

REPORT

ELF Workshop Liberal Messages for Europe

03.07.2018, Central Park Hotel, Sofia, Bulgaria

The fourth workshop from the “Liberal Messages for Europe” ELF events series in the Bulgaria took place in the capital Sofia on 3 July 2018. The event was supported by the Project Office for Southeast Europe of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the Liberal Institute for Political Analyses.

According to the preliminary set format and topics the workshop managed to identify the key challenges and possible solutions for the European Union from a citizen’s point of view. When elaborating on the Bulgarian contribution to the European community, the participants outlined that the country acts as an external border for the Union and especially in times of external challenges such as the migration crisis, it plays a very important role. Furthermore, Bulgaria has unique ethnic model and can serve as a role model for the rest of the member states as there is a great respect for the different cultures and religions. As far as the challenges within the country and the EU are concerned, the migration crisis and the integration of refugees are seen as an obstacle for the entire Union. This is a complex problem and no country member should be left to deal with the situation on its own. According to the participants, only by having a common EU strategy and true solidarity in action, the greatest challenge for the EU could be overcome. To deal with the migration crisis it is necessary to improve the communication and to foster public dialogue on migration topics, on the one hand, and to reconsider and better communicate the EU values, on the other.

Strengthening the Union as a whole would help to improve the external trade as well, however, proactive actions to protect the Community’s international trade interests are of high demand. Improving the standard of living and raising the incomes could benefit the younger people and could allow them have a better professional realization within the Union. This is very much connected to the promotion of good governance and introduction of proper mechanisms for consolidation of the Rule of Law. The establishment of a European Public Prosecutor’s office is seen as a viable tool in this respect. The operation of such a unit could prevent the corruption, which is another issue to tackle with within the country and the EU as a whole. The monetary union, defense and security are amongst the important topics discussed furthermore during the event.

All the findings will serve as a basis for the production of a Strategy Paper for the better positioning of the national and European liberal parties at the upcoming European Parliamentary elections and beyond. The next and last workshop within this events series of citizen’s consultations will be held in Varna city on 13 July.