

**Question for written answer E-003651/2014
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Giovanni Barbagallo (S&D)

Subject: Late payments of government debts in Sicily

According to figures released in the last few days, the Region of Sicily comes out bottom of the league of the Italian regions in terms of payments to businesses. The figures show that, in 2013, Sicily's regional government paid out to its suppliers only 34.6% of the resources budgeted for this purpose by central government. Sicily falls very far behind all the other Italian regions which, in the worst-case scenario, have made more than 65% of the payments they owe.

The date set for Member States to implement Directive 2011/7/EU was 16 March 2014. The Directive requires a deadline of 30 days or, in exceptional circumstances, 60 days to be met for government payments to companies. Italy's new national government has reiterated its strong commitment to settle all local and central government debts as quickly as possible.

By Decree-Laws 35/2013 and 102/2013, the Italian Government had budgeted EUR 47 billion to be spent within 12 months, to settle debts predating 31 December 2012.

Nevertheless these figures from the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, updated to 26 February 2014, show that the Region of Sicily has used none of the resources provided by central government to pay off health service rather than regional government debts. Sicily and Sardinia are the only regions with this negative track record.

Italy also still risks infringement proceedings on two counts: possible incorrect implementation of the Directive itself; or failure to implement it, i.e. missing the set payment deadlines.

The situation is made worse by the severe recession, which has had a dramatic impact, especially in southern Italy. Now the situation of the Region of Sicily calls for prompt and effective intervention.

What initiatives is the Commission taking to ensure Italy fulfils its obligations as quickly and as well as possible?

What kind of feedback has it received from the Italian authorities on the findings released a few days ago, after the government's written reply of 10 March?

What kind of action can the Commission undertake, not only to control, but also to prompt and direct a capacity for effective spending in the regions?