

Liberal Democrats

Proud to be the Party of Europe



Our **political philosophy** is summarised in the preamble to our Constitution:

"The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity."



Liberal Democrats believe:

in **Liberty** (the freedom for individuals to make their own decisions), **Equality** (freedom from discrimination, poor education, poverty and disease), **Community** (dispensing government and economic power as widely as possible), **Internationalism** (to co-operate with rather than confront other nations) and **Environmentalism** (to sustain our world for future generations).

If you share our beliefs, why not think of joining the 'LibDem Family'. We think you will be pleasantly surprised at just how different we are.

Rights 
Liberties
Justice

This leaflet is promoted by Rights-Liberties-Justice (Liberal Democrat Lawyers Association), part of the Liberal Democrats, which fights for Liberal Values in Human Rights, Justice and the Law (www.Rights-Liberties-Justice.UK)

For more information or to join the **Liberal Democrats:**

www.libdems.org.uk

Liberal Democrats fighting for Europe - always

The Liberal Democrats have always been Internationalist and European.

In the 19th Century Liberal Prime Minister, William Gladstone, was a committed internationalist and an opponent of jingoistic nationalism.

In the 1930s Liberal (and architect of the NHS and Welfare State), William Beveridge, argued for a Federal Europe, which was the basis of Churchill's proposal for a union between France and Britain after the fall of Dunkirk.

In 1946 Winston Churchill's call for a 'United States of Europe', was supported by leading Liberals, such as Violet Bonham Carter. Even at this stage, it was clear that many in the Conservative leadership did not support Churchill.

The 1947 and 1948 Liberal Assemblies voted for greater European integration. Liberals were at the foundation of the European Movement in 1947.

In 1949 the Council of Europe was founded with Liberal contribution. Its aim was to help bring European nations closer together. Its main achievements are the creation of the European Convention on Human Rights and Court of Human Rights.

In 1951 the Labour Government opposed joining the European Coal and Steel Community.

In 1955 The Conservatives under Anthony Eden took little interest in the Messina Conference that led to the Treaty of Rome and the EEC. Indeed, one observer noted that throughout most of the conference the British 'representative never opened his mouth unless it was to insert his pipe.'

In 1956 Jo Grimond became leader of the Liberals and was the first party leader to support joining the European Community.

In 1959 Labour voted against a Liberal amendment that Britain should join the European Community and not EFTA.

In 1960 and 1961 Liberal Assemblies overwhelmingly voted for Britain to join the European Community.

In 1962 in response to the Conservative application to join the European Community, Labour Opposition leader, Hugh Gaitskell, declared it was "the end of Britain as an independent European state, the end of a thousand years of history!"

In 1972 Liberals with Labour MPs, such as Roy Jenkins and Shirley Williams, who opposed their own Party's opportunistic stance, helped Edward Heath to pass the European Community Act against Conservative right-wing objections.

In 1975 Liberals were united in supporting 'Remain' in the European Referendum. Harold Wilson and Margaret Thatcher also supported 'Remain'. However, the Labour and Conservative parties were split with Enoch Powell and Ian Paisley joining sides with Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn to oppose membership.

In the 1980s Liberals supported the Single Market promoted by Margaret Thatcher, ensured the passage of the Maastricht Treaty under John Major against Tory rebels and then supported the Treaties of Amsterdam (1997), Nice (2001) and Lisbon (2009).

In 2016 Liberal MPs unanimously supported remain and today support the People's Vote believing Britain's place is in an ever-closer Europe.

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