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[The European Times](#) (13.02.2025) - *Last 27 January 2025* in Rome, the signing of the [Agreement \(Intesa\)](#) between the Italian Republic and the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Italy (DOR) represents a significant moment for religious pluralism in the country. The agreement, signed today at the Palazzo Chigi by the Undersecretary to the Presidency of the Council, Alfredo Mantovano, and by the legal representative of the DOR, His Excellency Siluan (Span Ciprian Nicolae), sanctions the legal and institutional recognition of one of the most numerous and deeply rooted religious communities in Italy.

A Framework of Protection and Recognition

The agreement, whose procedural process was successfully concluded, introduces a series of fundamental provisions that regulate the religious and administrative life of the Romanian Orthodox community in Italy. Among the main points:

- **Autonomy and independence:** The State recognises that the DOR has full autonomy in the internal management of the denomination, without interference in the appointment of ministers of [religion](#) and in the organisation of the community.
- **Protection of ministerial secrecy:** ministers of religion cannot be obliged to testify about information learned in the context of their pastoral ministry.
- **Religious education:** the right to respond to requests from pupils and families regarding the teaching of the Orthodox religion is guaranteed, provided that this takes place outside school hours and at the expense of the DOR.
- **Recognition of religious marriages:** Marriages celebrated before ministers of the DOR, provided they are transcribed in the civil registry, will have civil effects.
- **Legal status of religious organisations:** The organisations of the DOR dedicated to worship, education, assistance and charity are recognised by the Italian State.
- **Access to the eight per thousand tax:** the DOR becomes part of the public financing system for religious denominations through the eight per thousand tax on personal income tax.

A recognition awaited for decades

The Romanian Orthodox Church, with almost twenty million faithful in Romania and the diaspora, is one of the most important Orthodox religious communities in [Europe](#). In Italy, the presence of the DOR dates back to the 1960s, with the foundation of the first parish in Milan in 1974. In 2023, there were 285 registered parishes in the country, demonstrating

significant growth of the community, in parallel with the increase of the Romanian population in Italy, which is now one of the largest foreign communities.

The legal recognition through the Agreement allows the DOR to consolidate its institutional presence and to obtain protection comparable to that of other religious denominations that have already signed agreements with the Italian State, such as the Waldensian Church, the Italian Buddhist Union and the Church of Jesus Christ of [Latter-day](#) Saints.

The Significance of the Agreement in the Context of Religious Freedom

The agreement signed today is an important step towards full respect for religious freedom in Italy, as enshrined in Article 8 of the Constitution, which guarantees religious denominations autonomy in accordance with the national legal system. This recognition comes at a time when, in [Europe](#), policies of religious integration are taking on an increasingly central role, both for the protection of fundamental rights and for the promotion of constructive intercultural dialogue.

The presence of Professor Geraldina Boni, President of the Commission for Agreements with Religious Denominations and for Religious Freedom, emphasised the crucial role of the Commission in pursuing a complex but essential path to guarantee equal dignity to all the denominations present in the country.

The Reactions of the Romanian Orthodox Community

Representatives of the DOR expressed their satisfaction with the achievement, seeing the Agreement as not only institutional, but also cultural and social recognition of their contribution to Italian society. Bishop Siluan stated: *'This agreement demonstrates the respect and attention of the Italian State towards our community, which has lived in and contributed to the growth of the country for decades'*.

An Issue Still Unresolved: The Difficulties of Other Religious Denominations

Although the signing of the Agreement between the Italian Republic and the DOR represents an important step forward for religious freedom, the question of the difficulties that many other religious organisations encounter in registering their ministers of worship or in being recognised as a legal entity remains unresolved.

Numerous denominations often face bureaucratic and legal obstacles that limit their full institutional recognition. This creates a system of inequality, in which some communities can enjoy rights and benefits recognised by the state, while others remain in a legal limbo that complicates their functioning and growth.

The Agreement with the DOR can represent a model for a further expansion of religious freedom in Italy, guaranteeing that all faiths can access the same rights, within a framework of respect for the Constitution and the principle of equality. The challenge now is to ensure that religious pluralism is fully respected, without discrimination, and that the path to recognition for all faith communities is made more accessible and equitable.

A Step Towards a European Model of Religious Integration

The agreement between Italy and DOR is part of a broader framework of recognition of the different religious denominations present in the country and can serve as a model for other European states that host important Orthodox religious communities. This agreement

reinforces the principle of positive secularism of the state, in which religious pluralism is not only tolerated, but recognised and valued.

Italy thus confirms its commitment to guaranteeing a balance between the secularism of the State and the protection of religious minorities, promoting integration based on mutual understanding and respect for diversity.
