



MANIFESTO

Adopted at the Congress in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, April 2005
Updated at the Congress in Rome, Italy, May 2009

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I. Preamble

LYMEC, European Liberal Youth, is a pan-European organization dedicated to the promotion and strengthening of liberal and radical values in Europe. The word Radical stems from the French word *Radicaux* and indicates Social-Liberalism. LYMEC is composed of liberal and radical political youth and student organisations based in European countries, as well as of young European individuals subscribing to the principles and values of Liberalism and Radicalism. The aim of LYMEC is to strengthen cooperation among the community of young liberals and radicals and channel our combined efforts towards building a better and more liberal political, social and economic environment for all Europeans.

Furthermore, LYMEC aims to play a role in the construction of the European Union as a youth organisation in close cooperation with other pan-European liberal and radical organizations, educate its member organisations and individual members through the organization of seminars, publications, group travel, symposia, courses and educational meetings, stimulate the cooperation between its member organisations and individual members on the European level, to develop the important themes of the general public debate, educate its member organisations and individual members to develop clear strategies and to take own initiatives and to promote political awareness and involvement of young people in European politics including the promotion of active citizenship.

LYMEC views the European Union as a positive political force that has brought peace and stability to our continent and allowed Europeans to progress and develop in the spirit of tolerance and cooperation. It aims to reform and deepen the European Union in order to strengthen democracy, transparency and political participation on the European level.

LYMEC shall work on its political agenda by maintaining close relationship with the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party and its parliamentary group in the European Parliament. LYMEC closely follows the ELDR group in the European Parliament, taking positions on parliamentary debates and integrating the views of young Europeans into the group's work. LYMEC equally considers important the issues of global development and cooperation and is the official regional youth organisation of the International Federation of Liberal Youth (IFLRY) in Europe. LYMEC is independent in all decisions.

This manifesto is the common ground on which LYMEC bases its work.

II. Primary values of Liberalism and Radicalism

As liberals and radicals our main value is Liberty, which implies:

- Freedom with responsibility
- Equal rights and equality in law.
- The independence of the individual
- Progress and Prosperity through Peace and Global Cooperation
- Tolerance
- A free market economy
- A sustainable environment

- Active citizenship
- Respect for fundamental human rights
 - A pluralistic society
- The rule of law

III. The Main principles of Liberalism and Radicalism

1. Free Individual

Every human being is a unique individual whose distinctive characteristics have a potential to enrich the mankind as a whole. All individuals should be equal in rights and duties and protected from physical and mental violence imposed by authorities or other fellow human-beings. Every individual must be entitled to freedom of expression, way of life and enterprise. The freedom of the individual should go as far as his/her actions do not infringe the freedom of others. Individuals should be the basis of political organization.

2. Democracy and rule of law

The only state system that liberals can support is a democracy with universal suffrage and free and fair elections. Liberals favour subsidiarity to state centralization. Liberals are utterly against death penalty, torture and physical punishments.

The state exists to benefit the individuals and not as a goal of its own. Positive changes in society have always been brought around by free individuals acting alone or in conjunction with each other. The liberals do not believe that any group construct, be it national or religious, should be allowed to overpower the value and rights of individuals. Individuals must not be discriminated on the basis of their ethnicity, creed, colour, religion, gender, sexual preferences, gender identity/expression, national origin, language, disability, age, social, economical or medical status.

We are in favour of a pluralistic society, where a variety of views and opinions exist side by side in mutual respect. We want a tolerant and open society where full participation of all is guaranteed, including minorities and non-citizens, and where animal welfare is respected.

We believe in the division of powers, which consists of a legislative, executive and judicial power. We believe that the rights and freedoms of individuals should be enshrined in a written constitution.

Open societies do not protect their freedom by abolishing it. Freedom, democracy and the rule of law are at the core of the European project. Especially when the civil liberties are under pressure, as we have seen since recent years, we must protect and defend these rights.

Years after 9/11, the fight against terrorism is putting our shared values very severely to the test. The 'war on terrorism' is constantly invoked to justify a drastic curtailment of civil liberties and privacy, the limitation of democratic checks and balances and judicial review, a weakening of the rule of law and of international

treaties, and infringements of human rights.

However, in a democracy it is unacceptable to suspend the democratic machinery. The time has come to close this gap in Europe. After more than fifty years it is time to acknowledge that the safety and security of our citizens is a European responsibility. We must have a proper European policy, subject to democratic scrutiny by the European Parliament. A capable Europe that speaks with a single voice, is a full partner of the US, and can defend the rights of its citizens. But most importantly; in a democratic process the citizen can defend himself against the authorities. Making security a European remit will not weaken the position of the citizen, but strengthen it.

3. Liberal Economy

We support private ownership, market based economy, competition and free trade as the best means of ensuring sustainable economic growth and long-term employment levels, thereby providing a decent standard of life to all citizens. Private property is a fundamental element of a liberal state.

The government should adopt such economic policies that enable the economy to grow and develop and take into account the social and environmental aspects without smothering the economy with excessive taxation and bureaucracy.

We believe that private initiatives and competition are far better solutions in the economy than government interference and state planning. Therefore, we believe that state-owned companies should not have an exclusive monopoly on any income-generating activity, apart from a very few where such monopoly can be reasonably justified as being necessary.

IV. Key issues for LYMEC

1. Personal freedoms

The people have a right to privacy and freedom to be in charge of their own bodies. Women have the right to abortion, as well as to artificial insemination.

Liberals value life, but we should also respect each individual's decision to end it. We therefore support the decriminalisation of suicide. In conditions of terminal illnesses or untreatable sufferings, people have the right to choose to die with dignity with the assistance of medical staff.

Prostitution should be legalized and regulated in order to provide security and health standards to both the prostitutes and their customers. The state must observe vigorously that no one is forced or duped into becoming a prostitute by means of human trafficking or any other way, and is in position to stop being a prostitute according to one's free will.

The society must not view the issue of drug addiction hypocritically and deal with it only through its penal system. Drug addiction represents only a part of a wider

problem of substance-addiction in society. The use of soft-drugs should be legalised and strictly regulated by law.

The people are free to refuse to carry weapons and engage in harming or killing other people. Therefore, LYMEC believes that compulsory military service must be abolished.

Same-sex couples must enjoy the same status under the law as opposite-sex couples and be granted equal access to the adoption of children.

2. Education and Youth

No individual is truly free if he or she is ignorant. Full access to education therefore must be made available to all individuals regardless of their economic or social status, for example through scholarships.

We also believe in life-wide education and recognise the need for both formal and non-formal education.

The state should support the development of a private education sector based on market principles, which would exist in addition to the public educational system.

At all levels students should be more involved in the decision-making process.

There should not be any compulsory religious teaching in public schools and public schools should not be decorated with any religious symbols. In addition to the regular curriculum, the educational programmes and policies must include and promote:

- civic education, including understanding of European structures and organizations
- students' personal development according to their interests
- the possibility for young people to take part in exchange programmes in other countries
- the teaching of foreign languages at the earliest appropriate age
- programs aimed at developing tolerance and peaceful problem-solving
- sexual education
- active citizenship and youth participation, including political involvement

Young people have a crucial role in civil societies. Individuals must have the liberty to organize themselves according to a common cause or interest. The society as a whole benefits immensely from the enthusiasm, specific knowledge and grass-root initiative such groups provide. The civil society deserves to be actively promoted and financially supported by the state and local governments. Civil society organizations should equally be recognized as an important consultative factor in the political decision-making process.

We must respect the values and culture of other peoples and stimulate cultural exchange and co-operation, particularly through civil society and youth. Young people in Europe should be given the opportunities to develop skills and competencies to respond to the challenges of a globalised and competitive world and understand their role in this context. We call for EU, national and regional governments to facilitate

these exchange programmes for pupils and students.

3. Clean Environment

On a global level it is of the greatest importance that developed countries take the lead towards sustainable development. This means that developed countries must turn to sustainable energy consumption and reduce significantly their emissions of greenhouse gases.

LYMEC urges that the use of fossil energy sources is decreased and encourages the EU as well as all European countries to invest in alternative energy sources that neither pose threats to its surroundings nor to the environment in the long run and promote scientific research in this field.

LYMEC supports a common European environmental policy to set up minimum standards and take the environment into account in all European policymaking areas and in all European projects. The Kyoto agreement is a good start for further development of vital environmental cooperation. EU must use effective market-mechanisms like emission trading to combat climate change.

Environmental problems know no state borders and therefore LYMEC finds it reasonable to invest more money and time in resolving environmental problems in neighbouring countries. EU also must support measures that lead to the stabilisation of world population and the limited use of resources associated with it. One example is different programs to improve the situation of women in developing countries.

4. Freedom of expression and Information Society

Freedom of expression is a basic human right, which should be protected in all cases, at all times.

LYMEC therefore opposes any censorship of the internet. When an internet site should be blocked this can only happen by order of a court, not by order of the government.

Media play an important role in today's world and their influence is increasing. Media literacy is an important aspect of life in society. We understand that without freedom of the media there are no free societies and this is why the liberals have always been in the forefront of the struggle for the free and independent media.

LYMEC believes the media market must be open to competition.

The information society we are living must be inclusive of all citizens. The access to information must be made easily available to everyone, and the use of modern technologies must be widely instructed and propagated.

The government and state administration must perform their work with transparency. In those cases where the work must be kept closed to the wider public for security reasons, the work of the government must be checked by an independent monitor acting in the interest of the public.

We support the E-government projects by which the governments shall deliver better, more efficient public services via internet and be more responsive to the needs and interests of the citizens.

In the information society, the need to protect the citizens' privacy becomes even greater. The citizens' right to privacy can be waived only under special circumstances. The government is not allowed to collect and keep private information about citizens unless there is a strong need to do so in the interest of public safety and a judge allows the executive to do so. Additionally, an independent review of the government's actions must take place. Furthermore, the citizens must be protected from the collection and abuse of their private data by private companies.

5. Free Trade

LYMEC is in favour of free trade as a way of providing citizens with better quality goods for better price. Trade barriers serve to fund state budgets and protect otherwise unviable economic activities. As such they are not in the interest of the consumers and in the long run they harm the economy by giving it a false protection. LYMEC accepts that western countries risk losing labour intensive activities, due to relocation to low-wage countries.

We also view free trade as another way of opening up the world to all its citizens. Trade is an important factor in overcoming political, cultural and other barriers among people. It provides for a greater interaction among the citizens of the world and makes the individual more aware of life on the global level.

For liberals free trade however does not mean the right to abuse environment or workers or human rights of less-developed countries by companies from more developed countries. Such actions are deeply immoral and should be sanctioned by state authorities of both the country in which such irregularities take place and the country of company's origin.

We support free trade among all European nations, particularly inside the European Union. The European Union should continue to use the World Trade Organization as the prime instrument in the attempt to reach global free trade.

However, it is crucial that the global free trade agreement is accompanied with developmental aid to the less-developed countries.

6. Social policy

LYMEC believes that there must be an acceptable level of social security for all citizens. The welfare system should include free market competition in order to bring around greater efficiency and better quality of services.

The unemployment of the young people must be addressed by special programs. Moreover, in view of Europe's ageing society, LYMEC promotes an open discussion on modernising our welfare state, including a profound rethinking of the general age of retirement.

V. Strong and United Europe, deepening European democracy

LYMEC is committed to the process of creating a closer Union among the peoples of Europe. Strong cooperation among European nations is a guarantor of stability and progress and prosperity in Europe, goals that have been too often compromised in recent past with wars and conflicts.

In a competitive and globalised world, the Europeans stand a better chance of keeping up with other nations or even leading in economic and social development when they combine their collective productivity and creativity. The European Union represents the most successful political, social and economic framework for European-wide cooperation.

Nonetheless, the European Union feel distant to citizens. The alarmingly low turnouts at elections for the European Parliament illustrate this. The citizens in general do not understand who is responsible for which policy in this labyrinth of European legislation. Intergovernmental Conferences and EU Summits have shown that EU decision-making lacks legitimacy and is not transparent, not democratic and not efficient enough.

LYMEC believes that the European Union needs to be further developed, reformed and enhanced so that it becomes a union for the people and by the people. In this respect, the adoption of a Treaty of Lisbon is a meaningful, significant and substantial step forward, which must lead to further reforms and improvements, but in any case it can not be considered as the final step.

1. Institutional Settings

LYMEC believes that the Union needs a democratic, federal, open and transparent decision-making system, accountable to its citizens, in order to reconnect the peoples of Europe with the decisions taken in their name. This should be based on the democratic principle of the separation of powers.

As the only directly democratically elected body, the Parliament, representing the citizens, should co-decide in all policy fields. It should have full budgetary competence and it should have the right of initiative. Brussels should be the only residence of the European Parliament and its secretariat. Furthermore, the European Parliament should have the right to propose and elect the President of the European Commission and should have the power to remove individual Commissioners and to impeach the Commission President.

In the European Parliament, LYMEC believes that national and regional electoral lists are required to retain the traditional link that exists in some Member States between elected representatives and their constituents, whilst also believes that an EU-wide element is required to enhance the reach of the EU political parties as a precursor to establishing a pan-European democracy. We thus believe that members of the

European Parliament should be elected in two components: some elected in national or regional lists, and some others elected from a standardised EU “top-up” list.

The Council should be reformed into a genuine second chamber, co-deciding together with the European Parliament on EU legislation. It should meet in public except for when impossible for security reasons. Decisions in especially sensitive areas can be made with a double majority of states and people, preventing the domination of big countries over smaller ones. The right of veto should be banned in the decision-making system of the Union. The constitutional regions, in agreement with their member states, should participate in the Council of Ministers when debating what belongs to the sphere of competencies of those regions.

The European Commission is the guarantor of the European Constitution. The European Commission has to be transformed into a true European executive. It has to be fully accountable to the Parliament and the Council.

All matters within the competence of the Union should be subject to the Court of Justice. Every citizen should have the right to approach the Court of Justice.

2. Competencies of the Union

The Union of tomorrow must be based on decentralisation and diversity, not on petty bureaucracy and over-regulation. This means that the EU will only be in charge of those decisions, which cannot be better achieved as well on national or regional levels. The execution of competencies should be based on the two principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, which have to be closely monitored. The principle of subsidiarity implies that decisions should be made at the lowest level of government.

3. Development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy

Foreign Policy should remain a shared competence of the European Union. The Foreign and Security policy should be integrated and decisions taken democratically by the European Parliament and Council.

The EU should pursue a comprehensive approach to promoting peace and security, based on (1) conflict prevention, (2) crisis management involving the Rapid Reaction Force (RRF), (3) post-conflict institution building. The EU must develop a Defence Identity. The Rapid Reaction Force allows Europe to partake in peace-keeping and crisis management operations. However, it is unable to function without NATO assets and has no role in defending the EU. A European Army will be more efficient economically and will be more effective militarily. No member state, however, should be forced against its will to participate in specific missions. The EU shall respect the right of any member state to participate in international cooperation agreements external to the Union.

4. Home affairs, migration and asylum

We are against a “Fortress Europe”. Besides being economically beneficial, migration is a historical and natural phenomenon, and it is also a constituting character of

European culture. Globalisation of the market will bring globalisation of fundamental rights and thus freedom of movement. We therefore want to see a harmonized common and free immigration. A liberal right to asylum system without any economic considerations accompanies it.

There should be no obstacles inside the EU to free trade and free movement of labour force, private capital and services. To secure the free movement of people, the social rights should be transferable in the member states.

We support the true, de-facto establishment of a EU citizenship, which is complimentary to national citizenship. There should be no difference in rights between new and old member states.

5. Europe in a Globalised world

Europe's approach to relations with other regions of the world is a challenge of ensuring peace and stability. We believe that the EU must pay particular attention to Europe's new neighbouring countries.

EU must recognise our eastern and southern neighbours as a cooperation priority. Increased EU involvement in these countries will support fledgling democracies, prevent the violation of human rights and help develop a free market economy. EU should be a key player in promoting global governance.

The membership in the European Union must be open to all European countries who comply with the Copenhagen Criteria. The European Union must provide assistance to pre-accession countries to achieve the necessary standards for EU membership while at the same time guarding against a mock fulfilment of standards. There can be no automatism leading to membership.