



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Forty-eighth session

Summary record of the 966th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 20 January 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Pimentel

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention *(continued)*

Fourth periodic report of Liechtenstein (continued) (CEDAW/C/LIE/4; CEDAW/C/LIE/Q/4 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Liechtenstein took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Kubik-Risch** (Liechtenstein) said that Liechtenstein's efforts to promote female participation in political bodies had been focused on three areas: motivational activities, pre-election assistance and continuing post-election support through mentoring and workshops. Unfortunately, some of its initiatives had not always had the desired effect and strategic adjustments had been needed. For example, the Women's Pool of potential female politicians had been discontinued because many of the women registered failed to indicate a party affiliation. That failure made it difficult for political parties to target suitable candidates. However, regular information continued to be circulated to all registrees. In addition, a new website had been launched where women with political ambitions could register their interest and put themselves forward for political posts, including positions on municipal councils. The authorities recognized the need for affirmative action; it was a question of finding the right solutions.

3. **Ms. Bailey** said that, while the periodic report (CEDAW/C/LIE/4) acknowledged the clear gender segregation in basic vocational training and that, as requested, the State party had detailed the contributing factors and some of the related remedial measures in its responses to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/LIE/Q/4/Add.1), her main concern remained unaddressed. What she wished to know was how the State party ensured that those measures did not perpetuate existing patterns. She was concerned, for example, that the Fathers' Day initiative where boys and girls accompanied their father to work, might reinforce entrenched perceptions of male and female roles by exposing children to the same messages and stereotypes.

4. Noting that university students also followed traditional patterns of course selection, she wondered whether those gender-bound patterns began at school. Assuming that was the case, she asked what the State party was doing to address the imbalances in secondary education and prevent their being repeated in higher education. Since the State party acknowledged the male bias in course availability at its higher education institutions, which led many girls to study abroad, she enquired whether it envisaged broadening the range of courses so that more girls could complete advanced studies at home. Women accounted for 43 per cent of undergraduates, but that percentage fell significantly among postgraduates. She would appreciate an indication of the factors in that decline and what the Government was doing to reverse it.

5. Referring to the poor educational performance of immigrant children in Liechtenstein that had been highlighted in a recent report by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), she recalled that the Commission had recommended that the State party should work to remove linguistic barriers, sensitize parents to the importance of education and make adjustments to the system so that pupils were assigned to the different tracts of secondary education at a later age. She asked whether those recommendations had been implemented, and if so, with what impact.

6. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that it was regrettable that much of the statistical data in the report was out of date. Up-to-date figures were essential to a proper evaluation of progress. Noting that inequalities in employment, including wage disparity, gender segregation and discrimination against migrants, had been among the key concerns raised in

meetings with other treaty bodies and during the universal periodic review in 2008, she expressed concern that little progress appeared to have been made in those areas. The delegation had mentioned integration projects for migrant women during the meeting, but there was no specific information about migrant women's participation in the workforce in the periodic report. She urged the delegation to provide data disaggregated by sector of activity, origin, wage structure and other criteria in future reports.

7. She expressed concern that a shortcoming in article 46 (a) of the Employment Contracts Act that had been highlighted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Political Rights in 2006 remained unaddressed. That article prohibited discrimination in dismissal and severance but failed to extend the prohibition to discrimination in remuneration, recruitment and promotion. She also questioned the efficacy of the efforts to raise awareness of gender equality issues described on page 47 of the periodic report. The small number of companies (6 per cent) that had requested additional information packs pointed to low levels of interest.

8. The high percentage of women in part-time work and the increase in that percentage between 2006 and 2007, although a slight one, were also causes for concern. She asked the reason for the rise and what the authorities were doing to change the situation, for example, by encouraging men to make a greater contribution to family life and consider flexible or part-time working arrangements themselves.

9. **Ms. Hayashi** sought clarification about the funding of Liechtenstein's compulsory health insurance scheme. Were citizens required to make compulsory contributions or was the scheme funded directly by the State? She also wondered whether the health system was feeling the adverse effects of global phenomena such as population ageing, increased migration and higher unemployment and, if so, how those phenomena were impacting on health services for women.

10. Recalling that in its concluding observations on the third periodic report of Liechtenstein (CEDAW/C/LIE/CO/3) the Committee had recommended that the State party should remove punitive provisions for women who underwent abortion, she asked what progress had been made by the Working Group on Pregnancy Conflicts in the intervening period. Lastly, she sought information about access to health services for migrant women, and, in particular, the availability of specialized counselling in reproductive health in their own languages.

11. **Ms. Rasekh**, while commending the preventive focus of the health system and its universal reach, said that she too would like more information about the insurance system. Statistics for key indicators of women's health, including life expectancy, HIV prevalence and maternal mortality were also lacking. Assuming that the Ministry of Health maintained a database of gender-disaggregated data, could it please share that information? Noting the importance of early detection in the successful treatment of conditions including breast and cervical cancer, she suggested that the intervals of five and two and a half years established for general preventive health checks and gynaecological check-ups, respectively, should be shortened.

12. She was also concerned by the apparent lack of free contraception – a service deficiency that was illogical in a country with a health system focused on prevention and in which abortion was criminalized. There would always be some women who were unable to purchase contraceptives, so that deficiency was sure to contribute to the number of illegal terminations and terminations performed outside the country. Specific policies, such as sex education in schools, were needed to reduce the need for terminations and the resulting criminalization of women. She sought assurances that confidential reproductive health services were available to women, especially young women. Lastly, noting the State party's response to question 28 on the list of issues, she sought clarification of the objectives of the

Working Group on Pregnancy Conflicts, since decriminalization did not appear to be on the agenda. In particular, what was meant by the words “focus on prevention” if free contraception, including free condoms, was not envisaged?

13. **Ms. Kubik-Risch** (Liechtenstein) said that the status report on the human rights situation issued in January 2010 contained more gender-specific, more up-to-date statistics, and she hoped that it would fill some of the gaps identified. The report would be updated each year to incorporate the latest figures. She regretted that she could not provide the information sought about female migrant workers, but she could confirm that those women were at the bottom of the pay scale.

14. The campaigns to promote awareness of the Gender Equality Act were considered to have been effective. Information packs had been sent to the majority of companies in Liechtenstein. If only a small number had requested additional packs, perhaps that indicated that there was no further need? Furthermore, the campaigns had not been developed in isolation. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other institutions had been consulted and had provided input. Further campaigns would be conducted once the reform of the Gender Equality Act had been completed.

15. Many women opted for part-time work as a life choice that enabled them to reconcile family and work interests. However, measures to encourage more men to take advantage of part-time working arrangements were being considered and paternity leave not only existed but was taken.

16. Everyone in Liechtenstein, citizens and non-citizens alike, had access to the health system. Care not available in Liechtenstein’s hospital could be obtained at hospitals in neighbouring countries. However, to access the services, it was essential to conclude a medical insurance policy. Events were organized to raise awareness of the particular needs of migrants, particularly migrant women, among doctors and medical staff. Events organized for migrants included an evening presentation of the Liechtenstein health system for the Turkish Women’s Association and information events at the International Women’s Cafe.

17. With regard to abortions, the Working Group on Pregnancy Conflicts had been very active in recent years, including with preparations for a website. However, because abortion was such a sensitive issue in Liechtenstein, it was currently investigating the legal issues of what information could in fact be provided on such a website. All that took time, but concrete results were expected in the near future.

18. On the question of access to health services for migrant women, she said that, in general, female doctors in Liechtenstein did not speak other languages. Often, immigrants brought their own interpreters to medical consultations. Alternatively, there were counselling facilities in Vorarlberg, the neighbouring part of Austria, which were accessible to immigrants living in Liechtenstein.

19. Her delegation would provide the statistical data on women’s health requested at a later date. Concerning the need for regular medical check-ups, such as for breast cancer, she said that any woman was entitled to schedule an additional private examination at any time she wished, which would be paid for by her health insurance.

20. Sex education, particularly on contraception, was provided in schools by outside organizations that gave visiting presentations. Such organizations also offered counselling, including of a confidential nature, for women at various events organized for young people in the country.

21. **Mr. Ritter** (Liechtenstein) said that seeking to provide health services in immigrants’ own languages was regarded as a second-best solution: it was better for people

to learn German. Special German classes for immigrant children were provided, moreover, the Government had recently stipulated that all tuition in schools, from kindergarten onwards, would be given in standard German, not in the Liechtenstein dialect – a change that would also help immigrant children to assimilate.

22. Another important target group for language learning comprised the mothers of those children. Male immigrants would be using German at their place of work, but women staying at home to look after their children did not have that opportunity. Again, German classes specifically for immigrant mothers were financed by the Government.

23. The health system had been under some strain because of the economic crisis. The system was still very comprehensive, but State subsidies to it had had to be reduced. However, a new tax law had been introduced, which should ease the burden on families and enable them to pay their health insurance premiums.

24. **Ms. Rasekh** said that, while most people in Liechtenstein were relatively wealthy, there was still a minority of immigrants who could not afford contraceptive supplies. She asked whether there were any plans for the Government to offer such supplies free of charge, as was done in most European countries.

25. **Ms. Neubauer** asked for information on the situation of older and disabled women in Liechtenstein. According to the periodic report, the 2008 Interreg Project report “Women’s Lives 50+”, had revealed striking differences between the situations of men and women in that age group, as a result of which a catalogue of recommended measures had been compiled and sent to interested offices. She wished to know more about the “interested offices” and “the recommended measures” and whether there had been any follow-up on the latter’s implementation.

26. As to women with disabilities, she referred to a social study of people with disabilities in Liechtenstein, launched by the Office of Equal Opportunity, and asked what its findings had been, in particular concerning the specific challenges facing women. Had any responses to those challenges been identified?

27. **Ms. Kubik-Risch** (Liechtenstein) said that she was not aware of any Government plan to offer free contraceptive supplies. There were, however, a number of funds in Liechtenstein to help people on a low income.

28. With regard to older women, the recommended measures had been discussed by expert groups, composed, inter alia, of male and female representatives from the departments for family and children’s affairs, the association of health insurance companies, and trade and industry. The composition of the group had been wide-ranging to reflect the broad spectrum of areas where older women were disadvantaged.

29. For example, a return to work relatively late in life tended to be more difficult for women, who, as the study had revealed, were generally less well educated than their younger counterparts. The difficulty of finding relatively high-grade work had repercussions on the women’s pensions.

30. The catalogue of measures had been sent to the various groups that had participated in the discussions, for distribution to their membership and also more widely throughout the country. For example, the association of health insurance companies would pass them on not only to all the health insurers but to the pension insurers and so on. Measures had been taken primarily to assist women caring for elderly relatives, who clearly needed support. Training and education formed an important part of that support, and presentations and seminars on health and ageing were given throughout the country. A major advance in that area was the nursing and care allowance, which women could claim for looking after elderly family members.

31. With regard to women with disabilities, the social study carried out had found that while people of both sexes with disabilities certainly suffered disadvantages, no major difference could be detected between the situations of men and women. The measures that the Liechtenstein Government implemented for people with disabilities sought primarily to give very individualized care, rather than to provide generalized programmes. For example, there were virtually no deaf people in Liechtenstein, and so if a person did have that disability he or she would receive specially tailored care rather than being placed in a deaf persons' programme. Several times a year, the Office of Equal Opportunity drew attention to issues affecting people with disabilities through its publication *Mittendrin*, which was reproduced in one or other of the national newspapers, and whose editorial staff were largely people with disabilities.

32. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** requested more information about the proposed changes to custody rights mentioned at the previous meeting. She also asked the delegation to provide more details on the scope of new inheritance legislation referred to in the periodic report. With respect to de facto unions, she enquired whether there was a minimum time period that a couple needed to have lived together for their partnership to be recognized as such. She wished to know whether information provided by the Government on de facto unions clearly indicated the potential disadvantages of such partnerships, particularly with respect to women's property rights. Lastly, she asked the delegation to clarify whether the legal definition of property covered intangible property such as pension and other financial rights, including future earnings potential.

33. **Ms. Kubik-Risch** (Liechtenstein) said that, while the proposed changes to custody rights submitted by NGOs were currently being considered by the Government, no decision had yet been made in that regard. The new inheritance legislation would apply to the registered partnership regime. As to the provision of information to young women on de facto unions, she said that the Information and Contact Office for Women organized public lectures on the subject and had published an information brochure about the potential disadvantages of such partnerships. Her delegation would provide written answers concerning women's property rights after divorce at a later date.

34. **Mr. Walch** (Liechtenstein) said that the minimum duration requirement for a de facto union was five years for the purposes of family reunification involving a citizen of Liechtenstein and a foreigner.

35. **Ms. Neubauer** said that there was a lack of information on the implementation and monitoring of measures to ensure the equality of older women and men and persons with disabilities in employment. She would like to know whether the Government's recommendations in that regard had been followed up and, if so, what their impact had been, particularly with respect to older women's integration into the labour market.

36. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, welcomed the debate in the State party on changes to custody rights, but urged the Government to consider very carefully all the consequences of joint custody arrangements before taking a decision in that regard.

37. **Ms. Kubik-Risch** (Liechtenstein) conceded that there had been a lack of follow-up on measures taken regarding older women and women with disabilities, but said that some of those measures had only recently been implemented. However, her delegation would heed the Committee's advice on the need to ensure evaluation of the impact of such initiatives.

38. **The Chairperson** thanked the delegation for its constructive and frank dialogue with the Committee. She commended the State party on its ongoing legislative reform measures, including the revision of legislation governing sex offences that had introduced ex officio prosecution of domestic violence. She encouraged the State party to take further

measures to address the Committee's concerns with a view to full implementation of the Convention.

39. **Mr. Marxer** (Liechtenstein) thanked the Committee members for their questions and suggestions and reiterated Liechtenstein's commitment to comply with the recommendations of the Committee.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.