

Tribute to Stavros
1 June 2023

I am very sorry that for personal reasons I cannot be with you at this Symposium devoted to Stavros Katsanevas. I hope my short speech will be read out to you. Like we all, I wanted to pay the last tribute to Stavros - who was such an extraordinary person, and who left us so early.

So much has already been said, and will be said, about Stavros, about his gentle personality and character, deep and open mind, great heart, about his so many important initiatives and achievements. I fully agree and will not repeat it now.

What I wanted to tell you is what Stavros has done to us in Poland, to our science. Among his very many tasks, jobs and projects that he was so busy with, he still found the time, and in fact much enthusiasm to help me set up a new research centre in Warsaw, Poland. It is called "AstroCeNT: Particle Astrophysics Science and Technology Centre".

Back in 2015 I learned about a new opportunity to apply for big funding, nearly 9 M Euro, to create a new centre of excellence in the field in my country. Between 2016 and 2017 Stavros and I worked closely, with the help of several colleagues in Poland and abroad, including Sotiris Loucatos and others at APC, on transforming the initial idea into a concrete plan. When the project got approved in 2018, Stavros was unanimously elected the chairman of the International Scientific Committee of Astrocent. APC is the strategic international partner of Astrocent and has been receiving much support from Antoine Kouchner as the new director of the Laboratory, as well, when Stavros moved to Pisa to assume the new post of the director of the European Gravitational Laboratory.

In his new post, Stavros continued, despite growing health problems, to support Astrocent in any way he could. He cared so much about it. Last time we spoke just a few days before his departure, and it was about the centre.

He was giving himself to us, and others, fully, boundlessly and selflessly. He asked for nothing in reward. He did not calculate if this would pay off for him. Anyone who worked with him knows this.

A well-known Polish poet and priest once wrote: Let us rush to love other people. They depart so fast. That is certainly very true in the case of Stavros. He loved us and he rushed to do it. Have we done nearly as much of the same to him?

His last big plan was a mission to the Moon. Some joked that he wants to eventually go there by himself. Well, he has already gone far beyond the Moon where none of us who are still alive have gone. Of this, I am sure.

Good bye, Stavros, good by my dear friend and close collaborator. What you have done to Astrocent will never be forgotten. For this, and for all you have done, in the name of the Astrocent team and the International Scientific Committee I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Leszek Roszkowski
Director of Astrocent