

# EU consultation on the Working Time Directive

Back in September 2009, the incoming Commission announced that it would launch a new review of the [Working Time Directive](#) (WTD), based on a two-stage consultation of the [social partners](#) in accordance with Article 154 of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#).

It will come as no surprise to [UK](#) solicitors that the clear message from the first stage of the consultation, launched in March 2010, has been that changes to the current [working time](#) rules are urgently needed. There is also a high degree of consensus that [EU](#) working time rules should allow greater flexibility for workers' and employers' representatives to negotiate on the details of implementation at the appropriate level.

At the end of December 2010 the [European Commission](#) launched the second stage of consultation with workers' and employers' representatives at EU level.

The new consultation will be of great interest for solicitors, business leaders, and the [coalition government](#), as it asks social partners for their opinions on detailed options that cover key themes such as:

- on-call time
- timing of minimum rest periods
- tackling excessive working hours
- better reconciliation of work and family life and
- clarifying areas whether the law appears unclear.

There is a need to act swiftly as social partners only have until end of February 2011 to make their views known to the Commission. Based on those replies, the Commission will begin preparing a [legislative](#) proposal to amend the [Directive](#), and make a detailed impact assessment of the proposed changes. The legislative proposal could be adopted after that impact assessment is completed – this is planned for the third quarter of 2011.

The coalition government stated in May last year that it wanted to “*work to limit the application of the Working Time Directive in the UK*” – now is the time to move ahead with that work.

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