

Public Consultation on Guidelines on State aid for broadband networks – additional comments from NBR - Nasjonalt breibandsråd (National Broadband Council).

Introduction

NBR agrees with the intentions in EUs proposal. We also agree with the Norwegian Communications Authority, Nkoms, response to this hearing.

We have some comments listed below:

1. Regional coordinating subsidies for broadband in sparsely populated areas.

The experience with the administration of current regulations is so far that in some cases it can be too extensive, especially when it comes to relatively modest public subsidies to areas with few inhabitants. Areas with one to four households are not few in the most sparsely habited areas. Here consideration should be given to introducing a simpler subsidy scheme based on de minimis support for sparsely populated areas if the subsidy is below a certain amount limit for areas with few inhabitants. (De minimis-rule, sparsely populated areas, very sparsely populated areas)

For the least accessible, and most expensive, areas, it should be possible to provide support for combined solutions with fixed broadband and mobile broadband.

2. Broadband coverage target

The National Broadband Council supports the EU Commission's objectives that households, businesses, and public administration should have access to internet capacity with a download speed of at least 100 Mbit / s, with the possibility of upgrading to 1 Gbit / s. The National Broadband Council also supports the proposal that cities, towns, traffic arteries and all populated areas should have access to 5G. Both objectives are in line with national expectations from KS, NHO and the county municipalities that Norway will have full coverage of gigabit networks and 5G by 2025.

In practice, this should mean that not only is support given to development projects that increase capacity above 100 Mbit / s, but also provide support for development projects that increase existing capacity from e.g. 300 Mbit / s to 1 Gbit / s.

3. Distinguishing between fixed and mobile broadband services

The European Commission considers that there is a difference between the market for fixed and mobile broadband services. The experiences of the National Broadband Council indicate that this distinction is not as clear. In more and more development areas, it turns out that providers of broadband offer solutions combining fixed and mobile broadband. Today, the state aid regulations operate with different schemes for these two solutions. This should be adapted so that there is also good regional coordination of 5G development.