

«Churches Protest against Introducing Yoga to Schools»

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While representatives of both the Catholic and Evangelical churches in Slovakia reject the introduction of yoga exercises in Slovak schools, a representative of Slovak Jews, Jozef Weiss, considers the attendance at yoga exercise to be a matter of the children themselves, or of their parents.

Weiss, director of Central Association of Jewish Religious Communities (UZZNO), told SLOVAKIA on Thursday that he could not express any negative or positive standpoint from the viewpoint of Jewish religion.

The Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession (ECAV) in Slovakia is definitely rejecting the introduction of yoga.

«Yoga also has its philosophical and spiritual dimensions which I consider to be the penetration of something alien to our culture and tradition. Yoga is not gymnastics but supreme spiritual culture», SLOVAKIA was told by Ivan Osusky, bishop of ECAV Western District on Thursday.

The Education Ministry State Secretary Laszlo Szigeti does not consider the introduction of yoga exercises to be the most important problem the Slovak education sector should deal with at the moment.

According to Szigeti, such a move should be preceded by both expert and lay discussion. Szigeti can imagine yoga rather as an activity of leisure centres.

«We should in no case introduce yoga as a compulsory subject, as it is a certain threat mainly for the believers, the Catholic youth», he said.

Erzsebet Dolnikova, member of the Parliamentary Education and Sports Committee says that yoga also influences the psychology of children and makes them manipulable.

«I am rejecting yoga at schools as a teacher, mother and even as grand mother», she said.

The 'yoga matter', along with religious education at schools will be discussed on Friday by Education Minister Milan Ftacnik and representatives of Catholic and Evangelical churches Chairman of Slovak Bishops Conference (KBS) Frantisek Tondra and Bishop of Banska Bystrica Rudolf Balaz, and bishop of ECAV Western District Ivan Osusky.

In a pastoral letter, read in all Catholic churches in the past days, the Slovak bishops were repeatedly warning that yoga exercises cannot be separated from the spiritual ideas of Hinduism, which are in breach with Christianity. They also pointed to the fact that such exercises are considered to be inappropriate and have been rejected also in the Czech Republic, Austria and some other countries.

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