



*Joint Press Release – 2 June 2005*

## **European Trade Unions call on EU Employment Ministers to deliver genuine working time regulations for Europe's citizens**

*Participants:*

*European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)*

*European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)*

*European Transport Federation (ETF)*

(2 June, Luxembourg) The **European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)**, the **European Transport Federation (ETF)** and the **European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)**, today 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.

EPSU General Secretary, **Ms. Carola Fischbach-Pyttel** gave an outline of the Commission's revised proposal (released 31 May) to reconfigure the Working Time Directive. Calling the text "surreal", she slammed the Commission for ignoring the European Parliament report, which had been adopted by absolute majority on 11 May (the so called Cercas report). She stated that the Commission was putting at risk the health and safety protection of European workers, and potentially for the first time in EU history, taking a retrograde step on social policy. **Ms. Fischbach-Pyttel** also stated " **In light of the referendum result in France this week, it is essential that the Council of Ministers take account of citizens' concerns regarding the EU**".

**Ms. Catelene Passchier, ETUC Confederal Secretary** stated that "the European Parliament draft calls for a phasing-out of the "individual opt-out", recognition of the European Court of Justice ruling on on-call time in the workplace being considered as working time, and provides the flexibility by extending the period of calculating the average working week (maximum 48 hours) to 12 months (through collective bargaining)". She added that, "**Trade Union acceptance of this delicate compromise is clear evidence that European Trade Unions are realistic on this issue. We accept that there must be an element of "negotiated flexibility"**".

**Ms. Sabine Trier (ETF)** stated that it was essential that the opt-out provision, which had been intended only as a temporary measure, be abolished. She also emphasised the crucial role of collective bargaining as the mechanism through which balance could be found. Ms. Trier also called for the **Employment Ministers to respect the social dialogue agreement between Railway Social Partners on working conditions on mobile workers in cross-border transport. This agreement has existed since January 2004.**

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*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 Brussels, 19 March 2005*