

# MODULE 2: UNDERSTANDING STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICES

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Objectives:**

- Stereotypes, prejudices, preconceptions, biases: what are they and how are they different?
- Defining stereotypes, prejudices, preconceptions, and biases.
- Raising trainees' awareness on the implications that stereotypes and prejudices have on people's lives and how they affect personal and professional conduct.
- Encouraging trainees to identify and face their own stereotypes and prejudices.
- Displaying how stereotypes and prejudices can negatively affect their work.

**Materials:**

Projector  
Slide PP 2.1

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Trainers ask trainees to explain how they perceive the concepts of stereotypes, prejudices, preconceptions, and biases and how they are different.
2. Trainers show PP 2.1, read it and explain it, along with the differences between the terms.
3. Trainers discuss stereotypes and prejudices and how they affect our lives and communities.
4. Trainers are encouraged to use any of the activities below, depending on their time, if they are implementing an extended version or not, and on what they find useful for the group, taking into consideration also if the group is newly-arrived migrants or migrants who have already been in the country for a long time. For the current version of 7hour training, it is recommended that they use only one activity. For newly arrived migrants/ migrants with no such experience, activities B, C and E are recommended. For migrants who have been staying for long time in the host country and/ or migrants who are syndicalised and/ or migrants who are active in their communities and/ or otherwise active in issues of integration in the workplace, activities A & D are also recommended.
5. Trainers conclude that stereotypes can lead people to discrimination and escalate to hate crimes.

**Notes for trainers**

Biases, preconceptions, prejudices, and stereotypes are not always intentional. Their holders may not be aware of them and yet, they affect their judgements/ behaviour towards (an)other person(s). Biases, preconceptions, prejudices, and stereotypes can be either positive or negative, but they typically connote negative feelings/ opinions/ judgements/ beliefs.

Stereotypes can change when information about a group changes. Stereotypes also recycle: what it used to be a stereotype for a specific group can be later a stereotype for another group.

The difference between biases and stereotypes is that a bias is a personal preference, like/ dislike, influencing the holder's ability to be objective, while a stereotype is a preconceived idea, which attributes certain general traits to all members of a certain group.

The terms 'bias' and 'prejudice' are often used interchangeably. Yet, prejudice is an extreme case of bias.

People perceive things in our environment through their senses, collecting data, and they process these data through their past experiences, education, and cultural norms to draw conclusions. Perceptions may be or may not be true. Perceptions can lead to assumptions about a particular group of people and its members. Such assumptions may be based on the holder's actual experience with one or more members of that group. Sometimes, such perceptions may be true, but not always.

Biases, preconception, prejudices, and stereotypes influence our perceptions, judgements, and our behaviours as well as our actions towards other persons. Stereotypes imply attributes that are associated with a particular group and they may determine our behaviour and actions in several circumstances, influencing our relationships.

Everybody has stereotypes. It is maybe impossible to grow up in our societies without stereotypes. Stereotypes are reinforced, among other things, through media representation, film representation, advertisements, news articles, politicians. Discuss how media portrays or/ and silences men and women, LGBTIQ\* people, disabled people, migrants, refugees, or/ and other socially vulnerable groups. For example, when media depicts migrants and refugees as merely poor people, who are desperate to reach Europe, European citizens shape the perception that migrants have nothing to contribute in the society and the economic development of their countries. Or, when politicians and the media speak of refugees as "illegal migrants," they dehumanise them in our perception. Or, when women are more often than not depicted in the advertisements of cleaning products as the ones doing the cleaning, people associate women with cleaning.

It is important to highlight that we all have unconscious biases, preconceptions, and stereotypes. This is because people tend to categorise in order to comprehend and explain their environment – this is how our minds work. This does not make us bad people, just people. At the same time, we all have the responsibility to acknowledge our biases, preconceptions, and stereotypes so that to be objective and fair and contribute to an equal society. It is important that unconscious biases, prejudices, and stereotypes are not normalised through the training, which must make clear the importance and responsibility of each one to manage their own unconscious biases, prejudices, and stereotypes.

### **Activity A – Our own stereotypes**

**Time:** 10-20 minutes

**Materials:**

Flipchart

Markers

#### **INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Trainers write on the flipchart the following
  - Adventurous
  - Delicate
  - Emotional
  - Aggressive
  - Nurse
  - Strong
  - Jealous

Caring  
Rational  
Selfish/ self-centred  
Patient  
Impatient  
Plumber  
Intelligent  
Construction worker  
Authoritative  
Cleaner  
Weak  
Shy  
Gentle  
Car mechanic  
Dynamic  
Dependent  
Seamstress  
Sensitive  
Forgiving

and ask trainees to say for each one whether they believe it refers to a woman or a man.

2. Trainers create a column with the adjectives attributed to women and another one with those attributed to men.
3. Trainers discuss with the group why we attribute certain characteristics to women and certain others to men.

#### **Notes for trainers**

Due to socialization, we learn to associate certain characteristics to certain groups of people. Strength, aggression, and practical skills are typically associated with men while sensitivity, emotionality, and weakness are typically associated with women. Such associations are so strongly embedded in our minds that affect all aspects of our lives, including our roles, attitudes, responsibilities, behaviours, decision-making, personalities, self-identity, and professions. Such associations are often used to justify discrimination. Moreover, such associations become cultural norms themselves and silence everything outside the norm and gender binary, leading people who do not identify within the gender binary to invisibility and complete exclusion. Understanding that the characteristics we attribute to somebody on the basis of their gender, although thought to be “natural” are actually social constructions, and therefore, they can be changed/ they are not absolute, is important so that to be objective in our judgements and fair.

#### **Activity B – Case study**

**Time:** 15-20 minutes

**Materials:**

Flipchart

Markers

Handout 2.1

Notepads

Pens

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Trainers ask the group to form into pairs/ groups of 3-4.
2. Trainers disseminate handout 2.1 to pairs/ groups.
3. Trainers ask trainees to read the handout with their pairs/ group and discuss the following:
  - George's behaviour.
  - Maria's reaction.
  - Olga's feelings.
  - What they think about the relationship between Maria and Olga after the incident. Could the incident affect their relationship?
  - Could George learn something after this incident?
  - Invite pairs/ groups to discuss if they have faced any similar incidents in their lives, what happened, how they (re)acted and how they felt.
4. Trainers ask pairs/ groups to present their findings.
5. Trainers discuss the findings enriched with their own perspectives:
  - Explain that, in all people, previous experiences biases and preconceptions form an underlined pattern, on which (re)actions, opinions, and behaviours are based.
  - Emphasize how prejudices and stereotypes can affect their judgements
  - Highlight that assumptions can affect negatively and hamper their relationships and life as well as the lives of other people.

### **Handout 2.1\***

George is a Cypriot. He is also an IT professional and works for a communications company. He is married to Maria, who works at the same company. On the weekends, George plays soccer. George identifies and associates with other IT professionals, with his colleagues at the company he works for, and with other people who play soccer, all of them are typically Cypriot men. George believes that Cypriots have the best qualities. George also likes French, Italians, Brits, and Germans. George studied in the UK and he has some colleagues who are Brits and Italians. He also has some friends from soccer who are French and German.

Maria has a friend, Olga, who is from Ukraine. Olga works as a salesperson and is a single mother. Sometimes Maria invites Olga to their home for a coffee, especially on weekends that George is usually playing soccer. George does not like Olga. George believes that Eastern Europeans and especially women from the Eastern Europe tend to lie and take advantages of the others. George also believes that women in general are weak and that single mothers are always poor and immoral.

Last Sunday, George came back home from soccer, had dinner at home with Mary and was preparing to go out with his colleagues for beers. He was looking for his gold watch, but could not find it. He asked Maria, but she said she had not seen it either. George asked Maria if her friend Olga had come earlier for coffee as planned and Maria confirmed it. George then told Maria he was sure Olga had stolen his watch. Maria said that's impossible, but George insisted. George also insisted that Maria called Olga and asks her to return his watch. Maria refused, but George insisted and became angry. Maria finally called Olga and told her that George has lost his watch and asked her if she had seen it around earlier when she was at their house. Olga said she had no idea and heard George shouting he was sure she had stolen it. Olga told Maria she was offended and hung up. George was now convinced Olga had stolen his watch and told Maria not to invite her at their house again. George left to go out with his friends. Maria stayed at home puzzled. She trusted her friend, but then, again, maybe George was right. She knew Olga had financial difficulties and was not sure what to believe. Maria kept searching for George's watch but could not find it. The

following day, George found his watch on his desk, at his office. Last Friday, he was wearing it at a meeting. After the meeting, he wanted to wash his face and took off his watch. He had forgotten it there.

#### **Notes for trainers**

\* Trainers are recommended to change names, countries of origin, and/ or other details in the story in handout 2.1 to represent the reality in their own local/ national context.

George is identifying with groups with which he has shared experiences and with which he believes he has common fundamental values. There is nothing wrong with George identifying with these groups. The problem comes in when George develops an “us versus them” mentality, making assumptions for people belonging in other groups. George must acknowledge his biases, presumptions, and stereotypes and ensure he will not allow them again to impact his actions/ perceptions towards other people.

Maria is more open to people who do not belong in the same groups as herself. Yet, social constructions affect her judgement on them, making her not sure for them. Maria must also acknowledge her stereotypes and ensure they do not affect her relationships with others.

Olga was offended and taking into consideration that because of social presumptions and stereotypes this is probably not the first time she was suspected on something she did not do, she probably feels hurt and betrayed. Such feelings have a negative impact on her and her wellbeing and could also hurt her relationship with Maria.

#### **Activity C: Identifying stereotypes**

**Time:** 20 minutes

#### **Materials:**

Flipchart

Markers

#### **INSTRUCTIONS**

- Trainers ask the group to list the characteristics on which people are stereotyped and write their answers on the flipchart. If needed, trainers present more answers. Such answers are: race, nationality, ethnic origin, language/ accent, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance (skin colour, weight, hair colour, tattoos, piercings, dressing), profession, where they live, family status (single, married, divorced, single parent, couple without children, unmarried couples), socio-economic status/ class.
- Trainers ask for examples of negative stereotypes concerning these categories. Trainers contribute with their own examples, such as: “women are weak,” “fat people are sick,” “people with a lot of tattoos/ piercings are criminals,” “Asians are submissive,” “Arabs are aggressive,” “Romanians and Bulgarians are drunkards,” “trans women try to cheat men,” “gay men are promiscuous,” “disabled people are beggars,” “people with mental history are prone to criminality,” “people with HIV are dangerous,” “women wearing the veil are oppressed,” “single mothers are promiscuous and immoral,” “married/ long-term couples without children are selfish,” “poor people are more likely to steal.”

#### **Activity D: Learning through experience and sharing**

**Time:** 20-40 minutes

**Materials:**

Flipchart

Markers

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Trainers facilitate a discussion around the following questions, taking notes on the flipchart:
  - Can you recall and share an incident in which you/ a family member/ a friend was stereotyped by others? Why do you think you/ they were stereotyped? How did this experience affect you?
  - Can you recall and share a stereotype which you had in the past about a group of people? How do you think you learnt this stereotype? How did you get over it?
  - Can you identify stereotypes in the media? Please describe them.
  - Can you identify cultural stereotypes? Please describe them.
  - What kind of risks do you think stereotypes (may) pose to our communities/ lives?
2. Trainers must highlight that such questions are difficult as most of us cannot identify our own stereotypes or do not want to share them as we may feel guilty for them or threatened by exposing them. At this point, trainers are strongly encouraged to share with the group their own incidents of past/ current stereotypes. Trainers also highlight that nobody is pressurised to reveal their own experiences if not comfortable.

**Activity E: Stereotypes in the pop culture and how they may distort real concepts**

**Time:** 20-40 minutes

**Materials:**

Flipchart

Markers

Slides PP 2.2 and PP 2.3

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- 1) Trainers show slide PP 2.2 and ask trainees to discuss it.**
- 2) Trainers ask trainees their opinion on the female dragon in the poster and on the way she is depicted. Trainers are encouraged to ask the following questions:**
  - What do you think of the two dragons?
  - How are they different?
  - Which one do you believe is male and which one female? Why?
  - Do you think this is a fair representation of a female dragon? Why?
  - How would you portray a female dragon and why?
- 3) Trainers take notes on the flipchart.
- 4) Trainers show slide PP 2.3 and ask trainees to discuss it.
  - Do they believe this to be a better or worse representation of a female dragon? Why?

**Notes for trainers**

Discuss how unrealistic the depiction of the female dragon is based on animal and veterinary science, taking into consideration that a dragon would be a big lizard, which anyway influences the design of the poster. [Here](#) trainers can find an interesting read, which will help you in discussing the portrayal of the female dragon in *How to train your dragon 3*. It is not advisable to hand printouts of the article as it contains language that may be disturbing. Trainers are advised to study the article so that to be able to discuss with trainees why this is an unrealistic depiction of a female dragon, even though dragons are anyway mythical creatures.

