



MANIFESTO OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LIBERAL YOUTH

Ch1 - Introduction

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

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

Ch2 – Liberalism and Radicalism

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

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

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

National constitutions purport to bestow basic civil rights on those citizens who fall within its remit. Should a government breach these rights, the state must lose jurisdiction over the right which has been breached. However, this must be done on a case by case basis.

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



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

30 We recognise the right of peoples to defend themselves against armed aggression. However, as
31 Liberals, we favour non-violent action and fair negotiations to solve problems and deeply regret the
32 use of violence. We would like to point out that international law must be respected in war as it is in
33 peace. Only through popular consent and due process can self-defence and intervention be
34 legitimized, taking into account the considerable human suffering and material loss that will ensue.

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

40 We believe that individuals have all rights over their body, their mind and their fruits of his labour.
41 Hence, we favour a limited role of the state with its main functions being: to uphold the rule of law,
42 contract law and property rights in particular, to create equal opportunities for all and to ensure the
43 enforcement of human rights.



44 **Ch3 – The Implications of Liberty**

45

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

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

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

68 The foundation for individuals to make their own choices in the economic sphere is the free market.
69 A free society can only flourish if it provides for a free market for private goods. Therefore, we do not
70 see a significant role for the government in all matters regarding the economic life of the individual,
71 as she has the freedom to deploy her talents as she wishes and she has proprietary rights of the
72 fruits of his labour. Governments should therefore retreat from economic life to the largest extent
73 possible. Private enterprise must not be restricted and all state-held stakes in enterprises are to be
74 privatized. State monopolies cannot be tolerated unless in cases concerning the provision of
75 common goods in relation to the primary function of the state, in which case monopolies should be
76 minimized, but there also needs to be a framework to ensure fair competition and prevent the abuse
77 of monopolies in the private sector. Creating equal opportunities also has to extend to the economic
78 sphere through providing for an environment of competition and through enabling consumers to



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79 make informed choices. Consumer protection would be best regulated through the creation of a
80 watchdog to safeguard consumer rights and through labelling and, informing the consumer of all
81 aspects of production process and materials used.

82 Trade laws have to provide a legal framework, not a suffocating web of rules without any economical
83 justification. We liberals strongly support free trade as it creates worldwide prosperity through
84 permitting trading partners mutual gains. In particular, the liberalization of international trade for
85 heavily protected products such as agricultural goods needs to be pursued.

86 The private sphere of the individual must be respected and protected. The right to privacy is an
87 essential part of this idea. No one can be truly free, if all her actions are constantly monitored and her
88 integrity and honesty are questioned, without cause, by the state. Every individual must have
89 permanent access to all files concerning her. This right of access can only be denied through clearly
90 defined legal procedures when public security is at risk. Intelligence agencies as far as they are
91 needed must be under continuous public scrutiny through democratic control. Also, privacy laws
92 should protect the virtual identity of the citizen. Finally, it goes without saying that all medical
93 decisions and medical records are between a patient and his doctor and are no business of the
94 government.

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



99 Ch4 – On the Importance of Democracy

100

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

139 In defense of democracy, we:

- 140 • Consider that when an armed attack occurs, peoples have a right to individual or collective
141 defense, in accordance with international law

- 142 • Consider conscientious objection in peace and war as a fundamental expression of
143 disagreement with military solutions to conflicts

144 Demand democratic control and accountability over all military and police forces, including secret
145 police.



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

147

148 Individuals can only make use of their freedom if they know how to. We live in a world, where
149 reflection and critical thinking even in the most liberal democracies is sometimes not encouraged.
150 The key to liberalism’s focus on individuals and their freedoms, rights and duties is the individual’s
151 capacity for self development, and their awareness of their democratic responsibilities. Education is
152 therefore a precondition for a liberal society Education is therefore a precondition for a liberal
153 society. IFLRY believes that everybody should have the right to education at the level of primary and
154 secondary education.

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

159 As liberals, we firmly believe that the quality and diversity of educational programs. Private and
160 public institutions have to compete on the same level in order to prevent a discriminatory two-tier
161 system. The same rules regarding quality have to apply to both types.

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

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

170 As liberals, we believe in the secular state, and while we encourage the teaching of religious science
171 and ethics, we do not want any public funds to be used for religious education. While recognising
172 the right of any individual to display their private religious affiliation, the institutional display of
173 religious symbols should not be allowed in public schools and universities. We emphasize the
174 importance of education in schools on religion as a science and general discussions on ethics, but
175 no one should be forced to participate in religious ceremonies etc. during school hours.



176 **Ch6 – Assuming Responsibility for our Environment**

177

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

180 Environmental challenges are some of the most prevalent of our time, the social costs of economic
181 actions affecting the environment have been frequently overlooked or underestimated.

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

189 State action to combat climate change should enable market forces to allow for a diversity of
190 measures to combat the far-reaching negative effects of global warming and to allow the individual
191 to assume environmental responsibility. Different approaches such as incentives and regulation
192 should not be a priori favoured over one another. As liberals, we believe that a climate neutral world
193 is a necessary long-term goal to ensure environmental sustainability and a prosperous, free society
194 in general.

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

203 On a national and supranational level, mechanisms to correct the market outcome to reflect the
204 social cost, such as taxes levied on activities producing negative externalities, are a viable way to
205 make polluters pay and to internalise negative externalities.

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



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

211 Environmental politics should continue beyond global warming issues and tackle all kinds of
212 pollution. We need to adopt a holistic view and realize the full consequences of all steps of
213 production and all actions. The need for collective action in protecting the environment is first and
214 foremost the moral responsibility of individuals, whether in the position of consumer or producer.



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215 **Ch7 – On the International Order**

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

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

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

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

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

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

244 Weapons of mass destruction are a potential threat for mankind especially in the hands of
245 organizations – including governments – that do not share the respect for life. We stress the need
246 for global disarmament through a continuous reduction of the repertoire of weapons of mass
247 destruction. This needs to be vigorously pursued with equally vigorous effort to maintain individual
248 human freedom in the long run. In addition, international efforts to mark all weapons and the



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249 application of last user declarations are viable means to contribute to that goal.

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

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

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