

Long report on ELF Seminar ‘Brand Yourself, Present Yourself’

Brussels (Belgium), Friday 30 November 2018 to Sunday 2 December 2018

Introduction

This European Liberal Forum (ELF) seminar was the first of the three events part of the *Young Changemakers Academy* (YCA) programme organised by the European Liberal Youth (LYMEC) with the support of ELF, ALDE Party and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF). The YCA is a programme designed to encourage and prepare young people to take part, in the broadest sense, in the democratic process surrounding the elections to the European Parliament.

This first event of the YCA of 2018-2019 was specifically designed to provide hands-on training on a variety of skills to a selection of young European activists from all over Europe, including presentation skills, personal and political branding, networking skills, cybersecurity, and the writing and delivery of speeches. In practice, the event pursued the following objectives, divided into two parts.

The first part was titled “Protecting your Data and Networking” and took place on Friday, 30 November, with the following objectives:

- Becoming familiar with the ins and outs of political networking – mingling with a goal
- Understanding the dangers linked to data protection and how to protect data

The second part was titled “Branding, Speechwriting and Rhetorics” and took place on Saturday, 1 December, with the following objectives:

- Learning the key aspects to writing and delivering a speech, including
- Understanding how to build on personal strengths and building an own political brand in accordance with those

Audience and selection

The activists partaking in this three-event programme were selected based on the criteria of need, aptitude (ability and willingness to learn) and full availability for each of the programme’s events. Each Member Organisation of LYMEC was encouraged to submit one candidate with a nomination letter, a motivation letter written by the applicant, and the applicant’s CV, within a period of fifteen days. That period closed with thirteen applicants. Out of thirteen, ten were selected. The number of spots had been determined earlier, based on budget available for each of the events. All was communicated by email well in advance.

In one instance, an applicant showed to already have mastered many of the skills the programme offered; in another, an applicant communicated their unavailability for at least one of the events. In a last instance, one Member Organisation submitted two applicants and it was considered, provided eleven eligible applicants remained for only ten spots, that it would make sense to only select one of the two applicants from that Member Organisation.

Overall, participants in this programme and event were evaluated also based on their potential for becoming *multipliers* of youth-led social, political and economic change founded in the principles forming the foundations of the type of activism and citizenship



encouraged by organisations such as ELF or LYMEC. This component is essential to any capacity-building activity organised or supported by LYMEC, as the objective is not only to prepare a specific selection of youths from all over Europe, but to also make an impact in their respective contexts. This also explains why an emphasis was placed on each Member Organisation having a fair chance at being able to have one of their own partake in the programme.

Highlights of the event

Based on the Microsoft Briefing Centre in Brussels, participants were invited on Friday at 4 pm on a very brief exploration of AI technologies currently being developed under the auspices of Cornelia Kutterer, Microsoft Senior Director of EU Government Affairs, who bid the group welcome. Right after, the event kicked off with an opening of the seminar given by Svenja Hahn, LYMEC President, and Jeroen Dobber, ELF Strategy and Coordination Manager.

Right after, Nemanja Malisevic (Cybersecurity and Democracy Team) and Ethan Chumley (Defending Democracy Program) from Microsoft provided a training session on cybersecurity, specifically targeting the issues surrounding political campaigns and projects. Friday's programme closed with a Networking Reception hosted by Microsoft, in which Adam Mouchtar, EU40 Managing Director, provided participants with advice on networking –as a very experienced political advisor–, and answered questions from the audience. Among the attendees to the reception was John Frank, Microsoft Corporate Vice President of EU Government Affairs, or several representatives of relevant youth players such as the European Youth Forum. Participants were thus also able to network themselves.

The programme on Saturday resumed with a first training session by Svenja Hahn (LYMEC President) whom, based on her expertise as a marketing professional, provided participants with a roadmap and tips for the development of their own political brand. Homework will be provided to participants for a next event based on the foundations provided by this first training.

A second session given by Kamran Ullah, editor of the news section of Telegraf (Netherlands) and experienced public speaking trainer for relevant political players such as the VVD, provided a foundation on rhetorics to participants and a number of tips relating to public speaking to cause an impression. His experience was especially useful in order for participants to obtain the press perspective on public speaking (how a journalist will listen to their discourse).

The third session of the day was provided by Guy Doza on the writing and delivery of speeches. In an interactive workshop, participants learned about a number of rhetorical devices, tricks about speech structure and tips about different approaches to taking different types of speech (based on purpose of the speech). In a second part of the workshop, participants were able to practice everything they had learned, writing and delivering their own speeches. Mr Doza provided them with feedback and personalised recommendations everyone could also learn from.

A last session was aimed at gathering feedback from participants for the purpose of identifying improvement opportunities ahead of the remaining programme events.

Assessment of outcomes and results of the event

All speakers provided a training matching their pertinent desired learning outcome as described in terms of objectives at the outset of this report. Both throughout the event and at the designated feedback session at the end of the event, participants were encouraged to provide positive and negative feedback. All feedback was positive, especially regarding speaker selection (Guy Doza was especially popular) and the training on cybersecurity provided by Microsoft.

A point of improvement that was noted for future editions of the programme is to really ensure the training on fundraising is delivered as early as possible in the programme. Albeit this had been our intention from the beginning, it ended up not being possible in the end due to the unavailability of key speakers on this area; reason why the training on fundraising had to be moved to one of the later events.

One of the tangible outcomes of this event and the skills acquired was a short presentation video each of the participants was encouraged to make using the skills learned, introducing themselves to the public, using the skills acquired. It was agreed with participants that LYMEC would be posting each of those videos within the next few months on its social media profiles, to provide them and the programme with exposure.

Another of the positive results of this first seminar has been the emergence of certain group identity. Certainly, the personalised approach of the programme (the LYMEC Bureau is permanently available to participants should they require any help), group size and the branding of the programme being around *changemakers* –all participants are motivated to change their respective social, economic and/or political realities– has encouraged them to bond and try to become valuable to one another. Successive events will build on this existing bond and we expect this to help in adding value to the programme both in the short-term and in the long-term and, hopefully, with the years, to the ELF and LYMEC political networks.

Conclusion

This first ELF event part of the Young Changemakers Academy was a real success in at least three different ways; in terms of participant opinion, in terms of the perceptible improvement in participant skills (as observed by speakers/trainers and organisers) and in terms of the level of attainment of the main collective objectives for this event and programme. The recommendation that follows from examining all of these positive results is to continue to invest in this programme and the specific topics of training for this event in the future. It has been suggested that this should turn into a yearly programme. Results from this event would certainly encourage that.