

# The potential of social innovation in LEADER

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SCALE<sup>UP</sup>  
community-driven  
bioeconomy development

Social innovations in rural areas.

Session #1: Social innovations in rural communities -policies, concepts and drivers

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## Basis for this input

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Evaluation Study „SILEA - Analyzing the potential of Social Innovation in LEADER 2014-2020“ (Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism, 2019)

<https://info.bml.gv.at/dam/jcr:761edd58-f1ed-4e9c-89d1-3e3422891c8a/Studie%202020Endbericht%20SILEA.pdf>

Policy Lab „Realizing Bioeconomy and Circular Economy through regional cooperation“ (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Watermanagement, 2022)

## What are Social Innovations? Slightly adapted definition used in the SILEA project

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process

*types of behavior*

social interaction

*that are realized through new forms of cooperation*

multisectoral

*of public, economic and civil society actors*

change in social patterns

*which changes relationships, routines, beliefs*

needs and impact

*(to improve people's living conditions) / to tackle societal needs*

# Examples



## Examples connected to circular economy, bio-economy and sustainability

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- „Energiegemeinschaften“ – inhabitants become energy prosumers
- Solar panel DIY clubs
- Sharing models (cars, tools, flats, ...)
- Community supported agriculture, Food Coops
- Re-use and repair cafes
- New approaches to residue collection/ residue management
- Support and capacity building for owners of small scale forests

WHAT IS LEADER?



# What is LEADER? Selected structural elements

- EU initiative (started in early 1990s)
- Geographical area
- Strategy
- Participation of local people
- Local Action Group (LAG)
- Budget (average 3-4 Mio. for 7 years), regular calls for projects; regional board selects
- Management (min. 60h per week)



**WHY DOES LEADER PROVIDE A FERTILE GROUND  
FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION?**



# Why does LEADER provide a „fertile ground“ for Social Innovation?

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## Common needs and place based solutions

A common (perceived) need proves to be a good basis for SI development

The regional level knows “what works for us/ in our given circumstances”. There is also better knowledge about local resources.

Strategies provide “focused attention” (although SI often happens unplanned). A clear theme makes it easier for people to connect.

Solutions to societal challenges need cross-cutting of sector policies. The LEADER strategy provides an integrated approach and is independent of sector policies. The multi-level-connection, often facilitated by LAG managements, makes it easier to negotiate proper circumstances

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## Diversity and networking boosts (Social) Innovation

LEADER actively involves different actors; in SI projects especially women play leading roles

A diverse decision making body enhances the change for diverse actors (Quota!). LAG members act as “boundary spanners”

LAG management manages social interactions, establishes and maintains networks; SI is not only restricted to projects – networks as “SI infrastructure”. Building up on existing networks strengthens trust

LEADER as a European approach is implemented in over 3.000 LAGs – huge potential for transnational cooperation

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## **Social innovation needs time and continuity**

Social Innovation does not happen “over night” – a 7 years action period provides possibilities for SI to unfold

Continuity of people bridge the gap between funding cycles

To have decision making power makes it easier to balance a strategic long/mid term focus with quick wins that keep up motivation and makes the direction more visible

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## **Social innovation needs impulse and capacities**

LAG can act as “social entrepreneur” by actively promoting topics and projects (and not waiting for someone to act)

Social Innovation needs understanding and competences. LEADER is focused on capacity development and can access knowledge.

Although innovation implicates uncertainty, a sound methodology can provide security

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**THANK YOU**

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