

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3953/08
by Toine Manders (ALDE)
to the Commission

Subject: Mobile phone chargers

In everyday life, it is considered absolutely normal that there should be a standard connector for electronic equipment virtually throughout the European Union. As a rule, standards ensure savings and also make equipment easier to use. It is therefore odd that there is no standardised connector for a device which has an increasingly important place in our lives. There are many different connectors for charging mobile phones and for hooking up accessories to them. Connectors for mobile phone chargers often differ from one brand to another, but, in many instances, for a new phone model there is a completely different connector from that for the previous model too.

These major dissimilarities annoy consumers because they have to have a separate charger for each phone and have to buy new accessories for each new device. In addition, the lack of standardisation results in huge waste: there is a new charger for each new device, though, in many instances, the charger for the previous model still works perfectly well. Where chargers have a longer service life, it becomes attractive to invest in better quality. Chargers now being supplied with mobile phones are energy 'monsters': even when the charger is plugged in but the phone is no longer connected, there is considerable power leakage. Total waste per year as a result of a lack of standardisation is put at EUR 300 m.

In China, last year, the Government determined that all chargers and accessories must have a mini-USB port connector.

1. Is the Commission aware of the Chinese legislation on mobile phone connectors?
2. Is the Commission aware that, because there are different connectors, raw materials and energy are being wasted?
3. Has the Commission already looked into the scope for a standardised connector? If not, why not?
4. Is the Commission prepared to introduce a standardised connector for mobile phones in the European Union? If not, why not?