

DEFENDING THE RULE OF LAW AND FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

1. According to your political group, what tools should the European Union (EU) use to ensure member states adhere to the founding principles of the EU, including respect for human dignity and human rights, democracy, equality, and the rule of law? Do you favour proposals to condition and restrict access to certain EU funding for member states that do not comply with EU standards on the rule of law and human rights?
2. Which steps should the EU take to protect civil society from legislations that can unduly restrict their rights, activities and access to funding?

We want a Europe where human rights, the rule of law, and democracy apply equally to all. To protect Europe and our liberal democracies at this contemporary crossroads, the future of the EU can only be based on strong and connected European Union. We believe, however, that the external resolve of the EU can only be built on internal strength. We must therefore put our own house in order so that the EU is taken even more seriously on the international stage.

We call on EU Member States, especially current and future holders of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, to regularly address rule of law as part of their meeting agendas, and for the EU not to hesitate to use the sanctions already available, such as Article 7 of the Lisbon Treaty, and to deploy new sanctions such as the withholding of funds from the EU budget, when dealing with Member States who are restricting their citizens' freedom of speech and freedom of press in breach of European law.

In addition, we shall establish a new effective mechanism outside the framework of Article 7 of the TEU to monitor violations of fundamental rights, civil liberties and the rule of law in the member states of the European Union on a regular basis.

We will maintain our calls on the European Commission, as the guardian of the EU Treaties and on the basis of objective criteria, to enforce sanctions in cases of violations and indeed create stronger conditionality between the rule of law and receipt of European funding.

3. Which steps should the EU take collectively to protect journalists against attacks for their work and media pluralism in EU countries?

A free press and well-informed citizens are essential for every democracy. However, the information warfare by third states and populist forces, the use of fake news and geopolitical propaganda poses a grave threat both to democracy and individual freedoms.

ALDE is convinced the EU needs to step up its efforts to fight back by exposing disinformation and supporting professional journalism and media literacy. In times of political uncertainty, we must ensure our citizens can trust the press and make informed political decisions.

The recent scandals, such as Panama papers and LuxLeaks, have shown the crucial importance of the role played by journalists and also whistle-blowers in the preservation of the general interest. During the last mandate, ALDE suggested the idea of having a European legislation protecting whistle-blowers and contributed to the objective of upholding democracy and the rule of law by guaranteeing EU citizens' freedom of expression and information. Always weighting the respective interests of the public and of the parties concerned, ALDE fought for balanced and comprehensive procedures for the protection of the whistle-blower.

Read more: <https://aldeadle.box.com/shared/static/pc7r3lecxgawoe3sy7vuvpq3fwixyr0j.pdf>

TACKLING DISCRIMINATION AND PROMOTING EQUALITY

4. What are your group's plans to address discrimination against women, promote gender equality in EU countries and protect women and girls from gender-based violence?

Gender equality is a top priority for us. We are proud to propose a Team Europe composed of 5 women and 2 men, and we support the proposal that each country should propose both a woman and a man for European Commissioner candidates.

Gender-based violence and sexual harassment is still a huge problem in all our Member States. Combatting violence against women is a priority for us and we call for all EU Member States to ratify the Istanbul Convention. Women's sexual and reproductive health and rights are human rights, and the Member States of the EU need to provide all women with accessible, affordable, good-quality sexual and reproductive health care and services.

5. What are your group's plans to address racial discrimination, antisemitism, islamophobia, attacks and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, hate speech, racially motivated crimes, and attacks and promote tolerance in the EU?

Liberals strongly oppose all forms of racism, division of societies and hatred against human beings. Any form of violence against people on these grounds must be prosecuted.

6. What are your political groups' propositions to advance the rights of persons with disabilities?

Guaranteeing disabled people equal opportunities is a core concern for us. In employment legislation and other EU policies, ALDE will continue to back legislation to eliminate discrimination whether on grounds of gender, ethnicity, religious persuasion, disability or sexual orientation, and to improve integration.

During the last mandate, the ALDE Group strongly advocated for the rights of persons with disabilities, taking a horizontal approach to inclusion and accessibility issues across a range of policy areas from the European Semester to youth employment. We have been the driving force on the proposal for a European Accessibility Act.

Two additional key reports adopted this term concerned the implementation of both the European Disability Strategy and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, of which all Member States and the EU itself are signatories. ALDE supported calls for, inter alia, Member States to work towards a common definition of disability in line with the UNCRPD, to ensure European funding promotes deinstitutionalisation and the right to independent living, for the active participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in the development and implementation of legislation and policies and to include reasonable accommodation denial as a grounds for discrimination under the Employment Equality Directive.

Our MEPs have called for the EU to be a model of best practice as regards its own institutions and make EU programmes, elections, online content and internships accessible for all citizens including those with disabilities as well as for a continued European Disability Strategy to 2030. ALDE has also

continued to repeatedly call on Council to unblock the Anti-discrimination directive, which would end legal discrimination in access to services on all remaining grounds.

RESPECTING MIGRANTS AND REFUGEE'S RIGHTS

7. What migration policy does your political group support that would ensure all migrants and asylum seekers who reach EU territory are treated humanely and that respects their right to asylum? Does your political group support a policy to secure responsibility sharing among EU member states to alleviate the pressure on first countries of arrival? If your party's migration policy does not address any of these goals can you explain why and what your political group supports?
8. What should the European Parliament do to ensure that EU external migration policy protects the rights of migrants and asylum seekers, including the right to seek asylum, and does not expose them to abuse?

We believe that Europe's policies should aim to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers do not take unnecessary risks with their lives by boarding unsafe boats and falling in with criminal mafias. The EU should aim to provide shelter in the region where asylum seekers came from.

For that purpose, the EU should make migration agreements with safe countries in the Middle East and Africa. These agreements consist of three elements. First, the EU commits to financially support safe countries in hosting refugees. Second, the EU will work to facilitate the resettlement of refugees in a safe, humane, and legal way. Third, we must ensure the return to these safe countries of those migrants for whom, as quick as possible, an effective return decision following due judicial process has entered into force. We will aim to obtain the collaboration of safe countries, in particular by linking financial support to their willingness to facilitate such safe return.

For those who have a right to asylum in the EU, there should be a humane and effective Common European Asylum System with decent reception, responsibility sharing, and efficient procedures in line with EU fundamental rights standards.

We call on the EU to provide sufficient guidelines and recommendations for Member States on the dealing of LGBTI asylum claims and for Member States to outline and implement national recommendations and safeguards for LGBTI asylum seekers, including guidelines related to healthcare. We also call on the EU and Member States to continue its work for human rights and LGBTI rights worldwide and as an integral part of EU foreign policy to tackle the root causes of LGBTI persecution and discrimination.

In light of the shortcomings of this patchwork of 28 different national systems, the European Parliament has repeatedly pointed to the need for a comprehensive EU approach to migration. We want a common, fair, and humane framework for legal migration to Europe that allows for safe and legal possibilities for asylum seekers to enter Europe. We understand that to meet future demographic challenges, we cannot become a Fortress Europe. Free movement of people within the EU is vital for continued European integration and prosperity, so we oppose any re-introduction of permanent internal border controls between Schengen member states.

Read more:

https://www.aldeparty.eu/sites/alde/files/40-Resolutions/2015_shaping_a_modern_liberal_approach_to_migration.pdf

https://www.aldeparty.eu/sites/alde/files/40-Resolutions/2015_towards_a_new_asylum_and_migration_policy_for_europe.pdf

https://www.aldeparty.eu/sites/alde/files/40-Resolutions/2017_protecting_the_rights_of_lgbti_asylum_seekers.pdf

RESPECTING RIGHTS WHILE COUNTERING TERRORISM

9. What concrete steps should the European Parliament take to ensure that human rights, including the right to privacy, are protected in the context of the EU directives and other EU policies to counter and prevent terrorism? What should the Parliament do to ensure that Directives are subject to oversight and, if necessary, revision if they violate rights when implemented, especially if poorly transposed into domestic law?

Liberals must defend with more determination than ever Europe's liberal principles of human rights and civil liberties, democracy, the rule of law, human dignity, the potential of individuals and non-discrimination to ensure a positive and peaceful future on our continent and demonstrate that they have learnt the clear lesson of European history.

We would prefer to fight crime and terrorism by having adequately funded, well-staffed and best trained police and law enforcement services, rather than automatic surveillance or symbolic policies such as changing privacy laws for the worse.

Privacy (or any other basic human right) should not be sacrificed or suspended in order to fulfil a temporary and questionable goal. Or as Thomas Jefferson put it: "Those who desire to give up freedom in order to gain security, will not have, nor do they deserve, either one." We believe that you do not defend our way of living by giving up the essential freedoms that define it. If we give up privacy - a basic right of any individual - open society as we know it will cease to exist and will slowly but surely become more and more controlled and less free. Therefore, we call on decision-makers at all levels of power to use the principles of necessity and subsidiarity in making rules that affect our privacy.

During the last mandate, ALDE MEPs helped set up and lead a special committee on Terrorism and delivered a stronger legal framework for Europol and Eurojust, the establishment of the first European Public Prosecutor Office, and the revision of EU common capabilities for the exchange of information such as the Schengen Information System.

ENSURING RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE EU'S FOREIGN POLICY

10. What should the European Parliament do to ensure that respect for and promotion of human rights are at the centre the EU's bilateral and multilateral relations with third countries, including trade policy?

We support the efforts of the European Commission to negotiate more trade deals, and call on the negotiators to preserve human dignity and human working conditions, sustainability and anti-corruption in future agreements.

We believe the European Union needs to continue setting global standards in international trade and promote free and rule-based trade as an essential source of prosperity. Global trade from a European perspective must also be fair and sustainable.

11. Do you support a Global EU Human Rights Sanction Regime against individuals or groups of individuals responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including torture, rape, enforced disappearances, and extra-judiciary killings? How should the European Parliament further help advance justice and accountability for abuses?

ALDE MEPs led the negotiation of a joint text that finally was adopted in plenary in which the EP calls on the Council to swiftly establish an autonomous, flexible and reactive EU-wide sanctions regime that would allow the targeting of any individual, state and non-state actors, and other entities responsible for or involved in grave human rights violations.

We believe the regime should symbolically carry Sergei Magnitsky's name.