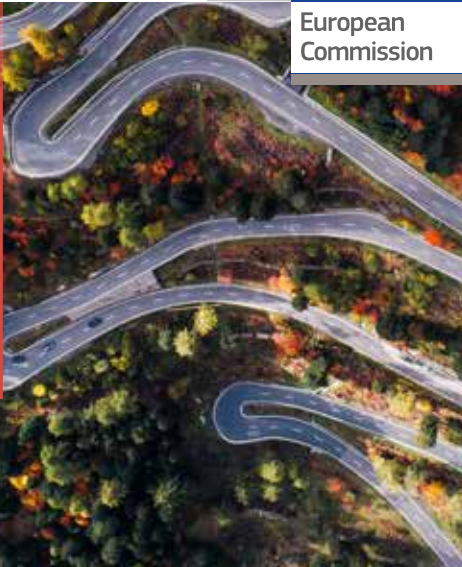




European
Commission



HOW THE EU HELPS MOUNTAIN AREAS

Europe's mountain communities can be remote and difficult to reach, creating challenges such as limited access to resources, services and markets. Balancing tourism and environmental protection can also be difficult. EU support can help turn these hurdles into opportunities to create jobs, boost local economies and improve lives. The EU-funded Rural Broadband project is one such example.

Rural broadband bridges Greece's digital divide

An EU-funded project has provided affordable broadband services to more than half a million people in rural and remote areas of Greece. This is helping to revitalise isolated parts of the country and improve communication, everyday life and work conditions for local residents.

Greece has a multitude of rural and remote areas including mountainous areas and islands that may be sparsely populated and difficult to reach. Until recently, these areas largely lacked reliable internet connections resulting in a digital divide in the country.

That has now changed thanks to the EU-funded **Rural Broadband** project – a public-private partnership that developed a broadband network covering some 5000 remote villages and settlements in northern, central and southern Greece. This large-scale effort has resulted in affordable and fast internet services for more than 525 000 people, with many seeing a positive impact on their everyday lives.

The project has made it possible for residents of rural and remote areas to engage online and, at a local level, has contributed to new forms of social, cultural and economic activities. Conceived by the Greek Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Media, it has also improved the quality of e-government and e-health, making public services such as these more easily accessible to people in isolated parts of the country.



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International acclaim

The Rural Broadband project involved a mix of technologies and has made wholesale broadband services available to Greece's telecommunications providers. These, in turn, are now able to offer high-speed internet and voice services to both residential customers and businesses throughout rural and remote areas – effectively tackling the country's 'broadband gap'. Before the investment in the broadband infrastructure – which at times involved technicians working on challenging terrain – such private players saw little commercial value in investing in these regions.

The project garnered international attention and was one of five winners of the 2017 European Broadband Awards. These annual European Commission honours showcase successful broadband deployment efforts, with the Greek endeavour lauded in the 'Territorial cohesion in rural and remote areas' category.



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RURAL BROADBAND

Project full name: Rural Broadband

Sectors: Connectivity

Project websites: <https://www.oteruralsouth.gr/>
<https://www.oteruralnorth.gr/>

Total cost: EUR 199 700 000

EU CONTRIBUTION: EUR 143 800 000

Fund: European Regional Development Fund
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

PROGRAMME: Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Innovation Operational Programme 2014-2020
Rural Development Programme 2014-2020

Project start/end: 2014 to 2018

