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PREMESSA

Il presente documento costituisce una ricerca valutativa effettuata nell'ambito del servizio di valutazione 2014/2022 del PSR della Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano. L'approfondimento ha riguardato la Misura 19 – Leader del Programma, con l'obiettivo di comprendere il ruolo assunto dai Gruppi di Azione Locale (GAL) selezionati a valere sul PSR all'interno dei territori in cui operano. L'analisi ha preso in considerazione, oltre ai sei GAL attivati nell'ambito del PSR della Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, anche i due GAL attivi nella Provincia Autonoma di Trento sempre nella programmazione 2014-2022.

L'attività valutativa è stata condotta durante un tirocinio formativo effettuato presso IZI spa da parte di una studentessa dell'Università degli Studi di Padova – *Master's degree programme in Local Development*, ed è stata anche argomento della successiva scrittura della tesi magistrale della tirocinante, oltre ad essere diventata parte integrante del prodotto valutativo.

Le attività a fine valutativo sono state svolte congiuntamente ai valutatori del PSR 2014/2022 della Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano IZI spa e Apollis, con cui è stato effettuato un confronto e un coordinamento per quanto riguarda le metodologie valutative utilizzate, la costruzione delle interviste e dell'indice e l'analisi dei risultati ottenuti. Parallelamente tale confronto è avvenuto anche con il relatore della tesi Professore Giorgio Osti.

INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

For the programming period 2014-2022, LEADER falls within Measure 19 of regional Rural Development Programmes: Support for LEADER local development, also called community led local development (CLLD), through which local development strategies are supported and implemented in consequence of the involvement and active participation of a local partnership. This public-private partnership operates through a bottom-up programmatic approach for territorial integrated projectuality, encouraging cooperation between rural territories and networking between local groups. Operationally, LEADER's public-private partnership takes the form of Local Action Groups (LAGs), which operate across all European regions. LAGs have the task to define and implement at the local level a Local Development Strategy which should be innovative, multi-sectoral and integrated, together with a Local Development Plan for their territories. LAGs' objective is to enhance the skills of rural areas in the different programming stages; organize and manage complex initiatives for the development of the territory; favor the participation of local actors in decision-making processes by valorizing their experiences (Podda, 2020).

The main objective of this research is that of understanding the role played by LAGs on their territories. This is done through the performance of a qualitative evaluation of LAGs actions that is not based on their efficiency and effectiveness in the utilization of available resources or short-term economic return on the territory (Podda, 2020), but rather aims to understand their territorial role through observations that concern their actions, relationships and the creation of social capital. The idea is that of understanding whether LAGs limit themselves to a more bureaucratic role by financing projects with the sole purpose to commit the funds available to them or if they are able to go further in their role on the territory, becoming local development agencies and which kind of paradigmatic, systemic or individual changes are necessary for LAGs to become one.

The assumption of the role of local development agency by LAGs depends on various endogenous and exogenous factors related to them. To a certain degree, LAGs are affected by their regulatory framework of reference, thus Rural Development Programmes and EU Regulations; this concerns the level of autonomy granted to LAGs in their administrative and implementation capacities, and also the role that the regional managing authority assumes in its interactions with LAGs. At the same time, it is presumed that LAGs have some freedom of action in between set boundaries (at EU-, national- and regional levels), which is where a change in their roles can happen. Another factor is the ability but also the willingness of assuming such role, which depends on the LAG itself. This can be the result of stakeholders' or technical staff's (in the form of LAG members) specific interest in striving towards the common goal of territorial development, or on the contrary stakeholders' lack of interest in doing so.

Assuming thus that LAGs have the capacity to become local development agency, the focus shifts now on features that makes them development agencies. The evaluator has defined a series of features that LAGs should acquire to be defined "local development agencies", in particular:

- Being or becoming a main point of reference for territorial actors. This implies territorial presidia activities and semi-constant interaction with the civil society and local actors through animation activities. In fact, for institutions born to promote local development, relational capacities are fundamental to establish a network of trust with and between local actors, necessary for territorial development (Rizziato, 2007).
- Long-term vision. A development agency has a key role in fostering a long-term plan and vision for the territory (OECD, 2009), which means that LAG action and strategy planning might need to go further compared to single EU programming periods.
- Being a promoter of cooperation among public and private actors operating at local development level (Ciaravino and Diglio, 2021), also acting as bearers of territorial demands and necessities to their reference Region or other public administrations.
- Broaden their capacity to manage development projects. On one side this means developing expert and specialist staff, and on the other side being able to manage and finance projects related to the achievement of strategy objectives also using other sources of funding if fitting; at the same time, LAG specific funds should not finance projects that could be financed through ordinary sources of funding (European Court of Auditors, 2022).
- Offering other services to the territory, related to objectives of local territorial development thus fostering the relationship between LAG and territory.

In addition to these factors, this research aims to understand if limits that make it difficult to reach the goal of becoming a "local development agency" for LAGs exist and which are they. In fact, they could be normative or legal, but also refer to policy styles adopted in the RDP or by LAGs themselves. All the information gathered on this could provide interesting data on what might need to change, both internally and externally, for LAGs to become local development agencies.

Furthermore, another research objective is that of investigating and identifying which changes and shifts in approaches could be adopted throughout the programming process to facilitate LAGs role as development agency.

Throughout these analyses, this work hopes to provide not only an analysis of the different aforementioned factors, but also tools for moving towards “LAGs as local development agencies” and identify where one can act on regional and supra-national policies to allow this movement. In this sense, the hope is to suggest possible actions for an improvement, which is one of the specific aims of any evaluation activity. Furthermore, verifying if and how LAGs operate as local development agencies can open to new interpretative horizons for the futures of rural and mountain areas.

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1 THEORETICAL BASIS, METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF THE EVALUATION OF THE LEADER-CLLD APPROACH FOR THE PROGRAMMING PERIOD 2014-2022

This chapter introduces the features of the evaluation of the LEADER approach by establishing the theoretical and methodological foundations of the scheme adopted by the evaluator. The chapter provides relevant information pertaining to literature on evaluating LEADER and Local Action Groups, the methodologies considered by the evaluator to be the most appropriate for reaching the evaluation objective, as well as the theoretical background on which the evaluator has relied in the construction of their evaluation tools. In regard to evaluation tools, the chapter includes an analysis of Community guidelines which have been taken into consideration in the construction of the qualitative evaluation and an overview of the “leaderability” index defined by Cacace, Di Napoli and Ricci in 2010 for the evaluation of LEADER during the programming period 2007-2013. Based on this index, the evaluator has designed its own index with the aim to transform qualitative information into quantitative data, which allows for a systemic reading of the role assumed by LAGs in their territories. The evaluator index is introduced in the last sub-chapter of this section, along with related opportunities and limitations.

1.1 EVALUATION OF THE LEADER APPROACH

The literature on evaluation of LEADER and Local Action Groups' performance is large. Among publications, one first distinction is that of literature focused on *evaluating* the LEADER programme in itself and literature concerning the *evaluation* of the LEADER programme from a technical and methodological perspective.

The literature on the evaluation of LEADER is extensive, its production started with the introduction of the Community Initiative in 1991 to current times, with the introduction of LEADER in the CLLD framework during the programming period 2014-2022, and its production will of course continue for the next programming period 2023-2027. Metta (2016) provides a systematized catalogue of these materials which allows an extensive overview of all different levels of analysis and research on the topic, which are:

1. Legislative documents from the European Commission and the European Parliament and Council;
2. Evaluation and self-assessment guidelines by governmental authorities for the LEADER implementing bodies such as the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development and the European Commission;
3. Grey literature documenting LEADER evaluation experiences on websites, social networks, conferences and local newspapers;
4. A collection of academic and research studies, which can be divided into three primary groupings, i.e. empirical applications of LEADER evaluation approaches, empirical applications of LEADER evaluation methods and indicators, critical analysis of the LEADER evaluation system as a whole.

Further differences concern also the programming period of reference (LEADER I, LEADER II, LEADER +, LEADER 2007-2013, LEADER/CLLD 2014-2022), the institutional level of reference (local, regional, national, EU), the kind of approach used in the evaluation (quantitative, qualitative or mixed), and the purposes of the studies.

Similarly, the literature on *evaluating* the LEADER programme is wide-ranging, consisting in the application of many of the methodological and technical tools provided by literature on evaluation to the reality of implementation of the LEADER method at different levels: from the analysis of different Rural Development Programmes since programming period 2007-2013, to single case studies of the activities of LAGs at the local level and comparative studies among LAGs from the same or different countries, among others.

1.2 METHODOLOGY ADOPTED FOR THE EVALUATION OF MEASURE 19

In the case of this evaluation of Measure 19 of the RDP of the two Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano/Bozen and the role of LAGs in their territories, the methodology adopted is primary of qualitative analysis, deemed by the external evaluator as the most appropriate to answer the research question regarding the role that LAGs assume in their territories, compared to quantitative methods, which would also require a higher number of case studies to obtain significant data and insights.

At the same time, the evaluator has constructed a quantitative scheme of analysis in the form of an index with the aim to understand and represent the role adopted by each LAG on its territory of reference. The index has been designed to transform qualitative information into quantitative data. For the building of the index and the design of the related indicators, the evaluating body has drawn inspiration from the “leaderability index” defined by Cacace, Di Napoli and Ricci in 2010 for the evaluation of LEADER during the programming period 2007-2013 (more on the “leaderability” and the evaluator body’s indexes is to be found in the following sub-chapters).

To collect information relevant for the study, the qualitative methods adopted in this research are that of:

1. in-depth, open-ended interviews, with data consisting of “verbatim quotations with sufficient context to be interpretable” (Patton, 2003);
2. documents, thus written materials and other documents with data consisting of in “excerpts from documents captured in a way that records and preserves context” (Patton, 2003).

The collection of information relevant for the evaluation and research has been carried out through two different steps: a first preliminary data collection through desk analysis, concerning the Rural Development Programmes of the two Autonomous Provinces, principally of Measure 19 itself, and the Local Development Plans of the different LAGs. Regarding LDP, the research has mainly focused on: structure of the public-private partnership, territorial context (namely territorial and economic characteristics, local territorial issues highlighted in the strategy), priorities defined for the development strategy, development objectives of the LEADER region, thematic objectives of the Local Development Plan, the action plan with the measures to be adopted to reach planned objectives, participatory processes adopted during the development of the strategy, monitoring and evaluation plans.

The second step has been that of creating an interview to gather further data. To do so, the evaluator has used semi-structured, open-ended interviews with standardized questions. This decision has been made because this kind of questionnaires allow to capture interviewees' experiences and perspectives on the programme in their own terms, while providing each interviewee with the same stimuli (Patton, 2003). Another aspect relevant for the evaluator is that semi-structured interviews grant the interviewer the flexibility necessary to examine more in-depth peculiarities and specificities from each LAG which could transpire from interviewees' answers to the defined questions. The semi-structured interview has been designed based on Community guidelines for the evaluation of the LEADER-CLLD approach¹, with the objectives to deepen information collected through the analysis of the preliminary data collection and to gather further information needed to answer the aspects of the research question related to the ability of the LAG to act as a territorial development agent, thus providing the necessary information to assess the designed index.

The resulting questionnaire has been administered to the managers of the LAGs. The choice of the managers as interviewees has been determined based on the practice of *purposive sampling*. As explained by Etikan et al. (2016), the purposive sampling technique, or judgment sampling, “is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses”. The individuals selected in this type of sampling are individuals that are “proficient and well-informed with [the] phenomenon of interest”. It is in fact for their characteristics and role in the LAG structure that LAG managers have been selected: LAG managers are the intermediary between the LAG, thus the LAG board, technical staff, partners, etc. and its community of reference, including beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, local policy makers, entrepreneurs. They facilitate interaction and mediate among stakeholders at different institutional levels and they animate the territory. LAG managers are also often stable throughout a LAG's life or have been selected because of their knowledge about the LEADER approach, the organizational functions of the LAG, as well as the local community and territory and its political climate (Metta, 2016). Because of this, LAG managers have a deep knowledge of aspects related to the LEADER method and the organizational features of their LAGs while also being those responsible for the management aspects of local development strategies (Ciaravino et al., 2021).

1.2.1 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND INDICATORS: THEORETICAL BASIS AND ASSUMPTIONS

As previously mentioned, the evaluation and the related semi-structured interview submitted to LAG managers has been defined based on European Commission as well as FARNET Network guidelines for the evaluation of the LEADER-CLLD approach for the programming period in question, related to the evaluator needs.

EU guidelines define the focus for the evaluation at RDP level as the assessment of the LEADER-CLLD contributions to the RDP's Focus Areas objectives and contributions to achieving the Union Strategy for smart sustainable and inclusive growth. However, the interest of the evaluator was not that of evaluating if LAGs have achieved the objectives defined

¹ European Commission – Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development – Unit C.4. “Guidelines. Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD”. Brussel (2017). and FARNET. “Valutare l'approccio CLLD. Manuale per GAL e FLAG”. (2018).

through the RDP, but that of understanding the role that LAGs play in their territory. Thus, following the evaluation objectives established, the evaluator has defined different thematic areas of interest. Nevertheless, these thematic areas are still present in EU guidelines as recommendations for a more in-depth analysis both at RDP and LAG level. The areas of interest are: 1) the delivery mechanism of LEADER-CLLD that ensures the application of the LEADER method, 2) LAG animation and 3) the added value of LEADER-CLLD, distinguishable aspects that are however strongly interrelated.

The delivery mechanism is defined as “the set of rules, procedures and individual steps employed to translate the objectives of the policy into the final implementation of actions by the recipients of the funds” (European Commission, 2017). Although rules and procedures to implement the LEADER-CLLD method are first established by the managing authority at RDP level, LAGs do have some autonomy within the established framework in shaping rules and procedures in order to adapt them to local conditions and meet specific local needs. This of course depends also on what degree of freedom the delivery mechanism grants LAGs in choosing and implementing types of operations, for developing their own actions and operations, for participation in project selection and financing, as well as the scope of animation activities of the LAGs and the criteria for cooperation project selection.

LAG animation, together with capacity building and supports, refers to the LAG's capacity to animate the territory, therefore those operations whose aim is that of raising the “awareness, readiness, cooperation and networking capabilities of the local people to contribute to developing their area”. Animation can be performed through various initiatives that can be both linked to the CLLD strategy implementation, such as provision of information, promotion of the strategy, supporting potential beneficiaries in developing operations and preparing applications, or not directly linked to the strategy or a specific project, but rather focusing on the territory and population, such as facilitating exchanges between stakeholders, enhance the awareness for local heritage etc. The fundamental role of animation in the implementation of the LEADER-CLLD method has been recognized in this programming period: in fact, the EU legal framework specifies that in the 2014-2020 programming period “there should be a greater focus on animation and capacity building” (European Commission, 2017), proven by the explicit provision of preparatory support and a LEADER start-up kit; the explicit allocation of funds for animation, the budget increase for running costs and animation to 25% of the total public expenditure incurred in the CLLD strategy².

The added value of LEADER-CLLD is a concept of more difficult definition. The added value is generated through “the implementation of the programme/strategy, the RDP and LAG delivery mechanism and the capacity building/support/animation” (European Commission, 2017). It should be acquired through bottom-up and partnership approach, resulting in enhanced identification of local needs and local solutions, enhanced engagement from local stakeholders and a greater opportunity for innovation (Courades et al., 2018) and is created through the aspects explained above: the delivery mechanism of the LEADER-CLLD method and animation on the territory, which engage in a process allowing for an improvement in social capital and local governance as well as enhanced development results, which in the long term can contribute to structural changes in the area where the LAG operates (Courades et al., 2018). The minimum actions that LAGs should include in their activities to obtain the added value are the preparation, project selection and implementation of the CLLD strategy through activities related to communication and support to favor project generation, design, implementation and monitoring; cooperation projects with other territories; as well as animation of the LAG territory. Moreover, if the LEADER approach is implemented following its 7 principles it should enhance social capital, related to “changes in the entrepreneurial skills, changes in the use and valorization of local resources, changes in the administrative capacities of local authorities, changes in the institutional capacities” (European Commission, 2017). Those related to the added value are structural changes that can be analyzed only at impact level, therefore in the long term. As such, this aspect cannot be fully addressed in the ex-post evaluation on Measure 19 for the programming period 2014-2022. However, some of the features related to the concept of “added value” are included in this research, as they can be observed in the short- to mid-term and are closely related to the concept of LAG as local development agency.

These elements (delivery mechanism, animation, some of the aspects of added value) have thus been included in the evaluation framework and transferred to the semi-structured interview. Besides these thematic areas, the evaluator has found fitting to create an index in order to answer the research question. In its creation, the evaluator has considered some facets of the so-called “leaderability” index, created by Cacace, Di Napoli and Ricci in 2010 for the evaluation of LEADER in the programming period 2007-2013, re-adapting it to better fit their own research objectives. As such, this index has to be included in the theoretical background of the evaluation.

With their elaboration of the “leaderability” index, Cacace et al. tackle the issue of evaluating LEADER in the 2007-2013 programming period, in which the LEADER method has been included in ordinary EU programming for rural

² EU Regulation 1303/2013, Title III, Chapter II, Article 35.

development, through its incorporation in Rural Development Programmes³. This meant that the approach had to be re-designed to fit a wider programmatic context, in which various elements had to be properly set, namely specific objectives, procedural mechanisms, administrative and monitoring procedures, in conjunction with the role that LAGs had to assume in this scenario. Being the regulatory framework defined by the Community legislator rather broad⁴, each regional managing authority had structured its LEADER approach independently, following general guidelines outlined in the national level Strategic Plan, and in relation to the strategic orientations of its own Rural Development Programme. In this context, the authors have deemed necessary, in order to answer the question pertaining the capacity of LAGs and of the LEADER approach of offering a real contribution to local development dynamics, to evaluate the policy scenario in which LAGs can operate and the means available to them. Specifically, two elements are taken into account: political autonomy, related to LAGs decision-making ability⁵, and functional autonomy, thus the functions attributed to LAGs⁶. The two elements depend on the actions of RDP governance on one side, and on the capacities and competencies of the LAG on the other, which make up the governance system of the Local Development Plans.

RDP governance is the result of the interaction between the managing authority with various other bodies: the relevant Commission offices, MiPAAF⁷, the paying agency, the independent evaluator, technical assistance, etc. This interaction is conveyed through a regulatory framework, constituted by a series of measures, agreements, calls and guidelines as well as the dual role of monitoring and support required of the managing authority, in its more or less strict implementation of the rules defined. Taking this into account, the term "leaderability" is defined in Cacace et al.'s paper as "the attitude of the regulatory framework in integrating the LEADER approach in the RDP avoiding the denaturation of its characteristics as defined by EU Regulation 2698/05". In analyzing "leaderability", thus political autonomy and functional autonomy of LAGs, the objectives are to comprehend:

- how much scope for action is given to LAGs from the regulatory framework in defining the intervention area, strategic guidelines, types of operation to implement, as well as their own organizational features;
- whether LAGs are enabled to implement their own Local Development Plans following the LEADER method principles; if LAGs are granted decision-making power in defining the type of projects selected, or a broad autonomy for structuring in a flexible manner territorial animation actions; if LAGs have been attributed a decisive role in the organization and implementation of specific administrative and procedural functions.

The evaluation of the two dimensions is mainly based on data of qualitative nature, however the authors found appropriate the creation of a methodology providing a synthesis in numerical values, enabling a comparative analysis between the different regional regulatory frameworks, creating the "leaderability" index. The authors selected a series of criteria divided among the two dimension "political autonomy" and "functional autonomy", and a score was assigned to each, giving to each criterion a specific weight based on its importance for the purpose of "leaderability". The scores obtained for each dimension are then aggregated through an algebraic sum. Finally, the two final values of each dimension are transposed on a Cartesian plane, obtaining four ideal types of "leaderability" (see Graph. 1).

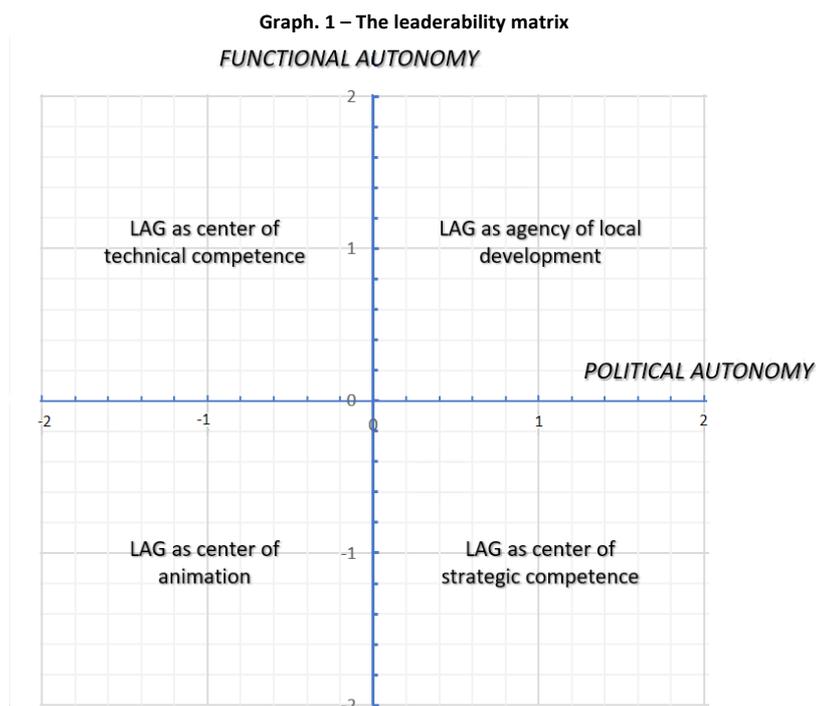
³ For the programming period 2007-2017 the LEADER method was part of the RDP as its 4th Axis. For the programming period 2014-2020 LEADER-CLLD has been defined as Measure 19 of the RDP.

⁴ EU Regulation 1698/05 defined general rules pertaining LAGs' mission, characteristics and core tasks. The subsequent EU Regulation n.1303/2013 for the programming period 2014-2020 has defined with more precision roles and tasks of LAGs pertaining the elaboration of the local strategy and animation activities. Furthermore, the 2013 Regulation has also recognized other important functions of LAGs, such as supporting local subjects in the elaboration and implementation of interventions, thus acknowledging the role of capacity builder and development agency. (Di Napoli and Tomassini, 2017)

⁵ EU Regulation 1698/2005 makes an explicit reference to the decision-making power that LAG must be allowed to have for the elaboration and implementation of local development strategies; this decision-making power is subject to general restrictions as defined by national legislation and specific indications defined in the RDP and in selection calls. (Cacace et al., 2010)

⁶ In regard to delegation of functions, Community guidelines establish several duties to guarantee principles of transparency and competition in the attribution of public funds, as well as veracity, coherence and accuracy of expenditures, requiring an articulated monitoring activities, usually attributed to the paying agency, who, with the approval of the managing authority, can delegate them. Specifically, administrative monitoring can be formally delegated to LAGs. (EU Regulation 1975/2006)

⁷ As referred to at the time of Cacace's et al. "leaderability" index definition, from 2022 known as Masaf.



Source: Own elaboration based on Cacace et al. (2010)

The 4 ideal types identified are:

1. *LAG as center of animation and information dissemination*: the decision-making power given to LAGs by the regulatory framework is very limited; the role of the LAG is limited at defining intervention strategies based on a relatively small set of pre-defined measures, with low margins for original contributions. The role of the LAG is that of a local desk for animation and information strictly based on the RDP.
2. *LAG as center of technical competence* (managerial and administrative): the LAG is seen as reliable in regard to managing administrative procedures and as a stimulus for local level policy demand; however, LAGs in this quadrant have a limited autonomy in terms of defining trajectories of development. As such, LAGs are entrusted with tasks of bureaucratic and administrative nature, while their strategic responsibilities are limited.
3. *LAG as center of strategic competence* (thematic): the managing authority grants LAGs autonomy in formulating and implementing innovative strategies that include experimental projects, actions and measures; at the same time, LAGs are not given specific responsibilities in the implementation phase, leaving the preliminary phase and monitoring activities related responsibilities to the managing authority and paying body.
4. *LAG as (or "towards") agency of local development*: LAGs assume full decision-making capacity and autonomy in the elaboration and implementation of local development strategies. The competences acquired by LAGs, related to a high level of reliability, allow for almost full delegation of administrative and monitoring functions. The characteristics of the LEADER approach are at an advanced stadium, thus LAGs are acknowledged as proper local development agencies.

The "leaderability" index was of interest for the evaluator because although for the programming period of reference the LEADER approach was one of the RDP Axis while in the programming period 2014-2022 of interest for this evaluation it has become a Measure, still the index provides significant insights in how LEADER is integrated in a wider programming context, with its limits and opportunities. Furthermore, the design of the four-quadrant matrix seemed an interest possibility to observe in a schematic and systemic way how LAGs operate in different situation.

At the same time, in the "leaderability" index some factors have not been considered. The first, which is also mentioned in Cacace's et al.'s paper, is that the index cannot take into account possible changes of the regulatory frameworks done during the programming period: to do so, data should be continuously or at least periodically collected as to update the matrix; even a slight change in autonomy granted at regional level to LAGs by the managing authority could strongly affect the position in the Cartesian plane. Furthermore, the analysis could be considered as limited compared to the evaluator needs for what concerns its focus on the regional RDP level. It is not taken into consideration the possibility that even if subject to the same regulatory framework, LAGs from the same region could act and behave differently from each other. This is the assumption made by the evaluator as one of the bases for its evaluation of LAGs in the Autonomous Provinces on Trento and Bolzano/Bozen for the programming period 2014-2022: that in the same region, LAGs can act and relate in different ways to the same RDP, despite adhering to regulatory limits defined in it. Thus, the

features of the “leaderability” index as well as its structure has been included in the designing of the evaluator's own index, as can be seen in the following paragraphs.

To be mentioned at this point is one final consideration on the evaluation framework established. The evaluator has decided not to include in its evaluation the expenditure capacity of LAGs. This choice has been made for three main reasons. First of all, LEADER-CLLD measures tend to be slower in their implementation compared to other RDP measures for their mode of operation. In fact, it takes time before Local Development Plans drafted by the LAGs are approved by the managing authority, therefore they experience a delay compared to other measures of the same programming period. Secondly, during the programming period 2014-2022 there have been issues related to Covid-19 that have determined some difficulties in the realizations of planned interventions due to raw material costs increases. This factor has continued to be an issue also after the implementation of the so-called Superbonus 110% in Italy, which has determined further cost increases and a slowing down of works due to unavailability of personnel⁸. Because of this, it did not make sense to include this type of evaluation in the analysis. Furthermore, as already highlighted, the evaluation wants to focus more on the capability (or not) of LAGs established by the RDP of becoming local development agencies and implement measures that go beyond the Programme, rather than evaluating if LAGs are able to implement the RDP itself.

1.2.2 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK: THE EVALUATOR'S INDEX⁹

As already mentioned, the set of indicators established by the evaluator finds its basis in Cacace et al.'s “leaderability” index. However, while Cacace et al. are interested in evaluating “leaderability” at RDP regional level, related to the regulatory framework, the following attempt seeks to evaluate the capacity of single LAGs of being a driving force behind the development of a territory.

For the purpose of this research, the aspects analyzed are those on which LAGs can intervene given some initial conditions as well as conditions that the LAG cannot affect, such as normative limits given by EU-, national- and regional level regulatory frameworks. Indeed, apart from these conditions determined by the regulatory framework, there are some elements which allow LAGs for some liberty in between set boundaries, such as which representatives to include in the partnership, adjusting RDP measures to better fit the needs of the territory, including in their local development plan wider pre-existing territorial strategies, etc. Moreover, LAGs can enact some measures that can encourage and favor their role of more active agencies in their territory, through the activation of extra-LEADER projects and actions, the provision of additional services not included in the RDP, the enhancement of animation activities, etc.

For the creation of the evaluation framework, the use of two dimensions of analysis as per Cacace et al. is maintained, however the denomination is changed to better fit the specific aspects considered in the defined indicators. Political autonomy (*autonomia decisionale*) is converted to decision-making ability (*capacità decisionale*). This decision has been taken because “autonomy” is a term related to what the RDP allows a LAG to do in its territory of competence, while the objective in this case is that of evaluating if the LAG has the capacity to make certain decisions. Functional autonomy (*autonomia funzionale*) becomes local development ability (*capacità di sviluppo locale*), related to LAG's ability to implement its local development strategy, thus its ability to realize activities and projects with the aim of development of its territory according to the projectuality defined through its decision-making ability.

To each indicator, related either to decision-making ability or to local development ability, are assigned points to be attributed to each LAG. In the definition of the values attributed to each indicator, it has been considered that not all criteria have the same relevance in the definition of the related dimension, thus the evaluator has defined a specific weight for each of the answers. If one indicator concerns more than one aspect, the points attributed to each indicator are cumulative. When the information codified in the indicator does not assume the form of a either positive or negative

⁸ Superbonus is a tax relief regulated by Article 119 of Decree Law n.34/2020 (decreto Rilancio), later extended by 2022 Budget Law. It consists in a deduction of 110% of expenses incurred in for the realization of specific interventions on buildings for energy efficiency, static consolidation or seismic risk reduction, starting from July 1st, 2020. This measure has determined a relevant inflationary impact. Due to the structure of the incentives, the narrow time window to terminate interventions and the perception that the incentive scheme would be temporary because of its generosity, demand had in fact immediately exceeded supply capacity, determining a high sectoral inflation. By the end of 2020 the cost of many goods and services in the construction sector had already increased in the double-digit percent range, in 2021 product unit costs in the same sector have increased of around 30%. The same costs have kept increasing in 2022, due also to the energy crisis. (Papi, 2022)

⁹ It is to be mentioned that the index used in this report has been refined by the evaluator following the writing of the present work in the context of an evaluation study on the CLLD approach in the fishing sector under the National Programme for the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund 2014-2020.

answer, the values attributed to the indicator are considered as minimum and maximum value, allowing for the assignment of other values between minimum and maximum.

The data collected for each indicator is derived from information gathered from:

- Local Development Plans of the LAGs;
- other significant documents provided by LAGs (such as mid-term self-evaluations);
- Rural Development Programmes;
- calls for selection;
- LAG websites;
- face-to-face interviews with the managers of the LAGs;
- a final focus group held with managers of the LAGs.

In regard to **decision-making ability** the following indicators have been defined:

- Cohesion of the territory, based on the organization of administrative functions in the territory of competence of the LAG through forms of aggregations such as Union of municipalities, *Comunità di Valle*, *Comunità Comprensoriale* or similar institutional bodies¹⁰.
+1 all municipalities in the LAG territory are in the same aggregation; +0.5 some of the municipalities in the LAG territory are in the same aggregation; -0.5 no aggregations
- Critical mass of the territory, based on the assumption that if the territory is too broad it is harder to implement actions and activities jointly; furthermore, if the territories are non-contiguous the risk is that of not being able to enact territorial presidia activities.
-0.5 the territory is non-contiguous; 0 the territory is contiguous
-0.5 the territory is outside the limits set by RDP; 0 the territory respects the limits set by RDP (between 10,000 and 150,000 inhabitants)
- Composition of the partnership, thus if the public-private partnership is representative of the instances and the organizations of the territory.
Points assigned based on the presence/absence of representatives from at least:
2/3 of total municipalities (directly or indirectly represented, through *Comunità Comprensoriale*, *Comunità di Valle*, etc.)
1 agricultural organization
1 craftsmanship organization
1 business organization
1 touristic organization
1 social organization
1 cultural organization
1 environmental organization
1 formative organization
1 other stakeholder
-0.1 for each missing component
- Territorial vision, related to the ability of the LAG to include and modulate in its Local Development Strategy wider territorial strategies or if the LAG refers to a larger territorial planning.
+0.5 if the Local Development Plan is part of an overarching strategy of the territory or is integrated to other local strategies; +0.5 if the management of the LAG is assigned to structures that are already operative in terms of local development policies; -1 if on the territory another local development instrument is active and it has not been integrated in the Local Development Strategy of the LAG, 0 none of the above apply.
- Strategic vision, related to LAG capacity to craft new measures and/or adapt RDP Measures to the specific needs of the territory, related to both content and selection criteria.
+0.5 LAG activates measures not activated by regional RDP; +0.5 LAG adjusts RDP Measures in terms of beneficiaries and share of funding; +0.5 LAG adds project selection criteria to those defined by RDP; -0.5 if none of the preceding points is assigned

In regard to **local development ability** the following indicators have been defined:

- Organogram, related to technical staff working on management and technical functions. One aspect is related to transparency, meaning that information on the staff working in the LAG is available to the general public

¹⁰ The evaluator considers the presence of such aggregations as determinant of inter-dependency conditions between different parts of the territory, stimulating relations and cohesion.

either through the LDP or the LAG website. The other aspect is related to the ability to manage administrative functions by technical staff.

-0.5 the organogram is not transparent; +0.5 the organogram is transparent

-0.5 difficulties in the management of bureaucracy by technical staff; 0 no difficulties in the management of bureaucracy by technical staff

- Credibility on the territory, evaluating if the LAG has been able to become point of reference for potential beneficiaries and for the territory, considering also the LAG's presence in the area in past programming periods.

Tab. 1 - Assigned points for credibility on the territory

	Point of reference	Not a point of reference
First programming period	0	-0,5
LAG has been active on the territory (or part of it) from more than one programming period	0	-1

- Animation and technical support for potential beneficiaries, related to animation activities focused on local territorial development rather than implementation of individual projects. The evaluator has defined 3 types of animation based on interviews with LAG managers:

Tab. 2 - Assigned points per type of animation

TYPE OF ANIMATION	CHARACTERISTICS	POINTS
Animation type 1	The LAG has worked on the territory for more than one programming periods thus there is no need to actively animate the territory: potential beneficiaries already know the LAG and refer directly to it	+0.5
Animation type 2	It is the first programming period for the LAG, thus it has worked on the territory to become known	+0.5
Animation type 3	The LAG thinks that animation is not useful once the Local Development Plan has been written and has opted for activating mainly infrastructural interventions by public bodies	-0.5

- Monitoring and self-evaluation, related to the type and frequency of monitoring and self-evaluation activities implemented by the LAG.
0 basic monitoring; +0.5 published at least 1 mid-term self-evaluation; +0.5 final self-evaluation already planned; -1 monitoring or self-evaluation not present or lacking
- Integration capacity, related to the ability to integrate in implemented projects other funds other than those provided specifically under LEADER and/or implementation of extra-LEADER projects.
+1 it has been done; 0 it has not been done
- Additional service activities, service activities or activities for the support of the territory activated/supported by the LAG
+0.5 additional service activities activated/supported; 0 no additional service activities
- Network potential
0 formal cooperation with other actors; -0.5 no formal cooperation with other actors

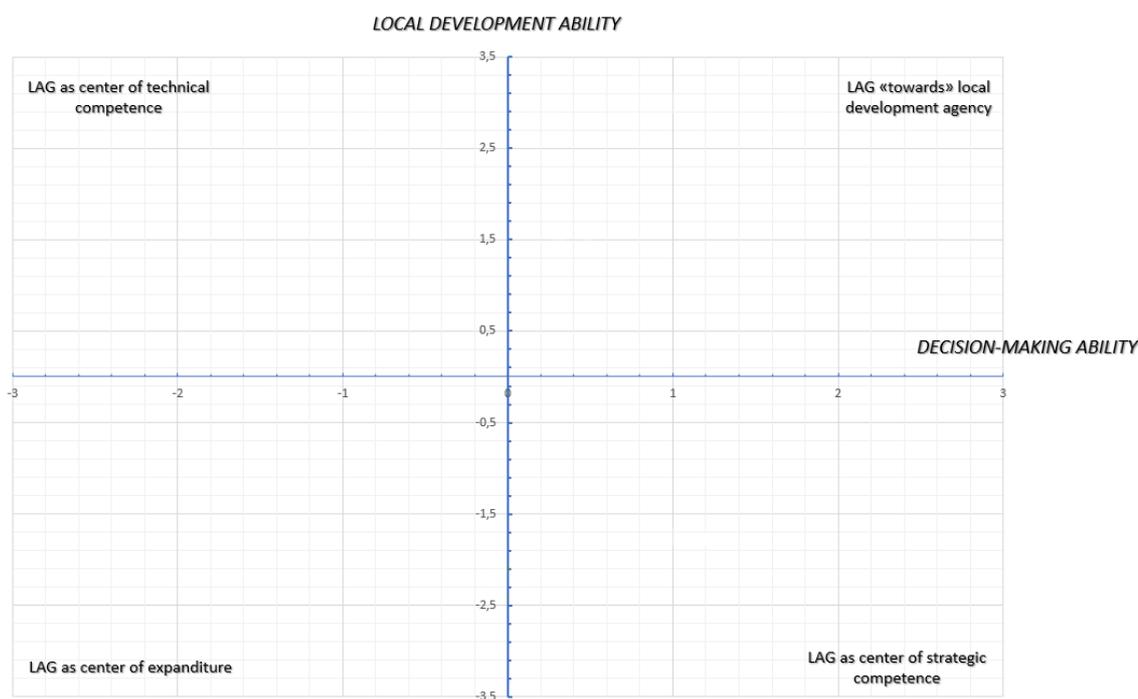
After collecting data and information to assign points to each indicator, the evaluator objective is that of transposing the results to a Cartesian plan similar to the one proposed by Cacace et al. To do so, the LAGs points from the different indicators are aggregated under each of the 2 dimensions. The two values obtained are then transposed on the Cartesian plan.

By combining the two dimensions, 4 types of LAG roles are obtained, represented in the four quadrants of the matrix (Graph. 2):

- LAG as center of expenditure
These LAGs have a passive interaction with the territory and tend not to contextualize the measures adopted in their territories to local needs, relying instead on measures defined in the RDP at regional level. Furthermore, they struggle with favoring the implementation of the strategy on their territory. However, they are still capable to ensure the allocation of funds on the territory, without playing an active role in the definition of the strategy.

- **LAG as center of technical competence**
These LAGs are characterized by their ability to favor the implementation of the defined strategy in their territories of reference. However they limit themselves to relying on the measures defined in the RDP at regional level to define the local strategy itself, without being able to contextualize them to local needs.
- **LAG as center of strategic competence**
These LAGs are able to elaborate a strategy that focuses on the specific needs of their territories, moving beyond measures defined at regional level as to tailor measures on the basis of local context. However, they struggle with favoring the implementation of the strategy in their territory.
- **LAG “towards” local development agency**
These LAGs are able to elaborate a strategy tailored on the specific needs of their local context. At the same time, they have the capacity and resources to favor its implementation successfully. In doing so, they move towards the role of local development agency for their territory.

Graph. 2 - The evaluation matrix



1.2.2.1 LIMITS OF THE EVALUATION MATRIX

This matrix can be a good evaluation system as it allows to understand if the groups formed under the LEADER-CLLD method respond to Community expectations on them being drivers of local development and not simply managers of funds. The matrix shows whether the funds spent by the Commission, regardless of single projects, can direct territorial development and generate structures that guarantee this development. As such, it can be considered an effective evaluation scheme in relation to CLLD objectives, which is the aim of the evaluation. If for a series of issues or choices that can come from either the managing authority, the LAG itself or that can be attributed to specific situation, the objective of going “towards” local development agency is not being achieved, the matrix can help in discerning the reasons behind it, thus whether the LAG is routed towards a certain direction or if there are structural issues that do not allow this movement. Moreover, the matrix provides, in relation to the objects of the evaluation and single indicators, instruments that can help in moving towards the direction of local development agency, providing tools as to what LAG can do to do so. Some LAGs could come to moving to the right upper quadrant, others to the axis origin, but in any case, they can identify a growth prospect if the conditions allow it and they want to do so. This is one of the major purposes of the evaluation: trying to help LAGs in moving towards the direction that has been defined, through policies, as the direction to be taken. Additionally, the matrix allows to comprehend the limits given by the regulatory framework: the objective is not to understand how the LAG works inside the regulatory framework, but rather if the framework becomes an obstacle to the direction the LAG is supposed to take.

At the same time, the matrix has some limits that need to be considered. The evaluator has built an index and its terms of assessment: although the evaluator has tried to consider all components, a series of qualitative aspects could pass undetected as the index is a quantitative one. The evaluation has thus been partially reduced to a strictly quantitative scheme. It is for this reason that alongside with this evaluation and matrix, there has been a part of evaluation focusing on interviews, which has included qualitative aspects that cannot be part of a quantitative scheme. This is one of the limits that can often be found in quantitative or qualitative schemes, hence the evaluator has recognized the need to include both methodologies in their analysis. Another risk is that LAGs might respond to this type of evaluation and index in a way which remains formal: in an effort to move the LAG in the quadrant "towards" local development agency, the LAG might cover only the quantitative aspect rather than qualitative ones. One final limit is that the scheme needs to be further verified. The first results obtained seems to tell that the direction is the right one. However, as convincing as it might be, it is still a scheme that is being used for the first time. It must be further applied for it to be refined and improved, as well as to identify and locate points where there could be interpretative difficulties. Furthermore, since the index is new, the single elements considered could present criticalities that are yet to emerge or criticalities that have not been considered.

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2 RESEARCH CONTEXT

2.1 MEASURE 19 IN THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES OF THE AUTONOMOUS PROVINCES OF TRENTO AND BOLZANO/BOZEN

The RDP of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen was adopted by the European Commission on May 26th, 2015. The RDP presents the priorities for the use of more than 486 million euros of public funding (from EAFRD, NextGeneration EU recovery instrument, national co-funding and additional national resources, regional funding) for the period 2014-2022. The main focus of the RDP is restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems, resource efficiency and climate change and improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors.

The RDP of the Autonomous Province of Trento was formally adopted by the European Commission on May 26th, 2015. The public funding available is of more than 486 million euros (from EARDF, national co-funding and additional national resources, regional funding). In the RDP, it is particularly stressed a focus on actions related to restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems, improving the competitiveness of the farm and forestry sectors and promoting social inclusion and rural development in rural areas.

Regarding Measure 19 on LEADER-CLLD, the approaches adopted by the two Autonomous Provinces can be first observed and compared through an analysis concerning their general description of the LEADER-CLLD measure, the definition of the eligible areas, the thematic areas identified and the definition of measures and operations that can be implemented by LAGs.

2.1.1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF MEASURE 19 OF THE RDPS CONCERNING LEADER-CLLD

Trento's RDP describes Measure 19 as a measure to meet the important need of reinforcing the relation between mountain agriculture and environment, tourism and development of rural areas. The territory for the implementation of LEADER needs to have a defined system where socio-economic activities integrate, or they have the potential to do so. The province defines that LEADER should be implemented in the areas that mostly need projects on touristic development, thus territories where tourist numbers are inferior compared to traditional tourist circuits. It is underlined the need to enhance these areas by diversifying activities of farms operating there, hence promoting the integration of agriculture and tourism also through specific local cultural identities of communities from the three linguistic minorities of Trentino: *ladina*, *mòchena* and *cimbria*, and not underestimating the attractiveness of the region's landscape.

Bolzano's RDP highlights how the LEADER strategy needs to ensure the involvement of local authorities and social and economic stakeholders, as well as a "bottom-up" approach to development. It expresses the need for innovation in the LEADER approach, both in regards of method and content. The innovative character is to be determined especially through the integrations of actions, cooperation among actors and enhancement of the territory with respect for the environment. Another objective for LEADER identified in the RDP is the growth of endogenous human capital, achieved through animation and selection activities carried out on the territory; LEADER needs to assume the important role of developing professional and human capacities of rural sub-provincial areas, to create the conditions for a local development of the territory based on responsibility and involvement of the subjects active on the territory. It is thus stressed the need for a strong and essential relation between the selected territory and human resources active in it.

From these definitions, the differences in the approaches to LEADER of the two Autonomous Provinces are immediately evident. Trento highlights the need for touristic development, recommending fields of interventions to be adopted. Therefore, Trento already defines in its RDP the content of LEADER future actions, and on which matters to intervene through local development strategies. On the other side, Bolzano does not address the contents of the strategies, leaving their definition to LAGs, rather it defines the approach to be taken, therefore emphasizing the CLLD approach, providing guidelines concerning the role that LEADER through LAGs needs to take on.

2.1.2 ELIGIBLE AREAS

The RDP of Trento already identifies two LEADER eligible areas; the eastern area (including 4 *Comunità di Valle*¹¹: *Comunità di Valle Primiero*, di Valsugana e Tesino, di Valle Alta Valsugana Bersntol, di Valle Altipiani Cimbri) and the central area (including 3 *Comunità di Valle*: *Comunità della Valle dei Laghi*, della Rotaliana and della Valle di Cembra), both meeting the requirements of EU Regulation n.1303/2013. The RDP also emphasizes that for each the two areas only one Local Development Strategy will be selected to concentrate resources on the selected areas to maximize the multiplier effect.

Bolzano/Bozen's RDP defines the characteristics of LEADER eligible areas and assigns the task of applying as possible LEADER territory to seven of the eight *Comunità Comprensoriali*^{12,13}, defined based on characteristics of geographical and cultural homogeneity and consisting of representatives from the municipalities that belong to each *Comunità Comprensoriale*. This decision was made to valorize these administrative bodies which already operate on the territory and in decentralized areas with an organized administrative and political structure. Furthermore, past experience during LEADER I, LEADER II, LEADER+ and axis 4 of the RDP 2007-2013, in which LAGs were created in the context of *Comunità Comprensoriali*, validates the decision to assign this responsibility to them again.

The decisions taken by the two Autonomous Provinces in regards of defining eligible areas continues to show the difference in their approaches. Trento's RDP already specifies which will be the two LEADER areas of the Province, without allowing for further elaboration, following through the content previously defined for Measure 19, thus the need for LEADER to be implemented in areas of the province that need touristic development; hence, it may be assumed that the selection of the two LEADER stems from decisions made at the provincial level. In contrast, Bolzano-Bozen does not assume the responsibility for this decision, delegating this task to administrative bodies which are closer to, and thus supposedly more knowledgeable about, the local context of the different rural territories located in the province.

2.1.3 THEMATIC AREAS

The two RDPs present a list of thematic areas that can be activated by LAGs in their local development strategy based on the partnership agreement.

Trento RDP defines that each LAG can activate up to three thematic areas among the list provided; in the strategy the thematic areas should be related to one another, clearly stating connections and synergies among them. Based on provincial operational guidelines, the strategy activated through LEADER concerns strengthening the links between agriculture, environment and sustainable tourism.

The activable thematic areas of intervention are:

1. development and innovation of supply chains and local production systems (agri-food, artisan and manufacturing ones);
2. development of renewable energy chain (energy production and saving);
3. sustainable tourism;
4. care and conservation of landscape, land use and biodiversity;
5. enhancement and management of natural and environmental resources;
6. valorization of cultural assets and artistic heritage related to the territory;
7. access to essential public services;
8. social inclusion of specific disadvantaged and/or marginalized groups;

¹¹ *Comunità di Valle* are public bodies established with Legge provinciale 16 giugno 2006, n.3. They are the intermediate level between municipalities and the Autonomous Province. They are made up of an associative structure, composed by the municipalities of each territory and they exercise administrative functions as defined by law. They have replaced the comprensori, which in turn had replaced mountain communities (established by L. 3 dicembre 1971, n. 1102).

¹² The *Comunità Comprensoriali* (CC) are public bodies established by Article 7 of Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica 22 marzo 1974, n. 279, with the purpose of promoting the enhancement and protection of the environment in mountain or partially-mountain areas, encouraging the participation of the population to the economic, social, cultural and ecological development of the areas. For the Province of Bolzano/Bozen, the CCs are regulated by legge provinciale 20 marzo 1991, n.7. In the Province there are 7 Ccs: CC Vinschgau - Val Venosta, CC Oberes Eisacktal - Alta Val d'Isarco, CC Pustertal - Val Pusteria, CC Burghragnamt - Burgraviato, CC Eisacktal - Valle Isarco, CC Salten Schlern - Salto-Sciliar, CC Überetsch und Unterland – Oltradig e Bassa Atesina and CC Bozen - Bolzano. The CCs pursue the common interests of their areas and promote and coordinate initiatives for the development of the areas. The Province and the municipalities can delegate to the CCs administrative duties of supra-municipal natures. Furthermore, the CC exercises the tasks ascribed to it by provincial law.

¹³ CC Bolzano is excluded as it is zona rurale A (urban or peri-urban area) (Rete Rurale Nazionale, Nota sulla classificazione delle aree rurali per la programmazione 2014-20)

9. requalification of the rural territory with possible establishment of inclusive services and spaces for the community;
10. diversification of non-agricultural activities by farms and other agricultural enterprises.

Same as Trento, Bolzano/Bozen defines that each LAG can activate up to three thematic areas among the list provided; in the strategy the thematic areas are to be related to one another, clearly stating connections and synergies among them.

The activable thematic areas of intervention are:

1. development and innovation of supply chains and local production systems (agri-food, artisan, fishing and manufacturing ones);
2. sustainable tourism;
3. valorization of cultural assets and artistic heritage related to the territory;
4. access to essential public services;
5. urban requalification with possible establishment of inclusive services and spaces for the community.

Furthermore, according to Bolzano/Bozen, LAGs can further operate under other thematic areas that focus on UE priorities as per UE Regulation n.1305/2013. Lastly, the RDP specifies that the list of thematic areas is to be considered as approximate and not limitative regarding the choice of themes by LAGs. In this sense it remains in line with the definition previously given to Measure 19, namely it defines more clearly the freedom of choice about the contents of the strategy given to LAGs.

2.1.4 DEFINITION OF IMPLEMENTABLE MEASURES AND OPERATIONS

The RDPs also define implementable Measures and operations in each LAG's LEADER-CLLD strategy.

For the Autonomous Province of Trento, fundable interventions need to be implemented within the framework of Operations provided by the RDP (excluding some non-activable Measures). Furthermore, the RDP allows LAGs to individuate other Operations not included in the RDP, provided that they allow for the achievement of the priorities and focus areas defined in article 5 of EU Regulation n.1305/2013. In the strategy, LAGs must also identify beneficiaries, aid intensity, eligibility conditions and selection criteria, in accordance with the Community legal framework.

The RDP of Bolzano/Bozen requires that LAGs' proposed operations be within the measures defined by the provincial RDP or EU Regulation n.1305/2013.

Thus, in regard to implementable measures, Trento provides LAGs with major autonomy in the definition of operations to implement, enabling them to activate measures not activated by the RDP, hence allowing LAGs to define types of interventions based on strategic needs of the territory and on specificities of the local development strategy, having, however, already defined that the strategy's objective must be touristic development. Instead, Bolzano/Bozen limits activable measures to a set of predefined measures, which in a sense shows Bolzano/Bozen's limitations in approaching innovation; this aspect seems peculiar as previously Measure 19 of the RDP highlights the need for innovation coming from the LEADER approach.

2.1.5 A FINAL COMMENTARY OF THE TWO RDPS

The observations made on the two RDPs have presented the differences in the approaches adopted for the LEADER-CLLD method as defined in Measure 19 in the two Autonomous Provinces. To summarize, the approach adopted by the A.P. of Trento to the implementation of the LEADER approach is strongly linked to the RDP itself. It is in the RDP that the two areas are defined and also the scope that LAGs have to work on is clearly stated. Therefore, LAGs are limited regarding their decision-making ability; although LAGs are granted the ability to select measures that the province did not activate. Bolzano/Bozen defines the guidelines for the methodology to be adopted in the implementation of the LEADER-CLLD method giving LAGs more latitude in regards of their decision-making ability on the objectives to be met through the implementation of the method, allowing them to define at local level the priorities for their territories, thus seeming to provide LAGs with the ability to act as local development agency for their territories. On the other side, the RDP defines the set of measures that can be activated by LEADER and in this sense the innovation ability of LAGs is in some ways hampered; at the same time, having predefined funds that already define what and how LAG can enact measures takes away from LAGs the burden of realization of the programme.

2.2 THE EIGHT LAGS

The RDPs of the two Autonomous Provinces have activated a total of eight LAGs in their areas: two for the Province of Trento and six for the Province of Bolzano/Bozen. The two LAGs in the Province of Trento are GAL Trentino Centrale and GAL Trentino Orientale. In the Province of Bolzano/Bozen, the LAGs are GAL Pustertal/Val Pusteria, GAL Sarntaler Alpen/Alpi di Sarentino, GAL Súdtiroler Grenzland/regione di confine dell'Alto Adige, GAL Vinschgau/Val Venosta, GAL Wipptal 2020 and GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten. The table below summarized the main characteristic of the territories of the eight LAGs; a full description of the eight territories is provided in the annexes (Annex I).

Tab. 3 - Summary of the characteristics of the areas of the eight LAGs

	GAL TRENTINO CENTRALE	GAL TRENTINO ORIENTALE	GAL PUSTERTAL	GAL SARNTALER ALPEN	GAL SÜDTIROLER GRENZLAND	GAL VINSCHGAU	GAL WIPPTAL 2020	GAL EISACKTALER DOLOMITEN
LEADER programming periods	First programming period	Never as a single territory, but all territories of the 4 Comunità di Valle have previous LEADER experience from programming periods 1994-1999 and 2000-2006	Programming periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 The area under LEADER has been increased for the programming period 2014-2020	Programming periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 only with the municipality of Sarntal/Sarentino In the programming period 2014-2020 the LEADER area includes 9 additional municipalities	In programming periods 1994-1999, 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 only with the territory of Val d'Ultimo-Alta Val di Non For the programming period 2014-2020, the LEADER area has been extended to include Bassa Atesina	As community initiative in 1991-1993 and in programming periods 1994-1999 and 2000-2006	In programming periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013	First programming period
Agriculture	Viticulture sector	Animal farming Fruit production	Cattle farming	Farming activities preventing diversification	Stronger economic sector of the area	Apple production on the valley floor Dairy production for mountain agriculture	Decreasing number of farms, implying intensification of agriculture	Decreasing number of farms, implying intensification of agriculture
Other relevant economic activities	No relevant ones	No relevant ones	Small-medium enterprises Most popular touristic valley of the Autonomous Province	No relevant ones	Construction sector In the area of Bassa Atesina the prevalent economic sector is the hospitality one	Manufacturing sector (mainly construction) Touristic sector	High number of employed in the service sector compared to provincial average	No relevant ones
Demographic trends	Demographic flows increasing, apart from negative growth in Val di Cembra	Demographic flows decreasing but positive	Positive demographic trend	Positive demographic trend, even if inferior to the provincial average 2 municipalities and 2 districts present negative demographic trends	Stable demographic trend in Bassa Atesina Negative trend in Val d'Ultimo-Alta Val di Non	Stable positive demographic trend	Positive demographic trend	Growth rate decreasing due to some municipalities having a negative demographic balance
Mean self-containment index ¹⁴	33.70	29.34	47.17	45.11	49.29	51.18	37.12	39.66
Areas of cultural and/or environmental interest	Eco-museums of Argentario and Valle dei Laghi Reserves Network of Alta Valle di Cembra	Parco Naturale di Paneveggio – Pale di S. Martino Natura 2000 sites	Parco Naturale Fanes-Senes-Braies Vedrette di Ries-Aurina Parco Nazionale Alti Tauri Dolomites	None	Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio Parco Naturale Monte Corno	Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio Parco Naturale del Gruppo Tessa Natura 2000 sites	One Natura 2000 site Historical town of Sterzing/Vipiteno	None

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the LDSs of LAGs and previous information acquired by the evaluator in their evaluation work

¹⁴ The mean value for the index of self-containment, meaning the capacity of an area to internally contain population flows that originate from it and thus satisfy labor and study demand produced in the area. Own elaboration on Istat data (2020); complete data divided per LAG and municipality can be found in the Annexes (Annex II).

2.2.1 SIMILARITIES AND PECULIARITIES OF THE AREAS OF THE EIGHT LAGS

The areas of the LAGs from the two Autonomous Provinces display both some common traits as well as distinctive features of each of them.

The defined LAG areas are predominantly mountain territories generally not characterized by depopulation phenomena although their demographic development has been declining, with the exception of some specific areas where demographic trends are in the negative¹⁵. All territories are characterized by the presence of significant commuting rates¹⁶ (ISTAT, 2020). The territories are characterized by the important presence of the agricultural sector, although agricultural vocations vary, and a vocation for tourism, even though this vocation might concern specific sub-areas and might be lower compared to other territories surrounding LAG areas.

At the same time, each LAG area has some specific features relevant for further analysis, described in the table below.

Tab. 4 - Peculiarities of the territories of the eight LAGs

LAG	PECULIARITIES OF THE LAG'S TERRITORY
GAL Trentino Centrale	Significant viticulture and wine production; Territory divided into three Comunità di Valle (later significant for issues encountered during LEADER implementation).
GAL Trentino Orientale	Territories making up the LAG area had previous LEADER experiences relatively distant in time; Wide territory with valleys that are very independent from a social point of view and very different communities, because of their belonging to different valleys.
GAL Pustertal/Val Pusteria	The LAG was extended consistently compared to previous LEADER experiences, involving all municipalities of Pustertal; Among all LAGs, GAL Pustertal/Val Pusteria is the one with the more marked touristic vocation.
GAL Sarntaler Alpen/Alpi di Sarentino	Until the last programming period, the LAG area included only one municipality, for the programming period 2014-2020 it included a total of 10 municipalities; The accessibility to the territory has always been complicated, there has been an improvement in the last few years, but the area is still quite isolated.
GAL Südtiroler Grenzland/regione di confine dell'Alto Adige	This is the only LAG fragmented from a territorial point of views, in fact the two sub-areas are non-contiguous; Even in contiguous territories road connections and networks are scarce; Characterized more than the others by depopulation phenomena.
GAL Vinschgau/Val Venosta	There has been no temporal continuity in LEADER presence in the area; Significant apple production; Historical differences in land management compared to other territories, as it was once annexed to Switzerland; The LAG area comprehends all municipalities of Vinschgau.
GAL Wipptal 2020	More intensive animal farming compared to the rest of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen; Characterized by its position on the Brenner border.
GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten	Newly established LAG, born from a specific need expressed by the territory; Characterized by its position on the left bank of river Adige and thus the LAG area does not include any bigger towns.

¹⁵ The areas characterized by negative demographic trends are Val di Cembra for GAL Trentino Centrale, 2 mountain districts and 2 municipalities for GAL Sarntaler Alpen/Alpi di Sarentino, the sub-area of Val d'Ultimo-Alta Val di Non for GAL Südtiroler Grenzland/regione di confine dell'Alto Adige and some municipalities in the are of GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten

¹⁶ The 6 LAGs from the Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen clearly state in their LDP the presence of a high number of commuters. The LDP of the 2 LAGs from the Autonomous Province of Trento lack this information, but an analysis of Istat data on the self-containment index of the municipalities shows that the situation is similar to the other 6 LAGs. As to provide complete information on the matter with relevant data and be able to compare the situation in all 8 LAG areas, a complete elaboration of Istat data regarding the self-containment index for the municipalities in each LAG and mean values for each territory can be found in the Annexes Table 1 the mean value for each LAG territory can also be found in Table 3.1.

3 RESULTS

3.1 RELEVANT INFORMATION GATHERED ON AND FROM THE LAGS

The information relevant for this research pertaining LAGs, gathered by the evaluator through the desk analysis of Local Development Plans, LAG website and other relevant documentation, as well as through the semi-structured interview administered to LAG managers, has concerned territorial characteristics of the LAG area, including territorial issues and social actors, structure of the public-private partnership, development strategy and LAG's objectives, participatory processes, animation activities, relationship between animation and administrative activities, activities and projects financed under the strategy, issues and benefits in the implementation of the strategy, territorial governance, self-evaluation, network and cooperation activities, actions on other funds and extra-LEADER services provided by the LAG.

Following is a table summarizing the information gathered by the evaluator.

Tab. 5 - Brief summary of the information gathered on the eight lags (1/4)

LAG	AREA	PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE	STRATEGY UPDATES AFTER FIRST VERSION ¹⁷
GAL Trentino Centrale	51,995 inhabitants 370 square km	TOT: 19 68.42% private members 31.58% public members 63.16% men 36.84% women	No
GAL Trentino Orientale	95,785 inhabitants 1,457.65 square km	TOT: 18 61.11% private members 38.89% public members 83.33% men 16.67% women	Yes, significant changes in 2019
GAL Pustertal	81,234 inhabitants 2,068.59 square km	TOT: 22 76% private members 24% public members 76% men 24% women	No
GAL Sarntaler Alpen	22,369 inhabitants 633.98 square km	TOT: 33 61% private members 39% public members 73% men 27% women	No
GAL Südtiroler Grenzland	10,563 inhabitants 455.63 square km	TOT: 41 56.1% private members 43.9% public members 65.1% men 34.9% women	No
GAL Wipptal 2020	Around 20,000 inhabitants 650.01 square km	TOT: 25 64% private members 36% public members 68% men 32% women	No
GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten	10,805 inhabitants 288.42 square km	TOT: 24 66.7% private members 33.3% public members 83.4% men 16.6% women	No
GAL Vinschgau	ASTAT 2016: around 40,000 inhabitants 1,442 square km	TOT: 7 57% private members 43% public members 86% men 14% women (1 of 7)	No

¹⁷ Updates of the financial plan are not considered.

Tab. 6 - Brief summary of the information gathered on the eight lags (2/4)

LAG	SELF-EVALUATION	COOPERATION	PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES
GAL Trentino Centrale	No	Project on E5 path with GAL Trentino Orientale, Südtiroler Grenzland. Sarntaler Alpen. Difficulties in cooperation for different requirements of the managing authorities of the two Autonomous Provinces	Strong interference of the technical staff of the LAG in the definition of the strategy and project proposals (oriented projectuality)
GAL Trentino Orientale	Not yet but planned.	Project on Via Claudia Augusta with GAL Pre-Alpi Dolomiti. Project on E5 path with GAL Trentino Centrale, Südtiroler Grenzland. Sarntaler Alpen: the common part was complex as there are no common guidelines.	Activation of focus groups, collection of expressions of interest to orient types of interventions and the public expenditure to be assigned to each action. Few public consultations for limited time.
GAL Pustertal	First on-going self-evaluation in 2019. Final self-evaluation planned for 2024.	One project with two LAGs from Finland. Project on SMART concepts in rural areas with GAL Wipptal 2020 and Eisacktaler Dolomiten. Informal network with the other LAGs from Bolzano/Bozen.	Working groups during the writing of the strategy, have not continued afterwards.
GAL Sarntaler Alpen	Not yet but planned. Performed ongoing monitoring.	Project on the Gastronomic Week Eisacktaler Kost with GAL Wipptal 2020 and Eisacktaler Dolomiten. Project on E5 path with GAL Trentino Orientale, Trentino Centrale, Südtiroler Grenzland. As GRW ¹⁸ cooperation with GAL Val Sabbia (start-up of young entrepreneurs). Informal cooperation with national network of LAGs. Informal network with the other LAGs from Bolzano/Bozen.	Working groups for each of the 10 municipalities of the LEADER area, with an average of 5 meetings for each municipality before the writing of the strategy. The municipalities' working groups have not been activated after the elaboration of the strategy because those participating after strategy publication were only LAG members.
GAL Südtiroler Grenzland	The final self-evaluation is ongoing.	The area of Bassa Atesina cooperates on the project on E5 path with GAL Trentino Centrale, Trentino Orientale and Sarntaler Alpen. Exchanges with some LAGs from Lombardy region (Val Sabbia, Val Sariana, Val Brembiana) on the topic of wool processing. Exchanges with LAGs from Austria and Germany on the topic of mountain viticulture. Informal network with the other LAGs from Bolzano/Bozen.	Working groups in each of the 2 areas during the writing of the strategy, have not continued afterwards.
GAL Wipptal 2020	First on-going self-evaluation in 2020. Final self-evaluation planned for the end of 2023 or the beginning of 2024.	Project on the Gastronomic Week Eisacktaler Kost with GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten and Sarntaler Alpen. Project on SMART concepts in rural areas with GAL Pustertal and Eisacktaler Dolomiten. Informal network with the other LAGs from Bolzano/Bozen.	Working groups in each of the 2 areas during the writing of the strategy, have not continued afterwards.
GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten	First on-going self-evaluation in 2020. Final self-evaluation planned for the end of 2023 or the beginning of 2024.	Project on the Gastronomic Week Eisacktaler Kost with GAL Wipptal 2020 and Sarntaler Alpen. Project on SMART concepts in rural areas with GAL Pustertal and Wipptal 2020. Informal network with the other LAGs from Bolzano/Bozen.	Working groups in each of the 2 areas during the writing of the strategy, have not continued afterwards.
GAL Vinschgau	No. Final audit report planned based on monitoring.	No project in formal cooperation with other LAGs. Informal network with the other LAGs from Bolzano/Bozen.	No working groups activated. In the area working groups of Terra Raetica were already active and they were the basis for the writing of the strategy ¹⁹ .

¹⁸ An explanation of and more information of GRW (Genossenschaft für Regionalentwicklung und Weiterbildung) and its interaction with LAGs can be found in the following sub-chapter.

¹⁹ In Terra Raetica (Switzerland, Vinschgau and Tyrol in Austria) 3 working groups on the macro-themes agriculture, environment and tourism have been active for several years. They meet at least twice as year, same as the Council of Terra Raetica. The LAG has based its strategy on their work.

Tab. 7 - Brief summary of the information gathered on the eight lags (3/4)

LAG	PROJECTS FUNDED (PUBLIC-PRIVATE) ²⁰	ANIMATION ²¹	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADMINISTRATIVE AND ANIMATION ACTIVITIES
GAL Trentino Centrale	56 private 41 public	Animation type 2	The administrative part creates less problems than animation activities. The interviewee does both administrative and animation activities but "does not count work hours".
GAL Trentino Orientale	49 private 11 public	Animation type 2. From 2021 the quantity of animation has diminished but the LAG kept in contact with beneficiaries that were managing projects.	Not many problems in managing them. The followed procedure steps allowed administrative and animation activities not to overlap for more than a few weeks, making them cyclically separated steps.
GAL Pustertal	7 private 27 public	Animation type 2.	There is a lot of bureaucracy to keep up with. Many municipalities beneficiary of funds had issues with it, thus they supported beneficiaries a lot. It was not easy to manage both kinds of activities.
GAL Sarntaler Alpen	5 private 12 public	Animation type 2.	Most of the time working on the LAG is spent on bureaucracy. It is a deficit because then it lacks time for effective animation on the territory.
GAL Südtiroler Grenzland	3 private 30 public	Animation type 3.	No issues because animation activities were carried out only at the beginning of the programming period during the definition of the strategy. Afterwards the focus was only on administrative activities. Having concentrated the resources on public and touristic infrastructures there was no need for further animation on the territory.
GAL Wipptal 2020	2 private 15 public	Animation type 1.	The technical staff of the LAG feels like bureaucrats, at the expense of animation
GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten	1 private 19 public	Animation type 1.	The technical staff of the LAG feels like bureaucrats, at the expense of animation
GAL Vinschgau	12 private (mainly renovation of farmsteads) 13 public	Animation type 3.	It was difficult to find a balance between them. At the beginning the LAG spent a lot of time supporting those who wanted to present a project. With time there was an improvement when beneficiaries understood how bureaucracy worked and that they needed to stay in contact with the LAG. Thus, with time the balance between animation and administrative activities has shown an improvement, however it is felt that the animation activity could be further improved on the LAG's part.

²⁰ The number of projects funded is not definitive as the data has been collected through LAGs websites and calls for projects launched as of May 2023, thus not encompassing the whole programming period as some projects are still on-going and have not yet been published on websites. However, tendencies related to funding a higher number of either private or public projects can be presumed from the data available to the evaluator at the time of this research.

²¹ The evaluator has defined 3 types of animation based on interviews with LAG managers:
 Animation type 1: The LAG has worked on the territory for more than one programming periods thus there is no need to actively animate the territory: potential beneficiaries already know the LAG and refer directly to it.
 Animation type 2: It is the first programming period for the LAG, thus it has worked on the territory to become known.
 Animation type 3: The LAG thinks that animation is not useful once the Local Development Plan has been written and has opted for activating mainly infrastructural interventions by public bodies.

Tab. 8 - Brief summary of the information gathered on the eight lags (4/4)

LAG	LAG HAS ACTIVATED MEASURES NOT ACTIVATED BY REGIONAL RDP OR ADAPTED RDP MEASURES TO ITS SPECIFIC CONTEXT	ACTION ON OTHER FUNDS	EXTRA-LEADER SERVICES
GAL Trentino Centrale	Yes, activated new measures: <i>Azione 4.3.a recupero terreni incolti</i> <i>Azione 4.3.b interventi per lo smaltimento dei reflui da interventi fitosanitari in agricoltura</i> <i>Azione 6.4.b sviluppo della ricettività minore</i> <i>Action 7.6 recupero e valorizzazione delle testimonianze storico-culturali</i> (complementary to RDP Measure 7.6 and Operation 7.6.1 which however referred to natural and environmental initiatives)	No	No
GAL Trentino Orientale	Yes, activated new measures: <i>Azione 4.3 interventi per la bonifica dei terreni incolti</i> <i>Azione 7.6 tutela e riqualificazione del patrimonio storico-culturale del territorio</i> (see GAL Trentino Centrale)	<i>National Strategy on Internal Areas</i> (SNAI) in the internal area of Tesino (territory included in LEADER). Natura 2000 network with the activation of a budget of provincial resources and aids from RDP.	Extra-Leader services as service contracts from LAG members and non-members: 1. Coordination of the project of Parco Miniera Lagorai 2. Technical assistance SNAI (Tesino) 3. Coordination of project on reserves of river Brenta. As institutional activity in favor of LAG members: management of the implementation of DPCM 24 settembre 2020 (funds that peripheral and ultra-peripheral municipalities could allocate to artisanal activities); this also allowed the LAG to broaden its public-private partnership.
GAL Pustertal	No	No, however GRW also manages Interreg	Not yet. There is a project for the activation of a welcome center as support service for new citizens or citizens who come back, where they can access all necessary information to integrate in the area.
GAL Sarntaler Alpen	No	Yes, as GRW Project to bring together chestnut producers under the name "Chestnuts of Südtirol" (RDP) Project on polyculture with Bioland Südtirol and Bioland Deutschland (EU direct funding) Provincial project on digitalization through PNRR.	Yes, as GRW.
GAL Südtiroler Grenzland	No	No	No
GAL Wipptal 2020	No	Yes, as GRW Wipptal/Eisacktal consulting for the stipulation and realization of local development projects through extra-Leader funds (PNRR, Interreg, cooperation on CLLD with Northern Wipptal)	Yes, as GRW Wipptal/Eisacktal organization of professional and personal training, summer courses and activities for children.
GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten	No	Yes, as GRW Wipptal/Eisacktal consulting for the stipulation and realization of local development projects through extra-Leader funds (PNRR, Interreg, cooperation on CLLD with Northern Wipptal)	Yes, as GRW Wipptal/Eisacktal organization of professional and personal training, summer courses and activities for children.
GAL Vinschgau	No	No	No

3.2 THE EVALUATOR INDEX: RESULTS

Based on the answers given in the interviews and data gathered through the desk analysis, the evaluator has assigned values for each indicator of the two analyzed dimensions (decision-making ability and local development ability) to each of the 8 LAGs. The results can be observed in the table below, while in the Annexes tables providing the justification detailing the reasons why specific indicator values have been attributed to each LAG can be found (Annex III).

Tab. 9 - Indicator values attributed to LAGs

	GAL TRENTINO CENTRALE	GAL TRENTINO ORIENTALE	GAL PUSTERTAL	GAL SARNTALER ALPEN	GAL SÜDTIROLER GRENZLAND	GAL VINSCHGAU	GAL WIPPTAL 2020	GAL EISACKTALER DOLOMITEN
DECISION-MAKING ABILITY								
Cohesion of the territory	0.5	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	1
Critical mass of the territory	0	0	0	0	-0,5	0	0	0
Composition of the partnership	-0.4	-0.2	-0.1	-0.3	-0.9	-0.5	-0.1	-0.3
Territorial vision	0	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	0.5	0.5
Strategic vision	1	1	-0.5	-0.5	-0.5	-0.5	-0.5	-0.5
TOT	1.1	1.8	0.4	0.2	-1.4	0	0.9	0.7
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ABILITY								
Organogram	-0.5	0.5	0	-0.25	0.25	-0.75	0	0
Credibility on the territory	-0.5	0	0	0	-1	-1	0	0
Animation and technical support for potential beneficiaries	0.25	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Monitoring and self-evaluation	-1	0.5	1	1	1	0.5	1	1
Integration capacity	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
Additional services activities	0	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	0.5	0.5
Network potential	0	0	0	0	0	-0.5	0	0
TOT	-1.75	3	1.5	2.75	-0.25	-2.25	3	3

At this point, it seems appropriate to further elaborate on certain specific aspects that might be more nuanced if observed from a qualitative point of view, compared to the quantitative analysis expressed in the table above.

The indicator “strategic vision” is related to LAG capacity to craft new measures and/or adapt RDP Measures to the specific needs of the territory, related to both content and selection criteria. It is to be noted that none of the points have been assigned to the LAGs from the A.P. of Bolzano/Bozen, meaning they have not activated new measures nor adapted RDP measures to their specific contexts, while both LAGs from the A.P. of Trento have activated measures not present in the regional RDP, crafted to answer specific needs of their territories. In particular, GAL Trentino Centrale has activated Azione 4.3.b: “intervention for waste management of wastewater from plant-health protection measures in agriculture”, on this the LAG manager elaborates:

“L'azione per realizzare i centri di lavaggio è un'esigenza che nella prima fase della strategia è subito saltata fuori. L'abbiamo inserita quindi come misura specifica (...). L'altro giorno è stato inaugurato il primo centro e poi ho letto che tra gli interventi previsti della Strategia nazionale per la prossima programmazione c'è anche questo” // “The action on the creation of wastewater management systems is a need expressed from the first phase of the strategy creation. Thus, we have inserted it as a specific measure (...). The other day we inaugurated the first system and then I read that among the planned measures of the national Strategy for the next programming period there is the same one”.

At the same time, this difference between the two Autonomous Provinces could be related to aforementioned differences between the two RDPs themselves. In fact, Trento provided LAGs with major autonomy in defining operations, enabling them to activate measures not activated by the RDP, while Bolzano/Bozen limited activable measures to those predefined by the RDP. As such, the inability of LAGs from Bolzano/Bozen to activate new measures is imputable to limits defined by the regulatory framework. However, it has been found through informal conversation with LAG managers and the managing authority from Bolzano/Bozen, that as to reduce operational issues, the province has negotiated activable measures with the LAGs before the adoption of the RDP. Therefore, measures are to some extent defined by LAGs themselves, however this information cannot be expressed in the evaluator matrix as this negotiation happens before RDP adoption. At the same time, LAGs would have been able to elaborate different selection criteria, which did not happen.

The indicator “organogram” partially reflects the difficulties in the management of bureaucracy by technical staff. While difficulties could depend on several factors, the interest of the evaluator is explicated in the interviews, where

difficulties on the management of bureaucracy is related to the relationship between administrative and animation activities. In particular, GAL Sarntal says:

“Tutto il lavoro e le ore che spendiamo in questo lavoro sono lavori di burocrazia e questo è un po' un deficit, quindi anche la sensibilizzazione e incontri o cose da fare per il territorio rimane indietro perché non hai mai il tempo, sei sempre dietro a fare carte. E poi fai i controlli, e sei sempre lì in ufficio. Per questo (...) o hai del personale che ti fa tutta la burocrazia e tu fai la motivazione, ma il budget non è abbastanza. Tante volte lo faccio per farlo e perché mi piace e sono convinto che il tema sia importante per il territorio (...), piuttosto passo un'ora in più nel territorio per fare anche un lavoro di rete. È una relazione che non è giusta. Si dovrebbe trovare un budget apposta per il motivatore (...).” // “All the work and hours in this job are spent on bureaucracy which is a deficit. Awareness activities and meetings or other things to be done for the territory end up lagging behind because you never have time, you are always working on documents. Then you must do monitoring, and you are always in the office. For this reason, you either have personnel dedicated to bureaucracy and you are the motivator, but the budget is not enough. I often do it anyways because I like it and I am convinced that the theme is important for the territory (...), I'd rather spend one more hour on the territory to do networking activities. The relationships [between the two types of activities] is uneven. A specific budget for the motivator should be found.”

Similarly, GAL Wipptal 2020 and GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten say:

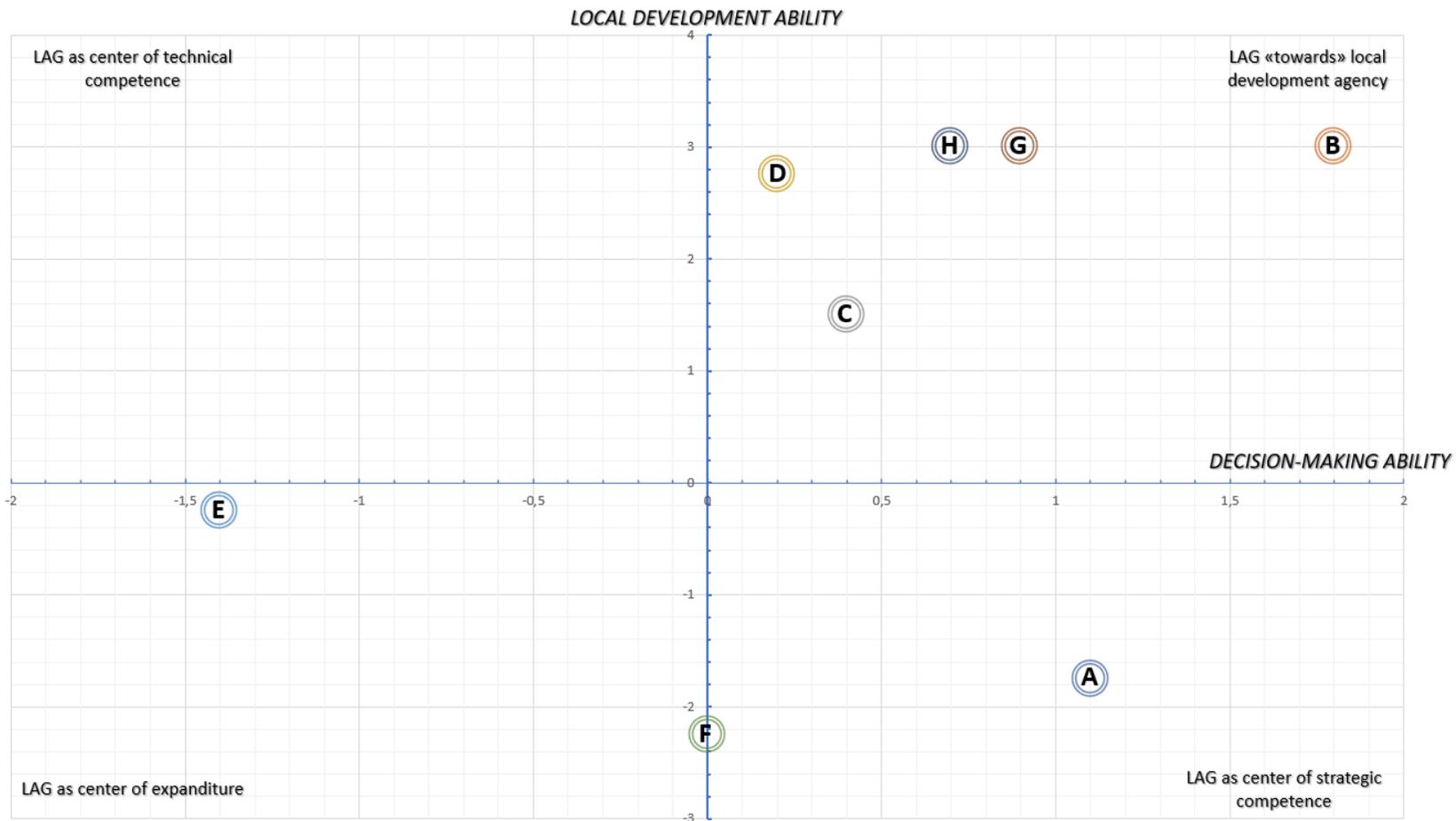
“Qualche volta ci sentivamo proprio dei burocrati, anche a carico dell'animazione.” // “We often felt like we were bureaucrats, at the expense of animation.”

It is thus clear that the aim of this question and related indicator was also related to the implementation of animation activities, fundamental for the direct contact with the territory, and at the same time defined of significant importance for the implementation of the LEADER-CLLD method by the European Union but also explicitly by the RDP of Bolzano/Bozen.

One final aspect to be mentioned pertains to the indicator “Composition of the partnership”, dealing with representativeness of the public-private partnership. The evaluator has defined a list of organizations that should be present in the PPP that should ensure that local stakeholders are represented. However, this does not account for the presence of umbrella organizations, who might represent all pertinent interests but also not actually do so.

Once having made these necessary remarks, going back to indicator values, the Cartesian plane defining roles assumed by the LAGs on their territory has been defined based on the values (Graph. 4).

Graph. 3 - the evaluating body matrix: LAGs role in their territories



The upper-right quadrant LAG “towards” local development agency includes 5 of the 8 LAGs considered in this research (B – GAL Trentino Orientale, G – GAL Wipptal 2020, H – GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten, D - GAL Sarntaler Alpen, C – GAL Pustertal) , the upper-left quadrant LAG as center of technical competence includes 0 of the 8 LAGs, the lower-right quadrant LAG as center of strategic competence includes 1 of the 8 LAGs (A – GAL Trentino Centrale), the lower-left quadrant LAG as center of expenditure includes 1 of the 8 LAGs (E – GAL Südtiroler Grenzland), while 1 LAG is positioned between the two lower quadrants (F – GAL Vinschgau). Based on the results expressed in the matrix, the assumption can be that the tendency of the LAGs considered is in fact that of moving towards the role of development agency.

In considering the results of the matrix, there are some aspects that need to be taken into consideration regarding the 5 LAGs that tend towards the role of local development agency. From the interview with the LAG manager of GAL Trentino Orientale:

“Il mandato che la parte politica mi ha dato quando sono arrivato al GAL è stato proprio quello di agire sul territorio come agenzia di sviluppo. La visione politica era chiara: fare del GAL un soggetto di service territoriale per favorire la creazione di reti tra attori territoriali, intercettare nuove risposte e supportare attività complesse di gestione di programmi che potevano essere assegnati al territorio oltre al programma Leader.” / “The mandate given to me by the political part when I started working as manager of the LAG²² was precisely to act on the territory as a development agency. The political vision was clear: making the LAG a subject for territorial service to favor the creation of networks between local actors, intercept new answers and supporting complex activity for the management of programmes that could be assigned to the territory besides the Leader programme.”

This signals that if on one side the LAG was actually able to assume the role of local development agency, this was certainly facilitated by a clear political orientation assumed by the Autonomous Province.

Furthermore, other 3 LAGs positioning in the same quadrant as GAL Trentino Orientale, have as lead partner who also manages the administrative sphere of LAG’s works, a GRW, *Genossenschaft für Regionalentwicklung und Weiterbildung* (Training and Regional Development Cooperative). Namely GRW Sarntal for GAL Sarntaler Alpen and GRW Wipptal/Eisacktal for GAL Wipptal 2020 and GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten. From the information on its website, GRW Sarntal was founded in 2003 as an integral part of regional local politics, promoting the development of the valley through initiatives related to various projects, working as a platform for local national and international meetings. Its objectives are sustainable and integrated development of the region, measures for the improvement of living standards in rural areas, development of local and regional economy, cooperation with institutions and organizations with similar objectives, economic strengthening of the valley, promotion of the cooperation between sectors and the use of international, national, regional and EU support programmes. GRW Sarntal manages the LEADER programme and the European Social Fund (ESF).

GRW Wipptal/Eisacktal, active in the territory since 2002, works similarly to GRW Sarntal, being the same type of cooperative, thus as an organizational and implementational structure, offering consulting services to beneficiaries of projects and programmes within the framework of regional development. For the programming period 2014-2020, GRW Wipptal/Eisacktal managed LEADER through the two LAGs, and Interreg. Being intrinsically related and managed by a cooperative whose focus, for several years, has been regional development of the three areas, has clearly impacted the role assumed by the LAGs on the territories. Hence, the positioning of GAL Sarntal, GAL Wipptal 2020 and GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten in the “local development agency” quadrant of the Cartesian plane is not surprising.

Looking then at GAL Südtiroler Grenzland, positioned in the matrix as “center of expenditure”, it is to be noted that this is the only LAG whose territory is noncontiguous, not only that, but the two parts of the territory are two different valleys under two different *Comunità Comprensoriali*. There are thus evident issues related to the definition of the LAG’s territory, which could affect the work done by the LAG on the areas of reference. Furthermore, the LAG manager said:

“Noi come GAL (...) non abbiamo una struttura come altri GAL che hanno le cooperative di sviluppo regionale come partner capofila. Quindi ci limitiamo più che altro all’attuazione della strategia LEADER e non abbiamo pretese di essere un’agenzia di sviluppo territoriale, anche perché non abbiamo le risorse e fino ad ora i Comuni e le aree coinvolte non sembrano avere l’intenzione di dotare il GAL di una struttura più ampia.” / “As LAG we do not have the same structure as other LAGs who have as lead partner the regional development cooperative. Therefore, we restrict our work to the implementation of the LEADER strategy, and we have no pretensions of being a territorial development agency. Furthermore, we do not have the resources to be one and as of now the municipalities and area involved do not have the intention of providing the LAG with a wider structure”.

This implicates the unwillingness of the territory of reference of seeing the LAG as a point of reference for long-term local development, but rather presuming its role as distributor of European funds.

To conclude, the positioning of the 8 LAGs in the evaluator matrix, on one side show a tendency towards the role of local development agency. However, leaving aside the 3 LAGs managed by regional development cooperatives, it is

²² The interviewed LAG manager arrived after the definition of the local development strategy, which was later revised.

observed a distribution of the remaining 5 LAGs which is quite varied, even between LAGs working under the same RDP (A and B from the A.P. of Trento and C, E and F from the A.P. of Bolzano/Bozen), indicating that the role assumed in the territory seems to depend on the LAG itself rather than on the RDP under which they operate.

3.3 OTHER SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS: PROJECTS FUNDED AND BUREAUCRACY

From interviews and other relevant data, the evaluator has found other significant elements that are worth mentioning and that might be relevant to consider in future programming periods.

Looking at data on the projects funded through LEADER by each LAG (see *Table 5.2* under Projects funded), it is evident that in the A.P. of Bolzano/Bozen the majority of projects are infrastructural public ones²³. In addition to numeric data, different LAG managers highlighted the same tendency in the interviews:

“Abbiamo cercato di motivare i Comuni; la nostra idea è che LEADER sia un sostegno proprio per i Comuni, per i lavori per i quali la Provincia non dà fondi e loro non hanno fondi per farli” / “We tried to motivate municipalities [in applying for project funding]; our idea is that LEADER can be a support especially for municipalities, for infrastructure works for which the Province does not allocate funds and they do not have funds to do them.”

If in this case it was the LAG itself that decided to allocate funds mainly for municipalities, another manager declared:

“Ciò che ci dice la nostra Autorità di Gestione è di concentrarci su pochi grandi progetti, su quelli degli enti pubblici (...). Ho visto e ho letto varie cose, tra cui anche un rapporto della Corte dei Conti Europea in cui hanno valutato l'approccio LEADER di vari paesi, tra cui non l'Italia ma per esempio la Germania, in cui hanno esplicitamente detto che il LEADER non ha lo scopo di finanziare progetti degli enti pubblici che potrebbero essere finanziati attraverso altri fondi.” / “Our managing authority tells us to focus on a few major projects, those by public bodies (...). I have seen and read various things, among them a report by the European Court of Auditors evaluating the LEADER approach in various countries, among them not Italy but for example Germany, in which it was explicitly said that LEADER does not have the purpose of financing public bodies projects that could be financed through other sources of funding²⁴.”

This proves some kind of interference by the Autonomous Province in addressing LAGs projectuality. This choice by the managing authority to finance through LAGs mainly public works penalized the capacity of the LAGs to work more efficiently on the activities of the territory, while on the other side this improves spending performance and better delineates areas of competence. In this respect, it might be useful to LAGs to define measures that are more contextualized, seeing local development as also including the development of activities on the territory, avoiding infrastructural interventions that could be funded with other regional funds.

At the same time, LAGs have pointed out some issues in intercepting private beneficiaries, related to the difficulties related to finding private beneficiaries willing to participate with 20% of financing and to difficult bureaucratic management of projects that falls on the private:

“Se noi [GAL] non diamo una mano come gestione [della burocrazia richiesta], anche in futuro sarà molto difficile attivare i privati.” / “If we [LAG] do not help with the management [of the required bureaucracy], it will be hard to activate private beneficiaries also in the future.”

The complicated bureaucratic process necessary to present a project discourages public and private entities from presenting them. This same issue was also emphasized by the European Court of Auditors (2022), who claims: “We found that the project application and approval process was complicated and included extra administrative requirements for project owners compared to mainstreaming spending programmes”. Related to this, there seems to be a general issue with bureaucracy related to LEADER programme, with interviews highlighting how the quantity of the required administrative obligations and requirements is often at the expense of animation activities (see *Table 3.5* under Relationship between administrative and animation activities), which are fundamental for the correct application of the LEADER-CLLD method. This does of course not depend on LAGs, but rather on the regulatory framework at different policy levels.

²³ Apart from GAL Vinschgau, the other LAGs from Bolzano/Bozen present a higher percentage of financed public infrastructural projects compared to private ones. On the contrary, the LAGs from the A.P. of Trento have funded a higher percentage of private projects compared to public ones.

²⁴ The LAG manager refers to “Special Report No10/2022. LEADER and community-led local development facilitates local engagement but additional benefits still not sufficiently demonstrated of the European Court of Auditors, in particular: “This situation was of a kind we identified in 2010. At that time, the Commission agreed that in principle LEADER should not support normal local government activities. In our 2015 special report on EU support for rural infrastructure, we made similar observations on the financing of rural roads in Germany (Saxony) and recommended that Member States ensure that EU rural development funds do not replace other public funds dedicated to the same policy area.”

3.3.1 FINAL REFLECTIONS ON RESULTS

The results expressed by the evaluator body matrix show differentiated situations. The understanding coming from the information gathered is that the role assumed by LAGs in their territory depend on various factors. It depends on contextual conditions; on the history of the LAG, as it is clear that being present in the same territory from more than one programming period gives advantages in terms of knowing the territory, local actors and needs, at the same time, the territory already knows how the LAG works; on the reasons why LAGs were established in a specific place (the request of having a LAG in the territory covered by GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten came from local stakeholders, and this has strongly influenced the positive implementation of the LEADER method in the area, facilitating the assumption of the role of local development agency by the LAG). Another significant factor is related to the capacity of individuals, in this case LAG managers, of acting in the LAG context and positively interacting with external territorial actors, through the creation of relationships of trust and cooperation.

It is to be noted that all LAGs have the will of acting as local development agency, but there might be difficulties in assuming that role related to local conditions, such as issues in the relations between members of the LAG, but also LAG members only focusing on getting funding rather than working together on a long-term territorial development strategy. Furthermore, the regulatory framework clearly has an impact on LAG possible actions: on one side it can facilitate LAGs moving in a certain direction, for example the managing authority for Bolzano/Bozen RDP inserted in the RDP measures previously negotiated with LAGs, thus facilitating the implementation of those measures at LAG level, while on the other side the regulatory framework can dampen the capacity of the LAG to interact positively with its territory in terms of becoming a development agency, for example limiting its animation capacity because of bureaucratic requirements.

When LAGs are able, because of internal and external factors, of becoming a local development agency, the LAG is in the position to become a driver of development, giving back to the territory and the population living in it programming capacity and autonomy.

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4 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

The objective of this research has been that of furthering the understanding of the role played by LAGs on their territories, namely in the cases of the 6 LAGs from the Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen and the 2 LAGs from the Autonomous Province of Trento during the programming period 2014-2022. The aim was that of comprehending whether they are able and have the capacities to act as “agencies of local development”, rather than assuming other roles, which have been defined as center of expenditure, center of technical competence and center of strategic competence.

Where a LAG plays the role of local development agency, it becomes a driver of development, making sure that the territory and social actors can acquire programmatic capacity and autonomy. Acting as local development agency allows for a greater involvement of territorial actors in the future of the territory, which suggests an increased possibility of success of implemented measures. A LAG operating as local development agency favors the creation of networks, which bring together resources and opportunities, creating the conditions for a real territorial development. The main concept bringing forth the transformation to agency of development is that the LAG exists in the perspective of long-term development of the territory and is not there only to commit funds. This also means that actors and stakeholders who participate in LAG's life are not there only to gather and use funds, but rather are there to engage jointly in a development project for the territory, of which the funding of projects becomes a consequence rather than the reason of one's involvement.

From the results obtained through the evaluation process, it was observed a general tendency of LAGs moving “towards” the role of local development agency, although a minority was defined as assuming one of the other defined roles. The perception is that of diverse situations which led to different outcomes. There are various factors on which the capacity of LAGs of becoming local development agency appears to depend on. First, it depends on the context and local conditions. These are related to the history of the LAG: in fact, when the LAG has been active in the same area for more than one programming period, this facilitates its interactions with both place and local stakeholders and its ability of intercepting and answering to local needs and demands. At the same time, an environment of cooperation between LAG members is fundamental: in cases in which there has been a high conflict level between members²⁵, the ability of the LAG of bringing forth long-term development ideas and practices was hampered, while cooperation among members fostered the capacity of working together towards a common goal²⁶. A key aspect has revealed to be that related to the capacities of individuals, namely LAG managers. A LAG manager with the ability of positively interacting with territorial and external actors, creating relationships of trust and cooperation, while also being able of affirming the role of the LAG as point of reference for the process of development of the territory, strongly influences the process towards becoming a local development agency.

Furthermore, there is an influence related to conditions of the regulatory framework in which LEADER is situated as well as decisions taken at RDP level. Related to RDP level decision influence is the case of one of the LAGs, whose defined area was non-contiguous. The non-continuity of the territory on which the LAG has worked has hindered its local development capacities and as such it assumed the role of “center of expenditure”, related to the dispensation of funds rather than as driver of development. In fact, the two territories presented different characteristic and were put together in an artificial construction. As such, municipalities and territories did not interact with each other, with each of them having its own particular interest in achieving what was best for itself from the programme, without sharing a collective interest²⁷. At the same time, the regulatory framework might favor a LAG taking on the role of local development agency. For example, if Bolzano/Bozen RDP limited activable measures by LAGs to those in the RDP, those same measures included in the RDP had been defined together with LAGs, facilitating their implementation at LAG level, thus considering specific LAGs' needs in the definition of the RDP itself. Furthermore, the Autonomous Province of Trento has facilitated the interaction between development instruments by including in one LAG territory one SNAI (*Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne*) area, which was also integrated in the Local Development Strategy defined at LAG level. Although the LAG manager has declared that in the end this interaction between funds did not work as it could have²⁸, it opened to future possibilities of facilitated positive interactions between funds for development of marginal areas.

²⁵ In one interview a LAG manager declared that at the beginning the LAG was a battleground between different public bodies involved.

²⁶ From an interview with a LAG manager: “the members told me that they have found themselves well and that no one ever felt unheard, there was never any envy or jealousy between representatives of different sector, they immediately created a positive community. They have worked very well, individuating concrete projects while never losing sight of the objectives they had set themselves”.

²⁷ Interview with LAG manager.

²⁸ At one point the management of SNAI was done mainly provincial level with not many operating margins left at territorial level.

In other cases, the regulatory framework might inhibit the capacity of LAGs of playing the role of local development agency. One of the factors which facilitate assuming this role is related to animation of the territory and the interaction with local stakeholders. However, many LAGs reported difficulties in managing territorial animations because of bureaucratic requirements and obligations, which are time- and resource-consuming, leaving technical staff lacking time and resources for interacting with the territory²⁹. This issue needs to be solved as animation is central for the correct implementation of the LEADER-CLLD method. One solution could be that of granting LAGs the necessary resources for an active interaction with the territory, accounting also for the fact that Bolzano/Bozen RDP explicitly refers to the importance of animation activities. However, a more advisable solution could be that of freeing the LAG from a part of bureaucratic obligations, assigning them to bodies or institutions with a greater expertise, ensuring thus LAG with both more time and resources to manage animation activities and interact with the territory, while lifting off the burden of capacity-building related to some of the bureaucratic procedures, at least those less central for LAG-related activities.

Another limit to LAGs assuming the role of local development agency is one that the LAG can give itself in its relationship with the RDP framework in which it is located. When this happens, the LAG exists only in relation to the RDP and its implications: the LAG is not open to the possibility of being something else and of having its own autonomy, which can go beyond the regulatory framework. In doing so, the LAG acts on its territory for the short-term defined by the RDP; thus, when the LAG ceases to exist in that specific area, the area goes back to the starting conditions "before LAG". On the contrary, when the LAG gives itself the chance to be a local development agency, able to go beyond the RDP, and dares to act as one in a specific territory, this enables a process through which the LAG can become one.

Moreover, the results obtained in this research draw attention to the relationship between autonomy of individual institution, in this case LAG as local development agency, and restrictions from the organizational field, which boost uniformity rather than innovation. As per EU guidelines, in fact, LEADER and LAGs should play a role in stimulating innovative approaches to solve local issues and take advantage of opportunities, making innovation one of the main characteristics of the approach. However, starting with LEADER mainstreaming in programming period 2007-2013, LAGs began to have more difficulties in approaching innovation due its capacity for innovation being hampered by current regulation systems, related also to the perception that achieving budgetary targets outweighs local community development needs (Dax et al., 2016). Furthermore, innovation is affected by a certain level of risk which collides with the limited autonomy from the regulatory framework. In some sense, with the mainstreaming of the approach, LAGs have lost the "option to fail"³⁰. At the same time, uniformity is boosted as funding under the mainstreamed LEADER approach is linked to the implementation of specific measures and themes. Thus, LAGs have a limited set of activable measures that already define what and how something can be done. The consequence is that interventions done by different LAGs operating in different territories tend to be the same. Moreover, the regulatory framework requires rapid spending performances, which makes it hard to highlight local peculiarities. The risk of this is therefore a tendency towards uniformity between LAG actions and territories.

Related to the achievement of budgetary targets, in the research is observed that many of the LAGs interviewed have focused on "hard" infrastructural interventions, funding public sector projects through LEADER, leaving behind more "soft" interventions related to social animation, which seem more pertinent to actions of local development agencies. This is not to say that LAGs should only focus on animation. However, material infrastructure should be the finalization of a previous animation-related process. When talking about bureaucratic issues or LAG structure moving in a direction rather than another, this happens because the LAG had to focus on the realization of a certain type of hard interventions rather than activities related to animation and networking. The current risk is that of LAGs not being able to find an equilibrium between hard and soft interventions. Furthermore, the regulatory spending framework makes so that the process for the funding of hard interventions is much easier and linear, compared to the process for funding soft interventions, which is way more complex. Thus, this encourages interventions related to hard infrastructure, rather than those related to animation activities. Nevertheless, an equilibrium between the two is necessary.

Drawing some conclusions based on this, it is evident that mainstreaming of the LEADER approach as it is, has some limits to be overcome from both an organizational and approach-related perspective. In terms of organizational perspective, these limits pertain the capacity of the territory of managing long-term development afterwards and without LEADER funding as it works now, although of course the presence of a structure like LAG reinforces this capacity. LEADER should become one of many instruments that LAGs and territorial networks can use to foster territorial development. LAG as local development agency should be able to be a driver of development not only through RDP funds, but rather through the construction of a long-term development strategy and structure which is able to interact with different sources of funding according to the specific needs of the territory, not limiting itself to RDP funding. This means that from an organizational perspective, to become a driver of development LAG should focus on soft

²⁹ More than one LAG manager report "not counting working hours" to take the time to have an active relationship with the territory.

³⁰ Interview with LAG manager.

interventions related to animation and networking activities, while hard interventions can be enabled through other sources of funding, with LAG being the attractor of development-related funds on the territory. However, the regulatory framework has moved in the opposite direction in the last few years. This had both positive and negative aspects, but still the direction of providing LEADER with a method that facilitates its role as local development agency has not been followed. A revision of the method might be needed.

Ultimately, LAG as local development agency needs to have a certain degree of autonomy from programmes and requirements that come from the top-down. At the same time, the bottom-up approach does not always guarantee to respond to local needs; it is not to be ignored that the bottom-up approach was first implemented decades ago and has not undergone any major changes in its LEADER declination. One must also account for the fact that both top-down and bottom-up approaches applied to development of rural, mountain and marginal areas, tend to still depend on the historical dichotomy urban-rural. This dichotomy might need to be approached in a different way. Indeed, spatial boundaries on which rural-urban division rests, which reflect and reinforce existing social, economic and political hierarchies, are mutable and permeable, reflecting “social processes of shifting, crossing, and blurring” (Lichter and Ziliak, 2017). People continuously cross spatial boundaries, with people living in rural communities commuting back and forth to their jobs in urban centers³¹, while plenty rural and urban areas are “places of consumption”, where people go shopping, seek entertainment or own second homes for holidays. Not only people cross these boundaries, but also ideas, culture, money and material things, a tendency which only increased with globalization and advancement of technology, creating a growing spatial interdependence. While rural and urban needs remain in part distinct and might require specific approaches to be solved, integrative solutions transcending the urban-rural divide could be beneficial, as “rural development efforts must more effectively transect these spaces and confront the myths perpetuated by rhetoric about urban-rural divides” (Shellabarger et al., 2019). These are also the foundation of the relational approach suggested in current research on rural development (Bock et al., 2022). However, this approach, together with top-down and bottom-up ones, present an issue when confronted with the ideas and practices of agencies of local development: in fact, none of the approaches seem to account for the meso-level, which is precisely that in which local development agencies are located and act. This suggests that time for a change might have come in terms of future perspectives related to LAGs and the LEADER approach for territorial planning, opening to new possibilities and interpretation for the destiny of rural and mountain areas.

³¹ Data on the self-containment index of LAG's municipalities (Table 1 in the Annexes) is a proof of the high rate of commuters living in rural areas.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

For the purpose of this research, it has been assumed that being an autonomous local development agency produces an added value which is superior to the sum of all the parts that form the social structure of the agency itself, based on the fact that the implementation of the LEADER-CLLD approach in itself assumes that they are necessary structures for the development of a territory. Since this was assumed but not delved upon, future research could explore this issue, finding its theoretical basis on “emerging properties” theory in sociology: in fact, Lampredi (2019), describes social relationships as “emerging” phenomena, meaning a domain with its own properties, which are not present in its constitutive parts, but that are generated and emerge in the relationship. It would be interesting to observe whether this proves true for local development agencies too, compared to other kinds of informal networks between relevant territorial stakeholders.

Also, to be mentioned in view of future research, is the evaluator index and matrix presented in this thesis. From the results obtained, it appears that the index is able to represent the general situation of LAGs, although it clearly has some limitations. One clear limit is that of not accounting for specific situations, for example the presence as LAG lead partner of bodies already designed for managing the development of a territory, which is the case of GRWs in the Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen, as well as accounting for mandates given by the political part to LAGs to act as local development agency, which is the case of one of the LAGs in the Autonomous Province of Trento. While using a quantitative evaluation scheme allows for a more functional comparison between different LAGs, the analysis of complex situations such as those connected to the role that LAGs assume on their territories seems to require a more in-depth qualitative analysis to accompany quantitative data. In any case, it would be interesting to apply the index to more case studies, potentially not only to LAGs but also to other instances in which the CLLD approach is used, such as FLAGs (Local Action Groups applying the CLLD approach under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) to refine and improve it, identifying possible criticalities that might have not been considered or have not yet emerged, while it could also foster a better understanding of limits and opportunities for LAGs as local development agencies for the long-term development of rural, mountain and marginal areas.

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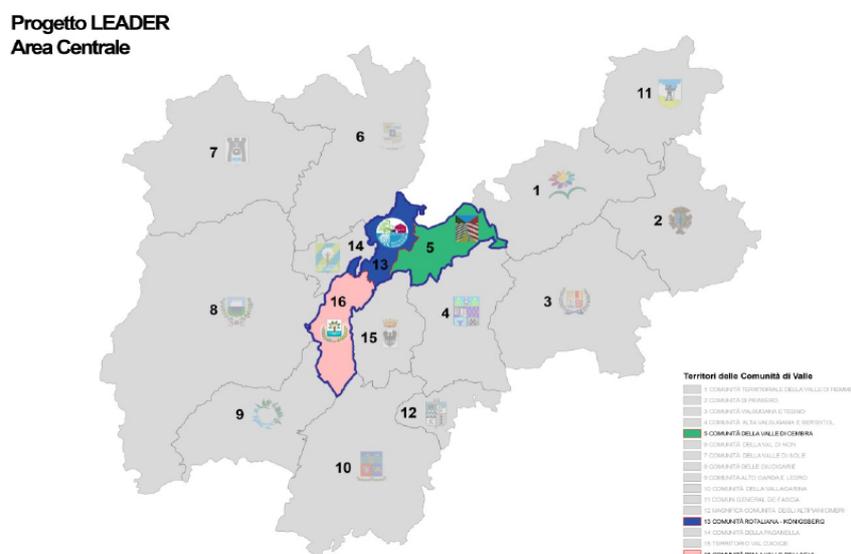
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ANNEXES

ANNEX I. THE TERRITORIES OF THE EIGHT LAGS

GAL Trentino Centrale



The programming period 2014-2020 is the first LEADER experience for the territories of GAL Trentino Centrale.

The area designated for GAL Trentino Centrale is made up of the territories of three *Comunità di Valle*: Comunità della Valle dei Laghi, della Rotaliana and della Valle di Cembra. The area amounts to about 370 sq km, with 51,995 inhabitants. The area is classified under the Italian National Strategic Plan as “area D”: rural area with comprehensive development issues.

In regard to the economy, agriculture is widespread on the territory, with farms working mainly in the viticulture sector with high-quality and typified production due to the presence of indigenous varieties such as Teroldego rotaliano, Müller thurgau, Vin santo. Transformation and commercialization activities are characterized by big-sized cooperative structures with thousands of associates and single producers associated among them. The prevalence and massive presence of the viticulture sector³² has prevented the development of an offer of other agri-food products, which has started developing only in the last few years in areas unsuited for viticulture and thanks to young entrepreneurs interested in activating new productions mainly of organic products, such as berries, cereal crops, beekeeping, etc. This diversification of agricultural production is proved by new agricultural activities taking place in portions of land previously abandoned.

The area, even if predominantly rural, is located in close proximity to the city of Trento, where important administrative centers and the tertiary sector of the Province are based. Furthermore, the area is close to the important road axis of the highway and railway of Brennero, giving the area an important competitive advantage that has not been taken advantage of for example in terms of touristic attraction.

The demographic flow has been constantly increasing, apart from Val di Cembra, which records a negative growth. Unemployment has also been increasing, from 5% in 2011 to 7% in 2015. Furthermore, the mean value of the self-containment index for the municipalities under LEADER programming indicates that the area is subjected to a high rate of commuting (Istat, 2020)³³.

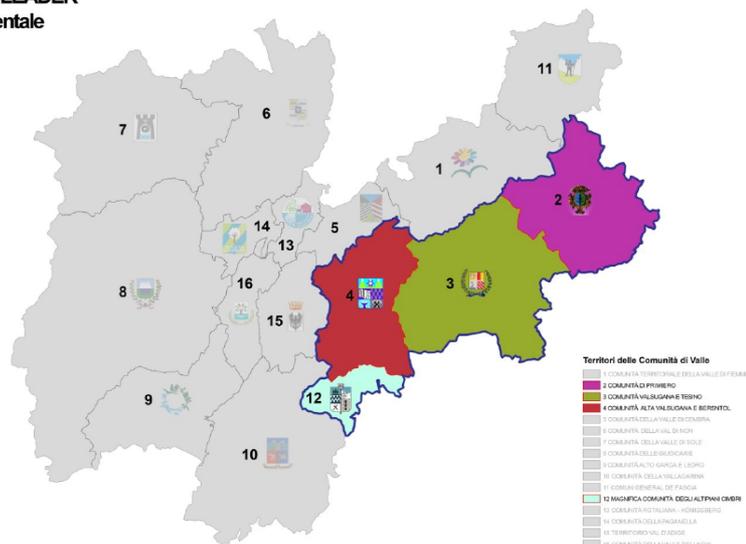
In regard to cultural and environmental heritage, in the area there are many architectural and environmental sites, partly supported by the presence of two Eco-museums: Argentario and Valle dei Laghi and by the Reserves Network of Alta Valle di Cembra.

³² In the LAGs' area represents the 40% of the total area cultivated in vines in the whole Province.

³³ The mean value for the index of containment, meaning the capacity of an area to internally contain population flows that originate from it and thus satisfy labor and study demand produced in the area, concerning the municipalities under GAL Trentino Orientale, is in fact 35.585 (own elaboration on Istat data).

GAL Trentino Orientale

**Progetto LEADER
Area Orientale**



The area of GAL Trentino Orientale corresponds to 4 *Comunità di Valle*: Comunità di Valle Primiero, di Valsugana e Tesino, di Valle Alta Valsugana Bersntol, di Valle Altipiani Cimbri. All 4 Comunità di Valle had already been part of past LEADER programming:

- Comunità di Valle Primiero: Leader Lagorai Sud (1994-1999) and Leader Valsugana (2000-2006);
- Comunità Valsugana e Tesino: Leader Lagorai Sud (1994-1999) and Leader Valsugana (2000-2006);
- Comunità di Valle Alta Valsugana Bernstol: all 15 municipalities were part of Leader Valsugana (2000-2006), 1 municipality of Leader Pasubio Vigolana (1994-1999), 3 municipalities of Leader Lagorai Sud (1994-1999);
- Comunità di Valle Altipiani Cimbri: Leader Pasubio Vigolana (1994-1999) and Leader Valsugana (2000-2006).

The whole territory of the LAG is also included in the area of competence of *Consorzio dei Comuni del Bacino Imbrifero Montano del fiume Brenta* (BIM Brenta)³⁴. The area amounts to 1,456.65 sq km, with 95,7858 inhabitants.

Regarding the economy, the primary sector is characterized by agricultural activities with a prevalence of animal farming and fruit productions. The animal farming sector has a long-lasting tradition of dairy production, with large areas of arable, grazing and meadow land for 1/3 of the total provincial availability of such lands. For fruit production, the main production is that of apple trees for a total of 10% of the total provincial area and other woody crops for 30% of the area. Farms mainly refer to cooperatives for transformation and commercialization of products. In the last years, young entrepreneurs have been creating new farms oriented to diversification through micro-chains and agritourism activities. In the area there is a will to reactivate abandoned areas both to find new lands for production and to restore the landscape, a process which pertains the whole Province of Trento.

Regarding secondary and tertiary sectors, the employed in these fields reflect the provincial average: around 26,10% in the secondary sector and 70,10% in the tertiary sector.

Broadband infrastructures are becoming the basis of the economic fabric of the territory, with a strong intervention of the Province in this sense, to allow its inhabitants and enterprises to be included in the economic, social and occupational development deriving from innovation of telecommunications. The investments of the Province have allowed the area to be an excellence in the ICT sector. It is significant that in the LAG's area 100% of public authorities are connected to an optical fiber network and 99,6% of enterprises are connected to the Internet.

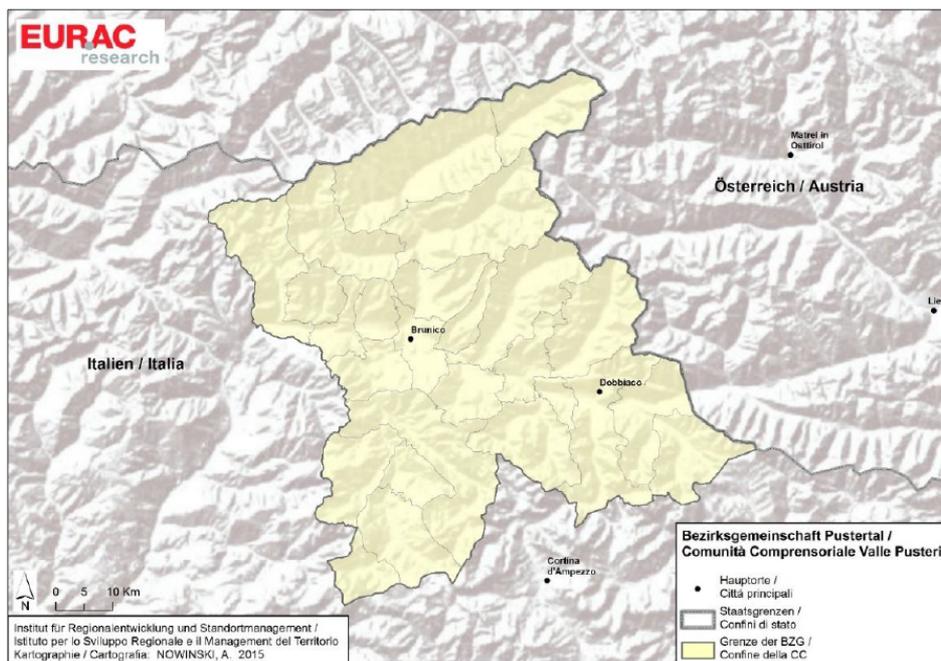
The demographic fluxes in the area have been decreasing through the years, however they are still positive, mainly in Alta Valsugana and Bernstol. Unemployment has been increasing, from 5% in 2011 to 7% in 2015. Istat data shows a high rate of commuters from the area of the LAG (Istat, 2020)³⁵.

Of great relevance in regards of environmental heritage are the presence in the area of Parco Naturale di Paneveggio – Pale di S. Martino, together with various Natura 2000 sites.

³⁴ BIM Brenta is a public body established on the basis of L. 959 del 27 dicembre 1953 to manage *additional fees* for *hydroelectric* plants of the bodies of water in its territory of competence

³⁵ The mean value for the index of containment concerning the municipalities under GAL Trentino Centrale is in fact 29.36 (own elaboration on Istat data).

GAL Pustertal/Val Pusteria



While during the 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 programming periods the LEADER area in the region included only the four municipalities of Valle di Tures and Valle Aurina, for the period 2014-2020 the whole area of the *Comunità Comprensoriale* has been included as LEADER territory. Thus, the area of the GAL Pustertal/Val Pusteria includes the whole *Comunità Comprensoriale* of Val Pusteria, with its 26 municipalities, for a total of 2,068,59 sq km and 81,234 inhabitants. The area is situated at the heart of the Alps.

The economic sector of Val Pusteria is characterized by small-medium enterprises with up to 99 employees. In 7,635 enterprises in the area there are 35,326 employees. Because of the enterprises' dimensions, their competitiveness in the extra-regional context is significantly low.

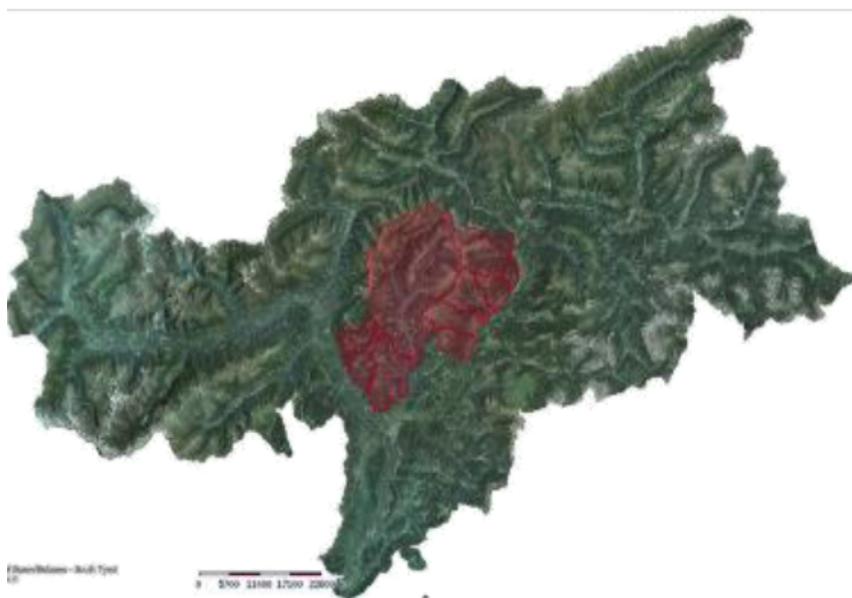
In the last few years, the number of farms was subject to a decrease of 16,2%: this negative growth corresponds to that of the whole Autonomous Province. Regarding agriculture, the most developed sector is that of cattle farming.

Regarding tourism, Val Pusteria is the *Comunità Comprensoriale* most popular of the Autonomous Province. The demographic trend for Val Pusteria has been positive between 2004 and 2014, with a growth of population of +8,1%. With the exception of the municipality of Brunico/Bruneck, the rest of the area is affected by a high percentage of commuters.

In the area there are various protected natural areas: Parco Naturale Fanes-Senes-Braies, Vedrette di Ries-Aurina, Parco Nazionale Alti Tauri, as well as the Dolomites, UNESCO World Natural Heritage site.

Many municipalities of Val Pusteria suffer from a digital divide related to the access to broadband internet, mainly for peripheral communities and municipalities in mountain areas.

GAL Sarntaler Alpen/Alpi di Sarentino



In past LEADER programming periods, only the area of the municipality of Sarntal/Sarentino was included in the LAG territory under both the LEADER+ Programme (2000-2006) and LEADER 2007-2013. Thus, the members of the LAG and the administrative structure of GRW Sarntal, the LAG's lead partner, have gained years of experiences from past LEADER programming. For the programming period 2014-2020, 9 further municipalities were included in the territory of the LAG.

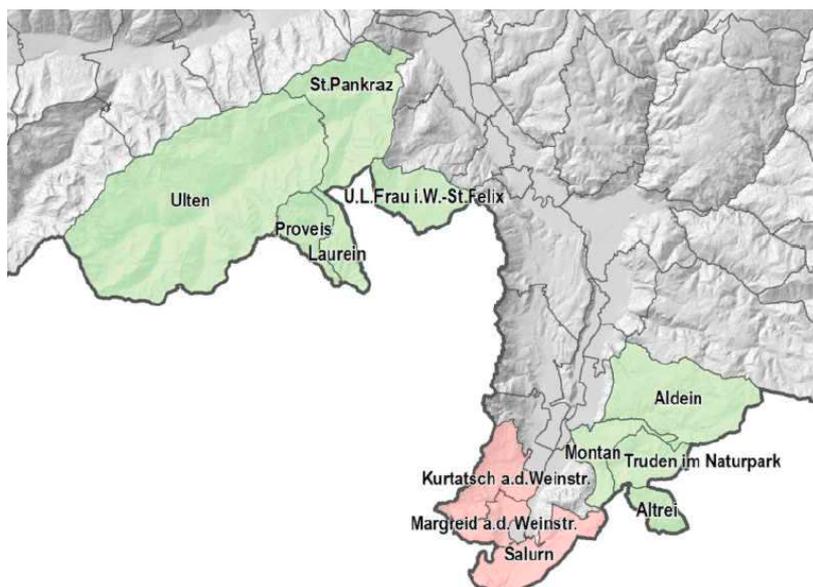
The area of GAL Sarntaler Alpen/Alpi di Sarentino is at the center of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen. It is surrounded by the Bolzano basin, Val d'Adige, Burgraviato, Val Passiria, Alta Valle Isarco and Valle Isarco. The territory includes 10 municipalities and districts from 3 *Comunità Comprensoriali*: Salto-Sciliar, Burgraviato and Valle Isarco, for a total of 622.98 sq km with less than 15,000 inhabitants. The entire area of the LAG has the characteristics of a mountain region³⁶, presenting, according to the SWOT analysis carried out in the writing of the local development strategy, a deficit at socio-economic development level higher compared to the provincial average.

Regarding the economy, the area is characterized by a social market economy, based on forestry, agriculture and culture, with common traits, strongly influenced by the alpine landscape which makes the territory a close and homogeneous environment. Economic growth concerns only some sectors in defined small areas. With reference to the agricultural sector, the useful surface for agricultural production is scarce or can be used only after expensive interventions. At the same time, there is a lack of diversification in agricultural production, due to the farming activity revolving only around milk processing for a long time.

Looking at the demography of the LAG area, most of the mountain region presents a low population density, with the main residential settlements located in the valley floor, around the closed mountain area. Population growth is inferior to provincial average, while a decline in population characterizes 2 mountain districts (Spelonca/Spiluck and Scaleres/Schalderes) and the municipalities of Verano/Vörand and Villandro/Villanders, accelerating the phenomenon of depopulation of mountains, mainly concerning young people. The area of the LAG presents a high number of commuters.

³⁶ Most of the LAG territory is located at an altitude higher than 1,000 m asl. (Local Development Plan of GAL Sarntal/Alpi di Sarentino)

GAL Súdntiroler Grenzland/regione di confine dell'Alto Adige



Fonte: Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano - 28.0.1 Cartografia provinciale e coordinamento geodati

The area of GAL Súdntiroler Grenzland/Regione di confine dell'Alto Adige is characterized by two different sub-areas which are spatially non-contiguous: Val d'Ultimo-Alta Val di Non and Bassa Atesina. The area of Val d'Ultimo-Alta Val di Non had already been part of the LEADER initiative during the programming periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013, while it is the first LEADER experience for Bassa Atesina.

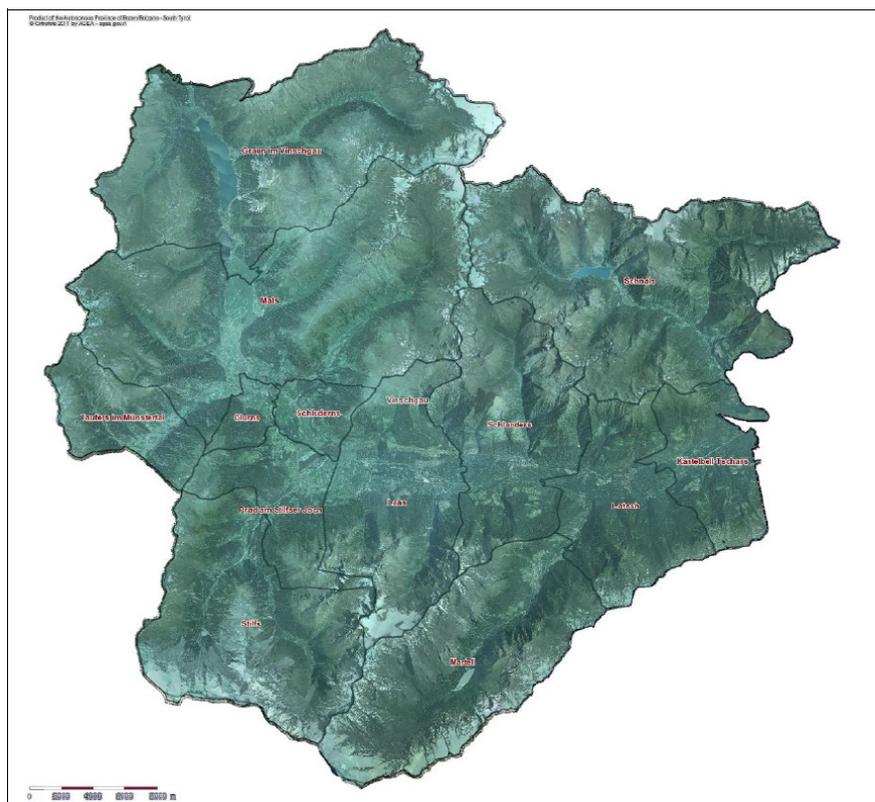
The LAG area of Val d'Ultimo-Alta Val di Non comprises five municipalities which administratively belong to *Comunità Comprensoriale* of Burgraviato (Ulten/Ultimo, St. Pankraz/San Pancrazio, Unsere Liebe Frau im Walde - St. Felix/Senale San Felice, Laurein/Lauregno and Proveis/Proves); Bassa Atesina with three municipalities (Altrei/Anterivo, Truden im Naturpark/Trodene, Aldein/Aldino, Montan/Montagna) and the mountain districts of the municipalities of Kurtatsch an der Weinstraße/Cortaccia (i.e. Oberfennberg/Favogna di Sopra, Graun/Corona and Penon/Penone), Margreid an der Weinstraße/Magé (i.e. Unterfennberg) and Salurn an der Weinstraße /Salorno (i.e. Gfrill/Cauria and Buchholz/Pochi), which administratively belong to *Comunità Comprensoriale* of Oltradige-Bassa Atesina. The area amounts to 455,63 sq km with 10.563 inhabitants. In any case, the two sub-areas have similarities that have been determinant in making them a single LEADER region, namely “border region of South Tyrol”: their peripheral location from larger populated centers as well as the fact that all the communities share a border with the Autonomous Province of Trento.

In regard to the sub-area Val d'Ultimo-Alta Val di Non, the stronger economic sector is that of agriculture, followed by the construction sector. Apart from Ulten/Ultimo, the tourism sector in the area is lacking. For Bassa Atesina the situation is different: the prevalent economic sector is that of hospitality industry, together with the food service industry, even though agriculture remains important.

Looking at demographic trends, in Bassa Atesina the population development is relatively stable, while Val d'Ultimo-Alta Val di Non has been experiencing a population decline since 2003. Both sub-areas are strongly affected by commuting.

Both sub-areas are characterized by the presence of important natural reserves: the national park Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio on one side, and on the other side Parco Naturale Monte Corno.

GAL Vinschgau/Val Venosta



The area of GAL Vinschgau/Val Venosta had already implemented the LEADER approach under LEADER I (1991-1993), LEADER II (1994-1999) and LEADER + (2000-2006).

The area of the GAL Vinschgau/Val Venosta includes the whole *Comunità Comprensoriale* Val Venosta with its 13 municipalities, for a total of 1,441.68 sq km and 35,365 inhabitants. The area is a valley system, markedly alpine, with a consistent extension of mountain and forest areas at a high altitude.

Regarding the economy of the area, for the primary sector natural agriculture is significant, particularly apple production on the valley floor, and dairy production, forage-growing, cultivation of niche products and apiculture in mountain areas. The area presents a climatic peculiarity: reduced rainfall and long-lasting irradiation, making it one of the drier valleys of the Alps. For what concerns mountain agriculture, farms are small-sized and often isolated, their main production is that of dairy products. These farms are only able to survive through secondary economic activities. In the valley, farms are small sized too, the main production is that of fruits and farmers usually do not need a secondary economic activity. For the secondary sector the main activities are that of small and medium enterprises of manufacturing activities, mainly related to the construction sector, as well as food processing. For the tertiary sector, touristic and public sector are relevant. Due to a reduced number of employment opportunities, commuting is necessary for many inhabitants of Val Venosta, many of which are cross-border commuters.

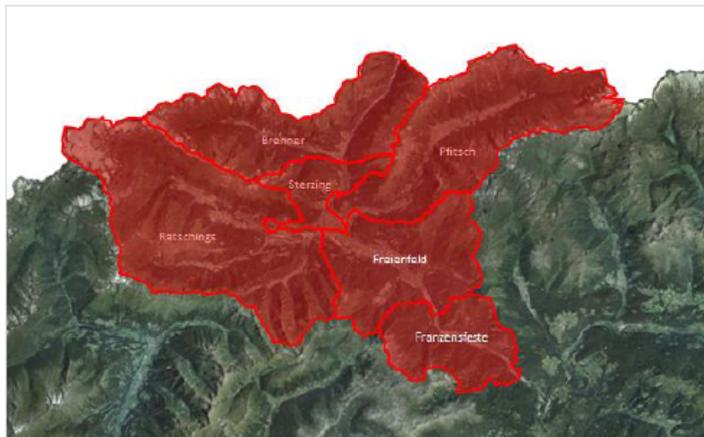
The demographic trend has been stable for the last years but still positive. However, compared to the other *Comunità Comprensoriali* of the Autonomous Province, the growth rate is the lowest. Many municipalities, in particular those located in the side valleys, present a high abandonment and aging rate.

The distance from the economic centers of the province, but also from the highway of Brennero, the main connection between north and south, is a considerable disadvantage, mainly for inhabitants and enterprises in far-out municipalities.

The area is affected by the so-called digital divide, as access to broad-band and internet is not present everywhere.

Val Venosta presents many specially protected areas, such as the national park Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio, Parco Naturale del Gruppo Tessa and many Natura 2000 sites.

GAL Wipptal 2020



The area of GAL Wipptal has already been LEADER territory both for the 2000-2006 programming period (LEADER+) and LEADER 2007-2013.

The area of GAL Wipptal 2020 is a locked geographical unit, including the whole territory of *Comunità Comprensoriale* Wipptal, with its 6 municipalities, for a total of 650 sq km and around 20,000 inhabitants. The territory has been historically cohesive and homogeneous. The area is characterized by the administrative center of Sterzing/Vipiteno, the transit axis Bolzano/Bozen – Brennero, and various lateral peripheral valleys, with a strong rural character. On this basis, it follows that on the territory there is a form of competition between urban and rural areas, between centers, with a stronger economic power and their privileged positions, and peripheral areas. The two municipalities with a higher economic development (Sterzing/Vipiteno and Ratschings/Racines), though, maintain a close relationship with the neighboring municipalities that are structurally weaker. It is to take better advantage of these interactions that the LAG has decided to include in its territory also Sterzing/Vipiteno and Ratschings/Racines.

Regarding the economy of the area, the active population in the agricultural sector is 9%, inferior to the provincial average. In the last 15 years, the number of farms in Wipptal has fallen sharply, a sign of the crisis and transition phase of agriculture in the area; the surface for agriculture use has strongly diminished, causing an abandonment of the cultural landscape. Only in two of the municipalities the agricultural surface has increased, meaning that there has been an agricultural intensification.

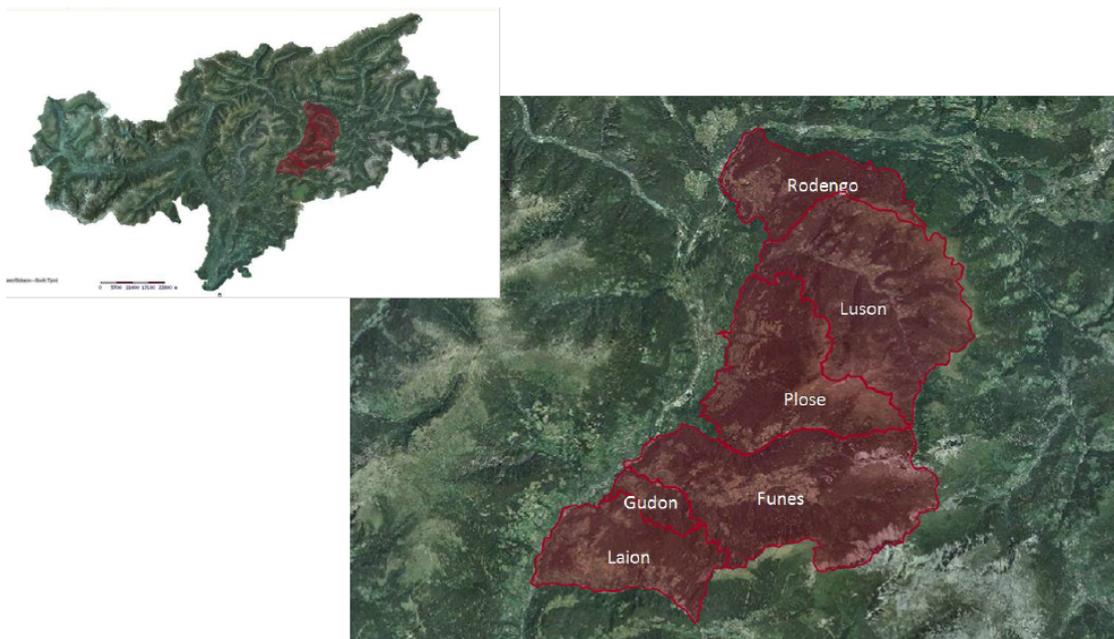
Also for the manufacturing sector the number of employees is inferior to the provincial average, while it is superior to provincial average the number of active workers in the service sector, privileged in the municipalities of Sterzing/Vipiteno, Franzenfeste/Fortezza and Brenner/Brennero.

Concerning tourism, there are two principal touristic municipalities (Brenner/Brennero and Ratschings/Racines), while the other municipalities have a low hospitality capacity and tourism attraction level.

Apart from Sterzing/Vipiteno, all other municipalities of the LAG's territory have a high percentage of commuters and low number of employment offers. In fact, the positive growth rate of the population in the years 2012-2014 has been strongly influenced by Sterzing/Vipiteno, together with Ratschings/Racines, while in the rest of the territory the growth rate has been inferior to provincial average (stable in the municipalities of Franzenfeste/Fortezza and Freienfeld/Campo di Trens; weak in the municipalities of Brenner/Brennero and Pfitsch/Val di Vizze). At the same time, Wipptal has a population that results younger when compared to the rest of the Autonomous Province, as well as a higher rate of migration and immigration of extra-EU citizens, influenced by its position on the border of Austria.

Regarding environmental and natural parks, in Wipptal only one territory has been recognized as a Natura 2000 site, while some of the municipalities have a high percentage of protected surface. For the socio-cultural heritage, in Wipptal can be found the historical old town of Sterzing/Vipiteno, Mondo delle Miniere Ridanna Monteneve, the provincial museum of hunting and fishing of Castel Wolfsturn, Castel Tasso, Castel Pietra and the fort of Franzenfeste/Fortezza.

GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten



This is the first LEADER experience for the area, although *Comunità Comprensoriale Valle Isarco* has already applied for the participation at the LEADER programme for the 2000-2006 programming period, in cooperation with *Comunità Comprensoriale Wipptal*. At the time, only Wipptal was selected as LEADER territory.

The area of GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten includes municipalities and districts with a strong rural connotation, located on the west side of Eisacktal/Val d'Isarco. The territory is characterized by lateral valleys and Alpine plateaus, presenting as a geographically closed unit. Its average altitude is higher than 1,000 meters asl. The area covers a total of 1,441.68 sq km with 10,805 inhabitants, making it the smaller LEADER area of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen.

Regarding the agriculture sector, in the last years the number of farms has decreased, while surfaces for agricultural use has remained constant, proving an intensification of productions. The percentage of employed in the sector is higher than provincial average, highlighting the rural character of the territory.

The capacity for tourist accommodation is on average high.

Regarding demographic trends, the population growth rate is decreasing with some municipalities presenting a negative demographic balance, which suggests abandonment tendencies. At the same time, the aging index shows a relatively young territory.

A low demand of labor and a high number of commuters proves a high attraction power of the main economic centers of the province for inhabitants of the area.

ANNEX II. MEAN OF SELF-CONTAINMENT INDEX FOR THE TERRITORY OF EACH LAG

LAG	MEAN OF SELF-CONTAINMENT INDEX
GAL Trentino Centrale	33,70375
Albiano	48,37
Altavalle	100
Cavedine	34,71
Cembra Lisignago	10
Giovo	40,66
Lavis	39,64
Lona-Lases	31,16
Madruzzo	14,29
Mezzocorona	42,91
Mezzolombardo	42,06
Nave San Rocco	21,35
Roverè della Luna	34,62
San Michele all'Adige	24,85
Sover	25,4
Vallelaghi	9,52
Zambana	19,72
GAL Trentino Orientale	29,33657895
Altopiano della Vigolana	0
Baselga di Pinè	43,73
Bedollo	21,98
Bieno	20
Borgo Valsugana	44,1
Calceranica al Lago	27,7
Caldonazzo	27,24
Canal San Bovo	52,03
Carzano	14,13
Castel Ivano	4,52
Castello Tesino	38,24
Civezzano	26,86
Fierozzo	31,82
Folgaria	58,19
Fornace	30,42
Frassilongo	27,27
Grigno	48,17
Imer	29,62
Lavarone	57,54
Levico Terme	45,06
Luserna	38,62
Novaledo	25,32
Ospedaletto	28,54
Palù del Fersina	14,77
Pergine Valsugana	44,87
Pieve Tesino	31,79
Primiero San Martino di Castrozza	5,17
Roncegno Terme	32,62
Ronchi Valsugana	21,43
Sagron Mis	25,3
Samone	27,86
Sant'Orsola Terme	19,67
Scurelle	39,45
Telve	30,42
Telve di Sopra	17,36
Tenna	20,32
Torcegno	22,66
Vignola-Falesina	20
GAL Südtiroler Grenzland	49,29285714
Anterivo/Altr	36,13
Lauregno/Laurein	57,44
Proves/Proveis	50,27
San Pancrazio/St. Pankraz	46,1
Senale-San Felice/Unsere Liebe Frau im Walde-St. Felix	48,41

LAG	MEAN OF SELF-CONTAINMENT INDEX
Trodene nel parco naturale/Truden im Naturpark	48,41
Ultimo/Ulten	58,29
GAL Pustertal	47,17076923
Badia/Abtei	70,21
Braies/Prags	44,97
Brunico/Bruneck	61,52
Campo Tures/Sand in Taufers	54,35
Chienes/Kiens	36,75
Corvara in Badia/Corvara	72
Dobbiaco/Toblach	54,03
Falzes/Pfalzen	28,01
Gais/Gais	31,18
La Valle/Wengen	43,74
Marebbe/Enneberg	65,27
Monguelfo-Tesido/Welsberg-Taisten	44,09
Perca/Percha	25,8
Predoi/Prettau	34,13
Rasun-Anterselva/Rasen-Antholz	45,38
San Candido/Innichen	57,98
San Lorenzo di Sebato/St. Lorenzen	34,3
San Martino in Badia/St. Martin in Thurn	49,21
Selva dei Molini/Mühlwald	34,84
Sesto/Sexten	66,02
Terento/Terenten	41,28
Valdaora/Olang	47,93
Valle Aurina/Ahrntal	54,74
Valle di Casies/Gsies	49,67
Vandoies/Vintl	41,56
Villabassa/Niederdorf	37,48
GAL Sarntaler Alpen	45,11
Barbiano/Barbian	42,09
Meltina/Mölten	45,87
San Genesio Atesino/Jenesien	45,35
Sarentino/Sarntal	59,31
Velturino/Feldthurns	33,33
Verano/Vöran	46,53
Villandro/Villanders	43,29
GAL Wipptal 2020	37,115
Brennero/Brenner	41,88
Campo di Trens/Freienfeld	37,3
Fortezza/Franzensfeste	23,4
Racines/Ratschings	44,97
Val di Vizze/Pfitsch	31,27
Vipiteno/Sterzing	43,87
GAL Vinschgau	51,17538462
Castelbello-Ciardes/Kastelbell-Tschars	49,28
Curon Venosta/Graun im Vinschgau	66,05
Glorenza/Glurns	40,94
Laces/Latsch	55,25
Lasa/Laas	52,2
Malles Venosta/Mals	55,84
Martello/Martell	48,32
Prato allo Stelvio/Prad am Stilfserjoch	48,04
Senaies/Schnals	52,89
Silandro/Schlanders	58
Sluderno/Schluderns	43
Stelvio/Stilfs	59,49
Tubre/Taufers im Münstertal	35,98
GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten	39,655
Funes/Villnöß	44,07
Laion/Lajen	35,55
Luson/Lüsen	39
Rodengo/Rodeneck	40

To be noted: due to unavailability of data, the means of self-containment index do not account for the self-containment index of town districts included in LAGs' territories.

Source: Own elaboration based on ISTAT data

ISTAT, "Dati statistici per il territorio. Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano". Rome, May 27, 2020. Available at: <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/243448>

ISTAT, "Dati statistici per il territorio. Provincia Autonoma di Trento". Rome, May 27, 2020. Available at: <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/243448>

ANNEX III. LAGS INDICATORS

GAL TRENTINO CENTRALE		
	ATTRIBUTED VALUE	JUSTIFICATION
Decision-Making Ability		
Cohesion of the territory	0,5	More than one administrative aggregation, i.e. Comunità della Valle dei Laghi, della Rotaliana, della Valle di Cembra.
Critical mass of the territory	0	The territory is contiguous: 0. The territory respects the limits set by the RDP: 0.
Composition of the partnership	-0,4	Missing: social organization, environmental organization, formative organization, other stakeholder: -0,1 each.
Territorial vision	0	None applies: 0.
Strategic vision	1	Activated new measures: azione 4.3.a, azione 4.3.b, azione 6.4.b azione 7.6: +0,5; therefore, adds project selection criteria to those defined by RDP: +0,5.
TOT	1,1	
Local Development Ability		
Organogram	-0,5	The organogram is not transparent: -0,5. No difficulties in the management of bureaucracy by technical staff: 0.
Credibility on the territory	-0,5	First programming period, not a point of reference: -0,5
Animation and technical support for potential beneficiaries	0,25	Animation type 2: +0,5, however incomplete as animation has been intended as "we go on the territory and we propose a project idea and then the concrete project": -0,25
Monitoring and self-evaluation	-1	Basic monitoring based on projects outputs: 0. Self-evaluation not present nor planned: -1.
Integration capacity	0	No integration with other funds and/or extra-Leader projects: 0.
Additional services activities	0	No additional services: 0.
Network potential	0	Formal cooperation with other actors (Project on E5 path with GAL Trentino Orientale, Südtiroler Grenzland, Sarntaler Alpen): 0.
TOT	-1,75	

GAL TRENTINO ORIENTALE		
	ATTRIBUTED VALUE	JUSTIFICATION
Decision-Making Ability		
Cohesion of the territory	0,5	More than one administrative aggregation, i.e. Comunità di Valle Primiero, Valsugana e Tesino, Alta Valsugana Bernstol, Altipiani Cimbri.
Critical mass of the territory	0	The territory is contiguous: 0. The territory respects the limits set by the RDP: 0.
Composition of the partnership	-0,2	Missing social organization, formative organization: -0,1 each.
Territorial vision	0,5	The LDP is integrated to SNAI for the LAG area of Tesino, also favoring SNAI area participation for LEADER funds: +0,5.
Strategic vision	1	Activated new measures: azione 4.3, azione 7.6: +0,5; therefore, adds project selection criteria to those defined by RDP: +0,5.
TOT	1,8	
Local Development Ability		
Organogram	0,5	The organogram is transparent: +0,5. No difficulties in the management of bureaucracy by technical staff: 0.
Credibility on the territory	0	First programming period, point of reference: 0.
Animation and technical support for potential beneficiaries	0,5	Animation type 2: +0,5.
Monitoring and self-evaluation	0,5	Final self-evaluation planned: +0,5.
Integration capacity	1	Cooperation in the implementation of SNAI in the internal area of Tesino. Actions on the Natura 2000 networks through provincial resources: +1.
Additional services activities	0,5	Extra-Leader services provided through: coordination of the project of Parco Miniera Lagorai and project on reserves of river Brenta. Management of the implementation of DPCM 24 settembre 2020 in favor of LAG members: +0,5.
Network potential	0	Formal cooperation with other actors: (Project on Via Claudia Augusta with GAL Pre-Alpi Dolomiti. Project on E5 path with GAL Trentino Centrale, Südtiroler Grenzland, Sarntaler Alpen): 0.
TOT	3	

GAL PUSTERTAL		
	ATTRIBUTED VALUE	JUSTIFICATION
Decision-Making Ability		
Cohesion of the territory	1	All municipalities of the territory are under Comunità Comprensoriale Val Pusteria: +1.
Critical mass of the territory	0	The territory is contiguous: 0. The territory respects the limits set by the RDP: 0.
Composition of the partnership	-0,1	Missing environmental organization (although present as external experts for the LAG): -0.1.
Territorial vision	0	None applies: 0
Strategic vision	-0,5	None of the points are assigned: -0,5.
TOT	0,4	
Local Development Ability		
Organogram	0	The organogram is transparent: +0,5. Difficulties in the management of bureaucracy by technical staff: -0,5.
Credibility on the territory	0	LAG is point of reference: 0.
Animation and technical support for potential beneficiaries	0,5	Animation type 2: +0,5. (Although the LAG already existed in past programming period, the area concerned by LEADER has undergone a significant enlargement: from 4 municipalities to 26, as such the evaluator has considered it as first programming period)
Monitoring and self-evaluation	1	First on-going self-evaluation in 2019: +0,5. Final self-evaluation planned for 2024: +0,5.
Integration capacity	0	No integration with other funds and/or extra-Leader projects: 0.
Additional services activities	0	No additional services: 0.
Network potential	0	Formal cooperation with other actors (1 project with 2 Finnish LAGs, project on SMART concepts in rural areas with GAL Wipptal 2020 and GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten): 0.
TOT	1,5	

GAL SARNTALER ALPEN		
	ATTRIBUTED VALUE	JUSTIFICATION
Decision-Making Ability		
Cohesion of the territory	0,5	More than one administrative aggregation: 3 municipalities and 3 districts are under Comunità Comprensoriale Alta Valle Isarco, 3 municipalities under Comunità Comprensoriale Salto-Schilar, 1 under Comunità Comprensoriale Burgraviato: +0,5.
Critical mass of the territory	0	The territory is contiguous: 0. The territory respects the limits set by the RDP: 0.
Composition of the partnership	-0,3	Missing social organization, cultural organization, environmental organization: -0,1 each.
Territorial vision	0,5	Management of the LAG is assigned to GRW Sarntal, a structure already operative in terms of local development of the territory: +0,5.
Strategic vision	-0,5	None of the points are assigned: -0,5.
TOT	0,2	
Local Development Ability		
Organogram	-0,25	On the website there is information on who the technical staff is but their tasks and duties are not clear: +0,25. Difficulties in the management of bureaucracy by technical staff: -0,5.
Credibility on the territory	0	LAG is a point of reference: 0.
Animation and technical support for potential beneficiaries	0,5	Animation type 2: +0,5. (See rationale for GAL Pustertal, the same applies, as enlargement from 1 municipality to 10)
Monitoring and self-evaluation	1	Performed ongoing monitoring (published): +0,5. Final self-evaluation planned: +0,5.
Integration capacity	1	RDP funds for bringing together chestnut producers under the name "Chestnuts of Südtirol", direct EU funding for project on polyculture with Bioland Südtirol and Bioland Deutschland, PNRR funds under provincial project for digitalization: +1.
Additional services activities	0,5	Additional services activated through GRW: +0,5.
Network potential	0	Formal cooperation (Project on Eisacktaler Kost with GAL Wipptal 2020 and GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten, project on E5 path with GAL Trentino Centrale, GAL Trentino Orientale, Südtiroler Grenzland; as GRW cooperation with GAL Val Sabbia): 0.

TOT	2,75	
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GAL SÜDTIROLER GRENZLAND

	ATTRIBUTED VALUE	JUSTIFICATION
Decision-Making Ability		
Cohesion of the territory	0,5	More than one administrative aggregation, i.e. Comunità Comprensoriale Burgraviato and Comunità Comprensoriale Oltradige Bassa Atesina
Critical mass of the territory	-0,5	The territory is non-contiguous: -0,5. The territory respects the limits set by the RDP: 0.
Composition of the partnership	-0,9	Missing agricultural organization, craftsmanship organization, business organization, touristic organization, social organization, cultural organization, environmental organization, formative organization, other stakeholder (all members of the LAGs are not representative of any organization, apart from representatives of municipalities and Comunità Comprensoriali): -0,1 each.
Territorial vision	0	None applies: 0
Strategic vision	-0,5	None of the points are assigned: -0,5.
TOT	-1,4	
Local Development Ability		
Organogram	0,25	On the website there is information on members of the technical staff but their tasks and duties are not clear: +0,25. No difficulties in the management of bureaucracy by technical staff: 0.
Credibility on the territory	-1	LAG is active in the territory from more than one programming period, the LAG is not a point of reference: -1.
Animation and technical support for potential beneficiaries	-0,5	Animation type 3: -0,5.
Monitoring and self-evaluation	1	Performed ongoing monitoring (published): +0,5. Final self-evaluation planned: +0,5.
Integration capacity	0	No integration with other funds and/or extra-Leader projects: 0.
Additional services activities	0	No additional services: 0.
Network potential	0	Formal cooperation (project on E5 path with GAL Trentino Centrale, GAL Trentino Orientale, GAL Sarntaler Alpen): 0.
TOT	-0,25	

GAL VINSCHGAU

	ATTRIBUTED VALUE	JUSTIFICATION
Decision-Making Ability		
Cohesion of the territory	1	All municipalities of the territory are under Comunità Comprensoriale Val Venosta: +1.
Critical mass of the territory	0	The territory is contiguous: 0. The territory respects the limits set by the RDP: 0.
Composition of the partnership	-0,5	Missing craftsmanship organization, social organization, cultural organization, environmental organization, other stakeholder: -0,1 each.
Territorial vision	0	None applies: 0.
Strategic vision	-0,5	None of the points are assigned: -0,5.
TOT	0	
Local Development Ability		
Organogram	-0,75	Organogram is not transparent: -0,5. Difficulties in the management of bureaucracy by technical staff at the beginning of the programming period, with time better balance: -0,25.
Credibility on the territory	-1	LAG is active in the territory from more than one programming period, the LAG is not a point of reference: -1.
Animation and technical support for potential beneficiaries	-0,5	Animation type 3: -0,5.
Monitoring and self-evaluation	0,5	Performed ongoing monitoring (published): +0,5. Planned one final audit report based on monitoring data: 0.
Integration capacity	0	No integration with other funds and/or extra-Leader projects: 0.
Additional services activities	0	No additional services: 0.
Network potential	-0,5	No formal cooperation with other actors: -0,5.
TOT	2,75	

GAL WIPPTAL 2020		
	ATTRIBUTED VALUE	JUSTIFICATION
Decision-Making Ability		
Cohesion of the territory	1	All municipalities of the territory are under Comunità Comprensoriale Alta Val d'Isarco: +1.
Critical mass of the territory	0	The territory is contiguous: 0. The territory respects the limits set by the RDP: 0.
Composition of the partnership	-0,1	Missing environmental organization: -0,1.
Territorial vision	0,5	Management of the LAG is assigned to GRW Wipptal/Eisacktal, a structure already operative in terms of local development of the territory: +0,5.
Strategic vision	-0,5	None of the points are assigned: -0,5.
TOT	0,9	
Local Development Ability		
Organogram	0	The organogram is transparent: +0,5. Difficulties in the management of bureaucracy by technical staff: -0,5.
Credibility on the territory	0	LAG is a point of reference: 0
Animation and technical support for potential beneficiaries	0,5	Animation type 1: +0,5.
Monitoring and self-evaluation	1	First on-going self-evaluation in 2020: +0,5. Final self-evaluation planned for end of 20203/beginning of 2024: +0,5.
Integration capacity	1	As GRW consulting for the stipulation and realization of local development projects through extra-Leader funds (PNRR, Interreg, CLLD with Northern Wipptal)
Additional services activities	0,5	Additional services activated through GRW: 0,5.
Network potential	0	Formal cooperation (Project on Eisacktaler Kost with GAL Eisacktaler Dolomiten and Sarntaler Alpen, project on SMART concepts in rural areas with GAL Pustertal and Eisacktaler Dolomiten): 0.
TOT	3	

GAL EISACKTALER DOLOMITEN		
	ATTRIBUTED VALUE	JUSTIFICATION
Decision-Making Ability		
Cohesion of the territory	1	All municipalities of the territory are under Comunità Comprensoriale Valle Isarco: +1.
Critical mass of the territory	0	The territory is contiguous: 0. The territory respects the limits set by the RDP: 0.
Composition of the partnership	-0,3	Missing business organization, environmental organization, other stakeholder: -0,1 each.
Territorial vision	0,5	Management of the LAG is assigned to GRW Wipptal/Eisacktal, a structure already operative in terms of local development of the territory: +0,5.
Strategic vision	-0,5	None of the points are assigned: -0,5.
TOT	0,7	
Local Development Ability		
Organogram	0	The organogram is transparent: +0,5. Difficulties in the management of bureaucracy by technical staff: -0,5.
Credibility on the territory	0	LAG is a point of reference: 0
Animation and technical support for potential beneficiaries	0,5	Animation type 1: +0,5.
Monitoring and self-evaluation	1	First on-going self-evaluation in 2020: +0,5. Final self-evaluation planned for end of 20203/beginning of 2024: +0,5.
Integration capacity	1	As GRW consulting for the stipulation and realization of local development projects through extra-Leader funds (PNRR, Interreg, CLLD with Northern Wipptal)
Additional services activities	0,5	Additional services activated through GRW: 0,5.
Network potential	0	Formal cooperation (Project on Eisacktaler Kost with GAL Wipptal 2020 and Sarntaler Alpen, project on SMART concepts in rural areas with GAL Pustertal and Wipptal 2020): 0.
TOT	3	