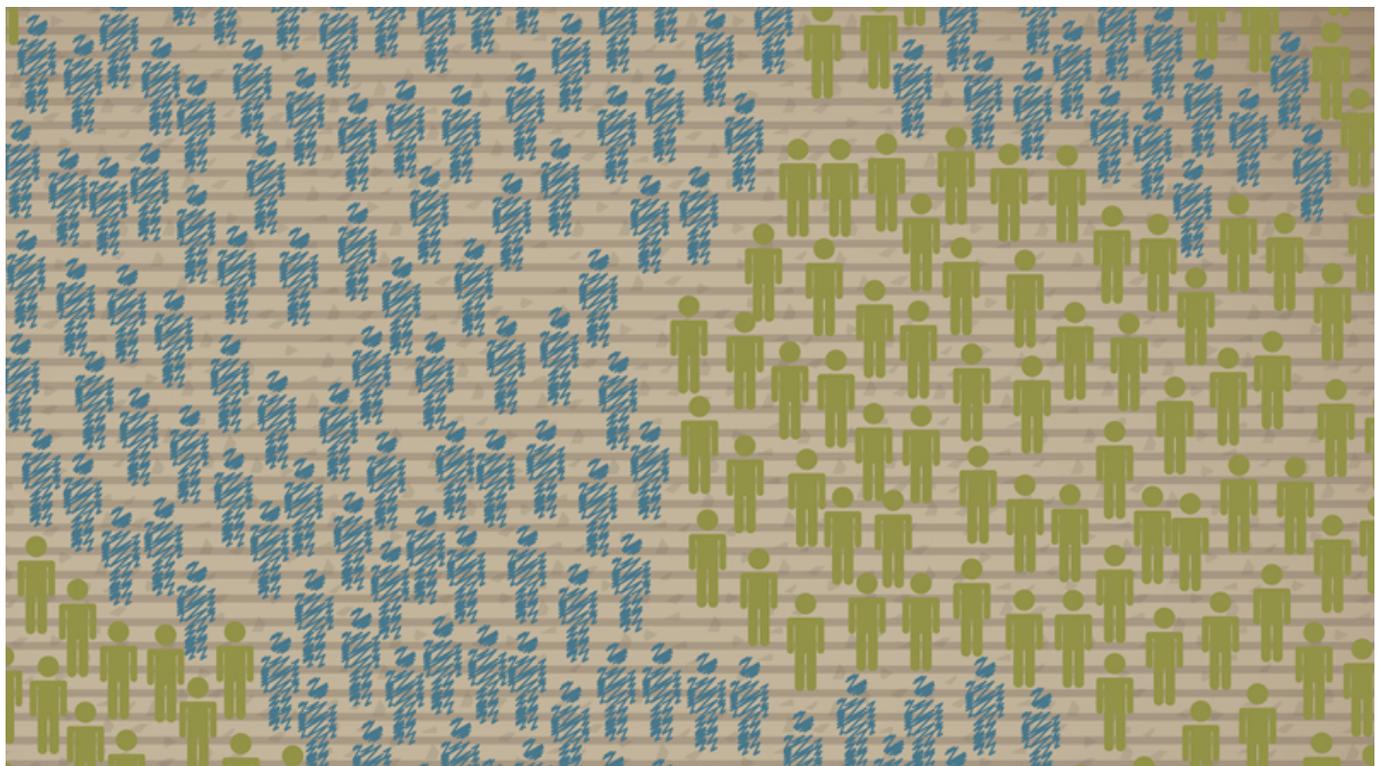


## Sunday work is a danger to our health and safety

Written by Thomas Mann on 3 May 2016 in Opinion  
Opinion

Sundays are traditionally a day of rest and leisure and should remain as such, argues Thomas Mann.



Six years ago, 72 organisations initiated the first European conference on a work-free Sunday. Together with more than 400 conference participants, we launched an official appeal to the European Council, the Parliament and the Commission.

Our message to the institutions was this: We stand for a work-free Sunday for all European citizens, establishing Sunday as a work-free day within the working time directive. The conference was the cornerstone of the creation of the European Sunday Alliance in 2011. We subsequently decided to establish an interest group in the European Parliament, which I have the honour of co-chairing.

My Danish colleague Ole Christensen has launched a draft report on the EU strategic framework on health and safety at work 2014-2020. To my mind, the most eye-catching figure he extracted is that every year, more than 4000 workers die due to accidents at work, and 150,000 fatal work-related diseases are contracted annually.

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This is a tragedy for Europe. This is why the EPP and the S&D groups are working together to ensure the highest level of health and safety. The Commission is our close ally, sharing our aim to better protect workers from accidents and diseases. In the strategic framework on health and safety at work 2014-2020, the Commission identifies three important challenges facing employers and employees.

First, improving implementation of existing health and safety rules, in particular by enhancing the capacity of micro and small enterprises to put in place effective and efficient risk prevention strategies. Second, improving the prevention of work-related diseases by tackling new and emerging risks without neglecting existing risks. Third, taking account of the ageing of the EU's workforce.

By using data from EU surveys on living and working conditions and interviewing more than 43,000 workers across 35 countries it can be shown that Sunday working is associated with an increased risk of accidents, illnesses, health problems, and negative effects on social participation and interaction.

This is most likely due to the fact that Sunday is traditionally a day of rest, leisure activities and social participation. There is a decisive difference between a Sunday and any other work-free day.

On Sundays, we have the unique possibility to relax and spend time together with our families and friends. Therefore, Sunday and the work-life-balance are both crucial factors in the debate on health and safety at work.

We must defend workers against the philosophy of the always-available employee. MEPs and the EU should stand side-by-side with us to safeguard Sunday as the day of rest, recreation and for religious service.

I am convinced that our interest group - the European Sunday Alliance - offers an excellent as a platform to connect MEPs, institutions and civil society on our common demand, namely that work-life-balance and Sundays should be included in the working time directive. Working on Sundays should be reduced to the minimum amount possible.

### About the author

Thomas Mann (EPP, DE) is a member of Parliament's employment and social affairs committee

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