

EUROPEAN LIBERAL DEMOCRATS



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Kroes: “Unless we attain higher growth rates our pension and healthcare systems will succumb”

Neelie Kroes (VVD - Netherlands) explains her main ambitions as European Competition Commissioner. Convinced that well functioning markets will create jobs and growth in Europe, she calls for an EU strategy for sustainable development that is based on market-instruments.

What role plays the EU competition policy in creating more jobs and growth?

Competition is the most effective means to make Europe more competitive. We know that jobs and growth are not created by governments but

by good functioning markets. We also know that for markets to function well, companies must be able to compete freely and on a level playing field. Competition policy is about making sure that such a level playing field exists. Concretely, this means that we are tracking down cartels. Cartels are enormously damaging to the economy and a rip-off for consumers. We are also supervising mergers and acquisitions to prevent and counter abuse of dominant positions by big market players. Finally, it is our task to supervise state aids. While state aids are sometimes admissible under EU rules, they constitute an obstacle to competition, in particular to those companies who are not so lucky to receive government hand-outs.

Is growth an end in itself?

I don't think there are many liberals who believe that either growth or jobs are ends in themselves. Leading a successful life cannot be reduced to

more work and material well-being. Having said that, jobs and economic growth are indispensable as means to the ways of life we envisage for ourselves. In Europe we often pride ourselves on our cultural traditions, our accomplished life-styles and our social models that guarantee a basic welfare level to all. But we tend to

«My overall ambition is to make the EU a far more competitive place to do business in»

forget that we can only sustain these social achievements on the basis of healthy economic foundations. For example, we know that in most Member States people's average age will further increase while birth rates will further decline. Unless we better mobilise our labour force and attain higher growth rates our pension and healthcare systems will succumb under demographic pressures.

Studies show that the Western way

of living puts a heavy burden on the environment and could not be extended to the entire world population. In your view how can growth be reconciled with sustainable development?

First, through advances in knowledge and technological progress. They are the key to achieving a balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability. Second, by making smarter use of market principles. I know that markets do not always function as they should. For example, market prices do not always accurately reflect the environmental costs of economic activities to society. But having said that, it would be a mistake to abandon market principles altogether. We should rather try to repair them with the help of market-based instruments such as environmentally-related taxes and emission trading schemes. The key is to internalise the real environmental costs in the price and then use market principles to encourage changes in production and consumption patterns.

How do you like your work at the European Commission? What are the main topics you are currently working on?

It is a great privilege to be Commis-



sioner for Competition and an enormous challenge. There are too many individual cases in the separate parts of my portfolio to mention here. But in the coming months, I will make a start with the general reform of EU state aid rules. Its purpose is to better focus aid on elements that contribute directly to the Lisbon objectives of jobs and growth, such as innovation and research and the availability of risk capital. It is my overall ambition to be able to say at the end of my mandate that the EU is a far more competitive place to do business in than five years ago. ■

Andrus Ansip becomes Estonia's Prime Minister

On 13 April, a new Estonian government – headed by Reform leader Andrus Ansip – was sworn in. The governing coalition includes the Reform Party, the Centre Party and the People's Union. Outlining his main priorities, M. Ansip said: “The new coalition will continue the valuable initiatives that the previous government started, but will also bring new ideas, new initiatives aimed at a caring and balanced society. The basis for Estonia's success has been an open economy, low taxes and conservative budget policy. The new government will continue these policies”. M. Ansip, 48, was Minister of Economic Affairs and Communications in the previous government. After working 10 years in the banking sector, he became the mayor of Tartu between 1998 and 2004. He studied business management at York University (UK) and has a Diploma in Chemistry. Married with 3 children, he speaks fluent Russian and English.



Welcoming this new Liberal democrat government, ELDR Party President Werner Hoyer said: “Estonia is a fast-developing country that has entered the 21st century with dynamism and a strong economic growth. With the new liberal democrat government led by Andrus Ansip, future prospects for Estonians look promising. On behalf of the European Liberal Democrats, I would like to wish him a lot of success in his work”. M. Ansip's Reform party (Eesti Reformierakond), previously led by European Commission Vice President Siim Kallas, joined the ELDR party in December 1995. Estonia's Centre Party (Eesti Keskerakond) is an ELDR member party since May 2004.

Verhofstadt proposes a new method for the EU growth strategy

On 22 March, we came again to the conclusion that we are not on track to achieve the Lisbon goal of becoming the most competitive economy in the world by 2010. This unfortunate situation is not due to the goal itself, nor to a lack of goodwill. The problem is with the method. The method being applied, the so-called open coordination method, is far too informal, creating the impression that the problems facing the European economy are differ widely from one country to the next and are therefore best dealt with at national level. However, only through an ambitious and collective Community approach have we succeeded in largely eliminating customs barriers to movements in goods and capital and overcoming monetary disarray with the introduction of the euro. Why not now employ the same

ambitious Community approach in attempting to bring about a competitive European economy? Especially as, by following the current approach, we risk losing the uniqueness of the European social model.

The figures speak for themselves. The average growth in GDP between 1992 and 2002 was 1.9% in the euro zone, compared with 3.3% in the US. According to OECD predictions, that gap is set to widen in the future: 1.7% in the euro zone, 3.6% in the US and as much as 8.8% in China. Total employment in the euro zone grew by 6.5% between 1991 and 2002, compared with 17% in the US. Furthermore, a quiet change has also been underway in the balance of trade over the last ten years. A quarter of the EU's imports now come from China, Japan and the

Asian tigers, a shift that has resulted in a huge trade deficit with this area over the past decade. And there can be no doubt whatever that this is just the beginning. Globalisation of the world economy is in full swing. New markets are opening up and large volumes of new consumers and players are emerging. All these developments threaten to leave the European economy behind, suffering as it is from a number of internal shortcomings and structural weaknesses. In order to tackle these deficiencies, we must be bold enough once again to adopt a Community approach, just as we did with the Stability Pact for the euro. This approach is centred around five cornerstones, forming a sort of 'pentathlon' for Europe.

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editorial



Lex Corijn, Secretary-general
of the European Liberal Democrats
(ELDR Party)

As we go to print, we rejoice the fact that Romania and Bulgaria, two countries where European liberal democrat parties are in government, have signed the accession treaty to join the European Union in 2007. European Liberal Democrats took up as the first, the enlargement with the new member states as a real priority.

Unfortunately, the joy is marred by the strong campaigns opposing the Constitution, to which we are strongly committed as it fulfils longstanding objectives of our Party. In the upcoming referenda on the constitution, we often listen to arguments which have nothing to do with the political case before us. As the no progresses in some countries, it becomes harder to make the yes heard. Why? It lacks often emotion, conviction and a clear voice. We need to state louder the reasons for a 'yes' and convey again and again what makes Europe's integration worthwhile.

Framework directives get a name. The services directive triggers a new wave of demonisation of liberalism. The criticism, come from people who fail to perceive that European Liberal Democrats want to modernize Europe to enable each person to fulfill their potential. We do not want to make Europe less social as our opponents claim. We are resolved to overhaul the economic and labour market structures to adapt them to the knowledge economy. Meanwhile, Paris and Berlin seek an alternative in order to bury the directive.

As the controversy surrounding the services directive continues, we must remain firm that

removing the red-tape currently strangling efforts to establish or provide services on a cross-border basis will make a real contribution to entrepreneurship and job creation, and will benefit the consumer. The creation of an internal market for services will make service providers more efficient and give customers more choice. As defenders of free market competition, we, European liberal democrats, have a major role to play in getting this message across, in order to make sure that the EU does not under perform economically. Framework directives are never easy to explain, they always lack definition. We must look at the substance, provide clear examples.

Finally on the day of the anniversary of Hubble, we continue to discover the unexplored in space. How fascinating this may be, time has come to really change our behavior towards the environment, as a recent UN report reminds us. 1.300 scientists from all over the world continue to assess the state of the planet. They concluded that two-thirds of the earth's ecosystems, which sustain human activity on this planet, are under threat of collapse. A proof that further investment must be made in the field of sustainable technology. To avoid worsening climate change, more sustainable production and consumption patterns are needed.

Today, a great project of European integration and co-operation reached the clouds. For Airbus 380, the sky is no longer off limit. European Liberal Democrats, symbolized with a bird as logo, we continue to be ambitious and make the difference. What the European Liberal Democrats stand for, you ask? It is easy, read our Electoral platform.

In order to improve our services with our members we have currently updated and redesigned our website and publications. Furthermore, from now on Council members and Congress delegates will be able to access all relevant documents on a new Intranet.

You will also find all information regarding our joint political activities with our member parties.

Finally, in the name of the whole ELDR Team, I wish Federica Sabbati every success in her new job, it was our pleasure to work with her.

Lex Corijn

Positive results for ELDR fact finding mission to Ukraine

During its meeting on 18 October 2004 in Berlin, the Co-ordination Committee, which aims to co-ordinate activities of the foundations of ELDR member parties active in democracy projects in Central and Eastern Europe, decided it would have its next meeting in Ukraine, in combination with a fact finding mission. In view of last year Presidential elections, such a mission was deemed interesting to assess the changes in the political climate after the Orange revolution and to find potential liberal partners.

At the beginning of March, a delegation composed of representatives of the ELDR party, its member parties and foundations and LYMEC visited the Ukrainian capital Kiev. The delegation met representatives of the National Democratic Institute in Kiev, the EU Commission delegation in Ukraine, and a number of representatives from various political parties. It saw many opportunities, as Ukraine after the Orange revolution has not yet a stable political landscape and many of the parties still lack a clear ideo-

logy. However individuals within parties often have an obvious liberal profile. It was clear that most parties favour integration of Ukraine into the European Union. The delegation concluded that because of this reason we should work together with those parties and politicians who want to steer Ukraine away from the past, and towards its European vocation.

While Ukraine obtained independence in 1991 with the dissolution of the USSR, democracy long remained elusive as the legacy of state control and endemic corruption stalled efforts at economic reform, privatization and civil liberties. The "Orange revolution," a peaceful mass protest in the closing months of 2004 forced the authorities to overturn a rigged presidential election and to allow a new internationally monitored vote that swept into power a reformist slate under Viktor Yushchenko.

For more information on the Co-ordination committee or the fact finding mission, please contact: dtanahatoe@eldr.org



ELDR Delegation in Kiev, Ukraine

Myriam Cornillet becomes ELDR Communications officer



Myriam Cornillet, 28, has been recruited to strengthen ELDR's external and internal commu-

nication. Having worked as a journalist for the leading EU policy portal EurActiv.com, she has a very good understanding of the EU press corps and can rely on a strong network. Myriam, a French national, has a broad range of experience working as communication and project officer in a diversity of organisations, notably for the European Commission's Internal Communication Unit and for the International NGO Doctors of the World. She also worked as parliamentary assistant trainee in the French Parliament. Fluent in English, French and German, she graduated with a masters degree in International relations from the Sorbonne University and with a masters degree in European law from University Paris XII Val de Marne. Discussing her new position, Myriam said: "I am excited about assisting ELDR in exploiting today's wide-ranging communication media to strengthen the European Liberal Democrat political family. On a broader perspective, I hope to contribute to the continuing emergence of a trans-national political life".

Pat Cox sets up office at ELDR headquarters

Former EP President Pat Cox has set up a consultancy "European Integration Solutions" to offer insights into the operation of the European Union and promote a better understanding between the USA and the EU. He will provide advices and networking services to public and private clients on both sides of the Atlantic. M. Cox has chosen to base its European office in ELDR headquarters, which will sub-rent him one room. His North-American office is based in Washington.

ELDR still has another office to rent, for more information please contact: kputzeys@eldr.org





The Freedom Union challenges political scene in Poland

Tadeusz Mazowiecki (the first Polish non-communist Prime Minister) Wladyslaw Frasyniuk (leader of the Union of Freedom party), and professor Jerzy Hausner (former deputy Prime Minister of Economics) have launched a new political initiative aimed at reversing political trends in Poland, which aims at a wide sharpening of public debate and introducing an offer for moderate central electorate.

At the launching convention in Warsaw on 27 February 2005, they called the movement "Democratic

Party". It is based on the structure and philosophy of the Freedom Union, but addressed to the broader public. The political manifesto recalls democratic values, tolerance, very pro-European attitude and wise economic governance as fundamental principles. It states also resisting from any political populism.

After the convention many new faces appeared and registered, a majority of them have never been member of any political party. Meanwhile, the regional conventions of a new party started to run.

The current Prime Minister, professor Marek Belka, stated officially that he supports the Democratic Party and intends to join it - no matter what political circumstances are. He will start a political campaign after 5 May, after a vote of confidence in the Polish Parliament. On 7 May, the Freedom Union is going to have its last congress and reshape into the new party.

Bartek Nowak
Chief of Political Cabinet EP Vice-President Janusz Onyszkiewicz

Le parti libéral d'Andorre remporte les élections

Le parti libéral d'Andorre reste au pouvoir et constitue le plus grand groupe au sein du Conseil général d'Andorre (le Parlement d'Andorre) avec 41 pourcent des voix contre 36 pourcent des voix pour les sociaux démocrates et 11 pourcent pour les conservateurs. Le parti libéral d'Andorre est au gouvernement depuis 10 ans.

La campagne du parti libéral a été menée par Albert Pintat, sous

le thème "un nouvel élan pour Andorre". Ancien Ministre des Affaires étrangères et hommes d'affaires, M. Pintat a été nommé Premier Ministre.

L'ancien Chef du gouvernement Marc Forné ne pouvant briguer un troisième mandat consécutif, s'est présenté au siège de député de la "paroisse" (commune) d'Andorre la Vieille, la capitale du pays.

10 reasons to vote UK Lib Dems



At the launch of the Liberal Democrat manifesto for the 2005 General Election – entitled The Real Alternative – Party leader Charles Kennedy presented a programme based on "dignity for older people, real opportunity for our children and a fair deal for families". The Liberal Democrats will "offer a real alternative to the authoritarian instincts of the Labour Government and the insular and narrow-minded instincts of the Conservatives", he said. They put forward 10 reasons to vote for them:

- putting patients first instead of targets in the national health system (NHS) - That will mean quicker diagnosis and treatment, lower prescription charges and free eye and dental checks
- scrapping students fees because access to education should be based on the ability to learn – not on the

ability to pay.

- recruiting 10,000 more police officers to cut crime and the fear of crime
- Free personal care for the elderly
- Cleaner transport & cleaner energy
- Spending £1.5 billion towards reducing school class sizes
- Better pensions - £100 on the basic state pension for the over 75s, who are the poorest and most vulnerable of our pensioners
- Replacing the Council tax by a fair system based on people's ability to pay
- the one percent of people earning over £100,000 a year will pay a new top rate of tax to fund the end of student tuition fees, free personal care for the elderly and the reduction of local taxes
- restore trust in the government at home and abroad and be a force for good in the world

The stakes of the British general election

The British election is about the shape of the opposition, not the government. If Labour gains another substantial majority, and the Conservatives suffer another crushing defeat, big enough to make it impossible that they could win the subsequent election, and the Liberal Democrats continue their steady rise, the traditional two party pendulum will have been arrested. It will become necessary to construct a new alternative.

The Tories are victims of the end of class politics, the end of the Cold War, just as the old Liberals were victims of their beginning, after the First World War. The most eloquent expression of this is that Labour now occupies mainstream Tory territory. It is pro-American, and only tepidly pro-European. It offers an unimaginative economic regime, which fails to address the deeper problems of globalisation. It pursues a repressive justice regime, and the chipping away of public provision in health and education. Above all, it is defined by putting holding power ahead of all principles. Only those who care passionately about foxhunting (and

nothing else), or who are consumed by (largely) unfounded fears of mass immigration and the rise of multiculturalism, who have been brought to rage against, rather than acquiesce in, or seek the reasoned, humane reform of, the modern world, have real, rather than merely tribal, cause to vote Conservative. And how many are they?

The reactionary, xenophobic vote in Britain is, probably, much the same as in France. Around 17%. The difference between this and the 32% were the Tories have been since 1992, is simply because of their being seen as the natural alternative to Labour. Break that assumption, and they fall immediately to that hard core. The story of the next Parliament will be a splintering of the Conservative Party and the gathering, around the Liberal Democrats, of sufficient shards to propel us to challenge for government in 2009/10. That is the measure of Charles Kennedy's leadership. The Tories are more deeply divided than ever. Between those who want to get out of the EU altogether and those

who recognize such a step would be madness. Between those who think the state should shrink to some 20% of GDP and those who accept the realities of our existing mixed economy. On civil liberties, between authoritarians and libertarians. On immigration, between ultra-nationalist exclusionists and business and farming interests, once the most powerful pillars of Conservative support. Between social liberals and social conservatives. All these divisions have one side that is closer to the Liberal Democrats' position than to that of their opponents within their own party. One can argue about the precise circumstances in which such fissile material will detonate. But that the Tories are doomed and Charles Kennedy has a realistic chance of eventually becoming Prime Minister, will not, after May 5th, be in any doubt.

John Stevens
A former Conservative Party MEP who left the Conservatives in 1999 over their opposition to Britain joining the Euro. He joined the Liberal Democrats in 2001

D66 remains part of the Dutch coalition government

Thom de Graaf (D66) resigned from the Dutch government following the parliamentary defeat earlier this year to introduce direct elections for the country's mayors.

The constitutional amendment needed to establish the system of direct mayoral elections fell in Parliament's upper house when opposition parties, mainly Labour Party (PvdA) senators, voted against the proposal.

D66's membership of this cabinet, the second to be led by Christian Democrat Prime Minister Balkenende, was partly based on the party's belief that, by participating, it could realise two of its main political aims: directly elected mayors and a major revamp of the electoral system. The negative vote left the future of Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende's three-party coalition somewhat precarious for a few weeks.

However, in an extraordinary Congress on 2 April, members of

D66, the third party in the Dutch coalition government voted to back the party's continued participation in the cabinet. The meeting in The Hague was organised after the party and its cabinet ministers reached agreement during the Easter weekend with the other two government parties about the conditions for D66 to remain in the coalition.

D66's coalition partners, the Christian Democrats and the VVD liberals, agreed amongst others additional funds for education and a further reform of the country's antiquated public broadcasting system. The second cabinet of Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende has therefore survived the situation.

The new D66 Minister for Government Reform and Kingdom Relations is Alexander Pechtold. Minister Laurens-Jan Brinkhorst was appointed as the new Deputy Prime Minister.

Irish Progressive Democrat celebrates 20th birthday

2005 marks twenty years since the foundation of the Progressive Democrats. During the party's Annual Conference in Cork on 8 April 2005, Mary Harne, Leader of the Progressive Democrats said: "Twenty years ago Des O'Malley broke the mould of Irish politics. He heard the call of conscience over the cult of personality. The Progressive Democrats were formed and the country broke free from the vice grip of civil war politics. (...) In 1985, we set out to blaze a trail for the modern, European liberal democracy we now have, a progressive and prosperous democracy, one ruled by law: one law, one State, one army, one Constitution".

Verhofstadt proposes a new method for the EU growth strategy

Ahead of the European Council, Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt circulated a policy paper to his counterparts which contains a new method with five main proposals to achieve the goals set in Lisbon five years ago. He highlights the main points for ELDR Insight.

The European pentathlon is an ambitious project both in terms of its goals and of the instruments required to achieve them. However, taking on such a challenge is the only way in which we can really make the European economy the most successful in the world by 2010 while at the same time safeguarding our social model. European heads of state and government have a choice: they can content themselves with comparing tables and action plans, or they can launch a new Community project following in the footsteps of the euro and the internal market.

Tax reform

In today's open economy, our goods and services with their high cost price are proving less and less of a match for new growth centres in other parts of the world. This high cost price is mainly the result of the high taxes levied on labour and companies. Given that we do not wish to alter our social model, the only course left open to us is to a massive shift from direct taxation and social contributions to indirect tax-

ation. After all, indirect taxes are neutral levies; they do not weigh directly on production costs. They do not affect exports. They are levied in the same manner on both imported goods and services and those produced at home and they have a redistributive effect comparable to that of direct taxation.

Convergence

Today, the solutions being applied by Member States vary considerably. The threat of dumping exists, which not only affects the European social model, but also undermines the cohesion of

"The only course left open to us is a massive shift from direct taxation and social contributions to indirect taxation"

the internal market. Convergence does not mean harmonisation, let alone standardisation. What it does mean is setting a perimeter, with a minimum and a maximum percentage, within which each Member State must try to find what suits it best so as to arrive together at a more integrated and more competitive European economy. Convergence of this sort could be applied in a number of areas. I am thinking of the percentage levels of corporation tax, government involve-

ment and labour market flexibility.

Completion of the internal market

The internal market strategy is being implemented far too slowly. How long have we been waiting for the introduction of the Community patent? The main problem, however is the general tardiness in transposing directives internal market pertaining to the internal market. For this reason, I would argue in favour of the automatic transposition of directives or at least of the most important parts of directives. In practical terms, if directives pertaining to the internal market have not been transposed within the specified time period, the main elements of such directives should enter into force once the specified time period has elapsed, even if there is no complete and formal transposition.

Werner Hoyer expresses concerns over Stability and Growth Pact

Substantial increase in research

In terms of research and development the European Union lags far behind

"We risk losing the uniqueness of the European social model"

the United States and, above all, Japan. In order to allocate substantially more money for research and development within the framework of Community financing, when the new financial mechanisms for the period 2007-2013 get under way, half of all spending on competitiveness should be allocated to R&D, while a quarter of regional spending by the Member States in receipt of structural funds should be set aside for research and development projects.

New political guidance

All these measures require fresh political guidance. The key in this respect is once again that the European Commission should play a greater role and be solely responsible for implementing the new growth strategy. It should also conduct a growth test to determine how each national measure conforms to the growth strategy set out in the convergence code. More detailed guidance from the Member States is also essential. Each country should also set up a special parliamentary committee consisting of members from both its national parliament and the European Parliament.

Guy Verhofstadt

Prime Minister of Belgium (VLD)

ELDR President Werner Hoyer has welcomed the Lisbon agenda's new focus on growth and jobs, for which the European Liberal Democrats have long been advocating. Ahead of the heads of State and government's summit, he expressed the need to give some teeth to the Lisbon process by putting pressure on the big Member States to deliver on reforms and back the idea of setting up a high-level group to monitor the progress. "Then the weaknesses and omissions of those braking the course for the renewal of Europe would become transparent" he said. He has

expressed concerns over the new provisions of the Stability and Growth Pact and calls on big Member States not to undermine the Euro. "The Finance Ministers' agreement on softening the rules guaranteeing the stability of the euro, which was rubber-stamped by the EU heads of State and Government, is exactly the wrong signal for the economic development of Europe. The stability of the euro is not an obstacle for growth in Europe, but on the contrary the most important condition for it," he said.

Cities and regions take up the Lisbon challenge

Cities and regions of Europe have increasingly been highlighting the key role they can play in helping the EU to achieve the objectives set out in the Lisbon Strategy. The Committee of the Regions represents many regions and cities which are economic engines in their respective Member States. The ALDE Group at the CoR has members who represent a number of these regions and cities, including London, Rotterdam, Gothenburg, and the Basque Country. In this article, the Mayor of Rotterdam outlines how the EU's cities can help to improve Europe's

competitiveness.

The Lisbon-strategy is very ambitious. The objectives of economic growth, employment, social stability and sustainable development can only be achieved if the large cities of Europe play a central role. Cities are, after all, the layer of government that is least remote from citizens and businesses. Large cities provide the forward thrust and form the hubs of innovative networks in Europe, and of course cities also have the social and environmental problems which must be addressed in conjunction with the economic strategy.

Rotterdam cooperates closely with the other major Dutch cities, Amsterdam,

The Hague and Utrecht, known as G4. Together we have our office in Brussels, to represent our interests. Together we monitor the policy developments in the European Union, develop initiatives and react on policy papers. Together we have also offered to help our national government draw up plans to achieve the Lisbon objective.

It is in the major cities that different, sometimes conflicting, economic, spatial planning, social and environmental aspirations coincide. They all have to be reconciled in each district, each neighbourhood of the cities. Large city authorities therefore have a special vantage point. We are best placed to



"Large cities provide the forward thrust and form the hubs of innovative networks in Europe"

produce the right balance between the economy, society and sustainability. And we can achieve this by promoting entrepreneurship, incentives to attract people and enterprises of all kinds, a good match between education, the labour market and sustainable development, encouraging young people to remain in education, eliminating unnecessary bureaucracy and simplifying legislation.

Given all this, we acknowledge our share in government responsibility for implementing the Lisbon strategy, and therefore we want to make our contribution nationally, and in Europe as a whole:

1. developing co-operation between citizens, businesses, neighbouring authorities, national government and the European institutions to achieve the Lisbon objectives, especially in preparing and adopting national action programmes;
2. expanding existing international exchanges and co-operation between cities and regions, both in individual policy areas and on an inter-disciplinary basis;

3. sharing knowledge, learning from others, with organised benchmarking, peer-pressure and peer-support;
4. making available to one another theoretical and practical research results, and training capacity;
5. making available our extensive practical knowledge and organising capacity in the area of balanced, economically and socially sustainable development, to streamline European and national legislation and action programmes.

The major cities have a direct government responsibility to roll up their sleeves, tackle pressure points, and build on the traditional strengths of urban networking, in order to support the Lisbon strategy. We have the organising capacity to develop and implement the best strategy with all stakeholders. We are ready to meet the Challenge!

Ivo Opstelten

Mayor of Rotterdam
1st Vice President ALDE Group (CoR)

«We have to help the individuals to adjust to the labour market»

Lena Ek, MEP from the Swedish Centre Party, led the negotiations on the European Commission's new Lisbon strategy on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE). She calls on Member States to act now to make the labour markets more flexible and to provide everyone with lifelong learning.

What is your assessment of the European Commission's new Lisbon strategy which focuses on jobs and growth? What are your recommendations to make this strategy work?

Implementation now lies in the hands of the Member States, but the European Commission has a role to play in ensuring that best practices are shared. The European economy has to be modernized to become more flexible and able to adjust while keeping sustainable social systems. This is a strong message from the parliamentary resolutions both before and after the Spring summit. What the Europeans want is that we put some of the political quarrels aside and find common solutions for the European good. I don't think we have that many years. While Globalisation is growing, Europe's competitiveness on the world market is declining. With an increased competition from America and Asia, the situation is becoming tougher for the European economy.

Some people fear they will lose out because of the Lisbon reforms. How can politicians better communicate that this will not be the case?

These reforms are about helping people to get ready for the labour market and to get knowledge and skills that they can apply in the modern world. People who have been educated 20 years ago need to brush their knowledge to be able to secure jobs or get better jobs. Providing lifelong education and training is a major public responsibility.

What actions should the Member States be undertaking?

Member States need to establish the conditions for a sustainable growth. This has to be acknowledged in a clearer manner by the Council. Today, unemployment is awfully high in some EU countries. Member States have to pull themselves together in the next three years, instead of entering quarrels. Once you have decided on a strategy, you need to move very quickly towards working on the tools. Member States need to implement the best method

to make the labour market more flexible and improve gender equality. The real challenge is to get a discussion between European and national politicians on the methods which bring the best results. MEPs and MPs should work hand in hand.

In the statistics relating to the Lisbon goals we see the Scandinavian EU countries constantly being cited as the good examples of the EU class. But if this successful 'Scandinavian flexicurity model' is such a good idea, why has it not yet been adopted on the continent?

The Scandinavian model shows that combining high level of flexibility and security works. I come from a small rural area. We had unemployment of nearly 16 %. With various methods directed towards the labour market and the companies, we managed to take it down to 4 % in four years. It is possible to improve the labour market and to improve job creation by the companies; People should take jobs even if they are not perfect, further train themselves and eventually get the jobs they want. It's really annoying to see that things can be done and are sometimes not being done.

The three main political groups (People's party, Socialists and the Liberal democrats) are in agreement over the Lisbon strategy. Shouldn't the political parties present different futures to their voters?

The political parties must decide on the priorities and where the balance should be. In this view, a lively political debate is very good. But after having debated, you have to agree and get a stable majority in order to get things done. This is the underlying thinking in the Parliament. The ALDE group, which brings together MEPs from the ELDR party and the Democratic party, is clearly gaining ground in the

"The Scandinavian model shows that combining high level of flexibility and security works"

European political discussions. Having coordinated the group's position on the Lisbon resolution, I can say that the group can really make a difference if it is coherent. We have managed to create very good working conditions in the group, which gathers very competent and enthusiastic people. Sometimes, citizens think that work

in the Parliament is very bureaucratic and lengthy. But it really isn't, it is a hands on job! It is fascinating to take part in the shaping of the future of Europe.

What do you think of the controversy surrounding the services directive?

I think that virtually everyone agrees that there are two areas in which we

"We can create a lot of new jobs in Europe in environmental technologies and services"

can create a lot of new jobs in Europe: first of all in the field of environ-



mental technologies and alternative energy, second of all in the services sector. So, the question is how to create an internal market for services? The political positions are different between the groups on this issue. I believe that if you have a permanent activity in another EU country, you should follow the law of this country.

The whole controversy on the directive revolves around defining from which time length an activity becomes permanent. I think three months is a good time limit.

What did you think of M. Chirac comments after the Spring European Council that "ultra liberalism is the new communism"?

I am a social liberal. I think Chirac is a man that loves catchy phrases. If you look at the debate in France on the Constitutional treaty, you can see that lots of catchy political phrases are used. As a social liberal, I've worked hard to get a Parliament's resolution containing references to sustainable development and taking into account social cohesion. I hope this line will win because it is the one that Europe needs.

ELDR Annual Congress to focus on Competitiveness

Jointly organized by the ELDR party and its Slovak member, ANO, the 26th ELDR annual Congress will take place on 23-24 September 2005 at the Radisson Carlton Hotel in Bratislava, in Slovakia. It will focus on Europe's competitiveness: "Working together for a Competitive Europe - Releasing Europe's Potential". The main debate on Competitiveness and Reform, chaired by Graham Watson, Leader of the ALDE Group and Werner Hoyer, ELDR Party President (FDP, Germany) will take place on 23 September between 3:30 and 5 pm. Pavol Rusko, Political Leader, Slovak Minister of Economy, (ANO), Matti Vanhanen, Finnish Prime Minister (Suomen Keskusta), Laurens

Jan Brinkhorst, Dutch Minister for Economy (D66), Guy Verhofstadt, Belgian Prime Minister (VLD) are expected to be the main speakers.

According to the draft agenda, other sessions will focus on:

- Liberalism in a Multicultural Reality
- Women and the labour market
- Ageing and Immigration in Europe
- Regions in a competitive Europe

The deadline to submit draft resolutions to the ELDR secretariat as well as a list of nominated delegates / substitutes by member parties is Saturday 23 July 2005. On Friday 12 August 2005, a mailing will be sent to the delegates containing the final Congress agenda,

items including theme resolutions, updating information and proposed resolutions for consideration. This mailing will also give the deadline for amendments to these resolutions.

Candidates running to become ELDR party Bureau members will present themselves to the audience between 11.15 - 12.15 am on 24 September 2005. A new ELDR Party president is due to be elected this year. Results will be announced at 6 pm on 24 September 2005.

We hope to see you all!

For more information, look at: www.eldr.org

Leaders' meeting ahead of the European Council



The Prime Ministers and leaders of the European Liberal Democrats (ELDR Party) met ahead of the Spring European Council during a lunch hosted by Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt in his official residence Lambermont to exchange their views on how to revive Europe's sluggish economy. They held a positive discussion on wide-ranging issues such as the relaunch of Lisbon reforms, the new provisions of the Stability and Growth Pact and the controversial services directive.

Liberalism in a multi-cultural reality

The ELDR Council will discuss about "liberalism in a multi-cultural reality" on 14 May 2005 in view of adopting a resolution during the ELDR Congress in Bratislava. Wilfried Derksen, ELDR Party Vice President (The Netherlands, D66) initiated the debate.

As we all know, most EU member states developed into multi-cultural societies. Next to the original cultural divergence in these countries, new divergences are now present as a consequence of new immigrants. I will call this here the multi-cultural reality.

One can distinguish national minorities and ethno-cultural minorities. Most of the time the national minorities have a specific habitat and share part of the common culture of the country. There may be a language difference and there may be a different religious background too, but generally, except for the Balkan, both majority and minority religions were of Christian descent. Though there is no general European consensus on the position of the individual (not everybody is a liberal), the conventions on Human Rights are generally shared in Europe. The notions of these conventions grew out of the mainstream European cultural thoughts.

This can be different with ethno-cultural minorities. They often entered in the last decades of the

twentieth century. Partially these migrants came from other continents with very different cultural background, including language and religion (mostly Islam, but also Hinduism). This brings a new dilemma, a new challenge for liberalism: the ideology of individual freedoms.

Liberalism respects wherever minorities exist, cultural differences as part and parcel of their

"Problems can arise when individuals of these new minorities want to express their individual rights, contradictory to the general habits of this minority"

innate and inalienable right to be free. Liberal policy should refrain from all attempts at coerced assimilation. Liberalism should focus on harmony between the various communities within a country by ensuring that nobody is either privileged or discriminated against because he or she belongs to a certain community. Minority rights are not to be interpreted as exempting members of minorities from the normal responsibilities and rights of citizenship.

Problems can arise when individuals of these new minorities want to express their individual rights, contradictory to the general habits of this minority. The same goes for the situation that

some cultural traditions collide with the general vision on individual freedom in society.

The ELDR Bureau sees this as a challenge for our liberal traditions. Therefore it starts in Sofia the discussion on this dilemma. This discussion will continue on the Internet and might come to a conclusion in the Bratislava congress. We invite you to find answers on questions like:

- What kind of liberal policy can help a multi-cultural society to live in a peaceful harmony?
 - How far goes the right of ethno-cultural minorities to cultural self-determination (including the right to use one's own language in administrative matters etc.)?
 - What should be the liberals' policy when the right of individual freedom or gender rights collide with the right of ethno-cultural minorities or with the culture of these minorities?
 - Parts of certain ethno-cultural minorities do not accept today's democratic society and want to enforce their culture on the whole of society. What is the liberal answer to that?
 - Which minority policy can help beating the threats of terrorism?
- and more.

Wilfried Derksen
ELDR Party Vice President,
The Netherlands, D66



Successful Lymec Congress

LYMEC held its annual Congress and Executive Committee in Amsterdam, The Netherlands 8-10 April 2005. Around 150 delegates all over Europe gathered in Amsterdam, where the event was smoothly organised by JOVD. A new political manifesto was adopted, together with several resolutions on new Youth Programme, the political situation in Ukraine, the European Constitution, the software patents and the Kyoto-protocol.

Many personalities addressed the Congress, among them: ELDR Party President Werner Hoyer, former Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs and VVD leader Josiaz van Aarsten, European Youth Forum President Renaldas Vaisbrodas, IFLRY President Emil Kirjas, Ilya Yashin from Yabloko Youth of Russia and Oksana Potapenko from Ukraine. The Presidents of both LYMEC's Dutch member organisations, Hans de Backer

from JOVD and Jan Paternotte from JD, also spoke at the Congress.

The Congress welcomed new member organisations. Liberal Students Club from Romania, Centerpartiets Ungdomsförbund from Sweden, Klubs LC from Latvia and Liberal Youth Assembly from Bulgaria got full membership. The following organisations became applicant members of LYMEC: New Generation from Hungary, FEL from Belgium and CTLiberali from Moldova.

Prior to the Congress, a seminar "Everlasting Energy" took place in Amsterdam 4-8 April 2005. LYMEC would like to thank JOVD for organising yet another successful LYMEC event and all Congress participants for attending the largest Congress ever! All adopted documents will be available on the Lymec website shortly (www.lymec.org)

Young Liberals' New Perspectives on Education

In ignorance no man can really be free. For liberals, education has always been one of the cornerstones of their policy. It was precisely this topic that laid in the focus of the LYMEC seminar New Perspectives for the Liberal Education, held in Bucharest from 21st till 24th October 2004. The seminar was hosted by a LYMEC member organisation - Romanian Liberal Students Club and took place in one of Romania's most famous buildings (other than Vlad Tepes castle) - the Ceausescu Palace, now home to the Romanian Parliament.

The seminar was opened by LYMEC President, Roger Albinyana I Saigi, and Romanian liberal leaders Mr Calin Popescu Tariceanu, the Prime Ministerial candidate of the Romanian PNL and Mr Ludovic Orban, Vice Mayor of Bucharest. The seminar brought together around 30 participants from around Europe to discuss important educational issues, such as mobility and the Bologna process. The conference also served as

an opportunity for LYMEC members to discuss and redraft a new LYMEC policy on education. LYMEC adopted new positions on education, including the decision to advocate for a greater role of civic education in European schools, earlier teaching of foreign languages, and promotion of active citizenship and introduction of sex education. LYMEC equally took a stand against compulsory religious education and display of religious symbols in public schools, but allowed for tolerance concerning expressions of religious affiliation among students and teachers.

During the seminar, separate working groups revised parts of the LYMEC Manifesto on education. For LYMEC, education has and will maintain to be one of greatest priorities. We understand that without a competitive and future-oriented education, that also nurtures social tolerance and open-mindedness, we cannot count on the development and growth of the European potentials, a goal to which LYMEC feels firmly dedicated.

"The European Union and the solution of the Cyprus Problem"



Participants to the conference on the EU and the solution of the Cyprus Problem

The objective of the symposium, organized by Cyprus' United Democrats and sponsored by the ELDR party, was to examine the way the European context affects the motivation of the sides involved in the Cyprus issue and the perspectives of the solution; how Cyprus' accession to the EU provides more security and more opportunities for conflict resolution.

The Head of the E.C. Representation in Cyprus H. E. Mr Andriaan Van Der Meer referred to the basic liberal values of the E. U. such as tolerance, dialogue, mutual understanding, inclusiveness and solidarity which among other are not compatible with the existence of dividing lines in Europe.

The President of the United Democrats in his speech referred to the role of the EU as a

catalyst for the solution of the Cyprus issue and call on for urgent initiatives towards the resumption of the bicomunal dialogue. MEP, Mr Panos Beglitis, analyzed the principles of a federal solution to the Cyprus problem that can function more effectively in the framework of the EU.

Mr Ozdil Nami, on behalf of the Republican Turkish Party, referred to the isolation of the T/c community and that the adoption of the Direct Trade Regulation by the EU will constitute a more balanced approach to the Cyprus issue. More than 200 people attended the symposium, which was covered by G/c and T/c TV channels.

Androula Vassiliou
Cypriot MP and Vice President of the ELDR Party

We, liberals, do not sell arms to dictators



The annual Congress of LYMEC in Amsterdam, Netherlands, last 8 to 10 April reaffirmed our commitment to continue working towards a more liberal and federal Europe.

One of the strongest issues addressed is the result of various calls over the past year by a number of European Council leaders for lifting the EU arms embargo on China.

There have been clear signals to believe that this step can be taken within the next months. From the joint statement of the 7th summit EU-China, to statements of EU Commissioner Peter Mandelson where he confirmed that Europe was preparing to move forward and lift the arms embargo, or even recent declarations by French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin where he also voiced support for lifting the embargo.

As liberal democrats we believe that any move in the direction of lifting the arms embargo on China will weaken the strength of EU institutions, and what's more important to emphasise, will weaken the credibility of such institutions in the eyes of the citizens. A loss of credibility that in the frame of the current process of ratification of the Constitutional Treaty is not convenient in any sense.

Variables such as the continued repression of dissidents in China, the widespread denial of basic human and political rights, the increasing hostility of China against Taiwan, as well as the failure to rule out its reunification through military force pose an undoubtedly moral pressure to strongly reject any removal of the embargo.

In this respect, an overwhelming majority of 431 Members opposed the lifting of the current embargo in the European Parliament. Our parliamentary group, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), has taken a very strong and clinching position against this possibility through its leader, Graham Watson, because liberals know exactly how relevant it is for our fragile European Idea to maintain the current status quo, which is the embargo.

The European Liberal Youth already took at its Congress in Amsterdam a strong position against this possibility, that on the other hand the forthcoming British Presidency of the EU might want to raise up again, and will urge the other European political youth organisations to adopt a common stand to pressure our respective European governments.

Today we must look at the possible reasons to lift the embargo and we find none. Tomorrow we must ensure that any attempt to remove the embargo on China will be subject to serious and demonstrable reforms in the areas of human and political rights.

Roger Albinyana i Saigi
LYMEC President

ALDE Group and China's arms embargo

With increasing voices calling for the lifting of the embargo, the ALDE group has been very vocal in expressing its position in recent weeks. On 10 March, the group organised a public hearing on the question. The idea was to reflect upon the conditions under which the EU should review its 16 year-old ban. Speakers included Chinese and international human rights experts: "If the EU lifted the arms embargo, this would be a massive public relations coup for the Chinese government. What kind of message would that send out to members of the Chinese opposition who turn to Europe as a social and democratic model?" asked Meg DAVIS, representative of Human Rights Watch. Speaking at the hearing, Graham Watson said: "Pressure from within the EU to lift the arms embargo on China does not reflect political change in China, but rather a new willingness by some in Europe to ignore the lack of it".

Ten days after the hearing, 10 Members from the ALDE arrived in China for a five-day visit, where they met with key government leaders, EU diplomats and representatives of civil society. "Dialogue is important" said Graham Watson, "but the EU has always insisted on linking trade and commercial agreements to political dialogue and human rights. This is what we stand for as a Union".

Amongst key meetings, ALDE Members met up with Foreign Minister of the Chinese Communist Party, Wang JIARUI and Li TIEYINNG, Vice Chairman of the National's People's Congress Standing Committee. Graham WATSON raised the issue of the anti-secession law that was recently adopted by the National People's Congress. "Although some parts of the law are constructive, other parts explicitly indicate for the first time, that a non peaceful resolution of

the Taiwan question is possible", he declared. He insisted that this question remains a high concern amongst EU leaders that has notably been subject to "many discussions and interpretations in Europe". At the outcome of the meetings, Graham WATSON requested a "formal clarification of the provisions stated in the anti-secession law" in order to "shed light on its real meaning".

Led by ALDE leader Graham WATSON, the delegation included Marielle De SARNEZ (ALDE Vice-President), Lapo PISTELLI (ALDE Vice-President), Dirk STERCKX (Chairman of the EP Delegation for relations with the People's Republic of China), and Ona JUKNEVICIENE (Chairwoman of the EP Delegation for relations with the Central Asia).

Strengthening ties between European and Asian Liberals



ELDR Vice President and Cypriot M.P. Androula Vassiliou represented ELDR at a special Dinner Reception hosted by the Liberal Party of the Philippines and the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD) on 2 April, in honour of the Liberal and Democratic Parliamentarians attending the 112th IPU Conference in Manila.

The President of the Senate of the Philippines and President of the Liberal Party, Hon. Franklin Drilon delivered the key note address at this special gathering. In his address, President Drilon welcomed all quest parliamentarians and stressed the importance of such gatherings in strengthening the ties between liberal politicians from around the world and fostering mutual understanding of the challenges and realities of today's globalized-world. M. Dillon called for an end to trade-distorting farm subsidies and tariffs by rich countries and warned that economic stability and global peace security will be difficult to attain in the 21st century if rich nations will continue to rig the trade game.

Androula Vassiliou was among those who responded to President Drilon's address, on behalf of ELDR. She thanked the organizers for their initiative and conveyed the greetings of ELDR's



President, Dr Werner Hoyer and its bureau members. She congratulated CALD for its progress and successes and noted that prominent among its eight member parties is the Liberal Party of the Philippines which will celebrate its 60th anniversary next year and has produced until now three Presidents of the country.

"We, the European Liberals", Androula Vassiliou continued, "believe and fight for a Europe based on the fundamental liberal principles of liberty, democracy, the rule of Law, human rights, tolerance and solitarity. We believe in a fair, free and open society which harnesses the ability of

each and every one of its citizens to participate fully in society, presenting them with the opportunities to fulfill their potential, free from poverty, ignorance and discrimination. It is this consistent and effective fight for these objectives", Mrs Vassiliou added, "that enabled ELDR to acquire a prominent position in the European Parliament after the 2004 elections".

Responses were also given by Norwegian M.P. Trine Skei Grande on behalf of Liberal International and Hon. Sam Rainsy, M.P., Leader of the Cambodian National Opposition and former CALD Chair.

L'ELDR présent à la Journée portes ouvertes des institutions européennes

Le parti ELDR était bien présent au Parlement européen et au comité des régions lors des journées portes ouvertes des institutions européennes le samedi 30 avril. Des milliers de citoyens ont ainsi pu collecter des informations et souvenirs à l'effigie de l'ELDR tout en faisant connaissance avec les représentants et le personnel du groupe et du Parti. Au Parlement, Willy De Clercq, ancien Premier Ministre belge et ancien Président du parti ELDR, s'est livré à une séance de dédicace de son livre « l'art du possible ». Conjointement avec le groupe ADLE, le parti a organisé un jeu a connu un grand succès. Il s'agissait de faire remplir aux visiteurs

une carte de l'Europe avec le nom des 25 Etats membres et leur emplacement. Du côté du comité des régions, l'accent a été mis sur les enfants qui ont eu la possibilité de faire des coloriages et des dessins sur l'Europe. La journée porte ouverte des institutions a encore une fois remporté un grand succès, avec plus de 60 000 visiteurs au Berlaymont. Nombre d'entre eux sont repartis avec le texte de la Constitution européenne.



Spain first to say "Yes" to EU Constitution

The European Constitution is a great step forward in the European building process, and in the spread of liberal ideas around. In that sense, *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* (CDC) feels really proud about the "YES" to the European Treaty that few weeks ago the Spanish citizens made, underlying the importance for my party of the "YES" of the Catalan people.

However, we have to analyse why there was a really low participation and enrolment of the citizens during the elaboration of the proposal and during the campaign, and why people feels far from the European idea. As Catalans, the full recognition of the diversity of languages and cultures in Europe is really important for us, which the liberals have always promoted. Europe has to be closer to citizens. The world needs a powerful

Europe, and we will work, as always, for it!

My party worked hard to convince citizens to vote YES, and also negotiated with the Spanish Government in order to obtain really important steps on in our (Catalan) participation in Europe. Our demands on making the Catalan language (spoken by 15 million of Europeans) official and the representation of the Catalan interests at the European Council of Ministers have been accepted by the Spanish Government. We also hope that the European national governments will be glad to fully accept our demands.

Artur Mas
Secretary General
Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya

Member Parties and Affiliate Parties

Member Parties
Albania
Partia Aleanca Demokratike
<http://www.aleanca.org>
Andorra
Partit Liberal d'Andorra
<http://www.partiliberad.ad>
Austria
Liberale Forum
<http://www.liberale.at>
Belgium
Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten (VLD)
<http://www.vld.be>
Parti Réformateur Libéral (PRL)
<http://www.mr.be>
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Liberalno demokratska stranka (LDS)
<http://www.liberali.ba>
Bulgaria
Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF)
<http://www.dps.bg>
National Movement Simeon II
<http://www.ndsv.bg>
Croatia
People's Party (HNS)
<http://www.hns.hr>
Cyprus
United Democrats (UDP)
<http://www.edi.org.cy>
Denmark
det radikale venstre
<http://www.driv.dk>
venstre
<http://www.venstre.dk>
Estonia
Estonian Reform Party
<http://www.reform.ee>
Estonian Centre Party
<http://www.keskerakond.ee>
Finland
Suomen Keskusta
<http://www.keskusta.fi>
Svenska Folkpartiet (SFP)
<http://www.sfp.fi>

Germany
Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)
<http://www.fdp-bundesverband.de>
Hungary
Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége (SzDSz)
<http://www.szdsz.hu>
Ireland
Progressive Democrats (PD)
www.progressivedemocrats.ie
Italy
Italia dei valori - Lista Di Pietro
<http://www.antoniodipietro.it>
Partito Repubblicano Italiano (PRI)
<http://www.pri.it>
Movimento Repubblicani Europei
<http://www.movimentorepubblicanieuropei.org/>
Kosova
Partia Liberale e Kosoves (PLK)
<http://www.plk-kosova.org>
Latvia
Latvia's Way (LC)
<http://www.lc.lv>
Lithuania
Lithuanian Liberal and Centre Union
<http://www.nsaivunga.lt>
Luxembourg
Demokratesch Partei (DP)
<http://www.dp.lu>
The Netherlands
Democraten 66
<http://www.d66.nl>
Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en democratie (VVD)
<http://www.vvd.nl>
Poland
Unia Wolności
<http://www.uw.org.pl>
Romania
Partidul National Liberal (PNL)
<http://www.pnl.ro>
Serbia and Montenegro
Liberals of Serbia
<http://www.liberali-srbije.org.yu>

Slovakia
Aliancia Nového Občana (ANO)
<http://www.ano-aliancia.sk>
Slovenia
Liberalna demokracija Slovenije (LDS)
<http://www.lds.si>
Sweden
Folkpartiet Liberalerna (FP)
[http://www.folkpartiet.se
Centerpartiet \(C\)
<http://www.centerpartiet.se>
Switzerland
Parti Radical Démocratique \(FDP-PRD\)
<http://www.fdp.ch>
United Kingdom
Liberal Democrats \(Lib Dems\)
<http://www.libdems.org.uk>
The Alliance of Northern Ireland
<http://www.allianceparty.org>
Affiliate Parties
Croatia
Hrvatska socijalno liberalna stranka \(HSL\)
<http://www.hsll.hr>
Liberalna stranka \(LS\)
<http://www.liberali.hr>
Libra
\[www.libra.hr\]\(http://www.libra.hr\)
Czech Republic
Civic Democratic Alliance \(ODA\)
<http://www.oda.cz>
Path For Change
<http://www.cestazmeny.cz/>
Macedonia
Liberal Party of Macedonia \(LPM\)
<http://www.liberalna.org.mk>
Norway
Venstre \(V\)
<http://www.venstre.no>](http://www.folkpartiet.se)

ELDR AISBL CALENDAR UPCOMING EVENTS 2005

May 2005	
12-14	Liberal International Congress, Sofia, Bulgaria
14	ELDR Party aisbl Bureau meeting, Sofia (10h00-13h00)
14	ELDR Council meeting, Sofia (14h00-17h00)
20-22	VLD Congress, Antwerp, Belgium
25	ALDE Group meeting, Brussels, 09h00-12h30
25-29	LYMEC Seminar, Gummersbach, Germany
27-28	VVD Congress, The Netherlands
June 2005	
15	ELDR Party aisbl Bureau meeting, Brussels (15h00-17h30)
16	ELDR Leaders and Ministers meeting, Brussels
18-20	Centre Party Sweden, Annual Congress, Stockholm
August 2005	
18-21	Folkpartiet Sweden, Congress
September 2005	
17-22	Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference, Blackpool, UK
22	ELDR Party aisbl Bureau meeting, Bratislava
23-24	ELDR Party aisbl Congress, Bratislava, Slovakia
October 2005	
27	PM meeting, Brussels (tbc)

ELDR aisbl

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