Chapter 7

CHURCH, STATE AND SOCIETY IN POST-COMMUNIST EUROPE

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Introduction

The collapse of communism is most usually symbolically equated with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 (about twenty years ago), although in some countries it is reckoned a bit later.[1] But the term "post-communist Europe" is not an adequate one for variety of reasons. Two of these reasons are worth mentioning in connection with the content of this chapter. First, the term simply acknowledges that some countries have a communist past, but does not say anything about the main features their new social orders have developed during years of post-communist transformation. Second, there are numerous post-communist countries,[2] countries which range from the center of the continent through the southeast to Eastern Europe, or from the Czech Republic and Slovenia through Macedonia and Albania to Ukraine and Moldova. These are countries with different histories,

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1 This chapter was written on the basis of work done in the research project Religion and Values Central and Eastern Research Network (REVACERN) from 2007 to 2009, funded by the European Union and coordinated by the University of Szeged, Hungary. For more details about the project, see http://www.revacern.eu/. Previous versions of this chapter were presented at the first International Sociological Association Forum on Sociology: "Sociological Research and Public Debate" (Barcelona, 2008), at the conference "Religion and the State: Regional and Global Perspective" (Sydney, 2009), and in Zrinščak (2009a and 2009b).

2 The number of post-communist countries in Europe is higher than the number of Western European countries: there are 22 post-communist countries which are members of the Council of Europe, the largest pan-European organization. For details see: http://www.coe.int/aboutCoe/index.asp?page=47pays1europe&l=en (last accessed 5 October 2011).

social and cultural specificities and social development possibilities with, in a word, *profound* social differences despite 45 (or, in the case of the majority of ex-Soviet Union states, 70) years of common past. Therefore, the term "post-communist Europe" used in this chapter is simply a technical one. In addition, the chapter covers only part of post-communist Europe: countries that joined the European Union in 2004 (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) or in 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania) and one country which is set to become the twenty eight member state of the European Union in July 2013 (Croatia).

Finally and most crucially, the main argument of this chapter is that issues and dilemmas concerning church-state relations are basically the same in "new" European Union member states and in "old" European Union member states. Post-communist states – at least those analyzed in this chapter – after years of transformation to pluralist democracy and market economy and particularly transformation connected with European Union membership do not represent any special case in terms of church-state relations, a view that might differ significantly from Western European analysis. Besides, there are considerable differences among the countries analyzed; post-communist countries should not be seen as a homogenized case regarding their church-state relations. Still, there are many issues present both in Western and Eastern Europe concerning these relations, which are of sociological interest and should be analyzed via a comparative perspective of church-state relations in Europe in general.

Therefore, this chapter paper will:

- give an overview of church-state relations in Eastern and Western Europe;
- give a sociological religious portrait of particular countries concerning social expectations concerning church-state relations; and
- analyze main issues and dilemmas in church-state relations, point out possible explanations and suggest directions for future research.

Comparative Framework: Church and State in Western Europe

This chapter concerns issues and dilemmas which are basically the same in "old" and "new" European Union member states. This argument is present in the available literature and is widely shared by different authors, although mainly those writing from legal points of view. Interestingly, church-state relations are principally a domain for lawyers rather than sociologists,[3] but what is of more

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3 Although there are some notable exceptions (Beckford and Richardson, 2007; Richardson, 2004, 2006, 2009; Shterin and Richardson, 2000, 2002; Berger, Davie and Fokas, 2008; Doe, 2004, etc.) a similar observation has recently been made by

interest is that there is not much cooperation between these two scientific perspectives. More specifically, sociological literature speaks about church and state but primarily approaches them from different angles, researching the position of minority religions or religious education issues. These are certainly very promising approaches, but other aspects of church-state relations present in the literature written by other experts should be brought into the general discussion.

Church-state relations in Western Europe, i.e. "old" European Union members with much longer democratic histories, can serve as a comparative framework for studying church-state relations in post-communist Europe. Authors basically agree that three different models are distinguished (Ferrari, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Torfs, 2007; Robbers, 2005). The first type can be found in countries with state or national church, such as England, Denmark, Finland, Greece, etc. France is well known as an unique country based on a strict separation model, although similar models (at least concerning legal separation rather than a general social attitude toward religion) can be found in the Netherlands and in Ireland. The majority of European countries fall into the third category, usually called the cooperative model, which is characterized by constitutional separation of church and state coupled with mutual cooperation based on agreements between state and different (usually historically dominant) religions that have important and officially recognized/supported social tasks and significance. In the case of the Catholic Church, these agreements (concordat in some cases) have been negotiated and signed between the Holy See and the respective countries.

Models speak little about the details and actual positions of different religions in any particular country. Deeper and more specific analysis can reveal details about the social position of minority religions, the concrete exercise of religious rights and religious freedom, norms guaranteed by constitutions or international agreements (e.g. Richardson, 2004). In addition, two questions of particular interest arise. First, are there any commonalities in terms of church-state relations which can be found among different European countries. More precisely, can we speak at least partly about an emerging European model of church-state relations, particularly keeping in mind the Europeanization process, or deepening of European Union integration? Second, and in connection with the first question, in which directions are church-state relations developing?

M. Koenig (2009: 298): "Church-state relations [is] a topic that had for a very long time been left to historians and legal scholars." Similarly: "There has been very little sociological commentary on the various definitions and conceptions of religion found in law. This is despite the obvious sociological importance a legal definition of religion has" (Sandberg, 2008: 157).

Although legal authors agree that there is no single European model of church-state relations, some of them nevertheless argue over evidence of a distinctive European dimension. Torf (2007) distinguishes between level A, the very basic level present in all European countries visible in the attribution of religious freedom to all religious groups and level B, which concerns the typical European leveling of support to some religious groups which consequently receive a kind of privileged treatment. Robbers (2005), particularly examining European Union laws, acknowledges the European Union's neutrality in relation to religious and philosophical issues but also its basic respect of religious needs and churches' right to self-determination. Still, history and traditions are very present and influence the persistence of different models despite countervailing tendencies. As has been pointed out by Madeley (2003: 2, 9), the "hand of history" is extremely visible because religions deeply influenced the creation of modern European nations and states. All this suggests a possible answer to the second question. There is a trend toward disestablishment. One commonly cited example is the Swedish Church, which changed its status in 2000 and has since then no longer been the state but the "folk" church (Gustafsson, 2003; Edgardh and Pettersson, 2010). Though it is not possible to argue about disestablishment on the basis of this single example, additional support can be found (in terms of recognition and support by the state) in debates about similar possible moves in several other countries. In these countries, changes from confessional to nonconfessional school education and more equal rights for minority religions have also been obtained. Disestablishment is in fact another reason for Ferrari (2008) to argue about the emergence of the common European trend.

At the same time, contrary tendencies are also noted. Some European countries have become very restrictive toward a wide range of minority religions (Richardson and Introvigne, 2001) and debates about the positions of Islam and its public role have become very intense (Casanova, 2007, 2008). There are arguments about antidisestablishmentarianism (Madeley, 2003: 17), the surge of religious persecution (Robbins, 2003) and the rise of government regulation over religion (Fox, 2009, 2010). Even though they seem oppositional, all these briefly presented viewpoints are of interest and should not be analyzed separately. Contradictory tendencies all constitute social reality. Sociological research should rely on all of them. Moreover, viewpoints on religion and state differ according to theoretical and ideological standpoints and it is common to find in the literature the same reality completely differently analyzed by different authors. Even the different official treatment of the issue of religious rights (and consequently that of church-state relations) by international organizations is noted. As argued by Richardson and Garay (2004), the European Court of Human Rights demonstrates its authority concerning religious rights to the

majority of post-communist countries (like Bulgaria, Romania, Russia and other post-Soviet states), even while it retains its traditional deference to original member states of the European Union.

Church and State in Post-communism

Church-state relations faced different challenges and passed through different phases after the fall of communism. The first years of the post-communist period brought a general embracing of religious freedom which was extended equally to traditional and minority religions and created a space for new religions to enter previously closed and hostile religious societies. However, traditional churches and conservative parties found it unjustified to grant the same privileges to traditional churches (which had suffered during the years of communism) and newly arrived religions, some of which (it has been argued by those who opposed equal treatment of different religions) possessed "suspicious" features. Yet this kind of social reaction was very different in Russia and some other post-Soviet states, which have on record very inimical and completely antidemocratic treatment of minority and nontraditional religions (Barker, 1997; Shterin and Richardson, 1998, 2000) than in the majority of other post-communist countries. These countries actually have become more or less similar to the majority of Western European countries in their differential treatment of different religions whilst coping more or less successfully with demands for religious freedom. The tension between a differential treatment and striving toward religious freedom for all different religions is in a fact a major similarity between Western and Eastern European countries. Still, many authors point to the fact that although these latter countries do not follow the restrictive "Russian pattern" of dealing with nontraditional religions, they nevertheless have (serious) problems dealing with religious pluralism (e.g. Črnič, 2007; Sarkissian, 2009; Borowik, 2006; Tomka and Yurash, 2006; Révay and Tomka, 2006, 2007; Kuburić and Moe, 2006).

Taking into account all available research on a number of post-communist states, I am extending the argument about the common European trend according to literature present in Western Europe to Central Eastern Europe and exemplified in essential principles: "substantial respect of individual religious freedom, guarantee of the autonomy and, in particular, the self-administration of the religious denominations, and selective collaboration of the states with the churches" (Ferrari, 2003a: 171–8; 2003c: 421; 2008: 110). The argument is based and should be underlined on the notion of separation of church and state, which is the constitutional norm prevailing in post-communist countries. It basically means a distinction between the areas which belong to the state and those which belong to the church, thus denoting a mutual respect of

their mutual autonomy. As outlined by Ferrari, the separation does not mean that the state does not have the right to help religious communities by its own resources in various forms of cooperation between states and different religious communities. Still, and crucially, the cooperation is selective in both Western and Central Eastern European countries and concerns mainly traditional religious communities, eliding the rights and social possibilities of different, usually minority, religions. The selectivity has stricter or looser ways of manifesting in different countries. The crucial questions concern the meaning of a constitutional or legal provision of the "separation" and of the "equality" of all religions before law and how different religions (different sizes, different histories, different attitudes toward societies) should be treated following these legal requirements. One of the underlying theories in most sociological papers, usually not explicitly stated, is the "human rights approach" which indicates that, if there are stipulations of "separation" and "equality" and if basic international and European documents guarantee equality based on beliefs, then selectivity (or selective cooperation between state and some religions) is not justified. The reality does not support this approach; as in Western Europe, post-communist Europe balances between religious freedom and a two (or three) tier system which ascribes different rights and different privileges to different religious communities. A summary of different aspects of church-state relations in post-communist countries is presented in Table 7.1.

Socioreligious Profile of Post-communist Europe

Historical legacy, both in terms of the communist past and of longer overall social development, is the factor influencing development of church-state relations in post-communism. However, these relations are shaped inside very concrete historical circumstances and consequently inside very concrete socioreligious landscapes. In researching the socioreligious background of church-state relations, there are several facts already pointed out in sociological research that have to be put together in order to understand the rather complex image of religious changes in post-communism. First, the trend of revitalization was widely acknowledged and discussed. Measured by different indicators, the revitalization of religion was a part of overall social changes in all countries, although to different extents and in different timeframes. However, a distinction should be made between the revitalization visible in the public appearance and role of religion (mainly regarding traditional churches, but after some time also newly arrived religions) and the revitalization visible in the rise of individual religiosity according to different indicators (like belonging, church participation, belief in God and particularly behavioral consequences of religious believing).

Table 7.1. Church–state relations in eight post-communist countries

	Bulgaria	Croatia	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia
Basic religious freedom	Yes + possible limits	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes + possible limits	Yes	Yes + possible limits	Yes
Separation	Yes + Eastern orthodox Christianity as traditional religion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not clear	Yes + reference to St Cyril and Methodius spiritual heritage	Yes
Concordat	No	Yes	Pending	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Special rights	Yes, although the degree is not the same in all countries (for details see the next row), while other religious communities (particularly those that are not traditional) may be registered but do not enjoy special rights, or can act as other nongovernmental organizations							
Agreement/ privileges	Orthodox Church + registered denominations	Catholic Church + communities with agreements with the state	26 registered churches and religious societies	Catholic Church and different rights of larger religions, although lower than in other countries	Catholic Church + 14 communities with special rights	Orthodox Church + 15 registered communities	Catholic Church + 14 registered communities	Catholic Church + traditional churches with agreement, although small privileges
Restriction (based on Fox, 2008a)	High	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	High	Low / moderate	Low
State involvement	High	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	High	Moderate	Moderate

Sources: Own analysis based on: Črnič (2007); Devetak, Kalčina and Polzer (2004); Ferrari and Durham (2003); Fox (2008a); Robbers (2005); and Schanda (2003, 2009). Because some of the sources are not so accurate there might be some recent changes in respect to data presented (particularly those connected with numbers of registered communities), but the overall picture seems to be rather stable and indeed reflects the overall situation in the longer period, i.e. the end of 1990s and 2000s.

The newly acquired public role of religion has not always developed in parallel with the rising of individual religiosity. Second, and in connection with the previous statement, revitalization is not the sole factor able to explain religious changes in post-communism. There are other important factors (ethnic, cultural, political) that have influenced religious changes, and even a lot of secularizing tendencies (both those inherited from the secular past and those connected with the "Westernization" of post-communist countries). Thus, another increasingly posed question is whether the revitalization was just a feature of the dissolution of communism and the rise of new democratic and market-oriented societies, which today (slowly but in some countries very visibly) gives way to "natural," "European" secularization and moreover, European secularism. Third, all these issues have to be put in a specific national context, as among post-communist countries there have been those with high religiosity (like Romania and Poland) and those with low religiosity (like the Czech Republic and former East Germany). Fourth, the specificity of the national context has been further underlined by the strong links between religious and ethnic belonging throughout Eastern Europe, the most prominent examples being in cases of war and of dissolution of former federal states, as in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s.

This chapter will contextualize and briefly discuss levels of as well as trends in religiosity in the countries analyzed. Data presented comes from the Aufbruch research project carried out in 1997 and 2007.[4] This international project's aim was to examine the position of religions and churches in transitional countries during communism and after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was a cross-sectional and longitudinal study comprised of quantitative and qualitative methods. Questionnaire surveys, the quantitative part of the project, were designed to investigate value systems and religious orientation in these countries. In both years a questionnaire survey was conducted, but some new questions were added in 2007. A representative sampling was made in each of the countries. In 1997 ten ex-communist countries were involved – Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia and East Germany – and in 2007 the survey was extended to Moldavia, Belarus, Serbia and Bulgaria.

Belonging to religious community[5] was a majority orientation in a majority of countries in 2007, except in the Czech Republic where less than 20 percent

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4 For more information about the research and about results see Tomka and Zulehner (2008). I personally was able to access the data through my participation in the REVACERN research project (see note 1), and would like to thank Professor A. Máté Tóth for this opportunity.

5 It should be noted that the wording of this question could generate misunderstandings. For example, "belonging to religious community" and "belonging to church" have different meanings in the Croatian language; questions about belonging to community can result in lower percentages than those about actually belonging to different confessional groups. See also Ančić (2011: 6) and Tomka (2006).

of respondents expressed belonging and in Hungary, where belonging was at the level of about 50 percent. Two Orthodox countries, Bulgaria and Romania, have exceptionally high belonging, followed by Poland, Croatia and Slovakia. Comparison to 1997 reveals contradictory tendencies: a small rise in Slovakia, a stable situation in Romania and a fall of around 7.0–8.5 percent in Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland.

Religious self-identification represents a partly different picture from the one based on confessional belonging. It is expected in sociological research to have a difference between confessional and religious identification and to have a lower level of religious identification than of confessional identification. However, comparing the 2007 versions of Figures 7.1 and 7.2 shows very different situations. In Croatia and Hungary, there is no difference between confessional and religious identification (of course, in line with the fact that we counted in the category of religious people those who identified themselves

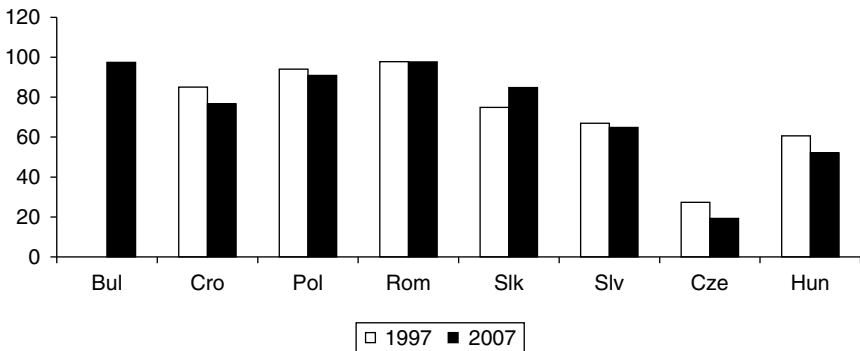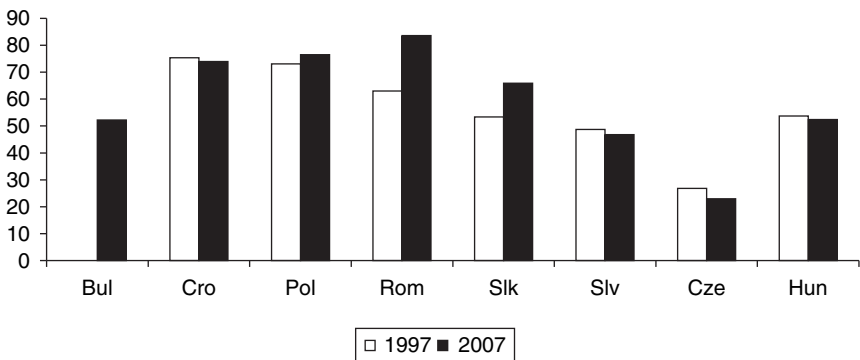**Figure 7.1.** Belonging to a religious community: "yes" responses (%)


Figure 7.2. Religious self-identification – those who declared themselves very religious and to some extent religious (%)

as very religious and also those who identified themselves as to some extent religious). In other countries, the difference is quite significant, the highest difference (almost double) being in Slovakia. It is rather unusual in sociological research to find a higher religious identification in comparison to confessional identification, as we did in the Czech Republic (though the difference was not so significant). It is interesting to note that the same tendency was already noted for Russia, which was partly explained by the role of public religion in a specific post-communist context, not performed exclusively by specific religious communities. A considerable part of population wants to be religious and supports its public appearance but does not trust and belong to any religious community (Agadjanin, 2001). If this tendency were to continue in the future, it would need to be further analyzed in the context of different meanings of "believing" and "belonging" in different European countries (Davie, 2000). The comparison between 1997 and 2007 also shows another important tendency: a stable situation or even rise of religious identification particularly marked in Slovakia and Romania.

As expected, participation at services is lower than other dimensions of religiosity in the majority of countries. The exception is Poland with a very high participation rate, followed by Romania, Slovakia and Croatia. Of particular interest is Bulgaria, with a much lower participation rate in comparison to other religiosity indicators (particularly "belonging to the religious community"). Romania also has a lower participation rate in contrast to the very high religiosity indicators in the country, which can be an indication of the "Orthodox specificities" of these two countries. In sum, religiosity is markedly present in countries analyzed, though there are significant differences among them. In terms of religious changes in the period 1997–2007, they can be confirmed, although an overall stability has still been more present than

Figure 7.3. Participation at services – at least once a month or more often (%)
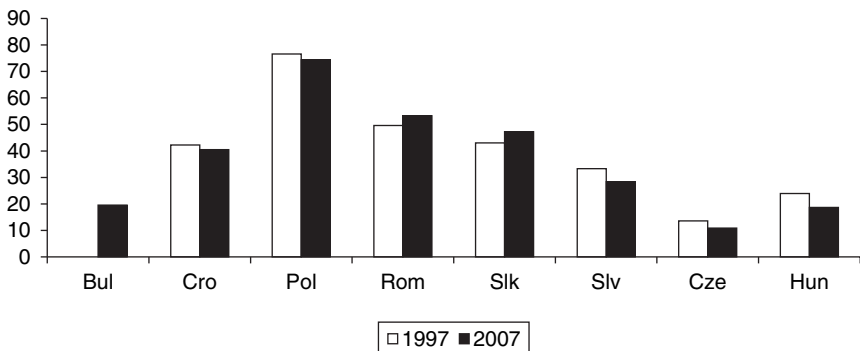
any clear revitalization or secularization tendencies.[6] Grouping of countries is extremely difficult as there are different values of different indicators, but based on the similar analysis of the same pool of data there are some consistent groupings (Ančić, 2011). Concerning religious belonging, one group forms Romania, Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and Croatia with the highest level, Slovenia and Hungary form the middle group, and the third and lowest level is occupied by the Czech Republic. Concerning religious self-identification, Romania, Poland and Croatia form the group with the highest religiosity, the Czech Republic is again the country with the lowest religiosity and this time we can put Bulgaria, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia in the middle group.

Church-State Relations: Social Expectations

Studies about church-state relations do not usually talk about people's social expectations. They take legal points of view focusing on constitutional or other legal provisions, rights and obligations or sociological points of view focusing on the position and rights of all religions. But as history is considerably present in contemporary church-state relations in Europe and as religions still have considerable social significance and perform important social tasks, it is of interest to take into consideration what the public thinks about and expects from churches, particularly traditional ones.[7] Thus, it is necessary to complement the socioreligious images of countries with public social expectations which in fact considerably shape the social role of religions and which consequently illuminate relevant issues for church-state relations.

According to the data presented in Table 7.2, respondents in a majority of countries are satisfied with the level of publicity of big Christian churches, as they opted for the answer "quite appropriate" publicity. However, there are considerable differences between countries. In some countries, there is a substantial number of people who think that churches acquired too much publicity. Croatian, Polish and Slovenian respondents tend to think that churches gain too much publicity, as to a lesser extent do the Slovakian public, while in Bulgaria and Romania one third of people (or more) think quite the opposite. Although in Croatia, Poland and Slovenia there are similar proportions of those who think that churches acquired too much publicity, the proportion was higher in 2007 than in 1997 in Croatia and Slovenia and much lower in 2007 than

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6 Stability is for example the main conclusion about concluded reason for religious changes in Croatia, drawn from the European Value Survey data 1999 and 2008 analysis (Črpić and Zrinščak, 2010).

7 It should be noted that the analysis here is restricted by the type of data available from the Aufbruch research project.

Table 7.2. "Do you think that, during the last decade, the big Christian churches acquired too much or not enough publicity?" (%)

Country	Too much		Quite appropriate		Not enough	
	1997	2007	1997	2007	1997	2007
Bulgaria		7.4		50.3		42.3
Croatia	38.1	44.1	45.1	41.4	16.7	14.5
Poland	67.6	45.8	26.9	45.9	5.5	8.3
Romania	28.0	16.2	40.3	50.6	31.7	33.3
Slovakia	32.4	32.7	53.7	57.8	13.9	9.4
Slovenia	37.6	43.1	48.6	46.5	13.8	10.4
Czech R.	14.5	19.8	65.3	62.5	20.1	17.7
Hungary	23.2	19.5	56.3	61.8	20.5	18.6

in 1997 in Poland. Starting from an assumption that the 1990s were years of acquiring this publicity in comparison to the communist years, the situation in Croatia and Slovenia requires deeper analysis. The general opinion about public presence of churches in countries seems also to not be in line with the general level of religiosity or with secularization or revitalization tendencies in respective countries.

A similar picture transpires from the answers (not presented here in detail) to the question of whether the public is satisfied with the general development of big Christian churches in the last ten years. A substantial majority in almost all countries opted for the middle position – neither unsatisfied nor satisfied – followed by those who opted for the satisfied position. The middle position got a bit less support in 2007 than in 1997.

Tables 7.3 and 7.4 show interesting views on the role of churches in contemporary societies. First, it is discernable that generally, the social role of churches is not seen to be in contradiction to the development of democracy, although there are some divisions in this view. Disagreement is particularly high in Slovenia and the Czech Republic and agreement exceptionally high in Romania, followed by Poland and Bulgaria. Further, agreement is much higher in 2007 than in 1997 in Romania and Poland. This is of particular interest, as religion (and particularly the Catholic Church) was a crucial factor in the democratization of previous communist states (Casanova, 2001). It is clear that support is higher in all countries concerning economic development and the possible ethical role of religion than it is concerning the case of democratic development, even though there is still a high level of rejection in Slovenia and the Czech Republic. This level of support obviously reflects transitional economic problems (like the rise of unemployment and poverty) and widespread opinions that the economic development during

Table 7.3. "For strengthening democracy is it important to ensure that churches would have a role to play?" (%)

Country	Disagree		Neither agree, nor disagree		Agree	
	1997	2007	1997	2007	1997	2007
Bulgaria		18.4		34.5		47.1
Croatia	34.0	38.1	32.6	26.1	33.4	35.8
Poland	34.7	27.3	31.6	22.7	33.7	50.1
Romania	19.3	9.8	29.3	17.8	51.4	72.4
Slovakia	27.0	33.3	34.7	31.3	38.3	35.4
Slovenia	27.0	58.7	27.2	24.3	27.9	17.0
Czech Republic	40.7	52.7	31.4	26.2	27.9	21.1
Hungary	30.3	35.0	27.8	27.6	41.8	37.4

Table 7.4. "For the economic development of our country, is it important to follow the moral principles of religion?" (%)

Country	Disagree		Neither agree, nor disagree		Agree	
	1997	2007	1997	2007	1997	2007
Bulgaria		15.8		30.1		54.1
Croatia	35.1	28.1	32.1	27.6	32.9	44.4
Poland	26.0	18.3	28.4	20.6	45.7	61.1
Romania	20.6	4.7	26.7	17.4	52.7	78.0
Slovakia	34.0	28.3	34.0	30.9	32.1	40.7
Slovenia	50.6	47.7	26.8	29.5	22.6	22.7
Czech Republic	45.8	42.7	29.4	30.6	24.8	26.7
Hungary	34.1	29.3	28.2	25.8	37.6	45.0

1990s was not in accordance with ethical principles and thus only widened social inequalities. Opinions welcoming the role of churches in disputed aspects of social development are also visible from other survey questions and can partly explain the relatively high social support of the social role of churches in some countries.

The 2007 questionnaire (in contrast to the 1997 questionnaire) included many new questions about the social role of churches, including the three presented in Table 7.5. General support for at least the first two categories ("Europe needs Christianity to preserve social spirit needs" and "Christianity strengthens freedom in Europe") is considerable, with the notable exceptions of Slovenia and the Czech Republic. In Croatia, Slovakia and Hungary less than half of the population show their support, while in other countries

Table 7.5. Attitudes to the general role of churches in Europe – those who agree (%) (2007)

Country	Europe needs Christianity to preserve social spirit needs	Christianity strengthens freedom in Europe	God should have been mentioned in the European Constitution
Bulgaria	63.6	64.2	46.0
Croatia	43.0	49.5	33.1
Poland	59.3	66.5	53.2
Romania	75.2	80.0	66.2
Slovakia	46.4	48.9	38.2
Slovenia	19.5	24.1	15.8
Czech Republic	24.6	30.9	9.3
Hungary	48.7	49.4	26.5

popular support is quite high. However, divisions clearly exist regarding mentioning God in the European Constitution: high support (more than 50 percent) is visible only in Romania and Poland, with a little less than 50 percent in Bulgaria. It is obvious that the support expressed for the general role of churches in Europe is not extended to the political realm (the issue of God in the European Constitution).

This last hypothesis is further justified by a series of questions (not shown here in the tables) which measured attitudes toward particular social and religious roles of churches, such as to educate and raise people in faith, to support and foster relations between people, to alleviate social needs, to teach people to be more attentive to each other, to participate in public life, to strengthen the national spirit, to support morality, to reconcile people with each other, to take an official position on important social issues and to teach people to help the needy. These statements can be classified as religious (e.g. to educate people in faith), moral-social (e.g. to foster relations or to teach people to be more attentive), and as more social-political (to alleviate social needs or to take an official position). The answers show that, in these first two general issues, support of church involvement is particularly high in almost all countries, ranging usually from 60–90 percent. In the last group of (sociopolitical) issues, support is a bit lower, but in the majority of countries it is still above 50 percent. In line with that, the official participation of churches in public life is supported, though not unanimously. Concerning all of the above classified issues, two countries stand out as exceptions: Slovenia and Romania. In Slovenia support is the lowest, while in Romania it is the highest.

Figure 7.4. "Is it appropriate when the big Christian churches deal with…?" – "yes" responses (%)
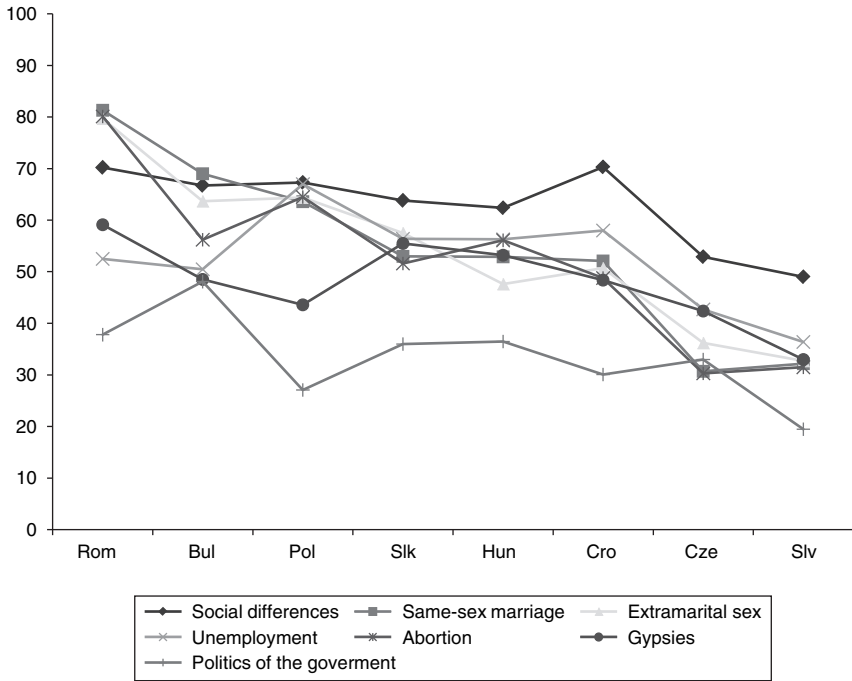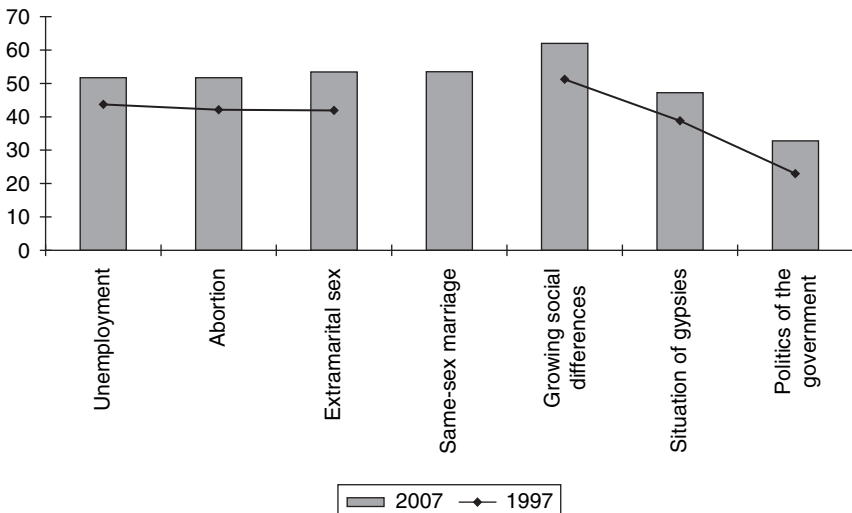

Figure 7.5. "Is it appropriate when the big Christian churches deal with…?" – "yes" responses for all countries (%) (except Bulgaria in 1997)

Acceptance of the voice of big Christian churches depends on the issue at stake, but ranges from general acceptance (about 50 percent or more) in most cases to general nonacceptance in the case of the politics of the government (Figures 7.4 and 7.5). Of particular interest is that the level of acceptance is much the same in, for example, the cases of unemployment and abortion, which are very different issues. Moral statements about issues of sexuality usually provoke opposing attitudes and heated social debates. The highest acceptance rate concerns growing social differences, showing that this is the most pressing social issue in all post-communist societies. Although the picture is not unambiguous, there is a general acceptance of churches' authority, but not at the levels of politics.

The crucial insight into the role of churches in post-communist societies comes from the questions (Figure 7.6) about church institutions like kindergartens, schools, retirement homes, hospitals, unions and media: do we have too little of them or too many? Do we want to have them or not? Most importantly, who should finance them? These questions also illustrate respondents' views on the ability of state and different private institutions (profit or nonprofit) in satisfying their social needs.

These results show that there is, in general, very high acceptance of different church institutions, particularly kindergartens, retirement homes and hospitals and less acceptance in the case of schools. Obviously, there is much space for church-owned institutions in connection with unfavorable social situations

Figure 7.6. "Would you say that the churches and religious communities still have too little, or already have too many, of the following institutions?" – "already too many" responses (%) (2007)
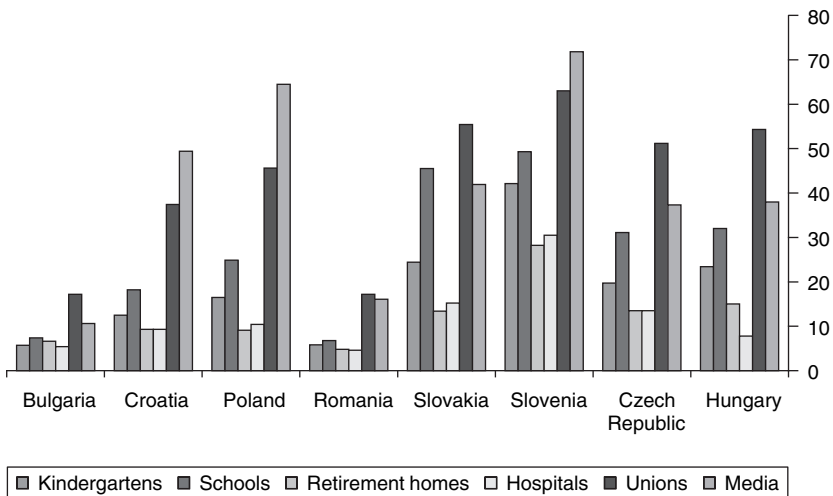
and particularly with the lack of social services governments have been able to provide. The least acceptance is for unions and media, although in that last case acceptance differs much between countries, ranging from 89.4 percent in Bulgaria to only 28.2 percent in Slovenia. Slovenia is the country with the lowest acceptance regarding all issues. Also concerning all these issues, the Czech Republic is not similar to Slovenia (as it is in the other previously analyzed questions) but to countries with generally higher acceptance rates.

Data from Table 7.6 indicates different views about donations to churches, which is demonstrated by the majority of answers being affirmative in Croatia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, whilst not in other countries. However, donations to churches also depend on the specific system of financing of churches in respective countries, which is not further elaborated on. Age differences are visible in a sense that in all countries, the elderly support the church through donations more than their younger counterparts. Concerning the religious self-estimation, more religious obviously support the most, while in general in more religious countries (Croatia, Poland and Romania) even those who are partly religious or to some extent nonreligious support considerably. That points to the importance of the general religious climate in a given society, or to the general role of a (dominant) church that obviously has a considerable social role beyond a purely religious one. Concerning the gender differences, women in general support more, although there are differences that can be explained by the particular situations of different countries.

Readiness to pay regular contributions to churches is not supported by a majority, except in Romania. Even in the more religious Poland and Croatia, readiness is expressed by less than 50 percent of respondents. Obviously, there are many reasons for this, and the economic situation is the most important one: even before the 2009–10 economic crisis, the post-communist countries were still catching up very slowly to Western Europe's economic level, meaning that a considerable proportion of their populations suffer rather poor living conditions. There are age differences, but they are not as consistent as they were in the question about donations to religious communities (Table 7.6). The individual level of religiosity has a considerable impact and in terms of gender, women are more ready to give money than men. Interestingly, readiness to pay was higher in 1997, particularly in Croatia, Poland and Slovenia.

Although it is not easy to draw any conclusion as different issues provoke different viewpoints, some patterns of responses are still detectable among countries. Romania, Poland and (to a lesser extent) Bulgaria are countries in which approval of the public and social role of churches is the highest. It can be even said that Romania is a unique case, with particularly high approval of religious influence in all social issues. Slovenia and the Czech Republic are at the other end of the spectrum, though we can observe significant approval

Table 7.6. Donations to religious communities or paid contributions to the church (%) (2007)

2007	Apart from occasional donations, have you or someone from your family during the last year given a donation to a religious community or paid a contribution to the church? ("yes" answers in %)								
Age	Bulgaria	Croatia	Poland	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia	Czech R.	Hungary
18–29	13.3	58.9	57.7	68.0	53.2	39.5	11.2	28.2
30–39	16.8	61.6	61.4	76.1	61.8	44.8	20.5	30.1
40–49	17.1	68.4	63.8	80.5	56.0	39.8	26.2	38.4
50–59	22.1	60.7	69.7	76.5	66.5	49.4	23.3	40.6
60+	21.6	73.3	75.2	81.6	71.7	61.7	32.9	55.4
Religious self-perception								
Very religious	43.8	84.5	77.4	87.5	86.7	89.0	78.5	76.9
To some extent religious	24.9	69.2	67.8	77.6	71.9	69.1	61.2	53.8
Neither religious nor nonreligious	8.7	48.7	48.9	60.8	38.9	36.0	26.0	18.4
To some extent nonreligious	6.8	41.9	43.1	45.9	32.0	25.2	13.9	5.0
Absolutely nonreligious	9.3	10.4	20.0	71.4	13.7	6.5	3.3	8.6
Sex								
Male	16.0	62.3	64.3	75.2	57.3	41.1	18.3	37.6
Female	20.5	68.8	66.9	77.3	65.3	54.5	27.3	41.8

Table 7.7. Readiness to pay regular contribution to the church / religious community of church taxes (%) (2007)

2007	If it would be necessary for supporting your religious community, would you be ready to pay a regular contribution of church taxes to the church/religious community? ("yes" answers in %)							
Age	Bulgaria	Croatia	Poland	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia	Czech R.	Hungary
18–29	27.6	42.5	40.1	84.0	39.5	19.5	14.9	33.3
30–39	45.5	42.6	38.4	89.8	51.5	20.1	12.3	36.0
40–49	35.8	43.2	46.0	89.4	49.0	23.1	23.0	47.5
50–59	35.3	50.8	41.3	89.6	57.0	32.5	18.2	49.4
60+	30.9	41.2	53.7	91.8	61.8	43.3	31.7	57.7
Religious self-perception								
Very religious	58.3	66.8	58.6	94.2	86.1	78.7	77.4	78.6
To some extent religious	46.6	41.1	45.6	91.0	58.7	44.7	49.3	65.4
Neither religious nor nonreligious	21.8	22.5	24.0	79.2	27.3	15.9	18.7	24.5
To some extent nonreligious	14.3	21.4	16.7	54.5	17.4	3.7	5.6	20.0
Absolutely nonreligious	16.7	3.4	23.1	42.9	2.2	0	4.5	8.5
Sex								
Male	33.2	39.6	40.8	88.3	43.6	24.1	17.6	39.8
Female	35.2	46.8	46.9	89.0	58.3	33.5	22.8	50.8

of church ownership of social institutions in the Czech Republic. Croatia, Slovakia, Hungary and (again to a lesser extent) Bulgaria occupy the middle of the spectrum. This grouping is similar to the previous analysis (same pool of data), which also detected three groups of countries (Ančić, 2011). The highest social expectations from religion are to be found in Romania and Poland. The second group consists of Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Croatia, while the lowest approval is noted in the Czech Republic and Slovenia. However, the factorial analysis extracted two factors, the first one being the sociocultural role of religion and the second one being the sociopolitical role of religion (Ančić, 2011).[8] Respondents from Romania and Poland are more in favor of a sociocultural role of religion, respondents in Bulgaria and Croatia are against it and Slovaks and Hungarians are in between.[9] Concerning the sociopolitical role, it is widely accepted in Romania, less accepted in Bulgaria and least accepted in Slovakia, Croatia, Poland and Hungary.

Religion, Church-State and Public Social Expectations: Concluding Notes

The main aim of this chapter was to give an overview of the development of church-state relations in Western and Central Eastern Europe and to demonstrate that there is no unique post-communist case. Post-communist countries differ greatly from each other (concerning both legal arrangements and sociological profiles). The above analysis shows that there are, in fact, not many differences between Western and Central Eastern (post-communist) countries as they face a very similar problem: how to balance historically shaped church-state relations that favored traditional churches with the rising of religious (and in general, sociocultural) pluralism.[10] As in Western Europe, there are different ways of dealing with pluralism and of rearranging church-state relations after the collapse of communism (Table 7.1).

The principal concern of this chapter is whether there has been a connection between the religious profile of countries and their church-state relations and

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8 Sociocultural factors consist of items such as: "religion can give spiritual comfort, reconcile people, support morality, support relations between people," etc., while the sociopolitical factor refers to participation in public life, holding of official positions on important social issues and strengthening of the national spirit (Ančić, 2011).

9 It is very important to recognize that these factors do not operate in Slovenia and the Czech Republic, probably due to a very low acceptance of analyzed items in these two countries.

10 Though this chapter analyzes mainly Central Eastern European countries, this claim is based on the available literature about Western Europe, partly presented in the subchapter "Comparative Framework: Church and State in Western Europe."

indeed, between church-state relations and public expectations about the social role of religions. The main argument is that public social expectation is the relevant factor for studying church-state relations and that this factor has been neglected so far in sociological studies. The analysis confirmed these assumptions to a great extent. It is observable that there is no clear link between a simple account of religiosity and church-state relations. However, if Table 7.1 is to be read in light of responses *about* religiosity, then even though the simple link is missing, one can conclude that there has been slightly stronger restriction and state involvement in countries with higher religiosity (with the notable exception of Bulgaria, although despite a lower level of religiosity there is a high confessional belonging in Bulgaria). Social expectations make the picture a bit more consistent as in general, higher religiosity also means higher social expectations and higher social involvement of traditional churches. Two things are important here. The first is that in the majority of countries the public (according to survey results) welcomes the social role of religion (particularly that of big Christian churches) and moreover, that this role embraces the strengthening of democracy across different governmental issues and the church ownership of different social institutions.[11] Simply, the significance of the social role of big churches is evident and is the factor that greatly influences church-state relations. Second, there are notable differences among post-communist countries. The Slovenian and Czech respondents are much more against the social role of religion (particularly of traditional religions), and these are at the same time countries in which differences between religions with privileges and religions without privileges are not so large. In terms of church-state relations, Hungary is similar to these two countries and is always somewhere in the middle in terms of social expectations. Slovakia and Croatia are countries with high or moderate religiosity, moderate social expectations and (consequently) countries that approve the significant role of traditional religions and allow these religions moderate social involvement. Poland is also a country with moderate state involvement, but with a more significant role for traditional churches. Bulgaria and Romania have many similarities in terms of higher state involvement, higher social expectations and somewhat higher restrictions toward nontraditional religions, although Bulgaria is a country where religiosity is high on the basis of confessional belonging and lower on the basis of religious self-identification. As underlined several times in the chapter, Romania is a country with exceptionally high religiosity considering all indicators. Bulgaria and Romania are also Orthodox countries in which state involvement in religious matters is historically

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11 The role of churches in the welfare field has been an important aspect of the development of modern European societies, and despite the secularization process, remains of continuing importance (Van Kersbergen and Kremer, 2008; Opielka, 2008; Van Kersbergen and Manow, 2009). This analysis is yet to be done for Central Eastern European countries.

higher than in Catholic or Protestant countries. That points to other social and cultural factors that are relevant for the creating and sustaining of church-state relations, which are not elaborated in this chapter.

As the intention of the chapter was also to introduce post-communist church-state relations to the general discussion about church and state, this last section will briefly discuss the findings in the context of possible future research. Namely, there are at least two visible contradictions in church-state relations in many European countries, post-communist countries included. They are normatively and at least ideologically devoted to concepts of "separation," "neutrality" and "equality," but at the same time continue with the different regulation of different religions. Secondly, there are marked differences between countries that at the ideological or normative levels supposedly follow the same or very similar principles. Historical influence, as already explained, is one of main reasons for this phenomenon (Madeley, 2003; Ferrari, 2008; Casanova, 2008). Still, the question remains as to why the histories continue to be so powerful with respect to rapid social changes in contemporary societies. Gunn (2006) underlined that it is not only history per se but *perceived national identity* or *founding myth* that country has about itself.

> Thus, I hypothesize, the differences among these countries cannot be explained simply by their histories and different legal systems and cultures, but also by understanding the "founding myths" and the "perceived identities" that are widely (and naively) shared by the populations… Those who are responsible for regulating religion…will often see "neutrality," "equality" and "nondiscrimination" not through some relatively "objective" lens, but through the rose-colored glasses of the founding myths and perceived identities. (Gunn, 2006: 37)

That fact is also underlined by other authors, like Casanova (2007, 2008) who points to how collective European identity has been questioned and shaken by the role of Islam and other immigrant religions which increasingly influence contemporary Europe. Similarly, Hervieu-Léger (2006) emphasizes the importance of historical and religious context for current European public debates on social and ethical issues, claiming that although religious institutions lose power, symbolic structures they shape have a remarkable capacity to influence the local culture. This indicates a need to complement studies of church-state relations with more general studies about the challenges of identity construction in contemporary social processes and the contemporary social significance of religion beyond the secularization trend and debates.

This is an approach that is very relevant for both Western and Eastern Europe. However, in an account of religious development in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), Borowik (2007) listed five reasons for distinguishing CEE

from the rest of Europe when discussing the role of religion: (1) Christianity arrived later here than in the West; (2) this is the area of parallel existence of Latin and Orthodox Christianity; (3) religion was consolidated at the same time as and was an important factor in nation and state-building processes; (4) CEE felt the influence of strong antireligious and antidemocratic communism; and (5) religion is a part of the total social transformation after the collapse of communism. It is not certain to what degree these reasons distinguish Eastern Europe from the West, but reasons 3, 4 and 5 explain the importance of religion to the post-communist region for state- and nation-building (Zrinščak, 2002, 2006; Marinović, Jerolimov and Zrinščak, 2006). That means that for historical reasons, religion is in Central Eastern Europe far more involved in contemporary social processes in comparison to Western Europe, although recent developments in different Western European countries might suggest that differences between Western and Eastern Europe are not so profound.

Another important issue that has to be further researched is the connection between church-state relations – or, more clearly, church-state separation – and democratic development. This question has dominated sociological research in post-communism, as the issue of minority religion has been studied from the point of view of both separation provisions and human rights and religious freedom provisions. Without going into detail, it can be said that the connection exists but is not particularly strong. Fox (2008b) found that state religious exclusivity is connected to poor human rights records, but that this relationship is weaker for Western democracies and that the reason might be a high respect for human rights in liberal Western Europe irrespective of church-state relations. Similarly, Stepan (2001: 222) argues that the construction and reconstruction of tolerance, not the conceptual separation of church and state, influences democratic development and religious freedom in Europe. Furthermore, the degree of separation of state and churches at least in Europe does not have any significant influence on religious vitality (Pollack and Pickel, 2009). However, people expect much from churches and although there are normative expectations that churches should respect functional differentiation in modern societies (Pollack and Pickel, 2009), the situation has been (as explained in this chapter) extremely complicated. Simply, three concepts are crucial and should be further researched in relation to each other: "church-state," "public social expectations" and "religion and identity formation."

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