

Participation within LEADER Projects

Examples from Local Action Group (LAG) Regionalentwicklung Oberallgäu (Germany)

Some backgrounds on the LAG

The LAG Regionalentwicklung Oberallgäu is located in the far South-West of Bavaria, bordering Austria and Baden-Württemberg. More than 142.000 inhabitants live in the 27 member communities, population density is 103 inhabitants/skm. Typical and important economic activities in this rural area are agriculture and tourism.

LEADER-activities started in 2003. In LEADER+, 43 projects with total costs of 5.4 Mio. Euro (and funding through LEADER at an amount of 2.4 Mio. Euro) were realised, including nine cooperation projects. Most of the projects and LAG activities were realised with a great extent of participation of local actors. Participation within the LAG activities took place on different levels.

Types of participation and project examples

Financial participation: Villagers finance their own store – and therefore do shop there instead of going to the discounter

The problem: The last food- and general supply store in the village of Krugzell had to close due to decrease of turnover. The next stores are several kilometres away and bus connections are rare – a problem for older people or persons without a car.

The solution: A „village store“ for Krugzell - with financial and emotional participation of population. Long-term economic sustainability is given through the fact that the population is interested in the economic success of the shop in which they invested: a good reason for them to shop in “their own” store. To the extent possible, local products are included in the assortment.

The effects: General supply possibilities also for persons without own car and a location for social contacts are maintained, (part-time-)jobs for women were created and a marketing opportunity for local producers given. The concept was transferred to other villages and a cooperation with many synergy-effects emerged (e.g. exchange of experience, better conditions for products delivered by wholesalers).

Participation in realisation: Volunteers construct swing bridge

The problem: The farmer operating a small ferry crossing the Iller river had to stop this activity due to retirement. No successor could be found and therefore the hiking net was disconnected.

The solution: A swing bridge made from steel – in order to keep costs to a minimum local volunteers constructed and built the 84 m steel bridge in voluntary work (more than 1.200 hours

not including the hours spent by the engineer for planning, also on voluntary basis) and with minimum use of machines.

The effects: Hiking network is functional and has gained added value through the spectacular construction. The group of volunteers grew together and takes care of maintenance in cooperation with the community.

Participation in planning and conception: How actors got involved in setting up the Regional Development Strategy

The problem: Many people have good ideas on how to make life a little bit better – but no forum to share their ideas with a greater public. At the same time, the LAG was about to set up the regional development strategy for LEADER 2007-13 and wanted to safeguard participation in this process.

The solution: In cooperation with the neighbouring LAGs and other partners a contest for regional development “New ideas for the Allgäu region” was initiated.

The effects: Regional actors (private persons, associations, enterprises, communities,...) handed in 251 project proposals. The best ones won awards, were included in the Regional Development Strategies and get assistance on the part of the LAGs. A creative climate in the region was supported.

Participation in decisions: The role of economic and social partners in the LAG

One of the LEADER-programme-regulations is that at least 50 % of the actors responsible for decisions about projects need to be economic or social partners. The LAG Regionalentwicklung Oberallgäu carefully identified partners which are sufficiently strong, think and act in regional instead of local categories and come from different professional backgrounds.

The economic and social partners have functions in the decision making body of the LAG and in projects groups. This way they participate in decisions as well as in the conception of projects.