

Speech of Bart Somers, President of Open Vld, at the ELDR rally.

Brussels, April 15, 2009.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On my turn it is an honour to welcome here today in Brussels the most important politicians of Europe. I say most important because it were the liberal politicians who shaped Europe as we know today. It were the liberal politicians who made from the European project a liberal project. A project of peace, liberty, welfare and democracy. It was thanks to all those liberal statesmen that during the last fifty years the European Union became the best ambassador of liberal democracy all over the world.

In Belgium we do never underestimate what the European Union has achieved. For our country was for many centuries the battlefield of Europe. Today, thanks to the Union, that battlefield has been transformed into a meeting table on which the most important battles of ideas are fought. In other words, the European Union means for the people of Belgium more security, more welfare and more liberty.

But, ladies and gentlemen, as liberals we can't be satisfied yet. For the last five years the top of the European decision makers has been mostly populated by socialists and conservatives. The consequences are quite clear. Europe has fallen into a stand still. A status quo in which nothing seems to move any more. And this is unacceptable. Because right now we can't afford any stand still. In these times of crisis we need, more than ever before, European leaders with vision, with courage, with leadership.

That is why these elections are crucial. Because the more liberals are elected, the more there will be European unification. The more European vision and the more vigour of its institutions. Because of all parties the liberal party is by far the most pro-European party. As liberals we share the same will to move forward. That is why my party, Open Vld decided not to write our own Belgian European program, as we usually do. No, this time the European program of the ELDR will be the European program of Open Vld. Because only what we want together, we can reach together.

I wish all liberal parties and all liberal candidates a big victory in June. Because a victory for the liberals is a victory for Europe. Success and thank you for your attention.