Question for written answer P-004790/2014
to the Commission
Rule 117
Brian Crowley (ALDE)

Subject: Environmental damage from pylons leading to loss of direct payments

The Irish Government, through the state-owned electricity transmission operator, EirGrid, intends to construct high-voltage overhead power lines supported by pylons across rural Ireland as part of the GridLink project. Concerns have been raised that this could have adverse effects on the environment and on the natural beauty of the Irish countryside, as well as harmful effects for health and safety.

In light of the common agricultural policy for 2014 to 2020, and with specific regard to the provisions therein on 'greening', could the Commission advise on the following:

1. Farmers will be required to maintain permanent pasture. Will farmers lose part of their direct payment if permanent pasture is damaged as a result of the erection of pylons on that pasture by the state-owned operator, EirGrid?

2. Farmers will be required to protect environmental landscapes. Will farmers lose part of their direct payment if environmental landscapes on their farms are damaged as a result of the erection of pylons by the state-owned operator, EirGrid?

3. Do the GridLink plans comply with the procedural and substantive safeguards of Articles 3, 4 and 6 of the Habitats Directive? If the directive is breached by the building of pylons on farmland, will farmers operating on that farmland lose part of their direct payment relating to greening?

4. Does the planned construction of high-voltage overhead power lines comply with the Birds Directive? If the directive is breached in farmland areas, will farmers lose part of their direct payment relating to greening?

5. Many Natura 2000 sites are located in Munster and South Leinster. What impact will the construction of pylons and high-voltage overhead power lines have on this important network of ecological sites? If such sites are part of a farm and are harmed, will direct payments be impacted?