

## EDUCATIONAL BOARD GAME

### «Escape the Labyrinth»

This game was made in the framework of the Erasmus+ program entitled «Putting Music and Drama in Play Against Peer and Cyber Bullying».



### 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

For the experiential investigation of the subject of bullying, we initially carried out actions based on «Forum» theater techniques as a means of self-expression and creation. These include the frozen image representation, the interrogation chair and the corridor of consciousness. The participating students actively experienced the roles of bully, victim, bystander in bullying situations and were given the opportunity to face dilemmas, take a stand and make decisions.



Thanks to the interaction between the group members, students and teachers, we consecutively took the position of the perpetrator, the victim and the spectator and saw that these roles can be alternated by the same people in different situations, while we realized that each of us has played any or all of these roles at some point in their lives.



The connection to everyday life is obvious, as we are all called upon to speak the truth and defend justice and the good for all, while when we are indifferent, inactive and tolerate violent or unjust behavior we become complicit in bullying.



Through these actions, the students gradually experienced the sense of collective responsibility, the social development of the self through the collective experience, cultivated expressive means as well as psycho-spiritual powers, strengthening their self-confidence. In addition, useful conclusions were drawn for the creation of the psychomotor part of the game.

## **2. INSPIRATION, CREATION, SYMBOLS**

The conception and construction of the «Escape the Labyrinth» game was based on the ancient Greek myth of Theseus, Ariadne and the Minotaur. Ariadne believed in Theseus and gave him the thread which helped him, after his battle with the Minotaur, to find the way back and exit the Labyrinth.

In our «Labyrinth», Ariadne is the first dancer of the circular dance and holds the beginning and the end of the thread. The thread symbolizes the power of love, trust, cooperation and solidarity. We all create it together, shaking hands and dancing a circle dance.

We start the game from the center of the Labyrinth looking for the exit. As the game progresses, we face our own inner and outer Minotaur and follow our personal path

moving from the inside out, from darkness to light, from fear and anger to love and unity, from war to peace, from oppression and manipulation to free will and expression, from separation to unity.

For this purpose we make sure that we constantly follow the thread, step by step, moment by moment. On the way out, the thread is in danger of being lost. We may find ourselves at dead ends, get stuck in the same spot, lose our way, or have to turn back. On the other hand, every step we take leads us to self-awareness and brings us closer to the awareness that at every moment we can assume our responsibility and with free will choose where and how we want to move. This internal process is what makes us move one step closer to the exit of the Labyrinth each time. Therefore the myth, symbolically, connects us to our higher self, our deepest needs and our inner truth.

### **Board: The «Labyrinth» of the game**

The board of the game is the labyrinth represented by dancers holding hands in a circular dance.

The circular dance is typical for all the peoples of the Balkan region. Particularly on the island of Naxos and the region of Tsakonia in the Peloponnese, its form is associated with its ancient origin and the spiritual significance it had at that time. According to one version, the Tsakonian dance is the «geranos», the dance that Theseus danced in Delos and represents his entrance and exit from the labyrinth



(Sakellariou 1940; Papachristou 1979(1960); Bikos 1969; Dimas 1980; Roubis 1990; Lykesas 1993; Stratou 1979, Symeonidou-Cheilari 2002 The «labyrinthine formations» of the dance, i.e. the shapes the dance makes in the space, and its ancient Greek peonic rhythm of 5/4 and 5/8, combined with the local linguistic idiom (Tsakonian dialect), were judged by scholars to be sufficient evidence for its characterization as an «ancient Greek dance».

Additionally, the Minoan Labyrinth motif is found in American Indian designs as well as archaeological sites in the British Isles. This shows that the labyrinth was a sacred and cosmological symbol for the peoples of that time. Many have tried to explain its mysterious meaning, in various ways and from various angles.

The basic idea we applied during the construction of the board is this connection between the ancient myth of Theseus and the traditional dances found in the various

regions of Greece. Therefore, the image we drew on the board is a circular dance of traditional dancers representing the turns and corridors of the Minoan Labyrinth.



In our game, the Labyrinth concept focuses more on its symbolism as a psychological trap from which the victims must escape. At a deeper level of thought, the line of the labyrinth becoming flat could be a topological metaphor of the ego's self-sacrifice so that the true self can embrace the bitter truth. This topological metaphor has cosmological and aesthetic significance. For this reason we tried to represent the Labyrinth also as a work of art.



In particular, the board of the game is a painting, where the folk dancers form the corridors of the Labyrinth. The folk dancer here symbolizes the death of narcissism on a person's journey to true individuality.



To construct the board we used the mask technique with identical paper figures placed on the canvas and painted them with shades of gray and black. We spread color just outside the frame of the figures so that each figure had a unique shape.



In the painting the Bully-Minotaur is our narcissism that finds the sweet truth too painful. This illustration also fits a very relevant passage from the Bible: «For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it» (Matthew 16:25)

The symbolism of the Ariadne's thread is achieved by the use of a red woolen thread, which gives some color to the black and gray board and is spread following the dancers from the entrance towards the center of the Labyrinth.



### **Cards**

Movement in the game is carried out with the help of cards. They implement the psychokinetic part of the game which has as its theoretical background the techniques of the Forum theater and were enriched with the related experiential actions we mentioned above.

The longing for play and the will to get out of our own «Labyrinth» pushed the creative team of our school to the inspiration and making of these cards. All team members, after discussing, reading texts, participating in role-plays and studying bullying scenarios, fictional and real, explored possible ways of dealing with cases of school and extracurricular violence, while at the same time they were asked to answer personally and collectively, questions such as:

What is it that drives us forward? What is holding us back? What's stopping us? What helps me come out of the isolation and darkness of the Labyrinth into the light, ask for help, connect with my powers, connect with my feelings and express them? What am I afraid of? Why am I angry? What makes me sad? How do I claim attention, acceptance of others, love? What are my deepest needs? Do I love myself? What gives me joy and motivation to continue? What is behind my behavior? How do I define myself and others? What are my talents and how can I develop them?

The material and conclusions derived from these actions were reflected in the final categorization and format of the game cards.

The cards were divided into three categories:

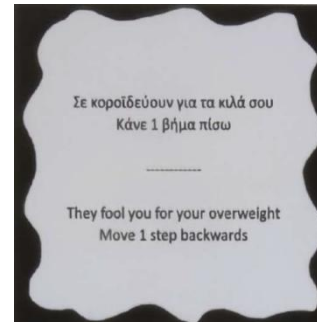
#### a. Red cards

These cards suggest ways to deal with bullying. They help the movement of the dance towards the exit of the Labyrinth and include: positive statements about ourselves and others, actions of solidarity, support and defense of the victim, suggestions for calling for help and support when there is a need.



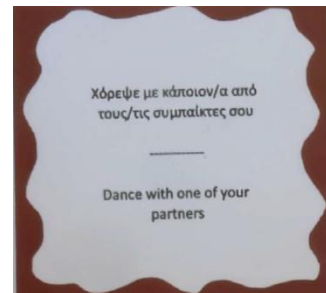
#### b. Black cards

These cards hold us back or immobilize us by blocking the flow of the dance and include: negative statements about ourselves and others, behaviors that show low self-confidence and self-esteem, acts that devalue human worth, violent behaviors that appear in bullying.



#### c. Crimson cards

These are the action cards that invite us to dance, to sing, to hug, to tickle, to mention positive experiences and thoughts that push us to continue the dance with feelings of gratitude, love and optimism.



### 3. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

As in the game, so in real life, despite the adversities, we constantly move forward knowing ourselves better, recognizing our uniqueness and importance, in a continuous process of self-awareness and truly deepening our relationship to our inner world that reflects our relationship with the others. In this way we perceive and accept both our light and darkness with love, respect, compassion, empathy, acceptance and forgiveness.

In this context, the pedagogical goal of the game focuses on stimulating these values and their transformative energy when a child experiences a threatening or intimidating environment. The specific goal was approached both theoretically and experientially, emphasizing the inner driving force of each person and their will to live, using their talents, abilities, curiosity and the desire for play.

#### 4. DESCRIPTION, INSTRUCTIONS, CONTENT

The main objective of the game is for the player (bully receiver) to escape from the Minotaur (potential bully). The difficulties faced by the victim, the confinement felt in this situation because of the inability to escape, are symbolized through the labyrinth and its multiple dead ends. The people dancing on our board hold hands as a sign of friendship, mutual support and personal empowerment, elements necessary for anyone to get out of the unpleasant labyrinth. The red thread helps us find the way out, symbolizing not only the people around us, but also their actions that affect our path.

##### Content

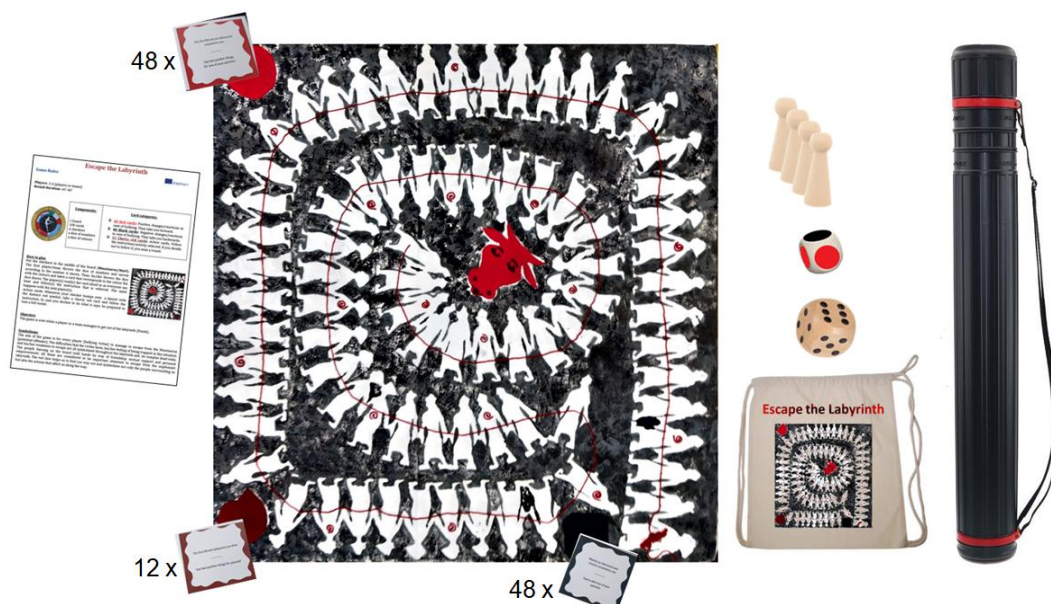
The game contains instructions in Greek and English and consists of:

- 1 board, dimensions 100cm x 100cm
- 108 cards
- 4 pawns
- 1 die with numbers
- 1 die with colors

Card categories:

- 48 Red cards: Positive changes / reactions in cases of bullying. They take you forward.
- 48 Black cards: Negative changes / reactions in cases of bullying. They take you backwards
- 12 Crimson cards: Action cards. Follow the instruction / activity listed. If you choose not to follow the instruction, you lose a round.

## Escape the Labyrinth





**Instructions:**

Put the checkers in the middle of the board (Minotaurus/Start). The first player/team throws the die of numbers and moves according to the number it shows. Then, he/she throws the dice with the colours and takes a card that corresponds to the colour the die shows. The player(s) read(s) the card aloud so as everyone can hear and follow(s) the instruction that is referred. The same happens with the next player(s).

**Action cards:** Whenever your checker bumps onto a dancer with the distinct red symbol, take a cherry red card and follow the instruction. In case you decline to do what it says, be prepared to lose a full round.

**Objective:**

The game is over when a player or a team manages to get out of the labyrinth (Finish).

**Illustration:**

The aim of the game is for every player (bullying victim) to manage to escape from the Minotaurus (potential offender). The difficulties that the victim faces, his/her feeling of being trapped in this situation and his/her weakness to escape are all symbolized throughout the labyrinth and its complex dead-ends.

The people dancing on the board hold hands by way of friendship, mutual support and personal empowerment. All these are considered to be important elements to escape from the unpleasant labyrinth. The red clew helps us to find our way out and symbolizes not only the people surrounding us but also the actions that affect us along the way.

**5. RESULTS**

By activating imagination, critical dialogue, active listening and empathy, the children showed active behaviors of mutual help and support. They put themselves in the shoes of the victim and suggested alternative behaviors they could adopt in their daily lives. In this way, healthy interpersonal relationships based on mutual understanding and solidarity, friendship, acceptance and cooperation were cultivated with the aim of the harmonious functioning of the group, the school and the community. The success of the pedagogical goal for the construction of the game lies in the fact that the incidents of bullying which had been observed in our school, were smoothed to a large extent through the common artistic actions (visual arts, dance, theater, construction of a board game) and the power of unity and group cohesion.



## **6. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The original version of the «Escape the Labyrinth» board game has the potential to evolve to become more engaging and interesting, and to enhance its interactivity. For this purpose the total number of cards can be increased, the texts-sentences-instructions can be modified and more movement options for the players can be added. In particular, the number of crimson cards can be increased and new team actions can be proposed to encourage interaction between teams and game players.