

**Question for written answer E-000322/2024
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Late payments in Portugal

Timely payment for purchased goods or contracted services is essential for the confidence of economic operators, but it is also a necessary condition for the liquidity of businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises. The Commission's proposal¹ for a Regulation on combating late payments is welcome, and we hope that it can bring about a drastic reduction in the significant delays in business-to-business transactions, but above all in the relationships between businesses and the Member States.

The Portuguese State has been failing to fulfil its obligations towards businesses. It should be noted that in the third quarter of 2023 there were late payments in the order of 661 days (Administrative and Financial Management Department of the Portuguese Ministry of Culture)². The problem is not a new one and has already led to infringement proceedings³ and earlier questions to the Commission⁴.

In light of the above:

1. What is the outcome of the Commission's dialogue – if any – with the Portuguese authorities on this matter?
2. How does it anticipate the application of the Regulation in a scenario of chronic non-compliance in cases such as the Portuguese one?
3. How does it reconcile the aims of the proposed Regulation with the principle of freedom of contract in business-to-business transactions?

Submitted: 1.2.2024

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2023%3A533%3AFIN>

² https://www.dgo.gov.pt/execucaoorcamental/ProgramaPagarATempoEHoras/PMP60_3Trim2023_AC-AR.pdf

³ INFR(2017)2037

⁴ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2023-002107_EN.html