

UNIT 3
EQUALITY
Primary level

Minorities and majorities

3.1 All different, all equal

We accept each other in a group

3.2 Is it fair?

Minorities and majorities in the school playground (research)

3.3 Is it fair?

Minorities and majorities in the school playground (follow-up)

3.4 A matrix of power

Minorities and majorities in our country

Unit 3: Key concept – “Equality” (for primary level)

Background information for teachers: how to raise awareness about minorities and majorities in primary students' daily lives

“All different, all equal” is a very well-known expression in Europe. It reflects one of the core values of EDC/HRE, which can be expressed as follows: “With some people I share a lot, while with others I share very little. Although I share certain characteristics with them, I don’t share others. For some elements of my personality I belong to a majority, for others to a minority.” When raising awareness about minorities and majorities at primary level, it is necessary to clarify the terms themselves. Generally, a minority is a group within a country that distinguishes itself from the majority of people by means of personal or cultural characteristics. In most cases, a minority lives as a demographic group in a certain territorial unit (a region, for example), but it can also be scattered and spread over an entire country or across a country’s borders. The different characteristics of minorities are very often language, ethnic background or religion, but sometimes also moral attitudes, sexual identity or social status distinguish them.

The term minority is generally used when a group is dominated by a larger group but doesn’t assimilate into that group. Therefore, in general, minorities describe ethnic or national minorities.

The Council of Europe, the United Nations and other international organisations have passed laws on the rights of minorities. These rights are respected to different degrees. The Council of Europe has two binding instruments: the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157, adopted in 1995) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148, adopted in 1992).

In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly also adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. In 1988, the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) was founded in Tokyo to try to shift attention to the problems of racism and discrimination against minorities. IMADR advocates the rights of underprivileged groups.

In most cases, the term minority refers to a group of people characterised by the following elements:

- small in size compared to the overall population of a state;
- having a non-dominant status in the country;
- possessing common features such as ethnicity, religion or language;
- having a feeling of solidarity or identity through perceiving themselves as a minority.

It is difficult to categorise minorities. The following categories are most commonly used:

- National or ethnic minorities: groups of people living in the territory of a state which is dominated by a different group of people.
- Linguistic minorities: a group of people speaking a different language from the majority of people in the country.
- Religious minorities: those with a different religion from the majority of people in a country, such as Protestants in Ireland, Christians in Saudi Arabia, or Muslims in Denmark or Germany.
- Sexual minorities.
- A minority of older people.
- A minority of younger people.

When working at primary level with the terms minorities and majorities, it is essential to explain these characteristics to the students. Only then can the function and status of a minority or a majority be analysed. The concept of minorities is not something that is unknown in students’ daily lives, At

primary school level, students frequently experience “belonging to” or “not belonging to” a minority.

The definition of minority in this context refers to the composition of the school population. The following series of lessons therefore begins with students’ daily lives and their own experiences of minorities and majorities (lessons 1-3). In a second step, the lessons tie in with majorities and minorities in society and identify different groups (lesson 4). It will depend on the depth of discussion, the motivation of the students and the overall academic achievement of the class to what extent the status of the different groups in society can be analysed. Not all minorities are underprivileged. There are some small groups in our societies which are very dominant for several reasons. It will be the teacher’s task to steer the process of debate.

The aim of education for democratic citizenship is to support the development of competences in three areas. This unit has the following competence profile:

Competence in ...		
... political analysis and judgment	... the use of methods	... political decision making and action
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Toolbox support

In this unit the following tools from the students’ toolbox will be used. The teacher must decide if some or all of the students need additional preparation in order to work with these tools.

- 0 Researching in libraries
- 0 Researching on the Internet
- x Carrying out interviews and surveys
- 0 Interpreting images
- x Mind maps
- 0 Creating posters
- 0 Holding exhibitions
- 0 Planning and giving presentations
- 0 Preparing overhead transparencies or a PowerPoint presentation
- 0 Writing newspaper articles
- 0 Putting on performances
- 0 Holding debates

Unit 3: Equality

Minorities and majorities

How to raise awareness about minorities and majorities in primary students' daily lives

Lesson title	Learning objectives	Student tasks	Resources	Methods
Lesson 1: All different, all equal	The students learn to know and accept each other as part of a group. The students discover what they have in common that they were unaware of before. They become aware of attitudes and practices related to difference.	The students are presented with a series of characteristics one by one. They have to decide whether or not they have each of these characteristics. After having noticed their own characteristics and those of their other classmates, they discuss issues concerning equality.	A piece of chalk or string to draw or make a line on the ground.	Group work, plenary discussion.
Lesson 2: Is it fair? (research)	The students become aware of the situation in their own school by observing other students at break time.	The students conduct research in the school playground by counting the number of students taking part in different activities. They note down the results and conduct interviews with the students who are not involved in any activities.	A copy of the table for taking notes in the school playground, pencils.	Groups of four.
Lesson 3: Is it fair? (follow-up)	The students reflect upon the data they have gathered and analyse and interpret the interviews. They come to a conclusion about the minorities and majorities in their school.	After having gathered all the data in quantitative as well as qualitative terms, the students analyse and interpret the results. They work with statistics and present their results to their classmates.	Notes from lesson 2, copies of the statistics table, coloured pencils, posters, glue.	Groups of four, presentation.
Lesson 4: A matrix of power	In a plenary discussion, the students understand that there are several minorities as well as majorities present in their country. They understand that a sense of exclusion can be the result of not only the way other members of society see you, but also of the way members of your own group see you.	The students are presented with various cards showing groups within a society – with some groups belonging to a minority, and some to a majority. They sort the cards according to whether they think the groups belong to a minority or a majority. They assign power cards (low power or high power) to the groups. In a plenary session, they discuss what effect belonging to a majority or a minority can have.	Word cards, power cards.	Plenary discussion.

Lesson 1

All different, all equal

We accept each other in a group

Learning objectives	The students learn to know and accept each other as part of a group. The students discover what they have in common that they were unaware of before. They become aware of attitudes and practices related to difference.
Student tasks	The students are presented with a series of characteristics one by one. They have to decide whether or not they have each of these characteristics. After having noticed their own characteristics and those of their classmates, they discuss issues concerning equality.
Resources	A piece of chalk or string to draw or make a line on the ground.
Methods	Group work, plenary discussion.

Lesson description

The teacher draws a line on the floor in the middle of the classroom or lays out a piece of string. There should be enough space on both sides of the line for the students to stand.

The teacher asks all the students to stand on one side of the line (all on the same side).

The teacher then calls out a series of characteristics one by one. As soon as a characteristic is mentioned, the students have to decide whether it applies to them. Those who recognise that they have this characteristic should jump over the line. When they have jumped over the line, the students should look around to see who else has done the same.

Below are some examples of characteristics that a teacher can call out. Those students who:

- are wearing jeans;
- have blue eyes;
- have visited other countries in Europe;
- regularly read a newspaper;
- have eaten breakfast today;
- have got a sister or a brother;
- like watching television;
- like playing football.

The students can now be asked to suggest characteristics, but the teacher should be aware of and react to sensitive suggestions.

Once the game has been played for some time, the students should form a circle with their chairs. They should then discuss the following issues:

- Did anyone find themselves in a group with someone with whom they thought they had nothing in common?
- How does it feel to be part of a large group?
- How does it feel to be alone?

Variation:

As soon as a characteristic is mentioned, the students move to form groups with those having the same characteristics. They stay together for a moment in order to discuss what they have in common. Their discussions might concern preferences and behaviour, for example.

Lesson 2

Is it fair? (research)

Minorities and majorities in the school playground

Learning objectives	The students become aware of the situation in their own school by observing other students at break time.
Student tasks	The students conduct research in the school playground by counting the number of students taking part in different activities. They note down the results and conduct interviews with the students who are not involved in any activities.
Resources	A copy of the table for taking notes in the school playground, pencils.
Methods	Groups of four.

Information box

Quantitative and qualitative research at primary level

Quantitative methods of data gathering – statistics – are taught in schools for several reasons: they are useful for daily life, they play an instrumental role in other disciplines and they promote critical reasoning when using real data.

Teaching statistics in primary school is usually done through combining it with natural sciences or covering it as part of mathematics. In many cases, teaching quantitative methods of gathering data remains at a purely instrumental level in primary school and very seldom includes analysis and interpretation of the gathered data. For the purpose of promoting critical thinking processes and reasoning, the teaching of quantitative methods ought not to stop at the presentation of results via graphs or diagrams. It is essential to focus on linking the methods of acquiring data with what has been discovered and to interpret the results.

In order to enhance this process at primary level, the addition of qualitative research helps students to gain more insight into what triggers the data that have been recorded and what the underlying notions are. In this context, it is suggested to let the students come up with ideas for interview questions themselves. By doing this, a real understanding of the issues that are being investigated can be developed. In the following two lessons, the key elements are the use of real data from the students' daily lives and the interpretation of the results.

Lesson description

The teacher divides the class into groups of four. For their research, each group will focus on one aspect of what is going on in the school playground at break time.

Examples of aspects for research:

- the number of boys and girls engaged in activities;
- the sports activities that are taking place;
- the other games being played;
- the topics being discussed;
- the different activities of younger and older students.

Each group will be assigned one aspect of research in order to find out about minorities and majorities in their school. The group has to formulate a research question they want to focus on. They write down their main question on the printed copy of the research table.

Examples of questions:

- “How many boys and how many girls are involved in activities at break time?”
- “What kinds of sports activities are played at break time and by whom?”

In addition, the students should formulate a set of not more than five questions about their aspect of research that they want to ask the other students in the school playground.

Examples:

- “Why do you think are there more boys/girls doing that?”
- “Why do you think that fewer boys/girls play this game?”
- “What would you change?”

During a longer break, the students go into the school playground and conduct their research in their groups. Depending on the organisational level of the class, work could also be divided within the group (two students take down the quantitative results, while two ask the qualitative questions and take notes).

Once the research has been completed, the students return to their classrooms and discuss their results within their groups for a moment. What is their general impression? Do they have similar results?

Lesson 3

Is it fair? (follow-up)

Minorities and majorities in the school playground

Learning objectives	The students reflect upon the data they have gathered and analyse and interpret the interviews. They come to a conclusion about the minorities and majorities in their school.
Student tasks	After having gathered all the data in quantitative as well as qualitative terms, the students analyse and interpret the results. They work with statistics and present their results to their classmates.
Resources	Notes from lesson 2, copies of the statistics table, coloured pencils, posters, glue.
Methods	Groups of four, presentation.

Lesson description


The students sit together in their groups and take out their notes from the previous lesson.

They discuss how they want to present the results of their research. The teacher hands out a large piece of paper from a flipchart to each group (the students will use this to make a poster).

The groups then work on the presentation of their results. The results should be divided into three big sections on the poster:

- quantitative results (statistical overview);
- qualitative results (results from the interviews);
- interpretations and possible solutions.

Possible layout of the poster:

Research question:
1. Statistics 
2. What students think – <i>It is unfair that ...</i> – <i>I think that we should ...</i> – –
3. What does this mean? – <i>More space for sports?</i> – <i>Football for girls too?</i> – –

While the students work on their posters, the teacher should walk around the class and give hints about specific questions and/or results.

Once all the groups have completed their work, each group will be given five minutes to present their poster. All posters should then be displayed in the school, preferably somewhere where other students can also look at them.

Variation:

The students' interpretations and solutions could be the subject of a further discussion about the research and the possible consequences that could arise from it, not only for the class but also for the whole school. A presentation at a students' council or at a teachers' conference could lead to changes in the situation of minorities/majorities in the school.

Lesson 4

A matrix of power

Minorities and majorities in our country

Learning objectives	In a plenary discussion, the students understand that there are several minorities as well as majorities present in their country. They understand that a sense of exclusion can be the result of not only the way other members of society see you, but also of the way members of your own group see you.
Student tasks	The students are presented with various cards showing groups within a society – with some groups belonging to a minority, and some to a majority. They sort the cards according to whether they think the groups belong to a minority or a majority. They assign power cards (low power or high power) to the groups. In a plenary session, they discuss what effect belonging to a majority or a minority can have.
Resources	Word cards, power cards.
Methods	Plenary discussion.

Lesson description

The students sit in a circle. There should be enough space in the middle for everybody to be able to see.

The teacher places the set of word cards bearing the names of different groups within society on the floor in the middle of the circle. Some of the groups should belong to minorities and some to majorities. Note: it is important to bear in mind that not all minority groups have little power in society!

Examples:

- children;
- people with disabilities;
- politicians;
- people with a different skin colour;
- punks;
- skaters;
- very religious people who show their religion by dressing differently;
- priests and nuns;
- people who are elderly;
- country-specific minorities such as Roma, Sinti, Ashkali, etc.;
- managers;
- workers;
- housewives;
- doctors;
- men;
- women.

The students should look at the different cards. Then they should each take a card and, without saying anything, sort it according to whether they think the group named on the card is a minority or a majority. This should be the first step in starting a “matrix of power”. Only one student at a time should stand up and take a card.

As a second step, the matrix will be continued by assigning power cards to the different minorities and majorities. It will be interesting for the students to discover that minorities, too, can be very powerful in a society.

Example of the matrix:

Power	Minorities	Majorities
Very high power		
High power		
Middle power		
Little power		
No power		

Once the matrix has been completed, the students discuss the effects that different levels of power can have. It will be the teacher’s task to steer the discussion and to take into account prior attitudes or fixed opinions in a very sensitive way.