

Strengthening European democracy and values

The Congress of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party convening in Athens, Greece, on 24-26 October 2019:

Nothing that:

- nationalism and populism have increased in EU Member States in recent years and in the European Parliament at the elections of May 2019;
- it is essential to secure the democratic process and democratic values within the EU institutions, and notably to ensure throughout the EU Member States equal conditions for the EU citizens to be represented in the European Parliament;
- all initiatives should be encouraged that aim at strengthening in the Member States the EU identities and fundamental values enshrined in the Treaty of the European Union.

Recalls that:

- the ALDE Party Manifesto adopted at the Congress in 2018 [1] strives for a Europe that stands up for the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens, and protects the rule of law;
- the Act of 20 September 1976 concerning the election of the representatives of the Assembly by direct universal suffrage [2], as last amended by Council Decision (EU, Euratom) 2018/994 of 13 July 2018, [3] leaves up to national legislators to establish arrangements concerning, among others: (i) Electoral thresholds : an obligatory minimum threshold of between 2% and 5% for constituencies (including single-constituency Member States) with more than 35 seats must be set by EU Member States for the 2024 European elections at the latest; [4] (ii) The possibility of voting from abroad : Voting by non-resident nationals in their country of origin is prevented at all by some EU Member States or limited to residents in the EU territory;
- Article 6(2) of the Treaty of the European Union, as complemented by Protocol No 8 to the Treaty of Lisbon, provides that the EU has the duty to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR);
- the European Parliament has expressed in several resolutions [5] the need for the EU to comply with the above-mentioned obligation, as this would strengthen fundamental rights protection in the EU, and the European Court of Justice (EUCJ) has outlined the conditions for accession; [6]
- the political guidelines [7] of the President-elect of the European Commission stresses for upholding the rule of law, protecting justice

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and values, strengthening democracy including via a "Conference on the Future of Europe", to start in 2020 and run for two years;

- the aim of a "European Year" is to raise awareness on a certain topic, through the funding of specific projects at local, national and cross-border level, and in this way to convey a political commitment by the EU institutions and Member States that the subject will be taken into consideration in future policy-making ;
- the ALDE Congress in 2017 adopted a resolution [8] calling for the organisation of EU-wide local celebrations on the Europe Day 9 May 2018.

Calls on:

- the ALDE Party to support the completion of the harmonisation of EU Member States' laws for the European Parliament elections, by setting conditions aiming at reducing inequalities between EU parties and EU voters, namely as concerns the electoral threshold and the right to vote from abroad;
- ALDE to fight apathy towards politics among young people and EU Member States to ensure that the 2024 and subsequent European elections are held using constituencies whose geographic and demographic size ensures a meaningful connection between voters and their representatives, while avoiding excessively small constituencies that lead to very high effective electoral thresholds;
- ALDE parties to call out any attempt to reduce voter turnout among certain demographic segments under the pretence of fighting voter fraud, and keep on emphasising the importance of transnational lists in European elections for the rise of a European demos;
- the ALDE Party to stimulate, via its Member Parties represented in the European Parliament or by any appropriate means, the revision of the draft agreement for the EU accession to the ECHR addressing the EUCJ concerns, taking in consideration Protocol No 8 to the Treaty of Lisbon and the relevant European Parliament resolutions;
- the ALDE Party to provide its contribution to the "Conference on the Future of Europe" in the most effective way(s);
- the ALDE Party to promote, along with its member parties, the declaration by the European Commission of the "European Year of Democratic Values 2020";
- all member parties of the ALDE Party, sitting in national/local assemblies and in the European Parliament, to promote official celebrations every year at the occasion of the Europe Day (9 May) at local and national level.

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Sources:

- [1] https://www.aldeparty.eu/sites/alde/files/40-Resolutions/2019_freedom_opportunity_prosperity_the_liberal_vision_for_the_future_of_europe_0.pdf
- [2] OJ L 278, 8.10.1976, p. 5.
- [3] OJ L 178, 16.7.2018, p. 1.
- [4] Currently, 15 EU Member States apply thresholds: France, Belgium, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Romania, Croatia, Latvia and Hungary (5%); Austria, Italy and Sweden (4%); Greece (3%); and Cyprus (1.8%). The remaining EU Member States apply no threshold.
- [5] European Parliament resolution of 15 December 2010 on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union (2009) – effective implementation after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon (2009/2161(INI)) ;European Parliament resolution of 16 September 2015 on the Commission Work Programme 2016 (2015/2729(RSP)) ;European Parliament resolution of 13 December 2016 on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union in 2015 (2016/2009(INI)).
- [6] EUCJ opinion no. 2/13 of 18 December 2014.
- [7] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en.pdf
- [8] https://www.aldeparty.eu/sites/alde/files/40-Resolutions/2017_call_for_action_for_europe_day_9_may_2018.pdf

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