

Answer given by Mr Santer on behalf of the Commission*(7 August 1997)*

The Commission is collecting the information it needs to answer the question. It will communicate its findings as soon as possible.

(98/C 21/272)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2275/97**by Cristiana Muscardini (NI) to the Commission***(2 July 1997)*

Subject: Reduction of payment deadlines for SMU

It is well known that one of the main difficulties faced by SMU as regards their expansion, and often their survival, is caused by the excessive delays in the payment of invoices. With a view to improving the functioning of the internal market, does the Commission feel it would be useful to draw up a directive requiring large firms and multinational companies in particular to settle invoices within a period of 30 to 45 days, after which interest calculated on the basis of the bank rate would have to be paid?

Answer given by Mr Papoutsis on behalf of the Commission*(23 July 1997)*

The action plan for the single market ⁽¹⁾ and the Commission's report on late payments in commercial transactions ⁽²⁾ indicated that further action is needed to tackle the problem of late payment in Europe. The lack of action in most Member States on this issue and the latest statistics on late payments in Europe have led the Commission to conclude that it is now necessary to make proposals for minimum requirements to combat late payments which should be incorporated into national legislation. The Commission intends to make a proposal for a directive on late payments before the end of the year, based on the package of measures set out in the Commission's Recommendation of 12 May 1995 (No 198/97/EC) on payment periods in commercial transactions ⁽³⁾, including the statutory right of creditors to interest on late payment.

⁽¹⁾ CSE(97) 1 final.

⁽²⁾ C(97) 2121, 9.7.1997

⁽³⁾ OJ L 127, 10.6.1995.

(98/C 21/273)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2284/97**by José Pomés Ruiz (PPE) to the Commission***(19 June 1997)*

Subject: Freedom of movement for road haulage every day of the week

Article 36 of the Treaty of Rome allows prohibitions and restrictions on goods in transit provided they do not constitute a means of arbitrary discrimination or a disguised restriction on trade between Member States. However, France and Germany do not allow lorry traffic on non-working days. The rest of the Member States, on the other hand, prefer heavy traffic to be spread over the seven days of the week, so as not to cause week day congestion for the sake of week-end traffic. Specific restrictions for road safety reasons are acceptable, but not general bans.

Furthermore, along the frontiers of these countries, great queues of lorries build up, to the direct detriment of the frontier regions of neighbouring countries.

Does the Commission possess any means of preventing these distortions of the free movement of traffic by liberalizing the transport of goods so as to avoid these additional costs to the transit of goods within the Union? If not, is it prepared to make a proposal to this effect?