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Project no.: 2020-1-RO01-KA204-080071

## Religious diversity and multiculturalism in Estonia

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### 1. Introduction

This article gives a brief overview of religious and cultural diversity in Estonia. To this end, it describes the distribution of Estonia's population between different ethnic and religious groups, and also discusses how attitudes towards religion differ between our major ethnic groups. Some of the challenges and opportunities related to religious and cultural diversity are also briefly mentioned. It should be noted that, despite the relatively high degree of ethnic and religious diversity in our society, relations between religious organizations here, for example, can be regarded as peaceful and rather cooperative. Thus, the Estonian experience may also be of interest to representatives of other countries reading this collection. It is also hoped that this comprehensive article will help to better understand our second article in this book on the study of religious education.

The data sources used in the article are mainly the census data of the Estonian Statistical Office and the socio-religious monitoring survey "On Life, Religion and Religious Life" of the Estonian Council of Churches. Population surveys are carried out every five years in the framework of the latter monitoring. They have a large sample size and thus provide extensive information on the religious and ideological views of the local population. The Estonian Council of Churches as an organization will be discussed in more detail later in the article. For the time being, it should be mentioned briefly that it is an independent and voluntary association of Christian churches and congregations, whose aim is to contribute to the spiritual development of society on the basis of Christian principles<sup>1</sup>. It represents the Christian churches in their relations with the State and contributes to ecumenical cooperation between the different confessions.

<sup>1</sup> Estonian Council of Churches website. <http://www.ekn.ee/english.php>, 02.08.2021.



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## 2. Ethnic distribution of the Estonian population

According to the last census in 2011, Estonians accounted for 69,72% of the permanent Estonian population<sup>2</sup>. This means that nearly 30% of the population is made up of representatives of other ethnic groups, the most numerous of which are the Slavic ethnic groups: Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians. Of these, the largest group is made up of Russians, who make up 25,2% of the Estonian population.<sup>3</sup> Other ethnic groups apart from the Slavs include Finns (0,59%), Tatars (0,15%), Jews (0,15%), Latvians (0,14%), Lithuanians (0,13%) and Poles (0,13%)<sup>4</sup>.

The ethnic composition of Estonia changed considerably during the 20th century. Before World War II, our country was almost mono-ethnic: 88% of the population were Estonians<sup>5</sup>. As a result of the war, escapes, deportations and immigration during the Soviet occupation, the proportion of Estonians decreased significantly and the proportion of Slavs immigrants from the east increased. The composition of minorities also changed: while before World War II the main minorities were Russians, Germans and Swedes, after the war the Germans and Swedes had left and were replaced by Slavic (mainly Russian) immigrants from the former Soviet Union<sup>6</sup>. Many former industrial areas and larger towns still have a high proportion of Russians, and in some towns in north-east Estonia Estonians are in a large minority.

The openness of the 21st century to Europe, and indeed the rest of the world, is likely to further diversify the ethnic composition of the Estonian population. There are currently around 200 nationalities living in Estonia. Admittedly, some of them are represented by just a few people<sup>7</sup>. The main minorities have remained the same. These are mainly Slavs, with a growing proportion of Ukrainians<sup>8</sup>. However, there is a growing number of people of Asian and African origin, for example,

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia. [https://et.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eesti\\_rahvastik#Rahvuslik\\_koostis](https://et.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eesti_rahvastik#Rahvuslik_koostis), 02.08.2021.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Estonian Statistical Office website, <https://vana.stat.ee/60202>, 04.08.2021.

<sup>6</sup> Tiit, Ene-Margit. Which nationalities live in Estonia? <https://www.stat.ee/et/uudised/millised-rahvused-elavad-eestis>, 02.08.2021.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



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who have come here for work or study. In the future, an increase in the proportion of the population of foreign origin is likely, which will challenge our country to cope with religious and cultural diversity in the broadest sense. This also applies to churches and the teaching of religion.

### 3. Religious distribution of the Estonian population

Estonians have historically been mainly Lutheran. Of the minorities here, however, the Slavs are mainly Orthodox; the Germans, Finns and Latvians are mainly Lutheran; the Poles and Lithuanians are Catholic; the Tatars are Muslim; and the Jews are Jewish. Estonians living in certain areas of Estonia, such as Setomaa in the south-eastern corner of Estonia, the coastal areas of Pärnu County and the island of Kihnu, have been Orthodox. Today, the picture has become more religiously diverse, with the majority of the population professing no religion. International comparative studies such as the “European Values Study” have shown that the Estonian population, and Estonians in particular, have one of the highest rates of drift away from traditional Christianity in Europe<sup>9</sup>.

In the 2000 and 2011 censuses of the Estonian Statistical Office, it was again possible to ask questions about people's religious self-determination after a break of 66 years<sup>10</sup>. This would have been unthinkable in the Soviet-era censuses, as anything to do with religion was excluded or stigmatized from the public sphere. Although asking only two questions about people's religion in a census is inevitably somewhat narrow compared to sociological surveys of religion, the advantage of censuses is that they are a large-scale data set, which allows information to be obtained on smaller religious and ethnic groups not included in the survey sample. This is a major advantage of censuses.

The censuses asked two questions - whether the respondent believed in a particular religion<sup>11</sup>, and a

<sup>9</sup> For more details see e.g. Jaanus, Eva - Liisa; Unt, Marge (2012). Religiousness of Estonians in the European context. *Step down among the people. Articles and discussions on the Spirituality of the Estonian Population* (ed. E. Jõks), 213-229.

<sup>10</sup> Tiit, Ene-Margit. Attitudes of the Estonian population towards religion. *Estonian Church*. <http://www.eestikirik.ee/uploads/2013/09/Eesti-elanike-suhtumine-usku.pdf> , 26.04.2018

<sup>11</sup> It was also possible to choose not to answer the religion question.



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second question to specify the religion<sup>12</sup>. What was the breakdown of the population by religion in 2000 and 2011, and what was the change over 10 years? In 2000 29,2% of the Estonian population considered themselves to be of a religion. Among the remainder, there were those who were indifferent to religion (34,1%), atheists (6,1%), those who refused to answer the religion question (8%) and those who could not answer (14,6%) or who simply did not answer this optional question (8%).<sup>13</sup>

The most widespread religion in 2000 was Lutheranism, professed by 13,6% of the population. Orthodoxy came second with 12,8% of the population. These were by far the largest denominations. They were followed by Baptism, Roman Catholicism, Pentecostalism, Old Believers, Adventism, Methodism and numerous small Christian denominations, whose members often do not even wish to identify themselves denominationally, but simply call themselves "Christians". The largest of the non-Christian communities were the Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>14</sup>

In the 2011 Census, the proportion of people in the population who had a religion was almost the same: 29,3% of the population (35,1% of those who were willing and able to answer) said they had a religion. However, the ranking of beliefs had changed. Orthodoxy had risen to the top of the list (16,1%), while the proportion of Lutherans had fallen (9,9%). The number of Orthodox had increased among Estonians and non-Estonians<sup>15</sup>. The number of most Christian communities in Estonia is unfortunately on a downward trend. There are, however, some exceptions, such as Orthodoxy, already mentioned. There is also a positive trend in the number of Christian free and individual churches. Of the other world religions, Islam is represented in Estonia by one congregation. However, the

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<sup>12</sup> To specify religion, the first option was to use multiple-choice answers, the second option was to use a classifier and the third option was to write the text (the name of the religion) in a free field. – The instructions for the 2011 Census of Population and Housing of the Estonian Statistical Office.

[https://www.stat.ee/sites/default/files/2020-](https://www.stat.ee/sites/default/files/2020-12/2011_aasta_rahva_ja_eluruumide_loendus_metoodika.Web_.pdf)

[12/2011\\_aasta\\_rahva\\_ja\\_eluruumide\\_loendus\\_metoodika.Web\\_.pdf](https://www.stat.ee/sites/default/files/2020-12/2011_aasta_rahva_ja_eluruumide_loendus_metoodika.Web_.pdf). 07.09.2021.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Estonian Statistical Office database. <https://andmed.stat.ee/et/stat>, 05.08.2021.

<sup>15</sup> Tiit, Ene-Margit. Attitudes of the Estonian population towards religion. Estonian Church. <http://www.eestikirik.ee/uploads/2013/09/Eesti-elanike-suhtumine-usku.pdf> , 26.04.2018



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congregation here is small, there are few practicing Muslims<sup>16</sup>, and they do not feature in the census statistics. Communities practicing religions of Far Eastern origin are also marginal in terms of statistical weight.

The problem with the census question, however, is that it measures a person's identity rather than affiliation or actual religious behavior. Since for Estonian Russians Orthodoxy is associated with their national identity (the link of Estonian identity with Lutheranism is not expressed in such a direct way), it is likely that many respondents who are actually not very religiously active or church-affiliated will call Orthodoxy “their own”.<sup>17</sup> The same phenomenon is possible with regard to Armenians here and their church<sup>18</sup>. In the case of Estonians, on the other hand, the link between national identity and religion may to a certain extent become apparent when the Pagan movement “maausk” is referred to as “theirs”: not all the orthodox recorded in the census may be actively involved in this community.

Thus, certain churches and religious movements are clearly delimited by ethnicity because of historical traditions: religious Russians (and other Slavic peoples) are most likely to embrace Orthodoxy. Estonians mostly Lutheranism. As already mentioned, “maausk” is also mainly embraced by Estonians, as the movement presents itself as a restoration of the traditional ancient Estonian religion. The Armenian and Jewish congregations are also ethnically defined. However, the other major churches and congregations in Estonia are multi-ethnic and are not linked to any particular national identity. Thus, for example, the link between religion and ethnicity does not apply to so-called newer Christian communities such as Adventists, Methodists and Baptists. Those who have joined these denominations are more personally connected to these denominations at the level of individual behavior and attitudes, and for them the census results reflect the reality better. These churches have a significant number of people of Russian nationality, so that the work of the

<sup>16</sup> Wikipedia. [https://et.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\\_Eestis](https://et.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_Eestis). 04.08.2021.

<sup>17</sup> Kilemit, Liina (2013). "What do the latest census data reveal about the faith of Estonians?". Online magazine "Church and Theology". <https://kjt.ee/2013/05/mida-naitavad-viimase-rahvaloenduse-andmed-eestimaalaste-usust/>. 05.08.2021.

<sup>18</sup> Estonian Statistical Office database. <https://andmed.stat.ee/et/stat>. 05.08.2021.



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congregations is sometimes carried out in parallel in several languages. The relatively large number of Jehovah's Witness congregations also have a significant number of Russian-speaking members. The Roman Catholic Church is, of course, a global church, and its membership in Estonia is also multi- ethnic.

Speaking of Orthodoxy in Estonia, it should be noted that there are two Orthodox churches in Estonia - the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Estonian Apostolic-Orthodox Church. The former is under the canonical jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, while the latter is an autonomous church under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. The space and focus of this article do not allow us to dwell on the reasons for the formation of the two churches, but it should be mentioned that the two churches differ in terms of their ethnic composition: the congregations of the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate are predominantly Russian-speaking, while those of the Estonian Apostolic-Orthodox Church are predominantly Estonian-speaking.

#### 4. Religious beliefs of the Estonian population in the light of sociological studies of religion.

In order to dwell on the ethnic groups here and their religious and ideological attitudes, we need to turn to the results of a fairly recent sociological survey on religion conducted by the Estonian Council of Churches in 2020<sup>19</sup>.

It has already been mentioned that, according to census data, nearly a third of the Estonian population believes in some religion. Analyzing the results of the sociological survey of religions, however, reveals a more accurate picture of people's religious identities. In the questionnaire they were offered a number of identities from which they could choose the one that suited them best. In the absence of

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<sup>19</sup> The survey "On Life, Faith and Religion 2020" was carried out by the research company Eesti Uuringukeskus OÜ. The survey was conducted from 25.11.2020 to 31.12.2020. The online survey was combined with a postal survey (N=1000). The questionnaire and the concept of the survey were prepared by the Estonian Council of Churches. The author of this article participated in the preparation of this survey as part of a team of experts.



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a preferred identity from the list, they were able to add one themselves<sup>20</sup>. The results were as follows: 27% of Estonians consider themselves spiritual but not religious, 23% non-religious, 20% indifferent to religion, 22% religious, 9% religious or spiritual seekers, 9% atheists and 8% none of the above. Although the number of respondents who explicitly said they were religious was low for this question, 63% of respondents said they felt close to Christianity in the next question. According to 2020 data, 22% of the Estonian population belong to a church or religious movement and 57% have been baptized. At the same time, only 16% attend church services at least 3-4 times a year.<sup>21</sup>

Previous research has shown that, for a number of historical and cultural reasons, the number of people who literally call themselves "believers" is small and may not fully reflect the number of people who actually associate themselves with Christianity at least to some extent and perhaps belong to a church. According to surveys carried out by the Estonian Council of Churches in different years, around 23-25% of respondents identified themselves as Christians. It is therefore difficult to say unequivocally how many people in Estonia today can be considered to be directly or indirectly associated with Christian churches.

31% of respondents feel some affinity with the aforementioned neo-paganism<sup>22</sup>. Since a nature-friendly and environmentally friendly attitude is sometimes attributed to secularism, adherence to this religion probably also intersects with certain ecological views and does not necessarily imply participation in the respective religious community. Eastern religions are also of interest to our people. As many as 24% of respondents feel close to them<sup>23</sup>.

But how do the religious and ideological attitudes of the largest ethnic groups here – Estonians and Russians - differ? The results of the "Life, Faith and Religion" surveys conducted over the years show that Russians here are generally more Christian than Estonians: they associate themselves more with

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<sup>20</sup> The percentage is higher than 100 because respondents were able to choose multiple identities if they wished. For example, some "believers" could also define themselves as "seekers".

<sup>21</sup> Estonian Council of Churches survey "About Life, Faith, Religious Life 2020".  
[http://www.ekn.ee/doc/uudised/EUU2020\\_esmased\\_tulemused.pdf](http://www.ekn.ee/doc/uudised/EUU2020_esmased_tulemused.pdf). 08.09.2021.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



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the Christian church (especially the Orthodox Church), are more baptized, attend church more often and have more Christian religious beliefs than Estonians. They are also more conservative on certain moral and value issues. Notably, the Estonian Council of Churches has also asked questions about these aspects in its surveys. There is also a known interest in people's attitudes towards e.g. euthanasia, abortion, cloning, homosexuality or extramarital affairs. Estonians, on the other hand, are more open to new spirituality and Eastern religions, less involved with Christianity and more liberal on the aforementioned life phenomena and moral issues.<sup>24</sup>

As you can conclude from the above data, the influence of Christian churches and congregations in Estonian society is not very strong today. Despite the fact that, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the anti-church policy organised by the occupying power, a “religious boom” briefly emerged in the late 1980s and late 1990s, when large numbers of people joined churches at one time<sup>25</sup> it remained temporary and church and congregation membership began to decline again in the following decades. Understandably, the de-Christianization of our society has been influenced above all by more than half a century of repressive anti-church policies by the Soviet occupation authorities, which resulted in the hostile church losing its social outlets and the opportunity to preach the gospel. On the other hand, fear of repression led frightened people to distance themselves from the church and not dare to socialize their children in the Christian faith. Whole generations grew up with almost no knowledge of Christianity or with prejudices and misconceptions. Thus, we can say that the Christian tradition in Estonia was broken at the level of both society and families, and this is one of the main factors influencing the level off secularization today<sup>26</sup>. But not only. The signs of

<sup>24</sup> Estonian Council of Churches surveys "About Life, Faith, Religious Life" 2010, 2015.

<sup>25</sup> With the end of atheist pressure, churches were able to operate freely again, and people's interest in and desire for churches was high. Many who had previously been afraid to do so were baptized and confirmed. Among Estonians, mass church membership occurred somewhat earlier than among Russians. However, the “religious boom” was short-lived. On the one hand, the Christian churches were unable to adapt so quickly to the changed situation and, on the other hand, what was said in the church was apparently distant and incomprehensible to the generations who had been alienated from Christianity for decades, and did not sufficiently appeal to them.

<sup>26</sup> See e.g. Rimmel, A., Altnurme, R. (2018). Religion, State and Atheism. *Estonian History of Church and Religion* (ed. R. Altnurme), 210-224.



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modernization began to take hold here at the same time as in other European countries, even before the Second World War. Moreover, while it was mentioned earlier that the greater religiousness of the Russians here is supported by the link between Orthodoxy and the national identity of the Russians, such a link is not so explicit in the case of Estonians. Or if it is, it is expressed in a somewhat different way. The reason for this is the fact that in the second half of the 19th century, when Estonians began to develop a national self-awareness and national political and cultural thinking, the clergy was dominated by Baltic Germans, who constituted the elite of society at that time. The emerging Estonian nationalism and the elite-controlled church remained on opposite sides of the social spectrum, which unfortunately led to the Christian church's marginal place in the emerging Estonian self-understanding and national narrative.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, this still affects our self-understanding today.

## 5. Challenges and opportunities of religious diversity and multi culturalism in Estonia today

The interaction between different ethnic and religious groups in today's Estonia can safely be described as peaceful and rather cooperative. Let me mention here some of the mechanisms that underpin this.

According to §40 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, everyone has freedom of conscience, religion and thought. Membership of churches and religious associations is free. There is no national church. Everyone has the freedom, alone or in association with others, to perform religious services in public or in private, as long as this does not harm public order, health or morals.<sup>28</sup> The Constitution thus provides the legal basis for a situation where everyone is free to believe according to their conscience, to proclaim their faith and puts all religions, regardless of their origin and background, on an equal footing, unless of course they are a threat to society or individuals.

<sup>27</sup> Karo, V. K. (2007). National narratives and religion. *Multi-religious Estonia II: a selection of studies of religion: special edition of Christianity*. (toim L. Altnurme), 13–46 and Vihuri, V. (2012). Estonian and Christianity through the eyes of clergy. *Step down among the people. Articles and reflections on the spirituality of the Estonian population*. (toim E. Jõks), 24–48.

<sup>28</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Estonia §40, <https://pohiseadus.ee/sisu/3511>. 05.08.2021.



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The Christian churches operating in Estonia, as well as some associations of congregations, are members of the Estonian Council of Churches, which maintains theological dialogue between member churches, promotes ecumenical communication, and is a common communication partner of Christian churches with the state. The Council of Churches also provides a common platform for the churches in their outreach work. For example, it covers areas such as media, education, sociology of religion, chaplaincy, ecumenism, life values and ethics, youth work, community work and international relations<sup>29</sup>. Given Estonia's small size, it makes sense to organize large-scale sociological studies of religion covering, for example, the whole of society on a joint basis, as this is likely to be beyond the capacity of smaller religious communities. An organization such as the Council of Churches would understandably foster mutual understanding and cooperation between different religious and ethnic groups (e.g. both Orthodox churches).

Due to the large proportion of minorities, their integration into Estonian society has been a major focus of attention throughout the country's independence. Language learning is considered to be very important, as it is the knowledge of the Estonian language that is the "key" to integration into the local society. It enables people to be involved in what is happening in society and offers the most diverse opportunities for participation. It is also important to note that knowledge of the language enables, among other things, participation in the local information space, which gives an understanding of the aspirations and values of our country and people. It is at times of crisis in society that integration deficiencies are felt most acutely. This was the case during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, when information about the restriction and vaccination measures reached Russian-speaking people, who, because of their lack of language skills, prefer to follow only Russian media channels and were therefore excluded from the operational flow of information essential to the crisis.

It was mentioned earlier that our largest churches - the Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate - are largely mono-ethnic by historical tradition. The situation is different, however, for the so-called newer Christian churches and congregations (in particular, e.g. evangelical

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<sup>28</sup> Estonian Concil of Curches website, [http://www.ekn.ee/sisu.php?lehe\\_id=5.08.09.2021](http://www.ekn.ee/sisu.php?lehe_id=5.08.09.2021).



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or charismatic individual congregations and associations of congregations). While in the rest of society there is often talk of a certain risk of ethnic segregation (Russian-language schools, cultural institutions, work collectives, a certain geographical and spatial isolation which creates a situation in which people of different nationalities do not meet each other very often), the religious organization's mentioned above provide a platform for different nationalities to act together. Christians moving here from other parts of the world are also often inclined to join these congregations.

Political scientist Alar Kilp argues in his 2007 article "Faith as a promoter of integration" that religious organization's, both churches and sects, have the potential to act as integrators and creators of social capital if they are sufficiently open. In Estonia, for example, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals and Free Churches, which include both Estonians and non-Estonians, have been remarkably successful in this respect. These congregations consider religious conversion to be more important than communal affiliation and include people of different nationalities. However, the larger churches, especially of course the Lutheran and Orthodox churches, which are more closely linked to national traditions, tend to remain on different sides of society. The Baptist Union unites both Russian- and Estonian-language congregations, but relations between them are said to be weak. The average respondent, however, sees potential for unification in the larger churches.<sup>30</sup> From the point of view of this article, this is an important observation, which certainly deserves further discussion and attention.

The sociologists Roots, Lilleoja, Beilmann observed on the basis of the data of the 2015 Integration Monitoring Survey that the trust of people of other ethnicities in almost all Estonian social institutions is lower than that of Estonians, with the exception of local governments, which are trusted to the same extent as Estonians, and the church, which is trusted much more<sup>31</sup>. Although it is likely that by "church" people of other nationalities were referring primarily to the Orthodox Church, the survey

<sup>30</sup> Kilp, Alar (2007) "Faith as a promoter of integration" - Eesti Päevaleht. 28.09.18.

<sup>31</sup> Ave Roots, Laur Lilleoja, Mai Beilmann (2016) "Networked society as a missiology Opportunity. Descriptive part" - *Where are you going, Mariana? Quo vadis Terra Mariana*. Ed. E. Jõks. Estonian Council of Churches. 321-336.



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results are also noteworthy in the light of the general level of secularization in Estonian society. The church is an authority whose opinion is listened to for this group of society, and this knowledge may prove important in moments of crisis in society when it is necessary to address people outside the Estonian-speaking information space. The author of this article also believes that this research deserves more attention and discussion in the future.

In the 2015 sociological survey of religions, the Estonian Council of Churches was interested in the extent to which the Estonian population supports the participation and role of Christian churches in certain social issues. It was found that, in general, the majority of respondents are equally positive about the social role of the church today<sup>32</sup>. However, some non-Estonians expressed the fear that involving only one church, the Lutheran Church, would lead to a greater national polarization of society and further divisions within society. Thus, in those cases where Russians did not support the involvement of the church in the affairs of society, it was still a question of integration rather than an anti-church attitude. They simply want to be more involved. Secondly, in the case of non-Estonians, it is striking that the (Orthodox) church is expected to maintain a certain distance, to keep out of society, to concentrate on its own mission and goals, and even in this case, the attitude against church involvement is not a rejection of the church.<sup>33</sup>

## 6. To sum up

This article gave a brief overview of Estonia's ethnic and religious divisions, their background, and discussed very briefly the challenges of religious diversity and multiculturalism in Estonia today.

Estonian society is for historical reasons quite secularized and the role of Christian churches in society is not great. However, the credibility of churches as social institutions is considerable. This gives

<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, this role is still rather modest.

<sup>33</sup> Kilemit, Liina (2018) "Estonians and non-Estonians expectations of the social role of churches in Estonia - two different visions?". Online magazine "Church and Theology". <https://kjt.ee/2018/09/eestlaste-ja-mitte-eestlaste-ootused-kirikute-sotsiaalsele-rollile-eestis-kas-kaks-erinevat-nagemust/>. 05.08.2021.



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Project no.: 2020-1-RO01-KA204-080071

churches a platform to have a say in the affairs of society. Sociological surveys of religion show that although the vast majority of the Estonian population do not consider themselves to be religious, the attitude towards the church and its activities in society is generally positive.

Our largest churches, such as the Lutheran and Orthodox churches, are traditionally national churches, meaning that they are predominantly of one nationality. In contrast, newer Christian denominations, federations of congregations and smaller individual congregations are often quite multi-ethnic, providing an excellent platform for interaction between different ethnic groups, which contributes to a more cohesive society.

The relative authority and trustworthiness of churches in society, and the cultural and ethnic diversity of some denominations, represent potential as binders and reconcilers of society, which should be harnessed more for the benefit of society as a whole.



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