

Taking action

An introduction for educators With tips and extra information

Text in italics are taken from the online learning tool

Your everyday actions have an effect on the people and society around you. How do people act against discrimination? And what can you do?

Aims

In this learning path, learners:

- Reflect on what it means to take action.
- Consider how human rights are relevant to their lives, both as a basis / justification for taking action and for understanding that human rights as they are written and upheld are a result of taking action.
- Gain an understanding of the relationship between human rights and taking action.
- Analyse three cases of discrimination involving young people whose rights were fought for and upheld at the European Court of Human Rights.
- Are inspired by examples of young people's different ways of taking action against discrimination to discuss what they themselves might do.
- Find information and a plan that they can use to prepare their own action.

Structure

This learning path consists of three tracks (lessons) each with a number of steps.

Track 1: Learners explore social engagement and listen to two people who took action after an antisemitic attack on a synagogue in Copenhagen in 2015. They consider reasons for and against taking action in situations involving discrimination.

Track 2: Learners reflect on the way human rights affect their own lives and those of others. They work with one of three cases that were taken to the European Court of Human Rights and consider the actors in the cases.

Track 3: Learners listen to five young people who took action. They then consider different forms of taking action and work in small groups on an example of discrimination and action. The last step prepares learners to develop their own action plan.

Learners require approximately 50 minutes for track 1, 100 minutes for track 2 and 50 minutes for track 3, plus additional time if they are to plan and execute their own action.



Flow of work - Icons

Learners will often work in pairs, small groups or discuss a topic with the whole class. The flow for each step is easily recognised with the help of the following icons:



Answering questions individually allows time to formulate a personal response.



Discussing topics in pairs gives everyone the chance to voice an opinion and discuss in a simple format, with one person.



Discussing in small groups allows for more opinions to be shared and also creates a comfortable space to voice ideas. Not all learners are keen to express themselves in a larger group.



Class discussions give the opportunity to bring the group together to review the work being done and also give you as the educator a moment to summarise some main outcomes.

Track 1 – Action and change

Time: about 50 minutes

What kind of action can lead to change?

Outline

In this track learners look at two points of view about taking action using the case study of a commemorative event after an antisemitic attack on a synagogue in Copenhagen in 2015. They listen to Anna and Naveed, who speak out and organise in their respective communities. Both reflect on the impact of their actions. By discussing both the obstacles to taking action and the benefits, learners are given the opportunity to weigh different perspectives and consider for themselves that there are reasons for and against taking action in situations involving discrimination.



Step 1 Zoom in and out

Describe two things you see.

Describe two NEW things you see.

Describe what you think is happening

This is a memorial event outside Copenhagen's Great

Synagogue in February 2015, after an antisemitic attack.

People showed their support for the Jewish community and expressed their sorrow about the violence.

This is an individual activity. Slow down the process of thinking and observing. Make sure the learners actually describe something they see in the image, instead of guessing what it shows. Ask challenging questions such as 'Why do you say that? What makes you think it is a girl or an Olympic flame?'



Step 2 Exploring an action

Anna spoke out publicly after the attack. (Video clip)

Look at the next page and describe what you liked or disliked about Anna's account.

*We are using the fingers of a hand as symbols.
Say it with your hand.*

Under (i):

Each finger represents a point you want to make.

Thumbs up: I liked

Pointer finger: I would like to point out

Middle finger: I disliked

Ring finger: I will remember

Little finger: I would like to learn more about

Before starting

- Make sure learners know that their answers will be shared within the group. Exchange and discussion is central to the learning process. Each time your students login they will see the following pop-up:

Please be aware: the answers you give during assignments will be shared with your teacher and classmates in group work.

- As the topics discussed are personal, consider whether the atmosphere in the class feels safe and whether you can be sure that the learners will treat each other respectfully. Discuss this point with the class if you think this might be necessary.

- Often learners will only be able to continue if they have submitted one or more answers. At some points when working online learners will only be able to continue if the rest of the class has also submitted answers. They need to be aware of this.

- Learners will need guidance on how much time to spend on each step. Taking the level of your learners into account, and the amount of time available it will be useful to indicate the available time. Tracks start with brief questions that serve as a 'warming up'. Keep the time spent on the first steps brief, so that there is more time for discussion later on.

- Consider giving some assignments as homework (as indicated). Research and preparing presentations can be done individually or in small groups as home work.

Blended learning

Blended learning mixes online and offline work, allowing students to benefit from both learning environments in the most effective way. The learning process is centred on individual assignments and intense exchanges, and should be carefully monitored.

Learners should not run ahead of the group. It can be useful to read some of the texts collectively, with one learner reading out loud and to watch some of the video clips collectively. Take time for the group work and class discussion.

Form pairs to discuss one of your responses.
Then share and compare with the class.

Take time to discuss what impact the event and Anna's words had on your learners. The violent event described might evoke strong emotions and this should be acknowledged. Using the 'Say it with your hand' method allows everyone to individually structure their thoughts. Discussing in pairs first allows learners to voice their responses. The class exchange should be on the basis of voluntary contributions. It should not be rushed. However, if a learner doesn't have anything to say about a finger, they should enter the word 'nothing' in the text box, as an answer is needed to be able to proceed.

Naveed Baig took part in the synagogue memorial service. (Video clip)

*Why do you think Anna spoke out publicly about the attack?
Why do you think Naveed attended this memorial event?*

By discussing the two examples together learners are given the opportunity to realise that both those individuals were directly affected by an act of discrimination, and that bystanders or passers-by do have ways to respond.



Step 3 To act or not to act

There are valid reasons for taking or not taking action in a situation. The next two questions look at the obstacles and benefits of taking action. Let's see what might tip the balance.

Give reasons against or obstacles in relation to taking action. Give reasons for or benefits in relation to taking action. Choose a word in the tag cloud that you find surprising. Discuss in pairs or as a class.

Consider whether a discussion in pairs or as a class is more appropriate. Depending on the class dynamics and learners' experiences one tag cloud might be bigger or contain a larger variety of words. It is not unusual if the obstacles learners write down are linked to negative emotions such as fear, powerlessness or danger. It is important to recognise that, depending upon the situation, these reasons for not taking action are legitimate. On the other hand, it can be beneficial for all students to also consider the empowering experience of taking action by looking at the benefits, both on an individual and a societal level.



Step 4 Actions and change

Think about the world around you. Which action have you noticed or heard of that has changed something?

Navigation

Most learning paths have several tracks. You as the educator will choose which path and track learners work with. Each track consists of several steps. Most steps include several screen pages – usually with a question, some information, and an assignment to work on in pairs or as a group. Learners can only go back a page if it is part of the same step, perhaps to look again at the question or to reread a text. The back arrow will not take learners back to previous steps. If this is necessary, the dropdown menu in the top left hand corner opens navigation through the whole track.

Tag clouds

There are two types of tag clouds that collect the individual answers submitted by learners. The 'word cloud' collects words submitted by the learners. All answers are treated equally. However, the 'cloud' shows a random collection of answers. This means that not everyone sees the same answers. Usually there will be more words than fit on one screen. A useful way to discuss the tag cloud is to ask if anyone is surprised or interested in a particular word. As the moderator you might also group words that belong together.

Sometimes the tag cloud collects the opinions of learners statistically and displays them in a graph or with numbers. This illustrates the differences of opinion in the class. Suggestions for discussion are given.

Learners who are the first to submit answers will find the tag cloud relatively empty. Let all learners refresh their screen if the last learners have submitted their answers.

Glossary

Word highlighted in the text are explained in the glossary. It will depend on the level and interest of the learners, and the time available if they use the glossary extensively or not. In some cases the learners will be required to use the glossary. Consider which words you want to discuss with the whole class to make sure they have been understood.

sure that learners are aware of this. They will sometimes need this information to complete an assignment.

To round off the track, learners are asked to reflect on action and change, either in their local environments or from global examples that interest them. This might also be given as homework and you can consider asking the learners to make the assignment on paper (a written sentence or poster) to hang up in class.

Track 2 – Your right to take action!

Time: about 100 minutes

Did you know you have a right to take action?

Outline

Learners gain insight into the way human rights affect their own lives and those of others. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is taken as a benchmark text to clarify the juridical weight of human rights. Learners can focus on one of three cases that were taken to the European Court of Human Rights. They present the case to the class and in the process gain both an understanding of the nature of the violation of human rights and a basic understanding of legal redress for human rights violations in terms of the process, and also which actors are involved in cases. At the end of the track learners are invited to make a creative wall of hashtags.



Step 1 Being human

What makes you human?

What rights are important to you as a human?

Click on each number in turn and discuss the tag clouds.

When discussing the two tag clouds, help the learners make the connection between the two questions: namely that every human has rights. The rights form the basis of the recognition of human dignity. Learners may be sceptical, as many are aware of human rights violations. Keep this thought on hold with the learners, as it will be returned to in the latter half of this track.



Step 2 A regular day

Let's say it is Wednesday! Consider what you do on a typical Wednesday.

Drag and drop these activities into your regular day.

Sleep, eating (three times), school, and reading.

Add activities that you do on a typical Wednesday.

Drag and drop these activities into your regular day.

Information and instruction (i)

Extra information and instructions are sometimes provided in the top right hand corner of the screen. Make sure that learners are aware of this. They will sometimes need this information to complete an assignment.

Subtitles

Make sure to turn on the subtitles (click on the icon at the bottom right corner of the video screen to select the language) before learners start watching the film clip.





Step 3 A day with rights

Which human rights affect your day? Choose three and add them to your time table.

Work in pairs and compare your days.

Under (i):

These rights are a selection. There are many more. Some of them can be read here:

<https://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchildfriendlylanguage.pdf>

After working individually on 'a regular day' and 'a day with rights' allow time for a brief exchange in pairs. This exercise allows for a personal connection to the topic. The class discussion should be kept for the next step.



Step 4 Complicated rights

Sometimes it might not be possible to achieve rights fully. Choose two rights that could lead to complications in everyday life.

Choose two rights that you consider complicated. Discuss the tag cloud.

The tag cloud will indicate which rights your learners consider most complicated. This might be in relation to their own lives, or to issues in school or in society. Take time to look at several examples. It will make sense to look at those that have a high score, but make sure to acknowledge that a right that was only chosen by one or a few learners is also valid for discussion if there were no time constraints. Help learners articulate why they consider the rights they chose to be problematic or complicated to achieve in everyday life.



Step 5 Convention on the Rights of the Child

A 'child' is anyone under 18. 'Rights' are things every child should have or be able to do.

Almost every country has agreed to these rights. The rights in the CRC are connected to one another, and all of them are equally important. They were written and agreed on by experts in terms of what is important to life, and to protection from harm.

You have the right to know what these rights are.

Governments and international organisations also have a responsibility to ensure that children are protected with these rights.

Go through the previous text.

Use pen and paper.

Choose a phrase that engaged you.

Choose a word that captured your attention.

Under (i):

Convention adopted by the United Nations in 1989 specifying the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children. Its aim is to protect all children worldwide and guarantee their rights, e.g. the right to life, the right to be protected from abuse and exploitation, the right to express their opinion etc. Currently, 196 countries have ratified the Convention, including all members of the United Nations except the United States.

This step is an introduction to working with concrete examples of human rights violations. The short text on the Convention is included so that learners can consider the rights in the context of international law. The phrase and word exercise helps learners to focus on what they consider important in a text. Learners might exchange their answers in pairs, but we suggest moving on to the group work.



Step 6 Action and rights

Not everyone is always free and equal. Discrimination is common. Look at how human rights are defended. Form a group. As a group choose one of the three cases.

-Who were the perpetrators?

-What should the role of people in this profession or institution be in society?

-Who took action to defend the rights of the victim?

Discuss how you feel about the outcome of the case.

As a group prepare to present your case to the rest of the class.

Under (i):

These are genuine cases that were taken to the European Court of Human Rights. The official names of the cases are: *Stoica v. Romania (Police violence)*, *D.H. and Others v. Czech Republic (Missed education)*, and *Defence for Children International (DCI) v. Belgium (Excluded children)*. If you would like to know more see: <http://echr.coe.int>

Police violence

Police officers beat a group of Roma outside a bar in Gulia, in northern Romania, on 3 April 2001. 14-year-old Constantin, who happened to be there, was also severely attacked and injured by the police. People stood by as police officers physically and verbally attacked him for being Roma. The attack left Constantin permanently disabled.

The court decided that the police acted violently in a discriminatory and racist way.

The lawyers highlighted the fact that the police force is the authority that is supposed to safeguard the peace and safety of society. The court held that the Romanian state must use all available means to combat racism and racist violence.

The court awarded Constantin and his family 15,000 euros, but his disabilities as a result of the attack are permanent.

Missed education

Between 1996 and 1999, 18 Roma children from the Ostrava region in the Czech Republic were sent to schools for children with learning difficulties. This decision was usually taken by head teachers in order to abide with regulations by the Ministry of Education which hindered Roma children from receiving the same standard of education as non-Roma children.

The Roma children were systematically sent to segregated schools based on their identity and not their intellectual abilities.

The court decided that the children had been discriminated against and had been denied their right to education.

This case is important because it was the first time that the European Court of Human Rights ruled that there had been a violation of the right of freedom from discrimination in public primary schools.

The families and their lawyers were supported by various non-governmental organisations such as Interights and Human Rights Watch. The court awarded 4,000 euros to each child and 10,000 euros jointly to all the children, but it could not compensate for the six years of missed education opportunities.

Excluded children

Refugee children in Belgium were considered 'illegal residents' and excluded from social assistance. They lived in poverty and were denied their right to medical care.

The immigration office placed hundreds of young refugees in inadequate living conditions, such as overcrowded hotel rooms with lack of proper hygiene and safety, and security problems.

The European Committee of Social Rights called this a violation of the right to economic, social and legal protection due to the lack of space in accommodation centres for refugees.

Defence for Children International – a non-governmental organisation – asked the Belgian government to create solutions to guarantee the rights of children without Belgian citizenship in the country.

Create groups or let the learners form their own groups. Encourage groups to take different cases so that each case has at least one group working on it. This is an opportunity for learners to articulate the main facts of the case in their presentations, as well as their thoughts about what in the case resonates with them. If more than one group has worked on the same case compare how they feel about the outcome of the case.



Step 7 #humanrights

Make a hashtag about what you've learnt about human rights and taking action!

This step can also be done offline. Learners can make a hashtag 'wall' on a poster-sized piece of paper. Learners can then ask about hashtags they want to know more about in a brief class discussion.

Track 3 – ... and Action!

Time: about 45 minutes

See how other young people took action.

Learn how to take action yourself!

Outline

Learners listen to five examples of action taken by peers and choose one to look at more closely. Working in groups, they discuss examples of discrimination and choose a form of action to take against it from a list of suggestions. These steps help learners to prepare their own action plan. This last step does not necessarily need to be completed in the track. It is an intensive step and needs time and careful supervision to be a valuable experience for the learners and their local environment / communities.



Step 1 Watch the film clip



Step 2 The activists

Pick one person and find out how they take action.

You have all chosen the same person.

Form small groups.

Which form of discrimination does their action address?

What might have been their motivation for doing this?

Are any other organisations involved? If so, who or which?

The actions described by the five young people vary in terms of level of commitment and implementation in their

societies: from becoming active in an NGO or helping people in need, to a simple reflection on their own discriminatory behaviour.



Step 3 Setting the stage

Have a look at some other forms of action.

Flashmob, Demonstration, Debate, Petition, Speaking out, Commemoration, Poster, Song, Social media campaign, Film

Each of these forms of action is described briefly and will be returned to later.

Form a small group.

Together you will decide on an action against discrimination. Choose one of the following scenarios.

- 1. You see antisemitic graffiti on a wall behind a sports ground.*
- 2. A friend is denied an internship because she wears a headscarf.*
- 3. Neo-Nazis are handing out CDs with antigypsyist songs outside your school.*
- 4. You see two women harassed on the street because they are holding hands.*
- 5. On the bus, only the Black passenger gets checked by the transport police.*

As a group, decide which action(s) you would take to address this discriminatory situation.

Which form of action did you choose? Explain why you chose it.

Which human right(s) does this relate to?

Who can you ask for help to take this action?

Think of a way to act out the type of action you've chosen to take.

Prepare a presentation about it for the other groups.

If learners have their own suggestions for types of action, they can use those instead.

If learners have difficulty answering this question, help them research other NGOs active in this field, or that address this form of discrimination.



Step 4 Action plan

Form teams!

Brainstorm about local discrimination issues.

Choose what it is you want to tackle.

Download the action plan and fill it out.

- 1. What is the action? Research local issues.*
- 2. Who is the target audience / who will take part?*
- 3. Why are you taking this form of action?*
- 4. Which form of discrimination or human rights does it concern?*
- 5. When is the action to take place?*
- 6. Where will it take place?*
- 7. Which skills do you have that can help make this action happen?*
- 8. Who can support your action?*
- 9. What are you calling the action or your group?*

Share your action plans with the other groups. Advise each other.

If the class has time and motivation to work on their own action plans, suggest that they can carry out an action altogether if they want to, as this will give them realistic experiences of teamwork and project management. There should then be a carefully lead discussion on which topic to work on. If groups work on different plans, consider who might be available to support and supervise them. Young people are often (over) ambitious and not aware of the amount of time needed to organise a seemingly simple event. Empowerment is achieved when the goals that have been set are met. Inside and outside school there may be experienced people (peers or adults) willing to mentor a group.



Step 5 Get inspired!

If you manage to carry out the action you planned, send the plan, a description and photos to the Stories that Move team and you may be included in our map of youth actions!

We are keen to add examples from across Europe to inspire others to develop a plan too. Please encourage your learners to take good photos of their activities. If you send in an action plan, please include your contact details as their educator in case we want to get in touch. The information can be sent in your local language.