

Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE) Position to 843 COM Report (2003) on Check of 93/104/EC Directive Concerning Specific Issues of Working Time Arrangement

In the third part of the 843 COM Report (2003), the European Commission invites all interested organisations to participate in consultations on the 93/104/EU Directive concerning specific issues of working time arrangements and to take a position to it.

The Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe intercedes with the Commission for the requirement to consider the 93/104/EU Directive regarding the protection of employees against the excessive work duration and insufficient rest times. The valid directive sets a continuous minimal weekly rest time of 24 hours and daily rest time of 11 hours. The FAFCE advocates for this minimal rest time being provided on Sundays in principal.

Above all, the FAFCE calls the attention to the significance of Sunday as a day reserved for the religion practise. Europe would negate its Christian roots, if no importance were attributed to practising religion on our continent. Christians should be given the option to satisfy the commandment of celebrating Sunday.

It would be a significant and essential step towards the improvement of frame conditions for the common life in families, if the protection of Sunday were adopted into the Directive on the working time arrangement. The family life consists of time-consuming relationships, in particular if small children and old people are part of the family. These relationships need a fix and binding framework and the easiest way of providing it is spending a day-off together.

The UNO declared International Year of Honorary Office three years ago. The Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe considers performing honorary activities and the engagement in associations or in beneficial establishments to be an irreplaceable contribution to the vital civil society. So as to be able to perform honorary engagements, binding time agreements are necessary. Sunday as the most important day off in our culture should stay open for the free development of EU citizens.

The Commission pursues in the analysis of the 93/1004/EU Directive on the working time arrangement the compatibility of family and professional lives. The Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe claims in this connection that flexible and shorter working hours may bring about the increase of the leisure time quantity but not necessarily of its quality. If accompanied by the spreading of the weekend work and by the resulting limitation of the valuable weekend leisure, the quality of the leisure time will deteriorate. One day when all family members have time for each other is necessary for the better compatibility of the family and profession and traditionally this day is Sunday.

The cyclic change with a highlighted day of relaxation is a constant value in every modern culture, no matter if it stems from the Christianity, Judaism, Islam or Buddhism. Determining Sundays as days off and gradual introduction of Saturdays as non-business days in the industry are pillars of the time culture in Western Europe.

They are of great importance since they set up the boundaries between the time determined by others on the one hand and self-determined time on the other hand.