



TOLERANCE AWARDS OF THE EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS

The European Academy of Sciences and Arts is a non-profit organization that deals with scientific progress and social change. Interdisciplinary skills and transnational cooperation should promote innovative research approaches as well as the dissemination and exchange of knowledge. The Academy was founded in 1990 as a registered association based in Salzburg, and now has about 2,000 scientists, artists and church dignitaries among its members, including 32 Nobel Prize winners.

Apart from the scientific discourse, since its inception the European Academy has been endeavouring to promote cultural exchange. Accepting different requirements and other cultures is the prerequisite for peaceful coexistence. Consequently, as early as the 1990s, the European Academy gathered representatives of the world religions in interreligious dialogues. From these dialogues emerged the Charter of Tolerance, which contains among others six essential principles for peaceful coexistence and was presented to the United Nations in New York in 2002.

Since 1997 the European Academy has awarded the Award for Tolerance recognizing the commitment to humanity and tolerance. Based on the Charter of Tolerance, this award will be given to personalities or institutions that promote cross-border humanity and understanding between religions and countries. So far, this distinction has been awarded among others to the former Mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kollek †, the social scientist and wife of former Egyptian President Susanne Mubarak, the International Red Cross, the founder of the *Children of Abraham Foundation* Dorothea Rosenblad, the former Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher † and Vienna's former Archbishop Franz Cardinal König †. This award was last granted to Court Counsellor Marko Feingold in January 2018, President of the Jewish Community of Salzburg and oldest Holocaust survivor of Austria.

At the suggestion of the British publisher and diplomat Lord George Weidenfeld †, who has rendered outstanding service building bridges between cultures and states, since 2012 the tolerance rings have been awarded to one representative each of the three Abrahamic religions Christianity, Judaism and Islam, who is actively engaged in promoting tolerance and compassion as well as cross-border dialogue and against racism.

The idea of the three identical rings can be traced back to the Parable of the Ring from Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*. The text is about a family tradition in which a father hands down a special ring to his favourite son and causes the ring to always be entrusted to the favourite son. The tradition comes to an end with a father who loves his three sons equally and has two identical rings reproduced.

The parable can be interpreted as meaning that the three rings represent the three monotheistic world religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), the three sons are the respective communities of faith and the father is a loving God who prefers no religion. God (Father) therefore loves all men (sons), no matter what religion they belong to.

In 2014, the European Academy of Sciences and Arts hosted the award for the first time in Cologne, not least because of the city's multicultural population structure. In order to better tie the event locally and to gear towards the media, a local board of trustees was founded in September 2016. After the 2014 and 2015 awards, the idea emerged to redesign the format of the event in order to make the topic better accessible to a wider audience. The careful considerations of the Board of Trustees and the aspect, that the key to a peaceful coexistence of different cultures lies in education and cultivation, led eventually to the cooperation with the Center for Teacher Education (ZfL) at the University of Cologne. The tolerance rings were awarded in 2017 to: Avishay Braverman (former President of the Ben Gurion University of the Negev), Rabeya Müller (Deputy Chair of the Center for Islamic Women's Research and Women's Advancement) and Mitri Raheb (Founder and President of the Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture in Bethlehem). In addition to the tolerance rings the European Academy awarded in 2017 together with the ZfL for the first time the School Award "Tolerance Catches On".