



PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN

# The Government Quarter

Liechtenstein has a new meeting point. The generously designed square in front of the new Parliament Building in Vaduz, which was opened on 15 February 2008, quickly became a popular meeting point and an animated main attraction for visitors and locals alike. The new Parliament Building sets urban architectural accents in Vaduz



LIECHTENSTEIN

Self-assuredly, the steep pavilion roof soars over the plenary chamber of the Parliament, its contour serving as a drawing card. The new design of the Government Quarter creates a prestigious impression through the use of a single uniform construction material encompassing the neoclassical Government Building. Architecturally intriguing how Peter Kaiser Square, echoing the identical bricks in the masonry of the Parliament Building and the expanse of construction on the slope in the rear, issues a welcome to visitors.

Within the historic Government Quarter exemplified by the Government Building built in 1905 and the even older museum structures, the modern architecture of the new Parliament Building with its steep pavilion roof appears rather surprising at first glance. An architectural contrast is provided by the golden-brown brick structure, also compared to Vaduz Castle, which has been enthroned above the location of the new Parliament Building since the Middle Ages. «With its simply-delineated self-confidence, its concise form reflecting a timeless elementary design marks the significance of the Plenum of the People as the National Parliament of a prosperous Alpine country and Principality,» the Munich architect and winner of the international architectural competition, Hansjörg Göritz, describes the philosophy behind the concise architectural style.

## Triangle of authority: Reigning Prince – Parliament – Government

For the first time in the history of Liechtenstein's parliamentarianism, Parliament is housed in its own building. Although Parliament occupied a Parliament Building from 1868 to 1905, which was located within a stone's throw of the newly constructed Parliament Building, it nevertheless had to share the facilities with the Court of Justice. Following the completion of the Government Building in 1905, Parliament relocated to the middle of the second floor. Only during the construction phase of the Government Building and for a short period following the enlargement of Parliament from 15 to 25 members, did Parliament sessions take place in the nearby Music School, the building where the famous composer Josef Gabriel Rheinberger was born. For the over 100 years during which Parliament enjoyed the right to hospitality in the Government Building, its desire for its own facility persisted. The fundamental decision was reached in Parliament in 1984: A Parliament Building was to be constructed in the immediate vicinity of the Government Building and below Vaduz Castle. As viewed from Peter Kaiser Square, the triangle of authority, Reigning Prince – Parliament – Government, is optically and impressively apparent.



## New Parliament Building as the center of the Government Quarter

The newly designed Government Quarter constitutes the beginning of the pedestrian zone. The first plan for its redesign failed by popular vote in 1993 due to the fears regarding the high cost of the building complex. The first plan submitted by the Swiss architect Luigi Snozzi foresaw a tower-like structure for the Parliament Building, while the Munich architect Hansjörg Göritz characterized the idea of a pavilion structure as a «continuation». Göritz looked upon the various architectural styles in the downtown area of Vaduz as an inspiration for the continuation – using the «tall building» for Parliament and a «long building» along the foot of the mountain to house the parliamentary offices.

## A state square in honor of the politician Peter Kaiser

The generously designed square of gold-brown bricks connecting the Parliament and Government was originally to be called «State Square». Parliament instead chose to permanently honor one of the great parliamentarians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by naming it «Peter Kaiser Square». Peter Kaiser (1793 – 1864) represented Liechtenstein's interests as a politician and historian during an eventful period in European history. The 1848 year of revolution kindled emotions in Liechtenstein as well. At the head of the popular revolutionary movement demanding more democratic rights stood the historian Peter Kaiser, who self-confidently wrote in a letter to the Reigning Prince, then residing in Vienna: «Thus the movement, which is raging throughout the whole of Germany and shaking every throne, has caught hold of us as well. We too want a more generous constitution, relief for property owners – in the future we want to be dealt with as citizens and not as subjects.» Peter Kaiser not only functioned as strategist for the revolutionary movement, but also assumed a mitigating role in conveying revolutionary demands. In 1848, electors unanimously choose Peter Kaiser as Liechtenstein representative to the German National Assembly convening at the Paulskirche in Frankfurt. In a

letter, Peter Kaiser entreated his countrymen to abide by the law, to make just use of their freedom, to have faith in the aid of the Reigning Prince in times of need and to better educate the people. This letter contains Peter Kaiser's in all likelihood best-known statement: «When we become conscious of our true virtue, we can epitomize a small country harmful to none, yet respected by all.»

## In 1862 the history of the parliamentarianism begins

In Peter Kaiser's time, the people had not yet acquired much influence on what was taking place. The Reigning Prince resided in Vienna and assigned an official, the National Administrator, with the task of governing. In 1862, Parliament was instituted when the Constitution entered into force. This Constitution rested on the premise of preserving the monarchy while simultaneously bestowing greater rights of participation upon the people. Parliament as the representation of the people was granted the power to enact laws, the power to approve the State budget, and the right of initiative, thereby enabling the people to introduce legislative proposals. Of the 15 Members of Parliament, twelve could be elected by the people through electors while the remaining three Members were appointed by the Reigning Prince. Not until

the 1921 Constitution entered into force were the people entitled to elect all 15 Members of Parliament by secret ballot. The country was divided into two election districts, the Unterland (Lower Country), corresponding to the former Lordship of Schellenberg, and the Oberland (Upper Country), corresponding to the former County of Vaduz. In 1988 the people approved an increase from 15 to 25 seats, 15 to be elected by the larger Oberland election district and ten by the Unterland election district. The Members of Parliament are elected in proportion to the votes they attain, that is by proportional representation: Each party gains as many seats as it is entitled to in proportion to the valid votes.

Abbreviated civics lesson – see «Liechtenstein from A to Z»

Peter-Kaiser-Platz  
with Government Building



## Liechtenstein from A to Z

**A | Alois von Liechtenstein.** Born 1968. Hereditary Prince. Married to Sophie of Bavaria. Four children. Representative of the Reigning Prince and as such has performed the duties of the Head of State since 2004.

**B | Big diversity, small population**  
At the close of 2007, Liechtenstein had 35,000 inhabitants. Of these, approximately one-third was foreigners representing 90 different countries.

**C | Church.** Liechtenstein is traditionally a Catholic country. According to the Constitution, the Roman Catholic Church has held the status of national church since 1921. Now, the State plans to grant all recognized denominations equal rights.

**D | Democracy.** Liechtenstein is a constitutional hereditary monarchy on a democratic and parliamentary basis. Monarchy and direct democracy share dual sovereignty.

**E | European Economic Area and Council of Europe.** Liechtenstein joined the Council of Europe in 1978. Liechtenstein became a full member of the European Economic Area (EEA) after a popular vote in 1995.

**F | FL** – official abbreviation for the Principality of Liechtenstein, also appearing on license plates. On the Internet, however, «li» prevails, and Liechtenstein athletes compete under «LIE» at international sporting events.

**G | Government.** The Government is elected by Parliament and appointed by the Reigning Prince. It consists of five members.

**H | Hans-Adam II.** Reigning Prince of Liechtenstein. Born 1945. In 2004, the Reigning Prince entrusted his eldest son, Hereditary Prince Alois, with the exercise of all sovereign rights, but remained Head of State in accordance with the Constitution.

**I | International network.** The small country of Liechtenstein is politically and economically well integrated, having cultivated numerous ties with its neighboring countries, Switzerland and Austria. The international network is effected through memberships in the UN, WTO, EFTA, EEA, OSCE and the Council of Europe. In addition, Liechtenstein has a highly developed, research-intensive industrial sector and an internationally-linked financial center.



**K | Kirchhügel.** The Kirchhügel (church hill) in Bendern is where the people of Liechtenstein first swore an oath of allegiance to the new local ruler, Reigning Prince Johann Adam Andreas of Liechtenstein, in 1699. It is now home to the renowned Liechtenstein Institute.

**L | Landtag** is the name of the 25-member Parliament in Liechtenstein. The Landtag is elected every four years by the people in direct elections conducted in Liechtenstein's two electoral districts. Seats are allocated to the electoral groups in proportion to the votes they attain.

**M | Municipalities.** The Principality of Liechtenstein is comprised of eleven municipalities, which enjoy a high degree of autonomy. Presiding over the municipal administration is the Mayor, who also chairs the Municipal Council. Like the Landtag, municipal councils are elected according to proportional representation. Only mayors are elected by majority vote.

**N | National Constitution.** The Constitution of 1921 was revised and approved by popular vote with an approximately two-thirds majority in 2003.

**O | Opposition.** The Free List (FL) with three of 25 Members of Parliament for the 2005 – 2009 term represents the opposition in the Landtag. The Progressive Citizens' Party (FBP) and the Patriotic Union (VU) form a government coalition. Majorities sometimes shift in Parliament.

**P | Petition.** The people have the right to submit a petition directly to the Government or the Landtag. Petitions have no direct legal consequences, but the power of many signatures may prompt official action.

**Q | Quorum.** To achieve a quorum, at least two-thirds of the Members of Parliament must be present. The Members of Parliament, convening at a round table in the new plenary chamber, are generally present for the entire meeting.

**R | Rhine.** The Rhine flows along the Swiss-Liechtenstein border.

**S | Sovereignty.** Liechtenstein was accepted to the Confederation of the Rhine as a sovereign principality in 1806. It is the only member of the Confederation of the Rhine to have retained its borders and its sovereignty.





President of Parliament Klaus Wanger  
and Prime Minister Otmar Hasler

**T | Telecommunications.** Since 2000, Liechtenstein has had its own telephone country code: +423.

**U | UN.** Liechtenstein joined the United Nations on 18 September 1990 as its 160<sup>th</sup> member.

**V | Vernacular.** In Liechtenstein, the official language is Standard German. In everyday situations, dialect is used.

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In each of the eleven municipalities, the dialect is spoken with slight variations. A conversation partner can be identified according to his or her municipality by those familiar with the dialects.

**W | Withdrawing money.** If you withdraw money from a cash machine in Liechtenstein, you receive Swiss francs or euros. The official currency has been the Swiss franc since 1924. Liechtenstein does not have its own currency, but instead has a currency treaty with Switzerland.

**X | Mark the ballot with an X.** Parliament is elected every four years. Parliament is responsible for the election of the Government. The Members of the Government are appointed by the Reigning Prince.

**YPSILON | Yet more.** If you would like to know more about Liechtenstein, you can find us on the Internet: [www.liechtenstein.li](http://www.liechtenstein.li)

**Z | Zzzzzzzz.** And when you need a place to sleep, Liechtenstein has plenty of first-class hotels and cozy guesthouses.