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Joint Press Release – 3 June 2005

**European Trade Union leaders condemn Employment Council
inaction on WORKING TIME
*'Valuable opportunity to reconnect with citizens missed'***

Participants:

European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)

European Transport Federation (ETF)

(3 June, Luxembourg) The **European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)**, the **European Transport Federation (ETF)** and the **European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)**, today condemned the Employment Council of Ministers inability to move the Working Time Directive debate forward. A delegation from the three organisations met with Luxembourg Employment Minister Mr. **Biltgen** yesterday, in his EU Presidency role as chair of the Employment Council. ***Mr Biltgen informed the delegation that no decision was foreseen, stating that a revised Commission text had only been tabled two days in advance of the Council.***

EPSU General Secretary, **Ms. Carola Fischbach-Pyttel** condemned this rationale. **“There was no surprise in the Commission’s text being tabled. It had been foreseen and indeed, was discussed in an EU Ambassadors meeting in detail, yesterday,”** She added that **“for the Council to use this as an excuse for inaction is cynical in the extreme. Tragically, in light of the events of this week, the EU has yet again missed an opportunity to reconnect with its’ citizens through a strong message on social Europe”**.

Ms. Catelene Passchier, ETUC Confederal Secretary stated that **“while the Commission text is not even a half-hearted attempt to take on board the carefully crafted European Parliament accord, it would have at least allowed the issue to move forward”**. She added that **“As usual, when it comes to social rights for EU citizens, the Council finds it difficult to even move a little”**.

Ms. Sabine Trier, ETF, stated that the Trade Union movement would be pushing for European action on working time to ensure that this issue could not simply be put in suspended animation.

The trade union organisations held an action and press conference, calling for a revised Working Time Directive that genuinely respects workers’ health and safety. The action, staged outside the Employment Ministers meeting in Luxembourg, used the theme *‘Commission proposals on working time are surreal’*, to highlight the Unions’ view that the debate at EU level is ignoring the legal basis for the directive, namely health and safety.

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION WORKING TIME PROPOSALS ARE SURREAL!



*The **European Federation of Public Services Unions** is the largest federation affiliated to the ETUC and represents 8 million workers providing services to the public in health and social care, local, regional and central government, and utilities in energy, water and waste.*



European Trade Unionists demonstrating against Commission working time proposals in Luxembourg yesterday, outside the Employment Council meeting