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Consultation on the EU 2020 Strategy

The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions finds it of the utmost importance that Europe develops and implements a new joint strategy for growth, employment, social progress and climate change policies. It is paramount that such a strategy becomes more ambitious and more binding than the previous Lisbon Strategy, and that it has employment generation and improvements of labour market conditions at its core.

The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions believes that the Commission's consultation paper lacks an in-depth discussion of how the EU will cope with the challenges of the near future: growing unemployment, public deficits and demographic change. The Commission seems to take for granted that the EU will quickly return to 'normal times' with satisfactory growth rates and employment generation. But the crisis is far from over yet and such a return should not be taken for granted.

The Commission's consultation paper furthermore neglects to include the following:

- A social vision for the future of Europe. Many citizens increasingly see the EU as only an economic cooperation that is a threat to their social situation or rights. But the EU must also defend and strengthen these rights and this should be a cornerstone of the strategy.
- The combating of youth unemployment as the number one priority with regards to employment and education.
- Entry strategies to the labour market for the many unemployed. Exit strategies from crisis spending and rescue packages cannot be Europe's only concern these days.
- A gender-dimension to all policy aspects.

The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions furthermore believes that the EU 2020 Strategy should be particularly strong on the following aspects:

- Ensuring stronger and fairer labour markets. Today, there is increasing pressure on employment conditions and working standards, often in the outright form of social dumping due to abuse of the rules of the internal market. This development must be countered.
- Rules and regulation as a lever. Deregulation is not the answer to the EU's challenges. Rather, rules and regulation should strengthen European competitiveness by motivating companies to create products and solutions with high standards.
- Education and competences that cover broad areas and are developed through a lifetime. Europe will still need skilled labourers and qualified workers with technical expertise. The focus on education can therefore not only be academic. Moreover, there must be a special emphasis on education for the young generation that is facing mass unemployment at the moment. Finally, lifelong learning systems with a high degree of public financing as well as employer financed training and further education, as part of collective agreements, should be prioritised.
- Research and innovation that include all employees. There are many sources of innovation and they should all be reaped. Employees are an often overlooked resource of innovation but are key to developing and implementing new products and practices. Hence, employee-driven innovation must be strengthened in the EU.
- A just transition of the workforce. In the transformation to a green economy, jobs will be created while others will be shed. But not always in the same place. To ensure that climate change and the policies to combat it do not marginalize groups of workers, the EU must invest in the social and education policies that can make the transition as smooth as possible.

For the EU 2020 strategy to be successful, governance is central. Yet one key aspect seems to be missing from the Commission's thinking on this: the role of the social partners. At both the national and the European level, it is necessary to support the social partners in reaching agreements that ensure the fulfilment of the strategy.

Finally, the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions would like to draw the Commission's attention to the contribution for the consultation from the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), which it fully supports.

Best regards,

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President