



INLW at the 40th ALDE party Congress

24 – 26 October 2019 Athens, Greece



This year the ALDE party met at Athens for its congress. The European Liberal Democratic political family was founded in 1976 ahead of the first European elections and was established as the first true transnational political party in 1993. Today the European Liberal family consists of more than 60-member parties across the continent and more than 80 members of the European

Parliament. Since November 2015, **Hans van Baalen** has been President of the ALDE Party.



ALDE MEPs are members of the new *Renew Europe Group in the European Parliament* and with 108 MEPs they are the third-biggest group in the European parliament. Last year at the congress in Madrid, **Astrid Panosyan**, one of the co-founders of La Republique En Marche (LREM) spoke on behalf of its leader Emmanuel Macron and made the commitment to work closely together in the new European Parliament with us. Today, we see that there is a united parliamentary group under the leadership of Davian Ciolos.

In the evening of our first congress day, Friedrich Neuman Stiftung sponsored the welcome reception/dinner around the swimming pool at the Hilton. During this very nice evening we met all the new parliamentarians who have been chosen in the European parliament and some of the potential candidates for the ALDE Bureau. The next day was started with some workshops and followed by the opening ceremony.



The official opening gave us inspiring speeches from many members.

Hans van Baalen began welcoming us ending his speech with the wish: “let’s unite and let’s go forward together”, followed by **Davian Ciolos**, the new Renew Europe leader in the European Parliament who stressed on our common values. The Renew Group defends the

liberal values actively. Important is creating welfare, while promoting economic opportunities, while mobilizing people. How can we transform challenges into opportunities? To create jobs; to mobilize the young generation to transform Europe and to have open mindedness is necessary to achieve this.

Xavier Bettel, the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, started giving vent to his deep regret about Brexit. He is convinced that if all details about Brexit had been said before the elections, then Britain would not have said no to Europe. He is one of the several liberal PMs and is making some important improvements in



Luxembourg. The separation of church and state, legalizing abortion, liberalizing drugs and same sex marriages are some of the new steps that he has taken with his government. He also wants to stress that Europe is a peace project and we must never forget this. That is something we can still ask our grandfathers who were willing to fight for our freedom. He received a warm applause from all participants.



Margrethe Vestager, executive Vice-president of the European Commission for a Europe fit for the Digital Age. She stressed that in this time, it is important to see each other, only digital contact is not enough. It is much easier to have a discussion once you are together in a room. One of the important issues for liberals is, that in a discussion

you can disagree and still all belong to the same party, that is part of our liberalism. Of course, we find the rule of law, to act with common sense and to respect each other also very important aspects.

Vera Jourova, vice-president for Values and Transparency. She added to focus on our liberal values such as equality, rule of law and respect. And stressed on the importance of the monitoring of corruption in the media, dis-information, medical freedom and protecting our journalists. They need more legal protection. We must pursue a peaceful and sustainable future. These issues will be important in the European parliament in the next term that has just started.

We will see our liberal MEPs and members of the Commission in their new roles working for our liberal values and for the time being Brexit and the result of that discussion will have much impact on the future of Europe. There was also an inspiring speech by Liberal International President, **Hakima el Haiti**, stressing that we liberals within Europe and in the rest of the world need each other and must support each other to achieve our goals of a liberal society, especially in the current situation of rising nationalism and populism in so many corners of the world.



There were many sessions in which all the amendments for the resolutions were discussed. We as member delegates had to be present during these sessions. Not only were the voting procedures for resolutions important but new vice-presidents had to be appointed. So, voting for persons was also one of our issues. One of the candidates was Baroness **Sal Brinton**. Baroness Sal Brinton will reach the end of her term as President of the UK Liberal Democrats and she finds it a privilege to become a member of the ALDE Bureau. Her motto was: “We need to fight like Liberals to defeat populism and prejudice”.



In the evening we were welcomed in one of Athens beautiful palaces: The Zappeion, this building was built for the Olympic Games and used in 1896. Many important events took place such as the official signature of the documents by which Greece became a member of the European Parliament on 1 January 1981.



The next day resolutions were accepted and finally the result of the election of the members for the ALDE Bureau was announced. Hans van Baalen was re-elected as ALDE Party President. INLW is very happy to announce that Sal Brinton has been chosen as one of ALDE’s new vice-presidents. The other new members chosen are: Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (Germany), Annelou van Egmond (the Netherlands), Ilhan Kyuchyuk (Bulgaria), Timmy Dooley (Ireland), Daniel Berg (Hungary).



It was again an interesting and pleasant meeting where many of our liberal friends were present. Many of us will follow the discussion on Brexit even more closely and hope that this important issue will be solved at the end of January 2020.



Next year in 2020 the ALDE congress will take place in Stockholm, Sweden.

The Dutch VVD Delegation at ALDE