

A EUROPE THAT WORKS



EUROPEAN LIBERALS ARE THE FIRST TO ADOPT ELECTION MANIFESTO

In 2014, we will have the opportunity to shape the future of Europe at a crucial time in the history of our continent. In this election, the choice you make can weaken Europe or make it stronger.

European Liberals are committed to building a stronger Europe to defend our common interests and values. We want a Europe with authority on the world stage. We want a Europe that boosts the economy and creates jobs. We want a Europe that is more transparent and accountable. A Europe that protects the safety and security of its citizens. A Europe of tolerance and equality, with strong civil rights and liberties. A Europe based on genuine democracy and the will of its citizens. A Europe that takes the lead in fighting climate change. A Europe that works for us all.

Liberals want a Europe which inspires trust, not fear; promotes prosperity and unity, not division.

Civil liberties and freedom are the foundations of a liberal Europe and explain the attraction of the European model for the world. Civil liberties are the very foundations of our wealth and we need to defend them when they are threatened. We want a Europe that respects and encourages individual choices and keeps its promise that everyone has the opportunity to improve their own life.

Our priority is to better address the serious economic challenges we face throughout Europe. The recession and record unemployment, including youth unemployment, threaten the long-term future of our communities. A stable and prosperous Europe needs to be built on better policies. We believe in a Europe that is answerable to you and works for you.

European Liberals have a strong track record of making Europe more accountable, more transparent and more effective.

We will continue to pursue strategies and take action that will lead us out of the current crisis and will create long-term growth. We believe in competition, removing obstacles to trade and effective regulation of the market. We will continue to fight protectionism and government interference where they undermine job growth and hinder prosperity at regional, national and EU level.

Creating jobs and opportunities

Liberal policies have proven to create jobs and improve peoples' lives. We can do more with your support.

We believe in the power and success of the European single market, which has created millions of jobs. We will prioritise the completion and expansion of the single market, not least in services, identify and create new opportunities for economic growth and greater innovation, and boost the EU's competitiveness.

Eliminating excessive national rules and regulations as well as border controls, and ensuring free movement of workers, have helped businesses to be stronger and more competitive. However, much more can and should be done to complete the single market and simplify doing business in Europe.

We will reinforce the single market in energy, the digital market, financial services, transport and healthcare sectors, while further facilitating the free movement of services and workers.

- ★ We will work for an EU-US free trade agreement that could boost the European economy by over 100 billion euros annually. We will also strive for free trade agreements with other major economic regions.
- ★ Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) drive prosperity in Europe. We will facilitate the creation of more jobs through easier access to finance, simpler rules for investment funds to support new, innovative businesses across Europe, and opportunities for young entrepreneurs.

- ✦ The EU must become a leader in start-ups and in new innovative technology companies.
- ✦ The digital economy is vital to jobs. We will work to create a modern economy that simplifies life through more e-services, and stimulates e-commerce by improving faster internet access, guaranteeing an open internet, fighting for net neutrality and creating a genuine single market in telecommunications, including the phasing out of mobile phone voice and data roaming charges by 2016, and unjustified prices for calling or texting across borders.
- ✦ We support the establishment of favourable financial and taxation frameworks to encourage the setting up of new businesses. Investment must be welcomed in Europe.

We believe that the greatest social and economic crisis now facing Europe is unemployment, especially among young people. These European elections must be about identifying opportunities through employment, education and training and this is the top priority for those elected as ALDE Members of the European Parliament.

Apprenticeship diplomas and university diplomas must be freely recognised across borders. Dual training, university and enterprise across borders must be strengthened.

We support the notion of a 'fifth freedom': the free movement of knowledge – including greater mobility for students, academics and researchers – between member states, so as to encourage inventions and discovery.

Transitioning into sustainable development through a resource-efficient and low-carbon economy with a stronger emphasis on renewable energy will create new jobs and make us less reliant on energy imports.

- ✦ We will work for a functioning emission trading system to reduce CO₂ emissions, and will work to strengthen it as a driver for innovation and energy-efficient solutions. An effective and well-functioning carbon market is a key tool to reduce greenhouse gas emissions cost-effectively. This includes investment in a pan-European electricity grid and building even more upon renewable energy sources. We will promote a long-term and stable policy framework to promote energy and resource efficiency. This must include member states and the European Union working together to increase energy efficiency, decarbonise energy generation, develop carbon capture and storage technology, promote recycling, reuse and efficiency in the use of natural resources, and phase out environmentally harmful subsidies, including those for fossil fuel production and consumption.
- ✦ We will support the shift of EU support under structural and cohesion funds towards research and investment into future oriented sectors such as the renewable energy sources sector.

In the process of creating these new jobs, we will also ensure environmental and ecological sustainability for future generations.

Setting new priorities

We need to rethink the whole budget process. We believe in a larger strategic objective to determine how our money is best spent. We call for an extensive reform of the financial system of the Union, both revenues and expenditure, ensuring that no countries contribute disproportionately.

Budget decisions should take into consideration how best to increase the number of jobs and improve people's lives and the welfare of our communities. The budget must be growth-oriented. We need to focus on innovation, research and development and support better education. Liberals are committed to making better use of your money by continuing to cut administrative budgets and lead the fight for a single seat for the European Parliament.

The original goal of improving people's lives has been overshadowed by bureaucratic bookkeeping. Wasteful subsidies must be abolished.

- ✦ We will work towards a real and fundamental shift in the next EU budget so that you will benefit more. EU money must be spent on creating jobs and not to subsidise income.
- ✦ We want to reduce and simplify EU rules so that they are easier to apply and enforce in order to avoid waste and error.
- ✦ Member states should provide declarations that EU money is not only spent legally but also provides added value.
- ✦ EU structural funds must be directed towards job creation, particularly for youth, and greater innovation.
- ✦ EU funds should also be directed towards research, which adds value and gives tools to researchers, PhD students and universities.
- ✦ Access to funds intended to improve people's lives must be time-limited, with entitlement lost if goals are not met within a specified period.
- ✦ We will work for a sustainable economy that respects the natural environment.

Over 40 billion euros are spent on agricultural subsidies every year. Agricultural subsidies in other countries distort the level playing field for European farmers. We want an international reduction of support and a further modernisation of the Common Agricultural Policy towards efficiency and more market orientation.

As Liberals we support a continuous CAP reform. However, we stress that the general rules prohibiting state aid to national industries, companies and products should also apply to the Common Agricultural Policy, thus preventing a renationalisation of agricultural subsidies. We aim to ensure a more transparent and less bureaucratic CAP implementation. EU money must be spent on creating jobs and maintaining food security and safety in all member states.

We support agricultural policy that is balanced between all three pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental and social. This will help farmers to produce more with less.

- ✦ We will make sure that family farmers and people in rural areas who preserve the landscape and encourage environmentally-friendly tourism benefit fairly from the Common Agricultural Policy.
- ✦ We will shift EU support from agricultural subsidies to modern and environmentally-friendly agricultural technologies to maintain food production and sustainable livestock farming while helping local communities.
- ✦ We support investment in research, modern technologies and their translation into practice in all sectors of agriculture, fisheries and rural development.

European Liberals have led the reform of the common fisheries policy, notably to end discards and to decentralise decision-making.

Restoring stable finances

Just as European citizens are expected to balance their household budgets and live within their means, we must ensure healthy public finances. We want a Union in which the criteria of the Stability Pact are adhered to by both the Union and its member states. The currency union can only be sustained if solidarity is combined with solid fiscal responsibility.

Fiscal solidarity depends on fiscal discipline which avoids moral hazard and does not reduce economic incentives for sound public finance.

Agreeing to these principles is not enough. We will continue to lead efforts to hold accountable those who flout the rules.

- ✦ We will work for the rapid implementation of a banking union in the Eurozone with a common legal basis for supervision and resolution of banks.
- ✦ We will establish a common mechanism to wind down insolvent banks in order to avoid costs for the taxpayer.
- ✦ We will create better control mechanisms and more automatic sanctions when the stability and growth pact is broken.

- ✦ We want both Eurozone and non-Eurozone countries to remain fully involved in the Union's decision-making on economic issues of common concern, as our economic futures are inextricably bound together.
- ✦ While we are committed to the principle of tax competition, we are convinced that we need to do more to fight tax avoidance and evasion.

Stronger in the world and safer at home

While some want to highlight and exploit our differences, we believe our shared values and unity allow us to defend our common interests in the world and individual rights at home. Our strength will help us create jobs and improve people's lives both within Europe and beyond our borders.

- ✦ We will promote human rights and protect the vulnerable both within the EU and beyond our borders.
- ✦ For Liberals EU enlargement remains an essential instrument of common foreign and security policy.
- ✦ We will enhance EU cooperation and strengthen EU policy in the field of justice and home affairs, in particular to fight organised crime.
- ✦ While we welcome the new Common European Asylum System, we will further work to create legal and safe routes to the EU for asylum seekers through resettlement and humanitarian visas, in order to eliminate the market for human traffickers and prevent tragic deaths in the Mediterranean.
- ✦ We will also work for a Europe open to talents and ideas from people willing and able to contribute to job growth and prosperity on the one hand, and on the other hand enforce a system to prevent irregular migration.
- ✦ We will strive for a common cybersecurity policy, which will improve the ability of our member states to protect our privacy and economy.

Our ability to promote the rule of law and individual liberties effectively abroad depends on our ability to guarantee the same rights for those here at home.

- ✦ We will continue the fight for full protection of all human rights and we will remain at the forefront of fighting discrimination of any kind.
- ✦ We will work for the creation of a mechanism to monitor violations of fundamental rights and civil liberties in the EU and enforce sanctions, on the basis of objective criteria, free from political interference.

- ✦ Europe should lead the world in data privacy. Access to the private data of European citizens should always be subject to proper judicial process.
- ✦ In a globalised world, no EU country can tackle the threats and challenges we are facing today on its own. EU citizens expect the EU and its Member States to stand together, to act together and to play an effective role in global affairs.
- ✦ The world is becoming ever more complex and unstable. Europe will need to depend more on its own military and security resources. A better pooling and sharing of those capabilities is needed to put them to much better use. This would allow faster responses to international crises, as the fight against piracy has successfully shown.
- ✦ We work for much closer cooperation between the EU and NATO.
- ✦ We will continue to support democratic and economic reforms in neighbouring countries. Healthier democracies on our borders ensure a safer European Union.
- ✦ We strongly support the new emphasis on human rights in EU foreign policy.
- ✦ We want to increase the influence of the EU in international affairs by establishing an additional European seat in the UN Security Council and other organisations, as well as by teaming up the Eurozone member states as a single constituency in the IMF.
- ✦ We believe that the EU should further strengthen its crisis civilian management capabilities and use its experience to guarantee stability, the rule of law and principles of good governance.

For an effective and transparent Europe

The financial crisis has caused the EU to stretch the Treaty of Lisbon. Within the lifetime of the next European Parliament we will support the calling of a Convention to develop the Union further in a democratic direction. By improving accountability for European politicians, we believe they can deliver more effective and efficient results for you.

The EU and its institutions need more transparency and less bureaucracy. We will continue our efforts to simplify EU rules and make them less burdensome.

- ✦ We advocate that decisions should be taken at the appropriate local and regional, national or EU level that serves citizens best and most directly.
- ✦ With the Lisbon Treaty national parliaments have been included to a greater extent in policy negotiation. In order to strengthen the principles of subsidiarity even further, ALDE proposes an annual subsidiarity check, whereby the European Parliament assesses the Commission's Work Programme to ensure that the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are being respected.

- ✦ We want to make the European Commission more efficient by substantially reforming working methods at the College, and by reducing the areas of portfolios.
- ✦ We support the ongoing restructuring of certain parts of the EU administration, such as the Committee of the Regions, in order to ensure that all parts contribute significantly to the decision-making process and the transparent, smooth and efficient running of the Union. We want to maintain the option of abolishing administrative structures which do not fulfil these criteria, such as the Economic and Social Committee.
- ✦ We call for an audit of all existing EU agencies. Those that do not deliver significant added value should be abolished.
- ✦ We recognise that differentiated integration does not pose a threat to the coherence of the EU as long as further integration remains open to other countries, allowing them to join if and when they choose.
- ✦ The European Parliament should have one seat only.
- ✦ We support a reinforcement of the democratic nature of the European Union, with a greater involvement of the European and national parliaments in decision-making, and with greater transparency of negotiations and voting within the Council.

The European Union needs to be stronger, simpler and more democratic.

We ask for your vote to help us achieve this.