

Agriculture and farming related activities: their actors and position in the LEADER approach

Zemědělství a související činnosti: jejich úloha a místo v přístupu LEADER

M. LOŠŤÁK, H. HUDEČKOVÁ

Faculty of Economics and Management, Czech University of Life Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic

Abstract: The paper aims to fill in the gap existing in the Czech Republic as for the research about the nature and impacts of the LEADER approach. The focus of the paper is to show how farming and agriculture related activities are addressed under the LEADER scheme in the European context and how does the LEADER influence the position of farming and related industries in rural development. Such outline is considered as the starting point for in-depth research in the LEADER in Czechia. To achieve such goal, the paper analyses the reports about the corresponding projects published in the Leader+ Magazine (edited by Leader+ Observatory). The analysis documents that LEADER supports collaborative actions. It is obvious that the farmers mostly participate in projects aiming at adding value to local product but they are not too active in improvement of the quality of life in rural areas. It opens the room for non-farming actors for their higher participation in rural development and thus it supports the reformulation of Common Agricultural Policy.

Key words: LEADER, farmers, farming related activities, rural development projects

Abstrakt: Článek usiluje o zaplnění mezery, která v ČR existuje, pokud jde o výzkum týkající se podstaty a dopadů přístupu LEADER. Záměrem je ukázat, jak jsou zemědělství a s ním další související aktivity osloveny v kontextu evropského LEADERu a jak LEADER ovlivňuje postavení zemědělství a navazujících odvětví v rozvoji venkova. Takový přehled je považován za počáteční podklad pro další výzkum přístupu LEADER v ČR. Aby mohlo být tohoto cíle dosaženo, jsou analyzovány zprávy o odpovídajících projektech, které jsou publikovány v časopise Leader+ Magazine. Analýza ukazuje, že LEADER podporuje aktivity směřující ke spolupráci. Je zřejmé, že zemědělci se nejvíce účastní projektů majících za cíl přidání hodnoty místním produktům. Zemědělci však nejsou příliš aktivní v projektech zaměřených na zlepšování kvality života na venkově. Právě tato oblast potom otevírá prostor pro nezemědělské aktéry, aby se mohli více zapojit do rozvoje venkova, a tak přispět k reformulaci společné zemědělské politiky.

Klíčová slova: LEADER, zemědělci, odvětví navazující na zemědělství, projekty rozvoje venkova

Albeit the LEADER type approach is considered to be “the essence of the EU rural development policy” (Kováč 2000: 182), this topic has not been addressed in details in the Czech journal Agricultural Economics (Zemědělská ekonomika) yet. On the other hand, the other peer review international journals with similar orientation like Agricultural Economics (Zemědělská ekonomika) are dealing with the LEADER approach in a more intensive way. If looking only two years back, the journal Agricultural Economics (published by the Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the International

Association of Agricultural Economists) addressed the LEADER in the paper of Skuras, Petrou and Clark (2006) who demonstrate how the LEADER focuses on the role of tourism considered in Greece as the key strategy in integrated territorial development. Also another journal – Sociologia Ruralis (published by the Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the European Society for Rural Sociology) – deals in details with the LEADER within last two years. For instance High and Nemes (2007) show how to cope with the ambiguity in the LEADER approach. On one side the

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LEADER calls for heterogeneity and participation but, on the other side, its evaluation is centralized and controlled by the delivery organizations. That is why the authors suggest to develop a hybrid form of evaluation that accommodates both endogenous and exogenous values. Furthermore, two papers within last year are published in the Journal of Rural Studies (published by Elsevier) which also focus on the LEADER. The first one (Franks, Mc Gloin 2007) considers the role of LEADER in influencing the collective action (documented in the case of Environmental Cooperatives in the Netherlands which join farmers and non-farmers). The second paper (Râmniceanu, Ackrill 2007) identified that prior to 2007, the LEADER was treated differently in the old EU member states (EU 15) and in the new EU member states.

The overview of the discussions about the LEADER in the European context which are presented in peer review journals highlights the Czech discourse still misses detailed analysis of the LEADER approach in rural development, including its theoretical conceptualization and the assessment of this policy measure. Such analysis would contribute to better understanding of the situation in the countryside whose frames have been already provided by the papers about rural areas published in Agricultural Economics /Zemědělská ekonomika/ (just to mention the recent time March 2007–February 2008: see the papers of Svatošová 2008; Buchta, Štulrajter 2007; Hubík 2007; Hudečková, Ševčíková 2007; Majerová 2007; Maříková 2007; Moravčíková et al. 2007; Ryglová 2007; Šimková 2007). This short summary of the recent papers on the Czech countryside suggests that there exist enough material and data which can be utilized and analyzed to deal with the situation in the LEADER approach in the Czech Republic not only in the plain descriptive way but also in the theoretical and scientific perspective.

Because the LEADER has already undergone several important changes to become finally one of the axes in the EU national Rural Development Programmes, it seems to be the challenge to start to fill in the existing gap in the Czech milieu. The authors of this paper are aware that the task cannot be done in one paper but the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach¹ is needed. It is why the research grant funded by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic (Economics of resources of the Czech agriculture and their efficient use in the frame of multifunctional agri-food systems – *Ekonomika zdrojů českého zemědělství a jejich efektivní využívání v rámci multifunkčních zemědělskopotravinářských systémů*) which involves social scientists from various disciplines can be considered as the right platform to provide the needed knowledge about the LEADER, including recommendations for its future development in the Czech context in accordance with EU trends. Therefore this paper aims to be the starting point in the analysis of how the LEADER approach works, and what are its outcomes, results and impacts for the rural areas in particular, and for the society in general.

It is obvious that the LEADER approach aims to join together (to link) the actions of those involved in rural economy as its acronym stands for². Therefore it is the challenge for social sciences to analyze this approach in rural development because social sciences, including economics, sociology or political science (Giddens 1989), are the sciences whose nature is to deal with the activities of people (and rural development combined with the LEADER approach is the activity). It means that the reason why social sciences with their interest in activities³ of people are considered as starting point for the analysis of the LEADER is shaped by the main features (elements) of the LEADER as they are derived from the Council regulation (EC) 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the

¹ While interdisciplinary approach means overlapping of many disciplines within certain cross-section area (various disciplines are melted in certain point which results in new discipline using and developing the knowledge from the other already existing disciplines), multidisciplinary approach means many disciplines existing in parallel mode (various disciplines retain their independence but when working together on the issue, they provide new views but do not build a new discipline).

² The French acronym for LEADER: "Liaison (Liens) Entre Actions Développement de l'Économie Rurale" can be translated as the links between rural economy and development activities.

³ It is probably the interest in activities which distinguishes social sciences from the interest in "social" as it is coined in natural sciences. Although natural sciences (like biology) address also the issues of social (e.g. Tölü, Savas, Pala, Thomsen 2007), they consider only a very narrow sense of this term (like related only to social hierarchy and its impacts on the behaviour of animals). Natural sciences do not question how (in what activities) was, for example, the hierarchy constructed. It is because natural sciences do not address such fundamental questions for understating the term social (rewording Berger 1991) like what are the activities the actors are involved in, what relations do emerge from their activities, how are the relations organized in the institutions, and what are the motives of actions. Therefore, although natural sciences speak about social, its understanding is narrow compared to human world.

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (The Council of European Union 2005):

- LEADER is the tool which initializes the grass root (bottom up) development activities (i.e. endogenous feature of the LEADER, because the LEADER is typical by “bottom-up approach with a decision-making power for local action groups concerning the elaboration and implementation of local development strategies”);
- LEADER supports the implementation of the high quality integrated strategies (multidisciplinary and the interdisciplinary approach which includes social, agricultural, technical or life sciences and activities) for the sustainable development of rural areas on national and international level (i.e. integrated feature of the LEADER because the LEADER is typical by “multi-sectoral design and implementation of the strategy based on the interaction between actors and projects of different sectors of the local economy”);
- LEADER aims to consider long-term and sustainable potentials of rural areas (i.e. sustainable feature of the LEADER because the LEADER is typical by “area-based local development strategies intended for well-identified subregional rural territories” when these strategies are to be economically profitable, environmentally friendly and socially acceptable);
- LEADER emphasizes (more than other the EU programmes and initiatives) the role of social networks which facilitate the exchange of experience, knowledge, innovations, the LEADER helps to enrich participating people, to train the skills to cooperate and to create local partnerships of various actors who are involved in the sphere of economy, culture or social issues as private and public or NGOs’ type organizations or individuals (i.e. intangible forms of capital /social, human, cultural capitals/ are other important features of the LEADER because the LEADER is typical by “local public-private partnerships”; “implementation of innovative approaches”; “implementation of cooperation projects” and “networking of local partnerships”).

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER AND THE METHODS USED

As the introduction has already pointed out, the paper was written with the support of the grant funded by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. One of the grant working packages addresses agriculture in the EU and its position in the EU economy. Because the LEADER is about

bringing together various actors involved in rural economy which includes agriculture and the growing number of non-farming rural sectors the paper will continue against this background. It will show how the LEADER contributes to the development of agriculture in the EU and how the LEADER influences the position of agriculture (and rural areas in general) in European economy. To achieve this general goal the paper will highlight (the paper’s concrete goals are the analysis of):

1. the tendencies in the development of implementation of the LEADER approach during its three phases (EU Community Initiatives LEADER I, LEADER II, LEADER+), including the thoughts about future prospects;
2. the contemporary implementation of the LEADER with the emphasis on the strategic themes in which the actors from farming, processing agricultural products, forestry and forestry related products processing participate through the projects funded under the LEADER scheme;
3. the cases addressed in selected LEADER supported projects (such projects framed by the emphasis mentioned in the previous point /2/ in 2005–2007 in EU).

To achieve the outlined goals, the specific document “Leader+ Magazine” was studied. This magazine has been being published since 2005 three times a year. Its aim is to improve the access of the public to the data concerning the LEADER+ Community Initiative. The magazine is published by the “Leader+ Observatory” which is established by the EU Commission. The reason for using this kind of information source is to work with the representative information for the analysis. It is because the magazine covers all the EU countries and shows the best practices and projects funded by the LEADER which deal with agriculture (or farming related industries). It will help to document what is the position of agriculture in contemporary rural economy in particular and in the EU economy in general (e.g. what is considered to be the best practices of farming under the LEADER scheme and to think, based on such background, about the future development of the support for the agriculture since the support should reflect the public expectations from farming; such expectation are embedded in LEADER best practices due to the nature of this programme).

The research is based on the content analysis of the information about the projects which were published in the “Leader+ Magazine” (more about content analysis see in Bailey 1987; Disman 1969, 1993; Neuendorf 2001). The papers from the magazine which

deal with the projects funded under the LEADER+ scheme, where the farmers and the related processors are direct actors involved in the local action groups (they are the groups linking various rural actors engaged in rural economy) were selected for the analysis. The survey of the total number of the projects presented in the "Leader+ Magazine" during 2005–2007 is divided according to the strategic themes (the themes are described in the next section of this paper). The survey provides the information about the ratio in which the agricultural and related actors are involved in the LEADER+ projects according to particular strategic themes. In this way the position of farming and related industries in rural development can be outlined.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Rural development (see Cork Declaration from 1996 or Salzburg Declaration from 2003) is grounded in the belief that the vital and vibrant future of the countryside is an interest of all people regardless whether they are rural or urban. It is because the countryside presents a very unique space with peculiar cultural, economic, environmental and social structure. It makes the countryside to be the real wealth of the national states. Although some politicians and their think-tanks might disagree about this specificity (see for example Diskusní fórum Liberálního institutu o zemědělství 1998) and therefore they doubt any need for the specific approach to the countryside, there are many studies based on empirical research grounded in theories showing the countryside with agriculture (having today multifunctional shape) is a unique space within national societies or in the global space (e.g. Newby 1982; Lošťák 1997; Svatoš 2008). Nevertheless, both groups agree the countryside suffers from, for example, difficult access to the public services, lower offer of alternative jobs, indicates lower incomes and not favourable age structure (ageing of rural population). It is also interesting that many problems faced in the countryside today remain the same as they were pointed out about 100 years ago in the report of the Commission for Country Life in the USA: the insufficient technical knowledge, the lack of training for country life in the schools, withholding of great tracks of the arable land for speculations, the inadequate highways, soil depletion, the lack of good leadership, the inadequacy of credit, the lack of public health services etc. (c.f. Nelson 1969).

However, the countryside is not the space which is only full of the problems generated there. There are also new elements which the countryside can offer.

That is why the rural areas face new challenges reflecting new demands of the contemporary population. The new demands to the countryside are usually considered as the result of the new understanding of rural areas (see e.g. Librová 1994; Librová 2003; Noe et al. 2008) reflecting growing importance of the quality of life. The new demands concern not only food security and food quality but also there are growing social demands on the countryside combined with new economic challenges of the 21st century. It is the countryside which can provide such important public good as "quietness" so lacking in the overcrowded societies. These new demands concern environment, landscape but also social and cultural issues provided by rural areas. That is why these demands reflect the multifunctional nature of agriculture.

The issues outlined above resulted in the need for the new shape of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The changes in the CAP also necessitate the changes in understanding new paradigms of rural development and necessitate the shift in the practice of the rural development (like the emerging support of the LEADER approach). The newly formed CAP should therefore (Lowe 2000; European Communities 2004):

- (1) help rural economic actors to acquire sufficient capacities and skills how to efficiently cope with changing economic conditions in the period of still more liberalized global trade which effects the farm producers in an uneven way (the function of food production of the CAP related to its first pillar and income support for farmers);
- (2) help to make rural development really sustainable, especially as for the environment which is considered to be one of the main assets in the countryside (environmental function of the CAP related to its second pillar and the agri-environmental measures);
- (3) help the development policy to be more tailored to the localities of its implementation; it is the way how rural development policy and its concrete outcomes, results and impacts will better meet and will match various needs and conditions of different rural areas (rural function of the CAP related to its second pillar and rural territory instead of rural economic sectors).

The newly formulated CAP reflects the results and impacts of more than one hundred fifty years lasting modernization which brought on the scene the processes of urbanization, industrialization, secularization and bureaucratization. These processes enabled the transformation from the traditional to modern society and resulted in concentration of capital and

labour in urban areas. As the consequence rural areas were more and more marginalized in economic, social, cultural, political or population terms. Such situation resulted in growing cumulative rural-urban disparities. The cumulative disparities (not the disperse inequalities⁴ which should be supported) have the potential to create serious social and economic problems whose solution is possible with the help of institutional interventions projected into development policies.

The cumulative disparities between rural and urban areas were the reasons why within the public, political and academic discourses the thoughts about how to change the negative trends in the countryside compared to urban areas started to be considered more intensively. After the World War II (during 1950–1975), in the period dominated by the Keynesian approach in regional policy (support of investments to problematic regions, “labour to workers” instead neo-liberal “workers to labour”), the main theories in rural development become the theories of regional imbalance. One of such theories is also the growth pole theory (Blažek, Uhlíř 2002). It was the growth pole theory which influenced the post-war rural development (Lowe 2000). It was the first theoretical background of the modern approach to rural development which was later labeled as the model of exogenous rural development. Phillip Lowe (2000) describes this model through its **(1) key principle** which was the economy of scale and concentration of production. This principle corresponded with modernist ideas of concentration and centralization as the tools to get rid of the features of the isolated and scattered traditional societies. Because of the centralization and concentration, **(2) the dynamic force** of this model was in growing urban poles. The urban areas needed resources (food and labour) for their growth and rural areas could provide them. To provide them in an efficient way, there was necessary to develop the countryside as well. Otherwise the rural areas would not be able to comply with the urban demands. Therefore, urban centers were considered to be poles “emitting” the development to the countryside through the tools like new machinery or new practices for farming. **(3) The function of the rural areas** in the exogenous model of development was the production of food for the expanding urban areas. The countryside

thus started to copy the situation which was in the Latin American context described by A. G. Frank in his dependency theory (c.f. Giddens 1989). That is also why Newby and Buttel (1980) refer to the theory of internal dependency as one of the theoretical insights explaining the rural-urban inequalities. **(4) The main problem** which was tackled by the exogenous model of rural development was post-war low agricultural productivity and the marginality of rural areas. That is why **(5) the main orientation** of rural development was aimed at the industrialization of agriculture and at the support of labour mobility between urban and rural areas in favour of concentration of population and capital in cities. Such orientation mirrors the modernist ideas behind the exogenous model of rural development. It was modernization that hampered the position of the countryside within national society, made the countryside to be more vulnerable to the omnipresent changes created by modern world, but it was also the modernization which was seen as the possible panacea for rural problems it generated. The exogenous model of development supports measures enabling the transfer of progressive technologies and practices from dynamic sectors and settlements (growing poles). Such transfer should result in overcoming the peripherality (marginality) of rural areas because it is the way how they will be linked with the main poles of economic and social modernization.

Looking back, the exogenous model of rural development which was implemented both in Western and Eastern Europe (with the modifications and diverse outcomes due to national settings and governing ideologies) was successful (especially in Western Europe) in the terms of forming the post-war agriculture to be more efficient, industrialized, and providing necessary foods in large quantity. In Eastern Europe, this model was partly successful especially in the former East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria. i.e. in the countries which in the 1960s and later on were not characterized by the Stalinist form of collectivization or which did not fossilize the farming structure in the 1940s like in Poland and Yugoslavia due to the failed collectivization (Swain 1998). However, despite the success, starting from the late 1970s it was more and more obvious (especially in Western Europe), that this model created also the problems which were not foreseen in the past.

⁴ The understanding of cumulative and disperse disparities/inequalities is derived from Hampl (Hampl 1999) combined with the ideas of Blažek and Uhlíř (Blažek, Uhlíř 2002). When the differences between rural and urban areas are losing their function to stimulate sustainable development and as such they result in negative social, economic and political consequences we should refer to cumulative disparities/inequalities (the differences among the regions are multiplied and extremely distinctive one from another). The differences which are desirable are called disperse disparities/inequalities (they balance extreme inequalities and enable the origin of the variances).

On the theoretical level, the roots of the problems were grounded in such societal changes which are labeled as the transition to post-modern (post-industrial, post-productivity) society. This transition signalizes the modernization paradigm achieving its ideal and practical limits (Van der Ploeg et al. 2002). It can be no more the leading paradigm in the rural development. Therefore, it should be replaced by the postmodern paradigm. The common denominator of postmodernism is multidimensionality, diversity (that is why agriculture is referred to be multifunctional). Instead of homophony (one way rationalist projection of the world with only one "True"; one unmistakable reasoning and the existence of "Great Narrations"), postmodernism is typified by polyphony (non existence of the only one everlasting and omnipresent "True"; the existence of ambiguity, uncertainty; many equal parallel reasoning).

From the point of view of the practical issues, the problems of modernist agricultural and rural development emerged firstly on domestic market. The food saturation due to the industrialized post-war farming resulted in West European surpluses of food staples (well known pictures of "lakes of milk, rivers of wine and hills of butter"). The agricultural production also started to face ecological limits because of the intensification of farming. The effects of the pollution which intensive farming brought started to be more visible and detectable because, for example, the more the fields were fertilized, the more organic elements remained in the environment. The more farming animals were produced in one place, for instance, the more nitrates were located in this place. Also the urban sector proved to be not able to absorb all rural population for which the industrialized agriculture with labour saving technologies could not provide new jobs (Evropská společnost 2005).

Phillip Lowe (Lowe 2000) therefore indicates 4 points of problems and criticism of the exogenous rural development. They might be called as 4 D:

- Dependant development (the success of exogenous model of rural development depended on the continual flow of subsidies and on the external political decision making).
- Distorted development (aiming at one sector /farming/, selected settlements /communities with large-scale and intensive farming/; did not consider non-economic aspects of rural life).
- Destructive development (did not support cultural and environmental peculiarities of rural areas).
- Dictating development (was created and brought into the life by external experts).

The problems brought by the exogenous model of rural development resulted in the search for a new paradigm of rural development, as has been already pointed out. Such paradigm should reflect the new societal discourse which was labeled as postmodernism. Under such circumstances, supported by the achievements and inspirations from some European regions which demonstrated the successful development without great amount of external subsidies, the model of endogenous development started to be discussed. This model wants the actors not to be "jailed" in the external (exogenous) structures but wants to demonstrate the role of the actors in the development. They are not "jailed" in external structures but they also create these structures to be able to act. That is why the endogenous model of rural development reflects the contemporary dominant institutional discourse in development policy (Blažek, Uhlíř 2002) related to the structuration theory of A. Giddens (1984, 1993).

The endogenous model of rural development is the development echoing the Schumacher's ideas (2000) presented in his book "Small is Beautiful" that the development does not start with the goods but with educated, well organized and disciplined people. Without them the resources become only latent, potential, shortly speaking not-used. According to Schumacher, it was possible to see the role of invisible or intangible factors (reworded it means such factors which are today conceptualized in the terms of human, cultural, intellectual, organizational or social capitals⁵) after the World War II. These factors are always at disposals in the locality because they are related to the people who live in the locality.

It is also very important that local people can get certain economic control over economic activities, services, energy production and distribution existing in the locality. It is the way how local communities can deal with the negative impacts of globalization which is considered as the climax of modernization transcending this phase of societal development into postmodern society sometime described as liquid modernity (Bauman 2002) because of having no stable and robust shape.

The integrated endogenous rural development is erected upon three pillars (Ray 2000) which makes this development a sort of postmodern laboratory rooted in the postmodern multidisciplinary of various sciences and everyday life. The three typical features of the integrated endogenous rural development are:

- (1) **Rural development activities are framed in territorial (not into sector) frames.** The size of the

⁵ For detailed conceptualization of these capitals see for instance Svendsen and Sørensen (Svendsen, Sørensen 2007).

territory is smaller than the national state. The orientation to the territory is because the activities in the sector frames could be influenced by the “absentee others” (the term coined by Zygmud Bauman 1999) who do not necessary need to feel the interest in the development of the particular area which is only one of their many stops in the mobile globalized world. The deterritorialized approach was typical for the exogenous model of development. On the other hand, the endogenous model of rural development embeds the development activities into the localities (territory) where various people live their everyday lives. The localization and territorialization necessary make the endogenous rural development of integrated nature. It is because when looking into territories, there are not only specific activities (such as farming in the exogenous model) but there is the whole portfolio of activities and human lives.

- (2) **Economic and other activities should aim to multiply and to retain the effects from these activities within the territory (within the locality).** It is because local resources (material and immaterial; natural, physical, human, cultural and social) are used and valorized there by local actors. It gives the possibility to control own resources and to manage their use. The absence of these possibilities, the situation when the profits are taken from the localities is pointed out by Newby and Buttel (Newby, Buttel 1980) as one of the main reasons of the rural areas’ backwardness. The actors who are not embedded in the local social networks do not necessary need to contribute to the entire life of the community they just operate in.
- (3) **The orientation towards the capacities, skills, cooperation and perspectives of local people.** The basic condition of the endogenous rural development is the engagement of local people in proposing and implementing development activities. This is the nature of the LEADER approach. Through such an involvement people acquire cultural, environmental and community values. This pillar is closely linked with the intangible and invisible forms of capitals. That is why the endogenous model of rural development is characterized as being built on these capitals (especially social capital) and helps significantly to include various groups of population into development activities. In this way, it helps to eliminate social exclusion. It is social exclusion which is serious social problem and limits the development potentials.

The model of endogenous rural development indicates significant traits of the postmodern paradigm.

It wants to link and to identify both the stakeholders and the shareholders with development activities. Its aim is not to prepare the development projects outside the locality of their implementation by specially legitimized experts and to implement them with the help of external structures. Contrary, the aim is to include people who are concerned into preparing, implementing, managing and monitoring the projects. This is also the aim of the LEADER approach. The rural development thus becomes the result of the democratic agreements and the compromises of various people and social groups. When the agreements of many people are concerned, there is necessary to have a sufficient stock of social capital because it is the tool to coordinate the activities in post-modern societies (Bělohradský 2002). It also means to take over the responsibility of all participating actors for the development of rural areas.

As P. Lowe (Lowe 2000) writes (and what is obvious from the paragraphs above), **(1) the key principle** of the integrated endogenous rural development is the use and valorization of various potentials of certain areas. It means this model is based on the specific local resources (natural, physical, human, social, cultural etc.) typical for the particular rural area. **(2) The dynamic force** of this model is the local initiative and entrepreneurship. It indicates the actors are not only “inert and inept – a playthings of forces larger than themselves” as Giddens (Giddens 1993: 4) writes when describing why to work with structuration theory, but they are also active actors changing the structures to act in a more efficient way. **(3) The function of rural areas** is diversified economy of services and productions. It is interesting that the former system of farming prior to 1989 focused Czechoslovakia on such off-farm diversification because it brought more incomes (and wealth) into the countryside (Swain 1998). Today such diversification is the way how to better protect rural areas from the risks brought by globalization. **(4) The main problem** to which the endogenous rural development is targeted to is the limited capacity and skills of rural areas and rural population to participate in economic and development activities. That is why **(5) the main orientation** of rural development aims at the so-called capacity building through supporting skills of local inhabitants, development of institutions and making better rural infrastructure.

Since the endogenous model of rural development is strongly related with the LEADER approach, the next text will highlight this approach in details to show its role in the rural development based on practical examples from the EU.

THE BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF LEADER IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Community Initiative LEADER was established⁶ in 1991 in the frames of the first reform of the EU structural funds. It is now known as the LEADER I Community Initiative. It pursued two mutually related intentions: (1) to support the integrated development of rural areas as the bottom-up approach through local action groups – LAGs (considered as the necessary institutional fundament of rural development) and (2) to increase the development potential of rural areas (in those times related to Objectives 1 and 5b of the EU) through the support of local initiatives (represented by LAGs). In 1994, the LEADER II started its work. It was also based on the creation of local action groups (LAGs) aiming at the same EU Objectives as the LEADER I extended into the Objective 6. LEADER II compared to LEADER I was more extended, it emphasized cooperation, innovations and the embeddedness in the networks including international collaboration in higher degree compared to its precursor.

In 2000, the LEADER+ was set up according to Commission notice to member states on 14 April 2000 laying down guidelines for the Community initiative for rural development (Leader+). It focused on three actions (Action 1 = support for integrated territorial rural development strategies of a pilot nature based on the bottom-up approach and horizontal partnership; Action 2 = support for interterritorial and transnational cooperation; Action 3 = the networking of all rural areas in the Community, whether or not beneficiaries under the LEADER+, and all rural development actors) and four priority themes (1 – the use of new know-how and new technologies to make the products and services of rural areas more competitive; 2 – improving the quality of life

in rural areas; 3 – adding value to local products, in particular by facilitating access to markets for small production units via collective actions; 4 – making the best use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value of sites of the Community interest selected under the Natura 2000). The additional priority orientation was the focus on target groups of women and youth and also the international cooperation. LEADER+ also emphasized the investments into social capital⁷ which is considered to be the key element in creating the social networks as the tools for disseminating the innovations, for their transfer into rural areas, and for the territorial cooperation. That is why LEADER is considered the social capital based Community Initiative (Sucksmith 2000). LEADER+ also accepted the new challenges which emerged as the result of the EU accession of the new member states after 2004. It also responded to the Lisbon strategy (adopted in 2000) and suggested to integrate the approach used in LEADER initiative into the new rural development policy in 2007–2013. It has already happened since in 2007–2013 LEADER (The Council of the European Union 2005) is one of four axes to be funded from European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) when implementing rural development projects. LEADER as the axis is transverse through the other three axes (axis 1 = Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector; axis 2 = Improving the environment and the countryside; axis 3 = The quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy). It means LEADER is not any more EU Community Initiative but it is the crucial approach supported in rural development. The support for LEADER axis will focus on implementing local development strategies⁸ with a view to achieve the objectives of one or more of the three other axes defined above.

⁶ This section is based on the information provided by the Czech website (<http://www.leaderplus.cz>) about LEADER and website of the European Commission (http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/index_en.htm) about LEADER (both web sites were visited in November 2007).

⁷ Social capital as the concept coined variously by such authors as Bourdieu (1983), Putnam (1993; 2000), Coleman (1988) and others means the assets of our relations and interactions which we can use to generate benefits in our activities. It is based both on our social status (who are we in the social hierarchy, how can we enter into the interactions based on our social status and how can we use the benefits from our social positions for our individual action) and on the amount of trust in the social interactions, existing social norms, formal and informal social networks which we use when accessing the resources, information or solving the problems). Social capital means the resources acquired through social networks and social relations (it is the wealth of our relations).

⁸ Local Action Groups must propose an integrated local development strategy based, at least, on one of these elements (echoing the typical features of the LEADER): (a) strategies intended for well-identified rural territories; (b) strategies intended for local public-private partnerships; (c) strategies intended for bottom-up approach concerning their elaboration and implementation; (d) strategies based on multi-sectoral design and intended for their implementation based on the interaction between actors and projects of different sectors of the local economy; (e) strategies intended for networking of local partnerships; (f) strategies implementing innovative approaches).

THE TENDENCIES IN IMPLEMENTING LEADER

Because LEADER was developed as the Community Initiative promoted by EU Commission, it includes the top-down principle in its origin. However the planning and implementing various the LEADER type decisions and projects assume also bottom-up approach. It means as J. Bryden (2006) suggests LEADER was the first significant experiment with endogenous or “bottom-up” local rural development attempted by European Commission to cope with negative impacts of globalization on rural communities.

The LEADER aims at the search for the innovative integrative (or at least multi-sectoral) solutions of the rural problems. It is done more and more in concrete sub-regional localities. It means, reflecting the principle of subsidiarity, the LEADER more and more emphasizes the local level of solving the problems. To do it, the LEADER can be used in whatever rural area and sector, not only in areas defined as priorities according to certain criteria as it is the case of the other EU funded projects in regional development. It means the LEADER is not of selective nature since it does not define any priority rural areas.

The key stone of the LEADER is the cooperation. According to the European Commission (2000) the Commission supports the creation of the quality partnership among various actors. This cooperation has to be set up in the rural areas of one member state or between rural areas of more the EU member states. In this respect, the LEADER plays the role of a laboratory with the goal to support the origin and to test the new approaches in integrated and sustainable development which will influence, supplement or strengthen the rural development policy in the framework of the EU. The member states are required to participate in this experimental endeavour when submitting their suggestions toward rural development policy. The term laboratory is the metaphor (Ray 2000: 166) indicating the new style of intervention because the funds are used by local action groups (LAGs) “within an ethos of much latitude for discretion in implementation” based on the local evaluation of problems and needed strategies. The new ways of rural development are introduced and disseminated through the broad network of participating actors. These words suggest the LEADER is embedded in two

principles. They are (1) coordinated cooperation of various actors (based on social capital) and (2) innovativeness of development strategies (assuming high level of human, cultural and intellectual capital⁹). It means the LEADER pursues the rural development through the local action groups which have to govern the high level of intangible forms of capital.

Since its beginning, the main actors of the LEADER projects are the local actions groups. The local actors set up the networks for the cooperation and the exchange of the experience. They are a sort of “learning organization” (about learning organization more in Tichá 2005). Within the local action groups also the network-making is more and more focused at local level of problem solving.

As for the financing of the projects implemented within the LEADER framework till 2007, a mechanism of so-called global grants was used. It means the funding was provided *ex ante* to the local action groups based on the development strategies they elaborated. The monitoring and assessments of the projects was done in *ex post* way (i.e. after the projects implemented in the frame of the LAGs were completed).

Since its beginning the LEADER has been offering the new forms of rural development. They are built upon the experience of local actors, local identity and actions of local people in the everyday life. In this sense Ray (2000) considers the LEADER in many aspects as the post-modern form of intervention which indicates many anarchistic elements penetrating into creating and implementing rural development projects. The term “anarchistic” echoes its understanding by Buchanan (1996) and means the LEADER is not so strongly regulated by external rules in which the development activities are “jailed”. In this respect, the LEADER opens a sort of libertarian world which is not harnessed by large number of regulations limiting the freedom of the actors. This new approach has been already used in the LEADER I, which spread in rural areas very quickly. The reason for such progress in the LEADER development, when the time for its implementation was relatively short, was (Bryden 2006) that the LEADER provided the sufficient amount of freedom, and also the administration concerning the strategy and projects was relatively low. The start of the other phases – the LEADER II and LEADER+, was slower (even with the continual tendency of slowing down the processes) due to administrative problems

⁹ Human capital means the skills, talent of an individual to do the work (it is the sum of technical skills and knowledge the individual possesses). Cultural capital is the knowledge (mostly tacit knowledge) of an individual how the work should be done, it is symbolic skill “how to play the game” (Petrusek 1989). Intellectual capital (Tichá 2008) is the aggregated sum of human and cultural capitals of individuals which exists on the level of collective actors (organizations, businesses etc.).

and problems related to financing. Such change was reflected by the local action groups in their criticism of the bureaucratization of the LEADER. They claim the bureaucratization limits their activities and decision making processes while national (or the EU) bodies prefer such bureaucratization since it includes a stricter and more precise delineation of the topics (themes) and activities which can be supported. The phase the LEADER+ has already taken some of this criticism into account and made easier financing since LEADER was financed only by one EU structural fund (EAGGF) compared to the previous three funds (ERDF, ESF, EAGGF in the LEADER I). Such simplification continued also in the period when the LEADER is funded as one of the axes in the national Rural Development Programmes through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

The financial contribution approved by the EU Commission (counted per one year average for the LEADER I in 1991–1993, the LEADER II in 1994–1999, and the LEADER+ in 2000–2006) slightly increased (in ECU to be comparable during the phases from about 279 mil ECU to 283 mil ECU and 302 mil ECU). The number of LAGs approved scored the highest number in the LEADER II phase. The strong support for the LEADER as the key mechanism for sustainable rural development was confirmed at the 1996 Cork Conference on rural development.

Nowadays the LEADER approach which is based on local partnership is emphasized as the approach that should be implemented throughout other programmes in the frame of regional policy. In means the LEADER has the potential to span from the Common Agricultural Policy into regional policy as the “best practice”. That is also why the idea to introduce LEADER into all axes of new rural development policy in the national Rural Development Programmes for 2007–2013 started to be discussed or, at least, the discussion was about the preference of the axis 4 (axis Leader – building local capacities for employment and diversification). The main outcome from the evaluation of the LEADER (compared to other programmes aiming at some sort of regional development) suggests the LEADER is (despite the fact of its problems with above outlined growing bureaucratization) the example of the successful Community Initiative because of its approach. This

approach enabled to penetrate on the level of the individual (particular) rural territories, and to its inhabitants. It also enabled to link agriculture and local food industry with the issues of local development, environment and the quality of life. If the approach of the LEADER is not the principle of the newly emerging rural development policy, then, for sure, it strongly influences the ideas about horizontal coordination on local and regional levels not only in the EU countries but also in OECD countries and other countries beyond EU (Bryden 2006).

They key innovation within the LEADER (since its beginning) is the emphasis on “less tangible” and “less mobile” factors of development (Ray 2000; Bryden 2006). The factors which are in the main focus of the LEADER are more embedded in rural communities. As such they strengthen local identities and intangible forms of capital existing in these communities. The intangible forms of capital are considered to be the strategic component of the development of rural communities through which the rural quality of life can be increased¹⁰.

CONTEMPORARY SITUATION IN LEADER

The establishment of the LEADER+ Observatory was the reflection of the need to develop the background supporting the networking when implementing the LEADER. Therefore the role of the observatory is to provide the information, room for meetings and the observatory also participates in the advisory and extension services for the state and regional administration (Introducing the Leader+ Observatory 2005).

Nowadays there are more than 1 000 local action groups (LAGs) working under the LEADER frames. They represent about 50 millions EU inhabitants who occupy about half of the EU territory¹¹ (in Czechia about 40% of the territory with about 4.1 million inhabitants¹²). The largest number of LAGs operates in Germany, Spain, France and UK, the lowest number (in the old EU member states) in Belgium, Sweden, Denmark and Luxembourg. Obviously, there is a correlation between the size of the country (in term of the population) and the number of LAGs. After the accession in 2004, all the new member states were invited to participate in the LEADER activities, their LAGs started to cooperate with those already

¹⁰ In this respect the LEADER supports through its priority themes the development of regional products including regional branding and regional labeling, networking of so far isolated local sectors of production and services, commercial utilization of the natural and cultural heritage, new applications of ICTs for the benefits of the local rural communities, the revival of local skills and crafts including their incorporation into programmes of education and tourism.

¹¹ Data were found through the LEADER web site http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/index_en.htm

¹² Data available on line at <http://www.leaderplus.cz/cz/plus/socio.asp>

existing in the old EU member states. The area of the cooperation between LAGs goes also beyond the EU territory.

The most frequent types of cooperation between LAGs are communications (various types of the exchange of information), educational activities, research, marketing strategies, the strategies of products' development and promotion. The strategy of the LEADER accentuates the innovative approaches to rural development. That is why the LEADER is considered to be the "laboratory of new ideas" (Siltanen 2005: 6), higher creativity and the willingness to take the risks are asked to be brought by the participants.¹³

The network structure as the medium enabling the cooperation of partners of different cultures, with various experiences and expectations brings also some problems. They are not only of administrative nature but are related also to the insufficient coordination of the common activities or the inappropriate partnership. These problems are more evident when looking at projects with international cooperation.

When considering the LEADER in general, it is obvious it operates as a sort of "social experiment" whose evaluation should confirm or deny what "works or does not work" (what is appropriate or is not appropriate) in rural development.¹⁴ The experience suggests the impacts of small projects in rural development (they are mostly the projects supported through the LEADER scheme) cannot not be indicated immediately (it is difficult to measure them in short time after the project was completed) and the impacts are mostly of qualitative nature. This fact, which results from the documentary study done for this paper in the Leader+ Magazine, is supported also by other studies pointing out short time to be able to evaluate full impacts of the LEADER projects (Sucksmith 2000). It is obvious that to measure the impacts of the LEADER projects necessitates a very careful preparation, consisting in detailed analysis of the situation before the project implementation. It means the starting situation necessitates to be described in the appropriate set of indicators reflecting all principles of LEADER as

well as the aims and intentions of corresponding strategy of LAG under which the project is funded (the strategies might be very different although they are framed in 4 themes).¹⁵

ORIENTATION TOWARDS AGRICULTURAL AND FARMING RELATED ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE LEADER+ PROJECTS

If looking at the priority themes within the LEADER+, then the most frequent is the theme concerning the best use of natural and cultural resources, the second is ranked the improving the quality of life in rural areas, the third the adding value to local products, and the last addressed theme is the use of know-how and new technologies. As the text will show latter, the farmers are the most frequently involved in the third theme (which is obvious due to its orientation), and also in the first theme. That is why the paper will focus more on the themes of adding value to the local products and the efficient use of natural and cultural resources. Both themes were addressed in the seminars organized by the LEADER+ Observatory in 2006. The aim of the seminars was to exchange the experience and to search for the new partners especially for international cooperation. Here are the interesting ideas which were raised during the seminars (Leader+ Observatory seminar: 'Adding value to local products' [February 2006, Grosseto (Tuscany), Italy], and the Leader+ Observatory seminar: Making the best use of natural and cultural resources [April 2006, Schruns (Vorarlberg), Austria]):

- a) The theme concerning adding value to local products:
- The concept of "gastronauts" which helps to understand the value of the territory in the relation with its gastronomic identity; the development strategies can be derived from this issue as documented through PDO/PGI procedures or "slow food" approach in gastronomy.
 - The strategies to support adding value to local products are influenced by the changes in prices, by financial compensations etc. It might require the

¹³ Innovations aiming at farming and related industries were present especially in the LEADER II phase. They focused not only on new approaches, technologies and markets but also at solving the problems of risks emerging when the new product is to be introduced on the market.

¹⁴ For such reason, there is well elaborated methodology when project evaluation is done in three phases: ex-ante (evaluating the contribution, benefits of the projects), midterm (evaluating the already achieved results compared with those which were expected), and ex post (evaluating all achieved outcomes, results and impacts compared to the situation if the project is not implemented).

¹⁵ The paragraph on the methodology of impacts assessment of the LEADER funded projects is addressed here because it is necessary to provide the evidences about the meaningfulness of the LEADER since the LEADER is incorporated into the new rural development policy for 2007–2013.

change in traditional activities as for the quality and labeling (branding) of the products, new approaches in regional planning or new ways of introducing the products on the market when producers and consumers are mutually related. It documents certain measures in policy support are reflected also in the activities of the stakeholders.

- The success of specific products is strongly influenced by the links of local traditions with the environment. It documents such approach is truly sustainable since it contains all 3 pillars of sustainability: economic (success on the market), environmental (friendly to nature) and social (traditional values and norms).
- The production of the prototypes of the new products for the global market is supported by the return back to the nature of traditional materials in relation with the modern market. It documents the rural development activities are not only about to modernize the countryside but also to use the traditional rural specificities (e.g. the traditional rural raw materials).

b) The best use of natural and cultural resources:

- It is already known the projects under this theme result in the increase of permanent jobs.
- Such projects are based on three different approaches toward cultural and natural resources:
 - emphasizing the mutual influence of both sorts of resources through architecture and landscape; the involvement of local inhabitants and especially youth (young generation is together with women the target group of the LEADER) into the activities increasing the attractiveness of environment, including educational activities;
 - emphasizing the balance among environmental, economic and social aspects in the tourism which is friendly to the environment (so called soft tourism as described by Librová 1994);
 - emphasizing the involvement of the stakeholders into evaluating various scenarios or analyzing the trends of territorial development of regions; through such involvement the social capital as the instrument facilitating collective actions is supported.
- The aim of such projects is both to increase the attractiveness of the locality through the tourism of high quality (the economic goal) and the increase of the knowledge of local inhabitants about the regional and cultural heritage through building up local identity (social and cultural goal).
- The innovation in the case of such projects can also mean the import of the products in the region, their

innovation in region means adding value and finally their export out of the region.

- The social and cultural potentials as trust in others and self-trust or other intangible, endogenous factors are important to cope with the barriers of the development.
- People are very often the most important natural and cultural resource of the region – therefore it is necessary to incorporate local people into the consultations about the LEADER+ projects and to set up the forums for stimulating the mutual influence and cooperation.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED UNDER LEADER+ IN EU

The LEADER+ Magazine which originated with the specific goal to disseminate the information about this Community Initiative represents the most appropriate document which can be studied for the purpose of this paper. Such selection was possible because of the critical analysis of the documents which is required by the content analysis as the method used in this paper. The following analysis will focus both on the integrated and endogenous approach in the development through the aim to guarantee rural sustainable livelihood using farming and related activities.

Quantitative analysis of the document LEADER+ Magazine

The analysis presented in this section was done using the following criteria: 1) the strategic (priority) theme of the projects, 2) the participation of farmers (and related actors) in the projects, 3) the scope and form in which the project was reported in the LEADER+ Magazine (only short information or detailed information). The results covering the years 2005 to 2007 (7 volumes, each in the size of about 55 pages) when the journal is published are shown in the Table 1.

Out of the total 112 projects reported in the LEADER+ Magazine since its origin till September 2007 (time of writing this paper), the farmers (incl. also forestry related actors and processors directly processing agricultural/forestry products) participated in almost one third (32.1%) of published projects. The tendency of their involvement in the projects slightly increases year by year (30.6% in 2005, 32.6% in 2006 and 35.3% in 2007 – measured through the information published in the analyzed magazine).¹⁶

¹⁶ If the analyzed information enabled to make such distinction.

Table 1. The overview of the types of reported projects in Leader+ Magazine

Theme of the project		LEADER+ MAGAZINE (volume/year)																
		1/2005		2/2005		3/2005		4/2006		5/2006		6/2006		7/2007		TOTAL		
		INF	DIP	INF	DPI	INF	DPI	INF	DPI	INF	DPI	INF	DPI	INF	DPI	INF	DPI	Σ
NCR	<i>N</i>	1	2	0	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	0	1	1	2	7	14	21
	<i>F</i>	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	2	1	0	0	5	3	8
QLC	<i>N</i>	1	4	1	2	0	2	1	2	0	2	0	2	1	2	4	16	20
	<i>F</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
AVP	<i>N</i>	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	3
	<i>F</i>	0	2	0	2	1	3	1	2	0	1	1	2	0	2	3	14	17
KNT	<i>N</i>	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	1	1	1	1	11	12
	<i>F</i>	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	5	5
INT	<i>N</i>	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	0	2	0	3	0	0	1	9	10
	<i>F</i>	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	4	5
TGR	<i>N</i>	1	0	2	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	4	6	10
	<i>F</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	<i>N</i>	4	7	4	10	2	7	3	9	2	10	0	7	5	6	20	56	76
	<i>F</i>	0	6	0	3	2	4	1	3	2	1	4	4	1	5	10	26	36
	Σ	4	13	4	13	4	11	4	12	4	11	4	11	6	11	10	82	112

Source: own analysis

Explanatory notes:

NCR = the theme “making the best use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value of sites of the Community interest selected under the Natura 2000”; QLC = the theme “improving the quality of life in rural areas”; AVP = the theme “adding value to local products, in particular by facilitating access to markets for small production units via collective actions”; KNT = the theme “the use of know-how and new technologies to increase the competitiveness of products and services of rural areas”; INT = international cooperation; TGR = target groups (youth, women); *N* = projects without participation of the farmers, forest related people or direct processors of agricultural/forestry products; *F* = projects with direct participation of farmers, forest related people or direct processors of agricultural/forestry products; INF = only information about the project; DPI = detailed information about the project

There is no significant difference in reporting about the projects where the farmers participated or where they did not participate (*F* or *N*) if the analysis is cross-tabulated according to the nature of the report – only information (INF) or detailed account about the project (DPI). The only short information about the projects (INF) where the farmers did not participate represents 26.5% of analyzed papers (73.5% are the projects presented in details where the farmer did not participate). The similar proportion is in the projects with the participation of the farmers (27.8% in the case of short information about the projects and 72.2% in the case of the detailed account about the projects with the participation of the farmers).

It is obvious that the participation of the farmers and their activities will be the highest in the theme concerning adding value to local products (AVP). Such projects number 18.9% out of the total number of the analyzed projects but out of the projects where the farmers participate, they score 47.2%. The second highest participation of farmers is in the projects about the best use of natural and cultural resources (NCR).

Out of the total number of the analyzed projects, their share is the highest (about 25%) and in the projects with the participation of the farmers they represented about 20%. As for the projects under the theme of the use of know-how and new technologies, they represent 15.3% of all analyzed projects and within the projects with farmers' participation, they achieve a similar proportion (13.9%). It means they are the third in the ranking of the themes in the projects where the farmers participate. The big disproportion between farmers and non-farmers was found in the projects addressing the theme of improving the quality of life in rural areas. Although their proportion in the total number of the projects is 18.9%, the projects where the farmers participate number only 2.8%. A similar disproportion between farmers and non-farmers is in other cross-tabulation focusing at target groups of youth and women. They are the smallest groups of the reported projects (9% out of all projects) but none of them is reported to be implemented by farmers. On the other hand, the participation of the farmers (13.9% of reported projects) was found in the

analysis done through the cross-tabulation when international cooperation was reported (12.6% of all reported projects). Such proportion is similar when looking at the participation of the farmers in the theme about the use of know-how and the new technologies. The data suggest the improvement of the quality of life in the countryside is not too much an issue of farmers but of other rural actors. This international comparison confirms the data from the Czech Republic as analyzed by Lošťák (2007). It is also interesting the target groups of the LEADER are not in the focus of the projects implemented by the farmers. It might suggest there will be opened still more for non-farming actors in rural development measures as indicated the case of the Dutch environmental cooperatives (Wiskerke et al. 2003).

Qualitative analysis of the projects with the participation of farmers and agriculture related actors

If looking at the projects which are addressed by the Leader+ Magazine more frequently, it is interesting they are rather the projects which started as the cooperation at international level. It is the case especially as for Germany, Austria, Sweden, Ireland, Italy and Finland (3–5 cases). The other countries whose projects are published in the Leader+ Magazine are Spain, France and Greece (3 cases) and Portugal (1 project). But the addressed projects of Spain, France, Greece and Portugal are without international participation. The exception from this rule (the more projects presented per country, the more the international nature of the projects) is the Netherlands, Belgium, United Kingdom and Denmark. In the case of these countries always 2 projects are addressed: one with international participation, the second without international participation.

The following text will deal with the projects with the participation of farmers and related actors as for the content of the projects.¹⁷

In the area of international cooperation, 5 projects with the participation of farmers and agriculture related actors are presented. The target groups of two of these projects are pupils and high school students (cooperation Austria-Germany, and United Kingdom-Ireland). The projects gave the pupils and

high school students the chance to participate in vocational training in the sphere of innovations in the agricultural technologies (including “green energy”) and in related activities such as boarding (food), sale and distribution of food or agri-tourism. Always the goal is to link schools with local farmers who implement original and innovative methods in farming and related industries. The other project (Denmark-Sweden) is about the network of woodmen and wood processors which was established to innovate the processing of local hard wood for the furniture in order to increase its production and sale. Italian-Belgian project develops in the innovative way the rural gastronomy (incl. rural restaurants) and emphasizes the role of intangible capital to promote the trust of visitors for the quality of catering industry. That is also why the established network educates small entrepreneurs in the issues of understanding the needs of people who are their potential clients in rural restaurants and hotels (rural hospitality management). The last project within international cooperation frames (The Netherlands-Germany) aims at natural parks (of the wetland type) management. These parks are supposed to be managed with care, used for tourism but also they should support regional identity through better understanding of natural assets of these specific landscape areas.

The use of know-how and the new technologies to increase the competitiveness of products and services of rural areas is also addressed by five projects with the participation of the farmers and agriculture related actors. Three of them (from France, Ireland and Germany) are the projects about the development, use and local provision of the energy from the local renewable resources, including the use of wastes from various processing activities; also the reconstruction of the vehicles and agricultural machines for the use of biofuel is concerned in these projects. The other project (from the Netherlands) develops the network of local producers (farmers and craftsmen) and consumers (households, industrial companies, public organization) and establishes also new jobs. This project joins about 150 farmers with experts in GIS not only for better land management but also to administer compensation payments. The last project reported in Leader+ Magazine under this theme is from Finland. It is related to the new methods of treating locally produced wood which should increase its use

¹⁷ This footnote is about Spanish project on improving the quality of life in the rural areas. The project aims at social inclusion of mentally handicapped people into everyday activities through their work in agricultural cooperative which was established for this purpose. The cooperative has 117 partners, employs 78 mentally handicapped people and 27 therapists. The other projects aiming at improving the quality of life in the countryside with participation of actors from agriculture were not published in Leader+ Magazine.

and should promote local furniture industry in order to bring new jobs into the locality.

Eight of the reported projects were targeted at the best¹⁸ use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value of sites of the Community interest selected under the Natura 2000. The projects where farmers or agriculture related actors participated are more related to natural resources but they are not limited only to them. Four out of them valorize the locality (its natural and historical heritage) through tourism – the Greek project, concentrates upon the production and processing of wine grapes, the German project upon the holidays on the former nobility farm estate (manor) linked with the production of food, the Austrian project the offers original path in the tree-tops and the Finish project revitalizes typical pastoral village. With the exception of the Greek project, the other three are typical by the broad cooperation of farmers, non-farmers, local administration, environmental experts and experts in tourism and marketing. The other two projects (from France and Denmark) accentuate the environmental functions and aim at the protection, revitalization and making more attractive the typical local environment. Social and economic dimensions of these projects consist in the diversification of local farms towards the activities in environmental protection and tourism. The Dutch project is specially tailored for the social services (social economy). It offers to use the natural heritage of the countryside (quietness and free space) and the peculiarity of rural social relations (individual approach and the reverence for common life) as healing milieu for mentally handicapped people. The farmers diversify their activities in this direction and set up the network based on the institution of social care. In a similar sense, the Swedish project offers valuable natural environment (including natural training) as the house for the horses of urban owners. It is framed in the context of the use of badlands. The experts in corresponding areas participate in the last two mentioned projects as well.

The largest group of the projects with the participation of the farmers and agriculture related activities presented in the Leader+ Magazine are the projects aiming at adding value to local products.¹⁹ The goals of the projects are often supplemented with the objec-

tive to increase the value of local products through local branding or organic certification. It is considered to be the way how to promote the regional identity, how to achieve the increase of the jobs which are often connected with gastronomic hospitality and tourism in general.

The projects under the theme of adding value to local products can be disaggregated into six groups. The largest groups (as for the projects presented in the Leader+ Magazine) are the projects (one from Spain, Austria, Portugal and two projects from Italy) with the following scheme: through the use of already known typical regional products to make more visible other local products (not only the traditional ones but also new products), to use the network of the shops (which might be newly established) and as the supplementary activity to organize educational courses (including workshops) to renew traditional productions and the skills used in these productions. The other four projects (France, United Kingdom, Austria, and Germany) want to find out the new use and marketing of certain products not only on nearby market but also on remote markets. These attempts are also supplemented by the education but also by introducing new machinery into the production. Three projects (Spain, Belgium, and Greece) focus their activities on establishing the processing facilities for typical regional products on farms and their distribution into the networks of restaurants and shops (including the label informing about the products and its organic certification). These projects also support the ways to bring the consumers to the producers (promotion, including the excursions in the processing facilities). Two projects (Sweden and Ireland) operate in the area of the new ways of marketing local products. They help to set up the networks consisting of producers, processors, shops and consumers. The other two projects (Finland and Greece) concern the new natural and organically processed products, their packaging and distribution, including the marketing on foreign markets. The last project (Sweden) deals with the marketing of a larger variety of regional products on distant (remote) markets and includes also the organization of the excursions to the producers of these products as a sort of the specific form of tourism.

¹⁸ The term “best” means in accordance with the principles of sustainable development positive impacts on the locality in the economic, social and environmental sphere.

¹⁹ Mostly making easier the access of the small producers to the market through collective actions is concerned when marketing both traditional and new products. The projects support setting up the networks of local producers and their involvement in marketing together with municipalities and local inhabitants. Also the development of databases of products targeting selected segments of the market and establishing electronic support for processing, distribution and introduction of goods in the market is supported.

CONCLUSION

Although the content analysis of the projects with the participation of the farmers and agriculture related actors which were presented in the Leader+ Magazine cannot claim to provide the real state-of-the-art of the LEADER+, it is possible to guarantee the document which was analyzed is the public, easy accessible and the largest representative of all activities which were implemented under the LEADER+.

Because the examples of the best practice have been already presented, the shortcomings which make the original idea of the LEADER more problematic are also important to be mentioned. Such approach is chosen intentionally to promote the discussion over the LEADER in the Czech context. The original mission of the LEADER was already stated earlier in this paper as relatively the most successful attempt to implement into the rural development the integrated endogenous approach. However, there are some doubts to confirm this statement. The first one is that the local intangible forms of capital which are emphasized to be crucial factors of such development have long-term effects to be demonstrated in the impacts of development activities (Lošťák 2007). Under such situation, the impacts of the LEADER projects should be investigated about 5–10 years after the financial support of the project ended (Sucksmith 2000). If the positive impacts continue and multiply, we can evaluate the projects as successful but now due to short time since their end it is difficult. The other doubt is about the actors of the local development. It is documented (Lošťák 2007; Kováč, Kučerová 2006) that the successful projects (the projects which won the grant) are such projects which are submitted by those with appropriate social networks, knowledge, skills and experience with similar activities. However, the LEADER comprises in its principles board inclusion of local actors into their development activities. It would be again desirable to investigate if the LEADER really increases the spectrum of local partnership, its quantity and quality. It might be the case, as documented by M. Sucksmith (2000) that those who govern the needed forms of intangible capital (required by the LEADER to work) use them not to support the skills and chances of those who still do not have such forms of capital (because they, for instance, had never participated in the LEADER yet). However under such circumstance the benefits of the LEADER will not be experienced by the whole community but rather by those who govern these forms of intangible capital. They will use them to support their position of “elite” in submitting and implementing rural development projects.

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Contact address:

Michal Lošťák, Czech University of Life Sciences, Faculty of Economics and Management, Kamýcká 129,
165 21 Prague 6-Suchbát, Czech Republic
e-mail: lostak@pef.czu.cz
