

205 Expanding Freedom of Speech

Movers: JnC, FEL, VU, JD, UV, SU, JL

The LYMEC Autumn Congress in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 13 October 2018

Considering that:

- freedom of speech is a core liberal value;
- there remain barriers to free speech that are relics of a bygone era in which the ruling class was exempt from any sort of criticism;
- several European countries still have lèse-majesté laws on their books, which can be used to prosecute anyone who insults their heads of state or government or those of third countries
- generic libel laws already exist to protect the rights of people whose reputation has been unfairly tarnished; under the principle of equality before the law, there should not be separate laws for members of the ruling classes;
- several European countries still have blasphemy (or similar) laws on their books, which can be used to prosecute anyone who insults a religious figure or deity; and
- free speech should remain free, and every individual should be protected by the same universal laws, no-one should be more or less protected than others;
- true equality doesn't originate from special laws, but a change of mindset; and
- a liberal conception of the very idea of freedom of speech should include a peculiar tint of philosophical republicanism, meaning that no citizen stands outside the reach of the law, nor the exposure to public opinion and sanction.

LYMEC:

- calls upon all EU Member States that still have lèse-majesté or similar laws to abolish them;
- urges all EU Member States that still have blasphemy or similar laws to abolish them;
- calls upon all EU Member States to make sure that a law on defamation is enforced;
- encourages EU Member States whose legislative procedure makes the simple act of striking down a law intricate to add a "freedom of speech" article to their constitution in order to render the above mentioned norms de facto unlawful; and
- reiterates its commitment to defending freedom of speech.

208 Establishing a formal definition and a protection system for Climate Refugees

Movers: SU, JnC, JD, NUV, LUF, CUF

The LYMEC Autumn Congress in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 13 October 2018

Considering that:

- Climate change does not take notice of countries' borders, which is all the more reason for us to work together.
- Persons forced to flee their country of origin as a consequence of their native soil becoming uninhabitable as a result of climate change aren't recognized as refugees with a right for asylum;
- The term Climate Refugee lacks any formally legal definition both at a global and European level, leading to the impossibility to create an adequate protection system;
- The recent adoption of 2017 European Parliament resolution on 'Addressing refugee and migrant movements: the role of EU external action' stressed that EU development cooperation should continue to address and effectively tackle the root causes of forced displacement and migration, including lack of economic opportunities and climate change, in line with Goal 16 in the Agenda 2030.

Believing that:

- The above mentioned EU Parliament resolution represents a crucial step towards diminishing the future number of displaced persons due to the effects of climate change;
- Such resolution doesn't tackle the the issue entirely, since some people won't have any choice but fleeing to the nearest habitable place, including Europe;
- Persons who are forced to flee need international protection.

Calls for:

- The establishment, at least at the European level, of a formal definition of the term climate refugee;
- The creation, at least at the European level, of a legal instrument recognizing such category of refugees and providing adequate protection

001 In varietate concordia — Liberal voices working together

Movers: JNC, YL, EYU

The LYMEC Autumn Congress in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 13 October 2018

Recalling that:

- in September 2018, the ALDE Party Bureau proposed to expel the Catalan European Democratic Party (PDECAT) from ALDE, a proposal which requires a two-thirds majority at the ALDE Council scheduled for 27 October 2018;
- the stated rationale is that the party from which PDECAT inherited ALDE membership, Democratic Convergence of Catalonia (CDC), has been recently found guilty of many corruption cases consisting of the misappropriation of the 3%, 4% and 8% of certain public tenders during, at least, 10 years;
- PDECAT has strongly and unequivocally condemned any cases in which members of CDC engaged in corruption;
- as well as fully cooperating with the judicial investigation, PDECAT has worked hard to put safeguards in place to prevent this from ever happening to it and is now recognised as a more transparent organisation than any other major party in Spain;
- the vast majority of people currently in PDECAT were not even members of CDC when the corruption cases occurred; and
- the Catalan liberal movement has been represented in the European liberal family through LYMEC and ALDE/ELDR for over three decades, contributing substantially to its growth and leadership over the years.

Lamenting that:

- talking to the Spanish media (e.g. [1] and [2]), leading figures from Ciudadanos have explicitly linked the proposal to PDECAT's support for Catalan independence;
- media reports show that Ciudadanos was already exploring several options to exclude PDECAT from ALDE months before the ruling on the corruption case came out[3]; and
- media reports state that certain ALDE MEPs had already been promised a vote to expel PDECAT at least two months before the ruling came out[4]

LYMEC:

- reaffirms that any kind of corruption is not to be tolerated
- Underlines its continued support for anti-corruption measures and fighting corruption in all its forms on all levels of government, and stresses the need to objectively scrutinise the measures taken by PDECAT to implement good practice and stamp out corruption;
- charges its ALDE Council delegate with voting against the proposal to expel PDECAT from the ALDE Party;
- calls upon all other ALDE Party member parties to carefully scrutinise the facts presented by all parties regarding this issue;
- petitions the ALDE Council to hold the vote by means of a secret ballot;

- reaffirms its view of ALDE as a place where European liberal parties can set aside their differences in national politics and work together for a liberal future for Europe; and
- hopes that the constructive coexistence between JNC and Jóvenes C's in European youth politics can serve as a model for their mother parties in ALDE.

[1]

<https://www.libertaddigital.com/espana/2018-09-27/ciudadanos-niega-que-el-pdecat-pueda-evitar-su-expulsion-de-la-familia-liberal-europea-1276625615/>

[2]

www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-ciudadanos-dice-expulsar-pdecat-alde-decision-correcta-porque-genera-fractura-division-20180927151952.html

[3] https://www.abc.es/espana/abci-ciudadanos-maniobra-para-aislar-pdecat-europa-201711250251_noticia.html

[4]

<https://okdiario.com/espana/2017/11/09/grupo-liberal-eurocamara-dossier-pdecat-votara-expulsion-diciembre-14-96569>

201 Eliminate Pink and Tampon Taxes

Movers FEL & IMS John De Coster

The LYMEC Autumn Congress in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 13 October 2018

Referring to

- Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13.12.2004 implementing the principle of equal 5 treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services, 6 OJ L 373, 21.12.2004;
- Research paper “Gender equality and taxation in the European Union”, requested by the 8 European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and 9 commissioned, overseen and published (2017) by the Policy Department C : Citizens' 10 Rights and Constitutional Affairs (Directorate General for Internal Policies) whose aim 11 was “to evaluate how tax systems and tax policies at EU and Member State level 12 contribute to – or hinder – gender equality”;
- Recommendations listed at the end of the latter research paper, including to :
 - Strengthen policies to promote the equal intra-household distribution of paid and unpaid work
 - Take account of the distributional and allocative impact of tax expenditures
 - Promote and conduct research on gender aspects of taxation, and
 - ensure the availability of appropriate gender-disaggregated data
 - Take legal obligations to prohibit discrimination and ensure substantive gender equality with regard to taxation seriously
 - Ensure political commitment at the European level
 - define targets and indicators to 23 achieve substantive gender equality with regard to taxation
 - Ensure the implementation of gender analyses and compliance with gender equality 25 objectives with respect to taxation at Union and Member State level
- Commissioner Věra Jourová written answer (d.d. Septembre 9, 2015) to MEP Ernest 27 Urtasun (Verts/ALE) written question (d.d. June 26, 2015) reading as follows : "Equality between women and men is a fundamental right and one of the founding principles of the European Union, Directive 2004/113/EC prohibits direct and indirect discrimination between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services. Indirect discrimination occurs where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons of one sex at a particular disadvantage compared with persons of the other sex, unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary”;

Acknowledging that

- Such things as a “pink tax” and a “tampon tax” really do exist;

Considering that

- The "Pink Tax" could be defined as followed : "refers to the additional costs for products or services, specifically targeted at women" ("Gender equality and taxation in the European Union", p14);
- "Overall, women pay 13% more for personal care products, 8% more for clothing, 7% more for girls' toys, 8% more for health care products", a study of the NYC Department of Affairs finds;
- The "Tampon Tax" could be defined as levying "VAT on women's sanitary products" (Collins online);
- The tampon tax has become a source of social and economic unfairness to women given that the "potential regressive effects of VAT on basic needs are also at the heart of the present debate on tampon taxes, which obviously are goods only consumed by women" ("Gender equality and taxation in the European Union", p44);
- The rate at which women's hygiene products are levied varies within the EU and thus may reach alarming percentages (5,5% in France, 6% in Portugal and Belgium, 10% in Spain, 19% in Germany, 22% in Italy, 27% in Hungary);
- Plan International published a study that showed that 45% "of girls in Scotland have had to use alternatives such as toilet paper, socks and newspaper during their periods because they could not afford to buy sanitary products", a rather saddening established fact which refers to the concept of "periods poverty", defined as "a phenomenon in which people struggle to pay for basic sanitary products on a monthly basis, resulting in a negative impact on their hygiene, health and well-being" by grassroots group Women for Independence;
- taxation not only unfairly impacts women through VAT on feminine hygiene products, as the above mentioned study states : "there has been a longstanding debate and increasing concern that the burden of VAT falls disproportionately on women" ("Gender equality and taxation in the European Union", p43);

Further acknowledging

- Scotland's decision to make sanitary products free for all students in order to "banish the scourge of period poverty";
- Susannah Lane's (Head of Public Affairs at Universities Scotland) way of putting things sound and clear: "Periods are a part of life but they shouldn't be a point of inequality, compromise someone's quality of life or be a distraction from making the very most of time spent at university";
- That measures aiming at doing away with the very existence of a tampon tax have been taken in various not-so-far-away-from-home countries, f.i. Ireland (0% VAT) or Canada (removal of the "Goods and Services" tax (GST) on feminine hygiene products);
- The "lack of research based on gender-disaggregated data that can show what impact specific rates and exemptions have in relation to certain consumption patterns" (p43);

LYMEC urges:

- to endorse the previously mentioned recommendations, more distinctively;
- to promote research on gender aspects of taxation and ensure the availability of appropriate gender-disaggregated data;
- to ensure political commitment at the European level and define targets and indicators to achieve substantive gender equality with regard to taxation;
- Member States to follow the Republic of Ireland's example by removing VAT on all feminine hygiene products; and ideally,
- Member States to contemplate the possibility to follow Scotland's footsteps by delivering feminine hygiene products for free on campus and to women with lower income.
- To urge member states to make female hygiene products more easily accessible - for example by providing them in public lavatories.

1001 Gender equality within LYMEC

Movers: SU, JnC

The LYMEC Autumn Congress in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 13 October 2018

Considering that:

- Gender equality is a fundamental human right of crucial importance, a right that LYMEC and all of LYMEC's Member Organisations support.
- ALDE, LYMEC, YDE and CoR organised a Summit of Young Elected Local and Regional Leaders in Brussels 17.9.2018. 18 young politicians participated, 1 of the participants was a woman, 17 were men.

Believing that:

- In order to reach true gender equality, gender considerations need to be included on all political levels.
- Acknowledging the importance of gender equality will contribute to reaching equal representation in politics.
- Improved gender equality within decision-making results in more representative politics, and therefore contributes to democracy.
- Gender quotas cannot be part of a liberal solution.

Calls for:

- LYMEC to actively strive for gender equality within the organisation, i.e. by including gender considerations when planning events, and by encouraging especially women to participate in LYMEC's events.
- Member Organisations to actively strive for gender equality within their organisations, i.e. by recruiting and supporting more female members and candidates.

301 Taking responsibility on protecting our health with vaccinations

Movers: FCY

The LYMEC Autumn Congress in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 13 October 2018

Considering that:

- Vaccinations are an easy and affordable way of securing the health of EU citizens;
- The number of measles cases has been on the rise for the past few years in Europe;
- In a report published in 2011 The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control states that more effort should be put to ensuring the coverage of vaccinations among the EU citizens.

Believing that:

- Citizens all around Europe should commit to preventing contagious diseases
- All nations of the EU should encourage their populations to vaccinate
- The opposition against vaccinations is higher than before due to misleading information in the media.
- Failing to vaccinate one's children is a form of child neglect.
- It is highly important to use vaccinations as a preventive measure to tackle different kinds of diseases
- The population should be well informed on the risks of not having enough vaccinated people in our society

Lymec calls for:

- Actions to be made to prevent any further damage and spreading of diseases
- Tackling false information relating to vaccinations
- The EU member states and commission to take action on making sure that sufficient coverage is met in the percentage of vaccinated individuals in the EU area
- All individuals living in the EU area to take responsibility on vaccinating themselves and their children.

303 Recognition of upper secondary qualifications across Europe

Movers: ELSN, CS

The LYMEC Autumn Congress in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 13 October 2018

Notes that:

- While the Bologna Process has greatly facilitated student mobility across Europe, several obstacles remain;
- To date, a process for mutual recognition of diplomas only exists for higher education (bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees);
- It is particularly difficult for students to have their upper secondary diplomas recognised, and the time it takes to get qualifications recognised varies widely between universities.

Considers that:

- Studying abroad is of great value to students as it e.g. increases students' cross-cultural awareness, improves foreign language proficiency and enhances career prospects;
- A common framework for recognising upper secondary diplomas would facilitate student mobility.

Calls upon:

- European countries to create a common framework for recognising upper secondary qualifications, similar to the one that exists today for higher education, under the proposed Sorbonne Process.

601 Stop Nord Stream 2

Movers: RU

The LYMEC Autumn Congress in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 13 October 2018

Considering that:

- The relationship between Europe and Russia is marked by historically remarkable tensions;
- The Danish government has asked for a common standing statement from the EU;
- Russia historically has used its natural gas to increase political pressure on other countries;
- The tariffs gained by Ukraine by the current pipeline make up 3 pct. of Ukraine's GDP;
- There is enough capacity in the current European gas network for the current demand;
- Natural gas as a fossil fuel need to be phased out during the next decades;

Concerned that:

- Russia will use the Nord Stream 2 pipeline to put economic and political pressure on Ukraine;
- This will give Russia more power in Europe by increasing the reliance of Russian gas; and
- Russia can cut off Ukraine's gas supply deliberately

LYMEC calls for:

- A complete stop in the work towards the building of Nord Stream 2
- Member states to find alternative access to various sources of energy, e.g. the building of LNG-terminals in Northern Europe.

202 Against the new wave of xenophobia and racism in the EU

Movers: JNC, FEL, JD, YL

The LYMEC Autumn Congress in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 13 October 2018

Considering that:

- politicians have failed to counter the rampaging speeches of hate and fear made by others;
- there are newly elected office holders who base their political speeches on the fear of others, scapegoating migrants and refugees;
- the consequent fear and hate felt by some citizens in society leads to hunts and other types of violence that have to be eradicated; and
- a patronising or clientelist discourse is just as harmful as those that aim to disrespect newcomers.

Recalling that:

- the LYMEC Policy book currently has several resolutions on the matter:
 - *Towards a common migration policy* (2.08);
 - *Tougher measures against racism* (2.53);
 - *Minority Rights* (2.70);
 - *Countering radicalisation of youth in Europe* (3.25); and
- LYMEC is one of the European political umbrella organisations with the most thorough anti-xenophobia stance.

LYMEC:

- reiterates its determination to fight all forms of racism;
- rejects and condemns racist and xenophobic comments made by elected officials as well as any type of discriminatory policy in European countries;
- urges the ALDE Party and its member organisations not to make racist or xenophobic comments or discriminatory policies.

901 EU support for sustainability and democracy in Tunisia

Movers: JNC, FEL, RU, VU, SU, JD

The LYMEC Autumn Congress in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 13 October 2018

Considering that:

- Tunisia was the only country to make a successful democratic transition following the Arab Spring;
- the European Union (EU) should support the incipient Tunisian democracy and its steps towards stronger protection of human rights;
- the EU stands to benefit from having a successful and stable Tunisian state, in contrast with Libya, which serves as a cautionary tale of what happens when there are failed states at the EU's borders;
- the EU should take the lead in the fight against climate change, particularly following the abdication of responsibility by the United States under the Trump administration;
- Tunisia has a great deal of potential in solar power and wind power, but it remains susceptible to blackouts and power shortages;
- both Tunisia and Europe would benefit from tapping this potential, through improved energy security, better grid connectivity, job growth, business opportunities for European companies; and
- Tunisia, Europe and the world have a strong interest in transitioning to a low-carbon energy mix and mitigating climate change.

LYMEC:

- calls upon the EU and its Member States to launch and support public/private initiatives to develop gigawatt-scale renewable energy projects in Tunisia;

- urges the EU and its Member States to get rid of protectionist rules and/or unnecessary bureaucracy so that European companies are in the best position to take advantage of business opportunities in the Tunisian renewable energy sector;
- stresses the importance of improving electricity transmission links between Tunisia and Malta, Tunisia and Italy, and Tunisia and France to improve grid connection and facilitate the import/export of energy among these countries;
- reminds the EU of the need to invest in a stable geopolitical neighbourhood;
- acknowledges that lessons must be learnt from previous European investments in the fields of the energy and therefore urges the EU to be self-aware of its investments. No political, financial or economic involvement shall be accepted should it endanger the sovereignty of Tunisians or the stability of its nascent democracy; and
- supports the nascent Tunisian democracy and urges its government to continue building on the protection of human rights.

401 Menstruation: Breaking the taboo

Movers: JUNOS, JuLis

The LYMEC Autumn Congress in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 13 October 2018

- In many societies, menstruation is viewed as unclean and talking about it is still considered a taboo. Therefore, a lot of women feel ashamed and embarrassed during their periods. This often stems from a lack of education and misinformation of society on the topic.
- Furthermore, even if education on menstruation is provided, sustainability may not be a part of it. However, female hygiene products pose a great challenge to the environment, not only due to the vast amount of waste that is accumulated, but also because they sometimes are not or cannot be disposed properly.

Considering that:

- Ireland already has 0% VAT on female hygiene products. This however, is not possible in many other EU states;
- A sustainable use of resources is important to guarantee a liveable world for future generations. Therefore, sustainability needs to be part of these measures of education on menstruation. Innovative and sustainable female hygiene products should be promoted as alternatives to regular products like tampons.

LYMEC Calls on:

- The EU to take measures and work on policies in order to ensure the removal of all taboos connected with menstruation with use of education;
- The EU to encourage education on sustainable use of hygiene products, especially on topic of disposal of waste.

306 European Digital University

Movers: ELSN, LHG

The LYMEC Autumn Congress in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 13 October 2018

Noting that

- digitalisation is on the rise and the internet can be used for meaningful objectives;

- lives become more individually and self-determined;
- we have plenty of good lectures in Europe and only the enrolled students of the specific university can profit from it;

Considering that

- the digitalisation is used efficiently with an added value for all participating parts;
- the universities in Europe share online lectures and materials;
- students can get the best offers and study with a European focus.

Calls for

- a European Digital University (EDU), a European online university. EDU should allow for online study all around Europe with a pan- European approach;
- a pan- European conception implementation, coordination and financing;
- trans-European committees for conception, implementation, coordination, quality assurance and accreditation, and affiliation to Erasmus+;
- an access for all Union citizen with university entrance qualification and contingents for non-European citizens by autonomous entrance procedures;
- a development of databases and IT for a technical access all around Europe;
- a development of digital teaching and research cooperation with European universities;
- an examinations cooperation with universities and accredited institutions, on the spot;
- a cooperation between EDU and already existing successful online-universities;
- a high Data security within the university.