

Speech Ver.di

Hello everybody,

I'm [Julius or Marianne] and I'm speaking for the trade union ver.di today.

First of all: it's crazy how many are here and how good the mood is!

For two years now, we as a society and also as a trade union have been dealing with climate protection and climate justice. And we keep asking ourselves the same questions over and over again: Jobs or climate protection? Mobility turnaround or innovative technologies? Economy or system restructuring?

However, these are debates that miss the point of a core problem:

As trade unions, we represent employees whose jobs and livelihoods are in industries that are harmful to the climate. That is a fact.

It is also a fact that we need a massive change in climate policy and that these very industries must therefore be scaled back.

But it would be arrogant to leave the employees to their own devices.

Solutions are needed for this - in quotation marks - conflict of interests. All of us here are aware that we need to massively restructure our economy and our production methods in order to effectively protect the climate.

And it is particularly important to pay attention to how this transformation takes place. Politicians and companies must not abdicate their responsibility to people under the pretext of taking climate protection measures.

At the same time, we will not allow politicians and companies to try to play off the interests of workers against those of the climate protection movement.

Instead, we demand a just, social and solidary climate policy.

We demand climate justice.

It is not the task of the individual to behave as climate neutral as possible, but the task of politics and society to create a system in which climate neutral behavior is not a decision but a normal state.

What do I mean by that? Let me give you a practical example: A cleaner in a hospital earns 11,11€ per hour. She works 20 hours a week. At the end she has a net income of 750€. How is she supposed to buy the expensive organic vegetables? How is she supposed to afford the climate-neutral new apartment? She probably also commutes because she can't afford an apartment in Heidelberg anyway. She doesn't have the privilege and access to all the things I just mentioned at all. We need to stop shifting responsibility to individuals and instead work on systemic changes.

For example, by massively expanding low-cost public transportation. After all, it's not just about having more trains and better intervals, but also about ensuring that people can afford to take the train at all.

We must also not forget those who then drive the buses and trains: Here, too, the same applies: Only if there are good working conditions and the employees are paid fairly will there be staff for public transport.

So when we talk about climate justice, we are also always talking about social justice.

That's why I would like to make one last point: Prospects must be created where employees are directly affected. Let's take the example of lignite: Measures must be taken in the affected regions so that local people have prospects. For example, there needs to be a right to further training so that they can find a job in another industry. Investments in climate protection and prospects cost money - and rightly so! But these costs must be borne on a basis of solidarity. And that means, for example, that higher wealth must be taxed more heavily than lower wealth.

We need this solidarity to preserve a livable planet for everyone. Already today, poorer and low-income households in particular are suffering from climate change. And this trend will intensify if we do not act now.

Climate protection is a social issue. And this shows that there is no conflict of interest between workers and climate protection.

Thank you