



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

SMEs regret failure to reach agreement on working time

Brussels, 28 April 2009 – UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation, regretted yesterday's failure to reach a compromise on the Working Time Directive between the European Parliament and the Council in the so-called conciliation procedure. According to the organisation, clear, simple and flexible rules on the organisation of working time are fundamental for small businesses to ensure their competitiveness on the market, all the more so during the present downturn. Unfortunately, the negative outcome of the talks between Parliament and Council will certainly not help to find a good solution on this highly important piece of legislation for small employers, denounced UEAPME.

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

"The failure to reach a compromise between Parliament and Council on such an important piece of legislation is clearly to be regretted, especially after five years of endless discussions and only nine months after a reasonable compromise was tabled by the Council only to be ignored and destroyed by the Parliament. However, not having a deal is perhaps better than having a bad deal in this case. The directive as amended by the Parliament would have been of no use to anyone, since it left no room for manoeuvre whatsoever on on-call time, on rest periods and on the possibility to opt out."

"Small enterprises strongly rely on the organisation of working time as a key tool to achieve internal flexibility and better respond to significant market fluctuations. This is more important than ever during a period of economic crisis such as the present one, when being able to adjust workers' shifts is sometimes the only way to avoid redundancy for a small entrepreneur. The Council compromise was far from being perfect but it was a workable compromise solution both for employers and workers. The ball is now firmly in the Commission's court – whichever decision it takes, it should start from the Council compromise and fully take into account SMEs' needs."

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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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