

The Law of Ukraine "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations"

Date of Entry into Force:

June 18, 1991 (**Summary version from 11 Feb 2003**)

The Law guarantees each Ukrainian citizen the right to freedom of conscience. This right includes freedom to profess, take and change religion or beliefs on one's own choice and freedom to profess any religion alone or together with others or not to profess any, to perform religious rites, to express openly and distribute freely his/her religious or atheistic beliefs. Nobody shall set obligatory beliefs and world outlook. The citizen shall not be forced in determination of his/her attitude to religion, profess or refusal to profess religion, in participation or non-participation in divine service, devotions and religious ceremonies, teaching religion.

Parents shall have the right to bring up their children according to their own beliefs and attitude to religion.

The Law prohibits to demand from priest information obtained by him during believer's confession.

Any discrimination of persons and limitation of citizens' rights and freedoms depending on their attitude to religion shall be prohibited.

All religions, creeds and religious organizations shall be equal before law. Establishment of any privileges or limitations of one religion over the other shall be prohibited.

According to the Law church in Ukraine shall be separated from state. Educational system in Ukraine shall be separated from church and shall have secular character.

Religious organizations in Ukraine are created with the purpose of satisfaction of citizens' religious needs to profess and spread beliefs and act according to its hierarchical and institutional structure. To religious organizations the Law refers:

- religious communities;
- religious administrations and centers;
- monasteries;
- congregations;
- missions;
- theological educational institutions;
- unions of the above mentioned religious organizations.

Religious organizations act on the basis of statute. Statute of religious organization shall be approved at general meeting of believers or on religious congresses, conferences. Statute of religious organization shall contain information about:

- type of religious organization, its religious belonging and location;
- place of religious organization in organizational structure of religious union;
- property of religious organization;
- rights of religious organization to found enterprises, mass media, other religious organizations, educational institutions;
- procedure of introducing changes and amendments to statute;
- procedure of settlement of property and other questions in case religious organization stops its activity.

Religious organizations shall be prohibited to:

- participate in activities of political parties;
- perform state functions;
- provide financial aid to political parties;
- nominate candidates for election post;
- agitate or finance election campaigns;
- interfere in activity of other religious organizations;
- preach hostility, intolerance to atheists or believers of other religions.

The Law sets procedure of registration of religious organizations statutes.

Activity of religious organization may be stopped due to its reorganization (division, merger, joining) or liquidation. Also the Law envisages cases when activity of religious organization shall be stopped in court procedure.

Religious organizations shall have the right to found and maintain freely accessible places of divine services or religious gatherings as well as pilgrimage places.

For fulfillment of their statute tasks religious organizations shall have the right to found publishing, polygraphic, manufacturing, restoration, building, agricultural and other enterprises as well as charity organizations (asylums, hospitals, boarding schools etc.).

The Law envisages authorities of state body on issues of religion.

The Law also determines legal regime of property of religious organizations.