Contents

BALKANIA Role Play

1. FROM TOLEDO TO BALKANIA

Balkania Role Play has been inspired by the **TOLEDO Role Play**[1] initially created in Israel by Prof. Aviva Doron, UNESCO Chair in Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue Studies, at the University of Haifa. The aim of the TOLEDO game is to facilitate education towards tolerance and openness between people with different cultural and religious background.

The TOLEDO Role play has been included in the set of various methods of Intercultural learning that the Project SMILE[2] (SEEding for Multiethnic and Intercultural Learning Experiences) has been promoting in South Eastern Europe (SEE). The project financed by the **German Ministry of Foreign Affairs** and managed by the *Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult*

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[1] The TOLEDO Role Play is based on a historical city of Toledo, known as the "City of Tolerance" which succeeded in the 13th century in developing a harmonic co-existence of Christians, Jews and Moslems. Despite of their differences, the three communities had found the balance between preserving their spiritual and religious uniqueness and cooperating in economic, political and cultural affairs, supported by the king Alfonso X, the Wise who additionally encouraged the cultural and scientific cooperation between scholars, poets and musicians from all three communities.

Being part of this role play the participants have to experience another reality, far from "here and now" which enables them to observe and evaluate situations of conflict, tensions and expectations in another context, broader and more complex that the one they are accustomed to in their every day life. Some important aspects of the TOLEDO role play to be considered are:

- psychological distancing and selection of a historical situation that involves distancing of the subject under discussion from the wounds and pain of the present; This distancing plays an important role in the didactic activity by activating observation and by encouraging positions of openness and tolerance.
- removal from the present-day ruling situation into a different, but yet historically credible context.

For further information about Toledo, please see: Prof. Aviva Doron, University of Haifa: "Delicate Balance. Toledo as a Model. Jews, Moslems, Christians: Tensions, Tolerance and Coexistence. Produced by UNESCO Chair in Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue, Haifa University with the assistance of UNESCO, Paris n the framework of the program of Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue

[2] www.smile.dvv-international.org

SMILE Project (SEEding for Multiethnic and Intercultural Learning Experiences)

Education Association (DVV International) in Bulgaria was aimed at fostering regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe in the fields of intercultural learning, human rights and adult education. Through seminars and workshops carried out in the period 2004-2007, SMILE has brought together adult educators from all SEE countries providing them with networking opportunities, and offering them tools and ideas for increasing reconciliation and intercultural learning across the region.

While the TOLEDO role play has proved to be efficient also in the regional context in South Eastern Europe, the SMILE project participants felt tempted to create a role play which describes a closer Balkan reality. The notion behind this idea was that a role play with a Balkan plot would engage participants more intensely and would allow greater impact on their awareness on conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence. This is how the **Balkania** idea was born.

2. THE PROCESS OF CREATION OF BALKANIA

Against this background, the creation of Balkania has been completed in two stages.

<u>The initial meeting</u>

TOLEDO Role Play in the Context of Tolerance and Coexistence on the Balkans,
7 – 11 December 2005, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia

brought together 19 participants from the SEE countries coming from academic, NGO and school backgrounds. Several different scenarios for the BALKANIA role play were elaborated by the participants split in three groups[3]. There was a plethora of enthralling and adaptable ideas presented by the separate groups, however the entire team of experts could not commit to any of the proposals

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[3] The results from the experts' work are available at www.smile.dvv-international.org , under the part Activities 2005

presented and discussed. It was decided that the participants will act as one team and will create a **new joined concept**[4] for the Balkan version of the Toledo Role Play which considered the best aspects of each of the separately developed scenarios, but had a whole new meaning that every single person in the seminar room could relate to.

At the second meeting

Balkania Role Play in the Context of Tolerance and Coexistence on the Balkans,
15 – 18 February 2007

21 participants from the SEE countries gathered together in Bansko, Bulgaria. The meeting was dedicated to the elaboration of the final variant of a Balkan role play that was unanimously named BALKANIA. The continuity of the work was ensured by some of the experts who were also present at the previous meeting in Scopje.

The Balkania Role Play was created in a way that reflects the reality of the Balkan countries and includes characters that are easy to identify with. The participants contributed to the selection of the *time period*, the *conflict situation* and the *communities* involved, as well as the selection and creation of *characters* for the role play with their *positions* and *feelings* that trigger discussions and debates. As a result of the intense work of the group coupled with creativity and commitment the final Balkania Role Play was created.

You are about to explore this game in the next pages. However, we should add that the Final Version of BALKANIA was further refined and enriched with the feedback received from several tests of the game in national context in some of the SEE countries.

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[4] Also available at www.smile.dvv-international.org under the part Activities 2005, Final version of the Balkan version of the Toledo Role Play

3. WHY A ROLE PLAY?

In the process of every creation there is a moment to ask ourselves why do we actually choose one particular approach?

Bellow we would like to share with you why we decided to invest our efforts in creating a new role play:

- Role play is a tool allowing to get quickly involved in a situation that might be totally different than yours and thus it supports understanding otherness and fosters the development of empathy;
- In a Role play everyone participates;
- Role play includes the intellectual as well as the emotional level of human nature;
- Role play allows to build awareness of the interrelation of different factors and could include simulations that are close to real life;
- Role play can be instructive on many different techniques – work in small groups, debates, presentation, visualization, creation of posters, etc.
- Role play can be useful for teaching additional knowledge and facts (e.g. in teaching history or literature) or for building social competencies in civic education classes, out-of-school learning activities, etc.
- Not the least – this role play format (the TOLEDO role play format) promotes in particular constructive approach to finding solution based on cooperation and searching for consensus, and thus develops skills for dialogue, team work and negotiation.

The Balkania Role Play is a collective effort that is meant to serve teachers in schools as well as adult educators dealing with the complexity of inter-religious and intercultural awareness and understanding.

4. ROLE PLAY – WHOM IS IT FOR AND HOW TO USE IT?

Having seen the advantages of the role play as a didactic tool for fostering multicultural awareness and increasing the consciousness of the values of the society based on tolerance and mutual respect, we did ask ourselves how to make the BALKANIA role play a tool applicable in every learning environment. Building on our experience in developing and testing the role play with different target groups, we mostly agreed on the fact that BALKANIA's best addresses the interests and attitudes of the students in the high school (15-19 years old), without being restrictive against all the others potential users of the game, such as: teachers, adult educators, adult learners, etc. At this stage it is important to highlight that each age and interest group participating in the game brings its own life experience, opinions, social and ethical norms, thus influencing the level of the groups' discussions. However, the application of the role play doesn't require any previous knowledge of the subject on the part of the participants.

The Balkania role play as well as its prototype TOLEDO is based on the principle that every participant takes on the role of one of the inhabitants of the city called BALKANIA. For this purpose he/she receives an **identity card**, containing information on the personal and professional background, the social status in his/her own community, as well as an outline on his/her position regarding the conflict situation that has to be solved. As already mentioned, the Balkania characters were created on the basis of the historical reality of the Balkan countries so that it would be easier for the participants to put him/herself in the position of the new character. This requires also that the participant steps back from his own opinions and positions and adopts those of another character, which may not always correspond to his own and may even contradict them. This enables the participants to understand different motifs, different way of thinking, different reactions and behavior. Not the least, this role play shows

how sometimes person's acts might be dictated by external circumstances. Thus, experiencing the role play the participant learns that the position of his/her opponent may also be logical and reasonable, and which is even more important he/she learns to respect them even if he/she doesn't agree with them.

While the big advantage of the role play - to experience different situations through the eyes of a different person - is indisputably of a great value, the **internalization** process might be a difficult one: e.g. a 16-year old young person may find it not so easy to enter into the character of a 56-years old man, married, traditionalist and the sole breadwinner of his family. In such a case it is recommendable that the participant tries to recall a real-life person that he/she knows, similar to the character he/she is supposed to play, tries to imagine his way of acting and imitate this. Another helpful tool might be just to re-read the identity card several times and the mere attempt to understand and assume the role of someone else will be enrichment for his/her own personality.

In the following pages we have summarized the basic rules of the Balkania Role Play in order to assist you in using this didactic tool:

5. SPECIFICS OF THE BALKANIA ROLE PLAY

1. **Target Audience**: students, teachers, adult educators, adult learners, etc.

2. **Purpose**: assist in fostering multicultural awareness, increase the consciousness for the values of the society based on tolerance and mutual respect, and support developing intercultural competencies in teachers and students from the countries in the Balkan region.

3. **Duration**: the role play is designed to be played in the time-span of a double lesson – 1,5 hours, but of course it can be extended according to the needs and the wishes of the moderator and the participants.

4. **Number of participants**:
    ❧ The role play is meant for **12-36 players**, each community being represented by 4-12 characters;
    ❧ Representation should be divided **equally** among the three communities;
    ❧ Each community should choose a "discussion chairman" who will take notes about the debates and decision making process, and will present the outcomes of the group discussion. According to the number of participants this might be one of the role play characters or a participant, who would be specially appointed as discussion chairman;
    ❧ If there are more than 36 participants, the moderator has three options:
        a. To make additional copies of some cards and add them to the others
        b. To give two participants one card
        c. To add more roles, such as: "observer", "reporter", the "king's writer", the "group secretary", etc.

5. **Necessary materials**:
    ❧ Book of **role play guidelines** for the moderator;

- ✎ **Background** page for each community, containing a description of the community's situation and its relation with the other communities;
- ✎ A **dilemma** sheet (the same for each community), with guiding questions for the participants, as well as for the discussion chairman from each community. It is important to mention that the questions should be formulated concrete and clear in order to focus the discussion on the most important, burning issues that have to be solved;
- ✎ **36 identity cards**: each card contains a description of the character being represented and information on his social environment;
- ✎ **36 "personal position" cards** with details about possible emotional and political responses to the dilemma questions

6. THE GAME

1. **Preparation phase**: the preparation work prior to the event can include some research of the historical background of the period described, typical religious traditions, etc. carried out by the participants. The moderator should be familiar with the background of the role play. It is recommendable for him/her to prepare a scenario which would be helpful for the time management and will allow going through all phases of the game within the available time.

2. **Introduction phase**:
   The moderator explains the idea and the rules of the role-play to the participants and divides them into three equal groups. Then he/she distributes the identity and personal positions' cards. However, the participants shouldn't use them at this stage yet. From here on there are two (or more) options:
   - ✎ Either the moderator tells the story and describes the dilemma as well the manner of solving this dilemma within each of the communities and among the three communities (this more objective method of presenting the

conflict situation is recommendable if the role play participants are more experienced, such as teachers or trainers)

❧ Or - in the case of working with students - the story and the dilemma are introduced by one of the characters in the game - e.g. by the Mayor or another key person in the role play, in order to facilitate the smooth transition into the atmosphere of the game.

In both cases, after introducing the story, the moderator is distributing the background sheets about each community and the dilemma sheets (the same for all three communities) to the participants already sitting accordingly to their new characters in 3 groups.

3. **Internal group discussions**:

Having learnt about the background of the role play and the concrete conflict situation, the participants in their turn start introducing themselves (by reading aloud from their cards). Then, accordingly to the positions written in the cards they have received, the participants should discuss within each community about the dilemma questions and the possible answers to them. Here, it is important to stress that the participants should be encouraged to stick to the characters they are representing, because the value of the role play is in the experience of the "otherness" and roles themselves are the key for this. Another relevant aspect of these intra-community discussions is that each community has to appoint a chairman, who will guide the discussion along the dilemma questions. Besides the chairman, the group can also appoint an"observer" whose task will be to document the proceedings and the decision-making process. In this regard there are some guidelines for the chairman of the discussions and the observer that should be highlighted by the moderator.

The **Chairman** should ensure that:

❧ all members of the group participate in the discussion

- all have the opportunity to express their opinion
- also differing opinions are heard even if the aim is to reach a consensus

The **observer** in his turn should:

- take notes of the process of the discussion, considering in particular the nature of the participation, the ability of the participants to listen to each other, the proper decision making, whereas it is important to decide from the very beginning on the procedure – <u>either</u> **by voting** or **by consensus**

Finally, both, the chairman and the observer have to pay attention to the correct application of **the main rule** of the role namely:

Every participant has to express an opinion!

4. **Plenum discussion**:

After the participants have agreed on their main position **as a community**, the chairman and/or the observer should report to the plenum, without neglecting also minority opinions within each group if those have been mentioned. Every participant is encouraged to join the final open discussion, moderated again by the person, who has introduced the role play and the story. Again **the rule of equal and free opinion expression** has to be respected.

This closing discussion consists of **two stages**:

<u>First</u>, it is summarizing the positions and decisions how to proceed further.

<u>Second</u>, it is shifting the focus from the role-play to the today's reality considering the following three levels:

- **Emotional level**: how do the participants feel about the characters of the game?
- **Historical level**: what is the perception of the participants of the historical reality presented in Balkania, in particular of the society and its problems?

     ﻖ **The general human level**: how does the role play reflect the relations between people with different cultural and religious background in the modern world in general and in respect of the reality closest to them in particular?

Here are some suggestions for questions facilitating the discussion:

     ﻖ How did you feel in your new role? Was it easy to put yourselves in a position of someone else?

     ﻖ How would you describe/assess the society of Balkania as presented in this role play?

     ﻖ Considering the peaceful and harmonic coexistence of the three communities in Balkania, how could you explain the dreadful event that happened in the city?

     ﻖ What are the advantages and disadvantages of the cultural openness and tolerance – then and now?

     ﻖ How do you think the horrible event in Balkania could have been prevented?

     ﻖ Did the game help you understand the realities of our world today, and how did it do so?

5. **Celebrating diversity** – at the end of the role play it is important to organize a small special event as a metaphor of the peaceful and harmonic co-existence that we should be striving for anytime, anywhere in the world.

7. THE STORY

7.1. The historical context

The story takes place at the end of the 19th century in a big harbour city, situated somewhere in the Balkans. The city hosts a multicultural society of Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities. At that time the economy was flourishing with the Jewish community playing a key role. The political power was just shifted from the Moslem to the Christians, the latter being the majority of the population. This post-Ottoman society is undergoing a process of modernization and secularization in certain spheres of social, economic, political and everyday life which is influencing on all the three communities.

7.2. The conflict situation

I, the Mayor of this city, have called you here, a selected group of honourable citizens from the three communities – the Christian, the Jewish, and the Moslem - to discuss the recent event that we could never have imagined happening in our peaceful city. As most of you probably have heard, a young man – Boris Bakouri was found dead near the harbour some days ago. Some of you might have known him – he is a son of a reputable Christian family and it is really hard to believe, that he would have had enemies in this city.
We learned about the dispute which Boris have recently had with Omer - Bediha Hanum's son – a kind and good young man from a Muslim family. Omer was quite concerned about his sister Selma who was in love with Boris and wanted to marry him against the will of the both families. Omer met Boris in the street and asked him to break up any relationship with his sister, because the love between a Muslim girl and a Christian boy has no future.
Omer is now arrested by the Police as prime suspect for Boris's death, but the Muslim Community stood up to defend him claiming that he is innocent and should be released from the prison.

Before we could take any steps to investigate the situation, some people from the Muslim Community decided to take the initiative in their hands – they blocked the city harbour demanding Omer's freedom and claiming to keep the harbour closed as long as he is imprisoned.

Now we are facing a totally new situation that we should try to resolve as soon as possible, and in a peaceful way: the harbour should be opened, because the business of the city is suffering. Our harbour is important not only for the living of our citizens, but for the supplies and the trade in the whole region.

We should also find the truth about the death of Boris Bakouri – was this a robbery or crime of passion? Should we be on alert for our lives and possessions when we walk in the streets? Or is it the peaceful coexistence between our communities that is at risk?

In any case, the peace and agreement in our city have been questioned.

As a Mayor of the city I want to do the justice to all its citizens and to keep the peace. That is why I invited you here - selected representatives of the different communities - for this discussion and would like to hear your advices on how to find a right, just and peaceful solution for the situation that we are currently facing.

Please, discuss these topics with the fellows from your community and come back here after one hour to present your position and advices.

7.3. Background sheet for the Christian Community

The story takes place at the end of the 19th century in a big harbour city, situated somewhere in the Balkans. The city hosts a multicultural society of Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities. At that time the economy was flourishing with the Jewish community playing a key role. The political power was just shifted from the Moslems to the Christians, the latter being the majority of the population. This post-Ottoman society is undergoing a process of modernization and secularization in certain spheres of social, economic, political and every day life which is influencing on all the three communities.

The **Christian Community** is in a peculiar situation in this multicultural city. On the one hand it is still very much attached to the old conservative traditions of the past. On the other hand this community is now in a dominant political position and in process of fast economical growth. It is trying to build a modern state, the legislation of which follows the best examples of the European democracy of the time.

The modern democratic society postulates that all people are equal, but the traditional Christian traditions state that all people who are not Christians are infidels.

Having this in consideration, it is understandable that some people were in favor of the mixed marriage between the Christian lad – Boris and the Muslim girl – Selma, while others, among which also leading public figures, as representatives of more traditional part of the community, strongly disagreed with it. Respectively, some people with more radical thinking are against the liberal treatment of the minorities. Other people, again, are complaining about the financial power focused in the hands of the Jewish minority in the city.

After the murder of Boris, there was growing tension among the Christian community in general and a public protest took place. During the protest there were strong voices for revenge. Not only the relatives, but also many other people from the Christian community are firmly convinced that the death of the young man is related to his love affair with the Muslim girl.

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Under the public pressure the local police arrested Selma's brother Omer as a suspect without prior investigation. Although this action aimed at diminishing the tension in the city, it actually unleashed the public protests and led to the blocking of the city harbour.

7.4. Background sheet for the Muslim Community

The story takes place at the end of the 19th century in a big harbour city, situated somewhere in the Balkans. The city hosts a multicultural society of Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities. At that time the economy was flourishing with the Jewish community playing a key role. The political power was just shifted from the Moslems to the Christians, the latter being the majority of the population. This post-Ottoman society is undergoing a process of modernization and secularization in certain spheres of social, economic, political and every day life which is influencing on all the three communities.

Relatively recently the **Muslim community** found itself in a position of minority in a Christian dominated state. After the shift of the political power many Moslems left the city and the country, but others decided to stay. This was however a tough decision because in the new political context their live was different. Although the communal rights of the Moslems are legally recognized, they are gradually getting marginalized economically and politically. Nevertheless, despite the power shift among the city leaders there are respected representatives of the Muslim community and the predominant model of cohabitation is peaceful on everyday life level.

Being a religious minority with certain cultural autonomy, Muslim community is still very traditional and was right from the start against the mixed marriage of Selma and Boris, both unofficially and officially. After the Boris's death and the protest of the Christians Moslems were feeling insecure about the future of their communal and religious rights and their status as a minority.

Some extreme voices in favor of "the good old Ottoman tradition" and the Sheria laws were outspoken in public thus raising the tension in the society. In the Ottoman times such mixed marriage would have been unthinkable.

After the arrest of Selma's brother, his family and his neighborhood protested in public that he is innocent and gradually the whole Muslim community joined their protest by gathering in the harbour area and thus preventing the daily business there. Insecure about the fact if their protests would be taken in

consideration Moslems decided that only extreme actions would force the ruling majority to pay attention to their demands.

7.5. Background sheet for the Jewish Community

The story takes place at the end of the 19th century in a big harbour city, situated somewhere in the Balkans. The city hosts a multicultural society of Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities. At that time the economy was flourishing with the Jewish community playing a key role. The political power was just shifted from the Moslems to the Christians, the latter being the majority of the population. This post-Ottoman society is undergoing a process of modernization and secularization in certain spheres of social, economic, political and every day life which is influencing on all the three communities.

The **Jewish community** has an important role in the city life and their leaders are among the notable citizens. Their place in the society has not being changed by the shift of the political powers – they are in the same minority position as before. Nevertheless, important sectors of the economy in the city (such as trade, pharmacy and banking) are dominated by the Jews and the economic stability raises also the social status of the community as a whole, although among the Jews there are also a substantial number of poor people.

Jews see themselves as political and social balancer in the society. The conflict situation in the city could not leave the Jewish community uninfluenced although their people were not directly involved in it. Some of the Jewish tradesmen were concerned about their business if the harbour would be kept blocked for a longer period of time. Apart from that, Jews are aware of the fact that if the peace and agreement in the city are broken and the ruling Christian authorities are forced to take repressive actions, this may affect their rights and freedoms as a minority community too.

On the whole Jews feel obliged to contribute to finding a fast and peaceful solution of the crisis situation although this may challenge their neutrality.

7.6. The dilemma (the same for each community)

*Please, discuss with your fellow citizens and decide what is important for you **as a community** in the multicultural city Balkania and what is your position in the above described situation.*

Here are some questions that may help you as guidelines throughout the discussion and may facilitate you in communicating your position:

- ❧ How would we react as community to the murder? Is this an isolated act which shouldn't reflect on our relations with the other communities or is it a sign for a new reality that we are facing?
- ❧ How do we suggest to proceed with the imprisoned young man?
- ❧ What do we, as a community, propose as a solution to the problem with the blocked harbour?
- ❧ What is our position as a community towards the mixed marriages?
- ❧ What would we suggest as a step to revival of the peaceful coexistence of the communities in our city? Would it be better if we restrict our relations with the other communities in the name of our own safety?
- ❧ What could be the contribution of each community to restore the peace and the understanding among the communities in the city?
- ❧ And what could the three communities contribute together?

Note to the chairman of the discussions: It is important to start your discussion by deciding what would be the decision making procedure – by voting (which would give an advantage to the opinion of the majority) or by finding a consensus within the group. This will facilitate the process of taking decisions as a community.

8. The team of authors

In every collective effort the contribution of everyone needs to be acknowledged. And herewith we extend our gratitude to all that have been involved and shared both expertise and personal creativity to transform Balkania from a nice idea into a real educational tool.

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 - Ms Emilia Ilieva for initiating and inspiring the process of creating Balkania and managing the SMILE project, within which framework Balkania was born.

9. To the readers

Thank you for honouring us with your interest
and may the role play serves the needs of all of us who are striving for a
peaceful living and infatigably transmit the culture of valuing diversity to the
generations that come.

10. Imprint