

 **Materials for teachers 6.2****Key statements on the policy cycle model**

1. Politics has two sides: the solution of problems and the struggle for power. The policy cycle as a model focuses on the first aspect – the solution of problems. The aspect of power is included too, in the way agenda setting depends on the pressure a protagonist can produce. But the main concern of the model is to describe the practical side of politics – in the words of Max Weber, “slowly and strongly boring holes through thick planks, both with passion and good judgment.” That means that the propaganda efforts in the competition for the voters’ support – including personal criticism against political opponents, populism and scandalising – may distort the picture, but are filtered out by this model.
2. This model delivers an interesting view on the concept of the common good. In a democracy, no protagonist knows what is good for everyone – this is the big difference between democracy and dictatorship. Rather, we must find out together, negotiate and bargain, argue and finally compromise. If we are wrong, or the solution was unfair, we will soon know, and have to try again. An open society requires a pragmatic, constructivist approach to answering the question on the common good.
3. Maps, like the policy cycle, are models. They show some aspects of reality clearly, but can do so only by leaving out others. The policy cycle model can serve as a map to answer the question of at what stage we as citizens can intervene and make ourselves heard. If we are not a member of parliament or government, we will not take part in the debate on which decision is to be taken – this is the **output** side of the political system. But the other stages map out the **input** side, and here we can become active. We can comment on a decision, support it or protest against it, and we can certainly participate in debates on political agenda setting. Political problems are not just there, but need to be defined and acknowledged as such (see topic of lesson 4).