WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Source
This activity was adapted from Compass – manual for human rights education with young people, Council of Europe.

Themes
- Social and political context
- Differences in perspectives
- Intercultural communication and dialogue

Competences addressed
- Attitudes: openness and curiosity towards diversity; tolerance of ambiguity
- Skills: critical thinking; active listening

Complexity: Level 2

Group size: 6 to 20 people

Time: 80 minutes

Objectives
- To develop participants' understanding of the complexity of cultural relations and intercultural dialogue
- To foster respect and open-mindedness towards different perspectives and opinions
- To develop participants' critical thinking and respectful communication skills.

Materials
Flip chart paper, sticky tape, two pieces of A4 paper – one with “I agree” and one with “I disagree” – and a big enough space for people to move around.

Preparation
This activity can be preceded by “In other words” in order to reflect on the importance of wording, ready-made concepts and stereotypes.

Prepare two posters – one saying “I agree” and the other saying “I disagree” – and stick them on the floor at opposite ends of the room, so that people can form a straight line between them.

Instructions
1. Start with a brief introduction to the complexity of culture. You may use some of the information presented in this T-Kit. Spend five minutes brainstorming with participants about the elements of culture.
2. Explain that you are now going to read a series of statements about relations between different cultural groups, with which people may agree to a greater or lesser extent.
3. Point out the two extreme positions – the posters featuring the phrases “I agree” and “I disagree”. Explain that people may occupy any point along the (imaginary) line between the two signs, but that they should try to position themselves, as far as possible, next to people whose views almost coincide with their own. Brief discussion is permitted while people are finding their places.
4. Read out the statements in turn.
5. Stimulate reflection and discussion. Ask those at the end-points to explain why they have occupied these extreme positions. Ask someone near the centre whether their position indicates the lack of a strong opinion or a lack of knowledge.
6. Allow people to move position as they listen to each others’ comments.
7. When you have gone through the statements, bring the group back together for the debriefing.
Debriefing and evaluation

Begin with reviewing the activity itself and then go on to discuss what people learned.

How did you make your decision about where to position yourself?

- How was it to hear other people’s opinions?
  - Were people surprised by the extent of disagreement on the issues?
  - Does it matter if we disagree about intercultural issues?
- If you changed position during the discussions, why did you do it?
- Do you think there are “right” and “wrong” answers to the different statements, or is it just a matter of personal opinion?
- Might it ever be possible for everyone to reach agreement when it comes to relations between different cultural groups? Why? Why not?
- What is important to consider when developing your opinion on a relationship between different cultural groups?
- How can relations between different cultural groups improve?

Tips for facilitators

In order to avoid everyone speaking at the same time, you could introduce a symbolic microphone (pen for example). The person who has the microphone can speak. This contributes to active listening from and of all participants.

Do not take a position and do not comment on the opinions and statements yourself. However, do not hesitate to come back to some of the opinions expressed during the debriefing.

The statements given below are designed to address some of the debates that take place concerning the relations between different cultural groups. There is no need to go into a great deal of detail at the beginning of the activity, since many of the points should emerge during the course of discussion.

Variations

Compose other statements, or ask members of the group to make up their own.

Suggestions for follow-up

This activity can be followed by “Alternative narratives”, to raise participants’ awareness of the different sides of one reality in public discourse.

You may wish to get in touch, as a follow-up to this activity, with an organisation that fosters intercultural dialogue in multicultural settings or with anti-discrimination organisations, to learn more about how they approach and promote intercultural relations.
Handouts

Examples of statements.

- Some people don't want to integrate.
- For society to survive, the rules people live by come first, individual freedom comes second.
- Some religions are against human rights.
- In a society, minorities must adapt to the majority.
- Muslims cannot really integrate into European societies.
- Resources are limited, so a society cannot welcome too many people, even if they flee a war in their own country.
- Some minorities decide to segregate themselves from society.
- We should respect people's right not to send their children to school for cultural reasons.
- Love can solve any problem.