

Brussels prods Europe to invest in broadband

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EU digital agenda commissioner Neelie Kroes visits a computer waste management center in Nairobi in September 2011. The EU executive Monday urged Europe's largest telecoms operators to invest in high-speed broadband as it launched a review into the price of access to smaller alternative operators.

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"Unfortunately, we see that for the time being, [telecom companies](#) are hesitant to commit significant funds to fibre roll-out," said Digital Agenda commissioner Neelie Kroes at a conference sponsored by the Financial Times and the European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association, the network representing large operators.

The commissioner's spokesman Jonathan Todd said some 270 billion euros were needed to offer all Europeans fibre-optic [broadband](#)

[connections](#) by 2020, with half able to subscribe to high-speed connections of 100 Mbps.

Historic operators such as France Telecom, Telefonica, [Deutsche Telekom](#) or Telecom Italia all run copper networks.

Some alternative operators consider the large companies are over-pricing access to their [copper wire](#) systems, earning easy profits that are a stumbling block to investing in fibre-optic networks.

The large companies for their part argue that lower copper access prices in the long term would erode broadband retail prices.

"I think that there is some truth on both sides," said Kroes, who is launching consultations into the issue.

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