

The practice of religious toleration in past and contemporary Europe

September 19-20, 2019 IEG Mainz

Throughout their long histories, European societies have always been religiously plural to some extent. Unprecedented in scale was the religious diversity introduced by the fragmentation of Western Christianity in the sixteenth century. From that time onward, millions of Europeans saw themselves confronted with religious diversity on a daily basis. Moreover, apart from the several major Christian confessions, Orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims, and a host of other religious currents found home in Europe, too. While subsequent centuries of politico-religious developments have fundamentally altered the confessional geography of Europe, its societies remain religiously plural. Indeed, in the modern day and age, processes of immigration and globalization further contribute to the (religious) diversity of European societies.

Both in past and present the existence of various religious and non-religious groups has presented its opportunities and challenges. Not infrequently religious differences led to bitter disputes, hatred, and even violence. In particular scholars who are interested in the practice of religious tolerance have studied the myriad of solutions that were established in order to maintain peaceful relation between different religious denomination and prevent the outbreak of religious violence. Various means to accommodate religious differences were implemented, including systems of confessional parity, sharing of shared spaces, and the enactment of religious peace treaties. As a result, a host of different 'regimes of coexistence' emerged, some more stable than others. Irrespective of their success or failure, the existence of such experiments to regulate and manage religious diversity testifies to the fundamental impact religious diversity had and has on European societies past and present.

This workshop brings together people from within and outside of academia to study and discuss the ways in which European societies throughout human history have addressed the phenomenon of religious diversity. Moreover, we aim to link the insights gained from academic research to contemporary experiences of religious diversity and to the policies drafted by (local) authorities in relation to the cultural, legal, and political aspects of religious diversity in our modern societies. Central questions include:

- In which ways was religious diversity managed, regulated, and accommodated?
- When and why did religious violence erupt and how was it contained?
- How did and do religious minorities negotiate their own position in European societies?
- What were the rights of religious minorities in relation to the religious majority and the state?
- What are the long term social, political, and economic consequences of the particular ways in which religious diversity was accommodated?

- How can academic research enhance our understanding of interreligious relations in the current day and age?
- How can the creation of shared infrastructures aid the research and teaching on the religious history of Europe?
- What role should/could the European Union play in relation to the management of religious pluralism?