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**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION
FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**

**COMMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF
LIECHTENSTEIN ON THE SECOND OPINION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES
IN LIECHTENSTEIN
(received on 15 February 2005)**

The Liechtenstein authorities welcome the opportunity to continue the dialogue with the Advisory Committee on the implementation of the Framework Convention, taking into account the limited potential for the application of the Framework Convention in Liechtenstein as acknowledged by the Advisory Committee.

The Liechtenstein authorities are aware of the fact that the risk of being subject to certain forms of discrimination might be higher for persons who do not have any knowledge of the official language, i.e. German. For this reason, multiple efforts are being undertaken to increase the number of people attending German language courses, especially women. Language courses organized by the Association for Intercultural Education (Verein für interkulturelle Bildung) are subsidized by the Government with a yearly contribution of 30'000 Swiss francs. Intensive German language courses (free of charge) are conducted for children over the age of eight who have come to Liechtenstein and do not yet possess adequate knowledge of the language. The purpose of these intensive courses is to enable such children to enter the appropriate grade and type of school after a maximum of one school year. Also, German as a second language is now a subject in the new curriculum and is continued at all levels of instruction as a supplementary course. In addition to teaching language, this course covers cultural and social issues. Regular contact between teaching staff and parents during German intensive courses and supplementary courses and active support by multicultural projects in schools serve to facilitate the integration of families. At the same time, the State provides support, in the form of the necessary infrastructure, for language and social studies courses relating to the countries of origin that are organized by private bodies (associations of foreigners).

In this context also worth mentioning is the „Migrant Women’s Project“ launched by the Women’s Information and Contact Office (infra), with a view to promoting the independence and integration of foreign women through the provision of language courses, counselling services and information. For this project, infra was awarded the Equality Prize for 2000 by the Government of Liechtenstein. In addition the Office of Social Services offers foreign families and couples of different nationalities counselling and therapy in problem situations relating to immigration issues, as well as German language courses, where needed, to resolve language problems.

The work of the inter-disciplinary working group on the implementation of the National Action Plan against racism and intolerance continues to be fully supported by the Government. As in 2004, the working group has been allocated 25'000 Swiss francs for its activities in 2005. Almost half of this amount (10'000 Swiss francs) will be used for the second year of the research assignment given to the “Liechtenstein Institute” in view of the elaboration of a scientific basis for the gathering of relevant data to measure forms and extent of discrimination. (For further information on the work of the working group, please refer to the enclosed 2004 report.)

In order to improve the coordination among the different institutions responsible for integration measures as well as to establish a clearly identifiable contact point in the national administration to which a person who feels to be subject to discrimination can turn to, the Government has decided to create the Office for the Equality of Opportunities (Stabsstelle für Chancengleichheit). This proposal of the Government was approved by Parliament in December 2004, through the adoption of the necessary budget for the creation of this office. (For further information on this new institution, please refer to the enclosed report of the Government to Parliament).

The Office for the Equality of Opportunities will also be integrated in the e-government portal of the national administration, with special references to the work and initiatives undertaken. This information will supplement the data provided on the specific Government homepage detailing the activities aiming at the prevention of racism and intolerance. On that page, the reports of ECRI on Liechtenstein have been published in English and German. As an immediate follow-up to the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, its second opinion on Liechtenstein will also be made public in English and German in the coming weeks, forming part of an overall updating of the homepage.

The Liechtenstein authorities wish to reiterate that they are fully committed to the implementation of the legal obligations arising from the various international human rights treaties to which Liechtenstein is a State party and that they also continue to support the aims of the Framework Convention. In this sense, they are looking forward to further constructive dialogue with the Advisory Committee.

Vaduz, 1 February 2005

Enclosures (available on the Committee of Ministers' website):

- 2004 report of the working group for the NAP (in German)
- report of the Government to Parliament on the establishment of an Office for the Equality of Opportunities (in German)