

**Question for written answer E-006925/2016
to the Commission**

Rule 130

Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea (ALDE)

Subject: Rural depopulation and negligent structural fund implementation in Spain

13% of Spanish territory is classed as a demographic desert. The Serranía Celtibérica region in central-eastern Spain has the highest rate of ageing in the EU, and its population density is less than eight inhabitants per square kilometre. Similar figures are found only in the Scottish Highlands and Lapland.

The Spanish authorities have had little success in curbing rural depopulation, even though Spain has been one of the main beneficiaries of structural funds in the last 15 years.

There is a lack of transparency in the management of these funds, as the Commission acknowledged in April 2016, and Community aid is not audited by the various governments, channelled through their respective development agencies, or managed directly by the local authorities.

Bearing in mind that the Commission had already drawn attention to this problem in the EU framework programme 1994-1999:

1. Does the Commission believe that Community funds earmarked for rural development should be specifically used for their intended purpose and that municipalities should be directly involved in managing them?
2. Will the Commission adopt an agenda for the EU's mountain regions that would place them at the centre of cohesion policy, including measures to tackle depopulation and strengthening programmes such as Padima?
3. What action will the Commission take to reverse depopulation and isolation in the Montes Universales region of central-eastern Spain?