

**Question for written answer E-005426/2021
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: COVID-19: rising energy prices

Since the beginning of this year, the price of natural gas has increased by more than 300%. In Italy, gas bills could increase by 50% and electricity bills by 25% in the first quarter of 2022.

The surge in energy costs is affecting all Member States and EU citizens, who have already been severely hit by the consequences of the pandemic.

On 2 December 2021, at the Council of Energy Ministers of the EU, Italy, France, Spain, Greece and Romania submitted a joint request proposing to amend Article 5 of Directive (EU) 2019/944 to allow for a more direct relationship between the price paid by consumers and the cost of production.

A coordinated European response is therefore required in order to prevent a further increase in inflation, the closure of thousands of companies and severe subsistence problems for vulnerable groups and low-income households.

In view of this, can the Commission state:

1. what measures it intends to take in the short term to limit higher energy prices and risks for businesses and citizens;
2. whether it intends to implement any income and business support measures to assist consumers and industry;
3. whether it intends to implement the proposal put forward by the Italian Government regarding the joint procurement and storage of gas?