

PRESS RELEASE

Working Time Directive: European Chambers exhort the Council to take up the cudgels for a flexible labour market

EUROCHAMBRES, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry, called on the Employment and Social Affairs Ministers meeting in Luxembourg on 2-3 June to wash off the anti-business mindset of the Working Time Directive.

Christoph Leitl, President of EUROCHAMBRES, said: *"Many of the amendments by the European Parliament in the Directive will not improve Europe's competitiveness but will further restrict the flexibility of the European labour Market."*

"We can only hope that the Council is more in tune with those who are out of work, with those workers who want to decide how long they work for themselves, and with those businesses that need working time flexibility in order to survive and grow."

- Chambers reject the Commission's amended proposal keeping the individual opt-out for 3 more years. This is not enough in order to guarantee a flexible European labour market. Chambers want to **retain the opt-out** but incorporate additional requirements to address any abuse of its operation.
- Chambers support an **extended reference period to 12 months** as it would provide additional flexibility to cope with seasonal peaks and increased demand - a particular advantage for SMEs.
- Chambers share the Commission's view that **inactive on-call time should not be regarded as working time**. The provision that the inactive part of on-call time can be calculated on the basis of an average number of hours or a proportion of on-call time is welcome but should be allowed by law as well as agreement between the two sides of industry.
- **Chambers support the principle of a better reconciliation of work and family life**, but do not consider the Working Time Directive as the right place to deal with this issue.

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