

Motivation letter

By Sergei Stanishev

Running for re-election for the position of PES President

Dear friends and comrades,

I know that in our dynamic life each one of us is overloaded by information – mails, letters, requests, and invitations. **But, please, stop and take some time to read this letter.** I believe it is important. It is about *Our* PES, about the future of social democracy, about the Change we need in Europe.

In October 2011, I received a phone call from PES President Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, who had then served as President for seven and a half years and who has done a great job in further developing the PES as European political party. He informed me that – due to health reasons – he unfortunately had to take the decision to step down. On behalf of the entire PES leadership he proposed me to be elected interim President of the PES.

Serving and leading our political family are important elements in my life. Just 10 years before I was elected leader of my national party – the Bulgarian Socialist Party – we were not even members of the Socialist International and the prospects for my country of becoming member of the European Union looked uncertain and distant. During the years after I served the PES as Presidency member and led the successful campaign for the accession of my country to the European Union as Prime Minister of Bulgaria. I considered the request of Poul Nyrup Rasmussen and the other leaders of our movement - amongst whom Martin Schulz and Hannes Swoboda- a great honour.

To me the strengthening of our socialist, social democratic and Labour movement is key. One of the pillars is our European political party. However, we must be fully aware that a strong family only exists when all members and partners are working closely together. Therefore a strong and supportive relationship with our member parties and organisations including the S&D group in the European Parliament is of utmost importance.

I always believed and acted with sincere conviction that we all need a strong, coherent, solidarity-based European political party to achieve both our national and European goals. **I also believe that it was a clear signal of confidence and equality within our social democratic family towards the parties from the new member states.** It proves that among us there is no second class member and that all of us – old and new member parties – have the same standing and chances.

I am sincerely grateful to all who put their trust in me, for your support, actions, new ideas and initiatives, criticism, and for the many policies, positions, campaigns and events we produced and conducted together. **I believe in team-work and have always been open to every proposal that has the potential to outline our profile, to bring us closer to our common goal – a Europe of peace, prosperity, social justice, equality and solidarity.**

Our movement has always aimed at great and ambitious goals. You cannot achieve them alone. You need shared values, good coordination, mutual respect and support. Only if we work together, we can be successful and the full potential of each party, organization or individual from our family materialized. I have never played petty games at the expense of anybody from our family and had done my best to support every party from our PES family and I believe this is the right code of conduct among socialists.

We have a small but very competent and devoted international and lively team in our secretariat and I highly appreciate their commitment – from Achim Post, the Secretary General and his deputies to every person in our headquarters in Brussels.

Our achievements

Our political family brings together social democrat, socialist, Labour and democratic parties. All with their own history, culture and political reality. But our common basis is formed by our shared values, our ideals and principles. Only while working together we are at our strongest. By sharing best practises, taking common stands and by campaigning together. We sharpen our ideas though open and frank debates, but we always try to find common ground. It is an honour for me to help provide you as representatives of our member parties and organisations an open platform for dialogue and to be instrumental – with my network and experience – to get our message across.

During this mandate, I have outlined a few major priorities on which I have been working together with you:

- to make the PES even more relevant and useful to our member parties and organisations by creating and investing in successful and innovative platforms;
- to outline our social democratic alternative to the conservative policies which have dominated the European institutions since 2009;
- to help and support every national campaign in order to have the strength and the opportunity to implement our policies;
- to organize an effective and inspiring truly European campaign with our common candidate;
- to provide training in door-to-door campaigning and social media skills to grassroots members in close cooperation with our member parties and YES. By launching a trans-European grassroots mobilisation campaign and the PES European training academy.

I am proud to see that we have made good progress. Some of our achievements of this mandate:

- **Political coordination:**

Since the PES congress in 2012 the **Pre-Council** meetings have been uplifted. Today they have become a major platform of coordination for our Heads of State and government, our European Commissioners and other key figures such as the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz and the President of the S&D group, Gianni Pitella. Our cooperation with the S&D Group is based on complementariness. In addition we have invested in a frequent coordination with our ministers at the eve of the ministerial councils.

Since the PES congress in 2012 we have successfully deepened the cooperation with our member parties through the **Secretary Generals** & modernising politics network and by building a **Taskforce national elections**. Together with the Presidency, this platform has played an important role in defining and approving the common PES strategy for the European election campaign 2014.

And we have created new and innovative platforms of cooperation at the organisational level, to exchange best practises and to become more effective as political family. By launching the PES **media network** in 2013 and the PES **campaign managers** network. And by creating the PES European training academy in 2014 together with YES where we successfully trained 100 party representatives from 25 member states – most of who work for the headquarters of member parties.

I highly value the intellectual contribution of FEPS as our leading think-tank in providing our family with fresh, thorough, “out of the box” ideas and policies. The President of FEPS, Massimo D'Alema and its Secretary General, Ernst Stetter play a key role in this process providing guidance and stimulating fruitful and constructive debate.

- Even the best political ideas will not disclose their potential if they do not turn into political actions and campaigns. **At the beginning of 2012 with the drive and enthusiasm of our youth organization YES we launched our Youth Guarantee campaign.** In the beginning, many people thought it was just a political activity to gain points. Today, I am proud that thanks to the commitment of our Prime Ministers and leaders, the S&D Group's pressure in the European Parliament and the efforts of our Commissioners, especially **László Andor**, it is a reality. It provides real chances to tens of thousands of young people across Europe for a real chance for a start in life.

- **On my initiative, PES was the first European political party to oppose ACTA**, and we stopped it in the interest of millions of European internet users. I turned the defence and promotion of democracy and human rights into a personal cause and opposed their violations in any case – from the EU member states to every other region.

Our Democracy Network turned into a powerful tool to defend our values and promote human rights, equality and democratic standards. Thanks to the initiatives of PES Women President Zita Gurmai, a great and passionate campaigner, our family led the fight for gender equality with **a number of public campaigns, such as “Equal pay for equal jobs”**. PES systematically insisted that our lists for the European Parliament to be gender balanced and today 45% of the members of the S&D Group are women – 85 out of 191 MEPs – the highest number in comparison to all other political families.

- **The preparation of our PES Manifesto was a challenge in itself.** It was our common ambition to prepare a short and understandable 10 points programme to serve our 2014 European elections campaign. The 10 common points outline the main goals of our family for Europe during the 2014 – 2019 mandate. In the spirit of mutual effort and compromise we jointly discussed the 400 amendments and were able to produce a real social democratic narrative for a Change in Europe. I stood up for the need to frame clearly the political debate between the PES and the EPP as major opponent and competitor because I believe it is we, not the populist, xenophobic or anti-European forces, who represent the true alternative to the conservative policy in Europe.
- At the start of my mandate, we had only 3 Prime Ministers of PES member parties out of 27 member states. Today we have 11 Head of States and Prime Ministers (Algirdas Butkevičius – Lithuania; Bohuslav Sobotka- Czech Republic; François Hollande– France; Helle Thorning-Schmidt – Denmark; Joseph Muscat – Malta; Matteo Renzi– Italia; Robert Fico – Slovakia; Stefan Löfven – Sweden; Victor Ponta – Romania; Werner Faymann– Austria; Zoran Milanovic– Croatia). They make a real difference in the Council defending the PES positions coordinated in advance at PES Pre-Council meetings. This enables us to have a stronger voice as socialists and achieve our priorities in Europe. Furthermore, there are 5 governments in which our member parties participate. I would like to outline especially the commitment of Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel to consolidate our efforts to achieve the progressive change Europe needs. We, the PES aim to support our member parties wherever and whenever we can. **There has been no request from a national party for assistance, participation in campaign event or any other form of support which has been turned down.** I consider it as one of the primary duties of the PES President and the whole family to provide such help when it is needed, and I have personally attended campaigns and political events all over Europe – from Paris, Torino, Oslo and Seville to Budapest, Bucharest, Vilnius, Warsaw and Athens. The national elections network which has been established is one of the practical tools to be even more efficient in this respect.

- **Since the end of 2013 the PES team has been mainly transformed into an election team for our leading candidate Martin Schulz in his remarkable and inspiring campaign.** I hope Martin appreciates our innovative and consistent organizational contribution to his personal tireless effort for our whole family. The PES, with the crucial commitment of our activists, organized **a Europe-wide “knock the vote” grass-root campaign**, through which we provided training on direct voter contact and the use of social media in campaigning to more than 11.000 members during 5 months. This European wide-grassroots mobilisation is one of the most valuable new assets for the future. I am convinced that if the final result would have been to a greater extent up to the European campaign today we would have had the President of the Commission.

However, at the very first Pre-Council meeting after the May 2014 elections our family clearly insisted that the vote of the people should be respected. The whole odyssey substantially changed the environment for doing politics in the EU and it was **the PES which was a leading force in that process.**

During my current mandate our team in the management has followed the line of high standards for transparency and good order in our accounts. Thanks to our Treasurer Ruairi Quinn, after the last full a comprehensive audit of PES, the auditors stated that “PES is an example to other European political parties.” I think we should all be proud of this.

I am grateful to the PES Vice-Presidents – **Jean-Christophe Cambadélis**, Jan Royall, Elena Valenciano and Katarina Nevedalova – and the whole Executive body and the PES Presidency for their contribution and commitment to our achievements. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Socialist Group in the Committee of Regions for their active and devoted work for our policies in their organization and in the Presidency. I believe that in the future we should use its political potential to a greater extent remembering that the strong positions in local and regional authorities are part of the basis for our family.

Why I need your support to go on

In the last 3 years as PES President I have spared no time, energy or effort to defend the confidence I received from you and have worked in good will for our common success. Like each one of us, I have had my disappointments, lived through difficult moments, and faced betrayals. We did not win the European elections. Just by a little! The EPP lost more than 50 MEPs. We preserved our positions, but failed to improve. If in half of the countries we had an additional MEP, it would be a different picture in Europe today.

Like many of you I was also disappointed that we did not have the maximum possible number of socialist European Commissioners. However, I understand the difficulty for those who have to govern in coalitional formats.

What is important for me is to see that **the members of our family in the Commission**, led by the First Vice-President Frans Timmermans, with our High Representative Federica Mogherini, **work as a real team and really make a difference**. In a short period of time **the social democrats in the Commission and in the S&D Group, led by Gianni Pittella, are making change of the political priorities a reality**. We fought for 5 long years to shift the policy at a European policy from austerity only towards investment and jobs. Today the Commission Investment Plan, initiated by us, is the first achievement and concrete tool in this direction. With the competent vision of Pierre Moscovici we are really changing the financial and economic priorities of the Commission. The new European Energy policy, led by **Maroš Šefčovič**, is also our priority. I believe that working devotedly and in good coordination with our governments, Commissioners, and MEPs, with all the parties, we have the critical political mass and strength to deliver and to achieve the change in Europe we pledged before the elections.

My experience in the last few years led me **to the conclusion that in order to achieve maximum efficiency as PES President, and provide the best results in our work in the European institutions one needs to focus completely on this mission**. I decided to stay as MEP in order to provide the best coordination with the S&D Group and commissioners, and stepped down as national party leader. It was a difficult personal choice. I led my party, the BSP, for 13 years in many political battles. We were in opposition, twice we had the confidence to lead the government, achieved the Bulgarian EU membership and remarkable economic and social results and I will remain proud of this exceptional experience.

Today I feel ready to do more as PES President. It would be false to say that everything is fine and easy, and the prospects for European social democracy promise one victory after another. Europe and our family are facing tremendous challenges and dangers. The EU is at a crucial juncture for its future. Too many people are disappointed, frustrated and angry with the slow economic recovery, high unemployment, growing inequality, and outstanding internal and external security challenges. The murky perspectives for them and their children lead to general disappointment with politics, abstention from voting or a shift towards anti-European parties. Social democrats are challenged by populist parties which claim to provide easy solutions to difficult problems. In many countries our parties are weakened. We lose voters and elections. To address all these risks we must clearly demonstrate that our policies aspire for the change, expected by Europeans.

Nevertheless, I **strongly believe that our values of freedom, justice, equality and solidarity are the best foundation for the right policies both at national and European level**. Throughout its history, our movement has been inspired by an optimistic view of the future, by our belief that the world can be better, and fairer, and that people can live decent and dignified lives, having equal opportunities and security.

Our Political Goal: Victory for a Social and Democratic Change in Europe

For me there can be **only one political goal for PES for the next 5 years – to win the European elections and have the President of the European Commission from the Socialists and Democrats family.** Along the way, I shall do my utmost to support every party in its domestic developments and elections in order to increase the weight of social democracy in the European Council.

The big question and challenge is how to achieve that ambitious goal. It is a privilege to share with you my vision on the matter. It is not my intention to focus now on the policies and positions, because I believe they are broadly represented in our Congress resolutions.

However, I am convinced that we need to strengthen the political and institutional capacity of the European Union to deliver results in priority areas, where we all need it and it can make a difference for the better.

We need to reform and strengthen the EMU as the economic core of the European Union, develop a “social pillar” within and provide convergence through strengthened economic governance. **I believe social democrats have to elaborate and implement a progressive and positive reform agenda which outlines our identity and paves the way for competitive, job rich economies through investment in our citizens who remain the greatest asset and capital of Europe.** For that purpose, we have recently established a special working group co-chaired by some of our best economic and social experts - Maria João Rodrigues and László Andor. We should prioritize investments in education and skills and in public health care. Europe’s growth should rely much more on real economy, and for that reason we need a comprehensive and coordinated new industrial policy, oriented towards green growth for the future. It was we, social democrats, who were the first to start speaking about this and now we have to foster our comprehensive vision about the ways for the reindustrialization of Europe. We have proven that socialists are fiscally responsible. However, the dismantling of the welfare state, camouflaged by the necessity to reach budgetary balances, is undermining the whole European project and the basis for economic success and optimistic society model, and has to be decisively opposed.

Not a single country of our Union can handle alone challenges such as terrorism, the Islamic State, mass refugee waves and migration. **Our approach should clearly be based on mutual solidarity, and strengthened and deeper cooperation, which can only strike the right balance between security for the citizens, a humanitarian approach, cooperation with our neighbours, and economic prosperity.** We need a stronger European role for maintaining and evolving even higher democratic standards in every country through an “EU Democracy Scoreboard”. The demons of intolerance, extremism, and neo-fascism are out of the box, fed by the unprecedented economic crisis. As socialists, we have to oppose any expression of these dark phenomena.

PES is the party which initiated and campaigned for the introduction of FTT, which has to be implemented and enlarged. **We need better regulations on the financial sector as a guarantee for the future that people will not have to pay for irresponsible gambling in the pursuit of profit.** Clear European rules against tax evasion are of the highest importance for the fiscal stability of the countries and for the reconstruction of the feeling of justice and fair sharing of the burdens by the citizens.

One of the biggest problems in Europe nowadays is the growing social inequality and growing poverty for too many working people, unemployed and the middle class. We need a Europe which protects and provides effective mechanisms for social justice and equal chances for every person. I cannot accept that in the wealthiest Union in the 21st century we have children who are hungry and cannot go to school. The PES will decisively oppose any form of discrimination - be it on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. Our fight for equality and human rights is the historic trade mark of social democrats and we shall remain champions in this field!

We should never forget that **one of the core foundations of our beautiful European project is the idea for peace and cooperation between people!** Sometimes it is taken for granted. **We cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that peace is undermined all around the borders of the European Union** – from the conflict in Ukraine, via the medieval ISIS to the growing instability, civil wars and chaos in the Middle East and North Africa. Only united, speaking with one voice, through foreign and security policy, only acting together we can ensure peace at our borders, and stability and prosperity for Europe.

Increasing the EU capacity for common policies does not mean a more bureaucratic, self-sufficient, self-producing bureaucratic approach, which distances and alienates European citizens. We should follow the principle that the decisions should be taken where they can produce the best results for the citizens and be democratically accountable. Our cultural diversity and national and regional identities are among the treasures of Europe and should be cherished and developed **on the basis of mutual respect and consideration for national interests in order to enrich our Union.**

We all feel that the world and Europe are entering a new period. The philosophy and policy of neo-liberalism, which has dominated since the 1980s has produced the deepest and most devastating economic, social and political crisis for decades. **I strongly believe that, based on our values, we are obliged to produce a new progressive, socialist vision and story about the future of our Union – inspiring and appealing to the people of our continent.** It is a million Euro intellectual, political and organizational challenge for all of us! We started this journey together in the recent months and can achieve it with joint commitment!

How to Make the PES Strong, Visible and Influential The right tool for a better Europe

We all declare that we want to have an even stronger, more influential and more visible Party of European Socialists. **I want to share with you my vision, working method and plan on how to achieve it together.**

It is evident to me that the tremendous challenges and obstacles ahead require from the PES President a lot of energy and full time commitment to achieve our political goal. I am ready to provide it. At the same time, I have never been a sole, individualistic or selfish player. **One can only be successful, if one has a strong team of people one can rely on, with whom one shares common ideas, attitudes, and efforts.**

I believe that in the last few years we have managed to establish such a team in the management of the party. I really feel our Secretary General Achim Post as a comrade, not in the formal, but in the real sense of the word. His political experience and valuable knowledge of every national party in our family, as a long standing International Secretary of the SPD, is a great asset in our efforts to make PES more effective, result oriented and closer to the parties. His innovation in organizing the European campaign was impressive and efficient. I believe that in the future he will bring even greater efforts in his capacity.

The principled, fair and transparent approach of our Treasurer Ruairi Quinn is the basis of our financial health and orderly work.

Deputy Secretary General Yonnec Polet is not just the one with the longest experience in PES as organization, but also possesses invaluable insight of all the details and trends in European policy making and institutions. He has a great input in the effective work of our ministerial networks. We all value his efforts and commitment in the process of preparation of the PES Manifesto.

Marije Laffeber, who in our capacity as international secretary and member of the PvdA leadership was member of the PES Presidency for 8 years before she was appointed Deputy Secretary General, brings the solid credible and innovative approach in the daily running of our organisation, responsible for financial and legal matters, staff and the organisation of all our statutory events. She was in charge of the preparation and daily running of the PES 2014 campaign. I especially value her contribution for the “knock the vote” campaign, the development of the PES Activists Network and the recent launch of our successful European Training Academy very highly.

Deputy Secretary General Giacomo Filibeck is well known among our member parties since his role in ECOSY and for his perfect knowledge of international affairs. I cannot avoid underlining his contribution for finalizing the long term goal to bring the Italian PD as a full member to our family. I am confident that with him we shall further strengthen the international authority of the PES.

With a relatively small number of people in our Secretariat, we manage to successfully produce policy papers, coordinate positions and meet expectations of national parties, organize dozens of conferences and events all over Europe. This would not be possible without the committed work of the whole PES Secretariat. I will do my best to keep and improve the informal and motivated and ambitious spirit for the future.

To me politics, apart from its core sense to stand for our values and improve people's lives, is a permanent competition – with the political opponents, with time, with your own inertia and temptation to rest on the laurels of your achievements. The moment you believe that you are doing everything right and routine prevails in your attitude, the moment you get irritated with constructive criticism or reduce the efforts for self-improvement, is usually the beginning of decline. After many years in politics, I have still not lost the internal need and ambition to do things better than yesterday, and I feel ready to continue doing so. I recall an old story of the wise man and his student and their dialogue:

- How can I achieve success? – *the student asked.*
- With two words – “right decisions” – *the teacher answered.*
- Then what is the secret of making right decisions? – *persisted the young student.*
- One word – “experience”.
- And how do you achieve experience?
- Two words – “wrong decisions” – *the wise man concluded.*

Our European party already has a lot of experience – both positive and negative. The important thing for me is **to continue our ambition for self-improvement, modernization, and permanent change on the solid base that we have.** I do not believe in “silver bullet” recipes for the success of the PES. From the moment when elections end, we are ought to start our preparation for the next campaign. It requires from the PES President and all stake holders in our organization **a complex approach, persistence and continuity in our work. If you miss even one element – it could be fatal for the final result. I will outline some key cornerstones for our strength and success in the forthcoming years,** the way I see them:

- **Cherish our PES**

The way we are seen in the eyes of others, to a great extent depends on ourselves. **We shall never look strong, united and leaders the processes, if we are actually providing mixed signals.** It is we, all the Prime Ministers, party leaders, delegates of our Congress, MEPs, and activists, who can make it a reality. On the basis of a collective spirit of mutual respect and positive attitude, cherishing and nurturing PES as our common party and destiny we can achieve it. We all know that the inability of our family to have an alternative candidate in 2009 led us to the idea that it weakened our standing, and should not be repeated and this should be changed through a democratic process of selection of a common candidate. Like my predecessors I faced situations and efforts to bypass or limit the role of PES. Such an attitude does not increase the strength and influence of our movement.

We cannot waste time and energy on minor internal squabbles and focus on our political fight with the opponents. We should always remember that what we have achieved as individuals is due primarily to our belonging to our parties. There are always people who are at least not less qualified than each one of us. And it is good to remember it not only while you are in opposition, but also when in power. If we all follow such an attitude, PES will become even stronger.

- **Stronger Solidarity**

We see that there is a deficit of solidarity in Europe – within our societies and among nations. And rightfully we claim to change it, because Europe is dead without this value. But do we always show enough solidarity among ourselves? Can we be credible, if we do not demonstrate enough evidence, that this is our way of behaviour? **I have witnessed many cases when we are ready to keep silent, stay distant or even hostile towards members of our family, be it individuals, or whole parties.** It is part of human nature to defend your personal comfort. But our nature as socialists is to help each other. To be critical when necessary, but to help our comrades in need. Everybody has difficult times. I strongly believe that only our common and positive commitment, **only mutual support and enforcement can bring benefit to the whole family.**

- **Self-confidence and emotion**

Nobody will follow you, if you do not look and act with confidence. In order for people to entrust you with their own destiny, they have to see that you know where you are leading them. **One of our weaknesses is that we do not demonstrate our achievements enough. The other essential element is our sincerity and passion.** We can only earn trust if we really share the grief of an older person who cannot have access to quality health care, the desperation of a mother who cannot send her child to a decent school, the anger of a young graduate, whose first experience in real life is a long line for the unemployment bureau! I often ask myself the question – do I feel the pain they suffer? I think I do! And it is essential for all of us to remember that human compassion is one of the fundamental features of our movement.

- **Clear and credible identity**

The most important role of PES in my view is to keep and develop our identity. I believe that there is a need for more ideology and political differentiation from the other political families. We must avoid the trap to be presented as part of the status quo and the “establishment”. The image of Europe as technocratic, politically colourless machinery is one of the major reasons for the disillusionment of the people. **Politics is about choices and we always have to outline clearly our political alternatives, which are value based.** The other side of our identity is what you deliver. There are political parties who are masters of strong and appealing promises, who are successful in surfing on the waves of discontent and anger. But they are weak in substance and ability to deliver.

One of the best features of social democrats, which has to be further strengthened with pride, is that we are trustworthy and do what we promise. This is the reason the work and results of our Members of the Council, Commissioners, our Group in the European Parliament are of such importance. The role of PES in that respect is to assist every effort to make the Change in Europe we pledged for a reality and a strong fundament for our next campaign.

- **Better Communication**

In the modern world of communication, when information reaches societies within minutes, even the best positions, and the most impressive achievements lose their value, if nobody has heard or seen them and if the story is misinterpreted. **Here I see a vast field for improvement!** How many Europeans know that the FTT, or the Youth Guarantee, or the EC investment plan, are actually achievements of the social democrats?

How many Europeans still believe the false and old-fashioned cliché that conservatives accumulate growth and wealth while the socialists only spend and distribute? How many, even within our own family, are unaware of the successes of our governments? I am sure that each one of you can broadly extend that list of questions. **It means we need to urgently and systemically invest much more time, energy and resources in our communication – both external and internal.** Every event, position and achievement of the PES family has to become more visible to the media and our societies.

Among other changes we have introduced is the Media Network, which is a good start for making PES and European policies more visible in the member states and the results of our parties better-known in Brussels and among other members of our movement. We still have to do a lot to explore the potential of that fruitful cooperation. The visibility of PES in the European media will be among my first priorities.

- **Fight for what we stand for**

As PES President Poul Nyrup used to say “You only count, if you fight.” I strongly believe in that. In my political life I have won battles and I have lost. I have Enjoyed victories, and suffered defeats. But when it was about our principles, I never shied away and was ready to **pay the price.** The future of our family depends on our ability not only to declare our ideas and policies but to defend them by all democratic means. When you have something to say, there will always be people to follow you. In the 1520s, Martin Luther was summoned to the Imperial Court to be judged for his revolutionary interpretation of the Bible. Initially he did not dare to oppose the Catholic Church. But on the next day, he put himself together, and declared: “Here I stand and that is what I believe in and cannot do it any other way.” This is how he started the Reformation and changed the map of Europe. We have so many things to share with Europeans and I guarantee that I will always be ready to defend them.

- **Organization and coordination**

One of the crucial components of our success is how we shall organize our work. **PES is a roof party. It cannot be structured as the national members of the family. Our major task is to assist and coordinate not in an intrusive, but in an interactive, dialogical way our national positions and work closely with the members of our family in the European institutions.** I think we have successful experience in that, respecting the institutional role of our Heads of States and governments, Commissioners, Ministers or the S&D Group. I am sure that **we have a common political direction and in dialogue we have to find the right path.**

From this perspective I intend to organize periodically strategic meetings with all of them in order to outline the priorities and major challenges for our family. We should also strengthen the role of the Leader's Conference and make it more regular and explore more the potential of the Executive body of PES and the Presidency. In this respect it would be really important for the national party leaders to propose heavy-weight political figures for the Presidency. One of the novelties which we introduced is the Secretary General's Network, which is a very useful forum for cooperation of the key organizational figures in our family. **My ambition is to make it even more effective in order to strengthen the coordination and make a really European campaign for the next European elections.**

- **Intellectual might**

Ideas are the most important element in politics, especially for a movement, which has grown exactly on that basis. The world has changed tremendously. The post-industrial society, information revolution, and new technologies have fundamentally changed our environment. Today we live in societies which are much more atomized, which have a lesser sense of solidarity, and people feel defenceless and vulnerable. It is our common task to produce a new vision of the world. In achieving that I will count on each one of us. I see a special role for FEPS as our leading think-tank, which has developed an impressive network of thinkers, academics and foundations, both in Europe and across the Atlantic to provide expertise to our family. We should all appreciate the contributions which we have from them, without being exhaustive, on our economic policy, of social state, on Europe and the world, and recently on migration and asylum policy. I also intend to propose the establishment of an Advisory Board for strategic discussions on the future of European social democracy and on our political line. **I intend to invite to it prominent figures from our family with extraordinary political experience, and this body should meet regularly.** We definitely need their knowledge, freedom of mind and involvement in the debate about our priorities. With such an impressive set of tools we shall be able to win the intellectual and political debate with our opponents.

- **Investing in the future of our young generation**

It is not a secret that in most countries the electoral body of social democrats is growing old. In a way, we are living on the heritage from the past. If we do not change this, the prospects for the socialist movement are far from bright. Very few parties manage to be as appealing to the younger generation as they used to be. The new generation expects new policies, attitudes and ways of communication and organization. **We stand a chance only if we invest massively in research and analysis and change our approach.** Recently PES launched the European training academy for young political leaders and activists. In the years to come it should turn into a large scale project for political education of our young leaders. **Together with our youth organization YES we shall come forward with new initiatives and campaigns addressing the problems of the young generation of Europeans.** I had the rare chance to be elected as BSP leader at the age of 35, Prime minister at 39 and PES leader at 45. I know what obstacles – both objective and in attitude - you have to overcome when you are young. I am certain that we have to give greater chances to the young generation in the Socialist movement. What young socialists need is trust, support and encouragement for their initiatives and ideas. I know they would not accept routine, suspicion and patronisation. I will do all I can to make ensure that the next S&D Group will not only keep the proportion of women, but also substantially increase the number of young people in its composition.

- **Grassroots party**

PES cannot be locked in Brussels. In all previous years we did a lot to create a powerful network of PES activists. In a number of countries we have hundreds of thousands of activists who promote our socialists ideas and are the heart of every campaign. **Today we can proudly say that PES has the largest and best organized network of activists of all European parties.** I am exceptionally grateful for their energy, time and passion, with which they really make a difference and are an inspiration to all of us. Some of the most interesting and energizing meetings which I have had, be they in Spain, Belgium, Hungary, Romania, or any other country, have been with them. With the support and encouragement of the national parties we shall further strengthen this great asset for European socialists. My ambition is to fully support the enthusiasm, openness and conviction of our activists through extended care and interaction on behalf of PES in order to turn their network into the most powerful tool of the socialist family for the next European elections.

- **Getting closer to the member parties**

One of my priorities remains to make PES more useful to the member parties. I have already mentioned that there is not a single request for assistance, campaign support, or political position, which has been rejected. The National Elections Task Force chaired by our secretary general became an effective tool to support our parties during elections. **This year, we have discussed a special programme of events and activities for every party facing national elections – be it PSOE in Spain, PS in Portugal, SLD in Poland or BSP in Bulgaria.**

For most parties it is essential to demonstrate that they have broad European support from one of the two biggest political families in Europe. I remember very well that in France the opponents of François Hollande tried to impose the impression that he is in an international isolation. With the coordinated effort of many of our leaders at European and national levels this bluff was dispersed. **I intend to extend and deepen that approach and will look for every way to support our parties. Furthermore, in the future we have to organize even more pragmatic tailor-made programmes for each individual party, not just during the election period, but in a systemic way, based on an interactive approach.** For me there are no “big” and “small” parties. Of course, the strength of parties such as SPD, PS, UKLP or PD is crucial for our common political weight. However, we need to ensure that all parties feel their ownership in PES. Our team will work hard to achieve high results in each country. In the end in many elections every vote counts!

- **Innovation and Learning**

There are so many things we can learn from each other. I can give dozens of examples of our parties’ achievements that we should study, use, and transmit. Look at the impressive results of PD in Italy under the leadership of Matteo Renzi by becoming a party of change, innovation and hope! It is admirable how Joseph Muscat and the Labour party in Malta manages to preserve and increase its support being in government for several years now! Last year, attending the SAMAK Congress of the Nordic parties, I was deeply impressed and moved by the spirit of pride for the achievements of social democracy in the Scandinavian countries, combined with the will for modernisation of their successful model of development. Just recently I learned much from the experience of the Swedish social democrats and the UK Labour Party in organizing their massive door stepping campaigns. **I see one of the important missions of PES for the future to be a deepened exchange of experience, best practices and, know how among the members of the family. It should involve every field – from policy making and coalitional relations to campaigning, party organization and media policy.** Each time we have had events where people from different parties shared their practical experience and knowledge participants approached me to thank me for the added value provided by PES.

- **Our partnerships**

In present times the question of alliances – both internal and external - becomes of vital importance for every political party. The more and more fragmented composition of the European Parliament requires from **our Group exceptional skills in striking the right balance between identity and the need for effective functioning of the Institution. It is clear that the only stable majority can be provided by PES and EPP together. As a party, believing in parliamentary democracy, willing to deliver, we took our share of responsibility and should not be shy of this.** We are all aware of the risks which may follow in the long term for us as an alternative to the conservative and neo-liberal policies and for the next elections. It is of paramount importance to manage to incorporate major priorities of our agenda into the work of European Institutions.

It requires from us to be coherent, self-confident and aggressive in our relations and cooperation with other democratic parties. We need to strengthen PES's relations with the European Trade Union Confederation and the civil society in order to be able to fulfil more.

PES has always been active in the international field developing relations with progressive forces far beyond our region. Apart from our institutionalized relations with the SI, we have developed cooperation with the Progressive Alliance. One of the good tools, developed together with the S&D group, is the Global Progressive Forum. **Our relations and regular exchange with the US Democrats remains the key element for the cooperation of the progressives from both sides of the Atlantic.** Our family remains committed to the European perspective for the countries from the Western Balkans and through our cooperation with the sister parties it has to ensure that the process of enlargement in the region remains credible and is backed by the necessary reforms.

Since the beginning of the Arab Spring PES is seriously committed to promote democracy through Annual Conferences in the region and bilateral cooperation. We encouraged and supported the initiative of a number of parties from the region to establish the "Arab Social Democratic Forum" which helps to coordinate their policies and exchange experience and develop a social alternative for the whole MENA area. The PES remains committed to a lasting two-state political solution between Israel and Palestine and works actively with our partners on both sides for such a development. We need to invest much more time and effort in supporting and developing social democratic political partners in the countries of the Eastern Partnership, especially those, who signed Associated Agreements with the EU – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Dear friends,

These are some of my ideas and vision for the future development of the PES family. As you may feel, it is a very personal and sincere letter. It is based on what I have lived through and on our common hard work, experience and achievements. Some of them could be considered as ambitious, and thus reflect the need for further improvement of our work. I believe that the moment you stop, you start lagging behind! As a team player I am convinced that a single person cannot achieve our goal – to win the next European elections. I am confident that together in the spirit of solidarity, openness, innovation and joint streamlined effort there are no obstacles we cannot overcome!

Let's do it together!

Sincerely Yours,



Sergei Stanishev