

RICE 2020

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Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia

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Population of Slovakia

5,4 million



Members of this church

3,3 million

Inclusivity index

8,5%

Score: 4 out of 47

Instituional equality and non-discrimination

Score: 2,5 out of 16

15,6%

Church practices

Score: 1 out of 12

8,3%

Language and speech

Score: 0,5 out of 9

5,6%

Public statements

Score: 0 out of 10

0%

CATEGORIES	INDICATORS		RCC SLOVAKIA
1. INSTITUTIONAL (16/47=36,2%)			
<i>Legal documents</i>	1	Mentioning LGBTI in a non-negative way in legal documents	0
	2	Diversity required in leadership in legal documents	0
<i>Theology</i>	3	Theological unconditional support for equality	0
	4	Bible not used as a source of discrimination	0,5
	5	Tradition is not used as a source of discrimination	0,5
<i>Church policy</i>	6	Mentioning LGBTI in a non-negative way in church policy	0
	7	Inclusion guided process or protocol for parishes	0
	8	Congregations allowed to make their own policies	0
	9	Blessing of same-sex marriages	0
	10	Baptism of children of LGBTI	0,5
	11	Baptism and membership of LGBTI	0,5
	12	Blessing of transgender persons and their new name/identity	0
	13	Access to the Eucharist	0,5
<i>Ordination of clergy</i>	14	Access to seminary for women/LGBTI	0
	15	Ordination of female/LGBTI clergy	0
	16	Affirmative theological educational materials	0
C1 Total			2,5
2. CHURCH PRACTICES (12/47=25,5%)			
<i>Leadership</i>	17	Leading functions on national level for women/LGBTI	0
	18	Participation in policy-making	0
<i>Work</i>	19	Employment in non-pastoral services	0
	20	Employment in services to society	0,5
<i>Sexuality and kinship</i>	21	Support for adoption by LGBTI parents	0
	22	Celibacy not required for LGBTI	0
<i>Advocacy and networks</i>	23	Promoting social acceptance in public rituals	0
	24	Social ministry to LGBTI	0
	25	Pastoral ministry to LGBTI	0,5
	26	Support to LGBTI clergy association	0
	27	No support for 'traditional' family associations	0
	28	Support of LGBTI advocacy groups	0
C2 Total			1

CATEGORIES	INDICATORS		RCC SLOVAKIA
3. LANGUAGE & SPEECH (9/47=19,1%)			
<i>Official communication</i>	29	Inclusive language by church leaders	0
	30	Affirmative communication on a national level	0,5
<i>Worship</i>	31	Gender and sexuality issues in worship language	0
	32	Sensitive liturgical language	0
<i>Education</i>	33	Affirmative catechetical materials	0
	34	Awareness on interconnectedness of justice and inclusivity	0
	35	Taking into account scientific research	0
<i>Acknowledgment</i>	36	Acknowledgement of discrimination in the past	0
	37	Asking forgiveness	0
C3 Total			0,5
4. PUBLIC POLICY (10/47=21,3%)			
	38	Public statements on right to safety	0
	39	Public statements on freedom of conscience and religion	0
	40	Public statements on political organisation and expression	0
	41	Public statements on gender related rights	0
	42	Public statements on reproductive rights	0
	43	Public statements on kinship related rights	0
	44	Public statements on labour rights	0
	45	Public statements on health rights	0
	46	Public statements on diversity education in schools	0
	47	Public statements on access to other public services	0
C4 Total			0
TOTAL SCORE			4

Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia

Another church that scores very low on inclusivity, according to our co-researcher, is the Slovakian church.

In 2012, the Council for the Family of the Conference of Bishops of Slovakia expressed their view on the proposed law on registered partnership: 'Homosexual feelings, which are inherent in certain persons, should not lead to a lasting community of life with legal protection, on the grounds that homosexual partnership cannot be equated with a natural marital bond between a man and a woman. Homosexual acts are inherently unestablished and are in stark contrast to the sanctity of the sexuality of a man and a woman in marriage.'

There is a very strong pro-life movement in Slovakia that attracts many Christians to demonstrate their unequivocal aversion to same-sex unions and declare that a family should consist of a father, a mother and children, and everything else is a threat to the traditional family. These initiatives are supported by the churches, financially and morally.

In the church documents, the Bible and the Tradition are understood as a consistent belief system from the time of the apostles, through the church fathers, the councils, to the works of theologians of the last Second Vatican Council. Tradition is understood as a clear condemnation of homosexual acts. At the national level, homosexuals are recommended not to come out and assert their homosexual identity.

There are general conditions for access to the Eucharist, but it depends on the particular priest whether or not to give the Eucharist to a particular person. It is the same with baptism. Whether a child will be baptized or not depends on the particular priest. Baptism does not take sexual orientation into account, but if it is known, a life of purity will certainly be required.

It is an open secret that the leading positions are held by homosexual bishops and priests. When they speak about their identity, they run the risk of being forced to leave.

Students have been forced to leave seminary because they confessed to be homosexual. On several occasions, a bishop announced to a candidate priest just before the ordination that he would not ordain him because he found out that he was gay.

In priestly formation, and also in priestly retreats, sexual morality is taught very conservatively.

The church advocates an all-embracing love, even for LGBTI people, but at the same time the homosexual act is clearly emphasized as a grave sin. At the national level, bishops mention LGBTI issues and gender ideology as the current threats to society.

The co-researcher shares this experience: 'One of my acquaintances is a music teacher at a church conservatory and is a gay man. When he took part in the Rainbow March, someone noticed him in the photos and informed the school principal. He had to explain the situation and was threatened with firing.'

Any initiative of homosexual priests is suppressed and priests are punished. In the Trnava archdiocese, they are even persecuted by the bishop. Priests have to sign a document rejecting LGBTI and gender ideology. Whoever does not do so will be under scrutiny.

Church leaders refer to 'scientific' knowledge that supports healing therapies for gay people; authors (psychologists and sociologists) like Gerard van den Aardweg, Paul Cameron, Gabriele Kuby, and Mark Regnerus.

From this portrayal of the Slovakian church by the co-researcher, we get the impression of a conservative morality combined with a powerful and explicit policy to suppress LGBTI people, referring to 'science' and the Christian tradition. Based on the 2012 statement, the church has tried to influence political decisions. The parliamentary bill to recognise same-sex partnerships was rejected in 2012, and also again in 2018.

Ways forward for all churches

At the end of our research, we present a list of realistic, positive steps towards more inclusivity for all churches, regardless of their ecclesiastical characteristics or national identities. This ladder of ascending steps might also function as a spiritual rule of discernment for churches: Where are we on the ladder? Which further steps do we need to take?

1. Affirm the unconditional and inalienable human dignity of all persons, as children of God.
2. Condemn acts of violence and hate speech towards LGBTI people, or at least do not give any excuse for these hate crimes as a consequence of the church' public communication.
3. Make a statement about the freedom of religion of all people, also within the church.
4. Acknowledge the political responsibility of the national parliament that substantiates democracy and defends the rights of minorities.
5. Start a pastoral dialogue with LGBTI people.
6. Engage constructively with insights of scientific research on gender and sexuality.
7. Enlarge in the leadership structures the space for all people, starting with lay women, in order to share responsibility in decision making.
8. Be more open and franker about ordaining candidates for priesthood, who have proven to be capable, independent of their sexual orientation, even with the prescription of a commitment to living a celibate life.
9. Engage with Christian LGBTI advocacy groups and involve them in seminary education.
10. Apply a more flexible application or interpretation of the church's regulations, with pastoral discretion in the situation.
11. Study the implications of Bible, tradition, theology, and church policy for the LGBTI lived desires, sexualities, and identities.
12. Involve LGBTI people in the policy making on equality and non-discrimination.
13. Provide affirmative educational material.

14. Allow openly LGBTI persons admission to the seminary or theological university.
15. Initiate an organisation of LGBTI theologians.
16. Make a public statement about the right of LGBTI people to organise and express themselves.
17. Mention explicitly, and positively, diversity and LGBTI identities as enriching aspects of the church.
18. Acknowledge the church's involvement in the discrimination of LGBTI people.
19. Provide congregations with protocols towards becoming more inclusive and affirming and persuade them to incorporate these protocols in their local policies.
20. Get rid of the distinction in liturgical terms for blessing (same-sex) married couples.
21. Use gender sensitive language and incorporate gender issues and sexuality in the liturgy.
22. Support explicitly LGBTI couples when they adopt and raise children.
23. Make a public statement about sexual and reproductive health and rights for all people.
24. Identify 'heteronormative' language and policies, and change them.

- Metropolitan Community Church in Finland
- Church of Sweden
- Protestant Church in Switzerland
- Church of Norway
- Protestant Church in the Netherlands
- Evangelical Church in Germany
- Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic
- Old Catholic Church in Slovakia
- Church of England
- Roman Catholic Church in Germany
- Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship
- Old Catholic Church of Austria
- Roman Catholic Church in Malta
- Roman Catholic Church in Austria
- Roman Catholic Church in France
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
- Roman Catholic Church in Italy
- Roman Catholic Church in Switzerland
- Roman Catholic Church in Belgium
- Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
- Orthodox Church of Finland
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Poland
- Unitarian Church of Transylvania
- Roman Catholic Church in Ireland
- Roman Catholic Church in Hungary
- Roman Catholic Church in Romania
- Serbian Orthodox Church
- Roman Catholic Church in the UK
- Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia
- Orthodox Church of Estonia
- Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands
- Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
- Roman Catholic Church in Portugal
- Reformed Church in Hungary
- Moldovan Orthodox Church
- Belarusian Orthodox Church
- Roman Catholic Church in Croatia
- Church of Greece
- Roman Catholic Church in Spain
- Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia
- Georgian Orthodox Church
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia
- Armenian Apostolic Church
- Russian Orthodox Church
- Roman Catholic Church in Belarus
- Roman Catholic Church in Poland



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