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Onderwerp: Limitation of working hours and more influence of workers, for healthier working lives

LIMITATION OF WORKING HOURS AND MORE INFLUENCE OF WORKERS, FOR HEALTHIER WORKING LIVES

7 June 2010

According to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), The main goal of the Working Time Directive (WTD) is, and must remain, the protection of workers against the health and safety risks of long and irregular working hours. The WTD should be strengthened to deal with new risks, and workers equipped with stronger rights and instruments to adapt working time to their needs. However, any initiative to amend the Directive must first of all put an end to the opt-out and respect the European Court of Justice (ECJ) judgements on on-call work. The conditions are currently not there to address a possible revision in the social dialogue.

These are the key messages that the ETUC is giving today to the European Commission, in its position on the review of the WTD approved by its Executive Committee last week. The Commission has launched a new round of negotiations of the European social partners, after the previous attempts to revise the WTD –taking 7 years of struggle between European Parliament and Council – failed last year.

Said John Monks, General Secretary of the ETUC:

"With the Charter of Fundamental Rights now legally binding, the European Institutions must take its obligations even more seriously, i.e. to guarantee to every worker in the EU the right to limitation of his/her working hours in order to respect his/her health, safety and dignity at work. The Commission has asked us to check the WTD if it is fit for the 21-st century. In our view, such a check shows that the basic rules and principles of the WTD are as relevant as ever. But we also think that the WTD should be strengthened, especially to provide modern 21-st century workers - who are confronted with more pressure to accept irregular hours and shift work, but at the same time with stronger demands to reconcile work with family and care obligations - with the tools to negotiate better working times and schedules with their employers. However, we will not support any proposal for revision of the Directive if it does not first and foremost deals with putting an end to the opt-out, and proposing solutions on on-call work which respect the ECJ judgements on this matter. The Commission has asked the social partners at EU level to consider solving the problems in the social dialogue, passing on the 'hot potato' to us. But seeing the positions of us and the employers so far apart, we do not believe that currently the conditions are in place for a fruitful exercise. "

Resolution and Position

The ETUC exists to speak with a single voice, on behalf of the common interests of workers, at European level. Founded in 1973, it now represents 82 trade union organisations in 36 European countries, plus 12 industry-based federations.

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