

# RICE 2020

Rainbow Index  
of Churches  
in Europe 2020

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**Protestant Theological University Amsterdam, Netherlands, 18 April 2021**

# **1. Introduction: LGBTI Inclusivity in European Churches**

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## **INTRODUCTION: LGBTI INCLUSIVITY IN EUROPEAN CHURCHES**

During the past half century, remarkable changes have taken place with regard to the recognition of rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) people across Europe. At the same time, Europe has seen many instances of increased hostility towards LGBTI people, including outright persecution. Issues of sexual and gender diversity have become key topics in post-secular conflicts over divergent values in modern pluralistic societies, and in Europe, we also see these so-called 'culture wars.' Religion plays a part in all of this. Violent homophobia can be associated with nearly every fundamentalist or traditionalist interpretation of religion in the world. It is against this backdrop and in this context that it is important to explore and research empirically the situation of European churches in terms of their inclusivity of LGBTI people.

Networks like ILGA-Europe increase the visibility of LGBTI people and advocate their social and political rights in European countries. ILGA-Europe defines itself as an international, non-governmental organisation that advocates human rights for everyone 'regardless of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.' Annually, ILGA-Europe reports on political and social developments that impact LGBTI equality in Europe. Their reporting is published in the Annual Review and Rainbow Europe. Since 2011, the Annual Review has documented the legal, political, and social developments in 54 countries and 4 European institutions throughout the previous calendar year. It tracks positive and negative trends in relation to LGBTI equality and human rights in Europe and Central Asia. Rainbow Europe is ILGA-Europe's digital 'benchmarking tool' for advocacy and policy work. ILGA-Europe ranks 49 European countries on their LGBTI equality laws and policies, but the annual report also provides an impression of how the laws and policies of European countries impact the everyday lives of LGBTI people.

The European Forum of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Christian Groups (EF), an ecumenical association of LGBTI Christian groups in Europe, is one of the member organisations of ILGA-Europe. The European Forum's main aim is to realise equality and inclusion for LGBTI people in Christian churches and other religious organisations in Europe. For this purpose, the EF employs several approaches to engage with ecumenical bodies and churches on a European level, and also with civic and political organisations. For example, the EF provides information about religion-based homophobia and advocates for the human rights of LGBTI people within hostile social and religious environments. In spring 2019, the EF invited researchers from the Protestant Theological University (PThU) in Amsterdam to research the inclusivity of churches in Europe and to construct an index for ranking European churches according to their inclusivity, analogous with ILGA's Rainbow Europe equality index. The EF saw the need for 'hard facts' on European churches' inclusivity to provide churches with an incentive to grow towards a higher level of inclusivity and to convey to these churches practices and policies that would enhance their performance. In autumn 2019, the PThU agreed on a research contract with the EF that began in January 2020, and resulted in this report

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and the presentation of an 'inclusivity index' of European churches in December 2020. The research project is called RICE 2020, the acronym for 'Rainbow Index of Churches in Europe in 2020.' The index indicates the extent to which European churches are inclusive regarding LGBTI issues. Consequently, the index might be an important policy instrument for the European churches and for human rights advocates and organisations, the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament.

ILGA-Europe's Rainbow benchmarking tool, which serves as a model for our project, does not highlight the term 'inclusivity.' The term 'inclusivity' is not included in ILGA-Europe's glossary of the most commonly used phrases and acronyms. ILGA-Europe's project title speaks of the 'human rights situation' of LGBTI people. However, for us as researchers, 'inclusivity' adequately describes the intrinsic nature of the church as an institution and community that can only be properly understood from both a social scientific and a theological perspective. We elaborated this assumption in four arguments. Based on these arguments, we constructed the 'inclusivity index.' The index was translated into a questionnaire. Our co-researchers, members and partners of the EF, provided us with their answers to the questionnaire, and we, as researchers, analysed the data.

Here are the four arguments. As theologians researching inclusivity, we started with the argument that Jesus' practice of radical hospitality and commensality sets the rule for churches on diversity, equality, and the affirmation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. How does this rule define the recognition of LGBTI people in churches? What are the implications of Jesus' words and practices for inclusion in the sacraments and the ordination of clergy; the representation in leadership and decision-making in the church; the inclusivity of liturgical language; the acknowledgement of the church's role in the discrimination toward LGBTI people; the public statements of the church and its political interference? Furthermore, based on the performance of Jesus, we decided to research the lived experiences of LGBTI people with churches, and not settle with the churches' own presentation of what they perceive as their inclusivity. Thirdly, the research was not limited to written statements and policies, but attempted to probe the operant practises of inclusion, to detect possible illusionary, symbolic, or peripheral acts of inclusion, and possible strategies of silencing. Finally, we argue that inclusivity is a reality with social, economic, political, and other dimensions. That is why we investigated several practices that affect the operant churches' inclusivity, for example, the churches' actions with regard to human rights issues of health and safety, employment and education, freedom of expression and organisation.

In this report we present an 'inclusivity index', an index consisting of 47 indicators to measure the inclusivity of churches (Appendix C), which we made operational as a questionnaire. Next to the index, we present our analysis of the 2020 data the questionnaire generated. The index, together with the analysis of the 2020 questionnaire data, constitute the first annual report on the LGBTI inclusivity of European churches.

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## **INTRODUCTION: LGBTI INCLUSIVITY IN EUROPEAN CHURCHES**

The research results are primarily displayed as scores transposed into rankings (Chapter 2). In our analysis of the data, we focus on three major church families (the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, and Protestant churches). The vast majority of churches on which we gathered data in our research is connected to one of these church families (Chapters 3–6). We also gathered data on a few churches that are part of other denominations (Chapter 7). Then we put the analysis of individual national churches, who are part of their respective church families, in the context of their country's identity and national politics on LGBTI issues. We created 'country reports' on Eastern Partnership countries, on countries in Northern and Western Europe, and in Southern Europe, and we also zoom in on countries with 'traditional values and human rights' challenges (Chapters 8–11). There is a specific chapter (12) on churches' inclusivity regarding transgender persons. In the final chapter (13), we suggest possible ways forward for all churches based on our research. The appendices provide our research methodology, the names of the churches in their original languages, the list of indicators ('inclusivity index'), and the results of the questionnaire per church family.

The research and this report could not have been realized without the outstanding cooperation with Wielie Elhorst (Former Co-President of EF and RICE 2020 Research Volunteer), Misza Czerniak (Board Member of EF), and Rachael Stockdale (RICE 2020 Research Officer). During the last three months of this research project (January-April 2021), Rachael became part of our PThU research team and contributed to the organisation of the results and supporting the analysis of the data as a research assistant. She took over from Pilar d'Alo, our research assistant until December 2020.

Most of all we are grateful to our co-researchers and the time and effort they put into answering our questionnaire. We would have liked to honour the co-researchers publicly. However, the decision was rightly made not to include the names of the co-researchers in the report. Some co-researchers indicated that they probably would run the risk of harassment, or even worse, if their names would be associated with our research. In order not to put some of the co-researchers in danger, it was decided not to divulge the names of any co-researcher.

**18 April 2021, *Misericórdia Dómini/Fifth Sunday of the Great Lent***

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## **2. Scores and Ranking of Churches**



## SCORES AND RANKING OF CHURCHES

In this section we present the overall scores of the churches and their respective ranking based on these scores (2.1), followed by a specific focus on majority churches (2.2). Then we list the ILGA-Europe 2020 ranking, and the same-sex marriage/union policies of all the countries involved in our research (2.3), followed by a comparison with our data on the churches (2.4). The chapter finishes with a presentation of the data on the member churches of the Conference of European Churches (2.5).

# 2.1 Score/Ranking per Church<sup>1</sup>

	COUNTRY	CHURCH FAMILY	CHURCH NAME	SCORE	PART OF POPULATION (%) <sup>2</sup>	COUNTRY POPULATION (x million) <sup>3</sup>	REPRESENTATION OF CHURCH DENOMINATION IN COUNTRY (x million)
1	Finland	MCC	Metropolitan Community Church in Finland	45,5	-	5,7	0,003 <sup>4</sup>
2	Sweden	PC (Lutheran)	Church of Sweden	41,5	58	10,3	6
3	Switzerland	PC (United)	Protestant Church in Switzerland	38,5	24	8,3	2
4	Norway	PC (Lutheran)	Church of Norway	36,5	70	5,4	3,8
5	Netherlands	PC (United)	Protestant Church in the Netherlands	36	9	17,2	1,5
6	Germany	PC (United)	Evangelical Church in Germany	35,5	26	80,3	20,9
7	Czech Republic	OCC	Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic	26,5	-	10,7	0,003
8	Slovakia	OCC	Old Catholic Delegation of the Union of Utrecht in Slovakia	26,5	-	5,4	0,003
9	United Kingdom	PC (Anglican)	Church of England	26,5	12	65,4	7,8
10	Germany	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Germany	25	28	80,3	22,5
11	Hungary	PC (Methodist)	Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship	23,5	-	9,8	0,003

1 The mean for these scores is 15,4. **Highest ranked church per church family.** **Lowest ranked church per church family.**

2 U.S. Department of State, *2019 Report on International Religious Freedom*, June 2020, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/>; accessed 18 February 2021.

3 U.S. Department of State, *2019 Report on International Religious Freedom*, June 2020, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/>; accessed 18 February 2021.

4 Because the US Department of State does not provide sufficient information about some of the smaller churches that are part of our research, we have to work with estimates based on not completely reliable sources.

	COUNTRY	CHURCH FAMILY	CHURCH NAME	SCORE	PART OF POPULATION (%) <sup>2</sup>	COUNTRY POPULATION (x million) <sup>3</sup>	REPRESENTATION OF CHURCH DENOMINATION IN COUNTRY (x million)
12	Austria	OCC	Old Catholic Church of Austria	22	-	8,8	0,01
13	Malta	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Malta	21,5	94	0,5	0,47
14	Austria	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Austria	20,5	57	8,8	5
15	France	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in France	19	48	67,6	32,5
16	Hungary	PC (Lutheran)	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary	18	3	9,8	0,3
17	Italy	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Italy	17,5	67	62,3	41,7
18	Switzerland	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Switzerland	17	36	8,3	3
19	Belgium	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Belgium	16	57	11,6	6,6
20	Estonia	PC (Lutheran)	Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church	15	14	1,2	0,2
21	Finland	OC	Orthodox Church in Finland	15	1,1	5,7	0,06
22	Poland	PC (Lutheran)	Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland	13	-	38,4	0,06
23	Romania	Unitarian Church	Unitarian Church of Transylvania	12	0,3	21,4	0,06
24	Ireland	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Ireland	11,5	78	5,1	4
25	Hungary	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Hungary	9,5	51	9,8	5
26	Serbia	OC	Serbian Orthodox Church	9,5	85	7	5,9
27	Romania	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Romania	9,5	5	21,4	1
28	United Kingdom	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in the UK	9,5	7	65,4	4,8
29	Slovenia	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia	9	-	2,1	1
30	Netherlands	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands	8	24	17,2	4,1
31	Estonia	OC	Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church	8	2,3	1,2	0,03
32	Ukraine	Greek Catholic	Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church	8	10	44	4,4
33	Portugal	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Portugal	7,5	81	10,3	8,3
34	Moldova	OC	Moldovan Orthodox Church	6	81	3,4	2,8
35	Hungary	PC (Reformed)	Reformed Church in Hungary	6	16	9,8	1,6
36	Belarus	OC	Belarusian Orthodox Church	5,5	53	9,5	5

## SCORES AND RANKING OF CHURCHES

	COUNTRY	CHURCH FAMILY	CHURCH NAME	SCORE	PART OF POPULATION (%) <sup>2</sup>	COUNTRY POPULATION (x million) <sup>3</sup>	REPRESENTATION OF CHURCH DENOMINATION IN COUNTRY (x million)
<b>37</b>	Croatia	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Croatia	5,5	86	4,2	3,6
<b>38</b>	Greece	OC	Church of Greece	5	81	10,8	8,8
<b>39</b>	Spain	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Spain	5	66	49,7	32,8
<b>40</b>	Slovakia	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia	4	62	5,4	3,3
<b>41</b>	Georgia	OC	Georgian Orthodox Church	3,5	83	4,9	4,1
<b>42</b>	<b>Latvia</b>	<b>PC (Lutheran)</b>	<b>Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia</b>	<b>3,5</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1,9</b>	<b>0,7</b>
<b>43</b>	Armenia	Oriental	Armenian Apostolic Church	3	92	3	2,8
<b>44</b>	<b>Russia</b>	<b>OC</b>	<b>Russian Orthodox Church</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>141,9</b>	<b>92,2</b>
<b>45</b>	Belarus	RCC	Roman Catholic Church in Belarus	1,5	6	9,5	0,6
<b>46</b>	<b>Poland</b>	<b>RCC</b>	<b>Roman Catholic Church in Poland</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>38,4</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Total</b>							<b>384</b>

ELC Sweden, RCC Germany, and OC Finland might be considered as the churches that represent good practises for becoming more inclusive. Comparing these churches with other churches from the same church family might reveal the potential for inclusivity within a church family.

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## 2.2 Majority Churches

### Ranking

In about half of the 44 European countries, the majority (at least 55%) of the population belongs to one Christian denomination. The majority churches in these countries are mostly members of the Eastern Orthodox or the Roman Catholic church family. In some countries the majority of Christians is represented by a Protestant denomination (i.e., Reformed, Evangelical Lutheran, Anglican). Some of these majority churches are 'state churches,' others 'national churches,' and still others are churches within a secular state with specific privileges based on their recognized contribution to the history and culture of the country. We collected data on most of these majority churches, which represent about 260 million Christians in all these countries together.<sup>5</sup>

CHURCH	SCORE	PART OF POPULATION (>55%) <sup>6</sup>	COUNTRY POPULATION (x million) <sup>7</sup>	REPRESENTATION OF CHURCH DENOMINATION IN COUNTRY (x million)
ELC Sweden	41.5	58	10,3	6
ELC Norway	36.5	70	5,4	3,8
RCC Malta	21.5	94	0,5	0,47
RCC Austria	20.5	57	8,8	5
RCC Italy	17.5	67	62,3	41,7
RCC Belgium	16.5	57	11,6	6,6
RCC Ireland	11.5	78	5,1	4
OC Serbia	9.5	85	7	5,9
RCC Portugal	7.5	81	10,3	8,3
OC Moldova	6	81	3,4	2,8
OC Greece	5	81	10,8	8,8

<sup>5</sup> We don't have data about the following majority churches: ELC Denmark (state and national church), ELC Finland (national church), ELC Iceland (national church), OC Romania (favoured church), OC Cyprus (most religious state after Malta and Romania), OC Bulgaria ('traditional religion' of nation), RCC Lithuania (national catholic identity).

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of State, *2019 Report on International Religious Freedom*, June 2020, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/>; accessed 18 February 2021.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of State, *2019 Report on International Religious Freedom*, June 2020, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/>; accessed 18 February 2021.

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## SCORES AND RANKING OF CHURCHES

CHURCH	SCORE	PART OF POPULATION (>55%) <sup>6</sup>	COUNTRY POPULATION (x million) <sup>7</sup>	REPRESENTATION OF CHURCH DENOMINATION IN COUNTRY (x million)
RCC Croatia	5	86	4,2	3,6
RCC Spain	5	66	49,7	32,8
RCC Slovakia	4	62	5,4	3,3
OC Georgia	3.5	83	4,9	4,1
AC Armenia	3	92	3	2,8
OC Russia	2.5	65	141,9	92,2
RCC Poland	1	86	38,4	33
<b>Total</b>				<b>260</b>

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The mean score of these churches is 11,3.

## Eurobarometer 2019

With the exception of Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, and Serbia, these countries are part of the European Union, with Norway participating in the European Economic Area. According to the 2019 report *Discrimination in the European Union*, overall support for LGBTI rights and relationships in the European Union countries is strong and has grown since 2015.<sup>8</sup> However, there is a considerable variation between the countries. The vast majority of citizens in Sweden (98%) and the Netherlands (97%) agree that LGB people should have the same rights as non-LGB people. But in Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia, citizens disagree strongly (between 45 and 59%) with the statement that LGB people have the same rights as heterosexual people. Latvian, Polish, and Hungarian citizens seem to be divided on their (dis)agreement. In Latvia, 43% totally disagree, while 49% totally agree; in Poland, 45% totally disagree, while 49% totally agree; and in Hungary, 46% totally disagree, while 48% totally agree. A vast majority (55–71%) of people in Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Latvia, and Bulgaria totally disagree with the statement that there is nothing wrong with a sexual relationship between two persons of the same sex.<sup>9</sup> The support for same-sex marriage is also the lowest (16–33%) in these same countries. These percentages even decreased in Hungary, Slovakia, and Bulgaria since 2015.<sup>10</sup>

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8 European Union, *Discrimination in the European Union*. Special Eurobarometer 493, Fieldwork May 2019, Publication October 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/yearFrom/1974/yearTo/2019/surveyKy/2251>; accessed 21 March 2021.

9 Eurobarometer 2019, 123.

10 Eurobarometer 2019, 125.

The Eurobarometer also asked if transgender persons should be able to change their civil document to match their gender identity. More than eight in 10 citizens in Spain, Malta and the Netherlands agreed; more than five out of 10 disagreed in Poland, Croatia, and Slovakia; and more than six out of 10 in Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria.<sup>11</sup>

**This table compares the Eurobarometer data with our ranking of the majority churches in the 13 European Union countries.**

EU COUNTRIES	SAME RIGHTS LGB (% AGREE)	NOTHING WRONG WITH SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIP (% AGREE)	SAME-SEX MARRIAGE ALLOWED (% AGREE)	TRANSGENDER AND MATCHING CIVIL DOCUMENTS (% AGREE)
Sweden	98	95	92	69
Malta	73	73	67	83
Austria	70	65	66	57
Italy	68	59	58	43
Belgium	84	82	82	70
Ireland	83	80	79	65
Portugal	78	69	74	72
Greece	64	49	41	54
Croatia	44	36	39	39
Spain	91	89	86	83
Slovakia	31	29	20	25
Poland	49	49	45	41

When we compare these different types of datasets, we notice that the scoring of the majority churches in Sweden, Malta, Austria, Belgium, and Ireland are concurrent with the results for the country's citizens in the Eurobarometer questionnaire. The score for RCC Italy is relatively higher than the country's Eurobarometer results, while RCC Portugal scores relatively lower. RCC Spain definitely scores below the high standard set by its country in the Eurobarometer. The scores of the

<sup>11</sup> Eurobarometer 2019, 128.

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## SCORES AND RANKING OF CHURCHES

OC Greece and RCC Croatia and Slovakia do not seem surprising compared to how their countries scored on the Eurobarometer 2019. Interesting is the position of the RCC Poland, the lowest-scoring church in our research, while based on the Eurobarometer outcomes, the country itself seems to be more evenly divided on LGBTI issues. It might be an indication that RCC Poland is alienating itself from at least half of its country's population. To put it differently, the church is right in the middle of a culture war. The question is if the church is the protagonist of the fight for national identity and family values in Poland, or if the church is being played around by the Law and Justice government. The current president of Poland won the presidential vote in 2020 with the slimmest election victory (51–49%) since the end of communism in 1989.<sup>12</sup>

# Constitution and religion

Below we summarize what the constitutions of the countries in which the majority churches are located state about the relationship between state and religion.<sup>13</sup>

<b>SWEDEN</b>	The Swedish constitution protects 'the freedom to practice one's religion alone or in the company of others' and prohibits religious discrimination. The Church of Sweden is the national church, and was until 2000 the former state church.
<b>NORWAY</b>	Religious freedom is protected in Norway, religious discrimination is prohibited, and the government provides financial support for interreligious dialogue. There is also a program to combat anti-Semitic hate speech and anti-Islamic sentiment. Still, the ELC is the state church, enjoying exclusive benefits (clergy salaries).
<b>MALTA</b>	The Maltese constitution prohibits religious discrimination and provides freedom of religious worship. Still, Roman Catholicism is the state religion, and Catholic religious teaching is mandated in state schools, even though children may opt out.
<b>AUSTRIA</b>	Based on historical laws and the constitution, Austria guarantees the freedom of religion. Several religious 'societies' are recognized.

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<sup>12</sup> Reuters, 13 July 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-election-idUSKCN24E0CT>; accessed 23 March 2021.

<sup>13</sup> The information on the countries constitutions is based on the U.S. Department of State's *2019 Report on International Religious Freedom*.

<b>ITALY</b>	The Italian constitution states that all citizens are free to profess their beliefs and celebrate rites in public or in private, provided they are not offensive to public morality. Furthermore, each religious community has the right to establish its own institutions as long as these do not conflict with the law. The constitution also specifies that the state and the Catholic Church are independent of each other. Their relation is governed by treaties.
<b>BELGIUM</b>	The Belgian constitution provides for freedom of worship and freedom of expression. The government officially recognizes several religions.
<b>IRELAND</b>	The Irish constitution guarantees freedom of religion and prohibits religious discrimination. The Roman Catholic Church is not the established church. The preamble of the constitution does however refer to the Christian notions of 'the Most Holy Trinity' and 'our Divine Lord, Jesus Christ.'
<b>SERBIA</b>	According to the constitution, Serbia is a secular state. The establishment of a state religion is forbidden. Serbia guarantees the freedom of religion and equality for all religious groups. Nevertheless, the Serbian Orthodox Church is the largest and traditional church of the country.
<b>PORTUGAL</b>	The constitution provides for freedom of religion and prohibits religious discrimination, but minority religious groups have reported that the Portuguese government favours the Roman Catholic Church over other religious groups.
<b>MOLDOVA</b>	Although the law cites the 'exceptional importance and fundamental role' of Orthodox Christianity, and particularly the Moldovan Orthodox Church, in the life, history, and culture of the country, Moldova has no state religion. The constitution protects the freedom of religion. Minority religious groups indicate, however, the preferential treatment to the Moldovan Orthodox Church.
<b>GREECE</b>	The Greek constitution guarantees freedom of religious conscience and freedom of worship, although with some restrictions (no proselytizing, no disturbing of the public order; no offending of (other) religions). The state acknowledges Greek Orthodoxy as the 'prevailing religion.'
<b>CROATIA</b>	The constitution provides for freedom of religion. Although all religious communities have the same religious protections under the law, and receive some funding from the government, the Roman Catholic Church is provided with far more financial support and favourable tax and other treatment. As the majority religion, the RCC has a strong cultural and political influence.
<b>SPAIN</b>	The Roman Catholic Church is the only religious group explicitly mentioned in the constitution. Although the Constitution states that no religion shall have a 'state character,' and the government has agreements with different religious groups, the government also grants the Roman Catholic Church additional benefits not available to the other denominations, based on a bilateral agreement with the Holy See.



## SCORES AND RANKING OF CHURCHES

<b>SLOVAKIA</b>	The constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief and affiliation and prohibits religious discrimination. The country is not bound to any particular faith. Religious groups need to provide religious education and establish clerical institutions independently from the state. Most school religion classes teach Catholicism. The exercise of religious rights may be restricted only by measures 'necessary in a democratic society for the protection of public order, health, and morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.'
<b>GEORGIA</b>	The constitution stipulates the independence of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) from the state, but recognizes the 'outstanding role' of the GOC in the history of the country. Further laws and policies grant the GOC unique privileges (e.g., a consultative role in state education policies, tax exemptions).
<b>ARMENIA</b>	According to the constitution there is freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and a separation of religious organisations and the state. However, the Armenian Apostolic Church is recognized as the national church because of its 'exclusive mission' with regard to the 'spiritual life, development of the national culture, and preservation of the national identity of the people of Armenia.' The AAC has the first right to station chaplains in hospitals, schools, military units, and prisons. The state does not interfere with the AAC's exclusive right to preach freely and to spread its beliefs. A school can opt for a history of the Armenian Church course, but once a school chooses such a course, it becomes mandatory for all students.
<b>RUSSIA</b>	According to its law, Russia is a secular state. There are, however, four 'traditional' religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism). Furthermore, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) is recognized for its special role in the country's 'history and the formation and development of its spirituality and culture.' According to NGOs and independent experts, the government cooperates more closely with the ROC than with other religious organisations. The ROC also benefits from an agreement with government ministries that gives it greater access than other religious organisations to public institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons, the police, and the military. Multiple officials support the construction of Orthodox churches, perceiving the country as an Orthodox nation. The ROC is a member of the 'Civic Chamber', a state institution with representatives of public associations which have the opportunity to review draft legislation pending before the State Duma.
<b>POLAND</b>	The state of Poland has a concordat with the Holy See, which defines the special relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. The constitution as such provides freedom of religion and equal rights for all religious organisations.

## 2.3 ILGA-Europe Country Ranking 2020, and Effective Legalisation of Same-Sex Marriage, or Union

This table compares countries' ILGA-Europe ranking with the dates of the countries' same-sex marriage or union policies.<sup>14</sup>

COUNTRY	PERCENTAGE	SAME-SEX MARRIAGE	SAME-SEX UNION
Malta	89	1 September 2017	
Belgium	73	1 June 2013	
Norway	70	1 January 2009	
France	68	18 May 2013	
Spain	67	3 July 2005	
Portugal	66	5 June 2010	
Finland	66	1 March 2017	
UK <i>England and Wales</i> <i>Scotland</i> <i>Northern Ireland</i>	64	13 March 2014 16 December 2014 13 January 2020	
Sweden	62	1 May 2009	
Netherlands	62	1 April 2001	
Ireland	53	26 November 2015	
Germany	51	1 October 2017	

<sup>14</sup> ILGA-Europe, <https://www.rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking>; accessed 9 March 2021.

## SCORES AND RANKING OF CHURCHES

COUNTRY	PERCENTAGE	SAME-SEX MARRIAGE	SAME-SEX UNION
Austria	50	1 September 2019	
Greece	48		24 December 2015
Croatia	46		1 September 2014 Marriage is limited to opposite-sex couples
Estonia	38		1 January 2016
Switzerland	36		1 January 2007 Legalisation of same-sex marriage passed parliament 18 December 2020
Serbia	33		Same-sex marriage was constitutionally banned in 2006, when a new constitution explicitly defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman
Hungary	33		1996 Same-sex marriage is prohibited by the Constitution of Hungary, January 2012
Georgia	30		2018, Constitutional ban on marriage
Slovakia	30		2014, Constitutional ban on marriage
Czech Republic	26		1 July 2006
Italy	23		5 June 2016
Ukraine	22		1996, constitutional ban on marriage
Moldova	19		1994, constitutional ban on marriage
Romania	19		Neither same-sex marriages nor civil unions are legal
Latvia	17		2006, constitutional ban on marriage
Poland	16		1997, constitutional ban on marriage
Belarus	13		1994, constitutional ban on marriage
Russia	10		2020, constitutional ban on marriage
Armenia	7		2015, constitutional ban on marriage

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## 2.4 ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map and RICE 2020 Compared

When we compare the ILGA-Europe's country ranking with the ranking of all the European churches in our research and of the majority churches, we can make the following observations.

1. The RCC Malta, the majority church in Malta, is one of the highest ranked RCCs, which seems to be in sync with the top ranking of the country.
2. Spain and Portugal score about two-thirds of the total as countries, but as RC majority churches, they are positioned in the lower half of the ranking.
3. Belgium is much higher-ranked as a country than its RCC.
4. The Protestant churches of Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and Germany, and the Anglican Church in the UK are ranked according to their countries' above-average inclusivity score.
5. The RCCs in the Netherlands and the UK rank lower than their countries.
6. The Protestant Church in Switzerland scores significantly higher than the country score would imply.
7. The RCC France is ranked lower than its country score might suggest.
8. The OC Greece and the RCC Croatia, both majority churches, score relatively lower than their countries as such.
9. The scores of RCC and OCC Austria fit with the middle ranking of Austria as a country.
10. The low ranking of Russia, Poland, Belarus, and Armenia also corresponds with the majority churches in these countries.
11. ELC Latvia is the only church in Latvia we have data on. The low score of ELC Latvia does not deviate from the low score of the country. Although ELC Latvia does not represent the majority of the population, it is the largest church within Latvian Christianity.

## 2.5 CEC Churches Ranking

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) is a network of 114 churches from Orthodox, Protestant, and Anglican traditions from all over Europe. These churches combine their resources for dialogue, advocacy, and joint action with regard to issues of diaconia, migration and refugees, and women and youth in the churches.<sup>15</sup> CEC has offices in Brussels and Strasbourg. The CEC emerged as a peace-building effort, building bridges between the East and the West during the Cold War. The first official assembly of the CEC was in 1959, in Denmark. Every five years there is an assembly. Annually, the CEC gathers the European National Councils of Churches.

Our research gathered data on the following member churches of the CEC.

CHURCH	OFFICIAL NAME	SCORE
ELC Sweden	Church of Sweden	41,5
PC Switzerland	Protestant Church in Switzerland	38,5
ELC Norway	Church of Norway	36,5
PC Netherlands	Protestant Church in the Netherlands	36
PC Germany	Evangelical Church in Germany	35,5
PC UK	Church of England	26,5
OCC Czech Republic	Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic	26,5
OCC Austria	Old Catholic Church of Austria	22
ELC Hungary	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary	18
ELC Estonia	Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church	15
OC Finland	Orthodox Church in Finland	15
ELC Poland	Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland	13
OC Serbia	Serbian Orthodox Church	9,5

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15 See <https://www.ceceurope.org/>.

CHURCH	OFFICIAL NAME	SCORE
OC Estonia	Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church	8
Ref Hungary	Reformed Church in Hungary	6
OC Greece	Church of Greece	5
ELC Latvia	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia	3,5
Armenian Apostolic Church	Armenian Apostolic Church	3
OC Russia	Russian Orthodox Church	2,5

These data show a significant difference between churches in Western and Northern Europe with the churches in Eastern Europe.

It is hard to find a statement on LGBTI rights on CEC's website. The search term 'LGBT' links to a page called 'Libraries,' which collects resources on human rights topics.<sup>16</sup> 'The aim is to present a diversity of opinions on human rights, especially emerging from CEC member churches.'<sup>17</sup> The only opinion that refers to LGBTI issues, under the heading of 'Anti-discrimination,' is the 2014 'Church of Norway's commitment to the human rights of LGBT.' Nearly all the resources are about religious minorities and religious freedom. Also, in the 2019 book *Human Rights, Religious Freedom and Faces of Faith*, there is only one reference to 'LGBT rights,' but in a chapter on women's rights. 'Women's rights are most often associated with sexual and domestic violence, employment discrimination and reproductive rights. Women's rights also include immigration and refugee matters, child custody, criminal justice, health care, housing, social security and public benefits, civil rights, human rights, sports law, LGBT rights. All these topics became priorities for Christian theology in the framework of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogues.'<sup>18</sup>

16 The search terms 'gay,' 'lesbian,' and 'sexuality' showed no search results. The search term 'gender' refers to a press release on a 2016 summer school on women and children rights. Another reference is to a press release on a 2019 summer school on freedom of expression and hate speech. The press release mentions: 'Xenophobic attitudes, stigmatisation of minorities, stereotyping on the basis of race, colour, national and ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation lead to hatred and can ultimately result in violence. Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and Christianophobia are expressions of such attitudes, but they are not limited to religious groups, but also affect others such as "refugees" in general or Roma and other minority groups.' As a follow up to this summer school on hate speech, there is a reference to an October 2020 report and resource kit to address hateful content online published by the European region of the World Association for Christian Communication. 'LGBT' is just mentioned once in this report, in an example of two Polish journalists who write that 'the topic that is hugely controversial in our country at the moment is the question of LGBTQ rights: homophobia is rampant and gay people are perceived as 'threatening' the very concept of Polish identity and Catholicism.'

17 See <https://www.ceceurope.org/human-rights/libraries/>.

18 Eleni Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi, 'The Rights of Women,' in Göran Gunner, Pamela Slotte, and Elizabeta Kitanović (Eds.) (2019), *Human Rights, Religious Freedom and Faces of Faith*, Globethics.net CEC No. 6, 191-207, 192.

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## **SCORES AND RANKING OF CHURCHES**

Dialogue and advocacy at the European level is an important part of the mission of the Conference of European Churches, according to its website. However, the rights of LGBTI Christians and the responsibility of CEC's member churches to be welcoming and affirming to people of all gender identities and sexual characteristics does not seem to be a priority at the moment. According to CEC's communication officer, there is no official CEC statement or study on LGBTI topic, 'as its member churches do not have an agreement on the issue.'<sup>19</sup>

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19 E-mail from Naveen Qayyum, 12 April 2021.

# **3. Denominations, Families of Churches, Church Families**



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## **DENOMINATIONS, FAMILIES OF CHURCHES, CHURCH FAMILIES**

The European Forum of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Christian Groups (EF) has two working groups which bring together specific expertise on church related questions and themes, one for the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and one for the Eastern Orthodox Churches (OC). Both working groups provided information about the inclusivity of their church family in general, by sharing 'pre-filled comments' for the questionnaire. Respondents of the questionnaires could use these generic comments to answer more adequately the questions related to the local churches within these church families. Both the RCC and some of the churches within the OC (Bulgaria, Russia, Georgia, Romania, Serbia) are transnational institutions in Europe, presided over by episcopal synods headed by the pope or a patriarch, with a unifying organisation and regulating traditions and constitutions. The multiple nations encompassing structure and jurisdiction of these churches could imply that a lot of issues raised in the inclusivity questionnaire should lead to the same answers. From this perspective, generic comments filled in in advance makes a lot of sense. Nevertheless, the total scores of the national churches within these church families deviate significantly. This could mean several things, e.g., that national churches have a certain level of freedom when it comes to policies and practices regarding LGBTI people, or that ecclesial constitutions are limited by a country's state legislation, or that churches differ depending on a nation's cultural history and traditions, or that the level of inclusivity is related to being a majority or minority religion in a country. In sum, more variables affect the inclusivity of churches than just being part of the same church family or jurisdiction. This underlines the importance of looking at the comments that were made related to the situation of the specific national RCC or OC, next to the 'pre-filled comments.'

# **4. Eastern Orthodox Church**

## 4.1 Introduction

The Eastern Orthodox Church (EOC) is one of the largest Christian bodies in the world today. It is a family of independent churches which regard themselves collectively and individually as the ‘one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.’ The Eastern Orthodox Church is distinct from the Oriental Orthodox churches, e.g., the Armenian Apostolic Church (which is also researched in *RICE 2020*). The approximately 200 million members of the Eastern Orthodox Church are today mostly found in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus region, and the Middle East, but there is a large and influential ‘diaspora’ located mainly in Western Europe, North America, and Australia. In this research, we received the data from four churches in Eastern Europe (Russia, Moldova, Belarus, Estonia), two churches in South-East Europe (Serbia, Greece), two churches in the South Caucasus region (Georgia, Armenia), and one church in Northern Europe (Finland). We did not receive data on diaspora churches.

Orthodox churches base their teachings on the same ecumenical creeds and on Eastern patristic sources, but different historic, cultural, and political contexts have influenced and shaped local teachings, canonical rules, spiritualities and practices. Orthodox churches are divided in several jurisdictions (patriarchates) which may oversee other autocephalous and autonomous churches.

The Russian Orthodox Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Church of Georgia, and the Church of Greece have full autocephalous structures. From history the Church of Greece has inherited a rather complex structure: dioceses in the north of Greece (the ‘New Lands’), Crete and the Dodecanese have remained, at least nominally and spiritually, under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

The Moldovan Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church of Belarus are under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Orthodox Church of Finland and the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church are under the direct jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

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## 4.2 Gender and Sexuality in the Eastern Orthodox Church

As Brandon Gallaher and Gregory Tucker report in *Eastern Orthodoxy & Sexual Diversity: Perspectives on Challenges from the Modern West* (2019),<sup>20</sup> the Eastern Orthodox Church today remains committed to models of gender and sexuality and related disciplines which were formulated in pre-modernity. Many Orthodox subscribe to a version of ‘gender essentialism’ which regards biological sex, gender, and gender roles, as stable, transhistorical realities, such that all human beings are essentially and permanently either male or female. Marriage is understood as the union of a male and a female, and only sexual activity within its bounds is morally sanctioned. Other gender identities and sexualities are officially condemned, but pastoral responses vary, especially according to country and culture. The majority of Orthodox, especially those in post-Soviet regions, accept the Church’s teachings and disciplines on sexuality as ‘part of a complete package of received traditions which is beyond scrutiny.’<sup>21</sup> Scholars point to the shift in meaning of (the reference to) the concept of ‘tradition.’ For several Orthodox churches, the reference to tradition tends to be not as much to the Church’s tradition, which always includes the Bible, but instead increasingly to national-cultural tradition.<sup>22</sup>

Many Orthodox regard the Church’s opposition to sexual diversity as a matter of dogmatic truth, which must be defended in the contemporary world against the decadent secularism of ‘the West’ and its rejection of ‘traditional values.’ As Gallaher and Tucker found, ‘A minority of Orthodox today publicly challenge the Church’s teachings and disciplines concerning sexual diversity, and more hold contrary opinions in private. The status quo is often questioned, in the first instance, as a result of pressing pastoral realities on the ground.’<sup>23</sup> Among Orthodox theologians, there is a wide range of opinion on the received teachings from Tradition and a growing recognition that these realities need to be grappled with openly.

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20 Brandon Gallaher and Gregory Tucker, eds., *Eastern Orthodoxy & Sexual Diversity: Perspectives on Challenges from the Modern West* (2019). Interim Report of the British Council Bridging Voices Consortium of Exeter University & Fordham University, New York on ‘Contemporary Eastern Orthodox Identity and the Challenges of Pluralism and Sexual Diversity in a Secular Age,’ see <https://www.britishcouncil.us/programmes/society/bridging-voices/eastern-orthodoxy>; accessed 15 April 2021.

21 Gallaher and Tucker, *Eastern Orthodoxy & Sexual Diversity*, 8.

22 See, for instance, Konstantin Mikhailov, “The Church and LGBTQ Issues: The Insurmountable Challenge of Modernity.” In “*For I Am Wonderfully Made*”: *Texts on Eastern Orthodoxy and LGBT Inclusion*, edited by Misha Cherniak, Olga Gerassimenko, and Michael Brinkschröder, 188–205: 194 (European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups, 2016).

23 Gallaher and Tucker, *Eastern Orthodoxy & Sexual Diversity*, 8.

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## SCORES AND RANKING OF CHURCHES

Recent Orthodox teaching documents that deal, among others, with issues of sexuality and gender, are:

1. the final documents of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church on Crete (19-26 June 2016), *The Sacrament of Marriage and Its Impediments*<sup>24</sup> and *The Mission of the Church in Today's World*,<sup>25</sup>
2. the Russian Orthodox Church's documents *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* (2000)<sup>26</sup> and *Russian Orthodox Church's Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom, and Rights* (2008)<sup>27</sup>, and
3. *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*, drafted in the Orthodox diaspora in America, and adopted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 2020.<sup>28</sup>

We will discuss the two Russian Orthodox Church's documents more extensively in the country report on Russia.

In the documents of the Holy and Great Council, Natallia Vasilevich notes, first of all, that same-sex unions in society at large are not condemned as such, but that the disapproval of same-sex unions is directed exclusively at the members of the Church.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, the document doesn't categorically condemn same-sex unions for members of the Church as totally unacceptable, but emphasizes the pastoral challenge. Thirdly, legislation and practices which allow same-sex unions are not per se condemned. Fourthly, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is not explicitly included in the unaccepted reasons for discrimination. Finally, the role of *oikonomia* concerning marriage and family life is in many instances acknowledged. *Oikonomia* provides the possibility of the dispensation of love, to apply Church teaching with flexible limits in concrete situations.

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24 Official Documents of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, *The Sacrament of Marriage and Its Impediments*, <https://www.holycouncil.org/-/marriage>; accessed 15 April 2021.

25 Official Documents of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World*, <https://www.holycouncil.org/-/mission-orthodox-church-todays-world>; accessed 15 April 2021.S

26 Sacred Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* (2000), see <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/3/14.aspx>, original Russian version, see [https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/dokumenty/osnovy-sotsialnoj-kontseptsii-russkoj-pravoslavnoj-tserkvi/#0\\_9h](https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/dokumenty/osnovy-sotsialnoj-kontseptsii-russkoj-pravoslavnoj-tserkvi/#0_9h); accessed 15 April 2021.

27 The Russian Orthodox Church, *The Russian Orthodox Church's Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights*, <https://old.mospat.ru/en/documents/dignity-freedom-rights/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

28 Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, *For The Life Of The World: Toward A Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*, <https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos>; accessed 15 April 2021

29 Natallia Vasilevich, "The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church and LGBTQI Issues." In "For I Am Wonderfully Made": *Texts on Eastern Orthodoxy and LGBT Inclusion*, 302–306. She commented on the draft documents.

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Also, the social ethos document *For the Life of the World*, authored by Orthodox theologians mainly from the West, does not present rigid rules but is characterized by a holistic approach to sexuality, marriage, and family life, and a pastoral attitude.<sup>30</sup> While the text however remains vague on issues of sexual and gender diversity, in clear terms it admonishes not to discriminate: 'All Christians are called always to seek the image and likeness of God in each other, and to resist all forms of discrimination against their neighbors, regardless of sexual orientation. Christians are called to lives of sexual continence, both inside and outside of marriage, precisely on account of the sanctity of sexual life in the created order. But Christians are never called to hatred or disdain for anyone.'<sup>31</sup>

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30 Gregory Tucker, "Sexualethik und Familienleben in der Orthodoxie," *Religion und Gesellschaft in Ost und West* 48, no. 11, 2020: 6–8.  
31 *For the Life of the World*, par. 19.

## 4.3 Pew Research Center: Orthodoxy Majority Countries on Homosexuality

A worldwide survey of the Pew Research Center in 2019 shows that acceptance of homosexuality is highest in Western Europe and North America.<sup>32</sup> Central and Eastern Europeans within the European Union, however, are more divided on the subject, with a median of 46% saying homosexuality should be accepted and 44% saying it should not be. In Ukraine and Russia, the majority of the population says homosexuality should not be accepted, respectively 69% and 74%. The Pew Research states that besides factors such as education and political preference, religion, both as it relates to relative importance in people's lives and actual religious affiliation, plays a large role in perceptions of the acceptability of homosexuality in many societies across the globe.

% WHO SAY HOMOSEXUALITY SHOULD (NOT) BE ACCEPTED BY SOCIETY (PEW RESEARCH CENTER)		
SHOULD	COUNTRY	SHOULD NOT
94	Sweden	5
92	Netherlands	8
89	Spain	10
86	France	11
86	Germany	11
86	UK	11
75	Italy	20
59	Czech Republic	26
49	Hungary	39
47	Poland	42
44	Slovakia	46
14	Ukraine	69
14	Russia	74

32 Pew Research Center, *The Global Divide on Homosexuality Persists*, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/06/25/global-divide-on-homosexuality-persists/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

There is slight progress in the percentages of acceptance if we compare the Pew Research finding findings of 2015–2016 with those of 2019.

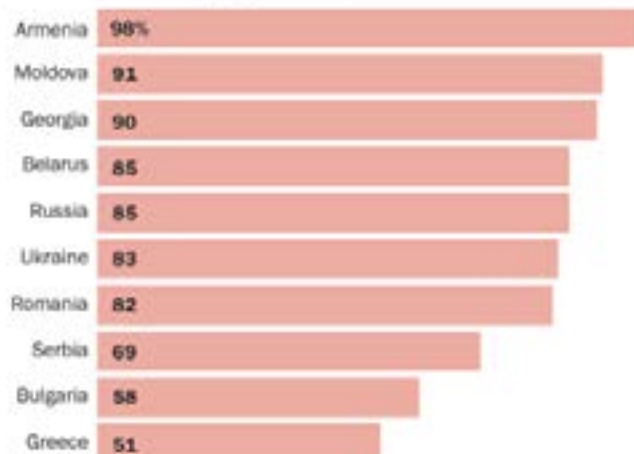
## Homosexuality widely seen as morally wrong

*% who say homosexual behavior is morally wrong*

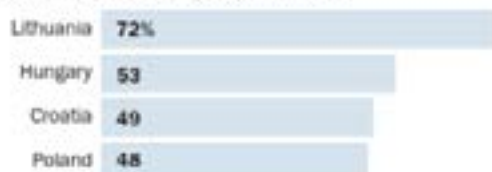
### Median results of surveyed countries



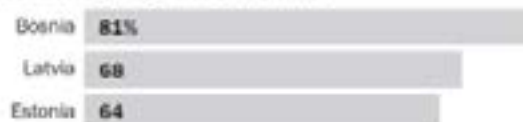
### Among those in Orthodox-majority countries



### Among those in Catholic-majority countries



### Among those in religiously mixed countries



### Among those in majority religiously unaffiliated countries



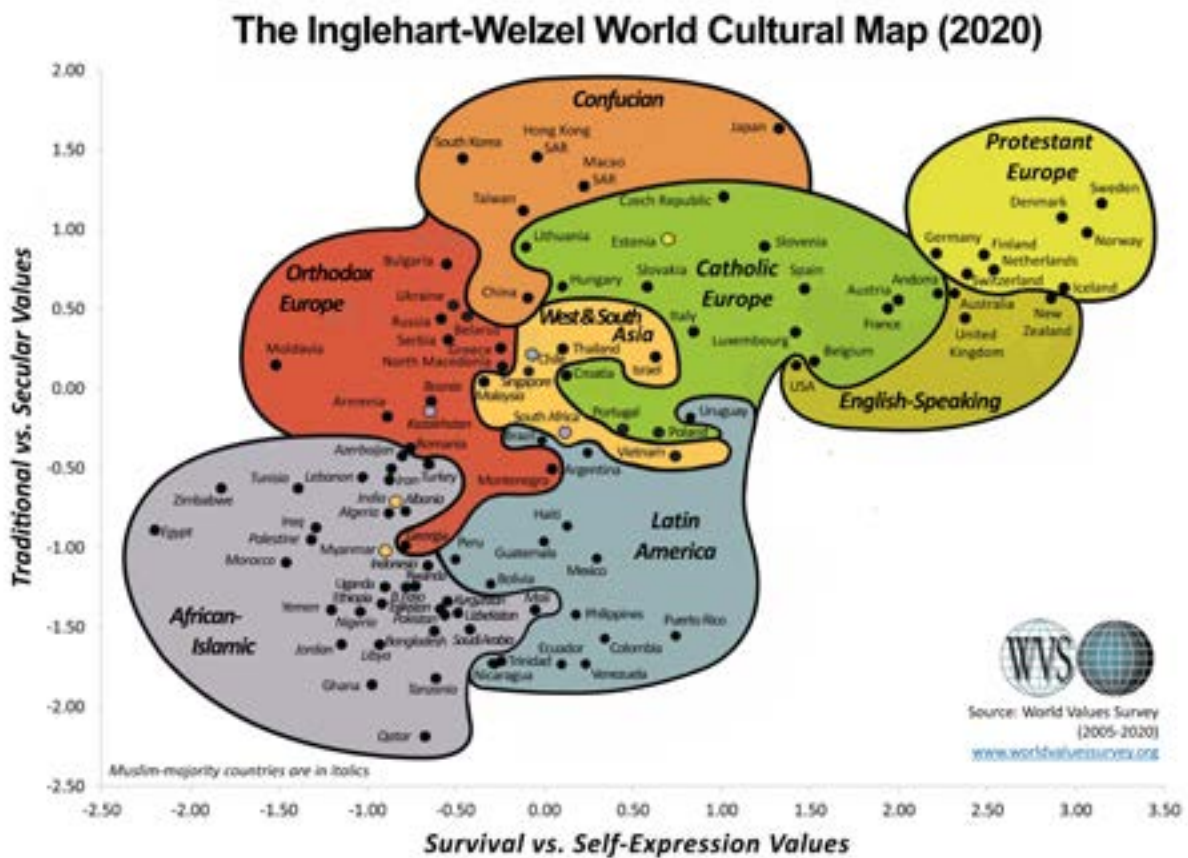
Source: Survey conducted June 2015–July 2016 in 18 countries. See Methodology for details.  
 “Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



## EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH

On the Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map, based on the findings of the World Values Survey,<sup>33</sup> we see the post-Soviet Eastern European countries along the line of the dimension of Traditional versus Secular values. According to the political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, there are two major dimensions of cross-cultural variation in the world: Traditional values versus Secular values, and Survival values versus Self-Expression values. The global cultural map below shows how scores of societies are located on these two dimensions.



Moving upward on this map reflects the shift from Traditional values to Secular-Rational, and moving rightward reflects the shift from Survival values to Self Expression values. The location of Orthodox majority countries along the line of Traditional versus Secular-Rational values reflects both their shaping by a communist past and the remaining or renewed impact of cultural-religious traditions, as well as the possible tensions between these two value-systems.

33 The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map – World Values Survey 7 (2020) [Provisional version]. Source: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

## 4.4 Orthodox Churches' Scores

We have collected data about eight churches from the OC family. The table below shows the scores per country church per category of indicators .<sup>34</sup>

	INSTITUTIONAL	PRACTICES	SPEECH	POLICY	TOTAL
Finland <sup>35</sup>	6	4,5	2,5	2	15
Serbia	4,5	2,5	0,5	2	9,5
Estonia	3	2	1	2	8
Moldova	2,5	1,5	0	2	6
Belarus	2,5	1,5	0	1,5	5,5
Greece	2,5	2	0	0,5	5
Georgia	1	0,5	0	2	3,5
Russia	0,5	0,5	1	0,5	2,5
<b>Number of indicators</b>	<b>16</b> <i>(mean = 2,8)<sup>36</sup></i>	<b>12</b> <i>(mean = 1,9)</i>	<b>9</b> <i>(mean = 0,6)</i>	<b>10</b> <i>(mean = 1,6)</i>	<b>47</b> <i>(mean = 6,9)</i>

	INSTITUTIONAL EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION (1)	CHURCH PRACTICES (2)	LANGUAGE AND SPEECH (3)	PUBLIC POLICY (4)
OC	(22,5:8) 2,8	(15) 1,9	(5) 0,6	(12,5) 1,6

34 The scoring suggests three groups of churches: 1. Finland, Serbia, Estonia, 2. Belarus, Moldova, Greece, 3. Georgia, Russia.

35 We can distinguish the churches according to the jurisdictions they belong to. **Jurisdiction of ROC. Jurisdiction of Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.**

36 The average score per category consists of the total score of the church family divided by the number of churches within the church family. The eight OCs scored 22,5 points together in the category 'Institutional equality and non-discrimination', which leads to an average score of 2,8 per church, out of the 16 indicators in that category.

## 4.5 Co-Researchers' Comments

The co-researchers were requested to add specific comments and references to the scores per indicator, to substantiate the awarded score. In addition, the **Orthodoxy Working Group** within the European Forum provided pre-filled comments to the co-researchers. These were used (nearly) in full by the co-researchers from Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Serbia, Russia, Estonia, and Greece. The co-researcher from Finland used the pre-filled comments more selectively.

Additionally, **specific comments and references** to documents, websites and articles were provided richly by respondents from Finland, Georgia, Serbia, and Russia. Some specific comments and references were added by respondents from Belarus and Estonia. For Moldova and Greece, there were no specific comments or references.

## Highest scores on indicators per category

The highest scores are those scores of a church family above 45% of the possible total score per category. For the OCs this would imply every score above 3,6, which is 45% of the total score per category with eight churches (in total eight points). The OCs score highest on the following indicators (numbers) per category.

	CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3	CATEGORY 4
OC (> 3,6 = 45%)	11, 14	-	-	-

If we zoom in on the only two indicators that have a higher score than the average of 3,6, these are about the church allowing baptism and membership to LGBTI persons (indicator 11) and about

the access of women and LGBTI people to the seminary (indicator 14). The indicator on baptism reflects the calling of the church to be a sign and instrument of God’s welcoming love and gift of salvation. The gratuity of the church in offering baptism, however, is not for all Orthodox churches unconditionally applied to LGBTI persons, as the pre-filled comment and the co-researchers explain (see below, at indicator 11). The relatively high score on indicator 14 is explained by the possibility of women to access the seminary for theological education and training for certain ministries (like teaching religious education in school or icon painting) that are not recognized by ritual ordination. The acceptance of women is not applied in the same way to openly LGBTI persons. In the seminary, they usually have to keep their identities secret. Trans persons in general will not be admitted.

It is significant that the allowance to participate in the Eucharist is not in the same degree granted by Orthodox churches to LGBTI persons as baptism. Here the score remains with a total of 3 below the average. See the explanation of indicator 13 below.

## Relatively highest total scores per indicator (at least 3 points)

<b>Institutional</b>	
4 – Bible not used as a source of discrimination	3
10 – Baptism of children of LGBTI families	3,5
11 – Baptism of LGBTI persons	4
14 – Access to seminary women/LGBTI	4
<b>Practices</b>	
17 – Leading functions national level	3,5
24 – Social ministry to LGBTI people	3
<b>Language and speech</b>	
-	
<b>Public statements</b>	
38 – Right to safety	
39 – Freedom of conscience/religion	
41 – Gender-related rights	

# Lowest total scores on indicators per category

There are 18 indicators (38% of the total of 47 indicators) on which all researched Orthodox churches have **zero value**:

<b>Institutional</b>
1 – LGBTI in legal documents
2 – diversity in leadership in legal documents
7 – guided protocol for parishes
9 – blessing of same-sex marriages
16 – affirmative theological educational materials
<b>Church practices</b>
21 – adoption by LGBTI couples
25 – pastoral ministry to LGBTI people
26 – support of LGBTI clergy association
28 – support of LGBTI advocacy
<b>Language and Speech</b>
30 – communication national level
32 – sensitive language in liturgy
37 – apologies and asking for forgiveness
<b>Public statements</b>
40 – on political organisation
42 – on reproductive rights
44 – on labour rights
45 – on health rights
46 – on diversity education in schools
47 – on access to public services

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## Difference per category

The biggest difference in scores between the Orthodox churches is in the category of 'Institutional equality and non-discrimination', with a second place for 'Church practices.'

	Highest	Lowest
Institutional	Finland 6	Russia 0,5
Church practices	Finland 4,5	Georgia, Russia 0,5
Language and speech	Finland 2,5	Moldova, Georgia, Belarus 0
Public statements	Finland, Moldova, Estonia, Serbia, Georgia 2	Greece, Russia 0,5

## Geopolitical difference and level of inclusivity

We can compare the total score in average of the churches within the EU and those outside the EU.

Orthodox churches within the EU (Finland, Estonia, Greece)	total score in average 9,3
Orthodox churches outside the EU (Serbia, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Russia)	total score in average 5,4

## Majority/minority churches and level of inclusivity

We can distinguish between majority and minority Orthodox churches' total score on inclusivity.

Orthodox churches in a majority situation (Serbia, Greece, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Russia)	total score in average 5,3
Orthodox churches in a minority situation (Finland, Estonia)	total score in average 11,5

## 4.6 Analysis of the Orthodox Churches per Indicator

### **Indicator 1 (mentioning LGBTI in a non-negative way) and 2 (diversity required in leadership)**

In legal documents of Orthodox churches there is no mentioning of LGBTI identity. The pre-modern sources that dominate Orthodox thinking and self-conception (e.g., canon law, homilies, pastoral texts) have no concept of sexual identity and tend to discuss only sexual activity, same-sex sexual activity being prohibited. Likewise, they have no concept of trans identity. Even in the Finnish Orthodox Church, which stands out in many ways as more accepting towards LGBTI people and in which, on a national level, there has been an on-going discussion on the topic of sexual identity for the last 30 years, no legal documents mentioning LGBTI in a positive way or stating the importance of diversity in representational leadership (**indicator 2**) have been published. In Georgia, in 1995, the legal documents of the GOC, i.e., the set of rules for the government of the Church and its members, were rewritten, but neither in this document nor in any other documents is there any general reference to the LGBTI identity by the GOC.

### **Indicators 3 (theology) and 4 (Bible)**

Both indicators have a relatively high score, except for Georgia and Russia.

As for **indicator 3: Orthodox theological principles**, the pre-filled comment explains that 'The Orthodox Church generally acknowledges that all human beings are loved by God as his creatures and that he wills the salvation of all,' but that also 'All humans stand in need of salvation, revealed by Christ.' Orthodox theologians would generally acknowledge that these two principles (all are loved by God, but all need salvation) apply to all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender characteristics.' The journey of salvation, however, requires that one acts in a certain moral way, and here churches may require, for instance, abstaining from same-sex sexual relations.

The interpretation and implementation of this theology is different in the Orthodox churches. In the Orthodox Church of Finland, for example, a person openly identifying as LGBTI and living in a sexual relationship is not excluded from ecclesial community. The co-researcher refers to Archbishop Leo (Makkonen), who has often stated that the church does not get involved in what happens in individuals' bedrooms.

In the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC), the recognition of the principle that all people are loved by God is questionable. Although the GOC is a member of the larger church family of the Orthodox

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Church, it has a different understanding in this matter. Observation of the actions of the GOC allows the co-researcher to say that its theology does not recognize the equality of all people regardless of their gender identity and sexual orientation. In this context, the respondent mentions the actions of the GOC against LGBTI people (with reference to articles and websites).<sup>37</sup>

For the Russian Orthodox Church, the co-researcher refers to its official document, *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* (2000). It declares that LGBTI people are not only to be limited in their social life, but also in a spiritual way they are seen as a vicious distortion of the God-created nature of man. While unequivocally condemning homosexuality as a sin, the ROC recognizes the right of homosexuals to personal respect and participation in society, but with clear limitations and thus in an ambivalent way: 'While not denying anyone the basic rights to life, respect for personal dignity, and participation in public affairs, the Church believes that those who promote a homosexual lifestyle should not be allowed to teach, educate, or otherwise work among children and youth, nor should they hold positions of authority in the army or correctional institutions' (XII.9).

As for **indicator 4 (Bible)**, the pre-filled comment states that the Orthodox Church has traditionally employed very complex hermeneutics that interpret the bible as a deeply spiritual text that finds its meaning in Christ. This means that simplistic moral and/or historical readings, such as in conservative Protestant churches, have generally been regarded as inadequate. There is a tendency, however, among Orthodox conservatives to more and more adopt 'literalist' readings. The co-researcher for the Georgian Orthodox Church comments that the Bible is used as a normative instrument for defining gender roles and is interpreted as a condemnation of LGBTI people and practices. Likewise, the ROC in *Bases of the Social Concept* is using the Bible as an instrument to condemn 'LGBT practices'. The co-researcher quotes: 'The Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Church unequivocally condemn homosexual sexual relations, seeing in them a vicious distortion of the God-created nature of man' (XII.9).

### **Indicator 5: use of Tradition**

On this indicator we see a significant difference between Finland (0,5) and the other Orthodox churches (0). The way of using 'T(t)radition' is a major determinant, if not one of the predictors, for an affirmative or condemning stance towards LGBTI people.

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37 S. Zviadadze, "Die Georgische Orthodoxe Kirche und die Herausforderungen der Moderne," *Religion und Gesellschaft in Ost und West* 43, no. 6-7 (2015): 16-9; T. Grdzeldze, "Human Rights and the Orthodox Church." In *Orthodox Christianity and Human Rights in Europe*, edited by E. A. Diamantopoulou und L. L. Christians (Brussels, 2018), 307-23, 314-17; "When a Film Shows Gay Romance in Georgia, Going to See it is a Risk," 6 December 2019, *The New York Times*, see <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/06/movies/and-then-we-danced-georgia-protests.html>; "Crowd Led by Priests Attacks Gay Rights Marchers in Georgia," *The New York Times*, 18 May 2013, see <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/18/world/europe/gay-rights-rally-is-attacked-in-georgia.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.



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The interpretation of the tradition works in most Orthodox churches against affirmation of LGBTI people. From the prefilled comments of the Orthodox Working Group: 'The church tradition is widely regarded as condemning same-sex sexual relations and relationships and (implicitly) transitioning and other queer expressions. The reality, however, is much more nuanced.'

In the Finnish Orthodox Church, there is acknowledgement that tradition knows saints who have lived queer lives, and that the Orthodox church in history has blessed same-sex people into 'brotherly union.' However, according to the co-researcher, such theological work that complicates the church's understanding of its own tradition is mostly ignored by contemporary leaders.

The *Bases of the Social Concept of the ROC* states (XII. 9): 'Patristic tradition just as clearly and definitely condemns any manifestations of homosexuality.'

Several co-researchers note that 'tradition' is increasingly understood as *national* tradition. For example, the GOC in its condemnation of LGBTI desires, sexualities and identities does not refer to the historical tradition and theology of the Orthodox Church, but exclusively to the tradition of Georgia and the Georgian people. They would be alien to the lived Georgian tradition. It is illustrated by the following example: 'A telling example is the Christmas letter of Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II in 2014, in which the Patriarch emphasized, with regard to legislation on same-sex marriage, that the European Community and the European Parliament should take into account the traditions and the way of thinking of the individual states. The Patriarch also called on the authorities to ban a gay rights rally to be held in the capital in 2013. In a statement, Patriarch Ilia II described homosexuality as "an anomaly and disease" and said that the gay rally planned for May 17 was "an insult" to the Georgian tradition.'

### **Indicator 9: blessing of same-sex marriage**

There is no recognition of same-sex marriages at all by Orthodox churches in this research.

### **Indicators 10 and 11: on Baptism**

Rather positively valued by Orthodox churches are the indicators on baptism. Children of LGBTI parents can be baptized in Orthodox churches, except for the Russian and Georgian church. As it is explained for the Finnish Orthodox church (0,5): 'The relationship status of the parents of a child cannot be an impediment to the child's baptism. In any case, priests would carry out the baptism even if they disagreed with the domestic arrangements of the parents.' Or explicitly for the Serbian Orthodox Church (1): 'Baptism is available to all children, both officially and in practice.'

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As for the ROC, there is no information that the church would deny baptism of children because of their parents' lifestyle, but the strict rules, according to the co-researcher, can be applied to deny baptism of children in some cases, including LGBTI families.

Also, for **indicator 11** (baptism and membership of LGBTI persons), in general, according to the pre-filled comment, the Orthodox Church accepts all baptized Orthodox Christians as members but 'membership' does not indicate endorsement of all aspects of a person's way of life. The prefilled comment explains that the church expects repentance of all members. For LGBTI persons this means that many aspects of their identity should not be 'realized' in (sexual) relationships, etc. We may speak of a 'baptism but...,' baptism under the condition of changing the life-style.

In the ROC there exist church-canonical obstacles to performing the Sacrament of Baptism, and among these obstacles are 'homosexual relationships.' The definition of the Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church (2008), based on the adopted Concept of the ROC's missionary activity, specifies the following obstacles to the performance of the Sacrament of Baptism:<sup>38</sup>

6. The lack of human desire to participate in Church life.
8. Unwillingness to leave sinful habits and beliefs that are incompatible with the title of a Christian (prostitution, work related to abortion, fornication, striptease, homosexual relationships; all forms of occultism: astrology, divination, ESP, belief in reincarnation, etc.).

In the Georgian church, there are no common and official rules on this subject, but in practice LGBTI people as members are not unconditionally admitted to baptism.

### **Indicator 13: allowance to participate in the Eucharist**

Conditions for participation in the Eucharist vary greatly across the Orthodox world. We mention here the OC's that apply restrictions for LGBTI people. The Georgian church (O) restricts participation in the Eucharist / Communion on the basis of gender and/or sexual identity. Broadly speaking, the co-researcher comments, persons in sexually active same-sex relationships and transgender persons who identify/present a gender other than their birth gender are excluded from communion. In many places, even sexually abstinent but openly LGBTI persons are excluded from communion. In the Serbian church, persons who are seen as being in active 'sin' are barred from the Eucharist, but in some places, a formal confession before partaking is sufficient, and some places do accept, with discretion, LGB people in relationships. The co-researcher for the ROC refers to a document approved at the Holy Bishops' Council of the ROC, 'On the participation of the faithful in the Eucharist' (2015):

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38 See [https://studopedia.net/3\\_45093\\_tserkovno-kanonicheskie-prepyatstviya-k-soversheniyu-tainstva-kreshcheniya.html](https://studopedia.net/3_45093_tserkovno-kanonicheskie-prepyatstviya-k-soversheniyu-tainstva-kreshcheniya.html); accessed 15 April 2021.

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'It is unacceptable to take communion in a state of bitterness, anger, in the presence of severe unspoken sins or unforgiven offenses. The Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church states: "Homosexual aspirations, as well as other passions that torment a fallen person, are cured by the Sacraments, prayer, fasting, repentance, reading the Holy Scripture and patristic creations, as well as Christian communication with believers who are ready to provide spiritual support."<sup>39</sup>

### **Indicator 14: access to the seminary**

This indicator has a relatively high score because, as the pre-filled comment explains, Orthodox seminaries and other church institutions may accept women for theological education and training for certain ministries (like teaching religious education in school or icon painting) that are not recognized by ritual ordination. The acceptance of women is not applied in the same way to openly LGBTI persons. They are admitted, according to the respondents, if they keep their identities secret. Trans persons in general would not be admitted. An exception is Finland, where theological education is given in public universities and no discrimination is allowed. The co-researcher comments that after this academic education, the Orthodox seminary admits LGBTI persons as students, but they would probably be expected to be celibate and are usually not open about their identity.

### **Indicator 15: ordination of clergy**

The general comment of the co-researchers is that only males are ordained. Among the celibate clergy, a large number are known to be gay/bisexual, but this is not widely acknowledged, and the vast majority do not discuss their sexuality.

Those who address the issue, e.g., in the context of allegations of sexual abuse, can expect disciplinary punishment from the church. In 2019, a high-ranking member of the Georgian Orthodox Church accused the head of the church, Patriarch Ilia II, and other high-ranking church officials of sexual misconduct of men, including underage boys. The accusing person after some time was forced to leave his episcopal ministry.<sup>40</sup> The respondent for ROC states that LGBTI people leading a celibate lifestyle and considering homosexuality as a sin might be ordained.

### **Indicator 17: church leadership**

The pre-filled comment explains that women can hold certain lay roles, openly LGB people are not completely non-existent, and post-operative transsexual people have no formal impediments

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39 See <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3981166.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.

40 See <https://oc-media.org/high-ranking-priest-accuses-ilia-ii-of-pederasty-and-sodomy/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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to participate fully. The Finnish co-researcher (1) adds that the highest decision-making body, *kirkolliskokous* (national synod) consists of 40% clergy and 60% laypeople. Of the 21 lay representatives, 12 are women.<sup>41</sup> Among employees of the church, both on the national and local parish level, women and men are equally represented. Important is the co-researcher's reference to the Finnish equality law: based on this law, openly LGBTI people are allowed to be members of the national synod, parish councils and hold positions of non-ordained employees in the church, such as choir conductors, pastoral workers, and youth workers. For other Orthodox churches, there is no reference to such a law.

### **Indicator 18: policy-making**

The Georgian co-researcher comments that openly LGBTI people are not involved in policy-making, but cis-hetero women are in some few cases, and often in a somewhat invisible way, as members of a lower-level committee or advisory group. Official decisions tend to be made by higher clergy, who are all men. For the ROC, the comment is that women are not presented in the organisational or clerical structure.

### **Indicator 19 and 20: employment in non-pastoral services**

Only Serbia, Greece, and Finland score 0,5. For Finland, the co-researcher refers to Archbishop Leo who stated in 2012 that 'The Orthodox church respects also in Finland the principles of universal declarations of Human Rights.'<sup>42</sup> But the respondent also refers to a 'don't ask, don't tell' attitude and to possible forms of hidden discrimination. The Serbian co-researcher also refers to 'don't ask, don't tell.' The ROC has a formal exclusion from functions: In the *Bases of the Social Concept of the ROC*: people who openly declare their homosexual orientation cannot work in schools, universities, among children and youth, or have leading functions in the army or correctional institutions (XII.9).

### **Indicator 21: adoption by LGB parents**

The score overall is zero. Generally, the Orthodox Church is opposed to adoption by lesbian and gay couples. This being said, the Finnish Orthodox church formally recognizes the civil rights of any form of a family, as the church respects the state laws. This is an example of *oikonomia* in the pastoral practice of the Orthodox church. The application of economy is generally regarded as being

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41 See <https://www.ort.fi/hallinto-ja-paatoksenteko/kirkolliskokous>; accessed 15 April 2021.

42 See Pekko Metso and Laura Kallatsa, "Contemporary and Traditional Voices: Reactions to Same-Sex Marriage Legislation in the Evangelical Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland," *Exchange: Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research* 47, no. 3 (2018): 230–257, see <https://erepo.uef.fi/handle/123456789/7157>; <https://www.ort.fi/arkkipiispa/kolumnit-ja-kannanotot/haastattelu-moraalikysymykset-yhteiskunnallisia>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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a more flexible application or interpretation of the canons (church rules). Pastoral discretion is of key importance in the application.

On the other end of the spectrum, we find the Russian co-researcher referring to the Representation of ROC at the Council of Europe that drafted a report 'On violations of children's rights when they are "adopted" by homosexual unions (same-sex partnerships)' (2013).<sup>43</sup> The report is devoted to the legal analysis of the protection of children's rights. In particular, it concerns the protection of the child's right to family, the child's right to mother and father, the child's right to ('natural') sexual identity and self-identification, as well as the right to sexual integrity, the child's right to their own beliefs and moral and ethical attitudes, the child's right to full development and protection of their mental health, the child's right to national and cultural identity and access to their native culture.

### **Indicator 22: celibacy not required for LGBTI**

Only the Finnish Orthodox Church scores 0,5, all others 0. Explanation from the Finnish co-researcher is that 'official' teaching on the sexual ethic is one thing, pastoral practice another. 'Officially', the church encourages people to abstain from same-sex sexual relationships. In actual pastoral practice, this depends on the priest. Many priests do not condemn homosexual activity in a permanent relationship, such as registered partnership or gender-neutral civil marriage. In the ROC, LGBTI persons are obliged to celibacy if they desire to become a part of church and take part in the sacraments.

### **Indicator 23: social acceptance in public rituals**

The Finnish co-researcher (0) explains that the leadership of the church states that LGBTI rights and Finnish law relating to those rights need to be respected, and LGBTI people are served by the church just like straight people. There cannot be, however, any affirmative ritual to bless same-sex partnerships.<sup>44</sup> The pre-filled comment and score (0) given by the Orthodox Working Groups is that connection of public displays of homosexuality with liturgy or religious rituals is seen as blasphemous. For churches such as ROC, the practice is social condemnation of LGBTI people in its public rituals, although in formal documents, they do not praise violence against LGBTI people nor approve the discrimination of LGBTI in their basic human rights. The co-researcher for the ROC offers an example of public condemnation: 'The Moscow Patriarchate supported the protests of Orthodox groups against LGBTI propaganda by the US and British embassies, noting that the demonstration of such symbols is "disrespectful to the worldview of many Russian citizens."<sup>45</sup> High-rank officials

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43 See <https://pravoslavie.ru/64601.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.

44 Metso and Kallatsa, "Contemporary and Traditional Voices", see <https://erepo.uef.fi/handle/123456789/7157>; accessed 15 April 2021.

45 See <https://ria.ru/20200629/1573624609.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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of the ROC condemn gay prides. Archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the DECR of the Moscow Patriarchate, stated that LGBT citizens want to demonstrate their superiority and their own pride at a “fundamentally destructive” event. “Holding such marches brings confusion and division in society, it always serves to divide people.”<sup>46</sup>

#### **Indicator 24: social ministry to LGBTI**

In the field of caritas and diaconia, discrimination is less present than in other areas. The co-researcher from Finland refers to Archbishop Leo’s statement which implies that the church should serve LGBTI people the same as everyone else in terms of diaconia, pastoral or social support. The Georgian Orthodox Church would offer general services (e.g., homeless support, soup kitchen) from local parishes without discussion of sexuality or gender, although it could be a problem if the person involved would raise the issue. There was an example in the press when a local community sent some products to trans women during the Corona pandemic.<sup>47</sup>

#### **Indicator 25: pastoral ministry to LGBTI people**

The Orthodox churches in the research do not provide specific pastoral ministry to LGBTI people. However, in Finland, there is *Yhteys-liike*, an ecumenical group of pastors and ministers who provide support to LGBTI people, and it includes Orthodox priests who are available for support.<sup>48</sup>

#### **Indicator 26: support to LGBTI clergy association**

There is no clergy or theologians’ LGBTI-affirmative association in these Orthodox churches.

#### **Indicator 27: support to ‘traditional’ family associations**

The Orthodox Church of Finland gives no support to local fundamentalist associations. Neither does it mention this association, its logo or internet address on the official website of the church among the other church organisations or associations. Also, the church’s resource book for adult education published in 2013 includes a description of ‘family [which] is open-ended when it comes to whether or not same-sex couples can also participate in the reality of the miniature church’ (which is how a traditional family is seen in the church). The positiveness of ‘the range of sexuality’ is acknowledged.<sup>49</sup>

Serbia, Estonia, and Greece (all churches in EU countries) have a score of 0,5, all other churches 0.

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46 See <https://www.msk.kp.ru/online/news/880703/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

47 See [http://gtarchive.georgiatoday.ge/news/21270/Georgian-Orthodox-Church-Sends-Food-to-27-Transgender-Women](http://gtarchive.georgiatoday.ge/news/21270/Georgian-Orthodox-Church-Sends-Food-to-27-Transgender-Women;); accessed 15 April 2021.

48 See [http://www.yhteys.org/etusivu\\_n.htm](http://www.yhteys.org/etusivu_n.htm); accessed 15 April 2021.

49 See Metso and Kallatsa, “Contemporary and Traditional Voices.”

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Other churches give official or non-official support to organisations with a pro-traditional family and anti-LGBTI agenda. The Georgian Orthodox Church supports organisations like the World Congress of Families. As decreed by the Patriarchate of Georgia, 17 May marks Family Purity Day in the country. Celebrated since 2014, the day is dedicated to Georgia's long-lasting traditions, family values, and Orthodox Christianity.<sup>50</sup> In Estonia, the Metropolitan gave speeches in which he endorsed the promotion of 'traditional values,' but it was not supported by the whole church, as the clergy tends to not approve of politics.

The Russian Orthodox Church intensely and officially participates in discussions related to family values. The co-researcher comments that often in this matter, clergy are related to ultra-nationalist movements.

### **Indicator 29: language by church leaders**

Except for Finland, the score is 0. Official language is exclusive, often condemnatory, and sometimes incites violence. Language of disgust and shaming is common. The co-researcher from Georgia specifies that speech by individual bishops – not considered to be 'official,' but just individual opinions – may incite violence. In the OC Finland, some leaders may use affirmative language. According to the co-researcher from Russia, the language heard in statements and interviews can be neutral ('homosexuality') to negative ('pervert,' 'sodomy,' etc.).

### **Indicator 30: communication on a national level**

All Orthodox churches have a score of 0. Official communication is largely negative. The official internet portal of the ROC, *Patriarchia*, has 21 mentions of the word LGBT, all in a negative, condemning way. These mentions include 'radical anti-family ideology,' 'what does excessive tolerance towards LGBT people lead to,' 'supporting the ideology of sexual minorities,' 'this violates human freedom and the inviolability of family life,' – 'The Bible clearly says that same-sex relationships are a distortion of love.'

For Finland, it is specified that instead of being negative or condemning, most of the time communication ignores the LGBTI or the whole issue of human sexuality. However, statements that specifically address homosexuality recognize the need to respect every person's value and universal human rights.

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<sup>50</sup> "Georgians march on church-backed Family Purity Day in Tbilisi," see <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2019/1309>; "Georgian Orthodox Church Marks Family Purity Day Today," <http://gtarchive.georgiatoday.ge/news/15671/Georgian-%20Orthodox-Church-Marks-Family-Purity-Day-Today>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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### **Indicator 31: gender and sexuality issues in worship language**

Only Estonia and Russia have a score of 0,5, all others 0. The pre-filled comment states that there is no positive narrative on issues of gender and sexuality in Orthodox churches and that sermons often include condemnatory statements on these topics. For ROC, the co-researcher refers to one thematic worship, which was for HIV people. In Finland, issues of gender and sexuality usually are absent in public worship. Some priests might mention the International Women's Day.

### **Indicator 32: sensitive liturgical language**

All churches have a score of 0. The general comment is that language for God overwhelmingly conforms to the received patterns (Father/Son, He/Him). There is rarely any conscious effort towards inclusion. Since heterosexual marriage is the only kind accepted, language of husband and wife is normative.

The co-researcher for the OC Finland specifies that the nouns in Finnish are neutral and there are no different nouns for he and she, so some of the language is less masculine due to grammar. There is little conscious effort towards inclusion. Some choir conductors and readers begin epistle readings with 'brothers and sisters' instead of just 'brothers.' This is also mentioned as an option in the most recent edition of *Divine Liturgy* (2012), the book containing notated texts for Sunday liturgies and feast days.<sup>51</sup> Some people refuse to mention sisters alongside brothers, and at least one bishop does not approve it. Since heterosexual marriage is the only kind accepted, language of husband and wife is normative.

In educational material of ROC in the past, the appeal to God in the masculine gender had a traditional character, but now it increasingly has a dogmatic character.<sup>52</sup>

### **Indicator 33: affirmative catechetical material**

Only Finland has 0,5, all others 0. For Finland, reference is made to the church's resource book for adult education (2013), see the comments to indicator 27. The co-researcher from Georgia comments that there are only translations of old catechetical books, such as a *Catechism* by Metropolitan Philaret Drozdov. In Russia, educational materials that teach tolerance and fight discrimination may even be considered an offense under article 6.21 of the Code of administrative offences of the Russian Federation, 'Promotion of non-traditional sexual relations among minors.'

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51 Ortodoksisen kirjallisuuden julkaisuneuvosto, *Jumalallinen liturgia* (2012), 376.

52 Priest Georgiy Chrystych, "Why is God a man?" 20 March 2020, see <https://foma.ru/pochemu-bog-muzhchina.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.



**Indicator 34: interconnectedness of justice and inclusivity**

Finland, Estonia, and Russia have a score of 0,5, all others 0. The pre-filled comment of the Orthodox Working Group states that the OC generally regards social justice issues and rhetoric with suspicion. The Serbian co-researcher specifies that there is little attention to any of the issues raised, and they are often seen as coming from 'the West'. The Georgian co-researcher comments that the GOC generally regards social justice issues and rhetoric with suspicion. Documents such as the recently-issued *For the Life of the World: Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church* (2020) are not received and discussed in the GOC as a somewhat isolated church.<sup>53</sup>

The Russian co-researcher explains that in official social teaching documents, ROC has declared its respect for human rights, dignity, and freedom. The ROC is not supportive of the liberal feminist movement, while respecting the role of the woman as mother and supporter of the husband. The ROC showed a negative perception of laws protecting families from domestic violence, seeing in it a distortion of traditional family values, interference of government into family life and spreading of Western values in Russia. The OC Finland is actively involved in national and international social justice organisations and ecumenical organisations. *Filantropia*, the international diaconia organisation of the Orthodox Church in Finland, works actively on and promotes girls' and women's issues and projects. The co-researcher from Estonia comments that the Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church of Estonia has openly spoken on behalf of acceptance towards refugees and inclusivity for them.

**Indicator 35: engagement with science**

Finland and Serbia have a score of 0,5, others 0. The pre-filled comment with the score of 0,5 states that often, the Orthodox Church denies the validity of scientific and even theological research when it contradicts the position of the Church and affirms it only when it agrees.

For the Serbian Orthodox Church, it depends. On certain topics, such as IF, IVF, abortion, some bodies within the Church tend to fully integrate scientific research. In the case of transgender issues, the Church accepts transsexuality based on research. In Finland the Church does not actively engage with science, but does not deny it. Homosexuality is not considered an illness.

Officials from ROC question insights from science on sexuality and gender. Here is an example: 'Archpriest Andrey Lorgus, psychologist, comments: "The first thing to say is that the vast majority of the literature on this issue contains the lie that homosexuality is an innate predisposition, that it is, so to speak, 'nature.' At the heart of this lie is the decision that led to the exclusion of homosexuality as a personal pathology from the DSM. This decision was supported by unreliable research (...).

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53 The Georgian Orthodox Church withdrew from the WCC in 1997.

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Secondly, we must understand that this is not a disease, but a personal distortion. This is not a matter for doctors, because in fact there is no psychiatric component. Neither the narcologist, nor the neurologist, nor the psychiatrist can help here in any way, as there are no clinical symptoms. This is a personal violation that can have consequences.”<sup>54</sup>

### **Indicator 36: acknowledgement of discrimination in the past, and 37: asking forgiveness**

Only the Finnish Orthodox Church has a score of 0,5 on indicator 36. The pre-filled comment says that the Orthodox Church generally sees no problem in acknowledging past discrimination. In fact, the Church’s history of discrimination, conceived as ‘tradition’, is often cited as a reason to continue to discriminate. However, in Finland, some individual priests or bishops have acknowledged the discrimination in the past. The Russian co-researcher comments that when Pope Francis said that the Roman Catholic Church should ask for forgiveness from LGBT people, the head of the press service of the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia (ROC), Alexander Volkov, said in an interview that the ROC does not plan to ask for forgiveness from gays.<sup>55</sup>

### **Indicator 38: public statements on safety**

All the churches except Greece have the score of 0,5. This is a relatively positive result. The pre-filled comment is that the Orthodox Church occasionally acknowledges that sexual orientation and gender identity should not be criminalized, but there are also examples of church leaders acting in opposition to the extension of rights to LGBTI persons. For Serbia, it is specified that the Church does give official statements with regard to the right to safety from violence and persecution. Also in Estonia, the Metropolitan’s speeches contain the claim that it is unacceptable to do harm to LGBTI people. In Russia, church leaders condemn homosexuality, but they do not praise violence against LGBTI people nor approve the discrimination of LGBTI in their basic human rights. However, the ROC leaders refuse to acknowledge their own role in hate speech that may incite violence.

### **Indicator 39: freedom of conscience and religion**

All churches have a score of 0,5 except ROC. No further explanation is provided. For Finland, it is commented that the church acknowledges that secular, democratic societies must make space for freedom of thought, conscience, and religion of LGBTI persons, but some church people may also act against such freedom being realized within the church.

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54 5 June 2013, see <https://www.pravmir.ru/mozhno-li-vylechit-otvechayut-svyashhenniki/>; accessed 15 April 2021.  
55 See <https://nsn.fm/society/society-rpts-otkazalas-prosit-proshcheniya-u-geev>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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## **EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**Indicators 40 (political organisation), 42 (reproductive rights), 44 (labour rights), 45 (health rights), 46 (diversity education in public schools), 47 (access to other public services):** All churches across the board have a score of 0.

### **Indicator 40: political organisation and expression**

Comments range from 'there are no such statements' (Finland) to 'the Orthodox Church does not support the formation of LGBTQ+ groups and often attacks them in public' (Georgia). In Russia, Vladimir Legoyda, Chairman of the Synodal Department of Church-Society relations, stated on political organisation of LGBTI, 'I emphasize that the demonstration of the triumph of vice, which is personified by the activities of LGBT organisations, contradicts the just requirements of morality that have defined the life of our society for many centuries.'<sup>56</sup>

### **Indicator 41: gender related rights**

All churches have a score of 0,5, except Russia. For Serbia, it is explained that there have been explicit statements and consistent practices of acceptance of postoperative transsexuals in their reassigned sex. The co-researcher from Finland comments that the church supports freedoms within the context of secular democracy, but many individuals fight against securing these freedoms in legislation, and would welcome and rely upon exceptions clauses for churches. However, the Council of Bishops has made statements related to the civil marriage law at the request of the Finnish parliament.

### **Indicator 42: reproductive rights**

The pre-filled comment is that generally, the OC denies reproductive rights to non-heteronormative couples. The Church does not accept the right to an abortion and often also condemns the use of contraceptives (though, in practice, this is frequently permitted/accepted). For Serbia, it is commented that childbearing is seen in such a positive light that non-cis-heteronormative and single parents are not condemned. Also, generally, the Serbian Orthodox Church condemns contraception and abortion officially, but not strongly – there are different views and exceptions.

### **Indicator 43: kinship related rights**

All churches have a score of 0,5, except Belarus and Russia, which have 0. The pre-filled comment is that some Orthodox Churches acknowledge that a right to civil partnership for same-sex couples should be allowed within a secular democratic society, but they generally do not campaign for such

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56 See <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1619521.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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a right. There is widespread opposition to full marriage equality. The Belarusian Orthodox Church has never expressed support to secular or religious forms of family life of LGBTI persons. The ROC has officially announced that it 'categorically does not recognize' same-sex unions and marriages. This is stated in the document 'On the canonical aspects of Church marriage' (2017).<sup>57</sup>

#### **Indicator 44: labour rights**

The pre-filled comment says that the Orthodox Church generally does not speak about such issues and would be unlikely to address LGBTI discrimination directly. Labour rights are implied in anti-discrimination laws proposed, e.g., in countries of the Eastern Partnership program of the EU. In 2014, the Georgian church announced in a statement that the proposed anti-discrimination law was propaganda and legalisation of a 'deadly sin' because it includes 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' in the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination.<sup>58</sup>

#### **Indicator 45: health rights**

Pre-filled comment: 'The Orthodox Church does not address LGBTQ+ separately in such discussions.'

As to the issue of conversion therapy, the co-researcher for the ROC comments that there are no special conversion therapy programs in the ROC, but some church leaders proclaimed that the church is able to convert homosexuals.<sup>59</sup> We have no comments on health rights of intersex people.

#### **Indicator 46: diversity education in public schools**

There are negative statements on diversity and sexuality education in public schools. The *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* forbids LGBTI persons to become schoolteachers, in order not to spread 'propaganda of homosexuality'. The ROC leaders condemn any tolerant practices in educational organisations. It is illustrated by a quote from the bishop of Perm and Solikamsk, Irinarch: 'In this regard, I appeal to all my fellow citizens, heads of educational and cultural institutions, and heads of provincial and city administrations to understand the essence of the problem of imposing tolerance on our people — the danger of this expansion not only for the spiritual and national, but also for state security. We cannot allow our country to be turned into a home of pseudo-spirituality and tolerance!'

In Georgia, there is quite strong opposition to sex education from the GOC and other Orthodox religious movements and conservative social groups supported by the official patriarchate: 'Their

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57 See <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/5a21a6599a794725bcb7072a>; <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5075384.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.

58 See "Georgian Church Speaks Out Against Anti-Discrimination Bill," see <https://civil.ge/archives/123664>; accessed 15 April 2021.

59 See <https://snob.ru/profile/32485/blog/168858>; <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/600480>; <https://pravoslavie.ru/59167.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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## EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH

arguments are that sexuality education runs against moral principles established in “traditional” Georgian society and will cause defilement and debauchery in young people – and that “sexuality education is LGBT propaganda.”<sup>60</sup>

### Indicator 47: access to other public services

There are no such statements.

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<sup>60</sup> E. Ketting and O. Ivanova, *Sexuality Education in Europa and Central Asia* (Cologne, 2018), 93, see [https://www.bzga-whocc.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Dokumente/BZgA\\_Comprehensive%20Country%20Report\\_online\\_EN.pdf](https://www.bzga-whocc.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/BZgA_Comprehensive%20Country%20Report_online_EN.pdf); accessed 15 April 2021. For a further overview see Salome Minesashvili, “Can the Georgian Orthodox Church Contribute to the Democratization Process?”, January 2016, see [http://gjp.ge/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/policy\\_brief\\_ENG\\_1.pdf](http://gjp.ge/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/policy_brief_ENG_1.pdf); accessed 15 April 2021.

# 4.7 Ways Forward

When we look at the specific comments of the Orthodox churches, combined with the differences in their total scores, we find the following reasons for a larger latitude for becoming an affirming church.

1. Recognition that there are nuanced and diverse voices and practices in Church tradition and that (living) Tradition is not homogeneous, but allows for a wider range of opinions.
2. A dual structure of lay representatives and clerical hierarchy, like in the national synod in Finland. Women and openly LGBTI people can have leading functions in the lay administration.
3. Prominent church leaders, metropolitans, (arch)bishops who in official communication use non-condemning or affirmative language.
4. A theology that affirms the unconditional and inalienable human dignity of all persons in their uniqueness.
5. The church acknowledging and respecting the state laws.
6. The application of *oikonomia* as being a more flexible application or interpretation of the canons (church rules) with pastoral discretion in the situation.
7. Engagement in an open way with scientific research.
8. No formal or informal alliances with organisations that promote the heteronormative ‘traditional’ family and carry an anti-LGBTI agenda.
9. Theological education (partly) taught in public universities.

# **5. Roman Catholic Church**

We start this chapter with a section on the church and LGBTI issues, and paying particular attention to the role of Pope Francis (5.1). Then we look at the scores of the national churches (5.2), followed by a comparison of a number of RCCs, reflecting on the room for churches' development with regard to LGBTI inclusivity (5.4).

# 5.1 The Church and LGBTI People

## Introduction

In his *Religion in the Secular City* (1985), published 20 years after his widely acclaimed *The Secular City* (1965), Harvey Cox described the global influence of the 'traveling pope,' John Paul II. Cox portrays Karol Wojtyła as an example of the return of religion, and of the impact of a religious leader on global politics. In his mission to evangelize the world, Pope John Paul II strengthened Christians all over the world, giving them a voice in their societies and their nation's politics at the same time. During the eighties, John Paul II played a proactive role in his homeland Poland, supporting the social movement *Solidarność* with its leader Lech Wałęsa. Papal support proved instrumental to the transition from communist rule in Poland as well as other Eastern European countries. However, the Pope's range of influence was not limited to Europe. In the early eighties, right-wing regimes in El Salvador and Nicaragua were no longer bothered by Latin American liberation theologians, who were pulled back in line with the Holy See.

As the leading bishop of a worldwide church and the only absolute monarch in Europe, the pope has a lot of responsibilities that come with his powerful position. It matters who the pope is. It mattered when John Paul II was pope, it mattered when Benedict XVI was pope, and it matters now that Francis, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, is the pope. In his responsibility for the church, the pope is served by the Roman Curia, the central administrative body of the Holy See, comprising in 2019 about 2700 people, a quarter of which are women.<sup>61</sup> As servants to the leader of the church, the Curia with its 'dicasteries' (departments) has the same power as civil servants in any administration to facilitate

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61 See <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2020-03/number-of-women-employees-in-the-vatican-on-the-rise.html>; accessed 9 March 2021.

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changes or thwart them. Of course, the pope has the authority to appoint and fire cardinals and bishops, which gives him tools to transform over time the Curia, and also local Synods of bishops. At the moment, the pope and his Council of Cardinals are working on a new apostolic constitution for the Roman Curia, with some reforms underway.<sup>62</sup> One of the issues that might concern Pope Francis in his dealing with the Roman Curia is the impression that ‘everything is in the hand of closeted gay clergy who run the Vatican,’ as described in Frédéric Martel’s *In the Closet of the Vatican*.<sup>63</sup>

## RCC working group

In gathering the data on Roman Catholic local/national churches, we were greatly helped by the European Forum’s RCC working group, which has been (pro) actively involved in the research. They gave us advice on the phrasing of the questions, suggested specific items, followed the research development with their feed forward, and helped us by collecting data as co-researchers, tracing missing data and providing specific local comments. Because of their active involvement as researchers, we welcomed the suggestion to have a meeting with the RCC working group about the data collection, after most of the data were gathered. This meeting (October 2020) established a common ground that proved fruitful for the further research project, but only after we dealt with some critical remarks from the working group, for example, about the EF’s organisation of the research process. The organisation could have been more transparent about the co-researcher’s required (substantial) investment of time, according to the working group.

What we as researchers took from this meeting was the acknowledgement of the deep-seated pain and disappointment about the lack of inclusivity of the churches, of which the co-researchers were loyal members. One of the co-researchers expressed his agony and sadness in answering the questionnaire and scoring his church with an avalanche of negative answers in contrast to his experience that in reality, the situation is not ‘that bad.’ This observation illustrates that our research is quite effective in exposing the official policy of non-inclusivity in documents, public statements, and official practices, but also that in some RCCs, there is a ‘shadow reality’ where things are left unsaid, not mentioned, not explicated, not exposed. Simultaneously, the observation emphasized that co-researchers were painfully confronted with the gap between the at times experienced inclusive pastoral practices on the local or diocesan level, and the official theology and policy of non-inclusivity on the (trans)national level.

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62 See <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2020-10/pope-c6-council-cardinals-meeting-reform-apostolic-constitution.html>; accessed 4 March 2021.

63 Frédéric Martel, *In the Closet of the Vatican. Power, Homosexuality, Hypocrisy* [Sodoma, 2019], London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019, Kindle Edition.



## RCC and LGBTI rights

The RCC working group provided us with general comments about the scoring of the indicators with regard to the RCC. Nearly all local churches used these general comments, while most churches added specific comment about the local situation. The following is based on the general comments.

According to the *Codex Iuris Canonici*, leadership in the RCC is reserved for cis men only. These men must live a celibate life, because sexual abstinence is required from all people who are not (heterosexually) married. Women, as well as openly gay men living with a partner in a sexual relationship, are excluded from the hierarchy. Based on Scripture and tradition, the RCC adheres to the idea of complementarity of the sexes, a binary gender system, and condemns sex between men. The official position of the Church is that 'homosexual acts' are forbidden. The RCC supports organisations that promote the heteronormative family. 'Transgenderism' is mentioned in a negative way.

From a perspective of *caritas*, the RCC makes no difference between people. The Holy See has published a statement against violence and criminalising laws against homosexual people, while protesting, however, against the use of the terms 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity'. In general, the language used by church leaders is partly condemning and non-inclusive, partly pastoral and welcoming/inclusive.

## Pope Francis

In 2014 and 2015, the pope called two extraordinary synods on the family to discuss the concrete pastoral situation on marriage, without questioning the indissolubility of marriage. After the synod, an apostolic exhortation about the care of families, *Amoris Laetitia* (19 March 2016), 'The Joy of Love,' was published.<sup>64</sup> The document, which reminds the church to attend to the 'complexity of various situations,' raised some controversy in the church.<sup>65</sup> With regard to LGBTI people, the pope articulated the following decision of the majority of the bishops at the synod (AL 250–251): 'We would like before

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64 See [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20160319\\_amoris-laetitia.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia.html); accessed 9 March 2021.

65 See <https://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/controversy-at-heart-amoris-laetitia/>; <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/amoris-laetitia-controversy-predates-document-itself>; <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2019/08/12/amoris-laetitia-is-at-the-center-of-the-controversy-over-the-john-paul-ii-theological-institute/>; all accessed 10 March 2021.

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all else to reaffirm that every person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while “every sign of unjust discrimination” is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence. Such families should be given respectful pastoral guidance, so that those who manifest a homosexual orientation can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God’s will in their lives. In discussing the dignity and mission of the family, the Synod Fathers observed that, “as for proposals to place unions between homosexual persons on the same level as marriage, there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family”

In July 2013, on a flight home after visiting Brazil, the pope answered questions from journalists. One of the questions was about a ‘gay lobby’ in the Vatican. The pope reaffirmed the church’s position that homosexual acts were sinful, but homosexual orientation was not. He also said: ‘If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge?’<sup>66</sup> In 2016, in a book on confession and God’s mercy, the pope wrote that his words ‘who am I to judge’ were simply his reflection on church teaching found in the catechism.<sup>67</sup> The book is based on an interview in which the pope also said, ‘I am glad that we are talking about “homosexual people” because before all else comes the individual person, in his wholeness and dignity. And people should not be defined only by their sexual tendencies: let us not forget that God loves all his creatures and we are destined to receive his infinite love. I prefer that homosexuals come to confession, that they stay close to the Lord, and that we pray all together. You can advise them to pray, show goodwill, show them the way, and accompany them along it.’

In 2018, the pope claimed that only heterosexual couples and their children constitute a real family. This claim invoked criticism from LGBTI advocacy groups and led to the question of mixed messages by the pope. ‘With such seemingly incongruent acts, it is hard to understand where Pope Francis really stands when it comes to LGBT inclusion and equality.’<sup>68</sup>

In November 2019, Pope Francis condemned the persecution of lesbian/gay people and met with a lesbian activist who works to end conversion therapy.<sup>69</sup>

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66 BBC, 29 July 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-23489702>; accessed 10 March 2021.

67 CNA, 12 January 2016, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-francis-explains-who-am-i-to-judge-in-his-new-book-21443>; accessed 10 March 2021.

68 Robert Shine, New Ways Ministry, 21 June 2018, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2018/06/21/catholics-object-to-pope-francis-claim-lgbt-families-are-not-real-families/>; accessed 8 March 2021.

69 Robert Shine, New Ways Ministry, 16 November 2019, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2019/11/16/lesbian-tells-of-popes-concern-about-conversion-therapy/>; accessed 9 March 2021. See also the statement by Francis DeBernardo, New Ways Ministry’s Executive Director, 15 November 2019, [New Ways Ministry Praises Pope Francis For Condemning Persecution of Lesbian/Gay People – New Ways Ministry](https://www.newwaysministry.org/2019/11/15/new-ways-ministry-praises-pope-francis-for-condemning-persecution-of-lesbian-gay-people/).

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In September 2020, Pope Francis received a group of Italian parents with LGBTI children, who presented the pope with the Italian edition of a new book filled with the stories of such Catholic families.<sup>70</sup>

In the documentary *Francesco* (Evgeny Afineevsky, October 2020), Pope Francis appears to endorse civil unions for same-sex couples.<sup>71</sup> Where the documentary reflects on pastoral care for those who identify as LGBTI, the pope says: 'Homosexuals have a right to be a part of the family. They're children of God and have a right to a family. Nobody should be thrown out, or be made miserable because of it.' The pope follows these remarks with a comment on the issue of civil unions for same-sex couples: 'What we have to create is a civil union law. That way they are legally covered. I stood up for that.'<sup>72</sup> A couple of weeks later, the Vatican Secretary of State sent an explanatory, unsigned note to provide 'an appropriate understanding of the words of the Holy Father,' which was published on the Facebook page of the apostolic nuncio to Mexico. The note suggests that the pope had answered two separate questions which were asked at different moments during a 2019 interview with a Mexican broadcast, and that these were edited and published in the documentary as a single answer without proper contextualisation, 'which has led to confusion.'<sup>73</sup> However, what remains is that Pope Francis has publicly and explicitly endorsed a legal arrangement for 'civil cohabitating' or 'civil union' (*convivencia civil*), even when this would not be granted the same status as a marriage between a man and a woman. This comment, which could be interpreted as a shift in tone, might have exacerbated the existing divide between Catholics who support the pope and those who oppose him.<sup>74</sup>

Part of the Afineevsky documentary is the reference to the phone call Andrea Rubera received from the pope in 2015. At the time, Rubera and his husband were considering whether they would let their child participate in a catechetical parish program. They were afraid their child might be treated differently or be subject to some sort of prejudice. Rubera sent a letter to Pope Francis, laying out his dilemma. The pope answered his letter with a phone call, in which he said: 'Go to the pastor, ask for a meeting, introduce yourself transparently and I'm quite confident that everything is going to be all right.' At the moment all three children of the couple have gone through the catechetical program and minister as altar servers.<sup>75</sup>

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70 Robert Shine, New Ways Ministry, 18 September 2020, [Pope Francis to Parents of LGBT Children: 'The Church Loves Your Children as They Are' – New Ways Ministry](#); accessed 9 March 2021.

71 See [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt12356510/?ref\\_=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_2](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt12356510/?ref_=fn_al_tt_2); accessed 8 March 2021.

72 Catholic News Agency, 21 October 2020, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-francis-calls-for-civil-union-law-for-same-sex-couples-in-shift-from-vatican-stance-12462>; accessed 8 March 2021.

73 New York Times, 2 November 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/02/world/europe/pope-gay-civil-unions.html>; accessed 8 March 2021.

74 Colleen Dulle, *America*, 22 October 2020, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/10/22/pope-francis-gay-civil-union-lgbt-context-media-documentary>; accessed 9 March 2021; Robert Shine, *New Ways Ministry*, 26 October 2020, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2020/10/26/while-some-continue-to-laud-popes-support-for-civil-unions-others-have-a-different-view/>; accessed 9 March 2021.

75 Brian William Kaufman and Robert Shine, New Ways Ministry, 4 February 2021, [Gay Couple Shares Positive Impact a Call from Pope Francis Had on Their Family's Life – New Ways Ministry](#); accessed 9 March 2021.

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In January 2021, Pope Francis mandated that women are formally allowed to give readings from the Bible during Mass, to act as altar servers, and to distribute communion.<sup>76</sup> Even though women, like openly gay men, remain barred from becoming deacons or priests, this implies a change in canon law (Canon 230/1).<sup>77</sup>

March 2021, the 'Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith' (CDF) responded negatively to the question (technically called a 'dubium') if the church has 'the power to give the blessing to unions of persons of the same sex.'<sup>78</sup> According to *Vatican News*, the CDF, referring to *Amoris Laetitia*, gave several reasons for its negative response. 'The first regards the truth and value of blessings, which are "sacramentals", liturgical actions of the Church which require that what is being blessed be "objectively and positively ordered to receive and express grace, according to the designs of God inscribed in creation". Relationships, even if stable, "that involve sexual activity outside of marriage" – meaning, outside "the indissoluble union of a man and a woman", open to the transmission of life – do not respond to the "designs of God", even if "positive elements" are present in those relationships. This consideration not only concerns same-sex couples, but also unions that involve the sexual activity outside of matrimony. Another reason for the negative response is the risk that the blessing of same-sex unions may be mistakenly associated with that of the Sacrament of Matrimony. The CDF concludes by noting that the Response to the *dubium* does not preclude "the blessings given to individual persons with homosexual inclinations, who manifest the will to live in fidelity to the revealed plans of God", while it declares impermissible "any form of blessing that tends to acknowledge their unions as such."<sup>79</sup> The CDF's response also mentions that 'the Sovereign Pontiff Francis, at the Audience granted to the undersigned Secretary of this Congregation, was informed and gave his assent to the publication of the above-mentioned Responsum ad dubium, with the annexed Explanatory Note.'

There have been expressions of strong disagreement with the Vatican's negative decision on church blessings for same-gender couples. A bishop in Belgium said he felt ashamed of his church.<sup>80</sup> In Germany, more than 2600 pastoral ministers, as well as other Catholics, signed a letter to support the blessing of same-gender unions within a week after the CDF's decision became public.<sup>81</sup> An

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76 See <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/11/world/europe/pope-women.html>; accessed 8 March 2021.

77 Robert Shine, New Ways Ministry, 12 January 2021, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2021/01/12/in-popes-welcome-of-women-acolytes-and-lectors-a-lesson-for-lgbtq-catholics-too/>; accessed 8 March 2021.

78 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 22 February 2021, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2021/03/15/0157/00330.html#ing>; accessed 16 March 2021.

79 *Vatican News*, 15 March 2021, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2021-03/holy-see-the-church-cannot-bless-same-sex-unions.html>; accessed 16 March 2021.

80 *The Brussels Times*, 17 March 2021, <https://www.brusselstimes.com/news/art-culture/160334/antwerp-bishop-ashamed-by-churchs-position-on-homosexuality/>; accessed 18 March 2021.

81 *Katholisch.de*, 17 March 2021, <https://www.kirche-und-leben.de/artikel/2600-unterstuetzer-fuer-aufruf-zur-segnung-homosexueller-paare>; accessed 27 March 2021.

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initiative of Austrian pastors, a reform movement of about 350 priests and deacons supported by about 3000 lay people, announced that they will keep on blessing same-sex partnerships.<sup>82</sup>

New Ways Ministry's executive director, Francis DeBernardo, called the Vatican's decision 'an impotent one because it won't stop the movement to bless such couples, and, in fact, it will actually encourage Catholics in the pews and the many Catholic leaders who are eager for such blessings to happen to work harder in their support—and blessing—of same-sex couples. (...) People think that church teaching evolves at the top and filters down. That is not how it works. The sense of the faithful is important and how the faithful receive a teaching affects the validity of such teaching.'<sup>83</sup>

# **Frederic Martel's In the Closet of the Vatican**

Writing about the LGBTI inclusivity within the Roman Catholic Church compels us to mention Frederic Martel's controversial, and disturbing book, if only because the pre-filled comments from the EF's RCC working group refer to it. Responding to the question about the active involvement of cis-hetero women and openly LGBTI people in the church's policy making on equality and non-discrimination, the RCC working group answered: 'On the global level, women and openly LGBTI people are not involved in the church's policy-making on equality and non-discrimination, because they don't belong to the rank of bishops. However, everything is in the hand of closeted gay clergy who run the Vatican (cf. Frédéric Martel: Sodoma).' Other co-researchers writing about a local RCC also refer to the Martel book; one of them with a disclaimer: 'This latter statement [on Martel's book in the pre-filled comment] doesn't, in my opinion, accurately reflect Martel's research or commentary although there are components of truth to what is written in the comment. It is noted that the original was written in French and translated into English. The English is not a direct facsimile of the French and an interview with Martel suggests re-reading with a caution when ascribing to his writing an assumption of comment as opposed to the relaying of what someone else said.'

As researchers, we are not in the position to have an opinion about Martel's book. We are not able to check the facts presented in this 'narrative non-fiction.' Our research also does not focus solely on clerics (priest, bishops, cardinals) or the Vatican, but on the impact of the church's policies

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82 *Religion.orf.at*, 16 March 2021, <https://religion.orf.at/stories/3205365/>; accessed 16 March 2021.

83 New Ways Ministry, 15 March 2021, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2021/03/15/new-ways-ministry-calls-vaticans-ban-on-blessing-same-gender-couples-an-impotent-decision/>; accessed 16 March 2021.

and practices on LGBTI people in general. But some of Martel's findings do raise questions for our research. What if one cannot understand the Catholic church without taking into consideration the 'structurally homosexualized nature of the Church'? What to make of one of Martel's rules that 'the more homophobic a priest is in public, the more likely he is homosexual in private'? What role does the 'culture of secrecy' ('Don't ask, don't tell') play in the church, which Martel relates to homosexuality as one of the keys that explain 'the institutionalized cover-up of sexual crimes and misdemeanours'? How do we perceive the importance of Pope Francis's words about civil unions for same-sex couples, not judging LG people, and acknowledging the families of LGBTI (adoptive) parents, when we agree with Martel that these are part of a 'veritable culture war', a vicious 'battle' between 'liberals' and 'conservatives', which is far from decided?

## **Pew Research Center: *Catholics on homosexuality***

Before we start looking at the specific data of the RCCs that were included in our research, let us first see what is known about the views of Roman Catholic believers on homosexuality. In November 2020, Pew Research Center published data on 'How Catholics around the world see same-sex marriage and homosexuality'.<sup>84</sup> According to data from 2015–2017, large majorities of Catholics in Western Europe said they support legal same-sex marriage. However, in almost all of the Central and Eastern European countries, most Catholics oppose same-sex marriage.

<b>% OF CATHOLICS IN EACH COUNTRY WHO FAVOUR OR OPPOSE ALLOWING GAYS AND LESBIANS TO MARRY LEGALLY (PEW RESEARCH CENTER)</b>		
<b>FAVOUR</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>OPPOSE</b>
92	Netherlands	3
87	Belgium	10
78	UK	21
76	Switzerland	23
75	Spain	13
74	France	24

84 Pew Research Center, 2 November 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/02/how-catholics-around-the-world-see-same-sex-marriage-homosexuality/>; accessed 9 March 2021.

## ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

% OF CATHOLICS IN EACH COUNTRY WHO FAVOUR OR OPPOSE ALLOWING GAYS AND LESBIANS TO MARRY LEGALLY (PEW RESEARCH CENTER)		
FAVOUR	COUNTRY	OPPOSE
71	Austria	26
70	Germany	29
65	Ireland	30
57	Italy	41
57	Portugal	30
50	Czech Republic	43
40	Slovakia	54
29	Croatia	66
29	Poland	62
25	Hungary	66
15	Latvia	80
14	Belarus	83
6	Ukraine	90

In their June 2020 report on 'The Global Divide on Homosexuality', the Pew Research Center showed also a divide between the population in Eastern and Western European countries on the acceptance of homosexuality.<sup>85</sup> The differences on the acceptance of homosexuality are related to age, education, income, (in some instances) gender, and religion and its importance in people's lives. But there are also correlations with people's political ideology and the country's wealth.<sup>86</sup>

% WHO SAY HOMOSEXUALITY SHOULD (NOT) BE ACCEPTED BY SOCIETY (PEW RESEARCH CENTER)		
SHOULD	COUNTRY	SHOULD NOT
94	Sweden	5
92	Netherlands	8
89	Spain	10
86	France	11

85 Jacob Poushter and Nicholas O. Ken, *The Global Divide on Homosexuality Persists. But increasing acceptance in many countries over past two decades*, Pew Research Center, 25 June 2020, [https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/06/PG\\_2020.06.25\\_Global-Views-Homosexuality\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/06/PG_2020.06.25_Global-Views-Homosexuality_FINAL.pdf); accessed 9 March 2021.

86 Poushter and Ken 2020, 5.

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<b>% WHO SAY HOMOSEXUALITY SHOULD (NOT) BE ACCEPTED BY SOCIETY (PEW RESEARCH CENTER)</b>		
<b>SHOULD</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>SHOULD NOT</b>
86	Germany	11
86	UK	11
75	Italy	20
59	Czech Republic	26
49	Hungary	39
47	Poland	42
44	Slovakia	46
14	Ukraine	69
14	Russia	74



## 5.2 RCC National Churches' Scores

We have collected data from about 20 churches from the RCC family.<sup>87</sup> The table below shows the scores per country church and per category of indicators.<sup>88</sup>

	RCC	INSTITUTIONAL	PRACTICES	SPEECH	POLICY	TOTAL
1	Germany	8	8	3,5	5,5	25
2	Malta	7	7	4,5	3	21,5
3	Austria	5,5	6	4,5	4,5	20,5
4	France	6	4,5	3	5,5	19
5	Italy	5,5	5,5	4	2,5	17,5
6	Switzerland	6	5,5	3,5	2	17
7	Belgium	5	5,5	2	3,5	16
8	Ireland	4,5	4	2,5	0,5	11,5
9	Romania	4,5	2	2	1	9,5
10	Hungary	3,5	2	2,5	1,5	9,5
11	UK	3	3	2	1,5	9,5
12	Slovenia	3	2,5	2	1,5	9
13	Ukraine	3,5	0,5	2	2	8
14	Netherlands	5	1,5	1	0,5	8
15	Portugal	4	1	1,5	1	7,5
16	Croatia	2,5	0,5	1	1,5	5,5
17	Spain	2	2	1	0	5

<sup>87</sup> The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC) is not a *Latin* Catholic Church but an *Eastern* Catholic Church of the Byzantine Rite. The UGCC belongs to the worldwide Catholic Church and is in full communion with the Pope in Rome (see further the country report on Ukraine).

<sup>88</sup> The numbers in red represent the top score per category. The numbers in yellow are outlier scores within category (scores above or under the mean). The scoring suggests three groups of churches: I. Germany, Malta, Austria, France, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland; II. Ireland, Slovenia, Romania, Hungary, UK, Ukraine, Netherlands, Portugal; III. Croatia, Spain, Slovakia, Belarus, Poland.

	RCC	INSTITUTIONAL	PRACTICES	SPEECH	POLICY	TOTAL
18	Slovakia	2,5	1	0,5	0	4
19	Belarus	1,5	0	0	0	1,5
20	Poland	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Number of indicators</b>		<b>16</b> <i>(mean = 4,2)</i>	<b>12</b> <i>(mean = 3,1)</i>	<b>9</b> <i>(mean = 2,2)</i>	<b>10</b> <i>(mean = 1,9)</i>	<b>47</b> <i>(mean = 11,2)</i>

The average score per category consists of the total score of the church family divided by the number of churches within the church family. The 20 RCCs scored 83,5 points together in the category 'Institutional equality and non-discrimination', which leads to an average score of 4,2 per church out of the 16 indicators in that category.

	INSTITUTIONAL EQUALITY AND NON- DISCRIMINATION (1)	CHURCH PRACTICES (2)	LANGUAGE AND SPEECH (3)	PUBLIC POLICY (4)
RCC	(83,5:20) 4,2	(62) 3,1	(43) 2,2	(37,5) 1,9

## High scores

The highest scores are those scores of a church family above 45% of the possible total score per category. For the RCCs, this would imply every total score above 9 points, which is 45% of the total score per category with 20 churches (in total 20 points). The RCCs score highest on the following indicators (numbers) per category.

	CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3	CATEGORY 4
RCC (> 9 = 45%)	10, 11, 13	19, 20, 24	-	38

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## ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Let us zoom in on some of these scores. Indicators 10, 11 and 13 are about the gratuity of the church in offering baptism to all children, inviting people to participate in the Eucharist, and welcoming people as members. In general, this gratuity expresses the character of the church itself. These indicators reflect the sacramental calling of the church to be a sign and an instrument of God's salvation. The church as the body of Christ is a gift from God to the world God loves, and to all the people in it. As God welcomes every human being, offering each and every one a place in creation, so the church welcomes and includes every child of God, in principle. This 'divine' principle is the principle of gratuity.

The pre-filled comments on indicators 10 and 11 suggest that the answer should be 'yes' because there are no negative church regulations on these issues. That explains the high scores, although some RCCs score 0 points on indicator 10 and 0,5 or 1 point on indicator 11 (Slovenia, Croatia, Belarus), or the other way around (Poland). No church within the RCC intentionally excludes a person solely based on gender and sexual identity. However, the results to indicator 13 would have been different if we had referred to 'homosexual acts' or being in an 'openly gay partnership/marriage.'

Indicators 19 and 20 are about employing personnel without discriminating. The pre-filled comments to indicators 19 and 20 indicate that church regulations on employing people do not exist. However, we need to nuance the relatively high scores somewhat and differentiate between the churches. Some churches have a 'don't ask, don't tell' practice for LGBTI employees, but there are also churches that see a niche for hiring LGBTI people in non-pastoral tasks. Furthermore, there are churches that follow the non-discriminatory regulations of their national government and employ all their (non-clerical) workers indiscriminately. Some churches score 0 points (Poland, Croatia, Slovakia, Portugal, Belarus, Ukrainian Greek Catholic) and others 0,5 (UK, Spain, Ireland, Netherlands, Slovenia, Romania, Switzerland). The church might not have any difficulty with people's gender identity, but it might be different when it comes to being explicit about one's sexuality.

Indicator 24 scores the social ministry to LGBTI people. Caritas is another core Christian value. The churches do have a diaconal responsibility to all people. Everybody may ask the church for social support. The RCC working group suggested that in terms of caritas, there is no difference made between people (LGBTI or not). This implies that the answer to the question should be positive, that there is social ministry aimed at LGBTI people, although not specifically. Most churches scored 0,5 or 1 point, indicating that the church does provide caritas for LGBTI people. Other co-researchers, however, stated that the church in their country does not provide caritas for LGBTI people (Slovakia, Poland, Netherlands, Croatia, Slovenia, Belarus).

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Considering the language used by church leaders (indicator 29), the RCC working group noted that this language is partly condemning, non-inclusive, and partly welcoming/inclusive, pastoral. It might be that Pope Francis has shifted the language of the RCC leaders to become more inclusive and affirmative, but there is still a long way to go. Not one church scores a full point on indicators 29 or 30 (national communication). Most churches score 0,5 points on both indicators, reflecting the mixed message. Some churches score 0 points on at least one of the two indicators (Poland, Belarus, Spain, Slovakia, Croatia, Netherlands, Portugal, Hungary).

The RCC working group suggested that indicator 34 should not be valid because of the unclarity of the question: Is it about interconnectedness within social doctrine, or is it applied to sexuality and gender issues? The RCC answer to the first aspect should be a full point, and to the last aspect, no points. Interestingly, none of the churches got a full point on this indicator. It seems that the churches who overall are more inclusive (or less non-inclusive) score 0,5 points, while the others score 0 points.

With regard to indicator 36 (acknowledgement), the RCC working group stated that acknowledgment of discrimination of LGBTI people can only been found in passing statements. One of these statements is from Pope Francis in 2016, when he recalled church teachings and said '[Gay people] should not be discriminated against. They should be respected, accompanied pastorally.' Despite the Pope's statement, several churches score 0 points (Spain, Slovakia, Poland, Netherlands, Croatia, Belgium, Belarus), and just one church (Malta) a full point, referring to statements by their local bishops against discrimination of LGBTI people.

Within the category 'public policy', there is only one indicator (38, right to safety), which shows a decent score. The RCC working group informed us about a statement against violence and criminalising laws against homosexual people published by the Holy See. The working group also mentioned that in the same statement, the Holy See protests against the use of the terms 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity'. Only two churches score a full point here (Germany, Austria), most churches 0,5, and some 0 points (Spain, Slovakia, Poland, Belarus).

Recapitulating the scores on some of the indicators per church, we tend to find a group of churches that seem to have a strong non-inclusive inclination within the RCC family. Poland stands out, as well as Spain, Slovakia, Croatia, and Belarus. It will not come as a surprise that these churches are part of the group with the lowest score and ranking, RCC Poland being the church that is overall ranked lowest. It is not unimportant to mention that, with the exemption of RCC Belarus, these RCCs are majority churches in their country, representing about 73 million Christians.

# Low scores

We could also zoom in on the low scores of the churches, compared with the other scores in the RCC family per category.

	CATEGORY 1 (0-3)	CATEGORY 2 (2-2,5)	CATEGORY 3 (1-2,5)	CATEGORY 4 (0-2)
RCC	1, 2, 7, and 9 (0 points), 12, 14 (0 points), 15, 16	17, 18, 21, 22, 26, 28 (mostly 0,5 points per indicator per church)	32, 33, 37	41, 42 (0 points), 46

## Category 1

The RCCs have particular issues with transgender persons. ‘Transsexual men or women are not allowed to seminaries and priesthood because of alleged mental instability.’ That is how the co-researcher on RCC Germany represents the church’s position from a secret document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith on this issue.

In accordance with the teachings and tradition of the church, seminary is restricted to celibate men. Interestingly, two churches (Belgium and Germany) have a nuanced perception on the practice of ordination. The co-researcher on RCC Germany mentions a project report from the diocese of Limburg that states: ‘Candidates for priesthood, who have proven to be capable, will be ordained as priests, independent of their sexual orientation.’ And the co-researcher on RCC Belgium mentions that cis gay men have been ordained. However, he does not write about the expected commitment to living a celibate life, which is prescribed for all who undergo clergy formation and ordination.

Some churches provide some information on LGBTI issues for the theological education. For example, the co-researcher on RCC Malta mentions that the Theology Faculty offers a course for seminarians on LGBTI-friendly pastoral approaches. At times, the local group of LGBTI Christians, Drachma, is invited to speak to seminarians, and also to priests to share their experience in pastoral encounter.

## Category 2

As a consequence of the exclusion of woman and openly gay cis men from the priesthood, not a lot of them are represented in leadership and policy-making. There are exceptions. For example, the co-researcher on RCC Belgium mentions, ‘In the diocese of Liège, some women and LGBT people

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have high responsibilities in the Episcopal Council. Some of them have also responsibilities at the national level.'

Most RCCs also do not support explicitly the adoption and raising of children by LGBTI couples.

In the RCC, celibacy is not only a requirement for LGBTI people, hence the relatively low score.

Most RCCs also do not have an association of LGBTI theologians. RCCs tend not to support LGBTI advocacy groups.

### **Category 3**

Most RCCs have a liturgy that is not sensitive to gender issues and sexual orientation.

Most churches do not have formational material that is affirmative about LGBTI issues. Pre-filled comment: 'On the global level, the guidelines for educational and formation material are rejecting same-sex relationships, trans identities and intersex bodies.'

With the sole exception of RCC Malta, no other RCC has acknowledged the church's involvement in the discrimination of LGBTI people, although even the co-researcher on RCC Malta says, 'Generally so. I would say midline, not a complete full-point.'

### **Category 4**

Most churches have not made public statements on gender-related and reproductive rights of LGBTI people. None of the churches made a statement on both of these rights.

Most churches also have not made public statement on diversity education in schools. Austria, France, Germany, and Belgium are the nuanced (0,5-point) exceptions.

## 5.3 Ways Forward

When we translate these findings on the relatively low total scores of all the Roman Catholic churches together into positive and realistic steps towards more inclusivity for these churches, we need to be aware of the differences within the church family. Most churches might see the following steps forward as realistic.

1. Be more open and franker about ordaining candidates for priesthood who have proven to be capable, independent of their sexual orientation, even with the prescription of a commitment to living a celibate life. As a consequence, they will also be incorporated in leadership.
2. Engage with Christian LGBTI advocacy groups and involve them in seminary education.
3. Appoint lay women in leadership positions.

However, RCCs that are ranked quite low probably want to start with more modest steps.

1. Engage in a pastoral dialogue with LGBTI people.
2. Condemn acts of violence and hate speech towards LGBTI people.
3. Take scientific research into consideration, even when it states a different perspective on LGBTI issues.
4. Make a statement about the freedom of religion of all people, also within the church.

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## 5.4 Comparison of RCCs

In order to better understand the diversity within the RCC family, we will compare some of the churches. The comparison is based on the specific comments by the co-researchers. We start with the churches of Poland and Slovakia, followed by the churches of Germany and Malta, and finish off with the churches of Italy and Spain. This section should be read against the background of the country reports on Poland (chapter 8), Germany (chapter 10), Malta, Spain, and Italy (chapter 11).

### RCC Poland

In August 2020, the Polish Bishops' Conference (KEP) issued a 'statement on LGBT,' which gives direction to the clergy. The statement claims to be based on scientific knowledge, but it argues from 'common sense' and fragments of theology. The statement divides sexual orientations into natural (heterosexual) and not-natural, meaning wrong and defect.

The church condemns gender transition: 'Being a transgender person in public is against Christian morality.' When a transgender person wants to be baptized, they can only use the name and gender assigned at birth.

The church promotes conversion therapy and consulting centres where one can 'heal their sexuality and return to their natural orientation.' Although it may vary from seminary to seminary, seminarians are provided with anti-LGBTI materials and information from the right-wing conservative Catholic press. They are shown 'testimonies of former gays' who praise the benefits of these therapies.

The church affirms that 'homosexual partnerships cannot be legalized in any form.' The church is against any form of adoption for LGBTI people. The church states that there only should be cis-gender heteronormative sexual education for children, if any.

Although KEP's document states that 'children born in a partnership of two women' can be baptized, there is no possibility of administrating two women as parents. Practice shows that children of LGBTI parents may be baptised privately, not during Sunday Mass. A lot of priests outright disagree with this private practice.



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Practice shows that openly LGBTI people and known activists have been banned from the Eucharist.

According to the co-researcher, there is a 2019 Polish newspaper article referring to about 20 homophobic quotes from 16 Polish (arch)bishops and prominent priests, like: 'We can't allow the Pride to pass through our grounds.' 'Mary, please help us fight that sick LGBTI ideology.' 'Homosexual partnerships are nothing like marriages, they are not in God's plan, they are a mockery in the eyes of God.' 'The church does not deny homosexuals a right to love, it just denies them the right to love a person of the same sex/gender.'

In 2019, the vice-president of KEP, Marek Jedraszewski, the Archbishop of Krakow, one of the most important and prestigious dioceses in Poland, said during the commemoration of the 'Warsaw Uprising' that 'We fought the red plague. Now we need to face a new plague, the rainbow plague.' He called men to fight this 'rainbow plague.'

Bishop Ignacy Dec stated in 2020, 'Currently, the most serious threat to humanity are not contagious diseases, hunger, or even ecological catastrophes, but precisely the gender ideology, (...) which strikes at marriage and family, reducing people to the level of degenerate beings, incapable of passing on life.'

Although the KEP's statement declares that 'Violence against LGBT people is unacceptable,' there have been numerous calls to arms against the 'rainbow plague' and 'gender or LGBT ideology' by bishops and local priests.

The church supports anti-LGBTI organisations, who want to ban Pride marches, rainbow flags, and who want to ensure that children are taught that being gay is a bad thing.

The co-researcher summed up her findings with: 'Pope Francis might be Pope Francis, but in Poland we have KEP and their document on LGBTI people.'

The data provided by the co-researcher show the influence of the local synod of bishops on the policies and practices with regard to LGBTI inclusivity. The Polish bishops make different choices than the current pope, it seems, and definitely different choices than RCC synods in other countries. The policies and practices of the church do correlate with the policies and practices of the Polish government. However, from the co-researcher's information, it is not clear if the Polish church is influencing the political situation in Poland, or if it works the other way around, government and politicians influencing the church.

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## **RCC Slovakia**

Another church that scores very low on inclusivity, according to our co-researcher, is the Slovakian church.

In 2012, the Council for the Family of the Conference of Bishops of Slovakia expressed their view on the proposed law on registered partnership: 'Homosexual feelings, which are inherent in certain persons, should not lead to a lasting community of life with legal protection, on the grounds that homosexual partnership cannot be equated with a natural marital bond between a man and a woman. Homosexual acts are inherently unestablished and are in stark contrast to the sanctity of the sexuality of a man and a woman in marriage.'

There is a very strong pro-life movement in Slovakia that attracts many Christians to demonstrate their unequivocal aversion to same-sex unions and declare that a family should consist of a father, a mother and children, and everything else is a threat to the traditional family. These initiatives are supported by the churches, financially and morally.

In the church documents, the Bible and the Tradition are understood as a consistent belief system from the time of the apostles, through the church fathers, the councils, to the works of theologians of the last Second Vatican Council. Tradition is understood as a clear condemnation of homosexual acts. At the national level, homosexuals are recommended not to come out and assert their homosexual identity.

There are general conditions for access to the Eucharist, but it depends on the particular priest whether or not to give the Eucharist to a particular person. It is the same with baptism. Whether a child will be baptized or not depends on the particular priest. Baptism does not take sexual orientation into account, but if it is known, a life of purity will certainly be required.

It is an open secret that the leading positions are held by homosexual bishops and priests. When they speak about their identity, they run the risk of being forced to leave.

Students have been forced to leave seminary because they confessed to be homosexual. On several occasions, a bishop announced to a candidate priest just before the ordination that he would not ordain him because he found out that he was gay.

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In priestly formation, and also in priestly retreats, sexual morality is taught very conservatively.

The church advocates an all-embracing love, even for LGBTI people, but at the same time the homosexual act is clearly emphasized as a grave sin. At the national level, bishops mention LGBTI issues and gender ideology as the current threats to society.

The co-researcher shares this experience: 'One of my acquaintances is a music teacher at a church conservatory and is a gay man. When he took part in the Rainbow March, someone noticed him in the photos and informed the school principal. He had to explain the situation and was threatened with firing.'

Any initiative of homosexual priests is suppressed and priests are punished. In the Trnava archdiocese, they are even persecuted by the bishop. Priests have to sign a document rejecting LGBTI and gender ideology. Whoever does not do so will be under scrutiny.

Church leaders refer to 'scientific' knowledge that supports healing therapies for gay people; authors (psychologists and sociologists) like Gerard van den Aardweg, Paul Cameron, Gabriele Kuby, and Mark Regnerus.

From this portrayal of the Slovakian church by the co-researcher, we get the impression of a conservative morality combined with a powerful and explicit policy to suppress LGBTI people, referring to 'science' and the Christian tradition. Based on the 2012 statement, the church has tried to influence political decisions. The parliamentary bill to recognise same-sex partnerships was rejected in 2012, and also again in 2018.

## **RCC Germany**

The church in Germany is the highest-scoring RCC. The co-researcher provided us with detailed comments on the situation of the RCC in Germany.

There are a few things to be noticed. In principle, the RCC Germany does not differ from other RCCs when it comes to recognizing the marital status and issues of gender and sexual identity, because that is part of the policy of the universal church. The church upholds the Catholic norm of

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having sex within the frame of (heterosexual) marital fidelity. The church also admits only cis-men to seminaries, and when a seminarian's homosexual orientation or practice becomes public, he might be sent away from seminary. However, there are some aspects that make this church stand out when it comes to LGBTI inclusivity: 1. The dual structure of the church, the clerical hierarchy together with the representation of lay members in the Central Committee of German Catholics, and the involvement of Catholic associations, encourages a lively discussion in the church on becoming a more welcoming and affirming church for gays and lesbians. 2. This internal discussion is fuelled by the differences between the dioceses and the bishops. 3. The strong tendency in the mainstream of German society to avoid discrimination and promoting human rights affects the members of the church, and also the church hierarchy. 4. The church respects the political decisions and rights of the German state, for example, the right to define (same-sex) marriage.

## **RCC Malta**

Another high scoring RCC is the church in Malta. According to our co-researcher, church policy in Malta largely accepts LGBTI people. Archbishop Scicluna (Adjunct Secretary of the Congregation of Faith at the Vatican) and former Bishop of Gozo, Grech (currently Secretary General for the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican) have in recent years welcomed LGBTI people and their families. They have even publicly commented that LGBTI people and their diverse sexuality are a gift from God.

On a local level, bishops have spoken quite clearly against discrimination of LGBTI people, and the church has moved away from conversion practice after being called out by Drachma on this issue. Drachma promotes dialogue between gay communities and religious institutions. The church collaborates with Drachma and does not encourage fundamentalist organisations that tend to demonise LGBTI people.

With regard to participation in the Eucharist, in general, priests allow individuals to make their own decisions and do not withhold people from receiving the Holy Communion, even if it is known publicly that the person is in a married relationship with a person of the same sex. On a doctrinal level, the official position remains, but on a practical level, it is different.

In pastoral practice, LGBTI people in stable long-term same-sex relationships are encouraged and supported, although exceptions do exist.

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## **ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

On an official level, the church is totally against LGBTI couples adopting and raising children, but on a practical level, adoptive same-sex couples have found spiritual accompaniment from the clergy, also from bishops.

The official position of the Vatican in recent years has made it more difficult for LGBTI men to be admitted or to be retained at the seminary. In the past, rectors of the seminary did not stop LGBTI people from the priesthood if they showed an ability to live celibate, like heterosexual candidate priests.

The Church has often been concerned with all the emphasis on LGBTI issues, but has not openly or outrightly condemned LGBTI people. They prefer not to comment than to make very condemnatory statements. But the church is still heteronormative and gender-normative.

What is noticeable is how the official, doctrinal position of the universal church can differ from local, practical arrangements. The Maltese church is part of the universal RCC, but communicates with LGBTI advocacy groups, tries to be welcoming to all people of faith, restrains from condemnatory statements on LGBTI issues, and speaks out against violence and discrimination of LGBTI people.

## **RCC Italy**

The RCC Italy, and also RCC Spain, are churches ranked somewhere between Germany and Malta and Poland and Slovakia. Comparing the co-researchers' comments on all these churches might help understanding two aspects of inclusivity. First, the comments could give an indication about the reciprocal influence between the church's policy and practices with the state's constitution and laws. Second, the comments could indicate which policies and practices are incremental to local RCCs becoming more welcoming and affirmative.

We don't have much data about the RCC Italy. The co-research stressed that in Italy, the rule 'Don't ask, don't tell' is massively followed. Furthermore, that there is a difference between doctrine and practice. For example, many LGBTI couples receive pastoral care from their pastors. And although their marital and family status is condemned, same-sex couples with kids are included in parish activities in larger cities.

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The church is in conversation with an LGBTI Christian association. Some parishes, and more rarely some dioceses, are joining the vigils of prayer for the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia (IDAHOBIT). For the Lenten period and Easter Week, for the first time, the Italian bishops' conference published guidelines mentioning LGBTI people as a category not to be discriminated.

## RCC Spain

On the RCC in Spain we have some more data, which indicate a tension between more conservative and less conservative bishops. Archbishop Cañizares Llovera (Valencia) and Bishop Reig Pla (Alcalá de Henares), for example, have preached against LGBTI people in (televised) sermons, especially on Holy Family Day. However, Archbishop Osoro Sierra (Madrid) refused to sign a letter against a regional law on transsexual persons, which was written by the bishops of that particular region; Reig Pla was one of these bishops. Some bishops stand for conversion therapies, such as Reig Pla, whose diocese offers courses of 'spiritual sanitation'. The Spanish Bishops' Conference (CEE) has supported him, but nuanced his position. There is an unofficial, but demonstrable support of ultraconservative bishops (such as Reig Pla) and ultraconservative anti-LGBTI organisations (Hazte Oír).

The co-researcher mentions a document about sexuality and its moral appraisal that the CEE published in 1987. In this document, there is a reference to 'homosexuality' as one amongst other 'deviant moral acts', such as premarital sexual relations, masturbation or prostitution. Since then, there have not been other references to homosexuality in the CEE repository. In another CEE document from 1992, an updated reading of *Humanae Vitae*, there is just a veiled reference to how to cope with 'wrong sexual behavior'. Priests were advised to be extremely careful to express their moral opinion because these parishioners probably could not change their habits due to 'deficient Christian development'. Priests should invite them to intensify their sacramental life, and initiate a 'patient dialogue' to explain the demands of proper moral sexual behaviour.

Since it was approved in 2005 in Spain, the CEE has been especially belligerent against same-sex marriage. Furthermore, the CEE is highly restrictive on reproductive rights, not only for LGBTI people.

'Gay lobby' or 'gender ideology', that is the way the Spanish church and its media refer to political organisations of LGBTI people. The CEE spokesman, Luis Argüello, mocked a recent LGBTI Pride. He stated that the church should be proud of motherhood and fatherhood, and of the difference

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## **ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

between men and women. In 2018, he declared that 'Only cis-hetero and celibate men can be admitted to Spanish seminaries.' In 2020, he defended the need of sexual education 'free of queer and gender ideologies'

Although there have been some attempts at dialogue between some bishops and LGBTI+ Christian groups like CRISMHOM in past years, there has been no official commitment. CRISMHOM has had some contacts with important members of the diocese of Madrid and of some vicariates to inform them about the community and its activities. These meetings were, however, always informal, not to say 'clandestine'. A Christian LGBTI organisation was 'allowed' to celebrate a 'discreet' ceremony against the LGBTI-phobia in a parish of Madrid in 2020. When it was published on their website, and was reported by an ultraconservative web journal, the two priests who organised the ceremony were taken off their ministry at the parish. A new decision of the diocese is still pending.

There have been some isolated cases of same-sex couple blessing ceremonies in the last years, on which the press reported, but the CEE has not recognised this practice. Children of LGBTI parents have been baptized during a Mass in several parishes, on which the press reported. However, other priests refuse to baptise these children, or have refused to let the parents participate in the ceremony.

# Differences and room for progress

When we reflect on the differences between the above-mentioned churches, there are a few things we want to mention. All local churches and dioceses adhere to the doctrine of the RCC. However, some local priests and dioceses found some leeway within the boundaries of doctrine for particular pastoral practices and informal activities that are welcoming to LGBTI people and organisations. Sometimes, these margins are rather small, and can only exist in the shadow ('Don't ask, don't tell'); sometimes, there is more space to manoeuvre for various reasons. When we include also the specific comments from co-researchers on the other RCCs, we find a confirmation of these reasons for a larger latitude for becoming an affirming church, and also some new reasons. Let us sum them up.

1. The inspiring words and acts of Pope Francis.
2. The challenging example of higher-ranked RCCs.
3. A diversity of opinions between more and less conservative diocesan bishops within a local/national church, and the influence of less conservative bishops to act and speak in the spirit of Pope Francis.
4. Most bishops have made public statements against violence and discrimination of LGBTI people and have restrained from condemnatory statements on LGBTI issues.
5. The willingness by some bishops to enter a dialogue with Christian LGBTI advocacy groups.
6. The inclusive tendency of (some) national Catholic media.
7. The impact on the church of a country's societal discourse and political pressure on human rights.
8. Some bishops' national synods show respect for the state's responsibility in a democracy to constitute and defend laws based on political decision-making.
9. Some churches, like Germany and Switzerland, have a dual structure of clerical hierarchy and lay representatives. In the latter, women and LGBTI people have leading functions.
10. The appointment of a new (arch)bishop who is more progressive (or less conservative).
11. The importance of the freedom of personal conscience.



# **6. Protestant Churches**

Protestantism is a diverse confessional branch of Christianity, being more divided theologically and ecclesiastically than the Catholic Church or the Eastern Orthodox Church. Some denominations have a worldwide scope and distribution of membership, while others are confined to a single country. Churches that were researched in *RICE 2020* belong to the denominational families of Lutherans, Calvinist/Reformed, Methodists, or represent a union of two or more Protestant church families. The Church of England (CofE) is a special case. Though Anglicanism is regarded as one of the major branches of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Protestant Reformation, it is a form of Christianity that includes features of both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. The Church of England is one of the three member churches (ecclesiastical provinces) of the Anglican Communion in the United Kingdom. The other are the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church in Wales. In this research, the data are from the Church of England only.

We include the scores for the Church of England in the analysis of this chapter and dedicate a separate section, 6.5, on the process of discernment on human sexuality in the CofE.

## 6.1 Protestant Denominations

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN	CALVINIST/ REFORMED	UNITED PROTESTANT	METHODIST	ANGLICAN
Sweden	Ref Hungary	Switzerland	EF Hungary	Church of England
Norway		Germany		
ELC Hungary		Netherlands		
Estonia				
Poland				
Latvia				

With the exception of the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship, all researched churches are members of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The Lutheran churches in this research are all members of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

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The Protestant Church in the Netherlands and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) are also members of the LWF. The ELC Latvia is not in full communion with those LWF member church bodies who practice ordinations and marriages of LGB people, but it is in full fellowship with the (conservative) Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS).

The Reformed Church in Hungary and the Protestant churches in Switzerland and the Netherlands are members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). Some Reformed parts within EKD (one 'Landeskirche' and the league of Reformed churches) are also members of the WCRC.

With the exception of the Church of England and the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship, all churches are members of the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE).

The Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship describes itself as 'A church of the Methodist confession and a member of the universal church of Jesus Christ.'<sup>89</sup> It has a spiritual affinity but no organisational unity with the United Methodist Church.

## 6.2 PC Scores

	INSTITUTIONAL	PRACTICES	SPEECH	POLICY	TOTAL
Sweden	15,5	10	7,5	8,5	<b>41,5</b>
Switzerland	15	8,5	6,5	8,5	<b>38,5</b>
Norway	14	10,5	7,5	4,5	<b>36,5</b>
Netherlands	11,5	10,5	7	7	<b>36</b>
Germany	13,5	10	7	5	<b>35,5</b>
Church of England	8,5	8	4,5	5,5	<b>26,5</b>
EF Hungary	10	9	4	0,5	<b>23,5</b>
ELC Hungary	9,5	6,5	2	0	<b>18</b>

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89 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungarian\\_Evangelical\\_Fellowship](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungarian_Evangelical_Fellowship); accessed 15 April 2021.

	INSTITUTIONAL	PRACTICES	SPEECH	POLICY	TOTAL
Estonia	5,5	4,5	3,5	1,5	<b>15</b>
Poland	5,5	4,5	2,5	0,5	<b>13</b>
Ref Hungary	2,5	2,5	1	0	<b>5,5</b>
Latvia	2	0,5	0,5	0,5	<b>3,5</b>
<b>Number of indicators</b>	<b>16</b> <i>(mean = 9,4)</i>	<b>12</b> <i>(mean = 7,1)</i>	<b>9</b> <i>(mean = 4,4)</i>	<b>10</b> <i>(mean = 3,5)</i>	<b>47</b> <i>(mean = 24,9)</i>

We could make the following comments based on the scores.

One Lutheran church is on top (Sweden), and one at the bottom (Latvia). Lutheran churches are found throughout the ranking: in the top, in the middle, and at the bottom.

There is only one specific Reformed church in the research, the Reformed Church of Hungary. It is ranked as 11<sup>th</sup>. Among the united Protestant churches, there are two with a largely Reformed background (Netherlands, Switzerland). Their scores are significantly higher.

The united Protestant churches that were included in the research (Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland) are all in the top five.

Of the united Protestant churches, two have a dominant Reformed tradition (Netherlands, Switzerland), and one has a dominant Lutheran tradition (Germany). This doesn't seem to lead to a difference in the outcome.

Some co-researchers indicate that they faced difficulties in giving the scores because of regional differences within their church. This was stated explicitly by the co-researchers of Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, and also one time by the co-researcher of Poland. For the German co-researcher, this presented the biggest challenge. The co-researcher stated: 'Sorry, in the whole questionnaire I cannot give any references, because the Protestant Church in Germany is organized regionally into 20 regional churches (in contrast to all other Protestant churches in Europe) and thus much too differentiated. I can give the points rather safely.'

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The co-researchers dealt with this challenge by attributing for a number of indicators a score of 0,5. In the research methodology this half-point score was indeed foreseen, among other things, for balancing the differences between the national level and the regional/local level. In several cases, the co-researcher from Switzerland attributed a full point to an indicator, but comments: 'With the caveat that there are many whose views are much closer to the half-point position. The honest answer would be a three-quarter or at most a seven-eighths point.'

The data show that regional differences within the space of Europe have a major impact on the outcome. All researched churches in North-West Europe are in the upper half; all researched churches in Central-East Europe are in the lower half. Regional differences in this case include historical, cultural, and political differences.

Within the region of Central-Eastern Europe, the data show a difference in outcome *for all categories* between, on the one hand, the EF Hungary, ELC Hungary, ELC Estonia and ELC Poland, and on the other hand, the Reformed church in Hungary and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia. Is there a common denominator for both groups of churches?

As for the first group, the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Estonia, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Poland are all minority churches, though in different gradations. EF Hungary is a small denomination (free church type), with eight congregations and several educational and social institutions. ELC Hungary is the third largest denomination in the country. ELC Estonia is the second largest after both the Orthodox churches (Estonian and Russian). ELC Poland is the largest Protestant body in the country but has only 1% of all believers with the Roman Catholic church 86%.

Looking at the second group, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia is the largest denomination (36% of the population), followed by the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. The Reformed church in Hungary is the second-largest church in the country (16%) after the Roman Catholic Church. What might be a common denominator of the latter two? Though not absolutely dominant majority churches, the size of their organisation and the number of their adherents is likely to have an impact on society, culture, and politics. For their acclaimed historical role in nation-building, they may identify more easily with the cultural-political establishment, in particular when the political climate is nation-centred. As relatively large churches, they may less feel the need to identify themselves in opposition to or distinction from other churches on, for instance, moral or political topics, and may less feel inclined to identify with marginalized groups in society. As established churches, they don't bear the pain of being a minority. This differs from the other Central-Eastern European Protestant churches in the research.

According to the Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map, based on the findings of the World Values Survey, the post-Soviet European countries are nearly all along the line of the Traditional versus Secular-Rational values dimension, and rather far removed from Self-Expression values, which are supportive of LGBTI emancipation and acceptance. However, within this context, there must be factors that explain the relatively more accepting attitude of the minority churches. We suggest that it is their minority status, together with a more positive attitude towards the European Union and its legislation for the protection of minorities, which have an impact on their relatively more accepting stance towards LGBTI people.

Compared to the ILGA ranking of countries (*Annual Review 2020*), there are a few remarkable differences.

	ILGA 2020 RANKING OF ALL COUNTRIES	RICE 2020 RANKING OF ALL CHURCHES	RICE 2020 RANKING OF PCs
Norway	4	4	3
United Kingdom	10	9	6
Sweden	11	2	1
Netherlands	13	5	4
Germany	16	6	5
Estonia	21	19	8
Switzerland	23	3	2
Hungary	27	11, 16, 35	7, 10, 11
Latvia	41	42	12
Poland	42	22	9

With the caveat that ILGA and RICE didn't include the same list of countries, the most notable difference is that PC Switzerland, ELC Poland, EF Hungary and ELC Hungary perform relatively (> 10 ranking positions difference) better in the RICE research than the respective countries in the ILGA research, which indexed the human rights situation of LGBTI people in the country. A cautious conclusion may be that these churches potentially might have a positive impact on advancing inclusion of LGBTI people, not only in the church, but also in society and state.

## 6.3 Average Score per Category

The average score per category consists of the total score of the church family divided by the number of churches within the church family. The 12 PCs scored 113 points together in the category 'Institutional equality and non-discrimination', which leads to an average score of 9,4 per church out of the 16 indicators in that category.

	INSTITUTIONAL EQUALITY AND NON- DISCRIMINATION (1)	CHURCH PRACTICES (2)	LANGUAGE AND SPEECH (3)	PUBLIC POLICY (4)
PC	(113:12) 9,4	(85) 7,1	(53,5) 4,4	(42) 3,5

## Highest scores on indicators per category

The highest scores are those scores of a church family above 45% of the possible total score per category. For the PCs this would imply every score above 5,4, which is 45% of the total score per category with 12 churches (in total 12 points). The PCs score highest on the following indicators (numbers) per category.

	CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3	CATEGORY 4
PC (> 5,4 = 45%)	3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16	17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28	29, 30, 34, 35, 36	38

Categories 1 and 2 have many indicators with a high score, there are less in category 3 (with 5 indicators out of 9), and category 4 has the least (with 1 out of 10). Protestant churches over the whole appear to be less prominent in making public statements on LGBTI-related issues.

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If we zoom in on the highest scores per indicator in Category 1, these are the indicators: 8 (local congregations are allowed to own policy making), 11 (offering of Baptism), 13 (access to Holy Supper) and 14 (admission to the seminary). The space for discussion and independent policy-making by local congregations is characteristic of the Protestant church structures. The gratuity of the church as a sign and instrument of God's welcoming love and gift of salvation is reflected in the access to the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Supper. The majority (10 out of 12 for Baptism, 9 out of 12 for Holy Supper) of Protestant churches in the research do not create any barriers for LGBTI people in receiving baptism and becoming church members, or partaking in the Holy Supper. As for the Holy Supper, exceptions are Latvia (0), Hungary (0,5) and the Netherlands (0,5). See for an explanation the comments on the indicators below.

In Category 2, the highest indicators (> 9) are 17 (performing leading functions on national level), 19 (employment in non-pastoral services of the church), 20 (employment in social services of the church), and 22 (celibacy not a requirement for clergy and lay people). The inclusion in leadership functions of women and openly LGBTI people often goes together in these churches, although some churches only accept women and not LGBTI people in leadership functions. The employment in non-pastoral services of the church is, for the majority of the PCs, self-evident. They willingly conform to the legislation of their country in these matters. Exceptions are Latvia, Estonia, ELC Hungary and Ref Hungary, with 0 or 0,5 for indicators 19 and 20. The Protestant churches distanced themselves in their Reformation history from celibacy as a requirement for clergy. This explains the high score on indicator 22. Still, for LGBTI people in some churches, it is a requirement, either as a pastor/priest or as a member of the church, to refrain from sexual practice. This is confirmed by 0 (Latvia) or 0,5 scores (Estonia, Ref Hungary, Church of England).

In Category 3, the highest scores are on indicator 34 (raising awareness of intersection of social justice and inclusivity, 9) and on indicator 35 (engaging with scientific research, 8,5).

The highest indicator in Category 4 is no. 38 (public statement on right to safety, 8). All other indicators in this category score significantly lower.



## Lowest total scores on indicators per category

Since there are no total scores of 0 or 1 on indicators, we look for a score of 3 or less.

	CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3	CATEGORY 4
PC (< 3)	7	25	37	41, 42, 44, 46, 47

Only a few Protestant churches have a guided protocol for congregations to become more inclusive (indicator 7). Only a few have instituted a certain form of specialized pastoral ministry to LGBTI people (indicator 25). Some Protestant churches have acknowledged their involvement (past and present) in discrimination of LGBTI people, but only a few have publicly apologized and asked for forgiveness from everyone who was affected negatively by the church's discrimination. These are the churches of Norway, Switzerland, and Germany.

Public statements have rarely been made to support LGBTI people on issues of gender-related rights (41), reproductive rights (42), labour rights (44), diversity education in public schools (46), and access to other public services such as tax, housing, public toilets, etc. (47).

## Difference per category

	HIGHEST	LOWEST
Institutional	Sweden 15,5	Latvia 2
Church practices	Netherlands, Norway 10,5	Latvia 0,5
Language and speech	Sweden, Norway 7,5	Latvia 0,5
Public statements	Switzerland, Sweden 8,5	ELC Hungary, Ref Hungary 0

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## 6.4 Analysis of the Protestant Churches per Indicator

1. Protestant churches do not specifically mention LGBTI in the church orders or other **legal documents**. However, for some regional Swiss churches, this might be the case, with the comment that transgender and intersex people are not mentioned at all. In the Netherlands, ‘other life commitments’ are mentioned in the church order on marriage when speaking about same-sex unions. The Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship, which has affinity with the Methodist tradition, uses a document from 1984 which is still given to those who want to join the church (with a disclaimer that could be summed up as ‘You don’t have to agree with everything, but this is what we have. You are encouraged to submit any suggestions’). In it, homosexuality is described in this way: ‘Homosexuality, like all sexual deviations, is the distortion of the order of creation, it is a sin, it is not God’s will as we can read it in the Scriptures. (...) The church is ready to be a tool of God to help homosexuals who want to change, looking for the order of Christian lifestyle in reparative love.’<sup>90</sup>
2. In Switzerland, the large majority of member churches of the Protestant Church have stated explicitly that people may not be excluded from **leadership positions** (such as ministry, synod, or presbytery) based on their sexual orientation. In the Netherlands, equal representation of offices, age and gender to the regional governing bodies and synod is encouraged.<sup>91</sup> The Estonian Lutheran has women’s ordination since 1967. The church allows women to become bishops as well, but so far, there is no female bishop. In Sweden, the Church has a gender policy, and every four years, there is an equality letter written for the General Synod. This letter will, as of 2020, also include transgender perspectives.

On 6 May 2004, the Synod of the Reformed Church in Hungary adopted the resolution ‘Marriage, family, sexuality: Resolution of the Synod of the Reformed Church in Hungary on the issues of marriage, family and sexuality.’<sup>92</sup> The document excludes homosexual persons from ordination as pastor or becoming a teacher of religion. See for a detailed comment on this the country report on Hungary.

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90 See [https://metkapolna.hu/kezikoenyvuenk.html?fbclid=IwAR18la8zIJBPA\\_nmY1KMzPhmlmlLnGbLtc335kc88DTDjEKTcvcZILv3-4](https://metkapolna.hu/kezikoenyvuenk.html?fbclid=IwAR18la8zIJBPA_nmY1KMzPhmlmlLnGbLtc335kc88DTDjEKTcvcZILv3-4); accessed 15 April 2021.

91 ‘General regulations of the church order of the PCN,’ 7, article 3, among others, see <https://www.protestantsekerk.nl/thema/kerkorde/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

92 „Házasság, család, szexualitás: A Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinatának állásfoglalása házasság, a család és a szexualitás kérdéseiről,” 6 May 2004, see <http://regi.reformatus.hu/mutat/6221/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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3. The overall comment is that the **Protestant church's theology** implies that all human beings are equally dignified because no one is without sin, but all receive life and forgiveness by the grace of God. For some churches (Latvia, EF Hungary), and also in the churches with a confirmed inclusivity at the national level, on the regional and local level it can go together with moral restrictions to engage in gay relationships under the motto: 'We love the sinner, we hate sin.'
4. Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, EF and ELC Hungary receive full points on '**the Bible** as not being used as an instrument for exclusion,' with the caveat that there are a variety of positions on this within the church. Netherlands, for instance, gives a 0,5 score. The Lutheran Church of Poland also has a 0,5 score with the comment that 'Biblical studies do include gender and feminist interpretation of the Biblical text, and the same applies to the subject of LGBTI: the cultural context of the Bible is taken into account.' This seems to imply a theological potential for growing towards more inclusivity.
5. '**Tradition**' with a capital is not so much a source of authority as in the RCC and OC. If used in Protestant churches, conservative people mean that they are the representative of the main (historical) line and that modern theology is deviating from that (as the co-researcher from the Netherlands explains). Or, if progressive voices refer to the tradition, it is usually in the way that the church has a bad history and was wrong in the past (Switzerland). In one case, of the EF Hungary, tradition is used as a source of resistance to discriminating practices. The co-researcher refers to the *Advent Statement* of the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship,<sup>93</sup> which is discussed in more detail in the country report on Hungary.
6. **Church policy mentions LGBTI in a non-negative way:** Comments vary here. From the full point of the Church of Norway ('There is an officially appointed committee to look into discrimination in the church') to the zero of the Estonian Lutheran church that adopted a motion condemning partner churches in the Porvoo Communion, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), triggered by the decision to allow same-sex weddings in the Church of Sweden.<sup>94</sup> The motion says that blessing same-sex partnership or even marriages is not in accordance with Scripture and Christian faith. This motion by the synod of the EELC can be seen as an official document about homosexuality. On the other hand, it can be interpreted as a statement about the other churches. An in-between position is held, for instance, by the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, that tends to use concealing language in its documents. Synod decisions and official publications of the PCN are mostly written in a heteronormative way, for instance, referring to same-sex relations as 'relations in love and faithfulness'

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93 <https://www.change.org/p/everybody-advent-statement-of-the-hungarian-evangelical-fellowship>;  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/29/pastor-v-populist-viktor-orban-hungary-faith-faultline>; accessed 15 April 2021.

94 See <http://www.eestikirik.ee/suhtumisest-homoseksuaalsesse-kaitumisest-kirikutes-ja-kirikuosadusest/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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7. **Guide for congregations to become more inclusive:** A good practice offers the Church of Sweden. It has the Rainbow Key, which is 'an LGBTQ labelling guaranteeing that elected representatives and employees in a parish have gone through the process model for a more inclusive church and have the will of actively working with diversity and openness. As the last step, the parish develops the diversity vision and gets it approved from the Central Board of the Rainbow Key. The vision should tell how the parish will work actively with diversity and inclusion, both practically and theologically. After approval the parish receives the LGBTQ label Rainbow Key in a ceremony. The process from start to end takes about 6 months up to one year.'<sup>95</sup> Co-researchers from the Netherlands and Switzerland point to the 'looser superstructure' of their churches, in which local congregations have space to make their own decisions, e.g., on blessing of same-sex marriages.
  
  8. **Are local congregations allowed to make their own policies:** Co-researchers from Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany, EF and ELC Hungary, Poland, Norway, and Sweden give a full point. Church of England has 0,5, with the comment that 'The church allows local parishes to establish their own policy of affirming the rights of LGBTI people, but this does not extend to local agency in, for example, performing same-sex marriage.' Interesting comment from Switzerland: 'This is how progress happened in the last 30 years!'
  
  9. **Blessing of same-sex marriage** is officially allowed in the Protestant churches of Sweden, Norway, Germany, and Switzerland. In Sweden, no difference at all is made between marriages of hetero- and same-sex couples. The Book of Worship has one liturgy of marriage, and since 2017, it is a gender-neutral liturgy.<sup>96</sup> The co-researcher from Switzerland refers to the church-state relation, and comments that the 'honest answer would again be a three-quarter point. Part of the issue is actually not a church issue, but state law [in Switzerland, by law, marriage is still restricted to a heterosexual couple]. This resulted in some church laws demanding an explicit difference between a straight marriage and a same-sex blessing event. I expect this to change once the marriage is no longer restricted to straight couples.' The Protestant Church in the Netherlands also makes a distinction between the blessing of hetero- and homosexual couples, but this is not conditioned by state law that officially opened marriage in 2001 for same-sex couples. The distinction is due to divergent views within the church. The co-researcher gives 0,5 points with the explanation: 'Blessing is possible since 2004. The terms used for blessing in Dutch are different for heterosexual marriage and "alternative life commitments": *inzegeven* vs *zegenen* (ordinance 5, article 4 of the church order).'

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95 See <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/stockholmsstift/forsamlingar-kan-hbtq-certifieras-med-regnbagsnyckeln>; accessed 15 April 2021.

96 See <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/samkonade-aktenskap>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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In the Lutheran church of Poland, no type of marriage or blessing for same-sex couples is officiated. 'However, recently, the church committee focusing on GDPR issues [General Data Protection Regulation] stated that Lutheran parishes should respect same-sex civil marriage contracted abroad and include such pieces of information in parish records.'

10. **Baptism of children of LGBTI parents:** The co-researcher from the Church of England (1) refers to Canon B22 4: 4: 'No minister shall refuse or, save for the purpose of preparing or instructing the parents or guardians or godparents, delay to baptize any infant within his cure that is brought to the church to be baptized, provided that due notice has been given and the provisions relating to godparents in these Canons are observed.'<sup>97</sup> For several churches with a score of 0,5, it is commented that it depends on the local situation. A local church is free to allow or refuse same-sex couples. If a congregation excludes LGBTI parents, they will move to another congregation. The co-researcher from Poland gives 0,5 point with the explanation that church documents do not make any restriction and that there are no restrictions for LGBTI parents to be godparents. That would make it unlikely that baptism would not be granted by a Lutheran pastor.
11. **Baptism and membership of LGBTI persons:** All Protestant churches, except for the Ref Hungary (0) and the ELC Latvia (0,5), have the full score. The co-researcher from the Church of England points to Canon B 24, which would imply that there are no grounds for refusing baptism to people who identify as LGBTI.<sup>98</sup> Others contend that there are no restrictions to membership, not even in conservative local churches. In practice, however, things may vary. For the Reformed church of Hungary an example is provided: 'In the Hungarian LGBT Christian group, we have a gay member who came out to his congregation. First, they said it is okay. But later, priests asked him not to come to the little groups anymore. He could join the service without his boyfriend, but not the little groups.'
12. **Blessing of transgender persons** is possible in the PC Netherlands and CofE (full point) and in Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, and EF Hungary (0,5). The PCN 'book of common prayer' includes a liturgy/order of service regarding the name giving/transition of trans people.<sup>99</sup> In the PC Switzerland, member churches explicitly or implicitly allow or even encourage blessings if people want it at turning points in their lives, of which gender transition could be one. In Sweden, there is no official liturgy of blessing of transgender persons. However, there are no obstacles for a 'liturgy of remembrance of baptism', provided by the Book of Worship, in the local parish by a priest.

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97 See <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/legal-services/canons-church-england/section-b>; accessed 15 April 2021.

98 See <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/legal-services/canons-church-england/section-b#b36>; accessed 15 April 2021.

99 See <https://www.protestantsekerk.nl/nieuws/aanvulling-dienstboek-nl-naampresentatie-en-zegening-van-een-transpersoon/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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13. **Restrictions to participating in the Eucharist/Holy Supper:** Full points, except for ELC Latvia (0),<sup>100</sup> Ref Hungary (0,5), and PC Netherlands (0,5). For the PCN, it is explained that local situations vary. In practice, local churches are free in this matter. Some will say that participating in the Holy Supper is dependent on whether one 'practices' (sexually) as an LGBTI person.
14. **Admission to the seminary:** Full points, except for Poland, Estonia, and Ref Hungary (0,5). For Poland, it is explained that the Lutheran church does not have its own seminary but educates its students in a public (state) Christian university.<sup>101</sup> One of its values is tolerance. However, the university does not mention LGBTI identities. Women are allowed to be students and also serve as deacons in Lutheran parishes. In the Lutheran church of Estonia, LGBTI people are welcome to study in the academic part (until Master degree), but they are not welcome to the additional one-year pastoral seminary course that is required to become a pastor/priest. In the Ref Hungary, there has been an incident with a gay person removed from the theological faculty in 2004 because he attended a meeting of the LGBTI Christian community Mozaik.
15. **Ordination of clergy, both women and LGBTI:** Poland and Latvia have 0 points. In ELC Poland, only cis-hetero men can be ordained as pastors or bishops; cis-hetero women can be ordained as deacons. In the Lutheran church of Latvia, women were ordained from **1975 until 1993. After that, no woman was ordained, and** women's ordination was officially abolished in 2016. The Church Synod changed the Church's Constitution to define that a minister can be only a male person. As a reaction, some parishes left the Church and joined the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad (LELBAL). The LELBAL supports ordination of women and sexual minorities. After the 2016 Synod, the Archbishop of the Lutheran church in Latvia stated that 'Women's ordination is a step towards recognition of same-sex marriage.'<sup>102</sup> In the Lutheran church Hungary (0,5), there is a law in the official church documents stating that the pastor or the student of theology getting ready for ministries cannot live in civil union. Only marriage is accepted. This indirectly discriminates against both heterosexual and non-heterosexual people living in civil unions. In other churches, it depends on the local situation who can be ordained. In the PCN and PC Switzerland, local churches are free not to accept women or LGBTI people. In the PCN, they have to describe that in their local policy documents. LGBTI people may face discrimination.

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100 See <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/zinu-analize/kultursoks-kas-trauce-apvienoties-luteriskajai-baznicai.a251943/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

101 See <https://chat.edu.pl/en/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

102 See [https://jauns.lv/raksts/zinas/18352-arhibiskaps-vanags-sieviesu-ordinacija-ir-solis-uz-geju-laulibu-atzisanu](https://jauns.lv/raksts/zinas/18352-arhibiskaps-vanags-sieviesu-ordinacija-ir-solis-uz-geju-laulibu-atzisanu;); <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/zinu-analize/kultursoks-kas-trauce-apvienoties-luteriskajai-baznicai.a251943/>; [https://www.laikmetazimes.lv/2020/07/23/"sieviesu-jautajums"-kristiga-draudze/](https://www.laikmetazimes.lv/2020/07/23/); accessed 15 April 2021.

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16. **Affirmative educational material for clergy** is provided by churches of Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Netherlands, and EF Hungary. The Swiss co-researcher comments that materials have been published in cooperation with Christian LGB-organisations, though some of it is really dated. Information about trans and intersex people is lacking. However, 'having the training materials does not prevent people to go through training without addressing the issue.' No affirmative materials are provided by the CofE, Latvia, Poland, and Estonia.
17. **Leading clerical functions for women and LGBTI:** In Latvia 0 points, in ELC Poland 0,5. In Poland, women are also members of church committees. The discussion regarding ordaining women is still ongoing. There is a dedicated website on that topic<sup>103</sup> and editions of church magazines. For the CofE (1) these leading functions include the female Bishop of London (the third most senior bishop in the church), and two openly LGBTI elected prolocutors [senior clergy members] of the General Synod. In 2009, the Church of Sweden ordained Eva Brunne as bishop for the diocese of Stockholm. Bishop Brunne was one of the world's first openly gay bishops.
18. **Actively present in church policy decision-making on inclusivity:** In the PC Netherlands, representation of the groups involved is actively sought. In the CofE, the project 'Living in Love and Faith: Christian Teaching and Learning about Human Identity, Sexuality and Marriage'<sup>104</sup> (book was published in November 2020) has involved cis-hetero women and openly LGBTI people. In the Church of Sweden, there is a national LGBTI network and they work close to EKHO Sweden. In Estonia, women are allowed but LGBTI people are not.
19. **Employing LGBTI people for non-pastoral tasks:** Here, the attitude towards state laws is a decisive factor. The PC Netherlands follows the laws on non-discriminations and employment unconditionally, the same in Sweden, Germany, and the CofE. In Norway there are regional differences, since state laws allow some exceptions in the religious domain.
20. **Employment in services to society:** The decisive factor is the same here as with indicator 19. The Swiss co-researcher comments that there have been instances where a less inclusive congregation asked for a 'Don't ask, don't tell' policy; or in places where the Protestant Church cooperated with less inclusive churches to provide such services, LGBTI people may face discrimination. And in Norway, a few theologically conservative organisations are the exception.
21. **Support to adoption and raising of children by LGBTI persons:** Even Protestant churches with a high-ranking total score on inclusivity might be reticent in policy toward the rainbow

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103 See <https://ordynacjakobiet.luteranie.pl>; accessed 15 April 2021.

104 See <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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family. The Swiss co-researcher comments that there has not been a lot of opinion-building regarding rainbow families within the church, nor much activity on a level above a specific congregation, and that secondly, ethical aspects of fertility-related medical treatments are being discussed controversially (independent of the gender of the parents). In Hungary the political situation has become more restricted. For instance, the new adoption law of 2021 excludes gay couples. See the country report on Hungary.

22. **Celibacy not a specific requirement:** In some churches, local churches may require celibacy from LGBTI people, but there is no difference between clergy and lay people.
23. **Promoting social acceptance in public rituals:** From PC Netherlands, members of the Executive Committee are actively present at Pride services, etc. In public statements, the church actively supports LGBTI acceptance. In Sweden, there is a common practice in the decentralized church that local congregations hold their own services and rituals in relation to various LGBTI aspects. In Norway, quite a number of churches take part in Pride events. In Poland, there is one Lutheran parish that organises a public service for LGBTI people.
24. **Social ministry to LGBTI:** In most cases, services of caritas/diaconia are inclusively provided to LGBTI people. The co-researcher from Sweden comments that diaconal ministries make intersectional needs assessments. If LGBTI identity is part of peoples' increased vulnerabilities that render them in need of diaconia, this help is provided. Some co-researchers stress that it is important to offer the services explicitly in a non-heteronormative way. An example from Switzerland: a church may provide counselling to couples, and they are perfectly willing and able to counsel couples no matter their gender, but as this is stated only in the small print, most same-sex couples in need of counselling go elsewhere. Added is the comment that for trans\* people, the quality of care provided is very much luck of the draw.
25. **Pastoral ministry for LGBTI persons:** There are no specific LGBTI pastoral ministries, but LGBTI networks within the church may provide specialised pastoral counselling for LGBTI people.
26. **Church support to LGBTI association of pastors/students:** There are groups of pastors within churches, usually branches of broader LGBTI Christian groups, but (as in Sweden) these groups do not feel the need to be approved by the church leadership. The co-researcher commenting on the situation in Ref Hungary shares a story about active resistance of the church towards LGBTI Christian groups: 'In the Hungarian LGBT Christian group, we have a gay member, who came out to his congregation. First, they said, it is ok. But later priests asked him not to come to the little groups anymore. He could join the service without his boyfriend, but not the little groups.'



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27. **Church does not support pro-heteronormative-family organisations:** Ref Hungary and Latvia both receive 0 points, many others 0,5: there are congregations that support such 'traditional family values' organisations (Switzerland, UK) or organise events that promote the heteronormative family as the cornerstone of the society (Poland). In Estonia, a few pastors are involved in such organisational activities, writing articles for their web portal,<sup>105</sup> while a Lutheran conservative organisation also has its own website.<sup>106</sup> The co-researcher from ELC Hungary comments that 'In 2017, the Lutheran Mission Centre which is part of the Hungarian Evangelical Lutheran Church issued a statement in which homosexual partnership cannot be accepted as a legitimate alternative to heterosexual marriage. Sexuality's place is in the heterosexual marriage which is from God. Homosexuality is not a "normal lifestyle". The practice of homosexuality is a deviation from the norm and not a variation of normal behaviour. This statement was published on the home page of the church and there wasn't any protest against it.'
28. **Church supports advocacy group of LGBTI:** Positive examples from CofE and Sweden. CofE has the advocacy organisation Inclusive Church.<sup>107</sup> The Church of Sweden works with LGBTI organisations in the national and international work and proudly stands up for those collaborations and partnerships. The co-researcher from EF Hungary was able to organise together, with an LGBTI organisation, a Mozaik Community open day event in the church.
29. **Language of church leaders is inclusive and affirmative:** ELC Hungary, Ref Hungary and Latvia 0 points. The co-researcher from Latvia comments that the ELC Latvia considers homosexuality as sin, basing this opinion on the Holy Scriptures. The church condemns violence and abuse of homosexual people, and speaks about the need of pastoral care and supporting such persons on their way of 'leaving the sin'. Many other PC have 0,5 points because 'diversity of views among church members is represented by the leadership.' The co-researcher from Poland comments that there are some church leaders, especially in a certain region, whose language is non-inclusive. However, some others, including the bishop of the church, use more affirmative language.
30. **Communication on national level is LGBTI acceptant:** Latvia and Ref Hungary 0 points. The Lutheran church of Poland gets 0,5 'because there are some positive signs towards LGBTI community in official communication. However, that topic is barely visible and extremely rare. One of the examples – interview published on official website stated, "We cannot claim

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105 See <https://objektiv.ee>; accessed 15 April 2021.

106 See <https://meiekirik.net>; accessed 15 April 2021.

107 See <https://www.inclusive-church.org/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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homosexuality is a sin.”<sup>108</sup> In Estonia (0,5), the Bishop proposed, after the Estonian parliament had adopted the Cohabitation Act in 2016 without, however, changing other laws, that the word ‘marriage’ should be saved for heterosexual couples. Now with a right-wing government, Estonia will have a referendum on marriage in Spring 2021.

31. **Gender and sexuality in public worship on national level:** PC Switzerland has World AIDS day on the agenda of the church, International Women’s Day is often combined with Women’s World Day of Prayer, and IDAHOBIT or ITDV happens if an LGBTI organisation takes the lead. CofE celebrates a communion service on Transgender Day of Visibility. Lutheran church of Poland has an LGBTI public service in a local parish in Kraków. In Sweden, such services are very common and organised on the diocesan level.
32. **Sensitive liturgical language:** Relatively low scores for the PC. Diversity and autonomy at the local level is mentioned as a factor, and there is very little ‘prescribed’ language for liturgy. Sweden has a Book of Worship with a strong emphasis on inclusive language. In the Estonian language, there is no gender difference for pronouns, and the word for ‘Lord’ is not perceived as literally meaning ‘lord’ because in the Bible it is written in old language ‘Issand’ (instead of ‘isand’) – so it has become a separate term or name for God.
33. **Educational and formational materials are affirmative:** Germany, Netherlands and Sweden have a full point. ‘In the institute for church employees of Church of Sweden these perspectives are constantly present.’
34. **Awareness on interconnectedness of justice and inclusivity:** 0,5 for several churches because (according to the co-researcher from Poland) ‘The church raises a certain amount of awareness on certain aspects of justice and inclusivity, however does not mention LGBTI-related issues.’ Or, from Switzerland: ‘In general, the interconnectedness is well included in the teachings, but SOGI is not often mentioned.’
35. **Church takes into account scientific research:** The most affirmative churches get a full point, others get 0,5. Significantly, only Latvia has 0 points. For the CofE’s project ‘Living in Love and Faith’, it was explicitly stated that ‘The teaching document should include, inter alia: Reflections on contemporary understandings of human sexuality and the contribution of other disciplines, especially the sciences.’ In PC Netherlands, some parts of the church may dispute the validity of such research on ideological grounds, but in general, it is widely accepted. In Estonia (0,5) scientific research is taken into account, yet the church has not been ready to start a committee to discuss LGBTI issues, though the local group of LGBTI

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108 See <https://ewangelicy.pl/2020/08/16/jestem-kochana-i-dziele-%20sie-miloscia-rozmowa-z-weganska-pastorka-ks-jennie-%20hogbergj/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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Christians, Gay Christians of Estonia, has proposed it (supported by the theological faculty of Tartu University and Church's Family Centre).

36. **Church acknowledges discrimination in the past:** Switzerland, Norway, Netherlands, CofE, Sweden<sup>109</sup> full point. PC Netherlands participated in the 2011 declaration against violence against homosexual people (not bi, trans, or intersex), in which also the involvement in discrimination was acknowledged.<sup>110</sup> CofE supported the ban on conversion therapy with acknowledging its own history of discrimination.<sup>111</sup> In Estonia (0) it is said that the Church does not discriminate. 'All are welcome and all should meet the moral standards on sexuality.'
37. **Church publicly apologizes and asks for forgiveness:** Only Switzerland, Germany and Norway get a full point. From PC Switzerland, some key people did, from their positions, but not all. The co-researcher from Ref Hungary comments: 'Never, ever. This would be such a miracle.'
38. **Public statements on safety:** This one receives the highest score of all the indicators 38–47. Only ELC Hungary and Ref Hungary get 0 point. The co-researcher from ELC Hungary comments that there are no public statements at all from the church concerning LGBTI people. The EF Hungary has 0,5 points, and this is because of the *Advent Statement* issued by the church.
- Positive examples from CofE: The church has supported government legislation to protect LGBTI people from criminalisation and discrimination, including through bishops who sit in the House of Lords. From PC Netherlands: The national church participated in the declaration against violence against homosexuals (not BTI) in 2011, which also acknowledges its involvement in discrimination. From PC Switzerland: The Church supported the explicit inclusion of sexual orientation into existing laws against discrimination. The public vote took place in February 2020, the law is in force since 1 July. Note: Gender identity was included in the original draft, but was dropped during the debate in parliament. If I remember correctly, the church did not address this issue. The PC Switzerland also made a statement on conversion therapy: 'The member churches gathered in the Confederation agree that the diversity of sexual orientations reflects the abundance of God's creative activity.'<sup>112</sup>
39. **Statement on freedom of religion:** Latvia, Poland, and Hungarian churches have 0 points here. The co-researcher from the Lutheran church of Estonia (0,5) comments: 'Estonian Council of Churches (and EELC is part of that) has lobbied that Churches have an exception

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109 See <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/Sve/Binärfiler/Filer/3c90f603-d0c6-4e50-b7b9-310b343437e5.pdf>; accessed 15 April 2021.

110 See <https://www.lkp-web.nl/idahot/234-kerkelijkke-verklaring-tegen-geweld-tegen-homoseksuelen>; accessed 15 April 2021.

111 See <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-%20centre/news/general-synod-backs-ban-conversion-therapy>; accessed 15 April 2021.

112 See [https://www.evref.ch/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/19\\_vernehmlassungsantwort\\_ehe\\_fuer\\_alle.pdf](https://www.evref.ch/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/19_vernehmlassungsantwort_ehe_fuer_alle.pdf); accessed 15 April 2021.

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in the non-discrimination law not to hire LGBT workers on certain positions. Bishop Urmas Viilma said that hate speech should not be criminalised (it's not yet in Estonia). On the other hand, the statement by Estonian Council of Churches that condemns homosexuality states that there should not be condemnation or discrimination towards LGBT people.'

40. **Public statements in regard of political organisation:** Estonia (0,5) with reference to Bishop Urmas Viilma, who has compared the Christian minority and LGBTI minority in LGBTI Pride context. 'Sometimes,' the co-researcher writes, 'it is difficult to evaluate if what he says is condemnation or support... He says, as long as Christians can walk through the city on Good Friday remembering our guilt and sin, he can't condemn same-sex community walking through the city similarly with their guilt and sin.'
41. **Public statement in relation to gender-related rights:** Church of Sweden (1): There is a strong sexual and reproductive health rights and gender justice policy for the international ecumenical affairs and political advocacy of the church that speaks to bodily integrity of these matters.
42. **Public statements on reproductive rights:** This indicator has the relatively lowest total score among PC (2). The co-researcher from Switzerland extensively explains why there is hesitation and reservation about these ethical matters from the side of the church. We summarize here the view on the rights to child-bearing. 'The church would never say that child-bearing is a right, but that children are a gift and entrusted to their care-givers. Many medical procedures related to fertility are discussed controversially. For instance, a gay couple adopting a child would get support and would be seen as a family, but surrogacy is seen as questionable, among other arguments, because there is a high chance of exploitation of women, and a lot of open questions whenever there are health issues for either the surrogate or the child before the parentage is legally recognised.'
43. **Statements in relations to kinship rights:** In Estonia (0,5), Bishop Urmas Viilma has acknowledged that LGBTI people need legal solutions, but these should not copy traditional (heterosexual) marriage. In the CofE, 'The Church has its own positions and its own debates and differences about what's OK in love and family life. But its main concern is to support all families, the best way the church can.'
44. **Statements on labour rights:** Switzerland and PC Netherlands both 0,5, with the comment that the general attitude is supportive but that trans people are often forgotten.
45. **Statement on health rights:** In the Church of Sweden, there has been a public statement on trans health rights. The CofE supported the ban on conversion therapy. PC Switzerland also publicly condemned conversion therapy. The co-researcher for the PC Netherlands

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comments that the church doesn't speak proactively, but if asked by media, the church will speak out against conversion therapy.

46. **Statements in regard of diversity in sexuality education:** The co-researcher from Sweden (0,5) comments that there has been no specific policy commentary in the national context on this, as church and state are separated. But the church has supported comprehensive sexuality education. In the international work, the global advocacy work, and partner work the church advocates for this. For example, former Archbishop Anders Wejryd represents the Church of Sweden in the ongoing process on human sexuality in the World Council of Churches. The co-researcher for CofE (1) refers to the 2019 document *Valuing All God's Children: Guidance for Church of England schools on challenging homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying*.<sup>113</sup>
47. **Statements in regard to rights to access of other public services** (tax, housing, toilets, etc.): No such statements were made by the churches.

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113 [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/Valuing%20All%20God%27s%20Children%20July%202019\\_0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/Valuing%20All%20God%27s%20Children%20July%202019_0.pdf); accessed 15 April 2021.

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## 6.5 Church of England's Process Of Discernment

The Church of England or Anglican Church makes a specific case within the larger protestant world. For some, Anglicanism represents a non-papal Catholicism, for others a form of (evangelical) Protestantism, for yet others a combination of the two. The majority of Anglicans are members of ecclesiastical provinces of the international Anglican Communion, which forms the third-largest Christian communion in the world. The provinces are in full communion with the See of Canterbury and recognise the Archbishop of Canterbury. Ecumenically, the Anglican Church is in full communion with the Nordic Lutheran churches of the Porvoo Communion,<sup>114</sup> and the Old Catholic Churches in the Utrecht Union.

There are no clear statistics on the representation of the Church of England in the population of the United Kingdom. According to the church's own statistics, the total 'worshipping community' in 2019 was 1,11 million (1,9% of the population), rising to 2,33 million (4,1%) at Christmas.<sup>115</sup> But this is about attendance, not about membership. The Christian population of the Church of England is calculated using data from the 2011 census: 3,456,000; about half of the population.<sup>116</sup>

## Living in Love and Faith

The co-researcher refers to the 1991 statement by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the CofE, *Issues in Human Sexuality*,<sup>117</sup> but also mentions the resources of the Living in Love and Faith project<sup>118</sup> which were not yet published when the co-researcher provided us with data on the Church of England.

The Living in Love and Faith (LLF) project was launched in 2017 by the two Archbishops of the CofE. Living in Love and Faith is an invitation to a 'learning journey' and 'an appeal from the Bishops to join

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114 Some of the churches in our research are members of this communion: the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Church of Norway, and the Church of Sweden. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia is an observer, while the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia Abroad is a member. See [http://porvoocommunion.org/porvoo\\_communion/members/](http://porvoocommunion.org/porvoo_communion/members/); accessed 11 March 2021.

115 Church of England Research and Statistics, *Statistics for Mission 2019*, London: Research and Statistics 2020, <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/2019StatisticsForMission.pdf>; accessed 11 March 2021.

116 *Statistics for Mission 2019*, 23.

117 The House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England, *Issues of Human Sexuality: A Statement* (London: Church House Publishing, 1991).

118 See <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith>; accessed 27 April 2021.

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them in discerning a way forward for the church that is open to new vistas on our disagreements and new perspectives on our differences.’ In November 2020, the LLF group published its resources. The resources include videos, podcasts, an online learning hub, a five-week course, and a 480-page book *Living in Love and Faith: Christian teaching and learning about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage*.<sup>119120</sup>

*Issues in Human Sexuality* (1991) had stated two fundamental principles. ‘Homophile orientation and its expression in sexual activity do not constitute a parallel and alternative form of human sexuality as complete within the terms of the created order as the heterosexual.’ And: ‘Homosexual people are in every way as valuable to and as valued by God as heterosexual people.’

In 1998, the 13<sup>th</sup> Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops passed a resolution I.10 on Human Sexuality, which stated that the Conference ‘while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex.’

In the United Kingdom, shortly after the Civil Partnership Act came into law in 2004, the bishops of the CofE issued a Pastoral Statement, setting out the church’s response: ‘What needs to be recognized is that the Church’s teaching on sexual ethics remains unchanged. For Christians, marriage – that is the lifelong union between a man and a woman – remains the proper context for sexual activity. In its approach to civil partnerships the Church will continue to uphold that standard, to affirm the value of committed, sexually abstinent friendships between people of the same sex and to minister sensitively and pastorally to those Christians who conscientiously decide to order their lives differently.’ Also, the clergy had to assure that their relationship was consistent with the teaching set out in *Issues in Human Sexuality*.

In 2013, the *Pilling Report* was published, which reviewed the position of the church in the light of recent developments and adopted a different tone: ‘We warmly welcome and affirm the presence and ministry within the church of gay and lesbian people, both lay and ordained.’ The report recommended that ‘there can be circumstances where a priest ... should be free to mark the formation of a permanent same-sex relationship in a public service.’<sup>121</sup> The report was not unanimous, and the recommendations were never formally approved by the bishops or Synod. However, it was decided to set up a process of ‘shared conversations’. This process of discernment took place in the following years.

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119 The House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England, *Living in Love and Faith: Christian Teaching and Learning about Identity, Sexuality, Relationships and Marriage* (London: Church House Publishing, 2020).

120 The following text is mainly based on *Living in Love and Faith* 2020, 140–144.

121 The House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England, *Working Group on human sexuality. Report*, London: Church Publishing House, November 2013.

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In 2014, the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act became a law. The Act included a series of legal guarantees for religious groups opposed to same-sex marriage, meaning that the church was not required to change its teaching or practice. The House of Bishops again responded with Pastoral Guidance reaffirming the church's position, while explaining that 'those same-sex couples who choose to marry should be welcomed into the life of the worshipping community and not be subjected to questioning about their lifestyle. Neither they nor any children they care for should be denied access to the sacraments.' About civil partnerships the bishops said: 'clergy should not provide services of blessing', but that a 'more informal kind of prayer, at the request of the couple, might be appropriate in the light of the circumstances.' Those who were in a same-sex marriage could not be ordained, and those who were ordained could not enter into same-sex marriages.

The process of discernment resulted in a 2017 report, *Marriage and Same Sex Relationships after the Shared Conversations*, which did not find the support of a majority of the clergy, some of which had been hoping for more acceptance of same-sex relationships. After the debate, the Archbishop of Canterbury called the church to seek a 'a radical new Christian inclusion in the Church ... founded in Scripture, in reason, in tradition, in theology and the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it.' This gave impetus to the *Living in Love and Faith* project.

In 2018, the Church of England's Education Office published a policy document supporting sex education which includes, among other things, education concerning one's sexual desire. The document stated that 'Sex education should include an understanding that all humans are sexual beings and that sexual desire is natural. Pupils should be taught that humans express their sexuality differently and that there is diversity in sexual desire.'<sup>122</sup>

## Next steps to 2022

2021 will be a year of learning and discernment for the whole church, in order for the bishops to discern in 2022. According to *The Guardian*, 'The Church of England could make a historic change to traditional teaching on sexuality in less than two years after bishops promised that decisions on issues that have riven the church for decades would be taken in 2022. The self-imposed deadline could end with clergy being permitted to conduct same-sex marriages – or the church could opt to reinforce traditional teaching on marriage, sexuality and gender.'<sup>123</sup> The newspaper also quotes

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122 *Changes to the Teaching of Relationships and Sex Education and PSHEA: A Call for Evidence*, see <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-03/Relationships%20and%20Sex%20Education%20Response.pdf>; accessed 27 April 2021.

123 *The Guardian*, 9 November 2020, see <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/09/church-of-england-could-rethink-stance-on-lgbtq-issues-by-2022>; accessed 11 March 2021.



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Jayne Ozanne, a prominent campaigner for LGBTI rights within the Church of England, who warned that the outcome of the decision promised by the bishops is uncertain, and that further delay meant more people would face rejection and harm: 'While it's good to hear that decisions may finally be afoot in two years' time, we must act now to safeguard LGBT people in our care. We cannot go on acknowledging and apologising for the harm church teaching is causing without recognising the safeguarding responsibilities we have. Too many lives are at risk.'<sup>124</sup>

A blogger involved with the campaign for a change of attitude in the Church of England towards the place of LGBTI people in the Church, commented on the LLF book and online resources, and mentioned that an 'inclusive pro-LGBTIQ+ group including gay and straight members has written to thirty-four bishops known to be supporters of LGBTIQ+ people, sending a copy to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London.'<sup>125</sup> The group asked the bishops 'How can the LLF process be re-imagined in conjunction with the existing LGBTIQ+ networks to enable a process that is safe and constructive for us to pave the way to a resolution to be brought to Synod in 2022?'

An affirmative statement was issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, on 5 March 2021, in reaction to an open letter by a fellow Anglican Primate, Henry C. Ndukuba, Archbishop of Nigeria, who had described homosexuality as 'the deadly virus' and compared homosexuality 'to a yeast that should be urgently and radically expunged and excised lest it affects the whole dough.' Welby stated: 'I completely disagree with and condemn this language. It is unacceptable. It dehumanises those human beings of whom the statement speaks.'<sup>126</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury's criticism was endorsed by senior CofE colleagues, including Stephen Cottrell, the Archbishop of York, and Sarah Mullally, the bishop of London.<sup>127</sup>

Additionally, encouraging signs to which the co-researcher refers are LGBTI-affirming public statements of the CofE in recent years: the 2017 backing of the ban on conversion therapy with acknowledging the church's own history of discrimination, and the 2019 document *Valuing All God's Children: Guidance for Church of England schools on challenging homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying*.<sup>128</sup>

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124 *The Guardian*, 9 November 2020.

125 Colin Coward, 26 November 2020, <http://www.unadulteratedlove.net/blog/2020/11/26/inclusive-pro-lgbtqi-group-writes-to-thirty-four-pro-gay-bishops>; accessed 11 March 2021.

126 The Archbishop of Canterbury, 5 March 2021, <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/news/news-and-statements/statement-archbishop-canterbury-regarding-comments-primate-nigeria>; accessed 11 March 2021.

127 *The Guardian*, 6 March 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/mar/06/justin-welby-condemns-nigerian-archbishop-henry-ndukuba-gay-virus-comments>; accessed 11 March 2021.

128 [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/Valuing%20All%20God%27s%20Children%20July%202019\\_0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/Valuing%20All%20God%27s%20Children%20July%202019_0.pdf); accessed 15 April 2021.

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## 6.6 Observations

When we reflect on the differences between the analysed churches above, there are a few things we want to mention.

According to their church understanding, Protestant churches tend to have a less hierarchical structure which allows for regional and local differences. Because of this ecclesiastical structure, non-inclusive opinions and practices can exist and remain on the regional or local level, even when the national level has a clear inclusivist stance and policy. The diversity within the church at the grassroots, however, also has been a positive factor of transformation for LGBTI inclusion, as we hear from Switzerland: 'This is how progress happened in the last 30 years!'

The findings of the research affirm that in relation to the state, Protestant churches tend to respect the laws of the country, while having at the same time a degree of autonomy in deciding the limits of rights among their membership. With regard to LGBTI inclusion, this pertains in particular to laws on non-discrimination and on issues of partnership legislation, such as laws on civil union or marriage for all. Some of the Protestant churches unconditionally apply non-discrimination laws; others, however, invoke to a stronger or lesser degree the right to freedom of religion to claim a space for exception, e.g., resistance against marriage for all.

The findings of the research also affirm that there is a positive correlation between women's rights in the church and LGBTI rights. Where women's ordination is not allowed, or is even abolished (Latvia), LGBTI rights in the church are not respected. The opposite might also be true. Where women's ordination is requested by parts of the church and in discussion on a national level, safe space for expressing and hearing the voices of LGBTI members of the church might equally increase, as seems to be the case in ELC Poland.

The findings of the research seem to demonstrate a positive relation between taking into account scientific research on gender and sexuality and acceptance and affirmation of LGBTI people. Taking into account scientific research can even be the starting point for discussing LGBTI issues in the church more seriously, as in the case of ELC Estonia.

Protestant churches have different stances on blessing same-sex unions/marriage. In all North-Western European churches in this research, there is the possibility of blessing a same-sex union or marriage. In the Central-Eastern European countries, this is not the case, and some churches

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## PROTESTANT CHURCHES

oppose the state politics fiercely if they tend to officially legalize same-sex partnerships, like in Estonia. Interesting is the split position of the ELC Poland: it does not allow blessing of same-sex partnerships in the church, but decided nevertheless that Lutheran parishes should respect same-sex civil marriage contracted abroad and include such pieces of information in parish records. In some churches which allow for blessing of same-sex marriage, subtle distinctions in terminology and liturgical language are made to keep a value difference between marriage between a man and a woman, or marriage between two women or two men.

Some Protestant churches have actively used their public role to advocate for LGBTI rights in society. Good examples include the CofE and the PC Switzerland supporting the ban on conversion therapy, the CofE's 2019 document *Valuing All God's Children* and the *Advent Statement* of EF Hungary. In some cases, a church has opposed the advancement of LGBTI rights in society, as we saw in Estonia in the case of the Cohabitation Law. In general, the impression based on our data is that churches could be more proactive in supporting and advocating the rights of LGBTI people.

In countries that show a backlash in LGBTI rights, such as Hungary (which in May 2020 approved a law to make it impossible for transgender or intersex people to legally change their gender) and Poland (more than 100 municipalities informally declare themselves 'LGBT-free zones' and non-recognition of same-sex civil unions), there are no public statements in defence of LGBTI people from the side of churches, with the exception of the *Advent Statement* of EF Hungary.

Overall, transgender and intersex people are not yet equally visible in the picture of those Protestant churches that tend to have a good performance in inclusive policies and practice of gays and lesbians.

The examples of the highest-ranking Protestant churches in the research, together with the interpretation of the lowest total scores on indicators of these churches, suggest following factors as important for achieving full inclusion of LGBTI persons in the church: fuller inclusion is advanced if church leadership consciously involves LGBTI persons and groups in policy-making, in particular also trans and intersex people; if they make regulations on and install a committee to monitor sexual rights and gender justice in the church; if inclusive language is a consistent and non-negotiable practice for the liturgy and in the public speech of church leaders; if the church distributes affirmative educational and formational materials on LGBTI issues; if there is a quality measuring instrument (such as the Rainbow Key label in Sweden) to stimulate local parishes to work for more inclusion of LGBTI persons; if the church publicly apologises and asks for forgiveness from those who have been affected by the church's discrimination; and if the church acts more pro-actively in supporting the human rights of LGBTI people in society.

## 6.7 Ways Forward

Based on the findings of the research and the analysis, what might be steps forward to enhance the inclusivity of Protestant churches towards LGBTI people?

1. Involve LGBTI persons and groups in policy-making, particularly trans and intersex people.
2. Make regulations and monitor sexual rights and gender justice in the church.
3. Make inclusive language a consistent and non-negotiable practice in liturgy and public speech.
4. Distribute affirmative educational and formational materials on LGBTI.
5. Develop an instrument to measure and stimulate local parishes to work for more inclusion of LGBTI persons.
6. Make public statements against conversion therapy and against homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia.
7. Publicly apologize and ask for forgiveness from those who have been affected by discrimination.
8. Get rid of distinction in liturgical terms for blessing (same-sex) married couples.
9. Engage constructively with scientific research on sexuality and gender.
10. Send high-ranking church representatives to LGBTI events, such as Prides and commemorations.
11. Become pro-active in supporting and advocating the human rights of LGBTI people in society.

However, Protestant churches that are ranked quite low probably want to start with more modest steps.

1. Engage in a pastoral dialogue with LGBTI people.
2. Condemn acts of violence and hate speech towards LGBTI people.
3. Take scientific research into consideration, even when it states a different perspective on LGBTI issues.
4. Acknowledge the responsibility of the state and its laws if they are the results of a democratic process.
5. Do not promote or support conversion therapy.

**7. Other Churches:  
Metropolitan  
Community Church;  
Old Catholic Church;  
Unitarian Church**

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In this chapter we present the data on a couple of churches that are not part of the major denominations or church families we discussed in the chapter 4, 5, and 6. We start with the Metropolitan Community Church in Finland, followed by the Old Catholic Churches in Austria, Slovakia, and Czech Republic, and finish with the Unitarian church in Romania.

## 7.1 Metropolitan Community Church

There is one church that tops the ranking of our *RICE 2020* research, the Metropolitan Community Church in Finland, with a score of 45,5 points out of 47. This is not that strange, because MCC is ‘a church started by these minorities’ according to our co-researcher. MCC is the only Christian denomination that is primarily made up of LGBTI people and has a focus on LGBTI and Queer understandings.<sup>129</sup> Maybe that is also the reason that the co-researcher does not provide us with much information. All the indicators score a full point, with the exception of the questions on ‘social ministry’ (24)—‘No means as we can’t give any monetary support...’, says the co-researcher—and on church support for an LGBTI association of theologians—probably because there are not enough MCC theologians in Finland to form an association.

According to its website, Living Water (Elävä vesi) MCC Helsinki parish, an emerging church whose pastor is Tarja Pyykkö, started in Helsinki in 2016. They organise worship services, discussion groups, pastoral care, and they participate in societal debate. Tarja Pyykkö is the first Finn to be trained as a priest in the MCC Church. The pastor states: ‘We hope that the activities of our congregation will also reach sexual and gender minorities who have come to Finland from abroad for various reasons. Especially for rainbow people who have come to the country as asylum seekers, we hope to be able to offer support both in spiritual matters and in any other way in integration into Finland.’<sup>130</sup> Their Facebook page is followed by 236 people.<sup>131</sup>

The MCC Helsinki website also mentions that ‘The ecclesiastical activities of the Metropolitan Community Churches began in 1968 in California under the direction of Troy Perry. The activities

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129 Metropolitan Community Church, <https://www.mccchurch.org/> and <https://visitmccchurch.com/>; accessed 31 March 2021.

130 See [https://visitmccchurch.com/our-churches/mcc-kirkot-suomessa-finland/elava-vesi-mcc/?utm\\_source=website&utm\\_medium=website&utm\\_campaign=fi-elava-vesi-mcc-page](https://visitmccchurch.com/our-churches/mcc-kirkot-suomessa-finland/elava-vesi-mcc/?utm_source=website&utm_medium=website&utm_campaign=fi-elava-vesi-mcc-page); accessed 31 March 2021.

131 See <https://www.facebook.com/pg/mcchelsinki>; accessed 31 March 2021.

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## OTHER CHURCHES

typically involve people from different ecclesiastical backgrounds as well as non-Christian communities. The original purpose was to provide a spiritual community for those belonging to sexual and gender minorities who were discriminated against or even persecuted in their own congregations. The underlying idea was that MCC services would become redundant over time as churches became more open to diversity and rainbow people could return to their own congregations. This development still seems to be largely underway.'

MCC, with 222 affiliated churches in 37 countries, has the 'official observer' status with the World Council of Churches.

## Other affirming churches in Europe

There are other churches in Europe who are minority churches in their countries and LGBTI-affirming, like the Union of Methodist and Waldensian Churches in Italy,<sup>132</sup> the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches in the UK,<sup>133</sup> the Remonstrants, the first Christian church in the world to bless same-sex relationships similarly to other relations, in 1986, in the Netherlands,<sup>134</sup> the United Protestant Church of France,<sup>135</sup> and the Reformed Catholic Church of Poland.<sup>136</sup>

## 7.2 Old Catholic Church

We have the data of three OCCs: Austria (score: 22), Slovakia (score: 26,5), and the Czech Republic (score: 26,5). The co-researcher for Slovakia and the Czech Republic used one questionnaire for both countries, which were one country, Czechoslovakia, since 1918, before separating into two independent states in 1993.

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132 See <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2010/9/7/italian-protestants-approve-same-sex-blessings/>; accessed 31 March 2021.

133 See <https://www.unitarian.org.uk/>; accessed 31 March 2021.

134 See <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/09/13/world/dutch-legislators-approve-full-marriage-rights-for-gays.html>; accessed 31 March 2021.

135 See <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-protestant-marriage/french-protestant-church-allows-gay-marriage-blessing-idUKKBNO020LP20150517>; accessed 31 March 2021.

136 See <https://starokatolicy.eu/>; accessed 31 March 2021.

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OCC Slovakia and Czech Republic are known as a 'refuge church,' welcoming everyone. There are no normative theological interpretations, and practice varies among individual parishes. Parishes range from merely tolerant to fully accepting and affirming.

The 2003 synod stated that same-sex couples participate in some of the parishes. The synod asked the parishes to continue to foster a climate of acceptance, openness, and tolerance to their neighbours, who love and live in this manner. No one should be discriminated against because of his or her sexual orientation; 'We are all God's children.' The synod also affirmed that the diaconate is open to women. Openly gay male deacons and presbyters have also been ordained.

Blessings of same-sex unions are celebrated in various forms in local parishes, which differs, however, from a marriage ceremony.

The bishop for the Czech Republic approves gay or lesbian candidates to the seminary. Many priests are openly gay. The highest lay position in the church is held by an openly gay man.

Church ministers have officiated at Pride services in several cities in Czechia and Slovakia and also during IDAHOT vigils.

The statements of the bishop and the priests are always very inclusive and affirmative towards all minorities. The character of the Old Catholic churches is very much connected with the struggle for social justice, cooperation, and support.

There are no public statements on the national level, but they do exist on a local level.

The OCC Austria leadership states that all humans are equal and that all priests in the church have to be welcoming and affirming. The church has women and openly gay men as priests. Since 1996, there is an official ceremony for same-sex couples.

The OCCs score above the mean of all the scores, which puts them slightly above the middle on the ranking list. Between these churches there are some minor differences. Slovakia and Czech Republic score a bit higher on the categories *church practices* and *language and speech*, but we don't have sufficient information to emphasize these differences. Being rather small churches, who function as 'refuge' churches, might indicate that the level of inclusivity of these churches is probably more influenced by their church tradition than the national identity.



## 7.3 Unitarian Church

We only gathered data from one Unitarian (Universalist) Church, the Unitarian Church Romania. Nevertheless, UC Romania is historically a very important church. Unitarianism as a faith movement within Christianity started in Transylvania (since 1947 part of Romania), in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the UC in Romania is still the largest (about 60,000 church members) UC worldwide. The UC Romania is affiliated with the UC in Hungary. Most church members perceive themselves as part of the Hungarian minority in Romania, and Hungarian is the liturgical and ecclesiastical language.

Our co-researcher scored the UC Romania with 12 points. No specific comments were provided.

In October 2017, the synod of the UC Romania issued a formal statement on ‘Marriage and Family’ that defined marriage as a relationship restricted to a man and a woman,<sup>137</sup> despite the ‘deep’ concern of the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council. The UUPCC sent a letter of understanding for the ‘severe pressure applied to the Hungarian Unitarian Church from outside political forces and from the minority ethnically-Hungarian Christian communities in Romania.’ However, the North American Unitarian Universalists also expressed their unease with this decision by the UC Romania, which could only be seen ‘as contrary to foundational U/U principles but also as a dehumanizing attack on [U/U people] personally and LGBTQ people generally.’<sup>138</sup>

The UC synod’s decision was a reaction to the 2016–2017 constitutional struggle in Romania about the legal prohibition of same-sex marriage. A proposal to prohibit same-sex marriage was actively supported by the Romanian Orthodox Church at the time.<sup>139</sup> Interestingly, the deputy bishop of the Hungarian UC Romania expressed in February 2016 his ‘opinion as an individual (...) using my opportunity for freedom of speech in this important matter of conscience.’ He stated: ‘To me, unconditional respect for and protection of the dignity of God’s human creation is a basic theological value. I consider gender identity and sexual orientation to be scientific realities. Living in accordance with one’s gender identity and choosing one’s spouse are basic human rights. In my opinion, if the Church that serves both God and humankind is to be faithful to the Gospel’s teachings of unconditional love and acceptance, it cannot stand behind societal prejudices or discriminate among believers in matters of their human rights.’<sup>140</sup> Unfortunately, it remained an individual, private statement.

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137 Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council, [https://uupcc.org/sites/uupcc.org/files/statement\\_to\\_global\\_uu\\_community-10-27\\_on\\_website.pdf](https://uupcc.org/sites/uupcc.org/files/statement_to_global_uu_community-10-27_on_website.pdf); accessed 13 April 2021.

138 Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council, [https://uupcc.org/sites/uupcc.org/files/message\\_of\\_hope\\_courage\\_and\\_concern.pdf](https://uupcc.org/sites/uupcc.org/files/message_of_hope_courage_and_concern.pdf); accessed 13 April 2021.

139 NBC News, 7 June 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/romanian-rights-groups-want-parliament-nix-gay-marriage-referendum-n769231>; accessed 13 April 2021.

140 Unitarian Universalist Association, 9 February 2016, <https://www.uua.org/international/blog/unitarian-leader-takes-equal-marriage-stand-in-romania>; accessed 13 April 2021.

# **8. 'Traditional Values and Human Rights' Country Reports: Hungary, Russia, Poland**

In this chapter, we discuss separately three countries in Eastern Europe that are challenged by the friction, or some would say conflict, between human rights issues and the defence of traditional, supposedly 'Christian' family values: Hungary (8.1), Russia (8.2), and Poland (8.3).

## 8.1 Hungary

### Church and state

Hungary is a multi-confessional country and freedom of religion is declared as a fundamental right. The preamble of the Constitution, renewed in 2011, 'recognizes Christianity's nation-building role' which laid a basis for a political fusion of nationalism and Christianity. The Church Law of 2011 deprived more than 300 religious entities of their legal status and in fact ended the separation of state and church.<sup>141</sup> Since 2019, the government of Viktor Orbán has an official ideological commitment to fight in the name of 'Christian Liberty' against the liberal democracy.<sup>142</sup>

### Findings of the RICE research

For Hungary, we have information from the RCC (score: 9,5), the Reformed Church (score: 6), the Evangelical Fellowship (score: 23,5), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church (score: 17,5).

### Roman Catholic Church

For the RCC, we only have a few specific comments, of which the following is most important: 'Official and pastoral approaches differ. The official teaching is written in the pre-filled comment. The practice is rather don't-ask-don't-tell.'

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141 See <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/hungary/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

142 Rita Perintfalvi, "Der Kampf um Geschlechtergerechtigkeit als ein Kampf um Demokratie: Anti-Genderismus in Ungarn im Kontext einer ‚Sakralisierung der Politik!‘" In *Anti-Genderismus in Europa: Allianzen von Rechtspopulismus und religiösem Fundamentalismus. Mobilisierung – Vernetzung – Transformation*, edited by Sonja Angelika Strube, Rita Perintfalvi, et al (Bielefeld 2021), 173–185. Open access publication, see <https://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-5315-1/anti-genderismus-in-europa/?number=978-3-7328-5315-1&c=310000055>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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## Reformed Church

For the Reformed Church, we also have a few specific comments, from two different co-researchers. Both refer to a resolution adopted by the Synod of the Reformed Church in Hungary on 6 May 2004, 'Marriage, family, sexuality: Resolution of the Synod of the Reformed Church in Hungary on the issues of marriage, family and sexuality.'<sup>143</sup> The resolution, which does not judge the inclination but equalizes homosexual practice with adultery, is still in effect. It reads:

'It is known to us that we have fellow human beings who, as an inherited or acquired disposition, are incapable of marriage according to the order of creation, attracted to their own sex. The tendency itself is not morally qualified. We receive these brothers and sisters with a patronizing tact, treating their deep human drama with understanding and discreetly. We have a duty to protect them from all forms of discriminatory behavior that violate human dignity. However, as homosexual practice is condemned by both the Old and New Testaments as a crime of equal weight to adultery (Leviticus 18; 45 Romans 1:26k), our church cannot accept such relationships, and considers their church blessing impossible. It also follows from all this that such a way of life or its propagation is incompatible with the profession of pastor and religion teacher and with the training and preparation for these professions and all church service.'

The resolution, excluding LGBTI persons from pastoral ministry and the theological seminary/faculty, was accelerated by the case of an openly gay student excluded from Károli Gáspár Reformed University in Budapest by the decision of the church diocese.<sup>144</sup>

The co-researcher further comments: The church never acknowledged its involvement in the discrimination of LGBTI people, and never made a public apology.

## Evangelical Lutheran Church

There are also just a few specific comments for the Evangelical Lutheran Church. 1. There is no general statement or policy concerning LGBTI people. 2. In 2017, the Lutheran Mission Centre

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<sup>143</sup> „Házasság, család, szexualitás: A Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinatának állásfoglalása házasság, a család és a szexualitás kérdéseiről,” 6 May 2004, see <http://regi.reformatus.hu/mutat/6221/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

<sup>144</sup> „Református zsinat: a homoszexualitás a házasságtöréshez hasonló bűn,” 6 May 2004, see <https://hvg.hu/itthon/000000000563F24>; accessed 15 April 2021.

in Hungary issued a statement in which homosexual partnership is not accepted as a legitimate alternative to heterosexual marriage. Sexuality's place is in heterosexual marriage, which is from God. Homosexuality is not a 'normal lifestyle.' The practice of homosexuality is a deviation from the norm and not a variation of normal behaviour. 3. For pastors and theology students preparing for ministries, marriage is obligatory. They cannot live in a civil union.

## Evangelical Fellowship

Notable for its relatively higher score (23,5) is the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship. The Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship (EF) is a relatively small church in the Methodist tradition that was, together with more than 200 other churches, overnight deprived of its legal status by the Church Law of 2011. The stripping of its legal status had considerable consequences for the social-diaconal ministries of EF. Because of the Church Law's serious violations of human rights, addressed by Hungary's Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights, amendments to the law passed Parliament in 2018 and 2020. However, analysts consider them to be a mere 'repackaging' of the violations of religious freedom.<sup>145</sup> The Church Law ended the separation of state and church in Hungary. The head of EF, Rev. Gábor Iványi, protested publicly against the Church Law with an open letter to the president and to the Minister of Human Resources.<sup>146</sup> EF openly resists the Orbán government; the majority of other churches have built strategic alliances with the government and are to a high extent financially dependent on the support of the government.<sup>147</sup> EF connects its resistance to the church politics of the government with solidarity for other minority groups and other parts of civil society which are under attack, such as institutes of higher education as spaces for diversity and open debate.<sup>148</sup>

The co-researcher of EF comments that, as for the position of the church towards LGBTI, officially there is still a document from 1984 in which homosexuality is condemned: 'Homosexuality, like all sexual deviations, is the distortion of the order of creation, it is a sin, it is not God's will as we can

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145 David H. Baer, "Hungary's New Church Law is Worse than the First," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 39: no. 3 (2019), see <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol39/iss3/2/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

146 See <http://www.iprotest.hu/archivum/for-the-freedom-of-religion/open-letter-of-pastor-gabor.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.

147 Perintfálvi, "Der Kampf um Geschlechtergerechtigkeit," 180–181; Sándor Fazakas, "Die reformierte Kirche in der Übergangsgesellschaft Ungarns," *Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West* 42, no. 1 (2014): 18–20. Incidentally, pastors in their sermons openly criticize the dependency of their church on the state: „A hűség ára,” [The price of loyalty], sermon of Pastor László Thoma, 28 February 2021, 12th district of the Reformed Church in Budapest, see <http://www.gref.hu/hu/igehirdetes/evangeliumi-fokusz/a-huseg-ara/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

148 In September 2020, church leader Iványi organised a solidarity meeting at the University of Theater and Film Arts in Budapest, to support the threatened university and to protest against the in his eyes 'fascist' policies of the Orbán government, see <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/06/world/europe/hungary-students-blockade-orban.html>; <https://www.euronews.com/2018/09/05/there-s-nothing-christian-about-orban-s-democratic-values-view>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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read it in the Scriptures. (...) The church is ready to be a tool of God to help homosexuals who want to change, looking for the order of Christian lifestyle in reparative love.’ However, the moral theology of the church is in a process of change. The co-researcher is the first openly LGBTI seminary student, together with another student. An openly queer theologian is assistant pastor to one of the congregations of EF.<sup>149</sup> Of importance is the *Advent Statement* of EF from 2020 (main author Pastor Gábor Iványi), a public theological declaration.<sup>150</sup> In the Statement, the church calls for freeing the concept of ‘Christian Liberty’ from narrow political usage by the authoritarian government and to restore it to the dignity of the Biblical and theological concept. The *Advent Statement* unequivocally calls for women’s equality and acceptance and inclusion of LGBTI people: ‘The spread of fear towards, and alienation of, distinctive social groups by means of government policies is a worldwide problem which we experience in Hungary, too. We believe that it is not hatred but the practice of getting to know each other and inclusion that bring all of us closer to those belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community. We want to be free from judging the other person. We want to be free for unconditional acceptance and inclusion of the human person.’

LGBTI Christians in Hungary have organised themselves in the community Mozaik and find also welcoming communities in several international congregations in Budapest. Pastor Gyarfás in an interview calls it ‘dangerous’ to be an openly LGBTI person in most of the Hungarian churches.<sup>151</sup>

## Decreasing acceptance, deteriorating social climate

In ILGA-Europe’s *Rainbow Map 2020*, Hungary is ranked in the middle of the European countries, place 27.<sup>152</sup> Hungary scores about 50% on the criteria for ‘equality and non-discrimination’, ‘hate crime and hate speech’, and ‘civil society space.’ It is doing worse on ‘family’ issues, and it scores far below par on ‘legal gender recognition and bodily integrity’ (0%) and ‘asylum’ (17%). ILGA’s ‘Hungary chapter’ mentions that the Eurobarometer 2019 found that Hungary was one of a handful of EU countries where the social acceptance of LGB people has decreased since 2015.<sup>153</sup>

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149 See <https://www.evangelisch.de/blogs/kreuz-queer/177906/11-11-2020>; accessed 15 April 2021.

150 See <https://www.change.org/p/everybody-advent-statement-of-the-hungarian-evangelical-fellowship>; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/29/pastor-v-populist-viktor-orban-hungary-faith-faultline>; accessed 15 April 2021.

151 See <https://www.evangelisch.de/blogs/kreuz-queer/177906/11-11-2020>; accessed 15 April 2021.

152 See <https://www.ilga-europe.org/rainboweurope/2020>; accessed 15 April 2021.

153 See <https://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/2020/hungary.pdf>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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## 'TRADITIONAL VALUES AND HUMAN RIGHTS' COUNTRY REPORTS

Homosexuality is legal in Hungary, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is banned, and registered partnership for same-sex couples is legalized. Still, same-sex households are not eligible for the same legal rights available to opposite-sex married couples. Lately, in particular during the reign of Viktor Orbán and his national-conservative Fidesz party, the government has passed further legislation that restricts the civil rights of LGBTI Hungarians.

May 2020, Hungary's parliament has voted to end legal recognition for trans people. The new law defines gender as based on chromosomes at birth. Previous provisions whereby trans people could alter their gender and name on official documents will no longer be available.<sup>154</sup> The churches have remained silent on this curtailing of transgender rights.

Hungary's Constitution of 2011 already stipulates that marriage must be between a man and a woman, but December 2020 the government amended the definition of family in the Constitution and restricted the right to adoption. The amendment states that in a parent-child relationship, 'The mother is a woman and the father is a man.' The amendment ensures that only heterosexual married couples can adopt children. The attempted justification for the amendment explains that 'New, modern ideologies in the western world raise doubt about the creation of the male and female sex, and endanger the right of children to have healthy development.'<sup>155</sup> After these decisions in parliament, Amnesty International headlined on their website: 'Dark day for LGBTI community as homophobic discriminatory bill and constitutional amendments are passed.'<sup>156</sup> Human Rights Watch stated that there is an intensified attack on LGBTI people.<sup>157</sup>

Hungary's government ordered a publisher to print disclaimers identifying books containing 'behaviour inconsistent with traditional gender roles' after Labrisz, a lesbian group, published a fairy-tale anthology.<sup>158</sup>

The Eurobarometer 2019 indicates that a majority (53%) of people in Hungary totally disagree with the statement that there is nothing wrong in a sexual relationship between two persons of the same sex. Support for same-sex marriage is also low (33%) in Hungary, and the percentage

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154 "Hungary Votes to End Legal Recognition of Trans People," *The Guardian*, 19 May 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/19/hungary-votes-to-end-legal-recognition-of-trans-people>; accessed 15 April 2021.

155 "Hungarian Government Mounts New Assault on LGBT Rights," *The Guardian*, 11 November 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/11/hungarian-government-mounts-new-assault-on-lgbt-rights>; accessed 9 February 2021.

156 Amnesty International, 15 December 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/12/hungary-dark-day-for-lgbti-community-as-homophobic-discriminatory-bill-and-constitutional-amendments-are-passed/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

157 Human Rights Watch, 18 November 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/18/hungary-intensified-attack-lgbt-people>; accessed 15 April 2021.

158 *Reuters*, 10 January 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-lgbt-books-idUSKBN2902AT>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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even decreased since 2015.<sup>159</sup> The Eurobarometer also asked if transgender persons should be able to change their civil document to match their gender identity. More than seven out of 10 people disagreed in Hungary.

Indicative for the deteriorating social climate of gay and lesbian people is the fact that of all EU countries in the research, only in Hungary has the proportion of respondents who would feel comfortable with a public display of affection between two men or two women decreased between 2015 and 2019.

## **Conclusion**

With the exception of the Evangelical Fellowship, the official messages of the Hungarian churches and their silence on the backlash in human rights of LGBTI people contribute to the deteriorating and increasingly unsafe situation for LGBTI people in Hungary.

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159 *Discrimination in the European Union: Special Eurobarometer 493*, Fieldwork May 2019, Publication October 2019, survey requested by the European Commission, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/ebs\\_493\\_data\\_fact\\_lgbti\\_eu\\_en-1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/ebs_493_data_fact_lgbti_eu_en-1.pdf); accessed 15 April 2021.



## 8.2 Russia

### Church and state

According to its law, Russia is a secular state. There are, however, four 'traditional' religions, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism. Furthermore, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) is recognized for its special role in the country's 'history and the formation and development of its spirituality and culture.'<sup>160</sup> About 65% of the population adhere to the ROC, and national-cultural identification is for many people stronger than religious identification.

According to NGOs and independent experts, the government cooperates more closely with the ROC than with other religious organisations.<sup>161</sup> The ROC also benefits from an agreement with government ministries that gives it greater access than other religious organisations to public institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons, the police, and the military. Multiple officials support the construction of Orthodox churches, perceiving the country as an Orthodox nation. The ROC is a member of the 'Civic Chamber', a state institution with representatives of public associations, which have the opportunity to review draft legislation pending before the State Duma.

### Political, legal, and social context

As early as 2000, Putin declared that Orthodoxy had 'determined the character of Russian civilisation' and that it was the source of its 'spiritual and moral rebirth. Following Putin's re-election in May 2012 for a third term as president, the promotion of 'traditional values' and the defence of institutions such as family and nation became official state politics.<sup>162</sup> The Russian Orthodox Church is of great importance in the civilisational project designed by Putin's regime for Russia to distance it from the

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<sup>160</sup> US Department of State, *2019 Report on International Religious Freedom: Russia*.

<sup>161</sup> US Department of State, *International Religious Freedom Reports*, Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom, see <https://www.state.gov/report/custom/68b5b0e2ca/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

<sup>162</sup> Melissa Hooper, "Russia's 'Traditional Values' Leadership," *The Foreign Policy Centre* (2016), see <https://fpc.org.uk/russias-traditional-values-leadership/>; Alexander Agadjanian, "Tradition, Morality and Community: Elaborating Orthodox Identity in Putin's Russia," *Religion, State & Society* 45, no. 1 (2017): 39–60. Elena Stepanova, "Moral Discourse as Resource of Publicity: Religious and Secular Alternatives." In *ISPS Convention 2017 Modernization and Multiple Modernities*, edited by E. Stepanova and T. Kruglova, 406–415, KnE Publishing (e-pub); Kristina Stoeckl, "The Human Rights Debate in the External Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church," *Religion, State & Society* 40, no. 2 (2012): 212–232; Kristina Stoeckl and Dmitry Uzlaner, eds, *Postsecular Conflicts: Debating Tradition in Russia and the United States*, (Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press, 2020).

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West and which, to a large extent, centres around ‘traditional values.’ The ROC has become a ‘moral norm entrepreneur’ (Stoeckl) of ‘traditional values’ in international politics, closely cooperating with the state leadership.<sup>163</sup> This becomes apparent in Russia’s leading role in the campaign at the United Nations Human Rights Council from 2009 to 2012 to reinterpret human rights from the concept of ‘traditional values.’ In September 2012, a majority of countries at the UNHRC voted for the resolution ‘Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind: best practices.’<sup>164</sup>

The Representation of the ROC at the Council of Europe drafted a report, ‘On violations of children’s rights when they are “adopted” by homosexual unions (same-sex partnerships).’ The report analyses the protection of children’s rights in the context of the promotion at the national and international levels of allowing same-sex couples to adopt children.<sup>165</sup>

In its influential social teaching documents, *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* (2000) and *The Russian Orthodox Church’s Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights* (2008), the Church anchored the concept of traditional values and morality into its theology. Traditional family values have become central to the church’s rhetoric and politics, both domestic and international.<sup>166</sup>

The Church formulated as part of its basic social teaching: ‘While treating people with homosexual inclinations with pastoral responsibility, the Church is resolutely against the attempts to present this sinful tendency as a “norm” and even something to be proud of and emulate. This is why the Church denounces any propaganda of homosexuality. Without denying anybody the fundamental rights to life, respect for personal dignity and participation in public affairs, the Church, however, believes that those who propagate the homosexual way of life should not be admitted to educational and other work with children and youth, nor to occupy superior posts in the army and correctional institutions.’<sup>167</sup>

Since 2012, federal laws have passed in Russia that seriously restricted the rights of LGBTI people. In 2013, the State Duma approved the law ‘for the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values.’ The law bans the ‘promotion of non-traditional

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163 Kristina Stoeckl, “The Russian Orthodox Church as Moral Norm Entrepreneur,” *Religion, State & Society* 44, no. 2 (2016): 132–151.

164 Resolution 21/3 ‘Promoting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms through a Better Understanding of Traditional Values of Humankind: Best Practices.’ *RightsDoc*, October 2012, see <https://www.right-docs.org/doc/a-hrc-res-21-3/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

165 Reference of the co-researcher, see <https://pravoslavie.ru/64601.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.

166 Sacred Bishops’ Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* (2000), see <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/3/14.aspx>, original Russian version, see [https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/dokumenty/osnovy-sotsialnoj-kontseptsii-russkoj-pravoslavnoj-tserkvi/#0\\_9](https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/dokumenty/osnovy-sotsialnoj-kontseptsii-russkoj-pravoslavnoj-tserkvi/#0_9); *Russian Orthodox Church’s Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights* (2008), see <https://old.mospat.ru/en/documents/dignity-freedom-rights/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

167 *Bases of the Social Concept*, XII.9

sexual relationships to minors.' This 'gay propaganda law' makes it illegal holding any sort of public demonstration in favour of gay rights, to speak in defence of LGBTI rights, and to distribute affirmative material on LGBTI lives or disseminate unbiased information related to LGBTI issues. This affects in particular LGBTI youth, who face great barriers to enjoying their fundamental rights to dignity, mental and physical health, education, information, free speech, and association. The law has increased social hostility and violence against LGBTI persons, and has led to threats to LGBTI human rights activists to stop their activities and even to murder.<sup>168</sup>

Another Federal Law that negatively impacts the rights of LGBTI people is the law on NGOs, requiring them to register as 'foreign agents' with the Ministry of Justice if they receive funding from abroad (2012). LGBTI centres, who often receive support from international donors, have been fined for refusal to register on the 'foreign agent' list. Other centres saw their registration requests refused by the authorities and domestic courts.<sup>169</sup>

## Findings of the RICE research

In ILGA Europe *Annual Review 2020*, Russia is ranked 46<sup>th</sup> out of 49 countries (with a score of 10%). In our research, the Russian Orthodox Church is ranked 43<sup>rd</sup> out of 46. Its total score is extremely low: 2,5. The low score of the church even beats the low score of the country.

The comments of the co-researcher are extensive. With many references and examples, the co-researcher affirms the analyses of other academic studies on the attitudes and policies of the ROC towards LGBTI. The co-researcher underlines that the *Bases of the social concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* is fully in line with the 'gay propaganda' law, which forbids LGBTI teachers to become schoolteachers in any school in order not to spread 'propaganda of homosexuality.' The leaders of the ROC, on the national and regional level, constantly condemn any tolerant practices in educational organisations. Anecdotal evidence is provided: 'The Bishop of Perm and Solikamsk, Irinarch, criticized the modern concept of tolerance: "In this regard, I appeal to all my fellow citizens, heads of educational and cultural institutions, and heads of provincial and city administrations to understand the essence of the problem of imposing tolerance on our people — the danger of this expansion not only for the spiritual and national, but also for state security. We cannot allow our country to be turned into a home of pseudo-spirituality and tolerance!"'<sup>170</sup>

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168 Human Rights Watch, "No Support: Russia's 'Gay Propaganda' Law Imperils LGBT Youth," 11 December 2018, see <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/12/11/no-support/russias-gay-propaganda-law-imperils-lgbt-youth>; accessed 15 April 2021.

169 ILGA Europe, *Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Russia*, 2020, see <https://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/2020/russia.pdf>; accessed 15 April 2021.

170 See <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/556348.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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The ROC intensely and officially participates in discussions related to family values. It supports and facilitates social organisations promoting the exclusiveness of the heteronormative family. Clergy who promote traditional family values often ally with patriotic, nationalist, far-right movements such as the Cossacks. ‘In the Omsk diocese, a round table was held on the theme “Public initiative in support of traditional family values and patriotic education.” The initiators of the event were the “United Cossacks of the Irtysh Region,” an autonomous non-profit pro-life organisation, the Ministry of Labor and Social Development of the Omsk region. The round-table was attended by representatives of the Omsk diocese, priest George Vardugin and head of the sector for work with preschool organisations of the Department of Religious Education and Catechisation Svetlana Barantseva, who was the co-director of the round-table.’<sup>171</sup>

The co-researcher illustrates how the ROC with its public rituals and statements encourages social condemnation of LGBTI people, although in formal documents they do not praise anti-LGBTI violence nor approve the discrimination of LGBTI in their basic human rights: ‘The Moscow Patriarchate supported the protests of Orthodox groups against LGBT propaganda by the US and British embassies, noting that the demonstration of such symbols is “disrespectful to the worldview of many Russian citizens.” High-rank officials of the ROC condemn gay prides. Archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the DECR of the Moscow Patriarchate, stated that LGBT citizens “want to demonstrate their superiority and their own pride” at a “fundamentally destructive” event. “Holding such marches brings confusion and division in society, it always serves to divide people.”’<sup>172</sup>

In particular the language of church leaders is mentioned as stirring hatred and exclusion. ‘The language heard in statements and interviews can be from neutral “homosexuality” to negative “pervert, sodomy” etc. The Patriarch of ROC called same-sex marriages “the end of the world” and corruption of morals.’<sup>173</sup> Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church, called sex correction operations “blasphemy” and “a crime against God.”’<sup>174</sup>

The ROC leaders refuse to acknowledge their own role in the discrimination of LGBTI people, that may incite violence, which the co-researcher illustrates with the following example: ‘As for the increasing number of murders of LGBT citizens in Russia, according to Vladimir Legoyda, Chairman of the Synodal Department for Church Relations with Society and the Media, Christians today are

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171 See <http://nasha-molodezh.ru/blogs/viktor-vlasov/obshhestvennaya-initsiativa-podderzhat-traditsionnyie-семейные-ценности.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.

172 See <https://www.msk.kp.ru/online/news/880703/>; <http://www.xgay.ru/news/rainbow/2017/06/09-36198.htm>, accessed 15 April 2021.

173 See <https://www.ntv.ru/novosti/633297/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

174 See [https://vk.com/wall-38905640\\_621973](https://vk.com/wall-38905640_621973); accessed 15 April 2021.

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killed more often than gays. At the same time, Legoyda refused to accept that the Church's position promotes violence against LGBT people and provokes murder. "The Church does not call for violence, the Church calls for repentance...", he said.<sup>175</sup>

The Russian Orthodox Church backs the legal restrictions and obstacles to LGBTI people to politically organise themselves. The co-researcher refers again to Legoyda, the Chairman of the Synodal Department for Church Relations with Society and Media, who commented on the political organisation of LGBTI people: 'I emphasize that the demonstration of the triumph of vice, which is personified by the activities of LGBT organisations, contradicts the just requirements of morality that have defined the life of our society for many centuries.'<sup>176</sup>

The ROC pushes actively for more legislation to restrict the rights of LGBTI. The ROC has officially announced that it 'categorically does not recognize' same-sex unions and marriages. This is stated in the document 'On the canonical aspects of Church marriage' (2017).<sup>177</sup> In this climate, amendments were proposed by members of the Duma to Russia's Family Code on 'strengthening the institution of the family', which included primarily seeking to ban same-sex marriage and adoption [which in practice already is not possible], and as a further step, barring transgender people from officially changing their gender.<sup>178</sup>

On the issue of conversion therapy, the co-researcher comments that there are no special conversion therapy programs in the ROC. However, some church leaders, including the prominent Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, have proclaimed that the church is able to convert homosexuals.<sup>179</sup>

Obviously, there is an interaction between inclusion/exclusion of LGBTI people inside and outside the church structures. Local situation in the parishes may differ, but in general openly LGBTI persons are not accepted as a full member and participant in the church. Baptism can be denied to them. The co-researcher mentions that in the ROC there exist church-canonical obstacles to performing the Sacrament of Baptism, and among these obstacles are 'homosexual relationships.' The definition of the Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church of June 2008, based on the adopted concept of the ROC's missionary activity, specifies as one of the obstacles to the performance of the Sacrament

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175 See <http://www.xgay.ru/news/rainbow/2016/04/24-33656.htm>; accessed 15 April 2021.

176 See <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1619521.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.

177 "Resolutions of the Holy Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church (29<sup>th</sup> November – 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2017), Resolution 4.2," see <https://mospat.ru/en/news/47917/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

178 "A New Russian Law Could Ban Trans People from Officially Changing Their Gender," *The Moscow Times*, 3 September 2020, see <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/09/03/a-new-russian-law-could-ban-trans-people-from-officially-changing-their-gender-a71217>; accessed 15 April 2021.

179 See <https://snob.ru/profile/32485/blog/168858>; <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/600480>; <https://pravoslavie.ru/59167.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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of Baptism: 'Unwillingness to leave sinful habits and beliefs that are incompatible with the title of a Christian (prostitution, work related to abortion, fornication, striptease, homosexual relationships; all forms of occultism: astrology, divination, ESP, belief in reincarnation, etc.).'<sup>180</sup>

As for clergy ordination, 'sodomy' is mentioned among the obstacles to the priesthood.<sup>181</sup>

Bible and Tradition are plainly used as instruments to condemn LGBTI desires, sexualities, and identities. Official ROC documents and public speeches of its leaders do not reflect or relate to the more nuanced and differentiated interpretation of the sources that is currently voiced in global circles of Orthodox theology, such as in the Social Ethos Document *For the Life of the World* or in the Bridging Voices Consortium Report on *Eastern Orthodoxy & Sexual Diversity*.<sup>182</sup>

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180 See [https://studopedia.net/3\\_45093\\_tserkovno-kanonicheskie-prepyatstviya-k-soversheniyu-tainstva-kreshcheniya.html](https://studopedia.net/3_45093_tserkovno-kanonicheskie-prepyatstviya-k-soversheniyu-tainstva-kreshcheniya.html); accessed 15 April 2021.

181 'Serious sins, the perpetrators of which in the Ancient Church were subject to public repentance, constitute an obstacle to the priesthood. These sins include murder, theft, burial, sacrilege (6 right. Greg. Nyssa.), fornication, adultery, sodomy. The 61<sup>st</sup> Apostolic Canon reads: "If the faithful will be accused of fornication, or of adultery, or any other forbidden deed, and will be convicted: let him not be introduced into the clergy.'" See <https://sedmitza.ru/lib/text/432392/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

182 *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*, drafted in the Orthodox diaspora in America, and adopted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 2020, <https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos>; *Eastern Orthodoxy & Sexual Diversity: Perspectives on Challenges from the Modern West*, edited by Brandon Gallaher & Gregory Tucker, Interim Report of the British Council Bridging Voices Consortium of Exeter University & Fordham University, New York on 'Contemporary Eastern Orthodox Identity and the Challenges of Pluralism and Sexual Diversity in a Secular Age', 2019, 39–60. <https://www.britishcouncil.us/programmes/society/bridging-voices/eastern-orthodoxy>; accessed 15 April 2021.

## 8.3 Poland

New Ways Ministry, a US-based Catholic LGBTI advocacy platform, ranked the worst Catholic LGBTQ news events of 2020. Only one of the events referred to a European country, Poland: '[Roman Catholic] Polish church leaders continue using extreme rhetoric against the LGBTQ community, including the release by the nation's episcopal conference of a document that claims church teaching on homosexuality is infallible and which seemingly endorsed conversion therapy.'<sup>183</sup> This event ranked number one on the list and scored 60% of the votes.

In an editorial comment in December 2020, *The Guardian* suggested that there is growing discrepancy between the Roman Catholic clerical hierarchy and the people in Poland. Polish bishops and prelates have lined up alongside the governing Law and Justice (PiS) party in its culture war against LGBTI rights: 'Poland has at times resembled a theocracy in the heart of the EU.'<sup>184</sup> However, the church's negative policy towards LGBTI issues is doing harm to the life of the RCC. According to survey results that were published in the beginning of November 2020, about two-thirds of Polish people think that the RCC plays a negative role in public life. Of the regular Catholic churchgoers, 50% are negative, and of the Catholics that vote for PiS, about 70% are positive.<sup>185</sup>

In January 2021, Robert Shine (New Ways Ministry) wrote: 'In recent years, Polish [Roman Catholic] church officials have taken an increasingly harsh stance against LGBTQ people, often in conjunction with the nation's ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS) which has made homophobia and transphobia hallmarks of its political platform. (...) In recent years, Poland's episcopal conference issued a document that claimed church teaching on homosexuality was infallible and seemingly endorsed conversion therapy. Some archbishops have suggested that the movement for LGBTQ equality is "the most serious threat to humanity" or that it is a "rainbow plague" comparable to totalitarianism. Other times, church leaders have been slow to condemn violent attacks against Pride marches and remained silent when some Polish towns were declared "LGBT-Free Zones." (...) Poland is, in many ways, an extreme example when it comes to the Catholic Church and LGBTQ issues. (...) Church leaders in other nations should learn from the Polish situation. It is striking that support for the Catholic Church is decreasing so rapidly in a nation where the institution was once-dominant not

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183 Robert Shine, New Ways Ministry, 30 December 2020, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2020/12/30/the-readers-voted-here-are-the-worst-catholic-lgbtq-news-events-of-2020/>; accessed 9 March 2021.

184 *The Guardian*, Editorial, 2 December 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/dec/02/the-guardian-view-on-polands-catholics-losing-faith-in-their-church>; accessed 9 March 2021.

185 *Katholisch.de*, 4 November 2020, [https://www.katholisch.de/artikel/27485-grosse-mehrheit-der-polen-bewertet-katholische-kirche-negativ?utm\\_source=aktuelle-artikel&utm\\_medium=Feed&utm\\_campaign=RSS](https://www.katholisch.de/artikel/27485-grosse-mehrheit-der-polen-bewertet-katholische-kirche-negativ?utm_source=aktuelle-artikel&utm_medium=Feed&utm_campaign=RSS); accessed 9 March 2021.

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only in politics, but in the popular imagination. Poland may be an extreme case, but it is a warning sign that church leaders should be wary of forming alliances with those who win power by targeting LGBTQ people with hate speech and violence.<sup>186</sup>

ILGA-Europe's *Rainbow Map* showed Poland to be the worst country in the European Union for LGBTI people in 2020.<sup>187</sup>

In her first 'state of the union' speech (September 2020), Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, criticized Poland's 'LGBT-free zones.' Polish municipalities across a third of the country have declared themselves zones 'free of LGBT ideology.' Von der Leyen expressed her disapproval of Poland's right-wing nationalist government, which has often hit out at 'LGBT ideology.' 'Being yourself is not your ideology,' Von der Leyen said in the European Parliament in Brussels. 'It's your identity. So, I want to be crystal clear – LGBTQI-free zones are humanity free zones. And they have no place in our union.'<sup>188</sup>

On 2 March 2021, a Polish court acquitted three activists who had been accused of desecration and offending religious feelings for producing and distributing images of a revered Roman Catholic icon altered to include the LGBTI rainbow. The posters used rainbows as halos in an image of the Virgin Mary and the baby Jesus. The activists protested against the hostility of Poland's Catholic church toward LGBTI people. The court did not see evidence of a crime and found that the activists were not motivated by a desire to offend anyone's religious feelings, but rather wanted to defend those facing discrimination. An LGBTI rights group, Love Does Not Exclude, welcomed the ruling as a 'breakthrough,' according to *The Guardian*: 'This is a triumph for the LGBTQ+ resistance movement in the most homophobic country of the European Union.'<sup>189</sup>

On 11 March 2021, the European Parliament passed a resolution declaring the entire EU a 'LGBTIQ freedom zone,' responding to the political situation in Poland.<sup>190</sup>

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186 Robert Shine, New Ways Ministry, 4 January 2020, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2021/01/04/poland-reveals-damage-that-catholic-officials-anti-lgbtq-opposition-does-to-church/>; accessed 9 March 2021.

187 ILGA-Europe, <https://www.rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking>. See also <https://notesfrompoland.com/2020/05/14/poland-ranked-as-worst-country-in-eu-for-lgbt-people/>; accessed 9 March 2021.

188 *The Guardian*, 16 September 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/16/ursula-von-der-leyen-says-polands-lgbt-free-zones-have-no-place-in-eu>; accessed 11 March 2021.

189 *The Guardian*, 2 March 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/02/polish-court-acquits-lgbtq-activists-over-rainbow-icon-poster>; accessed 11 March 2021.

190 *Balkan Insight*, 11 March 2021, <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/03/11/european-parliament-declares-whole-of-eu-an-lgbt-freedom-zone/>; accessed 11 March 2021.



**9. Eastern  
Partnership  
Country Reports:  
Ukraine, Belarus,  
Moldova, Armenia**

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In this chapter, we present reports on the four countries (with their majority churches) that are part of the Eastern Partnership, a joint initiative of European Union and six Eastern European partners governing the EU's economic relationship with the post-Soviet states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The Eastern Partnership was inaugurated by the European Union in 2009.

## 9.1 Ukraine

### Church and state

The constitution of Ukraine protects freedom of religion and provides for the separation of church and state. Due to its complex and divided history, with the Ukrainian lands belonging to different empires from the East and from the West and lacking statehood until 1991, Ukraine nowadays has a multi-confessional landscape. There is no clear majority church. According to the annual national survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre, an independent public policy think-tank, 65% of respondents identify as Orthodox.<sup>191</sup> They belong either to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (newly created in December 2018 and granted autocephaly on 6 January 2019 by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople) or to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. About 9% self-identify as Ukrainian Greek Catholic (UGCC). The picture is completed with a smaller share of Protestant churches, the Roman Catholic church, and Muslim and Jewish communities.

### Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

In the RICE research, we have the results for the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC). It is an Eastern Catholic Church of the Byzantine Rite, in full communion with the Pope and the worldwide Catholic Church. As an Eastern Catholic church, it is distinguished from the Latin (Roman) Catholic Church in its liturgy, spirituality, and partly in its canonical structures. Followers of the UGCC reside

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<sup>191</sup> See <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/UKRAINE-2019-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf>; <https://uars.info/index.php/rs/article/view/1778>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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## EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRY REPORTS

primarily in the western regions of the country (which until WWII belonged to Poland), although nowadays the church understands itself as a church for all Ukrainians and emphasizes its presence in all regions of Ukraine, as well as in the widespread Ukrainian diaspora.

In ILGA Europe's *Annual Review 2020*, Ukraine is ranked 36<sup>th</sup> out of 49, with a total score on achieved human rights for LGBTI of 21%. This might sound not very impressive; however, when one considers that in 2015, Ukraine was only 46<sup>th</sup> out of 49 countries there has been a substantial progress over the last five years. There is a clear upward trend. An important factor for this progress is Ukraine's status as an Eastern Partnership country, which obliges Ukraine to align its legislation with the ethos and provision of the European Union.

The RICE research has a parallel outcome to the ILGA Europe ranking: the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church ranks 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 46 churches. In the family of Catholic Churches (see this report), the UGCC ranks 13<sup>th</sup> out of 20 churches. Its total score of 8 is equal with that of the RCC Netherlands.

The co-researcher from Ukraine used the pre-filled comments of the Roman Catholic Working Group in EF. In the only specific comment he gives, the co-researcher refers to the LGBTI-condemning position of the church. However, he states that 'At the same time in non-official communication, many priests and monks among the UGCC-community are friendly to LGBTI, they even support them personally.' This differentiation between the official position of the church and the personal attitudes and communications of clergy members apparently allows the co-researcher to assign, for a total of 16 indicators, a balanced score of 0,5. This includes, for instance, indicator 29 [The language used by church leaders is inclusive and affirmative towards LGBTI people], 30 [The church's communication on a national level in general constitutes an affirmative environment for LGBTI people], and 36 [The church acknowledges its involvement in the (past and present) discrimination of LGBTI people]. For the latter 0,5 score also, the pastoral statements of Pope Francis (see the pre-filled comments) may have played a role.

## **UGCC's position towards LGBTI people**

In its teaching, the UGCC considers same-sex sexuality and partnerships as unequivocally sinful. In its Catechism *Christ – Our Pascha* (2016, 2018) it is stated that 'sexual activity outside the Mystery of Matrimony, marital infidelity, the destruction of marital fruitfulness through abortion or

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contraception, polygamy and polyandry, *homosexual acts* [emphasis added], and autoeroticism—all of these demean human dignity and are grave sins.<sup>192</sup> Note that the wording ‘homosexual acts’ is used and not ‘homosexuality’. Clearly, the Catechism wants to distinguish the person from the act, ‘loving the sinner and hating the sin.’ *Practicing* homosexuality is where the problem begins. In the words of Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk of the UGCC: ‘I don’t want to judge those persons. I am not against any person. Homosexuals deserve support and loving pastoral care, because the person who is living this type of life, who sins, is wounding and destroying himself. And therefore, the Church is against the sin yet protects the person and his dignity.’<sup>193</sup>

In the discourse of the church, the condemnation of homosexual activity is closely connected to the vehement rejection of ‘gender ideology.’ In 2016 the bishops of the UGCC issued an Encyclical in which they warned against the ‘danger of gender ideology’ because it would destroy Christian faith and morality and universal values: ‘In particular, gender theories are a significant threat today, attempting to destroy the perception of human sexuality as a gift from God that is naturally linked to the biological differences between man and woman, as well as introducing a dangerous disorder to human relationships and attacking the foundations of interpersonal communication.’<sup>194</sup>

In this ‘anti-genderism’ and defence of the essential differences of man and woman in order to uphold a stable, heteronormative, patriarchal cultural order, the reasoning of the bishops of the UGCC has similarities to that of their colleagues of the RCC Poland,<sup>195</sup> and for instance to the Vatican document *Male and Female He Created Them* (2019).<sup>196</sup> But the ‘statement on LGBT’ of the Polish Bishops’ Conference is much more explicitly anti-gay and aggressive in tone. The difference is reflected in the score between RCC Poland (1) and the UGCC (8). Likewise, the difference with the Russian Orthodox Church (score 2,5) is significant.

In sum, the UGCC has a relatively better performance when it comes to LGBTI acceptance than neighbouring churches in the West and in the East. However, the score of 8 is just below average (9) in the family of Catholic Churches. Within the family of Orthodox Churches, the UGCC as an Eastern Christian church would have been ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>, positioned equally with Estonia and after Finland and Serbia.

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192 Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Ukrainian Catholic Church: Christ – Our Pascha* (Kyiv, Edmonton: 2016. Second Edition 2018), Section 863.

193 Interview on 7 June 2013, see [https://risu.ua/en/ukrainian-catholic-patriarch-responds-to-accusation-that-he-is-liberal-on-homosexuality\\_n63411](https://risu.ua/en/ukrainian-catholic-patriarch-responds-to-accusation-that-he-is-liberal-on-homosexuality_n63411); accessed 15 April 2021.

194 “Encyclical of the Synod of Bishops of the Major Archbishopric of Kyiv-Halych of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church regarding the danger of gender ideology,” 1 December 2016, # 2, <https://ugcc.fr/publications/official-documents-ugcc/encyclical-of-the-synod-of-bishops-of-the-major-archbishopric-of-kyiv-halych-of-the-ukrainian-greek-catholic-church-concerning-the-danger-of-gender-ideology/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

195 See in this report par. 5.4, RCC Poland, on the ‘statement on LGBT’ of the Polish Bishops’ Conference, August 2020.

196 “*Male and Female He Created Them.*” *Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education* (Vatican City, 2019).

## **Cooperating churches' position towards LGBTI people**

The UGCC cooperates with other churches in the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations (AUCCRO). All major churches are a member of this Council, including the Jewish and Muslim communities. Through AUCCRO, the churches find a platform of dialogue with the state on issues of common concern, such as freedom of religion and religious education in schools, to influence political and legislative processes. AUCCRO is the main organisation through which the churches fight the battle for 'traditional (family) values.' Already in 2006, AUCCRO issued an 'Open Letter to the Parliament of Ukraine Regarding Efforts to Legalise So-Called Same-Sex Marriages [the Registration of Same-Sex Partnerships]'.<sup>197</sup> It was followed by the 'Declaration of Opposition to the Phenomenon of Homosexuality and Efforts to Legalise So-Called Same-Sex Partnerships' in 2007, addressing Ukrainian society at large.<sup>198</sup> In Ukraine, after the Maidan revolution, discussions intensified as a result of the required amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine and other legal codes set as part of the Association Agreement with the European Union in 2015. Since then, AUCCRO has issued many more declarations calling on the state authorities to refrain from legislation that guarantees and ensures the human rights of LGBTI people in all sectors of society.

The traditionalist movement, to which AUCCRO so far seems to give voice, serves as an attempt at formation of a collective Ukrainian Christian identity. The apparent rhetorical conflict with the European Union on issues of sexuality and gender may serve as a force that unites them against a common enemy (e.g., secularism, liberalism). Second, for the churches, it may reinforce the claim of the churches to social relevance gained through their prominent role in the Maidan protests. This is one of the paradoxes of the Ukrainian churches in a modernising society. While their social (and political) capital continues to draw on their support for Euromaidan's modernising thrust, they are now trying to reinforce it by claiming a role as the guardians of traditional morality.<sup>199</sup>

The picture is that of a society divided between 'traditional' values and the prospects for political modernisation connected to aligning legislation with the values of the European Union. Perhaps the relatively positive score of 8 points for the UGCC reflects such a social-political ambivalence and

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197 AUCCRO, Open Letter 2006, "Vidkrytyi Lyst Do Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainy Z Pryvodu Iniatyiv Lehalizatsii Tak Zvanykh Odnostatevykh Shliubiv (Reiestratsii Odnostatevykh Partnerstv)." In *Sotsial'no Zoriientovani Dokumenty Ukrain's'koi Hreko-Katolyts'koi Tserkvy 1898–2008*, 455–524. (Lviv: Vydavnytstvo Ukrain's'koho Katolyts'koho Universytetu, 2008).

198 AUCCRO, "Deklaratsia Vseukrainskoi Rady Tserkov i Religiiynykh Organizatsii 'Pro Nehatuyvne Stavlennia Do Yavyscha Homoseksualizmu Ta Sprob Lehalizatsii Odnostatevykh Shliubiv (Reiestratsii Odnostatevykh Partnerstv)." VRCIRO, 15 May 2007.

199 Heleen Zorgdrager, "Ukrainian churches in defence of 'traditional values': two case studies and some methodological considerations," *Religion, State & Society* 48, no. 2–3 (2020): 90–106.

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dynamics. It is the dynamics of a post-Maidan church in transition, in the tension between tradition and renewal, still dealing with post-Soviet legacies while feeling the breeze of self-expressionist Western European values. In this dynamic, groups such as LGBTI start to give voice to their concerns and desires. The traditionalist movement is strong, for the UGCC is backed by conservative, anti-genderist Vatican policy, but LGBTI people find some parts of the church as well, above all individual priests and leading intellectuals, ready to listen to them and to engage in a pastoral and constructive dialogue.

## 9.2 Belarus

### Church and state

The constitution grants freedom to profess and practice any religious belief but prohibits religious activities directed against the sovereignty of the state, its constitutional system, and 'civic harmony'. The law recognizes the 'determining role' of the Belarusian Orthodox Church (BOC) in the 'historic establishment and spiritual, cultural and state traditions' development of the Belarusian nation.' The law also acknowledges the historical importance of the 'traditional' faiths of Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, and evangelical Lutheranism. Religious activity by unregistered groups is banned. About 53% of the population adheres to the Belarusian Orthodox Church, an exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church in Belarus. About 15% adheres to the Roman Catholic Church.

The EU cooperates with Belarus in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

EU assistance to Belarus takes mainly the form of country Action Programmes funded every year under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). Engagement with civil society is a prominent feature of EU cooperation in Belarus across all sectors.

### Findings of the RICE research

In ILGA Europe's *Annual Review 2020*, Belarus is ranked 44<sup>th</sup> out of 49 countries. In this *RICE 2020* research, the Belarusian churches also score very low. For Belarus, we have information about the BOC (total score: 5,5) and the RCC (score: 1,5), from the same co-researcher. The BOC has place 37 and RCC Belarus has place 46 out of 47 churches. Within the family of Orthodox churches, BOC is ranked 6 out of 10. Its total score is 5,5. Within the family of RCs, the Belarus Catholic church is ranked 19 out of 20. Its total score is 1,5.

The BOC, as an exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, is guided by the moral teaching of the mother church, as expressed in the *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* (2000) with its explicit condemnation of homosexuality: it is seen as a vicious distortion of the God-created nature of man. While unequivocally condemning homosexuality as a sin, the ROC recognizes

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the right of homosexuals to personal respect and participation in society, but with clear limitations and thus in an ambivalent way: 'While not denying anyone the basic rights to life, respect for personal dignity, and participation in public affairs, the Church believes that those who promote a homosexual lifestyle should not be allowed to teach, educate, or otherwise work among children and youth, nor should they hold positions of authority in the army or correctional institutions' (XII.9).<sup>200</sup>

A Pew Research of August 2017 on the stance of Orthodox believers in Belarus towards marriage rights for gay and lesbian couples shows that Belarus is close to countries such as Russia and Ukraine with high percentage (above 80%) for a negative stance towards equal marriage rights.<sup>201</sup>

## Specific comments of the co-researcher

The co-researcher used the pre-filled comments for the OC and made only one specific comment (with regard to question 43): 'The Belarusian Orthodox Church or its representative have never expressed support to secular or religious forms of family life of LGBTI persons.'

The same co-researcher provided more specific comments for the RCC, next to the pre-filled comments. 1. Local parishes do not have the freedom to make choices that deviate from the national church policy. 2. LGBTI people are free to participate in the Eucharistic life of the church as long as they do not openly admit to not being celibates or disagreeing with restrictive teachings of the Church. 3. The bishops support anti-LGBTI activities of pro-life groups, which are directly represented at the Conference of Bishops. 4. There are no LGBTI advocacy groups in Belarus, but even if there were, they would not be supported by the church hierarchy. 5. The church hierarchy supported a campaign for prohibition of 'gay propaganda' and 'gender ideology.'

From ILGA Europe's resources, we know that anti-genderist groups are active in Belarus. They organise themselves against 'gender ideology', reproductive rights, sex education and LGBTI rights. In 2018 a petition was launched with the support of the Catholic Church, urging the President to protect the traditional family and to ban the propaganda of 'non-traditional' sexual relationships to minors.<sup>202</sup>

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200 Sacred Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* (2000), see <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/3/14.aspx>; accessed 15 April 2021.

201 "Orthodox Christians, Catholics in Central and Eastern Europe see common ground between their religions," Pew Research August 2017, [https://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/08/orthodox-christians-support-key-church-policies-are-lukewarm-toward-reconciling-with-roman-catholic-church/pf\\_11-08-17\\_orthodoxy-03-01/](https://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/08/orthodox-christians-support-key-church-policies-are-lukewarm-toward-reconciling-with-roman-catholic-church/pf_11-08-17_orthodoxy-03-01/); accessed 15 April 2021.

202 *Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of LGBTI People in Belarus*, ILGA Europe, 2019.



In 2019, religious leaders Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz (RCC) and priest Andrei Lemeshonak (BOC), together with the anti-abortion organisation Open Hearts, launched a petition addressed to the Prime Minister to ban 'LGBT propaganda'. A number of orthodox priests distanced themselves from it, and a wide coalition of human rights NGOs, LGBTI organisations, and others criticized it.<sup>203</sup>

## Political, legal, and social context

Civil protests in Belarus broke out on 9 August 2020, following the national elections which Alexander Lukashenko claimed to have won. While Belarusian women have been key voices of dissent as leaders of the opposition, LGBTI people and activists have also participated in and supported the protests from the beginning. Several LGBTI rights activists have been arrested and detained in the course of events.<sup>204</sup>

The churches in Belarus were rarely visible at political protests in the past, but this changed abruptly in 2020. Both before and after the presidential election in August, a number of church representatives adopted a critical stance on the country's politics. Regina Elsner, analyst at ZOiS Berlin, calls it 'a remarkable development in several respects.'<sup>205</sup> Belarus is less religious than other post-Soviet countries. Although the majority of the population self-identifies as Orthodox, the Belarusian Orthodox Church has less cultural significance and less lobbying power than its Russian and Ukrainian counterpart. The Roman Catholic Church has a fairly high public profile, but does not aspire to represent national identity. At the forefront of the Orthodox and Catholic clergy and people's participation in the protests are fundamental ethical demands for non-violence, liberty, and truth, free from political slogans or hostile images. The active ecumenical participation in the work of the Coordination Council is also remarkable in that respect.

Within the BOC, and also within the RCC, there are high-ranking church leaders in favour of Russia and the incumbent regime, and there are those who publicly supported anti-government rallies, and so did many younger-generation Orthodox priests.<sup>206</sup> In August 2020, the ROC appointed bishop Veniamin, a native Belarusian and explicitly loyal to the Patriarch of Moscow, as the new exarch of Belarus, after dismissing the predecessor Metropolitan Pavel for being too much weaving between the political camps.<sup>207</sup>

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203 *Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of LGBTI People in Belarus*, ILGA Europe, 2020.

204 *Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of LGBTI People in Belarus*, ILGA Europe, 2020.

205 Regina Elsner, "Churches and protest in Belarus: activism or liberation theology?" *ZOiS Spotlight 2/2021*, 20 January 2021, see <https://en.zois-berlin.de/publications/churches-and-protest-in-belarus-activism-or-liberation-theology/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

206 Cyril Hovorun, "The Belarusian Protests and the Orthodox Church," 28 August 2020, <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/the-belarusian-protests-and-the-orthodox-church/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

207 See <https://warsawinstitute.org/moscow-appoints-new-head-belarusian-orthodox-church/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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We can only wonder what the awakening of the Christian protest voice might imply in future for the churches' dealing with human rights of LGBTI people. It is foreseeable that the rather isolated situation of Belarus will change through the increase of international attention and support, and not least through the enormous increase in communication possibilities through social media.

In Belarus, as in all countries of the former Soviet Union, the influence of new technologies has an impact on LGBTI emancipation and visibility. In Belarus, political mobilisation and participation and freedom of expression have been enhanced due to social media developments. On the other hand, studies also identify the current challenges to LGBTI human rights in Belarus in terms of increasing hate speech online, media manipulation, and the spreading of disinformation.<sup>208</sup> The narratives of LGBTI persons and groups in Belarus are complex combinations reflecting a situation where native (post-Soviet) and imported (Western) phenomena undergo mutual restructuring, blending into one another and co-existing simultaneously in different combinations within one culture at a particular point of time.<sup>209</sup> In these social, political and cultural exciting dynamics, LGBTI emancipation takes place.

## Conclusion

Our data support the findings of other researchers: both the BOC and the RCC in Belarus on the whole show a non-inclusive attitude towards LGBTI people. Some hope for change can be drawn from the fact that the BOC has a 0,5 score on indicator 38 (public statements on safety) and on indicator 39 (public statements on freedom of religion). Local and regional differences within the churches may grant more space for LGBTI lives and desires, as can also be expected from the country's broader socio-political transitional process in which individual clergy persons and many faithful, including LGBTI people, take actively part.

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208 A. Abdubachaeva, K. Vavrik, K. Ayvazyan, M. Mkrtchyan & Y. Nosik, "Sustaining human rights in the era of new technologies: Case studies of Armenia, Belarus and the Kyrgyz Republic," *Global Campus Human Rights Journal* (2019) 3, 286–311, <https://doi.org/20.500.11825/1574>; accessed 15 April 2021.

209 Galina Miazhevich, "Negotiating non-heteronormative identities in post-Soviet Belarus and Lithuania," in Richard Mole, ed. *Soviet and Post-Soviet Sexualities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019). Chapter 10.

## 9.3 Moldova

### Church and state

The Moldovan Orthodox Church is the majority church in the country. MOC is a self-governing (autonomous) church under the Russian Orthodox Church. Its official name is Metropolis of Chisinau and All Moldova, to be distinguished from the Metropolis of Bessarabia, also referred to as the Bessarabian Orthodox Church, a self-governing body under the Romanian Orthodox Church. According to the census of 2014, 90% of the population adheres to Eastern Orthodoxy; the large majority of Moldova population, about 80%, belongs to the Moldovan Orthodox Church.

### Findings of the RICE research

In this research, the MOC has a total score of 6, whereas its Russian 'mother church' has the lowest total score (2,5) of the Eastern Orthodox churches. What might explain the difference?

If we look at the indicators for which MOC has a 0,5 and ROC 0, we find indicator 3 (theology), 4 (Bible), 10 and 11 (no obstacles to Baptism), 14 (admission to seminary), 18 (women involved in policy making), 24 (social ministry includes LGBTI people), 39 (freedom of religion), 41 (gender related rights), 43 (kinship related rights).

The co-researcher from Moldova doesn't provide specific comments, but uses the pre-filled comments from the Orthodox Working Group in EF. For instance, for indicator 14, the comment is

'Some Orthodox seminaries and other ecclesiastical institutions admit women for theological education and training for certain ministries that are not recognised by ritual ordination (e.g., children's ministry, choir direction, hospital chaplaincy). LGB persons could be admitted but would always be expected to be celibate and usually not open about their identity. Trans persons would usually not find it possible to attend.'

And for indicator 24:

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‘The Orthodox Church would not provide LGBTQ+ affirmative services. Other services (e.g., homeless support) would probably be offered without discussion of sexuality or gender, although it could be a problem if the person involved raised this issue.’

For almost all indicators, the co-researcher from Moldova is convergent with the pre-filled scores and comments of the Orthodox Working Group. From this, we cannot yet draw any explanation for the relatively higher score of MOC in comparison to ROC. We have to search for other explaining factors.

## Attitudes towards LGBTI in Moldova

Moldova is no exception to the Central and Eastern Europe countries which in general hold traditional viewpoints on social issues. Moldova is a very traditional and conservative society. According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in Central and Eastern Europe Countries in May 2017, 92% of Moldovans believed that homosexuality should not be accepted by society (see the figure).<sup>210</sup> Here it is third in rank with a non-inclusive attitude after Armenia and Georgia, and followed by Russia with 86%. According to the same survey, only 5% of Moldovans would support same-sex marriages.

The MOC is an influential force in shaping moral and political attitudes. It publicly supports pro-heteronormative family organisations, calls on the government to ban LGBTI marches, and supports campaigns in local municipalities for banning ‘homosexual propaganda.’ Dissident voices are not tolerated. On multiple occasions during the year, President Dodon voiced support for the Orthodox faith and the MOC. For example, on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Russian Patriarch Kirill’s enthronement in Moscow, President Dodon said, ‘Moldovan people would always keep unity with the Russian Orthodox Church...’ During his meeting with Patriarch Kirill in Moscow in April 2019, President Dodon said, ‘Orthodoxy was and will always be one of Moldovan statehood’s pillars and keeping and strengthening traditional values is our primary task.’<sup>211</sup>

In June 2018, MOC hierarchy suspended a local priest, Maxim Melinti, who spoke publicly against the involvement of the church in politics, in particular when the church and the pro-Russian President Dodon organised many events and festivals in support of the traditional family and against same-sex marriages.<sup>212</sup> According to the official church decree, Melinti’s ‘activities were aimed “at disturbing and

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210 See <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/05/10/social-views-and-morality/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

211 See <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/moldova/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

212 See <https://www.rferl.org/a/moldovan-church-priest-melinti-lgbt-suspended/29321830.html>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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overthrowing the good church order” through repeated actions promoting and encouraging sexual minorities, contributing to the development of the LGBT movement in the Republic of Moldova.<sup>213</sup>

The explanation for the relatively higher score of the MOC compared to the ROC cannot be based on church-internal factors, but has to be found in church-external factors. The different political context might be a variable that effects a slightly better climate for LGBTI Christians in Moldova. Moldova has the status of an Eastern Partnership country of the European Union, which requires the state to bring its legislation in accord with the EU standards. How this can work out is illustrated by the following example. In 2013, the Parliament of Moldova passed a bill which bans the propaganda of prostitution, paedophilia and ‘any other relations than those related to marriage and family in accordance with the Constitution and the Family Code.’ It was very similar to the Russian law on ‘homosexual propaganda’ of the same year. The Moldovan bill was signed into law on 5 July 2013 and came into effect on 12 July 2013. Only a few months later, on 11 October 2013, the Moldovan Parliament abolished the law banning ‘homosexual propaganda.’ The Venice Commission of the EU had declared the law incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights, and so did the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly.<sup>214</sup>

## Progress in level of inclusivity

There is a slight upward trend in the human rights situation for LGBTI in the Republic of Moldova, compared to Russia.

ILGA-EUROPE ANNUAL REVIEW	MOLDOVA	RUSSIA
2012	rank 49 (shared position)	rank 49 (shared position)
2018	rank 43	rank 45
2020	rank 39	rank 46

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213 “Outrageous Sins: Moldovan Church Sidelines Priest In Spat Over LGBT Support,” see <https://mitropolia.md/prot-maxim-melinti-parohul-bisericii-acoperamantul-maicii-domnului-din-s-ghidighici-mun-chisinau-este-oprit-de-a-oficia-cele-sfinte/>, accessed 15 April 2021.

214 See <https://www.ilga-europe.org/resources/news/latest-news/moldova-must-strike-down-law-banning-homosexual-propaganda>, accessed 15 April 2021.

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In our RICE 2020 research on LGBTI inclusivity of churches, both MOC and ROC correspond to a large extent with ILGA Europe's Rainbow Map: the Moldovan Orthodox Church is ranked 35<sup>th</sup> and the Russian Orthodox Church 45<sup>th</sup> out of 47 countries. Like the country, the Moldovan Orthodox Church shows evidence of slight progress in inclusivity.

## 9.5 Armenia

### Church and state

The Armenian Apostolic Church (AAC), part of Oriental Orthodoxy, is the national church of the Armenian people. It is one of the most ancient Christian institutions. Armenia's identity is strongly connected to Christianity, as both a religious and a cultural identification. With over 1700 years of Christian history, Christianity has become a part of Armenia's ethnic-national identity. Also, atheists may consider themselves as belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church.<sup>215</sup>

Although its Constitution makes Armenia a secular country and separates church and state, the Armenian Apostolic Church is still perceived as a state church. Article 8.1 of the Constitution reads: 'The church shall be separate from the State in the Republic of Armenia. The Republic of Armenia recognizes the exclusive historical mission of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church as a national church, in the spiritual life, development of the national culture and preservation of the national identity of the people of Armenia.'<sup>216</sup>

About 92% of the population belongs to the Armenian Apostolic Church. Small Roman Catholic and Protestant communities exist also in Armenia. Armenia has signed on to all international conventions guaranteeing religious freedom.

### Ranking of AAC in RICE 2020

In the ILGA-Europe country ranking, Armenia is ranked 47 out of 49 (score 7%), just after Russia, and leaving Turkey and Azerbaijan behind. The *RICE* ranking corresponds with this. The Armenian Apostolic Church is listed 43 out of 46 churches (total score: 3).

The *RICE* co-researcher for the AAC is from the New Generation Humanitarian NGO that presents itself as 'a non-governmental organisation established in 1998. Its activity is based on humanitarian

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215 Hranush Kharatyan, "Religion and the Secular State in Armenia," see <http://iclrs.org/content/blurb/files/Armenia.pdf>; Yulia Antonyan, "Religiosity and Religious Identity in Armenia: Some Current Models and Developments," *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, 56/2, 2011, 315–332, see <https://akjournals.com/view/journals/022/56/2/article-p315.xml>; accessed 15 April 2021.

216 Kharatyan, "Religion and the Secular State," 79.

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principles to contribute to the regulation of the issues and problems of the society, and in particular the issues that vulnerable groups face in the society.<sup>217</sup> Among these vulnerable groups, explicitly LGBTI people are mentioned. The New Generation Humanitarian NGO was ready to assist at the organisation of the 2018 Forum of LGBT Christians of Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Yerevan. However, several mass media outlets, political forces and civic unions began speaking and publishing materials about the LGBT Christian Forum that was to take place. Due to the created situation that endangered the safety of NGO staff members, New Generation Humanitarian NGO was forced to temporarily cease their normal working process and draw the attention of local and international institutions on the hate speech and the bias-motivated violence. With many other human rights activists, they issued a 'Statement on Cancellation of the Forum of LGBT Christians of Eastern Europe and Central Asia' on 9 November 2019.<sup>218</sup>

This incident illustrates the situation of LGBTI people in Armenia. Dozens of cases are reported of physical and sexual violence against LGBTI people annually, and despite an article law added to the Criminal Code criminalizing 'calling for, justifying, or promoting violence against a particular group' (Art. 226.2), hate speech continues.<sup>219</sup>

## Specific comments of the co-researcher

The co-researcher has a few specific comments. On indicator 7: 'Church officially condemns homosexuality.' On indicator 9 ('Space for local parishes to have discussions and establish their own policy'): 'No official restrictions but such existing in verbal forms.' On indicator 30 there is the reference to a message on the official website of the Armenian Apostolic Church, in which New Generation Humanitarian NGO is sharply accused of 'deliberate distortion of and lying about Christian beliefs and violation of the rights of the faithful of the Church' because of its 'Statement on Cancellation of the Forum of LGBT Christians.'<sup>220</sup>

It is telling that in comparison to the eight Eastern Orthodox churches in the *RICE* research, who all have a 0,5 score on indicator 38 ('The church made public statements in regard to the right to

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217 See <https://ngngo.net/en/home/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

218 See <https://ngngo.net/en/2019/11/09/s-t-a-t-e-m-e-n-t-on-cancellation-of-the-forum-of-lgbt-christians-of-eastern-europe-and-central-asia/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

219 ILGA Europe, *Annual review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex People in Armenia 2020*, see <https://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/Armenia.pdf>; accessed 15 April 2021.

220 See <https://www.gahana.am/am/christian/show/127041247>; accessed 15 April 2021.



safety of LGBTI people'), for the AAC, the score is zero. From the side of the hierarchy, there is no public protection of LGBTI people.

Also, for indicator 24 (social ministry to LGBTI people), the score is zero, where most Eastern Orthodox churches have 0,5. The vacuum that the church is leaving here is filled by NGOs. The LGBTI NGO Pink Armenia provided social support to LGBTI people when lockdown measures because of COVID-19 deprived them of their income and ability to cover the costs of food, housing, and healthcare. Right Side NGO supported 400 trans people with food, medicine, access to healthcare and financial support for rent costs.<sup>221</sup>

## **Influence of the Church on anti-LGBTI sentiments**

The level of religiosity of a country is an important determinant of the level of acceptance of homosexuality in the society. A survey conducted in November-December 2015 in Yerevan and all regions of Armenia showed that 90% of Armenia's population is against LGBTI people, agreeing that their rights should be limited through legal means.<sup>222</sup> The report acknowledges that the acceptance of homosexuality depends highly on the religious situation. The AAC is seen as an authority for the majority of the people. The CRRC Caucasus Barometer annual survey 2018 showed that the army and religious institutions are the most trusted establishments, with 80% of respondents having confidence in the AAC and other religious institutions.<sup>223</sup>

Clergy members over the years have frequently made negative statements regarding LGBTI persons in public. Through the media, they portray LGBTI people as a threat to Armenian society. The approach of the Church towards homosexuality in general is that the notion has been imported to Armenia by 'Western powers' aiming to destroy Armenian traditions and values. Besides being seen as 'a disease to be treated', it is considered abnormal from traditional understanding of morality and family. Representatives from LGBTI NGOs highlight the influence of the church together with a

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221 ILGA Europe, Annual Review Armenia 2020.

222 Pink Armenia in collaboration with the Heinrich Böll Foundation's South Caucasus office, *From Prejudice to Equality: Study of Societal Attitudes Toward LGBTI People in Armenia*, (Yerevan, 2016), see [https://issuu.com/pinkarmenia/docs/from\\_prejudice\\_to\\_equality\\_english](https://issuu.com/pinkarmenia/docs/from_prejudice_to_equality_english); accessed 15 April 2021.

223 See <https://www.civilnet.am/news/201801/two-years-after-velvet-revolution-armenia-sees-increased-public-trust-in-institutions/>; Caucasus Research Resource Centre, "Caucasus Barometer 2019," <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2019am/factsheet/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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societal legacy of uniformity as important factors in relation to the current anti-LGBTI sentiment.<sup>224</sup> Ethnographic research by Tamar Shirinian in the period between 2010 and 2013 showed that queer groups in Armenia create ‘*alternative spaces*’ which make difference possible but also reproduce the nation’s norms by containing that difference in interior queer life-worlds. The researcher suggests, however, that these spaces also have the potential of redefining ‘Armenianness’ as they bring alterity into the larger space of nation.<sup>225</sup>

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224 The Danish Institute for Human Rights, Study on Homophobia, Transphobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, *Sociological Report: Armenia, 2010*, see [https://www.coe.int/t/Commissioner/Source/LGBT/ArmeniaSociological\\_E.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/Commissioner/Source/LGBT/ArmeniaSociological_E.pdf), accessed 15 April 2021.

225 Tamar Shirinian, “Queer Life-Worlds in Postsocialist Armenia: *Alternativ Space* and the Possibilities of In/Visibilities,” *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ World-making* 5 (1) 2019, 1–23.

# **10. Northern and Western Europe Country Reports: Sweden, Germany, Switzerland**

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# 10.1 Sweden

Sweden legalized same-sex marriage in 2009. On the 2020 ILGA-Europe's ranking, Sweden has the same score as the Netherlands, but lower than Belgium, Norway, France, Spain, Portugal, Finland, and the UK.<sup>226</sup> On the Eurobarometer 2019, Sweden's citizens present themselves as the most progressives in Europe on equal LGBTI rights, with the exception of rights for trans people, on which Malta and Spain score better.<sup>227</sup>

EU COUNTRIES	SAME RIGHTS LGB (% AGREE)	NOTHING WRONG WITH SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIP (% AGREE)	SAME-SEX MARRIAGE ALLOWED (% AGREE)	TRANSGENDER AND MATCHING CIVIL DOCUMENTS (% AGREE)
Sweden	98	95	92	69

ELC Sweden, or the Church of Sweden, is the national church, and was until 2000 the state church. ELC Sweden is still the majority church, representing about six out of 10 Swedes. It is also the largest Lutheran denomination in Europe. Next to the MCC Finland, ELC Sweden is the highest-scoring (41,5) church in our research.

The co-researcher presented us with substantial information on the ELC Sweden, which can be summarized as follows.

1. As one of the biggest Lutheran churches in the world, ELC Sweden included a gender-neutral liturgy of marriage in their book of worship in 2017.
2. The Church has a gender policy, and every four years, there is an equality letter written for the General Synod. This letter (since 2020) includes trans perspectives.
3. The church works with the *Rainbow Key*, a LGBTI labelling guaranteeing that elected representatives and employees in a parish go through the process for a more inclusive church and actively work towards diversity and openness. As the last step, the parish develops a diversity vision and gets it approved from the central board of the *Rainbow Key*. The vision

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226 ILGA-Europe, <https://www.rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking>; accessed 9 March 2021.

227 European Union, *Discrimination in the European Union*. Special Eurobarometer 493, Fieldwork May 2019, Publication October 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/yearFrom/1974/yearTo/2019/surveyKy/2251>; accessed 21 March 2021.

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should tell how the parish will work actively with diversity and inclusion both practically and theologically. After approval, the parish receives the LGBTI label *Rainbow Key* in a ceremony. The process takes about 6 months up to one year.

4. In 2005, the synod decided to introduce a blessing ceremony for a registered partnership.<sup>228</sup> The synod also distanced itself from condemnation, accusation, and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation: 1. The Church has committed itself to actively combat discrimination against persons on the grounds of sexual orientation. 2. The Church of Sweden should not sanction or run an organised activity in order to 'cure' homosexuals from their disposition. 3. Homosexual orientation, or a life of partnership, is not a motive for refusing to be ordained to church service.
5. Sweden has a very strong anti-discrimination legislation which includes the church, as any other employer.
6. The church works with LGBTI organisations in its national and international work and stands for those collaborations and partnerships. The church participates in Pride events.
7. There is a strong 'Sexual and reproductive health and rights' and 'Gender justice' policy in the international ecumenical affairs and political advocacy of the church that speaks to bodily integrity.

It is important to know that a marriage sanctioned in the church, without the interference of a civil servant, is a legal marriage in Sweden. The discussion in the church was not about what kind of blessing the church offers to couples, but if the church wants to legalize a same-sex marriage with its wedding ritual.

In 2009, some months after the legalisation of same-sex marriages, the synod of the ELC decided to conduct wedding ceremonies for both heterosexual and homosexual couples. 'The Synod's decision takes a stance in favour of an inclusive view of people. Regardless of whether one is religious or not, this affects the entire social climate and the view of people's equal value,' according to a spokesperson of the country's largest gay rights group. However, individual pastors may still refuse to perform marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples. Representatives from the Catholic and Orthodox churches in Sweden expressed their disappointment about the decision. 'It is with great sorry that we receive news that the Church of Sweden's Synod has today decided to wed same-sex couples that it will be referred to as marriage. This is a step backwards, not only from Christian tradition,

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228 See [https://km.svenskakyrkan.se/tcrot/km/2005/skrivelser/i\\_KsSkr\\_2005-9\\_Samlevnadsfragor.shtml.html](https://km.svenskakyrkan.se/tcrot/km/2005/skrivelser/i_KsSkr_2005-9_Samlevnadsfragor.shtml.html); accessed 30 March 2021.

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but also from all of the major world's religions views of what marriage is,' declared representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the family of Orthodox Churches in a joint statement. 'We don't wed same-sex couples in our churches and faith communities because doing so stands in clear opposition to the church's tradition and to our entire view of creation.' In moving ahead with the decision to perform same-sex marriages, the Church of Sweden also ignored concerns expressed earlier this year by the Church of England in a strongly worded letter to Swedish Archbishop Anders Wejryd that the move could lead to 'an impairment of the relationships between the churches.'<sup>229</sup> There was also strong resistance to the 2009 'liberal' decision from within the ELC. Already in 2005, more than 800 priests had signed a letter in which they rejected same-sex marriage. This opposition was fired up in 2009 by a campaign that started in the free churches.<sup>230</sup>

However, the decision by the church in 2005 was crucial and would finally lead to the wedding ceremony in 2009: the 'gay agenda' won. The theological issues and views on sexuality ('genuine' homosexuality [i.e., not sinful] as opposed to promiscuous homosexuality) that laid the basis for the 2005 decision were not changed in 2009.<sup>231</sup>

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229 *The Local.se*, 22 October 2009, <https://www.thelocal.se/20091022/22810/>; accessed 30 March 2021.

230 Mariecke van den Berg (2017) 'Rings for the rainbow family: religious opposition to the introduction of same-sex marriage in Sweden,' *Theology & Sexuality*, 23:3, 229–244; DOI: 10.1080/13558358.2017.1351125.

231 Daniel Enstedt (2015), 'Blessing same-sex unions and the invention of a 'genuine homosexuality' in the Church of Sweden,' *Sexualities* vol. 18(5/6), 564–592.

## 10.2 Germany

Same-sex marriage has been legal in Germany since 1 October 2017. In May 2020, Germany became the fifth nation in the world to enact a nationwide ban on conversion therapy for people younger than 18, next to Malta (in Europe).<sup>232</sup>

On the Eurobarometer 2019, Germany’s citizens score rather high on the equality of rights for LGBTI people.<sup>233</sup> Compared to the Eurobarometer 2015 results, Germany shows the largest increase in scores on LGBTI rights equality. The Germans are catching up, which is clearly demonstrated in the legalisation of same-sex marriage and the ban on conversion therapy.

EU COUNTRIES	SAME RIGHTS LGB (% AGREE)	NOTHING WRONG WITH SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIP (% AGREE)	SAME-SEX MARRIAGE ALLOWED (% AGREE)	TRANSGENDER AND MATCHING CIVIL DOCUMENTS (% AGREE)
Germany	88	86	84	70

However, on ILGA-Europe’s country ranking 2020, Germany ranks in the middle of all the countries (51%), just above Austria, and below Ireland, Netherlands, Sweden, the UK, and nine other higher-scoring countries.<sup>234</sup> There is still some homework for the German government in improving the laws and regulations on the level of the federation as well as on the level of the regions.

When the *Bundestag* voted in June 2017 in favour of same-sex marriage, the majority of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) voted against the proposal. However, a quarter of the CDU parliamentarians said ‘Yes’.<sup>235</sup> In the federal elections in September 2017, the ruling CDU and Social Democratic Party (SDP) both lost heavily, about a fifth of their parliament’s seats. The right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD) was the newcomer in parliament, with 13% of the votes. AfD, the first far-right party to win seats in parliament since the 1950s, is opposed to full LGBTI rights and same-sex marriage.

<sup>232</sup> Federal Ministry of Health, <https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/en/press/2020/conversion-treatments.html>; accessed 29 March 2021.

<sup>233</sup> European Union, *Discrimination in the European Union*. Special Eurobarometer 493, Fieldwork May 2019, Publication October 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/yearFrom/1974/yearTo/2019/surveyKy/2251>; accessed 21 March 2021.

<sup>234</sup> ILGA-Europe, <https://www.rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking>; accessed 9 March 2021.

<sup>235</sup> *Welt*, 30 June 2017, <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article166099805/Diese-Unionsabgeordneten-stimmten-fuer-die-Ehe-fuer-alle.html>; accessed 2 April 2021.

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Germany is a federal state and comprises 16 constituent states, which are collectively referred to as *Bundesländer* (federated states). Each state has its own constitution and is largely autonomous in regard to its internal organisation. The main Christian denominations are also structured by historically developed regional divisions, which do not completely coincide with the dividing lines of the federated states. The Roman Catholic Church has 7 ecclesiastical provinces (archdioceses) and 27 dioceses. The Evangelical Church is a federation of 20 independent churches with their own synods.

The German federal constitution provides for freedom of faith and conscience and the freedom to practice one's religion. It prohibits an official state church.<sup>236</sup> There is a special partnership between federated states and religious groups with a 'public law corporation' status. Federated state governments subsidize institutions with this legal status, like the RCC and the EKD, which provide public services (religious schools and hospitals). All state governments, except for Bremen and Hamburg, subsidize the RCC and the EKD.

Although Germany does not have a majority church, Christianity is the largest religion in Germany. In 2019, 55% of Germans belonged to a Christian denomination; the Roman Catholic Church had 22,6 million church members, the Evangelical Church 20,7 million, the Orthodox Church 1,5 million, and the other churches together about one million.<sup>237</sup> The two largest Christian denominations are not equally distributed over the country. The *Bundesländer* in Eastern Germany are predominately unaffiliated to any institutional religion. Roman Catholics are the majority in the federated states of Nordrhein-Westfalen, Bayern, and Saarland, while Protestants constitute the majority in Schleswig-Holstein, Bremen, Niedersachsen, and Hessen.<sup>238</sup>

Our research gathered the scores for the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) (score: 35,5) and the RCC Germany (25).

## EKD

For the EKD, we only have the scores and no specific comments, because, as the co-researcher stated, 'The Protestant Church in Germany is organised regionally into 20 regional churches (in contrast to all other Protestant churches in Europe) and thus much too differentiated.' Nevertheless, the co-researcher also stated that he could give 'the points relatively safely.'

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236 U.S. Department of State, *2019 Report on International Religious Freedom*, June 2020, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/>; accessed 18 February 2021.

237 EKD, *Gezählt 2020. Zahlen und Fakten zum kirchlichen Leben*, July 2020, [https://www.ekd.de/ekd\\_de/ds\\_doc/Gezaehlt\\_zahlen\\_und\\_fakten\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ekd.de/ekd_de/ds_doc/Gezaehlt_zahlen_und_fakten_2020.pdf).

238 *Zensus Datenbank 2011*, <https://ergebnisse2011.zensus2022.de/datenbank/online>; accessed 2 April 2021.



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Since 2014, Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm is the Chair of the Council, and the legal representative, of the EKD. The EKD is a federal church consisting of 20 regional churches ('Landeskirchen').<sup>239</sup> Bedford-Strohm is an advocate for equal rights for LGBTI people in the EKD. Even before he became the Council's Chair, he made a plea for the blessing of same-sex marriages in the church.<sup>240</sup> Bedford-Strohm's statements were still controversial in 2014, even though the EKD declared in 2013, in its study report *Between Autonomy and Dependency*,<sup>241</sup> that theologically speaking, there is no difference between a marriage and a same-sex union.<sup>242</sup> In 2016, the Synods of the regional churches in the Rhineland, Hesse-Nassau, Baden, and Berlin-Brandenburg agreed to give same-sex civil partners exactly the same ceremony as heterosexual married couples.<sup>243</sup> Other regional churches followed, with the result that in most *Landeskirchen*, there is just one ceremony for a marriage in church. Württemberg is the exception within the EKD, where a blessing of a same-sex relationship is only possible if the local congregation agrees.<sup>244</sup>

Leaders in the EKD reacted positively to the state's legalisation of same-sex marriage in 2017. The representative of the church in Hesse-Nassau, Volker Jung, stated that this meant the end of a long history of discrimination. 'Incorporating same-sex marriage in the Constitution makes marriage a safe place for any relationship that is built on mutual trust, responsibility and dependency', according to Jung.<sup>245</sup>

## RCC

RCC Germany is the highest-scoring RCC. The co-researcher provided us with detailed comments on the situation of the RCC in Germany. RCC Germany does not differ from other RCCs when it comes to recognizing the marital status and issues of gender and sexual identity, because that is part of the policy of the universal church. The church upholds the Catholic norm of having sex within the frame of (heterosexual) marital fidelity. The church also admits only cis men to seminaries, and when a seminarian's homosexual orientation or practice becomes public, he might be sent away

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239 See [https://www.ekd.de/ekd\\_en/ds\\_doc/The\\_Evangelical\\_Church\\_in\\_Germany.pdf](https://www.ekd.de/ekd_en/ds_doc/The_Evangelical_Church_in_Germany.pdf).

240 *Queer.de*, 11 November 2014, [https://www.queer.de/detail.php?article\\_id=22677](https://www.queer.de/detail.php?article_id=22677); accessed 29 March 2021. The 2014 article mentions that the regional churches have different policies. In Hessen, LG couples can marry in the church, while the church in Württemberg fires ministers because they are gay.

241 *Zwischen Autonomie und Angewiesenheit Familie als verlässliche Gemeinschaft stärken* (2013). See [https://www.ekd.de/ekd\\_de/ds\\_doc/20130617\\_familie\\_als\\_verlaessliche\\_gemeinschaft.pdf](https://www.ekd.de/ekd_de/ds_doc/20130617_familie_als_verlaessliche_gemeinschaft.pdf).

242 *Queer.de*, 20 June 2013, [https://www.queer.de/detail.php?article\\_id=19473](https://www.queer.de/detail.php?article_id=19473); accessed 29 March 2021.

243 *The Local.de*, 12 August 2016, <https://www.thelocal.de/20160812/first-gay-wedding-in-berlin-protestant-church/>; accessed 29 March 2021.

244 *Evangelisch.de*, 23 November 2020, <https://www.evangelisch.de/inhalte/111225/20-11-2014/segnung-homosexueller-bunt-wie-ein-regenbogen>; accessed 29 March 2021.

245 EKD, 30 June 2017, <https://www.ekd.de/EKD-Ehe-fuer-alle-Abstimmung-Bundestag-24425.htm>; accessed 29 March 2021.

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from seminary. However, there are some aspects that make this church stand out when it comes to LGBTI inclusivity. 1. The RCC in Germany has a dual structure. Besides the hierarchical church, to which the church law (Codex Iuris Canonici) applies and which is not interested in diversity of leadership, there is the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK), in which all lay members are organised, representing together more than 99% of Catholics. The dual structure of the church and the involvement of Catholic associations encourages a lively discussion in the church on becoming a more welcoming and affirmative church for gays and lesbians. 2. The church is currently in the midst of a synod that addresses equality of women, as well as a new evaluation of same-sex relationships and relationships of trans people (see below). Many bishops and lay leaders have made positive and respectful statements about finding a more welcoming and affirmative attitude towards LG people. A minority of the bishops sticks to the understanding that same-sex sexual relationships are evil. 3. The strong tendency in the mainstream of German society to avoid discrimination and promoting human rights affects the members of the church, and also the church hierarchy. 4. The church respects the political decisions and rights of the German state, for example, the right to define (same-sex) marriage. 5. Based on the principle of non-discrimination and the principle of loving your neighbour, the church is against criminalisation, hate speech, and hate crimes and any kind of discrimination and conversion therapy, and affirms the freedom of religion and conscience for everybody.

Bishop George Bätzing of Limburg, presiding over the German Conference of Bishops (DBK), expressed his disappointment with the Vatican's March 2021 statement banning the blessing of same-gender unions.<sup>246</sup> Spring 2019, the German bishops started a 'Synodal Path' to work in dialogue with all the faithful on a reformation of the church. In this process, the church reflects on the abuse of power, sexual morality, celibacy, and the role of women in the church.<sup>247</sup> The negative response by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to blessing same-sex unions, however, seems to thwart the reformation in the DBK. Bishop Bätzing said he was not happy, neither with the Vatican's massive statement nor its timing. Although there were bishops who agreed with the statement, Bätzing's disappointment was shared strongly by the president of the ZdK, by the Catholic Women's Community in Germany (KFD), and by the Catholic Women Association (KDFB). According to *New Ways Ministry*, Catholics in Germany and Austria have in recent years been increasingly open to a discussion about blessing same-sex unions. Last year, a working document for the 'Synodal Path' spoke positively of same-gender relationships, and the Archdiocese of Salzburg, Austria, published a book on the topic of blessings.<sup>248</sup>

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246 *Katholisch.de*, 15 March 2021, <https://www.katholisch.de/artikel/29096-baetzing-werden-vatikan-nein-zu-segnungen-homosexueller-diskutieren>; accessed 16 March 2021.

247 See <https://www.katholisch.de/aktuelles/themenseiten/der-synodale-weg-der-kirche-in-deutschland#>; accessed 16 March 2021.

248 Robert Shine, *New Ways Ministry*, 16 March 2021, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2021/03/16/top-german-bishop-not-happy-with-vatican-ban-on-blessing-same-gender-couples/>; accessed 16 March 2021.

## 10.3 Switzerland

The overall score of Switzerland on ILGA-Europe’s *Rainbow Map 2020* is 36%.<sup>249</sup> This is significantly lower than France (56%), west of Switzerland, and the German-speaking neighbouring countries, Germany (51) and Austria (50), but higher than Italy (23), the country on the southern border. The main reason for the relatively low score is that Switzerland did legalize same-sex unions in January 2007, but the legalisation of same-sex marriage only passed Parliament December 2020 and still awaits the prospective referendum.

Based on a February 2020 survey commissioned by *Pink Cross*, the Swiss organisation of gay and bisexual men, a majority of the population seemed to be in favour of rights for same-sex couples.<sup>250</sup>

SUPPORT FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY (% IN FAVOUR)	MARRIED LESBIAN COUPLES MAY USE SPERM DONATION TO HAVE CHILDREN (% IN FAVOUR)	SAME-SEX COUPLES ALLOWED TO ADOPT CHILDREN (% IN FAVOUR)
81	66	67

According to a major 2018 Pew Research Center survey of religious beliefs and practices in Western Europe, 80% of the non-practicing Christians in Switzerland favoured ‘gay marriage’ (slightly more than the general population: 75%) and 58% of the church-attending Christians.<sup>251</sup> This might indicate that Swiss Christians who are most loyal to the church were probably less inclined to make a case for equal rights for LGBTI people, even though the majority favoured same-sex marriage.

Switzerland does not have a majority church. The two churches we have gathered data on in this research, the RCC (score: 14) and the Protestant Church (score: 38,5), together represent 60% of the Swiss population, with the RCC representing the majority of Christians.

The Protestant Church (Schweizerischer Evangelischer Kirchenbund, SEK) is a federation of 26 independent member churches, divided over 24 regions (‘cantons’). Like the Protestant congregations,

249 ILGA-Europe, <https://www.rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking>; accessed 9 March 2021.

250 Swissinfo.ch, 10 February 2020, [https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/lgbt\\_survey-shows-widespread-swiss-support-for-same-sex-marriage/45549724](https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/lgbt_survey-shows-widespread-swiss-support-for-same-sex-marriage/45549724); accessed 31 March 2021.

251 Pew Research Center, 29 May 2018, <https://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/>; accessed 31 March 2021.

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Roman Catholic parishes are also organised in cantonal church bodies, recognized by the regional governments in the cantons. These cantonal church bodies convene in the Roman Catholic Central Conference of Switzerland (Römisch-Katholische Zentralkonferenz der Schweiz, RKZ). Although many Roman Catholics support the opportunities this historically grown situation offers, from the perspective of Roman Catholic doctrine, the church bodies are not churches, since there is only one hierarchical church.

The co-researchers reporting on both church traditions in Switzerland portray the diversity that comes with this regional ecclesiastical structuring. This regional level of ecclesiastical decision-making is more influential than the national level.

## **RCC**

The co-researcher on the RCC adds to the regional ecclesiastical structuring that there are also regional differences based on language. The state church law belongs to the German-language regions and gives lay people an unusual power in the RCC, but this does not exist in the Italian- and French-speaking regions, which are much more secularized.

The RCC Switzerland has a dual structure, guaranteed by Swiss law: the clerical hierarchy and also lay parliaments in each region, elected by Catholics in the parishes. The institutions formed by Swiss state church law are similar to secular parliaments. Anybody can be elected here and become president or board member. Some dioceses have women in leadership positions, but it is not possible to be an openly LG person in such a position. Some of the regional organisations asked the hierarchy to stop withholding ordination to women and homosexuals. The president of the regional organisation of Basel came out as trans during her presidency.

The Swiss bishops conference is deeply divided. There is no shared position on LGBTI issues. It all depends on the diocese if the language is inclusive and affirmative; if LGBTI advocacy groups are supported, and not heteronormative family organisations; if Pride services are organised as well as (unofficial) blessing services for same-sex couples; if bishops meet LGBTI organisations and speak out publicly about LGBTI rights.

December 2020, just after the Swiss senate passed a law on 'marriage for all,' the bishops' conference published a statement on marriage equality, but only in French. The statement questioned the equality of civil unions and marriage. Civil marriage law is seen as part of the state's jurisdiction, while the

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church is primarily responsible for the sacrament of marriage between a man and woman.<sup>252</sup> The Catholic Diocese of Basel, the Swiss Church's largest, already came out in support of civil marriage equality and of church blessings for same-sex couples in September 2019.<sup>253</sup>

The Diocese of Chur, which sees itself as 'the last ones who are truly Roman Catholic,' is known for its discriminating and LGBTI-phobic positions, which led other bishops to contradict this position. The 2019 retired bishop of Chur, Huonder, had a quite strong presence on the website of the bishop conference with his negative statements, which oppose the so-called 'gender ideology.' On Chur's website, there is a letter by Polish bishops against gender ideology which targets trans people and homosexuals, referring to the 'holy family' as the ideal family. Bishop Huonder referred to the 'clobber passage' in Leviticus as a guideline on how to deal with homosexuality. The Bible is seen as a witness for heterosexuality as the Creator intended it to be. The Diocese of Chur asked people in a pastoral letter to fight against 'genderism,' and also to withhold the Eucharist from people not living in accordance with church teaching. The Diocese of Chur continually makes statements about society limiting the freedom of the church and forcing it to follow the zeitgeist.

There have also been very supportive and welcoming statements by different regional (youth and women's) organisations, but these are not considered to have any theological authority. Still, these statements are very important because many people strongly identify with the regional bodies and feel that they make the RCC a home for them. The Swiss Catholic Women's League (SKF) is actively involved in policy-making on equality. Hardly any LGBTI person is involved on a national level (except for the closeted gays who are part of the hierarchy). There is no policy of LGBTI inclusion developed. However, LGBTI people can perform leading functions in the national lay administration of the Swiss RCC and influence policy-making there. The Diocese of Basel has an LGBTI working group.

On a parish level there is more room for a pastoral approach.

There is a 'Don't ask, don't tell' policy for pastoral work in some dioceses. Regional lay organisations employ LGBTI people for non-clerical tasks and sometimes for pastoral work, without 'mission.' It very much depends on the regional context.

In the German-speaking regions, there is marriage and partnership/family counselling open to everybody. In the French- and Italian-speaking regions, they tend to follow the 'Roman' line.

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252 Catholic News Agency, 9 December 2020, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/swiss-bishops-same-sex-marriage-proposal-fraught-with-difficulties-94824>; accessed 17 March 2021.

253 Robert Shine, New Ways Ministry, 7 January 2021, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2021/01/07/switzerland-passes-marriage-equality-over-bishops-objections-on-rights-of-children/>; accessed 17 March 2021.

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# SEK

Since 2020, the Protestant SEK supports the inclusion of sexual orientation into laws against discrimination.<sup>254</sup>

Since 2019, the church supports (by majority vote) the extension of marriage in Swiss law to same-sex couples. The church expressed as its position that God's creative acts are reflected in the multiplicity of sexual orientations.<sup>255</sup>

In Switzerland, one must get married at a registrar's office. Any religious ceremony called 'marriage' may only take place afterwards. This resulted in some church laws demanding an explicit difference between a straight marriage and a same-sex blessing event. This will probably change, since the marriage is no longer restricted to straight couples (2021). At the moment, church ministers are still allowed to refuse weddings if a specific situation goes against their conscience.

According to the co-researcher, the large majority (three-quarters) of member churches have stated explicitly that people may not be excluded from leadership positions based on their sexual orientation. Officially, there are also no restrictions to participating in the sacraments or to being admitted in seminary. However, the actual practice varies, discrimination still happens, and some member churches are less affirming than others. The differences between the member churches and between the congregations make that local practices might be less inclusive than the general (majority) stance of the church.

While there are a significant number of LGB people in leadership positions, the number of trans people is very low.

There are various Christian LGBTI organisations, but no specific organisations for theologians. The co-researcher suggests that when pastors and theologians organise themselves, the church could welcome them as partners in dialogue on LGBTI issues.

The co-researcher remarks that until recently, the church's policy was predominantly made on a regional level. However, the structure is changing. The national organisation of the church becomes more important, which could also affect further decisions on LGBTI inclusivity.

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254 *Kirchenbote online*, 13 January 2020, <https://www.kirchenbote-online.ch/artikel/?id=25215&artikel=Evangelische-Kirche-Schweiz-f%C3%BCr-Erweiterung-der-Rassismus-Strafnorm>; accessed 17 March 2021.

255 EKS, 5 November 2019, <https://www.evref.ch/ja-zur-ehe-fuer-alle/>; accessed 17 March 2021.

**11. Southern Europe  
Country Reports:  
Malta, Spain, Italy,  
Croatia, Serbia**

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In this chapter we focus on Malta (11.1), Spain (11.2), Italy (11.3), Croatia (11.4), and Serbia (11.5).

## 11.1 Malta

Malta is ILGA-Europe's prime example of LGBTI inclusivity for some years. Again in 2020, Malta ranked above all other European countries.<sup>256</sup> Malta is also the most Roman Catholic country. Roman Catholicism is the state religion in Malta, representing more than 90% of the population. In the chapter on the Roman Catholic church family, we presented the data on RCC Malta our co-researcher provided us with.

In 2017, the Maltese bishops published a document on applying *Amoris Laetitia* called *Criteria for the Application of Chapter VIII of Amoris Laetitia*. The bishops' document reflects the Pope's call for more mercy and inclusion in the church, all of which is applicable to LGBTI issues. After discussing the document, New Ways Ministry's Robert Shine writes: 'Some might find this latest document from Bishops Scicluna and Grech to be without merit, and readers may think my assessment of it is too generous. But given the bishops' own more positive records on LGBT issues, and the larger push for equality by Maltese Catholics, I think a generous interpretive lens which admits limitations is warranted.'<sup>257</sup>

What is noticeable is how the official, doctrinal position of the universal church can differ from local, practical arrangements. The Maltese church is part of the universal RCC but communicates with LGBTI advocacy groups, tries to be welcoming to all people of faith, restrains from condemnatory statements on LGBTI issues, and speaks out against violence and discrimination of LGBTI people.

Although, Malta can be seen as a vibrant example of a Catholic country in support of LGBTI rights, according to a 2019 poll among members of Malta's LGBTI community, many of the respondents expressed that they continue to encounter challenges within the church, despite these strides towards equality.<sup>258</sup>

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256 ILGA-Europe, <https://www.rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking>; accessed 9 March 2021.

257 New Ways Ministry, 22 January 2017, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2017/01/23/instructions-on-amoris-laetitia-from-maltas-bishops-can-inform-lgbt-issues-too/>; accessed 29 March 2021. See: The Archdiocese of Malta and the Diocese of Gozo, *Criteria for the Application of Chapter VIII of Amoris Laetitia*, January 2017, <https://church.mt/media-and-resources/publications/guidelines-by-the-bishops-for-the-application-of-chapter-eight-of-amoris-laetitia/>; accessed 29 March 2021.

258 New Ways Ministry, 15 March 2019, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2019/03/15/survey-taken-on-religion-and-sexuality-in-catholic-malta/>; accessed 29 March 2021.



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In 2019, for the first time, the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics (GNRC) participated in Malta Pride. Drachma, the island nation's Catholic LGBTI group, is one of the founders of GNRC. On the eve of Pride parade, members of Pro Malta Christiana, a right-wing Catholic group, held a 'rosary rally' protesting against Malta Pride and the LGBTI agenda. Church officials distanced themselves from the protest, according to a student's website: 'Communications Officer at Curia, Christina Aquilina, emphasized that Pro Malta Christiana "must bear the responsibility for their actions," for spreading hate, rather than love. She continued, "The Church respects people of all sexual orientations and recognises the dignity of each and every one." The Maltese Church also officially confirmed that the group never had any ties with the Church in Malta, since "for the Church each person is precious."<sup>259</sup>

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259 New Ways Ministry, 19 September 2018, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2018/09/19/global-network-of-rainbow-catholics-joins-maltas-pride-celebrations-amid-anti-gay-protest/>; accessed 29 March 2021.

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## 11.2 Spain

On ILGA-Europe's *Rainbow Map*, Spain is ranked above Sweden and the Netherlands.<sup>260</sup> One of the reasons for this is that Spain legalized same-sex marriage in 2005, and has improved the legal situation for LGBTI people since then. Spain is considered to be one of the most culturally liberal and LGBTI-friendly countries in the world. According to the Eurobarometer 2019, Spain's citizens set a high standard for agreeing with equal rights for straight and LGB people.

EU COUNTRIES	SAME RIGHTS LGB (% AGREE)	NOTHING WRONG WITH SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIP (% AGREE)	SAME-SEX MARRIAGE ALLOWED (% AGREE)	TRANSGENDER AND MATCHING CIVIL DOCUMENTS (% AGREE)
Spain	91	89	86	83

RCC Spain is the majority church in Spain, representing two-thirds of the population. The RCC is the only religious group explicitly mentioned in the Constitution. Although the Constitution states that no religion shall have a 'state character,' and the government has agreements with different religious groups, the government also grants the Roman Catholic Church additional benefits not available to the other denominations, based on a bilateral agreement with the Holy See. In the chapter on the Roman Catholic church family, we presented the co-researcher's data on the RCC Spain.

In April 2019, the regional government of Madrid started an investigation on whether the RCC Diocese of Alcalá de Henares had broken anti-homophobia laws. A newspaper reported about a journalist who, while posing as a gay man trying to change his sexuality, attended a counselling session offered by the diocese. Bishop Luis Argüello Garcia expressed his 'support and affection' for the bishop of Alcalá and 'rejected the irruption of a group of vociferous people in a temple where a mass was being celebrated.' He added that 'homosexuality is not cured,' but that the Church is willing to 'accompany' people who are 'uncomfortable' with their homosexuality.<sup>261</sup>

In June 2019, bishop Reig Pla of Alcalá de Henares told Spanish Catholics to be ready to be martyrs in defence of the church's freedom. According to the bishop, LGBTI activists and the government

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260 ILGA-Europe, <https://www.rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking>; accessed 9 March 2021.

261 *The Local.es*, 6 April 2019, <https://www.thelocal.es/20190406/spanish-church-defends-bishop-in-gay-cure-controversy/>; accessed 29 March 2021.

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are 'harming our children and harming the mission of the Church,' and Catholics should not allow it: 'This is not about going against anybody, but it is about safeguarding the liberty of the Church, of safeguarding religious liberty, and to commit ourselves even unto martyrdom if it is necessary in order to serve those who suffer and expect a word of hope from us, the shepherds of the Church. We must not abandon them.' Reig Pla added that when speaking to his fellow bishops during a meeting of the bishops' conference, he appealed to them to not allow the government to impede the work of the diocesan centre which is being investigated for practicing conversion therapy.<sup>262</sup>

In October 2020, Father Ángel García Rodríguez offered encouraging words and a blessing at the country's largest event for lesbian and bisexual women. In Garcia's church, in San Antón, all families are welcome. Garcia's Madrid parish is known as a refuge for LGBTI persons in Spain. He baptizes the children of LGBTI couples and blesses those who ask for it. 'If we bless cars, pets... how can I not bless two people who love each other,' he asked. The priest referred to Pope Francis, who 'himself has called the Church to unconditionally welcome LGBTIQ+ people,' and he recalled how 'the Synod of Bishops on the Family, which took place in 2014, produced an extensive document which launched a reflection on the problem of the family today. It supported that the Catholic Church should welcome everyone, including homosexuals, lesbians, and those of different sexual orientations.'

A whole chapter in Frédéric Martel's book is dedicated to the 2005 battle against 'gay marriage' in Spain, with a specific focus on Cardinal Antonio María Rouco Varela.<sup>263</sup> "¡No pasarán!" The message from Rome was clear. Cardinal Rouco received it loud and clear. In fact, he didn't need much asking. When his friend Angelo Sodano, secretary of state to John Paul II, who had become a second pope in many respects since the holy father's illness, asked to block "gay marriage" whatever it took, Rouco was already at the head of the "resistance". For Rome, it was imperative that Spain not yield. If gay marriage were to be legalized there, the symbol would be so powerful, the effects so considerable, that the whole of Latin America could fall very soon.<sup>264</sup> Cardinal Rouco retired in 2014 at the behest of Pope Francis. The Pope undertook a major house-cleaning in Spain and appointed three moderate cardinals (Osoro, Blázquez, and Omella). Martel also pays attention to Archbishop Antonio Cañizares—'This friend of Rouco's was also close to Cardinal Ratzinger, so much so that in Spain he was known as "little Ratzinger"'—and bishop Juan Antonio Reig Pla—'The cardinal's right-hand man was even more of a caricature, and more extremist if that's possible. Bishop Juan Antonio Reig Pla waged the anti-gay-marriage battle in his own way: with the subtlety of a drag queen barging into the changing room at Barça.' Martel concludes his narrative on the CEE: 'The spiritual

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262 New Ways Ministry, 30 June 2019, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2019/06/30/bishop-says-he-is-ready-to-be-a-martyr-in-defending-conversion-therapy-practices/>; accessed 29 March 2021.

263 Frédéric Martel (2019), *In the Closet of the Vatican. Power, Homosexuality, Hypocrisy*, translated by Shaun Whiteside, Bloomsbury Publishing: London, Kindle Edition, chapter 16.

264 Martel 2019, Kindle Edition, location 6908.

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battle and the battle of men that was fought in the country between these six cardinals and prelates, Rouco-Cañizares-Reig versus Amigo-Blázquez-Sebastián, profoundly marked Catholic Spain in the 2000s. It also exposed the fault line between Benedict XVI and Francis, and even today it remains so powerful that it explains most of the tensions that exist within the Spanish episcopate. (During the last election of the Spanish Episcopal Conference, when I was back in Madrid, Blázquez was once again re-elected president and Cañizares vice-president, a way of preserving the balance between the pro- and anti-Francis forces.)<sup>265</sup>

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265 Martel 2019, Kindle Edition, location 7105.

# 11.3 Italy

The Italian Constitution states that all citizens are free to profess their beliefs and celebrate rites in public or in private, provided they are not offensive to public morality. Furthermore, each religious community has the right to establish its own institutions as long as these do not conflict with the law. The Constitution also specifies that the state and the Catholic Church are independent of each other.

Since June 2016, Italy as a country has legalized same-sex unions, but in ILGA-Europe's 2020 *Rainbow Map*, Italy appears in the lowest quarter, scoring 23%, ranked between Czech Republic and Ukraine.<sup>266</sup> The country lags behind its EU partners in creating anti-homophobia measures. It is the only country in Western Europe where same-sex couples still have no legal status. Attempts at progress have been stymied by a macho culture, Catholicism, and support for far-right parties. The far-right parties are in sync with the Italian bishops' conference (CEI). LGBTI rights associations have linked a rise in hate crimes in 2019 to the prominence of Matteo Salvini's far-right Lega Nord.<sup>267</sup> The Eurobarometer 2019 data, however, seem to give Italy's citizens more credit with their position on equal rights.<sup>268</sup>

EU COUNTRIES	SAME RIGHTS LGB (% AGREE)	NOTHING WRONG WITH SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIP (% AGREE)	SAME-SEX MARRIAGE ALLOWED (% AGREE)	TRANSGENDER AND MATCHING CIVIL DOCUMENTS (% AGREE)
Italy	68	59	58	43

Italy was the last European Union country to legalize civil unions. The 2016 law was as a rejection of 'Vatican' influence into Italian politics. New Ways Ministry quoted *The New York Times*: 'It was a historic occasion for a nation that is still dominated by the Roman Catholic Church, which opposed the measure, and where traditional family norms are still strong.' And *CNN*: 'Previous attempts to legalize gay unions had been stymied and fiercely contested by conservatives and the Roman Catholic church, which holds significant sway in the nation.' Bishop Nunzio Galantino, at that time interim secretary general of the CEI, called it 'a loss for everyone' and stressed the 'importance of the family consisting of father, mother and children.'<sup>269</sup>

266 ILGA-Europe, <https://www.rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking>; accessed 9 March 2021.

267 *The Guardian*, 26 July 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/26/italy-lgbt-new-law-debate>; accessed 30 March 2021.

268 European Union, *Discrimination in the European Union*. Special Eurobarometer 493, Fieldwork May 2019, Publication October 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/yearFrom/1974/yearTo/2019/surveyKy/2251>; accessed 21 March 2021.

269 New Ways Ministry, 13 May 2016, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2016/05/13/despite-vatican-opposition-italy-passes-civil-unions-bill-for-lesbian-and-gay-couples/>; accessed 30 March 2021.

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Frédéric Martel devotes a whole chapter on the CEI.<sup>270</sup> He states that Pope Francis performed a big clear-out in the CEI, by replacing Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco and putting Bishop Nunzio Galantino and Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti in central positions. Martel also narrates rather colourfully the strategic but unsuccessful battle of the CEI against the 2016 law. He provides the readers with an interesting perspective on the relations between the CEI and Italian politics and on the diminishing influence of the church.

Italy has the fifth world's largest Roman Catholic population (after Brazil, Mexico, Philippines, and the USA) and is the largest Catholic nation in Europe (before France).<sup>271</sup>

In 2020, Italian church officials were voicing their opposition to a potential non-discrimination law aimed at protecting LGBTI people. Pope Francis has not commented on the potential law, and it is unlikely he will comment either way on Italian politics, according to New Ways Ministry.<sup>272</sup> June that year, the CEI stated that even though 'discrimination – including [discrimination] based on sexual orientation – constitute[s] a violation of human dignity, which – as such – must always be respected in words, actions and legislation.' However, they stated that a specific protection against discrimination on the basis of LGBTI identity is unnecessary and would criminalize legitimate differences of opinion. The bishops were worried that the new law would open the door to criminalizing 'those who believe that the family requires a father and a mother to be such – and not a duplication of these figures,' and would create 'a crime of opinion.' This argument has repeatedly been refuted.<sup>273</sup>

In July 2020, it was reported that Father Emanuele Moscatelli was ordered by his bishop to 'dialogue' shortly after officiating at a lesbian couple's civil union ceremony. The dialogue led to a temporarily suspension from active ministry. The bishop stated that the priest agreed that he would resign his assignment as pastor, as a sign of taking distance from 'the mess he had made.' The priest would leave active ministry for one year to reflect, according to the bishop, 'in order to recover the clarity and joy of his presbyteral ministry in the concreteness of today's world,' and come to 'clarity on a doctrinal level and communion on a pastoral level.' Fabrizio Marrazzo of the Gay Centre in Rome commented: '[To celebrate a civil union] is a civil liberty granted by the State, which should not influence the activity linked to the Church of a parish priest. There have been priests who bless the wedding rings of homosexual couples. We don't understand the difference.'<sup>274</sup>

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270 Frédéric Martel (2019), *In the Closet of the Vatican. Power, Homosexuality, Hypocrisy*, translated by Shaun Whiteside, Bloomsbury Publishing: London, Kindle Edition, chapter 17.

271 Pew Research Center, February 2013, <https://www.pewforum.org/2013/02/13/the-global-catholic-population/>; accessed 30 March 2021.

272 New Ways Ministry, 10 October 2020, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2020/10/10/politicians-connected-to-italian-bishops-claim-lgbtq-protections-are-death-of-liberty/>; accessed 30 March 2021.

273 New Ways Ministry, 24 June 2020, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2020/06/24/italian-bishops-worry-non-discrimination-bill-would-criminalize-lgbtq-negative-voices/>; accessed 30 March 2021.

274 New Ways Ministry, 31 July 2020, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2020/07/31/priest-leaves-active-ministry-after-officiating-at-lesbian-couples-civil-union-ceremony/>; accessed 30 March 2021.

## 11.4 Croatia

The RCC Croatia (score: 5), a majority church that represents about 3,6 million Croatians, is the only Croatian church we have data on. The RCC Croatia is ranked comparatively lower than Croatia as country on the ILGA-Europe country ranking 2020. There, Croatia scores 46%, which puts it above Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, and just below Austria.<sup>275</sup>

The co-researcher about the RCC Croatia mentions that there is no official document on LGBTI issues in the church. With regard to the policy autonomy of dioceses, the co-researcher writes: 'There is nothing official. Talking to personal contacts we know that there are discussions on some levels, but it is hard to determine if it really is a discussion or more of a personal decision. We know that a trans man person was confirmed and his new identity and name were accepted by the priest in Zagreb, but we don't know if a discussion took place and the priests who are affirming are not willing to talk about it.' On baptism of children of LGBTI parents: 'Officially it is not accepted. It seems there are individual cases, but it is unknown how often this was possible.' On employing LGBTI people for non-pastoral tasks: 'There is no regulation. But from the overall atmosphere and official attitude towards LGBTI, it is hard to imagine that they would do so knowingly unless they agree to keep quiet about their identities.' On the social acceptance of the LGBTI community: 'The official church won't publish an official statement. Still, there are priests and bishops who will openly condemn LGBTI happenings.' On the right to safety for LGBTI people: 'There is a short mention against discrimination in an official statement by the Archdiocese of Zagreb in regards to Pope Francis' statement "who am I to judge"'. On diversity at schools: 'The RCC in Croatia was against health education that included education about sexualities and sexual identities and published the stance of the Archbishop on its website.'

The recurring word is 'nothing official,' which suggests that the RCC Croatia is more skewed towards non-inclusivity, hence the relatively low score.

The score of the RCC Croatia in our research might not be surprising, compared to how the country scored on the Eurobarometer 2019. Citizens in Croatia disagree strongly with the statement that LGB people should have the same rights as heterosexual people. More than five out of 10 Croatian citizens disagreed with the Eurobarometer's statement that transgender persons should be able to change their civil document to match their gender identity.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> ILGA-Europe, <https://www.rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking>; accessed 26 March 2021.

<sup>276</sup> European Union, *Discrimination in the European Union*. Special Eurobarometer 493, Fieldwork May 2019, Publication October 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/yearFrom/1974/yearTo/2019/surveyKy/2251>; accessed 21 March 2021.

EU COUNTRIES	SAME RIGHTS LGB (% AGREE)	NOTHING WRONG WITH SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIP (% AGREE)	SAME-SEX MARRIAGE ALLOWED (% AGREE)	TRANSGENDER AND MATCHING CIVIL DOCUMENTS (% AGREE)
Croatia	44	36	39	39

Since 1 September 2014, Croatia has legalized same-sex unions, but marriage is limited to opposite-sex couples.

The Croatian constitution provides for freedom of religion. Although all religious communities have the same religious protections under the law and receive some funding from the government, the Roman Catholic Church is provided with far more financial support and favourable tax and other treatment. The RCC has a strong cultural and political influence.<sup>277</sup>

Thomas Bremer, professor of Ecumenical Theology and Peace Studies at the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Münster, Germany, wrote in 2006: 'The Roman Catholic Church is probably the most influential organisation in Croatia, and it gained additional significance in the years of national awakening since the late 1980ies. It was the only organisation in socialist Yugoslavia which was regarded as "Croat" without being influenced by the party and the ruling elites.'<sup>278</sup>

'Croatia today is a European and Catholic nation,' wrote historian Vjekoslav Perica in 2006.<sup>279</sup> 'Croatia has invented itself as an emphatically Catholic European country. Catholicism has, however, operated as an ambivalent factor.' This ambivalence referred to the battle between the conservatives and the liberals in the RCC Croatia.

A 2020 feature in the London-based Roman Catholic magazine *Catholic Herald* on 'How the Catholic Church preserved Croatia's history, tradition and culture' provides an impression of the importance of the Catholic church in Croatia. 'In Croatia, perhaps more than anywhere else, the mission of preserving national history, tradition and culture fell to the Catholic Church. A small nation, at the edge of Europe, at the traditional political and cultural dividing line between West and East, Croatia has defined itself more by religion than by any other factor. A Western orientation – allegiance to

277 U.S. Department of State, 2019 Report on International Religious Freedom, June 2020, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/>; accessed 18 February 2021.

278 Bremer, Thomas (2010) 'Croatian Catholic Church and its Role in Politics and Society,' *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* vol. 30/3, article 1; <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol30/iss3/1>.

279 Vjekoslav Perica (2006) 'The most Catholic country in Europe? church, state, and society in contemporary Croatia,' *Religion, State & Society*, 34:4, 311–346, DOI: 10.1080/09637490600974401.



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Rome rather than Constantinople – quickly emerged as a distinctive factor in Croatia's development. (...) Most Croats, if you press them, whether they are devout or not, admit that if the Catholic Church had not stood up for Croatia, and particularly under the ideological assaults of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the national identity would have been crushed.<sup>280</sup>

In October 2020, Evgeny Afineevsky's documentary *Francesco* also had some impact on the RCC Croatia. 'The Croatian Catholic Church is shocked by Pope Francis' support of the idea of civil unions for gay couples,' according to the website of the independent news channel *N1*, CNN's regional broadcast partner in the former Yugoslavia, quoting the Croatian newspaper *Jutarnji list*.<sup>281</sup> A priest close to the Croatian Bishops' Conference told the newspaper that Pope Francis' statement in the documentary were in stark contrast with the thinking of a large part of the Catholic Church in Croatia. 'This will provoke reactions from all quarters, because the Pope touched something that represents a sort of DNA of the Catholic faith. It is true that God loves all people, including gay people, but at its core the Catholic Church is opposed to artificial insemination, abortion or homosexuality. That is the DNA I am talking about and which Francis, most likely in good faith, is now questioning. If we start to recognise marriages that are not a union between a woman and a man, then five or 20 years from now we will become open to discussion on allowing abortion. This brings into question the core of our faith and that is why I guarantee you that this time Francis will encounter strong reactions,' the priest said.

That was not the first controversial position the RCC Croatia took in its short history as a national church (since the Republic of Croatia declared its independence in June 1991). In July 2013, Croatia became a member of the European Union. December 2013, a majority of Croats (65%) agreed in a referendum that marriage is matrimony between a man and a woman. The result meant that Croatia's constitution needed to be amended to ban same-sex marriage. The referendum was called by a conservative group In the Name of the Family, after Croatia's centre-left government drafted a law to let gay couples register as 'life partners.' In reaction to this legal proposal, the Catholic church's leaders urged their followers to vote 'yes' in the referendum. Although the vote has deeply divided Croatia, it was a major victory for the Catholic Church-backed conservatives in the country, who gathered 750,000 signatures in its support. 'Marriage is the only union enabling procreation,' according to Croatian Cardinal Josip Bozanić, Archbishop of Zagreb. 'This is the key difference between a marriage and other unions.'<sup>282</sup>

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280 *Catholic Herald*, 16 July 2020, <https://catholicherald.co.uk/how-the-catholic-church-preserved-croatias-history-tradition-and-culture/>; accessed 26 March 2021.

281 *N1*, 23 October 2020, <https://hr.n1info.com/english/news/a567396-ji-croatian-catholic-church-shocked-by-francisand39-statement-about-homosexuals/>; accessed 26 March 2021.

282 *The Guardian*, 1 December 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/01/croatia-vote-ban-gay-marriage-referendum>; accessed 26 March 2021.

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One month later, some 100 campaigners for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights protested in front of Zagreb's Catholic cathedral against homophobic statements by prominent priests. They kissed each other and waved rainbow flags in front of the cathedral despite being confronted by a much larger crowd of opponents.<sup>283</sup> The protest was organised after recent statements by several top priests calling homosexuality 'unnatural' and 'pathological'. 'The conspiracy of faggots and lesbians would destroy Croatia,' said Adalbert Rebic, a professor of theology and prominent priest in an interview with the newspaper *Slobodna Dalmacija*. Zagreb's assistant Archbishop Valentin Pozaic have made similar statements.

July 2014, Croatian government officials challenged the predominantly Catholic nation's ban on marriage equality by passing a law recognizing same-gender couples, directly opposing Church leaders who have vigorously opposed any LGBTI rights.<sup>284</sup> The Life Partnership Act gave gay couples in Croatia all the rights enjoyed by married heterosexual couples, with the exception of the right to foster or adopt a child.

In 2018, the Croatian parliament passed a new foster care law, which still excluded same-sex couples as possible foster parents. However, in January 2020, the Croatian Constitutional Court ruled that courts and relevant authorities are obliged to give all competent applicants equal opportunities, including same-sex couples.<sup>285</sup>

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283 *Balkan Insight*, 14 January 2013, <https://balkaninsight.com/2013/01/14/zagreb-lbgt-s-protest-against-church/>; accessed 26 March 2021.

284 New Ways Ministry, 16 July 2014, <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2014/07/16/croatia-defies-catholic-bishops-by-legally-recognizing-same-gender-couples/>; accessed 26 March 2021.

285 *Balkan Insight*, 7 February 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/02/07/croatias-top-court-rules-same-sex-couples-can-foster/>; accessed 26 March 2021.

## 11.5 Serbia

### Church and state

The constitution guarantees the freedom of religion in Serbia. The law grants special treatment to seven religious groups the government defines as ‘traditional.’ These are the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), Roman Catholic Church, Slovak Evangelical Church, Reformed Christian Church, Evangelical Christian Church, Islamic community, and Jewish community. According to the 2011 census, approximately 85% of the population is Orthodox Christian (5,9 million people), 5% Roman Catholic, 3% Sunni Muslim, and 1% Protestant.<sup>286</sup> The Serbian Orthodox Church has a full autocephalous patriarchal structure.

### Political, legal, and social context

Serbia officially applied for membership of the European Union on 22 December 2009. On 1 March 2012, the European Council granted Serbia official candidate status for EU membership.

In 2013, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between Serbia and the EU entered into force, of which the accomplishments are monitored and evaluated annually. The ‘Serbia 2020 Report’ of the European Commission concludes that the legislative and institutional framework for upholding human rights is broadly in place. However, there is a gap in adequate implementation of the antidiscrimination laws. The Report concludes that progresses have been made, such as two pride parades in May and September that took place without any incidents,<sup>287</sup> the latter attended by the openly lesbian prime minister, and the law on birth registry now enables data on gender change to be entered into the registry.<sup>288</sup> However, ‘The implementation of the hate crime legislation, including on grounds of sexual orientation, remains inadequate. Centralised official data on hate crimes broken down by bias motivation is still lacking. Due to lack of trust in institutions and the fear of stigmatisation

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286 See <https://rs.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/235/Serbia-2019-International-Religious-Freedom-Report.pdf>; accessed 15 April 2021.

287 Although the Pride Info Centre in Belgrade was attacked, <https://crd.org/2020/03/04/attack-on-pride-info-centre-and-violent-protest-signal-worrying-trend-for-lgbt-community-in-serbia/>; accessed 15 April 2021.

288 See [https://www.ombudsman.org.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=276:possible-to-register-gender-reassignment-abroad-into-the-registry-books-in-serbia&catid=44:opinions-and-views&Itemid=4](https://www.ombudsman.org.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=276:possible-to-register-gender-reassignment-abroad-into-the-registry-books-in-serbia&catid=44:opinions-and-views&Itemid=4); accessed 15 April 2021.

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and victimisation, cases of violence and discrimination towards LGBTI persons are often unreported. Transgender persons are particularly vulnerable to violence, abuse and discrimination. Intersex persons remain invisible both socially and legally.<sup>289</sup>

Over the last year, there are signals that Serbia would be politically more sceptical towards joining the EU and continues to develop intense relations and strategic partnerships with a number of countries worldwide, including Russia, China and the US.<sup>290</sup> This might also impact on the pace of implementation of anti-discrimination legislation.

## Serbian Orthodox Church and civil society

The Serbian Orthodox Church, as the largest religious body, has historically played a key role in influencing public opinion. Researchers find that in Serbia, as in other post-Yugoslav countries, national identity seems to be increasingly defined by the formulation of a traditional discourse on sexuality and gender, culminating in a growing interference of religious institutions with national debates and policies on LGBTI rights.<sup>291</sup> Parts of the SOC have ties with clerical-nationalist, right-wing groups, operating within legal frames, with anti-democratic, anti-Western, anti-LGBTI ('gay lobby' as a conspiracy movement) and pro-Russian agendas, other parts of the church have a more moderate attitude in theology and politics.<sup>292</sup> There is an ambivalent attitude towards gay people that is usually expressed in the 'Hate the sin, love the sinner' formula. There is also a different kind of ambivalence: the Serbian Orthodox Church as well as its faithful either stick to the 'policy of silence' regarding LGBTI issues, or they resort to a very strong moralistic judgment and condemnation.<sup>293</sup>

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289 See [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/serbia\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/serbia_report_2020.pdf), 38. See also Miloš Kovačević and Nikola Planojević, *Grasp the Truth Based on Facts! Report on hate-motivated incidents against LGBT + people in Serbia from January 2017 to June 2020*, Published by the Da se zna! Association, see <https://dasezna.lgbt/attachments/podaci-3-ENG.pdf>; accessed 15 April 2021.

290 See [https://www.europaanu.nl/id/vlcokgj0qkyh/nieuws/key\\_findings\\_of\\_the\\_2020\\_report\\_on?ctx=vh9if1ear39f&tab=0](https://www.europaanu.nl/id/vlcokgj0qkyh/nieuws/key_findings_of_the_2020_report_on?ctx=vh9if1ear39f&tab=0); accessed 15 April 2021.

291 Danica Igrutinović, Mariecke van den Berg and Srdjan Sremac, "Pride Parades and/or Prayer Processions: Contested Public Space in Serbia #Belgrade Pride 2014," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 28, no. 2 (2015): 204–225.

292 Nicole Navratil, "Homophobie und antiwestliche Diskurse." In *Anti-Genderismus in Europa: Allianzen von Rechtspopulismus und religiösem Fundamentalismus. Mobilisierung – Vernetzung – Transformation*, edited by Sonja Angelika Strube, Rita Perintfalvi, et al. (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2021), 121–132.

293 Miloš Jovanović, "Silence or Condemnation: The Orthodox Church on Homosexuality in Serbia," *Družboslovne razprave* 29, no. 73 (2013): 79–95.

## **Findings of the RICE research**

In our *RICE* total ranking, the Serbian Orthodox Church places 26<sup>th</sup> out of 47 churches, with a total score of 9,5. On ILGA Europe's 2020 Rainbow Map, Serbia places 26<sup>th</sup> out of 49 countries, just above Hungary.<sup>294</sup> These results of *RICE* and ILGA Europe correspond to a high extent, which is not surprising given the fact that about 85% of the population adheres to the SOC. Among the 8 Orthodox churches in the *RICE* research, the SOC is ranked as second, after Finland (total score 15). Unlike Finland, where same-sex marriage has been legal since 2017, the state of Serbia has a ban on same-sex marriage in its constitution (2006).<sup>295</sup>

The SOC differs from the Orthodox church family on some indicators.

With regard to baptism, the church is the only OC that scores a full point. 'Baptism is available to all children, both officially and in practice.'

In its attitude towards transgender people (indicator 12), 'Post-operative transsexuals are welcomed under their newly assigned sex. If they haven't already been baptized, they can be with their new name.'

As for participation in the Eucharist (indicator 13), the co-researcher refers to the importance of local or regional differences, and thus to a certain space of 'oikonomia' (to make allowances for something on pastoral grounds) of a bishop or local priest. The co-researcher comments: 'Persons who are seen as being in active 'sin' are barred from the Eucharist, but in some places, a formal confession before partaking is sufficient, and some places do accept LGB people in relationships – as well as unmarried sexually active people – under these conditions, though with discretion.' In general, the co-researcher points to 'the four walls' as 'an oft-repeated mantra – there is much less judgment of anything that is kept private.'

LGB persons could be admitted to the seminary (indicator 14) 'but would always be expected to be celibate and usually not open about their identity. In order to be admitted, the applicant needs a formal written letter of blessing from the bishop. A "don't ask, don't tell" philosophy is broadly employed with regard to employing LGBTI persons in church services.'

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294 See <https://www.rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking>; accessed 15 April 2021.

295 See <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/21599165.2020.1733983?needAccess=true>; accessed 15 April 2021.

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The SOC is not completely supportive of traditional, heteronormative family organisations.

On issues like IVF and abortion, some bodies within the church tend to fully integrate scientific research (indicator 35). In the case of transgender issues, the church accepts transsexuality based on research.

Childbearing is seen in such a positive light that non-cis-heteronormative and single parents are not condemned.

However, official speech and official communication on LGBTI is largely negative and condemning, with the exception of public statements with regard to the right of safety from violence and persecution. The co-researcher concludes: 'The most affirmative communication states that basic human rights have to be accepted and that all humans are beloved by God.'

## **Church, Nation, State and LGBTI**

Jelena Subotić, a political scientist with expertise on the Western Balkans, wrote about the role the Orthodox Church has played in Serbian politics, especially since 2000.<sup>296</sup> She focused in particular on the church' homophobia and the status of Serbia's LGBTI community, next to its policy on Kosovo ('Jerusalem for the Serbs'). On the increasing conflation of Serbian national identity and Orthodox Christianity, and the 'profound social desecularisation,' Subotić concludes: 'The Serbian Orthodox Church has developed its political identity as inseparable from the Serbian nation and, since the collapse of the socialist Yugoslavia, from the Serbian state. It has long seen itself as a national and not only religious institution. This idea that being Serb means being Orthodox is deeply ingrained in SOC doctrine (...) It is a Church that is deeply conservative, opposed to change, and primarily interested in maintaining a political role in Serbian society, especially since the democratic transformation, or the hopes of democratic transformation in 2000.'<sup>297</sup>

The church's position on homosexuality has not changed. Homosexuality is perceived as sinful, degrading behaviour, imposed by modernity, imported from the 'decadent' West, not indigenous to Orthodoxy or to Serbia. The OC has been an active instigator of violent acts during several Pride

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296 Jelena Subotić, "The Church, the Nation, and the State: The Serbian Orthodox Church After Communism," In *Orthodox Churches and Politics in Southeastern Europe*, edited by S. P. Ramet, 85–110 (London/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

297 Subotić, "The Church, the Nation, and the State," 101.

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parades. In 2010, influential Archbishop Amfilohije Radović compared the Pride Parade to Sodom and Gomorrah. In 2011, the patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Irinej, weighed in, calling for the cancelation of what he called 'The Shame Parade.' The OC Serbia 'has reserved its strongest stance for the regulation of the private sphere, especially sexuality. It has placed LGBTQ issues front and center to its entire social agenda. It has promoted violence, fostered intolerance, and made it impossible for LGBTQ Orthodox Serbs to feel like they could, also, belong to their Church. It is this violent and intolerant legacy of the Church's post-2000 activism that will remain one of its longest lasting stains.'<sup>298</sup>

## Final remarks

The SOC has a difficult track record on instigating homophobia, hate-speech and discrimination. The RICE research shows tentative signs of hope. Positive indicators for change are in particular the space for more accepting attitudes by some bishops or priests, the openness to scientific research in the case of transgender people and reproductive issues, and perhaps also the change in leadership. In February 2021, the Council of Bishops elected Bishop Porfirije Peric as Serbia's 46<sup>th</sup> patriarch and the successor to Patriarch Irinej, who died in November from COVID-19 at the age of 90. Bishop Porfirije is seen as a modernist in the conservative church.

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298 Subotić, "The Church, the Nation, and the State," 102.

# **12. Transgender Persons**



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## TRANSGENDER PERSONS

Although the whole of the research is directed at LGBTI people and identities, indicator 12 intentionally addresses the situation of trans people. Question 12 asks about a special blessing in the church for trans people when they present their new name and or identity. Let us first see how the church families score on this indicator, before we zoom in on specific comments from the co-researchers on particular churches.

	RCC (OUT OF 20)	OC (OUT OF 8)	PC (OUT OF 12)	OTHER (OUT OF 6)
Identity blessing trans people	1	0,5	5,5	2,5

## RCC

In the RCC family, the RCCs Austria and Italy both score 0,5 point on this indicator. Unfortunately, we do not have any comments on these scores by the co-researchers for these churches. The pre-filled comments by the RCC working group mention for this question: 'This is currently not possible.'

The co-researcher for RCC Germany, who scores this indicator with 0 point, provides us with some interesting comments. 'Special blessing rites for trans people don't exist in the German RCC. If trans persons are welcome in church or not depends; experiences vary from outright rejection by the parish priest to being welcome by the parish. On one hand there are the negative conditions defined by the Vatican concerning the impossibility to change name and gender status in canonical books as well as the exclusion from marriage and priesthood. On the other hand, there is at least one case of a trans theologian in Germany who has made his situation transparent and was employed by his diocese, while in another diocese a trans theologian was rejected as employee for pastoral work. In general, trans issues have only very recently become an issue for discussion, but still without any conclusions. (More accurate would be a value between no and half-a-point).'

The co-researcher for RCC Croatia says: 'We know that a trans man person was confirmed and his new identity and name were accepted by the priest in Zagreb, but we don't know if a discussion took place and the Priests who are affirming are not willing to talk about it.'

The co-researcher for RCC Poland mentions that 'if a transgender person (after transition) wants

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to be baptized, they must go back to their name and gender assigned at birth.’ The Polish bishops’ conference has decreed that ‘being a transgender person in public is against Christian morality.’

The co-researcher for RCC Belgium says: ‘This is such a unique situation (with which we have no real experience) that it is difficult for us to answer. However, considering that “Trans” persons can have their new name added in their baptismal book, but that they cannot have the sex indicated at the origin changed, it seems to us that the answer must be “0 point”.’

The co-researcher for Malta specifies: ‘Not yet there entirely on transgender people, but at least not condemnatory.’

The co-researcher for Spain writes that the Archbishop of Madrid refused to sign a letter against a regional Law on Transsexual Persons, which was written by two conservative regional bishops, one of which was Bishop Reig Pla.

When we consider these voices, they show some differential in positions within the RCC family, and also within RCCs. On the one hand, a trans person might be baptized and confirmed and fully accepted, even without a special ritual. This might be the case in the RCCs Austria and Italy. On the other hand, a trans person might be condemned.

## **OC**

The pre-filled comments on the Orthodox Church mention that the church has no concept of trans identity. Nevertheless, the OC Serbia scores 0,5 point in reply to question 12, the only OC with a positive (not zero) score on this indicator. The co-researcher explains: ‘Postoperative transsexuals are welcomed under their newly assigned sex. If they haven’t already been baptized, they can be with their new name.’ There is also no formal impediment for ‘postoperative transsexual people’ to participate fully in leadership. The OC Serbia accepts transsexuality based on scientific research.

The co-researcher on Finland mentions that ‘Trans people are a minority within a minority, and the church does not really recognise them at all in its life.’

## **PC**

Within the family of Protestant churches, there are some who score 1 point (PC Switzerland, Church of England, PC Netherlands) on indicator 12, others 0,5 points (Church of Norway, Evangelical Church Germany, EF Hungary, ELC Hungary, Church of Sweden), or even 0 points (ELC Latvia, ELC Poland, ELC Estonia, Reformed Hungary).

According to the different co-researchers, blessing rituals for transgender persons are possible in the Protestant churches in the Netherlands, the UK, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany and in the EF Hungary. The PC Netherlands' book of worship has a liturgy for regarding the name-giving/transition of trans people. In the PC Switzerland, member churches encourage blessings if people want it at turning points in their lives; gender transition might be an example. Although, there is no official liturgy of blessing of trans people, there are no obstacles for a 'remembrance of baptism' in the local parish by a priest.

An 'LGBTQIA+ affirming Christian community' in Liverpool (Church of England) celebrates a communion service for Transgender Day of Visibility. The Church of England published a pastoral guidance for welcoming transgender people (2018) and a document challenging homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying at schools (2019).

In general, Protestant churches that tend to have a reasonably good performance when it comes to inclusive policies and practices for gays and lesbians are not up to par with regard to transgender and intersex people.

## **Other churches**

Of course, MCC Finland is exemplary church for the inclusion and the equality of rights of trans people as well. MCC Finland scores a full point on indicator 12. The three Old Catholic churches on which we have data score 0,5 point. We do not have any specific comments on this issue from the co-researchers.

# Ways forward

Based on the data about trans people our research gathered, we might suggest churches to consider the following (ascending) steps forward.

1. Start paying attention to trans people.
2. Do not condemn trans people.
3. Make a statement against (homophobic, biphobic and) transphobic bullying and hate speech.
4. Accept trans people with their (new) name and identity.
5. Publish and distribute among local churches and congregations a pastoral guidance for welcoming transgender people.
6. Celebrate Transgender Day of Visibility (31 March).
7. Provide a blessing ritual for trans people.

# **13. Ways Forward**

At the end of our research, we present a list of realistic, positive steps towards more inclusivity for all churches, regardless of their ecclesiastical characteristics or national identities. This ladder of ascending steps might also function as a spiritual rule of discernment for churches: Where are we on the ladder? Which further steps do we need to take?

1. Affirm the unconditional and inalienable human dignity of all persons, as children of God.
2. Condemn acts of violence and hate speech towards LGBTI people, or at least do not give any excuse for these hate crimes as a consequence of the church' public communication.
3. Make a statement about the freedom of religion of all people, also within the church.
4. Acknowledge the political responsibility of the national parliament that substantiates democracy and defends the rights of minorities.
5. Start a pastoral dialogue with LGBTI people.
6. Engage constructively with insights of scientific research on gender and sexuality.
7. Enlarge in the leadership structures the space for all people, starting with lay women, in order to share responsibility in decision making.
8. Be more open and franker about ordaining candidates for priesthood, who have proven to be capable, independent of their sexual orientation, even with the prescription of a commitment to living a celibate life.
9. Engage with Christian LGBTI advocacy groups and involve them in seminary education.
10. Apply a more flexible application or interpretation of the church's regulations, with pastoral discretion in the situation.
11. Study the implications of Bible, tradition, theology, and church policy for the LGBTI lived desires, sexualities, and identities.
12. Involve LGBTI people in the policy making on equality and non-discrimination.
13. Provide affirmative educational material.
14. Allow openly LGBTI persons admission to the seminary or theological university.
15. Initiate an organisation of LGBTI theologians.
16. Make a public statement about the right of LGBTI people to organise and express themselves.

17. Mention explicitly, and positively, diversity and LGBTI identities as enriching aspects of the church.
18. Acknowledge the church's involvement in the discrimination of LGBTI people.
19. Provide congregations with protocols towards becoming more inclusive and affirming and persuade them to incorporate these protocols in their local policies.
20. Get rid of the distinction in liturgical terms for blessing (same-sex) married couples.
21. Use gender sensitive language and incorporate gender issues and sexuality in the liturgy.
22. Support explicitly LGBTI couples when they adopt and raise children.
23. Make a public statement about sexual and reproductive health and rights for all people.
24. Identify 'heteronormative' language and policies, and change them.

# Appendices

**A.** Research methodology

**B.** Churches

**C.** List of indicators ('inclusivity index')

**D.** Results per church family: OC, RCC, PC,  
other churches



# **A. Research Methodology**

## **Inclusivity index**

Our exploration of social scientific and theological theories of inclusivity, specifically pertaining to sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics, taught us that inclusivity is a complex and contested concept. Not only is it a debated and disputed concept among scholars, but it is also encumbered with a convolution of embodied experiences, political interests, cultural preconceptions, historical distortions, and religious abashment. Because inclusivity is not a clear-cut concept, it is not appropriate to apply it directly to policies and practices of churches. What is possible, however, is to use our theoretical exploration as a heuristic framework for exploring and describing the churches' inclusivity in practice. This implies operationalising our exploratory theoretical framework as a strategy to uncover the meaning of sex and gender inclusivity for European churches on a national level. That is why we have compartmentalised the concept of inclusivity into a number of indicators, i.e., observable and measurable entities to define a concept in a practical way. A set of combined indicators is referred to as an 'index.'

Our prime research subject are European churches on a national level, and how they act according to their inclusivity practices and policies. What do churches do and say about inclusivity? What statements do they make publicly, and what is their performance rate in terms of inclusivity? However, how churches interpret situations defines their consequential acting, and their actions are reflections of the meaning they ascribe to a particular issue. The consequences of these attributed meanings affect several different subjects. Primarily, it affects the church members. Church leaders intentionally influence how church members define a reality and think about an issue, and they might even suppose that it is their calling to control the church members' behaviour. Secondly, as societal and political agents, churches are in the position to steer a public debate in a certain direction. Churches are part of civil society and are often major players in the political domain. They influence political parties and politicians and contribute to public debate with their statements and their policies. 'Privileged' national churches and established 'state' churches are especially influential, but so are churches that represent the majority of the (religious) population in a country, even in countries with a constitutional separation of church and state. Thirdly, the political debate not only results in laws and regulations that restrict the lives of LGBTI people, but it also creates opportunities for scapegoating. LGBTI

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people experience personally, directly, physically, and psychologically the consequences of political and legal decisions, as well as the repercussions of societal opinions influenced by the actions of the church. Churches are not blameless when LGBTI people experience stigmatisation, repudiation, and rejection, or even become the victim of physical harassment.

In sum, the meaning implied in the church's inclusivity affects LGBTI people profoundly, on several levels. Morally, this obliged us to include LGBTI Christians' perception of the church's inclusivity in our research. It is not about the self-definition, or self-presentation, of the churches. The centre of gravity in this research epistemologically rests on the lived experiences of LGBTI Christians with regard to the church's policies and practices of inclusivity. That is also why we opted for a relational, or collaborative, research approach, and involved LGBTI Christians, represented by the local networks of the EF and their partner organisations, as co-researchers. LGBTI Christians were the main generators of data on the churches' inclusivity per country. We worked with the following research question: *What are the European churches' policies and practices on inclusivity pertaining to sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics as experienced by LGBTI Christians?*

## **Stakeholder and co-researchers**

The EF is the main stakeholder in our research project. The EF has member groups in 21 countries. These member groups generated the data for *RICE 2020*. The data of the other 16 countries were generated by the EF's partners. All the participants in this research operated as co-researchers. From the beginning of the project, it was clear that the local networks of the EF would be carrying out the research on the churches in their countries, for a number of reasons. Firstly, the language. Most of the documents and other media which are the data resources are only available in the churches' national languages, requiring researchers who are able to understand all the European languages. Secondly, generating the data requires a certain amount of local knowledge regarding the sampled churches. Working with the list of research indicators and interpreting the indicators in the specific national context of a particular church from a distinguished Christian tradition calls for researchers who are able to make sense of sensitive issues in detail. Thirdly, the sensitivity of the research also requires researchers who possess a well-informed understanding of the church and its policies and who perhaps have some form of access to the leadership of the church itself. Finally, in order to fully comprehend and experience the church's inclusivity stance, this research requires the researchers to be familiar with the lived experience of LGBTI people.

## Research approach

Constructing a ranking index with data generated by epistemologically positioned co-researchers entails a 'mixed methods' approach. Often, 'mixed method' means a sequential triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods with the intention of making the research results valid, as well as reliable and generalisable. Instead of a 'mixed method' approach, or a specific quantitative research, however, we opted for a (pre-structured) qualitative survey, to determine and rank the diversity among European churches with regard to inclusivity.

## Indicators

We constructed a list of indicators with specific values and detailed research guidelines to instruct the co-researchers. In addition to ILGA-Europe's index, we used different tools as sources for inclusive churches, next to the input and feedback from the EF network and interviews with informed stakeholders. However, we predominantly drew on our literature review of social scientific and theological theories of inclusivity for adequately selecting and defining the various indicators and ensuring completeness in the list as far as possible.

We identified *four categories* for evaluating inclusivity in churches, encompassing 47 indicators in total: 1. institutional equality and non-discrimination; 2. church practices; 3. language and speech; and 4. public policy. The category 'institutional equality and non-discrimination' provides us with indicators on how the institutional regulations and policy of the church express equality and non-discrimination based on sexually orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics. The category 'church practices' directs our attention to inclusivity in church practices when it comes to the blessing of marriages and relationships, the admission to clerical offices, and the invitation to the Eucharist. 'Language and speech', as a category, indicates the importance of inclusive language and speech in church documents and declarations on a national church level. In the category 'public policy', we cover indicators on public statements of the church regarding societal inclusivity of LGBTI people, and on prophetic political action by the church.

We constructed an index by counting the scores of all the indicators. In order to value the indicators, we use a sort of three-response format. The range of the indicator score was from zero ('no point') to one ('full point'), with half a point in between.

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## Challenges

One of the challenges for the research was the presumed discrepancy in some churches between the national and the local level. Some churches take a 'liberal' stand, or no stand, on inclusivity questions at the national level, but leave it up to the regional churches or local parishes and congregations to effectuate their own inclusive practices. The research focussed on the national level, but we incorporated the discrepancy between the national and the regional or local level in the values of the indicators.

A major challenge for this research was the consistency of the observations and interpretations of the co-researchers. We tried to strengthen the consistency by instructing the co-researchers and through cooperating and aligning intently with the EF's research project manager, who coordinated the research activities of the local networks. Furthermore, we asked the co-researchers to provide us with the supporting material and specific comments on their indicator survey score, which most of them did in an excellent manner.

Another challenge for the reliability of the research results is the confirmation bias of the co-researchers. LGBTI Christians are the ones who directly and immediately experience the impact of the churches' inclusivity practices and policies. LGBTI people are, and always have been, grossly affected by discrimination in society and church. It will require tremendous generosity on their part to execute this research. We addressed this issue in consultation with the representatives of the EF.

## Missing values

There were a few missing values in the research. Some of the questions did not have a score, even though there was be a specific comment linked to the question. In a few cases the co-researcher indicated that the question could not be answered due to a lack of information. In all these cases we added a 'user-missing value' based on the average score of the question per church family, rounded off to 0, 0,5, or 1 point.

## **Co-researchers comments**

The co-researchers were asked to provide us with the available information that sustained their answers and scores, and with specific comments to understand the meaning of their answers. We received only 6 questionnaires out of 47 with no specific comments at all.

## **Adequacy of questions**

When the questionnaires returned (October–December 2020), with the scores and the comments, we realized that not all the questions were formulated as clear and unequivocal as we intended them to be. In particular, Michael Brinkschröder, from the EF's RCC working group, provided us with excellent constructive commentary on the questions, which justifies the following methodological reflection.

Q7: The non-existence of protocols or guidelines, on a national level, for congregations/parishes to become more affirmative, doesn't necessarily imply a strongly negative attitude towards LGBTI people. The suggestion was made to distinguish more clearly between the factual non-existence of such a protocol, for whatever reason, and the intentional policy of not creating such a protocol because there should not be any affirmation. We agree with the suggestion. Although we have the impression that it did not led to inadequate scores, this might be taken in consideration with the next index.

Q8: The suggestion was made that the question doesn't distinguish, in the RCC context, between parishes and Roman Catholic associations. The latter have a mostly positive influence on the language and the atmosphere surrounding LGBTI issues in the RCC. We take this as a valid observation. The index focuses on the institutional church, but we did refer to the association's role in the analysis.

Q10 and 11: The suggestion was made that the outcome of these questions would probably have been different (0 instead of 0,5 or 1 point) if we had phrased them as 'Does the church baptise children of gay parents?' and 'Does the church baptise openly gay people?'. This should be taken in consideration for the next index.

Q13: There would probably have been a different answer for RCCs (0 instead of 0,5 or 1 point) if we had referred to 'homosexual acts.' However, none of the RCC scores resulted in 0 point.

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Q14: In the context of the RCC, the OC, and some Protestant churches, women are excluded from seminary. Although the criterion for admission to the (RCC and OC) priesthood is based on gender and on sexual abstinence, implying that closeted gay men living in celibacy could be admitted, resulting in a possible 0,5 score, the question explicitly refers to 'openly LGBTI people'. The question makes a case of correlating exclusivity towards gay men with exclusivity towards women, gay or straight.

Q15: The suggestion was made that if we would not get different answers for questions 14 and 15, one of these questions should be deleted in the evaluation because it would be hard to explain why a church would have 0 points in 14 and 0,5 points in 15 while the content of the answers is supposedly the same. This is a valid point for the RCC, even though some of the RCCs do score 0,5 points at questions 14 and 15. However, this is not a valid point for churches from the other church families, which show some variety in scores between 14 and 15.

Q17: The RCC working group suggested that the categories of 'leading clerical functions', 'policy-making', and 'non-pastoral tasks' in questions 17–19, seem to be based on an identification of clerical and pastoral functions. This is misleading, because it renders all female and male lay theologians and pastoral workers invisible. For the RCC, this might be a valid observation, although it is not the question which make people invisible. The questions address the representation of cis-hetero women and LGBTI people in institutional leadership, as one indicator of inclusivity.

Q22: It was suggested that the question is unclear. For example, in the RCC, trans people can marry heterosexually according to their birth sex, in which case celibacy is not required. This is a valid point, and the question should have been phrased differently. The intention of the question was to see if celibacy is focused solely on gay people. However, in the RCC, celibacy seems not to be related to being gay, but to the restriction of sex to a marriage between a man and a woman.

Q26: The suggestion was made by the RCC working group to put a self-established association welcomed by the church on the same level as an affirmative association established by the church. We agree with this suggestion. When the specific comments indicate a 'welcomed association,' the score should be higher than 0 point.

Q32: With regard to the specific focus on language in this question, the RCC working group made the suggestion that in the RCC liturgy, ritual symbolism is probably a more important aspect concerning gender and sexuality than language: e.g., symbolic gender transitions of the priests, cross-dressing, homoerotic kisses etc., which work unconsciously without much verbalisation.

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Q34: The RCC working group suggested that the question might not be clear enough, in which case we cannot be sure about the meaning of the answer. It could be interpreted as referring to interconnectedness within the social doctrine 'in general', which would mean a full point in the RCC context, or referring specifically to sexuality and gender issues, which would result in 0 point in the RCC context. This seems to be a valid point. However, one could object that in a questionnaire with 47 questions about LGBTI inclusivity, it would be a bit strange to interpret this question as not being about LGBTI inclusivity, even when the question only uses the word 'inclusivity'.

Q37: The RCC working group suggested that when only some church leaders had asked for forgiveness, or when the church has asked for forgiveness, but not in a fully satisfactory way, half a point could be an adequate score. We tend to agree with this suggestion.

Q38–47: The RCC working group raised the question of what it would mean when there is no explicit statement. It could mean that the church does not recognize these rights, or does not consider them of importance, which indicates that the answer should be 0 points. But it could also mean that the church is not against these rights nor condemning LGBTI activists, but just has not made a statement (yet). We agree that these are quite different positions. However, the questionnaire intends to disclose inclusivity, and not speaking out in favour of human rights for LGBTI people can hardly be seen as an appeal for inclusivity. Nevertheless, we understand that there might be reasons to score 0,5 points even when there is no explicit statement.

## B. Churches

COUNTRY	CHURCH	WEBSITE
Armenia	<i>Հայ Առաքելական Եկեղեցի</i> (Armenian Apostolic Church)	<a href="https://www.armenianchurch.org/">https://www.armenianchurch.org/</a>
Austria	<i>Katholische Kirche Österreich</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Austria)	<a href="https://www.katholisch.at/">https://www.katholisch.at/</a>
Austria	<i>Altkatholische Kirche Österreichs</i> (Old Catholic Church of Austria)	<a href="https://altkatholiken.at/">https://altkatholiken.at/</a>
Belarus	<i>Беларуская праваслаўная царква</i> (Belarusian Orthodox Church)	<a href="http://church.by/">http://church.by/</a>
Belarus	<i>Рыма-Каталіцкі Касцёл у Беларусі</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Belarus)	<a href="https://catholic.by/">https://catholic.by/</a>
Belgium	<i>Katholieke Kerk in België</i> <i>Église catholique en Belgique</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Belgium)	<a href="https://www.kerknet.be/">https://www.kerknet.be/</a> <a href="https://www.cathobel.be/">https://www.cathobel.be/</a>
Croatia	<i>Katolička crkva u Hrvatskoj</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Croatia)	<a href="https://hbk.hr/">https://hbk.hr/</a>
Czech Republic	<i>Katolická církev podobojí v Čechách</i> (Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic)	<a href="https://www.starokatolici.cz/">https://www.starokatolici.cz/</a>
Estonia	<i>Eesti Evangeelne Luterlik Kirik</i> (Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church)	<a href="https://eelk.ee/et/">https://eelk.ee/et/</a>
Estonia	<i>Eesti Apostlik-Õigeusu Kirik</i> (Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church)	<a href="https://www.eoc.ee/">https://www.eoc.ee/</a>
Finland	<i>Suomen ortodoksinen kirkko</i> (Orthodox Church of Finland)	<a href="https://ort.fi/">https://ort.fi/</a>
Finland	<i>MCC-kirkot Suomessa</i> (Metropolitan Community Church in Finland)	<a href="http://www.elavavesimcc.fi/">http://www.elavavesimcc.fi/</a>
France	<i>Église catholique en France</i> (Roman Catholic Church in France)	<a href="https://eglise.catholique.fr/">https://eglise.catholique.fr/</a>
Georgia	<i>საქართველოს სამოციქულო ავტოკეფალური მართლმადიდებელი ეკლესია</i> (Georgian Orthodox Church)	<a href="https://patriarchate.ge/">https://patriarchate.ge/</a>
Germany	<i>Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland</i> (Evangelical Church in Germany)	<a href="https://www.ekd.de/">https://www.ekd.de/</a>
Germany	<i>Römisch-katholische Kirche in Deutschland</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Germany)	<a href="https://www.katholisch.de/">https://www.katholisch.de/</a>



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COUNTRY	CHURCH	WEBSITE
Greece	<i>Εκκλησία τῆς Ἑλλάδος</i> (Church of Greece)	<a href="http://ecclesia.gr/">http://ecclesia.gr/</a>
Hungary	<i>Magyar Katolikus Egyház</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Hungary)	<a href="https://katolikus.hu/">https://katolikus.hu/</a>
Hungary	<i>Magyarországi Református Egyház</i> (Reformed Church in Hungary)	<a href="https://www.reformatus.hu/">https://www.reformatus.hu/</a>
Hungary	<i>Magyarországi Evangéliumi Testvérközösség</i> (Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship)	<a href="https://metegyhas.hu/">https://metegyhas.hu/</a>
Hungary	<i>Magyarországi Evangélikus Egyház</i> (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary)	<a href="https://www.evangelikus.hu/">https://www.evangelikus.hu/</a>
Ireland	<i>Eaglais Chaitliceach in Éireann</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Ireland)	<a href="https://www.catholicbishops.ie/">https://www.catholicbishops.ie/</a>
Italy	<i>Chiesa Cattolica in Italia</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Italy)	<a href="https://www.chiesacattolica.it/">https://www.chiesacattolica.it/</a>
Latvia	<i>Latvijas evaņģēliski luteriskā baznīca</i> (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia)	<a href="http://www.lelb.lv/">http://www.lelb.lv/</a>
Malta	<i>Arċidjoċesi ta' Malta</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Malta)	<a href="https://knisja.mt/">https://knisja.mt/</a>
Moldova	<i>Biserica Ortodoxă din Moldova</i> (Moldovan Orthodox Church)	<a href="https://mitropolia.md/">https://mitropolia.md/</a>
Netherlands	<i>Rooms-Katholieke kerk in Nederland</i> (Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands)	<a href="https://www.rkkerk.nl/">https://www.rkkerk.nl/</a>
Netherlands	<i>Protestantse Kerk in Nederland</i> (Protestant Church in the Netherlands)	<a href="https://www.protestantsekerk.nl/">https://www.protestantsekerk.nl/</a>
Norway	<i>Den norske kirke</i> (Church of Norway)	<a href="https://kirken.no/">https://kirken.no/</a>
Poland	<i>Kościół katolicki w Polsce</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Poland)	<a href="https://episkopat.pl/">https://episkopat.pl/</a>
Poland	<i>Kościół Ewangelicko-Augsburski w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej</i> (Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland)	<a href="https://www.luteranie.pl/">https://www.luteranie.pl/</a>
Portugal	<i>Igreja Católica em Portugal</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Portugal)	<a href="https://agencia.ecclesia.pt/">https://agencia.ecclesia.pt/</a>
Romania	<i>Biserica Romano-Catolică din România</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Romania)	<a href="https://www.bisericacatolica.ro/">https://www.bisericacatolica.ro/</a>

COUNTRY	CHURCH	WEBSITE
Romania	<i>Erdélyi Unitárius Egyház Biserica Unitariană din Transilvania</i> (Unitarian Church of Transylvania)	<a href="http://www.unitarius.org/">http://www.unitarius.org/</a>
Russia	<i>Русская православная церковь</i> (Russian Orthodox Church)	<a href="http://www.patriarchia.ru/">http://www.patriarchia.ru/</a>
Serbia	<i>Српска православна црква</i> (Serbian Orthodox Church)	<a href="http://www.spc.rs/">http://www.spc.rs/</a>
Slovakia	<i>Katolícka cirkev na Slovensku</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia)	<a href="https://www.kbs.sk/">https://www.kbs.sk/</a>
Slovakia	<i>Starokatolícka delegatúra Utrechtskej únie na Slovensku</i> (Old Catholic Delegation of the Union of Utrecht in Slovakia)	<a href="https://starokatolici.eu/">https://starokatolici.eu/</a>
Slovenia	<i>Katoliška Cerkev v Sloveniji</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia)	<a href="https://katoliska-cerkev.si/">https://katoliska-cerkev.si/</a>
Spain	<i>Iglesia católica en España</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Spain)	<a href="https://www.conferenciaepiscopal.es/">https://www.conferenciaepiscopal.es/</a>
Sweden	<i>Svenska kyrkan</i> (Church of Sweden)	<a href="https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/">https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/</a>
Switzerland	<i>Römisch-katholische Landeskirche</i> <i>Église catholique en Suisse</i> <i>Chiesa cattolica in Svizzera</i> (Roman Catholic Church in Switzerland)	<a href="https://www.kath.ch/">https://www.kath.ch/</a> <a href="https://www.cath.ch/">https://www.cath.ch/</a> <a href="https://www.catt.ch/">https://www.catt.ch/</a>
Switzerland	<i>Evangelisch-reformierte Kirchen der Schweiz</i> <i>Église évangélique réformée de Suisse</i> <i>Chiesa evangelica riformata in Svizzera</i> <i>Baselgia evangelica refurmada da la Svizra</i> (Protestant Church in Switzerland)	<a href="https://www.evref.ch/">https://www.evref.ch/</a>
Ukraine	<i>Українська Греко-Католицька Церква</i> (Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church)	<a href="http://ugcc.ua/">http://ugcc.ua/</a>
United Kingdom	<i>Church of England</i>	<a href="https://www.churchofengland.org/">https://www.churchofengland.org/</a>
United Kingdom	<i>The Catholic Church, Bishop's Conference in England and Wales</i>	<a href="https://www.cbcew.org.uk/">https://www.cbcew.org.uk/</a>

# C. List of Indicators (‘Inclusivity Index’)

CATEGORIES	ITEMS (INDICATORS, QUESTIONS)
<b>Institutional equality and non-discrimination</b>	
<i>Legal documents (i.e., church order, canon law, code of canons, church constitution)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The legal documents mention LGBTI identities in a non-negative way.</li> <li>2. The legal documents state the importance of diversity in representational leadership.</li> </ol>
<i>Theology</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. The church’s theology implies the unconditionally acknowledged equality of all people for God regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics.</li> <li>4. The Bible is not used as a normative instrument for defining gender roles, and is not interpreted as a condemnation of LGBTI people nor of LGBTI lived desires, sexualities, and identities.</li> <li>5. The Tradition is not interpreted as a condemnation of LGBTI people nor of LGBTI lived desires, sexualities, and identities.</li> </ol>
<i>Church policy</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. The church policy mentions LGBTI identities in a non-negative way.</li> <li>7. The church provides and/or acknowledges a protocol/guided process to local congregations on how to become more inclusive and affirming.</li> <li>8. The church allows local parishes/congregations/regional associations to have discussion and agency on LGBTI issues and to establish their own policy of affirming the rights of LGBTI people.</li> <li>9. The church officiates ‘same-sex marriages’ and/or holds a blessing ceremony for same-sex couples.</li> <li>10. The church baptises children of parents of all sexual orientations and gender identities.</li> <li>11. The church unconditionally accepts LGBTI people as members, not refusing them baptism if that is the condition for membership.</li> <li>12. Transgender persons receive a special blessing when they present their new name and/or identity in church.</li> <li>13. The church doesn’t make any restriction to participating in the Eucharist/Communion based on gender and/or sexual identity.</li> </ol>
<i>Ordination of clergy</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. Cis-hetero women and openly LGBTI people are admitted in seminary (institute for ministerial education and formation).</li> <li>15. The church ordains people regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity.</li> <li>16. The church provides affirmative theological educational material for clergy formation on gender equality and LGBTI issues.</li> </ol>

CATEGORIES	ITEMS (INDICATORS, QUESTIONS)
<b>Church practices</b>	
<i>Leadership</i>	17. Cis-hetero women and openly LGBTI people perform leading clerical functions in the church on a national level.
	18. Cis-hetero women and openly LGBTI people are actively involved in the church's policy making on equality and non-discrimination.
<i>Work</i>	19. The church employs openly LGBTI people for non-pastoral tasks on the church premises and in church owned offices.
	20. The church employs openly LGBTI people in any place where the church offers services to society.
<i>Sexuality and kinship</i>	21. The church supports the adoption and raising of children by LGBTI couples.
	22. Celibacy is not a requirement specific to LGBTI people, both among clergy and lay people.
<i>Advocacy and networks</i>	23. The church promotes social acceptance of the LGBTI community in its public rituals.
	24. The church provides social ministry ('diaconia' or 'caritas') to LGBTI people.
	25. The church established a pastoral ministry for LGBTI members of the church.
	26. The church supports an LGBTI association of clergy/ministers/students of theology.
	27. The church does not support any (private or church-related) organisation that promotes the heteronormative 'traditional' family as the cornerstone of church and society, with an implied negative inclination towards openly LGBTI people.
	28. The church publicly supports advocacy groups/organisations for LGBTI people.
<b>Language and speech</b>	
<i>Official communication</i>	29. The language used by church leaders is inclusive and affirmative towards LGBTI people.
	30. The church's communication on a national level in general (website, bulletins, social media, newsletters, etc.) constitutes an affirmative environment for LGBTI people.
<i>Worship</i>	31. Gender issues and sexuality are thematised in public worship on the national level of the church.
	32. The liturgical language in prayer or worship books is sensitive to gender issues and sexual orientation.
<i>Education</i>	33. The educational and formational material offered by the church to its members in any of its educational or catechetical activities present an affirmative inclination towards LGBTI experiences and issues.
	34. The church raises awareness on the interconnectedness of justice and inclusivity in general.
	35. The church takes into account the scientific research on gender and sexuality, and engages with it in a constructive and open dialogue.

## APPENDICES

CATEGORIES	ITEMS (INDICATORS, QUESTIONS)
<i>Acknowledgment</i>	36. The church acknowledges its involvement in the (past and present) discrimination of LGBTI people.
	37. In regards to LGBTI experiences and issues, the church publicly apologized and asked for forgiveness from everyone who was affected negatively by the church's past non-inclusivity.
<b>Public policy</b>	
	38. The church made public statements in regards to the right to safety of LGBTI people.
	39. The church made public statements in regards to the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion of LGBTI people.
	40. The church made public statements in regards to the right of political organisation and expression of LGBTI people.
	41. The church made public statements in regards to gender-related rights of LGBTI people.
	42. The church made public statements in regards to reproductive rights of LGBTI people.
	43. The church made public statements in regards to kinship-related rights of LGBTI people.
	44. The church made public statements in regards to the labour rights of LGBTI people.
	45. The church made public statements in regards to the health rights of LGBTI people.
	46. The church made public statements in regards to the diversity education in public schools, directed at building tolerance and affirmation of the rights of LGBTI people.
	47. The church made public statements in regards to the rights of LGBTI people to access other public services.

# D. Results per church family: OC, RCC, PC, other churches

## Results for OC

CATEGORIES	INDICATORS	OC FINLAND	OC GEORGIA	OC MOLDOVA	OC SERBIA	OC ESTONIA	OC BELARUS	OC RUSSIA	OC GREECE	TOTAL
<b>1. INSTITUTIONAL (16/47=36,2%)</b>										
<i>Legal documents</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<i>Theology</i>	3	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	<b>2,5</b>
	4	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	<b>3</b>
	5	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0,5</b>
<i>Church policy</i>	6	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0,5</b>
	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	8	0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	<b>0,5</b>
	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	10	0,5	0	0,5	1	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	<b>3,5</b>
	11	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	<b>4</b>
	12	0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	<b>0,5</b>
	13	1	0	0	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	<b>3</b>
<i>Ordination of clergy</i>	14	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	<b>4</b>
	15	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0,5</b>
	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>C1 Total</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>4,5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>22,5</b>
<b>2. CHURCH PRACTICES (12/47=25,5%)</b>										
<i>Leadership</i>	17	1	0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	<b>3,5</b>
	18	0,5	0	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	<b>2,5</b>
<i>Work</i>	19	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	<b>1,5</b>
	20	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	<b>1,5</b>
<i>Sexuality and kinship</i>	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	22	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0,5</b>

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CATEGORIES	INDICATORS	OC FINLAND	OC GEORGIA	OC MOLDOVA	OC SERBIA	OC ESTONIA	OC BELARUS	OC RUSSIA	OC GREECE	TOTAL
<i>Advocacy and networks</i>	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	24	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	<b>3</b>
	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	27	1	0	0	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	<b>2,5</b>
	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>C2 Total</b>		<b>4,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>1,5</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>

### 3. LANGUAGE & SPEECH (9/47=19,1%)

<i>Official communication</i>	29	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0,5</b>
	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<i>Worship</i>	31	0	0	0	0	0,5	0	0,5	0	<b>1</b>
	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<i>Education</i>	33	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0,5</b>
	34	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	0	0,5	0	<b>1,5</b>
	35	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<i>Acknowledgment</i>	36	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0,5</b>
	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>C3 Total</b>		<b>2,5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>

### 4. PUBLIC POLICY (10/47=21,3%)

	38	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	<b>3,5</b>
	39	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	<b>3,5</b>
	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	41	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	<b>3</b>
	42	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	43	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	0	<b>2,5</b>
	44	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	45	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	46	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	47	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>C4 Total</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>12,5</b>
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>3,5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9,5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5,5</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>55</b>

# Results for RCC

CATEGORIES	INDICATORS	RCC MALTA	RCC AUSTRIA	RCC UK	RCC SPAIN	RCC FRANCE	RCC IRELAND	RCC SLOVAKIA	RCC POLAND	RCC NETHERLANDS
<b>1. INSTITUTIONAL (16/47=36,2%)</b>										
<i>Legal documents</i>	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0
<i>Theology</i>	3	0	0,5	0	0	1	0,5	0	0	1
	4	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0	0
	5	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5
<i>Church policy</i>	6	1	0	0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0
	7	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0
	8	1	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0,5
	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	10	1	1	0,5	0,5	1	1	0,5	0,5	1
	11	1	1	0,5	0,5	1	1	0,5	0	1
	12	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	
<i>Ordination of clergy</i>	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	16	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5
<b>C1 Total</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>5,5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4,5</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. CHURCH PRACTICES (12/47=25,5%)</b>										
<i>Leadership</i>	17	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0
	18	0,5	0	0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0
<i>Work</i>	19	1	1	0,5	0,5	1	0,5	0	0	0,5
	20	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	1	0,5	0,5	0	0,5
<i>Sexuality and kinship</i>	21	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	22	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Advocacy and networks</i>	23	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0,5
	24	1	1	0,5	0,5	1	0,5	0	0	0
	25	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0
	26	0,5	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	27	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0
	28	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0
<b>C2 Total</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4,5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,5</b>



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RCC CROATIA	RCC BELGIUM	RCC SLOVENIA	RCC GERMANY	RCC PORTUGAL	RCC ROMANIA	RCC SWITZERLAND	UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH	RCC BELARUS	RCC HUNGARY	RCC ITALY	TOTAL
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### 1. INSTITUTIONAL (cont.)

0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,5
0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	1,5
0	0,5	0	1	1	0	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0	7
0	0	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	6,5
0,5	0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	7
0	0	0	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	4,5
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0,5	2
0,5	1	0,5	1	0,5	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	6,5
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	1	0	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	0	1	1	14
1	1	0,5	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	15,5
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,5	1
0,5	1	0,5	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	12,5
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0,5	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,5	3
<b>2,5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4,5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3,5</b>	<b>1,5</b>	<b>3,5</b>	<b>5,5</b>	<b>83,5</b>

### 2. CHURCH PRACTICES (cont.)

0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,5	2,5
0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	2
0	1	0,5	1	0	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	0,5	9,5
0	1	0,5	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	1	10,5
0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,5	2
0	0	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	2
0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	5,5
0	1	0	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	0	1	0,5	11
0	0	0	1	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	5
0	0,5	0	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	2,5
0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	6
0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	2,5
<b>0,5</b>	<b>5,5</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5,5</b>	<b>62</b>

CATEGORIES	INDICATORS	RCC MALTA	RCC AUSTRIA	RCC UK	RCC SPAIN	RCC FRANCE	RCC IRELAND	RCC SLOVAKIA	RCC POLAND	RCC NETHERLANDS
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### 3. LANGUAGE & SPEECH (9/47=19,1%)

Official communication	29	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5
	30	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0
Worship	31	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5
	32	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education	33	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0
	34	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	0
	35	0,5	1	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0
Acknowledgment	36	1	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	0	0	0
	37	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>C3 Total</b>		<b>4,5</b>	<b>4,5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

### 4. PUBLIC POLICY (10/47=21,3%)

	38	0,5	1	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5
	39	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0	0	0	0
	40	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0
	41	0	0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0
	42	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	43	0,5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	44	0,5	0,5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	45	0	0,5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	46	0	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0
	47	0,5	0	0,5	0	1	0	0	0	0
<b>C4 Total</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>4,5</b>	<b>1,5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0,5</b>
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		<b>21,5</b>	<b>20,5</b>	<b>9,5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11,5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>

## APPENDICES

RCC CROATIA	RCC BELGIUM	RCC SLOVENIA	RCC GERMANY	RCC PORTUGAL	RCC ROMANIA	RCC SWITZERLAND	UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH	RCC BELARUS	RCC HUNGARY	RCC ITALY	TOTAL
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### 3. LANGUAGE & SPEECH (cont.)

0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	<b>8,5</b>
0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	<b>6,5</b>
0	0,5	0	0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	<b>3,5</b>
0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	<b>2</b>
0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0,5	0,5	<b>2,5</b>
0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	<b>7,5</b>
0	0	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0,5	0,5	<b>4,5</b>
0	0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	<b>7</b>
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3,5</b>	<b>1,5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3,5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>43</b>

### 4. PUBLIC POLICY (cont.)

0,5	0,5	0,5	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	<b>9</b>
0	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	<b>4</b>
0	0,5	0	1	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	<b>3,5</b>
0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	<b>2</b>
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
0	0	0,5	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	<b>3,5</b>
0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0,5	<b>4,5</b>
0	0,5	0	0,5	0	0	0	0,5	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
0	0,5	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0	0,5	0	0,5	0	0,5	1	<b>6</b>
<b>1,5</b>	<b>3,5</b>	<b>1,5</b>	<b>5,5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,5</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>37,5</b>
<b>5,5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25,5</b>	<b>7,5</b>	<b>9,5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1,5</b>	<b>9,5</b>	<b>17,5</b>	<b>226</b>

# Results for PC

CATEGORIES	INDICATORS	PC SWITZERLAND	ELC LATVIA	ELC POLAND	ELC NORWAY	PC GERMANY
<b>1. INSTITUTIONAL (16/47=36,2%)</b>						
<i>Legal documents</i>	1	0,5	0	0	1	1
	2	1	0	0	1	0
<i>Theology</i>	3	1	0	0,5	1	1
	4	1	0	0,5	1	1
	5	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	1
<i>Church policy</i>	6	1	0,5	0	1	1
	7	0,5	0	0	0,5	0
	8	1	0	1	1	1
	9	1	0	0	1	1
	10	1	0	0,5	1	1
	11	1	0,5	1	1	1
	12	1	0	0	0,5	0,5
<i>Ordination of clergy</i>	13	1	0	1	1	1
	14	1	0,5	0,5	1	1
	15	1	0	0	0,5	1
	16	1	0	0	1	1
<b>C1 Total</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5,5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13,5</b>
<b>2. CHURCH PRACTICES (12/47=25,5%)</b>						
<i>Leadership</i>	17	1	0	0,5	1	1
	18	1	0	0	1	1
<i>Work</i>	19	1	0	1	0,5	1
	20	1	0	1	1	1
<i>Sexuality and kinship</i>	21	0,5	0	0	0,5	0,5
	22	1	0	1	1	1
<i>Advocacy and networks</i>	23	1	0	0,5	1	1
	24	0,5	0,5	0	1	1
	25	0,5	0	0	1	0
	26	0	0	0	0,5	1
	27	0,5	0	0,5	1	0,5
	28	0,5	0	0	1	1
<b>C2 Total</b>		<b>8,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>4,5</b>	<b>10,5</b>	<b>10</b>

## APPENDICES

CofE UK	EF HUNGARY	PC NETHER- LANDS	ELC ESTONIA	ELC HUNGARY	ELC SWEDEN	REF HUNGARY	TOTAL
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### 1. INSTITUTIONAL (cont.)

0	0	0,5	0	0	1	0	<b>4</b>
0	0	1	0	0,5	1	0	<b>4,5</b>
0,5	0	0,5	0,5	1	1	0	<b>7</b>
0,5	1	0,5	0,5	1	1	0	<b>8</b>
0,5	1	1	0,5	1	1	0	<b>8,5</b>
0,5	1	0,5	0	0	1	0	<b>6,5</b>
0	0,5	0,5	0	0	1	0	<b>3</b>
0,5	1	1	0,5	1	1	0	<b>9</b>
0	0	0,5	0	0	1	0	<b>4,5</b>
1	0	0,5	0,5	0,5	1	0,5	<b>7,5</b>
1	1	1	1	1	1	0	<b>10,5</b>
1	0,5	1	0	0,5	0,5	0	<b>5,5</b>
1	1	0,5	1	1	1	0,5	<b>10</b>
1	1	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	<b>10</b>
1	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	1	0,5	<b>7,5</b>
0	1	1	0	0,5	1	0,5	<b>7</b>
<b>8,5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11,5</b>	<b>5,5</b>	<b>9,5</b>	<b>15,5</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>113</b>

### 2. CHURCH PRACTICES (cont.)

1	1	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	<b>9,5</b>
1	1	1	0,5	0	1	0,5	<b>8</b>
1	1	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	<b>9,5</b>
1	1	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	<b>10</b>
1	1	0,5	0	1	0,5	0	<b>5,5</b>
0,5	1	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	<b>9,5</b>
0,5	0,5	1	0,5	0,5	1	0	<b>7,5</b>
0	0,5	1	0,5	0,5	1	0	<b>6,5</b>
0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
0,5	0	1	0	0	0,5	0	<b>3,5</b>
0,5	1	1	0,5	0,5	1	0	<b>7</b>
0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	1	0	<b>5,5</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10,5</b>	<b>4,5</b>	<b>6,5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>85</b>

CATEGORIES	INDICATORS	PC SWITZERLAND	ELC LATVIA	ELC POLAND	ELC NORWAY	PC GERMANY
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### 3. LANGUAGE & SPEECH (9/47=19,1%)

<i>Official communication</i>	29	0,5	0	0,5	1	0,5
	30	0,5	0	0,5	1	1
<i>Worship</i>	31	0,5	0	0,5	0,5	1
	32	0,5	0	0	0,5	0,5
<i>Education</i>	33	0,5	0	0	0,5	1
	34	1	0,5	0,5	1	1
	35	1	0	0,5	1	0,5
<i>Acknowledgment</i>	36	1	0	0	1	0,5
	37	1	0	0	1	1
<b>C3 Total</b>		<b>6,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>7,5</b>	<b>7</b>

### 4. PUBLIC POLICY (10/47=21,3%)

	38	1	0,5	0,5	1	1
	39	1	0	0	1	0,5
	40	1	0	0	0,5	0
	41	0,5	0	0	0,5	0,5
	42	1	0	0	0	0
	43	1	0	0	0,5	0,5
	44	0,5	0	0	0	0,5
	45	1	0	0	0,5	1
	46	0,5	0	0	0,5	0,5
	47	1	0	0	0	0,5
<b>C4 Total</b>		<b>8,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>4,5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		<b>38,5</b>	<b>3,5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>36,5</b>	<b>35,5</b>

## APPENDICES

CofE UK	EF HUNGARY	PC NETHER- LANDS	ELC ESTONIA	ELC HUNGARY	ELC SWEDEN	REF HUNGARY	TOTAL
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### 3. LANGUAGE & SPEECH (cont.)

0,5	1	0,5	0,5	0	1	0	<b>6</b>
0,5	0,5	1	0,5	1	1	0	<b>7,5</b>
0,5	0	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	0	<b>4,5</b>
0	0	1	0,5	0	1	0	<b>4</b>
0,5	0	1	0,5	0	1	0	<b>5</b>
0,5	1	1	0,5	0,5	1	0,5	<b>9</b>
1	1	1	0,5	0,5	1	0,5	<b>8,5</b>
1	0,5	1	0	0	1	0	<b>6</b>
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>4,5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3,5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7,5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>53,5</b>

### 4. PUBLIC POLICY (cont.)

1	0,5	1	0,5	0	1	0	<b>8</b>
0,5	0	1	0	0	1	0	<b>5</b>
0,5	0	1	0,5	0	1	0	<b>4,5</b>
0,5	0	0	0	0	1	0	<b>3</b>
0	0	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	<b>2</b>
0,5	0	1	0,5	0	1	0	<b>5</b>
0,5	0	0,5	0	0	1	0	<b>3</b>
0,5	0	1	0	0	1	0	<b>5</b>
1	0	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	<b>3,5</b>
0,5	0	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	<b>3</b>
<b>5,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1,5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8,5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>26,5</b>	<b>23,5</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>41,5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>293,5</b>

# Results for other churches

CATEGORIES	INDICATORS	MCC FINLAND	OCC AUSTRIA	OCC CZECH REPUBLIC	OC SLOVAKIA	UC ROMANIA	AAC ARMENIA	TOTAL
<b>1. INSTITUTIONAL (16/47=36,2%)</b>								
<i>Legal documents</i>	1	1	0,5	0	0	0	0	<b>1,5</b>
	2	1	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	<b>2</b>
<i>Theology</i>	3	1	1	1	1	0,5	0	<b>4,5</b>
	4	1	1	1	1	0,5	1	<b>5,5</b>
	5	1	1	1	1	0,5	0	<b>4,5</b>
<i>Church policy</i>	6	1	1	1	1	0,5	0	<b>4,5</b>
	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
	8	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	0,5	<b>4,5</b>
	9	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	<b>2,5</b>
	10	1	1	1	1	0,5	0	<b>4,5</b>
	11	1	1	1	1	1	0	<b>5</b>
	12	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	<b>2,5</b>
<i>Ordination of clergy</i>	13	1	1	1	1	1	0	<b>5</b>
	14	1	1	1	1	0,5	0,5	<b>5</b>
	15	1	1	1	1	0,5	0	<b>4,5</b>
	16	1	0	1	1	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>C1 Total</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>11,5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6,5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>2. CHURCH PRACTICES (12/47=25,5%)</b>								
<i>Leadership</i>	17	1	1	1	1	0	0	<b>4</b>
	18	1	0,5	1	1	0	0	<b>3,5</b>
<i>Work</i>	19	1	1	1	1	0	0	<b>4</b>
	20	1	1	1	1	0	0	<b>4</b>
<i>Sexuality and kinship</i>	21	1	0,5	1	1	0	0	<b>3,5</b>
	22	1	1	1	1	1	0	<b>5</b>
<i>Advocacy and networks</i>	23	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	0,5	<b>4,5</b>
	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	25	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
	26	0,5	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0,5</b>
	27	1	0	1	1	1	0	<b>4</b>
	28	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0
<b>C2 Total</b>		<b>10,5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8,5</b>	<b>8,5</b>	<b>2,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>36,5</b>



## APPENDICES

CATEGORIES	INDICATORS	MCC FINLAND	OCC AUSTRIA	OCC CZECH REPUBLIC	OC SLOVAKIA	UC ROMANIA	AAC ARMENIA	TOTAL
<b>3. LANGUAGE &amp; SPEECH (9/47=19,1%)</b>								
Official communication	29	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	0	<b>4</b>
	30	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	0	<b>4</b>
Worship	31	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	<b>2,5</b>
	32	1	0	0,5	0,5	0	0	<b>2</b>
Education	33	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,5	<b>3</b>
	34	1	0,5	1	1	0,5	0	<b>4</b>
	35	1	0,5	1	1	0	0	<b>3,5</b>
Acknowledgment	36	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0	<b>2,5</b>
	37	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>C3 Total</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>3,5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1,5</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>26,5</b>
<b>4. PUBLIC POLICY (10/47=21,3%)</b>								
	38	1	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	<b>2</b>
	39	1	0,5	0	0	0,5	0	<b>2</b>
	40	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
	41	1	0	0	0	0,5	0	<b>1,5</b>
	42	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
	43	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
	44	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
	45	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
	46	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
	47	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>C4 Total</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12,5</b>
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		<b>45,5</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>26,5</b>	<b>26,5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>135,5</b>

- Metropolitan Community Church in Finland
- Church of Sweden
- Protestant Church in Switzerland
- Church of Norway
- Protestant Church in the Netherlands
- Evangelical Church in Germany
- Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic
- Old Catholic Church in Slovakia
- Church of England
- Roman Catholic Church in Germany
- Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship
- Old Catholic Church of Austria
- Roman Catholic Church in Malta
- Roman Catholic Church in Austria
- Roman Catholic Church in France
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
- Roman Catholic Church in Italy
- Roman Catholic Church in Switzerland
- Roman Catholic Church in Belgium
- Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
- Orthodox Church of Finland
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Poland
- Unitarian Church of Transylvania
- Roman Catholic Church in Ireland
- Roman Catholic Church in Hungary
- Roman Catholic Church in Romania
- Serbian Orthodox Church
- Roman Catholic Church in the UK
- Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia
- Orthodox Church of Estonia
- Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands
- Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
- Roman Catholic Church in Portugal
- Reformed Church in Hungary
- Moldovan Orthodox Church
- Belarusian Orthodox Church
- Roman Catholic Church in Croatia
- Church of Greece
- Roman Catholic Church in Spain
- Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia
- Georgian Orthodox Church
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia
- Armenian Apostolic Church
- Russian Orthodox Church
- Roman Catholic Church in Belarus
- Roman Catholic Church in Poland



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