

**Priority question for written answer P-000034/2024  
to the Commission**  
Rule 138  
**Tomáš Zdechovský (PPE)**

**Subject:** IROP implementation challenges caused by COVID-19

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the implementation of EU funds in Czechia, particularly funds granted under the integrated regional operational programme (IROP). Beneficiaries implementing construction projects are facing difficulties with repayment requests. Unforeseen circumstances, such as supply chain disruption and the unavailability of building materials, have led to delays in project completion and the managing authorities have not been following the established methodology consistently.

Despite rules<sup>1</sup> allowing project completion deadline extensions, the managing authority rejected a repayment request for a school construction project, citing a 10-month delay as a substantial contract modification. The authority decided not to repay 25 % of the project's total value (EUR 2 million) even though no fraud was identified. The beneficiary, a village with fewer than 2 500 inhabitants, reported genuine pandemic-related difficulties, relying on exceptions envisaged in the rules. The financial repercussions for the village are expected to be serious.

1. Is the Commission aware of the inconsistent application of the project extension methodology?
2. Is the managing authority obliged to consider the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in repayment requests and should project deadlines under IROP be extended for construction projects?
3. Is the refusal to repay 25 % of the contract value for projects initiated in 2020 justified?

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<sup>1</sup> General rules for applicants and recipients under IROP point 16.7 [https://irop.gov.cz/getmedia/ac08d6f1-6d5a-4212-a298-80a61dca6198/Obecna-pravidla-IROP\\_vydani-1-15\\_cistopis.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf](https://irop.gov.cz/getmedia/ac08d6f1-6d5a-4212-a298-80a61dca6198/Obecna-pravidla-IROP_vydani-1-15_cistopis.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf)