

European Communities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

1983 - 1984

7 November 1983

DOCUMENT 1-909/83

ANNEX

to the report by Mr VAN MINNEN

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Social Affairs
and Employment

on the proposal from the Commission of the European
Communities to the Council (Doc. 1-846/83 - COM(83)
543 final) for a draft recommendation on the reduction
and reorganization of working time

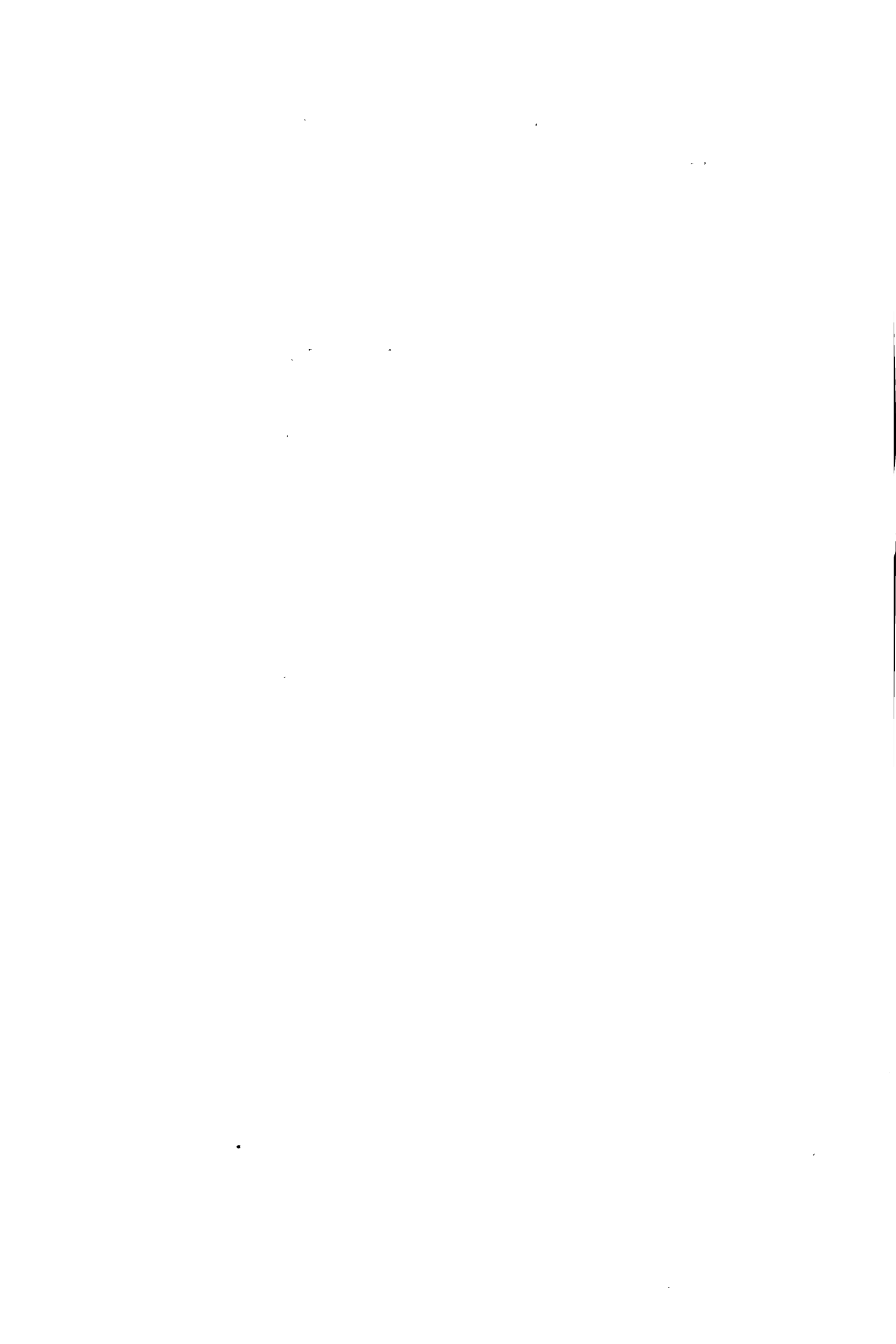
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OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO THE SITUATION
OF WOMEN IN EUROPE

Draftsman: Mrs H. WIECZOREK-ZEUL



On 7 October 1983 the European Parliament was consulted by the Council on the draft recommendation on the reduction and reorganization of working time. On 12 October 1983 the European Parliament referred this draft recommendation to the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment as the committee responsible and to the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Committee of Inquiry into the Situation of Women in Europe.

At its meeting of 18 October 1983 the Committee of Inquiry into the Situation of Women in Europe appointed Mrs WIECZOREK-ZEUL draftsman of an opinion. At the same meeting the committee adopted this opinion by 8 votes in favour with 3 abstentions.

Present: Mrs Cinciari Rodano, chairman; Mrs Vayssade, vice-chairman; Mrs Lenz, vice-chairman; Dame Shelagh Roberts, vice-chairman; Mrs von Alemann, vice-chairman; Mr Brok (deputizing for Mrs Maij-Weggen), Mr Enright (deputizing for Mrs van den Heuvel), Mr Estgen, Mrs Gaiotti de Biase, Miss Hooper, Mrs Lizin and Mrs Wieczorek-Zeul.

The Committee of Inquiry into the Situation of Women in Europe

- welcomes the fact that on the basis of the Memorandum it submitted on the Reduction and Reorganization of Working Time, the Commission has responded to the demands of the European Parliament and proposed a common approach to the Council;
- notes however that the present draft recommendation fails to take account of Parliament's resolution on reducing working hours in a number of areas, for example in that it does not provide for 'practical measures by the Community' or specify Community objectives in terms of which measures to reduce working time can be evaluated;
- calls for the aim of 'a significant reduction in daily, weekly and/or yearly working hours in the short term' to be explicitly formulated and for the submission of a proposal on a legally binding instrument which will enable coordinated action to reduce working time to be taken in all Member States, and in such a way that this can then be arranged on a national and industry-wide basis between trade unions and employers. A further aim is to increase the involvement of women in the working world;
- notes that the maximum effect on employment of reductions in working time will be achieved if
 - = these are implemented as quickly as possible,
 - = reductions are on as large a scale as possible so that new recruitment becomes necessary. In this context the aim should be the 35-hour week,
 - = reduction of working time takes the form of a reduction in weekly working hours,
 - = due account is taken of the need to achieve progress towards economic recovery in the Member States,
- stresses that with changing social values and the new division of roles between men and women it is urgently necessary, in reducing weekly working hours and reorganizing working time, to reduce 'daily working hours which will enable couples to achieve a more equitable division of labour as regards housework, care of children and employment' (Maij-Weggen report), and recommends both sides of industry to take account in negotiations of this method of reducing working hours;

- welcomes the fact that the recommendation explicitly refers to the advantages of reducing daily working hours to promote 'equal employment opportunities for women and create the necessary conditions which allow a greater sharing of family responsibilities'; wishes however that a reference of this kind had been included in the 'principles recommended' to Member States;
- welcomes the fact that the present draft expressly includes the principle of equal treatment for men and women;
- calls on the Commission to submit a directive to restrict overtime working, as otherwise the potential effect on employment of reducing working hours could be vitiated by overtime; believes however that a reduction in overall working time could be organized in such a way that for certain types of employment with seasonally determined peaks, extensions of working hours would be possible and then compensated for at other times of the year;
- advocates in the interests of women, who often belong to the lower and medium wage brackets, that the earnings and purchasing power of the lower and medium wage brackets should be safeguarded and in particular supports the recommendations of the Commission in Paragraph 22 of the Memorandum to the effect that the earnings of the lower wage brackets must be fully safeguarded when working hours are reduced;
- hopes that the Member States will also encourage agreements between the two sides of industry by compensatory measures to protect wages;
- requests the Commission to support and propose pilot projects involving new ways of organizing working time;
- reaffirms its resolution on part-time working of 16 September 1982 and its proposed amendments to the proposal for a Council directive in which Parliament expressed its views on matters of principle on the question of greater flexibility of working time;
- emphasizes once again the importance of adopting a comprehensive directive to regulate part-time working and new forms of flexible working, so that this process does not take place at the expense of full-time employment of women and calls on the Council to adopt the directive as soon as possible;
- criticizes the fact that in a number of important areas the Commission has failed to take account of Parliament's proposals to amend the directive;
- hopes that part-time working in its new form of flexible working (all working hours less than full working hours) will play a part in allowing a better division of household and family duties between men and women and at the same time allow both men and women to pursue a satisfying occupation and observes that part-time working is no substitute for a general reduction in working time.

