



## **The Working Time Directive gets another chance**

### **EU Parliament strengthens workers' rights**

EUCDW Press Release, Brussels, 18-12-2008

By approving the report on the Working Time Directive in its plenary session on 17 December 2008 at Strasbourg, the European Parliament has taken an important step towards completing one of the most crucial social policy projects of the current Parliamentary term. One of the factors that has made this decision possible was the firm stance taken by the employees' group of the EPP-ED. This group once again met its responsibilities of representing the interests of employees.

There was a lot at stake when the MEPs went to the ballot. The member states had agreed a common position on 15 September intended to review and reform crucial aspects of the working time regulations. This common position ignored the ruling of the European Court of Justice by denying full working time status to on-call duty. It also defied the protests of trade unions, the employees' group of the EPP-ED and the EUCDW by extending the maximum weekly working time to up to 65 hours. Whereas the final negotiations with the European Parliament appeared to have paved the way for a compromise in the on-call duty issue, the positions regarding the weekly working hours remained irreconcilable. This was due to an "opt-out clause" which opened up the possibility of bypassing the maximum working time limit of 48 hours (in a 6-day working week) even without the approval of the social partners. The EUCDW had called for a new arrangement to maintain the protection of workers' health and safety, to comply with the principle of reconciling the demands of family and career and to anchor the required working time flexibility in collective bargaining agreements.

The vote in the plenary session demonstrated once again how seriously the EPP takes the interests of employees. The coordinated strategy of EUCDW and trade unions, the negotiation skills of EUCDW President Elmar Brok and a majority of substantially more than 400 votes against the opt-out clause have strengthened the European social model and demonstrated that the Social Market Economy is a cornerstone of the Christian-Democratic identity. Now we must secure this achievement in consensus with the Council and ensure that the long overdue review of the Working Time Directive can be completed. Our special thanks go to the EPP-ED rapporteur Jose Silva Peneda, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Gabriele Stauner and Csaba Öry.

The European Union of Christian Democratic Workers (EUCDW) is made up of 24 workers' organisations from 18 countries and is an association of the European People's Party (EPP).  
Tel 0032 2 285 4164, fax 0032 2 285 4141, e-mail: [euclidw@epp.eu](mailto:euclidw@epp.eu), website: [www.euclidw.org](http://www.euclidw.org)