

LIBERAL BULLETIN



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Her Power, Our Freedom:

A Decade of Empowering Liberal Women

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party, EUPP

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Editorial

As 2025 draws to a close, we celebrate a defining year for the liberal family. Among its brightest moments was **the Alliance Of Her 10th Anniversary Summit**, celebrating a decade of women's leadership. In this special edition of the Liberal Bulletin, we spotlight those women who are driving Europe's democratic future.

This edition is especially personal to me as a two-time graduate of the Alliance Of Her, from both the flagship Academy and the newer Masterclass. I would not be where I am today without the lessons learned and the sisterhood shared. It taught me that when women support each other, barriers become obsolete.

The Alliance of Her is an initiative of **ALDE Party** in partnership with the **Friedrich Naumann Foundation** and the **European Liberal Forum**. Together, these partners have built a decade-long commitment to empowering liberal women, and I want to acknowledge their continued

dedication to this shared mission.

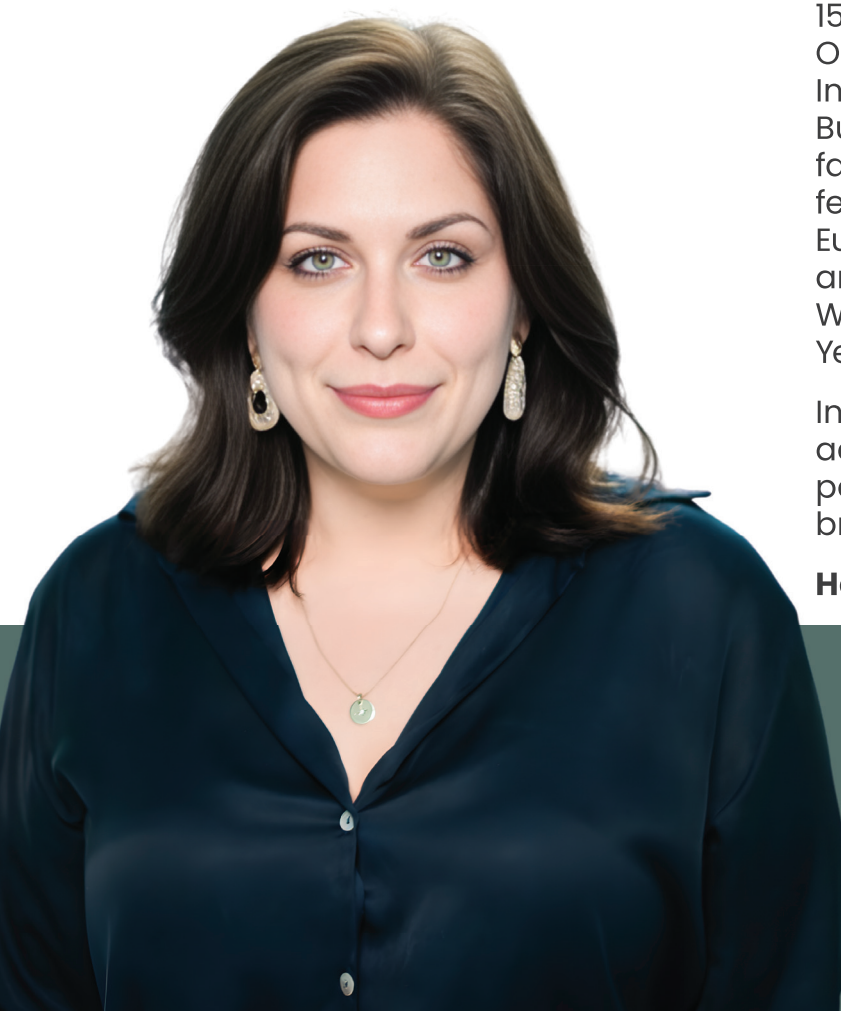
Women's freedoms are still under threat. Across Europe and beyond, rising extremism, anti-feminist backlash and democratic erosion are no coincidence – they are the tools of those who work to replace democracy with autocracy. Misogyny is not just hatred against women; it is a political weapon to weaken our societies from within. When we defend women's rights, we are defending democracy itself. History shows that when liberal women lead, societies become freer and fairer for everyone.

Even as hatred resurfaces, liberal women continue to break records, win elections and transform politics. Across Europe and the world, we are driving reform and defending freedom. From the brave women of **Ukraine** and **Georgia**, fighting for a European future, to Venezuelan Nobel Peace Prize winner **Maria Corina Machado**, they remind us that courage knows no limits.

It was incredibly inspiring to see over 150 alumnae and allies of the Alliance Of Her at our 10th Anniversary Summit. In this special issue of the Liberal Bulletin, you can relive some of our favourite moments from the event, with features from leading voices including European Commissioner **Marta Kos** and the winner of the Alliance Of Her Women in Politics Champion of the Year Award, Minister **Marie Bjerre**.

In these pages, we celebrate the women across Europe who are reshaping politics. Because when one woman breaks a barrier, a thousand will follow.

Her Power. Our Freedom.



ALDE Party President

📷 @svenja_ilona_hahn

Svenja Ilona Hahn



Commissioner Marta Kos shares why:
**“Autocrats fear strong
women”**

Marta Kos

European Commissioner for Enlargement

 @MartaKosEU

An Olympian swimmer in her youth, Commissioner Marta Kos is not afraid of swimming against the tide. As European Commissioner for Enlargement, the growing tide she is now faced with is the rise of autocracy threatening Europe's democratic order.

At the forefront of the EU's strategy to curb foreign interference and strengthen European values, she has seen how Russia spent hundreds of millions to undermine pro-European democratic forces during the elections in Moldova. She has witnessed the ongoing fight for Ukrainian freedom and monitored democratic backsliding in the Western Balkans, as well as growing illiberal tendencies within some EU member states.

Amid these efforts, the ongoing concern is that the most vocal and proactive defenders of democracy are being silenced. Speaking at the Alliance Of Her 10th Anniversary Summit in Brussels, Kos delivered a powerful warning:

"Women's rights are always among the first to go when a society takes an autocratic turn."

This is because, "Autocrats fear strong women," she told the theatre packed

with Alliance Of Her alumnae and allies. "Because women's empowerment always leads to fairer, better and stronger societies."

Women represent half of the world's population. Can we say we live in a free and democratic society if women are not equally represented in leadership and in politics?

In this sense, supporting female leaders has become a not-so-secret weapon in the Commissioner's arsenal.

Building a culture of equality

Three pillars are essential to resisting authoritarianism: the rule of law, free media and a strong civil society.

"We need judges and prosecutors who act when votes are bought or European funds end up in the pockets of officials," Kos explained. "We need people who are free to speak up and take to the streets when governments take the wrong turn."

Freedom is not merely defended on battlefields or in parliaments, but also in classrooms, newsrooms and community halls, wherever women raise their voices and claim space.

But gender equality cannot be achieved through legislation alone. True democratic resilience requires changing culture, attitudes and opportunities on the ground.

"It is not only about legislation, not at all. That's why in the process of enlargement we are looking for alliances with civil society organisations and with powerful women. We are talking to the young generation. We're not just saying: you have to introduce this law, but what would

**"Women's rights
are always
among the first
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autocratic turn."**

this law bring to your country?" Kos said.

"We need journalists who can uncover corruption without fear. In Moldova they told me a free press is a matter of national security."

Before entering politics, noticing the strong absence of women in the media in her home country of Slovenia, Kos co-founded Ona Ve ("She Knows"), dedicated to elevating women experts in public discourse. The name signals confidence and authority, qualities women are too often asked to prove repeatedly.

Beyond encouraging accession countries to introduce policies and laws that promote gender equality, we need to go deeper to support a culture of equality in actually taking root.

"We need strong societies where women and civil society are driving forces for change and for democracy. In the last year, I have met groups of powerful women all over Europe. Fearless women. Women leading change. In Belgrade, in Chisinau, in Kyiv. But also, within the EU, in Prague, Paris and The Hague."

Women must be at the table

The accession of Ukraine has been one of the most intensely debated enlargement issues in the last months.



We don't know when we will finally see an end to this terrible war. But what a number of studies have shown is that peacebuilding and transition processes in which women are actively involved are more likely to lead to sustainable, lasting peace. But how can we ensure women have a seat at the negotiating table?

"Helping women to be more empowered to go into politics, developing mentoring systems, and also getting men involved as allies are key," Kos said, pointing to the work of the Alliance Of Her Ukraine Mission in 2024-25.

The theme of this year's Alliance Of Her Summit "Her Power, Our Freedom," is a rallying call which resonated strongly with Kos:

"If we waited for society to balance itself, we'd wait another thousand years. Above all, women must be courageous. If you don't enter politics, you can't claim leadership. Be active. Organise. Run for office. And lead! No one else will do it for you."

Why are women so important for building a strong, peaceful democracy? Perhaps it's because, like Kos, women are used to swimming against the tide. But what many realised at the Summit is that we don't have to swim alone.



HER POWER. OUR FREEDOM.

On 23 October 2025, alumnae and allies of the Alliance Of Her, **ALDE Party's** flagship women's empowerment programme, came together to celebrate ten years of empowering liberal women leaders across Europe.

Honouring the past and looking to the future, representatives from ALDE Party, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and the European Liberal Forum kicked off the day calling for strength, fearlessness and unity against growing anti-democratic forces.

Annika Arras, co-founder of the Alliance Of Her, took us on a journey from the very first class up until the present day, with affiliate classes in Ukraine, Bulgaria and the MENA region.



What is The Alliance Of Her?

The ALDE Party, FNF and ELF partnership empowering liberal women to lead, succeed, survive and thrive in politics. Through our Academy, Masterclass and growing alumnae community, we equip women with the tools to break down barriers and succeed in political life.

Our voice is our greatest weapon

Women's rights are always the first to go when society takes an autocratic turn, underscored **Marta Kos**, EU Commissioner for Enlargement. She called for mentorship as a critical strategy for defending democracy.

Oana Toiu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, encouraged women to step forward and enter politics, building on generations of strong women who paved the way throughout history.

Women's Anger in Politics

Encouraging attendees to fuel their anger about the current political reality into resistance, an inspiring panel of women leaders including **Lena Borislavova**, Bulgarian MP, **Besa Kabashi-Ramaj**, PDK Kosovo, and **Kristine Wilfore**, co-founder of #ShePersisted, shared lessons from the front lines on resilience during political attacks and battling misogyny in person and online.

The Alliance Of Her: 10 Years in Numbers

330 Participants trained

37 Countries reached

9 Current and former Ministers

12 Current and former MEPs

Empathy is our greatest weapon

Tracing the rise of authoritarianism to inequality, insecurity and democratic erosion, **Zuzana Čaputová**, Former President of Slovakia, called empathy a powerful ward against polarisation.

During the evening gala, sitting Alliance Of Her MEPs took the stage followed by a fireside chat with alumnae Ministers **Diana Buzoianu** and **Romina Pourmokhtari**, all reflecting on their journey into politics and what drives them forward.

As **Svenja Hahn**, MEP and ALDE Party President, said: "It's no coincidence that women rise to leadership in times of crisis. When everyone believes we're set to fail, we're proving them wrong."



We are each other's best allies



Marie Bjerre on Leading with Values From Countering Misogyny to Championing Freedom

Marie Bjerre, Denmark's Minister of EU Affairs, was named this year's Alliance Of Her Women in Politics Champion of the Year. A driving force behind Denmark's Presidency of the Council of the EU during an exceptionally turbulent period, facing everything from security challenges and trade tensions to advancing Ukraine's EU accession, Bjerre has become one of Europe's most vocal defenders of liberal values and gender equality.

Congratulations on being named the Alliance Of Her's "Women in Politics Champion of the Year." How does it feel?

I'm overwhelmed and humbled. Many women have inspired me, and getting the chance to inspire others is just so meaningful.

I never would have made it to where I am today if there had not been other women paving the way. If you can't see it, you can't believe it.

What change do you want to see for women in politics in the next decade?

I want to see more women participating on equal terms. Because we do have women in politics (not enough of them), but many are still being treated differently just because of our sex.



What is the biggest lesson you took away from the Alliance Of Her programme?

If I had to choose one, it would be defining my values and knowing what I stand for.

That has always been my compass, and it became even clearer during the AOH programme. I've always been active in politics, but that experience encouraged me to write a note asking myself: What do I believe in? What do I want? I still keep it in a drawer and go back to it from time to time.

Do you mind sharing what you wrote?

I want to be strong in my liberal beliefs and the fight for freedom. I believe everyone should have equal possibilities. I wrote about trust, international outlook and a deep belief in cooperation.

You were initially motivated to run for office during Donald Trump's first presidency. With misogyny rising across Europe in the wake of his second presidency, what does "Her Power, Our Freedom" mean to you?

When I first ran in 2019, it was during a nationalistic shift and backsliding on liberal values: rule of law, international cooperation and global responsibility. But today, misogyny is a worrying trend. Across Europe, we see a regression in gender equality. In Denmark, we've made great progress, but we still haven't achieved full equality. But some are now insisting we already have. Influencers glamorise traditional roles. These are signs of backsliding. We must empower strong women.

One piece of advice for young women entering politics?

Many men jump in without having all the answers, while women often hold themselves back. Be brave. If not for yourself, then for your sisters, because your action will inspire the next generation of leaders.



REWRITING THE TRAPS OF POWER

June 2024's European Parliament elections saw the first decline in women MEPs since 1979.

Katrien Van den broeck, author of *Confronting the 10 Traps of Power: A Survival Guide for Women in Politics*, argues that women face structural and cultural traps that hinder continued success.

We asked participants at the Alliance Of Her 10th Anniversary Summit which of the ten 'traps' most affects women in politics. Half chose perfectionism and insecurity, followed by isolation and clinging to power (both 16.7%).

1. We are our harshest critics

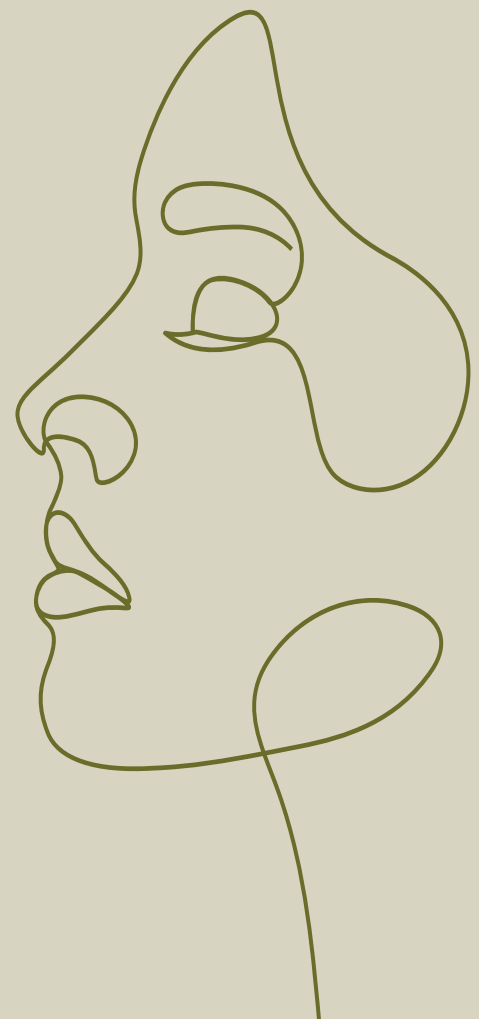
"Women often believe it's all or nothing. You're either flawless or a failure. But our worst critic is really ourselves. You can spend time revising something again and again seeking 'perfection.' Meanwhile, some men go on TV and confidently say complete nonsense. We have to stop thinking 'good' isn't enough."

–Elena, Italy

2. Sisterhood deficit

"Women have difficulties getting support when they enter into politics. I started from zero. We need to work on building and improving sisterhood. If women would support each other more, we could make a difference. This is why we still have more men than women in politics."

–Melissa, Belgium



3. Practice rejection

"Get into situations where you expect to be rejected. You'll soon get places you wouldn't have expected to. You never have anything to lose by trying. But you will lose by not trying."

–Dara, Hungary

4. Beware of isolation

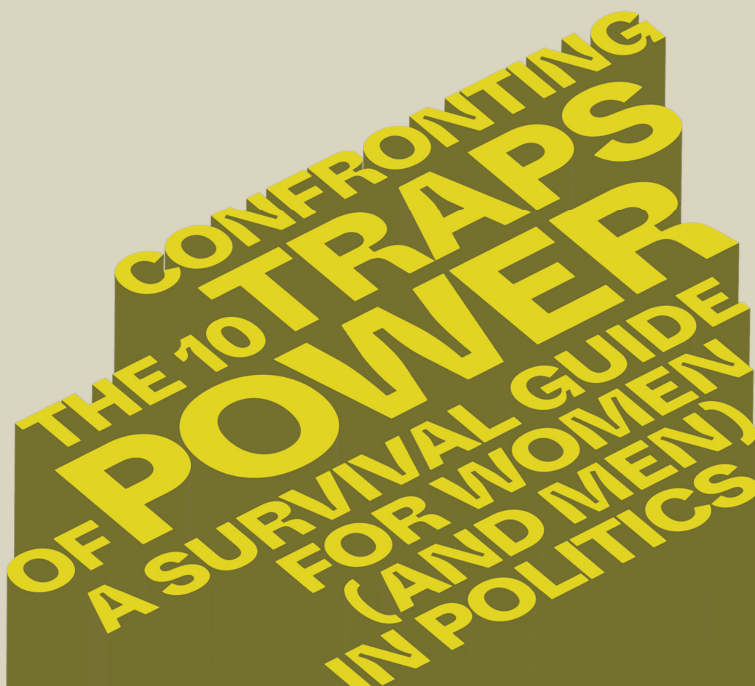
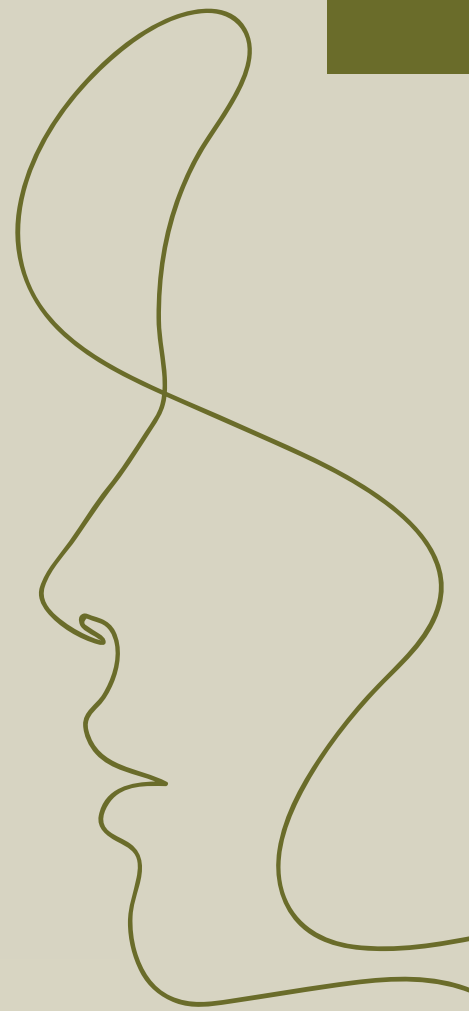
"The higher you go, the more pressure. And the more tempting it is to retreat into a safe circle with people who support you. But that creates distance and tunnel vision. Look at it like exercise. Set time aside to get out of your comfort zone and meet different people. Not only people who are in higher positions, but also younger voices, ordinary citizens and people with different viewpoints."

–Violetta, Ukraine

5. Break the script

"It's how girls are raised. We need education that helps us deconstruct traditional gender roles early. I had an amazing teacher who helped us rethink everything about what a man and a woman should be. It completely changed my perspective and how I see myself."

–Arabela, Romania



**Download
the book**



The Future is Hers

Movers & Shakers from the Alliance Of Her community

Simona Mohamsson

📷 @smohamsson



A trailblazer in Swedish politics, **Simona Mohamsson** rose through the ranks to become leader of Liberalerna at just 30 years old and was also named Sweden's Minister for Education and Integration. Born in Hamburg to Lebanese and Palestinian parents, and a 2023 alumna of the Alliance Of Her, she's making waves with her recent campaign for mobile-phone free schools.

Heidy Purga

📷 @heidypurga



As Estonia's Minister of Culture, **Heidy Purga** brings flair to politics as a former radio journalist, producer and DJ. The 2017 Alliance Of Her alumna has organised a charity rave for Ukraine, run kids' DJ workshops and performed at music festivals this year, bringing real-world experience from the arts and culture sector to her Ministerial role.

Fatimazhra Belhirsch

📷 @fatimazhrabelhirsch



Assuming office as a Member of Parliament for D66 in November 2025, **Fatimazhra Belhirsch** has served in the Dutch Senate since 2023 and sits in the Benelux Parliament. With 14 years at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and experience as a refugee lawyer and human rights advocate, she is part of the 2025 Alliance Of Her Masterclass.

Lena Borislavova

📷 @lena_borislavova



Lena Borislavova, an alumna of the Alliance Of Her 2025 Masterclass, is redefining Bulgarian politics as a part of one of ALDE Party's newest members, **We Continue the Change**. As Deputy Chair of her parliamentary group and member of the Committee on Prevention and Counteraction of Corruption, she fights every day to stop Bulgaria's democratic backsliding.

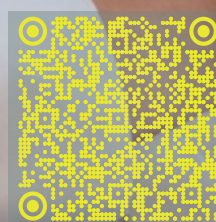
**Join us in
celebrating
10 years of
progress.**

THE ALLIANCE
OF HERP

**HER
POWER.
OUR
FREEDOM.**

Anna Stürgkh
Member of the
European Parliament
Class of 2022

**SCAN TO
WATCH**





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ALDE Party - Produced: December 2025 - With the support of the European Parliament.

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