

Short report Warsaw workshop, Voice of Europeans

9-10 June 2019, PM na Trawie, Warsaw

It was second event in this series. After the session in Amsterdam, organized a week earlier, we could adjust the program and the exercises.

On 9th June, all participants gathered in Warsaw for a joint dinner to get to know each other in an informal setting. The conversation starter cards were not used this time since the discussion between the participants was very lively since they met in the hotel lobby. The dinner was the first moment to welcome all participants in Warsaw and give a short introduction to the topic.

Early on 10th June, so at 9am we kicked off the program with an official welcome done by Milosz Hodun of behalf of the ELF board and by Martine van Schoor on behalf of Stichting IDI. It was followed by a name game and a warm up exercise. In a session of 'across the line', participants reacted to statements by standing left or right of a line in the middle of the room, also giving insights on where people stood on topics of membership.

After the exercise Adam Szłapka MP, secretary general of Nowoczesna, gave a short introduction to how the Polish liberal recruit and mobilize members, and what challenges a broad collation of opposition parties bring as regarding the party membership.

Led by Martine van Schoor, the day proceeded in three parts, focusing on attracting new members, engaging & retaining membership and working with civil society respectively. All participants prepared examples of successful tools and strategies, which were openly shared in the 'party report' sessions. Examples ranged from activities on campus in Ireland, to political festivals with concerts in Hungary to Friday before parties with politicians in Iceland.

Further session was organized by Karen Chamberman, coordinator of youth and mobilization during the campaigns at Ciudadanos. Karen run an interactive session on how politicians and politics is seen by the people and how can it get closer to the politics. Later on she presented the organizational structure the Spanish liberals use (successfully) to attract new members.

After a lunch break, all participants went for a short guided tour in the parliament of Poland. The tour was led by Marek Szolc, member of Warsaw City Council and secretary of Nowoczesna in Warsaw.

The project continued with two more presentations. The first one was run by Caroline Stout and Steven Coenegrachts from Open VLD and presented the way Belgian liberals build and maintain their party structures. The second one was done by Annie Keegan from Fianna Fail. Annie explained how Fianna Fail keeps on being the largest Irish political party and how it survived a terrible membership crisis after lost elections.

The last session focused on parties' experiences on interaction with civil society. It was organized in format of work in groups of two.

The programme ended with an evaluation session and a dinner.

From our perspective it was a very successful event. It is crucial that it was based on peer-to-peer learning and all participants were involved in the process from the beginning to the end.