

**Question for written answer P-009645/2014  
to the Commission**  
Rule 130  
**Brian Crowley (ECR)**

Subject: Internet access in rural Ireland

Recent data compiled by the Irish Central Statistics Office found that large sections of communities in Ireland have no access to or limited access to fast and effective internet.

Of those aged between 16 and 75, 18 % say they have never accessed the internet. Nearly half of those aged between 60 and 75 have never been online, with rural areas and deprived areas likely to be over-represented in these statistics.

Furthermore, recent public consultations on rural development in Ireland have identified the lack of broadband and insufficient investment in digital infrastructure as being barriers to growth, inclusivity and development.

A fast, effective and high-quality internet service is essential for rural communities, but despite actions and investment under previous schemes there remain many communities in Ireland without effective internet.

Could the Commission outline what funding and programmes are available for rural communities to install or improve their communications infrastructure? Could it also provide details of the 'Connected Communities' initiative, and state when the next call will be opened and whether community groups will be able to apply directly?