

EN
E-003173/2018
Answer given by Ms Gabriel
on behalf of the European Commission
(23.8.2018)

The 2020 broadband objectives reflect the connectivity needs of users to benefit from digitisation and the Digital Single Market. They are complemented by those identified for 2025 in the Commission's Communication "Towards a European Gigabit Society"¹. The Commission has encouraged Member States to embrace these goals but national and regional authorities remain responsible for the design, implementation and fulfilment of their broadband strategies.

EU policy, regulatory (including in the future the new European Electronic Communications Code²) and financing initiatives support and will continue to support national efforts to increase the connectivity. These policies have contributed to achieve significant progress as indicated in the Study on Broadband Coverage in Europe 2017³. That being said, the European Court of Auditors' Special Report has rightly identified a number of challenges, in particular the urban-rural digital divide.

To further stimulate ongoing investment, the EU is mobilising around EUR 6 billion (EUR 680 million for Spain) up to 2020 through the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). Additional support is provided by the European Fund for Strategic Investments and a new Connecting Europe Broadband Fund.

The Commission proposes to continue this effort in the post-2020 budget of the Union. The Connecting Europe Facility will now focus on supporting deployment of very high capacity digital networks, with a budget of EUR 3 billion, complementing the ESIF, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and InvestEU programmes.

The Commission trusts that it can count on the support of the European Parliament to ensure that these programmes will continue to foster broadband roll-out and to call on Member States to address the remaining challenges.

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Connectivity for a Competitive Digital Single Market - Towards a European Gigabit Society", COM(2016) 587 final.

² http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-4070_en.htm

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/study-broadband-coverage-europe-2017>