



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Parliament decision on Working Time Directive must be reversed

- **Inactive part of ‘on call’ time not working time – Plenary must amend**
- **Individual opt-out should not be scrapped**

Brussels, 20 April 2005 UEAPME, the European small and medium business organisation, has condemned the decision to make EU working time rules less flexible, taken by the European Parliament’s Employment and Social Affairs Committee today (Wednesday).

“Imposing greater inflexibility on working time rules will threaten the survival of many small firms and ultimately cost jobs across the EU,” said **Hans-Werner Müller**, UEAPME Secretary General. “The European Parliament must reverse today’s result when it votes on the directive in plenary session.”

The decision to consider the inactive part of ‘on call’ time as working time would be a massive blow to many SMEs, which rely on flexible working time arrangements to adjust to a constantly evolving business environment. UEAPME urges the Parliament to revert to the original proposal by the Commission by which only active ‘on call’ time would be considered working time.

Phasing out the individual opt-out means, ultimately, scrapping a provision that is crucial for many small businesses. The provision to opt-out of the Working Time Directive enables small businesses and their staff to adapt to the specific needs in different sectors and seasonal demands.

Almost 90% of businesses in Europe have less than 10 employees. For the vast majority of these firms, the provision to opt-out by collective agreement is irrelevant. Denying these micro-businesses the possibility of the individual opt-out would be a killer blow. The individual opt-out and the collective opt-out should be maintained if there is to be a level-playing field for all firms.

“Imposing further restrictions on working time rules would be a bad outcome for both employees and employers. It is hypocritical of the European Parliament to claim it is behind the Lisbon Strategy, while at the same time approving proposals to seriously limit the flexibility of the European workforce and damage the competitiveness of the EU economy,” concluded Mr Müller.

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EDITORS’ NOTE: UEAPME is the employer’s organisation representing the interests of crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 78 member organisations, which represent crafts and SMEs across the whole of Europe, covering over 11 million enterprises with nearly 50 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner.

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