

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICTS

GLOBAL JUSTICE

Climate change is an ethical issue to a great extent. Accelerated global warming is largely due to the activities of the wealthy industrialised countries. However, its consequences will hit hardest those countries that are least responsible for the crisis and are often already in a vulnerable situation. Awareness of this imbalance should lead to accountability in the so-called global North.

WHAT THE EXERCISE IS ABOUT

- Duration: 45–60 minutes.
- Themes: global justice, climate crisis, carbon footprint.
- Equipment required: Computer and internet connection for video streaming and online research.
- Searching for information on your own on the average carbon footprint of Finnish residents. Comparing carbon footprints around the world and considering the ways in which the information found obligates us.

THE GOAL OF THE EXERCISE

The aim of the exercise is to become aware of the causes of climate change and those who suffer most due to it, and to reflect on the accumulated knowledge from an ethical standpoint.

HOW THE EXERCISE SHOULD PROCEED

First, briefly outline what the climate crisis is all about. You can do this, e.g., by explaining the phenomenon to the students on the basis of what they have previously learned, or alternatively using the following graphics:

- Climate-guide.fi has several informative graphs. For example “How hot will it get in your lifetime?” and “Changes of climatic zones” <https://ilmasto-opas.fi/en/ilmastonmuutos/vidoot-ja-visualisoinnit/-/artikkeli/b4df9633-7e1f-4389-9dd0-a0539588f211/visualisoinnit.html>
- ...or by watching this short video by Sky News: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GjrS8QbHmY>

Ask each student to work out their own “climate debt” as follows:

- First work out your own carbon footprint using the Sitra Lifestyle Test (<https://lifestyletest.sitra.fi>)

- Then compare your result with the average for Finns, which you'll see appear alongside your own result. What do you notice

The average Finn's emissions ranged from 9.6 tonnes to 11.8 tonnes per year between 2000 and 2013 (Source: Sitra). Find out what is the extent of your carbon footprint within the group, and write it down, e.g., on the board. It is good to remember that in all countries there is a divergence between people in relation to the inhabitants' average carbon footprint.

Then instruct everyone to continue their search for information. Ask students to:

- Find a current map of the regions most vulnerable to climate change. (You may try searching e.g. under "countries most vulnerable to climate change". Estimates of regions' vulnerability vary somewhat. There is also one such map based on Standard & Poor's rating of the subject.)
- Choose a few countries from the most vulnerable regions.
- Find out the inhabitants' average carbon footprint in the countries you choose.
- Carbon footprints by country can be found e.g. on Wikipedia under *List of countries by carbon dioxide emissions per capita*.

Put the findings together at this point. In what order are the average carbon footprints of the inhabitants of the countries most vulnerable to climate change? Write them on the board and compare with the span of carbon footprints you previously marked. What do you observe?

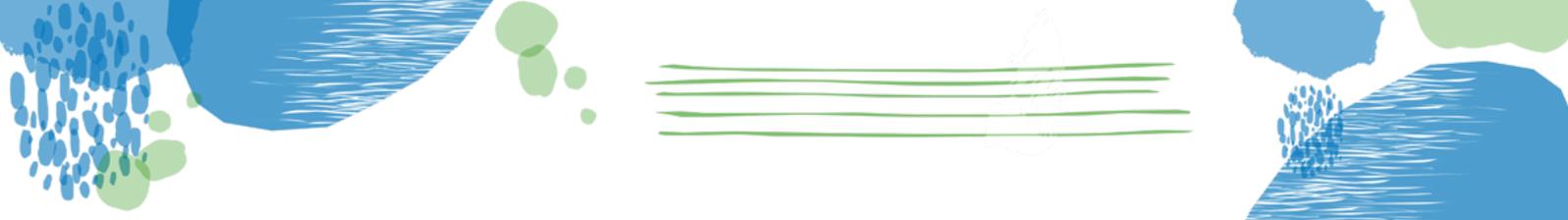
Then split the students up into small groups. Ask them to discuss the following:

- What do you think about the fact that the inhabitants of the regions most affected by the effects of climate change have often had the least impact on the cause of the phenomenon?
- What about the fact that "high emitters" in Finland hardly suffer the serious consequences of climate change, such as extreme weather events
- Summarise your ideas and write down a few sentences on these points.
- What do you think the knowledge of this imbalance obliges us to do? How should we act in the future? To what extent would you be ready for the changes needed?
- Summarise your ideas on this part too and write down a few sentences.

Finally, discuss the summaries done in the small groups. Write down the main conclusions, e.g. on the board.

Tip: Depending on the feeling within the group, it may be good to continue with the exercise **Influencer Bingo** or **Intergenerational Conflict** in this pack. Depending on the direction you want to explore in more depth, you can also:

- Find out e.g. which factors most explain differences in carbon footprints across the world.

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- Consider which actions for each of them would bring their own carbon footprint as close as possible to those of the benchmark countries.

Tip: Often, when reflecting on the low carbon footprint of some countries, we get the impression that the carbon footprint is naturally low in poor and developing countries. However, it is not the case that a low carbon footprint and lower development are necessarily linked. In the global North we could allow ourselves to update our image of living standards in some countries of the global South. Here are two links that you can use to do so.

You can use the Dollar Street page on the <https://www.gapminder.org/> website to compare life in different countries. (You can choose which language to use, and click on 'Quick tour' for a guide to the site.) You'll see from the webpage that the basic framework of middle-income life is largely the same, regardless of region.

This graphic compares ecological footprint and human development indices across countries: <http://data.footprintnetwork.org/#/sustainableDevelopment?cn=all&yr=2016&type=BCpc,EFCpc>

LINKS AND FURTHER READING

Teacher's climate guide: <https://teachers-climate-guide.fi/>