

**Question for written answer P-009910/2013  
to the Commission  
Rule 117  
Liam Aylward (ALDE)**

Subject:     Legality of low user standing changes in the energy market

An electricity supply company in Ireland has recently introduced a 'low user standing charge' which applies to customers who use an average of two units or less per day in any billing period. This additional charge has added a significant cost to customers' energy bills. While the charge was initially aimed at recouping costs from empty/vacant households and premises, in reality it is hitting low-income and vulnerable customers the hardest, as they seek to lower their energy usage in order to reduce their energy bills.

What is the Commission's position on 'low user standing charges' which vulnerable, low-income customers are obliged to pay regardless of their energy usage? Could the Commission comment on the legality of such charges?

Secondly, a public service organisation levy, which has been approved by the Commission, is also charged to all energy consumers in Ireland. At a time of economic hardship this levy is hitting vulnerable, elderly and low-income energy users the hardest.

Could the Commission comment on the possibility of suspending this levy for those facing economic hardship?