

**Question for written answer E-000358/2023
to the Commission**
Rule 138
Marek Belka (S&D)

Subject: Irregularities concerning the LEADER programme in Poland

According to the Polish Government, thanks to the LEADER programme, aimed at supporting the revitalisation of rural communities, more than 23 000 contracts were signed between 2014 and 2020 for the implementation of projects that resulted in the creation of several thousand new jobs and several thousand new enterprises in rural areas in Poland. Several thousand tourism-related and recreational infrastructure facilities were also created. In 2019, the Supreme Audit Office underlined that until then, the funds under the programme had been distributed correctly. Recently, there have been numerous cases of new Local Action Groups (LAGs) being set up which do not have an established position in the communities, are often registered after the deadlines set in the competitions, lack the required documents, but are linked to Law and Justice Party activists. Existing LAGs have faced the prospect of being excluded from the next perspective and of having their missions terminated as a result of unclear competition procedures and conflicts of interest on the part of those who administer the funds, namely local authorities which are also controlled by the ruling party.

In light of the above:

1. Does the Commission have the right, on its own initiative, to inspect and, in the event of irregularities, to call into question the results of the LEADER programme procedures?
2. Have any requests been made to the Commission or its subordinate bodies, including in particular OLAF, to carry out audits on the implementation of the LEADER programme in Poland, and, if so, what was the outcome?

Submitted: 6.2.2023