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Sergei A. Mudrov*

Abstract

This paper analyses the dialogue of Churches and EU institutions, with a focus on the Churches' representations at the European Union. These representations are described in accordance with the confessional divisions: Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) is regarded as the most influential Catholic representation; among the Orthodox representations this status is kept by the representation of the Church of Greece, and among Protestant—the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD). Overall, this paper finds that the existing patterns of cooperation constrain the Churches' ability to influence the process of decision-making in the EU. However, this influence may increase should the practical cooperation on the policy level acquire more intensive forms.

Key words: Christian Churches, European integration, Lisbon Treaty

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The EU Response to the Eurozone Crisis: Democratic Contestation and the New Fault Lines in European Integration

Sergei A. Mudrov

Introduction

Christian Churches (especially the Roman Catholic Church) played an active role at the initial stages of the process of European integration, with the Vatican taking an unambiguously pro integration stance (see O'Mahony 2009, Boomgaarden and Freire 2009, Katzenstein 2006, Risso 2009, Venneri and Ferrara 2009). The Catholic Church, it is claimed, "actively inspired, promoted, and shaped European integration" (Philpott and Shah 2006, p.51). Gary Wilton mentions that the Christian faith of Robert Schuman, one of the founding fathers of the project of European unification (along with the faith of De Gasperi, Monnet and Adenauer) was not somehow restricted to the private sphere, but was "[t]he inspiration for a life dedicated to public service and to the rebuilding of Europe upon secure Christian foundations" (House of Bishops' Europe Panel 2010, p.8). Protestant Churches also did not stay aside: As early as 1950 a transnational reflection group was formed, which included leading Protestant politicians and Churchmen. This group, named as the Ecumenical Commission on European Cooperation, was designed "[t]o offer expertise on European issues for Protestant churches" (Leustean 2011, p.444). In fact, one of the presidents of the European Commission (Jean Rey, 1967-1970) was a member of this group (Leustean 2009, p.166).

Furthermore, the existence at that time of the close ties of Christian Democratic Parties with (mainly) the Roman Catholic Church was obvious, as was also obvious the support, given to integration of Europe by the Vatican (see O'Hanlon, 2006; Guth et al., 2001). However, during the next decades the presence of Churches was not as visible as before, and the direct references to religion in the process of integration were rare. A lack of the Churches' visibility in European integration until the early 1990s can be attributed (at least partly) to the specific circumstances of that period. Indeed, an active involvement in and the unconditional support of

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integration by Churches in the West could undermine their cooperation and ecumenical ties with Churches in the East. Churches in Eastern Europe were heavily dependent on Communist authorities, and the latter viewed the process of European integration as an alien project (see Leustean 2011). Therefore, for the sake of maintaining ecumenical ties with their counterparts in the East, Churches in the West largely refrained from an explicit support of the unification of Europe.

However, with the collapse of Communist regimes in the USSR and other European states, this obstacle ceased to exist. In addition, the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht made European integration less economic in nature, with a more substantial involvement of non-economic areas and actors. Finally, the 1992 initiative of Jacques Delors (then the President of the European Commission) "to give a Soul to Europe, to give it spirituality and meaning", articulated in a speech to Churches' representatives in Brussels, underlined the growing interest towards religious organisations from European institutions (European Commission— BEPA, N.d.a). As Florian Grotsch and Annette Schnabel emphasised, "In the early 1990s, the European Commission (EC) discovered 'religion' as a political arena and a resource for integration" (Grotsch and Schnabel 2012, p.587). Therefore, the logic of developments in Europe, both in the West and the East, led in the early 1990s to the increasing involvement of Christian Churches in the process of European integration. This cooperation was further developing in the 21st century, and it was formalised in the article 17 of the 2009 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, envisaging a "regular, open and transparent" dialogue between Churches and European institutions (Mudrov 2012).

This paper analyses the existing patterns of interaction between the EU and Christian Churches. It considers two main issues: the presence of Churches at the supranational level (including the possible degree of influence) and practical issues of cooperation. Overall, it aims to identify the most influential and visible representations, as well as specific features and concerns of their work at the EU level.

This paper is structured as follows. In chapter One we discuss some theoretical issues on the inclusion of Churches in European integration, accepting social constructivism as the most appropriate theory for that. Chapter Two discusses the issues of secularization in the EU, advancing the conclusions of chapter One. Indeed, indentifying that Europe is not as secular as it

is sometimes claimed, we argue that the influence of Churches in the EU is therefore on the adequate level. However, it often depends on the Churches' wishes to be involved in EU politics and on the level of religiosity in the EU member states. Chapter Three analyses the presence and activities of Churches at the supranational EU level. Chapter Four is devoted to the assessment of the Churches' practical cooperation with EU institutions, based at present on the article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

The focus of the paper is on Christian Churches. Of course, one cannot deny the presence (and influence) in the EU of other religions, particularly Islam and Judaism. However, in this research we aim at analysing the role of Christian Churches only. In fact, they remain the most numerous and, in our view, the most influential religious organisations in the EuropeanUnion.

1. Churches in European integration: a theoretical perspective

In this chapter, we shall discuss how Churches can be studied in European integration from a theoretical perspective. Overall, finding a place for religion in the theories of European integration is a challenge for the researcher. Indeed, the mainstream theories of European integration, such as neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism, are silent about religion. In principle, this should not be seen as a surprise, since the focus of both theories lies elsewhere, making the accommodation of religion problematic. Neofunctionalists point to economic groups and supranational institutions as the driving forces of integration (Haas 1968). In their reasoning, supranational institutions occupy a very specific role, even being able to pursue their own policy, since those institutions are "endowed with a potentially far-reaching legislative power" (Lindberg 1963, p.284). Their legislative power, neofunctionalists maintain, was especially noticeable in the key events of European integration. For example, the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht became mainly possible due to the role, exercised by the European Commission, which acted as a "policy entrepreneur" (Sandholtz and Zysman 1989, p.108).

Even less attention to religion should be expected from intergovernmentalism or its newest version—liberal intergovernmentalism. Its "founding father", Harvard's professor Andrew

Moravcsik, put economic factors at the forefront of European integration. His vision is that European integration has resulted from a series of rational choices, made by national leaders, pursuing economic interests. These economic interests come as an undoubted priority; they subordinate all other interests and objectives. In Moravcsik's theory, unlike neofunctionalism, supranational institutions do not supersede the will of national leaders-- they simply reflect this national will (Moravcsik 1998). The role of non-materialist factors is reluctantly accepted, but only as secondary. As Moravcsik states: "[i]n the LI account of integration, ideas are present but not causally central" (Moravcsik 1999, p.675).

The only major theory of European integration, where one could, in principle, find space for religion, is social constructivism. This lies behind specific features of social constructivism. First, this theory brings non-economic concepts into the study of the integration process. Second, it attempts to understand how norms, values and ideas become meaningful, and how they contribute to various developments in the EU (Christiansen et al. 1999). Social constructivists also try to bring non-state actors into the analysis of European integration, thus creating a comprehensive and diverse image of the integration process. Indeed, in their analysis, integration is not confined to strict economic calculations and rational choices, dictated by purely pragmatic interests. Instead, one encounters a more lively and humanoriented picture, where even feelings, emotions and subjectivity do matter. In this picture, we see the influence of history and convictions, identity and various non-governmental organisations (Christiansen et al. 1999, Checkel 1999). This more comprehensive and, arguably, more realistic perspective deserves to be regarded as a more appropriate reflection of the integration process after the Treaty of Maastricht.

Accepting the social constructivist's approach as timely and appropriate, we cannot overlookits important shortcomings. Along with other theories it largely ignores the presence of Christian Churches in European integration. This lack of acknowledgement is more surprising for social constructivists than for others, since only social constructivism so confidently introduces non-state actors and identity into the process of unification in Europe. Not sharing this refusal to acknowledge, we assume that the constructivist's approach and methods can be applied for the understanding of the role of Churches in European integration. This, in fact, emanates

from the logic of social constructivism and its theoretical propositions (Checkel 1999; Christiansen et al. 1999; Leustean 2009).

Overall, the introduction of Churches is based on a number of important arguments. First, it is the acceptance of the social constructivist inclusion of identity and non-state actors into the analysis of European integration. Identity comes in the forms of both European identity and national identities in the member states (see Caporaso and Kim 2009, Carey 2002, Cram 2009). Second, there is an argument that Churches can be regarded as identity-formers and non-state actors. Moreover, religion itself is regarded as part of identity, as one of itsconstituent elements (Enyedi 2003, Korostelina 2003, McCrea 2011). These two points are important for the inclusion of Churches in European integration. Indeed, we encounter the commonality of certain features from both sides—social constructivism and Churches (i.e. such features as identity and non-state actors).

However, the identification of the role and place of Churches in European integration is not confined to the above-mentioned fact alone. Certainly, social constructivism allows us to look at Churches via the lenses of non-state actors and identity. Churches contribute to the formation of both European and national identities, directly and indirectly (via the system of values). Churches also embrace, in their relations with the outside world, the features of nonstate actors, using mechanisms of influence, which are similar to the ones of regular non-state actors (for example, petitions, negotiations, etc.) (Driskell et al. 2008, Mandry 2009). There are, however, some other features which allow us to see the Churches as unlike the ordinary actors introduced via social constructivism, but as unique participants in European integration. These are historical circumstances and Church-state relations. In fact, these features originate mainly from the essence of Churches as religious and spiritual institutions.

Historically (as has been mentioned earlier), Churches were seen as active contributors to the beginning of the process of European unification. Regarding Church-state relations, it is a phenomenon which applies only to Churches. No other actor in European integration has acquired anything similar to Church-state regimes (Leustean 2008). These regimes denote the specific status of Churches, their relations with governments, as well as their influence in education and other important policy areas.

There is a substantial degree of agreement among scholars on the typology of Church-state relations in the EU. Lucian Leustean cites three models (or systems): the state Church, the cooperationist (or hybrid) and the secular (or separation) (Leustean 2008, p.247). If one religious denomination is predominant and is regarded as a "national" or "established" Church, this will form the state Church model. The cooperationist model exists where there is a formal separation between Church and state, normally with agreements which regulate the status of Churches. Finally, the secular model exists where no particular religion is favoured by the state and no established Church exists (Leustean 2008, pp.247-248). Christopher Soper and Joel Fetzer assert the notion of laïcité, which is the opposite of an established Church, and expound on the idea of an intermediate system. They describe two main categories of laïcité: strict and soft. The first version implies that "[c]itizens may, in their private life, believe what they will about religion. In public, however, religious individuals face more restrictions". According to the second version, "[t]he state should respect all religious beliefs but also foster the free exercise of religion by, for example, funding private religious schools" (Soper and Fetzer 2007, p.937). The third (intermediate) system is located between these two polar cases, where there is no established Church by law, but national legislation guarantees the patterns of cooperation between Church and state. As Soper and Fetzer explain "The German Basic Law establishes a formal separation between Church and state, but at the same time the constitution secures cooperation between the two institutions in such areas as education and social welfare provision" (Soper and Fetzer 2007, p.938).

Gerhard Robbers (2005) posits three "basic types of civil ecclesiastical law systems": state Church or predominant religion, strict separation, and basic separation, where the existence of common tasks for both sides is recognised (Robbers 2005, pp.578-579). John Francis offers a broader explanation, describing five main models of Church-state relations:

> „[t]he Erastian model, in which the state has assumed responsibility for the direction of the church; the liberal model, in which the state is secular and neutral in its relationships with the church(es) found in its society; the theocratic model, in which the church has achieved supremacy in religious and secular affairs; the spheres model, in which the church prevails in some spheres and the state in other spheres of society; and the anti-church model, in which the state stands in opposition to the church and seeks to curtail or eliminate religion." (Francis 1992, p.800)

In summary, all of these approaches can be fitted into the three main regimes: state Church, strict separation and the cooperationist model. The first two are the exception in the EU, although the

state Church system exists in Denmark, England, Finland, Malta and Greece. Strict separation is probably peculiar to France and (as sometimes asserted) to the Netherlands. All other EU states embody the model of cooperation between Church and state with varying degrees of depth and intensity of this cooperation, and, as Russell Sandberg argues, the position of the Church under the same type of system in different countries varies 7 a great deal (Sandberg 2008, p.336). For instance, in Denmark, within the state Church system, there is a high degree of state control over the Lutheran Church, while in Greece the Orthodox Church is a self-governing structure (Sandberg 2008, p.331).

Concluding this chapter, we need to emphasise that Churches can be studied in the process of European integration from the angle of identity and non-state actors. Various systems of Church-state relations underline the unique character of Churches, and can also be regarded as an opportunity structure for religious interests in politics since "[t]hey determine to some extent whether churches, as political actors, operate as public institutions or as interest groups" (Minkenberg 2003, p.196). Certainly, they confirm the unique stance of Christian Churches in European integration, and their impact on the level of influence of Churches, often in combination with other variables, should not be overlooked.

2. Secularisation in the EU

As confirmed in the previous chapter, one can regard Churches as unique participants in European integration. We also need to prove that Churches have not lost their ability to influence the decision-making process in the EU. In our view, this can be done through a more detailed analysis of the level of secularisation in the European Union, since it is one of the important parameters which may reflect the role of religious organisations in public life.

An important argument in that respect is that the process of secularisation, which occurs in some parts of the Union, is not applicable to the EU as a whole. Certainly, it is not uncommon to hear that Europe is going through a process of rapid secularisation. As Loek Halman and Veerle Draulans claim, "The sharply declining levels of Church attendance in Europe are often regarded

as evidence that this part of the world is being secularized" (Halman and Draulans 2006, p.263). Franz Hollinger, Max Haller and Adriana Valle- Hollinger argue that "In Europe religious institutions have lost much of their former influence and religious practice and belief have both declined in the course of the twentieth century" (Hollinger et al. 2007, p.133). David Voas claims that religion in Europe is in decline, with the appearing of the phenomenon of "fuzzy fidelity", when people can keep loyalty to tradition, without being regular church-goers (Voas 2009, pp.161,167). Interestingly, the "death of religion" was a sort of "conventional wisdom" of social sciences in most of the 20th century (Inglehart and Norris 2004, p.3). Hans Knippenberg writes about "a dramatic decline of religiosity" in all aspects, including the belief, Church membership and Church attendance, with the traditional Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches as the main victims (Knippenberg 2006, p.261). Europe has been regarded as a model of the secularisation process, which implies that the presence of religion diminishes in everyday life and the sacred "[e]ventually becomes socially and politically marginal" (Haynes 2010, p.3). Although the secularisation hypothesis remains popular, we do not see substantial evidence that Europe (or the EU) is turning into a kind of atheist superstate. In fact, the diversity of the EU member states and the complexity of the process of secularisation does not allow to indicate any trend applicable to the EU at large. Halman and Draulans agree that "Secularization may well be a European phenomenon, but this does not imply that Europe is homogeneously secular" (Halman and Draulans 2006, p.264). Indeed, the countries of Western Europe differ considerably in religious matters, with religious participation higher in the Southern Catholic parts and lower in Northern Protestant (Pettersson 2006, p.232).

Jonathan Fox mentions two different concepts of secularisation (when people become less religious, and when the influence of religion declines, due to the moving of religion from the public to the private domain), but he admits that there is no agreement that this process is happening (Fox 2001, p.56). We can hardly find a European society where Christianity has become a purely private matter and Churches are completely deprived of any voice or have totally lost the ability to exert an influence. Even in France, traditionally regarded as one of the most secularised countries in the EU, political leaders have begun to speak openly about the increasing importance of religion. In spite of some secularisation developments, we cannot claim that religion has been banished from the political sphere (Knippenberg 2006, p.254). Moreover, even if religion moves to the private sphere, "[i]t continues to influence policy because many

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modern ideologies that influence policymaking have religious origins… Such influence is often indirect but nonetheless important" (Fox 2001, p.65). Fox reminds us that religion influences people's views, "their perception of events and their actions" (Fox 2001, p.59), including, of course, the views of the policy-makers.

Rodney Stark emphasises that the secularisation doctrine is not applicable to the EU as a whole, especially if it refers to the level of religiosity. According to him, "[t]here has been no demonstrable long-term decline in European religious participation" (Stark 1999, p. 254, emphasis in the original). Participation has changed from time to time, but it was low in western and northern parts of Europe many centuries before the 21st century (Stark 1999, p.254). With the undermining of the secularisation doctrine, there is no reason to expect that Churches will be hidden in a ghetto or locked into a "private space". Even in more secularised societies Churches can find their way to exert an influence. Jurgen Habermas offers the following explanation:

> „I am thinking here of the fact that Churches and religious organisations are increasingly assuming the role of "communities of interpretation" in the public arena of secular societies. They can attain influence on public opinion and will formation by making relevant contributions to key issues, irrespective of whether their arguments are convincing or objectionable. Be it the dispute over the legalization of abortion or voluntary euthanasia, on the bioethical issues of reproductive medicine, questions of animal protection or climate change—on these and similar questions the divisive premises are so opaque that it is by no means settled from the outset which party can draw on the more convincing moral intuitions." (Habermas 2008, p.20)

It is also worth noting that the importance of Churches has increased in some parts of Europe, especially in the countries of the former Soviet bloc (with few exceptions, such as Estonia), after the fall of Communist regimes. Overall, there is no reason to expect that Churches in the EU at large will substantially lose their influence or will be driven into "private space". This became particularly true after the waves of enlargement in 2000s, when the states where religion plays "the influential role" joined the European Union (Katzenstein and Byrnes 2006, p. 679). There is also some statistical testimony to that. For instance, most Europeans regard themselves as believers (at least formally), while atheists are in the minority. The number of non-believers does not exceed the 50-percent threshold in any EU country, with the highest figure of 33 percent registered in France, and most Europeans regard themselves as belonging to a particular denomination. The level of confidence in the Church is also high in many EU member states; a substantial level of very negative assessment (no confidence at all) has been registered only in

four countries (Czech Republic—39.0 percent and between 26 and 30 percent in France, Bulgaria and Slovenia) (see Special Eurobarometer 225, 2005, European Social Survey 2008, Halman 2000). Finally, we discover a growing presence of Christian Churches at the European level. All three Christian confessions—Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant—have established representations in Brussels, interacting with the EU institutions.

However, one should not assume that Churches are active and influential in all policy areas. The reality is quite the opposite: they are active mainly on selected issues that they regard as particularly important. Such an approach is explained by the fact that the limited resources of Churches do not allow them to monitor carefully all aspects of EU activity. Those issues, which are regarded as the most important for Churches, are mainly value-based, i.e. involving concepts of identity, morality and the rights of vulnerable and oppressed groups (Jansen 2000). Taking into account the areas of importance for Churches and their social concepts and doctrines, it seems plausible that Churches do not act for self-centred aims but mainly in reflection of more common interests (see Conference of European Churches 2001, Siluianova 2001, Values and Principles for the building of Europe 2003).

To an extent, the role of Churches is also dependent on how the theme of European integration is discussed and perceived in various confessions. It is an issue of high interest for the Catholics, with the Vatican trying to express rather optimistic views on the process of European unification (O'Hanlon 2006, Nelsen et al. 2001). These views are not always shared by some within the Roman Catholic Church, with the criticism of what is seen as moral corruption in the EU (Anderson 2003). This criticism of the EU is partly echoed by some Orthodox Churches, who warn that Europe has lost its soul, denying its Christian roots (see Gundiaev 2006). On the Protestant side, a clear Eurosceptic stance is taken by Free Churches, while mainline Protestants remain largely pro-European (see Hagevi 2002, Madeley 2010). The Church of England has tended to be more critical in the last few years, indicating that the EU is reluctant to recognise its Christian heritage, that it becomes too technocratic and experiences a democratic deficit (House of Bishops' Europe Panel 2010a).

By and large, the level of influence of Churches is pre-determined by their own desire to be involved in EU politics and the level of religiosity in various EU member states. Additionally, the level of success and influence of Churches may depend on the issue at stake. If there is a

problem, which attracts large attention from the public and governments, one can expect a better mobilising potential of Churches, which, in many cases, outweigh the mobilising potential of their opponents. One of the key examples is the involvement of Churches in the process of EU Treaties Reform, which produced the (failed) European Constitution and then the Treaty of Lisbon. Churches argued in favour of the inclusion of references to the Christian heritage of Europe and the provisions for structured and regular dialogue between Churches and European institutions. These issues were of high importance for most Churches in Europe.

On some issues (such as the ones related to EU policy on immigration and asylum), Churches may ally with secular organisations (CCME 2005). Presumably, such alliances make their influence stronger, but it becomes more difficult to observe the specific contribution of Churches. However, there is a good presence of the Churches and Christian organisations in Brussels and generally well-established ties with EU institutions, which allow Churches to exercise their influence, especially if they are willing to work together. This common work is often exercised under the aegis of various ecumenical institutions, such as the Conference of European Churches. To conclude, the following needs to be mentioned. Based on the sociological data, we can claim that the level of religiosity in the EU allows enough space for Churches to be listened and to be heard both on the national and supranational levels. Of course, there will be regional differences, when one refers to the national level. Also, some confessional differences are evident when one analyses the Churches' presence in Brussels, at the level of the EU institutions. Overall, it appears that Churches will interact more intensively with the EU institutions when it comes to the issues which are regarded by Churches as more important, both for society and for them.

3. Churches at the supranational level

The presence of Churches at the supranational level is a crucial indicator for defining how actively and successfully Churches can monitor EU policy-making. It is important for their formation of coalitions and for their attempts to influence the decision-making process. The work of representations in Brussels is also a reflection of the Churches' interest in the EU

developments and their desire to participate in European integration. These representations are the main focus of analysis of this chapter.

First, it is important to underline that only the Roman Catholic Church has established its presence in the EU at the diplomatic level. This exists in two forms: the Embassy of the Holy See to the EU and the mission of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. Of course, the Papal Nuncio (appointed first in the capacity of a Nuncio for the European Community in 1970) takes it as a logical and natural task to defend, using diplomatic means, the Vatican's interests at the European level. The Sovereign Order of Malta's circumstances are not as favourable as for the Holy See: the representation of the Order is recognised as a diplomatic entity by the European Commission, but not by the EU member states (see Leustean 2011). However, no other religious representation is regarded as a diplomatic mission by anyone and cannot in principle acquire this status.

The official website of the European Commission (the Bureau of European Policy Advisors) provides a substantial list of non-diplomatic representations from different religions, with 54 organisations listed as religious bodies and two representing humanism. The religious representations are mainly Christian, with a small number of Jewish and Muslim organisations (European Commission—BEPA, N.d.). However, fewer than half of these organisations exist with functioning staff, a clear agenda and an ability to monitor developments in the EU with attempts to influence its decision-making process.

In our view, it is pertinent to classify these representations along denominational lines. Lucian Leustean also suggests making a distinction along the following functional parameters: the official representation of Churches, inter-Church or convictional organisations or networks, religious orders and single-issue organisations (Leustean 2011a, p.307). The Catholic organisations working on a wide range of issues include the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), Jesuit European Social Centre and Caritas Europa. Single-issue organisations are normally concerned with issues around immigration and refugees, such as the International Catholic Migration Commission and the Jesuit Refugee Service Europe. Orthodox representations tend to concentrate on broader issues, and include representations of the Churches of Greece, Romania, Cyprus, the Moscow Patriarchate and the Liaison Office of the Orthodox Church (Ecumenical (Constantinople) Patriarchate). Finally,

Protestants are represented by the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) office, European Evangelical Alliance, Christian Action, Research and Education (CARE for Europe), and Lutheran Churches of Finland and Sweden. There is also a representation from the Anglican Church and representations of Free Churches. The ecumenical organisations are represented by the Church and Society Commission (CSC) of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and by APRODEV (Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organisations in Europe).

If we try to assess the level of influence (at least, the potential for influence and the efficiency of the organisational structure) of a particular office/representation, than the following criteria should be used. First, it is important to know when the office was opened (a newer offices tend to have less established links in Brussels' political circles). Second, the number of fulltime employees should be taken into account (fewer employees are not able to deal with as many issues as more employees), as well as the stated objectives of the office (whether they are broad or concentrated around some narrow issues). Third, we need to know if a particular Church is influential in a member state (i.e. is able to influence EU institutions through the authorities of its country). Finally, it is necessary to identify if a level of religiosity in a member state is high enough to suppose that its representatives in Brussels (i.e. Members of European Parliament) will be willing to support the Representation of the Church and its initiatives. A more detailed description of the main Christian representations in Brussels follows, divided along denominational lines.

Catholic presence

Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE)

This Commission can be regarded as the most influential Catholic organisation working at the EU level (mainly due to its resources, experience, expertise and well-established ties with the political elite). Established in 1980, it is composed of the bishops delegated by 27 Catholic Bishops' Conferences of the European Union. It has a permanent Secretariat in Brussels, employing eleven advisors, who deal with a variety of issues – from fundamental human rights and bioethics to migration and asylum. Its general secretary is currently an Irish priest from

Great Britain, Patrick Daly, who is probably more open to ecumenical cooperation than his predecessor, Piotr Mazurkiewicz from Poland. The objectives of COMECE include monitoring and analysing the political process of the European Union and maintaining regular dialogue with EU institutions. COMECE also informs the Catholic Church about EU developments, including the development of its legislation, and "promotes reflection, based on the Church's social teaching, on the challenges facing a united Europe" (see COMECE N.d.). Thus its mission is both to inform and influence, although the latter is not explicitly mentioned in the COMECE documents.

The Jesuit European Social Centre—JESC (formerly The Jesuit European Office – OCIPE) JESC is probably the second most influential Catholic organisation after the COMECE. The Jesuit European Office was established in 1956 and is now present in Brussels, Budapest and Warsaw, "with an antenna in Strasbourg". JESC states that it "seeks to accompany the construction of Europe", using a variety of methods. It aims to reflect on European values and responsibilities from the perspective of the Christian faith and to promote solidarity, both within Europe and between Europe and the wider world. JESC aims to prioritise its contribution on the development of a European consciousness and on the issue of justice and solidarity within Europe and between Europe and other continents. In the first area, it specifically aims to search for the adequate spiritual, moral, political and legal foundations of the European project. In the second area, the concept of solidarity is seen and exploited as a unifying factor, as having a prominent place within Catholic social thought and EU developments. The methods which are used by JESC include advocacy, "personal contacts and relationships" and networking with various groups and organisations. JESC works in close cooperation with COMECE and together they produce a monthly newsletter, Europeinfos, which is published eleven times per year (see JESC N.d.).

Orthodox presence

Representation of Ecumenical/Constantinople Patriarchate

This was the first Orthodox representation at the EU, established in 1995 by the decision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Its head is now metropolitan Emmanuel (Adamakis) of France, whose

pastoral duties do not allow him to contribute to the representation's work on a fulltime basis. Most work is conducted by the representation's secretary, archimandrite Aimilianos (Bogiannou). The main mission of the Office is to bring the important contribution of the Orthodox Church to the construction of the European Union. The headquarters of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Istanbul, Turkey) are not in the EU member state, but the Patriarchate is well represented in the European Union, mostly in the form of the Greek-speaking dioceses (immigrants of Greek or Cypriot origin, living in various EU member states). Also, the Ecumenical Patriarch holds the Primacy of Honour among the other heads of Orthodox Churches, although his role is in no way equivalent to the role of the Pope in the Catholic Church. (The Ecumenical Patriarchate, N.d.).

The Church of Greece

The office of the representation of the Church of Greece to the EU was founded in 1998. It now has three permanent members of staff and is headed by metropolitan Athanasios (Hatzopoulos). The representation focuses on "following and studying" various aspects of the EU's work, which "falls within the immediate interest of the Church of Greece". It also aims to promote the spiritual and cultural work of the Greek Orthodox Church, through its collaboration with European institutions, participation in different activities, organised at the European level and through organising lectures, conferences, seminars, etc. In fact, the representation of the Church of Greece can be regarded as the most influential among the Orthodox representations in Brussels. This is explained by the presence in Brussels of professional and competent full-time staff, the wide range of issues on its agenda, its good ties with the European Parliament (Greek MEPs) and the European Commission, as well as the high respect which the Orthodox Church has in Greece (thus the ability to influence EU institutions through a member state). (Representation of the Church of Greece, N.d.).

Representation of the Moscow Patriarchate

The representation of the Russian Orthodox Church was opened in Brussels in 2002, in order to represent the interests of the Patriarchate of Moscow and its faithful, many of whom live in EU

member states. It aims to monitor EU legislation and to provide advocacy in those areas which are of interest and importance for the Russian Orthodox Church. However, there are some signs that the level and importance of representation has weakened, compared to previous years. Indeed, until 2009 its official head held the rank of bishop; now it is in lower rank of priest, holding the title of the "acting representative". Moreover, the acting head of representation, Fr Anthony Ilyin, is also a rector of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Brussels; therefore he cannot work on a full-time basis as a representative to the European Union. This is the same for the representation's secretary, Fr Andrei Yeliseev, who is a rector of the Orthodox parish in Antwerp (see Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church, N.d.). Such state of affairs in the representation of the Russian Orthodox Church is probably explained by the fact that the main countries of this Church (Russia, Ukraine and Belarus) are not the members of the European Union. True, the representation can rely, to an extent, on the Russian Orthodox MEPs from the Baltic States, but this reliance is very limited.

Representation of the Romanian Orthodox Church

This representation is one of the most recent, founded in 2006. Its president is archbishop Nifon (Mihaita) who is permanently resident in Romania, but all current job is conducted by director, resident in Brussels (at present Fr Sorin Selaru). Its main objectives, as stated on its website, are similar to the objectives of other representations: monitoring the activity of European institutions, bearing in mind the issues of the direct interest of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and informing the Patriarchate in Bucharest about the major EU developments. The representation is also determined to take part in actions which "mobilise the European Churches in order to support the Christian values within the process of institutional consolidation of the Union". In principle, it is recognised that the office's main activities are oriented towards "information, communication and public relations" (Representation N.d.). Up to now, the role of the office was limited to participating in various events organised by European institutions. Potentially, it may become one of the most influential representations in the EU, due to the substantial presence of Romania in the European Parliament and the influential role of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Romanian politics and society (Representation of the Romanian Orthodox Church, N.d.).

Representation of the Church of Cyprus

This was the last Orthodox representation, opened in Brussels (in 2008), but it can now be regarded as the biggest one. It consists of four members of staff-- the representative himself (currently bishop Porfyrios Papastylianou), his secretary and two assistants. According to the head of representation, its task coincides in a substantial degree with the tasks of other Orthodox representations: to monitor European legislation and to speak out on the issues which are relevant to the Church. The Church of Cyprus has also one specific interest: the violation of the rights of those Christians who live on the occupied Cypriot territories (Representation of the Church of Cyprus, N.d.). Given this context, it is likely that the representation of the Church of Cyprus is also partially taking on the function of representing the Cypriot state. Given the importance of religious issues to the occupied territories, such an approach is understandable, however, it may distract the Church of Cyprus representation from dealing with those questions, which are considered important for other Orthodox Churches.

Committee of Representatives of Orthodox Churches to the European Union

In March 2010 representatives of all Orthodox Churches in Brussels established a special committee, which aimed to coordinate the inter-Orthodox perspectives on EU policy initiatives. In fact, as stated in an article, published by the acting head of the representation of the Moscow Patriarchate, none of the inter-Christian organisations (which unite the representatives of different confessions) is able to speak on behalf of Orthodox Churches. The viewpoints articulated by these organisations (due to the nature of the decision-making process) are not able to express the Orthodox identity (Ilyin 2010). As the article emphasises, the Committee is therefore "[c]alled to make visible the presence of the global Orthodoxy both for the decision-making political elites and for an expert community and mass-media in Brussels" (Ilyin 2010). However, this Committee does not intend to become a substitute for any existing representation and it does not exclude the possibility for representations to cooperate on their own within the European Union. Nor is the Committee a formal structure which is able to speak on behalf of all Orthodox representations in Brussels. In fact, it looks more like a consultative body for the

Orthodox, but its existence is important in the respect that it allows the specific Orthodox identity to become more visible.

Protestant presence

Evangelical Churc in Germany

The most visible Protestant presence in Brussels is the representation of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). Its office was established in Brussels in 1990. It now has five permanent members of staff, with Katrin Hatzinger being the head of office since May 2008. The EKD office monitors the legislative proceedings of the European Union and represents the interests and position of the Church. The main areas of interest for the EKD include political issues (such as the reform of treaties and the dialogue between Churches and the EU), asylum, migration and migrant integration, data protection, labour law, social legislation, taxation, media policies and bioethics. It is worth noting that the EKD office also deals with other issues, which are of interest and importance for the Evangelical Church in Germany. The EKD office normally contributes to consultations and public statements. It also regularly informs the EKD central office in Germany and Church-based institutions and organisations about policy developments in the European Union. It publishes a newsletter "Europa-Informationen" every other month (in German) which serves as an important source of information about EU developments (see EKD N.d).

CARE (Christian Action Research and Education) for Europe

CARE for Europe represents various Protestant Churches and concentrates on monitoring European policies in such areas as bioethics, family life, gambling, human trafficking, religious freedom and human rights. CARE for Europe emphasises that "through its lobby work it seeks to influence European policies to adhere to Christ's values and so help sustain a Christ-like European Union". Its office in Brussels is staffed with two employees. The organisation mainly provides research briefings and participates in public hearings at the European Commission and European Parliament. The important policy papers produced by the organisation include those on Demographic Change, End of Life Issues and Reproductive Health (CARE for Europe N.d.).

The European Evangelical Alliance (EEA)

The EEA unites the national Evangelical Alliances of Europe and a large number of pan-European mission agencies. There is one person based in Brussels who represents the EEA, but up to now this organisation's work has not been substantial. Its website lists "the EEA's expectations", which include some predictions for the future. For example, the EEA claims that there will be more and more effective political monitoring and advocacy at the national and European levels, that many more Christians will be involved in politics, and that praying for the EU and for Europe as a whole will become a priority for many more Christians. However, there is no information on the organisation's advocacy mechanisms or any practical steps to explain cooperation between the EEA and the EU (European Evangelical Alliance N.d.).

Eurodiaconia

Although it claims to be just a "Christian" (i.e. non-denominational) organisation, the list of its members indicates that this organisation is more Protestant than anything else. It is the organisation, which coordinates its members' activities on various social issues. Eurodiaconia's secretariat in Brussels is comprised of five members of staff: a secretary general, three policy officers and a communications and administration officer. The organisation deals with the issues of poverty and social exclusion, migration, life of people in diasporas, etc. It tries to influence relevant policies, both at European and national levels, but its actual degree of influence is difficult to assess (Eurodiaconia N.d.).

Ecumenical organisations

The ecumenical organisations are best represented by the Conference of European Churches, which unites the representatives of more than 120 Churches across Europe – Orthodox, Old-Catholic and Protestant. In addition, an important but less influential role is played by the

Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organisations in Europe (APRODEV).

The Conference of European Churches

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) was founded in 1959, and now consists of more than 120 Churches of different denominations. It has a General Secretariat and three Commissions: Churches in Dialogue, Church and Society Commission and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CEC N.d). Church and Society Commission is a body, which mainly deals with the issues of European integration. One of its objectives is "[f]acilitating, resourcing, and coordinating the engagement and advocacy of the churches in relation to the European institutions" (CEC CSC N.d.). There are ten members of staff in the CSC CEC, located in Brussels and three in Strasbourg. Church and Society Commission is one of the most professional and influential religious organisations in Brussels, which has established good links with EU institutions. There are all reasons to suggest that CSC CEC is the most influential and well-known ecumenical organisation, working at the EU level.

APRODEV

The Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organisations in Europe was founded in 1990, with the objective "to strengthen the cooperation between the European development and humanitarian aid organisations which work closely together with the World Council of Churches". It states clearly that its main aim is to influence the process of decision-making in EU institutions, in the areas which affect developing countries. Based on an analysis of its participating organisations (sixteen at present), APRODEV mostly represents the Protestant Churches of Europe. In its strategic plan, APRODEV states the principles on which EU development policies should be based. These include contributing to sustainable development, gender equality, human dignity, the eventual eradication of poverty, etc. The EU policies which are of most concern for APRODEV include trade and agriculture, climate change, the

Palestinian-Israeli conflict and EU policies towards other regions, such as Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (APRODEV N.d.).

To conclude, we can claim that the presence of Christian Churches in Brussels is obviously visible, for all three Christian confessions. However, Protestant Churches prefer to act more actively via the ecumenical organisations, especially the Conference of European Churches. Orthodox Churches also use, to an extent, the potential of the ecumenical bodies, although they understand the importance of the direct interaction, between their representations in Brussels and EU institutions (Church of Greece appears to be the most active in that respect). As for the Roman Catholic Church, it has got some adequate resources to work in Brussels independently and its representations at the EU level are the most professional and influential, with the COMECE leading the array of Catholic organisations, working with the European Union.

4. Practical cooperation

The analysis of practical cooperation between Churches and the EU institutions is important in order to see in more detail how the work of representations in Brussels is organised. Practical cooperation between Christian organisations and European institutions usually takes the form of consultations and meetings. Lucian Leustean distinguishes two main types of meetings: working groups (when experts from both sides work together on specific issues), and "as 'photo opportunities' between the highest levels of political and religious leadership in Europe" (when the Presidents of the Council, Parliament and Commission are present, as well as Church leaders and leaders of other religions) (Leustean 2011a, pp.309-310). These meetings are the most visible to the press and general public and sometimes create allegations that Christian organisations may have "too much" influence at the high political level. However, these meetings seem to be largely ceremonial, with few practical consequences.

There have been nine such meetings since 2005 (see table 1).

Table 1. Meetings between the religious and political leaders in the EU

Date	Theme	Confessions present
July 2005	Rejection of Terrorism and ongoing EU integration	Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Judaism and Islam
May 2006	Fundamental rights and mutual respect	Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism
May 2007	Building a Europe based on human dignity	Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Judaism and Islam
May 2008	Climate Change and reconciliation	Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Judaism and Islam
May 2009	Economic and financial crisis: ethical contributions for European and global economic governance	Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Judaism and Islam
July 2010	Combating poverty and social exclusion	Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism
May 2011	A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity: a common willingness to promote democratic rights and liberties	Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism
July 2012	Intergenerational Solidarity: Setting the parameters for Tomorrow's Society in Europe	Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Baha'ism
May 2013	Putting citizens at the heart of the European project in times of change	Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism

(Source: European Commission—BEPA, N.d.)

What can be concluded from the peculiarities of these meetings? If we take into account the list of Churches which participate in these regular high-level meetings, we can find that there are some established partners in the dialogue, who are normally invited each year. These include COMECE representatives, as well as the representatives of CEC. From the Protestant side, representatives of the Evangelical Church in Germany are generally invited (and the Church of England is also present). From Orthodox Churches, representatives of the Greek Orthodox Church attended all the meetings (apart from the last one in May 2013), and representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate were officially present at all the meetings, apart from those in 2006, 2010, 2012 and 2013. A representative of the Church of Cyprus was present at the meetings of 2007, 2010, 2011 and 2012, and representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Church attended meetings since 2008. A representative of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church attended only one meeting, in 2010. The Ecumenical Patriarchate was represented at all the meetings, usually by metropolitan Emmanuel (Adamakis), the head of the representation to the EU. However, since 2010 he has attended these events in his new capacity, as the president of the Conference of European Churches. This new post did not deprive him of his previously-held posts, but allowed to become a participant of the annual meetings as head of the ecumenical organisation. Some smaller Churches were also invited from time to time, such as the United Protestant Church in Belgium (European Commission—BEPA, N.d.).

These types of meetings do not give much opportunity either for substantial interventions or for discussions from the participants (in reality, it is hardly possible to have a deep and profound discussion in a meeting which only takes place once a year, lasts less than two hours and is attended by more than twenty participants). The meetings are normally held in the atmosphere of formality and diplomatic politeness, avoiding profound discussion of themes which could be problematic or controversial.

In contrast to these "photo opportunities" meetings, the working groups are more practical and provide more opportunity for influence, especially if the Church experts are good professionals in their field. However, there are no formal rules to oversee the involvement of Christian organisations in the EU policy-making. Church experts work alongside experts from secular organisations, and there is unlikely to be any preference towards the former from European institutions. Moreover, in certain cases, their Church affiliation may even lead to some

uneasiness, if the partners in dialogue have strong anti-Church views or are opposed to any sort of religious involvement in policy areas, even if this involvement comes in the form of expertise not related to a religious agenda.

In principle, after the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, it might have been expected that Churches would have better opportunities to exercise their influence on the supranational (European) level. As Lucian Leustean noted, "[t]he latest Lisbon Treaty gives religious communities a more significant position and institutes a consultation framework with the European institutions" (Leustean 2009, p.175). Indeed, Article 17(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union envisages "open, transparent and regular dialogue" with Churches (as well as with philosophical and non-confessional organisations). In April 2010, COMECE and CSC CEC (thus representing all three Christian confessions) submitted their "General considerations" on the implementation of this provision of the Treaty of Lisbon. They emphasised, in particular, that the Churches' dialogue partners should include the Council, Commission and Parliament, but also "other EU institutions and bodies" (COMECE and CSC CEC 2010, p.3), and that opportunities for dialogue should be given to both minority and majority Churches.

Explaining the characteristics of such dialogue, COMECE and CSC CEC noted the following important aspects. Openness, according to them, means that the EU institutions should be willing "[t]o work with citizens towards the goal of 'involvement in the lawmaking and governance' of the EU" (COMECE and CSC CEC 2010, p.4, emphasis in the original). One more feature of this openness is that no policy field, which is within the EU's legislative and governmental competence, should be excluded from this dialogue. This dialogue should also be "frank" and can focus, inter alia, on the promotion of universal values, as mentioned in the Preamble of the Treaty on European Union, as well as "[t]he respect of human dignity of every human being, reconciliation and intercultural understanding as well as on the realization of the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity in EU policy" (COMECE and CSC CEC 2010, p.4). Transparency is explained as a good opportunity to allow the interested public to know the Churches' perspectives on EU issues and an opportunity for the EU institutions to disseminate their views to a bigger audience. The provision for a regular dialogue is particularly developed, with Christian organisations emphasising that regular dialogue "[g]oes above and beyond

sporadic ad-hoc meetings between representatives of Churches and EU institutions" (COMECE and CSC CEC 2010, p.5). The Churches stressed that the future dialogue framework should improve and enhance the existing one, at all levels: working contacts, consultations, dialogue seminars and high-level meetings. In fact, those high-level and most visible meetings need "[c]ommon content preparation prior to the events as well as any subsequent follow-up" (COMECE and CSC CEC 2010, p.5). Regarding the European Commission, regular dialogue "[s]hould contribute to consolidate the frequency of meetings with the Churches" (COMECE and CSC CEC 2010, p.5). In reality, this may well depend on the Commission's strategic annual planning, and therefore it concedes that such a meeting might even be necessary before the Commission declares its legislative and work programme for the coming year. Also, COMECE and CSC CEC pointed out that they would welcome participating in the hearings which are organised by parliamentary committees. All this confirms the Churches' readiness to closely cooperate with EU institutions.

In contrast, however, the European Commission's official website does not provide such substantial and inclusive definitions of the characteristics of this dialogue, as that elaborated by the Christian Churches. To the European Union, openness means that the "Dialogue partners can be churches, religious associations or communities as well as philosophical and non-confessional organisations that are recognized or registered as such at national level and adhere to European values". Transparent dialogue means that the European Commission, on a dedicated website, "conveys to the public all relevant information about the activities within the dialogue". Finally, regular dialogue means that "The European Commission maintains a regular dialogue with interlocutors at various levels in the form of written exchanges, meetings or specific events", without specification of how regularly (European Commission—BEPA, N.d.b). This rather reserved tone on the part of the European Commission can possibly be viewed as a confirmation of McCrea's claim that the EU, while being not strictly secular, may impose some limitations on the impact of the return of religion to the political arena (McCrea 2011, p.13). It is clear that the European institutions do not show the same degree of openness and eagerness to interact with Christian Churches that Churches express themselves.

Certainly, it was the Churches' achievement that in the text of the Lisbon Treaty the provisions for their dialogue with the EU were separated from the dialogue with civil society.

However, it was watered down by the inclusion of "philosophical and non-confessional organisations" in this dialogue. Moreover, the Churches initially requested "structured" dialogue, but this word does not appear in the wording of the Article 17. Consequently, Article 17, if applied in its totality, simply means dialogue with almost everyone, without any specific obligations from the European Union. In fact, putting this article into practice remains an issue of practical concern, since it is very difficult to organise the dialogue with hundreds of different denominations. If all of them are invited at one time, it will be, in the best case, a chance for short interventions from religious leaders, without a realistic opportunity for a lengthy and productive discussion.

Even current meetings at the high political/religious level produce only few concrete results. Consequently, in order to increase the efficiency of Churches-EU interaction, both sides should be aiming at closer discussions at the policy levels, with the Church experts articulating their views on various issues, including poverty, climate change, etc. This is a sort of more concrete and practical arrangement, which may give to the Churches a higher level of influence. If the cooperation at the policy level will acquire more intensive forms, then it is likely that Churches will be more listened and heard on the highest levels in Brussels.

Conclusion

Christian Churches have now firmly established their presence at the supranational EU level. Their representations in Brussels can be regarded as efficient and adequately working structures, which closely cooperate with EU institutions. Although monitoring and assessment is their key function, they contribute on the increasing level to the decisionmaking process and the discussion of various policy initiatives, from migration and asylum to poverty reduction and climate change. Churches are able to offer their experience and expertise in very broad areas, thus confirming their importance as participants in this dialogue.

Those representations, which function in Brussels, reflect the key role of the Roman Catholic Church, as the most influential confession in the EU. Indeed, the COMECE secretariat

is well-staffed (especially if compared with other representations) and is competent in broad areas. At the same time, Orthodox Churches demonstrate more interest towards the EU developments, especially the Churches of Greece, Cyprus and Romania. Representations of the Orthodox Churches from the above mentioned countries are taking the leading roles, which is also reinforced by the high level of influence of these Churches in their respective states. There is a lower level of influence in Brussels from the representations of the Ecumenical and Moscow Patriarchates, partly due to the fact that these Patriarchates are located not in the EU member states. Finally, Protestants are well represented by the office of the Evangelical Church in Germany, which is the most professional and influential on the Protestant side. Other offices are much poorer staffed. However, Protestants (as well as Orthodox and Anglicans) work quite efficiently through the ecumenical organisations, such as the Conference of European Churches. Overall, it is evident that from those Christian organisations, which are present in Brussels at the EU level, there are several "leaders", which are likely to continue to play the most significant role. Their leadership is explained by objective parameters and by the interest, which is shown by their founding Churches in the process of European integration and confirmed by their willingness to influence the decision-making process in the EU.

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