



The Social Significance of Religion in the Enlarged Europe: Secularization, Individualization and Pluralization

Olaf Müller

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Engaging with some of the central issues in the sociology of religion, this volume investigates the role and significance of churches and religion in contemporary Western and Eastern Europe. Based on an extensive international research project, it offers case studies of various countries (including Finland, Ireland, Portugal, Germany, Poland, Russia, Estonia, Hungary and Croatia), as well as cross-country comparisons. Researching more precisely the present social relevance of church and religion at different levels, *The Social Significance of Religion in the Enlarged Europe* raises and responds to both descriptive and explanatory questions: Can we observe tendencies of religious decline in the various Western and Eastern European countries? Are we witnessing trends of religious individualization? To what extent has there been a religious upswing in the last few years? And what are the factors causing the observed processes of religious change? Marked by its broad range of data and a coherent conceptual framework, in accordance with which each chapter assesses the extent to which three important theoretical approaches in the sociology of religion - secularization theory, the market model of religion, and the individualization thesis - are applicable to the data, this book will be of interest to scholars of sociology, politics and religion exploring religious trends and attitudes in contemporary Europe.

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