

HOUSE OF LORDS
MINUTES OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN BEFORE
THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE EUROPEAN UNION
(SUB-COMMITTEE A)

THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL FUNDS

THURSDAY 6 MARCH 2008

UKRep, 10 Avenue d'Auderghem, 1040 Brussels

MS M KAPTURSKA, MS I GORCYCA, MS A WASOWICZ and MS J LORENS

Evidence heard in Public

Questions 292 - 341

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THURSDAY 6 MARCH 2008

Present

Cohen of Pimlico, B.
Kerr of Kinlochard, L.
Trimble, L.
Woolmer of Leeds, L.

Witnesses: **Ms Monika Kapturska**, Head of Delegation, **Ms Izabela Gorczyca**, Information Officer, **Ms Anna Wasowicz**, Information Officer, Wielkopolska Regional Representation (Poland); and **Ms Joanna Lorens**, Head of Delegation, Lubelskie Regional Representation, (Poland), examined.

Q292 Chairman: Welcome to UKRep. It is very good of you to come and give evidence to us. We are putting this on the record so that we can use it. Sue is taking shorthand but you will get a look at what it looks like. We are expecting to be able to hang on to you until 3.20. I know there are two regions who would like to present. Can I say that the general initial questions, which you have all seen, but I want to read them on for the sake of record, that your presentations will address are: what the role of a Regional Representation in Brussels is; how does your Office represent your region's interest; what is the size of each region's allocation from the EU and how is your allocation utilised, what kinds of projects, what kinds of activities are you doing with it. Since the Wielkopolska region has not yet had its presentation photocopied, could we ask Lublin to start. Obviously it does not matter which one we start and then we can listen with the papers in front of us.

Ms Lorens: Of course. First of all, I would like to thank you very much for the invitation. It is an honour for me to be in such a distinguished assembly today. Before commencing with the presentation I want to make one point, a caveat. I cannot be called an expert on EU funds in our region, I simply represent my region here in Brussels in my Regional Representation

and I co-operate with my friends and colleagues from the Marshal's Office of Wielkopolska voivodship which is the managing body of the EU funds. We have prepared a presentation which has been supplied to you. It is a very detailed one full of facts and figures which can be left for evidence afterwards. I would like to make it presentation-friendly and it may have been better to have the projector and equipment to show it, but since we do not have that I will try to make it accessible in a different way. Referring back to the first question about the Regional Office, if I may start with that, our Office of the Lubelskie region is a small one. I am the only person who represents the region in Brussels for now. The activity so far has been focusing on two areas: promotional and representational. The Office is in the process of restructuring and at the end of this year we expect to have the Representation proper with staff and divisions and sections, but due to certain changes in the local authorities it has not been possible to arrange it. The promotional area means the participation of our region in different activities here, such as open days. This is an initiative in Brussels organised by the Committee of the Regions and DG Regio. It is a great event and regions from all over Europe present their good practices here, their co-operation, their programmes and projects. We do participate in that. The other part of my activities here in Brussels is simply representing the interests of the voivodship by liaising between the institutions and facilitating communication for the authorities supporting the actions undertaken by the authorities. That is the main thing. Maybe I should have started with a presentation of the region as such because that could be of some use. At the back of this document is a map of Europe and the Lubelskie region is the dark orange. We are at the very border of Europe bordering with Ukraine and Belorussia. Poland is divided into 16 regions and Lubelskie is quite a large one, the third biggest as far as Poland is concerned. It covers 25,000 square kilometres. This is eight per cent of the surface of Poland. The population last year was 2,180,000 inhabitants which ranks it twelfth in Poland as far as density is concerned. It is a sparsely populated region. It is 76

per cent of the European average as far as population density is concerned. It is also one of the regions with the lowest urbanisation indicators in the country, less than 47 per cent. The main city, Lublin, is an academic and economic centre, the biggest town, which is on the right-hand side of this map. Looking at the economy and the challenges for the regions, we are aware of the weaknesses. There are certain weaknesses typical of such poorly developed regions, such as a low level of economic development which translates to low income among the population, a poorly developed innovation market, a poorly developed SME sector, system of supporting companies and so on. However, these weaknesses are balanced by certain advantages and strengths, namely the potential for the production, for instance, of green food because agriculture is the strongest sector, it is not industry but agriculture. It is the potential of the region for the production of bioenergy, biomass, biofuels, but also tourism. Such characteristics will be important for the part of the presentation when I tell you about the Regional Operational Programme which has certain priorities that apply to the current situation and the challenges. I will not go through the previous Financial Perspective of the Integrated Regional Operational Programme, 2004-06, the current Financial Perspective will more important for us now.

Q293 Chairman: Yes, please.

Ms Lorens: If we look at the size of the allocation that Lubelskie receives, slide number eight shows quite a good visual representation of the allocation for 2007-13. I will try to describe it briefly. Within the National Cohesion Strategy for 2007-13, over €2 billion of EU funds were allocated for the region for investments. This amount includes allocation for the Regional Operational Programme, which is very important because this is the first ever large-scale programme, this multi-annual programme, financially stable programme, of development measures for the region. The ROP is crucial. Also, a component of the Operational Programme is the Human Capital and Operational Programme - Development of Eastern

Poland. On the graphic we show the share of Community assistance and national contribution which makes it clear that the EU funds constitute the basis of that. If I can focus on the Regional Operational Programme, that will show the principles that guide how we distribute the funds to different projects. We should have in mind one specific goal, that is improving the competitiveness of the Lubelskie region, which triggers faster economic growth and growth of employment complying with the natural and cultural qualities of the region. This is the main goal of the programme and it is divided into three sub-goals concentrating on the competitiveness of the region, on improvement in investment conditions, and also improving the quality of life of the region. Behind the Regional Operational Programme there is the strategy of the voivodship's development and there are certain criteria that allow projects to be co-financed. If we could look at the criteria, they would be the impact on the increase of economic activity, competitiveness, quality of inter-regional relations but also improving the environmental quality and promoting the image of the region, that is also important. What constitutes the core of the programme are the axes. The axes overlap certain levels of co-financing and there are nine such axes. The programme is divided into sections. The first one is entrepreneurship and innovations, then economy infrastructure, third attractiveness of urban areas and investment premises, fourth information society, fifth transport, sixth environment and pure energy, seventh culture and tourism and co-operation between regions, eighth social infrastructure and, finally, technical assistance. From that division we see the highest level of co-financing from the ERDF is attributed to the transport axis, and that is 22 per cent, and entrepreneurship and innovations. They have the highest level of co-financing.

Q294 Chairman: Ms Lorens, we can read what you are doing afterwards. I would very much like to look at some of your specific projects. We are particularly keen to ask you, when you have told us that, how you find your dealings with the EU and how well it works,

how useful it has been. If you could move us to that, because I do want to have time to discuss.

Ms Lorens: Okay. The evidence that I was presented with was the evidence from the previous Financial Perspective 2004-06 and the evaluation of the main beneficiaries and the main activities focusing, for example, on improving the infrastructure, the educational and sport infrastructure as well as roads infrastructure and social ones. For the new Perspective, 2007-13, today I got the information that on 17 March we will start the call for the new applications, so the assessments of these new proceedings will be known in two months. That is the reply that I got, that in two months' time we will be able to give the reply on what are the main problems with utilising the funds and management. I can forward that question and supply you with it in written form as soon as possible, by Monday.

Q295 Chairman: That would be very helpful. We are running an inquiry which says there are these Structural Funds and we know roughly how they are allocated, but we are very keen to find out the views of a recipient of these Structural Funds. Do the conditions strike you as onerous? Is there an awful lot of administrative cost? Has it been helpful? Anything you can tell us.

Ms Lorens: Of course. The answer is they are really helpful. From the data I have with me today I cannot give you precise examples. As I said, the allocation from the previous Perspective was 80 per cent, so quite a high utilisation of the funding. I have no data on the present Perspective but just for indicative projects, which is at the end of the presentation.

Q296 Chairman: That would be interesting to see.

Ms Lorens: That is an indicative schedule for individual key projects. The key project for the city and region is the regional airport. As I said, the region is quite a big one but it does not have an airport, so that is the first thing. Another thing is the construction of a regional

geographical system and culture meetings point and, finally, sports facilities such as a stadium. I understand what you need for your evidence and if I could put down the question and provide you with that, would it be okay if I provide you with that?

Q297 Chairman: That would be most helpful. My Lords, is there anything else that we can ask Ms Lorens? We can always come back to her at the end.

Q298 Lord Trimble: The amount of money the region is receiving is €2 million per annum, is that right?

Ms Lorens: That is the complete allocation.

Q299 Lord Trimble: For the period from 2007-13 you have a total of €2 million.

Ms Lorens: €2 billion.

Lord Trimble: That is quite a difference.

Chairman: Two million would not go very far.

Lord Trimble: That was what I was thinking. This may be a silly question to ask you but could you handle more?

Q300 Chairman: Could you use more money?

Ms Lorens: If we look at the previous experience, utilisation of 80 per cent, it was like a period of training for us from 2004-06 and it turned out that we managed.

Q301 Chairman: You managed to spend 80 per cent of what you were given?

Ms Lorens: Yes.

Q302 Lord Trimble: Would you expect to spend more than 80 per cent in this current plan?

Ms Lorens: I would be optimistic.

Q303 Lord Trimble: If you had even more could you spend it?

Ms Lorens: The needs are great. With good management, yes.

Q304 Lord Trimble: What I am getting at here is we know from speaking to the Commission that they are operating on the basis that countries, regions, cannot absorb more than the equivalent of four per cent of GDP per annum. Do you share that view? Do you think that is the right sort of figure? Do you think it would be possible to absorb more? I am just looking for a response to that.

Ms Lorens: Thank you for the question and I will give you the answer in written form.

Q305 Chairman: Can we move on to Wielkopolska. We may come back at the end, but it is nice to give somebody else a chance to present because your two regions are very different.

Ms Wasowicz: Have you received our presentations?

Q306 Chairman: No.

Ms Wasowicz: We are still waiting for the photocopies to come.

Ms Kapturska: I just wanted to tell you that we have prepared our Regional Operational Programme and it is in English. This is almost the last version because it is 30 August 2007 and we signed it with the Commission on 6 September. Here you have the presentation from my colleague on Structural Funds.

Q307 Chairman: Perhaps while we are waiting we could ask you how many people you have in the Office here.

Ms Kapturska: Three of us.

Q308 Lord Trimble: So the Office is empty now!

Ms Kapturska: We have a stagiere from the Marshal's Office of the Wielkopolska Region and she is watching the Office.

Q309 Chairman: Answering the telephones.

Ms Kapturska: Yes.

Q310 Chairman: You have heard the sort of things we want to know, and I think we can probably ask you those independent of your presentation. You are a richer region than Lubelskie. How much funds are you in receipt of?

Ms Wasowicz: In the current Financial Perspective we received €1.2 billion in the framework of our Regional Operational Programme for Wielkopolska Voivodship. However, that is not the final sum that we are going to absorb because beneficiaries originating from our voivodship can apply to the funds on a national level also. This is not the final amount of money that will be absorbed in our region, we expect more than that.

Q311 Lord Woolmer of Leeds: More European funds?

Ms Wasowicz: Yes, European funds. That is only the co-financing in the framework of the EU Funds.

Q312 Chairman: Do you find you are able to absorb as many funds as are available to you?

Ms Wasowicz: This is a very difficult question at this stage of the procedure because we could only participate in the first Financial Perspective from 2004-06, so we do not have any evaluation reports carried out yet. We will have to wait for these results. We do not have any official data or indicators at this stage. Let me remind you that this programme is still going on, it is not closed, the projects are running this year. I suggest we should wait for the first outcomes. We are very sorry that you do not have our presentation in front of you but it will give you a progress overview of the Perspective that is being implemented right now.

Q313 Chairman: We would find that useful. I have got a general question that is slightly difficult to answer. You are the first representatives of a country we have talked to that are really new to the whole business of Structural Funds. There is a considerable movement in the old European states to say that more money should be given to the new countries and the Commission, I am sure, would tend to agree that they are worried about absorption but the Commission seem to feel it is all going very nicely. I would like to know what problems, if any, you have found in your dealings with the Commission. Are there problems of not understanding or not being able to get them to finance projects that you would like financed?

Ms Kapturska: If I could answer because for ten years I worked for local authorities and now in Brussels, so I have got some experience. The local authorities say they can absorb as much money as possible. Usually, for example, the communities built one road every two years but they could build more. Now the Marshals, which are dividing the money and which are the managing authorities of the Structural Funds, are the presidents of the regions. We have got everything in our presentation.

Q314 Chairman: We will catch up.

Ms Kapturska: They tried to divide all the money very carefully but everybody is complaining we do not have enough money. It is the lack of information first and the bureaucracy which is too much and is a barrier as well.

Q315 Chairman: Your bureaucracy or the EU bureaucracy?

Ms Kapturska: Both of them. There are many rules created by our government which do not exist under the rules of the Commission.

Chairman: The Commission said something like that to us. They said that often they felt the rules which stood in the way were those imposed by the states.

Lord Woolmer of Leeds: If the Commission asked your region to produce some concrete evidence of the bureaucracy and the costs and your suggestion how this could be improved, would that be possible to do? The Commission said that everybody complains but nobody produces the evidence. That is not in your region.

Q316 Chairman: Generally.

Ms Kapturska: We have no time to do it because we have a lack of staff dealing with Structural Funds. We have almost as many inhabitants as Ireland, it is over three million people, and in the last period we had just 80 people to deal with Structural Funds in our region at a regional level. We are trying to get more and now we have a maximum of 120. You can imagine this is a problem and that is why it is very difficult for them to prepare reports like that.

Q317 Lord Woolmer of Leeds: They just have not got the time to do it, they are too busy getting on with the job.

Ms Kapturska: Yes.

Q318 Chairman: Are you short of people because you are short of trained people or you just have not had time to hire them? Half of Poland appears to be in London at the moment and I sometimes wonder if we have taken a few of your trained people. Is it a shortage of people who know how to do the work?

Ms Kapturska: Yes. Many of them came in at the beginning of the summer so they had time to read all the documents and so on to do the work but the problem, which is a really important one, is the Marshals' Offices at the regional level which deal with the Structural Funds do not pay enough money. Salaries are very, very low.

Ms Lorens: That is true for my region as well. The private sector offers better working conditions and remuneration for such experts. They do not stay with the local authorities at this level, they go to the private sector. The Marshals' Offices suffer from lack of qualified people.

Ms Kapturska: People who were experienced in the period of 2004-06 went to private companies or became directors. The others are quite new and this is a problem. It does not go against implementing the Structural Funds in Poland because all the communities, provinces and so on are waiting for the money and are ready to absorb the funds, I am perfectly sure about that.

Q319 Chairman: Colleagues, do you want to ask any more questions now or shall we ask Ms Kapturska to do her presentation, now that we all have it? If we could ask you to get through it in about ten minutes and that will leave us time to ask questions.

Ms Kapturska: First of all, I wanted to tell you what a great honour it is for us to present our Regional Office to the House of Lords. I would like to present Anna Wasowicz, who will speak about Structural Funds, and Ms Izabela Gorczyca, our third collaborator. I would like to speak about the Office for four minutes, a maximum of five, and Anna will speak about Structural Funds. I will start with the Office. As you can see, as with all self-respecting regions, we are in the heart of Europe.

Q320 Chairman: Yes, you are, are you not?

Ms Kapturska: In Poland we have just 16 regions but they are quite big. We are the second biggest one and, as I said, we compare with Ireland and we say we are as big as Belgium in the sense of area. Here you have our administration, which I would like to show you. The Marshal, which is the president of the region, implements the Structural Funds with the Regional Board. Wielkopolska has 54 per cent of the EU average GDP.

Q321 Lord Kerr of Kinlochard: What is Poland as a whole?

Ms Kapturska: Fifty. We are third after the Mazowia and Silesia regions. Mazowia has 57 as far as I know. I will tell you about some tasks and activities of the Wielkopolska Office. You know what our regional officers do in Brussels.

Q322 Chairman: You have three of you.

Ms Kapturska: I just wanted to tell you we have got three employees and we stay in the same building with the German Hessen, Italian Emilia-Romagna and French Aquitaine. We have three main areas of activity. They are promotion, funds and co-operation with the other institutions and regions. Then there are slides concerning our activities and I do not know that it is necessary to explain them now. We participate in conferences, seminars and so on. We inform our region about possible funds and the opportunities. We organise the study visits of the Commission in our region and the visits of our representatives here in Brussels. We co-operate with our Permanent Representative and in the sense of cultural and economic promotion with the embassy in Brussels. We monitor all the funds and inform our local authorities of any possible funds and projects. We promote our economy. We have got a member in the Committee of the Regions, which is the Marshal of the region.

Q323 Chairman: If I may ask a general question as you go through. We notice, as it were, that you are here, not in Poland.

Ms Kapturska: Yes, for five years.

Q324 Chairman: Do you find it very important to be in Brussels and, if so, why?

Ms Kapturska: Yes. As you know, there are 268 regions and 264 of them have their offices in Brussels, which means something.

Q325 Chairman: It must.

Ms Kapturska: All Polish regions, except Świętokrzyskie, have their offices in Brussels. When we compare with the German or Spanish offices, they have something like 15 people in their offices so they can share the competences. It is quite difficult for us, but the important thing is we are here, we can promote our region here and we try to build consortia for projects and try to attract our communities and local authorities to co-operate with the other authorities in Europe to exchange knowledge and best practices, which is very helpful for us.

Q326 Chairman: Thank you.

Ms Kapturska: As my colleague said, we have internships in our Office which is very helpful for the local authorities because people in the region have to know what we are doing and how they can use this knowledge. It is still not enough for us so we try to attract people to Brussels. On one of the last slides you will see our last very interesting project, the Brussels Club of Wielkopolska. We created this a few months ago and our colleagues from other regions have been very surprised that we have had this idea. Because there are just the three of us we wanted to co-operate with all the people from our region who work in the European institutions in Brussels. We have found out there are more than 70 people working in the European institutions from Wielkopolska. We meet and they can help us in our work here. Thank you for that. I want to go to my colleague, Anna Wasowicz, who will give you a short speech about the Structural Funds.

Ms Wasowicz: My Lords, given the limited timeframe I will present you with an outline on Structural Funds in the Wielkopolska region. This will be an overview of structural assistance that we have received in past years. I am glad that my colleague presented you with the details on the new Financial Perspective in Poland in her region of Lubelskie Voivodship. Our presentation is a bit different and it should give you the historical approach to structural assistance accessible to Poland. Let me start with Pre-Accession Funds that our region received in the framework of three main programmes starting from 1996.

Wielkopolska could participate in the Phare programme, which is Poland and Hungary Assistance for Reconstructing of their Economies. This was a major programme for Central and Eastern Europe, initially established only for Poland and Hungary but later extended to ten candidate countries, as I am sure you know. In 1996 Wielkopolska became eligible to use the cross-border co-operation component within the Phare programme. Since our region is perceived as doing well Wielkopolska cannot participate fully in all editions of these programmes, they were directed mainly to poorer regions and that refers to the economic and social cohesion component. We were also able to participate in the instrument for structural policies for pre-accession that was a Cohesion Fund for implementing the project. We managed to implement four very successful projects. We also participated in a special accession programme for agriculture and rural development. I would now like to give you some main effects of the implementation of the pre-accession funds in Wielkopolska. We need to consider that not all of them have been measured since the last projects terminated as of 2006. We can observe the effect of Phare assistance to the region but within these limited resources we managed to implement the very spectacular project of building a bypass of Poznań, the capital city of Wielkopolska, gaining co-financing of over €160 million within three years. That was a multi-annual project. More effective was ISPA financing, financially important environmental projects and improving access to drinking water to approximately 20 per cent of Wielkopolska's population. Support under the SAPARD programme was also effective in our voivodship with significant and effective support mainly for food processing and marketing of agri-products. Thanks to the successful utilisation of pre-accession funds Wielkopolska is listed in sixth position in the ranking of pre-accession aid utilisation. Let me present very briefly the architecture of Structural Funds distributed in Poland in 2004-06. The Community Support Framework for Poland amounted to nearly €12 billion in the period 2004-06 and is being implemented through five mono-funded sectoral operational

programmes and one multi-funded Integrated Regional Operational Programme where nearly 40 per cent of resources are allocated. We are implementing Cohesion Fund projections and Community initiatives, INTERREG and EQUAL. The Integrated Regional Operational Programme is of main significance for Polish regions. It was prepared by the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Social Policy but in close co-operation with regional self-governments. Goals, priorities and measures cover the whole of the country but most regions differ in their implementation, it depends on the socio-economic structure and situation in the voivodships. This Perspective has been managed nationally by the Ministry of Regional Development since 2005 but most tasks are performed in the regions by regional self-government, Marshal Offices, which are responsible for project identification, and regional state administration, which are Voivodship Offices, which are responsible for audit, monitoring, payment verification and certification.

Q327 Chairman: I am sorry, I need to move you on a little. Could you take us quickly through what you are looking to do in 2007-13?

Ms Wasowicz: As you can see, ---

Q328 Chairman: I see, for instance, that you are hoping to spend a lot of money on communications and infrastructure.

Ms Wasowicz: Yes, that is correct. These are priorities set out by the regional government which is now responsible for programming and implementing the Structural Funds.

Q329 Lord Kerr of Kinlochard: Can I ask what “implementing” means there? If I am an entrepreneur and I want to establish a factory, may I apply to the Structural Funds or do I have to be a public sector body wanting to build a road or an airport?

Ms Wasowicz: Private sector entities are also definitely eligible to obtain co-financing with the priority competitiveness of enterprises, yes.

Q330 Lord Kerr of Kinlochard: What proportion of these numbers do you think would be private sector? What would be the public sector/private sector breakdown?

Ms Wasowicz: In the Regional Operational Programme it is also an obligation imposed by the European Commission to design the financial architecture, so I would encourage you to have an in-depth look at the programme which is on the CD. I do not recall at the moment.

Q331 Chairman: Do not worry.

Ms Wasowicz: I am sure the significant amount will be contributed by the private sector here.

Ms Kapturska: There is a joint instrument for the private sector and enterprises, the JEREMIE instrument.

Ms Wasowicz: €60 million will be implemented under the JEREMIE instrument in our voivodship.

Ms Kapturska: Which is exactly for private enterprise, SMEs.

Q332 Lord Kerr of Kinlochard: But, of course, they can also go to a bank or to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development or to the European Investment Bank or a private sector bank. I used to think when I knew a bit about it that people who had a very good project, private sector people, would not bother about this sort of money because this takes a lot of paperwork, a lot of approvals, they would go to a bank and get a loan if they were confident they were going to make money and pay off the loan quickly. Is that the case, that the private sector complains that the paperwork and delays and complications are a disincentive to going for Structural Funding?

Ms Wasowicz: There are very convenient preconditions to obtain these loans in the framework of the JEREMIE instrument and probably most of these companies would never obtain an equal amount from a regular bank.

Ms Kapturska: As far as we know, they co-operate very well with the Agency of Regional Development which deals with this fund for enterprises.

Q333 Chairman: Thank you. I am afraid we are running out of time.

Ms Wasowicz: I am truly sorry, but we have also prepared a list of key projects.

Q334 Chairman: I was going to say that while we are running out of time I would be very glad to put these into evidence. One can see from the paper what sort of thing it is, what you are doing and how you are using the money. We will also extract material from the CD. Clearly we will come back and talk to you in a year or so and find out how it is all going. We are very grateful to you for your help. You have provided us with a great deal of evidence which is here and which we can take home and include in the report.

Ms Kapturska: I am sorry for our lack of knowledge. Normally we do not deal with the Structural Funds.

Q335 Chairman: You have given us a great deal of information.

Ms Kapturska: We have great experts in our regions.

Q336 Chairman: You have given us a great deal of information, which no doubt you had to drag out of your regions, and we are most grateful.

Ms Kapturska: We will send some more information if you need it and we can co-operate with our colleagues in the regions.

Lord Trimble: If you send us anything further, what we would particularly appreciate is your view of how easy DG Regio is to work with, whether you think they are too controlling

in terms of what you want to do or whether you find you can do the things you want to do within the programme that they have laid out. A consumer's perspective of how the Commission operates.

Chairman: We know how the Commission thinks it operates, we would like to know what the consumers think, and so would they. They would like to know if they are making difficulties for you.

Q337 Lord Trimble: And we will not tell them who complained!

Ms Wasowicz: Being the biggest beneficiary of Structural Funds we cannot really complain.

Q338 Lord Kerr of Kinlochard: Oh yes you can.

Ms Kapturska: We have got our Commissioner.

Q339 Chairman: Yes, of course you have.

Ms Kapturska: Mrs Hübner.

Q340 Chairman: Who we are seeing later.

Ms Kapturska: The fact she is the Commissioner for Regional Policy is wonderful for us. I can say in the name of Wielkopolska that we have wonderful contact with Mr Beschel from DG Regio. He is the head of the unit for Poland. He is in our region very often and supporting us in implementing JEREMIE and JESSICA. Maybe your Committee would be interested to come to Wielkopolska and have such a visit.

Q341 Chairman: What a nice idea.

Ms Kapturska: It could be a great opportunity for us and the people who are dealing with the Structural Funds to present you with much more information and knowledge.

Ms Lorens: The evidence.

Chairman: For the purpose of this report we feel well-served. Thank you all.