

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES'
RELIGIOSITY. EVOLUTIONS IN THE LAST DECADE

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Abstract. The paper aims to study in an empirical manner the dimensions of religiosity in the last decade in Central and Eastern European countries (CEE) by analysing the evidence of religiosity from the perspective of Norris and Inglehart's thesis that a key factor driving religiosity is represented by the feelings of vulnerability to physical, societal, and personal risks. As such, the paper comprises (1) specifications on (a) religiosity and dimensions of religiosity, (b) the theoretical context and (c) historical context of religiosity after the Eastern Bloc's deconstruction, (2) evidence of religiosity – "believing and belonging" – and of patterns of religiosity in CEE countries.

Keywords: *Religiosity; Believing; Belonging; Secularization*

The assumption of the paper is that the registered levels of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries' religiosity in the last decade are part of a trend that reconfirms the thesis of the dynamics of religiosity according to the degree of development and modernization of societies and the reciprocal thesis of secularization based on *existential security* formulated by Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart.

As such, the paper contains specifications on (a) religiosity and the dimensions of religiosity, (b) the theoretical and (c) historical context of religiosity after the Eastern Bloc's deconstruction, (c) evidence of religiosity – "believing and belonging" – and models of religiosity in CEE countries in the last decade.

Theoretical Context of CEE Religiosity

Comparative studies conducted in political science, sociology or anthropology on the evolution of religion, following complex historical and transnational patterns, the level of denominational institutionalized religion and that of individual religiosity, both the belief system and the action system – "involving formal rituals and symbolic ceremonies to mark the major passages of birth, marriage and death, as well as the regular seasonal celebrations", as Durkheim

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pointed out, all with “an essential function for society as a whole, by sustaining social solidarity and cohesion, maintaining order and stability, thereby generating collective benefits”¹ – use religiosity as the predominant model of analysis².

In the “schematic” form of empirical research, religiosity is expressed in *religious values*, having as indicators the importance of religion and the importance of God; *religious beliefs*, indicated by adherence to beliefs within each religion, such as Christian faith in God, life after death, heaven, and hell; moral attitudes toward issues such as abortion, marriage, divorce, work and gender equality; *religious orientations* or *religious culture* – Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim, Mosaic, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, etc.; *religious participation*, indicated by attendance at religious services, daily prayer or meditation, and *religious political activism*, having as indicators: membership of religious groups and civic organizations and support for religious parties³. It should be noted that in recent decades the authors have argued and tried to demonstrate “how religiosity is systematically related to (i) levels of societal modernization, human security, and economic inequality; (ii) the predominant type of religious culture in any nation; (iii) generational shifts in values; (iv) different social sectors; and (v) patterns of demography, fertility rates, and population change.”⁴

In the Western literature of the last seven decades, religiosity has been predominantly analysed on the background and within the theory of secularization. In Bryan Wilson’s formulation from 1966⁵, now a reference, the secularization thesis sustained that the nature and status of religion has changed fundamentally in the modern societies, that religion has lost its influence at societal, institutional, and individual level. According to Wilson, the individual secularization involved both the decline of community and the process of socialization. Bryan Wilson’s and, in a 2002 updated form, Steve Bruce’s secularization theory argued that the modernization brought about a continuous decline of all forms of religiosity, of “the power, popularity and prestige of religious beliefs and rituals.”⁶

¹ Through the faith-based voluntary and charitable organizations, but also through experiencing “a sense of common identity.” See Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, 2nd edition, Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011 (2004), p. 9.

² Even if the theory of modes of religiosity “is still embryonic and further developments need to be operated empirically,” understanding of modes of religiosity as “*tendencies* toward particular patterns of codification, transmission, cognitive processing, and political association,” either in the imagistic form of fragmented ritual traditions and cults, or in that of the revelations encoded in doctrinal bodies – “transmitted through routinized forms of worship, memorized as part of one’s ‘general knowledge,’ and producing large anonymous communities” – help to explain religious traditions that “may be associated more or less strongly with different categories or strata of religious adherents.” Harvey Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons: Divergent modes of religiosity*, Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 188, p. 1.

³ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *op. cit.*, p. 15. These values, beliefs, orientations, forms of participation and political activism have been considered in other contexts as representing dimensions of religious vitality.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

⁵ See Bryan R. Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society: Fifty Years On*, edited with Commentary by Steve Bruce, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016 (1966).

⁶ See also Gert Pickel, “Religiosity in European Comparison – Theoretical and Empirical Ideas”, in *Religion and the Conceptual Boundary in Central and Eastern Europe: Encounters of Faiths*, edited by Thomas Bremer, Basingstoke, Hampshire/New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 184; and Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2002, p. 44.

As such, secularization theory has constituted for a time the “paradigm for the study of religion,”⁷ a paradigm that, according to Steve Bruce, combined “an assertion about changes in the presence and nature of religion, and a collection of related explanations of those changes.”⁸ Defined by Karel Dobbelaere as a “multi-dimensional concept,” secularization has been analysed in terms of three dimensions, “by using the terms ‘laicization – for the societal or macro level, ‘religious change – for the organizational or meso level, and ‘religious involvement for the individual or micro level,”⁹ with the specification that “the concept of secularization should be used only if one referred to all three levels at the same time” and that “*la laïcisation*” should be considered “as a subcategory of societal and organizational secularization.”¹⁰ In this perspective, the *societal secularization* has been defined – both as a latent process of modernity and as a result of deliberative policy – as “the shrinking relevance of the values, institutionalised in church religion” (Thomas Luckmann), and the loss of “social function of societal legitimation” of the religion.¹¹ The *organizational secularization* has been distinguished as “modernization of religion”, decline in church orthodoxy and adaptation of denominations to the secular values of society (“to the secularized society”), whereas the *individual secularization* has been characterized as decline in involvement in churches and denominations, the compartmentalization of “the individual’s meaning system,” and the separation of the religion from other areas of life.¹²

The theory of secularization has been but amended and nuanced since, as has shown Peter Berger, one of its originally important maintainers, “secularization theory has turned out to be empirically untenable.”¹³ According to Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, after 2000, the “thesis of the slow and steady death of religion has come under growing criticism,” the secularization theory “currently experiencing the most sustained challenge in its long history.”¹⁴ Although it was assumed, in different formulations, “by nearly everyone studying religion in the modern world,” and although certain realities have supported the notion of secularization, according to Berger, there were facts and evolutions misinterpreted or interpreted as being exclusively relevant in terms of secularization and not as

⁷ See Peter L. Berger, *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age*. Boston/Berlin, De Gruyter, 2014, p. IX.

⁸ Steve Bruce, “Secularization and the Impotence of Individualized Religion”, *The Hedgehog Review*, Spring & Summer, 2006, p. 35.

⁹ Karel Dobbelaere, *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels*, 2nd printing, Bruxelles/Bern/Berlin/Frankfurt am Main/New York/Oxford/Wien, P.I.E. – Peter Lang, Presses Interuniversitaires Européennes Bruxelles, “Gods, Humans and Religions” No.1, 2004 (2002), p. 13.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 13, p. 14. Dobbelaere specified that, according to Françoise Champion, the process of laicization is typical of countries with a Catholic tradition, since the Catholic Church assumes as vocation to impose its moral views on social life, values which may conflict with those (“values emancipated from religion”) advocated by the State. Champion indicates the “logic of laicizing” in countries of Catholic tradition as being different from that of Protestant tradition countries. See Françoise Champion, “Les rapports Eglise-Etat dans les pays européens de tradition protestante et de tradition catholique: essai d’analyse”, *Social Compass*, Vol. 40, Issue 4, 1993, pp. 592-602.

¹¹ Karel Dobbelaere, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

¹² See *Ibidem*, pp. 17-28, pp. 29-44.

¹³ Peter L. Berger, *op. cit.*, p. IX.

¹⁴ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

a different challenges to religious faith¹⁵. Beyond those who continued to defend secularization theory, “a relatively small group of scholars,” there were many who adopted “revised versions of the secularization theory.”¹⁶ Among the main recent of them is situated Peter Berger’s “new paradigm,” a paradigm of “two pluralisms – the co-existence of different religions and the co-existence of religious and secular discourses” – that is meant for “the understanding of modernity and religion.”¹⁷

An important amending belongs to Thomas Luckmann, who presented in his *theory of individualization* or of religious privatization – “the invisible religion”¹⁸ – the religious belief as an anthropological constant and explained for both Western and Eastern Europe the decline of involvement in the churches concurrently with the consistent individual religious belief¹⁹. In Grace Davie’s characterization of modern societies, this religiosity implied a “believing without belonging,” the modernization promoting the pluralization of religion, religious lifestyles, and syncretism.²⁰ For Luckmann, the religious values were not lost in the modern society, but the relevance of institutionalized religion has declined in the favour of individualised/privatised/“invisible” religion. Within it, the “great” other-worldly transcendence has “shrank” to this-worldly middle and small transcendences in daily life.²¹ Religion has become privatized because it changed its location – in individual projects of self-fulfilment²² – and thereby it has become “invisible” for the social scientific study of religion.

¹⁵ In order to present these misinterpretations, Berger wrote *The Desecularization of the World* (1999), *Questions of Faith: A Skeptical Affirmation of Christianity* (2003), *Religious America, Secular Europe?* (2008), *Dialogue Between Religious Traditions in an Age of Relativity* (2011), *Questions of Faith: A Skeptical Affirmation of Christianity* (2003). They nuance repeatedly the work within he has examined secularization as a problem of plausibility and legitimation, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967). But modifications to the secularization theory he already introduced in his *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (1969), in which discussed the “secularization of consciousness,” and in *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (1980), in which considered Christianity’s “plausibility structure,” provided through social affirmation, as being in continuous decreasing affirmation and even refutation. In order to avoid their complete demise, the secularized population and churches “turn to the individuals’ this-worldly needs.” See Björn Mastiaux, “Secularization: A Look at Individual Level Theories of Religious Change,” April 18, 2012. <https://religiousstudiesproject.com/2012/04/18/bjorn-mastiaux-secularization-%E2%80%93-a-look-at-individual-level-theories-of-religious-change/>

¹⁶ Expression used in Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *op. cit.*, p. 4. In order to exemplify a radical revision of the secular theory, they cited Peter Berger, “one of the foremost advocates of secularization during the 1960s”: “The world today, with some exceptions... is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever. This means that a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labelled ‘secularization theory’ is essentially mistaken.” Peter Berger, *The Desecularization of the World*, p. 2, apud Norris and Inglehart, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁷ See Peter Berger, *The Many Altars of Modernity*, ed. cit., p. IX.

¹⁸ *Das Problem der Religion in der modernen Gesellschaft* (1963), published as *The Invisible Religion* (1967) and *Die unsichtbare Religion* (1991). Luckmann’s book has opened, according to Ian Tyrrell, the series of works on “religious individualisation which were developed by German sociologists to the extent that it has regarded as a specifically German paradigm.” Hermann Tyrell, “Säkularisierung – eine Skizze deutscher Debatten seit der Nachkriegszeit”, p. 60, apud Annette Wilke, “Individualisation of religion,” *International Social Sciences Journal*, Vol. 66, Issue 213-214, 2015, p. 263.

¹⁹ See for a systematization of the basic theories about the development of religion Gert Pickel, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

²⁰ See Gert Pickel and Kornelia Sammet, “Introduction – Transformations of Religiosity in Central and Eastern Europe Twenty Years after the Breakdown of Communism”, in Gert Pickel, Kornelia Sammet (eds.), *Transformations of Religiosity: Religion and Religiosity in Eastern Europe 1989 – 2010*, Springer VS, 2012, p. 10.

²¹ Annette Wilke, *loc. cit.*, p. 263.

²² Thesis expressed in Grace Davie’s concept of “believing without belonging” from hers *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging* (1994).

Promoting the thesis of the privatization of religiosity has given way, especially with the debates dedicated to the sociological theory of individualization, to the thesis of the individualization of religiosity. As part of a broader trend of religious revitalization, the individualization of religiosity was advocated by Ulrich Beck in a perspective in which "secularization does not mean the demise of religion and faith, but instead the development and massive dissemination of a religiosity that is based increasingly on individualization," the defining factor of this development being "the decoupling of (institutional) religion and (subjective) faith"²³ and the imposition as "new religious 'authority principle' " of the "sovereign self" which has "A God of one's own". Between the individual religion, "which tends to ignore or outright reject the claims of truth and authority that institutional religion raises" reject definitively the claims of truth and authority of the institutional religion, and the institutional religion, which "tends to be critical of 'completely subjective' individualized religion," theology can occupy the mediating position, as showed Veronika Hoffmann.²⁴ In this mediating approach, the basis for further development that could connect the two perspectives is the thesis that "faith and doubt are intimately connected with the shaping and reshaping of personal identity", but that this does not imply the complete abandonment of "claims of intersubjective rationality and the possibility for truth". Sure enough, religious beliefs and practices depend on the "personal resonance" from the side of the individual, but "the distinction between 'manner' and the 'matter' of individualization makes an 'outside grounding' of this personal resonance conceivable."²⁵

The *theory of pluralisation and vitalization* has constituted another significant revision of the theory of secularization. Its authors, Rodney Starke, Roger Finke and Laurence Iannaccone²⁶, theorists of so-called "rational choice" or "market" in religion, have sustained as basic thesis the constant supply for religiosity and religious belief. For them, in Western Europe, especially in United States, the development of religiosity depended from the level of pluralisation of the society, which was essential for citizens' possibility to "choose rationally" their religious affiliation, following their preferences. They rejected the idea of secularization at the individual level and, contrary to Berger, considered the religious pluralism as "a prerequisite for sufficient supply to meet the diverse kinds of religious demand."²⁷ In relation to CEE, they considered that their theory explains also the revitalization of religiosity after the fall of repressive political systems and "rebuilding of a religious market."²⁸

²³ Ulrich Beck, *A God of One's Own. Religion's Capacity for Peace and Potential for Violence*, translated by Rodney Livingstone, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2010, p. 29, p. 26; originally published as *Der eigene Gott*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008.

²⁴ Veronika Hoffmann, "Individualised versus institutional religion: Is there a mediating position?," published by De Gruyter, 2019, p. 1134. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110580853-054>.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 1135.

²⁶ Especially in *Deregulating Religion: The Economics of Church and State* (2007).

²⁷ Björn Mastiaux, *loc. cit.*, p. 2.

²⁸ Gert Pickel, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

Starting from the idea that the traditional secularization thesis needs updating although “the concept of secularization captures an important part of what is going on,” Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart significantly refined the theory of secularization through the thesis of secularization based on *existential security*. They sustained that the “feelings of vulnerability to physical, societal, and personal risks are a key factor driving religiosity” and that “the process of secularization – a systematic erosion of religious practices, values, and beliefs – has occurred most clearly among the most prosperous social sectors living in affluent and secure post-industrial nations.”²⁹ The consequences for religiosity are significant at the societal level (socio-tropic) and the personal level (ego-tropic). The growing security or the greater protection, control, longevity, and health tend to reduce the importance of religious values, of traditional spiritual values, beliefs, and practices.³⁰ Just like the higher degree of education and cognitive awareness of human rationality, as Weberian theory suggests, could undermine religious beliefs.³¹ According to Norris and Inglehart, “the importance of religiosity persists most strongly among vulnerable populations, especially those living in poorer nations, facing personal survival-threatening risks.”³² Their thesis is that religiosity is in connexion with existential insecurity, that “the absence of human security” is “critical for religiosity”. What they have shown is that the evidence concerning the churchgoers during last fifty years confirm the phenomenon of secularization in Western rich nations, with the notable exception of United States. The second thesis of this theory is that, despite the secularization specific to rich countries, “the world as a whole now has more people with traditional religious views than ever before – and they constitute a growing proportion of the world’s population.”³³

An increase in the complexity of the secularization theory has realized Robert Putnam by sustaining the thesis on the role of religion/secularization in the social capital. Putnam examined the modes in which secularization contributed to an erosion of social capital in post-industrial societies, especially in the United States, and demonstrated that it has manifested as a process of universal decline of engagement in communities and as erosion of community activism³⁴. This “striking fact about the dynamics of social capital” is explained as a significant shrinkage of “a primary reservoir” of “the primary spheres of community life” – faith, work, and politics –, namely a decrease of “a primary source of identity, social support, political leverage, community involvement, and friendship...”³⁵

Most of the researchers who dealt with religiosity and social capital in the EEC countries and who were mainly “divided into two factions” – the advocates of an *early secularization* in the development of religion in Eastern Europe

²⁹ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

³¹ See *Ibidem*, p. 64.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 4.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

³⁴ See Robert D. Putnam, “Conclusion”, in *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society*, edited by Robert D. Putnam, Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 409.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

(Steve Bruce, Detlef Pollack, Olaf Müller), who considered that the development of religion in our part of the world will be similar to the tendency of Western European secularization, and the proponents of the *revitalization of religion* thesis (Miklos Tomka, Paul M. Zulehner, Inna Naletova) –, indicated the high probability that the market model would in fact be inadequate as a general explanatory model of religiosity in Eastern Europe³⁶, as well as the complementary application of the ideas proposed by the thesis of individualization of religiosity and the non-discussion of these ideas as an explanatory model in itself suitable for Eastern Europe³⁷. The results obtained by them seemed to only partially suggest the emergence of non-institutionalized forms of religion, completely privatized in Eastern Europe after the changes of political regime, instead they indicated the consolidation of institutionalized forms. As a result, most researchers considered it plausible to identify in the case of CEE countries of the development of different processes in parallel, given that extensive modernization is taking place in these countries, and the *de facto* restoration in the CEE, by revitalization, of the “normal” level of the religion that existed before the establishment of communist power.³⁸

Historical and Present Context of CEE Religiosity

From the perspective of the historical context and political system that marked the evolution of religion and religiosity, it should be noted that, compared to the period before 1945, when “religion had been one of the *main pillars of the societal order and the state*, under the Communist era it was *persecuted* and pushed to the private sphere.”³⁹ The Communist power has been militantly anti-religious and anticlerical, the churches have remained the only institutions representing the traditions and the continuity with the previous system, and also they became the *single institution of opposition*. But the public role of the churches was eliminated by the nationalization of ecclesiastical institutions, rigidly control of clergy, imprisoned of priests who resisted, persecution of numerous religious activities – such that strongly declined the number of those who declared themselves religious –, regulation of the personal religiosity – which declined spectacularly starting with *sixties* –, prohibiting religious education – such that “a part of the up-growing generation received no religious upbringing.”⁴⁰ “Religion was confined to the churches and private life,” its

³⁶ See the studies comprised in *Transformations of Religiosity: Religion and Religiosity in Eastern Europe 1989 – 2010* (2012).

³⁷ Given that, as Müller pointed out, “so far, there is not much evidence that the de-institutionalization of religion will be completely compensated for by an increase in individualized, syncretistic religiousness”. Olaf Müller, “Religiosity in Central and Eastern Europe: Results from the PCE 2000 Survey in Comparison”, in Gert Pickel, Olaf Müller (Eds.), *Church and Religion in Contemporary Europe. Results from Empirical and Comparative Research*, Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009, p. 81.

³⁸ See Gert Pickel and Kornelia Sammet, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

³⁹ Miklós Tomka, “Religiosity in Central and Eastern Europe. Facts and Interpretations”, *Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe*, III, June 12, 2010, p. 1. <http://rascee.net/index.php/rascee/article/viewFile/33/20>.

Tomka's characterization of this context is precise and expressive.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

public role declined, like as “the incidence of religiosity,” but “religious holidays were still celebrated, religious superstitions were still practiced, children were brought to the surviving priests secretly for baptism.”⁴¹ Both the church and the faithful resisted, but the communist atheism has constituted itself as “an inevitable process of secularization.”⁴²

The present situation of religion in CEE is complicated not only by the effects of its history in Communist era but also by the fact that the second half of the 20th century has constituted a process of modernization. As a result, the secularization was concomitant with the modernization, “the peculiarity of the CEE situation” being “that the effects of the totalitarian system have been mixing with those of the changes in the socio-economic system”: industrialization, urbanization, the rise of the middle class, increasing level of education, the general weakening of traditions, and the increase of personal autonomy. The implications manifested themselves, as in Western societies, in the atomization of society, lack of communities, withdrawal into private life, furthermore, in the confusion of values and goals.⁴³ “Since 1989⁴⁴ religion has resumed to be a *public actor* whose precise role, however, has not been finalized yet (Bremer 2008, Pollack, Borowik, Jagodzinski 1998, Spieker 2003, Tomka, 2010)”⁴⁵. The *threefold optical illusion* to which religion has fallen prey were, in Tomka’s view: “not so much religion rather the *measure or standard applied to the evaluation of religion changed*,” “many details and forms of the hidden religious life became visible and public” and “the believers were not afraid any more to profess their faith publicly,” and “religion, so far isolated in privacy, became a topic of public life”, and the “ecclesiastical dignitaries became celebrities.”⁴⁶

In the first decade of the processes of changing the social systems the CEE population experienced a significant religious growth, while their Western counterparts witnessed religious decline, the public esteem of religion, but the process was not equivalent with a religious upswing. All in all, the evidence indicates that “the interest in religion (and perhaps also religiosity) strengthen, the interpretation become higher and practice of religion deviate from traditions as they were established by the churches; and religiosity becomes more diverse and individualistic.”⁴⁷ Based on the data obtained in empirical research⁴⁸ but also

⁴¹ Andrew M. Greeley, *Religion in Europe at the End of the Second Millennium: A Sociological Profile*. New Brunswick/London, Transaction Publishers, 2003, p. 90.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 89.

⁴³ See Miklós Tomka, *loc. cit.*, p. 1, p. 4.

⁴⁴ According to Tomka, in 1989 occurred “the second cataclysmic event” of the “artificial *social experiment*”, after the significant changes produced in the end of the Second World War and the Communist takeover. This “second cataclysmic event” “again precipitated radical changes in the socioeconomic relationships” of CEE and, specifically, the current situation of religion.

⁴⁵ Miklós Tomka, *loc. cit.*, p. 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

⁴⁷ See *Ibidem*, p. 8.

⁴⁸ Realized by Need and Evans. See Ariana Need and Geoffrey Evans, “Analyzing patterns of religious participation in post-communist Eastern Europe”, *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 52, issue 2, 2001, pp. 229-248.

on qualitative case studies⁴⁹ comparing patterns of religiosity in EEC countries up to 2000, Norris and Inglehart pointed out aspects that confirm the secularization theory: the tendency of a linear decline in religious participation especially of the younger generations; low levels of religious participation (similar to those of the most secularized Western European societies) of important segments of the population in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, who declare their faith in God and adherence to the Orthodox tradition; a landscape of religiosity quite similar to that of Western Europe after the end of the episode of short-lived religious resurgence in the early 1990s; a superficial knowledge of the faith. Moreover, they considered that the data confirmed their thesis: "religiosity is far stronger in poorer developing nations than in affluent societies,"⁵⁰ but they have shown that connecting the process of secularization to human development and existential security in many CEE countries highlights a much more complex long-term erosion of religiosity than the modernization theory suggests. Thus, in countries where the living standards have risen gradually, religiosity tend to erode gradually over succeeding birth cohorts, as predicted by traditional secularization theory. In contrast, declining living standards and the disappearance of prosperity between 1990 and 2000⁵¹ meant a resurgence of religiosity in the short term in low – to moderate – income societies, especially in the more vulnerable segments of the population, as the dramatic case of Yugoslavia's disintegration and the outbreak of the bloody civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina has highlighted ethno-religious identities and the importance of religiosity in the Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim communities coexisting in the Balkans. As such, the most relevant factors regarding CEE religiosity are the experiences of societies during the transition and consolidation of democracy, their historical religious culture, the relationship between church and state under communism, the success of their economic adjustment to the free market in the last decade, their integration in international organizations such as NATO and the European Union, as well as the degree of homogeneity or ethno-religious fragmentation. In general, Norris and Inglehart support similar conclusions to those formulated by Gert Pickel after applying the "map" of macro-structural lines to the CEE countries – socio-economic, socio-political and cultural-ethnic, starting from the hypothesis that: "if a low level of modernization, large Catholic population and a non(post)socialist system come together, the affiliation to church should be the highest, as well as the proximity to religious beliefs. If the situation is described by the combination of negative structures in the country, the religious indicators are likely to be very low. Between these two poles, a large spread of combinations is conceivable."⁵²

⁴⁹ See Irena Borowik, "The Roman Catholic Church in the process of democratic transformation: The case of Poland", *Social Compass*, Vol. 49, Issue 2, 2002, pp. 239-252, and "Between orthodoxy and eclecticism: On the religious transformations of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine", *Social Compass*, Vol. 49, Issue 4, 2002, pp. 497-508.

⁵⁰ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

⁵¹ "Widespread feelings of existential insecurity were also engendered by the sudden introduction of neo-liberal free markets, which produced severe recessions, throwing millions of public sector employees out of work; and where household savings are threatened by hyperinflation...; where political stability and government leadership is undermined by scandals over corruption or a banking crisis; and where ethnic conflict sharply worsens or where domestic security is threatened by secessionist movements..." *Ibidem*, p. 114.

⁵² See Gert Pickel, "Religiosity in European Comparison – Theoretical and Empirical Ideas", *ed. cit.*, p. 190.

Map of macro-structural cut-lines: CEE countries

Cut-lines on the macro level	Socio-economic	Socio-political	Cultural-ethnic	Countries
Eastern Europe Mixed countries	•	–	–	East Germany, Estonia, (Latvia)
Eastern Europe Catholic countries	•	–	+	Poland, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary
Eastern Europe	+	–	•	Bulgaria, Romania
Orthodox countries	+	–	•	Serbia-Montenegro
Eastern Europe Muslim countries	+	–	+	Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania

Source: Gert Pickel, 2008: 188. Steps represent different degrees of integration: + = high position on this cleavage, • = middle position, – = low position; for the socio-economic cleavage: + = low economical standard (regional relation); for the social-political cleavage: + = a non post-socialist system; for the cultural-ethnic cleavage: + = a large Catholic population

In Pickel's characterization (a) the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia) (and East Germany) – nations with a relatively high socio-economic level, with a very small Catholic population⁵³, a socialist history and good traditional relations with Western Europe meet the conditions for a shallow religious affiliation; (b) the Eastern European group comprising countries with a predominantly Catholic population, a middle economic situation and a relatively good position compared to their Eastern European neighbourhood (Czech Republic, best economic development, Hungary, Slovenia, Poland, Slovakia and Lithuania); (c) the countries of south-eastern Europe with a predominantly Orthodox population (Bulgaria, Romania and Albania), different in structure but similar in general, in their poor stagnant economic situation, living conditions and the “linking power of the Orthodox Church”; (d) Muslim countries in Eastern Europe (Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina), open to more orientations and religious beliefs due to the strong traditional relationship with religion in Islam, with a low level of well-being.

Regarding the indicators of individual integration in the church, the evaluation of the trust in the church as an institution showed that, in general, the trust in the church is higher in Catholic countries and that there are large differences regarding the trust in the church in CEE countries: in Romania, Albania, Poland or Latvia, most citizens trust the church and religious institutions; confidence in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Slovenia is quite low. In Romania, confidence in the national Orthodox Church is very high and indicates its role in the nation-building process. In a comparative perspective, using WVS and EVS data,

⁵³ Need and Evans also found that Catholics in Central and Eastern Europe are generally more rigorous in their religious practice than Orthodox Christians. See Ariana Need and Geoffrey Evans, *loc. cit.*

however, Pickel⁵⁴ showed a declining trend in church and religion trust in most CEE countries, as Norris and Inglehart pointed out as a clear pattern of the decline in all indicators of religiosity in the CEE.

In terms of religious practice, Pickel highlighted Catholics as the most fervent practitioners of all other faith groups, the Eastern European countries with a predominantly Catholic population having the highest attendance at church (Poland, Slovakia, Croatia, and Lithuania); weaker religious participation of Protestants who, due to the high level of modernization, have a very low ecclesiastical affiliation (like those in the Scandinavian countries); middle position of Central European countries (Latvia, Hungary, Czech Republic) in terms of membership in religious groups and church attendance; the largest distancing (alienation) from the church in the Baltic countries (Estonia and Latvia), the countries with the highest level of socio-economic well-being and the lowest Catholic population in the CEE, but with the lowest religious and ecclesial affiliation and the lowest level of religious participation; the special situation of the Eastern Orthodox countries: Romania particularly involved in religious practice, Bulgaria less, in their condition of the mediation between the Protestant and Catholic countries.

In terms of faith in God, the Baltic states, mostly Protestants, appear at a great distance from the subjective component of religiosity, these nations, as Pickel pointed out, showing the strongest opposition to religion, similar to those in Western Europe; countries such as Poland, Albania and Romania, record the most important results, the extremely high faith in God and the self-assessment of religiosity requiring, according to Pickel, a connection with the historical development of these countries. Pickel observed that there are no major differences between Catholic countries in Western and Eastern Europe in this regard, but that the differences are substantial between Protestant countries in Western and Eastern Europe, given the reactions of Protestant churches to socialist anti-religious repression. In this context is to be situated the extremely low religiosity of the CEE Protestant countries, primarily Estonia. Pickel referred to the large number of those who doubted the idea of a personal God as the basis of the Christian faith, as an indicator of a slight decline in clear faith and the formation of an uncertain religious feeling or a tendency to move away from traditional religiosity to a personal religiosity.

In the same line of interpretation, Norris and Inglehart found as obvious patterns, on the one hand, the decline of all indicators of religiosity in successive birth cohorts and more significant religiosity of older generations relative to young people; on the other hand, the important differences in the levels of religiosity of post-communist societies, similar to those already observed in Western Europe. For example, Poland, Romania, and Bosnia-Herzegovina tend to be consistently more religious than East Germany, Estonia, and Montenegro, in the case of these transnational contrasts, which may be due, according to

⁵⁴ See the data, indicators, and measurements, as well as the author's interpretation, in Gert Pickel, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-211.

Norris and Inglehart, to factors such as the historical relationship between church and state or differences in human development, the regularities may be as follows: countries where the older generation is more secular show relatively more uniform patterns for successively born cohorts, while countries where the older generation is relatively religious show a more dramatic decline of religiosity among younger cohorts. As such, the authors believe that there are much stronger indicators of historical change in some countries than in others. For instance, the most marked generational contrasts, such as those in Hungary, Moldova and Romania, are less evident in countries with a more secular generation of older people, such as East Germany, Estonia and Latvia. These trends are similar when comparisons are based on the importance of religious values, attendance at worship services, or the frequency of prayer, which indicates a significant phenomenon.⁵⁵

Evidence of CEE Religiosity in the Last Decade

An analysis of the WVS⁵⁶ data registered in the last decade in the CEE countries brings a number of confirmations of the trends already highlighted. Thus, the thesis “religiosity is much stronger in developing nations than in rich societies,” sustained by Norris and Inglehart, is verified in the latest data on the indicators of values, beliefs and religious participation that we consulted.

Important in life: Religion

Q6: “Indicate how important is in your life: religion” (%)

CEE countries	Very important	Rather important	Not very important	Not at all important	NSWE countries	Very important	Rather important	Not very important	Not at all important
Albania	24.4	48.7	15.7	10.8	Austria	13.9	29.1	32.5	23.4
Bosnia Herțegovina	39.8	41.2	12.8	5.6	Denmark	5.7	13.6	45.7	34.2
Bulgaria	21.9	36.7	26.2	12.3	Finlanda	11.0	20.7	41.0	26.2
Croatia	20.6	42.4	21.2	13.7	France	14.3	22.8	26.2	36.1
Czech Republic	8.3	12.1	26.8	48.8	Great Britain	15.8	21.2	35.4	27.4
Estonia	6.5	16.4	38.4	36.9	Greece	54.8	26.8	11.9	6.2
Hungary	16.1	29.0	33.6	20.3	Germany	13.5	24.1	34.9	26.2
Lithuania	12.2	33.1	35.8	15.7	Italy	24.9	40.4	24.9	9.4
Muntenegru	63.1	22.8	7.7	5.5	Netherland	12.8	17.5	35.5	33.6

⁵⁵ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁵⁶ *World Values Survey*, the seventh wave: 2017-2020. Because *European Values Study* had not released data for the last years, we used the Joint EVS/WVS 2017-2021 Dataset Results by Country.

North Macedonia	53.7	28.5	19.1	6.1	Norway	11.2	23.4	46.1	19.1
Poland	37.3	40.8	13.5	7.0	Portugal	20.1	41.7	24.0	13.6
Romania	48.2	32.1	13.9	5.5	Spain	17.2	20.9	31.2	30.7
Serbia	25.2	41.8	24.4	7.1	Sweden	9.5	18.5	42.3	29.4
Slovakia	24.4	28.6	28.0	18.3	Switzerland	11.5	20.9	35.0	31.7
Slovenia	11.5	25.0	38.3	24.9					

Source: World Values Survey Wave 7: 2017-2020. Online Data Analysis
<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

Importance of God

Q164. "How important is God in your life? Use a scale to indicate. 10 means 'very important' and 1 means 'not at all important'" (%)

CEE countries	Very important	Not at all important	NSWE countries	Very important	Not at all important
Albania	79.9	2.5	Austria	14.4	17.8
Bosnia Hercegovina	50.5	1.8	Denmark	5.3	33.8
Bulgaria	19.6	11.0	Finland	10.8	26.1
Croatia	38.8	10.5	France	13.0	35.2
Czech Republic	9.1	37.4	Great Britain	15.0	34.5
Estonia	9.2	32.6	Greece	44.7	3.9
Hungary	21.0	19.3	Germany	15.5	27.0
Lithuania	15.1	9.0	Italy	20.1	10.5
Montenegro	40.0	2.5	Netherland	9.1	37.5
North Macedonia	55.1	5.3	Norway	9.7	38.4
Poland	39.0	5.9	Portugal	26.3	7.9
Romania	59.2	2.0	Spain	11.0	20.0
Serbia	23.0	7.0	Sweden	9.3	46.5
Slovakia	17.1	13.4	Switzerland	15.0	22.7
Slovenia	13.2	25.3			

Source: World Values Survey Wave 7: 2017-2020. Online Data Analysis
<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

Compared to EVS 2008 data, religion has become even more important in Albania (in 2000, 16.2% of Albanians considered religion very important in their lives and 36.8% as quite important), Northern Macedonia (in 2000, 43% of Macedonians considered religion very important in their lives), Montenegro (in 2000, 37.1% of those surveyed considered religion very important in their lives and 40.8% as quite important) and even Poland (in 2000, 31.8% of Poles considered religion very important in their lives) and remained important in

countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Romania, Serbia. However, it decreased slightly in importance in Slovenia, remained the lowest in Estonia (6.5%), and low in the Czech Republic (8.3%).

God is considered very important in life in percentages of over 50% in Albania (79%), Romania, Northern Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, then in Montenegro (40%) and Poland (39%). The lowest confidence was maintained in Estonia (9.2%) and the Czech Republic (9.1%).

Compared to northern, western and southern European countries, which mostly account for less than 20% to the indicator “very important in life: religion,” with the notable exception of Greece (54.8%), Italy (24.9%) and Portugal (20.1%), CEE countries register much higher percentages. The same report is maintained regarding the importance given to God. There exists the same significant difference between the CEE and North, West and South European countries: most of NSWE countries registered percentages up to 15%, some of them but below 15%: Denmark (5.3%), the Netherlands (9.1%), Sweden (9.3%), Norway (9.7%), the exceptions being Portugal (26.3%), Italy (20.1%) and, most notably, Greece (44%).

Believe in:

Q165	God
Q166	Life after death
Q167	hell
Q168	heaven
(%)	

CEE countries	God	Life after death	Hell	Heaven	NSWE countries	God	Life after death	Hell	Heaven
Albania	96.4	22.7	22.6	27.1	Austria	67.8	50.1	22.9	37.5
Bosnia Herzegovina	93.4	65.9	72.1	74.4	Denmark	50.4	39.8	9.4	17.8
Bulgaria	68.9	25.0	23.1	25.4	Finland	53.5	35.5	14.5	33.9
Croatia	81.3	51.3	40.1	48.0	France	50.3	41.2	23.5	35.5
Czech Republic	31.0	30.5	16.2	22.4	Great Britain	47.8	41.7	23.9	35.2
Estonia	37.7	35.1	15.1	23.8	Greece	91.7	47.7	44.3	46.1
Hungary	65.1	39.8	25.7	38.6	Germany	57.2	39.4	15.7	31.4
Lithuania	73.6	52.6	40.7	43.2	Italy	76.2	49.4	38.0	44.8
Montenegro	92.8	35.6	52.0	58.0	Netherlands	41.1	38.8	14.4	30.2
North Macedonia	89.7	52.3	47.5	51.6	Norway	45.5	39.3	14.2	34.0
Poland	90.4	64.2	53.4	64.3	Portugal	81.1	32.9	26.1	35.4
Romania	93.0	55.2	55.5	59.9	Spain	64.2	38.1	25.0	33.4
Serbia	82.1	33.4	30.2	35.5	Sweden	34.4	37.8	12.3	28.8
Slovakia	67.1	46.8	37.2	43.9	Switzerland	65.7	50.4	16.9	38.5
Slovenia	58.2	36.1	22.3	30.6					

Source: World Values Survey Wave 7: 2017-2020. Online Data Analysis
<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp>

Faith in God increased slightly in Albania (from 94% in 2000 to 96.4% today) and Montenegro (from 88% in 2000 to 92.8% today), a slight decrease while still maintaining high levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Poland, Croatia, Northern Macedonia, Serbia. The lowest level of faith is that of the Czech Republic (31%). Notable exceptions in the NSWE group of countries – Greece (91.7), Portugal (81.1%) and Italy (76.2) – for levels of faith in God, with higher dominant percentages.

In some CEE countries the level of faith in the afterlife has increased: Montenegro (from 29% to 35.6%), Estonia (from 33% to 35.1%), Hungary (from 36% to 39.8%), but the trend is of slight decrease. Lithuania, Romania, and Poland registered more significant decreases.

A more pronounced downward trend was in the belief in heaven, especially in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, a significant increase in this respect registering only Montenegro (from 38% to 58%). A single other slight increase was marked in Bosnia and Herzegovina (from 70% to 74.4%).

Attending religious services – CEE countries

Q171. "How often do you attend religious services?" (%)

CEE countries	More than once a week	Once a week	Once a month	Only on special holy days	Once a year	Less often	Never, practically never
Albania	2.2	6.8	5.8	37.8	2.8	2.6	41.3
Bosnia Herzegovina	12.3	16.7	14.3	26.6	3.4	12.7	12.2
Bulgaria	2.4	6.3	8.6	41.2	7.1	12.7	20.6
Croatia	4.8	16.9	11.9	23.5	7.8	13.4	12.0
Czech Republic	1.5	5.0	2.4	9.2	9.9	9.7	60.9
Estonia	1.6	2.1	4.3	13.9	12.6	11.2	54.0
Hungary	1.6	8.6	7.0	18.0	6.0	16.9	41.1
Lithuania	1.6	12.1	16.2	37.9	5.6	10.0	15.6
Montenegro	6.7	9.2	20.8	36.2	5.4	11.8	8.2
North Macedonia	11.7	13.0	15.4	33.2	3.4	12.6	8.0
Poland	5.8	41.3	17.1	16.6	3.6	4.7	9.7
Romania	5.5	21.9	16.6	33.6	6.0	8.5	5.0
Serbia	1.3	6.8	12.0	36.2	7.2	18.9	15.5
Slovakia	5.4	21.1	9.5	14.1	4.0	6.3	3.4
Slovenia	1.5	13.7	8.6	25.3	6.3	9.1	35.0

Source: World Values Survey Wave 7: 2017-2020. Online Data Analysis
<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp>

Attending religious services– NSWE countries

Q171. “How often do you attend religious services?” (%)

NSWE countries	More than once a week	Once a week	Once a month	Only on special holy days	Once a year	Less often	Never, paractically never
Austria	2.0	11.1	13.8	22.9	6.3	11.7	31.9
Denmark	1.9	1.5	3.9	25.4	14.8	16.8	36.2
Finland	1.5	3.1	6.5	16.8	17.4	24.9	29.5
France	2.4	5.5	4.5	10.6	7.0	6.9	62.9
Great Britain	4.4	6.8	5.4	8.2	7.9	7.1	60.2
Greece	3.6	18.1	22.8	34.9	4.0	10.4	5.2
Germany	1.4	7.1	10.6	16.8	8.4	14.0	40.9
Italy	5.0	21.7	14.0	23.0	6.1	6.0	22.2
Netherland	3.6	6.9	5.8	9.8	7.4	9.1	56.6
Norway	2.4	3.2	6.2	24.5	13.3	9.9	40.4
Portugal	3.2	14.3	12.3	15.1	4.5	18.9	31.1
Spain	3.2	13.5	6.1	13.0	4.3	12.2	46.2
Sweden	1.3	4.0	4.4	12.2	10.4	16.2	51.4
Switzerland	1.7	6.5	7.9	13.5	11.1	12.1	46.8

Source: World Values Survey Wave 7: 2017-2020. Online Data Analysis
<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

It can be said that only just the percentages of religious participation express the degree of secularization of the CEE countries. Standard participation, let's say, or the attendance of once a week in the religious service recorded percentages of up to 10% in six of the CEE countries for which we found recordings in World Values Survey Wave 7: 2017-2020 (Estonia, Albania, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Czech Republic, Serbia and Hungary) and up to 20% in five other countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Lithuania, Northern Macedonia and Slovenia). Notable exceptions are Poland (41.3%) and, with lower percentages, Romania (23.9) and Slovakia (21.1%). Huge percentages of religious non-participation, “almost never”, were recorded in the Czech Republic (60.9%), Estonia (54.0%), Hungary (41.1) and Albania (41.3), countries of almost the same calibre of secularization as France (62.9%), the United Kingdom (60.2%), the Netherlands (56.6%) and Sweden (51.4%).

Religious person

Q173. Whether or not you attend religious services, would you say that you are a religious person, a non-religious person, or an atheist? (%)

CEE countries	A religious person	Not a religious person	An atheist	NSVE countries	A religious person	Not a religious person	An atheist
Albania	79.0	16.7	2.4	Austria	57.9	32.0	5.5
Bosnia Herzegovina	82.8	10.2	2.3	Denmark	53.8	33.8	11.3
Bulgaria	61.8	29.2	3.9	Finland	49.1	38.6	8.6
Croatia	78.0	9.1	5.9	France	40.5	34.5	22.7
Czech Republic	32.4	45.9	12.3	Great Britain	36.9	36.9	12.6
Estonia	34.4	54.4	8.1	Greece	81.4	11.9	11.9
Hungary	53.2	36.9	6.8	Germany	50.5	34.8	10.9
Lithuania	79.4	12.1	2.1	Italy	74.0	15.1	6.2
Montenegro	83	8.7	2.5	Netherlands	42.2	44.4	10.1
North Macedonia	77.3	10.0	3.0	Norway	37.3	53.0	8.8
Poland	83.0	10.0	3.3	Portugal	69.0	20.2	7.9
Romania	78.7	16.8	0.8	Spain	47.4	35.7	14.3
Serbia	73.9	17.3	4.1	Sweden	26.7	51.5	19.2
Slovakia	68.8	21.4	5.4	Switzerland	47.6	40.8	10.0
Slovenia	66.3	16.6	13.3				

Source: World Values Survey Wave 7: 2017-2020. Online Data Analysis
<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

Religious belonging or affiliation

Q289. Do you belong to a religion or religious denomination? (%)

CEE countries	Yes ⁵⁷	No	NSVE countries	Yes	No
Albania	93.9	6.0	Austria	83.1	26.7
Bosnia Herzegovina	96.1	3.2	Denmark	81.6	18.5
Bulgaria	73.4	25.7	Finland	72.8	26.8
Croatia	80.9	19.0	France	41.7	58.1
Czech Republic	22.0	75.9	Great Britain	38.4	61.4
Estonia	18.9	80.7	Greece	95.3	3.8
Hungary	44.0	55.7	Germany	64.0	35.8
Lithuania	85.5	14.1	Italy	76.9	22.5
Montenegro	70.6	27.6	Netherlands	35.5	62.2
North Macedonia	91.7	8.0	Norway	66.0	36.0
Poland	90.6	9.2	Portugal	75.3	24.6
Romania	95.3	3.7	Spain	62.6	37.5
Serbia	73.8	25.8	Sweden	60.4	38.5
Slovakia	69.8	29.4	Switzerland	69.7	29.8
Slovenia	63.8	35.6			

Source: World Values Survey Wave 7: 2017-2020. Online Data Analysis
<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

⁵⁷ The percentages represent those who indicated their affiliation with Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy (Russian/Greek/etc.), Judaism, Islamism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Neo-Protestantism (Pentecostals, Baptists, etc.), another religion or denomination.

Confidence: Churches

Q64. How much confidence do you have in the church (mosque, temple, etc.) (%)

CEE countries	A great deal	Quite a lot	Not very much	None at all	NSWE countries	A great deal	Quite a lot	Not very much	None at all
Albania	18.7	34.0	29.1	16.1	Austria	9.1	27.0	36.3	25.1
Bosnia Herzegovina	23.1	33.4	28.4	14.2	Denmark	96.6	49.4	29.5	8.2
Bulgaria	9.5	25.6	44.4	17.4	Finland	9.5	45.5	33.3	10.1
Croatia	9.6	27.6	38.1	22.6	France	8.5	30.5	28.7	27.0
Czech Republic	5.0	11.5	30.6	45.8	Great Britain	9.0	22.1	47.0	20.2
Estonia	8.0	25.9	26.2	19.6	Greece	28.1	37.3	23.0	10.2
Hungary	15.2	24.9	32.9	23.7	Germany	5.1	26.4	42.8	20.2
Lithuania	18.6	49.4	17.8	4.3	Italy	16.1	36.5	29.9	12.9
Montenegro	45.2	34.4	11.8	5.8	Netherlands	5.9	16.4	41.0	32.9
North Macedonia	43.2	31.2	12.6	12.1	Norway	7.8	42.4	40.1	8.9
Poland	19.0	36.2	31.1	11.3	Portugal	19.3	40.3	22.3	16.9
România	41.0	28.3	21.8	8.1	Spain	13.2	19.3	30.6	35.8
Serbia	19.5	36.2	29.9	12.3	Sweden	6.9	40.5	37.3	13.1
Slovakia	14.8	34.5	28.1	19.5	Switzerland	4.1	29.5	44.0	20.8
Slovenia	6.5	16.0	42.7	33.7					

Source: World Values Survey Wave 7: 2017-2020. Online Data Analysis
<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp>

The religiosity expressed through religious participation as belonging to the institutionalized religion, maintained at levels as low as those registered in NSWE countries, is at odds with that expressed by self-assessment of subjects as religious persons and by declaring the religious affiliation. The belonging to an institutionalized religion is seriously outclassed by a declared affiliation with a religion or denomination. This is a very high percentage in the CEE countries, with the exception of Estonia (80.7% of respondents say they do not belong to any religion or denomination, a percentage not found in the NSWE countries), the Czech Republic (75.9 declared themselves as non-religious or non-denominational) and Hungary (55.7%), countries competing with NSWEs such as the Netherlands (62.2% declared without religion or denomination), Great Britain (61.4% declared without religion or denomination) and France (58.1 declared without religion or denomination).

The high percentages register under the indicator “religious person” indicate also the extent to which subjects self-assess themselves in terms of private and individualized religiosity, “hidden religion,” or project their religiosity into charitable, philanthropic, individual or collective, religious or non-religious

actions. These percentages are quite far from those that express confidence in the Church, at a difference of about 50%.

Consequently, the data available justify, from my point of view, the conclusion that in the CEE countries: (a) the downward trend in the number of practicing believers and in the confidence of subjects in the Church expresses a downward trend of the religiosity and institutionalized religion; (b) the declared level of religious affiliation indicates a tendency to increase private and individualized religiosity, regardless of the connotations that are attached to these forms of religiosity; (c) the level of attachment to the religious values and beliefs connected with that of religious participation indicates some current patterns of religiosity: Catholic, relevant to a strong religious culture, strong ecclesial affiliations, a special relationship between religious beliefs and political issues (valid especially in the case of Poland, less in the case of Slovakia, Croatia and Lithuania); the Orthodox one, relevant for a strong confessional heritage and the affirmation of a distinct sense of national identity (especially valid for Romania); the Protestant one, in which religious subjectivity, religious affiliation and institutional affiliation were significantly reduced; (d) the effects of the degree of societal modernization are reflected in the levels of confidence in the church, religious subjectivity and faith in God, and also in the declared denominational membership; (e) the degree of development of the countries with the highest level of institutionalized religiosity confirms the thesis put forward by Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehard, namely of religiosity as a manifestation of the "feeling of vulnerability to physical, societal and personal risks," of existential insecurity, so how (f) the degree of development of the countries with the lowest level of institutional and general religiosity largely confirms the theory of secularization.

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