

Summer Seminar 2011

Doorn, The Netherlands



Liberal Principles Compared

Europe faces a poignant set of challenges, ranging from social to economic issues. At this important junction, liberalism also faces severe challenges. What does it mean to be a liberal? Can we speak of a liberal *Grundnorm* spanning all the liberal traditions of Europe, or is there a Rubicon dividing those on the left and the right? These are questions we must ask as we come to grips with what solutions liberalism can offer Europe.

There is, however, strength in the diversity of liberal views. Europe is the proud standard-bearer of several strains of liberalism, all imbued with their own rich, philosophical heritages. This plethora offers a well of inspiration, and promises to answer the daunting challenges facing the EU. We can all benefit from learning more about the liberal prism of others, and perhaps, through this, hone our own liberal profile.

However, it is not only at the national level where a discussion on the principles of liberalism is needed. As demonstrated by the sovereign debt crisis, some challenges require European rather than national solutions. In order to strengthen our position it is important that liberals agree on certain basic principles, forged through precisely the kind of dialogue promoted by this European Liberal Forum (ELF) project, 'Liberal Principles Compared'. ELF is the non-profit European political foundation of the liberal family. ELF brings together liberal think tanks, political foundations and institutes from around Europe.

Nationally, as well as at the European level, the fundamental question of what it means to be a liberal requires discussion. The seminar 'Liberal Principles Compared', organised in Doorn by ELF, with the support of the foundations Internationaal Democratisch Initiatief (IDI)

and Mr. Hans van Mierlo foundation, provides us with an eminent building block for dialogue. The seminar fostered inspiring discussions between liberals from throughout Europe. This publication builds on the conclusions drawn at Doorn, and through its distribution enables a wide readership, including liberal decision-makers, to take part in a stimulating debate on the principles of liberalism.

'Liberal Principles Compared' falls under one of ELF's core tasks, namely to provide the liberal family with intellectual input through its network of think tanks and foundations. By connecting a seminar to a publication, 'Liberal Principles Compared' has transcended the limitations of a single event to produce a product which can be drawn on by liberals independent of location. On behalf of ELF I wish to thank our member foundations, International Democratic Initiative and the Mr. Hans van Mierlo foundation, for their dedication and enthusiasm in making 'Liberal Principles Compared' a reality.

Our aim is to create a platform serving the needs for further discussion on the basic tenets of liberalism. The publication builds on the position papers of eight organisations participating at Doorn. Maartje Jansen's contribution outlines the planning of the seminar, while Frank van Mil of the Mr. Hans van Mierlo foundation renders an excellent analysis of the Doorn discussions.

To define and refine the key principles of liberalism remains a key responsibility for all liberals. 'Liberal Principles Compared' is an important aid in this regard.

Thierry Coosemans
Board member of ELF

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MEET
HODO
DOGX

Methodology

Members of the European Liberal Forum and European Liberal Democrats (ELDR) frequently discuss joint policy ideas and the future of liberalism in Europe. A liberal response to e.g. economic developments, education, environmental concerns, social security or foreign policy is discussed during ELF and ELDR congresses and seminars. However, these discussions focus on practical situations at hand, and not so much on the fundamental principles different liberals adhere to. Last September in Doorn ELF organised a seminar to make a fundamental comparison between the principles of different liberal think tanks. The participants were representatives of think tanks, some of them affiliated with a political party, others wholly independent.

The Doorn project consisted of four different but closely related sub-projects:

1. A liberal voting compass

Each participating organization completed an online questionnaire. In the questionnaire the participants were asked to state to what extent they (dis)agree with propositions of social phenomena. The same propositions are included in this publication. After the seminar we re-sent the questionnaire to all ELF members. Seventeen responded and the results of this second round are included in the publication you have before you. The graphs in margins show the percentages of the respondents that indicated to agree or disagree with the propositions.

2. Position papers

All nine participating organizations were asked to determine the five positions that are most essential in their concept of liberalism. They also determined five positions which to them are explicitly non-liberal. Each position was explained briefly. These contributions were bundled in the seminar reader and distributed at the start of the seminar. The goal of this preparatory exercise was twofold. Firstly, it enabled the participants to learn how different organizations give substance to the concept of liberalism. Secondly, the organizers invited the authors of the three most widely different concepts of liberalism (Telders Foundation, Movimento Liberal Social and Institut Novum) to clarify their contribution in a ‘prepared reading’.

3. Doorn Seminar

Apart from the prepared readings the seminar programme consisted of an introduction and subsequently a discussion on six different themes. The various introductions were presented by a moderator with expertise in the specific fields. The themes and moderators were:

Secularism – Thierry Coosemans

Communitarianism – Joost Röselaers

Individualism – Dirk Verhofstadt

Solidarity – Robert Farla

Laissez-faire – Dennis Hesseling

Security – Marietje Schaake

4. Publication

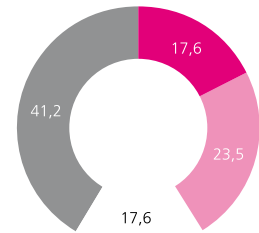
The publication disseminates the seminar discussions and the arguments brought forward by the nine participating organizations and speakers among all ELF members. It also includes the results of the voting compass questionnaire sent to all ELF members. Since the position papers would be included in the publication all participating members were given the opportunity to update or redraft their position paper. One of the participants, Fores, is an independent research foundation that is not linked to any political party or programme. Therefore it decided to not have its position paper included in the publication.

The seminar benefited from intensive preparation by the participants and speakers, excellent introductions during the seminar and lively discussions between the representatives of nine think tanks from Slovenia, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and Romania. The whole exercise proved valuable in distinguishing some common traits but even more the differences between the think tanks. Afterwards, all participants and organizers praised the fact that we took the time to make a fundamental comparison and to learn more about the specific traits of the various perspectives. For organizations to work together, to accept and work with each other's products it is necessary to know if the views of the other are similar to yours. Furthermore it is easier to situate a party or organization in the liberal political landscape when you have more in depth knowledge about the organization's principles and views.

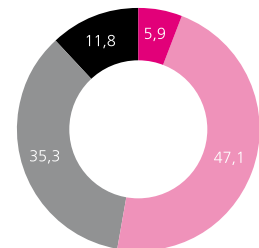
It was satisfying to observe that the seminar provided us with these insights and I hope this project will lead to further discussion on liberal fundamentals within ELF and between ELF members.

Maartje Jansen

Coordinator of the International Democratic Initiative foundation and International Officer D66



1/4 Investments in public transport are preferable to road network investments



2/4 Liberals should work towards making the ownership of a car cheaper, but to higher taxation of the use of it



IT TAKES
THREE
TO BE A
LIBERAL

It takes three to be a liberal

During two fruitful days at the ELF seminar ‘Liberal principles compared’ in Doorn (The Netherlands), we discussed several topics and ideological positions. We came together as liberals, so a lot of consensus was to be expected. But as shown by the questionnaire, filled out earlier by all the participating organizations, there is a certain level of discrepancy in the views on how to handle all kinds of issues. However, in Doorn we were not together to discuss these policy issues, but we were together to discuss the underlying principles on which these views were built.

After these two days in Doorn, I was happy to conclude that there was consensus on one very important part of these principles: the individual should always be the starting point from which liberals can develop a view on all issues.

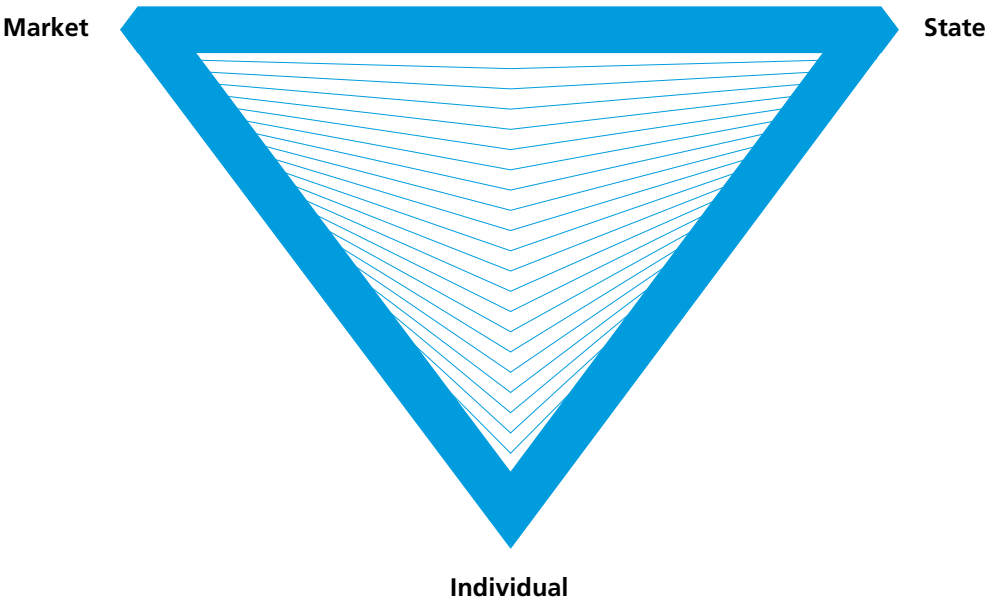
This seems a predictable outcome of a liberal discussion, but during the discussion it proved to be very fruitful to introduce the individual to a lot of dichotomies which seemed to limit our argument. Although liberals always try to keep in mind that individual freedom is of utmost importance, they often fail to take the individual into account during discussions about certain issues. As in public life, often the discussion is narrowed down to a choice between two options. A choice between more of this or more of that. And even though it is not the intention of those using the concepts, it suggests that reality can be reduced to (a choice between) two options: between church or state (secularism); between market or state (*laissez-faire*); between freedom and security. Often the individual is not one of those options. But in the process of choosing between two institutions, the individual is often lost in the discussion. Introducing the individual to that discussion opens up a whole new dimension. First the discussion is basically an axis between two institutions (figure 1). This graphic representation illustrates how easily the two can be perceived as each others exact opposite. After the introduction of the individual, the scale is transformed into a triangle, thus stressing that the discussion isn't about dichotomies, nor about exact and inescapable opposites. Rather it shows that we're discussing elements that relate to each other. The tendency to narrow the discussion down to a choice between two institutions was a natural consequence of some of the questions about liberalism we had in Doorn to fire up the discussion.

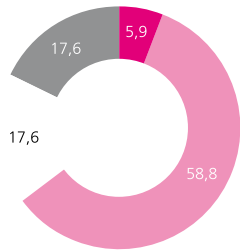
The first of these questions was, whether liberalism is secularism? The overall consensus was that the state should be free of religion. The state should not favor any opinion on what is a good life; and religion is an institution with a strong and powerful opinion on what the good life should be like. Consequently, most of the discussion focused on the relation between the state and religion. And on how much religion within governmental policy is desirable. Should the state subsidize

Figure 1

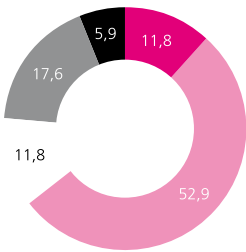


Figure 2





3/4 Privatisation of public transport leads to efficiency



4/4 It is a government task to make sure all its citizens have access to public transport, even in remote areas

■ totally agree
 ■ agree
 ○ neutral
 ■ disagree
 ■ totally disagree

any school that is based on any religion? These are all questions of institutional rights. These are questions about the rights of groups. It is a discussion based on the dichotomy of (the collective of) the state and (the collective of) religion. But as Mr. Coosemans pointed out in his introduction of the topic, liberals should be concerned with individual rights. The question should not be whether any religious activity should be supported by the state or not. The question should be, how can the state facilitate individuals in executing their rights of religious freedom? This means that the individual is added to the pair of concepts state and religion. The discussion thereby is no longer on the relation between two institutions and on the balance of power between them. The discussion is about how the freedom of individuals can be protected against either state or religious intrusion by these very institutions. A second discussion can be about how both state and religion can positively contribute to individual freedom.

The false dichotomy of state-church could be viewed as an communitarian dichotomy. Whatever side you choose, you always choose a group or institution. So any choice based on this dichotomy is a choice that is based on group interests. In Doorn there was a general consensus on the statement that communitarianism is incompatible with liberalism, because in liberalism the individual freedom is more important than group interests. Joost Röselaers argued differently in his introduction. For the sake of argument, he claimed that a group is the ideal instrument to give people the security to live as freely as possible. His argument was refuted because communitarianism considers group rights to be more important than individual rights. In Doorn it was the consensus that liberals should always start from the individual point of view. So the argument is exactly reversed. Mr. Röselaers argued that the groups rights are the best way to secure individual freedom, while the overall consensus was that group rights could only follow from individual rights that secure individual freedom.

So in this sense liberalism could be viewed as an individualistic ideology. It can be viewed as political individualism. There was little discussion about this. Everybody agreed on the importance of individual rights and, again, on the fact that for liberals the individual should

always be the starting point of any argument about rights and obligations. A complaint often heard about individualism, and thereby about liberalism, is that it coincides with egotism. In Doorn this was refuted by the comment that liberalism doesn't deny the need to live together. An insightful point to make in this light refers to the different terms of egotism and egoism the English language distinguishes in this: egotism means placing oneself at the center of one's world with no concern for others, including those loved or considered as 'close,' in any other terms except those set by the 'egotist.' Egoism on the other hand, envelopes a much wider array of views, all somehow comprising the idea that it is only logical that individuals principally have themselves to refer to. Egoism doesn't necessarily have a connotation of anti-social behavior. More so, according to the participants of the seminar, liberalism promotes living together and liberalism only works if there is solidarity.

As Robert Farla pointed out in his introduction, solidarity is based on someone's affiliation to a group. So how does this relate to the liberal idea of individual freedom over group affiliation? Well, affiliation does not mean submission. So, although the individual has responsibility towards his or her group, the individual can never be judged solely on the fact that he or she is affiliated with that group. This responsibility is based on the reciprocity of freedom. You can only have freedom, if you secure the same freedom for all the people surrounding you. Thereby your freedom is limited by the freedom of the other people of your surrounding group. When we discussed the consequences of this principle for development aid, there was a disagreement on the limits to this group. Some participants argued that the nation state is the group to which an individual has the responsibility to secure the rights of the individuals in that group, while others argued that we should be as concerned with the rights of people from other countries as we are with the rights of the individuals of our own nation.

The discussion on development aid is not only a discussion on solidarity but also on *laissez-faire*. The relation between *laissez-faire* and liberalism is probably the most debated relation of our seminar. Especially the Telders Foundation argues that a liberal market should be

‘The relation between *laissez-faire* and liberalism is probably the most debated relation of our seminar’

a *laissez-faire* market. While there are others, for example Dirk Verhofs-tadt and Dennis Hesseling (in his introduction), who argued that the market should be monitored by the state, because the market has no morality. This discussion was centered around the dichotomy of the state and the market. But, as pointed out by Corina Hendriks, there is a third party, which should be the most important party in liberalism; the individual. As we all agreed, in the end individual freedom is the goal. So both the market and the state should serve individual freedom. Everybody agreed on this principle, but there were still differences. On the one hand there was the argument that a *laissez-faire* market is the best way to accomplish as much individual freedom as possible, because this is the best protection against state intrusion. On the other hand people argued that because of the immorality of the market, the state should secure the individual rights against any group intrusion, be it a market party, a religious group or any other group-like entity.

The way we look at *laissez-faire* thus also has to do with our view on security. To what extent should the state intervene to secure individual rights? And, just as important, to what extent should NGO's have the power to intervene to secure individual rights against state intrusion? As Marietje Schaake pointed out in her introduction, there should be a balance between state power and non-governmental power and this balance should maximize individual freedom. In this sense, security and freedom can be mutually inclusive. Security can maximize freedom. She also pointed out that it is always important to ask whose freedom is secured. This comes down to the same principle that leads to solidarity: reciprocity. One can only be free, if one gives the same freedom to the people around oneself. If only one individual gets more freedom while another individual's freedom is limited, the first cannot be free in the end.

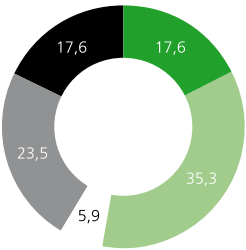
The most important conclusion that we can draw from this seminar would be that we share one important principle, namely that individual freedom should be leading for any political decision. From this seminar we remembered that as soon as we forget this principle, we stop having a liberal discussion and we start having a communitarian or a false discussion. Therefore it is of the utmost importance to be aware of this most important liberal principle and not to follow non-liberal framing into a communitarian discussion. Liberals should always be the ones to introduce the individual into a discussion about the choice between institutions.

Frank van Mil

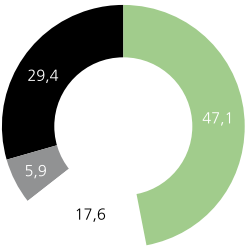
Scientific director of the Mr. Hans van Mierlo foundation

Gosse Vuijk

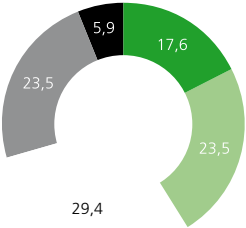
Mr. Hans van Mierlo foundation



1/7 The use of fossil fuels must always be more expensive than clean (for example solar) energy



2/7 Nuclear energy is the solution to the energy problem



3/7 Energy taxes should be progressive (the more you use, the more you pay) instead of degressive (large users pay relatively less per energy unit)

- totally agree
- agree
- neutral
- disagree
- totally disagree

S O M
M E R
S E M I
M A R

Summer Seminar

The goal of the summer seminar was to explore liberal principles and values. It was not a competition of who is the liberal champion. And it was not about solving policy issues using a liberal perspective. The main aim was to see which underlying principles we share – or not.

The exploration of liberal principles took place according to six themes, some of them commonly linked to liberalism, others more often linked to other political ideologies. Each discussion started with a presentation by a moderator.

Participants

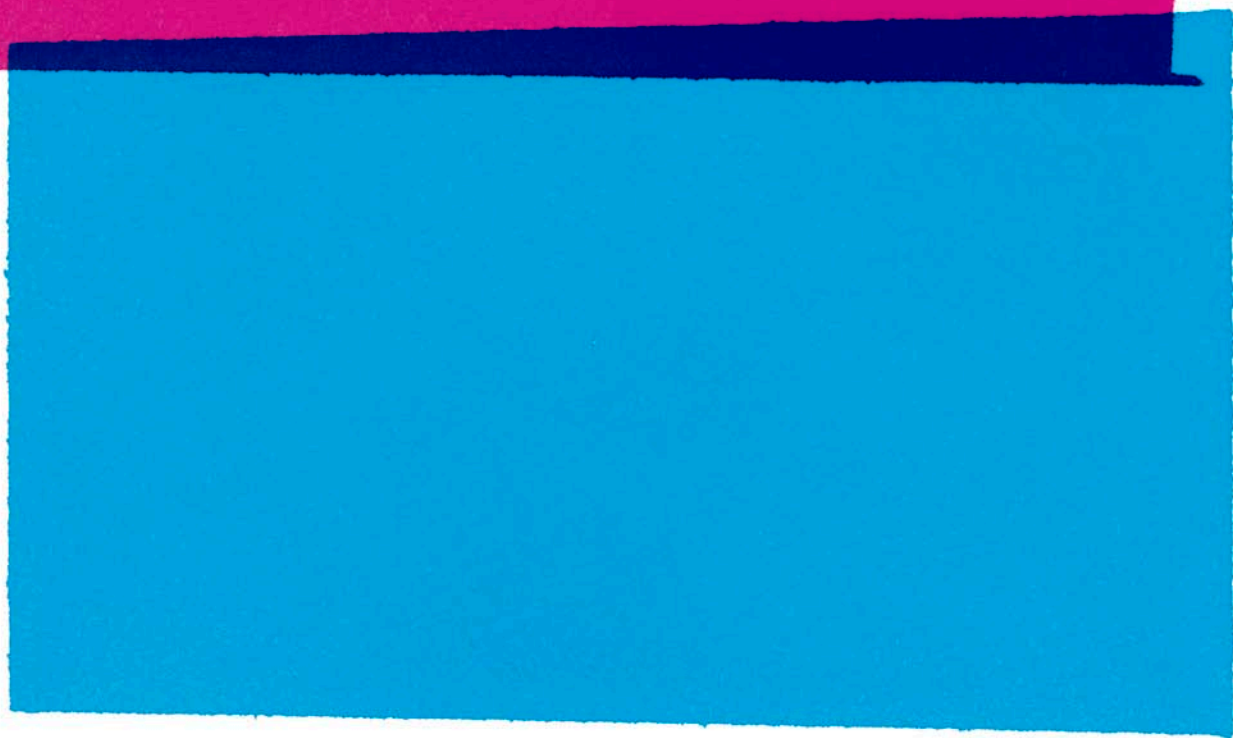
Fleur de Beaufort Telders Foundation
Igor Caldeira Movimento Liberal Social
Giulio Ercolessi Fondazione Critica Liberale
Jelmen Haaze Liberales
Corina Hendriks Mr. Hans van Mierlo foundation
Andreea Mihai Institute for Liberal Studies
Sebastjan Pikl Institut Novum
Ronald Pohoryles Liberal Future Forum
Patrick van Schie Telders Foundation
Karin Zelano Fores

Moderators

Thierry Coosemans
Robert Farla
Dennis Hesseling
Frank van Mil
Joost Röselaers
Marietje Schaake
Dirk Verhofstadt

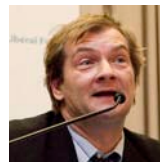
Organizers

Maartje Jansen
Anne van Veenstra
Gosse Vuijk



Liberalism is secularism?

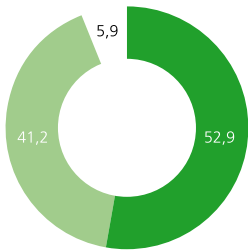
Secularism, in the form of a separation between public power and religion, is a unifying theme for liberals. Furthermore, liberals agree on the importance of neutrality towards religions, as well as tolerance towards other religions and customs. While on an abstract level these notions are shared, the degree to which religious customs are tolerated in society is still widely debated. Across different countries and cultures different practices for tolerance can be found, all aiming at a workable solution for practical issues. For example, one strand maintains that tolerance towards those disagreeing with laws and regulations should be temporal (such as in the case of doctors not wanting to perform abortions).



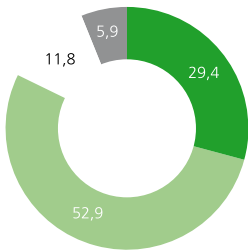
group discussion 1

**moderated by
Thierry Coosemans**

Independent expert, former
director of Centre Jean Gol



4/7 Damage to the environment should be taxed to the one who caused it (The polluter pays)



5/7 All governmental bodies should be front-runners in sustainable procurement

■ totally agree
 ■ agree
 ○ neutral
 ■ disagree
 ■ totally disagree

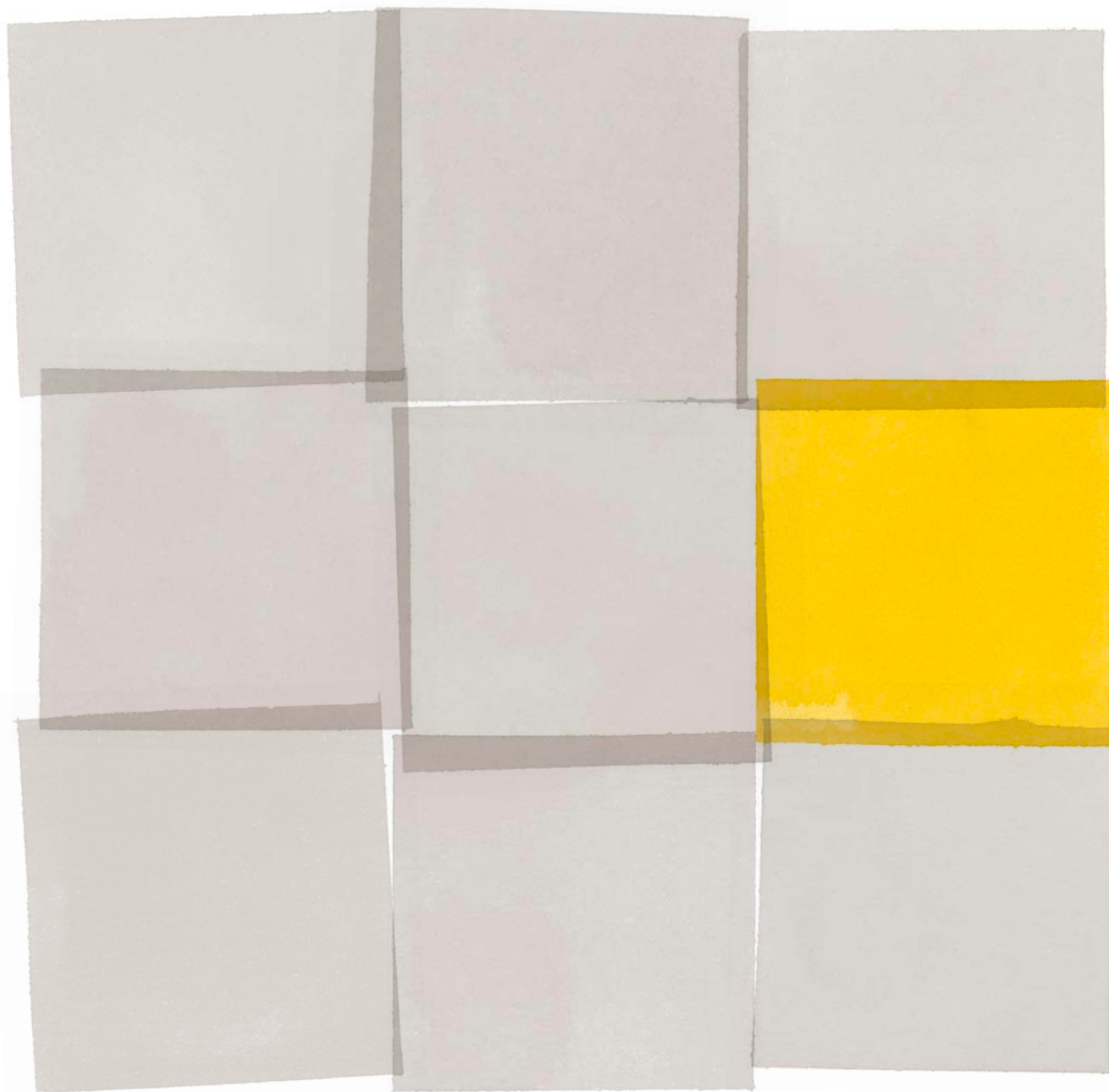
The theme of secularism within the liberal movement has been discussed at a number of previous meetings. Two seminars were held in Bucharest and Berlin, culminating in a book published by the *Telders Foundation*. This book is a collection of contributions from different European countries. The main theme of the book is whether there is a need or a possibility for a European approach that can serve as a basis for a civic European identity. An important issue is, however, the semantic discussion between languages. *Secularism* means something else than *laïcité* in French or *vrijzinnigheid* in Dutch. And also within one language (for example in Italian) there are many different meanings to the word 'laico' or 'secular'. In different cultural environments also different solutions emerge for similar issues – see for example the discussion on the veil/burqa in different European countries. The specific attitude towards secularism within a country is rooted in history, often in the struggle against religion. This struggle took place in many different ways across Europe.

‘Touching the principle of freedom of expression in any way is out of the question (‘you cannot rule out *Voltaire*’)

Liberals agree that there needs to be a *separation* between the state and religion. Another key liberal concept is *neutrality* towards religions, treating all religions equally. This neutrality needs to be distinguished from *indifference*. There is also distinction between individual beliefs and the common principles of an institution, as confessional parties hold. As much as it is possible to separate public power and religion, it is a different thing altogether for individuals to separate their beliefs and their politics. Then, the motivation of the individual comes into play, which may be equally true for confessionals as for liberals, who both may hold ‘universal’ values. Furthermore, there is not much to be said on freedom of expression, as touching this is out of the question (‘you cannot rule out *Voltaire*’).

The third notion that is central within the attitude of liberalism towards religion is *tolerance*. Although this is a notion that is shared by all liberals, its application to daily life may lead to problems. This is best illustrated by the concept of '*accommodements raisonnables*', practiced in Canada, which means that the host society should go to reasonable length to accommodate the various non-indigenous religions. Of course this can also be an issue for indigenous religions, but they are often already part of the mainstream culture within nations. Today, one of the main challenges for modern societies is the question: to what extent do we expect individuals to adapt and to what extent do we need to be tolerant? One solution is by taking a temporal view on tolerance towards cultures that take a different view on certain laws and regulations. Doctors not performing abortions and public officials refusing to perform gay marriages are examples of issues that should be allowed only temporarily. In other words, only those that were already opposed to these practices before they were made common law are allowed to refuse. Others will have to adapt.

'Neutrality towards religions needs to be distinguished from indifference'

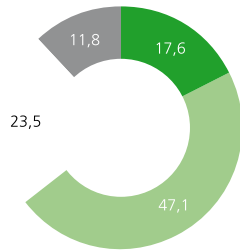


Liberalism is communitarianism?

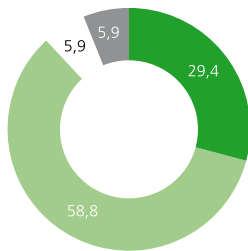
At first sight the notion of communitarianism seems to be incompatible with liberalism, which takes the individual as its starting point. Still, in today's uncertain times many feel the need for communal values. Therefore, this vision on communitarianism builds upon liberal values and goes beyond it, by constructing common, perhaps universal values. Liberals can also be considered a community, as liberalism has defined values, often institutionalized in constitutions as well as in the universal declaration of human rights. Furthermore, communitarianism can also be seen as an emancipatory movement for liberating groups, such as homosexuals or ethnic minorities. A main discussion point is, however, whether this thinking in groups is limiting rather than liberating.



group discussion 2
moderated by
Joost Röselaers
Minister of a
Remonstrant church



6/7 The government should be held accountable for protecting biodiversity



7/7 Recycling is a liberal priority

■ totally agree
 ■ agree
 ■ neutral
 ■ disagree
 ■ totally disagree

The link between liberalism and communitarianism is not obvious at first sight. Most liberals consider the focus on the individual as the central aspect of liberalism. D66 carried out a recent exploration of shared liberal values (*‘Exploring social-liberal frontiers’*) in search of answers to questions such as: are there any universal values? And are there any values shared by all social liberals? This exploration started out with the notion that while liberalism is strongly focused on individuals and their individual values, this should not lead to indifference towards others. In uncertain times, people seem to be in need of shared values. This is exemplified by the rise of the populist movements across Europe that emphasize the importance of a national identity. While every person has its own values, according to these movements shared values are those that are democratically chosen by a majority. The question is whether universal values are the same as these ‘shared’ values?

‘To have laws that are based on a constitution rather than based on an autocrat’s rulings is a direct outcome of liberal ideas that are enshrined in constitutions as well as international declarations such as the universal declaration of human rights’

Liberalism typically emerged through a struggle against monarchy and totalitarianism – also of the church. But in different European countries this struggle took place in different ways. Depending on their specific history, this led to a different attitude towards communitarianism. Now it is common to have laws that are based on a constitution rather than based on an autocrat’s rulings. This is a direct outcome of liberal ideas that are enshrined in constitutions as well as international declarations such as the universal declaration of human rights. This is happening around the world – not only in Europe.

Communitarianism emerges as a reaction to an era in which there was a lot – perhaps too much – focus on the individual. It emerged as a reaction to globalization and the confusion it brought about. The current surge of populist movements across Europe can also be seen as an example of a new emergence of communitarianism. Traditionally, it seems that the core focus of liberalism – the individual – is contradictory to the spirit of communitarianism, which can be seen to value the group over the individual. But the vision on communitarianism, instead, builds upon liberal notions such as a constitution and democracy, defending them as common values. Many liberals are criticized (for example by confessional parties) for lacking values to base their principles on. The minimum range of universal liberal values includes freedom, equality and tolerance. Liberals, however, accept more than one inspiration and deny the notion that any source of inspiration may be more important than others.

Liberals agree on many values, such as equality before the law. An important question concerning these values is whether shared values are negotiated or if they are truly universal, even when a majority of people is against it (think of the hypothetical example of the separation of religion and the state: would this still hold when a majority of Europeans wants to introduce the *Sharia*?). The minimum of universal liberal values include *freedom, equality, tolerance*. But while all liberals agree on freedom being a universal value, the question is raised whether people – and their choices – are ever truly free. Furthermore, while freedom of the individual is undeniable, there is also a relation between shared values and social cohesion. Therefore, there is a role for morality, such as promoted by the church – or by liberals.

Next to their emphasis on shared values, liberalism and communitarianism share another characteristic. Liberalism can be seen as an emancipatory movement for minorities striving to live following the principle ‘own good in our own way’. People should be allowed to feel free as part of a minority (thus as part of a group), before they can be free as an individual. This idea is, however, contested. Some fear that allowing minorities to strive for their freedom as a group having priority over their freedom as an individual, may enclose them in a single identity

‘Liberals accept more than one inspiration and deny that any source of inspiration may be more important than the others’

‘You can only
have universalism
if you respect
individualism’

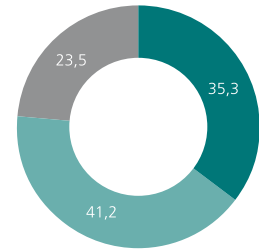
– similarly to the notion that multiculturalism encloses people in their culture. People are then judged on their group rather than on individual merit.

The discussion of liberalism as promoting the rights of minorities vs. liberalism as only promoting the rights of (all) individuals not only applies to minorities, but also to the idea of having a *leitkultur*. For example: can being an American act as an overarching – shared – value? The traditional liberal view is that rights only apply to individuals, not to groups. If people are defined by their group, they may be only be free within their group, not as an individual. But different communities and identities occur at the same time and over time. (*‘You can only have universalism if you respect individualism’*) Similar to the idea of tolerance to those not respecting the law because of their religion, one ‘solution’ to this discussion is to consider liberalism as an emancipatory movement only temporarily; when it has served its purpose it renders itself superfluous. The question remains though whether we will ever get there.

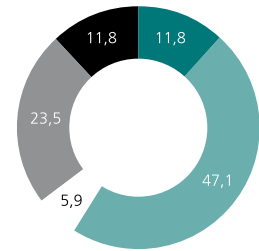
In the discussion on liberalism and communitarianism a number of open questions remain: are we mixing up multiculturalism with communitarianism? Are we mixing up collective action with communitarianism? And what is the role of tribalism? Still, two conclusions seem to be supported by all:

1. Liberalism can only yield to the individual: the discussion keeps coming back to the point where communities are not absolute. They are temporal, or multiple, or ..., but the individual remains the central focus and entity. This is a distinguishing trait of liberals.
2. There are universal values that liberals should defend at all costs (discussion of Kant vs. Hegel), such as equality before the law.

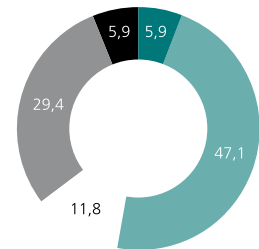
The question remains how this can be translated into practice. In what way should the state support communities? Can we think of any values that need to be promoted and protected by the state? One of the possible answers is that the state should protect individual rights. Another liberal idea worth to be protected and implemented by the state is *education*. But although everyone agrees on the importance of education, the content is still open for discussion. For example, what should be the mission and role of schools? Are they to teach skills or citizenship? What do you need to teach if you want to teach citizenship? Is it sufficient to teach children basic communication skills (basic language skills) necessary to navigate our society or do we also need to teach them values such as laid down in the constitution? This is, in other words, a discussion between the work of *Martha Nussbaum* and *Hannah Arendt*.



1/8 Public and private sector employees should have the same rights (e.g. laws concerning dismissal, pension rights)

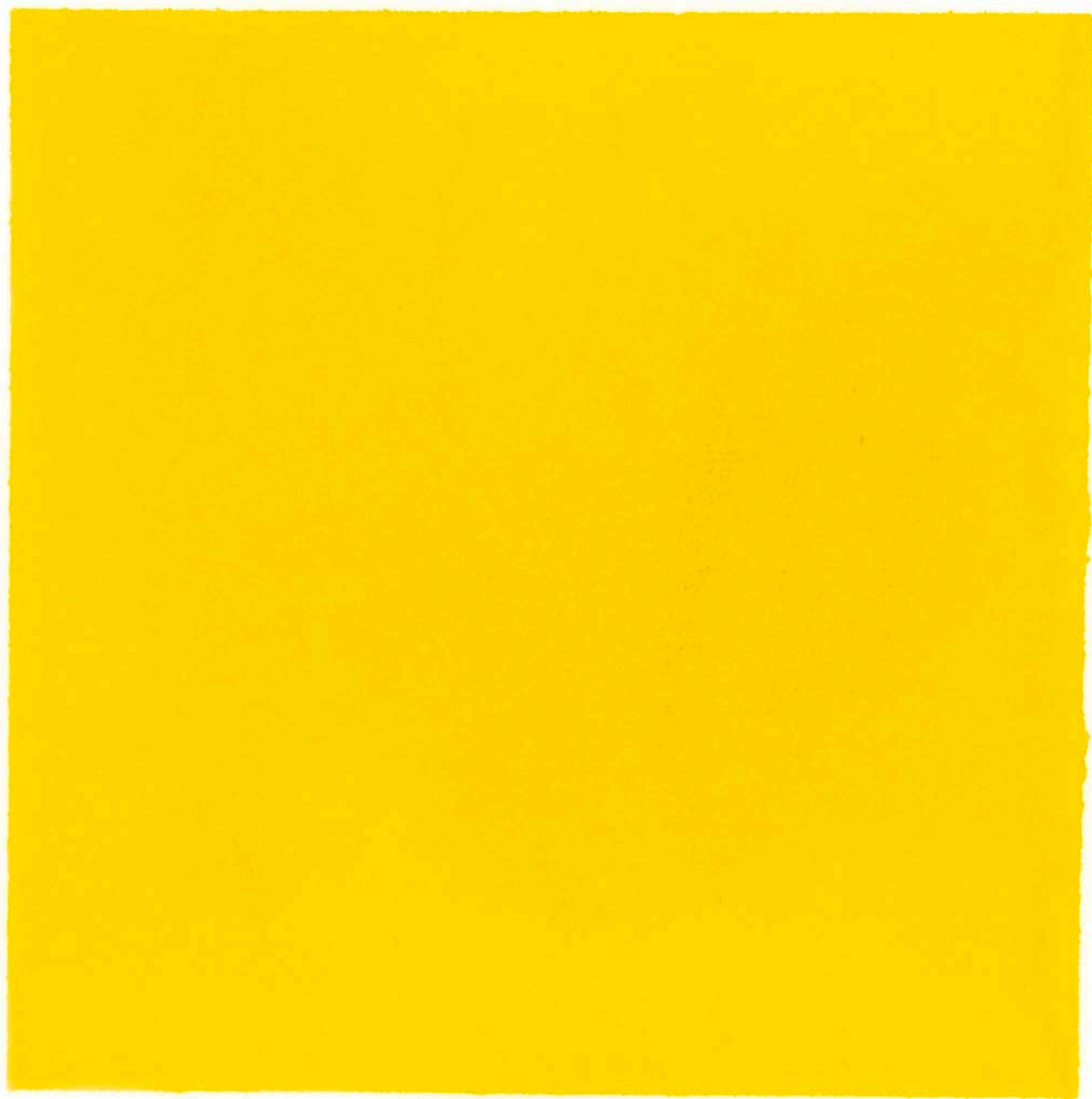


2/8 The government has a role in facilitating day care



3/8 When someone is poor and has a debt problem, the person's prospects (and not the debts) should be central in finding a solution

■ totally agree
 ■ agree
 ■ neutral
 ■ disagree
 ■ totally disagree



Liberalism is individualism?

Promoting liberal values and principles continues to be important, as liberalism leads to many desired outcomes. But it is threatened by other ideologies, such as socialism, the green movement, confessionals, populism, and nationalism. As a result, the traditional economic left-right axe has become much less relevant. Instead, liberals should shed all its adjectives and position themselves as progressive. The traditional left is now defending acquired rights, leaving it to liberals to defend the rights of the individual.



group discussion 3
moderated by
Dirk Verhofstadt
Member of the
Liberales core group

‘Liberalism is not an ideology for the rich that want to advance their position but for the disadvantaged that want to improve their position’

The main difference between liberalism and the other political movements is its focus on *individual rights*, as opposed to group rights. Individualism is a culmination of human development. It contains the right of self-determination. A second foundation of liberalism is *tolerance* as defined by *Immanuel Kant* in his ‘*categorical imperative*’. Examples of communities where the individual was or is made inferior to the community include nationalism in WWI (the state is most important), Communism (USSR, Cambodia), Fascism (Hitler) and theocracies (Iran). Naturally, these situations are not at all desirable. Still, individualism occasionally breaks through (examples of 1968, 1989): *The End of History*.

However, *Francis Fukuyama* was wrong. Liberalism did not win, but is still suppressed:

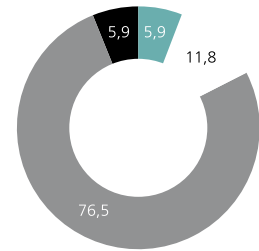
- > By **socialists** that believe it will lead to inequality. But Adam Smith holds that egoism will lead to an equal distribution through specialization. Also *Kant* (categorical imperative) assumes that solidarity is innate to liberalism. Unlike libertarians, liberals believe that a strong, but not necessarily big, government is necessary.
- > By **greens** that believe liberal ideas are bad for the environment. But through natural selection and competition ecologically better situations emerge (pollution and unsafe cars are much more common in China for example).
- > By **confessionals** that find liberals to be lacking values. Both multiculturalism and monoculturalism are attacks on the individual and self-determination. There are some liberal values that are universal (such as equality before the law). The values in the universal declaration of human rights were promulgated by liberals, and those are the values on which the world order is currently based.
- > By **populists**, who blame liberals for not listening to common people. They respond to fear from e.g. globalization, Europe, multicultural societies, migration. The problem with populists is that they voice the opinion of the masses, but do not lead nor offer a new perspective or solution. Instead, they look for the way of least resistance, rather than making informed decisions. Furthermore, it is dangerous to give fear and anxiety the room to grow.

> By **nationalists** that blame liberals for not putting their country first. But people have multiple identities, depending on the context. And, remarkably, researchers have found that world powers emerge as a result of their tolerance, diversity and openness to the outside world and fade as a result of the inverse situation.

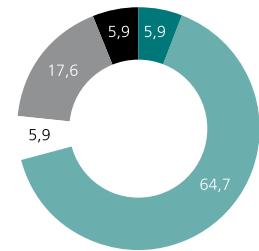
In other words, utopian visions will enslave people as they do not take the individual as the starting point.

In today's world, the economic left-right axe has lost its relevance. Only the axes progressive-conservatism and group-individuals remain important. Liberals are progressive and individualists. Liberals need to coin the word progressive and take it from the traditional left. The traditional left is now trying to protect the acquired rights and has become a conservative movement. Therefore, liberalism is not an ideology for the rich that want to advance their position but for the disadvantaged that want to improve their position.

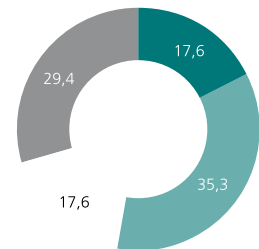
Two further issues need to be discussed: the role that liberals attach to governments and the use of adjectives such as 'social-'. Concerning the first: liberals are not against a government, which sets them apart from libertarians. Within liberal theories the need for a government is embedded. Still, it is necessary to be critical on power – rather than being negative about government. Liberalism is against a government that has too much power without having proper checks and balances in place. Concerning the second issue: different cultural backgrounds give different meanings to liberalism. Still, liberalism should get rid of its adjectives such as 'social-'. These adjectives imply that liberalism is not considered social in itself. But as a liberal you strive for the greatest self-determination of the other. This makes a liberal self-evidently social (think also about *John Rawl's* 'veil of ignorance').



4/8 The unemployed usually have only themselves to blame

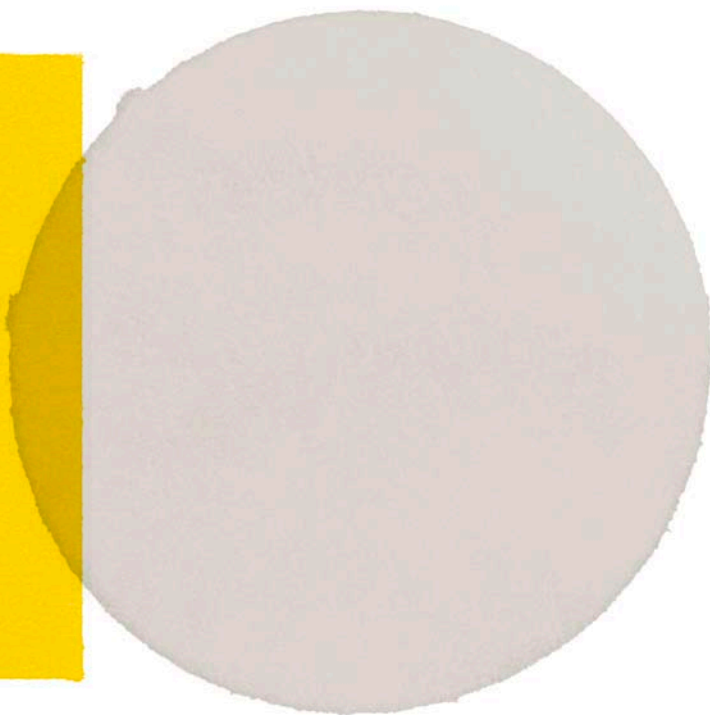
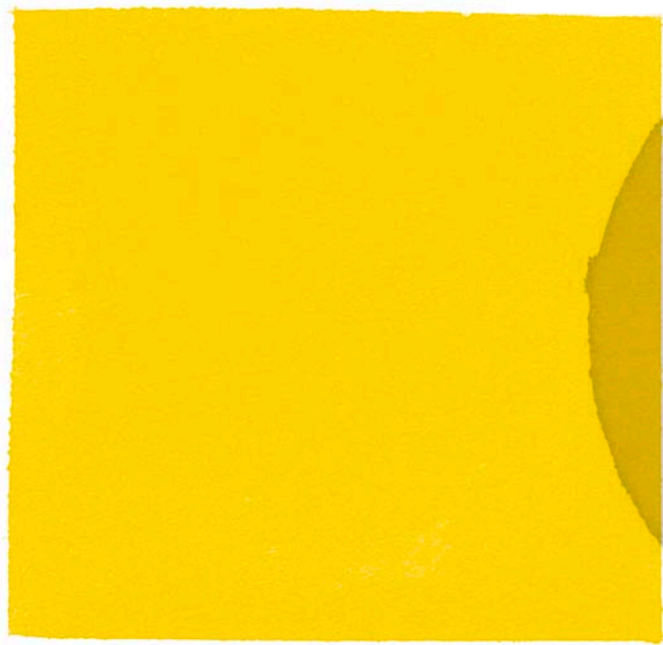


5/8 The government should only support the absolute minimum in order to stimulate them to go back to work



6/8 Life-long learning should be the starting point for any agreement between an employer and his employees

■ totally agree
 ■ agree
 ■ neutral
 ■ disagree
 ■ totally disagree



Liberalism is solidarity?

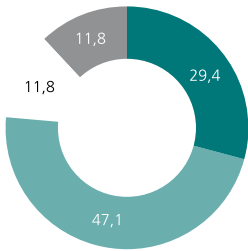
This discussion uses development aid as an example of solidarity. Most consider development aid a liberal value and find the 0.8% rule (that holds that countries should spend 0.8% of their national income as development aid) important to maintain. But the motivations for supporting development aid differ widely. The main question of this session is whether solidarity is liberal by nature and whether development aid is, therefore, a liberal value. However, several preconditions are raised: aid should be effective and transparent as well as temporal. When these conditions are not met, development aid may not be a case of solidarity at all. Furthermore, the most liberal and perhaps most important mechanism for development aid is opening up the (European) market for developing countries. This should truly ensure a level playing field.



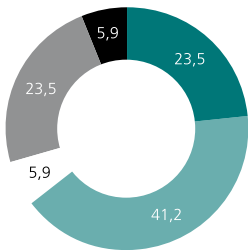
group discussion 4

**moderated by
Robert Farla**

International Secretary
in the Board of D66



7/8 The government has a role in offering schooling to unemployed in order to get them back to work



8/8 Liberals always prefer individual pension arrangements above mandatory collective pension arrangements

■ totally agree
 ■ agree
 ○ neutral
 ■ disagree
 ■ totally disagree

The central question of this discussion is what is liberal about solidarity towards recipient groups. Although liberals are said to have a moral obligation towards others, in practice, the moral circle of people does not encompass the whole world. Rather, the smaller the circle, the more solidarity people are likely to feel. So why do we still feel solidarity towards people outside this circle? And to what extent do we feel solidarity?

To illustrate this discussion, the example of development aid is used. Reasons for supporting development aid are listed:

- > Creating an equality of chances and a level playing field (regarding opportunities, not outcome)
- > For economic reasons
- > Promoting democracy as well as fighting feudalism (promoting human rights/liberal values)
- > Out of solidarity
- > As a temporal emergency measure after disaster has struck
- > Out of moral duty/responsibility: fighting for the right of the self-determination of others
- > To ensure being credible and consistent
- > Gaining access to strategic resources

From this list, it becomes clear that development aid is thus not just about solidarity to those in the developing world. Nor is it just a moral obligation to others in need (moral duty of fighting for self-determination of others, promoting human rights and liberal values, creating a level playing field for all). Also reasons of self-interest (economic reasons, access to strategic resources, and being consistent) are mentioned.

Four issues that need to be determined in relation to development aid were raised: its effectiveness, its transparency, its duration, and its nature. First of all, the way aid is spent is considered an important condition for whether it should be given at all. However, effectiveness is hard to determine as cultural contexts differ. Secondly, the role of transparency in spending the money is mentioned as a precondition: only if it can be proven that it is spent (well), it should be given.

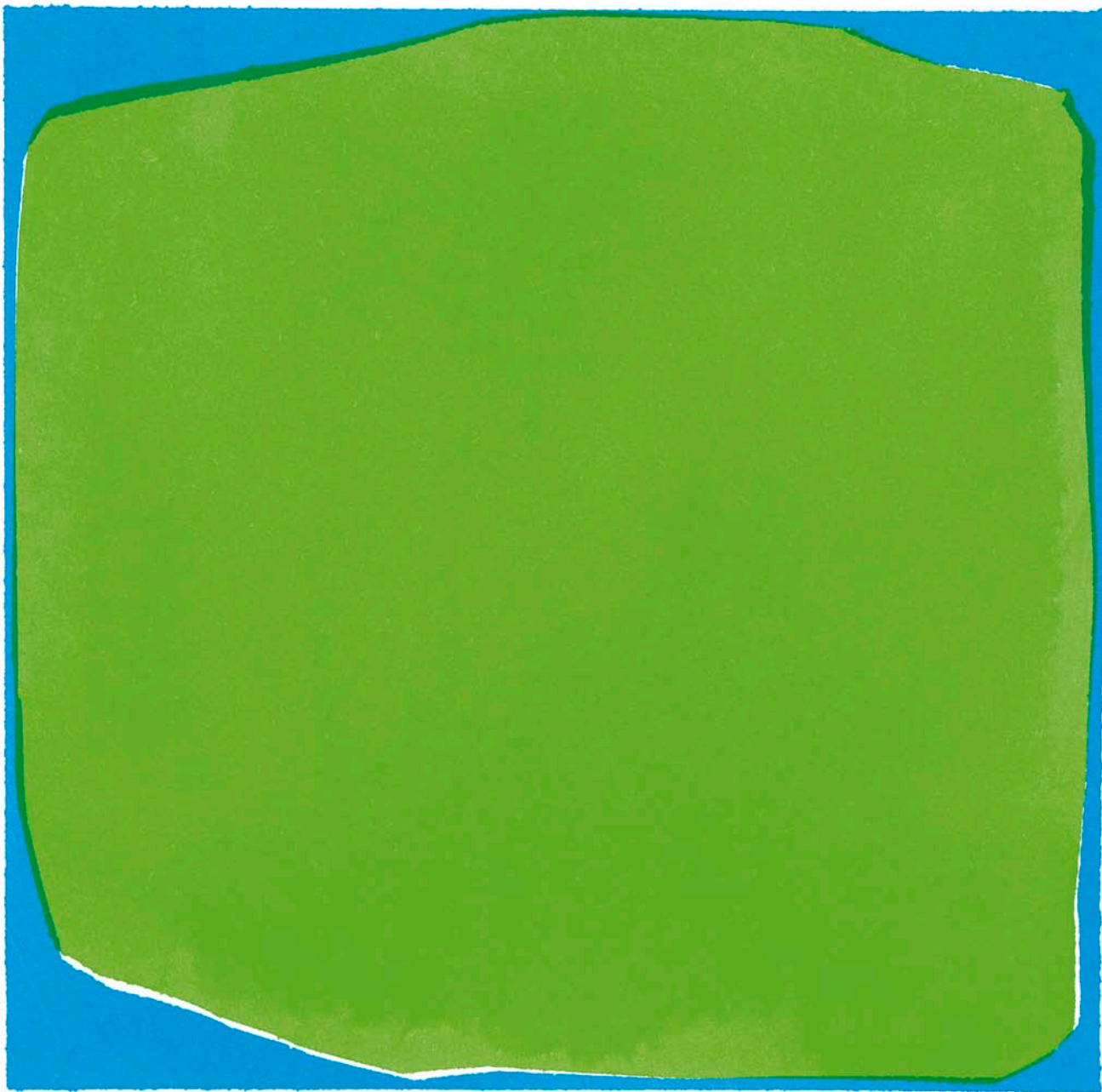
And thirdly, the term of spending should be considered. The question is whether all development aid should be temporal (such as in case of an emergency)? Many say wholeheartedly yes to this, although the term is undefined. And a fourth question that is raised concerns the nature of the spending: should it be only money, or can other forms of aid also be considered, such as property rights, microcredits, etc...?

Another mechanism that may also be considered (although it can hardly be called development aid) is to open up markets. This form of international cooperation is perhaps most important for supporting development from a liberal viewpoint. As soon as developing countries are able to compete with Western markets they are able to create their own wealth and create their own competitive advantages. The problem is that the EU and others, such as the US and Japan, have taken many protectionist measures (e.g. agricultural subsidies).

A final argument for giving development aid is that if we do not give it, the poor may come and get it for themselves. Thus, all arguments that are in favor of giving it, are in our own interest. As a result of this, liberals tend to be less open towards migration than they are towards development aid. (*'Either you put a fence around your country, or you put a fence around your social security system.'*) Still, some of the best ways of development aid come from migrants earning money for their family, thereby becoming a resource for host countries as well as for their home countries. Also, countries that are open to migrants are usually more prosperous. Therefore, migration may be considered useful instead of threatening.

Although other measures than development aid are considered important and other reasons than mere moral obligations are mentioned, most would consider that humans have a responsibility to help people from other countries. Without responsibility and moral duty, liberalism turns into mere egoism.

'Either you put a fence around your country, or you put a fence around your social security system'



Liberalism is laissez-faire?

Liberalism is definitely not laissez-faire. The state is evidently necessary but its actions should be limited where possible.

The discussion is about the conditions, the areas to which laissez-faire applies, and about the mechanisms for state intervention.

Another way of looking at this, is by recognizing that issues require coordination by the market, the state or by people themselves.



group discussion 5

**moderated by
Dennis Hesseling**

NMa Dutch competition
authority

The definition of laissez-faire is that transactions between private parties are free from state intervention. From this definition we can derive several degrees of state intervention:

- > Never: laissez-faire / pure capitalism (the vision of Ayn Rand)
- > Sometimes: regulated / social market economy; criteria: when, how?
- > Always: communism

These degrees should be seen as a continuous scale of the degree of state intervention rather than as different stages. However, by defining intervention in such a way, everyone will end up in the middle category. At this point, the discussion on state intervention goes into multiple directions:

1. Firstly, which criteria apply; when is state intervention allowed/desired?
2. Secondly, to which areas does it apply?
3. Thirdly, how will it take place? There are different degrees of intervention.

‘If we introduce the perspective of the individual, we need to take into account the different roles that individuals can take on’

A start for the first exploration is that public intervention is allowed or desired when it needs to realize an infrastructure from which all benefit as well as when it needs to ensure a real free market (*Adam Smith*). But we should also take into account that criteria may differ according to the specific situation. An example: in case of emergency, we may have different desires for the infrastructures, such as in the case of the storm at *Pukkelpop*¹ where there was a clear demand for a mobile network of higher quality.

Concerning the second question regarding the areas to which intervention may apply, perhaps we should make a distinction between those interventions that regulate the working of the market (guaranteeing contracts, delivering infrastructure, keeping market open for competitors) areas where there is no market and interventions for the purpose of realizing different outcomes from the market.

A start of a list of areas in which state intervention is desirable, could be:

- > Where competition cannot work, state intervention is necessary
- > Anti-trust regulation

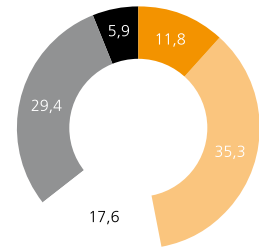
- > Schools: minors are customers that cannot choose
- > Healthcare
- > Conditions for effectiveness and efficiency
- > Import criteria for products that enter Europe: making sure that others produce are as safe, healthy and sustainable as inside the EU

The third question considers different roles and a different degree of action for state intervention. This hierarchy of action can be used according to the importance attached to a specific action to be performed by the government (this choice for the degree of action is determined politically):

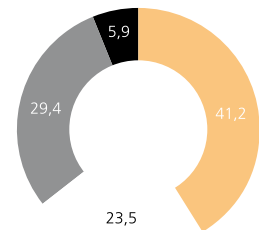
1. To produce (for example water works, police force)
2. To regulate (e.g. public transport)
3. Active control (e.g. higher education)
4. Passive control (e.g. energy tariffs)

Perhaps the discussion should not focus on the dichotomy between the state and the market, but on the mechanisms that can be used for solving certain issues: the market or bureaucracy, or by people themselves. If we introduce the perspective of the individual, we need to take into account the different roles that individuals can take on. So the individual should be the starting point – also the future individual. Both the market and the government are mechanisms that can be used to realize certain outcomes for this individual. The question then shifts from when is state intervention desired, to in which cases can people best organize things amongst each other, or which mechanism do we use to create a service or product: the market or bureaucracy? Both coordination mechanisms are necessary to create a balance between private and public interests. We need private interests and self-determination for private transactions. And we need public mechanisms to realize public interests, such as the common good.

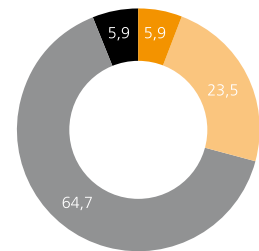
¹ Pukkelpop is a music festival in Belgium. In 2011 it was hit by a severe storm. Five people died as a result of a collapsing tent, 140 people were injured. The mobile network was not equipped for the thousands of people wanting to call their relatives and friends.



1/6 Government should be committed to 0.8% GDP for development cooperation

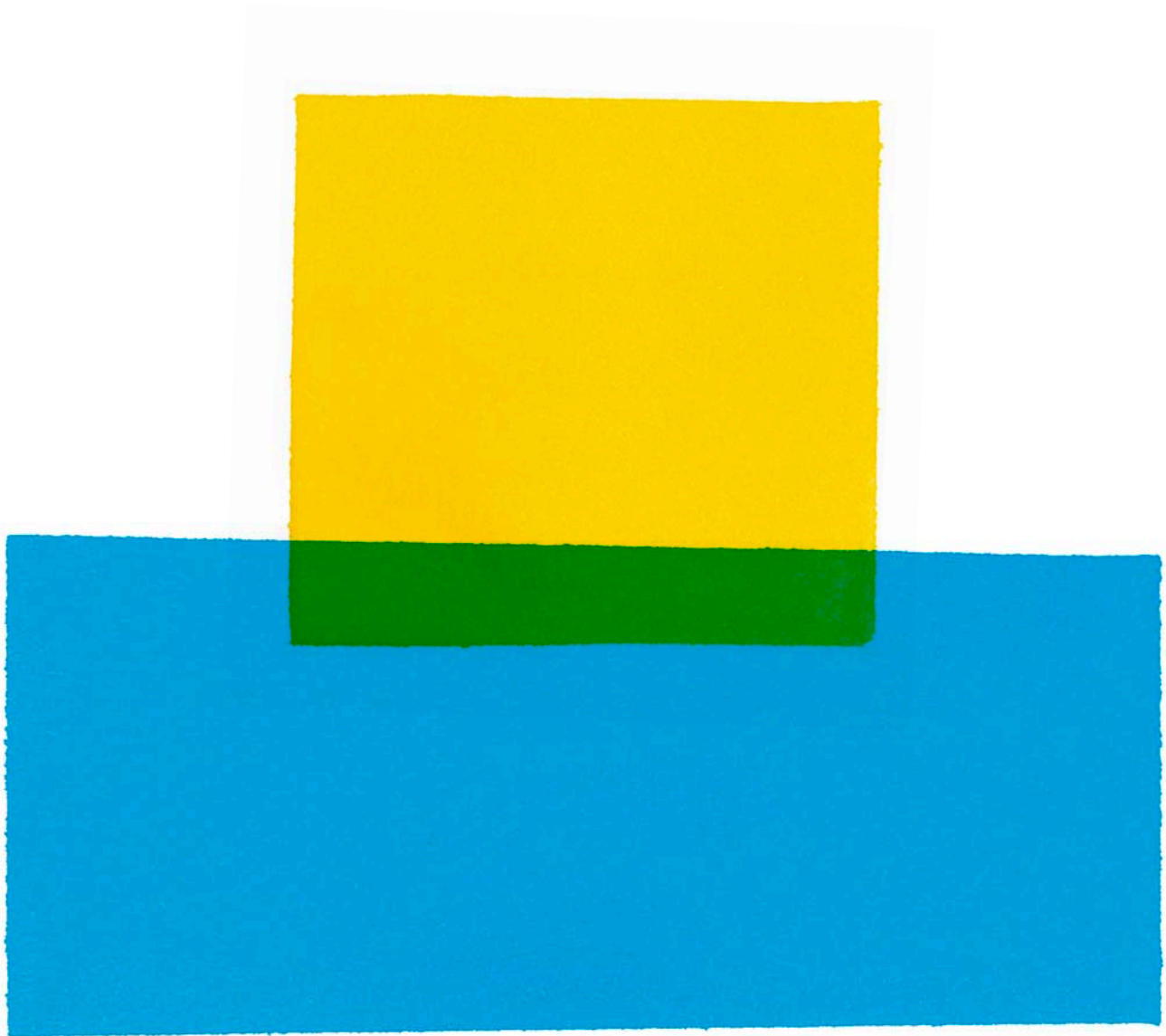


2/6 Development-aid does not have to be demand-driven. Donors know what they can do best



3/6 In development cooperation, economic development goes first. Through economic development the rule of law and human rights will be improved eventually anyhow

■ totally agree
■ agree
■ neutral
■ disagree
■ totally disagree

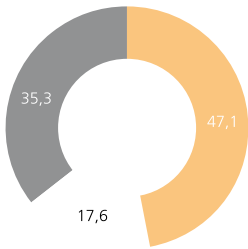


Liberalism is security?

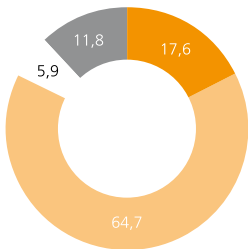
Some considerations on security issues and potential solutions for security threats to the current world order: towards a more 'liberal' view on realizing security. Traditional security measures are considered quite authoritarian. Still, most would agree that security should be realized by the state. A first consideration concerns the international order in which, according to liberals, security should be realized. There seems to be a mutual exclusiveness of security (security for European citizens may not always seem compatible with security for citizens that live in the Middle East). A second consideration concerns the challenges in the virtual world, such as the lack of an international coordinating body (as a result of which the physical location of hardware becomes important), and the emergence of parallel internets. And a third consideration considers liberal security mechanisms as trade and human rights enforcement.



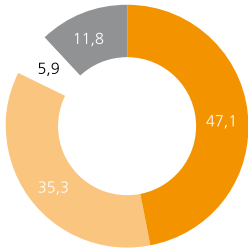
group discussion 6
moderated by
Marietje Schaake
D66 MEP



4/5 Development aid should be limited



5/5 It's the task of the European countries to intervene in humanitarian disasters around the world



6/5 Protective measures in EU countries should be abolished when they damage poor countries

■ totally agree
 ■ agree
 ■ neutral
 ■ disagree
 ■ totally disagree

Most would agree that security should be realized or guaranteed by the state – unless you are a real libertarian. Even though liberals (or at least some) may have a natural distrust of the government – especially when it comes to privacy issues – conditions for security need to be in some form provided by the state. Freedom and security are mutually reinforcing. Therefore, the liberal view is to create space for the individual to act, as people usually only take risks when they enjoy a certain amount of freedom. But traditional security mechanisms are mainly oppressive. The challenge thus is to go beyond the traditional means for realizing security (military force, police, etc.) and realize security internationally in different ways, so that people are more free to act, to mutually enforce security. One could say security in a soft way, instead of the hard way.

‘Is security mutually exclusive? In other words, does guaranteeing the security of Europeans require some repression abroad?’

An important liberal view is that security can be realized in a better way in an international framework. But in the interest of (perceived) international security the European Union supported regimes that blocked their own citizens’ freedom, such as in a number of countries in the Middle East. So is security mutually exclusive? In other words, does guaranteeing the security of Europeans require some repression abroad? An example are the many boat refugees that flee Northern Africa across the Mediterranean. A related issue is how to deal with pre-emptive actions. Now, we mainly see hypocrisy with states circumventing their own laws or outsourcing activities in order not to be held accountable for any mess they create elsewhere. How to react to those who claim they want freedom, but only claim it for themselves, and not for others?

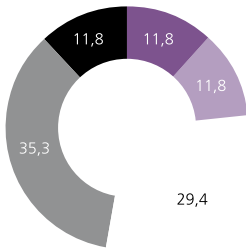
Another liberal view is that there is an intertwined relation between security and trade. In other words, trade is frequently used as a mechanism of realizing security, such as through the establishment of trade

relations (assuming that war is usually bad for business). And there is also a relation between trade and human rights. However, no trade relation of the EU has ever been terminated because of human rights. A question that arises is thus whether trade relations lead to opportunities to also enforce, for example, human rights, similar to it being an opportunity for security. An example is the relation with some regimes (such as Libya in the times of *Gadhafi*), where trade relations may not have been beneficial for human rights. But in the case of Iran, for example, the sanctions may hardly influence the regime, but the citizens even harder. The question is then, for which purposes are these sanctions a means?

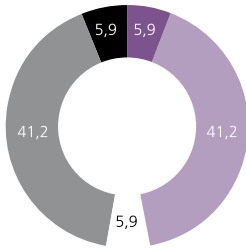
The online dimension of security is increasingly important. From the start, the Internet used to be 'hyperliberal', without any regulations. There was literally no governing body. For the sake of security, now all sorts of privacy invading measures have been undertaken. As a result, parallel Internets have emerged. For example, the Chinese authorities are creating their own Internet for Chinese citizens. Chinese citizens will consequently visit different websites than European citizens. Although this is seen as undesirable by many, one can question how this is different from the traditional media that are also largely nationally oriented. Another important question is who owns citizens' data and who is going to regulate this. The national level may no longer be sufficient to regulate the Internet, and internationally operating organizations may need to step in. But before these types of regulations are fully operational, other national mechanisms may step into this vacuum. For example, suddenly the physical location of the servers or the company owning the servers becomes important, as European countries are no longer able to control their inhabitants' actions that take place using US based companies such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*. An example is the case of the *WikiLeaks* supporters, who may be persecuted by the US.

Internet security is a very non-transparent sector, with few factual reports using clear numbers. So if we mention security threats, we also need insights into the reality of the acuteness of these threats. Another related issue (online and offline) is that security threats are used by

'Security threats are used by private companies to make sure that society pays for their interests'



1/5 There should be no government-imposed conditions (like; apartment blocs with lowrents, mixed target group, green and garden provisions) for building new housing areas



2/5 It is nonsense to restrict building in an area where a lot of offices would like to reside, or people would like to live

■ totally agree
 ■ agree
 □ neutral
 ■ disagree
 ■ totally disagree

private companies to make sure that society pays for their interests. An example is the case of patents and copyright infringements, which are pushed to the internet traffic to ensure that someone else pays for the enforcements of these infringements. Transparency and being informed are ways to overcome this. Transparency and accountability are often seen as liberal values. But the question is what exactly is liberal about these values? Is it really about being liberal or is it about being in power? As liberals are usually not in power, they may be more in favor of transparency. But how will this be when liberals are the leading power (such as in Denmark¹ and the Netherlands)? In practice, governing parties do not always favor transparency.

A last thought on security, both online and offline, concerns the duration of certain security-raising measures. Checks and balances are very necessary for realizing security. Issues for increased security should often be only temporary and should, for example, be checked and ratified every six months. Many measures are taken out of fear. Creation of fear is central to this theme and it is an important driver for taking security-curbing measures.

¹ Early September 2011 the government coalition in Denmark was led by Venstre.

Eight position papers



Jelmen Haaze

All politics come down to the value system, the ethical reference framework people use to weigh alternative solutions offered for a given problem. Making these paradigms explicit both serves the individual participants who are thus sharpening their arguments in discussion and the liberal family as a whole as it is precisely these confrontations on principles, which bring us together and remind us of why we are liberals.

Liberal principles considered

Today's struggle is not about 'market or government', it is about finding the individual in the masses and rediscovering men as the measure. It is about moving away from utopic and dogmatic thinking. It is about judging actions upon their own merits and direct consequences to society. No ideology should ever engrave a political pathway into society for history has shown that the cruelty of good virtue all too often ends up in the belief that every bump in the road, the opposition that one inevitably encounters, must be evened out by the guillotine. Politics must leave to people the capacity to begin, the freedom to explore and progress away from the traditional answers. Only then might the past open up to us with unexpected freshness and tell us things that no one has yet had ears to hear. Freedom begins where one has left the realm of political life inhabited by the many. Good governance is not statesmanship, a management of the resources and positive freedoms. It is about enabling an emancipatory environment where freedom is not limited to the one who supports the ruling party but is an essential component of an active society where individual citizens take up responsibility in public debate.

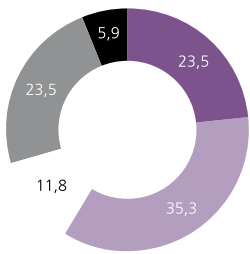
If the government is to do less, it becomes the responsibility of every one of us to do more to help shape society's moral code and discover the discretionary room in between people in order to tackle today's problems which can no longer be understood in dual world view of us against the others. An archaic world view of which the political mechanisms are well known: identify a scapegoat and promise more wealth for less work. Caught between 'church square' and the

world, they nostalgically provoke images of the integrity and concreteness of a simpler, sturdier, more peasant like vision while longing for the world they renounce. The charismatic leadership, as opposed to ideologic leadership, masks the absence of a real socio-economic alternative other than catering for their respective constituency. This clientelism and political opportunism is unacceptable for liberals and democrats who vigorously defend the open society and recognize that today's risks can no longer be understood from a communitarian paradigm. Globalization is a fact: environmental disasters can have global consequences and no economic region is isolated. Liberalism is not about egoism and selfishness as conservative and communitarian agents deliberately and falsely claim. Rather than *laissez-faire* it means using al instruments of political power to set up a system of rules ensuring a level playing field and preventing monopolies, thus allowing us to pursue our own interests and cooperate with others. In this a balance needs to be found between ensuring protection against systemic risks on the one hand and tolerance for individuals taking on private risks on the other hand, as it is precisely trough this private initiative that new ideas are born. Only, but wherever the individual development interferes with the freedoms of the other, these actions must be subjected to negotiated consent.

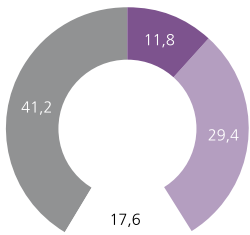
This tolerance goes beyond the economic realm. It is at least unrealistic to assume that our differences in opinion are to be attributed only to ignorance. Tolerance and good citizenship require a certain ability to relativize one's own opinion. Contrary to a 'neutral'

government this demands for a secular government which does not invade the private sphere with pre-chewed answers to what is 'right' or 'wrong' but actively invests in citizens' capacity for critical thinking, in their communicative capacity and in 'equality' as a precondition for dialogue, not as sameness. These capacities are however not unique abilities of any one (ethnic) community and do not form part of an ethical system claiming universality. Liberalism is not a value system as such. Although it is to be understood that these capacities will be installed in society as 'values' this is a consequence of the ethical nature of the human being, not of the manner in which they are to be transferred. True democracy is not a rule of the majority, it is a respect for the minority. Liberalism has faith in men as ethical beings and actively promotes individual agency.

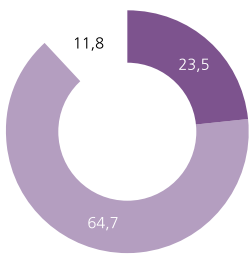
Jelmen Haaze
Liberales



3/5 Housing corporations should be forced by law to invest in energy efficiency of rental apartments

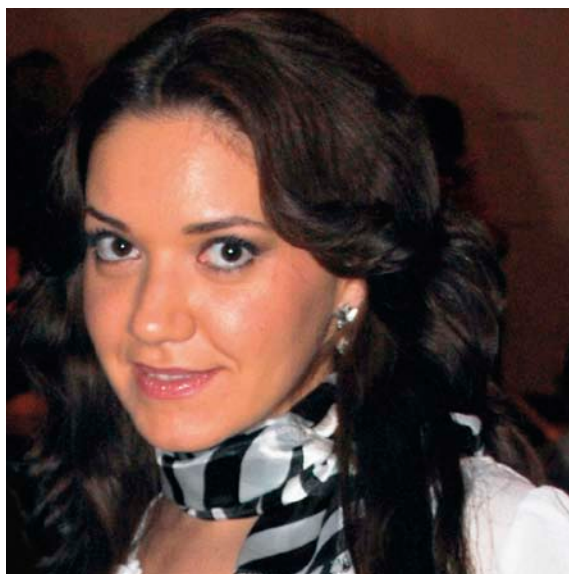


4/5 The government should actively prevent that neighbourhoods or regions do not split in a more affluent part and a 'ghetto' part



5/5 Spatial planning in cities should provide more possibilities for citizens' and company's initiatives. The role of the government is to facilitate and inform

■ totally agree ■ agree □ neutral ■ disagree ■ totally disagree



Andreea Mihai

Comparing the liberal principles is especially important in their exact mode of application, depending on the needs of each country. The seminar 'Liberal Principles Compared' that took place in Doorn, was very interesting because the addressed subjects allowed discussion of relevant viewpoints.

Liberal Principles

Liberalism, as a political ideology (which, otherwise, has preceded the economical form of liberalism), was born in the religious wars of XVI-XVII centuries, which have the result of separating the church from the State and the Citizen, as an attempt of fixing the theological-political problem. The essence of liberalism (the one that individualizes liberalism in relation to other political ideologies) consists of promoting changes according to newly emerged historical conditions, and especially, economical and political freedom of the citizen in relation with the state. John Locke, considered the father of liberalism, promoted political tolerance. Subsequently the economic liberalism appeared whose father is considered the economist Adam Smith. He sustained the economic freedom, individual initiative and non-intervention of politics in economy. Economic liberalism has, at its base, the principle of *laissez-faire* (let it happen).

In Romania classic liberalism took root especially in the second half of the XIX century, as well as neo-liberalism in the interwar period.

Liberal ideas existed in Romanian society long before 1848, in the programs of some secret political societies, conspiracy groups and cultural societies (influenced by the occidental liberalism) which followed the political, cultural and economic emancipation of the country. After the founding of the Liberal Party, personalities of the party or different factions and dissidents supported different forms of liberalism. The governmental liberals (1876-1888) were the supporters of individual properties and the conscience of the right of property. Politically they were the supporters of the electoral college

system and census vote. Whether they considered themselves moderate, radical, or democrat-radical governors, these groups militated for the development of banks, industrial and finance institutions, promoting protectionism. Furthermore they advocated the development of agriculture and improvement of the life of peasants.

In the interwar period, Romanian liberalism has acted on the application of the motto 'prin noi insine' ('By ourselves'); in favour of the limitation of foreign capital penetration, in favour of the intervention of the state in the economical and social life, an intervention that led to the democratization of Romanian society.

The liberal doctrine, in its various forms, starts to play a more and more significant role in the East-European countries, including Romania, after the crash of communism. This was required for the necessary reconstruction of democratic institutions and for the transition to a free market economy. In this new situation, it was impossible to update classic liberalism. The principles of classic liberalism match with the ones of state intervention in some areas and with the principles of social liberalism, which target the disadvantaged social categories. It needs to be mentioned that liberal ideology, like others, has been the focus of the activity of some parties, on which parties elaborate their political programs and platforms.

The essence of liberalism

The individual

The fundamental concept that resides at the base of liberalism is the individual freedom. To be free means, in the general sense, the absence of constraints: nobody can force me to do what I don't want to do. To be free (as a liberal conception) doesn't mean the capacity to do something but the right to do it. The liberty of one individual starts where the liberty of others ends, because everybody has the right to do whatever he wants, on the condition that it doesn't violate the liberty of others and respects the laws of society.

Free society

There are two aspects we could refer to: the private sphere (of individual freedom, which gives us the possibility to live how we want in the intimacy of our own life, conscious of the freedoms and responsibilities we have, without hurting the freedom of others) and the public sphere (subject of the law jurisdiction, because civilization means, in the end, the replacing of force with laws). The efforts of liberalism are turning to enlargement of private sphere for an increased individual freedom within a free society.

Economy and capitalism

Economic liberalism has been associated with capitalism, as a social system in which the individual is free to follow his own rational interest, to possess properties, and to take advantage of its own actions. The economic liberalism is based on the formulation 'laissez faire', which presume non-intervention, of the state in economy. The result: private property, individual initiative and economical prosperity.

The state

The liberal state is, above all, a state limited both in power of the rule of law, which presumes the dominance of law, and in terms of its functions – the minimal state. The liberal state noninterventionist is the opposite of socialist paternalist state, interventionist. The first of the classic liberal principles referring to the state include: the separation of powers within the state, obedience to the laws not to the individual judges, and the system of representation. This last principle is the binder between liberalism and democracy.

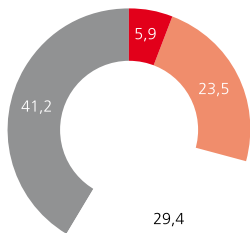
Democracy

The notion of 'democracy', in use since antiquity, means 'power of the people'. Nowadays we speak when the members of a community can influence the decisions that influence them. Democracy presumes respect of some liberal-democratic principles: the right to vote, equality of votes, the rule of law, tolerance, permanent and nonviolent progress of humanity.

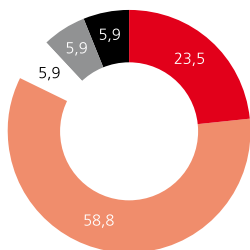
Monopoly of the political life – which represents an essential element of totalitarianism – is a non-liberal principle, intolerable. Liberal democracy presumes pluralism of parties and opinions.

Liberals believe that *pluralism and diversity* are in fact written in the profound human nature. Liberal democracy does nothing else but to order their manifestation in the field of pure politics, through action rules and legal constituted political parties.

Society and state need to be separate. Any attempt to confuse state with society leads to totalitarianism.



1/6 An immigrant does not have to follow an extensive integration course, he finds his way himself



2/6 A flow of immigration might be essential to keep the national economy afloat

■ totally agree
 ■ agree
 ○ neutral
 ■ disagree
 ■ totally disagree

Totalitarianism being a political formula radically unacceptable, which needs to be avoided at any cost. The state exercises the power that it has been given by the society. The exercise of power from the state is legitimate as long as none of the acts of power are in contradiction with the respect of the will of the majority, minority protection and human rights.

A world in which all economic partners are equal is not free, just because it doesn't exist; as it is known, the complete removal of liberty in the communist regime didn't succeed in the creation of the dreamed full economic equality. The differences introduced by the political identity of the totalitarian actors often turned into flagrant economic discrimination. But, a world in which all economic actors are free, doesn't make them equal. Rather it makes them unequal. It is important to highlight that this inequality is – in long and medium term – inequality in prosperity. Liberals start from the principle of liberty and believe that inequality in prosperity is superior to servitude in misery.

The ideal of economic justice – economic justice defined by the formula 'from everybody by possibilities, to everybody after needs' – is a mirage. The existence of such an ideal world would presume that all people should have the same objectives, which is impossible, and that the consumer goods are ranked in a single form. This cannot be obtained without a severe control of the authorities. The argument against the ideal of economic justice is that a unique hierarchy of individual consumers preferences and an economic objective uniformity cannot be obtained other than by force.

Tolerance versus discrimination – the liberal ethics contain some essential values, with social and economic relevance alike: tolerance, dialogue, trust, contract and property. Tolerance is a means and not a purpose in itself. Tolerance is preferable to intolerance as it assures civil peace and the existence of a decent society. Tolerance presumes, actually, that every belief or dogma, no matter of its nature, is to be protected, in particular by the political authority. From a liberal point of view, diversity becomes prolific only when it is not confronting privileges and special protections from the authorities. Tolerance towards minorities – religious, ethnic, sexual and cultural – represents a means most adequate for obtaining a durable social equilibrium.

Liberals count on spontaneous solidarity between individuals susceptible of free thinking and liberal behaviour, under the form of recognition of common interests that bind them together in what is formally called ‘middle class’. Political stability and economic performance, tolerance and civic spirit, managerial rationality and optimism are needed for social harmony. Achieving social harmony represents a clear signal that democracy, as an everyday social state has begun working.

Andreea Mihai

Institute for Liberal Studies



Sebastjan Pikl

Liberal thought has, in my opinion, a privilege and an important advantage when compared to the two other major political ideologies – conservative right and social-democratic left –, namely that it can reinvent its ideology in accordance to concrete questions, cleavages and problems arising from the world here and now. I believe the time has come to question basic assumptions and dig out not only the basic justifications of liberal thought but to rethink them and carefully take into consideration complex reality of 21st century.

Interventions on Liberalism – ideology in question

‘Money is like muck, not good except it be spread’

Francis Bacon (The Essays, 1601)

Introduction

Political perspectives of 3 major ideological movements (conservative right, social-democratic left and liberal thought) have in last decades undeniably lost their way to cope with growing complexity of the human world. Incompetence and incapacity to understand newly constructed cleavages and interdependencies of post-modern global world, rapid technological changes, medicalization and population growth, give us reason to believe that contemporary politicians can't even pose the right questions, let alone find solutions for emerging problems. The ability to act is becoming so limited, I'm starting to believe that not taking some necessary decisions is done on purpose. There has never been so much money and wealth on this planet so unequally distributed with so many negative side effects and externalities. It looks like growing to become a pessimist is slowly becoming a reality of everyday individuals and the imagination is starting to contemplate scenarios of the near future which correspond frighteningly to actualities but consequently look gloomy, with evermore catastrophic outcomes. Liberal thought has, in my opinion, a privilege and an important advantage when compared to the two other major political ideologies -conservative right and social-democratic left-, namely that it can reinvent its

ideology in accordance to concrete questions, cleavages and problems arising from the world here and now. I believe the time has come to question basic assumptions and dig out not only the basic justifications of liberal thought but to rethink them and carefully take into consideration complex reality of 21st century. And since I find some of the basic corner stones of classical liberal thought as either out of date or obsolete, my reasoning will try to offer a horizon of topics and not so much as a compact theoretical concept. My firm stand is that any justified liberal theory needs to search for a development model that would bring more socially and ecologically sustainable solutions, offering new solutions with synergies between social, economical and ecological streams for an innovative and modern society.

Liberalism is...

1. Liberalism is freedom and free will

Free will is the apparent ability to make choices free from certain kinds of constraints. Even though Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis over a century ago undoubtedly proved that our free will is very much determined by our upbringing, culture and mental processes which are mostly unconscious by its nature, this adds nothing to the fact that ability to make free choices still exists. The individual self still exists. But experience shows that society or societies in that fact are dynamic phenomena influencing and changing understanding of the individual self over time as well

as that social dynamics is constructed and shaped by individual choices.

Freedom/free will is therefore a dynamic quality and it should be viewed as such.

2. Liberalism through economic and distributive justice

On the one hand classical liberals have a negative concept of freedom in that they believe freedom is assured by what the government does 'not' do. For them, freedom is brought about by government NON-intervention (one is reminded of Reagan's famous slogan 'Government is the problem, not the solution'). Postmodern liberal thought should, on the other hand, have a positive view of freedom, that is, believe in giving all citizens the opportunity for self-realization. This translates into belief that government should provide certain basic resources for all individuals, which ultimately calls for government involvement rather than non-intervention.

Justice as fairness is a concept developed by political philosopher John Rawls. Conception of justice comprises of two main principles: Liberty and Equality. Supporters of basic income follow his rational when advocating for it.

It is mostly the inability to tackle unemployment with conventional means that has led to the idea being taken seriously in the last decade or so. Social policy and economic policy can no longer be conceived separately, and basic income is increasingly viewed as the only viable way of reconciling two of their central objectives: poverty relief and full employment.

> **A basic income** is an income unconditionally granted to all on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement. It is a form of minimum income guarantee that differs from those that now exist in

various European countries in three important ways:

- > it is being paid to individuals rather than households;
- > it is paid irrespective of any income from other sources;
- > it is paid without requiring the performance of any work or the willingness to accept a job if offered.

3. Liberalism is exploration: Shift towards space-technologies and space exploration

Not so long ago the renowned astrophysicist, professor Stephen Hawking warned in a number of interviews that the human race must look to outer space within the next century or it may face extinction. Threats to the existence of the human race, such as war, resource depletion and overpopulation, put it at its greater risk ever.

Colonization of space is therefore our only chance of long-term survival.

A shift towards a massive rise of investment of public and private resources into the space technology research should be one of the priorities of liberal thought and action in the future.

Liberalism is sustainable development

Sustainability is a timely concept with relations to environment, intergenerational cooperation, economy, spirituality and above all a holistic approach to life. In this perspective it goes above particular policy recommendation, but it is becoming an political ideology per se. The question of equilibrium – balancing use with renewal, pollution with its impact on ecosystems – is key to understanding the challenges of our world.

Keeping systems in balance is an important idea that reaches beyond environmental concerns. Demographic balances in a given society, the interplay between births, deaths, emigration and immigration. We must

have enough young workers to replace retirees, and to fund their pensions. Finally, can societies remain stable when resources are concentrated in the hands of a few, while others go without?

5. Liberalism is secularism

One of the basic cornerstones of classical liberalism is religious tolerance. A modern state should be secular but in the same time needs to grant religious freedom to all.

6. Liberalism is on-going struggle for protection of human rights

Liberals should support Human rights and international norms that help to protect all individuals everywhere from severe political, legal, and social abuses. These rights exist in morality and in law at the national and international level and are stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Liberalism is not...

1. Liberalism is not financial capitalism

It may be that market institutions are functionally indispensable, but the core difference of the current crisis is precisely that financial capitalism has reached the limits of its own logic. It has been extremely successful at extracting value from all economic sectors through their financing. It has penetrated such a large part of each national economy (in the highly developed world especially) that the parts of the economy where it can go to extract non-financial capital for its own rescue have become too small to provide the amount of capital needed to rescue the financial system as a whole.

By way of illustration: the global value of financial assets (which means: debt) in the whole world by September 2008 – as the crisis was exploding with the collapse of Lehman Brothers – was \$160 trillion: three-and-a-half times larger than the value of global GDP. The financial system cannot be rescued only by pumping in public money.

The financial sector needs to be seriously reduced and decreased in a number of financial instruments and derivatives.

2. Liberalism is not unrestrained free market

Classic liberalism argues that liberty and private property are intimately related. From the eighteenth century right up to today, classical liberals have insisted that an economic system based on private property is uniquely consistent with individual liberty. The ability of a free market to sustain a 'prosperous equilibrium' is more and more under question. Private property based market tends to be unstable, get stuck in an equilibrium with high unemployment, and is becoming absolutely unsustainable. All that raises doubt about whether a free market and private property is an adequate foundation for a stable, free society.

To wrap the argument, property rights generate an unjust inequality of power that leads to a less-than-equal liberty for the working class.

Solution is probably not in the nationalisation of property but in a system of strong governmental control over market mechanisms.

3. Liberalism is not Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism, in its most general form, claims that one should assess persons, actions, and institutions by how well they promote human happiness. Since there are many assumptions on human motivation, I will raise

only one argumentation line for the sake of a paradox this concept holds in a post modern environment. However one understands happiness either in a sense of psychological egoism (hedonism, pleasure) or as J.S. Smith understood it, as a relationship between happiness and duty, any theory that holds individual happiness as a criterion is in a serious clash of relevance with the fact that modern medicine and psychiatry hold the means to artificially help any individual to become happy or at least not to be in pain. Modern antidepressants are by some theories used to produce 'happy consumers' and perpetuate current political/economic system. Data shows that usage of antidepressives in western countries increased by two fold in the decade before the crisis (2008).

> **In the United Kingdom** the use of antidepressants increased by 234% in the 10 years up to 2002.¹

In the United States a 2005 independent report stated that 11% of women and 5% of men in the non-institutionalized population (2002) take antidepressants.²

A 2002 survey found that about 3.5% of all people in France were being prescribed antidepressants, compared to 1.7% in 1992, often for conditions other than depression and often not in line with authorizations or guidelines.³

Data from 1992 to 2001 from the Netherlands indicated an increasing rate of prescriptions of SSRIs, and an increasing duration of treatment.⁴

So, to come back to freedom and free will. What sense does it make? If a liberal ideal is becoming artificially produced happiness, Can this happiness be translated into liberal ideal?

Sebastjan Piki

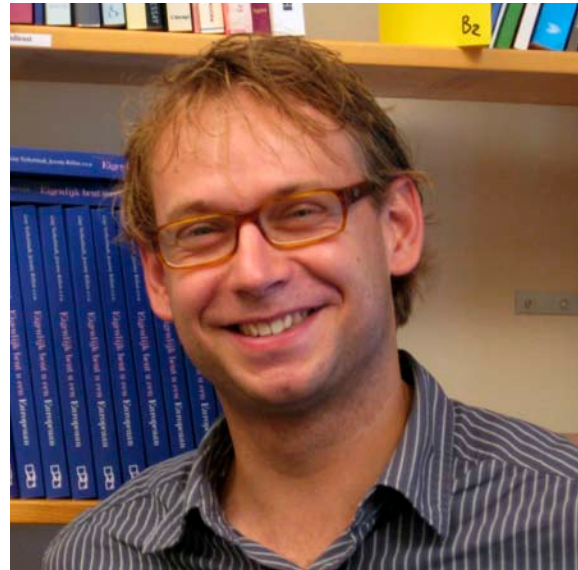
Institut Novum

1 National Institute for Clinical Excellence, 2004)

2 Stagnitti, M. (2005) Antidepressant Use in the US Civilian Non-Institutionalized Population, 2002. Statistical Brief #77. Rockville, MD: Medical Expenditure Panel, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

3 Olié, JP; Elomari, F; Spadone, C; Lépine, JP (October 2002). 'Antidepressants consumption in the global population in France' (in French). *L'Encéphale* (Elsevier) 28 (5 pt. 1): 411-7.

4 Meijer W, Heerdink E, Leufkens H, Herings R, Egberts A, Nolen W (2004). 'Incidence and determinants of long-term use of antidepressants'. *Eur J Clin Pharmacol* 60 (1): 57-61.



Corina Hendriks & Frank van Mil

Seminars like ‘Liberal Principles Compared’ give me an excellent opportunity to touch base with my core convictions. Because it took place in a hospitable environment, inhabited by many like minded spirits, the seminar guaranteed a constructive and refreshing dialogue.

Our concept of liberalism

In this brief paper we determine the five guiding principles that are most essential to our concept of social-liberalism as well as the five positions which in our view are explicitly non-liberal.

Five positions that are essential to D66' concept of liberalism: our 'guiding principles'

1. Trust in peoples own capabilities

A key feature of D66' concept of liberalism is that we start all our political reflections from the point of view of the individual, the smallest nucleus in society. Every person should have the freedom to lead its life the way he or she deems fit: society should be arranged in such a way that people can define and develop their own vision of the 'good life', without the interference of others. We allow the freedom for the individual because we believe that people have the (potential) strength and capabilities to do so. Potential, because often the strength and capabilities of people need to be nourished and strengthened by good education and a basic level of economic security.

While propagating the freedom for individuals to unleash their talents and lead their own lives, we also acknowledge that individuals do not live in a social vacuum. That they do not – metaphorically speaking – live on an island. Individuals are humans in social interaction and in one way or the other always in search

of recognition from others. More and more different forms of cooperation between individuals gain in significance in society as traditional structures dissolve (life time employment, families, labour unions, pension scheme's etc). People (single and plural) usually, individually and/or jointly, have more talents and creativity for solving societal issues than governments could ever aspire to command. D66 views it as very important to keep this presumption in mind. We should facilitate this creative potential by giving freedom and opportunities for bottom-up societal initiatives to prosper.

2. Think and act internationally

Building upon the conviction that individuals are social beings, our concept of liberalism promotes an unbiased view to diversity: to others, to people who live their lives in different ways. The right concept of individualism according to our social-liberal view implies that people are aware of the consequences of their actions on others (and the environment, see A4); others in the same street, others in other social strata, others in other countries. In our concept of liberalism, individuals can and should look across borders with an open mind, and act accordingly.

In more concrete terms, this openness implies a strong support for the European Union (Europe is domestic) and for international and multilateral cooperation. Cooperation on a global level is the key to a world with lesser conflicts, war and shortages.

3. Reward accomplishment, and share the wealth

The diversity in society that results from the individual freedom to live one's own life, is viewed by D66 as advantageous for society as a whole. Through diversity and openness our society and economy thrive; if all people can work according to their own talents and interests, the society at large benefits.

People are never the same, and differences – and different achievements – in society should be allowed and rewarded. Every individual should get the opportunity and freedom to reach for the highest and the fullest expression of his or her capabilities. But despite being different, people are equal before the law and should have the same chances and opportunities to create a 'good life' for themselves; in terms of e.g. education, jobs and housing. Furthermore, our concept of liberalism results in a view of society that is just and fair: together we take care of the people who cannot take care of themselves, and it is consequently self-evident that we share our wealth. Liberalism is alien to a philosophy of collectivism, it is strongly committed to solidarity amongst people.

4. Strive for a sustainable and harmonious society

In our concept of liberalism, society is not only just and fair, but it is also sustainable; we not only take into account the consequences of our actions for current generations, but also for future ones. We live in harmonious or respectful relationship with the environment as well as with the people that surround us, now and in the future. True individuals live their lives with responsibility for the whole: taking care of the continuity of our society is a moral obligation.

The earth is not ours, and is therefore not an object of use, not a disposable. We should stop exhausting and

polluting our environment. It is not the preservation of the (natural) environment that should be discussed, but the reversal of policies that lead to its degradation.

5. Cherish fundamental rights and shared values

Underlying all these principles, are various fundamental values – codified in rights – that universally apply to all individuals around the world: the freedom and equality of all human beings regardless of beliefs, religion, sexual orientation or (ethnic) origins. We firmly believe in the physical integrity of individuals – the freedom to choose what happens to your own body. Respect for our democratic laws and procedures as well as respectfully used freedom of speech are central pillars on which our concept of liberalism rests. We protect the fundamental rights of ourselves as well as those of others.

Five positions that are explicitly non-liberal, and why so...

1. Categorically putting the community/groups before the individual

Our concept of liberalism does not involve beliefs that take the community as the core nucleus of society nor statements that reduce individuals to the group or community they supposedly 'belong' to. Though by nationality a Turk or a Moroccan, individuals of this national origin are not solely Turkish or Moroccan. The identity of individuals is plural, and people have different roles in different contexts: a person can be a father, a teacher, a neighbor, a YUP or hipster, a Manchester-fan and a Londoner, all at the same time.

The identity of individuals is a private affair. Though firmly believing in the freedom of the individual and denouncing community thinking, liberalism for us is not based on a 'context-free' individual: positions that take the individual as a person apart from its social environment are not liberal. People continuously combine their efforts to influence the world around them. Sometimes, the relations between people are formal, hierarchic and well-established (in for instance churches or trade unions), but increasingly so these relations are informal, based on equality and more ad hoc ('light communities'). In the public domain, free individuals cooperate to solve societal issues.

2. A dogmatic belief that markets will always produce optimal and fair results

In the past, liberalism has often been equated with a belief in the effective and efficient functioning of markets: markets are always to be preferred above government intervention because markets produce the most efficient and fair results. Furthermore, it is often said that markets offer the most freedom to individuals and are therefore 'natural' to liberalism. Our concept of liberalism rejects this dogmatic belief in market mechanisms and market parties: markets are scarcely efficient by themselves (effective market functioning always requires legislation and regulation) and the homo economicus does not exist (people usually take altogether different decisions than rational actor theories predict). Furthermore, sometimes markets can produce fair and just outcomes, but in general markets have no morality: it is the price incentive that prevails, not a moral compass.

3. Categorically dismissing the state/government as a possible solution for problems in society

Reversely, liberalism has often been equated with anti-state theory. The more room there is for the individual, the better; so government intervention is unwelcome. One good look into history however refutes this statement. Liberal thinkers were the first to invoke state intervention in order to abolish feudalism and protect property rights. Liberals in our country took the first steps in the development of the welfare state to emancipate the individual and protect workers' right (e.g. legislation against child labour): people could only truly be free and influence their own destiny when protected by a neutral state that loosened them from social and economic fixed networks. Henceforth, state intervention is necessary for the freedom of individuals. It is not so much a big state that is needed, but a strong state nevertheless.

4. Claiming that one holds the absolute truth

In the current debate about identity and integration the liberal concept of protection of human rights and fundamental values is often extended to include statements about what (national) citizenship should look like, and what the state should do to protect the rule of law. In this view, the state therefore should define what set of rules, knowledge and behavior qualifies as proper integration and when it is achieved. In our concept of liberalism, the state is neutral in this respect and all citizens should abide by the laws of the country. People amongst themselves determine the precise definition of fundamental rights. The rule of law applies also to the state, that is entrusted to protect the citizen. Philosophically, we think that no one can

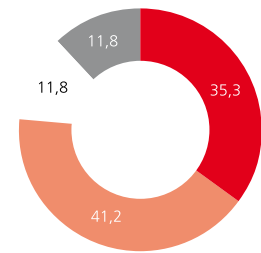
hold an absolute truth. Only in the public domain can people come to a consensus about what values we hold. Liberals should always be open to discuss their liberal principles, and accept the idea that even they might be wrong.

5. Stating that sustainable development is secondary to economic growth

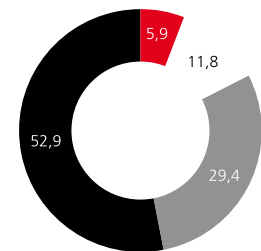
Leftist political ideologies are often associated with the care for our environment while liberals are associated with care for our money. Liberals supposedly think first about economic growth, and second about sustainability. In our concept of liberalism this is a false dichotomy. Not only is proper economic growth also sustainable growth (in terms of the sustainable use of resources, capital, labour and nature) but care for the natural environment more specifically is intrinsically part of liberal thought: as free individuals we take responsibility for the world we live in. That is our concept of real individualism and liberalism, such as it is explained as the social-liberal view in this document.

Corina Hendriks and Frank van Mil

Mr. Hans van Mierlo foundation



3/5 Religious symbols should be banned in schools



4/5 The state should help with the funding of mosques and churches because they help people find their place in society

■ totally agree
■ agree
■ neutral
■ disagree
■ totally disagree



Patrick van Schie

The seminar on ‘Liberal Principles Compared’ was very useful, because it stimulates one’s thoughts when one is confronted with the quite different ways in which liberals, who of course are supposed to agree on some common principles, can give interpretations to these principles and even how they lay stress on different basic principles. Within the context of the European Liberal Forum it is very practical to have more information on the values that guide the organization; it would be good to have position papers of all the member organizations and to lay down as a condition the presentation of such a paper by each candidate member.

Position paper for the ELF-seminar

Five main liberal principles, according to the Telders Foundation

1. Freedom for the individual, who has to be able to develop himself within his own domain

True liberalism means that the individual is the point of departure and the touchstone for all political thought and action. Personal freedom is the most central value, which – when in conflict with other values – must in principle be given priority. This freedom is, of course, limited by the harm principle, that is the freedom of other individuals. An individual must be able to make his own choices; he must be autonomous.

2. Responsibility

Responsibility means, first of all, that the individual is to be held responsible for (the consequences of) his own actions. It is not acceptable if other individuals or society have to bear the burden of what results from an individual's free decisions. In the public domain, responsibility means that power always has to be democratically accountable. No public power without democratic control and accountability.

3. Rule of law, including equal vertical rights and power equilibrium

All collective enforcements must rest on laws that have come about democratically. Nobody, including government (agencies) is above the law. Equality in a liberal sense means that all citizens are equal before the law, and that the government is not allowed to differentiate groundless between citizens. As an extra check to

power (encroachments), each power (institution) must be counterbalanced by at least one other able power (institution).

4. Spontaneous order as the norm, complemented by a strong but really limited government

Liberals do believe that the spontaneous order is a result of the free actions based on choices made by all different individuals. In the economic sphere, this means that the free market is not only the most efficient but also the morally preferable economic order. The state has limited functions, but in performing these functions it has to be strong. Those limited functions include the safeguarding of security, the construction and maintenance of infrastructure, and contributing to the autonomy of individuals via education and subsistence aid for the unable.

5. The nation state as the embedded foundation of a liberal order and upholder of the national interest

Individual rights and a liberal order cannot be free-floating; if they will mean anything, they have to be firmly embedded in a nation state. The liberal nation is not a fixed concept, but it is the result of how the people define it (Renans 'daily plebiscite'). The first obligation towards the citizens of this nation state, is to stand up for the national interest vis-a-vis other countries.

Five positions not compatible with liberalism, according to the Telders Foundation

1. Patronizing and enforcement of 'solidarity'

Individuals know best what is good for themselves; no one else should prescribe what would be better for them unless it is to prevent harm to other individuals. Liberals can recognize 'solidarity' as a principle that *may* have value, but only if it concerns solidarity arising out of the free will of individuals. The state should have no business forcing citizens to 'solidarity'.

2. Striving after equality of individuals

The only equality a liberal can embrace, is equality before the law. Civilians are all unique and different as individuals, and all have the right to make their own choices. No one is equal to another person, not in his or her nature nor in his or her position within society. A policy that strives after societal equality, can only bring about unacceptable encroachments upon liberty.

3. Reform of society from above

Liberals certainly have ideals, but they should not act as idealists. This means that their ideals should always be in conformity with realities and with the wishes of the citizens. For example, continuous European integration driven from above (by politicians) without explicit support from the electorate, is a violation of the main principles of liberalism.

4. Extra space/rights for specific groups, i.c. privileges

As each individual is equal before the law, it is for a liberal wholly unacceptable to give (so called) minority groups a privileged position and/or extra rights. This extends to religious groups, ethnic groups, gender or whatever category. For example, no one should have a more extended right of free speech when he refers to a holy book, than someone else who does not. Also, 'positive action' on behalf of women or ethnic minorities, does not respect the members of these groups as individuals while it violates the equal rights of non-members of these groups.

5. Juridisation

Liberals believe in an independent judicial power. This means that in the application of laws in specific cases, judges must in their decisions be free from external pressure. It does *not* mean that verdicts of judges are above criticism. And it becomes even dangerous when these verdicts are taken as new policy lines, unalterable by representative bodies of the people. Parliaments and other representative bodies should always be able to change general laws after specific judicial verdicts, for future events; if this is not granted, democracy will be strangled by an over-extended judicial power.

Patrick van Schie en Fleur de Beaufort

Telders Foundation



Giulio Ercolessi

Comparing the different brands of liberalism – each sometimes claiming, in some countries, to be the only one that deserves the label, and in others fiercely competing with each other – is a necessary exercise if we want to restore the substance of our public debate, and is particularly necessary to our own political family, as the word ‘liberal’ carries different meanings – sometimes very different indeed – within the different national political traditions.

Liberal Principles Compared

One

Liberal democracy appears to be in a very bad shape almost everywhere. Almost everywhere we have to face decisional paralysis, all vested interests hijacking political institutions, furious electors, outraged youth. Every now and then, short-lived enthusiasm arises around a new and flamboyant leader, that systematically create new disappointment shortly after the wave of enthusiasm expires.

Liberal representative constitutional democracy appears to have fallen into disrepute, and the marriage between democracy and liberalism no longer appears indissoluble in the eyes of many of our fellow citizens.

This is also a consequence of a lack of political debate and ideas, as in most of our democracies we are no longer used to choose policies, rather, we are asked to select personalities. Political principles, competing interests and views on social affairs, historical perspective, different ethical values seem to be less and less important than witty remarks or jokes within the framework of infotainment provided by the media.

The average quality of the political class is bound to deteriorate further, as the first quality required of a politician is more and more that of not caring about his/her reputation too much: if it is the personality and the character that matters, and not the political choices, negative campaigning is bound to grow even further, in Europe as it has been the case in America. As a consequence, the qualities required of candidates are also less and less those necessary to be effective demo-

cratic leaders, capable of mastering a complex political and economical international perspective, of understanding the existing constraints, of seeing the risks of unintentional consequences of political decisions – already difficult enough – and being recognised as political leaders, and win an election, and be re-elected after doing what was to be done.

Liberalism, as the archetypal form of ‘government by discussion’, risks to be the most distinguished victim of these developments.

Half a century after Bernard Crick’s classical booklet, a new ‘Defence of Politics’ is probably necessary to all the existing political families, in order to give a political significance to a real European-wide democratic debate; that obviously requires, at least, a shared vocabulary. But comparing the different brands of liberalism – each sometimes claiming, in some countries, to be the only one that deserves the label, and in others fiercely competing with each other – is a necessary exercise if we want to restore the substance of our public debate, and is particularly necessary to our own political family, as the word ‘liberal’ carries different meanings – sometimes very different indeed – within the different national political traditions.

Liberalism, more than any other political thought, is after all not only one of the main political ideologies of the Western civilization: it the one that shaped more than any other the very civic and cultural fabric of the Western civilization in the contemporary age.

Two

The brand of liberalism that was mostly recognized as such, after the end of World War II and until a few decades ago, the one that largely influenced most of the political spectrum in most Western democracies throughout the Cold War, not only required the guarantee and the implementation of the individual liberties that were trampled by communist and other totalitarian regimes, but also included a push towards an ever greater inclusion and empowerment of each individual in the actual exercise of his/her citizenship and liberal rights. That had originally been an typically liberal idea, born in the Victorian age in the same country, England, that had given birth to liberalism two centuries before. The idea was that public powers should actually put the individual in the condition of making real use of his/her liberal liberties. The Welfare state was first conceived and designed by liberals as Keynes and Beveridge, who were card-carrying members of the Liberal Party, not by socialists or social democrats. And for years, not only communists, but also a lot of mainstream socialists, had been accusing the wicked liberal economist John Maynard Keynes for having rescued capitalism from its certain downfall, thus preventing the rise of a happy global socialist society.

It is a fact that almost all national political classes and state bureaucracies had long been squandering since, for their own advantage, much of the benefits they were supposed to make available to a majority of citizens. A healthy liberal mistrust towards ever possible abuses committed by the holders of political power, and a less naive and more sober notion of democracy, should obviously have suggested that 'public' is by no means equivalent per se to 'caring for public interest'.

But, as it frequently happens in politics – and in social sciences – an overreaction took place since the late Seventies on both sides of the Atlantic, in the end substituting the liberal consensus that had been shared in most Western countries by the moderate left and the moderate right alike while we were containing and opposing Soviet communism, with the so-called *Washington consensus* of the Nineties, that was much less interested in the expansion of the aggregated demand and therefore more inclined to accept growing inequalities, and, inevitably, also decreasing equality in opportunities.

In some countries, namely in France, and elsewhere to a smaller extent, that essentially merely economical doctrine became synonymous with liberalism, to the point that the previous meaning – liberalism as synonymous for political freedom and freedom of conscience in the first place – has been long labelled as *vieilli* (outdated) by French dictionaries (Robert): so that even the Chilean Pinochet regime of the Seventies and Eighties can be defined as *libéral* in the present French political debate.

Anyway, this new basically economical consensus, not the comprehensive liberal political views that embodied the Western opposition to communism from the Forties more or less to the late Seventies, was the ideology upon which the globalised world was restructured after the fall of communism.

At the beginning it was a success, because of the enormous growth caused by the more open societies in general and by the opening of totally new markets; and most of all by the simultaneous huge technological revolution; and, later, due to the practice of easy indebtedness.

The subsequent global economic crisis still ongoing, and the consequent discredit that the most radical interpretations of the *Washington consensus* are undergoing, should not be allowed to drag liberalism into disrepute together with them.

A liberal society cannot survive without a free market economy, not only because private enterprise is an expression of individual freedom, and because the economical development that it alone can make possible is necessary in order to achieve a satisfactory degree of human development, but also because a liberal society must be polyarchic: political power, economic power and media power should be as much separate as possible. Strong counter-powers to the political power are vital for a liberal society.

It is however not only a long overdue tribute to historical accuracy, but also a statement of fact, that different views on the extent of legitimate and suitable state intervention, and different ideas on the desirable level of equality of opportunities, have always been present in the history of contemporary liberalism.

As far as *Critica liberales* is concerned, our foundation has always identified with the more 'progressive' and Millian notion of liberalism. However any possible choice in the field of economic policies has to come to terms with the constraints of globalisation and interdependence; and freedom of trade – as Spinoza, Voltaire and Kant had already seen – nowadays globalisation and interdependence, are the strongest ever guarantee for peace among the great world powers (and therefore today the strongest guarantee against any risk of a future nuclear war).

Three

Both more Keynesians and more free-trader liberals should find a common ground on the overriding importance they both attach to the freedom and free development of the personality of each single individual: personal freedom, freedom of speech, the right to a due process of law, protection from discrimination on the ground of ascribed identities (ethnicity, physical characters, age, disability, sex, gender, sexual orientation) or on the ground of political, cultural and religious choices; and equal social dignity. The rule of law, human rights, liberal constitutional democracy are nowadays the shared heritage of all the democratic political families in Europe, but they all are the outcome of liberal initiative, liberal imprinting, liberal intellectual leadership in the past. We should be their most demanding interpreters today.

The ever impending risk of the 'tyranny of the majority' is nowadays most notably visible in the debate concerning the rising and aggressive claims of religious fundamentalisms (both Christian and Islamic), the new bioethical issues, prohibitionist policies and the controversies over multiculturalism.

On all these issues we should stick to the rule that basic constitutional principles – individual liberties, equal rights and dignity, the rule of law, democracy – are the only acceptable binding civic bonds of an open society (this is what some of us call the 'patriotism of the Liberal Grundnorm', with an explicit reference to Jürgen Habermas's idea of 'constitutional patriotism' and to Hans Kelsen's idea of Grundnorm), despite the claims of populists and religious fundamentalists. This implies that the state, or public powers, can never be entitled to forcefully protect adult and sane individuals from

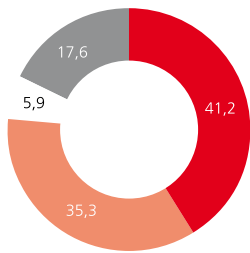
themselves (“every man has a property in his own person”, John Locke 1690); that individuals should always be treated as individuals, not as individual members of typified groups; that cultural diversity can never justify a compression of individuals’ rights within minority communities or those of minorities within minorities; that faith, ideas and practices of their elders can never be forcefully imposed on minors that are “capable of forming their own views” (New York 1989 Convention on the Rights of Children).

No better institutional framework could be provided, in order to protect these individual liberties and rights, than that provided by our great and successful liberal tradition of religious neutrality and separation – as large as practically feasible – between religion and political power. This achievement was the converging result of the struggles both of deists, free-thinkers, libertines and immanentist or atheist philosophers, and that of religious minorities. In the new multireligious situation, when many claim that ‘interreligious dialogue’ is the key to any peaceful coexistence, we should never forget that the fight for religious freedom and freedom of conscience was from the start a fight against the religious supremacy of the established churches (at that time in the form of compulsory uniformity and intolerance), and only in the end a fight against the scourge of state atheism in communist countries or against Islamic fundamentalism. The “wall of separation between church and state” (Thomas Jefferson, 1802) is even today the most secure and effective tool to protect the freedom of conscience of each single individual.

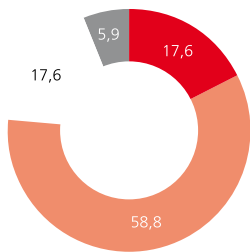
On the contrary, today many religious leaders demand a ‘public recognition’ on the part of our states and of

the EU itself. That is almost wherever in Europe the demand of Muslim leaders. And other established religions, first of all the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy, are thus trying to seize the opportunity to ask for a renewed ‘public role’ of all religions, that would inevitably confine non-believers in the position of second class citizens, like the Dhimmis in the Ottoman Empire; to try to impose on all of us, by law, personal behaviours only consistent with a faith many of us do not share, and even many more do not share in its traditional interpretation, as it is the case of tens of millions of Catholics. Or at least they want to impose on all of us to pay more taxes to replace the voluntary contributions of those whose faith is no longer strong enough to contribute financially to the life of their churches as they did decades ago; or require that religious faiths and religious people and leaders be given a privileged rank in our secularised societies. But what does this ‘public role’ mean? What supporters of new, ‘open’, ‘updated’ or ‘positive’ *laïcité*, or of a new ‘public role’ of religion, should explain is very simple – and usually untold: what public resources, what superior social dignity, what greater role, what power of influence should be given to groups qualified or recognised as ‘religious’, and denied, taken away or refused to all the others? And where should we draw the line between what is and what is not religious? Answering these questions would make things much clearer, and liberals should never desist from asking for clear answers.

An even more open threat to open societies comes from those populist politicians who want no ‘religious dialogue’ at all, but use the autochthonous religion, or whatever other item they find in their country’s real or invented ‘tradition’, as tools to exclude people of no or other religion, and autochthonous individualists



5/5 Everyone is equal before the law. Therefore the government should not introduce laws that promote positive discrimination (quotas for women, ethnic minorities, youth etc...)



6/5 Immigrants enrich the culture

■ totally agree
 ■ agree
 ○ neutral
 ■ disagree
 ■ totally disagree

alike, from their regressive dream of a society they would like to make more cohesive and intolerant through a renewed authoritarian imposition of some kind of anthropological uniformity.

Christianity is for them nothing more than an ideological weapon to be brandished against immigrants. One thousand years ago, Europe could indeed have been described as synonymous for Christendom, and each of its emerging nations was – or had just become – Christian. No longer today: our Europe is more secular and liberal than any other part of the world, and religiously plural. Claims for national identities, or for a European identity, based upon a single religion, or indeed on one single culture, are not candid, innocent claims: what is claimed is a exegetic principle, a criterion to be implemented in the interpretation of the entire system of law, creating first and second class citizens.

The biggest challenge of the present time is the paradoxical erosion of the most precious historical values typical of our common civic identity, by populist politicians who pose as the keepers of our ‘real’ identity and tradition, and would like to cage all of us into closed homogeneous and mutually hostile communitarian enclosures, the smaller and the more controlled the better.

Four

The basic principles for liberalism in the XXI century are not difficult to be found. If the means necessary to implement them change along with the generations, the principles themselves should in the end be the same described by John Stuart Mill in 1859: “There is a sphere of action in which society, as distinguished from the individual, has, if any, only an indirect

interest; comprehending all that portion of a person's life and conduct which affects only himself, or, if it also affects others, only with their free, voluntary, and undeceived consent and participation [...] This, then, is the appropriate region of human liberty [...] framing the plan of our life to suit our own character; of doing as we like, subject to such consequences as may follow; without impediment from our fellow creatures, so long as what we do does not harm them even though they should think our conduct foolish, perverse, or wrong.”

Five

Liberal principles

A liberal society must be polyarchic: political power, economic power and media power should be as much separate as possible; judicial review and the independence of the judiciary must never be limited or restrained.

Basic constitutional principles – individual liberties, equal rights and dignity, the rule of law, democracy – can be the only binding civic bonds of an open society (patriotism of the ‘Liberal Grundnorm’).

Individuals should always be treated as individuals, not as individual members of typified groups.

At least a safety net – including basic health care and safety from poverty – should be guaranteed to individuals by public powers. Especially children should be granted the highest possible degree of equal opportunities.

There cannot be a liberal society without a free market economy. But the level and progressiveness / flatness of taxation is not a matter of principle, but a debatable matter of economic efficacy. Keynesianism is one of the major historical currents of Western liberalism.

Non liberal principles

Public powers can sometimes be entitled to forcefully protect adult and sane individuals from themselves.

Democratic rule, and democratic will, could sometimes be allowed to prevail over the rule of law and individuals' or minorities' freedom and human rights.

Public powers should promote or defend the traditional, and/or all, religious faith in order to enhance the cohesiveness and/or security of society.

Cultural diversity can sometimes justify a compression of individuals' rights within minority communities or those of minorities within minorities.

Parents always know what is best for their children: let them be free to impose their minor children the schools, ideas and practices they want.

Giulio Ercolessi

Critica Liberale foundation



Igor Caldeira

When we compare different ideological positions, or, to be accurate, before we do that, we must first have a clear view of our own principles and options. The very first advantage of the comparison work done during the Doorn Seminar is, precisely, forcing participants to have this introspective analysis. The second advantage is, then, the comparison in itself. Not only can we find different opinions when we debate, but we can (and we could, in fact), see even different ways of seeing the same problem, different angles; and, sometimes, though more rarely, even problems that we had not realized in our introspective work.

What is Liberalism for MLS members?

Background

Movimento Liberal Social was officially created in 2005, following three years of previous contacts between Individual Members of LYMEC. Its main goal is to promote Liberalism in Portugal. The movement is a political platform joining people who believe that the traditional divide in Portuguese politics, between a somewhat morally liberal but economically socialist Left, and a somewhat economically liberal but morally conservative Right makes little sense. We believe in an integral Liberal project for Portugal.

Its name (Social Liberal) was chosen partly because one of its founders was actually a member of the Dutch Social Liberal party, D66, and partly because in Portugal the word 'Liberal' is often associated with Right-wing politicians and people who are economically libertarian, but morally conservative. Our political spectrum goes nevertheless slightly beyond social liberalism, including members who identify themselves with a more conservative (or to say it in other terms, more focused in market) liberalism. Nevertheless, most of our members, when asked to answer the *European Political Ideologies test*¹ do tend to have, as a first result, 'Social Liberal'.

Graphic display

Before advancing into specific examples of what our members tend to see as liberalism or iliberalism, I would like to show three graphics that may help the reader to understand where we stand.

Some years ago, several members were asked to take the *Political Compass test*². The results can be seen in image 1 on page 85.

So, we can see, there is strong cohesion regarding social and moral Libertarianism, while members divided themselves in the economic Left/Right axis, with most members being on the Right. We can say that, overall, the political spectrum of MLS covers the Centre-Left and the Centre-Right of the Libertarian field, as we can see on image 2, page 85.

On a national level, nevertheless, our members, while consistently being on a morally Libertarian position, clearly put themselves on the economical Right. In the third graphic, you will be able to see *my personal* result in the Political Compass for the Portuguese national elections of 2009. Bear in mind that, in the international Political Compass, my results are usually in the exact economic Centre, or slightly Left-of-Centre (and so, normally, I am a 'Left-winger' in the context of MLS).

The results of other MLS members solidly put us in the Portuguese economical Right (at the same level of the two conservative parties, DSP and CDS, or even more to their right) but in the 'Libertarian-cosmopolitan' field, and usually more so than the very pro-European Socialist Party or the very morally liberal Left Block, who led the fight for abortion and gay rights in the last decade. (See image 3 on page 86).

Let us then see five examples of what may be seen as Liberal and *not* Liberal for MLS members. For this, I did a quick survey, and got fourteen answers, which while not being representative of the whole organization, still gives us some hints. Probably, the most interesting

Image 1
Results of MLS members

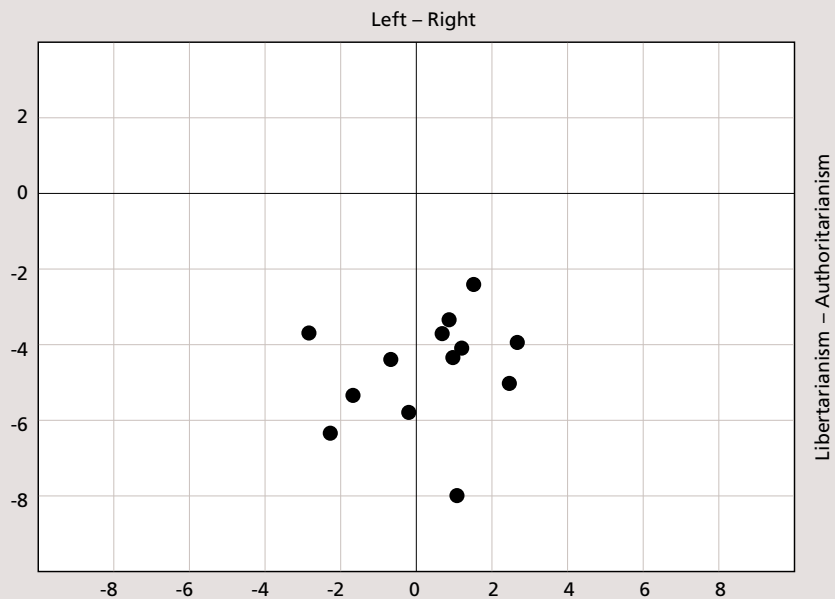


Image 2
MLS political spectrum

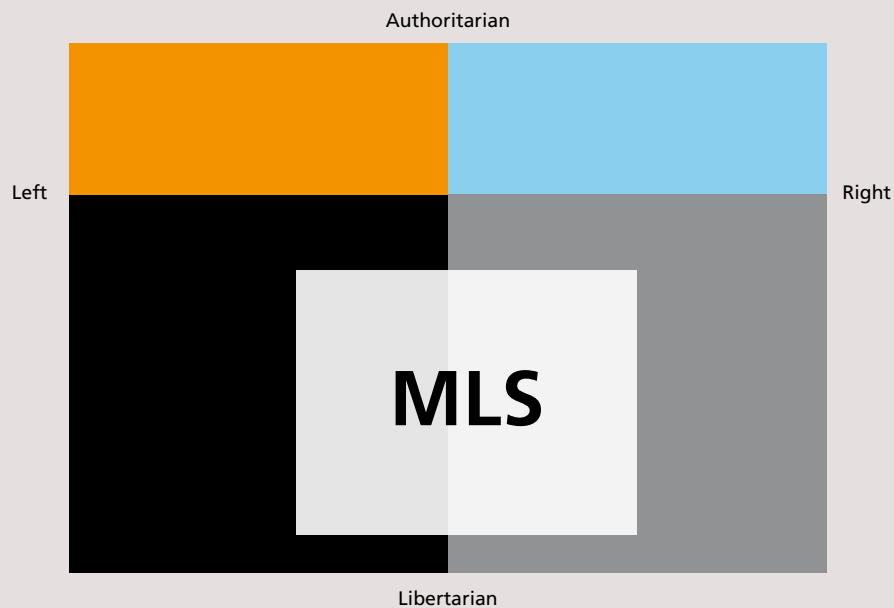
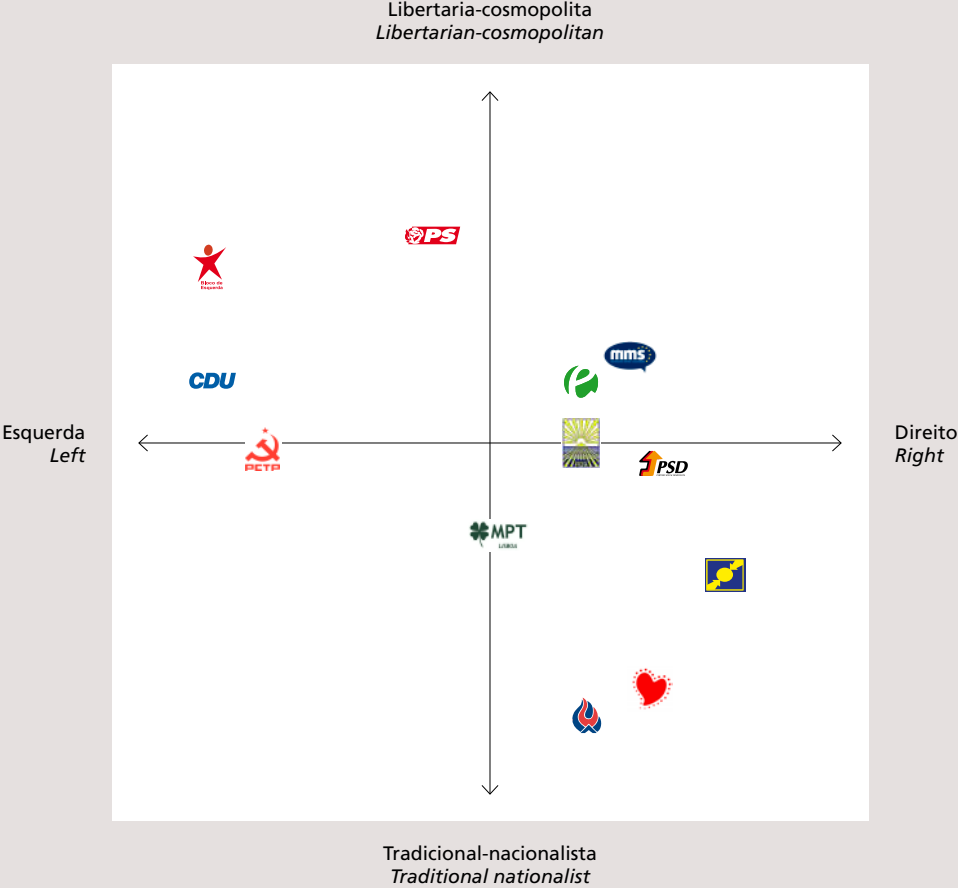


Image 3
Portuguese Political Compass



answer was the one given by a member to whom the most Liberal thing is ‘the State’ and the least Liberal thing was also ‘the State’. It is in my opinion the shortest, and the intellectually deeper, answer, but I will stick to something less challenging.

Five examples of Liberalism

1. Free trade

One of the most common answers is free trade. Our members are generally favourable to the abolition of tariffs in international trade. It may be questionable the extent of such abolition; generally, Liberals are against protectionism from underdeveloped countries. Still, some adhere to the ‘dumping’ thesis, namely, that restrictions may be put having in mind the respect for political rights or the respect for the environment. Nevertheless, our standing on issues such as the Common Agricultural Policy tells me that such thesis do not get much support among MLS members.

2. Low and simple taxation

MLS officially defends a flat tax on incomes and no corporate tax whatsoever. Specifically regarding corporate tax, it is curious that there was a consensus between the Left and the Right wings of the movement towards the abolition of such tax.

3. Same-sex marriage and adoption

Also almost consensual, LGBT rights have been one of our distinctive marks since the beginning. While marriage is already a reality in Portugal (one of the five European Union member-states in which it is allowed) since 2010, adoption is still polemic.

4. Drug legalization

I hesitated between mentioning abortion or drug legalization, since both got some answers. Nevertheless, abortion is a solved matter in Portugal since several years, through its approval with a broad majority in a national referendum. Regarding drugs, our position is much less consensual in society. While the consumption of drugs is allowed in Portugal, its trade is generally not so³. Our general position is that legalizing drugs will avoid the formation of criminal organizations and allow consumption to be moderated and controlled through normal market mechanisms.

5. Private provision of Education and Health

Much more problematic are the social policies, and this is where on MLS we do find a real division between Left and Right liberals. The general stance is that the State must not have a monopoly on the provision of such services. The questions arise in the modalities of interaction between State and privates. There are three general positions, which I will shortly describe going from the Right-wing stance to the Left-wing one. Minimum services for all, and the rest depending on individual savings; Voucher systems (the central and most common position, meaning also that there are several interpretations of how this would work); Traditional State provision with individuals being simply free to chose to go to private services.

Five examples of Iliberalism

1. Non-separation of State and religion(s)

The notions of secularism do diverge greatly, but on MLS the dominant one is of perfect separation of State

and religions. Between the French 'laïcité' (the State has no power in religions and religions have no power in the State), the Belgian 'neutrality' (in which there is public funding of religions) or the North-European secularism (in which there is a national church, but there may be also cooperation or privileges between the State and several other religions also), MLS definitively leans to the 'laïcité' model, so of complete independence (not interdependence nor 'collaboration').

2. Racism, segregation, discriminatory laws

Racism is one of the most common answers to this question. There is a consensual rejection of laws that discriminate individuals on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.. Less consensual, but majority, is the rejection, for the very same reason, of quotas (for women for example). Even if such instruments are well intended, our general understanding is that they create unnecessary paternalistic attitudes that focus on group's features, instead of simply leaving up to social interaction the conditions of success of each individual. The rejection of quotas is thus a reflex of our commitment to individualism and of our rejection of discriminatory policies.

3. Keynesianism, lax credit, nationalizations

Interventionist policies are generally rejected. There is a tendency towards a 'conservative' monetary and budgetary policy; *a fortiori*, nationalizations are out of question. But as we may see in the following point, MLS is not 'pro-business' either, in the sense it does not wish to transfer money from the State to corporations or protect them in any way.

4. Subsidies and fiscal incentives to economic activities

The counterpart of the 'no-corporate tax' position, is that the State must not subsidize companies either. This means that the European policies on agriculture and fisheries, for example, are absolutely rejected. Fiscal benefits for companies fall under the very same category, for they introduce complexity in the economy, and do not allow businesses to freely pursue their own goals.

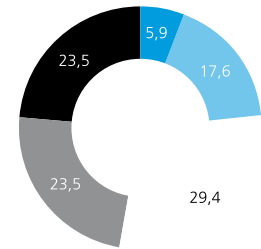
5. Traditional political values, such as patriotism/ nationalism or the monarchy

Not being a real question in Portugal, for the overwhelming majority of the population does not question the republic, this anti-monarchic sentiment within MLS actually has deeper roots. It consists in a rejection of any traditionalism. Probably more consensual than the rejection of monarchies is the distrust of patriotism. Generally, MLS members will answer *Strongly Disagree* to the Political Compass sentence 'I'd always support my country, whether it was right or wrong' and *Strongly Agree* to the sentence 'No one chooses his or her country of birth, so it's foolish to be proud of it'.

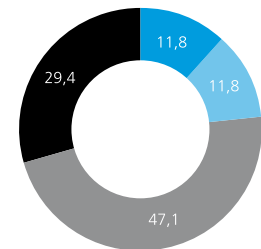
Igor Caldeira

Movimento Liberal Social

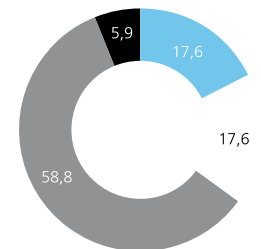
- <http://www.selectsmart.com/FREE/select.php?client=polphil>
Within the twelve ideologies mentioned in the test, our members tend to, besides having 'social liberal' as first option, having on the six top positions 'market liberal', 'third way', 'anarcho-capitalist', 'social democrat' and 'ecologist'. On the bottom six, we have 'christian democrat', 'anarcho comunista', 'libertarian conservative', 'classical socialist', and consistently, 'fascist' and 'communist' in the end.
- <http://politicalcompass.org>
- Though apparently there is a loophole in Portuguese law that leaves aside some synthetic drugs.



1/5 A legal requirement to carry an identity-card should be introduced



2/5 In criminal justice, punishment should be more important than rehabilitation



3/5 A curtailment of privacy is acceptable if it benefits security

■ totally agree
■ agree
■ neutral
■ disagree
■ totally disagree



Ronald Pohoryles

Comparing liberal values across Europe is not a mere philosophical task. Liberals are not only a community that shares principles, but political actors as well. Based on common shared values there are different ideas for the implementation of the principles in the decision-making process, different weight in the national political systems and, based upon this, a different scope of policy issues.

Charter of Liberales Forum

In *Men*, the Liberales Forum sees the creator of his own living conditions, empowered to use his free will and take responsible action. From this derives the obligation for him and for policy making to exemplify, awaken and permanently foster power of judgment and a personal and social sense of responsibility.

Political Liberalism seeks to guarantee and promote the opportunities for autonomy and self-fulfillment for the individual and for social groups; it opposes any form of authoritarian and dogmatic claims to truth in politics, culture and science.

Liberal Politics searches for a road between the extremes of untrammelled egotism and patronizing egalitarianism, leading to as much freedom as possible for as many people as possible. It rejects any restriction of liberty and human dignity as well as any discrimination on the grounds of gender, political conviction or ethnic affiliation.

Freedom can only evolve within a structure. The liberal structure is based on the safeguarding of liberty. *The democratic constitutional state* with the principles of the separation of powers and individual freedom of contract represents the polity best in line with safeguarding liberty.

In the economic sector, freedom can best unfold within a business framework based on private property, competition and the *free market*. The market economy ensures a maximum of performance and development potential. Threats to the market economy and eco-

nomic equality of opportunity must be forestalled by appropriate framework legislation.

The guarantee of material subsistence is a prerequisite of individual liberty. From this derives the *social dimension* of Liberal Politics. Ensuring freedom from poverty and want constitutes an indivisible mission for the individual *and* society. Nobody should be absolved from personal responsibility, but nobody should be exposed to impotence.

A healthy environment is the precondition for the free development of man. The destruction of the natural foundations of our existence is a threat to future generations' right to life. For this reason, *ecological responsibility* is an obligation for Liberals. Subjugation, violence and war represent the worst intrusions on the freedoms of other persons, groups or nations. Hence, Liberal Politics is fundamentally committed to a *world in and of peace*.

Freedom is not just a right, but also a responsibility.

What follows from the Charter?

The concepts of the Austrian Liberals are based on the liberal understanding of the individual, the society, the state, the market and the European integration.

Responsible Individualism

For Liberals, individual freedom of expression,

(religious) convictions and lifestyle is a core value. However, individual freedom is a right as well as an obligation. Personal freedom is incompatible with egoism. Individuals are members of a given society. Hence, the freedom of the individual ends where it limits the freedom of others. Respect for others is inseparable from individual freedom.

Individuals have to be protected against undue intrusion into their privacy, be it from the state, be it from social or corporate actors. Freedom and privacy cannot be played against security. In modern societies new technologies have brought about a serious challenge to the core values of human rights.

The commitment to individual freedom is universal: there can be no distinction between the fundamental rights of citizens with a given nationality and the fundamental rights of migrants and asylum-seekers. Liberals object any discrimination on the grounds of gender, religion, sexual practices and nationality.

Open Societies

The society organises the living together of individuals with different life concepts and their aspiration for autonomy and freedom. There is a necessary common understanding to ensure freedom and autonomy of the individual without damaging the rights of the other(s).

Liberals oppose any state intervention into the private life of individuals and into the norms and values of social groups on ideological grounds. Liberals stand for a democratic political culture that is based upon the responsible self-regulation of social and cultural groups, respecting the freedom of individuals and the common values of the society at large.

Value conflicts occur and have to be resolved by democratic deliberation. Conflict and consensus building are mechanisms for the progress of democracy and society and for social change. There is an obvious need to base conflict and conflict regulation on shared basic common values. Where self-regulation of the society does not suffice to protect fundamental rights of individuals or social groups, (legal) regulations and enforcement mechanisms are necessary to protect the society against political or religious radicalism and against ecological threats. The open society ensures the greatest freedom of its members, but has to be protected against its enemies.

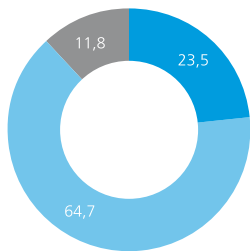
Free Market Policies and Market regulations

Market economy is the most efficient and effective mode of production and distribution of wealth and is historically closely linked to democracy. We can consider modern technologies and globalisation as challenges as they increase the complexity of the world-wide system. It is obvious that the Free Market needs efficient and effective regulations to ensure fair competition and responsible behaviour towards society and the environment.

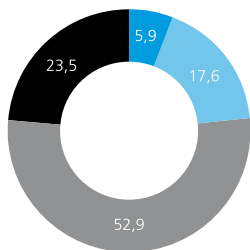
A Constitutional State as Societal Organisation

The democratic state is a form of societal organisation that has to serve individuals and society. Based upon democratic rules it is to be understood as an additional instrument complementing societal self-organisation. It has to regulate public affairs by setting laws and regulations where necessary.

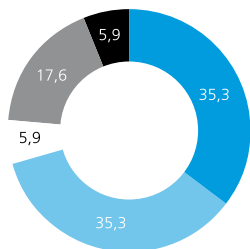
State, society and economy are in a delicate balance: the state has to guarantee social and economic stability and has to protect individuals and minorities against corporate and other forms of institutionalised power.



4/5 Only if one committed an offence or if one is misbehaving, he or she can be stopped for identification



5/5 Prostitution should be illegal



6/5 Prevention is always a first priority, further expansion of repressive authorities is not preferable

■ totally agree
 ■ agree
 ○ neutral
 ■ disagree
 ■ totally disagree

On the other hand, the state creates bureaucratic institutions and policy instruments that can come into conflict with the freedom of the individual and the principles of an open society.

Liberals oppose unnecessary interventions of the state in economy and society. However, a state based upon democratic articulation of the political will, has the responsibility to ensure human rights, social fairness, fair competition, ecological responsibility, security for its citizens and democratic participation.

Liberal Policy Strategies

Comparing liberal values across Europe is not a mere philosophical task. Liberals are not only a community sharing principles, but political actors as well. Based on shared values there are different ideas for the implementation of liberal principles in the decision-making process and liberal ideas may be more or less dominant in the national political systems. These factors result in a different scope of policy issues.

The Austrian Liberals are among the weakest liberal movements in the European Union. There are several reasons for this problem, most of which have a historical context. In the 20th century the creation of the 'Liberale Forum' came very late compared to the establishment of other political parties. It still has to

establish itself as a durable political force. Austria with its ultra stability in terms of mutual alignment between the social partners, and, with exception, the conservative party and the social democrats has up to now done little to improve the quality of democracy in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

Given the specific Austrian context the Austrian Liberals concentrate their efforts on three 'big issues':

- > Free market policies and the role of the state
- > Migration and integration
- > European integration: deepening and widening the European Union to fulfil the process of democratic unification.

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