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Candidate for the Secretary General of YES

Maris Sild

Social Democratic Youth of Estonia

Dear comrades,

With the support of my home organisation and the support of the member organisations of the Nordic Social Democratic Youth – FNSU, I hereby announce my candidacy for Secretary General of YES.

Ten years ago I first voted for Social Democrats. Two years later I joined Social Democratic Youth of Estonia, a year later the Social Democratic Party and ran for the SDY Estonia's Secretary General position. I have held this position ever since. In some years it has been a volunteer position, last years it has been a full time job. I can honestly say, that it has been a crazy ride and given me a lot of experience in every level.

As a secretary general of SDY Estonia I started almost from zero. For the first years we worked on building up the organization, as there were only few local branches working and involving more and more new members. In my most successful year we gained over 20% new members for the organization and managed to have local branch in every county.

In last two years we have had three election campaigns and I have been leading them all. In municipality elections we had the best result in all time among young candidates. We had 115 young candidates and 16 of them were elected as the city or parish councils. In European Parliament elections our young candidate had the best result among the young candidates in Estonia, but also had a better result than many of the Estonian Parliament members and ministers.

Most of my life I have been working in different NGO-s. After the SDY Estonia the second important one for me is Estonian Union for Child Welfare where I was responsible for School Peace program, Youth Rights and International projects. During this time I met a lot of different people and situations, but it really taught me that everything is possible if you put your heart into it.

Right now Social Democratic Party of Estonia is running our biggest campaign of all time – parliament election campaign to finally become a prime minister party. In the recent years we have said, that far-right rising is not a problem in our country, but in the last months we have seen it changing – polls show that far-right party might also get into the parliament in Estonia. In that sense I can even more see the struggle we are all in right now – fighting with the strengthening of the far-right.



In my current position as a Secretary General of SDY Estonia I have been leading our organization's everyday work. I am responsible for finances, projects, reporting, work of the local branches, assisting the board and organizing all the big events and campaigns. During my mandate I was elected also to the Social Democratic party board and got the third best result on the votes that really shows the good work that we have been doing. We started in a situation where the youth organisation was just a youth club for the party. Now we can be proud of being an equal partner whose opinions are respected.

I have been taken part of the YES events since 2008. I have been working closely with my organization's vice presidents who are responsible for international relations and have been replacing them where needed on international level. In 2011 I was elected as a YES Control Commission member, which gave me a valuable insight to the financial and administrative work of YES, which is so important for the work of the Secretariat, but goes often unseen for most of the YES members and activists. Unfortunately I have been away from YES since 2013 when my mandate in Control Commission ended, but I have still followed everything what has been happening in YES and advising our Bureau Member.

During my years in YES I have seen it in many different times. I remember clearly difficult congresses and times we have had, but my belief in our organisation has never disappeared. YES is something that I can really be proud of. When The European Youth Guarantee was finally adopted in Estonia, our whole organisation was really proud of. Every member of SDY Estonia was able to say, that is something that started form us, form our European roof organisation. This shows clearly that YES is a big influence and there is a lot that we can accomplish if we stay as united force.

I see YES as a strong power in Europe that can influence decisions and political directions of PES and S&D group. Having a common strong political agenda is a good way to strengthen our organisation even more.

My years in YES have taught me the different backgrounds and history our organisations and countries that influence YES quite a lot. Coming from a small country with only developing democracy, it has meant a lot to our organisation to be a part of YES and influence our work. Being familiar with YES since 2008 has given me quite good idea about difficulties and also opportunities that our organisation can meet on the way of developing and becoming the strongest political youth organisation in Europe.

In my vision YES is an organisation where all the member organisations feel welcome and are able to and want to contribute as much they can. I truly believe that if YES is united, it can be the force that can change the ways that Europe is changing right now – far-right



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parties are gaining support everywhere. In order to be that there has to be a strong representation from different parts of Europe. Also we have to make our networks stronger and really make sure that member organisations get the training and support they need from them. We must even more concentrate on letting every young person in Europe know that socialist movement is something that they can really count on and this is the movement that really takes care of the youth.

There is still four years until the next European Parliament elections, but that does not mean that this the time we can rest. Right now even more this is the time to work on building our organisation, sharing experiences and supporting each other in campaigns and elections. As important as the overall elections result in Europe, is also the election result and support of over movement in every country.

I know that making YES more financially sustainable is not an easy thing to do. I have had the same struggle in my home organisation over the years and it is a never-ending struggle, but it is possible to improve as we seen happening with YES in last years.

I want to dedicate next years to YES – Young European Socialists mainly because I truly believe in our organisation and movement. I believe that if we work together we can accomplish a lot. If anyone ever asked me why I am in politics I have always said that I want to change the world and that is the perfect way to do it. Make the Europe more equal, solidary and a better place to live.

I am glad to answer any questions or receive any comments that you might have. Do not hesitate to contact me!

Socialist regards,

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