

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003177/26
to the Commission
Kostas Papadakis (NI)
(30 July 2026)**

Subject: The death of work-free Sundays is rooted in the EU's anti-labour legislation

A provision included in a draft law that allegedly ensures 'equal pay for men and women for equal work' extends the working week to include Sundays and public holidays and adds new industry sectors to the list exceptions to compulsory Sunday rest. The new provision is another link in the long-standing policy of abolishing the observance of Sunday as a day of rest. This policy began under the PASOK and Nea Dimokratia coalition Government and was expanded on under the SYRIZA law.

This attack, which the Nea Dimokratia Government is escalating, is part of the policy that endorsed the 13-hour workday, the system of adjustable working time arrangements, flexible employment arrangements and the undermining of collective agreements. The huge profits of large corporate groups rely on wage stagnation, intensification of work, flexible forms of employment and the continuous extension of working time.

In view of this, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Where does it stand on the fact that European guidelines and the relevant legislation on the organisation of working time, including Directive 2003/88/EC, constitute the institutional framework that is used by Member State governments to extend work to Sundays and public holidays, deregulate fixed working time and intensify the exploitation of workers?
2. Where does it stand on the fact that the ever-growing list of exemptions from compulsory Sunday rest, from retail to an increasing number of industry sectors, is the result of implementing an EU strategy according to which production and businesses function based on the competitiveness and profitability needs of corporate groups and not on the needs of workers for fixed working time and rest?

Submitted: 30.7.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu on behalf of the European Commission
(25 September 2026)**

Directive 2003/88/EC ⁽¹⁾ sets out minimum requirements for the protection of the health and safety of workers, in particular limits to working time (not more than 48 hours a week on average, including overtime), minimum daily and weekly rest (at least 11 consecutive hours of daily rest and 35 hours of uninterrupted weekly rest), paid annual leave (at least four weeks per year) and extra protection for night workers.

While requiring minimum weekly rest of 35 hours, the directive leaves it to the Member States to determine whether it must include a Sunday.

When transposing the directive into national law, Member States must ensure that workers receive at least the protections provided by the directive, but they may adopt or maintain more favourable provisions for workers.

Member States have therefore some flexibilities in how they implement the rules and regulate the practical organisation of working time at national level but cannot reduce the minimum rights guaranteed under the directive.

Choices on Sunday work for certain sectors are therefore primarily matters of national law and policy, including collective bargaining, but must always comply with the directive's minimum standards to ensure the objective of health and safety. Upholding workers' rights is a central element of fair and competitive labour markets.

The Commission has recently renewed its commitment to fostering quality jobs in a competitive economy ⁽²⁾ and reaffirmed that it remains committed to strengthening social dialogue at all levels ⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2003/88/oj>.

⁽²⁾ Quality Jobs Roadmap, https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/82975aa7-bdd6-4a64-b3e3-82433901f8f7_en?filename=Quality-Jobs-Roadmap_Communication_2025.pdf.

⁽³⁾ Commission and European cross-industry social partners, Pact for European Social Dialogue, 5 March 2025 https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/93c513bd-9faa-4ba7-a4c7-9a06505790fc_en?filename=Pact%20for%20European%20Social%20Dialogue_signed%20version.pdf.