

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICTS

FROM FEAR TO POSITIVITY

Thousands of Finns participated in the Finnish Innovation Fund's public debates on the topic "What is stopping us from acting to curb climate change". The summary of these discussions states: "The shared experience was that climate action is easier if change is not a matter of sacrifice but the path to a better life."

In the public debate on climate change and its mitigation, the narratives of worry and even fear often predominate. For example, we talk about how it will be awful to respond with the necessary measures and that we will have to compromise our standard of living.

Concerns about the situation, combined with hope for change, can make a person act, but outright fear and anxiety can at worst be paralysing. By working together on a positive vision for the future, we can be more proactive in making a difference.

WHAT THE EXERCISE IS ABOUT

- Duration: 30 or 50 minutes.
- Theme: Exploring the narratives of climate change and the changes needed to mitigate it as they appear in public debate. Working together to create positive perspectives on the same topic - "paths to a better future".

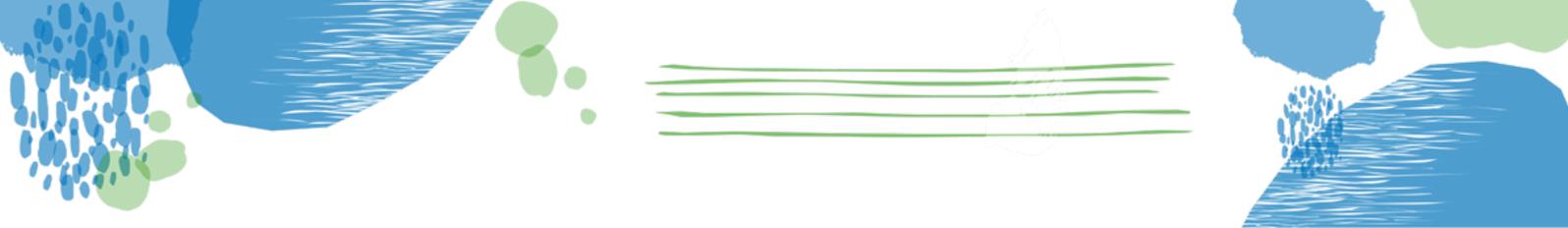
HOW THE EXERCISE SHOULD PROCEED

Ask the students what changes they have heard are required of us to mitigate and adapt to climate change? In what sort of tone are these changes usually talked about?

Then look together at viral media on climate change and mitigation. You may collect examples of headlines before the lesson or let your students do it. Ask the students:

- What sorts of verbs are used in news headlines and what words are repeated?
- What sort of image is conjured up by the formulation used?
- How do you think such an image affects people's willingness to act to mitigate climate change?
- What might be a better way of motivating people and communities to change?

In the following, the idea is to generate positive narratives on how our quality of life will improve with changes to mitigate climate change.



Divide the students into pairs or small groups. Ask them to refresh their memory concerning what sorts of changes and measures will most effectively mitigate climate change. If needed, they can perform a short information search.

Then, ask them to discuss the following questions, e.g.:

- What kind of changes will climate change bring to our lives?
- What are the positive consequences of the changes?

After the discussion part, you can choose one of the following ways to work with small groups. Options A (written output) and B (video) will take more time, while option C can be done more quickly.

A. Put yourself in a politician's shoes. Write a short and pithy speech (no more than 5 minutes) to inspire citizens to work together for a better future. Tell us about the positive changes that are taking place in our lives as we take the recommended steps to mitigate climate change.

B. Make an inspirational video for primary school students. Explain what measures are being taken to mitigate and / or adapt to climate change and how they will improve the quality of life and living environment.

C. Imagine that you are a journalist working for the media of the future. Working together write as many catchy headlines as you can that describe a world in which positive changes have taken place as a result of mitigating climate change.

Finally, present your group work to one another. If possible, set aside time after the presentations to discuss the work, using e.g. the following questions:

- As a result of the group work, did you find any shared positive visions for the future?
- How did it feel doing the task? How did the task maybe change your perspective or thoughts on mitigating climate change?
- Who do you think should do a similar exercise?

If you wish, you can also share your output on social media in your own school or student accounts, for example, the hashtags #climatecrisis #climateaction #youth #changeformthebetter #betterfuture. You can also come up with your own hashtags.

Tip: If you want to start out with a short exercise-in-pairs that will support this task, use the "Push or Pull" exercise on the Ahtisaari Days site (http://ahtisaaripaiva.fi/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/NegotiationSkills_PushOrPull.pdf). It shows how we can try to influence others to act as we hope. Alternatively, you can do the same exercise after the group discussion on the viral media.