



Dear Member of the European Parliament,

We write to you concerning the Working Time Directive on which the European Parliament plenary will vote on 17 December.

European companies and employers are seriously concerned that the position adopted by the European Parliament's Employment Committee jeopardises the possibility of an agreement on the revision of the Working Time Directive. This is something that the EU simply cannot afford in the present economic climate. We support the Council common position as it stands. Although not completely satisfied, we believe that this position represents a pragmatic compromise for all actors concerned as it safeguards flexibility, while at the same time protecting workers.

The changes proposed by the Employment Committee would on the contrary impede the flexibility which both employers and workers need in a period where competitiveness and efficiency in public services provision matters more than ever.

There are two main areas of concern for European businesses and employers:

Opt-out

A recent survey by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions found that 87% of workers considered the option of "working more or less hours if needed" an important factor in determining their satisfaction with work, and only 14% of respondents said they would be willing to work less hours if it meant a reduction in earnings.

We strongly object to the deletion of the opt-out provision proposed by the Employment Committee, which is neither desirable nor necessary. The opt-out allows companies and workers to derogate from the rule of a maximum working time of 48 hours per week. Responsible companies do not use this possibility to make employees constantly work longer hours, but simply to deal with temporary fluctuations in demand. Workers signing the opt-out also benefit, as they can work overtime, for example to supplement their income, a significant consideration in the current economic circumstances. It is also worth noting that the Council compromise contains a number of important safeguards for workers.

On-call time

European companies and employers are also concerned that the entire period of on-call time will count as working time. Counting inactive on-call time as working time would hamper the effective provision of key public services across the EU, as well as having negative consequences on a number of private sectors. It would put pressure on financing and lead to severe problems of work organisation in some work places.

More generally, delaying a decision on working time in the current economic climate would be damaging to both employers and workers. We also believe that it would not be understood by European citizens. A pragmatic solution needs to be reached on this protracted issue. We therefore call for your support of the Council compromise at the plenary vote on 17 December and to vote against the amendments made by the Employment Committee.

Yours faithfully,



Philippe de Buck
Director General

Andrea Benassi
Secretary General

Rainer Plassmann
Secretary General

Arnaldo Abruzzini
Secretary General

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