

## Toolbox for students

### Tool 15: Holding debates

A debate can help to make us aware of various opinions about a topic and to understand the advantages and disadvantages of controversial issues. In order to hold a debate, there needs to be a controversial question that can be answered with a yes or a no. In a democracy, there is always more than one solution or one opinion.

#### Two opinions – a debate

Here's how it works:

- Divide your class into two groups. One group is “for” (in favour of) the issue, the other group is “against” the issue.
- Each group finds possible arguments<sup>48</sup> to support their opinion. They should also put together arguments that go against the opinion of the other group.
- Note down your argument using key words.
- Each group designates two speakers.
- The debate is organised in three parts: the opening round, an open debate, and the closing round:
  - the opening round: each speaker briefly explains his or her argument. The “pros” group and the “cons”<sup>49</sup> group take turns presenting;
  - the debate: the speakers present their arguments and try to counter the opposing side's arguments;
  - the closing round: this round has the same procedure as the opening round. Each person has the possibility to summarise his or her opinion.

#### The timekeeper

Choose someone from your class who is responsible for keeping the time during the debate.

- The opening round should last no more than eight minutes (each person can speak for two minutes).
- The debate should last no more than six minutes.
- The closing round should last no more than four minutes (one minute per person).
- If somebody goes over the allotted time, a bell is rung.

#### Observers

Students who are not speakers during the debate observe what happens. After the debate, they say what they noticed using the following points as a basis:

- Which arguments were presented?
- Who will implement what and how?
- Was each speaker allowed to speak or were they interrupted?
- How did different speakers try to get their message across?
- Which arguments were convincing?
- What examples of good arguments were presented?
- Which words were used frequently?
- How did the speakers speak (using body language, were they loud enough, with inflection)?

48. Argument: a statement that is formulated to support a claim.

49. Pros and cons: this means “for” and “against”.