

European Mountaineers for Permanent DST

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What is it about

For years, there has been a discussion about the abolition of summer time (Daylight Saving Time DST) / standard time change. Now the EU seems to have decided to end the bi-annual clock change. Each country should be free to decide for permanent summer time or standard time.

In this article I try to point out the generally discussed advantages and disadvantages and to explain the positive consequences of a permanent summer time, especially from a mountaineering point of view.

A Short History of Daylight Saving Time

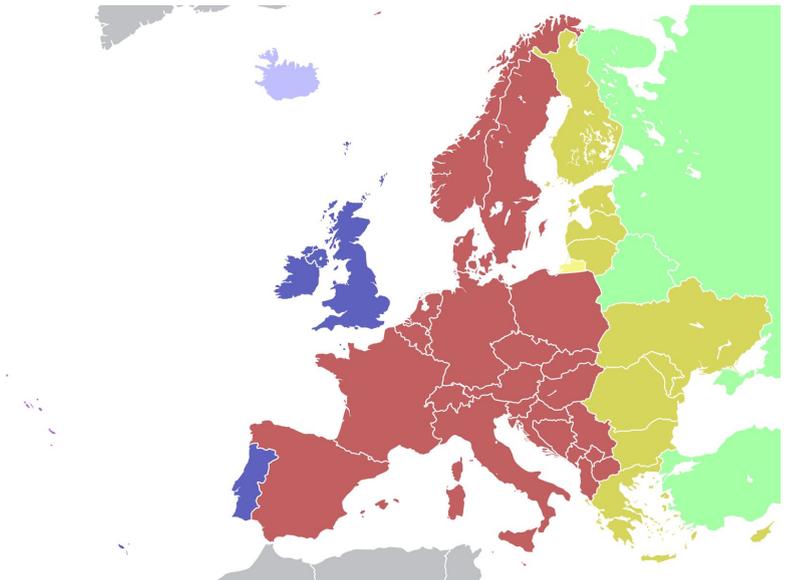
In 1884, a global system of 24 time zones with an east-west extension of about 15° of latitude was created. In the center of a time zone, the time corresponds exactly to the position of the sun, that means, at 12 noon, the sun is exactly in the south. There are four minutes of time deviation per degree of longitude.

An example: Warsaw is around 21° east, Paris a bit more than 2°. That's a difference of about 18° ($18 * 4 = 72$ minutes time difference). In Warsaw, the sun rises about 72 minutes earlier than in Paris. People who live in a time zone have the same clock time, but not the same time of day. Strictly speaking, we do not all live in the same biorhythm in every time zone.

The idea of a "summer time" with clock shift is even older than the definition of time zones. In 1784, Benjamin Franklin found that extended nightlife wastes energy by the use of artificial light. So he suggested to economize on candles by rising earlier to use morning sunlight according to the proverb *"Early to bed, and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise"*.

In reality, the first states to adopt DST nationally were Germany and Austria during World War I.

The current summer time was introduced throughout Europe on the occasion of the "oil crisis" in the 1970s.



Disadvantages of the bi-annual clock change

- **Energy saving**
New studies found that DST leads to electricity savings of less than 1% during the days when DST applies
- **Dairy farmers** are another group who complain about the change. Their cows are sensitive to the timing of milking, so delivering milk earlier disrupts their systems. (Today some farmers' groups are in favor of DST.)
- The annual time change causes an enormous expenditure concerning **time tables** of public transport.

This expenditure was probably one of the main reasons for the EU's intention to end the bi-annual clock change, notably for the transport and logistics sectors, which arise from an uncoordinated application of clock-changes in the course of the year. Each country should now be entitled to decide for a permanent summer time or standard time.

A little bit of mathematics

"The average German gets up at 6.20 am and goes to bed shortly after 11 pm", writes the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung FAZ. "Without time change, he would have missed two hours of sunlight during the summer. But if he goes to bed shortly after 11 pm in the evening, it would be dark for almost two and a half hours."

A simple arithmetic operation gives the following result:

With permanent summer time, the average German, who gets up at 6:20 am, would spend **179** hours more *before sunrise* than with standard time. On the other hand, he would spend **365** hours less *after sunset* before he goes to bed at 11 pm.

With permanent summer time, the average German would gain about 186 (365 minus 179) hours of daylight per year.

Opinion diversity for permanent summer time

- Proponents of DST generally argue that it saves energy, promotes outdoor leisure activity in the evening (in summer), and is therefore good for physical and psychological health, reduces traffic accidents, reduces crime or is good for business. Groups that tend to support DST are urban workers, retail businesses, outdoor sports enthusiasts and businesses, tourism operators, and others who benefit from having more hours of light after the end of a typical workday in the warmer months.
- Opponents argue that actual energy savings are inconclusive and that DST can disrupt morning activities.

What are the advantages of the permanent summer time for mountain sports?

Over the years, our rhythm of daily life has shifted more and more "backwards". Shops used to be open from 8 am to 6 pm. Nowadays, opening hours from 9 am to 8 pm are quite common. TV stations consider the programme from 8 to 11 pm as "prime time", followed by the night program. Many events start at 9 pm and last until midnight.

Leaving early in the morning for a mountain hike takes more effort today than it did a few decades ago, when getting up early was "normal".

In fact, more and more mountaineers / hikers start their tours later and later.

In the accident statistics, we read of

- exhaustion, heart problems (often caused by heat)
- getting lost (after dark)
- hypothermia (after dark)
- wet snow avalanches during spring ski tours
- sudden deterioration in the weather, thunderstorms (usually occurring in the second half of the day)
- harmless injuries, which can lead to critical situations when the day is ending
- Rescue operations facing difficult conditions in the darkness

Early departure is important and advisable for mountain tours. In reality, "7 o'clock in the morning", regardless of summer or standard time, is considered "early" when you go to bed the night before at 11 o'clock or later. If, for example, you prefer to start at 9 o'clock (summer time), this would be equivalent to 8 o'clock (standard time) - an hour gain in time, which may decide on a favourable or dramatic outcome of a mountain tour.

Resolution

European Mountaineers (EUMA) vote for permanent summer time as a contribution to reduce alpine accidents. Leaving late for mountain excursions can lead to dramatic situations and casualties: Heat as well as cold, dangerous weather and snow conditions, darkness and difficult rescue operations are well known causes for alpine accidents and tragedies.

Sources

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