

FOCUS 2 – INTERVIEWS

What do you think about the tradition of having a cross (crucifix) in many German classrooms?

Irmtraud (68): I'm undecided in this case. I come from a rectory, so in my father's office there was always a cross on the wall. When my mother was finally in a nursing home, she took that cross with her, and it was hanging above her bed. But if school is a place where children go, who are not Christian, who are Muslim, who are Jewish, or total non-believers, then I think the cross is probably in the wrong spot. Therefore I don't find it that necessary that there is a cross in the classroom, except if it is a Christian school. Then, of course, it should be. Why should there be a cross? I think it leads to problems, but if it is taken away then I also wouldn't want any other religious symbols to be present. ... In fact, different religions are all expressions for the same thing, which is needed by the people, which is desired by them. So maybe we should just have the different religious symbols next to each other

Natalija (28): This is also a little bit difficult, because in German schools you have multicultural classes, you have kids of different religions and if you have a cross you're already saying what you are and Germany is a country with so many beliefs and so many different people and if you don't want people wearing headscarves you shouldn't have your cross in the school.

Monika Marie (41): That's ... an old school habit. It's ambivalent. It doesn't feel right to have a cross sitting in the classroom because it represents the Christian culture ... but it is just one culture, one religious culture. ... It does not represent everybody in the classroom. Simply for that reason it doesn't feel right....

Stefan (44): Well, it is there because of the Christian tradition not just of Germany but Europe, as well. I think Christianity is one of the decisive and most influential factors in European history and so from a historical, traditional point of view I think it is a tradition just like the church sitting in the center of many villages, towns and cities, or church towers being the highest



buildings in any town. I don't see this as a religious statement but more as a historical tradition, which as long as it doesn't offend other people, doesn't offend me.

Nina (43): This is something I consider to be very conservative or very one-sided because I feel that we should bring up and educate our children today in schools in a way that respects lots of different religions and lots of different nationalities and races.

Anke (43): ... I think religion should not be present in school, at least not just one. If a cross, then also many other religious symbols! I don't find it appropriate to only have a cross, least of all with today's immigrant population ... either all or none.

Tobias (45): I didn't attend such a school; in my school Erich Honecker and the hammer and sickle in the garland of corn, the GDR symbols, were hanging on the wall. Personally, I don't have a big problem with the cross; I don't see it as such a strong symbol. ... I think we would get along in school quite well without crosses. I personally don't need a cross on the wall to be in contact with God. And if we look at it from a theoretical point of view and say we live in a secular country, a cross definitely shouldn't be on the wall. ... On the other hand, if we talk about culture, I think the cross definitely belongs, and you have to deal with it independently from your personal religion or personal understanding of religion



Gerald (42): Well, that's a political issue for me. I'm not so religious, so I think it would be better if they disappear. I would prefer a separation of state and religion.

Anna (42): In East Germany, we had the picture of Erich Honecker in the classroom, well not in every classroom but in certain rooms in the school. I personally don't like it because it gives a certain direction in the education and orientation towards a certain religion. And I would prefer a school that is completely neutral, that gives the opportunity to develop in different directions and not only in one. That's why I would remove all these crosses. But I would also not allow any other.