

## FOUNDING STATEMENT

### setting up the EUROPEAN SUNDAY ALLIANCE

*“Together for decent working hours!”*



#### **Fair and just working conditions**

*Every worker has the right to working conditions, which respect his or her health, safety and dignity.*

*Every worker has the right to limitation of maximum working hours, to daily and weekly rest periods and to an annual period of paid leave.*

Article 31, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

A work-free Sunday and decent working hours are of paramount importance for citizens throughout Europe. We, the undersigned, believe that all citizens of the European Union are entitled to benefit from decent working hours that, as a matter of principle, exclude working late evenings, nights, bank holidays and Sundays. We believe that today, legislation and practices in place at EU and Member States levels need to be more protective of the health, safety, dignity of everyone and should more attentively promote the reconciliation of professional and family life. We believe that social cohesion in the European citizenship should be reinforced.

#### **WORKING CONDITIONS AT RISK**

Empirical studies prove that non-standard working hours cause a de-synchronisation of the social rhythms, which has a serious negative effect on the health and safety of workers. Unsustainable working time patterns (unpredictable on-call duties, broken hours, shift work, unsocial working hours such as night- and weekend work) can lead to increased stress and illnesses, as well as absenteeism related to strong feelings of a lack of control and influence on one's work and life. People usually work on Sundays or at irregular hours out of financial necessity rather than by choice. Unsustainable working time patterns, especially when they do not allow for enough working hours, are a main source of the growing phenomenon of the “working poor” in Europe.

#### **RECONCILIATION BETWEEN WORK, FAMILY AND PERSONAL LIFE**

According to the EU Directive on the Protection of Young People at Work, Sunday is already the acknowledged weekly rest day for children and adolescents in the EU. Likewise, extensive or irregular working time arrangements make it difficult to impossible for workers to enjoy a proper family life and to reconcile work with duties towards children and other dependents.

## **SOCIAL COHESION**

Work-free Sundays traditionally support the independence of persons from a purely economic-driven lifestyle. Sundays are the reference for the time organisation of state and society. Notwithstanding the need to provide essential services of general public interest such as emergency, police and health services, a common weekly day of rest creates the necessary framework with regard to the collective rhythm of time in all the Member States of the EU. It serves to strengthen social cohesion in our societies. Only a well-protected common work-free day per week enables citizens to enjoy full participation in cultural, sports, social and religious life, to seek cultural enrichment and spiritual well-being and to engage in volunteer work and association activities. Without this day, all these forms of social interaction and pastime would be endangered.

## **RESOLUTIONS OF THE ALLIANCE**

The European Sunday Alliance,

- Supports the protection of health and safety of workers and their right to a limit on maximum working hours and of a weekly rest period, including, in principle Sunday
- Supports the respect for collective agreements covering work organisation, which are essential to the social contract of a modern European society
- Warns against the growing economic pressure which is undermining national regulations regarding working conditions
- Commits itself to safeguard and promote work-free Sunday and decent working hours
- Urges the European Institutions to safeguard Sunday, in principle, as the common weekly rest day in the EU
- Urges the EU to better ensure that EU legislation and internal market rules guarantee the central place of health and safety, work- and life-balance and social cohesion by launching relevant initiatives to ensure work-free Sundays and decent working hours
- Calls on the Governments of the Member States to take their responsibility for improving, implementing and enforcing existing legislation and practices and respecting collective agreements

## **INVITATION TO JOIN FORCES**

The European Sunday Alliance,

- Invites all civil society (family, sports etc.), national and local Sunday alliances, the trade union movement and socially responsible employers, the churches and religious organisations to join this Alliance and take action to promote the protection of work-free Sundays and decent working hours.
- Calls on all democratic political parties to support its action and take the necessary steps through democratic institutions and media to promote the protection of work-free Sundays and decent working hours.

*Brussels, 18 February 2011*