



Christel Schaldemoses tale til Political Festival of Europe

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Europe Stage, Mariager

Omstændigheder

Schaldemoses tale på vegne af partiet Socialists & Democrats.

Thank you.

I am very happy to be the first to speak on behalf of one of the political groups in the European Parliament at this years Political Festival of Europe.

Europe is indeed high on the agenda and for good reason.

We live in unprecedented times. Two years of covid pandemic was immediately followed by the Russian attack on Ukraine. We now have a war on European soil, which creates the beginning of a new economic crisis. And above and beyond it all the climate crisis, which we truly feel this summer in Europe.

President Putin thought his war of aggression against Ukraine would drive a wedge in the European unity and divide our union. He did not succeed. The countries of Europe are more united now than ever.

Never have the European Union reacted so fast and so firm, as we have done with sanctions upon sanctions against Russia and help and support to Ukraine.

This is important. We have to stand firm in support of the rule based world order where international treaties and rules are respected. We cannot accept an illegal war of aggression against a peaceful European nation.

Now is the time to stand together for the values on which our union is build. And this we do.

Just in the Nordic countries alone we have seen significant shifts in the last months. Finland and Sweden are joining NATO, something which would have been incomprehensible just a year ago.

And here in Denmark we abolished our European Defence Cooperation opt-out with a convincing majority of 66,9 % in June.

Putin's aggression has not divided us in Europe. If anything, it has tightened our defence and security cooperation.

But international solidarity does not come for free. The sanctions imposed on Russia, as well as the Russian counter-sanctions and following effects also affect our economies, our societies and our people.

Energy prices and inflation are up. European household budgets are challenged. Everybody feels it. Once again we look at the tips and tricks from former generations on how to cook a family meal as cheap as possible or how to use less energy in the household.

It does not make the economic crisis any easier that it comes on top of two years of covid pandemic, which also had significant negative effects on the economy for many European households.

The last years has been severely challenging for societies all over Europe. We see inequality rising. The divides grow bigger. The people who had the least are hit the hardest.

The covid pandemic posed the biggest risk to the most vulnerable amongst us. And at the same time, some of the jobs that could not be reorganised into telework where the lowest paid front line jobs like bus drivers and nurses. These professionals risked infection just by going to work every day.

For many families the online schooling of children and youth took a heavy toll, but the most affected were the children whose parents could not help them with homework or did not have the means to provide adequate IT equipment. For them, they have effectively lost years of education.

And when we see the prices on energy and groceries rise now, it affects lower income homes more than higher income ones.

For some, this is just the nature of society. But for us - European Social Democrats - it highlights the inherent defects in the society. It puts a spotlight on the shortcomings in our societies, which we have to fix.

As Social Democrats we share a vision for our societies all over Europe: That no one is limited in the pursuit for a good life by their social or economic background. The income or education of your parents should not pose a limitation on what you can make of your future.

To achieve this goal we need a strong society build on equality and solidarity. A society, which evens out the inherited inequalities caused by our background. A society where solidarity is inherent in the structure of society.

And the good thing is, that these societies are more resilient when faced with a crisis. We saw that clearly during the covid pandemic - strong, social democratic societies got through the pandemic better. And we will see it again in the current economic crisis.

The motto of the European Union is “United in diversity”. Which is true. We have diverse histories and cultures and our societies are build differently as a consequence of this. But despite that, we have decided to enter into a union to overcome the challenges, where each country will fall short on their own.

The European Union is a union of member states. This is part of what makes the union diverse and we have to both remember and respect that. But it also makes our EU a union of responsibility.

Everyday we become more interconnected in Europe. Be it due to political decisions or technologic advancements, the countries in Europe affect and rely on each other. One poorly made decision in one country can have ripple effects in neighbouring countries. And one government acting in time can save neighbouring governments many problems.

This is the beauty of the European Union and European cooperation. The member states hold an important responsibility for the greater whole.

The European Union must focus on the challenges, which no member state can solve on their own: The climate crisis, taming the tech-giants, regulating harmful substances just to name a few.

There is plenty for the EU to do. But this does not take away responsibility from the member states to do their utmost as well. Europe becomes better, when all levels of political decision making take on their particular responsibility.

The last couple of years has been challenging for Europe, but they have shown what we can accomplish, when we stand together.

The covid pandemic made us strengthen the health cooperation in Europe making vaccines available all over the continent. And now the European cooperation is much better prepared for when the next health crisis comes. But we also have to make sure that each member state in the European Union is best prepared when the next crisis hits. This is the responsibility of the national governments.

We talk a lot about the Future of Europe these years. For some, the debate is a welcome opportunity to list their many wishes for institutional changes to the European cooperation. I think that is the wrong focus. We can do so much good for Europe within the current framework. We just need to focus on what is important.

EU must focus on the crosscutting challenges that no member state can solve on their own. On top of the agenda, we have the climate crisis. And we are on it.

Despite a pandemic and a war we cannot postpone finding adequate and longstanding solutions for the climate crisis that we are in the middle of. If anything this warm summer must be a wake-up call. The climate changes does not wait.

We, the European Social Democrats, keep pushing for high ambitions in the green transition. But unfortunately our colleagues on the right wing are too easily swayed by the businesses arguing for lower ambitions and longer

implementation periods. The conservative majority in Europe can cause us to lose significant progress with severe consequences in the years to come.

The covid pandemic forced us to rapidly adapt our societies in the short term. The climate crisis is forcing us to adapt our societies for the long term. We have a responsibility for future generations to make sure that the decisions we make now, will have the right lasting impact. And we have a responsibility for current generations to make sure, that the green transition has a red heart.

In Denmark, we Social Democrats always try to strike the right balance between economic responsibility and social justice. You could add to that the green commitment for the future.

In Europe, our priorities are the same. Long-term economic responsibility in every decision made. A firm focus on social justice - our policies should always aim at eliminating inequalities and fostering equal opportunities. And a strong commitment to the green transition.

These are indeed unprecedented times. They call for strong European cooperation, a strong commitment to create more resilient and fair societies and we firmly believe in European values.

Thank you very much.

Kilde

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