

**Question for written answer E-000850/2022
to the Commission**

Rule 138

José Gusmão (The Left), **Marisa Matias** (The Left)

Subject: Termination of flight connections between the Azores, Madeira and mainland Portugal

It is reported that the restructuring plan to support SATA Azores Airlines being negotiated by the Portuguese State and the Directorate-General for Competition could scrap certain 'loss-making' routes between the Azores and mainland Portugal and between the Azores and Madeira, namely: Lisbon-Horta-Lisbon, Funchal-Ponta Delgada-Funchal, Lisbon-Santa Maria-Lisbon and Lisbon-Pico-Lisbon. Since 2015, SATA has operated these routes, without financial compensation from the State, in accordance with the amended public service obligations approved by the Commission. Since then, it has met capacity, frequency and cargo requirements, charging maximum fares for no financial gain. If the Commission's decision is upheld, vital connections will be put at risk. In view of Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which confers a special status on the outermost regions (like the Azores and Madeira) and so empowers the Union to adapt its policies to suit these regions, how can the Commission justify such decisions? What basis does it have for equating these connections to mere commercial routes, in apparent disregard for their importance for the regions in question? Is the decision to scrap these connections based on a particular study?