

## Eastern Europe

For 45 years after WWII, half of Europe lived under Soviet Communist rule. Then in a few short years from 1989, the Berlin Wall was dismantled and these former Communist satellites emerged as independent nations. Some joined the EU and NATO. East and West Germany reunited.

Excluding the Balkans (53.6 million population), the countries of the former Eastern bloc are Belarus (9.5 million), Czech Republic (10.6 million), Estonia (1.3 million), Hungary (9.7 million), Latvia (1.9 million), Lithuania (2.9 million), Moldova (4 million), Poland (38.1 million), Slovakia (5.4 million) and Ukraine (44 million).

These former Communist nations have followed different trajectories since the fall of Communism. Yet they share much in common.

• *Freedom and opportunity* for many, yet also a sense of loss. Many older people mourn the passing of some aspects of the Communist life.

• *A crisis of values* that manifests itself in consumerism, in a moral vacuum and in addictions of various kinds, or simply in living lives without any reference to God.

• *Declining populations* because of low birth-rates and emigration. (The Czech Republic and Slovakia are the exceptions and they are only growing very slowly)

• *Corruption and autocracy.* Some countries



are building civic society and electing honest leaders; others are controlled by oligarchs and autocrats, who suppress journalists, influence the courts and fix elections. Many are somewhere in between. The EU is engaged in a bureaucratic conflict with various new members over their democratic standards.

• *Lively Christian faith is 'down but not out'.* In many countries, evangelicals are a very small, but often growing, minority. Catholic affiliation and churchgoing have resisted decline better than Protestant equivalents. And in some surprising places (Romania, Ukraine, Moldova, Lithuania for example) spiritual life is thriving in various denominational soils.

Pray that the Kingdom of God will grow and strengthen all across the former Eastern Europe, bringing new life, creativity, and hope for the future.

## THE NATIONS



Following the fall of the dictator Colonel Gaddafi, this troubled North African state of 6.5 million people has split into warring factions, each financed by oil sales. A combination of military victory of one or more factions, UN action and war-weariness may lead to a kind of peace eventually.



The public Christian community is largely Coptic Orthodox or Catholic. Each denomination numbers several tens of thousands and has expatriate origins: the Copts are African, the Catholics, European. An underground Church of perhaps 1500 Libyans of Muslim background exists in the shadows. A Muslim country, Libya is one of the most dangerous places for anyone to profess faith in Jesus. Extreme Islamist militias are a deadly threat and national anarchy means the non-existent state offers no protection to the vulnerable. Sympathizers of the 'Islamic State' have murdered hundreds of Christians. Videos of the beheading of Coptic Christians, shared widely in 2015, shocked the world.

Libya is also a transit route for migrants. Thousands have drowned attempting to cross the Mediterranean from Libya. The EU, controversially, has a deal to send sea-borne migrants back to Libya where they face brutal incarceration or even being sold into slavery.

Pray that Libya will have rest from war. Pray that Christians will be strengthened, protected, and enabled to grow in love and numbers. Pray for just and compassionate responses to the migrant crisis.



A giant East African island, Madagascar is home to 21 million people and to many unique plant and animal species. Madagascar is poor - a land of subsistence farmers - with a degraded environment and turbulent politics.



Over half the population profess Christian faith and church growth continues, notably among Pentecostals and charismatics. A third of the people (and many who are officially Christians) still follow traditional pre-Christian beliefs. Yet the Holy Spirit is working and young people especially are finding faith.

Pray for the growth and strengthening of the Christian faith in Madagascar! Pray for the healing of the nation from poverty and civil strife.