



# LYMEC Digital Assembly Outcomes Report

(Hybrid - Online and Vienna, Austria)

24 August 2024

## Charting a Liberal Path to tackle the far-right and far-left

*\*This report was based upon the notes from both breakout sessions.*

This event has aimed at triggering interactions between speakers and participants by splitting the group into 2 breakout rooms with one speaker each before convening again in a plenary session to reflect on the discussions. This report is summarising this more engaging event. Participants had the chance to ask questions but also react, comment on what was said and engage with each other.

### Introduction

The members of European Liberal Youth gathered for a Digital Assembly themed around how we handle extremism of the far left and far right with the purpose of sharing insights from lived experience of key challenges and strategies for success. The members separated into two sessions, one on promoting liberalism in crowded spaces with Peter Berry (NEOS Policy Adviser) and Greta Virag Kiss (FNF), and the other on upholding liberal values in face of extremism in European Politics with Dolores Bakos (NEOS Member of Viennese Parliament) and Sorcha Ní Chonghaile (LYMEC). Subsequently, members had a whole group advocacy and action discussion with Willemijn Krans (LYMEC) based upon the insights they shared in their sessions.

The insights from members and guests focused on the difficulties liberals encounter in political discourse, the amplification of the liberal message, appealing to youth, and the role of regulation in maintaining a balanced and fair political environment. The combined inputs from both sessions into 5 key areas are shared below.

### 1. Challenges in Online Political Discourse

Liberals encounter considerable challenges in engaging with the public, especially in the realm of online political discourse. The rise of social media platforms, such as TikTok, has exacerbated these challenges by enabling the spread of extremist views and misinformation. The NEOS party has utilised direct engagement strategies, such as door-to-door campaigning, to create meaningful connections with citizens, addressing their concerns and promoting liberal values.



However, the dominance of extreme voices online continues to pose a significant hurdle for liberal discourse.

## **2. Amplifying the Liberal Message in a Busy Media Landscape**

The media environment presents another challenge for liberals, who often struggle to gain visibility due to the limited size of their parties and restrictive state regulations. While traditional media provides limited opportunities for exposure, social media platforms remain a critical battleground where liberal messages can easily be overshadowed by more extreme content. Despite these challenges, face-to-face interactions have proven to be an effective method for spreading liberal ideas, though they require substantial resources and are not widely practised across Europe. The ability to amplify the liberal message in such a crowded media landscape is essential for maintaining relevance and influence.

## **3. Liberalism's Appeal to European Youth**

Liberalism offers a unique appeal to European youth by emphasising individualism and a positive outlook on the future, standing in contrast to the revolutionary zeal of the far-left and the conservatism of the far-right. To effectively promote liberalism as a viable alternative to extremism, it is crucial to address the specific concerns of young people, particularly in areas like housing and job opportunities. NEOS, for example, has positioned itself as a party that acknowledges public dissatisfaction while advocating for progressive change. By focusing on practical solutions that resonate with young voters, liberals can strengthen their appeal and counter the allure of extremist ideologies.

## **4. The Role of Regulation in Online Discourse**

Regulation plays a critical role in managing the complexities of online discourse, particularly in preventing the spread of extremist views. However, striking the right balance between regulation and the protection of freedom of expression is a significant challenge. Liberals must ensure that regulations designed to curb extremism do not infringe on individual rights or become tools for government overreach. The international nature of social media platforms further complicates regulation, requiring coordinated efforts across borders to effectively manage the spread of harmful content while safeguarding democratic principles.

## **5. Balancing Ideology with Practical Policy**

Liberal parties face the ongoing challenge of balancing their ideological commitments with the need to implement practical policies that address the concerns of the electorate. While far-right parties often exploit populist trends, liberals must navigate a more nuanced path that respects their core principles while remaining responsive to current issues. This requires flexibility and a



willingness to adapt, ensuring that liberal policies remain relevant and effective in an ever-changing political landscape. The success of recent liberal campaigns, such as Ed Davey's unique approach with the Liberal Democrats in the UK, demonstrates the importance of tailoring campaign strategies to resonate with both core supporters and undecided voters.

### **Conclusion**

Liberal parties are confronted with numerous challenges as they strive to maintain their relevance and promote their values in an increasingly polarised world.

By addressing the complexities of online discourse, amplifying their message in a crowded media landscape, appealing to youth, and carefully balancing regulation with freedom of expression, liberals can continue to offer a compelling alternative to the extremism that threatens democratic societies.

As they navigate these challenges, liberals must remain committed to their principles while adapting to the evolving needs of the electorate, ensuring that they remain a vital force in shaping the future of European politics. Liberals need to select carefully their messages and stick to them in order to achieve impact.

It is worth noting that we had around 70 participants - a sign of how much interest this session brought but also how well this event was presented and advertised to our membership.

We want to thank the **Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom - European Dialogue** for the opportunity to co-organise this Digital Assembly event and for helping to make it the success it was. The insights gathered during the event and the main messages shared as an outcome will be used further in the coming weeks on social media and within our organisation.

On behalf of LYMEC,

**Ines Holzegger**  
**LYMEC President**