

Evaluation of the Community Initiative LEADER in Greece: A Methodological Approach

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Abstract

Rural areas represent a wide variety of cultures, landscapes and economic activities, which form a different cluster of diverse and distinct cultural identities. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and exploitation of environmental resources are the main activities that characterize them. In recent years the European Union implements the Community Initiatives LEADER to address the problems and deterioration occurring in rural areas. This paper assesses these initiatives with the application of Factor Analysis (Factor Analysis-PCA Method) and analysis in Clusters (Cluster Analysis-Ward's Method) which is the New Tool for Innovation Partnership in agriculture. Therefore, clusters were developed regrouping Local Action Groups on the basis of their common economic characteristics (management of funding). The survey results indicate that during the implementation of LEADER II the largest amount of money was aimed at the development of rural tourism, while during the implementation of LEADER + the largest amount of money aimed to promote investment growth. The changing needs of the people in Greece over the years along with the segmentation of the rural area are expected to facilitate the implementation of a policy for rural development in the future.

Keywords: LEADER II, LEADER +, Common Agricultural Policy, Local Action Groups, Rural Development and Governance.

JEL Classification: O13, Q18

Introduction

The accession of Greece to the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1981 and the implementation of the Common agricultural policy (CAP) led to the influx of significant financial resources, the improvement of the producers' incomes and the strengthening of production (Arabatzis et al., 2006; Arabatzis and Polyzos, 2008).

The depopulation and migration to urban centers is a long process while, especially in the past thirty years, population disparities among the regions of the country present a major problem. Consequently, some action is needed in order to keep the population in rural areas (Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food, 2007).

One of the most important actions for rural development are forests. Community support of forestry sought to promote sustainable forest management, maintenance and improvement of forest resources and extension of woodland areas. Among the measures taken were the following: afforestation, improvement of the economic, ecological and social value of forests, improvement of logging, processing and marketing of forestry products, promotion of new outlets for forest

products and establishment of associations of forest holders (Arabatzis et al., 2006).

Rural development is considered as a key tool for restructuring the agricultural sector and encouraging the diversification and innovation in rural areas. It can contribute to economic growth and increased employment opportunities in rural areas along with investment in human resources and the provision of environmental goods. Therefore, the strategy of rural development in Greece aims to develop the competitiveness of the Greek rural economy, improve the standard of living, and in general, the quality of life of rural residents (Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food, 2007).

The Community Initiative LEADER was implemented from 1991 to 2006 (Leader I, Leader II, Leader +) in disadvantaged areas and introduced major reforms in rural areas in Greece and Europe. The importance of these programmes lies in the funding provided by the European Union (EU), Member States and local stakeholders with the aim to improve the quality of life of local residents and promote the development of rural areas. Specifically, the implementation of LEADER aims to encourage residents of remote areas not to leave their areas and migrate to urban centers, but develop alternative forms of tourism, invest and cooperate with residents of other regions by being provided some income from the EU.

The Purpose of this Study is the Evaluation of the Community Initiative LEADER in Greece using Multivariate Statistical Methods (Factor Analysis and Hierarchical Cluster Analysis) in order to study the implementation of rural growth and the development of programmes in Greece with the objective to identify and present regional disparities.

The selection of the methods of Factor Analysis and Hierarchical Ward's Cluster Analysis is based on the fact that in order to evaluate the Leader initiatives, the Local Action Groups (LAGs) should be grouped on the basis of some common characteristics so that the results are interpretable. The Hierarchical analysis is recommended for a few observations for which it was chosen.

The objective of the Evaluation of LEADER is to provide information and analysis which will contribute to the more effective implementation and completion of the programmes currently being carried out and set an example for the new policies to be implemented in the years to come.

Rural and Regional Development at the International Level

In recent years many countries around the world face many socio-economic problems which they try to resolve by means of rural development.

Bryden (1994) argued that the admission of new Member States to the European Union and the reform of the Central Agricultural Policy (CAP) determine the future of rural areas. The strategies implemented by the CAP were to provide income support and compensation to farmers, according to global market prices as well as supporting the afforestation of agricultural land, the retirement plans for farmers in addition to the installation of environmentally friendly farming.

The following table presents methodologies of Spatial Development Models in Europe.

Table 1: European Projects Applications

Research	Country	Strategy	Results
Murray and Geer (1992)	Northern Ireland	LEADER INTERREG MIRIAM	Promotion of local products, Rural tourism, Protection of the environmental and natural resources.
North and Smallbone (1996)	Northern England	Support of the Businesses	New jobs for local residents, Improved their quality of life, Establishment of new businesses.
Anderson and Centre (2001)	Finland	POMO	Approaches of partnerships.
Courtney et al. (2006)	Scotland	Responding to a Questionnaire sent by mail (464 Businesses)	Increased numbers of tourists for purposes of recreation, Increase in food production, Combination of physical characteristics of the region with the commercial viability of a business.
Perez and Fernandez (2006)	Spain	New European Agricultural Policy	Use of the forests whether directly or indirectly (production of wood or offering entertainment-leisure).
Ramniceanu and Ackrill (2007)	Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia	SAPARD	Improving competitiveness, Maintaining the rural population.

Implementation of the Community Initiative LEADER in Europe

Many developmental programs and policies are applied in rural areas of the countryside, emphasizing mainly in the reduction of poverty and income inequalities ,by investing in infrastructure and rendering of social services (Martin, 1998).

According to Saraceno (1999) the European program Leader in the 90's, was applied in local communities of various countries, giving freedom to the local groups to manage the financial reinforcements. Every country aimed to rural development and improvement of the living standard of the local citizens. The application and significance of the program Leader was studied by many researchers in countries in and out of the European Union.

Since 1991, the European program Leader had promoted the local development in every participant country through the funding it had offered. Goal of these countries was to promote the sustainable development by committing economic and cultural resources (High et al., 2007).

Ray (1998) referred to the Leader in France and Scotland. In the area of France, the aim was to support failed businesses by providing

financial help. Concerning the islands of Scotland, Leader aimed to the enrichment of the cultural environment, the participation of the local citizens, so as based on the fundings they would receive, they would develop their local remote areas.

In Ireland, Leader aimed to promote the rural financial development and increase the level of participation of the local societies, claims Storey (1999). Moreover, Leader aimed to improve the living conditions of the population of the countryside, in cooperation with the government.

Implementation of the Community Initiative LEADER in Greece

The word LEADER comes from the initials of the words (Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l 'Economie Rurale) which mean Links between actions for the development of rural economy. The Community Initiative LEADER has been developed in three phases: LEADER I (1991-1993), LEADER II (1994-1999) and LEADER + (2000-2006) (Ramos et al., 2003).

According to the Department of the Management of the Operational Programme of Community Initiative Leader +, the Community Initiative LEADER I was applied mainly in mountainous and disadvantaged areas of the country. Within this framework 25 programmes of integrated rural development were implemented by the respective Local Action Groups. As regards the Community Initiative LEADER II, the implementation of local programmes of 56 Local Action Groups and 7 thematic programmes of communities was approved.

The Community Initiative LEADER + is the rural sector initiative during the third programming period (2000-2006) and presents the continuation of initiatives LEADER I and LEADER II. As regards the local programmes which were introduced as part of this initiative, they were conceived and executed by 40 LAGs. The LAGs are SA Development Companies which consist of corporate agencies of the wider public or private sector (Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food, 2006).

The separation of development agencies in groups is regarded as a prerequisite for the future setting up of programmes in rural areas. Also, the segmentation of rural areas facilitates the implementation of a policy for the Local and Regional Rural Development (Apostolidis, 2014).

Methodology

The Quantitative Data used in this project is derived from the Department of the Management of the Operational Programme of Community Initiative Leader +. From the data and the elicitation of the results it was ascertained that the agencies who implemented the Initiative Leader II were 56 while for the Leader + they were 40.

The conducting of the results and the analysis of Quantitative Data was realized by using the statistic program SPSS v.20.

Different variables were defined between the two initiatives in order to separate the development agencies according to specific characteristics. Specifically, the variables used for the LEADER II were (Community, National and Private Participation): Technical

Support, Occupational Training, Agro Tourism, Small Businesses, Utilization of Local Production and Environment/Culture.

For the LEADER +, the following variables were used (Community, National and Private Participation): Technical Support Project Promoters-LAG, Aid-Investment Support to Entrepreneurship, Support Services, Protection-Promotion and Exploitation of natural and cultural heritage, Cooperation among regions of Greece inter-territorial-inter-regional Cooperation and finally cooperation between two or more member-Transnational Cooperation.

Then Descriptive Statistics (DS) and Factor Analysis (FA) was applied to reduce the large number of variables into a smaller number of important Dimensions. Finally, Cluster Analysis (CA) (Hierarchical Ward's Method) was applied by separating development companies into groups according to their common characteristics.

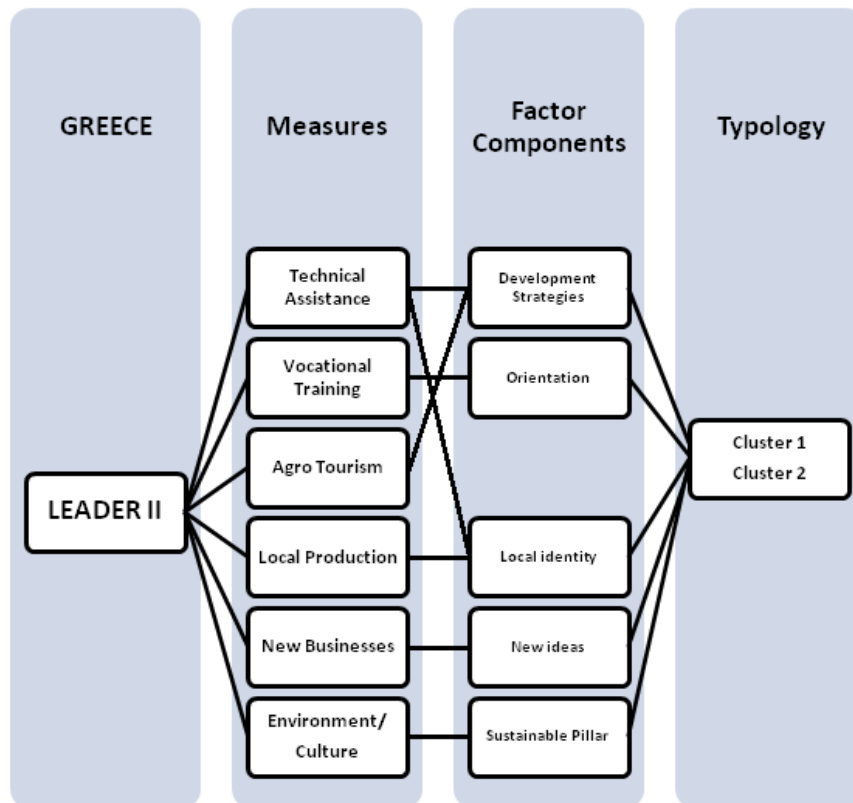


Figure 1: Multivariate Statistical Method

Results

Evaluation of the Community Initiative LEADER II

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics shows that there are 56 LAGs and the difference between the maximum and the minimum amount ranges from 42,555.26€ to 2,601,225.75€. In particular, the largest average funding was observed in agro tourism, (856,482.7750€). Also, in the CP Leader II the marketing of local production (640,422.5916€). The average funding for the provision of technical assistance to the development project agencies and the young people wishing to start a professional activity were at moderate levels (473,358.5325€). Similar involvement was shown by funders as regards the support of investments aimed to protect and enhance the environment (340,184.9816€). Finally, vocational training for those who had not joined a profession presented the lower average funding (8,580.9104€).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for the Community Initiative LEADER II

VARIABLES	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean		Std. Deviation
						Statistic	Std. Error	
Technical Assistance (CP)	56	1433777.60	33972.98	1467750.58	26508077.82	473358.5325	38420.27787	287511.03299
Technical Assistance (NP)	56	359460.02	7477.62	366937.65	6692140.96	119502.5171	9805.55600	73378.06210
Technical Assistance (PP)	56	562617.68	1320.95	563938.63	2079670.80	37136.9785	10324.78051	77263.58255
Vocational Training (CP)	56	289347.60	0	289347.60	3030679.74	54119.2811	7350.16509	55003.59901
Vocational Training (NP)	56	192898.40	0	192898.40	1939482.25	34633.6116	4772.94019	35717.41386
Vocational Training (PP)	56	42555.26	0	42555.26	480530.98	8580.9104	1279.95358	9578.29557
Agro Tourism (CP)	56	2601225.75	0	2601225.75	47963035.40	856482.7750	78022.27090	583865.21249
Agro Tourism (NP)	56	822732.39	0	822732.39	15825377.17	282596.0209	26320.75893	196966.52414
Agro Tourism (PP)	56	2280359.56	0	2280359.56	44005880.87	785819.3013	69223.08202	518018.11238
New Businesses (CP)	56	1438089.46	0	1438089.46	17385009.09	310446.5909	43894.00734	328472.67359
New Businesses (NP)	56	400136.14	0	400136.14	4617569.71	82456.6019	11642.63432	87125.49743
New Businesses (PP)	56	1281850.07	0	1281850.07	14916899.52	266373.2056	37474.70439	280435.00899
Local Production (CP)	56	1951013.94	0	1951013.94	33808080.75	603715.7277	66154.69191	495056.38328
Local Production (NP)	56	547328.65	0	547328.65	9134131.52	163109.4915	17770.93682	132985.51405
Local Production (PP)	56	2384823.44	0	2384823.44	35863665.13	640422.5916	72317.51041	541174.69405
Environment/Culture (CP)	56	1441115.02	0	1441115.02	19050358.97	340184.9816	39113.71240	292700.22186
Environment/Culture (NP)	56	321130.47	0	321130.47	4691675.03	83779.9112	9709.83849	72661.77784
Environment/Culture (PP)	56	654467.66	0	654467.66	8389062.93	149804.6952	17561.28345	131416.61191
Valid N (listwise)	56							

FACTOR ANALYSIS of the Community Initiative LEADER II

In this study, the Multivariate Statistical Analysis of Factor Analysis in which the variables were reduced and analyzed was applied. The method applied is Principal Component (Principal Component Analysis-PCA).

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.783
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1886.876
	Df	153
	Sig.	0

From the above table (Table 3) which shows the sampling adequacy, it is revealed that in this investigation the analysis is appropriate because the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is 0.783 therefore, the analysis is appropriate for the data of Leader II. Moreover, the significance Sig. is <0.05 which means that there is a correlation between the variables.

Table 4 shows the extracted components which are representative of the original variables as all the figures are high. Also, the conclusion is that some variables are more associated with some factor, e.g. 0.970 and others less, e.g. 0.548. Finally, the extraction column shows the percentage of variance of each variable which is explained by all the factors, the rest being lost.

Table 4: Correlation of variables with factors

VARIABLES	Initial	Extraction
Technical Assistance (CP)	1	0.910
Technical Assistance (NP)	1	0.675
Technical Assistance (PP)	1	0.548
Vocational Training (CP)	1	0.939
Vocational Training (NP)	1	0.933
Vocational Training (PP)	1	0.814
Agro Tourism (CP)	1	0.951
Agro Tourism (NP)	1	0.917
Agro Tourism (PP)	1	0.968
New Businesses (CP)	1	0.963
New Businesses (NP)	1	0.960
New Businesses (PP)	1	0.970
Local Production (CP)	1	0.935
Local Production (NP)	1	0.951
Local Production (PP)	1	0.926
Environment/Culture (CP)	1	0.892
Environment/Culture (NP)	1	0.930
Environment/Culture (PP)	1	0.837

Table 5 shows which of the 18 factors best explain the total variance of the original variables. The eigenvalues of the first five factors are larger than the unit and explain 88.988% of the variance, thus, five factors are selected at this stage of the analysis.

Table 5: Information about the factors derived

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.196	51.086	51.086	9.196	51.086	51.086	4.027	22.373	22.373
2	2.555	14.196	65.283	2.555	14.196	65.283	3.496	19.420	41.794
3	1.735	9.641	74.924	1.735	9.641	74.924	3.036	16.864	58.658
4	1.360	7.553	82.477	1.360	7.553	82.477	2.899	16.106	74.764
5	1.172	6.511	88.988	1.172	6.511	88.988	2.560	14.224	88.988
6	0.865	4.806	93.794						
7	0.442	2.458	96.252						
8	0.215	1.197	97.449						
9	0.149	0.827	98.276						
10	0.100	0.558	98.834						
11	0.080	0.446	99.281						
12	0.061	0.337	99.618						
13	0.027	0.149	99.767						
14	0.022	0.124	99.891						
15	0.009	0.050	99.940						
16	0.008	0.045	99.985						
17	0.002	0.014	99.999						
18	0	0.001	100						

Figure 2 presents the block diagram of components showing that the slope of the curve decreases sharply after the fifth component and becomes parallel to the horizontal axis.

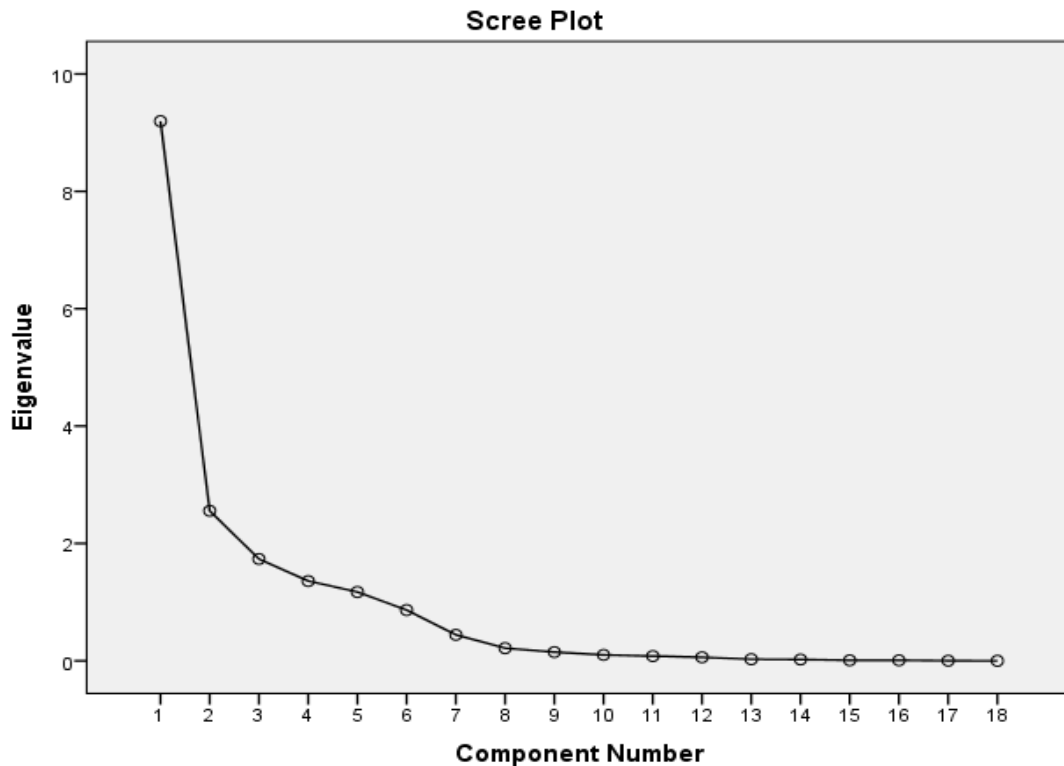


Figure 2: Diagram of Components

Table 6 shows the five factors which were extracted and the corresponding loadings of their variables. For the first variable: Technical Support (Community Participation) the first factor is selected, which is also the case with the remaining variables except for Vocational Training (National, Private, Community Participation) in which the second factor is selected and Technical Support (Private Participation) in which the fifth factor is selected.

Table 6: Loadings

VARIABLES	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Technical Assistance (CP)	0.925	-0.107	0.167	-0.009	-0.122
New Businesses (PP)	0.811	-0.201	-0.140	0.501	0.036
New Businesses (CP)	0.810	-0.202	-0.124	0.501	0.011
New Businesses (NP)	0.806	-0.197	-0.153	0.498	0.013
Local Production (NP)	0.801	-0.210	-0.423	-0.238	-0.173
Local Production (PP)	0.784	-0.210	-0.417	-0.194	-0.236
Local Production (CP)	0.769	-0.236	-0.453	-0.172	-0.232
Environment/Culture (CP)	0.768	0.292	-0.143	-0.265	0.357
Agro Tourism (NP)	0.749	-0.224	0.524	-0.161	0.075
Agro Tourism (PP)	0.746	-0.374	0.504	-0.105	0.078
Agro Tourism (CP)	0.731	-0.422	0.479	-0.064	0.070
Environment/Culture (PP)	0.721	0.244	-0.268	-0.232	0.362
Environment/Culture (NP)	0.682	0.436	-0.141	-0.293	0.410
Technical Assistance (NP)	0.680	0.013	0.340	-0.244	-0.191
Vocational Training (NP)	0.553	0.727	0.223	0.162	-0.149
Vocational Training (CP)	0.556	0.726	0.234	0.166	-0.141
Vocational Training (PP)	0.471	0.716	-0.016	0.168	-0.227
Technical Assistance (PP)	-0.027	-0.092	-0.040	0.306	0.666

Table 7 shows what the components after rotation represent. The first component (factor) is strongly associated with: Agro tourism (Private Participation) Agro tourism (Community Participation), Agro tourism (National Participation) with correlation coefficients 0.929 , 0.910 , 0.905. Corresponding reasonable interpretation follows for the other variables and relevant factors. According to the correlations obtained from Table 7, the five Factors (Dimensions) are called: Development Strategies, New ideas, Orientation, Sustainable Pillar, Local identity.

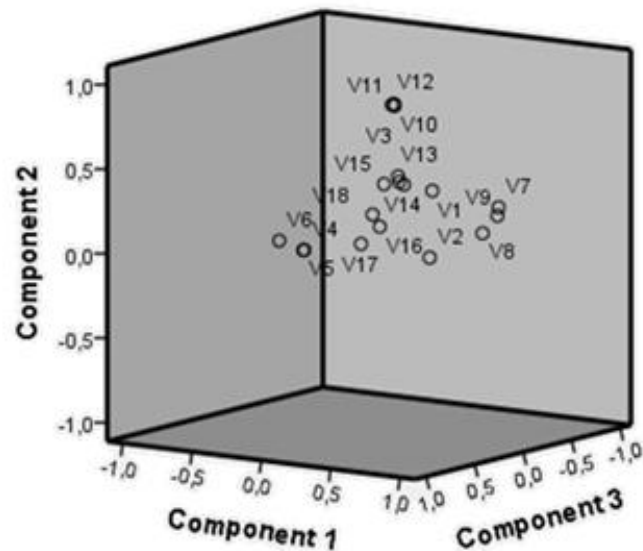
Finally, the factorial values obtained after Factor Analysis are the five new variables used in the Cluster Analysis.

Table 7: Rotation Matrix

VARIABLES	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Agro Tourism (PP)	0.929	0.270	0.005	0.146	0.100
Agro Tourism (CP)	0.910	0.313	-0.035	0.112	0.103
Agro Tourism (NP)	0.905	0.181	0.123	0.204	0.091
Technical Assistance (NP)	0.664	0.042	0.325	0.154	0.320
Technical Assistance (CP)	0.662	0.433	0.294	0.238	0.375
New Businesses (PP)	0.297	0.891	0.164	0.169	0.182
New Businesses (NP)	0.283	0.886	0.171	0.158	0.201
New Businesses (CP)	0.307	0.884	0.176	0.146	0.190
Vocational Training (CP)	0.176	0.124	0.920	0.215	-0.002
Vocational Training (NP)	0.168	0.122	0.919	0.213	0.008
Vocational Training (PP)	-0.050	0.147	0.855	0.198	0.142
Environment/Culture (NP)	0.191	0.080	0.356	0.864	0.113
Environment/Culture (CP)	0.279	0.181	0.289	0.813	0.194
Environment/Culture (PP)	0.172	0.231	0.211	0.810	0.228
Local Production (CP)	0.207	0.430	-0.003	0.325	0.776
Local Production (PP)	0.237	0.404	0.028	0.333	0.772
Local Production (NP)	0.254	0.386	0.002	0.402	0.759
Technical Assistance (PP)	-0.068	0.320	-0.250	0.309	-0.532

Extraction Method: PCA

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

**Figure 3: Component Plot in Rotated Space**

In Figure 3 it is depicted a Variables grouping regarding the correlations. Therefore, there exist five groups of variables with the following composition:

Component 1 (Variables: V1, V2, V7, V8, V9).

Component 2 (Variables: V10, V11, V12).

Component 3 (Variables: V4, V5, V6).

Component 4 (Variables: V16, V17, V18).

Component 5 (Variables: V3, V13, V14, V15).

Table 8 Shows the Correlation among the five Factors. The highest correlation is shown between second and third factor with indicator 0.827.

Table 8: Factor Correlations

Component	1	2	3	4	5
1	0.544	0.507	0.331	0.435	0.384
2	-0.351	-0.282	0.827	0.290	-0.172
3	0.726	-0.280	0.228	-0.329	-0.484
4	-0.228	0.759	0.212	-0.392	-0.416
5	0.020	0.097	-0.331	0.682	-0.645

TYPOLGY of the Community Initiative LEADER II

From the stage of Factor Analysis it is shown that only five variables met the statistical criteria therefore, cluster analysis was implemented. Specifically, the Hierarchical Analysis in clusters (Hierarchical Cluster Analysis) pooled data by columns (variables). The grouping took place according to the Ward's Linkage Method. The final results of the analysis showed that development companies in Greece are divided into 2 Groups (Figure 4).

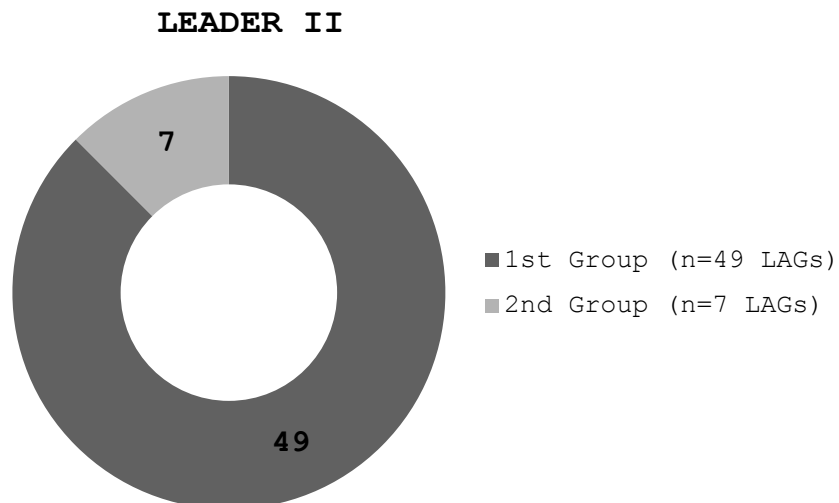


Figure 4: Typology Results for LEADER II

Evaluation of the Community Initiative LEADER +

In Table 9 Descriptive Statistics, it appears that the LAGs are 40 and the range of observations, that is the difference between the maximum and the minimum amount varies from 30,000€ to 2,974,396.73€. Specifically, the largest average in financing observed was to support investments (2,511,661.3947€). Moreover, with regard to the protection and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage, the largest average in financing observed was to Community Participation (881,326.0243€). Finally, the cooperation between the regions in Greece and the cooperation between the regions of states received smaller funding with the LAGs in some cases not being at all involved in the transnational cooperation (16,965.3400€).

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics for the Community Initiative LEADER +

VARIABLES	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean		Std. Deviation
						Statistic	Std. Error	
Technical Assistance (CP)	40	659084.37	667916.83	1327001.20	37506401.98	937660.0495	27182.37687	171916.44622
Technical Assistance (NP)	40	219694.80	222638.94	442333.74	12502133.40	312553.3350	9060.79452	57305.49617
Technical Assistance (PP)	40	30830.00	1170.00	32000.00	492761.77	12319.0443	1296.90948	8202.37573
Investments (CP)	40	2364378.90	1452703.86	3817082.76	95006697.90	2375167.4475	97691.65325	617856.26532
Investments (NP)	40	1396457.34	321658.46	1718115.80	35559717.78	888992.9445	56206.55971	355481.49624
Investments (PP)	40	2974396.73	1109318.49	4083715.22	100466455.79	2511661.3947	120115.71365	759678.47582
Supportive Actions (CP)	40	342072.40	30750.01	372822.41	5656568.14	141414.2035	10729.53929	67859.56477
Supportive Actions (NP)	40	102849.15	10249.99	113099.14	1862125.49	46553.1372	3415.65470	21602.49712
Supportive Actions (PP)	40	102642.86	9000.00	111642.86	1739485.17	43487.1293	4061.82370	25689.22868
Protection of Natural & Cultural Heritage (CP)	40	1490328.16	192150.00	1682478.16	35253040.97	881326.0243	50165.90983	317277.07191
Protection of Natural & Cultural Heritage (NP)	40	501087.72	64050.00	565137.72	11846044.05	296151.1013	16989.35173	107450.09485
Protection of Natural & Cultural Heritage (PP)	40	391649.21	0	391649.21	2843404.01	71085.1002	12674.06251	80157.80948
Cooperation between regions (CP)	40	99750.00	26250.00	126000.00	3444285.40	86107.1350	3883.61185	24562.11801
Cooperation between regions (NP)	40	33250.00	8750.00	42000.00	1148095.13	28702.3783	1294.53730	8187.37275
Cooperation between regions (PP)	40	34166.72	7833.28	42000.00	1141754.86	28543.8715	1313.09239	8304.72547
Transnational Cooperation (CP)	40	90000.00	0	90000.00	2064464.60	51611.6150	4156.65602	26289.00097
Transnational Cooperation (NP)	40	30000.00	0	30000.00	688154.87	17203.8718	1385.55203	8763.00044
Transnational Cooperation (PP)	40	30000.00	0	30000.00	678613.60	16965.3400	1366.42173	8642.00982
Valid N (listwise)	40							

TYPOLGY of the Community Initiative LEADER +

Ward's Clusters Analysis was applied to the group the 40 observations on the basis of the 18 variables. The grouping took place with the Hierarchical Method (Hierarchical Ward's Cluster Analysis). The final results of the analysis showed that development companies in Greece are divided into 2 Groups (Figure 5).

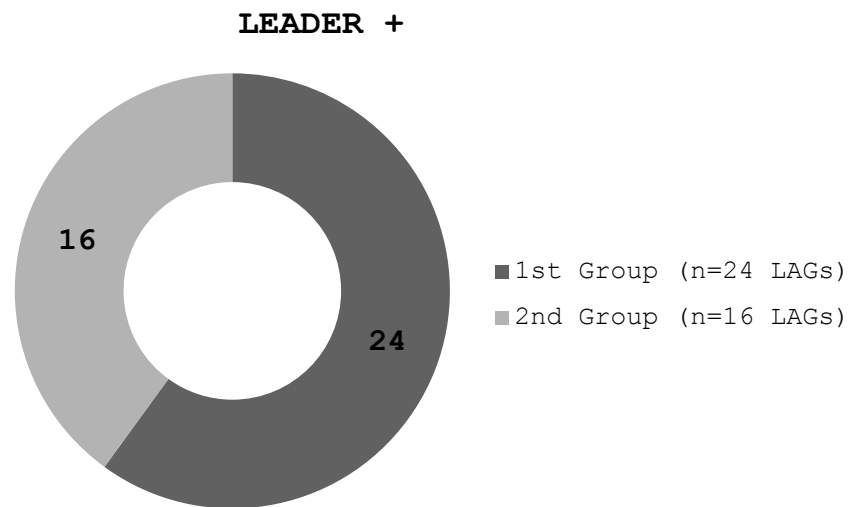


Figure 5: Typology Results for LEADER +

Conclusions

Evaluating and comparing the two Community initiatives LEADER II and LEADER + in Greece, it is shown that the total funding of Leader + was considerably higher compared to Leader II.

It is clear from the above analysis that the combined use of two Multivariate Statistical Methods, Factor Analysis and Ward's Cluster Analysis can help significantly in the attempt to separate development companies into groups according to their common characteristics.

More specifically, in the CP LEADER II there were in total 56 LAGs and the variables meeting the statistical criteria in Factor Analysis were 18. The analysis revealed five factors which were suitable to take the place of the original variables in the cluster analysis. The final results show that the LAGs were divided into 2 Groups (Clusters) based on their homogeneity in relation to the amount of funding in each measure of the European Project. One group are the LAGs (n=49), while the other LAGs (n=7) in Greece are grouped into the other.

Especially the First Group consists of the following LAGs: Development Agency of Temenos Pediados SA, Development of Mani SA, Development of Lefkada SA, Local Development Company of Chios SA, District Development Agency of Naxos "Ariadne", Kythera Development SA, Center for Strategic Planning "Pindos", Odyssey Neos-Periplus Research Company & Development Northern Evros SA, Union of Macedonia Vineyards, Development Agency of Serres SA, Development Company of local Government SA Development Association of Halkidiki SA, Development Dodecanese SA, Development of Imathia SA, Kavala Development SA, Development Agency of Karditsa SA, Development of Kastoria SA, Development Centre of Kalambaka-Gate SA, Pieria Development SA, Cooperative self-governing of Zakynthos SA, Evritania SA, Development of Pella, Florina development SA, Development Fokiki SA, Development Center of Mountainous Mylopotamos-Malevizi SA, Anonymous development Company of Rodopi SA, Dimosynetairistiki Company EVROS SA, Development Company of Xanthi Prefecture SA, Olympia development SA, Development Company of Pelion SA, Local Development Company of Lesbos SA, Northern Peloponnese Development Agency SA, Development Company of Drama SA, Development Company of Kefalonia and Ithaca SA, Development Agency of Lemnos SA, Aitoliki Development SA, Corfu Rural Development SA, Development

of Ellassona - Kissavos SA, Development Company of Eastern Thessaloniki SA, Development Company of Parnonas SA, Development of Kilkis SA, Development of Lasithi SA, Local Development Company of Samos SA, Development Company Eastern Macedonia and Thrace SA, Greek Fur Center SA, Development "Company Parnassos-Iti" Fthiotida SA, Developmental of Evia SA, and Development Company of Aetoloakarnania SA.

While, the Second Group consists of the following LAGs: Development Company of Southern Epirus-Amvrakikos SA, Agricultural Cooperative of Epirus Corfu SA, Development Company of Thessaloniki Prefecture SA, Company for the Development and Protection of Helicon SA, Development Agency of Western Macedonia SA, Epirus SA, and Development Agency of Western Crete SA.

Regarding LEADER +, the separation of LAGs in homogeneous groups took place only as analysis in clusters because the measures sampling adequacy (KMO and Bartlett) showed that Factor Analysis was not appropriate. Therefore, 18 variables were used and 40 observations (LAGs) were grouped in 2 Groups. The final separation of LAGs in homogeneous groups were grouped in 2 groups based on their financial characteristics. One group are the LAGs (n=24), while the other LAGs (n=16) in Greece are grouped into the other.

Especially the First Group consists of the following LAGs: Development Center of Mountainous Mylopotamou-Malevizi SA, Anonymous Development Company of Rodopi SA, Dimosynetairistiki Company of Evros SA, Helicon-Parnassos Development SA, Development Company of Lake Trichonis SA, Pelion Development Company SA, Epirus SA, Development Agency of Western Crete SA, Development Agency for Local Government SA, Development of Imathia SA, Kavala Development SA, Development Company of Kefalonia and Ithaka SA, Development of Kastoria SA, Development of Cyclades SA, Olympia Development SA, Development of Pella SA, Florina Development SA, Development Fokiki SA, Development Company of Xanthi Prefecture SA, Development Company of Parnonas SA, Aitoliki Development SA, Rural Development of Corfu SA, Development Ellassona-Kissavos SA, and Development Agency of Lemnos SA.

While, the Second Group consists of the following LAGs: Development Company of Thessaloniki Prefecture SA, Heraklion Development SA, Development Agency of Western Macedonia SA, Development Centre of Kalambaka-Gate SA, Development of Dodecanese SA, Local Development Company of Lesvos SA, Cooperative self-governing Zakynthos SA, Development Association of Halkidiki SA, Development Lasithi SA, Pieria Development SA, Development Karditsa SA, Development of Drama SA, Development Company of Southern Epirus-Amvrakikos SA, Development Agency of Northern Peloponnese SA, Development Agency of Serres SA, and Development Kilkis SA.

Concluding, a comparison of these results with those emanated from other investigations, shows that the methodology followed per case differentiates the results of each survey. Tsiantikoudis et al., (2008) evaluates the Community Initiative Leader +, by applying the Cluster Analysis Between Groups Linkage Method and the results prove that the developmental companies of Greece are divided into 4 Groups. Veleva et al., (2012) evaluates the Community Initiative Leader + and the results indicate the creation of two new dimensions in result of the application of Factor Analysis. A new research method by Vlontzos et., (2014) aims to investigate and measure the relative efficiency of Leader + action plans of seven rural areas in Northern Greece, by means of applying the Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) Model.

Limitations of the research can be adhered to the fact of not having included quantitative data from the priority axis 3: Networking, in the analysis.

Suggestions for further research, may include the application of Operation Research (OR) Methods e.g. DEA Method for measuring the relative efficiency of local actions and for investigating of the Inputs and Outputs in order to show how the Maximisation of their relative efficiencies can be achieved through its use (Vlontzos et al., 2014). In particular, DEA can be used to evaluate the Decision Making Units based on Linear Programming. Moreover, the outranking relations theory, which is a particular methodological direction of Multicriteria Analysis involved in methods of the PROMETHEE Group and of the ELECTRE Group (Arabatzis et al., 2010) can be used.

It can be concluded from this study that what should be promoted in Greece is sustainable, viable and balanced, environmental protection along with establishing appropriate land use planning in rural areas so as to bring long-term economic growth.

The new Programming Period for rural development and the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) can be regarded as the most important pillars in overcoming the economic crisis and creating a sustainable growth path besides shielding the economy of Greece.

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