

**Question for written answer E-001631/2011  
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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**Subject:** Necessary switchover to Internet Protocol 6 (IPv6)

Internet addresses are built upon the IPv4 standard, which had a limit of approximately 4.3 billion IP addresses. IPv4 addresses are now exhausted, ICANN having allocated the last block last week. The fact is that few of them are active, but updating already assigned addresses in order to optimise their use would be costly and would only postpone the need to introduce the next generation of addresses.

Indeed, more than ten years ago already, a successor was defined as Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6), able to provide 340 undecillion (340 trillion trillion trillion) unique addresses. The implementation of the IPv6 standard will entail additional costs and furthermore it is not fully compatible with the existing IPv4 standard. That means that they will have to operate side-by-side for a certain period of time, until the switchover is complete.

Taking these developments into consideration, is the Commission concerned about the exhaustion of IPv4 addresses? If its answer is on the whole affirmative, is it confident that purely market-based incentives will lead to a swifter switchover than we have seen until now? Is it working with the Member States in this matter? Is the Commission going to carry out an impact assessment of the switchover and what are the Commission's views on who should bear the costs of this exercise? Finally, could it envisage an action plan if such studies show that a private-only switchover is not taking off?