

**Question for written answer E-009872/2012  
to the Commission**  
Rule 117  
**Adina-Ioana Vălean (ALDE)**

**Subject:** Draft revised EU Guidelines for the application of state aid rules in relation to the rapid deployment of broadband networks

The draft revised EU Guidelines for the application of state aid rules in relation to the rapid deployment of broadband networks provide for the possibility of state support for ultra-fast broadband networks. One of the stated aims of the new wording is for publicly funded networks to provide a 'step change' in terms of technological capabilities as compared with existing broadband infrastructures.

1. Article 107(3)(c) TFEU requires that state aid measures in the broadband sector be aimed at well-defined objectives in the common interest. Do current case-law and decision-making practice support the conclusion that such a technological 'step change' may qualify as an objective of 'common interest'? Is this concept not alien to EU state aid law? Is there a risk that it may lead to a duplication of existing infrastructure in urban areas, as opposed to targeting state aid on rural and underserved areas? How can taxpayers be reassured that public funds will not be wasted on areas where existing networks are in a position to gradually meet the demand for higher broadband speeds?
2. How does this 'step change' approach fit with the Commission's communication of 20 September 2010 entitled 'European Broadband: investing in digitally driven growth', which stresses that competition between different technologies (fixed and wireless) will be instrumental for meeting the targets set out in the Digital Agenda?