

**Question for written answer E-008002/2014
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Evelyne Gebhardt (S&D)

Subject: Broadband development and EU law on competition and state aid

The provision of broadband services to all EU citizens is one of the main aims of the digital agenda. Broadband provision has long been a major factor determining location. In many regions, smaller municipalities are suffering from dwindling populations and companies moving away. Swift development of the broadband network is vital if this trend is to stop. This often requires public funding.

In this context I am aware of concerns that quick, inexpensive solutions to the question of broadband development would be hindered by the EU's law on competition and state aid. In specific cases it appears that the fact that the owners of existing lines are not obliged to provide competitors with open access to them runs counter to the requirement that, in the case of public funding being used, non-discriminatory access to the infrastructure established by the municipality must be guaranteed. The result is that the most economic solution – connecting certain areas to the existing broadband network – is not achieved.

1. Is the Commission aware of such cases?
2. Does the Commission think – also taking into account the authorised aid for the Hinkley nuclear plant – that the EU's law on competition and state aid regarding the swift, economic development of broadband provision, particularly in rural areas, will have an adverse effect or will be interpreted in an unbeneficial way?
3. Does the Commission intend to provide municipalities with guidelines on developing broadband which are in line with the EU's law on competition and state aid?