

## Practising different ethical approaches

In this exercise, students are given a set of problems related to a planning issue and asked to make proposals. They may choose whatever ethical approach or attitude to decision-making they like, but they should be able to explain their motives, and their proposals must be consistent. The exercise offers opportunity to analyse and discuss ethical approaches to decision-making.

### Requirements

- Approx. 45 min for three presentations and discussions, 10 min more for each subsequent presentation and discussion;
- A room with enough space so that several groups can convene and discuss without disturbing each other.

### Schedule

1. Divide the students into 3 to 5 groups of 3 to 5 members each.
2. Hand out the exercise sheets.
3. Allow a preparation time of 10 minutes.
4. Give the first group 5 min. to present and justify their proposals, followed by a five-minute discussion.
5. Proceed with the other groups.

### Hints

Approaches to decision-making cannot always be classified as strictly as handout 2.1.2 suggests. For instance, the principle of *acting sustainably* can be seen both as a personal attitude (related to prudence mentioned as one of the cardinal virtues in the handout) and as a rule or duty.

The difference is in how it comes about, so the question that should be discussed here is 'Why exactly did you make the proposal you made?' Students should become aware of the kind of ethics they use. If time permits, you may discuss and analyse the underlying ethical approaches with every single proposal.

Also the preparation within individual groups will probably include some reflection on ethical concepts, if handout 2.1.2 has been worked through before, so students may come up themselves with an explanation of their proposals.

The discussion should not emulate a stakeholder environment, although such an exercise may also be useful. But in this case, the focus is on exploring how and by what ethical considerations proposals and decisions come about.

## Exercise sheet

### THE PLANNING ISSUE

An old, valuable forest is to be declared a nature reserve. Three quarters of the area have not been used for decades, thus being in a nearly-natural state. The remaining portion is owned by a company that has always done some modest harvesting of timber (which, due to its quality, ranges as a highly esteemed regional product) in a quite sustainable way. As a result, that part of the forest is not in a state as natural as the rest but considered valuable and worth protecting all the same.

The presence of humans in the forest is for some reasons likely to spoil natural developments because they may disturb hatching birds and inadvertently destroy habitats, especially deadwood structures. That's why a complete prohibition of entering the area has been taken into consideration by naturalists.

You are members of a planning group responsible for drafting a regulations act for the nature reserve.

The following stakeholders are involved:

- **Locals** who have been in the habit of walking through the forest, e.g. for collecting mushrooms, for a long time. They wish to do so in the future, too.
- The **municipality** of a small town nearby who wants to exploit the area touristically, hoping to attract visitors and generate some revenue. In particular, they wish to invite tourists to come to the forest and construct a network of hiking paths which don't exist in the area as yet.
- The **forestry company** who wants to continue harvesting timber. In return, they are willing to donate to the nature reserve. The donation could be used to fund a research programme for better understanding and protection of the forest.

### YOUR TASK

Discuss the issue and develop a proposal how to handle the wishes of all three stakeholders. Take into account that you are responsible to conservancy authorities but will also have to maintain good relationships with all stakeholders. Try to come up with a proposal that would stand a test among real village residents, civil servants and company owners, each one vigorously committed to their cause.

Be prepared to explain and justify your decisions to your fellow students.