



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

SMEs condemn Parliament's plenary vote on working time

Brussels, 17 December 2008 – UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation, was left strongly disappointed by today's plenary vote at the European Parliament on the Working Time Directive. Despite numerous calls by all employers' organisations to back the Council's compromise on the dossier, MEPs decided instead to reconfirm the opposite stance taken by the Parliament's Employment Committee one month ago. This will certainly complicate the possibility of an agreement on this long-standing dossier and generate more uncertainty both for workers and employers, denounced UEAPME. SMEs cannot accept the fundamental changes introduced today on qualifying "on-call" time as full working time and on the deletion of the opt-out, it stressed.

Secretary General **Andrea Benassi** offered the following comments:

"Today's vote rejects a reasonable compromise reached after years of endless negotiations between Member States and leaves very limited room for manoeuvre for further talks. This is unacceptable, especially in such a difficult economic climate."

"Today's decision protracts the legal chaos we have witnessed in the last years, which creates extra costs and legal uncertainty for employers. This is particularly regrettable for European small enterprises, which need clear, simple and flexible rules on the organisation of working time to ensure their competitiveness on the market."

"The Parliament's vote seriously jeopardises the possibility of ever reaching an agreement on such a crucial dossier. If no consensus is found between Parliament and Council in the coming months, Member States will apply the old rules on working time. That will leave workers and employers worse off compared to the rejected Council compromise. We wonder whether MEPs fully considered the consequences of their vote or whether they were driven more by the desire to be re-elected for another term."

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EDITORS' NOTES: UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing exclusively crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 83 member organisations covering over 12 million enterprises with 55 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner. For further information: <http://www.ueapme.com/>

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