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Datum: 03/28/2011 06:15 PM
Onderwerp: ETUC Press release

**REVISION OF THE WORKING
TIME DIRECTIVE: THE ETUC
DECLARES ITSELF
DISAPPOINTED AT THE
PROPOSALS FROM THE
EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

28 March 2011



European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC]
Confédération européenne des syndicats [CES]

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has responded to the consultation of the social partners on the revision of the working time directive (WTD), at the level of the European Union (EU), which ended on 25 March 2011. The ETUC, disappointed with the European Commission's proposals, says it is ready to start negotiations with the social partners on working time.

The ETUC regrets that the concerns it expressed during the first phase of the Commission consultation were not sufficiently taken into account. The proposals to maintain the opt-out and extend the reference periods, in particular, are at odds with the principles of health and safety at work based on evidence and well-founded research (such as, for example, the evaluation of the impact assessment regarding the WTD and the evolution of working time organisation established by Deloitte).

What makes this approach all the more inappropriate is the fact that the Commission's implementation report highlights the problems with the conformity between national law and the WTD. In other words, many workers are afforded no protection against excessive working hours, a fact which is harmful to their health and safety and violates their rights.

On the basis of such evaluations, it is not understandable for the ETUC how the Commission can persist in proposing to keep the individual opt-out, thereby deliberately putting at risk the health of EU workers.

Against this background, the ETUC has said it is ready to start negotiations with the social partners at European level with the objective of a global revision of the WTD, for the sake of workers' health and safety.

The ETUC believes that the revision involves the end of phasing-out of the individual opt-out in the near future, the retention of the reference periods and ensuring compliance with the judgements by the European Court of Justice regarding on-call time and compensatory rest.

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 83 trade union organisations in 36 European countries, plus 12 industry-based federations.

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