

Speech OPZZ 35th Anniversary Gala

Luca Visentini

A warm thank you for inviting me to this important anniversary in the history of OPZZ.

I take this opportunity to extend to you the congratulations of the whole ETUC.

OPZZ is an important member of the ETUC, and the European movement has benefited enormously from the input of your trade union.

Since Poland joined the European Union, you have made sure that the voice of workers from Central and Eastern European member states was well heard in the trade union movement.

You have always been fighting for improving the working and living conditions in Poland, as well as in the region – your battle for convergence, cohesion and solidarity has been paramount.

Recently, the input of OPZZ in the revision of the posting of workers directive is an example of this excellent contribution.

Together we have worked for a directive that will ensure better conditions for posted workers and the respect of the principle of equal treatment on remuneration.

The establishment of the European Labour Authority is a tangible outcome of the lobbying effort of the ETUC with the input of affiliates such as your organisation.

ETUC will continue to work to ensure the proper transposition of the revised Posting of Workers Directive in all Member State. I am certain that OPZZ will be instrumental in this with the work it will carry out in Poland.

We need to keep up our efforts on this topic. In this respect, we also need to keep insisting on the reform of our social security systems. So, there will truly be adequate and portable social protection for all categories of mobile workers.

Equally importantly, the engagement of OPZZ in the campaign of ETUC on Europe Needs A Pay Rise is also another excellent example of the relevance of your support on European matters.

OPZZ has not only actively engaged in this theme but has also had a congress dedicated to this subject – and the results the trade union movement have achieved in Poland when it comes to wages is an example for Eastern Europe.

You've almost reached the goal of increasing the minimum wage in the country up to 50% of the average, and you have managed to extend its coverage to all forms of non-standard work, including self-employed.

OPZZ practices what it preaches. It is a progressive trade union whereby it promotes equality and truly works for the integration of migrants, a particular example of this is the work that OPZZ had carried out so as to organise Ukrainian workers in Poland.

OPZZ also shows how progressive it is in its non-discrimination approach on the basis of ethnic origin, religion and sexual orientation – these are not easy topics in the Visegrad region, we admire your courage.

We need to continue our effort together especially now that we have a new European Commission.

The Commission President has launched her new programme. We reacted to this with the 15 priorities of ETUC.

Ursula Von Der Leyen, the Commission President, has announced she will propose a legal framework to ensure a fair minimum wage to each European worker.

The ETUC together with its affiliates has to be at the forefront shaping this initiative and ensuring that our demand for more and stronger sectoral collective bargaining is duly recognized and implemented.

We also need to focus on ensuring that wages in Europe are raised to the level that they are truly living wages. Collective bargaining is an important tool that will get us to having real living wages.

And we need to fight against wage and social dumping, which is perpetrated by Western multinational companies, alike in many other Central and Eastern European countries

We need to further our work in advocating a just transition. This is one of our priorities, the climate crisis needs to be addressed, but in doing so we need to ensure that none of our workers are left behind.

Speaking of just transition we have to also mention digitalization. Once again here ETUC will keep insisting that no worker can be left behind as technology becomes more part and parcel of our daily life and work.

Friends, our efforts in ensuring that jobs are sustainable needs to continue. Each and every one of us needs to continue working for the rights of workers, including youngsters who are in non-standard work.

The success we have as ETUC will widely depend on the support and input we get from the affiliates.

Here I once again reaffirm the gratitude and great respect we have for the work you are delivering every day in the interest of Polish workers.

I want to congratulate OPZZ, your leadership, the recently elected new President Andrzej Radzikowski, and your colleagues who cooperate with us at European level.

And I would also like to remember Jan Guz, a great friend of Europe and of European workers.

I know we can always count on you.

Again, my warmest congratulations for your 35th anniversary.

