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Vatican City — December 6, 2022

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Pope Francis on Dec. 6 tightened control and oversight over Vatican-based foundations and associations in his latest effort to impose international standards of accounting and governance on Vatican offices and affiliated entities.

A new law aims to bring the Holy See into further compliance with recommendations from the Council of Europe's Moneyval committee, which in April 2021 flagged as problematic the lack of an overarching law governing the creation and administration of foundations registered in Vatican City.

Such foundations draw donations from the faithful, but until recently they had little oversight or accountability.

The new law lays out strict governance, administrative and accounting regulations that put the foundations under the ultimate oversight of the Vatican's Secretariat for the Economy, with their books subject to review by the office of the auditor general.

The same Moneyval report that flagged the foundation loophole highlighted as a case study the well-known scandal of the charitable foundation of the Vatican's Bambino Gesù pediatric hospital, which draws donations from around the world.

The Vatican's criminal court [in 2017 convicted the hospital's former president](#) of diverting some \$500,000 in donations from the hospital foundation to renovate the apartment of the former Vatican No. 2, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.

Bertone was never charged, and the original charge of embezzlement was reduced to abuse of office after the president's lawyers argued that the money was intended as an investment to benefit the hospital because the apartment was going to be used for fundraising events.

The Vatican has several foundations and associations that have Vatican City as their legal headquarters, including some Pope Francis created himself and dedicated to past popes and papal initiatives.

Francis was elected as pope in 2013 with a mandate to clean up the Vatican's murky finances and to bring international standards of transparency and accountability to them. The reform effort has taken years and spawned a few scandals, including a [current criminal trial over a past investment](#) in a London property.

Recently, the Jesuit priest credited with helping bring order to the Holy See's budgeting as prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy, [Fr. Juan Antonio Guerrero Alves](#), announced his resignation for medical reasons. His deputy, the lay economist Maximino Caballero Ledo, was named to succeed him.

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