

LEADER policy design: Effects of top-down regulations on bottom-up rural development

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LEADER/agricultural policy

Chair: Dr. Kim Pollermann

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Project Background

Project: 5-Länder* Evaluation

Who?	Thünen Institute: Federal Research Institute for Rural Areas, Forestry and Fisheries Entera – Umweltplanung & IT
What?	Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes that implement EAFRD** funding
Where?	Five federal states: Hesse, Lower Saxony, Bremen, North Rhine-Westphalia, Schleswig-Holstein
How?	By examining the effects of financing rural development
Why?	Policy recommendations for the design and implementation of different funding measures/RDPs
When?	Duration: 2015 – 2026 (and preceding project: 2007 – 2016)

*Länder = Bundesländer = federal states in Germany

**EAFRD = European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

Outline

1. Introduction to LEADER
2. Research question and approach
3. Data and methods
4. Findings and interpretation
5. Conclusion
6. Recommendations

LEADER = Links between actions for the development of the rural economy



Figure 1: Examples of LEADER-funded projects in the study areas: calisthenics park, renovation of a traditional community baking house, youth bus and fitness trail for people with disabilities

Introduction to LEADER

LEADER principles



Bottom-up approach



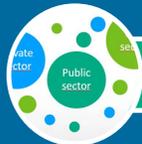
Area-based strategies

= Local development strategies (LDS)



Local partnerships

→ Local action groups (LAGs)



Multi-sectoral action



Innovation



Networking



Cooperation



LAG management



offer leverage points for policy design

Research question and approach

- What are suitable conditions for the implementation of LEADER?
- Comparative approach: Analyses of different steering approaches and their results
- Focus on different leverage points for policy design, e.g.:
 - LAG selection process
 - Allocation of LEADER budgets
 - Thematic priorities for local development strategies
 - LAG structure
 - Stakeholder involvement
 - Innovation in LEADER projects
 - Cooperation projects (joint projects of two or more LAGs)

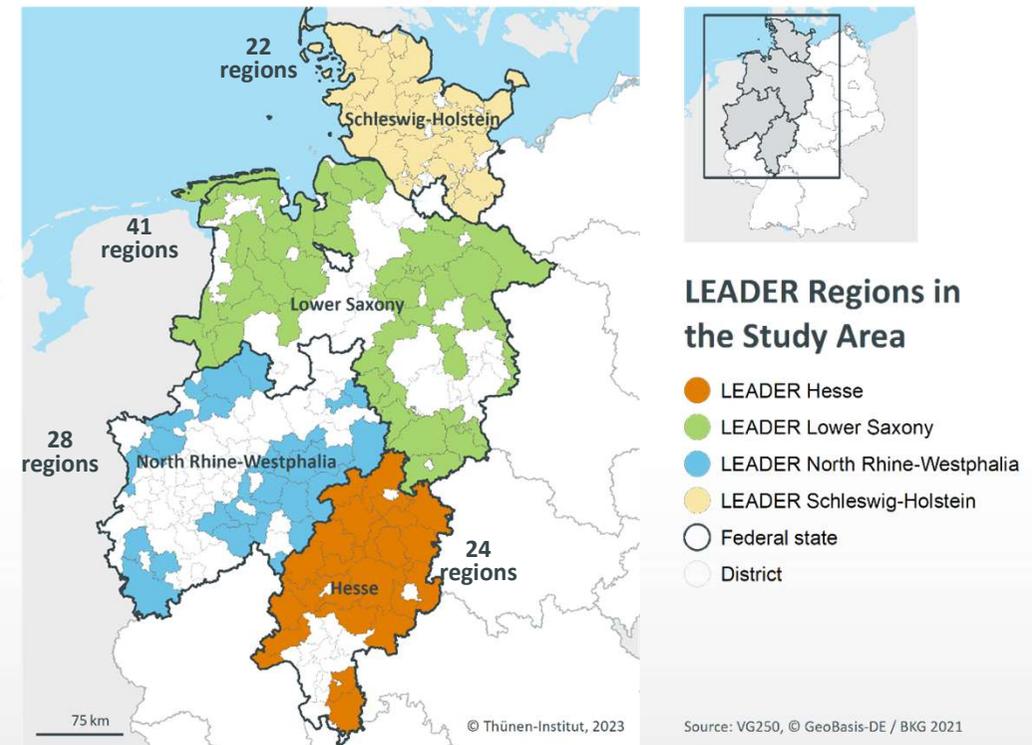


Figure 2: LEADER regions in the study area (2014-2022)

Data & methods

- **Mixed methods approach**
- **Data collection and sources:**
 - Document analyses: programme documents, funding guidelines, local development strategies, etc.
 - (Online) Surveys: LAG management, LAG members, grant beneficiaries
 - Interviews with various stakeholders (see above)
 - Annual funding data
 - Standardised requests of activities and organisational structures for 2016 and 2019

LAG structure: Female representation

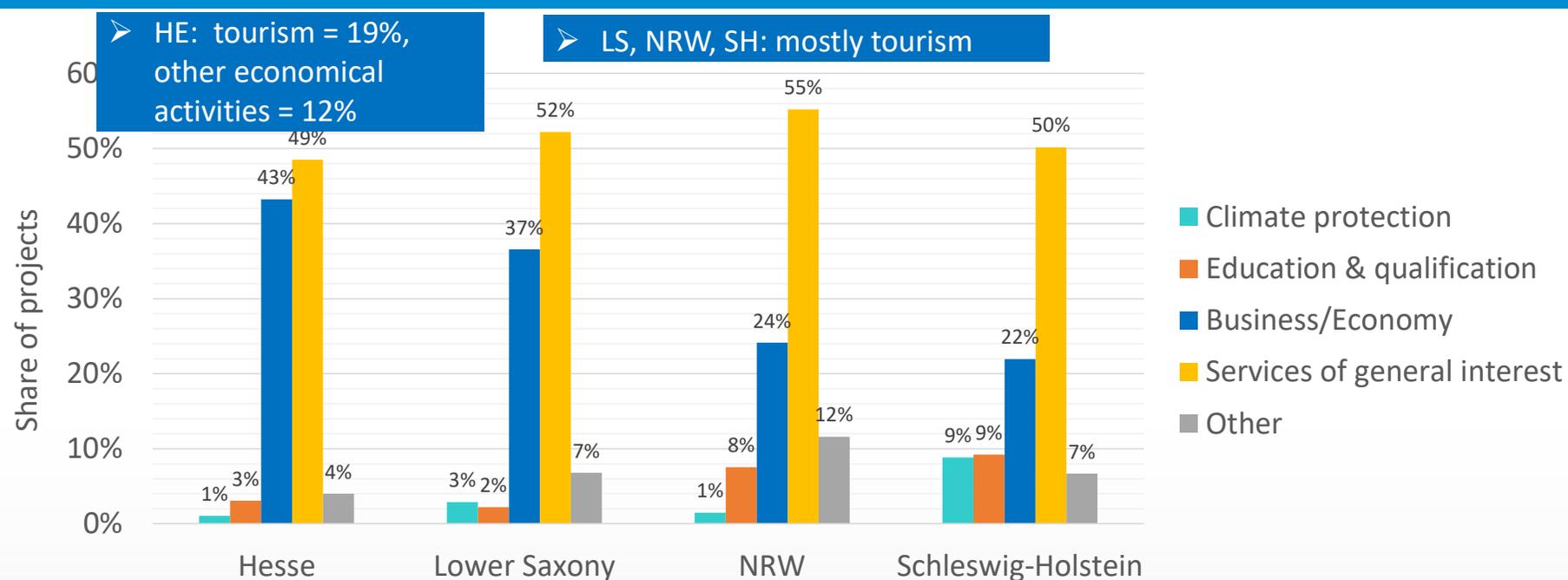
Federal state	Av. share of females (2013)	Requirements for 2014-2022 funding period	Av. share of females (2020)
Hesse (n=340)	19%	„Target groups should be represented“	26%
Lower Saxony	28%	„Regions should strive for gender balance“	31%
North Rhine-Westphalia	20%	Fixed quota (33% females) introduced with the start of the funding period	42% → target exceeded
Schleswig-Holstein	21%	„Regions should strive for gender balance“	27%

- Without top-down targets, achieving equal representation would be a lengthy process
- Setting minimum targets helps to increase awareness and maximise efforts towards reaching equal representation of women in LAGs

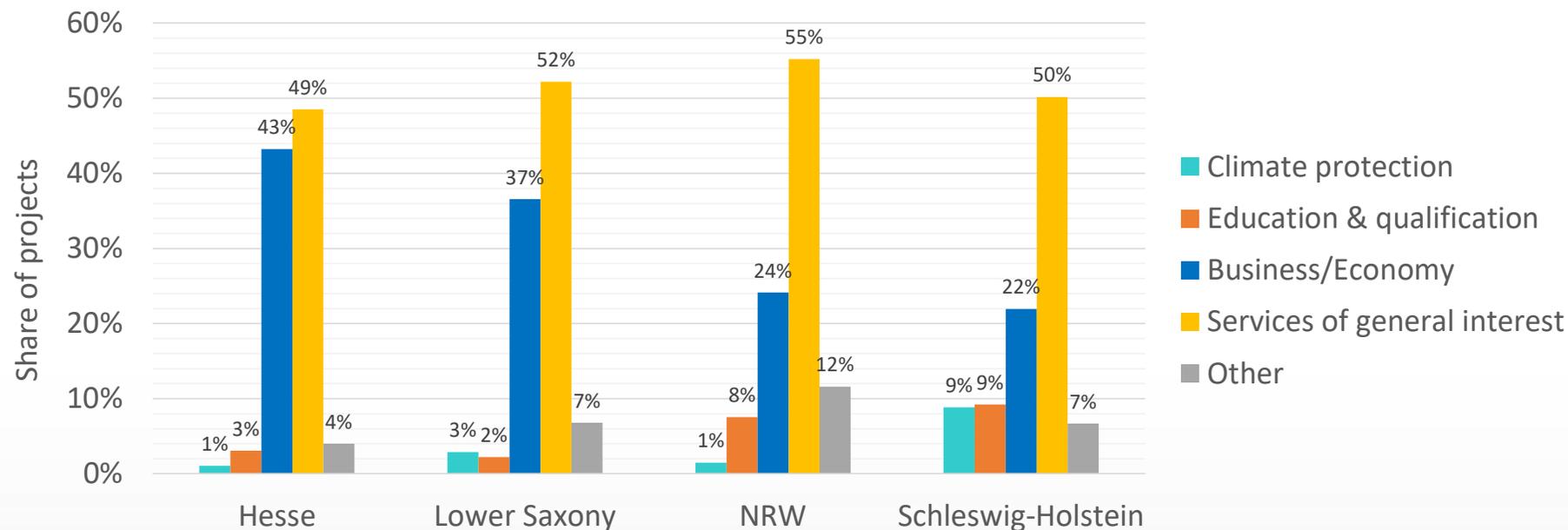
Thematic priorities for local development strategies

Federal state	Requirements/priorities for LDS	Priority areas for LEADER projects
Hesse	Four relatively broad priority areas to be addressed in LDS Fifth category: „Other“	1./2. Business and entrepreneurship (with and without job creation target) 3. Services of general interest 4. Rural tourism/local recreation 5. "Other"
Lower Saxony	None	-/-
North Rhine-Westphalia	None	-/-
Schleswig-Holstein	Four priority areas for LDS	1. Climate change and energy (mandatory) 2. Sustainable services of general interest 3. Education 4. Growth & innovation

Thematic priorities for local development strategies: Project themes/focus



Thematic priorities for local development strategies: Project themes/focus



- Top-down regulations can be relatively effective for promoting ideas on relevant topics
- No restrictions were observed with respect to project themes → no undermining of the bottom-up approach
 - Obstacles were rather encountered with respect to the administrative implementation

Innovation in LEADER projects

Innovation in the LEADER context:

New ideas or approaches to local development in the (LEADER) region (technological or social innovations)

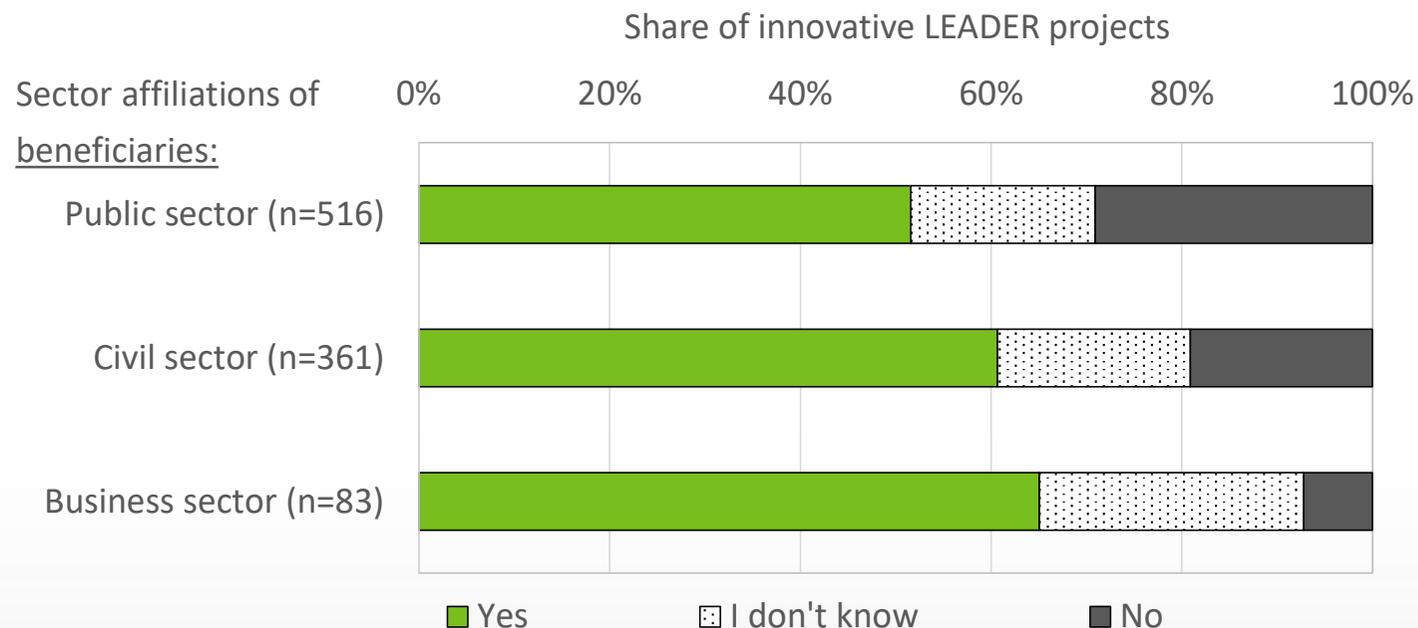
Federal state	Requirements for LDS (2014-2022 funding period)	Share of innovative projects
Hesse	None	61%
Lower Saxony	None	44%
North Rhine-Westphalia	All projects (sub measure 19.2) were required to have an “innovative character”.	66%
Schleswig-Holstein	None	51%

- LEADER gives room to innovative ideas → no strict requirements needed
- Amendment to the NRW requirement in 2018 → less restrictive with respect to projects contents

Innovation in LEADER projects: Favourable conditions for innovative projects

Factors analysed:

- Sector affiliations of beneficiaries
- Work capacity of LAG managements
- Origin of project idea
- Experience of LAG managers
- Age of LEADER region
- LAG structure (sectors, gender)



- More innovative ideas from the non-public actors
- Also: Positive correlation between work capacity of LAG management and share of innovative projects

Conclusion

- Advantages and disadvantages can be observed for the both steering approaches ("hard" rules or "soft" guidance)
- What works best to support LEADER implementation depends on the topic and desired results
 - Areas for hard rules: e.g. female quota in LAGs, binding minimum target for capacities of LAG managements
 - Areas for "soft" guidance: setting the agenda through encouragement, consulting, support for networking (for e.g. to promote cooperation projects or innovative ideas)

Recommendations

- What (else) is required?
 - The need for simplification (adjustment of funding regulations and budgetary guidelines) to make LEADER funds more accessible to non-public stakeholders
 - Involvement of LEADER regions in policy design
 - Sufficient capacities for LAG managements
 - Binding minimum target of 1.5 full-time equivalent → minimum of two regional managers: continuity and more stability

Literature

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Thank you for your attention!

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Picture sources (Page 3)

- Bottom-up: <https://bizzdesign.com/blog/business-process-modeling-top-down-or-bottom-up-process/>
- Area-based strategies: Lynn-Livia Fynn
- Multi-sectoral action: Lynn-Livia Fynn
- Innovation: Kim Pollermann
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