INCLUSIVE PATHways TO PEACE

Alien Accord

Methodological guide

Co-funded by the European Union

AGENCY FOR MOBILITY AND EU PROGRAMMES

Udruga Studio B

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Introduction

The “Block H8 - Peace puzzles Toolkit” methodological guide presents a methodology and innovative tools to engage and empower youth with conflict resolution skills through game-based educational resources and aims to increase the quality of youth work by equipping youth practitioners and organizations with new skills, approaches and methods. It strives to promote common values such as tolerance, inclusivity, and understanding, ultimately contributing to building cohesive and peaceful societies.

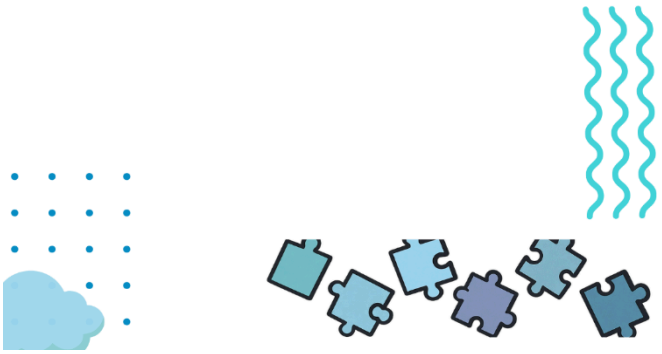
By providing Open Educational Resources (OERs) as a dynamic and interactive environment, we want to equip practitioners with hands-on experience that they can directly apply in their youth-focused initiatives, thereby contributing to enhancing the capacity of Youth and for Youth organizations by offering a practical resource for youth work.

This toolkit’s incorporation of digital elements, such as 360-degree photo/videos and Augmented Reality, provides a cutting-edge approach to non-formal education, available in English, Croatian, Serbian, Spanish, Greek and Turkish, ensuring that YPs, youth organizations, and training providers can use it in a way that respects diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

Concerning the Youth, the overarching goal of these Open Educational Resources is to contribute to the enhancement of critical thinking and problem-solving, decision-making, teamwork, media literacy, communication and collaboration, leadership, professionalism, and strong empathy among young people, through active participation, in order to enhance conflict prevention and resolution abilities among youth.

Block H8 – Peace Puzzles Toolkit – Methodological Guide is a practical handbook for preparing and implementing 8 educational escape room activities focused on peacebuilding, human rights, inclusion, non-violent communication, emotional intelligence, digital safety, and the prevention of discrimination.

The guide provides detailed methodologies for each room. For every escape room, it presents the visual setup of the space, educational objectives, target group, accessibility and adaptation options, scenario, game objective, room layout, required materials, preparation process, the role of the Game master, gameplay flow, tips, hints, and debriefing questions, thereby providing a comprehensive tool for every practitioner in both non-formal and formal learning settings.



Co-funded by the European Union

Project context

"Inclusive pathways to peace, 2024-2-HR01-KA220-YOU-000279458" is an Erasmus+ KA2 *Cooperation partnerships in youth* project, coordinated by Association Studio B (Croatia) with partners from Serbia (Udruženje Svetlost), Spain (ASOCIACIÓN JUVENIL ERASMIAU), and Cyprus (Neolea gia antalagi kai katanoisi – Youth for Exchange and Understanding). The project aims to engage and empower 181 youth with conflict resolution skills through game-based educational resources and to increase the quality of youth work by equipping 130 youth practitioners with new skills, approaches and tools. The project promotes common values such as tolerance, inclusivity, and understanding, ultimately contributing to building cohesive and peaceful societies. After participatory action research and using creative gamification approach, partners co-created open educational resources - including interactive escape rooms enhanced with 360° and augmented reality elements - that support young people in building empathy, communication, and conflict resolution skills. By combining non-formal education and digital innovation, the project is strengthening the quality of youth work and contributing to more cohesive, democratic, and peaceful communities across Europe.



This guidebook was developed as an intellectual output within the project.

During its implementation, partners collaborated on the creation and testing of educational escape rooms focused on topics related to peacebuilding, conflict transformation, empathy, human rights, communication, and cooperation among young people. Through international collaboration and exchange of experiences, the project explored how game-based learning and highly participative educational activities can encourage active participation and meaningful learning among youth. The escape rooms in this guide were developed by four national teams of 10 youngsters and 2 youth workers, tested in an international setting in Šabac, Serbia in March of 2026, further refined based on feedback by the participants of that mobility, to finally be used in local events in Croatia, Cyprus and Spain. This approach enabled us to create a meaningful learning resource, that is both fun and educational for both youth and youth practitioners, with an immersive experience going much deeper than traditional learning methods.

This guide was created as a practical support resource for educators, youth workers, trainers, facilitators, and organizations interested in using educational escape rooms in their work.

We hope you'll enjoy using it as much as we enjoyed the process of its creation!

Alien Accord

1 Introduction

A) Context

This room connects the game narrative with the project's educational focus by placing participants in a fictional first-contact scenario that reflects real-life conflicts rooted in misunderstanding, fear, and miscommunication. Through interaction with the alien species, participants are challenged to practice non-violent communication, empathy, and cooperative problem-solving to prevent escalation and reach a peaceful resolution.

B) Visual presentation of the room

The room should resemble an ordinary human working environment - such as an office, classroom, or meeting room - to create a sense of familiarity and normality. At first glance, the space appears functional, neutral, and safe, reinforcing the idea that this is a controlled setting designed for communication rather than confrontation. Walls, furniture, and lighting can remain largely unchanged and recognizably "human."

The central focal point of the room is a laptop or computer placed on a desk or table. This device functions as the Linguistic Interface Unit, the primary tool through which contact the alien civilization is established. The screen should be clearly visible and treated as an important operational console.

On one side of the room, a Contact Vault is installed - visually represented as a mailbox, container, or secure box. This object serves as the physical channel for receiving and sending information from Kyrion-9. While simple in structure, it should stand out slightly from the rest of the room, hinting at its importance as a bridge between two worlds.

Mounted on the wall are two clocks. One shows standard Earth time, while the other displays Kyrion-9 time, designed with an unfamiliar, non-linear structure. The contrast between the clocks subtly reinforces the theme of differing perspectives, rhythms, and worldviews that complicate communication.

A single calendar page is also visible on the wall, marking today as the meeting day.

Sound design should remain minimal but intentional. A low, ambient hum — similar to electronic equipment, distant signals, or faint transmission noise - can be played to suggest ongoing interstellar communication. Occasional soft notification tones or static bursts may reinforce the idea that contact is fragile and dependent on careful interaction.

Overall, the environment should communicate normality under tension. Nothing appears dangerous or hostile, yet subtle elements constantly remind participants that they are navigating an unfamiliar cultural and communicative landscape. This balance supports the educational aim of practicing non-violent communication, empathy, and calm problem-solving in situations where misunderstanding could easily escalate into conflict.

Co-funded by the European Union

C) Educational objectives

- Develop peaceful conflict resolution and de-escalation skills by requiring participants to respond to tension, misunderstanding, and urgency through dialogue rather than force or dominance.
- Strengthen understanding of non-violent communication principles, using a fictional first-contact scenario to explore needs, emotions, and intentions behind conflicting positions.
- Enhance empathy and perspective-taking, encouraging participants to consider radically different worldviews, communication styles, and cultural logics when interacting with the alien civilization.
- Improve teamwork and cooperative decision-making, emphasizing active listening, shared responsibility, and consensus-building under time pressure.

D) Target group profile and number

Age: 14-30

Group size recommendation: 4-7 participants

Group profile: The activity is aimed at young people who are open to dialogue, reflection, and active participation, and who are willing to engage with differing perspectives and communication styles. Participants are expected to collaborate closely, practice active listening, and approach challenges through discussion and mutual understanding rather than competition. The room is particularly suitable for young people interested in peacebuilding, communication skills, human rights, or non-formal education, as well as those open to exploring conflict, misunderstanding, and cooperation through experiential and game-based learning methods.

Escape room difficulty: Medium

E) Accessibility & Adaptability

This escape room is designed with accessibility in mind, ensuring that participants with different needs, particularly those with hearing impairments and wheelchair users, can fully engage with the experience. All core elements, puzzles, and instructions are created to be usable without reliance on sound, and important information is always available in a visual format.

When setting up the room, facilitators should pay special attention to physical accessibility. Make sure there is enough space for wheelchair movement, avoiding narrow pathways or cluttered layouts. Key objects, clues, and interactive elements should be placed within comfortable reach (not too high or too low) and should not require excessive force or complex physical actions.

Flexibility is encouraged. Facilitators can adapt elements of the room depending on the specific needs of the group. The goal is not just access, but meaningful participation, ensuring that all players can contribute, explore, and enjoy the experience equally.

Co-funded by the European Union

2 Step by step preparation

2.1 Scenario

A signal has been received.
Somewhere beyond human time and logic, an alien civilization is watching. They have seen this moment before: rising tension, unresolved conflict, and communication *that turns quickly into harm. In their world, these patterns ended everything. Survival came only when violence was abandoned and dialogue became the highest form of intelligence.*

Now Earth stands at the same threshold.

You are not soldiers, scientists, or leaders. You are intermediaries — tasked with proving that understanding is still possible. Every message you send, every choice you make, is interpreted as evidence of who we are as a species. Time is limited, pressure is real, and misunderstanding carries consequences.

This is not a test of speed or cleverness. It is a test of listening.

To succeed, you must slow escalation, recognize unspoken needs, and navigate difference without domination. There are no enemies here — only perspectives that do not easily translate. The question is not whether humanity is powerful enough to survive.
It is whether it can learn to communicate before it is too late.

2.2 Objective of the game

The objective of the game is for participants to collectively prevent the activation of a planetary fail-safe device by establishing and maintaining peaceful communication with an unfamiliar civilization. Progress is achieved by interpreting messages, responding thoughtfully, and navigating moments of tension where misunderstanding could escalate into irreversible consequences.

The game is structured so that information is incomplete, meanings are ambiguous, and time pressure is constant. No single participant has full access to understanding or control over the outcome. Success depends on the group's ability to listen carefully, share interpretations, clarify intentions, and negotiate responses together through the Linguistic Interface Unit and the Contact Vault.

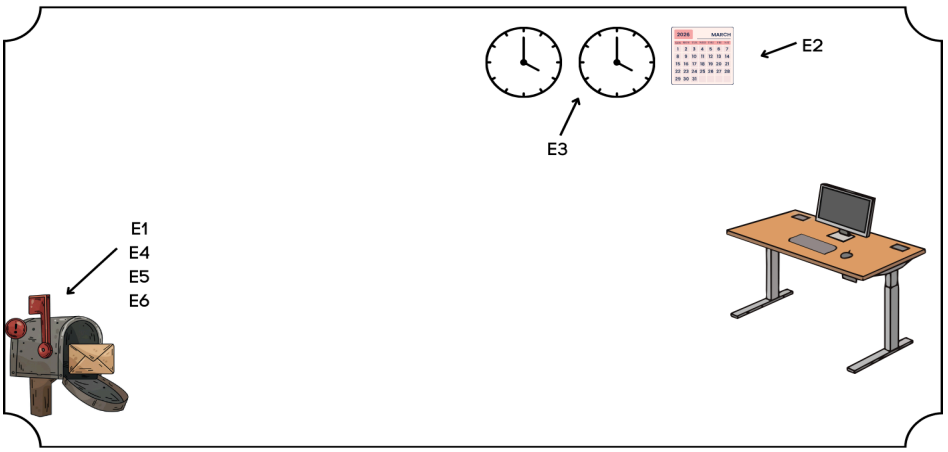
Rather than rewarding dominance, speed, or technical problem-solving alone, the game emphasizes relational decision-making. Participants must recognize emotions, underlying needs, and differing perspectives - both within the group and in their communication with the alien observers. The group succeeds only if it chooses dialogue over escalation, cooperation over control, and collective responsibility over individual certainty.

2.3 Room Layout

Depending on the shape and size of the room you will be using as the area of the escape room, the room layout will also vary. The most important thing is keeping the flow of the room relatively the same, eg. keeping the first steps of the escape room towards the entry way and the final steps toward the back of the room. We suggest

Co-funded by the European Union

the following layout as an idea which can be adapted according to the space being used:



2.4 The Materials

- M1. Laptop or computer
- M2. Mailbox (or a box painted like one)
- M3. Desk

Additional:

Participants should have at least one phone with a working camera and an internet connection.

Game master can wear an alien costume if available to better immersion.

Timer can be displayed visibly in the room, or the GM can have it on their phone, making sure to notify the players as time passes. Time to be set for this room is 45 minutes.

In this escape room there is a time deduction/ addition mechanic, where based on players choices, a time deduction or addition will show up on the screen, be ready to change the time on your timer every time it happens.

2.5 How to set up the room

The following steps you will have to do before every group of participants starts their escape room journey.

First make sure you have laid out all the materials that make up the room (M1-M2) according to the room layout requirements.

Follow the next steps to set up the room with the game elements from the *Peace puzzles Toolkit* or the *Unlock Peace - modules for DIY production* so it is playable:

Co-funded by the European Union

1. Preparing the laptop/computer: (M1) Create an additional profile on the laptop and set the password as 0515. On the desktop create a folder, inside of it should be 10 empty sub-folders, numbered 1-10. You should copy this folder with 10 subfolders as many times as possible to fill out the entire desktop with folders, numbering them starting from 1 and ending on the final number (ex. 99). Open the folder numbered with 15, and inside of it open the subfolder 5. Inside of it create a notepad file with the following link: https://www.canva.com/design/DAG8-GajU_I/WP2xri922oa-RbPzrJOzMw/view?utm_content=DAG8-GajU_I&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=uniquelinks&utlId=h60eab570f2

SCAN

1. Place the laptop on a visible spot in the room.
2. Place the mailbox (M2) on the opposite side of the room.
3. Have E1 letter ready to give to participants upon entry.
4. Tape E2 on the wall.
5. Tape E3 on the wall next to it.
6. Have E4, E5 and E6 ready with the Game master to place inside the mailbox at the appropriate time.

8. Have the link to the AR scanner web application ready to forward to the players' phone upon entering the room, https://alienaccordserbia.netlify.app/ or have it ready in the form of a QR code which you can print from the DIY module.

SCAN

9. Start the timer for 45 minutes, being ready to deduct or add time when called for by the presentation.

Steps 1 to 7 are to be repeated before every group of participants enters the room, these will be your setup and reset steps to follow.

TIPS:

➔ When you install the game zone: make sure you remember the location of every clue! This will allow you to follow the progress of the participants during their game and give them the right clues.

➔ It is recommended to recount the material at the end of the session. It is possible that players have written on some or that they have accidentally kept some of the materials in their pockets.

3 Step by step implementation

3.1 The Game master

General Game master missions are to:

- Prepare all the game media, set up the room and then put it back in place;
- Welcome the players and immerse them in the atmosphere of their mission before the game;

Co-funded by the European Union

- Follow the game in order to help them, give them clues or advice;
- Once the mission is over, the Game master is here to debrief with the players by going back over the highlights of the mission.

In the game space, we advise that the Game master remains a little bit away from the group to leave the necessary space for the players to evolve independently and perhaps be less tempted to ask for clues or judge the reactions of the Game master.

Specifics of the GM role in this ER:

In this ER the Game master acts as one of the aliens from the planet Kyrion-9, called Vaelis. They can dress up accordingly or not and say that the alien has taken a form that would be pleasing to the humans from planet Earth. GM's role is to place elements in the "contact vault" (the mailbox- M2) when called for by the tasks appearing on screen. Following the flow of the screen challenges the GM would have to subtract or add time to the timer as well. During the game GM should keep an eye on any possible misclicks from players on the screen, leading them to the wrong page of the presentation. The final task of participants is to think of an idea and present it to Vaelis, where it's at the GMs discretion to choose whether or not the idea is satisfactory and give the green light to the rest of the aliens to stop the device threatening Earth.

3.2 Introductions and instructions

Before starting the game, it is the Game master's job to introduce themselves and explain their role. The Game master is here in case participants need some help or are lost in the game. Explain the scenario if they still have some questions and explain about the timer.

Ask the participants if they have already played an escape game and if not, explain to them the purpose and mechanisms of escape games.

Inform the participants they have 45 minutes to complete the escape room.

Give the following instructions:

- Respect the Props and Decor: Treat all props and decor with care and respect.
- Do not use physical force, only mental. No clue is intended to be revealed by breaking elements of the room.
- Communicate Effectively. Clear communication is key to success. Make sure to verbalize your thoughts. observations and ideas with your team members.
- Listening to each other's perspectives is crucial for solving puzzles efficiently.
- Use your resources wisely. Utilize all available resources, including clues, tools and your teammates' skill and knowledge.

Co-funded by the European Union

- Think creatively and think outside the box to find solutions to challenges.
- Stay focused. Keep your focus on the task at hand and avoid distractions.
- Concentrate on solving puzzles and progressing through the game to achieve your ultimate goal.
- Manage your time. Time management is essential. Pace yourselves throughout the game to ensure you have enough time to solve all puzzles and complete the mission before the countdown expires.
- Stay positive and encouraging. Maintain a positive attitude and encourage your teammates. Support each other through challenges and celebrate your successes together.
- Seek help if needed. If you find yourself stuck on a particular puzzle or clue, don't hesitate to ask for hints or assistance from the Game master. They are there to help guide you and ensure you have an enjoyable experience.
- Follow safety guidelines. Be mindful of any safety guidelines provided by the Game master. Avoid running, jumping or engaging in any behaviour that could result in injury to yourself and others. No clue is hidden in a way that requires climbing furniture or moving heavy pieces of the set.
- Above all, remember to enjoy the experience! Embrace the adventure, immerse yourself in the story, and have fun working together with your team to overcome challenges and the escape room.

*TIP- It is better to give instructions outside of the play area, preferably in a quieter area where players can focus on what is being said by the Game master.

3.3 Hints and tips

During the course of the game the Game master should observe and give some hints or tips to the players. We have suggested some hints, at certain moments through the course of the play, depending on the situation, the Game master can give additional hints or tips. However, make sure you give players time to play and try to guess things, only give hints if asked or in case players are stuck.

3.4 Course of the gameplay

1. Participants are notified they have received a communication message from aliens and receive the letter (E1) as well as the link to the scanner web application for their phone.
2. Scanning the glyphs of the initial letter they will have the code for the laptop. (M1)
3. Having successfully entered the laptop code (0515) players see a big number of identical folders. If they start opening them one by one it would take a long time, so they search the room.
4. On the wall they see a calendar with the date circled 15th of May, as well as two clocks, showing time on Earth (5:15) and on Kyrion-9 (unreadable to the human eye).

Co-funded by the European Union

5. These repeating numbers should guide them to open folder number 15 and subfolder number 5 within it revealing the link to the presentation or better said to the Linguistic Interface Unit.
6. Starting from here they communicate with aliens through it, solving tasks as follows:
7. Security measures- finding the correct color answer when looking at the paper that arrives at the contact vault (M2).
8. System failure detected- offering to help decipher the code for the aliens' failing system, decoding the binary code on the paper that arrived at the contact vault and choosing the correct order of wires.
9. Data storage- reviewing the newspaper article that arrives in the contact vault and choosing the correct answer on the screen.
10. Direct communication - preceding to direct communication players will open a 360-view sending them directly to the aliens, their task will be to actively listen to the alien remembering their message.
11. Upon "returning to Earth" they will have 15 minutes to create a way to teach non-violent communication and peaceful conflict resolution to your people on Earth and present it to Vaelis.
12. Presenting the idea, Vaelis chooses whether the device threatening the Earth will be stopped.

3.5 Debriefing phase

The Game master congratulates the players on completion of the escape room.

Elementary questions:

How do you feel?

Did you enjoy the game?

Did you feel under pressure with time?

Discussion:

A discussion led by the Game master based on the educational topic should follow. Together with participants, the GM should recap all that was important to learn from this educational escape room experience.

Any educational topic specific questions should be added here.

- What moments in the game showed how misunderstandings or assumptions can escalate a conflict, and what helped de-escalate them?
- How did your group handle differences of opinion under time pressure, and what communication strategies were most effective?
- What elements of the alien communication felt unfamiliar or difficult, and how does this relate to real-life intercultural or interpersonal conflicts?

Taking a group picture: Game master helps the players take a group picture in celebration of completion.

Participants' feedback: Game master invites the players to give any additional feedback they might have regarding the experience.

Co-funded by the European Union

Impressum

This Methodological guide was created within the Erasmus+ project "Inclusive pathways to peace", 2024-2-HR01-KA220-YOU-000279458."
This project is co-funded by the European Union.

Publisher

ASSOCIATION LIGHT
SIME KATICA 1
15000 ŠABAC – SERBIA
nvo.svetlost@gmail.com

Editor in chief

Marija Ristić, Association Light

Design

Vojislav Radosavljević

Contributors

Saša Despotović, Gordana Mandić Radosavljević, Nikolina Jureković, Magdalena Dević, Kemal Ashik

July 2026.



