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Frankfurt/M.

**Statement auf der DiEM 25-
Konferenz am 9.2.2016
in Berlin**

Dear friends, dear colleagues!

First of all I want to thank Yanis for inviting me and for organizing this important event.

I hope, it will encourage a left wing, progressive movement for another, a better Europe.

I am a member of the Executive Committee of IG Metall.

Today I speak to you as one of the initiators of the call:

“Founding Europe anew”, that was initiated in 2012 and was supported by many unionists, academics and intellectuals.

This call is a pleading for a radical path change of the European integration process.

It asks for an end of austerity policy and neoliberalism, and for a new policy of solidarity and democracy.

It says – let me quote:

“Europe needs a democracy offensive. The EU will have no positive future as a detached elite project. ... Europe’s populations must be involved concerning core questions. ... We plead for a European social movement of citizens which embarks on a radical change of path, and acts against the current disastrous crisis policy.”

In February 2015 we started another statement „Greece after the election – not a threat but an opportunity for Europe”.

It was signed and supported by all German trade union leaders.

Dear friends, dear colleagues!

It is obvious that there are many commonalities between our activities and the democracy manifesto of DiEM25 which we are discussing today.

Demanding a radical change in Europe both initiatives are based upon a common idea:

More democracy is what Europe needs most!

So there are a lot of possibilities of cooperation, let’s talk about that!

But that is not enough.

The point I want to make is the following:

We have to start a debate amongst ourselves what our idea of democracy should be.

As I think we need a widespread plan of democratization.

The EU currently doesn't only suffer from a lack of legitimation and from an authoritarian fiscal policy.

It is also threatened by a brutal social division that is destroying social cohesion and solidarity within and between member states.

Increasing poverty, rising unemployment, especially of young people, and a huge inequality are scandals, we cannot put up with.

If we fail in fighting these scandals the vision of a Europe of the people will stay a castle in the air.

Therefore we have to intervene into market contribution of wealth and power, especially when it's dominated by financial markets – and this is the case in the EU.

That means: We have to fight European Financial Market Capitalism as a whole, as a political and as an economic power. A plan for a democratic Europe must go beyond the reform of political institutions.

It should include a new European economic and social policy agenda and aim to weaken the neoliberal political and economic elites.

So let me be clear: It's about political, social and economic democracy!

And it's about democracy against the power of financial market!

Dear friends, dear colleagues!

There is no doubt:

The left and the unions in Germany have a particular responsibility in this struggle. Germany is the hegemon in the EU and the German government is the spearhead of austerity.

Therefore our struggle has to be a European, but also a domestic one.

And honestly spoken: that is not that easy!

But one thing is evident: We have to put the German government under pressure for another policy, under pressure of a widespread social movement.

Without a radical change in German policy there will be no new window of opportunity for another path of EU development.

That is why we have to convince also the people in Germany, that we, that all of us would benefit from an EU without austerity and neoliberalism and real democracy and solidarity!

We are aware of our responsibility and it is encouraging for us that we are not alone.

We are looking forward to a strong Democracy of Europe Movement 2025 that will support us and our common activities for a better Europe.