

“Plus 5” review of the 2002 Special Session on Children and World Fit for Children Plan of Action

National Progress Report of the Principality of Liechtenstein¹

1. General remarks on the national child and youth policy

Liechtenstein attaches great importance to the well-being of children and young people, locally, nationally and internationally, and was therefore represented by a high level delegation, including the Head of Government, at the twenty-seventh Special Session on children in 2002 in New York.

The national policy concerning young people follows the long-term guidelines of family policy, equal rights policy, and child and youth policy. These three areas influence themselves mutually. The Government therefore sees the welfare of children and young people as an interdisciplinary task. In addition, it can be mentioned that the Liechtenstein child and youth policy observes as fundamental guiding principles the relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and of other international human rights treaties to which Liechtenstein is a party.

A number of topic areas are regarded as key for the long-term welfare of children and young people and are treated as a priority. These include the support of families, including financial measures; work, especially with respect to the compatibility of career and family life; recreation; maintaining quality of life; taking into account aspects of the environment and mobility; and multiculturalism in society. These long-term pillars of child and youth policy are complemented by short-term and medium-term goals, which are formulated when specific new problems arise. The small size of the country makes it possible to react quickly and flexibly to new challenges.

As of 31 December 2005, 7768 children and young people under the age of 18 were registered in Liechtenstein.² This corresponds to a share of 22% of the resident population. 51% of them are male, 49% female; the share of foreigners is 39%.

A representative study on the overall living conditions (including, *inter alia*, school, professional education, work, friendship, love, sexuality, health, violence, participation in society and politics) of young people between 12 and 20 years of age has been undertaken in 2006. The results are expected to be published in March 2007.

¹ The progress report only highlights new and innovative developments since 2002. Any other current information regarding the general situation, in particular the educational, health care or social system, can be found in the second report under the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (www.ohchr.org).

² Population statistics as of 31 December 2005, Office of Economic Affairs

3. Resource trends

The standard of living in Liechtenstein is high. The favorable economic conditions allow most inhabitants to enjoy a secured income and pleasant living conditions. The State is able to offer modern infrastructure and a well-developed network of services. Absolute poverty as such does not exist in Liechtenstein, even though there are people who are comparatively disadvantaged and require State assistance. In general, all children in Liechtenstein enjoy a very good environment to grow up in and develop.

In many areas, children and young people benefit indirectly, i.e. from State benefits through their families, for instance with respect to rental subsidies and other financial assistance for families. It is difficult to quantify the contributions of the State to minors. This is also difficult to document with respect to other State expenditures, such as for the prevention of addiction, HIV prevention, the support of disabled persons, and in general for health care or the promotion of recreational activities in culture and sports, where the benefits are accorded both to minors and to adults.

4. Monitoring Progress

Liechtenstein is a party to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and has so far submitted two implementation reports. Throughout the whole reporting process, several different governmental departments are involved. This includes not only the submission of information but also the participation in the dialogue with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as the follow-up to concluding observations and recommendations.

5. Participation of children

Over the past few years, various efforts have been undertaken to increase the involvement of children and young people in topics that affect them directly, including the search for adequate opportunities of direct participation. The right to appropriate information is now better secured thanks to the **Youth Information Center**, which is eagerly used.

A new **Youth Act** is under development with which the essential basic ideas and rights concerning children will be implemented at the local and national levels. The drafting of the Act was strongly influenced by the CRC, directly and indirectly, and developed in a broad participatory process with a low threshold, with the input of children, young people and adults. The draft of the new Youth Act enshrines a fundamental right of co-determination and participation for children and young people, along with other interest representations for children and young people, i.e. bodies that represent the rights and interests of children and young people (Children and Youth Advisory Council). The draft law also specifies that forms of democratic youth representation (e.g., Youth Parliament) should be supported and promoted by the State authorities. Municipalities should also ensure appropriate and regular participation of children and young people. The implementation of a pilot project on “Youth Participation” (students’ parliament) is planned for the 2007/2008 school year at the national level.

The draft of the new Child and Youth Act was adopted by the Government on 20 December 2005 and circulated for broad consultations among interested political and civil society groups. The responses are now being analyzed and integrated into the draft law, which will be submitted to Parliament in the course of 2007.

From 2006 to 2009 a **youth participation project called “JUBEL”** is taking place. It tries to involve young people in the development of the country and to make them participate more actively and effectively in society and politics. The participation will evolve mainly in school-settings.

On the International Day of the Rights of the Child (19 November) in 2001, 2004 and 2006 all municipalities set up so-called **“listening benches”**. Sitting on the benches were adults, including in some cases mayors, listening to the opinions and sorrows of children and thus acknowledging the right of the child of having an own opinion and of being heard. The events were also used to inform more generally on the rights of children according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Some interventions made by the children were recorded and later played on the national radio during the children’s programme “Kids & Co”.

6. Mayor national actions taken since 2002 related to MDG targets

MDG 1: Eradication of poverty

Absolute poverty as such does not exist in Liechtenstein, although there are individuals who are relatively disadvantaged and who require State support. Improvements have been undertaken in the area of family support services. An increasing number of working poor are no longer able to make a decent living with their income. Particularly affected are families with children, especially single-parent households. The increasing financial burden on families, which indirectly affects the situation of children and young people as well, has prompted the Liechtenstein Government to take appropriate measures, such as rental subsidies and other financial assistance to families with children. A reduction of dependency on income support among these families over the last few years appears to indicate that an alleviation of the situation has actually been attained.

MDG 2: Education

Schooling is mandatory for every child living in Liechtenstein and is free of charge. Continuing education orients itself by the abilities and performance of each child. Criteria such as citizenship, gender, and social and ethnic background are irrelevant for the right to school attendance and vocational training. For further information on the educational system in Liechtenstein reference is made to the second report under the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (www.ohchr.org).

A recent development in the area of education is the adoption of a new **Stipend Act** (LGBI. 2004 No. 262) and its **amendment** that entered into force on 1 August 2005 (LGBI. 2005 No. 41). The state benefits in the area of educational subsidies have been expanded. In return, through a general combination of educational support consisting of stipends and loans and a general limit on the duration of the benefits, the self-responsibility of recipients is also being increased. The new system decreases the burden on parents whose children are in school, especially single parents with modest financial means.

MDG 3: Gender equality and Elimination of discrimination

Gender-appropriate teaching took place on several occasions, and great importance was also placed on **empowerment programs especially for girls**. In 2002, the Office of Education, together with the Office of Equal Opportunity organized the expert conference on “Girls’ Dreams – Boys’ Dreams”. The goal of the conference was to call into question stereotypical roles and to generate impulses for gender-sensitive pedagogy. As a follow-up project, the two offices organized a lecture series “Neither Macho nor Wimp” in 2003. The focus was on the needs, challenges and difficulties experienced by boys of all age.

Through their behavior, teachers are an important role model for young people. As part of the 20th anniversary of the women’s franchise, media briefcases were updated for **gender-appropriate teaching** and presented to the teachers. The media briefcases offer concrete course materials and materials allowing for reflection on one’s own behavioral roles and role expectations. Since the 2003 lecture series was a full success and the participants expressed their desire for a more in-depth treatment, the workshop series “Neither Rambo nor Softy” was organized in 2005. The workshop topics were: role models, role images, aggression, sexuality and competition, and the role of fathers after divorce.

The priority topic of the Working Group against Racism, Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia in 2006 was the sensitization of youth. This corresponded with the start of the Council of Europe campaign „**all different – all equal**“, which is taking place in 2006 and 2007. The goal of the campaign is to motivate young people to engage actively in the development of peaceful societies that are characterized by differences and inclusion. Main issues that are being addressed are diversity, human rights and participation. This campaign is closely linked to the Council of Europe campaign against racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance from ten years ago in which Liechtenstein had also taken part.

With regard to the **integration of the foreign population** several initiatives have been going on in the last few years and different governmental working groups as well as NGOs have taken up related issues. A new initiative worth mentioning is for example the provision of German language classes for non German-speaking mothers and their children. Only in February 2007 the Commission for the Equality of Opportunities has submitted general guidelines as well as a concrete concept paper to the Government, identifying the necessary short and long-term integration measures.

MDG 4: Reduction of child mortality and Promotion of healthy lifestyles

For general information on the health care system in Liechtenstein reference is made to the second report under the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (www.ohchr.org). A survey undertaken in 2005 presented a considerable **level of tobacco, drug and medicine consumption** among youth. The survey was the starting point for a three year prevention campaign.

MDG 6: Fight against HIV/Aids, Malaria and other diseases

There is no reliable data on the number of persons with HIV/AIDS in Liechtenstein. However, so far no cases of infected children or adolescents have been reported. In general, the publicly funded Bureau for Sexual Matters and HIV Prevention is responsible for the promotion of sexual health. Its activities are divided into the four areas of sexual education, sexual counseling, family planning, and sexual transmissible diseases and HIV. The Bureau organizes workshops in schools, in the public youth area, and in kindergartens, which are intended to supplement traditional sex education. On the basis of a stable sexual identity, young people deal with topics such as relationships, love, contraception, unwanted

pregnancies, and physical development. The Bureau also organizes talks and continuing education for parents, teachers, and other professional groups engaged in education.

MDG 8: Mobilizing resources

The financial means for the International Humanitarian and Development Co-operation (IHDC) of Liechtenstein increased considerably during the last years and amount to approximately 22 million Swiss francs in 2007. The Official Development Aid (the latest for the year 2004) amounted to 0.43% of the GNP. The Government decided in its coalition programme to continuously raise the ODA up to 0.5% of the GNP until the end of the legislative period in 2009 and to 0.7% until 2015. In 2006 over 60% of the overall resources for IHDC went into education and health programmes, including programmes against HIV/AIDS.

Child protection against abuse, exploitation and violence (Millennium Declaration):

Liechtenstein has tightened its **Criminal law** with respect to offenses against the sexual autonomy and in regard of other sexual offenses (LGBI. 2001 No. 16). The penalty for sexual abuse of minors has been increased, and the beginning of the statute of limitations has been raised to the 18th birthday. In addition, child pornography and abuse committed abroad have been criminalized.

In December 1999, an interdisciplinary **Expert Group against Sexual Abuse of Children and Adolescents** was appointed by the Government, consisting of experts in psychology, therapy, medicine, and law. The group is primarily a contact point for professional helpers who are confronted with cases of sexual abuse in the context of their practical work. The expert group primarily counsels specialists, not victims. Among the different sensitization initiatives are for example lectures to the National Police on child pornography on the internet or to football teams on sexual abuse in sports. In 2006 the Expert Group set up an internet website (www.stoppkindsmissbrauch.li). A prevention programme designed for primary school children will be launched in 2007.

The **revised Code of Criminal Procedure** has been in force since 1 January 2005. The amendments give victims more rights and establish safeguards ensuring that the victims of a criminal act will not be traumatized (again) by the procedural requirements. The core of the revision is the sensitive questioning of witnesses (new §115(a)). By using technical means of conveying words and images, victims can be questioned separately from the suspect/perpetrator. Such questioning is mandatory in the case of minors who have not reached the age of 14 by the time of questioning (i.e., underage victims). In addition, the investigating judge has the option of delegating the questioning to an expert (e.g., a child psychologist), which has already frequently been done. A further important amendment is the extension of the possibility of dispensation from testimony (§107). This ensures, *inter alia*, that victims in need of special protection will only have to testify once in court on the criminal act (LGBI. 2004 Nr. 236; 2005 Nr.33).

A **Victims' Assistance Act** is currently in preparation. The new law will provide that victims of crimes (persons whose physical, sexual, or psychological integrity has been directly affected by a crime, as well as their spouses, children, parents and other persons who are similarly related to them) receive assistance through counseling and compensation.

Social work in schools was set up by the Government in 2003 in order to reduce the occurrence of violence among youth. Starting as a three year pilot project it has now been prolonged for a further year. Depending on the final evaluation of the project, the Government will decide on the possible continuation of this measure.

From March 2007 to July 2008 the Governmental Commission for the Protection from Violence will conduct a campaign against violence among youth. **“Respect-Please”** (www.respect-bitte.li) includes different projects at secondary schools and youth centers as well as special events directed towards teachers and other professionals working with children and young people.

A new offer for young people are the so called **“coolness trainings”**. In individual settings they shall learn how to deal with own aggressive impulses and to avoid the use of violence.

Vaduz, 21 February 2007 / ah