

Governance of COVID-19

LIECHTENSTEIN

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Characteristics of the governance system

- Parliamentary democracy with the Prince as head of state
- The prince represents Liechtenstein in its international relations and can both veto and propose laws, and ultimately dissolve the government and the parliament
- Legislative authority is vested in the Landtag (25 members, term of 4 years, currently 4 parties (maximum were 5)).
- Executive authority is vested in the Regierung a collegial body comprising the Prime Minister and four Ministers, it is responsible to the Landtag and the Prince
- Liechtenstein citizens have various direct-democratic rights such as initiative and referendum
- Political culture is determined by consensus and concordance. The government has always consisted of the same two parties, which, with two exceptions, have always formed a coalition

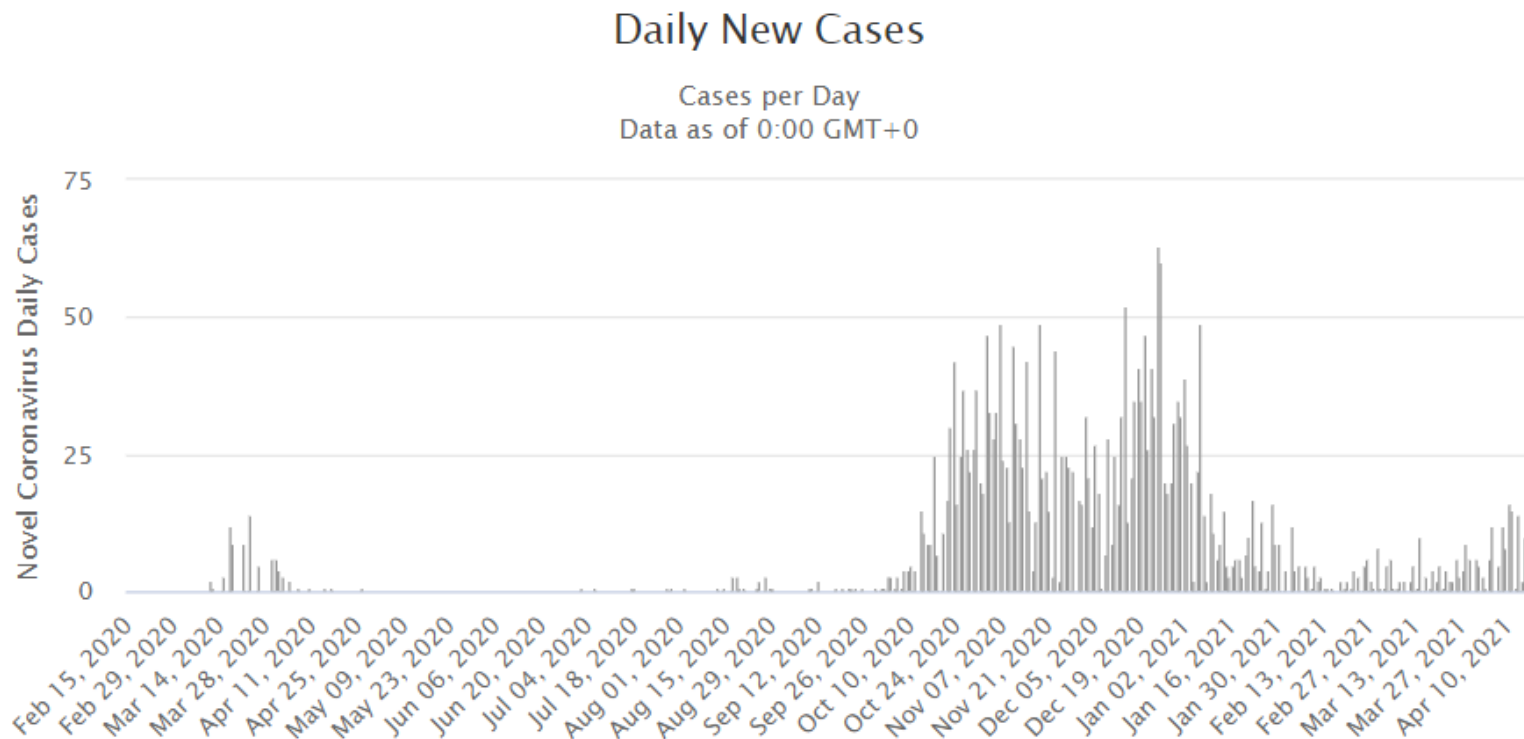
Governance of the health care system

- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Culture is responsible for social policy in Liechtenstein including social welfare, social insurance, health, family policy and equality.
- In the field of health, the Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for health policies and the hospital system. The Office of Public Health is assigned to the Ministry of Social Affairs.
- According to Article 18 of the Constitution, the State is responsible for public health services in Liechtenstein. Mandatory health care insurance (OKP) is obligatory for everyone, regardless of age, place of origin or residence status.
- Persons subject to compulsory insurance have a free choice among the health insurance funds approved to provide health insurance in Liechtenstein. The supervisory authority is the health office.
- The principle of solidarity applies in Liechtenstein which means that everyone pays health insurance contributions regardless of their state of health. Children and teenagers pay neither franchise nor deductible.
- In-patients are treated either in Liechtenstein's own hospital or in one of the hospitals in the surrounding region. Healthcare agreements have been established between Liechtenstein and these hospitals over the border.
- Inpatient care (including accommodation, meals, drugs, etc.) is covered by basic insurance; superior facilities in hospital, e.g. a single room, are available with supplementary insurance. There are no state-provided dental care services in Liechtenstein.

COVID-19 pandemic statistics

- The first case of the coronavirus infection was registered on March 4th 2020.
 - The peak number of new cases during the first phase was 14 (Source: worldometers.info; March 2020).
 - The „second wave“ of the pandemic began in October 2021.
 - The peak number of new cases during the second phase was 63 (Source: worldometers.info; 24 December 2020).
 - As of February 2021, 56 people have died after contracting the COVID-19 virus (April 2021). Until October 30th 2020 Liechtenstein had only one death. The number of deaths increased rapidly to 39 on December 31th 2020.
- The testing policy has been expanded over time. As of February 2021, there have been 36 795 tests with 8.2% positive PCR-tests and 3.4% positive antigen-tests (Source: covid19.admin.ch).
 - In Liechtenstein, there is an official test route which is operated by the Medical Association on behalf of the government.
 - Since April 2021 the dispensing and use of self-tests is permitted in Liechtenstein. The costs for self-tests are not covered by the government.
 - Since April 2021 the country covers the costs PCR analysis as well as for rapid antigen tests in pharmacies and doctors' practices.

COVID-19 pandemic statistics

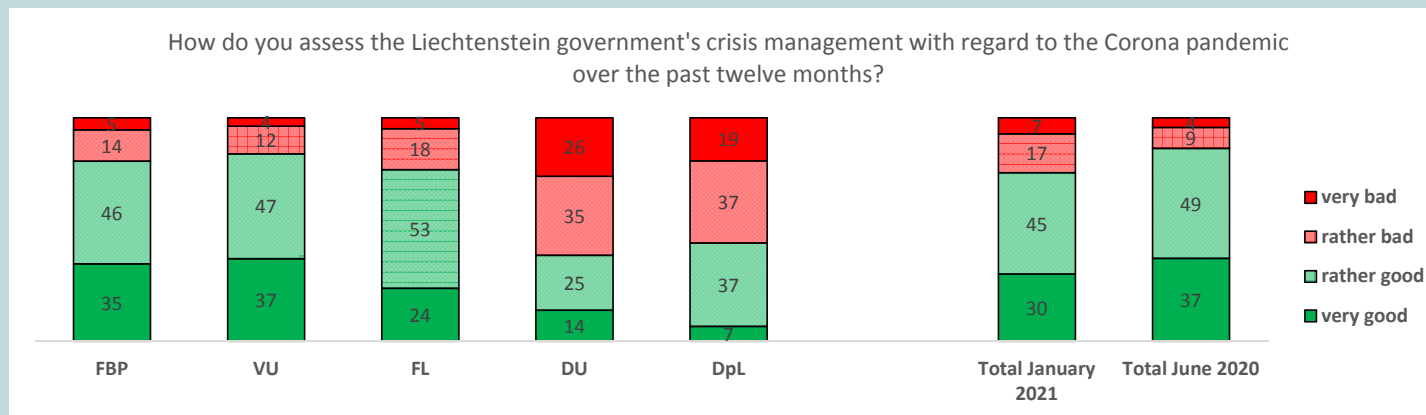


Liechtenstein's Governance of COVID-19

- Public communication about the Corona situation was strongly determined by the government. The representatives of the responsible offices mostly remained in the background. The media coverage of the regularly held media conferences and the daily situation report is high.
- Scientist from outside public administration are sometimes interviewed by the media and may also be invited to the official media conferences by the government. However, governance of COVID-19 in Liechtenstein is mainly led by politics.
- Liechtenstein politics mostly reacts on measures taken by Swiss politics (see below). References to scientist are mainly references to Swiss scientists.
- The pandemic was a challenge for the organisation of the governance system but the system never collapsed. Liechtenstein government followed a very pragmatic approach and always focused on what was feasible with the given capacities. Other projects might be delayed due to the pandemic.
- In the second wave, Liechtenstein recorded significantly higher case numbers. There was the impression that the government no longer reached the public equally well through the existing communication channels and therefore the measures were less well adhered to. The government then launched a communication initiative involving numerous other actors (NGOs and business associations).
- Liechtenstein relies mainly on Switzerland. Based on Customs Union Treaty the Swiss Epidemics Act (EpG) and various ordinances on national economic supply are applied in Liechtenstein. Liechtenstein has the same legal status as the cantons in accordance.
 - Liechtenstein must comply with all Swiss measures against the coronavirus in the area of 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 has greater leeway with regard to the other measures, especially those concerning the population (such as conversion to distance learning, enforcement of assembly bans). Liechtenstein has sometimes used this leeway.
- The SwissCovid app contributes to the containment of the new coronavirus. It complements the classic contact tracing and helps to stop transmission chains but is not very widespread in Liechtenstein.

Public attitude

- Public support for the government's Corona policy was strong throughout the pandemic.
- Trust in the government has increased overall.
- The government's Corona policy had no influence on the recent parliamentary elections and was hardly an issue in the election campaign.
- Criticism of government policy is mainly through letters to the editor. Criticism increases somewhat over time, but remains at a low level.
- Every Sunday there is a silent protest against the government's Corona policy. However, this rarely receives attention.



COVID-19 measures

- The obligation to wear face masks was extended step by step. It is now obligatory in public transport, shopping centers and all public buildings.
- Further measures:
 - restrictions and temporary bans on public events
 - contact restrictions indoors and outdoors; in private and public space
 - closure of restaurants
 - closure of shops (only for a short time)
 - recommendation to work in home office
- There was one serious lockdown in Spring 2020 and the so-called “Winterruhe” (winter rest) over Christmas but no curfews
- Liechtenstein benefits from its rural settlement structure. Liechtenstein also lacks large shopping centers.
- The government has always attached great importance to including economic and socio-political interests in its strategy and communication.
- There was little discussion of fundamental rights in Liechtenstein, as the crisis was not politicized.

COVID-19 and education

- The policy aimed to restrict schooling as little as possible.
 - All schools have comprehensive hygiene and safety concepts in order to prevent the risk of spreading the virus.
- Schools were only closed for a few weeks in spring 2020. In January 2021, the Christmas holidays were extended by a few days.
 - Already before the outbreak of the Corona crisis, a digitalization initiative was taking place at the schools and all pupils were equipped with a tablet.
 - Language stays and school camps were cancelled and are still not possible.
 - Teaching at universities is exclusively online.
 - Out-of-home childcare was to some extent also available during the period of the public and private educational institutions were closed.
- Various offers were organized for helping families with distant learning.
- A survey on distance learning has not yet been systematically evaluated. A rough evaluation shows that the system has worked reasonably well, but is no alternative to face-to-face teaching.

COVID-19 and borders

- There were never any travel restrictions in place towards Switzerland.
- Liechtenstein applies the same travel restrictions as Switzerland.
 - For travelers from risk countries, a 10-day quarantine obligation applies in principle. The list of risk countries is regularly updated by the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health depending on the infection rate of the country of departure in relation to the one in Switzerland.
- On March 17, 2020, Liechtenstein's border with Austria was closed as part of the Swiss Federal Council's declaration of an "extraordinary situation" under the Epidemics Act and independently by a corresponding measure taken by the Austrian government.
 - The border was open again on June 15th 2020.
 - Over the entire period of the pandemic, border traffic with Austria was (if at all) mainly restricted by Austria rather than by Liechtenstein or Switzerland.
 - Since 10 February 2021, Austria requires all persons entering Austria to carry an entry form (Pre-Travel Clearance Form) that is no more than seven days old and proof of a negative Corona test that is no more than seven days old.
 - Tests are usually made in Austria. They are free of charge.

COVID-19 and economies

- The policy was mainly reactive to compensate for any economic damage incurred. Economic stimulus measures make little sense in a small state.
- There was a mix out of different measures.
 - Tax measures: payments deferrals (i. e. VAT)
 - Employment related measures: wage compensation in terms of short-time allowance and daily allowance (health insurance)
 - Economic Stimulus Package: loans; moratorium on debt repayments; Support contributions for loss of income; fund for specially hard cases
- State benefits from large reserves.
- Economy proves surprisingly resistant - especially the labour market.

COVID-19 and vaccination

- Liechtenstein is integrated into the vaccination system of Switzerland. Only vaccines that are licensed in Switzerland are used.
- There is no particular dependence on the EU and no direct agreements have been concluded with pharmaceutical companies.
- Vaccination started very late in Liechtenstein. After that, however, the system worked well (thus far).
- There is only one vaccination center in the country. The most commonly used vaccines are: Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna.
- The population was divided into six groups: 1) Residents of nursing homes; 2) staff of inpatient care, outpatient care, state hospital; 3) exposed persons in primary health care; 4) persons born in 1951 and older; 5) particularly at-risk persons (risk groups) under 70 years of age; and 6) rest of the population.
- There is no sound data on vaccination readiness yet. At the moment, however, it can be assumed that about two thirds of the people want to be vaccinated.

Conclusion: Lessons and prospects (1-2 slides)

- The pandemic has shown the high dependence on Switzerland as well as on foreign countries in general.
- If anything, trust in the government has increased. However, it is unclear how stable this development is.
- The government system remains largely unaffected by the pandemic.
- The small-scale nature of the pandemic makes it easier to organize vaccination if the vaccine is available.
- The economy was surprisingly robust.
- Domestic solidarity is relatively high, but has also never really been tested.
- The majority of the rules are respected. There is little public opposition to the Corona measures.