

19 May 2004

**UNICE SEES NO PROSPECT OF NEGOTIATIONS ON WORKING TIME**

Today, the Commission launched a second consultation of the social partners on working time.

*“We share the widespread belief that there is a need to revise the directive without delay. Flexibility of working time is crucial for employment and competitiveness in Europe. It is not just in the interest of employers. Unfortunately, the approach sketched out in the Commission document seems to fall short of meeting the challenge”* stated Philippe de Buck, Secretary General of UNICE.

Throughout the debate, UNICE:

- called for averaging the reference period for calculating weekly working time over 12 months as a general rule, with a possibility to extend it beyond 12 months by collective agreement,
- insisted that only time actually worked should be considered as working time,
- asked that abuses of the opt-out, where they exist, should be treated by compliance measures at member state level and not by removing the opt-out.

*“Having read ETUC’s press release, I see no prospect of negotiations between us”* concluded Philippe de Buck.

*Note to the editor:*

UNICE is the official voice of more than 16 million small, medium and large companies. Active in European affairs since 1958, UNICE’s members are 36 central industrial and employers federations from 29 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe

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