

Exposé

Policies of the ELDR Party in Foreign Affairs

Foreign Affairs have always been at the core of European Liberals' agenda. Since the founding of the European Liberal Party in 1976, European Liberals have wholeheartedly supported a construction of an inclusive European home through repetitive calls for fair and open EC/EU enlargement and extensive visa liberalisation processes.

In this section of *Enlargement & Foreign, Security and Defence Policy*, you will find a division of our adopted policy resolutions into four different areas. While three of them; *Enlargement, Foreign & Security Policy and Defence Policy* are fairly commonplace under the larger umbrella of *Foreign Affairs*, the fourth one, *Foreign & Humanitarian Policy* might need some additional elaboration.

One of the fundamental tenets of European Liberalism is the humanitarian ethos. A firm point of departure is that every human being has her own value, and that every single individual should be able to choose and form their own life and destiny. *Freedom* is at the core of liberal thinking.

Thus, the ELDR Party can under no circumstances accept violations of fundamental human rights, such as outright discrimination of minorities; terrorist attacks, particularly on civilian targets or violations of people's right to assembly and freedom of speech, whether in Europe or elsewhere in the world. It is therefore that we wish to give *Foreign & Humanitarian Policy* a special acknowledgement by devoting a special section on in our policy work to the field.

Through its growing pan-European network, at the end of 2010 comprising 58 Member Parties and 73 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 area of *Foreign Affairs*.

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On Defence Policy:

As keen supporters of a strong and vital Europe, the ELDR Party has always been positively inclined to increased European cooperation in defence matters. In the view of European Liberals, it is not fruitful to refrain from maximising the potential output if it is feasible, regardless of the area.

Concretely, that means putting flesh on the bones of the often repeated call for *Europe to speak with one, coherent voice*. It also means establishing a European mechanism to enhance coordination with NATO in defence matters, so that the increasingly complex global security situation in a multipolar world can be properly addressed, inter alia comprising condemning and avoiding terrorist attacks, minimising nuclear proliferation and stockpiles and contributing to successful European peace keeping missions where needed.

Through comprehensive resolutions in [1985](#), [1987](#), [2003](#), [2006](#) and [2010](#), the ELDR Party has been supporting the development of a strong European Defence Capacity, in recent years to be placed under the leadership of the positions of President of the European Council and European Foreign Minister/High Representative for Foreign & Security Policy as envisaged in the draft Constitution and Lisbon Treaty.

On Enlargement:

Enlargement of the European Union is an area heavily interlinked with European Liberals. Throughout the history of the European Liberal Party, we have been calling for a fair and open process of EU Enlargement, where applicant countries are regarded as presumptive resources and judged by their progress and commitment to the EU's *Acquis Communautaire*, the guiding document for Candidate Countries to adhere to.

Already in 1978, European Liberals supported the enlargement of the EC to Greece, Portugal and Spain as soon as possible. This carried weight in 1981, [when Greece gained accession to the EC](#), and six years later the other two. In 1991, [European Liberals were the first political movement to acknowledge the independence of Slovenia and Croatia](#). In [2000](#), [2001](#) and [2002](#), European Liberals re-affirmed their thorough support for the enlargement process, and issued calls for i.a. transparency in the process and judgment of presumptive accession of Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey to be based on the adherence to Copenhagen Criteria and not to be stirred by prejudice.

European Liberals have also been thorough supporters of visa liberalisation to Europe for countries in Europe's vicinity. Although we

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acknowledge the underlying importance of visas in safeguarding Europeans through keeping potential rascals at bay, the largest burden of a too conservative interpretation on visa policies is carried by ordinary citizens that in the worst of cases have to abstain from travelling to meet with fellow Europeans and to learn from best practice. This in turn has negative impacts on the future developments of the regions in frame.

Through a number of resolutions, most notably in [2008](#) and [2010](#), the ELDR Party supports an increased pace of visa facilitation in Europe's vicinity and an increased coordination of cross-border European security, to ensure the safety on European soil.

On Foreign & Humanitarian Policy:

ELDR has always paid special attention to our fellow Europeans on the Balkans. Already in [1992](#) and [1993](#), we condemned Slobodan Milosević's regime and the atrocities in Kosovo, and followed the developments closely over the years, inter alia in [1998](#) and [2001](#), analysing the aftermath and offering concrete solutions for further action to sustain a credible peace.

The European Liberal commitment to humanitarian policy does naturally not stop on Europe's blurred borders. Already in the 1980's, ELDR took an active stance in deploring [the violence on the Falkland Islands](#) and [inhumane imprisonments in South Africa](#). In the 1990's, [the activities of the Ba'ath Party in Iraq were examined](#) and [the Kurdish question in Turkey brought into the limelight](#). In more recent times, [the lack of democracy in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), [the totalitarian temptation of Latin America](#) and [the bloodshed in DR Congo](#) have been discussed and harshly criticized.

To achieve credibility, however, one cannot only criticize others, but also have a thorough look in the mirror and examine your domestic situation. This has also been done comprehensively, last in 2006, when the [ELDR Theme Resolution](#) of the ELDR Congress in Bucharest, Romania, suggested a number of concrete improvements of the Internal Security and Defence Policy of the EU, comprising areas such as asylum, immigration and free movement of people.

On Foreign & Security Policy:

Ever since the very early years, European Liberals have keenly followed global developments to criticize, comment and ultimately produce concrete proposals. These have been taken on board by MEPs in the European Parliament and the ELDR Member Parties and served them well in their concrete foreign policy work. More than any of the other four

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areas under the over-arching umbrella of *Foreign Affairs*, the sub-theme *Foreign & Security Policy* have been guided by topical events of the year.

As a corollary; in the late 1980's with new winds blowing in the Soviet Union and behind the Iron Curtain, ELDR was ahead of the game calling for [giving Mikhail Gorbachev's "new policy thinking" a chance](#) already in 1987, yet emphasizing [time](#) and [again](#) that the Soviet troops and paramilitaries had no business to do in the occupied Baltic States.

In the early 1990's, Europe was experiencing difficult times in both east and west. Starting with the former; under the other topics, we have already touched upon the precarious situation in former Yugoslavia and ELDR's wholehearted support for the fellow Europeans in the region.

Thus, also under this topic we warned for [further escalation of the conflict in 1991](#); expressed concern and [called for further action in 1993](#); welcomed the work of the UN and [called for a prolonged mandate of the UNPROFOR in 1995](#); strongly called for an end to the dismal developments in Kosova in [1997](#), [1998](#), [1999](#) and [2001](#); [called for respecting democracy in Serbia](#) in 2000 and stayed on top of the situation all the way [until peace was brokered](#). Today, ELDR has twelve member parties all across the Balkans that continue to work hands-on with these questions in the region, building a new prosperity on the fragile yet highly fertile ground.

Continuing with the latter, the deplorable situation of Northern Ireland figured prominently on the agenda in the early 1990's, where the ELDR through resolutions in [1990](#), [1992](#), [1995](#) and [1996](#) followed the developments from terrorist aligned guerrilla warfare to peace and restructuring.

In 2010, it is therefore utterly pleasant to see the efforts taking effect. When Northern Ireland finally was allowed to appoint their first ever Minister of Justice of local descent; David Ford, Party Leader of ELDR Member Alliance Party could assume this difficult yet symbolically important office.

In addition to this, there has also been a round of other things that have kept ELDR and its stakeholders on their toes, such as the malfunctioning democratic process in Russia in [2003](#), [2007](#), [2009](#) and [2010](#); the [unfair treatment of citizens of Taiwan](#), the [terrorist attacks of 9/11 on the USA](#) and its aftermath and [the European future of Moldova](#), to mention only a few cases.

Being the credible force it is in politics around Europe, ELDR will remain committed to alerting decision-makers and improving conditions also in the future.

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