

AGREEMENT

between the Republic of Lithuania and the Holy See on Co-operation in Education and Culture

The Republic of Lithuania and the Holy See (hereinafter referred to as the "Contracting Parties");

in order to regulate relations between the Catholic Church and the Republic of Lithuania in the spheres of education and culture;

the Republic of Lithuania, acting in accordance with its Constitution and the Holy See, acting in accordance with the documents of the Second Vatican Council, particularly its declaration *Gravissimum educationis*, as well as the norms of Canon Law;

holding the principles of freedom of conscience and religion as recognised and proclaimed by the international community;

having regard to the important moral, cultural and historic contribution of the Catholic Church to the Nation's life;

acknowledging that in Lithuania Catholics constitute the largest community among the traditional religious communities in Lithuania recognised by the State;

have agreed on the following:

Article 1

1. The Republic of Lithuania, upholding the principle of freedom of religion and acknowledging the natural right of parents to provide their children with religious education, shall create the same conditions for teaching the Catholic religion in all State and municipal schools of general education as for teaching other curriculum subjects.
2. At the request of parents or guardians State or municipal pre-school educational establishments shall be provided with conditions for Catholic education.
3. All educational establishments and study institutions shall guarantee respect for religious convictions, symbols and values.

Article 2

1. Holding in respect freedom of conscience, everybody shall have a guaranteed right to choose freely classes in religion or ethics as subject for required moral education. Such a choice shall not be ground for discrimination.
2. For students attending school up to the age indicated in the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania the right to choose classes in religion or ethics shall be reserved to their parents or guardians. Students who have reached the age indicated in the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania shall have the right to decide independently regarding religious education.
3. Students under the guardianship of the State or municipality shall be guaranteed the right to study the Catholic religion, provided that Catholicism is the faith professed by their families or relatives.

Article 3

1. The qualifying certificate for teaching the Catholic religion shall be granted in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania with due regard to the norms of the Conference of Lithuanian Bishops.
2. Teachers of the Catholic religion must have the written authorisation (*missio canonica*) of the local Bishop. Such authorisation constitutes an indispensable part of the qualification requirements for the profession. From the moment when the authorisation is withdrawn, a teacher shall lose the right to teach the Catholic religion. The procedure for the notification of the withdrawal of the authorisation shall be established by a separate agreement between the authorised institution of the Republic of Lithuania and the Conference of Lithuanian Bishops.
3. Teachers of religion in State or municipal schools have the same rights and duties as teachers of other subjects.

Article 4

1. In educational establishments where the Catholic religion is taught as a subject of moral training, teachers and students of the Catholic religion shall enjoy the same opportunities as teachers and students of other subjects as regards the development of extra-curricular activities, using of the school premises and resources.
2. Appreciating the contribution of the Catholic Church to the education of youth, the Republic of Lithuania shall support the activities of Catholic youth organisations, providing said organisations with the same possibilities to use premises and resources of the State or municipal educational institutions as other public youth organisations registered in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania.

Article 5

The Catholic Church may organise courses and engage in spiritual-religious education in universities and other establishments of higher education in agreement with the administration of these institutions.

Article 6

1. The preparation of programmes for teaching the Catholic religion, textbooks and other didactical materials for institutions of education shall be organised by the Conference of Lithuanian Bishops, in co-operation with the competent institution of the Republic of Lithuania. The prepared textbooks shall be approved for use by the Conference of Lithuanian Bishops and by the competent institution of the Republic of Lithuania.
2. The preparation and printing of textbooks on the Catholic religion shall be financed in accordance with the general procedure established by the competent institution of the Republic of Lithuania, in co-operation with the Conference of Lithuanian Bishops.

Article 7

1. Each within its competence, the authorised institutions of the Contracting Parties shall ensure that the contents and methods of teaching the Catholic religion comply with the requirements established by the Catholic Church and the Republic of Lithuania.
2. Professional qualifications of teachers of the Catholic religion shall be assessed and their work shall be supervised in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania with the joint participation of the representatives of the Conference of Lithuanian Bishops.

Article 8

The Catholic Church shall have the right to establish educational establishments of various types and levels or to be among the founders of such establishments. Such institutions shall be established upon receiving written authorisation of the competent authority of the Catholic Church and pursuant to the laws of the Republic of Lithuania. Education in such institutions shall be conducted according to Catholic doctrine, while subjects of general education shall be taught according to the programme approved by the competent institution of the Republic of Lithuania.

Article 9

1. State or municipal educational institutions established together with the Catholic Church, as well as programmes providing education of established public standards within non-State and non-municipal Catholic educational institutions, shall be financed by the budgetary funds allotted thereto pursuant to the procedure prescribed by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania or its authorised institution to the same degree as State or municipal institutions of a relevant type or level.
2. Supplementary programmes of non-State Catholic educational institutions shall be financed by the founding institution.

Article 10

1. The Contracting Parties shall mutually recognise diplomas and academic qualifications in education at the University level.
2. The authorised institutions of the Contracting Parties shall exchange information on the recognition of qualifications.
3. The Republic of Lithuania shall recognise diplomas and academic qualifications granted by the Faculty of Theology which had been in operation within the Inter-diocesan Seminary in Kaunas in 1940-1991.
4. In providing subsidies for State post-secondary schools (including Universities), the Republic of Lithuania shall also grant subsidies to schools preparing teachers of Catholic religion, as well as to public institutions of post-secondary education, including those wherein faculties of Catholic theology, religious study centres and departments are established.

Article 11

1. The competent authority of the Church may establish diocesan and inter-diocesan seminaries for the spiritual and intellectual preparation of candidates for the priesthood. Diplomas of higher education granted by the seminaries shall be recognised in the Republic of Lithuania, provided that the level of studies meets the qualification requirements set for higher education.
2. Seminary professors and students shall have the same rights and duties as professors and students from other educational institutions of an equivalent level.
3. The Republic of Lithuania shall provide support to the Catholic seminaries. The amount shall be fixed by a separate agreement between the competent institution of the Republic of Lithuania and the Conference of Lithuanian Bishops.

Article 12

1. Having regard to the right of its citizens to freedom of information, the Catholic Church shall have access to public mass media. Catholic radio and television programmes shall be broadcast pursuant to separate agreement between the Conference of Lithuanian Bishops and the authorised institution of the Republic of Lithuania.
2. The Catholic Church shall have the right to establish and possess its own media network in conformity with Canon Law and the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania.
3. Honouring the principle of religious freedom, the Republic of Lithuania and the Catholic Church shall co-operate to guarantee respect for religious convictions and beliefs, ethical and religious values, religious symbols and sacred objects in the media and public life.

Article 13

1. The cultural and historical patrimony of the Catholic Church is an important part of the national heritage, therefore the Catholic Church and the Republic of Lithuania shall continue to co-operate to preserve this heritage.
2. The archives of the Catholic Church that were expropriated between 15 June 1940 and 11 March 1990 and which are currently being kept at the State Archives shall be left there for safekeeping. The authorised representatives of the Catholic Church shall have the right to free access, to investigate and to publish the material from these archives without charge.
3. The conditions for the administration and safekeeping of the aforementioned archives, as well as the procedure for the submission of information on the available documents shall be stipulated by a separate agreement between the Conference of Lithuanian Bishops and the authorised institution of the Republic of Lithuania.
4. The Conference of Lithuanian Bishops and the authorised institution of the Republic of Lithuania will establish a permanent bilateral commission to perform the following tasks:
 - decide on the future status of the movable and immovable cultural treasures that were expropriated between 15 June 1940 and 11 March 1990, while having regard to their religious value;
 - draw up lists of movable and immovable cultural treasures in order to receive full financing from the State for their conservation and restoration;
 - draw up and update on a regular basis lists of movable and immovable cultural treasures in order to receive State support according to their priority.
5. The Catholic Church desiring that its cultural heritage should continue to be available to the public, shall ensure that the interested persons are able to study and research it.

Article 14

Should any divergences arise in future concerning the interpretation or implementation of the present Agreement, the Contracting Parties will proceed by common accord to an amicable solution.

Article 15

This Agreement shall enter into force from the moment of reciprocal notification of the fulfilment by the Contracting Parties of the procedures necessary for its entrance into force.

Done in Vilnius on 5 May 2000 in two copies in Lithuanian and English, both texts being of equal force.

For the Republic of Lithuania



For the Holy See

