



Statement of the Atropos Skeptics Society on the Concordat

The Atropos Skeptics Society strongly criticizes the proposed treaty between the Czech Republic and the Vatican, the so-called concordat, which, in our view, threatens the principles of secularism, human rights, and justice for victims of sexual abuse.

A fundamental issue is the extension of the “right equivalent to confessional secrecy” to so-called pastoral workers. This wording is vague and allows this right to apply to anyone the Church designates, including individuals who are not priests. This creates a dangerous loophole for abusing this secrecy to conceal cases of sexual violence and obstruct investigations. Given that the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic has so far handled cases of sexual abuse non-transparently, we consider this provision entirely unacceptable. The treaty grants the Catholic Church a privileged position that contradicts the principles of equality and freedom on which the Czech Republic is founded. It is unacceptable for any organisation, including the Church, to be able to hide crimes under the guise of secrecy and thus evade justice. Instead, transparency and accountability should be emphasised. We perceive the concordat as a strengthening of the Church's influence in the Czech Republic.

Atropos calls for a thorough review of the treaty by the Constitutional Court. The court must assess whether the treaty aligns with the constitutional order and whether it violates citizens' rights, particularly those of sexual abuse victims. In our view, the treaty is written in a vague and one-sided manner, favouring the Roman Catholic Church. The government conceded to the Vatican during negotiations, which is against the interests of abuse victims and society as a whole.

Furthermore, we point out that some countries, such as Slovakia, have had negative experiences with similar agreements, which have made it more difficult to investigate sexual abuse within the Church. The Czech Republic should learn from these experiences and avoid repeating the same mistakes.

It is unacceptable for the Czech Republic to be perceived as a state that tolerates child abuse and obstructs independent investigations.

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Pavel Šmejkal, chairman

