

**Question for written answer E-000999/2014  
to the Commission**  
Rule 117  
**Tonino Picula (S&D)**

Subject: Protection of Croatian consumers shopping online

Shopping online is often the quickest and cheapest way to buy a given product and a method employed by most European citizens. According to the figures available, 64% of people in Croatia use the Internet and spend more than 15 hours a week browsing. Out of that number, almost a third now shop online. The statistics also show that a total of EUR 401 million was spent on online shopping in Croatia from September 2011 to February 2012. In that period the average Croatian shopper made seven purchases, spending an average of EUR 227. Regarding the percentage of Croatians who have taken advantage of this way to shop within the past year, the findings differ from one study to the next, but all the research points to a strong upward trend in the number of online shoppers.

Although a trend towards more and better protection for online shopping has arisen from Croatia's recent accession to the EU, consumers are often sceptical about this way to shop for reasons of transparency and on account of the delivery charges. Overcoming consumer distrust, combined with qualitative improvements to access, is one of the preconditions for the further development of e-commerce, an aim which the Commission has charted in its Digital Agenda.

An additional specific problem for Croatian consumers is that some suppliers, mostly in the United Kingdom, are still not aware that Croatia belongs to the EU, a fact which adds to the already high delivery costs. Building on the present regulations, what steps will the Commission take to protect Croatian consumers more securely and ensure that they can enjoy the equal status to which – now that Croatia has joined the EU – they are entitled?