

**Question for written answer P-010478/2013  
to the Commission  
Rule 117  
Kerstin Westphal (S&D)**

Subject: ERDF support for broadband in Germany

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is intended to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union. As part of its reform of cohesion policy, the Commission is seeking to focus future promotion measures on specific areas ('thematic concentration'). In accordance with the negotiations between the Commission, the Council and the Member States, support for ICT is to be included in this concentration. The institutions all agree that broadband is a key factor in promoting growth in Europe. In light of the great economic and social importance of establishing ubiquitous broadband coverage, the regions (i.e. in Germany, the federal states) are authorised to provide in their ERDF programmes for support to be provided by the ERDF for ICT measures.

According to statements by the Commission, however, aid for such measures is not permissible in the case of Germany. The Commission is indeed planning to introduce an explicit ban on promotion of broadband using ERDF funds and is seeking to have this specified in the partnership agreement to be drawn up between Commission and Member State. Support for extension of broadband coverage could then be given only through the EAFRD.

1. Is the Commission still committed to the idea of providing all European citizens with broadband of at least 30 MBit/s, and offering half of all households 100 MBit/s, by 2020?
2. Does the Commission acknowledge that even in Germany there are gaps in broadband coverage, and not just in isolated rural regions, but also in urban areas?
3. Is it true that the Commission is insisting that broadband expansion may not be supported by means of ERDF aid?
4. If this is true, how does the Commission justify its position, particularly in the light of the talks on the ERDF Regulation (in which the importance of ubiquitous broadband coverage was given further recognition by its inclusion as a thematic concentration)?