

CHAPTER V

The partnership approach and the local action group

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CHAPTER V

**European Commission Notices to the Member States****LEADER+**

European Commission Notice to the Member States of 14 April 2000 laying down guidelines for the Community Initiative for rural development (LEADER+)

ref. 2000/C139/05

LEADER II dossiers**Innovation notebooks**

No. 2: Organising local partnerships (1997)

No. 3: From strategy to action: project selection (1998)

No. 4: Assessing the added value of the LEADER approach (1999)

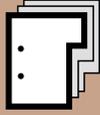
Observatory dossiers

No. 3: Mainstreaming LEADER in future rural policies (1999)

Guides

Support systems for new activities in rural areas (1998)

CHAPTER V

Examples**“Innovative actions” factsheets**

E15 - E32

M01 - M02 - M16 - M27 - M28 - M38 - M39 - M42 - M43 - M45 -M47- M54

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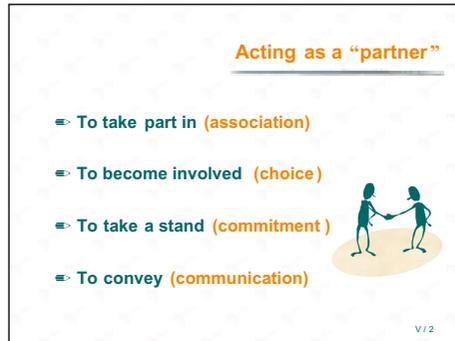
T06 - T31



The LEADER method relies on a new concept of rural development based on establishing links between citizens, activities and rural areas.

Setting up a local partnership, known in LEADER as a “local action group (LAG)” allows this concept to be put into practical application:

- > By harnessing the differing and complementary resources of the public sector, the private sector and the civic and voluntary sector.
- > By uniting local players around joint projects and common, cross-sectoral actions, in order to achieve the critical mass or threshold needed to improve the area’s economic competitiveness.
- > By envisaging development through a multisectoral approach, stemming from negotiations and consultations between the players concerned.



According to the bottom-up approach to development, “being a partner” means:

- > **To take part** (joining in, rallying around a cause, participating in a process, etc.)
- > **To become involved** (making choices, assuming responsibilities, etc.)
- > **To take a stand** (committing oneself and others, publicly stating and defending an opinion, etc.)
- > **To convey** (communicating, disseminating, exchanging information, viewpoints, etc.)

A partnership is a group of players that have chosen to commit themselves to furthering local development.

Beyond the objective of leading a collective project, the *raison d’être* of a partnership is its ability to transform social relations, attitudes and behaviour and to act as an innovation tool for managing projects.

Local partnership

⇒ New form of organisation in order to

- ✓ unite prime movers around a project
- ✓ allow everyone to express their views
- ✓ take a wider view of resources
- ✓ ensure a link between actions
- ✓ stay closer to local realities
- ✓ manage in a flexible manner



V/3

The partnership concept is first and foremost a local **form of organisation** that will influence the institutional and political balance of the area. This form of organisation, which is compulsory in LEADER, is encouraged by delegating to the local level a large proportion of the work of defining and managing action programmes.

The local partnership is expected to:

- > **unite all of the prime movers in the area around a joint project;**
- > **allow all** groups of players, including the most marginalised, to express their views.
- > **take a wider view** of local resources, making the partnership more receptive to innovative ideas;
- > **ensure strong links between actions** and to integrate distinct sectoral approaches in order to bring them into closer synergy;
- > **stay closer to local realities;**
- > **manage in a flexible manner.**

The creation of a local partnership involves a **wide diversity of players** who in many cases were not previously accustomed to working together. A broad representation of local interests within the group of partners opens up global and multisectoral prospects, facilitating the diversification of the local economy.



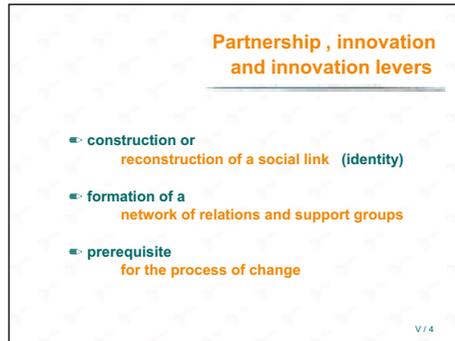
IV/8

VI/5-8

VII/6

II/10

IX/4



Apart from mounting joint economic actions, the local partnership also represents a desire to **construct or reconstruct a social link**, or even to seek an identity for the area.

In the area as a whole the partnership should result in the **formation of a complex network of relations and support groups** that makes it possible to take into account and exploit all of the area's potential and to enhance support measures.

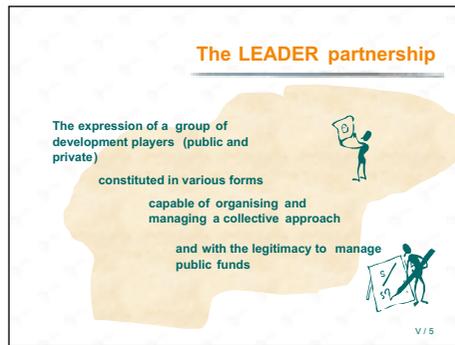
This can only be achieved over time.

Establishing a partnership is increasingly becoming a necessity and **prerequisite for inducing processes of change** and development that are beyond the reach of an isolated development player, albeit an institution.



VI/8

VI/6-7



Under LEADER, **local partnership is the expression of a group of players (public and private) established in a variety of different forms** which, due to their legitimacy, their knowledge of the field, their involvement in networks and the recognition they enjoy, are **capable of organising and managing a collective approach**.

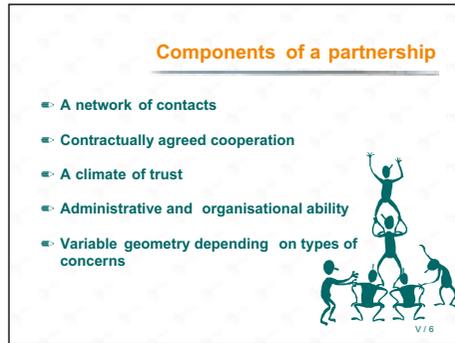
The LEADER partnership has had to demonstrate that it has the legitimacy to manage public funds, irrespective of its composition and legal form.

A local partnership can take a wide variety of forms, depending on:

- > type and number of partners;
- > the backdrop to the partnership's creation and the individuals or corporate entities that instigated it;
- > the objectives assigned to the partnership;
- > the socio-economic culture of the area concerned (legal and administrative system, current regulations, role of the public authorities, institutional practices, civic participation, etc.).



M47, M01

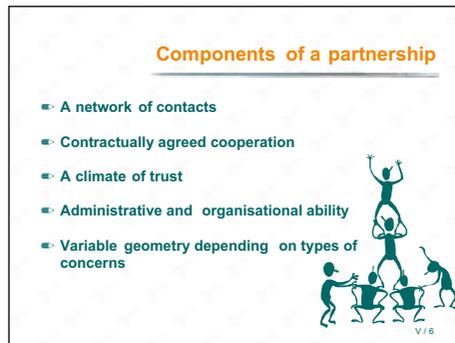


A partnership is created by establishing new relationships between diverse parties. It is a long-term process, with intense collective interludes, some formal aspects and other fairly informal ones. As a general rule, the components of a partnership are as follows:

> **A network of contacts** – A partnership is founded on the establishment of contacts between players from clearly identified local circles (local authorities, groups of entrepreneurs, diverse associations, etc.) These partners do not therefore represent individual interests, but shared ones. Due to the presence of such partners, the local partnership created in the spirit of the LEADER approach is enhanced with wider networks of contacts. In practice, however, at the outset a LEADER partnership is sometimes only a rudimentary structure of local players to manage a programme or cope with a problem seen as serious for the area. Gradually, the programme will evolve by incorporating other development players and/or prompting other forms of local organisation.

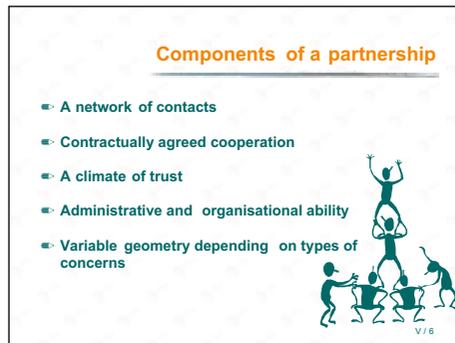


M01, M16, M28,
M45, M54, S23



> **Contractually-agreed cooperation** – In order to be lasting and act consistently, a partnership must adhere to certain operating rules. More often than not, this association of players, whether temporary or permanent, is established contractually, which reinforces transparency within the group, its credibility to outsiders and the effectiveness of the approach as a whole. However, the partnership's composition is not fixed once and for all but instead evolves in line with needs and opportunities. The possibility of including new partners at any time reinforces the programme's credibility and foundation.

> **A climate of trust** – The creation of a climate of trust between the partners is a prerequisite for the smooth running of the partnership, as well as an on-going challenge that must be met. Depending on the context, economic developments, cultures, population movements, etc., past achievements can quickly be undermined and the very basis of collective efforts can be called into question.



- > **Administrative and organisational ability** – Effective organisation and management are factors in the success of the local partnership. Transparent decision-making and regular information to the community foster trust. The partnership must also be structured. At the start, the ranking and distribution of tasks between the partners do not have to be very specific but, as the local development project evolves, they must be refined. The separation of duties and powers is a guarantee of the proper working of “local democracy”, the cornerstone of a dynamic partnership. In practice it has to be clearly defined who is responsible for proposing, deciding, implementing and financing.
- > **Variable geometry** – A partnership is not the result of a whim. Depending on the origin of its instigators, coupled with other factors, groups create a specific and tailored partnership for themselves. Sometimes the partnership is forced to open up to partners from different backgrounds, leading to the development or even modification of the objectives and content of the action. Ultimately it is possible to achieve a “variable geometry” partnership based on a variety of different concerns:
 - *usefulness (in achieving the stated objectives);*
 - *benefit (of the expected results);*
 - *effectiveness (necessary for the success of the planned actions);*
 - *motivation (required for taking charge of projects);*
 - *adaptation (to the changes imposed by a long-term approach).*

The local action group (LAG)

- ⇒ An organisation with different beginnings and legal statuses (neither public administration nor private sector), set up to:
 - ✓ represent the interests of the development players and communities concerned
 - ✓ establish a strategy and implement the development programme
 - ✓ wield the power of decision

V.12

Under the LEADER approach, the partnership is comprised of the “local action group” (LAG). The local action group promotes the development strategy and is responsible for implementing it.

- > The partners involved in the LAG represent the interests of local socio-economic players and communities and the different sectors and associations concerned by the environment, the heritage, social and cultural integration, etc.
- > Together they establish a joint strategy and implement the development programme, based on the widespread engagement of the entire community and on a search for integration (involvement, participation in the approach, “trawling” for projects, encouraging the creation of new links, conflict management, etc.)
- > The LAG has decision-making powers and a budget. However, decentralised funding and management does not rule out negotiations with the regional or national authorities responsible for applying the programme.

The local action group is neither a public administration nor a private entity. Far from ignoring such bodies, it plays a complementary role in linking the two. This is one of the most original and strategic features of the programme.



S18, S32

M16

The local action group (LAG)

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V.13

LAGs are highly diverse

There are **three types of structure** depending on the country concerned and its political and institutional traditions:

- > in countries with a long tradition of public intervention in local development (Belgium, Denmark, France, Austria, Netherlands), local action groups are often integrated into existing structures;
- > in countries where forms of concertation or local partnership emanating from civil society already existed (Sweden, Finland, United Kingdom, Italy), LEADER has come to reinforce these formal or informal structures, or has had to find a place for itself within them;
- > in countries that had no partnership culture at the outset (Spain, Portugal) or no strong tradition of local authority intervention (Ireland), the establishment of LEADER-type local partnerships has made it possible to satisfy a local need and has led to the creation of new structures.

The local action group (LAG)

⇒ An organisation with different beginnings and legal statuses (neither public administration nor private sector), set up to:

- ✓ represent the interests of the development players and communities concerned
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- ✓ wield the power of decision

V.14

Likewise, the local action groups' composition and "style of approach" reflect the socio-political culture of the different national and regional contexts:

- > Many LAGs are closely linked to the public sector (regional or local administrations and the various departments dependent on them). This gives them access to a large number of resources. Certain LEADER groups are even a fully-fledged part of the development support system set up by political institutions.
- > Other LEADER groups form part of existing civic and voluntary associations. In general their activities tend to focus on "animation", training and skill and capacity building. They often target disadvantaged areas or sectors of the community.
- > Groups from the private sector or controlled by it are less numerous (although nearly all LAGs include the private sector in their partnership in one form or another). These groups are often more concerned with the needs of existing enterprises than with creating new activities.

LEADER+

The Notice to the Member States stipulates that the LEADER+ local action groups must consist of a balanced and representative selection of partners drawn from the different socio-economic sectors of the area concerned. At the decision-making level the economic and social partners and associations must make up at least 50% of the local partnership.

The team of practitioners

- A team qualified to
 - ✓ “animate” the development approach
 - ✓ inform, train and advise
 - ✓ foster dialogue
 - ✓ identify those to be associated with the projects
 - ✓ support project leaders



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The permanent core of the local action group is made up of a board of directors and **a qualified team of practitioners** responsible for “animating” the area’s development.

Two fundamental factors are the quality of the team of practitioners appointed by the local action group and its own perception of its role:

- > generally speaking, development agents or the team of practitioners are in charge of **“animating” the development process**: engaging and involving people, encouraging the expression of and paying active attention to views, putting the players into contact, etc;
- > their task is to **inform, train and advise** and to provide follow-up to the community and local players;
- > they spearhead efforts to **foster dialogue**, or even in some cases, to arrange mediation. Depending on their mediation skills and on the particular situation, they may call upon the services of organisations specialised in such matters;
- > one of their primary tasks is to **identify project leaders**;



M28, M39, M42

E15, M27, T06

M02, S23

The team of practitioners

- A team qualified to
 - ✓ “animate” the development approach
 - ✓ inform, train and advise
 - ✓ foster dialogue
 - ✓ identify those to be associated with the projects
 - ✓ support project leaders



V.16

- > as a permanent structure, it is the job of the team of practitioners to **bring together the key players** to ensure the smooth operation of the projects and, more generally, to encourage the integration of players and sectors at all levels;
- > the development agents **support project leaders** and seek appropriate forms of support for the specific projects and the problems that may arise. The “practitioners” or “development agents” that make up the LEADER team are usually quite young and have very diverse training backgrounds (economics, town and country planning, geography, agronomy, etc.) Apart from specialised in-service training in local development (the practice has become considerably more widespread in recent years), the personality of the development agent and the cohesion of the team of practitioners are essential to the success of project “animation” and support.



M01, M38, M54,
M43, M45, M47

T06

M01, S26

**Tasks of the
local action group**

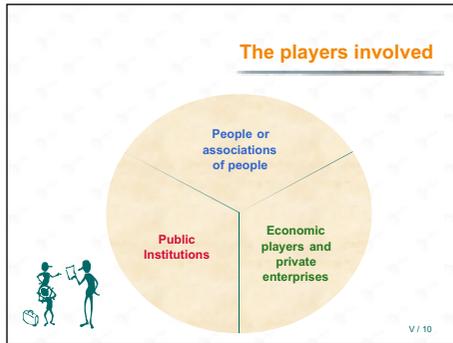
Forms of support appropriate to each stage of the project:

- ✓ information and advice
- ✓ “animation” and identification of project leaders
- ✓ training
- ✓ drawing up the business plan and sourcing finance
- ✓ interface with specialised bodies
- ✓ support and project monitoring
- ✓ collective actions

V / 9

At each stage of the project, specific needs emerge that require **appropriate forms of support** from local action groups, in collaboration with other players and support organisations in the public, private and civic and voluntary sectors. These include the **following forms of support:**

- > **information and advice;**
- > **“animation” and identification** of project leaders;
- > **training** of project leaders (capacity building, widening the debate through collective thinking, etc.);
- > **help with drawing up the business plan** and sourcing finance;
- > acting as an **interface** with specialist bodies (research laboratories, technological expertise, etc.);
- > **support and project monitoring;**
- > **collective actions.**

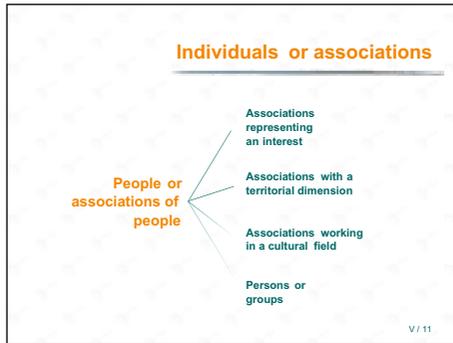


slide 10

The LEADER local action group generally concerns **three major categories of potential partners:**

- > **people or associations of people;**
- > **economic players and private enterprises;**
- > **public institutions.**

At level II, slides 11 to 13 set out the characteristics of these potential players: individuals or associations (SLIDE 11), economic and financial players (SLIDE 12) and public players (SLIDE 13). Depending on the time available and the objectives of the presentation, showing these slides might be useful in allowing an examination of the status of the prime movers in the local area.

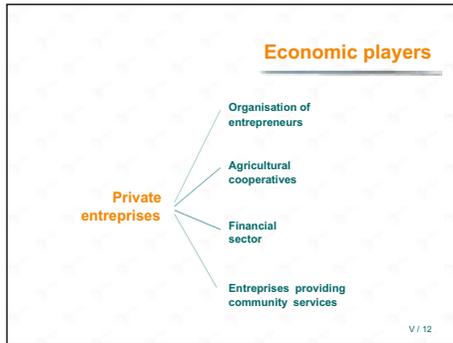


slide 11

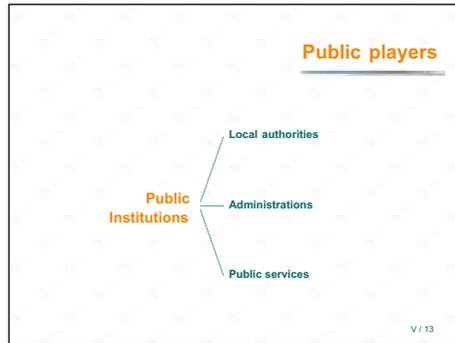
Each is comprised of a number of groups of players:

for people or associations of people (slide 11)

- > associations representing an interest (trade unions, trade associations);
- > associations with an interest in the area (local development associations, environmental associations, etc.);
- > cultural, social or religious associations;
- > people or groups (informal groups, private individuals, etc.).

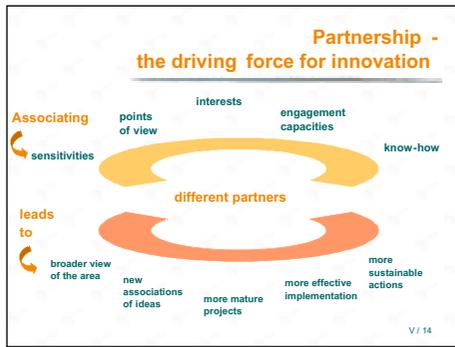
**slide 12****for economic players and private enterprises (slide 12)**

- > organisations of entrepreneurs (business and industrial associations, major enterprises working in the area);
- > cooperative farming sector (cooperatives, cooperative union);
- > financial sector (banks, friendly societies, etc.);
- > enterprises providing community services (cultural services, newspapers, radio, television, non-cultural services, etc.).

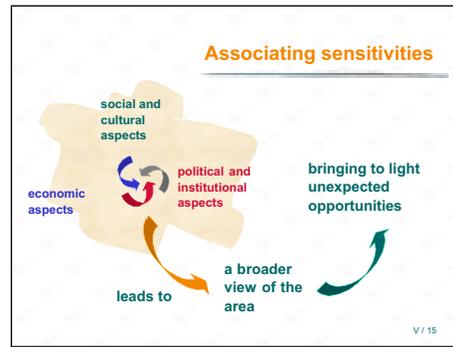
**slide 13****for public institutions (slide 13)**

- > local authorities (district councils, associations of districts, etc.);
- > public administrations (local, regional, branch offices of national administrations);
- > public services (social, public health and transport services; schools, universities, etc.).

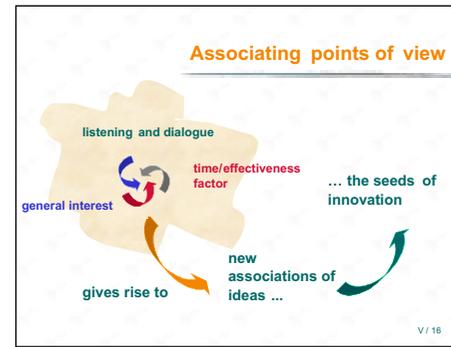
The summary table (slide 14) is divided into five slides (slides 15 to 19):



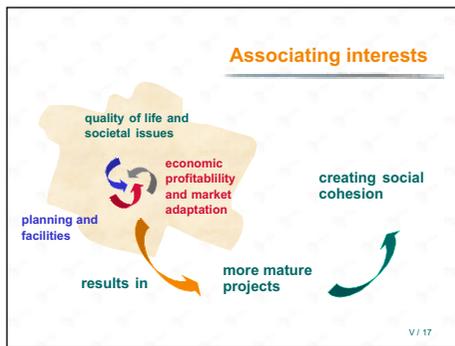
slide 14



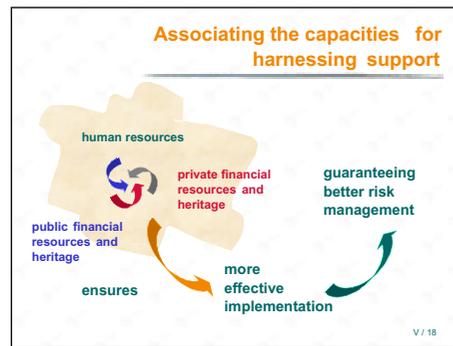
slide 15



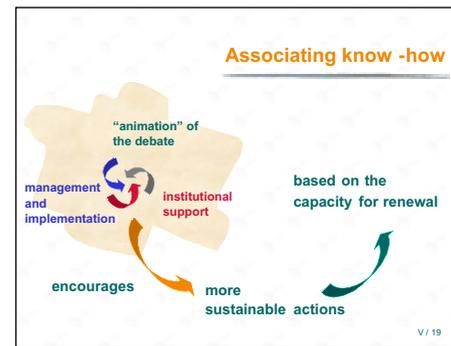
slide 16



slide 17



slide 18



slide 19

<p>ASSOCIATING →</p> <p>↓</p>		<i>Sensitivities</i>	<i>Points of view</i>	<i>Interests</i>	<i>Capacity for harnessing support</i>	<i>know-how</i>													
<p>VARIOUS PARTNERS</p> <p>↓</p>																			
<p>LEADS TO →</p>		<p>with social and cultural aspects</p>	<p>with economic aspects</p>	<p>with political and institutional aspects</p>	<p>a broader <i>view of the area</i>,</p> <p>bringing to light unexpected opportunities</p>	<p>listening and dialogue</p>	<p>time/effectiveness factor</p>	<p>the general interest</p>	<p>for people, the quality of life</p>	<p>for markets, economic profitability</p>	<p>for the area's planning and facilities (economic, cultural, environmental)</p>	<p>more "mature" <i>projects</i>,</p> <p>integrating the interests of the different social groups and creating social cohesion</p>	<p>human resources</p>	<p>private financial resources and heritage</p>	<p>public financial resources and heritage</p>	<p>"animation" of the debate</p>	<p>management and implementation</p>	<p>institutional support</p>	<p>more <i>sustainable</i> actions,</p> <p>based on the capacity for continual renewal</p>



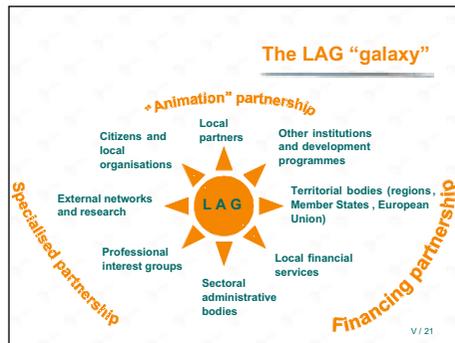
Far from being a static structure, the local partnership evolves in line with a **five-phase** development process.

For each of these phases, the chart summarises the following aspects:

- > *the key concepts characterising the phase;*
- > *the type of partners that must be engaged;*
- > *the dominant form of organisation during the phase;*
- > *the principal forces behind the dynamism or type of motivation in question.*

Development and partnership

Stages	1	2	3	4	5
Nature of the partnership	instigate, identify and engage	debate, position and propose	validate, programme and finance	prepare, implement and monitor	evaluate, adapt to needs and relaunch
Key partners	A limited number of people or organisations involved	Institutional and trade representatives, resource persons from civil society	Fund-providers and investors, banks and administrators, diverse administrations	Individual or collective project leaders	Parties directly and indirectly involved in an area and in production chains
Form of organisation	Informal organisation relying on volunteers	Working groups on objectives or themes	Institutional consultation based on a contract	Personal commitment relying on obligation of result and the contract	Strategic group based on identity and the aim of the common good
Forces behind the dynamism	Political activism, usefulness	Cooperation, interest	Competence, effectiveness	Responsibility, motivation	Integration, citizenship
Difficulties or limitations due to the composition of the partnership	Spontaneous initiative, sometimes poorly received by institutions and/or the community. Fragility due to the small number of people involved.	Corporatist pressure, hegemony by specific institutions or sectors of activity	Progress hampered by institutional rationales and financial constraints	Stifled by a project dynamic that runs out of steam	Diluted activities and uncertainty about the benefit of global actions



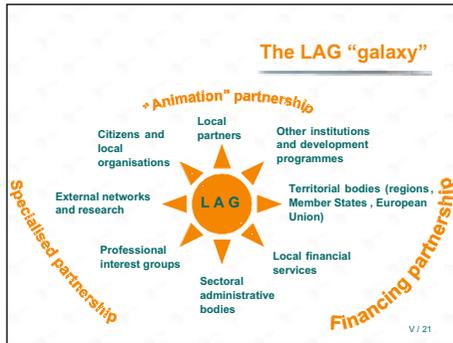
The partnership formed by the **local action group** evolves as it adapts to the different stages and requirements of the development process. With the ability to include a real “**galaxy**” of potential partners (*see slides 14 to 19*), it will act in turn as:

- > A development “**animation**” **partnership** whose aim is to create a community project based on an educating and motivating approach. Its goal is to raise civic awareness, change behaviour and encourage as many individuals as possible to take responsibility. This development “animation” partnership is extremely diverse and evolves over time. It is linked with the **management** partnership which responds to targeted needs: effective management, need for project funding, administrative and political demands, evaluation procedures, etc.



M01, M38, M47

T31



> A **funding and management partnership** whose aim is closely linked with the allocation, distribution and use of a financial envelope. This form of partnership generally stems from a short-term opportunity (programme, exceptional funding, etc.). It is limited in time and aim. It follows a project rationale (finding and bringing suppliers of resources and know-how together to actually set up a venture). This partnership forms part of a purely technical/economic rationale.

> A **specialised partnership** that becomes involved on an ad hoc basis according to the needs of the area project, in a variety of fields: training, information dissemination, arranging dialogue, feasibility studies, product search, technical support, etc.



M01, M38, S23

M45, E32

Looking ahead

- How do you obtain the effective participation of the entities involved in the partnership?
- How do you achieve broad representation within the partnership?
- Effect of the partnership approach on the local dynamic?
- Originality of the LEADER partnership?

V / 22

How (by what method) can the following bodies be **effectively involved** in the consultation and decision-making process?

1. Local authorities
2. State/Region
3. Trade representatives
4. Cooperative sector
5. Civic and voluntary sector
6. Development agents
7. Financial sector
8. Other

Does the local partnership sufficiently **represent** the different players and interests of an area? Does it take equal opportunities into account?

Does the partnership approach lead to:

1. More local decision-making?
2. Greater consensus over implementation decisions?
3. More coherent actions?
4. Encouragement of collective initiatives?
5. A demonstrative effect for other institutions?
6. The implementation of projects that would never otherwise have come into being?

What is the **added value** of the LEADER partnership compared with other forms of partnership?