



# Freedom in the World 2018

## Liechtenstein *Profile*

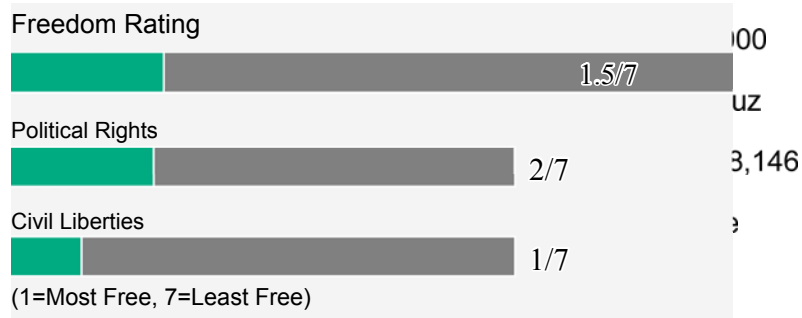
**FREEDOM STATUS:**  
**FREE**



Freedom in the World

Scores

Quick Facts



Aggregate Score: 90/100 (0=Least Free, 100=Most Free)

### Overview:

The Principality of Liechtenstein combines a powerful monarchy with a parliamentary system of government. The prince of Liechtenstein has an influential political role, which was enhanced by a constitutional referendum in 2003. Human rights and civil liberties are generally respected in the country.

### Key Developments in 2017:

- Parliamentary elections in February resulted in a victory for the ruling Progressive Citizens' Party (FBP), which formed a coalition with the Fatherland Union (VU). The right-wing populist Independents party, which ran by criticizing the political establishment as corrupt and out of touch and occasionally made appeals to xenophobia, gained a seat.
- Significant progress was made with the implementation of anticorruption laws, including the adoption of a code of conduct for corruption prevention.

## Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

### POLITICAL RIGHTS:

# 33 / 40

#### A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 10 / 12

**A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?**

**2 / 4**

Liechtenstein has one of the most politically powerful unelected monarchs in Europe. In a 2003 constitutional referendum, voters granted significantly more power to the

monarch. The prince, as hereditary head of state, appoints prime minister on the recommendation of parliament and possesses the power to veto legislation, dismiss the government, and dissolve parliament. Prince Hans-Adam II is the current head of state, but he handed his governmental powers over to his son, Hereditary Prince Alois, in 2004.



**A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4**

The Landtag, the unicameral parliament, consists of 25 deputies chosen by proportional representation every four years. Voting is compulsory under the law, but not enforced. International observers considered the 2017 parliamentary election to be credible. Four parties competed and Prime Minister Adrian Hasler's FBP won 35 percent of the vote and nine seats.

**A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 4 / 4**

The electoral framework provides a sound basis for democratic elections. There are no provisions for election observation, but domestic and international observers are free to monitor the election process. Liechtenstein remains one of the few European countries without a legal framework on party finance—parties can spend unlimited money and do not have to disclose their sources of funding.

## B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 13 / 16



**B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?**

4 / 4

There are no limits on the establishment or participation of political parties. There are currently four political parties in Liechtenstein. Parties must obtain eight percent of the vote to meet the threshold for representation in parliament—it is one of the highest electoral thresholds in the world, making the formation of competitive new parties difficult.

**B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4**

The unelected prince wields significant political power in Liechtenstein, which limits the impact of legislative elections on power dynamics. However, opposition parties have the ability to gain power in parliament through elections, as demonstrated by the right-wing populist Independents party, which won four seats in 2013, its first election, as well as an additional seat in 2017. The Independents ran on a platform criticizing the political elite as out of touch and corrupt, and made occasional appeals to xenophobia. The ruling FBP lost one seat in the 2017 election.

**B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious**

**hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 3 / 4**



Although citizens are largely free to make their own political choices, the prince has the power to veto the outcome of national referendums and popular initiatives. The prince has occasionally threatened to use these veto powers, thereby exercising undue influence on such plebiscites.

**B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 3 / 4**

Approximately one-third of the population consists of foreign nationals who do not have political rights. Under Liechtenstein's restrictive naturalization criteria, one must marry a resident Liechtenstein citizen and live in the country for more than 10 years, or live in the country for 30 years, to qualify for citizenship.

The number of women in parliament declined in 2017 from six members to three, which led to calls for the introduction of a quota. In 2016, in a move that showed the government's commitment to representing women's interests, Liechtenstein signed the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. At the end of 2017, the government was working to harmonize it with domestic law in order to ratify it.

## C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT:

10 / 12

### **C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4**

Although parliament sets the legislative agenda, the prince has significant political power with no electoral mandate. The prince can dismiss the government and parliament, veto legislation, call referendums, and nominate judges.

### **C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 4 / 4**

Anticorruption laws are effectively implemented, and levels of corruption are reportedly low. In a 2017 evaluation report, the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) applauded Liechtenstein for the implementation of anticorruption measures, including the adoption of a code of conduct for corruption prevention.

### **C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 4 / 4**

Although there is no constitutional guarantee of access to information, laws are in place to provide for government transparency, which are largely respected in practice. The government has made efforts in recent years to increase transparency in the banking sector.

# CIVIL LIBERTIES: 57 /

## 60 (-1)

### D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 16 / 16

#### **D1. Are there free and independent media? 4 / 4**

The constitution guarantees freedom of the press, which is respected in practice. Liechtenstein has one private television station, one public radio station, and two main newspapers that are owned by the two major political parties. The media lacks pluralism, but citizens do have access to foreign broadcasting, mostly from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

#### **D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 4 / 4**

Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed and protected in practice. The constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion. Catholic or Protestant education is mandatory in all primary schools, but exemptions are routinely granted. Islamic religious classes have been offered in some primary schools since 2008. All religious groups are tax-exempt.

#### **D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 4 / 4**

Academic freedom is largely respected, with no restrictions from state or nonstate actors.



**D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4 / 4**

The law guarantees freedom of expression, but prohibits public insults directed against a race or ethnic group. There are no restrictions on internet access or online communication.

## E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS : 12 / 12

**E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 4 / 4**

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, and this right is respected in practice.

**E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work? 4 / 4**

Domestic and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are able to function freely. The government largely cooperates with NGOs and is receptive to their viewpoints.

**E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4**

The law facilitates the formation of trade unions and collective bargaining, and the principality has one small trade union. A 2008 law gives civil servants the right to strike.



## F. RULE OF LAW: 14 / 16



### **F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4**

The judiciary is independent and impartial, but the 2003 constitutional referendum gave the prince the power to appoint judges, meaning that the judicial appointment process lacks a key element of democratic accountability. The appointments of ad hoc judges, who often serve for a short time, are not publicly announced.

### **F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 4 / 4**

The constitution provides for the right to a fair trial, and the rights of defendants are usually respected. Most trials in 2017 were public and defendants were considered innocent until proven guilty.

### **F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 4 / 4**

People in Liechtenstein are largely free from the illegitimate use of physical force, as well as war and insurgencies.

### **F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 3 / 4**

In 2015, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance reiterated its recommendation to abrogate specific sections of the Law on Foreigners, which allow for the

withdrawal of a permanent residency permit if the foreign national is highly dependent on social welfare.



Despite antidiscrimination laws, women, particularly Muslim women, experience employment discrimination. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals face social stigma, and according to a leading human rights group, often do not disclose their orientation out of fear of discrimination.

## G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 15 / 16 (–1)

**G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 4 / 4**

There are no restrictions on the freedom of movement in Liechtenstein.

**G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4 / 4**

There are no undue restrictions on the right to own property or to establish a private business for residents. Non-residents are not allowed to establish a business in Liechtenstein, but prospective business owners exploit loopholes to work around the law.

**G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family,**

### **protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 3 / 4 (–1)**



Same-sex registered partnerships are legal, but in a 2016 speech, Prince Hans-Adam II announced his opposition to adoption rights for same-sex couples. At the end of 2017, single LGBT people could adopt children, but same-sex couples could not.

Domestic violence and spousal rape are illegal in Liechtenstein and authorities effectively prosecute offenders and protect victims. Abortion is illegal with only a few exceptions—a 2011 referendum to legalize it was defeated by voters.

**Score change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because same-sex couples continue to face restrictions on their ability to adopt children.**

### **G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 4 / 4**

Liechtenstein is largely free from economic exploitation and human trafficking. Despite its relative wealth, poverty is still a persistent issue in Liechtenstein, particularly in immigrant communities. Immigrants often struggle to find jobs and social mobility for immigrant communities is limited.

**Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)**

**X = Score Received**

**Y = Best Possible Score**

**Z = Change from Previous Year**

**Full Methodology**



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