

**Question for written answer E-006810/2020
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Dominique Bilde (ID)

Subject: Rural areas without internet access, in particular in the Grand Est region of France

Access to a fast and high-quality internet connection ('broadband') is of increasing importance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 12/2018 points out that, as part of its Europe 2020 strategy, the European Union has allocated EUR 15 billion to three objectives, including making basic broadband available to all Europeans by 2013 at the latest and fast broadband coverage by 2020 at the latest¹.

However, the 2020 target for fast broadband coverage is very unlikely to be achieved (p. 7). In 14 Member States, rural coverage was below 50% at the end of the first half of 2017.

In France, the Grand Est region has the largest number of municipalities (at least 151) which are white areas, i.e. without a mobile telephone and internet network and where fixed internet access offers are limited².

1. What is the Commission's assessment of its broadband deployment strategy?
2. Does the Commission intend to introduce emergency measures for teleworking in rural areas during the health crisis?

¹ Broadband targets were set in the Digital Agenda for Europe, one of the seven flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 strategy adopted by the Commission in 2010. They are (i) making basic broadband (from 144 kbps to 30 Mbps) available to all Europeans by 2013 at the latest, (ii) ensuring fast broadband coverage (> 30 Mbps) by 2020 at the latest, and (iii) ensuring that at least 50% of European households have access to ultra-fast broadband (> 100 Mb/s) by 2020 at the latest.

² <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/grand-est/retrouvez-toutes-zones-blanches-grand-est-1401559.html>