Welfare and Values in Europe

Transitions related to Religion,
Minorities and Gender

National Overviews and Case Study Reports

Volume 3

Eastern Europe:
Latvia, Poland, Croatia, Romania

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Coordinator
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Chapter 1 Introduction

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Welfare and Values in Europe

This book is the third in the series of three from the research project Welfare and Values in Europe: Transitions Related to Religion, Minorities and Gender, WaVE for short. The WaVE-project responded to a call by the European Commission’s 6th Framework Programme for research on ‘values and religions in Europe’. The call invited studies aiming ‘to better understand the significance and impact of values and religions in societies across Europe and their roles in relation to changes in society and to the emergence of European identities’. The Commission sought an exploration of how religion is used as a factor in solidarity or discrimination, tolerance or intolerance and inclusiveness or xenophobia. It was looking for insight on ways to ensure the peaceful coexistence of different value systems through a comparison of various policies and practices employed in European countries, and through a consideration of their relative degrees of success. It was the positive response by the European Commission to our proposal in 2005 that enabled the European research group to carry out this project successfully. The project ended formally in March 2009 with an international conference at Uppsala University; the work on these volumes has been completed since then.

The background to the study

The WaVE-project should be seen as part of a wider development of research in religion and society at Uppsala University. It started in the 1990s with a project on church and state in which, amongst other areas, the social/diaconal function of the Church of Sweden was investigated. The separation of church and state in Sweden in the year 2000 was analysed as part of the increasing separation between religion and society, but the study

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1 The project was part of a broader initiative by the Swedish Research Council under the title ‘The State and the Individual: Swedish Society in the Process of Change’. The title of the project is: From State Church to Free Folk Church. A Sociology of Religion, Service Theoretical and Theological Analysis in the face of Disestablishment between the Church of Sweden and the State in the year 2000. The results are summarized in the final report: Bäckström, Anders and Ninna Edgardh Beckman and Per Pettersson (2004). Religious Change in Northern Europe. The Case of Sweden. Stockholm: Verbum.
also included investigations into the deregulation of the welfare state and the increase of poverty resulting from the financial crises in Europe at the beginning of the 1990s. This development sparked a new interest in the organizations and associations of civil society, of which churches and religious organizations are part. After its separation from the state the Church of Sweden became the largest organization within the civil society in Sweden. The study formed the background for the inauguration of a Centre for the Study of Religion and Society at Uppsala University, an enterprise developed in conjunction with the Foundation Samariterhemmet.  

As part of the work on the church-state project an international reference group was formed. This group became the core of a new network with a clearer focus on the place of religion in the different welfare regimes of Europe. In 2003 the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation accepted a second project entitled *Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective. A Comparative Study of the Role of the Churches as Agents of Welfare within the Social Economy* (2003-2009) – it is known as WREP. The aim of the project was to analyse the function of majority churches as agents of welfare in a comparative European perspective. Its motivation lay in an awareness of common developments observed around Europe, such as an aging population, growing migration and an ever greater strain on the economy. 

The WREP-project included four different welfare models together with four different majority church traditions with theologies that are ‘incarnated’ in the respective locality. That is a) the social democratic model of the European north which has developed within the context of Lutheran state churches (*Sweden, Finland and Norway*), b) the liberal model typical of Anglo-Saxon countries (*England* with its established Anglican Church), c) the conservative or Christian Democratic model found mainly in continental Europe, where the Catholic Church is dominant (*France, Italy and to some extent Germany* with its special history and bi-confessional status) and finally d) the countries of southern Europe where the state plays a weaker role compared with that of the family (Orthodox *Greece* but also Italy, at least to some extent). In total eight countries were covered by the project. In order to make the project feasible and at the same time collect reliable and comparable data, the study focused on one middle-sized town, in which different kinds of data were collected including printed material of various kinds and interviews with representatives of the local government, the churches and the wider population.

The project brought together different areas of society (a new idea at the time), namely the fields of religion, welfare, gender and social economy. The

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2 An agreement between the Foundation Samariterhemmet and Uppsala University to develop research within the social/diaconal sphere of society was signed in 1999. The Centre has now changed its name to the Uppsala Religion and Society Research Centre and has moved to new premises at Uppsala University, see www.crs.uu.se for more information.
project revealed the interconnectedness between different welfare regimes of Europe and their background in both social/political and religious circumstances. The study also shows that care within religious organizations, as within the welfare organization of the state, is normally carried out by women. Our data reveal that the representatives of the local majority churches, of local governmental social organizations and of the population as a whole expect churches and voluntary organizations to function as complementary organizations to the state. At the same time a critical voice is asked for. The fact that the churches themselves are contracting at the same time as growing demands are made upon them is an increasing dilemma. Two edited volumes from this project were published in 2010 and 2011.3

The Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective project has been introduced at some length as it constitutes the background to the Welfare and Values in Europe project reported in this volume. WREP did not, however, cover the religious and social conditions as they appear in the eastern part of Europe – i.e. in the post-communist countries where the welfare situation is quite different, and is continuing to evolve. In this part of Europe, the majority churches have often moved from being oppressed by the state to having a central role in national identity after the fall of communism. The WREP-project also revealed the need to include religious minorities in the study as a whole, as their presence to a high degree shapes the discussion on the presence of religion in the public sphere of society. Thus the WaVE-project has the advantage of resting on experiences of WREP. At the same time the project has an agenda of its own, which will be developed in the following section.

The Welfare and Values in Europe project (WaVE)

In the WaVE-project, the focus has shifted from the function of and interaction between majority churches and welfare regimes to the study of welfare as the ‘prism’ through which core values are perceived – for example those of inclusion and exclusion. The methodological issues and the comparative nature of the project are also extended in the sense that the religious minorities found all over Europe are included and are seen in relation to the values of the majority cultures. The number of researchers has grown accordingly from 24 to 34. The partners of the project, together with the researchers are listed in the Appendix.

The aim

The WaVE-project was formed against the background of major transitions in the welfare state and the growth in religious activities in the domain of welfare. By shedding light on the degree to which religion, on the one hand, and welfare, on the other, are viewed as private and public matters, WaVE entails a comprehensive re-examination of theories of secularization and counter-secularization in the European context. WaVE is predicated on the assumption that the intangible concept of ‘values’ is understood best through the ways in which they are expressed and developed in practice. The provision of basic needs, and the related notion of citizenship and belonging, comprises the most fundamental level at which coexistence between different cultures, values and religions can be examined.

The objectives of the project may be summarized as follows:

First, the project sets out to assess the impact of religion in societies in different parts of Europe as a bearer of values of solidarity and social cohesion, or as source of tension and exclusion. WaVE pursues this aim through an in-depth examination of the values expressed by majority religions in their interaction with minority communities in the domain of social welfare needs and provision.

Second, the project studies the values expressed by minority groups (religious minorities in particular), both in their use of welfare services, and their search for alternatives (tracing trends in the establishment by minority groups of their own welfare networks). WaVE offers insights into the extent to which minorities are perceived to challenge the values, cultural identities etc. of the local majorities.

Third, WaVE seeks to bring to light the gender-related values underpinning conceptions of welfare and practices in welfare provision in the localities under examination, focussing on whether there are particular elements of tension or cohesion embedded in values relating to gender, and to the rights and needs associated with women and men. The relationship between religious values, minorities, and gender is a critical and relatively under-explored field of research. The effects of and the transitions in this relationship in terms of social welfare, social cohesion, and conceptions of citizenship and belonging, form a key dimension of the WaVE-project.

At the same time the study raises important questions concerning the secular state’s idea of a clear separation between the religious and the secular. There is an uncertainty in the state’s expectations of the religious organizations of civil society which is clearer in the north-west than in the south-east of Europe. This concerns the consequences of an increased social involvement of religious organizations for the role and identity of the secular state. The project therefore explains an important factor behind an increasing observance of religion in the public sphere of society, a tendency which is
contradictory to the general understanding of Europe as a place where religion becomes ever more private. A full explanation of the theoretical background and aim of the study is found in Chapter 2 in the first volume of this series of three reports.  

Methodological considerations

WaVE is an empirical study concerned with the relationship between majority cultures and minority religions across Europe and their relationship to welfare and values as they appear in a local context. It was from the start a comparative project as it was looking for similarities and dissimilarities following north-south and east-west dimensions of Europe. It covers considerable geographic breadth as well as religious and social complexity.

The complexity of the religious and social developments taking place in Europe and the substantial differences concerning both welfare organization and religious majority/minority relations in each country, urged us at an early stage in the project planning to use qualitative rather than quantitative data. Quantitative data is useful in order to frame values across countries and religious communities in Europe and in order to study changes over time. It also gives a comprehensive understanding of the religious and social situation in each country. These kind of data were however already available through the World Values Survey (WVS) and through the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) covering most of the countries involved in the WaVE-project.  

Instead of collecting statistical data on a national level, we decided to follow the model established in WREP and to dig deep into one medium-sized town in each country, using a range of qualitative methods. The great advantage of working in this way has been a much more profound understanding of the complex relationships in the locality between majority and minority relations. It has also been possible to observe at first-hand the contributions of women both as givers and receivers of welfare. Conversely it has been much more difficult to foresee what would happen in the course of our research. In what way would the provision of welfare services function as a prism through which values of conflict or cohesion would become visible?

An important choice concerned the towns in which in-depth observations could be carried out. These towns should be middle-sized relative to the

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4 The State of the Art-report is drafted by Effie Fokas.
5 www.issp.org/; www.worldvaluessurvey.org/
population of the respective country. They should exhibit values connected
to post-industrial circumstances with growing employment within the
service society. Most important of all was that the towns in question were
able to exhibit a majority religious tradition alongside minority communities
either as autochthonous ethnic/religious groups or as religious minorities
growing as a result of migration into Europe. They should exhibit values connected
to post-industrial circumstances with growing employment within the
service society. Most important of all was that the towns in question were
able to exhibit a majority religious tradition alongside minority communities
either as autochthonous ethnic/religious groups or as religious minorities
growing as a result of migration into Europe. Equally important, however,
were practical issues such as accessibility and appropriate contacts with the
locality in question. The selected towns are listed below – those marked with
an asterisk were also included in the WREP study.

- Sweden: Gävle (population circa 90,000 located north of Stockholm)*
- Norway: Drammen (population circa 57,000, located close to Oslo)*
- Finland: Lahti (population circa 98,000, located north of Helsinki)*
- Latvia: Ogre (population circa 29,000, located east of Riga)
- England: Darlington (population circa 98,000, located south of
  Newcastle)*
- Germany 1: Reutlingen (population circa 110,000, located south of
  Stuttgart)*
- Germany 2: Schweinfurt (population circa 55,000, located in Northern
  Bavaria)
- France: Evreux (population circa 54,000, located north-west of Paris)*
- Poland: Przemysl (population circa 68,000, located in the south-east of
  Poland, near the Ukrainian border)
- Croatia: Sisak (population circa 53,000, located in central Croatia)
- Italy: Padua (population circa 200,000, located 40 km from Venice)*
- Romania: Medgidia (population circa 44,000, located near the Black
  Sea)
- Greece: Thiva (and Livadeia) (combined population circa 43,000,
  located north of Athens)*

More information about each of these places can be obtained in the project
description, and for the eight countries that were part of WREP, in the
working papers published by the Uppsala Religion and Society Research
Centre. The precise location of the each town can be seen in Figure 1.1

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7 For a discussion and definition of minority groups see chapter 2.
8 The population of Reutlingen is predominantly Protestant; the population of Schweinfurt is
  predominantly Catholic.
9 Italy was included in the WREP project; the town in question however has changed from
  Vicenza to Padua.
10 Greece was included in the WREP project where both towns were studied; in the WaVE
  project, the study has focused on Thiva only.
11 For further information, see the following: *Presentation of the Research Project Welfare
  and Values in Europe. Transitions Related to Religion, Minorities and Gender (2006)*.
  Research Project funded by the European Commission Sixth Framework Programme (FP6).
  Uppsala: Uppsala University; Edgardh Beckman, Ninna (ed). (2004). *Welfare, Church and
The data collection was carried out during the autumn 2006 and the year 2007 and has been divided into two stages.

*The first stage* was a mapping process which included fieldwork in the thirteen European towns (twelve countries) covering the north-south and east-west axis of Europe. This fieldwork included information on the welfare regime in question, an introduction to the majority religious tradition of the

country, and an overview of the minority situation in the town studied. The
researchers were asked to map as broadly as possible ensuring that the
following information would be covered: a) the groups present in the locality
with a description of ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ communities, b) whether or
not these groups provide welfare services, either internally to the group or
externally for others as well and c) how these various groups interact? The
researchers were encouraged to find this information by approaching a) local
authorities – asking for statistical information, b) central offices for majority
churches – to ask about welfare-related activities, c) a selection of
representatives of minority groups and d) the local media. Online material
was also gathered together with material produced by churches, religious
communities and voluntary organizations. This included quantitative data
and national statistics. The results from previous interviews within the
WREP-study were also available in eight of the case studies. In order to give
the four new countries an opportunity to catch up with this kind of
information, they were given an extra year of funding.

The mapping process was a research enterprise in itself, resulting in an
overview of religious minorities in different regions of Europe, showing its
breath and complex history. The overview shows that minorities can be
indigenous as the Sami people in the north of Europe and Turkish-Tatars in
the east of Europe. They can also be a result of changed borders as in Poland
and of changed history as in Latvia (the Russian speaking ‘minority’). They
can also derive from immigration within Europe (most often from east to
west) or from other continents, most often from Africa or Asia. The reason
for migration can be work opportunities in the west or the result of
oppression and conflict (ethnic, social, political or religious). These groups
can be of different Christian origin as in England or representing other
religions, most often Muslims as in many West European societies. The
interrelationship between ethnic and religious affiliations is strong but they
do not overlap completely.

The mapping process was used finally as a means for a strategic selection
of interviews with a) individuals representing religious minorities, b)
individuals representing local authorities working with religious minorities
and c) individuals representing majority churches with a special relation to
minority communities.

The second stage was the in-depth interviews with the individuals
selected as described above. The focus was on the minority groups present in
the given localities. The interviewers were asked to include a broad range of
questions following the practice in WREP. These interviews were
complemented by participant observation in the communities studied with
notes taken. Shorter interviews largely for clarification were also carried out.
The ‘principle of saturation’ has been used in order to decide when to stop
the collection of material. All in all about 30 interviews were conducted in
every town, in some cases fewer and in some cases more. All interviews
have been transcribed and have become an important source of information. In the WaVE-project approximately 400 individuals that have been interviewed across the north-south and east-west divide of Europe. Together with the WREP-material, more than 800 interviews have been performed, transcribed and analysed.

The enquiry included the study of the values of minority (religious) groups and the extent to which these values are perceived as different to, or in conflict with, those of the majority. Attention was also paid to the tendency to establish independent networks for the provision of welfare-related needs. The expression of minority group values, their search for alternative means of social care, the extent to which their welfare-related values are perceived as different to or in conflict with those of the majority, and the extent to which values are particularly gendered, are embedded in the analysis of the interview research.

Throughout the observations and interviews indicated above, researchers have gleaned insight into the gendered nature of the rights and needs of men and women, in both majority and minority communities. By means of observation, note has been taken of the relative participation of women and men in both the provision and receipt of welfare assistance. By means of the interviews, information has been gathered about the extent to which these patterns are religiously motivated, and whether this leads to greater social cohesion or social exclusion.

Our methodology has resulted in a broad overview of examples grounded in the historical tradition of each country. In order to make the most of the fieldwork, and to extract as many examples as possible of local cooperation between religious communities and local authorities, the research team in each country was asked to focus on examples of tension or cohesion in the respective locality. The advantage of this method is the breadth of examples that resulted from that analysis. This is certainly reflected in the reports of this and future volumes.

That said, there is an obvious tension between comparability and contextuality embedded in a project like this. The project is clearly comparative in the sense that similarities and dissimilarities between majority-minority relations have been studied throughout Europe. At the same time the comparative nature of the project is based on contextual situations mirroring the complexity of reality on the ground. This has been a demanding part of the project but at the same time a very enriching enterprise as it has offered insight into the very complexities that surround the European situation. Generalizations of current religious and social developments in Europe are clearly dependent on this kind of knowledge.
Overview of results

This volume includes the initial comparative analysis of the WaVE-project – see Chapter 6. This analysis displays very clearly both the difficulties and the possibilities that arise when working with this kind of material. One immediate problem, for example, is the different understandings of the basic concepts used in the study: both the notion of welfare (a north-south divide), and the notion of minority and majority (an east-west divide). It is also the case that generalizations from the study of one case (town) per country have to be treated with caution. That said, there are obvious similarities and dissimilarities that emerge from the data, and at least some of the difficulties of interpretation can be resolved by careful interviewing.

Both the interviews and the statistical material indicate that all the countries in the WaVE study have experienced a radical transformation, resulting from the globalization of the economy, the influence of the European Union and extensive migration (both immigration and emigration). The data also reveal that there is a basic European understanding regarding the responsibility of the state to provide a welfare service, an understanding endorsed by both the left (Social Democrats) and the right (Christian Democrats). There is, finally, a European-wide interest in including the voluntary sector in the provision of welfare, albeit in different ways depending on particular historical circumstances.

A further important result is the marked ambiguity regarding the factors leading to social cohesion or social tension with respect to the minorities and majorities under review. This is seen firstly when the language question is investigated. To have access to the codes of the culture through the dominant language is of paramount importance for newly-arrived minorities if they are to get appropriate welfare services. Language training is sometimes provided by state authorities (Gävle) and sometimes by the local church (Lahti); in Thiva, however, it is limited by inadequate organization. This can create social barriers through a lack of communication which is highly negative for the groups in question.

It is clear, secondly, that the role of individual and interpersonal contacts is critical in meeting the welfare needs of minorities and in fostering a feeling of inclusion. Rather differently, particular individuals also represent the critical voice of the church in some places, as the City Mission in Drammen exemplifies. In both cases, however, contact with individuals becomes an effective way of getting around the bureaucracy of local authorities. At the same time, this way of working is clearly an expression of particularism (the minority individual needs contacts with other individuals to obtain the services required).

Thirdly, and most ambiguous of all, is the role of social networks within minority groups. On the one hand social networks lead to greater cohesion as they provide the groups with self-esteem, and with more contacts with local
authorities/institutions; as a result they are able to relate the traditions of the incomers to the majority culture. On the other hand, the most conspicuous conflict of values that we found concerns exactly these networks in so far as they can result in ghettoization, especially when the life of the minority group is combined with lack of language or cultural competence. The multicultural condition is a sign of modern plurality – indeed it can be seen as the thriving pulse of the international city; rather more negatively, religious differences all too often become a sign of exclusion from the majority culture, a situation which can lead to the social problems associated with isolation, and a reduction of freedom especially for women.

Fourthly the role of the media is often mentioned with regard to its tendency to stereotype, frequently exaggerating the extra-ordinary and conflict-based relations between religious groups, both internationally and nationally. These tendencies are different in different parts of Europe, but generally they highlight the tendency to give conflicts a religious face. In Ogre, this is more a question of language: different TV channels (produced either in Latvian or in Russian) provide the inhabitants with totally different interpretations of current events.

A cautious interpretation of the results indicates that countries with more general (universal) welfare systems function more inclusively, as such systems lead to an enhanced sense of belonging (citizenship) compared with countries with more means-tested or rudimentary welfare provision. In the latter, there is a greater need to organize help within local religious communities. One point, however, is clear: different welfare organizations reflect different sets of values. For example, a liberal and universal welfare system may have difficulty in accepting the claims of minority religions as they do not fit with the secular values underpinning the majority system. In other words the tension is as much between religious and secular values as it is between the values of religious majorities and those of religious minorities. Indeed, in certain cases, notably the Nordic countries and in Italy, the majority religion can function as a bridge between a secular majority and a religious minority. Lastly – and to make matters even more complex – one can see that religious values are far from uniform: they vary between more liberal and more conservative, leading in the Italian case to different strategies towards immigrant women who are seeking to terminate an unwanted pregnancy.

Overall, the WaVE-study demonstrates that welfare provided by majority religions fills gaps left by the state (all over Europe) and that this provision is seen more clearly in the localities where the relationship between majorities and minorities are personal rather than instrumental. This provision unfolds differently, however, due to different historical pathways in the north and south of Europe. Difficulties tend to arise when the welfare provided by religious groups is too particularistic and when the provision has
‘strings attached’ (for example prayer or worship), which is more common in conservative than in liberal religious communities. The data also show that the social networks of minority groups are sometimes perceived by the majority society as isolating and as hindering equality. Rather more positively, the leaders of these networks are treated as partners in the welfare domain. Women, in particular, are crossing borders in some localities.

The most important challenge facing national welfare states today is how to maintain and strengthen the bonds of solidarity in an increasingly diverse society, that is how to accommodate diversity in a situation in which financial problems are growing (especially in the south-east of Europe), where unemployment is rising (especially among young people) and where new forms of poverty are emerging in the midst of a consumer society. The difficulties are exacerbated by the politicization of these issues, especially in relation to Islam. The question to investigate becomes therefore how and in what ways majority and minority welfare providers understand social cohesion and how this is implemented in their work. The need will grow as the competition in relation to labour and indeed to social and medical care intensifies. The situation is not resolved by the increase in the role of religious communities in the delivery of welfare, but nor does it become worse. It simply becomes more complex. One point is clear in this situation: that is the need for further research in this area. The WaVE-study is just the beginning.

Project coordination

The WaVE-project has been based at the Religion and Society Research Centre at the Faculty of Theology, at Uppsala University. The work of a project such as WaVE would not have been possible, however, without an extended group of people with an interest in the area of welfare and values amongst majority and minority religions across Europe. All in all 34 junior researchers across Europe have been involved in collecting data together with senior colleagues who have contributed to the analysis of the material in the respective country. A complete list of partners and researchers attached to the WaVE-project can be found in Appendix 1.

A project of this size can only come to a successful conclusion if the organization is well developed, with regular meetings to discuss progress. The Researchers’ Handbook, which displays the design and structure of a European Commission sponsored project, acted as a guide in this respect. Such a project is divided into work packages and deliverables following a time schedule from the start to the end of the project.

WaVE contained eight work packages (WP1 to WP8) and sixteen deliverables. WP1 was the State of the Art-report (deliverable 1) and is included in volume one as Chapter 2. WP1 also includes an overview of the
national situation (deliverable 2), which will appear as the first report from each country in this volume. WP2 constitutes the Development of Methodology (deliverables 3, 4 and 5) which includes the guidelines for the mapping process and the interview sessions. The Work Package is attached to volume 1 and 2 as Appendix 2. WP3 concerns the Fieldwork (deliverables 6 and 7); these were interim reports on the case studies for internal use only. WP4 is the Analysis of the Local Data (deliverables 8, 9 and 10) and constitutes the final case study report (D9) – this is the second report from each country in this volume.

WP5 is the Comparative Cross-country Analysis (deliverables 11 and 12) which includes a preliminary and a final draft of the comparative analysis – for internal use only. WP6 is the Dissemination of Results at Local and National Level (deliverables 13 – the local conferences and 14 – the national conferences). WP7 is the Generation of EU Policy Recommendations (deliverable 15), which appears in this volume, together with WP8, the Final Report (deliverable 16), which is the comparative cross-country analysis and also appears in this volume.

Each partner has had certain responsibilities linked to a particular work package. Further, to keep the research group together, and to adhere to a strict time table, the consortium had to meet on a regular basis. Accordingly the whole group of researchers has met once a year and the junior researchers, with direct responsibility for data collection, twice a year. The meetings have taken place in different countries, making these occasions a source of information in themselves. These meetings have included not only a high standard of conversation connected to the aim of the project, but also relaxed gatherings in the evenings in order to encourage the social side of the work. This combination of hard work and relaxed interaction has been very fruitful.

We are pleased that we are able - after some delay - to publish these reports in hard copy. They will also be placed on the following website: www.crs.uu.se. We hope that they will be read by a wide variety of researchers and stakeholders, as well as by the European Commission itself. The reports vary a little in their style and presentation but we trust that they convey accurately the scope of the WaVE project and the richness of our data.

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Religion and Society Research Centre should also be acknowledged, namely Barbro Borg and Maria Essunger. Lina Molokotos-Liederman has been responsible for checking the reports emerging from the project. All of these people deserve our warmest thanks; they have played a vital role in the success of the whole undertaking.

I would also like to thank the institutions that have contributed financially to the project, most of all the European Commission with its substantial grant, with Andreas Obermaier as our contact person. I must also include the Foundation Samariterhemmet and the Faculty of Theology at Uppsala University, both of which have provided premises and covered extra costs attached to the project. Finally the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation has made the production of this report possible. Anna Row has been responsible for the editorial work of this publication.

We are pleased to note in conclusion that the WREP and WaVE projects have borne fruit in the form of a major research programme known as The Impact of Religion: Challenges for Society, Law and Democracy. This is an Uppsala University programme running from 2008-2018, and is funded by the Swedish Research Council. The focus is on the visibility of religion studied through six different themes. This multidisciplinary research programme would not have been possible without the experience drawn from the WREP and WaVE projects. For further information see www.impactofreligion.uu.se.

As the coordinator of the WaVE-project it is my privilege to extend my especial thanks to Grace Davie and Effie Fokas. Without the expertise of Grace and her extraordinary talent in managing large and complex meetings, the project would not have been completed. Effie started as a doctoral student within the WREP-project, but very quickly became a key contributor; it was Effie who authored both the proposal and the final summary of the results.

In this respect Effie exemplifies one of the great advantages of this kind of project. That is to give space to young researchers in order to develop their interests and to grow as researchers. Indeed one of the most pleasing aspects of the whole venture is the emergence of a new generation of scholars that have one by one obtained their doctoral degrees and launched their careers. Their enthusiasm and growing skills have contributed enormously to the whole project; it has been a pleasure to work with them.

This is the third volume of three, and covers Latvia, Poland, Croatia and Romania, i.e. the four post-communist countries that were included in the WAVE-project. Their welfare systems are still under development and are therefore different in style, but could on the whole be characterized as

\[12\text{ The themes are 1) Religious and social change, 2) Integration, democracy and political culture, 3) Families, law and society, 4) Well-being and health, 5) Welfare models-organization and values, 6) Science and religion.}\]
relatively weak and comparable to conditions appearing in southern Europe. The confessional status of the countries in this volume varies: from Lutheran Latvia, to Catholic Poland and Croatia, to Orthodox Romania. The first volume covered the Protestant north of Europe (Sweden, Finland, Norway and England) with strong or moderately strong welfare states. The second volume covered continental Europe with moderately strong to relatively weak welfare states (bi-confessional Germany, Catholic France and Italy and Orthodox Greece). As already explained, each volume contains two reports from each country, first a report on the national situation covering the characteristics of the welfare system and the religious composition of the country, and second a case study covering the mapping process and the analysis of the results from the interviews.

Finally, as the coordinator of the project Welfare and Values in Europe: Transitions related to Religion, Minorities and Gender, I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the project and have helped to bring it to a successful conclusion. The consortium as a whole will be listed in the Appendix, and the contributors to this volume are introduced at the beginning of this volume.

Uppsala, September 2012

Anders Bäckström
Coordinator
Chapter 2 Latvia

2:1 OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL SITUATION

Raimonds Graudiņš

Introduction

To describe the situation in Latvia is a challenging task because of the diversity of religions and ethnic groups represented in the country. There are also many complex and specific issues related to historical context, economic development and provision of social welfare. Given that a large part of the population is still struggling to fulfil basic physiological needs, the type of problems and their order of priority are often different from those faced by the populations in developed European countries. However, this report provides grounds for interesting comparisons in order to understand the nature and hierarchy of social problems across Europe and gain insights in order to provide policy recommendations.

Latvia is a small country with a population of 2.3 million in an area of 64 600 square kilometres. It is located on the eastern side of the Baltic Sea and has borders with Estonia in the north, Lithuania in the south, and Russia and Belarus in the east. The Scandinavian countries are located right across the Baltic Sea and can be easily reached via sea or air transport.

Latvia is very advantageously positioned on the crossroads between east and west. This circumstance has had different effects on the development of the country. On the one hand, it has facilitated trade and relationships with other countries; on the other hand, the territory of Latvia has always been a target for acquisition by the most important powers of the Baltic Sea region (most notably Germany, Russia, Poland and Sweden).

As a result, Latvia has been exposed to influences from different cultures and religions. The first independent state of Latvia was established only in 1918 and more than 20% of the population were people of foreign ethnic

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1 The article describes the situation at the time the research was carried out. While to date there have not been major shifts in the society concerning values and religion, subsequent events have influenced economic well-being of people and relations among the ethnic groups.
origin. This, however, did not hinder the economic and social development as Latvia quickly achieved levels of prosperity comparable to other European countries. This situation lasted until World War II, when Latvia was occupied and annexed to the Soviet Union.

The Soviet period has had a particularly strong impact on Latvian society with its emphasis on collectivism, brotherhood among the friendly nations, commitment to total employment, universal social coverage, complete gender equality, planned economy, and rejection of religion. Forced immigration was yet another aspect of Soviet policy aiming to ensure that Latvia and other Baltic states were tied with Russia through the significant population of ethnic Slavs.

After regaining its independence in 1991, Latvia has made enormous efforts to return to the pre-war traditions and to restore a market economy. Many reforms were carried out in order to be able to join the European Union in 2004. However, the post-Soviet heritage and current state of international affairs pose many problems that need to be solved. Among these are questions related to ethnic and religious diversity, as well as economic development and standards of living.

What are the shared values on which the welfare system is based? Does the state provide sufficient amount of social aid and services? Can religious organizations contribute to social welfare? Do religious values function as a source of cohesion or as a source of tension in the society? Are there observable links between religious and ethnic minorities? Does the ethnic composition in the country influence its economic performance and social climate? What is the attitude towards multicultural diversity? Do Latvians consider gender issues to be an important problem? One would expect that policy makers have answers to these questions. Though a survey of experts and review of the available research in these areas reveal that this might not be the case.

For example, according to a survey of experts and decision makers carried out by Graudins (2004), there is no common understanding of the model of the welfare state that should be implemented in Latvia. It also reveals that there are certain contradictions in the legislation, especially regarding the role of the church in the welfare system.

The notion of church as a welfare agent is relatively uncommon among both secular people and the representatives of the church in Latvia. Perhaps this is due to the lack of institutional and informal traditions, since the church was restricted in its public activities during the Soviet times (Krumina-Konkova and Gills 1999). There is also a lack of academic studies related to this subject. Currently the Faculty of Theology of the University of Latvia has prepared applications for such projects, but there is no output available as of yet.

Research on the relationship between majority church and minority groups is almost nonexistent in Latvia. Dr. Valdis Teraudkalns, a prominent
Latvian researcher in the field of religion, is currently preparing a publication on the dialectics between different religions in Latvia. He also touched upon these issues when discussing emergence of charismatic religions in Latvia. According to Teraudkalns, traditional churches in Latvia are not supportive to the new religious movements (Teraudkalns 2001a).

The report on religious freedom in Latvia (2005) prepared by the US Government Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor concludes that the relations among religions in Latvian society are generally amicable and this has contributed to religious freedom. Concerning minority groups, the report highlights the fact that many Russian-speaking, non-citizen, permanent residents are members of the Orthodox Church, which is the third largest religion in the country. Still, there are no studies that examine this linkage in more detail.

There are very few studies on religious minorities in Latvia. Existing research, including Krumina-Konkova and Gills (2005), tends to focus on new charismatic movements since they have been the most important in terms of number of members and have had a significant impact on the life of the church and the society. The authors find that Latvian society does not find it easy to communicate with new religions, probably because of lack of knowledge and objective information about these issues. They also note that belonging to religious minority groups changes the cultural identity of people and thereby has an impact on the development of a new multicultural identity.

Cultural identity and issues related to ethnic minorities, in turn, have received due attention from the Latvian research community. These aspects are also high on the political agenda since Latvia has many different minority groups, which represent a large share of the total population. The history and composition of ethnic minorities has been discussed in Dribins (2001 and 2004), where the author draws the line between traditional national minorities and the Russian-speaking population that emerged during the Soviet times. Pabriks (2002) discusses ethnic proportions, discrimination and employment issues. Several studies have examined the integration policy and integration processes in Latvian society (Indans and Kalnins 2001, Pabriks et al 2001, Makarovs and Strode 2005, Zepa et al 2005). A few studies have been made concerning specific minority groups in Latvia: Jews (Dribins 2002), Roma people (Latvian Centre for Human Rights 2003), traditional Muslim nations (Scerbinskis 1998) and immigrants form the neighboring countries.

There is relatively less attention paid to the recent immigration and new minority groups. Apparently this has not been the most visible problem in practice since Latvia has not been particularly attractive for immigration (Indans 2004). However, there are studies that discuss issues related to tolerance in the Latvian society and in this context aspects of immigration,
Religion and ethnicity are discussed and closely linked with each other (see for example, Zepa et al 2004; Sulmane and Kruks 2006). These studies also measure the attitude of the Latvian society towards the representatives of Islamic culture.

The issue of gender equality is currently high on the political and research agenda. However, the main emphasis so far is on the economic aspects of gender equality that are not specifically related to religion. Thus, the most recent studies are on women in business and in the labour market (SKDS 2005a, Ziverte et al, 2005, Women in Business 2006). There are also studies concerning human trafficking (Supule and Krastina 2006) and education of gender equality in schools (Caune et al 2005).

In 1997 the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Latvian Academy of Sciences published a book on gender equality in which different aspects of gender inequality were discussed in more detail. This book is essentially a collection of articles that touch upon legal issues, attitudes and values, as well as gender roles in the family and society (see Koroleva 1997).

The types of discussions about immigration, gender equality and Islam that take place in contemporary Europe have not been topical in Latvia. Perhaps in the Latvian case we could draw some parallels with Orthodox Russian-speaking women of whom relatively many are unemployed. But there is hardly anything on this subject in the research databases in Latvia. There are, however, articles in academic journals discussing the role of women in modern Christian religions and Protestant religions in particular (Tēraudkalns 2001b, 2002a, 2003a, and 2003b).

Religious values have actively been discussed during the last couple of years. These aspects have been particularly important within the context of religious education in schools, morality in the society and cultural identity. The Institute of Philosophy and Religion at the University of Latvia has published a collection of articles dedicated to these topics with contributions from many prominent researchers in this field (Kule 2005). There is also earlier output from Teraudkalns (2003c and 2003d) looking at the interplay between post-modern culture and religion. Krumina-Konkova and Gills (2000) have discussed European visions and religious life in Contemporary Latvia.

After looking at the Latvian academic output in this area of studies, it is possible to identify the following areas where WaVE research could fill the gap in knowledge:

- Churches/religious organizations and social welfare
- Religious minorities in Latvia
- Links between ethnicity, religion and gender equality
- Sources of cohesion/conflict in the society
- Religion as a source of cohesion/conflict
- Values that we can see in action in the Latvian society
Characteristics of the national welfare system

Economic reforms carried out during the past decade have strengthened the private sector and created macroeconomic conditions that are favourable for entrepreneurship. The economy is liberal and open for trade and investment. As a result, for the past few years Latvia has been one of the fastest growing economies in the European Union with GDP growing at 10.2% in 2005. However, rapid economic development does not necessarily bring the desired social outcomes.

Most of the Latvian population has yet to see the gains from the economic growth, as income inequality in Latvia is one of the highest in Europe. According to the data from Eurostat, the ratio of total income received by the 20% of the population with the highest income to that received by the 20% of the population with the lowest income in Latvia was 6.7 in 2005 versus a 4.9 average in Europe. Up to 19% of the population make their living below the risk-of-poverty threshold (after social transfers), compared to 16% in Europe.

The average income per person is barely half of the EU-25 level in purchasing power terms, but in market prices GDP per capita constituted only 5,500 euros in 2005 (data from Eurostat and Latvian Central Statistics bureau).2

The government has tried to respond to this situation with new policy initiatives and by inviting other actors, including the family, non-profit organizations and the church to contribute to the social welfare. However, for these policy responses to function and to make them understandable there is a need for a conceptual understanding of the underlying issues and a clear framework for cooperation between the actors. In other words, the ‘rules of the game’ should be clear, as should be the cause and effect relationships within the welfare policy. Due to the complexities of the modern world and historical factors, the government has had mixed success in solving these problems. The next sub-sections in this report provide a description and background of the welfare system in Latvia.

General description

Aidukaite (2004) attempts to put the Baltic countries within Esping-Andersen’s (1999) typology. According to her study, Latvia falls somewhere between the liberal and conservative-corporate regimes. Latvia’s insurance for the elderly and family benefits offer only a basic level of security and social assistance is means-tested, which is typical of a liberal approach. On

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2 It should be noted that the situation is improving and real wage growth in Latvia was 15.6% in 2006. At the same time, this is offset by continuous growth in prices and by increasing risks of the overheating in the economy.
the other hand, its social insurance schemes (unemployment insurance and short-term benefits) overlap with the corporatist model. Since they are state-managed, they depend on previous contributions and in certain cases differ among occupational groups.

In its approach to welfare policy, the state usually puts market efficiency first. Social policy has never been a top priority. The burden of social responsibility is put on the individual. Even if all major social insurance programs are in place, the benefit levels are fairly low. Citizens have to rely primarily on the market and family to secure their welfare needs.

At the same time the market is still in transition and the salaries are fairly low. According to Eurostat, average gross annual earnings in industry and services were 8.2 times lower than the EU average in 2004, which is a significant difference even when taking price factors into account. Moreover, in the absence of adequate labour unions and legal protection, the employees may become too dependent on the labour market. In extreme cases this may even deprive them from certain social and human rights (vacation, better employment alternatives, etc.). Besides, not everybody is fortunate to have the support of a well-off family. Altogether this has also led to an increase in income inequalities and poverty rates.

One of the most debated and confusing areas of social welfare in Latvia is health policy. Currently it is a combination of minimum state health insurance and private contributions. In 2004 Latvia ranked second behind the USA in terms of the share that patients had to pay for health services. This system has been severely criticized because in such a situation access to health services becomes an issue for many people. The share of public expenditures devoted to the health sector is also comparatively low, never exceeding 3.4% of GDP in Latvia’s recent history (Rajevska 2005).

The relationships between welfare agents are determined by the market and legislation. The state is the main actor in social policy, but it tends to withdraw from social activities that can be sustained by the market. Thus, for instance, the pension system is increasingly privatized. In cases when, neither the state, nor the market, is willing to participate, the government does not hesitate to invite other (traditional) providers of welfare, including the family, the church or NGOs.

An important feature stipulated in Latvian civil law is the principle of the responsibility of the family. It means that if a person applies for social assistance, the authorities also evaluate the financial situation of the family members of the individual (the so-called legal supporters). This is not a common practice in other countries because usually only the situation of the individual is analysed and taken into account.

Within the public sector, social policy is implemented on two levels – national and municipal level. The national government is first of all responsible for social policy strategy, legislation and implementation. It also manages social insurance and provides social services to disabled children
and elderly people. The rest of the social services, as well as social assistance benefits, are within the authority of the municipalities. It is commonly believed that municipalities are closer to the people and can better address their needs.

Public institutions also have the right to delegate their functions to the private sector or NGOs, maintaining full or partial control over the particular service and providing the necessary financial support. This is how social services are organized in several municipalities. Religious organizations can also participate through this mechanism because in legal terms they also represent the NGO sector (Graudins 2003). For example, based on the legal framework for cooperation between the municipalities and NGOs, the municipality of Riga (the capital of Latvia) has concluded contracts with the Riga Baptist seminary and the Diaconal Centre of the Evangelical Lutheran church of Latvia. The Baptist seminary provides shelter to homeless people and the Diaconal Centre operates soup kitchens for the poor (Aboltins, 2006).

Historical legacy

Aidukaite (2004) argues that the post-socialist welfare regime has been influenced by the heritage from the Soviet era. For example, the predominance of insurance-based social protection could be traced back to the Soviet times, when social security was provided through guaranteed employment. Another characteristic is high coverage, but a relatively low level of social benefits. Historical factors might also explain the relatively passive contribution of the church to social welfare in Latvia. During the Soviet times the church was separated from society. Hence, the Latvian church cannot refer to a historical heritage comparable to the old European countries, where the role of the church and its social presence has been much more prominent (Krumina-Konkova and Gills 2005).

Another important aspect was the economic feasibility of particular ways of organizing welfare. The reforms had to take into account the lack of resources for maintaining the existing systems, as well as consider new social problems that emerged after the fall of the Soviet Union (Aidukaite 2003). Concerning the church in Latvia, it has also been affected by the lack of resources as at the dawn of independence it did not have the means to provide much social support outside its parishes.

The political attitudes and beliefs of the society and policy makers have also had a substantial impact on shaping the social policy, as have international players, such as the IMF and the World Bank, which provided financial support for the reforms. In general, Latvia and the Baltic States have not been trying to copy any particular welfare regime. Nevertheless, they have analysed and compared approaches to social welfare in different
countries and a number of policy transformations from other nations have taken place, including influences from the United States, Great Britain and Scandinavian countries (Rajevska 2005). As regards religion, Teraudkalns (2005) notes that the Lutheran church, which has been dominant in Latvia, has not been oriented towards social theology. As a result there is also a lack of particular intellectual and theological tradition in this respect.

The role of the majority church in the national welfare system

With regard to social policy, the church has the same opportunities to contribute to social welfare as any other NGO. However, there are also specific provisions concerning the church. The so-called ‘traditional’ religions have signed agreements with the state that define the scope of cooperation, as well as draw the borders between the state and the church. These treaties do not contain specific clauses concerning welfare policy, but among other things they authorize traditional religions to provide religious education in public schools and to offer chaplain services in the military organizations, which can also be regarded as a form of social welfare provision. See Characteristics of the majority Church (below) for additional information on the relationship between the state and the church, as well as on the respective legal arrangements.

Since 2000 the Latvian Ministry of Welfare has included social ‘caritative’ (charitable) work (from the Latin caritas – ‘charity’) in the classification of professional social workers. This means that religious-based social workers with special university education can be employed by state funded social services institutions. It is up to the director of the institution to decide if there is a need for such staff.

The role of women in the welfare sector

According to data from the Ministry of Welfare, 54,000 people were working in the healthcare and social sector in 2004, of which 47,000 or 87% were women. The average monthly salary for women in this sector was 256 euros, which was 90% of the average salary received by men. In comparison with other sectors, this salary was 1.4 euros higher than the average salary for women in Latvian economy, which was roughly 255 euros. On average, women in Latvia earned 16% less than men in 2004.

The contribution of the health and social sector in terms of its share in total employment constitutes 5.3%. As can be concluded from the previous paragraph, this sector is less important for men and relatively more important to women, as only 1.3% of men are working in this sector, compared to 9.5% of women. Professions such as a nurse and ward attendant are almost exclusively female. These are also the positions with the lowest salaries.

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Future challenges

Latvian society is concerned about the young population going to work abroad and not coming back because of the difference in living standards. It suffers from a severe brain drain since it is often the most talented people who leave the country. There is also a fear that growing emigration may subsequently trigger immigration from the Eastern countries or from the South to fill the workforce gap in the economy. Due to recent changes in the society and economic development, total unemployment has decreased in Latvia down to 6.9% in 2006, which is lower than EU average (7.9%). Female unemployment is even lower (6.1% in contrast with 8.9 in EU25). However, long-term unemployment is still higher than European average (4.1% and 3.9% respectively), reflecting that in Latvia there may be more people with operational capability, who are subject to permanent social distress.

An aging population and negative population growth are also a problem, putting stress on the public insurance system. According to Eurostat the proportion of population aged 65 and over was 16.5% (higher than in most European countries). The government has responded to this issue by encouraging the development of private insurance funds, raising the pension age, and putting stronger emphasis on the market. The social budget throughout the last years has been in surplus, and amounted to 72.85 million euros or 7.2% in 2004 (Ministry of Welfare 2005). At the same time, the level of old age pensions is very low, amounting to only 123.35 euros on average in 2005, which was below the subsistence minimum at 150.08 euros (data from the State Insurance agency and Latvian Central Statistical bureau).

According to the UNDP development report (2005), poverty, social exclusion, and income disparity are still problematic issues in the country, especially in the rural districts. When measuring in accordance with the UNDP development index, Latvia lags behind its Baltic peers in terms of income component and life expectancy. The latter problem might also be due to the poor public healthcare system that needs to be addressed as well. Data from Eurostat shows that life expectancy at birth in Latvia is 65.6 years versus 75.8 on average in Europe as of 2005.

Gender issues will also continue to be high on the political agenda, in particular the economic aspects of these issues. The problems that are currently debated in Latvia also include single mothers, elderly women, trafficking, and violence against women.

Issues that affect the family also constitute a problem. The number of registered marriages have decreased more than twice since 1990 (Sebre et al 2004). On the other hand, existing families find it increasingly difficult to take care of the youngest and eldest members of family, which also creates a demand for new social services. This problem can be related to high rates of
female employment and increasingly demanding work schedules for both men and women.

There are also other urgent problems in the welfare sector in Latvia. Many of them are concerned with basic human needs, such as lack of affordable and high quality housing, for example. This sets the context for further discussions. In general, existential problems are equal for everybody in Latvia. Poverty does not sort people by religion or race. There is no evidence that poverty rates would be higher for certain ethnic/religious minority groups in Latvia, with the exception of the Roma people, who have been officially recognized as a problem group. There are some distinctions related to gender, as we already discussed, but they are present in other countries, as well.

Several issues concerning the organization of welfare are currently debated. Thus, for example, the role of the state in the provision of welfare is being discussed. The effectiveness of the whole system is another issue. Finally, the role of the bearers of traditional values is not yet clear, meaning that the purpose of such institutions as the church or the family in modern Latvian society is not defined from the political point of view.

Religious composition in the country

Registered members of religious organizations

There are many religious denominations and groups represented in the country. Table 2.1.1 shows the number of members of religious organizations in Latvia in 2004. According to this data, more than 55% of permanent Latvian residents belong to some religious denomination. This is the number, which religious organizations have reported to the Religious Affairs Council of the Ministry of Justice. Different religious organizations have different approaches for counting their members, therefore the number of active churchgoers is supposed to be lower. At the same time church representatives argue that the total number of believers must actually be higher because there are people who believe in God, but are not members of any specific religious organization. This argument is also supported by data from sociological studies (see Believing without belonging, below).
Table 2.1.1 Religious confessions and number of members in the parishes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Number of members</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia</td>
<td>539,327</td>
<td>40.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholics</td>
<td>395,067</td>
<td>29.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox Church</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>26.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Believer Orthodox</td>
<td>7,635</td>
<td>0.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptists</td>
<td>7,123</td>
<td>0.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostals</td>
<td>4,225</td>
<td>0.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Faith Christians</td>
<td>1,495</td>
<td>0.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Apostolic</td>
<td>1,007</td>
<td>0.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons)</td>
<td>776</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dievturi (traditional Latvian religion)</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augsburg Lutherans</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charismatic church ‘Jaunā Paaudze’ (‘New generation’)</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh-Day Adventists</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German Lutherans</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>宗教</td>
<td>人数</td>
<td>百分比</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformed Church</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Christians</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah’s Witnesses</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hare Krishna</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Eastern apostolic</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodists</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukyo Mahikari</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostolic</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Followers of Messiah</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.004%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baha’ists</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.004%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglicans</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0.003%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahamists</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.002%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visarionians</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.002%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterians</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.001%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,321,017</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL POPULATION IN LATVIA: 2,312,819  
Source: Religious Affairs Council of the Ministry of Justice, Latvian Central Statistical bureau.

The typical division between the majority church and minority religions is problematic in Latvia, since none of the religions represent even half of the religious population. However, the Lutheran tradition is the most important in terms of numbers. The Lutheran church is also considered to be the closest to the Latvian identity (Krumina-Konkova and Gills 1999 and 2005). Hence, we can regard it as a majority church in Latvia.
There is quite a significant diversity of religious movements present in the country. Apart from Lutherans, two other religions stand out, namely the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. In Latvia we typically refer to all three churches as major traditional religions. The dominance of the Lutheran church is not so prominent as to automatically assign the ‘minority’ label to the other two religious traditions. In fact, a couple of years ago official sources, including the Council of Religious Affairs reported that there are more Catholics in Latvia than Lutherans. There are also differing views concerning their institutional strength. However, volatility in the data is mainly due to changes in reporting methodology and the information in Table 2.1.1 is the most reliable at the moment.

In terms of percentage, the Latvian Lutheran Church represents slightly more than 40% of the religious population, the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church are estimated at approximately 30% and 26.5% respectively. The rest of religious movements taken separately each represent less than one percent. Out of total population the major traditional religions represent 23% (Lutherans), 17% (Catholics), and 15% (Orthodox).

Believing without belonging

Data about religious population that is obtained through sociological studies differs from the church statistics presented above. The marketing and public opinion research centre SKDS has been studying religiosity of Latvian residents over several years. According to their latest survey (SKDS, 2005b), about 71.9% of people in Latvia affiliate themselves with some religious denomination. This is almost 17% higher than the number reported by religious organizations. Additionally, 10.6% of the respondents are believers who say that they do not belong to any confession. Thus, non-registered believers, with or without attachment to a certain religion, together constitute 27.6%.

Up to 15.8% of respondents indicate that they are non-believers. For the remaining 1.7% of respondents it was either hard to tell or the answer was not applicable. The number of non-believers has increased since 2003, when it constituted 11.9%. However, earlier surveys from 2000 and 2001 reported an even higher proportion of non-believers (over 17%).

The percentages of major religions and their order of significance also vary according to the surveys from different years. In 2000 and 2001 the largest religions denomination was Lutherans. In more recent surveys from 2003 and 2005 the majority of respondents say that they belong to the Orthodox Church. However, due to the volatility of data, the marginal differences between percentages, the limited sample size and the levels of statistical error it is hard to tell whether we can draw any definite conclusions, such as that the role of Lutheran church is diminishing. The role
of the Orthodox Church is the most prominent in Riga, where more than 50% of the population belong to the Russian speaking Diaspora. In central and western Latvia, where the Latvian population is more dominant, the proportion of Lutherans is the highest. The eastern part of Latvia has historically been more Catholic.

Other sociological studies that include a survey of religious aspects, such as Zepa et al (2004), report varying percentages, but they also confirm that the proportion of religious people is higher than suggested by the data from the Religious Affairs Council, indicating the presence of non-registered believers who may or may not have an affiliation with certain religious groups. All studies find that most of the Latvians are Lutherans, most of the Russians are Orthodox, and most of the other national groups are either Orthodox or Catholic. It is also interesting to note that the proportion of religious people seems to be higher among the minority groups than among ethnic Latvians. The proportion of religious people is also higher in the countryside than in the cities.

Characteristics of the majority Church

According to Article 99 of the Latvian Constitution (Latvijas Republikas Satversme 1998), the church shall be separate from the state. However, this does not exclude cooperation. In 2004 the Lutheran church together with the other six traditional religions signed individual agreements with the state that defined the status of these religions in Latvia and established their rights to provide chaplain services in the army and religious education in public schools. Following these agreements, the Parliament has approved a law regarding the Latvian Lutheran church, which contains roughly the same set of provisions, but brings this cooperation to a higher legal level. Similar laws have been drafted for several other traditional religions, as well.

The periodical Kristus Dzive has published data on the situation in Latvia for 1991 shortly after regaining independence. According to this information, 10,666 people were baptized in the Lutheran church (35% of all baptisms), 1,549 weddings were organized in Lutheran church (32.2% of all weddings that took place in the church), and 1,439 funerals were carried out with the assistance of the Lutheran church (15.2%). Funeral services are the only ones were the Lutheran church was not dominant, as 52.8% of religious funerals were organized by the Catholic Church and 20.8% by the Orthodox Church (Kristus Dzive 1991).

The Consistory of the Latvian Lutheran Church has kindly provided information on the evolution of religious services in recent years. Thus, in 2005 the Lutheran church registered 15,761 baptisms, 1,095 weddings and 2,286 funerals. According to the data from the Religious Affairs Council of the Ministry of Justice, overall there were 12,579 weddings in Latvia in
2005, of which approximately 20% were held in churches. This percentage seems to remain constant over the years.

If we compare the latest data with the information from the previous periods, it is evident that overall, the church has maintained its position as a provider of ritual services. Slightly lower numbers of weddings and higher numbers of funerals reflect the current demographic patterns. But the increase in the number of baptisms indicates that there is a stable interest in religion, despite the notion of secularization in the society.

A simplified organizational structure of the Latvian Lutheran church is presented in Figure 2.1.1. The highest decision-making body is the Latvian Synod, which is a meeting of the representatives of all parishes taking place at least once every three years. The functions of the Synod are similar to those of a shareholders’ management structure in a company. One of its tasks is to appoint the archbishop. The audit commission and Consistory are under the authority of the synod as well.

The organization is managed by the Consistory, which is led by the archbishop. The decision-making bodies include the Presidium (consisting of archbishop, his assistant and senior dean), the Capitol (the council of rural deans) and the Commissions (created to manage different functional areas of the organization, such as finance, pastoral issues etc.)
In the pastoral dimension, the next step down in the hierarchy is the deanery supervised by the rural dean. The parishes and the vicars are at the bottom end of the hierarchy. The consistory also manages a large number of projects and institutions (including commercial enterprises) that are necessary to support the primary activities of the church.

According to the data from the latest yearbook of the Latvian Lutheran church, there are 32 employees at the top level of the consistory, not including the archbishop, of which 14 are rural deans. The rest are professionals working in the commissions. In addition, there is also the clergy working in the secretariat of the archbishop and the consistory (at least 30 people).
Concerning the pastoral capacity of the organization, there are 123 vicars, 55 evangelists, and 14 honorary ministers working in the Lutheran church. Many of them are serving in more than one parish. In many rural areas the parishes are small and quite passive, therefore the pastors have to combine duties.

The number of workers in the church organizations is very difficult to estimate. This type of data has not been reported in full in any publicly available source. Besides, there are many part-time and voluntary workers, which make it challenging to track them down. The Consistory could not provide reliable data either, but according to a high level church representative this is one of the bits of data that they are currently gathering.

The Lutheran church in Latvia has several sources of income. They collect regular taxes from the parishes. There are also private and corporate sponsors as well as foreign funds that provide assistance. There are partnerships with the state and municipalities where the public sector provides financial support, too. Finally, there is also some income from the church properties and real estate. The church does not publish reports on their financial situation. However, at the end of each year data on the financial situation of the church is submitted to state tax authorities.

Brief information on the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches

The Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox Churches have well-established hierarchies and decision-making authorities similar to the Lutheran Church. However, since these churches are subject to supranational authorities (the Vatican and Moscow Patriarchy, respectively), their organization is more autocratic. The sources of finance are not much different from the Lutheran church, but these churches also benefit from being a part of international network.

The Catholic Church in Latvia is represented as the Riga metropolis within the Vatican system. It is managed by the curia and the highest authority is the Archbishop Metropolitan of the Riga Archdiocese. At the moment, the highest Catholic official in Latvia is the Catholic cardinal Janis Pujats. The organization of Catholic Church is divided in 4 dioceses and 289 parishes. The Catholic Church in Latvia is very well developed institutionally. It manages educational establishments and monasteries, as well as charity organizations, including Caritas and different community based initiatives. More information about the welfare activities of the Roman Catholic Church in Latvia will be presented in the Latvian case study report.

The Riga metropolis of the Orthodox Church is part of the Moscow patriarchy. It is led by an archbishop metropolitan and also has other
decision-making authorities, such as a synod. The activities of the Orthodox Church mostly take part within the churches with virtually no outside prayer and support groups. The Orthodox Church in Latvia is rather a beneficiary than a benefactor of social assistance and enjoys support from wealthy individuals. Nevertheless the Orthodox Church has established several charity organizations that aim to address the spiritual and social needs of its members. It also manages several monasteries and is very active as a publisher of religious literature.

Even though representatives of each denomination are deeply convinced that their belief is the correct one, the relations between traditional churches are very positive. Since each of the churches individually lacks the influence and financial power, they often team together in order to implement projects or make public statements. Ecumenical services have become a regular event during the most important religious and national festivities. According to the representatives of the churches, the mission of ecumenism is to unite people and promote integration in the society.

The Church as a critical voice

The Latvian Lutheran church promotes conservative values and it is quite common for the church to assess issues that are being discussed in society. Thus, the representatives of the Latvian Lutheran church have been discussing welfare issues and have even invited the government to pay more attention to problems related to family policy and poverty. In its public relations the Church tries to keep a distance from the state institutions and play the role of a critical voice.

In relation to religious minority groups there are no explicit expressions of tension. However, as noted above, traditional churches in Latvia are not supportive to new religious movements, such as Pentecostals or other religions that hitherto have been of marginal interest in Latvia (Teraudkalns 2001). In reaction to a growing publicity of minority religions, the Latvian Lutheran Church encourages its members and the society in general to preserve and strengthen their beliefs in Christian values and return to the parishes.

The majority Church in welfare provision

The information in this section is taken from the website of the Diaconal Centre of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia.³ The Diaconal Centre is the main body of the Lutheran church through which the social involvement of the church is organized. This centre was established largely thanks to the financial and intellectual support from the Lutheran Church in

³ For more information see http://www.diakonija.lv
Germany, and the representatives of the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church sometimes joke that this is an example of how German deaconry works in Latvia.

![Map of Diaconal Centres of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia](source)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia is administratively divided into 14 deaneries (see Figure 2.1.2). There is a diaconal coordinator for each deanery appointed by the diaconal centre. The task of this person is to organize the training of voluntary workers from the parishes and to facilitate cooperation among them. The diaconal coordinator also communicates with vicars concerning diaconal issues.

The parishes are responsible for the implementation of diaconal work at the local level. They elect their diaconal leaders and establish diaconal institutions, such as diaconal support and care centres and chapels. They also develop projects and implement various support programmes.

Parish level diaconal work is concerned with a variety of tasks. They provide services to the members of congregation as well as organize cooperation with local municipalities, governmental and non-governmental institutions. Services are provided to a wide range of people, irrespective of creed or denomination. Depending on its capacity, parish-level diaconal work offers:
• prayer and support groups
• Christian counselling (individual and group work) at the diaconal centres, as well as making visits at home, hospitals, old people’s homes and other institutions
• support by visiting sick and elderly people at home, providing transportation to church
• fellowship within the congregation through various activities and joint efforts
• practical aid in cases of emergency: food, second-hand clothes, shoes, housekeeping goods, etc.
• consultations of doctors and other specialists as well as medical and practical homecare

The Diaconal Centre of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia has also implemented a number of projects. For example, in 1998 they established a support centre for family and children. Another family and children support centre opened its doors in 2006. The centres operate on a daily basis (typically from 12.00 to 18.00) and they are attended by children between the ages of 4 and 16, who come from families in social distress. The centres also work with the parents. During the day each of the centres can serve approximately 25-35 children. More than 1,200 individual and over 70 group consultations are provided during the year.

The Diaconal Centre also offers other assistance, for example, a Christian Counselling Line (support and psychological assistance in critical situations), Soup Kitchens\(^4\) (warm meals and food packages to the members of parishes and the wider population in social distress), Christian Counselling and Chaplaincy (if a person finds himself in an extraordinary situation, during sickness, in need of special care and support) and other Support Groups and Training.

The Diaconal Centre of the Lutheran Church has participated in the foundation of 11 local diaconal centres all over Latvia as well as one social centre in the Riga district. It has also provided consultancy to parishes on project development and undertakes supervision and coordination of practical help (e.g. human aid from the partners on the national level).

There are no services that are specially targeted towards minority groups but all members of Latvian society can benefit from the welfare services provided by the church. Unfortunately there is no specific information on how minority groups in Latvia benefit from church welfare provision.

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\(^4\) The Diaconal Centre of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia operates two Soup Kitchens in Riga. There are Soup Kitchens also in other cities, such as Kuldīga, Talsi, Kekava, and Saldus
The majority church in relation to gender and family

The dominant patterns of roles for women and men in Latvian society have been shaped by social and economic realities during the Soviet times and during the years of independence. The role of the church has been marginal in this respect, but as a promoter of conservative values it also stands for the traditional model of family.

In general the Latvian Lutheran church supports the idea of equality between men and women in the society. However, the archbishop of Latvian Lutheran church has received much attention in Latvia and abroad for refusing to ordain female priests. According to Archbishop Jānis Vanags, ‘women undoubtedly possess the same talent and intelligence as men. But the position of vicar is reserved for a man [according to the Scriptures]. This has been the position of the church and it has not been contested by any serious counter-arguments yet.’ (Araja, 2005).

Welfare, religion and gender

The description of the gender regime in Latvia is a complex task. According to Luse (2005), the perceptions of the role of men and women in the society have been changing over time and are still in transition. The situation is also very different from family to family, depending on their economic situation. However, the traditional model of the family is still dominant in the society.

During Soviet times gender equality was considered to be an important matter. Slogans also found their expression in practice – all women were working in the Soviet Union. However, it is also documented that aside from duties on the job, women were also responsible for doing the housework. Hence, the situation has also been described as a ‘double burden’ for women.

The early 1990s and independence brought a shift towards neo-traditional gender attitudes, where men were supposed to become ‘breadwinners’ and strong players in the market, while women were supposed to fulfil the traditional role at home. However, the economic conditions in the country brought corrections in these attitudes. In many instances men were not able to bring enough income and women were forced to enter the labour market in order to make ends meet.

In certain cases, the psychological burden of responsibility has been too high for men, which has led to depression and alcoholism. In such situations important shift in responsibilities has often occurred, where women have taken over the role of the person in charge. Besides, there is a relatively large number of single mothers in Latvia (ibid).

The information above should be considered as a general background when looking at the employment figures for women in Latvia. According to
the data from Eurostat, 59.3% of women in Latvia were working in 2005. Even though it is a decrease in comparison with the early 1990s, the numbers still hit the bar of the Lisbon agenda (57% mid-term target by 2005) and were higher than the European average (56.3%). The Ministry of Welfare has been very proud of this achievement, but it ignores the fact that it is partly a heritage from the past and a consequence of the harsh economic reality. The latter is something that poses many challenges for women.

Legal equality
According to Eglite (1997), Latvia has never hesitated to recognize gender equality and has always displayed willingness to incorporate it into legislation. For example, immediately after its independence in 1990, Latvia joined the United Nations convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Since 1995 either the mother or the father can take advantage of the parental leave.

Significant improvements have also been made in the labour code. There are even certain norms that put women in a more favourable position than men. For instance, when choosing from two job candidates, employers should give priority to the female applicant if their qualifications are equal. Taxation and social entitlements are based on individual rights. However, the overall financial situation of the family is considered before granting somebody a social benefit.

In general, despite some minor problems that are found from time to time, the legal base of gender equality is considered acceptable from the gender point of view. The problem is how to turn these norms into practice. Perhaps there is a need for additional formal and informal enforcement mechanisms. Currently disputes can be solved mainly through the court, which is quite expensive.

Overview of the minority presence in the country
Table 2.1.2 (below) presents information on the national composition of the population of Latvia in 1935 and 2005. A distinctive characteristic of the country today is that the majority population constitutes only 58.8% of the total number of inhabitants. There is a significant Russian speaking minority, which constitutes 26.8%, not counting other people with Slavic origin, such as Byelorussians and Ukrainians. This explains why Latvian people are much more concerned about language, cultural, and citizenship issues than their western peers. This also means that the context for discussions about minority issues and the balance of powers is very different.

Researchers make a distinction between two broad groups of minorities in Latvia. First, there are historical minorities who have been present in Latvia
since before World War II. Statistical data from 1935 shows that at that time the total population in Latvia was 1.9 million and Latvians represented 77% of the population. The largest minority group was Russians, but at that time they represented only 8.8%. The next most important groups were Jews (4.9%) and Germans (3.3%) with other minorities being less significant. These minorities historically coexisted in Latvian society. During the first independent state of Latvia they preserved their national traditions, but at the same time they accepted the idea of being part of the Latvian state, which was build around the Latvian national ideals.

The second largest group of minorities are post-war immigrants that are mainly Russian-speaking people, who came to Latvia during the Soviet era. They generally represent the same nationalities as the pre-war minorities, but their attachment to national roots is less prominent. In fact, researchers describe this group as a ‘non-national minority’ that is bound together by common language (Russian) rather than ethnic origin (Dribin 2004). This group has very close ties with Russian intellectual and spiritual culture and often does not share the national interests and traditions of the rest of the population. For example, representatives of this group advocate the idea of a two-community Latvia and two national languages.

Radical political movements (both Latvian and Russian) tend to capitalize on this situation and even provoke conflicts (ibid). An example of this was the protest against reforms in education in 2004, shortly before elections of the European parliament. The reforms aimed to prepare students in Russian schools for studies in state universities by gradually increasing the proportion of subjects taught in Latvian. Pro-Russian politicians took active part in the organization of different events and manifestations, and slogans, such as ‘Hands off Russian schools!’ and ‘The Russians are coming!’, appeared at the time. Latvian nationalistic parties did not fall behind and responded with ‘Latvians, don’t give up!’ and other expressive phrases. Meanwhile, the majority of Russian schools did not find the reforms problematic and they were informed about this move well in advance. Thus, the reforms were eventually implemented. But these activities were nevertheless successful for the political parties concerned as they were both able to get seats in the European parliament, which was hardly expected.

When analysing the Latvian case and comparing it with other countries, it is important to take into account that people with a foreign ethnic background enjoy different levels of economic, political, and social rights across Europe. It is commonly believed that in Western Europe ethnic minorities are often isolated and excluded from the society. However, in Latvia, the Russian-speaking minority takes active part in all vital processes.

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5 The data in Table 2.1.2 does not make a distinction between pre-war minorities and after-war immigrants, but it can be judged from the differences in the numbers of people representing different ethnic groups in different periods.
of public life. Key areas of national economy are often managed and operated by Russian-speaking entrepreneurs.

There are political parties that are established to protect their interests and to represent them in the national and even European parliament. Besides, the widespread knowledge of Russian language allows any Russian speaking person to feel comfortable in the Latvian society even without mastering the national language.

The situation with other minorities is rather interesting too. Most of the minorities (especially Poles and Jews) speak Russian, have joined the Russian speaking community and even report Russian as their mother tongue, which might be a consequence of the Soviet times. At the same time, significant parts of the minorities still retain their national language (more than 50% percent of Lithuanians and Estonians list their national language as their mother tongue). The Latvian language becomes increasingly prominent among these groups of people, as well. Nowadays it is not uncommon for people in Latvia to be fluent in several languages.

Table 2.1.2 National composition of the population of Latvia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of people</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvians</td>
<td>1 467 035</td>
<td>1 357 099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>168 266</td>
<td>660 684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byelorussians</td>
<td>26 803</td>
<td>88 287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainians</td>
<td>1 844</td>
<td>59 011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poles</td>
<td>48 637</td>
<td>56 511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuanians</td>
<td>22 843</td>
<td>31 717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>93 370</td>
<td>9 883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma people</td>
<td>3 839</td>
<td>8 491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germans</td>
<td>62 116</td>
<td>3 788</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Estonians  6 928  2 537  0.4  0.1
Other     4 255  28 426  0.2  1.2
Total     1 905 936 2 306 434 100.0 100.0

Source: Latvian Central Statistics bureau

Not all permanent residents in Latvia are citizens of Latvia even if they have a Latvian passport. As of January 01, 2007, there are approximately 395,000 people predominantly with foreign ethnic backgrounds, who have not fulfilled the requirements to obtain Latvian citizenship and have the denomination ‘non-citizen’ in their passports. The process of naturalization still continues and it has accelerated since Latvia’s membership in the European Union. There are also cases when people decide to accept citizenship of other countries (Russia, for example).

Different ethnic groups also may belong to different religious organizations. Most Latvians belong to the Lutheran Church or the Catholic Church. The Orthodox Church is the most popular among the Russian-speaking population. The traditional national minorities, in turn, may cultivate their historical traditions. Thus, for example there are Tatars and other people from the former southern Soviet republics, who are Muslims. There are also Jews, who follow their faith. Speaking about other religious minorities, it is often hard to make any linkage with ethnic origin without deeper investigation. For example, the charismatic religions seem to attract people with different ethnic backgrounds. Perhaps they find other uniting factors related to the context of post-modern society, but there is lack of knowledge and studies on these issues in Latvia.

Attitudes towards integration and immigration

Since regaining independence in 1990, the Latvian government has implemented an integration policy that is orientated towards multicultural diversity (Dribin 2004). The state retains its national identity in a sense that everybody must know the national language and show respect to the country. But it strives to establish democratic values and adjust its institutional framework in order to be able to serve the needs of a diverse society. Minorities are given the opportunity to preserve their traditional values and take part in building the multicultural society.

However, this question is not yet fully resolved. Studies, such as Zepa et al (2004), show that a significant part of the population would still like to see the identity of the country based on its national values and history rather than accept the multicultural reality. A similar rhetoric can sometimes be heard from some leaders of political parties.
Even though there has always been people from foreign ethnic backgrounds in Latvia, the immigration that took place during the Soviet times has had the most prominent impact on Latvian society. This is because of its dimension and the impact of political assimilation. Recent immigration has not been that much of an issue, as Latvia is prone to emigration rather than immigration at the moment. There is also a lack of studies and data that would provide relevant information about recent immigration.

However, several studies show that in general Latvian society is not in favour of immigration, especially in the context of the labour market (see for example Indans and Kruma, 2006). This might also be related to the Soviet experience. After many years of forced immigration people are looking for social cohesion and additional immigration is not welcomed. At the same time, polls such as Eurobarometer 63 indicate that only 2% of people in Latvia consider immigration a threat.

There are no hot debates related to the Muslim presence in the country as there are only few hundred followers of Islam in Latvia. They are modest in their activities and remain invisible in the society. However, studies about tolerance in the society have raised questions about attitudes towards Muslims and potential immigration from the Muslim countries. Opinions vary, but such immigration would be considered negative by a certain part of the population because of fears of aggression and terrorism (Zepa et al, 2004).

Minority groups are typically concentrated in urban places. There are also specific regions in the countryside where national minorities represent a local majority (especially in the regions that are close to the Russian border). But there is no evidence that they would be isolated from the rest of the society in terms of locality and place of residence.

Religious minority groups

Ringolds Balodis (1999), the former head of the Religious Affairs Council of the Ministry of Justice, provides the following classification of religions that best describes the situation in Latvia:

1. Traditional religious organizations (as also referred earlier in the text) - eight confessions that are listed in the Article 51. of the 1937 Civil Law (Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Orthodox Church, Old Believer Orthodox, Methodists, Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jews).
2. ‘Non-traditional’ religions - religions that have not been historically present in Latvia, but are regarded as traditional religions in other countries (e.g. Muslims, Buddhists, Anglicans and others)
3. Registered new religious movements - movements that are established as a result of separation from traditional churches (e.g. Augsburg
Lutherans,) as well as independent movements that register themselves as religious organizations, including those that are referred to as ‘sects’ (e.g. Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses)

4. Associations that are in fact new religious movements, but do not want to be recognized as such to avoid special attention, control etc. (e.g. Brahma Kumaris, different cultural organizations, esoteric organizations, non-governmental organizations, and even commercial enterprises).

5. Non-registered new religious movements (e.g. Satanists).

6. National religion – there is a religion called ‘Dievturi’ in Latvia, which is of local scale and is based on folklore and traditional rituals. There might be similar examples in other countries.

From the legal point of view, religious organizations belong to the non-governmental sector. Legal requirements are similar to those that apply to other NGOs in the country. According to the legislation, religious organizations need to register and provide basic annual reports to the Religious Affairs Council and state tax authorities. Thanks to this order, the authorities and society in general may obtain more or less reliable information about the religious movements represented in the country. However, as is evident from the classification of religions in Latvia, religious groups might be organized in a variety of forms. Thus, we never have the complete picture. There is also a lack of empirical studies describing these organizations and the type of activities that they are involved in. Hence, there is a need for further research in this area.

There is no commonly accepted definition of ‘religious minority’ in Latvia, but the classification presented above may help us to identify which religions might be considered as such and what their characteristics are. For example, religious movements belonging to categories 2-6, can definitely be regarded as minority religions, because these are registered or unregistered organizations with a relatively small number of followers.

If we consider the number of followers as the most important criteria, then more than half of organizations included in the list of traditional religions also might be considered as religious minorities (e.g. Old Believer Orthodox, Methodists, Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Jews). In that case we narrow down the list of major religions to three religious denominations: the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Orthodox Church. From this perspective all other denominations presented in Table 2.1.1 can then be regarded as religious minority groups.

Identifiable relationships between ethnic origin and religious denomination can be found mostly in the groups of ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ religions. In the first case, there is a relationship between the

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6 A literal translation of the name of this religion in English would be ‘Beholders of the God’.
largest ethnic groups and majority churches (e.g. Latvians attend the Lutheran church and Catholic church, Russians attend the Orthodox Church). In the second case religious minorities are at the same time ethnic minorities (e.g. Jews and Muslims). The linkage between the ethnic and religious factor is not so obvious in case of other religious groups and there is a need for deeper investigation into the relationship of different ethnic groups and new religious movements.

The relationship between ethnic background, religious groups, and gender equality has not been explored in Latvia. Issues concerning gender in relation to minority religions are not high on the agenda in the public debate. In Western Europe, gender and minority issues relate most frequently to Islam, but in the Latvian case these problems do not surface, as the presence of Muslim minority is not so prominent. Perhaps Muslims in Latvia are also less strict about following their religious practices or they keep their faith so private that it is not visible to the rest of Latvian society. Overall, issues related to religious minorities and smaller ethnic groups, such as Muslims in Latvia, are overshadowed by the significance of problems related to the Russian minority.

Gender issues in relation to traditional religions also have not been widely discussed, except the reluctance to ordain women in the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church. However, it is obvious that there are signs of patriarchal legacy in traditional religions and traditional models of the society in general. This is illustrated by the fact that we are likely to question these problems in minority communities and minority religions, while we tend to ignore them in our own society and traditions.

Most community organizations establish some sort of network for self-support – and religious groups are no exception. However, we do not have sufficient information about such networks and it is hard to judge whether they indicate a presence of discrimination or a gap in the provision of social services. Again, this illustrates the need for additional research in this area.

According to Scerbinskis (1998), existing Muslim organizations play an important role in unifying and defending the interests of Muslim people. In one way or another they also cover social issues. At the same time, the author indicates that Muslims are increasingly taking steps towards integration. Some of them become part of the Latvian community, but more often they join the Russian speaking population. Most children from non-Russian minority families study in Russian schools. Nevertheless, it is said that immigrants from the former southern and eastern Soviet countries (including Muslims) tend to preserve their identity and traditions.

There is only one active mosque in Latvia, which is located in a rented office space in Riga. Though if the Muslim community remains active, building a mosque is only a question of time. There are no specific legal requirements for establishing places of worship in Latvia and there is no evidence that religious minority groups would encounter difficulties in this
respect. The only instance when additional registration in the Religious Affairs Council is needed, is in the case of opening of an educational establishment, monastery, mission or diaconal centre. Thus, supposedly the most critical factors for building a new place of worship is the acquisition of the necessary property, real estate, and finance, as well as the regular administrative routines. However, as there is no empirical research on this topic, a survey among representatives of religious minority groups in Latvia could shed some light on how this actually works in practice. This may also be included in the tasks of the fieldwork for the WaVE project.

Conclusions

This report provides a state-of-the-art assessment of the situation in Latvia with regard to areas relevant for the WaVE research. It gives an overview of the existing literature on the subject, describes the national welfare system, and presents information on the religious situation in the country and welfare activities of the majority religion; it also describes existing ethnic and religious minority groups.

The overview of main issues in the society and the survey of existing research related to the WaVE study in Latvia revealed that the project can contribute new knowledge in such areas as the role of religious organizations in social welfare, religious minorities in Latvia, links between ethnicity, religion, and gender equality, as well as sources of conflict and cohesion in society.

Latvia, together with other post-communist countries, represents a special case in Europe. It is historically rich with different religious and ethnic groups. At the same time, it has managed to avoid aggressive conflicts among the different groups in the society. A better understanding of the chemistry in Latvian society may provide interesting insights for the analysis and comparison with the situation in other European countries.

Statistical information shows that risks of poverty and social distress are higher in Latvia than in most other European countries, which to a large extent is a consequence of the political and economic transition. At the same time, there is no evidence of significant differences among majority and minority groups in terms of quality of life and standards of living. Lagging social indicators are also compensated by a tighter labour market and higher economic growth.

Latvia is also specific in the sense that there is no single majority religion. Rather there are several dominant religious denominations that cooperate in order to achieve common goals. The historical development of the role of the church in society and its relationship with the state is also very different from Western Europe. While in many European countries the social role of
the church is established and has been maintained for decades and even centuries, in the Latvian case it started anew after regaining independence from the Soviet Union.

The development of gender regimes is also very peculiar in the Latvian case. Many women are taking part in the labour market (more than in Europe on average), but they are not necessarily happy with this situation. While legal equality seems to be established, problems include equal employment opportunities and equal pay for men and women.

The characteristics of religious minorities in Latvia also represent an open area for research. It is commonly believed that the relationships between different religions in Latvia are amicable. Religion is more often regarded as a source of cohesion rather than a source of conflict. At the same time there is relatively little knowledge on the religious minorities present in the country and the links between ethnic, religious and gender issues have not been discussed very much.

Overall, this report shows that there are many issues and areas of study in Latvia that are interesting from the perspective of the WaVE research. Thus, one of the next steps of the research is to select the priority areas that should be explored in more detail during the fieldwork. At this stage we have defined three main areas of focus for our study in relation to the majority and minority issues in the locality: social and economic inclusion, the role of religious organizations, and aspects related to gender equality.

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Abstract

The aim of this report is to describe the most important factors that can lead to social cohesion or social conflicts in a small Latvian town named Ogre, while concentrating on their relationship with religious and ethnic issues. In order to gather information about the social situation in Ogre and the relationships between different groups in the society a variety of research methods were used, including in-depth interviews, biographical interviews, survey questionnaires, participant observation, collection of written material and content analysis. The empirical research shows that cohesion in the society is facilitated by such factors as equal opportunities among different groups, existence of support networks, good education, access to information, as well as common interests and values. As far as it is based on common grounds and similar goals, religion also seems to be a cohesion factor. The factors that provoke conflict include ethnic policy, knowledge of national language, lack of information, social distress, ability to thrive in the labour market and quality of welfare related services. Based on the findings of the report we provide suggestions for improvement in social policy at local, national and EU levels. Suggestions on the local level are mostly related to the quality of social services. On the national level they are primarily concerned with ethnic policy. Recommendations on the EU level are related to a wider notion of European values.

Presentation of the town

Introduction of the town

Latvia has always been rich with people representing different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Due to the advantageous geographic situation of Latvia, neighbouring countries have always struggled for control over this region and this has resulted in influences from different cultures and religions. When the first independent Latvian state was established in 1918, more than 20% of its population were people from foreign ethnic origins.

However, the Soviet period has had a particularly strong impact on the ethnic composition of the population in Latvia. The Soviet government used immigration as a policy tool to ensure that Latvia and other Baltic states were tied to Russia through the significant population of ethnic Slavs. Thus, the percentage of the population of foreign ethnic origin increased substantially over this period. At the dawn of independence some
immigrants returned to their countries of origin (especially military servicemen and industry workers), though the majority stayed in Latvia. As a result, there are over a million immigrants and their descendants in Latvia, representing 42.2% of the total population (Results of the 2000 population and housing census in Latvia, 2002). Many of them do not share Latvian national ideals and do not feel affiliated with this country.

In this regard Ogre is a typical Latvian town with an ethnic and religious composition close to the Latvian average. It is important to note that Ogre is very close to Riga, the capital of Latvia (only 36 kilometres away). During the Soviet times this made Ogre attractive for immigrants. Nowadays it alleviates some of the social and economic problems because many citizens of Ogre work and spend most of their time in Riga, where the economy is booming and income is higher.

It is also worth mentioning that during the Soviet times Ogre was turned into a hub for textile manufacturing. In order to create the necessary workforce, people from all over the Soviet Union and even Vietnam were invited to move to Ogre. To provide shelter for the immigrant workers, a new part of the city was built. The new part of the city was called ‘Jaunogre’ (or the ‘New Ogre’ in English). Not surprisingly, for a long time this has been the part of the city with the highest concentration of people from foreign ethnic origins. To provide education opportunities to immigrant children and youth, a Russian high-school was also opened in Jaunogre.

**Brief presentation of the majority and the minority presence**

**Ethnic composition:**
The ethnic composition in Ogre is presented in Table 2.2.1.

**Table 2.2.1 Ethnic composition of citizens of Ogre**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th># of people</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latvians</td>
<td>17,153</td>
<td>64.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>6,545</td>
<td>24.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byelorussians</td>
<td>1,116</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainians</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>1.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poles</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>1.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuanians</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>0.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>2.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>26,573</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Other nationalities that are not represented in the table include: 48 Estonians, 40 Jews, 31 Tatars, 30 Germans, 25 Armenians, 16 Moldavians, 16 Roma people, 9 Karelians, 8 Mordvians, 7 Finns, 6 Americans, 6 Greeks, 6 Uzbeks, 5 Bulgarians, 5 Tchuvashes, 5 Mari people, 5 Udmurts, 5 Hungarians, 4 Afghans, 4 Avars, 4 Bashkirs, 3 Komians, 2 Frenchmen, 2 Kazakh, 2 Komians - Permians, 1 Korean, 1 Krimchak, 1 Lezgin, 1 Norwegian, 1 Osettian, 1 Rumanian, 1 Tajic. Up to 231 people did not report their nationality, and 4 persons did not want to declare it.

Of the total number of citizens in Ogre, 22,064 were born in Latvia and 4,264 persons were born abroad. Most of the citizens from foreign ethnic origins come from Russia (2,422). However, as can be seen from the above, the spectrum of the countries is rather broad. Concerning the language, 75% of the citizens reported that their mother tongue is Latvian and another 13% state that it is Russian. Other languages constitute 12% (2000 population and housing census in Latvia, 2002).

It is interesting that the declared nationality might be different from the mother tongue. Thus, for example, out of 17,153 Latvians, 540 list Russian as their mother tongue. At the same time out of 6,545 Russians 390 people listed Latvian as their mother tongue (2000 population and housing census in Latvia, 2002). Other ethnic groups predominantly list Russian as their native language, although there are some exceptions. These patterns describe the high degree of interrelations among the different ethnic groups, which to a large extent is a result of the Soviet policy.

**Religious situation:**

Data on the religious denominations in Ogre is presented in Table 2.2.2. The numbers in the table represent only the active members of the parishes. Some churches claim that the actual number of believers in Ogre is much higher. For example, a survey by the Catholic Church revealed that there are around 4,000 Catholics in Ogre. A higher number of Catholics in Ogre might be explained by recent local migration from the Latgale province to the Riga agglomeration (including Ogre), as well as by higher social involvement of the Catholic Church.
Table 2.2.2 Religious congregations in Ogre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Number of members in the parishes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic Church</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelic Lutheran Church</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox Church</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity Baptist Church</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Day Adventists</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah’s Witnesses</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelic Baptist Church</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostolic Church ‘Vārda Spēks’ [‘The power of word’]</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian Church ‘Žēlastība’ [‘Mercy’]</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelic Faith Christian Church ‘Gaisma Pasaulei’ [‘Light to the world’]</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources:* Religious Affairs Council of the Ministry of Justice, Press Department of Ogre Municipality, estimates of the officials and members of the churches.

It is evident from the data that the three major religions that are present in Latvia are dominant also in Ogre. Information on other religious movements is rather scattered. Their size is more difficult to establish because not all of them are acknowledged or registered. Some religious movements have a practice of registering in one place, while being active in other places too, which makes them even harder to track down. Besides, those people who cannot find an appropriate denomination in Ogre, may practice their faith in neighbouring places, including the capital Riga.

Brief presentation of the local welfare system

Responsibility for public social services and benefits is divided between the national and local governments. The national government, as represented by the Ministry of Welfare and its agencies, designs the welfare policy, monitors its implementation and provides social insurance benefits and
social benefits to specific social risk groups. Currently it also manages residential institutions for orphans and people with special social needs. One of such institutions is a centre of special social care for people with intellectual disabilities, ‘Saulstari’ [‘Sunbeams’] in Ogre. Through its agencies the state also provides financial support to a day care centre for intellectually disabled youth, ‘Saime’ [‘Family’]. There is also a local branch of a state employment agency in Ogre.

Responsibility for social services and social assistance has to a large extent been transferred to the local municipalities. The municipality provides material support to persons or families in social distress and designs and implements social services in practice. The role of the municipality in the provision of social welfare is expected to increase in the future. The plan is that local governments will eventually take over the residual state institutions for social care, though the date is constantly postponed due to lack of financial and institutional resources.

Other social actors, such as the non-governmental sector, private establishments, and religious organizations are increasingly active in the domain of social services. However, limited financial resources and lack of an institutional foundation hinders the development of alternative forms of social welfare provision.

**Role of local government:**

Local government is the main provider of organized forms of social welfare in the Ogre municipality. The social security network in Ogre is rather developed. The municipality has established a social assistance office, which implements the national welfare policy and decides on social benefits. It is also responsible for the development of new social services and supervises municipal institutions for social care.

The institutions managed by social assistance include the above mentioned day care centre for intellectually disabled youth, ‘Saime’, a Child Crisis Centre, a family support day care centre, and a house for the poor. The municipality also provides home care services and supports NGOs working with children and families in social distress. Other types of social services are organized on an ad-hoc basis.

The municipality has attempted to use outsourcing in order to develop new organized forms of social services. However, recently it was calculated that it is cheaper to provide services using its own resources and the idea of outsourcing was abandoned. Concerning the organization of social services, it is interesting to note that the employees in all of these institutions are almost exclusively women.

Besides social services, the local municipality also provides facilities for medical care. Additional social and medical services are available to the citizens of Ogre through the regional municipality. These include residential
facilities for elderly people, the orphanage, as well as the health centre and hospital.

According to the legislation social services are accessible to all permanent citizens of Ogre and people are not discriminated because of their ethnic and religious background. The services are also available to persons who do not speak the national language.

Role of majority church:
Even though there is no strong tradition of church based social services and assistance in Latvia, religious organizations are active in the field of welfare. The scope of their activity depends on the initiative of the individual parishes and priests, financial resources, and the relative development of social theology in the specific religious denomination.

The Catholic Church is the most prominent in this respect. It offers social assistance to families and pensioners in poverty irrespective of their religious beliefs and attitudes. The church supplies not only food, but also literature, apparel, home appliances and other material assistance. It also provides spiritual assistance and organizes cultural events.

There have been cases when the church helps marginalized people relocate to another town. The church has a list of poor families. The vicars offer services to them and they also invite businessmen and providers of foreign financial aid for their contribution. The Catholic Church in Ogre believes that it is crucial to work with families. It also makes regular visits to schools, including the minority school (sometimes called ‘Russian school’) in Ogre. Although most Catholics in both Latvia and Ogre are of Latvian origin, the Church tries to expand its religious and social influence to other ethnic groups and visits to minority school are appropriate for this purpose. Last, but not least, the Catholic Church does not hesitate to cooperate with the local municipality, if such a need arises.

The Lutheran church in Ogre also provides social assistance and organizes regular events. However, its activities are targeted primarily to the members of the parish, which might partially be due to limited human and financial resources. The same can be said about the Orthodox Church which has mostly been a beneficiary rather than benefactor in material or social assistance.

The Baptist church is also socially active and quite visible in the society. It has provided food and other material assistance to the people in need. In May 2007, the Baptist church organized a Family day in Ogre, which was aimed at reminding people of the significance of the family.

Role of minority associations/networks:
According to the data from the state registry, there are more than 200 community organizations in the Ogre district, which suggests that the civil
society in this region is rather developed. The press department of the Ogre city council informed us that of this number there are approximately 25 organizations in the city of Ogre that are visible in the public domain and 15 out of these are connected with welfare activities in one way or another.

There are several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and associations that aim to provide assistance exclusively to their members, such as an Association of Pensioners, an Association of Disabled people or an Association of people who have been subject to repression from the Soviet government. Other organizations, such as the Rotary club and Rotaract, aim to provide good service to a wider society. There are also religiously based organizations such as an open society fund, ‘Cerība Tev’ ['A Hope for You’], whose main mission is to help children in social distress.

Minority religious groups are usually centred around their priests and parishes. Except for some activists associated with left wing political parties, the research did not reveal any other organizations that would organize or sustain ethnic minority networks.

Explanation of the extent to which the local situation is in flux

The history of Ogre, like the history of Latvia, in general is rich with political, economic, and social transitions. The most significant recent changes involving ethnicity, religion and values are related to the Soviet era, its collapse and the following rebuilding of the independent state of Latvia, which eventually resulted in joining the European Union.

Until the Soviet times Ogre used to be a resort town with just a few houses. During the Soviet era it was turned into an industrial city with good salaries, new infrastructure, new schools and kindergartens and a high level of social protection. It also received flows of immigrants from close and distant republics of the Soviet Union.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union it became a neglected city with a high level of unemployment among women, many people without citizenship, and mediocre future perspectives. The enterprises that previously provided the backbone for social and economic stability were either closed or struggled to survive.

Over the years, the social and economic situation has picked up. The development of Ogre has also been facilitated by its proximity to Riga. Many people who work and study in Riga live in Ogre or the Ogre district. As a result, the developments in Riga and in Latvia as a whole have a huge influence on the local situation in Ogre.

The minorities have integrated into society rather well. Despite the dramatic changes, extreme conflicts have always been avoided. At the same time, different groups in society preserve different identities and do not share
a common vision about the future of the state. This leaves room for uncertainty about the future and has an impact on the locality as well.

Regarding values, the biggest changes were related to transition from collective values to individualistic ones, though it may be argued that collective values were imposed on the society and the changes only legalized the true individualistic nature of people. Another aspect was the revival of traditional values and religion. However, nowadays these values are confronted with changes taking place in the post-modern society.

During the 15 years of independence a strong social segregation has taken place, raising the issue of inequality. The society is also undergoing a generation change. Young people with a modern education are gaining status in society, while older generations (especially retired people) are in a less favourable position. Generation change also brings changes in the dialectics between different ethnic groups. While the previous generations often had different and conflicting interests, the younger generations are more similar and closer to Western Europe in terms of their mentality.

The situation is also in flux because of demographic and economic changes in the society, which are similar to other countries in Europe. In addition there are specific national factors, which are hard to foresee, such as the government’s policy towards liberalization and opening the labour market to the workforce from other EU countries, as well as from the countries outside the EU.

Last but not least, it is difficult to foresee the reaction of the local society if Latvia would suddenly become prone to immigration rather than emigration. We also do not know what would happen if an immigrant population with a different mentality (such as people from Islamic countries) would reach a notable size in the society, in a similar way to what has already happened in several European countries.

Context and timeframe

There were no specific events at either local or national levels around the time of our research, that may have had a significant influence on the outcome of the study. However, there are several nationwide factors that have affected the relationships between different groups for a longer period of time. These factors set the wider context in which interactions between different groups in society are taking place.

The specificities of history and the ethnic composition in Latvia imply that ethnic policy and the relationships between different groups in the society are one of the greatest social and political challenges. Studies on ethnic relations, such as Zepa et al (2005), find that there are conflicting views between Latvian and Russian speaking people. The most sensitive
areas include ethnic policy, language and education, as well as the interpretation of history. As a result, there are still several crucial political issues that are not resolved or where dissatisfaction persists at least from the side of one party concerned.

For example, issues related to citizenship are still not fully resolved. As of January 1, 2007, there are approximately 395,000 people living in Latvia who are not citizens of the Republic of Latvia, but who are also not citizens of any other country. They have a Latvian passport (the so-called ‘non-citizen’ passport), which guarantees them rights to reside in the territory of Latvia, to travel abroad and other rights. Many of them have been living in Latvia for years and have children who are citizens of Latvia. According to the current legislation, if the resident has valid reasons to claim citizenship or if he or she can pass a basic language and history test, it is not problematic to obtain citizenship. Some of the ‘non-citizens’ obtain citizenship, while others ignore it, believing that they should have been granted citizenship in the first place.

Education is another area where major disputes have appeared. The protest against the education reform in 2004 was one of the biggest and longest protests since Latvia regained independence. The reform increased the role of Latvian language in national minority schools and after long disputes it established a 60/40 breakdown, meaning that at least 60% of the subjects in senior grades must be taught in Latvian. The initiators of the reform believed that it would facilitate integration and studies at university level. The opponents of the reform regarded it primarily as a threat to the prevalence of Russian language and culture (Zepa et al, 2004b).

The status of Russian language is also subject to debates. Given the high number of Russian speaking people in Latvia, left wing political parties propose accepting Russian as the second state language. Politicians that are in the centre of the political spectrum suggest giving it the status of a minority language. Neither idea seems to be acceptable to more nationally oriented Latvian citizens and political parties.

Despite the different opinions, ethnic conflicts have not found expression in unlawful activities and manifestations against the existing order of ethnic relationships. Researchers explain this by many uniting factors that compensate for social conflicts. For example, ethnic minorities are not concentrated around certain regions or occupations. They are engaged in various economic activities and dispersed across different regions in Latvia. They have common interests and mostly belong to Christian religions, which is also regarded as a uniting factor (Zepa et al, 2005).

However, Christian religions and the defence of traditional values do not always have a positive image in the media and public debate. In the discussion on the impact of religious values on Latvian society and the activity of the Churches one should not overlook the political activities of the First Party of Latvia, which is also referred to as the ‘Priests’ Party’. It
mobilizes a part of its electorate resting on support from religious leaders and trying to absorb all Christians Churches regardless of their denominations. The activities of this party are sometimes controversial when compared with the ideals of tolerance that are currently dominant in European society. For example, they take a sharp stance against any public activities to do with sexual minorities. This confrontation reached its peak during the transgender Pride Marches in Riga, which have taken place during the last couple of years. The aggressive stance against these issues has openly been fuelled by some notable representatives of Latvian Christian Churches and the First Party of Latvia.

To a certain extent, one of the external factors that facilitate a positive chemistry in society is rapid economic development. It relieves social tensions and reduces conflicts of interests. On the other hand, due to the tight situation in the labour market, there have been some speculation on the need to import additional labour from CIS countries. Even though people in general have a negative attitude towards new flows of immigration, it is not yet seriously considered as a threat.

**Methods and sources**

The material was gathered between September 2006 and September 2007, using the following methods: in-depth interviews, biographical interviews, survey questionnaires, participant observation, collection of written material and content analysis. In-depth interviews served as the preferred method when interviewing providers and receivers of social welfare. Biographical interviews were conducted with some of the representatives of specific minority groups. Survey questionnaires were handed out to the students in a minority high-school. Participant observation was carried out during the services at different churches and social service institutions, as well as special events, such as the Bible Marathon and the Family Day. Different documents were also collected during the fieldwork, including the reports of social service institutions.

Since there is no visible Muslim community in Ogre, we were only able to collect some basic information for comparative purposes, mostly relying on the competence of our interviewees, who have been in contact with these people. Otherwise no major difficulties were encountered in gaining access to certain groups. It was more problematic that there is limited statistical and documentary information on the religious situation in Ogre and ethnic aspects in the welfare domain. Often, the data is not detailed enough. For example, information on receivers of social aid does not present a breakdown according to nationality. Measurable indicators of social welfare, such as average salary, are not differentiated for majority and minority groups.
The choice of the groups and topics depends on the objectives of the research, which we defined in the following way: to find (or examine) the most important factors that can lead to discrimination and social conflicts, concentrating on their relationship with religious and ethnic issues.

Groups of interest

As far as it is possible to speak of segregation in Latvian society then this is definitely because of the variety of ethnic groups represented in the country. For the purposes of this study we have identified the following groups of interest:

1. Latvian speaking population – this is what we refer to as the majority population. These are people of Latvian nationality (as written in the passport) who either have Latvian as their mother tongue or who speak it fluently. According to the latest population census (2000 population and housing census in Latvia, 2002), this group constitutes 64.55% of the population in Ogre, which is not far different from the situation in Latvia overall (57.7%).

2. Russian speaking population – this is the biggest minority group in terms of numbers. Most notably this group consists of Russians (24.63% of the total population in Ogre), but there are other smaller ethnic groups like Byelorussians (4.2%) and Ukrainians (1.94%) who may be included in this group as well.

3. Smaller minority groups of interest – the rest of the population in Ogre is constituted by representatives of more than 30 different nationalities. Most of them list Russian as their mother tongue. Others have responded that their mother tongue is either Latvian or the language of their country of origin. It is documented that some of these groups are subject to particularly high risk of social exclusion (for example, Roma people).

Our intention is to study relationships and interactions among these groups. Special attention is given to youth and youth problems, as we believe that these relationships and attitudes represent crucial aspects of integration. The venues where we studied these interactions include the local municipality and its organizations, other establishments of social assistance and social care, NGOs, educational establishments, religious organizations, and other public places. We contacted the representatives from the organizations listed above and used other opportunities to communicate with representatives of the selected groups.

For comparative purposes we are also interested in certain smaller minority groups. These include marginal ethnic groups, like the Roma people, and specific religious minority groups, such as Muslims, and various new religious movements.
Issues of interest

The first area of study is welfare. We look into different aspects of welfare and try to see whether there are any special trends and examples of exclusion or conflict between different groups in the society. The specific aspects of welfare policy that we look at include social security, employment policy and gender equality. We are interested to find out who are the main providers and receivers of social welfare and whether these aspects are at the intersection of religion, ethnic factors and gender equality.

The particular objects and institutions of study include the local branch of the state employment agency, the local municipality, the local social assistance office, and the crisis centre for family and children. We have surveyed both the employees of these organisations and the receivers of the services. We have also selected several respondents randomly to include people who have a Slavic ethnic background but are not necessarily receivers of social assistance in order to get a more balanced opinion.

Initial interviews with representatives from municipal organizations revealed that a Russian school in Ogre serves as a significant factor in decreasing the potential for conflicts. Therefore, separate attention in our study is given to this school and surveys of students and staff are included in our fieldwork. We also assume that the school serves as a mirror of the society and should tell us more about the social climate in Ogre in general.

The second area of study is the role of religious organizations. In this part of the research we are gathering information on religious organizations that are active in Ogre. In particular, we are interested in their welfare related activities and their relations with the minority groups. We also try to assess whether religion represents a source of cohesion or conflict.

In this part of the study we have surveyed the members and authorities of all the largest traditional churches in Ogre. We also carry out interviews with members and authorities of marginal religious groups, such as Evangelical Protestant groups and Pentecostals. A subject of particular interest to us is cooperation among different religious groups, which is rather prominent in Ogre and in Latvia overall.

Justification of selected groups and issues

The welfare dimension is the key perspective from which we look at social problems in the WaVE research and this has become the starting point for our research. In order to select the areas of interest, we identified the key aspects of the welfare policy, as defined by the Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia and included them in our fieldwork. As mentioned above, these are social security, employment issues, and gender equality.

Speaking about social security in general, it includes social insurance (pension system), social services (organized forms of service delivery) and
social assistance (material benefits). In our study we do not look much into the pension system because that is managed at the national level. We are primarily interested in welfare at the local level and social policy at the local level in Latvia basically deals with social services and social benefits.

Values and religion represent another important dimension of the WaVE research. We hope that the survey of religious organizations and their welfare-related role helps us to understand how religious values find their expression in practice. We are particularly interested in examples where the expression of values intersects with the welfare dimension (for instance, the labour market). To a certain degree we also try to identify other values (for example, traditional or political) that influence the social interactions between people. This is done with the help of a theoretical framework described in the Analysis section, below.

The choice of the relevant social groups was motivated by their significance in the Latvian society. The dialectics between the Latvian and Russian speaking Diaspora is the central problem in modern Latvian society. The importance of the Russian speaking population cannot be overlooked, not least because of their presence in terms of numbers. They are also very active in the public domain, having political forces and different non-governmental organizations defending their interests.

Apart from issues related to the large Russian population, there are other minority groups in Latvia that might be interesting from the WaVE perspective. It is documented that some smaller minority groups, such as the Roma people, are subject to a particularly high risk of social exclusion. Existing research on the national level also reveals that certain religious minority groups experience tensions with the rest of the society.

Findings

Examples of cooperation and/or cohesion between groups

In order to relate our empirical data to the concept of cohesion, we refer to the definition of cohesion provided by Berger-Schmitt (2000). According to her study, the concept of cohesion includes two major dimensions: (1) reduction of disparities, inequalities and social exclusion and (2) strength of social relations and interactions.

One part of our research dealt specifically with the first dimension of cohesion. We collected all available statistical data and visited local institutions that are involved in implementation of welfare policy. We interviewed both providers and receivers of social care in order to gather evidence of disparities and exclusion. Unfortunately statistical reports about the receivers of social services often do not make a distinction between
different nationalities and religions. Hence, we must rely to a large extent on our own observations and responses from the interviewees. The second part of the empirical study included examination of social relations and interactions in state and municipal welfare service organizations and the minority high school in Jaunogre.

Access to social services

During the visits in the social service institutions we observed that representatives of both Latvian and Russian speaking Diaspora use the social services. Our impression was also confirmed during the interviews. As a senior official at the Family Crisis Centre noted: ‘My experience from working in the social assistance office shows that both Latvian and Russian speaking people apply for social services. Often there are more Russian people waiting in the line than Latvians.’ Concerning the Family Crisis Centre in particular she notes that currently it serves Latvian families more often than Russian, but this might be reflecting the higher number of Latvians in Ogre (1,F).1

Receivers of the services in the social assistance office and local branch of the state employment agency supported the opinion that there are no visible inequalities in terms of access to social welfare based on ethnic and religious factors. According to a young woman who came to the social services office on behalf of her mother, ‘everybody has a place [in the society]. The officials at the social service institutions do not distinguish between different ethnic groups and religions’ (18,F,1). This opinion was also supported by other interviewees, including an elderly lady who came to the social assistance office for financial support (18,F,3). According to our observations the receivers of social assistance are usually elderly people from different ethnic backgrounds, who live in rather poor conditions. Thus, social assistance offered by the municipality mostly deals with material benefits and it is means tested. The statistics on the use of social services show that women resort to social assistance slightly more often than men.

Latvian and Russian speaking respondents surveyed in the state employment agency also shared the opinion that social services are equally accessible for different groups in the society. Even among the unemployed persons the opinion on the social security system and labour market policies was generally positive. At least the respondents believe that welfare policies today are better than before. They also acknowledge the fact that the spectrum of social services has widened. According to a Russian speaking woman, ‘organizations that provide social services in Ogre today are

1 When interviews are cited in the text, they are coded with an individual number for each interview, followed by F = female, or M = male. When there are two or more respondents in the same interview, they are distinguished with a number following the indication of their sex, e.g. (18,F,1).
working very well. I remember the situation nine years ago when there was nothing available’ (10,F).

**Opportunities in the labour market**
The official statistics show that at the time of our research there were 721 unemployed persons in Ogre and the Ogre district. Of these 446 were Latvians, 166 Russians, 16 Byelorussians, and 13 Ukrainians. More than half of the unemployed persons are women. A senior official in the state employment agency commented that ethnicity and religion are not among the primary unemployment factors. Rather the main problem factors are related to the age, gender, and physical abilities of the people.

Russian speaking respondents surveyed in the state employment agency also denied ethnic discrimination in the labour market. According to yet another Russian speaking woman (over 50 years old and unemployed), ‘there were no problems at work because of ethnic factors. Both Latvians and Russians successfully worked together’ (9,F). However, several Russian speaking respondents noted that knowledge of national language has been an issue at work (13,F; 23,M). The state employment agency has recognized this problem and offers Latvian language courses to make integration in the labour market easier.

It is notable that people from different social groups shared the same opinion on general social issues and values. They highlighted the favourable situation in the labour market and positive economic development (8,M; 10,F; 14,M; 16,F; 17M). However, while there are ample employment opportunities, it is not easy to find the desired job, which would completely fulfil material and other needs of the person (8M; 9,F; 10,F). Job offers at the state employment agency do not always suit the particular individual (9,F). Interviewees also noted that, according to their assessment, social benefits are not high enough to compensate for the rapidly rising costs of living. Therefore, they stressed the importance of one’s own initiative and responsibility for social well-being (8,M; 9,F; 11M; 12,F).

**Importance of family**
The majority of the respondents highlighted the role of family in social welfare. On a personal level respondents believe that family is where the foundations for their life are laid and where they learn about what is good and bad (23,M; 26F). ‘The values which I follow in my everyday life are the ones which I have been taught in my family’, said one of the Russian speaking respondents (23,M). According to the interviewees, these values together with personal experience shape the identity of a person and can be more important than values which are related to ethnicity and religion (23,M; 24F).

Family surrounds the person throughout the whole existence and can be important at different stages of life. A senior official from the minority
school said that their students recognize family as a basis for good education and later success in career (26,F). The role of the family was also stressed by the interviewees at social services institutions. For many people in social distress support from relatives is crucial to make their living (10,F; 11,M; 18,F,1).

The impact of the family on wider society is also recognized in Ogre. The representative of the Catholic Church defined family as the core building block of the society, thereby explaining why so much attention in their social charity work is directed towards families (5,M). The municipality has set up a special institution for family counselling and support (1,F).

Teachers and social pedagogues at the minority high school attempt to follow the situation in the families of their students. They inform the municipality about any problems and even participate in the provision of social services. The director of the minority school is an elected member of the municipal council, and this greatly facilitates the cooperation (1F; 26,F; 27,F).

**Role of religious organizations**

The apparent role of the church in the provision of social welfare was not prominent, but the church was described as a source of moral support (10,F). To a certain extent it is also a factor that facilitates social cohesion. For example, the Catholic Church attempts to unite people from different ethnic backgrounds. They offer services in both Latvian and Russian languages and try to find values that unite people rather than create conflicts (5,M).

There are examples of cooperation among different churches. For example, the Lutheran church cooperates with Baptists in providing human aid. The services of the Russian Baptist church take place in the premises of the Lutheran church. Religion might serve also as a factor of solidarity among generations. According to the representatives of the Lutheran church, youth is increasingly interested in religion and in attending church (7,M).

The senior official of the Family Crisis Centre noted that they also have a good cooperation with religious organizations. Religious organizations have provided human aid (e.g. food and clothing) and organized events for children from the crisis centre (for example, celebration of the New Year). It was stressed that religious organizations are very responsive when asked for help and also come up with their own ideas and initiatives (1,F).

**Other sources of cohesion**

The existence of social networks and personal contacts was considered an important asset for social cohesion. Friendships were mentioned in several interviews and depending on the context they were described as a factor for both cohesion and exclusion. As a positive example, respondents mentioned friends and relatives as a source of emotional and material support (9,F;
As a negative example, one of the respondents noted that she lost the job in a state agency because of changes in the management. As she put it, the new administration made it explicit that the existing employees would have to leave in order to give place to others (12,F). Thus, lack of friendships in relevant circles may limit a person’s potential to prosper and vice versa.

There are many NGOs in the Ogre district and in the Ogre municipality. Thus, we were interested to see whether they have had a significant impact on the society and whether we can somehow observe positive effects of the development of the civil society. While there are no organizations that would deal specifically with the inclusion of certain marginal social groups, the activities of many organizations are conducive to social cohesion. For example, the Association of Disabled People unites both Latvians and Russians. Religiously based organizations organize charity activities that benefit the wider society. However, the respondents did not mention these organizations as a significant factor in social welfare on the local level. These responses also indicate that active social and political participation at grassroots level is not so developed in Ogre.

According to our interviewees, a strong cohesion factor is the Russian high school in Ogre (1,F; 6,M). Thanks to the personalities of the teachers and senior officials of the school, Russian youth demonstrates willingness to integrate into the Latvian society and help their parents to do the same. For example, the students at the Russian high school created language courses for their parents in order to help them to obtain Latvian citizenship. The students also are interested in research in the areas of social inclusion and integration policy (26,F).

Neither the students, nor the teachers of the Jaunogre high school participated in protests against the education reform, which took place in 2004 concerning the role of national language in minority schools. According to the senior official of the school, ‘we were well prepared for reform and knew that it was for the benefit of our students. We should also be very grateful to parents for their understanding and support regarding this issue’ (26,F).

To collect additional information about the school and get insight in the opinions of the Russian speaking youth, we have carried out a survey of senior students at Jaunogre high school. The summary of the findings of the survey is included in Appendix 1.

**General social climate**

Overall, people describe the social climate in Ogre as positive and believe that none of the groups in the society are subject to special danger or threats. As one of the Russian respondents notes, ethnicity does not play a crucial role in every day communication and people have friends from both Latvian
and Russian circles (23,M). This is facilitated by the fact that most of the people in the society are fluent in both languages, Latvian and Russian.

People also have similar interests and needs. There are local cultural and sports events that are attended by the representatives of both majority and minority groups. There is a wide selection of extracurricular activities, sports opportunities and cultural education that are accessible in Ogre. These activities are provided by the schools, the municipality, and the private sector. According to the respondents, events where representatives of different nationalities and religions come together play a crucial role in uniting the society (26,F; 27,F).

It seems that common values and behavioural norms across the majority and minority groups serve as a factor for cohesion too. According to our observations, people in Ogre and in Latvia in general are very much concerned about conformity with the behavioural norms of the community. People seem to care about what others would think or say in public about their actions or personality. Ability to integrate and thrive in society is regarded as a virtue. Inwardness is another facet of this phenomenon. People are inward orientated in the sense that their religious and other beliefs are regarded as a deeply private matter. This is motivated by the historical and cultural context and helps to avoid conflicts. The representative of the Catholic Church put it in the following way: ‘the person is part of the society and his individuality is what forms it. But he or she should also let the society to influence his or her own identity to ensure harmony’ (5,M).

Examples of tensions/problem points between and within groups

In the following presentation of data we define conflict as an instance where the criteria of social cohesion are not met or where it is possible to observe an explicit dissatisfaction and clash of interests between two or more ethnic or religious groups (see previous section for the definition of social cohesion).

Examples of explicit conflicts among different groups in the society were not visible in Ogre at the time of our research. Therefore we had to look at more subtle levels of social inclusion and exclusion. Research carried out at a national level provided some starting points. According to Ziverte (2006), people with a foreign ethnic background consider the language barrier as one of the potential reasons for social exclusion. Research carried out by the Strategic Analysis Commission (2006) shows that people may also have psychological barriers that make them abstain from using social welfare services. The studies also highlight the lack of political involvement of people from ethnic minority groups. Several studies that look at religious aspects, such as Krumina-Konkova and Gills (2005) and Zepa et al (2004a),
reveal that recent religious movements and the influx of new religions are not welcomed in the Latvian society.

**Distribution of social welfare**

If we look at socio-economic statistics, such as the Gini coefficient, it is evident that social segregation is one of the persistent problems in social and economic development in Latvia. Hence we were interested to observe the trends on the local level and see whether we can relate them to ethnic or religious factors. However, disaggregated data on income, employment, and other social endowments for different ethnic and religious groups is not available, neither nationally, nor locally.

According to our own observations, ethnic and religious minorities are engaged in a wide spectrum of social and economic activities. Many of them enjoy high standards of living. Thus, our study does not provide grounds to draw definite conclusions about characteristics of social segregation among different groups. Still we can at least make an objective statement that ethnic and religious minority groups are under higher risks of social distress. This is because of such factors as insufficient knowledge of national language, negative personal experience of religious minorities, and other factors which are discussed in more detail later in this section.

As noted in the previous section, our interviews at the state employment agency and social assistance office confirmed that social services are equally available to all members of the society. Actual beneficiaries of these services represent people with different ethnic backgrounds and we did not observe any disproportion or discriminatory trends (1,F; 18,F,1; 18,F,3).

The fact that people with different ethnic and religious backgrounds do use the social services shows that they do not feel alienated from the local authorities. However, the respondents noted that it would be beneficial if information on different types of services and service institutions would be more widespread. It would also add value if state and municipal agencies would provide information on alternative kinds of social assistance, including those offered by the voluntary sector (8,M; 15,F).

**Issues related to employment**

People who do not thrive in the labour market sometimes tend to rely on social assistance rather than solve the problems by other means. A Russian lady who had come to the state employment office together with her child said that she left the job after child birth because she was not satisfied with the salary (15,F). A young Latvian woman who had a seasonal job also shared the same concerns:

> It was my choice to become unemployed. The social benefits I receive are almost equal with the salary that I would get from working [in the shop]. I
would rather sit at home and spend time with children. If there would be better offers around, I would probably go and work. (16,F)

It was striking that health issues were frequently mentioned as one of the most important social risks and threats for social welfare and successful participation in the labour market (8,M; 9,F; 10,F; 13,F; 14,M; 17,M). Several respondents, especially men, have left their jobs because of the need to take a rest or solve health issues. As one of the respondents said,

I became unemployed because of health reasons. I hurt my back and just wanted to take a little bit of rest. There are job offers, but none of them I would really like to accept. […] And I do not really need it. Currently I would like to make a renovation in my flat. (17,M)

He also noted that many people, especially in the construction sector, are working illegally and the government should do something about that.

The labour market is an arena where we may observe different kinds of problems. On the part of employers there is a noticeable discrimination with regard to the age and gender of the potential employee. The majority of the unemployed workforce consists of women, very often due to family reasons. Disabled people represent a group that is notably excluded from the labour market as well. They also have psychological barriers, due to which they are not able to join the labour market even if they receive employment offers. Former prisoners also have problems in returning to the labour market and there is a negative stereotype that criminal activities are more present among the Russian speaking Diaspora (3,F).

The only example where ethnic factors come into play is knowledge of the national language, which is desirable or even compulsory in certain occupations. The majority of Russian speaking respondents mentioned this aspect, but only few had really been confronted with this problem in their working experience. ‘The problem is not so much in the communication. Reading and writing is more of an obstacle’, says a Russian speaking lady (13,F). These concerns are also shared by a Russian speaking male respondent: ‘these issues come into play whenever you need to submit an application form to the local municipality or other similar situations. Then I need to ask help of somebody to do it for me’ (23,M).

The labour market was also the main area where gender equality issues became visible. The majority of the unemployed workforce consists of women and it is important to note that women are more often subject to long-term unemployment. Having a small child is a very restrictive factor for women, even though the Latvian legislation allows parental leave for either of the parents (3,F). Several respondents suggested that the state should intervene and provide some solutions to this problem (9,F; 15,F; 16,F).
Religion as a source of conflict

According to our interviewees at the national minority school and local social services institutions, people are informed on different traditions and religions and the relationships between different groups are generally amicable (1,F; 6,M; 26,F; 27,F). At the same time, interviews with representatives of several Evangelical Protestant groups revealed that people from less traditional religious groups encounter difficulties both in their personal and social life. A person who has been active in different Free churches shares her experience: ‘people assume that we are mad. I have been hold up to ridicule by my family and by my colleagues at work. It has been a humiliating experience’ (19,F)

A male respondent from another Free church commented that his denomination is sometimes equated with sects: ‘people are negative toward our church as it collects the levy of one tenth. I personally enjoy donating to the church and have donated quite high sums.’ He also believes that the church provides answers to the fundamental questions in his life and thereby contributes to his material welfare (25,M).

We referred to several cases where belonging to a certain religious group negatively influenced the person’s employment opportunities and relations at work. According to a Latvian woman surveyed at the state employment agency, her mother was a member of the Seventh Day Adventists’ church and she had a conflict with her employer after which she had to leave. As she noted, ‘my mother wanted to practice religious rituals and it required leaving the job during the working hours. The employer did not agree with it’ (15,F).

The vicar of one of the Evangelical movements shared an opinion that tensions are inevitable in the life of a Christian. The Bible provides many examples where religious people are subject to suffering and conflicts (22,M). This encourages new religious movements to be even more active in promoting their values and attracting new members to the church.

In general it can be observed that new religious movements are more active in attempts to evangelize and increase the number of members than traditional churches. Perhaps their outward orientated activity is what distracts people who are more neutral regarding spiritual issues. It is also noteworthy that religious values are very important for them and that religion has changed their understanding and appraisal of many things in this world (19,F; 20,F; 25,M).

The ‘grey areas’ in between

The survey of students at the Jaunogre high school (see appendix to this chapter) revealed an interesting insight on what we might call a ‘local identity factor’. Many respondents asserted that they do not feel affiliated
with the state or do not feel that the state would express sufficient concern about them at the national level. At the same time they stressed their positive sentiments and affiliation with the city and the locality they live in.

Identity, in particular, turned out to be a tricky concept to define for the interviewees, especially those from a foreign ethnic background. Latvian speaking respondents could more easily relate to Latvian traditions and Latvian language as core building blocks of the country and their self perception. For people from a foreign ethnic background it is more complicated. According to their own assessment they would be regarded neither as Russians in Russia, nor as Latvians in Latvia (23,M; 24,F).

Being reluctant to talk about these issues, one of the Russian speaking respondents related his identity to the identity of his children: ‘if there were a confrontation between Latvia and Russia, I would take the same position and the same stance as my children’ (23,M). The declared nationality of this person and his children is Latvian because he has Latvian roots and the children were born in Latvia.

According to another viewpoint, identity is not defined by national or political factors, but rather by who the person thinks he is, how he or she behaves in everyday life, and what his or her role in the society is. For example, the person might identify himself or herself as a representative of the middleclass, family person, a businessman, or a pensioner. As noted above, people are not so much concerned about ethnic factors in their everyday life. They have both Latvian and Russian friends, and issues related to ethnic identity seldom become an issue (23,M; 24,F; 26,F).

Comparative information on Muslims and Roma people

Since there is no visible Muslim community in Ogre and people practice their faith rather discretely, it was very difficult to gather any information on this group or make a personal contact. However, according to the information provided to us in the minority high school, there are several families in Ogre that originally come from Azerbaijan, one of the few Islamic countries of the former Soviet Union. Their children study in the Jaunogre high school, and there is no evidence that they experience any kind of discomfort stemming from their ethnicity or religion (26,F; 27F).

As a senior official of Jaunogre high school put it, ‘it seems that they like it here. If they would not feel comfortable and secure, they would certainly have left this school and this locality’ (26,F). They also note that children at school are educated on different religions and are able to discuss issues among themselves. They illustrated this with an example from a lecture where issues related to religious fundamentalism were discussed. One of the students raised his hand and told the rest of the students that he is a Muslim. He presented his viewpoint on the problems discussed in a constructive
manner and said that they have also discussed these issues in their family (26,F; 27F).

According to the latest population census (2000 population and housing census in Latvia, 2002), there are 16 Roma people in Ogre. A representative from the Family Crisis Centre was rather well informed about this group and told us that there are two families. One of the families lives in relative poverty, but apparently they do not resort to any kind of social assistance provided by the state or municipality, trying to overcome their challenges on their own. The members of the other family, however, have created some concerns for authorities and security officers, since there is information that they have been involved in suspect activities (1,M).

There is also a larger Roma community in Tome, a small village located in the Ogre district. Most of them have in unskilled jobs and some are illiterate. The Catholic Church in Ogre has undertaken special support efforts for this community and they are keeping up regular communication. One of the Catholic priests has knowledge of the Roma language, which helps to establish trust and relationships with this community (5,M).

Analysis: emergent values and their relationship with ethnicity, religion and gender

In its recent publication ‘The Future of Europe 2007’, the Strategic Analysis Commission under the auspices of the president of Latvia (SAC) has attempted to describe the future and past values for Europe. In this paper values are defined as ‘important orientations that are constantly reasserted in action’ and that are ‘perceived as something preordained and objective’. They also note that interests take place within a certain common horizon of values, such as family, religious community, nation and Europe. (Strategic Analysis Commission, 2007, p. 2). Based on EU legislation and the Constitutional Treaty, SAC has attempted to categorize these values, and their classification is presented in Table 2.2.3. The values are divided in three broad groups, namely political values, social values, and cultural values.
### Table 2.2.3 Classification of European values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLITICAL VALUES</th>
<th>SOCIAL VALUES</th>
<th>CULTURAL VALUES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core description of the</td>
<td>Positive value that</td>
<td>This is not a single value, but rather forms a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual both obeying</td>
<td>ensures the preconditions for quality of life. The dominant view is that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authority and participating in its creation. This forms the basis of democracy and individual rights by attaching to individual political status.</td>
<td>unequal distribution of welfare is not qualitative.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule of law</td>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>Enlightenment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sets the margins which no political power can overstep. The basis is Kant’s vision of a free and equal law-based federation of States.</td>
<td>Its value is the time individuals devote to themselves without being subject to market production.</td>
<td>Humanity can progress through the human mind. Rational human enquiry in scientific form can lead to happiness and welfare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluralism and Parliamentarism</td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Inwardness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power is not concentrated in one place. A long term balance exists between different interests, which avoids conflict escalation. ‘United in Diversity’ is more than an ideological slogan. The problem lies with ‘united’. A link also exists between representatives and people as a sort of agreement between equals. Transparency forms part of this value.</td>
<td>Competition between people is value if it is fair and regulated for the benefit of society. The market can reconcile interests and capabilities so that selfish behaviour benefits society. The market allows everyone to perform according to their capabilities to achieve maximum positive results for society.</td>
<td>Christianity is part of the inward vision of human life. Human nature is to be found not in social position or external behaviour but in the soul. Inwardness ensures conformity with the external world order. Europe is characterized by tension between the external and internal personality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>Irony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a democratic value,</td>
<td>Individuals acknowledge</td>
<td>Capacity to distance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
it aims at integration although in some contexts appears to be divisive. Identity as a means to create distinctness. Europe has become cautious and sceptical of this value.

themselves as masters of their own lives. The individual forms the basis of society (not family or class). Individuals can decide what is best for them.

oneself from one’s own perceptions, to see accidental effects of own vision. To admit that one’s own vision is not the only one. Irony leads to distrust in simple solutions. Europe is based on an ironic denial of a Eurocentric identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Separation of Church and State</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
<th>Historicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political power should not bother about souls because then it would limit their freedom.</td>
<td>Valuing ‘otherness’ motivates distancing from objective differences (religion, race, culture, social class) and to treat all people as equal. Others have the right to define their identity without enforcing ‘normality’.</td>
<td>History is the form in which Europe explains social, political and cultural phenomena. It also provides an understanding as to where we stand. It is a depositary of memories and facilitates the search for new identities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Strategic Analysis Commission, 2007*

In our analysis of the value dimension we adapt this framework and use the division between cultural, social-economic, and political values. We also recognize the distinction between autotelic and instrumental values. However, we do not put emphasis on the categorization as such. Rather it helps us to identify different sets of values, where some values are values in themselves, while others are instrumental in achieving a higher set of values and goals.

### Cultural values

#### Religious values:
Religion in the Ogre society was presented as a value that leads to cohesion. This might be related to the fact that the vast majority of religious people in Ogre belong to Christian denominations. Different churches also cooperate to better meet the needs of their members due to lack of institutional and financial resources. Religious aspects have created conflicts in the case of less traditional religions, but this has not been a widely recognized problem partly because other religious movements are very scarcely represented.
Religious values seem to be very important for people who are deeply involved in religion or for those who find their spiritual fulfilment in less traditional religious denominations. However, for the majority of the population, ‘inwardness’ as a value also plays an important role in aspects related to religion. After the Soviet times, when any expression of religion was humiliated, many people regard religion as a ‘deeply private matter’ and do not overly emphasize religious aspects when they socialize in public. People often deny that they are religious even if they attend churches during festivities or take a keen interest in esoteric teachings.

The representative of the Catholic Church shared an observation that older people are more sensitive about issues related to ethnic origin, national traditions and language. Sometimes there is even some tension, when people refuse to talk in Latvian or in Russian just out of principle (5,M). Younger generations are more practical in this respect and they have very good language skills. The majority of Russian youth in Ogre can fluently speak Latvian.

The representatives of the Lutheran Church complained that some younger people are not so much interested in spiritual values, but that they might turn to the church in order to obtain practical benefits. For example, they would like to receive services and rituals, such as baptism, marriage etc., without taking the time and effort to learn about religious values (7,M). This shows that people are very rational even in their attitudes towards cultural and religious issues.

**Values related to family:**

According to the results of the empirical study, family plays an important role in the social welfare of all groups of the society in Ogre. For some individuals family is a value in itself, as it surrounds the person from womb to tomb and forms the basis of the society. Other respondents regard family as an instrumental value, which serves as a platform for successful participation in the wider society and market economy. People also note that family is the institution where parents teach values to children. For many individuals these values form the basis of their beliefs and attitudes and provide a moral compass through the whole life.

The values that are taught in the family include values that are central to the WAVE research. For example, the religiosity of the family has a huge impact on the religious stance of the individual. Relationships and attitudes in the family to a large extent also determine a person’s mindset towards ethnic issues and citizenship. Finally, the role models that are followed in the family influence one’s perception about ‘correct’ relationships between the different sexes.

Family is regarded as important resource in social welfare policy as well. Representatives of educational and social services institutions argue that a
positive climate in the family is crucial for the success of family members and harmony in the society. They stress that families must be strong enough to be able to cope with their principal problems before they turn for the assistance or unleash them over a wider society. In this respect it is related to the principle of subsidiarity, on which the political governance in the European Union is based as well.

The latter point is also related to the value of inwardness and individualism that are characteristic of people in Latvia. As stated in the definition (see Table 2.2.3), inwardness ensures conformity with the external world order. Individualism, in turn, means taking charge of one’s own destiny and the destiny of the family. There is, however, a recent tension between the traditional values of the family and individualism, but this is beyond the scope of this paper. Overall, it is noteworthy that different groups in the society share the opinion of the importance of the family and it is the most frequently mentioned source of support in case of social and economic distress.

While family as a general value is common to different groups in the society, specific values that are cherished in the family may differ in their content across different groups. For example, Latvian and Russian families may have different understandings and interests related to such concepts as identity and citizenship. Likewise, family may either praise or deny religious values. With regard to gender equality some families would prefer keeping traditional roles of men and women, while more modern families would emphasize equality among sexes. Hence, family as a set of values may encompass unifying as well as dividing factors in society.

**Gender equality:**

At the local level we did not find any expression of values that would contradict with the espoused ideals of equality between men and women. Women are often occupied in the labour market and female participation in labour market in Ogre is higher than the EU average. At the same time, women are also often involved in doing housework, taking care of children and other activities that are characteristic to the traditional model of the family.

These aspects result in an additional burden for women and limit their career potential. As noted above, women find it more challenging to thrive in the labour market and go back to work after childbirth. They typically have lower positions, lower salary, and there are many low paid professions that are almost exclusively occupied by women.

**Tolerance:**

Overall it seems that the society holds tolerance as a value. However, tolerance at the local level is more based on a traditional rather than a post-modern world outlook. There seems to be an implicit agreement among
members of the society that conflicts should be avoided. Moreover, Latvian society does not have a tradition of violent protests or conflicts. At the same time, this traditional bias might explain why Latvian society has difficulties in accepting more recent marginal groups that have attracted extensive publicity, including new religious movements.

Socio-economic values

Social welfare:
According to a famous Latvian saying it is a virtue to be able to help others rather than to ask help from somebody. Hence the Latvian attitude towards social services is equivocal. Due to lack of institutional traditions social services are not very well developed and carry a certain stigma. Moreover, as noted above, the Latvian nation is rather individualistic and in this context a certain degree of inwardness is perceived as a value. People believe that their material and social well-being is their own business and that they should manage to solve these problems by themselves. Social services and assistance is perceived as a form of begging or something that should be avoided at any cost.

Thus, many Latvian residents, including older people, tend to abstain from relying on social assistance. However, this is changing with rising material needs and awareness about the means and purpose of social services. It should be noted that people from foreign ethnic backgrounds do not hesitate to apply for social assistance if they are entitled to receive it.

Social assistance in Ogre is directed towards disadvantaged people and people in social distress. The main actors in the provision of social security are state and municipal organizations. Since they are required to provide this support to all residents by law, there are no major conflicts with regard to various religious or ethnic groups. In fact these groups are in a slightly more advantageous position because, in addition to state and municipal support, they may also count on help from their communities and denominations.

Referring to a wider context of social welfare, there are many values that seem to be important for the respondents. People have an appreciation for a certain quality of life and standards of living. They are not against free markets and competition as far as they deliver socially acceptable results. But in situations where this is not the case, they expect intervention and higher support from the state.

Employment:
In the market economy, employment is one of the most important areas of welfare. The majority of people sell their competence and skills to the market. In return they get material gains which are supposed to guarantee certain standards of living.
The situation in the local labour market is currently rather positive in the sense that unemployment is low and there are many open employment opportunities. However, people believe that remuneration is too low and that it does not guarantee a sense of social security. In certain situations people even have a higher appreciation for leisure time, which leads to quitting the labour market and living on the moderate social assistance benefits.

Employment is still an area where different kinds of inequalities exist. For example, there are issues related to gender equality. Women are more often unemployed than men and they typically earn a lower salary. People have also encountered obstacles that are related to knowledge of national language and religious traditions. Finally there are issues related to fair attitudes towards employees from the part of employer. However, these conflicting situations usually represent conflicts of interests rather than conflicts of values.

Contrary to many other European countries, the local economy and quality of life are not so much dependent on minority work. Occupations are spread equally among different groups of people. Also, there is no evidence that different national groups would have different opportunities or aspirations in the labour market. However, currently there is a pressure from employers who opt for a relatively cheap labour force from countries outside the EU. Attitudes towards this new type of immigration are negative from both the incumbent majority and minority groups.

**Education:**

Education seems to be an important factor for cohesion in the society. Outside the family, the educational system is an important environment where political, social and cultural values are formed. The study at the Jaunogre high school showed that teaching the values of civil society is equally important as the academic curriculum. According to senior officials of the school, values such as tolerance and cohesion are high on the list. They also note that the personalities of the teachers and their leadership potential are very important in getting this message across.

Education is perceived as a substantial resource for implementation of social policy in Ogre. Local authorities acknowledge the role of the Jaunogre high school in creating a positive chemistry between Latvian and Russian speaking groups in Ogre. The state employment agency, in turn, offers language courses to unemployed people in order to increase their competitive edge in the labour market.

Students list education as one of the top values in the survey questionnaires. The situation is different from few years ago when students were more interested in early employment. Nowadays they increasingly regard good education as a basis for successful career.

As described in the state of the art report for Latvia, education has been a reason for conflicts among different ethnic groups at the national level, most
notably within the context of protests against the reform in national minority schools. However, teachers and students from the Jaunogre high school did not take part in these protest activities. Currently pupils representing many different nationalities are studying in this school. The school also pays special attention to the knowledge of Latvian language, which gradually becomes a lesser problem for most young people.

Health:
Health problems turned out to be one of the primary concerns that limit the potential of people to be successful in the labour market and enjoy higher quality of life. In this regard it is perceived as an instrumental value. People also regard health as a part of a wider context of social values and welfare. It is commonly accepted that health care is a public good and should be available to everyone.

Access to health care was one of the issues mentioned by receivers of social assistance. This problem is mostly related to affordability of medical care and medication. In some of the examples we observed people postpone medical treatment or try to solve their health problems with traditional methods (for example, herbs and healers) demonstrating an unwillingness to resort to social and medical assistance.

Quality and other issues related to health care are commonly accepted as a problem and no specific sources of conflict or differing values have been observed regarding different ethnic and religious groups or gender equality.

Political values

Citizenship:
In the political dimension people hold citizenship as a value. Sometimes it even serves as a reason for conflicts. Latvian speaking people value citizenship highly and believe that representatives of the Russian speaking Diaspora must show a due respect to the country and its traditions before they are eligible for citizenship. On the other hand, there are Russian speaking people and their descendants who have lived in Latvia for many years and who are convinced that they deserve citizenship without any procedures.

Even though different opinions on nationality and citizenship issues exist, we did not observe any extreme examples of nationalism or cultural clashes. People seem to respect different interests and opinions. Also from the point of view of the majority population, there is no impression that the quality of life is eroded by minorities. At least such dissatisfaction is not made explicit. Racism as a theme or as an attitude did not come up during the interviews.

Attitudes towards the rule of law are contradictory in the local society. On the one hand, people respect the law and even actions with a moral content
are nowadays often judged in terms of the law. On the other hand, people are tolerant towards relatively small breaches of law if economic or other circumstances make it a rational choice. For example, workers in the private sector may work illegally or companies may avoid paying taxes. This also signals a certain lack of respect and trust in the authorities, which might be related to lack of political participation and inclusion at the grassroots level. Despite the proliferation of NGOs, their activity and influence is rather limited.

Separation of church and state:

The separation of Church and State in the political dimension is very visible in Ogre. Even though there is some cooperation between municipal and religious organizations, their welfare related activities are not coordinated and there is a lack of exchange of information. This is not surprising given the lack of tradition in cooperation between the state and the church and the absence of a welfare related theology.

References


Appendix

Summary of survey questionnaires at Jaunogre high school

The students of senior classes at Jaunogre high school have completed 30 survey questionnaires providing answers to the questions presented below. The survey was carried out during the last week of August and first week of September 2007.

1. What is necessary for a good life (value priorities)?

Majority of the respondents have ranked the following values as a priority:

- Material wealth – 8
- Family – 7
- Education – 5
- Friends – 3
- Interesting job – 2
- Leisure time and facilities – 1

The students also provided their own value priorities, for example, knowing the meaning of the life, good health. Altogether 5 respondents mentioned health as a value (one respondent ranked it as a priority).

The most frequently mentioned values were the following:

- Friends – 28
- Material wealth -24
- Family 23
- Interesting job – 21
- Education – 18
- Leisure time and facilities – 11
- Health – 5
- Love- 5
- Determination – 5

2. Main support networks and resources

The students have mentioned the following support networks and resources:

- Family – 28 (out of which 12 denoted it as the most important resource)
- Friends – 26 (out of which 8 denoted it as the most important resource)
- Work colleagues – 11 (out of which 1 denoted it as the most important resource)
- Municipality – 9 (out of which 2 denoted it as the most important resource)
- School – 8 (out of which 3 denoted it as the most important resource)
- Church – 4 (nobody mentioned it as the most important resource)
- Non-governmental organizations – 4
- Community – 2
The their own alternative students 3 students mention self reliance and 2 respondents rank it as the most important resource

3. Do you have friends representing different nationalities?
13 students responded positively. Others did not provide an answer.
Remark - It should be taken into account that Jaunogre high school as a minority high school is multinational and the lectures are conducted in Russian. In Latvia representatives of many nationalities (for example, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Jews and other) speak Russian both in the local community and in the family.
In some questionnaires the respondents have noted that they have Latvian youth among their friends.

4. How would you characterize the relationship between youth of different nationalities?
Most of the students have answered that the relationship is neutral (14) or friendly (13). In 10 questionnaires the respondents stress that the relationship depends on the person himself and his character rather than on nationality. Only 2 respondents have described relationship as intolerant. No respondents described the relationship as hostile.

5. Potential conflicts in Ogre among different religious, ethnic, or social groups:
Majority of the respondents believe that the conflict is most probable between the rich and the poor (9), representatives of different religions (8), representatives of different nationalities (7). Majority of respondents state that such conflicts in Ogre are unlikely. 15 respondents believe that they are impossible between representatives of different religions, 13 – between different nationalities, 12 – between the rich and the poor.

6. How do you feel as a citizen of Ogre:
Feel good (18)
Feel normal (9)
Only one person responded that it feels bad. The students stress that they feel secure in Ogre.

6.1. Do you feel needed in your city:
12 respondents answered negatively
5 respondents answered positively

6.2. Do you feel needed in your country:
17 people responded negatively
8 people responded positively
Chapter 3 Poland

3:1 OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL SITUATION

Irena Borowik, Agnieszka Dyczewska, Eliza Litak

Introduction

Although Poland, inhabited by 38 million citizens, is a country of over one thousand year tradition, its structures and institutions are still shaping. A crucial fact is that over the last 200 years it has had only 40 years of sovereignty: 21 years during the interwar period, when Poland recovered after 146 years of partitions (when it was divided between Russia, Germany and Austria) and 17 years until now, following the fall of the communist regime in 1989.

Specificity of current situation

The year 1989 was a turning point and practically all contemporary analysis of the Polish situation will sooner or later have to refer to it. Even the name of the country has changed: from the People’s Republic of Poland (Polska Republika Ludowa – PRL) to the Republic of Poland (Rzeczpospolita Polska – RP). Poland has become a parliamentary democracy, adopting capitalism and a free-market economy.

The next crucial moment, still underestimated by most Poles, was membership to the European Union in 2004. Polish law, the economy and even social structures have been (and still are) adjusting to European standards, and Poles are learning how to take advantage of opportunities presented by the EU.

Following the parliamentary and presidential elections in October 2005 another period of transformation began. The power was seized by the right-wing conservative party ‘Law and Justice’ (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość). A governmental coalition was later formed with the addition of two populist and previously anti-European parties. Current authorities openly strive towards the radical change of the country’s structures. Their actions are
strongly ideological, appealing to national history and ‘traditional’, mainly Christian, values. Therefore, significant changes may occur practically in every field that is of interest in the WaVE project: welfare policies, gender, religion and the concept of majority and citizenship.

Therefore, since 1989 Poland has been in continuous transition. Political, social, economic relations are still being shaped; neither capitalism, nor democracy, are deeply rooted. One stable base is the religious and national homogeneity: over 90% of Poles belong to the Roman Catholic Church, while national/ethnic minorities constitute approximately 2-3% of the society. In reality, however, there are increasing tensions caused by conflicts of values and the restructuring of the society.

**Previous research on issues connected with the WaVE project**

Problems, which are of interest for the WaVE project, are currently very high on the public agenda. However, not all of them are thoroughly researched. Issues such as welfare, religion, gender and minorities are examined, but there is a lack of research (on a broad scale) concerning the interrelations between these factors. Also the perspective undertaken in this research is most often different from that of the WaVE study. This is most visible in the case of research on welfare: it is rarely treated as an ‘indicator’ of values prevailing within a given community; local welfare networks are not thoroughly examined, especially the presence of different – ‘official’ and ‘alternative’ – welfare providers.

In case of the role of the Catholic Church in welfare provision, the questions that are examined are diverse: the Church’s attitude towards social issues and contemporary problems; the role of the parish in the welfare system (Firlit 2003); historical research on charitable activities (Leś 2001); the expectations of Polish citizens of having the Church respond to social needs and the range in which they take advantage of its social services (CBOS 2005). However, the main focus of all this research is more on quantitative, measurable factors, and less on values underlying such social and charitable activities.

Research on the relationship between the Catholic Church and minorities concentrates on its relations with religious minority groups (Ibek 1996); rarely does it focus on national/ethnic minorities. Moreover, because of the dominance of the Catholic Church in Poland, it is not the Church’s stance that is examined, but the attitude of the majority of Polish society. Here we can also mention research, which does not directly concern the relations of the majority Church towards minority groups, but rather attempts to reveal the status of the Church in Poland (i.e. privileged or discriminated), or to examine its adaptation to the country’s democratic transformation (i.e. respect for pluralism) (Załęcki 2001). Usually existing research is based on one perspective: either that of the Catholic majority, or that of the minority
group; rarely are both groups treated equally. Therefore, in this respect the WaVE project can expand knowledge on this subject.

There is also research on minorities themselves. In the case of religious groups (especially new religious movements), the main topics of research monographs on minorities include: social reception, potential dangers and negative impact on society, (LibiszowskaŻółtowska 2001, OBOP 1999a). Occasionally, an analysis of the Polish religious landscape is carried out. Research on national and ethnic minorities usually includes monographs, focusing on their identity; it is groups from the Polish borderland that are primarily examined (Babiński 2004, Łodziński 2005). In the case of immigrants, research concerns mainly issues of tolerance and discrimination, issue connected with adaptation, problems in obtaining legal status, position in the labour marker (the grey area of illegal immigrants) (Biernath 2001, Slany 2005). Clearly, these studies rarely examine issues connected with welfare.

Gender equality is a relatively new subject of study in Poland. The economic situation of women is usually analysed in terms of their place and chances in the labour market. (Gender and economic opportunities in Poland, 2004). The status of women and men in public life is researched, especially in politics (Fuszara 2005). There are also attempts to assess and interpret gender relations within family life and at home (Titkow, Duch-Krzystoszek and Budrowska 2004). This type of research also tries to demonstrate whether gender inequalities are even noticed in social consciousness.

Research on gender rarely relates to issues connected with religion. From our point of view, the role of the Catholic Church in shaping gender relations is most often taken for granted; although this matter appears in the existing literature, the problem itself is not thoroughly examined. Therefore, the WaVE project will significantly contribute to illustrate how the relations between gender and religion look like in reality and how they manifest themselves in concrete situations.

Characteristics of the national welfare system

Under the communist regime, the State was the distributor of almost all welfare services. Although the quality of services was often low, including the level of financial benefits, they were provided practically for all members of society. The conviction that the State should ensure social security is deep-rooted at least in some milieux and this may be described as a ‘post-communist mentality’. Moreover, in some sectors of the welfare system there are still some remnants from the communist era, i.e. a central administration and a homogeneous organizational structure. Nevertheless, at
The Polish networks of welfare have a very long tradition; their beginnings are usually associated with the Christianization of Poland. During that time, the Catholic Church was ‘the leader’ in running educational, healthcare and other welfare-providing agencies. However, also other religious groups (mainly Protestant, Orthodox and Jewish) organized such activities, supported by the State and municipal authorities.

As in other European countries in the 19th century, along with industrialization came ‘pro-social’ attitudes that lie at the base of the modern welfare state. There were three models of welfare in the partitioned Polish territory (Austrian, German and Russian); at the same time ‘underground welfare networks’ were organized by Poles, similarly as during the Second World War. During the Second Republic of Poland (1918-1939) the social insurance system and public welfare were introduced (Leś 2001).

The model of social policy during the PRL, also described as a ‘state-collectivist’ model, is crucial to the understanding of the current situation. It aimed to reach full employment and social security was guaranteed by high social contributions to the prices of basic goods and services. Most of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were banned and their properties were taken over by the State. Only some organizations could operate but under conditions set by the authorities and with significant limitations of their autonomy.

After 1989 the public sector was partially privatized and NGOs revived their activities; State administration and social services were decentralized. In 1999 four important reforms took place concerning administration, education, healthcare and social insurance.
Current organization of the welfare system

In Poland, the responsibility for organizing welfare is held mainly by the public sector, which cooperates with numerous social organizations. The official welfare system is organized at the level of the State and local authorities. At a State level, the most important institutions, which to a high degree still hold a monopoly in the field of financial benefits, are the National Health Fund (NFZ, responsible for financing health services for the citizens) and the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS, responsible for the system of social insurances), both financed mainly from mandatory contributions by employees. Within the State budget, so-called targeted funds are also allocated: these include public money devoted for the realization of concrete tasks, considered to be significant for State policy, i.e. the Labour Fund, used for paying benefits to the unemployed and fighting against unemployment. The State is also partly responsible for higher education and healthcare.

Since 1989, because of the decentralization of the State, a large part of responsibility of the welfare system was gradually handed to local governments\(^1\). Currently, they are responsible for (among other things): primary and secondary education, social assistance (i.e. social benefits, fight against malnutrition), care for the disabled and people with mental disorders, social welfare homes, employment offices, local medical facilities and hospitals, adoption centres and Centres for Helping the Family.

Participation of the private sector in the welfare system is still very weak; some private agencies are restructured or privatized institutions previously belonging to the public sector. After 1989, private schools (including universities) and medical centres began to appear; because of the reform of the social insurance system private pension funds were also created. Their services are offered at various levels of contributions and some of them are refunded by the State.

Also NGOs are taking roots in Polish society; for many of them social assistance, education or healthcare provision are priorities. However, NGOs do not have many members, nor employees, thus, they do not have a strong influence on public life. Also their cooperation with the public sector is often not sufficient to meet needs.

An important, although not officially prescribed role in welfare provision is played by the Roman Catholic Church. As the public welfare system is not effective enough, the Church is viewed as an important and competent partner that shares responsibility especially in areas that are somehow neglected by the public institutions (i.e. care for the homeless).

\(^1\) Self-governments are organized in three levels: (starting from the largest) województwo, powiat, gmina, which are more or less equivalent to districts, counties and provinces.
Finally, we should mention family as an important agent in the Polish welfare system; it is the first and primary place where Poles seek help in case of need (Czapinski and Panek 2006). After 1989, the State withdrew from part of social services (i.e. in the field of social care and education) and although they are available on the market, most families are unable to pay for them. Therefore, families have to take on the main responsibility in fields such as the care of their children, the elderly and the disabled; they also have to pay the costs of education.

Challenges and problems

As we have already mentioned, the Polish welfare system struggles with numerous difficulties and its organization is continually being discussed. At present, education and healthcare are very high on the public agenda. Previous reforms in these areas are strongly criticized but many of the new proposals are limited and superficial. The situation of the healthcare system is especially serious. There have been frequent strikes due to the doctors’ and nurses’ dissatisfaction with compensation and work conditions. A growing number of qualified medical staff emigrate from Poland and within a relatively short time there may be a need to replace them with foreign workers, especially from the East.

In the case of education, the creation of gymnasiums is criticized, as mainly a superficial adjustment to Western standards. Another growing problem is violence and aggression, even towards the teachers.

Highly centralized and practically monopolistic institutions, such as the already mentioned ZUS or NFZ, are also problematic: bureaucracy is excessive, financial management is inefficient and obligatory fees are too high.

Because of the instability of the Polish political situation there is a lack of a coherent and far-reaching social policy. Moreover, new regulations concerning welfare are often determined by politicians’ ideological choices and election promises and undertaken with no consideration of expert opinions.

Meanwhile, drafting a long-term policy is necessary, as the Polish welfare system is to face a few challenges ahead. One of them is demographic change, i.e. the ageing of Polish society. This process has not reached dangerous proportions yet: in 2004 the population of people aged 65 and over constituted 13% of the society, compared to 16.5% in the whole EU. However, in the future it may become a problem, especially given the decreases in crude birth rates (9.5 per 1000 inhabitants in 2005; 10.5 in the EU). On the other hand, life expectancy (especially male) in Poland is still lower than the EU average and amounts to 70.0 years for men and 79.5 years for women (EU average: respectively 75.1 and 81.2) (Eurostat).
The next issue is changes within the family model. There are increasing numbers of one-parent families; also the number of families threatened by social marginalization is growing (i.e. alcoholic or pathological) and family violence is spreading.

The other challenge for Polish welfare is the unemployment, still very high in comparison to the whole EU: in 2005 it amounted to 17.7% (EU average is 8.7%). Especially alarming is the number of people deprived of work for long periods of time; these individuals are often passive and at risk of social exclusion. In 2005, the rate of long-term (12 months or more) unemployment reached 10.2% (EU average was 3.9%), half of which (5.3%) was very long-term unemployment (24 months or more) (Eurostat).

The unemployment is closely connected with poverty. The statistics are grim: in 2003, the at-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers amounted to 31%, while the same rate in the EU was 25% (Eurostat); in 2005 around 13% of Poles lived in extreme poverty, below the minimum subsistence level (GUS). Moreover, ‘Polish poverty’ is changing: in the communist times it affected mainly the elderly, while at present we are witnessing a younger form of poverty, as it affects above all families with many children and the unemployed.

We should finally indicate issues connected with EU membership, i.e. implementing a European model of social policy or the growing number of migrants (both to and from Poland); the latter issue raises public debates. On the one hand, there are some anxieties about the potential growth of low cost workforce coming into Poland, mainly from the East. On the other hand, emigration has started reaching a massive scale: it is estimated that after Polish accession to the EU over 1 million Poles have emigrated to other European countries (Kłos 2006). Because a significant number of emigrating Poles are highly qualified and well educated, there are fears that it may lead to a ‘brain drain’ within a relatively short period of time.

Religious composition in the country

Poland may be regarded practically as a religiously homogenous country: it is estimated that 90-92% of Poles belong to the Roman Catholic Church, approximately 2% are members of religious minorities and 5-7% do not declare their religious affiliation. This situation is relatively new: until the interwar period, religious minorities constituted about 30% of the whole society and played important cultural, social and economic roles. The same applies to national and ethnic minorities. The Second World War, the shift of the country’s borders and policies by the PRL authorities led to the present situation, where minorities are neither numerous (in terms of number of members), nor do they play any significant role in Polish society as a whole.
Offically registered denominations

At least theoretically, there is religious pluralism in Poland, as only official registers include 161 churches and religious associations (as of May 2006). The year 1989 was especially crucial for the development of religious freedom: during the communist regime the number of religious groups was artificially understated and their ability to act was limited. This has significantly changed: during the ‘90s representatives of foreign religious associations could officially establish their own agencies. Not surprisingly, the number of denominations has increased over seven times during the last 17 years. Currently, in Poland there are groups deriving practically from every religious tradition (see table 3.1.1).

Table 3.1.1 Religious traditions present in Poland.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious tradition</th>
<th>Number of registered religious groups deriving from a given tradition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestantism</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholicism</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodoxy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining elements from various traditions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neo-paganism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taoism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified religious tradition</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main source: Ministry of Interior and Administration (MSWiA)

In the case of the 15 religious associations that have a longer tradition of existing in Poland, their relationship with the State is regulated on the base
of special, separate acts. These include the following Churches: Roman Catholic, Polish Autocephalous Orthodox, Evangelical-Augsburg, Polish Catholic, Old Catholic Mariavite, Pentecostal, Seventh-Day Adventist, Baptist Christians, Reformed Evangelical, Evangelical Methodist, Catholic Mariavite, Eastern Old-Rites, as well as the Union of Jewish Confessional Communities, the Islamic Religious Union and the Karaim Religious Union.

The remaining associations are included in the register put together by the Department of Denominations and National and Ethnic Minorities in the Ministry of Interior and Administration. Initially, the policy of registration was very liberal, which led to many abuses. Therefore, in 1999 regulations were significantly hardened: a major change was increasing the required number of members to 100 (previously that number was 15).

Non-registered religious movements

The number of religious groups in Poland is certainly much higher than the number of those registered. The Polish ‘religious underground’ may count 200-300 groups, gathering up to 1.5 million members (Urban 2000, 76). Only in the ‘90s about 40 religious communities were refused official authorization by the State due to the so-called threat they posed to public safety and morality or to the freedom of individuals, but also because of procedural negligence. Many religious groups have never applied for registration due to ideological convictions or to avoid State control. There are some new religious movements, which would rather isolate themselves from the outside world even physically, as they place their headquarters far from urban centres.

Some groups operate within organizations registered as ‘normal’, sometimes as commercial associations, the activities of which are only partly religious. Their activities are borderline between science and religion, (for example, Transcendental Meditation, Rebirthing, Church of Scientology) or between religion and business (for ex. Human Perfection Centre).

Since 1989 the number of cult movements increased. They organize themselves mainly as voluntary associations with a rather loose structure and are connected with i.e. New Age or deep ecology.

Religious minorities

Most of the denominations have very few members: only 27 groups count more than 1,000 followers (Rocznik Statystyczny... 2005). The size of the largest religious minorities is presented in table 3.1.2:
Table 3.1.2 Largest religious minorities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Approximate number of members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church</td>
<td>510,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah’s Witnesses</td>
<td>130,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical-Augsburg Church</td>
<td>77,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Catholic Mariavite Church</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal Church</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish Catholic Church</td>
<td>19,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh-Day Adventists</td>
<td>9,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Religious Union</td>
<td>5,000*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rocznik Statystyczny 2005, 217-218
* Data from Libiszowska-Żółtowska 2001, 73

Even the largest – Orthodox – minority constitutes less than 1.5% of the whole society. This relatively large number results from the long presence of the Orthodox in Poland, dating back to the 11th century and their deep-rooted connections with Polish society, especially on the Eastern borders of the country.

The next denomination, Jehovah’s Witnesses, constitute approximately 0.3% of Polish society. They are also the most widely recognized minority (OBOP 1999a), probably due to their intensive evangelising activity, which results also in the strongest annual growth in comparison to other denominations (Libiszowska-Żółtowska 2001, 57).

The number of members of the Evangelical-Augsburg Church is – as in the case of the Orthodox – historically determined. Most of them live in the South-West (Silesia) and North-East (Masuria) of Poland; these are regions that belonged for some time to Germany or were under its strong influence.

Concerning the Muslim minority, its size can only be estimated, as there is lack of concrete data. Most of Muslims in Poland are part of the Islamic Religious Union (Sunni). Usually they are descendants of the Tartars who have lived in North-East Poland since the 17th century and are fully integrated within Polish society. Meanwhile, there is practically no current Muslim immigration.
Characteristics of the majority Church

Although the Catholic Church in Poland can give the impression of being a ‘monolith’, in fact it is highly diverse. Especially after 1989, when the common ‘enemy’ – the communist regime – disappeared, its internal divisions surfaced. Within its structures various milieux have emerged, i.e. charismatic movements or ultra-conservative Catholics, brought together by ‘Maria Radio’, clashed with practically all ‘pro-modern’ groups. Moreover, to the Catholic Church formally belongs also part of Greek-Catholic Church, preserving its own, Byzantine-Ukrainian rite.

The Catholic Church within the Polish state and society

The Catholic Church in Poland is not constitutionally established; nevertheless, it has very strong relations with the State. This can be seen even in the 25th article of the Constitution, where – although it guarantees equal rights and autonomy to all churches and confessional associations – only the Catholic Church is mentioned by name. Moreover, the preamble includes references to God and Christian values. The other document determining relations between the State and the Catholic Church is the Concordat, ratified in 1998. Therefore, the Catholic Church is the only religious association in Poland whose position is based on an international act.

A highly controversial matter is the Church’s involvement in politics. In the beginning of the ‘90s the Church tried to gain influence on the political scene, justifying this mainly by historic services it has offered to the Polish nation. This prompted critique and discontent among the majority of Polish society and support for the Catholic Church significantly dropped for some time. Although in recent years the Catholic Church officially claims to be apolitical, the majority of the Poles ‘is allergic’ to any form of potential political activity by the Church.

Still, the number of people taking part in religious practices indicates that the majority of Poles are attached to the Catholic Church. One-time practices are very common: in 2004, 94% of babies born in Poland were baptized. Concerning burials, research indicates that the importance of having a religious burial is highly regarded by 92.3% of Poles (Borowik 2001, 130-131). The rate of other practices, especially regular church attendance, is much lower, but it is still relatively high in comparison to other European countries: in 2005, 45% of the faithful were attending Sunday mass (ISKK).

The Catholic Church’s assets and personnel

The transformation in 1989 had a positive impact on the Catholic Church’s assets and ‘personnel’. The number of clergy is rather stable: in 2001 there
were 28,259 priests, 6,709 clerical students, 1,363 brothers and 23,843 nuns; while in 2005 – 29,490 priests, 6,204 clerical students, 1,375 brothers and 23,199 nuns. On average, there are approximately 1,170 faithful per priest (ISKK).

However, it is almost impossible to estimate the financial situation of the Catholic Church. Separate ecclesiastical units have their own budgets and are not obliged to provide accounting reports. Therefore, transparency depends mainly on the good will of the clergyman in charge of a given diocese or parish. Main sources of income are: ‘the collection’, various donations and semi-formal contributions for religious services, which are not recorded, nor taxed. This ‘informal’ way of financing results in an unequal situation among different dioceses and parishes. Because in most cases ‘traditional’ sources of income are not sufficient, the economic activity of the clergy is becoming a more common phenomenon, i.e. the archdiocese of Warsaw possesses two modern office blocks and Catholic publishing houses are developing.

Social insurance for the majority of the clergy, renovations of sacred monuments, charity and educational activities are partially financed by the State through the Ecclesiastical Fund, created in 1950 as a compensation for nationalizing the Church’s estate. However, the Fund serves also other registered confessional associations. In the public debate the further existence of the Fund is being questioned, mainly because after 1989 the Church recovered part of its properties.

The Catholic Church and welfare

Since 1989, Catholic aid and educational facilities have been developed; the Church’s activity in those domains is becoming increasingly professional and well organized. Also the financial sources for such activity are becoming more varied, i.e. the Church starts to use European Funds; some of the Church’s medical facilities operate on the basis of contracts signed with the National Health Fund and, therefore, they are practically part of the official welfare system.

The Catholic institution that is particularly geared to respond to social needs is Caritas Polska, a subsidiary of the Episcopate. It uses approximately 60,000 volunteers, 1,000 clergymen and 3,900 employees. Some of the facilities ran by Caritas include: houses for single mothers and victims of violence, day-care centres, various houses for permanent stay, hospices and hostels for the homeless; recently five offices for the Activation of the Unemployed were created. Caritas also organizes numerous regular or one-time charity activities.

Religious orders play the role of a ‘welfare provider’ as well. In 2000, these were only female orders that ran: 350 nursery schools, 32 primary schools, 26 children’s homes, 60 childcare centres, 80 old people’s homes.
and 10 houses of single mothers (Zdaniewicz 2000, 218). Also some parishes engage in charity and educational, cultural, economic and even rehabilitating services. In general, the Catholic Church plays a significant role in supplementing the State in welfare provision, which is in accordance with public expectations.

Moreover, social issues appear very often in the clergy’s sermons and documents of the Polish Episcopacy, for example in the ‘Social letter of the Polish Episcopalian Conference’ (2001) or ‘The Church towards social-economic life’ (1999). Numerous topics are covered, such as poverty, unemployment and comments on current welfare policies and economic transformations. The principles of social solidarity and subsidiarity are strongly supported.

The Catholic Church and minorities

The most important aspect of the Church’s attitude towards minorities is its relations with religious minorities. This issue, although not very often, is addressed in official documents. The Church accepts the minorities’ right to act freely, indicates that dialogue is a Christian duty and reminds that tolerance is a century-old Polish tradition. Most often minority issues are evoked by specific events, i.e. the publication of the cartoons of Muhammad.

The Catholic Church has a formal relationship with religious minorities that are deeprooted in Polish society. At the Episcopate there are 9 commissions or committees for dialogue with other religious associations; common councils of Christians, Jews and Muslim do exist. Sometimes, a common official stance on matters connected with morality and religion is adopted. Nevertheless, these contacts are mostly on an occasional basis.

However, in places where there are more religious minorities, every-day contacts are usually correct, as communities share churches or chapels. Another example of a partnership is charity: for example the Protestant ‘Deacony’ and Orthodox ‘Eleos’ cooperate with Caritas.

On the other hand, the Catholic Church has almost no contacts with new religious movements or other denominations relatively new in Poland, even those approved by the State, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses or Far-Eastern religions. These are treated with suspicion and labelled as ‘dangerous sects’ (Doktór 1999, 182-183; Ibek 1996).

Concerning the issue of welfare provision, usually the Church does not pay any attention to denomination or personal beliefs, although sometimes providing a welfare service is connected with religious ceremonies and its ‘beneficiaries’ are expected to take part in them. There are almost no services offered specially for minority groups. One exception is the help offered by Caritas to foreigners in Poland: there are 3 Help Centres for Immigrants and Refugees, providing material, psychological, social and
legal support in order to facilitate integration within Polish society. Since 2004 *Caritas* also organizes special aid programs financed by European Refugee Fund.

Welfare, religion and gender

Gender regime in Poland

Gender regime in Poland has been strongly influenced by historical factors. Especially during the times when Poland was partitioned and the combination of religious, family and national values was so strong that any attempts to change the traditional position and image of women, regarded as important safeguard of Polish identity, was treated almost as an act of subversion (Titkow 1995, 14). At the same time, women often had to undertake previously ‘male duties’, due to – among others – the men’s involvement in national uprisings and, consequently, their massive imprisonments. Therefore, since the 19th century female paid employment was acceptable and natural within Polish society.

During the short period of Polish independence there was a chance for a gradual, smooth development of real gender equality. This process came to a stop by the war and the post-war communist period towards a quite different direction. Due to State policy, there was a massive professional mobilization of women that was supported by social and legal provisions. The ‘dual earner model’ took roots in Poland (as in other communist countries) much sooner than in the rest of Europe. However, this ‘gender equality’ was in fact imposed by the authorities and there was no real transformation of relations between men and women. Division of labour within households was still ‘traditional’ and women were loaded with a ‘double burden’: the need to combine a job, motherhood and housework (Kwak and Pascall 2005).

At first impression, it may seem that women ‘lost’ because of the transformation in 1989. The State withdrew from part of welfare provision and public support of ‘working motherhood’ (i.e. kindergartens, nurseries) has become significantly weaker. Another factor is a more competitive labour market, where motherhood is regarded as a disadvantage. Consequently, after 1989 the presence of women in public life declined significantly, and it has slowly started to grow only in the last few years. The best example of this trend is changes in the representation of women in the Parliament: there were 20% women in 1988, 13% in 1990, and again 20% in 2005 (Fuszara 2005, 90-92).

Also women’s participation in the labour market is weaker than under the communist regime: in 2005 the rate of female employment in Poland amounted to 46.8% (56.3% in the whole EU), while female unemployment
was at 19.1% (EU average: 9.8%) (Eurostat). However, unemployment in Poland is high overall and differences between male and female employment are not higher compared to the whole EU. Still, the weaker position of women in the labour market is undeniable. Among others, they rarely gain managerial positions (indicative of a ‘glass ceiling’); there is also the phenomenon of ‘sticky floor’ restricting women to low-status, low–paying jobs. Moreover, there are financial discrepancies: gender pay gaps amount to 20% and women’s retirement benefits are 30% lower (Gender and economic opportunities… 2004, viii; Raport z wyników… 2003).

Nevertheless, the inability to maintain a household on one salary makes it necessary for women to be engaged in paid employment. Some benefits helping women to combine professional and family life are provided by Polish law, i.e. employment protection during pregnancy or maternity leave. Moreover, social acceptance for such family model where both spouses work professionally and share housework duties is on the increase. However, it seems that these are mainly statements, as most of the housework is still done by women, who also have the responsibility of raising children.

Taking all this into consideration, we can describe the gender regime in Poland as a ‘challenged dual earner’ (see Kwak and Pascall 2005, 196-199). There is definitely a need to improve gender relations and stabilize the status of women. One such attempt was the National Action Plan for Women (1997-2001, 2003-2005), which was financed by the public budget and based on the cooperation of government, local authorities, research institutes, NGOs, trade unions and the media. Some of its aims were: to abolish discrimination on the labour market and within the social care system, to create the policy of ‘equal chances’ and to support enterprises managed by women.

On the whole, however, the instability of the Polish political sphere prevents the introduction of far-reaching solutions to gender problems. At present, as ruling parties share ‘traditional views’ on family life and the role of women, the situation is especially unpredictable. On the one hand, the State’s legal and material support for families is increasing. On the other hand, there are reasons to believe that the authorities will try to marginalize the ‘gender issue’. After the 2005 elections the post of Government Representative for the Equal Status of Women and Men (created in the ‘80s) was eliminated and further stages of the National Action Plan for Women were suspended.

Moreover, some proposals by ruling parties, which are theoretically meant to improve women’s position, may have the directly opposite effect. There are public speculations that these projects are indirect attempts to ‘push women back to the home’. The most controversial idea is the prohibition of dismissing women for up to 3 years after childbirth, which will surely make employers reluctant to hire women.
In such circumstances, membership in the EU is of great importance for shaping a new gender regime in Poland. For a few years now, gender equality was supported by European legislation and resolutions that Poland had to implement. Now there is also a chance that already existing institutions and regulations, meant to improve the status of women, will find support in wider European-level structures.

Welfare and gender

There are reasons to expect that the majority of welfare work is done by women, i.e. they prevail among those employed in the healthcare and education sectors; also the profession of a social worker, whose task is to render individual help to people in difficult life situation, is ‘feminized’. Women also hold most of the responsibility for providing ‘unofficial’ welfare, mainly within families: recent research shows that on average they do housework and care after children, the elderly and the disabled on weekly basis, approximately 45 hours 21 minutes more than men (Titkow, Duch-Krzystoszek and Budrowska 2004).

Men and women also differ in taking advantage of the welfare system, i.e. in terms of benefits received and reasons for granting them. Among beneficiaries, women prevail: they dominate among recipients of practically all types of allowances, except from disability pensions and unemployment benefits. There are also different proportions of men and women in at least some social welfare facilities, i.e. there are almost three times more women than men housed at elderly people’s homes, while men constitute almost 80% among those taken in as homeless in hostels, night shelters, etc. (Raport z wyników…2003).

There are problems concerning specifically women, which must be also resolved by the welfare system. Some of the most alarming and widely discussed problems are prostitution, white slavery and violence against women. Another issue, strictly connected with welfare, is the low level of care in obstetrics facilities: there is a growing awareness of this problem, primarily thanks to the ‘Human Birth’ Foundation (Fundacja ‘Rodzić po ludzku’).

The Catholic Church and gender

It is commonly believed that the Catholic Church influenced the traditional image and role of women, among other ways by leading to her idealization and linking women with values like readiness to sacrifice, protectiveness etc.; this was connected partly to the widespread cult of God’s Mother. The patriarchal character of the Catholic Church and value of obedience are believed to have shaped gender relations within the Polish society as well. In 2004 and 2005 there was a heated public debate, caused by the statement
made by the Governmental Representative for the Equal Status of Men and Women asserting that the roots of violence against women lie in the strong Catholic Church’s influence on public life, its patriarchal structure and underestimation of women’s roles.

Some documents are devoted to gender issues, i.e. the ’List of Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith to the Bishops of Catholic Church on Cooperation between Man and Woman in the Church and in the world’ (2004) or ‘Vocation to matrimonial and family life’ (1999, document of the Polish Second Plenary Synod). According to these texts, the Church opposes rivalry between the sexes, as well as relativising differences between them. Most often the Catholic Church concentrates on the role of women: although they should have access to leadership positions and be active in public life, the home and the upbringing of children are still treated as belonging to a woman’s domain and one of their most important tasks, from which – although it is not directly stated – they cannot be exempted.

The role of men is seldom discussed. Usually they are treated as the primary breadwinners and the official Church opts for a social policy that would allow them to provide their families with sufficient means for living, even if their spouses do not engage in any paid work.

Not surprisingly, in the domain of welfare, the Catholic Church in Poland is strongly in favour of extending the maternity leave and making women’s housework equal with professional work. The latter should include, among others, providing housewives with retirement pensions, health insurance and tax relief.

The Church itself is engaged in helping single mothers, which is a part of its fight against the abortion. Therefore, the network of Houses for Lonely Mothers is being developed; also, the special Fund for Life’s Protection for single women in need has been created.

Overview of the minority presence in the country

The number and size of minorities (2-3% of Polish society) are generally not very visible in public life. Still, there are no serious tensions around religious minority groups and they are – with some exceptions – quite well integrated within the society. They have also equal – at least theoretically – access to public welfare, as the official policy of the Polish State emphasizes the individual rights of each citizen, rather than the rights of specific groups. Only persons with an irregular legal status may have problems with access to some of the social services. In general, official policy towards the minorities (especially national and ethnic) emphasizes the need of helping them to preserve their culture, language and identity, as well as to integrate them within Polish society and support them in the field of welfare.
Still, support for minorities and protection of their rights must be strengthened. At present, Polish law concerning minorities is being adjusted to European legislation; this process is controlled among others by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). Its last report on Poland (issued June 2005) admitted that the policy towards the minorities had already been improved, but several ‘weak points’ were also indicated, i.e. cases of intolerance and racist offences, especially against Gypsies and immigrants, which were not treated seriously enough by the authorities and the police; anti-Semitism still alive within some parts of society; lack of efficient and integrating immigrant policy; refugee problems with accessing social and legal help (ECRI, 2005).

After the 2005 elections, problems have intensified. In January 2006, the ‘European Parliament resolution on the increase in racist and homophobic violence in Europe’ stated Poland as one of the countries with a growing discrimination. The resolution referred mainly to: denying LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) groups the right to demonstrate; homophobic, racist and xenophobic statements by some politicians, also by those from the governmental coalition; the activity of Maria Radio; finally, the assault on Chief Rabbi of Poland by unknown offenders. The issue of increasing homophobia and threatening LGBT rights was undertaken also in Amnesty International public statements (November 2005), as well as in letters of Human Right Watch to the Polish president and prime minister (February 2006).

National and ethnic minorities

According to Polish legislation, minorities are divided into national and ethnic. The 2005 Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language stipulates that: a national minority is less numerous than the other citizens of RP; it differs in terms of language, culture or tradition, which it aims to preserve; its ancestors have been living on the current Polish territory for at least 100 years; and it identifies with the nation having its own state. Ethnic minorities are defined similarly to national ones, but they do not identify with a group that has its own state.

Practically all national and ethnic minorities have their own organizations (most of them even a few). They publish their own magazines (usually more than one), which are subsidized by the State. Their activity also includes regular cultural and educational events.

Table 3.1.3 presents the groups treated as national minorities by Polish legislation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Main localization</th>
<th>Denomination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armenians</td>
<td>8-15,000</td>
<td>Silesia and Kraków</td>
<td>Catholic Church of the Armenian or Latin rite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belorussians</td>
<td>200-300,000</td>
<td>Podlasie Region</td>
<td>Orthodox Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechs</td>
<td>2 000</td>
<td>Kłodzka Valley Region, Lublin Region, city of Zelów</td>
<td>Evangelic-Augsburg Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germans</td>
<td>300-500,000</td>
<td>regions of: Opole, Silesia, Down-Silesia, Warmia-Masuria, and Kujavia-Pomerania</td>
<td>Catholic Church (majority) and Augsburg-Evangelical Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>8-10,000</td>
<td>big cities</td>
<td>Judaism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuanians</td>
<td>20-30,000</td>
<td>Suwałki Region</td>
<td>Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>15-20,000</td>
<td>dispersed, main cities: Białystok and Warszawa</td>
<td>Orthodox Church (majority) and Eastern-Old Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovaks</td>
<td>10-20,000</td>
<td>Spisz and Orawa Region.</td>
<td>Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainians</td>
<td>200-500,000</td>
<td>Dispersed</td>
<td>Greek Catholic Church (majority) and Orthodox Church</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main source: Łodziński 2005

As the above tables indicate, some national minorities are borderland cultures, living in regions, which directly neighbour their country of origin. In most cases, they are well integrated within the communities they live in, but occasionally a memory of a historical conflict is brought to light – this concerns mainly the Ukrainians, Germans and Russians. Also attitudes towards the Jews are ambiguous: their culture has gained more and more
popularity, but at the same time there are remaining stereotypes and prejudices.

An overview of ethnic minorities is presented in table 3.1.4.

Table 3.1.4 Overview of ethnic minorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Main localization</th>
<th>Denomination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gypsies</td>
<td>20-30,000</td>
<td>Large cities, Little Poland and Upper Silesia</td>
<td>Catholic Church (majority)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karaims</td>
<td>around 200</td>
<td>Warszawa, Wrocław and Trójmiasto (Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot)</td>
<td>Karaim Religious Union in RP (Judaic tradition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemkos</td>
<td>60-70,000</td>
<td>Low Beskid Mountains, Sądecki Beskid Mountains, regions of: Warmia-Masuria, Lubusk, West-Pomerania and Down-Silesia</td>
<td>Orthodox Church, Greek Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatars</td>
<td>under 5,000</td>
<td>Białostocki Region</td>
<td>Muslim Religious Association in RP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main source: Łodziński 2005

The case of Gypsies is significant. On the one hand, they are particularly exposed to discrimination and often treated as ‘outsiders’. On the other hand, they are under special protection by the State and some NGOs, who support them both financially and through special programs meant to improve their integration within Polish society.

The Karaims, known as ‘the smallest minority’, are a group of Turkish origin, coming from the Crimea, which have been present in the Polish territory for centuries. Meanwhile, the Lemkos are people of Ruthenian and Walachian origin, inhabiting the Eastern Carpathian Mountains since the 15th century, but forced to resettle to other parts of Poland by the communist authorities after Second World War. Part of the Lemkos identify themselves with the Ukrainian nation.

The identity of some ethnic and national minorities strongly coincides with religious affiliation, therefore they can be practically treated as religious
minorities as well. This is mainly the case of Jews, Karaims or Tatars, but also of part of the Ukrainian minority and Russian minority (Old-Rite Church) and Armenians.

There are also Polish autochthonous groups, sometimes included in literature among ethnic minorities. Although – in most cases – they identify with the Polish nation, they emphasize their own identity: for centuries they have been living on the same territory and they preserve their own culture and language (or dialect). The most important of these minorities are: Silesians, Kashubians, Mazurians and Podhalan Gorals.

Immigrants, repatriates and refugees

In the times of the PRL immigration to Poland was very small2 and even now it does not reach a large scale, although the number of immigrants has been slowly increasing since 1989, especially after accession to the EU. In 2004, 9,495 immigrants arrived for permanent residence in Poland (Rocznik Statystyczny 2005).

However, in most cases immigration is in fact a ‘re-emigration’, as 81% of immigrants have Polish citizenship. ‘Re-emigrants’ arrive mainly from the USA, Canada, Great Britain and Germany; and they indicate discontent because of not having achieved abroad intended economic goals as the main reason for their return. Meanwhile, foreigners arriving in Poland are mainly citizens of: the Ukraine (25%), Russia (11%), Germany (9%), Belarus (7%), Vietnam (5%), Armenia (3%) and Kazakhstan (1%) (Biernath 2005, 205.217).

Immigrants from the East arrive in most cases for economic reasons and usually undertake low-paid, low-status jobs; this concerns especially citizens of the former Soviet Union, Turkey, Vietnam and China (Rajkiewicz 2006, 12). Immigrants from the Western countries most often work in the management of foreign companies (Biernath 2005, 217). Generally, it is estimated that between 70-320,000 foreigners work on Polish territory. Concrete data are unavailable, as the majority of them work illegally and only 20,000 are registered. Illegal workers usually stay in Poland only for a short period of time (around 3 months), as most often they do seasonal work, mainly in agriculture and construction (Korczyńska 2005, 8-10).

Another important group of immigrants are students, attracted by the relatively low costs and high quality of university education in Poland. They come equally from the East (i.e. Ukraine, Belarus, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Russia) and from the West (i.e. Sweden, the USA, Germany, Canada) (Godlewska 2006, 24-27).

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2 One exception was Greek and Macedonian immigration from 1949 to 1951, when around 12,300 people arrived in Poland after the Greek civil war (1946-1949).
Refugees are a separate issue. They arrive mainly from Chechnya (6,244 applicants for refugee status in 2005) but also from the Ukraine (84), Belarus (82), Pakistan (69), Georgia (47) India (36) and over 40 other countries. However, Polish procedures are time-consuming, complicated and refugee status is not easily granted: in 2005, out of 6,860 applications, 335 people received refugee status, and 1,822 persons received a consent to a ‘tolerated stay’.

Finally, we have to mention the repatriation process, which concerns mainly the Poles that were resettled to the Soviet republics after the Second World War. This is a rather marginal phenomenon: between 2001 and 2005, there were 2,700 applications for repatriation visas to Poland. Moreover, each year the number of applicants decreases, mainly because there is no sufficient information on this option among the Poles living in the East (Kozłowski 2006, 15).

Generally speaking, the immigration issue does not appear often in public discourse. Occasionally, it is evoked by concrete events, i.e. accession to the EU raised the discussion on a potential overflow of the Polish labour market by cheap workforce from the East. Most of these debates concentrate on tensions and possible problems; very few programs or articles focus on introducing the culture of the countries from which the immigrants arrive. One exception is the debates on refugees that emphasize compassion and the duty to help people in need. Nevertheless, the atmosphere around other immigrant groups is also slowly improving, especially because of growing emigration. Polish society gradually realizes that foreign employees are indispensable to Poland; in the summer of 2006 farmers wanted government to introduce legal facilitation for seasonal workers from the East.

Sexual minorities

In the last few years sexual minorities have become more visible and they arouse the most emotions and controversies among all minorities. In fact, this is the only minority on which there are serious conflicts within the society. Currently authorities emphasize their disagreement with granting homosexuals more rights and they treat them as one of the main threats to morality, family and nation.

It is hard to estimate the number of people declaring an affiliation to this group. They form a number of more or less formal organizations, publish their own magazines and organize numerous events, i.e. ‘Equality Days’ or equality marches, which strongly divide public opinion. These sexual minority milieux do not declare a common religious affiliation; part of their members belong to a group whose religiosity is defined as the ‘Catholic religiosity of gays’ (Orłowski 2006, 73-87).
Relations between religious minorities and the majority

Religious minorities are generally quite well integrated within the society, especially in those places where they have been present for a long time (i.e. the Orthodox in North-East Poland; Protestants in Silesia). In the scale of the whole country, however, they are hardly visible in public life and not present in the social consciousness.

Attitudes toward religious minorities

The dominant attitude towards religious minorities is one of indifference but the ‘degrees of tolerance’ vary. The most accepted minorities are followers of large, long-existing denominations from the Christian tradition, such as Orthodoxy or Lutheranism. Members of new religious movements or non-Christian religions are treated with suspicion; the same applies to believers of Christian denominations that have a shorter tradition in Poland. There is a tendency sometimes to treat Far-Eastern religions (especially Hinduism), Jehovah’s Witnesses or Pentecostals as ‘sects’ (OBOP 1999b).

Despite a widespread lack of knowledge and limited social trust, usually there are no obstacles to the activities of religious minorities, and problems with establishing places of worship seldom occur. However, more common are conflicts over already existing places of worship, especially if they had previously belonged to another religious community (i.e. former Orthodox churches currently used by Catholics). Again, the situation of new religious movements is more difficult, as sometimes they may have a problem with renting a place or with conducting their meetings.

As a whole, the issue of religious minorities appears sporadically in public debates. Discussions on the potential threats posed by ‘sects’ are probably the most often raised. Sometimes there are also questions connected with gender such as the ordination of women or the violation of women’s rights by certain new religious movements.

The Muslim minority is specific case. Their number in Poland is very small and their communities are rather well integrated so there are practically no tensions concerning them. However, in public debates potential conflicts and problems tend to be emphasized, mainly because of the events in other countries that are publicized by the media, for example the September 11 terrorist attacks in the USA or the riots in the suburbs of Paris. Moreover, although there have been no cases of violations of Muslim women’s rights in Poland, the low position and limited freedom of women according to Islam is often assumed among public attitudes. However, a number of Poles (including women) converting to Islam has been slowly increasing each year and this leads to a more objective reflection on Islam that can help undermine stereotypes.
Religious minorities and welfare

As other minorities, religious groups have the same rights to public welfare as all Polish citizens. However, occasionally tensions connected with welfare provision arise, mainly because of conflicts on values that are not taken into consideration by the authorities. For example, there were conflicts between demands for healthcare and the religious principles of a religious minority (i.e. blood transfusions in the case of Jehovah’s Witnesses). Another controversial issue is religious education at school: although theoretically it is guaranteed to members of certain denominations, in reality it is provided mainly for Catholics, as other religious groups are usually too small to exercise this right.

Informal aid is offered permanently or temporarily by most of the religious minorities. Some religious minority groups - i.e. the Adventists, Buddhists, Jews, Lutherans, Orthodox or Pentecostals – have created formal welfare-providing organizations. As in the case of the Catholic Church, part of their non-religious activities, connected with education and charity, are subsidized by the State.

Most often, concrete minority groups somehow ‘specialize’ in some types of welfare related activities. For instance, the Adventists concentrate on health prevention and help for alcoholics and drug-addicts (i.e. they run detoxification clinics) and establish day-care rooms. The Lutherans develop mainly facilities for children (mostly day-care rooms and kindergartens) and various social care homes; the Pentecostals work mostly with prisoners, while the Methodists focus on the teaching of English language. The Orthodox, among others, help immigrants and refugees, but also train social workers. The Jewish minority is concentrated on help for the elderly.

Muslims are also involved in welfare provision but they strongly emphasize a mutualassistance network, which is concerned mainly with caring for members of their own community. They focus on children, women and youth, help for the unemployed and the homeless, and environmental protection. There are also Muslim activities outside the group, which aim to promote Islamic culture.

Generally, welfare providing activity by religious minorities in Poland has a wide scope and is well developed. It is also often more professional and effective than public services, partly because the groups use and learn from the experiences of their fellow members from other, mainly Western, countries. Unfortunately, the majority of Polish society is barely aware of such activities offered by minorities.
Conclusions

The above description is only an initial approach of selected social issues connected with welfare, religion, gender, minorities and the inter-relations between them. It is difficult to assess objectively the current situation within all these dimensions, as the time factor is important since significant changes take place continually. Any predictions concerning the future course of events are uncertain: recent events (2005-2006) have showed how fragile and non-stable Polish institutions and policies are. Membership in the EU, although it demands further transformations and adaptations, may provide some external support for Polish structures.

Such support is needed especially in the welfare system. Since 1989 Polish social policy is subject to dynamic transformations with an ongoing search for an optimal welfare model. The welfare model in Poland suffers from certain inefficiencies in comparison to that in other European countries. According to our opinion, the significance of local communities and informal welfare networks is underestimated, which is directly connected with only a superficial observance of the subsidiarity principle. Also, other values (offering help to each other and social solidarity) are important, but only in theory, because at present the value attached to these words translates poorly into reality, as indicated by the low compensation levels for social workers, teachers or nurses. Another example is the position of women: although they have been placed on a pedestal and idealized, in reality their situation is worse than men and very little is being done to change it.

Minorities (religious, national or ethnic) present an additional challenge. At a national level pluralism is still something ‘exotic’ and unnatural; however, the situation slowly starts to change. Minorities are not really regarded as an asset but rather as source of potential problems. However, the local experience and situation is significant, especially in areas where different religious and/or national groups have been living together for a long time. There the cooperation can be more extensive, based on a mutual understanding and real partnership.

Taking all these factors into consideration, certain previous assumptions concerning Polish welfare, religion and gender need to be questioned. On the one hand, hidden tensions underlying Polish society, indicating marginalized conflicts of values, or gaps between theory and practice, must be shown and explained. On the other hand, the existing and future cooperation (although still marginal) between the majority and minorities in local communities should be examined. In our opinion, the WaVE project, focusing on a selected local community, will shed a new light on all these issues.


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Abstract

The report presents the outcome of the Polish part of the WaVE project. The research, lasting from August 2006 to October 2007, was carried out in Przemyśl, located on the borderline with the Ukraine. Though presently the town is practically homogenous, with minorities reaching no more than 5% of the population, the memory of multiculturalism is still alive and somehow determines present relations between the Polish-Roman Catholic majority and – especially – the Ukrainian-Greek Catholic minority. Although the tensions between both groups rarely concern welfare provision, as the Ukrainian-Greek Catholic minority is well adjusted to Polish life-style, it is the relationship ‘overshadowing’ all other inter-group relations in Przemyśl, therefore is widely discussed in the report. Meanwhile, the other ethnic minority, the Roma, has adapted poorly to the social system, which results in the Roma’s complete dependence on social care, causing tensions with the majority society, which expects more self-reliance from them. The religious minorities, mainly of Protestant origin, try to mark their presence within local society, among others by active participation in welfare provision, also outside their own communities. Generally, the study illustrates that the issues of ‘belonging’, ‘ourness’, ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ are alive and significant, despite all the transformational changes.

Presentation of the town

Introduction of the town

Przemyśl is a town of 67,000 inhabitants, situated in South-East Poland, 12 km from the Ukrainian border, which is presently also the Eastern border of the whole European Union. This location has determined the town’s specificity throughout history.

Above all, for centuries this region has been a melting pot of ethnicities and cultures. Until the Second World War Przemyśl was called ‘the town of three religions’, almost equally represented among its citizens: Roman Catholicism, Eastern Christianity (Greek Catholicism and Orthodoxy) and Judaism, which in most cases overlaps with the following ethnicities: Polish, Ukrainian/Ruthenian/Lemko and Jewish. However, after 1945 the town became almost homogenous, as the local Jewish community was exterminated by the Nazis, while the Ukrainians (of both denominations) were forcibly resettled by the Communist authorities, partly to the Soviet
Ukraine, partly dispersed all over Poland during the ‘Vistula Operation’ in the 1947, when around 150,000 were moved from this region. Not known is the number of Ukrainians who – to avoid being resettled – converted to Roman Catholicism, pretending to be a Pole. Due to the ‘Vistula Operation’, the institutional, religious and cultural framework of ‘Polish Ukrainians’ was destroyed until 1989. Though a small number of Ukrainians (or their descendants) have been returning already since the 50s, the previous multiculturalism of the town has never been restored since.

Although presently Przemyśl is much less pluralistic then in the past, the memory of complex relations between Poles and Ukrainians is alive and frequently painful. On both sides it would be difficult to find any family that did not suffer from civil war taking place at the end of the Second World War. This past is important in order to understand the transformational ‘trauma’ (Sztompka 2000) in Przemyśl. This interplay of the present and of such a different past makes Przemyśl a very interesting town, not only in Poland, but also in post-Communist Europe with new state arrangements and relations between them, new political areas, parties and their programmes, the opening of borders and intensive migration.

Its close proximity to the border has some other social consequences for Przemyśl. There is illegal immigration but it is not regarded as a serious problem for the town itself. More significant is the issue of so-called ‘ants’ – local people carrying small amounts of goods (especially cigarettes and alcohol) through the border. It is a public secret that for some of the unemployed or beneficiaries of social help this activity is the main source of earning money outside the control of local authorities.

In the mid ‘90s the town faced the decline of local industry (such as automation); moreover, due to the reorganization of the country’s territorial organization, Przemyśl lost the status of capital city of one of the Polish provinces. Generally, this region is one of the poorest in Europe, with 35.4% of the average EU GDP per inhabitant (Eurostat, data for 2007). Also unemployment is one of the highest in the country, reaching 17.1%, compared to 12.4% for the whole of Poland (GUS, data for June 2007).

However, there are visible attempts to improve the town’s situation and image. The local authorities try to promote Przemyśl as a tourist attraction and to modernize the organization of the public services, i.e. for a few years now, the town takes part in the initiative ‘Transparent Poland’, the aim of which is to increase the clarity of the public system.

Brief presentation of the majority and minority presence
The domination of the Polish Roman Catholic population in Przemyśl is unquestionable. As we estimate, the minorities, both national and religious, constitute no more than 5% of the local society. However, in Przemyśl, as in
all other Polish towns, there are no records of the minorities present within the society. Therefore, the numbers we provide in Table 3.2.1 are based mainly on the declarations of their representatives and estimations by local authorities or other actors.

Table 3.2.1 Minority groups in Przemyśl (in order of size).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National/ethnic minorities</th>
<th>Approximate size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainians</td>
<td>over 900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>50-100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Religious minorities**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek Catholics</td>
<td>1,200-2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah’s Witnesses</td>
<td>250-300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostals</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodists</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>80-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventists</td>
<td>26*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptists</td>
<td>15*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*children not included

In Przemyśl there are a few individuals of Jewish, Belorussian, Hungarian and Japanese nationality and apart from the Japanese, their presence is historically determined. At present, there is also a small Vietnamese minority, but its size is difficult to assess.

**Characteristics of the majority Church**

The Roman Catholic Church is a very important and visible actor in the town’s public life. Its local structures are very well developed: there are 17 parishes and 17 Catholic orders; one of the biggest Polish seminaries, presently of around 110 clerical students (see WSD) is situated here. The total number of clergymen and nuns in Przemyśl can be estimated at around 500, and the following quotation from the sermon by the Roman Catholic priest describes this situation well: ‘In our town, it is practically impossible to go for a walk and not to meet a clergyman or a nun’. Also there are significant groups bringing together lay Roman Catholics, such as the
Catholic Action or the Catholic Families Association for the adults and the Light-Life Movement for children and youth.

Moreover, the town is the main city of the Przemyśl archdiocese, with residence of the archbishop and most of the archdiocese institutions situated here. Influence of the current archbishop on the local society and authorities is undeniable, as even the town’s president openly admits consulting some issues with him.

Although the size and importance of the Roman Catholic Church is not exceptional when compared to the rest of the country, South-East Poland is commonly perceived as ‘the most Catholic’ region, with the highest level of religiosity and the largest number of vocations. For example, the indicator of participation in the Sunday mass (dominicantes) for the Przemyśl archdiocese reached 64.8% in 2006, while the Polish average was 45.8% (ISKK).

**Characteristics of the national/ethnic minorities**

*The Ukrainians*

The estimations of the number of Ukrainians in Przemyśl vary between 900 (official data) and 50% of the town’s population (but this latter figure seems to be definitely overestimated). This controversy derives, firstly, from the fact that many Ukrainians live in Przemyśl temporarily or even illegally. Secondly, it is hard to draw an exact line between the Poles and the Ukrainians, as many Poles have Ukrainian ancestors and vice versa, due to centuries-old coexistence.

The difference between the position of Ukrainians in the region during the interwar period and the present is striking. In the past, their communities were well established and their members only occasionally felt ‘as the minority’. In everyday life the Ukrainians were equally (or even more) visible as the Poles. In Kalników, a village of 1,400 inhabitants, the number of Poles before the Second World War was estimated at 100. As Grzegorz Babiński stresses: ‘Poles were the minority there’ (Babiński 1997, p. 100). Nowadays, they constitute a defined national minority, not visible in everyday life.

Presently, the Ukrainians in Przemyśl are a rather tightly-knit group, organized around three main institutions: the local branch of the Ukrainians in Poland Association (main representative of their needs on the local level, though there are also other Ukrainian organizations), the Greek Catholic parish and the Ukrainian school, closely cooperating with one other. Nevertheless, it seems that the general situation (i.e. employment, lifestyle, etc.) of ‘the settled Ukrainians’ is not much different from the majority population. They have all the citizens’ rights; also language is not problematic and though they are using Ukrainian among themselves, they know Polish equally well.
The situation is different for Ukrainians staying in Przemyśl temporarily, often illegally, involved mainly in small trade, housework, construction and agriculture. The main factors determining their worse position within the society are: lack of Polish social insurance coverage and lack of rights to receive social support, lack of language competence, and poor knowledge of Polish procedures and bureaucracy. ‘The settled Ukrainians’ serve as guides and tutors in situations when such help within ‘Polish reality’ is needed (see pp. 128-129).

The Roma
The Przemyśl Roma are much more dispersed and divided than the Roma in other Polish towns, with very weak internal organization and lack of representation. For a few years now there have been attempts to create a Roma organization in Przemyśl, but so far the idea has failed. The Roma blame the bureaucratic procedures, while the people working with them point the finger to the Roma’s passivity and inability to appoint their own representative.

The Roma in Przemyśl form a type of underclass, with hereditary poverty, poor housing conditions, widespread alcoholism, low life expectancy (45-55 years, especially among men), almost 100% unemployment (though they often work illegally, also abroad) and – consequently – complete dependence on social support. This is caused, not only by the majority’s generally negative attitude towards them, but mainly by their weak adaptation to the social system. They were forced to settle down in the 50’s, when the nomadic life they had led before was prohibited by the Communist authorities and until now this event is recalled by the Roma as ‘the end of their world’.

Still, according to Polish law this minority group has full access to medical care, education, social help and all the other rights, as they are Polish citizens, only of Roma origin. They can be even described as ‘the group of special care’, as they receive much support from the local government, the Roman Catholic Church and various charity organizations.

Immigration
Officially, there are very small immigrant groups as between 1989 and 2002, 170 people settled in Przemyśl from abroad, while in 2005 there were only 46 (internal data of the local Statistical Office). However, as already mentioned, illegal immigration may be quite significant. In 2006 the local border guard caught over 500 foreigners (mainly from Vietnam, Moldova and China) crossing the border illegally (‘Wpadka na granicy’ 2007); it is impossible to assess how many have managed to avoid being discovered. Nevertheless, for these immigrants Przemyśl is only a ‘stop’ on the way to Central Poland or to other countries of the EU.
As Przemyśl is the largest town on the borderline with the Ukraine and those caught illegally crossing the border are usually brought here, the Guard Centre for Foreigners (first such institution in Poland) is being established in Przemyśl. After prolonged completion works, it was officially opened in November 2007, when our fieldwork had already been finished.

**Religious minorities**
Though small and of little visibility (except of the Greek Catholics), religious minorities are deep rooted in Przemyśl, as each of them has been here at least since the interwar period.

*The Orthodox and the Greek Catholics*
At first sight, both churches are very close, as Greek Catholicism derives from Orthodoxy, their rites and customs are similar, and their members may often be mistaken with each other. Additionally, both affiliations strongly overlap with the Ukrainian nationality: it is estimated that 10-20% of the Ukrainian in Przemyśl are Orthodox, while the rest are Greek Catholic. However, there is mutual distrust and ‘rivalry’ between the two churches, especially since the Greek Catholics are often treated by the Orthodox as dissenters. Moreover, their positions within the local society are diametrically different.

Orthodoxy used to be a denomination of significance in this region, with its presence dating back to the 9th century, but due to historical factors – i.e. creation of the Greek Catholic Church, State policy during the interwar period or massive resettlements after the Second World War – the local Orthodox Church was almost destroyed and started to recover only in the ‘80s. Presently, the Orthodox have two parishes in Przemyśl and they are not very visible in the town’s life.

Meanwhile, the Greek Catholic Church is a more noticeable actor in the local society. Przemyśl is the seat of the Archbishop and some of the archdiocese institutions. Officially, it is a part of the Roman Catholic Church, in fact, however, both churches lead separate lives and there is low awareness of their unity and mutual indifference, even distrust.

In the mid ‘90s the tensions between the two churches were especially intense. The most significant was the conflict over the former Greek Catholic cathedral, which was lost in 1947 and until the 18th century it had belonged to one of the Roman Catholic orders. When after 1989 the Greek Catholics applied for the building to be returned to them, some Roman Catholic Polish milieus began action for the church’s ‘defence’, including its occupation. Even John Paul’s II intervention did not persuade ‘the defenders’ to allow the Greek Catholics into the building. Finally, another nearby church was given to the Greek Catholics. Until now, these events are
recalled in Przemyśl as the main conflict between both groups (Greek Catholic/Ukrainian and Roman Catholic/Polish).

The ‘national dimension’ of this church is very visible and the words ‘Ukrainian’ and ‘Greek Catholic’ are treated in Przemyśl as practically synonymous, both by the members of this church and the whole local society.

**The Protestant Churches: the Pentecostals, the Methodists, the Adventists and the Baptists**

Despite their low visibility, the Protestant Churches seem to be quite well adjusted to the local situation, mainly because of their long-time presence (at least 80 years), good internal organization, but also because of their cooperation with each other, both in the field of religion (i.e. ecumenical prayers, distribution of the Bibles) and social activities. The relations are close especially between the Methodists and the Pentecostals: even their churches are next to each other, sharing the same yard. Contacts seem to be the weakest with the Adventists, probably because it is the only congregation located in the suburbs (the others are in the city centre).

The other factor facilitating the activities of the Protestants is support from their fellow adherents from abroad. Pentecostals closely cooperate with the Swedish congregation, from which they, not only receive material help, but also learn how to act effectively.

Typically in the majority of the cases, either the members of the Protestant Churches, or their not so distant ancestors, are converts from the Roman Catholicism. Significant is the case of Pentecostals: the whole of their local congregation emerged in the ‘30s from the Roman Catholic Church.

**Jehovah’s Witnesses**

Although it is the second largest religious minority in Przemyśl, Jehovah’s Witnesses are hardly visible in the town’s public life and difficult to contact. What is more surprising is that their activity is quite developed and well organized. For instance, in the town there are three congregations and a ‘Kingdom Hall’. They also are active in social activities. Regarded as non-Christians, they are distanced by other minority groups, i.e. they are not invited to the occasional common prayers, organized by other confessions.

**Brief presentation of the local welfare system**

In general, the local welfare system is similar to that on the national level: the main responsibility for providing welfare services is held by the local authorities and public institutions, supplemented by numerous private/non-governmental organizations. However, probably due to the serious problems with which the town struggles, the number of social partners involved in
welfare provision is significant. Despite this, the local welfare system seems to be insufficient to fulfil all the population requirements as it is still concentrated on covering the most immediate needs and short-term help.

**Role of local government**

The local government in Przemyśl is gradually becoming a coordinator within the welfare system, but the most important welfare providing facilities are still public. This concerns the majority of educational institutions (i.e. all 14 primary schools are public, so are most gymnasiums and nursery schools), the employment office, but also medical care: out of 30 medical facilities only 7 are public, though they are the largest, including the local hospitals. In most cases, non-public medical facilities are free for the insured, as they have contracts with the National Health Fund, responsible for financing health services for the citizens.

Within the Municipal Office, there are, among others, the Department of Education and Sport, the Department of Housing Administration and the Department of Social and Citizens’ Affairs. The latter is particularly important for our research, as it is responsible for social help, for cooperation with the social associations and NGOs, as well as for controlling and registering them. However, not all of the Department’s officially prescribed tasks are fulfilled: i.e. responsibility for the minorities’ affairs is only formally in the Department’s competences.

The most important executive arm within the field of social help, the Municipal Social Help Centre (MOPS – Miejski Ośrodek Pomocy Społecznej), is subordinate to the town’s president. Some of the main forms of help provided include (according to the MOPS website):

- financial benefits (i.e. permanent, temporary, for foster families, for children’s education, for single parents, for multiple children families, for the disabled, attendance allowance);
- reimbursement of rehabilitation (i.e. workshop therapy, equipment);
- social work (increasing individuals’ and families’ abilities to function properly within the society);
- material help (i.e. providing clothes, food);
- personal care at the places of residence;
- specialist care services.

According to estimations by the managers of the MOPS, approximately 15% of the Przemyśl inhabitants use their help, especially financial benefits (internal data of the MOPS). The main criterion in order to receive help is to fulfil conditions such as: low income, number of children, unemployment, disability, etc. (depending on the help required). The MOPS cannot refuse to serve a person fulfilling these criteria; however, an issue often discussed is
whether people ‘having proper papers’ are really in need. This evokes further questions concerning the MOPS’ organization and rules of providing help. As a member of local government told us on ‘false needy’ people:

Instead of helping more a smaller group, this money is divided among more people, and instead of giving i.e. 800 ZL [200 EUR], one can give them 200 [50 EUR]. Four times more people apply for this money, and it is a vicious circle, it’s hard to solve. Cause actually they [the MOPS] only examine the papers, don’t they? (1, 3, M)\(^1\)

The minorities and the public welfare system

The minorities settled in Przemyśl have full access to the public welfare system and we have not come across any problems concerning the availability of public services. However, both groups vary in their use of local welfare. As the Ukrainians’ material situation is not much different from the whole society, they turn to MOPS occasionally, i.e. for financing children’s meals. The most important public facility for them is a school complex with Ukrainian as the teaching language, one of five such schools in Poland. The school was first established in 1911, closed in 1945 and reopened in 1991. At present, it consists of a kindergarten, primary school, gymnasium and secondary school; in 2000 it had 266 pupils (Popowicz 2007).

Meanwhile, the Roma practically live on social help, with financial benefits as their main source of income. They also take advantage of other forms of help (i.e. material) provided by the public institutions. In fact, what is most problematic in this minority is, not access to the public services, but their over reliance on social support and their inability to live independently. Therefore, since 2004, the local authorities engaged themselves in a governmental programme meant to increase Roma integration within the society and improve their life conditions, but also to support their identity and culture. In 2007, approximately 25,500 EUR were allocated to the renovation of the Roma apartments in Przemyśl (of which 68,000 EUR came out of the local government budget), as well as 3,750 EUR for the Roma Culture Festival and 200 EUR for children’s school equipment (MSWiA).

Only those staying in Przemyśl illegally or without valid insurance have problems with access to the public services. Due to Polish law, such people have no access to public welfare and only those in critical situations may use some of the services. Here, what is problematic is access to medical care, especially in the case of pregnant Ukrainian women wanting to give birth in Poland, due to better conditions here. In case of emergency they are treated in Przemyśl hospitals, but afterwards they are often required to pay both for the stay and care.

\(^1\) When citing group interviews, the first number refers to the interview number, the second number to a given person, and the letters M/F indicate the sex of the respondent.
In the case of religious minorities, they have no obstacles in accessing public welfare. Often, the members of minority churches underline that they have no need to turn to social help, as they know how to look after their own life and have sufficient internal aid networks. Jehovah’s Witnesses have particular problems when they have to use medical care due to their religious convictions, i.e. prohibition of blood transfusion. Therefore, they turn to specific doctors with whom they cooperate or go to the hospitals in other Polish towns.

Role of majority church
As in the whole country, the Church in Przemyśl is an important partner in welfare provision. This is possibly due to the following three factors:

- the weaknesses of the public welfare system and seriousness of local problems;
- the long tradition of the Church in supplementing state institutions in taking care of the nation and local communities;
- the strengthening of the Church’s efforts when facing possible competition in majority-minority relations.

The cooperation between the Church and the local authorities is very close and well developed, especially in the fields where the activities of public institutions are ineffective. Some of the Catholic facilities, i.e. medical or those for the homeless, have practically become part of the official welfare system, as their employees and some services are paid by the local authorities. Within some fields (i.e. care for the children and youth, care for the homeless) the Church’s participation is almost indispensable.

The main Catholic institution responsible for welfare provision is the Caritas of the Przemyśl archdiocese. Some of its permanent facilities include:

- a night shelter for women;
- a kitchen for the poor (about 300 meals a day);
- a house for single mothers and their children (approximately 15 places).

There are also other forms of help offered by the Roman Catholic Caritas, i.e.:

- ‘The Wings’ program – helping children from poor families to continue their education;
- workshops for the vocational activation of the disabled;
- summer holiday camps for children from poor, large families (about 2000 children/year);
• Christmas Eve dinner and Easter breakfast for the poor (approximately 500 people);
• individual help in random situations.

Most Catholic parishes, religious orders, as well as Catholic lay organizations also lead some aid activities. Therefore, other facilities connected to the Church include: a secondary school, a gymnasium, a night shelter for men, a kitchen for the poor, 3 kindergartens, a female boarding school, a special child care centre, 2 preventive-educational day care centres and a post-primary school for adults.

Theoretically, Catholic welfare providing services are available to all citizens and offered regardless of their faith. However, at least some of those aid services are accompanied by religious practices, i.e. holidays for children are officially called ‘retreats’ and include a religious programme; regulations of the Catholic night shelter for men (the only male night shelter in Przemyśl) demand ‘eager participation in church services’ from those sleeping there, etc. Still, those responsible for the Catholic welfare services underline that if someone does not want to take part in religious practices after all, it does not affect the help he/she will receive.

Occasionally, also the Greek Catholics use help provided by Roman Catholic organizations. For instance, some Ukrainian children attend Catholic day care centres; the Ukrainian women stay sometimes in the Home for the Mother and the Child or in the Caritas night shelter.

Concerning the Roma, in 2003 a special priest for their community was appointed, as this group is mostly Roman Catholic (see pp. 130-131). The clergyman was appointed partly accidentally, as it was simply the priest working in the parish where many Roma lived.

Role of minority associations/networks

Apart from the Roma, all local minorities are organized into more or less formal communities: the Ukrainians have their associations; religious minorities come together around their parishes or congregations. Also all of them (apart from the Roma) are somehow involved in welfare provision. However, these are to a great extent internal aid networks, geared towards members of their own group and rather ‘exclusive’ in character, usually having no official structures.

Still, various religious minorities try to ‘cross the borders’ of their own group while rendering help. Especially successful in this respect are the Pentecostals (see pp. 130-131), but also other churches – apart from internal support – try to involve themselves in the local welfare system. For instance, they organize gift and money collections for people in need and help those that request their support regardless of their religious affiliation. The Methodists and the Adventists (separately from each other) organize rehabilitation programmes for alcoholics, drug-addicts and smokers. Some
educational facilities are also proposed by the minorities: i.e. Jehovah’s Witnesses organize individual Polish language lessons for foreigners, while Methodists aim to create an English language school, accessible to all Przemyśl citizens.

Meanwhile, the Greek Catholics and the Ukrainians are concentrated on supporting members of their own religious or national group. Significant is the difference between the Greek Catholic and the Roman Catholic Caritas: the Greek Catholic Caritas is meant above all to respond to the needs of parishioners or people of Ukrainian origin, who are treated by the Greek Catholics as ‘ours’. Therefore, much emphasis is put on help for specific individuals, which means, for example visiting the elderly and the ill (about 30 people), continuous care for Ukrainians in the local prisons (approximately 12 in 2007), subsiding children’s lunches at the Ukrainian school (11 children in 2007), continuous help for the poor (i.e. buying fuel for the winter every year) and occasional help in random situations (16,M, Greek Catholic priest). The Greek Catholic Caritas’ activity is determined by very limited financial sources, as it depends mainly on members’ donations.

The main undertaking of the Greek Catholics in the field of welfare provision is the Ecumenical Social Care Home in Prałkowce (a village next to Przemyśl), run by nuns. It is a modern, specialist care home for the elderly, which – when finished – will have around 100 places (currently it serves approximately 40 people) (see pp. 127-128).

Explanation of the extent to which the local situation is in flux

Generally, the present situation is in flux and, though these transformations are not revolutionary changes (the general ‘layout’ remains the same, i.e. nothing can threaten the dominant position of the Church), they are important as they concern the everyday functioning of religious groups and the minorities. The most important of changes are: the 1989 transformation and accession to the EU.

The 1989 transformation

Although the event took place 18 years ago, the processes that was started then is still not finished. The groups still have to adapt to new conditions and learn how to take advantage of the new situation.

In general, all religious associations in Przemyśl were positively affected by the systemic transformation. Religion was allowed to ‘come out of the shadow’. In the case of the Church, it was enabled to develop independent, uncontrolled activity: the most visible example is the re-legalization of

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2 When citing individual interviews, the first number indicates the interview number, followed by the sex of the respondent (M or F) and his/her affiliation or function.
Caritas and the rebuilding of its structures, together with the gradual modernization of welfare activity. The Greek Catholic Church was re-legalized, it regained part of its properties and rebuilt its structures. Meanwhile, the Pentecostals or the Methodists were able to establish freely contacts with their fellow adherents abroad.

Accession to the EU

This event seems to be another milestone for the religious associations and the minorities in Przemyśl. Two most visible factors are European funds and the opening of the borders.

Concerning European funds, especially the Church seems to master the ability of using them effectively, as currently a large part of Caritas activity is based on European subsidies. Moreover, some historic churches – not only the Roman Catholic, but the Orthodox too – in the region have been renovated thanks to EU support. Also the Greek Catholic Church, as part of the Roman Catholic Church, receives some EU support.

The other issue, the opening of the borders, has a more ambiguous impact. Paradoxically, religious minorities partly suffer from it: many of their members leave the town and the average age of the faithful increases. The process started already in the ‘90s (Przemyśl citizens migrated to other parts of Poland), but after the accession this trend took large scale proportions. Migration concerns all the churches, but the size of the group is important here. As the minority priest told us:

Only in 2006, 50 people of our parish went to Ireland and Holland. It is very much for us. When the Latin [Roman Catholic] parish is left by 50 people out of 10,000, the parish priest almost does not notice it. But I do notice, because if on Sunday we have 300 or 200 people at the holy mass and 50 are missing, it really has significance. (16, M)

The freedom of travelling within the EU has also affected the Roma community. They have started a ‘social help migration’, as they travel temporarily to those countries where they can receive more support:

As soon as some cousin from England or Germany calls them and says that social welfare there can give them more than in Poland, they pack themselves and go (…) They are away for half a year and then they re-appear, even more of them, cause they bring some of their relatives with them. (6,M, Roman Catholic priest)

Apart from other consequences, this fluctuation in the Roma community makes it difficult to provide them with long-term help, the most needed in their case.
The Ukrainians

The change in the overall situation of the Ukrainians deserves a separate description. After 1989 they regained the right to act more openly; they also try to recover former properties of Ukrainian organizations. However, the latter provoked opposition of some Polish milieux. It is a part of a larger issue: for over 50 years the debate on Polish-Ukrainian relations was ‘frozen’ by the Communist regime, therefore, the antagonism broke out in the ‘90s. Even nowadays, almost any event can open a fiery discussion on the relations between both nations.

Nevertheless, those discussions have now calmed down and the relations seem to improve. Above all, the new generations are growing and they are more concerned about other issues, than settling accounts with the past:

The Poles, as well as the Ukrainians, have nowadays completely different aims: pursuit of happiness, of work, of some worldly means – not browsing deeply through the history. (26,M)

Context and timeframe

During the fieldwork, many events of various importance for the Polish part of the WaVE project took place, both on a local and national level. The most important could be divided into three categories: politics, social affairs and relations with the Ukraine.

In terms of politics, the main development relevant to the study is the local government election on the 12th of November 2006, and the winning in Przemyśl of ‘Prawo i Sprawiedliwość’ [‘Law and Justice’], a right-wing, traditional party, strongly appealing to the ‘patriotic’ and moral values, emphasising its connections with the Church. The other factors are continuous disturbances in the Polish politics at the national level, finalized by the self-dissolution of the Parliament on the 7th of September 2007. During these political conflicts issues of – among others – values underlying the State and the notion of ‘Polishness’ were often evoked.

In terms of social affairs, probably the most dramatic events were the constant strikes by a large part of medical staff across the whole of Poland, demanding a multiple increase in their salaries and in general expenditure on health care. Other events often mentioned in the local media were corruption and smuggling cases. Smuggling (both of goods and people), although it is not surprising in the border region, has currently gained special significance, mainly due to Polish preparations to implement the Schengen Agreement.

The years 2006 and 2007 were also important for the Polish-Ukrainian relations. Even the implementation of the Schengen Agreement will affect them, as it means the tightening of the Polish-Ukrainian border and the introduction of paid visas (probably costing 35 EUR) for the Ukrainians. On
the other hand, in 2007 the government introduced some facilitation although still not sufficient) for short-term workers from the Ukraine, Russia and Belarus, which was needed mainly due to Poles’ growing emigration and lack of labour force in Poland. Also the granting to Poland and the Ukraine of the organization of the Euro 2012 soccer championship means cooperation between both nations.

However, the issues most publicized in Przemyśl during the fieldwork were those dividing the Poles and the Ukrainians, namely the 60th Anniversary of ‘the Vistula Operation’ and conflicts over the ‘National Home’ (‘Narodnyj Dim’). In regard to the ‘Vistula Operation’, the Ukrainians demand recognition of their traumatic experience, while some Poles recall the terror and murders previously committed by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in the southeast territories, which was used as a justification for the resettlements. The official celebrations of the anniversary, organized mainly by the Ukrainians in Poland Association, took place in April 2007, and were strongly opposed by some Polish milieus. Prior, in February 2007, a separate conference took place, which was prepared mainly by a few traditional, mainly rightwing Polish organizations (some of them connected to the Church). This conference, although officially devoted to the ‘Vistula Operation’, was in fact meant to remind Poles of the Ukrainians’ crimes.

The other conflict, concerns the ‘National Home’, a large tenement house built by the Ukrainian organization in the interwar period and taken over by the local authorities after 1947. According to our respondents this is the main issue presently dividing the Poles and the Ukrainians in Przemyśl. In 2006 and 2007 there were several attempts to solve the conflict, undertaken both on the local and national level; however, they have not brought any results.

Methods and sources

Choice of the groups

For our in-depth research we have selected six groups, divided into two (though overlapping) categories: religious and ethnic/national. Religious groups include: the Roman Catholics, the Greek Catholics and the Pentecostals. Meanwhile, ethnic/national groups include the Ukrainians, the Roma and the Poles.

The choice of Poles and Roman Catholics was inevitable, as dictated by their status within the local society: in our case study the majority group was included in the in-depth research, as Poland was not involved in the WREP project. Meanwhile, the Greek Catholic Church is the most significant religious minority in Przemyśl. Also, ambiguity of this Church’s situation (being officially part of the majority, though in fact of minority status,
together with being a pillar of Ukrainian identity) was very interesting for the research.

It was decided to include the Pentecostals in order to research thoroughly at least one group of Protestant origin, which is successful (i.e. in terms of membership number and importance) in the world and – increasingly – in Poland; it also enabled us to do at least an initial comparison between denominations of three large Christian traditions: Catholicism, Eastern Christianity and Protestantism. We also wanted to include in our research a group whose relation with the majority is not stigmatized and burdened by the historical events.

Concerning the Ukrainians, it is definitely the most visible, the most numerous and the best organized minority in Przemyśl. Their situation is very complicated: at the same time they are deep-rooted in the region and in the town, with huge influence on its history and culture, but they are also regarded sometimes as strangers or even enemies.

Finally, the Roma’s situation is very interesting from the WaVE perspective, as they are so strongly dependent on the welfare system; also the issue of different worldviews and, consequently, different values, is especially visible in the case of this minority.

Concluding, because of such choice of groups, we included two minorities characteristic for our case study (the Greek Catholics and the Ukrainians), indispensable for understanding the specificity of Przemyśl, and two minorities ‘common’ for more case studies within the WaVE project (the Pentecostals and the Roma), which gives useful ground for comparisons between the countries.

The methods used

In the Polish part of the WaVE project various methods were used throughout the fieldwork. The most dominant was the use of different types of interviews, including in-depth, group and biographical interviews. More specifically, fact finding interviews (10) were carried out mainly with some recipients of social help, Roman Catholic parish priests and local journalists. Meanwhile, in-depth interviews (33) were carried out mainly with the representatives and members of majority and minority Churches (especially those involved in welfare provision), members of national and ethnic minorities, and the representatives of local authorities and the public sector. Group interviews (4) were carried out with groups involved in charity activity and with members of the Roma minority. Finally, the biographical interview method (8) was used with the Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics and Pentecostals.

Apart from the interviews, the following methods were also used:
participant observation during charity actions, public welfare services, religious events and practices, local festivals;
press content analysis, focused on issues relevant to our study, covering a one year period from January 2006 to October 2007, and including publications, such as: weekly magazine Życie Podkarpackie [‘Podkarpackie Life’], newspapers Nowiny [‘The News’] and Gazeta Wyborcza – Rzeszów [‘Election Newspaper – Rzeszów branch’], monthly magazine Nasz Przemyśl [‘Our Przemyśl’];
amalysis of web pages, covering mainly the official site of Przemyśl, other web pages of local authorities and public services; web pages of religious, ethnic and national groups; some other web pages devoted to Przemyśl;
amalysis of sermons (preliminary) from Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

Findings

Examples of cooperation and cohesion between groups
The examples of cohesion we would like to mention concern the following issues: attempts to increase ‘organizational cohesion’ within the welfare system, the Ecumenical Social Care Home in Pralkowce, cooperation between the Greek Catholic Church and Ukrainian organizations, the Ukrainian school, activities undertaken to improve the Roma situation and Pentecostal activities.

Increasing ‘organizational cohesion’
There is a growing awareness in Przemyśl that social assistance should be complex, multidimensional and long-term, based on cooperation of many institutions, not only public. For example, since 2005 a programme of cooperation between the Przemyśl local authorities and NGOs, as well as other actors involved in public service activities has been developed. The Chart of Cooperation was drafted, defining for example the scope and forms of the cooperation, ways of financing the organizations, etc. In the town hall, the post of representative for cooperation with NGOs was created. Also a Consultant Team was created, consisting of 8 representatives from local authorities and 5 from NGOs whose tasks are (among others): to assess the town’s policy towards NGOs, to monitor the cooperation and to improve it. A few times a year a meeting between members of all NGOs willing to participate is organized: representatives from 70 organizations took part in such meeting in September 2006. However, practically no minority organization attends these meetings.
The next undertaking is the creation of the Help Centre for Families within the MOPS, involving social workers, pedagogues, psychiatrists and job consultants. When a family applies for help, the Consultant Team decides what type of help (i.e. psychiatric or pedagogic) is needed and appropriate steps are undertaken.

Another issue is mutual and long-lasting cooperation between Roman Catholic aid organizations (i.e. Caritas) and public institutions. Moreover, during the fieldwork there were a few requests for tightening cooperation between the Church (i.e. the parishes) and public institutions in the domain of welfare. The parish priests emphasized sometimes that they have an insight into people’s situation (mainly due to annual visits in the parishioners’ houses) which is not in the reach of the MOPS. Also lay Roman Catholics indicated that members of the religious community know more about the needs of their fellow members than public institutions, therefore, further cooperation in this field could be very fruitful.

Characteristically, all those undertakings aiming to combine the activities of many welfare providers involve only the actors belonging to the majority population – Polish and Roman Catholic. Moreover, the attempts to improve the welfare system are rather small-scale and should be regarded as minor improvements of the system, rather than real transformations.

**Ecumenical Social Help Home in Pralkowce**

The idea behind the Ecumenical Social Help Home in Pralkowce, run by the Greek Catholic nuns, is to work on the Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation and eliminate the antagonism between Greek and Roman Catholicism. Therefore, the Home is meant to provide care to all the elderly, from all churches and ethnic groups:

> We thought it cannot be a closed ghetto, it cannot be like that. We had to come up with something so this place would not be only for one group, and so the idea of ecumenical home was created, where everyone who needs help would find it. (18,F, Greek Catholic nun)

Also the employees and the volunteers working there are of both denominations and nationalities; the main criterion being proper qualification for the job.

Nevertheless, so far the inhabitants are mainly Ukrainians, especially those who returned from the West of Poland to die in their region of origin. Even the very first idea behind the Home’s creation was to help the people of Ukrainian origin, who have to stay in ‘Polish’ social care homes and who are often forced to hide their nationality and unable to participate in the Greek Catholic religious practices. Therefore, it is also expected that employees would be able to communicate in Ukrainian:
We try at least, though we had many problems with it, we try at least to make them understand Ukrainian, even if they do not speak it. (18, F, Greek Catholic nun)

The Greek Catholic Church and the Ukrainians
Concerning the strong overlap between the Ukrainian and Greek Catholic affiliation, it is not surprising that there is a close cooperation between this church and the Ukrainian organizations and institutions. For example, Greek Catholic clergymen teach in the local Ukrainian school and actively participate in the school’s life. The youth from the school is involved in some of the Greek Catholic Caritas’ activities, and Caritas finances part of the free meals served at the school. The Greek Catholic clergy also takes part in the events organized by the Ukrainian organizations, i.e. in the recent anniversary of the ‘Vistula Operation’.

What really unites these religious and national organizations is providing care for the same people, who are both Ukrainians and Greek Catholics. This is especially visible when there is a need of helping the Ukrainians who stay temporarily in Przemyśl or are ‘newcomers’, and who are in difficult situation, i.e. they have no material means, have been robbed or have certain bureaucratic problems. In such cases, the Greek Catholic parish and – mainly – the Ukrainians in Poland Association offer help together, using all available means and becoming ‘guides’ within the Polish reality:

Not always do they need financial help; often they need some concrete help in preparing a paper. Even simply leading them to some office, translating, cause there is a language barrier. After all, Ukrainian is not Chinese, but it is difficult for them to say, to call everything they have in mind etc. (17, M, Greek Catholic priest)

Some time ago, the issue of Ukrainian women coming to Poland and – often – marrying Poles without much forethought, only to find themselves left by a spouse or married to an alcoholic, has surfaced:

(…) often such women arrive, with one or two children, and … I think… they leave Ukraine a bit recklessly, they come from some poor villages or the mountains, and it seems to them that it is a man, it is a Pole, that she is abroad and she will have unbelievable life now; and having two children, often they become involved with the alcoholics also here, and later such relationships last very short (…). (32, F, ‘Ukrainian Women Association’)

Therefore, the Greek Catholic clergy and the ‘Ukrainian Women Association’, apart from helping individually (i.e. contacting lawyers, dealing with bureaucratic procedures, providing clothes), they also help organize meetings (or rather types of workshops) during which advice is offered on issues such as dealing with Polish bureaucracy or seeking legal work. Also recently, there was a case of a Ukrainian woman, who – without
having Polish social insurance – gave birth in a Przemyśl hospital and was obliged to pay for it. Again, it was the people from Ukrainian organizations and the Greek Catholic parish that helped her by filling out the applications and contacting the appropriate institutions.

**The Ukrainian school**

At first sight, the local Ukrainian school may be a contentious issue in Przemyśl. When it was opened in the 90’s, some Polish milieus were against it, accusing it for example that ‘Ukrainian nationalists’ would be brought up with Polish money; also the fact that subsidy to the Ukrainian school is higher than to other public schools has raised some controversies. Additionally, almost at the same time as the opening of the Ukrainian school, one of Przemyśl’s well-known public secondary schools had to be moved from the building it previously occupied in order to give it back to the Greek Catholics. This might have given the impression of ‘taking something back from our children and giving it to theirs’.

However, further research revealed that the school actually turned out to be a ‘cohesion factor’, mainly for the Ukrainian community, but also in helping to improve the Ukrainians’ position within the local society, thus improving also the relationship with the majority.

Not surprisingly, the school integrates primarily the Ukrainians living in Przemyśl. The consequences may be seen among the parents and the children; therefore, the school is important, not only for the present, but also for the future. The parents have the opportunity to meet and work with other Ukrainians, for example before the school was opened, the parents had been working together during the building’s renovation to finish it before the beginning of the school year. Meanwhile, as the school is rather small and practically nobody is anonymous here, the children have the chance, not only of learning their tradition, but also of forming close relationships with fellow countrymen.

Moreover, despite previous fears that the school would separate the Ukrainians and the Poles, it actually – at least to some extent – improved the Ukrainians’ ‘image’ within the local community; it also increased their self-confidence and, therefore, put them in a position of ‘partner’. As one of the local officials interprets:

> I think it is a problem of every minority (…). They want to say: ‘We are the same citizens as you are. We have the same rights, we reach the same results, and sometimes even better’. Because it is this a natural way of showing one’s belonging to this society. (39,M)

Due to the school’s size and close cooperation between the teachers and parents, the work with the pupils is more efficient. The level of education is very high (it is one of the best schools in Przemyśl, with practically 100%
pupils passing the A-levels) and the school has built up a good reputation so some Poles also end up sending their children here. Moreover, there are numerous supplementary classes, including music or dance courses. The school has its own folk band, which often performs during the town’s celebrations.

Additionally, more tight cooperation between the town’s authorities and the Ukrainians has been established because of the school. For instance, among the people who promoted the creation (and later its development) of the school was present director of the Department of Education and Sport.

**The local government and the Church towards the Roma:**

As mentioned above, there are initiatives of the local government and the Church to help improve the life conditions of the Roma, as well as their integration within the society. Some of those initiatives are introduced together by both actors: one of such examples was the ‘Roma school’, created by the all-Poland priest for the Roma, the local clergy and the local authorities. Another idea developed jointly by the town and the clergy was installing in Roma homes prepaid meters for electricity in order to prevent them from falling into debt. Local authorities also provide a bus for the annual Roma pilgrimage.

As indicated above, there is a special post of the ‘Archdiocese Priest for the Roma’, who is responsible for looking after this minority. As he admits himself, the Roma expect from him above all ‘the social aspect of the care’ and some material help. The priest is supported by a few clerics from the local seminary and a few lay volunteers (mainly women), who provide the Roma with food, clothing, coal and wood in the wintertime, gifts for the children etc. They have also made an agreement with some of Przemyśl pharmacies, which fill the Roma’s medication prescriptions for free. Also the local Caritas provides the Roma with free meals and some clothes.

Generally, the Roma find no problems in reporting their needs to the public services or other actors. Even a governmental programme was introduced when the Roma in Przemyśl informed the local authorities, after hearing about it from Roma in other Polish cities. After checking requirements, the officials decided to implement the programme locally.

**The Pentecostals and local organizations**

During our research, we have had a growing impression that the Pentecostals are the most ‘cohesive’ group in our locality, not involving themselves in any kind of potentially contentious situation. They cooperate, both with other denominations and some local institutions. Although this work is small scale at first sight, it is effective and very well organized. A few members of the congregation are involved at the local children’s home and this cooperation has lasted for seven years now. The Pentecostals also organize holidays for the children and help the poor and people in random situations,
not only materially, but also in providing them with free services (i.e. during house renovation). A few volunteers visit prisoners (6 in 2007) helping them during their leave and offering to help their families, etc. Significantly, in most cases, neither these beneficiaries, nor their families, have any connection with the Pentecostal congregation; no participation in religious services is expected of them.

The most ‘institutionalized’ initiative of the Pentecostals is the second hand shop (selling textiles, furniture, everyday items) run in cooperation with the Society for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled. Half of the 20 volunteers working in the shop are from the congregation and the other half from the Society. The income, shared between the congregation and the Society, is devoted to aid activity. Because of the very low prices of goods on sale, the shop serves many Przemyśl citizens; moreover, additional discounts are possible upon request, sometimes the goods are even given for free. However, characteristic is the fact that it is not officially publicized that the shop is co-owned and co-created by the Pentecostals; as the pastor of the congregation said, this is to avoid any potential protests and misunderstandings by the local citizens.

Similarly, it is not publicized that the ‘Swedes from Goteborg’, who are the town’s benefactors in many areas, are also Pentecostals and that they help Przemyśl with support and through the local Pentecostal congregation. The Swedes provide the second-hand shop with all the goods for free; they also provide the rehabilitation equipment for disabled to the rental company that opened in Przemyśl in November 2006. Over the last three years they have also subsidized the children’s home.

It is important to conclude this part of the report. Firstly, in every example of cohesion there is also a ‘but’: in each case of assistance there is a potential for conflict. Secondly, though some examples of cooperation in the field of welfare may be found (as presented), it seems that cohesion between different religious/national groups concerns more cultural activities (i.e. common jazz festival), commemoration ceremonies (i.e. Day of Memory of Przemyśl Jews) and religious practices (i.e. ecumenical midnight Mass on Christmas) rather than welfare provision.

Examples of tensions/problem points between and within groups

The conflicts involving the groups included into our in-depth research mainly do not concern welfare (at least in the strict sense of the term) or rather we have not been able to determine whether these conflicts affect welfare provision. According to the research the main conflict in the ‘strict meaning of welfare’, although probably not obvious to the actors themselves, does not concern national or religious affiliation, but rather the passivity and demanding attitude of some beneficiaries for social assistance.
The second significant conflict (or rather a permanent tension), which to some extent is similar to that mentioned before, concerns the Roma. But first, we would like to describe briefly some everyday tensions concerning the Ukrainians.

**Tensions concerning the Ukrainians**

As it was indicated, the most visible conflicts between the Poles/Roman Catholics and the Ukrainians/Greek Catholics are connected, not with welfare provision, but mainly with the memory of the past or with the ownership of the buildings that are important for both groups. This may be caused not only by ‘material factors’, but also by the groups’ will to mark their presence symbolically.

Nevertheless, some small-scale, ‘everyday tensions’ between the Poles and Ukrainians still occur, though the minority’s members tried to lessen their importance during the interviews, emphasising that young generations are free of prejudice. However, they admit that acts of discrimination, such as rude treatment in public offices, sometimes take place. For instance, we were told about a situation, when the representative of the ‘Ukrainians’ in Poland Association’ tried to have the fluorescent lamp changed and the electricity checked at their headquarters. The reaction of the Flats’ Administration worker was:

Oh! No, if it is for the Ukrainians’ in Poland Association, then I cannot change this lamp. If this was for any other, Polish organization, then yes, but for the Ukrainian Association – no way. (31,F, Ukrainian)

Representatives of religious minorities are aware of the Ukrainians (especially those who live in Przemysl temporarily) being sometimes treated badly:

For instance, during an ordinary situation at the shop, or service at the bar, or at the petrol station. These are nuances, these are little things, you can see that this person is a bit worse treated, not as a guest who demands and deserves respect, but as someone who came and wanders around. (27,M)
Demands versus demanding attitude

This crucial, in our opinion, conflict takes place mainly between some beneficiaries of social help and some providers of welfare. On the one hand, demanding attitudes can be found, on the other, there are demands for becoming independent from the society’s help and taking responsibility for one’s life. Almost in all interviews with persons involved in welfare provision (both public and informal) the issue of persons overusing others’ came up.

People working in the public sector (i.e. in MOPS) are to a great extent ‘helpless’, as they are obliged to offer services to those formally fulfilling the criteria, though often they are convinced that people they help should not be supported in any way. Social workers sometimes feel exploited and deceived by the social system:

Please, tell me, whether in me, as in a citizen who tries to do something, the protest should not arouse against it? I think it should and it will arouse a protest in me, because it starts to be this way: people who do not work begin to have the same level of income as those who work for them. I am very sorry, but I think it is a pathology. (43,F, social worker)

Meanwhile, people from religious organizations or NGOs have more freedom: they can (and they often do) refuse to help people they do not trust. However, this is the case of mainly small aid groups (i.e. run by the minorities). In situations where, as in the case of the Roman Catholic Caritas, the scale of activity is massive and when some form of bureaucracy and official criteria are adopted, then the people involved in this activity sometimes have to offer help against their personal conviction on the customers’ real situation.

From our point of view, the people who ‘overuse’ social help may be divided into two subcategories: the ‘passive’ and the ‘manipulative’. The ‘passive’, who, despite everything, may rely on some compassion from other members of the society, are the people that are unable to change their lifestyle, for whom learned helplessness and inadequacy have become practically inherent parts of their personalities. In their case, the people

\[3\] It is important to point out that there are specific characteristics of transformational societies related to the field discussed. On the one hand, political and economic transition increased rapidly the extent of inequalities. In 1992, 85.7% of the Poles declared that ‘income differences are too large’, and 77.7% agreed that the ‘government should reduce income differences’ that are not accepted by majorities of societies (Toš, Mohler and Malnar 1999, 145). On the other hand, members of the post-Communist societies are more passive in search for improving their own situation and expect more help from the outside institutions. It is one of the effects of totalitarian or quasi-totalitarian states, where any personal activity was not welcomed. This deadlock can be seen as one of the most important obstacles in overcoming the so-called ‘learned’ or ‘inherited’ passivity in Poland.
willing (or having to) help them focus on searching for ways of activating them and improving their integration within the society.

Meanwhile, the ‘manipulative’ are those who regard social help as the easiest source of income. Sometimes, they work illegally (i.e. ‘the ants’) and treat social benefits as additional income. But for many of them not working and receiving various forms of help from the public institutions and charity organizations is simply more comfortable and more profitable than taking up a job. This is the category of welfare beneficiaries that raises opposition among the rest of the society, especially those involved in aid activities, who often feel exploited. Consequently, our respondents expressed reluctance towards receivers of help, and the conviction that ‘the one who is really in need would never ask for help’.

The Roma and the local majority

The relations between the Roma and the rest of the local society should not be described in terms of conflict, but rather as ‘lacking in mutual adaptation and understanding’. Significant is the Roma’s inability to settle into a lifestyle and, after 1989, in a competitive, free market system.

Lack of education has very serious consequences in the case of this community. The elderly are often illiterate (because of spending their childhood in caravans); their children usually have an incomplete primary education, as they often leave the school after the first few classes, and even in those years when they attend the school, they are very often absent. It is hard to identify a single reason for their situation. The non-Roma often attribute this to the Roma’s disregard for education, idleness and passivity; the non-Roma, who work and sympathize with this minority, explain this in terms of the Roma’s lack of mobilization and low value of education. Meanwhile, the Roma themselves say their situation is due to lack of understanding of their children, who are abused by the Poles (mainly by other pupils), lack of clothing or equipment needed for school, weak health or simply a child’s unwillingness to attend school, especially after being treated – according to them – unfairly.

The attempts to solve these problems have not yet brought any results. In the late 90’s, there was in Przemyśl a so-called ‘Roma school’ (first few classes of primary school) only for the members of this community; it was designed to protect Roma children from any forms of discrimination and to adjust the lessons to their needs. Such schools still exist – with success – in other Polish towns. However, after a few years the Przemyśl school closed down. One of the main reasons was that the children did not attend the lessons and there was a lack of motivation by their parents. But another factor could be the Roma adults’ reluctance to isolate their children:

(…) my son started the school normally, with the children, with his peers. He had colleagues, he had friends – why should I have done it
Would the Roma school solve all the problems? No. (…) One should understand another that he should attend the Polish school. Because he was born in Poland. (4,1,F, Roma)

However, it seems that the situation will gradually improve after all, as the Roma adults wish their children to be better educated:

I would like my granddaughters to be able to write, to read. Because it is the first thing the children should know. To read, to write, and I hope they go to some higher school, because I would like one of my granddaughters to play the violin, and the other one – I do not know, we will see what she will be interested in. (4,1,F, Roma)

The other, more serious, problem is what can be regarded as the Roma’s demanding attitudes toward local authorities and charity organizations. Practically all our interviewees involved in helping the Roma underlined such attitudes, ‘willingness to improve their living standards, but not own activity’ (38,F, senior official). As one of the social workers observed:

This is what the Roma do very often: they deserve it [help], because they are minority group. There is no discussion, it does not matter that the legal articles say something different, he deserves it. End of discussion. (43,F)

In fact, the main points formulated by the Roma we interviewed were: better social assistance (above all, greater financial benefits) and improvement of housing conditions, the responsibility for which they put utterly on the local government. Their idea of perfect social care is based on the information they have from the Roma living in western countries, i.e.:

There is a very high level there [in Great Britain]. They [the Roma] have their apartments, everyone has own room, and they receive money that are sufficient for food, for clothes. Twice or thrice a year they receive such help. They receive in winter, they receive in autumn. And for the summer clothes they receive. Simply, they receive for everything, so they could live somehow. And here, in Poland, it is… you cannot even dream about it. (3,1,F, Roma)

However, it would be unjust to blame the Roma, their passivity and demands, for all of their problems. Above all, despite living all their life in Poland, they still have very low social skills and do not know the formal ways of improving their situation through the institutions. A good example is their very simplified view of the hierarchy: the only people they view as really worthy talking to when they are in need are the institutions’ directors or usually the town’s president. The good president is the one who has the time for average citizens and one who solves their problems personally (4,1,F, Roma). They also cannot find their place within the new reality and
cannot imagine job suitable for them. They are aware that their education is too low for the current labour market, and the elderly know they have practically no chance to find a job:

Q: What do you think, what job could you…

A: Well, what job could I, Miss? To get the job you have to finish the school at least (…). Eight classes, Miss, it is too little to have a job. (2,1,M, Roma)

Certainly, the Roma also experience some discrimination, prejudice and reluctance from the majority population. We even had the occasion to witness the Poles’ distance towards the Roma, even those from their closest environment: when, accompanied by the Roman Catholic priest, we were knocking at the doors of one Roma respondent and her neighbours looked out of their doors, warning us: ‘But the Roma are living there, you know’.

Furthermore, even if the Roma wanted to find a job, they would have many problems. When asked whether the local employers would agree to hire the Roma, a senior official in the labour office responded:

Miss, I doubt it, I doubt it. And I do not blame them, the reasons are obvious, well, after all, there is an anxiety, I do not know how to call it, but the Gypsies’ reputation – we are speaking now nicely about the Roma, but when you ask any average citizen… (36,M)

Overall, the activities by the local government and charity organizations designed to improve the Roma situation do not bring the intended effects partly because of the intensive migration of the community. But there is a deeper and more important reason: the inability to find a model of assistance that would ‘activate’ the Roma themselves and let them find their place within the society. As a person working with them told us:

The idea of any kind of help addressed to the man is to give him a chance of independent development, independent life. (…) The point is not to give someone a fish, but to give him a fishing rod. And we give this fish [to the Roma] all the time. (…) But we cannot give them the fishing rod. Somehow we do not know what could be such fishing rod for them. (6,M, Roman Catholic priest)

The ‘grey areas’ in between
Generally, there is definitely no ‘black and white’ situation in Przemyśl. As it has been presented, there are no groups or issues that might be an example only of conflict or only of cohesion (with the exception of the Pentecostals). Each situation may lead to conflict, as well as to cooperation between the groups. The expression of group solidarity through social assistance may become a contentious sphere when public support is overused by some
citizens; the Roma inability to function independently within the society motivates various public actors to combine their efforts for the minority’s good; the Ukrainian school, raising at first fears against the nationalism and/or ghettoization, turned out to be beneficial for both the minority and the whole of local society, etc.

What belongs to ‘the grey area’ is the invisibility of religious minorities within the local society. In Przemyśl, there is a very low awareness of the presence of churches other than Roman or Greek Catholic. Even the local journalists are not sure which denominations are present in the town. Moreover, some specific churches are often mistaken with each other:

It makes practically no difference whether a person is a Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal or anything else – they already know it is either ‘a wrong faith’ or a Jehovah’s Witness. (26,M, pastor of the minority church)

The representatives of the minority churches complain about being treated by the local authorities as ‘worse religions’, mainly with distrust and suspicion, especially when they want to develop their activity and involve themselves in the town’s public life. Not surprisingly, the cooperation between the minorities and the local authorities is minimal, as minorities feel sometimes marginalized and ignored by the local government:

We know that on various meetings organized by the city council the representatives of Roman Catholic Church were invited. We would like to ask why we are never invited; after all, there are many denominations here. If there are important issues for the town, why can’t we participate in them? It is not the matter of appreciating us, but we think we have something to say, something to offer. (28,M, pastor of the minority church)

The representatives of minority denominations seem to be aware that when they want to start some activity outside their own group, it is sometimes better not to reveal their religious affiliation, as it could raise suspicions and distance. This is why the Pentecostals do not publicize their co-ownership of the second-hand shop; also a Baptist who raised the money for disabled children did it as a pedagogue, not as the pastor.

To conclude, we would risk the statement that in the case of the religious minorities, discrimination concerns not access to welfare services, but the right to offer them. Providing welfare is considered a privilege for the groups present in the local society, establishing their position within the social system.
Analysis: emergent values

Values could be analysed from different perspectives: as declared or practiced, as felt or ‘known’ In this report, we do not distinguish between these various manifestations of values, but take into account a general perspective of what is seen as ‘good’, ‘desired’ and respected from an individual and collective (national, religious, local, ethnic, gender) point of view. While analysing the material, we had in mind some broader perspective related to values within Polish society, but only occasionally did we find the opportunity to refer to it. Every society has some specificity concerning the hierarchy of values related to different fields, such as values connected with work, family life, religion, politics, tolerance etc. A good starting point for comparisons is the European Value Studies, which originally began in 1978, the last edition of which took place in 1999/2000.

In this broader perspective, the Poles compared to the Europeans are, as stressed by Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania, less reflexive in terms of moral consciousness and lacking in linkage with a broader system of values. As she argues, they are more rigorist on moral issues, partly because of the stronger impact of the Church (Jasińska-Kania, Marody 2002, 233-234) As far as the hierarchy of values is concerned, in comparison to the worldwide results the Polish respondents may be located closer to the so called ‘Third World societies’ than to the European ones (Jasińska-Kania 2007).

The analysis of values with regard to the ‘welfare areas’

Family

Generally, in Poland there is a dominant traditional attitude towards the family, i.e. the majority considers family as one of the most important values in life and a ‘happy family’ as life goal. This model has been confirmed by many research studies. The ISSP research from 1994 provides an interesting platform for situating Polish respondents within the European context. Agreement with the statement ‘married people are happier’ achieved in Poland the highest level of 62.2%, significantly distancing other traditionally religious and family oriented countries such as the United States (46.5%), Austria (45.7%) or Italy (31.8%) (Malnar 1999, p. 229).

Not surprisingly, there are significant changes taking place in the youngest and most educated generations, as Krystyna Slany’s research proves, namely the growing popularity of cohabitation and of the model of ‘living apart together’, particularly among students (Slany 2002). Also, Polish census data confirms this, as the number of couples in this type of cohabitation systematically grew: in 1988 there were 125,000 people, in 1995 148,000 people and in 2002 198,000. As Slany interprets it: ‘taking into account those, who do not know that actually they practice this kind of
relation, the phenomenon achieves a mass nature’ (Slany 2003). But it is striking that these new trends do not ruin the strong position of the family and even young people, presently ‘cohabiting’, plan to have a strong, stable and loving family as soon as they are ‘ready’.

The research in Przemyśl fits very well the Polish model, confirming that a ‘healthy’ and ‘normal’ family is viewed as a basic value by the representatives of all groups concerned. Family can be ‘good’ and ‘bad’. ‘The positive’ side is described as the relations binding the family members, consent, lack of addictions, common goals (‘harmony’, ‘cohesion’); ‘the negative’ side, is characterized by quarrels, risk of addictions (i.e. to alcohol) and lack of cooperation, which are all expressions of lack of harmony. The proper material status of the family is secondary, as it is still very important in ensuring a dignified lifestyle, but not the most important, as is the family living in harmony that can help someone cope with every difficult situation.

The family is also the main focus of aid activities. When, as the respondents describe, one can see ‘a family suffering privation’, ‘a family that is broke’, ‘a pathological family’, then ‘a family has the right to be granted help’, and one may (or even has to) ‘work with the family’. Aid workers assess negatively the passivity of a family ‘that does nothing to improve its position’ (43,F, social worker).

The value of the family is connected, not only with transmitting the genes, but also with its symbolic significance. Therefore, from a macro perspective, the fact that many pro-welfare activities aiming to preserve or reach social cohesion, and referring to such general values as solidarity, dignity, human rights etc., can be viewed as the expression of the primordial importance of one’s own family, which may also comprise ‘broader families’ within a given society: a family of persons of one nationality, a family of fellow believers, a family of citizens. The examples of conflicts and cooperation presented above are often an expression of this concern for preserving family bonds also in the broad meaning of this word.

Strength of the family mirrors in such comparisons as: ‘they were so attached to each other, just like the family’ (19,M). The family appears as the model for all good, close, human relations, being an important point of reference for the construction of the identity, including gender, religious and national identity. On the basis of our analysis we may also conclude that according to our respondents the family is and should be a security guarantee. In the majority of cases this security did not mean the instrumental value of money, but just the opposite: it was the source of solutions for a problematic situation, expressed as: ‘the family helps’, ‘the family will struggle together’.

From our point of view, the family is regarded as an autotelic, universal and superior value, and areas, including education, health, social care and
employment, refer to it, at least to some extent, as they are partly connected with the aim to provide the family with wellbeing.

**Education:**

Both in the examples of conflicts and cohesion the significant role of education in the sphere of values is undeniable. The value of education is connected – in various ways – with cultural, national and religious identification, though it performs different functions, depending on the group.

In the case of the Ukrainian school, education is valuable because it integrates the group, strengthens its identity, but above all is a lasting and publicly visible expression of its presence. The level of education in the Ukrainian school (consequently, also its value) is measured through external criteria, such as: participation in the knowledge contests, results of the A-levels and the pupils’ involvement in after-school activities, which is a visible source of pride among our Ukrainian respondents connected somehow with the school. The school’s high quality education was also underlined by the Poles. So, the uniqueness of the Ukrainian school is perceived by some Poles from Przemyśl as something valuable for the whole society.

Therefore, education, apart from being an autotelic value for both individual Ukrainians and the Ukrainian community is also an instrumental value for gaining status within the public life and for legitimising one’s own difference from the majority. The existence of this school is possible due to the democratic norms (i.e. freedom and equality), connected with the systemic transformation after 1989. Prior to that time such emphasis of one’s ‘national otherness’ would not be possible.

Meanwhile, in the Roma case education fulfils completely different functions. The instrumental aspect of education is connected with the possibility of increasing one’s own social position, as revealed for example by the interviewee quoted on p. 143. Characteristic is also the ‘generational change’: almost all Roma of the oldest generation are illiterate and they also admit ‘not forcing’ their children to attend school when they did not want to. In the case of grandchildren the importance of education is beginning to be appreciated, which may be interpreted as the gradual recognition not only of the rules and demands of contemporary society, but also of its values. We may also say, that the value of children’s well-being and secured future ‘wins’ among the Roma’s traditional attitudes toward education.

However, joining the educational system may be still perceived as negative by this minority, if it threatens their children with losing their tradition or with being stigmatized while preserving it. Therefore, the educational system is regarded by the Przemyśl Roma at the same time as a value and anti-value when it interferes with values important for the preservation of the group’s ethnic identity.
Within other minorities (i.e. Ukrainians, Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Orthodox) the value of education was often appreciated due to its informational function. Public dissemination and promotion of information on minority groups can make them less ‘strange’ and more visible, giving them a chance to leave ‘the grey area’. As one of the minority priests said, education ‘(…) is a belief, that when someone gets to know something, it is much better than when we are self-contained’ (25, M).

Health
The value of health usually appears as an instrumental value, in most cases within the context of public medical care. A few respondents reported about their health problems, how they were and in what conditions the medical treatment was carried out. During the fieldwork two of our respondents were in hospitals, and even though in one of the hospitals there were strikes, nevertheless they both assessed the doctors’ work positively, as having improved their health. Another respondent, suffering from backbone spinal cord disease, complained about the lack of competence of the local medical staff, due to which her health worsened. Only the representative of the Roma underlined, while talking about their health problems, that they were well treated in the hospital. They were not talking about a factual health improvement, but rather positively assessing the way they were treated. So, it is clearly visible how important it is for this group to be treated equally with others. Something that for others, namely non-Roma, was assumed part of standard behaviour of medical staff, for the Roma it was of great significance and not taken for granted.

Negatively assessed are also various abuses (or what is regarded as such) of the medical care system. On the one hand, each person has the right to expect help in case of emergency regardless of one’s financial situation. On the other hand, persons regularly paying their insurance consider it unjust if finally everyone, even those who are not insured, has full and free access to medical care. Therefore, we may speak about a conflict of values here between equality and justice.

Also ‘the national dimension’ was activated when talking about the Ukrainians (or other foreigners) with no right to medical care (see p. 118). For instance, this is an issue of Poles’ ‘securing’ their own rights and sources by limiting (legally) foreigners’ access to medical care. Nevertheless, according to our Ukrainian respondents this issue was treated with the understanding and recognition of legal procedures binding in Poland and such situations became an opportunity of showing solidarity within one’s own national group (see pp. 128-129).

In our case study, the value of health appeared also in the context of religious identification. Representatives of various denominations underlined the significance of prayer for healing, but also that the person’s health (both
of body and soul) is connected with God’s grace. The Adventists emphasized the significance of physical health for spiritual development, recalling the Bible’s words: ‘The body is the temple of the spirit’ (1 Cor. 6,19).

Social care
Concerning social care, receivers view it usually instrumentally, as a form of immediate help and in most cases insufficient. Often, both the receivers and the givers negatively assess all the abuses connected with the provision of social care and the issue of justice emerged.

The values revealed within the field of social care are often ‘civil values’, connected mainly with human rights, having definitely a positive impact on cohesion between groups. They put emphasis on equality, solidarity, enabling all members of the community to participate fully in civic life, etc. In Przemyśl such values may be observed behind certain activities directed towards groups threatened by marginalization (i.e. the Roma, the disabled) and aimed to improve their integration within the society and to increase their independence. In fact, as the analysis of the interviews indicates, having social beneficiaries achieve independence and self-sufficiency is regarded as the main aim of any successful form of social assistance.

The other groups of values within the ‘social care area’ are those deriving from the professional ethics connected with being a doctor or a social worker. They usually mean that the given service should be provided to any person in need, with no regard of one’s national/religious affiliation. In our case study such values can be observed in the provision of indispensable medical care to foreigners who are not entitled to it under Polish law, or in the realization of governmental programmes for the Roma by local social workers, regardless of their personal critical opinion towards this minority group. Also offering help to people whom one does not trust (i.e. those overusing social assistance programmes) falls into this category.

For many respondents involved in welfare provision, especially those connected with NGOs and religious groups, help was a universal value. The most frequent answer to the question of why someone offers to help was: it is obvious, you simply have to help each other. Sometimes, also additional explanations, deriving from religious or national affiliation, were given. Above all, as the collected material reveals, it is the relationship (especially close and long-lasting) with the person whom one helps that is the main justification, gratification and desired aim of being involved in any aid activity. From this perspective, helping serves to build closeness and friendship with the receiver, whom the helper does not know in the beginning. The relationship itself is regarded as a value and ‘this partnership’ becomes an important relationship, although at first it is usually circumstantial.
Social care plays an important role in ‘collective relationships’. Especially for the minorities it is a way of showing and strengthening internal bonds and solidarity and consequently, establishing their identity. This is very visible in case of the Greek Catholics and the Ukrainians (see pp. 119, 124-125). However, the issue of integration within the society is also at stake. As the activities of religious minorities indicate (see pp. 120-121, 136-137) providing help to the members of local society is not only a ‘religious vocation’, but also a way of signifying one’s presence and establishing his/her position in public life. Therefore, concerning social care, the desired aims of being recognized, accepted and included within the social system should be regarded as values. The member of a given society is not only entitled to receive from the community, but also has the right to give. Active participation (also in the field of social care) is therefore an instrumental value that helps individuals and groups establish contacts with the larger community.

To conclude, we may say that help is a value referring mainly to solidarity. The 1999 European research on values shows that generally in all countries the respondents have a great concern about the living conditions of the elderly (60.9%), the disabled (56.4%), the unemployed (43.1%), and to much lesser extent towards the immigrants (17.7%). Significantly, only in respect to the living conditions of one’s immediate family did respondents declare ‘absolutely yes’ when asked if they were prepared to do something for improving the situation (67.0% for Europe), with much more modest declarations in the case of a neighbourhood (9.7%) or immigrants (3.8%) (Baloban 2005, pp. 326-327). Our case study refers not to the average, but to those who are really engaged in helping others, due to their profession or because helping is on the top of their hierarchy of values that are not only claimed and felt, but also practised.

**Employment**

Continuous employment is an undeniable value, but often unreachable for Przemyśl citizens. What is positively assessed is a permanent, well paid job, a lack of such work in Przemyśl and poor working conditions are seen negatively. It seems that for the majority of respondents employment is an instrumental value that serves one’s self-preservation and improvement of material status. For a few workers from both the public and private welfare system, as well as for the clergymen of various denominations, work provided them with selfactualization, realization of religious values and the meaning of life. A permanent job is connected with more general values, above all with security and equality. It is a universal value, positively assessed by the majority of respondents.

However, sometimes those working feel deceived by the social system, as revealed by the interviewee quoted on p. 133. In this case, the value of work
is being attached to the value of social justice and equal distribution of goods according to one’s contribution, according to one’s own abilities. This is the core of a tension between ‘the working’ and ‘the social help dependents’. For the former, working is – among others – a way of becoming a rightful member of the society; for the latter, personal security and convenience, or effective use of opportunities are more important.

Relation of revealed values to religion, minorities and gender

Values connected with religious affiliation
As almost all denominations currently present in Przemyśl are Christian, the main declared values are similar: goodness as a superior value, mercy, love towards others, selfless help, etc. Equal emphasis (at least theoretically) is also placed on the dignity of charity beneficiaries: the help offered to them should not make them feel inferior. Also, the importance of the value of activity, independence and personal responsibility is similar, as the representatives of all denominations indicate these are the main goals of any form help, although the majority Church seems to be especially focused on these aspects. Moreover, all clergymen responsible for aid activities within various churches underlined that charity is simply inseparable from Christianity and their church’s essence.

However, different accents are put on the ‘evangelising’ aspect of charity. Officially, members of all denominations declare that help should be offered with no regard of religious affiliation. Nevertheless, as it was mentioned, welfare-related activities by the Church sometimes have clearly visible religious elements. At the same time, Pentecostal activity is more ‘hidden’ and the help is more of a ‘value in itself’.

The Greek Catholic and the Orthodox focus on their own members. The value of internal solidarity seems to be especially significant within these communities, probably due partly to historic experiences, forcing them to form tightly-knit groups, carefully preserving their own identity and – to some extent – isolating themselves from the outside world. Therefore, values, such as interdenominational integration and reconciliation, which are behind the creation of the Ecumenical Social Help Home, are in reality lost in the face of the value of internal solidarity and supporting members of one’s own church (see p. 128).

Meanwhile, for religious groups of Western origin, though present in Przemyśl for a few decades, there is still a need of establishing their position within the society. Here a potential conflict arises – maybe not of values, but of interests and different visions of the society. For the majority it seems ‘natural’ that the Roman Catholic Church is, next to the local authorities, the main carer and benefactor, which underlines its significant position within the society. Meanwhile, for religious minorities active participation in public
life is also an important value, but its ‘full implementation’ could threaten the established system and common vision of the local Polish majority as religiously homogenous, and, thus, weaken its identity.

Overall it cannot be said that the ‘religious values’ behind the welfare activities undertaken by religious groups in Przemyśl are in conflict. It is the religious composition of the society that may provoke the tensions, rather than the religion per se.

**Values connected with national/ethnic affiliation**

The values of different national groups are mostly similar to each other and concern patriotism, the common good of one’s own group, solidarity between fellow members, internal cooperation and solidarity, preserving one’s identity, etc. However, the implementation of those values causes conflicts between the groups, not conflicts of values, but of contradictory interests. The conflict derives from the fact that ‘nationally-related’ values, at least in Przemyśl, are connected with drawing more or less clear distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them’, with protecting one’s own group from ‘the others’, and with putting the interest of ‘us’ before that of ‘others’.

While in many cases the majority treats some features of life as obvious, for members of minorities this is never the case and some values are considered just as important because they relate to the minority status, for instance national minority. One Ukrainian interviewee, while talking about the Ukrainian schools, expressed this openly: ‘Well, we simply didn’t take into consideration any other argument for sending them to the Polish school. What for, if we had ours, simply’ (31,F). It seems very important to have ‘our own’ school as opposed to ‘theirs’ with ‘their’ history, ‘their language’, ‘their geography’, ‘their culture and religion’. There is no visible animosity in the context of the sentence towards ‘them’ and ‘theirs’, but a rather long-term longing for ‘ours’ and an attachment to ‘our own’.

Concerning the Polish-Ukrainian relationship, though it is not strictly a welfare issue, the question may arise on why the tensions are still so strong, despite the passage of time, but also maybe – paradoxically – because of the course of time. In a democratic and transforming Poland minorities, not only ethnic but also religious and cultural, have their rights better protected. It allows more activities and more ‘visibility’ of minorities that are not longer ‘virtual’. For this reason, ‘revived sentiments’ from the past and competition related, not only to such fields as welfare, but also to status, material goods, power and social positions could become a reality. Until now some Poles and Ukrainians who witnessed the tragic events are still alive, or they know about them from a memory that has been transmitted from one generation to the next. Generally, however, the values of the Ukrainian minority do not seem much different from those of the local majority. Probably greater emphasis is put on the identity (religious-national) and internal bonds
between the community members, which is not surprising concerning their minority status.

As the analysed material reveals, for Roma the family is almost ‘a national value’. They care about keeping close contacts with their relatives living in other towns and abroad. The family is for them, above all, the pillar of their national identification, enabling them to preserve their tradition. However, there are still other values, or maybe attitudes, that make it difficult for them to fully integrate in the society. The most frequently mentioned, low evaluation of education, is only one. The other crucial factor is low evaluation of activity for the public good and focus on private/family interest, as well as low evaluation of work, regarded not as a way to self-realization or confirmation of one’s status within the society, but as a burden. The next issue is the Roma’s short-term perspective and focus on immediate security (mainly material), with little regard to securing a future. Paradoxically, the Przemyśl Roma seem to be ‘the slaves of their minority status’: they are aware that with their social abilities they have little chances in the contemporary world, but they are ‘paralysed’ by this consciousness since because they remain sure of receiving help whenever they need to, they do little to change it.

Values connected with gender

Gender is connected mainly with values referring to the family; more exactly, with the traditional roles of the mother and the father in a ‘patriarchal family’. In this model, the main role of the mother is looking after the offspring, while the father is to be the main breadwinner. This model is not widely observed in Przemysl (due to financial problems, the mothers have to be working whenever possible), but is ‘glorified’, especially by the Church, but also among some minority denominations. It is not surprising, then, that women prevail both among the receivers and the providers of the welfare system.

Characteristically, when social service is to be targeted to the persons of only one sex, these are mainly women. The examples of this are: the Home for Single Mothers, the night shelter for women, the ‘Ukrainian Women Association’ (with the exception of the St. Albert night shelter for men). Also, it is mainly single women who use the Ukrainians’ help while living illegally in Przemysl. Seemingly, it is somehow easier for women to turn for social help, exercising the value of solidarity, and the society seems to feel ‘more obliged’ to respect this value when a potential recipient is ‘weaker’ and ‘helpless’, as women are often perceived.

Concerning the Roma and the value of education, one of the respondents expressed her conviction that in the case of girls’ education is less important, as they do not need as much knowledge as boys. Generally, in this minority girls leave the school earlier, being obliged to start a family life and
becoming wives as soon as they are physically mature. This may result, among others, in their worse status and lesser chances in the labour market.

**In Lieu of a Conclusion**

In the third volume of his influential trilogy, Manuel Castells was wondering on the EU and on the possible foundations for integrity, as he called it, ‘European Identity’. He rejected this idea step by step for many different reasons: religious, ethnic and national, concluding that there is nothing like ‘the European identity’ and that it could not be. Then, at the end of the book he perversely presented his belief in the ‘identity as a project’, in his opinion containing the elements presently appearing in ‘discourse and practice of social actors opposing globalization and disfranchisement without regressing to communalism’ (Castells 1998, p. 333) In his answer the long list opens with a defence of the welfare state, social solidarity, stable employment, worker’s rights; he adds the concern about human rights and the Fourth World, reaffirmation of democracy and civil activity at local and regional levels, the vitality of territorially rooted cultures. All these values in his opinion are supported by European citizens and could be the foundation of a ‘projected identity’. Our study in Przemyśl proves that the first values in Castell’s list are widely shared by our respondents, while others, such as concern about human rights or the Fourth World, are not as common.

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Chapter 4 Croatia

4:1 OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL SITUATION

Marija Geiger, Siniša Zrinščak

Introduction

Croatia is a small (according the Census 2001 it has 4,437,460 inhabitants) and recently independent country (1992), following the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. The process of gaining independence was closely connected to the Homeland War, which ended in 1995. After a turbulent social and political period during the 1990s, the situation in Croatia has been slowly but considerably stabilized. The main political goal of the Republic of Croatia is to become a full member of the EU. The Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU was signed in 2001, and after Croatia fulfilled all conditions, the negotiation process started in October 2005.¹

The interaction between religion, minorities and gender is a new topic in Croatian scientific research and the results of the WaVE project will provide new knowledge on social welfare, majority – minority relations and gender. This statement is based on the analysis of recent scientific literature and research in Croatia, briefly presented below.²

¹ Diplomatic relations between the EU and Croatia began after the EU recognized Croatia’s independence on 15 January, 1992. Contractual relations between the EU and Croatia were conditional on Croatia’s observance of a ‘code of good democratic conduct’. On 18 July, 2000 the European Commission adopted a proposal to the Council on opening of negotiations for a Stabilization and Association Agreement with Croatia. The proposal was a major step forward towards bilateral relations, following the election of a new political leadership advocating political and economic reform in Croatia. The EU opened negotiations on the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Croatia on 24 November 2000 at the Summit in Zagreb. On 29 October 2001 the EC and Croatia signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement. In early 2003 the government officially submitted a document applying for EU membership. (www.delhrv.cec.eu.int/en/eu_and_country/bilateral_relations.htm).

² Following the completion of this report and awaiting its publication Croatia has completed its negotiations with the EU. The EU Accession Treaty was signed in December 2011 and the citizens of Croatia confirmed the decision to join the EU on the referendum in January 2012. The long process of negotiation as well as legislative harmonization has had a significant
There are two recent research studies, which have (only partially) focused on the social, welfare-related role of religious agents in the country. The first one is the European Value Survey (EVS) conducted in Croatia in 1999; it produced a series of data about different aspects of the social role of religion and was published later in a book (Baloban, 2005). The second study is more important as, by initiating this research, the Catholic Church wanted to present itself as an institution, which has paid much attention to different welfare issues. The Croatian Caritas and the Centre for the Promotion of Social Teachings of the Church conducted a research on poverty in Croatia. The results, which highlighted the high poverty level and various aspects in the life of the impoverished, were presented and discussed at the international conference in October 2004 and were partly published in the Croatian journal *Revija za socijalnu politiku* (*Journal of Social Policy*), no 3-4/2006.

There is no research on the relations between the majority Church and the minority groups with the exception of one recent report on attitudes of the Catholic Church toward the reproductive and sexual rights (Škrabalo, Jurić, 2005). The report was produced as a part of the effort of the Open Society Institute in Croatia to measure the openness of the society.

In addition, there are only a few researcher efforts that consider the minorities at the national level, apart from the studies on the Roma population (Štambuk, 2000, Šućur, 2000, Štambuk, 2005). An analysis of the EVS data shows that there is a social distance towards various social groups, such as people of different races, foreign workers, homosexuals etc. (Zrinščak, 2006). Research on youth also indicates a high social distance towards various ethnic groups of the former Yugoslavia, particularly toward the Serbs and the Albanians (Baranović, 2002). Banovac and Boneta researched social distance towards various ethnic groups and found a low level of acceptance of the Serbs, the Albanians and the Roma (Banovac & Boneta, 2006). Although the issue of the relations between the Croats and the Serbs was the main issue during the process of dissolution of Yugoslavia, there are only few political documents and analyses, devoted to the problem of the return of the Serbian minority to Croatia after the Homeland War and their access to public services, but no reliable research.³ There are some publications and projects by the Franciscan Institute for Culture of Peace and

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³ On 25th June 1991 the Croatian Parliament proclaimed the Republic of Croatia as an independent and sovereign state. The Declaration of Croatian independence was followed by the attacks of the Yugoslav Army, and a rebellion of the ethnic Serbs in some parts of Croatia. The Homeland War began in late 1991 and was concluded with a military action (Storm) in August 1995 as a result of which Croatia regained much of its occupied territories, when many Serbs left the country.
the Croatian Caritas on the reconciliation and forgiveness after the war (Vuleta, Batarelo, 2001, Vuleta, Anić, Milanović Litre, 2004).

Gender equality is a relatively new topic of research in Croatia. In recent years some studies, mainly conducted by various women’s associations and other non-profit organizations (Transition to Democracy, B.a.b.e., Women’s Studies, CESI, Society for Psychological Help...) have focused mainly on domestic violence and violence towards women (Ajduković, Pavleković, 2004). There is also other research on the position of women (Leinert-Novosel, 1999) and single parent families (Raboteg-Šarić, Pećnik, Josipović, 2003). This research did not focus on gender equality in relation to religion. There is one important exception: the study on different aspects of position of women in the Catholic Church in the 20th century was conducted by Rebeka Jadranka Anić (2003). Very recently, the Franciscan Institute for Culture of Peace conducted a complex study on gender roles in society and Church, but the results have not yet been analysed and published.

Beside the already mentioned EVS, which focused on values and religion (and partly on their relation to some welfare issues and attitudes toward minorities), there is just one more research study, which examined value orientations in relation to religion (Marinović Jerolimov, 2005).

Characteristics of the Croatian welfare system

Historic background

The beginnings of social policy can be traced back to the end of the 19th century when Croatia was a part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. However, after World War I Croatia became a part of the new Yugoslav state in which the implementation of social insurance laws was very slow. After the World War II Yugoslavia became a communist state and Croatia was one of its six republics. The main characteristic of the communist welfare state was the statutory social insurance, but only for those employed by the expanded state sector (Zrinščak, 2003). Agricultural workers and those employed in the private sector were excluded, which in return further contributed to the attractiveness of the state sector. The health and education sectors became public with free access for all. The communist state also promoted a new position of women in the society, mainly related to the possibility (and even necessity) of their employment. However, the communist welfare state had many shortcomings: services were free but of low quality, members of state and party apparatus had privileges, workers were in general poorly paid, etc.
The peculiar features of the welfare systems of the countries undergoing the post-communist transformation are usually labelled very simply and very generally as the post-communist welfare states or welfare states in transition (Deacon, 2000). This means that the system combines elements of the communist system with different and in many cases contradictory changes in the transition period. Although the term ‘post-communist welfare state’ is very ambiguous, it is impossible to describe the Croatian welfare system in terms of the classic Esping-Andersen typology of welfare states. The factors which have shaped the Croatian post-communist welfare state are: the communist legacy, transitional social consequences, problems related to the war, new social risks, global social changes, and the role of neoliberal thinking, particularly channelled through the role of international financial institutions in designing and implementing welfare reforms in post-communism.

The post-communist transformation has witnessed on the one hand remarkable continuity in the statutory welfare provisions, but also on the other hand showed no consistency in regulating or planning the privatization process which was carried out in almost all the welfare fields. Besides these factors, the transitional crisis together with the problems related to the war in Croatia contributed to the fall of the GDP, a considerable rise of unemployment and other related welfare issues. The war devastated much of the Croatian territory and a considerable part of the population became displaced. The situation has been slowly but considerably improving after the war ended in 1995 and Croatia regained its occupied territories.

The relationships between the public, private, non-profit sectors and family are not easy to estimate because of the rapid changes which are ongoing in many fields as well as lack of data. In the field of health, education and social welfare the state is still the main provider of services. At the same time, some costs are being shifted to the users. The unregulated public-private mix in the healthcare sector can be noticed because access to higher quality healthcare is usually connected to informal payments. The welfare services are almost completely free for the users, but the shortage of services (for example, in the field of care for the elderly) causes inequality between those who can pay for private service and those who cannot. The family is, in this sense, still the most important source of services. Care for children, elderly or handicapped persons, relies on the informal help from nuclear or extended family members. Emerging private market forces can be noticed also in the field of the pension system. In 2002 the public pension system was changed and insured persons are obliged to pay part of their contribution to private pension funds. The welfare sector is mainly a female sector. In centres for social work, 87% of professionals are women and in welfare institutions 84% are female (Jurčević, 2005). There is no data on the
informal welfare work, but there is no doubt that it is performed mainly by the women. The role of the non-profit sector is also a relatively new phenomenon, although the communist system partially tolerated the professional, cultural or sport non-profit organizations. The new political system, formally allowed the rise of this new sector but at the same time, particularly in the 1990s, created some serious obstacles to the development of the civil society. The comparative international CIVICUS research on civil society in Croatia showed that its role in the welfare sector is still very limited (Bežovan, Zrinščak, Vugec, 2005).

The role of the Catholic Church in welfare

The welfare system in Croatia was mainly built in the communist period. The education of social workers in Croatia started in 1952 (the first post-secondary education of social workers in the whole communist world) and the first so-called centres for social work (which had to deal with all welfare problems in the local communities) were established in the late 1950s. As a result, the welfare sector was basically secular, detached from the Church. During the communist era the Catholic Church organized some welfare activities (Caritas in Zagreb started to operate in the mid 1960s), which were illegal but at the same time tolerated by the system. The new post-communist state opened the possibilities for the involvement of all Churches, including the majority one. From the beginning of 1900s Caritas established its various activities and regulated its relations with the State. However, because of the communist legacy and secular character of the welfare sector, the position of the Church in the national welfare system is far from being important or comprehensive as in many European corporative welfare states. Nevertheless, the Church is trying to become a more important partner in the social debates. Related to that, from time to time, the Croatian Bishops Conference points to the deficiencies of the Croatian welfare system and tries to cooperate with other social actors in order to change the situation.

Future challenges and current debates

In the near future, the welfare system will be challenged by several problems. The negative natural increase of the population together with the low fertility rate is already very high on the public agenda and will remain so (Puljiz, 2005:106-107). According to the Eurostat data, life expectancy for men is 72 years of age, and for women 79. This is slightly below the EU average. In the EU-25 it is 74.9 for men and 81.3 for women, while in the

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http://www.caritas.hr

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EU-15 it is 75.9 for men and 81.8 for women (2003). Croatia is also an ageing society with 16.5% of population over 65 in 2001, and in that respect does not differ from other EU countries. Several governments have been concerned with initiating demographic measures that would stimulate the rise of fertility but without or with very limited success. Although only sporadically discussed, reconciling work and family life will be of greater importance in the near future. This is of a particular interest to women as they work partly in the illegal or unregulated sector (poorly paid or not paid for overtime work, only in temporary employment, etc.) (Kerovec, 2005:19-20, Puljiz, 2005:115, Milidrag Šmid, 2005:7). The issue of future migration trends has just started to be discussed as new migration patterns can be expected. In recent years the Chinese community has been growing which can also produce some tensions in the future. The public is mainly preoccupied with the living conditions of current pensioners but the living conditions of future pensioners (which is connected to the radical pension reform in 1999 and 2001) will be one of the main challenges in the future.

There are several issues currently debated. The first one is the permanent discussion about the unfavourable demographic trends (Wertheimer Baletić, 2005:12, Puljiz, 2005:100-101). Work on Sundays, mainly in shops and supermarkets (usually large shopping malls, constructed recently by foreign investors), is also debated. As mentioned, women work overtime with no pay, with no days off, on Sundays and holidays. The Trade Union, backed by the Catholic Church, wants to restrict work on Sundays, while employers are very much against it. Debates on poverty and income inequality are also high on the agenda, but there are only very general discussions about high poverty or inappropriate inequality (although income inequality is, for example, still lower in Croatia than in many Western European countries). According to data from Eurostat, those at risk of poverty following the social transfers in 2003 made up for 18% and the unemployment rate was 13.6% in 2005. Therefore, the poverty rate is slightly higher than in EU15 (17%), and EU25 (16%), but the unemployment rate is significantly higher than in both EU15 (7.9) and EU25 (8.7). From time to time the work of social workers is also discussed, as the media usually portrays them as unethical, as those who take away the children from their parents, have no compassion, etc.

The main issue concerning gender in relation to welfare is violence against women. This problem was placed on the agenda in the late 1990s and the beginning of 2000s, as a result of the long-term activities of women’s organizations, but more importantly as a result of newly stimulated

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5 http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/
6 http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/
7 The position and the responsibility of the social workers for the socially deprived persons and questions of safety at work are discussed in public, especially following the cases with tragic consequences. Those cases create a negative image of social workers as a profession.
democratization and openness to the EU in the beginning of 2000. Violence against women is debated in connection to domestic violence and sexual abuse of children. Some other issues (such as trafficking, or the economic position of women) have also been publically considered from time to time but with low intensity and duration.

It is very hard to say if there is an explicit source of conflict related to the welfare provision regarding religion, minorities or gender. There are tensions between Croats and Serbs in previously war-affected areas, but these tensions and conflicts are not restricted to welfare; they are connected with the possibilities of economic prosperity and harmonious life between majority and minority ethnic groups. Only one serious conflict occurred recently when the government announced a plan in 2004 (requested also by the EU) to establish an asylum reception centre but failed to do so because of the strong protest by the local inhabitants.

Religious composition in Croatia

There were three religious traditions existing in the ex-Yugoslav territories – Catholicism, Serbian Orthodoxy and Islam. Because of the turbulent history, religious institutions in many cases compensated for the lack of state organization of separate nations and played significant ethnic, linguistic, cultural and political roles. Identifying ethnicity with religion, or equalising religious and ethnic belonging is a common assumption: Croats are perceived as Catholics, Serbs as Orthodox and Bosniacs as Muslims. This division still exists, and although the religious factor cannot be denied, contributed to the recent war against Croatia or Bosnia and Herzegovina being incorrectly reinterpreted as a religious war.

Croatia is a country with a relatively high religiosity in comparison to many other European countries and with one dominant Church – the Catholic Church. According to the 2001 Census there were 87.83% Catholics, 4.42% Orthodox, 1.28% Muslims, 0.14% Greek Catholics, 0.14% Jehovah Witnesses, while all other religious communities amounted to 0.53% (among them Jews, Seventh Day Adventists, Lutherans, Baptists, etc.). There were 5.21% of respondents who declared themselves as non-believers, agnostics, or those who did not declare a religious affiliation. In comparison to 1991, changes in the religious composition of the country can be noticed. Because of the war and particularly after Croatia regained its previously occupied territories, many Serbs (predominantly Orthodox) left the country and many Croats (predominantly Catholics) came to Croatia.

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from other former republics of ex-Yugoslavia (mainly from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia). Therefore, there is an increase in the number of Catholics (from 76.64% to 87.83%) and a decrease in the number of Orthodox (from 11.12% to 4.42%). A slight increase also occurred in the number of Muslims, Baptists, Jehovah Witnesses, and Calvinists and those from ‘other religions’. Among small religious communities, Jehovah’s Witnesses grew the most, from 0.10% to 0.14%.

Croatia is a country with high religiosity measured by other indicators as well (regular church attendance, different beliefs, importance of God in everyday life or prayer outside religious services). At the same time, the level of religiosity is not consistent in all dimensions. The religious influence is partly noticed in some moral attitudes (for example, in attitudes toward abortion) and hardly in the field of public morality (such as attitudes toward corruption, illegal behaviour, etc.) (Črpić, Zrinščak, 2005, 79-80). The dominance of Catholicism does not exclude openness to eclecticism, especially to belief in reincarnation or astrology.

Characteristics of the Catholic Church

Historic role

In Croatian history, the Church was symbolically interpreted as a keeper of the souls and the national identity. The unfavourable period for religion and religious institutions started with the establishment of communist government. Although the socialist Constitution guaranteed all forms of religious rights and religious freedom religion was formally treated as a ‘private matter’, on the ideological level the government reinforced the ideological fight against religion. Religion and religious institutions were politically unacceptable and treated as a negative social factor. Therefore, at the institutional level, religion and religious institutions were invisible (Marinović Jerolimov, 2000:22), but despite the societal marginalization, traditional religiosity and connections with religion and Church were not exterminated.

The breakdown of communism brought the revitalization of the role of religion in the society. During the 1990s, religion, particularly the Catholic Church, gained legitimacy for being active in the society. The Catholic Church embraced political transformation and the political elite used it as a supporting partner. It was a period of high levels of manifest religiosity and intensive identification between the nationality and the religiosity. The Church also had an important humanitarian role during the Homeland War.
New legal framework

The new Constitution, approved by the Parliament in 1990 promotes new values. According to the Constitution, Croatia is a secular country, built on the idea of the separation between the Church and the State. The Constitution guarantees the freedom of awareness and religious beliefs as well as their public expression. It also states that all religious communities were equal in law, that they had the freedom to perform their ceremonies, the right to have and freely run schools, institutions, charitable associations and in all these activities to obtain the protection and assistance of the State. However, the principles of separation and equality are due to the situation on the ground and dominance of one Church, reinterpreted and realized as a principle of cooperation between Church and State, mainly the Catholic Church and State (Zrinščak, 2004). This was particularly visible in the signing of four agreements between the Holy See and Croatia: on legal questions (1996), on cooperation in the field of education and culture (1996), on spiritual care in military and police forces (1996), and on economic issues (1998). Through these agreements the Catholic Church regulated different aspects of its social roles and functions. There were objections to the agreements with the Holy See as violating the idea of separation of Church and State and putting other religious communities in unfavourable position. In many cases smaller religious communities often feel as being in an unfavourable position, though their position is considerably connected to their low numbers and low visibility. However, this is an ongoing debate also present in other European countries, touching upon the issues of legal and actual equality among different traditional and non-traditional religious communities.

It should also be stressed that not everyone welcomes the new position of the Catholic Church. There is a division as some parts of the society strongly reject the Church’s engagement in social issues, while others consider that the Church must be more engaged in social life. This situation seems to be very confusing and the Church tries to define its position and future development. Theologians and clergy emphasize the role of lay persons, particular in the welfare domain as a way in which the Church should demonstrate its mission in contemporary societies.

The cultural and symbolic dimension of religious institutions

One of the most prominent roles of the Church and the functions of the clergy is to perform religious services related to the crucial moments of human existence – childbirth, marriage and death. There is no data on the rate of baptisms and burials performed by the Catholic Church. Certainly, there are well-founded estimates that religious services for birth and death
are widespread. According to the EVS data from 1999, the majority of population believe that birth (88.4%) and death (93.7%) should be marked with religious services (Ćrpić, Zrinščak, 2005:74).

The organizational structure and financial situation of the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church in Croatia is organized according to the territorial model and is divided into three metropolitan areas and 15 (arch) bishoprics. Bishoprics are further divided in parishes. The Holy See approved the separate Croatian Bishop Conference in 1993, as in the former Yugoslavia there was only the Bishop Conference of Yugoslavia.

It is not possible to assess the current financial situation of the Church. There is no transparent data on personnel employed. The Church is financed through its own income and partly through the financial assistance of the State. According to an agreement on economic issues, the Church can receive non-taxable money from believers and the State is responsible for the return of property taken from the Church after the World War II. A joint Commission was established in order to define which property can be claimed and for which the Church should receive compensation. Furthermore, the Church receives a certain amount of money each year from the state budget for the salaries of priests and other employees, the maintenance of Church buildings and the contribution of the Church to welfare activities. Based on an agreed calculation the Church should have received about 200,000,000 kunas per year (approximately 27,200,000 euros), but in the period from 2000 to 2003 it only received approximately 160,000,000 kunas per year (about 21,700,000 euros) (Pandža, 2005). The Church still has complaints about its unfavourable financial situation due to the numerous social activities it performs.

Welfare – a new position of the Church

During the 1990s the main focus of the Church was the re-establishment of its social position, diminished in the communist time, and the regulation of its relation to the State. The war also affected many of its activities in the 1990s. However, after the second half of the 1990s the Church has also tried to show that the welfare situation of the population and the general social situation in the country is one of its main concerns. In 1996 the newly appointed Zagreb archbishop cardinal Bozanić paid much attention to the welfare issues (Zrinščak, 2001). In numerous public speeches and official documents, both issued by himself or the Croatian Bishop Conference, the Church has addressed the following issues: ‘structural sin’ relating to the
privatization of the economy, as a result of which many workers lost their jobs, immoral behaviour in the business sector, high unemployment rates, poverty and social inequality, demographic problems, the hard life of pensioners, reform of the family policy, which reduced benefits to mothers and children, corruption, etc. The Church also established the Centre for the Promotion of Social Teachings of the Church, which has organized several important activities, including public lectures on the Church’s social and moral teachings and some public campaigns; it has even initiated the research on poverty and sociological research on religiosity and other social issues. The Catholic Church has established itself as an equal and active partner in the welfare domain despite some restrictions. The argument that the Catholic Church has a significant role in the society is justified by the measure of trust in the institutions. According to the 1999 EVS, 44.0% of respondents assigned the highest level of trust to the Catholic Church. Respondents believe that the Church can give answers to the moral needs of individuals (69.5%) and to family problems (68.0%), to questions on the meaning of life (74.6%), to current social problems (39.9%) and to the restoration of law and order (37.0%) (Zrinščak, 2001:191-192).

Because of the lack of data, it is hard to outline the whole range of the Catholic Church’s welfare activities. One of the oldest and the largest Catholic welfare organizations is the Croatian Caritas. Caritas is a non-profit organization, an institution attached to the Croatian Bishop Conference and further divided into 15 bishopric Caritas organizations and about 1,500 Caritas organizations in parishes. The Croatian Caritas has numerous activities devoted to projects for the reduction of poverty, the promotion of voluntary work, and advocacy at the national and local level, as well as for the promotion of small enterprises, establishing family counselling centres, and various humanitarian activities, such as monetary or in-kind help, soup-kitchens, etc. In recent years the Croatian Caritas has been striving to transform itself into a modern organization that performs activities at the level of civil society and that tries to build partnerships with other civil society organizations. This effort is so far, not reflected at the level of parishes, which still mainly act as traditional organizations that only offer humanitarian help to people in need. The Catholic Church has also wanted to establish different welfare institutions, but as already stated, because of the communist legacy the Croatian welfare sector mainly belongs to the state. Among 454 kindergartens in Croatia there are only 45 that belong to religious communities and 42 to the Catholic Church (Bouillet, Bračić-Ružić, Zrinščak, 2002). Among 407 secondary schools there are only 13 or 3.2% that belong to religious communities. According to two different Church sources 9 or 10 schools belong to the Catholic Church. Up to 4.6% of homes for the elderly belong to different Churches. During the communist
period the Catholic Theological Faculty existed outside the University of Zagreb and in 1991 it became once again a part of the University. The same situation was true for the theological faculties in other Croatian regions. Activities for establishing a new Catholic University in Zagreb are in their final phase.

The Catholic Church and minorities

The position of the Church towards minority religions was largely affected by the war in which the conflict between Serbs and Croats (but also other non-Serbs which were, as the Croats, chased away from the territories occupied by rebel Serbs) partly had religious connotations. The Church, even during the war, proclaimed the principles of love, dignity of others and non-discrimination, but it also supported the duty of the state to defend itself (Šanjek, 2002:118). In many cases this was reinterpreted as a support to military activities of the Croatian Army against rebelled Serbs. In recent years the Church has more actively called for reconciliation and harmonious life; it has promoted its pro-European stand, although it has usually underlined that national identity should be maintained and national interests defended. Some bishops and priests (possibly in their majority) are more prone to emphasising national interests and to stressing values that are proclaimed more by the right-wing political parties. In that way they are also closer to politicians and parts of society that are very suspicious to the Europeanization process.

The Catholic Church promotes ecumenical dialogue between different religious communities and has numerous connections to other religious communities, particularly the Islamic religious community, which is a traditional religion in Croatia (the Croatian Parliament recognized Islam as equal religious community in 1916). Good relations can also be observed with traditional Protestant communities, while relations with the Serbian Orthodox Church are heading in a good direction after the war. The Zagreb archbishop cardinal Bozanić and the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church patriarch Pavle had met in Belgrade, Serbia in 2004, even though the mutual mistrust is still visible. Each year a prayer for the unity of Christianity is organized in Croatia and in 2006 participants included representatives of the Catholic Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Evangelic Church, the Reformed Christian Church, the Union of the Baptist Churches, and the Evangelical Pentecostal Church. Possibly some slight tensions can be observed towards some new religious groups, but due to their small size this does not attract much attention.
Welfare, religion and gender

The position of women in society

The communist system promoted the employment of women but because of low quality and shortage of services or economic impossibility to acquire some services, women were burdened with double work in a much higher proportion than women in the West (Pascal, Manning, 2000, Puljiz, Zrinščak, 2002). The situation became even worse in the post communist era and women can be generally defined as one of the ‘losers’ of the transition (Leinert-Novosel, 1999:7, Dubljević, 2003:31). There are two main reasons for this. The first reason is connected with the economic decline and worsening of social situation in connection to transition and war. According to the first Quality of Life Survey conducted in Croatia in 2006, 35% of women are involved in caring for and educating children every day in comparison to 22.6% of men. Even 80.7% of women perform housework tasks every day in comparison to 32.8% of men.\(^{10}\) The economic position of women is of particular interest. Despite some positive trends (education, participation in the social domain…), the position of women in the labour market is worse than that of men. Although women represent 51.5% of population, their share in employment amounts to only 45%, and the possibility for women to be without any income is three times higher in relation to men. The Eurostat data shows that in 2004 the unemployment rate was 15.6% for women and 12% for men.\(^{11}\) Women, particularly older women, also have a larger share in poverty (Kerovec, 2005:19). One of the most important problems is working in the unofficial economy.\(^{12}\) Women are the predominate actors in the gray economy and this type of work reduces their pensions. The issue of the gender pay gap is not addressed as such. According to one estimate, men in Croatia are paid salaries that are 19.4% higher than women, but according to recent official findings the gap is 10.5% \(^{13}\) The second reason is related to the promotion of traditional women’s roles in society by right wing political parties (which were in power during the 1990s) and by the Catholic Church, which usually stresses

\(^{10}\) The first Quality of Life Survey in Croatia was initiated by UNDP Croatia and was conducted from March to May 2006 by the research agency Target. Data are not yet officially published but are circulated among circles of experts.

\(^{11}\) http://w3.unece.org/pxweb/Dialog/Saveshow.asp.

\(^{12}\) The shadow economy includes both unreported and underreported activity. The Institute of Public Finance in Zagreb researched the shadow economy in the period from 1990 to 2000. The shadow economy accounted for approximately 25% in the first period and for approximately 10% of GDP on average between 1996 and 2000. See: http://www.ijf.hr

the image of women as caring mothers. Some measures were introduced, in order to encourage women to take paid leave (up to three years) as to stimulate higher fertility rates, but those attempts cannot be evaluated as very successful. Single mothers are an especially disadvantaged group; they have to deal with many problems and can rely mostly on the help of relatives and friends, and not on the society, since there is an evident shortage of public services. In the context of debates about working on Sundays in shops and supermarkets, the Catholic Church directs the public attention to the issue of women’s work and the separation from children and family, which can lead to the destabilization of normal family life. The Church does not express such a high level of understanding for other problems such as violence against women or the sexual exploitation of women, though there are changes in that respect as well as the Church has started to support new shelters for victims of domestic violence.

Unfavourable positions of women in the labour market, difficulties in reconciling work and family life (including maintaining a household), as well as the influence of a traditional women roles are reflected in the public domain. The level of participation of women in public life is very low. According to the UNECE gender statistics there were 7.9% of women in the Parliament in 1995 and only 7.9% and 10.0% among government ministers. The situation is better today, at least in the Parliament where the participation of women rose to 21.7% in 2005. Generally, women are not adequately included in processes of government and important decision-making.

Since the late 1990s and the beginning of 2000 there were several official initiatives for promoting new policies of equality between women and men as well as improving different aspects of the position of women in the society. The government issued several important documents and passed laws, such as the National Policy for Promotion of Equality between Women and Men 2001 - 2005, the Law on Equality between Women and Men (2003), the establishment of the Ombudsman for Gender Equality and the Government Office for Gender Equality (Rodin, Vasiljević, 2003, Milidrag Šmid, 2005:6). However, the issue of the implementation of this important framework on the situation on the ground is still not considered in a satisfactory manner. It could be argued that the most positive steps have been noticed in the area of domestic violence which has become a public issue. The government also introduced some specific measures for addressing the higher unemployment rate among women (particularly older unemployed women) but there is no sign that these measures have brought any improvements so far.

14 http://w3.unece.org/pxweb/Dialog/Saveshow.asp
Gender questions in the Catholic Church

‘Women’s issues’ do not exist in the Catholic Church. The Church did not present any kind of response towards the political activities of women nor the other aspects of the social position of women (Anić, 2003). There are no women’s organizations that tend to research and promote female roles in the Church or promote a new culture of interaction between gender and cooperation with secular women’s organizations (Anić, 2003:25). Statements on the position of women in the Church are rare and formulated after 1995. Catholic magazines from time to time elaborate feminist topics, but promote explicitly negative statements about feminism. Topics of feminist theology are elaborated in a more positive manner, however the Church does not have an official statement considering feminist exegesis (Anić, 2003:43). Theological interpretations are usually based on traditional dualisms, which ascribe to women qualities such as intuition, dedication, self-denial, emotionality, kindness. Recent theological interpretations of women are based on the model of the Virgin Mary. At the same time the Church has always supported a traditional family, and consequently, traditional social roles of women and men. This traditional view is still very influential but the communist regime did, in some aspects, question the historic influence of the Church on the social formation of gender roles. That is, for example visible today, in the attitudes towards abortion. The free health insurance paid abortion based on a woman’s demand was introduced in 1978. Although Croatia is today a highly religious country and although the Church (as one of the most trusted social institutions) explicitly rejects abortion, the same law from 1978 (although with some changes) is still in effect. The majority of the population today, accepts the attitude that by having an abortion a new life is terminated. At the same time the majority justifies abortions in some cases (such as when a woman is not married) and is clearly against any changes in the current legislation (Škrabalo, Jurić, 2005:180). The Catholic Church raised its voice against abortion after 2000 (when left-centre parties came to power). Before the general elections in late 2003, bishops asked believers not to vote for parties and individuals that advocate abortion, euthanasia, and same-sex marriage (the first law on rights of same-sex consensual unions was passed in the Parliament in the year before the elections). In an address to the believers in October 2005, the Croatian

15 Croatia has undergone great changes since the 1990s and the life of sexual minorities (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender persons: LGBT persons) has been improving since 2000, but homophobia is still strong, especially in rural areas. Homosexuality is legal in Croatia. It was decriminalized as early as 1977. According to the Croatian Penal Code (Art. 192,193) the age of consent is 14 for all, irrespective of sexual orientation. Since July 2003 Croatia introduced modern laws addressing LGBT persons in East and Central Europe. Parliament changed a number of laws and added anti-discrimination clauses. Homosexuals cannot get married in Croatia but same-sex unions are recognized under the Law of Same-Sex
bishops asked for the annulment of the abortion act, for improvements in laws on marriage and family and generally for a greater understanding of the Church teachings on marriage and family life. It is interesting that in that case different religious communities coordinated their efforts and a common statement on the dignity of life, entitled ‘Human life is a Gift from God’, was issued. This statement was supported by the Catholic Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Muslim Community, the Evangelical Church, the Union of Baptist Churches and the Evangelical Pentecostal Church. The Church has also tried to influence the government in issues of different aspects of medically assisted fertilization.

An overview of the minority presence in Croatia

Because of the process of dissolution of Yugoslavia and the building of an independent Croatian state, the relationship with the minorities was one of the main issues during the transition in Croatia. The political and social situation of the minorities is much better today, although tensions and problems persist between Croats and Serbs, particularly in the war affected areas. According to the Croatian Constitution, a national minority is a group of Croatian citizens whose members traditionally live in Croatia. Members of a national minority share ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious specificities that are different from the rest of citizens and try to maintain their particularities. The Croatian Constitution lists several minorities with an autochthon status: Serbs, Czechs, Slovaks, Italians, Jews, Germans, Austrians, Ukrainians, Ruthenians, although others that have not been mentioned can also claim their rights. According to the number of acknowledged nationalities, Croatia is one of the most multicultural East-European countries, but their actual number is not so high. The 2001 Census listed 22 nationalities, which amount to 7.47% of population, plus many others in the category of ‘other nationalities’ that amount to 0.49% of population, all together adding up to 7.96% There are 4.54% Serbs, 0.47% Bosniacs, 0.44% Italians, 0.37% Hungarians, 0.34% Albanians, 0.30% Slovenians etc.

According to its geopolitical position and rather turbulent historical socio-political processes, Croatia was very open to migration processes (Čizmić, Živić, 2005:57). For centuries it has been a country with high emigration to other non-European and European countries. Immigration to Croatia and the

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Unions. Croatia has six laws addressing LGBT people that protect LGBT persons from overt discrimination. LGBT organizations are supported by human rights organizations and women’s’ groups. The majority of political parties recognize and support the struggle for sexual minority rights. In recent years homosexuals have become more visible in the media (http://www.iskorak.org).
patterns of immigration are mainly connected to political processes. In 1102 Croatia entered a political union with Hungary and in 1527 it became a part of the Austrian Empire. Parts of the Croatian coasts were always under Venetian rule and later under Italy. Italian, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian and some other minorities originate from these periods and are concentrated in various parts of Croatia. When the Ottomans started to penetrate into Europe many Slavic nations (mainly Serbs, Bosnian Muslims and Montenegrins) moved towards the borders of what was then the Austrian Empire. When the Ottoman power started to decline Austria occupied the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and it became together with Croatia a part of the same state. After the formation of the (first) Yugoslavia after the World War I and (second) Yugoslavia after the World War II, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Macedonia became parts of one state that created new migration patterns, now inside the one state. Some migrations were politically motivated, but most of them were economic in their nature since the Adriatic coast and the tourism industry started to flourish in the late 1950s and 1960s, Croatia became an attractive place to settle, particularly for Bosniacs, Serbs and Albanians (Albanians from Kosovo which was a part of Serbia). The Homeland War caused another migration as many Serbs left the country and many Croats from other parts of ex-Yugoslavia came into it (Lajić, 2002:38). Chinese immigration into the country is a very recent phenomenon (Gelo, 2006, Krasnec, 2006). It is a new kind of non-Slavic, external immigration that is not yet scientifically analysed. Despite the low number of Chinese immigrants, their sudden visibility together with unfavourable demographic trends has stimulated debates on future migration trends and the need for defining immigration policy.

Minority groups can be found in very different parts of Croatia. There are no consistent patterns of their concentration in different places as migration processes were influenced by very different historical factors and phases. Nevertheless, we can detect the most attractive regions for immigrants: Eastern part of Croatia (Vukovar-Srijem county, Pozega-Slavonija county and Osijek-Baranja county), Zagreb and its surroundings, and the Adriatic coast.

According to the 2002 Constitutional Law on National Minorities all minorities have equal rights that they can be used in all social fields. There are different legal mechanisms that could help them in obtaining specific needs. The law also guarantees adequate representation of minorities in local, regional, and national political bodies. The same applies to access to welfare services (Gjenero, 2005:54, Mesić, 2003:170). However, there is no research or data on how that guaranteed access is realized in everyday life. The first scientific conference that focused on access to social rights indicated that access can be connected to various obstacles – such as
poverty, low education levels or regional disparities (Puljiz, 2004, Šućur, 2004). Welfare services are not distributed equally in the geographic sense and therefore those living in rural and less developed areas or areas more affected by the war can have more problems in fulfilling their welfare needs. The access is also very much connected to the employment perspectives. Therefore, it could be said that, beside formal equality, real inequality in welfare areas can affect both Croats as well as the minorities. However, minorities that live in such economically depressed areas affected by the war, mostly Serbs, can have more difficulties because of ghettoization and social isolation. The only research on the connection between the minority and welfare status are the studies on the Roma population (Štambuk, 2000:198, Šućur, 2000:216-222, Štambuk, 2005). The issue of integration or assimilation is not a challenge for the official minority policies. Debates on immigration have just started to dominate the public agenda. They were primarily the result of the resistance of the local population to the asylum centre that the government wanted to establish and recent Chinese immigration (Gelo, 2006). Both cases provoked very negative attitudes towards foreigners. In the beginning of 2006 a well-known demographic expert publicly declared that the government should work on its migration policy, in order to attract young and educated people from some (mostly Slavic) countries. The need for developing an immigration policy is based on the negative demographic trends in Croatia and a shortage of labour force, but his appeal was not well received by the public. The negative attitudes on future immigrants can be possible be related to the current debate on the Europeanization process which would allow wealthy individuals from EU countries to come into the country and buy most of the Croatian natural resources, such as houses on the coast, islands, hotels, etc. It should be added that these kinds of debates largely do not deal with the autochthon minorities that have been living in Croatia for centuries.

The Muslim minority can be for analytical purposes divided into three groups. The first one consists of Bosniacs from Bosnia who speak the same language as Croats and with whom Croats have a long history of cohabitation (Ćimić, 1997:97-99). The Bosniacs are after the Serbs the largest minority, and they live mostly in the urban areas. The second group consists of those who moved to Croatia from other parts of former Yugoslavia, and they mostly live in larger towns and on the coast. They are partly Macedonians (Slavic nation), and in the majority Albanians who speak a different language and have different historical background. The third group includes those who came from various Arab countries, but there

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16 Social distance toward Roma population is a pressing problem. The government has established a group of experts for drafting a national strategy for the Roma population aiming to improve their position and integration in society.
are only about 500 people belonging to this group. Because of these specificities of the Muslim presence in the country, and because the majority speak the same language, Muslims are successfully integrated in Croatia while maintaining their ethnic and religious identity (Omerbašić, 1999:453). In some particular localities Muslims can have some problems, as in recent years in the city of Rijeka where there is a conflict regarding the building of a mosque; these kinds of problems are not reflected at the national level and have not initiated any kind of public debates on the Muslim presence in the country.

Religious minority – majority relations

In the light of the situation of a majority religion and low percentage of other religions, all other religious groups are usually publicly labelled as religious minorities. Consequently, religious minority groups can be defined in relation to the dominant religion – Catholicism. On the other hand it can be said that different levels of minorities exist. The first group (usually recognized as such in public) consists of those religious communities that have a longer historical presence and/or are very different from Catholics: Serbian Orthodox, Muslims, and Jews. The second group, maybe not differentiated as such by public, includes communities which have also a longer tradition, but have also regulated their relations with the government by signing special agreements, which give them some special rights: the Evangelical Church, the Reformed Christian Church, the Evangelical Pentecostal Church, the Baptist Churches, the Macedonian Orthodox Church, etc. The third group consists of several new religions, or new religious movements, but due to very low figures, they do not usually attract any kind of public debates.\(^\text{17}\)

Organizational aspects of the religious minorities largely depends on the issues of to which religious tradition each minority belongs. Therefore, there are considerable differences in organizational forms among Orthodox, Muslims and various Protestant Churches. Their activities also largely depend on the traditions and size of each minority. Some of them have their own secondary or high-school institutions established as early as the communist era (the Evangelical, Baptist, Pentecostal Churches and the Adventist Community). In 1992 the Muslim community established a

\(^{17}\) The Church of the Whole Gospel, the Union of Churches *Word of Life* and the Protestant Reformed Christian Church brought legal action to the Constitution Court because of the government’s rejection of theirs demands for singing an agreement with the government (2005). The government considered that these communities do not comply with established preconditions: minimum number of members (6,000) and a historical presence in the Croatian territory since 1941.
‘medresa’ – a secondary school, and has plans to establish a Theological-Welfare faculty. The Serbian Orthodox Church also has its own secondary school. The Jewish community in Zagreb established a kindergarten and a primary school. All these educational institutions are recognized by the state. There are also various activities mainly focusing on the spiritual life of their believers. Religious communities that have signed an agreement with the government have additional rights, such as to offer religious instruction in public school and to perform religious marriages, which are recognized by the state.

There are no issues concerning gender in relation to the minority religions that are high on the public agenda. There was but one case publicly discussed recently. Although there are no legal restrictions, the police authority in one Croatian town did not want to issue official documents to a woman who provided a photo wearing a veil. The practice of other police authorities was to let Muslim women or Catholic nuns have their picture on official documents with their specific clothing. The debate lasted for a few weeks, and only some women’s groups argued that, in the name of women’s liberation, Muslim women should not wear their veils on documents. The case was brought to the Constitutional Court, with no decision so far.

Many religious communities have their own welfare organizations. They were particularly active during the Homeland War when they organized humanitarian aid for all the population. The Union of Baptist Churches established a few non-profit organizations which offer different types of aid: assistance to persons with specific needs, home help, foster care etc.\(^{18}\) The Pentecostal Church has a welfare organization called AGAPE which organizes assistance to those who needed help in 18 towns and has separate centres for providing assistance to the children.\(^{19}\) The Adventist Church has created an organization called ADRA, which is a part of ADRA International, and has concentrated on projects of reconstruction and economic progress in the war affected areas.\(^{20}\) The Muslim humanitarian organization, Merhamet, was particularly active during the war when it organized humanitarian aid for numerous refugees that came from Bosnia to Croatia. Merhamet also coordinated aid from different international Islamic humanitarian organizations (Omerbašić, 1999:378). Except for the activities organized by Merhamet, there is no data allowing for the conclusion that Muslims have established their own welfare-providing network.

Some religious communities have reported problems in establishing their own places of worship. The first mosque in Croatia was built in Zagreb

\(^{18}\) Data from interview with Željko Mraz, General Secretary of the Union of Baptist Churches.  
\(^{19}\) Data from interview with Stanko Jambrek, coordinator in the Evangelical Pentecostal Church.  
\(^{20}\) http://www.adra.hr/o_nama.html
during the communist time and there are problems in finding a place for a mosque in the city of Rijeka. There are also not yet realized plans for rebuilding a synagogue in Zagreb, which was destroyed in 1941. Religious communities have also reported that the return of the nationalized property is very slow but this is a problem for all religious communities (including the Catholic Church) and for many individuals. The Serbian Orthodox Church has reported various cases of violence against priests and churches, and the Islamic community also has a problem in establishing separate parts in cemeteries for Muslim graves in many towns. There are no signs that small religious communities have particular problems in establishing their own places of worship.

Conclusions

What is the role of religion in the welfare domain? Can we see minorities as a provocation for dominant values and for the cultural identity of the majority? What is the position of women in the welfare domain? These are some important questions that must be properly answered. Interaction between religion, minorities and gender is a brand new topic in Croatian scientific research and results from the WaVe project will provide new knowledge on welfare, majority – minority relations and gender that will contribute to the understanding of recent trends in the EU.

This project will take place in a specific time in Croatia – a time when the role of the Church and the religious organizations in welfare and the public sphere is intensely debated, in a period of the stabilization of the relations between the majority and minorities, particularly in the war affected areas, in a time of discussing violence against women but not necessarily other aspects of the women’s position in the society. The past (the communist legacy, the effects from the war …) is still very much present, while the future knocks at the door and many changes can be foreseen.

Another specific and very important factor is that Croatian society has started negotiations for the EU membership and the Europeanization process continues. This is related to profound changes that are already provoking various social reactions. It is interesting to note that according to different public opinion polls Croatian public support for EU membership is only or even less than 50%; this is partly due to the prevailing feelings (originating in the war and the dissolution of Yugoslavia) that the EU does not want to accept Croatia on its own, i.e. that Croatia has to wait for the other ex-

22 See, for example, Eurobarometer data on Croatia: http://www.delhrv.ec.europa.eu/en/static/view/id/317
Yugoslav states that have not yet started EU negotiations. Recent debates in Europe on ‘expansion fatigue’ only support that feeling, while the government strongly advocates for quick negotiations and political support for full EU membership before the end of this decade.

The first phase of our research has demonstrated already several main issues and problems. After the turbulent period of transition and the war, the Croatian welfare sector is faced with a considerable number of recent and upcoming problems. The analysis of the current Croatian situation indicates that an explicit source of conflict related to the interactions between welfare provision, religion, minorities or gender does not exist. On the other hand, there are many tensions that can be noticed, and there is a lack of data in numerous fields. Some issues are not even debated, or have just started to dominate the public discussions, such as the questions concerning the immigration policy or access to public services. There is also a well-founded impression that many inequalities exist, but we (public, politicians, researchers…) do not know much about them.

The position of the Catholic Church is of particular interest. The Church is a very important and the most trusted social institution. Its role in the welfare sector is not visible in terms of ownership of welfare institutions (as the welfare sector is dominantly secular), but the role of the Church is significant as it tries to promote its welfare activities and become a critical social voice in many issues. This is a part of the process of transformation from a state-oriented to a society-oriented institution. On the other hand, activities of the Church provoke various public reactions – from support and encouragement to critique and disapproval.

The Croatian religious landscape is very specific because of the interference of ethnicity and religion – Croats are Catholics, Serbs are Orthodox and Bosniacs are Muslims. Following the turbulent 1990s, the authorities (the government and key political figures) tried to promote reconciliation and a harmonious life, although tensions are still present and will continue in the future.

The definition of a national minority in the Croatian Constitution is relevant for our research. A national minority is a group of Croatian citizens that traditionally live in the Croatian territory. Members of a national minority share ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious peculiarities, differing from those of other citizens, and wish to maintain their particularities. Along with the autochthon minorities many other nationalities live and have settled in various parts of Croatia. The Constitutional Law on the National Minorities guarantees equal rights for all minorities, but there is no data or research on the achievement of these rights in everyday life. Welfare services are geographically not well distributed – those who live in rural
areas or areas affected by the war have more problems in meeting their welfare needs, and some minorities live predominantly in these areas.

Religious minorities can be defined in relation to the dominant religion – Catholicism. All small, but traditional religious communities have recently signed agreements with the government according to which their positions and rights are regulated. Religious communities acknowledge improvements, although they report some problems in the local communities. New or non-traditional religious communities can be officially registered as such, but cannot have rights that can be regulated only through agreements with the government. Because of the specificities of the Muslim presence in the country (as they are a traditional religious community in Croatia, and speak the same language as Croats) Muslims are integrated into the society, but have maintained their ethnic and religious identity. Organizational and practical aspects of religious minorities depend on religious tradition, size of the minority and its legal status. Many religious communities have established their own welfare organizations (ADRA, AGAPE, Merhamet).

Issues of gender equality are a new topic in Croatia. New policies on equality between women and men have been promoted but real equality has not been achieved. Women are faced with a number of difficulties: inferior positions in the labour market, unemployment, exploitation in the ‘shadow’ economy, violence and gender discrimination as well as low participation in the public life.

Due to all these factors, there is a great need for the future analysis to place Croatia into the European context, comparative to other societies. This is a great opportunity to compare the Croatian society with other European societies and to generate data that does not yet exist. Also, this is an encouragement to looking at the past, recent and future trends and the interactions between three crucial domains – religion, minorities and gender, from a welfare perspective.

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Interview with Željko Mraz, General Secretary of the Union of Baptist Churches.
Interview with Stanko Jambrek, coordinator in the Evangelical Pentecostal Church.
Interviews with Marinko Juretić, parish-rector of the Serbian Orthodox Church and Milan Topić from Serbian secondary school.
Abstract

This paper is based on an in-depth qualitative research that was conducted in Sisak – a medium-sized town in Croatia. The first section presents Sisak’s characteristics, a portrait of the national and religious minorities and a map of the local welfare system. The local government has social programmes but the most visible welfare actors are the Centre for Social Welfare and Caritas. Despite the war there are no open conflicts, but at the same time there is no systematic and permanent cooperation, particularly in the welfare area. The welfare issues are not in the centre of minority activism. The welfare dimension of the minority groups was researched in two Bosniac organizations, as well as in the Islamic community and the Evangelical Pentecostal Church. The analysis of values focuses on three welfare areas – social care, employment and family. Concerning social care, the situation in Sisak is representative of the state at the national level (Communist heritage, distrust in state institutions, lack of cooperation, informality, underdeveloped civil sector and traditional views on social care as a women’s domain). Unemployment is the crucial issue – it is at the core of welfare and security and a polygon for inequality. Also, unemployment is closely related to the problem of underground economies, anomie and the position of women in the labour market. Family is the alternative welfare provider with visible gender dimensions (mainly gender-based division of labour, domestic violence).

Presenting the town of Sisak

Brief introduction

Sisak is a medium size city in central Croatia, placed at the banks of three rivers: Sava, Odra and Kupa. It is the administrative, political and regional centre of the Sisak-Moslavina County.

Following the Second World War Sisak experienced considerable economic growth due to the extensive process of industrialization and urbanization. It, thus, became an attractive location for migrant workers who, in the 1950s settled in Sisak, mainly coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also from Kosovo, both being part of the former Yugoslavia. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, when Croatia became an independent state, and during the Homeland war (1991-1995) much of the economic sector suffered great losses and destruction. The situation has been slowly but considerably improving since 1995, when Croatia regained
control over its occupied territories. Although Sisak was never occupied, the war came very close to the town and thus its effects on the population were significant. The situation in Sisak has improved, but the social problems remain. Sisak-Moslavina county is the region with the most difficult social situation in Croatia. Based on the official data specified below, field work (mainly interviews and focus-groups), and analysis of the local weekly newspaper, there are several key problems that citizens of Sisak face:

**Unemployment**: it is the most important problem. According to the official data from the Croatian Employment Services (CES) 2005 annual report there were 18,290 unemployed persons in the Sisak-Moslavina county of which 10,455 were women. This is especially high compared to the situation in the Zagreb county in 2004 when unemployment was 16.9% and permanent social benefit users accounted for 1.2%, while in the Sisak-Moslavina county the unemployment rate was 30.9% and permanent social benefit users accounted for 4.9%. During 2005 there were 6,555 unemployed persons in Sisak of which 3,408 were women. Unemployed persons can claim some of their social rights in the local CES office;

**Privatization of the former state economy**: it has caused considerable increase of unemployment and other related welfare problems;

**Unfavourable demographic trends**: very low fertility rates, population ageing..., e.g. the natural population increase was -1.020 in Sisak-Moslavina County, while the natural population increase from migration - 638 in 20051;

**Ecological issues**: due to pollution caused by the local factories, there are high rates of mortality due to cancer: 313, 4 people in 2005 in comparison to the Croatian average of 284,82;

**Unresolved property rights of Serb returnees**: since many Serbs left the country during the war their property was, in some cases, destroyed in the course of the war or taken by refugees coming from other parts of former Yugoslavia, which was a barrier to their return;

**Low level of development and living standards**: Sisak-Moslavina county is the second least developed county in Croatia (among 21 counties);

**Workers’ rights**: working underground or grey economy, very low salaries, violation of legally guaranteed rights;

**Gender issues**: domestic violence has become the most visible problem which, over the last few years, has attracted a great deal of public attention.

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**Portrait of national minorities in Sisak**

According to the Croatian Constitution, a national minority is a group of Croatian citizens whose members traditionally inhabit an area of Croatia or a

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1 Joint Memorandum on Social Inclusion of the Republic of Croatia, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare web page: www.mzss.hr
2 Croatian National Institute of Public Health, web page www.hzjjz.hr
certain part of it. Members of the national minority share ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious characteristics differing from those of the rest of the citizens, which they try to preserve.

Religious and national identification in Croatia is intertwined as Croats are perceived as Catholics, Serbs as Orthodox, and Bosniacs as Muslim. Catholicism is the major and socially the most influential religion in Croatia. According the 2001 Census Sisak has 52,236 inhabitants (27,292 women and 24,944 men). During the 1990s new distinctions appeared since some of the constitutional ethnic groups in Yugoslavia after its dissolution became national minorities in Croatia: Albanians (from Kosovo and Macedonia), Bosniacs, Macedonians, Slovenians and Serbs. Therefore, after the shift in state sovereignty, the same people in the same territory were transformed from constitutive peoples and ethnicities into minorities.

Table 4.2.1 National portrait of Sisak (according to Census 2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Number/percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albanians</td>
<td>149 (0.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosniacs</td>
<td>795 (1.52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>3 (0.01%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croats</td>
<td>43,402 (83.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechs</td>
<td>100 (0.19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germans</td>
<td>16 (0.03%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarians</td>
<td>28 (0.05%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italians</td>
<td>15 (0.03%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>2 (0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonians</td>
<td>62 (0.12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegrins</td>
<td>40 (0.08%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>6 (0.01%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are 20 national minorities in Sisak (Table 4.2.1), Serbs being the largest and Bosniacs the second largest groups.

Regarding the numerical representation, and according to the Constitutional Law on National Minority Rights, national minorities realize their right to be represented through the City Councils of national minorities and the national minority representatives. In the city of Sisak three National Minorities’ Councils have been established – Bosniac, Roma and Serb – including representatives of the Albanian and Czech national minority. For the functioning of each of the councils, the City provides 50,000 Kuna (about 6,850 Euros) per year, and for the representatives of each national minority 30,000 Kuna (about 4,110 Euros) per year. Each national minority organizes its own activities according to their priorities and needs.

**Portrait of religious minorities in Sisak**

Since Catholicism is the majority religion and because of the small number of other religions, the public tends to label all other religions as minority religions.
Table 4.2.2 Religious portrait of Sisak (according to the 2001 Census)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Number/percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholics</td>
<td>41.204 (78.88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern-Rite Catholics</td>
<td>16 (0.003%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>3.801 (7.28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumanian Orthodox</td>
<td>1 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serb Orthodox</td>
<td>18 (0.03%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>2.537 (4.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>3 (0.01%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventists</td>
<td>25 (0.005%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptists</td>
<td>102 (0.20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelic</td>
<td>14 (0.03%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah Witnesses</td>
<td>61 (0.12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvinists</td>
<td>2 (0.00%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostals</td>
<td>5 (0.01%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>47 (0.09%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnostics and not declared</td>
<td>2.389 (4.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheists</td>
<td>1.820 (3.48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>210 (0.40%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2001

There are eleven religious minorities in Sisak. According to the 2001 Census on the national level, more Muslims, Baptists and Adventists and less Serbs live in Sisak than the national average. There is a visible disproportion between the number of Serbs (3,897 in Sisak, 201,631 in Croatia) and the number of believers of the Serbian Orthodox Church (18 in Sisak, 40,433 in Croatia) in the Census at the local and the national level, which emphasizes
the issue of Serbs not willing to declare themselves as members of the Serbian Orthodox Church. For the most part they declare themselves simply as Orthodox. This is very probably related to the fact that the Serbian Orthodox Church supported the Serbian rebellion in Croatia and thus still has a rather negative image among Croats.

Because of the small number of members, only Orthodox Serbs, Muslims, Adventists, Baptists, Pentecostals and Jehovah Witnesses have an organized form of religious community.

How does the local welfare system work?

In order to get a full picture of the welfare system at the local level we identified and interviewed various stake-holders.

Local government and its welfare programme

The local government of Sisak as a unit of local self-government has certain welfare programmes and initiates various forms of partnerships with private and civil society organizations at the local level. Local welfare programmes include:

- Family and child care.
- Assistance to families and households.
- Programs for people with special needs.
- Financing of non-governmental organizations.
- Bereavement support and financial assistance on a one-time basis.
- Fuel cost assistance.
- Social housing.
- Securing apartments for people in need.
- One-off financial support.
- Programmes for pensioners, pupils and students.
- Retirement homes.

Although it seems that the City has a very diverse and encompassing set of measures in comparison to other towns in Croatia, Sisak has a relatively restricted social programme (Sisak, for example, does not have public

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3 On the other hand a Serb Orthodox priest claimed that all those who declare themselves as Orthodox, are in fact members of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

4 Despite the organized way of living of Jehovah Witnesses, there is no data on their social activities because they do not have interactions with other religious communities and local authorities.

5 After the modifications to the Law on Social Welfare (2001) the gradual decentralization of social protection and the social care system became a main objective. Contrary to this, analysis of local welfare shows that the system is still not flexible, but rather centralized without necessary connections between sectors and institutions.
kitchens). In addition, for all these programmes the City plans to earmark 7,848,200 Kuna or about 1,075,095 Euros per year. But unfortunately, according to the employees interviewed, this has been just an optimistic financial plan which has never been realized. We were not able to gain official information on how much the City really spends. The local welfare system is not sufficient to cover the local population’s needs.

The Centre for Social Welfare
The Centre for Social Welfare and other institutions established by the Republic of Croatia are in charge of providing welfare. They are financed by the Republic of Croatia and supervised by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. Because of its centralized structure the national welfare system is inflexible and inefficient. According to the social workers interviewed, the crucial problem for the local social welfare system during the 1990s – the war and post-war period – was the large number of displaced persons and refugees, as well as the possibilities for return and the rights of the returnees. Today the most important problem is unemployment. Social assistance and other welfare activities are extended to the minorities. There is no official data on the national or religious structure of the users.

The role of the dominant religion
There are four Catholic parishes in Sisak and each parish has its own organizational style and charitable activities. As only two parishes have charitable activities that are visibly organized (the Parish of Saint Cross and the Parish of Saint Quirinus), during the field work we focused on the Parish of Saint Cross because it has the most organized and the most visible charitable dimension.

Within the Parish of the Saint Cross, the Church organizes and implements welfare activities through the organization. The work of Caritas is mainly based on voluntary work. Assistance is provided to those in need regardless of their national (Roma, Serbs, Bosniacs, Croats) or religious identities (Muslim, Orthodox, Catholics). Charitable activities are based on distribution of clothes, monthly donations of food or personal hygiene necessities (when it is financially possible) for the people who live in the parish area. Caritas does not have information on who is receiving social assistance from the state institutions. On Christmas and Easter Caritas organizes big charity events.

Caritas cooperates with the local government, the Sisak Moslavina county departments, the Red Cross, primary schools, Catholic organizations, local entrepreneurs and large companies, NGOs, the Court and local media. Caritas is not in contact with national or religious minority organizations except with members of the national or religious minorities who are at the same time their beneficiaries.
National minority organizations in Sisak
Despite the difficult economic situation, national minority organizations do not have a structured humanitarian and welfare programme. They are mainly focused on articulating and promoting the rights of each minority group or on protecting cultural heritage. Welfare issues are marginalized in national minority projects, but plans for the future include a welfare dimension. Roma are the most marginalized national minority. According to the president of the City Council of the Roma national minority 95% of Roma do not have health insurance, 60% are social assistance beneficiaries, and they claim not to have enough information on their rights in the area of welfare. Roma have established several mainly cultural organizations.

Religious minority communities in Sisak
According to the interviews held with the religious leaders of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Islamic community and the protestant churches - Baptist Church Betel, Adventist Church and Evangelical Pentecostal Church - we can conclude that in the first two religious communities social and charitable activities were organized during the Homeland war and during the immediate post-war period. Decrease in international humanitarian donations caused a reduction in charitable work and charitable assistance is given only upon demand. Still, religious leaders emphasized the need for a set of permanent and systematic charitable activities.

The most active in the welfare domain are Protestant churches but they are publicly invisible and maintain only mutual (permanent or temporary) cooperation. The Christian Adventist Church is the most recognized Protestant church in Sisak. Its charitable work is mainly carried out through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency – ADRA. The Baptist Church Betel is focused on education – free IT and English courses – for all the residents of Sisak. The Evangelic Pentecostal Church has permanent humanitarian efforts.

Explanation of the extent to which the local situation is in flux
At the national level Sisak is perceived as an area of specific state concern. This is an important indicator for the evaluation of Sisak as a town whose political, economic and environmental spheres are in flux. Over the last few years national media have been covering a set of problems and scandals which has influenced such an assessment – including politically unstable local government, the mistakes made by the Centre for Social Welfare in the case of domestic abuse of children, the issues surrounding the sale of companies once owned by the state (Ironworks Sisak and the Rolling-mill), pollution and health risks for Sisak inhabitants. The details of each of the problems will be discussed in the following section.
Context and timeframe

In order to present the local context, we will give a short presentation of the local events during 2006 and the first quarter of 2007, based on the content analysis of the local newspaper New Sisak Weekly (Novi Sisački Tjednik).

As mentioned earlier Sisak faces a difficult economic situation (devastated industry, decline of exports, low educational level of labour force) and many social problems. One of the most talked about issues at the local and national levels was the privatization tragedy, violations of worker’s rights and of social security for about 1,455 workers in the Rolling mill. Many of the local companies have had problems doing business. Also, Sisak faces environmental problems, the local refinery being the main source of pollution. During 2005 political change took place in the local government (political conflict between representatives of two dominant parties in Croatia – the Social Democratic Party and the Croatian Democratic Union). During 2006 the City allocated 7 million Kuna for social welfare. Also the City donated money and equipment for children with special needs or socially deprived children and implemented programmes for people in need and pensioners. Primary schools promoted humanitarian activities for socially deprived pupils and for the homeless. During 2006 several NGOs were very active – Homeland war veterans organizations, people with special needs, pensioners. The NGO, Agency for local democracy (ALD), implemented several European projects on education, development and the strengthening of social skills of local government and NGOs. Also, several institutions organized humanitarian events (the Red Cross, the Rotary club and the Croatian Block).

The parishes of the Catholic Church were very visible. Local newspapers presented their charitable work, projects and cooperation with other institutions and there was a great deal of involvement in local religious and secular manifestations and cultural activities, such as restoration of sacred buildings …

Activities of the national and religious minorities were not so visible. There were several articles about the Roma during the World Roma day. The City participated in the National Programme for Roma and in the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 projects. Czechs were visible through their cultural activities and cultural cooperation with the Parish of Saint Quirinus. There were several articles on Bosniacs: debates on the Danish cartoons and on the status of Bosniacs in Sisak, cultural activities of Bosniacs and Bosniac participations in local manifestations. The ALD has an important role in the life of national minorities and in the promotion of tolerance, human rights and civil development (for example, the project Local Multiculturalism – Youth in Action).

During 2006 there was little information on Orthodox Serbs and the Islamic Community during Orthodox Christmas and Ramadan. The City co-
financed the restoration of Orthodox sacred buildings. Alternative religious beliefs were visible through the advertisement of Tai-Chi courses, astrology, Kabbalah, etc.

There were also several activities that made the gender issue more publicly visible, including projects by local women’s organizations, the promotion of the National Policy for Gender Equality, etc.

Methods and sources

Researched groups and issues

The case study focused mainly on four groups:

The **City Council of Bosniac National Minority** (the Council) is a non-profit association, representing the Bosniac national minority in public life and local government. It has several important roles: improving the position of Bosniacs in Sisak, selecting representatives for local and state departments, educating the Council’s members, attracting new members and preserving Bosniac identity. The Council was created in 2003 after the first national minority elections in Croatia. The City provides the venue for the Council’s activities. The Council has 25 members – 5 women and 20 men. It has good relations with the local and national media, local radio station and local and national television. Every last Wednesday of the month Bosniacs have their own radio show, called *Bulbul*. The Council is cooperating with ALD, the Centre for Peace Studies (CMS), the Centre for Women Adela,\(^6\) as well as with other Bosniac associations in Sisak.

The **Group of Bosniac Women** is connected to the Council. It was established alongside the Bosniac National Community of the Sisak-Moslavina County. At the time of the research the Group of Bosniac Women did not have a formal autonomous organizational form, but it operated as if it did. It has 25 members - mainly with secondary school education, of which only one is not married and ten are unemployed. Tasks and aims of the association derive from a traditional image of women as the core of the family and the safe-keepers of identity and culture. The Group presents and nurtures traditional Bosniac culture and national identity, organizes presentations of Bosniac cuisine and national costumes and folklore. It also participates in humanitarian actions, organizes lectures on gender issues (women in Islam, prevention against breast cancer…) and supports women organizations (Adela, the Organization Against Breast Cancer…).

Sisak has a large, forty year old **Islamic Community** with members of different national backgrounds (mainly Bosniacs, but also Albanians, Roma

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\(^6\) Considering other Bosnian associations, see the Bosnian web site: www.bosnjaci-smz.hr
and a few Arabs). Until 2003 the Islamic Community was the only Bosniac institution and the base of the Bosniac community in Sisak. The Islamic Community has its own building and a section at the cemetery. Religious education is organized in primary schools and in the *maktab*\(^7\). During the Homeland war, because of a number of refugees coming from Bosnia, the Islamic Community grew. As other religious communities in the post-Communist period it experienced the revitalization of Islam, although the previous imam emphasized the strengthening of formal religiosity without a deeper understanding and participation in the rituals. However, after the war the number of believers decreased. According to recent estimates only 10% of believers participate in the rituals. The new imam is trying to organize and improve the social life of the community. One of the most important goals for the future is to build a multifunctional Islamic centre with a mosque, kindergarten, library, internet café, conference room, etc... There were some property problems regarding building a mosque, but everyone is very optimistic about the future of the multifunctional Islamic centre in Sisak.

The **Evangelical Pentecostal Church** (EPC) was established in Sisak in 1981. During the Homeland war the previous pastor left Sisak and the EPC stopped its activities. When the new pastor came with his family to Sisak in 2000, the EPC revitalized its activities. According to the pastor, before the Homeland war the EPC had about 60 members, while today the number is lower, about 20 - 30 members of different nationalities – Croats, Serbs, Roma and even Muslims. There are twenty permanent members – 12 women and 8 men, 13 of which are adult, with a secondary school or lower school education, mainly unemployed (some are pensioners); only one person is employed. The Pastor is a central figure but there is no hierarchy. In line with the Christian doctrine, the EPC organizes humanitarian work. Depending on the amount of humanitarian donations from England, the EPC distributes food but it first visits the beneficiaries in order to check their documents from the welfare institution.\(^8\) There is no recent cooperation with other welfare institutions. The local government does not show interest in the activities of the EPC. The EPC cooperates only with the Baptist Church Betel because of local prejudices toward religious communities which are not considered traditional. Therefore, the EPC is interesting because of its permanent but invisible charitable work. It is also very interesting because of

\(^7\) *Maktab* (‘school’ in Arabic) is a Muslim elementary school.

\(^8\) In cooperation with the Centre for Social Welfare 105 households or 427 family members received assistance in 2002. In 2003 within the same project 53 households or 206 family members received help. Help was not distributed only in Sisak, but also in surrounding areas where assistance was received by 188 households or 509 family members. Because of the difficult situation of the Roma, the EPC distributed food for 93 Roma families or 406 family members in 2003. In 2003 and 2004 the EPC donated food, toys and Christmas presents to the Association of blind people. It also organized in-kind help (mainly clothes) in 2002 and 2003. But its work is invisible at the local level. Only one person mentioned coordination with the Pentecostals.
the different national backgrounds of its members, which is apparently not an obstacle for group cohesion and close relations internally.

During the general mapping of the locality we noticed that the members of the Islamic Community maintain a traditional value system. This is very interesting because of the potential tensions with the majority values, particularly considering gender. As we mentioned earlier, the Muslim community overlaps with the Bosniac national community. This is why some of the research was conducted in the Council, one of the most organized minority groups. The Council is a secular organization and it includes the only minority women’s group in Sisak – the Group of Bosniac Women.

This study will focus on the following five issues:

1. the current situation in Sisak (main social problems), local welfare system and subjective definition of welfare;
2. the visibility of minority groups through their involvements in local sociocultural events and relationships with majority/or other minority groups, primarily through the dimension of welfare;
3. the inner dimension of a minority community (the structure of the group, the hierarchy, inter-relations, cohesion, activities);
4. the identity and the personal experience of belonging to a minority (in everyday life and in the welfare system);
5. gender issues (gender relations in the private and public domain, the role of women in the welfare system, violence against women).

Methods
The first and second phases of the case study were based on:

- individual interviews with representatives of the main welfare actors (local government, the Centre for Social Welfare, NGOs, Caritas) and members of the national and religious minorities;
- questionnaires;
- 4 focus groups;

The aforementioned data was complemented by observation of selected groups and analysis of various documents and materials (statistical data, local government welfare projects, personal documents, web sites, Pentecostal religious materials, content analysis of Bosniac journals, historical evidence…). Information on NGOs was included as an additional source of data. Because of the important role of the state welfare system, the
Centre for Social Welfare and Caritas, as the most visible majority religion organizations, were both included in our in-depth study.

We conducted two types of interviews: structured interviews with representatives of local government and national and religious minorities, and semi-structured interviews with social workers, volunteers and members of the Council, the Group of Bosniac women and the EPC. The semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The questionnaire follows the questions used in the semi-structured interviews on welfare activities, cooperation with other local welfare actors and problems of minorities and gender.

The data from the focus groups forms the basis for our report. There were four focus groups:

- **Focus group 1 (EPC)** – 4 women and 4 men.
- **Focus group 2 (Bosniac Women’s Group)** – 10 women.
- **Focus group 3 (Council)** – 2 women and 2 men.
- **Focus group 4 (Islamic community)** – 4 women and 4 men.

In the Council focus group 8 participants were planned, however only 4 persons showed up, 2 women and 2 men, but this did not reflect negatively on the group discussion and on the quality of the material.

**Findings**

**Cooperation and cohesion**

At the beginning of the field work we identified several examples of cooperation and cohesion in the following domains: welfare, majority-minority relations, internal minority life, and gender.

**Table 4.2.3 Examples of cooperation and cohesion**

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**Welfare**

*Cooperation between local welfare actors*

We found examples of cohesion between the majority and the minorities and within the minority group. Also it is important to mention that representatives of Caritas, the Red Cross as well as social workers emphasized the mutual cooperation and solidarity between different welfare actors (state institutions, religious organizations, NGOs) during the Homeland war. However, the end of the war marked a decrease in this solidarity and cooperation. There is no adequate formal or institutional relationship between welfare actors. Cooperation is based on friendships and informal relationships. Interestingly, formal coordination is implicitly perceived as unnecessary: ‘…I know of those social workers, they say to me ‘listen, do you have somebody, we have somebody of our own, could you take some for them?’ We are a small community where everybody knows each other so it’s more informal…’ (F4)⁹.

During the interviews a social worker and a volunteer from Caritas mentioned cooperation between the EPC and the ADRA:

The Evangelic Church asked us... to give them a certain number, depending on how many packets of food they received, then they asked us to give them...  

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⁹ All interview citations in parentheses include the sex of the interviewee (M or F), followed by the interview number.
a list of persons who need it the most… This was not a bad way to work with a community. (F1)

I know about the members of the Adventist church. Their humanitarian organization ADRA… They called me and asked me about social assistance…(F3)

According to a female interviewee (F4), in 2005, up to 339 beneficiaries received assistance from Caritas and the Parish of the Saint Cross. Their religious and ethnic origins were diverse: 29 Roma, 40 Muslims, 52 Orthodox and 218 Catholic: ‘We also get a couple of Muslim women that come to us. We don’t care at all…’ (F4).

…There is no discrimination when it comes to food. When there is less food, then we only consider our parish, but not with clothes. You will see that, by my estimate, probably half are Muslims. (F3)

A participant in the focus group of the Group of Bosniac women spoke about her experience with the Catholic humanitarian organizations Caritas and Saint Quirinus. She said that she was ‘nicely welcomed’ (F14) by Caritas, but had a very frustrating experience with the Centre for Social Welfare.

The charitable dimension in the Islamic Community
The main functions of the Islamic Community according to the participants of the focus groups are education and socialization of children through religious education and rituals. There was no tradition of welfare and charitable activities within the Islamic Community until the ‘90s, but there are some welfare institutions that are incorporated in Islam:

One of the constituent components of Islam is the charity dimension that is in the religious terminology called zakat (or zekjat). Zakat means giving away a certain percentage of your own means. …Before zakat could be paid in kind…but today its always just money, and then this zakat goes to Zagreb to a fund from which it is then distributed…most of it goes for religious education for students of the theological high school, then for the poor… and then we get some of it, I think 30% or 40% of zakat it has to be spent for a programme, not just charitable work but also for improving religious education. (M13)

There are two other categories of assistance besides zakat – Ramadan and Kurban Bairam, they have a social dimension. A part of the meat is distributed to Muslims in need. (M9)

Respondents thought that a humanitarian organization, like Merhamet – an international Muslim humanitarian organization – cannot solve the main problem of unemployment. They emphasized the importance of informal forms of assistance:
Mainly, in the very mind of a Muslim, of a Bosniac we traditionally have solidarity among ourselves… I don’t think that, at the moment, we should organize ourselves… But it is something specific incorporated in the Muslims in the Bosniacs themselves by our tradition. It exists in us and doesn’t need to be formalized. (F22)

But, one of the most important persons in the Islamic community said that he has the intention to turn occasional welfare activities into a more regular and more organized effort:

One of our goals, theoretically, is charity work… But there are some problems… I went straight to the Centre for Social Welfare… I wanted to realize such efforts in a way to find out who, of our people, needs it, who gets social assistance?… Our people have pride, dignity, our believers that come here, nobody comes directly and says ‘listen, my situation is such and such.’ (M13)

*The Bosniac family as the main welfare provider*

Many Bosniac participants spoke about informal family assistance and the support of their relatives. Generally speaking, family and relatives are the most important welfare providers for Bosniacs (atheists and believers):

My family helps me. My brother is from Bosnia. He has a store, so I go there and bring back whatever he lets me have. My sister is in Austria. I have three sisters. Actually they are the ones that help me so much now… (F17)

During the focus groups respondents from the Group of Bosniac women and the Council emphasized that because of unemployment and social insecurity, some of them who have relatives in a third country (such as Italy) temporary migrate and do illegal work.

*‘In the name of the Lord’ – Pentecostal humanitarian work*

In the previous section we emphasized the charitable work of the EPC. The Pastor is responsible for the distribution of humanitarian packages. What is the role of other members? They provide information on the families in need and sometimes help carry out humanitarian work: ‘People that have no means and know members of the community, the community helps them’ (F5).

Despite the negative image, it became evident that the EPC helps many families in Sisak. During the service, members of the EPC pray for all the citizens of Sisak and Croatia.
Local visibility – relations with the majority

Bosniac involvement in local socio-cultural activities

Despite some problems in communicating with the County, cooperation between the Bosniac associations and the County departments has lately improved. Generally, members of the Council, the Group of Bosniac women and members of the Islamic Community emphasize good relations with the local government. During interviews and focus groups Bosniac respondents emphasized good relations with local government and local political parties that support Bosniac projects:

The county official came...She is an open minded person... She is very qualified, ambitious. She knows that Bosniacs matter just as much as anybody else… We all have our place but we must use it…And now the wind is blowing our way and we are trying… (F18)

There is some improvement…We are satisfied…for example this year we will be celebrating the sixth Bairam concert… we actually profited a lot from this new Constitutional Law on Minority Rights. It actually imposes some duties on the state. (F20)

The Bairam concert is the central annual event for Bosniacs. One of the tasks of the concert is to promote Bosniac culture.

Being a minority – identity and cohesion within minority

Bosniac heritage

According to some respondents, there is not much difference between Bosniacs and Croats:

We are lucky our language is almost the same. Therefore we have no language barriers. That is one of our advantages. As far as our culture and traditions goes we have our religion. It is our song our sevdalinka. It is our heritage that we want to preserve, keep, so that it connects us and that, in some way, we prevent assimilation. (F20)

When it comes to Bosniacs a certain differentia specifica to Croats and Serbs… is our religion Islam… It is the strongest dividing line…Definitely, the assimilation of Bosniacs is happening, but a large portion of the Bosniac people will be preserved from assimilation. (M9)

Sisters and brothers in the Pentecostal community

During the research and focus groups we detected a high level of internal solidarity and cohesion within the EPC. Members of the Church are symbolically sisters and brothers (they call each other ‘brother’ and ‘sister’) and membership in the EPC is their primary identity.
For some respondents the Pastor is perceived as the most important person dealing with welfare problems. The Protestant churches in Sisak have good relationships with each other and a developed cooperation; this is especially true for the EPC and the Baptist Church Betel. Despite the invisibility of the EPC and the prejudice against it, tolerance is the most important value of the Community:

…our Pastor has never belittled the Catholic Church or the Orthodox Church, or the Jewish faith, nothing, nor any other religion or nation or any other personal choice. Everybody has a right to their own life. That is our motto. We respect the choices of others but we stick to our own ones and I represent my faith. (F7)

**Gender**

*The role of women in the welfare domain*

Respondents among all the groups perceived women as crucial actors in the welfare domain:

For women, it is in their genes to pay attention, to listen to what is being said to her by the person who needs help…A woman is caring and a woman is, structured to be more gentle, to help. While a man wouldn’t have the patience … (F18)

Women work at very sensitive jobs: they are more emotional than men. They are more emotional and softer…and such things should be done. (M2)

However, a participant from the Council advocated a more flexible gender interpretation:

I’m happy that there is progress, that women drive trams, that they do men’s jobs because there are many women that chose to do the jobs that are said to be women’s – health, social welfare, teachers, because it is supposedly more gentle…Maybe somewhere they will prove they are good in a technical profession as well… there are improvements in Croatia in this area. (F29)

**Conflicts**

During the field work we identified several examples of: conflict between the majority and the minority; potential conflict within the majority and conflict within the minority group. As was emphasized above, despite the complex political situation and the military conflicts between Croats, Muslims and Serbs in Bosnia during the 1990s there are no explicit conflicts between the majority and the minorities in Sisak. Respondents from the Islamic Community and the Bosniac Women Group explicitly emphasized the tolerance of Sisak’s citizens.
Table 4.2.4 Conflicts

<table>
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º: problem shared by both the minority and the majority

**Welfare**

*Unemployment – the core issue of welfare and a polygon for inequality*

Respondents from all groups emphasized unemployment as the crucial problem in Sisak for both the minorities and the majority. For most, a stable job with a good salary is the basis of welfare and a synonym for social security:

Social security means a job for me and my husband… A safe job with a permanent salary. (F23)

A job, salary, working hours, but unfortunately today that doesn’t exist anymore. (F10)

Unemployment is the main problem and employment is perceived as the domain where inequalities between citizens of Croatia can be detected. There is no official data on unemployment rates among minority groups. Respondents feel that the majority has better opportunities when it comes to employment and that generally citizens in Croatia are not equal. Some interpret this as a problem at the state level: there are no jobs for Croats just like there are no jobs for minorities, only people that can pull strings can get jobs, particularly people who are politically connected with the party in
power. According to others, the unemployment of Bosniacs is a manifestation of the institutional discrimination against Bosniacs:

There are not enough jobs in Sisak as it is. I don’t know what is available. If we look at the minorities, they get less of what is already scarce or they get nothing. Especially Bosniacs, employment is connected to politics. And ’it’s clear’, not Croatians but ‘it’s well known’.¹⁰ (M6)

I saw it more as a personal problem, and not a Bosniac one. It is the problem of the Croatian state. (F22)

It’s all well until you state your name and surname. That’s where everything stops. (F5)

A respondent from the Islamic Community mentioned a different example:

…my wife got a job, and her friend didn’t. And my wife is Bosniac and her friend is not…Minorities live within the state and share the fate of others. I’m not saying that there are no examples of somebody being discriminated against because of this or that, but that exists everywhere. (M8)

Irresponsible unemployed users of social assistance
Some respondents stressed the darker side of unemployment – people do not want to work:

Mostly, people don’t want to work. They are registered at the unemployment office, but in average people don’t want to work. They demand social assistance from the state. He would rather have the 100 Kuna from the state than to work. (M2)

I am registered for welfare at the Unemployment Office, both my husband and me. It’s not a lot of money. Together we receive 1,800 Kuna. I pay everything with that. Utilities as well… a lot of people get welfare and so they don’t want anything from the Unemployment Office to work anymore. And they spend it when they have it. Spend it on alcohol, cigarettes. After they spend they are against the state and the welfare. (F17)

Workers’ rights
Some of the respondents from the EPC and the Group of Bosniac Women had problems with social security and insurance because of illegal employment. Respondent F8, worked in a bakery but she does not have a stable salary: ‘I get paid every 10 days and my salary is 20 days late’, nor a legal status (‘“we’ll make it official in ten days”, they procrastinate and then they say “we never employ officially and then they fire you”.’ (F8))

¹⁰ ’It’s well known!’ is the slogan of the Croatian Democratic Union, the ruling party in Croatia at the time.
A similar situation was experienced by M4, who worked as babysitter.

The private businessmen should be controlled, they don’t let people take sick leave, for example bakery X, girls, women that are married…work Saturdays and Sundays. (F13)

There is no security any more:

I don’t think there is because even the state owned sector, that to us means some kind of social status and security, is not secure any more. They are always talking about reorganising, reducing the number of employees…that means that people working there are not safe… (F9)

Disappointment in state institutions

Problems concerning state institutions (dysfunctional judicial institutions, distrust in the Croatian agency for employment, post-war property problems…) are not seen by the members of the minority groups as exclusively minority problems, but as general problems in Croatia:

Lawyers and attorneys set the price so high that nobody can sue. And the police say ‘you can go to court’ and they don’t ask you if you have the money to do so… (M3)

We mentioned earlier that the Centre for Social Welfare is perceived as the main welfare agent but at the same time it is the most criticized actor:

I went to the Centre for Social Welfare…She yelled at me…She looked like she was about to spit in my face. (F14)

The last place I would go to is the Ministry, the institutions. Only when you are up to your neck in problems. Of course, first you go to the family, if it’s functioning, friends. The last institution you go to is the Centre for Social Welfare… The procedures are very slow…I mean some things are just not well organized. I was really disappointed…Thank god that I’m religious and that my faith forbids alcohol…There is no safe house for women, there is no marriage counselling…I mean if you are having marital problems you have to go to Zagreb to get help. There is no counselling for kids, the fundamental institutions that are supposed to resolve problems don’t exist and the problems are piling up… (M9)

Inequality

All respondents thought that citizens in Croatia are not equal because of their national, religious or class background:

Today if somebody is Serbian he already doesn’t have as many rights, if he is Roma or any other nationality, if he is not Croatian, if he is not Catholic. (F6)
Local invisibility – related to minority

_Invisibility and prejudice against Pentecostals_

We asked a Caritas volunteer to talk about the charitable work of the EPC. She answered ‘in Sisak they do not do anything’ (F3). About the Baptist Church she said:

…they are a very closed community. As far as humanitarian work goes they only work with their own members, but I know that often they have free things, I don’t know if after that they try to recruit, I don’t know, but often they have English language courses. (F3)

Generally, Protestant communities (the Adventist Church, the Baptist Church) are perceived as sects, which recruit members through English courses or material assistance:

I know, Protestants have them all the time. Baptists, for them I know for sure. I know they get a lot of funding from the outside. Mostly from America… They organize free courses of some foreign languages, and that’s how they find people they then try to baptize… recruit. (F4)

Some of the persons interviewed stated individual examples of the majority not being tolerant towards minority religions. Protestants emphasized discrimination through informal relations - harassment, problems with neighbours, verbal abuse…:

I had an example when the group ‘Croatian woman’ was founded in our village. And of course they invited me. And there were some women who were against me being invited. ‘She cannot be a Croatian woman because she is not of Roman Catholic faith’ although I was born in Croatia, I’m Croatian. (F6)

Being a minority – problems with identity and conflicts within a minority

_Problems within the Bosniac minority_

The Bosniac national minority in Sisak is not homogenous. Part of it tries to maintain the Bosniac characteristics and Bosniac identity, but most (according to the estimate made by the interviewees) assimilate willingly. They incorporate Catholic customs and forget their own culture. One of the results is that Bosniacs, most of the time, do not belong to any Bosniac associations.

Our people want to be both Muslim, Bosniac and Croatian so they don’t know where they stand…They don’t know what to chose. People came here
50, 60 years ago and forgot they were Muslim. They started to accept all of this… baptising… Why? (F18)

One of the crucial problems for Bosniacs in Sisak is the issue of identity. There is no exact data on Bosniacs in Sisak and in Croatia because of administrative confusion and the overlapping of national and religious identity. According to Bosniac respondents, there are three dimensions of national identifications: Bosniac, Muslim (in the national sense), and Croat of Islamic religious belonging that practices Islam11.

Some reasons for the internal and external identity problems are:

The problem is that people went through a lot…Our people feel that if somebody writes down that they are Bosniac that one day he could have problems, God forbid a change of government…maybe people fear if they put down ‘Bosniac’, they will not be Muslim, so they can have problems and they are afraid… (M5)

This confusion has serious consequences:

A Bosniac can vote only for Bosniacs, a Muslim cannot vote for Bosniacs. And we, who are a part of the government now, in the county, in the town of Petrinja, Sisak cannot participate in the government. It’s nobody else’s fault, nobody else’s it’s our own fault and we create these problems for ourselves. (M5)

All of the respondents in the Council, the Group of Bosniac women and the Islamic Community (except an Albanian woman) declared themselves as Bosniacs. Respondents from the Council mainly declared themselves as atheists.

Problems in cooperation with the Islamic Community

We identified some latent ideological tensions between the two groups, the secular (the Council, the Group of Bosniac women) and the religious (the Islamic Community), but we did not get a clear image of these divisions. There are two versions of a conflict which are based on the personal interpretations of the role of the Islamic Community and the political orientations of actors. Some think that the Islamic Community must be more active in the public life of Bosniacs, but others speak in favour of a distance.

Until 2003 the Islamic Community was the one and only institution in the Sisak Moslavina county and for Bosniacs in Sisak, but after the establishment of different associations of Bosniac national community and of the Council, it lost its monopoly status. One of the respondents from the Council said:

11 There are no official data on the number of Croats of Islamic belonging.
‘There were problems in cooperation, but cooperation is better now… Decentralization of power is a hard and slow process but it is inevitable for the development of the civil society.’ (F20).

**Gender**

**Different visions of gender issues**

*The Bosniac - Muslim perspective:*

Gender issues are a dividing line for participants of all groups, but there are several versions of gender equality identified during the research. Among the Group of Bosniac Women gender interpretations were very heterogeneous: older women advocated a strong gender division and the subordination of women, but younger women advocated more flexibility in gender relations without the religious background:

Most women feel they do more work… Wherever I go women do more work and men don’t… The woman carries the burden of family, work, household, everything … (F17)

There is a division of labour concerning the children and the kitchen. Some chores are performed by my husband, and some by me. For example I cook, he does the dishes, he vacuums… There is even more equality because we make all the decisions together. (F23)

The most visible gap is between the Western gender model and the religion-based gender model in the Islamic Community. Younger Muslim women criticized the Western model of gender equality and advocated a non-Western gender model that is based on Muslim religious law in the private domain (strict gender division, man as a provider, marriage according to *Muslim Law*), although it incorporates the emancipation of women in the public domain (right to education and to work):

For me, in general, the classic equality of the sexes that is at the moment required in the West is not necessary… I completely agree with the Islamic Law the Sharia… There in the classic sense the man is the head of the household… This Sharia, this law suits me. This means I’m not asking to be equal because we cannot be equal. He cannot have children, I can… I don’t need to be an emancipated woman because I already am according to Islam and I have my own rights. (F22)

Usually they say that in Islam a woman is locked up in the house, which is not true. If I educate myself and have the right to work… But I still think that the man should be the stability in the home... In Islam we say that out of the four pillars of the house three belong to the women… Women have so many rights, like in no other community. (F21)
Men sustain a traditional complementary gender model and they ascribe better qualities to women especially in the areas of providing care, nurturing and the home.

The Pentecostal perspective:
Contrary to the role of women in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, in the EPC the role of women is more egalitarian: ‘...in our church a woman can be a Pastor...’ (M3)

The interpretation of gender relations in the secular domain is mainly traditional:

It is said in the Bible...it should be equality. But the woman needs to obey because she should look up to her husband and he should look up to Christ ...The woman is nonetheless more inferior. (M2)

Grey areas and other issues
After analysing the empirical material we identified grey areas or areas in-between cohesion and conflict (in the welfare domain and within the religious minority community), as well as other issues as exclusively women’s’ issues.

Table 4.2.5 Grey areas and other issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welfare</th>
<th>Minority</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of voluntary</td>
<td>Building and function of the future Islamic Centre</td>
<td>Exclusively women’s issuesº</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>welfare activityº</td>
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º: both a majority and minority problem

Lack of voluntary welfare activities
Civil engagement and participation in the voluntary welfare sector are not developed. Respondents from Caritas and the Centre for Social Welfare explained the reason for the lack of voluntary welfare activities mainly being: preoccupation with private problems, lack of time and the lack of tradition of voluntary work:

I think that people here are too occupied with their own problems that they cannot resolve so they can’t deal with somebody else’s problems … (F1)

Our woman comes home and goes to her neighbour to do the ironing in order to earn the money for living. You can’t expect such a network of volunteers that they have abroad. (F3)
Volunteers should be everywhere… That’s why I think we should introduce volunteering from the first grade. (F2)

**Lack of cooperation and coordination**
Lack of networking and cooperation between associations and communities in the welfare domain is a problem. Respondents from Caritas and the Centre for Social Welfare spoke about it:

We work strictly by the law, they work by their rules. They provide a certain amount of services, we provide the other. We cooperate with some of the institutions on the phone and so, but I don’t think that there is any kind of coordination on the city level. (F2)

Caritas provides, but we don’t even know to whom… (F1)

Well, I think that we lack that … in order to avoid overlapping (of our activities). Sometimes I come to Caritas and there I see the same people that were in the Red Cross that morning. Then we agreed with Saint Quirinus. Only social assistance users with the document from the Centre for Social Welfare can come to Saint Quirinus and the ones that we send with a certificate. Therefore both Saint Quirinus, as well as we keep everything registered in order to avoid overlapping. (F3)

**The future Islamic Centre**
The Islamic Community in Sisak plans to build an Islamic Centre, but because of property issues the project is not realized yet. It will be a factor in the homogenization of Bosniacs and a place for learning and cultural exchange:

In the 21st century and in the geographic area that we live in it can’t be just a classic building with an area for prayer… It is conceived as having polyvalent content – it will have a conference room… a library… a small kitchen… a kindergarten… an internet café. It will not just be a place where people come to do the Namaz, the prayer, stay for 5 or 10 minutes and then leave, but a place where people will come, talk, reflect, work… (M9)

I don’t like this separation of youth. I think our children should go both here and there, wherever they want. And those other children that they can come here and visit and socialize and find common interests. (F24)

**Other issues – gender situation in flux**

**Against violence on women**
Despite the different levels and versions of gender traditionalism among the minority groups, the most visible changes (at a local and national level) can be seen in the gender domain, primarily in the sphere of the protection of
women against all forms of violence. There is a high rate of family violence in Sisak (from January to August 2006 there were 790 cases of violence, mainly domestic violence). The Centre for women Adela and ALD promote gender issues in Sisak:

The violence against women is increasing: a lot of women are suffering but won’t admit to it. They are closed up, quite… They are closed up and they never want to, I think, burden others with their problems. (F17)

The state has, administratively dealt with it so poorly … there are cases. He got drunk, threw everybody out. He didn’t beat up anybody, and he is a veteran, PTSP. He goes away for two days, takes a couple of pills they take him back home and so on… (M6)

Among the Islamic Community respondents were very surprised by the fact that family violence exists in Sisak. Allegedly, they never hear about it, nor does the local women’s organization Adela. Only one woman from the EPC showed an apologetic attitude towards violence:

Of course a woman has to tolerate it a little bit. She should not talk back so much. Because women that are women in this world, the women want to stand out more than they know they can. They like to show off, wear some make-up, look good. When they go out they want men to look at them. Well of course when the man comes she will get punched in the face. I’m for it! If that’s the kind of woman it serves her right. (F8)

Exclusively women’s issues

Bosniac women and men and Pentecostal women thought that all women have the same problems: they are worst off in the labour market, they have problems balancing family life and their careers, the asymmetrical division of housework, lower salaries, harassment, sexual harassment in the workplace, etc.

I think it’s easier for men to get employment, they have better chances. (F11)

I do the same job as my male colleague. His salary is 4,500 (approx. 616 Euros) Kuna and mine is not even 2,500 (approx. 342 Euros) (F12)

A lot of women said that they had to sleep with the director or somebody else before they get the job. Harassment in the workplace. (F5)

Mobbing. (F7)

Contrary to the social workers’ views, women from minority organizations evaluated the recent position of women as better than during socialism:
It’s better now. For example let’s take my mum. My father didn’t harass her, they really had a great marriage…but he didn’t let her work. (F15)

I think that all of us women today are much happier and much more satisfied. (F10)

Analysis: emerging values

Based on the research, we found that the dominant values are related to three domains: social welfare, employment, and family. Also, there are intersections between them.

Table 4.2.6 Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welfare</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Family</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communist heritage</td>
<td>Employment as welfare</td>
<td>Family as welfare provider</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distrust in state institutions</td>
<td>Underground economy</td>
<td>Gendered housework</td>
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<td>Informal relations and</td>
<td>Inventions of unemployed</td>
<td>Debate against domestic violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>lack of cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undeveloped civil sector</td>
<td>Inequality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social welfare as</td>
<td>Multiple deprivation of</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>typical women’s domain</td>
<td>women</td>
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º: both a majority and minority value

Values in the welfare domain

The general impression seems to be that there is no absolute gap between the values of the majority and the minority in the welfare domain. There are specific welfare programmes for Serb returnees and a programme for the integration of Roma in the society, but other minorities (national or religious) are not involved in any special projects. During the in-depth research we focused on the social welfare domain: the definition of welfare, the main welfare provider, the evaluation of the welfare actors. Based on the field work we can identify several values that belong to the social welfare domain.

The situation in Sisak reflects the state of the Croatian society:
1. According to a number of clients and cases, the state welfare institution, the Centre for Social Welfare, is perceived as the main inefficient provider of social welfare and assistance.

2. Lack of trust in state welfare institutions.

3. Lack of networking, cooperation and formal relations between welfare actors.

4. Underdeveloped civil sector.

5. Welfare as a women’s domain.

The Communist heritage in social care

The welfare domain is still determined by a strong Communist heritage. The state and the Centre for Social Welfare as a state institution are still perceived as the main providers of social welfare and assistance. Despite the tendency to decentralize and transform from a passive to an active welfare state (Puljiz, 2001), the welfare domain is still centralized and passive.

Non-governmental organizations and religious minority organizations do not have the adequate status, some of them are invisible (the EPC). They have a minor role compared to the Centre for Social Welfare.

On the other hand, because of foreign donations, only Protestant communities have permanent charitable activities. Other religious minority communities (Orthodox, Islamic community) do not have a tradition of charitable work during the Communist period or in the post-war period.

The welfare issue is invisible in the national minority’s projects. Despite a high rate of unemployment national minorities do not incorporate welfare issues in their programmes. They are still in the first phase of articulating their political goals and projects. From that position serious and well articulated welfare programs remain plans for the future. There is a deep gap between plans and their realization.

Lack of trust in the state welfare institutions

Centralization in the welfare domain results in the overloading of the Centre for Social Welfare, which, due to its inadequate institutional structure and lack of staff, becomes the most criticized of institutions. Considering that the Centre for Social Welfare is faced with too many clients, lack of professionals, insufficient space, lack of information technology and the marginalization of social workers, we can conclude that the Centre for Social Welfare has an ambivalent position. Šučur has detected similar problems: lack of transparency and lack of information on beneficiaries, social workers are not informed about NGOs and other welfare actors, citizens are not informed about their rights, welfare state institutions are not sensitive to local needs… (Šučur 2003).

Respondents showed a lack of trust in state institutions: the Centre for Social Welfare and the Unemployment Office. They described these institutions as inadequately organized (e.g. there is no family counselling),
arrogant clerks with lack of understanding for people in need, ineffective in solving problems, and complete lack of expediency in resolving cases. Despite these critics, neither the respondents, nor the people in need, have any motivation of their own for self-organising, networking and volunteering. That is partly a consequence of the Communist heritage and mentality. On the other hand, it is an example of delegating responsibility. Croatian citizens, both members of the minority and the majority, think that someone else must care for their needs. There is a gap between personal solidarity and institutional solidarity (Aračić, Črpić, Nikodem, 2003).

**Primacy of informal relations**

The problem of coordination between different welfare actors is not a new problem in the Croatian welfare policy at the national or local level (Bežovan, Zrinščak, 2001). According to the empirical material we collected the lack of networking and cooperation or insufficient networking and cooperation is due to the lack of institutional and informal relationships and friendships. This is most clearly seen in the welfare domain, especially in the lack of cooperation between various welfare actors. Some interviewees did not see the need to transform informal relationships into formal ones, although the inefficiency of these relations became evident in the conversations with social workers who did not have any friendships nor contacts with persons in other welfare organizations or institutions, nor do they have any information about the humanitarian work of other welfare actors, such as Caritas, Adventist Church and so forth. One of them did mention cooperation with the EPC. Social workers emphasized the need for better coordination between welfare agents.

The lack of coordination causes overlapping of social welfare activities and makes it impossible to conduct checks on beneficiaries. Also, the informality of welfare, humanitarian and charitable activities is related to the lack of transparency and manipulation.

The existing gap between personal solidarity and institutional solidarity is not specific to our respondents. Croatian citizens help each other, but their help is personal, based on face to face interactions with their relatives, friends, neighbours and the people in need (Baloban, Črpić, Štengl, 2003, p. 204). Respondents from Bosniac and Islamic focus groups explain the importance of informal assistance as per the genetic and cultural characteristics of Bosniacs – Muslims. It is visible in the Islamic Institute through zakat (zekjat) and sadaqua (sadaka).\(^\text{12}\)

**Underdeveloped civil sector**

Civil society in Croatia has a short tradition because of communism, totalitarian ideology and lack of experience with the concept of freedom of

\(^{12}\) A term used in the Muslim tradition for a non-obligatory contribution in cash or service
association (Bežovan, Zrinščak, 2004, 2007). Civil engagement is not a common practice among the vast majority of citizens in Croatia. For the majority, as well as for minorities state institutions are conceived as crucial and exclusively responsible for resolving all welfare issues. Therefore, there are few alternatives beyond the public welfare sector. Also, there is no tradition of charitable activities and volunteer work, unless they are motivated by states of emergency (war, natural disasters…) or incentives from abroad (international donations).

During our conversations with respondents we came across an insufficient knowledge of civil society in Sisak. This lack of information is not determined by education, age, or profession; some of the interviewees do not possess recent and important information on other organizations and institutions. According to the interviews and analysis of the local newspaper, there are five NGOs that are visible at the local level: Adela, ALD, Caritas of the Saint Cross Parish, Humanitarian Society and Saint Quirinus. Participants in the focus groups, as individuals, are not involved in any NGOs or any other organizations.

The small number of volunteers in the groups (social workers, volunteers) is explained as a consequence of the lack of time or the need to deal with existential problems. Only one of the participants emphasized the need for volunteers and their involvement in all of the institutions.

Social welfare as a women’s sphere

A large number of studies show that the occupational structure is segregated according to gender. There are many more women than men in clerical occupations and service occupations, waitresses, nurses, child care workers, teachers… (Stockard and Johnson, 1992, p. 29). The feminization of the welfare domain and the high percentage of women in the social welfare system correspond to the gender stereotypes for women (emotional, tender, altruistic) and men (rational, active, assertive) (Crespy). Respondents of all focus groups agree in understanding welfare and social welfare as a woman’s domain. We can reconstruct the traditional polarized gender image: women are more altruistic, emotional, devoted, gentle, giving beings than men. Because of their ‘natural’ characteristics, women are predetermined for social welfare and for taking care of the children, old people, patients… For some participants (from all researched groups) their role and position is subordinate to men.

13 Civil society in Croatia was established during the Homeland War and encouraged by foreign organizations and foreign donors. NGOs played a significant role in solving war-related problems (refugees and displaced persons, problems with privatization of previous state ownership (Bežovan, Zrinščak 2004).


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Values in the employment domain

Based on the field work and the empirical data, we can conclude that (un)employment is the crucial issue and a value for both the minority and majority citizens in Sisak. The analysis shows that:

1. Employment is the basis of welfare and social security;
2. Unemployment has a dark side: an underground economy and the creation of unemployed;
3. Employment is a polygon for inequality within the majority and in the relationship between the majority and the minorities;
4. Employment is related to gender issues and raises the issue of the position of women.

Employment as welfare

Unemployment is a painful experience, the most difficult problem for everybody, not just for minorities. Official data on unemployment does not cover minority members as a subgroup. The unemployment of our respondents is the result of an inability to find permanent and legal employment, of inadequate education and of the collapse of the local economy. Social security is mainly defined as stable employment and a decent salary. This is not exclusively a minority definition of welfare since the representatives of the majority associations and institutions defined welfare in the same way. Employment is the basis for existence and self-actualization. Only two respondents evaluated their subjective social situation as the ideal vision of social security and welfare. There is a big gap between ideal and actual social security and welfare. According to the respondents there are in general no safer jobs or social security.

Underground economies and inventions of the unemployed

Croatia has a dual labour market, the official (legal, formal) sector and the illegal (unofficial, informal, grey) sector. The underground economy is not specific to Croatia. It is present in all societies, but there are differences in the scope and form of the informal economy in each society (Bejaković, 2004, p. 69; Štulhofer and Rimac, 2002). There are many different possible causes for the presence of an unofficial economy in Croatia: a drop in actual incomes, a high inflation rate during the 1990s, the existence of parallel means of payment in domestic transactions, a high tax burden, the Homeland war, inefficiency in the process of privatization, shortcomings in the legal systems, lack of penalties, etc. (Bićanić and Ott, 1997).

An underground economy has a tendency to discriminate against workers and give them an inferior status (Bejaković, 2004, p. 69). This type of economy is related to disrespect of workers’ rights, illegal work in Croatia and in third countries, and unpaid work (especially for over-time), as well as
the problem of working hours not being defined and often exceeding eight hours per day.

According to empirical material, the dark side of employment and social welfare users is visible. Merton identifies five reactions to the ends-means dilemma or modes of individual adaptation to anomie (Merton, according to Kuvačić, 1990, p. 42). Innovation is one of them. In innovation people try to attain a culturally defined goal, but they abandon culturally approved ways of achieving the goal. Passivity of the majority and the minority in the legal domain, unrealized expectations in state institutions and high rate of unemployment are all reasons for creativity and invention in the illegal domain: illegal immigrant work, lying about the real social status in order to receive benefits, lack of responsibility of unemployed persons, etc.

**Employment as the basis for inequalities**

Respondents of all focus groups evaluated the equality of citizens. They thought that citizens in Croatia are not equal. For example, Pentecostals emphasized religion as the basis of inequality. For Bosniac – Muslim respondents, employment became the polygon for inequalities within the majority (privileges for persons with connections or persons related to the party in power) and between the minorities and the majority (employers prefer Croats). For some respondents there is no ethnic or national discrimination in the employment domain, but they feel that minorities are more vulnerable as a labour force. Also, we can detect an ethnic hierarchy of jobs as no Bosniacs occupy a position of power and importance. They do jobs that are paid less and of a difficult manual character. One respondent suggested affirmative discrimination in the labour market.

**Women as workers – current women’s problems**

There are 3,408 registered unemployed women in Sisak, but their actual number is higher. Also, there is no data on unemployed women with national or religious minority backgrounds. During the fieldwork we spoke with 21 women from a national or religious minority background. Ten do not have a job, and one has a high level of education, but she has a job that requires a lower qualification. Also, we must mention that the women we spoke to were active and engaged in their respective organizations but we have no data on other Bosniac-Muslim women who are not members of an association. Unemployed women are doubly deprived in the public domain (insufficient education, unemployment) and again in the private domain (financial dependence, traditional roles, gender asymmetry). The situation is even worse in rural areas.

Despite their difficult social status, minority respondents evaluated the current situation concerning women as much better than during the communist period. Participants from the Centre for Social Welfare thought that the position of women was better during communism. Based on the
empirical material we can create a list of current women’s issues concerning employment: men are prioritized when it comes to employment; harassment; sexual harassment; lower salaries; problems with the reconciliation of work and private life.

**Values in the family domain**

Whether it is biological or symbolic (like in the case of Pentecostals) family is a very important social group for our focus groups respondents. Because of that we identified several values in the family domain:

1. Family is an alternative welfare provider.
2. There are several alternative interpretations of the traditional division of household duties.
3. Attitudes towards domestic violence.

**Family as a welfare provider**

Family has the status of a welfare provider because of two reasons, the lack of effectiveness of state welfare institutions and the traditional cultural primacy of informal relations. The situation is similar for a segment of the majority. According to Šućur, the residents of rural areas rely more on family support and the neighbourhood, while the residents of urban areas look for assistance in welfare institutions (Šućur, 2003, p. 34). Traditional family is a multifunctional social group. Some of its functions are to provide mental, emotional and economic support. Bosniac-Muslim respondents emphasized the importance of their families and relatives in the welfare domain. Also, Bosniac-Muslims have strong and intensive relationships with relatives in Bosnia or a third country (Italy, Austria, Sweden…). According to an eminent person from the Islamic Community, for Bosniacs poverty is a topic that makes them uncomfortable. It is not an issue of public debate, not even inside the religious community. Beside the stronger traditional family relationships in the rural areas, one other reason can also be that asking for help is perceived as humiliation, proof that not only the individual, but the whole family has failed. Existential problems are private problems resolved within family or close friends.

The EPC in Sisak is a symbolic spiritual family, they call each other *brother* or *sister*. There is a high level of solidarity and cohesion in the Pentecostal community. For respondents the pastor and other members of the community are persons who assure spiritual, welfare and psychological support. Every member of the EPC knows the social status and welfare problems of other members; poverty is not a stigma among them.
Gender issues in the family – persistence of a gendered division of domestic labour

Despite general patterns of change in the household and in the family structure in European families (marriage rates decrease, divorce rates increase, increased number of children born out of wedlock) (Scott 2006), during field work we identified different interpretations of an overwhelmingly traditional view of gender, the role of women in the family and of violence against women. Statements on the crucial role of women as employees in the public welfare domain are an extension of views on the traditional role of women in the private domain and a traditional, gendered division of domestic labour (Oakley, Benet). We find the most explicit gap between the publicly promoted majority gender values and gender values in the Islamic Community. Younger Muslim women advocate a complementary gender model inspired by Islam and Islamic matrimonial law (*Shariah*) and criticize the Western type of gender emancipation. Their interpretations of the role and the status of women are built on a couple of premises. Men and women are not equal, they are different. Because of that women and men have different obligations and rights. According to the respondents a woman has many rights in Islam, a right to education and work, but notwithstanding women are mothers. They are family-oriented, focused on the home and the children. Men are providers. According to *Shariah*, they have the obligation to provide food, clothes, education… Other respondents have a more westernized version of gender relations.

Within the Group of Bosniac Women differences in gender interpretations are mainly based on age. Younger women expressed a more liberal gender view, which does not exclude a traditional gender model.

Pentecostals promote gender equality in the religious domain but they maintain in most cases the traditional gender role in the secular domain. Despite the image of women as carers, gentle and good beings, for some respondents gender relationships have their roots in the religion: a woman is subordinated to the man and the man is subordinated to the Christ. Other interpretations are egalitarian because they include a critical view of the position of women in the public domain and of a flexible division of domestic labour.

Bosniac respondents emphasized the role of women as the keepers of Bosniac identity, tradition and culture. A woman is a gentle fighter against assimilation, which is the main problem for many Bosniacs. Although they have been living in Sisak for decades, Bosniacs are more sensitive today when it comes to their identity. Many first and second generation Bosniacs spoke about assimilation of the third generations of Bosniacs. According to them, the third generation forgot its cultural and religious heritage and it assimilates too much into the dominant culture. Despite the revitalization of Islam during the 1990s, some Bosniacs have adopted many Catholic customs.
and have not participated in the Islamic Community or the activities of the Bosniac organizations.

**Domestic violence**

In recent years problems of family violence and child abuse have come into the focus of public attention at the national and local level. According to feminists, family violence against women and children is ‘the ultimate expression of male power within the family’ (Stockard and Johnson, 1992, p. 57) One of the most visible gender problems in Sisak is domestic violence. In 2002, 2004 and 2006 ALD conducted research on domestic violence in the Sisak-Moslavina county. Results show that 31% of the respondents experienced domestic violence, but 76% of them did not ask for help. Because of this in 2003 ALD organized an SOS phone number for victims of domestic violence. During 2006 ALD received 232 calls. Despite the visibility of domestic violence, respondents from the Islamic Community were very surprised to hear about this. We identified new attitudes towards violence: it is not a private, but a public problem. According to the respondents, solving this problem lays within the responsibility of state institutions and NGOs. Only one respondent from the EPC stated that women deserve violence. Also, respondents (women and men) with a traditional gender perspective emphasized cases of violence against men. In general women showed understanding towards abused women and emphasized the traditionally female position of keeping the problems they experienced inside the family. The general suggestion of the respondents is to ‘come out of the closet’ (Vander Zanden, 1990, p. 388) and resolve the problem with the professionals ( NGO, state institution, police…).

How are these values related to religion, minorities and gender?

Analysis demonstrates that some of the values are related to religion, minorities and gender. The most obvious intersection between religion, minority and gender is visible in the Islamic Community. Traditional interpretations of women’s roles in the Muslim community are in part determined by Islam and Islamic matrimonial law (Shariah). Also, the perception of women within the EPC is partly determined by Protestantism: women are equal to men during rituals and religious life, but their role in the secular domain is mostly traditional. But in general, an image of women as more altruistic and gentle than men is universal. It is not specific to one religion.

Intersections between religion, minority and gender are also visible in the cases of unemployed Muslim and Bosniac women or Roma women from the EPC. They are also deprived both in the public domain (insufficient
education, unemployment) and in the private domain (financial dependence, traditional roles, gender asymmetry).

Also, in the case of Bosniacs there is the overlapping of religious and national minority status, but during the fieldwork we identified a division in the Bosniac-Muslim community. The Islamic Community and some Bosniacs promote more religious values, but another segment of the Bosniac national minority is dominated by secular values.

Welfare issues are treated in various ways by the Islamic Community, the EPC and the Catholic Church. In the first community, charitable activities are organized only during the Muslim holidays. On the other hand, the EPC has an organized welfare activity as does the Catholic Church. But, as we mentioned, because of the prejudice towards Protestantism, their humanitarian involvement is invisible. Contrary to that, the charitable work of Catholic organizations is very visible. The Islamic Community exclusively focuses on Muslims, but the EPC distributes assistance to people with various religious and ethnic backgrounds.

There is a visible atmosphere of tolerance between the Bosniac associations and the majority institutions and organizations that were included in the research, but the lack of tolerance on the part of the majority is evident when directed towards the Protestants.

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Chapter 5 Romania

5:1 OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL SITUATION

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Introduction

After the fall of the Ceausescu Regime in 1989 Romania started its long way of reintegration in the group of European nations and their values and culture. Romania’s religious tradition, firmly rooted in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and the country’s transition to democracy and historical trajectory from Communism to a post-Communist welfare state contribute in making the Romanian case study of particular interest in the WaVE project. The contribution of the Romanian case study to the WaVE project is to examine the social influence and impact of religion through its welfare dimensions from an Orthodox perspective against the country’s post-Communist historical context.

The Moldavian Voivode Stefan cel Mare (1433-1504) was named by Pope Sixtus IV ‘the champion of Christianity’. In modern terms he could also be considered as the first person to have contributed to the development of a social welfare system in Moldova: he funded the construction of many churches and monasteries in Moldova and Transylvania, which, besides their religious function, served as educational centres and hospitals. The Church became the most important spiritual and social institution in the country’s history and many schools and hospitals functioned under the auspices of churches and monasteries. However, after 50 years of persecution and state control of the Romanian Church, the country’s main welfare structure disappeared permanently. Starting in 1989 and after the fall of the Ceausescu regime, the social role of the Church in the welfare of Romanian society entered a new phase. Yet, because all of the Church’s holdings were confiscated during the Communist period, the Romanian Church found itself at a disadvantage and lacking the most basic of resources. The Church is

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1 The WaVE Consortium is very grateful to Dr Lina Molokotos Liederman for her extensive redrafting of the chapters on Romania prior to publication.
now in a period of transition and reorganization marked by a reaffirmation of its social function. The organization in 2001 of an International Congress on ‘Family and Welfare in the Beginning of a New Millennium’ by the Romanian Patriarchate in Bucharest indicates the Church’s increased involvement in the social welfare of Romanian society.

Research literature

Even though the Church has traditionally been both a spiritual and social resource in Romania, the question of social welfare activity did not become a topic of discussion in the Romanian Orthodox Church until the end of the 20th century. A review of research literature on welfare and religion indicates a shortage of studies on the social role of the Church in Romanian society. However, the study by Marcia R. Lampen on ‘Romania - the role of faith-based programs: a study of the effects of values and economics on the provision of social welfare services in post-Communist Romania’ is indicative of the Church’s interest in increasing its social function in the social welfare of Romanian society. Conducted in 2003, the study examined the impact of values and economics on the delivery of faith-based services in Romania; it was presented during the 2005 convention of the NACSW (North American Association of Christians in Social Work) (http://www.nacsw.org/Publications/Proceedings2005/LampenMProgramsinRomania.pdf).

The relations between the majority church and minority groups in Romania are discussed in several publications that date from the late 1990s and present a historical review and the state of affairs (Moraru 1999; Gotia-Galfy 1999). The relations between the majority church and religious minority groups is particularly relevant in Transylvania, where, conflicts broke out after 1989 between the Greek-Catholic Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church on the question of retrocession of churches from Orthodox to Greek-Catholics. Therefore, after 1989 the most discussed issue in publications and literature on the activities of religious institutions was the problem of Transylvanian churches and the restitution of their properties. The issue of cohabitation between the majority Church and religious or national minorities in Romania has been discussed by Irimie Marga (Marga 2002).

Several publications analyse the status of minorities, including migration and emigration from the country, discrimination and social cohesion (Jura 2004; Andreescu 2005; Jivan and Vultur 2000).

The work of researchers in Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca is worth noting because it has a central position in the study and research of religion and religious movements in Romania. As a university centre where different religious traditions have coexisted for centuries, Babes-Bolyai
University has been hosting the Academic Society for the Research of Religions and Ideologies (SACRI), an organization that promotes the research and study of religions and ideologies and inter-religious dialogue, and encourages religious and political freedom and pluralism. Published by SACRI, the *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, provides a space for the study of religions and ideologies in an interdisciplinary approach including religious studies, philosophy of religions, ethics, political philosophy and political science, anthropology, sociology, interreligious dialogue and communications theory.

The intersections between gender equality and religion are examined in several publications on the female ecumenical movement in Romania during the period of Communist repressions (Isac and Albu 2003; Manolache 1994). One of the most important publications on the status of women during the Communist era is by Magyari-Vincze, from the Faculty of European Studies in Cluj-Napoca.

Research on religion, minorities and welfare, particularly on the Muslim minority in the eastern part of Romania is scarce. For this reason, the case study analysis for the WaVE project was conducted in Medgidia, a small city with a Turk-Tatar Muslim minority, located in the eastern part of Romania in the Black Sea region. The Romanian case study (see the next chapter) is, therefore, focused on the coexistence of the historical Muslim community within a primarily Christian society.

**Characteristics of the Romanian welfare system**

**Historical background: the welfare situation in the Communist period and its impact on the Romanian welfare structure**

During the Communist period all aspects of the welfare system were coordinated by the State. Pensions, hospitals and sanatoriums (medical facilities for long-term illnesses) were paid for by public funds. The State provided financial assistance to its employees and in some cases also to orphans, people with mental or physical disabilities and the elderly.

The pension scheme in socialist Romania was available only to state employees. Pensions were based on the employee’s salary rate. Retirement age was 57 for women and 62 for men. The State also provided pensions to disabled persons and bereaved families that were already entitled to a retirement pension. Cooperatives, professional associations and the clergy had to provide their own pensions.

The main gap in the Communist welfare system was the lack of any social welfare programmes outside the ‘system’. Any person who was not part of the workforce could not benefit from any form of welfare service.
represented a duty and a right, and welfare policy was a mix between universal benefits (accessible for all citizens) and social measures related to employment or to specific work places’ (Rusu 2001). Therefore, work was strongly connected to welfare assistance and it was only through participation in the workforce that one was eligible to have free access to educational scholarships, medical assistance, maternity leave and child benefits.

Current situation: the welfare system in post-Communist Romania

After 1989 the situation changed and Romania entered a deep crisis marked by severe unemployment and lack of social welfare programmes. During this difficult transition period, the Romanian State was the main provider of social and welfare services through institutions, such as the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family, the Ministry of Education and Research, and the Ministry of Public Health. However, the State was not able to ensure full employment and it was necessary to create a new welfare system, including unemployment insurance and social assistance services. This post-Communist period of transition particularly affected groups of disadvantaged people, thus creating a bigger gap between poor and rich. As a result, there was a massive flow of labour emigration to Western Europe. The highest official rates of emigration in 2004 were to Germany (2,707 persons), Italy (2,603 persons) and Hungary (1,553 persons) (www.insse.ro). However, taking into account the large number of undocumented Romanians who left the country in order to find work abroad, the overall emigration figures from Romania are much higher.

According to the 2002 census by the National Institute of Statistics (www.insse.ro), the total population in Romania is 21,680,974, including 48.75% male and 51.25% female citizens. In 2004, the percentage of active population in Romania was 45.93% (9,957,000), including 25.23% (5,471,000) male and 20.70% (4,486,000) female. Out of a total of 799,000 unemployed persons (3.69% of the total active population), 2.2% (491,000) were male and 1.4% (308,000) female. Comparing this data to the 2002 Eurostat data on Romania when the unemployment rate was 8.4%, it seems that the actual situation has improved with 3.69% being the most recent unemployment rate. However, research conducted by Mircea Badescu for the European Training Foundation indicates that ‘the percentage of people whose jobs started within the past 3 months was 3.7% in 2004 (up from 2.9% in 2003) but this is still below the EU 25 average of 4.3%. For the same period, part-time employment in Romania was 10.2%, well below the EU 25 average (17.7%), as was the percentage of employees with temporary contracts (2.6% in Romania compared to 13.3% for EU 25).’ (Badescu and
The role of family
The family plays an important role in the Romanian welfare system. Since the State is unable to provide social assistance for the care of elderly people and persons with disabilities (a significant problem in Romania), the family has filled the gap in social welfare services to the point of becoming the single most important structure in the care of vulnerable people. Welfare services are provided mainly by women, who are paid by the State to provide social care to elderly people and persons with disabilities. The average monthly salary of a female social worker is approximately 120 Euros, paid for by local authorities. However, there is a lengthy administrative process that social workers have to go through in order to be able to receive this type of payment by the State (www.anvr.ro).

The role of the Church
The national welfare system in Romania is managed mostly by the State with the Church having a secondary role in the provision of social services. The Romanian Orthodox Church has limited resources at its disposal and is, therefore going through a period of transition and reorganization. According to official data provided by the Romanian Patriarchate, the Church’s welfare structure is to become decentralized so that every bishop can be responsible for a local welfare structure according to the needs of the community. The Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic and Reformed Churches, through their own social assistance centres, hospitals and charity activities, also make a significant contribution to the Romanian welfare system.

Social assistance for children
The problem of abandoned children is a particularly significant issue in Romania and dates back to the Communist period. In 1966 the Ceausescu regime outlawed abortion (Decree 770) as part of a measure to increase population growth. At that time, Romania and Hungary were the European countries with the lowest national birthrates: 14 children per 1,000 persons (Scarlat 2005). Following the Ceausescu Decree, the number of births in 1967, only one year after making abortion illegal, doubled in comparison to the year before. However, the Romanian system of welfare was not prepared for such a drastic demographic change: kindergartens, schools and hospitals were simply unable to face the new situation. Between 1966 and 1989 a total of 9,452 women died from illegal abortions (Statistical Centre of Medical
and Sanitary Documentation - http://www.ms.ro). By 1986 birth rates in Romania declined to the levels observed in 1966 and after 1989 birth rates remained very low. In 2002 there was an increase in birth rates (9.7 per 1,000) but only after the State changed the status of social insurance and pensions under Law 19/2000. In 2004 birth rates had risen to 10 children per 1,000 persons (www.insse.ro).

While birth rates in Romania rose quite significantly by 2004, the rate of abandoned children in 2003/2004, according to the UNICEF Coordinator in Romania, was 1.8%, amounting to approximately 5,000 children per year, the same rate as during the Ceausescu period. The high percentage of abandoned children can be attributed to the difficult and precarious economic situation in Romania, especially in rural areas.

In response to the alarming rates of child abandonment, the State has made significant efforts to educate the population about the responsibility of caring and looking after children; it has also implemented specific and highly regulated actions that may seem modest, but are practical and effective. For example, the problem of abandoned children was raised by the Deputy Ionela Pop-Bruchental in the legislative body of the Chamber of Deputies in November 2006. Based, not only on the number of registered abandoned children (4,000 in 2005), but also on the number of unregistered children at the time of their birth (http://www.cdep.ro), the Deputy proposed new legislation on newborn children. According to Law no. 14, which was ratified and put into effect in 2006, parents of newborn children, are offered financial benefits and a package of essential items, such as clothes, personal hygiene products, dry milk, etc. Granting this package, in addition to money, was designed to prevent the misuse of funds by the parents (i.e. spending the money they receive from the State for purposes other than their children’s needs). Another regulated form of government assistance directed to young children is the programme Cornul si Laptele (‘Croissant and Milk’), according to which bread and milk are distributed daily to kindergartens and primary schools (classes 1 through 4). This initiative was designed to supplement the money granted to families for looking after children that in some cases was being misused by the parents.

Religious composition of Romania

According to the 2002 census, Orthodox believers were 86.7% (http://www.insse.ro). In addition to the Christian Orthodox majority, the following religious groups are officially recognized in Romania: Roman-Catholics, Reformed, Pentecostals, Greek-Catholics, Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Muslims, Unitarians, Evangelical Christians, Old Rite Christian Church, Evangelicals, Evangelical Church of Augustan Confession, and Jews (Mosaic). The National Institute of Statistics (http://www.insse.ro) has
published the following data concerning officially recognized religions in Romania:

**Table 5.1.1 Officially recognized religions in Romania**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious denominations</th>
<th>Number of practicing members</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox Church</td>
<td>18,817,975</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic Church (Hungarians, Germans, Romanians)</td>
<td>1,026,429</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformed Calvinist (Protestants) (Hungarians)</td>
<td>701,077</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Church United with Rome (Greek Catholics)</td>
<td>191,556</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal Church (Neo Protestants)</td>
<td>324,462</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist Church (Neo Protestants)</td>
<td>126,639</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Day Adventists (Neo-Protestants)</td>
<td>93,670</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unitarians (Protestants) (Hungarians)</td>
<td>66,944</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims (Islam) (Turks, Tatars)</td>
<td>67,257</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Christians (Neo Protestants)</td>
<td>44,476</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah’s Witnesses</td>
<td>39,300</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical - Lutheran Church of Augustan Confession (Protestants) (Germans)</td>
<td>8,716</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Certain religious foundations and groups are also recognized, including the Mormon Church (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), the Religious Nazarene Association, the Bahá’í Romanian Community and Soldiers of God (a reformist movement within the Orthodox Church).

There are approximately 70,000 Muslims in Romania: the majority (56,033) are Romanian Muslims and the remaining (13,967) are foreign nationals (including Turks, Tatars, Albanians, etc.) living in various urban and rural areas in Romania. Most Muslims are concentrated in Constanta (85%) and Tulcea (12%). The remaining 3% live in other areas, such as Bucharest, Braila, Calarasi, Galati, Giurgiu, Turnu Severin, Iasi, Cluj-Napoca and Timisoara (www.islamulazi.ro). The integration of Muslim immigrants is considered smooth and there are no specific issues of debate on this topic.

**Characteristics of the majority church**

**Historical background**

Romania’s religious history and frequent characterization as a Saviour of Christianity originates in the Ottoman domination, when Romanian Voievods where fighting against the Ottoman Empire. By the early 1900s the Romanian Kingdom was one of the largest countries in Eastern Europe and included the provinces of Moldova (together with Bessarabia - actually the Republic of Moldova - and North Bucovina - currently in the Ukraine),

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Group</th>
<th>Followers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Rite Christian Church (‘Lipoveni’ Russians) (Old Orthodox)</td>
<td>38,147</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran-Evangelic Synodo-Presbyterian (Protestants) (Hungarian)</td>
<td>27,112</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Romanian Church (Neo-Protestants)</td>
<td>18,178</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosaic Jews</td>
<td>6,057</td>
<td>&lt;0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian Church</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>&lt;0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the Old Kingdom and Transylvania. The unification of all Romanian territories was deeply influenced by the Orthodox Church clergy, particularly by Patriarch Miron Cristea who contributed to the unification of Transylvania and Romania in 1918. After unification, the Romanian Kingdom inherited the great diversity of its three regions: the Protestant, Greek and Roman Catholic minorities in Transylvania, the Catholic minority in Bucovina and the Muslims in the Old Kingdom.

After the Second World War, the Romanian monarchy was abolished and Romania became a People’s Republic. The New Constitution of 1948 brought new changes as far as religion is concerned. The Constitution, and implicitly the Romanian State, granted freedom of conscience and religious freedom, according to which all religious denominations are free and equal in front of the law. However, at the same time, the Communist regime adopted a different stance on certain religious groups: made the Greek Catholic Church, Jehovah’s Witnesses and several other Neo Protestant churches illegal. These groups were prohibited because they were viewed as representing the interests and ideology of the United States of America (Gillet 1997). Members of these religious denominations were deported to prisons or were forced to leave the country and their churches and property were confiscated and ‘nationalized’. As a result, hundreds of priests and pastors died in Communist prisons.

After the 1989 Revolution, the status of the Greek Catholic Church and other religions was restored, with the exception of Jehovah’s Witnesses that were not officially recognized until 2003. In the same year, Article 44 of the Constitution concerning private ownership was revised and the process of restitution of nationalized properties began.

Current situation

Following the latest census (2002), conducted by the National Institute of Statistics, the institutions most trusted by the Romanian population are the Church and the army. This attitude can be explained by the country’s long history where religion has played a determining role. For example, the great Voivode of Moldova, Steven the Great, erected a church or a monastery after every battle he won defending his country. The Orthodox Church was also deeply involved in the process of unifying the Romanian provinces of Moldova, Transylvania and the Old Kingdom, thus influencing its future.

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2 The Church emerges as by far the most trusted domestic institution in Romania, with a moderate to high trust rating of 91%, followed by the army (79%), the mass media (69%), followed by the police (46%). The survey further reveals that Romania's least trusted institutions are NGOs (24%) and the Parliament (32%). The current government receives a 44% trust rating, a fairly high figure on a regional comparison with other Balkan countries, such as Serbia or Macedonia. (http://www.idea.int/europe_cis/balkans/see_survey.cfm).
position and status for the future generations. Romanian national identity is, therefore closely linked with Orthodox Christianity.

According to statistical data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, 98% of children born into Orthodox families are baptized. Data on religious marriages and burials is not available.

According to the Romanian Constitution of 1923, the Romanian Orthodox Church is the ‘dominant church of the State’ and the Greek Catholic Church a ‘national denomination’ (Leb 2004). Article 4 of the Romanian Constitution that was amended in 1991, stipulates that ‘Romania is the common and indivisible homeland of all its citizens, without any discrimination on account of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, opinion, political adherence, property or social origin’ (http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?den=act2_2&par1=1).

The Romanian Orthodox Church became autocephalous in 1885 and was raised to the rank of Patriarchy in 1925, under the name of the Romanian Patriarchate (http://www.patriarhia.ro/en/). The Holy Synod, made up of all functioning hierarchs (metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, assistant bishops), is the highest authority of the Romanian Orthodox Church for all dogmatic and canonical issues, as well as for all religious affairs. The Romanian Patriarchate comprises six Metropolitan Sees made up of 10 Archdioceses and 16 Dioceses, 161 deaneries, and 13,527 parishes served by 14,513 priests and deacons in 15,218 places of worship (www.patriarhia.ro). The Romanian Orthodox Church has 637 monasteries and sketes (small monastic communities relative isolation for monks and ascetics,) and metochions with over 8,000 monks and nuns.

Outside the Romanian borders there are three Metropolitan Sees under the jurisdiction of the Romanian Patriarchate: the Metropolitan See of Bessarabia, the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan See for Germany and Central and Northern Europe, and the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan See for Western and Central Europe. Additionally, there is one Archdiocese in North America (the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese for America and Canada) and two Dioceses (the Romanian Orthodox Diocese in Hungary with headquarters in Gyula and the Romanian Orthodox Diocese in Yugoslavia with headquarters in Vârșeț, Serbia/Montenegro).

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3 A *metochion* is an ecclesiastical embassy church, usually of one autocephalous or autonomous church to another. The term is also used to refer to a parish representation (or dependency) of a monastery. In the former case, the local territorial church grants a plot of land or a church building for the use of the foreign church being represented and the location is then considered to belong canonically to the foreign church. Services held there are often in the language appropriate to the church being represented and the congregation is often made up of immigrants or visitors from the nation associated with that church. Typically, a *metochion* presence on the territory of an autocephalous church is limited to only a few parishes at most. In the case of a monastic *metochion*, such as a parish church, it is a dependency of a particular monastic community, perhaps receiving clergy from that community or other forms of support (http://orthodoxwiki.org).
The Romanian Orthodox Church, as well as other Churches, are under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, which includes in its structure the State Secretariat for Religions. The Secretariat is in charge of providing financial, legislative assistance and maintaining dialogue between Churches. The Liberal Party of Romania (PNL) submitted a proposal to grant the Orthodox Church the status of a national religion, but the request was rejected by left wing parties.

According to Law no. 489/2006 on religious freedom and the general regime of denominations, published in the Official Monitor of Romania (Part I, no.11, 8.01.2007), officially recognized religions can receive State funding and benefit from tax exemptions in compliance with the Tax Code (www.culte.ro). The law includes provisions for religious institutions with smaller revenues that can receive public funds from local authorities in order to cover the costs for the proper functioning, maintenance and repair of Churches and pay for the sustenance and salaries for both clergy and non-clergy staff. Public funding is dependent on membership numbers and the real needs of each recognized religion according to the latest census.

As a majority religion, the Romanian Orthodox Church benefits the most in both financial and other terms. Orthodox clergy generally preside over State occasions and ceremonies and the Church receives the largest share of public funding. For example, in 2004, the State granted financial assistance (for various purposes, including salaries for the clergy) as follows: 8 million euros (ROL 291,480 million) to the Orthodox Church, 884,861 euros (ROL 31,855 million) to the Roman Catholic Church, 164,027 euros (ROL 5,905 million) to the Greek Catholic Church, and 296,111 euros (ROL 10,660 million) to the Reformed Church.

The Church’s welfare activities

The Orthodox Church is considered one of the most credible and trusted institutions and has an active role in social welfare initiatives in Romania. In 2005 the Romanian Orthodox Church received from a variety of sponsors and donors 13,402,104 Euros (ROL 46,907,363)(www.patriarhia.ro). For centuries the Orthodox Church was the most important institution and the first schools, hospitals and printing houses in Romanian lands were funded by and placed under the auspices of the Orthodox Church.

The Church’s commitment to social welfare is illustrated in the creation of the Department of Church and Society within the Romanian Patriarchate. The Department offers spiritual and material support to people in need, mostly to children and elderly people, and coordinates all welfare activities of the Church. During natural disasters, the Church offers humanitarian aid at a national level in order to provide immediate assistance to affected persons.
The presence and social involvement of the Church is significant in various domains of Romanian society, including 143 priests in the army, police and prisons (98 Orthodox priests, 54 churches and chapels within army locations inside the country and abroad and one priest for each of the 39 prisons and their 37 churches and chapels) and 364 priests in hospitals, social centres and educational institutions (www.patriarhia.ro). Furthermore, there are over 330 social institutions under the patronage of the Romanian Orthodox Church, including centres for children and old people, social canteens and bakeries, centres of diagnostic treatment, counselling centres and centres for victims of human trafficking (www.patriarhia.ro). According to the Romanian Patriarchate, the Orthodox Church provides permanent social assistance to approximately 270,000 persons (www.patriarhia.ro).

The following social institutions are under the patronage of the Romanian Orthodox Church:

- 121 centres for children;
- 35 centres for elderly people;
- 106 social canteens and bakeries;
- 52 centres for diagnosis and treatment;
- 23 centres for the assistance of families in difficulty;
- 2 centres for victims of human trafficking.

The social activities of the Orthodox Church are in accordance to agreements of collaboration between public institutions and the Romanian Patriarchate. For example, a formal agreement between the State and the Church was signed in 1993 between the Ministry of Justice and the Romanian Patriarchate, in order to allow religious services in prisons. In another instance, the Church and the Romanian National Television (TVR) organized jointly a national fundraising campaign for regions affected by flooding in 2005. The campaign raised approximately 5,373,274 euros (ROL 18,000,470).

The Church also works in partnership with national and local authorities, but also with national and international non-governmental organizations for the implementation of national programmes against poverty and for the prevention of domestic violence, human trafficking, drug abuse and the spread of HIV/AIDS (www.patriarhia.ro).

The Romanian Orthodox Church, as a majority church, does not provide any services that are specifically targeted to minority groups since in the assistance it does not differentiate between particular ethnic or religious

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4 Bread is considered one of the most important food products in Romania, which explains why there are so many social bakeries providing people with bread, especially during natural disasters when the provision of fresh water and bread is critical.
groups. However, in some of its programmes the Department of Church and Society works together with representatives of Islam (for example, the Constanta action assisting flooded villages) and the Roman Catholic Church.

Welfare, religion and gender

The position of women in Romanian society

The role of women in Romania has traditionally been to take care of the home, children and older members of the family. Although the official position of women for the Romanian Orthodox Church is that, from a theological point of view, there are no differences between men and women, the Church recognizes more particularly the role of women in the educational, social and cultural domains but not in administering the Holy Sacraments (i.e. the ordination of women). It was not until the end of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th when the status of women started changing. In the study *Women and their history in Romania*, Ciupala indicates that ‘the access to education for women in Romania at the end of 19th century was extended: women have been accepted in all educational institutions, including universities, without discrimination. In this sense Romania was much more developed compared to other European states’ (Ciupala 2004).

Queen Mary of Romania, who funded schools for young girls from poor families, was an important role model in the education of women. The figure of Queen Mary in the 20th century seems to hold a predominant role in most documents concerning the involvement of women in the social and religious life of modern Romania since she deeply influenced the conscience of Romanian people on the involvement of women in social and political life.

In general terms, the chances for education and career development are equal for men and women. A recent television show ‘Great Romanians’ illustrated the position of women in Romanian society. Four out of ten Romanian figures were women: Nadia Comaneci, Olympic Champion in gymnastics with 5 golden medals, Queen Mary of Romania, known for her charity work and political involvement during World War I, Elizabeta Rizea, the symbol of Romanian peasant resistance against the Communist regime, and Ana Aslan, biologist who contributed to gerontological research and actively developed an anti-aging geriatric treatment (*Gerovital H3*). However, according to sociologists, leadership positions are held primarily by men. Another gender gap relates to leisure time: women use their spare time for looking after children and housekeeping, while men use their free time for recreation. A discussion of issues of discrimination and gender stereotypes relating to the professional and leisure activities of women was
published by Monica Roman in her article ‘Gender Difference in Allotting Leisure Time in Romania’ (Roman 2006).

According to Magyari-Vincze, ‘one of the greatest paradoxes experienced by women under Socialism was that they became “emancipated” without being valued as such, and more than that, experienced this emancipation as a kind of “punishment” to carry on a triple-burden as workers-mothers-housekeepers’ (Magyari-Vincze 2003). After 1989, the status of women did not improve and the post-Communist transition period deeply affected the status of women since, in addition to working outside the home, a woman’s role, according to Romanian tradition, is still to take care of children and the older members of the family. An article published in the *Gazeta de Sud* (no. 3636, 11 December 2006) indicates that the percentage of women working 48 hours a week (in comparison to other EU countries, where the percentage of number of hours worked is half) is almost equal to the percentage of men working for the same number of hours a week. The Communist legacy in the domain of gender equality can still be felt in Romania, especially in the countryside, where the recent ‘economic transition’ is forcing women to survive on two jobs for a small amount of money.

According to UNIFEM data, in the 2005 *Human Development Report*, the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) was calculated at 0.789, with Romania ranking as the 51st state out of 177. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) was calculated at 0.488, ranking Romania as number 56.

As of 2003, the adult literacy and unemployment rates for women were respectively 96.3%, (versus 98.4% for men) and 6.4% (versus 7.5% for men).

At the same time, the data from 2005 indicate that Romania is ‘a source and transit country for human trafficking, sexual exploitation and forced labour to countries in the EU and to the Balkans’ (http://www.unifem.sk/index.cfm?module=project&page=country&CountryISO=RO#_ftn13).

The Church’s involvement in the provision of educational activities and social welfare services targeted specifically towards women in Romanian society is scarce, sometimes even non-existent. A type of activity that is noteworthy began during the Communist regime Romania in the 1970s and it was organized by Lutheran women who introduced a celebration of the International Day of Prayer. Subsequently, in 1990, following the efforts of Protestant and Orthodox women, an ecumenical movement was organized under the Ecumenical Forum for Romania, which became officially registered in 1998 and included 38 representative centres all over Romania. Social assistance for those in need, as well as spiritual and material support are included among the central activities of the Forum.
Gender legislation and policies

In terms of the Romanian legal framework for gender equality, equal treatment and equal opportunities for women and men are guaranteed by legislation. The Romanian Constitution (Article 16) stipulates that ‘all citizens are equal before the law and public authorities without any special privileges or discrimination’ (http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?den=act2_2&par1=2). ‘The principle of equality between the sexes is explicitly regulated under Article 4 of the Constitution and in a number of national regulations’ (http://www.gender-equality.webinfo.lt/results/romania.htm). On 7 December 2002, the Romanian government adopted the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, ensuring the principle of equal pay and treatment for women and men and prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination based on sex (http://www.gender-equality.webinfo.lt/results/romania.htm; http://www.unifem.sk/index.cfm?module=project&page=country&CountryISO=RO). The Law also stipulates the adoption of a National Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, whose objectives include support for the enforcement of the gender equality principle, development programmes for continuous training and increase of women’s participation in the country’s economic and social life. Additionally, the new Labour Code introduced in March 2003 (Law nos. 480/2003 and 541/2003) stipulates equal pay for equal work, prohibits direct and indirect discrimination and includes special provisions on equal opportunities, equal treatment in the labour market and equal possibilities for continuous training. The Labour Code also includes special measures for the protection of women in the workplace, for example during and after maternity. Maternity leave is granted for two years for healthy children and three years for children with disabilities. Therefore, Romania has a well-defined non-discriminatory legal framework.

The European Commission noted in its evaluation document ‘Agenda 2000’ that ‘in the field of equal opportunities, national Romanian legislation covers the provisions of the European Union legislation on non-discrimination in terms of gender’ (http://www.gender-equality.webinfo.lt/results/romania.htm).

Overview of the minority presence in Romania

The official terms used by the Romanian State to designate other nationalities are ‘national or ethnic minorities’. The term ‘ethnic’ is mostly

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5 ‘Agenda 2000’ is an EU action programme whose main objectives were to strengthen community policies and to give the European Union a new financial framework for the period 2000-2006 in view of its enlargement. It was launched in 1999 (http://ec.europa.eu/agenda2000/index_en.htm).
used to designate the Roma population, ‘etnie rroma’ (Roma ethnicity), and a national minority is mostly connected to nation-states: Ukrainian, Hungarians, Serbians etc. According to the Department of Interethnic Relations, the term ‘national minority’ refers to the country’s ethnic and linguistic groups.

After the unification of 1918, Romania inherited from its provinces a large ethnic and religious diversity. Therefore, the presence of religious and national minorities in Romania is diverse and concentrated across different regions. Almost in all cases these are accepted historic minorities from Romanian territories dating from between the 10th and 14th centuries.

The most recent figures on national minorities in Romania, were collected during the 2002 census and published by the Department for Interethnic Relations.

Table 5.1.2 National minorities present in Romania (according to the 2002 census)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minority</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hungarians</td>
<td>1,413,807</td>
<td>(6.60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>535,140</td>
<td>(2.46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainians</td>
<td>61,098</td>
<td>(0.28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germans</td>
<td>59,764</td>
<td>(0.27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian (Lipoveni)</td>
<td>35,791</td>
<td>(0.16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turks</td>
<td>32,098</td>
<td>(0.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatars</td>
<td>23,935</td>
<td>(0.11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbians</td>
<td>22,561</td>
<td>(0.10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovaks</td>
<td>17,226</td>
<td>(0.07%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>8,025</td>
<td>(0.03%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croats</td>
<td>6,807</td>
<td>(0.03%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hungarians, located in the central and north-western part of the country, constitute the largest national minority in Romania. Approximately half (757,086 out of a total of 1,431,807) of the Hungarian communities are concentrated in urban centres.

![Image of map showing concentration of Hungarians in Romania]

Figure 5.1.1 Concentration of Hungarians in Romania (Source: http://www.dri.gov.ro).

The Roma (Gypsies), whose presence on Romanian territory could date as early as 1068, are the second largest national minority in Romania. Approximately 39% (208,948 out of a total of 535,140) of Roma live in urban centres.
The Turkish (32,098 or 0.14%) and Tatar (23,935 or 0.11%) national minorities are concentrated in the region around the Black Sea. Their presence in the country dates from the end of 13th century and they include Muslims from Romania. Some mosques that have been found in Transylvania and Moldova were constructed or established in existing buildings as places of prayer by Muslim foreign students living temporarily in Romania.

All historic minorities are represented in Parliament and receive political and financial support from the State. The recent Chinese minority is not considered a historic minority since it is viewed as part of the Chinese
Diaspora and Chinese residents are not Romanian citizens. However, the State is in the process of granting the Chinese community an official status. The Chinese population is mostly located in the Colentina neighbourhood of Bucharest, where blocks of buildings with apartments, offices and commercial units have been specifically constructed for this community (Authority for Aliens, http://aps.mai.gov.ro).

National minorities in Romania are officially represented in Parliament and have a role in government: they are regularly consulted on issues concerning regional administration and education, social welfare, cultural exchange, etc. According to Article 59 (paragraph 2) of the Romanian Constitution, each national minority is entitled to be represented by one organization. Under the electoral law, the organizations of citizens belonging to national minorities that do not receive in the elections the necessary number of votes in order to be represented in Parliament each have the right to one deputy seat. This right has been recognized and guaranteed by Law no. 70/1991 concerning local elections. More specifically, Article 2 stipulates that Romanian citizens, irrespective of nationality, race, language, religion, sex, political beliefs or profession equally enjoy their election rights.

Patterns of immigration and relevant legislation

Compared to other European countries, the volume of immigration to Romania is small. In 2002, 72,859 foreign citizens were registered under the Authority for Foreign Citizens (http://atlas.verslo.is/templates/integration/20062007/romania/Immigration.pdf). However, over the last decade Romania has become a destination for foreign citizens for a variety of reasons, including business, studies or other motives (marriage, religious missions, etc.).

Romanian policy on immigration and on the welfare (social) needs of immigrant population is covered under Law 357/2003 on the status of foreign citizens in Romania. More specifically, Government Emergency Ordinance No. 195/2002 on the Regime of Aliens in Romania (approved with modifications through Law 357/2003) stipulates that all aliens (holders of a right of permanent stay) benefit from equal treatment with the Romanian citizens (except for the right to vote and military service) in a variety of areas including, access to the labour market, education, social security, health care and social protection, and freedom to associate and belong to trade unions or professional organizations (http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,LEGAL,,LEGISLATION,ROM,4562d8b62,4187a2d24,0.html).

According to a recent report by the National Office for Refugees (the Romanian governmental unit in charge of the implementation of asylum
policy), 60% of refugees are Muslims from Iraq and Iran and 40% originate from other countries. Up to 95% of refugees live in Bucharest.

Religious and national minority-majority relations

The relations between religious and national minority groups in Romania are satisfactory but there are some exceptions: the cases of the delayed restitution of Greek-Catholic properties and the establishment of Jehovah’s Witnesses’ places of worship within traditionally Orthodox communities. The Orthodox Church is generally very conservative and hesitant in accepting certain religious groups, including Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Pentecostal Church and new religious movements, including the Yoga Organization ‘MISA’. This attitude dates from the Communist regime and the Ceausescu period when the Orthodox Church was forced to exist under a Socialist form of nationalism, according to which minority religions were viewed as foreign ‘spies’. This ideology was kept alive for the 50 years of Communism in Romania and changing this perception take time. Although a process of education in the spirit of religious dialogue and tolerance is already underway, it is important to maintain and develop it further.

The second largest church in Romania is the Roman Catholic Church (5%). The relationship between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches was greatly improved when Pope John Paul II visited Romania in 1999; it was the first Papal visit in an Orthodox country. Following the official visit of Pope John Paul II, the dialogue between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church was reopened after a long period of hesitation originating in the Communist period. This was a great challenge since the status of the Greek-Catholic community in Romania has become a point of contention. In 1948 the Greek Catholic Church was outlawed by the Communist regime and its properties were confiscated by the State. During the 50 years of Communism, Greek Catholic Churches were administered by the Orthodox Church. On 31 December 1989, the Greek Catholic Church was recognized as an official religious organization according to Law no. 9. The Romanian Orthodox Church returned 138 churches to the Greek Catholic Church, which was only the first step towards dialogue since there are some remaining tensions concerning the restitution of properties belonging to Greek-Catholics. Since then there has been some progress in the dialogue between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches and on January 1, 2007, on the first day after joining the EU, the Romanian Orthodox Church returned to the Greek-Catholic community the Church of St. Vasile on Polona Street in Bucharest (http://www.culte.ro).

The relationships between the Romanian Orthodox Church and other religious minority groups are handled through specific commissions in charge for the development of ecumenical and theological dialogue with the
Anglican and Lutheran churches and with the World Reformed Alliance. These commissions are actively engaged in the organization of conferences and educational activities committed to dialogue with other religious minority groups. For example, the report ‘Present Relationship between Greek-Catholics and Orthodox Church’ was published in 2006 under the auspices of Orthodox Metropolitan See of Cluj, Alba, Crisana and Maramures.

Religious freedom

Religious groups in Romania have not faced any persecution. As indicated earlier, the Romanian Orthodox Church is a majority Church but religious freedom is guaranteed by law. Officially there are few difficulties on implementing an ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue between the majority and minority churches in Romania. However, according to a 2010 report by the US Embassy in Bucharest there are restrictions on religious freedom and discrepancies in the distribution of funds to minority religions. For example, “the government generally respected religious freedom in practice; however, some restrictions adversely affected the rights of some religious groups. Since the 2006 religion law became effective, 14 religious groups received approval from the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs to register as religious associations, four of them during the reporting period.

According to the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs, the state budget for 2010 allocated approximately $11.6 million (40 million lei) to recognized religions for the construction and repair of churches, as well as for supporting their social assistance activities. The funds were distributed in direct proportion to the number of believers in each religion as identified in the 2002 census, with the Orthodox Church receiving the largest share. The report indicates that minority religious groups, including the Greek Catholic Church, the Baptist and Adventist churches, ‘continued to report that local authorities for unjustified reasons opposed granting them construction permits for places of worship’ (http://romania.usembassy.gov/2010-irf-en.html).

Excluding material requests, such as distribution of funds and restitution of churches and other property (such as libraries and administrative buildings) to former owners, there is no indication of a situation of tension or hostility in the Romanian religious landscape that could trigger a violent conflict. New Age movements are hardly accepted in the traditionalist Romanian society but their existence is tolerated and viewed as one of the ‘sheep that went astray’.

So far there are no issues relating to gender and minority religions pertaining to Islam or any other religious group under debate in Romania.
Welfare activities of minority religions

The Roman Catholic Church is one of the most active institutions within the Romanian welfare system: it provides welfare assistance in Romania, mostly medical, social and educational assistance to orphans and the elderly, through the Caritas association, which has four centres in Transylvania, one in Moldova and one in Bucharest. The Caritas Romania Confederation (http://www.caritas.org.ro/) is under the authority of the Conference of the Roman-Catholic Bishops of Romania. The organization consists of six Diocesan Catholic Caritas of Romania, which are the founding members, and of five Diocesan Caritas of the Catholic Church. Caritas Romania Confederation is open to cooperation with other organizations regardless of religion, politics or nationality. Caritas Romania Confederation became a full member of Caritas Internationalis in 1995 during the XVth General Assembly of the Caritas Internationalis in Rome.

Actiunea Catolica (http://actiuneacatolica.ro/) is another Catholic organization providing education and social assistance. There is also the Association of Catholic Physicians and the Association for the Protection of People with Disabilities.

The Protestant churches (Baptist, Evangelist, and Pentecostal) have their own welfare organizations. CAF Romania is a foundation providing assistance for the social integration of young people from orphanages. Caminul Felix, which operates two family villages in western Romania, has been supporting the physical, spiritual, emotional and socio-economic needs of orphaned and abandoned children in Romania since 1990 (http://www.caminulfelix.ro). Charity Foundation Herald was established in Cluj-Napoca in March 2001 in the aim of offering help people in need (www.fundatiaherald.org).

Muslim welfare organizations in Romania are grouped under the Tuna foundation, which is involved in educational, cultural and humanitarian activities in Romania, particularly in Medgidia. The Taiba foundation is an organization for the promotion of Islamic culture in Romania but its activity also extends to social welfare assistance to the Muslim community. It is one of the most active Muslim welfare foundations aiming to help people that receive no social benefits and vulnerable individuals in need (elderly people, unemployed, people with disabilities, widows and the poor). The organization also helps preserve the Muslim culture of Romania and meet the religious, spiritual and educational needs of Muslims in Romania (www.islamulazi.ro).

The Islamic and Cultural League of Romania (http://www.islamhouse.com/ip/108467) is an organization funded by the League of Muslim students in Romania with centres in Timisoara, Bucharest, Iasi, Cluj-Napoca and Constanta that exist to sustain the Islamic religious tradition. The Muslim Theological Seminary opened in 1901 in
Medgidia but it closed down in 1967. In 1992 it was re-opened and it is now the most important centres of Turkish-Tatar culture in Romania.

Conclusions

The Orthodox Church is the most trusted institution in Romania. However, Romanian Orthodoxy, as a majority Church is going through a difficult period of reorganization, transition and reform. The general vision of the clergy on gender issues and on the emancipation of women remains patriarchal and conservative, which explains partly why few young people go to church. However, despite low church attendance levels, young people identify themselves with Orthodoxy and for some of them ‘to be Orthodox means to be Romanian’.6

There are two movements within the Orthodox Church: a conservative strand, which resists any changes in church activity, and a more liberal one (mainly in Transylvania) that is, not only more tolerant and open to dialogue with other faiths, but also more focused on welfare and social activities. It remains to be seen which of these two strands will constitute the future of Romanian Orthodoxy. This interesting question can be further investigated and analysed by making parallels with other Orthodox churches in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and with Islam in Romania. Both religions share similar trajectories in Romania: even though Romanian Orthodoxy is a majority religion with the largest number of believers and Islam is one of the smallest denominations in Romania, both religions are facing the similar challenges and problems: how to survive in a secular world and how to preserve their community.

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Nicoleta Zagura

Abstract
The research for the Romanian case study was conducted from July 2006 to December 2007 in the town of Medgidia, situated in the Eastern part of Romania, in the Black Sea Region. The study illustrates the challenging transition from a Communist social system to a post-Communist welfare structure for the population of Medgidia during this long process of change from one social and economic system to another. Reflecting the multicultural aspect of modern Romanian society, the town is composed of two large national and at the same time religious communities: the Romanian Orthodox and the Turkish-Tatar Muslims and several minority groups, such as the Orthodox Roma and the Horhane Roma (formerly Muslim Roma). The latter is the most vulnerable group and relies on the social welfare services provided by the State, the Pentecostal Church and the Open Doors Foundation.

Presentation of the town

Introduction/general characteristics
Medgidia is a medium-sized industrial town located in the Eastern part of Romania, not far from the Black Sea, in the Constanta region that belongs to the Dobrogea County. The name Medgidia originates from the name of Sultan Abdul Medgid, who ruled between 1839 and 1861, and founded the town.

The specificity of the town lies in its interesting cultural and religious mix of Christians and Muslims with diverse customs and traditions. The French writer, Jules Verne, was so impressed by the colourful image of the town that one of his stories, ‘Keraban the Terrible’, takes place in Medgidia. By the end of the 19th century the region was described by writers and anthropologists, including the Swiss researcher Eugene Pittard, as a bridge between East and West, where one can find an exotic and mixed landscape of Islamic and Baroque buildings. However, the unusual geometry in the architectural landscape of the town can still be observed in its old streets. The colourful character of the 19th century buildings reminding of past times

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1 Professor Martin Hauser, a member of the WaVE Consortium, supervised the writing and dissemination of the working reports from Romania.
and old Empires is dominated by grey buildings raised during the Communist period and, thus speaks of the town’s unfortunate history. The mix of architectural styles in the small city centre of Medgidia reveal the diversity of its residents. The streets are as different as their inhabitants; some have been recently paved, while others are still covered in mud. One can also be struck by the abundance of comfort next to poverty: expensive cars, motorcycles and vans can be seen next to horse carts.

Medgidia remains as diverse as it was in the past, but the relations between groups are in a constant state of flux. Orthodox and Muslims are the most influential groups in the public life of the town. They are the main and historically traditional groups in the town and seem to resist the influx of Neo-Protestant Churches, such as Pentecostals, Jehovah Witnesses and Baptists. The town’s population of 44,843 inhabitants includes 35,554 Romanians, 8,122 Turks and Tatars, and other minorities, including Roma and Old Rite Russians (Lipoveni). Two large religious communities can be found in Medgidia: Orthodox (35,228 people), most of whom are Romanians and Roma, and Muslims (8,168 people), who are mostly Turks and Tatars (http://www.emedgidia.ro). Other smaller religious communities include Roman-Catholics (Romanians coming from Bucovina and Transylvania), Greek-Catholics (Romanians from Transylvania), Pentecostals (Romanians, Roma, Horhane Roma - former Muslim Roma - and Turks), Baptists (Romanians and Roma) and Adventists (Romanians and Roma).

After 1989 and the fall of Communist rule, Medgidia was faced with the collapse of its local economic and social infrastructure that had been maintained by the Ceausescu regime. The local cement and wine industry, the most important economic drivers of the town and overall productivity started to slow down thereby raising unemployment rates. With the exception of the French Lafarge cement factory and the Fruvimed wine factory, there is no other significant and visible economic activity. Unemployment is, therefore, a significant problem since it is very difficult to find work. Until now no concrete actions have been implemented to alleviate the situation.

The socio-economic instability of the town has particularly affected the Roma community that had been forced by the Communist regime to settle down and integrate in Romanian society by sending their children to schools and finding a place to work. Faced with the new economic reality in Medgidia Horhane Roma have started to migrate once again with horses and carts, thus refusing to send their children to school. This has greatly contributed to the increase of illiteracy rates, street begging and crime.

The majority presence in Medgidia

The Romanian Orthodox Church has an important and visible presence in Romanian society and in Medgidia. The Church’s impact on public life is
significant both from a spiritual and a political point of view. Local Orthodox priests participate regularly in the Town Hall meetings and their opinions play a decisive role in many issues concerning the town. There are three Orthodox Churches and two Orthodox Chapels in Medgidia. Romanians identify not only with the Orthodox Christian faith, but also its history, cultural identity and set of values and ethics.

Muslims are the second majority group in Medgidia, where there are two mosques and a Muslim seminary. Just as the Orthodox, Muslims also take part in the political and social events of the town and imams are invited regularly to participate in Town Hall meetings and other social activities that relate to the town. However, the political involvement of Muslims in Medgidia was challenged by Imam Osman Aziz in March 2008, when he declared that Muslims from Romania should not be involved in the political life of the town (http://www.adevarul.ro/articole/vor-salva-preotii-clasa-politica-de-pacate/344342).

Religious minority groups
The Christian Orthodox are the largest religious community in Medgidia with 35,228 members. Most are Romanian but there are also Orthodox Roma and a few Macedonians (http://www.emedgidia.ro/). Muslims constitute the second largest group with 8,168 members. Most (8,122) are Turks and Tatars, while the remaining are foreign citizens from Turkey and Arab countries (http://www.emedgidia.ro).

The following religious minority groups are also present in the town:

- Roman-Catholics: approximately 142 Romanians from Bucovina and Moldova (http://www.searchromania.net/parohii-35/constanta/medgidia/_1/). There are also Italian and French citizens (involved in business activities in the town) who occasionally visit this church. Some members of the Greek-Catholic church are also part of this community.
- Pentecostals: approximately 70 baptized members, Horhane Roma, Romanians and some Turks. According to the Roma social worker from the Medgidia Town Hall, there are 700 Pentecostal Roma in the town (http://www.betleem.ro/en/vision.htm).
- Adventists: approximately 58 members (http://www.biserici.org).
- Old Rite Orthodox (Stylist Church): although there is no data on the membership size of this community, it is comprised mainly of Lipoveni (Old Rite Russians), who settled in Romania in the 17th century, and some Romanians. The Stylist Church is independent from the Romanian Orthodox Church (http://www.emedgidia.ro).
As in most small towns in Romania, people in Medgidia know each other so they tend to adopt an attitude of ‘us’ (the native residents of the town) vs. ‘them’ (others), a term applied to people who live in the town but who are recent arrivals from other cities or places. Therefore, a foreign person living in the neighbourhood is usually treated with respect but from a distance. For example, an engineer started explaining his personal story by saying that: ‘I do not belong to this town; I arrived here 40 years ago, forced by circumstances...’ (2,M). Even after 40 years of living in Medgidia he is still viewed as a foreigner in the town. The fact that people make the distinction between native residents and others indicates the patriarchal and conservative character of the population and the hermetic character of its society.

The attitude of ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ is prevalent, not only in the social, but also in the religious life of the town. The majority of the residents of Medgidia have an Orthodox or Muslim background and their religious values are linked to historic ideals, tradition, local customs, family history, and respect of the ancestors. Therefore, it is considered disgraceful for someone to leave their traditional beliefs by going to a different church with a more recent history and religious tradition. This means that traditional religious communities and their institutions, such as the local Orthodox Church and the Mosque, are resistant towards the Neo-Protestant churches (the Pentecostal, Baptist and Adventist Churches in Romania) that were established in Romania after 1990 with the assistance of Romanian believers from Transylvania (where the Neo-Protestant Church has a longer history). Because the arrival of Pentecostals, Adventists, Baptists is a recent phenomenon in Medgidia they have been rarely accepted as a Church. Neo-Protestant Churches are barely tolerated by the Orthodox and rejected by Muslims because the Horhane Roma do not practice sacred bath rituals and they eat pork and drink alcohol. These new Churches are, therefore viewed at best as cultural or philosophical movements or welfare organizations, but not as legitimate historic religious institutions.

National minority groups
The main national groups present in Medgidia include Romanians, and Turks and Tatars, followed by Horhane Roma.

With 35,554 people, Romanians are the majority group in Medgidia (National Institute of Statistics - http://www.insse.ro). However, this figure was contested by the political party of the Roma minority, ‘Partida Rromilor’, based on assertion that many Roma declare themselves Romanians (approximately 5,000 persons). Most Romanians are Christian
Orthodox but there are also Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists, Old Rite Orthodox, Roman-Catholics and Greek-Catholics. Romanians are proud of their religious and national identity and for them to be Romanian means to belong to the Orthodox Church and to respect their ancestors and history.

Turks and Tatars are the second national group in terms of size, amounting to 8,122 people. This number includes only the local population of Turks and Tatars, thus excluding the 4,000 to 4,500 Horhane (who in some cases declare themselves Turks). Turks and Tatars from Medgidia are Muslims (http://www.emedgidia.ro). The first Tatars from Crimea arrived in Dobrogea at the end of the 18th century (starting in 1783) after being persecuted by the Tsarist regime, while a second wave of Tatar refugees from Crimea came to the region in the beginning of the 20th century. Most of the community settled in Medgidia and contributed a great deal to the development of the town. The Turkish and Tatar Muslims are, therefore very important from an economic point of view and visible everywhere in the town. They tend to be a very entrepreneurial community including active local investors opening small factories and family businesses, and operating hotels by the seaside. They have a high level of cohesion and cooperation with all the other groups since their presence is very visible in public schools, hospitals, banks, libraries, cultural centres, universities in Constanta. As a group they can be characterized as a model of social cohesion and at the same time as a group that keeps a special relationship with the traditional values that are specific to their community: family, religion and education. Most members of the Turkish - Tatar community preserve the Tatar traditions and customs but they also speak Romanian and their children go to Romanian schools and Muslim seminaries.

The size of the Roma community in Medgidia is the most difficult to estimate. According to official data from the National Institute of Statistics there are 497 Roma in the town (http://www.insse.ro). However, according to the leader of ‘Partida Rromilor’ there are 6,000 Roma in Medgidia, of which 4,500 are Horhane, 500 (possibly more) are Orthodox and 700 Pentecostals with the remaining not belonging to any church. The Horhane Roma represent an ethnic group at the margins of society. As an originally nomadic type of group, this community still keeps alive the memory of the ‘nomadic freedom’ when having a horse was essential and representing an important value and a way of showing their cultural identity and freedom. This way of life originates in seasonal agricultural employment, when the Roma migrated to different regions of the country in order to find work. Nowadays this type of migration also means that after obtaining official documents as Romanian citizens, Roma are able to migrate across Europe.

Other nationalities in the town include Macedonians, Greeks, Armenians and Hungarians. Their presence is barely visible (just a few persons for each nationality) and too small to be included in any statistical data. Compared to
Romanians and Turkish-Tatar Muslims, Horhane Roma have a different position and social standing in the town. In the Communist period (mainly from 1950 to 1957), Horhane Roma nomadic communities settled in Medgidia but their presence seemed like a minority from the very beginning because they were affected by restrictive laws that were imposed upon them that did not allow them to continue living a nomadic life or to practice their traditions and rituals (http://www.divers.ro/focus_ro?func=viewSubmission&sid=7277&wid=37452). Many Horhane Roma ended up working in agriculture and construction jobs. Education became mandatory so they were forced to send their children to school. After 1989 and the fall of the Communist regime, Horhane Roma began to ignore some of the laws that applied during Communist rule and many families pulled their children out school. As a result, there are now many illiterate young people who have never been to school and do not know how to read and write (9,M). The Horhane Roma have, therefore, become a controversial national minority, something that is visible in the daily life of Medgidia. Since their identity is connected to the Ottoman Empire and they are often called ‘Cenghene’, a Turkish name for Tzigan, denoting the Roma. However, because the Horhane Roma have refused to practice sacred bath rituals and renounce eating pork and drinking alcohol, this community is still rejected by the Turkish-Tatar Muslims in the town (4,M). Only four Horhane Roma go to the mosque and all four of them are women.

Since religion plays an important role in Romanian society, especially during celebrations of rites of passage, such as weddings, births and funerals, Horhane Roma have adopted new religious practices. Some Horhane Roma started to occasionally go to Orthodox Churches while others went to the Pentecostal Church, so now there is also a Horhane priest in the Pentecostal Community of Medgidia (10,M). Following the extensive social welfare services offered by the Pentecostal Church, many Horhane Roma have started joining this congregation. In fact, it seems that the Neo-Protestant Churches and the Open Doors Foundation are one of the few and only structures that started socialising and attempting to integrate the Horhane Roma in the local society.

At present the Horhane Roma in Medgidia is a community comprised of families in need living under poor housing conditions and affected by high rates of unemployment and illiteracy, and low levels of social integration. Alcoholism and poor hygiene are other factors that are pushing this minority group to the margins of society.

Child marriages are an additional problem because the legal age for marriage in Romania is 16 for girls and 18 for boys (http://www.avocatnet.ro). Because the child marriages (at the age of 13-14 for girls and at the age of 15-16 for boys) of the Horhane Roma are illegal, couples have no marriage certificates and parents are not able to obtain birth certificates for their children. Even if families have birth certificates for their
children, mothers rarely declare the name of the father because from their point of view it is better to have them preserve their status of a single mother in order to receive social benefits for single mothers from the public authorities. In response to this situation, the Medgidia Public Service of Social Assistance works very hard to register Horhane children in order to give them birth certificates and place them in public schools (7,F). In response to this problem, social workers try to persuade parents to officially recognize their children and create a traditional family unit with a father, mother and child. They try to convince fathers that it is important to recognize their children (by registering them with the local authorities who can issue birth certificates) and look after their well-being. However, according to other minority groups, such as the Lipoveni or Macedonians, public authorities seem to be investing a significant amount of money to ‘force’ the education of the Horhane but actually end up ignoring other underprivileged groups (11,M).

**Immigration and emigration**

According to the IOM, immigration to Romania represented only 0.6% of the total Romanian population in 2005 (http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=495) so it is not a very visible phenomenon in Medgidia. Several Turkish professors and imams have moved to Medgidia over the last few years in order to teach about Islam in a Muslim college, where the director is a Turkish citizen.

In contrast, emigration is a much more important issue and a well-known survival mechanism in Romanian society since, according to the IOM, it represented 5.7% of the total Romanian population in 2005 (http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=495). With the average salary in Romania being 270 Euros per month in 2007 (http://www.roportal.ro), many Romanians migrated to Western Europe in order to find a better paying job. The wave of migration to Western European countries was unregulated before Romania entered the EU. However, following Romania’s entry to the European Union in 2007 a large number of unemployed Romanians left for Western European countries, including Spain, Italy, Germany and Hungary. This also meant that after Romania joined the EU, the status of Romanian citizens in the host countries changed and as EU citizens they could no longer be deported to Romania.

Following two highly publicized cases of Romanian Roma citizens who were arrested after murdering two Italians in Rome (http://www.italymag.co.uk/2007/news-from-italy/general/immigration-row-as-romaniansarrested-in-rome-murder-hunt/), the Romanian and Italian governments organized campaigns against illegal migration. Quite suddenly the Romanian population working abroad had to deal with a severely
negative and stigmatized image created by the media. Declarations by certain political parties in Italy on the intention of the Italian government to deport illegal Romanian workers raised concerns among Romanian families that are surviving solely on the remittances they receive from family members working abroad.

Emigration has serious consequences for Romanian society, including the break up of families when parents work abroad and children are left behind with grandparents who are not always able to look after them. Many people end up losing trust in the future to the extent that the rate of depression and suicide has grown by 2% over the last ten years in Romania. The average age of persons committing suicide is between 15 and 35 years. Suicides among young people are part of the so-called ‘Italy-Spain syndrome’ because they are prevalent among children of absent parents who work abroad in these countries. Psychologists have started talking in the media about early age suicides (sometimes as early as 15 years of age) as a result of torn families with parents working abroad and their children missing them (http://www.roportal.ro).

This situation has also affected some families in Medgidia. In a town with a high rate of unemployment, finding a good paying job is a critical issue. According to the data provided by the Medgidia Public Centre of Social Assistance there are at least 500 families with children who are taken care of by grandparents while parents are working abroad (7,F). According to a social worker, a mother, whose daughter was working in Italy, had asked ‘what is the hope for the future?’ (15,F). Therefore, the situation of Romanians in Italy prompted many questions in the local media about Romanian people working abroad and their influence on the town’s local economy, social welfare and family.

The local welfare system

Public welfare system
The social welfare system in Medgidia shares similar characteristics with the national welfare system in Romania. The Medgidia Public Service of Social Assistance has the main responsibility of providing social welfare services. The Service operates under the auspices of the Town Council of Medgidia and the authority of the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family(http://sas.mmssf.ro/serviciiSociale.php). The mission of the organization is to coordinate and develop a sustainable local welfare system and facilitate the working relationship between governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to offer a range of social welfare services to the population of Medgidia.

The Public Service of Social Assistance addresses a variety of social problems relating to poverty, unemployment and illness faced by people
across a broad range of social groups; it provides the following services and allowances (money) (http://www.emedgidia.ro):

Financial assistance for families distributed more specifically to the following social groups:

- Children (according to Law no. 61/1993)
- Families (according to Governmental Decision no. 105/2003)
- One parent families (according to Governmental Decision no. 105/2003)
- Newborn children (according to Law no. 416/2001)
- People in need of work (according to Governmental Decision no. 26/1997 and Law 272/2004)
- Parents or guardians taking care of a child under the age of three

An example of the type of social services provided to families is a recent housing programme for young families through the National Housing Agency (http://www.anl). However, the number of persons benefiting from this service is very small: only 24 persons benefited in 2004-2005 from the programme and this number is very small compared to the great number of people in need (http://www.administratie.ro/articolenou.php?articol_id=7761).

Allowances (financial assistance) are also granted to the following social groups:

- Blind persons and persons with other disabilities
- Working blind persons and other working persons with disabilities
- A person supervising or assisting someone with disabilities
- Children and adults infected by AIDS

Social Care is offered in the form of money, goods or services to persons or families whose income is insufficient to cover basic needs, including the following:

- Assistance to persons on a minimum salary (according to Law no. 416/2001)
- Assistance to persons on a minimum salary for paying heating costs for a house or apartment (according to Governmental Decision no. 5/2003) or for buying heating systems during the winter months (according to Governmental Decision no. 91/2005)
- Social assistance to refugees

An example of this type of social care is the psychological assistance offered to the children of approximately 500 families because one or both parents
are working abroad and the grandparents are having difficulties in fulfilling parenting roles.

According to the National Centre for Sustainable Development (www.sndp.ro), government welfare assistance has become inefficient due to lack of skilled personnel. Since the salaries of social workers are very low an increasing number of people working in this field have left the country. The number of social workers in Medgidia (teachers, medical assistants, psychologists, etc.) between 1998 and 2003 decreased by more than 25%; in 1998 there were 845 social workers in Medgidia and by 2003 that number had dropped to 625 (http://www.ncsd.ro/ncsd-la21/AgLoc21_Medgidia). The lack of skilled social workers in the public sector has been one of the factors for the increase of illiteracy and child abandonment among the Horhane Roma community, which is totally dependent on social welfare assistance. For this reason, other actors, such as NGOs, associations have filled in the gaps in social welfare.

**Welfare activities of religious majority groups**

Romanians seem to be very receptive to other people’s needs and every neighbourhood assists poor people or lonely elderly persons by giving them food and clothing but not money. However, this form of informal help is not systematic since it is the result of individual initiatives so it cannot be considered an efficient welfare mechanism.

In this context, the Orthodox Church has more of a spiritual role in its provision of social welfare. Since it is not a wealthy church after 50 years of Communist persecution and oppression, the Orthodox Church is in a process of transition. The Church’s role in social welfare provision that had been originally created by Queen Mary of Romania (1914-1927) and sustained through the support of the Red Cross came to an end during the Communist period. Only in 1990 did the Church’s Social Assistance Department reopen Orthodox institutions and universities in Romania. At present the Orthodox Church provides insufficient social assistance, which tends to be un-systematic and not well organized but there are signs of reform and reorganization in the Church as an institution, including in the Orthodox community of Medgidia. Orthodox believers in Medgidia have created the association Batranete si Speranta [Old Age and Hope] in order to help elderly people in need of social care at home. For example, volunteer women (aged between 30 and 50) help approximately 20 elderly persons, who do not have a family or whose families do not live locally (12,F). One of the volunteer women noted that ‘all of us have old persons in the family; from the Orthodox point of view it is our mission to take care of our parents, as they took care of us’ (12,F).

The role of the Muslim community in Medgidia is different from the Orthodox. After 1990 the Muslim community in Medgidia was gradually supported by Turkish associations. For example, the Muslim Seminary was
reopened under the auspices of the Turkish Government. Additionally, there are two Muslim foundations, the Tuna and the Taiba, that are active in Medgidia. However, the type of social welfare they offer is quite specific because they do not seem to cooperate with the local authorities, thus making their services less transparent (10,M).

The Tuna Foundation was created in 1995 by an association of Turkish and Romanian businessmen in order to provide welfare services to underprivileged people irrespective of their religious or national background. The Foundation is the most visible Muslim welfare related organization not only in Medgidia but also in Constanta and Bucuresti (http://www.tuna.ro).

The Taiba Foundation is financed by Muslims from Arab countries and offers financial and social assistance to members of the Muslim community. It also sponsors pilgrims who wishing to make the annual pilgrimage to Mecca (http://www.taiba.ro). The organization has also constructed a mosque in Medgidia but its activities have been contested by the Mufti of Romania (see section 4).

Finally, the deputy of the Democratic Union of Muslim Turks and Tatars from Romania party (DUMTTR)\(^2\) organizes, independently from the two Foundations mentioned above, political and educational activities that are strongly supported by the Mufti of Romania. More specifically, the DUMTTR organizes educational activities for young people in mosques and in its Cultural Centre; it has also created a women’s organization.

**Welfare activities of minority groups/associations**

In addition to the social welfare provided by local public authorities and the religious majority groups mentioned above, there are several NGOs and Foundations that offer welfare assistance both on a regular and ad hoc basis.

Neo-Protestant Churches in association with the Open Doors Christian Foundation are the most visible welfare actors in the town (http://open-doors-foundation.org/). The Open Doors Christian Foundation is a Christian organization that brings together Baptist and Pentecostal Churches offering social welfare services on a regular basis. The activities of the Foundation are developed in partnership with the Medgidia Public Service of Social Assistance, local schools and the hospital. The Foundation offers social welfare services, as well as educational and social activities that are in great demand, especially in a post-Communist society of transition and economic and educational instability. Neo-Protestant Churches organize summer schools for Horhane Roma children, education activities for young mothers, family counselling and health education. The social services and activities of the Open Doors Foundation and the Medgidia Public Service of Social

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\(^2\) The members of the DUMTTR are Romanian citizens representing most of the Romanian Muslim population in Romania.
Assistance are visible in terms of statistics but also in the various building and renovation projects for the Horhane Roma minority in cooperation with the Town Hall (http://somethingismissing.com/wst_page4.html). The key factor making in the welfare activities of Neo-Protestant Churches possible is the financial support they receive from their communities abroad in cooperation with Canadian and American foundations (http://open-doors-foundation.org/). The Foundation benefits from a high visibility in the town because it has worked very actively towards the elimination of illiteracy among the Roma community.

Additionally, there are several other welfare foundations, such as the Ingerii Pazitori [Guardian Angels], an NGO that offered assistance to children infected with AIDS and developed AIDS prevention projects. However, it has not been able to expand its activity due to lack of funding. There are also several other organizations, such as the Association of Roma parents, the Association of Volunteers and the Association of Women Entrepreneurs. However, their social work is not visible in the town because they provide welfare services informally and on an ad hoc basis.

**Minorities and the public welfare system**

Minorities in Medgidia have free access to public services, such as education, medical assistance and emergency services. Regardless whether they have official documents (birth certificates, identity cards, etc.) they can be admitted to emergency and medical services. However, minorities can have access to the public welfare system only if they have been officially registered in the Town Hall (by submitting birth certificates, identity cards, etc.).

The case of the Horhane Roma minority is problematic. One specificity of this minority is that they do not seem to be eager to take any personal initiative, opting instead to wait for someone to help them. Additionally, they do not seem to be united among themselves and help each other. An additional problem is they have only recently started registering the birth of their children with the local authorities (10, M). To that effect, the Town Hall has employed a Horhane Roma staff member in order to facilitate the dialogue between this community and the local authorities. With the assistance of the Open Doors Foundation, the Horhane Roma representative, together with a team from the Medgidia Public Service of Social Assistance, organized a campaign to issue legal documents to members of Horhane Roma community so they can have a legal status in Romania and, thus be able to receive financial and social assistance. However, following this initiative, it was surprising to see that after receiving identity cards most of these ‘new citizens of Medgidia’ disappeared from the town, as if they had never lived there before! After some time only a few Horhane Roma came back from Western European countries in order to take with them the members of their families that had remained in Medgidia. The few Horhane
members that have remained in the town depend heavily on social assistance from the local authorities and the Neo-Protestant Churches.

Following to new legislation on granting financial assistance of 300 Euros at the first marriage and benefits to families with newborn children, members of the Roma community have started registering their marriages and newborn children, which is a positive development contributing positively towards their social integration in the town. Once registered, they have the appropriate documents and are able to benefit from social assistance. The rate of registered marriages and births among the Horhane Roma community has, therefore increased up to 50% since many Roma families have decided to register their marriages in order to receive social allowances and benefits (there have even been registrations of “newly married couples” among 70 year olds!) (www.grafuldobrogei.ro).

The Public Service of Social Assistance, together with the Open Doors Foundation and Neo-Protestant Churches organized a campaign for the social integration of the Horhane Roma community and developed a literacy programme for children and their parents. They have also cleaned their houses and developed a hygiene and health education programme. During a summer school organized by the Open Doors Foundation, a teacher was invited to teach in the Horhan native language and help members of the community study in order to be accepted in the local public schools. As a result, over the last few years approximately 37 Horhane pupils have been accepted in local public schools, which is a sign of their social integration in the town (8,F).

Other minority groups, such as the Lipoveni (Old Style Russians), Makedons or Greeks in the town, rarely require any social assistance and are therefore, not visible in the statistical data of the Medgidia Public Service of Social Assistance (7,F).

Methods and sources

Choice of groups

Three representative national (ethnic) groups have been selected for the Romanian case study: Romanians, Turks and Tatars, and Horhane Roma and three representative religious groups: Orthodox, Muslims and Neo-Protestants.

Every national group corresponds to approximately 80% of a religious group:

- The Romanian majority is Orthodox (www.emedgidia.ro)
• The Turkish-Tatar community is almost exclusively Muslim (www.emedgidia.ro)
• The Horhane Roma started converting to Neo-Protestant Churches but, there are no statistics on the size of their membership in the Pentecostal, Baptist or Adventist Churches

In the beginning of the case study research, the Turkish-Tatar Muslims were going to be considered a minority group, but given their strong visibility and economic presence in the town, it seemed more accurate to include them as a second majority group equal to the Romanian Orthodox majority. Furthermore, the Turkish-Tatar Muslims and the Romanian and Roma Orthodox are historic majorities that share in common religious and cultural values.

Horhane Roma, who are Neo-Protestant, are mostly an excluded group in Medgidia and, are therefore considered a minority group in the case study. It is the most vulnerable community in Medgidia, affected by an ongoing crisis in terms of education and their cultural and religious identity. Their religious identity is dominated and squeezed by the Orthodox and Muslim majorities. In this context, the Neo-Protestant Church seems to offer Horhane Roma a ‘salvation’ and the opportunity to receive both social welfare assistance and religious support. It is worth noting the opinion of a representative of the Roma political party (9,M), who describes the identity challenges of the Horhane Roma today:

Their skin is ten times darker than mine but at the census they declare themselves as Romanians. Why all these problems of identity? Personally I do not agree with the term Roma, it is a characterisation of a language that we speak (Romany), but we are Gypsies, Gitanes, Tziganis, not Roma! To be a Tzigan means a lot! To ignore the 'conventional’ way of being, to have unconditional freedom, to sing, to dance, to travel and to enjoy this lifestyle means to be Tzigan. To have the spirit of adventure in your blood! Once settled you cannot define yourself as such from a cultural point of view. Many are declaring themselves as Romanians because of their lifestyle. They don’t feel as being Gypsy anymore! Roma is a solution also in naming the settled Gypsies, a politically correct notion that is losing a lot from the authentic spirit of a Gypsy. Then do you speak about dance, music, a specific kind of food that are all characteristic of our community? So you call it Roma dance, Roma music, Roma steak? Its sounds ridiculous! It’s an identity problem and every person has the freedom to solve it in his own way! (9,M)

Methodology
The fieldwork for the Romanian case study in Medgidia was conducted through interviews and general observation of a broad range of social categories: working and non-working people, as well as young and old members of the local population. Three group interviews and 27 individual
interviews were conducted. Group interviews took place during three group meetings that took place in the Medgidia Cultural Centre, the DUMTTR and the Medgidia Public Service of Social Assistance. Individual interviews with representatives of local authorities and local religious or political leaders were conducted during meetings that took place in churches, the local school, shops and markets or coffee shops. The interviews cited in the report are coded with a number indicating the interview number, followed by the letter M or F indicating male or female.

The field work took place during two different time periods. The first interviews were conducted in the summer of 2006 when the research was focused exclusively on the Muslim community. Another round of field research, this time with an extended focus, was conducted in the spring and autumn of 2007 and included Neo-Protestant movements, the Roma community and the public welfare structures in Medgidia.

Additional research material was collected town’s archives, the local library and from local, regional and national newspapers and web sites.

**Challenges**

Obtaining reliable statistical data on minorities in Medgidia was particularly challenging. For example, representatives of not only the Roma minority, but also of other groups provided data that was different from what was published in the official web sites of the Town Hall (http://www.emedgidia.ro/) and the National Institute of Statistics (www.insse.ro/).

Additionally, accessing information on the welfare activities of Muslim NGOs became more difficult because of a conflict in March 2007 between the Muftiat, the institution of the officially organized authority of the Mosque, and the Taiba NGO (see section 4). This conflict was unfortunate for the WaVE research study because the representatives of the Muslim community in Medgidia that had been originally open and cooperative during the interviews turned suspicious and more reserved during subsequent meetings.

**Findings**

**Examples of cooperation and cohesion between and within groups**

The projects coordinated by the Medgidia Public Service of Social Assistance, the Open Doors Christian Foundation and the Neo-Protestant Churches are representative examples of cohesion and cooperation in the field of social welfare. The common goal among these organizations is to
increase the level of welfare assistance to the Horhane Roma community. Their work in bringing together the resources of national and religious groups from the town in order to help Horhane Roma has produced good results so, for example, up to 37 Horhane Roma children have been placed in public schools (Group Interview no. 3).

**Organizational cohesion**

As a local governmental welfare institution, the Medgidia Public Service of Social Assistance is not able to satisfy all of the needs and demands for welfare assistance (7,F; group interview no. 3). This means that local NGOs have been asked to fill in the gaps in social welfare and invited to cooperate with governmental structures. The involvement of NGOs and Churches in the provision of social welfare assistance further illustrates that governmental structures are not adequate to help the Horhane Roma minority improve their life conditions, form relationships with the majority groups in the town and, thus achieve any degree of social integration in the town.

School is the best place for the social integration of the Horhane Roma in society. Furthermore, having children go to school has benefits for the whole family since it also gives the opportunity for parents to go to school, take literacy or health education classes and participate in social activities (7,F).

An experimental short-term project of collaboration between the Medgidia Public Service of Social Assistance and the Open Doors Christian Foundation to provide free meals to poor families during week-ends became an important project of social assistance for Horhane Roma families with the cooperation of both governmental and non-governmental institutions (8,F). The Open Doors Christian Foundation, Neo-Protestant Churches and public schools worked in cooperation with the staff from the Medgidia Public Service of Social Assistance and one of the DUMTTR leaders also offered some welfare assistance (group interview no. 3). This level of cooperation resulted in a project of material and financial help offered by members of all social groups in Medgidia who came together to help Horhane children live in clean houses, wear new clothes and have all necessary supplies for going to school. Additionally, members of Horhane Roma families (especially women) have been invited by social workers to participate in literacy classes in order to help them find a place of work and improve their social integration in the town.

Without the help of the Open Doors Foundation and the Neo-Protestant Church this type of social cohesion would have been impossible to achieve. The initiative by the Neo-Protestant Church was a good example of solidarity and cohesion since other religious communities, including Muslim Orthodox families contributed by donating clothes, school supplies and toys to Horhane Roma children.
The role of Neo-Protestant Churches in social welfare provision

As already mentioned, the Neo-Protestant Church, including Pentecostals and Adventists, is the most visible religious group offering social welfare in Medgidia. The Church’s activities could be characterized as socially cohesive in the sense of working together with other religious groups and local government institutions and fostering relations with other national and religious groups. The activities of the Neo-Protestant Church are visible not only because of the social impact of their work, but also because of their organization and media tools they use. For example, Pentecostals have a website where they post their activities (www.betleem.ro). They also have a well-organized structure and are efficient in terms of collaboration with other parties. The work of Adventists is also visible in Medgidia. The services they provide in the Medgidia Town Hall are focused on education of health and family values (http://www.adventistmuntenia.ro/newstext.php?id=417). Although, they do not have their own web site, a group website (http://www.adventistmuntenia.ro) has been created for the whole region in order to post all information on their social welfare activities. In terms of further cooperation with parties outside the Neo-Protestant Church, it is worth noting the presence of an Orthodox priest, who during a conference on Family and Health Values, mentioned that the involvement of both churches is necessary in order to help support the family.

More specifically, the Open Doors Christian Foundation acts as an efficient liaison organization connecting the Neo-Protestant Churches and local authorities that work together in the provision of a well organized network of social welfare services. For example, the Foundation, in cooperation with the local authorities, organizes summer holidays, events and workshops for children from poor families, and weekend continuing education classes, offers free medical assistance to the elderly, and free meals to Horhane Roma children (20,F).

To conclude, the Neo-Protestant presence in Medgidia was initially viewed by the traditional religious communities of the town (the Orthodox and Muslim) with great apprehension as an alarming sign of how the globalisation has entered the traditional society of Medgidia. However, Neo-Protestant Churches have been gradually accepted as a necessary social actor and have found their own place in the town's social welfare landscape, offering critical social services to the Horhane community and other people in need. Therefore, this faith group has contributed towards cohesion between different religious and national groups by adding to the social work of the local authorities in Medgidia.
EU level cooperation

In November 2007 the Lyceum Nicolae Balcescu in Medgidia, hosted in cooperation with the Town Hall, the Young European School (YES) event dedicated to the environment and sustainability. The YES ‘Europe…your future’ is a movement that brings together teachers and students from all over Europe (Belgium, Estonia, France, Poland, Slovakia, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Germany and Netherlands). The event received international attention and promoted international and national cooperation of cultural and religious values, which was a unique opportunity for a small town like Medgidia.

Examples of tensions/problem points between and within groups

The most noticeable conflicts in the town have occurred between residents of Medgidia and newcomers who are perceived as different, as ‘the other’. The town’s long and difficult history, including Communist rule, has influenced the social attitude of local residents who had trusted the institutions of the ‘opposition’ and the core values of traditional society: the Mosque and its imam and the Orthodox Church and its priest. For the residents of Medgidia, Islam and Orthodoxy represent not only religious values, but also the town’s own history, identity, culture and ancient roots. This partly explains why there are tensions between the Orthodox and Muslim communities, and Neo-Protestant groups.

The conflicts or tensions between religious and national groups in Medgidia are not directly connected to welfare provision but rather to discussions on the value and meaning of social welfare. According to the field research, there was some tension between a representative of a Neo-Protestant organization and an Orthodox priest, who mentioned that the Neo-Protestant Church is ‘buying’ believers by offering them welfare services (10,M).

A similar but more significant conflict took place in the Muslim context when representatives of the Romanian Muslim community accused Arab NGOs, funded by Arab countries, of attracting members by offering social welfare services, therefore, blaming them for destabilising the Romanian Muslim community by pushing them towards an ‘extremist’ form of Islam (www.muftiyat.ro/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=139&Itemid=75). More specifically, in the spring of 2007 there was a conflict between the Mufti of Romania and the Taiba Foundation during the meeting of the Sura-I Islam (Synodal Council of Muslims). The Mufti challenged the authority of the Taiba Foundation and refused to recognize the diplomas of some students and imams that had studied Islam in Arab countries with financial assistance from the Taiba Foundation and one of its branch organizations, Muslim Brothers, accusing them of studying ‘the wrong
interpretation of Koran, inciting Islamic extremism’ (http://www.muftiyat.ro/). This conflict was significant enough to attract the attention of local and national media that increased public interest in the Muslim community of Romania.

This situation of tension and conflict was the result of a deeper disagreement between the Mufti of Romania and representatives of the Taiba Foundation and the diplomatic missions of Arab countries that had funded scholarships for imams. According to the Mufti of Romania, the pilgrimage to Mecca by Romanian Muslims and the publication of religious books on Islam should be coordinated by the Romanian Muslim authority in Romania, the Muftiat and the Synodal Council of Muslims (http://www.muftiyat.ro/). Therefore, the Mufti of Romania wanted to protect the activities of Romanian Muslims from the unregulated social welfare activities of newcomer organizations, such as the Taiba Foundation. However, the conflict was also one between Romanian Muslims and Arab Muslims and relates to the underlying broader tensions between Sunni Muslims and Shiite Muslims since Romanian Muslims are Sunnis, while Arab Muslims are Shiite.

The social integration of the Horhane Roma community

The main source of tension that is very visible in the town is the ongoing conflict between different sub-groups of the Horhane Roma. According to records of local crime in Medgidia, the highest percentage of conflicts are recorded in the Horhane Roma areas, where there is a great deal of tension between ‘families’ and ‘clans’ (http://www.romanialibera.ro/a10755/primarul-medgidiei-implicat-in-scandalul-taxelor-deprotectie.html; http://www.ziua.net/ct.php?id=40977). Every ‘clan’ has its own ‘action area’ in terms of economics and begging. If someone attempts to enter the ‘other’s’ area he needs to pay a protection fee, otherwise he will be attacked. As a result, conflicts between clans tend to be very violent. In most cases, conflicts are usually the result of quarrels over money because the Horhane Roma do not have any stable form of work. As a result, many collect scrap iron or work sporadically on agricultural jobs, while others simply become professional beggars. There are also frequent quarrels over issues of ‘buying’ a wife, which is still prevalent in this community. The average age of marriage is between the age of 13 and 15. Marriages are decided by the families and overseen by the chief of the clan (the Bulibasha) after the bride is usually ‘sold’ by her family.

After the fall of the Ceausescu regime the State was unable to have any form of control over the activities of the Horhane Roma so they were left alone to decide if they want to send their children to school. For most Horhane Roma parents, it is unnecessary to send their children to school.
since it is more convenient to leave them at home and marry them off at an early age (at 12 to 14 years) (24,F).

Health is an important issue affecting the Horhane Roma community and the integration of their children in public school. Since Horhane Roma citizens have no official documents doctors often refuse to treat them and it is difficult for them to receive free medicine. As a result, the Horhane Roma, especially children, face serious health problems (12,F). Because of poor hygiene many children often carry viruses to school so parents of other school children often refuse to have their kids in the same classes as Horhane children (7,F). Horhane families often keep horses and animals inside their houses something that has an impact on the health of the children that end up suffering from a variety of diseases. For example, a girl had complained at school that the horse died inside the house and the family had to carry it outside. After asking for help from the Town Hall, the department of social services and a specialized disinfection company went to the girl’s home to treat the house and teach her parents how to keep their house clean (group interview no. 3; 8,F). These problems tend to create conflicts between parents and social workers and local schools are not adequately prepared to deal with such situations in order to help Horhane children go to primary school. Social workers have difficulties trying to convince families that Horhane Roma children also deserve a chance for a better future. However, Horhane Roma children have gradually become more socially accepted and nowadays many are achieving good results in school.

These issues have contributed in making the Horhane Roma, the most vulnerable, excluded and aggressive group in Medgidia. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, most Horhane Roma do not have any type of identity documents so they do not exist in any official papers. Local authorities have made great efforts to officially identify them and issue documents (birth certificates and identity cards) for them so that they can have a legal status in order to be able to receive social assistance. However, many resist the concept of registering with the local authorities since this means that they have to comply with legislation on marriage and mandatory schooling for children.

The problem of issuing official documents for the Horhane Roma in order to integrate them in the local community also means that many Horhane Roma leave for Western Europe or Turkey. As it was discovered during the field research, if the children are not old enough to work or to take care of themselves alone, Horhane Roma are often left behind with the other members of the group. The Public Service of Social Assistance has made great efforts to persuade members of the Horhane Roma to send their children to school. The Open doors foundation has also given its support in this and the situation has now started to change for the better at least for the younger generations.
According to the field research, these changes are becoming more and more visible, especially among Horhane Roma women, who seem to be the most receptive to change, thus indicating a glimpse of hope for a better future. Many Horhane women have made great efforts to keep their children in school and to enrol themselves in regular literacy courses, while also starting to visit the local church. For this small group education has, therefore started to become an accepted value, which is a great step for the future.

Analysis: emergent values

The values of Romanian society can be grouped as individual and group values. According to the 2002 census, the Romanian Orthodox Church was the most trusted state institution, (http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/71402.htm), making religion and religious practices the most popular group value in Romania. However, the army and the family are also greatly valued.

Regarding the individual values of Romanians, according to 2006 EUROBAROMETER study, ‘human rights (47%), peace (52%) and respect for human life (27%) are the most important values in personal life’ (www.ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb66/eb66_ro_exec.pdf).

Personal fulfilment was indicated by Romanians as being extremely important, thus reaching the rate of 27% in Romania compared to 19% in Hungary, 10% in Poland and 7% in Sweden (www.ec.europa.eu). After the long period of ‘group think’ imposed by the Communist regime, Romanians finally started to think, learn and act as individuals. Therefore, the value of self-fulfilment is linked to personal freedom, freedom of religion, access to education and better lifestyle that are greatly cherished after the experience of Communism in Romania.

Family and gender

Family is one of the most important values and institutions in Romanian society. Having a family is viewed as an act of trust, hope and belief in a better future. According to the interviews, getting married, even after a first or even a second divorce, indicates one’s trust in the value of family (2,M; 21,F). Furthermore, the family seems to inspire trust so public figures, as well as fellow workers and neighbours are usually more trusted if they have a family (21, F). This means that if a person from a small town, such as Medgidia, is not married and does not have a family many people try to help him or her find a partner and get married in order to enter a sense of social normality and be able to fit in and be the same as the whole of society.
For the population of Medgidia, family seems to be a value that is closely connected to other values, such as religion, education and well-being. Family is also an important provider of social welfare. According to a study by the Gallup Organization in August 2006, one out of every 10 Romanian families was receiving money from family members working abroad (http://www.unicef.org/romania/ro/Raport_final_HAC.pdf). Love, marriage and having children are all viewed as essential components of the family. Marriage also acts as a motivating factor to work harder in order to improve the wellbeing of the family. To start their life together, newly married couples are usually helped by their parents in purchasing an apartment or a house and if this is not possible they live with their parents.

For the Orthodox community there is great value in the institution of marriage and in the most difficult moments of their life people count on the support and care of family members rather than that of the state (14,M). The average age of marriage in Romanian Orthodox families is 24 years for women and 26 for men. In the case of Orthodox Roma, the average marriage age is 18 years for women and 23 for men (Town Hall Evidence Catalogue).

Marriage is also a very important and a greatly valued institution for the Turkish-Tatar population According to the local imam, marriage is considered indicative of the maturity of a person and his/her desire to ‘build a better future’ (5,M). The average age of marriage is the same as for Romanians: 24 for women and 26 for men. Islam allows men to have more than one wife but this custom is not practiced in this community.

On average, both Orthodox and Muslim families have two children (Town Hall Evidence Catalogue). In many cases grandparents, instead of nannies or kindergartens, take care of the children’s education. In most cases both members of the family work but the local imam has expressed a concern over how hard women work, thus ignoring the traditional values of the family, such as raising children and taking care of their home.

Interfaith marriages between Muslims and Orthodox are recognized by both communities but unions with Neo-Protestants are not official unless the latter convert to Islam or Christianity (1M; 11,M).

Considering that 80% of welfare in Medgidia is offered by women, it is clear that their social involvement prevails in the life of the town. Both the Orthodox and Muslim majority groups also give special importance to women as mothers and caretakers. However, this romantic perception of women has changed for the younger generations so shortly after giving birth to a child many young mothers go back to work in order not keep their job, thus leaving their babies in the care of grandparents or child care centres.

The Horhane Roma are a special case in terms of family values. The concept of family means to belong to a group (a clan) and marriage is not viewed as a relationship between a man and a woman but as one between ‘clans’ or ‘castes’. Parents decide the age and the conditions of a marriage and their decision has to be approved by the oldest leader of the group, the
Bulibasha. The family of the boy usually ‘buys’ him a wife from the same clan. This means that in most cases these unions are inter-marriages with cousins or even brothers from different mothers. The status of the girls in such marriages is comparable to being enslaved: they must clean the house, take care of other children in the family, cook, wash and in many cases go begging. If a girl does not fulfil these requirements she can be returned to her parents (even if she is pregnant) and the boy of the family can ‘buy’ another wife.

**Work**

The value of work in Romanian society is a motivating factor to improve one’s personal lifestyle and the well-being of the family. It is, therefore directly connected to the value of self-fulfilment, social mobility and hope for the future. Work seems to be the most value with the greatest impact on the development of other values, including family and health. The place of someone’s work is directly connected to social status and future expectations.

Unfortunately, unemployment is a permanent problem in Medgidia and faced with the problem of finding a good job many young and educated people leave their families in order to find work in Western Europe. Usually after a certain period of time they return only to take their families and leave the country indefinitely (27,F). The high rates of unemployment in Romania strengthen the country’s profile as an ‘emigrant nation’ with most of the young and productive segments of the population leaving the country and the oldest population together with children remaining in the country.

During the interviews, representatives of all religious and national communities raised the issue of unemployment and emigration. A woman explained indicatively how emigration acts as a solution or coping strategy:

I just finished Medical University in Bucuresti. Unfortunately I did not find a working place in Medgidia, my native town. After staying one year at my parents and looking for contracts with pharmaceutical companies, I decided to quit and leave the country in order to practice my skills. Now I do medical assistance for a charity foundation in the UK and I am very pleased by my work and my salary … of course I miss my parents a lot but you cannot have everything in the same time. We see each other on holidays! (27,F)

However, other views on emigration are also prevalent. For example, young members of the Turkish-Tatar community tend to think about employment and emigration in different terms. Many among the older generation of Turks and Tatars consider that a small family business is the best solution for ensuring that all family members have a permanent job. Therefore, emigration is not viewed a solution, but as a sacrifice and a factor that has a negative impact on family and society.
In contrast to these views, the Horhane Roma tend to expect the State to provide them with a place of work. As a result, they register the highest unemployment rates (9,M).

**Health and social care**

The values of health and well-being are directly linked to the free medical care provided by public health institutions. Despite the fact that hospitals are very crowded and not very modern in terms of equipment, Romanians trust and use this service with the exception of dental care and gynaecology, for which even underprivileged people have used private clinics (24,F). The main public health institution in Medgidia is the Municipal Hospital, which in 2004 inaugurated with the support of UNICEF a new and state of the art maternity section with modern equipment and good hygiene (http://www.medfam.ro/rompres/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=3896).

The value of health in Romanian society is also connected to economics and education. If people are wealthy (an economic factor) they give priority to health and well-being: good nutrition, sport, and regular medical check ups. If people are well educated but cannot afford to pay for health and well-being programmes they can apply for social assistance in order to have access to health activities. These programmes are very popular especially among retired persons, who receive every year from the National Social Insurance Company a free ticket for a treatment in a Romanian health resort (http://www.cnpas.org/).

Social care provision in Medgidia can be approached from two perspectives. From an outside perspective, the social problems in the town are important and visible. However, what is not visible from the outside but is very well known from an insider’s point of view is the fact that many people in Medgidia remain passive and tend to wait for others to help them solve their problems. An example of this situation is the following excerpt from an interview: ‘we are poor and we don’t know too much, about social assistance…but it is not our problem, they have to come and help us’ (23,F). Yet another view is that ‘our town is quite dependent of social assistance because of the high rate of unemployment and low salaries’ (22,M). Members of the community who are dependent on social assistance services typically wait for the staff of the Medgidia Public Service of Social Assistance to deal with their problems. Furthermore, following the increased social welfare services provided by the Neo-Protestant churches, people have come to realize that the Church can come to their rescue so they continue to remain passive, waiting for others to do something about their problems.
Education

Education is undoubtedly playing a cohesive role in Medgidia and its value is recognized by members of all national and religious communities. Education is valued as a key factor for bringing people together, establishing dialogue and for promoting social cohesion and stability.

For the Orthodox community, education has an important role that and is viewed as a tool in the struggle for a better future and for building a career. As a result, parents invest a great deal in their children’s education and encourage them to study hard. According to a construction worker in Italy:

It is a sacrifice to stay apart from my family and kids. I can see them two times a year. Now I regret that when I had the opportunity to study I didn’t and my effort working abroad now is to make money and to offer to both of my kids a good education. (22,M)

For the Muslim community, education is also considered a key for success in life. Both the religious and political leaders of the community regularly encourage young people to study and they have developed within the community a system of mutual support in order to provide more and better education for children. Religious education is also very important so the community organizes religious education courses for children that take place in mosques. The DUMTTR cultural centre offers dance, music and craft lessons in the aim of preserving the cultural tradition and identity of the community.

The value of education for the Horhane Roma has developed gradually and over time. During the Communist rule in Romania the Horhane Roma were required by law to go to school. After 1989 schooling in Romania was made optional because the government considered it unnecessary to force children to go to school. As a result illiteracy is very prevalent within the Horhane Roma, with the highest rates of illiteracy among 24 to 27 year-olds (9,M; 23,F). Because of the high rates of literacy in the Horhane Roma community it is difficult for them to understand their responsibilities and benefits and the opportunities that are available to them on how to change or improve their social situation. In the last four years the Social Service of Public Assistance, local schools, the Open Doors foundation, and Neo-Protestant Churches have brought together their resources in order to place Horhane Roma children in schools. Every year more than 40 children from this community go school. The role of mothers in this development is key since they are becoming gradually more aware of the benefits of education for their children and for themselves. Both the local and national authorities have organized a literacy campaign for the Horhane Roma. The results are small but visible: instead of eight people expected for a week-end literacy class (organized by local authorities and the Open Doors Foundation) there are now 37, indicating that the desire for change is really there.
Religion

Regardless of the values of the majority and minority groups present in Medgidia, the prevailing opinion among people in the town is that humanity and solidarity and helping each other are the most important values.

As the national majority groups in Medgidia, the Orthodox and Muslim communities share with the Neo-Protestant minority similar values of love, hope, patience, mercy and charity. However, there are differences that are determined by their historical and cultural background. Orthodoxy is strongly connected to values that have a cultural and historic dimension: to be a Romanian Orthodox means to keep alive the memory of the ancestors and to greatly cherish this memory. Muslims also work towards preserving their culture, language, traditions and customs. Therefore, to be a Muslim means, not only to share the same religious values, but also to be part of a ‘live’ mechanism of social and religious events and celebrations, and to share the view of communicating and transmitting these values to others (15,F).

In contrast to the strong historical and cultural values of these two majority groups, Neo-Protestant churches seem to cherish the values of welfare, education and charity. Although charity is a general Christian value, in the case of the Neo-Protestant movement it has a different dimension: in Orthodoxy charity is usually a sporadic or occasional act, but in the Neo-Protestant case charity has continuous and more permanent dimension.

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Chapter 6
Welfare and Values in Europe: a comparative cross-country analysis

Effie Fokas

Introduction

This chapter applies a comparative lens to the material emanating from the 13 case studies conducted in the project on Welfare and Values in Europe: Transitions related to religion, minorities and gender (WaVE).1 WaVE responds to the call for research on ‘Values and religions in Europe’, which invited studies aiming ‘to better understand the significance and impact of values and religions in societies across Europe and their roles in relation to changes in society’. WaVE proposed to grasp these somewhat vague and intangible notions by examining them through the prism of welfare. Specifically, the project aim was to focus on the domain of welfare provision (who provides what to whom, and for what reasons; and who seeks what, from whom and for what reasons) and to trace the impact of values and religions on majority-minority relations within this context. What patterns can we see in welfare provision which lead to greater social cohesion or to tensions within diverse societies? What tendencies are there towards ‘conflict’ or ‘cohesion’ due to values that are embedded in majority and minority welfare provision and needs? As suggested by the project’s subtitle, three major and interconnected dimensions of social change in Europe are identified and examined through the prism of welfare – change related to religion, minorities and gender.

The situation noted in the WaVE State of the Art Report (drafted in 2006 and published in Fokas 2011) remained the same at the end of the WaVE project, in 2009, as it does today: a snapshot of European society today

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1 This report is based mainly on the data and analyses offered by the WaVE researchers in their case study reports (Deliverable No. 9). It has benefited enormously from the comments made by WaVE project members on the first and second drafts. Still, the report reflects the author’s own interpretations of the material, and any resultant weaknesses in the report are her sole responsibility.
reveals a number of controversies pivoting on conflicts – perceived or real – between minorities and majorities in Europe. The examples are many. Debates on the proper balance between freedom of speech and religious sensitivity have been persistently renewed, following reprinting of the cartoons of Mohammed in various publications and again in the Danish *Jyllands-Posten* (in turn, closely followed by the bombing of the Danish Embassy in Pakistan). Details of the citizenship tests introduced in various countries to assess whether the values of immigrants are compatible with those of the majority society continue to be debated, as we have seen cases where even members of the majority population fail to pass the test (Gest 2007), as well as extensive analyses on what the citizenship tests mean in terms of our openness to cultural diversity (Butler 2008). Meanwhile, ‘Fortress Europe’ – type comments by European leaders have proliferated in recent years, as politicians face the challenges posed by mass migration. When these challenges intersect with a global economic crisis, as is the case at the time of writing, immigrants tend to become scapegoats for labour market frailty, and slogans such as ‘British jobs for British citizens’ are increasingly prevalent.

And although the economic crisis tends to overshadow identity politics to a certain extent at the current juncture, negative attention to the Muslim presence in Europe continues to permeate most of the aforementioned debates and, more directly, to be visible through such issues as the wearing of headscarves in public schools, and tensions concerning the building of mosques. The Muslim presence in Europe is indeed a catalyst for debates on values conflict, and an especially interesting (and profitable) focal point for the mass media, which tend to overemphasize the ‘Muslim factor’. However, this generalized image is highly inadequate. First, conflict over religion and values is not limited to minority-majority relations, nor to Islam in Europe. In Europe at least, we are also witnessing parallel to – or as undercurrents of – these developments major tensions between religious and secular worldviews. Debates between secularists and religionists, or *post*-secularists, are proliferating, as are popular books on these themes (for example, Richard Dawkins’ *The God Delusion*). Meanwhile, there is significant tension within religious and secular worldviews so that neither can be viewed as a monolith. Further, the generalized image of a values conflict centred on Islam misses critical nuance – for example, the extent to which conflicts of *interests*, rather than conflicts of values, are at play in different circumstances. Attention to such nuance in the WaVE case studies has challenged the generalized image of an Islam-based values conflict.

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2 A *Times* journalist in the UK administered the citizenship test to 100 random British citizen respondents in late 2007, none of whom passed the test.

3 A study by Roccas (2005) suggests that there is a striking correlation between religiosity and values and, in fact, there is more similarity of values between different faith groups than between religious and secular people of the same cultural backgrounds.
In fact, as will become clear in the following pages, our research indicates that most majority-minority interaction in the domain of welfare lies somewhere between the categories of ‘conflict’ and ‘cohesion’, in a large grey area which requires careful navigation. Here we find such resource factors such as time, space, and money as operative in the actual interaction between majorities and minorities, and more every day factors such as the role of the media, communication (which often boils down to the issue of language, and the minority’s knowledge of the majority language), immigration policy, employment policy, and the role of ‘professional helpers’ (those who administer welfare policies, the first point of contact for many minorities with majority individuals). Besides particular factors, we also have different ‘dimensions’ of conflict or tensions – for example, between different minority groups (rather than between majority and minority), or between different generations of the same groups. The same applies regarding dimensions of cohesion. Meanwhile, our research questions the very notions of conflict and cohesion and identifies complex (rather than dichotomous) relations between the two whereby, for example, conflict may be a necessary precursor to longer-term cohesion. Critical to our work in the WaVE project is careful attention to this large grey area, comprised of active resource factors, and pointing to different dimensions of conflict and cohesion beyond majority-minority relations and to different relationships between conflict and cohesion.

The twin aims of this chapter are to highlight certain patterns found in the case study data collected in the WaVE project and, upon this basis, to offer insights gathered regarding practices, tendencies, mechanisms etc. leading to conflict or cohesion, or influencing the large grey area in between, in minority-majority relations.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, the WaVE project research design will be set out and certain implications of our methodology choices will be explained. Second, a brief elaboration will follow on the concepts of welfare and values as motivators of our research. Third, in a section entitled ‘findings’, (necessarily selective) results from the research conducted will be presented in three main sections, roughly divided in accordance with the project’s general themes (though the themes overlap in many cases): Religion -- what is the role of religion in the context of welfare and values, in terms of religiously provided majority welfare and/or religiously defined minority welfare needs?; Minorities -- what is the experience of minorities within this framework, in terms of problems in access to welfare provided, differing welfare needs, and/or establishment of their own welfare networks?; and Gender -- are there specific minority and/or majority gender

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4 Note, by ‘religiously provided welfare’ I mean welfare provided by religious institutions or groups, rather than welfare provided through religious means or with religious messages (the two do not necessarily overlap).
values influencing the provision and/or use of welfare? Are there gendered welfare needs and if so, how do these influence minority-majority relations?

This brief presentation of certain themes from the research results will be followed by reflections on social cohesion in its relation to welfare. Here the focus is on two themes which call for careful analysis, and around which many of the cross relevant sub-themes cluster: majority policy (and practices) in relation to minorities; and minority social networks and integration. Finally, the chapter closes with an exploration of factors arising from the data which influence minority-majority relations either positively or negatively.

Opportunities and challenges of the research design

The study was carried out in twelve European countries: Sweden, Norway, Finland, Latvia, England, Germany, France, Poland, Croatia, Italy, Romania, and Greece. A number of factors unites these cases. Albeit for different reasons, significant changes in national welfare systems have been taking place in all of the countries under study. Likewise, religion is somehow in a state of flux in the various country cases, a state which is variously influenced by European and global developments in this regard (with different levels of ‘spill-over’ effect). Meanwhile, all of the countries under study have experienced momentous transformations resulting from globalization and, specifically, from migration (imm or em). The way that the latter fact unites the cases in the WaVE study is almost tangible through the links between various case studies, with Romanian immigrants being studied in the Italian case; Greek immigrants studied in one of the German cases; and Polish immigrants in both the Greek and English cases.

At the same time, this vast geographical scope offers a kaleidoscope of the European situation in terms of: different majority religious traditions, and different levels of religiosity/secularity; a broad spectrum from weak to strong welfare states (most evident on a north-south perspective); widely varied gender regimes and gender norms; and contexts of immigration versus emigration (most relevant on an east-west axis).

The post-communist contexts examined deserve special mention (Croatia, Romania, Latvia and Poland). The transition from the communist welfare state to the current welfare systems in each case is a momentous one. The experience of these countries is fundamentally different from our other country cases as regards minority presence (centuries old – which by and large also means a lack of state welfare measures designed specifically for minority needs) and the prevalence of emigration rather than immigration as is most relevant in the other cases in the WaVE project. Further, accession,
or potential for accession, to the European Union is a prevalent factor of change in these cases.

In order to facilitate our aim to grasp welfare and values ‘on the ground’ and as expressed in practice, we chose to conduct in-depth fieldwork in one medium-sized town in each country case. In most cases, the town selection was influenced by that in the previously conducted Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective (WREP) study, but in all cases the main criteria for selection were the size of the town (medium-sized relative to the national situation) and a minority presence broadly representative (where possible) of the national situation insofar as majority-minority relations could be examined. The towns selected are: Gävle (Sweden); Drammen (Norway); Lahti (Finland); Ogre (Latvia); Darlington (England); Schweinfurt and Reutlingen (Germany); Evreux (France); Przemyśl (Poland); Sisak (Croatia); Padua (Italy); Medgidia (Romania); and Thiva (Greece). The fieldwork in these towns took place between September 2006 and December 2007.

The study is qualitative and inductive in its approach. Specifically, researchers were set the task of observing majority-minority interaction in the domain of welfare and, based on patterns observed, to offer analyses on the causes of conflict and/or cohesion between majorities and minorities (focusing on mechanisms in each case), and to draw suggestions regarding local, national, and European-level policies arising from their analyses. The research process began with a thorough ‘mapping’ of the towns under study, in terms of all of the groups present in the locality (majority and minority), a description of how the local welfare system operates (who are the main actors in local welfare and what are their main activities?), and a consideration of the basic forms of interaction between these various groups (are there any notable examples of tension, or cohesion, within and between various groups, in domain of welfare?). This mapping process was an important basis upon which the researchers could make informed decisions about how to choose the sample for a second stage of the fieldwork, the in-depth research.

Contextuality was a guiding principle in our research design, so that in each case researchers focused on particular groups and themes bearing special relevance in each town context. Accordingly, the diversity of the case study towns and countries is reflected in the diversity of the research areas covered across the cases. The list of minority groups studied forms a

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5 On this project, see the link via that of the Uppsala Religion and Society Research Centre www.crs.se.
6 Two case studies were conducted in Germany: one a town traditionally with a Catholic majority (Schweinfurt) and the other in a town traditionally with a Protestant majority (Reutlingen), though in both cases today faith statistics offer no clear majorities.
7 The latter suggestions form the foundations of the ‘EU policy recommendations report’ which appear as chapter 7 in this volume.
complex grid of religiously, ethnically and/or linguistically, gender, or otherwise defined groups. The list across the 13 cases includes Muslims (both ‘old’ and ‘new’, native and immigrant, first generation to fourth generation), Roman Catholics, Protestant groups (mainly Evangelical and Pentecostal), Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, and Greek Catholics; Roma and travelling communities, Finnish and German repatriates (recent returnees from the former Soviet Union and former eastern bloc countries), Russian-speaking communities, and Polish, Ingrain, Albanian, Romanian, Nigerian, Pakistani, Indian, Turkish, Bosnian, Ukrainian, Russian, Algerian, Moroccan and Greek immigrants; female labour migrants; and male labour migrants. Meanwhile, the list of themes focused on in the various cases is also diverse, including immigration policy, reproductive health policy, care for the elderly, educational programmes, employment policy and administration of benefits to the administration of reproductive health, etc.

The advantages to our particular research design are many. First, qualitative studies offer the opportunity for gathering much, varied, and in-depth information. By conducting qualitative studies in particular towns, we have been able to glean nuanced information about our cases, and to find that information embedded in its natural context. Following the guidance offered in the project’s Methodology Guidelines (see Appendix 2 in Volume 1), the material gathered reflects more closely the local realities on the ground in each case. Further, as a result of having contextuality as our guide, whereby – as noted above – researchers were given the task of selecting particular groups and themes bearing special relevance in each town context, the research offers a more complete and realistic perspective of the range of arenas of minority-majority interaction and thus a better grasp of the types of problems that might be encountered, and types of solutions found, in the efforts towards social cohesion in diverse societies across Europe.

These significant opportunities offered by WaVE’s research design also entail particular challenges and limitations. First, as explained in the State of the Art report and in the Methodology Guidelines, defining certain terms in a universally applicable manner across these diverse cases was exceedingly difficult – e.g., ‘majority’ and ‘minority’, ‘welfare’, and ‘values’. These, together with other concepts critical to the WaVE research such as ‘social cohesion’ and ‘religion’, were managed with an open approach: we did not choose one definition to follow for all case studies and, rather, allowed for a

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8 The project’s Methodology Guidelines (WP2, D3-5) guided researchers to be sensitive to internal versus external definitions of groups, as well as to their own prejudices of socialisations which might influence their perspectives (see Appendix 2 in Volume 1).

9 The WaVE researchers owe special thanks to Pål Repstad for these insights, shared in his ‘Notes on the advantages and limitations of qualitative methods’, presented at the WaVE junior researchers’ meeting in Padua, 14-17 September 2006. As Repstad notes, ‘natural’ belongs in inverted commas because there is inevitably an element of the researcher’s construction and interpretation of the information.

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rich variety of definitions of these terms to arise from the various contexts (each national and local context). This open approach was certainly more challenging for the researchers, and renders comparison more difficult, but it forms an important part of the contextuality which was a guiding principle of our research.

A second challenging aspect of our approach is that qualitative studies are necessarily limited insofar as the possibilities of generalization are concerned: we cannot, based on our in-depth research in our selected towns, generalize our findings to apply to the various national contexts, or even to other towns within each national context. The same applies to the possibilities for comparison: the diversity of the cases, and of the selected groups and themes in each case study, defies neat and systematic comparison.

However, by applying a comparative lens to the data gathered across all the cases, we can and do seek to identify common or different patterns of phenomena and their causal relationships (or lack thereof), and we hope this will lead eventually to a deeper understanding of how greater social cohesion can be achieved between (and within) majorities and minorities in diverse societies.

Welfare and Values – setting the scene

Welfare, it may be argued, is a quintessential European value. Each European nation has its own characteristics in this regard, with different hierarchies of welfare values in each case – gender equality for example stands out as a core value in Swedish welfare, whilst people take to the streets in Greece and France over proposed changes to free universal tertiary education as a basic element of national welfare. Meanwhile, European state welfare provision is, at root, aimed at social cohesion, inasmuch as welfare systems are based on structures of interdependence between the members of a community, as embedded in citizenship laws and expressed through a sense of belonging. Increasingly however, in the context of growing diversity, debates arise regarding whether diversity in itself inhibits the ability of welfare systems to foster social cohesion.

10 An example simply to illustrate the point: in the Evreux case, discussion of the notion of ‘cohesion’ tended to lead to discussion of cooperation (e.g., a sign of cohesion between majority and minority would be cooperation between the two in the welfare domain).

11 To be precise, in the Greek case the reactions are largely against the degrees of private universities receiving equal accreditation as those of the public universities.

12 We did not have a guiding common definition of social cohesion in the WaVE project, but a number of researchers chose to adopt that of Berger-Schmitt (2000), whereby social cohesion entails reduction of disparities, inequalities and social exclusion, on the one hand, and strengthening of social relations and interaction, on the other.
Should we strive to preserve diversity, or to promote integration? This is a dilemma often – however naively – seen strictly in either/or terms. According to Rogers Brubaker (2001), the differentialist turn of the last third of the twentieth century may have reached its peak, and rather than interest in preserving diversity, increasingly we are seeing a ‘return of assimilation’. Debates have centred on whether the new multicultural contexts across Europe signify the end of the European welfare states as we know them (Banting and Kymlicka 2004; Kymlicka 2005). An underlying question is whether multicultural welfare policies lead to greater social cohesion and solidarity or, on the contrary, whether they simply lead to an undermining of welfare systems all together. Traditionally, opposition to immigration and multiculturalism was voiced from right-wing factions throughout Europe; today, such opposition is developing within the left also, as a perceived threat to the welfare system (Kymlicka 2005). In his consideration of whether there is a ‘trade-off’ between heterogeneity and redistribution, Kymlicka examines patterns of social spending in relation to levels of immigration in various contexts throughout Europe, and he concludes that there is not, in fact, a ‘trade-off’ (rather, it is the pace of immigration which may play a role in leading to smaller increases in social spending). At the same time, he admits that ‘one of the most compelling challenges facing national welfare states is how to maintain and strengthen the bonds of solidarity in increasingly diverse societies’ (Kymlicka 2005, 22).

In the context of such debates, it is important to seek to understand the relationship between diversity and social cohesion: if indeed diversity is thought to threaten social cohesion, then in what way exactly? Robert Putnam offers us useful clues in this regard. In an article entitled ‘E Pluribus Unum [roughly synonymous with the EU motto ‘unity in diversity’]: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century’ (2007), Putnam argues that over the long run (in the next several decades), increased diversity is not only inevitable but desirable; that in the short to medium run, however, ethnic diversity challenges social solidarity; and in the medium to long run, successful immigrant societies create new forms of social solidarity and ‘dampen the negative effects of diversity by constructing new, more encompassing identities’ (2007: 138-9). The nature of the challenge posed by diversity to social cohesion in the short run is, according to Putnam, the development of anomie and social isolation: ‘diversity does not produce ‘bad race relations’ or ethnically-defined group hostility, our findings suggest. Rather, inhabitants of diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, to distrust their neighbours, regardless of the colour of their skin ... Diversity, at least in the short run, seems to bring out the turtle in all of us’ (2007: 150-1). In other words, it is not a direct majority-minority division which develops but, rather, a more general limitation to social solidarity overall (even within the majority) ... as is also suggested in the questions posed by Kymlicka above.
These discussions have developed in a North American context, but they apply equally well to the European context, and they provoke the question relevant wherever diversity has developed: is it the mere presence of difference that is the operative factor in the challenge to social cohesion, or is it the presence of different, perhaps competing, values? In posing this question in the WaVE project, we encounter the conceptual hurdles that challenge most researchers of values. As van Deth and Scarbrough (1998) observe, ‘values’ is an elusive concept, and agreement about its content and meaning hard to find. However, through an exploration of common aspects of different definitions, they propose the following: values cannot be directly observed; they engage moral considerations; and they are conceptions of the desirable (1998: 28).

From quantitative studies and values surveys we have information about the values claimed by different groups of peoples (the World Values Surveys and the European Values Surveys are amongst the most prominent of such studies). But these are often abstract notions, and tell us little about whether, in practice, differing values are in fact leading to conflicts and thus damaging social cohesion. Values do not exist ‘in the air’, as it were, but are grounded in everyday life and interaction, and they need to be examined this way – on the ground and through qualitative research – if they are to shed any light on actual, lived social cohesion and/or conflicts. As van Deth and Scarbrough argue, ‘values are embedded in other things – in ways of thinking, talking and acting, in judgements, decisions, attitudes, behaviour, and the like. We can conceptualize values as separate from these other things, but we cannot ‘get to them’ separately from their place in other things. Values cannot be researched on their own because they do not stand on their own’ (1998: 31). Here we encounter the bridge developed in the WaVE project between welfare and values through the questions it poses: what values are embedded in majority and minority welfare provision and welfare needs? And what are the results in terms of ‘conflict’ or ‘cohesion’ between majorities and minorities (or, indeed, within society at large)? And, finally, what role – if any – is played by religion in the above?

I turn now to our findings related to these questions.

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13 I am grateful to Olav Helge Angell for brining this text to our attention.
Findings

Religion

Majority religion welfare actions and attitudes towards minorities

The large role played by majority churches in welfare provision across Europe has been established in other research (and by several members of the WaVE research team though the WREP project\(^ {15} \)). In fact, the majority church in some cases provides ‘gap-filling’ welfare services that even the state does not provide – e.g., in Thiva the only homes for the elderly are church-run and in Lahti the only children’s afterschool clubs are church-run; in Przemysl, the same applies to facilities for the homeless. In the latter two cases, this strong role of the church is likely to stem from the place of these churches in relation to national identity and to the state; these churches are seen to a large extent as part of the state, hence – for better or for worse – their welfare services are seen as part of the state welfare apparatus. According to one Greek Orthodox monk, this is certainly ‘for the worse’, as the church should not be viewed as ‘an arm of the state’. A second reason for this strong role of the church, however, is the relative weakness of the state welfare system, leaving as many gaps as it does in both national cases. Interestingly though, the Finnish case offers an interesting example of such gap-filling even where the welfare state is comparatively very robust. In Lahti, for example, churches help to conceal state weaknesses by offer basic language courses to immigrants.

To what extent is it problematic that majority churches are the sole local providers of certain welfare activities? One potential problem is that in several cases (Przemysl, Medgidia, Thiva, and Sisak), the majority faiths are involved in addressing the most basic of minority needs, such as offering food, clothing and blankets, and in each case, most such activity is very much ad hoc and driven by particular individuals rather than embedded in a systematic approach to welfare provision. Of course, ad hoc means not universal, thus receipt of such welfare assistance may depend on luck, who one knows, etc. In the case of Thiva, for example, Pakistanis and Indians are not privy to some of the most generous of religiously-provided welfare

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\(^{14}\) This section is based on my interpretation of the case study reports found in Volumes One, Two and Three from the WaVE project. Examples are taken from individual case studies where they relate to particular points being made, but these examples should not be interpreted as representative of the case study as a whole. I do not formally cite each case study report, and I also include information here which is not in the case study reports but which came directly from individual researchers in their feedback sent on the first draft of the Comparative Cross-Country Analysis report.

\(^{15}\) The final reports from the project Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective (WREP) are available in Bäckström et al. (2010 and 2011).
because their limited Greek and lack of social interaction with the majority population, which means they are not informed by word-of-mouth, as are the other minority groups benefiting from such services. At the same time, the informality of such welfare services may also be seen as an advantage, in their relative flexibility and ability to ‘work between the cracks’ between unbending organizational, institutional and bureaucratic limitations.

A second potential problem in majority church-provided welfare services is the notion that the help comes with ‘strings attached’, and an expectation that the recipients – regardless of their faith orientation – will also participate in religious services and activities offered alongside the welfare assistance. The welfare provision of the Catholic Church in Przemysl is described as having ‘some religious elements’: in one home for single mothers and children, there is no official requirement that the boarders take part in the rosary prayer, but they express a sense of pressure to participate – if not external pressure, than internal, out of a sense of gratitude and indebtedness towards the nuns who run the home. In Schweinfurt, one representative of a church welfare service states: ‘it is understood that we talk about God here and when one goes along with that it is ok. Even if a man entertains Buddhist thoughts, that is his choice, but he has agreed to go along’. Meanwhile in Gävle, where one assumes a much more discrete majority church presence, the influence of a Christian ethos and culture on the education system is still considered so strong as to be problematic to some non-Christian minorities (and, indeed, perhaps more so to very vocal secularist groups). One symbolic example is the use of Lutheran churches for public education graduation ceremonies. Here we find resonance in the observation of Statham et al (2005: 429) that ‘although European societies see themselves are broadly secular, Christian religions often play important institutional, social and political roles, regardless of how many or how few people actually believe or practise the religion. These institutional arrangements define pre-existing conditions and the political environment into which migrant religions have to find a space for their community’. Indeed, the welfare domain is highly revealing of a broad range of norms across Europe, seemingly banal until they encounter difference, such as may occur with mass immigration.

The Italian case offers a much more blatant example of majority religions norms influencing minority welfare and, critically, also majority welfare, via Catholic Church attitudes to abortion. There, tensions arise over immigrant women’s high rates of, and demands for, voluntary termination of pregnancies, and the Church’s influence over reproductive health in general. The fact that a large percentage of the demand for this service comes from immigrant women is breeding ground for ill-feelings, particularly on the part of the civil servants working with reproductive health issues, towards the minority population seeking abortions. Meanwhile, the fact that a large
percentage of doctors (80% and seemingly growing year upon year) refuses to perform abortions on the grounds that their (majority Catholic) faith condemns it, indicates the Italian norm of publicness of religion in the doctors’ open practice of conscientious objection against performing abortions. The issue thus permeates both the public and the private domain, as the Catholic Church’s influence is conspicuous even within welfare provision structures. At the same time, this case also highlights the internal plurality of majority religion, as within the Catholic Church liberals and traditionalists struggle against one another over the issue of reproductive health. Indeed, the Italian case offers us an example of how values conflicts may arise within a particular group (here, the majority) rather than between the majority and minorities.

According to Hunsberger and Jackson (2005), more religious people express prejudice (in terms of self-reported negative attitudes towards stereotypic perceptions of various categories of ‘others’) than non-religious individuals. Theoretically, this could negatively influence the openness of religious welfare provision to minorities, insofar as religious organizations reflect individual members’ prejudices. Still, such a claim would have to be assessed against differences across national, religious and generational categories to avoid a monolithic perspective of ‘religious people’.

More interestingly for our purposes, Hunsberger and Jackson’s study suggests that religion-based prejudice against minorities is likely to be intensified if and when members of the majority religion perceive themselves to be in conflict with other religious (or nonreligious) groups for limited resources: for example, ‘the (often erroneous) perception that immigrants create competition with members of host populations for jobs can create prejudice against these immigrants’ religion in particular’ (Hunsberger and Jackson 2005, 818). In other words, what could easily be interpreted as a conflict of religious values is, in fact, a conflict of interests, over limited resources. The case of Sisak offers one example of such prejudice, with certain respondents complaining that anyone who is not Catholic is not considered Croatian and, hence, is not offered equal rights, particularly in the area of employment competition. The Evreux case offers a counter-example, of cohesion and cooperation between Catholic, Protestant and Muslim representatives in a particular part of town, focused on helping to protect undocumented immigrants from being discovered and potentially deported.

Minority religious needs and practices

First, it is important to point out that in terms of minority religions, minority status in and of itself often leads to group identification on the basis of religion; this is likely to be enhanced for immigrant communities, as they tend to be somewhat detached from core public institutions promoting civic
values and tend, instead, to rely on their religious institutions and family networks as a ‘community support system’ (Statham et al. 2005). One recurrent observation in the WaVE study is that the (externally imposed) religious identification of groups is often stronger than the internal realities of the given groups merit. In other words, minority groups which may perceive of and identify themselves with reference to a broad range of categories are often perceived of and defined by others (e.g., the majority population) one-dimensionally with reference to their religious identities. This tends to be a product of one of two things (or a combination of these): ‘representatives’ of these groups are often more religiously vocal and conservative than the average member, and the mass media tend to emphasize the religious definitions of these groupings over other definitions. In other words, what we as researchers may define as minority religious needs may, by the groups themselves, be expressed as ethnically or otherwise defined needs.

In terms of the examples we have identified as religiously-defined minority needs, a main issue that arises in many of the cases is the need for cultural competence of welfare workers and authorities in the welfare arena (an issue to be addressed more thoroughly below), which would include knowledge of religious traditions, needs, etc. The Gävle case offers an example of effort in this direction in the introduction of an inclusive calendar at a local school where the religious holidays of all faith groups represented in the school are observed. Culture is easily mixed with the religion in this area of specific minority needs, and one example serves to prove the point: Drammen homework assistance programmes, originally introduced to provide after-school assistance to minority children in areas where their learning was weaker than that of majority students, evolved in one case (that of a separate ‘boarding-school’ version of this programme) to include lessons in culture and tradition, and religious lessons. Provision of food in schools in accordance with religious traditions is, indeed, one type of a religiously-defined welfare need.

But it is notoriously difficult to distinguish, from an external perspective, between religions and cultural needs. And, perhaps arbitrarily, some of what we have labelled as the latter appears in the section below.

Minorities

Minority welfare needs – met and unmet

The range of minority welfare needs across the cases under study is extremely broad. This to some extent reflects the breadth of development of national welfare systems (discussed above), but it is also of course a factor of the status of the minority individual or group (financial, marital and
educational status, age, documented or undocumented immigrant; employed or not; skilled or unskilled, etc.). In Germany, individuals who immigrated as guest workers now face difficulties tending to their needs with extremely low pensions that this group is allowed. The Romanian case is perhaps the most acute, where extreme poverty (amongst both majorities and minorities however) and an especially weak welfare system (with only four social workers in the entire town of just under 44,000 individuals). The Greek and Italian cases reveal similar characteristics by virtue of their large contingents of undocumented immigrants, for whom ‘illegal’ status renders concepts such as health and general welfare benefits offered by the state as something of a luxury: their welfare priorities are acquiring residence and work permits, accommodation, and employment – in short, the right and ability to remain, live and work in their respective immigration destinations. In most cases, undocumented immigrants are barred from access to much (if not all of) state welfare provision. Medical emergency services are usually an exception, offered universally to all in need, but even here practice often differs from theory. Thus, depending on the status of the minority individual, and in conjunction with the welfare situation of the host county, there may be a whole range of systemic barriers to welfare access. However, generally in these case studies there are more practical rather than systemic barriers to minorities’ access to welfare, whether state-provided or otherwise provided. One poignant, and repeated, example is lack of information about available programmes reaching minority communities, usually because of their poor knowledge of the majority language but also because of limited communication with majority individuals and structures. This problem surfaces prominently in most of the WaVE case studies. One illustrative example comes from the case of Thiva, where one programme for Greek-language training was advertised through posters in store windows throughout the town, but these were only in Greek and, accordingly, inaccessible to those in most need of the language courses. In the case of Darlington, the provision of information and the recommendation by midwives (trusted individuals with whom some degree of contact was inevitable) was needed for some minority women to seek out certain welfare provisions offered in the locality. In yet other cases, minority communities are fully informed, but the provision offered is not quite what they need, or want. The strong focus on the family and religious or ethnic community provides an important clue as to why this is the case: in Reutlingen, for example, there are relatively few Greek and Turkish immigrants using state services of care for the elderly. In both cases, ‘sending’ one’s family member to such state institutions is taboo, often interpreted as a lack of love and respect for these elders (the latter being a very highly-ranked value in these cultures, as noted also in the Darlington and Medgidia cases). In Schweinfurt, the example arises of one minority-run welfare organization (‘Friendship’) places emphasis on the
importance of German language capability for returnees from the former Soviet Union but faces the problem of a lack of motivation on the part of recipients, who complain about their limited chance of finding work in Germany in any case (so why learn German?), and explain that they have a sufficiently large circle of family and friends who speak Russian, so there is no immediate need to learn German.

Overall, a frequently expressed minority welfare need is for culturally aware and linguistically capable (in the minority language(s)) professional helpers. In Drammen, the need for psychologists in these categories is noted. In Darlington, minorities’ requests along these lines have been heard by officials, who in turn find it difficult to recruit welfare professionals from minority cultural, ethnic or religious backgrounds (indicating a potential vicious cycle: the family and community-oriented approach of minority groups means all needs should be cared for within the family, but when needs arise that can’t be cared for in the family, it is difficult to find competent same-culture help, because the culture does not encourage welfare activity beyond the immediate family). In Reutlingen, there’s a broad discussion about ‘intercultural care’ for the elderly, but a real solution of how to manage it has not yet emerged. Because minority groups by and large avoid making use of homes for the elderly, where at all possible, these institutions are ill-equipped, in terms of intercultural knowledge, to handle the relative few cases of minority users. Thus, a vicious cycle ensues, as minorities are thus less likely to consider use of these homes for the elderly. The Schweinfurt case, though, offers a successful example of a Turkish member of the town Advisory Council on Foreigners who acts as a ‘cultural broker’ for Turkish and Muslim users of welfare services by resolving a seemingly constant flow of misunderstandings that arise between the workers in the services, on the one hand, and the minority users, on the other.

In Evreux, the lack of cultural competence of welfare structures – but also of the broader society – stand outs as especially problematic: in particular, the indication of minorities by their ethnic, rather than religious, identities by the welfare structures and the public at large. In Gävle, the Family Centre established by the local authorities fails to attract the desired participation of the targeted groups of immigrants in the activities established for them (courses in cooking, meetings places for immigrant women, etc.). According to the Swedish research team, this could have to do with the fact that these programmes are a clear reflection of dominant Swedish values: ‘they are directed more towards giving than towards listening for the voices of the newly arrived persons as citizens with both resources and needs’. (A similar plan in Darlington for cooking classes for Traveller women, was abandoned for fear of offending the women concerned).
One possible factor in lack of communication between majority welfare institutions and minorities, and limited knowledge of the latter’s needs, is spatial segregation as occurs in many cases. In Evreux, Medgidia, Thiva, and Gävle in particular, there are strong tendencies towards ghettoization of particular groups. The trajectory of the development of each of these ghettos is different but results similar in terms of symbolic distance from the majority population (even where ghettos are in the centre of town). Such symbolic, and very often real, distance is especially conspicuous in the case of the Roma, and particularly so in the Polish case study. Here the relationship between the local majority and the Roma is described as ‘lack of mutual adaptation and understanding’ – a description which could apply to the Roma in other case studies as well. Lack of education is pinpointed as a root of the problem, but the majority and the Roma explain this differently: the ‘stricter’ majority perspective is that the Roma are uninterested in education and lazy; the ‘softer’ majority perspective is that the Roma lack mobilization and lack sufficient appreciation for education; the Roma themselves cite a lack of understanding of Roma children’s needs and verbal abuse of the children, weak health and unwillingness to attend due to the poor treatment received there, and lack of clothing or equipment needed. And this impasse of lack of mutual adaptation and understanding remains in place. This evidence corroborates with results of research which reveals the circularity of the relationship among stereotypes, labelling and politics, in the case of the Roma (Sigona 2005), a vicious cycle which is difficult to break.

Finally, certain majority welfare-providing efforts can lead to more problems rather than solutions. The Darlington case offers an interesting example of how good intentions can go astray: local authorities, forced to meet national integration targets, may be required to take decisions against their better judgement (the latter being based on their closer contacts with and understanding of the local community, as may be opposed to the drafters of national integration policies), and thus end up placing minorities in uncomfortable positions which, in turn, may lead to tensions and conflict between groups. In one case, local authorities were obliged to act against their better judgement (which is based on local knowledge), in order to implement a national-level policy calling for a meeting between diverse minority groups which were unlikely to see eye to eye. The plan backfired by producing more discord than anything else. A recurrent theme, then, is the need for greater understanding and awareness of characteristics and needs of minorities on the ground and the development of policies accordingly. The insider knowledge and first hand insights of local level representatives of welfare agencies should not be underestimated, or ignored.
Minority networks – tending to own needs

Most minority communities have their own welfare networks, though these vary significantly in levels of formality and structure. To a large extent, these networks develop along the lines of particular needs of the minority communities as they arise. For example, the aforementioned homework assistance programmes in Drammen were established by the local Turkish minority in order to offer extra assistance as the need arose for Norwegian language learning. Minority parents have praised the programmes for their role also in keeping their children safe and protected and off the streets, where drug use is a problem in the locality. One of the homework assistance programmes was in fact further extended to act as type of boarding school, only for boys. The latter provoked an intense media reaction, criticising the separatist tendencies perceived in this development, and in some cases feeding fears of possible extremist tendencies. Possibly as a direct reaction to the debates provoked by the establishment of the boarding school, the Drammen local authorities decided to establish after-school homework assistance programmes in all its schools.

In general, the minority desire for their own welfare institutions is perhaps most acute in the realm of education. Separate Saturday schools have also been established in Reutlingen for the children of USSR repatriates, seeking more creative, art-focused courses, but also intended to teach children the Russian language and, in general, a more rigorous and robust teaching style than that – according to this group – offered by the German education system. The Russian-language high school in Ogre serves the purpose of uniting the Russian-speaking population and preserving Russian cultural values (the schools are not new, but the Russian-speaking population actively seek their continued operation). The case of Przemysl Roma, though, offers a counter-example of a separate school being established by the local authorities, but against the will of the Roma themselves who preferred that their children not be thus segregated; the school eventually closed because of lack of attendance.

Whether separate minority welfare institutions (including educational services) lead to greater integration into or segregation from the majority society is a matter of debate. In Gävle, immigrants are encouraged by majority institutions to form their own organizations in democratic forms so as to better integrate into the Swedish welfare society and its structures and procedures. Trends in formation of social networks around a culture of origin reflect what Castles and Miller (2003: 39) describe as helping people to ‘maintain self-esteem in a situation where their capabilities and experience are undermined’ (See also Schrover and Vermeulen 2005). One minority representative in Schweinfurt describes minority initiatives, particularly in the realm of education, in just these terms: maintenance of
minority culture in conjunction with enhanced education is required for minority self-esteem which, in turn, will lead to increased participation of minorities in the public sphere.

In the case of Reutlingen, in the realms of education and social work, minority communities express their eagerness to organize their own welfare networks rather than simply receiving help from others, and they rally for more public funding for their own programmes. For instance, youth crime is one particularly challenging problem in the locality; certain minority groups feel they could be used effectively as a resource, establishing their own initiatives against youth crime which would be more effecting in addressing the causes of such crime within their communities. This is one of many examples in which minority communities seek recognition as a resource, for what they have to offer to the broader community (and it links well to the Gävle illustration above, regarding the need to listen carefully to minorities’ expressed needs and recognize their own resources they can offer in addressing social problems).

In fact, in Przemysl and in Lahti, there seems to be well-developed activity along these lines. In the former, participation in welfare provision is presented as an important part of social integration. Minority organizations – particularly Protestant groups – wish to be recognized not only as a useful resource, but as a partner – an equal contributor to the resolution of local welfare needs, together with the local state structures. Symbolic of their exclusion in this domain is their difficulty in securing public spaces for their welfare activities. Indeed, space – access to public spaces by minority organizations, is another significant factor in minority integration which goes hand-in-hand with needs for recognition and for operation of their own welfare networks (this issue arises in several case studies). Space in this sense has both physical and metaphorical significance.

The situation in Lahti regarding Protestant groups’ welfare activities is similar to that in the Polish case, in terms of minority activity in the welfare domain seen as a way to integrate minorities into local society. In this case however, some minority faith groups (e.g., Pentecostals) have their own venues and they sometimes offer these for use by immigrant groups, thus encouraging their volunteering and citizen participation.

Gender

Gender and majority values

Some of the most mediatized and socially divisive welfare challenges in Europe are arising around the gendered needs and values of religious minorities (and, especially, of Muslim women): these range from the headscarf issue (as a barrier to education and employment of Muslim
women) to more controversial issues, as polygamy, female circumcision, sharia divorce – which ‘contradict most liberal states’ legal and moral understandings of equality, between individuals, and men and women’ (Statham et al. 2005, 431). In fact, much of what is often (however inappropriately) described as a ‘return’ of religion has been channelled through issues to do with the body and rights of minority women (headscarves, forced marriages and honour killings, etc)... issues which have provoked broader debates about sexuality and women’s bodies in the public sphere.

These particular issues do not appear in the WaVE research data, though they likely exist in the background through their influence on respondents’ perspectives (a ‘spill-over’ effect of European and global-scale issues which may not even be present at the national, much less local level). One exception is in the Schweinfurt case, where one woman encounters criticism regarding her wearing of a headscarf. She states, ‘I love Germany. No question. And I could not live anywhere else. But then people question why I wear a headscarf. They say I want to bring Islam to Germany. No, I want this country the way it is.’

Other than this one case, relevant issues that do arise are, for example, the wish of Muslim women in Reutlingen to be able to use a public swimming hall only for girls and women, as they will not allow their daughters to participate in mixed groups, but at the same time want for them to be able to learn to swim. Calls for separate sex swimming lessons also factor into the Gävle case. In fact, the Swedish case is perhaps the most conspicuous in terms of welfare values related to gender, with promotion of gender equality and individual autonomy intrinsic to the welfare system as a whole. Here majority-minority ‘tensions’ arose in relation to this in the educational domain: specifically, the Swedish value of same and equal rules for men and women, boys and girls, was challenged by requests for separate swimming courses for the two sexes by a small number of Muslim immigrants. Meanwhile, Swedish openness to sexuality met with resistance from Muslim parents in Gävle not wishing for their children to shower and change in front of others (nudity being avoided), and also reacting to the use of naked drawings and models in biology classes. Also in the domain of the Family Centre established in Gävle, contrasting gender values are evident in the relative inactivity of fathers (not only Muslim but from immigrant groups in general) in contributing to the care of young children (e.g., taking care of small children so as to free the mother to attend support group meetings; instead, the mothers tended to bring the small children with them if attending such meetings).

It is tempting to interpret all of the above through the lens of a gendered value conflict related to Islam. However, such developments are by no means restricted to Islam and to Muslim communities: in other case studies
conservatism and gendered values are introduced by different minority groups, and indeed by majority individuals in more patriarchal societies. Stereotypes and culturalist interpretations abound. E.g., Nigerian men are described by one ‘welfare worker’ in Padua as uninvolved in the care for children. Such stereotypes are often produced and reproduced by welfare agents, and in some cases they are also promoted by the minorities themselves as some migrants tend to present their own cultures in a static way.

Also, such stereotypes can go both ways, as minority groups issue their own judgements of majority society in the realms of gender and family values, or of younger generations within their own minority group. For example, certain Polish and Romanian women in Thiva judge their own value in relation to Greek women on the basis of who cooks and cleans more for their men. Greek and Turkish women in Reutlingen note that the younger generation women were not playing a sufficiently strong role in the home caring for the family. In Sisak also, older Muslim women emphasize the need for preservation of their cultural values and criticize younger women in this respect, and particularly younger men who marry Croat women and adopt Croat values and tradition etc. Meanwhile, in Lahti Lutherans praise the immigrant communities for their strong family values as compared with the majority Finnish tendencies, which are considered less family oriented.

This brings us to the question of generational values clashes as regards the roles of men and women. Beyond the above examples, in the Reutlingen and Darlington cases as well, conflicts or potential conflicts are identified by respondents over different gendered values from one generation to another. These developments resonate with debates within western European majority communities over what has been controversially labelled the ‘selfish [female] sex’, which is considered responsible for gaps in care for children and the elderly: the accusation in the representative literature is that ‘the elderly and vulnerable are paying the price for a generation of professional working women’ (Wolf 2006). In this sense, many minority women consulted in the WaVE study find exposed to two accusatory views pointing in opposing directions: internally to their communities they are criticized for not providing continuity in their cultural values and traditions (including gendered values), and externally they are often criticized as the bearers of those aspects of culture considered most foreign and often antithetical to ‘western European values’. This corroborates with the observation by Yuval-Davis et al (2005: 519), that it is immigrant women who are most often implicated in the maintenance of (or, at least, in the failure to ‘overcome’) traditional practices such as arranged marriages, authoritarian gender and generational relations, and religious practices.
Gender between religious and secular values

The above are mainly examples of gendered values to do with culture and tradition. There are also cases of explicit gendered values linked to religion, as we have seen above in the case of Padua, where tensions develop between majority and minorities over reproductive health issues strongly influenced by the Catholic Church. However, the issue unfolds to reveal other fault lines than that between majority and minority: secular versus religious values; progressive versus conservative religious values; and women of all religious and ethnic backgrounds uniting behind women’s right to choose, on the one hand, aligned on the other against those advancing conservative religious values insofar as voluntary interruption of pregnancy is concerned. Here the high percentage of immigrant demand for abortions is used to question the rights of all women. In this particular ‘grey area’, women of various religious and ethnic backgrounds (including Catholic) united in opposition to a particular conservative Catholicism.

Women’s and men’s access to and provision of welfare services

In several cases, it is clear that within minority communities, women have the first and perhaps only contact with the local welfare system, through needs arising in relation to pregnancy, childbirth and child-rearing. As such, the importance of welfare services offered for women, in terms of potentially influencing minority welfare as a whole, is considerable. In Darlington for example, minority women’s first contact with welfare services is often through pregnancy or childbirth, from which point they are introduced, through referrals, to a world of options such as language and other courses. Trust factors as highly important here, established only through initial positive experiences in their contact with the system and which could then lead to allowing ‘foreigners’ to care for their children while they work. In Padua also, women’s reproductive health needs expose them to other areas of help and influence, for them and for their families in general. And in the Polish case, women are sometimes the only ones to have contact with the welfare services, as they are more likely to seek help for their own needs and will struggle on behalf of the entire family for their needs as well. All of the above are good examples of interconnections (here, between gender and minority status) fostering positive interaction between various groups rather than problematic outcomes (Staunes 2003).

The ‘women’s solidarity’ in the Padua case has been described above. The case of Przemysl offers another positive example in the Ukrainian Women Association, of minority women coming together to tend to minority women’s needs – in other words, women are the main providers and recipients of welfare aid. In the Finnish case, Ingrain women too are active and well connected in social networks and are recipients of local welfare aid,
whereas Ingrain men are described as passive. In Thiva, the Pakistani and Indian populations are almost exclusively men; they have formed their own associations and do not seek welfare support from local authorities and local voluntary institutions – mainly, however, because they lack information about these (as noted above, due to communication and language barriers).

Reflections on welfare and social cohesion

Majority policy (and practice) towards minorities

There are several policy areas (policy broadly defined and not limited to state apparatus) in particular which arise repeatedly in the WaVE material, including language and communication; the role of media; immigration and minorities policy; the role of the individual (interpersonal contact); and the role of ‘professional helpers’ (those enacting local welfare policies). These themes have been addressed above in more or less detail; below the aim is to reflect on the material specifically from the perspective of majority-minority interaction and barriers to or facilitators of social cohesion. Each point stands alone as a significant factor in much minority-majority interaction, but it is also useful to note their interconnectedness which, for seemingly almost arbitrary reasons, can lead to conflict and tension between minorities and majorities.

One especially prevalent minority need which is strikingly problematic in many cases is poor knowledge of the majority language – a banal point seemingly but with multifaceted repercussions. Communication and language problems in the various cases entail problems to do with frequency and type of contact with local welfare services; difficulties in majority language learning availability (lack of majority language capability significantly influences the well-being of minorities in several cases); and, in general, lack of understanding, on the part of the majority, of minority culture and minority needs. In this environment, stereotypical and culturalist perspectives thrive, often with the support of the local and/or national media.

The Latvian case offers an interesting example of the interconnectedness of the role of the media and language limitations. In Ogre media plays a crucial role in majority-minority relations because Latvian and Russian-speaking people live in completely different information environments. The two groups follow different print media and television and radio stations which often present the same information from entirely different perspectives. These media sources are mostly national, but they have a tremendous impact on the local level too. Thus, the Latvian researchers describe the media as one of the most important sources of conflict between majority and Russian speaking minority in Latvia.
In the findings section the role of the media appears frequently, particularly as linked to stereotypes but also to the inflammation of problem points. Most interesting, though, is what we do not see in the findings, which makes us more aware of the particular role played by the media in majority-minority relations, because the picture gleaned from our case studies is quite different to that described in the introduction to this chapter, and that seen in national and global media. In some cases, the content is the same (no unrest over the Mohammed cartoons or citizenship tests, but values differences arise over modesty and sexual freedoms), but in general our research data offer a much more nuanced picture of the everyday significance of religious values in majority-minority relations. Certainly we were not overwhelmed with an image of Islam as causing barriers to cohesion between Muslims and majorities in our individual cases. By and large other minority groups proved more challenging to local majorities than Muslim groups did in any country where they were studied (e.g., Roma and Pentecostals, in cases where they were included in the study).

Immigration policy as a factor in majority-minority relations is especially conspicuous in the Italian and Greek cases, but bears relevance for other cases as well. The situation of undocumented immigrants is especially precarious and, most importantly, immigration policy is often such that they are unable to resolve this situation. For example, in Thiva (as in the rest of Greece, as immigration policy is set at the national level), undocumented immigrants currently in the town have no possibility of achieving work and residence permits as no new permits are being issued (not since the last period during which permits were issued, in 2001). Yet there is a strong demand for immigrant labour, much larger than could be met only by those documented immigrants living in the town. The undocumented immigrants simply compete for the same jobs and are often offered them at lower wages, with no access to social security of course, and constantly facing the possibility of deportation. This situation is supported by the fact that the underground economy has come to rely on illegal, uninsured, labour.

Here a lack of state resources is also quite evident: in Thiva only two civil servants working in the office handling the applications for work and residence permits, working with only paper files and no electronic system. Frustration with the situation leads many immigrants in such contexts to question the values of the majority state (though complaints were not waged by immigrants against the population at large – just against the Greek state).

These are patterns visible in the Italian case as well, and certain elements may be found in all other country cases experiencing illegal immigration. Just as many local economies have tended to adapt to the presence of undocumented immigrants, so too the local populations in such cases recognize the need, in individual households also, for migrant labour. Within this particularly difficult (for many immigrants) situation, interesting
examples of majority-minority cohesion arise in our research which corroborates with the ‘contact hypothesis’ – i.e., that increased contact with people of other ethnic and racial backgrounds will lead to increased tolerance and social solidarity. The WaVE research has offered examples of increased and closer contact leading to fondness of one’s neighbour, even if prejudices remain about the ‘other’ members of the particular ethnic or religious group; of majority individuals helping minority individuals through the difficulties related to immigration policy (often in employer-employee contexts, landlord-tenant relations, or amongst neighbours); and of a sense of solidarity developing between minority and majority individuals in opposition to the problems of ‘the system’. In all of the above, we should recognize the important role of the individual and interpersonal contact (particularism). In this and in several other domains of welfare provision, our research has shown the critical function of particular individuals in majority-minority interactions.

Finally, and intimately connected to policy on immigration and minorities as well as to the role of the individual, is the role of ‘professional helpers’ or, as Michael Lipsky (1980) calls them, ‘street-level bureaucrats’.\(^\text{16}\) According to Lipsky, welfare policies (presumably including immigration policies) are not best understood as made in legislatures.\(^\text{17}\) Rather, much more relevant to minorities’ realities are their daily encounters, in crowded offices, with street-level bureaucrats: he argues that ‘the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out’ (1980: xii). These civil servants are, characteristically, limited in their abilities to meet minority needs due especially to the ratio of workers to clients or cases, and to time. Lipsky’s arguments apply exceptionally well to the Thiva and Padua cases, but also to the Medgidia case (where, as noted above, there are only four social workers in working in the town municipality and serving the town as a whole) and to the case of Darlington. In cases where illegal immigration is prevalent, the problems around the professional welfare workers negatively influence many aspects of minorities’ experiences, delaying their legal entry into the labour market and, therefore, extending their precarious positions in their host societies. Here too, then, an underlying theme is particularism.

Further, it is important to pay attention to ‘the other side of the coin’ – namely, the dissatisfaction such situations entails for the professional

\(^{16}\) These are civil servants working in schools, the police, welfare departments, and other agencies whose workers interact with and have wide discretion over the benefits and the allocation of public sanctions (Lipsky 1980: xi). I am grateful to Pål Repstad for bringing this text to our attention. See also Psimmenos and Kassimati (2003).

\(^{17}\) Lipsky writes about street-level bureaucracy in general, but I am applying his arguments here specifically to the domain of immigration – i.e., as would apply to the Padua reproductive health centres and the Thiva office for foreigners.
welfare workers in question, who are inevitably overworked, underpaid and frustrated over their inability to even nearly do their jobs properly. Moreover, dissatisfaction and frustration on their part often translates into less than friendly attitudes towards the minorities whose needs they are to serve, and may also translate into frustration with the minorities themselves and to development of (or submission to latent) stereotypes. Frustration may also arise amongst welfare workers in situations where they feel the recipients of their efforts are not worthy of the help – as, for example, has been observed in the Polish case with reference to the Roma. And in all such cases, an added problem is that these welfare workers, who could play such a useful role in helping to improve policies towards minorities by informing institutions and political leaders of major pitfalls, are often too frustrated and overburdened to play such a positive role.

Minority social networks and integration

We now turn our attention to another theme related to welfare and social cohesion – the social networks of minority groups and the role of these networks in minorities’ integration into majority society. The focus on the family in the domain of minority care and welfare provision forms a ‘red thread’ linking most of our case studies. An array of sub-themes flows from this. In the vast majority of the cases, minority groups reveal tendencies to focus on caring for their own, starting with the unit of the immediate family, and spreading out to extended family and friends and to the local ethnic or religious or linguistic community to which they belong. In other words, they practice the principle of subsidiarity (which notably is also a core (claimed) principle of the European Union). In many cases, minority groups attach to this caring function a passing on of language, culture and traditions. These tendencies sometimes become the centre of debate, with the following two clashing perspectives. On the one hand, these types of social networks are thought to support minority integration into majority society by increasing minority self esteem, recognising and encouraging the use of their own resources, and symbolically at least setting minority welfare services in the same domain as other majority-provided welfare services (in other words, treating minorities as equal partners in the welfare domain). On the other hand, such minority social networks are perceived as structures which further segregate and isolate minorities from majority society. There is no easy resolution of this debate.

The same argument focusing on the dangers of segregation could be used in other cases of segregated minority educational facilities – e.g., the Ukrainian school in Przemysł, the Russian high school in Ogre; and the Przemysł Roma school. In the first two cases, the establishment of separate educational facilities seems to have worked in the direction of improved relations with the majority society and greater integration of the groups in
question, whether this is because of the increased confidence felt by the
students attending these schools, or because of the educational programmes’
special focus on (and success in fulfilling) their particular areas of need (e.g.,
intensive majority-language courses), etc. In the third case, the school closed
down due to lack of attendance on the part of the Roma children due to, in
part, precisely a *resistance* to such segregation. In their totality, such cases
raise deep questions about values of integration and social cohesion, on the
one hand, and the practical means of reaching these, on the other. In several
majority communities, such segregation is seen as divisive, an unhealthy and
negative form of ghettoization at worst, and at best, a shunning of majority
institutions, culture and traditions. But, for many minority groups, these
educational (or otherwise welfare-related networks and programmes) of their
own play a significant role in their integration into majority society. In the
Reutlingen example, we saw minority communities seeking to make their
own contribution to the fight against youth crime, arguing that they have
their own resources which form a useful contribution to society as a whole.
The work of Shrover and Vermeulen (2005) is helpful in imparting insight
into the deeper significance of immigrant organizations as ‘an indication of
how immigrants see themselves and the rest of society, of how these
differences are perceived by others; a translation of which is found in
government policy’ (Shrover and Vermeulen 2005: 831) (the point was also
made above, with reference to Castles and Miller 2003; here the work of
Bhikhu Parekh and Charles Taylor on recognition is especially relevant).

A second main reason for minority preference for their own welfare
networks may be the symbolic establishment that this entails and the sense
of belonging that comes with the gaining of a community’s own *space* for
their welfare activities. This is also an issue of dignity, and it is in
conformity with norms of majority society, which organizes itself into its
schools, programmes, etc.

A third reason may be the simple fact that having their own welfare
networks allows minorities to ‘to do things their way’, family and tradition-
focused. It is this last reason which especially gives rise to debate and
controversy around the question of differing, and possibly conflicting,
majority and minority values. But the question also arises: who is to say that
minorities’ way is ‘wrong’? Here the multiple modernities approach to
diversity instructs us to broaden our perspectives in order to be able to
include alternative forms of modernity arising in other cultures. At the same
time though, in seeking to analyse ‘the minorities’ way’ as right or wrong,
which voices will be listened to? Minority groups are certainly not
monolithic and internal divisions abound. The risk is that, from an external
perspective (and as noted above), it is easy to hear mainly the most vocal of
representatives who are often also the most (religiously and otherwise)
conservative, and who tend to receive more media attention.
Further, these debates raise a broader question of who is best placed to
determine what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ segregation? Is emphasis on caring for
one’s own an endorsement of segregation, or an admirable value? Is it
ideological, or practical? (or are these different for different groups?) And
how critique-worthy is, for example, the desire to protect children from
social ills present in majority society? The other side of the coin is a
difficulty in determining where to draw the line – i.e., a ‘healthy’
preservation of traditions that can lead to increased minority group
confidence, or to continuation of ‘unhealthy’ (according to the majority)
practices such as arranged marriages (or for example marriages between
cousins, which are a recent focus of debate in the UK because of the
numbers of health problems arising in the children born from these
marriages).

In some of the case studies, mention was made of the changed attitudes to
Muslims in the aftermath of 11 September 2001 (though this does not apply
equally to Muslims in the post-communist countries studied). Indeed,
increased media attention to debates around Muslim groups has raised fears
about extremism and terrorism, honour killings, etc. and, as a result, it seems
it is often the case that assumptions about Muslims influenced by such issues
are projected onto all aspects of Muslim life and seeming segregation.
However, special effort needs to be made in order to resist such easy
conclusions. For example, the study of Greeks (Christian Orthodox) and
Turks (Muslims) in Reutlingen indicates a strong tendency in both groups to
preserve their own identity and to segregate themselves, in varying degrees,
from the majority society (although in the Greek case this self-segregation
does not preclude integration into majority society; the Turkish case reveals
a bit more difficulty, potentially due not least to Turkish non-accession to the
EU). To a large extent, this is simply a normal function of immigrant or
diaspora, or in any way ‘displaced’ societies – a tendency towards
preservation of cultural and/or religious identities and norms in the process
of closing one’s self or family (or extended kin group) from the outside and
unknown other in order to protect from these influences.

This raises the question of how tolerant majority societies really are to
difference. Are majority societies working towards integration, or
assimilation, or in fact towards segregation? Our research results point to an
ambiguity on this point. Programmes labelled as aiming towards integration
do indeed often seem to mask deeper value orientations which create
ambitions for the assimilation instead. This does not necessarily (nor often,
in our cases) result in substantive conflict between majorities and minorities.
Nor, however, does it help to abate misunderstandings between the two, or to
address, as fruitfully as possible, the welfare needs of minorities. Further, it
fails to take sufficiently into account the positive resources that minority
groups represent, one of which could in fact be a focus on the family.
Conclusions

As noted at the outset, the aims of this chapter are to highlight certain patterns found in the case study data gathered in the WaVE project (this in the ‘findings’ section), and to offer insights upon this basis regarding practices, tendencies, mechanisms etc. which lead to ‘conflict’ or ‘cohesion’, or which influence the large grey area in between, in minority-majority relations. In these last few paragraphs an attempt is made towards the latter. Our opening questions in the introduction section will serve as a guide: What patterns can we see in welfare provision which lead to greater social cohesion or to tensions within diverse societies? What tendencies are there towards ‘conflict’ or ‘cohesion’ due to values that are embedded in majority and minority welfare provision and needs?

Patterns in welfare provision leading to greater social cohesion or tensions

The factors which can be identified as having more or less positive results in the direction of increased social cohesion are, by and large, somewhat ambiguous. For example, the fact that majority religion welfare provisions often fill major gaps left by the state is positive in the sense that at least these important services are made available to minorities. However, the services sometimes come with ‘strings attached’, in terms of expectations that recipients will also partake in ‘religious goods’ offered alongside the welfare aid (church services, prayer meetings, etc.). Also, majority religion welfare services often operate in an informal, ad hoc way, so that there is still not universal coverage of the particular welfare needs they address. Second, the role of the individual and interpersonal contact is critical in the meeting of many minority welfare needs: relations developed with neighbours, employers, particular civil servants, etc. are often extremely effective in getting around bureaucratic or other barriers to their access to welfare, and are also important in fostering a sense of cohesion with the majority individuals in question. However, again here we find particularism rather than universal coverage, and luck (i.e., who do you happen to know) playing a large role in whether minority needs are met or not. Third, and most ambiguous, is the role of minority social welfare networks of their own. As explored in the previous section, whether or not such networks lead to greater social cohesion or, rather, to segregation of the minority groups is debatable and depends on one’s vantage point. Minority groups, however, tend to perceive of such networks as effective in a. dealing with their primary needs (e.g., maintaining their culture and religion and (sometimes as a result) family cohesion; b. allowing them to be used as resources and thus ideally to be treated as equal partners in the welfare domain; and related to the latter, c. strengthening their self-esteem. (The role of minority social
welfare networks could also be listed in the following section, as a factor leading to negative results in terms of social cohesion).

In terms of factors which lead to more or less negative results in terms of social cohesion between majorities and minorities, these are in many cases interrelated. A lack of cultural competence amongst majority individuals and institutions providing welfare to minorities often leads to inappropriate, or at least to less effective, welfare provisions. We find many cases of external labelling, so that the labels applied to minorities by the majority welfare services are often different from the minorities’ self-definitions. Related to the above are tendencies towards stereotyping and culturalism, whereby in the absence of cultural competence as regards minority identities and needs, culturalist reductionism and stereotypes abound, leading again to off-mark and ineffective welfare provisions, and negatively influencing the potential for healthy majority-minority interactions and relations. One frequently encountered factor exacerbating this problem is the media, which often create or promote stereotypes, essentialize minority identities, and over-emphasize conflict and tensions. Another factor influencing lack of cultural competence and stereotyping is the spatial segregation of many minority groups – here both physical and metaphorical distance between minorities and majorities (even in cases where ghettos may be in the centre of town) significantly limit substantial interaction and thus understanding between majorities and minorities. And related to the latter are language and communication barriers, which have been addressed at length in the previous sections but must be emphasized again here as extremely important factors in majority-minority relations.

Meanwhile, we also encounter failures to use insider knowledge, where available. For example, local level welfare workers are often better placed to influence welfare policy which, however, comes from the national level and sometimes ignores the insights and expertise of those working at the local level. Another problem area relates to the role of professional helpers, those civil servants administering public welfare to minorities who are often overburdened and ill-prepared for the challenges of handling minority needs. The latter is intimately linked to immigration policy, which is often so poorly formulated (particularly in its ability to handle undocumented immigrants in a healthy manner), also exacerbates the problems of the professional helpers, and of course much more so negatively influences minorities’ experiences of the local authorities and their access to public welfare services.

Tendencies towards ‘conflict’ or ‘cohesion’ due to values in welfare provision and needs

The most conspicuous values conflict in the domain of welfare arises in relation to minority social networks. The values embedded in many such
networks (tending to their own; conservative cultural or religious values – e.g., sexual modesty and segregation of activities for boys and girls; etc.) sometimes clash with majority values in particular settings (e.g., liberal approaches to sex; freedom rather than limitations to do with women’s (and men’s) bodies; integration of all social networks into a broader shared national system; etc.). Also, the mere existence of some such networks is, from certain (majority) perspectives, seen as a segregating factor and as a wish of the minorities to separate themselves from the majority society. However, we have also seen examples of conflict over such values clashes which, in the end, are precursors to greater social cohesion as both the majorities and minorities in question come to better understand and appreciate one another’s perspectives. Here contact (communication) -- though perhaps tense in the beginning -- is a necessary start for resolution of different perspectives.

Certainly **women’s bodies and rights** become the focal point for debates regarding conflicting majority and minority values, though by and large the content and intensity of the debates in our research are quite different to what is portrayed in the media. This is an interesting area forming a juxtaposition with tensions between religious versus secular values also, as alliances may develop between women of all religious and ethnic backgrounds in opposition to religiously conservative pressures.

Values conflicts also arise in the form of **generational clashes within minority groups**. These clashes often have a gender dimension, as differences arise over the role of younger women in the household and the extent to which they cook and clean, etc. These examples help to remind us that the minority groups are not a monolith, nor static. Further, we have encountered a level of complexity in the generational dimension, whereby one cannot assume a relative conservatism of older generations verses liberal perspectives of younger generations: in some cases, the opposite is actually the case. Related to the above are **differences in domestic values** which sometimes arise between majorities and minorities, with minorities in particular negatively assessing the values in this domain of the majority (and, again, most of all of majority women).

Finally, in terms of welfare values leading to cohesion, a first and most banal point is simply the extent to which **majority welfare provision is aimed at social cohesion** – in other words, welfare provision extended to minorities in an effort to better integrate them into society, offering rights and benefits which, hopefully, will lead to an enhanced sense of belonging. In spite of all the flaws and weaknesses in these efforts (many of which are outlined above), such an aim and value can still be detected as a driving force behind much majority welfare provision. A similar point can be made regarding **minority welfare provision as aimed at social cohesion**, as in many cases minority (religious, but not only) welfare services play a significant role in offering help to both majority and minority individuals in
various domains (e.g., alcohol abuse). Here we see a solidarity developing around particular welfare needs. Finally, our research has indicated several positive examples of women’s solidarity, in particular, developing around particular needs. Here the values expressed are women’s rights and women’s ability to help support one another’s needs, and the alliances which develop often cross ethnic and religious boundaries and unite women of different backgrounds behind their shared concerns.

This reference to patterns emerging through the research and of insights gathered is not – and cannot be – exhaustive. Indeed, the information generated by the WaVE project is extremely rich and complex, with one of the major lessons emerging being that the European situation insofar as welfare and values is concerned is, in fact, far more complex than is often thought, and portrayed by the media but also by much academic literature. The WaVE project’s reliance on street-level information, through the case study approach and intensive qualitative study, has proven critical to the ability to generate insights faithful to the situation on the ground in various national and local contexts.

Summary Table

Groups and Themes/Areas Studied

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<th>Case study town</th>
<th>Groups studied</th>
<th>Themes/areas studied</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gävle (Sweden)</td>
<td>Iraqi/Muslim; Thai/Buddhist; Chile/Catholic; India/Hindu; Roma/many of whom are Pentecostals</td>
<td>a) a public school in an area of Gävle with a high degree of immigrants, and b) the recently established Family Centre run by the local authority in cooperation with the Church of Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drammen (Norway)</td>
<td>Turkey (from various parts of the country)/Muslim</td>
<td>a) educational institutions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b) newspaper contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahti (Finland)</td>
<td>Ingrians; Pentecostalists; Muslims from various backgrounds; Russians/Orthodox and repatriates from the former USSR</td>
<td>Welfare activities of the Pentecostal Church, the Salvation Army, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogre (Latvia)</td>
<td>Latvian speaking population; Russian speaking population (Russians, Byelorussians, and Ukrainians); smaller minority groups (incl. Roma)</td>
<td>Interactions between these groups (with a special focus on the youth) in the local municipality and its organizations, other establishments of social assistance and social care, NGOs, educational establishments, religious organizations, and other public places</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Darlington (England) | 1) The established Bangladeshi/Bengali community, which is also a Muslim community, concentrated in one area of the town.  
2) The Traveller/Gypsy community, which has been present in the area for many generations, but is a fairly invisible minority.  
3) The very new and fast growing Polish community | Issues of children, the elderly, and women’s roles and situation |
| Schweinfurt (Germany) | The Evangelisch-Methodistische Gemeinde (EMK), a Protestant Free Church.  
Levi e.V., an association of the Protestant Church and the different connected to Protestant Free Churches.  
Three of the four main Muslim groups present in Schweinfurt: DITIB, Milli Görüş and the Alevitischer Kulturverein e.V.  
Russische Landsmannschaft e.V., the association of ethnic Germans from the former USSR. | Welfare provision activities of each of these institutions/organizations, and the patterns of use of these services by various groups |
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<th>Location</th>
<th>Ethnicities</th>
<th>Focus</th>
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<td>Reutlingen</td>
<td>Turkish/Muslims; Greek/Christian Orthodox; Germans from the former USSR/Protestant, Catholic, Jew and non-religious</td>
<td>Care for the elderly and intergenerational relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evreux (France)</td>
<td>The established Muslim community, concentrated in the Madeleine area.</td>
<td>The welfare providing organizations of each of these groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The long-term established Protestant community</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Ethnic minorities, not related to a religion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Przemysl (Poland)</td>
<td>Polish/Roman Catholics, Ukrainian/Greek Catholics and Roma/ Pentecostals.</td>
<td>The welfare providing organizations and activities of each of these groups, as well as content analysis of their webpages, of the local press, and of their church sermons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisak (Croatia)</td>
<td>The City Council of Bosniac National Minority, The Group of Bosniac Women; the Islamic Community (comprised of mainly Bosniacs, but also Albanians, Roma and a few Arabs); and the Evangelical Protestant Church (comprised of Croats, Serbs, Roma and even Muslims)</td>
<td>the current situation in Sisak (main social problems), local welfare system and subjective definition of welfare; the visibility of minority groups through their involvements in local socio-cultural events and relationships with majority/or other minority groups, primarily through the dimension of welfare; the inner dimension of a minority community (the structure of the group, the hierarchy, inter-relations, cohesion, activities); the identity and the personal experience of</td>
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<td>Region</td>
<td>Group</td>
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<td>Padua (Italy)</td>
<td>Nigerian and Romanian immigrants</td>
<td>Access to local welfare services and their availability to immigrants in the area of reproductive health</td>
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<td>Medgidia (Romania)</td>
<td>Romanians/Orthodox; Turks-Tatars/Muslims; Roma (Horhane)/‘neo-Protestants’</td>
<td>Welfare activities</td>
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<td>Thiva (Greece)</td>
<td>Albanian/Muslim population; female migrant labourers from Eastern Europe; male migrant labourers from Pakistan and India</td>
<td>Interaction between these groups and the majority population in the area of employment (beginning with their experience of the regularization process and including social security access)</td>
</tr>
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References


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Chapter 7
Policy Recommendations\(^1\) on three levels

EUROPEAN, NATIONAL/(REGIONAL/) AND LOCAL LEVELS

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Country Abbreviations

In this report country abbreviations are used as a reference system and refer to specific sources (especially the case study reports). Country abbreviations at the end of every national or local policy recommendations reveal which case studies paid particular attention to this issue. These findings cannot always be generalized to other cases. Country abbreviations are not used with respect to European policy recommendations, as they are more general by nature and based on a comparison/synthesis of local and national policy recommendations. The country abbreviations are as follows:\(^2\)

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\begin{align*}
\text{DE} & \quad \text{Germany}^* \quad (*\text{DEs} = \text{Schweinfurt, DEr = Reutlingen}) \\
\text{EL} & \quad \text{Greece} \\
\text{FR} & \quad \text{France} \\
\text{HR} & \quad \text{Croatia} \\
\text{IT} & \quad \text{Italy} \\
\text{LV} & \quad \text{Latvia} \\
\text{NO} & \quad \text{Norway} \\
\text{PL} & \quad \text{Poland} \\
\text{RO} & \quad \text{Romania}
\end{align*}
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\(^1\) In this report ‘policy recommendations’ refer to research-based, concrete, and practical suggestions to policy-makers. They aim to give support to political planning, guidance and decision-making. The chosen terminology follows the guidelines of the WaVE Researchers’ Handbook, and is confirmed by recommendations from the Finnish NCP for FP6.

\(^2\) As used in the EU context in general. The countries are listed in alphabetical order by the native name of the country.
Foreword

The aim of this report is to suggest policy recommendations based on the overall findings of the WAVE case studies. The recommendations focus on three levels: European, national (or regional), and local. The crosscutting themes of the policy recommendations are religion, minorities and gender. Each of these themes is scrutinized in a variety of contexts.

This policy recommendations report is based on the materials produced in the course of WaVE project which were available at the time of drafting (mid-February 2009). These materials include:

- The policy recommendations included in the case study reports (D9) (excluding the French report which was not available at the time of writing)
- The draft version of the comparative analysis (D11)
- The local dissemination reports (D13) (DEs, EL, HR, IT, LV, PL, FI, UK)
- The national dissemination reports (D14) (DEs, EL, IT, LV, PL, FI, UK).

It should be noted that the causes and consequences of various policy recommendations are closely intertwined (for example poor language skills have an effect on poor success at school). This explains the overlapping nature of at least some of the following recommendations.

Given the present economic situation (spring 2009), the recommendations must be read bearing in mind that money is short – indeed very short – in many parts of Europe, and that many of our suggestions have cost-implications. That said, due precisely to the fact that money is short, the subject matter of the WaVE project is more than ever timely: there are new spaces opening up in Europe for the churches and church-based organizations, not least their welfare activities.

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3 For a background to the WaVE-project and for an explanation of the deliverables D11, D13 and D14, see the Introduction to this volume.

Summary

The key political message arising from the WaVE case studies is the crucial relevance of *religion* (as subject matter) and *locality* (as the key framework in which to operate) in the domain of welfare provision, if this is viewed from the perspective of majority/minority relations in Europe.

a) Concerning the former, issues related to *religion* are clearly on the agenda in the domain of welfare in both majority and minority communities. The role of religion is dual: it offers considerable potential but also involves a degree of risk. Thus, greater sensitivity, know-how and information on these questions are urgently needed. This relates closely to the level of action, where more attention should be paid to religion. Thus the message from our studies is: to raise awareness by improving the level of information (see Figure 7.1 below).

b) Concerning the latter, *locality* (specifically the local) emerges as the primary context of action in the domain of welfare. Thus, power, resources and support, as well as information are needed at the local level. The role of religion is also evident in the various elements of locality. Thus the second core message from our studies is: to increase effectiveness by improving the action (see Figure 7.1 below).

Noting the significance of *religion and locality*, several interrelated improvements in *information and action* are needed in order to build social cohesion and to prevent tensions or conflicts between majorities and minorities in Europe. In this process, the values of each community (majority/minority) and their social, economic and political resources should be acknowledged in both constructive and critical ways.

Thus, information and action provide the main themes of our policy recommendations at European, national/regional and local level. These are summarized in the *cycle of social cohesion* set out in *Figure 7.1* and in the paragraphs that follow; each recommendation is then considered in more detail.⁵

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⁵ Further, more fully documented examples from the case studies are given in the comparative cross-country analysis in this volume (Chapter 6).
Figure 7.1 Cycle of social cohesion in WaVE

**Improve the information:**

- According to our research, religious communities can be a remarkable asset in providing welfare services and in promoting communality – but at the same time, there is a real risk of tension and conflict. Notably a faith community that is too dominant or whose self-definition is too narrow is seen at times as a challenge to welfare, which may be compromised as a result.

- The need for multilingual and culturally-sensitive information is noted in many cases. Both the material itself and the channels of information by which it is disseminated need to be developed in order to reach the target groups in question. Public information channels also face new challenges given the need to work in an ever more culturally, religiously and gender sensitive way.

- The involvement of minority communities is crucial in planning and decision-making procedures, for example with respect to social services. The WaVE case studies present practical suggestions on this matter. The active involvement of minorities has many positive effects: the empowerment of the minorities themselves; the enhancement of mutual
understanding between majorities and minorities; and the capacity to build more effective social services in a pluralist society.

- There is a need at all levels (EU, national and local) to develop better methods of sharing information between different organizations. This was mentioned in more than half of the WaVE case studies. It is worth noting that the national and local dissemination meetings of WaVE results were frequently seen as examples of good practice in sharing information and promoting cooperation. Many of our cases stress the advantages of coordinated networks, which necessarily improve the efficient use of resources and the quality of welfare services.

- There are a number of demands for better indicators, statistics, evaluation and research right across Europe (i.e. in both the East-West and North-South axis). In this context, both internationally comparative and locally sensitive approaches are required. Adequate and reliable knowledge regarding the current situation is the fundamental basis for improvements in the area of both culture- and gender-sensitive welfare provision.

**Improve the action:**

- The crucial significance of proximity is a crosscutting issue appearing in a wide variety of contexts in the WaVE case studies. Respecting the *local* situation and taking local knowledge into account are crucial elements in creating social cohesion. The particular, if at times controversial, place of the family as the primary community of solidarity will be carefully considered.

- The need for majority and minority groups to share a language is a crucial factor in building cohesion and preventing conflicts. Access to training courses in the majority language is therefore central, a need highlighted in almost all of the WaVE case studies – the more so, given that language skills were often connected with more general societal and social activities, including schooling and working life.

- In addition to language skills there are other requirements concerning education and schooling in a multicultural society. These concern majorities as well as minorities, who have both shared and specific needs. Attention must be paid
to the quality and content of primary, secondary and tertiary education as well as to access and equal opportunities.

- Many of the WaVE case studies address the need for greater cultural and gender sensitivity in welfare provision. Here our recommendations focus primarily on the education and training of the welfare providers with respect to multiculturalism and communication. Questions about resources inevitably arise.

- Regardless of religion, culture or gender, work has an important role both for the individual and for society as a whole. Equal opportunities in the work place, and a good balance between work and family life or work and migration, are strong factors leading to cohesion. Thus, it is crucial at both European and national levels to promote working opportunities for as many people as possible.

- There are a number of issues regarding political and legal systems, resources, administration, and policy programmes, which require revision and improvement in order to protect the religious, minority and gender-equal values that are crucial for social cohesion. Our evidence indicates that there are significant challenges for the political system, especially in the Eastern and Southern countries of Europe.
Improve the Information

Religion: Opportunities and Risks

The dual nature of religion as an opportunity, but also as a risk, is clearly seen in the WaVE case studies. According to WaVE, religious communities or organizations can be a remarkable asset in providing welfare services and in promoting communality – but there is also the potential for tension and conflict. Notably a faith community that is too dominant or whose self-definition is too narrow is seen at times as a challenge to welfare, which may be compromised as a result. *Thus, we suggest that:*

**European level:**

The EU recognizes both the opportunities and risks in the interconnections of religion and welfare. Thus the EU should promote and support open discussion on the role of religion, but should also monitor the welfare services offered by religious institutions and the welfare services which relate to religion.

**National level:**

Attention is paid to the role of religion in a given context. There is a diversity of approaches concerning religion and welfare, which the policy messages clearly reflect:

- *Firstly,* whenever it is based on common understandings and shared goals, the cohesive nature of welfare work of religious communities is noted. ‘Putting values into action: religious institutions supporting minorities’ (FI) is an example of good practice and cohesion building. This approach refers to services, which are linked to the spiritual and religious orientation of the giving community but where help and assistance is not tied to the ethnicity, faith or religiousness of clients. This gives space to the viewpoints, values and cultures of immigrants, but also allows non-Christian groups to become familiar with Christian values, thus contributing to the building of social cohesion. At the same time, however, there is a risk of indifference in this approach – i.e. if all values simply become relative and negotiable. (LV, FI, DEr, EL)
• *Secondly,* particular risks connected to the dominance of one national religion are noted. These examples generally emerged from societies where the Catholic Church was/is dominant. At times, there is a need to challenge this situation, which can lead to the marginalization and discrimination of minority groups. In these cases, careful attention should also be paid to gender sensitivity and reproductive health issues. (IT, PL)

Some points concerning religion and welfare need to be noted in all contexts. This includes the following policy recommendations:

• Religion is an important feature of modern societies and should not be avoided. Minority communities are not in the main afraid of a religious approach, and thus religion could become a bridge to explain the particular needs of minority communities and their difficulties with the dominant system, for example within healthcare. (DEr)
• Religious communities can function as ‘forums for citizen participation’ and thus as forums for emancipation and empowerment for minorities. They enable feelings of importance and belonging. Also, religious communities can function as ‘low-level mediators’, i.e. as a voice for the weak or silent members of the community. (FI)

**Local level:**

Encounters between minority communities and the local parishes are encouraged. (DEr)

The active participation of the church in local politics is encouraged, especially in its role as ‘the voice of the weak’ – i.e. immigrants, ethnic minorities, women. This means that the church could support minorities by actively defending their needs vis-à-vis politics and politicians. (EL)

**Multiculturalism: A Need for More and Better Information**

The need for multilingual and culturally-sensitive information is noted in many WaVE cases (for example LV, EL, UK, SE). Both the material itself and the channels of information by which it is disseminated need to be developed in order to reach the target groups. The public information channels, i.e. the media, also face new challenges in learning to work in a more culturally, religiously and gender sensitive way. *Thus, we suggest that:*
European level:

The EU provides guidance and financial support for the provision of objective information (for example on welfare services) especially to minorities, immigrants and women. Attention is also paid to the distribution channels for this material.

The EU launches a programme to train the media (for example journalists of all kinds) about religion in Europe. This is especially important in relation to Islam.

National level:

Educational campaigns are launched to raise awareness on multiculturalism. These campaigns could be planned together with policy programmes. Such efforts could include: the dissemination, in different languages, of objective information about the society as a whole and the activities of different groups; the encouragement of sensitivity towards issues relating to ethnic relations (for example citizenship, education, language and history); the deepening of knowledge regarding marginal religious groups (LV).

National programmes to improve information channels and media coverage are arranged, with the aim of supporting improvements at local level (see below). (LV, DEs, DEr, NO, FI)

Local level:

Both the acknowledgment of and open conversation about ethnic and religious groups are encouraged. (LV, DEr)

Information channels and media coverage at local level are improved: for example information channelled to different language groups to reduce segregation; better use of media and the internet in information sharing; training for the local media on how to report on immigrants and minorities; a training course for journalists concerning Islam. (LV, DEs, DEr, NO, FI)

A common religious/ cultural calendar is created for workplaces (also schools, hospitals etc.). This will function as an educational tool and will reduce conflicts. (SE)

More information on the services provided at local level is produced (UK, LV, SE, EL, IT, FI). For example:
• The development of information packs (including contact details and information on language classes) for healthcare workers (for example midwives/childcare professionals) as a way to reach women in particular. (UK)
• Better information about social services including those provided at national level or by the voluntary sector, which is presented in a way that makes it accessible to all. (LV)
• Printed information on welfare services is made available in all major languages. (SE)
• Better information is made available on the church and church-related associations regarding provision for the disadvantaged. With unofficial or oral communication only, certain groups are excluded from these services which are then underused. Communication must be improved. (EL)

Involve the Minorities

The involvement of minority communities is crucial in all planning and decision-making procedures. The WaVE case studies present practical suggestions on this matter. The active involvement of minorities has many positive effects, including the empowerment of the minorities, the enhancement of mutual understanding between majorities and minorities, and the capacity to build social services more suited to a pluralist society. On the basis of the WaVE case studies we suggest that:

European level:

Representatives of minorities are listened to whenever European policies/actions concerning minorities are under review. To support this, the EU contributes to the creation of an accurate database of minority associations at EU, national and local levels.

The EU encourages the Member States to develop policies, which guarantee the consultation of immigrants and ethnic minorities concerning issues that relate to them.

National and local levels:¹

The participation and consultation of minorities is encouraged at various levels:

¹ In this section, the policy messages are exceptionally interrelated. Thus, the policy messages are not separated into national and local levels.
- The public sector consults with immigrants and ethnic minorities, their associations and all those who work with these groups – both officially and unofficially. Immigrants and ethnic minorities are encouraged to participate in national and local politics on designated advisory boards, through institutions such as the churches (EL), or by direct involvement in political parties, decision-making bodies and procedures. This promotes the feeling of solidarity, participation, and commitment. It also functions as an information source for the public sector regarding the needs of minority groups. Minorities are also seen and heard in local festivities. (UK, NO, FI, DEr, DEs, EL, PL)

- Regular meetings (‘preventive negotiations’) are arranged on ‘values in practice’ between minorities and institutions – for example, schools, work places, health and medical services. The aim of these meetings is to identify and listen to different views about practical arrangements and to find solutions to these differences. Written agreements are drawn up on the basis of these dialogues. (SE)

Welfare organizations (municipal, religious etc.) employ members of minorities to work as cultural mediators (for example professional social workers of immigrant origin). Regarding the organizations, this both increases knowledge and helps in the communication with other members of the minority; at the same time it enhances the competence of all those involved. (SE, IT, FI)

**Networking: Efficiency through Coordination**

There is a need on all levels (EU, national and local) to develop better methods of sharing information between different organizations. This was mentioned in more than half of the WaVE case studies. In this connection, it is worth noting that on many occasions the national and local dissemination meetings of WaVE results were seen an effective way to promote cooperation and sharing information. (PL, HR, IT, DE, FI, UK, LV) Well-coordinated networks clearly improve the use of resources and the quality of welfare services. *On the basis of the WaVE case studies we suggest that:*

**European level:**

- The EU improves information sharing between the Member States, for example by strengthening the open method of coordination (OMC) regarding social inclusion. This is also
reflected at national and local levels in relation to the importance of data, measurement, analyses and evaluations.

- The EU improves its sensitivity in reacting to cross-border challenges in Europe (recent issues concerning the Romanian Roma in various Member States are a case in point).
- The EU encourages forums where majorities and minorities can meet, but also where representatives from the same minority from different Member States can gather for mutual support.

**National levels:**

- Mechanisms of coordination and cooperation are created. For instance, networks are developed for information exchange between institutions from the public sector and NGOs (including religious groups), in order to reduce overlapping actions – and thus to reduce the frustration and mistrust which arise from non-coordinated actions. A good example of effective information sharing is the use of formal/informal ‘community experts’, who are recognized as link-persons and informants regarding particular minority groups. (PL, HR, IT, FI, UK)
- A bridge organization or NGO coordinator is created, supported by the local authority. The organization/individual would be responsible for a local database of caregivers and receivers, the coordination of local activities, and the raising of funds from local sponsors, other institutions and the EU. (PL)
- Meetings are arranged for minorities from different areas and cities (for example the Roma from various Polish cities). Such meetings permit the sharing of knowledge and good practice within certain minority groups. (PL)

**Local level:**

Mechanisms of coordination and cooperation are improved (see national level). Cooperation between the local administration and the voluntary sector is strengthened to develop new social services. Particular attention should be given to volunteers in building solidarity, social exchange, cooperation and contacts. (LV, DE)
Better Indicators, Statistics, Research and Evaluation

The demands for better indicators, statistics, research and evaluation are universal in both the East-West and the North-South axis of Europe. In this context, approaches that are both internationally comparative and locally sensitive are needed. Adequate and reliable knowledge regarding the current situation is the basis for all improvements in culture- and gender-sensitive welfare provision. On the basis of the WaVE case studies, we thus suggest that:

European level:

The EU engages in developing better indicators and statistics on ‘risk groups’, including immigrants and ethnic minorities. Peer reviews are arranged on this topic to support accurate benchmarking.

The EU provides resources for further research in order to develop national indicators, statistics and systems of evaluation.

National level:

Better social and economic data are developed giving clear and comparable information concerning the social status and social rights of minorities. More information is gathered about people in social distress and about different ethnic and religious groups. The situation of different groups in the society is accurately assessed, enabling specific policies directed towards target groups. (HR, LV).

National standards for the evaluation of institutions, the efficiency of individual programmes and the provision of certain services are both established and monitored. (HR)

Resources are directed to producing more research-based information concerning multiculturalism, including the significance of religion for certain groups. (FI)

Resources are directed to the study of smaller towns. (UK)

Local level:

Local statistical data are collected systematically, for example regarding the family, housing, employment, schooling of children, and legal status of immigrants. (EL)
More in-depth research is carried out, especially with regard to recent integration processes and their further development. (DEr)
Improve the Action

Distance Matters: Make It Local and Make It Personal

The importance of proximity emerges as a cross-cutting issue in almost all the WaVE case studies and in many different contexts. Respecting the local situation and taking local knowledge into account are crucial elements in creating social cohesion. One (at times controversial) example of this policy concerns the value of family as the primary community of solidarity. On the basis of the WaVE case studies, we suggest that:

European level:

The EU recognizes that effective European and national cohesion rests very largely on local cohesion. For example, by:

- Utilizing to the full the principle of subsidiarity as a means of power and empowerment. The principle could even be stretched to include individuals and their families, recognizing the role of family (notably its educative and civilizing functions) as the basis of a multicultural, peaceful Europe. Such an approach should not, however, imply a reduction in public welfare. Regarding the latter, there is a continuing need for an adequately resourced national response.
- Acknowledging the value of both subjective value orientations and collective norms as the basis of integration. Citizens must be willing participants in social cohesion.

National level:

There is flexibility in the implementation of national guidelines, frameworks, targets and policy recommendations, in order to respect the local situation and to take local knowledge into account. Attention is paid to the different dynamics of large conurbations, smaller towns and rural areas. (UK)

Local level:

The significance of local governance and its institutions in guaranteeing the quality of life of immigrants is taken seriously, and attention is paid to improving local resources (for example personnel and equipment). (FI, RO)
Active participation in and visits to minority community events are encouraged, alongside the participation of different groups in cultural and sporting activities. Such events unite people through mutual participation and common sharing. (DEr, LV)

Local spaces are established where minorities can meet, and where multicultural encounters and other services can take place. (UK, EL, RO)

The importance of unofficial support networks, such as friends, neighbours, religious communities and most importantly the family, is acknowledged. At the same time the possibility that family-centeredness might lead to isolation and loneliness is recognized; contacts to the wider society must also be encouraged. Support to young families is strengthened. (HR, LV, FI, RO)

Language: A Key to Society, Education, and Work

The need for majority and minority groups to share a language by which they can communicate is a crucial factor in building cohesion and preventing conflict. This highlights the need for language training for all minorities. The importance of language skills was stressed in almost all of the WaVE case studies. (UK, SE, NO, HR, IT, LV, FI, DE, EL) Language was often connected with general societal and social skills, schooling and working life.

On the basis of the WaVE case studies we suggest that:

European level:

The EU encourages the Member States to improve their facilities for language training for immigrants and other minorities.

The EU supports and offers resources for national and local actors, with a view to providing high-quality language training, which meets the needs of the target groups.

The EU provides general guidelines relating to context-based, group-related and personalized language training.

National level:

The Member States improve their facilities for language training, in order to fit with the needs of the target groups. Attention should be paid, for example, to the timing of courses (arranging these during school hours so that parents can attend), to the need for special courses for the parents of school children, and to the need for gender-specific courses. (NO, UK)
The use of support mechanisms is encouraged, such as interpreters and native-speaking assistants as well as homework assistance programmes and preparatory kindergartens. (NO)

Local level:

At the local level more attention is paid to arranging tailored and participant-oriented language courses. Local authorities should map out the specific needs present in their area and provide courses which offer an opportunity to learn for as many people as possible. Courses should be advertised in the language of the target groups. (EL) Attention should also be paid to the timing of courses (arranging these during school hours, so the parents can attend) (NO), to the need for special courses for the parents of school children, and to the need for gender-specific courses. (UK, NO, FI, LV)

Also at local level, the use of support mechanisms (such as interpreters and native-speaking assistants as well as homework assistance programmes and kindergartens) is encouraged. (NO)

Particular Challenges for Education

In addition to language skills there are other needs concerning education and schooling in a multicultural society. These needs concern majorities as well as minorities, who have both shared and specific needs. On the basis of the WaVE case studies we suggest that:

European level:

More attention is paid to the quality and content of primary, secondary and tertiary education in all European societies. Equal opportunities and access to schooling are basic priorities, which should be respected at all levels of education and in all social contexts.

National level:

Education policies are improved and considered carefully. Special attention is paid to equal opportunities and support. This includes the following actions:

- Addressing the wide variety of situations and needs of different groups (both majority and minority), and sensitizing teachers to these issues. (EL)
- Encouraging (‘putting pressure’) on Roma parents to send their children to preparatory classes and kindergarten. (PL, cf. 2.2. /support mechanisms/ NO). All children are guaranteed the right to free kindergarten. (RO)
- Access to secondary and tertiary education is encouraged. This includes the offering of language courses and the support for minorities to enable access to secondary and tertiary levels (high school, university and work-related education) (DEr), and to lifelong learning programmes for professional skills. (DEr, LV)
- Educational programmes promoting knowledge of cultural plurality and minority religions (in a given region) are provided in schools. These programmes should include meetings with the representatives of minorities. (PL) Special emphasis should also be given to learning and teaching about the majority culture. (FI)

A special organization is set up with the aim of providing educational activities relating to family values and interreligious dialogue. (RO)

The values of civil society are strengthened in primary education. (LV)

Local level:

Skills courses are arranged in a cultural- and gender-sensitive way, for example gender specific computer courses at hours convenient for the target group. (UK)

The value of a teacher as a role model is noted, especially in schools with large numbers of minority children. (LV)

Workshops are arranged for the local community relating to team-work and cooperation between groups. (RO)

Work: A Common Value Creating Social Cohesion

Regardless of religion, culture or gender, work has an important role for an individual as indeed for society as a whole. Equal opportunities in the work place, and a good balance between work and family life or work and migration, are strong factors leading to social cohesion. Thus, it is crucial at both European and national levels to promote working opportunities for as many people as possible. In this regard, we suggest that:
**European level:**

Special attention is paid to the position of immigrants and other minorities in the labour market. The EU encourages research on how these groups can improve their labour market position.

The EU supports policies which guarantee the right to work for as many people as possible. This includes actions which help to reconcile work and family-life and which encourage employers, in both the public and private sectors, to employ persons with a migration background.

**National level:**

Careful attention is paid to the payment of proper wages and of social security contributions for migrant workers (especially in agriculture). Checks should be made to confirm that employers are complying with the law. Such checks would largely remove (or at least ameliorate) the competition for work in this context. (EL)

Gender sensitive labour policies are strengthened. Gender discrimination in the labour market is confronted (LV) and better policies for reconciling work and family-life are developed (for example parental leave, part-time and flexible contracts). Care-giving is promoted as the responsibility of everyone, not only women. (LV, IT, RO)

**Local level:**

Encounters between unemployed immigrants and employers are arranged – to respond to the particular needs of both immigrants and employers, and to facilitate contacts and interactions between the two parties. (SE)

Special attention is paid to the employment of young parents in order to support young families. (RO)

Religious communities are encouraged to provide work, including voluntary work, for immigrants, who often have difficulties in finding employment. Good examples of this already exist. (FI)

**Cultural and Gender Sensitivity to Welfare Services**

Many of the WaVE case studies address very directly the need for greater cultural and gender sensitivity in welfare provision. (NO, IT, LV, FI, EL) Here the recommendations consist mainly in educating the welfare providers
regarding issues of multiculturalism and communication. The question of resources cannot be avoided. *These issues are addressed in many of our policy recommendations but in this section we highlight the following:*

**European level:**

European guidelines and standards for cultural- and gender-sensitive welfare are established; such standards must be promoted politically and supported financially.

The training of social workers and welfare providers regarding these issues is promoted and supported.

**National and local levels:**¹

Improvements in the quality and scope of welfare services are necessary. Our recommendations on this matter include the following:

- National (and international) actions are prioritized in relation to the mental health needs of immigrants (who need both support and treatment). Healthcare workers are educated to recognize the symptoms of trauma-based depression. (FI)

- Organizing social services such as ‘family advisory centres’ on a non-discriminatory basis, but at the same time paying careful attention to gender, is likely to encourage cohesion. New welfare activities, including sex education in high school, are needed. (IT)

- Social assistance should be provided to people in need; the procedures for obtaining state support must be simplified. (RO)

Resources are a crucial issue for many of these points. For example:

The high costs vs. poor quality of healthcare services need to be tackled. (LV)

The working conditions of civil servants who deal with immigration policy must be improved; this should lead to better attitudes towards immigrants. (EL)

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¹ In this section, the policy messages are exceptionally intertwined. Therefore, the policy messages are not separated into national and local levels.
Better finance is directed to the social security system. This includes adequate salaries for social workers in order to attract professional staff. (RO)

The intercultural training of social workers must be encouraged. This training should address the need to adapt the welfare services to respond to different kinds of people, rather than the reverse. In detail, this means:

- Respect as a corner stone of the welfare activities of religious organizations who work with immigrants and other minorities. This includes respect for personal beliefs and other faiths. (FI)
- Improvements in the communication skills of welfare workers (i.e. active listening, efforts to understand, observing non-verbal language, and the need to express things simply). (IT)
- The development of culturally appropriate welfare services especially in primary and specialist healthcare. (NO)

The Core: Influencing the Political Systems

There are a number of issues regarding political and legal systems, resources, administration, and policy programmes, which require revision and improvement in order to protect the religious, minority and gender-equal values that are crucial for social cohesion. The WaVE case studies indicate that there are significant challenges for the political system, especially in the Eastern and Southern countries of Europe. On the basis of the WaVE case studies we suggest that:

European level:

The EU supports national, local, and (above all) context-based solutions to questions relating to ethnic and religious minorities, immigrants and gender, notably with reference to schooling and the labour market. The exchange of information between countries is promoted and peer review is utilized as a means of transnational cooperation.

The EU confronts the following at both EU and national level: problems of over-centralization; immigration law; issues of corruption; and the shadow or grey economy.
National level:

Immigration law and related policies are revisited. (IT, EL) In detail, this includes the following:

- The attitudes of policy-makers towards immigrants and other minorities are improved. Considerate policies that recognize the resources and motivation of the immigrants themselves are encouraged, as well as policies that respect minority languages and education. (FI, LV)

- The slowness of bureaucracy is tackled. Residence permits are processed rapidly and to support this, electronic systems are developed where needed. Wherever possible, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers are given an official status, which enables access to education, work and social security. (FI, DEs, EL)

- Economic policies, especially questions of taxation, are addressed in ways which increase the profitability of work and decrease the attraction of the shadow/grey economy. (HR, LV)

- The decentralization of power is encouraged: to build more effective governance, to reduce bureaucracy and corruption, and to support cooperation at local level. More space is given to NGOs. (HR)

- Adequate flexibility is guaranteed in the integration process of immigrants. Guidelines are established and regularly updated. (FI)

- Programmes opposing domestic violence and initiatives to support both gender equality and the economic and social empowerment of women are encouraged. (HR)

There is an urgent need to revise the social security and welfare systems to deal with the requirements of immigrants and other minorities. For example:

- Social security systems are developed to meet the needs of high-risk groups (for example immigrants, ethnic minorities, and women). Issues of low wages and social benefits must be tackled in order (a) that work is profitable and (b) that – when necessary – adequate social security is guaranteed for all citizens. (LV, NO, IT)

- The welfare system is modernized in terms of values and working methods. The welfare system commits itself to the values of equality (of men and women) and non-discrimination (especially in the field of reproductive
The system is set up with the aim of empowering people, not only distributing financial resources. (IT)

**Local level:**

More attention is paid to the attitudes, structures, human and financial resources that prevail in local administration. The aim of services should be quality and care, ensured by adequate staffing levels. (DE, PL, EL, FI)

Local social programmes are developed in cooperation with the public sector and other actors (for example NGOs, religious and other minorities) at least every second year. These programmes should establish a social vision for the locality in question, paying attention to both human and financial resources. The programme then functions as the basis for decision-making. A process of evaluation is created and implemented. (HR)

Local governments institutionalize ‘bridge persons’ or ‘door openers’ as part of the administration. These persons have contacts with different cultural and religious groups as well as the welfare providers and social networks in the field; they are persons with proven intercultural competence. (DEs)
Appendix:

1:1 The WaVE team

In total, 34 researchers have been included in the WaVE project. The coordination committee is listed first, then the support team, and then the group of researchers involved in each case study. The senior scholar is named first, followed by the junior researcher.

COORDINATION COMMITTEE
Anders Bäckström, Project Coordinator, Faculty of Theology, Uppsala University
Grace Davie, Assistant Director, Exeter University
Effie Fokas, Programme Manager, Faculty of Theology, Uppsala University
Ninna Edgardh, Faculty of Theology, Uppsala University
Per Pettersson, Service Research Center, Karlstad University; Faculty of Theology, Uppsala University

SUPPORT TEAM
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Lina Molokotos Liederman, Centre for European Studies, Exeter University

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Ninna Edgardh, Researcher for the Swedish case study
Per Pettersson, Researcher for the Swedish case study

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Pål Repstad, Institute of Religion, Philosophy and History, Agder University
Olav Helge Angell, Researcher for the Norwegian case study

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Eila Helander, Faculty of Theology, University of Helsinki
Anne Birgitta Pessi, Researcher for the Finnish case study
Henrietta Grönlund, Assistant Researcher
Elina Juntunen, Assistant Researcher
LATVIA
Zaneta Ozolina, Department of Political Science, University of Latvia
Raimonds Graudins, Researcher for the Latvian case study
Andrejs Berdnikovs, Researcher for the Latvian case study
Antra Mazūra, Researcher for the Latvian case study

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Martha Middlemiss Lé Mon, Researcher for the English case study

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Annette Leis-Peters, Researcher for the German case study of Reutlingen
Anika Albert, Researcher for the German case study of Reutlingen

GERMANY, SCHWEINFURT
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Ilona Biendarra, Researcher for the German case study of Schweinfurt

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Corinne Valasik, Researcher for the French case study

POLAND
Irene Borowik, Institute for the Scientific Study of Religion, Jagiellonian University
Agnieszka Dyczewska, Researcher for the Polish case study
Eliza Litak, Researcher for the Polish case study

CROATIA
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Marija Geiger, Researcher for the Croatian case study
Tamara Puhovski, Researcher for the Croatian case study

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Annalisa Frisina, Researcher for the Italian case study
Valentina Longo, Researcher for the Italian case study
Adriano Cancellieri, Researcher for the Italian case study
1:2 The Consortium of the WaVE project

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The contractors who are responsible for the work in each respective country are the following:

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UU: Uppsala University (Coordinator) – Anders Bäckström

**Partner 2:**
EXETER: Exeter University – Grace Davie

**Partner 3:**

**Partner 4:**
PADUA: University of Padua – Chantal Saint-Blancat

**Partner 5:**
JAGIELLONIAN: Jagiellonian University – Irena Borowik

**Partner 6:**
ZAGREB: University of Zagreb – Siniša Zrinščak

**Partner 7:**
LATVIA: University of Latvia – Zaneta Ozolina
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Partner 9:
DURHAM: Durham University – Douglas Davies

Partner 10:
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AGDER – Agder University – Pål Repstad

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KARLSTAD: Centre for Service Research, University of Karlstad – Per Pettersson
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