

## CHAPTER 13

# Prioritising Community Spirit over Freedom of Religion During the Pandemic

## The Case of Denmark

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### Abstract

The handling of the COVID-19 pandemic by the Danish state and society has generally received praise. The actions taken by the Danish authorities efficiently curbed the death rates and the population generally accepted the restrictions put on public and collective aspects of their lives as they were performing what in Danish was named *samfundssind* (community spirit/civic consciousness). The practice of *samfundssind* also prevailed among religious communities, who adhered with very few complaints to the complete closing of all places of worship for the public during the first lockdown and the extremely bureaucratic rules of limitations during the later lockdowns. In this

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analysis of the pandemic's impact on religious life in Denmark, we present three key findings: (a) we present how minority groups struggled with achieving a positive public perception, (b) we show that the usual privileged position of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark (ELCD) was more or less nullified by the strict restrictions of the government, and (c) we argue that ELCD was therefore subjected to the same restrictions as the minority religious groups. It was also clear that many of these restrictions were formulated on the basis of an understanding of the ELCD as the default form of religion in Denmark.

## Introduction

The first case of COVID-19 in Denmark was reported on 27 February 2020 and Denmark went into an extensive lockdown from 11 March. The lockdown targeted all 'non-essential' public institutions and private institutions of a certain size, the buildings were closed to the public, and employees were asked to work from home if possible.

Because the majority religious group in Denmark – the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark (the ELCD) – is *de facto* a state institution, the lockdown of public institutions was naturally extended to the ELCD, which constitutes a major part of religious life in Denmark. The restrictions on the public manifestation of religion during the first lockdown in spring 2020 was one of the most severe in Europe (De La Ferriere 2020), yet there was high compliance and very few protests. The handling of the coronavirus in Denmark has been praised as among the most successful and has been claimed to represent a manifestation of the high level of mutual trust (Olagnier and Mogensen 2020; Rytter 2023). The concept of *samfundssind* (civic consciousness) had been used in the economic crisis of the 1930s during the economic crisis as an appeal not to hoard groceries in shops, but it now attained a much broader significance as an articulation of the sense of societal cohesion that developed. Another more critical evaluation is that that, '[g]iven that the closure of churches affected most Danes very little, the pandemic's greatest impact on Danish religion might be a legacy of deepening division between Muslims and non-Muslims' (Macaulay 2022).

Economist Dani Rodrik has famously claimed that during the pandemic 'countries have in effect become exaggerated versions of themselves' (Rodrik 2020). Rodrik's intriguing comment was directed

towards economic aspects, but it rings very true as a description of how the development of the pandemic was framed by the sociological and legal realities of religious life in Denmark. The importance of the Parliament (and lesser importance of courts) for the political system in Denmark was for instance clear from the way the lockdowns were done based on the Emergency Acts, discussed and decided by a majority vote in the Parliament (Fallentin Nyborg et al. 2020). Similarly, the position of the majority church as a key religious actor was central for how the Danish state used its relation to the church as a template for how to deal with religion. Yet this does not mean that the previous framework of sociological and legal structures of religion in Denmark remained intact through the pandemic. In line with Rodrik's comment, it became clear that in Denmark 'exaggerated versions' meant that some existing aspects of Danish society were more clearly brought forward. This could for instance be the case with how the concept of *samfundssind* became widely used. Similarly, the legal status and sociological structures of religious life in Denmark were not just extensions of previous patterns but also changed. In this chapter, the specificities of the Danish case of religious change are presented as a particular case but also as a contribution to the general discussion of how the pandemic impacted religion.

### Setting the Context

The most eye-catching aspect of religious life in Denmark is the extraordinary position of the ELCD. The ELCD constitutes a state church, if the constitutional provisions, the lack of autonomy at the national level, and the legislative function of the state with regard to the regulation of the church is kept in mind (Kühle et al. 2018). The constitution thus mentions the ELCD as a church with a special position vis-à-vis the state, the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs is the executive body of the church, and the Parliament constitutes the legislative organ. The identity of the ELCD as a state church is, however, ambiguous. The constitution names the church as the *folkekirke*, the church of the people and not the church of the state, and, even if the executive power at the national level lies with the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs and the legislative power is with the Parliament, at the local level there is a strong local democracy situated in parochial councils inhabited by the members. Membership is declining, albeit quite slowly, and

a substantial majority of the Danish population (71.4 per cent as at 1 January 2024) remain members. Statistics on religious ceremonies indicate that 70 per cent of newborns are baptised in the ELCD, 64 per cent are confirmed, and 80 per cent of funerals are with the assistance of the ELCD (Denmark 2023). While the ELCD therefore constitutes an impactful factor in the Danish religious landscape, it has also been discussed whether most Danes can indeed be characterised as Christian or whether they could instead – due to their low levels of religious belief and religious practices – be characterised as somehow non-religious and Denmark as a secular country. At the same time, majority Danes have also been characterised as culturally Christians, since their relation to the ELCD is based on feeling a cultural, emotional affiliation with the church as well as connecting the church to a Danish national identity (Lundmark and Mauritsen 2022; Mauritsen 2022). Recently, it has been argued that the Danish and more general Nordic religious landscape can be characterised as complex in the sense that religion at the individual level is declining and found increasingly less personally important and relevant to many citizens, while religion remains highly important and debated at the state level (Furseth 2018). This approach goes beyond the more one-sided narrative of Denmark as a secular country, which has otherwise been quite persistent in former research (e.g. Zuckerman 2020).

Although most citizens of Denmark therefore retain a connection to the ELCD, albeit perhaps mainly as a culturally religious connection (Mauritsen et al. 2023), the Danish religious landscape is also characterised by several religious minorities. Muslims represent the largest religious minority group, constituting about 5 per cent of the population, but Buddhists are also represented (about 0.6 per cent of the population), Hindus (about 0.4 per cent of the population), and a very small minority of Jews (about 0.01 per cent of the population). Owing to the large-scale influence and support of the ELCD, the numbers of the organised non-religious are low, coming in at around 0.05 per cent.

Religious groups can apply for recognition by the state, which includes financial privileges as well as legal privileges (tax deductions and the right to officiate weddings, for instance). The recognised religious communities include organisations and congregations within Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Sikhism, and Hinduism, as well as smaller religions like the Bahai and more controversial religions like the Jehovah's Witnesses.

The special and in some cases also privileged position of the ELCD is evident throughout society. The parliamentary year, for instance, starts with a religious service in a church and is performed by a pastor from the ELCD; hospitals, prisons, and educational institutions have chaplains from the ELCD and the ELCD is responsible for and constitutes the central focus of teaching of religion in state-funded primary schools (Andersen and Sigurdsson 2022; Kühle et al. 2018). The formal accommodation of other religions in the legal regulation of religion in Denmark has been slow. The regulation of religious communities outside the ELCD was only formalised in the Act on Religious Communities in 2017 and state-driven institutions have formally only adapted minimally to a religiously diverse situation, though small attempts to begin sharing the privileges of the ELCD with other religious communities have been seen (Kühle 2022). Overall, the Danish context is complex. Denmark is from one perspective a highly secular country, but it is from another perspective a country with a state church highly entangled with secular institutions.

## Legal Aspects

The Danish Constitution contains no general constitutional provision on the state of emergency. Article 23 of the constitution allows the government to issue provisional Acts, so long as they do not violate the Constitution, should the Parliament be unable to convene (Fallentin Nyborg et al. 2020), but, as the Parliament was kept open during the pandemic, the extraordinary means employed during the pandemic were done with reference to the Danish Epidemic Act (2019), which allows restrictions in order to prevent or contain a dangerous contagious disease (Saunes et al. 2022, 420–21). The legal framework for handling a pandemic was therefore generally something that was produced as the pandemic developed and not something that was in place already.

As the ELCD constitutes a public institution, the lockdown of public institutions in March 2020 directly restricted a major part of religious life in Denmark. The personnel of the ELCD are employed by the state, and as such they were asked to work from home when the churches were closed to the public. In a video recorded by the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs on 12 March, the minority religion groups were requested to do the same. To a very large extent, religious majorities and

minorities followed suit. The formal legislation that would require the religious minorities to close the religious buildings to the public was only in place from 5 April 2020, meaning that, until then, the groups adhered to the request voluntarily (Kühle and Larsen 2021; Larsen, Mauritsen, Kühle, et al. 2020). In the late spring and summer of 2020, society was slowly reopening and from 18 May it was again possible to gather in religious buildings (Larsen, Mauritsen, Sothilingam, et al. 2021). When Danish society closed again in the winter of 2020/21, both minority and majority religions were under the same restrictions. The level of interreligious cooperation was low and no formal body was constituted; in fact, when a church and a mosque during the lockdown agreed to come together in a joint ringing of the bells and call for prayer, extensive public critique was raised.

Regarding the regulation of religious life, Article 6 of the Epidemic Act and Article 12B of the revised Epidemic Act (LBK no 1444 of 01/10/2020) restricted gatherings (funerals and burials being exempt from the regulation) to a maximum of ten participants and prohibited and restricted access to premises to which there is general public access. These restrictions were mentioned by the prime minister when she announced the lockdown on 11 March. The legislation ensuring this came into effect on 18 March 2020, stating that all public cultural, church (in effect the majority ELCD), and leisure institutions had to keep their premises closed to the public (BEK no 224 of 17/03/2020) and respect the norms for social gatherings (BEK no 539 of 26/03/2021). With effect from 5 April, the buildings of the minority religions were also formally closed to the public (BEK no 370 of 04/04/2020). Funerals, burials, marriage ceremonies, baptisms, and other religious acts were exempt from the regulation, but it was still a suspension of Article 67 of the Danish Constitution, which protects freedom to practise one's religion if it is not 'contrary to good morals or public order'. The initial temporary shutdown of religious buildings *de facto* closed all collective religious activities in Denmark. It has been argued, though, that as the lockdown was not aimed at religion specifically and was for a higher purpose, i.e. to contain dissemination, the restrictions on collective religious life were within the scope of Article 67 (Klinge et al. 2020, 137). In relation to this and in the light of general global discussions on the effect of pandemic lockdowns on freedom of religion, the most striking aspect is probably that religion was not given any specific consideration at all: 'As regards the above-mentioned restrictions on

the freedom of assembly, the preparatory works state nothing on how the freedom of religion was affected by those restrictions' (Fallentin Nyborg et al. 2020, 1110).

The closure of the majority church and the buildings of minority religions was in force until 18 May 2020, when a specific relaxation of the restrictions on assemblies allowed religious buildings to reopen under certain conditions (BEK no 630 of 17/05/2020). This was revised twice again (BEK no 687 of 27/05/2020; BEK no 795 of 08/06/2020). The Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs published the detailed regulation on 17 May and in a revised version on 9 June (Kirkeministeriet 2020a) and 20 August 2020 (Kirkeministeriet 2020b). In the winter of 2020/21, when the pandemic re-emerged, restrictions were applied again, but the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs now simply adjusted the regulations whenever needed – for instance 7 January 2021 (Kirkeministeriet 2020/2021a), 21 April 2021 (Kirkeministeriet 2020/21b), and 2 July 2021 (Kirkeministeriet 2020/21c). The regulations were very complicated and distinguished for instance between services with and without song, indoor and outdoor services, and whether participants were sitting or standing, as well as whether participants were wearing face masks and had coronavirus passports (Kirkeministeriet 2021). By 1 February 2022, all regulations were removed as COVID-19 was reclassified as no longer being an illness of special concern.

The impact of the pandemic on the regulation of religion in Denmark was significant. First, it is worth noticing that the pandemic preparedness systems in place did not mention religion (Sundhedsstyrelsen 2013), so there does not seem to have been any plan or legislation in place to regulate religious life in the event of a pandemic. When the pandemic developed, the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs produced a highly bureaucratic system of regulation, which included both minority and majority religions. These regulations mainly concerned access to religious buildings, which with the bureaucratic regulations came to concern the number of participants allowed at specific types of arrangements. Another area that was highly regulated was funerals. Initially the strict rules for gatherings did not apply to funerals, but indoor funerals would have to apply to rules about distancing (BEK no 370 of 04/04/2020).

When the reopening began on 18 May 2020, the first round of regulation from the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs retained this understanding but the regulations from 20 August 2020 contained

a reduction of participants at outdoor funerals at 200, and the regulations from 7 January 2021 a limit of 50. The reduction of the number of participants at outdoor funerals changed the balance of which area was the most restrictive – indoors or outdoors. The fact that there were now formally more restrictions on outdoor funerals could be seen as a reaction to the public debates on Muslim funerals as conforming to the majority conception of funerals in the majority church as indoor. The regulation of funerals led to many frustrations within the majority church as the employees found the regulations to be unclear and more specifically led to many concerns for the pastors since they simultaneously had to act as civil servants while also providing pastoral care (Videnscenter 2020, 127). An area that seems to have been little regulated is chaplaincies, where there was little discussion on the rights of ministers of religion to visit patients. The ELCD's online pastoral care site [Sjælesorg.nu](http://Sjælesorg.nu) announced that it had received a growing number of requests (Ritzau 2021). This could mean a growth in the need to receive pastoral care but it seems more likely that this was yet another example of religion moving online. The long-term effects of religion moving online are still to be seen, but the short-term experiences suggest that religion cannot 'just' move online without fuelling processes of transformation. Most religious groups were – on that note – happy to return to being mainly centred around the physical presence. The main changes regarding organised religion may therefore readily be in relation to how the different actors conceive of the regulation of the religious landscape: the ELCD encountered that the price of being close to the state may have been higher than expected, while minorities, primarily the Muslim community, experienced how crisis situations often do not foster tolerance and inclusion. Paradoxically, the legal treatment of religious minorities during the pandemic did not follow the strict division between minority and majority religion that normally prevails in Denmark; minority and majority religious groups were treated almost equally. It is in this regard that the pandemic may be said to have produced changes to religion–state relations in Denmark.

### Sociological Aspects

When the first case of COVID-19 in Denmark was reported, on 27 February, the initial reaction from the health authorities was that COVID-19 would probably be of little importance for Denmark.



The evaluation soon changed, and Denmark went into an extensive lockdown from 11 March. The lockdown meant the closing of public buildings, closed borders, and general policies for social distancing including restrictions for gatherings (a limit of ten individuals from 18 March) and the closure of all non-essential shops and services. The Danish narrative of the pandemic has focused extensively on questions of trust, social capital, and societal cohesion, with religion playing a very small part in that story. The prominent HOPE project, which followed the overall development in the reactions to the pandemic among the population via weekly surveys, did not include any questions relating to religion. The consequences of the pandemic for the role of religion generally and for the majority church was studied by the Education and Research Center of the ELCD (Videnscenter 2020). The Pew Research Institute also studied how government restrictions and COVID-19 affected faith among Danes, as well as their assessment of government handling of the pandemic (Devlin and Connaughton 2020; Majumdar 2022; Pew Research Center 2021). In addition, a quasi-representative panel survey funded by the private foundation Velux followed changes in religious beliefs and activities of the population as well as the opinions regarding the lockdown (Andersen et al. 2021; Mauritsen 2021). There were also several qualitative studies of religion, media, and change, and the research on COVID-19 and religion has all in all been quite comprehensive.

### *Collective Religious Life*

The overall result from these various studies is that collective religious life was massively affected during the pandemic. During the first lockdown, Denmark had one of the most restrictive regimes regarding religion (De La Ferriere 2020) and consequently there was very little collective religious life during the spring of 2020 in Denmark. Even if legislation allowed for baptisms, weddings, and funerals, most people postponed weddings and baptisms and limited their participation in funerals. Some of the baptisms were moved to the summer period after the reopening of the majority ELCD, and confirmations were collectively postponed until after the reopening and therefore show the most marked decline in church activities (Videnscenter 2020). There was also disruption regarding participation in major religious holidays like Easter and Christmas, but also Ramadan and Eid, Pesach, Vaisakhi,

and Vesak (Larsen, Mauritsen, Kühle, et al. 2020). While both majority and minority religious groups experienced interruptions in terms of celebrating holidays, there was a marked difference in how the groups generally responded to the restrictions laid upon them. It can generally be argued that religious groups overall complied to restrictions to a very high degree; however, several of the minority groups expressed deep concerns related to the possible negative public perception of them. This was confirmed by different instances; for example, as earlier mentioned, when a mosque and a church decided to perform a common act of church bell ringing and public call to prayer to symbolise solidarity. This message was not apprehended in public debates and resulted in politicians discussing whether to entirely outlaw the access of Muslims to perform public call to prayer (Kühle 2021). Such cases made it clear that in Denmark the majority church ‘enjoys larger acceptance and less negative media coverage than religious minorities’ (Kühle and Larsen 2021, 15). This apprehension resulted in some minority groups – especially Muslim and Hindu groups – going beyond the restrictions and taking on the responsibility of conveying the restrictions in multiple languages, actively supporting these restrictions in their communication and sometimes adding even further precautions when meeting for religious practices such as cleaning extensively more than ordered and demanding that visitors should wear masks, even before this was commanded by authorities (Larsen, Mauritsen, Sothilingam, et al. 2021).

Overall, collective religious life in Denmark was therefore highly impacted by the pandemic and its accompanying restrictions. However, new digital approaches and tools were also developed and utilised by most of the religious groups to maintain some sense of community and communication and to continue performing rituals to some degree.

### *The Digital Turn*

Since collective practices were so limited during the different phases of the pandemic, many religious groups turned to digital tools to support their collective religious life. However, there were differences in how different groups approached the digital. Many priests in the ELCD were quick to adapt to the digital and quickly filmed small services and prayers that were streamed on Facebook or the church’s website. In some churches, this digital practice became extensively advanced,

with full online Sunday services, while others were more hesitant with incorporating digital practices to that degree, sometimes with reference to discussions of whether for instance online communions could be theologically legitimised (Holm, Rønkilde, and Thorsen 2022; Kühle and Larsen 2021). Minority groups also integrated digital communication; several Muslim groups streamed Friday prayer online; Buddhist groups carried out meditation retreats online; and minority Christian groups also implemented online services (Larsen, Mauritsen, Sothilingam, et al. 2021). For many, the online solution was practical, but it lacked something. With regard to a group of Muslim women, it has been argued that:

The flavour of being physically together was lost during coronavirus. Hence, it appears that digital infrastructure is endowed with an ambivalence between, on the one hand, an immediate nearness that enables users to integrate participation easily into daily practicalities and makes home a territory of religious activity and community-building, and, on the other, a physical distancing that impairs religious and emotional connections. (Lyngsøe 2022, 197)

The turn to the digital could enable religious practices to some degree and substantially changed how the religious groups upheld community. However, if we turn to analyses of religiosity at the individual level, religiosity remained remarkably stable over the course of the pandemic.

### *Trends in Religiosity during the Pandemic*

Unlike what has been the case in some other countries, the pandemic did not seem to increase Danes' religiosity (Christensen, Kühle, and Jacobsen 2021; Mauritsen 2021; Mauritsen, Bendixen, and Christensen 2022; Pew Research Center 2021; Poulsen et al. 2021) and few people mentioned religion when asked what they had missed mostly during the 2020 lockdown (Christensen, Kühle, and Jacobsen 2021). As earlier mentioned, Denmark is often described as a highly secular country, although most of the population are members of the ELCD, and, if we look simply at individual-level religiosity during the pandemic, this could be empirically supported. It has often been argued that crises increase levels of religiosity, since religion offers community and coping strategies. In Denmark, this does not, however, hold true;

analysis of four waves of longitudinal data shows that on average self-reported religiosity did not increase during the pandemic<sup>1</sup> (Mauritsen, Bendixen, and Christensen 2022). This could have multiple explanations. One possible explanation is that Denmark's welfare state handled the pandemic well, leaving no need for religious coping, another that the majority of Danes perceived religion and especially Christianity as a cultural and national marker rather than a source of comfort (ibid.). Nevertheless, the levels of self-reported religiosity remained low, which could be interpreted in favour of an understanding of Denmark as a secular country. We will return to this point and contextualise it with the other analyses of religion in Denmark during the pandemic in the conclusion.

### *Controversy Regarding Lockdowns*

Finally, despite the enormous impact of the lockdown in the spring of 2020 on religious life and public life more generally, there was initially very little debate on the restrictive policies and the restrictions imposed were generally accepted. In the fall of 2020, concerns were raised regarding the spread of virus through farmed mink and, in November 2020, Danish authorities ordered a stop to the mink industry and all minks killed to prevent the mink-related virus variant from spreading.<sup>2</sup> It soon became clear that the government, after having received much praise for its initial handling of the pandemic in this case, had reacted too hastily and without legal backing. The debates and critique therefore became increasingly critical and both the opposition, which had previously supported the actions of the social democratic government, and the media took a more critical stance towards prime minister Mette Frederiksen. Different groups, 'Men in Black', 'Free Observer', and 'Danmark Vågner' (Denmark Is Awakening) became active on Facebook and one organisation, 'Men in Black', arranged several demonstrations and in one instance burned a puppet of the Danish prime minister with a sign stating 'She must and shall die' on a sign attached to it. Discussions of conspiracy theories increased, and ideas aligned with conspiracy theories like QAnon prospered (Jacobsen, Kühle, and Christensen 2021). There was also criticism and actions coming from spiritual milieus in Denmark, who saw the handling of the pandemic by the prime minister not only as a sign of a democratic crisis but also as a spiritual predicament (Lehrmann 2020). The Danish National

Center for the Prevention of Radicalisation also found that Danish Salafi organisations were very active recruiting under the COVID-19 lockdown, and, while they would not encourage going against the Danish authorities' instructions, they would criticise that the COVID-19 recommendations were without foundations in Islam and Sharia law (Ekstremisme 2020). All these groups were, however, quite small.

Religion was not a major topic of discussion generally during the COVID-19 in Denmark (Andersen et al. 2021) but there were some debates, which can broadly be divided into three overall themes or aspects. First, the media attention was almost entirely related to stories about the spread of the virus by religious communities and activities abroad (Borup 2020; Fibiger 2020). Global religions were generally portrayed as sources rather than solutions to the calamities of the pandemic and in some cases amounted to scapegoating (Fibiger 2020). Second, debates turned to the behaviour of the Muslim minority in Denmark (Jacobsen, Kühle, and Christensen 2021; Kühle 2021). The mosques as religions in Denmark in general abided by the instructions given by Danish authorities. The virus was at times spreading more in areas with a largely Muslim population. This – combined with the extensive attendance to the funerals of Yahya Hassan, a famous poet with an Arab background and Abukar Ali, a gang member with a Somali background in the summer of 2020 – fuelled public debates over whether a certain ethnic, cultural, or religious group was responsible for spreading the disease (Westengaard 2020). Denmark was – along with Montenegro and Spain – coded by Pew as the only European country in which 'any level of government (including public officials) attributed or linked the spread of COVID-19 to certain religious groups or events' (Majumdar 2022, 19). Denmark was, however, not – according to Pew – among the 17 European countries where individuals or groups were seen to do so (Majumdar 2022, 103).

Finally, while the closing of the churches for Easter had led to only minor debates, the restrictions on participating in religious gatherings around Christmastime led to increasingly heated discussions. The main issue was that the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs was very slow to publicise the instructions and, when the restrictions were made public, many pastors and parish councils found that they did not have enough time to prepare; many services were cancelled. The state handling of the Christmas lockdown led to reflections of whether the state was considerate enough and whether it included the majority church

sufficiently as an actor in decision-making processes (Videnscenter 2020). In this way, the pandemic accentuated that the close relations of the ELCD vis-à-vis the state do not always translate into a position of privilege: it might be more beneficial for the church if more distance were kept.

The relation between majority as well as minority religious groups and the Danish state during the COVID-19 pandemic can conclusively be described as collaboration and perhaps even compliance. Religious groups facilitated the adherence to public health measures to prevent the spread of the virus by applying the regulations often eagerly and (for some) sharing information on social media (Larsen, Mauritsen, Kühle, et al. 2021). Though the initial situation and the resources of majority and minority religion were quite different, the patterns of reactions among minority and majority religion were not that different and the pandemic did in that way show that despite differences both majority and minority religion face many of the same difficulties.

## Conclusion

In 2023, Danish society had long returned to the pre-pandemic condition. The overall changes produced by the pandemic have not been as profound as some prophesied and, regarding both religious vitality and online presence, the changes seem modest.

Summarising, both the ELCD and religious minority groups adhered to the restrictions imposed on them by the Danish state, but minority groups generally experienced more negative attention related to their practices, although they often did more than required to live up to the restrictions. This points to the clear differences in terms of position between the ELCD and other religious groups. This argument can be further supported by the fact that most of the guidelines brought forward by the government in terms of regulating religion were clearly formulated on the basis of an understanding of religion as that practised in the ELCD rather than a more diverse understanding of religion. However, both the ELCD and the minority religious groups were indeed heavily affected and restricted during the lockdowns, which points to how religion does not enjoy special privilege in Denmark in times of crises. Therefore, as the title of this chapter suggests, we conclusively argue that during the pandemic community spirit was in fact prioritised more than freedom of religion in Denmark.

## Notes

- 1 'Self-reported religiosity' is defined as how important the respondents perceived religion to be. See Mauritsen, Bendixen, and Christensen 2022 for further information.
- 2 <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/what-the-mink-corona-virus-pandemic-has-taught-us>.

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### Legal Materials

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