Question of Consultation
How can cohesion policy better promote harmonious, balanced and sustainable development taking into account the diversity of EU territories, such as least favoured areas, islands, rural and coastal areas but also cities, declining industrial regions, other areas with particular geographic characteristics?

Statement
A well-balanced and sustainable development in the European Union should acknowledge the spatial diversity and polycentrality as an outstanding quality and hence spotlight it to regional adjusted courses of action, methods and procedures. European regional policy should act as a coordinator to harmonise the different, growing requirements of utilisation, developmental and configuration potentials and conservation interests to space. If one of the goals of the strategy of Lisbon is to boost knowledge and innovation to gain economic growth, it is necessary to enable every region to contribute to this objective. Therefore it is essential to formulate comprehensive developmental strategies which on one hand support the existing growth and innovation potentials and at the same time bear in mind the basic principle of sustainability. The heterogeneity of space must be sustained by differentiated policy approaches to develop structurally weak regions, rural areas and areas with special geographically characteristics.

In this regard it is a big challenge to point out perspectives to economically weak and structurally changing regions. Therefore, appropriate courses of procedures for developmental processes in growth areas should go along with monitoring and support for restructuring areas in order to stabilise and strengthen their potentials.

New members of the EU should be supported in special development programs instead of comparing them with the whole European area. This action should prevent problems resulting out of different development levels between the regions. New members not only see themselves in competition to other regions, but also can participate of their economic strength.

Changing focus of restructuring areas to enhance a heterogenity within the European Union seems to be an appropriate way of gaining higher knowledge which will result in stronger integration of rural and urban areas within the members states. European regions shall have an comparable and heterogenic developed infrastructure. There should be a focus of development strategies to gain sustainability and develop a comparable economical situation based on the already existent. To integrate restructuring areas by linking power and potentials of different member states of the European Union using their already developed strengths to strengthen regional governance structures within rural and urban areas could be an achievement and will lead to a strong integration and a combined interest of discovering and developing new potentials within these areas.

To strengthen the strengths, to bundle and link power and potentials, to advance partnerships between as well as regional governance structures within urban and rural areas, strong and weak areas should be a key to enhance the common solidly responsibility of regions. Looking at the individual strengths of regions and supporting them and the links to their neighbours, gives all regions the potential to become an integrated and well-developed area.