

RECOGNITION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

МИНИСТЕРСТВО ЮСТИЦИИ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ
СВИДЕТЕЛЬСТВО
О ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЙ РЕГИСТРАЦИИ
РЕЛИГИОЗНОЙ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ
№ 0
1997 г.

Наименование организации: "Український Центр Свідомого Релігій в Україні"

Вид деятельности: християнство, Свідомі Релігій

Принципиальность и централизованность религиозной организации

Регистрационный орган: Религиозный отдел Главного управления юстиции Украины

Местонахождение (юридический адрес): 080040, г. Киев, Петров-Ступа, вул. Солов'яківська, 6

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РАСПОРЯЖЕНИЕ
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В соответствии с Федеральным законом от 12.01.1997 № 14-ФЗ "О свободе совести и о религиозных объединениях" и постановлением Правительства Российской Федерации от 20.01.1997 № 14-ПП "О государственной регистрации религиозных организаций" зарегистрирована религиозная организация "Український Центр Свідомого Релігій в Україні" (наименование, вид деятельности, принципыальность и централизованность религиозной организации) с местом нахождения (юридическим адресом) 080040, г. Киев, Петров-Ступа, вул. Солов'яківська, 6.

18.01.1997

Министр юстиции
Ю.А. Сидоренко

РАСПОРЯЖЕНИЕ
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№ 40 от 24. 2. 1997

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РАДА В СПРАВАХ РЕЛІГІЙ ПРИ КАБІНЕТІ
МІНІСТРІВ УКРАЇНИ

СВІДОЦТВО № 11
про реєстрацію
статуту релігійної організації
"25" березня 1997 р.

Цього дня зареєстровано статут про управління релігійною організацією "Український Центр Свідомого Релігій в Україні".

діяльність якої поширюється на територію
України.

Керівний орган релігійної організації
розташованої за адресою: м. Київ,
вул. Солов'яківська, 6/20.

Підстава для реєстрації: Закон УРСР "Про
свободу совісті та релігійні організації"

Голова Ради: М.П. Колесник

Protokols.
19. 3. 1997
Resolūcija
1997 g.

Latvijas Suverēnās Tautas vārds.

Reģistrācija
19. 3. 1997 g.

Latvijas Suverēnās Tautas vārds.

Reģistrācija
19. 3. 1997 g.

Latvijas Suverēnās Tautas vārds.

Reģistrācija
19. 3. 1997 g.

Jehovah's Witnesses are recognized as a religious organization throughout the countries of the European Union. In the case of *Jehovah's Witnesses of Moscow v. Russia*, the European Court of Human Rights referred to Jehovah's Witnesses as "a known Christian denomination" and observed that since the late 19th century, the Witnesses "have established an active presence in many countries world-wide, including all European States which are currently members of the Council of Europe." (*Jehovah's Witnesses of Moscow v. Russia*, no. 302/02, § 155, 10 June 2010) This reiterates findings of the Court in a number of previous cases.

The following overview shows the history of Jehovah's Witnesses' legal status in various European Union countries.

Austria

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Austria in the early 1920's, opening their office in Vienna in 1923. In May 1930 a local association was registered. In 1933 the local association Wachtturm-Gesellschaft was registered but was dissolved in 1935. In 1947, Wachtturm-Gesellschaft was revived. In 1998, Jehovah's Witnesses became a state-registered religious confessional community. And on 7 May 2009, Jehovah's Witnesses in Austria were recognized as a religious society with the same legal status as the Catholic Church and the Protestant churches.

Belgium

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Belgium in 1901. A legal association was incorporated on 15 April 1932. In 1990 the Witnesses adopted the name Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. Except during the Nazi occupation from 1940 to 1944, the Witnesses have enjoyed peaceful relations with the government and with their neighbors.

Britain (United Kingdom)

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Britain in 1881. On 14 June 1914, the International Bible Students Association (as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known) was registered as a charitable company for the advancement of religion. On 28 July 1939, the Kingdom Hall Trust was registered as a charitable company for the advancement of religion in the name of the London Company of Kingdom Witnesses (name changed in June 1994) and in 1994 received the Lord Chancellor's certificate as a trust corporation. On 8 October 1999, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Britain was registered as a charitable company for the advancement of religion as a successor to the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, which is based in the United States.

Bulgaria

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Bulgaria in the 1920's. On 6 May 1938, the Association of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Kingdom of Bulgaria was legally registered. This registration was revoked by the Communist government less than a decade later. On 17 July 1991, two years after the fall of the Communist regime, Jehovah's Witnesses were legally recognized in Bulgaria. However, in 1994 the Witnesses, along with numerous other religious groups, lost their legal status after the passage of a restrictive law on religion. Finally, on 7 October 1998, the Directorate of Religious Denominations under the Council of Ministers issued a document again legally recognizing Jehovah's Witnesses in Bulgaria.

Cyprus

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Cyprus in the 1920's. They established an office in 1948. In

March 1960, Jehovah's Witnesses Congregation (Cyprus) LTD was formed as a nonprofit religious corporation.

Czech Republic

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in the territory of the Czech Republic in the early 1900's. In 1928 the International Corporation of Bible Students, Czechoslovakia branch, was established in the city of Brno. In 1931 the International Association of Bible Students, Czechoslovakia branch, was established in Prague. And in 1933, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Czechoslovakia branch, was also established in Prague. The activities of these associations were canceled after the Nazis invaded the country. In 1945 the activities of both associations were restored in Prague, but they were banned again in 1949 after the Communists came to power. Finally, on 1 September 1993, the Religious Association of Jehovah's Witnesses was registered.

Denmark

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Denmark in 1894. In April 1932 the association Vagttårnets Bibel- og Traktatselskab (CVR 16792810) was legally established. And since 11 April 1970 (Journal nr. 1—Kt 662), Jehovah's Witnesses have been recognized as a religious denomination by the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs (now under the Ministry of Justice).

Estonia

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Estonia in the 1920's. On 21 June 1933, Vahi-Torni Piibli ja Traktaatide selts (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society) was registered but was dissolved soon thereafter by the Soviet regime. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Eesti Jehoova Tunnistajate Koguduste Liit (Association of Congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in Estonia) was registered on 15 June 1994. This association was reregistered on 11 May 2004.

Finland

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Finland in 1906. On 11 March 1933, Vartiotorin Raamattu- ja Traktaattiseura r.y. was registered. On 30 April 1940, this association was dissolved for the duration of World War II. On 31 May 1945, Jehovan todistajat (Jehovah's Witnesses) was registered as a religious association under the Act on Freedom of Religion. On 9 February 1949, the Watch Tower Society was registered again, the official name being Vartiotorin Raamattu- ja Traktaattiseura r.y.—Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Finally, on 5 November 2007, an updated charter of Jehovan todistajat was registered under the new Act on Freedom of Religion.

France

Jehovah's Witnesses became active in France in the early 1900's. The first local association of Jehovah's Witnesses was registered in the *Official Journal of the French Republic* in November 1906. On 16 September 1947, after a period of severe war-time repression, *Les Témoins de Jéhovah*, a national association, was registered and set up its offices, commonly known as Bethel, first in Paris and later in Louviers. On 13 January 1993, and again on 23 June 2000, the Conseil d'État deemed local associations belonging to Jehovah's Witnesses to have the religious status set out in the 9 December 1905 law on the separation of Church and State because they respect public order. Moreover, on 9 July 2002 and on 5 June 2003, the other national associations of Jehovah's Witnesses in France were granted recognition by the Prefect of the

Hauts-de-Seine region because of the Witnesses' religious nature and respect for public order.

Germany

Jehovah's Witnesses—initially under the name *Bibel-forscher*—first became active in Germany in 1897. The association was registered in the Association Register of the Local Court in Magdeburg in 1927 as *Internationale Bibelforscher-Vereinigung, Deutscher Zweig* (International Bible Students Association, Germany branch). Under National Socialism, Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted and banned, and their registration was deleted. In 1945 the Witnesses were again registered by the local court in Magdeburg. In 1950 this association was again banned, this time by the Ministry of the Interior of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Thereafter, the association was organized for the area of the Federal Republic of Germany under the name *Wachturm Bibel- und Traktat-Gesellschaft, Deutscher Zweig e. V.* and was based in Wiesbaden (since 1984 in Selters/Taunus). Jehovah's Witnesses in the GDR were granted legal recognition on 14 March 1990, by the Council of Ministers of the GDR, Office for Church Affairs. Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany developed from the Religious Association of Jehovah's Witnesses in the GDR. The area of activity has been extended to all of Germany. On 13 June 2006, Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany were granted the rights of a public law corporation with the bestowal of the deed of recognition from the State of Berlin. Since then, the rights of a public law corporation have been acknowledged in most (10 in August 2009) of the other 15 states of Germany.

Greece

Jehovah's Witnesses have been active in Greece since 1905. In 1922 a branch of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society was founded in Athens. In 1927, by means of consultatory response (July) of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Supreme Court (Areopagus), the Witnesses' right to perform marriages was recognized, and they were recognized as a "known religion." In 1947 the same status was confirmed by means of a new consultatory response (January) of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Supreme Court. In 1975 the Supreme Administrative Court (Council of State) ruled that Jehovah's Witnesses met the constitutional requirements of a "known religion" and thus constituted a "recognized" denomination. (Decisions 2105, 2106) In 1989 the nonprofit corporation Christian Jehovah's Witnesses of Greece was founded. (Athens First Instance Court Decision 520) And in 2001 the Ministry of Education and Religions recognized the Witnesses' branch office as "a sacred and consecrated place, dedicated to the worship of God."—Document A3/102/13.6.2001.

Hungary

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Hungary in the early 1900's. An office of the Watch Tower Society was established in the 1920's but was closed by the Fascist government on 2 December 1939. On 7 February 1947, a branch office of the Watch Tower Society was reestablished in Budapest. However, in 1950 the office was closed, and the Witnesses were banned by the Communist government. On 27 June 1989, the ban on Jehovah's Witnesses was lifted, and the State Office for Church Affairs officially recognized Jehovah's Witnesses. On 3 July 1990, *Magyarországi Jehova Tanúi Egyház* (Church of Jehovah's Witnesses in Hungary) was registered.

Ireland

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Ireland in the 1890's. Their work in Ireland was administered by the Brit-

ain branch of Jehovah's Witnesses for some 40 years. In 1957 a branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses was established in Dublin for the Republic of Ireland. In 1966 this branch office started caring for Northern Ireland as well. On 19 February 1985, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Ireland was registered.

Italy

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Italy in 1903. In 1919 a correspondence office of the Watch Tower Society was opened in Pinerolo, near Turin. Although the Witnesses were persecuted during the Fascist period, in 1956 the Constitutional Court granted them greater freedom of worship under the new constitution. In 1976 the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania was granted rights similar to those of national denominational corporations. On 30 July 1986, the Council of State (High Administrative Council) recognized the *Congregazione Cristiana dei Testimoni di Geova*, and the President of the Republic officially decreed the public recognition with the Decree of the President of the Republic of 31 October 1986, n. 783. Finally, on 20 March 2000 (updated 4 April 2007), in harmony with Article 8.3 of the Italian Constitution, the Italian government signed an agreement with *Congregazione Cristiana dei Testimoni di Geova* for which parliamentary approval is now pending.

Latvia

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Latvia in the 1920's. An office was established in Riga in 1926. On 14 March 1933, the International Bible Students Association (as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known) was officially registered. However, on 30 June 1934, the association was shut down after the new government established martial law. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the first two congregations were registered in Latvia on 12 October 1998. There are now a total of 14 registered congregations, and the *Sargtorna Biedriba* (Watch Tower Society) is also a legally registered association.

Lithuania

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in 1912 in the Memel area of what is now Lithuania. On 20 April 1934, *Tarptautinė Biblijos Tyrinėtojų Sąjunga* (The International Bible Students Association) was registered. This registration was nullified on 1 January 1938, as persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses intensified before World War II. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, *Lietuvos Jehovos liudytojų religinė bendrija* (Religious Society of Jehovah's Witnesses in Lithuania) was registered on 21 July 1993, by administrative order No. 549p. After the law on religious associations and societies was amended in 1995, the Religious Society of Jehovah's Witnesses in Lithuania was reregistered on 3 January 1997, and two new religious associations of Jehovah's Witnesses were registered on 11 September 1997.

Luxembourg

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Luxembourg in 1922. On 6 July 1946, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Association sans but lucratif (not-for-profit association), was formed, and its registration was officially recognized by the publication of its statutes in the *Mémorial* No. 62 of 23 October 1946, and the *Mémorial* No. 83 of 4 November 1947.

Malta

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Malta in 1936. Their work in Malta was administered by the Britain branch of Jehovah's Witnesses for some 50 years. On

16 April 1997, the International Bible Students Association Malta was registered.

Netherlands

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in the Netherlands in 1908. On 1 September 1922, the Dutch branch of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania was established. On 29 May 1949, Stichting Genootschap tot Verbreiding van het Evangelie (Foundation for Spreading the Gospel) was established. On 6 February 1980, Wachttorens-, Bijbel- en Traktaatgenootschap, a religious legal entity, was established. On 22 April 1996, Stichting Wereldwijde Educatieve Services (Foundation Worldwide Educational Services) was established. And on 24 August 2009, Christelijke gemeente van Jehovah's Getuigen (Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses) was established.

Poland

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Poland in 1895. A branch office of the Watch Tower Society was opened in Warsaw in 1921. In 1932 the office was moved to 24 Rzgowska Street, Łódź. On 22 March 1938, the authorities shut down the Łódź office, but it reopened in 1946. In April 1950 the Łódź office was raided by the Communists, and on 2 July 1950, the Office for Religious Affairs announced that it rejected the application for registration by the Association of Jehovah's Witnesses in Poland. On 12 May 1989, Strażnica—Towarzystwo Biblijne i Traktatowe, Zarejestrowany Związek Wyznania Świadców Jehowy w Polsce (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Registered Religious Association of Jehovah's Witnesses in Poland) was formed, and on 31 January 1990, this was introduced into the Registry of churches and other denominations.

Portugal

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Portugal in 1925, and an office of the Watch Tower Society was opened in Lisbon that year. However, during the dictatorship of Dr. António de Oliveira Salazar, numerous applications for legal recognition were denied. On 25 April 1974, that dictatorship was overthrown. Shortly thereafter, on 18 December 1974, the Associação das Testemunhas de Jeová (Association of Jehovah's Witnesses) was legally registered as a religious, nonprofit association under the general civil law. On 24 April 2007, this association, with its same name and statutes, was reregistered as a religious corporate body under the new religious freedom law, Law No. 16 (2001). Finally, on 22 June 2009, under the same law, the Minister of Justice signed the Certificate granting the Association of Jehovah's Witnesses the statute as a Long-standing Religious Community, the highest juridical and religious classification possible.

Romania

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Romania in 1911. In April 1920, a branch office of the Watch Tower Society was set up in Cluj-Napoca. In 1930 the branch office was relocated to Bucharest. On 21 April 1937, the Ministry of Religions forbade the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in Romania, and on 2 August 1938, the Bucharest office was closed. Following World War II, the Association of Jehovah's Witnesses in Romania was registered on 11 July 1945. After the Communists came to power, the Justice Ministry closed the Bucharest office on 8 August 1949, and the Witnesses remained under ban for 40 years. Finally, on 9 April 1990, Organizația Religioasă „Martorii lui Iehova” (The Religious Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses) regained its legal status through civil judgment No. 1166 issued by the Bucharest Court of

First Instance, Sector No. 1. On 22 May 2003, the Minister of Culture and Religions issued Order No. 2657 reconfirming the status of Jehovah's Witnesses as a religion. On 6 February 2004, the Religious Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses was included in a list of recognized religions in Romania. And on 18 June 2008, Government Decision No. 658 recognized the new statute for the organizing and functioning of the Religious Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Slovakia

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in the territory of Slovakia in 1912. In 1930 two legal corporations were formed: Biblická a traktátní společnost Strážní věž, československá větev (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Czechoslovakia branch) and Mezinárodní sdružení badatelů Bible, československá větev (International Bible Students Association, Czechoslovakia branch). But during World War II, the work of Jehovah's Witnesses in Czechoslovakia was banned. After the war, the Ministry of Interior acknowledged the reactivation of both legal corporations on 13 December 1945. After the Communist Party took power, the work of Jehovah's Witnesses in Czechoslovakia was again banned, on 4 April 1949. Finally, on 24 March 1993, the Ministry of Culture registered Náboženská spoločnosť Jehovovi svedkovia v Slovenskej republike (The Religious Society of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Slovak Republic).

Slovenia

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in the territory of Slovenia in the late 1920's. On 9 September 1930, the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia legally recognized The Light-house Society of Bible Students in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. On 9 September 1953, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia officially registered the Christian Religious Community of Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1976 the official registration of this community was reconfirmed. After Slovenia gained independence in 1991, the Witnesses were reregistered under the name Jehovah's Witnesses—Christian Religious Community, on 12 December 1992. On 27 November 2009, Jehovah's Witnesses—Christian Religious Community was reregistered under the new Religious Freedom Act (Official Gazette of the RS No. 14/07).

Spain

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Spain in the early 1920's. In 1925 a branch office of the Watch Tower Society was established in Madrid. However, on 2 February 1939, all non-Catholic religions were declared illegal. On 10 July 1970, the Ministry of Justice legally recognized Jehovah's Witnesses as an approved religion in Spain.

Sweden

Jehovah's Witnesses first became active in Sweden in 1899. An office was established in 1901 in Stockholm. In 1907 the office was moved to Örebro. In September 1926 the office was moved back to Stockholm. On 31 March 1954, the branch office was moved to Jakobsberg. In 1952, Bibel- och Traktatsällskapet Vaktornet (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society) was legally registered. On 23 July 1954, Vaktornets förlags- och tryckeriaktiebolag (Watchtower Publishing and Printing Corporation) was legally recognized. On 13 March 2000, the religious community Jehovas vittnen—Bibelsällskapet Vaktornet (Jehovah's Witnesses—Watchtower Bible Society) was legally approved. Finally, on 27 February 2009, Jehovas vittnen—Bibelsällskapet Vaktornet was registered under the name Jehovas vittnen (Jehovah's Witnesses).