

Policy action LAB 14 December 2024 - EU funds paving the way
to the rural vision

Experience in Lower Saxony coordinating EU-funds

Barbara Fährmann
Lower Saxon Ministry for Federal and European Affairs
and Regional Development

Department 103, Managing Authority EFRD/ESF+ and
EAFRD-Coordination



Kofinanziert von der
Europäischen Union



Niedersachsen

Outline

1. “Coordination” Governance of EAFRD, ERDF, ESF+ since 2014
2. Cross fund strategic framework for preparing the funding period 2021-2027
3. Coordination and exchange mechanisms during the implementation period
4. Obstacles to better interfund-coordination

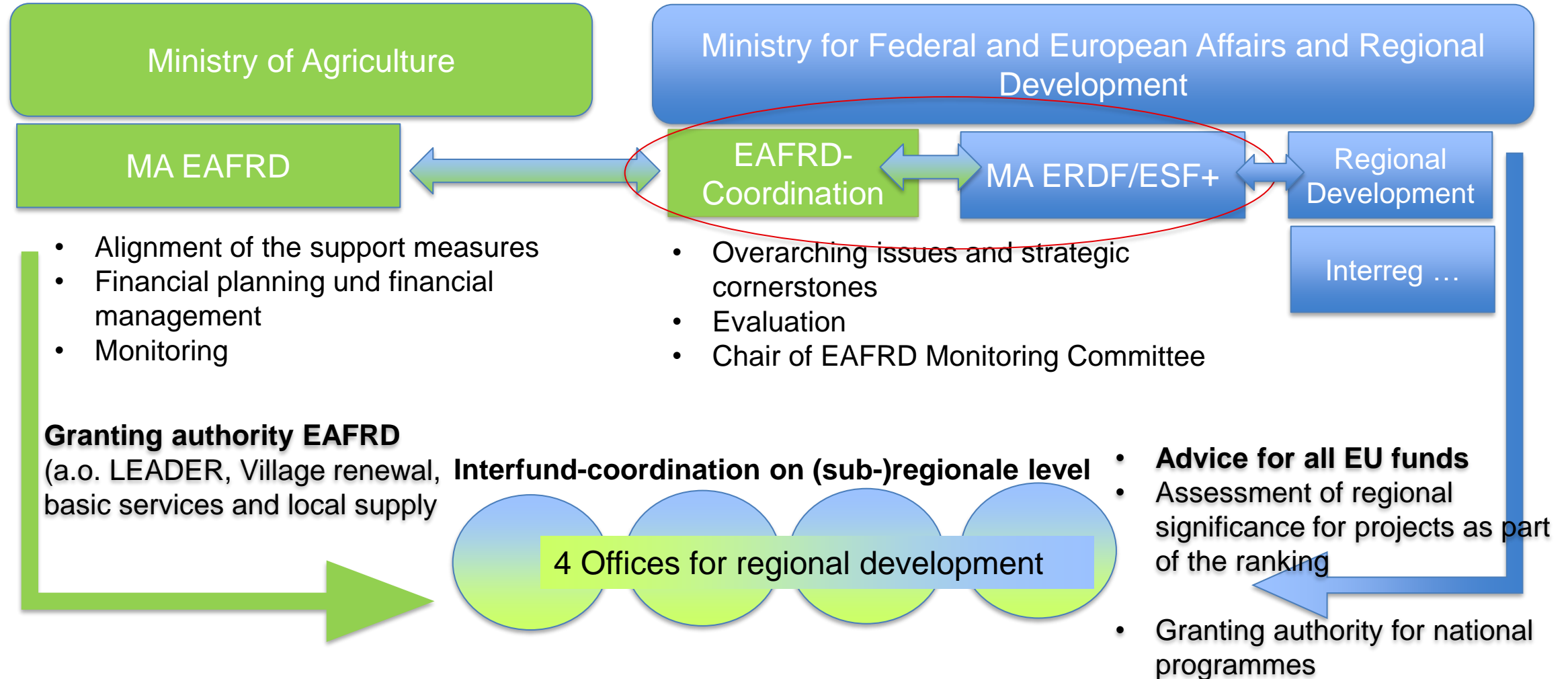
1. „Coordination“ Governance of EAFRD, ERDF, ESF+ (1)

- Since 2014: aim of better coordinating and strengthening the links to overarching political and regional objectives
- Reorganisation in two steps:
 - 2014 Integration of the Managing Authority (MA) of ERDF/ESF together with a strategic coordination of EAFRD in the State office and Establishment of four offices for regional development
 - 2017 Establishment of a new ministry: Lower Saxon Ministry for Federal and European Affairs and Regional Development (short European Ministry)



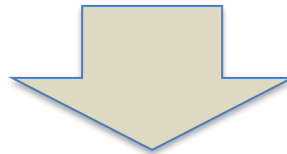
- Enhancing strategic approach: coordination of priorities and alignment and of EU-programmes
- Common understanding and approaches for the cross-cutting objectives
- Bundling of knowledge and knowhow
- Harmonisation of rules und regulations as far as possible (grant law)
- Common reporting system to monitor the regional up-take of ERDF/ESF and EAFRD
- Territorial approaches an tailored solutions for the different Regions of Lower Saxony

1. „Coordination“ Governance of EAFRD, ERDF, ESF+ (2)



2. Cross fund strategic framework for 2021-2027- Mission + Goals

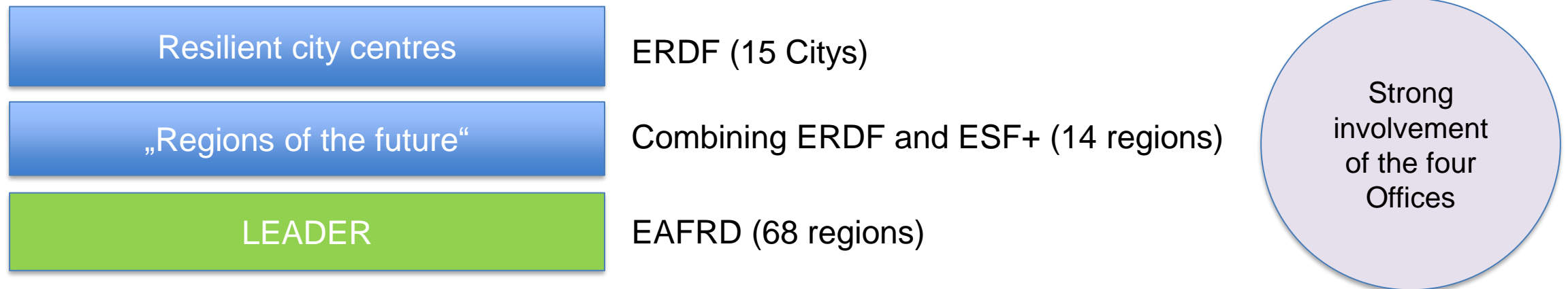
- 2018 **mandate** of the Land Government for the **Lower Saxon European Ministry**:
 - to develop an optimal and broadly accepted funding landscape,
 - to apply funding as efficiently and well-coordinated as possible,
 - to simplify funding as much as possible
- Development of the **EU-funding strategy** in a broad bottom-up approach
- Online consultation of over 500 representatives of the civil society, economy and scientific community.
- Thematic workshops with the respective representatives of the ministries and lobbying groups.



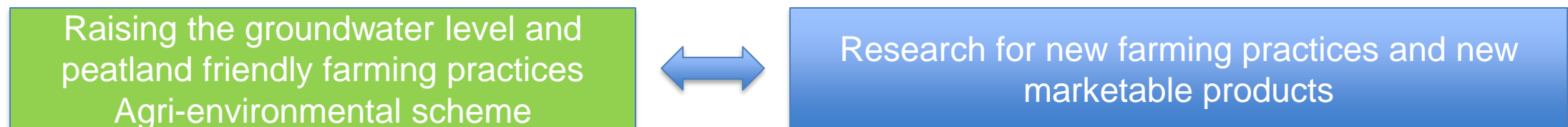
- Three strategic objectives (innovation, climate protection, biodiversity, future viability of all regions)
- High demand for **place based approaches** in order to adapt funding instruments to the needs
- Making use of synergies between the different European funds and hence making them more efficient

2. Cross fund strategic framework for 2021-2027 - Outcomes

Establishment of three territorial Instruments at different scales including urban and rural areas

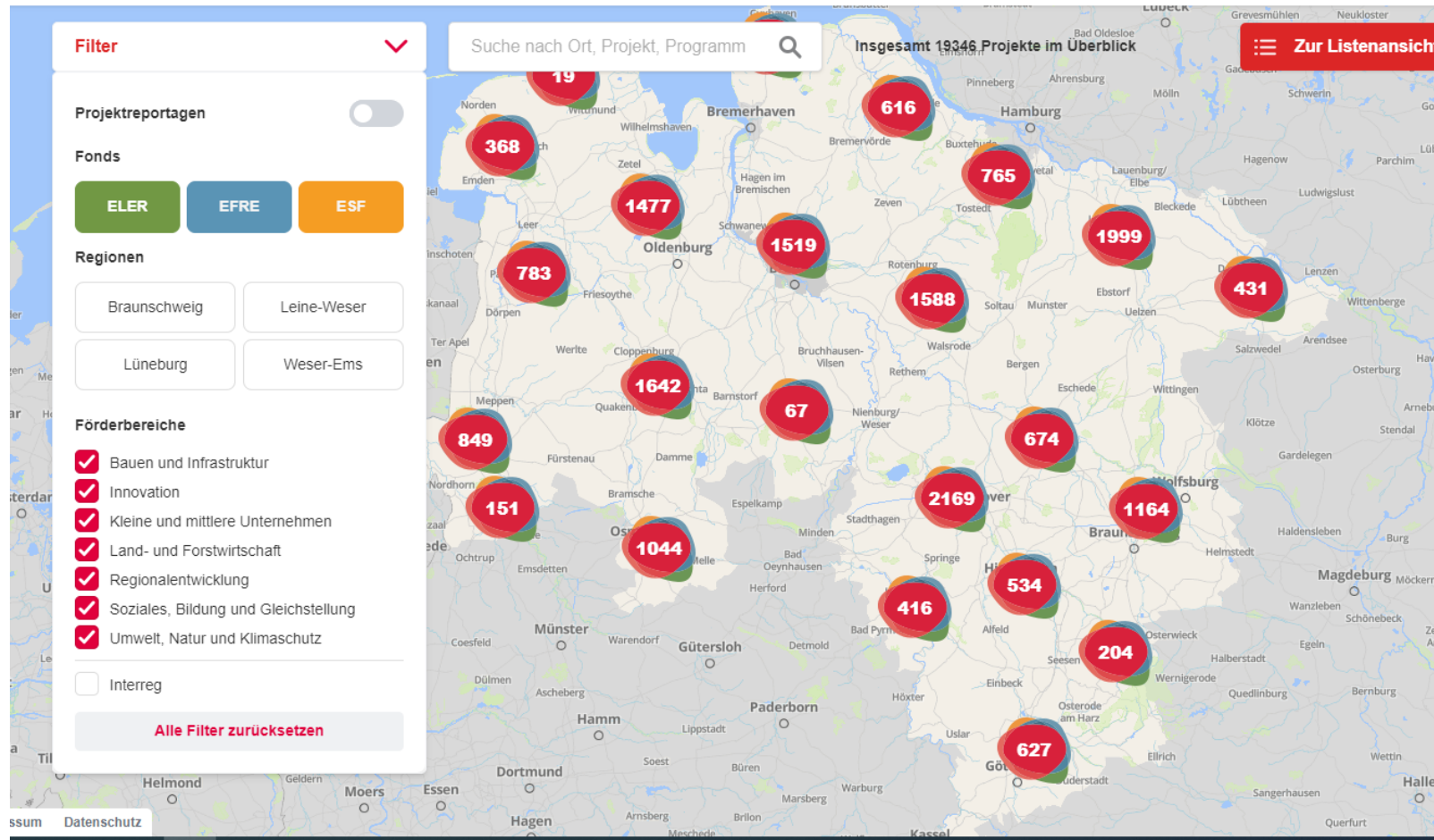


Establishment of a good division of labor for certain fields of action: e.g. rewetting of peatlands



3. Coordination and exchange mechanisms during implementation

- Meeting of ERDF/ES+F Managing authority staff and EAFRD Coordination once per week
- Continuous exchange and **Jour fix** with the EAFRD Coordination EAFRD Managing Authority at least once a quarter;
- **Mutual membership** in the Monitoring Committees (EAFRD and ERDF/ESF+)
- **Common reporting** of approval and disbursement dates of EAFRD, ERDF, ESF+ on County level (Ministry, and offices for regional development)
- Sharing **Evaluation** results
- **Joint publicity and public relation work:** Europe for Lower Saxony
- **Joint projects:** regional dialogue process for simplification and reduction of administrative burden (in planning)



Part of the joint publicity and public relation:

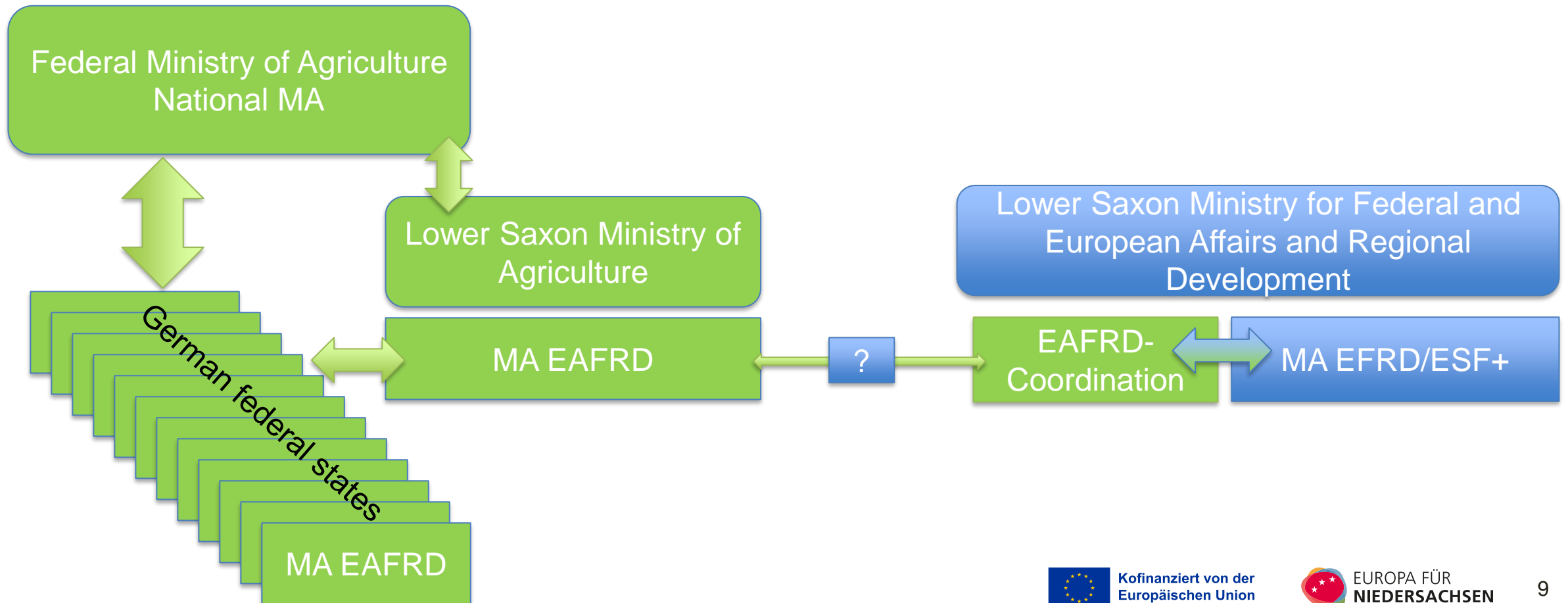
- **interactive project atlas** including EAFRD, ERDF and ESF+
- Projects can be filtered according to **funding areas/topics**

4. Obstacles to better interfund-coordination (1)

- Delayed start of EARDF (CAP) new funding period – difficult to integrate EARDF in the funding strategy approach until the end
- Difficult communication and joint activities due to the different running times of the funding period
- The fact that the EARDF is no longer “member of the Structural Funds family”
- **Integration of the EARDF in a single national CAP strategic plan**
 - No longer independent Rural Development Programmes (RDP) on the regional level like the other Programmes (monitoring, evaluation etc ...)
 - Exhaustive and time consuming coordination process between
 - a. all the German federal states (regions) in order to harmonise their EARDF interventions
 - b. the federal states and the federal Level
 - c. EAFRD and EAGF departments (on federal an regional level)

4 Obstacles to better interfund-coordination (2)

- Few Resources left for all that is not mandatory, e.g. coordination with the other funds



4. Obstacles to better interfund-coordination (3)

Regarding EAFRD

- Development of a completely new reporting system (result orientation, performance report etc.) within the EAFRD
- Dominance of agriculture-related issues (and conflicts) – more sector specific plan as a territorial perspective
- Little attention to broader socio-economic topics and interventions

Regarding Structural funds

- Provisions on thematic concentration together with the investment guidance: strong emphasis on Innovation! Little room for maneuver to address issues of general interest especially in rural areas (health, demographic change, etc.)
- No specifications for evaluating the effects of funding on rural areas