



EUROPEAN LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

Insight

28 YEARS OF LIBERAL DEMOCRAT ACHIEVEMENT

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European Liberal Democrat Prime Ministers Summit, Brussels

The European Liberal Democrat and Reform Prime Ministers and leaders met on Thursday 25 March in Brussels to prepare the European Council, and in particular to discuss the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), terrorism and economic reform. Five Liberal Prime Ministers, the Presidents of the Commission and Parliament and the Leaders of the ELDR Group and Party were joined by Liberal Foreign Ministers and by the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Turkey, who updated them on the state of play in discussions on Cyprus.

At the post-meeting press conference, Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt summarised the conclusions reached by the Liberal Prime Ministers on the EU constitution and the IGC, the fight against terrorism, economic reform, the international situation and Cyprus.

Concerning the draft European constitution and the Intergovernmental Conference, Mr Verhofstadt said that the ELDR Prime Ministers and leaders agreed that



there is now enough opportunity to conclude a constitution as fast as possible, and if possible before the European elections in June. "We heard the opening expressed by the Polish Foreign Minister who accepted the principle of double

majority, and we think the moment is there to find a compromise" said Mr Verhofstadt. "For the Liberal leaders, it is important that the final outcome is one of transparency and democracy, to achieve efficiency in the European Union and easier

decision-making. We hope we can put as many Justice and Home Affairs issues as possible in the Constitution, which should become core business of the EU after the Madrid attacks." On terrorism, the Belgian Prime

Minister said the Liberal leaders want to implement the Action Plan of 2001 against terrorism: "It's important to discuss new initiatives, but the most important thing is to implement all the existing issues." They also agreed on the need to discuss civil protection as well as the importance of discussing the causes of terrorism. The idea of a scoreboard on the implementation of the 2001 Action Plan was also proposed at the meeting.

With regards to economic reform and the Lisbon Agenda, Mr Verhofstadt said there was "full agreement among the Liberal leaders". He said that another method was needed, one of economic governance, and this new method should be developed as part of the mid-term review of the Lisbon Agenda next year.

In response to a question about whether his participation at the ELDR Prime Ministers and Leaders summit meant that his AK Party was joining the ELDR, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said through an interpreter: "We attended today's meeting as guests, we are observing, but our friendship is growing stronger. We have requested some time to finalise our position and the ELDR have agreed."

Europe facing 3-11



The defeat suffered by the Spanish Conservatives in the March general elections is clearly related to the horrific terrorist attacks of March 11th. In the aftermath of the dreadful carnage the now outgoing conservative Spanish government failed to react honestly. The government's lack of openness plus false information distributed to the

media was immediately punished by the Spanish voters. They quickly understood the political manoeuvring behind and voted for the opposition. Terrorists should be under no illusion: it was not their terrible crimes that decided the outcome of the election but the inappropriate reaction of the Spanish Conservatives.

Terrorism, for what ever ideological reason, always aims at destroying our way of life. That is why civic values such as liberty, individuality and tolerance that were promoted through centuries by European liberals are now facing an important challenge. Since March 11th, one thing has become clear: terror has reached all of us. The EU must react!

The new direction set by the Spanish Socialists drives forward the debate on the European Constitution Treaty. Reaching a compromise in the distribution of voting weights in the Council, is now getting much more likely. However, the immediate withdrawal of the 1300 Spanish troops stationed in Iraq is a mistake. Such action could lead the terrorists to the fatal conclusion that our

democracy can be blackmailed through bombs.

Furthermore, Europe also needs to rethink its security on the constitutional level. The consequence of recent events should also be, to bring in fresh force to the European Council and to the IGC the need for the establishment of the post of an European Public Prosecutor who directs and supervises Europol, which urgently needs enlarged policing competences for fighting against terrorism and organised crime. We have also to bear in mind that the European Parliament must be competent to supervise and set the budget for both, the European Prosecutor and his executing body, Europol.

We can only contain the threat of March 11 to our democracy and way of life with all the cherished civic values enshrined, if Europe backs up its solidarity with Spain with concrete measures for the effective and efficient fight against terrorism.

*Dr. Werner Hoyer,
President of the ELDR Party*

The following participated in today's meeting of ELDR Prime Ministers and Leaders: Guy Verhofstadt (Prime Minister of Belgium); Anders Fogh-Rasmussen (Prime Minister of Denmark); Matti Vanhanen (Prime Minister of Finland); Anton Rop (Prime Minister of Slovenia); Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha (Prime Minister of Bulgaria); Recep Tayyip Erdogan (Prime Minister of Turkey); Pat Cox MEP (President of the European Parliament); Romano Prodi (President of the European Commission); Graham Watson (Leader, ELDR Group); Werner Hoyer (President, ELDR Party); Dimitrij Rupel (Foreign Minister of Slovenia); Kristiina Ojuland (Foreign Minister of Estonia); Lydie Polfer (Foreign Minister of Luxembourg); Solomon Passy (Foreign Minister of Bulgaria); Abdullah Gül (Foreign Minister of Turkey); Atzo Nicolaï (State Secretary for European Affairs, the Netherlands).

Brussels Rally 29 April: Ready for the European elections

AN ENLARGED EUROPE, OPEN TO THE WORLD

Excerpts from the ELDR electoral Manifesto

ELDR dedicates this issue of Insight to topics from around the world. You can read contributions in view of the Manifesto's chapter on an Enlarged Europe that is open to the world. We start the newspaper with excerpts from the electoral Manifesto.

A commitment to enlargement

The European Union will be in a process of enlargement for many years to come, even beyond the historic enlargement taking place in 2004. ELDR welcomes the fact that many new countries want to join the EU in order to create a united continent based on the principles of liberty, democracy, peace, stability, equality between women and men, market economy, free movement, and the rule of law. The EU must change and adapt to the challenges of enlargement. All candidate countries must fulfil the criteria and be judged individually on their own merits. All European countries that fulfil the Copenhagen criteria should be welcome to join the European Union.

Safeguard clauses are a necessary but temporary mechanism to facilitate the integration of new Members in the Union, while maintaining the proper functioning of the Union as a whole.

A responsibility to the world

The EU should actively support the role of the UN and should commit itself to UN norms and decisions. The EU also has a very important role to play in defending human rights beyond its own borders. Therefore ELDR is very concerned about the current general atmosphere in international relations, where active non-violent resistance to governments is often equated with terrorism. ELDR will never be silent on issues such as the death penalty, torture, abuse and violation of human dignity. So as to ensure that those responsible for infringing basic human rights do not escape justice, we will continue to reaffirm the EU's commitment to the International Criminal Court (ICC) as the best way of enforcing the defence of human rights worldwide.

Ratification of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

In some countries, children are deprived of certain basic rights and forced into child labour. ELDR therefore calls on those countries which have not yet ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to do so promptly, and encourages educational programmes aimed at ensuring that children aged between 7 and 14 years have access to basic schooling.

Strategic EU-USA partnership

The EU and the USA should not treat one another as rivals, but as partners. ELDR will work towards the forging of a new strategic partnership between the EU and the USA, based on respect for international law and UN decisions. As the two largest global economic and political units, the US and the EU have a responsibility to work together for the values which they share.

A unified and coherent voice

ELDR has always promoted an active

common European Foreign Policy. The EU can only play an important and active role on the international scene when it is united and coherent and speaks with one voice. ELDR welcomes steps taken over the last years towards a common foreign and security policy, including the establishment of a European rapid reaction force, which has made an important contribution towards enhancing the credibility of this policy. In particular, the EU should seek to establish offices in so-called failed states.

In general, EU citizens wish to see an active Europe promoting peace, stability and security in a responsible manner on the international stage. ELDR believes that only if the Union's foreign and security policy is backed up by credible political, economic and military capabilities, supplied by Member States and NATO, will Europe be able to influence situations of tension or conflict in order to champion its values and assert its interests.

Liberalism in the European Union The way forward!

Watch out for a new book, which will be launched in April. Liberal key stake-holders, like Prime-Ministers, current EU top office holders and EU top advisers who have been shaping and who are still in the driving seat steering European Affairs give a sound overview as to the Liberal Dimension of European Politics and International Relations. They take a critical look back regarding 25 years of the Liberal Democrat Movement while also highlighting the challenges of tomorrow. Accessible in style, with a guiding agenda of topics and issues this publication is an indispensable aid to all readers interested in European Affairs and International Relations. More information will be made available in our next newspaper.

Update on new Statute for the ELDR Party

The work to obtain a legal statute for the ELDR Party is progressing. Until now the ELDR Party - as all other European parties - did not have a formal European legal statute. The Maastricht Treaty mentioned European parties but did not foresee any European legal statute for them. Therefore the ELDR functioned as an 'association de fait' and the President, Secretary General and Treasurer were personally liable for their management of the Party. This has changed since the adoption by the European Council on 29 September 2003 of the Regulation establishing rules on the statute and financing of European political parties. This regulation foresees that in order to benefit from funding by the EU, parties must register in the country of the EU where they are active, by way of a legal statute.

The ELDR Party secretariat has for two years now been preparing for this change and identified the statute the most appropriate for us, as recommended by a Law firm, which is the incorporation as an International Non-profit Organisation (IASBL). The Law firm Bird&Bird

specialised in Belgian and European Law, has drafted statutes for an IASBL that have been scanned by the Bureau and the working group set up by the Bureau presided by Lord Alderdice. To facilitate their adoption by member parties these draft statutes are based as far as possible, on the former statutes of the ELDR Party. Two steps now must be taken for these statutes to see the light.

One is their adoption by ELDR Party member parties. To achieve this, the draft statutes have been submitted to the ELDR Council in London on the 4th July and in Amsterdam on 11 November 2003 for examination. They will then have to be approved by an extraordinary Congress which will be organised on 30th April 2004. The other step is the introduction of our request for recognition at the Belgian Ministry of Justice. Our dossier has been submitted 11 December 2003. Once the Ministry approves our statutes and the IASBL is created we will have to ask the EU authorities for a formal recognition as European political party. This will then lead to the financing of our party by the EU.

The timing is as follows: 30th April 2004: Signature by member parties of the Statute of the IASBL European Liberal Democrats; 10- 13 June 2004: European Elections; 20th July 2004, The European regulation will enter into force as from the first plenary session after the European Parliament elections in June 2004; Spring - Summer 2004: The ELDR Party signs for renting new offices moves out of the European Parliament and installs new premises (computers, furniture...); September - December 2004: Start of the financing of European parties by the European Parliament. (This is nonetheless conditioned by: the insertion of an amount on the budget line of the EP for European political parties and the adoption of a code of conduct for the proper use of those funds).

All Member Parties have been informed of the proceedings and the implications. If you nevertheless wish to receive more information please do not hesitate to contact sdechamps@europarl.eu.int

*Sabine Dechamps
Principal Administrator ELDR Party*

Forum ELDR website

One of the many functionalities on the ELDR Party's new website is the possibility to discuss current affairs in the new internet discussion forum. It's an interesting way to share your views and opinions with fellow Europeans. How to use the new forum? First of all you need to be a registered user. You can become one on the website. You enter the discussion forum by signing in on the right hand side of the homepage with your "nickname" and password or directly in the forum. As registered user you will have access to two discussion forums. One is about news and current affairs. If you would like to discuss about something you read in the newspaper, then this is the place to discuss it. The other public forum is for questions concerning the ELDR.

Electronic Membership Section

The other forums on the website have privileged access for members of the Electronic Membership Section only. Until recently you could only be a registered user with ELDR's E-membership Section. From now onwards you can properly become an E-member with special possibilities! The E-members group exists for those who wish to become member of the ELDR Party Electronic Membership Section and who broadly agree with ELDR's basic documents that are the Stuttgart declaration, the Manifesto and the Statutes.

The benefits for E-members is privileged access to additional forums where you can contribute on various issues to the debate for the ELDR Party family, exchange views and ideas, and participate with fellow Europeans to make the European Union

Tools of development

Annemie Neyts, President of Liberal International, gave a key note speech last February at a meeting organised by the Catalonia Open Foundation en de Fundacio Llibertat i Democracia (Catalan Group of LI) at the occasion of the publication of the Catalan translation of The Road to Serfdom by Hayek. The article below is an excerpt of her speech.

Do we, liberals, offer a unique, irreplaceable and therefore indispensable approach to present day world affairs, or do we have nothing better to offer than diluted environmentalism, toned down social-democracy, watered down conservatism, or some revisited third way approach?

Liberalism is trust in people, qualified by prudence. Trust in people, at the root of liberalism. What I do claim is that no other ideology is so fundamentally rooted in trust in people, as liberalism is. Liberals entrust people with the task to shape their own lives, communities and societies and expect to be entrusted with the same responsibilities. At first sight, liberalism has not much to offer in the way of grandiose undertakings wherein to lose oneself. Liberalism certainly has no readymade plans to offer, nor well-mapped roads to eternal bliss and happiness.

A political approach equally based upon trust, confidence and therefore upon optimism, puts respect for individual freedom and recognition of each man's and woman's dignity at its centre. Such a political approach also entrusts each woman and man with the right, the task, the responsibility to shape her and his own life and does not subject them to any readymade design or plan. Only liberalism can truly and truthfully offer such an approach.

Fundamental civic liberties like freedom of speech, assembly, worship, that economic freedom and political freedom were non-essential rights, luxury rights so to say, the fulfilment of which could only follow the fulfilment of really vital needs like food, shelter and education. The prejudice, the bias we need to free ourselves from, is that freedom, individual initiative, civic liberties are results of development. We need to do away with the illusion that development comes first. We need to stress and spread the view that freedom, individual initiative and civic liberties are the very tools of development.

In order to provide for the framework in which freedom, individual initiative and civic liberties can thrive, democracy and the rule of law are essential. The simple fact of the growing membership of Liberal International, with about eighty parties in more than seventy countries in the world, testifies to this growing recognition, but the battle is far from won. Entire cultures and religions deny women the most basic rights. The European Union did make the government representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council pledge to respect the equality of men and women and that is how progress gets going, first by mere phrases...

The growing recognition of the value of individual freedom fuels the growth of political liberalism. Liberalism runs the risk

to be overwhelmed by this growing protest movement, unless we develop an intelligent answer to it. We should avoid two errors. Error number one: howl with the crowds, be it in a slightly more civilised way. Error number two: tackle the players rather than the ball. Fight the arguers, the demonstrators, rather than the arguments. Liberalism has, of old, been associated with each of those, and rightly so, because they all are tools of development. We must not try to dissociate ourselves from what we rightly view as tools of development, we must stress relentlessly that this is what they are "tools of development".

We must add that they do not suffice to ensure sustainable political development. The newly emerging protest movement is not the only threat to political liberalism. Another threat is posed by those, in our own countries and elsewhere, who reject the very notion of universality, who believe in cultural, linguistic and ethnic purity, and who spread the view that cultures, languages and nations should keep to themselves and should on no account mix, lest they lose their identity and authenticity.

The worst threat is posed by international terrorism. It must be fought. The case for universality, openness, cross-cultural and cross-national Cooperation should be easier, and least in theory. Not globalisation is the culprit, but the absence of perspective beyond one's own village... The case for universalism is our case.

I have tried to show that liberalism offers a unique, indispensable and irreplaceable approach to world affairs because it is rooted in trust, because it entrusts people with the right and the plight to shape their own lives and communities, because it considers that individual freedom and individual initiative are the indispensable tools of development. I have also shown that this approach is universally valid, if not universally accepted. I have pointed to several threats posed to liberalism by recent developments, in Europe and elsewhere and have indicated how, in my view, these threats should be answered. The battle for liberalism is far from won, but it is a most worthwhile battle. Because it is the battle for the recognition of the universal right to individual freedom. It is a battle I am most



grateful to be able to contribute to. I thank you for your kind attention.

*Annemie Neyts
President of Liberal International*

Let Turkey out of the waiting room!

Let me start by underlining that the European Union is a political and economic co-operation, not a religious sect!

When one listens to the debate about the Turkish accession into the Union, one could get another impression. The question of Turkish accession seems to have become a part of the campaign for the European Parliament election in many EU member states. And the tone is vulgar and populist. This has to change otherwise prejudice will set the agenda and a negative atmosphere will prevail over the Turkey-EU co-operation. Indeed the accession of Turkey into the European Union is a controversial point. Nevertheless it is a point that should be firmly grasped by liberals and promoted alongside the rest of the liberal agenda for enlargement and increased co-operation and interaction.

Turkey applied for membership of the European Communities back in 1959 together with Greece. The military coupe in 1960 set back the process. In 1963 the so-called Ankara-agreement was signed. Turkey is a full member of both the Council of Europe and NATO. The democratic orientation of Turkey has long been towards Europe and the western world. In 1987 Turkey and Morocco endorsed formal applications for membership of the EU. The application from Morocco was turned down as Morocco was seen as a North African country, not a European one. Turkey's application on the other hand was accepted. In 1999 Turkey was granted status as a candidate country. I believe it is due time that the EU now lives up to its promises and welcome Turkey into the Union.



An appropriate first step would be to renegotiate Turkey's accession and trade agreements with the EU, this can support the reforms and developments in Turkey. LYMEC, the European Liberal Youth firmly believes that when Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen criteria it should become a member of the EU. Of course, as in all previous cases, the formal negotiations with the Turkish government can start already when fulfilling the political and economic criteria. And let us be honest and frank. The Turkish accession to the Union will not happen within this decade. The implementation of the Acquis Communautaire will take time. The Turkish society will when acceding be somewhat different from how it looks like right now.

The perspectives of Turkish membership are many and diverse. I believe that it would

support democracy and human rights. Membership would bring long-term stability to both Turkey and the region. By giving Turkey a viable and attractive alternative, the Republic can and will most probably transform from a partly authoritarian to a truly liberal democracy. The accession of Turkey is also supported by liberal values: we do not believe that a superior culture or religion exists. The European continent is multicultural and respects diversity. Turkey will enhance our diversity. We as liberals should lead the way!

*Ellen Trane Norby, President of LYMEC,
European Liberal Youth*

(ELDR thanks Ellen for this last article she wrote in her capacity as LYMEC President)

A United States 2004 Election Special

2004 is a big year for global politics. There are major elections happening all over the world. Spanish and Russian elections were in March, the European Union is set for an election in June, and the United States election in November. Of all these elections the most watched will undoubtedly be the one in November. This year in the United States, the entire House of Representatives, which is composed of 435 members; 34 U.S. Senators; 10 state governors and the President are up for re-election. The Republican Party, or conservative party by American terms, is currently the majority party in the House by 23 seats, the Senate by 1 seat, holds the majority of Governorships at 28, and, holds the Presidency. Over the past 10 years, the Republican Party has made significant gains in all these areas ending a 40-year dominance by the Democrats or liberal party by American terms in 1994. Will 2004 end this streak of Republican majorities or will the political pendulum swing back towards the Democrats? This is hard to say because traditionally it is very difficult to beat an incumbent candidate, especially in times of war, and, with the majority of incumbents being Republican, the Democrats have a long tough road ahead to unseat them.

One major advantage the incumbent president has is the fact he faces no primary opponent. President Bush declared early on that he plans to run for re-election thereby eliminating a Republican primary. The Democrats however were left with trying to find a party leader strong enough to challenge President Bush. The primary officially began in January although candidates started campaigning much earlier.

The manner in which the Democratic Party chooses its candidate is a very complicated process. Each State Democratic Party is allo-



ated a number of delegates based on a complicated formula that takes into account the state's electoral votes and the strength of support for Democratic presidential candidates in the last three general elections. Democratic primaries and caucuses are proportional. Therefore multiple Democratic candidates can earn a share of a state and district's delegate pool, based on how they finished in each primary or caucus. The winner of the majority of delegates is chosen to represent the party for the election in November.

Nine democratic candidates threw in their names and competed for the nomination. Among them, Al Sharpton, a civil rights leader; Carol Moseley Braun, former member of the Senate; Richard Gephardt, former Democratic Leader in the House of Representatives; Dennis Kucinich, currently in the House of Representatives; Howard Dean, former governor of the State of Vermont; General Wesley Clark, former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO; John Edwards, currently a Senator from North Carolina; Joseph Lieberman, currently a U.S. Senator from Connecticut; and, John Kerry, currently a U.S. Senator from Massachusetts.

Super Tuesday

Over the past three months, all nine of these candidates debated and campaigned against each other. Finally, on Tuesday March 2nd, also known as Super Tuesday because of the number of primaries held on that day, 10 American States put to rest the question of the year: Who will challenge George W. Bush for the White House in 2004? The answer, a junior senator from the State of Massachusetts, John F. Kerry. However this answer gives way to two more questions. Who exactly is John Kerry and is he actually better than the status quo? These two questions may seem to have simple answers, however looks can be deceiving.

John Kerry was born in 1943 in Denver, Colorado. Soon after, his family moved to Massachusetts, where he resides today. His father was a foreign service officer which enabled a young John Kerry to be schooled in Switzerland before he attended Yale University, two years ahead of George W. Bush. He volunteered to join the Navy and served in Vietnam for two tours from December 1967 to June 1968. During his service as a Swift Boat Officer in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam, he received a Silver Star, Bronze Star with Combat V, and three Purple Hearts for his service in combat. He returned from Vietnam and became a strong advocate for the anti-war movement by forming Vietnam Veterans in America and becoming the spokesman for the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. This led him to testify before Congress in 1971 about his experience in the war. John Kerry then went back to school and received a law degree from Boston College and became a top prosecutor in Middlesex County, Massachusetts.

In 1982, Kerry was elected Lt. Governor but only served two years before he was elected

to the United States Senate in 1984 where he continues to serve. However this is where the question of who is John Kerry gets complicated. As Time Magazine points out since being in the Senate, John Kerry has sponsored 371 laws; nine of which become law, of those nine, six were of "a ceremonial nature," meaning renaming a federal building or designating a national Prisoner of War/Missing in action day.

Someone who spends a tremendous amount of time analyzing an issue

Senator Kerry's voting record over the last 20 years reflects someone who spends a tremendous amount of time analyzing an issue. However this has caused Senator Kerry to change his mind on several of them. According to the Boston Globe, the New York Times as well as the Congressional Record, Senator Kerry has changed his option and/or vote on no less than 20 issues ranging from Defense to Taxes. For example, Senator Kerry voted against the 1991 Persian Gulf War Resolution because he felt that the nations involved at the time represented "shadow battlefield allies who barely carry a burden." In 2003, Senator Kerry voted for military action against Iraq because the US had a "strong coalition" of international support. However when asked in January of 2004 if he considers himself to be, "an anti-war candidate" he stated, "I am." Later on during the primaries, Kerry stated that he voted for the war resolution "to threaten the use of force." Later still he voted against a bill that would give Iraq 87 billion dollars for reconstruction.

According to Time Magazine in 2004, Senator Kerry also changed his mind on the issue of the death penalty for terrorists. "Kerry now supports the death penalty for terrorists, even though in the days before 9/11 he argued that it could impede the fight against terrorism because foreign countries might not extradite suspects to the US for trial." Republicans say that this indecisiveness and constant changing of opinion is proof that Kerry is not a leader and will make the United States vulnerable in the war on terror. People may disagree with President Bush, but they have no doubt what he stands for.

Since March 2nd, Kerry has repeatedly claimed that Bush has failed to fulfill his campaign promises on a number of domestic issues including education and health care. The Republicans however say this is a false claim because of the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act on Education, which Kerry voted for, and, the Medicare Act, which vote Kerry missed due to campaigning. However of Senator Kerry's criticisms of the President, none have been as hard as his criticism against his foreign policy. "I think there has been an exaggeration," Mr. Kerry said at a January debate when asked whether President Bush has overstated the threat of terrorism. "They are misleading all Americans in a profound way." He continued to say, "This administration's arrogant



and ideological policy is taking America down a more dangerous path".

If Senator Kerry defeats Bush in November, what does this mean for U.S. relations with Europe? Over all, Europeans are not that happy with President Bush. President Bush pulled the US out of the International Criminal Court, he vowed not to sign the Kyoto Protocol, he holds many European citizens prisoners in Guantanamo Bay without giving them access to lawyers or fair trials, has imposed steel tariffs despite being a "free trader" and many believe he snubbed the UN when preparing for war in Iraq. However it is yet to be seen if a Kerry Presidency will try to change or reverse any of these policies.

Unlike President Bush, Senator Kerry has family ties to Europe. His grandfather is from a Czech village, his cousin served in the French Socialist Government for four years and his wife was born in Mozambique a former colony of Portugal. Senator Kerry is also fluent in French.

Senator Kerry has also stated that he is in favor of the Kyoto Protocol, against the death penalty, with the exception of terrorists, and is a supporter of multilateralism. However given Senator Kerry's constant re-evaluation of the issues who can say whether John Kerry's final decision would be better than President Bush's.

Only time will tell if the man, who was luckily born with the same initials as his political hero JFK, can pull it together to defeat his Republican nemesis, President George W. Bush. One thing is for sure, this election will be another long fought political battle over the next eight months. But until that fateful day in November when Americans decide who is better to lead the country, in the words of both candidates, "Bring it on!"

Kevin Cyron,
ELDR Group Stagiaire,
United States

Ivo Thijssen
ELDR Group Stagiaire,
The Netherlands

Liberals win in Taiwan



Taiwan's presidential election had everything. Joint naval exercises by France and China interfering in a democratic election; conflict-ridden and vilifying rhetoric; the incumbent president and vice-president were shot while campaigning; the campaign featured two referenda questions, which had China raving; the winner defeated the loser by less than 30,000 votes of 12.9 million cast that were valid; a recount of the ballots and an investigation into the shooting.

The Liberal Democratic President Chen secured a tremendous election result getting a little over 50 percent against the alliance of the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Peoples First Party (PFP) in the March 20 elections. Chen only won the 2000 presidential election with 39 percent of the vote due to a split in the KMT, who had ruled the country for over 50 years, making it a three horse race, from which Chen benefited.

That the Taiwanese democracy is still a fragile one was shown in the days following the election by the lack of restraint shown by the leaders of the KMT and PFP who, disappointed as they were with their unexpected defeat, continuously stirred up the emotions of their supporters and incited them into mob behaviour instead of leaving it to the legal system.

Taiwan is thus entering a very difficult phase of democratic consolidation. It is not unlikely that in the wake of their election defeat the Kuomintang will split again and end its alliance with the Peoples First Party. The Kuomintang is expected to be broken up into two different camps, one that follows the localisation trend which identifies itself with Taiwan as a separate entity and one that sticks to the old ideology which features reunification with China.

If the disintegration of the Kuomintang happens, it can have implications for the Parliamentary elections in December 2004. The Democratic Progressive Party will then stand a good chance of getting a majority in Parliament for the first time, which is necessary to pass through their reform proposals.

One of the most controversial reforms is the Constitutional reform. The current

Constitution is the old Chinese constitution, which Chiang Kai-shek introduced after the Japanese left Taiwan in 1945, and which represents the whole of China and not just Taiwan. Moreover many of the Constitution's articles require revision to suit a democracy. China believes that a win of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) at the Parliamentary elections might speed up the constitutional reforms.

Future constitutional changes will anger China. But China must learn to deal with the reality of Taiwan. This is now an island where "Taiwan identity" has grown considerably at the expense of "China identity". However some of the problems for the Chinese political leadership are: it might lose face; a separation might ignite other separatist regions in China; they have to accommodate the powerful conservative Chinese military who benefits from a tense cross-strait situation. Although China must be pleased that the controversial referenda response just fell short of the 50% threshold, it can not ignore the strong message that was sent out by the millions of voters who voted 'yes'.

Two million Taiwanese join hands for peace

On February 28th two million Taiwanese joined President Chen Shui-bian in forming a human chain down the length of the island in remembrance of the 2-28 incident. What brought two million people together in an act of solidarity, pro-democracy and defiance against the Chinese threat?

In August 1945 Japan declared unconditional surrender one week after the US dropped their atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Chiang Kai-shek accepted the surrender of the Japanese military in China and sent his troops to Taiwan.

These mainlanders took over the governance of the Island in a repressive, brutal and corrupt fashion exploiting the Taiwanese. Violence flared on February 28 (2-28) 1947 when a middle aged Taiwanese woman who was caught smuggling ciga-

rettes was beaten unconscious and a protesting passer-by shot dead. Public discontent spilled over into riots as the population expressed their anger over their treatment by the mainlanders. Chiang Kai-shek responded by sending more troops from China to crack-down the revolt resulting in the massacre of 30,000 Taiwanese. The killings were both random and premeditated as local elites and educated Taiwanese were sought out and disposed of. The elimination of the Taiwanese social elite also facilitated the Kuomintang's (KMT) governance. This was followed by the "White Terror" in which many thousands of Taiwanese were imprisoned or executed for their real or perceived opposition to the Kuomintang military regime, who were driven out of China by Mao's Peoples' Army, leaving

many native Taiwanese with a deep-seated bitterness for the mainlanders. Since Taiwan has embarked on a democratic path the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) made sure the 2-28 incident is publically remembered in Taiwan. Two million people joined hands, honouring and respecting the dead who had been opposing the brutal regime of the KMT. The KMT, with their stronghold around Taipei, were mostly mainlanders settled after Mao chased them away and felt uncomfortable with this public act of remembrance which worked very much in favour of Chen's Presidential bid.

Against this backdrop Liberal International came to Taiwan to hold its 'Asia Conference' in support of the Democratic Progressive Party and President Chen Shui-bian and of their efforts to consolidate Taiwan's democracy. In such a young democracy not all organs of society become democratic overnight. Moreover the Kuomintang has been in power for over 50 years, becoming the richest political party in the world as it allegedly transferred state enterprise into personal and party assets, and most media is still pro-KMT. This makes the Kuomintang still a formidable opponent. Therefore liberals from around the world came to Taiwan and joined the election campaign and showed their moral support.

You can not but feel tremendous respect for the courage and personal sacrifices the DPP activists and others have made often risking their lives and imprisonment in bringing democracy and respect for human rights to Taiwan.

The Taiwanese people live under a daily threat of Chinese missiles pointing at them and deserve the support of all democrats in their pursuit for democracy and peace. It is disappointing when democratically elected western politicians and the business



community, who hold their positions only because they work in a democratic environment that respects the rule of law and property rights, publically leave fellow democrats in the cold. It seems that other standards and principles apply when it is more convenient to accommodate an authoritarian China who is still on a daily basis abusing human rights.

Jasper Veen
Political Advisor Liberal International

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Political Advisor
Liberal International

Lost in Russia

More and more I hear the tone of concern in the colleagues' voices when they ask me about Russia. "You know Russia, you tell us!" - this is something that I have been asked often during the last year and especially in connection with the Russian presidential elections in March.

Yes, Russia is a direct neighbour of Estonia, Latvia, Finland and of Lithuania in the Kaliningrad region. That means a neighbour of the European Union. Nobody can stay indifferent to where Russia is heading under Putin. Will there be any room for democracy? Probably not in the sense that we in the Western political culture understand. Russia's experiment with free civil society began with the Gorbachev reforms and lasted until the first independent TV channels were closed a few years ago. Or perhaps even until the voice of the "Soldiers' Mothers" organisation and other NGO's were undermined when the Second Chechen War began in 1999?

It is a fact that Russia is a strategic partner to both the EU and the NATO. Cooperation with Russia is vital for security building in Europe. The fight against interna-

tional terrorism together is a clear uniting factor for partnership. Also, there are important mutual economic interests between the EU and Russia. This is a reality. Still, can we disregard the other reality that Russia is moving towards limiting basic democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law? That Pandora's box is on our table in the EU and NATO.

Russia has put forward fourteen points of interests (read: demands) to the EU. At the same time the EU adopted a common strategy paper on relations with the Russian Federation. What next? What happens if Russia declares that they will not implement the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement in case the EU does not fulfil Russia's demands? Can we characterise this kind of relation as partnership? If one side is only demanding and the other side has to implement? Certainly not. The political behaviour Russia accepts is a firm stand. Any political politeness is seen as a sign of weakness, and I am not original writing this. However, we tend to forget that from time to time. Presenting demands has been a part of Russian diplomacy over the centuries.

A Russian diplomat or a politician can be your best friend in private life. You would never experience more hospitable reception than from a Russian friend. But as soon as it comes to the ambitions and interests of Russia, then you would not recognise your best friend anymore. You would immediately experience the most cool and demanding tone from your partner with whom you may have recently enjoyed the best hand-made pelmeni together.

Russia has always remained a mysterious place for Western people. Recently I read an article by an Estonian journalist about her experience from the last elections in Russia. It immediately reminded me of the times when Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union. Today, the ordinary people of Russia love Putin like they loved Lenin and Stalin. The 70 years of totalitarianism were able to destroy almost all of what we in the West call democratic values. Most of the Russian political and intellectual elite were killed or deported during the Leninist-Stalinist dictatorship or they were able to escape to the West. Today, without knowing Russian history we can not fully understand why the 25 years old young generation

is crying for Stalin. Chauvinism and the will of domination are deep in many of today's Putin's Russia.

However, there are still lot of people in Russia who want to live in democracy and to enjoy the same freedoms and rights as we do here. I believe it is a task of European liberal community to support those people in Russia. They are facing difficult times again. People like Sergei Kovalev, Grigori Javlinski and many others are still there. For time being they have to go under ground but the fight for democratic values should continue.

Russia is a member of the Council of Europe. Here, I believe is the place where the EU should stand firm. Russian citizens should have the same right to enjoy the human rights and rule of law as other citizens of the member states of the Council of Europe do. If the EU wants to speak on the issue of values, democratic principles and the human rights with Russia seriously, then the Council of Europe is the right forum to do it. In a way it has become a sort of "habit" to mention Chechnya in our meetings in the EU. But does it make any differences? Will it



change anything? So far not. People feel released after mentioning Chechnya and go on to the other topics. But when dealing with Russia, it is important to remain consistent and remember that this is a serious business, because it is easy to get lost in Russia and with Russia if you do not make a difference between pelmeni discussions and real business!

*Kristina Ojuland
Foreign minister of Estonia*

Russia: a part of Europe or apart from Europe? There are no roads in Russia, only directions, goes a Russian proverb



At the eve of the eastward enlargement of the European Union and following the re-election of Vladimir Putin as Russian President, the question of which direction Russia is taking gains more importance. For Liberals in Russia and abroad the question is how to make sure that Russia walks on the road to democracy, instead of lingering in its direction.

EU's concerns have been raised by the way Vladimir Putin implements the concept of "democracy" in Russia. Putin's revival of a centralized state with the

President as the predominant institution seems to lead right back to the Russian autocratic tradition. Public support of the war in Chechnya has been the result of Putin's aggressive and centralized style of leadership and his monopoly over the media, which bans any images of the conflict and human rights violations in Chechnya.

Will these tensions be relieved or strengthened by the results of the recent Duma and presidential elections? Liberal political forces failed the December 2003 electoral test and are relegated outside the parliamentary channels. Opposition to Putin is therefore even weaker than before, due to a strong pro-President Duma majority, a state-controlled media, and extremely fragmented, leader-centric opposition parties.

Today, Russia's primary interest as regards to Europe is to make it instrumental for the country's transformation. Putin's agenda focuses on economic development and aims at preventing any development that might marginalize Russia. The feeling of being

consigned to the sidelines of European political development while being increasingly economically dependent on it, together with security concerns linked to NATO enlargement are making Russia increasingly uncomfortable with Europe.

So what buttons should Liberals push for Russia to press on with real institutional reforms? First of all, Liberals in Russia and abroad should be wary of assertions that Russian values are divergent from European or Western ones, as these can be used as a justification for preventing modernization and undermining reforms.

Liberals should be vocal in condemning the war in Chechnya and link EU's economic support to upholding human rights. Especially after September 11th, the new American agenda of combating international terrorism has been used as a pretext for Russia's armed intervention in Chechnya. It is shameful that only one European institution, the Council of Europe, has really confronted Russia about its human rights violations in

Chechnya by suspending its voting rights. European Liberals, in government or opposition, should be speaking loudly against the quiet international endorsement of this war.

Liberals should push for a more coherent and strategic approach to Russia within a strong Common Foreign and Security Policy, so as to not to lose negotiating power on other issues. Russia has been skilful at negotiating bilaterally with single EU members more favourable deals than with the EU as a whole. Why is it that countries like Germany, France and Italy have negotiated more flexible visa rules for Russians while Russia is blocking the extension of its Partnership and Cooperation agreement to the new EU members?

Liberals should insist on the EU to direct its efforts at democracy building in Russia, but with an emphasis on political party development. International resources directed at building up civil society without building at the same time sustainable political struc-

tures have not solved the problem of establishing a strong democracy in Russia. The defeat of liberal forces in the past elections is a worrying sign of the fragmentation of political parties, deriving from the general failure to understand the role of parties in a democratic system.

Finally, European Liberals should step up their support for their liberal partners in Russia, namely Liberal International member "Yabloko" party led by Grigory Yavlinski, which has been the only Russian party to condemn the war in Chechnya and has in the past suffered for it at the ballot. Russian Liberals should be aware that uniting liberal and democratic forces will be crucial to succeed in the next elections of 2007.

Almost 15 years into Russia's post-soviet life, the direction that Russia takes now will determine to what extent it is a part of Europe or ...apart from Europe.

*Federica Sabbati, Secretary
General of Liberal International*

Minister Verwilghen and his fight against poverty in Niger: "Women do the toughest job"



The Belgian Minister of development co-operation Marc Verwilghen (VLD) recently made another visit. This time the destination was Niger, together with Unicef and under the patronage of HRH Princess Mathilde. The aim of the mission, that took place in February, was to familiarise the minister on the ground with the Belgian development co-operation and projects of Unicef. The trip aimed primarily

projects that cover education to children (particularly to girls) and the role of women in society.

Niger is the second poorest country in the world. Just 17 percent of Niger's children can read and write, the child death rate amounts to 27 percent. Around 60% of the Niger's population live below the poverty level, and two thirds of these are women. These are worrying figures, where the Belgian development co-operation wants to bring change.

Education, a children's right

Even though the number of children attending school has risen dramatically in recent years, there's no solution yet to the problem. Especially girls attending school have particular problems, as education is not perceived to be a necessity for them. Minister Verwilghen aims to change this. "The issue of education to children became obvious during our visit to the Unicef project in Agadez, the nomad school of Tassikim Talam. This school aims to bring the children of the nomad population to school, including girls. We should continue this trend, to aim for every child to have the right to attend schools," according to

Minister Verwilghen. The Belgian development co-operation is also active in the sphere of education, more particularly within the direct bilateral co-operation.

Positive role of women

The Belgian development co-operation supports also the role of the women in society, which is not yet always evident. A positive evolution can nevertheless be seen, mainly in the public sector. Niger's authorities signed recently an agreement to prevent discrimination against women. "This agreement guarantees a minimum representation of 10% of women in Parliament. It's a start, but the main problem is with the poor people. I found out that only women do the toughest work, for example the labour in the fields. Unimaginable," according to Minister Verwilghen.

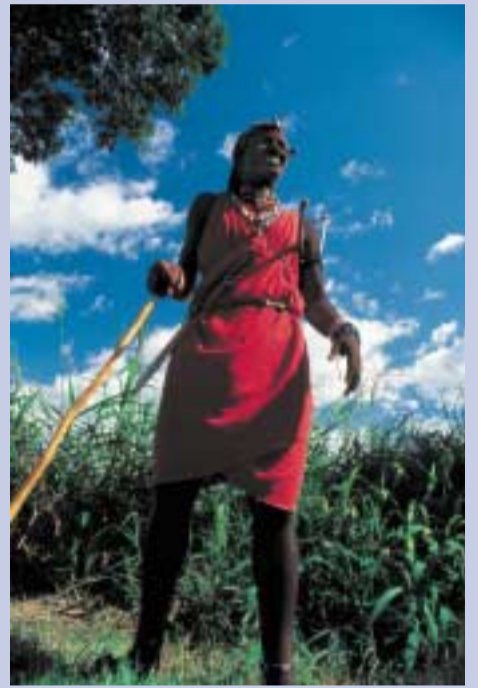
Fight against poverty

The direct bilateral aid of the Belgian development co-operation is active in Niger since the seventies and is not only geographically concentrated (Dosso, Maradi and Niamey), but also sectorally concentrated (health, education, food safety and agriculture). The Belgian aid to

Niger follows the strategy to fight poverty. Until 2008 the development co-operation will amount to € 42.330.000 of direct bilateral aid to Niger.

Marc Verwilghen

Belgian Minister of Development



WTO trade round of vital importance

The stalled WTO trade round is of vital importance, that much is clear.

Economically, a successful conclusion to the talks will serve as a boost to economic confidence throughout the world. It will act as a spur to investment and economic activity in a large number of developing countries. It will provide a barrier against the rising tide of protectionism and tit for tat trade disputes which continue to blight international commerce, not least across the Atlantic. Liberals have long believed that open trade is essential to economic prosperity and growth. Much depends, therefore,

on whether the so called Doha Development Round succeeds.

But there are other wider reasons why the fate of the WTO round should be of overriding concern to Liberals. The WTO, notwithstanding its cumbersome procedural flaws, remains one of the most sophisticated experiments in multilateral decision making in the world. It is worth recalling that it encompasses over 140 member countries and is underpinned by a set of rules which are binding on all members, big and small alike. Most importantly, since 1993, the WTO has possessed a highly developed arbitration mechanism by

which disputes between members are examined and, crucially, penalties imposed upon those found to have transgressed trade rules. In other words, the WTO has evolved from being a forum in which negotiations to lower trade barriers took place, into a body which ensures that trade rules are properly enforced, akin to an international court of law.

The WTO has become the target of numerous criticisms: that it favours the rich members over the poor, that it is insensitive to issues of particular public concern such as environmental sustainability or animal welfare, or that it makes decisions in an unduly unaccountable fashion. Some of these criticisms are justified, if in part rather than in whole. There is, for instance, a clear problem in the way that WTO trade disciplines tend to take precedence over wider environmental international agreements. It is also true, inevitably, that the world's leading trading blocs, such as the EU and the US, are able to bring far greater resources to bear when wheeling and dealing in the negotiations in Geneva. The lack of expertise or administrative resources available to some of the WTO's poorest members is a real impediment to a level negotiating playing field. It is also the case that, given the sheer

technocratic complexity of WTO talks, the negotiations themselves escape the appropriate levels of political and parliamentary scrutiny.

Liberals in the European Parliament have argued vociferously to correct some of these imbalances. For instance, ELDR MEPs have taken the lead in advocating greater scrutiny powers for the European Parliament to ensure that any major WTO deals are subject to a full parliamentary debate and a vote of assent. We have also long championed the cause of developing countries within the WTO, not least by arguing in favour of far reaching concessions by the EU in the crucial field of agricultural trade. We have also adopted imaginative proposals to ensure that WTO disciplines do not arbitrarily run roughshod over international environmental accords.

Yet, when the WTO is assessed in the wider context of international economic and political uncertainty, it is essential that Liberals remain strong supporters and defenders of the institution and its multilateral principles. It must always be remembered that the alternative to the WTO, whatever its shortcomings, is a return to beggar-thy-neighbour trade rela-



tions in which the strongest bully the weakest without any real legal or institutional constraint.

In many ways, the WTO has become a victim of its own success. It has been strikingly more successful than other multilateral bodies in adopting new agreements and rules, and is now blamed for giving undue emphasis to those rules and agreements. Yet the task now is not to dismantle or discredit the WTO, but to ensure that the success of multilateralism in the trade field is now reproduced in other areas of public policy too. That is the challenge for Liberals everywhere in the years ahead.

Nick Clegg, Member of the European Parliament





Lex Corijn, Secretary-general of the European Liberal Democrats (ELDR Party)

The flying bird. No, it's not the name of the latest cheap fares airline. It is the symbol for what we are. European liberal family aim for a bird, flying towards freedom. I will reflect in this column on the Open to the world section of the electoral Manifesto by presenting you a bird's view of the world today. Our manifesto is called, Freeing Europe's Potential with subtitle A new enlarged Europe, open to its citizens and

open to the world. ELDR's approach has always been that Europe should promote international free trade, sustainable development, and a healthy environment, to ensure a more peaceful and stable world, where freedom and democracy is the rule, not the exception. In some parts of the world that situation is not yet there and on a number of issues Europe is not yet open to the world either.

A bird view of the Middle east is rather difficult as its wing was almost shot off, several times. The war (and the post-war) in Iraq, the terrorist attacks in Istanbul and the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, founder of Hamas, adding even more pressure on the fragile relations between Israel and Palestine are the most significant signs of a tense situation, which risks to become unsolvable. But the future may seem to become a bit brighter. One can see an easing of some long standing conflicts. Some statesmen in the region have started, often secret, negotiations to resolve some of the most basic grounds for conflict. One notable example are the talks between Israeli government officials and the son of Kadhafi from Libya. The European Union could contribute significantly, but only when it speaks with one voice, and for that we need a genuine Common Foreign and Security Policy, backed up by the European Security and Defence Policy.

Another birdview brings us to Asia. South-East Asian countries were hard hit by avian flue. It may not yet be as deadly as SARS, but nevertheless it has killed several people. It is indeed a problem where the EU is best to respond to protect our citizens from this potentially fatal disease.

The last focus in this column is the birds view on the environment. Europe has done a lot to improve the worlds environment. But it can do more. Our Manifesto proposes to introduce a Common Environmental Policy for the European Union. By making it a common cause, we can undo some of the damage inflicted on the environment in the last decades. One particular issue is the Kyoto protocol, or the lack of it. Climate changes can only be stopped if the EU backs commitments to meet the requirements. In the moment when even the European front seems to be breaking on what used to be our common flag (just see the recent declarations from the Italian government on this issue), we liberals have to act and come up with constructive proposals.

In these days, the flying bird is flying low, in a feeling of profound sadness. The recent tragic terrorist attacks perpetrated by ETA in Madrid do not hit only the Spanish state. They also hit the spirit of the European Union, rooted in freedom and democracy. It is only the last one of a series of attacks, occurred in the heart of democratic Europe. They are a shocking signal that challenges to our free society can come at any time, anywhere. Our values should never be given for granted, but need to be defended and re-affirmed continuously. The ELDR is indispensable in this respect and should remain at the forefront to keep Europe's only directly elected body focussed on promoting a European area of freedom, security and justice, with respect for civil liberties That must be our aim.

Member Parties and Affiliate Parties

<p>Member Parties</p> <p>Albania Partia Aleanca Demokratike http://www.aleanca.org</p> <p>Andorra Partit Liberal d'Andorra http://www.partitliberal.ad</p> <p>Austria Liberales Forum http://www.liberale.at</p> <p>Belgium Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten (VLD) http://www.vld.be Parti Réformateur Libéral (PRL) http://www.mr.be</p> <p>Bosnia-Herzegovina Liberalno demokratska stranka (LDS) http://www.liberali.ba</p> <p>Bulgaria Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) http://www.dps.bg National Movement Simeon II http://www.ndsv.bg</p> <p>Croatia People's Party (HNS) http://www.hns.hr</p> <p>Cyprus United Democrats (UDP) http://www.edi.org.cy</p> <p>Denmark det radikale venstre http://www.dr.vk venstre http://www.venstre.dk</p> <p>Estonia Estonian Reform Party http://www.reform.ee Estonian Centre Party http://www.keskerakond.ee</p> <p>Finland Suomen Keskusta http://www.keskusta.fi Svenska Folkpartiet (SFP) http://www.sfp.fi</p> <p>Germany Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP) http://www.fdp-bundesverband.de</p> <p>Hungary Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége (SZDSZ) http://www.szdsz.hu</p> <p>Ireland Progressive Democrats (PD) www.progressivedemocrats.ie</p> <p>Italy Italia dei valori – Lista Di Pietro http://www.antoniodipietro.it Partito Repubblicano Italiano (PRI) http://www.pri.it I Democratici http://www.democraticiperlulivo.it Rinnovamento Italiano http://www.rinnovamento.it</p>	<p>Kosova Partia Liberale e Kosoves (PLK) http://www.plk-kosova.org</p> <p>Latvia Latvia's Way (LC) http://www.lc.lv</p> <p>Lithuania Lithuanian Liberal and Centre Union New Union http://www.nsajunga.lt</p> <p>Luxembourg Demokratesch Partei (DP) http://www.dp.lu</p> <p>The Netherlands Democraten 66 http://www.d66.nl Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en democratie (VVD) http://www.vvd.nl</p> <p>Poland Unia Wolności http://www.uw.org.pl</p> <p>Romania Partidul National Liberal (PNL) http://www.pnl.ro</p> <p>Serbia and Montenegro Liberals of Serbia http://www.liberali-srbije.org.yu</p> <p>Slovakia Aliancia Nového Občana (ANO) http://www.ano-aliancia.sk</p> <p>Slovenia Liberalna demokracija Slovenije (LDS) http://www.lids.si</p> <p>Sweden Folkpartiet Liberalerna (FP) http://www.folkpartiet.se Centerpartiet (C) http://www.centerpartiet.se</p> <p>Switzerland Parti Radical Démocratique (FDP-PRD) http://www.fdp.ch</p> <p>United Kingdom Liberal Democrats (Lib Dems) http://www.libdems.org.uk The Alliance of Northern Ireland http://www.allianceparty.org</p> <p>Affiliate Parties</p> <p>Croatia Hrvatska socijalno liberalna stranka (HSLS) http://www.hsls.hr Liberalna stranka (LS) http://www.liberali.hr</p> <p>Czech Republic Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA) http://www.oda.cz</p> <p>Macedonia Liberal Party of Macedonia (LPM) http://www.liberalna.org.mk</p> <p>Norway Venstre (V) http://www.venstre.no</p>
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ELDR CALENDAR FOR UPCOMING EVENTS 2004

April 2004	4-6 Lymec Congress, Zagreb, Croatia
	26-28 HNS Congress (Croatia)
	29 ELDR Party Electoral Rally, Brussels
	29 ELDR Party Council
	30 ELDR Party Extraordinary Congress, Brussels
May 2004	
	Congress Estonian Reform Party, Estonia (tbc)
	24 Group Meeting ELDR Comité of the Regions
June 2004	
	5-6 Svenska Folkpartiet Congress (Finland)
	10-13 Elections European Parliament (European Union)
	17 ELDR Leaders and Ministers Meeting, Brussels
	18-20 Keskusta Congress (Finland)
	19-21 Centre Party Congress (Sweden)
July 2004	
	19-22 First plenary session European Parliament after June elections
September 2004	
	11-12 Congress Radikale Venstre, Denmark
	19-23 Congress Liberal Democrats, Bournemouth (UK)
November 2004	
	Congress Liberal Centre Union, Lithuania (tbc)
	20 Congress D66, The Netherlands

ELDR

Parti européen des libéraux, démocrates et réformateurs
Parlement européen - PHS 55C42 - Rue Wiertz, 59
1047 Bruxelles - Tél 02 284 31 69 - Fax 02 231 19 07
Direction: Lex Corijn - Réalisation: Daniel Tanahatoo.
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