



Press Release

For immediate release
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Working Time Directive

Loss of Working Time opt-out would hit British firms, says IoD

British businesses would lose their competitive edge if EU policy-makers were to abolish the UK's opt-out from the 48-hour maximum working week, according to the Institute of Directors.

In a survey of IoD members, 76% of respondents said it would be impossible to run their businesses as efficiently if the opt-out were removed. Ninety per cent of respondents said the opt-out must remain in place.

The survey results are included in the IoD's response to the European Commission's review of the Working Time Directive, which took effect in the UK in 1998.

The IoD's Parliamentary and European Adviser, James Walsh, said:

"Britain's flexible approach to working time gives our businesses a vital competitive edge. The opt-out cuts both ways: employees who choose not to exercise it retain their right to work no more than an average 48-hour week, but many value the freedom to work more than 48 hours - and to be paid more for doing so.

"Competitiveness would be badly undermined if the British opt-out were scrapped or restricted."

The survey shows that many IoD members are open-minded about possible reform of the 'reference period' – the 17-week term used to measure average weekly working hours. A total of 65% of respondents either had no objection to the prospect of a longer reference period or expressed no preference either way. However, 77% said that the opt-out must be retained even if the reference period were extended to 12 months.

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Notes to Editors

1. The European Commission's review of the operation of the Working Time Directive closes today. Copies of the IoD submission are available from the IoD Press Office.
2. The IoD (Institute of Directors) was founded in 1903 and granted Royal Charter status in 1906. It is a non-party political organisation with upwards of 54,000 members in the United Kingdom. Membership includes directors from right across the business spectrum – from media to manufacturing, e-business to the public and voluntary sectors. Members include CEOs of large corporations as well as entrepreneurial directors of start-up companies.
3. The IoD offers a wide range of business services which include business centre facilities (including six regional centres), conferences, networking events, issues-led guides and literature as well as information services and free access to a comprehensive business library and enquiry service. The IoD places great emphasis on director development and has established a certified qualification for directors - Chartered Director - as well as running specific board-level and director-level training and individual career mentoring programmes.
4. In addition, the IoD provides an effective voice to represent the interests of its members to government and key opinion-formers at the highest levels. These include ministers, constituency MPs, Select Committee members and senior civil servants. IoD policies and views are actively promoted to the national, regional and trade media.
5. For further information, visit our website: www.iod.com