

## SLOVAKIA THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN EDUCATION

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### I. Religious instruction organised during the school hours (in lower and in secondary education) in state funded schools

**I.1 Question: Religious instruction organised during the school hours (in lower and in secondary education) in state funded schools. Is – and if affirmative please refer to the provisions in the law (add the text separately) – the teaching of religion in your country organised during school time in public educational institutions: in primary education, in secondary education.**

**I.2 Question: What choices amongst the religious education possibilities are offered in public educational institutions , e.g. catholic religion, Islamic teaching, ....**

**Answer:**

*Despite the fact that religion was not accepted in state doctrine of the socialist regime before 1989, there was the Church department at the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Socialist Republic which dealt with church matters at the national level, it controlled way of religion services and paid operation costs as well as salaries of registered churches . The religion education was not a part of curricula at primary and secondary, neither tertiary education institutions during socialist regime.*

*Situation in Slovakia in terms of religion and free expression of belief has been changed after the 'Velvet revolution', the fall of iron curtain and totalitarian regimes in all countries of Central and Eastern Europe.*

*From 1989 there were evident various problems depending on the particular sectors in the state. In the beginning of nineties there was very important for the educational sector to establish new- more democratic institutions, to set up new pedagogical objective and trajectories, to start with the reform process in educational area, changes in curricula, in the methodology of teaching and learning, initial and in-service training of teachers and open the opportunities to give chance to children and their parents to decide on religion instruction being potentially placed directly at school.*

*Slovak constitution (1992)<sup>1</sup> and the following legislation i.e. the Concord with the Vatican, signed in 2003 and the Agreement of all registered churches with the state, signed in 2004 – creates a legal basis for the cooperation between the state and churches in the provision of Religious Education. The churches have the right to educate the whole range of generations via*

- a) church education in church parishes;*
- b) establishing their own schools;*
- c) teaching religious education to all children that are registered for this subject by their parents, in public schools;*
- d) influencing young generation via leisure/out of school activities.*

*In the Article 24 of the Slovak Constitution there is expressed that freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief shall be guaranteed. This right shall include the right to change religion or belief and the right to refrain from a religious affiliation. Everyone shall have the right to express his or her mind publicly. In general it means that everyone has the right to manifest freely his or her religion or*

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<sup>1</sup> Constitution of the Slovak Republic No. 466/1992 Coll. has entered into force on the 1st of October 1992 , the complete version is available at : [http://www.vop.gov.sk/en/legal\\_basis/constitution.html](http://www.vop.gov.sk/en/legal_basis/constitution.html)

*belief either alone or in association with others, privately or publicly, in worship, religious acts, maintaining ceremonies or to participate in teaching.. Churches and ecclesiastical communities shall administer their own affairs themselves; in particular, they shall establish their bodies, appoint clericals, provide for theological education and establish religious orders and other clerical institutions independent from the state authorities. In the Constitution there is also mentioned that exercise of rights may be restricted, but only by a law, if it is regarding a measure necessary in a democratic society for the protection of public order, health and morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.*

*Nowadays the practice in Slovakia is that there are two parallel alternatives for all children in public schools: Religion Education (further on RE) and Ethical Education (further on Ethics). At the level of lower secondary education (age 10 - 15) and the first two years of the upper secondary education level (age 15 - 17) the choice of the families between these two alternative subjects for their children has been compulsory. At the beginning both RE and Ethics were electives in the early primary years (age 6-10) and the last years at the secondary school (age 17 - 19). According to the School Act from 2004 the compulsory choice between RE and Ethics applies already to the primary level (age 6-10). In the last two school years at the secondary level RE lessons are still voluntary. Until 2008 the number of RE lessons used to be one lesson per week. Since 2008 when the new school reform started to take place the state education programme guarantees only one lesson once in two weeks. More lessons can be added according to the particular school educational programme which reflects more freedom for any given school. Each school can decide in close cooperation with wider community, parents, teachers, representatives of local employer organisations, public authorities and other stakeholders on more flexible educational programme of a specific school.*

*Religious education (RE) in Slovakia has always been confessional. It has been focused primarily on teaching into a specific religious confession. It has always resembled the way of teaching religious education in church schools and even the church catechesis in parishes. For years the Slovak curricula of religious education have been aiming to develop children's involvement in a certain, just Christian denomination – nowadays they can practically choose from **Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox or Reformed religious education**. But also there are very rare exceptions (in cities) when the school decided to fulfil children's spiritual needs by a wider and more general approach to religion. Anyway, the children in Slovak schools are expected to learn their faith not only cognitively, but mainly "from inside". The partial aims are to develop children's inner religiosity, their personal relation to God through Jesus Christ, not only on cognitive but as well non-cognitive dimension of acquiring Christian faith, on the experiential learning about God and the Bible, on the positive concept of truth, etc. This approach requires the implementation of a wide range of adequate cognitive, affective and expressive teaching methods. The teachers, though paid from the state budget, should be members of a certain denomination. The evidence of it is a canonical commission from their own church who they represent.*

*From 2009 there are available syllabus and national standards for **Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox or Reformed religious education** which have been prepared by expert teams and these documents serve as the pedagogical tools for teaching and learning religion at all levels of primary and secondary education.<sup>2</sup> In the educational area "Man and value" we can find except*

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<sup>2</sup> National standards and description of educational framework are composed in so called national educational programme which can be used for the further development in school educational programmes. All subjects are composed in educational areas. There are as follows: Language and communication, Math and the work with information, Man and nature, Man and society, Man and value, Man and the world of labour, Art and culture and Health and movement. The detailed information is available at : [www.statpedu.sk](http://www.statpedu.sk) but unfortunately not in English.

*above mentioned four churches also Ethics. Parents and their children are allowed to choose either Ethics or one of the churches as the specific subject related to values which might be the part of the competences of human being in the nowadays societies*

## ***II. State funded denominational schools and state supervision***

**II.1. Question: Are there state funded denominational schools in your country? If affirmative, what is the numeric importance of state funded schools. If affirmative, what is the numeric importance of Islamic state funded schools. Please refer to statistical information on-line**

**II.2. Question: Are there non-state funded denominational schools in your country (private)? If affirmative, what is the numeric importance of private schools. If affirmative, what is the numeric importance of Islamic private schools. Please refer to statistical information on-line**

**II.3. Question: How do the authorities control the teaching in state funded denominational schools and are there any special questions about the control of the content of teaching in state-funded denominational schools? Please refer to the provisions in the law.**

**Answer:**

*Education and training at clerical and private schools and school facilities that may be established by the churches or religious communities recognized by the state, or by another legal entity or natural person: Education obtained in these schools is equivalent to the education provided at other schools and tuition can be charged. The goal of clerical and private schools is to provide, in addition to quality education and training, alternative content, methods, and formats in education and training.*

***The financing of regional education is established on normative principles, with the goals of:***

- introducing a normative system of financing per student,*
- changing the centralized system of financing to a two-level decentralized system,*
- motivating founders to more effectively use existing capacities and financial sources,*
- introducing multi-source financing of regional education,*
- supporting equality of all school founders.*

***Budget chapters of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic finance apply to:***

- all schools regardless of their founder,*
- school facilities within the foundation scope of the Regional Education Office*

*Since January 1, 2005, the school facilities within the foundation scope of municipalities and VÚC are financed via share taxes in terms of the Act No. 564/2004 Coll. and regulation of the government No. 668/2004 Coll. and since January 1, 2007, the school facilities within the foundation scope of clerical and private founders financed via share taxes in terms of the Act No. 596/2003 Coll. As amended<sup>3</sup>.*

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<sup>3</sup> The Act No. 596/2003 on State administration in education and school autonomy

*Public authorities can control the teaching in state funded denominational schools especially regarding the quality of teaching process, progression of pupils and other issues determined by the law in state-funded denominational schools. The main body responsible for this is State school inspection State School Inspection in the Slovak Republic has been set by law on the 1st January 2000.*

*The State School Inspection (further on SSI) is independent in its work and acts in accordance with laws and other valid legal norms, acts and decrees, especially Act No 596/2003 . The school inspectorate supervises and observes the quality of education and it is responsible for evaluating the quality of school management, the teaching and learning process, the material and technical conditions including practical training in schools and other educational facilities.*

*SSI registered headquarters are situated in Bratislava and 8 regional SSI centres which are the executive branches of the State School Inspection in the Slovak Republic. SSI and its branches are financed from the budget of the Ministry of Education.*

### **III. Refusal or limitations on the number of pupils of another conviction/belief by the governing board of a confessional (catholic) school**

**III.1. Question: Does the head of a state funded denominational (e.g. Catholic) school has the right to refuse pupils from other religious beliefs? Please refer to the provisions in the law.**

**III.2. Question: Does the head of a state funded denominational (e.g. Catholic) school the authority to limit the number of pupils from other religious beliefs (e.g. Muslim pupils) in order to support the specificity of the project?**

**Answer:**

*Criteria for admission of pupils are approved by the school founder, founder also determines number of pupils who will be admitted.. Denominational schools are regulated by the legislation of specific church (church acts and decrees) as well as by public educational legislation. According to the Act on state administration in education and school autonomy and the Act on financing schools from 2003<sup>4</sup> the co-governing body is also school governing board which can be established also at the denominational school and can contribute to the methodology of school admission - criteria and number of pupils for the schooling. The second act and its amendment is very closely related to the methodology of financing the denominational schools from public sources .In fact in Slovakia there is no separation of state and church and some disparities between financing of public and private/denominational schools are deepened.*

### **IV. Point of views of the authorities concerning the teaching of Islam in denominational (Catholic) education, Islam instruction or instruction on other convictions/beliefs in denominational (catholic) schools for (a number of pupils requesting it) and alternative ethical course**

**IV.1. Question. Is there a legal obligation to organise, if parents ask for, classes of Islamic religion in denominational (Catholic) education funded by public authorities? a. for any pupil for whom a request has been made? b. from a minimum number of pupils for whom a request has been made?**

**IV.2. Question. Does the same obligation exist for the offer of (a) other religions and/or philosophical convictions, (b) an alternative class of conception of life, philosophy, ethics**

**IV.3. Question. Can you shortly mention the pro and contra standpoints that have been expressed concerning the respect of fundamental rights (among others, freedom of education and right to education) in relation with this obligation?**

**IV.4. Question. Reference to the legal basis, with Website address, and also if possible to the parliamentary preparation of texts.**

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<sup>4</sup> The Act No. 597/2003 on financing primary and secondary schools and educational facilities, the Act No. 179/2009 on the changes in financing denominational schools from public sources

**Answer:**

**V. Teaching of Islam in denominational (e.g. Catholic) schools at their own initiative**

**V.1. Question: Is there in your country a general guideline for teaching of Islam in denominational (e.g. Catholic) schools at their own initiative defined by (a) the Bishops' Conference, (b) another body, namely. . .**

**V.2. Question: If affirmative, does the guideline implies that (a) the teaching of other religions is organised when: one parent asks for, or a sufficient number of parents ask for (how many?), (b) only teaching of Islam is offered as alternative religion when one parent asks for or a sufficient number of parents ask for (how many?)**

**V.3. Question: There is no guideline and: (a) in fact, teaching of Islam is never proposed in Catholic schools, or (b) the teaching of Islam is organised in some schools, which have taken themselves the initiative. If possible, explain the importance of this option**

**Answer:**

*In Slovakia there are either general, or even specific guidelines for teaching of Islam in denominational or public schools. Community of Muslims is however small in Slovakia. Those living in Slovakia established Islamic foundation in Slovakia. They act as a confessional organization of Muslims and provide space to all Muslim people in the country including converted Slovak citizens. The foundation is financed from its own sources. Main activities of Islamic foundation in Slovakia are related to the religion: it organizes worships, increases knowledge about Muslim community in Slovakia, informs about Islam, and alike. The foundation operates its own internet web page, organizes cultural activities, works with the Slovak media, helps applicants for asylum from Muslim countries, and cooperates with the initiative People against racism.*

*Muslims in general do not have in Slovakia enough space for practising of their religion education and services. They do not have a mosque in the whole country, only in Bratislava (the capital of the Slovak Republic) are some rooms to the disposal in the building which serves to other occasions.*

*Islam is not registered church in Slovakia. According to existing national legislation only in case of at least 20000 members of the given church there is possible to achieve approval for building up own temple. As in Slovakia lives approximately (according to unofficial information) 7000 Muslims, they do not have their own temple. At present there is initiative to decrease a number of believers up to 10000.*

**VI. Religious symbols in public schools**

**VI.1. Question: Are religious symbols (e.g. crucifix) in public schools compulsory, allowed, or forbidden?**

**VI.2. Question: Is a teacher allowed to wear the Islamic headscarf and manifest her religion? Please explain if not allowed on which grounds.**

**VI.3. Question: Is a pupil allowed to wear the Islamic headscarf and manifest her religion? Please explain if not allowed on which grounds.**

**VI.4. Question: Who decides on the dress code in schools. Please refer to the law.**

**VI.5. Question: Can a pupil and/or a teacher be exempted from the dress code when she considers it her religious duty to wear the Islamic headscarf?**

**VI.6. Question: Who is the regulatory authority in this sphere?**

**VI.7. Question: What kind of disciplinary measures and proceedings are taken if the pupil or teacher fails to comply with the rules on dress codes?**

**VI.8. Question: Please describe the case-law in your country.**

**Answer:**

*No religion symbols are used in public schools. The same is valid regarding demonstration/manifestation of faith, presentation of belonging to any kind of belief, religion by using special wearing. Teachers are considered as representatives of public authorities and they are obliged to promote understanding of diversity and value for it.*

**VII. After-school education in private religious institutions. Islamic instruction organised after the school hours (age 6-18)**

**VII.7. Question: How would you characterize the public debate about this form of Islamic instruction organised after the school hours?**

**Answer:**

*Muslim community can organise its own Islamic teaching in leisure of children in after school hours. They are not monitored by any public authority because of freedom of expression religion. We do not have official data on the number of children who take part in such events*

**VIII. Additional comments**

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