



# Annual Report 2016

## Introduction

This LYMEC Annual report covers the year of 2016. It was a year of change, as not only did the LYMEC members elected a new Bureau in the month of April, but our organisation also got a new secretary general as Danica Vihinen took over from Igor Caldeira earlier that spring. While the first weeks of the new mandate were dedicated to everyone getting into their new roles, both the Bureau and the Office got to work quickly outlining the plans for the mandate of 2016 to 2018. As this report shows, much has already been achieved and LYMEC both as an organisational capacity and as a political unit is moving forward, stronger and louder and more influential than ever before.

## 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of LYMEC

2016 was a special year for LYMEC, marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Liberal Youth. We used this opportunity to dive into our history both by looking into the Archive of Liberalism in Gummersbach in Germany and by reaching out to all former Presidents to hear their stories and capture their experience. The outcome of this is the 40-year anniversary booklet. This booklet contains 40 years of LYMEC history and was given to friends and partners as well as to the delegates at the autumn congress. The anniversary congress in Tallinn was attended by a record high number of former presidents and bureau members, who all took us down memory lane and shared their experience and liberal achievements. The highlight of the anniversary year was the sophisticated gala dinner and party at the autumn congress in Tallinn. Together with former presidents and bureau members the current delegates lived through 40 years of LYMEC and celebrated liberalism and the progress young liberals have made in Europe. At the anniversary congress, the Bureau also presented the idea of establishing an alumni network, which was welcomed by everyone. The legal foundation is currently being processed with the aim of formally establishing the network in 2017.

## Partners and networks

LYMEC would not be much without our partners and networks and it is with satisfaction we look back on a year where we both maintained the ties to some of our long-term partners as well as strengthened the links to new members of our network.

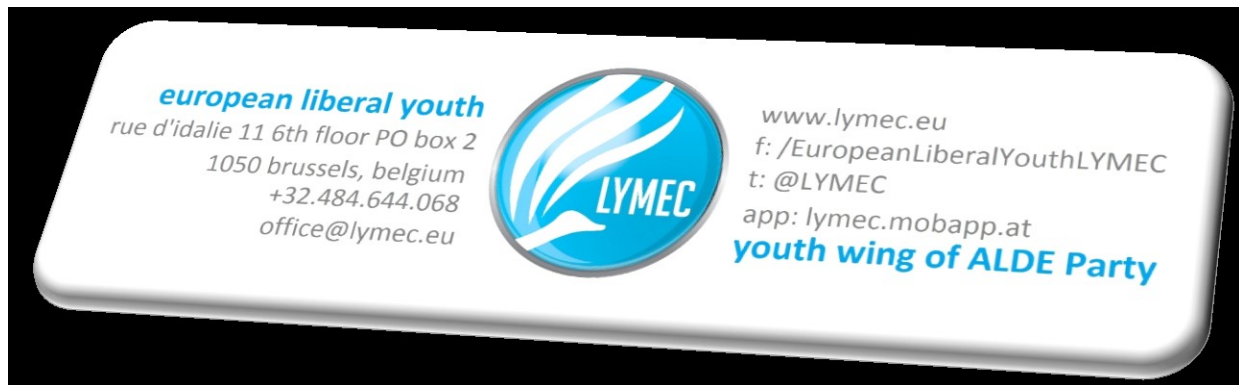
Naturally, some of our key partners continues to be the ALDE Party and the ALDE Group in the European Parliament. Thanks to their kind financial support, we can continue to run a professional office as well as our congresses. Moreover, together with the ALDE Group

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and the Young Democrats for Europe we held a very successful Winter Academy in the European Parliament with participants from both inside and outside the European Union. We continued our good and longstanding relationship with European Liberal Forum (ELF), who once again made it possible for us to have a series of seminars and events across Europe as well as to publish the book 'Defending Europe'. In relation to ELF, we also had the pleasure of being invited to participate in and speak at a number of other ELF partners' events, such as the seminar on digitalisation and the future of the labour market at the ALDE Congress in Warsaw.

Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) also continues to be an important ally in the quest of liberalising Europe. In the past year, we have intensified the contact with especially the FNF office in Moscow, as well as continued our good relationship with the offices in Sofia, Athens, Brussels and Berlin.

LYMEC was lucky to have former secretary general, Igor Caldeira, take the LYMEC seat in the board of IFLRY, the International Federation of Liberal Youth. The LYMEC Bureau firmly believes his experience and network will benefit both our organisations. Thanks to his works, our links with IFLRY are growing stronger and stronger. In the past year IFLRY and LYMEC have united and spoken with one voice in questions such as the coup attempt in Turkey and visa liberalisation for Ukraine and Georgia.

One of the newer relationships is with IRI, the International Republican Institute, where we have continued to join their events on Generation Democracy as well as their Leadership and Excellence in Advanced Politics seminar. Representatives of IRI were also visiting our congresses. In addition to this we have built a strong relationship to the other political party youth organisations within the European Youth Forum, seeking to join forces with organisations from both sides of the political spectrum whenever we can find common ground, for example regarding the Spitzenkandidat process and the joint statement made ahead of the elections in Macedonia.

### **Policies, Campaign and Communications**

Free trade has continued to be a key political topic for LYMEC in 2016 as a continuation of the pro TTIP campaign started in 2015 as well as supporting CETA. Other core liberal topics we worked with includes countering the proposal of free train tickets which the Commission flirted with as well as calling for modern media laws.

Unfortunately, 2016 was also a year where much of our energy was spent on condemning the actions of governments using illiberal means to hold on to their power, such as Poland in December 2016 and also sending our sympathy to the opposition in Venezuela.

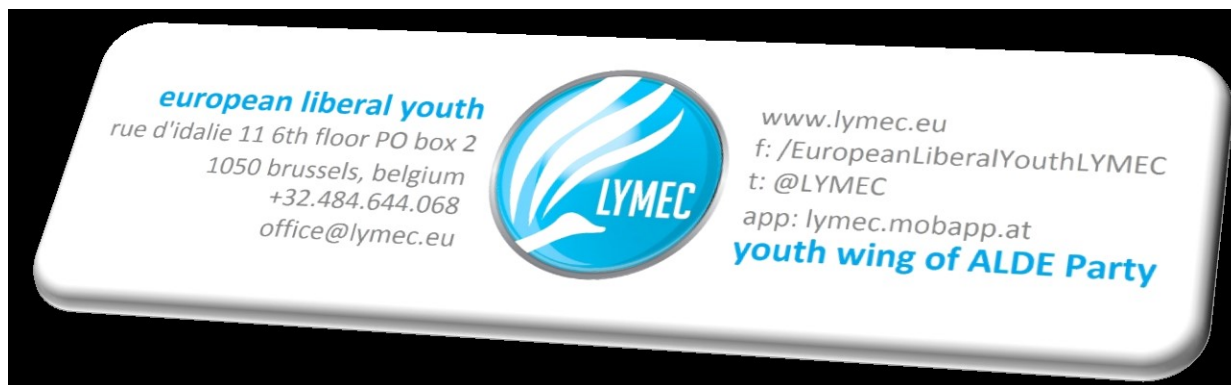
Again LYMEC put a focus on human, women's and gay rights in 2016. For the second time LYMEC participated in the actions during Europride week. Secretary General Danica Vihinen took part in a discussion in Brussels, Vice President Svenja Hahn in a discussion in Hamburg, and three delegates from LYMEC participated in

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the Europride Parade in Amsterdam together with JOVD. On social media, we ran a campaign during the whole week to raise awareness in regards to the situation on LGBTI rights in Europe and what still needs to be done. Moreover, 2016 was also the year we again had to address the issue of the lack women's fundamental sexual and reproductive rights in Poland, which also resulted in a resolution to ALDE party congress.

In the early summer 2016 LYMEC campaigned on social media to keep the United Kingdom in the EU. With specific social media targeting we reached young pro-EU people. We also ran a joint social media campaign together with many of the other party political youth organisations with the message "Brits IN". Despite all efforts from the different pro-EU forces the referendum resulted in a Brexit. Following the defeat in the British referendum LYMEC made it clear that the outcome was a wakeup call for the EU and that the result must serve as new beginning, where our institutions deliver real solutions to the problems faced by Europeans. Moreover, we also made clear that while we respect the decision of the British people, we will not accept cherry picking, but demand fair negotiations from all involved parties.

UK's decision to leave the EU sparked a discussion on how to create a better and more sustainable EU, and in the second half of 2016 much time was allocated to drafting the 2017 campaign on "Setting the Agenda for Europe", where LYMEC is targeting the main concerns of young people in Europe and offering liberal solutions to the problems.

In general, LYMEC has continued to both expand and to professionalize our social media communication and activities, especially by the use of videos, GIFs and micro targeting.

2016 was also the year, where LYMEC again proved to be a vivid youth organisation and expanded our impact on our mother party. At the ALDE Party Council in Vilnius in June we successfully put forward a resolution on the so called Spitzenkandidat process, ensuring that ALDE Party continues to support the system of each European political party appointing their candidates for the position as President of the European Commission ahead of the European Parliament elections, and that this function moreover will be democratically elected, not settled via backroom deals as we have seen in the past.

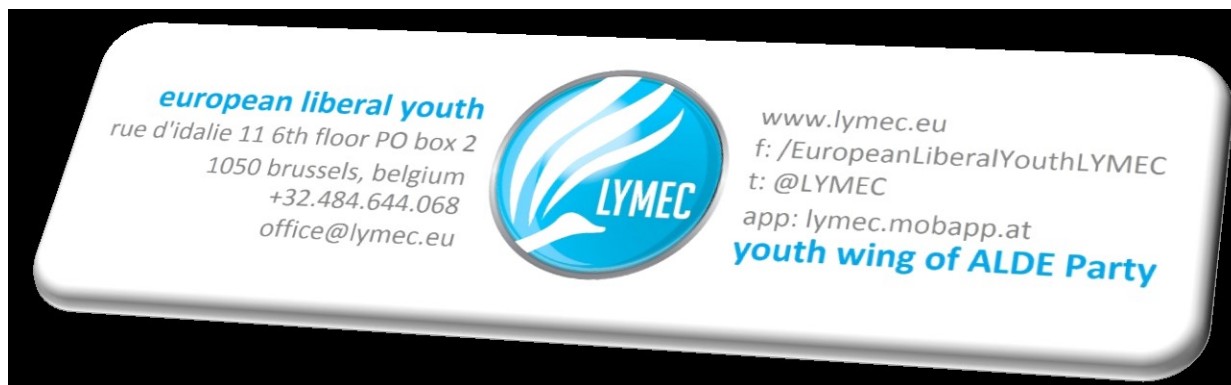
Our hard work was also rewarded at the ALDE Party Congress in Warsaw in December, when both our resolution on youth unemployment as well as the one on fundamental sexual and reproductive rights were adopted by the congress. We also succeeded in having the most active delegation to date thanks to the leadership and oversight of policy of the Policy Officer. All policies, proposals and amendments put forward by LYMEC at the ALDE Council and Congress have had their point of departure in the LYMEC policy book, making sure the policies adopted by LYMEC members are taken to the higher level.

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## **Working Groups and IMS**

The Working Group on CAP established in 2015 finished its one year work by putting forward their results as a policy paper to the Autumn Congress.

In late summer, another working group, the working group on how to counter populism, was established. The group presented their first results to the Autumn Congress in 2016 and are still continuing their work.

The network of European Liberal Students (ELSN) was transformed into a permanent Working Group with the same title. The ELSN was revitalised with a kick off seminar on "Bologna, Copenhagen and Beyond" that led to intense discussions on how to shape a EU-wide education concept that will be presented as a resolution to this year's Spring Congress. The new form as a Working Group helped to bring the idea on cooperation from especially our student MOs back to life.

The work of the 40-year anniversary group resulted in the anniversary booklet and ended with the festivities in Tallinn as outlined earlier in this report.

Following the autumn congress in Tallinn a new Working Group on Statutes and Congress was formed. This aim of the Working Group was to update the statutory documents of our organization as well as to come up with a proposal on how to make the congress run smoother as well as suggesting a distribution model for allocation of spots for LYMEC events. The first recommendations of the Working Group have been taken into account for the registration to the Spring Congress 2017 and their suggestions for amendments will be presented as motions by the bureau.

The Individual Member Section (IMS) has kept on growing in 2016, and we have especially seen numbers peaking in the aftermath of the Brexit vote. Despite the sad circumstances, it is a great sign that people believe now is the time to stand up for Europe and join the liberal movement. In general, our Individual Members have been very active in the last year. The IMS delegates have been quite organized in their congress preparation and have made a lot of amendments to resolutions in the name of the IMS section based on decisions from open meetings before congress. Moreover, IMS continues to be strongly represented at LYMEC congresses and seminars and are strong LYMEC ambassadors on social media, making sure the liberal message is spread wide and far. All this is proof that the Individual Members Section is vivid and IMS are active and willing to shape LYMEC policies and gain new insights and experiences for them as individuals as well.

## **Organizational Improvements 2016**

Throughout the year, we have worked on continuously improving the organizational aspects of LYMEC, especially looking into how technology can help us make the congress run smoother. As part of this effort we have implemented a resolution tool, which makes it easier to deal with amendments for the chairs during the congress as

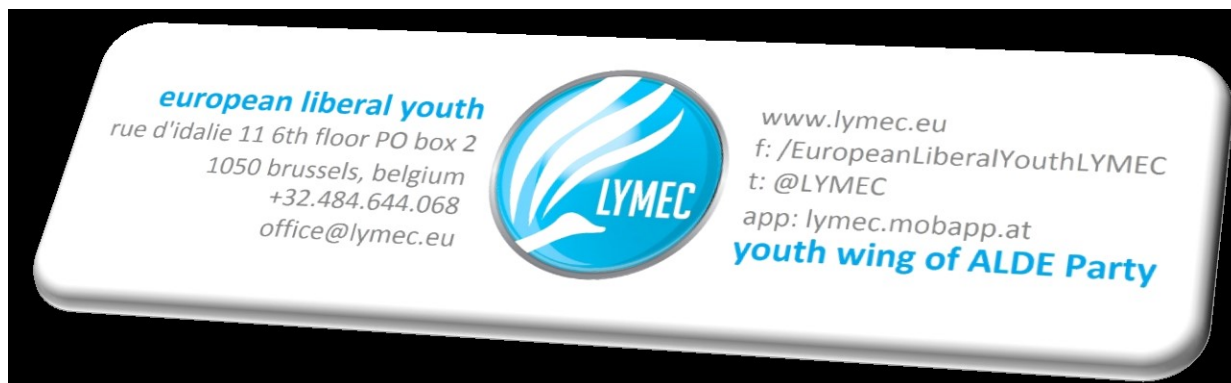
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well as for the office to update the policy afterwards. Moreover, we have also introduced an electronic voting system used for voting on resolutions and amendments during the congress, making the whole process a lot faster.

In terms of communication with and between members in general and international officers in particular, two Facebook groups has been updated/established. "The International Officers' Group" works as a forum where international officer can communicate together on national campaign, events and political developments in general as well as for the LYMEC Bureau and office as an extra channel to market events and send out reminders for when deadlines are approaching. The Facebook group 'LYMEC Members and Friends' was established to have a platform to gather all members, who can both communicate with each other on everything from discussing political developments to sharing campaigns or cool events. Moreover, both groups are used to promote LYMEC statements and campaigns asking members to go like our posts. With a limited marketing budget LYMEC needs the help of our members to hit like and share to make things go viral. Based on our growing social media and over all reach, it is fair to conclude that this approach is working well.

### Events organized by LYMEC

- "Strengthening Democracy in the Southern Balkans and Empowering Young Activists", Skopje, Macedonia (ALDE Group)
- "Defending Europe – the Military Future of our Continent", Brussels, Belgium (ELF, FNF)
- "Entrepreneurship – unleashing our potential" Congress seminar, Vienna, Austria (ELF, NEOS Lab)
- "Unleashing our potential", Spring Congress, Vienna, Austria (ALDE Party & Group)
- "Bologna, Copenhagen and Beyond", ELSN Working Group seminar, Brussels, Belgium (ELF)
- "Leading for Liberalism", Young Leaders' Meeting, Dublin, Ireland (ELF)
- "The Future of the European Neighbourhood Policy" Seminar, Bucharest, Romania (ELF, FNF)
- "Living on the Internet" Congress seminar, Tallinn, Estonia (ELF)
- "Living on the internet", Autumn Congress, Tallinn, Estonia (ALDE Party & Group)
- "A Connected Continent for Young People", Winter Academy, Brussels, Belgium (ALDE Group)

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## New Members in 2016

- Attistibai Youth, Latvia (full)
- Joves Liberals d'Andorra, Andorra (full)
- European Youth Movement Ukraine (associate)
- Alliance Youth Northern Ireland (associate)
- SMC Youth Slovenia, Slovenia (associate)
- Youth Forum of AKR, Kosovo (associate)

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