

First happy new year. I started the year as I finished the last year. I have not started in Denmark yet, but I will go to Denmark in the end of the month. And I finished the year in Denmark and Sweden. You have read the summary of our program very well. What we want to do is very close to what have been achieved in some countries. Denmark is one of them. I have been starting to like you very much and it is not only because my head of cabinet is married to a Danish woman. I will come back to Denmark now and then.

You raised a number of important topics

First I will congratulate you with what you did with the unions and the anatomy of social partners and bringing together members of the trade unions. We absolutely need strong unions and by the way also strong employers, because there cannot be social dialogue without strong organizations. We have confidence and trust in the partners. Because through strong social dialogue and through strong organizations - and you are the best prove of that, we can really improve living conditions.

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The gender issue. I am just coming from a meeting about gender issues. You are an example and brought a message into the European Union. We still have a lot to do. We still have many gaps – pay gaps, pension gaps and promotion gaps. This commission with Ursula von der Leyen has taken head of direction. We really want to fight one of the biggest unfairness - which is gender inequality. Europe cannot be Europe with inequality between men and women. It is a strong commitment. I think Denmark can also strongly support that.

We are living in a time with big changes. These changes are giving us many new opportunities, but they do also represent many new risks. The risks are there. The risks are in nature, and we cannot make deals with nature. We can make deals with countries, employers and unions. We can make many deals, but with climate, nature, and the forces of nature, we cannot make deals. So we have to adapt and really have to develop policies with response of nature. And this is what transition and the green transition and green deal is about. It is a deal for us to make society compatible with the environment, compatible with nature, compatible with the way of how things change. For the survival of the planet. We need the support of member states, and I know that one member state will be in the front, because we are ambitious. We have a very ambitious goal – 50 percent minus in 2030, and I know the danes have more ambitious goals so you are needed and you should inspire us. And I know that this cannot be easily achieved.

The transition fund. It is not just a transition fund it is a JUST transition fund as such, that what we do we are doing in a fair and socially acceptable way. So we have to combine the social Europe with these changes.

You mentioned in your speech the changes of technology – the digital revolution. There is a lot of opportunities. We can find better responses to work, but there is also a lot of risks. The risk of the young guys who deliver pizza on bikes with no security – a lot of them have accidents and when they have an accident, somebody else is just jumping in – and this is not acceptable. We cannot build the economy of the 21st century with the labour standards of the 19th century. We have to bring the platforms - this new economy in a social sustainable way. It is a big challenge, and it is a part of our programme. A solid economy cannot be build on precarious wages and standards. This is a challenge, we have to take and we have to work together with the social partners – with the employers and the unions.

Now friends, there is the one topic, that I cannot escape.

Yes, there is a big injustice in Europe in wages. I have looked it up this afternoon. And I looked at the highest minimum wage in Europe – and the lowest. And there is a big difference - one to six. I don't want to mention the countries. The people working in the countries with the low minimum wages are not six times

less intelligent, less productive, less motivated than those who work in the other countries. Their living costs are not six times cheaper. They are just much much poor. Even those who have a minimum wage in the richest countries – and by the way I know very well which countries are the rich countries. They also live less privileged lives because they are on a minimum wage. Therefore we have to do something. We want to give European citizens and European workers a message. For the time being the messages has to be on wages. We have to invest in people. We have to skill our people and we have to give the people new opportunities. But we also have to give them the right and the opportunity to have a decent living. And when we talk about a decent living we also mean decent wages. That is why we have to do something on the framework. We are not doing that because we consider that the Danish labour market system or the Danish wages are too low. We know very well they are among the highest in Europe – good economy, good wages, good innovation good social dialogue. That means that the economy is a strong economy. So we have not thought about changing your model. We have not thought about changing the Swedish model or any other models. And therefore I repeat – which I already have done a lot of times. We will give you all the guaranties that the Danish labour model will not only be preserved but will also be better protected than it is today. Better protected than it is today!

I talked to the president of the commission the day before yesterday. I said I want to protect the system, and she said no; not only to protect – but also to promote.

So we want to promote this system, because it is a system based on social dialogue. We are talking about collective bargaining and a part of the social market economy is social dialogue. And it is strongly connected to collective bargaining. There is no strong social market economy without collective bargaining and therefore we have to preserve, encourage and strengthen that. You do that for yourselves in the system of Denmark but we have to extend that to those countries where it does not exist sufficiently. That's want we to do because that is also a part of Europe.

That also means that the good things, the good experience and the good societies where people are living in with strong social protection, with education, with skill and are comfort with a labourmarket in changes

Security is a right to everybody; to citizens and also to workers. We have to give people security. We have to give them the opportunity to reskill in a world that are changing a lot. That is a strong commitment. On Tuesday, there will be the first consultation. You will not find a ready text about some legal project or proposal. It is simply a text with us asking for comments. It is a large consultation from all of the citizens and all the social partners but not only the social partners - also the citizens. We will go to every parties. There is also Polish people and Hungarians that might have problems here and there.

We are open for all kind of dialogues. We want a strong Europa that is closer to the citizens. That means also where the economy works for all – not only for you, for all. Thank you.