

# Liechtenstein

## **Joint Communication to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women concerning the fifth periodic report of Liechtenstein under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

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9<sup>th</sup> June 2018

Submitted by

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With the following joint report, the Women's Network as the umbrella organisation and its member associations would like to supplement and respond to the fifth periodic report of the Government of the Principality of Liechtenstein of 30 January 2018. We would ask the Committee to take this opinion into account in its assessment.

The report is structured along the main topics of the Convention, with particular reference to points covered in the fifth periodic report:

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**Reference documents used**

**CEDAW 2017**

- > Fifth periodic report submitted by Liechtenstein under article 18 of the Convention pursuant to the simplified reporting procedure, submitted 1st February 2018 ([CEDAW/C/LIE/5](#))
- > List of issues and questions prior to the submission of fifth periodic report of Liechtenstein, 21 July 2017 ([CEDAW/C/LIE/QPR/5](#))
- > [Menschenrechte in Liechtenstein](#) – Zahlen und Fakten 2017 (Human Rights in Liechtenstein – Facts and Figures 2017), published by the Government of the Principality of Liechtenstein

**CEDAW 2011**

- > Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 5 April 2011 ([CEDAW/C/LIE/CO/4](#))
- > [Shadow report of the Women's Network](#) on the follow-up report of the Liechtenstein Government requested by the CEDAW Committee in its concluding observations, submitted on 12 June 2013
- > [Follow-up letter](#) sent to the State party on 10 September 2014

## General

Unfortunately, a standstill has been noted on gender equality issues in Liechtenstein for several years now. While progress has been made in some areas, it has consistently been difficult to achieve. The decline in the share of women in politics and the public discussions that followed indicate a wide range of significant deficits.

Even in the fifth periodic report, for example, the Government is able to list only a few concrete measures and events; moreover, these are not new and only partially take up recommendations from the last CEDAW report or other reports. The measures mentioned in the fifth periodic report also include many that have been carried out for years either jointly or in a leading role by non-governmental organisations or foreign organisations (for example the politics course for women or the Interreg projects "Subject: Role Models" and "Subject: Women Decide"). We also criticise the fact that measures and events take place only once, are not embedded in an overarching strategy, and no review of the scope or the benefits nor follow-up take place.

This development was accompanied by the dissolution of the Equal Opportunities Unit directly affiliated to the Government, as part of the 2011 reform of the National Administration; it is furthermore reinforced by the austerity exercises that have taken place since 2008. Ongoing projects and developments were not continued for several years, given that the necessary decisions on the new organisational form and the necessary financial and human resources were postponed for years.

This happened in spite of continuous proposals by various non-governmental organisations (NGOs), in particular the Liechtenstein Women's Network, which supported the continuation of the established and successful work of the Equal Opportunities Unit. In the course of this development, the Gender Equality Commission, which had advised the Equal Opportunities Unit, resigned en bloc in 2013. The internal working group of the National Administration to promote equality between men and women has likewise not been active for several years. These two bodies were supported substantially by the Equal Opportunities Unit, which fulfilled an important coordination task.

The tasks of the former independent unit were partially transferred to the newly established Human Rights Association in 2016. The "public responsibilities" were assigned to a specialist department subordinate to the Office of Social Services.<sup>1</sup>

### Points 3 and 4

The new Equal Opportunities Department meanwhile (re-)established within the Office of Social Services has only 1.1 full-time equivalent positions, its staff members have little influence and discretion, and – at least as viewed from the outside – there is little commitment on the part of the competent Ministry. The financial resources of CHF 30,000 for own projects (see point 25) are also limited. Given these conditions, the Equal Opportunities Department cannot effectively fulfil the public responsibilities of public outreach and project work as defined in Article 19 of the Gender Equality Act (LGBI. 2016 No. 505). The 2017/2018 catalogue of measures compiled by the department, which in any event contains only a few new measures, is lacking a long term perspective.

The establishment of the independent Human Rights Association – which had long been called for – was fundamentally positive. However, it is criticised that the association is not equipped with the necessary financial resources to effectively cover the entire range of issues within its mandate. Whether sufficient resources will be available for the effective promotion of gender equality is

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<sup>1</sup> Report and Application of the Government to the Parliament of the Principality of Liechtenstein concerning the creation of an independent human rights institution and the transfer of responsibilities from the Equal Opportunities Unit and the Migration and Passport Office to the Office of Social Services, 3 May 2016, URL: [http://bua.gmg.biz/BuA/dynamic\\_bridge.jsp?buajahr=2016&buanr=57](http://bua.gmg.biz/BuA/dynamic_bridge.jsp?buajahr=2016&buanr=57)

questionable. In addition, the Human Rights Association was not granted the right to bring collective legal action on behalf of the persons it represents.

With respect to gender equality and equal opportunities, the Government and public authorities are delegating their responsibilities increasingly to civil society. They are hardly taking any measures, do not serve as a role model, and are not creating a basis for improvements in the areas discussed here.

After the former Equal Opportunities Unit and other bodies were not adequately replaced, various NGOs have tried since 2016 to fill the resulting vacuum, such as the Women's Network (newly re-established as an association), the Association *Frauen in guter Verfassung*, infra, and the *Hoi Quote* Association. However, it appears that the Government, public authorities, and political actors see this as an incentive to assume even less responsibility for gender equality and equal opportunities, given that in their view, this issue is being handled by NGOs. This dynamic puts the organisations involved in a difficult situation.

Already on the occasion of the follow-up report to the fourth periodic report in 2013, the Women's Network addressed a shadow report to the CEDAW Committee and criticised the administrative reform at the expense of gender equality policy and the Government's lack of willingness to take effective special measures.<sup>2</sup> A shadow report on the ICCPR in 2017 submitted jointly by the Associations *Hoi Quote* and *Frauen in guter Verfassung* reconfirm this concerns in the light of current developments.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Point 7: Hereditary succession to the throne**

The male succession to the throne of the Princely House as laid down in the Law on the Princely House contradicts the Liechtenstein Constitution and acts as a negative role model for the demand for equal opportunities in politics and society.

#### **Points 8, 9, and 13**

The right of individual complaint to the Constitutional Court and the protection against discrimination under the Gender Equality Act are valuable legal instruments, but due to the small size of the country they are ineffective in practice.

### **Access to justice**

#### **Point 18**

In 2016, the Legal Aid Act (LGBI. 2016 No. 405) was revised. Now, legal aid in civil proceedings is granted only in cases involving a difficult situation of fact and law. This approach makes access to justice more difficult, which can prove disadvantageous for migrant women and financially dependent women with low education levels, for example, especially in labour and family law (divorce, alimony and child support).

### **Temporary special measures**

The authors would like to draw attention to the fact that in the fifth periodic report of 30 January 2018 (points 18 to 20), the Committee's question on the application of temporary measures has not

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<sup>2</sup> [Shadow report of the Women's Network](#) on the follow-up report of the Liechtenstein Government requested by the CEDAW Committee in its concluding observations, submitted on 12 June 2013

<sup>3</sup> Report to the Human Rights Committee concerning the second periodic report of the Principality of Liechtenstein under Article 40 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 16 December 1966

really been answered. Politics courses, implementation of individual projects without long-term visions and a consistent strategy, and purportedly active participation in public discussions can hardly be considered measures within the meaning of Article 4 of the Convention. The experience of the authors of the present report is rather negative with regard to the willingness of politics and the Government to deal, for instance, with the under-representation of women in political decision-making processes. Unfortunately, there appears to be a general lack of appreciation of the problem and its nature.

Already during the last reporting period, the Committee's final report of 5 April 2011<sup>4</sup> recommended measures to improve the participation of women in politics and the public. What was then the Gender Equality Commission prepared appropriate measures and submitted them to the Government.<sup>5</sup> This included a concept for the introduction of gender quotas on electoral lists, which was presented to the Government through the competent Minister (who is still in office today). The Ministry's statement that the concept would be addressed prompted the Committee to consider the recommendation partially fulfilled in the follow-up report to the Government dated 10 September 2014.<sup>6</sup> In its shadow report submitted to the Committee on 12 June 2013<sup>7</sup>, the Women's Network pointed out that, contrary to the Ministry's statement, no actual measures had been taken to bring about progress in this direction and that the situation (participation of women in politics) appeared to be worsening. As the results of the last municipal and national elections show, this prediction has unfortunately come true.

### **Point 23**

A politics course for women has been offered for 14 years now. Its aim is to increase the share of women in political offices. The Women's Network is concerned that it is being considered to open up the politics course to men as well. Experience shows that the learning atmosphere is more relaxed when women are among themselves. If the aim is to open up the course, the Women's Network points out that separate modules must be offered instead to raise men's awareness and deal with their specific perspectives and concerns (e.g. compatibility of family life and employment, reconsideration of one's own roles).

## **Stereotypes and harmful practices**

### **Point 29**

The transnational "Subject: Role Models" project, which was adopted from Austria, came to an end in 2014. Awareness-raising projects and events on role models are initiated in Liechtenstein by NGOs (e.g. *infra*). However, raising awareness of role stereotypes falls within the remit of the State and is also the responsibility of the public authorities.

### **Point 32**

According to our information, specific continuing training in the National Administration to eliminate stereotypical role models last took place in 2013/2014.

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<sup>4</sup> Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 5 April 2011 ([CEDAW/C/LIE/CO/4](#))

<sup>5</sup> "Introduction of Gender Quotas on Electoral Lists at the Municipal and National Level." Application of the Gender Equality Commission of 9 November 2012 [not published online]

<sup>6</sup> [Follow-up letter](#) sent to the State party on 10 September 2014

<sup>7</sup> [Shadow report of the Women's Network](#) on the follow-up report of the Liechtenstein Government requested by the CEDAW Committee in its concluding observations, submitted on 12 June 2013

Following traditional role models restricts women and men in the development of career and life perspectives. With *profil+*, a service offered by *infra*, companies and schools can hold an impulse day for young apprenticeship graduates without major organisational effort, at which they reflect on diverse ways of conducting their lives and dealing with professional perspectives. Unfortunately, the National Administration has not yet agreed to hold an impulse day. Raising awareness against role stereotypes is also a public responsibility. The National Administration itself should serve as a role model in this regard.

### Point 33

The internal working group of the Liechtenstein National Administration has not been active in years. After the end of the previous term of office, it was not re-appointed by the current Government.

## Violence against women

### Points 38 and 46

We believe that the violence protection law – which entered into force in 2001 and provides for expulsion of the potential perpetrator by the police and a prohibition on entering the shared abode – is a major milestone in the fight against domestic violence. Looking at the statistics (interventions by the National Police in cases of domestic violence since 2001, point 46), it is striking that no prohibition on entry has been imposed on men since 2014. The statistics also show that since 2013, the number of expulsions has decreased dramatically. No expulsions were pronounced in 2015, and a single expulsion was pronounced in 2016. We advocate that the existing legal instruments be applied accordingly.

### Point 39

We very much welcome the revision of the definition of sexual offences set out in the Criminal Code (StGB). This revision concerned offences such as:

- dangerous threat against close relatives (§ 107(4) StGB)
- persistent stalking (§ 107a StGB)
- rape or sexual assault committed in a marriage or domestic partnership (§ 202 StGB).

It is clear, however, that implementation has brought with it several difficulties. Women who, after a long and difficult internal struggle, have managed to file a complaint, for example concerning rape in marriage, must be prepared for a decision against them at trial on grounds of *in dubio pro reo*, if they are unable to produce any witnesses. This means further trauma for the women and further stigmatisation as victims, and these offences remain unpunished. This low chance of success frightens many women away from exercising their rights. This practice of automatic discontinuation of proceedings in the event of conflicting statements by victims and perpetrators must be addressed.

Based on the experience of the Women's Shelter with the competent authorities, it should be noted that their professional assessment is not taken into account in the proceedings. This must change in the future for the benefit of the woman and children.

In practice, it has been shown that criminal law alone cannot solve the problem of domestic violence. **We call for** further accompanying measures, such as prevention campaigns, intervention projects, the permanent networking and continuing training of all actors working in the field of domestic violence (police, prosecution authorities, courts, victim and perpetrator counselling centres, etc.).

## Participation in political and public life

With regard to the participation of women in politics, a considerable decline has unfortunately been observed in Liechtenstein in recent years. Currently only 3 out of 25 Members of Parliament are women, which corresponds to a share of 12%. The share of women in municipal councils is currently 16.8% (19 out of 113).

Better representation in public bodies such as commissions, boards of directors, etc. has likewise not been observed. It is criticised in this regard that no formalised application and appointment procedures are being introduced with the aim of improving the situation. As a result, appointment decisions always depend on individuals.

The Government does not take a gender-sensitive stance on gender equality issues. For instance, the recent "Petition regarding the Government decision of 16 July 1997 on the appointment of bodies (delegations, commissions, working groups, etc.) – balanced ratio of women and men"<sup>8</sup>, which the *Hoi Quote* Association submitted in the summer of 2017 and which was referred to the Government by Parliament, was simply ignored. The petition reminded the Government of a Government decision 20 years ago in which the Government committed itself to improving the presence of women in public bodies, but this decision was never implemented. As the only response, Prime Minister Adrian Hasler explained at a citizens' meeting in 2017 that the petition was not relevant to him. This statement shows a lack of willingness to contribute to improving the situation of women in politics.

**Point 74** of the fifth periodic report of 30 January 2018 explains the dissolution of the Women's Pool with reference to the waning interest of women. However, this explanation is far from adequate, and it assigns the blame to women. It neglects the question of whether commissions and working groups actually availed themselves of the Women's Pool. No actual evaluation or survey took place. According to personal reports, almost no women from this pool were asked to hold office or to participate in political parties.

Under **point 75**, the periodic report discusses a study by the Liechtenstein Institute from 2011 which examines the reasons for not running for office in municipal elections.<sup>9</sup> These reasons are more diverse among women than among men. In addition to the professional burden that was also cited by men as a reason for not running for office, women also bear the burden of family life to a large extent. Women view municipal politics as dominated by men, which appears to be an obstacle for women. They also shy away from an election campaign more than men. Another reason cited is the lack of support in their social environment, since such a candidacy does not correspond to the socially desirable behaviour in a traditional society. A woman's candidacy must therefore overcome more or different obstacles. As in the case of other examples, no strategies or measures were derived after the publication of these studies with the aim of reducing these obstacles.

Such measures should also in particular be in the interest of the political parties and could be promoted by the Government through appropriate instruments (e.g. through party financing). **Point 76**, for example, lists recommendations from the study for the recruitment process of the parties. The authors of the present report criticise the fact that no active promotion of women has taken place at the party level. Party membership also plays an essential role when public bodies are being appointed.

The two major parties in Liechtenstein – the Patriotic Union (VU) and the Progressive Citizens' Party (FBP) – each have their own women's section. Their standing and influence within the parties appear

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<sup>8</sup> Petition of 29 September 2018:

[http://landtaglive.gmgnet.li/files/medienarchiv/Petition\\_des\\_Vereins\\_Hoi\\_Quote.pdf](http://landtaglive.gmgnet.li/files/medienarchiv/Petition_des_Vereins_Hoi_Quote.pdf). The Government decision of 16 July 1997, that the petition refers to, was issued shortly after introduction of an Equal Opportunities Act. But no follow-up activities took place.

<sup>9</sup> Liechtenstein Institute Working Paper No. 31, Municipal Elections 2011: Problems in Recruiting Female and Male Candidates

to be rather weak. These bodies ("Women's Union in the VU" and "Women in the FBP") are treated equally to the youth and senior sections.

Under the pressure of the recent discussions, though, a rethinking in the parties has been observed. Since recently, the VU has had a party leadership with equal gender representation. Women are still underrepresented in the party leadership of the FBP. However, it is criticised that the active promotion of women and the goal of gender parity are not laid down in the party charters and thus remain non-binding. Only the Free List (FL) has a party leadership with equal representation, chaired by a woman and a man. According to the Free List charter: "The party leadership must have equal gender representation". There are no women in the Independents (DU) group.

The recruitment of candidates for the next municipal council elections (2019) is within the responsibility of the local groups of the political parties. Here again, there is no binding consensus for each party as a whole and no apparent concrete strategy to involve more women in decision-making bodies. Without accompanying measures for the recruitment and election process, women will hardly be more likely to make themselves available for elections.

In spring 2018 a consultation on the partial revision of the Political Parties Funding Act took place. The revision was triggered by recommendations of the Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption (GRECO). The Women's Network, *infra*, and Hi Quota asked the Government in a statement to consider mechanisms to support the promotion of women in and by the political parties via party funding and thus to take into account the recommendation of the Committee of 5 April 2011 (CEDAW/C/LI/CO/4). At the time this report was prepared, there was no information as to whether and how this request is being considered.

#### **Point 77**

According to the periodic report, the semi-annual discussion rounds with female Members of Parliament are regarded as positive and should definitely be continued. Unfortunately, many women do not seem to be familiar with them. To the best of our knowledge, no such event was held in 2017. It is therefore not possible to claim that they are held regularly. To promote the effectiveness of such events, they should be embedded in a clear strategy and accompanied by flanking measures, such as mentorship offers for women interested in politics.

#### **Points 79 and 80**

One of the main activities of the new Equal Opportunities Department is the implementation of transnational Interreg projects (see points 18 and 23). We believe it to be very important to continue or even expand such transnational projects.

However, studies of this sort are not enough. Neither the Equal Opportunities Department nor the creation of the Human Rights Association, which was established through civil engagement, releases the Government from the responsibility to pursue proactive, targeted, and sustainable measures for the concrete improvement of women's participation in public and political life and to make human and financial resources available for that purpose.

## Other aspects

The Government regularly supports events (such as the annual Finance Forum Liechtenstein and Entrepreneurs' Day) through patronage, financial contributions, and its own participation that repeatedly stand out due to their lack of female speakers. Women's organisations in reaction repeatedly remind the Government as well as the sponsors and organisers of these events that the lack of competent female speakers at these forums sends the wrong message to women in the business and financial sector.

The organisers continue to justify the dominantly male composition of their list of speakers with the lack of competent or suitable women and the lack of willingness on the part of female experts to participate. Astonishingly, this never appears to be the case when a Women's Business Day is organised (by the same organisers). In general, we believe it to be problematic when the Government supports events that do not ensure a balanced podium. Here, the Government would have an effective steering instrument at its disposal.

**We therefore call upon** the Government to take effective measures to increase the participation of women in political decision-making processes. For example, by

- formulating a strategy to increase the share of women in politics as well as binding measures or mechanisms for their implementation. This must be accompanied by public recognition that under-representation is a problem and that targets must be set and monitored.
- implementing appropriate mechanisms (quotas) in the electoral system (e.g. list quotas).
- making better use of financial steering instruments to promote developments in political parties, municipalities, business, and the media. Particular mention should be made of party financing, media promotion, and criteria for the payment of subsidies for events as well as owner strategies and service agreements with public institutions.
- adopting measures to implement gender-equal representation in elected public bodies. For this purpose, binding mechanisms must be introduced, and publication of vacant positions and a transparent appointment procedure must be ensured. Furthermore, regular reporting and, where necessary, review of nomination practices by external bodies are essential.

## Employment and social security

### Points 97 to 99

Every two years, wage statistics in Liechtenstein are compiled as part of the wage structure survey conducted by the Office of Statistics. Despite the Gender Equality Act, the pay gap in Liechtenstein has narrowed only minimally in recent years. On average, women in Liechtenstein still earn 16.5% less than their male colleagues. Nearly 7% of this pay gap between women and men cannot be explained by "objective" characteristics such as qualifications, training, professional status, line of business, etc. and are thus discriminatory. This applies to both the private and public sectors.

On average, women earn 7% less than men for no objective reason already when they start their first job after completing their apprenticeship. The inequality has negative consequences up to retirement age. The fact that women earn an average of 16.5% less may also encourage many couples to opt for the "traditional" family model contrary to their wishes. This economic constraint restricts freedom of choice.

While the Government has supported individual projects so far, it has not yet actively addressed the issue of wage equality. The wage surveys of the National Administration and their results were not published.

Few companies have meanwhile had their pay practices checked using self-testing tools and also made adjustments. These activities and their publication are having an impact. We consider companies' frequent claim that the same salary is paid for the same job profile to be more of an attempt to justify their behaviour.

#### **Points 106 and 107**

After many years of an expansion moratorium, we welcome the renewed expansion of childcare facilities and lunch tables. A change in financing is currently under discussion. According to this discussion, the actual childcare services provided and no longer the childcare places themselves are to be financed. We are concerned that this financing model will lead to a deterioration in the ratio and quality of childcare.

#### **Points 108 and 109**

In the past, there have been numerous studies and surveys on the compatibility of family life and work without concrete measures having been derived and implemented. The Women's Network and the member organisations have a great deal of expertise and know-how. We actively approached the Minister of Social Affairs and offered to participate in the working groups set up by the Government. Unfortunately, our offer was rejected without satisfactory arguments.

#### **Points 111 to 114**

Flexible working relationships and part-time work for men and women in the public and private sectors should be further promoted. There are hardly any opportunities for employees to increase or reduce their existing part-time workload. By promoting a wide variety of part-time work models, men and women are to be given the opportunity to assume responsibility in family work (childrearing, care, nursing). The introduction of paid parental leave is considered a key measure here.

We consider it to be problematic that women are much more likely than men to engage in lower paid work and part-time work, which has negative consequences for career development and retirement benefits. Despite equal or higher qualifications, women's chances of promotion are significantly lower. These are the main reasons why the share of female managers is still significantly lower than the share of male managers. Women in management positions can be found mainly in gender-typical sectors such as healthcare and social services. This calls for targeted information and advice.

#### **Point 127**

We recommend joining the ILO (International Labour Organization). This will allow Liechtenstein to ratify ILO conventions that counter discrimination in employment and occupation.

There is an urgent need for action in this regard among workers involved in housekeeping and home care. These workers, mainly women from Eastern European countries, are not subject to Liechtenstein labour law and therefore work in Liechtenstein without labour law protection. Only the following states are not ILO members: Andorra, Bhutan, Micronesia, Monaco, North Korea (DPRK), Nauru, and Liechtenstein, even though the ILO is based close by in Geneva.

## Health

### Points 136 to 139

Although there is talk of "decriminalising abortion", abortion still remains a criminal offence for those involved – with a few exceptions.

## Women's economic empowerment

We have already pointed out the problems above arising from part-time employment and loss of income due to the care work for family members and children as well as wage differences and the social and pension insurance consequences for women.

### Point 148

As in other parts of the report, points 148 to 150 of the fifth periodic report cite the activities of NGOs as positive examples. As a general matter, it is a good thing to recognise civil society's engagement in improving the economic standing of women. However, we believe the situation is critical when NGOs take on tasks the State should properly perform. Apart from improved subsidies for the Day Care Association over the medium term, no strategic measures are discernible to improve the economic situation of women. Measures to combat the gender pay gap, such as the disclosure of wages in the National Administration, have been rejected. Wage inequality, a lack of paid parental leave, and the lack of willingness in the private sector to make sufficient part-time work or flexible working time models available to women and men are also having an impact in politics. There too, there is a lack of women, and the conditions they encounter are less favourable than for men.

## Marriage and family relations

### Points 183 and 184

On 1 January 2015, the new law on parents and children entered into force in Liechtenstein, which in particular provides new rules for custody through the amendment of several laws.

The new law on parents and children prioritises the welfare of the child and provides a comprehensive list of criteria for that purpose. An important legal improvement is that the witnessing of violence involving caregivers is a violation of the welfare of the child. This is a very important step in recognising the damage that witnessing violence can do.

The daily work of the Women's Shelter shows that there are serious problems and challenges in implementing the laws for the protection of children affected by domestic violence or having to witness it. Although legislation aims to protect children from domestic violence, children do not receive sufficient protection in many cases of domestic violence. They suffer greatly from the violence they have been exposed to, which, in our experience, is not yet sufficiently acknowledged by the agencies involved. In our opinion, it will be particularly important in future to ensure (and verify) that the legal provisions relating to custody and visitation rights are taken into account. We very often observe that the rights of the parent exercising violence against family members are given priority over the right of children to be free from violence.

Other problems are the lack of recognition of the harm inflicted on children when they witness domestic violence and the lack of protection that would prevent children from witnessing violence in the first place. In theory, legal protection can be provided by protective orders under civil law, but

such cases presuppose a significant impairment of mental health. In practice, these protective measures are rarely used to protect children. The precondition of significant impairment of mental health is set too high (this also applies to adults). The threshold implies that psychological violence must be tolerated over an extended period of time, until mental health problems develop. This is unacceptable, especially in the case of children.

Joint custody as a rule is upheld by many family judges as the status quo even in cases of domestic violence. Mothers who are themselves victims of violence must therefore apply for custody to be changed. Courts often take a long time to process such applications, and it is regularly the case that violent fathers retain custody. This is contrary to the new law on parents and children, which includes the protection of children against the risk of experiencing assault or violence themselves or of witnessing it against important caregivers. Even in cases of recent violence and where victims are still housed in a shelter, violent fathers in practice are quickly granted visitation rights. These rules force mothers affected by violence to come into contact or stay in contact with the perpetrators. Visitation rights are often used by perpetrators to commit further violence against women and children.

It is also of concern that children's needs and rights are often not taken into account. When children express that they are afraid of their father and do not want to see him, their wish is often ignored. It is almost automatically assumed that the mother is influencing the children negatively in order to restrict the father's visitation rights.

## Annex: Information on the participating organisations

### **Frauennetz (Women's Network)**

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The Gender Equality Office for Women and Men, established in 1996, was mandated by the Government to hold regular meetings of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), political party organisations, and public organisations working to promote equality between women and men. The first exchange took place in April 1997. The Gender Equality Office, which later became the Equal Opportunities Unit, coordinated and chaired the loose association of women's organisations until its dissolution in 2016. Projects were launched, information on current political developments relating to gender equality was provided, opinions and statements were drafted, and events were organised. With the dissolution of the Equal Opportunities Unit, the Women's Network lost its coordination office. For this reason, the member organisations decided at the end of 2016 to establish an association as an umbrella organisation. The network serves to facilitate mutual exchange, to promote the member organisations' projects, and to create improved conditions for women in political, social, economic, and cultural matters. The Women's Network promotes equality between women and men, the compatibility of work and family life, and equal opportunities for women and girls, especially in education, employment, family, politics, and the media. The Women's Network currently has eight member organisations.

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### **infra**

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infra is an information and counselling centre for women. Our mission is to offer needs-oriented services specific to women in the areas of counselling, trainings, projects, and public outreach. Our services and counselling are versatile and anonymous and are guided by the needs of women. infra is committed to equal opportunities for women and men in all areas of life.

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### **Frauenhaus (Women's Shelter)**

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The Women's Shelter was established in 1991 as a shelter for women and children abused by domestic violence. It is the only such shelter in Liechtenstein and provides space for 3 women with their children. Last year there were 27 women and 36 children in the shelter. The Women's Shelter offers advice and protection. The telephone is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Women's Shelter also offers off-site consultations and follow-up care, and it engages in public relations concerning domestic violence against women and their children. There are 3 daytime employees (1.6 full-time equivalents incl. directory work), and the Women's Shelter receives financial support from the State (around 60%).

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### **Women's Section of the Liechtenstein Employees Association (LANV Sektion Frauen)**

The Women's Section of the LANV (Liechtenstein Employees Association) was founded in 1997. The Women's Section promotes equality between women and men in terms of work, wages, education, family, and society. For this purpose, the dedicated members work closely with other (women's) organisations and the Equal Opportunities Department of the Office of Social Services.

With its "pay respect" project, the Women's Section received the recognition prize in the context of the Government's Equal Opportunities Award in 2014. With various awareness-raising campaigns and other actions, the Women's Section makes a significant contribution to wage transparency and equal pay between women and men.

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### **Verein Hoi Quote (Hoi Quote Association)**

The Hoi Quote Association was founded after the 2017 parliamentary elections in March 2017. The Hi Quota Association advocates a statutory gender quota to ensure adequate representation of both genders in political decision-making processes and to reduce structural discrimination based on gender in national and municipal elections and in appointments to public bodies.

The contributions of the Hoi Quote Association in this report deal in particular with aspects concerning the participation of women in political decision-making processes.

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### **Verein Frauen in guter Verfassung (Association of Women with a Good Constitution)**

The purpose of the association is to strengthen the rights of the people and to promote the concept of democracy. It offers women a political forum and is neutral in terms of party politics and religious denomination.

Since its formation in 2004, its activities have included opinion making activities in gender related issues such as drafting forum contributions and letters to the editor, participating in consultations on Government proposals (e.g. parental leave, inheritance law), and supporting initiatives (e.g. help instead of punishment, registered domestic partnerships, and non-smokers' protection). By participating in various campaigns, the association has worked towards preservation of the former Equal Opportunities Unit. A current project of the association is the development of an archive on the civil women's rights movement in Liechtenstein. This includes activities to commemorate and convey the movement's achievements and enhance visibility of women in historiography in general.

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