

Exposé

ELDR Party Policies on Environmental Sustainability and Energy; Agriculture; and Health Care

In establishing policies on environmental sustainability and energy production, in particular, as well as extensive proposals on European agricultural policy, since the early 1980s, Europe's Liberal Democrats have not just jumped on the recent bandwagon of environmentalism. It is rather the case that the ideas and principles of the ELDR Party in these fields are now coming to the fore.

Through its growing pan-European network, today comprising 56 Member Parties and 72 Members of European Parliament, the ELDR Party has been able to influence the European agenda, both in past and present. The output is, however, not merely confined to Europe and the EU. With around half of the member parties in positions of government in their respective countries, it follows quite naturally that the viewpoints of European Liberals have a very concrete impact on the implemented policies; locally as well as globally.

You are kindly invited to browse through our full selection of resolutions in our Policy Centre. As a small *aperitif* and guide for exploration, however, find below a small resumé of the ELDR Party's views on the areas of *environmental sustainability and energy policy; agricultural policy; and health policy*.

Environmental Sustainability and Energy Policy

Since the early 1980's European Liberal Democrats have been consistently recognising the need to strike an appropriate balance between energy production and the further development of our economies, on the hand, and protecting the environment on the other. Furthermore, Europe's Liberals have noted on several occasions ([1988](#), [2008](#)) manifestos for the European Parliament elections and a resolution adopted in [1991](#) that environmental protection can stimulate innovation and the more rational use of resources. Taking this positive approach leads to the development of green technologies - creating jobs; greater energy efficiency and security of supply, including developing a common EU energy policy, thus reducing dependence on external providers, such as Russia.

The ELDR Party has been promoting such policies for over two decades from the late 1980s right up to the present day in resolutions adopted in [2006](#), [2007](#) and [2009](#).

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One of the key areas in which the EU creates an added advantage is when it comes to the ability of the member states to agree on common goals to tackle climate change, develop new ways of energy production and ensure sustainable development. This need for European and beyond that, international, cooperation in such matters is repeatedly brought to the fore in ELDR Party Policy, including on several occasions in relation to the Baltic Sea where, in [1997](#), ELDR called for common environmental minimum standards in the Baltic Sea region and then in [2008](#) to introduce an emissions trading scheme for shipping in the region, as well as a system to preserve, protect and administrate certain sensitive areas in the Baltic Sea.

Moreover, member state and international coordination and research has a big role to play in generating energy from renewable sources, such as wind, tides, solar and biomass and developing measures to restore global sustainability, such as carbon capture and storage technology, and their implementation in partnership with developing nations ([2006](#)). Europe's Liberal Democrats noted in [2008](#) that nuclear power is not as an attractive source of energy as it may appear; highlighting that the potential risks to humans and the environment associated with using nuclear power will not be completely eradicated in the foreseeable future. Liberals therefore prefer maximizing the use of the afor-mentioned renewable energy sources.

Adopting a positive approach, using fiscal incentives, such as different rates of VAT for products and actions that conserve energy, and market forces, to the question of lessening pollution and better use and management of resources is more effective than bureaucratic command and control. ELDR supports the EU Energy and Climate Package and its binding 2020 targets which became law in 2009, while emphasising the need to reduce administrative burdens on business and providing incentives for them to invest in technologies in pursuit of a strong low carbon economy, such as the development of more eco-efficient and environmentally friendly motor vehicles.

With the transport sector accounting for around a third of EU energy consumption, Liberals support the development of energy efficient modes of transport that simultaneously emit less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, such as electric cars and trains. Similar to the energy sector, ELDR supports further investment in the transport sector in this regard as well as incentives to encourage producers and consumers to invest in energy efficient vehicles that run on environmentally friendly fuels ([2007](#), [2008](#)).

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The call for an integrated climate and energy policy, based on sustainable economic growth, was a key feature of the ELDR 2009 manifesto for the European elections.

External energy policy

In addition to increasing internal, renewable energy production, ELDR also supports the development of a genuine European external energy policy when it comes to trading with energy partners outside the EU. This includes greater solidarity between member states on energy issues and enhancing the EU's ties with energy producer, transit and consumer countries; opposing the creation of a global cartel of gas exporting countries or companies; and supporting initiatives such as the Nabucco gas pipeline ([2007](#)).

Agricultural policy

The achievements of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) have been significant. This does not mean, however, that the CAP is untouchable and liberals believe a balance must be found between agricultural expenditure and other EU spending priorities. In the [1986 Congress](#) in Brussels, Belgium, ELDR's members noted the importance of the CAP, but also stated that it must be progressively reformed in view of changing world situations and the gradual enlargement of the Union. Liberals are of the opinion that the CAP denies full freedom of choice for consumers and fair and free competition for producers, while limiting the development of third world countries whose producers are adversely affected by the policy, which in turn contributes to their poverty and vulnerability. Moreover, Liberals consider that key elements of the policy - production subsidies, import quotas and price support - prevent the lowering of food prices that would naturally occur through free trade ([2008](#)).

European Liberal Democrats' calls for reform of the CAP have often been repeated ([1991](#), [2003](#), [2008](#) and [2009](#)). The latest policy included in the [2009 manifesto](#) for the European elections states that reforms, within the multilateral framework of the World Trade Organisation, must include allowing farmers to: compete in a free global market, better meet increasing global demand for food in an environmentally responsible way; direct funding for research in renewable energies, including sustainable new generation bio-fuels; and guarantee long-term food supplies. The CAP should be progressively reduced after 2013 and be replaced by common food, rural and sustainable land use strategies.

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Health Policy

Europe's Liberal Democrats support the extension of the EU Single Market to health care so as to provide the highest possible standards of care and treatment in Europe ([2009 manifesto](#)). In a similar vein, liberals also called in 2009 for the European Commission to develop plans to finance major European hospitals to deal with research and development of treatment into rare diseases and highly specialized health care in order to pool and enhance expertise on specific health care issues.

Treatment of diseases includes malaria and in ELDR policy developed in 2009 greater financial support was called for in malaria research in order to enable further testing and research related to vaccines, malaria drugs and insecticides. Liberals believe an improvement in health infrastructure and the training and transfer of medical personnel in diagnosing malaria is also necessary for effective treatment to be ensured.

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