, drinks and ideas about their common natural heritage—what's next?





Axel Mitzka
Naturpark Dübener
Heide, Germany

Bees & Biodiversity

LEADING PARTNER
LAG Pays Voironais,
France
TOTAL COST
442,000 EUR
(over all 7 LAGs)
PROJECT DURATION
June 2012–
December 2013

LEADER REGION
PRESENTED
LAG Dübener Heide,
Germany
PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Naturpark Dübener
Heide, neulandplus
LOCAL COST
20,000 EUR (Germany)
CONTACT DETAILS
Axel Mitzka,
a.mitzka@naturpark-
duebener-heide.com

Honey bee colony losses are being observed world-wide. This phenomenon is causing great ecological and economic concern. Indeed, scientists estimate that the survival of over 80 % of plant species depends directly on pollinating insects, most particularly on bees. Preserving bees and their environment will therefore benefit all kinds of pollinating insects, animals and finally humans.

For this reason the project »Bees & Biodiversity« was born: a European transnational cooperation project gathering seven LEADER areas in seven European countries (Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Great Britain, and Slovakia), wishing to preserve bees as pollinating insects, and thus act in favour of biodiversity.

During two years (2012–2013), each partner area was conducting a specific local programme answering to its own stakes and challenges. Many various local actions were carried out throughout the member areas, belonging to three main themes: land management, beekeeping activity and economy, information and education.

The transnational cooperation has led the seven LEADER areas to share their challenges and their experiences through the organisation of visits, conferences and seminars during three common events as well as the realisation of a common website to capitalise and communicate about the project.

Suzana Zupančič
RA Kozjansko, LAG
»From Pohorje to
Bohorja«, Slovenia



Learning paths along Ponikva

LEADER REGION

**LAG »From Pohorje
to Bohor«**

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

**Ponikva Tourist and
Improvement Society**

TOTAL COST

8,608.64 EUR

LEADER FUNDING

3,600.00 EUR

PROJECT DURATION

April 2009–April 2010

CONTACT DETAILS

**info@ra-kozjansko.si,
tod.ponikva@gmail.com**

Geologically, Ponikva's territory is part of the Dinaric Alps. Boletina near Ponikva is one of Slovenia's Natura 2000 areas. A desire to display the uniqueness of Ponikva's karst topography, its protection and prevention from pollution are the main goals of this LEADER project.

Ponikva is extremely rich in natural as well as historical and cultural sights. The Ponikva Tourist and Improvement Society together with the project partner, the Municipality of Šentjur, wanted to present this heritage to a wider range of people: schoolchildren, locals, or visitors. Hiking trails offer an ideal possibility to merge the useful with the pleasant.

Therefore, the Stanko Buser karstic water learning path and a geographic-historic learning path were set up with a total length of 14 km. Those paths lead across the Voglajnsko hills of the Eastern Celje basin outskirts. On the way, historical and geographical characteristics of the Ponikva area are highlighted. The paths are marked with instructive information boards, thus contributing to the preservation of the existing natural and cultural heritage and providing information about the features of the local environment. A multilingual brochure was published to provide specific descriptions of individual points and leads visitors along both paths.

Eugenio García-Rojo
LAG »ADRI Valladolid
Norte«, Spain



WOLF—Wild Life & Farmers

LEADER REGIONS
numerous from Spain,
Estonia and Portugal

PROJECT MANAGEMENT
LAG ADRI Valladolid
Norte

TOTAL COST
616,000 EUR

LEADER FUNDING
616,000 EUR

PROJECT DURATION
2009–2013

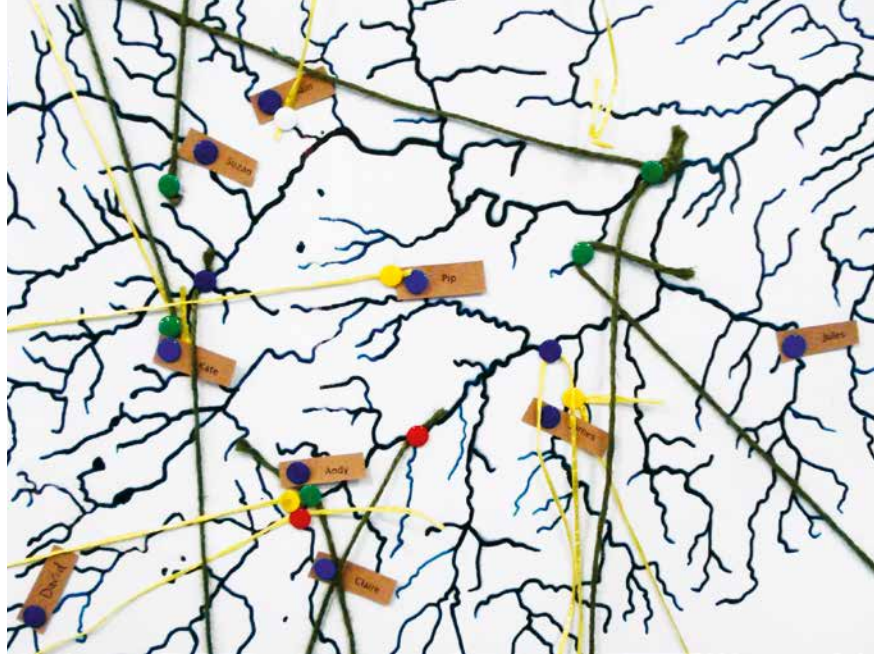
CONTACT DETAILS
adrivall@
tierradecampos.com;
www.wolf-project.com

The project »WOLF – Wild Life & Farmers« tries to promote actions in favour of the coexistence between livestock and large carnivores. From late 2009 until November 2013, 11 Spanish LAGs worked in this cooperation project, which became a transnational one in 2011 when the Portuguese LAG was incorporated and the Estonian LAG being the latest joining in 2012.

During two years, as LAGs using the LEADER approach, we organised sectoral work sessions with farmers in each of the territories. Finally, each territory was designated two ranchers attacked by wolves to participate in a transnational seminar in October 2011. The ranchers worked together with representatives of agricultural organisations and made suggestions for implementing coexistence measures into the First and Second Pillar of the CAP 2014–2020.

In 2012 and 2013, LAGs started to work on intersectoral meetings with local governments, conservation organisations, agricultural corporations, hunter associations, and tourism entrepreneurs to find new sustainable harvests in these territories where the wolf and large carnivores have become jewels of biodiversity.

Since 2010, LAGs have worked on environmental education and edited a lot of promotional material in Spanish and English available on the project website.



Claire Pencak
& Kate Foster
Tabula Rasa, UK

Working the Tweed

LEADER REGION

**Scottish Borders,
Scotland, UK**

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Tabula Rasa

PROJECT PARTNERS

**Tweed Forum, Southern
Upland Partnership**

TOTAL COST

ca. 61,560 EUR

LEADER FUNDING

ca. 12,738 EUR

PROJECT DURATION

July 2013–March 2014

CONTACT DETAILS

**Claire Pençak, info@
workingthetweed.
co.uk, www.working-
thetweed.co.uk**

Working the Tweed is a catchment-wide project delivered by the arts organisation Tabula Rasa in partnership with Tweed Forum and Southern Uplands Partnership. Four lead artists are exploring contemporary river culture to bring to the surface some of the less known worlds, maps, voices and languages of the Tweed. The project raises awareness of the river ways, helps us re-imagine our relationship to the rivers and considers our environmental responsibility towards them. The themes of the Tweed Catchment Management Plan provided the structure for a series of Riverside Meetings and Catchment Conversations. We engaged with other 2,000 people through Knowing Your River events, a project exhibition, Tweed Sessions celebrating the tunes of the river, and listening projects. The project inspired reflections on the ecological indicator species via drawing and performance, and documented work on the rivers through interviews and an online sound map. Social media and a website have created a wider community for the project nationally and internationally. We hope to continue the work through individual creative projects and community involvement. The project has been summarised as a DVD, with reflections about how collaborative arts practice can contribute to shaping the future of the catchment.

Erika Kovačič

LAG for the rural
development of the land
between Sneznik
and Nanos, Slovenia



The seasonal lakes of Pivka

LEADER REGION

Slovenia

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Municipality of Pivka

TOTAL COST

141,242.16 EUR

LEADER FUNDING

5,945.87 EUR

PROJECT DURATION

March 2012–September

2013 (ecomuseum)

March 2012–May 2014

(nature park)

CONTACT DETAILS

Erika Kovacic,

erika.kovacic@pivka.si

The seventeen seasonal lakes of Pivka and the river Pivka give the Pivka valley its beautiful appearance and rich biodiversity. Some of the most charismatic species live here: everything from the bear, wolf and lynx to the small endemic shrimp. Both the river Pivka and the lakes are dry for most of the year and are only full when there is heavy rainfall, mostly during spring and autumn. This is a time when many karst springs come to life and start to supply water to the riverbed of the river Pivka and the basins of the lakes of Pivka.

Due to this phenomenon it is advisable to visit this ever-changing world more than once and in different seasons as you will be able to get acquainted with all its various unique appearances. Is the lake full of water? Or is the lake bottom covered with a colourful blossoming carpet? Has the farmer mowed the grass? Will the corncrake sing?

The unspoiled area invites visitors to stroll around the lakes. But before that, they can stop at the Ecomuseum of the Seasonal Lakes of Pivka where they can see and hear the story of the karst that intertwines the stories of water, stone, and man.

Biodiversity & LEADER—now it's your turn!

Tips for the realisation of biodiversity-promoting LEADER projects

Michael Proschek-Hauptmann
Umweltdachverband,
Austria

Within the framework of the project »Biodiversity & LEADER« recommendations for a better integration of biodiversity issues into the new LEADER programme directed at the Austrian ministry and at the responsible federal authorities were worked out. Likewise, the following tips were deduced for Local Actions Groups (LAGs) of LEADER regions and for regional players working in the fields of biodiversity and cultural landscapes, respectively.

How can I, as a LAG manager, integrate biodiversity into my LEADER project?

Consider that it is of great importance to encourage cooperation between LAGs and biodiversity and cultural landscape players:

- » Offer local conservation players your support as a project partner. Establish your LAG as a contact point, also for biodiversity matters.
- » Inform conservation players about the conditions and the potentials of LEADER.
- » Provide regional LAG and conservation players with opportunities for exchange during the planning process of the Local Development Strategy (LDS).

Strengthening the topic of biodiversity within the Local Development Strategy is essential for the successful integration of biodiversity into LEADER:

- » Decide on one biodiversity representative in your LAG who makes sure that the topic is put to practice and does not lose weight during the implementation of the LDS.
- » Determine the promotion of biodiversity as a positive criterion in the project selection process at LAG level; create an incentive through bonus points.
- » Actively approach conservation players, integrate them in your LDS preparation and together, work out biodiversity objectives for your region.

How can I, as a biodiversity and cultural landscape player, contribute to the implementation of biodiversity-promoting LEADER projects in my region?

Consider that ensuring the connection of all relevant regional players is essential concerning the promotion of biodiversity through LEADER:

- » Analyse your environment: Who are relevant LEADER/LAG contact persons in your region? Approach them actively and get in touch.
- » Enable exchange throughout all groups (agriculture, forestry, tourism, nature conservation, etc.) and make sure that everybody communicates their needs.
- » Offer advice towards your colleagues: As a LEADER-experienced conservation player, provide inputs to interested LEADER beginners, especially to non-institutionalised colleagues.

To raise the importance of biodiversity in your LEADER region, creating awareness for the regional natural and cultural landscapes is of great significance:

- » Share your know-how about the importance and the chances of biodiversity for the quality of life and economic development with rural and regional development players.
- » Appoint local biodiversity ambassadors who are responsible for the clarification of questions. Be available to outsiders with your qualified advice.
- » Strengthen the regional exchange of experiences at various events and disseminate best-practice examples.

The entire document including the outcome of the project »Biodiversity & LEADER« and the detailed recommendations is available for download (in German only) at:

www.umweltdachverband.at/themen/naturschutz/biodiversitaet/projekte



How to integrate biodiversity into the LEADER planning process?

Panel & plenary discussion

Moderator: Robert Lukesch,
ÖAR Regionalberatung

LEADER—a promising approach with a wide range of possibilities ...

LEADER offers a wide range of possibilities for the conservation of biodiversity. Among other benefits it can fulfil the function of a communication platform on a local scale. LEADER projects can bring new perspectives or even break down divisions between communities, reported Suzana Zupančič from the LAG »Od Pohorja do Bohorja« in Slovenia. In most LEADER projects the local population is involved, which is seen as a very important point by the local managers Andreas Zeman from the LAG »Nordburgenland Plus« in Austria and Roeland Cappon from the LAG »Flemish Ardennes« in Belgium. Andreas Zeman further saw the implementation of small projects as inspiring, as well as the combination of old and new technologies in the management practice.

... yet linked to numerous challenges

However, implementing LEADER into the conservation of biodiversity can be quite challenging as well. The involvement of many different stakeholders, the difficulties of finding initial financing as well as carrying on a project once funding has stopped or setting up follow-up projects, respectively, were described as major obstacles by the experts. Complex bureaucracy and finding co-funding were also noted as

discouraging points. Roeland Cappon underlined the complexity of bottom-up processes and a contra-productive effect of projects that are too narrowly focused around one topic in a way that makes innovation difficult.

Volunteers—a crucial resource for the implementation of LEADER

Many LEADER projects and their continuation beyond the financing period would not be possible without voluntary work. But maintaining volunteers and relying on volunteer work is not always easy, explained Suzana Zupančič. To maintain the volunteers, communication is essential. According to Magnus Wessel from BUND Germany, voluntary work can start up biodiversity conservation initiatives; yet to protect nature and to maintain a network of volunteers in the long run, professional help is required. Michael Proschek-Hauptmann from Umweltdachverband, Austria, confirmed the crucial role of voluntary work in nature conservation and the need for investing public money to coordinate it. To build your own business model within the framework of a LEADER Project can help to guarantee both: continuity of the initiative and integration of voluntary work.

Successful networking—successful biodiversity & LEADER projects

The degree of networking success between nature conservationists and rural developers is variable. Bérangère Bougué from the French LAG »Pays de Sources & Vallées« experienced well-functioning communication work thanks to the small number of (merely technical and scientific) partners. In some Slovenian LEADER regions on the other hand, networking is not working at all because LAGs do not include conservation players; there, conservation projects are usually financed by LIFE and not by LEADER. The lack of confidence in one's partners (e.g. in the form of reluctance to share

one's projects or project ideas due to competitive thinking) is another problem. According to Paul Haustraete, in Belgium, a polarisation problem can be identified caused by the high population density and a consequent lack of space in the country with the result of farmers, nature conservationists and industry fighting over every single square meter—conditions that make it difficult to work together. Magnus Wessel noted a general lack of tradition of cooperation coming from the gap between those players following the sustainable way and those on the competitive track. In this context it has to be clear that LEADER is not about maximising the profits of a region, it is about rural development.

Participative approach: a recipe for the success of LEADER

According to Luis Fidschuster from the Austrian National Rural Network, the quality of integration of conservation players in LEADER depends on the composition of the Local Action Groups. In Austria, implementation differs from region to region. With respect to the ongoing application process for the upcoming new period, only little time is left (deadline: 31st October 2014) to work out a local development strategy, which makes a good participation process rather challenging. Furthermore in the former period 2007–2013 at least in some Austrian federal states bottom-up processes were partly counteracted by top down enacted measures. Therefore it could be a challenge for some LEADER groups to motivate players to involve themselves in the ongoing strategy process. In the Austrian region of Burgenland, nature conservation players are part of the LEADER board and involved in the establishment of the new local strategy. Since the last period, a nature protection measure with a dedicated budget is part of the strategy, highlighted LEADER manager Andreas Zeman. Axel Mitzka from the Naturpark Dübener Heide

in Germany reports of good experiences in the German nature park, where two regions have an element of nature in common and cooperate with an NGO. Two new aspects in the new LEADER »programme« should help foster participation in the next funding period: The role of the LAG will be improved with the regional authorities losing their influence on the project selection and the local development strategy will gain importance which should facilitate the integration of biodiversity-related issues into LEADER projects.

Bottom-up or top-down?

Both bottom-up and top-down approaches should be used in sustainable nature conservation. As Magnus Wessel clarified, LEADER does not offer solutions to every single problem. According to Michael Proschek-Hauptmann, the success of biodiversity projects also depends on the structure of the region itself. Regions of poor economic status, peripheral or poorly populated regions have a good chance of gaining higher value with LEADER. »As biodiversity players, we stick to the top-down approach because many environmental problems cannot be solved bottom-up. However, a learning process that bottom-up can also take us closer to long-lasting biodiversity targets has begun,« said Michael Proschek-Hauptmann, general director of the Austrian Umweltdachverband.

Conservationists, get involved in LEADER now!

Not only is it important for conservation players to take influence in the strategy, it is also crucial to become part of the LEADER structure, said Luis Fidschuster from ÖAR Regionalberatung GmbH. A new LEADER regulation is that 51 % of every LAG body's members have to be civil society representatives. It may often be difficult to find these private partners and many LAGs would be more than happy to welcome NGO conservation players to become members of a LEADER board. So, don't hesitate to contact your LAG now!

Final messages from the podium

SUZANA ZUPANČIČ:

»LEADER gives us the opportunity to link theory with practice.«

ROELAND CAPPON:

»LAGs can act as platforms and bring together different actors to work in innovative projects.«

ANDREAS ZEMAN:

»I am looking forward to the next steps to elaborate our strategy: coming workshops and strategy meetings.«

MAGNUS WESSEL:

»Less paper, more people—be brave and get involved!«

LUIS FIDLSCHESTER:

»Small projects are going to be funded more easily—go ahead!«

MICHAEL PROSCHEK-HAUPTMANN:

»Get in contact with your LEADER manager, tell them about your project ideas to protect biodiversity. Use LEADER to develop your rural area!«

Contact information

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