

democrats

UITGAVE VAN HET INTERNATIONAAL SECRETARIAAT D66

www.d66.nl/internationaal

D66 wins at national elections: 7% of the vote and 10 MP's in Parliament



On 9 May national elections were held in The Netherlands. D66 more than tripled its seats and now has 10 Members of Parliament. Party leader Alexander Pechtold remains responsible for Foreign Affairs. The new spokesperson for European Affairs is Gerard Schouw, Development Cooperation will be dealt with by Stientje van Veldhoven and Wassila Hacchi is spokesperson for Defence issues.

Masterclass Internationale Samenwerking

In het najaar 2010 organiseert NCDO de vierde jaargang van de Masterclass Internationale Samenwerking. Deze Masterclass is een intensief trainingsprogramma voor leden van politieke partijen.

Meningsvorming over politieke internationale kwesties staat hierin

centraal. Gerenommeerde sprekers uit binnen- en buitenland leiden thema's in: de toekomst van het Nederlands beleid voor internationale samenwerking, Duurzaamheid en Klimaat, Vrede en Veiligheid. Discussie en verdieping. Ben jij politiek geëngageerd en heb je interesse voor deze vraagstukken, meld je dan aan voor de Masterclass Internationale Samenwerking. Meer informatie en aanmelden (tot 29 augustus 2010) op <http://www.politiek2015.nl>.



Balkans in the process of globalisation

Ljubljana, 15th-18th July, LIBSEEN seminar attended by Ivo Thijsen, IDI Vice-president.



So what's LIBSEEN? It's the Liberal South East European Network that was founded to gather liberal political parties in the Balkans. It is the only network of its kind in the region. From the very beginning in 2008, IDI has been one of the main partners of LIBSEEN.

It was a great pleasure to attend LIBSEEN's

IDI in Turkey: "In search of Liberalism"

A combined delegation of the **Liberal South East European Network** (LIBSEEN), the **Democrats 66** of the Netherlands and **Liberal International** visited Istanbul and Ankara (24-28



May) to examine the prospects for development of liberalism in Turkey. At meetings with a number of NGO's, civic associations, international actors and the Liberal Democratic Party, the delegation learned about the stagnation in the reform processes that have

summer academy on behalf of D66 / IDI. This year, the meeting was dedicated to the topic *"What is the role of the Balkan/South East European region in the globalised world?"*. Although the world is indeed becoming a global village, Ljubljana seemed far away when I was stuck at Prague airport the first night due to weather conditions. It may not have been easy getting there, but it was totally worth it.

Next to discussing the political dynamics (or fatigue) of EU accession and new trade opportunities, we focused on the main transition still taking place in the region: from a culture of war to a culture of peace. According to one of the excellent speakers, the transformation should go hand-in-hand with a change from a culture of economy to an economy of culture.

After a number of years of economic reform, culture could be a new engine of growth. More importantly, culture may prove pivotal in winning back self-respect in the region. After all, not all (political) problems can be solved with political tools and economic growth. More cultural exchange in the area can also promote openness, curiosity and creativity. Incidentally, these three factors were mentioned by one of the other speakers as main requirements to benefit economically from globalisation. It's a small world after all.

been witnessed in the last years, as well as the endangered European perspective of the country. Songul Arslan, member of the IDI Turkey work group, and IDI coordinator Maartje Jansen participated on behalf of IDI. From now on IDI will work with individual liberals to promote liberal values and liberal thinking in current politics, academic circles and youth movements.

Political Cafe with Sophie in 't Veld in Istanbul

On 24 May D66 MEP Sophie in 't Veld presented a social liberal perspective on democracy and fundamental rights in a political cafe hosted by IDI in Istanbul. Ümit Izmen, Deputy Secretary-General of Tüsiad, explained about economic developments in Turkey since the Ottoman empire thereby enlightening the audience about the impact of these developments on political thinking. The discussion was moderated by Prof. Attila Yayla from the Association for Liberal Thinking.

Early October IDI will organise a second political café in Turkey. In cooperation with ARI movement the theme **"How to involve youth in politics"** will be discussed. Date, speakers and location will be announced on the website.

D66 in NIMD / Constitutional reform: Experience sharing in Africa

By Wouter Dol

As former Chief Justice of Namibia and South Africa Ishmael Mahomed stated, a constitution is the "mirror reflecting the national soul," it is not simply a statute which mechanically defines the structures of government and the relations between the government and the governed. It is the identification of the ideals and aspirations of a nation; the articulation of the values bonding its people and disciplining its government.



Highlighting the fact that not all is doom and gloom in relation to governance in Africa, NIMD recently in Nairobi facilitated an interactive study tour for politicians and public leaders from Ghana, Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe on the issue of constitutional reform. It brought together practical lessons from the different countries and offered participants and experts the chance to learn from each other's experience.

Since African countries often based their legal and governance frameworks on those of European former colonial powers, this resulted in

Start of European Correspondents Network

One of the indicators of D66 states: think and act internationally. As of this summer, a group of D66 members will really suit action to the word and



report like correspondents on the about interesting political developments in other European countries. Moreover, the network serves to strengthen the ties with like-minded parties to enrich D66 with ideas from abroad. It is after all fascinating to learn how in surrounding countries identical political issues are dealt with in a totally different way. In this newsletter, a column starts about one of these political issues. Correspondent Raymond van Doorn will go first and tells about his all time favorite country: France.

France: because you're worth it

By Raymond van Doorn

While a lot of Dutch people are thinking where to spend their holidays in the Dordogne or Auvergne, President Sarkozy doesn't have much opportunity to plan his holidays. The hyperactive French president started his first term in office in

obvious mismatches with the local context. The British system for instance might work in a relatively homogeneous society and where there is little need for interparty cooperation like the context of the UK, but this can be difficult to apply in many African multi-ethnic settings with different needs to divide power and resources.

Thus on the one hand a national constitution is the technical basis that supports and organises a country's political principles and democratic institutions, but on the other hand, indeed as recognised by Chief Justice Mahomed, it should also reflect a nation's social fabric and identity.

For instance the newly proposed constitution in Kenya is designed specifically to prevent the ethnic violence that the country experienced after the 2008 elections. And in Ghana, where the 1992 constitution is being reviewed, principles such as minorities' representation, traditional governance systems (chieftaincy), and citizen-government engagement feature prominently in the review process.

The participants in the regional exchange in Kenya challenged each other by posing the question: why is constitutional reform necessary and what lessons on this process can we learn from each other? The peer-to-peer nature of the programme provided an interactive setting for the delegates to learn from each other's approach, content, and outcome in the constitutional reform processes. To compare this with further international practice, NIMD had invited Mr. Jan-Kees Wiebenga (former MP and MEP for the VVD and current councilor with the 'Raad van State') to share key lessons from the European (EU) constitution building perspective.

Participants agreed that constitution making is a long-term and ongoing process that does not stop once a constitution is approved or adopted through a national referendum. As one delegate remarked: "Those involved in the reform process should look out for the next generations, and not only the next elections".

At the same time, the process of constitutional reform is extremely sensitive since it deals with the very nature of political society, thereby making it vulnerable for political abuse. It would not be the first time that for instance a ruling president uses constitutional reform processes to abolish the presidential term limit in order to stay in power longer. This challenge was recognised by all, and valuable experiences were shared to protect and safeguard the delicate reform process from political interference.

While updating the constitution cannot resolve all contentious issues in a country, participants embraced the idea that it nevertheless is a big step in the right direction. As long as the process is managed transparently and inclusively, a revised constitution should be able to better reflect the key characteristics of a nation, improve social cohesion, and advance democracy. This way, the regional exchange added further momentum and contributed to the different constitutional reform debates in the

2007 very ambitiously and a lot of reforms were announced. In 2010, several of his fellow citizens have gotten a bit allergic of this wagon load of reforms, of which a great part is not even finished. The opposition party *Parti Socialiste* (PS) won the regional elections in March this year and seems to be getting back on track after years of internal disputes. Finally, former prime minister and arch enemy Dominique de Villepin launched his movement *Republique Solidaire*, a likely rival as right-wing presidential candidate in 2012.

Also issues of a less political nature have drawn the attention of Mr. Sarkozy. In spite of his preceding interference in the French national football team, *Les Bleus* did not perform as expected at the World Cup in South Africa. The national coach/astrologist Raymond Domenech was very much criticized and his retirement approaches. That brings us to the political hot topic in France at the moment: *reforming the retirement legislation*. In the Netherlands there is more or less consensus on the notion that the retirement age has to shift. This notion has now also reached France. It is one of the reforms Nicolas Sarkozy really has to go ahead with; otherwise his credibility will be seriously at stake during the presidential elections in 2012.

France is already facing a deficit of 30-billion euro in 2010, which will rise to 40-billion euro in 2015. The French working population is not capable to finance the current retirement system. The age limit in France to retire is 60 years. That seems low compared with the 65 years limit in the Netherlands, but on the other hand the Netherlands has one of the highest retirement ages in Europe. The French Labour Minister, Eric Woerth, spent several months consulting all social partners in order to create a bill that is certain of sufficient support: it sounds like the Dutch polder model....

Last June, the proposal was finally revealed. The retirement age will go up from 60 years to 62 years in 2018. Relatively, it is the same approach as D66 has in the Netherlands, as we want to raise the current 65 to 67 years. It is very unlikely that the French bill will be accepted smoothly. In line with French political traditions, the PS declared to be against and wants to maintain 60 years as the age limit. Several demonstrations have already been held. It is not clear though what alternative the PS has to offer. Martine Aubrey, mayor of Lille and party leader of the socialists stated that it is unfair to work 44 years in case somebody starts to work at 18 years old. Moreover, the PS claims that the government's proposal does not cover 15-billion euro. Furthermore a special fund created by the PS to finance retirement for other purposes should have been used. However, the PS has to find another way to finance the retirement: the only alternative seems to be raising taxes or new public loans.

And what do our French like-minded parties think of all this? The *Parti Radical* backs the bill, as they are allied with the *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire* (UMP) of Mr. Sarkozy. The

participating NIMD programme countries.

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) works to strengthen political parties and democratic systems in developing or young democracies. It is governed by the seven Dutch political parties that founded it, including D66, and currently operates democratisation programmes in 17 countries worldwide.

For more information on this event or on other NIMD programmes and activities please see www.nimd.org or contact the D66 political advisor Wouter Dol on wouter.dol@nimd.org

independent *Mouvement Démocrate* (MoDem) of François Bayrou backs the plans as well, although they agree with the PS that people starting to work young are entitled to certain privileges. That last argument is a reason for the *Parti Radical de Gauche* to be against and to maintain the 60 years age limit. Instead, they propose a kind of scoring system, gaining points related to the number of working years.

The bill will be discussed in the French parliament in September. Meanwhile, Minister Woerth is in serious political trouble caused by a lady who retired a long time ago: 87-year-old heiress to the cosmetics company L'Oréal, Liliane Bettencourt. He is accused of questionable advices to her on tax issues and is assumed to have received illegal gifts in cash as treasurer of president Sarkozy's party UMP. An employee of Mrs. Bettencourt even stated that Mr. Sarkozy received these envelopes as well. This statement brought the president himself in the line of fire, it was however withdrawn quickly by the employee. Woerth has resigned as treasurer of the UMP but is still supported by his party. President Sarkozy made clear in his TV interview July 12th that Mr Woerth is a very honest man, that he will stay in office. Furthermore Sarkozy claims that his government is victim of a smear campaign of the opposition.

Generally, products of L'Oréal are meant to be revitalizing, but on the image of the French government, they might have the opposite effect...

Calendar

15 September: [International Day of Democracy](#)

18 September: NCDO Conferentie Politiek 2015: "Coherence of foreign policy". Featuring D66 workshops on trade barriers (in cooperation with the Green party) and on the role of religion in development cooperation (with the Christian conservative party)
13-18:00 Felix Meritis, Amsterdam

23 September: Political café "30 Years after the Military Coup, consequences for the constitution" in cooperation with the Turkey Institute
Felix Meritis, Amsterdam

1-3 October: LIBSEEN Leaders Conference, Osijek, Croatia

Early October: Political café "How to involve youth in politics?" in cooperation with ARI Movement
Istanbul / Ankara

13-15 October: [ELDR Congress](#), Helsinki, Finland

5 November: IDI Liberal Values conference: Religion and Liberalism, The Netherlands

Varia

LI Executive adopts resolutions initiated by D66 on net neutrality and GLBT rights

Liberals from all over the world assembled in Berlin 11-12 June for the Executive Council meeting of Liberal International. D66 proposed two resolutions that were both adopted by the council. [Click here](#) for all resolutions.

Helsinki ELDR Congress

D66 members interested in attending the next ELDR Congress (Helsinki, Finland 13-15 October 2010) as part of the D66 delegation, can notify Maartje Jansen at the International Secretariat. [Please note](#) that costs of travel, accommodation and meals are not reimbursed by D66 or ELDR.

Colofon Democrats

The International Newsletter "Democrats" is published by the foundation Internationaal Democratisch Initiatief (IDI) and the D66 International Secretariat. This newsletter was composed by Maartje Jansen. With contributions from: Ivo Thijssen, Raymond van Doorn and Wouter Dol.

6 November: D66 Party Congress, The Hague,
The Netherlands

11-13 November: Liberal International
Executive, Cape Town, South Africa

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