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**THE EXPERIENCES OF IMPLEMENTING LEADER APPROACH, WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO EFFECTIVENESS, EFFICIENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY**

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**Abstract.** This paper discusses the role of local partnerships in promoting competitive and sustainable rural development, and the experiences of implementing LEADER approach from the perspective of effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. In the late 1980s, the EU's rural development policy shifted towards endogenous development, as introduced into the practice of rural development in the framework of the LEADER programme. The basic institutions of implementing the LEADER approach are the LAGs (Local Action Groups as local partnerships), which have a great role in the local development with their proactive operation. Due to the ever-increasing role of the LEADER approach played in realization of rural development policy the LAGs have become key actors of the institutional system of rural development. Their operation can effectively contribute to the realization of the European rural development policy at local level, to the competitive and sustainable development of their area. Compliance with this role requires an active and conscientious work of the LAGs both in the process of programming and implementation. The impact assessment of implementation LEADER approach showed that in spite of several positive examples, there are many factors which hinder the wide adoption of the features of the programme into practice, thus realization of results and impacts expected from it in the process of local development. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to maintain and strengthen the factors of success and to avoid factors which weaken or hinder the effective adaptation of the method. Thereby it can be hoped that the possibilities provided by the LEADER approach can be utilized in the local rural development.

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