Lesson 4
What values must we share?
Taking responsibility in a human-rights-based community

This matrix sums up the information a teacher needs to plan and deliver the lesson. **Competence training** refers directly to EDC/HRE. The **learning objective** indicates what students know and understand. The **student task(s)**, together with the **method**, form the core element of the learning process. The **materials** checklist supports lesson preparation. The **time budget** gives a rough guideline for the teacher's time management.	
Competence training	Judgment: reflecting on criteria and values.
Learning objective	A democratic community relies on a shared set of values. Human rights provide a set of values that we can agree on.
Student tasks	The students select dilemma case stories, report on their decisions, compare and discuss their priorities.
Materials and resources	▤ Materials for teachers 2.2. Flipcharts (prepared in the previous lesson), markers. ✍ Student handout 2.5; alternatively, Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on a flipchart or overhead transparency.
Method	Joint planning discussion, presentations, discussion.
Time budget	1. Joint planning decision. 10 min
	2. Presentations and discussion. 15 min
	3. Reflection on the unit. 15 min

Information box

The key task gave the students the opportunity to produce a lot of material, and it is quite likely that this is more than can be properly discussed in one lesson. Therefore a choice must be made. The students should participate in this decision, as the problem and responsibility is theirs as much as the teacher's. A quick decision saves time for the following lesson sequences.

However, if the students question the need to select some of their work for the follow-up discussion, their objections have priority. To avoid disappointment among the students, it is important for them to understand that they will learn more from a thorough discussion of a few choices than from hearing brief inputs on everything that was discussed. The class must solve a dilemma, as time and public attention are scarce resources – not only in class management, but also in public life. Gatekeeping and agenda setting are a necessity, as well as an exercise of power (see unit 9 for an extensive treatment of this issue).

This is an important learning opportunity in class management – in teaching in the spirit of democracy and human rights. The sooner the students can choose what issues to focus on the better, but no one should feel overruled. The students must find a balance between efficiency and fairness of participation. In the end, the majority will decide (see unit 8 on the problem of outvoting minorities).

In the final stage of reflection, we suggest focusing on one of two key issues that are always involved in taking responsibility in open societies: the dilemmas of complexity and stability (see materials for teachers 2.3, lecture module Nos. 2 and 3).

The **complexity dilemma** refers to the experience that taking responsibility is a difficult task, and that these difficulties increase the more complex our social systems become. If the students articulate this experience, the teacher should choose this topic. The students may well need encouragement to accept the risk of fallacy, rather than trying to avoid taking decisions.

The **stability dilemma**, on the other hand, refers to the experience that we are very much on our own when making decisions, and we cannot take for granted that we all adhere to the same basic values. To what extent is such an agreement necessary, and how can we achieve it? Human rights offer a set of values that is confined to the principle of respect for human dignity, which is acceptable to all major religious beliefs. In this respect, this is an important lesson in human rights education (HRE).

Lesson description

Preparation

The teacher has hung up the presentation charts in the classroom in advance of the lesson.

Stage 1: Joint planning decision

The teacher chairs the first stage of the lesson. He/she goes to each of the four flipcharts with the dilemma case stories in turn and refers to the two alternative options. The students vote for one of the options by a show of hands, and the teacher enters the results on the flipchart.

The groups which have reflected on their personal experience give a briefing on the issue and present the students' decision. They hang up their additional flipcharts.

The teacher points out that the students will not have sufficient time to discuss all their decisions in detail and they must therefore make a choice by a show of hands. If the students agree, no further discussion is necessary.

If the students have difficulty in agreeing on what issues to choose, the teacher suggests one or two. Criteria for such a choice could be:

– a discussion on an issue that the students found particularly interesting;

– a unanimous decision – do the students share certain values or priorities?

– a controversial decision – do the students agree on certain values or priorities?

– a preference for students' personal experience.

The criteria that apply depend on the choices recorded on the flipcharts.

Stage 2: Presentations and discussion

The presenters come forward and explain the reasons for their group's decision. A second group member supports the presentation by making brief notes on the flipchart.

The students compare their criteria, guided by the teacher, and discuss their choices. The teacher chairs the discussion.

The result of the discussion cannot be anticipated. The students may or may not agree on their principles for taking responsibility in a given situation. The bottom third of the flipchart can be used to record the result of the discussion.

Stage 3: Reflection

The teacher chooses one of the following issues based on observing and talking to the students during the key task, for example. A joint decision with the students is not appropriate, as the teacher would need to explain the options in a lengthy lecture.

Option 1: The complexity dilemma:
The students reflect on the difficulties in taking responsibility

The plenary session begins with a feedback round. What went well, what was difficult?

We may expect the students to point out that taking responsibility in this way is difficult and time-consuming. The requirement to understand the consequences of what we are doing – consider the outcome, *respice finem*, is often unachievable.

The teacher's response is that this objection is perfectly justified – but what are the alternatives? To stop making decisions and taking responsibility? To insist on complete information first?

Of course, life will go on, and we will have to run the risk of making mistakes in our decisions. But it makes a difference if we are aware of our risk of fallacy, and the challenge of complexity in modern society (see ▤ materials for teachers 2.3, lecture module No. 2). That is why education and training of the kind offered in this unit are so important.

Option 2: The stability dilemma:
The students reflect on their experience in the light of human rights

The teacher refers to the values and priorities that the students agreed or disagreed on in their previous discussion, which give rise to the following question:

⇨   What values do we share?

This is the topic of the lesson; the teacher writes it down as a headline above the flipcharts on the blackboard; otherwise a strip of A3 size paper is pinned up on the wall.

The students review their discussion as it has been recorded on the flipcharts.

This line of reflection leads to further questions:

⇨   What values do we disagree on? Do they mutually exclude each other?

⇨   What values should we agree on?

The teacher explains why this question is so important: we depend on each other to take responsibility along the same lines. What could such guidelines be?

The students will know, or realise, that there is no religious belief or philosophy of ethics that we all accept, and no one will accept any set of values that is imposed upon him or her. The only source that provides a set of rules or values that we may agree on are human rights.

The teacher refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1:

> "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."
>
> *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 December 1948), Article 1;*
>
> *full text in ✍ student handout 2.5.*

The students look up this article in ✍ student handout 2.5, or the teacher presents it to the class.

This article alone can take us very far:

– We are born with human rights; they are unalienable, no one can take them away from us.

– We are free.

– We are equal.

The teacher has just demonstrated how to read such an article – slowly, word by word. The students continue:

– We have human dignity: we should treat each other with respect.

– We have certain rights.

– We are "endowed with reason": we can think for ourselves.

– We are "endowed with conscience": we can take responsibility.

– We "should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood": we should take responsibility for one another, which includes caring for those who depend on support by others.

The teacher points out that human rights not only have a vertical dimension – the relationship between state authority and the individual citizen – but also a horizontal dimension – the

relationship between individuals as members of a community. We can allow ourselves a lot of liberty and pluralism in a human-rights-based civil society that gives us the framework of basic values that we can all agree on.

Options for more extended study

Both options in the reflection phase are worth discussing. In an extension to this unit, the second key issue can be discussed.

The perspective of responsibility can be linked to literally every other unit in this manual. See the section on cross-references at the beginning of this chapter.