

## **Implementation of ICCPR affected by issues related to gender inequality and religious freedom**

### ***Rights of religious minorities affected by the power of the Roman Catholic Church in Liechtenstein.***

Centre for Civil and Political Rights (02.08.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2vssGdj> - The Human Rights Committee reviewed the second periodic report of Liechtenstein on the 4th and 5th July 2017. Despite the State's commitment to comply with the Covenant, the List of Issues demonstrates that Liechtenstein faces issues such as domestic violence and the integration of persons with disabilities in the labour market. Among the main questions addressed in the review, there was the creation of an independent National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in November 2016 through the Liechtenstein Human Rights Association Act (LHRA Act), the close ties between the State and the Catholic church and the gender inequality towards women in general, and particularly within the political sphere. No NGOs from Liechtenstein attended the formal briefing despite the importance of discussing those issues during the review. See hereafter the observations concerning religious freedom:

### ***Strong ties between the State and the Catholic Church***

"The Constitution of Liechtenstein foresees the Roman Catholic Church as the official State Church and it is funded by certain municipalities, whereas religious minorities are organised as private associations and have to apply for State funding. The Christian Church, for instance, has applied for State funds and currently receives 300.000 Swiss francs per year for its activities. In the review of the State report, the Human Rights Committee expressed concerns regarding the impact that manifestations of the close link between State and church could have for the protection of freedom of religion as envisaged in the Covenant. Despite the fact that approximately 73% of the population in Liechtenstein is Catholic, the Committee called upon the State party to also take the interest of followers of other religions into consideration to ensure an effective implementation of its obligations.

The Deputy Head of the Office for Foreign Affairs has recognised such strong relationship between the State of Liechtenstein and the Catholic Church. According to him, "minority religious are tolerated", but it is true that they are not "actively supported by the Government." Furthermore, reference was made to a package of proposed amendments to the Constitution, which would provide the basis for recognition of other communities as long as they fulfil certain criteria such as having a minimum number of 200 followers and presence in Liechtenstein for over 20 years, and that they respect public order. The delegation of Liechtenstein concluded its remarks on this issue by expressing its regret that any progress is unlikely to be made in the near future regarding the separation of State and religion because certain municipalities have not yet accepted the disentanglement of property between the two institutions."

### ***Recommendations of the Committee***

Within one year, the State party should provide information on the following recommendations from the Committee's Concluding Observations:  
[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR%2fC%2fLIE%2fCO%2f2&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR%2fC%2fLIE%2fCO%2f2&Lang=en)

### ***Concluding observations about religious freedom:***

28. The State party should 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; and
- (c) the criteria for the recognition of religions guarantees the freedom of religion and belief and freedom to manifest a religion or belief either individually or in community with others, in public or in private, in worship, observance, practice or teaching.