

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-001145/25
to the Commission
Henrik Dahl (PPE)
(18 March 2025)**

Subject: Directive 94/33/EC of 22 June 1994 on the protection of young people at work, and in particular Article 8(1) (b) thereof.

The Commission has consistently stressed the importance of reducing administrative burdens on businesses and increasing Europe's competitiveness, as is reflected in its latest work programme. At the same time, Europe faces a significant skills shortage, making early exposure to the labour market through student jobs an important first step towards a professional career.

A key obstacle to this is the 'two-hour rule' stemming from EU Directive 94/33/EC, which limits working time for 13-to-14-year-olds to a maximum of two hours on school days. Practical experience in SMEs shows that that rule creates major difficulties for both businesses and young workers, it being impractical to schedule such short spells of work, especially when travelling time is taken into account.

In the light of its focus on regulatory simplification and on improving conditions for SMEs,

does the Commission acknowledge that the two-hour rule represents a needless administrative burden for SMEs and creates practical barriers for both employers and young workers?

Submitted: 18.3.2025

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu on behalf of the European Commission
(14 April 2025)**

Directive 94/33/EC ⁽¹⁾ lays down minimum standards to protect children and adolescents performing work to ensure that young people have working conditions which suit their age.

The directive sets out the employer's general obligations to protect and monitor young workers' health and safety by laying down minimum standards for working hours, night work, rest period and breaks for young people.

Member States must ensure that young people are protected against any specific risk to their safety, health and development which are a consequence of their lack of experience, or of the fact that young people have not yet matured.

The recital also stipulates that Member States should take the appropriate measures to ensure that the working time of children receiving school education does not adversely affect their ability to benefit from that education.

This is why the directive limits the employment of underage workers so that they cannot perform work that is beyond their physical or mental capacity.

Member States may allow children of at least 13 years to perform light work for two hours on a school day and 12 hours a week performed during term-time and seven hours a day and 35 hours a week for work performed when school is not operating.

The Commission has no plans to amend the directive with the aim to liberalise the protection of children and young workers. The restrictions on working time and other health and safety aspects of the work life of children are there to protect young workers from risks arising from their lack of experience and physical and mental development.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/1994/33/oj/eng>