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Rural development plans in Germany: National rural network (Nationales Netzwerk für den ländlichen Raum Deutschland NLR)

Country profile for Germany

Size: 357 000 km²

Population: 82.31 million inhabitants (density: 231 inhabitants/ km²)

GDP per capita: 23 702 € (year 2003)

Rural areas cover 80% of the German territory and about 40% of the population live in these areas. Globally speaking, more than 53 % of the total surface area of Germany is utilised as agricultural land (19.1 million ha), of which 9.4 million ha are classified as Less Favoured Areas, and 11 million ha (33%) is covered by forests.

Germany has a wide variety of landscapes. Regarding regional economic strength and the employment situation, there is still a clear west-east divide between the "old" and "new" "Länder". In future, rural areas will meet new challenges concerning changed conditions like demographic change, high unemployment, unsatisfactory economic growth, environmental changes etc. These different aspects will be taken into account during the selection and presentation of subjects within the networking.

Chosen strategy corresponding to the profile

The Federal Republic of Germany implements the national network ("Nationales Netzwerk für den ländlichen Raum" Deutschland NLR) through a network programme at national level. The work of the national network will address the whole German territory, where those involved are supported from 2007 on within the second pillar of the CAP.

In accordance to Article 68 of the Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 dated 20 September 2005 the objectives of the German network programme are:

- Collection, preparation and dissemination of knowledge resulting from the development and implementation of measures and projects for rural development
- Access to good and new practices concerning rural development for a wide range of actors and support for implementation
- Implementation and management of working groups with the additional support of experts
- Initialisation and promoting of cooperation between regions and bodies responsible for rural development.

Since mid 1997, the Deutsche Vernetzungsstelle LEADER (DVS) (German networking office for LEADER) established at the Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung (Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food) provides the basis for the exchange of development strategies, project conceptions, experiences and know-how among the LEADER actors.

The DVS works on behalf of the BMELV (Bundesministerium für Ernährung, Landwirtschaft und Verbraucherschutz; Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection) and has regular contact with the action groups as well as the relevant "Länder" offices. During the period 2000-2006 a total of 148 LEADER groups have been supported. The mid-term evaluation for this period (2000-2006) was consistently positive, and it appears that these experiences can be used for the new period to implement the German rural network through the BLE. In the new programming period, the scope of activities of the network is extended in comparison to the former period 2000-2006, and it is important to ensure also participation of actors mainly involved in the measures of axes 1 and 2 of the EAFRD Regulation.

The action plan of the German network programme referring to article 68 (2) b) of Regulation (EC) 1698/2005 includes the following:

- **Identification and analysis of good transferable practices** (e.g. Project analyses, transfer of new strategies through the internet, development of a project data base, feasibility studies concerning the ILE- and LEADER context to support cooperation between the actors)
- **Network management** (the network office will advise e.g. on Method of organizational structure, implementation and procedural method, general and further information about Regulation (EC) 1698/2005 and its axes)
- **Organisation of exchange events** (e. g. workshops, expert seminars, conferences and all events will be documented)
- **Preparation of training programmes** (10 to 15 persons will participate in training about e.g. organization, conflict solving, group processes, systemic instruments)
- **Inter-territorial and transnational cooperation** (Information: Transfer of Know-how, initiating of cooperation)

The share of funding for the whole period is shown in the table below:

Financial table for the whole programming period (EUR current prices)

Type of expenditure for the national rural network	Total public expenditure	EAFRD contribution
(a) for running the structure of the national rural network	950.000	475.000
(b) for implementing the action plan of the national rural network, including its evaluation	5.878.112	2.939.056
Total	6.828.112	3.414.056