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# **Management of agreed integrated territorial policies in the Italian regions : Implementation in Apulia (Italy)**

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**Résumé.** Pour répondre au cadre tracé par la Commission Européenne pour le Développement Rural et plus particulièrement pour s'inscrire dans les Programmes d'Initiative Communautaire LEADER, la Région d'Apulia a instauré un processus de compétition et de sélection entre les territoires sollicitant son appui. Le type de partenariat, la qualité de la planification et des porteurs de projets, le mode d'organisation mis en place et les compétences managériales mobilisées constituent les principaux critères utilisés. Un système de suivi en temps réel des initiatives complète le dispositif et permet de réorienter si nécessaire les interventions. Il permet aussi de développer les échanges d'expériences entre les différents GAL (Groupes d'Action Locaux). L'approche LEADER conduit de fait, dans les régions du Sud de l'Italie, à trouver un compromis entre les acteurs publics et privés en tenant compte de l'environnement local. C'est ainsi que des Projets Territoriaux Intégrés et des Projets Sectoriels Intégrés sont mis en place. En Apulia, sur 10 territoires identifiés pour la mise en œuvre des PTI, trois relèvent d'une approche agricole ou para agricole (soutien à des industries de transformation agro alimentaire et au marketing). Dans les autres régions du Sud de l'Italie (Campanie, Basilicate et Calabrie) les dimensions territoriales et sectorielles se rejoignent en élargissant le champ d'action au renforcement des ressources socio-culturelles et environnementales, par exemple pour la rénovation des villages et les sentiers de tourisme.

**Abstract.** In order to respond to the European Commission's framework for rural development and more particularly to participate in the LEADER community initiative programmes, the Apulia region has set up a process of competition and selection among the areas requesting its support. The main criteria are the type of partnership, the quality of planning and of those putting forward projects, the type of organisation set up and the managerial skills used. The system is completed by a real-time system for monitoring initiatives and makes it possible to re-orient the initiatives if necessary. It also makes it possible to develop comparisons of the experience of the various Local Action Groups. The LEADER approach in regions in the south of Italy leads to finding a compromise between public and private players, taking the local environment into account. Integrated regional projects and integrated sectoral projects are therefore set up. Of the 10 areas in Apulia identified for the implementation of integrated regional projects, three had an agricultural or para-agricultural approach (support for agrifood processing industries and marketing). In other regions in the south of Italy (Campania, Basilicata and Calabria), the regional and sectoral dimensions join and broaden the scope of action to include the strengthening of sociocultural and environmental resources, for example for the renovation of villages and tourist hiking trails.

## **Introduction**

In recent years, rural areas have increasingly been at the heart of scientists' and European Union policy makers' attention, being more and more the object of specific policies.

The necessity of setting and implementing policy actions for the development of rural areas is due to the deep modifications that European Community rural areas had in the meantime. In those areas, in fact, the economic sector that historically have shaped them—agriculture—has been progressively experiencing an increment of surface unit and labour unit productivity, related to the variation of agricultural and breeding techniques.

Those evolutions, along with the effects of the policies implemented, have determined that agriculture has assumed connotations and, more specifically, relations – and following effects – that differ greatly with the diverse components of rural areas. All of these are set in the more general context of economic, social and demographic transformations in rural local development of the European Union countries.

## I - Integrated approach

Specific solutions have been devised and implemented to address the problems caused by processes. Solutions have had significant impacts in the Union territories, in terms of both content and methods.

All of this has also been done in Italy, a country characterized by a great vocation and diffusion of agricultural activities, by a large number of “agricultures” and rural contexts, and, finally by the historical presence of numerous local institutions. These institutions, (geographically ordered in Regions, Provinces, and Communes) have had for 30 years, gradually increasing power over the government of their territories, and hence the possibility of programming and implementing specific rural development pathways.

This very decentralised institutional structure has been combined with a model inspired by EU policy framework and based on EU regulations, of actions for territorial development, based among other factors on the principles of programming, concentration, partnership and integration. It has been very important for extremely differentiated Italian rural areas that needed dedicated, flexible development instruments. In this context, maybe more than in others, it is very important to implement policies that are no longer based on financial subsidies to realize a single project but based on programme “picture”, with clear declarations of the needs of the context and the objectives and strategies to meet them all in a defined time period (the principle of programming). At the same time, also considering the need to maximize the effects of public funding, concentration—mainly territorial— of actions is another principle

To make this model of local development work, it is fundamental to share problems, needs and feasible actions with local communities. The aim of this principle is the definition of a strategic “picture” that truly responds to the expectations and potential of territories, that enhances capacities and capital, especially human capital, and that awards people responsibility related to the choices made (the principle of partnership).

As a direct consequence of the principles described, there is a need for integration among subjects and economic sectors that is more relevant when local systems are diversified and when they are not used with the sharing of ideas etc. In fact, the integrated approach requires that actions must not be separated but linked and coordinated in a territorial strategy. The approach is based on the hypothesis that horizontal integration among different actions and financial resources will lead to a more valuable action and to more “value-added”. The implementation of an integrated project is based on an intense activity of orchestration among different stakeholders. Moreover, as different economic sectors are concerned, it requires specific forms of management that will lead to defining links among different procedures and also to identify different levels of responsibility. As a result, its activation requires in-depth ex ante evaluation of the opportunities it can offer and rigorous thematic and territorial selection of contexts, if it is to offer a better alternative to the orthodox way of managing actions.

## II - Italian and Apulia experiences

What instruments are used and what are the experiences realized in Italy and in Apulia related to rural territorial integrated and shared policies? Among them, what has been done in the domain of the European Commission Initiative LEADER (Liason Entre Actions de Developpement de l'Economie Rurale – links between actions for the development of the rural economy) is surely very important.

The initiative, whose title affirms the specificities of the instrument, has been since its beginning in 1998 an experimental field with special characteristics. It endorses a strong participatory approach by socio economic and institutional stakeholders in rural areas, that are called upon to share objectives and development strategies – coherent with needs and specific problems to the aim of ensuring sustainability – through the constitution of Local Action Groups (LAGs), consisting of a broad partnership. This partnership has the duty, among other things of defining its own programme – and its management – with

which to identify integrated actions. Actions, moreover, have a generally limited dimension, and at the same time, a strongly innovative character (both in terms of method and content) and a large potential for transfer or replication in the same or in other rural areas. Finally, LEADER foresees the possibility of linking rural areas through cooperation projects and the creation of networks.

The CI ended the first experience, LEADER I, that had excellent results which led to its repetition. This experience had great relevance in 1994-99 when more than 800 European Union rural areas and 203 in Italy were formed making clear the will and the receptiveness of rural areas to experiment new models of development.

The results have generally been less good in terms of quality and impacts. From these some relevant modifications have been introduced in the present version of the Initiative, LEADER +. The objectives of the CI now include the following objectives among others:

- ❑ to assist rural development actions, with the same experimental nature as previous editions but that have specific characteristics such as high project quality, the capacity of assuring durable effects, the concentration of strategies around a few themes, the capacity for creating employment,
- ❑ to develop a complementarity with the *mainstream*,
- ❑ to promote cooperation among territories of a member State, of different member States and also States which are outside the European Union.

The CI is potentially feasible in all rural areas of the EU, but – with the aim of increasing the impacts – it is possible for a rationed number of territories. These territories must have a population of between 20,000 and 100,000 inhabitants, a population density of less than 120 inhabitants per square km, geographical, economic and social homogeneity and a sufficient critical mass of human and financial resources.

The procedure planned establishes that the competent authorities in Italy, the Regions, carry out a strong action policy. In fact, they determine - in agreement with the socio-economic partnership – a general programmatic table (the Operative Plan) to supply a possible concentration on some territories of the CI action, the objectives and the strategies, the financial planning, the technical contents and procedural aspects. In this context, the LAGs - the result of the assembly in partnership of the institutional and socio-economical delegations of the local territories - are called upon to define the so called Local Development Programme (LDP).

The LDP, in agreement with the objectives of LEADER+, has to be of high quality, to be accomplished through a careful territorial diagnosis, the determination of the weak and the strong points, the analysis of constraints and opportunities, identifying specific strategies of intervention based on one or more of the following topics such as new technologies and know-how, strategies for the competitiveness of products and territories, the improvement of the quality of life in rural areas, of the local products, of the natural and cultural resources. Finally, in the LDP, the actions to be conducted must be specified. These actions must display transferability, have a systematic nature and must have a preference for actions of immaterial characteristics, thus limiting those material actions with limited financial dimensions.

Even with the adjustments and the difficulties that, in the course of its evolution have interested the initiative, it has been the “laboratory” in which the macro-principles of the current setting up of development policies have been applied. As a matter of fact, in its priority mission of increasing demand and participation, exerted through the fulfilment of real activities around a strong principle, with the final aim of “triggering” a process of self-determined growth, it has put into practice a sharing approach, integration, multi-sectorality and specificity. Tangible proof of this are the considerable results achieved in Italy and the great attention that local communities have paid to the opportunities offered by the initiative, meaningfully improving the quality of their planning.

A relevant contribution to this, for example, has been made by the Apulia Region. This Region, rather than defining earlier in the process what had to be the territories involved in the initiative LEADER+, has activated a strong mechanism of competition among the same territories, establishing some admittance

requirements of a quantitative type and using a well-constructed multi-criterion matrix of evaluation of the LDPs presented. This matrix has truly allowed an accurate and well-organized evaluation of the territories, of partnerships, of planning, of the responsibility of undertaking, of the organization and the managerial skills, all fundamental elements for the optimal implementation of the planned actions of the LDPs.

In addition, the Region has developed certain computing tools dedicated to the monitoring of the initiatives that are very useful for understanding both the ongoing stage and the possible difficulties and the consequent needs for modifications in the course of the process. The Region has also started up substantial information and dissemination activity that is useful for giving citizens a broad range of knowledge about LEADER+ and to related Apulian LAGs to each other.

Moreover, this aspect ensures the exchange of experiences that is useful for limiting the possible risk of “insularity” that a local dimension can bring, leading to comparison among realities whose differences are a source of mutual enrichment.

In addition to the interesting experience of the LEADER process, there is another recent undertaking in Italy with good specificity, with regard to Integrated Projects. These projects, previously used by the Regions in the South of Italy and also borrowed by other areas, are characterized by a substantial amount of agreement between public and private subjects in a local environment and present a very wide range of solutions and methods. They range from a territorial dimension (Integrated Territorial Projects - ITP) to a sectorial one (Integrated Sectorial Projects), and to others with a clear agricultural and/or rural connotations (Row Integrated Projects - RIP; Rural Areas Integrated Projects - RAIP).

Focusing our attention on the characteristics of the IP (Integrated Projects) destined to the support of Agriculture and/or the rural development shows the different aims and approaches.

In regions like Apulia, within the ten areas identified for the implementation of the ITPs, three display a distinct agricultural connotation, with the employment of instruments such as support for industrial investments, improvement of processing and marketing, the variety of agricultural activities, and also – in specific areas – other interventions of an infrastructural or forestry nature.

In Sardinia, also in the field of ITPs, an innovative and systematic approach has been favoured. Priorities have been determined such as the reinforcement of agroindustrial quality chains, the creation of networks for the tourist reception, the promotion of production channels addressing the development and revitalizing of knowledge and material culture (handicrafts, local traditions, the building trade, ecological design of buildings, restoration work, culture), the integrated implementation of local resources with the creation of “Cultural-tourist parks”.

In other regions such as Campania, Basilicata and Calabria, the RIP has been established as an instrument, mainly sectorial, more inclined to reinforce the productive patterns mainly through the improvement of the links among the different parts. The RAIP, adopted in Campania and Calabria, are the instruments that, more than any other, put sectorial integration in a territorial dimension. In fact, not only do they intervene in agriculture but they are enlarging their scope to include the improvement of environmental and socio-cultural resources, supporting the renovation of villages, tourism and the creation of new services.

## Conclusion

Integrated planning, however this has been set up, is a brave choice and a complex challenge. Its implementation is strongly based on an agreement – not always simple – among various subjects. Besides, referring to different fields, it needs specific managerial methods with which to define links between procedures of accomplishment and the roles and responsibilities in the steps of implementation.

Moreover, the governance of programming is of great importance and paramount for guaranteeing success. It addresses management in which one or more strong characters, possibly with institutional nomination, are able to apply the policy after listening to the demands of the local communities, and, at the same time, with the capability of driving new ideas on the one hand carrying them in regional programme pattern on the other. This can hinge the system properly and prevention the implementation of disjointed operations and micro-entities that cannot give real results enabling territories to make comparisons with the markets.

Finally, the best dimension obtained by a possible comparison among different local fields is the ideal context for the exchange and transfer of the most important ingredients: experience and competences.