



Annual Report 2017

The LYMEC annual report covers the year of 2017. It was in many ways a busy year for LYMEC and the year where much of what was outlined in the plans and goals for the 2016-2018 mandate was achieved.

Politics, campaigns and communication

The year of 2017 started off with a lot of noise in the liberal family, with the rumours that members of the ALDE Group were trying to expand the group with members of the 5 Star Movement from Italy. While we would normally be very happy to see the liberal group grow in the European parliament, this was not the case when it came to the populist 5 Star Movement, and we were not afraid to say it out loud.

The spirit was a lot better a couple of months later, when our energy was focused on the 60-year anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. We gathered a LYMEC delegation consisting of 15 young liberals from across Europe who took part in the celebratory march and highlighted the importance of standing up for Europe and for what we have built together in the past 60 years, but at the same time also the need for continued reforms.

In 2017 the LYMEC Bureau overall took a more strategic approach to our campaigning effort. Instead of topical, more short-sighted campaigns, we looked into our policy book and found a number of areas of key importance to young liberals with the ambition of working with them more in depth. We called the campaign 'Setting the Agenda for Europe'. With a threefold objective the campaign raised awareness about issues that are important to young people such as: youth unemployment, youth participation, migration challenges and climate change. By taking the floor, being critical and showing initiative the campaign also aimed to influence European political discourse and present and promote a liberal youth vision for Europe with concrete solutions and liberal ideas. The campaign proactively targeted key-decision makers, stakeholders and various civil society organisations in Europe.

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As part of the campaign we did a series of video interviews with central liberal politicians working on the policy areas of our interest: we interviewed Fredrick Federley (MEP), Ilhan Kyuchyuk, (MEP), Jasna Gabric (Mayor), Urmaz Paet (MEP) and Angelika Mlinar (MEP) talking about topics such as migration, climate change, security and defence. All the interviews were published on our social media and the majority of the MEPs also published the interview on their own channels giving us a much broader audience than usual. Besides setting focus on topics that are important for young liberals, the video campaign also helped us build closer relations with elected politicians and we have received very positive feedback about the professionalism and engagement the politicians experienced from LYMEC. Whether it can be directly linked to the campaign or not is hard to tell, but following the campaign, we have also experienced an increase in the requests from our liberal MEPs to have LYMEC's inputs to the work they do in the European Parliament. This is of course something we are very happy to provide, whether it is in the form of amendments or more general feedback.

In terms of communication we increased our use of videos further, not only for the purpose of campaigns. In the past year, LYMEC has produced videos from all our events, and we find that they work well in terms of communicating to all stakeholders. Due to the consistent high quality we come off as a professional, dynamic organisation, and we continued to grow our number of followers on both Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

In the beginning of 2017 the Bureau made the decision of cancelling the LYMEC Congress Newspaper, as the interest in writing for it and reading it did not match the time and money it took for the Bureau to produce it and the environmental footprint in terms of printing it. Instead we have set up an online blog, where everyone is welcome to send in contributions. It would not be truthful to say the interest to contribute to the blog has been huge, but we hope it is one of the things that can take off further in 2018, and until then Bureau members are writing posts as they see fit.

In 2017 LYMEC again excelled at the ALDE Party congress, which was this time held in Amsterdam. Without any doubt the LYMEC delegation was the most active both in terms of participating in the debates and in putting forward resolutions and amendments. The result was clear: our resolutions on Educating Europe and on Tackling Propaganda and False News from Russia were adopted and we left solid, young liberal fingerprints on several other resolutions. Overall, the feedback from other party delegates was that the LYMEC delegation was serious, hardworking and dedicated.

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In relation to the ALDE Party one of the big victories of 2017 was also to get a LYMEC representative into the ALDE Party Elections Manifesto Committee. While not everyone within the ALDE Bureau supported the idea at first, our good name and network in the end ensured that we have our spot on the committee, side by side with former prime ministers and national members of parliament and we have an excellent platform to feed into the manifesto.

We continued to do number of policy focused seminars with the aim of inspiring and providing new knowledge to the participants. Some seminars took the "classical" format, having speakers, q&a sessions and discussions, but we also challenged our self a the participants with a new format during a hackaton on youth unemployment in Andorra.

Partners and networks

LYMEC would not be much without our partners and networks and it is with satisfaction we look back on a year were we both maintained the ties to some of our long-term partners as well as strengthened the links to new members of our network. Naturally, some of our key partners continues to be the ALDE Party and the ALDE Group in the European Parliament. Thanks to their kind financial support, we can continue to run a professional office as well as our congresses. Moreover, together with the ALDE Group and the Young Democrats for Europe we held a very successful Summer Academy in the European Parliament with participants from both inside and outside the European Union. In 2017 we also continued our good relationship with the European Liberal Forum and agreed to increase our cooperation in 2018. Together with ELF, we again had a series of seminars across Europe and published the book "The New Europeans" with essays from participants in the seminar we held under the same heading in Athens.

In relation to ELF, we also had the pleasure of being invited to participate in and speak at a number of other ELF partners' events in Ljubljana, Athens, Poznan, Porto and Stockholm, giving us a platform to spread the young liberal message to the rest of the ELF membership and it reflects that we as an organisation are viewed by partners as serious and as "deserving a spot at the table".

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Together with the ALDE Group in the European Committee of the Regions we launched a brand new long-term initiative aimed at providing an opportunity for young liberal democrat local and regional politicians from LYMEC to meet and share ideas and best practice amongst themselves. In August, nearly twenty young politicians from across Europe gathered in Brussels for the first Young Elected Leaders Summit, interacting with each other and ALDE members of the European Committee of the Regions during several workshops to address common challenges and solutions. The first summit went smoothly and with few modifications we can see a potential for future development which I am sure we will pursue together with the Group.

Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) also continues to be an important ally in the quest of liberalising Europe, and in 2017 we had the pleasure of working closer with the FNF Russia office, attending events in both Moscow and Saint Petersburg, with the office in Athens for our seminar as well as continuing our good cooperating with the FNF office in Sofia in relation to our Autumn Congress there.

In 2017 we also continued our good cooperation with IFLRY. Due to work obligations, the LYMEC representative to the IFLRY Bureau, Igor Caldeira had to step down. The Bureau appointed Sergiu Boghean as interim representative, who represented LYMEC at the IFLRY General Assembly in Beirut. At the ALDE Congress in Amsterdam, LYMEC and IFLRY co-hosted a reception for alumni members of both organisation and raised the first money for our alumni network.

2017 was also the year we launched our mentorship program. 8 promising young candidates to national or European elections have been teamed up with mentors from either local, national or European level from a different country. The mentorship program runs for 5 months developing the mentees talents and learning from each other. In the process of finding mentors, we once again felt that LYMEC has a very good name within the liberal family showcased by the fact that busy politicians are willing to take time out of their calendar to take on the role as mentors. The feedback so far has been positive and some of the mentors have already asked for a continuation.

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Organisation

2017 was also a year, where we finetuned many of the small things in our organisation, making things run even smoother. In the spring, at the Stockholm Congress, we adopted new statutes which among other takes into account how to distribute spots at the congress and ensures that LYMEC representative to the IFLRY Bureau is elected by the congress and not just appointed by the Bureau.

Another great new organisational feature from 2017 is the Freedom Fund. The Freedom Fund is earmarked money within each congress budget, which members from less prosperous organisations can apply for travel refund from. We all know that not all member organisations have equal funding options and that in some countries it can be very difficult or even illegal to raise money for young liberals. Members can now apply for money to cover the price of one person to go congress. This ensures that more members are present at our congresses and take part in our internal democracy, and we are happy that members we had not seen for years made it to the congresses of 2017 thanks to the Freedom Fund.

One of the things that took a lot of the time for our organisation in 2017 was the IMS reform. While much time and hard work was put into the proposal from the side of the IMS delegates, the proposal was rejected by the congress and for now we have "IMS as usual" so to speak. This does however not reflect the general status of the IMS section within LYMEC, which continues to grow and be very active both in terms of the policy making at congresses and in general participation at events. Besides having IMS present at all other LYMEC events, we also held a special seminar in December on organisational skills tailored to the needs and wishes from the IMS section.

The permanent working group of the European Liberal Students Network continues to work well, putting forward policy at every congress. In addition to the permanent working group, a new group was formed on the topic of minority rights.

In 2017 we also changed the organisational structure for the LYMEC assistant (intern). We joined an internship program under the region of Brussels educational department that substantially lowers the bureaucracy related to hiring an assistant and gives the assistant a tax break for the 6 months the internship takes. Under the program we are required to make a learning agreement and from the Bureau side we are happy that we have found a way to formalise the values we believe are important for the LYMEC assistant; that the work is paid and that the assistant should leave the LYMEC office after 6 months with new skills.

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In 2017 our membership continued to grow with new members from Ukraine, Czech Republic, Poland and more (please see full list in the end of the report). However, for LYMEC Bureau it has been important not only to grow our organisation in terms of numbers but also to strengthen our members. In this the LYMEC organisational Tool Kit plays a key role. The tool kit is available on the LYMEC website and showcases concrete organisational tools that can be used for both newly established and older organisations. In 2017 we also had the pleasure of visiting a wide range of our members, some by invitation and others we proactively visited like the organisations that were paid a visit by a Bureau member during the Balkan trip. The Balkan trip was an initiative from LYMEC to investigate how we can support our members and further strengthen liberalism in the region.

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Events organized by LYMEC

“The New Europeans”, Athens, Greece (ELF, KEFiM) / Delegation to the March for Europe, Rome, Italy (ALDE Group) / “Educating Europe” Congress seminar, Stockholm, Sweden (ELF) / “Educating Europe” Spring Congress, Stockholm, Sweden (ALDE Party and Group) / “Defending Europe” Book Launch, Brussels, Belgium (ELF) / LYMEC Hackathon: Youth Unemployment”, Andorra la Vella, Andorra (ELF) / “Innovation and Efficiency: Building the Europe that Citizens Dream of” ALDE Summer Academy, Brussels, Belgium (ALDE Group) / “Getting the Liberal Message Out”, Gdansk, Poland (ELF) / “Summit of Young Elected Local and Regional Leaders”, Brussels, Belgium (ALDE CoR) / “Leading for Liberalism” Young Leaders’ Meeting, Podgorica, Montenegro (ELF) / “Transatlantic Partnerships” Congress Seminar, Sofia, Bulgaria (ELF) / “Transatlantic Partnerships” Autumn Congress, Sofia, Bulgaria (ALDE Party and Group) / “The New Europeans” Book Launch, Brussels, Belgium (ELF) / “Building the Best” Mentorship Program Launch, Brussels, Belgium (ELF) / Launch of the LYMEC and IFLRY Alumni Networks, Amsterdam, Netherlands / “IMS Training Days”, Brussels, Belgium (ELF).

New Members in 2017

Nowoczesna Youth, Poland (associate) / ANO Youth, Czech Republic (associate) / Youth Forum of Nasa Stranka, Bosnia-Herzegovina (associate) / UDI Jeunes, France (associate) / Liberal Youth, Greece (associate) / Liberal Democratic League of Ukraine, Ukraine (associate)

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