



16 mai 2014

Letter to the Candidates to the Presidency of the European Commission

Dear Candidates for President of the European Commission,

The upcoming May 2014 European elections may significantly change the European Union by sending to the European Parliament a large number of anti-European and nationalist MEPs, who unfortunately do not adhere to all the values of the European Union, nor to its humanist political traditions. It is not a matter of condemning voters who make this choice, but rather of reflecting on the causes of this anti-Europeanism and how to address it by constructing the future of Europe.

Since the difficulties of adopting the Maastricht Treaty, Europe has had to live through difficult times. Even what was long considered as its greatest success, the Euro, is today disputed. For the first time in its history, the European budget has been revised downwards, whereas it is chiefly an operating budget. The institutions, including the European Parliament, have been heavily criticised for their “democratic deficit”. For the last ten years, the policies implemented at European level have been poorly understood and are even a cause of concern for our citizens. These policies have led to an increase in the number of Eurosceptics and have strengthened ultra-nationalists. A new momentum must therefore be given to the European institutions and policies in order to rediscover the Community spirit and its democratic base. This political about-face must take account of the criticism levelled by Europeans at the unbalanced policies adopted in recent years which, moreover, exacerbate inequalities, poverty and social exclusion, by undermining the accomplishments of the European social models in terms of progress and solidarity. It is necessary not only to rebalance policies in order to promote, protect and support disadvantaged populations and those that have been particularly badly affected by the economic crises, but also to implement structural reforms which guarantee the future of our welfare systems and our industrial capacity.

This work must start within the European Commission itself. The European Commission is currently a weakened institution whose voice is no longer heard in the major European debates. It is your ambition to become its President. It is important therefore that you re-establish its essential political role, which means working for the general European interest, instead of allowing the EU to drift towards intergovernmentalism. You must reinstate the importance of the Commission’s work, including opposing the minimalist, purist or defeatist positions for Europe advocated by some Member States and some MEPs. You must also protect the staff of the institutions against the unfair attacks often left unanswered by the current College.

The U4U trade-union, of which I am the President, has tirelessly campaigned against this deterioration of the European spirit and the European institutions. Two petitions to that end were signed by more than 25,000 and 15,000 Community staff respectively. This staff mobilisation clearly demonstrates that the staff of the European institutions are aware of the dangers and are prepared to pull together to meet public expectations, provided that the lead comes from above.

The U4U union has also noted the damage caused by intergovernmentalism to the European Commission's work. This damage is visible in the successive reforms of the Staff Regulations. These reforms, implemented since 2000, have been motivated not by a wish to strengthen the independence of the European civil service or to achieve greater efficiency, but by the desire of the Member States to weaken the Commission by dividing and demotivating its staff, by multiplying structures, such as the European agencies and executive agencies, which make coordination and decision-making increasingly slow and complex, even inefficient, but above all make Europe incomprehensible for citizens.

These reforms, accepted by the current College of Commissioners, are a perfect illustration of not only the Commission's weakness, but also of the increasing divide between the College and staff. It will therefore be your responsibility to change this situation, by rebuilding staff trust, by finally giving the Commission a strong political thrust, capable of mobilising its staff and the pro-European forces within our societies.

The Commission's staff are ready to engage with you in order to restore the full scope of our institution's role, in particular by the following means:

At institutional level, by a collegial and independent Commission which bases its decisions on the general European interest, instead of being a sounding board for a handful of Member States, or even industrial interests or other lobbies;

At political level, by a Commission committed to a responsible, human-focused modernisation of the European social models and a bold approach to the socio-ecological transition. For example, by supporting the "New Deal for Europe" (www.newdeal4europe.eu) European citizens' initiative. It is important to break with the "neo-liberal" ideological label which is systematically attached to the Commission's policies and find a new momentum driven by efficient policies, focused on tangible results which are immediately visible and beneficial for European citizens;

At budgetary level, by a Commission which fights for a true, adequate European budget, based on its own resources, in order to guarantee the effectiveness of the actions of the European institutions and ensure their independence;

At international level, by a Commission which works towards the unification of Community and national resources and competences in order to create a single, genuine common foreign and security policy, in order to make Europe a model of modern diplomacy in the 21st century.

I look forward to meeting you at your earliest convenience in order to discuss the solutions proposed by U4U with a view to strengthening the European project, with the support of the European civil service.

Yours faithfully,
Georges Vlandas
President of U4U

Letter sent on 16 May 2014 to:

M. José Bové

M. Jean-Claude Juncker

Mme Franziska Keller

M. Martin Schulz

M. Alexis Tsipras

M. Guy Verhofstadt