

# Religious tolerance and intolerance

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## THEME

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Dealing with interreligious/worldview conflicts and intolerant and tolerant attitudes related to them.  
Age group: 16 years and older

## CONTEXT

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In times when societies are diversified on a cultural and personal level, we are faced with the challenge of shaping our coexistence in the midst of different groups of religion or worldview with empathy and tolerance so that conflicts do not escalate and thus endanger social cohesion.

## GOALS

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- Creating a better understanding for other groups of religion or worldview
- Reflecting on one's own values, attitudes and behaviour
- Raising awareness of possible conflict situations and learn how to deal with them constructively

## METHODOLOGY

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- Small group work
- Brainstorming
- Presentation and discussion

## MATERIAL & EQUIPMENT NEEDED

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- Masking tape and two A4 sheets with "Yes, I agree" and "No, I disagree" written on them in large letters
- Flipchart, paper and markers

## Overview of activities (process)

**Duration:** 2 sessions of 45 minutes each

### PART 1

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#### **Introduction to the workshop: 10 minutes**

The teacher/educator introduces the students/participants to the topic and its social relevance. He/she/they explains the process and the objectives of this module.

The teacher/educator can introduce the topic to the students/participants by referring to e.g. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance".

### **Exercise: Which side are you on?**

This exercise serves to warm up to the topic, to develop a personal connection to it and to initiate a first interaction with other workshop participants. The teacher/educator divides the room in half with the tape and puts the sheet with the sentence "Yes, I agree" on one side and the sheet with "No, I don't agree" on the other side. The students/participants start by standing in the middle of the room. The teacher/educator reads out all the statements one after the other, with the workshop participants standing on one side or the other each time, depending on which opinion they hold. If someone cannot decide, they stand on the line between.

Example statements (the teacher/educator is welcome to add more):

- Religion is important to me
- My attitude towards religion has changed in the course of my life
- I have been in conflict one or more times because of my religious or philosophical beliefs
- I have been a witness to religious or worldview conflict one or more times
- I do not want to be involved in religious or worldview conflicts

### **Group work: 20 minutes**

The teacher/educator divides the students/participants into groups of 4-6 persons (there should not be more than 5 groups in total). Each group is given 2 flipchart sheets and pens and appoints a facilitator (who leads the discussion), a scribe (who writes down the results on the flipchart sheets) as well as a presenter (who presents the results in plenary). Each group should now write the term "tolerance" on one of the two sheets in the middle and the term "intolerance" on the second. The teacher/educator now asks the students/participants to discuss in their group the answers to the questions "What characterises tolerance" and "What characterises intolerance". The answers are written down on the respective flipchart sheets. The groups have 10 minutes for each question.

### **Presentations: 15 minutes**

Each group is now given about 3 minutes (depending on the number of small groups) to present the results of the two flipchart sheets to the plenary.

## PART 2

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### **Discussion of the results : 10 minutes**

The flipchart sheets are put up and if the second part of the module falls on another lesson, students/participants should be given a short time to recall their contents. Then the teacher/educator asks the group which answers are repeated or similar, where there are similarities and where there are differences and whether the answers can be brought to a common denominator. After the discussion, the teacher/educator presents a statement to the students/participants to make it clearer what distinguishes tolerance. Here, the concept of Feldmann/Henschel/Ulrich\* can be used, according to which three criteria must be fulfilled in order for an attitude to be considered tolerant:

- conflict (a situation arises in which there is a confrontation of different values or competing interests)
- non-violence (no violence, be it psychological or physical, occurs in this situation)
- equal rights (acceptance that everyone has equal rights)

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\*Eva Feldmann, Thomas R. Henschel, Susanne Ulrich: Tolerance. Gütersloh, 2001.

The teacher/educator writes down these explanations on flipchart paper and asks the students/participants if they are surprised by this definition and if it is comprehensible. She/he/they leads into the second part of the group work in which the participants will now deal with the topic of conflicts of a religious and philosophical nature.

### **Group work: 30 minutes**

The students/participants come together again in small groups and are given three tasks by the teacher/educator. Each of the three tasks will take a maximum of 10 minutes.

1. Share situations in which you have experienced an inter-religious or worldview conflict. You can have been involved in the conflict or a witness to it.
2. Find an example from history where there was a conflict between different religious or worldview parties. Discuss how this conflict was dealt with.
3. Consider together what current situation comes to your mind in which a conflict of different values or interests of a religious or philosophical nature can occur today. Discuss first what influence an intolerant and then a tolerant attitude can have on the conflict.

### **Summary: 5 minutes**

Everyone comes back to the plenary. The teacher/educator asks the participants what was the most difficult part of this learning module for them and what they take away for themselves. The answers to these questions are voluntary.



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