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# ATTITUDES TOWARDS FAITH AMONG INHABITANTS OF POLAND AND HUNGARY MODERATING ROLE OF AGE, EDUCATION AND PLACE OF RESIDENCE

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## **Abstract**

The paper addresses the aspect of attitudes towards faith among inhabitants of Poland and Hungary. These particular two Central and Eastern European countries were chosen because they were the first states from the former communist bloc to sign concordats with the Holy See. The authors assumed that age, education and place of permanent residence would constitute important factors differentiating attitudes towards religion among the inhabitants of the two countries. The paper uses statistical data from Round 9 of the European Social Survey, compiled by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. An analysis of data concerning attitudes towards faith has shown that Poles, regardless of their age, education and place of residence, are by far more religious than Hungarians are. However, both in Poland and in Hungary, the share of believers in the youngest age groups is lower than in the oldest groups. These data allow us to predict that in the next decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, secularisation processes will be progressing in both countries.

*Keywords:* attitudes, faith, religiosity, Poland, Hungary

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## **1. Introduction**

The changes initiated in Poland in 1989 consisting in the transition from a communist state into a liberal democracy triggered a domino effect in other satellite states of the USSR. These transformations affected all important spheres of life, in the first place the political and economic one, and subsequently the social sphere, which led to the need to regulate the space of relations between the state and the Catholic Church as well as and other religious communities. The normalisation of such relations found its legal expression in the signing of a

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concordat, i.e. an international agreement between the Holy See and the highest authorities of the respective countries.

Due the need for a change in the model of the relationship between the state and the Church, both the government and the society at large had to undergo a transformation consisting in abandoning an atheist communist state (and society) and heading towards a secular democratic state (and society), and it was precisely such secularism that involved a social debate concerning its extent. Each of the states consequently had to decide which standard would express its relationship with the Church, i.e. whether it would be based on the principles of rigid separation (i.e. the solution applied in France) or coordinated separation (created in Germany after World War I and implemented in other European countries later, under the influence of the Second Vatican Council's decisions). The latter model is characterised by respect for cultural and religious values, constituting the Christian heritage of European nations, as well as by regulation of the relations between state and Church in the form of agreements.

The first stage of relationship normalisation involved establishing diplomatic relations with the Holy See by the post-communist countries, while the next step consisted in regulating the legal situation of the Catholic Church in the territory of the state with a legal agreement referred to as a concordat. The first Central and Eastern European states to sign concordats were Poland (in 1993) and Hungary (in 1990, in 1994 and in 1997).

These first post-communist concordat countries are analysed here, firstly taking into account the historical aspects that led to the signing of the respective agreements, secondly presenting a picture of the current Polish and Hungarian societies, and finally, analysing the attitudes towards faith of the inhabitants of the two countries depending on age, education and place of residence.

## **2. State-Catholic Church relations in Poland after 1989**

The changes in the relations between the state and the Church in Poland began back in 1989, when three 'Church laws' were passed:

- 1) Act of 17 May 1989 on the relation of the State to the Catholic Church in the Republic of Poland [1],
- 2) Act of 17 May 1989 on guarantees of freedom of conscience and religion [2],
- 3) Act of 17 May 1989 on social insurance for clergy [3].

After the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1989 elections, when the internal political situation changed, diplomatic relations with the Holy See were resumed on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1989. The subsequent stage in the activities undertaken by the Polish government involved negotiations with the Holy See aimed at concluding a concordat. After the draft submitted by the Government of the Republic of Poland on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1993, negotiations commenced on the final wording of the agreement. As a result of this work, on 2<sup>nd</sup> May of the same year, the text of the Concordat was agreed and accepted by both parties, and subsequently, on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1993, it was formally concluded by and between the Holy See and Poland

[4]. However, ratification was blocked by the Polish Sejm of the second term. Only after the 1997 parliamentary elections on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1998 did the Sejm of the third term pass a law authorising the ratification of the concordat, which finally took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1998 [5].

Thus, the concordat was drawn up before the passing of the new Constitution, meaning that the Polish legal framework had to conform to the concordat and not vice versa. This affected the later practice of constitutional separation of Church and state as well as the public perception of this act.

### **3. Contemporary Polish society and religion**

In today's Polish society, which is pluralistic and in the course of modernisation, the sphere of religiosity is a significant area of changes. Currently, it can still be observed that a decisive majority (86% of adult respondents) declare faith in God, and the vast majority (92.5%) of Poles define themselves as Christian, with a substantial majority of Catholics (87%) [Pew Research Center, *Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe. National and religious identities converge in a region once dominated by atheist regimes*, 10 May 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2017/05/POL-Overview-FOR-WEB.pdf>]. A small share of respondents are not affiliated with any religion (7.3%) and forecasts predict that this percentage will increase slightly to 12.8% in 2050, meaning that one in eight Poles will not follow any religion (Table 1). The process of creeping secularisation will therefore gain momentum in Poland. Its sources are to be sought primarily in a critical opinion on the results of the actions taken by the Church as an institution (clergy, social-Church organisations), not as a community. Particular controversy is triggered also by political involvement, especially of the direct type [6].

**Table 1.** Estimated changes in the composition of religious groups in Poland in the years 2010-2050 [Pew Research Center, *Religious Composition by Country, 2010-2050*, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2015, <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/2050/percent/all/>].

Year	Christians (%)	Muslims (%)	Unaffiliated (%)	Hindus (%)	Buddhists (%)	Folk Religions (%)	Other (%)	Jews (%)
2010	94.3	< 0.1	5.6	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1
2020	92.5	< 0.1	7.3	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1
2030	90.8	0.1	9	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1
2040	88.8	0.2	10.9	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1
2050	86.8	0.2	12.8	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1

The involvement of the Polish Church in social problems is not judged unambiguously either. These results, among other things, from the conviction, shared especially by young people, that the Church does not indicate answers to important social problems concerning the functioning of the individual or of the family in today's world. Currently, the Church has found itself on the defensive. However, it is trying to redefine its place and its role in the Polish democratic

civil society, which makes the question about the attitudes and behaviours of Poles towards faith an extremely significant one.

#### 4. State-Catholic Church relations in Hungary after 1989

In May 1989, Hungary symbolically began to tear down the Iron Curtain, by starting to dismantle the barbed wire fence along the border with Austria. Even before the first free elections in March 1990, the government of the Republic of Hungary signed the first of the three concordats - the agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Hungary on the establishment of diplomatic relations of 9<sup>th</sup> February 1990. [*Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Hungary, Signed 9<sup>th</sup> February 1990, Accordo tra la Santa Sede e la Repubblica di Ungheria (Relazioni diplomatiche) Firmato il 9 febbraio 1990*, [http://www.olir.it/ricerca/getdocumentopdf.php?lang=ita&Form\\_object\\_id=854](http://www.olir.it/ricerca/getdocumentopdf.php?lang=ita&Form_object_id=854)] The other two agreements governing the relationship between the state and the Catholic Church in Hungary are the following:

- 1) Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Hungary on chaplaincy in the Hungarian Armed Forces and Border Guard Service, signed on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1994 [*Rendelet Egyfelől a Magyar Köztársaság, másfelől az Apostoli Szentszék között a Magyar Honvédségnél és a Határőrségnél végzendő lelkipásztori szolgálat tárgyában 1994. január 10-én aláírt megállapodás, valamint az egyfelől a Magyar Köztársaság, másfelől az Apostoli Szentszék között a Magyar Honvédségnél és a Határőrségnél végzendő lelkipásztori szolgálat tárgyában 1994. január 10-én aláírt megállapodás értelmezését célzó memorandum egységes szerkezetbe foglalt kihirdetéséről* (290/2008. (XII. 9.) Korm.)];
- 2) Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Hungary on the financing of the public service and lending activities of the Catholic Church in Hungary and on certain property matters, signed on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1997 [*Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Hungary on the financing of public service and other particular religious activities undertaken in Hungary by the Catholic Church and on some issues of property ownership. Signed on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1997 (Passed in parliament as Act LXX of 1999); 7].*

After 16 years, the Holy See and the Hungarian government proceeded to renegotiate the financial concordat. On 21<sup>st</sup> October 2013, amendments were signed to the 1997 financial concordat, reflected in the provisions concerning “financing of the public (social) service and religious activities of the Catholic Church in Hungary, as well as certain additional financial matters”. The concordat was amended due to changes in the legal situation: on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2011, a new Constitution was passed for Hungary, with Article VII, paragraph 2 setting forth that “The State and Churches shall be separate. Churches shall be autonomous. The State shall cooperate with the Churches for community goals.” In this manner, the Hungarian government agreed to cover costs associated with

“teaching of religion”, and students attending Catholic schools received the same financial support as that provided to students attending state-owned ones [8].

The issue of ‘cultural’ subsidies also turned out to be important. Institutions belonging to the Catholic Church in Hungary received the same subsidies as those granted to similar state institutions. This includes the use and conservation of monuments, treasures of art, museums, libraries and archives [B. Novak, *Hungary updates agreement with Vatican*, The Budapest Beacon, <https://budapestbeacon.com/hungary-updates-agreement-with-vatican/>].

#### **4.1. Contemporary Hungarian society and religion**

The communist regime left a strong mark on the Hungarian society. Religious practices were subjected to repression, and atheism was the ‘official faith’. Currently, the majority (59% of adult respondents) declare faith in God, and Hungarians today declare themselves overwhelmingly as Christian (81%), more than half of these being Catholics (56%) [<https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2017/05/POL-Overview-FOR-WEB.pdf>]. However, in the modernising Hungarian society, a significant share of people are not affiliated with any religion (20.3%) and, moreover, this percentage is expected to increase to 23.3% by 2050, meaning that a quarter of all Hungarians will be non-believers (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Estimated changes in the composition of religious groups in Hungary in the years 2010-2050 [Pew Research Center, *Religious Composition by Country, 2010-2050*, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2015, <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/2050/percent/all/>].

Year	Christians (%)	Muslims (%)	Unaffiliated (%)	Hindus (%)	Buddhists (%)	Folk Religions (%)	Other (%)	Jews (%)
2010	81	< 0.1	18.6	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	0.1
2020	79.3	0.1	20.3	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1
2030	77.6	0.2	21.9	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1
2040	76.6	0.3	22.9	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1
2050	76.1	0.4	23.3	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1

The Hungarian society is certainly not a strongly atheistic one, but the vast majority of its members neither follow the teachings of Churches, nor participate in institutionalised forms of religious worship. It should be emphasised that, despite the post-1989 revival of religious practices, a significant part of the society continues to distance itself from Churches and references to religion in the public sphere [9].

## **5. Experimental**

The aim of this study is to provide a comparative analysis of contemporary attitudes towards religion among inhabitants of Poland and Hungary. Answers were sought to the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent do respondents declare being followers of a religion and being affiliated with a Church or a denomination?
- 2) What is the respondents' declared degree of religiosity?
- 3) What is the respondents' declared frequency of praying?
- 4) What is the degree of the respondents attachment to religious or family traditions?

It was assumed in the presented analyses that important factors differentiating attitudes towards religion would be age, education and place of permanent residence.

The respondents' age is taken into account in the analyses due to the fact that recently, the decrease in religiosity among young people has been particularly emphasised, manifesting itself mainly in a low degree of participation in religious practices compared to other age groups, weaker declarations of faith, and abandoning participation in religious instruction. Studies conducted by the *Pew Research Center* in over 100 countries over the last decade clearly show the worldwide occurrence of this trend [Pew Research Center, *The Age Gap in Religion Around the World*, <https://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2018/06/14112107/ReligiousCommitment-FULL-WEB.pdf>].

Place of residence is significant for the religiosity analysed in the paper: research shows differences in attitudes towards religion among residents of urban areas compared to rural or small-town communities. In the case of Poland, these differences manifest themselves for instance in the fact that people living in rural areas and small towns declare themselves as devout believers and believers more often than big-city dwellers [10]. Respondents living outside the urban environment also attach more importance to religious practices.

The level of education was also taken into account in the comparative analyses presented. It was assumed that it might prove to be an important factor differentiating attitudes toward religion. In Poland, a decrease is currently observed in the number of believers and of those attending religious observances in the group of people with higher education [11], and the results of international research presented by the *Pew Research Center* show that wealthier and better-educated individuals are generally less religious. Those less well-off and less well-educated, in turn, are more religious.

Statistical data were used to answer the research questions put forward, obtained from Round 9 of the European Social Survey (ESS) [*ESS9 - 2018 Documentation Report*, The ESS Data Archive, edition 3.0] and compiled by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw (IFiS). This institution prepared a set of data for selected European countries, including Poland and Hungary. IFiS is the entity responsible for the Polish edition of the Survey. The ESS is an international survey designed in 2001. The first edition took place in 2002. The survey is conducted every two years in the form of face-to-face interviews with newly selected representative samples of respondents. It is used to obtain data concerning attitudes, beliefs and behavioural patterns of different populations in over thirty countries.

A CAPI study (quantitative research) as part of Round 9 of the survey was conducted in Poland from 26<sup>th</sup> October 2018 to 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019. Of the 2,700 respondents aged over 15 selected to participate, 60.35% eventually participated in the survey. The ESS methodology used in the Polish edition considers a refusal to answer and the indication ‘hard to say’ but does not show them in the final results. For this reason, the results of the Polish research do not add up to 100%. In Hungary, on the other hand, the study proper in the CAPI form (quantitative research) took place from 31<sup>st</sup> January to 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019. A total of 4,363 respondents aged over 15 were selected for the study, of whom 40.73% eventually participated.

## 6. Results and discussion

One of the aspects addressed in the ESS concerned attitudes towards faith and religiosity among Europeans. For this study, the aspects making it possible to answer the research questions put forward in the paper were selected.

The first question analysed concerned declarations of following a religion or of being affiliated with a Church or denomination. In the case of Poland, in each age group, the vast majority of respondents gave an affirmative answer. The share of such responses ranges from 79% for the 25-34 age group to 92% for respondents aged 65 and above. Hungarians, on their part, differ significantly from Poles in terms of the sense of being followers of some religion or being affiliated with some Church or denomination. Negative answers prevailed in the following age groups: 24 and younger, 25-34, 35-44 and 45-54. Between 54% and 66% of respondents in each age group do not consider themselves as followers of any religion or declare any affiliation with any Church or denomination. Only in the two oldest age groups did a majority of the respondents give affirmative answers: 54% in the 55-64 group and 69% in the group of respondents aged 65 and above (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Declaration of following a religion or of being affiliated with a Church or with a denomination by age group. Own compilation based on ESS data provided by IFiS PAN (Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences).

<b>Do you consider yourself a follower of any religion or do you feel affiliated with any Church or denomination?</b>				
<b>Age</b>	<b>Poland</b>		<b>Hungary</b>	
	<b>Response (%)</b>		<b>Response (%)</b>	
	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>
24 or younger	81	18	35	64
25-34	79	18	31	66
35-44	85	14	38	60
45-54	86	12	42	54
55-64	87	10	54	44
65 or older	92	7	69	30

After dividing the respondents into groups broken down by level of education, a certain regularity was found in Poland, namely that the lower the level of education, the higher the percentage of people who consider themselves to be followers of a religion or to be affiliated with a particular Church or religious denomination. At the same time, regardless of the level of education, the vast majority of Poles gave an affirmative answer to this question. Their percentage ranges from 80% to 89%. In the case of Hungary, the percentage of affirmative answers is significantly lower, ranging from 38% (secondary education) to 55% (below-secondary education), while the share of those declaring to be followers of a religion does not decrease with an increasing level of education, as it happens in the case of Poland (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Declaration of following a religion or of being affiliated with a Church or denomination by education level. Own compilation based on ESS data provided by IFiS PAN.

<b>Do you consider yourself a follower of any religion or do you feel affiliated with any Church or denomination?</b>				
<b>Education</b>	<b>Poland</b>		<b>Hungary</b>	
	<b>Response (%)</b>		<b>Response (%)</b>	
	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>
below secondary	89	10	55	44
secondary	85	13	38	58
above secondary	80	17	50	48

In Poland, the highest percentage of people (92%) who consider themselves to be followers of a religion or declare their affiliation with a particular Church or denomination live in rural areas. Among big-city dwellers, it amounts to 80%, and the level is similar in small and medium-sized cities/towns. In Hungary, on the other hand, the largest share of affirmative answers is found among residents of small or medium-sized cities/towns (56%), and the lowest percentage in big cities (37%) (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Declaration of following a religion or of being affiliated with a Church or denomination by place of residence. Own compilation based on ESS data provided by IFiS PAN

<b>Do you consider yourself a follower of any religion or do you feel affiliated with any Church or denomination?</b>				
<b>Place of residence</b>	<b>Poland</b>		<b>Hungary</b>	
	<b>Response (%)</b>		<b>Response (%)</b>	
	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>
large city or suburbs of a large city	80	18	37	61
small or medium-sized city/town	81	16	56	42
village or farm on the outskirts of a village	92	17	51	46

Summarising the presented data, it can be found that, compared to Hungarians, a much larger share of Poles gave an affirmative answer to the question about having the sense of following a religion or of being affiliated with a Church or denomination, regardless of whether age, education or place of residence were taken into account. A much larger share of inhabitants of Poland compared to Hungary consider themselves followers of a religion or feel affiliated with a Church or religious community.

ESS respondents were also asked to indicate the degree of their religiosity on an 11-point scale. Regardless of the age group, in the case of this question, mid-scale values of 5-7 prevailed, indicating an average degree of religiosity. Interesting conclusions can be drawn from the comparison of the extreme answers given in each country when asked about the degree of religiosity, i.e. 'none' and 'high'. The share of non-religious respondents regardless of the age group is higher in Hungary than in Poland. In Poland, on the other hand, compared to Hungary, a larger percentage of respondents in each age group described themselves as very religious. However, both in Poland and in Hungary, the share of respondents who are not religious at all decreases with age, with a simultaneous increase in the number of highly religious individuals (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Declared degree of respondents' religiosity by age group. Own compilation based on ESS data provided by IFiS PAN.

Regardless of your affiliation with a particular religion or denomination, how would you describe the degree of your religiosity?											
Age	Poland (%)										
	none	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	high
24 or younger	6.4	3.3	5.5	6.3	6.8	20.2	14.3	18.5	6.8	5.3	2.4
25-34	8.1	3.7	3.7	4.9	6.2	20.4	14.7	17.1	11.8	4.9	9.1
35-44	5.7	3.1	4.2	5.0	4.5	17.9	15.2	12.6	16.6	3.7	8.0
45-54	5.7	0.5	5.1	5.2	4.4	14.1	14.7	16.9	15.5	7.6	6.2
55-64	6.2	0.8	2.5	6.2	5.9	16.9	9.5	13.7	17.5	5.4	13.6
65 or older	3.0	1.7	1.2	4.2	2.3	11.0	8.2	13.8	21.7	11.1	21.3
Age	Hungary (%)										
	none	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	high
24 years or younger	34.4	10.5	10.3	5.6	7.2	16.6	4.0	2.0	5.2	0.5	0.8
25-34	32.0	8.9	10.1	6.9	8.6	13.3	7.8	5.4	3.3	0.0	1.5
35-44	25.8	9.0	8.1	11.7	7.9	16.3	9.1	5.5	3.1	0.0	0.6
45-54	23.0	7.7	6.3	9.9	11.4	14.7	6.6	6.9	5.0	1.2	2.9
55-64	14.4	9.8	7.6	9.9	6.8	14.1	12.9	8.5	9.3	1.6	3.0
65 or older	10.4	4.1	7.4	5.3	7.5	15.7	10.3	14.8	9.5	4.0	9.3

The declared degree of religiosity depending on the level of education differs significantly between the analysed countries and between the analysed groups. The presented data show that in Poland, the largest number of people who are not religious at all are those with higher education, while the majority of

very religious individuals are people with lower levels of education. These relationships are not as clearly visible in Hungary. In addition, in Hungary, the percentages of respondents who are not religious at all and very religious are similar for the different levels of education. In Poland's case, the prevailing ratings are 5-8, while in Hungary they are 3-7. The most common answer given in Hungary to the question about the degree of religiosity is 'none' (Table 7).

**Table 7.** Declared degree of respondents' religiosity by education. Own compilation based on ESS data provided by IFiS PAN.

Regardless of your affiliation with a particular religion or denomination, how would you describe the degree of your religiosity?											
Education	Poland (%)										
	none	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	high
below secondary	4.0	1.0	2.0	5.0	4.0	16.0	11.0	16.0	16.0	8.0	16.0
secondary	6.0	2.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	17.0	14.0	15.0	17.0	5.0	7.0
above secondary	8.0	4.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	16.0	14.0	15.0	14.0	5.0	6.0
Education	Hungary (%)										
	none	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	high
below secondary	20.0	7.1	7.0	9.2	8.5	13.4	9.0	10.2	7.6	2.7	4.2
secondary	21.2	9.8	10.1	5.6	8.2	18.8	8.1	5.8	4.8	1.0	3.1
above secondary	22.6	6.4	7.3	9.5	7.8	14.0	10.2	8.5	6.1	0.3	4.5

**Table 8.** Declared degree of respondents' religiosity by place of residence. Own compilation based on ESS data provided by IFiS PAN.

Regardless of your affiliation with a particular religion or denomination, how would you describe the degree of your religiosity?											
Place of residence	Poland (%)										
	none	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	high
city*	10.0	4.0	5.0	8.0	6.0	18.0	16.0	8.0	11.0	6.0	6.0
town*	7.0	2.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	18.0	10.0	16.0	15.0	6.0	8.0
village*	2.0	1.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	14.0	12.0	18.0	18.0	8.0	16.0
Place of residence	Hungary (%)										
	none	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	high
city*	23.0	8.1	9.8	9.8	7.8	14.7	8.9	6.9	4.1	0.9	2.7
town*	17.1	8.9	5.8	8.4	10.0	17.2	9.2	9.0	7.2	1.4	4.4
village*	23.4	5.6	8.9	6.0	6.6	13.1	8.8	9.3	7.9	2.7	4.6

\* full descriptions of the individual categories: big city or suburbs of a big city, small or medium-sized city/town, village or farm on the outskirts of a village

Subsequent analyses took into account the respondents' place of residence. In Poland, ratings of 5-8 prevail once again, while the most frequent answer given in Hungary to the question about the degree of religiosity is 'none'. Poles living in big cities more often declared themselves to be non-religious compared to inhabitants of small and medium-sized cities/towns and rural areas. In Hungary, on the other hand, the percentage share of respondents declaring this was similar among inhabitants of big cities and rural areas. At the

same time, both in Poland and in Hungary, people living in rural areas described themselves more often as highly religious. However, it is worth emphasising that the percentage share of this declaration (regardless of the place of residence) is much higher in the case of Poles compared to Hungarians (Table 8).

An analysis of the data concerning the respondents' declared degree of religiosity makes it possible to conclude that Poles are more religious than Hungarians regardless of their age, education level or place of residence in their declarations provided in the survey.

**Table 9.** Praying frequency by age group. Own compilation based on ESS data provided by IFiS PAN.

<b>In addition to attending mass, other religious services and meetings, how often do you pray - if you pray at all?</b>							
<b>Age</b>	<b>Poland (%)</b>						
	<b>every day</b>	<b>more than once a week</b>	<b>once a week</b>	<b>at least once a month</b>	<b>only on particular holidays</b>	<b>even less often</b>	<b>never</b>
24 or younger	13.0	15.0	11.0	13.0	15.0	8.0	18.0
25–34	15.0	17.0	12.0	7.0	14.0	11.0	14.0
35–44	22.0	16.0	9.0	12.0	11.0	7.0	12.0
45–54	26.0	15.0	11.0	9.0	14.0	5.0	11.0
55–64	33.0	11.0	13.0	8.0	12.0	3.0	9.0
65 or older	49.0	14.0	12.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	6.0
<b>Age</b>	<b>Hungary (%)</b>						
	<b>every day</b>	<b>more than once a week</b>	<b>once a week</b>	<b>at least once a month</b>	<b>only on particular holidays</b>	<b>even less often</b>	<b>never</b>
24 or younger	4.0	3.0	2.0	4.0	6.0	18.0	54.0
25–34	5.0	3.0	4.0	2.0	12.0	20.0	49.0
35–44	4.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	9.0	17.0	49.0
45–54	7.0	5.0	6.0	2.0	12.0	20.0	41.0
55–64	7.0	8.0	8.0	5.0	14.0	19.0	34.0
65 or older	20.0	14.0	7.0	7.0	11.0	17.0	20.0

From the point of view of attitudes towards faith, it is important to present data on the frequency of praying. In fact, praying is one of the main behavioural dimensions of religiosity. Both in Poland and in Hungary, the share of respondents saying prayers every day increases with age. However, in Poland it is significantly higher for each age group compared to Hungary. At the same time, in both countries the percentage of those not praying at all is highest among younger respondents. However, it should be noted that it is significantly higher in Hungary in every age group. In addition, the share of respondents

regardless of the age group who answered ‘every day’, ‘more than once a week’, ‘once a week’, ‘at least once a month’ and ‘only on particular holidays’ is higher among Poles compared to Hungarians with regard to each of the categories of answers mentioned. The share of respondents who answered ‘even less often’ or ‘never’ in all age groups, in turn, is higher among Hungarians compared to Poles (Table 9).

A similar trend can be observed taking into account the level of education. The share of Polish respondents whose answer to the question about the frequency of praying was ‘every day’, ‘more than once a week’, ‘at least once a month’ and ‘only on particular holidays’ is higher compared to the respondents from Hungary in each group regardless of the level of education. At the same time, Poles who pray are more often people with below-secondary education than people with secondary education, while the latter in turn pray more often than those with higher education. This trend was not found in Hungary (Table 10).

**Table 10.** Praying frequency by education. Own compilation based on ESS data provided by IFiS PAN.

<b>In addition to attending mass, other religious services and meetings, how often do you pray - if you pray at all?</b>							
<b>Education</b>	<b>Poland (%)</b>						
	<b>every day</b>	<b>more than once a week</b>	<b>once a week</b>	<b>at least once a month</b>	<b>only on particular holidays</b>	<b>even less often</b>	<b>never</b>
below secondary	31.0	15.0	12.0	8.0	11.0	6.0	9.0
secondary	25.0	16.0	9.0	10.0	14.0	6.0	13.0
above secondary	26.0	14.0	11.0	10.0	11.0	6.0	14.0
<b>Education</b>	<b>Hungary (%)</b>						
	<b>every day</b>	<b>more than once a week</b>	<b>once a week</b>	<b>at least once a month</b>	<b>only on particular holidays</b>	<b>even less often</b>	<b>never</b>
below secondary	12.0	10.0	6.0	4.0	10.0	18.0	36.0
secondary	6.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	13.0	20.0	42.0
above secondary	9.0	9.0	7.0	5.0	12.0	17.0	37.0

In Poland, inhabitants of rural areas pray more often than people living in towns and cities. In Hungary, in turn, a larger percentage of people living in rural areas than of those living in towns or cities do not pray at all. Regardless of the place of residence, the share of Poles who pray ‘every day’, ‘more than once a week’, ‘once a week’, ‘at least once a month’ and ‘only on particular holidays’

is higher than the respective share of Hungarians. Compared to Poles, Hungarians answered much more frequently ‘even less often’ and ‘never’ (Table 11).

**Table 11.** Frequency of praying by place of residence. Own compilation based on ESS data provided by IFiS PAN.

<b>Apart from special circumstances such as weddings or funerals, approximately how often do you pray - if you pray at all?</b>							
<b>Place of residence</b>	<b>Poland (%)</b>						
	<b>every day</b>	<b>more than once a week</b>	<b>once a week</b>	<b>at least once a month</b>	<b>only on particular holidays</b>	<b>even less often</b>	<b>never</b>
city*	25.0	10.0	9.0	9.0	12.0	7.0	21.0
town*	22.0	14.0	11.0	11.0	14.0	7.0	11.0
village*	34.0	17.0	13.0	8.0	10.0	5.0	6.0
<b>Place of residence</b>	<b>Hungary (%)</b>						
	<b>every day</b>	<b>more than once a week</b>	<b>once a week</b>	<b>at least once a month</b>	<b>only on particular holidays</b>	<b>even less often</b>	<b>never</b>
city*	6.0	4.0	5.0	6.0	13.0	24.0	37.0
town*	12.0	9.0	6.0	5.0	10.0	16.0	36.0
village*	11.0	10.0	6.0	4.0	10.0	15.0	41.0

\* full descriptions of the individual categories: big city or suburbs of a big city, small or medium-sized city/town, village or farm on the outskirts of a village

The presented data make it possible to conclude that Poles, regardless of age group, education level and place of residence, declare praying more frequently than Hungarians. Hungarians, on the other hand, indicate more often that they do not pray.

Attitudes towards faith are also indicated by the respondents’ attachment to religious traditions. In the ESS, this aspect was diagnosed by asking the respondents to indicate the extent to which the person presented in the survey was (or was not) similar to them. In terms of attitudes toward faith, this person was described in the following way: ‘Tradition is important for them. They seek to follow religious or family traditions’. If this aspect is analysed taking into account the respondents’ age, it can be concluded that older people are more attached to religious and family traditions in both Poland and Hungary. At the same time, regardless of the age group, a larger number of Poles compared to Hungarians feel similar or very similar to the person defined in the question. Hungarian respondents, in turn, stated more often compared to Poles, regardless of the age group, that the person described was either not similar or not at all similar to them (Table 12).

**Table 12.** Attachment to religious or family traditions by age group. Own compilation based on ESS data provided by IFiS PAN.

<b>Please indicate the extent to which this person is similar or not similar to you: Tradition is important to them. They seek to follow religious or family traditions.</b>						
<b>Age</b>	<b>Poland (%)</b>					
	<b>very similar to me</b>	<b>similar to me</b>	<b>to a certain extent similar to me</b>	<b>only slightly similar to me</b>	<b>not similar to me</b>	<b>not at all similar to me</b>
24 or younger	11.3	35.8	22.3	17.9	7.9	1.5
25-34	14.6	34.6	26.8	15.8	5.0	1.8
35-44	21.1	42.8	22.2	8.9	2.7	1.2
45-54	31.1	38.4	16.6	7.8	4.1	0.5
55-64	30.8	42.0	17.6	6.9	1.2	0.0
65 or older	34.7	37.4	10.9	9.1	3.3	0.6
<b>Age</b>	<b>Hungary (%)</b>					
	<b>very similar to me</b>	<b>similar to me</b>	<b>to a certain extent similar to me</b>	<b>only slightly similar to me</b>	<b>not similar to me</b>	<b>not at all similar to me</b>
24 or younger	7.5	29.9	26.3	20.8	11.6	0.5
25-34	3.8	25.3	28.3	24.0	12.6	1.3
35-44	8.9	25.3	31.1	19.2	10.0	2.4
45-54	14.7	32.7	27.8	15.7	4.6	0.7
55-64	13.1	37.2	27.2	12.0	7.4	0.8
65 or older	20.8	30.9	23.2	14.9	5.0	0.7

Taking into account the level of education, it should be indicated that the answer given most often by the Polish respondents was ‘similar to me’. This turned out to be independent of education. Hungarians, in turn, regardless of their level of education, answered ‘similar to me’ and ‘to some extent similar to me’ most often. At the same time, respondents of both nationalities in each group distinguished by level of education indicated the answer ‘not similar to me at all’ least frequently. Declarations of attachment to religious and family traditions to a large or very large extent were more frequent in Poland compared to Hungary, regardless of the level of the respondents’ education (Table 13).

Further data show that in Poland as well as in Hungary, inhabitants of rural areas are far more attached to religious or family traditions, followed by inhabitants of small or medium-sized towns/cities, and finally big-city dwellers (Table 14).

**Table 13.** Attachment to religious or family traditions by education. Own compilation based on ESS data provided by IFiS PAN.

<b>Please indicate the extent to which this person is similar or not similar to you: Tradition is important to them. They seek to follow religious or family traditions.</b>						
<b>Education</b>	<b>Poland (%)</b>					
	<b>very similar to me</b>	<b>similar to me</b>	<b>to a certain extent similar to me</b>	<b>only slightly similar to me</b>	<b>not similar to me</b>	<b>not at all similar to me</b>
below secondary	28.6	34.5	18.0	12.1	3.6	0.6
secondary	20.0	45.4	18.9	9.8	2.7	1.5
above secondary	22.8	40.4	19.3	9.3	5.2	1.0
<b>Education</b>	<b>Hungary (%)</b>					
	<b>very similar to me</b>	<b>similar to me</b>	<b>to a certain extent similar to me</b>	<b>only slightly similar to me</b>	<b>not similar to me</b>	<b>not at all similar to me</b>
below secondary	13.3	29.0	27.0	18.2	8.0	0.9
secondary	9.8	31.5	29.3	15.7	8.6	1.5
above secondary	16.8	32.5	23.3	16.4	6.2	0.9

**Table 14.** Attachment to religious or family traditions by place of residence. Own compilation based on ESS data provided by IFiS PAN.

<b>Please indicate the extent to which this person is similar or not similar to you: Tradition is important to them. They seek to follow religious or family traditions.</b>						
<b>Place of residence</b>	<b>Poland (%)</b>					
	<b>very similar to me</b>	<b>similar to me</b>	<b>to a certain extent similar to me</b>	<b>only slightly similar to me</b>	<b>not similar to me</b>	<b>not at all similar to me</b>
city*	16.7	40.3	21.9	11.4	5.4	1.5
town*	22.5	37.9	20.7	12.9	3.9	1.1
village*	30.6	38.3	15.9	8.9	3.0	0.5
<b>Place of residence</b>	<b>Hungary</b>					
	<b>very similar to me</b>	<b>similar to me</b>	<b>to a certain extent similar to me</b>	<b>only slightly similar to me</b>	<b>not similar to me</b>	<b>not at all similar to me</b>
city*	9.9	30.6	29.3	14.9	8.0	0.7
town*	13.2	30.1	24.4	16.8	8.8	1.2
village*	16.4	30.8	27.4	17.4	6.2	1.3

\* full descriptions of the individual categories: big city or suburbs of a big city, small or medium-sized city/town, village or farm on the outskirts of a village

Summarising the above data, it can be concluded that Poles, regardless of their age, education and place of residence, declare greater attachment to religious or family traditions than Hungarians.

## **7. Conclusions**

Religion plays an important role in social and individual life. Researchers most often emphasise the fact that religion determines one's behaviour in accordance with a specific system of values, gives one a sense of security, often also meaning to the individual's life, and determines one's attitude towards others. The individual dimension of religion is related to its therapeutic function, which involves referring to God and religion in important and difficult life situations. Its social dimension, in turn, involves such aspects as support provided by members of the religious community, especially in difficult or traumatic life situations.

The political transformations, which have taken place and continue to take place in post-communist countries, have also brought about a number of changes in people's attitudes towards religion and faith. According to Romanowicz & Tomczyszyn, the fact that the place and importance of religion in contemporary societies is undergoing rapid changes and modifications can be illustrated with the emotional discussions seen in various mass media or during public debates [12]. These discussions intensified particularly in the 1960s and were associated with a number of changes taking place in the cultural, political, economic or theological spheres. The whole transformation process related to the weakening of religion's influence on various dimensions of social life began to be referred to as secularisation and linked with modernisation, pluralism and individualisation. This in turn led to the emergence of a new form of religion, based on an individual/private dimension of action, and becoming a private matter of the individual. However, in post-communist countries, including Poland and Hungary, a significant part of the population continues to strive to maintain the previously existing, traditional form of religion, and is clearly opposed to religious elements being driven out of the space of public life. In this context, the question concerning the determinants of the different attitudes towards faith and religion becomes extremely important.

The analyses presented in this paper, based on statistical data from the ESS, show that Poles are more religious than Hungarians. The vast majority of Polish respondents described themselves in the survey as followers of a religion or felt affiliated with a Church or denomination. Hungarian respondents, on the other hand, declared being religious to a much smaller extent. This is particularly the case in the younger age groups and among big-city dwellers. Respondents living in Poland also indicated a higher degree of religiosity, while Hungarian respondents answered more often that they did not believe at all. Poles also pray much more frequently, while Hungarians either do not pray at all or do so very rarely. Respondents from Poland are also more attached to religious or family traditions. To recapitulate, the oldest respondents, people

with the lowest level of education and people living in the smallest localities are most religious in Poland. At the same time, the level of religiosity among Poles is lowest in the group of young people with higher education, living in big cities. These regularities were not that distinct among the Hungarians respondents.

The analyses have shown that a high degree of religious homogeneity continues to be a specific trait of the Polish society. Poles demonstrate a stronger attachment to religion regardless of age, education and place of residence compared to Hungarians. At the same time, it can be predicted that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be marked by the process of secularisation both in Poland and in Hungary, although it is more likely to be creeping in Poland, and progressive in Hungary. This process will be similar in its nature to those occurring in highly developed post-industrial societies. It is also worth emphasising that other factors are also emerging nowadays that support and initiate secularisation processes, e.g. religious indifferentism, cultural influences of globalisation, people distancing themselves from the Church as an institution and practicing their faith individually (in their own way) [13]. The deepening individualisation of religiosity, the subjective definition of the truths of faith, and the creation of one's own norms and moral rules are precisely those phenomena which pose a serious challenge for today's church.

The near future will show in which direction and towards which truths the Church is heading in Poland and in Hungary, the values that will become priorities and guide the Polish and Hungarian societies, and the extent to which they will remain connected to the teachings of the Church. Based on the analyses we conducted, we can attempt to predict a decline in religiosity in Poland in the coming years, along with an increase in the number of people choosing apostasy. This concerns in particular the youngest demographics (referred to as young adults). Unless the Catholic Church in Poland adopts measures to counteract these trends, they may have a particularly severe impact on the institution. In fact, a crisis of faith is undoubtedly linked to a crisis in vocations, observed for quite some time now in Western European countries, among other places.

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