Question for written answer E-004193/2020

to the Commission

Rule 138

Susana Solís Pérez (Renew)

Subject: Depopulation and the digital divide

In Spain, the gap between rural and urban areas is becoming ever wider. Only 16% of the population lives in rural areas and, in Galicia alone, the population has fallen by 100 000 since 2010.

One of the reasons why many young people and workers settle far away from rural areas is the lack of access to internet and broadband.

Although one of the EU’s objectives was to roll out high-speed broadband and the digital infrastructure by 2020, particularly in rural and peripheral areas, in some autonomous communities, such as Galicia, only 14% of the population has internet access, which is the highest percentage of all Spanish territories.

Cohesion policy is a key tool to ensure that territories are able to develop harmoniously without leaving anyone behind, and must support the digital transition to make the economy more resilient.

Against this background:

1. Will the Commission take depopulation into account as a criterion for the distribution of Cohesion Funds and recovery plans?

2. What specific measures will it propose to improve digital connectivity and promote innovation in rural areas?