

**Question for written answer E-003051/2018
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso (PPE)

Subject: Launch of the WiFi4EU initiative

The Commission has launched the WiFi4EU initiative in an effort to improve connectivity in local communities and tackle the problem of rural depopulation. This initiative will provide free internet access points in European villages, towns and cities with a view to bridging the digital divide.

The WiFi4EU project was launched on 15 May 2018 at 13.00 (GMT+1) through a special Commission internet platform. In just its first five minutes, 3 500 applications were submitted from municipalities in practically every Member State. As a result of that high demand, the platform was suspended shortly after and the service became unavailable.

In 2017, I asked the Commission about this project, querying the first-come, first-served selection criterion, as I was concerned that it would undermine the principle of equality of opportunities.

Given that the use of that criterion has brought about a temporary suspension of the project and caused needless uncertainty for the municipalities that have applied for funding, does the Commission intend to change the funding allocation requirements?

In any event, in the light of the above events, how will it ensure the proper functioning of the WiFi4EU project?