



Centre européen
Robert Schuman

*Maison de l'Europe
Scy-Chazelles*

ROLEPLAY MAY I ENTER? PREPARATION

1.- Playing cards and signs:

- ▶ Officials of the immigration office,
- ▶ Refugees,
- ▶ Observers,
- ▶ Journalists.
- ▶ Information papers about the regulation of entry into the territory in a foreign language (or an invented one).

2.- Set the scene of the roleplay:

- ▶ With the chalk, draw a line on the ground to represent the border, or place the furniture so as to materialize a physical border
- ▶ A space for the border crossing: a table to materialize the counter of the immigration office
- ▶ Information papers about the regulation of entry into the territory
- ▶ Materials :
 - ▶ Flipchart (optional)
 - ▶ Chalk and/or furniture to materialize the border post
 - ▶ Pens and sheets of paper, so that the observers and journalists can take notes
 - ▶ (Video)-camera for the journalists
 - ▶ (Video)-camera for the journalists

3.- Instructions

- ▶ Explain that this is a roleplaying game acting out a group of refugees fleeing their home country to take shelter in another country.
 - ▶ This activity has been adapted from the manual: *First Steps: A Manual for starting human rights education*, Amnesty International, London, 1997.
 - ▶ Begin with a reflection of on the participants' knowledge regarding the situation of the refugees. Note the points raised on a big sheet of paper or the flipchart, in order to make references to it later in the subsequent discussion.
-

- ▶ Present the backdrop of the room and read the following text:
- ▶ ***“On a dark night, cold and wet, numerous refugees present themselves at the border between Blue country and Violet country: they are fleeing the war in Green country and want to enter Yellow country. They are hungry, cold and tired.
Some of them have a bit of money, and only a few of them are in possession of identity documents or passports. The officials of the immigration office of Blue country have differing points of view – some want to let the refugees cross the border, while others don’t. The refugees are desperate and come up with several arguments while trying to convince the officials of immigration.”***
- ▶ Divide the participants into groups: The first group represents the refugees from Green country, the second group represent the officials of the immigration office of Blue country, a third group is made up of European and international observers as well as a fourth group of journalists.
- ▶ Distribute the role cards and allow the players a quarter of an hour to prepare. Ask the participants to think up a role for everyone, as well as their arguments.
- ▶ Start the roleplay. It is up to you to decide when to stop, around 10 minutes should suffice.
- ▶ Give 5 minutes for the observers to prepare their feedback and for the journalists to prepare a brief press review; then start the debriefing and the evaluation.
- ▶ Begin by asking the observers to express their general reactions to the roleplay.
- ▶ Continue with the journalists’ press review.
- ▶ Then gather the comments from the players about their impressions of being a refugee or an official of the immigration office.
- ▶ Then come to a general discussion regarding the points raised and the lessons learned by the participants.
 - ▶ To what extent is the treatment of refugees just?
 - ▶ The refugees have the right to be protected under Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention of 1951 under the Status of Refugees. Have they received such protection? Why? Why not?
 - ▶ Should a country have the right to send back refugees? When? For what reasons?
 - ▶ Would you send back a refugee if you were an official of the immigration office? What would you do if you knew that this person risks death in his own country?
 - ▶ Which problems will the refugees be confronted with in your country? Which human rights are being violated?
 - ▶ What is necessary to do in order to solve some of the problems the refugees are meet with once in your country?
 - ▶ What can one and should one do first to prevent the refugee problem?

4.- Advice for the leader

- ▶ Use the reflection phase to assess what the participants know about the reasons for the existence of refugees, the causes of their flight, about their origin and destination countries. This will help you decide how to direct the debriefing and evaluation, and what additional information to provide at this stage.
- ▶ Consider the possibility that one of the participants is a refugee. Depending on his country of origin, you can make use of his experience and call him in as a resource person. But you must also know that this can be traumatic for him.
- ▶ The four groups don't necessarily have to be of the same size. For example, you can decide to only have three or four observers and journalists and let the other participants be protagonists of the roleplay.
- ▶ As the setting is a dark, cold and wet night, why not turn off the lights and open the windows during the roleplay?
- ▶ If it seems more fitting in your case, you can set the scene at the moment of the time of arrival of a group in a small boat taking in water.
- ▶ To add to the confusion of refugees, you can write the signs and information notes in a foreign language (or invented). Don't forget to indicate the significance of the signs to the officials of the immigration office, the observers and journalists!

5.- Variants

- ▶ Start the exercise again by reversing the roles of the officials of the immigration office and the refugees.
- ▶ The observers and the journalists will then have the task of noting the differences between the two versions, notably in the case of a better protection of the refugees' rights.
- ▶ Organize a following roleplay involving an official team of The UNHCR responsible for giving help to the refugees of Green country.

6.- Ideas for action

- ▶ Get in touch with a local or national organization that works with refugees in your country and see how to support it.
- ▶ Young people coming without their families seeking asylum are particularly vulnerable. The group could investigate what happens to these unaccompanied minors in their country and think about how to support them.
- ▶ Invite to your organization an NGO working with refugees, or a refugee, to learn about how refugees enter to your country, the asylum seeking process and the life these people lead today.
- ▶ The website for Refugees (UNHCR) of The United Nation's High Commission offers a lot of information, flyers and videos to the organization of a workshop about refugees in your organization or school: <http://www.unhcr.org>.

7.- Following suggestions

- ▶ Inquire about refugees in your country, particularly about the realities of their daily lives. The participants can contact a local association of refugee aid and interview its staff, volunteers and refugees.
- ▶ Visit www.newtimes.dk to read stories written (in English) by asylum seekers and refugees in Denmark. Choose one article and discuss your answer.
- ▶ The British Red Cross manages information and activities on refugees as part of its project entitled Positive Images project: www.redcross.org.uk.
- ▶ A school may wish to pursue the study of this question by researching information on the role of UNHCR (<http://www.unhcr.ch>) and then writing up an "official report" including the following points:
 - ▶ The arguments that convinced the officials of the immigration office to let refugees enter;
 - ▶ Any inappropriate behavior on the part of the immigration office officials;
 - ▶ Recommendations on what Blue country should do to protect the rights of refugees.
- ▶ Ask if the Geneva Convention meets the current needs or whether it should be updated. For example, in a lot of countries, in order to get the status of a refugee, asylum seekers must prove that they have been personally persecuted; being a member of a persecuted group or coming from a region affected by conflict is not enough. Similarly, the Convention does not cover the case of climate refugees.

