

LESSON 1: Everyone has the right to a healthy, clean, and sustainable living environment

Duration	50 min. The lesson includes multiple reflection and brainstorming moments. You can decide how much time to spend on these activities. To complete the lesson within 50 minutes, you must manage the time carefully. Each part of the lesson has a suggested time division. + Optional extra exercise: 20 min.
Course	English
Doelstellingen	
General learning objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students understand what (human) rights consist of and realize that rights come with responsibilities.• Students know what 'the right to a healthy, clean and sustainable environment' means and realize its importance.• Students create their own ideas to contribute to a healthy, clean and sustainable environment and envision a positive future.

<p>Specific Learning Objectives per Course</p>	<p>English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students form their opinions and support these with arguments. • Students think critically about their own opinions and those of others. • Students participate purposefully in oral and written interactions. • Students select relevant information when reading and listening to texts.
<p>Praktische info</p>	
<p>Teaching methods</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussion • Group work • Brainstorming sessions
<p>Materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment 1.1: Inspiration cards • Attachment 1.2: PowerPoint "The Right to a Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment" • Nemonte Nenquimo TIME100 2020 (youtube.com) • Attachment 1.3.: Vocabulary
<p>Optional</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect Children's Rights and Our Planet: Child-Friendly • Animation on UN General Comment No. 26 (youtube.com) • Attachment 1.4: Children's Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 1.4.1.: Children's Rights (fiches) ◦ 1.4.2.: Children's Rights (in simple wording) • Attachment 1.5: GC26 Child-Friendly Version

Lesson Plan

Goal :

The YOUCA project of 2024 focuses on the right of children and the youth to a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment. This right has been recognized as a human right and has been specifically worked out for children in General Comment No. 26 (see Attachment 1.3.). In this lesson, we delve into the content of this right and what it can mean for young people.

In the first part of the lesson, we get acquainted with the concept of 'rights' **(10 min)**.

Then, we challenge the students to think about the right to a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment and what this means to them. Depending on the teacher's choice, this brainstorm can be accompanied by the use of inspiration cards (see Attachment 1.1.). By touching on various elements of this right, it quickly becomes clear that human rights are interconnected. Making decisions that respect the right to a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment also benefits other human rights. This right is also a condition when you want to guarantee other human rights **(20 min)**.

*Optional : Are you interested in diving deeper into the Convention on the Rights of the Child? You'll find an extra exercise where the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is linked to other rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The teacher's guide is General Comment No. 26 (see Attachment 1.3) **(20 min)**.*

We conclude the lesson with a few examples of people who fight for a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment, and have the students reflect on how they can contribute to it themselves. Because not only do young people have rights, they are also responsible for their own rights and those of others **(20 min)**.

Would you like more information before starting this lesson? You can review the following information:

- <https://youca.be/project2024>
- [Protect Children's Rights](#)
- [and Our Planet: Child-Friendly Animation on UN General Comment No. 26 \(youtube.com\)](#)
- [Attachment 1.3: GC26 Child-Friendly Version](#)
- [The Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment \(unep.org\)](#)
- [The right to a healthy environment: 6 things you need to know | UN News R2HEInfoNoteCBDJan2023Web \(ohchr.org\)](#)
- [De artikelen van het kinderrechtenverdrag | UNICEF België](#)

Use the PowerPoint presentation:

(slides 1-4: 10 min)

1. Introduction (slide 1)

- Start the lesson by explaining that this year's YOUCA Action Day focuses on 'the right to a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment'. Assure students that they may not know exactly what this is yet, but they will discover this together during the lesson.

2. What are rights ? (slide 2)

- Before delving into the specific right to a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment, it's essential to understand what 'rights' are. Start a class discussion or have students think in small groups first.

- i. What are rights ? Which rights do you know?
- ii. Why are rights important ? What can you do with them?
- iii. 'My right ends where yours begins.' What does this mean to you?

- Discuss possible answers:

a. What are rights ? Which rights do you know?

Rights are principles or fundamental rules indicating what you can do and what you can expect from others. Everyone has them, regardless of origin, nationality, beliefs, and gender. They protect vulnerable individuals such as children, elderly people, people with disabilities, refugees, and they also protect you.

Examples include the right to free speech, education, culture and recreation, nationality, etc.

b. Why are rights important ? What can you do with them?

Rights ensure fair and rightful treatment for everyone. They help prevent discrimination and injustice, and contribute to a fair society. They are a significant part of a democratic society.

If you feel like your rights are violated, you can take action to improve your situation because it is not allowed to violate someone's rights. You can seek protection from Belgian judges or international judges if necessary. Additionally, there is power in numbers. When countries fail to uphold their duties and violate human rights, people can protest and demand respect for their rights.

(Examples include the climate case ([de klimaatzaak](#)), students skipping school for climate protests ([spijbelen voor het klimaat](#)), annual demonstrations against racism and inequality ([jaarlijkse betoging tegen racisme en ongelijkheid](#)), etc.)

c. **'My right ends where yours begins.' What does this mean to you?**

Your rights are limited by your responsibility to respect others' rights. Your responsibility is that you must ensure a balance is present between your rights and those of others. You must exercise your rights within certain boundaries.

Example: You have the right to free speech, but that doesn't mean you can tell lies about someone to hurt them or damage their reputation.

There are many situations where the rights of different people conflict.

Example: The right to education can conflict with the right to free time. Some students want to learn during class, while others prefer to have fun. If the latter talk or laugh loudly, it disturbs the students who want to learn.

3. The Right to a Healthy, Clean, and Sustainable Environment (slide 3)

- Explain that the right to a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment is relatively new. It has been recognized as a human right by the United Nations in 2022. Although not yet binding for all member states, it sends a strong message that protecting our environment is essential. The European Union has formed this international right into a European right and urged member countries to incorporate it into their national legislation.
- Also explain that this right is not a reality for many young people around the world, including in Belgium. Think about particulate matter in the air from the industry or cars, polluted lakes that cannot be swum in, floods due to climate change, etc.

4. Why was this right introduced? (slide 4-5)

- Discuss why this right was introduced.
 - i. It is a response to a triple global crisis:
 - Loss of biodiversity (the number of plant, animal, and microorganism species, and even the genetic variations within these)
 - Extreme pollution (of water, soil, air, etc.)
 - Climate change (extreme droughts and heat, changing seasons, etc.)

This crisis has a significant impact on the livability of our planet and our environment. It affects food security, poverty, health, safety, etc.

- ii. Your environment greatly impacts your life. There is a strong interaction between the right to a clean environment and other human and children's rights. The right to a clean environment is a condition for other universal rights, and respecting universal human rights contributes to a clean environment.
- iii. It is important to say that the crisis does not affect everyone equally. Some people are more at risk than others. For example, you have a higher risk of health damage if you live near a polluting factory or busy street. Often, the poorest people live in places where the environment is less safe or stable. People living in poverty are less likely to succeed in school or face food insecurity due to a polluted environment.

For more information, visit the [YOUCA website](https://www.youca.be).

Content of the right (slides 6-9: 20min)

5. Definition of the Right (slide 6-8)

- In this part, we delve deeper into the content of the right to a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment. Students think about what this right means to them. Divide the right into three questions:
 - i. My environment is clean if...
 - ii. My environment is healthy if...
 - iii. My environment is sustainable if...
- Have students come to the board to write their answers down. Ask them to explain why they think of these words. There are no right or wrong answers.

Support in case of few responses:

- Use the inspiration cards from Attachment 1.1. Place the cards on the floor and let students freely choose which cards they think fit the right. Ask them to explain why they would or wouldn't link certain cards to this. There are no right or wrong answers; the cards are meant to spark discussion and reflection and broaden the concepts of 'healthy', 'clean', and 'sustainable'.

ATTENTION: These inspiration cards are in Dutch. Challenge students to translate them into English

6. Conclusion (slide 9)

- Discuss the items written on the board. Highlight that many different aspects can fall under this right, depending on the situation. Also note that this right is connected to all other human and children's rights. Which ones do you recognize? A healthy, clean, and sustainable environment is a condition for the realization of all other human and children's rights, and when human and children's rights are respected, it contributes to a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment.

Optional: Interaction with other children's rights (Slides 10: 20 min)

7. Children's Rights (Slide 10):

- Introduce the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This treaty was established by the United Nations on November 20, 1989, and applies to everyone under the age of 18. Almost all countries in the world have signed the treaty. In Belgium, it was incorporated into law at the beginning of 1992.
- Review the children's rights sheets that include all the rights from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Attachment 1.2.1.). Ask if there are any rights the students don't understand and provide more information if necessary (Attachment 1.2.2.).

8. Interaction (Slide 11):

- Explain that all human and children's rights are interconnected. They are also linked to the right to a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment. They depend on each other and are equally important.

- Give an example: Article 6 - the right to life, survival, and development: it is necessary for the environment in which children live to be healthy, clean, and sustainable. If this is not the case, it harms children's rights to life, survival, and development. Climate change can indeed pose a threat to children's lives!
- Divide the class into pairs and distribute the children's rights sheets (Attachment 1.2). Allow them five minutes to think about the following questions regarding their children's rights:
 - i. How can existing children's rights ensure a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment?
 - ii. For which children's rights is it necessary to have a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment?
- Review the answers in class. Use Attachment 1.3. as a guideline. This document can also be distributed.
- Optionally, watch this video together: [Protect Children's Rights and Our Planet: Child-Friendly Animation on UN General Comment No. 26 \(youtube.com\)](#)

9. **Conclusion (Slide 12):**

- Discuss the interaction between the rights and emphasize how they influence and reinforce each other.

Inspirational Examples

10. **Not a New Idea (Slide 13-14: 5 min):**

- The right to a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment is not a new concept. For years, initiatives have been taken to protect and preserve our environment. This is done both through individual efforts and legal actions. These initiatives can be found both in Belgium and worldwide.
- Ask the students if they know of any examples.
- You can provide the following examples yourself:
- Nemonte Nenquimo and the Waorani from Ecuador (Slide 15):
 - Watch the video about Nemonte Nenquimo and the Waorani community: [Nemonte Nenquimo | TIME100 2020 \(youtube.com\)](#)
 - Why do these people take action? If this community does not take action, their environment is in direct danger and they will no longer be able to live there in the near future. Their way of life is at stake.
- VZW Klimaatzaak in Belgium (Slide 16):
 - Discuss the initiative of VZW Klimaatzaak, a citizen initiative where citizens want to urge the Belgian governments to fulfill their promises regarding climate change. This initiative ended in a lawsuit in which the Brussels Court of Appeal ruled in favor of VZW Klimaatzaak in November 2023. This means that the governments are now obliged to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions more quickly.

- Why do these people take action? The environment of these people will not immediately change so drastically that they cannot live there anymore. They take action because they believe it is the right thing to do for future generations. They demand that the government take better care of them and future generations.
 - Sources: [Klimaatzaak](#) and [Klimaatzaak haalt slag thuis in beroep: rechter verplicht overheid om uitstoot broeikasgassen sneller naar beneden te halen](#) | [VRT NWS: nieuws](#)
- Dream Yourself (Slide 17: 16 min):
 - Encourage the students to think about how they can make their environment clean, healthy, and/or sustainable. Encourage them to think as concretely as possible: which specific place do they want to change? How does it look after their intervention? You can have them do this using various methods depending on the available time:
 - As a reflection question at the end of the lesson without further discussion;
 - Discussion in pairs;
 - Mind map;
 - Drawing;
 - PowerPoint presentation