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What does the Coalition Government mean for employers?

While the coalition agreement does not provide a huge amount of detail on the government's employment policies, it sets out a number of proposals that have an impact on this area and may impact upon employers before the end of this parliament. These include:

- ◆ Review employment and workplace laws, for employers and employees, to ensure they maximise flexibility for both parties while protecting fairness and providing the competitive environment required for enterprise to thrive.
- ◆ Encourage shared parenting from the earliest stages of pregnancy; this will include a system of flexible parental leave.
- ◆ Extend the right to request flexible working to all employees. It is not clear at this stage if this will be phased (as advocated by the Conservatives in their manifesto), or immediate (as advocated by the Liberal Democrats in their manifesto).
- ◆ Promote equal pay and take a range of measures to end discrimination in the workplace. As part of this, the government will look to promote gender equality on the boards of listed companies.
- ◆ Limit the application of the Working Time Directive (93/104/EC) (the Directive) in the UK. This presumably refers to the ability to opt-out from the Directive.
- ◆ Support the national minimum wage.
- ◆ Introduce various reforms in public sector employment, including various pay reforms, new protections for whistleblowers, and the right for public sector workers to form employee-owned co-operatives and bid to take over the services they deliver.
- ◆ Establish a commission to consider a British Bill of Rights (incorporating and building on the UK's obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights).

The key issue over the next few months is likely to be implementation of the Equality Act 2010 (2010 Act), and there is no reference to the 2010 Act in the coalition agreement. While the Liberal Democrats broadly welcomed the 2010 Act, they would have liked the previous government to have done more. The Conservatives, meanwhile, have previously indicated that they would review the way that the 2010 Act is brought into effect and possibly make some changes to it.

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