

Dear Commissioner, dear Parliamentarians, dear friends from the trade union movement and dear guests – welcome to the New Year reception of the Danish Trade Union Confederation.

A week ago, we celebrated the beginning of a new decade.

Today it is time to look ahead at the challenges in front of us.

Twenty twenty (2020) marks the beginning of a renewed EU.

We have a newly elected European Parliament and a new European Commission.

One of the top priorities on the European agenda will be the green transition.

The Danish Trade Union Confederation were very pleased to see that the Commissions Green Deal for Europe contains a Just Transition Fund.

A green and just transition is one of our key priorities.

This includes support for reskilling or a job change if you are employed in a sector subject to a high level of transition.

If this is not sufficient, a security net must be in place to catch those who cannot enter into a new job.

This is mainly the responsibility of the Member States, but the EU has an important role in supporting this.

A just transition requires involvement of social partners, and the EU must push for this to happen in all member states.

In FH, we will do our utmost to make sure a European Green transition will also be a just transition.

Another core priority for the European Institutions must be to secure proper working conditions for all types of workers.

The digital era creates both possibilities and challenges for our labour markets. An example of this is the increase in platform workers.

If we leave things the way they are, it is likely that within the next decade we will see a strong division of the labour market.

Some workers – mostly young people – will be forced to work on short-term contracts with poor standards and very little or no protection.

Others will still enjoy the benefits of job security, proper health and safety and basic rights such as pay during sickness.

We need to see action from European policy makers that will secure decent working conditions for everyone in the workforce.

This includes a revision of competition law so it does not hinder self-employed workers the right to organize.

I hope the Commission will also be ambitious when it comes to improving health and safety at work.

The European strategic framework for health and safety expires in twenty twenty (2020) and a new strategy should include concrete proposals concerning mental health.

Furthermore, no worker in Europe should have to work for a wage that does not allow a decent living standard.

I know that you agree with me on this, Commissioner Schmit.

However, we disagree on how to get there.

The Danish Trade Union Confederation is – as you well know from your meeting with FH and DA in Copenhagen in December – very sceptic towards the upcoming proposal on a European minimum wage.

Not because we do not support those earning the least getting a pay rise. But we don't believe that regulation at EU-level is the right way ahead.

I am aware that you are very inspired by our social dialogue and strong labour markets in the Nordic countries.

And that you have no desire to destroy this.

But as social partners we are the ones who knows the daily functioning of our labour market model.

Therefore, I hope you will pay close attention when we voice our concerns.

A strong voice for workers and a strong social dialogue is the best road to achieve higher wages and better working conditions.

Denmark is living proof of this together with a few other European countries.

Therefore, I hope – and believe - that you will listen closely to our concerns in the time to come, Commissioner Schmit.

For the last couple of years much time has been spent on discussions about whether brexit will ever take place.

I am sure it has been the subject of many New Year bets – will twenty twenty (2020) be the year where brexit finally happens?

It seems likely that by the end of this month, the EU will have one member less.

From our perspective, we are sad to see the UK leave.

However, it is the choice of the British voters and I hope we will now be able to look ahead to the terms for the future relationship between EU and the UK.

An agreement between the EU and the UK must not erode the rights of the British workers.

Let's hope that both British and European policy makers will be able to agree on terms that will secure close ties between the two parties to the benefit of people on both sides.

So overall, the year ahead of us is full of exciting challenges.

I look forward to engage with many of you in an attempt to find solutions that benefit the European workers.

Thank you for coming, I hope you will have a pleasant time with us this evening.