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Media Release

Working Time Directive

The Malta Employers' Association notes with satisfaction that the European Commission's attempt to re-examine the Organisation of working Time Directive has once again been blocked by a group of countries, including Malta.

MEA's position has been a consistent one against the abolition of the opt out clause giving the employees the right to determine whether they would like to work more than 8 hours overtime or not. In March 2004, the EU had issued a consultation paper on the possible re-examination of this Directive. MEA had written to the Commission strongly objecting to any amendments to the existing opt out arrangements. Again earlier this year when the European Parliament passed a vote to revise the Directive, MEA pronounced itself on the issue.

It is our firm belief that if the EU is really intent on reaching the targets set up by the Lisbon Agenda with respect to competitiveness, the working time directive should allow for arrangements on working time to be determined at national level. The current national economic situation, certainly cannot afford the introduction of additional measures that introduce further inflexibility. The possible negative impact of industry far outweighs any marginal benefit which the Maltese worker may benefit from the abolition of the opt out clause.

The MEA strongly advocates the retention of the employee's right to opt out from the 48 hour rule. One is pleased to note that in Malta this view is shared by all the social partners, including the trade unions.

The MEA will continue to give its total support to Government on this issue and will continue with its lobbying efforts both locally and at European level, to retain the existing arrangements.