

**Question for written answer E-002029/2022
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Recovery fund and combating population decline

Population decline, especially in rural and inland areas, and ageing both pose problems for the future of the European Union.

In its communication entitled 'A long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas'¹, the Commission says that Member States should use the Recovery and Resilience Facility to cover existing investment gaps in rural areas and that 'funding needs to be mobilised coherently, in complementarity with national and regional Member State interventions, which remain crucial to providing comprehensive support to rural areas'.

The Spanish Government announced that it would invest EUR 10 billion from its recovery fund in tackling population decline². However, and as was recently reported³, 35 % of the budget allocated to this in 2021 has not been used.

Given that population decline is a serious problem for rural areas in Spain, and that investment is sorely needed:

1. Does the Commission consider that the budget allocated in the recovery funds to combating the decline in population numbers is being used efficiently?
2. Does it believe that investing more of these funds directly in regional projects would be a more effective way of combating population decline than allocating a large slice of them to bureaucratic running costs?

¹ COM(2021) 345 final.

² <https://elpais.com/economia/2021-03-16/el-gobierno-movilizar-a-10000-millones-de-los-fondos-europeos-para-luchar-contra-la-despoblacion-rural.html>

³ https://www.abc.es/espana/abci-sanchez-deja-sin-ejecutar-35-por-ciento-fondos-contra-despoblacion-202205220419_noticia.html#vca=rrss&vmc=abc-es&vso=tw&vli=cm-general&_tcode=cXEycWk1