

Manifest of the Youth Alliance of Liberals and Democrats



1. Preamble

TLDE, Youth Liberals and Democrats is a Romanian organisation dedicated to promoting and consolidating liberal values in Romania, liberalism which built Romania.. TLDE is formed by young Romanians who subscribe to the liberal principles and values. TLDE affirms individual liberty and basis of any political, social, economic and cultural reasonable organisation and proposes a political project founded on the relationship between liberty, democracy and prosperity. TLDE's purpose is to strengthen the cooperation among the young liberals community and to channel their common effort to built a liberal political, economical and social environment for all Romanians.

Moreover, TLDE aims at playing an important role in Romania's developments within the European Union as a youth organisation in close cooperation with other liberal organisations, forming its members through organising seminars, publications, trips, symposiums, courses and educational meetings. TLDE wishes to stimulate cooperation amongst its members as well as with other liberal youth organisations from the EU, developing important public debate themes, educating its members to develop clear strategies, take initiative and promote political awareness and youth implication in Romanian and European politics, developing and active citizenship spirit.

TLDE pursuits promoting an institutional system organised around individual rights, as well as developing a national political community based on political, economical and civil rights principles, as well as justice and social solidarity.

TLDE promotes political pluralism, consolidating the democratic system and national security, defending human and family rights, guaranteeing justice independence, protection, consolidation and extension of private property, achieving economical and cultural value exchange, as well as insuring free and equal access to education, promoting values and national interest.

TLDE sees the European Union as a positive political force which has brought peace and stability to our continent and has allowed all Europeans to progress and develop in the spirit of tolerance and cooperation. Through promoting liberalism in Romania, TLDE seeks to deepen the European Union in order to consolidate democracy, transparency and political participation at a European level.

TLDE shall work on its political agenda maintaining a close collaboration relationship with the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Romania, with the youth organisation LYMEC at a European level, following at the same time with great attention ELDR's activity and the European Parliament Group ALDE. TLDE follows closely the ALDE group in the European Parliament, taking positions in parliamentary debates and communicating young Romanian liberals' visions in Romanian MEP's positions within ALDE. TLDE is independent in all its decisions.

This manifest along with its rules of procedure are the common ground on which TLDE bases its work.

2. Primary Values of Liberalism

As young liberals, our main value is individual freedom, which implies :

- freedom of thought and expression;
- freedom of association;
- freedom of press, of scientific research and education;
- right to property;
- the right of every person to choose an occupation and to use freely the resulting income;
- the right to a fair treatment which insures conditions of a decent life;
- the right to social security, ecological and food security;
- the right to live freely in a system of free entrepreneurship;
- rule of law and equal rights;
- responsibility;
- tolerance;
- reason;

- active citizen participation;
- respect of fundamental human rights;
- sustainable environment;
- a pluralist society.

3. Principles of Liberalism

3.1. Individual Freedom

Each human being is a unique individual whose distinct characteristics have the potential to enrich humanity. All individuals should be equal in rights and obligations and protected against physical or psychological violence imposed either by authorities or by other human beings. Each individual has to have the right to free expression, way of life and entrepreneurship. Individual freedom should go as far as his/her actions do not affect the freedom of others. Individuals should be the basis of political organisation.

3.2. Democracy and Law

The only state organisation system that liberals can support is democracy with universal vote and free and fair elections. Liberals strongly oppose death penalty, torture and corporal punishments.

The State exists to benefit the individual and not as an end in itself. Positive changes in society have always been brought by free individuals acting alone or in collaboration with others. Liberals do not think that a constituted group, either national or religious, should be able to dominate values and rights of individuals. Individuals must not be discriminated on the basis of their ethnic belonging, beliefs, colour, religion, sex, sexual preferences, identity/expressing gender, national origin, language, disabilities, age, social status, economic or medical.

We favour a pluralist society, in which a variety of visions and opinions exist in common maintaining mutual respect. We wish for a tolerant and open society in which total participation is guaranteed, including minorities and foreign citizens and in which animal welfare is respected.

We believe in division of powers, which consists of legislative, executive and judiciary power. We believe that the rights and duties of individuals should be recorded in a written constitution.

Open societies do not protect liberty through suppressing it. Liberty, democracy and the rule of law are the European project's core. Especially when civil liberties are under pressure, as we saw in the last years, we have to protect and defend these liberties.

Years after 9/11, the fight against terrorism puts our common values to the pressure. The "War against terrorism" is constantly cited to justify a drastic violation of civil liberties and private life, limiting the democratic mechanism of checks and balances, a weakening of law enforcement and international treaties and a violation of human rights.

In Romania, 25 years after the fall of communism, we may not accept that democratic mechanism be suspended, the justice be transformed in a political weapon and that it ceases to be blind and impartial. By such, we defend the security and safety of Romanian citizens and we consider it both a national and european duty. We wish to have policies in the benefit of the citizens, which are generated by a representative Parliament, not just a voting minority. Thus, we seek to minimise the rupture between population and political class by stimulating active involvement of citizens.

3.3. Liberal Economy

We support private property, market economy, competition and free trade as being the best methods to insure economic growth and create work places on the long term, insuring thus a decent life standard to all citizens. Private property is a fundamental element of a liberal state.

The government should adopt economic policies such as to stimulate economic growth and development, taking into account at the same time social aspects and

the environment without suffocating the economy through excessive taxation and bureaucracy.

We believe that private initiatives and competition are much better economic solutions than government interference and state planning. Thus, from our point of view state companies should not have the exclusive monopoly of income generating activities, except in few cases in which such a monopoly could be justified as necessary.

3.4. Reason

We consider that all individual action should be filtered through reason, avoiding thus the traps of superstitions and ignorance. The power of reason gives us the capacity to take responsibility over our lives and to build our own destinies.

Reason passes through education. By such, education is a good in itself. It is a vital mean of promoting personal development and, if extended to a general scale, it allows social and historical progress.

Thereby, we are against the use of force and aggression. From our liberal perspective, the use of force is justified either in cases of self defence or as a mean to counter oppression, but always and forever after exhausting reason and arguments.

3.5. Tolerance and diversity

Tolerance is for us both an ethical ideal and a social principle. Our engagement towards tolerance may be expressed through the famous saying "I despise what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it". From our point of view, tolerance is first of all a guarantee of personal autonomy and is thereby a condition for personal and moral development.

Only in a free idea market will the "truth" emerge, where good ideas displace the bad ones and ignorance is progressively eliminated. Contest, debate and argument, the fruit of diversity and multiplicity, are thereby the engine of social progress.

4. Important subjects for TLDE

4. 1. Individual freedom

Individual freedom represents for us the supreme value and subject and is, in many ways, the unifying principle of liberal ideology. People have the right to life and are free to do what they wish with their bodies.

4. 2. Education and Youth

No person is truly free if he or she is ignorant. Total access to education has to be made possible for all individuals of society without social or economical considerations.

We believe also in a continuous education throughout life and we recognise the necessity for both a formal and a non-formal type of education.

At all levels, students should be involved more in the decision making process.

More than the normal school program, educational policies and programs should include and promote :

- civic education, including an understanding of European structures and organisations;
- personal developing of students depending on their interests;
- the possibility for youngsters to take part in exchange programs with other countries;
- learning of foreign languages from the earliest age;
- programs which target developing tolerance and solving problems in a peaceful manner;
- sexual education;
- active participation and involvement as both a teenager and a citizen, including political involvement.

The youth has a crucial role in civil society. Individuals should have the right to organise themselves based on a common cause or interest. Society as a whole benefits enormously from the enthusiasm, specific knowledge and rooted initiatives that such groups offer. Civil society deserves to be actively promoted and financially sustained by the state and local authorities. Civil society organisations should be also recognised as an important consultative factor in the political decision making process.

We have to respect other people's values and cultures and stimulate cultural exchange and cooperation, especially through civil society and the youth. Youth in Romania, as well as in Europe, should receive opportunities to develop skills and competences in order to face the competitive and globalised challenges of the world they live in and understand their role in this context.

4. 3. Environment and Animal Welfare

TLDE considers that Romania must become one of the leading countries in generating and consuming sustainable energy, as in significantly reducing gas emissions.

TLDE militates for reducing the use of fossil sources of energy and encourages investigations in alternative sources of energy which do not endanger the environment. We also promote scientific research in this domain.

We support a common European policy of the environment and fixing some minimal standards which take into consideration the environment in all areas of decision.

TLDE defends animal rights and their welfare. We promote their respect and fight against any physical or psychological abuse against them. Our belief is that "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its **animals** are treated"(Ghandi).

4. 4. Freedom of expression and Information Society

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, which should be respected at all time and any conditions.

Thereby TLDE opposes any form of internet censorship. If an Internet site should be suppressed or blocked, this may be enforced only by a blind justice's decision, not through a governmental decision.

The Media plays an important role in our society. We believe that the media market should be one open to competition.

4. 5. Free Trade

TLDE favours free trade as a modality to insure better quality products at a better price to citizens. Tariff barriers serve only at financing state budget and protect unreliable economic activities. Thereby, they are not in the consumers interest and affect on the long run the economy offering a false protection.

We see free trade as a modality to keep the world open for all its citizens. Trade is an important factor in overcoming political, cultural and other types of barriers between people. It offers greater interaction between world citizens and allows the individual to be more aware of life at a global level.

For liberals free trade does not mean the right to abuse the environment or the workers of the human rights of countries less developed by companies from more developed countries. Such actions are profoundly immoral and should be sanctioned by authorities from both the country in which they take place as well as the company's country of origin.

We support free trade between all European nations, especially within the European Union. EU should continue to use the World Trade Organisation as a primary instrument in the attempt to reach world free trade. However, it is crucial that these world free trade be accompanied by development aids to countries less developed.

4. 6. Social Policies

TLDE believes that an acceptable level of social security has to exist for all citizens. The social system should include free trade competition to bring more efficiency and quality to services. Youth unemployment has to be addressed through special programs which include education and professional formations adapted to the necessities of the labour market for all citizens.

5. A powerful and united European Union, deepening the European democracy

TLDE commits itself in the process of creating a closer Union between the people of Europe. A strong cooperation between European nations is a guarantee of stability and progress and prosperity in Europe, objectives which have been too many times compromised in the recent past through wars and conflicts.

In a competitive and globalised world, Europeans have a better chance of keeping up with other nations or even being at the front of economic and social development when they combine collective creativity and productivity. EU represents the best political, social and economical framework for an enlarged European cooperation.

However, EU seems to be distant from its citizens. Low turnouts at elections for the European Parliament show it. Citizens in general do not understand who is responsible for which policy in this European legislative maze. Intergovernmental Conferences and EU Summits have shown that the EU decision making process lacks legitimacy and is not transparent, is not democratic and not efficient enough.

TLDE considers that EU should continue to deepen, reform and be bettered as to become a union for the people and by the people. In this sense, adopting the Lisbon Treaty is a step forward full of sense, significant and substantial, which has to lead to reforms and further improvements, but which in no case should be considered a final step.

5.1. Institutional Framework

TLDE considers that the Union needs a decision system more democratic, federal, open and transparent, responsible towards citizens, to be able to reconnect people from Europe with the decisions taken on their behalf. This system should be based on the democratic principle of power separation.

Being the only directly and democratically elected body, the Parliament, representing the citizens, should co-decide in all policy areas. It should have a full budgetary competence and have the right to initiate. Bruxelles should be the only residence of the European Parliament and its secretariat. Moreover, the EP should have the right to propose and elect the President of the European Commission and should have the power to withdraw individual Commissioners as well as withdraw through impeachment the President of the Commission.

In the EP, TLDE believes that national and regional voting lists are necessary to maintain the traditional link that exists in some Member States between electoral representatives and voters. We also believe that a EU enlargement element is necessary to underline the extension of EU political parties as precursors in establishing a pan-European democracy.

The Council should be reformed heading towards a second chamber, co-deciding with the EP on matters of EU legislation. It should meet in public sessions except moments in which it cannot for security reasons. Decisions in sensitive areas can be taken with a double majority of states and populations, preventing thus the dominance of big countries over smaller ones. Veto right should be eliminated from the decisional system of EU.

The European Commission is the guardian of European Treaties. The European Commission should be transformed in a true European executive. It should be responsible in front of the Parliament and the Council.

All domains within the Union competences should be subject to the European Justice Court. Each citizen should have the right to address the European Justice Court.

5.2. EU Competences

Tomorrow's EU should be based on decentralisation and diversity, not on bureaucracy and over-regulation. This means that EU will have the task of decisions which cannot be better accomplished at a national or regional level. Competence completion should be based on the two principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, which must be closely monitored. The subsidiarity principle implies taking decisions at the smallest governance level.

5.3. Developing the Common Foreign Policy and Common Security

Foreign Policy should remain a shared competence of EU. The Foreign and Security Policy should be integrated and decisions taken democratically through the EP and Council.

EU should continue a clear approach for promoting peace and security, based on (1) conflict prevention, (2) managing crisis implicating the Rapid Reaction Force (RRF), (3) post-conflict institutional building. EU has to develop a Defence Identity. The Rapid Reaction Force allows Europe to participate in peace maintain operations and crisis management. However, it cannot function without NATO's framework and has no role in defending the EU. A European Army will be more economically and military efficient. No state should however be forced against its will to participate in specific missions. EU will respect each member state's right to participate in international cooperation conventions external to the Union.

5.4. Internal Affairs, migration and asylum

TLDE is against a "European Fortress". Besides the fact that it is economically beneficial, migration is a natural and historical phenomenon, but most of all a

constitutive element of European culture. Market globalisation will bring a fundamental rights globalisation and thus a freedom of movement. This is why we see a free, common and harmonised immigration. A liberal right to the asylum system without economical considerations accompanies it.

There should be no obstacle within the EU in the free movement of labour force, private capital, goods and services. In order to secure the free movement of people, social rights should be transferable in member states.

We support the establishment of a true and de-facto EU citizenship, which is complementary to national citizenship. There should be no difference in rights between new and old member states.

5.5. Europe in a globalised world

Europe's approach in relationship with other world regions is a challenge from a point of view of insuring peace and stability. We consider that the EU should pay closer attention to the new neighbouring states of Europe.

EU has to recognise its eastern and southern neighbours as a cooperation priority. The increased EU involvement in these countries will support young democracies, preventing human rights violation and will help developing a free market economy. EU should be a main player in promoting global governance.

EU Member status should be open and accessible to all European countries which comply with the Copenhagen Criteria. EU has to offer assistance to countries in a pre-adhesion state in order to achieve necessary standards to be EU members, watching at the same time at preventing a superficial compliance of these standards. There can be no automatism leading to the EU member status.