Dear Delegates and Liberal Friends,

In just a month it will be six years since I took the IFLRY office as its Executive Director. This will be my last office report (or at least I think so).

I had an absolutely extreme start! My first training was in Strasbourg exactly at the same time when the Icelandic volcano decided to erupt, leaving us with half of the participants stuck at airports or somewhere in Europe, which was followed by my first General Assembly in St. Petersburg, where we had a heat wave and were not far from the burning forests and… flooding at the Yabloko office.

I did not have a proper handover of the office because the UK authorities refused my visa and gave it only months after I was hired. I had to rely on our intern who was teaching me what’s what at the office. There was a complete financial chaos and many things needed sorting out at the office. I was overwhelmed, I was not sure I wanted to continue. It got even “better” when the president and the secretary general at the time resigned. During the first 1,5-2 years I didn’t know much about London because I was almost living at the office. That was needed! It was needed to clean everything up, to organise the office and find solutions to old problems that accumulated at the office for different reasons.

The following years were crazier. I was a course director in our Frankfurt seminar, when the huge snowstorm started… I have been trying to put out the fire that some delegates started in our hotel in Beirut, and then I found myself solving a similar issue in Timisoara. I have been fighting a fake police in Istanbul 5 years ago, which would not let our delegates go as they supposedly broke a taxi window with a beer bottle. I have been in many police stations in many counties, as there was always somebody to be taken care of:) Oh, of course to close the list, I was detained in Belarus by Immigration Police with several of other IFLRY gangsters present at this GA. The list is endless. In fact I can write a book about IFLRY and our adventures together and it will be a fat book! It will be a wonderful book!

I learned a LOT! I became a trainer, a course director, an accountant, a bookkeeper, a tax expert, an insurance expert, a travel expert, an event organiser, a treasurer (when they were absent), a secretary general (when they were missing) a conflict solver, a campaigner, an expert on embassies and visa, a web master, magician (I still don’t believe I handled many of the situations I faced during my term at the office) and what’s funny, most of these were not even in my contract. I also learned how to drink 2 bottles of beer, how to play cards against humanity, be awake till 5am but be fresh for the meetings at 9am.

I am proud of what the IFLRY office achieved during these 6 years. I am proud of what the Bureaus I have worked with achieved during this period. These were the most challenging and the most rewarding 6 years of my life. To receive and read the huge appreciation from all the Bureau members I worked with as well as the member organisations makes me even more proud and emotional. To know that some of them are coming to Istanbul to say good-bye to me, makes my heart melt. It has been an absolute joy to follow how the auditors’ were reporting about the office work progress and how every year it became better and better, almost perfect. I am humbled!

I want to look back and thank Bart Woord, who was my first president, Frederik Ferie, who is the guilty person for me being your executive director, as he convinced me to apply for this job. I am proud to call him a good friend of mine. Thomas Leys, who has been an amazing president and the most fun to work with, as well as Naomi Rokkum and Jordi Villanueva. I want underline what an incredible job Joao Victor has done for IFLRY. We have spent days and month if not years to clean the IFLRY finances. I would have never been able to do this without him. I was glad I had the chance to work with Mirna Mneimneh, Rabih Fakhreddine and Davor Kalin. A big thank you goes to Ivo Thijssen, who has been absolutely great to work and fun to spend events with. I would also like to thank Mats Loftrom for years of support and cooperation.

Special thanks go to the current Bureau members. I have been amazed when I first met Christian, I could not believe how a guy of his age could be so responsible and smart. Hence I was thrilled to know he wanted to run as IFLRY president years after. You never stopped surprising me; you are a great leader with unthinkable calm and constructive approach to issues. It has been a great pleasure Christian to work with you, thank you for everything IFLRY achieved under your leadership. I can’t wait to ask for your signature when you are a President again, but of a country.

Frerik Kampman. I never experienced anybody to do as much as Frerik did right after he was elected. I sometimes felt he knew more about IFLRY after a month in his position than many did after years. Thank you for all your ideas and creative thinking, for the jokes and the Argentinean tango, for reaching far and beyond and for being an amazing friend.

Daniel George. I am not sure I can emphasise how much this person did for IFLRY. I have been asking myself why is he not paid for what he is doing, because he has been working for IFLRY almost as many hours as a normal employee. You have made our finances professional Daniel, you have lead an important Prorgramme of IFLRY, you have lead so many of our seminars, you cherished IFLRY and will do so even when you are gone. For that I am so thankful. Thanks for being such a kind person, who can shout and care at the same time, who would drive from Germany with massive tables and computers to make the office life better. Thanks for all the support you gave me almost every day since you became treasurer. Thanks for helping me to stand where we are now. I am proud of you.

Danylo Korbabicz, I will never understand how you make your magic and make things possible out of nowhere in super shot times. I have discovered you over and over again and want to thank you for all your work, but also for deep discussions and the great fun and your music taste:)

I want to thank our former minister Stanislav Anastassov with whom I worked for many years. I wish I could learn to be as calm and strategic as he is and as balanced as he is. I can’t imagine how many jobs, positions you were responsible for, but you were always ready to help if needed.

Ahmad al Rachwani, our beloved habibi, your positive attitude and character has been always helpful. You have been through many hardships that many never experienced or hopefully will never do and you still keep fighting. Thank you for all the hope you bring to the bureau but also the great food you make for us during bureau meetings.

There are two people who I want to dedicate a very special paragraph in my report. Bobby Dean and Mateusz Trybowski. I can never thank you enough for all the things I learned from you both, I can never thank you enough for how you felt and loved IFLRY and how you made it yours. You have been mentors for me, you have always been there, you have been amazing friends and you became like brothers to me. Thank you!

Last but by no means least I want to send my warmest hugs and thanks to all my interns and assistants: Elin Blomqvist, Helena von Schoultz, Christa Blomberg, Laura Ollila, Maria Wahlstedt, Maria Flemmich, Sandra Ahtola, Ninah Genc, Jochum Nyberg, Rhiannon Clapham, James Bowles and Dali ten Hove. I am thankful to IFLRY for the chance to get to know and work with you. You have been the witnesses of our daily work, you have been there for all the challenges we faced and all the joys we had. You have always been more, much more than interns or assistants. Please know that all the success we registered during these years is also due to you all. You are all dear to me. A big fat thank you!

Dear Member Organisations, I am grateful you have trusted me to lead your office for these years, I am glad to be leaving it a much better place than before, thank you for believing in IFLRY. Please take a good care of it and make it even better.

Thank you IFLRY for becoming a second home a second family for me. And don’t you even dream, even when I am gone, I will be hurting for you, I will be caring for you! It has been an honour!

Yours,

Mane Manukyan

P.S. Please find the office report since Santo Domingo below

I have the pleasure to report to you and our Membership not present in Istanbul the forth IFLRY office report. Unfortunately I was not present in Santo Domingo during the IFLRY EC, but I hope you had the chance to familiarise yourself with what the office was doing after Vienna. This report will spread light on the work of the office since Santo Domingo.

The last phase of seminars in the Latin America project (Erasmus Plus KA2 grant) took place in Santo Domingo. The office finalised the post seminar logistics. The financial report has been prepared with a big support of Rhiannon who also worked hard on the financial report of the whole project that included 3 international seminars. The topical report of is being drafted, and will be submitted to European Commission before June.

Unfortunately we had to say good-bye to Rhiannon and have a call for a new assistant. The office has received many applications and had a tough selection process, which resulted in recruiting Dali ten Hove who has integrated very quickly to the office environment and work. I have prepared all the paperwork for our outgoing and new assistants and registered Dali in the respective institutions in the UK. Soon after his arrival, Dali attended the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE with the ALDE group within the amazing opportunity provided for IFLRY members, bureau and office to experience and be part of these important gatherings at CoE in Strasbourg.

Soon after Santo Domingo, the office was organising the Bureau and Programme Manager’s meeting in Paris.

We have finalised the both topical and financial report for the IFLRY WP 2015. Everything has been submitted to Council of Europe and the final payment of the grant will be paid to IFLRY after the evaluation of the reports. I want to thank Tanya, Daniel and especially James for their help.

We had a visit from European Commission representative at the office to evaluate the work IFLRY is doing within the Erasmus Plus grants that we have received since 2014 as well as advise on reports and applications. I am happy to report that we are in good standing with them, and that they have a good impression of the organisation as a whole.

After the Commission visit the office has prepared and filed the Operational grant report to the European Commission for 2015 (KA3), which was done with a big help of Dali and James. Dali has also worked on Erasmus plus KA2 grant application, which will be finalised with the new bureau and submitted to the Commission.

James has been often busy with news updates on the website as well as taking care of the Issue, that you have been receiving every month.

We have prepared the financial documents for the audit, which was a month ago in London. I again need to thank both James and Dali for helping me to make sure everything was in order, and as we witnessed from the auditors report it was more than in order. I am really proud to see another great auditors’ report on the office work. Thank you Marijn and Robert.

Office has been heavily working to make Istanbul happen. I have been in touch with local partners, with 3H, with many hotels and with the Bureau we have been evaluating the security situation and the risks involved if we had the International seminar and the GA in Istanbul. I am glad we made it here, where we were 5 years ago. With the help of the assistants we have completed the invitation, application and recruitment processes of the delegates and participants for the seminar and General Assembly in Istanbul, Turkey. All the logistical issues have been taken care of and hopefully you are please with the results. I would like to thank 3H and especially Nazlican Kanmaz for hosting us and for their great support to make this possible.

As always office keeps carrying out tasks such as bookkeeping of the organisation, bank transfers and payments as well as bank reports to be provided to the treasurer for filing in our accounts. A big part of the daily work at the office is answering the e-mails from IFLRY MOs, the bureau members on ongoing events/issues.

Thanks you passing by the office for a cup of coffee when you are in London. We are always happy to welcome you in our cosy office.

Liberally yours,

Mane Manukyan

IFLRY Executive Director