

LYMEC Electoral Manifesto

THE FUTURE IS EUROPE

Events in the last years have clearly shown that Europe is experiencing a crisis of solidarity, a crisis of togetherness and a crisis of short-sighted visions. It has been a time of rising national egoism, populist agendas and hate-speech. Recent geopolitical shifts have made it clear that we can no longer rely on some of our default allies in solving conflicts in the European neighbourhood.

We are living in a time of post-truth news realities, and challenges to personal data and cyber security. It is more than evident that to protect our Union of freedom, justice and democracy, we need to reform it. For that, we need all pro-European, progressive voices to actively involve citizens to bring about change in the European Union and the way we think about Europe.

We need the energy and optimism of young people; only together can we turn the European Union into one that better delivers upon our concerns. There is no other way forward - the future is Europe.

LYMEC, European Liberal Youth, is a pan-European youth organisation dedicated to the promotion and strengthening of liberal values in Europe. LYMEC aims to strengthen the cooperation of young liberals and to unite the efforts of young people in building a better and more liberal political, social and economic environment for all Europeans.

We strive to ensure more youth engagement and civil participation; we are guided by the principles of individual freedoms, coupled with responsibilities. Only in a state of freedom are people able to realise their true potential, and only by taking our fair share of responsibilities can we form an ever-perfect, inclusive, merit-based society.

The upcoming European elections present a perfect opportunity for young people to get our voices heard and to influence the decision making. We call on all political leaders to listen to the voices of young liberals from across Europe, and to consider these LYMEC priorities for the upcoming mandate of the European Parliament:

1. A working framework on legal migration and asylum, and tackling the refugee crisis – a call for a liberal Europe

The Commission proposed to revise the Common European Asylum System in 2016 when it became clear that the existing EU rules were not fit for purpose. In the meantime, we have seen a drastic decrease in the latest numbers of migrant arrivals compared to 2015, yet

populists are still using migration to spread a narrative based on fear and hate. Disappointingly, driven by populist rhetoric, Member States are resisting taking up the needed actions of solidarity. This leaves the European Union in a permanent state of incapability to deal with the current realities.

A proper framework for safe, orderly and legal access to the EU, including to its labour market and effective integration measures for those already in Europe, are lacking. This makes it difficult for migration in Europe to be successful.

Western societies are immensely divided by issues related to asylum and migration. This results in a renaissance of nationalism, populism, protectionism. Populist politicians are taking advantage of fear. They favour a closed society. Open society is in decay. The challenge for young liberals today is to defend the core values of open society and liberal democracy. While others advocate for a "Fortress Europe", LYMEC advocates for a liberal Europe.

LYMEC calls for:

- a harmonised immigration and refugee policy. The EU should further strengthen the role of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). In an area with common borders and freedom of movement, there is no need for twenty-seven different asylum agency practices and procedures.
- the EU to revise the Dublin System, which establishes a country responsible for asylum application, and work towards a balanced common asylum policy based on solidarity and justice. This should take into account asylum seekers' individual needs and situation (for example their language, education connections, family members or contacts willing to support them), as well as the capacity and resources of potential host states. We need to make sure the burden no longer only lies on countries at the European borders.
- a legal and safe alternative to irregular migration, which would prevent smuggling, human trafficking and fatal accidents at sea. We need the ability to start the asylum procedure outside of the EU and to apply for humanitarian visas at all EU embassies. We also need a functioning, common immigration system, which encourages workers and professionals highly needed by the European labour market to come to Europe, the immediate launch of integration measures, including proper access to schooling, vocational training, and labour market access for young migrants.
- liberals to tap the potential of jobs as an integration engine and work to speed up the allocation of work permits to legal migrants and refugees who arrive on EU soil, eliminate legal limbos that stop migrants or refugees who are eager to work from doing so, facilitate the recognition of educational degrees from third countries, and extend

the availability of language courses, especially in the case of migrants or refugees whose professional background enables them to plug critical skill gaps in the host country's economy.

- liberals to stand up and defend Migration as a phenomenon which can be economically and socially beneficial when appropriate measures are taken by both the immigrants and the receiving society.
- removing obstacles within the EU to free trade and the free movement of labour, private capital and service. Workers should have fully transferable employment rights across Europe. This can be done through strengthening EU citizenship.

2. Security and defence – stronger Europe through stronger capabilities

Europe is facing internal and external threats to its peace and security, by organised terrorist groups, regional conflicts in its vicinity and continuous threats of cyber-attacks.

The geopolitical situation is becoming increasingly complicated. The individual capacities of Member States are not enough to meet those challenges. LYMEC firmly believes that the European Union needs to increase its common defence capabilities. While the European Common Security and Defence Policy is already in place, it is not efficient due to different national security strategies and interests. This weakens Europe's role on the global stage and leads to unproductive double spending on defence equipment and infrastructure.

LYMEC calls for strengthening the common EU defence alongside that of NATO, targeting the EU defence spending deficiencies through a common EU defence budget, the development of European capabilities and an integrated defence market, including defence research and innovation. LYMEC also calls for a forward-looking approach to tackling cyber-security, ensuring proper information sharing and pan European efforts to protecting Europe's critical infrastructure from future cyber-attacks.

LYMEC calls for:

- closer cooperation between member states in the field of security and defence in view of finding efficient solutions such as the PESCO project, a common defence intelligence body under the authority of the Commission and accountable to the European Parliament, and common border control.
- the focus of security strategies to be prevention of conflict and conflict resolution. We insist on cooperation in the field of development aid, diplomacy, police, justice, sanctions, cyber security and defence since working together as EU is crucial. Member States must work towards intensifying the Common Security and Defence Policy and

move towards the creation of a functioning “Defence Union” and the creation of a European defence force.

- Member States to work more together on border security matters and even out the differences in financial and capacity responsibilities between member states, especially those managing external borders.
- introducing common security standards for EU Identity Cards in order to improve the mutual trust of Member States in the field of border security.
- common spending in the MFF post 2020 to be focused more on the management of borders and on common defence. Investing in common defence and security capabilities would lead to reducing resources needed, accelerating information exchange and improved EU response. Furthermore, after Brexit, the collective military potential for EU States will decrease.
- an integrated defence market to be created, funding improved for defence research and innovation, and to foster the EU’s cyber-security capabilities.
- EU security and defence decisions to be taken by a qualified majority, as defined by the Lisbon treaty, in order for the EU to participate effectively on the global forum. A strong Europe needs a common foreign policy, whereas the European response currently is often too little too late.

3. Climate change, environment and energy

LYMEC firmly insists on more measures for tackling climate change. New, creative solutions and innovations should be sought in order to save our environment. Therefore, we want to strengthen the European Emission Trading System (ETS) by expanding it to all carbon-emitting sector. Prospectively, we want to reach a global emission trading system. In addition, Europe should invest more in green and alternative energy sources as the uncompetitive energy prices and extreme dependency on unreliable third country suppliers are making Europe’s energy system vulnerable.

LYMEC calls for continuing EU’s leadership and further progressing under the Paris Agreement, for the diversification of energy sources and improving energy security and for striving for more affordable energy prices as means to boosting the competitiveness of industrial start-ups. We support innovative measures for ensuring sustainable development and restoring the environment. In order to ensure a safe future without life threatening epidemic, food security has to be considered in the security policy of the Union. We want the food produced in the EU to be sustainable and safe for the environment and the individual.

LYMEC calls for:

- European countries to prioritise the sustainable use of natural resources, e.g. by reducing food and water wastage.
- Europe to do their best to keep the planet as clean as possible, restoring the world for future generations.
- new creative solutions and innovations to be researched and a promotion of universities and Research Centres, researching in that field to be established.
- increased awareness of sustainable development and climate issues, not just to young people but across generations. We must stay in line with the agreement made in Paris, and Member States should stay united in the effort to prevent climate change.
- the EU's leaders to come up with a consensus and contingency plan on how to act on the consequences of climate change, such as natural disasters and climate migration.
- more attention to the importance of Arctic areas, which will grow in the upcoming years. Europe needs to focus more on preserving its unique nature and wildlife.
- more structural support in finding innovative energy solutions and ensuring that the European energy supply is steadier and more affordable, as means to boosting the competitiveness of industrial start-ups. We must diversify our energy sources and improve energy security. We must also ensure that the European energy grids overcome the existing infrastructure bottlenecks within the Single Energy Market.

4. Digitalization, innovation and markets

The world is turning increasingly digital; and sadly, Europe is lagging behind compared to Asia and the US. It is important to overcome the digital deficiencies through proper high-speed internet infrastructure, but also through securing the openness of the internet. The open internet is vital to promoting innovative ideas and digital economic productivity, which develops pioneering solutions.

We firmly insist on the principles of net neutrality, transparency and freedom of expression in the digital field. In addition, we believe in the pursuit of new technologies and robotics. It is essential that we boost competitiveness in the field of digitalization by increasing EU funding for research and innovation. At the same time, we must complete the digital single market and look for new global trade partners. It is also important that Member States invest in e-government whilst protecting citizens' privacy.

LYMEC calls for keeping Europe's internet open, ensuring net neutrality and a copyright reform fit for the needs of the 21st century. We highlight the need for promoting digital solutions, innovative creations, and improving the functionality of the single market whilst exploring new international trade opportunities.

LYMEC calls for:

- the protection of freedom of expression as a basic human right, at all times and in all its forms. All censorship of the internet should be opposed. Actions, such as website or content blocks, should only happen as a result of a thorough judicial review by means of a court order and not by order of a government or automatic filtering.
- the safeguarding of Net neutrality to ensure a fair and equal access to information, easily available to everyone. The use of modern technologies must be widely instructed and promoted.
- a copyright reform which does justice to the needs of the 21st century. Such a reform should ensure broad accessibility of information and data and should not hamper innovation.
- the media market to be open to competition.
- the support of additional E-government projects through which governments should deliver better, more efficient public services via internet and be more responsive to the needs and interests of the citizens.
- citizens' privacy to be protected in the information society. Special attention must be given to the personal privacy in the digital era and that citizens' right to privacy could be waived only under special, extreme circumstances and only after a judicial review. An increasing number of decisions are made through automated algorithms and decision support systems. Where such algorithmic decisions affect citizens' lives, non-discrimination should be the core value upon which such decision support systems are built.
- the perception of digitalisation as an opportunity and not a threat. The coherent development of digitalisation will advance our society. It would dramatically transform the European industry, services, markets and labour. Hence, special policy prioritization on the EU level is needed.
- a digital-friendly regulatory framework, which would encourage innovation and global competitiveness.

- innovation to be encouraged and not curbed, with exceptions to innovation based on unethical research.
- tax cuts for European companies investing in innovative products and solutions to support innovation in Europe. We oppose any taxes on innovation or scientific research.
- improving the functionality within the internal market and for further free trade agreements not only with all the European community, e.g. Switzerland, but also with Canada and the US.
- a free market based on competition that can guarantee a long-term growth and economic stability.
- the European Union and their member states to gradually reduce the EU agricultural subsidies and to eventually completely abandon them within the next 20 years

5. Education, labour market, youth unemployment

Innovation is important in EU's education systems. Europe needs to predict future skill needs and adapt education better to the jobs available on the labour market, while bridging the generational digital skills gap. LYMEC welcomes the increase of funding for Erasmus+ under the multiannual financial framework post 2020. We believe 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.

We further ask for improved capacities of the European vocational training programs and for flexible opportunities-based measures for fighting youth unemployment. We demand improvement of EU-wide labour mobility as it tackles Europe's skills mismatch across borders and improves the dissemination of innovation and knowledge across the EU.

LYMEC calls for ensuring appropriate digital education, in order to equip the young people of Europe with competitive skillsets of the 21st century, and insists on more flexible opportunities for first-time labour market entrees. In addition, LYMEC calls for removing the remaining intangible barriers to free movement, thus addressing Europe's mismatch of labour supply and demand.

LYMEC calls for:

- the reconnection of the labour market and education sector and adapting both to the digital realities of the 21st century as means to tackle youth unemployment. For too

long, education, the labour market and youth unemployment were treated as three separate subjects.

- the free movement of workers to be encouraged as an answer to the mismatch between supply and demand of skilled labour. This will also strengthen European identity.
- the creation of a Common European Job Bank, which would lead the way to a real single European Job Market under the authority of the European Commission of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.
- 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.
- students to have a student status all around Europe, the educational institutions to be allowed to found branches in other Member States and work with other institutions and faculties in a European University Network. We should further aim at establishing a European University.
- the EU to support and respect the freedom of ethically acceptable research.
- more support for education scholarships, additional public-private partnerships, and a needs-based funding system for students.
- the ERASMUS+ programme to have more funding and based even more on an international level. The UK and EU relationship should continue to collaborate on an ERASMUS+ level. We also believe Erasmus+ should evolve by further including and fostering joint degrees programs within the frame of its possibilities.
- digitalisation to be used more in the field of education, and that Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) have to be established and spread as an option.
- the European Commission to officially recognize the "student-entrepreneur" status and inscribe this system in its Youth and Job Strategies. More entrepreneurs are needed across Europe, an opportunity should be given to students who want to develop their own companies with the opportunity to take a semester off to develop/found the start-up.

- a harmonized time frame for spring and fall terms determining the earliest possible starting date and latest possible ending date in order to facilitate European wide exchange and cooperation.
- a European Digital University that is coordinated, financed and implemented as a pan-European concept. It includes online learning tools and works under best practice, together with already existing universities in Europe.

6. Future of the EU, institutional reform, ensuring the respect of human rights and equality

As the European Liberal Youth, it is clear to us that Europe is not the problem, Europe is the solution. It is extremely important to us however, that Europe is properly explained to all young people, by providing concrete reminders and examples of the peace and prosperity that it brought about and reminding that “Brussels” is where the national leaders take decisions too. It is important that Europe reforms profoundly, reinventing the values on which it was founded, striking down any attempt of infringements on the rule of law on its territory, fostering that Member States are doing more together – but not only on paper – and ensuring that turning a blind eye on cases of human rights and equality challenges is not accepted in Europe.

LYMEC believes that the future of Europe depends on the youth, which is why we want to see more young candidates for the upcoming European elections, as well as an electoral approach targeted at young people, explaining concretely what the EU is and has done for each and every one of us. We want to see institutional reforms, putting the citizens at the centre of the European construction. We want European decision-making to be more resilient, more accountable and less prone to stagnation by its individual member states. We insist on ensuring that the rule of law, equality and human rights are respected in our Union of values and in the global field.

LYMEC calls for:

- the Commission to evolve and become the executive branch of the European Union under a parliamentary system, and to take a more proactive stance in defending the interests of the European citizens. This includes better monitoring and improved enforcement of EU legislation.
- the Spitzenkandidaten system for the election of the President of the European Commission to be kept in place. It should be maintained but improved. However, in the future, the candidate of the party with the most votes should not necessarily become

Commission President, but rather the candidate who is able to unite a majority in Parliament. They should then be able to nominate their Commissioners regardless of their nationality.

- the number of European Commissioners to be reduced, rendering the European Commission more concentrated in its portfolios and therefore more efficient.
- increasing the transparency of the deliberations in Council in line with the European voters' expectations. We further insist on the gradual abolishment of the unanimity requirement in the Council proceedings and replacing it with qualified majority voting, as the current system has often proven to lead to decision-making paralysis and national protectionism.
- the powers of the European Parliament to be strengthened, providing it with proper legislative initiative powers, so that it can fully carry out its duties.
- the relevant regulations to be amended so that EU languages other than the official ones can be used in the proceedings of the European Parliament.
- EU nationals living in states other than the one where they hold citizenship of for a longer period of time to be allowed to vote and stand as candidates in regional and national elections, other than the currently existing passive and active electoral rights only for local and European elections, as means of creating a truly European populous.
- Issues of self-determination to be resolved through peaceful and democratic means and bona fide dialogue that respects the rule of law and fundamental human rights (including the rights of national minorities and regional entities) between the parties involved.
- transnational lists that allow citizens to vote for candidates from across the EU to be introduced. They should be equipped with the legal frameworks for pan-European campaigns and budgeting.
- the powers of the European Union in the field of human rights to be increased, and its ability to enforce them to be bolstered. We call for the human rights perspective to be an imperative part of future free-trade agreements.
- full civil equality without exception. We believe that in our union of values, there's no place for second class citizenship and persisting lack of gender equality.

- the European Court of Justice to have the resources necessary to speed up cases concerning the violation of human rights.
- the principle of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious and personal diversity, which constitutes an invaluable asset to the European society, is upheld. We insist that diversity, minority and indigenous peoples' rights must be defended and safeguarded.

The European Union is founded on the values of freedom, democracy, respect for the rule of law, and respect for human rights. We insist that those values should be upheld by the introduction of an EU mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, applicable to all member states. Countries, which do not support these principles and share these values, cannot be part of the European Union.