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Romania Bows to Church, Scraps Mandatory Sex Education



Parliament in Romania has amended a recently passed law to exclude mandatory sexual education from school curricula – after the influential Orthodox Church slated it as ‘an attack on children’s innocence’.
Romania’s parliament on Wednesday scrapped mandatory “sexual education” in the country’s schools, bowing to pressure from the powerful Romanian Orthodox Church, which called it an attack on childhood innocence.

MPs from both the centre-right ruling National Liberal Party and from the largest party in parliament, the centre-left but socially conservative Social Democratic Party, PSD, voted for the amendment, proposed by MPs from the two parties.

The decision comes two months after a legislative order obliged schools to offer sexual education to children at least once every six months, which parliament also adopted and was promulgated by President Klaus Iohannis.

The previous version of the act mandated schools to “systematically roll out … at least once every semester, educational programmes for life, including sexual education for children, in order to prevent the contraction of sexually transmitted

diseases and pregnancy in minors”.

The amended law, which must be promulgated by Iohannis again, no longer refers to “sexual education” and instead speaks of the introduction into schools of “education for life, including health education, in order to prevent the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy in minors”. Parents must also give written consent for their children to be taught the courses.

The change was supported by some of the same MPs that voted for the original legislation only weeks ago. It comes after the Orthodox Church, to which more than 80 per cent of Romanians belong, condemned the original law as “an attack on the innocence of children” and invoked children’s rights and freedom of conscience to ask for the law to be amended.

According to the EU statistics agency Eurostat, Romania and its neighbour Bulgaria have the highest proportions of teenage mothers in the EU. “The highest shares of births of first children to young mothers aged below 20 were recorded in Bulgaria (12.5 per cent of total births of first children in 2017) and Romania (12.1 per cent),” Eurostat said in 2019.

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