

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001754/26
to the Commission
Giuseppe Antoci (The Left)
(29 April 2026)**

Subject: The digital divide in southern Italy and its impact on the school system: the situation in Sicily

Recent studies covered by the Italian and international press highlight that Italy's digital technology uptake and basic digital proficiency figures are below the EU average. According to ISTAT data, 54.3% of people in Italy between the ages of 16 and 74 were equipped with basic digital skills in 2025, a far cry from the 80% target the EU has set for 2030. Another fact of note is that around 10% of the Italian population does not use the Internet at all.

These issues are further exacerbated in Italy's southern and island regions, where a lack of infrastructure and uneven access to digital technology have resulted in persistent and substantial territorial inequalities.

The country's digital divide is also reflected in the education system: 54% of schools in the islands have computer rooms, as opposed to 67% in north-western Italy. Because of the shortcomings outlined above, digital skills among pupils in Sicily have fallen behind the rest of the country, a state of affairs that could undermine this demographic's social integration and career prospects.

In the light of the above:

1. What view does the Commission take of the chronic digital divide in southern Italy and in Sicily in particular?
2. What impactful instruments will the Commission bolster — potentially by means of cohesion and NextGenerationEU funds — to bridge the digital divide and ensure equal access to digital education?

Submitted: 29.4.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(7 July 2026)**

As a response to the gaps created by the covid crisis and the acceleration of the digital transformation of educational systems, the Recovery and Resilience Facility ⁽¹⁾ (RRF) supported, through Member States' approved recovery and resilience plans, digital initiatives, such as investments in school infrastructure, digital equipment, Internet coverage and digital skills.

The RRF complements funding for education and skills under Erasmus+ and Cohesion policy funds ⁽²⁾. The EU allocates for Sicily around 113 million EUR in open, digital and participative educational environment under the current Regional Development Programme.

The Commission is aware of the challenges linked to digital skills and regional disparities in Italy, including in southern regions and the islands.

The Training Monitor ⁽³⁾ and the Digital Decade ⁽⁴⁾ country reports monitor closely the situation in Italy. They show little progress in increasing basic digital skills in Italy and highlight the deep geographical divide in skill acquisition as one of the main obstacles to equity in education.

The Commission attaches high importance to fostering digital skills as a driver of innovation, competitiveness and upward economic cohesion across the EU.

This policy priority is embedded in the Union of Skills, the STEM Education Strategic Plan, Digital Decade Policy Programme ⁽⁵⁾, the Digital Education Action Plan and the upcoming Education Package ⁽⁶⁾.

The funding under the next multiannual financial framework will follow these priorities, aiming to close the digital divide. The future National and Regional Partnership Plans ⁽⁷⁾ will be determined in close partnership between the Commission, the Member States, regions, local communities, thus better addressing their specific needs.

⁽¹⁾ https://reforms-investments.ec.europa.eu/recovery-and-resilience-facility-1/country-pages/italys-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en.

⁽²⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/available-budget_en.

⁽³⁾ <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor/en/country-reports/italy.html>.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/factpages/italy-2025-digital-decade-country-report>.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/europes-digital-decade>.

⁽⁶⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_26_189.

⁽⁷⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/eu-budget-2028-2034_en#investing-in-people-member-states-and-regions.