



Liechtenstein — Va-PoReg Country Report

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01/23/1719 Start Autocratic Monarchy: On 01/23/1719, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI merged the lands of Vaduz and Schellenberg, creating a new territory that he named the Principality of Liechtenstein. This act made Liechtenstein a sovereign member state of the Holy Roman Empire. Due to the Napoleonic Wars, France took control of the Holy Roman Empire in the early 19th century. Emperor Francis II abdicated and dissolved the empire, leading to the creation of the Confederation of the Rhine. This restructuring had a significant impact on Liechtenstein, as the state was no longer obligated to any feudal lord. Liechtenstein's sovereignty is generally attributed to these events, as the prince no longer owed any obligation to a suzerain.¹ In 1918, a committee was appointed with the approval of the prince to revise the constitution of Liechtenstein. The new constitution was presented in 1921 and adopted by the Diet with minimal changes on 08/24/1921 and sanctioned by the prince on 08/02/1921. According to LIED only legislative elections, which weren't multiparty, were held until 1917, from 1918 only multiparty legislative elections were held. There were no executive elections.

10/05/1921 End Autocratic Monarchy/Start Constitutional Monarchy: Since this date, the constitution has been the state constitution of Liechtenstein, and the government has been elected by parliament and sworn in by the prince.² Male suffrage was introduced in 1921 (LIED). Women suffrage was only introduced in 1984.³ According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held during this period. There were no executive elections. Per FH, for the period between 1972 and 1976, the country scores between 6 and 7, categorized as partly free, which we interpret as rather free. The period subsequent to 1976 is not represented by data. From 1992 onward the country is considered free with a score ranging from 2 to 4, which we also interpret as free in our framework. On 03/14/2003 a constitutional referendum was held. Prince Hans-Adam had previously threatened to leave the country if the referendum had not turned out in his favor. Due to the constitutional amendment following the referendum, Liechtenstein boasts one of Europe's most politically influential hereditary monarchies. In his capacity as head of state, the prince appoints the prime minister and cabinet based on parliament's recommendation, with the authority to dismiss the government and dissolve the parliament.⁴ Liechtenstein has a unicameral parliament with a multi-party system. However, the eight percent threshold is comparatively high for representation in parliament. Although, people are free to make political decisions, the prince can veto the outcome of a referendum or influence the shaping of public opinion. Freedom of the press, freedom of religion, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly are guaranteed. Although the judiciary is generally independent, the prince holds powerful influence. The prince plays a crucial role in the selection of judges, resulting in a process that lacks a fundamental aspect of democratic accountability.⁵ On 02/07/2021 general elections were held, they were deemed credible. Although the law provides for compulsory voting, this is not implemented.⁶ The general election on 02/09/2025 weakened the FBP and strengthened the opposition (DpL), yet the established parties, VU and FBP, renewed their coalition. In April 2025, Brigitte Haas (VU) was elected as Liechtenstein's first female Prime Minister.⁷ No competitive elections were held since 1984 according to LIED. Political liberties according to LIED have been present since 1946. V-Dem does not list Liechtenstein in its data.

Constitutional Monarchy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Marxer/Pállinger 2009, Marxer 2010)

Notes

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liechtenstein#History>

² https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regierung_des_F%C3%BCrstentums_Liechtenstein#Demokratischer_Umschwung_und_neue_Verfassung

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage_in_Liechtenstein

⁴ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/liechtenstein/freedom-world/2023>

⁵ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/liechtenstein/freedom-world/2023>

⁶ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/liechtenstein/freedom-world/2023>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2021_Liechtenstein_general_election

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_Liechtenstein_general_election

References

Marxer, Wilfried (2010): Liechtenstein, in: Nohlen, Dieter & Stöver, Philip (Hrsg.), Elections in Europe: A Data Handbook. 1. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1155–1186.