

## The one step forwards exercise

**Length**  30 – 60 min

**Difficulty**  Medium

**Group size**  Small to medium

**Aims** To open participants minds to the importance of freedom of religion or belief for people of all faiths and none, by putting themselves in the shoes of people from other backgrounds.

To increase awareness of the challenges that people of other religions or convictions can meet in relation to freedom of religion or belief.

To increase understanding of the consequences violations of freedom of religion or belief can have at the personal level.

**Description** Roleplay exercise in which different people move forwards or stand still depending on whether their character can relate positively to scenarios/statements that the facilitator reads out. As different characters move further and further apart, the advantages and obstacles faced by different groups in society become visible.

**Materials** A space/room big enough for participants to move freely across the floor from one side to another.  
Prepared role cards and situation statements, (see appendix).

**Source** Adapted from the EU commissions compass manual and the Oslo coalition for freedom of religion and belief's training material available at [www.educationforpeace.com/english/FORB.php](http://www.educationforpeace.com/english/FORB.php)

## Tips for facilitators

This exercise should ideally be carried out towards the beginning of a basic FORB training, either before any theoretical contents on FORB are presented, or just after a session introducing the most basic contents of FORB. The exercise will hopefully make it easier for participants to relate the theoretical learning about FORB to their context, ideas and value systems. The exercise can also help facilitators to assess the groups' current understanding of and attitudes towards FORB.

It is important to create a calm atmosphere that allows participants to get into the roles they are given, for example by putting on some soft music or simply asking participants to be silent.

## Outline and instructions

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| • Explain the exercise and get into roles | 5-10 min  |
| • Step forward exercise                   | 15-30 min |
| • Reflection and discussion               | 10-30 min |

Randomly hand out pre-prepared role cards to all participants, telling them to keep their 'identity' secret and not show their card to anyone. Ask participants to read their role cards and spend some time getting into role. To help them do this, read out the questions below and ask the participants to think about how their role-figure would respond, painting a inner picture of their life and their perception of themselves.

- What was your childhood like?
- What sort of house did you live in?
- What kind of games did you play?
- What sort of work did your parents do?
- What is your everyday life like now?
- Where do you socialise?
- What do you do in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening?
- What sort of lifestyle do you have?
- Where do you live?
- How much money do you earn each month?
- What do you do in your leisure time?
- What you do in your holidays?
- What excites you and what are you afraid of?

Ask all participants to line up silently on a straight line on one side of the room. Tell them that you will read a number of scenarios and statements out loud.

Every time they feel that their role character would have been able to agree or relate to a statement in a positive way they are to take one step forward. If they do not feel that their role character would have been able to agree or relate positively

Fel! Ingen text med angivet format i dokumentet.

to the statement they are to stay in the same position as they are. The participants are not allowed to talk during the exercise.

The statements are read out loud one after the other. After each statement the facilitator should pause to allow participants time to think about if their character can move forward, and to note their position in the room in relation to other participants. All participants should be given enough time to note their positions in the room at the end of the exercise and to step out of their roles before a reflection/ evaluation of the exercise is carried out by the whole group.

Initiate the group reflection by asking the participants what happened during the exercise and how they felt doing it. Lead the group in a joint conversation about questions the exercise raised and what the participants learned doing it.

Questions you might ask the group are:

- How did people feel stepping forward - or not?
- For those who stepped forward often, at what point did they begin to notice that others were not moving as fast as they were?
- Did anyone feel that there were moments when their basic human rights were being ignored?
- Did anyone feel that there were moments when their freedom of religion or belief was being ignored, why?
- Can people guess each other's roles? (Let people reveal their roles during this part of the discussion)
- How easy or difficult was it to play the different roles? How did they imagine what the person they were playing was like?
- Does the exercise mirror society in some way? How?
- What first steps could be taken to address the inequalities in society?
- What first steps could be taken to address the obstacles to freedom of religion or belief that were identified during the exercise.

## APPENDIX: ROLE CARDS

Role cards should be cut out and distributed among participants.

Please note that these role cards need to be adapted to the context in which the exercise is to be carried out.

As you develop role cards remember to include characters of different genders, social classes, educational levels, ethnic backgrounds and religions or beliefs. Include characters from majority and minority communities and free thinkers within these communities as well as characters from rural and urban contexts.

The example role cards below have been developed for a Middle Eastern context.

<p>You are an unemployed single mother living in a conservative Christian community.</p>	<p>You are a Muslim girl living with your parents who are devoutly religious people.</p>
<p>You are an atheist from an upper class family living in a major urban city/city.</p>	<p>You are a son from a family from a poor rural district. You have moved to the capital in order to find work. As you have started to live life apart from your family you have gradually started to become more and more of a convinced atheist.</p>
<p>You and your husband are devout Baha'is.</p>	<p>You are a Christian who has been asked to move from your village for your own protection by the police.</p>
<p>You are a 17-year-old girl from a devout Christian family who has fallen in love for the first time.</p>	<p>You are a Christian priest in a little village in the rural region of XXX.</p>

Fel! Ingen text med angivet format i dokumentet.

<p>You are a member of the capital's Jewish community.</p>	<p>You are a young girl from a conservative Muslim family who wants to go to university.</p>
<p>You are devout Muslim who wears a beard/ You are member of the country's most conservative religious party who previously had a position in the government.</p>	<p>You are a member of the faculty at the country's most renowned theological seminary.</p>
<p>You are a westerner working with interreligious dialogue in the country and living in its capital.</p>	<p>You are a Christian/Muslim girl from a family originating from a war-torn neighbouring country, newly arrived in country YYY. You want to go to university.</p>
<p>Your parents are Shia and you live in the capital.</p>	<p>You are an old person in a Western non-religious family visiting the country as a tourist.</p>
<p>You are a Christian woman who is severely beaten by her husband.</p>	<p>You are an elderly person in a Muslim family.</p>
<p>You are a Muslim woman who is severely beaten by her husband.</p>	<p>You are a convert from Islam to Christianity.</p>
<p>You and your family are devout Jehovah's witnesses.</p>	<p>You are a young Christian man living in a rural district who think you have found the love of your life.</p>
<p>Your held a high military position during the time of the former dictator.</p>	<p>You are a young democracy activist who doesn't think religion is that important.</p>

## APPENDIX: Sample statements

Please note that these statements need to be adapted to the context in which the exercise is to be carried out.

The example statements below were developed for a Middle Eastern context.

- You feel your language, religion and culture are respected in the society where you live.
- You feel that your opinion on social and political issues matters, and your views are listened to.
- Other people consult you about different issues.
- You are not afraid of being stopped by the police.
- You know where to turn for advice and help if you need it.
- You have never felt discriminated against because of your origin.
- You have adequate social and medical protection for your needs.
- You can go away on holiday once a year.
- You can invite friends for dinner at home.
- You have an interesting life and you are positive about your future.
- You feel you can study and follow the profession of your choice.
- You are not afraid of being harassed or attacked in the streets, or in the media.
- You can vote in national and local elections.
- You can celebrate the most important religious festivals with your relatives and close friends as well as publicly.
- You can participate in an international seminar abroad.
- You can go to the cinema or the theatre whenever you want to, and see any film you want to.
- You are not afraid for the future of your children.
- You can pray openly in public whenever you feel like it.
- You can fall in love with the person of your choice even if they have a different religion than you do.
- You feel that your competence is appreciated and respected in the society where you live.

**Fel! Ingen text med angivet format i dokumentet.**

- You and the community you belong to can build a place of worship without worrying about harassment or not getting the needed permission
- You can get a divorce if you want to
- You don't have any problems getting a new id-card
- You dare to be open with your world view towards family and friends, at your work place and on the internet without fear of repercussions
- You can keep your friends and your social status even if you convert to a different religion
- You have never been in a mosque
- You have never been in a church
- You have been arrested by the police at some point in your life