

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1499/01  
by Gerhard Hager (NI)  
to the Commission

Subject: Programme to strengthen the economic competitiveness of frontier regions

The Nice European Council called upon the Commission to propose a programme for the frontier regions in order to strengthen their economic competitiveness (see paragraph 7 of the Presidency conclusions). This request was prompted by the fact that, if the European Union is enlarged, businesses and employees in the regions bordering on the applicant countries will be exposed to particularly harsh competition on account of the huge wage differentials between the applicant countries and the neighbouring EU Member States. In its Communication on its work programme for 2001 (COM(2001) 28 final), the Commission itself states that, as a follow-up to the second report on cohesion, it will submit a Communication on the EU's frontier regions.

Against this background, would the Commission answer the following questions?

In its work programme for 2001, why does the Commission provide only for the submission of a Communication on the EU's frontier regions when the European Council called specifically for the drawing up of a programme designed to strengthen the economic competitiveness of those regions?

What stage has been reached in the preparations for submitting such a programme?

What sort of conditions and measures designed to strengthen the economic competitiveness of border regions are contained in the programme, how much funding is to be allocated and when are the measures in question to be implemented?