

European Liberal Leadership of the Future

The European Liberal Leadership of the Future program took place in two sessions. The first session took place on the 6th and 7th of September in The Hague and the second session took place in Brussel on 22 and 23 November in Brussels. The main objective of this program was to exchange knowledge and experience of liberals on personal development. The participants who were invited to participate in the program were all active and talented members of their respective parties or political foundations. The program focused on topics such as personal branding, storytelling and dealing with contemporary media. And off course there was the opportunity for the participants to enforce their own personal network.

The Hague

On 6th of September fifteen participants arrived in The Hague where they first got acquainted with each other over diner. During this diner not only personal stories were shared but also personal and political ambitions.

On the 7th of September the participants were welcomed by Jock Geselschap, International Secretary of VVD International/Haya van Somerenstichting. After his introduction the first session of the program was given by Lennart Salemink, national board member Training and Talentmanagement of the VVD. We started off with an interactive exercise which forced the participants out of the comfort zone and into the growth zone. According to Lennart this is the zone where you as an aspiring politician should constantly be in. By the end of the session the participants were asked to give a 5 minute pitch about themselves, their ambitions and there political ideas before an audience of their choice.

After a break the participants gathered for the second session given by Daniel Tanahatoe, communication advisor of the ALDE Party. This session was a training on how to create the best personal communication strategy. The conclusion and valuable lesson for the participants was that in politics nothing counts more than being able to tell the media, and the public, what you stand for, why you stand for it, and how you are going to make it happen, once in power.

At last MEP Jan Huitema stood in front of the group for the last session on personal storytelling. During the European Elections of 2014 Jan Huitema was on number six of the list of candidates but by a smart and strategic personal campaign he received a lot of preferential votes and thereby becoming elected for the European Parliament. His key message for the participants is to tell your personal story with key personal references that voters can easily recognize during a campaign.

The day ended with a diner for all participants, where before leaving the next day they shared ideas about the sessions from this day.

The next day all the participants were invited to the VVD Europe Day where they met with all three MEP's Hans van Baalen, Jan Huitema en Caroline Nagtegaal and also VVD's main candidate for the European Parliament elections in 2019, Malik Azmani. They also had a productive meeting with Mark Rutte who shared some stories from his personal experiences in Europe.

Brussels

Two months later the participants met with each other for the second part of the European Liberal Leadership of the Future program in Brussels. On Thursday the 22th of November Stephanie Dörr and Erik Floor, office manager and policy advisor to MEP Caroline Nagtegaal welcomed the participants in the European Parliament for a tour and an explanation about the work in the European Parliament. This tour was followed by a diner.

On Friday the 23th of November the program started with a session by political strategist and communication specialist Radu Magdin from *Smartlink Communications*. During this session Radu discussed with the participants the influence from - and relation with traditional media. Since the participants were from different countries across Europe, Radu talked with the group about the different media landscapes throughout Europe and where the possibilities and difficulties lay for them. As an exercise the participants were asked to prepare for the role of journalist and the role of guest in a television interview. The main focus during this exercise was on posture and framing the answers given to the questions by journalist in a positive and beneficiary manner.

This session was followed by a training from Bartho Boer, Director of Communications at Dutch Railways on public speaking. As soon as the session started the participants were asked to put everything away and push the tables and chairs aside. With a great variety of exercises the participants developed their skills and worked towards a final speech at the end of the session. This thirty second speech was about the motivation of the participants to fulfill a political position within the EU or on a national level. After this session the European Liberal Leadership of the Future came to an end.

Conclusions

By the end of the Liberal Leadership of the Future program the participants were trained in a variety of skills. The main focus throughout the program was on telling your personal story. By the exercises done participants learned how to present not only their political ideas but learned to present them in a way that it appeals to their audience. Beside the variety of skills the participants got better acquainted with the work of the European Parliament and had the opportunity to extend their own personal network.