



International Federation of Liberal Youth

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Date: Friday, October 02, 2009

From: IFLRY Core Committee on the Revision of the Manifesto

To: IFLRY Office & IFLRY Member Organizations

Subject: Proposal on the Revision of the IFLRY Manifesto

Dear friends,

Below you will find the result of many months of hard work in order to get our beloved Federation a modernized and fresh Manifesto that we can all be proud of.

The process of the Manifesto revision was started after a motion was adopted at the Extraordinary General Assembly in Kiev, Ukraine, in December 2008, which called for a full updating and rewriting of the IFLRY Manifesto by a core committee composed by representatives of member organizations and the Bureau.

Since then, we have been breaking our heads over the Manifesto's new structure, its substance and of course the nitty-gritty details. We wanted to have a Manifesto that would be more comprehensive, more inspiring and more adapted to today's realities than the current one. We believe we have succeeded.

While we are certain that there will still be a sufficient amount of debate and amendments on some of its perhaps more controversial elements, we believe that overall it includes the major ideas and beliefs of IFLRY's Member Organizations. We are certain that at the end of the General Assembly a new Manifesto shall have arisen that, even if it can never be fully satisfying to everyone, shall be sufficiently representative for it to serve as a unifying force¹.

We would like to thank all the people who have contributed to the revision process, especially those who have taken the time to answer our questionnaires and to give input to earlier drafts of the current manifesto.

On behalf of the IFLRY Core Committee on the Revision of the Manifesto,

We hereby submit the text below as an amendment on the full text of the current Manifesto to the General Assembly in The Hague, Netherlands, from the 12th to the 14th of November.

Liberal regards,

Lukas Schweiger

Secretary of the Committee, on behalf of Liberala Ungdomsforbundet (LUF – Sweden)

Bart Woord

Secretary of the Committee, on behalf of the IFLRY Bureau

¹ Secondary amendments to this proposed version of the Manifesto shall be (first) dealt with at the Standing Committee on Manifesto and Resolutions at the General Assembly



1 **Ch1 - Introduction**

2 The IFLRY Manifesto is the core document that outlines what unites the young liberals, democrats,
3 radicals, centrists and libertarians who are members of the International Federation of Liberal
4 Youth.

5 This Manifesto replaces the version adopted at the IFLRY Extraordinary General Assembly in
6 Eastbourne (1992 – subsequently amended), which in turn replaced the IFLRY Manifesto, adopted in
7 Lugano (1981 – subsequently amended).

8 **Ch2 – Liberalism and Radicalism**

9 Liberalism is an ideology based on individual freedom and social justice. Liberals believe that all
10 individuals have the right to make their own choices in contacts and contracts with others, free from
11 external pressure. Hence, liberalism is about the fundamental right to live and to assume full control
12 and responsibility over one's own actions and in dealing with others.

13 The rights of the free individual also apply to the voluntary cooperation of free individuals. In other
14 words: a liberal society is a civil society where people enjoy the freedom of peaceful assembly and
15 association, freedom of expression, freedom of cultural identity, freedom of religion, etc.

16 An essential condition for a liberal society is the strict separation of powers into an executive, a
17 legislature and a judiciary. All three branches must subject themselves to public scrutiny and must
18 account for all their actions through clear and transparent procedures and free and easy access to
19 information.

20 The role of a constitution is not to legitimize the actions of the government, but to safeguard the
21 basic civil rights of all citizens. Governments breaching provisions laid out in the constitution
22 immediately lose their legitimacy. This is when it becomes civil right and duty to remove that
23 government from power.

24 Liberals believe in the equality of rights of all citizens. We condemn all types of discrimination
25 against individuals or groups, especially but not exclusively discrimination based on their cultural,
26 ethnical, sexual, physical or gender identity.

27 We are especially proud of our common roots with historical Radicalism and aim for a constant
28 renewal of society and its institutions to establish a social order reflecting our liberal values.

29 We recognize the right of democracies to take up arms against foreign aggression. However, as
30 Liberals, we favour non-violent action and fair negotiations to solve problems and deeply regret the
31 use of violence. We would like to point out that the constitution and international law must be



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32 respected in war as it is in peace. Only the citizens can decide over war, taking into the account the
33 considerable human suffering and material loss that will ensue.

34 New state structures are being created through the process of globalization. Political and
35 economical unions are taking the place of the classic nation-states. As liberals, we embrace this
36 process of reform and support the freedom of people, goods, capital and services that accompanies
37 it. At the same time, we warn strongly against nationalistic, racist and xenophobic reflexes as they
38 jeopardize peaceful coexistence and preclude diversity.

39 We believe that individuals have all rights over their body, their mind and their fruits of his labour.
40 Hence, we favour a limited role of the state with its primary function to uphold the rule of law,
41 contract law and property rights in particular, and to defend human rights.



42 **Ch3 – The Implications of Liberty**

43

44 Individual freedom, on which we liberals base our philosophy on, is not a self-serving concept. It
45 rather serves the goal of enabling individuals to develop their potential to the fullest. This goal can
46 only be reached in a free society where the right to life, liberty and property is not restricted without
47 due justification. At the same time, we acknowledge that individuals can find themselves in
48 situations where formal liberties are not sufficient to fulfil individual freedom and social justice.

49 One of the most crucial implications of individual freedom is the right of the individual to make his
50 or her own choices over one's life. All too often, governments regulate the lives of their citizens
51 through legislation that is founded on religious and moral values or other ideas based on non-
52 objective normativism. Nobody should be able to take away even the toughest of choices from the
53 individual, including terminating one's own life. As liberals, we therefore condone euthanasia as a
54 way to avoid unnecessary mental or physical suffering, as the right over one's own body is absolute.
55 Abortion must be allowed and accessible to all women choosing to terminate their pregnancy.

56 As liberals, we see the creation of equal opportunities as an important implication of the goal of
57 enabling individuals to fulfil their potential and to make their own choices. We are therefore in
58 favour of affordable and universally accessible education and health care, while at the same time
59 stressing that market-based solutions such as public-private partnerships are to be favoured over
60 state-run enterprises. As we do not condone coerced solidarity, we believe that there should be
61 clear entrance and exit conditions to any public option, without jeopardizing the basic functioning
62 of the aforementioned tasks. In the same line of thought, we are also strongly opposed to
63 conscription, both in times of peace and in times of war; as well as any other form of mandatory
64 public service.

65 The foundation for individuals to make their own choices in the economic sphere is the free market.
66 A free society can only flourish if it provides for a free market for private goods. Therefore, we do not
67 see a significant role for the government in all matters regarding the economic life of the individual,
68 as she has the freedom to deploy her talents as she wishes and she has proprietary rights of the
69 fruits of his labour. Governments should therefore retreat from economic life to the largest extent
70 possible. Private enterprise must not be restricted and all state-held stakes in enterprises are to be
71 privatized. State monopolies cannot be tolerated, but there also needs to be a framework to ensure
72 fair competition and prevent the abuse of monopolies in the private sector. Creating equal
73 opportunities also has to extend to the economic sphere through providing for an environment of
74 competition and through enabling consumers to make informed choices. Consumer protection
75 would be best regulated through labelling, informing the consumer of all aspects of production
76 process and materials used.



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77 Trade laws have to provide a legal framework, not a suffocating web of rules without any economical
78 justification. We liberals strongly support free trade as it creates worldwide prosperity through
79 permitting trading partners mutual gains. In particular, the liberalization of international trade for
80 heavily protected products such as agricultural goods needs to be pursuit. In promoting
81 international trade, governments must make sure that imported goods, also meet all standards set
82 on domestic production.

83 The private sphere of the individual must be respected and protected. The right to privacy is an
84 essential part of this idea. No one can be truly free, if all her action are constantly monitored and her
85 integrity and honesty are questioned, without cause, by the state. All individuals must have
86 permanent access to all files concerning her and intelligence agencies, as far they are needed, must
87 be under continuous public scrutiny through democratic control. Also, privacy laws should protect
88 the virtual identity of the citizen. Finally, it goes without saying that all medical decisions and
89 medical records are between a patient and his doctor and are no business of the government.

90 Finally, as liberals we are convinced that no liberty comes without responsibility. The most
91 important responsibility of individuals is that they must respect other individuals' liberties, their
92 private sphere and the environment we all share. This respect must be guaranteed and reinforced by
93 the rule of law.



94 **Ch4 – Assuming Responsibility for our Environment**

95

96 Individuals shape and are shaped by the environment surrounding them. From that fact derives a
97 responsibility to not to harm the environment that we all live in.

98 Environmental challenges are one of the most prevalent of our time. The Tragedy of the Commons
99 has become a reality as social costs of economic actions affecting the environment have been
100 frequently overlooked or underestimated, resulting in negative externalities.

101 While we as liberals firmly believe in the free market for private goods, we also recognize that when
102 it comes to environmental aspects, we need to accept that collective action is necessary in order to
103 commit to goals that are feasible in making a difference. Solutions should ideally be based on
104 market mechanisms and property rights. Modern technology and private enterprise need to be seen
105 as the best means to create a better environment rather than as obstacles towards it. Furthermore,
106 environmental politics needs to stay true to the principles of proportionality, necessity and
107 subsidiarity.

108 Choice, and not coercion must be in the centre of every measure undertaken, as only the possibility
109 of having a choice allows the individual to assume environmental responsibility. This is especially
110 true when it comes to combating the far-reaching negative effects of global warming. As liberals, we
111 believe that a climate neutral world is a necessary long-term goal to ensure environmental
112 sustainability and a prosperous, free society in general.

113 On a global level, we look up to innovative initiatives such as the Climate Neutral Network within the
114 United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and recognize the United Nations Framework
115 Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as a suitable framework on a global level to ensure that all
116 countries commit to contributing to lower greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions caused by aviation,
117 agriculture and maritime traffic need to be included in every agreement to ensure a holistic
118 approach. Developing countries need to contribute their share as well, but developed countries
119 need to reach out to them in order to provide them with the knowledge and technological means to
120 lower emissions as well as no longer turn their back on the problem of environmental refugees.

121 On a national and supranational level, mechanisms such as Pigovian taxes levied on market
122 activities associated with negative externalities are a viable way to make the polluters pay and
123 thereby to internalize negative externalities.

124 Often neglected is the local level, where once more individual responsibility and entrepreneurship
125 are most capable of leading to sustainable change. Generally reducing bureaucratic hurdles and
126 lowering tax levels ensures that more people are willing to take the risk to produce green



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127 innovation. Also, the importance of education and raising awareness in civil society cannot be
128 underestimated.

129 For liberals, environmental politics cannot stop at global warming. Principles outlined above also
130 apply to combating different kinds of pollution, i.e. toxic waste, air, noise and light pollution. We
131 need to adopt a holistic view and realize the full consequences of all steps of production and all
132 actions. The need for collective action in protecting the environment is first and foremost the moral
133 responsibility of individuals, whether in the position of consumer or producer.



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134 **Ch5 – Education as a Precondition for a Liberal Society**

135

136 Individuals can only make use of their freedom if they know how to. We live in a world, where
137 reflection and critical thinking even in the most liberal democracies is sometimes not encouraged. A
138 lack of proper education can lead to a rise in populism and extremism – both are counterproductive
139 to a liberal society. Education is therefore a precondition for a liberal society. IFLRY believes that
140 everybody should have the right to education at the level of primary and secondary education.

141 One of the biggest educational challenges for liberals around the world is how to secure the right to
142 education for everyone regardless of the individual's financial situation. In line with the reasoning
143 above, free education at the primary and secondary level needs to be available for everyone, but
144 alternatives must be allowed as well.

145 As liberals, we firmly believe that the quality and diversity of educational programs are stimulated
146 by competition. Private and public institutions have to compete on the same level in order to prevent
147 a discriminatory two-tier system. The same rules regarding quality have to apply to both types.

148 On the level of higher education, it needs to be the role of the government to ensure that everyone
149 has access to university education. In many countries around the world, access to higher education
150 is still subject to various forms of direct and indirect discrimination. These hurdles need to be
151 removed.

152 Especially at the level of higher education, the market deserves to be given a more prominent role.
153 At the same time, everybody needs to have the opportunity to obtain a university degree. Innovative
154 solutions to achieve that goal, include government-backed student loans for living expenses and
155 tuition, must be encouraged.

156 As liberals, we believe in the secular state, and while we encourage the teaching of religious science
157 and ethics, we do not want any public funds to be used for religious education. Also, the display of
158 religious symbols in public schools and universities should not be allowed. We emphasize the
159 importance of education in schools on religion as a science and general discussions on ethics, but
160 no one should be forced to participate in religious ceremonies etc. during school hours.



161 **Ch. 6 – On the Importance of Democracy**

162

163 A modern, liberal society based on freedom and reason can only be maintained through democratic
164 government since only democracy can ensure the fundamental human and civil rights of the
165 individual. Democracy is the political system which to the greatest extent possible is capable of
166 respecting personal freedoms and gives the best preconditions for individuals to fully develop their
167 personalities and realize their hopes and needs. Only by integrating liberalism and democracy can
168 both systems fully develop.

169 Democracy is a driving force of continuous reform and an instrumental way of ensuring a free
170 society, while it imposes on the individual the responsibility to respect the opinions and rights of
171 others within their community. To ensure participation of all citizens in decision-making processes,
172 it is necessary to make admission to representation of different viewpoints as easily as possible and
173 society must therefore support political parties and organizations.

174 In a modern democracy the decision-makers are responsible and obligated to justify their actions to
175 the citizens. The citizens must be able to oust their leaders if they do not meet their responsibilities.
176 The law must be transparent for the citizens in order to complete a just and efficient democracy. As
177 liberals, we see the following democratic principles as central:

- 178 • Cabinet responsibility and an efficient separation between the legislative, executive and
179 judicial power
- 180 • Free, regular elections and secret ballots
- 181 • Possibilities for direct participation, e.g. through legally binding referendums
- 182 • Subsidiarity, i.e. decision-making always on the most local and least centralized viable level
- 183 • The principle of democratic control of bureaucracy and government at all levels
- 184 • Constitutional checks to secure limitations on, and divisions in, state power and to ensure
185 the promotion of individual rights

186 Democracy is never perfect while the demand for renewal of society and its institutions is
187 continuous. Democracy is playing different roles in political systems around the world. We therefore
188 believe that:

- 189 • Democratization of structures and decision-making processes within organizations and
190 institutions on regional, multilateral and global levels of co-operation is crucial;



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- 191 • Regional and local autonomy of decision-making with due respect to specific traditions,
192 cultures and ethnic identities is the road to improvement and renewal of public institution

193 The foundation of modern democracy is transparency, a free public debate and active, enlightened
194 citizens. Essential for a democracy is dialogue where all arguments will be heard and where the
195 citizens reflect on own stands and reach a compromise and come to better and more durable
196 solutions. A free and pluralistic media is hence a precondition to create a platform for such dialogue
197 and has also a role as supervisor of decision-makers.

198 It is the obligation of the individual as well as the community to protect democracy and it's
199 institutions. The best constitutional defense of democracy is the fulfilment of constitutional rights.
200 We strongly reject the concept of defense of democracy through the restriction of democratic rights.

201 In defense of democracy, we:

- 202 • Consider it to be the right of democracies to take up arms to defend themselves against
203 aggression
- 204 • Consider conscientious objection in peace and war as a fundamental expression of
205 disagreement with military solutions to conflicts
- 206 • Demand democratic control and accountability over all military and police forces, including
207 secret police.



208 **Ch. 7 – On the International Order**

209

210 In a globalized and still globalizing world, relations between individuals from different cultures,
211 nations, ethnicities and parts of the world are intensifying. At the same time, the majority of
212 mankind does not enjoy the political, economic and environmental conditions that are the
213 prerequisite and foundation for a self-determined life.

214 As liberals, we stress the importance of international cooperation to promote and secure the
215 universality of human rights which extends across borders and continents.

216 We deplore that global trends like the increasing influence of religious fundamentalism, totalitarian
217 regimes, conflicts about resources like oil, water or farmland, environmental problems and
218 economic nationalism, increase the chance of conflicts between societies, with detrimental
219 outcomes for human rights and the development of civil society and liberties. Often, these conflicts
220 derive from fundamental flaws in political and economical structures within states.

221 Facing the need to prevent such conflicts, as well as various global problems like pandemic
222 diseases, international financial crises, climate change and international terrorism, we call for
223 intense international collaboration that goes beyond the mere pursuit of narrow state interests.
224 Such collaboration can be promoted by more transparency and democracy within international
225 organizations.

226 This is particularly valid for the United Nations, the highest international body, which is in need of
227 reform to gain its authority as a globally representative organization that is effective in solving
228 global problems in a legitimate way. The United Nations primary means to prevent the outbreak of
229 wars and to protect human rights is through dialogue, appeals and sanctions, as well as the
230 establishment of international legal rules and bodies. In addition to the overall responsibility of the
231 International Court of Justice to deal with international disputes, the International Criminal Court
232 should be recognized by all states for dealing with the most severe violations of human rights.

233 The sovereignty of states is one of the most important building blocks of international law and
234 should not be violated. Governments which show an outrageous disrespect for fundamental rights,
235 or are not capable of guaranteeing these rights, may lose their international legitimacy and this may
236 provide a legitimate reason for other states to intervene into the country for the sole purpose of
237 preventing further deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

238 Weapons of mass destruction are a potential threat for mankind especially in the hands of
239 organizations – including governments – that do not share the respect for life. We stress the need
240 for global disarmament through a continuous reduction of the repertoire of weapons of mass



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241 destruction. This needs to be vigorously pursued with equally vigorous effort to maintain individual
242 human freedom in the long run. In addition, international efforts to mark all weapons and the
243 application of last user declarations are viable means to contribute to that goal.

244 Limitations to the free movement of labor, goods, services and knowledge are to be removed in
245 order to maximize economic growth and to improve standards of living. As such, free trade
246 arrangements should include requirements that human rights and environmental standards be
247 applied to traded goods. Moreover, we recognize that individuals involved in international trade
248 have a high interest in peace and stability in our world and can function as an effective stop to war
249 and conflict. In addition, the improved standards of living as a result of free trade reduces social-
250 economic grievances and thus leads to a higher level of stability and peace.

251 We therefore strongly reject protectionism and nationalism because it denies the right to trade and
252 the benefits of free trade.

253 A global civil society composed of freely associating individuals who are dedicated to human rights
254 and individual freedom is the most powerful tool in overcoming the forces of coercion,
255 fundamentalism and totalitarianism.