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Angela Ilić

Churches in the Face of Political and Social Transition

German-Serbian Ecumenical Consultations 1999–2009

Kirchen und der politisch-gesellschaftliche Wandel

Deutsch-serbische ökumenische Begegnungen 1999–2009

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List of Abbreviations

English

CCC	Christian Cultural Center
CED	Central European Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church
ECHR	European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
SOC	Serbian Orthodox Church
WCC	World Council of Churches
CEC	Conference of European Churches

German

CDU/CSU = Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/ Christlich Soziale Union	Christian Democratic political parties with a shared representation at the German federal parliament
DDR = Deutsche Demokratische Republik	German Democratic Republic, GDR
DBK = Deutsche Bischofskonferenz	German Bishops' Conference
EKD = Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland	Evangelical Church in Germany
KAS = Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung	Konrad Adenauer Foundation
OKR = Oberkirchenrat (male)	Superintendent
OKRin = Oberkirchenrätin (female)	Superintendent

Other

CCEE= Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae	Conference of European Bishops
COMECE = Commission des Episcopats de la Communauté Européenne	Conference of Bishops of the European Community
Mons.	Monsignor

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Methodological Considerations

1.1 Introduction to the Topic

At the beginning of October 1999, only a few months after the end of the war in Kosovo and the NATO air strikes over Serbia and Montenegro, high-ranking representatives of the Central European Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Church in Germany (*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* – EKD) met in Berlin to discuss the situation in Serbia. With the coming of winter and with hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons, the country was facing a potential crisis. »Humanitarian aid before the winter is the need of the hour,« echoed the call from the participants. The aim of the encounter was to explore how the churches and their humanitarian agencies in both countries could help in specific ways, but as the press release issued after the meeting stated, »the medium and long term goals [of cooperation] must be to integrate the Balkans and to include a democratic Serbia and Montenegro in the new pan-European politics.«[1]

After that first meeting, eight more rounds of German-Serbian interchurch consultations, the so-called *Serbien-Tagungen* (Serbian Meetings) took place, continuing through 2009. Between 1999 and 2005 meetings were held every year; after that every two years. Their location from 1999 until 2002 was in Germany; beginning in 2003 it alternated between the

[1] »Erklärung nach Gesprächen mit Kirchenleuten und Kommunalpolitikern aus Serbien – Bischöfe Koppe und Atanasije: ›Humanitäre Hilfe vor dem Winter ist das Gebot der Stunde‹« (Declaration After Talks with Church Leaders and Local Politicians from Serbia – Bishops Koppe and Atanasije: ›Humanitarian Help Before the Winter is the Order of the Day‹), *Dokumentation der Serbien-Tagungen der Serbischen Orthodoxen Diözese für Mitteleuropa, der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland und der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz 1999 bis 2004* (Hannover: Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, 2005), 12.

two countries. The ecumenical scope of the consultations was broadened in 2000 to include Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant participants, with the joining of the German Bishops' Conference of the Roman Catholic Church (*Deutsche Bischofskonferenz* – DBK). Through lectures, discussions and meetings in working groups, participants focused on the role of churches in Serbian society and the challenges that confronted them. The nature of this dialogue was primarily not theological in nature. This stands in stark contrast to most other bilateral or multilateral dialogues involving Orthodox churches in Europe. While not avoiding theological and ecclesiological questions altogether, these interchurch consultations centered primarily on political and social subject matters, all of which predominantly related to the relationships between church and society and between church and state and involved a significant number of participants representing governments and political parties. The history, substance and outcomes of this process stand in the center of attention in this monograph. The goal of the research is not to produce an exhaustive historical narrative of the meetings but to examine their content and locate them in the broader political, social and ecumenical context within which they took place, while highlighting some of the most significant developments along the process.

1.2 Methodology & Source Materials

The consultations between the Evangelical Church in Germany, the German Bishops' Conference of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Serbian Orthodox Church are approached from three directions and from an interdisciplinary point of view, with the thematic focus of the meetings determining the theoretical and methodological approaches taken. First the broader context of the meetings is presented, followed by a detailed study of the actual consultations, and finally their visibility and impact is surveyed.

The book begins with a discussion of the most relevant and important theories from the field of religious studies, including the current sociological trends concerning religion in Europe, churches and modernity, and church and state relations. In addition to exploring the existing scholarship on ecumenism and interreligious / intercultural dialogue, some of the recent key developments in ecumenical relations in Europe are discussed. As part of this endeavor, it is unavoidable to address perceptions and representations of the self and other, which is achieved through presenting select theories of identity construction and nationalism studies, along with memory studies.

In order to understand the background and the regional context within which the consultations were initiated, a brief historical overview is provided, focusing on important developments in the two countries from the mid-18th century onward, paying special attention to the role of religion and religious communities in the process. The historical overview also addresses events and processes of significance that impacted the relationship between the two nations. Finally, it presents the more recent and current political and social developments in both countries and in the world, which shaped the immediate context of the consultations.

In order to approach the actual content of the meetings, the research has examined all the available primary textual, visual and audio materials from each consultation, the preparatory meetings, and – when available – from post-meeting press conferences. These materials include, but are not limited to: minutes of individual consultations, the texts of presentations and lectures held at the consultations, media announcements issued by the participating religious communities before and after the meetings, and reports and summaries of meetings produced by the participating churches. The Evangelical Church in Germany does not consider these consultations as official dialogue, and therefore did not place an emphasis on documenting them in great detail.[2] Additionally, financial support for each meeting varied, so the amount of documents produced and stored after each individual consultation also oscillated greatly. The uneven documentation presented a challenge for the research and much time was spent on locating and assembling the documents in the preparatory phase, often one by one.

Materials from the following nine official rounds of consultations have been analyzed:

1. October 1–3, 1999, Loccum, Germany. Topic: *Framework for the Debate about the Role of Church in Reconciliation and Political Stabilization*.
2. July 4–6, 2000, Berlin, Germany. Topic: *Humanitarian Aid and Democratization in Serbia*.
3. June 6–7, 2001, Berlin, Germany. Topic: *Church and State in Serbia*.
4. July 2–3, 2002, Berlin, Germany. Topic: *How Can Churches Support Building Serbian Society?*
5. September 14–16, 2003, Belgrade, Serbia. Topic: *Church and Identity*.
6. October 31–November 2, 2004, Berlin, Germany. Topic: *East in the West and West in the East*?

[2] Due in part to this position, the *Serbien-Tagungen* are usually referred to as »consultations« or »interchurch consultations,« not as a »dialogue,« throughout the book.

7. November 24–28, 2005, Golubac, Serbia. Topic: *The Clash of Cultures? The Cultural Heritage between Religion and Ethnic Groups: Outlook on the Future of South Eastern Europe*.
8. April 27–29, 2007, Berlin, Germany. Topic: *State and Church in Serbia and Montenegro*.
9. October 19–20, 2009, Fruška Gora, Serbia. Topic: *Church, State, and the Rule of Law*.

1.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

Texts were studied through the methods of critical discourse analysis (CDA) with keen awareness of the environment in which they were produced.[3] Critical discourse analysis has influenced discourse theories throughout Europe in the last twenty years and proved to be a helpful tool in approaching the public documents from the *Serbien-Tagungen*. The beginnings of critical discourse analysis can be traced back to the early 1990s. The critical linguistics school that developed at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s had the most direct influence on it, but CDA has also been impacted by German conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) and by the Cambridge school of intellectual history. The foremost representatives of CDA, Norman Fairclough and Theun van Dijk, have published a significant number of works since then and it was partly in interaction with their literature that the approach to textual analysis in this monograph was formulated.[4]

The linguistic background of CDA is the assumption that language should be understood as both a political instrument and also as social practice. CDA, which has influenced not only political science, but several other disciplines as well, has been concerned with addressing discursive issues of social concerns and inequality. In light of this, Fairclough presents the desiderata for a CDA approach to media discourse by listing – among others – the following components and concerns: the combination of linguistic and intertextual analysis; that »analysis of textual practices should be mapped on to analysis of the institutional and wider social and cultural

[3] The scholarship guiding this part of the research includes Peter K. Manning and Betsy Cullum-Swan, »Narrative, Content, and Semiotic Analysis,« in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 463–477.

[4] See for example Lilie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough, *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

context of media practices;« and that »linguistic analysis of texts should be conceived multifunctionally, and be oriented towards representation and the constitution of relations and identities as simultaneous processes in the texts.«[5]

The Hungarian political scientist Márton Szabó's arguably most influential contribution has been the development of his political discourse theory. As Szabó himself explains, »According to the discursive approach, people are not situated beyond their own texts; rather, they form a reality together with their speeches, in which subject and object, objective and subjective, the signifier and the signified [a reference to Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory], belong together.«[6] This is why participants, their identities, attitudes and roles are analyzed together with the dialogue-related texts and events. Although not every published document in connection with the *Serbien-Tagungen* can be called explicitly political, or was authored by politicians, many of them nonetheless address discursive themes from the political sphere and may therefore be analyzed in part by treating them as politically influenced or motivated texts. Particularly the press releases – which were intentionally written as public texts aiming to represent the dialogue process, the participants and other actors to the general public – were examined in light of Szabó's theoretical framework. A further author whose works were consulted in the methodological preparations is Ruth Wodak, who has authored a number of books on qualitative discourse analysis.[7]

The most important research questions to be answered through the CDA approach included the following: What has been the premise for the ongoing consultations and what were their primary goals? Which issues emerged as central? What was the relevance of these issues at the time within the immediate political and social context? What are different viewpoints on these issues among the participants and how were they being expressed? Which rhetorical tools were used by the different participants to convey their message? What are some of the specific conclusions emerging from the process of consultations?

5 Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (London: E. Arnold, 1995), 33–34.

6 »A diszkurzív szemlélet szerint a beszélve cselekvő ember nincs kívül saját szövegein, beszédeivel együtt egy olyan valóságot alkot, amelyben alany és tárgy, objektív és szubjektív, megnevező és megnevezett összetartoznak.« Márton Szabó, *A diszkurzív politikatudomány alapjai: Elméletek és elemzések* (The Foundations of Discursive Political Science: Theories and Analyses) (Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2003).

7 See for example, Ruth Wodak et al., *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

The press releases issued prior to and following the meetings were analyzed additionally through a five-step process. The first reading of the twenty-one press releases from the nine meetings (only six of these twenty-one were in Serbian) examined the central topics expressed in each of them, any decisions or specific outcomes that resulted from the meeting, and any points of agreement or disagreement among participants that was mentioned in the text. The second reading of the press releases focused on the small building blocks of the text: the choices of words and their usage in the press releases, as well as their frequency. The most frequently used words in each press statement, in descending order, are listed right after the treatment of each text. The analysis examined the most often occurring words and expressions in the text, then evaluated whether those words were being used with positive, negative or neutral denotative and connotative meanings. The trajectory in the use of certain words and concepts was also mapped through the entire period of ten years. These findings are illustrated by charts and graphs in addition to the already mentioned information. The third reading focused on the style in which the documents were written. The fourth reading concerned the authors and/or signers of the press releases and their representations of self and other in the text. The fifth and final reading examined the internal cohesion within the press releases over ten years, in addition to comparing and contrasting German and Serbian press releases to one another.

In addition to the textual analysis, in-depth interviews were conducted with key initiators, organizers and participants of the consultations from the three primary participating church bodies.[8] The interviews aimed to gain insight into what went on behind the scenes, i. e. to glean information that may not be evident in the written materials. The goal was not to interview as many people as possible but rather to conduct qualitative conversations with a few individuals who possessed profound understanding of the entire series of consultations. The questions guiding this part of the research included: Why and by whom was this process initiated? Who decided on the topics to be discussed at the meetings and on what basis were these decisions made? What was the role of the three main partici-

[8] The way interviews were prepared, conducted and evaluated was guided by recent scholarship on oral history. See for example, Alistair Thomson, »Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History,« *The Oral History Review* 34/1 (2006): 49–70; Ulrike Froschauer and Manfred Lueger, *Das qualitative Interview: zur Praxis interpretativer Analyse sozialer Systeme* (Wien: WUV-Univ.-Verlag, 2003); and Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, »Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses,« in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), 157–171.

pating churches within this process and how can their relationship to one another be described – especially in terms of being equal or unequal participants? Where were the major points of agreement and disagreement between the German and Serbian sides? How were these matters of conflict treated at the meetings? Which questions or developments led to unexpected turns along the way?

Since the consultations were bilingual, all the documents that are available in both German and Serbian were studied in both languages. Primary texts concerning the consultations were divided into five categories: 1) project plans; 2) lectures and formal presentations at the meetings; 3) minutes of the discussions; 4) reports from the various working groups to the plenary meetings; 5) official press statements issued after the meetings and/or press conferences. There were a few types of texts that did not fit perfectly into any one of these five categories. Press statements issued prior to the meetings were examined together and according to the procedures of category five. Personal notes, drafts and other documents supplied to the researcher by organizers and participants were analyzed together with the interviews, since these did not qualify as documents or statements that had been written in order to be made public. Texts available from the two off-shoot meetings from the consultations in 2006 – nonviolent conflict resolution workshop for students – and 2008 – seminar for teachers of religious instruction in public schools – were analyzed on the basis of combining the most fitting guidelines and questions from the general analysis used for texts.

As part of the textual and discourse analysis, each text went through at least five different readings, each serving a particular purpose and each driven by one or a cluster of research questions. The concerns that were relevant for all of the textual materials examined included identifying the central topic of the text along with the context within which it was written, linguistic building blocks, and style. Following separate analyses of each text the internal cohesion of all texts within one given consultation was analyzed, for each meeting round. This reading aimed to determine what specific conclusions emerged. A final reading was completed in which the researcher looked for three things. First, signs of trends, developments, and changes over the course of time were noted. Second, texts were given an overall evaluation in light of the principles for ecumenical / interreligious dialogue, to establish how much and how closely they followed these guidelines. Finally, an evaluation of the overall conclusions of the process was made, trying to establish what the responses of the churches should be to certain situations and how the role of the churches was formulated and expressed throughout. This reading also attempted to determine how

this particular series of consultations fits into the larger context of current ecumenical developments in Europe.

Although most of the research focused on the three main protagonists of the process, the role of other churches, religious communities, organizations and individuals representing the political, academic and non-governmental sphere was not overlooked. Among these groups were representatives of minority churches – such as Methodists, Baptists and others – and of the Islamic and Jewish communities in Serbia; the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (especially its office in Serbia), which played a significant role in organizing, funding and co-hosting several events; other associations connected to the relationship between Germany and Serbia – such as representatives of Danube Swabian organizations; and politicians and legal experts from both countries.

The third approach to examining the consultations at hand aimed at identifying outcomes from the dialogue process. This was achieved in two main ways. First, a cursory look investigated the frequency and type of coverage given to select consultations both within the participating churches and in the secular media. Second, it explored what, if any, new initiatives have emerged on the basis of this process – for example, additional, specialized meetings, or forms of cooperation among participating churches in concrete ways. In the conclusion, a general evaluation of this particular process in light of the theories and ground rules about dialogue is provided.

CHAPTER 2

Religion, Identity and Dialogue in Modern-Day Europe: An Interdisciplinary Survey of Selected Trends and Theories

2.1 Introductory Remarks

This book takes an intentionally interdisciplinary approach to examining the subject matter in detail and in a comprehensive manner. The most significant trends in religious behavior and important developments in the study of religion discussed in the present chapter have been selected for their relevance to the current religious situation in the two primary countries examined. The chapter offers relevant background information in the form of theories and literature for a critical exploration of the topic and concentrates on three major theoretical areas. In the first section an exploration of the role of religion in Europe is presented, highlighting some of the significant characteristics of the religious landscape on the continent as a whole. Since churches from two very different regions of Europe stand at the center of analysis, it must be clarified at the beginning how Europe can be defined as an entity and how the divisions within the continent are to be treated. The changing role of churches and of religion in Germany since the end of World War II and the role that the Serbian Orthodox Church has played in Serbian society in recent decades are discussed in broad strokes. The particularities of Eastern Orthodox Christianity within the European context, and especially in relation to European integration, are also explored. Another important aspect of church and society, namely the relationship between church and state, receives additional attention.

The second section introduces some of the theoretical foundations for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue that are referenced throughout the book. This is followed by a glance at some of the present interpretations of ecumenism, particularly by the churches participating in the dialogue process under scrutiny. Specific topics are explored in terms of their relevance for the consultations.

Finally, additional theoretical fields are explored to the extent that they help provide a better understanding of the subject matter under consideration. These include religion and societal memory as well as a brief journey through some of the central intellectual movements within nationalism studies. The exploration of the process of one's self-perception and representation of the other is achieved through theological, anthropological and sociological approaches.

2.2 Considering the Role of Religion in Modern-Day Europe

One of the most fundamental questions that must be answered at the onset of the discussion is a clarification of what is meant by Europe, how it is understood, and based on what criteria it is symbolically divided for the purposes of this book. Based on the way in which one defines and understands Europe, vastly differing lines of division may be drawn up across the continent. If Europe is understood as a space of ideas (*Ideenraum*) or as a common cultural space (*Kulturraum*), then the shared intellectual and cultural heritage determines Europe's outermost borders. Europe can also be theorized as a place of discourse (*Diskursraum*), a reality constructed and therefore existent primarily through and within the intellectual realm, which naturally leads to a very different delineation. While keeping these various approaches in mind, the present work considers not only the shared cultural and intellectual heritage but also the common historical experience to be among the most relevant factors when differentiating between specific regions within Europe.

In contrast to representing Europe as a monolithic whole, it is argued in this chapter that such an approach does not reflect the current religious landscape accurately. Neither does the still oft-used rigid division into the broad categories of Western and Eastern Europe, although several arguments stand in support of it, among them the religious divide between primarily Roman Catholic and Protestant Christian Western Europe and majority Orthodox Christian Eastern and South Eastern Europe.[9] While East and West as geographical designations are undeniable, it should be

[9] One of the central differences between the Western Christian-influenced and Eastern Christian-influenced parts of Europe is a result of the fact that the Western part by and large participated in, and was consequently impacted by, the Enlightenment, while the Eastern and South Eastern portions of the continent mostly did not. This topic is further discussed in Chapter Three. For more on this argument and the historical background, see for example, Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of*

remembered that a functional understanding of the divisions within Europe (whether strictly geographical, ideologically based, religious or cultural) should be less rigid and more nuanced, while also recognizing clearly defined national and regional differences.

Certain commonly used geographical categories attempt to further break down the broad category of Eastern Europe into smaller sections, which allows for a more precise and thorough examination of the specificities and commonalities of religious life. In this book, Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe are identified in the following way: Central Europe refers to the Visegrád countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia;[10] Eastern Europe denotes the countries located east and north east of these four nations: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, the European part of Russia, and the Baltic nations. Finally, South Eastern Europe is used as a collective term to refer to the countries located on the Balkan Peninsula, including all the Yugoslav successor states in addition to Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania – although usually not Greece, unless otherwise noted.[11] There are vast cultural and religious differences among (and even within) these smaller regions: Central European countries have been influenced primarily by Western forms of Christianity (Roman Catholicism and Protestantism); in most of Eastern Europe – except for the Baltic countries and the Western part of Ukraine – Eastern Christianity (Eastern Orthodoxy) is the dominant religion, while in South Eastern Europe Western Christianity, Eastern Christianity and Islam are all represented. As some scholars argue, there are certain commonalities that may make it possible to draw up a historical geography of a distinct Eastern European Christianity.[12]

South-eastern Europe [Variorum Collected Studies 453] (Aldershot: Variorum / Ashgate, 1994).

10 For the history behind the 1991 Visegrád Treaty and for more information on the V4 go to http://visegradgroup.eu/main.php (last accessed July 15, 2013).

11 In the case of a purely geographical division Greece clearly belongs to South Eastern Europe but the particular classification used for the purposes of the present book is based partly on the fact that all the other countries listed above formerly stood under socialist rule.

12 For the extended argument on Eastern European Christianity, see Bruce R. Berglund, »Drafting a Historical Geography of East European Christianity,« in Bruce R. Berglund and Brian Porter-Szűcs (eds.), *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010), 329–371. For a global look at the importance of place in religion, especially as it relates to remembrance and violence, see the edited volume Oren Baruch Stier and J. Shawn Landres (eds.), *Religion, Violence, Memory, and Place* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006).

Whether examining the entire continent or looking only at specific regions, what are some of the trends in the religious landscape that can be observed in Europe today? Statistical data has confirmed the diversity of religious and spiritual beliefs within Europe, although one should treat these figures – as any other statistical information – cautiously, recognizing that they can by no means provide an adequate and accurate measure of the level or content of religiosity. According to the results of a 2005 special Eurobarometer poll concerning in part beliefs and religious values across much of the continent, 52% of respondents answered that they believe that there is a God. The results of the poll showed vast differences among countries, with the highest numbers being measured in Malta (95%), Cyprus (90%), Greece and Portugal (both at 81%) and the lowest percentages in Sweden (23%), Estonia (19%) and the Czech Republic (16%). Germany stood near the middle of the spectrum, with 47%.[13]

In the realm of church and state relations there are also significant differences among European countries. On the one hand, there is observable movement in several – primarily Northern European – countries away from established religion and from traditional religious communities altogether. While in some states such as Great Britain, Greece and Denmark established churches currently remain in their place and in several South Eastern European countries support for established or national churches is evident, disestablishment has occurred elsewhere, most notably in Sweden, where the [Lutheran] Church of Sweden was officially disestablished in 2000. In 2012 steps were also undertaken in Norway toward the disestablishment of the [Lutheran] Church of Norway. In several of the countries with established churches the level of religious engagement – measured for example by regular church attendance or involvement in other religious activities – is at very low levels when compared to statistics in other countries.[14]

[13] »Social Values, Science and Technology,« *Special Eurobarometer* 225, Wave 63.1 (June 2005): 7–8. The sample included respondents from the twenty five member states, from the candidate countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Turkey), and from three of the EFTA [European Free Trade Agreement] countries, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_225_report_en.pdf (last accessed July 20, 2013).

[14] According to data combined from several years of polling by the *European Values Study*, Iceland (2.8%), Denmark (2.9%) and Norway (5.3%), all states with established Lutheran churches, are among the countries with the lowest percentage of those who attend religious services regularly (at least once a week). *European Values Study*, http://www.jdsurvey.net/evs/EVSAnalizeQuestion.jsp (last accessed July 15, 2013).

Overall, a general decline in the size and the influence of traditional and/or established churches can be noted. There are large numbers of people remaining in these churches who are only members on paper but do not actively practice their religion. To use the phrase coined by the English sociologist Grace Davie, these individuals represent the trend of »belonging without believing« – people may still be members of a religious community but their commitment and involvement levels are very low, if at all existent.[15] The countries in Central and Eastern Europe, where, after the fall of socialist regimes, people flocked back to the traditional churches in large numbers, may have been an exception to this trend, particularly during the 1990s. However, with the passage of time, church attendance levels have evened out in many of these countries and are now either stagnating or declining.

Another observable change in the religious landscape across Europe is the growth of confessional and religious diversity. While this development is still most prominent in countries such as Germany, France, the Netherlands and Great Britain, increasing diversity is something most European countries are experiencing today due to the influx of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and guest workers, who usually bring their own confessional or religious traditions from home with them. Growing labor mobility within the continent, especially within the European Union, has also contributed to geographically spreading religious traditions.

The growing degree of ecumenical and interreligious cooperation in a climate of increasing religious diversity is also among the current trends in Europe. Peter Katzenstein and Timothy Byrnes recognize the upsurge in cooperation and emphasize the strengthening of transnational religion in Europe today, asserting that recent enlargements have infused a renewed religious vitality into the European Union and have brought the issue of religion more to the forefront of the European public space.[16] In conclusion, it can be argued that the religious landscape of Europe as a whole has been transformed significantly in recent decades and the churches on the continent are facing noticeable sociological, demographic, political and economic changes.

15 Grace Davie also argues that many in contemporary Europe today are »believing without belonging,« in *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

16 Peter J. Katzenstein and Timothy A. Byrnes, »Transnational Religion in an Expanding Europe,« *Perspectives on Politics* 4/4 (2006): 679–694.

2.2.1 The Changing Religious Landscape in Germany

The above discussed trends are reflected in the current religious landscape of the Federal Republic of Germany as well. According to the European Values Study, church attendance in Germany stood at the average of 10.6% in 1999.[17] Church membership ratios may still be relatively high, compared to other countries, although both the Roman Catholic Church in Germany and the Protestant (*evangelische*) churches have experienced a large number of people officially leaving their ranks (*Kirchenaustritt*). Many of them made this decision in order to avoid having to pay the church tax, which is collected and processed by the government.[18] In Eastern Germany, the number of those withdrawing membership from the Catholic or Protestant churches reached its height in 1992, and although numerically still significant, it has been steadily decreasing since then.[19] The current trend of increasing confessional and religious diversity as a result of immigration can also be observed in Germany today, particularly as the number of foreign-born residents is increasing.

The German reunification in 1990 has produced socially significant trends: among these the most important ones are the internal labor migration from East to West and the difference in income and living standard, which are still higher in the Western regions than in the East.[20] Other indicators, such as the rate of unemployment, also differ between the two parts, with Eastern German *Bundesländer* on average having significantly higher percentages (13.25% in 2008) than their counterparts in Western Germany (7.11%).[21] These factors directly affect the churches in the Eastern parts of Germany as people in large numbers – especially younger ones – are moving westward in search of jobs, and in most cases, end up

17 *European Values Study*, http://www.jdsurvey.net/evs/EVSAnalizeQuestion.jsp (last accessed July 15, 2013).

18 Between 2001 and 2009 the percentage of members in the Roman Catholic Bishoprics and Protestant *Landeskirchen* compared to the total number of residents shrank from 64.4% to 60.6%. Although the rate of those leaving seems to have subsided since the 1990s, still close to 200,000 people choose to withdraw their membership from the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches combined each year. http://www.kirchenaustritt.de/statistik/ (last accessed July 15, 2013).

19 See Detlef Pollack, »The Change in Religion and Church in Eastern Germany after 1989: A Research Note,« *Sociology of Religion* 63/3 (Autumn 2002): 373–387.

20 The average income in the East from dependent employment was in 1998 24%, in 2003 27%, and in 2008 also 27% lower than the average in the West. »Sample Survey of Income and Expenditure,« Statistisches Bundesamt, http://www.destatis.de (last accessed July 15, 2013).

21 *Pocketbook: Germany 2009* (Wiesbaden: Federal Statistical Office of Germany, 2010), 14–19.