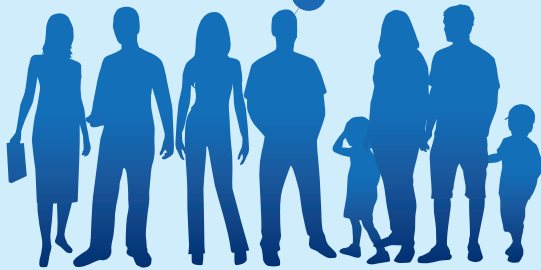




European
Commission



European Energy **CONSUMERS'** **RIGHTS**

What you gain as an energy consumer
from European legislation

**Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers
to your questions about the European Union.**

**Freephone number (*):
00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11**

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://europa.eu>).

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014

ISBN 978-92-79-37952-9

doi:10.2833/21153

© European Union, 2014

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

Printed in Belgium

PRINTED ON ELEMENTAL CHLORINE-FREE BLEACHED PAPER (ECF)

Photos:

©VLADGRIN/ iStock/Thinkstock; ©Syntika/iStock /Thinkstock; ©Studiogstock/iStock/Thinkstock; ©Venimo/iStock/Thinkstock; ©Siridhata/iStock/Thinkstock; ©Bannosuke/iStock/Thinkstock; ©Lislud/iStock/Thinkstock; ©Snkan Haz?r/Herrera/Thinkstock; ©Vectoraart/iStock/ Thinkstock; ©Robert Churchill/iStock/Thinkstock; ©Vadim+Shulepnikov/Herrera/Thinkstock; ©Johavel/iStock/Thinkstock; ©istrejman/iStock/Thinkstock



Besides the general consumer rights guaranteed in EU legislation¹, the EU has defined since the opening of the energy supply market a set of rights that all EU citizens enjoy as energy consumers. Their aim is to help you, amongst other, to get a better deal, and to track and manage your energy use.

Your rights as an energy consumer have to be clearly set out in the national laws of your country and must reflect provisions in EU legislation². On that basis, the national legislation must guarantee you the right to...

¹ Consumer legislation: Directive 85/577/EEC to protect the consumer in respect of contracts negotiated away from business premises and Directive 97/7/EC on the protection of consumers in respect of distance contracts – both replaced, as from 13 June 2014, by Directive 2011/83/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on consumer rights. Council Directive 93/13/EEC on unfair terms in consumer contracts; Directive 2005/29/EC on unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices.

² Energy legislation: Directive 2009/72/EC concerning common rules for the internal market in electricity and Directive 2009/73/EC concerning common rules for the internal market in gas. Directive 2012/27/EU on energy efficiency and Directive 2010/31/EU on the energy performance of buildings. Directive 2010/30/EU concerning the indication by labelling and standard product information of the consumption of energy and other resources by energy-related products. Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources and amending and subsequently repealing Directives 2001/77/EC and 2003/30/EC.

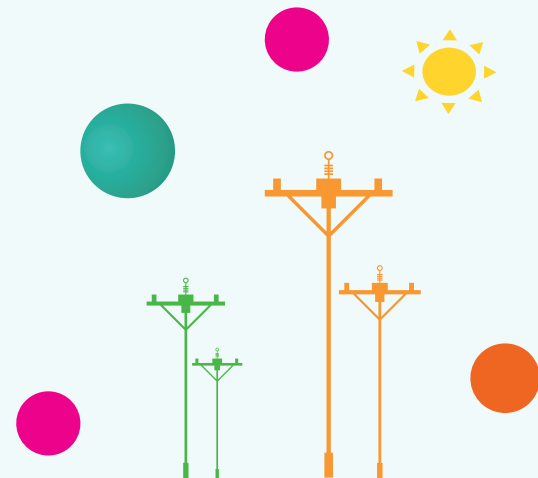
1. An electricity connection

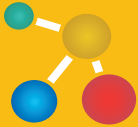


National legislation must guarantee you the right to...

... have your home connected to the local electricity network and supplied with electricity.

You have the right to have **your home connected** to the local electricity network and be supplied with electricity. The connection is done by the network operator designated to operate the energy infrastructure in your local area (each local network has only one designated operator). Terms, conditions and tariffs for this connection are supervised by the National Regulatory Authority in your country. This body also has to monitor that the local network operator ensures proper functioning of the local infrastructure.





2. A choice of supplier

National legislation must guarantee you the right to...

... choose your supplier and enter into contract with any EU electricity or gas supplier offering services to you

Although you cannot decide the designation of the network operator in your area, you are free to choose your energy supplier from the full **range of EU suppliers** offering their services in your area. The network operator cannot itself offer energy supplies. Where the network operator is part of a larger company which does offer energy supplies, the network operator must have a separate visual identity, in order not to create confusion with the separate company offering the supplies. You can choose an electricity or gas supplier registered in another Member State, provided that the supplier offers services also in your area and agrees a contract with you.



3. An easy and fast switch of supplier



National legislation must guarantee you the right to...

... change your electricity or gas supplier in an easy and quick way, without extra charges.



If you decide to **change your supplier** of electricity or gas, you will not be charged for the change. The network operator in your area must make the change within 3 weeks, provided you respect the terms and conditions of the original contract (e.g. notice period, agreed minimum duration of the contract). Suppliers are not allowed to impose disproportionate obligations that would prevent consumers' switching. No later than six weeks after you switch, you will receive the final closure account from your previous supplier.



4. Clear contract information and right of withdrawal

National legislation must guarantee you the right to...

... receive clear information on your energy contract before signing, and an advance notice if any changes are made to the contract, with the possibility to end the contract if you do not accept the new conditions. You also have the right to withdraw from a new contract within seven days if the contract was concluded outside the supplier's business premises or by distance means of communication (such as Internet or telephone).

Your **contract** with your supplier (i.e. the electricity and/or gas company chosen by you) must specify:

- the name and address of the supplier;
- the type of supply or service, the quality and the date of connection;
- the type of maintenance service offered;
- how to obtain information on tariffs and maintenance charges;
- how long the contract is for, conditions for renewal, withdrawal, or termination;
- what compensation or refund you have a right to if the supplier does not meet their obligations;
- what to do in case of a complaint and how disputes are settled.



Your supplier must provide you with this information before you sign the contract. The contract must be clear and understandable and avoid non-contractual barriers (e.g. excessive documentation).

If the contract is concluded outside the supplier's premises (for example at your home or your workplace) or via other distance means of communication (such as Internet or telephone), you can withdraw from it (e. g. if you change your mind) within seven days from its conclusion – unless during those seven days the energy supplies have already begun with your agreement.

If your contract permits the supplier to vary the energy prices, the contract should state in a sufficiently clear manner for what reasons and according to what method the prices would be changed. Your supplier has to inform you in advance of any changes to the contract or prices. Price increases must be communicated in a transparent and comprehensible manner. This must be done no later than one billing period after the increase comes into effect. You are free to end the contract if you do not accept the new conditions or the price increases.



5. Accurate information on your consumption

National legislation must guarantee you the right to...

... have access to accurate information on your consumption of electricity and/or gas and therefore regulate your energy consumption.

Bills established on the basis of actual energy used must be sent to you frequently enough to enable you to regulate how much energy you use. You are entitled to have at your disposal your consumption data at no additional costs. You may instruct the data manager to give access to this data to other electricity or gas suppliers and cannot be charged for this service.

You have right to be provided with a competitively priced accurate individual meter for electricity and gas (as well as district heating/cooling and hot water) when a new connection is made in a new building or when a building undergoes major renovation. For other cases the right to a competitively priced accurate individual meter applies unless technical or financial obstacles have been identified at national level.



6. Information on how to use energy more efficiently and on the benefits of using energy from renewable sources

National legislation must guarantee you the right to...

... be properly informed on the benefits of using equipment and vehicles using renewable energy and be properly informed on how much energy you use and how to use energy more efficiently.

Your energy bills, contracts, transactions and receipts should - unless your national authorities determine it not appropriate - set out clearly:

- the current actual prices and how much energy you have used;
- a comparison with how much you used in the same period last year;
- whom you may contact to find out how to save energy, for example consumer organisations, energy agencies or similar bodies, including website addresses and, if possible, comparisons with similar types of customers.



When you buy appliances (such as fridges, freezers, washing machines, tumble driers, dishwashers, electric ovens, TVs, lamps and air conditioners), you have the right to be informed on how much energy these appliances use and choose more efficient products. Shops have to display the **EU energy label** as well as a product fiche with detailed information on the performance of the product.

You have the right to be informed either by the equipment supplier or by the national authorities on the benefits, costs and energy efficiency of equipment and systems for the use of heating, cooling and electricity from renewable energy sources.

Your electricity supplier must provide you with information on the mix of its energy sources (renewables, nuclear, etc.) and its environmental impact. This information must be presented in an easy and comparable manner.

You also have the right to be informed on how to use energy more efficiently and on the available support measures for the use of energy from renewable sources.



7. Specific consumer protection measures for 'vulnerable' consumers



National legislation must guarantee you the right to...

... receive adequate protection, if you are defined as a 'vulnerable consumer' by relevant national legislation.

Member States have to define the **concept of vulnerable consumers** in their national legislation and ensure there are adequate measures in place to protect vulnerable customers. Member States have some flexibility to define vulnerable customers according to their own particular situation but they must take measures to address energy poverty while ensuring a high degree of protection.



8. Easy resolution of complaints and disputes

National legislation must guarantee you the right to...

... file a complaint to your gas or electricity supplier and, in the event your complaint is not managed to your satisfaction, send your complaint to an independent body for an inexpensive, prompt and fair out-of-court settlement.

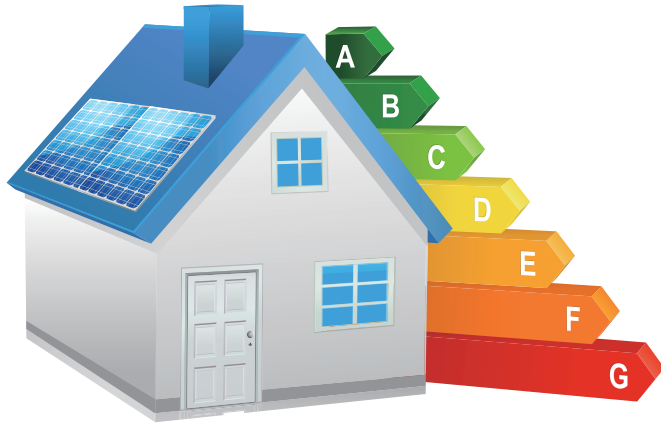
Your supplier has to provide you with information on how to file a complaint. You can **file a complaint** to your gas or electricity supplier and you are entitled to expect a high standard of service in the way your supplier manages your complaint. This should provide you with a prompt dispute settlement and a reimbursement and/or compensation if warranted. In the event that your complaint is not managed to your satisfaction, you have also the right to send your complaint to an independent **body for out-of-court dispute settlement**, such as an energy ombudsman. These options do not limit your right to subsequently bring a case before a Court.

9. An energy performance certificate for your home



National legislation must guarantee you the right to...

... receive information about the energy efficiency of the property you wish to buy or rent.



You have the right to be informed about the energy performance of a property when looking to buy or rent. Before you sign a contract you should receive an **energy performance certificate**, explaining how the property rates in terms of energy efficiency. This certificate also has to include recommendations on how to improve the energy efficiency of your home.



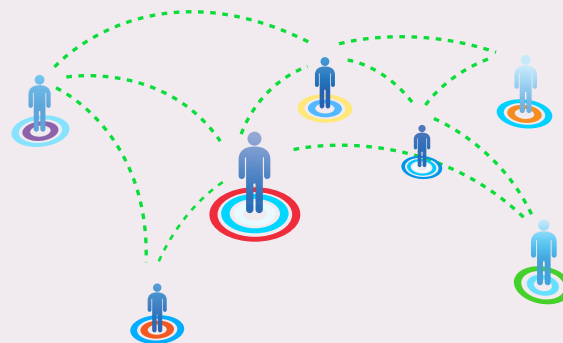
10. A national contact point for energy

National legislation must guarantee you the right to...

... contact a single point in your country where you can find more information on these rights.

You must have access, within your country, to a **single point of contact** from where you can obtain all the information you need concerning your energy rights, current legislation and how to deal effectively with any gas or electricity supplier dispute.

Your rights as an energy consumer in the EU have to be set out in the national laws of your country. **National regulatory authorities** have a duty to help ensure that consumer rights are respected, and that consumers are protected in line with EU law.



To find out more about your rights, please contact:

Single point of contact

Citizens Advice consumer service – United Kingdom

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/energy
Helpline: 08454 04 05 06
Textphone: 18001 followed by
08454 04 05 06
Welsh language helpline:
08454 04 05 05
Welsh language textphone: 18001
followed by 08454 04 05 05
Post Point 24
Town Hall
Walliscote Grove Road
Weston super Mare
North Somerset
BS23 1UJ

Commission for Energy Regulation – Energy customers – Ireland

<http://www.energycustomers.ie>
P.O. Box 11934
Dublin 24 - Ireland
Tel: 1890 404 404
Fax: (01) 4000 850
Email: energycustomers@cer.ie

National Regulatory Authority

Ofgem – United Kingdom

www.ofgem.gov.uk/
9 Millbank,
London,
SW1P 3GE
Tel: 020 7901 7295
Fax: 020 7901 7066
Email: consumeraffairs@ofgem.gov.uk

Commission for Energy Regulation –Ireland

<http://www.cer.ie>
Belgard Square North
Tallaght
Dublin 24 - Ireland
Tel: +353 1 4000 800
Fax: +353 1 4000 850
E-mail: info@cer.ie

Out-of-court dispute settlements mechanism

Ombudsman Services: Energy – United Kingdom

www.ombudsman-services.org/energy.html
PO Box 966
Warrington
WA4 9DF
Phone: 0330 440 1624
Fax: 0330 440 1625
Textphone: 0330 440 1600

Commission for Energy Regulation – Energy customers - Ireland

<http://www.cer.ie/customer-care/complaints>
Complaint form available online
Energy Customers Team
Commission for Energy Regulation
P.O. Box 11934
Dublin 24 - Ireland
E-mail: energycustomers@cer.ie

For more information see: http://ec.europa.eu/energy/gas_electricity/consumer/rights_en.htm

For additional information on your consumer rights, please consult Your Europe

(http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/index_en.htm) or the consumer associations in your country.

HOW TO OBTAIN EU PUBLICATIONS

Free publications:

- one copy:
via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>);
- more than one copy or posters/maps:
from the European Union's representations (http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm);
from the delegations in non-EU countries (http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm);
by contacting the Europe Direct service (http://europa.eu/eurodirect/index_en.htm) or
calling 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (freephone number from anywhere in the EU) (*).

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

Priced publications:

- via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>).

Priced subscriptions:

- via one of the sales agents of the Publications Office of the European Union (http://publications.europa.eu/others/agents/index_en.htm).



Publications Office

ISBN:978-92-79-37952-9

doi:10.2833/21153