Secularism in Europe

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Introduction[1]

In March 2013, the conclave and election of Pope Francis generated tremendous media interest. Switzerland's leading German-language daily, the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, spoke of "Papa Superstar".[2] According to Radio Vatican, no fewer than 3,641 journalists representing 968 media organisations from 61 countries were accredited for the papal election.[3] In Germany, several television stations - including RTL, a private broadcaster - transmitted the announcement of the new pope's election live.

However, it is not enough to look at media reaction to the election of the head of the Catholic church to draw conclusions about the influence of religion on society, especially because "the unique profile of the Catholic church and its personification in the pope correspond to the logic of modern media staging and thereby stimulate media production"[4]. But nor does the amount of media coverage support the much-hyped idea that religion and religiousness are losing their relevance in modern society.

However, a more detailed review of current events reveals that Europe, which is often described as an *"exceptional case"* when it comes to the advance of secularisation (see Davie 2002; also see Berger/Davie/Fokas 2008), even by critics of the process, is influenced considerably more strongly by religion than is commonly assumed. This begs the question: how secular is Europe really?

To answer this question we start by defining what is meant by "secularism". Afterwards we will attempt to determine the degree of secularisation in EU states. In doing so we will also discuss the heterogeneity of European citizens' relationship with religion and their views on its importance. This is followed by a discussion of the institutional types of relationship between the state and religion. Whereas French laicism is considered a "French passion" (Jean Baubérot) and seen as a substitute religion, cooperative structures are typical for most other European countries, although they differ from country to country. In Germany the churches fulfil a public role. In Great Britain the focus is on protection against discrimination and the safeguarding of cultural and religi-

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1 I am very grateful to Christian Nowak for his support and input.

2 R. Stadler: "Papa Superstar", published in the *NZZ* on 2 April 2013.

3 See *Radio Vatican* press statement of 28 February 2013, location: URL: http://de. radiovaticana.va/news/2013/02/28/gro ProzentC3 Prozent9Fes_medieninteresse_f ProzentC3 ProzentBCr_konklave/ted-669078 (accessed on 23 May 2013).

4 R. Stadler: "Papa Superstar", published in the *NZZ* on 2 April 2013.

ous pluralism. In Italy Catholicism is considered a cultural heritage even while freedom of religion is seen as very important. At the end of the paper the findings are structured, grouped and discussed to provide a detailed response to the question of how secular Europe really is.

1. Secularism and secularisation

Secularism is understood to mean a worldview representing a pure or mostly pure immanent interpretation of the world. It emerged from the transformation of religion in Europe that began during the early modern period. As a result of functional differentiation (see Luhmann 2002), religion evolved from holding the dominant power of interpretation to being seen as a provider of an alternative explanatory approach. Religion has become a "subsystem" alongside others and is often not up to the task of asserting itself in relation to other subsystems. In other words: secularism is a by-product of a secularisation process consisting of transformation processes within the religious sphere, technical and scientific progress and above all the loss of religion's ability to determine politics and the law.

Marcel Gauchet noted that the differentiation of political and religious subsystems was an indirect consequence of Christian worldviews, in particular the teaching of incarnation and, linked to that, the emphasis of the unique value of the individual. Both contributed implicitly to enhancing the self (Augustine) and, later, also the subject (Descartes). The Reformation made a decisive contribution to this process by partly desacralising the religious and by emphasising the freedom of each Christian. Only by raising the importance of the individual was it possible for the "withdrawal" of religion from the public sphere to occur. But in the long term, this also led to the "political death of religion", according to Gauchet. That is why he refers to Christianity as "the religion of the exit from religion" (*la religion de la sortie de la religion*; Gauchet 1985: 292). He draws a distinction between radical breaks, driven by laicism in opposition to religion in predominantly Catholic countries, and "gentle" secularisation in predominantly Protestant regions, which tended to occur as a gradual internal erosion of the religious. But in both cases religion lost a large part of its ability to direct the actions of individuals and to create social ties. Like Gauchet, Claude Lefort sees the withdrawal of religion from politics as a precondition for the democratisation of political culture (Lefort 1999). As a result, political power stopped pointing to something "beyond politics". Religion became less

relevant in politics and in parts of society, which prompted Steve Bruce and others to speak of declaring God dead (2002)[5].

In addition to the Reformation, humanism and the Enlightenment also contributed to the functional differentiation of the subsystems of the political and the religious spheres. All three triggered a process of "disenchantment of the world" (Max Weber) (see Taylor 2007), which at first led to the emergence of deism. This became increasingly popular in the enlightened circles of the 17th and 18th centuries. Not without cause, Ernst Troeltsch called it the "religious philosophy of the Enlightenment" (Troeltsch 1925: 429). In his observations on natural religion, one of the first representatives of this religious belief of the modern era, Edward Herbert of Cherbury, distanced himself from the suprarational dogmas and instead associated religion with moral determinations. Despite all criticism of divine revelation, the deists did not question the existence of God – Voltaire, for instance, decidedly argued against atheism.

But the inability of human reason to supply a conclusive proof for the existence of God led David Hume to doubt the philosophical legitimacy of deism. Materialism or atheism, as espoused by radical rationalists such as the Baron d'Holbach and, later, by socialists, appeared to be the logical development of deism. Some observers viewed the progression from religious belief to materialism and atheism as a direct and teleological progress. For example, Auguste Comte, in his three-stage theory of law (which follows a historical stage scheme), based his arguments on the assumption of an evolutionary, progressive loss of relevance of religion in society. In his view, religion would increasingly lose legitimacy and influence in favour of reason as an explanatory model and interpretation framework, until at last it would lose all legitimacy and influence (see Knoblauch 1999: 25.; Pickel 2011a: 64).

The positivist belief in a necessarily diminishing role for religion in modern societies is common to all later critics of religion (see Pickel 2011a: 61). Gert Pickel writes: "Religion is seen as *irrational* [emphasis in the original] and fundamentally as superfluous for modernity" (ibid.). Marxism adopted strict secularism and tried to unmask religion as opium for the oppressed masses and as the "cry of the beset creature" (Karl Marx). In response to the vacuum caused by the supposed loss of influence of religion, socialism, along with positivism, nationalism and later national socialism became alternative political substitutes for

5 Bruce does not assume that religion will "die off" completely. Instead, he, like Wilson (1982: 149), means that even at the end of the secularisation process people will always remain religious; it is only the social relevance of religion that will disappear (2002: 43).

religion. Ludwig Feuerbach saw the divine as the projection of human desires and Sigmund Freud interpreted religion as a "universal obsessional neurosis".

Political worldviews and ideologies announced the imminent end of religious faith. It was assumed that religion would over time lose in importance because it stood in contradiction to processes of modernisation (see Pickel 2009: pp. 89). Initially the reason for this was considered to lie in the increasing rationalisation of the living environment of the modern individual. Whereas religion was seen as the provider of "transcendent solutions for intramundane problems" (Pickel 2011a: 139) before the Enlightenment and the increasing influence of modern science on society, the increasing prevalence of the scientific worldview meant that it degenerated to an irrational alternative explanation (see Wilson 1982).

The original "gentle secularism" thus tended to evolve into "hard secularism" in the 19th and early 20th century, although this remained a minority phenomenon at the global level. The latter observation explains why "hard secularism" appeared in its purest form in the institutions and structures of very few states, such as the USSR, China and North Korea. In France and Turkey it assumed the shape of a *laïcité* which has been interpreted with differing degrees of rigidity, depending on the degree of conviction.[6] In the Anglo-Saxon countries a gentler form of secularism continues to predominate even today, as the following illustration by Barry A. Kosmin shows.

In the shadow of secularism, social scientists, among them Thomas Luckmann, Steve Bruce, Bryan R. Wilson and Peter L. Berger, developed the so-called theories of secularisation (see, among others, Tschannen 1991; Dobbelaere 2004b). Whereas some emphasised the advance of industrialisation and the associated division of labour (Weber, Durkheim), others focused on the increasing differentiation of modern society (Luhmann, Wilson), the subsequent lowering of essential life risks, which rendered religion mostly irrelevant as the authority for overcoming difficult life situations (Norris/Inglehart), as well as the disappearance of the political and social relevance of religion (Bruce) and the diminishing plausibility of transcendent powers (Berger). All of these theories were based in the first instance on the observation of on-going processes in Europe. The decreasing active participation of a growing section of the population in religious life was seen as a strong indication that religion was gradually disappearing (see Hervieu-Léger 2004:102). Dwindling religiousness as measured by "affiliation, attendance, and belief" (Voas 2009: 167) was especially highlighted.

6 On France, see: Baubérot 1990: 49-99.

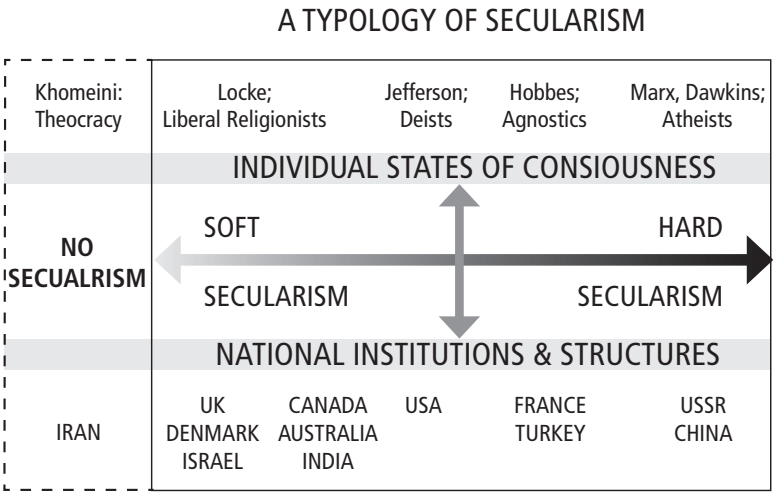

Figure 1: Typology of secularism
(Source: Kosmin 2007: 3)

But if one looks at membership development in other organisations in arnas such as sports, politics and other social activities after World War II, it is noticeable that there was a tremendous decline in participation, both in daily life and financially. This would seem to indicate a profound change of what can be referred to as social life; but the decline of religious life in itself is no evidence of religious indifference (see also Davie 2008: 167). Instead, it is a process of deinstitutionalisation or of declining influence of the church, which continues in Europe even today.

The process of secularisation follows distinct trajectories in different parts of the world (see Norris/Inglehardt 2004). Earlier it was assumed that increasing modernisation meant it would have an impact even in parts of the world that were still very religious. But in the USA the assumptions of the theories of secularisation and modernisation - including some which were developed there - appear to hit their limits. Although the country is highly developed and has an exceptional scientific landscape, a large share of the US population remains religious. In the USA the strict separation between church and state ("a wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world", Roger Williams) served to protect religious communities from the state, rather than protecting the state from a dominant church, as in France. But even there one may encounter differences in the attractiveness of religious faith from state to state, in different age cohorts and social classes. Young academics predominate among those stating no religious affiliation in surveys. Their number has

been increasing rapidly in recent years, from 6% in 1990 to 19% in 2011. However, 67% believe in the existence of God (PewResearchCenter 2012: 9). But what really gave the theories of secularisation a shake-up was the so-called "return of the religions" (Riesebrodt 2000) or "return of the Gods" (Graf 2004) in most regions of the world since the 1980s. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon, particularly the end of the great political ideologies, i.e. the great substitute religions of the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as the current acceleration and challenges posed by modernity, which converts individuals into "DIY designers" of their own existences and sometimes overtaxes them. This effect was described by Émile Durkheim in his observations on suicide (1990), in which he notes

> *"that individual wellbeing depends on the degree of social integration. A lower level of social solidarity is associated with an increased inclination to commit suicide: a lower level of social solidarity means that the individual has to make more personal decisions, has to rely more on himself and is tied less to group-based norms, expectations and demands" (Schnabel/ Grötsch 2012: 373).*

The consequences are disorientation and disintegration. In this regard, the sociologist Ronald Hitzler speaks of the "departure of man from his self-inflicted majority" (Hitzler 1999: 359). But this is of course an exaggeration because taking charge of one's own life also offers great benefits. Still, it can lead to insecurity and in part that explains the current search for roots and the return of the religious.

This makes it necessary to look even more closely at secularisation processes, and doing so reveals a great diversity of variants. It is probably more accurate to speak of secularisation as a "research programme" (Pickel 2011a: 137) rather than a "theory". The recent empirical findings on the influence of religion on society and individuals in parts of the Arab world, Latin America, most recently also in Cuba[7] or in North America and even in largely secularised Europe have led to a noticeable decline of the use of the term secularisation in its pure meaning as "disappearance of religion" (as used by Auguste Comte) (see Casanova 1994; Pollack 2007: 74).

Instead, a bewildering range of religious offerings and esotericism are becoming increasingly attractive. They focus on spiritual techniques for dealing with earthly

7 For instance, see *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, URL: http://www.sueddeutsche.de/panorama/papst-in-kuba-und-mexico-pilger-der-barmherzigkeit-1.1318091 (accessed: 23.11.12).

problems and promise to give new energy in tough everyday competition. The religious movements that place themselves in opposition to the modern world appeal mainly "proletarised intellectuals" (Weber) and the marginalised.

In light of these developments, more modern theories first studied various aspects of how the religious field was changing. They started from the assumption of the privatisation of religion (Luckmann 1963, 1967, 1991), as well as its deinstitutionalisation and individualisation (Beck 2008; also see Pollack/Müller 2008: pp. 3) or emphasised competition between religious communities and institutions in pluralistic societies, which is strongly reminiscent of the market model (Finke/Stark 1988). Peter L. Berger even assumed a "compulsion to heresy" in the late modern age (Berger 1992). The emergence of *believing without belonging*[8] (Davie 1994, 2000, 2008, see also Pollack 2007: pp. 73) at the macro level, i.e. with a view to the societal importance of religion, would therefore by no means imply its disappearance, but merely a reduction of the relevance of religious institutions (Pickel 2011a: 182).

These theories assume an increasing autonomy of individuals in the late modern age or the liberation of the individual from heteronomy and authorities, which leads not only to a great pluralism, but also to an observable change of collective identity to a post-conventional identity in society as a whole, in which ascriptive ties no longer count (Eder 2000: 79). Everybody has the opportunity to change their normal biography into a "biography of choice" (Pickel 2011a: 180).

In fact, the trend towards more self-actualisation does not stop at faith. It leads to dissolution of the traditional milieus. Linked to that is a redefinition of the social framework. Religion changes its form (see also Pollack/Müller 2008: 2). According to Thomas Luckmann it becomes "invisible" (Luckmann 1991), although a truly "invisible religion" would not be observable. But the profusion of available options grows in tandem with individual freedom, and what emerges is a kind of "patchwork religiousness". This means that religion is subject to change, even though the change may have a greater or smaller impact on the individual forms of its members' religious beliefs, depending on their degree of social anchoring (see Luckmann: 1972: 9 and Pollack 2003: 151). But the result is the secularisation of the social structure (Pollack 1996: 57).

8 For a summary of the current state of the secularisation debate see Hildebrandt et al. (2001), Minkenberg/Willems (2002: pp. 7), Braun/Gräb/Zachhuber (2007), Pollack (2012), Willems/Pollack/Basu/Gutmann/Spohn (2013).

Alongside these theories, which focus mainly on the religiousness of individuals (in terms of their mutual interactions with society), a growing number of voices is debating post-secularism. They question the reality of the paradigm of loss of social relevance of religions, a paradigm evoked by the theorists of secularism and shared in this instance by the theories of individualisation and privatisation as well as the market model of religion.

In contrast to the thesis of a complete privatisation of religion, José Casanova (1994) proposes his own concept of "deprivatisation" of religion (1996: 196). His view is that the repeatedly propagated secularisation hypothesis promotes a seemingly self-evident truth, which on closer inspection turns out not to be true at all (see Casanova 2004: pp. 2). He argues that the fundamental assumption of secularisation theorists, namely that religion and the process of modernisation are pitted against one another in irreconcilable conflict, is false. In many fields of public debate - as in the EU during the debate on references to God (Weninger 2007) - a discussion may be observed that is broadly religious in its outlines or content. Even in France, representatives of religions participate in ethics commissions or councils, such as the Muslim Council. It is mainly the churches or their representatives (see Gabriel/Reuter 2004: 269) who remain the protagonists and bearers of religion.

> *"In this way the churches intend to [...] counteract the displacement of religion into private life, but without challenging the institutional separation between church and state, which citizens support. The interest of the religions thus becomes to introduce their positions into public politics and to be able to exert influence on societal processes as one of the key stakeholders of civil society" (Pickel 2011a: 268).*

Religion is making increasing use of the media to counteract the loss of impact of its classical preachers by employing radio or the internet for its discourses (Foret 2009: pp. 44). This strategy gives the line of reasoning more weight because:

> *"[t]he authoritarian pattern of discourse by the priest (the pastor, the rabbi, the imam) who questions political leaders from his pulpit is obsolete. Instead interventions in the media in the name of democratic values (pluralism, freedom of speech) are far more legitimate" (ibid.: 44).*

Casanova does not reject the process of secularisation in its entirety. He agrees that the phenomenon exists, but not to such an extent as is often claimed. For

instance, he emphasises that the influence of the Catholic church on public debates in Spain faded away almost unnoticed (1994: 90).

An earlier, prominent proponent of the secularisation and modernisation thesis, Bryan R. Wilson, today also argues against the thesis of the privatisation of religion. He focuses on the impact of religion on society, although he differentiates between society and community (1988: 83) and mainly sees community as being influenced by religion (ibid.: 85). Wilson also sees religion as being under pressure in modernity because its binding strength cannot be maintained. But this is a consequence not so much of scientisation as of the increasing challenge which modern society represents for the relevance of (local) communities. Face-to-face interactions and solid cohesion within a local community are surrendered to an "*impersonal imitation of genuine communication*" (ibid.: 100).

Similarly, Roland J. Campiche (2004) emphasises the role of religion as a social resource of society (ibid.: 91). In his study on religiousness in Switzerland he points out the dual character of religion. He contests theses of the individualisation of religion and its invisibility, arguing that the dual nature of religion should be seen as

> *"a side-by-side existence of two types of religiousness: on the one hand, an institutional religion, inheritor of the Christian tradition [...], on the other hand a universal church that corresponds to cultural and religious standards of the late modern age. Both types of religion are subjects of regulation" (ibid.: 38).*

He rejects the thesis of the coexistence of a clearly defined, organised religion and a diffuse individual religiousness that eludes any socio-cultural access. Campiche does not deny the individual interpretation of religion, but instead emphasises the "wide field of individual religious interpretation" (ibid.: 152). Nevertheless, he doubts that such an interpretation can occur without collective patterns of orientation (as does Hervieu-Léger 2004: 103) and shows that forms of religious orientation can be grouped, implying that they are neither random nor purely individual. In addition, he rejects the assumption that religion is invisible in society, claiming that it is increasingly and frequently observable in the media (Campiche 2004: pp. 179, pp. 209). Here, Campiche and Casanova are in agreement.

Furthermore, secularisation can also - as may be seen specifically in the case of European Islam - take the form of state regulation of religion (Sadjed 2013: pp. 17; Salvatore 2005). In this interpretation, only certain types of religiousness

are compatible with the modern, liberal constitutional state. Such regulation can easily mutate into control. This was the case, for example, when the state founded national Muslim Councils in France and Germany. In France this has even led to a violation of the sacred principle of *laïcité* as the state acts decisively to integrate Islam and, with this objective in mind, (indirectly) supports the founding of mosques and private religious schools as well as the training of imams.

Reviewing these different and sometimes contradictory views allows us to draw some initial conclusions about the functions religion fulfils today. Franz-Xaver Kaufmann identifies six traditional tasks of religion: the construction of collective identity, social integration, the prophetic dimension, the ritualisation of everyday life, reducing contingency, and opening oneself to the cosmos (Kaufmann 1989: pp. 11). They remain relevant, but have changed their appearance, dramatically in some cases.

The construction of collective identity

With regard to the construction of collective identities, religion has lost its former central place in most countries of the world. In Europe especially, individuals rarely receive the traditional religious parameters of identity as coherently and completely as before. In the late modern era, identities are fluid and subject to rapid change.

Social integration

In Europe religion has essentially forfeited its ability to determine individual behaviour and create a solid social linkage. Even the dominant value system is shaped much less by religion than it used to be. Most youths hold moral values based on personal decisions. US communitarians see a danger to their society in this development because it places their cohesion at risk. Fundamentalist interpretations do offer strong social integration. But in the highly pluralistic societies of Europe they compete with other authorities that provide meaning and are confronted with a critical public. A different, more modern way consists of integration through accepted differences.

The prophetic function

Campiche's study shows that the Swiss would like their churches to show even greater engagement in promoting community solidarity and development aid. This expectation is especially common among the youth. The attractiveness of

German church congresses and Catholic Days results not only from an intimate sense of community, but also from the debate around social issues.

The ritualisation of everyday life

Institutionalised religion has also lost its monopolistic position with regard to the ritualisation of everyday life. True, many people still practise religious rituals such as Christian burials, betrothals, Whitsun and Christmas masses and, to a more limited degree, baptisms. But strong competition comes not only, and - at least in most European countries – not mainly from the rituals of political religions such as the *Jugendweihe*, a youth initiation ceremony, but from sports events and music festivals (Hervieu-Léger). They fulfil the earlier function of "self-testimony" (Émile Durkheim) of religions. The "emotion of the depths" (*l´émotion des profondeurs*) creates a strong feeling of belonging. Many large-scale religious events, such as visits by the pope, church congresses or Catholic Days, continue to fulfil this function.

The reduction of contingency

Religion transforms chance into necessity. The doctrine of Providence partially alleviates daily insecurity and gives meaning to events. The desire for a clear sense of purpose explains why many believers long for reliable religious traditions and stable value systems. They prefer fundamentalist or traditionalist groups or Pentecostal communities. Most of the others, by way of contrast, desire unrestricted opportunities to design their life projects. But the attractiveness of freedom also depends on the strength of the welfare state. In times of crisis, it grows weaker, which strengthens the longing for certainty.

Opening oneself up to the cosmos

Religions give individuals a cosmic status, which helps them find their bearings in the world. They provide orientation and a sense of purpose. Europeans use them to build their own offerings of meaning. This leads to patchwork religiousness. In his study, Campiche showed that such patchwork religiousness does not emerge by chance, but is developed by social actors. But his study also showed that many Swiss consider giving a sense of purpose to be the main function of religion. Some, who feel that mainstream religions do not provide this, seek solace in so-called "sects" or delve into esotericism and the New Age movement. Religion is being seen less and less as a provider of metaphysical answers. Instead, it is expected once again to offer magical or curative services and to help surmount concrete daily problems that modern science cannot solve. Ma-

linowski had already noted the link between magical actions and the limits of knowledge. In the categories of Comte, the religious landscape changes back from "youthful" metaphysics to "childlike" religion.

The following section discusses the validity of these hypotheses for Europe. To simplify the analysis, we will make use of Michael N. Ebertz's distinction between dechurchification, de-Christianisation and secularisation (Ebertz 2011: 3). Ebertz interprets dechurchification as the "decrease of the normative bindingness of specifically church-related expectations of influence and commitment", de-Christianisation as the "distancing from specifically Christian meanings" and secularisation as the "loss of relevance of religions and religiousness in general". These three dimensions are analysed on the basis of existing survey findings.

2. Current findings

2.1. Research design and research questions

Despite increasing scepticism regarding the secularisation hypothesis - Jürgen Habermas now speaks of a "post-secular era" (Habermas 2009) - Europe continues to be seen as secular.[9] In the introduction to his book "The Desecularisation of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics", Peter A. Berger names the continent as the only world region where "the old secularisation theory would seem to hold" (Berger 1999: 9; see also 2002; Norris/Inglehart 2004). Berger bases his argument mainly on observations that can be assigned to Ebertz's categories of dechurchification or de-Christianisation, that is "a decline of expressed beliefs and of church-related behaviour, a decline in adherence to church-dictated codes for personal conduct and the difficulties in recruiting clergy for the churches" (Ziebertz/Riegel 2009: 293).

The prevailing explanatory theories of the secularisation process are unable to account for why it is specifically the European continent, where Christianity became a world religion, that represents an "exceptional case" (Davie 2002; Davie 2001; Willaime 2006). The oft-cited theories of modernisation are also unable to offer good reasons to explain the exceptional status of Europe: in the United States, despite pronounced modernisation, there are many signs of

9 By Europe, we primarily mean the EU member states. Switzerland and Norway are also included in parts of the analysis where survey results cover these countries.

extraordinary religious vitality (see also Ebertz 2011: 3). This applies equally to Switzerland, where modernisation and religiousness are closely linked. Similar conclusions hold true for the thesis of individualisation, which can explain the considerable diversity of the religious field and dechurchification, but not the high degree of de-Christianisation and secularisation in Europe. With reference to the rational choice-inspired market model or supply-side model of religion (Stark/Bainbridge 1987; Stark/Iannaccone 1994; Stark/Finke 2000), the latest empirical studies indicate that supposedly "no indications [can be found] that validate the rational choice model, quite the opposite: the model assumptions regarding the negative influence of religious monopolies and any form of state intervention in the religious market were refuted" (Gladkich 2012). This allegedly also applies to Europe (see Voas/Olson/Crockett 2002). But we will see that this conclusion has to be seen in context for Europe.

	Secularisation theory	**Individualisation hypothesis**	**Market model**
Representatives	Bryan Wilson Steve Bruce Detlef Pollack	Thomas Luckmann Grace Davie Hervieu-Léger	Rodney Starke Roger Finke Laurence Iannaccone
Basic assumption	Tension between modernity and religion	Individual religious orientation as anthropological constant	Constant need of individuals for religion
Reference theory	Modernisation theory	Individualisation theory	Supply-oriented market theory
Main hypothesis	Continuous loss of relevance of religion as a social authority that gives meaning and purpose	Loss of relevance of institutionalised religion; continued existence of private forms of religion	Religious market determines extent of religiousness and church orientation

Figure 2: Overview of core assumptions of secularisation theory
(Source: Pickel 2013: 70)

To understand the dynamics of secularisation in Europe requires taking into account the particularities of the European landscape. If one looks at the individual countries of Europe, i.e. when one leaves the "space traveller's perspective" and instead assumes the "birds-eye perspective" in the words of Ebertz (2011: 1), then the claim that Europe is secularised cannot be supported in its entirety, based on current findings.

This observation takes into account the more recent theoretical concept of "multiple modernities" (Eisenstadt 2001; Davie 2002; Knöbel/König/Spohn 2007), which – greatly simplified – emphasises the different effects of modernisation in society as a whole – and therefore in the religious sphere, too – based on different starting conditions in the various countries, and thereby negates a necessarily secular identification of individual European nations. Instead,

> *religion represents "a constitutive dimension of national modernisation and transnational integration processes and of the forms of collective identity embedded in them, even when – as has just occurred in Europe – the immediate social influence of organised religious communities is on the wane" (Knöbel/König/Spohn 2007: pp. 7).*

In addition, quantitative analyses have started focusing on the link between growing religious pluralism in Europe on the one hand and the importance of religion in society as a whole on the other hand (Pollack/Tucci/Ziebertz 2012).

In this paper, the various findings on the degree of secularisation in Europe are first presented. The following surveys and studies were used:

- the PewResearch Religion & Public Life Project,
- Eurobarometer 225 of 2005 and Eurobarometer 341 of 2010,
- the Bertelsmann Religionsmonitor 2013,
- Tom W. Smith's report of 2012, "Beliefs about God across Time and Countries",
- the Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism of 2012 (Win-Gallup International) (Smith 2012),
- the Gallup Polls: Public Opinion 2007 and 2008,

- the EuropeanSocialSurvey 2002 and 2008,
- the study "Religion and Life Perspectives (RaLP)" (Ziebertz/Kay 2005; 2006; 2009) and
- the World Values Survey 2005-2008.

In a second step, the diversity of religious landscapes in Europe and the various stages of secularisation on the continent are explained on the basis of multiple factors: the importance of denomination, of state-church relationships and the socio-economic situation in various countries.

2.2. Data analysis

Based on first impressions, Europe remains a Christian continent. 76% of the EU's population describe themselves as Christians (PewResearchCenter 2011). About 50% of the population are Catholics, about 18% Protestant and about 8% Orthodox (ibid.). Islam is growing in importance in the various European societies, but it remains relatively unimportant if one wishes to measure the overall degree of secularisation in Europe. It would be desirable to focus specifically on European Islam and its possible contribution to secularisation, but doing so would go beyond the narrow bounds of this study.

A closer look at the various EU member states shows how highly differentiated the situation is in Europe. There are tremendous differences between countries with a very small share of "non-Christians", such as Malta, Romania, Portugal, Poland, Ireland, Croatia, Lithuania and Greece, and countries with many "non-Christians", such as the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, the Netherlands, France and Belgium. But there are only two countries where "non-Christians" make up more than 50% of the population: the Czech Republic and Estonia.

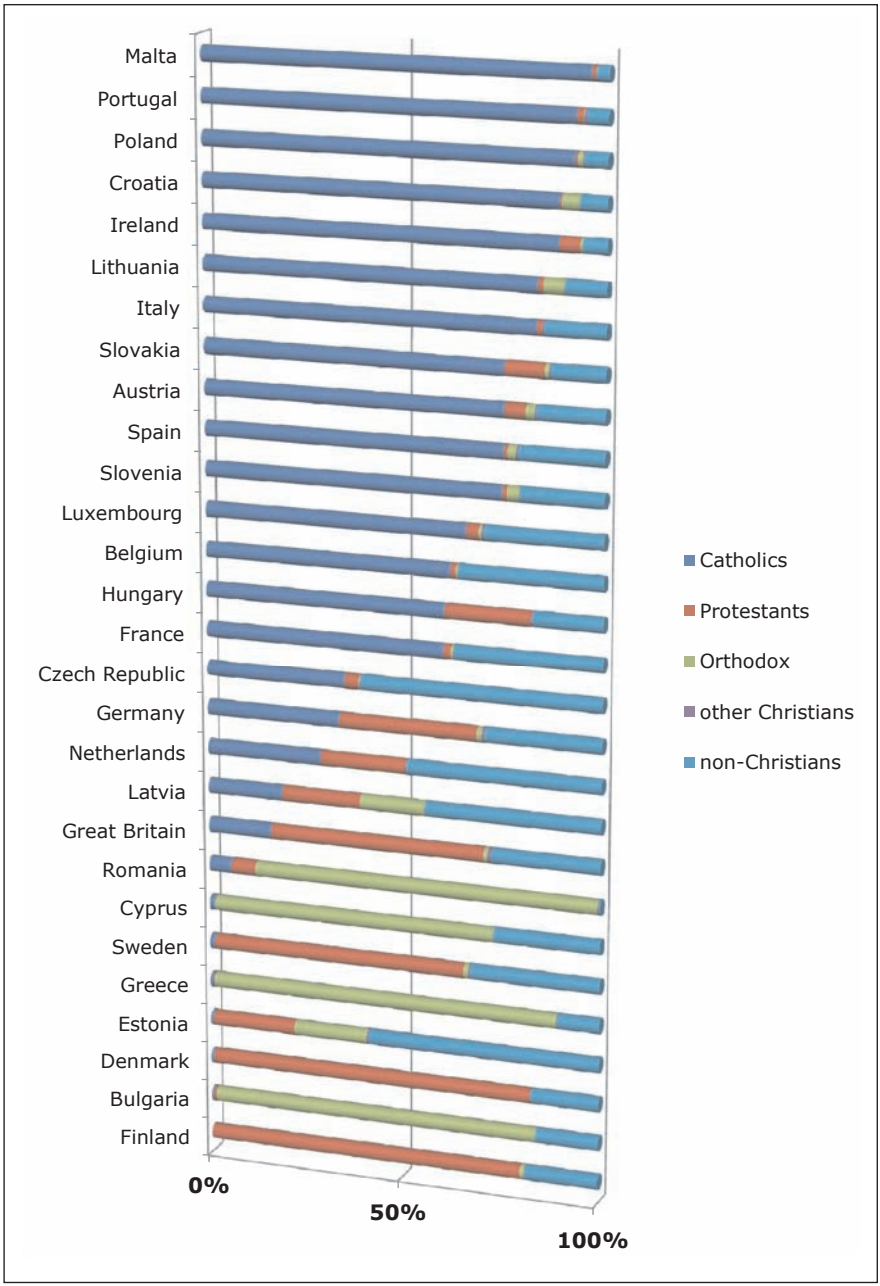

Figure 3: "Christians" and "non-Christians" in the EU
(data: PewResearchCenter 2011)

De-Christianisation and secularisation

This finding, which seems to indicate that Europe should be seen as a Christian continent, requires further qualification as soon as one looks at the individual belief in God in addition to identification with a religious community, or when asking Europeans about the relevance of religion in how they live their lives.

The question about belief in God was asked both in Eurobarometer 2005 and in Eurobarometer 2010. In both cases, participants were able to choose one of three possible answers: "You believe that there is a God", "You believe that there is a spiritual or other force that directs your life" or "You do not believe that there is any form of God, spirit or force that directs your life" (Eurobarometer 2010: 231). On average, 51% of EU citizens said they believed in God, 26% believed in a spirit or a kind of force that directs life and 20% of those surveyed denied believing in any kind of God, spirit or force that directs life (ibid.).

When looking at the results for individual countries, the answers to these questions are highly diverse. Regarding the belief in God they range from a maximum value of 94% in Malta to a minimum value of 16% in the Czech Republic. It is also worth noting that among the 28 countries of the EU there are now six where the number of participants who said they believed in "some sort of spirit or force that directs life" was greater than the number of those who believed in God (this was the case in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland and Latvia). The share of non-believers is highest in France, at 40% (see Figure 4).

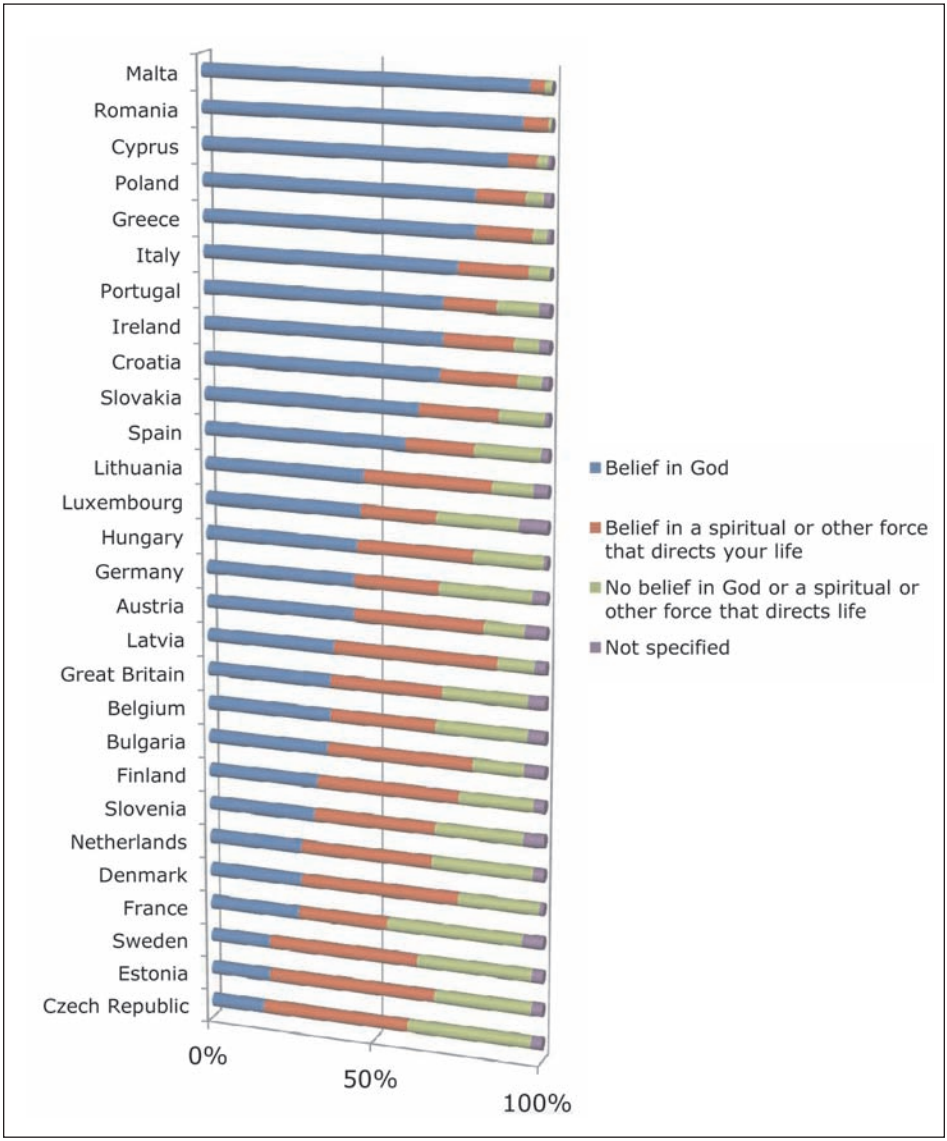

Figure 4: Belief in God
(data: Eurobarometer 2010)

In the Eurobarometer 2010 survey, Germany occupies a position near the middle. This is mainly due to the substantial weight of the former West German federal states: Tom W. Smith's study of 18 countries worldwide shows that belief in God is very weak in the former East German states. These are the data from the European countries surveyed:

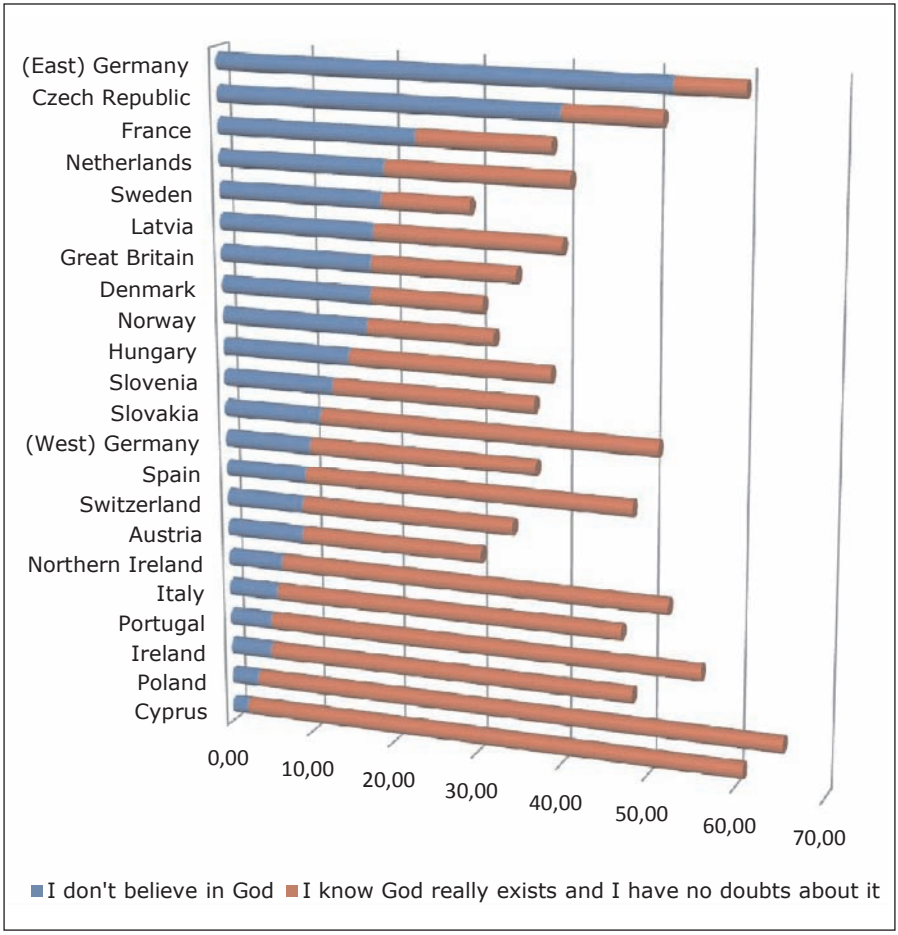

Figure 5: European countries ranked by "atheism" and "strong belief" in "God" (2008)

(data: Smith 2012: 7)

With about 52% of the population not believing in God, the former East German states rank highest on "atheism" not just in Europe, but worldwide. Smith's findings are supported by an Allbus survey conducted in 2008, which found that 53% of East Germans professed not to believe in God – as opposed to just 10% in the former West German states. A strong belief in God is shared by 27% of the population in Germany's west and 8% in the east (Pickel 2013: 82). Possibly some of the East German survey participants believe in the existence of a "force that directs life". But there are probably not that many because East Germans were found to be especially resistant to esoteric "sects" or movements (see Pickel 2010; Götze/Jaeckel/Pickel 2013). It is safe to assume that most believe neither in God nor in a spiritual alternative and can therefore be counted as atheists (see Pickel 2011b).

The Bertelsmann Foundation's Religionsmonitor 2013 survey confirms this supposition. It found a share of 46% of "atheists" for East Germany (44% in France, according to the same source) (Bertelsmann Foundation 2013: 8). The question of whether these are atheists by conviction or whether the scores merely reflect an indifferent attitude towards religion is hard to answer. According to surveys, 25% of East Germans define themselves as atheists, a further 25% as "not religious" (ibid.: 83). If we assume that those who responded that they do not believe in God in the Smith and Allbus studies are "atheists", then there would be proportionally more East Germans than Chinese inclined towards atheism. According to the Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism of 2012, 47% of the Chinese population are atheists (30% in the Czech Republic and 29% in France) (WIN-Gallup International 2012: 3). Unfortunately, this index draws no distinction between western and eastern Germany. The percentages of Czech and French "atheists" in the Global Index are similar to those of people who do not believe in God according to Smith's figures for the same countries, or are even higher (30% and 39.9% in the Global Index and 29% and 23.3% in Smith's study). Presumably North Korea has a higher percentage of "atheists" than any other country; but there are no survey results for this country.

According to the Gallup Polls of 2007 and 2008 religion has little relevance in the lives of most Europeans. Over 70% of those surveyed in Estonia, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, the Czech Republic, France and Great Britain answered the question: "Does religion occupy an important place in your life?" with "no". In Croatia, Portugal, Cyprus, Romania, Croatia, Austria and Latvia, by contrast, religion remains important.

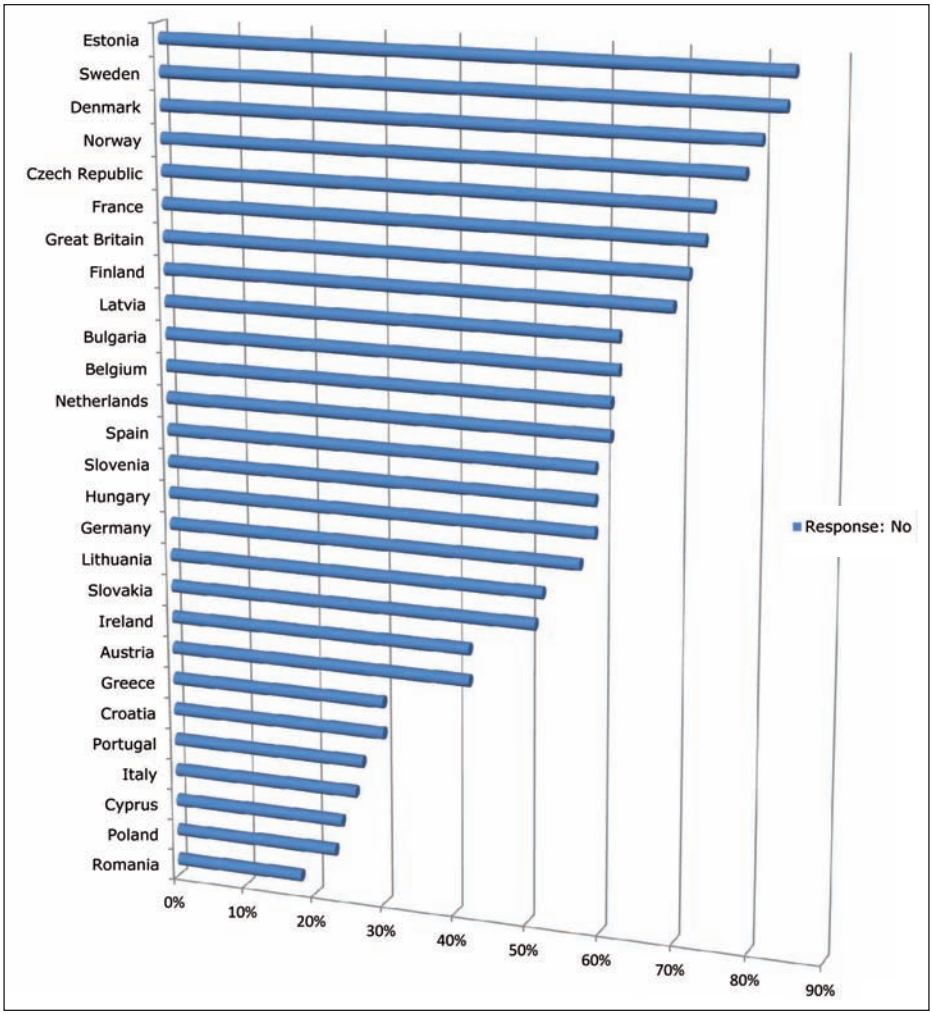

Figure 6: The role of religion in the individual conduct of life
(data: Gallup Poll 2008)

Similar findings emerged from the survey item "How important is God in your life?" of the World Values Survey 2005-2008:

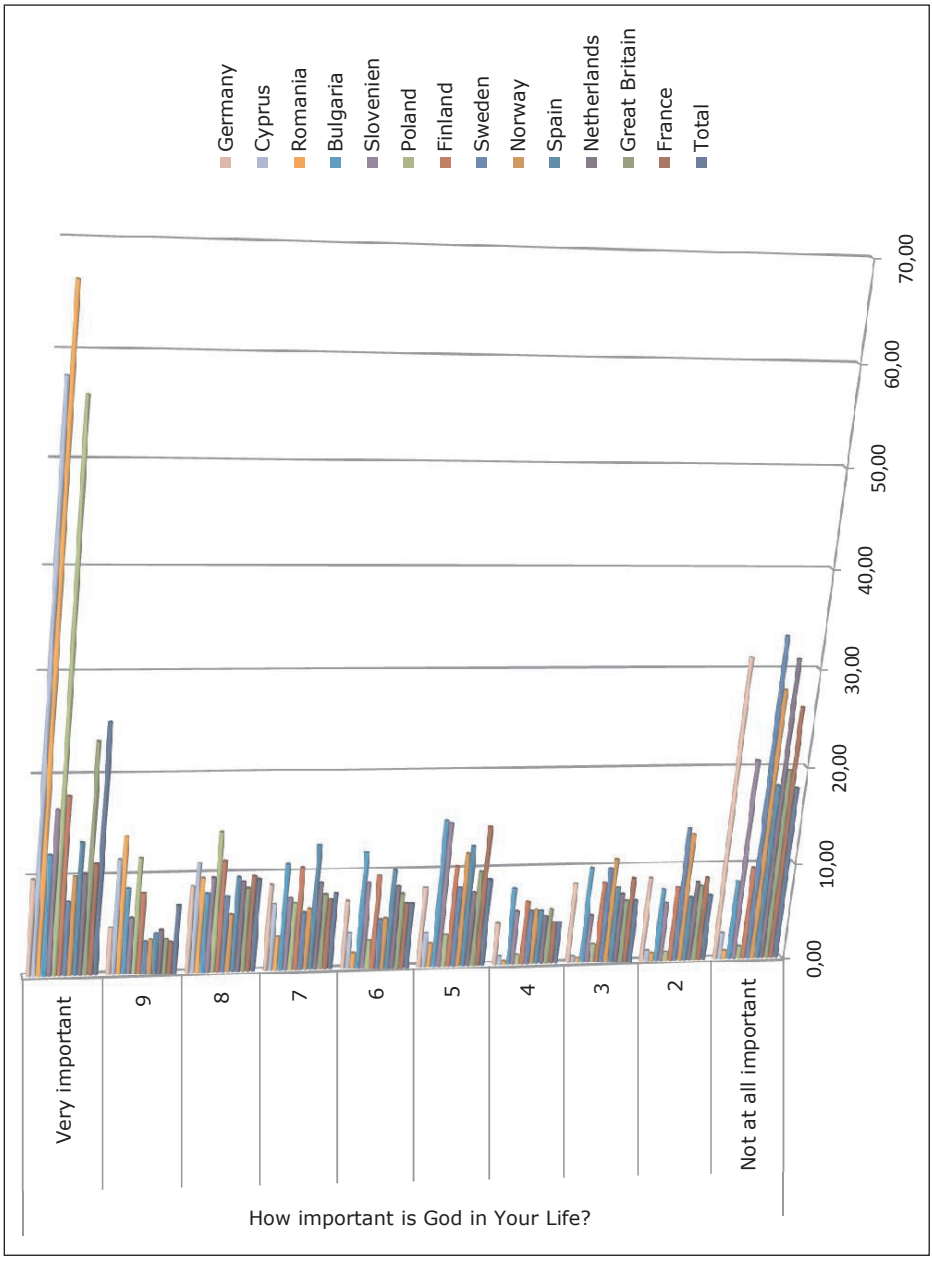

Figure 7: Importance of God in your life
(data: World Values Survey 2005-2008)

Remarkably, more Germans (31.2%) than French (26.1%) consider God to be of absolutely no importance in their own lives. Conversely, 11.2% of the French consider God to be very important in their lives, as do 9.8% of Germans. So it would appear that in addition to a high proportion of "atheists" in France, there are also many "religiously-musical" people. Presumably the fact that there is a Catholic France alongside the laicistic Republican France plays an important role. In Germany, in contrast, the effects of two successive dictatorships in the east of Germany are still being felt, in conjunction with Protestantism, which tends to promote secularism. The Religionsmonitor survey of 2013 notes that no short-term change of status should be expected because the younger generations generally view religion as less important than older generations, and are less religious on the whole. In East Germany, just 18% of those aged 36-45 and 12% of those aged 16-25 had a religious education. But the numbers are not much greater in the west: 25% of the 16-25 year-olds. 42% of those aged 16-30 in this part of Germany consider religion to be "very important" or "important" (70% of the over-60 year-olds share this opinion). 51% of the 25-39 year-olds claim to be "somewhat", "quite" or "very religious" (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2013: 9).

Religion's loss of relevance as a guide and compass for European citizens is accompanied by dechurchification.

Dechurchification

As measured by attendance at Mass, the citizens of the European Union are not particularly involved in religious life. The share of those stating that they "never" attend church services except on special occasions is over 60% in the Czech Republic, closely followed by France, Great Britain and Belgium, where more than half of respondents gave the same answer. Only in Poland, Greece and Cyprus do less than 10% of those surveyed give the same answer. Germany ranges somewhere in the middle.

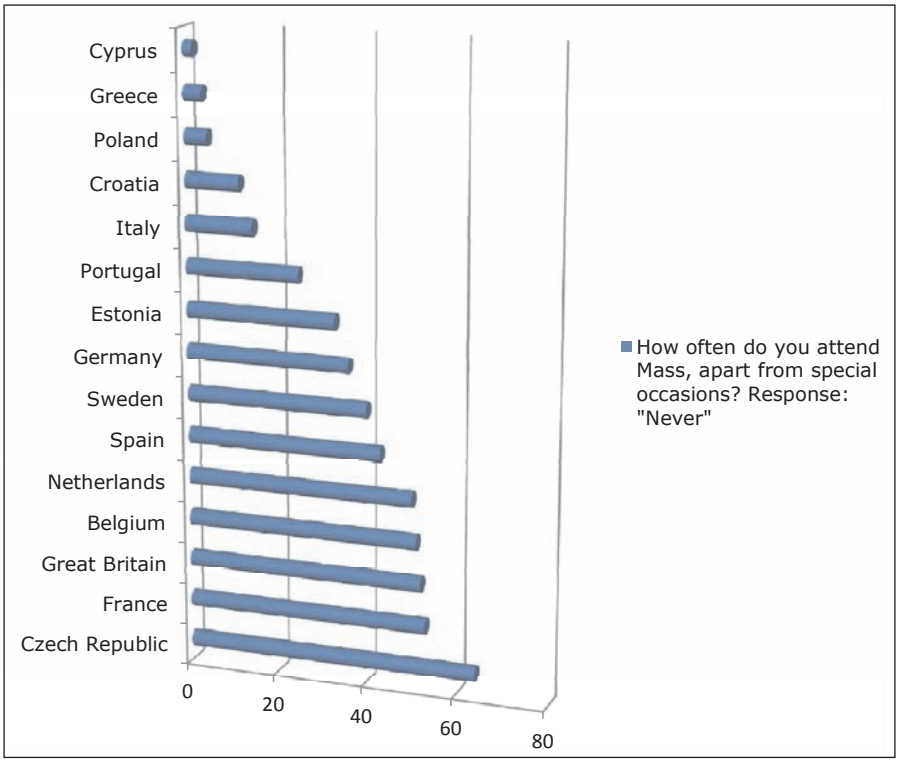

Figure 8: Frequency of attending Mass (according to EuropeanSocialSurvey 2008; for Italy ESS 2002)[10]

Dechurchification is also becoming noticeable through the large numbers of people who officially leave the church (as has been happening in Germany since reunification) and who no longer define themselves by their faith. Together with the demographic change, it is leading to a rapid aging of the remaining church population. Nevertheless, religious rituals remain attractive for special occasions. Although Europe's youth rarely go to church (see Figure 9), most of them – with the exception of the respondents from the Netherlands – say that they consider a religious setting important for an impending wedding or for the baptism of their child. Remarkably, the importance of religious ritual is consistently rated higher for the baptism of a child than for one's own wedding (see Figures 10 and 11).

10 See. Religious attendance. Europe's irreligious, in: The Economist, dated 09.08.2010: http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2010/08/religious_attendance (accessed: 22.08.2013).

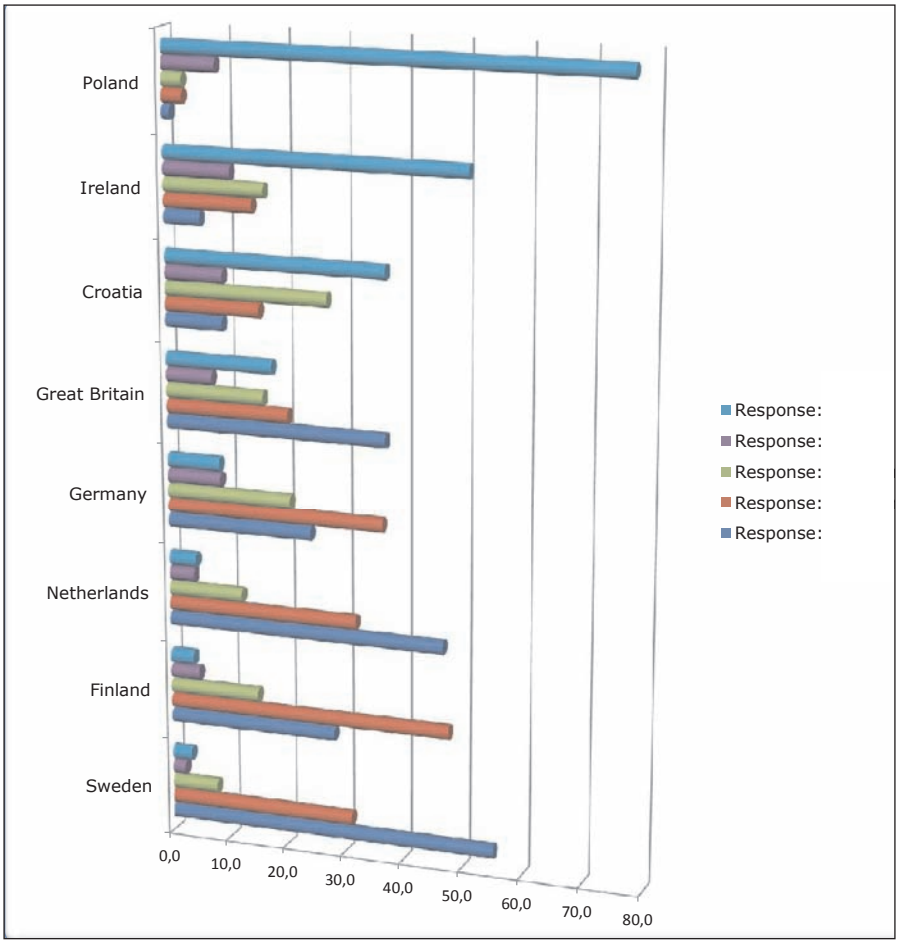

Figure 9: Apart from funerals, weddings and baptisms, how often do you attend church services?

(data: Ziebertz/Kay 2006: pp. 267)

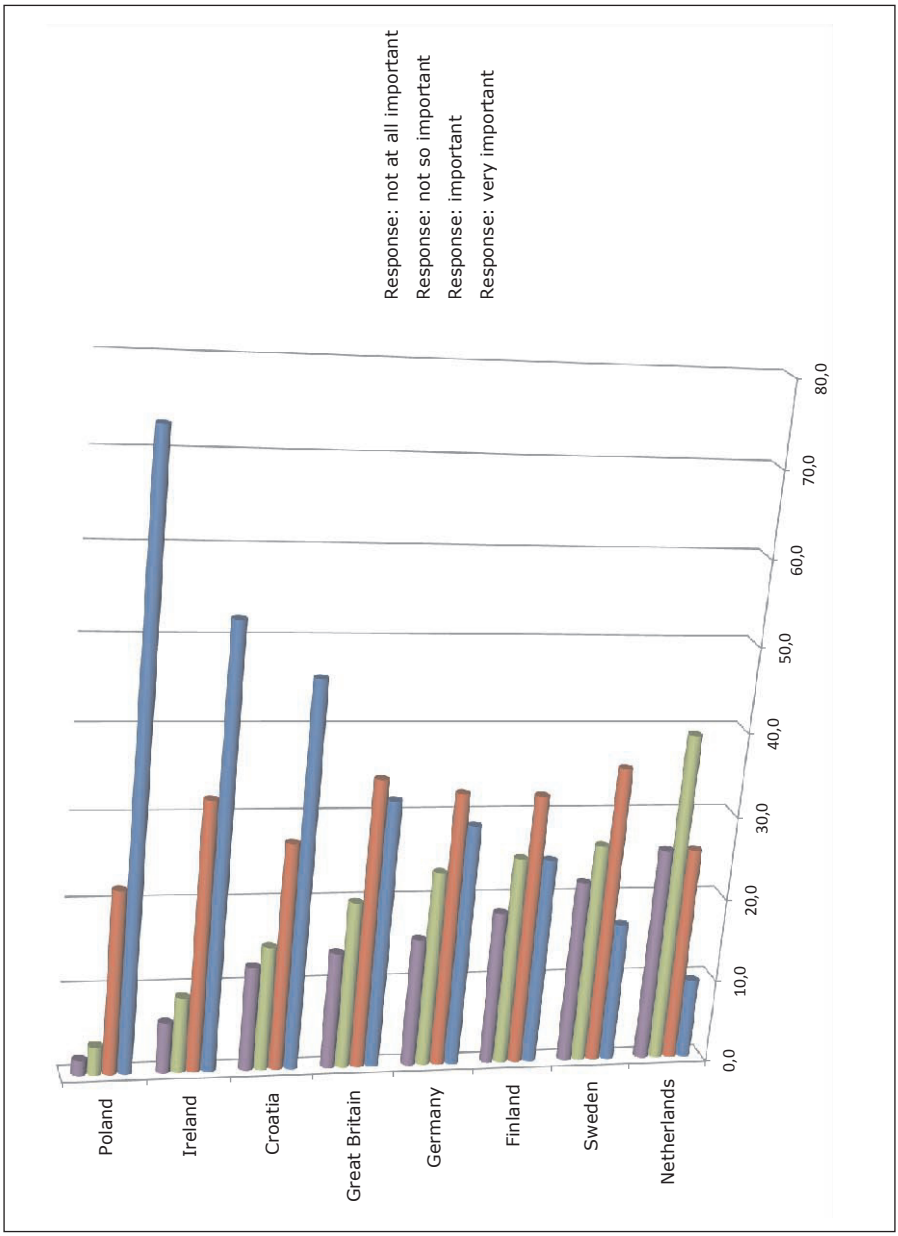

Figure 10: If you were to get married, would it be important to you that your wedding take place in a religious setting?

(data: Ziebertz/Kay 2006: pp. 267)

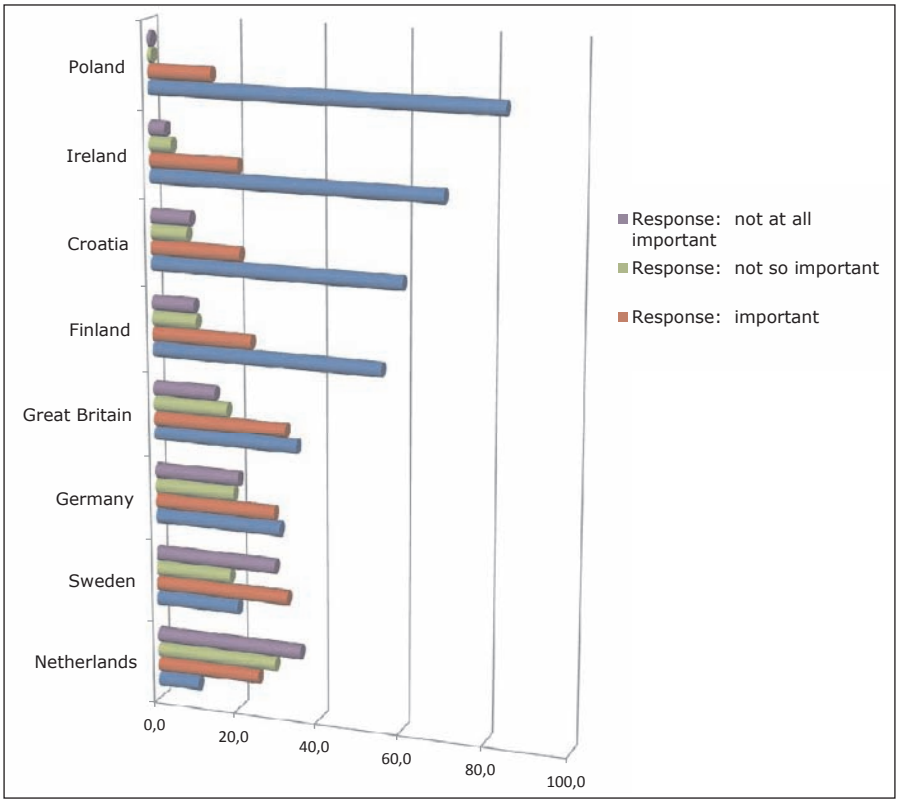

Figure 11: If you were about to become a parent, would it be important for you that your child be baptised?
(data: Ziebertz/Kay 2006: pp. 267)

Factors influencing secularisation

The search for the factors promoting secularisation in Europe requires looking not only at socio-economic parameters, but also at national cultures, which are seen as the ensemble of "key societal ideas, values, norms and social objectivations" (Ebertz 2011: 4). These are patterns of thought which largely originated in religious traditions and continue to make their influence felt despite de-churchification. In this context, the data from the RaLP study mentioned earlier are revealing (Ziebertz/Kay 2009). A fundamental connection may be observed between secularisation and denomination (1), the form of church-state relationships (2) and socio-economic parameters (3).

1.) Generally, Protestant countries or those with mixed denominations tend to display a lower degree of church affiliation than Catholic and Orthodox countries (Ebertz 2011: 3). Lithuania, which is mainly Roman-Catholic, is more religious than Latvia (mixed denominations) and Lutheran Estonia (see Figure 6). Such differences are related mainly to special value systems, according to Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel. Protestant Europe feels more attached to the post-materialistic value of self-realisation, which it helped create, than does Catholic Europe, whose attachment is in turn stronger than that of Orthodox Europe. One of the reasons for this discrepancy is that Protestantism is a religion of "emancipated Christians" or "freedom of conscience" together with a high degree of 2metastability" (see Bizeul 1993). The following diagram from a study by Inglehart and Welzel shows this quite clearly:

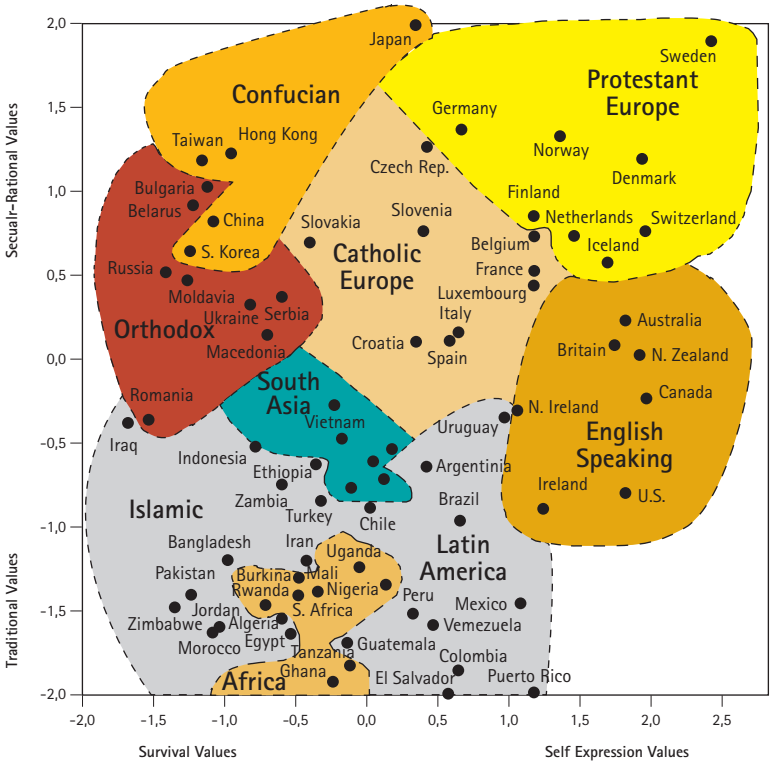

Figure 12: The World Values Survey Cultural Map 2005-2008
(source: Inglehart/Welzel 2010: 554)

At the same time, a similar correlation can be seen regarding the influence of a denomination on society as a whole or on the *societal level* (Ziebertz/ Riegel 2009: 296), that is the contribution of religion to social cohesion (ibid.: 295). However, even in a strictly Catholic country such as Poland one can observe a decline in religious practice among the younger generations. Although most young Poles continue to be more religious than the average, only about one in three of those aged 20-32 go to church every Sunday. Among those living in cities, it is only one in every five (BpB 2011: 42, see also Pac 2009). Since the end of the communist regime and the pontificate of John Paul II., the Roman Catholic church has lost influence in politics, the state and society. Strict commandments, little charisma on the part of the current church officialdom and the end of the threat to the Polish identity help to explain these changes. 70% of Polish youth are in favour of premarital sex and about 75% consider contraception permissible (Deutsches Polen-Institut 2008: pp. 9). This despite the fact that the great idol of the post-transition youth, Pope John Paul II., was a fervent opponent of contraception. The share of those who describe themselves as not religious, undecided or indifferent towards religion has doubled from 3% to 6% in just two years (2008-2009). The youth in particular are nowadays taking this step (Osęka 2009: pp. 116).

2.) The influence of the type of relationship between church and state on secularisation is hard to capture. Various factors should be considered when analysing this relationship. Pollack and Pickel write:

"In order to do so, we first set up a catalogue with five criteria to determine the degree of the legal separation of church and state which takes into account the existence of a state church (1), the establishment of theological departments in state colleges or universities (2), the integration of religious education in the curriculum of public (i.e state-financed) schools (3), the permission of military and prison pastoral care (4) as well as the grant of tax preferences and financial support for the church (5)" (Pollack/Pickel 2009: 149).

Detlef Pollack and Gert Pickel assign scores of 0, 1 or 2 to each of these five parameters.

"The first criterion received 2 points since it comprises both the existence of a state church as well as the legal privileges of a national church or of churches which are closely linked to the history of the respective country. The third criterion also received two points since the question is not only whether

public schools offer religious education but also, whether it is financed by the state. According two points to the fifth criterion can be justified with the fact that this criterion not only contains tax preferences for churches and religious communities but also financial support of churches based on contractually defined fiscal support as well as the payment of personnel costs of the church by the state" (ibid.).

However, this does not give a complete overview of the relationship between church and state and much less of the influence of religion on the "fundamental programmatic orientation" of states. Instead, aspects such as the influence of denominations on the specific forms of the social and welfare state require closer analysis. For instance, "public service provision centred on individuals [may be observed] in European countries shaped by Calvinist-Free Church veins of Protestantism" (Ebertz 2011: pp. 9, with a reference to Manow 2005); the Lutheran influence on the form of the Scandinavian welfare state model is essentially uncontested (see Stråth 2002, but also Jochem 2005) and an "anti-statist, family and church oriented programme of responsibilities [is to be found] in the Roman Catholic countries, and particularly in the Mediterranean countries" (Ebertz 2011: 10).

Regarding the link between church-state relationships and the degree of secularisation, the countries that held on to a state church model longest prove to be especially secularised, both with regard to individual religiousness and to frequency of church attendance (Storm 2012: 334). But it may also occur that only one of these two dimensions is present: whereas Great Britain is characterised by strong "believing without belonging" - a statement that not all experts would agree with (Voas/Crockett 2005) - a pronounced "belonging without believing" may be found in most Scandinavian countries (2008: 169).

This is most likely due to the fact that in Great Britain, both the Anglican church and society as a whole are characterised by a large variety of religious leanings and communities. In the northern European national states, the Lutheran church continues to be strongly anchored in society, even though religious practice is not particularly pronounced. Religious passivity appears to result, as mentioned earlier, from a lack of religious competition. Religion has become "a memory shared from a great distance", which, "even though it no longer implies a shared faith, continues to trigger collective identity reflexes" (Hervieu-Leger 2004: 104).

The following overview results for the European countries:

	Existance of a State Church (2)	the establishment of theological departments in state colleges or universities (1)	The integration of religious education in the curriculum of public (i.e. statefinced) scools (subsidized by the state) (2)	the permission of military and/or prison pastoral care (1)	tax preferences for churches, financial support (2)	sum
Italy	0	1	2	1	2	6
Portugal	0	1	2	1	1	5
Spain	0	1	2	1	2	6
Greece	2	1	2	1	2	8
Ireland	1	0	2	1	1	5
Austria	1	1	2	1	0	5
Belgium	0	1	2	1	1	5
France	0	0	0	1	1	2
Great Britain	2	1	2	1	0	6
Northern Ireland	2	0	2	1	1	6
Netherlands	0	1	1	1	1	4
Germany	1	1	2	1	2	7
Norway	2	1	2	1	2	8
Sweden	2	1	2	1	2	8
Denmark	2	1	1	1	2	7
Finland	2	1	2	1	2	8
Poland	2	1	2	1	2	8
Hungary	0	0	2	1	2	5
Czech Rep.	0	1	2	1	2	6
Slovakia	1	1	2	1	2	7
Slovenia	0	1	0	0	2	3
Croatia	0	1	1	1	2	5
Estonia	1	1	0,5	1	2	5,5
Romania	0/1	0/1	1	0/1	1	2-5
Bulgaria	0/1	1	1	0	1	3-4
Russia	0	0	1	0	0	1
USA	0	0	1	1	1	3
Australia	0	0	0/1	1	1	2-3
Canada	0	1	2	1	1	5
New Zealand	0	1	2	1	0	4
Japan	0	0	0	1	2	3
Philippines	0	0	1	1	2	4

Figure 13: The relationship between church and state

(Source: Pollack/Pickel 2009: 152)

Grace Davie finds this conclusion confirmed by the fact that support for the Swedish Lutheran church remains high despite very tentative active participation in church life in Sweden. And so one stays on as a member of the church despite church taxes, gets married in church, baptises one's children (Davie 2008: 171) and supports the church, e.g. financially. In addition one makes use the church during times of great national sorrow, as in 1994 when the Estonia sank at a cost of 900 lives or after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, in which many Swedes lost their lives (Davie 2008: pp. 169). Similar processes can be observed in Denmark. The special relevance of the Lutheran Danish church for Danish society was described as follows by the former bishop of Roskilde, Jan Lindhardt: "Danes do not need to go to church because they live in their Danishness every day"[11] (see Møller/Østergård 2013: 147).

But this does not apply to Roman Catholic countries with a long history of a state church – in Italy it lasted until 1948, in Ireland until 1972, in Portugal until 1978 and in Spain until 1980. In these countries, religious faith and loyalty to the church are usually strongly expressed. In this case the factor "denomination" appears to have a stronger effect than the type of relationship between state and church.

In Spain a remarkable development is occurring, however. The influence of the church on the societal elite and on the media remains strong. But the percentage of Spanish Catholics has declined steeply since 1990. Then, almost 90% of Spaniards were Roman Catholic. Today it is only 70.5%, and only 13% practise their religion regularly (Morel 2013). Just 35% of Spaniards accept that 0.7% of their taxes are paid over to the church, even though this does not cost them anything overall because they would have to pay the taxes anyway (ibid.). The Roman Catholic church sees the reasons for the rapid secularisation of the country as lying in "aggressive atheism" and in the allegedly "radically anti-clerical attitude" of the earlier leftist prime minister of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. It tries – with the support of the new conservative prime minister, Mariano Rajoy – to reverse reforms such as legal equality for homosexual couples or the simplification of divorce proceedings, which allegedly would endanger the Christian roots of Spain. But it was probably the collaboration of the church with the Franco regime, its current silence on the economic crisis, its wealth of properties and the scandals around paedophile priests which have most damaged its reputation.

11 Quoted from Møller/Østergård (2013: 147).

Countries which have used concordance-democratic arrangements to resolve conflict and which have a system of pillars, such as the Netherlands or Belgium, usually display a high degree of secularisation. Possibly this is linked in this case too with the almost non-existent competition between the various ideological-religious milieus, which are kept strictly separated. Today there is a debate in the Netherlands about whether Islam should form an independent, new pillar. This applies neither to Switzerland nor to Austria with their respective concordance democracies, probably because in these countries power is divided up between political parties rather than society being divided up into denominational milieus. Long cooperation between the state and religious communities, such as in Germany, appears to slow down the process of secularisation, without being able to halt it completely. Even though there has not been a state church in Germany since 1919, certain matters – such as religious instruction, the church tax, pastoral care for institutions, cemeteries, and theological faculties – are jointly governed by the state and religious public sector bodies. This is increasingly true of Islam, too.

In contrast, both socialism and French laicism have tended to drive not only dechurchification, but also de-Christianisation and secularisation. The distribution pattern between more or less secularised countries does not consist of a simple East-West contrast, however. Such a view would ignore the diversity of secularisation processes in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. There are tremendous differences in the eastern parts of Europe between regions and countries such as the former German Democratic Republic, the former Czechoslovakia and Hungary, in which socialism extended itself as a political substitute for religion in large parts of the population without noticeable resistance, and countries where a denomination (Catholicism or the Orthodoxy) provided an alternative to this worldview. The alternative could take on the form of a consistent opposition on the part of the church against the socialist state, as in Poland, or, in contrast, of close cooperation between the church and the state, as in Romania. The case of Spain illustrates that cooperation between the church and a dictatorial political regime is less likely to be accepted in Roman Catholic countries than in Orthodox countries – possibly because of the Orthodox tradition of a close "symphonia" between the state and religion. In Romania, the Orthodoxy's cooperation with the Ceaușescu regime appears to have had hardly any negative impact on religiousness and loyalty to the church.

In France, the bitter power struggle between the Roman Catholic church and laicistic Republicans, which was made worse by inept enforcement of the 1905 law on church-state separation, finally brought the Roman Catholic to the point where it opened up to modernity. The fight between the "two Frances", repu-

blican and laicistic France vs. Catholic and neo-royalist France, has effectively been overtaken by history.

The front of supporters of laicism seemed to crumble in 1984, when almost a million people took to the streets to defend the special rights granted the predominantly Catholic private schools in the "Lex Falloux" of 1850, through which the schools had reached an agreement with the state. The protestors demonstrated against the reforms proposed by the leftist president of the time, François Mitterrand, and his education minister, Alain Savary, which would have integrated the private schools more closely with the public education system. The draft law had to be withdrawn and the education minister was forced to resign.

But since the mid-1980s, the supporters of laicism have been mobilising again. This was reflected, for instance, in the amount of opposition against a conservative government's plans to revise the "Lex Falloux" in 1993/1994. On this occasion, the state's intention was to make it easier for territorial regional authorities to fund capital expenditure by private secondary schools. Many saw a greater public funding of private schools as threatening the ideological neutrality of the state. Despite the decision of the Constitutional Court, which found the reform to be unconstitutional, many people demonstrated for the "protection" of the public school system in Paris in 1994.

Nowadays in France, laicism is mainly used as a weapon against militant Islam. Although ideological laicism has advanced dechurchification and de-Christianisation quite considerably in this country, religious (Catholic) values and attitudes shaped by Catholicism continue to characterise politics and society, as shown by the large-scale demonstrations in 2013 against same-sex marriage and especially against giving homosexuals the right to adopt. Many Catholics still see France as the "oldest daughter of the Church". Whereas Danièle Hervieu-Léger believes he has observed a loss of cultural importance of Catholicism in this country (Hervieu-Léger 2003), Philippe Portier and Jean-Paul Willaime emphasise the existence of new forms of Catholic engagement in French society (Portier 2002; Willaime 2006: 768).

3.) Naturally, socio-economic parameters also contribute to explaining the differing degrees of secularisation in European countries. Secularism tends to be stronger in economically developed countries with extensive social welfare than in poorer regions. As mentioned before, Switzerland forms a remarkable exception. In addition, the question of whether the Scandinavian countries are particularly susceptible to secularism because of their wealth or because of their Lutheran culture is hard to answer. Both factors

are indirectly linked in the sense that the Scandinavian welfare state is commonly viewed as Protestant achievement (for Sweden, see: Jochem 2012: 24; Stråth 2002; for Denmark: Østergård 2006, 2011). But they do not explain the relatively low degree of secularisation of Finland. The three factors just named are in any case often hard to separate.

Overall, therefore, we have to look at three factors (denomination, state-church relationships and socio-economic factors) and eleven parameters:

- The dominance of Catholicism
- The dominance of Protestantism
- The dominance of the Orthodoxy
- The dominance of a mixed-denomination tradition
- The laicistic model of the separation of state and religion
- The socialist model of the separation of state and religion (and its impact in the present)
- The model of the state church and its impact in the present
- The cooperative model of state-church relationships
- A low degree of socio-economic development
- A medium degree of socio-economic development
- A high degree of socio-economic development

The influence of these various factors and parameters on the stage of secularisation of European countries can be clearly illustrated graphically by operationalising the individual factors as required. The Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox or laicistic countries form four clearly identifiable clusters:

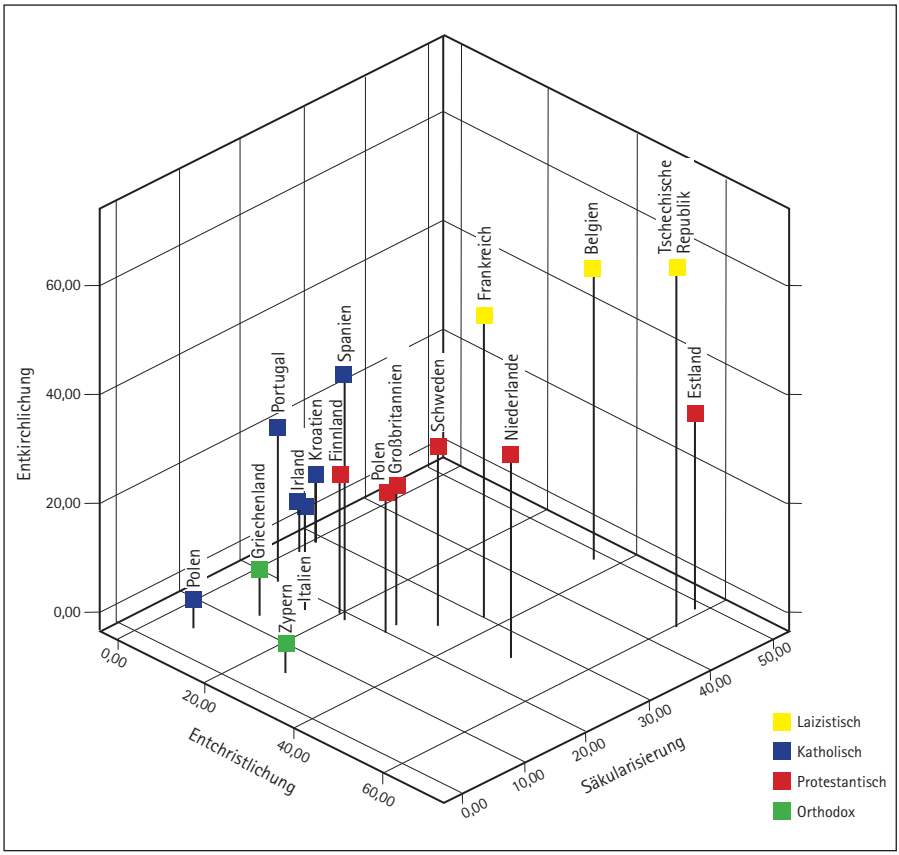

Figure 14: Degree of secularisation of European countries
(own research)

In order to display the existing survey data, they were first allocated to the following three categories (based on Ebertz 2011): "dechurchification" (see Figures 8, 9, 10 und 11), "de-Christianisation" (see Figure 3) and "secularisation (see Figures 4, 5, 6, 7, 13). The X-axis shows "secularisation", the Z-axis shows "de-Christianisation" and the Y-axis shows "dechurchification". Where there were multiple datasets for the categories "dechurchification" and "secularisation", the average was calculated.[12] The relationship between church and state was operationalised by re-coding the values from Figure 13. The values range from 0 to 8 points; a value of zero means 0% and a value of eight means 100%.

12 See the appendix in section "Table for Figure 15" for more detail.

The following should be noted with regard to this illustration: survey data is not available for all three categories for all European countries. This means that not all European countries could be covered in Figure 14 and the countries that were included contributed a different number of values to the top-level variables "dechurchification" and "secularisation". Nevertheless, the illustration shows a clear tendency. The factors identified as influencing secularisation in this study are clearly visible.

The chart appears to confirm our supposition that the socio-economic parameter - which does not form a cluster of its own here - is less relevant for the process of secularisation than the denomination and laicistic ideology.

2. Conclusions, outlook

Although the process of secularisation takes different forms in different European countries, its pronounced strength in this part of the world cannot be denied. And this is true for all three of the dimensions of secularisation studied by Karel Dobbelaere: for the diminishing importance of religion for societies as a whole, for the adaptation of the religious sphere to (post-)modern attitudes and value systems, and for the privatisation of religion (see Dobbelaere 2004a: 29-45). In countries with a Protestant or Anglican milieu such as Scandinavia and Great Britain, as well as in countries with a laicistic tradition such as France and Belgium, where the cooperative culture of "organised laicism" dominates, the process of secularisation is further advanced than in most Roman Catholic countries, including the Catholic part of the Netherlands. This is especially true for Poland, where the Catholic faith is one of the basic pillars of national consciousness. But even there, the process of secularisation is visibly advancing. This may have something to do with demographic changes, which are particularly pronounced in many Roman Catholic countries (see Kaufmann/Goujon/Skirbekk 2012). The aging of the population leads to a decline in the number of devout church members. As the younger generations, as mentioned earlier, practises religion less and identifies less with the institutional churches, the secularisation process is reinforced.

But this diagnosis has to be relativised. In recent years, the media, politics and academia in Europe have shown growing interest in religious questions, not least because of the self-confident emergence of Islam and radical religious communities ("fundamentalist" religious communities, "sects" and New Reli-

gious Movements). Processes such as the great head-scarf debates or the debates about the use of head-to-toe coverings in public spaces are testimony to this growing interest, as are the debate about crucifixes in public buildings, the dispute about the participation of Muslim girls in coeducational physical education classes, especially in swimming lessons, the debate about religious instruction at public schools, about circumcision of boys and girls, about halal butchering and the offering of halal meat in public canteens, the proclamation of new public holidays or society's perception of and involvement in the holidays of religious communities of migrants, and others. The issue at hand is essentially the question of stronger consideration of cultural pluralism and the recognition of religious minorities.

The Roman Catholic church is now rapidly adjusting to modern value systems, after having taken a critical position on modernity for a long time. But this change is generating a backlash from traditionalists and the deeply religious within and outside the churches and religious communities. This is leading to the isolation of individual religious groups.

The hypothesis regarding the privatisation of religion should also be questioned. Academia at first assumed the existence of an individual, patchwork-type design of religion. Parts of Christianity were allegedly - at least in the upper class - freely combined with fragments from Asian religions or the "New Age" movement by some individuals. And this supposedly created a customised religious experience for the individuals in question.

However, social scientists like Roland Campiche rightly emphasise that such a process of privatisation did not occur in a completely uncontrolled fashion. Certain religious actors tried to steer it and to draw tangible or intangible benefits from the process. In addition, empirical studies carried out among Europe's youth showed that patchwork religiousness was firmly rooted in specifically Christian ground (see Ziebertz/Kay 2005, 2006).

Today, academia tends to view patchwork religiousness as a partly antiquated idea. Instead, the more common approach nowadays is to try to address post-Christian religious practice through the concept of "hybrid religiousness". This includes a diversity of combined behaviours and attitudes, such as the founding of alternative communities with a religious nature, renovating church buildings by raising donations or even by providing voluntary labour, sometimes even given by completely secularised citizens such as in the former East German states, or the massive attendance of non-Christian youths at papal visits or their attendance at Protestant or Catholic church days in Germany.

"Hybrid religiousness" is the result of the search for orientation by recurring to individual elements from religions or their traditions, and this in a world in which all earlier foundations have been given a shake-up. Naturally, the hybrid interpretation of religion is also an outcome of the individualisation and privatisation process. It requires no institutional permanent membership and can therefore by very short-lived. But it is also linked to the ability of adapting to the pluralism of (post-)modern societies. Religious and other communities offer a large number of orientation guidelines and interpretations of what "good" means and how to live a good life (see Baumann/Belhoul 2005).

Based on these observations, three scenarios can be described for the further process of secularisation in Europe:

1.) A post-secular strengthening of "fundamentalist" religious communities and so-called "sects" is conceivable, but improbable. There is already a large number of religious communities with deeply committed adherents in Europe, both within and outside of the established religious communities. They include, for example, the Evangelicals, the Pietists, the Bible fundamentalists, Pentecostalists, charismatics within the Catholic church (members of the Catholic Emmanuel Community), followers of the Jewish organisation Chabad Lubavitch, the various forms of political Islam and the numerous New Religious Movements or "sects" which are under government observation in France and Belgium. Throughout the world, their numbers have exploded after the end of the great political ideologies and other forms of substitutes for religion, both because of exogenous (US missionaries, TV preachers) and endogenous factors (social upheaval, modernisation drives, discrimination of all sorts). In Europe they have notched up some successes, but compared to the dramatic developments in the USA or in the entire southern hemisphere, these have been very modest. We have previously noted the "resistance" of East Germans towards psycho-cults and "sects". Not much is left of the hypothesis, formulated shortly after reunification, about the revitalisation of the church in Central Europe, even though the traditional church communities in Bulgaria and Romania were able to benefit from the new circumstances. Certainly political Islam is finding considerable support among young migrants. But their Islamisation can be interpreted as part of the "modus of subjectivation" of the modern era (see Tietze 2001). It is usually temporary, fragile and an expression of an individual protest attitude. As the demographics of migrants tend to become similar to the demographic evolution of the host country, we should not expect a renewal of religion, which would come from the migrant milieus.

Despite the current financial and economic crises, there is no sign of a substantial change in secularisation trends anywhere in Europe. The far right in Sweden ("Sverigedemokraterna" party, see Lipponen 2002) or Finland ("Perussuomalaiset" party) and partly in Germany, too (citizens' movement "Pro Deutschland", see Häussler 2008) emphasise the specifically Christian heritage in order to rail against the alleged "threat" to their own identity posed by immigration. But still, a strong return to religiousness appears unlikely in today's Europe.

2.) And it is even more unlikely that widespread religious indifference in Europe will turn into a radical rejection of religion. Mass atheism has up to now always been a consequence of top-down antireligious campaigns, as under conditions of "real existing socialism". Today's so-called "new atheism" is and will remain an elite phenomenon. The movement's representatives, such as the biologist Richard Dawkins, the late US publicist Christopher Hitchens or the philosophers Daniel Dennett and Daniel Onfray, form minorities of free thinkers (see Kreiner 2010). Even though humanist organisations compete with the churches, and offer a rather successful substitute ritual in the form of their "Jugendweihe" youth initiation in the eastern parts of Germany, they remain rather small. In 2013, the Humanist Association of Germany had no more than 20,000 members. Similarly, the Coordinating Council of Secular Organisations (KORSO) and the International Federation of the Religiously Unaffiliated and Atheists (IBKA) are hardly known to the broader public, although the German Bus Campaign - as a variant of the Atheist Bus Campaign - did generate a certain amount of media interest. Even though atheism is a well-established worldview among French intellectuals, it is far from being a mass movement even in France. And this will hardly change in the future. Earlier French intellectuals of the left such as Maurice Clavel or Benny Lévy even became devout believers towards the ends of their lives, whereas others adopted French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas's distinction between the sacral and holiness to criticise the sacral elevation of politics in totalitarianism. According to this view, only religious holiness can serve as the foundation of healthy political ethics.

In addition, one finds a slowing-down or even stagnation of the secularisation process in those Western European countries that were the first to secularise. Regular religious observance has stabilised at a low level of about 5% of the overall population in these countries, according to Kaufmann, Goujon and Skirbekk. The percentage of those who define themselves as religious appears not to sink below about 40-50% of the population, whereas the share of those who believe in the existence of God or a higher

being does not drop below a lower limit of about 60-70%. In the future, the Roman Catholic and possibly also the Orthodox countries will continue to secularise, but only until they reach the levels found in the Western European countries that underwent secularisation early (Kaufmann/Goujon/Skirbekk 2012: pp. 78). This could then we be seen as the continuation of the Protestantisation of Europe and of Catholicism.

But even in the most secularised parts of Europe, there are few atheists of conviction to be found. Instead, broad indecision prevails in the area of religious belief – paired with an even greater attitude of indifference. In modern societies, where the economy plays a central role, this widespread attitude can be explained through the attractiveness of easily procured tangible goods. True, a so-called post-materialistic lifestyle has become established in classes that are materially (over-)satisfied. But as individuals keep a greater distance from large institutions, they tend to customise their religiousness - if any - according to individual preferences.

3.) The most probable scenario is one where fluid "hybrid religiousness" predominates in Europe, with a bedrock of institutionally regulated religiousness and individual islands of devout believers and confirmed atheists.[13] "Hybrid religiousness" allows for numerous, flexible forms and expressions of religiousness. Sociologists of religion have long pointed to the emergence of "neo-Christianity" (Hervieu-Léger 1986), which in particular takes the form of groups with a special closeness to nature as testimony to the creation of God (Hervieu-Léger/Hervieu 1983). The various forms that such diffuse religiousness can assume will have to be examined in another study. According to Roland Campiche's studies on the religion of the Swiss and other Europeans, universal religiousness includes - in addition to the belief in a higher being - a belief in a close connection between religion and human rights and the conception of religion as a private affair (Campiche 2010: 33). To this one might add an emphasis on social engagement, an emphasis also chosen by the new Pope Francis in his pastoral work.

13 In this regard, see Roland Campiche's thesis on a dualisation of the religious field into an institutional and a universal religion (Campiche 2004).

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Appendix

Below are the data underlying the figures shown in the main section of the paper, in the order of their appearance.

	Religious orientation					
Country	Catholics	Protes-tants	Orthodox	other Christians	non-Christians	Total
Finland	0,05%	80,20%	1,10%	0,05%	18,60%	100,00%
Bulgaria	0,50%	0,60%	83,00%	0,05%	15,85%	100,00%
Denmark	0,70%	81,90%	0,05%	0,30%	17,05%	100,00%
Estonia	0,70%	21,20%	18,90%	0,50%	58,70%	100,00%
Greece	0,70%	0,30%	88,30%	0,20%	10,50%	100,00%
Sweden	1,20%	64,40%	1,30%	0,40%	32,70%	100,00%
Cyprus	1,30%	0,05%	71,80%	0,05%	26,80%	100,00%
Romania	5,70%	6,30%	87,30%	0,30%	0,40%	100,00%
Great Britain	16,20%	54,50%	0,90%	1,00%	27,40%	100,00%
Latvia	19,10%	20,10%	16,50%	0,05%	44,25%	100,00%
Netherlands	29,10%	21,80%	0,05%	0,20%	48,85%	100,00%
Germany	33,90%	34,80%	1,40%	0,70%	29,20%	100,00%
Czech Republic	35,40%	3,50%	0,30%	0,30%	60,50%	100,00%
France	60,40%	1,80%	0,60%	0,20%	37,00%	100,00%
Hungary	60,60%	21,60%	0,05%	0,30%	17,45%	100,00%
Belgium	62,00%	1,40%	0,50%	0,20%	35,90%	100,00%
Luxembourg	65,90%	3,20%	0,70%	0,60%	29,60%	100,00%
Slovenia	74,80%	1,20%	3,00%	0,05%	20,95%	100,00%
Spain	75,20%	1,00%	2,00%	0,50%	21,30%	100,00%
Austria	75,30%	5,10%	2,30%	0,30%	17,00%	100,00%
Slovakia	75,30%	9,80%	1,00%	0,40%	13,50%	100,00%
Italy	83,00%	1,30%	0,05%	0,60%	15,05%	100,00%
Lithuania	83,20%	1,40%	5,10%	0,05%	10,25%	100,00%
Ireland	88,40%	5,10%	0,50%	0,05%	5,95%	100,00%
Croatia	88,50%	0,30%	4,40%	0,05%	6,75%	100,00%
Poland	92,20%	0,40%	1,30%	0,30%	5,80%	100,00%
Portugal	92,30%	1,60%	0,20%	0,60%	5,30%	100,00%
Malta	95,80%	1,10%	0,05%	0,05%	3,00%	100,00%

Table used for Figure 3: "Christians" and "non-Christians" in the EU
(data: PewResearchCenter 2011)

	Belief in God			
Country	**Belief in God**	**Belief in a spiritual or other force that directs your life**	**No belief in God or a spiritual or other force that directs life**	Not specified
Czech Republic	16	44	37	3
Estonia	18	50	29	3
Sweden	18	45	34	3
France	27	27	40	6
Denmark	28	47	24	1
Netherlands	28	39	30	3
Slovenia	32	36	26	6
Finland	33	42	22	3
Bulgaria	36	43	15	6
Belgium	37	31	27	5
Great Britain	37	33	25	5
Latvia	38	48	11	3
Austria	44	38	12	6
Germany	44	25	27	4
Hungary	45	34	20	1
Luxembourg	46	22	24	8
Lithuania	47	37	12	4
Spain	59	20	19	2
Slovakia	63	23	13	1
Croatia	69	22	7	2
Ireland	70	20	7	3
Portugal	70	15	12	3
Italy	74	20	6	0
Greece	79	16	4	1
Poland	79	14	5	2
Cyprus	88	8	3	1
Romania	92	7	1	0
Malta	94	4	2	0

Table used for Figure 4: Belief in God
(data: Eurobarometer 2010)[14]

14 In percent.

	«Atheism» and «strong faith»	
Country	**I don't believe in God**	**I know God really exist and I have no doubts about it**
Cyprus	1,90	59,00
Poland	3,30	62,00
Ireland	5,00	43,20
Portugal	5,10	50,90
Italy	5,90	41,00
North Ireland	6,60	45,60
Austria	9,20	21,40
Swiss	9,30	25,00
Spain	9,70	38,40
(West-)Germany	10,30	26,70
Slovakia	11,70	39,20
Slovenia	13,20	23,60
Hungary	15,20	23,50
Norway	17,40	14,80
Denmark	17,90	13,00
Great Britain	18,00	16,80
Lettland	18,30	21,70
Sweden	19,30	10,20
Netherlands	19,70	21,20
France	23,30	15,50
Czech Republic	39,90	11,10
(East-)Germany	52,10	7,80

Table used for Figure 5: European countries ranked on "atheism" and "strong belief" in "God" (2008)[15]

(data: Smith 2012: 7)

15 In percent.

	Does religion play an important role in your life?
Country	**Response: No**
Romania	18%
Poland	23%
Cyprus	24%
Italy	26%
Portugal	27%
Croatia	30%
Greece	30%
Austria	42%
Ireland	42%
Slovakia	51%
Lithuania	52%
Germany	57%
Hungary	59%
Slovenia	59%
Spain	59%
Netherlands	61%
Belgium	61%
Bulgaria	62%
Latvia	62%
Finland	69%
Great Britain	71%
France	73%
Czech Republic	74%
Norway	78%
Denmark	80%
Sweden	83%
Estonia	84%

Table used for Figure 6: The role of religion in the way individuals live their lives

(data: Gallup Poll 2008)

Table used for Figure 7: Importance of God in your life[16]
(data: World Values Survey 2005-2008)

		Country						
		Total	France	Great Britain	Nether-lands	Spain	Norway	Sweden
How important is God in Your Life?	Not at all important	17,80	26,10	19,70	31,00	18,10	27,90	33,30
	2	6,80	8,60	7,80	8,20	6,60	13,20	13,80
	3	6,40	8,70	6,40	7,10	7,80	10,70	9,80
	4	4,30	4,30	5,70	5,00	5,50	5,70	5,50
	5	8,90	14,30	9,70	7,60	12,30	11,60	8,10
	6	6,60	6,60	7,60	8,40	10,00	5,10	5,00
	7	7,80	7,20	7,70	8,90	12,70	6,30	5,90
	8	9,40	9,70	8,50	9,20	9,60	5,90	7,70
	9	6,90	3,20	3,50	4,40	4,10	3,50	3,30
	Very important	25,20	11,20	23,30	10,30	13,40	10,00	7,50
		Land						
		Finland	Poland	Slovenia	Bulgaria	Romania	Cyprus	Germany
How important is God in Your Life?	Not at all important	9,60	1,30	20,70	8,20	0,90	2,80	31,20
	2	7,70	0,90	6,10	7,50	0,80	1,10	8,70
	3	8,30	1,90	5,00	9,90	0,50	0,70	8,30
	4	6,50	1,00	5,50	7,90	0,40	0,90	4,30
	5	10,30	3,30	14,70	15,00	2,40	3,50	8,20
	6	9,50	2,90	8,80	11,90	1,60	3,70	7,00
	7	10,50	6,90	7,40	10,80	3,50	6,80	8,80
	8	11,30	14,20	9,60	8,00	9,60	11,10	8,80
	9	8,20	11,70	5,70	8,70	13,90	11,60	4,80
	Very important	18,00	56,00	16,70	12,20	66,30	57,70	9,80

16 In percent.

	How often do you attend Mass, apart from special occasions?
Country	**Response: No**
Czech Republic	64
France	53
Great Britain	52
Belgium	51
Netherlands	50
Spain	43
Sweden	40
Germany	36
Estonia	33
Portugal	25
Italia	15
Croatia	12
Poland	5
Greece	4
Cyprus	2

Table used for Figure 8: Frequency of attending church[17]

(data: EuropeanSocialSurvey 2008; for Italien ESS 2002)

17 In percent.

	Apart from funerals, weddings and baptisms, how often do you attend church services?				
	Response:				
Country	never	once or twice per year	sometimes	once a month	almost weekly
Sweden	55,3	31,3	7,8	2,2	3,3
Finland	28,3	47,7	15,2	4,9	3,9
Netherlands	46,7	32,0	12,5	4,2	4,6
Germany	24,4	36,6	21,0	9,1	8,9
Great Britain	37,1	20,7	16,5	7,8	18,0
Croatia	9,7	16,0	27,4	9,8	37,1
Ireland	6,1	14,9	16,9	11,3	50,8
Poland	1,3	3,4	3,4	9,0	76,8

Table used for Figure 9: Apart from funerals, weddings and baptisms, how often do you attend church services?[18]

(data: Ziebertz/Kay 2006: pp. 267)

	If you were to get married, would it be important to you that your wedding take place in a religious setting?			
	Response:			
Country	very important	important	not so important	not at all important
Netherlands	9,5	25,6	39,3	25,6
Sweden	16,6	35,4	26,2	21,8
Finland	24,6	32,2	24,8	18,3
Germany	28,8	32,6	23,3	15,3
Great Britain	31,8	34,3	19,9	13,9
Croatia	45,8	27,0	14,8	12,4
Ireland	52,3	32,1	9,0	6,0
Poland	73,0	21,8	3,4	1,8

Table used for Figure 10: If you were to get married, would it be important to you that your wedding take place in a religious setting?[19]

(data: Ziebertz/Kay 2006: pp. 267)

18 In percent.
19 In percent.

	If you were about to become a parent, would it be important for you that your child be baptised?			
	Response:			
Country	very important	important	not so important	not at all important
Netherland	10,1	25,1	29,3	35,5
Sweden	20,1	32,3	18,3	29,4
Germany	30,7	29,3	19,4	20,6
Great Britain	34,8	32,2	18,0	15,0
Finland	55,1	23,9	10,7	10,3
Croatia	60,0	21,6	8,8	9,6
Ireland	69,4	21,2	5,4	3,9
Poland	83,3	15,0	0,9	0,8

Table used for Figure 11: If you were to become a parent, would you want your child to be baptised?[20]

(data: Ziebertz/Kay 2006: pp. 267)

20 Angaben in Prozent.

	Dechurchification	de-Christianisation	Secularisation
Belgium	51.00	35.90	48.50
Germany	24.58	29.20	20.09
Estonia	33.00	58.70	48.56
Finland	22.19	18.60	19.49
France	53.00	37.00	30.03
Greece	4.00	10.50	12.50
Great Britain	24.14	27.40	22.13
Ireland	8.89	5.95	22.30
Italy	15.00	15.05	16.58
Croatia	13.84	6.75	24.13
Netherlands	33.86	48.85	25.86
Poland	2.50	5.80	5.37
Portugal	25.00	5.30	19.32
Sweden	28.76	32.70	25.18
Spain	43.00	21.30	18.30
Czech Republic	64.00	60.50	43.98
Cyprus	2.00	26.80	5.10

Table used for Figure 14: Degree of secularisation of European countries (own research)

The three variables "dechurchification", "de-Christianisation" and "secularisation" were operationalised as follows:

Dechurchification: Average of: "If you were to get married, would it be important to you that your wedding take place in a religious setting?" (sum of answers: "unimportant", "not very important"; see Figure 10); "If you were about to become a parent, would it be important for you that your child be baptised?" (sum of answers: "unimportant", "not very important"; see Figure 11); "How often do you attend Mass, apart from special occasions?" (answer: "never"; see Figure 8) and "Apart from funerals, weddings and baptisms, how often do you attend church services?" (sum of answers: "never" to "sometimes"; Figure 9).

De-Christianisation: Share of people describing themselves as "non-Christians" (see Figure 3).

Secularisation: Average of: "Church-state relationship" (re-coded to 0=0% to 8=100%; see Figure 13); belief in God (sum of answers: "Believe in a spirit of force that directs life" and "Do not believe in a God, spirit or other force that directs life", see Figure 4); "I don't believe in God" (sum of answers; see Figure 5), "Does religion play an important role in your life?" (answer: no; see Figure 6), "How important is God in your life" (sum of answers 1 = Not at all to 5; see Figure 7).

About the Autor

Yves Bizeul, born 1956 in Paris, Licence en Droit (University of Paris II), Diplôme de Sciences politiques, Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris (section Service Public), Maîtrise en théologie protestante (University of Strasbourg), Doctorate 1988, Habilitation 1993, 1988/90 Alexander-von-Humboldt-Foundation fellow. Chair of Political Theory and History of Political Ideas at the Institute of Politics and Administrative Sciences of the University Rostock since 1995. Main research subjects: Cultural and political pluralism in postmodern societies; theories of political symbols, myths and rituals; transformation of religious identities.

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If you were to ask someone what makes Europe different from other parts of the world, one answer would stand out from all the others: the extent of secularisation of European states. Even compared to the United States, a direct cultural offshoot of Old Europe, religion appears to play a smaller role in European societies.

This paper reviews Europe's attitudes towards faith and religion, based on a broad cross-section of data. It discusses various theses and definitions around secularism and identifies the degree of secularism in the European Union. Aspects covered include the personal relationship between citizens and their religion, the influence of religion on the way citizens choose to lead their lives, and the church-state relationship in various EU countries.

The paper confirms the general trend towards secularisation, but finds that this development is characterised by an increase in religious indifference rather than the growth of atheism. In addition, a slowing down or even stagnation of the process of secularisation may be observed in those Western European countries that were the first to become secularised. The share of the population believing in God or a higher being appears not to drop below a lower limit of about 60-70%.

This study provides detailed information that should form a part of any considered discussion of religion and secularism in Europe.