

# THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

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## *Abstract:*

*The aim of the paper is to show the power of the Catholic Church as a very influential institution in today's Croatia, which regained its influence especially after the founding of the state of Croatia. The state Vatican was one of the first countries in recognizing the independence of the Republic of Croatia. Croatia thanked to Vatican abundantly for concluding special international Vatican agreements, through which the Catholic Church has secured great influence and financial resources. Very soon, the rise and rush of ever greater influence of the Catholic Church in Croatia has been going on since the beginning of the 1990s with grew of religious education in preschool institutions, schools and at the university level, that is, by introducing religious education at all educational levels in Croatian society. Also is shown the importance of the Catholic Faculty of Theology (CFT) in Croatian higher education system, importance of confessional religious education in schools, influence of the Catholic Church on Croatian Society by Croatian Catholic Medical Society and influence at the University level in wider sense. Behind all lies the clientelistic management and procedures at the University, non-transparent spending of public*

*money, violence against some faculties their students and professors as well as the long-term fulfillment of Church's goals in conquering the field of education in the Republic of Croatia.*

**Key Words:** Catholic Church, education, university, school, Vatican treaties

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the field of education in Croatia has been moving further and further away from the secular social field of knowledge and increasingly turning to the ecclesiastical field of religion and “belief”, based on religious dogmas, although this process has been visible for decades but was slow and subtle. We can follow it practically from the very beginning of the Croatian state in 1991, and especially today, when we have already established 12 primary and 12 secondary church schools with 1504 and 2406 pupils in Croatia, according to data for 2018/2019 year (Hrvatska katolička mreža, 2019). There are also more church faculties and studies in Croatia, Zagreb, Split and Osijek,<sup>2</sup> which are expanding and establishing new studies, for which they receive state funds, although they are owned exclusively by the Croatian Archdiocese Conference and the Vatican, but not the Croatian state. These studies are based, as a rule, on canon law<sup>3</sup>, ecclesiastical law that

<sup>2</sup> For example, in Croatia we have Catholic Theological Faculties (CFT) in Đakovo, Zagreb and Split, as constituents of state universities, but also a special Croatian Catholic University, outside state universities with several studies: psychology, sociology, history, communication, nursing and theology, and recently received a permit for the establishment of medical studies (Hrvatsko katoličko sveučilište 2021). Graduated students of nursing acquire the title of “master / master of nursing”, emphasizing employment “at all levels after graduating from university, health care (primary, secondary, tertiary), as well as outside the health care system in educational institutions and other social welfare institutions.” (Hrvatsko kaatoličko sveučilište, Diplomski sveučilišni studij *Sestrinstvo*, 2021)

<sup>3</sup> Canon law - consists of “regulations by which some Christian communities (churches) regulate internal relations, but also issues within their competence that affect secular authority.

differs in legislative framework from civil law, and in some respects neither the competencies nor the consequences for the citizens of such state-church integration of faculty institutions are clearly delineated (Hrvatska katolička mreža 2019).

On the website of the Catholic Network<sup>4</sup> states that the Catholic school is a school “for the person and the school made up of persons”, emphasizing that “every person, in his material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Jesus’ teaching – therefore the development of the person is the goal of the Catholic school.” (Hrvatska katolička mreža 2019). The Church finds the reasons for the establishment and operation of Catholic schools in “her mission, entrusted to her by Jesus Christ. This mission is to bring people to their human and Christian perfection, to their maturity in faith. Special attention is paid to the general criteria that must reconcile cultural, didactic, social, civic and political choices. These choices must always be faithful to the Gospel proclaimed by the Church.” That is why in such schools, “evangelical principles” are what constitute “norms of upbringing, an inner mover and a final destination.”

## SOME HISTORICAL REMARKS

Croatia is one country with a prevalently Catholic population. There are an estimated 3.7 million baptized Roman Catholics and about 20,000 baptized Greek Catholics in Croatia which make 86.3% of the population according to the 2011 census. (Catholic Church in Croatia 2021)

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They are passed, confirmed or accepted by the legitimate church authority. Although canon law has a historical continuity from the beginnings of the Church until today, due to doctrinal differences and ecclesiastical schisms, it has been codified quite differently.” (Hrvatska enciklopedija, 2021 <https://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?ID=30223>)

4 Katolička mreža (Hrvatska katolička mreža 2019).

The Catholic Church in Croatia is part of the worldwide Catholic Church that is „under the spiritual leadership of the Pope, Roman Curia and the Croatian Bishops’ Conference“ (Hrvatska biskupska konferencija 2021). Its administration is centered in Zagreb, and it comprises „5 archdioceses, 13 dioceses and 1 Military Ordinariate“. Current Croatian cardinal is Josip Bozanić, Archbishop of Zagreb. (Galić 2018, 213–214)

Theologians in Croatia note that in Croatia “statehood and ecclesiology have been interconnected in the issue of education” since the 9th century (Hoblaj, Lončarić-Jelačić & Razum 2005, 291). It is true that “the bearers of education were bishops and monks”, from the Middle Ages and in Croatia, as well as in other countries, as the same authors state, because the Church was then the only financially powerful institution that could pay for schools and universities, of course initially only in their own interest. However, after several centuries of “cooperation” between the states, the Croatian and Catholic churches found themselves in “three different periods of time, in a” struggle “with the state” (Hoblaj, Lončarić-Jelačić & Razum 2005, 291). The first reforms towards the secularization of education were sought by Maria Theresa, during the Habsburg Monarchy, who took away from the Jesuits and other orders of the Catholic Church authority over schools and introduced compulsory schooling for children of both sexes from 6 to 12 years. Her son, Franjo Josip I, continued the secular policy of education, carried out school and administrative reform, and opened the modern University of Zagreb (1874), which theologians consider “very harmful consequences, especially for higher education” (Hoblaj, Lončarić-Jelačić & Razum 2005, 291). The period after the collapse of Bach’s absolutism (1860), Croatian theologians call the “process of regression of traditional culture”, which they reversed in the early 1990s, the return of “traditional culture” and “biblical values”<sup>5</sup> in Croatian education, from the lowest to the highest levels, from primary schools to the University, according to Church visions from ancient historical times.

<sup>5</sup> Namely, in 1991, confessional religious education was introduced in Croatian primary and secondary schools, as an “elective” subject, which is held regularly until today,

The history of the University of Zagreb began on September 23, 1669 “when the diploma of the Roman Emperor and Hungarian-Croatian King Leopold I recognized the status and privileges of a university institution to the Jesuit Academy in the free royal city of Zagreb, which was accepted at the Croatian Kingdom Congress in 1671.” (Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Povijest Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2021) The Philosophical Study in Zagreb has been operating as the *Neoacademia Zagrebiensis* since 1662, i.e. as a public law higher education institution. The academy remained in the hands of the Jesuits until 1773, when Pope Clement XIV. abolished this order, and in 1776 Maria Theresa by decree established the Royal Academy of Sciences with 3 faculties: Philosophical, Theological and Legal.

After Josip I founded the modern University of Zagreb in 1874, the Church was deprived of 300 years of supervision over the public primary schools it founded, in addition to its competence in organizing religious education. This was preceded by conflicts between the so-called church and liberal movement, where the church movement advocated “joint cooperation” of Church and state, while the liberal spirit of secularism of the 19th century, insisted on a complete break between Church and school (Hoblaj, Lončarić-Jelačić & Razum 2005, 291). After the First World War, several faculties of the University of Zagreb were established: Technical College in 1918, (1925 Technical Faculty), Faculty of Economics and Forestry in 1919, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in 1924, School of Economics and Commerce in 1925 (outside the University), Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry in 1942. After World War II, it was founded in 1946; Faculty of Science, 1947; Faculty of Economics, 1962; Faculty of Political Science and Faculty of Dentistry, 1967; Faculty of Kinesiology, 1972; Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation, 1974; Faculty of Organization and Informatics, 1981; Faculty of Food Technology and Biotechnology, 1956. The Faculty of Engineering is divided into: Architectural-Construction-Geodetic, Electrical Engineering, Mechani-

while this “elective” subject still has no alternative in primary schools. In 2014, the current, 83rd rector of the University of Zagreb, Damir Boras, mentioned when he was elected rector for the first time, that the University of Zagreb would “return to its biblical values”, because those values at the University were “neglected”! Interesting, his family origins also led him to the head the Old Catholic Church at the same time (Kustura, 2014).

cal-Shipbuilding and Chemical-Food-Mining. Today, some of these faculties, under the influence of modernization and modern society, have been separated into separate faculties. In 1979, the Academy of Dramatic Arts became part of the University of Zagreb, and in 1980 the Academy of Fine Arts and the Academy of Music (Sveučilište u Zagrebu. Povijest Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2021). In the period of independent Republic of Croatia, more new faculties were established in various cities of Croatia, and the establishment of “Croatian Studies” in 1993 is especially significant, defining itself as a “higher education institution and scientific organization, which has a vocation: to research and study Croatian society, state, space, population, emigration, culture, Croatian civilizational and historical heritage in the European and world context; to teach about existing knowledge and newly acquired knowledge in the system of higher education and to nurture the Croatian national and cultural identity.” (Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Fakultet hrvatskih studija. 2013-2021).

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CATHOLIC FACULTY OF THEOLOGY (CFT) IN CROATIAN HIGHER EDUCATION<sup>6</sup>

The Faculty of Theology (CFT) has been operating since 1784 within the Zagreb Seminary on Kaptol, where, in addition to the existing theological one, Archbishop Juraj Haulik opened a two-year philosophical study in 1853. On March 11, 1869, the Croatian Parliament passed a law ordering

6 The Catholic Faculty of Theology of the University of Zagreb began its foundation in 13<sup>th</sup> century as a philosophical and theological study initiated in Zagreb by Bishop Stjepan II Babonić (1227–1247) (Katolički bogoslovni fakultet 2021). Later, the seminary of Count Drašković were established with a humanistic school and a Jesuit college (1633) in Gradec, which led to the establishment of the Academy (1662), when King Leopold I enrolled in the general studies of the Habsburg crown in 1669 with associated university rights and privileges (Katolički bogoslovni fakultet 2021). After the abolition of the Jesuit Order (1773), Empress Maria Theresa reorganized Zagreb's general studies into the “Royal Academy of Sciences” with 3 faculties: philosophy, theology and law.

the “provincial government” to reorganize the Archbishop’s Lyceum of Zagreb into the Faculty of Theology. After the modern Croatian University was founded in 1874, a four-year Faculty of Theology was opened in the same year. The initiator of the founding of the Croatian University in Zagreb was Bishop Strossmayer. The reorganization of the Faculty of Theology was carried out in 1935 in accordance with the requirements of the Apostolic Constitution “*Deus scientiarum Dominus*”, and the new study was confirmed in 1937 by the Congregation for Seminaries and Universities, thus equating the Faculty of Theology in Zagreb. (Katolički bogoslovni fakultet 2021).

During ex country Yugoslavia, between 1941. and 1991., in which Croatia was part as a constitutive socialist republic with its own Constitution, the Croatian bishops were part of the Bishops’ Conference of Yugoslavia. In 1946, socialist regime confiscated property of the Church and in 1952 officially banned all religious education in public schools (Galić 2018). By its decision that year, the Government of the People’s Republic of Croatia excluded the Catholic Faculty of Theology from the University of Zagreb, which *de facto*, but not *de jure*, ceased to be an integral part of the University of Zagreb. (Katolički bogoslovni fakultet 2021). From that year 1952. when the socialist regime expelled the Catholic Faculty of Theology as one of its constituent units from the University of Zagreb, it was not restored until the political and democratic changes in 1991. Catholic Faculty of Theology (CFT) is a specific academic and church institution with special treatment according to present Statute of the University of Zagreb (Statut Sveučilišta u Zagrebu 2017), whose personnel in politics, dealing leaders, program design and affirmation, financial policy and organization of the faculty are being considered on the university level, but also take into consideration the opinion and seek confirmation from the relevant ecclesiastical authority in Vatican, according to Croatian Bishops’ Conference (<http://www.hbk.hr>) (Galić 2018, 214). Previously, in 1993, the Holy See established a key church institution for making all legal issues and decisions – the Croatian Bishops’ Conference (HBK) – and approved its Statute (Jakulj 2015, 493).

The position and activity of the Catholic Faculty of Theology (CFT) within the University which are regulated with respect to the international treaties and contracts between the founders and the University, with the consent of the relevant state and church authorities. The founder of the Faculty is the Zagreb Archdiocese. The Faculty is also, as a high church institution, subject to the Holy See and is aligned with the provisions of canon law, the Apostolic Constitution of *Sapientia christiana*, of the Faculty Statute, which is approved by the Holy See and according to the general acts adopted by the Faculty itself (Galić 2018, 214). It is written in the Statute of the CFT that „The purpose of the Faculty is to nurture, to research and to systematically and comprehensively present the Christian Discourse, to advance the knowledge of its truth through the philosophical-theological sciences upbringing and education of the diocesan clergy, members of the institution of consecrated life, members of the association of apostolic life and Catholic lay people“. (Statut Katoličkog bogoslovnog fakulteta 2017). Catholic Church in Croatia, apart from being known for its great demands for the return of property confiscated during the socialism, is well known for „Vatican contracts“, which enable it to supply large material resources and long-term policies to influence educational institutions at all levels, as well as on the media (Galić 2018, 214).

## CONFESSIONAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

The Vatican was one of the first countries to recognize the independent Republic of Croatia. Croatia thanked the Vatican abundantly for concluding special international agreements. Very soon, the rise and rush of ever greater influence of the Catholic Church in Croatia has been going on since the beginning of the 1990s and grew of religious education in schools and preschool institutions, in view of the introduction of religious educa-



tion on all levels in education institutions, all according to international Contracts that the Government of the Republic of Croatia in the mid 1990s concluded with the state Vatican in the areas of “education and culture”, in “legal issues”, on “the care of Catholic faithful, the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Croatia”, on “economic issues”, “Catholic religious education in public schools and religious education in public preschool institutions”.<sup>7</sup> The Agreement on Legal Issues<sup>8</sup> is considered to be “the most important of the four agreements signed, because it regulates an almost complete legal framework of relations between the Catholic Church and the Republic of Croatia” (Jakulj 2015, 497).

According to the Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Croatia on Cooperation in the Field of Education and Culture, the Republic of Croatia undertook to “respect the fundamental right of parents to religious education of their children” and to “within the school curriculum and in accordance with guardianship, to guarantee the teaching of Catholic religious education in all public primary and secondary schools and in preschool institutions, as a compulsory subject for those who choose it, under the same conditions as the teaching of other compulsory subjects” (HBK, Ugovor o suradnji na području odgoja i kulture, 1996). Also, according to

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7 Four agreements were concluded between the Holy See and the Republic of Croatia: On cooperation in the field of education and culture, dated 19 December 1996 (HBK, Ugovor o suradnji na području odgoja i kulture, 1996); Agreement on legal issues, dated 19 December 1996 (HBK, Ugovor o pravnim pitanjima, 1996); Treaty on the Pastoral Care of Catholic Believers Members of the Armed Forces and Police Services of the Republic of Croatia, dated 19 December 1996 (HBK, Ugovor o dušobrižništvu katoličkih vjernika pripadnika oružanih snaga i redarstvenih službi Republike Hrvatske, 1996) and the Agreement on Economic Issues, dated 9 October 1998 (HBK, Ugovor o gospodarskim pitanjima, 1998).

8 According to the Agreement on Legal Issues, regarding of a cleric possible criminal offenses in Croatia, the judiciary is obliged to inform the relevant church authorities. The Church protects its officials from criminal prosecution, i.e. the criminal law of the Republic of Croatia can hardly be applied to them if the Church protects them with a “confessional secret”. There were cases with incorrect work with some clerics who have not been recalled from the Croatian Bishops’ Conference, but the Church simply expelled a proven pedophile from one parish and moved to another, without any fence, as a standard practice.

the same agreement, the Republic of Croatia undertakes that “the educational system in public preschool institutions and schools, including higher education institutions, will take into account the values of Christian ethics.” In the mentioned agreement, in 15 articles, the contracting parties “regulated issues: 1. on religious education in preschool institutions and on religious education in primary and secondary schools; 2. on the manner of establishing and managing schools of any level; 3. on the status of Catholic higher education institutions and institutes and on the establishment of new ones; 4. on proper access to state media, and possession of one’s own; 5. on the issue of access to cultural heritage and its preservation. Pursuant to this Agreement, but also to the Agreement on Legal Issues, the Governments of the Republic of Croatia and the CBC concluded an Agreement on Catholic Religious Education in Public Schools and Religious Education in Public Preschool Institutions” (Jakulj 2015, 503). After that, in 2000, the Croatian Radio and Television (HRT) and the Croatian Bishops’ Conference (HBK) signed an Agreement on the religious program on Radio and Television, the time and manner of broadcasting, and mutual cooperation in the Catholic Church’s access to the media.

Catholic religious or religious education in public schools is performed by persons whom the diocesan bishop gives a confirmation of the canonical mandate (*missio canonica*). According to the Vatican contract in the field of education, public schools do not choose the teachers to perform religious education in schools by themselves, as they choose for other subjects-matters in schools, but “the diocesan bishop determines a suitable person for performing religious education or religious education”, according to Vatican’s contract „about Catholic Religion in Public Schools and Religious Education in Public Preschool Institutions“ (HBK, Ugovor o suradnji na području odgoja i kulture, 1996). Also, according to the same Contract, “*The missio canonica*” confirmation for teaching of Catholic religious confession or religious education will have an effect when the diocesan bishop does not

90 | revoke. In other words, a school, say, cannot do much if teacher is inap-

propriately behaving towards children, if someone discriminates or sends a message of harassing, racist or even fascist content. Accordingly, religious instruction largely depends on the choices of teachers, whereby the diocesan bishop has the right, by his decree, to revoke the canonical mandate (*missio canonica*) for teaching Catholic doctrine or religious education due to „the correctness of the teaching and the personal timidity”, what his is stated in one Vatican’s contract on performing religious education in public schools and religious education (Galić 2018, 215).

## INFLUENCE OF CATHOLIC CHURCH ON CROATIAN SOCIETY

There are different ways of including conservative values in Croatian society, which are implemented by the Catholic Church in Croatia at different levels. European studies of values from 2008 which show the modernization of Croatian society, but also the importance of traditional values such as marriage, family, children, religiosity, which is largely supported by church ideology (Domitrović, Ivanešić & Žagmešter 2020). In addition, traditional forms of religiosity related to religious institutions continue to prevail in contemporary Croatian society (Nikodem 2011). The results of research on religiosity in Croatian society in the last decade show that women, people with a lower level of education, whose parents have a lower level of education and who come from smaller settlements are more prone to religiosity, and the connection of empirical dimensions of religiosity with “right” political orientation, as well as strengthening this connection in the last ten years (Nikodem & Zrinščak 2019).

The methods and ways of the Church’s work and its lobbying for its own interests in Croatia depend on various organizations with which the

Church is either in direct contact from its own ranks, or various civic initiatives and associations are established to promote church views, such as: Association “In the name of the family”, “Vigilare”, “Bethlehem”, “40 days to live”, etc. The latter is actually a campaign in which Catholic believers in 33 Croatian cities, in 35 places, watch and pray to “stop abortions” by their demonstrations in hospitals and clinical centers, and with banners against abortion and pro-life propaganda, women who go to abortions in certain places are disturbed. All this is done for the “victory of the culture of life”. The campaign usually starts a few weeks before Easter and ends just before Easter, but some church activists are present there throughout the whole year.

The pro-life approach to reproduction is also advocated in religious studies both within Catholic theological faculties within state universities and at the Croatian Catholic University, within various studies, from theology and religious studies, to sociology, psychology, nursing, etc., and from students, as well as professors in these studies, are expected to accept church doctrines not only in faith but also in marital and reproductive relationships. Thus, for example, as part of the final specialist work at the Catholic Theological Faculty in Đakovo, works are being prepared that represent the protection of the “human person from conception to natural death” (Kovač 2017). In the paper, the author states: “Speaking of the human person, we must keep in mind that it is a human person from conception to natural death. Pro Life, in accordance with the sacral tenets of bioethics, advocates the abolition of the legal possibility of abortion and the recognition of the anthropological status of the human embryo from the first hour of its existence, that is, since it took shape as a fertilized egg. is owed to man in accordance with the moral law in relation to his physical and spiritual totality. The human being must be respected and treated as a person from conception, and from that moment on he must be recognized the rights of the person, among which is the inviolable right to life that every innocent human being has” (Kovač 2017, 7).

Catholic Church is very active in Croatian social and political life. From 1991 until now The Church has implemented a number of conservative spirit actions in order to promote its values in Croatian society, such as: non-working Sunday, punishment of the crimes of the socialist era, introducing religious education from preschool institutions to schools and higher education institutions, protection of marriage as the union of a „man and a woman“ (2013 referendum), opposition to abortion (campaign: “Protecting human life from conception to natural death”), opposition to euthanasia, opposition to natural methods of family planning and the treatment of infertility, and opposition to artificial birth control methods (Galić 2018, 215).

It is interesting that abortion in the Republic of Croatia is still performed on the basis of the last adopted law from 1978 of the SFRJ “*Law on health measures for exercising the right to freely decision on the birth of children*”, which was based on the SFRJ Constitution of 1974, which guaranteed freedom of birth decisions, but with much more obstruction in Republic of Croatia in the field of authorized clinics and violations of the law to the detriment of women. Namely, the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia eliminated this option of freedom of birth decisions and introduced a novelty in Article 21 that “every human being has the right to life”. The definition of “human being” is not specified, but religious fundamentalists, including members of HKLD, believe that it is any fertilized egg “from conception to natural death”, regardless of whether the fetus is born alive or dies in a woman’s body, as well as to the degree of fetal malformations that may be incompatible with life, so that pro-life activists and church organizations believe that this law is now in conflict with the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. Therefore, they requested a “constitutional review” of the law from the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Croatia, which issued a decision (Rješenje Ustavnog Suda Republike Hrvatske, broj: U-I-60/1991 i dr. od 21.veljace 2017, 2017) requesting the adoption of a new law in within 2 years and noted that “the right to life of the fetus cannot take precedence over the right to choose a woman”. Members of the Croatian Catholic Medi-

cal Association (HKLD) and numerous pro-life associations and individuals also sent their comments. Most “pro-life” associations, as well as members of HKLD, participate in the drafting of the new law, while women’s associations do not have access to the drafting of this law. A new law has not yet been passed. At the same time, there is a growing obstruction in practice in hospitals of the possibility of legal abortion on request, despite the current law on abortion, because it is presupposed to the Law on Medicine, which allows doctors and “conscience appeal”, which in gynecology, just when it comes to performing abortions, it is used extensively. Despite the authorized licenses to perform this medical service in Croatian clinics, some clinics completely deny abortion, because all doctors or the vast majority of them call for a “conscience appeal”, so women who need an abortion often end up in illegal places or end up in violation legal deadline, which is why they are then again denied the right to perform the service “outside the law”.<sup>9</sup>

The Croatian Catholic Medical Society (Hrvatsko katoličko liječničko društvo, HKLD) was also founded as one of the most important church societies in Croatia, very soon after the independence of the state of Croatia. The company’s website states: “Croatian Catholic Medical Association (HKLD) is a Catholic professional non-governmental organization, which brings together doctors of medicine, dentists, masters of pharmacy, masters of medical biochemistry and other highly educated health professionals” (Hrvatsko katoličko liječničko društvo 2021). It was established in 1991 with the goals of achieving the following activities: “1. to encourage the ethical, moral, health and professional education of its members according to the requirements of the times and the teachings of the Catholic Church;

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9 Recently, there have even been some cases of refusal to perform abortions in the desired pregnancy, but “malformed fetuses incompatible with life”, despite the law, so patients were referred to Slovenia, where such procedures are extremely expensive, although Croatia is required by law to make free of charge, as reported by the Croatian media and TV, Nova TV, 25 February 2021, <https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/tko-se-ne-nadje-utakvoj-situaciji-ne-zna-kako-je-uredno-cekati-gledati-trbuh-i-da-ce-na-kraju-dijete-bitimrtvo---641435.html>

2. to bring into the activity of health care and to bear witness by one's own example to the values of the Christian life; 3. to cultivate the spirit of true service and respect for the human person in the process of dealing with a sick person; 4. Advocate for the application of reasonable and best practices in the protection of health, the prevention, recognition and treatment of disease and the recovery of patients; 5. take care of the dignity of doctors and other health professionals as well as of proper and safe working conditions in their profession; 6. to serve the teaching of the Church with his professional knowledge by vocation; 7. to promote Catholic moral and ethical attitudes in medical science and practice.” (Hrvatsko katoličko liječničko društvo 2021).

## **INFLUENCE OF CATHOLIC CHURCH AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL IN CROATIA**

The influence of the Catholic Church on universities throughout Croatia takes place in several ways, the most important of which are the opening of theological faculties, except at the University of Zagreb, also at the University of Đakovo and Split and the establishment of its own Catholic university – Croatian Catholic University – nominally outside state universities, but financially largely supported by the use of state funds in teaching and research. Equally, church interests are seen in the individual employment of theologians at various other faculties, the acquisition of doctorates in the field of social sciences and their entry into scientific fields of other professions. One of the important influences is the management of research projects for Croatia, such as the longitudinal research project “European Value Study” (EVS). This is the largest international longitudinal research of social values in the EU, led for Croatia by the Catholic Theological Faculty (CFT), as the project leader, in cooperation with the Croatian Catholic University and several sociologists from the Faculty of Philosophy and Law in Zagreb

and the Ivo Pilar Institute. The website of the Croatian Catholic University states the following about this project: “The research provides insights into the ideas, beliefs, preferences, attitudes, values and opinions of citizens from all European countries. It is a unique survey that describes what Europeans think about life, family, work environment, religion, politics and society in general. The European Values Study was launched in 1981 and four waves of research have been conducted to date (1981, 1990, 1999, 2008). In the last wave (2008), 47 European countries participated and more than 70,000 respondents were surveyed. The fifth wave of the study is being conducted this year (2017) and also involves about 50 countries. The information gathered through EVS (from 1981 to the present) has contributed to a better understanding of the diversity of European cultures, and the project itself has significantly improved both scientific knowledge in the research area and economic activities across Europe. In Croatia, the first wave of the European Values Study was conducted in 1999.” (Hrvatsko katoličko sveučilište. Istraživački projekt Europske studije vrijednosti, 2021). It is interesting that such a project for Croatia is not led by any of the faculties that have in their departments professional teams trained in social research and sciences, such as departments of sociology, psychology, anthropology and other social sciences, but by the Catholic Theological Faculty (CFT), which within its theological field does not cover at all research competencies in the field of social sciences.

In the year of 2014. the Catholic Faculty of Theology (CFT) expressed a desire for an integration with the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS), University of Zagreb, concerning „double major studies“. In that context ex Dean of the FHSS, now the Rector of the University of Zagreb, without the knowledge of the members of the Faculty Council, secretly signed the special kind of Contract with the CFT, while the Faculty Council of the FHSS knew nothing about the concrete Contract (Galić 2018). It was before he had received the votes for the Rectorate and afterwards, when he received that votes and became the Rector he was supposed to “return” the



service to the Church by signing for her a wishful Contract on joint double major studies with an important faculty (FHSS) in Croatia which educates half of the required teaching staff for public-school subjects. At the end, in 2014, he succeeded and became Rector in 2014 thanks to the votes of the Catholic Church. At the same time the Rector is the Head of the „Old Catholic Church“ that has some different protocols and regulations concerning formal conditions for leading that Church, such as possibility for marriage and having children. But, that Contract should be provided at the expense of the FHSS and its students, since by that Contract students of FHSS would be discriminated in applying for their study, during studies and in getting employment. Namely, conditions and legal approach to that two faculties are not equal, as well as is not equal the reciprocity of study programs, neither do the possibilities for getting jobs in public schools for graduated students and neither the responsibilities of faculty authorities above, since FHSS is in the ownership of the State Croatia under „civil law“ and CFT is in the ownership of the state Vatican and under „canon law“, where women are not even equal with men (Galić 2018). At the same time, international Contracts of Vatican state is presented and officially accepted in Croatia as the law even „above“ Croatian Constitution, what is the question that goes beyond this paper. However, it was meaning also that FHSS was opened equally for everyone who fulfilled final secondary-school examination and entrance examination, but CFT sought an extra condition – that of the parish’s confirmation, what was not possible to fulfill for some students of FHSS in the first place. Also, CFT wanted for their students to get more than twenty different studies on different Departments that is possible for study on FHSS, as the second major, from History, Art History, Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy, Psychology, many language departments (Croatian, Slavic, English, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Scandinavian, Dutch, Arabic, Jewish, Chinese and Japanese, Hindi), linguistics, information sciences and other departments (Galić, 2018). At the same time CFT offered for students of FHSS only one study as the second major study – „religion pedagogy and Catechesis“, i.e. „confessional religion“ for teaching in public schools. It was meaning that their students can easily

enter and get plenty of possibilities for study at FHSS, but students of FHSS can get only one study of confessional religion at CFT (Galić 2018). The crucial and additional problem with that type of combination is the possibility for getting jobs in public schools, what goes on at the expense of FHSS students, putting them in unfair position. Why? Because in Croatia jobs for confessional religion teachers are not getting through process of announcements in public schools, and schools do not choose that teachers by themselves, as it is the process for other professors and teachers in all other public-school subjects (Galić 2018). In the case of confessional religion teachers, the selection of their teachers in public schools is made by the Catholic Church, and public schools do not have any power to influence or change that staff if they are not working their job correctly and well for example. Only Church can change them if it wants and only Church can give them so called „*canonic mandate*” for every new school-year, of course if they live according to Christian principles of Catholic Church expectations (Galić 2018). But, for example, if some teacher of confessional religion get divorced, he/she would never get again „canonic mandate” (*missio canonica*) ever, or if he/she gets a child out of an official marriage. From religious teachers is expected to have a virtuous life in accordance with the Catholic doctrine and its worldview. In long-term perspective, with that kind of contract between two faculties such teachers could take up most of the subjects in public schools studying at the FHSS, and besides religious education they could also teach a good part of other subjects (foreign languages, Croatian, history, Croatian, philosophy, etc), and The Church would put them in public schools. At the same time, the number of teachers who do not have a „canonic mandate” and which the Church did not send in public schools would drop, although the school itself can select them on the basis of the competition and announce, but in concurrence with the Church, public schools loose. Interesting, the religious teachers in public schools of Croatia are not paid by the Church for their work, but by money from the state budget, although the school’s government cannot even choose or dismissed that stuff (Galić 2018).

The Contract on integration of the FHSS and the CFT would allow to students of the CFT to get more additional school-subjects for teaching in schools, with the huge number of combinations of studies at the FHSS that are offered to students in more than 20 different professions and studies. At the same time, the students of the FHSS could receive only one additional profession – religious pedagogy, i.e. teaching of “Catholic catechism” in schools from CFT. In addition, the criteria for enrolment were not the same, as the CFT requires additional ecclesiastical documents with the recommendation of the pastor, which the FHSS does not seek at all. Consequently, students who are not believers or students of other faiths would be discriminated because they could not even register on CFT. At the same time, a selection procedure for teachers in schools of „Catholic religion” is not conducted by schools and state of Croatia, but by the Catholic Church. It means that state public schools cannot even choose a staff for teaching the subject of „Catholic religion” but must only accept what the Church choose. Likewise, schools cannot dismiss teachers of „Catholic religion” who do not perform their job properly (Galić 2018). Of course this means that schools would be gradually squeezed out concerning their teaching staff and powerless to choose their own teaching staff for education of pupils, and the overall control over the election of staff and school management would be taken over by the Catholic Church. This, of course, is long-term and far-reaching project, which has great ambitions for clericalization of the whole society.

Talking about the differences between the FHSS and the CFT it is important to bear in mind differences in a way of governance, responsibilities to different states and supervisions, different systems of rights and unequal criteria of women’s equality to men according to these different rights systems, so it was a big risk in entering to integration with that institution for students and professors for the FHSS. Namely, there are huge differences between two faculties in many aspects: 1. FHSS is in the ownership of Croatian state and is based on civil law. 2. CFT is based on canonical law where women don’t have the same rights as men. 3. FHSS has a Dean as the highest had

of institution who is civil person, responsible to the Rector of the University of Zagreb, but CFT has a person above the Dean, so called „Big Chancellor”, who is a Church person, responsible directly to the state of Vatican, and in this case it is a Croatian Cardinal Monsignor Josip Bozanić, Archbishop of Zagreb (Galić 2018) 4. Difference in systems and kinds of laws that are applicable in two faculties is also additional reason to be unsecure, especially for women’s rights in a case of accepting that Contract. This is why most FHSS professors and students rejected the contract, but with great and long-lasting sacrifices, both at the level of individuals, some of whom lost their jobs and some students scholarships, and on the institutional level against the FFZG from the University level of the Rector and Rectorate, lobbied and politically supported by the Catholic Church. Installed deans who were lobbied to push through the same contract put a lot of pressure and blackmail on the FHSS, threats were made, private security companies were hired to “protect the dean from students”, and several lawsuits were filed against professors, especially vice-dean for international cooperation and science, in court-processes in which they intervene politically, some have been wiped out and some are still being led.

## CONCLUSION

In the modern age of the rise of secularization in many EU countries (Czech Republic, Germany, France, for example), the strengthening of church influences in some parts of Europe, such as Poland or Croatia, is a great success of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church in Croatia has finally experienced its prosperity and the fulfillment of some distant medieval dreams of its influence and power, which it has been drawing since the Middle Ages, now in modern society. With the help of international agreements, it has achieved the possibility of realizing long-term financial resources and regu-

lar influence in various areas of life, from inclusion in public space through its associations and representatives, through the media and education system and health system. to whom it is possible to do something without the interference of the Church or without questions put to that institution. The current Rector of the University of Zagreb, who wanted to forge a secretly signed contract with the FHSS in 2014, according to the interests of the CFT, is still in the position of the Rector of the same University. However, despite the fact that he is constantly followed by countless different scandals – from the crisis of management at FHSS and the transformation of Croatian Studies, through conflicts of interest in public tenders (which he finally awarded to himself), countless lawsuits against the media and individuals, some of whom are university students and professors, who dared to talk about university mismanagement, controversial awarding of honorary doctorates (to corruptive and destructive politicians), inappropriate and sexist statements against female students at the university and rewarding professors reported for sexually abusing to emeritus status and all the way to the recent fact that he was vaccinated against COVID-19 “across the line”, it is clear that he is a person who uses his position of power to promote his own interests, as well as the interests of the Catholic Church and not the academic community and the University he is the head of. Behind all this lies the clientelistic management and procedures at the University, non-transparent spending of public money, violence against the FHSS, its students and professors as well as the long-term fulfillment of Church’s goals in conquering the field of education in the Republic of Croatia.

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## KATOLIČKA CRKVA U POLITICI VISOKOG OBRAZOVANJA REPUBLIKE HRVATSKE

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Cilj rada je prikazati moć Katoličke crkve kao vrlo uticajne institucije u današnjoj Hrvatskoj, koja je svoj uticaj povratila posebno nakon osnivanja države Hrvatske. Državni Vatikan jedna je od prvih zemalja koja je priznala nezavisnost Republike Hrvatske. Hrvatska se obilno zahvalila Vatikanu na sklapanju posebnih međunarodnih vatikanskih ugovora, kojima je Katolička crkva osigurala velik uticaj i finansijska sredstva. Vrlo brzo uspon i nalet sve većeg uticaja Katoličke crkve u Hrvatskoj traje od

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**Ključne riječi:** Katolička crkva, obrazovanje, sveučilište, škola, Vatikanski ugovori

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