



Activity sheet 1 Human rights and religion

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are core values of the European Union. They are included in its founding treaty and Charter of Fundamental Rights. Countries that wish to join the EU must respect human rights; so must countries which make trade and other agreements with it.

This activity sheet focuses on three current topics in the area of human rights and religion: the use of torture, the idea of secularity, and the question of Turkey joining the EU.

Inhuman treatment?

Key Stage 4 PSE, Community Aspect - understanding contemporary issues, including human rights

What does the EU say about torture, and what do you think?

- The *European Convention on Human Rights* – signed by all 25 members of the EU – says that “No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”.
- Since 2002, prisoners captured in Afghanistan have been detained at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba, and some say that they have been tortured. The European Parliament and other organisations have called on the EU Council to stand up for these prisoners’ legal rights.
- In 2005, law lords in the UK ruled that it was illegal to use evidence that might have been obtained using torture. In the same year, the UK started to deport Islamic extremists to countries which have been known to torture prisoners, on the condition that they sign a ‘no torture’ agreement.
- In 2005, European officials investigated reports that the USA had detained al-Qaeda suspects secretly in 8 countries, including Romania and Poland. There were also allegations that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had flown terrorist suspects from the EU to countries in the Middle East. This raised the possibility that EU members had colluded in sending prisoners to be tortured.

Activity: What counts as torture?

Photocopy and cut up the following cards, each containing an example of a type of punishment. In groups, discuss which punishments count as torture, and whether you think each is acceptable.

Note: depending on circumstances, all of these could be considered as torture under the United Nations Convention against Torture.

Electric shock	Solitary confinement	Sleep deprivation
Playing loud music	Blindfolding	Denying food
Choking	Beating	Forced to sit down

Discussion points:

- Is it the EU’s place to tell other countries how to treat prisoners?
- Should the EU value international relations more than the rights of individual prisoners?
- Is it OK to use torture sometimes, e.g. to thwart a terrorist attack?
- What right does the public have to know about such use of torture?

The place of religion

Key Stage 4
A2

WJEC, GCSE Religious Studies B – Identity and Belonging
WJEC, Religious Studies – Studies in Religion and Ethics

How does religion fit into Europe, and where should it fit?

- Countries which wish to join the EU must demonstrate that they can provide for human rights. Both the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *European Convention on Human Rights* insist on “freedom of thought, conscience and religion”, meaning that people should be free to believe in and practise any religion.
- Some EU states are completely ‘secular’ – meaning that there is no association between the government and the church. An example is France, whose tricolour flag represents the three ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity; if the church is able to influence government, then it is argued in France that these ideals might not be realised.
- Other EU states are not entirely secular. In Germany, the government collects taxes for religious institutions; and the UK’s head of state (the Queen) is also the head of the Anglican church. Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Greece and Malta have an ‘established’ church – an official link between government and religion; in the UK, this is the case in England and Scotland only.
- Recently, some EU countries have struggled with the issue of Islamic dress, which poses important questions about tolerance and equality. In 2004, France introduced a ban on the wearing of headscarves in schools: their obvious religious symbolism was felt to have no place in a secular society.

Activity: Flag up religion

The French flag (right) is a famous symbol of secular society. In groups, discuss how you think Wales or the UK should deal with religion: how can we balance the needs of religious people with the idea of secularism?



Design your own flag to illustrate your thoughts.

Further discussion points:

- What difference does it make whether a state is secular or not?
- Why should the state protect religious beliefs?
- Is religious ‘extremism’ just a matter of opinion, or can we agree on a definition of extremism?

Should Turkey join the club?

For general curriculum links, see the Teachers' Introduction

How would the EU change if Turkey joined? Would we accept those changes?

- Turkey applied for full membership of the EU in 1987, after 28 years of interest in doing so. The application was rejected because of Turkey's weak economy and poor record on human rights.
- During the 1990s Turkey moved closer to the EU, and in 1999 was accepted as a candidate for full membership. Turkey needs to fulfil the Copenhagen Criteria – guaranteeing democracy and human rights, and demonstrating a free market economy.
- There is debate about whether Turkey as a country is compatible with the EU. Some point out that Turkey is geographically in Asia rather than Europe; others ask whether a predominantly Islamic country would fit in with a union of traditionally Christian countries. However, Turkey is one of the world's few officially secular states, so admission to the EU might enable it to be a 'buffer' between Europe and Islamist states such as Iran.

Class debate: “This House would allow Turkey to join the EU”

Give the class some time to research the topic; they might find it useful to look it up at www.debatabase.org. Then divide them into two large groups, *for* and *against* the motion. Using a flipchart sheet to brainstorm ideas, each group should write down all possible arguments for their side. They should look out for common themes in their arguments, link these points together, then decide on their top 3 arguments. Next, sub-divide each large group into 3 smaller groups; each of these should develop one of the top 3 arguments. (Alternatively, swap the large groups once they have decided their 3 points, so that they have to develop the points devised by their opponents.)

You can choose your own format for the debate itself: for further guidelines, contact CEWC-Cymru.

Discussion points:

- Why do you think some people oppose EU membership for a country with 70 million Muslims? How would this change the EU?
- Does it matter that Turkey is not really 'in Europe'?
- Consider the points for and against Turkey joining the EU. What would you do if the final decision was yours?

About Citaware

Citaware aims to increase understanding in Wales of European citizenship, and to enable people of all ages to engage with EU institutions. It is funded by the European Commission and organised jointly by:



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