

**Question for written answer E-000870/2013
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Socially fair development of Renewable Energy Policy in the internal energy market

In its Communication of 15 November 2012 entitled 'Making the internal energy market work' (COM(2012)0663), section 3.2.2. 'Targeted assistance to give vulnerable consumers better protection', the Commission considers it necessary for social policy to protect consumers in an economically weak situation, because final energy prices for consumers may continue to rise in the coming years. Impact assessment SWD(2012)0149 calculates the specific impact on employment and also alludes to the social aspect of affordability for vulnerable customers. As the cost impact of RES (renewable energy sources) initiatives becomes more and more a challenge for customers with low incomes, even in wealthy Member States, affordability is a matter of public acceptance of a policy designed to achieve a sustainable energy system. Taking into account the huge differences in income within the EU, the question of sensitivity in price development seems to be underestimated. Since the financial challenges for many EU citizens have increased in recent years, we are concerned about public support for the energy objectives.

1. Is there any information available about the social impact on economically vulnerable consumer groups of likely significant price hikes in some Member States resulting from the establishment of the internal market, the costs of RES and energy efficiency improvement? How big are these groups?
2. What is the proportion of consumers' budgets available for energy, and especially electricity?
3. What criteria may be applied to identify vulnerable customers and fuel poverty?
4. Are there adequate social protection instruments in all Member States to ensure affordability for people with low incomes?
5. Has an analysis of good practices and a long-term action strategy for social security been conducted in terms of energy savings and energy costs?
6. Has an assessment of the applicability of price adjustments been carried out for each Member State in order to achieve a suitable energy market price level and cover the cost of other energy strategy targets?
7. Has the Commission any information on the extent to which the implementation of the internal market and the other energy targets is hampered by political concerns about social incompatibility? In which regions of the European Union does this apply?