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## WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE ISSUED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Council of the European Union issued the European Working Time Directive in 1993. The directive seeks to ensure a better level of protection of the safety and health of workers, at the same time avoiding administrative, financial and legal constraints that could hold back the creation and development of small and medium-sized undertakings.

The directive regulates the minimum rest periods, shift working patterns and other miscellaneous things. The directive asks member states of the European Union to take measures to ensure compliance with the provisions.

### Minimum Periods of Rest

The minimum periods of rest seek to protect the health of the employee.

**DAILY:** A minimum of 11 consecutive hours of rest in a 24 hour period should be ensured

**BREAKS:** Where the working day is longer than six hours, every worker should have specified periods of rest of specified lengths. The rest periods can be negotiated at organizational or industry level or legislated

**WEEKLY:** In addition to the 11-hour daily rest, each employee is entitled to a rest of 24 consecutive hours in a week

**MAXIMUM WEEKLY WORKING TIME:** Average working time for each seven-day period should not exceed 48 hours, and can be agreed upon through negotiations or legislated

A minimum of 4 weeks annual leave, that cannot be cashed out except on termination, should be granted to each employee

### Night Work and Shift Work

**NIGHT WORK:** Normal hours of night work should not exceed 8 hours in a 24 hour period. Where the work is hazardous, night workers should not have to work more than 8 hours in any 24 hour period

**HEALTH ASSESSMENT:** Night workers are entitled to a free health assessment before they are assigned to night work, and periodical assessments at regular intervals thereafter. If a night worker suffers health problems because of night work, the person shall be transferred whenever possible to suitable day work

**GUARANTEES FOR NIGHT-TIME WORKING:** Where employees face safety or health risks linked to night-time working, certain kinds of guarantees should be provided

**NOTIFICATIONS:** Employers who use night-working regularly should notify competent authorities if they so request

**PATTERN OF WORK:** Where work is organized according to a certain pattern, work should be adapted to the worker, with a view to alleviating monotonous work and risks to health and safety

### Miscellaneous Provisions

The miscellaneous provisions are of a general nature and include such stipulations as:

Where there are more specific community provisions concerning certain occupations or activities, the more general provisions of this directive will not apply. Organizations, industries or states can go in for provisions that are more favorable than those in this directive

Member states shall put in place necessary measures to comply with the provisions of this directive before 23 November 1996

### Conclusion

The European Working Time Directive is a directive issued to member states of the European Union. The directive has made certain provisions regarding periods of rest, night work and work patterns with a view to safeguarding the health and safety of workers. Member states have to put in measures to comply with the provisions before 23 November 1996. They are free to provide more favorable provisions than those suggested in the directive.