

Employment



Julie Girling MEP
Employment and Social
Affairs Spokesman

Julie Girling MEP is Conservative Spokesman for Employment and Social Affairs. She is joined on the Employment and Social Affairs Committee by Roger Helmer MEP.

Guiding principles

The European Conservatives and Reformists Group are committed to economic growth, developing flexible labour markets and reducing burdensome legislation and bureaucracy. We recognise that employment legislation is crucially important to ensure that businesses maintain their competitiveness, that public services are efficient, and that employees can take advantage of flexible working arrangements. We firmly believe that efficient and proportionate legislation can act as a catalyst for prosperity, job creation and competitiveness within the EU.

We recognise the vital importance of developing and nurturing an entrepreneurial culture and a self-employment environment. Conservative MEPs strongly believe that employment laws are best decided at the national level and that the restoration of British control of social and employment legislation is a major goal during this mandate. We believe in free enterprise, free competition and minimal regulation. The Conservatives therefore oppose any such

regulations which introduce labour rigidities and embed a dependency culture.

Conservative MEPs believe that small businesses are essential for growth. We will continue to make a particular effort to promote the interests of SMEs by ensuring that they have greater access to the opportunities afforded by the Single Market.

We believe in the principle of subsidiarity, and will continue to oppose any attempts to undermine this principle at EU level



Julie visiting Renishaw plc in Wotton Under Edge, Glos

Current mandate

We were strongly opposed to the vote which ended the exemption of lorry drivers from the Working Time Directive (WTD). The ECR consider this move to be unnecessary and completely unwanted. It could open the floodgates for further EU intervention in any number of professions affecting the self-employed. The British Conservatives believe this matter should fall solely within the competence of national governments and should not be arbitrated at EU level. All Conservative MEPs will continue to fight to keep self-employed entrepreneurs outside the scope of the WTD. We firmly believe that they must have freedom to set their own working time and that any measure risking the fluidity of our labour market will be strongly opposed.

Conservative MEPs have been influential in the current debate on adequate, sustainable and safe pension systems; we successfully negotiated proposals in Committee safeguarding the principle of subsidiarity and we will continue to oppose any attempts to establish criteria for a minimum level of pensions or attempts to define adequate pensions at European level. We firmly believe that pensions cannot be regulated at EU level.

Future for the Working Time Directive

One of our major Conservative campaigns in the near future will concern the UK's opt-out from the EU's Working Time Directive (WTD). The European Commission are currently drafting a revision of the rules regarding the EU Working Time Directive. Currently, UK workers have the option to opt voluntarily out of the EU WTD and work for more than 48 hours per week. We believe this is a crucial element in promoting economic growth and maintaining our flexible labour market. It is of course also widely affecting employment within the NHS. It is not explicit at this stage that the UK opt-out of the WTD is under threat, in fact our case for the opt-out is even stronger than in 2008, given that 15 other national governments* are now making use of it and we can guarantee that UK Conservative MEPs will resist any EU attempt to abolish the UK's right of opt-out. We believe that it is unrealistic to ask national governments in the current economic climate to refrain from using it and we will work to ensure that a more pragmatic approach is taken in the upcoming negotiations in the European Parliament to ensure that we do not develop any further constraints that will hinder the



Julie talks with the Store Manager and Kingfisher's Innovations Manager at one of the large B&Q stores

UK's potential for growth and competitiveness in the future. Furthermore, we believe that the rest of the EU may have much to learn from the UK. Whilst most of Europe is facing huge economic challenges, the effect on employment levels varies tremendously. Unemployment is soaring to unprecedented levels in many Member States and yet in the UK we are managing to hold steady with many recent quarters showing reductions. It is important to get across to our European colleagues that open and flexible labour markets, as in the British model, are vital for economic recovery. We must resist the socialist inspired knee-jerk reaction which seeks to over-protect individual employment rights to the detriment of a healthy economy. UK Conservatives will be taking this message to the Parliament in a high level seminar in Autumn 2011.

Future commitments

In order to nurture economic growth, we believe in minimal regulation and rolling back any unnecessary outdated legislation. The ECR strongly believes that reducing bureaucracy, particularly for SMEs, should be considered a priority which is reflected in our proposals in the Employment Committee on public procurement. We will support efforts to implement the Commission's proposal of cutting administrative costs of EU legislation by 25 per cent by 2012. All Conservatives will endeavour to promote the interests of small businesses and entrepreneurs. In addition to protecting the UK's opt-out from the WTD, we will be pushing through structural reforms to enhance competition, hold down labour costs and boost productivity, ultimately bringing an end to an over-regulated labour market. Conservatives will always work to give British people greater opportunities in the European jobs market. 🇬🇧

* UK, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Malta, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia & Spain.