

INTRUM'S EUROPEAN PAYMENT REPORT 2026: LATE PAYMENTS ARE HOLDING BACK EUROPEAN GROWTH

Intrum has today published the 29th edition of its annual European Payment Report (EPR). The report shows that the share of revenues paid late now exceeds sustainable levels – putting pressure on businesses navigating economic uncertainty and holding back growth.

European businesses are facing growing pressure on cash flow as late payments exceed sustainable levels, according to Intrum's European Payment Report 2026. The report shows that **the share of revenues received late has risen above 12 percent**, surpassing the level businesses consider sustainable without disrupting operations. **More than half of businesses say late payments have already caused them to miss growth targets**, highlighting the disruptive impact of payment delays across Europe.

At the same time, despite a challenging economic outlook, **64 percent of companies say growth is their top priority for 2026, the highest share in the past five years**. For many, the focus appears to be shifting from survival to success. However, Intrum's EPR data suggests that late payments are increasingly affecting companies' day-to-day stability and limiting growth ambitions.

Late payments are creating a chain reaction across European supply chains. According to the report, **62 percent of businesses say delays in receiving payments lead them to pay their own suppliers late**, highlighting the systemic nature of the issue. At the same time, the payment gap is widening – the gap between actual payment time and agreed payment terms. In the B2B sector, it has widened from 16 days in 2023 to 20 days this year.

The pressure is expected to continue. More than half of businesses expect the risk of late or non-payment to increase over the next 12 months, reflecting persistent economic uncertainty and ongoing financial strain.

As payment delays are becoming disruptive, businesses are responding by strengthening payment discipline, with six in 10 reporting that they are taking steps to avoid late payments – the highest proportion recorded in six years. Additionally, as many as **66 percent of businesses are already using AI in payments** (up from 59 percent in 2025), and 23 percent report enhanced efficiency as the main benefit. Yet, AI adoption remains uneven, with 55 percent of businesses reporting that they lack the skills needed to fully unlock its potential.

Johan Åkerblom, President and CEO of Intrum, comments:

“European businesses have shown strong resilience in recent years and remain focused on growth, even in a challenging environment. However, our latest findings show that late payments are no longer merely a working capital challenge; they are increasingly affecting day-to-day stability and limiting companies’ ability to pursue their growth ambitions.

Our research suggests that many organisations are approaching a tipping point. Businesses indicate that around 12 percent of revenues can be received late without disrupting operations. Today, that threshold has been exceeded, signalling growing pressure on cash flow across supply chains.

Encouragingly, businesses are responding. Many are strengthening payment discipline, tightening credit assessments and exploring new ways to manage payment risk. Technology is playing a growing role in this shift, helping organisations improve visibility and strengthen financial resilience. Artificial intelligence, in particular, is emerging as a powerful tool in payments management.”

Anna Zabrodzka-Averianov, Senior Economist at Intrum, comments:

“European businesses are operating in a complex landscape marked by economic uncertainty, where geopolitical tensions, trade disruption and uneven economic growth continue to shape financial conditions. Despite this, growth ambitions remain strong, showing that companies across Europe are determined to move forward.

This year’s report highlights that payment behaviour is becoming an increasingly important indicator of business stability. Late payments create a vicious circle as businesses that are struggling to secure payments end up paying other businesses late. The late payment issue is trickling down supply chains and hampering the broader economy.

With many businesses expecting payment risks to increase over the coming year, maintaining financial discipline and strengthening payment management will remain critical for building resilience. Many businesses are increasingly relying on AI to improve efficiency, strengthen resilience and improve payment performance.”

EPR 2026: key findings

- Around **12% of revenues** are currently being paid late, exceeding slightly the level deemed by European executives
- **57% of businesses** missed growth targets due to late payments
- **62% of businesses** pay suppliers late as a result of delayed payments, and more than half of businesses (**53%**) expect late or non-payments to increase in the next 12 months
- **64% of businesses** prioritise growth despite economic uncertainty
- Businesses are increasing measures to manage late payments;
 - **50%** ask customers to prepay (46% in 2025)
 - **39%** conduct credit checks (37% in 2025)
 - **26%** practise fraud prevention (up from 23%)
- **58% of businesses** are strengthening their payment discipline and 73% are investing in improved payment interfaces
- **66% of businesses** use AI in payments, and based on reported time savings in the payments function, AI can reduce costs associated with chasing late payments by around **20%**

The full European Payment Report is available for download at intrum.com/insights.

About the survey

The **EPR 2026** is based on responses from **8,385 businesses across 20 European countries**, providing insights into payment management, financial risk and highlights evolving attitudes toward late payments and financial uncertainty.

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About Intrum

Intrum is Europe's leading provider of credit management services, operating in 20 markets. We support millions of individuals in improving financial health whilst helping businesses to get paid. With a century of experience, around 9,000 employees serving 70,000 companies, Intrum enables sustainable payments by combining technology, empathy, and a human-centered approach.

The company is headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, and publicly listed on Nasdaq Stockholm. For more information, please visit www.intrum.com.