



March 2021

NEWSLETTER

Czech-Liechtenstein Society

Member of Europa Nostra



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Honorary Chairwoman's Address

The Principality of Liechtenstein and the Czech Republic are bound together by deep ties, common values and common interests. Liechtenstein does not share such a close cooperation with any other nation states except for its immediate neighbours Austria and Switzerland. That applies to both historical relations and current initiatives. The ties reach deep into the past when Heinrich I von Liechtenstein was in 1249 granted the freehold ownership of the baronial estate of Nikolsburg in South Moravia by King Ottokar Přemysls. The links are unbroken when it comes to Liechtenstein's role in today's world.

Since 2004, when the Czech Republic joined the EU, both countries have been closely linked through the European Economic Area. The countries essentially belong to the same economic area that they were in

prior to 1918. The EEA and a double taxation agreement concluded in 2014 with then Finance Minister Andrej Babiš form a solid basis for close and growing economic exchanges between our countries. With respect to its size, Liechtenstein belongs among the top exporters and generally generates a large surplus. As regards the Czech Republic, we have a slight trade deficit in favour of Prague. I believe that there is still considerable potential in trade for both sides. Another area of close cooperation is education. The Liechtenstein Gymnasium Vaduz and the Matyáš-Lerch-Gymnasium in Brno are connected by an EEA-financed annual pupil exchange. At the university level, some 90 Czech students have studied at the University of Liechtenstein in recent years. The cooperation in relation to universities is rooted in a century-old



H. S. H. Maria-Pia Kothbauer, Ambassador of Liechtenstein to Austria and the Czech Republic, during the Days of Liechtenstein History event at the Masaryk University (November 2019)

tradition, which was honoured recently by Masaryk and Mendel University with the awarding of the Grand Gold Medal to Prince Hans Adam II von Liechtenstein and the Golden Medal to Hereditary Prince Alois von Liechtenstein.

In the field of culture, notable exhibitions have been held in Prague, Opava and Vienna. Artists from Liechtenstein have appeared as guests at various Czech festivals such as the renowned German-language theatre festival in Prague. This involves a collaboration with the “Theater am Kirchplatz” (TAK) of Schaan. Given that the Czech Republic and Liechtenstein do not share a common border, many are amazed that we maintain a regional cooperation. South Moravia and Lower Austria have launched a project sponsored by Intereg under the motto “Borderless Liechtenstein”. The programme is aimed at cyclists and wine lovers as much as people interested in culture and in our common history. The most telling witnesses to these ties are the cultural landscape and the castles of the Lednice-Valtice Area and Wilfersdorf.

At the same time, however, we also have a historical burden to cope with.

Liechtenstein does not face such profound bilateral challenges with any other country. The challenges touch on fundamental questions of interstate relations, such as the recognition of sovereignty and the sovereign equality of states, and in 2020 they led to a state complaint lodged at the European Court for Human Rights.

Not until 2009 did diplomatic relations resume between our two countries. In all, relations were interrupted for more than 70 years. It was the 1989 Velvet Revolution, which we together commemorate every year with joy and high esteem, which enabled a new engagement with history, including that of the country and the princely family of Liechtenstein. We are grateful to the Joint Commission of Historians under the able stewardship of Prof. PhDr. Tomáš Knož

and Dr. Peter Geiger. Since 2010, it has made a tremendous effort in pointing out the opportunities and challenges presented to us by our common history in an academically exemplary manner.

The goal of the Liechtenstein Government is to actively shape a common future with the Czech Republic and to cooperate even more closely. This also means discussing the outstanding issues in terms of reconciling the interests of partners. The Princely House has made far-reaching proposals for engagement and cooperation with the Czech Republic.

In this same spirit, I am grateful that I can say that Liechtenstein can rely on an ever-growing number of friends in the Czech Republic. These friends are interested in furthering our relations and the common understanding of outstanding historical treasures binding us together.

The Czech-Liechtenstein Friendship Association has played a decisive role in this respect ever since its establishment in 2018. I want to particularly thank its founding fathers Director PhDr. Richard Svoboda, Dr. Jiří Balašík and Minister Daniel Herman as well as the board for their tireless efforts in reaching out to the members and drawing up a fascinating and wide-ranging programme. I am grateful to have been invited to serve as Honorary President of the unique Czech-Liechtenstein Friendship Association. ■

H. S. H. Maria-Pia Kothbauer, the Ambassador of Liechtenstein to Austria and Czech Republic



Students of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, at the Days of Liechtenstein History event



Jiří Balašík

■ New Honorary Chairman of the Czech-Liechtenstein Society

Jiří Balašík, the existing Chairman of the Czech-Liechtenstein Society, was appointed the new Honorary Chairman of the association by its Board on 16 March.

“It is a natural step which reflects an appreciation of the work done by Jiří Balašík when establishing the association, recruiting new members and creating a meaningful programme in the first years of its existence,” Zuzana Holendová, a member of the Board, commented after the election of the new Honorary Chairman, which was performed “by letter”. Jiří Balašík will succeed Daniel Herman in the role.

A former Minister of Culture, Daniel Herman is soon to start a new role, driving this change. The concurrence of two engagements could have raised ethical doubts about a conflict of interest and therefore Daniel Herman resigned his position as the Honorary Chairman of the Czech-Liechtenstein Society as of 15 March. “At this moment, I am still bound to confidentiality, but I believe that I will be able to share my new mission with all members of the association as early as April,” wrote Daniel Herman in a letter to Jiří Balašík, continuing:

“However, believe me, it will be good news and I will continue to work hard for Czech-Liechtenstein mutual understanding. Besides, I’ve just filed an application for membership in the Czech-Liechtenstein Society.” As the mutuality of Czech and Liechtenstein relations has been one of the principles of the Czech-Liechtenstein Society since its establishment, the Board did not want to leave the position of one of its Honorary Chairmen vacant after the resignation of Daniel Herman. The idea was also supported by Her Serenity Princess Maria-Pia, the Honorary Chairwoman representing the Principality as well as the House of Liechtenstein in the association. “Although I was ready to lead our association as the executive chairman for another electoral term, I have accepted the honorary role. I will continuously support the development of the association and, at the same time, I fully trust my Vice-chairman Petr Svoboda to keep the continuity and direction that the Czech-Liechtenstein Society follows, and I am also very much honoured and appreciate the trust I have been given,” Jiří Balašík said of his new role in a letter sent to all association members.

The Vice-chairman Petr Svoboda is already preparing an electoral General Assembly that should be held on April 22. Its main task will be to elect a new Board for a three-year term and agree on upcoming programme priorities. ■



Daniel Herman



How Liechtenstein has mastered the Corona crisis so far

In Liechtenstein, the first positive coronavirus case was discovered on 3 March 2020, and since the beginning of the pandemic, 55 people in Liechtenstein have died from or with coronavirus. The situation translates into a clear statistical excess mortality rate. The following article will describe how the Principality of Liechtenstein, which, with around 38,000 inhabitants, is one of the smallest countries in the world, has mastered the crisis so far. It will also look at what special crisis management measures feature in the small state.



Good starting point

In recent decades, Liechtenstein has repeatedly shown that a small state can often succeed particularly well in reacting quickly and efficiently to major challenges. Smallness leads to short distances and decisions can therefore be taken quickly and with broad support. Behind a government consisting of only five ministers, and a parliament of only 25 members, there is a state administration of around 800 people organised into 19 offices and 27 departments and other institutions. Liechtenstein thus has a very low state ratio of 20.3 %, which means the lowest state expenditure in relation to GDP in Europe. At the same time, Liechtenstein has the world's highest GDP per capita income at around USD 170,000. Particularly remarkable is the fact that Liechtenstein has no national debt at all. It is one of the few countries in the world that has received an AAA rating from S&P for many years. This attainment is certainly also due to around € 2 billion that it holds in its financial reserves.

Therefore, the starting point for coping with the pandemic was for Liechtenstein, even as a very small country, rather good, relative to what faced other nation states.

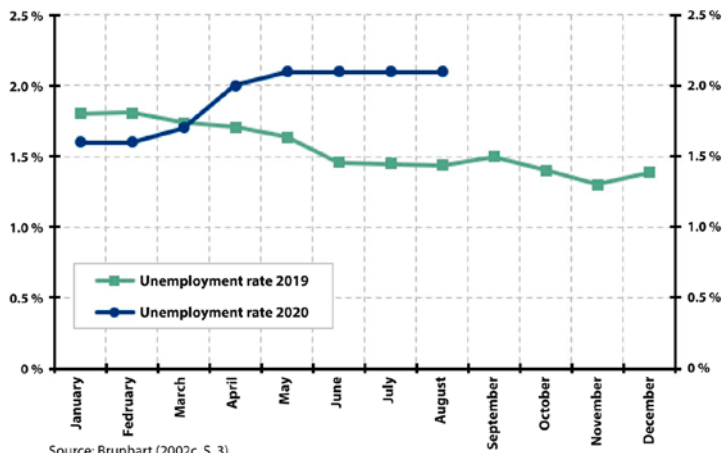
Danger recognised - preparation inadequate

Pandemics are global events that do not respect borders. Combatting them must necessarily be conducted with close coordination between states, and mutual support and solidarity are key to finding success in such a crisis. In this regard, the coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated how far such solidarity goes and where it ends. Europe and the EU in particular have got many things right, but glaring weaknesses have also come to light and many mistakes have been made that could have been avoided. In particular, it must be noted that although almost all European countries - including Liechtenstein - had identified a pandemic as one of the top risks in their national risk analyses, practically speaking, not one of the countries was actually adequately prepared for a pandemic. Deficiencies in protective equipment stocks amounted to one of the clearest signs of an underestimated danger. This was the case in countries including Liechtenstein.



Thomas Zwiefelhofer, the former Liechtenstein Minister of Interior, Justice and Economy and the Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic in Liechtenstein

Liechtenstein's unemployment rate in 2019–2020



Limited room for manoeuvre

Liechtenstein is closely connected with Switzerland by the bilateral Customs Union Treaty of 1923 that, for example, can lead to a lack of border controls between the countries. Based on the Customs Union Treaty, many Swiss laws are directly applied in Liechtenstein, in particular the Epidemics Act and the laws on national economic supply.

The Customs Union Treaty provides Liechtenstein with the same legal status held by the 26 cantons in the application of customs laws. What at first glance may seem like a big loss of sovereignty, in practice ensures a significant highly efficient resource deployment for a small state, which would otherwise be faced with enormous challenges and, most probably, an overburdening of its resources. Conversely, this close connection to its neighbour Switzerland does mean a certain loss in the ability to act, which in the case of a pandemic places limits on crisis management. Although it is true that the shifts in competence from the cantons to the federal government provided for in Art. 6 of the Epidemics Act for a special situation and in Art. 7 of the Epidemics Act for an extraordinary situation are not applicable to Liechtenstein, the small country of Liechtenstein must nevertheless comply with all Swiss measures employed against the coronavirus in customs

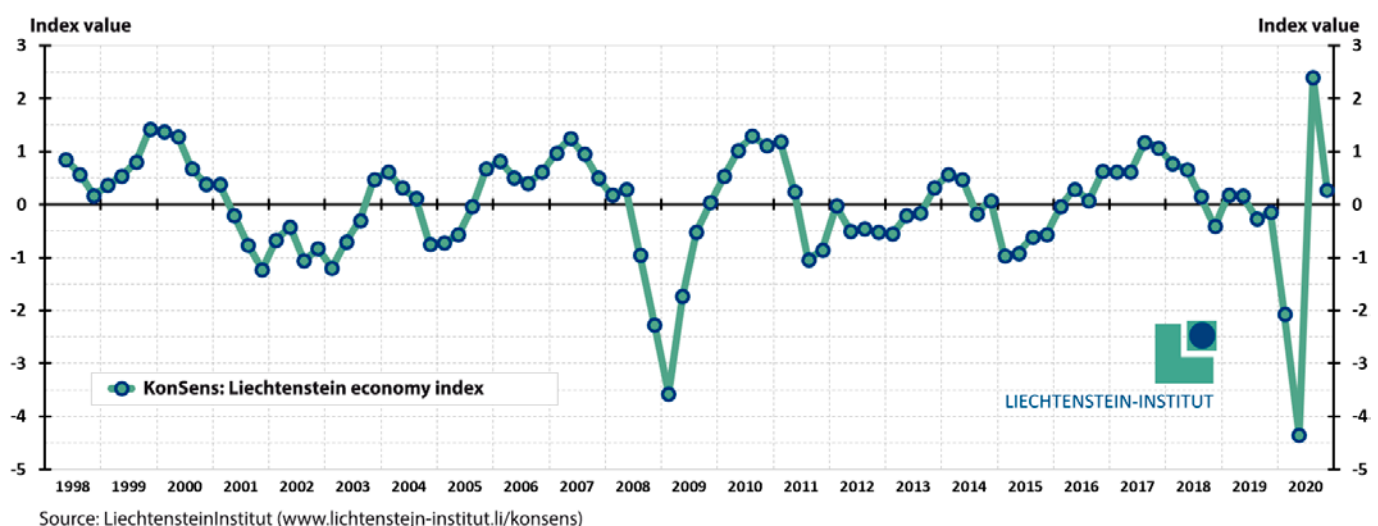
treaty matters, i.e. above all, the provisions on the movement of persons and goods and on the supply of important medical goods. Liechtenstein, meanwhile, has greater leeway with regard to the other measures, especially those with a direct impact on the population (such as, for example, in the case of education, the switch to distance learning, and the enforcement of assembly bans or restrictions). As an interim conclusion, it can therefore be stated that although the small state has a very good financial starting point for coping with the pandemic and its consequences, in terms of measures undertaken against the pandemic, it has only limited leeway due to the customs treaty with Switzerland, which, it should also be noted, the Liechtenstein government has to date used rather cautiously.

First package of economic support measures

While the customs treaty with Switzerland sets limits for the Liechtenstein authorities in the area of measures against the coronavirus, there is de facto unrestricted financial leeway for the economic management of the crisis, which is not affected by the customs treaty. The government and the parliament of Liechtenstein have so far committed to the use of this room for manoeuvre.

The economic slump associated with the pandemic is the biggest seen in Liechtenstein since the Great Depression of the 1920s. For 2020, experts forecast a Liechtenstein real GDP annual growth contraction of 6.0 % in the base scenario, and 8.7 % in the negative scenario. The Liechtenstein authorities have therefore very quickly initiated a series of measures

GDP Index – Liechtenstein





to preserve businesses and jobs. For instance, within a week of the officially ordered closure of parts of the economy in March 2020, the government adopted a comprehensive first package of measures, which primarily included bridging measures for short-term liquidity problems, short-time work, direct subsidies in the form of fixed-cost contributions and measures to support individual and micro-enterprises. The Liechtensteinische Landesbank (LLB), which is majority-owned (57%) by the state, was at the same time encouraged to provide attractive, non-bureaucratic loans, and the municipalities supported the state's package of measures with additional financial resources from their own reserves in the amount of CHF 20 million (CZK 472 million).

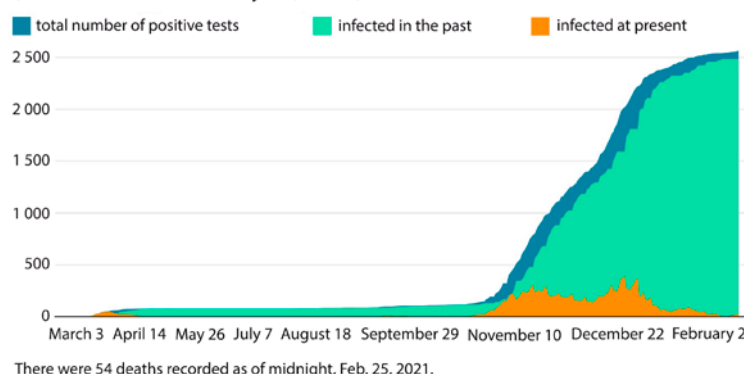
Further government support in the course of the pandemic

In the course of the pandemic, the state aid was repeatedly readjusted. Also, the package of measures has already been extended and topped up three times, most recently in February 2021. In this regard, Liechtenstein benefits as mentioned from the fact that it does not have to reckon with a national debt despite the extensive state support. The state's financial reserves will probably mean that the crisis management will not have any fiscal consequences that have to be passed on to the population in the form of austerity packages or tax increases. Altogether, the four packages of measures adopted so far by the state and municipalities amounted to a total of CHF 155 million (CZK 3.6 billion) by mid-March 2021. By the end of 2020, around CHF 88 million (CZK 2.1 billion) of the CHF 110 million (CZK 2.6 billion) approved by parliament for 2020 had been disbursed. Of this amount, about CHF 48 million (CZK 1.1 billion) was accounted for by short-time work compensation, while CHF 16.5 million (CZK 390 million) went into contributions to economic promotion measures and around CHF 23 million (CZK 543 million) was expended on loans for securing liquidity, on which, however, there is a repayment obligation.

Conclusion and outlook

Liechtenstein was hit just as hard by the pandemic as other countries in Europe and the world. With high infection figures at certain times in the second wave, a clear excess mortality rate among the older population and a marked forecast negative impact on the national economy, the serious consequences of this initially underestimated pandemic are also evident

The number of Liechtenstein citizens who have tested positive for Covid-19 since the pandemic outbreak
(situation as of February 25, 2021)



in Liechtenstein. For the population, partly drastic measures such as partial lockdowns and restrictions on social, cultural and economic life have led to massive encroachments on basic rights. However, in contrast to other countries, these have met with little resistance and opposition. The comparatively tolerant reception of the state's coercive measures can certainly, to a degree, be attributed to the mild character of the measures in comparison to what was brought in across the rest of Europe, which followed the path taken by Switzerland. In addition, generous and rapid state support for the economy contributed to what has been, to date, a rather mild economic impact caused by the crisis. In conclusion, it can be said that even a small state like Liechtenstein can cope well with a challenge such as a pandemic. However, the prerequisites for coping well are good and reliable partnerships with other states and a forward-looking, wise fiscal policy in good times that creates enough reserves to draw on in bad times. What remains is the risk of the economic impact of a global economic crisis. Due to its small, almost non-existent domestic market, high level of economic development and competitive industry, Liechtenstein has a very high export ratio and foreign trade quota. That is generally a positive thing, but it leaves the country fundamentally vulnerable to economic weaknesses in target markets for exports. Further strengthening the domestic economy is of the utmost importance, as is moving on to focus on strong diversification in order to firm preparations against potential impacts from a possible global post-coronavirus recession and economic crisis. The awareness of these challenges in the politics of Liechtenstein is high, and the outlook is therefore positive. ■

Thomas Zwiefelhofer



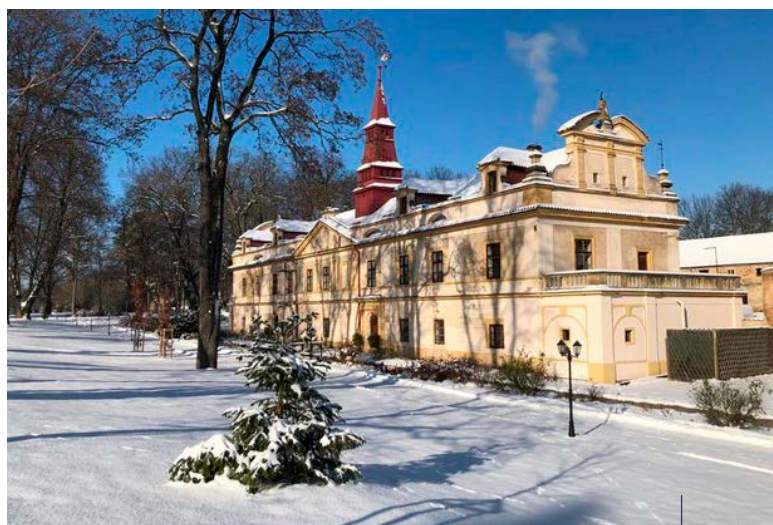
... take a look at our Instagram account @czechliechtensteinsociety

We continue our Instagram activities! Join us and follow @czechliechtensteinsociety!

12 January 2021 - @zamekvaltice celebrates! The renovation of the Belveder summer house, the last inaccessible building of the Lednice-Valtice Area, has been finished. The renovation, which was carried out in parts during the past 20 years, is over. ■



12 March 2021 - Spring is slowly approaching in the lowlands, but charming winter weather remains amid the Alpine peaks in Liechtenstein. And skiers are enjoying themselves in the ski resort of Malbun, sunlit and without queues. ■



19 February 2021 - Did you know that the chateau in Úholičky u Roztok has been connected to the princely family of Liechtenstein across more than 150 years of common history? The first official mention of Liechtenstein's estate in Úholičky is dated 1654. At that time, Úholičky was included in the Liechtenstein estate of Roztoky. In 1803, Alois Liechtenstein, the estate's holder at that time, sold Úholičky to new owners. ■



29 January 2021 - Baroque frescoes by Johann Michael Rottmayr, above the staircase of the Liechtenstein Garden Palace in Vienna, were re-discovered during the overall renovation of the building in 2000. When it is once more possible, it is well worth seeing. Guided tours for the public (who book ahead) are regularly held in both the Liechtenstein palaces in Vienna. ■



Roman Stránský, a student of the University of Economics, in the Liechtenstein mountains



■ Studying in Liechtenstein? Quality education, a friendly atmosphere and a beautiful landscape

Roman Stránský, a student of the Prague University of Economics and Business, spent one term of the last school year at the Liechtenstein University in Vaduz. He studied Finance, taught there in English.

Jana Tepperová, a member of the Board of the Czech-Liechtenstein Society, who works at the Department of Public Finance at the University, talked with Roman Stránský about why he was glad that he decided to go to Liechtenstein.

Can you tell us what you studied at the Liechtenstein University?

I chose financial derivatives and risk management, taxes and Liechtenstein law and also financial asset appraisal and portfolio management. I also took a very interesting semestral project course in which we worked on a financial topic in a team. Our team project was focused on sustainable financing, for example in the environmental area, and related to new EU regulations. This project course was very useful for me and I was truly surprised how professionally it was conducted.

Can you tell us more? Why did the teaching method suit you?

When I compare it with our schooling at home, it seems to me that there one course is often too broad. There is no time to go deep into the topic, to understand thoroughly all connections and apply the acquired knowledge to real problems. It is different in Liechtenstein. In the courses I took we did not go over that many topics but there was much more time for questions and discussions, and we had the opportunity to go deep into the details. In the course dealing with the semestral team project, we were divided into two groups; each had two weeks to choose a topic to work on. In line with the topic we chose, we

received a lecturer. Then we had two weeks to prepare a concept which we presented. The lecturer supported us and communicated with us continuously during the whole term. For me it was very impressive, and I miss this at the University of Economics.

What shape did the support and communication take in particular?

It was possible to meet the teacher at school and have a real chat about the project because the teacher had enough time to spend with us and answer our questions. When I compare things, at our school in the Czech Republic I took a course within my specialisation that was based on a similar principle, but the teacher never had that much time for us. We received some evaluation at the end of the course but the support during the term was missing.

How did you see Liechtenstein as a country?

There is a simple answer to that: I was greatly satisfied. I can imagine I would choose to live in Liechtenstein. I liked the fact that everything was so near and within nature at the same time. I wanted to try a smaller school, compared to the Prague University of Economics, and Liechtenstein University is indeed small. About 40 people study Finance there each year, everybody knows everybody. Thanks to that it reminded me more of a secondary school class. There was close contact with fellow students and teachers. And I also liked a lot the fact that Liechtenstein is situated in the mountains; a hiking route starts just by the school building. I like mountains and hiking and that's why it was perfect for me.

Did the locals accept you – at the university and in society in general?

Yes, they received me very nicely. I lived at the campus where mainly international Erasmus students are accommodated. There are about 70 people, mostly international students, living there. I did not encounter any problems there, they were all very nice. The university is very small and it is all very pleasant and home-like. Directly at the school, there were not many Erasmus students studying finance. Most international students come to Liechtenstein to study architecture, it was mostly locals in finance. But I did not have any problems there, there were no situations in which I was not well received.

Would you like to return to Liechtenstein at some point?

Definitely, yes. Maybe it will be for work, maybe not, but for whatever reason, I would like to return. And I would definitely recommend the Erasmus programme in Liechtenstein to everybody. As I said previously, the environment of the small university is unique and the atmosphere is very friendly. ■



At a ScioSchool



■ Liechtenstein Languages arrives in Czechia

Czech children do not want to learn about a virtual John from London. That is the reason why ScioSchools bet on a Liechtenstein method, developed with the support of the princely family and government of Liechtenstein.

After some time, English teachers teaching small children usually discover that education that involves slavishly following a textbook from Lesson 1 to Lesson 20 is simply not the right way to go. Situations described in textbooks are often remote from the everyday lives of first and second-year pupils and cannot deliver an experience for children that will help them to remember information well. That is why an inventive teacher searches and complements the teaching with materials that incorporate an immediate experience for the kids and help them learn in a more natural way.

ScioSchools was also thinking along these lines and eventually their teachers (referred to as “guides”) opted for materials developed by the nonprofit education institution of Liechtenstein Languages, which for more than six years has been financially supported by Hans Adam II, the governing Prince of Liechtenstein. “Textbooks often present unnatural situations and artificially created characters to children, something like John from London, which are not appealing to the kids. We were therefore looking for ready-made materials that would fit our concept of education. And our needs were exactly met by thematic packages from Liechtenstein Languages,” says Jiří Hokeš, headmaster of ScioSchool in Prague 11.

The cooperation between ScioSchools and Liechtenstein Languages, a nonprofit language education project, nicknamed simply LieLa, started more than a year ago. At the beginning, there was a common interest in innovations and education, and it later turned out that the method successfully developed and practiced by LieLa for

several years is very beneficial in practice in innovative Czech elementary schools. Czech teachers gained the chance to experience it directly at elementary schools in Liechtenstein to where they were invited for professional visits as part of several meetings with the Liechtenstein partner. The complete thematic packages provided by LieLa, including practical learning aids such as posters and cards, were introduced step by step into English classes on the elementary school level at five ScioSchools. The successfully developing cooperation was then slowed down by the necessity to switch to online schooling during the Covid-19 pandemic. Education based on direct practice, contact and experience is almost excluded in online schooling.

About Liechtenstein Languages:

It is a nonprofit education project intensively working in Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Austria, funded by the princely family, Liechtenstein government, educational foundations and private donors. It organises its own language education based on the “Neues Lernen” method developed in Vaduz. It closely works with immediate language experiences, similar to those through which we absorb our mother tongue in childhood. LieLa’s teaching methods and materials are successfully used in English classes for children at elementary schools as well as in German courses for adult migrants who have no prior knowledge of the language they are learning or European writing script. Since 2015, when the project was initiated by the princely family and Prince Stefan Liechtenstein, Liechtenstein’s Ambassador in Germany at the time, over 10,000 persons have taken the basic German course for foreigners.

Experience of Czech parents with education of their children using the LieLa method:

“We were quickly acquainted with Liechtenstein Languages thanks to Jana, a guide at ScioSchool in Prague 11 where my daughter Mia goes. I really like the fact that the teacher has materials prepared that activate the children physically and emotionally and that give each lesson a topic and drive. They were drawing, singing, trying to speak and doing some exercise. Simply great. The class worked together but there was also space for each student as an individual. I really wish that this online period that we are going through would end, to be followed by the Liechtenstein period”. (Kateřina Hemerková) ■



■ Media Roundup

We bring shortened versions of the most interesting news stories on Czech-Liechtenstein relations that have recently been published by Czech media.

Czech history at the European Court. Liechtenstein is miffed: We are not and never have been Germans

22. 2. 2021 | Robert Břešťan | Hlidacipes.org

When the Czech representative at the European Court of Human Rights received information last August that Liechtenstein had filed an international complaint against the Czech Republic, it caused quite a stir. Such a complaint made by one state against another is rather rare. In more than 60 years of its existence, the court in Strasbourg has heard only 28 complaints of this type. The case is already under way, and the verdict could be crucial - for Czech history as well as the present.

What is essential is the fact that the core of the complaint is not about events after the end of World War II during 1945-1951, when the seizure of properties of Liechtenstein citizens in Czechoslovakia was decided, it is about contemporary times, particularly the approach of authorities and courts of the Czech Republic during 2014-2020. The Principality of Liechtenstein lost patience with the fact that the Czech state "again makes its citizens German" more than 70 years after the war. "By suing the Prince of Liechtenstein Foundation in 2014, based on the statement that the citizens of Liechtenstein are Germans, the Czech Republic did not act in accordance with the ban on discrimination and again showed disrespect towards the sovereign principality," says Katrin Eggenberger, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Culture of the Principality of Liechtenstein.

The Czech government representative at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, Vít Alexandr Schorm, confirms this approach of the plaintiff, writing that "the complaint is written with a very high level of expertise and is strictly formulated in the sense that the essence of the lawsuit is not the recovery of properties but the interventions in ownership rights which were carried out only recently".

On the other hand, it is not possible to avoid the historical background of the case. There is the question of whether František Josef II should have been affected



European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg

by the Beneš Decrees and property seizures. The Czech courts have not yet discussed this matter, stating that they cannot examine verdicts of the authorities issued before 25 February 1948.

In this extraordinarily weighty case...

According to the Liechtenstein government - the statement is also described in the official report which the European Court of Human Rights issued upon receiving the complaint on 19 August last year - "the rights of the citizens of Liechtenstein are breached by the fact that the Czech state and authorities label them as citizens with German nationality for the purpose of the application of the Decrees of the President of the Republic from 1945. The government of Liechtenstein sees this application as breaching Article 6 (the right to a fair trial) and Article 13 (the right to a remedy), Article 1 (protection of property) and Article 14 (ban on discrimination)".

That was why, as early as October last year, Czech representative Schorm sat down and wrote a three-page letter to five Czech institutes of history and law requesting their help in the effort "to examine some historical events and help in gathering the necessary documentary evidence in this especially important case".

The Liechtenstein government was surprised by this development. "This lawsuit has nothing to do with history. It is about events after 2014 that resulted in the verdict issued by the Czech Constitutional Court in 2020. The lawsuit is about present steps taken by the Czech government and courts," says Minister Katrin Eggenberger.



Katrin Eggenberger, the Liechtenstein Minister of foreign Affairs, Justice and Culture until 25 March 2021

‘Prepared for years, if not decades’

In their complaint for Strasbourg, Liechtenstein mentions two sets of trials in the Czech Republic. The first concerns the dispute that arose after the Czech state sued Liechtenstein when in 2013 the Land Registry approved the re-registering of 600 hectares of mainly forested land near Říčany to the Prince of Liechtenstein Foundation as the successor. It was this lawsuit that went up to the Constitutional Court and has now proceeded to Strasbourg.

The second is a set of 33 trials in which it was the Princely Foundation that sued the Czech Republic for the recovery of the confiscated properties in 2018. Some verdicts went in favour of the Liechtenstein princely family, for example the verdict delivered by the Regional Court in Ústí nad Labem or the recent verdict by the Regional Court of Appeal in Brno; other verdicts were delivered in favour of the Czech authorities. However, the vast majority remain in process at district courts. According to Schorm, the opposing party “has prepared for this strategic litigation on the confiscated princely properties for years, if not decades”. Therefore, in his opinion, it is not possible to underestimate the issue, an observation that stands also given the cooperation with local historians.

For the time being, the Czech party has not officially commenced any concrete cooperation with the institutes.

History does (not) belong before the court

When asked, historians are mostly open to cooperation on the expert level; however, some historians have already declined participation, reasoning that it might come into conflict with the independence of their scientific work.

Czechoslovakia insisted, as has the later Czech Republic, that the Liechtenstein princely family in the past claimed allegiance to the German nation. What is crucial here is the fact that the property seizures in Czechoslovakia not only included the properties of the reigning Prince František Josef II, but also properties of seven other members of the princely house and at least 31 other Liechtenstein nationals.

As proved by historians in their joint commission, these persons included, for instance, Dr Albert Bloch (seizure of bank assets), Ida Brändle (the state took her share of ownership in the “Golden Lion” hotel in Karlovy Vary), Marie de Charmant (a 20% stake in the sugar factory in Velké Šurany), Alfred Nietzsche (a real estate property in Karlovy Vary, a farm in Horní Slavkov, a family house and the “Rasierklingenfabrik Diu A. Nietzsche” razor blade factory) and Anton Wanger (securities, a Skoda car). The citizens of Liechtenstein were not later allowed to join the Swiss-Czechoslovak negotiations on compensation. In December 1949, Switzerland and Czechoslovakia agreed that Swiss citizens would be paid compensations totalling 71 million Swiss francs. The prince, princely house, other former owners and the state of Liechtenstein have never given up on their claims against the Czechoslovak state, something that is confirmed by current developments.

“The trial is ongoing. Currently it is in the phase in which we, as the defending state, have been asked by the court in Strasbourg to present a written statement as regards the complaint, with the opposing party to then respond,” says the Czech representative Schorm, adding that a verdict cannot be expected soon as it will rather be “a matter of several years.” ■

The stance that our citizens are Germans is not acceptable any longer. The Czech Republic faces an “exceptionally serious case”

23. 2. 2021 | Robert Břešťan | HlídacíPes.org

In an interview for the HlídacíPes.org news site, Katrin Eggenberger, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Culture in the government of the Principality of Liechtenstein, repeatedly emphasises that the lawsuit is not focused on events that occurred after World War II and in 1945–1951, when Czechoslovakia decided on the seizure of property from Liechtenstein citizens, but rather on recent events, namely the approach taken by Czech authorities and courts in 2014–2020.



Liechtenstein claims that the rights of its citizens are violated when they are labelled as Germans in the courts after as long a time as seven decades after the war. Czechoslovakia in the past insisted that citizens of Liechtenstein claimed German nationality. And, according to Eggenberger, the Czech Republic continues to take this approach.

Q: What is the essence of the international legal complaint?

The fact that Liechtenstein's citizens are still treated as Germans and that the Czech Republic is not willing to enter into negotiations on the unresolved property issues must be viewed as a lack of respect for the sovereignty and statehood of Liechtenstein. In the pending case, Liechtenstein is defending the fundamental rights of its nationals. By filing a court case based on the argument that Liechtenstein nationals qualify as Germans in 2014, the Czech Republic did not proceed in conformity with the prohibition of discrimination and once more demonstrated a lack of respect for the sovereignty of the Principality. The way this case was then argued by the Czech administration and handled by the Czech courts is irreconcilable with Articles 6, 8, 13 and 14 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Article 1 of Protocol 1 to the Convention. This needs to be rectified. Achieving this is all the more important given that there are other cases involving Liechtenstein nationals pending before the Czech courts in which the very same issues arise.

Q: The Czech Republic refers to this type of lawsuit as a unique type because there have been only 28 motions of this type during the 60-year-long existence of the European Court for Human Rights. Why did you choose this type of inter-state complaint?

Inter-state applications are not unusual. There are currently at least 10 of them pending before the Court. It is in the first place the task of the State parties to the European Convention to enforce any and all rights and freedoms guaranteed thereunder. To effectively protect their nationals' basic rights, States are entitled to apply directly to the ECHR. This role of the member States becomes even more important in cases of systematic breaches of fundamental rights. But the present case goes even beyond that. The Czech Republic asks its courts to treat Liechtenstein nationals as Germans

and the Czech courts act accordingly. The actions of the Czech Republic therefore not only deny Liechtenstein nationals' fundamental rights, they also disregard their nationality. Hence respect for the sovereignty of Liechtenstein and its equality within the community of nations is denied. No State can accept such treatment. So the inter-state application to the ECHR is of course the appropriate course of action under the European Convention in this case.

Q: The Czech Republic has officially requested the cooperation of Czech historians. To what extent is your legal action related to history, especially events that took place after 1945?

This case has nothing to do with history. It concerns events after 2014 leading to a judgment of the Czech Constitutional Court in 2020. The inter-state application of Liechtenstein against the Czech Republic was necessary because of legal actions undertaken by the Czech Republic during this period. It therefore concerns contemporary actions of Czech authorities and courts.

Q: Is Liechtenstein also going to, or has it already, engaged historians in preparations for the legal petition?

There is no need to add historical questions to the inter-state application, which already has strong arguments as it stands. But, of course, Liechtenstein knows that the historical facts fully support its position.

Q: Since 2009, when diplomatic relations between the Czech Republic and Liechtenstein were re-established after decades, a joint Liechtenstein-Czech Commission of Historians has been in operation. Is the argumentation of the legal action based in any way on the work of the commission?

The commission has not worked on the time period at the centre of the case, i.e. the years after 2014 when the Czech Republic's administration took the Prince of Liechtenstein Foundation and other Liechtenstein nationals to court. That the Czech Republic's core argument is wrong is proven by documents in the Czech archives accessible to anyone: Prince Regnant Franz Josef II of Liechtenstein has never declared himself to be of German ethnicity because he is a Liechtenstein national. The evidence for this fact was suppressed by the communist regime in the past but it is now presented in the Czech courts. ■