

**PRESS RELEASE**

## **EUROCHAMBRES reiterates need for enhanced flexibility of labour market to Commissioner Dimas**

At a meeting with Stavros Dimas, Commissioner for Employment and Social affairs, today EUROCHAMBRES' Deputy President Georgios Kassimatis and Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES, reiterated the need of European business for a flexible labour market.

Mr Abruzzini said: *"More flexibility of the labour market will not only improve European competitiveness but also stimulate the fierce labour market with 14 million unemployed. We have to say good-bye to rigid mindsets of the past and find creative future-oriented solutions which meet the need of both employers and employees. Employers must be encouraged to employ more people by enabling them to adapt to fluctuations in demand."*

### **New Working Time Directive must contribute to more flexibility**

For Chambers the new Working Time Directive is a key instrument to achieve progress towards a new labour market.

EUROCHAMBRES explicitly agreed with the proposal of the Irish Presidency to extend the **reference period** of the ceiling of 48 hours per week to **one year** in order to meet the needs of companies with business-related seasonal fluctuations.

Chambers recalled the utmost importance of **keeping the opt-out for Member States** especially since the recent judgements of the European Court of Justice (EJC) ruling that on-call duties in the health care sector are considered as working time. Member States rely more and more on the opt-out as a way to avoid further restrictions and substantial costs for specific sectors. The possibility of abuse by Member States does not constitute a basis for the removal of the opt-out, but rather an incentive to better implement it. Methods to address abuses have to be explored.

### **Wim Kok's recommendations need to be implemented by Member States**

EUROCHAMBRES also highlighted the responsibility of the Member States in implementing the recommendation of the Wim Kok Report "Jobs, jobs, jobs!"

Arnaldo Abruzzini said: *"We regret that up to now the pace of labour market reforms is far to slow in almost all the Member States. We urge national governments not to pay lip service, but to deliver."*

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EUROCHAMBRES has member organisations in 41 countries representing a network of 2,000 regional and local Chambers with over 17 million member companies.