

# DECODE

DECODING CONFLICTS  
THROUGH DIALOGUE

Insights on the new innovative method of teaching  
**Alternative Dispute Resolutions** in youth projects



Erasmus+



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# Introduction

The art of wise and insightful dialogue is a core value of every conversation, whether it is a high level political summit, private talk or business transaction. Unfortunately, in the modern world communication is frequently limited only to shortcuts, signs and short messages. One of the most vulnerable groups affected by this issue is youth, as they are not sufficiently prepared to notice, decode and understand codes used in multicultural communication. As a result, they stumble upon irresistible barriers and misunderstandings that lead to conflict and escalation of aggression. Instead of cooperating, they use their time and energy to protect their own identity and win fights that cannot result in a success of any side.

The project DECODE was designed precisely to change that.

# 1. Project description

The training course 'DECODE – Decoding Conflicts Through Dialogue' took place 26.11-06.12.2014 in Krakow, Poland and hosted 35 participants from 11 countries. Project was focused on teaching youth workers advanced techniques in multicultural communication and Alternative Dispute Resolutions. During these seven days young people had a chance to learn about various meanings of signs in different cultures and environments and the importance of decoding them. They learned how to identify various types of conflicts (conflict of values, generations, structures, relations, access to information etc.) arising from that background and explored different methods of resolving them.

The objectives:

- to raise awareness on the topic of intercultural communication and dialogue;
- to underpin the importance of decoding messages and intents depending on their cultural background;
- to explore origins of different types of conflicts and effective methods of resolving them;
- to promote and explain Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADR);
- to teach in practice skills relevant to effective negotiation and mediation;
- to share knowledge and skills in the field of conducting negotiations in different cultural environments, both on local and European level;
- to promote active participation of youth in civil society;
- to create a field for further cooperation and development of new projects

During the training participants had a chance to develop both theoretical (such as strategic planning) and practical skills (i.e. public speaking, conducting a successful mediation, negotiating in extreme conditions). They also had a chance to experience the decision making procedures in their communities, countries and the European Union and work on resolving contemporary issues that are present in European policy.

## 2. ADR stands for...

...Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADR). ADR are a different set of methods and procedures that are used to allow the opposing parties to come to an agreement without resorting to court and litigation. The history of ADR is as long as the history of disputes – so long ago as in ancient Egypt some disputes were settled with the help of negotiation or mediation.

The most common Alternative Dispute Resolutions are:

- negotiation
- mediation
- arbitration
- conciliation
- Dispute Boards

The ADRs are based on the principles of mutual trust, respect, openness, confidentiality and informality. Usually there is no public body involved so the parties can reach an agreement according to their own rules. The entire procedure is also much faster and cheaper than litigation and enables the parties to reach a common ground instead of granting one party being declared right and blaming the other. Most importantly, however, they allow the parties to maintain relations and mutual dialogue.

The Alternative Dispute Resolutions are also present in most of the legal systems in the world. They are also highly promoted by EU and a subject of several EU directives, such as:

*Directive 2008/52/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council  
of 21 May 2008 on certain aspects of mediation in civil and commercial matters;  
Directive 2013/11/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council  
of 21 May 2013 on alternative dispute resolution for consumer disputes*

### 3. An old challenge - a new approach

*'Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn'*  
Benjamin Franklin

The biggest challenge of every training course or youth project is to answer the question: how to turn the knowledge and skills that are the main topic of the project into practise? This is especially true in dispute resolution where all the factors present in conflicts - different values, emotions, prejudices and misunderstandings - must be taken into consideration. What to do to practise conflict resolution without causing real tensions between the participants? And how to make the simulations immersive enough so that participants would actually experience the entire complex background of the disputes? Our idea was simple - let's turn it all into a game.

To ensure that conflicts that participants tried to solve by negotiation and mediation are similar to those from the real life we created a role play game scenario that was set in a whole new reality - called Atlantica. In this universe there were six islands that differ in terms of political systems, economical situations, cultures with high or low-power distances. The game took place during the whole training period, allowing participants to immerse themselves more into the world, build their own cultures and traditions, explore values and interests. They were also able to discover that all the islands have a lot in common - roots, history, values. The lands developed complicated political and economic relations, were dependent upon each other and needed cooperation to survive. To make that easier they even created a political body called the Six Islands Treaty Organization.

However, as in the real world, the balance between the islands was easy to shatter. Everything changed when a new and mysterious seventh island called Atlantis emerged from underwater to join the other lands. The other islands had to decide whether to accept the new body in their world and try to adapt to a whole new situation or to keep to their identity and reject the newcomer.

And so the scenario created a basis for many conflicts and clashes of interests to arise and gave space for participants to practise their dispute resolution skills in a complex and multicultural world - just like the one we live in.



## 4. In the world of Atlantis

To present the scenario of the game and to give participants more of a real-feel about the world of Atlantica, we designed a newspaper that published the most important news about the islands, their customs, culture, relations and even... interviews!

The 6ISLE COURIER

# 6ISLE COURIER

Atlantica

25.11.3128 ABW

## The 774th Annual Meeting of Six Islands Treaty Organization starts soon!

**The official meeting of representatives of SITO islands (Six Islands Treaty Organization) of the land Atlantica will take place on 1-5 December on the board of a ship Krakowiak and is officially hosted by the government of Steam Republic.**

Delegates from every island have confirmed their attendance, including king of Ambergold, Shaman of Agriterra, Councillor of International Relations from Technocity, President-General from Santo Canto, Delegate of Thought from Philopolis and Minister of Foreign Affairs from

Steam Republic. The delegates will come on board of the ship on 29<sup>th</sup> of November and the official talks should start on 1<sup>st</sup> of December.

The delegates will discuss further cooperation between the islands and renegotiate already existing trade contracts. One of the most controversial topics to be discussed is deeper unification of monetary and law systems of the islands. It is however assumed by the experts in political field that there might be several bilateral issues between the islands that, if not resolved, can completely block the meeting.

Let's recall that SITO was created in 2354 ABW\* as a result of over two millennia of cooperation between the islands. One of its main goals is to prevent a clash in mutual relations, such as the one in the Dark Times that has led to disastrous war, known as The War of the Dissidents. It was stopped only by the catastrophic Big Wave that has laid waste on the islands and resulted in settling up the first drafts of the cooperation Treaty. Today SITO is celebrating great success and has reached the point of stabilization and prosperity.

\*After the Big Wave

JB

## The Holy Day has come!

Five days after the Horah, (*may God bless everybody who lives in this great times*) the youngest of three sons of our beloved deceased King (*may God give peace to his soul*) has ascended to the throne. His name, Al-Abat (*may God have him under protection*) was repeated in glory by every single creature living on our island, it sounds. The ceremony took place in the Golden Palace and was carried out by illustrious and wise priest, the main pontiff Thufir El-Sapir (*may God protect him forever*), witnessed by the Council of Pontiffs – the wisest people who have ever stepped on our holy land. The Golden Palace is huge and majestic, built from marble, ivory and gold and it expresses magnitude of our Kingdom

(*may God let it be strong and gorgeous forever*). For ages the Golden Palace was well hidden from intrusive eyes of the enemies of our Kingdom, in the faraway valley over the hills. Now this localization gives our King possibility to lead his life in calmness and peace.

Our new King, His Majesty Al-Abat, was born 9 winters ago. Every habitant of our land remembers this day, when the sun shined brighter and even wind stopped to honour him. The King is very gifted and skilful, but his age does not allow him to rule the Kingdom on his own. That is the reason why the Council of Pontiffs decided to designate King's uncle, virtuous man

# 6ISLE COURIER

Atlantica

03.12.3128 ABW

## ! Breaking News !

### We are not alone in The Universe!

**Unbelievable sensation! A new island has appeared in the middle of the Weavy Sea today in the morning. The whole Atlantica is in the big shock. Are we sure we can trust them? Can we feel save again?**

The whole Universe of Atlantica was struck by the strange, pictographic message sent to ship Krakowiak during 774<sup>th</sup> SITO Meeting. Luckily there were experts on decoding on board who were able to read the unexpected letter. In the end it turned out that Philocrates from Philopolis was right! The exact message was as follows:

*We Are Emerging Out of Water. We Are giving You A Chance To Live Together with Us Again. Prepare Yourselves, In 12 Hours We Will Be On Surface.*

*We/Atlantis/Observers*

Journalists from '6Isle Courier' were not wasting time. They have visited the island and interviewed several of its inhabitants. What we found out will completely change the shape of the world we live in.

According to the people of Atlantis, they were the first and biggest nation of Atlantica, long, long time before the Big Wave. They were a highly developed civilization and slowly they inhabited the other six islands. Can it mean that we are all coming from the Atlantis itself...? The six islands have slowly developed their own cultures and civilizations and they have gone apart from Atlantis, announcing their independence. Shortly after that, in 200 BBW a big war started between the six islands, that have been known to history as the War of Dissidents. People

of Atlantis were so shocked that this disaster could happen that they decided to leave the world of Atlantica and hide forever under the water. For many years they were working to build a big glass dome that could protect them under the water and to develop technology that would support life in those extreme conditions. Finally, in the year 0, when the war was raging between the other six islands, Atlantis submerged.

What they have not expected though, was the fact that by going under water Atlantis would create a disastrous wave. Known as the Big Wave, it has hit all the other islands and wiped most of the buildings and people away. The tragedy was so big that people of the six island have decided to stop the war and made peace between them -

selves. They have also started to count the time from The Big Wave to cut away everything that happened before. Slowly even the memory of Atlantis have faded away.

But what will happen now? The world has changed, the six islands have created the Six Islands Treaty Organization and have been living in peace for many years. Can we be sure that the sudden appearance of Atlantis will not destroy it all? Possibly we will find out soon...

KB

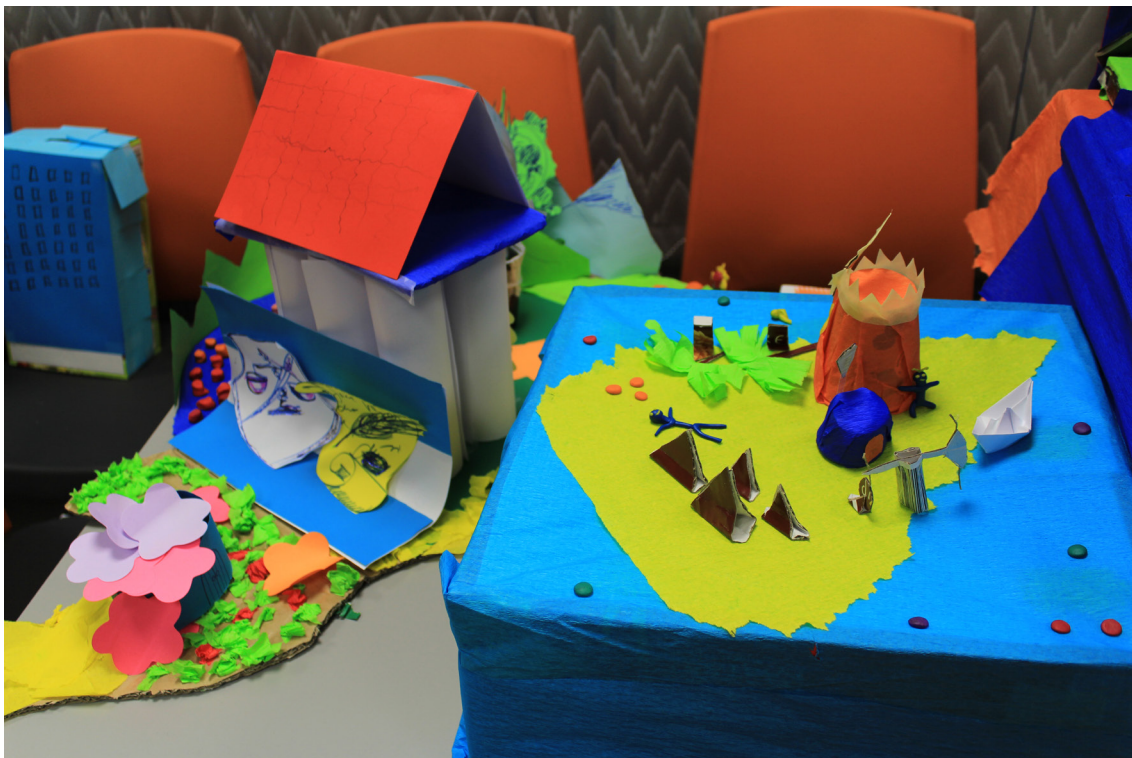


## 5. Step-by-step

Every game is a set of tasks that need to be fulfilled. Below there are some examples of challenges that our participants faced in order to maintain their position and good relations in the Atlantica Universe.

### 5.1. Task 1: Build your island

Participants were divided into six groups that represented the citizens of the Six Islands: Agriterra, Philopolis, Santo Canto, Steam Republic, Amber Gold and Tech-nocity. Based on what they had already learnt about different types of cultures and with the aid of short factsheets on every island's economy, politics and history – they created full and complete models of the islands they were from that moment inhabiting. The results of their work were not just paper lands – they designed customs, traditions, values and goals of the islands. The participants left their real lives behind and set off on a journey to the Atlantica universe.





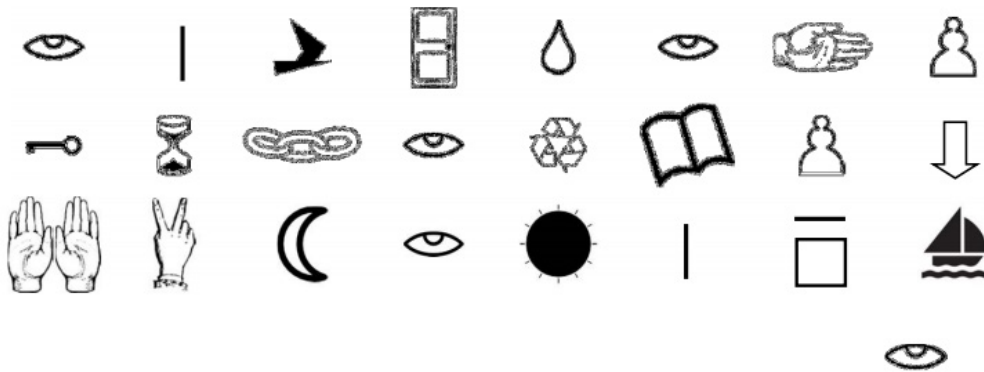




## 5.2. Task 2: Decoding a message

The people of Atlantis have decided to communicate with the other islands. Below there is a message that they have sent to initiate contact. However, it seems that the language they have used was long forgotten by the citizens of other islands... Knowing just a few symbols all participants had to cooperate to decode it.

**[Example] TASK 2:** A small yellow submarine swam up to the board of Krakowiak ship. Inside you have found this strange message and a box that looks like it is hiding some kind of treasure. Maybe the message is a code to unlock it? You have 30 minutes to decode the message... but are you sure others won't be faster than you?



Translation:

*We are emerging out of the water. We are giving you a chance to live with us again. Prepare yourselves, in twelve hours we will be on the surface.*

*Atlantis*

## 5.3. Task 3: Negotiation

Atlantis has already emerged and entered into relations with other islands. However, not everything was going as planned and soon some issues arose than needed to be solved through negotiation.

### **[Example] TASK 3: NEGOTIATION – Amber Gold vs. Atlantis**

General information: The countries of Six Islands Treaty Organization have signed a Convention on Common Criminal Policy in 2800 ABW. In accordance with the convention there is a catalogue of behaviours which are identified as crimes by all islands and they can be investigated by all six countries. The state, party to the convention on whose territory crime has been committed, submits a motion to the country from where the criminal comes and the extradition procedure starts. Piracy is one of those crimes.

Amber Gold: Johnny Redbeard is a famous pirate who has been robbing Amber Gold's trade ships for many years. Nobody knew where he came from and after each robbery he used to vanish so investigation against him was unsuccessful. Now, following Atlantis's appearance on the surface, your General Prosecutor strongly suspects that Johnny Redbeard is a citizen of this island. He wants to submit an official motion for extradition to the authorities of Atlantis to hold the pirate responsible for his crimes by the court of Amber Gold. Amber Gold's authority and society thinks that it is a fair solution; the island has suffered a lot owing to Johnny Redbeard robberies. But there is a serious difficulty to face: Atlantis is not a party to the Convention. What's more, you're not sure if they want to cooperate on this issue. Therefore, Amber Gold has decided to send a team of negotiators to talk with Atlantis.

### **Task: You are a negotiating team from Amber Gold:**

- General Prosecutor
- Representative of Ministry of Justice
- Representative of a court
- Trader who has been robbed by Johnny Redbeard

Prepare for the negotiations. Set up your goals and objectives. What do you want to achieve? Define what you can agree on (BATNA and WATNA). Prepare a negotiation strategy. You will have 10 min for the first round, then 5 min for rebuilding your strategy and 10 min for the second round. Don't forget that you should behave according to the cultural style of your island!

## 5.4. Task 4: Mediation

The appearance of Atlantis was not the only issue that bothered the citizens of the islands. Some of them have already entered into serious conflicts that needed mediation to be solved.

### **[Example] TASK 4: MEDIATION – Philopolis vs. Santo Canto**

#### **Task for: Philopolis**

Philopolis have arranged a youth exchange with Santo Canto for young people from both of the islands aged 13-18. During summer, 40 young people from Philopolis travelled to Santo Canto for a week for a youth camp where they were planning to do some activities together with their colleagues from the other island, learn and exchange ideas. During the exchange, the teachers from Philopolis found out that at least half of their group was drinking alcohol and 5 youngsters had become addicted to drugs that they obtained from someone from Santo Canto. So Philopolis decided to end the youth exchange programme and will no longer allow youths from Santo Canto to visit their island.

*Your attitude:* You are disgusted with the fact that young people from Santo Canto are already addicted to drugs. You think that all of them are the same and in your opinion the mediation is a waste of time.

#### **Task for: Santo Canto**

You have arranged a youth exchange with Philopolis for young people from both of the islands aged 13-18. During summer, 40 young people from Philopolis travelled to Santo Canto for a week-long youth camp where all of them were planning to do some activities, learn and exchange ideas. The exchange was very important for the teachers from Santo Canto because their young pupils come from excluded societies, have a lot of problems with drugs and are often involved in petty crimes. The exchange with Philopolis was a first chance for them to see a different way of life. Unfortunately, during the camp someone (no one knows who) has managed to smuggle drugs and alcohol into the camp. The team from Philopolis left in anger and they refused to invite anymore youths from Santo Canto to their island.

*Your attitude:* You care a lot about your youth and you want to do everything to help them. At the same time you are very sensitive about your own culture and react in extreme anger if someone is judging you.

#### **Task for: the mediator:**

You are representing Atlantis, the impartial side in the conflict. You were asked by the conflicted countries to mediate between them. Try to remember all of the features and roles of a mediator. Prepare a plan or schedule for mediation. Define the biggest cultural problems that you can face.

Remember that YOU are the manager of the conflict. You can announce breaks, ask one side to talk to you in private etc. Consider if you prefer all of the people from your island to mediate or if you will choose representatives.









## 5.5. Task 5: Plenary session

### [Example] TASK 5: Plenary Session

The 774th Annual meeting of the Six Islands Treaty Organization is slowly coming to an end. During the last few days delegates from the islands had the chance to renegotiate existing relations and set up some new avenues for future cooperation. Now it is time to agree on a final resolution.

#### THE PLAN OF THE PLENARY SESSION:

1. Official opening
2. Presentation of official statements (3 min presentation per island + 2 min questions from other islands)
3. Voting (after each presentation)
4. Deciding the case of Atlantis
5. Official closing

You have 30 min to prepare an official statement on behalf of your island. Include in it what you want to get from other islands and what you want to give in return. You can choose the topic freely but it should be consistent with your real needs. Consider all your knowledge about the mutual relations between the islands and their cultures. Prepare arguments that will support your statement.

*Tip:* You can work separately on the statements but if you really want them to pass maybe it's a good idea to use this time to consult with other islands?

You will have 3 min to present your statement and then the other islands can ask you questions (2 min). Each presentation will be followed by voting. For the statement to pass you have to gain majority of votes (more than a half). You can also refrain from voting.

The last thing you should decide is whether you accept Atlantis as a part of the Six Islands Treaty Organization. Every island will have 1 min to express its opinion and 1 min to pose questions to Atlantis. To accept Atlantis as a new member of SITO all islands have to agree when voting.

Remember! Atlantis is present during the whole session as an observer. It can ask questions but cannot vote.



**Good luck!**

## 6. Conclusion

Participants have evaluated the project as a very successful and innovative one. They underlined that they have developed their competences connected with negotiations, mediations, conflict resolution and ADR and increased their sensitivity towards cultural differences. Youth workers learnt about negotiating with different cultures, styles and techniques of negotiations, the role of signs and symbols in the communication process depending on the cultural context, the role of ADR, active participation in civil society. The immersion into one of the fictional „Atlantica’s” cultures, identification with it and constructing relations with other Islands gave participants the unique experience in discovering intercultural communication issues and challenges. Participants are now able to apply the new knowledge and skills in work in their organizations and environment, as well as develop a more open attitude among young people. They were motivated and equipped with the tools to become more involved both in life of their local communities and on the national and international level and they have found „Atlantica game” as a very useful tool in youth work.



The team (and citizens of Atlantis) from the left: Agnieszka Kasztalska, Marzena Ples, Ufuk Bal, Paulina Opielka, Arsen Simonyan, Karolina Borgosz



