



REVISION OF THE WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE: THE ETUC CALLS ON THE COUNCIL AND THE COMMISSION TO RESPECT EUROPEAN TREATIES AND FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

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In its meeting on 8 December, the European Council for Employment, social policy, health and consumer affairs will try to reach political agreement on the revision of the Working Time directive (WTD). The Executive Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) adopted a statement on 6 December 2005 urging the Council and the Commission not to water down the WTD to a voluntary shopping list.

According to the European Treaty and Charter of fundamental rights every worker within the EU has a right to limitation of his or her working hours, and protection of his health and safety at work.

In 2003, the Commission had three obligations related to the Working Time Directive: revision of the opt out with a view to its deletion, revision of the flexibility clauses about the reference period for counting the average maximum 48 hours, and implementation of the ECJ judgments on on-call work. In 2004, the Commission came up with very unsatisfactory proposals, with the overall effect of increasing flexibility for employers instead of increasing protection for workers. In the meantime, these proposals have been drastically amended by the European Parliament, acting with a convincing majority. When revising its proposals in May 2005, the Commission did not take these amendments sufficiently into account, but even on that basis the Council in June could not find political agreement, as some Member States demanded even more 'flexibility'.

The UK presidency now seems to lead the Council to compromises on the key points in the Directive that would turn the Working Time Directive into a Working Time shopping list.

Such proposals, if adopted by the Council and supported by the Commission, would lead to the first-ever social policy directive that would introduce a regression compared to the previous situation, and would in fact herald the burial of Social Europe.

Therefore, the ETUC calls on the Commission and the Council to respect the European Treaties, the ECJ, the European Parliament and European citizens and workers, and not to cooperate with such irresponsible proposals.

[ETUC Positions](#)

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