INCLUSIVE PATHways TO PEACE

The Office

Methodological guide

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AGENCY FOR MOBILITY AND EU PROGRAMMES

Udruga Studio B

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

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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.

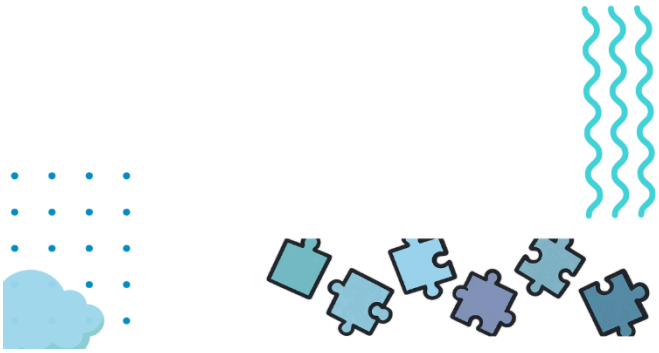
By providing Open Educational Resources (OERs) as a dynamic and interactive environment, we want to equip practitioners with hands-on experience that they can directly apply in their youth-focused initiatives, thereby contributing to enhancing the capacity of Youth and for Youth organizations by offering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



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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!

The Office

1 Introduction

A) Context

"The Office" is an educational escape room that immerses participants in a fictional workplace to explore the mechanisms of institutional discrimination. Drawing on research conducted by youth teams in partner countries during earlier stages of the IPP project, the escape room reflects how discriminatory practices are often embedded within policies, procedures, and everyday bureaucratic decisions. Through interactive challenges, participants are invited to uncover how institutions can systematically marginalize certain groups, making discrimination less visible but deeply entrenched. Aligned with the overall objectives of the project, *The Office* offers an innovative and experiential approach to addressing marginalization, inequality, and human rights. The escape room examines how institutional frameworks impact marginalized groups by highlighting barriers related to access, representation, and equal treatment.

B) Visual presentation of the room

Participants enter a space designed to resemble a modern corporate office, immediately establishing a sense of formality and control. The lighting is cold and fluorescent, creating an impersonal atmosphere, while a subtle soundscape of keyboard typing, printer noise, notification pings, and a ticking clock reinforces the environment. A slightly worn motivational poster reading "We Are All Equal" hangs on the wall, hinting at a disconnect between institutional ideals and lived reality. The room is arranged as an open-plan office with desks, filing cabinets, potted plants, and scattered documents.

A Game master, acting as a *Human Resources Manager*, oversees the process. Addressing the participants formally and maintaining a neutral, bureaucratic tone, they provide instructions that emphasize efficiency and procedure rather than fairness. This reinforces the power dynamics within the space.

C) Educational objectives

- Understand Institutional Discrimination and recognize how organizational rules, policies, and practices can advantage some groups while disadvantaging others.
- Foster Empathy and perspective-taking by developing an understanding of challenges faced by marginalized groups and the impact of systemic barriers.
- Develop collaboration, teamwork and problem-solving skills.
- Connect experiential activities to the formal concept of institutional discrimination and human rights principles.
- Promote reflection, critical and analytical thinking.

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- Strengthen observational, and communication skills.

D) Target group profile and number

Age: 16-30

Group size recommendation: 6-9 participants (2-3 participants per team)

Group profile: Youth and/or youth workers interested in developing a deeper understanding of institutional discrimination; and how such forms of unequal treatment are reinforced through various structures. Prior knowledge or experience is not required.

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.

2 Step by step preparation

2.1 Scenario

Welcome to The Office.

You've just entered the selection process. Congratulations - or maybe not... Everything looks normal at first: desks, folders, meetings, and a strict Human Resources Manager watching your every move. But soon you'll notice that not all teams are moving at the same pace. Some have the tools and resources to advance quickly, while others struggle to keep up. Success isn't guaranteed, and only the teams that navigate the office most effectively will get closer to the coveted positions.

Your mission is simple, yet tricky: explore the office, uncover hidden clues, and solve puzzles - but remember, your team isn't alone. Pay attention, strategize, and decide how to proceed. Along the way, you'll experience how access, privileges, and institutional rules can advantage some and disadvantage others - and see firsthand what it takes to move ahead in a competitive system.

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Will you be able to secure your place in The Office? Step inside, navigate the bureaucracy, and see how it will all play out!

2.2 Objective of the game

The Office is an escape room that simulates the *experience of navigating* a workplace where rules, policies, and procedures are not always as fair as they seem. The goal is to explore how institutional structures can advantage some people while limiting opportunities for others. Participants are grouped into teams, assigned different tools, and tasked with collecting clues, solving puzzles, and progressing through the office - only to discover that not all teams have the same access or opportunities.

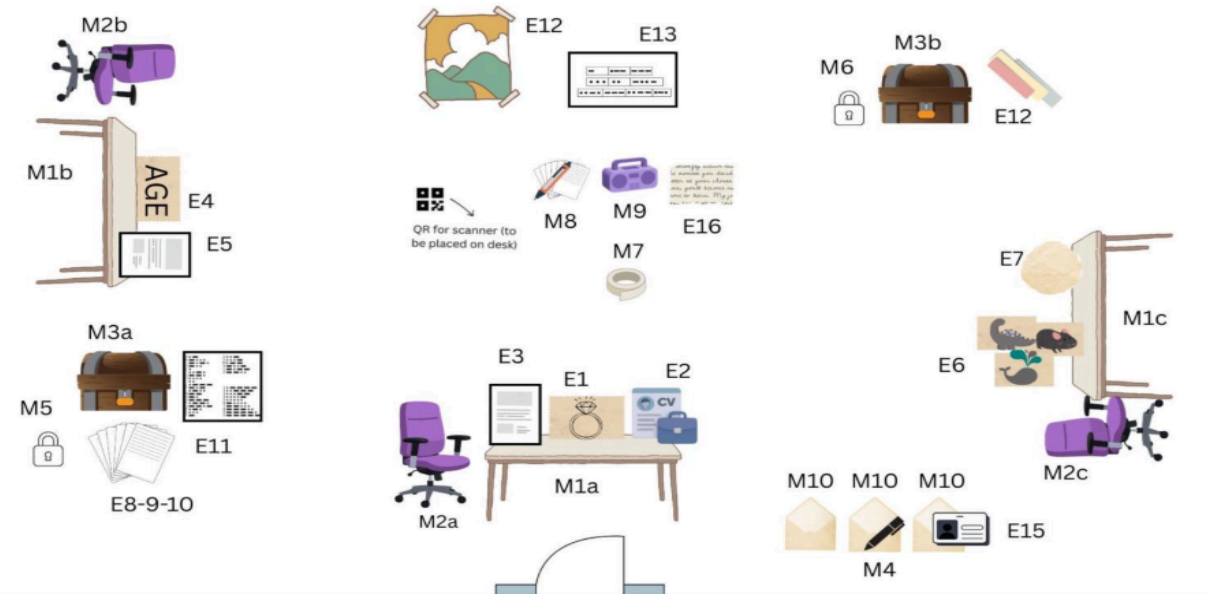
Through their journey, participants will encounter hidden triggers, unexpected barriers, and subtle inequities that mirror real-life systemic challenges. Some clues and tools will be easy to access, while others will require collaboration, negotiation, or creative problem-solving. By experiencing these dynamics firsthand, participants gain insight into how privilege, access, and exclusion operate in everyday institutions.

Once all teams come together in the final stage, participants will use their collected words to complete a full definition of institutional discrimination definition. The experience is immersive, engaging, and interactive, designed to challenge assumptions, encourage cooperation, and reveal the hidden workings of institutional discrimination - making the invisible visible in a way that is both playful and thought-provoking.

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

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2.4 The Materials

Furniture / Room Setup

- M1. 3 Desks
- M2. 3 Chairs
- M3. 2 Lock Boxes

Tools

- M4. UV light
- M5. 1 Lock with combination key "175"
- M6. 1 Lock with combination key “264”
- M7. Tape
- M8. Paper and pen to take note for clues
- M9. Speaker for audio
- M10. 3 Envelopes
- M11. UV pen (for room setup)

Additional:

One of the groups who has the “Phone Access Pass” will need to use their phone to be able to scan the QR code to access the scanner and access the AR and 360° elements. Internet connection will be needed to scan the QR code and triggers for AR and 360° elements.

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The materials listed above can be used to create an immersive atmosphere in the room. Feel free to incorporate additional elements to enhance the vibe and engagement.

Play background office sounds on the speaker (M9) such as typing, printer noises, email notifications, or clock ticking to establish an office environment. You may use copyright-free sounds online (Example: Free Office Sound Effects Download - Pixabay)

SCAN

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.

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-M11) 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:

1. Put a chair (M2a) in front of the desk. On this desk, place Trigger 1: Ring (E1), the CV (E2), and the Candidate Profile Sheet (E3) with a note stating: “Additional information required before final assessment.”.
2. Put one desk (M1a) near the entrance. Put a chair (M2a) in front of the desk. On this desk, place Trigger 1: Ring (E1), the CV (E2), and the Candidate Profile Sheet (E3) with a note stating: “Additional information required before final assessment.”.
3. Put another desk (M1b) on the left side of the room. Put a chair (M2b) in front of the desk. On this desk, place Trigger 2: AGE (E4) and the “Candidate Eligibility Policies” Document (E5).
4. On the document “Candidate Eligibility Policies” (E5), using a UV pen (M4), write the missing words on the document: “Ensure all candidates which fall below the threshold before advancing; only those meeting such hidden metrics have full access.” “These rules reflect institutional thresholds applied to all candidates.”. The words “such” and “to” are written with a UV pen and are not visible.
5. Put the last desk (M1c) on the right side of the room. Put a chair (M2c) in front of the desk.
6. On this desk, place the images of a mouse, dinosaur and whale (E6) and the prompt asking: “Which animal can be found in an office?” (E7). The image of the mouse is a trigger.
7. Place one lock box (M3a) on the left side of the room in a corner. This lock box should have the lock with combination key “175” (M5). Inside the lock box, there is a performance review (E8), a memo (E9), a chart (E10). On the last paper, a UV-pen annotation in the margin should note: “These procedures reflect longstanding prejudice, which must be managed

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carefully". The word "prejudice" should be underlined to stand out from the rest of the sentence as it is a key word for the definition. Here they will also find a Morse code alphabet (E11) that they will need to use to unlock the second lock box.

8. Tape printed poster "WE ARE ALL EQUAL" (E12) on the wall using tape (M7). Also tape the messages written in Morse code (E13) on the wall close to the poster.
9. Place the other lock box (M3b) on the right side of the room in a corner. In the lock box, place printed words for definition (E14). The box should be locked with a lock with the combination code of "264" (M6). Cut the words individually and place them (social, advantage, awareness, affect and institutional) (E12) in the lockbox.
10. Prepare 3 envelopes (M10) that will be given to participants as soon as they enter the room and are divided into 3 groups. Each group will get an envelope:
    i. 1st team's envelope: Pass for Phone Access (E15)
    ii. 2nd team's envelope: UV light (M4)
    iii. 3rd team's envelope: Nothing
11. Place paper and pen (M8) in the room and ensure participants are aware that they can use at any time in case they need it to write down clues.
12. Tape the incomplete Institutional Discrimination (E16) definition on the wall next to the poster and Morse code. The Game master should keep a completed copy of the definition (E17) to be able to check at the end of the game.
13. Start the background office sounds on the speaker (M9) to play on a loop throughout the game.

Once these steps are completed, the room is ready for participants to begin their escape room journey. Follow the Peace Puzzles Toolkit or the Unlock Peace – DIY modules for guidance on deploying game elements and ensuring the experience is fully playable.

Steps 1 to 13 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.

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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;
- 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 for the sake of leaving 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:

The Game master (GM) in this escape room assumes the role of the *Human Resources (HR) Manager*, an NPC who embodies the authority and rules of the office environment. Dressed formally in professional attire, the GM establishes the tone of the space, conveying a *sense of bureaucracy, control, and procedural efficiency*. Their demeanour should be calm, neutral, and impersonal, using precise language and minimal gestures to reinforce the atmosphere of an institutional authority figure. The GM's presence is meant to simulate the formal constraints and power dynamics of real-world organizations, highlighting how systems can control access and opportunities. They state that, in order to complete the process, they must complete an incomplete definition by finding words.

Upon participants' entry, the GM is responsible for dividing participants into teams and giving each team an envelope with (or without) materials. They monitor team activities to ensure the gameplay proceeds smoothly. During the final stage, the GM supervises the completion of the incomplete definition of Institutional Discrimination. The GM observes interactions, encouraging collaboration implicitly, without explicitly guiding the process. Their role in this stage is to ensure all groups participate and that the final puzzle reflects the dynamics of privilege, unequal access, and systemic barriers experienced throughout the room. If necessary, the GM can give hints to the participants.

Finally, the GM transitions participants into the debrief session. They facilitate reflection on the experience, guiding discussion about which groups were privileged or marginalized, examples of institutional discrimination in real life, and how systemic barriers and implicit bias can affect access and progression. Using observations from the gameplay, the GM helps participants connect the abstract concepts of institutional discrimination to concrete experiences within the escape

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room, reinforcing the educational objectives and allowing participants to reflect on both the simulation and real-world applications.

The GM should inform the participants about remaining duration every 15 minutes.

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.
- 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.

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- 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

Throughout 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.

Certain clues and puzzles within the room are intentionally challenging and may require subtle guidance from the Game master. For example, some words or tickets are hidden behind locked drawers or are only visible under UV light. The GM should observe teams closely and provide hints only when participants appear stuck for an extended period, ensuring the experience of unequal access remains meaningful. Hints can include gentle prompts such as:

- Reminding participants to check their envelope contents carefully before giving up.
- Suggesting that some items may be hidden in less obvious locations, such as under desks, inside folders, or embedded in documents.
- Indicating that certain tools, like UV pens or mobile phone passes, unlock additional clues, without explicitly revealing what they will find.
- When reconstructing the final definition of Institutional Discrimination, the GM can encourage collaboration and resource sharing if teams appear confused, without pointing out the specific words or their placement.

3.4 Course of the gameplay

1. Participants enter the office space, and the Game master (HR Manager) assigns participants into groups. Each team receives their envelope containing their assigned tools:
    - *Team 1: Phone access pass*

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- *Team 2: UV light*
- *Team 3: Empty envelope*

2. There is no specific order in which participants navigate through the room, they can collect words from all.
3. The participants with the “phone access pass” should scan the QR code to have access to the scanner. Some clues require using the tools (UV light or mobile phone).
4. Once the participants discover an image of a ring among interview documents or CVs. They scan this which generates a video of an interview with a female candidate, overlaid with notes of the interviewer.
5. Participants reflect on the normalized but discriminatory nature of these questions, collecting the 4 words that are part of the incomplete definition: gender, marital, normalised, practices.
6. On one of the tables, participants will find a document entitled “Candidate Eligibility Policies”. Using a UV light they will scan the document: “Ensure all candidates which fall below the threshold before advancing; only those meeting such hidden metrics have full access.” “These rules reflect institutional thresholds applied to all candidates.”. The words “such” and “to” are written with a UV pen and are not visible.
7. Teams find the word AGE subtly embedded in performance reviews or other documents.
8. Interacting with it (via QR code) reveals the number 175, presented as a combination code for the locked box on the left. However, even the teams that do not have a mobile phone can decode the code as each letter represents the letters’ order in the alphabet (A – 1, G – 7, E –5). Teams use this code to access hidden documents and clues in lock box (M3).
9. Unlocking the locked box (M3) with the code number 175 reveals a number of documents (E10) and a Morse code (E11) .
10. Teams find memos, charts, and policy notes reflecting standard office procedures. Some of the words within these documents are highlighted or written in different colours. These words are part of the incomplete definition:

    - *“Certain groups require additional monitoring to ensure performance standards are met.”*
    - *“Access to training resources is prioritized for employees demonstrating immediate output potential.”*
    - *“Candidates without internal references may face unintended disadvantage in advancement decisions.”*

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- *UV-pen margin note: "These procedures reflect longstanding prejudice, which must be managed carefully."*

11. With the Morse code (E11), they will be able to decode the code on the wall (E13) which reveals the number "264" which is the code number for the other lockbox (M3b).
12. Once participants unlock this box, they will find 5 words for the final definition: *social, advantage, awareness, affect and institutional.*
13. On another desk participants discover a prompt asking, "*Which animal can be found in an office?"*. There are three images: one of a whale, one of a mouse, and one of a dinosaur. The correct answer should be the mouse.
14. Scanning the image of the mouse leads to a 360° virtual office environment displayed on the phone.

- *Participants explore the virtual space, collecting the hidden words: "access", "which", "language", "policies"*

15. Participants notice a poster on one of the office walls titled "We Are All Equal". When examined closely, they identify key phrases with specific words highlighted in bold, including references to race, ethnicity, religion, and disability.
16. A fragmented definition of Institutional Discrimination is taped on the wall, with multiple blank spaces representing key concepts.
17. Each team contributes the words they collected.
18. Through collaboration, teams place the words correctly, unlocking the final definition and achieving the goal.
19. Following this, the Game master guides the participants through a discussion about the objectives of the game using the questions mentioned in 2.5 Debriefing phase.

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.

The GM can use the following questions to engage in the discussion about marginalized groups, human rights and discrimination:

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- What would group A, B, and C represent in real life?
- How does institutional discrimination manifest based on your experiences or observations? What are some examples?
- How did it feel to be on a team that had less resources/opportunities? What does this reveal about how institutional rules or systems can advantage some people while disadvantaging others?
- How can this be changed?
- What role does cooperation and solidarity play in this?

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.



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Impressum

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