

## Report on the Working Group on Populism

The Working Group on Populism was established in July 2016 as a reaction to the rise of both right- and left-wing populism in the European Union. It holds as its central tenet the sincere belief that LYMEC, and its constituent parts, as the representatives of Europe's liberal youth, are not only perfectly placed to pose as an obstacle to the rise of populism and a defence of our way of life, but also that we have a duty to do so. The Working Group was therefore established with the aim of developing a strategy that LYMEC, its member organisations and the Individual Members Section can implement to tackle the rise of populism in the areas in which we operate.

The Working Group made substantial progress prior to the Christmas break, holding a number of meetings and discussing issues pertinent to the rise of populism in Europe, as well as facilitating information and knowledge sharing on the topic. This was done as members of the Working Group felt that only with a sound knowledge of the phenomenon could a sound strategy be developed to tackle it. The first step taken by the Working Group was the establishment of a common definition of populism, which was as follows:

*Populism is a style of doing politics that does not lend itself to any particular ideology, but rather plays on emotions and symbolic language to pit the majority of people against the political establishment and political orthodoxy. It is a tool which divides society into 'us' and 'them'.*

From this, the Working Group went about analysing the various causes of populism, be they socio-economic, cultural and historical, and has at the moment of writing embarked on the development of a strategy.

The strategy as it stands focuses on the following key areas:

1. Europeanism: a new approach to pro-European politics
2. Constituents: how to connect with our base
3. Communication: how to breach the divide
4. Engagement: bringing the youth and politics closer together
5. Solutions: from the theoretical to the practical

The objective is to present the strategy to Congress and then proceed with the development of an evaluation mechanism to ensure the implementation of the strategy. A report on the implementation of the strategy will be given to the Autumn Congress.

Member organisations have been contacted to give their input to the strategy, and are still welcome to do so prior to the Stockholm Congress.

The strategy will be made available to Congress by the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017.