



REVISTA INCLUSIONES

INVESTIGACIÓN Y CIENCIA DESDE EURASIA

Revista de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales

Volumen 7 . Número Especial

Julio / Septiembre

2020

ISSN 0719-4706

CUERPO DIRECTIVO

Directores

Dr. Juan Guillermo Mansilla Sepúlveda

Universidad Católica de Temuco, Chile

Dr. Francisco Ganga Contreras

Universidad de Tarapacá, Chile

Editor

Drdo. Juan Guillermo Estay Sepúlveda

Editorial Cuadernos de Sofía, Chile

Editor Científico

Dr. Luiz Alberto David Araujo

Pontificia Universidade Católica de Sao Paulo, Brasil

Editor Europa del Este

Dr. Aleksandar Ivanov Katrandzhiev

Universidad Suroeste "Neofit Rilski", Bulgaria

Cuerpo Asistente

Traductora: Inglés

Lic. Pauline Corthorn Escudero

Editorial Cuadernos de Sofía, Chile

Portada

Lic. Graciela Pantigoso de Los Santos

Editorial Cuadernos de Sofía, Chile

COMITÉ EDITORIAL

Dr. Jaime Bassa Mercado

Universidad de Valparaíso, Chile

Dra. Heloísa Bellotto

Universidad de Sao Paulo, Brasil

Dra. Nidia Burgos

Universidad Nacional del Sur, Argentina

Mg. María Eugenia Campos

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México

Dr. Francisco José Francisco Carrera

Universidad de Valladolid, España

Dr. Pablo Guadarrama González

Universidad Central de Las Villas, Cuba

Mg. Amelia Herrera Lavanchy

Universidad de La Serena, Chile

Dr. Claudio Llanos Reyes

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile

Dr. Werner Mackenbach

Universidad de Potsdam, Alemania

Universidad de Costa Rica, Costa Rica

Mg. Rocío del Pilar Martínez Marín

Universidad de Santander, Colombia

Ph. D. Natalia Milanese

Universidad de Houston, Estados Unidos

Ph. D. Maritza Montero

Universidad Central de Venezuela, Venezuela

Dra. Eleonora Pencheva

Universidad Suroeste Neofit Rilski, Bulgaria

Dra. Rosa María Regueiro Ferreira

Universidad de La Coruña, España

Dr. Andrés Saavedra Barahona

Universidad San Clemente de Ojrid de Sofía, Bulgaria

Dr. Efraín Sánchez Cabra

Academia Colombiana de Historia, Colombia

Dra. Mirka Seitz

Universidad del Salvador, Argentina

Ph. D. Stefan Todorov Kapralov

South West University, Bulgaria

COMITÉ CIENTÍFICO INTERNACIONAL

Comité Científico Internacional de Honor

Dr. Adolfo A. Abadía

Universidad ICESI, Colombia

Dr. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México

Dr. Martino Contu

Universidad de Sassari, Italia

Dr. Luiz Alberto David Araujo

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Sao Paulo, Brasil

Dra. Patricia Brogna

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México

REVISTA INCLUSIONES

REVISTA DE HUMANIDADES
Y CIENCIAS SOCIALES

Dr. Horacio Capel Sáez

Universidad de Barcelona, España

Dr. Javier Carreón Guillén

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México

Dr. Lancelot Cowie

Universidad West Indies, Trinidad y Tobago

Dra. Isabel Cruz Ovalle de Amenabar

Universidad de Los Andes, Chile

Dr. Rodolfo Cruz Vadillo

*Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla,
México*

Dr. Adolfo Omar Cueto

Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Argentina

Dr. Miguel Ángel de Marco

Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Dra. Emma de Ramón Acevedo

Universidad de Chile, Chile

Dr. Gerardo Echeita Sarrionandía

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, España

Dr. Antonio Hermosa Andújar

Universidad de Sevilla, España

Dra. Patricia Galeana

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México

Dra. Manuela Garau

Centro Studi Sea, Italia

Dr. Carlo Ginzburg Ginzburg

*Scuola Normale Superiore de Pisa, Italia
Universidad de California Los Ángeles, Estados Unidos*

Dr. Francisco Luis Girardo Gutiérrez

Instituto Tecnológico Metropolitano, Colombia

José Manuel González Freire

Universidad de Colima, México

Dra. Antonia Heredia Herrera

Universidad Internacional de Andalucía, España

Dr. Eduardo Gomes Onofre

Universidade Estadual da Paraíba, Brasil

CUADERNOS DE SOFÍA EDITORIAL

+ Dr. Miguel León-Portilla

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México

Dr. Miguel Ángel Mateo Saura

*Instituto de Estudios Albacetenses "Don Juan Manuel",
España*

Dr. Carlos Tulio da Silva Medeiros

Diálogos em MERCOSUR, Brasil

+ Dr. Álvaro Márquez-Fernández

Universidad del Zulia, Venezuela

Dr. Oscar Ortega Arango

Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, México

Dr. Antonio-Carlos Pereira Menaut

Universidad Santiago de Compostela, España

Dr. José Sergio Puig Espinosa

Dilemas Contemporáneos, México

Dra. Francesca Randazzo

*Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras,
Honduras*

Dra. Yolando Ricardo

Universidad de La Habana, Cuba

Dr. Manuel Alves da Rocha

Universidade Católica de Angola Angola

Mg. Arnaldo Rodríguez Espinoza

Universidad Estatal a Distancia, Costa Rica

Dr. Miguel Rojas Mix

*Coordinador la Cumbre de Rectores Universidades
Estatales América Latina y el Caribe*

Dr. Luis Alberto Romero

CONICET / Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Dra. Maura de la Caridad Salabarría Roig

Dilemas Contemporáneos, México

Dr. Adalberto Santana Hernández

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México

Dr. Juan Antonio Seda

Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Dr. Saulo Cesar Paulino e Silva

Universidad de Sao Paulo, Brasil

Dr. Miguel Ángel Verdugo Alonso
Universidad de Salamanca, España

Dr. Josep Vives Rego
Universidad de Barcelona, España

Dr. Eugenio Raúl Zaffaroni
Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Dra. Blanca Estela Zardel Jacobo
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México

Comité Científico Internacional

Dra. Elian Araujo
Universidad de Mackenzie, Brasil

Mg. Rumyana Atanasova Popova
Universidad Suroeste Neofit Rilski, Bulgaria

Dra. Ana Bénard da Costa
Instituto Universitario de Lisboa, Portugal
Centro de Estudios Africanos, Portugal

Dra. Noemí Brenta
Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Ph. D. Juan R. Coca
Universidad de Valladolid, España

Dr. Antonio Colomer Vialdel
Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, España

Dr. Christian Daniel Cwik
Universidad de Colonia, Alemania

Dr. Eric de Léséulec
INS HEA, Francia

Dr. Andrés Di Masso Tarditti
Universidad de Barcelona, España

Ph. D. Mauricio Dimant
Universidad Hebrea de Jerusalem, Israel

Dr. Jorge Enrique Elías Caro
Universidad de Magdalena, Colombia

Ph. D. Valentin Kitanov
Universidad Suroeste Neofit Rilski, Bulgaria

Mg. Luis Oporto Ordóñez
Universidad Mayor San Andrés, Bolivia

Dr. Gino Ríos Patio
Universidad de San Martín de Porres, Perú

Dra. María Laura Salinas
Universidad Nacional del Nordeste, Argentina

Dra. Jaqueline Vassallo
Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina

Dra. Maja Zawierzeniec
Universidad Wszechnica Polska, Polonia

Editorial Cuadernos de Sofía
Santiago – Chile
Representante Legal
Juan Guillermo Estay Sepúlveda Editorial

Indización, Repositorios y Bases de Datos Académicas

Revista Inclusiones, se encuentra indizada en:





REX



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN



Universidad de Concepción



BIBLIOTECA UNIVERSIDAD DE CONCEPCIÓN

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AS A POLITICAL ACTOR IN BULGARIAN CIVIL SOCIETY

Dr. Olga Alekseevna Nesterchuk

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Russian Federation
ORCID: 0000-0002-8776-2694
nesterchuk-oa@rudn.ru

Lic. Nikolay Tihomirov Trifonov

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Russian Federation
ORCID: 0000-0002-5036-5302
trifonov-nt@rudn.ru

Ph. D. Oleg Evgenievich Grishin

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Russian Federation
Russian State Social University, Russian Federation
ORCID: 0000-0002-0669-1012
grishin-oe@rudn.ru

Fecha de Recepción: 22 de marzo de 2020 – **Fecha Revisión:** 23 de abril de 2020

Fecha de Aceptación: 24 de junio de 2020 – **Fecha de Publicación:** 01 de julio de 2020

Abstract

The article discusses the political role of Bulgarian NGOs as participants in civil society in the political process and preserving the most important cultural components of the Bulgarian nation. Pays attention to the implementation of the interests of the population by religious communities at a local, national and supranational level. Discusses the social activity of the biggest religious organizations in Bulgaria – the Bulgarian Orthodox church and the Bulgarian Mufti, namely how they influence state bodies and support the population. The main conclusion is that religious organizations are the most important factor in Bulgarian civil society, because they have the largest number of members compared to other NGOs and accordingly, their activities to a large extent depend on preservation of traditions, identity, morality and the implementation of proper integration in the European structures of Bulgarian society. Their activity work allowed to build a specific model of religious-civil and state relations.

Keywords

Religious organizations – Civil society – Identity – Bulgaria – European Union

Para Citar este Artículo:

Nesterchuk, Olga Alekseevna; Trifonov, Nikolay Tihomirov y Grishin, Oleg Evgenievich. Religious organizations as a political actor in Bulgarian civil society. Revista Inclusiones Vol: 7 num Especial (2020): 357-367.

Licencia Creative Commons Attribution Non-Comercial 3.0 Unported
(CC BY-NC 3.0)

Licencia Internacional



Introduction

Civil society as a voluntary association of people which, in order to protect the rights and legitimate interests of society in each state, includes religious communities. Religion has always been an integral part of a person's spiritual culture, and each society functions and develops based on religion values, which are shaped to a large extent by the attitude to the authority¹. In a traditional society like Bulgarian, the religion is one of the most important components of national identity and stability of the nation, which saves Bulgarian tradition in the current conditions of globalization and Europeanization of the State, where common European democratic values are promoted in the first place, rather than purely national achievements and traditions.

Bulgaria was preserved as an Eastern Orthodox country in the most difficult time of the Ottoman Empire, where five centuries of genocide against Christian peoples was carried out and in time of the totalitarian communist regime, when political authority sought to replace religion with socialist ideology. All this shows that religion is a fundamental component of the further development of Bulgaria in the new millennium.

The society accepted religious faith as a protective tool against alien traditions and rapid modernization, the risk, which is the loss of existing national framework and the State culture of Bulgaria in conditions of globalization. Taking into account the Orthodox and Muslims living in the Bulgarian territory, carries deferent national features – Bulgaria must preserve distinctive ideology, and this requires religious conformism. Religion-confessional factor is one of most important problems in the process of development of a civil society.

This is connected not only with the potential of religious creeds to fulfill a quick adaptive function and help the psychological calm of the population and migrants in their new place of residence.

Self-identification of a person with doctrines of religious faiths often acts merely as belonging to a national culture than to a religious movement². For this reason, the religious factor can be viewed from different perspectives. Not only as the basis of the inner spiritual world of the individual, but also as a tool for the formation and maintenance of national identity. This helps strengthen a civil society with a population of different faiths, in which religious societies play a big role. Therefore, it is important to consider the activity of the Bulgarian religious organizations during the Bulgarian transition from socialism to democracy.

Materials and methods

Historical research method shows that the first Bulgarian religious organizations appeared in the early 90s of the 20th century during the Bulgarian transition from socialism to democracy. This period is characterized generally with the advent of the civil society institution according to the European model³.

¹ F. Trentmann y J. Hall, *Civil Society. A Reader in History, Theory and Global Politics* (Berlin: Springer International Publishing, 2005).

² G. Giordan y E. Pace, *Religious Pluralism. Framing Religious Diversity in the Contemporary World* (Berlin: Springer International Publishing, 2014).

³ J. Hart de; P. Dekker y L. Halman, *Religion and Civil Society in Europe* (Berlin: Springer International Publishing, 2013).

Historically the Bulgarian Orthodox church (BOC) has had the role of unification if the main people forming ethnic groups (one group or a few?) in Bulgaria, having jurisdiction in some areas of Europe, America and Australia. The territory expansion of Bulgaria in the first part of 9th century put the State in direct contact with the Christian pestilence, not only with Byzantium, but also in the northwest with the Frankish Empire. The far-sighted Bulgarian prince Boris I adopted Christianity as an official religion in order to unite the two main ethnic groups in the State – Slavs and Bulgarians. Initially the Bulgarian church exists as an archbishopric under jurisdictions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, but after the victory of the Great Bulgarian King Simeon over the Byzantines in 917 in the battle of the Aheloy river, he announces the emergence of an independent Bulgarian patriarchate⁴. Over these centuries the Bulgarian Orthodox Church experienced periods of ups and downs but managed to maintain its Bulgarian identity and defend the interests of the Orthodox population of Bulgaria.

Today the Bulgarian Orthodox church as part of the civil society and civil activity in Bulgaria continues its activity to strengthen the traditions of Orthodoxy, to protect the poor and unprotected social groups, is in dialogue with the State and influences authority structures.

The peculiarities of the Bulgarian historical development highlight the formation of two main religious communities – Orthodox (majority of the population, about 80%) and Muslims (about 10%).

They have the major role in protecting the interests of believers, correspond with the authorities, advance the interests of citizens at three levels: supranational, national and local.

According to the official report of the US State Department in Sofia on the state “religion freedoms by countries 2016-Bulgaria” the State population is approximately 7.1 million. 76% of the population defines themselves as an Eastern Orthodox Christians, who belong to the Bulgarian Orthodox church. The Muslims community is about 10% of the population, Protestants – 1.1% and Catholics – 0.8%. There is a small percentage of Orthodox Christians belonging to the Armenian Orthodox church, Jews, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses and others⁵. Some religious minorities are concentrated geographically. A large number of Muslims live along the State border with Turkey and Greece, as well as in North-East Bulgaria. A certain number of gypsies who converted to Islam live in the central cities of Plovdiv and Pazardzik. Approximately 40% of the Catholics live in the Plovdiv region, where the biggest Catholic town in Bulgaria, Rakovsky, is situated and has a population of more than 15 000 people⁶. Research method of the legislative framework (institution method) makes it possible to identify that the new democratic Constitution of Bulgarian, adopted in 1991, regulated the inviolability of freedom of conscience and choice of religion, prohibited discrimination on the basis of religion and obligated the State to maintain mutual respect between believers from different faiths and between believers and unbelievers. The Constitution delimited religious organizations from the State organizations and banned the formation of political parties on a religious basis.

⁴ History of Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Available at: <https://www.bg-patriarshia.bg/index.php?file=history.xml>.

⁵ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Country Report on Religious Freedoms-2016 (Sofia: 2016).

⁶ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor...

Fundamental law points to Eastern Orthodox as a traditional religion in Bulgaria⁷, but there are others religious communities, who have representative bodies and they are equal in rights with Bulgarian Orthodox church.

The activity of the Bulgarian Religion organizations is regulated by the “Religion Act in Bulgaria”, which is promulgated in the State Newspaper 12/29/2002 adopted by the Bulgarian Parliament. The law appeared almost 15 years after the start of the democratic path of the State and proves once again that legal regulations appear much later than necessary and thus the development of civil society is showed down. The law regulates the law of religion, its protection, as well as the legal status of religious communities and institutions and their relations with the State. For example, the State is prohibited from interfering with organizations of religious communities and institutions. According to the law, the right of religions is exercised through the formation and expression of religious beliefs, the creation or participations in religious community, religious education, the organization of community institutions, the dissemination of opinion orally, in print, through the media, seminars, programs and others⁸. The Religion law constitutes Bulgarian Orthodox church as a legal entity exempting it from judicial registration, which is mandatory for all other religious groups wishing to acquire the status of legal entity.

Results

BOC is one of the most important components of civil society and one of the most active organizations, preserving moral values of society and promoting its consolidation.

The second largest religious society is the Main Mufti of Bulgaria, to which 10% of the population of State belongs. Islam appeared as a religion in Bulgarian lands from the occupation of the Balkan Peninsula of the Ottoman Empire. After the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule, the Berlin Treaty was signed, which guarantees freedom of conscience of Muslims in Bulgaria. The first Constitution of the new principality orders that everyone has the right to practice their religion. On 9th of September 1944 after the arrival of Soviet troops in Bulgaria and the start of the communist regime, Mufti almost completely disappeared. After the fall of the last socialist leader Todor Zhivkov, the first Muslim conference was held, at which the General Mufti was chosen⁹.

State internal policy is aimed at providing equal opportunities for different religious communities. Democracy State seeks respect for all legally registered religious organizations. However, there is evidence of unequal attitude of the Bulgarian government towards religious teachings. For example, the Orthodox faith on Bulgarian territory has unspoken State support. This circumstance is due to the fact, that Orthodoxy is considered one of the fundamental elements of Bulgarian culture, since most of the citizens adhere to the Orthodox religious worldview. Majority of Bulgarian officials and statesman carry Orthodox cultural values. Therefore, the support of the Orthodox Church is a natural, however, such circumstances can create certain prerequisites for infringing on the rights from a different faith, and sometimes there is a bias towards other creeds, which violates the principle of the equality of civil society. In this perspective at the supranational level at

⁷ Constitution of Republic of Bulgaria, adopted by Great National Assembly on 12/07/1991, entered into force 13/07/1991, Articles 6, 12, 13.

⁸ Religion law in the Republic of Bulgaria, promulgated in the State Gazette №120 of December 29, 2002.

⁹ General Mufti of Republic of Bulgaria. Available at: <https://www.grandmufti.bg/bg/za-nas.html>.

the end of 2018 the General Mufti deposited a complaint against Bulgaria for violation of religious rights of the Bulgarian Muslims. The complaint was represented during the meeting of OCCE in human dimension in Warsaw due to artificially fueled conflicts on a veritable basis¹⁰.

Thus, in a civil society the issue of religious contradictions between different religious affiliations should be largely regulated with the help of state bodies, and not at EU level.

At a national level in the conditions of the Bulgarian democracy the “Movement of Rights and Freedoms” party always enters the parliament, which preserves primarily Bulgarian Muslims. The party is regularly in power, joining coalitions with multidirectional large parties. In the last government its lobbies for the waiving of debts to the State in the amount of 8 million BGN (4 million euro) to replace the support of the ruling party of the Prime Minister Borisov. The Mufti said that waiving of debts is a prevention against the appearance of radical Islam in Bulgaria and gives the example that there isn't a Bulgarian citizen who is a members of terrorist group Islamic State. In 2019 deputies pass amendments to religion law, in which the main focus is to stop the financing of religious organizations abroad. The General Mufti opposes, since it receives about 2 million BGN (1 million euro) from the Turkish religious organization. The Mufti claims to not violate Bulgarian State security, because the Bulgarian and the Turkish Muslims profess the same values¹¹. At the end of May 2018 during the meeting between the General Mufti and the Bulgarian President Rumen Radev both sides agreed that if the Bulgarian State pays the salaries of confessors of traditional faiths, this will be an important step to prevent external influence and the preparation of the bill will be carried out in a narrow connection between State institutions and religious organizations. The position of the Bulgarian President aims at training confessors on their own material base in accordance with the education standards established in Bulgaria.

At a local level the Mufti too preserve interests of Bulgarian Muslims. In the end of September 2018 during the Bulgarian National celebration “United of Bulgaria” vandals scolded more than 40 Muslim tombstones in town of Dobrich. The Mufti deposited a declaration to State bodies, that sharply condemns this act and calls for law enforcement agencies to rather catch criminals¹².

This analysis can prove, that the Muslim religious community in Bulgaria in the framework of civil society has an important social and political role to consolidation of Bulgarian population and the authority must reckon with the legitimate interests of this community. There are regular meetings between Muslim representatives and official authority. The Community is actively involved in laws, which affect interests of Bulgarian Muslims. There is the dialogue with the main religious community – the Bulgarian Orthodox Church - and sometimes the positions of the two main religion communities are the same, for example, with the support of New Religion Act and against the Istanbul Convention. This is very important for the development of the civil society.

¹⁰ National TV of Bulgaria. Available at: <https://www.bnt.bg/bg/a/glavnoto-myuftijstvo-namyusylmanite-v-bulgaria-podgotvya-zhalba-steshtu-darjavata>.

¹¹ General Mufti: Debt forgiveness is prevention against the advent of radical Islam. Available at: <https://m/novini.bg/bulgaria/obshtestvo/527912>.

¹² Declaration of General Mufti of Bulgaria. Available at: https://www.kircfflihaber.com/bg?pid38_ntws7809.

Thus, the General Mufti in Bulgaria aims to preserve freedom of faith and preservation of religious values of the Bulgarian Muslims and support tolerance and collegiality of the whole Bulgarian society.

Discussion

Analyzing the experience of Russia. Russian analytics note that today the partnership of church and government is seen as a factor in political and social stability, a mechanism for the formation of new civilizational relations between government bodies and society as a whole, which is based on a consensus of interests¹³.

At the same time in Russia there are problems of the formation and development of the civil society in the context of low civil activity of religious associations. It is concluded that insufficient attention of State to this issue¹⁴.

Disunity in Russia is not only on the material basis – the poor and rich, but also on the accessibility of education and culture, in development and depressed religions, and in connection with the Orthodox circles – and with religious affiliation¹⁵.

The current religious policy, pursued by the authorities is deferent from the attempts to substantiate it in a scientifically, and in the State Duma for its legislative consolidation, relevant bills and amendments are regularly introduced.

In addition, the mass media introduce ideals of confessional superiority of traditional and most widespread religious into the public consciousness¹⁶.

The main functional of Russian Orthodox church and the other religious organizations for most of the Russians (47%) is development and support of the moral and ethical base of public life (probably not finding them in secular institutions). 41% of respondents limit the role of the Church among believers, considering that it should satisfy only spiritual needs. Slightly than a third of responders assign an instrumental function to religious organizations, believing that they should help the poor and low-income groups of the society¹⁷.

The analysis showed that there is a rapid development of state-confidential relations in a secular state. The Russian Orthodox church there is the potential to fill those of our social spaces where the participation of the state or other institutions of the civil society does not fully ensure the achievement of the desire social results.

During the development of the civil society in the EU, there are prospects for cooperation between the Bulgarian Orthodox church and other Orthodox churches that are

¹³ T. Chercasova, "Religion and power: forms of interaction. State and municipal administration", Scientific notes num 1 (2019): 298.

¹⁴ E. Shirocova, The role of the religious associations as an institution of civil society in modern Russia. *Орачев-online*, 17 (2015). Available at: <http://journal.mrsu.ru/arts/rol-religioznyx-obedinenij-kak-instituta-grazhdanskogo-obshhestva-v-sovremennoj-rossii>.

¹⁵ V. Melnicov, *State Securing Social Human Rights: ф Monograph* (Rostov on Don: Foundation of science and education, 2020).

¹⁶ O. Osipov y D. Averyanova, "Orthodox church in modern Russia in system of the civil society", *Society and power Vol: 3 num 77* (2019): 15-29.

¹⁷ Church and State. Available at: <https://www.levada.ru/2016/02/19/tserkov-i-gosudarstvo-2>.

part of a united Europe. In October 2018 by invitation Bulgarian Patriarch Neofit a meeting of representatives of the organization of Orthodox Churches of EU (CROCEU) took place in Sofia. The main topic of meeting was “factors of deepening and rapprochement in European society”. The Representative Office of the European Commission in Bulgaria held a seminar-discussion in which camps on the topic were laid out by representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Greek Patriarchate, the Romanian Patriarchate, the Bulgarian Patriarchate and the Cypriot Church. The members of the organizations reached a consensus that rapprochement of Europe should be an all-encompassing set of political measures with help of social, tax, budgetary, and education characters in order to achieve the common good on the fundamental principle of Christianity, while respecting national traditions¹⁸.

We can conclude that the Bulgarian Orthodox church supports the European integration of Bulgaria, but in the context of observing the principals of the original Bulgarian religion – Orthodox Christianity and traditional values of Bulgarian society, unity in diversity.

A notable example in this regard is the participation of the Bulgarian Orthodox young people in the international Youth meeting in the Romanian city of Sibiu with support of the Bulgarian Orthodox church. This is evidence that the policy of the Bulgarian Orthodox church starting with youth religion policy, aims at European unity, while maintaining identity.

A lot of initiatives of the Bulgarian Patriarchate aimed at protecting vulnerable social groups at national and local levels. In order to implement Orthodox charity, the internet platform “Diaconia.bg” was created.

At national level the foundation “Cover of the Virgin” was created in 1994 in order to serve the mission of BOC, developing social and educational activities, focuses on the Orthodox understanding of personality. The foundation in working to build self-awareness to popularize the idea of church community in Bulgaria and restore public trust in the church, supporting its social and educational activities. The essential idea of the foundation in the transformation of the idea of love for one’s neighbor into a social norm behavior.

To the great Orthodox Holiday Annunciation, the foundation took the initiative “I see you”, which is aimed as the donation campaign of ordinary people, and not of large firms and companies. Over a period of three years since the start of the campaign, some people have turned into system donors. In 2000, the foundation resources raised through the campaign were distributed among single mothers and those who have a lot of children. The other initiative of this foundation which is aimed at conversation about popularization of adoption of children is called “Adoption – joy and trial”¹⁹.

On a national level one of campaigns of BOC “Children draw children” helped provide clinic equipment in Sofia. It was bought thanks to two charity exhibitions in 2018 at which the best painting was sold at a national concurs - “The resurrection of Christ”. In 2019 this initiative went on to help those in need²⁰.

¹⁸ Bulgarian Patriarchate. Available at: <https://www.bg-patriarshia.bg/news.php?id273673>.

¹⁹ Conversation about adoption started in the capital “house of bird”. Available at: <https://www.pokrov.foundation/беседи-посветени-на-осиновяването-за>.

²⁰ Diaconia.bg. Campaign “Children draw children” at Holy Synod supplies clinic for pediatric oncology-hematology. Available at: <https://www.diaconia.bg/дарение-в-консумативи-получи-клиника>

On a local level the social initiatives are implementing of regional Metropolises to the Bulgarian Orthodox church. In the end of March 2019 with the blessing of the Metropolitan of Stara Zagora city, Kiprian, 20 prisoners from prison in Stara Zagora made a pilgrimage visiting several monasteries in Veliko Tarnovo region. The priest of the Stara Zagora prison says that this was an initiative of the prisoners, which he supported and put forward to the Metropolitan. Father Joan founded four temples in the prison and baptized hundreds of prisoners, who themselves want to attend the temple. Thus, this is the first temple in Bulgaria, which combines spiritual and pedagogical activities, and Father Joan teaches “the social activity of the prison” at Thracian University, following the example of other European countries²¹. All of the sacred employees of the Metropolis of Stara Zagora unanimously declare that the social activity of the Church is one of the main parameters for implementing the principles of Orthodoxy²².

In city of Russe, which is situated on the Bulgarian-Romanian border, an agreement was made between the Metropolis of Russe and the University of Russe, which is one of oldest High Schools in the country. The contract is based on the development of social projects by students from the university, which the Metropolis will support and implement in order to protect unequal social groups. On 20th march the Metropolis of Russe, Naum, and the rector of the, University of Russe professor Hristo Beloev presented awards to two students, who developed the best social projects: “Pensioners in favor of children” and “Learn to love”. The last project aims at problems of altruism and it will teach people in this direction. In Framework of the partnership in the university organized an essay competition on the Role Christian values in the life of a young Bulgarian²³.

These campaigns show a traditional role of BOC to preserve and support historical roots of the Bulgarian people and ensure fruitful cooperation between other state and non-state bodies and between religion and education structures to ensure political and social stability of the Bulgarian society.

BOC gives its opinion on the activity of government bodies. The last example is the meeting of the Holy Synod from 2nd of February 2019, according to which the Church supports the Council of Ministers and State Agency for protection of children to develop a new strategy for the protection of children from 2019 to 2030. The new strategy covers priority State policies, which brings together competent institutions of civil society²⁴. The strategy supports traditional development of society and families, overcoming demographic disruption, development of children, their talents, physical abilities, developing respect for parents, preparing children for a responsible life, free society in the spirit of tolerance, gender equality and friendship between people. BOC is ready to give itself critical remarks and recommendations about specific texts and measures of the strategy. BOC opposes decisions of state bodies. Striking evidence is the sharp protest of the Church against the adoption of the Istanbul Convention, which is contrary to Bulgarian family tradition, protects same-sex relationships and marriages, and thus violates the moral age-old values of the Bulgarian society.

²¹ I. Becci y O. Roy, *Religious Diversity in European Prisons. Challenges and Implications for Rehabilitation* (Berlin: Springer International Publishing, 2015).

²² Father Jordan Karagergiev took prisoners of worship. Available at: <https://www.diakonia.bg/отец-д-р-йордан-карагеоргиев-заведе-ли>.

²³ Metropolitan Naum awards students from joint projects of the Diocese of Russe and University of Russe. Available at: <https://www.diakonia.bg/митрополит-наум-награди-студенти-от-с>.

²⁴ Bulgarian Orthodox Church opinion on the draft “National Strategy for the Child”. Available at: <https://www.bg-patriarshia.bg/news.php?id=286900>.

Conversion, which is supposedly moral, and opposes women's violence, promotes homosexual relations and the main word is "gender" – meaning a third gender vision and gender choice, and this upsets the moral and spiritual connection between Bulgarian generations, because gender can only be biologically determined, since man and women are God's creation.

BOC does not accept the legalization of the term "gender identity" in Bulgarian Language. It sent a letter to the Bulgarian Parliament demanding to not ratify the Convention²⁵. After such initiative civil activism increased and in fact state institutions were under stress. The Prime Minister of Bulgaria Boyko Borisov in an interview said that the Convention in fact preserves women's rights, but it doesn't go against Bulgarian people. In the end, The Constitution Court of Bulgaria declared the Convention unconstitutional (it contradicts the Bulgarian Constitution).

It can be summarized, that the BOC is the most influential religious society in Bulgaria, as it protects the interests of the majority of the Bulgarian people. All types of power reckon with its positions and seek support in many areas of state policy.

Conclusion

The analysis of the activities of religious organizations in Bulgaria indicates the trends of tradition and the characteristics of their human rights, education orientation proves the fact of their influence on the general orientation of the formation of social civic culture of the population. This kind of community work can be seen as an attempt to build a certain model of religious-civil and state relations, a desire to substantiate ideological features and cultural traditions with religious teachings, since over the past decades, religious society has been an integral part of the Bulgarian civil society, determining the identity of the ethnically forming people in the center of Balkans. Religious organizations of the community contributed to the maintenance of identity of the Bulgarian nation in the European the world society through the preservation and establishment of faith and the observation of moral values.

Of course, in the Bulgarian society one can see the biggest popularization of the Orthodox traditions, which are identified in the understanding of some citizens as a national heritage. The religion in Bulgaria is a form of social consciousness that adheres to its geographical boundaries on the territory of the state and is historically the least susceptible to change and modernization than all other social forms. Although the state has more than one religious' teachings, Orthodoxy and Islam try to maintain a certain balance and express tolerance towards each other, together forming the country's spiritual experience.

In a modern democracy pro-west political system, the religious communities save a leading role among Bulgarian citizens and defend their religious interest to state bodies. Although secular and religious spheres are separate, the Bulgarian religious organizations have been a power authority to political institutions and actively defend their camps of actual political questions on a supranational, national and local level. In addition, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Bulgarian Mufti are active in relation to cooperation and exerting influence on state bodies, they stand for tolerance and identity, balancing between traditions and universal values.

²⁵ Bulgarian Orthodox Church opinion on the Istanbul Convention. Available at: <https://www.bg-patriarshia.bg/news.php?id=254101>.

The religious communities in the future will increase their influence on Bulgarian society in conditional return to tradition of some East-European EU members. The preservation of unique centuries-old priceless Bulgarian culture and identity in a single multinational Europe and multicultural world will depend on the religious organizations to a large extend.

References

Book

Constitution of Republic of Bulgaria, adopted by Great National Assembly on 12/07/1991, entered into force 13/07/1991, Articles 6, 12, 13.

Melnicov, V. State Securing Social Human Rights: A Monograph. Rostov on Don: Foundation of science and education. 2020.

Religion law in the Republic of Bulgaria, promulgated in the State Gazette №120 of December 29, 2002.

Trentmann, F. y Hall, J. Civil Society. A Reader in History, Theory and Global Politics. Berlin: Springer International Publishing. 2005.

US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Country Report on Religious Freedoms-2016. Sofia: 2016.

Journal articles

Osipov, O. y Averyanova, D. "Orthodox church in modern Russia in system of the civil society". Society and power Vol: 3 num 77 (2019): 15-29.

Internet publications

Becci, I. y Roy, O. Religious Diversity in European Prisons. Challenges and Implications for Rehabilitation. Berlin: Springer International Publishing. 2015.

Bulgarian Patriarchate. Available at: www.bg-patriarshia.bg/news.php?id273673.

Bulgarian Patriarchate. Bulgarian Orthodox Church opinion on the draft "National Strategy for the Child". Available at: <https://www.bg-patriarshia.bg/news.php?id=286900>.

Bulgarian Patriarchate. Bulgarian Orthodox Church opinion on the Istanbul Convention. Available at: <https://www.bg-patriarshia.bg/news.php?id=254101>.

Chercasova, T. "Religion and power: forms of interaction". State and municipal administration. Scientific notes num 1 (2019): 298.

Church and State. Available at: <https://www.levada.ru/2016/02/19/tserkov-i-gosudarstvo-2>.

Conversation about adoption started in the capital "house of bird". Available at: <https://www.pokrov.foundation/беседи-посветени-на-осиновяването-за/>.

Declaration of General Mufti of Bulgaria. Available at: https://www.kircfflihaber.com/bg?pid38_ntws7809.

Diakonia.bg. Campaign “Children draw children” at Holy Synod supplies clinic for pediatric onco-hematomy. Available at: <https://www.diakonia.bg/дарение-в-консумативи-получи-клиника>.

Father Jordan Karagergiev took prisoners of worship. Available at: <https://www.diakonia.bg/отец-д-р-йордан-карагеоргиев-заведе-ли/>.

General Mufti of Republic of Bulgaria. Available at: <http://www.grandmufti.bg/bg/zanas.html>.

General Mufti: Debt forgiveness is prevention against the advent of radical Islam. Available at: <https://m/novini.bg/bylgaria/obshtestvo/527912>.

Giordan, G. y Pace, E. Religious Pluralism. Framing Religious Diversity in the Contemporary World. Berlin: Springer International Publishing. 2014.

Hart de, J.; Dekker, P. y Halman, L. Religion and Civil Society in Europe. Berlin: Springer International Publishing. 2013.

History of Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Available at: <http://www.bg-patriarshia.bg/index.php?file history.xml>.

Metropolitan Naum awards students from joint projects of the Diocese of Russe and University of Russe. Available at: <https://www.diakonia.bg/митрополит-наум-награди-студенти-от-с/>.

National TV of Bulgaria. Available at: <https://www.bnt.bg/bg/a/glavnoto-myuftijstvo-na-musyulmanite-v-balgaria-podgotvya-zhalba-steshtu-darjavata>.

Shirocova, E. The role of the religious associations as an institution of civil society in modern Russia. Орарев-online, 17 (2015). Available at: <https://journal.mrsu.ru/arts/rol-religioznyx-obedinenij-kak-instituta-grazhdanskogo-obshhestva-v-sovremennoj-rossii>.

CUADERNOS DE SOFÍA EDITORIAL

Las opiniones, análisis y conclusiones del autor son de su responsabilidad y no necesariamente reflejan el pensamiento de **Revista Inclusiones**.

La reproducción parcial y/o total de este artículo
Puede hacerse sin permiso de **Revista Inclusiones**, citando la fuente.