

## ELDR briefing: Why Europe and the vote matters

### Give way for freedom – vote liberal!

The parliamentary group of Liberals in the European Parliament represents the third largest political force in the European Parliament, occupies the centre ground between the Right and Left – the voice of reason, of principle and purpose – and holds approx. 13% of the seats. With no parliamentary majority for any of the European political party families the liberals have often made the difference in policy making and stamped their liberal mark on many policy areas.

Liberals – although being the 3rd largest group – won more votes on legislative proposals in Parliament than the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest group of Socialists.

### WHY the European Parliament is important and the elections matter

The parliament is the only directly elected body in the European Union. The European Parliament has a big influence on the lives of EU citizens. EU laws apply in all member states, and most laws passed by national parliaments are drafted in response to decisions taken at the European level. The European Parliament shares **legislative power** equally with the Council of the European Union. This means it is empowered to adopt European laws (directives, regulations). It can accept, amend or reject the content of European legislation.

The European Parliament exercises democratic supervision over the Union including the power to dismiss the Commission. It also supervises the day-to-day management of EU policies by putting oral and written questions to the Commission and the Council. Finally, the President of the European Council reports to the Parliament on the decisions taken by the Council.

The Parliament also approves or rejects the appointment of the President of the European Commission as proposed by a majority vote in the Council of the EU. The Parliament must endorse the college of European Commissioners as a whole and has powers to dismiss them as a whole.

It is often argued that MEPs have more real power than members of national parliaments, even though they usually have a lower profile. Parliamentary approval is not necessary for all EU legislation, but with the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty the number of policy areas will dramatically increase where MEPs play a decisive role.

### WHAT do Liberals tell the Eurosceptics?

Liberals are not simply in favour of just “we want more Europe” as the Eurosceptics criticise.

- Liberals are pro European but criticise European institutions such as the Commission or the Parliament when it takes illiberal decisions.
- Liberals want a more democratic Europe and democratically legitimised European Parliament with clear responsibilities of the institutions.
- Liberals are in favour of a decentralised Europe (Europe of the regions). Liberals are committed to the concept of “subsidiarity” understood in the liberal sense of the term, a bottom-up approach to government:
  - local > regional > national > European
- This is why Liberals want a strong but lean Europe: Global challenges need global answers but no overregulation by any national or European state organ.