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Reactions in Greece over lack of increase in hours for weekly religious studies in schools



Public debate regarding an omnibus draft bill for public education concluded on Wednesday, with the draft legislation now headed for Parliament.

Among others, the draft bill foresees the same number of hours for weekly religious studies, which had been cut three years ago by the previous SYRIZA government.

As such, provisions in the draft bill stipulate two hours of religious study every week for third and fourth graders, and one hour weekly for fifth and sixth-graders.

Up until three years ago, religious studies were taught for two hours a week in the fifth and sixth grades. At the time, the previous leftist government cited the economic crisis as the reason for curtailing the number of hours.

The initial reduction in instruction time and the prospect of no change via the current draft bill, generated a heated reaction on the part of the association of theologians in Greece, as well as citizens' and parents' groups.

In a letter to the relevant education and religious affairs minister, Niki Kerameos, the association decried what it called a refusal by the government to discuss the

issue of religious classes or its standing recommendations.

In terms of the junior high school level, religious instruction remains in the group of lessons for which pupils will not take exit exams at the end of the academic year.

Finally, according to media reports, members of a special ministry committee are rapidly processing a new curriculum for the religious studies classes, in order to comply with a recent ruling handed down by the Council of State, Greece’s highest administrative court. The new textbooks are expected in September.

