



# LEADER approach in Bulgaria- problems, lessons, challenges, perspectives

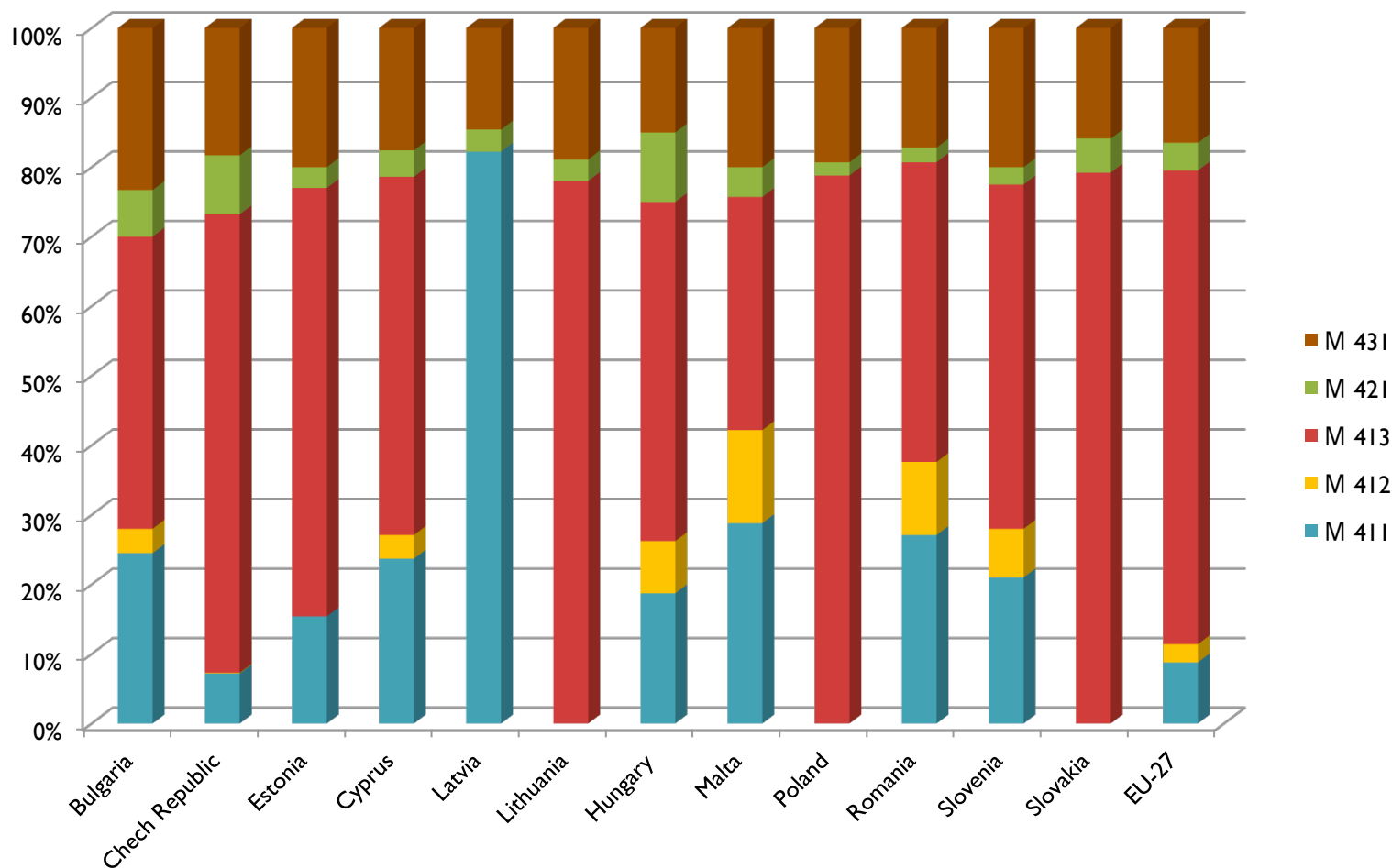
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# Problems (level PRD)

- The low share of funds under Axis 4 is in Bulgaria (only 2.3 %). (Estonia and Lithuania are given respectively 9, 5 and 6, 1 %. These values are higher than these in the most countries in the EU-15);
- Using of all measures (Axis 4) for the implementation of local development strategies ;
- The second by distribution in the EU „LEADER model " is applied in Bulgaria - decentralization in the approval of projects. LAG is responsible for evaluation, selection and approval and the issuance and delivery of the notification of beneficiaries. Payments to beneficiaries are made by the Paying Agency. This model is applied in Portugal, Malta, Belgium (Flanders) and parts of Italy.

# Distribution of funds under Axis 4 of the rural development programs in the new Member States for the period 2007-2013

Source: EC, Rural Development in the European Union . Statistical and Economic Information, Report 2013.



# Problems

In comparison with new members (EC-12), it can be concluded that Bulgaria had underestimated the importance of the LEADER approach for rural development and motivation for activation of local communities. Thus it has limited the process of management decentralization of public funds. At the same time the use of all measures for the implementation of local development strategies is complicated and created difficulties in preparation for the introduction, management and the expected effects of the implementation of the Leader approach.

# Problems

- until 2007 - limited experience on the use of the leader in 30 municipalities of the country;
- insufficient administrative capacity;
- insufficient number of experts;
- later elaborated legal framework for LEADER approach;
- The long period of time from the submission of projects to their approval, reaching 9 months in sub measure 431-2 and 15 months in measure 41. This leads to a decrease in interest and decrease the activity of local communities;

# Problems

- Not well developed and constantly changing regulatory framework on the implementation of LEADER in terms of project realization. This creates uncertainty and discourages potential beneficiaries. Only in the 5 months (September 2013 - January 2014) The Minister of Agriculture and Food has issued three orders to change the rules to implement measures 41 “Implementation of local development strategies” and 431-1 Management of Local Action Groups, acquiring skills and achievement of social activity of the territory of the local action groups” and selection of projects.

# Results

Under Measure 4I "Implementation of local development strategies" and sub-measure 43I-I "Running costs, acquisition of skills and animation – selected LAGs" are applied 126 proposals for LDSs. These LAGs cover 57 municipalities (24.7% of the rural municipalities), have a population of 800 758 people (less than 25% of the population in rural areas) and 27.8% of the rural areas.

## Degree of achievement of the reference indicators in RDP M-4I “Implementation of local development strategies”

Indicator	Kind	Measure	Target	Result	Degree of achievement (%)
Number of supported LAGs	General	Number	50	35	70
Total area of the LAG	General	sq.km.	36000	25800	71,6
Number of projects financed by LAGs	General	Number	2500	698 October 2013	
Population in the territory covered by the LAG	General	Number	1260000	801 000	63,6



## 35 LAG

- ✓ 1 LAG on the territory of 4 municipalities  
on the territory of one municipality on  
the territory of one municipality
- ✓ 4 LAG– 3 municipalities ;
- ✓ 12 LAG– 2 municipalities ;
- ✓ 18 LAG – the local action group is  
established on the territory of one  
municipality

# Perspectives

To increase the role of the Leader approach and to improve the regulatory environment for the LAG is necessary to create some prerequisites:

- *to increase the importance of the LEADER approach in the new rural development program. Its share have to be closer to that of the Czech Republic, Hungary and even Estonia.*
- *to improve the transparency of procedures for implementing Axis Leader as a requirement to increase the motivation and activity of local communities;*
- *to improve coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Fund "Agriculture" and the beneficiaries of the measures of Axis 4 from the Program for Rural Development.*

# Perspectives

- To improve the operation of the LAG is appropriate:
- *Improvement of local self-government, which is an important factor in mobilizing local communities and rural areas development and for the increase of public participation at local level.*
- *Increasing the capacity of local authorities and participants in LAG in order to achieve better implementation of the project cycle and increase the knowledge and skills for developing and managing various projects.*
- *Strengthening the participation of LAG in initiatives of organizations at European level as the European Rural Network*

*Bulgaria as an EU member to be engaged in more initiatives for implementation of transnational partnerships.*



# Led by local community development – new LEADER

- challenges
- lessons
- problems
- perspectives

Thank you for attention!

