

Let's fix our future - LYMEC4EU manifesto!

A liberal manifesto of the young generation for the European elections 2024

Europe is spiralling. From crisis to crisis. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the continuous rise of populism, energy dependency, growing inflation, increasing challenge of climate change apathy, youth unemployment and backlashes against the rule of law are only a few examples of the problems the European Union has to tackle. The **European elections 2024** are a pivotal moment for the young generation to fix the future, to fix our future.

As the European Liberal youth (LYMEC) we are ready to tackle these challenges. Today's problems in the European Union can still be fixed - and they need liberal solutions. Allegations of bureaucratic overload and technocratic administration should wake up the EU institutions. The European Union needs enthusiasm for innovation instead of management of gridlocks. As young liberals, we are optimistic, we are ambitious and we are more than ready. And this is what our Manifesto is all about: **Let's fix our future!**

Globalising democracy and freedom: Ukraine must win!

In a continent stricken by war, the fundamental essence of the European Union as a project for peace in our continent, LYMEC stands resolutely with Ukraine. Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine is an unacceptable act of violence and a clear breach of international law, causing terrible destruction and suffering on our continent. We demand the end of the invasion and the full respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, with whom the EU should deepen its cooperation in all spheres towards a future integration, and aid in the post-conflict recovery. Ukraine must win this war, Russia must lose it. Also, we must hold the Russian regime accountable for its war crimes and crimes against humanity. The European Union, together with its global partners, must step up its strategic ambitions to promote freedom and democracy worldwide - especially against strategic opponents like Russia and China.

LYMEC calls for:

- The full restoration of the borders and the sovereignty of Ukraine;
- Russia to take full blame for their human rights violations and war inflicted on innocent Ukrainian citizens, therefore the full accountability of Putin's regime and its supporters for its war crimes before the International Criminal Court;
- The EU and NATO to provide all possible and necessary ammunition and weapons to protect Ukraine from the Russian army (including air defence, sea defence, land defence, and weapons to counter-attack);
- Russian oligarchs supporting the Putin regime to be prevented from accessing any European benefits (in finance, travel, health, education etc.) and all bank accounts and assets in European countries should be frozen;
- The continuation and expansion of sanctions against Russia until the borders of Ukraine are restored, reparations are paid, war criminals are extradited and imperialistic power efforts of Russia are abandoned;
- The EU and its member states to extend mutual cooperation to become a geopolitical superpower that can withstand external pressure from states like the PRC;
- The EU to continue and to expand their support for the freedom fighters in Ukraine, Taiwan, Hongkong, Tibet and East Turkestan;
- The EU and its member states to develop, in consultation with its NATO partners and NATO's pacific allies, a common strategy regarding the challenges posed by the PRC that follows the principles laid down in this resolution and to act accordingly;

- The EU to publicly condemn any violation of human rights or breach of international law by the PRC and to respectively impose reasonable sanctions if continued;
- EU member states to change the EU treaties in order to allow for decisions within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) to be taken by a qualified majority and henceforth act with one common voice.

Creating economic growth through free and fair trade worldwide

Creating economic growth through free and fair trade worldwide is a complex issue that involves various factors such as free trade, supply chain, WTO, and global tax policy. Free trade refers to the unrestricted flow of goods and services between countries without any barriers such as tariffs, quotas, or subsidies. Free trade can lead to increased competition, innovation, and efficiency, resulting in economic growth. However, it can also lead to job losses in certain sectors and countries. In order to create a prosperous and innovative world an economy with free trade with the least amount of barriers is paramount. The free market system allows individuals to pursue their own self-interests, which in turn leads to innovation, efficiency, and economic prosperity and more individual freedom.

LYMEC calls for:

- A European emphasis on free trade against the rise of protectionism in order to create a more coherent and stable supply chain by taking away market restrictions;
- The promotion of all efforts of the European Commission in negotiating and finalising new agreements with third countries;
- A new attempt for a free trade agreement with the United States, in full respect of transparency and democracy in the negotiation process;
- The community of liberal democracies to use free trade as a clear differentiation from autocracies around the world;
- The EU to continue to use the WTO as the prime instrument in the attempt to reach global free trade, especially when enhancing dispute resolutions;
- Development assistance to counter a divide and let developing countries reap the benefits of globalisation;
- A decrease of the help to European agricultural production and the production itself (gradually) in order not to produce more than European countries need so developing countries' markets are not invaded by European products and can develop alone.

Saving our future by fighting the climate and energy crisis

As climate change and its disastrous consequences become more evident, the EU should welcome climate refugees and make suitable changes for the betterment of the situation in the countries most affected by it. The EU should play a leadership role in ensuring a global response to address climate change with more tangible actions, ensure a smooth transition to carbon neutrality by 2050, promote sustainable agriculture, and introduce high environmental standards as an engine for new technology and innovations, strengthen the European Emission Trading System, provide incentives to promote green public procurement, and increase cross-generation awareness. EU leaders should also come up with a contingency plan on how to act on the consequences of climate change, including natural disasters and climate migration.

LYMEC calls for:

- The EU continues to take steps to accept nuclear power as well as making it the safest energy source taking into account threats from natural disasters, terrorism and procedural mishaps;
- The EU to support measures of improving the European electricity network;
- The EU to allow for nuclear energy to be an acceptable source of energy in the short term while Europe makes a swift and robust transition towards a green economy, free from nuclear and fossil energy in the long run;
- An immediate European Union ban on oil and gas imports from Russia, a boycott of Russian goods, with an implementation of a prompt EU gas exchange mechanism, and the severance of contacts with organisations and entities that support or do not disapprove of the Russian war in Ukraine;
- The EU to strengthen the European Emission Trading System (ETS) by expanding it to all carbon-emitting sectors and fighting for a global emission trading system;
- The EU to develop a technology-neutral certification system for verified negative emissions that allows for exchange in the EU ETS, voluntary marketplaces and rebates on European CO2 taxes where applicable.

Solving the migration crisis through solidarity, reliability and fairness

As the asylum case process in European countries is under immense pressure due to the high volume of applications, necessitating a revised approach to refugee reception policy. The EU should share information about immigrants who are ineligible for asylum to prevent persistently attempts to claim it in various EU countries, thereby exploiting the system and exacerbating the pressure on asylum case processing. The EU should play a role in preventing a brain drain in countries in the middle east and play a role in preventing a humanitarian crisis as refugees are now traversing Libya and other nations in their pursuit of entry into the European Union via the Mediterranean Sea, leading to tragic loss of life on overcrowded boats. On the other hand, the EU should welcome immigrants who contribute to the economy of the single market. Immigrants boost output and employment of the host country, create new opportunities, provide skills for economic growth and contribute positively to long-term fiscal balances.

LYMEC calls for:

- The EU to revise the Dublin System and work towards a balanced common asylum policy based on solidarity and justice, taking into account asylum seekers' individual needs and situation as well as the capacity and resources of potential host states;
- Improved information sharing between European countries regarding rejected migrants from safe countries to reduce the burden on asylum case processing in these nations;
- Cooperation between EU countries to tackle risky entries into the European Union via the Mediterranean Sea to prevent more tragic cases of loss of life on overcrowded boats and to create a European broad humane treatment of refugees;
- A legal and safe alternative to irregular migration, which would prevent smuggling, human trafficking and fatal accidents at sea, including the ability to start the asylum procedure outside of the EU and to apply for humanitarian visas at all EU embassies;
- All EU countries to join in EU-wide migration pacts and directives in the future, as opt-outs undermine the proper functioning of the common systems and the principle of solidarity;
- Welcoming immigrants in EU countries who contribute to economic growth and who create new opportunities in the host countries;
- The EU to harmonise the member states' legislation and to extend the Blue card scheme to make it an EU-wide work permit replacing the equivalent national schemes;

- Defending migration as a phenomenon which can be economically and socially beneficial when appropriate measures are taken by both the immigrants and the receiving society;
- The EU to take steps in order to prevent and combat racism and xenophobia and consolidate an area of freedom, security and justice.

Increasing security and defence capabilities through close cooperation

In face of internal and external threats to European peace and security, including terrorism, human rights violations, regional conflict, and economic instability, LYMEC calls for EU member states to work towards intensifying the Common Security and Defence Policy towards a “Defence Union”, including joint defence procurement. European Member States should make concrete steps in military cooperation, towards in the future developing a European Military. The goals of these institutions should be limited to: secure European territory, to protect and promote international peace and stability, support civil authorities with law enforcement, disaster relief and humanitarian aid, both inside and outside of the EU.

LYMEC calls for:

- Close continued cooperation between the EU and NATO as inseparable allies;
- The EU's member states who are part of NATO should therefore commit to spend the minimum of 2% of the GDP in their own military;
- More EU funding for the existing programmes in the Multiannual Financial Framework connected to security and defence;
- Common arms procurement within the European Union while fully respecting the principles of the free market, especially in regards to the continued support of Ukraine;
- The EU and its member states to develop an ambitious strategy in the development of a European Military;
- This European Military to be overseen by a European Ministry of Foreign Affairs that can appoint a European Secretary for Defence and not to rely on compulsory military service.

Promoting upward social mobility by tackling youth unemployment

In the midst of an economic and inflationary crisis, LYMEC believes that providing economic security to European citizens and promoting upward social mobility is crucial. LYMEC advocates for the removal of barriers, the mutual recognition of vocation and academic degrees, changing priority rules, apprenticeships, reformed employment services and better support in the transition for entry on the job market by removing protectionist policies and supporting a single European Job Market. We also advocate for networks of start-up entrepreneurs and young chambers of commerce to be consulted when the European agenda on employment and entrepreneurship is set, and call for the European institutions to designate more high-risk funding to young entrepreneurs. Furthermore, LYMEC believes that providing world-class education is one of the prime factors facilitating upward social mobility and should thus be promoted adequately. This includes the belief that the ability to study, train or learn abroad while broadening the experiences and awareness of Europe significantly increases young people's competitiveness on the labour market, thereby also contributing to reducing youth unemployment.

LYMEC calls for:

- The removal of protectionist policies and supporting a single European Job Market;
- The European institutions to designate more high-risk funding to young entrepreneurs;
- The consultation of young chambers of commerce and networks of start-up entrepreneurs when the European agenda on employment and entrepreneurship is set;
- Extended support in the transition for entry on the job market or when changing employment;
- The mutual recognition of academic and vocational degrees within the member states of the European Union;
- The extension of the Erasmus+ programs to students at all educational levels;
- The further harmonisation in the education sector, including a unified grading system for schools and universities, and the alignment of semester start and duration to enhance mobility between universities.

Expanding the potential of the single market through harmonised competition

The single market is the cornerstone of the European Union and aims to ensure the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people within its member states. The harmonisation of competition policy across the EU has been a key factor in expanding the potential of the single market. Harmonised competition policy refers to the alignment of competition rules and regulations across all member states. This includes a common set of rules on antitrust, mergers, and state aid control. Harmonisation ensures that there is a level playing field for businesses operating within the single market, regardless of their location. As liberals, we want to continue expanding the opportunities the single market offers and strengthen the very basis of the European Union.

LYMEC calls for:

- The use of the single market as a worldwide role model for the social market economy, with a clear prioritisation of the individual's potential against state-owned economies;
- Working towards a level playing field for all businesses across the single market, regardless of their location within the EU, to encourage innovation across all member states;
- Promoting fair competition by having a common set of rules and standards to allow more innovation, which may include the International Financial Reporting Standards in all member states;
- The establishment of a common EU patent system (excluding computing-implemented inventions) in order to better protect intellectual property rights at European level;
- The internal market not to be used as a protectionist tool in trade with third countries, and instead as focus on standards pertaining to human rights and production methods;
- Tax cuts for European companies investing in innovative products and solutions to support innovation and scientific research in Europe;
- The use of tax competition between member states as a key component of European competitiveness in the single market;
- A reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) with the goal to create a more environmentally sustainable policy, support all farmers on a basis of equal opportunity and modernise the policies on the use of GMOs.
- The EU to enable the member states' legalisation of all drug related activities, while the production of and trade with drugs for commercial purposes should require a licence and the sale to consumers must require a mandatory health consultation.

Defending our democracy, rule of law and human rights

LYMEC firmly believes in the principles of the rule of law, which form the foundation of a free and democratic society. However, the EU has the risk of becoming increasingly bureaucratic and opaque. We should keep a critical eye to make sure the European Union becomes more democratic and transparent. Furthermore, LYMEC wants to preserve the effectiveness of the EU and the enforcement of European values. We believe that the EU must take a strong stance against member states that violate the rule of law and use all available mechanisms, including financial sanctions and suspension of voting rights, to hold member states accountable for any breaches of the rule of law. Overall, LYMEC promotes reforms for stronger rule of law, transparency, and accountability. Also, as our democracies face an increasing threat from the extreme right and left, and we see increased levels of polarisation and democratic backsliding in the EU, we need to promote the participation of young people, so that they are a key part of the democratic process and their ideas are heard of and become the driver of positive change. Finally, as the main defender of human and minority rights at the global stage, the EU should become a continent free of discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation, all Member States should protect the rights of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, gender and sexual minorities, as well as of people with disabilities, thereby ensuring full equality before the law. We want equality in effect and not only in name, as only in this way will our human rights be respected.

LYMEC calls for:

- The strict application of a rule of law mechanism that ensures that all EU member states abide by the values of freedom, democracy, respect for the rule of law, and respect for human rights, which should also be embodied in all EU external policy;
- Unequivocal support of minority rights with the European Union, considering the current backlashes against the queer community and especially trans people;
- All member states to recognize same-sex couples who have married or entered into a civil union, cohabitation or similar arrangement in other states, even if the member state does not itself perform such marriages or arrangements;
- The fight against the increasing threats from the extreme right and left to our European democracy, as well as growing levels of polarisation and democratic backsliding in the EU;

- The promotion of the participation of young people in democracy, so that they are a key part of the democratic process and their ideas are heard of and become the driver of positive change;
- More engagement of EU citizens in politics through making widely-supported citizen-initiatives on new legislation be allowed to be presented to the European Parliament.

Creating innovation and defending civil liberties in the digital age

Innovation is essential if we strive for a strong European ecosystem, and it is key in the development of new technologies and industries, while citizens' civil liberties and human rights are protected. Progress is fast, and change can come faster than the pace with which we become used to a new technology - which requires us, as liberals, to be nimble and ready to respond to new innovations. Digital services impact and make our lives easier in many different ways. We use them to communicate with each other, shop, order food, find information, see films and listen to music through new, constantly evolving services. Digital services have also made it easier for companies to trade across borders and access new markets. While there are many benefits of digital transformation, there are also problems. A core concern is the trade and exchange of illegal goods, services and content online. Online services are also being misused by manipulative algorithmic systems to amplify the spread of disinformation, and for other harmful purposes. These challenges and the way platforms address them have a significant impact on fundamental rights online.

LYMEC calls for:

- Citizens' privacy to be protected in the information society, and the clear commitment that citizens' right to privacy could be waived only under special, extreme circumstances and only after a judicial review;
- A strong rejection of proposed infringements on the right to privacy, especially mandatory chat controls or upload filters;
- The perception of digitalisation to be seen as an opportunity to advance our society and not a threat;
- A digital-friendly regulatory framework of the EU as a general principle, which would encourage innovation and global competitiveness;
- The Member States to increase their use of the structural funds in investing in spreading internet access to the regions with inadequate or no internet access;

- The Member States to convert analogue broadcasts to digital and use unutilized, dedicated military frequencies in order to free up frequencies for mobile internet;
- The extension of the roaming free zone with the EU to candidate countries for EU membership, especially Ukraine.

Fixing EUr future: Institutional reform and enlargement of the Union

To avoid apathy and democratic backsliding, civil society and especially young generations are the key. This is why LYMEC wants to see institutional reforms putting the citizens at the centre of the European project. We want European decision-making to be more resilient, more accountable and less prone to stagnation by its individual Member States, for which subsidiarity and proximity to EU citizens should be a guiding principle. Institutional reform and enlargement of the European Union in a liberal way can be achieved through various means. It is necessary to reform and broaden the EU to create a more transparent, democratic and competitive Union. Seeing the current changes on the political world stage and the position the EU is in, thorough adaptations to policy should be made. Reform is needed to secure the future of the Union. We believe that the only way forward for the European Union is through more integration, towards the construction of a federal union of states.

LYMEC aims at the following vision:

- **The European Commission:** should be a political executive branch, not an apolitical or technocratic institution, and advocate the common interests of the entire Union; its composition should be decided by a coalition formed by a majority of MEPs in the European Parliament; its President should be nominated and elected according to an improved Spitzenkandidaten system with a majority by the Parliament and approved by the Council; Parliament may at any time cast a constructive vote of no-confidence against the President of the Commission, an individual Commissioner or the entire Commission; the number of Commission portfolios should be reduced with the President then proposing the candidates, while the Parliament may eventually vote on these candidates individually.
- **The European Council:** should be merged with the Council of the EU into one council that is equated with the Parliament when it comes to law-making competence; should consist of representatives from the national governments; should operate with a qualified majority on all policy fields including the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and a three-fourths majority for treaty changes and the accession of new

- Member States; the blocking minority should be abolished, while keeping the Ioannina Compromise; it should select one chairperson for a 5-year period, who would lead the meetings and take care of the symbolic, ceremonial and diplomatic tasks of a state leader; should increase its transparency, publishing and live-streaming all meetings.
- **The European Parliament:** should be elected via transnational lists that allow citizens over the age of 15 to vote for candidates from across the EU; should offer Member States the opportunity to make use of single-member constituencies for national minorities, without permitting a (de facto) first-past-the-post system in cases of very small constituencies; should have the right of initiative to propose new legislation by either a political group, a committee or a group of MEPs representing at least 5% of Parliament; should continue having standing and temporary committees with a focus on specific political areas, and its committees should continue to reflect the political composition in the Parliament; it should transition into a single seat parliament in Brussels to save on administrative costs; and it should work to promote gender equality.
- LYMEC reaffirms its commitment to support enlargement of the EU to its maximum viable boundaries. The EU must develop a comprehensive strategy for cooperation with, and accession of, the European countries which are not members of the EU yet, to fulfil the vision of the founders of the EU of a peaceful and prosperous continent, especially the Western Balkans, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. The main task of the EU is to promote stable democracy, the respect of human and minority rights and a sustainable market economy, so as not to slow down the process of integration or dilute the progress already achieved.



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