

Vatican signs new agreement with right-wing Hungarian regime

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The Vatican has signed an agreement with the right-wing Hungarian Government this week, modifying the 1997 concordat and giving the Church major new powers in education and big financial advantages. The churches in Hungary already receive 1% of people's tax payments.

The Vatican announced that:

"The legislation regulates various financial issues regarding the teaching of religion in schools, Catholic higher education institutions, the restoration and conservation of religious patrimony of monuments and works of art owned by ecclesiastical bodies, the destination of a portion of tax to the Catholic Church, and the income of ex-ecclesiastical real estate not recorded in the appendix to the 1997 agreement.

"The Agreement, which consists of seven articles and three appendices, will come into force upon the filing of the instruments of ratification."

Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society, said: "The Vatican is careful not to spell out exactly what all this will amount to – the opaque language is carefully constructed to hide what precisely is happening. It has learned from bitter experience that when the population comes to know just how much the Church intends to take out of their pockets, and how much power it will have over their daily lives, there is often resistance. Not that anybody has been consulted about this. It has all been achieved behind closed doors and only announced when it is a done deal".

This is not the first time the Vatican has tried to amend this concordat, but it has had to wait until the country has turned sufficiently to the right to make this successful bid. Many commentators are ringing alarm bells at the way that the Hungarian political system appears to be turning into a dictatorship, with the Prime Minister. Viktor Orban systematically dismantling the democratic checks and balances that might restrain him.

The Vatican, of course, is notorious for making deals with dictators. It also signed concordats with Hitler, Mussolini, Franco and many others.

You can read the background to these developments at [Concordat Watch](#).

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