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Factsheet for case **AT-2020-12/628**

Protection of workers in retail, incl. change of working hours

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Country	Austria, applies nationwide
Time period	Open ended, started on 20 March 2020
Type	Bipartite collective agreement
Category	Protection of workers at the workplace – Occupational health and safety
Case created	15 April 2020 (updated 18 April 2020)

Background information

Ahead of the closure of schools and kindergartens, the unions demanded changes to shop opening hours. They requested that opening hours should be limited to 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. for the duration of the school closings for retail shops, as the measures would put many of the 400,000 domestic retail employees in a bind and demanded that the opening times in the shops .

Initially, the employers organisation (WKÖ) had rejected the union's demand for a temporary and significant reduction in working hours. "The trade is fundamentally against any legal shortening of the opening times," said WKÖ trade chairman Peter Buchmüller. The food trade in particular is an important infrastructure for maintaining the security of supply for the entire population and is "well equipped".

Due to the recent measures by the federal government, the shopping behavior of Austrians has changed. Social partners notice that customers shop less often, but buy more. The customer frequency decreases at a later hour.

Therefore, the commercial social partners have agreed to adjust the opening hours accordingly. In a joint protection package for employees and apprentices in the Austrian trade, we have agreed that the shops will be open from Monday, March 23, 2020, from 7:40 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. at the earliest.

On 23 March 2020, social partners agreed on a package of measures to protect retail employees.

Content of measure

The social partner agreement finally foresees that retail shops will be open until 7 pm.

Further protective measures include that

- pregnant employees will be exempted from work
- employees belonging to the Covid 19 risk group shall - if possible - be working in areas without client contact.

- a tax free treatment of Corona related supplements or rewards; Social parnters appeal to the Federal government to consider this.

Initiative of the social partners for uniform standards for the protection of employees in the workplace

To protect employees, social parnters recommend that retailers implement the following measures as quickly as possible:

Plexiglass panes ("breath protection") and spacers at all checkouts and counters.

- Gloves and hand disinfectants for all employees and apprentices (as soon as available again)
- Regular disinfection of checkout workplaces, break and lounge rooms and the toilet facilities due to shorter cleaning intervals
- Floor markings at all checkouts and counters to ensure the distance between customers and an orderly process in the store.
- No scanning of customer cards by employees
- Orderly access to all shops
- When there is a particularly high number of customers at peak times, retailers should ensure that not too many customers are admitted at the same time.

And to provide increased information of customers.

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Use of measure

Unknown

Actors, target groups and funding

Actors	Target groups	Funding
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Trade unions Employers' organisations	Companies providing essential services	Companies
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Social partners

Role of social partners	Agreed (outcome)
Form of involvement	Bi-or tripartite social dialogue bodies

This is an 'agreement' between the relevant social partners related to the retail sector (sections within the WKO and the OGB).

The employers organisation (Handelsverband) welcomed the innovations and recommended another protective measure: The association proposed to temporarily raise the limit for contactless payment transactions during the crisis. A temporary increase in the NFC limit without a PIN to, for example, 50 euros would significantly reduce the risk of infection both for the 110,000 employees in the food trade and for consumers. The employers regards only the restriction of the opening times as being ambivalent with regard to the tense labor market, but understands if it relieves the existing staff of the grocer.

Sectors and occupations

This case is sector-specific (only private sector).

Economic area	Sector (NACE level 2)
G - Wholesale And Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles And Motorcycles	G47 Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles

This case is occupation-specific.

Occupation (ISCO level 2)
Sales workers
Hospitality, retail and other services managers

Sources

- 20 March 2020: Protection of workers in retail ([orf.at](https://www.orf.at))
- 23 March 2020: Corona-Schutzpaket für Beschäftigte im Handel (www.wko.at)