

Human Rights in Focus – Our Contribution to a Sustainable World

Grade level: Upper secondary / Gymnasiale Oberstufe (Grades 10–12)

Duration: 60 minutes

Guiding question: How can we actively contribute to a more sustainable world through a human-rights perspective and recognize our responsibility?

Learning objectives:

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- develop a basic understanding of the importance of human rights in the context of the UN SDGs.
- be able to make connections between individual SDGs and specific human rights.
- reflect on how human rights influence their everyday lives and decisions.
- recognize the relevance of intercultural competencies for the universal validity of human rights.
- derive a personal approach to action for promoting human rights.

Materials:

- Projector/Smartboard
- Printouts of the 17 UN SDGs (visual display, e.g., pictograms/icons)
- Worksheets for group work (see below)
- Pens
- Moderation cards or Post-its

Lesson plan

1) Introduction & activation (5 minutes)

Teacher input: Welcome and introduce the topic “Human Rights and Sustainability.” Quick class question: “What comes to mind when you hear the word ‘human rights’?” (brainstorm; collect terms on the board/smartboard).

Visual prompt: Show the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on the smartboard. Briefly explain that these goals provide a comprehensive framework for a sustainable future and are closely linked to human rights.

2) Group work: Human rights and SDGs—an interactive link (20 minutes)

Form groups: Divide the class into 4–5 groups. Each group gets a worksheet with 3–4 selected SDGs (different combinations per group to ensure variety, e.g., Group A: SDG 1, 4, 16; Group B: SDG 3, 5, 10, etc.).

Task (communication + intercultural focus):

- **Discussion (5 min):** “Look at your assigned SDGs. Which specific human rights do you see affected here? How might different cultural contexts influence the interpretation or implementation of these rights?” (supports perspective-taking following Byram).
- **Matching + justification (10 min):** “For each SDG, choose at least one human right that you think is directly connected (e.g., SDG 4: Quality Education → right to education). Briefly justify your choice on the worksheet.” (worksheet includes columns for SDG, human right, justification).
- **Creative transfer (5 min):** “Imagine you are part of an international UN youth delegation. Choose one of your SDGs and one connected human right. Think about how you could promote this right in a country that is culturally very different from Germany. Consider concrete measures or projects. Present your idea as a short role play (about 1 minute per group) to the class.” (promotes creativity, intercultural competence, and communication).

3) Role play & presentation of results (15 minutes)

Role play: Each group briefly presents (about 1 minute per group). Focus: creative presentation and inclusion of intercultural aspects.

Short whole-class reflection after each presentation (1–2 min): “What stood out about the group’s idea? What challenges could arise in implementation, especially in a different cultural context?”

4) Individual reflection & transfer (10 minutes)

Individual work: Students get a separate worksheet with these questions:

- “Choose one of the 17 SDGs that seems most important to you personally. Briefly explain why.”

- “How can you personally contribute in everyday life to strengthening the human rights linked to this SDG? Think of concrete actions in your environment (school, family, leisure time).”
- “Today’s lesson showed that human rights are universal, but their implementation can vary culturally. What does this mean for your understanding of global responsibility?” (connected to Byram’s Intercultural Citizenship Model).
Optional share-out (if time): quick round where volunteers share a thought.

5) Closing & outlook (5 minutes)

Teacher input: Summarize key takeaways: Human rights are universal and inseparable from sustainable development. Individual actions matter, and intercultural empathy is crucial for global implementation.

Optional homework: Students continue with one specific human right or SDG and write a short statement (e.g., 3 sentences) about how they want to engage with this topic in the future.

Closing question: “What are you taking away from today’s lesson, and how will you integrate this awareness into your everyday life?”

Didactic notes

- **Differentiation:** If needed, SDGs can be adjusted by difficulty for group work. Prompts can also be visual (images, short videos) to address different learning styles.
- **Intercultural competence (after Byram):** Role plays and reflection questions aim to encourage students to deconstruct stereotypes, practice perspective-taking, and develop empathy for other cultures. Developing solutions for different cultural contexts strengthens awareness of the complexity of implementing human rights.
- **Communication skills:** Group work, discussions, and role plays support speaking and argumentation skills.
- **Creativity:** Role plays and project ideas encourage creative problem-solving.
- **Participation:** Combining individual work, group work, and presentations enables multiple forms of student participation.

Worksheet

My Rights – Your Rights

Imagine you are a person in this world. Which three rights are most important to you personally and should definitely be guaranteed? Briefly explain why.

Right 1:

Reason:

Right 2:

Reason:

Right 3:

Reason: