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Religious Education in Poland

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The Polish Religious Demographics

Poland is conventionally perceived as one of the most religious countries in contemporary Europe. Various indicators showing a high level of religious beliefs and religious practices seem to confirm such a picture. 95% of the population identify themselves as believers or strong believers, 54% of the population participates in religious practices once or a few times per week, and 69% declare that they pray every day or at least once a week.¹ However, despite strong indicators of religiosity, processes of individualization and privatization of religion can be also traced. For example, findings on the religiosity and morality of Polish Roman-Catholics show selective acceptance of religious dogmas and dictates, especially in the younger generation. Among young people of 18-24 years, who declare participation in religious practices at least once a week, about 75% accept premarital sex, more than 50% do not perceive divorce as something which is wrong, and 20% accept abortion.²

The dominant religion of the country is Catholicism; approximately 95% of the population belongs to the Roman Catholic Church. The second biggest religious denomination is the Orthodox Church, with 550,000 adherents, and the various churches of Protestant traditions constitute the third biggest group (approximately 148,000 adherents).³ In all, there are 172 churches and religious organizations of diverse religious traditions currently operating officially and registered in Poland.⁴ However, some scholars claim that in practice

¹ Rafał Boguszewski, *Dwie dekady przemian religijności w Polsce* (Warszawa: CBOS, 2009), 4-7.

² Rafał Boguszewski, *Moralność Polaków po dwudziestu latach przemian* (Warszawa: CBOS, 2009), 7-9.

³ *Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland* (Warsaw: Central Statistical Office, 2010), 130-1.

⁴ A full list of all registered churches and religious organizations is available on the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs – http://www.mswia.gov.pl/portal/pl/92/Wyznania_religijne.html.

there are many more small, newly established religious organizations operating in society, either registered as different kinds of association or without any legal recognition.⁵

Not only is the Roman Catholic Church the largest religious organization in Poland, but it also holds a special position and still plays an important role in the country's social and political life. This unique relationship to a large extent results from historical circumstances. The church contributed to the building and sustaining of national identity in the situation of a lack of state structures during the period of partitions in the 19th century.⁶ Its significance was further strengthened during the socialist era. The church was the institution representing the nation against the regime and providing a space for the resistance movement and fight for human rights, liberty and civil society.⁷ As a result, after the fall of the regime, the church had a very strong and respected position, which was used, particularly in the early 1990s, for attempting to impose Christian values and norms on the entire society as well as for intervening into the political and public affairs of the newly constructed democratic state.⁸ Scholars, pointing to the growing presence of the church in the mass media, the episcopate's guidance for voters in the EU accession referendum, strong support for the inclusion of a reference to God in the EU constitutional preamble, or recent fierce opposition to in-vitro fertilization as illustrations of renewed religio-political activity in Poland, speak of the "re-publicisation" of religion in Poland. Ironically, this growing presence of religion is accompanied with declining support, as reflected in polls, for the church's political involvement in society.⁹

Church-State Relations and Legal Provisions of Religious Education

The current legal provisions of church-state relations in Poland were introduced in the 1990s after long and fierce discussions concerning the nature and form of the newly

⁵ Maria Libiszowska-Żółtkowska, "Metodologiczne problemy badań nowych ruchów religijnych," *Nomos Kwartalnik Religioznawczy* 39/40 (2002): 11-28.

⁶ Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in Modern Times* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), 92-3; Geneviève Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion In Post-communist Poland* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006), 36-9.

⁷ Irena Borowik, "The Roman Catholic Church in the Process of Democratic Transformation: the Case of Poland." *Social Compass* 49, no. 2 (2002): 241; Maria Grabowska, "Religijność i Kościół w procesie transformacji w Polsce," in *Pierwsza dekada niepodległości. Próba socjologicznej syntezy*, eds. Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński and Marek Ziółkowski (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2001), 179.

⁸ See: Mirella W. Eberts, "The Roman Catholic Church and Democracy in Poland," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 5 (1998).

⁹ David Herbert and Max Fras, "European Enlargement, Secularization and Religious Republicization in Central and Eastern Europe," in *Religion, Politics and Law in the European Union*, eds. Lucian N. Leustean and John T.S. Madeley (London: Routledge, 2009), 85.

established state.¹⁰ The foundations of these relations are laid down by the Polish Constitution of 1997, which formally defines the character of the Polish state. The basic executive act regulating church-state relations is the Law on Guaranteeing Freedom of Conscience and Belief.¹¹

According to the Constitution, church-state relations shall be based “on the principle of respect for their autonomy and the mutual independence of each in its own sphere, as well as on the principle of cooperation for the individual and the common good” (Article 25.2). All religious groups have equal rights in Poland; however, there are differences in regulations concerning the legal position of the Roman Catholic Church and other religious organizations. The legal position of the former is regulated by the international agreement between the Polish state and the Holy See. The legal position of other religious organizations can be regulated by signing bilateral agreements with the Polish state. In practice, only 14 historical religions have such separated acts.¹² The legal status of other religious organizations functioning legally in Poland is regulated by registration with the Register of Churches and Other Denominations, on the basis of conditions stipulated in the Law on Guaranteeing Freedom of Conscience and Belief. Currently there are 157 religious organizations of various sizes and diverse religious traditions recorded in the Registry.

The Law on Guaranteeing Freedom of Conscience and Belief regulates in more detail relations between state and religious organizations, especially those whose status is not regulated by the separated agreements. It describes conditions for and scope of functioning of churches and religious organizations stressing their equal status in performing their religious activities. The Law also stipulates rules for registration of a religious organization as well as rules concerning reclaiming the property of some churches.

The Constitution also lays down general provisions regarding religious education (RE). According to Article 53, parents have the right to religious and moral upbringing and teaching of their children in accordance with their convictions. All religious organizations officially recognized by the state have the right to organize RE in schools, under the condition that schooling does not violate other people’s freedom of religion and conscience.

¹⁰ Timothy A. Byrnes, “The Catholic Church and Poland's Return to Europe,” *East European Quarterly* 30 (1996), http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_7063/is_n4_v30/ai_n28681631 (accessed October 8, 2010).

¹¹ The Law on Guaranteeing Freedom of Conscience and Belief was passed in 1989, before the change to the system, along with the Act Regulating the Position of the Roman Catholic Church and Law Concerning the Social Insurance of Clergy (so called May Acts). It introduced regulations concerning church-state relations for the first time in the modern history of Poland. Amended in 1998, the document is still in force today. See *Journal of Laws* 1989, no. 29, item 154.

¹² The list is available at: http://www.mswia.gov.pl/portal/pl/92/222/Wykaz_kosciolow_i_zwiazkow_wyznaniowych_dzialajacych_na_podstawie_odrebnych_usta.html.

Furthermore, no one can be forced to take part in religious practices or reveal their religious beliefs or confession. The current constitutional regulations resemble to some extent those of the March Constitution of Poland of 1921. Accordingly, the teaching of religion was obligatory at each educational institution dealing with youth under 18 years old. RE was to be overseen by the relevant religious organization, with the principal supervision of the state's educational authorities (article 120). Issues related to RE were not mentioned in the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland of 1952. Moreover, the right to organize RE in schools was later concealed in 1961 by the Act on Development of the Educational System and Teaching. RE was allowed to be organized outside the school. The decision about the removal of religion from schools' curricula should be seen as a part of the larger policy of laicization promoted by the Communist regime.

The Law on Guaranteeing Freedom of Conscience and Belief also touches upon the issue of organizing RE. It stresses the equality of all churches and religious organizations officially functioning in Poland in the right of offering RE in accordance with the decision of parents or legal guardians. RE is defined as an internal affair of churches and religious organizations and may be organized either at public schools and day care centres or at places of worship, churches or other places (Article 20). In the case of the former, detailed rules are stipulated in various acts (see the next paragraphs). Churches and religious organizations are also given the right to establish and run schools, day care centres, educational and care centres as well as institutions of higher education. Details concerning the operation of such institutions, conditions for the state's or local government's financial support as well as the way academic degrees and titles are granted and recognized are stipulated in relevant legal acts (Article 21). Churches and religious organizations also have the right to run seminaries or denominational high schools. The latter remain under the authority of the Minister of National Education (MNE) in respect to the curriculum offered and the process of issuing the Polish high school-leaving examination certificate (Article 22).

These general legal provisions regarding RE are further complemented by numerous regulations contained in the state educational law, documents issued by religious institutions and bilateral agreements between state and legally recognized religious associations. The most important legal acts concerning RE are the Education System Act and the Ordinance of the Minister of National Education on the Conditions and Methods of Organizing Religious Education in Public Schools and Kindergartens. Furthermore, the regulations between the state and the Roman Catholic Church stem from the Concordat (1998) and Agreement between the Minister of National Education and the Conference of the Polish Episcopate on

Qualifications of Religious Instruction Teachers. Organization of the RE by other religious associations is regulated by individual agreements, e.g. Agreement between Polish Ecumenical Council and Minister of National Education Concerning the Qualifications of Teachers of Religious Instructions of Churches Associated in Polish Ecumenical Council. These documents regulate in detail the way RE should be organized in public and private schools of various levels of education, the status of the teachers, as well as financial issues related to RE.

On the basis of the Education System Act of 1991, state schools are obliged to organize RE classes at all levels of compulsory education – in reception classes (6-7 years old), primary schools (7-13 years old), lower secondary schools (13-16 years old), and higher secondary schools, independently of the type.¹³ From 1999 this requirement also applies to all state kindergartens (optional for 3-6 year-old children). Participation in RE is optional. It is based on the written or oral expression of the will of the parents or legal guardians in the case of pupils in kindergartens and elementary schools and of parents or adult pupils in the case of secondary schools. However, the declaration can be changed at any time. These regulations also apply to non-public (private) schools with the entitlements of public school.¹⁴ Non-public (private) schools without such entitlements (mostly fee-based extramural high schools) are free to regulate all RE issues (its presence or absence, voluntary or compulsory character, denominational or non-denominational model, grades, teachers' qualifications, curricula and textbooks, amount of classes, etc.) on the basis of the competence of the school board and/or parents. The Education System Act designates the Ministry of National Education as the state body responsible for dealing with RE issues.

Detailed regulations concerning the organization of RE in schools are stipulated in the Ordinance of the Minister of National Education on the Conditions and Methods of Organizing Religious Education in Public Schools and Kindergartens. According to this

¹³ There are a few types of higher secondary schools. The most popular are grammar schools (3 years) or technical colleges (4 years), ending with the secondary school-leaving examination which is a condition for entering education at higher level. There are also vocational schools.

¹⁴ Within the Polish educational system, two types of non-public (private) schools are distinguished: with and without public school entitlements. The crucial element of those entitlements is the right to issue state certificates and diplomas. All schools, public and private, offering classes at pre-secondary level (elementary schools and junior highs) need to have such entitlements. It is related to the obligatory character of schooling in the age of 7-18. In both types of non-public schools, funding is split between the state (20-40% of school needs) and parents' or sponsors' donations. The status of non-public has almost 10% of all schools in Poland (e.g. 2.6% of elementary schools, 7.7% of junior highs, 19.4% of high schools). More or less one-third of them are conducted by religious associations (23% of elementary schools, 35% of junior highs, 47% of high schools). See Elżbieta Putkiewicz and Anna Wilkomirska, "State and Private Schools in Poland. Summary of the Main Research Results," 2004, http://www.isp.org.pl/files/455077119061137700112746_6657.pdf (accessed November 29, 2010).

document the minimum number of pupils required for a school to organize RE classes is specified as seven, or three in the case of organizing interschool or interdenominational classes. Where pupils opt out of RE, the alternative subject of ethics should be provided. All RE curricula and textbooks are detailed and approved exclusively by the relevant religious association offering RE classes and later made known to the MNE. RE classes should be offered in the amount of two hours per week. However, they can be reduced to one hour with approval from the authorities of the relevant religious association.¹⁵ The number of ethics classes is individually settled by the school principal. The grade received from religion or ethics is placed on the annual certificate, without specification if the grade pertains to an RE (and of which religion) or ethics class. Since 2007 the grade from the RE or ethics class has been included in the calculating average, but it is not taken into consideration in promotion to the next class. Additionally, discussions are taking place as to whether RE could be one of the optional subjects to be taken for the high school-leaving exam. The school is obliged to provide supervision during these classes for pupils who do not participate in either religion or ethics classes. Pupils attending RE have the right to be excused from all classes during the three-day Easter retreat, then being in the custody of the RE teacher. The regulations of the ordinance also confer the right to put a cross in the classroom as well as say a prayer before and/or after classes.

The requirements regarding professional training and status of RE teachers (often called “catechists”) is regulated by the documents regulating RE (see above) as well as Teacher’s Charter.¹⁶ Regulations regarding the professional training of RE teachers vary slightly at different levels of education. Qualifications for teaching RE in secondary schools are automatically held by clergymen with a seminary diploma. Similarly, lay RE teachers are obliged to have completed theological education at university level. Alternatively, they may hold non-theological education at university level, further complemented by relevant post-graduate courses focusing on pedagogical and catechetical subjects. For elementary schools and kindergartens similar rules apply. Additionally, final-year students of theological studies and people who have completed relevant post-graduate courses may be employed as RE teachers at this level of education.¹⁷ RE teachers have similar rights and obligations as

¹⁵ Classes in public schools last 45 minutes, while in kindergarten they last 15 minutes (in the 3-4 age group) and 30 minutes (in the 5-6 age group).

¹⁶ The Teacher’s Charter regulates in detail the status, duties and privileges of the teachers. It is complementary to the Labor Law, and has priority over it.

¹⁷ Recent data show a slight majority of lay RE teachers – in both state kindergartens and schools 53.9% are lay catechists, whereas 46.1% are clergy. In detail: kindergartens – 66.5% to 33.5%; elementary schools – 61.6% to 38.3%; junior highs – 51.6% to 48.4%. The proportions are reversed in secondary schools: trade

teachers of other subjects, however, they cannot serve as form tutors. They can organize parent-teacher meetings and are allowed to conduct socio-religious and ecumenical activities within the public space of a state school. On top of their training requirements, all RE teachers are compelled to receive a special referral issued by superiors of the given religious association (e.g. *missio canonica* given by diocesan bishop in Roman Catholic Church), which can be revoked at any time during the school year. Furthermore, their work is supervised by the inspectors designated by the authorities of religious associations. In practice, this means that the professional qualifications of RE teachers and their work are beyond the control of the Ministry of National Education. Only the pedagogical aspect of RE is controlled by school boards.

The legal documents also regulate financial issues related to the organization of RE in Polish public schools. RE is treated as one of the school subjects; therefore, all elements and aspects related to it (classrooms, didactical aids, salaries of teachers) are financed from public funds and are covered by the state budget.¹⁸ In the case of non-public schools, expenses related to RE are covered partially by the state and partially by private donors or parents, depending on the way school is financed. The salary of RE teachers is calculated based on both RE organized at school and catechesis organized in parishes. This does not cover optional socio-religious and ecumenical activities organized by RE teachers, which are conducted for free. When the referral is revoked, a catechist has the right to receive a salary until the end of the school year or disposable severance pay. The salary of the new teacher is then paid from the religious association's funds.

The legal regulations concerning RE arouse possible controversies. First, attending RE is based on expression of will; however, the legal acts do not resolve either potential conflict between the will of minors and their parents, or the problem of pupils whose parents are representatives of two different religious associations and are undecided in which tradition to bring up their child.¹⁹ Second, the fact that there must be a group of three or seven pupils in order for a religious group to have a right to organize religious education in school could be seen as a constriction of all parents' and pupils' right to participate in RE in school, guaranteed by the Constitution and Education System Act. In practice, the Roman Catholic Church is the biggest beneficiary of such solutions. The dominance of Catholic RE in state

schools and technical colleges – 30.5% to 69.5%; high schools – 25.7% to 74.3%. Piotr Tomasiak, "Religiöse Bildung in Polen. Stand, Chancen und Gefährdungen," in *Verkannte Dimensionen Der Bildung*, eds. Jerzy Bagrowicz, Jarosław Michalski and Jürgen Heumann (Toruń: UMK, 2008), 169-70.

¹⁸ Artur Mezglewski, *Polski model edukacji religijnej w szkołach publicznych. Aspekty prawne* (Lublin: KUL, 2009), 106.

¹⁹ Michał Pietrzak, *Prawo wyznaniowe* (Warszawa: PWN, 1999), 281.

schools of all levels is overwhelming and it can be seen as a consequence of the exceedingly stable denominational structure of Polish society. Roman-Catholic RE is dominant in kindergartens (94.7%), primary schools (98.0%), lower high schools (97.1%), technical high schools (92.6%), and grammar schools (93.3%).²⁰ Data on RE provided by minority religions are hardly available. For sure, the Orthodox Church, the Evangelical-Augsburg (Lutheran) Church in Poland, and Poland's Greek-Catholic Church are able to meet such requirements, yet only in some regions of Poland where their adherents are concentrated. As a result, in many cases the RE of minority religions is organized in parish premises or other places. Third, pupils taking neither religion nor ethics lack a grade on the school certificate. This may disclose a pupil's or his/her parents' worldview, which is overtly unconstitutional. Fourth, pupils have the right to participate in spiritual retreat, but the acts do not regulate the situation of pupils attending ethics class, those who attend neither RE nor ethics class, or adherents of other religious associations not participating in any kind of retreat. Furthermore, there is no specification as to what kind of cross, of which religious tradition, can be placed in school or kindergarten, in which classrooms, and why other religious symbols are excluded. Finally, there is no designation either of the prayer content or of the time and place in which it can be said. Moreover, there is no specification as to who should adjudicate on these matters.²¹

Religious Education in Practice

RE was reintroduced into all Polish state schools up to the secondary level on the basis of ministerial instruction at the beginning of the 1990/91 school year.²² The instruction was prepared by the Joint Episcopal-Government Commission, without wider discussion or consultations with minority religions. The decision initiated the public debate over the issue of the return of RE into schools, perceived as a potential violation of the right to freedom of religion and beliefs.²³ There were also various protests from the representatives of minority religions.²⁴ Consequently, a second instruction was issued regulating RE in respect to minority denominations. Critics also pointed out that the instruction lacked legal authorization and was undemocratic since such decision should be taken by the Polish parliament. These were the main reasons for the Polish ombudsman to question the instruction's legitimacy and

²⁰ Tomasik, "Religiöse Bildung," 170-1.

²¹ Pietrzak, *Prawo wyznaniowe*, 283.

²² Beata Górowska and Grzegorz Rydlewski, eds. *Regulacje prawne stosunków wyznaniowych w Polsce. Zbiór przepisów i dokumentów* (Warszawa: UW, 1992), 142-5.

²³ Eberts, "The Roman Catholic Church," 822-3.

²⁴ Bogusław Milerski, *Religia a szkoła. Status edukacji religijnej w szkole w ujęciu ewangelickim* (Warszawa: ChAT, 1998), 75-83.

validity in relation to the church-state relations inscribed in the Constitution.²⁵ The Constitutional Tribunal found the instructions to be legal, but appropriate changes within educational law were recommended.²⁶ In the period 1990-2010 the actions were brought against the regulations on RE on four occasions: in 1990 (by the ombudsman), 1993 (by the ombudsman), 1997 (by the President of the Republic of Poland), and 2007 (by representatives of the opposition party). In every verdict the Tribunal found the challenged regulations legal.

An analysis of the legal regulations concerning RE in Polish state schools points to its substantially denominational character. This means that religious institutions are solely responsible for RE, despite the fact that classes are organized within the public space of state schools. Range (what is to be taught), methods (how is it to be taught), aims (what the planned effect of teaching is), and the main entities – teachers and pupils – are all connected with the particular faith community. The content of RE is utterly denominational and theological and underscores doctrinal (i.e. dogmas), ecclesiological (i.e. celebrations), and liturgical (i.e. sacraments) issues. At the same time pedagogical, existential and universal humanistic aspects of educational process are neglected.²⁷ Teaching religion is treated exclusively as a form of catechetical (mostly evangelizational) mission aimed at a group of pupils and the whole school community, including teachers, staff, and the board. The main task of RE is to recognize, develop, and improve the personal faith of the pupil in accordance with the official stance of the religious organization responsible for the RE process.²⁸ The need to deepen faith is emphasized and religious identity is treated as a vessel to be filled with ready-made religious components. Religious identification is clearly defined and expected to grow.²⁹

In some RE textbooks, mostly at the secondary school level, teaching about other religions is included. However this tends to be done from the point of view of the dominant denomination. Additionally, elements of nondenominational education about various religions and beliefs are included in mandatory school curricula particularly within the fields of

²⁵ Eberts, "The Roman Catholic Church," 821.

²⁶ Pietrzak, *Prawo wyznaniowe*, 279.

²⁷ Milerski, *Religia a szkoła*, 277.

²⁸ Marian Zając and Paweł Mąkosza, "Poland: faithfulness to God and to People. Religious Education in Poland," in *How Teachers in Europe Teach Religion: An International Empirical Study in 16 Countries*, eds. Hans-Georg Ziebertz and Ulrich Riegel (Münster: Lit, 2009), 172.

²⁹ Marcin K. Zwierzdzyński, "Personal Identity in Cognitively Oriented Religious Education," in *Religions and Identities in Transition*, eds. Irena Borowik and Małgorzata Zawila (Kraków: Nomos, 2010), 182.

subjects such as literature, history, geography, and civic education. However, a special reference to Christian tradition is usually made.³⁰

In principle RE takes place in classrooms; nonetheless some activities (mostly liturgical) are implemented within a sacral space managed by religious organizations (e.g. churches, parishes, shrines, etc.). With minority religions frequently the whole RE is organized outside the schools, as the requirement of having three or seven pupils in order for the RE to be organized in school is not met. It is not possible for teachers from outside the faith community to conduct RE. Although all of them are assigned by religious associations, they are employed by state schools and paid from public funds.

The reintroduction of RE to state schools stirred ambiguous reactions. At the beginning of the 1990/91 school year, more than 95% of pupils declared their wish to participate in RE classes. Paradoxically, at the same time only about 30% of pupils and teachers, and about 40% of parents agreed with the introduction of RE into state schools. In the mid-1990s two-thirds of Poles supported the presence of RE classes in state schools.³¹ Despite more positive attitudes, RE in state schools was still criticized for a lack of organizational preparation (too numerous classes, deficiency in the number of teachers etc.), its extremely catechetical form, loss of the contact with parishes, and the possibility of fueling intolerance towards religious minorities and atheists.³² Results of recent public polls show high support for RE in state schools; 65% of population are in favor, with 32% oppose it. RE in kindergartens seems to be more controversial; 44% support it, whereas 49% are against it.³³ However, the research also shows support for non-denominational RE; 58% of those interviewed claimed that RE should focus on teaching on various religions and beliefs. There also seems to be controversy whether a grade should be given for attendance to RE; 55% of those interviewed oppose this solution. Moreover, 62% are against counting this grade within the average and 57% are against the possibility of taking RE as an optional subject for the high school-leaving exam.³⁴ However, these findings were contradicted by results of another

³⁰ *Base Curriculum for General Education. The Project* (Warszawa: ISP, 2005), http://www.isp.org.pl/podstawa/podstawa_files/podstawa_programowa_051003B.pdf (accessed November 29, 2010).

³¹ See: Krzysztof Kiciński, Krzysztof Koseła and Wojciech Pawlik, eds. *Szkoła czy parafia? Nauka religii w szkole w świetle badań socjologicznych* (Kraków: Nomos, 1995).

³² Krzysztof Kiciński, *Wizje szkoły w społeczeństwie posttotalitarnym* (Warszawa: Open, 1993), 110-49.

³³ Michał Feliksiak, *Religia w systemie edukacji* (Warszawa: CBOS, 2008), 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

public poll from the same year. In this survey, 51% of those interviewed opted for RE in parishes, whereas more than 35% support RE in school.³⁵

Conclusion

Most important regulations concerning church-state relations as well as RE were prepared and introduced immediately after the collapse of the communist regime, when the new political and social order was being constructed. The emerged legal framework, in the opinion of various commentators, was shaped under the pressure exerted by the Roman Catholic Church, aiming to secure its interests, and often introduced without consultations with the wider society.³⁶ As a result, the hastily introduced regulations lack coherence.

The most controversial issue is the fact that religion classes are conducted within the public space of the school, though under special circumstances and outside the auspices of the national education system. The peculiar status of RE teachers and the distinctive process of preparing and approving educational materials are examples of the extraordinary status of religion classes in the Polish schools. In short, the religious part gives the “essential content,” while the state part gives the “organizational form.” The various challenges faced by RE stem from specific tensions between religious associations and schools, often resulting from contradictory institutional interests. Despite the various weaknesses of the legal framework regulating RE in Poland it has never been reconsidered.

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³⁵ Artur Grabarczyk, “Sondaż "Polski": Rodzice nie chcą lekcji religii w szkole.” *Polska Times* (September 28, 2008), <http://www.polskatimes.pl/fakty/edukacja/47195,sondaz-polski-rodzice-nie-chca-lekcji-religii%20-w-szkole,id,t.html?cookie=1> (accessed December 31, 2010).

³⁶ See: Casanova, *Public Religions*; Eberts, “The Roman Catholic Church”.

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