

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2231/01
by Hans Kronberger (NI)
to the Commission

Subject: Liberalisation of shop-opening hours

In its economic policy guidelines, the Commission called on Austria to further liberalise shop-opening hours. At present, Austria's 66-hour per week limit is indeed the lowest in any Member State, and this is having adverse effects not only on purchasing power, tourism and the country's attractiveness as a business location, but also in terms of employment in the distributive trades and creating jobs in related sectors. Border areas are particularly badly affected. In addition, petrol stations are increasingly selling food and thus distorting the market. A government agreement extending shop-opening hours to 72 hours per week has been signed by the government but has not yet been implemented.

What steps does the Commission propose to take to prevent distortion of competition owing to shop-opening hours being liberalised to different extents?

Will it take action in respect of those Member States which fail to liberalise in good time? If so, what action will it take?