

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

as part of the LEADER competition for the
funding period 2023-2028 in North Rhine-Westphalia



Ahaus • Gronau • Heek • Legden • Schöppingen



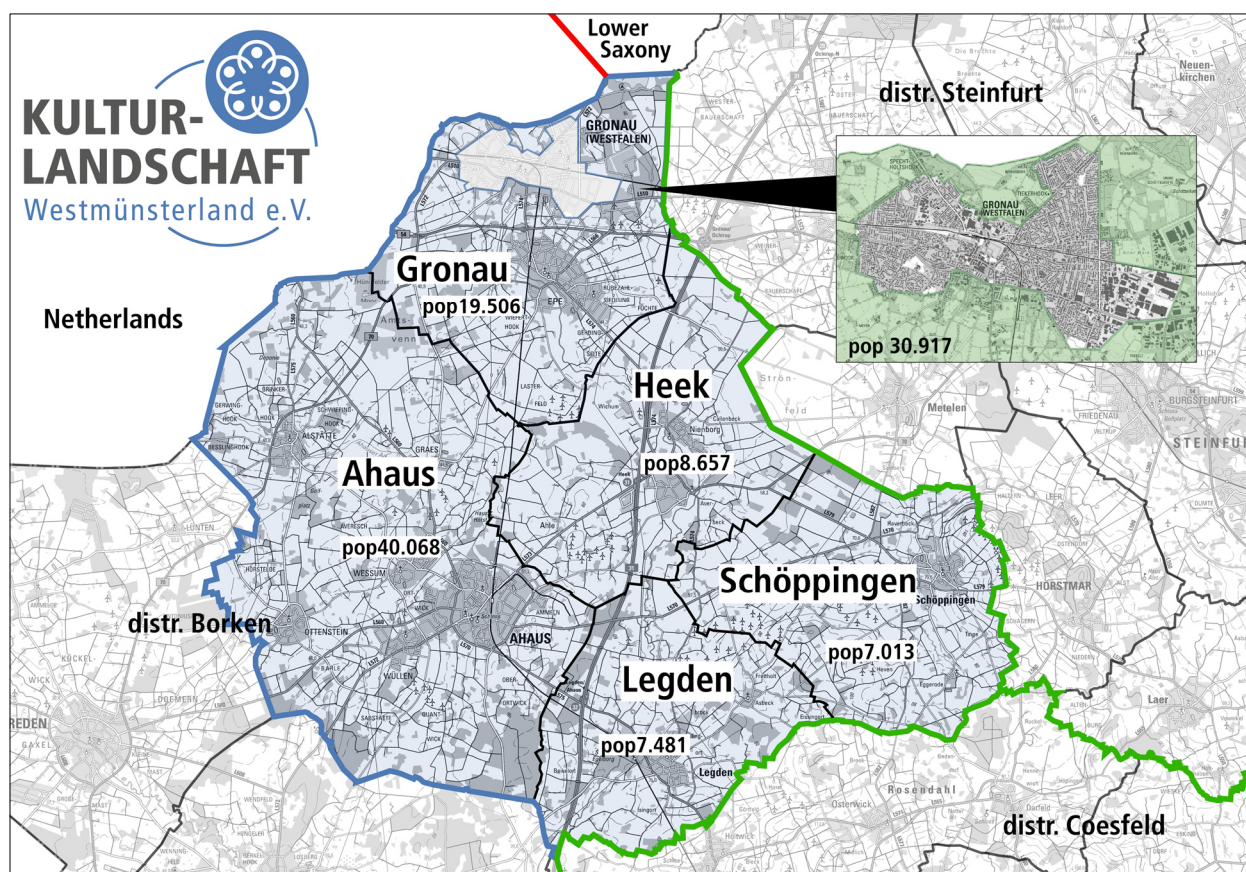
European Agricultural Fund for the
Rural Development: Here invests Europe
in rural areas under participation of the
state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

We shape Here!

www.leader-wml.de



Impressions from the „Kulturlandschaft Westmünsterland“ (from above left to down right): Castle Ahaus, Quantwick Mill Wüllen, Witte Venn, Schepers Mill Epe, town centre Epe, the well in Epe, Eppingscher Hof Heek, Mill Nienborg, High House Nienborg, Dove Tower Legden, Dormitorium Asbeck, dahlia corso in Legden, Church St. Brictius Schöppingen, Chapel Eggerode, artist village Schöppingen (sources: B. Plesker (3x), Matthias Höing, city marketing Gronau (2x), town of Heek (3x), Jürgen Göckemeyer (2x), Bernhard Laukötter, town of Schöppingen (3x))



The „Kulturlandschaft Westmünsterland“ (WML, translated as „Westmünsterland Cultural Landscape“) emerged as an applicant region for the 2023-28 funding period from the **„Kulturlandschaft Ahaus-Heek-Legden“** region, which has existed since 2010 - with the municipalities of **Schöppingen and Gronau as new partners**. The Gronau urban area with more than 30.000 inhabitants is excluded from the regional setting. The region is located in the northern part of the district of Borken in the Münsterland, which can be found **in the north-west of North Rhine-Westphalia**. It borders on the Netherlands and Lower Saxony. Almost **83.000 people** currently live in 14 locations on an area of 415 km². The region is rural, with Ahaus and Gronau fulfilling central functions. The development potential of the region is based on a thriving economy, the attractive environment for living and leisure, existing infrastructure and a mix of renewable energies that is virtually unique in the country.

With the actual development strategy, the region applied for a **third LEADER funding period** - with new power and expanded competencies. The expansion of the area is expected to give new impetus to cooperation, exchange and the joint power to get things moving.

Between October 2021 and February 2022, the future five municipalities jointly developed the present RDS in a comprehensive participation process with a kick-off event, workshops in all locations, thematic expert discussions and a closing event with a total of around 300 participants, based on a comprehensive inventory and a self-critical assessment in form of an evaluation. In addition, numerous existing municipal, regional and higher-level development strategies and concepts were taken into account and their content was coordinated with the alignment of the LEADER strategy. In the derived SWOT analysis, various urgent needs for action were identified, which were then condensed into the development strategy 2022-28. These include, above all, the provision of attractive framework conditions for housing and supply, the removal of barriers and social obstacles, a new motivation for commitment, the creation of alternative supply and care offers, the expansion of the use of potential for the generation of renewable energies, the reduction of energy demand and protection of the natural environment.

The **regional model** for the „Westmünsterland cultural landscape“ was created from these needs:

We shape Here! – Our strong region in constant change

„5“ for the region: We stand for close cooperation, community projects and sustainability in order to be an attractive and future-oriented home for everyone. The focus is on people, society, nature and the environment - in order to be able to react resiliently to future requirements.

The **overarching development goals** of the region include

- securing and improving the livelihoods and needs of all,
- a future-proof design of the entire region as a liveable, crisis-proof and self-responsible „home port“,
- the strengthening of regional added value and economic development,
- the support of neighbours, club commitment and voluntary work,
- strengthening and bringing together the regional social community,
- a valorisation of the cultural and natural area as a place for leisure activities and local recreation,
- the preservation of the natural basis of life and protection of the cultural landscape,
- the promotion of regional climate, environmental and resource protection and
- the creation of harmony between usage requirements and concerns of climate and nature.

In the coming years, joint rural regional development will focus on three fields of action (in order of priority):



I Our Region: *We shape Home!* with the aspects

housing and types of housing, work, (basic) care, health care, support and care, education



II Our Togetherness: *We shape Community!* with the aspects

neighborhood, voluntary work and clubs, meeting places and encounters, culture, identification, free time and local recreation



III Our Environment: *We shape Resources!* with the aspects

(renewable) energies, energy efficiency, recycling and upcycling, sustainable forms of mobility, regional food and biodiversity

The focus of future regional development in the region is thus based on the **three dimensions of the concept of resilience**, in which social, ecological and economic objectives are to be tackled with priority. In addition, **several specific development goals** were defined for each field of action, and the fields of action are also backed up with measurement indicators.

In addition, the region has defined **various cross-cutting issues**, the concerns of which should be considered in all fields of action when implementing the RDS: Digitization, tourism, accessibility – redefined, children and young people, mobility.



Various structural approaches are planned for the implementation of the RDS (e.g. training and optimization of expertise, network activities, information), but initial projects can also be named. The leading and start-up projects include e.g.

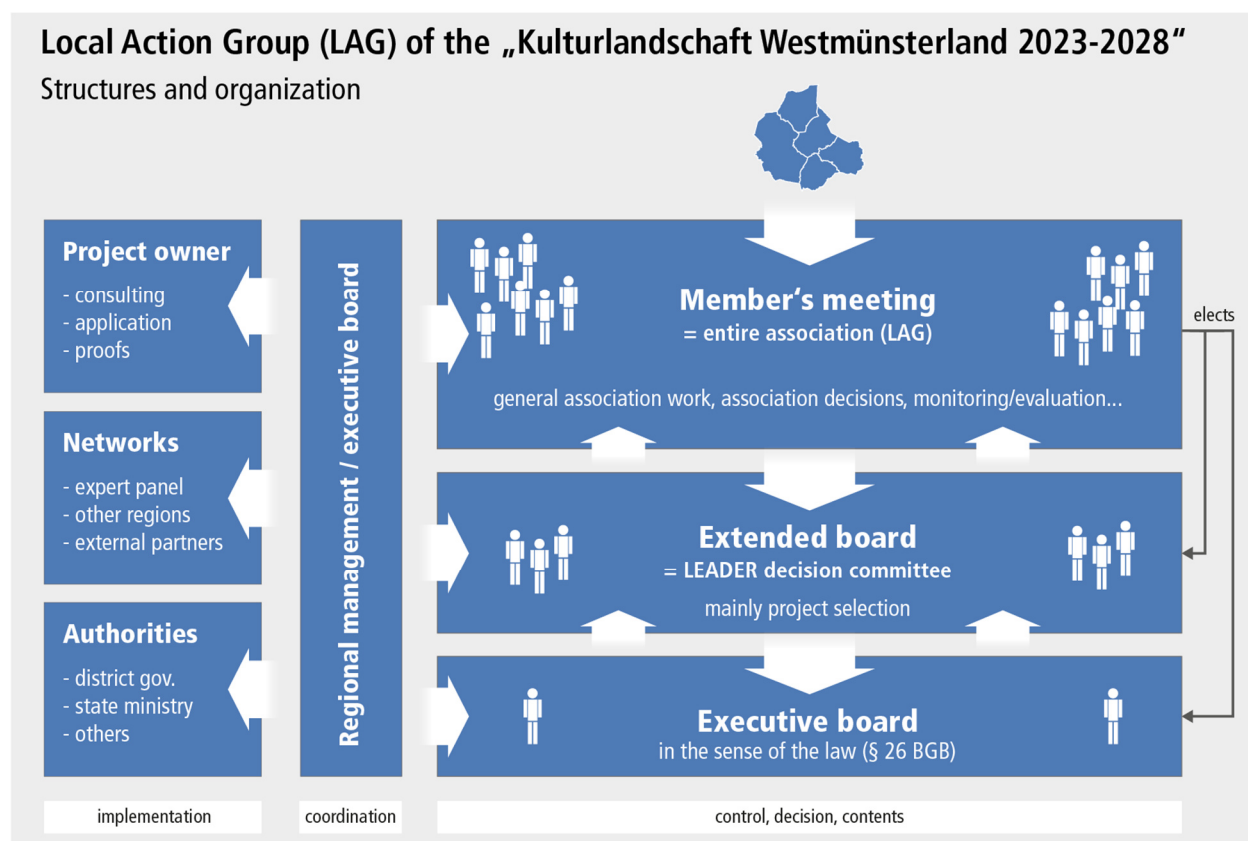
- an investigation into the needs and potential for housing in the future
- a project to improve health care for older people
- cooperative supply solutions to ensure basic regional supplies

- a FamilyCard Westmünsterland with support offers for families in the region
- a package of measures to secure evidence of Jewish life in the region
- the establishment of a regional hydrogen infrastructure
- a potential study on the topic of agri-photovoltaics

In total, **more than 100 project ideas** were named in the RES creation process, most of them only vaguely. These ideas will be deepened in the coming months. Numerous **cooperation** projects are also planned, and there are concrete agreements with the Grafschaft Bentheim region (Lower Saxony), with the Dutch region Zuidwest-Twente and the other LEADER regions in the Münsterland.

Broad public involvement is planned for implementation; the region wants to continue the extremely effective „branding“ of the LEADER backdrop and continuously advertise the implementation process and the possibilities for project funding. Several suitable formats have already been established (homepage, social media, series of events), and new ones are to be added (including excursions, action days, expert workshops).

Projects worthy of funding are selected based on the tried-and-tested framework of criteria for the current funding period. However, this is slightly modified by considering the main topics of the new RDS. In addition, so-called basic criteria are added, which relate, among other things, to the contribution of the projects to resilience and compatibility with existing plans.



No changes were made to the tried-and-tested **three-stage structure of the LAG** (general assembly - extended board - board), but the structures were adapted to the enlarged region: the **general assembly** as the supreme body and overall association was noticeably expanded to now about 50 members that include thematically appropriate actors also from Schöppingen and Gronau; the **extended board as the decision-making body** was expanded in accordance with the specifications of the LEADER program so that the minimum proportion of private partners and women is still guaranteed. It now consists of 17 members in total of which 10 are private partners. The **board** of directors of the LAG consists of the two

chair(wo)men. In order to accompany the RDS implementation, an externally based regional management was set for the new funding period, which takes over the comprehensive tasks of the management of the association.

To ensure the implementation process of the RDS, the methods used for **monitoring and evaluation** so far will be expanded again. In addition to a mid-term and final evaluation, annual short evaluations are planned, and the commitment and outflow of funds are also the subject of annual monitoring to a greater extent than before. The status of target achievement is also checked regularly.




The public in the region should always be informed about all developments regarding the RDS implementation. In addition to the usual ways, new formats such as digital information events, new instructions and tutorials or project videos are also offered.

The region has **€ 2.7 million** in LEADER funds available for the implementation of the RDS, which are supplemented by a further € 480,000 in public funds by council decisions from the five municipalities. For administration and regional management, the region plans to spend around € 770,000 within the funding period; the remaining funds are initially earmarked as budgets divided equally between the three fields of action (approx. € 1 million each). To this end, the region relies on annual small project funding as part of the regional budget. In addition to LEADER funds, funding from other programs should also be examined to finance the achievement of the RES objectives.



Examples of LEADER funded projects of the last funding period: Village Pond in Asbeck (Göckemeyer), learning across school types (von Wangenheim), model school Ahaus (freepik), the enlightened region, E-Carsharing AHL (village of Legden), bike park Heek (Lammers), SOS-benches (Olbrich), Co-Working Spaces AHL (projaegt), Mariengarden Ahaus (clinic Westmünsterland)

The strategy system at a glance

guiding principle		„We shape HERE!“ – Our strong region in constant change		
		„5“ for the region: We stand for close cooperation, community projects and sustainability in order to be an attractive and future-oriented home for everyone. The focus is on people, society, nature and the environment - in order to bea able to react resiliently to future requirements.		
				
superordinated development goals	Securing and improving livelihoods and needs for all		Supporting neighbourhood, association involvement and volunteerism	Preservation of the natural basis of life and protection of the cultural landscape
	Future-proofing of the entire region as a liveable, crisis-proof and self-reliant „home port“		Strengthening and bringing together the regional social community	Promotion of regional climate, environmental and resource protection
	Improving regional value creation and economic development		Enhancing the value of the cultural and natural area as a place for leisure activities and recreation	Creation of harmony between utilization demands and concerns of climate and nature
FoA	Our Region : We shape Home !		Our Togetherness : We shape Community !	Our Environment : We shape Resources !
cross-cutting	digitalization			
	tourism			
	accessibility – redefined			
	children and young people			
	mobility			
specific development goals	Long-term safeguarding of basic services in the villages of the region		Safeguarding and expanding the regional identity of all local people and valorisation of the regional cultural and natural landscape „Westmünsterland“	Strengthening the use of renewable energies in the region and increasing decarbonization
	Creation of living space and housing models for all levels of interest		Preservation or creation of new, local and regional places of encounter for all people	Increasing energy efficiency, reducing energy demand, optimizing consumption structures
	Preservation and creation of employment opportunities for all and support of contemporary working environments		Promotion of dialogue and exchange between generations and cultures	Raising awareness of environmental and climate protection issues in the region
	Securing medical care and basic nursing/care services		Securing and expanding the leisure, sports and cultural infrastructure for all age groups in line with demand	Creation or investigation of new forms of sustainable mobility to deal with a constantly increasing demand for mobility
	Enabling people in WML to think and act in a sustainable way, e.g. through extracurricular learning locations and opportunities for „active“ learning		Increasing the attractiveness of neighbourhoods, voluntary work, associations, communities (image, support, appreciation)	Increasing biodiversity and optimizing the framework conditions for sustainable agriculture
weighting	priority	1 – very high	2 – high	3 – high
	financial	€ 720.000 33 % of € 2,16 m*	€ 720.000 33 % of € 2,16 m *	€ 720.000 33 % of € 2,16 m *

* based on € 2,7 m funding money in total, minus 20 % management = € 2,16 m

Published by the
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with the municipalities of Ahaus, Gronau, Heek, Legden and Schöppingen



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Questions?

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**KULTUR-
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Westmünsterland e.V.



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Rural Development: Here invests Europe
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