

# Liechtenstein



Stable / Unchanged —

## Religion

## Population

## Area

- Christians : **88.6%**
- Muslims : **6.4%**
- Agnostics : **4.8%**
- Others : **0.2%**

37.800

160 Km<sup>2</sup>

## Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

Liechtenstein, a small German-speaking state, is a constitutional hereditary monarchy with a democratic and parliamentary form of government headed by the Prince of Liechtenstein. Liechtenstein has the highest gross domestic product per person in the world and is the second richest country in the world (by measure of GDP per capita) after Qatar.<sup>[1]</sup>

According to the latest data from 2010, Roman Catholics make up 76 percent of the population. Members of the Evangelical Reformed Church represent 6.5 percent.<sup>[2]</sup>

Most Muslims are Sunni and are mainly from Turkey, Kosovo, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>[3]</sup> There are about 30 Jews in the country.

The constitution states that each person has the freedom to choose their faith (Article 37) and guarantees an equal enjoyment of civil and political rights for all (Article 39) but grants a privileged position to the Catholic Church (Articles 37 and 38).<sup>[4]</sup>

There is no law requiring religious groups to register with the State. Religious groups have the freedom to establish private associations, for which authorisation from the commercial registry is mandatory. If they register as such, they are eligible to receive government funding for a variety of activities, including the provision of religious education in schools.<sup>[5]</sup>

Religious education is required in primary and secondary public schools. In primary schools, Catholic or Protestant education is compulsory. That said, parents are permitted to apply to the Office of Education for exemption. The Catholic Church controls the Catholic curriculum largely independent of state intervention. Islamic education is also offered (but is not compulsory) in primary schools and is partly funded by the state's integration budget, with the Muslim community

choosing the teachers.<sup>[6]</sup>

In secondary schools, parents and students are given a choice religious education. On the one hand they can opt for Catholic religious classes, which the government finances and the Catholic religious community organises. Alternatively, they can choose general classes about religion and culture taught from a sociological perspective.

Tolerance education has been of high importance in social, religious and cultural education. A course in religion and culture serves as an all-faith programme, including study of inter denominational issues and the major world religions.<sup>[7]</sup>

Liechtenstein's criminal code prohibits public incitement to hatred or discrimination against religious groups or individuals, the refusal to serve a person or group of persons based on religious affiliation and membership in any association that aims to promote discrimination against religious groups or individuals.<sup>[8]</sup>

The slaughtering of animals without stunning is also prohibited by law, making ritual slaughter of animals for kosher and halal meat illegal. Importing halal and kosher meat is legal.<sup>[9]</sup>

To receive a residency permit, foreign religious workers must have completed theological studies, belong to a nationally-known religious group, and be sponsored by a resident clergy member of the religious group.

## Incidents

No incident has occurred in the last few years. On the 4th and 5th July 2017, however, the United Nations Human Rights Committee (HRC) questioned the close ties between the state and the Catholic Church.<sup>[10]</sup> The Constitution of Liechtenstein defines the Catholic Church as the official state Church,<sup>[11]</sup> which is funded by the state and the country's municipalities. Religious minorities are set up as private associations<sup>[12]</sup> and must apply for state funding. In the review of the state report, the HRC expressed concerns<sup>[13]</sup> regarding the impact that close ties between state and Church could have on the protection of freedom of religion as envisaged in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

In its response, the delegation of Liechtenstein said that proposed amendments to the constitution are intended to give recognition to other communities provided they fulfil certain criteria, such as having a minimum number of 200 followers and having been present in Liechtenstein for over 20 years, and that they respect public order.

In its recommendations, the UN Human Rights Committee<sup>[14]</sup> asked Liechtenstein to ensure that: "(a) efforts are redoubled to reach an agreement within outstanding municipalities in order to amend the Constitution; (b) funding is provided to religious organisations of all religious communities on a basis of equality and that such funding is not limited to efforts aimed at integration of minority communities; (c) the law grants equal rights to all religious and belief groups."

## Prospects for freedom of religion

The population of Liechtenstein has slowly become more pluralistic over the last few decades. While Catholics made up more than 95 percent of the population in the 1930s and 1940s (and still about 90 percent in 1970), their share of the population has steadily declined since then (76 percent in 2010). A reorganisation of the relationship between the state and the religious communities is being prepared. The planned reorganisation is intended to create a uniform legal basis for the relationship between the state and the religious communities, leading to equal treatment of all religious groups.

However, during the review by the UN Human Rights Council the delegation of Liechtenstein expressed regrets that progress towards the separation of state and religion is unlikely to happen in the near future. Central to this is that the country's municipalities are opposed to moves to disentangle properties jointly held by religious and state institutions.

## Endnotes / Sources

- [1] 'Liechtenstein', The Association of Religion Data Archives, 2015, [http://www.thearda.com/international-Data/countries/Country\\_133\\_1.asp](http://www.thearda.com/international-Data/countries/Country_133_1.asp), (accessed January 2018).
- [2] United Nations Human Rights Committee, Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant, Centre of Civil and Political Rights, 12th May 2016, <http://ccprcentre.org/files/documents/CCPR:C:LIE:2.pdf>, (accessed January 2018).
- [3] The Association of Religion Data Archives, *op. cit.*
- [4] Constitution of the Principality of Liechtenstein, Legal Service of the Government of the Principality of Liechtenstein, 2003, [http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/research/liechtenstein constitution.pdf](http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/research/liechtenstein%20constitution.pdf), (accessed 13th February 2018).
- [5] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 'Liechtenstein', International Religious Freedom Report for 2016, U.S. State Department, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>, (accessed January 2018).
- [6] *Ibid.*
- [7] UN Human Rights Committee, *op. cit.*
- [8] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *op. cit.*
- [9] *Ibid.*
- [10] 'Liechtenstein: Implementation of ICCPR affected by issues related to gender inequality and religious freedom', Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR-Centre), 2017, [http://ccprcentre.org/ccprpages/liechtenstein-implementation-of-iccpr-affected-by-issues related-to-gender-inequality-and-religious-freedom](http://ccprcentre.org/ccprpages/liechtenstein-implementation-of-iccpr-affected-by-issues-related-to-gender-inequality-and-religious-freedom), (accessed January 2018).
- [11] Constitution of the Principality of Liechtenstein, *op. cit.*
- [12] Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR-Centre), *op. cit.*
- [13] *Ibid.*
- [14] *Ibid.*