



## **Comments on the second and third country report on racism**

Dear Ms. Stehrenberger, dear experts:

### **General remarks**

As President of the Association for Intercultural Education (Verein für interkulturelle Bildung, ViB), I have read the second country report carefully and with great interest. First, I welcome the suggestion to include NGOs, since we are in close contact with foreigners in Liechtenstein.

In general, I would like to comment positively on the report, since our Board of Directors and the foreign residents of Liechtenstein are very pleased with the efforts made in our country. As an example in the area of housing subsidies: Pursuant to my complaint on behalf of a Turkish family relating to housing subsidies, we were taken very seriously, and our letters were forwarded to the Government in a polite manner. The family did have to return the money that they, according to the law, had incorrectly received. But at the same time, the government official in charge thanked us for our advice that amendments should be made at the legislative level so that such cases would not recur. We certainly had the impression that the staff members were well-informed. My suggestion would be to draft official answers to foreigners as well as Liechtenstein citizens in simpler, more easily understandable German.

### **Functional illiteracy**

We know that the problem of functional illiteracy (people who are unable to read texts and understand them in context) is increasing. For this reason, ViB conducted an information campaign on 8 September, in collaboration with the Adult Education Foundation, serving alphabet soup at a stand for everyone. The population reacted with great astonishment that reading and writing deficiencies are this widespread.

### **2.2 State support / Non-governmental organizations**

We very much welcome the roundtable discussions conducted in 2004 with the foreigners' associations. Unfortunately we were not invited. However, we have been promised that these discussions will be continued.

### **2.4 Absence of statistical data**

In the area of immigration, there is an absence of data concerning people who face daily life in Liechtenstein as illiterates. Such data would enable us to adopt a concrete approach toward literacy education. In no European country today should anyone be excluded because he/she is unable to read notices!

For this reason, the Adult Education Foundation in Liechtenstein, in collaboration with Switzerland, launched a survey with the goal of training teachers to educate illiterates in a way that they do not lose face. The Association for Intercultural Education is active in this area.

In the area of housing, we know of one case in which a woman's rental contract was cancelled after she decided to wear a veil as a sign of her religious affiliation.

## **2.5 Other activities / Public awareness-raising**

At the annual Resch Community Center festival, ViB regularly organizes a cake stand with international desserts. This is always very much welcomed, and it gives our German language course participants an opportunity to work toward a linguistic goal. We use the revenue to attend cultural events.

The annual Africa Festival, organized by the Liechtenstein Development Service and the Theater on the Kirchplatz (TaK), allows ViB to create a space for a special marginalized group. In this way, we have repeatedly been successful in integrating asylum-seekers along with their skills and in enabling them to earn money by selling their very popular African specialties. This festival also deserves attention because of the way it raises the awareness of the public for the “forgotten continent”. It brings a culture closer that has many stories to tell and much to offer.

Together with the Office of Gender Equality and the Women’s Home, we organized an encounter festival with the title “Merhaba Liechtenstein – Hi Vaduz”. A “knowledge obstacle course” about both countries, stories told in Turkish and Liechtenstein dialect, and music and food made that Sunday a special experience, attended by many visitors.

In March 2006, we are planning to organize a 3-part series of evening events, under the patronage of the municipality of Schaan. We are planning to include a number of politicians, associations, and public figures. This event series entitled “Foreigners among us” targets Liechtenstein citizens, with the goal of elucidating their difficulties in everyday coexistence with foreigners, so that these situations can be improved on the third evening with small, concrete projects. ViB gave the impetus for the event series and, as part of this, is working on the project “International Women’s Coffee Talks”: weekly women’s discussion rounds in several municipalities with international participation, in which facilitators will host different topics.

A further goal is our demand that landlords draft uniform rules for residents in simple German, since we repeatedly have observed that such rules are not understood and therefore cannot be complied with.

We also request the newly created Integration Office to draft an easily understandable brochure on the political system, social insurances, history, separation of powers and the rule of law, politics, rights and duties of inhabitants, security, protection and order, public health, church and State, school and apprenticeships, education and labor. We would then use these brochures to offer integration courses.

Thank you for your kind attention.



Pia Dürlewanger, President, Association for Intercultural Education (ViB), Schaan

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