

UK keeps opt-out from Working Time Directive

The UK has retained its opt-out from the European Working Time Directive.

MEPs had voted in December to end the opt-out from the maximum 48-hour working week but the UK and other member states were against such a move.

Talks between MEPs, member states and the European Commission in Brussels failed to come to a consensus on how to proceed.

David Yeandle, head of employment policy at EEF, the Manufacturers' Organisation, says: "Manufacturers will be relieved that they and their employees can now continue to use the individual opt-out from the average 48-hour working week following the collapse of discussions in Brussels last night.

"This ends the current attempt by the European Parliament to phase out the individual opt out and the government and its allies in other member states are to be congratulated on maintaining a firm position on this important issue."

"Retaining the opt out will help employers to manage working time so that they can respond quickly and efficiently to changing customer demands and enable employees to choose to earn more by working longer hours."

"In view of this failure to reach agreement despite lengthy negotiations over many years, the Commission and the European Parliament should not seek to re-open this issue in the future."