



CENTAR ZA GRAĐANSKO OBRAZOVANJE
CENTRE FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

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MONTENEGRO ALREADY CHOSE TO BE A CIVIC STATE

Centre for Civic Education (CCE) reminds that the Constitution defines Montenegro as a civic, secular state, and that all future legal acts must be in line with this basic principle.

The media published parts of the concluding declaration from the international meeting of religious organisations “Legal status of churches and religious communities in Montenegro today”, which was subsequently forwarded to the Government as a framework for the future discussions on the legal relations between the churches and religions communities, on one side and the State, on the other side. Declaration contains demands for a number of rights to churches/religious communities that ought to be institutionalised by the Law on churches and religious communities. The participants in the meeting also urged for finalisation and adoption of the said law as soon as possible. Some of the demands concern the return of religious education “of the traditional churches and religious communities” to schools, where teachers would be appointed by the religious communities and paid by the state. Others demand that the state should allow religious communities to influence public broadcasting services, relieve them of taxes etc.

The document insists that “legal recognition of the church and religious community means a cluster of commitments to the Church and its identity that ought to be observed by the state”. In other words, the state will be obliged to defend interests of the Church which are represented as “common and general”, although this logic runs directly against the principle of separation of church/religious establishments from the state.

CCE is convinced that, should the authorities respond to these demands, the next step would be clericalism and retardation of the society, and we therefore feel obliged to express our dissent. Montenegro is a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional state and is currently living a difficult period of transition, marked by struggles for some of the basic human rights. Educational reform introduced the principle of democratic citizenship through the subject of civic education. The possibility of introducing religious education into the formal educational system would be a severe threat to the future realisation of this principle.

In that sense we support the Government of Montenegro which has so far managed to resist the influence of religious lobbies and maintain the secular character of the civic society, whose further development and improvement is our common task.

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