

Religious Organizations in European Welfare States in the 21st Century

For the Section: Religion, Politics, and the Public Spheres: Contesting Liberalism?

Panel Chairs:

- Josef Hien, University of Milan (josefhien@googlemail.com)
- Matthias Kortmann, University of Munich (matthias.kortmann@gsi.lmu.de)

Abstract

This Panel focuses on the role of religious organizations in welfare service provision and social politics in Europe in the 21st century. Traditionally, religious organizations have been important actors in welfare states both as providers of social services (on behalf of the state) and as political players in socio-political decision-making processes. In recent decades, this role has been challenged on two fronts: a twin process of decreasing religiosity and religious pluralization within European societies and decentralization and privatization of welfare services across European welfare states. This twin-pressure on faith-based care providers has already received a decisive spin through the refugee crisis and is likely to amplify in the long run through demographic change. Finally, the entrance of first generation immigrants as care clients and the accelerated immigration from countries with Muslim or Orthodox cultural backgrounds has consequences on two fronts for the role of traditional Catholic and Protestant organizations as faith based welfare providers and socio-political veto players in Europe: a religious pluralization of clients and the potential challenge through the entering of new Muslim and Orthodox care providers and political actors in welfare politics.

The aim of this Panel is to get a better understanding of the present role of religious organizations in welfare policy as providers of social services, as societal veto players as well as promoters of welfare in political processes. How are religious organizations included in welfare delivery in Western and Eastern Europe? How do they react to an increasingly secularizing or religiously pluralizing clientele? To what extent are they able to maintain their distinct religious profile under increasing cost and market pressures triggered by welfare state retrenchment and the Europeanization of the care market? To what extent are they involved in decision-making processes on socio-political issues (such as welfare reforms, but also refugee policies)? What role are newly established Islamic organizations able to play within European welfare states?

We welcome particularly empirical Papers that deal with one of these questions above and help uncovering the role of religious organizations in European welfare states in the 21st century.

Please send your proposals of up to 200 words to the Panel Chairs by 7 February (and NOT via the ECPR homepage yet!). After we will have accepted your paper we will include them in our panel proposal and submit them electronically. Please make sure that you have an active MyECPR account.