Teach to reach!
Teachers' Handbook

bye, Polarity
Thinking beyond Polarity
for Europe united in diversity

SAY: „BYE, POLARITY"

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Introduction

About the aim of the "bye, polarity" teaching materials

The teaching materials from the Erasmus+ project "bye, polarity" offer several approaches to addressing and reducing polarisation through school teaching. Polarisation is understood in a very broad sense. The materials work on it as a lifeworld, communicative, psychological and political-media phenomenon. Pupils should learn that polarisation begins in their own minds and is not a phenomenon that only has its place in human coexistence.

Therefore, the teaching materials focus on polarisation in different tasks. They serve to raise awareness, to deal with, to handle and to actively reduce polarisation. They are also intended to serve as a source of ideas for teachers to develop their own methods for dealing with polarisation in class, beyond the suggested tasks.

The structure of the "bye, polarity" teaching materials

The above-mentioned areas: Life, Communication, Psychology and Politics are divided into 4 sets of exercises, so-called "Content Units" (CUs). Each content unit has one of these four areas as its main topic and consists of several exercises and tasks. These tasks are of different types, either to provide theoretical introduction and knowledge acquisition, or to initiate self-learning processes, or to include direct calls to action to reduce polarisation.

The four content units can be used both as a building block and independently of each other. The first CU begins with the area "Polarisation in everyday life and the living world" in very immediate areas of experience and is suitable for an initial introduction to the topic. CUs No. 2 (Communication), No. 3 (Psychology) and No. 4 (Politics-Media) then take a step-by-step abstraction into more complex subject areas. The four CUs are therefore also suitable to be used independently for different ages and learning levels of pupils. Therefore, get an overview of the tasks and contents of the CUs and decide for yourself which ones are suitable for your pupils.

The individual exercises that make up a CU can also be used independently of each other for the most part. This means that you can also extract only one or two exercises for your lessons and do them in class. It is not necessary to work through the whole CU. Conversely, the exercises can of course be carried out one after the other in chained form. Sometimes individual exercises build on each other, but most can be used independently of the others. So get an overview of this as well.

In total, each CU is planned for 600 minutes of class time planned, so theoretically you can fill a total of 2400 minutes of class time if you do the whole programme of "bye, polarity". Of course, these are approximate values, as you never know in class how long an exercise will actually take.

Feel free to try out the exercises in different settings. The following tips will give you ideas that you can put into practice when doing the exercises.

1 Tips for Content Unit 1 "Polarisation in Everyday Life

1.1 General information on CU 1

The CU "Polarisation in everyday life" addresses the immediate living environment in which we all move. It addresses the emergence, reality and possibilities for reducing polarisation in our everyday lives.

This concerns:

1.2 to 1.5: Effects of first impressions and their impact on our thinking and feeling.

1.6 to 1.8: The influence of people's names on our images of them.

1.9 to 1.13: The influence of body norms and appearance on our views and opinions.

1.14 to 1.15: The influence of property, wealth and social behaviour on our thinking.

These are some key areas that, if not addressed enough, encourage polarisation. The first impression, for example, is a very powerful thing that we must learn to reflect on in order not to be at its mercy. The same applies to the other issues such as body, age, profession, wealth, appearance, names and behaviour. They can all contribute to the emergence of polarisation if left unaddressed.

1.2 First impression exercises (CU 1 - 1.2 to 1.5)

The exercises on first impressions are intended to create an awareness of how much the first impression we have of a person influences our judgements and behaviour towards him or her and how this can lead to polarisation at the outset.

Exercises 1.2 and 1.3: For this, the first two exercises (1.2 and 1.3) make students comprehensively aware of the effect. It is crucial that the pupils develop an awareness of the role that prejudices, stereotypes and clichés play in their encounters with other people and how much this shapes their social judgements.

Therefore, ask specifically how the students come up with the ideas they come up with. Work out to what extent they are influenced by prejudices, clichés, stereotypes, perhaps even racism, sexism and the like.
You can of course work with many more images than those given in the CU. Sometimes it is also a very good introduction to the topic to show the pupils pictures of famous people, that they don't recognise right away. Then the first impression should work. At the end, you resolve who it is actually about. This will often cause some astonishment. Ask pupils who recognise the person not to reveal anything.

It is important in all variations of the exercises that you draw attention to the fact that categorisation already takes place here and one's own prejudices have an effect, which can subsequently develop

into polarisation. Talk about how one can get into the habit of critically reflecting and questioning first impressions in order not to remain too influenced by them.

Exercise 1.4: Exercise 1.4 introduces the concept of "self-revelation". Students should learn that our social judgements about others are usually wrong, skewed or at least insufficient. Rather, in the way we judge others, we reveal much in our own psyche. We show our thought patterns, our biases, our imprints as well as clichés, stereotypes, and habits that we are born with.

Reflect on and work out with the pupils' different approaches to such self-revelations. What is all of myself in my judgements and impressions of the world? What can I find out about my views, thought patterns, opinions, and preconceptions when I reflect on my judgements and impressions of the world? What seems to be important to me, what is not so important to me? What ideas, perceptions and attitudes shape my thinking?

Then have the students make comparisons with their self-analyses and find out where common and different patterns of viewing the world lie. Then ask how these basic patterns of viewing the world can promote or reduce polarisation.

Exercise 1.5: This exercise is solution-oriented and aims at developing ideas and plans to reduce polarisation. Record these plans in different ways. Create mind maps or presentations, develop action plans and plans to be implemented.

Maybe your pupils already want to become ambassadors of social cohesion at this point. Plan with them how they can independently raise their awareness of the effects of first impressions on other people - for example in exercises 1.2 and 1.3 - and how they can critically reflect on these effects with other people to help reduce forms of polarisation right from the start. Turn your students into teachers.

1.3 Exercises on the influence of the name (CU 1 - 1.5 to 1.8)

The exercises on the influence of the name are intended to shed light on one of the least reflected possible areas of origin of polarisation. The very name of a person evokes countless associations, fantasy stories or prejudices. Therefore, this topic is very well suited to reflect the diversity of polarisation roots. Moreover, everyone has an approach to the topic of "names".

Exercises 1.6 and 1.7: Discuss the proverb in exercise 1.6 and let the group reflect on it. Then talk about the fact that in our societies we give people countless forms of names. We know civic names, nicknames, epithets for titles and functions, self-chosen names, swear names, etc. Take these different forms of names as an example to address our diverse social interaction with each other. You can also go into areas of gender and diversity issues, interculturality, racism, sexism, or classism. The field of classism in particular is often unknown to the pupils. Work with them on the extent to which a person's name is associated with certain social roles and ask them how this can lead to polarisation.

Exercise 1.8: This exercise provides a direct example of how a name can influence a person's subjective perception of a person's behaviour. For example, consider whether, and to what extent the evaluation of the message changes if it is a female or male name or if the name sounds foreign or exotic. Ask how the students imagine the person behind the name and the message in each case.

Since the topic of names occurs differently in every region, culture and language area, examples have been omitted. Choose examples that fit into your specific language area and the students' lifeworld.

Then work out how even small aspects - such as a person's name - can be a breeding ground for polarisation and ask where this actually leads to polarisation. Also take school as an example and work out how the name of a pupil or teachers can lead to categorisation and subsequently to polarisation (think of grading, perception of people etc.).

1.4   Exercises on the influence of body norms and appearance (CU 1 - 1.9 to 1.13)

The exercises on the influence of body norms and appearance on the formation of polarities are especially important for young people. For adolescents and children, this field is by far the most important in terms of developmental psychology. Think of clothing, normative ideas about appearance, gender stereotypes, age hierarchies, different tastes and more. Of course, this list only gives examples, and you can also provide the following exercises with other topics from the broad field of social norms.

Exercise 1.9: This exercise addresses the perspective of people's *age* and its influence on polarisation. Children and young people in particular are constantly confronted with this aspect. That is why they take a stand on it on various occasions. Work out with the pupils how the *age* factor can lead to polarisation. Think of hierarchies, discipline, but also physical strength and so on.

Exercises 1.10 and 1.11: These exercises focus on the creation of polarisation through existing body norms, that is, through normed appearance and normed attractiveness. Work out with the pupils the *norm body as* they imagine it and then problematise the corresponding expectations that go along with it. Already at this point, address psychological and social problem areas in that certain expectations and obsessions with physicality can lead to exclusion and illness (e.g. eating disorders, depression, …). This in turn leads to the further consolidation of polarising social behaviour.

Exercise 1.12: The purpose of this exercise is to break down entrenched norms about the body and to make students aware that such norms are constantly changing. Give the students an insight into this change and especially into the question of who it is that determines certain norms as *normal* and where such ideas of *normality* might come from. Based on the research results, problematise the polarising influence that such ideas can trigger among people. You can also use other fields than history, visual media, or social media, depending on the interests of your class. Think of magazines, posters, and so on.

Exercise 1.13: This exercise expands the relevant normative fields starting from appearance. The pupils should get a feeling for the many ways in which normative ideas relating to the body can polarise. It is far from being only about attractiveness or the like. Aspects such as a person's voice, the way they move, or typical facial expressions can also be a breeding ground for polarisation. Work out with the pupils how to counter this problem once it has been identified. Talk to them about how ideas of norms are always accompanied by certain subjective expectations about the behaviour and being of others with whom we interact socially. Ask where such expectations may be problematic and unjustified. Break habits and comfort zones. Try to instil in students an openness to diversity outside their peer group.

Exercise 1.14: An often-underestimated factor in the emergence of polarisation in our everyday world is the factor of *property*. In all contexts, a person's socio-economic conditions bring very different starting conditions into life. This often becomes quickly apparent in childhood through the formation of social groups based on these starting conditions. Using the example of Mark and Amelie in the exercise, problematise the extent to which this can lead to polarisation and find other examples in which property relations polarise (depending on the age of the pupils, you can also move on to the world of work, e.g. address income relations etc.). Also think about statements such as "Not everyone can always afford a lawyer" or similar and their significance for social polarisation.

Exercise 1.15: The last polarising factor presented in CU1 is behavioural norms and the expectations attached to them. Especially the area of *school* should be accessible for all students, as it is a big part of their life world. Address the different expectations of pupils' behaviour and how these expectations can already have polarising potential (e.g.: how the school system you work in favours certain people in their behaviour and disadvantages others, etc.). You then apply this to other areas of life in the second part of the exercise.

Exercise 1.16: The final exercise is for consolidation and repetition. Depending on which CU1 exercises you have done, you can relate the tasks to their results.

2 Tips on Content Unit 2 "Polarisation in Communication"

2.1 General information on the CU 2

The CU "Polarisation in communication" takes a first step of abstraction beyond forms of polarisation in the students' immediate everyday world (cf. CU1). It focuses on interpersonal interaction through communicative exchange and on where dangers of polarisation lurk in this area and how they can be countered with communicative training.

This concerns:

2.2 to 2.5: Dealing with the tension between "self-perception" and "perception of others.

2.6 to 2.8: The problem of the discrepancy of "sender:in and receiver:in" when communicating.

2.9 to 2.10: Non-verbal forms of communication as a possible cause of polarization.

2.11 to 2.13: Group dynamics and communicative hierarchy formation.

These exercises can also be worked on separately, but some of them are related in content in the way listed. If you want to follow the whole path of CU2, you will realise that the exercises lead step by step from communication between two people to group dynamics and their social hierarchy relationships. The topic is how polarisation can arise in all these communicative levels and what can be done about it.

2.2 Exercises on self-perception and perception of others (CU 2 - 2.2 to 2.5)

These exercises should first introduce the students to the fact that there is not one fixed view of the world, but that any participation in communicative processes always already happens from a certain point of view, which does not have to be that of my counterpart. Therefore, in order to reduce polarisation, it is important to recognise and constructively include these different points of view.

Exercises 2.2 and 2.3: The introduction to the area of *polarisation through communication is* the famous iceberg model. It is also quite understandable for younger pupils if it is introduced carefully. Among other things, it serves to make visible the difference between self-perception and perception by others

in communication. What lies above the surface of the water is visible to others. What lies below the water surface is not or hardly visible. The latter area is therefore much more exposed to mutual interpretation among people. However, this interpretation can be wrong and thus become a breeding ground for polarisation (e.g. interpersonal, communicative, political, economic or social tensions, etc.). For the supposed view below the surface of the water often leads us to interpret the behaviour of other people from our own point of view. If this interpretation is wrong, however, we may unjustifiably see their behaviour in a bad light or evaluate it negatively. This in turn can lead to misunderstandings, prejudices and polarities.

But even more: Exercise 2.3 then focuses on the fact that *I myself do* not always know my iceberg 100% in my self-perception. The image is dedicated to this circumstance, that I always perceive what lies beneath the surface of my water as cloudy and blurred. I don't always know exactly what drives me, motivates me or inhibits me. Therefore, the point of this exercise is to learn that *communication* is not only the key to getting to know *other people* better, but also to getting to know oneself better and thus to avoid possible polarisation from the outset. We should learn to reduce polarisation with each other by talking and communicating with each other - and thus get to know others and ourselves better. Work with the students on different settings and practical exercises that can help to achieve this.
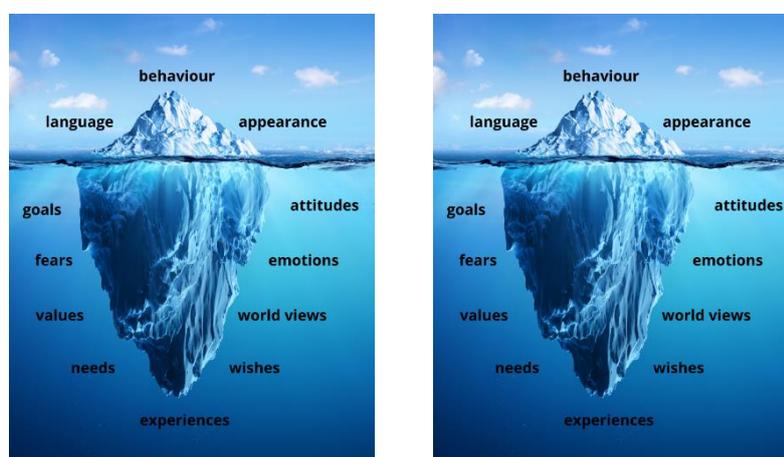
Exercises 2.4 and 2.5: A central point of interpersonal communication is to learn to distinguish between the spheres of the *private* and the *public.* Because in both spheres people behave differently when they communicate with each other. Through the two lists to be made in exercise 2.4, demonstrate to the students the extent to which the topics we are willing to talk about differences in the two spheres.

Exercise 2.5 is intended to reflect this distinction back to the life world of the students themselves and to make them realise that we are always in different communicative settings between private and public. This also applies to every single school day, on which this distinction is therefore reflected. Therefore, in securing the results of this exercise, above all, also develop an awareness of how we can meet each other with respect for our private communication dimensions. Because misunderstandings, conflicts and polarities usually arise where this consideration is not practised and communication is different in public than in private. For example, give such simple examples as the question "How are you?" to which people often give a very different answer publicly than one that actually reflects how they are. Provide more such examples and then work out how to meet each other communicatively to be considerate of such discrepancies.

2.3 Exercises on the discrepancy between sender:in and receiver:in (CU 2 - 2.6 to 2.8)

These exercises deepen the complexity of communicative situations. However, they do not require the previous exercises, they can be done independently. The main emphasis here is on the emergence of polarities through interference in the transmission of information. You can transfer this at any point to the different forms of communication of the students (such as verbal conversations, social media, messenger services, ...) and examine it there.

Exercise 2.6: This exercise introduces the model of the *message square* by communication researcher Friedemann Schulz von Thun, which is easy for students to understand. A simple example sentence "It's green." is used to demonstrate the different ways in which this sentence can be understood. Play through the different communicative interpretation possibilities of this sentence with other examples from the young people's world, e.g. "Your room looks like a rubbish dump" or "I'm going to count to three" and so on. On the basis of such examples, use the sketch to work out the theory of the news square in the second part of the exercise.
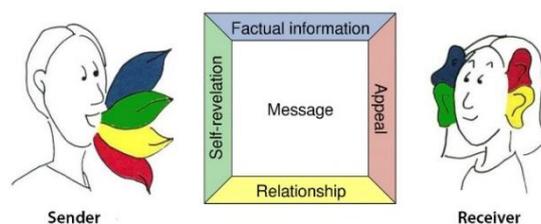

Figure 1: four-sides model
Source: https://4eyes-model.com/

Exercise 2.7: On the one hand, this exercise summarises and demonstrates the theory of the message square again. You can also drag this part into the previous exercise. The central aspect is the application part of Exercise 2.7. The pupils should think of situations in which conflicts arise because of certain interferences between sender and receiver that lead to misunderstandings. Instruct the pupils to specifically play with mismatches between the four sides of the message square (e.g.: one person hears as a reproachful appeal what the other wants to convey only as neutral factual information). Have the students try out all the sides of the message square and match them against each other. Bring up the example "It's green." from the previous exercise if the task is not yet clear enough.

Exercise 2.8: Now that the news square has been practised step by step theoretically and practically, we turn specifically to the *polarisation* factor in this exercise. On the one hand, the pupils - supported by the example "You really know the answer to everything. - on the one hand - supported by the example "You really know the answer to everything" - to work out different scenarios in which disproportions in the news square can lead not only to interference or misunderstandings, but also to pronounced polarisation.

It is important here to create an understanding that usually not a single misunderstanding immediately leads to radical polarities between people, but that this is usually accompanied by a developing history of miscommunication. The students should therefore develop such a history and consider on their hand where and when one should have intervened to either prevent the polarisation from arising at all or at least be able to reduce it if it has already arisen.

The aim of the exercise is to develop direct strategies to combat polarisation communicatively with the help of the news square. You can therefore also develop and compile a catalogue of ideas that will help the students to prevent different polarisations by communicating meaningfully with each other.

2.4 Polarisation and non-verbal communication (CU 2 - 2.9 to 2.10)

Especially for young people, an important aspect of communicative polarisation reduction is the focus on *non-verbal communication*. Exercises 2.9 and 2.10 focus on this aspect first of all from the very direct point of view of a person's body language. This should make us aware of the following about our communication: the medium we choose also determines the content that is delivered. If we are not sensitive to the medium, misunderstandings and polarisation can occur.

Exercise 2.9: This exercise is dedicated to the different forms of body language and also serves interpersonal, interregional and intercultural understanding. Not everyone uses the same body language when communicating, not everyone attaches the same importance to facial expressions and gestures. It is therefore important to develop an eye for this to address possible polarisation on a non-verbal level. The main aim of the exercise is to create an awareness of the fact that polarities arise more easily the fewer communication channels are available. Especially with important topics, physical presence is an indispensable factor to avoid misunderstandings. Make it clear to the students that it does matter whether we are just talking on the phone, writing a text or talking to each other face to face.

Exercise 2.10: This exercise fully addresses the problem of *polarisation through poorly chosen communication channels* introduced by Exercise 2.9 on body language. Work out with the students the strengths and weaknesses of certain communication channels and create a catalogue of ideas for situations in which which channel might be better or worse suited to communicate with each other. Work out different contexts directly from the students' lives in which they themselves have already had the experience that another channel would have been better. Therefore, create an awareness among the young people that they need to think carefully about which settings, formats, and media they should communicate in, especially when it comes to sensitive topics. Try this out with the example of "Romeo and Juliet" and consider other such examples with the pupils.

2.5 Polarisation and group dynamics (CU 2 - 2.11 to 2.13)

The last part of the area "Polarisation and communication" deals with communicative hierarchies and role dynamics in groups. The students should learn to recognise and reflect on their own involvement in such group dynamics to subsequently be able to take appropriate action when polarisation occurs. The CU concludes with an introduction to the ideas of *non-violent communication,* which is can be defined as the general goal of reducing polarisation.

Exercises 2.11 and 2.12: These two exercises are dedicated to the model of role dynamics in groups according to the psychologist Raoul Schindler, which students can understand. **Exercise 2.11** should reveal how, according to Schindler, roles are distributed, and which roles make a group function. It is crucial to point out that *each role* has its important function in the group and that it is not about excluding individuals because of different opinions or attitudes. A well-functioning group *integrates* its diversity.

This will then be practised practically in **Exercise 2.12**, creating a tool for students to help minimise emerging polarisation in group dynamics through *integration and inclusion of* different roles.
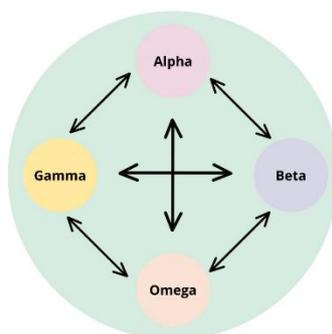
Exercise 2.13: This exercise is dedicated to individual strategies that can be used to counteract violence that arises through communication and thus reduce polarisation. Rosenberg's model of non-violent communication is of course not the only one, but it proceeds in simple steps that are comprehensible for young people. Use this excercise to practise different situations of *escalation* and *de-escalation of* communication.

Exercise 2.14: Now pull together everything learnt in CU2 and have students develop and run workshops themselves where they teach others to counter polarisation through communication.

3 Tips on Content Unit 3 "Polarisation in our psyche"

3.1 General information on the CU 3

The CU "Polarisation in our psyche" is aimed at students who already have a certain level of self-reflection on their own psychological processes. This is because it addresses psychological processes that can contribute to polarisation tendencies, the recognition of which requires that people be introduced to such self-reflection step by step. On this basis, the CU then develops concepts for action to reduce polarisation.

This concerns:

3.2 to 3.4: Reflection on one's own forms of perception and cognition with regard to polarisation

3.5 to 3.7: Reflection of psycho-social processes such as prejudices, stereotypes, clichés, …

3.8 to 3.11: Reflection on authority, enemy images and peer pressure and their reduction

3.12: Develop a catalogue of measures to actively deal with all this

These exercises can also be done separately, but some of them are related in the way listed.

3.2 Exercises on own cognition (CU 3 - 3.2 to 3.4)

These exercises are intended to familiarise students with the fact that even something as supposedly natural as one's own sensory perception or one's own concepts of intelligence are shaped in many ways and are socially embedded. Therefore, if they remain unreflective, they can always be a source for the emergence of polarisation. The aim of the exercises is to recognise this ground and to be able to break it down.

Exercises 3.2 and 3.3: The first two exercises familiarise the students with the basic concepts of shaping perception (adaptation, selective attention, and social perception). It is important to create an awareness of the fact that even the supposedly most immediate perceptual contents are already variously interpreted, contextualised and socially shaped. People emphasise different things in their field of perception, neglecting or ignoring others. This is related even to such simple mechanisms as habits or repetition.
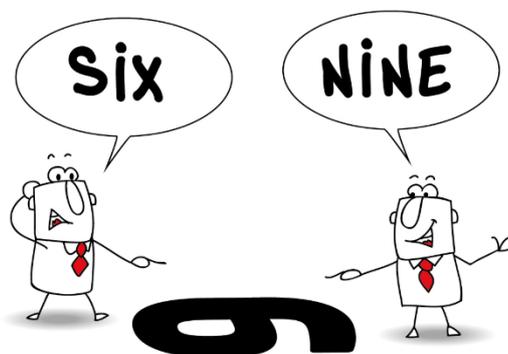
Exercise 3.3 applies this theory by providing students with a tool to question and address the influences of adaptation, selective attention, and social perception on a person's judgements about the world. For it is precisely what we are used to that we question least of all, precisely what is taken for granted that we doubt least of all. Therefore, it is important to shed light on these unquestioned habits of perception in oneself and others and to learn to recognise and criticise their influence on potential polarisation. Above all, the pupils should develop an awareness of the fact that behind a person's social attitudes, judgements and opinions there is always a whole life story and never just individual coincidences. Subsequently, you can therefore work out with them how to address this life story to a person in such a way that he or she does not feel attacked or treated unfairly. Aim for manners that can help us to learn to question each other's perceptions.

Exercise 3.4: A similarly delicate point as the imprints of our subjective perception (see Exercise 3.2 and 3.3) is the concept of *intelligence*. Quite a few polarisations among people arise based on the concept of intelligence and the associated assessment of a person's performance. Those who are considered less intelligent are also considered less capable. It becomes problematic when subjectively evaluative views of people and groups of people are drawn in, which can lead to polarisation.

Therefore, Exercise 3.4 works on a critical reflection of the concept of intelligence and enables the students to specifically question everything that is usually considered an *intelligence achievement.* Through this, it quickly becomes clear that it is always certain abilities that are recognised as *intelligent by* a collective in certain situations - and that in completely different situations in other collectives, in turn, other concepts of intelligence are given preference. In this way, the pupils should learn to what extent an unreflective use of the term "intelligence" can lead to polarization.

3.3   Psycho-social reflection exercises (CU 3 - 3.5 to 3.7)

The psycho-social reflection exercises go into a core subject of combating polarisation: prejudices, stereotypes, stereotypes and racisms, sexisms, classism's, and culturalisms that are built on them. Students should be able to reflect on all this and actively contribute to dismantling polarising social judgements.

Exercise 3.5: As the formation of multifaceted prejudices forms a core subject in the emergence of polarisation and polarities, this exercise aims at developing students' detailed understanding of the psychology of prejudice. The exercise therefore first goes through their establishment step by step, from mere markers to discrimination, and then makes the *labels* and *victim attributions* mainly responsible for polarisation. It is an application of the theory of the prejudice spiral according to Crisp et al. - The students should learn about the power of *labels, i.*e. social role attributions, which each lead to a behavioural adaptation of people according to these attributions if they are only built up long and strongly enough. It is precisely when labels lead to the formation of victim identities that counter-discrimination and thus the formation of polarities can occur.

Illustrate this dynamic in different areas of life and come back again and again to who imposes labels on whom and to what extent and thus could force their counter-imposing. Work especially on the aspect that social judgement naturally has its designated purpose for human beings, but that we always run the risk of letting it become a breeding ground for polarisation if we cannot critically reflect and question it.
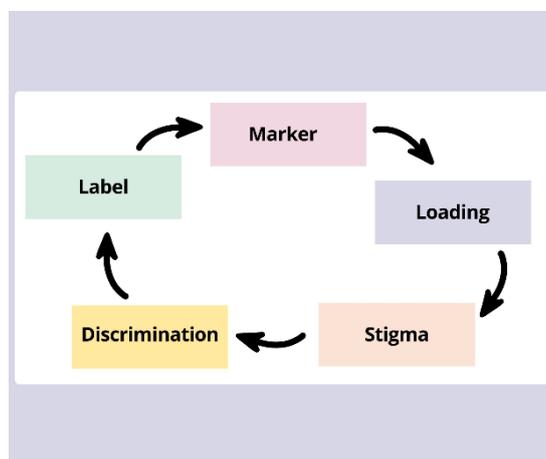
Exercise 3.6: This exercise applies the knowledge built up on the prejudice spiral (see 3.5). Discuss with the students not only different fields of prejudice theoretically, but also work out with them practically what can be done in each field to minimise the impact and effects of *labels*, *attributions* and *discrimination*. Think not only about education and awareness-raising, but also about things like improving people's opportunities, conditions and circumstances. Apply this to every area you discuss in class.

Exercise 3.7: This exercise now motivates the students to look at their own prejudices. As this is a very sensitive topic that people are reluctant to go out in public with, the exercise is designed around a private diary entry. Therefore, encourage the students to be mercilessly honest with themselves. They do not have to show their result to anyone, and it may remain entirely theirs.

Of course, if they want, they can share certain insights with the class under your guidance. If you want, set a good example yourself. What is crucial in this case is that they also set possibilities and measures of practical implementation towards more freedom from prejudice and thus discrimination and polarisation. From the reflection, it should be possible to move on to the call to action. If your students are very creative in this, they can shape this into their own workshop units.

3.4 Exercises Authority, Enemy Images and Peer Pressure (CU 3 - 3.8 to 3.11)

The exercises on the psycho-social impact of authority structures, enemy images and peer pressure go directly into the students' psychologically interpreted social life practice. We are always in

hierarchies, confronted with enemy images and exposed to the pressure of our social groups. This is also a typical breeding ground for polarisation, which will therefore be subject to both theoretical and practical elaboration.

Exercise 3.8: Exercise 3.8 builds on the so-called Asch experiment, which is one of the classic social-psychological experiments that reveal the extensive influence that peer pressure can have on an individual's actions. If the dynamics of your class allow it, you can conduct one version or another of the experiment as an introduction to the topic. To do this, familiarise yourself with Exercise 3.8 beforehand so that you know what it is getting at. If you decide to carry it out, guide it well so that there are no conflicts between the pupils. If it does, you can make it a subject of the lesson, as it shows how easily group pressure polarises.

Most importantly, the exercise aims illustrating peer pressure through both *punishment* for undesirable behaviour and *reward* for desirable behaviour of individuals. Using the Asch experiment, have students discuss what methods of such punishment and reward exist and how they both contribute to polarising behaviour that can manifest both between individuals and groups and between different groups. It is crucial to mark the tendency to eventually fit into the dynamics of the group, even if one continues to be inwardly unconvinced. The danger of polarisation exists when one *joins in,* no matter how one may think inwardly.

Exercise 3.9: This exercise is based on another epoch-making experiment in social psychology, the so-called *Milgram experiment*. It is intended to illustrate, using his example, how easily people - in addition to the peer pressure from the previous exercise - can be deliberately led by authority structures to commit exclusionary, conflict-generating, polarising, and even violent acts. What is crucial in this exercise is that the students develop an awareness of the fact that people are usually willing to do all kinds of things if they are only made to feel that they are not responsible for their own actions. This is achieved by introducing authorities, chains of command and the like, which virtually take over responsibility and thus declare people to be vicarious agents. These vicarious agents then go on to polarise, because they do not feel responsible.

Reflect with the pupils where such a so-called *diffusion of responsibility* occurs everywhere in our life together and where it is brought about by structures, hierarchies and authority structures. In a further step, work out with them which problems, especially in terms of forms of polarisation (exclusion, conflicts, images of the enemy, …), are associated with this and, in a final step, what could be done about it and how we could organise our life together to avoid the polarising diffusion of responsibility.

Exercise 3.10: *Enemy images* are a central aspect in the emergence and consolidation of polarities. The aim of this exercise is not only to make students aware of openly visible enemy stereotypes, but above all to help them recognise the reasons why enemy stereotypes arise (they can also use Exercise 3.5 to 3.7 on the spiral of prejudice). Based on these insights, measures should be determined that lead actively and practically to the dismantling of hostile images. Work out with the pupils both tasks that society would have in this respect and tasks that affect each individual in everyday life and can contribute to the prevention of enemy stereotypes. Above all, the reference to one's own responsibility in one's own area of life and scope of action is decisive (think of: Addressing problems directly, learning to approach people actively, planning joint activities, getting to know languages and ways of life, …).

Exercise 3.11: This exercise brings together exercises 3.8 to 3.10 and combines them with the question of how group pressure, enemy images and authority structures can be actively reduced. The students should find measures for different areas of life that can reduce social tensions and that everyone can actively implement. This is done through empirical research methods, mainly based on a questionnaire,

the results of which are then presented, and further steps are considered. These can in turn be disseminated from within the class to the whole school.

Exercise 3.12: As a summarising task of CU 3, exercise 3.11 is now linked to the creation of a catalogue of measures for the reduction of polarisation and the promotion of social cohesion. This catalogue of measures is to be publicised, discussed, revised, and applied beyond your class. Show the pupils that they themselves can participate in reducing polarisation in school (and at best beyond) through what they have learned. You may even succeed in involving other classes in this process.

4   Tips for Content Unit 4 "Polarisation in Politics"

4.1   General information on the CU 4

The CU "Polarisation in Politics" is the highest abstraction level of the four content units. It is aimed at students who already have a basic understanding of political forms, social relations, and the role of the media in our coexistence. Polarisation is addressed both through the shaping of our coexistence and through the influence of the discourses we engage in.

This concerns:

4.2 to 4.4: Laws and rules of coexistence in their role for polarisation

4.6 to 4.7: The role of the media and information dissemination in polarisation

4.8 to 4.10: The special role of online media and extreme forms of polarisation

4.11 to 4.13: Active and direct discourse participation as a contribution to polarisation reduction

These exercises can also be done separately, but some of them are related in the way listed.

4.2   Exercises on laws and rules of coexistence (CU 4 - 4.2 to 4.4)

These three exercises address the difference between explicit and implicit systems of rules through which we organise our life together. Overall, the pupils should learn that in addition to explicit rules such as laws, instructions or codes of conduct, there are also implicit rules such as taboos, mentalities, customs, habits and the like. Polarisation often arises when these complex systems come into conflict with each other, and friction arises. It is therefore important to be able to evaluate, understand, address and reflect on these systems to derive calls for action for oneself and others to prevent or reduce polarisation.

Exercise 4.2: This exercise introduces the terms 'explicit rules' and 'implicit rules' and guides students to explore, reflect and present them in different areas of life. Ask the pupils the following questions: Which explicit and implicit rules or rule systems can lead to polarisation? Where do sources of conflict lurk and how can they be addressed and eliminated? Be guided by the question: *What is to be done when we identify this or that conflict of rules and want to avoid polarisation?*

As far as possible with your class, be aware of the fact that polarisation very often arises not only in the area of tension between explicitly stated and fixed rules, but mostly in the case of implicit rules that are not clearly reflected and often only unconsciously followed, such as customs, imprints, habits, expectations, learned customs. - Guide the students to realise that even such implicit rules are by no means absolute, but can be recognised as relative and therefore negotiable.

Exercise 4.3: This exercise introduces the concept of *diversity* and aims at making clear to the students once again how few absolute and non-negotiable rules are needed in order to live together peacefully. Of course, it is crucial that they discuss the question of which *non-negotiable* rules must nevertheless exist (e.g. human rights, fundamental rights or similar), especially in the face of diversity. Perhaps work out a two-column overview of absolute (non-negotiable) and relative (negotiable) rules of coexistence with the students and have extensive discourse on this to provide food for thought.

Exercise 4.4: The main purpose of this exercise is to research the legal situation in the country where you live. With the help of the internet and other sources (law books etc.), work out with the pupils the legal regulations for different areas of life (think e.g. of human rights, fundamental rights, labour law, criminal law, property law, media law, ...). Ask your class where polarisation potentials lie in the legal regulations examined and how these could be reduced. Point out that laws are by no means perfect and unchangeable, but that a lot of experience, work and precedents have often gone into them and that is why they look the way they do. Nevertheless, also reflect critically on them, but at critical points ask constructively in your lessons for alternatives. What could be done better? What are the arguments for and against? Involve the pupils in the discourse.

4.3   Exercises on the influence of the media (CU 4 - 4.5 to 4.7)

These exercises refer to another central pillar of the polarisation issue in our society: the *media*. Media are understood in a comprehensive sense as forms of information transfer. Therefore, also familiarise the students with how comprehensive and diverse our media reality is. Because everywhere someone thinks about how he or she conveys information to other people, he or she is already designing a *medium*.

Exercise 4.5: On the one hand, the first exercise serves to introduce the pupils to the diversity of media reality mentioned above. On the other hand, they should already learn to reflect that everyone uses and judges media from different perspectives and therefore trusts certain media more and others less. This can lead to polarisation if one is always guided by certain media only for certain purposes and develops a certain lens for the world. Therefore, work with the students on the importance of diverse and critical media consumption. Teach them to ask about the goals, intentions, economic backers and political influencers of different media formats. Talk about how all this influences reporting and information processing.

Exercise 4.6: This exercise introduces the theoretical concept of *news values.* They are an easy tool for students to follow to understand the different orientations, goals and topics of media formats. This is because each media focuses on certain news values that guide its reporting. Based on this theory, analyse different media in your country and in the students' sphere of life. In particular, work out the problems associated with the strong isolation of information on only one of the news values and how this can lead to one-sided reporting and polarities. You can devote a special role to the topic of topic *setting,* since the problem already begins with the editorial selection of the topics that are reported on at all. Ask the students: what makes different media choose these or those topics and report on them in one way or another and how can the very selection or omission of certain topics lead to polarisation among media consumers?

Exercise 4.7: The term *framing is* introduced in order to go deeper into the problem of different colourings of media reporting. This is a technique of specific framing of information that is present in all media. Information is not invented or lied about, but presented in a certain light that distorts it. This already starts in language, for example: it makes a difference whether we say "climate change", "climate crisis" or "climate catastrophe" when we talk about the phenomenon in question. Framing information

can also contribute to polarisation by putting the information in a certain light and thus giving it a certain colouring. Make your students aware of this problem as consumers of information by having them analyse different media formats on the same topic and work out how the media *frame* differently. As indicated in the exercise, also use "Google Trends" to show quite simply how even different terms contribute to the general colouring of topics in our communication behaviour (see above: climate mathematics).

4.4 Exercises on online media and propaganda (CU 4 - 4.8 to 4.10)

On the one hand, these exercises deal with the currently very significant segments of *social media* and *online discourse,* as well as *propaganda* as an instrument of polarisation.

Exercise 4.8: This exercise aims at familiarising students with the fact that no single social media platform is merely a neutral way of conveying information. They all function based on certain algorithms that control the exchange of information and especially the display of information. However, this centrally influences the discourse and thus the formation of polarities on and through social media. For this purpose, terms such as *filter bubble*, *echo chamber* or *self-fulfilling prophecy are* introduced to make it clear to the students what dangers threaten the information process due to the special structure of social media and how this can lead to polarisation.

Exercise 4.9: Because of the special algorithmic structures of social media, the term *Fake News* has arisen there. The students should first be made aware of their very simple emergence and rapid spread. The central focus of the exercise, however, is on the question: how can I avoid being manipulated by fake news and thus, above all, the polarisation to which it can lead. This is because fake news is usually polarising, emotionalising and conflictual information. For this, the exercise introduces a step-by-step programme on how to deal with information that students can adopt. Work on each of the listed points as long as you can and want to. Teach students how to access different sources of information, how to evaluate their quality, what research techniques there are and the importance of research, and that a media-critical attitude never means rejecting media altogether (because then there is the threat of informative isolation). Mastering these techniques also means mitigating polarisation.

Exercise 4.10: Related to *Fake News,* this exercise deals with a manifestation of manipulation, namely *propaganda*. The students are shown different techniques of propaganda, which can be used to identify the extent to which propaganda is already taking place in the information process. The pupils should then analytically recognise these techniques in current media formats and present them to the class. On this basis, a discourse can be started on how to deal with all this to prevent or eliminate the polarisation caused by propaganda. So focus the discussion on propaganda specifically on the question of *polarisation*.

It is also important that you do not reduce the term *propaganda to* a political term only. The techniques of propaganda listed in the exercise can also occur in entertainment media, in companies, in education or in other ways of living together and therefore polarise. Work on this with the students as well.

4.5 Exercises in active discourse participation (CU 4 - 4.11 to 4.13)

The final exercises of CU4 are now dedicated to *active discourse participation* as a gold standard of polarisation reduction in the face of political and media-promoted polarities in society. Students should learn that actively seeking discourse is a powerful means of reconnecting where polarities arise or already prevail.

Exercise 4.11: Have students not only analyse media formats, but also found them themselves in different forms (print, digital, …). By learning how to do their own editorial work, students understand the complex contexts in which one stands when one wants to communicate information publicly to others. Assign the individual editorial offices specifically to work in a polarisation-reducing way, but without becoming uncritical or unreflective. To do this, always include periods of reflection with the class to support this difficult middle ground.

Exercise 4.12: Democracies are built on general discourse, both in politics and in the media and otherwise in society. Through the *panel discussion* format, students should learn how to engage in conversation and work out solutions, consensus or compromise, especially on polarising issues. The topics and type of event can be varied and are entirely up to your expertise. However, by all means think about class-wide events. In this way, the students also become ambassadors for reducing polarisation.

Exercise 4.13: What has been elaborated in this CU can be transferred into discourse as well as media formats to cooperations with other schools and thus create a multiplication effect (e.g. as inter-school editorial boards, inter-school panel discussions, etc.).

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