# A strong S&D Group to change Europe

Strategy Paper by Gianni Pittella, President of the S&D Group

### The Left and the Great Disorder

None better than the Czech writer Milan Kundera has described the acceleration of History we have been experiencing in the last years. In the time we grew up "mankind was divided in two--those who defended the status quo and those who sought to change it. Then the acceleration of History took effect: whereas in the past man had lived continuously in the same setting, in a society that changed only very slowly, now the moment has arrived when he suddenly began to feel History moving beneath his feet, like a rolling sidewalk: the status quo was in motion! All at once, being comfortable with the status quo was the same thing as being comfortable with History on the move! Which meant that a person could be both progressive and conformist, conservative and rebel, at the same time!"

These winds of change have no clear direction and generate confusion and great disorder. For the first time in contemporary history, millions of citizens look at the future with uncertainty and fear. Too many people no longer believe in the political maps they used in the past to orientate themselves and now feel lost.

This disorientation is also a by-product of globalisation. Globalisation had created huge hopes for a better future but finally it has also betrayed them.

In the Nineties the World was confronted with a crucial choice.

We could have chosen a progressive vision of globalisation based on international solidarity, on sharing knowledge and resources with the rest of the World. We could have established a new global governance able to regulate the financial markets, to manage migration and to sow the seeds of democracy all over in the world.

In front of this crucial choice, we, the Progressives, failed to impose our vision.

On the contrary, neo-liberal forces have shaped their own globalisation. Uncontrolled, financial globalisation has exacerbated inequalities, international markets have limited the room for manoeuvre of democracies, and our economic model has become even more unsustainable. The Great Financial Crisis still affecting the world since 2008 is the natural result of these trends.

The shortcomings of the neo-liberal globalisation are now evident and the people left behind are revolting against it. A new revolt of the masses is taking place in Western Democracies. A growing number of citizens are revolting against the elites that have supported and benefited from this Great Disorder.

### The necessary renewal of Social democracy

Neo-liberal forces have lost momentum but, too often, the Left is not perceived as the natural alternative to the Conservatives. Identity politics and nationalism are thriving by capitalising over the disenchantment created by globalisation.

Europe has become one of the targets of this revolt. Behind the feeling of alienation felt by many towards the European Union lies a feeling of dispossession: the idea of losing control over their lives is increasingly dominated by supranational powers beyond democratic control.

What is more, the electoral basin of this revolt against Europe lies in our traditional constituency: the working class that, in the past, saw the Socialist forces as their main interlocutor.

In this context, high is the risk that the traditional division between Left and Right will be replaced by a new axis opposing openness versus reticence. It is between those who see opportunity in the new emerging globalised society against those who see their lives and communities threatened by it. The ambition of the social-democratic force is to reconcile Europe with those men and women who feel betrayed by the European project and who, in recent years, have been the main basin of euro scepticism and abstentionism: the losers of globalisation, the young, and the new precariat. These are the social groups we have to win back. The survival of the European project will depend on the ability of our political family to give back to these citizens control over political processes that appear increasingly distant and aloof. In order to do that, we must speak a language of truth and clearly state that the current institutional framework is inadequate to live up to our citizens' expectation, in particular, given the poor means of the EU Budget. Some Member States are exploiting these structural weaknesses to renationalise EU politics. Many citizens are often right in blaming intergovernmental Europe and we stand with them to change *this* Europe.

To relaunch the social democratic project, what is needed is a sustained intellectual and political effort to revive the socialist and democratic family in Europe.

This requires compounding the analysis of the causes of the present crisis with fresh insight and political creativity.

Our group has already started a reflection on the future of social democracy with its internal seminars, and the School of Democracy is also part of this exercise, but we now need to have a better and more comprehensive structure. The 18 month Conference "Together: A New Direction for a Progressive Europe" organised by our Group with the PES starting from October 2016 will be the natural tool to organise this debate.

### Our achievements in the European Parliament

Since 2014, the political and historical contexts have dramatically worsened.

From Crimea to Syria, from Libya to Sahel, war is at the doors of Europe. Violence, inequalities, climate change, and demographic trends are fuelling mass immigration from Africa to Europe. Turkey is undermined by a severe democratic regression.

Europe is also confronting a broad range of internal crisis, the largest since its creation.

Among the most prominent are the Greek crisis, the refugee crisis, the long string of terrorist threats and attacks, and the British referendum.

In these perilous circumstances, although our Group accounts for only one fourth of the votes in the Parliament, we have achieved important results for Europe. During the Greek crisis, our Group took a very clear position against the Conservative Right and in favour of the unity of the Eurozone. In the darkest days of the negotiations with Athens, the

S&D Group was the only channel of communication between the Greek authorities and Brussels.

We have made our support to the Juncker Commission dependent on its will to put an end to austerity and we succeeded in obtaining the Communication on Flexibility.

We also pushed for a European Investment Plan and we obtained it.

Confronted with the migration crisis, we were amongst the firsts to criticise Member States' selfishness. The S&D Group called on the EU and Member States to act concretely. We did succeed in obtaining a proposal for a comprehensive relocation system which regrettably was then boycotted by Member States. We called for a revision of the "Posting of Workers Directive and pushed the Commission to present a proposal going in this direction.

Our Group called for and obtained the Special Committees on TAXE and the Enquiry Committee on Panama papers.

We were at the forefront in the battle against the Dieselgate and we obtained an enquiry committee to investigate it. These are just some examples of our victories.

The intelligent application of the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact (as testified by the Commission's recent ruling concerning Spain and Portugal), the Circular Economy Package, the proposed reform of the European Asylum System, the Migration Compact, the recent Parliament's position on Social dumping, the doubling of funding for education in the EU humanitarian budget, obtained thanks to the S&D Educa initiative, are all crucial achievements for our Group. This is really quite a lot given the circumstances. However, we are perfectly aware that this cannot be enough. On the other hand, it must be crystal clear, and we must not be reluctant to stress the fact that none of this would have been possible without our contribution. To achieve these results we have cooperated with the other Groups that supported the Juncker Commission but we have also shown that, when necessary, we were able to work on alternative strategies and majorities as was the case for conflict minerals regulation.

# A bolder strategy to achieve our priorities

This Commission's principle merit lies in having broken the neoliberal cycle that found its foremost expression, at the European level, in the Barroso Commission. Moreover, this Commission has been able to put foreword a new agenda for foreign policy. This is mainly the merit of the Socialist Commissioners.

Any agenda for change in Europe will necessarily have to revolve around a privileged relationship between the European Parliament, the only institution directly legitimised by direct popular vote, and the Commission, of which our Group needs to be the pillar. We reject any project to weaken the Commission aimed at renationalising the European Union. A weaker Commission would only lead to a more National Europe. In strategic terms, we cannot limit ourselves to voicing our disagreement, relegating ourselves to the margins; but neither can we crystallise our position around an *a priori* loyalty to the Commission. Our support to the Commission will be therefore a demanding one and it will be conditional on the capacity to deliver.

In terms of relations with the other political groups; to propose a new direction for Europe means prioritising the political substance of our priorities over its political make-up: legislative cooperation with the EPP, the ALDE and possibly even the Greens should be seen as a tool to achieve our goals rather than an end in itself.

We will strive to obtain as wide a support as possible for our priorities. We will fight to achieve the highest possible agreements and we will reject any compromises to the bottom. On those points on which an agreement cannot be found, we will push ahead by ourselves.

The issue of the overall political balance within the European institutions cannot, of course, be evaded: two years ago, an agreement was concluded with the EPP with the aim of providing a balance between the two major political families. On that occasion, it was agreed that the presidency of the European Council would go to the Socialist forces. This not being the case, and in the event that the current President of the European Parliament should not be reconfirmed, the imbalance would be even more apparent. Reconfirming Martin Schulz as President of the European Parliament is therefore not only an acknowledgment of his excellent work but a political necessity as well. On this issue, our Group stands united with the PES and the leaders of the Socialist family.

## A new direction for Europe

Brexit is a game-changer. The result of the British referendum shows that the mere revival of the European project is no longer a priority. Although a change of gear is necessary, it would be insufficient. Indeed, a new agenda is needed. Demanding the mere implementation of the ten priorities presented by the Commission in 2014 would be woefully inadequate in the current historical context.

We are not interested in managing the European decline and we must have the intellectual honesty to acknowledge that the outcome of the Bratislava summit is disappointing. Too many Member States have not yet realised the sense of urgency imposed by Brexit. If we are serious about saving the Union, a more ambitious agenda on growth, migration, sustainability, environment and security is needed and our Group will take the lead

In the debate about Europe's future, the negotiations with the United Kingdom will be decisive. On this point, we stress the urgent need for a clear negotiation timetable. We must also be clear about the fact that there will be no access to the Single Market for the UK unless the principle of free movement between the UK and EU is upheld.

### Reforming and moralising the economy

Eight years after the outbreak of the US financial crisis, it is too often forgotten that the root of the crisis lies in the deregulation of our economic system. Financial systems still need a tighter regulation. In this regard, the introduction of a Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) plays a pivotal role and our Group will be the watchdog of the FTT, urging the Member States that committed to introducing it not to backtrack.

Tax fraud and growing conflicts of interest undermine European democracy because they create illegal and opaque systems that are beyond the control of the citizens. Moreover, crony capitalism and conflicts of interest fuel democratic alienation and disenchantment.

It should be made clear that fraud, tax evasion and tax avoidance are the main enemies of the European Union.

Our Group wants to put into practice the conclusions of the TAXE I and TAXE II reports. In this regard, we believe that the Commission should no longer delay the submission of a proposal on the CCCTB (Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base), focusing on the aspect of consolidation. This, together with public country-by country reporting, already under discussion, is the first step towards applying the principle that taxes should be paid where profits are made.

We also ask the Commission to present a comprehensive blacklist of tax havens.

Finally, we consider the presentation of a law for the protection of whistle-blowers to be an absolute priority.

Reforming our economic system also means fighting for its moralisation. The growing conflict of interest between the public and private sectors are taking on unacceptable proportions – as exemplified by the Barroso and Kroes cases. We therefore ask the European Union to take a strong stand against this scourge. Moreover, in light of recent events regarding leading figures of the previous Commission, we ask the Commission to create new instruments against the conflicts of interests of its members and officials, including an extension of the cooling off period and a range of sanctions, at the administrative level, where there has been a breach of obligations either by a serving or a former Commissioner. Parliament should be involved on a regular screening of the financial activities of any Commissioner.

The fight against corruption should be at the heart of our agenda and the narrative about structural reforms should radically change. Instead of focusing on wrong political prescriptions, fight against corruption and inefficient public administration should be the main structural reforms.

## An agenda for growth and jobs

The investment plan and the Communication on flexibility of January 2015 marked a first important break with the austerity orthodoxy.

The weakness of the recovery, however, continues to prevent a reabsorption of unemployment rates, which remain unacceptably high. In this situation, Europe is in danger of entering in the unchartered waters of a secular stagnation.

In 2016, the aggregate fiscal stimulus of the euro area proposed by the Commission was neutral. It now needs to move into positive territory.

A new expansionary economic policy must rest on two pillars: a new investment strategy and a looser fiscal stance.

In terms of fiscal policy, the Communication on Flexibility showed that an intelligent application of the Stability and Growth Pact is possible. We must continue on this path and we hope in a broadening of the scope of application of the flexibility clauses, particularly with regard to culture- and knowledge-related expenditures – the only long-term antidote against terrorism.

But we must go even further. In the light of this Communication's success, we ask the Commission to table a proposal for the revision of the six-pack and two-pack, taking into account the achievements of the implementation of the Communication on flexibility and aiming at a drastic simplification of the European budget rules.

Our Group will oppose any incorporation into Union law of the Fiscal Compact as it stands now and would consider any proposal in this sense an unacceptable provocation. A suspension (even partial) of the Structural and Investment Funds at the expense of Spain and Portugal would be considered equally unacceptable.

Greece has also clearly demonstrated that austerity has failed. The mix of measures prescribed by the memorandum were often dogmatically inclined towards austerity instead than structural reforms. The Greek programme should build on the notion of "smart flexibility" in order to implement smart structural reforms, fight corruption and clientelism, improve the transparency and efficiency of public administration. All this must pave the way for a debt relief.

A new investment strategy must be multidimensional focusing on the investment plan as part of a new industrial policy.

The investment plan 2.0 must focus on high-risk projects that offer clear additionality. To this end, it will be necessary to correct the flaws of the existing plan. The plan cannot simply amount to a rebranding of the EIB's activities. The new Investment Fund's activities should also be able to raise funds through the issuance of debt. In this regard, we need to resume the battle for Eurobonds. The combination of the EFSI funds with the European Structural and Investment Funds is welcomed, as long as it is not at the expense of the Cohesion Policy.

It should also be noted that to date the EFSI has fallen short of expectations precisely in those peripheral regions that most needed its support – particularly the various Mezzogiornos of Europe. Special attention must also be paid to the Member States of Central and Eastern Europe, which must become the protagonists of the new investment plan. To this end, our Group will be organising a special mission to this region to assess how to tailor the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) as well as the EU's energy policy to these countries' needs.

The new investment plan must be the pillar of a new industrial policy to tackle the process of deindustrialisation many countries are experiencing. In this sense, we need to rethink our competition policy which should not be detrimental to the development of our SMEs. We need European industrial champions able to compete with their international competitors on a level playing field.

We also consider of particular importance the proposal for the creation of a fiscal capacity, also taking into account the creation of a European unemployment benefit scheme.

The completion of the Digital Single Market can also bring benefits to European consumers and businesses. We need to ensure that none is left behind. We must ensure everyone can access high-speed and affordable internet. Reform of European copyright laws is also needed to strengthen creators' rights.

Banking Union should also be completed as soon as possible with the swift approval within the Parliament of the European Deposit Insurance Scheme.

If the Union is serious in effectively ensuring investments conducive to growth and jobs, delivering on the Europe 2020, tackling unemployment, achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion, promoting solidarity and facing refugee and migration crises, the Multiannual Financial Framework needs to be endowed with adequate resources.

As a result of our constructive and perseverant action over the last years, the Commission moved in the right direction with its recent proposal. The S&D Group is determined to move further, both in terms of resources and flexibility of the EU budget, so to match the political and strategic priorities of the EU and ensure a balance between long-term priorities, new challenges and urgent crisis.

In this respect, a deep and comprehensive reform of the way the EU is funded is of capital importance. The EU deserves to have the ability to raise more of its own resources, ensuring a simpler, transparent and fairer funding, more accountable to the citizens.

## For a fairer social Europe

Regional and Social inequalities are undermining the Union.

For the S&D cohesion policy is the backbone of Europe as it is the main European tool to fight against territorial inequalities.

The fight against social dumping is also our top priority.

Our Group has obtained the proposal from the Commission for a revision of the posting of workers directive. We commit to an ambitious revision of this directive.

However, in order to pave the way for a Social Europe, we need to focus on some specific issues. Among the measures that we support:

 a European minimum legal framework for the protection of atypical work, particularly that arising from the digital revolution (the "Uberisation" of services), including: the need for a contract with minimum requirements, health and safety legislation, holidays, days of recuperation,, etc. It is not yet clear whether this legislative framework should be ensured through new legislation – more specifically, an *ad hoc* directive, which would have the merit of clarity – or through a revision of existing instruments aimed at the protection of atypical workers (part-time, fixed term, etc.). This would be a real revolution, which would give visibility to the EU's social legislation, especially since it is a subject that is scarcely legislated across the Union's Member States.

- Child poverty; the European Commission should work towards a European initiative against child poverty, as outlined in the resolution passed by Parliament.
- Social protection and EMU; our Group will push for the observance of values and social conditions in the application of the European Semester, in particular with regard to the issuance of recommendations for structural reforms to "noncompliant" countries.

Our Group will also push for the renewal and refinancing of the Youth Guarantee.

#### Globalisation on a human scale

Compared to 2014, it is clear that there is a growing discomfort among European citizens with respect to the process of globalisation that has characterised the previous decades. The issue of democracy comes to the forefront: many Europeans feel dispossessed of their sovereignty by a global market seemingly impossible to tame. It is therefore not incidental that the main opposition to the TTIP has revolved around the ISDS, the investor-state dispute mechanism that marginalises our democracies' legal systems.

Ignoring this distress – which raises issues that we should all be concerned about – would be suicidal. In too many industrial sectors, starting from the steel industry, the effect of unfair international competition is already painful for our jobs.

We therefore stress our unwavering opposition to granting market economy status to China, and ask the Commission to table a proposal for strengthening the EU's trade protection instruments.

On TTIP we support a change of approach. To date, the Group's position has been interpreted as a conditional support – conditional, that is, on compliance with certain conditions to be verified during the negotiations. Today we move from a conditional support to a conditional opposition to TTIP. The burden of proof doesn't rest anymore on those that oppose TTIP. Today, it is the supporters of the deal that must convince us of the goodness of the agreement. This means that, at present, the conditions for our Group's support are absent.

We believe that CETA is a positive trade agreement and that, in order to deploy its full potential, it is necessary to have binding clarification on some its aspects.

We stress again that we want a Europe that is on the side of the losers of globalisation. To that end, we demand a strengthening of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF), first and foremost by raising its budget from 150 to at least 450 million euros.

## Migration: a European solution

Our Group views positively the Commission's engagements towards creating a true European system for managing migration and asylum seekers. A complete overhaul of the current system is needed to get to grips with the crisis and provide a sustainable asylum policy for Europe, where true solidarity and fair sharing apply. We need a centralised European system that allocates refugees in a fair and transparent way, increased funding to help them integrate into European society, and clearer legal paths for refugees into Europe. Additionally, we should reflect on the possibility to introduce a reward-system, rather than a sanctioning-system for those member states that accept to participate in the resettlement/relocation of refugees. Against this background, we urge the Commission to uphold its determination in ensuring that these proposals are maintained at the top of the Council's agenda too.

We are happy to see that the Migration Compacts and the European Border and Coast Guards are finally being recognised by all Member States as an effective way of tackling the current crisis. The Migration Compact was a socialist idea that aims at building politically and socially stable environments in the third countries, rather than just stopping irregular migrants from entering the EU. Consequently, we demand the rapid implementation of the Migration Compact, as well as the swift adoption and implementation of an effective External Investment Plan for catalysing investments towards neighborhood countries and Sub-Saharan Africa.

We also call for a special EU plan to assist unaccompanied minors reaching the shores of Europe. Supporting displaced and migrant children at home and globally is a shared responsibility. Too often they are at risk of human trafficking, extreme forms of abuse and deprivation during their journeys.

# The battle for Europe is a battle for democracy

The current institutional framework is inadequate to cope with the demand for participation coming from our citizens.

The Verhofstadt report, the Bresso-Brok report and the Beres-Boege report will show the way forward in terms of institutional arrangement. However, it is essential for the European Union to strengthen its input legitimacy: simply put, European citizens need to have a bigger say in the European decision-making process. The establishment of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is a first step in the right direction, but there needs to be a much tighter link between the results of the European elections and the appointment of the President of the Commission, not excluding a direct election of the President.

These, and other crucial issues, could be addressed in a forthcoming Convention on the future of Europe.

Another crucial issue is the safeguard of democracy and the rule of law. We ask the Commission to take concrete action to counter the authoritarian tendencies and attacks on the rule of law taking place in Poland and Hungary. For our Group there are no doubts: we will never allow these two great countries to become illiberal democracies.

We should stand for inclusive and pluralistic democracies, and our Group will always be the main supporter of equality because this is the foundation of the Left. Social equality but also equality between men and women, granting the full rights of the LGTB community. We will fight to ensure that every piece of European legislation will protect minorities in Europe, including the Roma people.

Finally, the free movement of persons is a fundamental right guaranteed by the EU to its citizens. Our Group considers the principle of free movement to be non-negotiable and deems unacceptable any further proposals for reform of the Schengen system that challenge this principle. Moreover, we reiterate our clear support to the extension of the Schengen area to all EU Members, including Romania and Bulgaria. In terms of freedom of movement we cannot accept any de facto discrimination between EU citizens.

## Sustainable Development

The current model of development has shown its limits and the Left cannot limit itself to an industrialist vision of the economy. Solidarity vis-à-vis the next generation imposes on us the need to take care of our planet because of its fragility. Protecting our future means to adopt a horizontal agenda for sustainable development. What is needed is a comprehensive approach to sustainability touching all aspects of legislation.

Firstly, it is necessary to follow through on the climate commitments made at COP21 in Paris. Member States must take on their responsibilities and ratify the agreement but, for the S&D Group, the targets for energy efficiency and renewable energy should be revised upwards. In the meanwhile we call for the revision of the energy efficiency directive and energy performance of buildings. Moreover, the funds available for energy efficiency projects must be drastically revised upwards. On the production side, it is paramount that we move towards an energy landscape that is nearly fully based on renewables by 2050.

Circular economy should be seen as a chance for Europe to be recognised as a generator of sustainable jobs, industry and jobs. Research and development to promote a sustainable growth should also be supported. The Group of Socialists and Democrats must support a more sustainable agriculture and forestry, better management of fish stocks and a bigger EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

### A foreign policy faithful to the Union's values

We are grateful for the successful work carried out by our High Representative Vice-President of the Commission.

In the limits established to the European Parliament's competences on foreign policy, our Group intends to incorporate Human Rights mainstreaming into external action by integrating the Human Rights dimension into every international agreement, recommendation for mission mandates, and programme of actions under external action instruments. We do not consider Human Rights as the main asset of the EU's soft power, but as the hard core foreign policy. Because every conflict in the world -and their consequences of human suffering, political instability, economic stagnation, violence, refugees, arms trafficking, etc.- is funded on Human Rights violations.

The current legislative framework provides a leverage to condition the signing of international agreements. Therefore, prior to consent on the visa liberalisation agreement, we will demand that Turkey fulfil the conditions for respecting the rule of law, particularly concerning the anti-terrorism legislation. It goes without saying that we recognise Turkey as an important partner in solving the Syrian conflict and the fight against Daesh.

Our Group will not neglect the human rights dialogue pillar in international agreements; the S&D Group will actively tackle new challenges such as boosting security to fight terrorism or similar threats, to find a solution to migration and refugee flows or to strengthen the security dimension of development.

Africa is our neighbour and our Group must keep up the pressure to advocate a new partnership between Africa and the European Union. Africa is growing as a political and economic actor on the global stage and we cannot underestimate the geopolitical role that the United States and China want to play on the continent. More than ever, the EU needs an ambitious policy towards Africa leading to a genuine balanced partnership for both sides which basically means to overcome, step by step, the traditional vision of Africa focusing on poverty, instability and conflicts, and embrace a more positive and constructive approach.

### Terrorism and security: the Progressives' answer

The European citizens' security is endangered since the conflicts and instability surrounding the EU, increasingly spill over into the EU, be it in the form of terrorism, massive refugee flows, or disinformation campaigns aimed at dividing our societies

Violence has taken on an epidemic form in post-conflict environments where factional and territorial control as well as profit-making illicit activities are playing critical roles. Ensuring peace and stability on our continent and in our neighbourhood must now be at the heart of Europe's action. Our Group is already leading the EP position to tackle the

root causes of instability and forced and irregular migration; security, economic, development and fair trade are parts of the same comprehensive strategy.

Security must therefore be a pillar, but not the sole pillar of the EU's Foreign policy. The strengthening of the security in Europe and all around the world can take complementary paths, including stepping up the coordination between the various European intelligence agencies with the aim of creating a true European Intelligence Agency.

For too long we have resorted to quick-fix, reactionary solutions to the issue of security. Faced with the emergence of terrorist phenomenon, the battle for safe societies is first and foremost a cultural battle that will be played out around our ability to create a societal model based on intellectual freedom, critical spirit and tolerance. In this sense it is crucial to support investments in the cultural sector by expanding the flexibility clauses in the Stability and Growth pact with regard to cultural investments.

# Diversity and Unity within our group

In many countries, our parties are withering away. Internal debate is always positive but it should not be too divisive and disruptive, thus jeopardising our unity.

The answer to this risk does not lie in a further centralisation of power in the leadership. Fortunately our Group is still united and cohesive and this is also the result of difficult mediations.

A vibrant dialogue and discussion within our Group can only strengthen our family, but in order to steer it we need a strong collective leadership.

The centre of gravity of this collective leadership must be the Bureau.

In order to enhance the importance of the Bureau we must streamline its way of functioning, making it even more political and deliberative. Apart from the necessary oversight of the activities of the secretariat, the Bureau should only focus on the political initiative of our Group.

The work of the Bureau should be enriched by the contributions of the Heads of Delegation.

A strong Bureau needs to be able to rely on an efficient secretariat making full use of its human resources.

We must certainly win our political battle but we risk dissipating our efforts if we do not win at the same time the battle of the media. Informing our citizens about our battles and our successes is absolutely fundamental. Therefore, I firmly believe we must revise and reinforce the way the Group is communicating by being, first of all, much more vocal on the International and European press. We must also invest much more on the local press, by setting a greater coordination and synergies between the press unit of the Group, the cabinet and the national delegations' press officers. We are very keen to exploit all the opportunities coming from the newest social media and we plan to organise further social media 'moments' both for individual MEPs and for the Group. These are the reasons why I strongly recommended that we find a new Media partnership in order to provide the S&D Group with the expertise and the tools we require to ensure that our political actions are transmitted to the EU citizen with the greatest possible impact.

### Dear Comrades,

Diversity is a unique legacy of our Group. In the next days, I am going to meet our national delegations to discuss and debate together. We went through extremely difficult years. Difficult for Europe and for each of us.

Before being a political group, we are first and foremost a community of women and men that, despite all, still believe in Europe and in the progressive beliefs. In this historical moment, unity around our common values is and must be our major driving force. For all these reasons, I ask for your support to move forward together.

Gianni PITTELLA

Giami Tonela