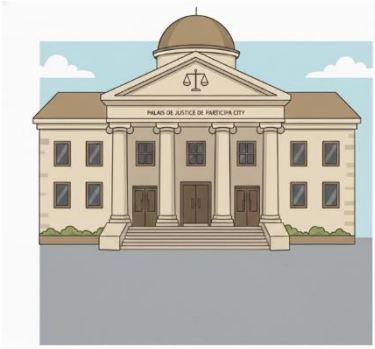
Participa City

A simulation game to learn about discrimination

Game material for the scenario “Courthouse“



https://participa-city.eu

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

PARTICIPA CITY – Scenario “Courthouse”



General information for the trainer

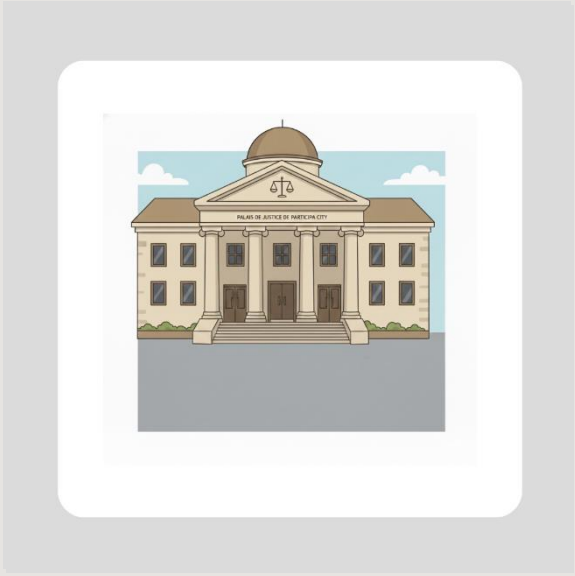
You find in this file all necessary material for playing the scenario “Courthouse”. Before you start playing please read the trainer manual carefully.

- The station overview is for your information and shows you the characters in the scenario and if additional material is needed (one page).
- The description of the scenario is for your information and describes the initial situation before playing and the perspectives that are established in the scenario (one page).
- You find then a plan of how to arrange the scenario in the room and a big sign to indicate where the scenario is played in the room (two pages).
- Depending on the number of tables needed for the scenario, you find the different table displays.
- The next page shows the name tags for the players in this scenario – cut them out.

The following pages show the material for the participants:

- “Welcome to Participa City” is handed out to all players, but only at the beginning of the game before the first scenario is played since it is a general introduction to the game and the city. You find this information copied according to the number of players. If “Courthouse” is not the first scenario played, you can ignore these pages.
- Each player gets another two papers: one with the biography card, the second with information about the initial situation and the role that the player should play.
- Some players might get additional information. The person(s) concerned is/are indicated on the additional material and on the station overview.
- You can play this scenario parallel with all other scenarios.
- It might be useful to use carton paper for printing.

PARTICIPA CITY – Courthouse station overview



Characters

a. Mr. Samy Mahamat

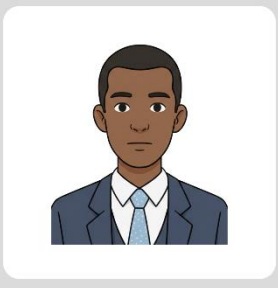
b. Mr. Karim Diallo

c. Mr. Diaga Bissingou

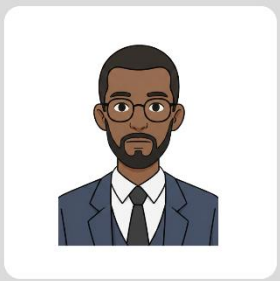
d. Mr. Raymond Duchêne

e. Additional material

i. Video transcription from the independent media outlet StreetPress, highlighting racism in the legal profession for Mr Mahamat and Mr Diallo.



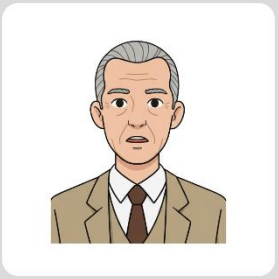
MR. SAMY MAHAMAT



MR. KARIM DIALLO



MR. DIAGA BISSINGOU



MR. RAYMOND DUCHÊNE

SIMULATION GAME

Material for the trainer

PARTICIPA CITY – Description of the scenario



Initial situation

In front of the entrance to the Participa City courthouse, two law partners, both black, are taking a well-deserved break while waiting for the next hearing. Another lawyer, who is white**, mistakes them for security guards** and shows them his professional card to get inside.

Depending on your plan, members of the Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB) might join the scenario.

Perspectives established in the station

- **Mr. Samy Mahamat, Lawyer**: he knows that his colleague Karim was mistaken for a defendant by a security guard during his last visit to the court. Loyal and unwavering in his friendship with Karim, he will support his associate no matter what.
- **Mr. Karim Diallo, Lawyer**: he was mistaken for a defendant by a security guard during his last visit to the court and will not let such a discriminatory act happen again without reacting.
- **Mr. Diaga Bissingou, Security guard**: his job is to maintain security and to prevent disturbances in front of the courthouse. He believes that in order to integrate into French society, Black people must strive to 'go unnoticed'.
- **Mr. Raymond Duchêne, Lawyer**: he mistakes Samy and Karim for security guards. He sees himself as a defender of immigrants and considers immigration to be a positive force for French society.

Game procedure

- You hand out the indicated material to the participants.
- First, there is a reading phase (approx. 10 minutes).
- Then, you give an acoustic signal, and the participants start playing the scenario (approx. 20 minutes).
- With the next acoustic signal, you end the conversation and ask the players to join the debriefing.

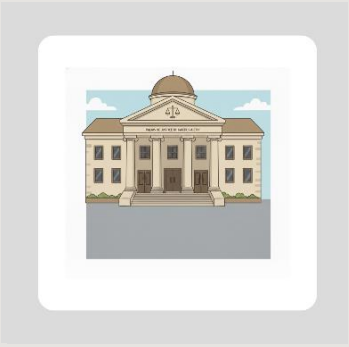
Material for the participants

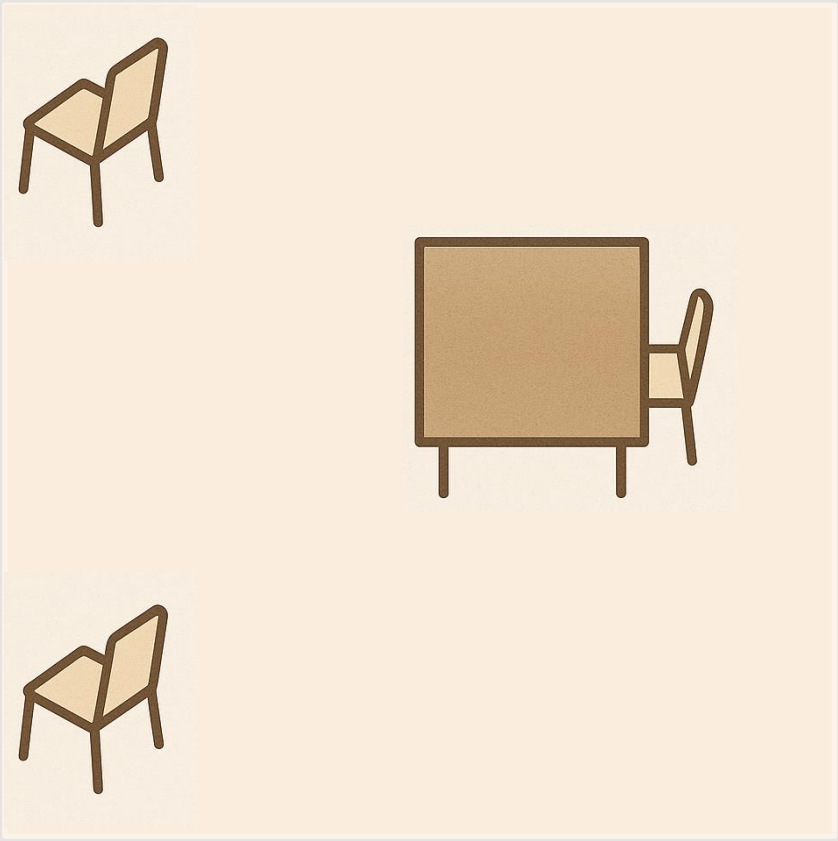
- Mr. Mahamat and Mr. Diallo: biography card + game instructions + additional material "racism in the legal profession".
- Mr. Bissingou and Mr. Duchêne: biography card + game instructions

SIMULATION GAME

PARTICIPA CITY – Exemplified station setup

Material for the trainer





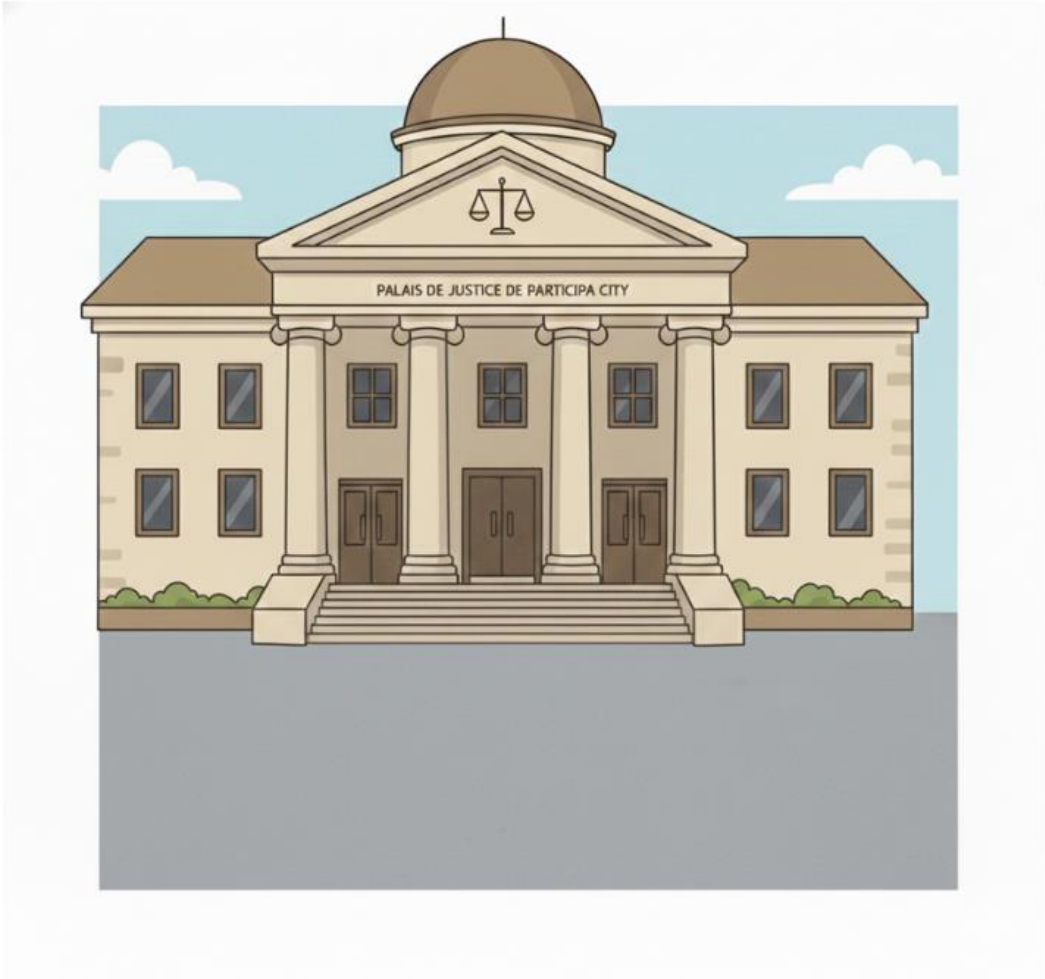
Two chairs mark the courthouse entrance.

All participants remain standing. The security guard is inside and then moves to the entrance.

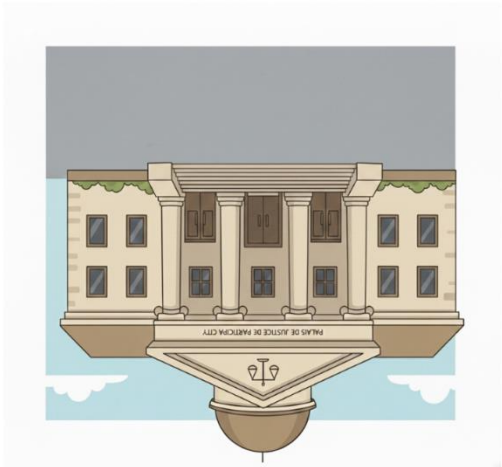
Additional chairs for ADB representatives might be necessary. They are positioned outside.

SIMULATION GAME

PARTICIPA CITY – Scenario Courthouse



SIMULATION GAME

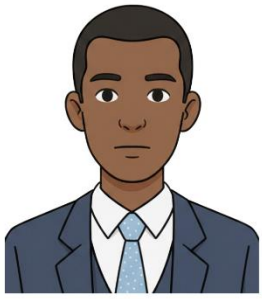


(fold here)

Courthouse

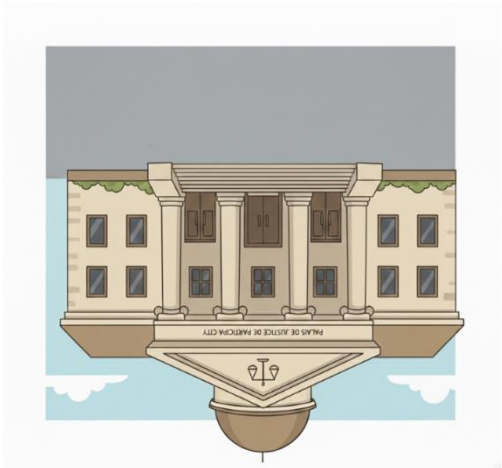
In front of the entrance

Mr. Samy Mahamat and Mr. Karim Diallo





At the beginning, Mr. Mahamat and Mr. Diallo are standing in front of the courthouse entrance. After the first acoustic signal, a man hurries into the court and shows them his ID card.

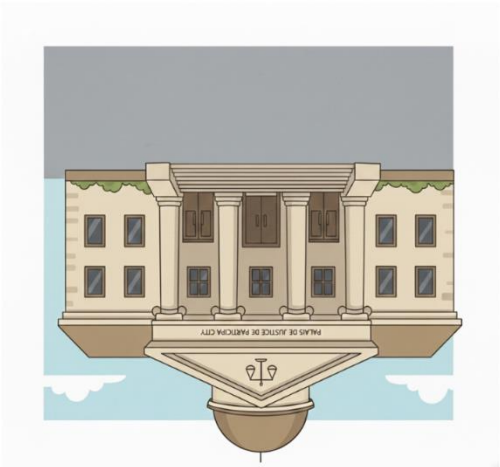


(fold here)

Courthouse
At the entrance of the courthouse
Mr. Diaga Bissingou



At the beginning, Mr. Bissingou is inside the courthouse. With the first acoustic signal, he returns to the entrance.



(fold here)

Courthouse

Outside the courthouse

Mr. Raymond Duchêne



At the beginning, Mr. Duchêne is out of the station. With the first acoustic signal, he hurries into the court and shows his ID card to the two men at the entrance.

PARTICIPA CITY – Scenario Courthouse – Name Tags



MR. SAMY MAHAMAT



MR. KARIM DIALLO



MR. DIAGA BISSINGOU



MR. RAYMOND DUCHÊNE

Welcome to PARTICIPA CITY

Material for participants

Introduction for all players

Participa City is a medium-sized town in Europe with approximately 100,000 residents. It is hardly different from other cities of this size. All types of schools are represented, as well as a University of Applied Sciences specializing in economics. The largest employer in the area is a metal processing company. Additionally, the town has ten sports clubs, a police headquarters, and two fire stations. There is also a neighbourhood considered a so-called “social hotspot”. This town district hosts institutions providing counselling services. Moreover, there are active **neo-Nazi structures**, whose members are primarily active in the surrounding areas but also occasionally make appearances in the city. For this reason, a round **table against right-wing tendencies** has been initiated and campaigns for more diversity are held regularly. According to studies conducted by the local University of Applied Sciences, approximately every second resident tends to hold prejudiced views against asylum seekers. And in 2019, an EU-wide Eurobarometer survey found that over half of Europeans believe racial or ethnic discrimination to be widespread in their country (Eurobarometer Discrimination in the EU 2019).

But something is different in this city:

After repeated attacks on local mosques, the situation escalated last year. Islamophobic slogans were repeatedly spray-painted on the walls of the city's largest Muslim place of worship. In response, the mosque's board decided to station a guard. Just a few days later, the guard was attacked and seriously injured. The perpetrators managed to escape and have been unsuccessfully sought ever since.

This incident sparked a broad debate on the issue of racism. The city council decided that the city should become **free of racism**. As a first symbolic step, the city was renamed Participa City. During the renaming ceremony, Mayor Calan stated: "Every person in this city should know that Participa City aspires to become a place free of discrimination!”. In Participa City, there are several political groups and initiatives. One of them gained significant attention by writing an open letter to the city council. In the letter, they called for a critical examination of the situation in Participa City regarding racism. At the following city council meeting, the issue was addressed as a top priority. The council members decided to establish an **Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB)**. Its members are selected randomly from among all residents. The board's findings are intended to help combat racism in the city.

We now want to visit places in the city where people from diverse backgrounds interact daily: for example, at schools, the employment agency, the train station, or sports and playgrounds. These encounters will allow us to identify the stumbling blocks on the path to a racism-free society. None of the participants should fear criticism of their behavior during the game: we are all here to learn how to recognize racism and discriminatory behavior in everyday life and develop strategies to counteract them. Unfortunately, in some instances, it will be necessary to reproduce racism to facilitate this learning process.

Have fun with the game!

Welcome to PARTICIPA CITY

Material for participants

Introduction for all players

Participa City is a medium-sized town in Europe with approximately 100,000 residents. It is hardly different from other cities of this size. All types of schools are represented, as well as a University of Applied Sciences specializing in economics. The largest employer in the area is a metal processing company. Additionally, the town has ten sports clubs, a police headquarters, and two fire stations. There is also a neighbourhood considered a so-called “social hotspot”. This town district hosts institutions providing counselling services. Moreover, there are active **neo-Nazi structures**, whose members are primarily active in the surrounding areas but also occasionally make appearances in the city. For this reason, a round **table against right-wing tendencies** has been initiated and campaigns for more diversity are held regularly. According to studies conducted by the local University of Applied Sciences, approximately every second resident tends to hold prejudiced views against asylum seekers. And in 2019, an EU-wide Eurobarometer survey found that over half of Europeans believe racial or ethnic discrimination to be widespread in their country (Eurobarometer Discrimination in the EU 2019).

But something is different in this city:

After repeated attacks on local mosques, the situation escalated last year. Islamophobic slogans were repeatedly spray-painted on the walls of the city's largest Muslim place of worship. In response, the mosque's board decided to station a guard. Just a few days later, the guard was attacked and seriously injured. The perpetrators managed to escape and have been unsuccessfully sought ever since.

This incident sparked a broad debate on the issue of racism. The city council decided that the city should become **free of racism**. As a first symbolic step, the city was renamed Participa City. During the renaming ceremony, Mayor Calan stated: "Every person in this city should know that Participa City aspires to become a place free of discrimination!”. In Participa City, there are several political groups and initiatives. One of them gained significant attention by writing an open letter to the city council. In the letter, they called for a critical examination of the situation in Participa City regarding racism. At the following city council meeting, the issue was addressed as a top priority. The council members decided to establish an **Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB)**. Its members are selected randomly from among all residents. The board's findings are intended to help combat racism in the city.

We now want to visit places in the city where people from diverse backgrounds interact daily: for example, at schools, the employment agency, the train station, or sports and playgrounds. These encounters will allow us to identify the stumbling blocks on the path to a racism-free society. None of the participants should fear criticism of their behavior during the game: we are all here to learn how to recognize racism and discriminatory behavior in everyday life and develop strategies to counteract them. Unfortunately, in some instances, it will be necessary to reproduce racism to facilitate this learning process.

Have fun with the game!

Welcome to PARTICIPA CITY

Material for participants

Introduction for all players

Participa City is a medium-sized town in Europe with approximately 100,000 residents. It is hardly different from other cities of this size. All types of schools are represented, as well as a University of Applied Sciences specializing in economics. The largest employer in the area is a metal processing company. Additionally, the town has ten sports clubs, a police headquarters, and two fire stations. There is also a neighbourhood considered a so-called “social hotspot”. This town district hosts institutions providing counselling services. Moreover, there are active **neo-Nazi structures**, whose members are primarily active in the surrounding areas but also occasionally make appearances in the city. For this reason, a round **table against right-wing tendencies** has been initiated and campaigns for more diversity are held regularly. According to studies conducted by the local University of Applied Sciences, approximately every second resident tends to hold prejudiced views against asylum seekers. And in 2019, an EU-wide Eurobarometer survey found that over half of Europeans believe racial or ethnic discrimination to be widespread in their country (Eurobarometer Discrimination in the EU 2019).

But something is different in this city:

After repeated attacks on local mosques, the situation escalated last year. Islamophobic slogans were repeatedly spray-painted on the walls of the city's largest Muslim place of worship. In response, the mosque's board decided to station a guard. Just a few days later, the guard was attacked and seriously injured. The perpetrators managed to escape and have been unsuccessfully sought ever since.

This incident sparked a broad debate on the issue of racism. The city council decided that the city should become **free of racism**. As a first symbolic step, the city was renamed Participa City. During the renaming ceremony, Mayor Calan stated: "Every person in this city should know that Participa City aspires to become a place free of discrimination!”. In Participa City, there are several political groups and initiatives. One of them gained significant attention by writing an open letter to the city council. In the letter, they called for a critical examination of the situation in Participa City regarding racism. At the following city council meeting, the issue was addressed as a top priority. The council members decided to establish an **Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB)**. Its members are selected randomly from among all residents. The board's findings are intended to help combat racism in the city.

We now want to visit places in the city where people from diverse backgrounds interact daily: for example, at schools, the employment agency, the train station, or sports and playgrounds. These encounters will allow us to identify the stumbling blocks on the path to a racism-free society. None of the participants should fear criticism of their behavior during the game: we are all here to learn how to recognize racism and discriminatory behavior in everyday life and develop strategies to counteract them. Unfortunately, in some instances, it will be necessary to reproduce racism to facilitate this learning process.

Have fun with the game!

Welcome to PARTICIPA CITY

Material for participants

Introduction for all players

Participa City is a medium-sized town in Europe with approximately 100,000 residents. It is hardly different from other cities of this size. All types of schools are represented, as well as a University of Applied Sciences specializing in economics. The largest employer in the area is a metal processing company. Additionally, the town has ten sports clubs, a police headquarters, and two fire stations. There is also a neighbourhood considered a so-called “social hotspot”. This town district hosts institutions providing counselling services. Moreover, there are active **neo-Nazi structures**, whose members are primarily active in the surrounding areas but also occasionally make appearances in the city. For this reason, a round **table against right-wing tendencies** has been initiated and campaigns for more diversity are held regularly. According to studies conducted by the local University of Applied Sciences, approximately every second resident tends to hold prejudiced views against asylum seekers. And in 2019, an EU-wide Eurobarometer survey found that over half of Europeans believe racial or ethnic discrimination to be widespread in their country (Eurobarometer Discrimination in the EU 2019).

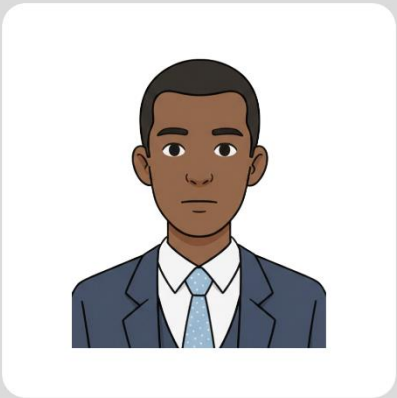
But something is different in this city:

After repeated attacks on local mosques, the situation escalated last year. Islamophobic slogans were repeatedly spray-painted on the walls of the city's largest Muslim place of worship. In response, the mosque's board decided to station a guard. Just a few days later, the guard was attacked and seriously injured. The perpetrators managed to escape and have been unsuccessfully sought ever since.

This incident sparked a broad debate on the issue of racism. The city council decided that the city should become **free of racism**. As a first symbolic step, the city was renamed Participa City. During the renaming ceremony, Mayor Calan stated: "Every person in this city should know that Participa City aspires to become a place free of discrimination!”. In Participa City, there are several political groups and initiatives. One of them gained significant attention by writing an open letter to the city council. In the letter, they called for a critical examination of the situation in Participa City regarding racism. At the following city council meeting, the issue was addressed as a top priority. The council members decided to establish an **Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB)**. Its members are selected randomly from among all residents. The board's findings are intended to help combat racism in the city.

We now want to visit places in the city where people from diverse backgrounds interact daily: for example, at schools, the employment agency, the train station, or sports and playgrounds. These encounters will allow us to identify the stumbling blocks on the path to a racism-free society. None of the participants should fear criticism of their behavior during the game: we are all here to learn how to recognize racism and discriminatory behavior in everyday life and develop strategies to counteract them. Unfortunately, in some instances, it will be necessary to reproduce racism to facilitate this learning process.

Have fun with the game!



MR. SAMY MAHAMAT

You are 32 years old. Of French nationality but with Chadian origins, you were born and have always lived in Participa City, a town to which you are particularly attached.

You have been a lawyer for 3 years. Last year, you opened **your own law firm together with your associate Karim**. Both of you have **specialized in immigration law.**

Having faced discrimination since childhood, you never miss an opportunity to call it out and put racists in their place — which is precisely what led to your commitment in the field of justice.

In your free time, you enjoy spending time with your spouse and friends, and you are a member of a boxing club. **You also volunteer for an organization that provides legal assistance to immigrants and victims of discrimination**.



PARTICIPA CITY – Game instructions
“Courthouse” for Mr. Samy Mahamat

Game procedure

- Identify yourself with the person from the biography card and these game instructions here as well as with the additional material to get familiar with the game situation.
- First, there is a reading phase to prepare yourself (approx. 10 minutes).
- After an acoustic signal, the discussion with Mr. Diallo, Mr. Bissingou and Mr. Duchêne begins (approx. 20 minutes).
- After another acoustic signal, the conversation ends and the trainer will ask you to join the debriefing.

The initial situation

It’s break time for you and your partner Karim. You have taken off your lawyer’s robe, and are getting some fresh air in front of the courthouse entrance with your associate, while waiting for the next hearing.

Suddenly, a man who seems to be in a great hurry hands you his ID card and explains that he has to rush to court for his client's hearing. **He obviously mistook you for two security guards.** This annoys you greatly because there is nothing to indicate that you are part of security (you are wearing a suit!) and you blame this on your skin color. The situation with the lawyer escalates, prompting the security guard to come and meet with you.

It is possible that members of the Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB) will join you.

Your role in the situation

You know that your colleague Karim was mistaken for a defendant by a lawyer during his last visit to the court, what has already deeply shocked you.

You consider the fact that a colleague mistook you for a security guard because of the color of your skin to be **an affront and a denial of your professional success**. You also consider this situation to be an **act of racism** against you and your partner.

Very annoyed, you explain your point of view to the lawyer and try to make him aware of the situation of racialized lawyers in the legal system.







MR. KARIM DIALLO

Born in Guinea 31 years ago, you have been living in France since the age of 18, when you came to study law. Three years ago, **you obtained French citizenship** and are now Franco-Guinean.

As a **victim of discrimination** since your arrival in France, you worked hard to obtain citizenship and redoubled your efforts to achieve this dream: to become a lawyer and help foreigners with their legal procedures in France.

A year ago, with your friend Samy, you both embarked on the adventure of setting up your **own law firm specializing in immigration law**.

Although you enjoy living in Participa City, you are **increasingly concerned about the rise in acts of discrimination and racism in the city**. As future parents preparing to welcome your first child, you and your wife hope that Participa City will remain a city where diversity and coexistence are encouraged.



PARTICIPA CITY – Game instructions
“Courthouse” for Mr. Karim Diallo

Game procedure

- Identify yourself with the person from the biography card and these game instructions here as well as with the additional material to get familiar with the game situation.
- First, there is a reading phase to prepare yourself (approx. 10 minutes).
- After an acoustic signal, the discussion with Mr. Mahamat, Mr. Bissingou and Mr. Duchêne begins (approx. 20 minutes).
- After another acoustic signal, the conversation ends and the trainer will ask you to join the debriefing.

The initial situation

It’s break time for you and your partner Samy. You have taken off your lawyer’s robe, and are getting some fresh air in front of the courthouse entrance with your associate, while waiting for the next hearing.

Suddenly, a man who seems to be in a great hurry hands you his ID card and explains that he has to rush to court for his client's hearing. **He obviously mistook you for two security guards**. This annoys you greatly because you were embarrassed during your last visit to the courthouse when a lawyer **mistook you for a defendant**. The situation escalates, prompting the security guard to come and meet with you.

It is possible that members of the Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB) will join you.

Your role in the situation

You consider the fact that a colleague once again mistook you because of the color of your skin to be **an affront and a denial of your professional success**. You also consider this situation to be an **act of racism** against you and your partner.

This time, you will not let such a discriminatory act happen again without reacting. Very angry, you explain your point of view to the lawyer and try to make him understand that his behavior is unacceptable, especially for a lawyer!







MR. DIAGA BISSINGOU

Aged 41 and a Senegalese national, **you arrived in France 15 years ago** hoping to find a fulfilling and well-paid job. Although you have **a master's degree in political science**, you have been doing odd jobs since your arrival in France.

Two years ago, you found a job as a **security guard** with a security company and **work at the Participa City courthouse**. You rely on this job and hope to finally obtain a **long-term residence permit**.

As a father of two, you live with your family in the northern district of Participa City. You are particularly involved with FC Participa City, helping out and organizing transportation when the team plays away games.

Your only wish is to live a quiet life in Participa City with your family, focusing on your work and your children's academic success.



PARTICIPA CITY – Game instructions
“Courthouse” for Mr. Diaga Bissingou

Game procedure

- Identify yourself with the person from the biography card and these game instructions here to get familiar with the game situation.
- First, there is a reading phase to prepare yourself (approx. 10 minutes).
- After an acoustic signal, the discussion with Mr. Mahamat, Mr. Diallo, and Mr. Duchêne begins (approx. 20 minutes).
- After another acoustic signal, the conversation ends and the trainer will ask you to join the debriefing.

The initial situation

You went inside the courthouse for two minutes to speak to your colleagues at the Security Control Station, as your walkie-talkie was out of order. When you return to your post at the entrance, you discover that **three men are arguing in front of the courthouse entrance**.

From what you understand, they are three lawyers, **and one of them (white) mistook the others (black) for security guards**, which deeply offended them. The two lawyers accuse their colleague of racism and of denying their professional success.

It is possible that members of the Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB) will join you.

Your role in the situation

Your job is to maintain security and to prevent any disturbances in front of the courthouse, so **you will try to de-escalate the situation and to prevent things from getting out of han**d, no matter what reason is behind the discussion.

As for the situation you are witnessing, your opinion is nuanced. On the one hand, **you know that the judicial system is far from free of racism and discrimination**. In fact, you have already overheard many informal conversations, as professionals and defendants often take their cigarette breaks in front of the entrance. Some defendants have even mentioned that being represented by a lawyer from an ethnic minority could unsettle the judge, who might see it as a form of “communitarianism.” But on the other hand, you also believe that in order to integrate into French society, **Black people must strive to ‘go unnoticed’** and work twice as hard to be accepted.







MR. RAYMOND DUCHÊNE

Aged 55, you are a brilliant and **highly sought-after lawyer** who has achieved remarkable social success.

Coming from a modest background, you are often seen as a model of meritocracy. You grew up in a former mining town in northern France, alongside the children of Moroccan immigrant miners, and have never forgotten your roots.

You frequently defend Black and Arab clients in court. You see yourself as a **defender of immigrants** and consider immigration to be a positive force for French society, particularly for the economy, as it helps to fill jobs in sectors facing labour shortages.

As a big chess fan, you enjoy participating in regional tournaments in your spare time. You are also an avid reader of detective novels and enjoy spending time tending to your garden.



PARTICIPA CITY – Game instructions
“Courthouse” for Mr. Raymond Duchêne

Game procedure

- Identify yourself with the person from the biography card and these game instructions here to get familiar with the game situation.
- First, there is a reading phase to prepare yourself (approx. 10 minutes).
- After an acoustic signal, the discussion with Mr. Mahamat, Mr. Diallo, and Mr. Bissingou begins (approx. 20 minutes).
- After another acoustic signal, the conversation ends and the trainer will ask you to join the debriefing.

The initial situation

You hurry to court because you are very late for your client's hearing, an Ivorian asylum seeker who is appealing for recognition of his refugee status.

You must remember to show your ID card to the security guard so that you can enter quickly and defend your client. In your haste, **you show your ID card to two black men at the entrance to the courthouse**. But they are not security guards, they are lawyers. **They seem genuinely upset at having been mistaken for security guards**. A heated argument breaks out between you and the other two lawyers, prompting the security guard to come and meet with you.

It is possible that members of the Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB) will join you.

Your role in the situation

Despite your apologies, the two men are visibly upset and claim to be victims of racism in this situation. You find their reaction exaggerated and, accustomed to defending immigrants, **you cannot stand being considered racist**.

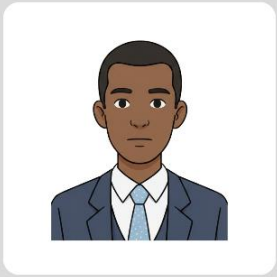
You don't understand why they are making such a big deal out of it: after all, there s nothing wrong with being a security guard, there is no job too small! You even find their arguments completely humiliating for the security guard who has just joined you.





ADDITIONAL MATERIAL COURTHOUSE
MR. MAHAMAT and MR. DIALLO







Racism in the legal profession

Real-life situation that inspired this scenario:

In a report by the media outlet StreetPress published on March 17, 2025, Franco-Senegalese lawyer Seydi BA reflects on the racism he has experienced in his professional environment. He explains that by dressing in a simple sweater, chinos, and sneakers - or even in a three-piece suit - he can easily be mistaken for a defendant, particularly by prison guards. While waiting for his client for 45 minutes in the visiting room, he recalls hearing a guard ask his colleague: “But what’s he doing out there?”

He also notes the change in the guard’s attitude once he replies that he is a lawyer: “Ah, sorry, Maître, sorry!” - though the damage is already done. He recounts an incident outside the professional entrance of the Paris courthouse, where he was taking a break with his associate, who is also Black. A colleague arrived and showed him his professional card, thinking Seydi BA was a security guard. Seydi BA pointed out that he was a lawyer, so the colleague, head down, then showed his card to Seydi’s associate, also a lawyer. Realizing his mistake, the colleague left briskly.

Seydi BA speaks of a feeling of humiliation and indignation, as these kinds of scenes often occur in public. He reflects: “I still completed seven years of study, I’ve always done everything to avoid being mistaken for a defendant, and yet people still take me for a defendant or a detainee. What more can I do? How can I prove my legitimacy, so I am recognized for who I truly am?”

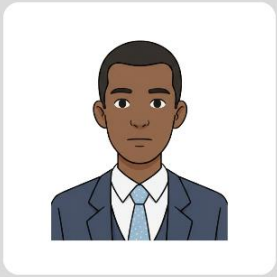
He expresses frustration that it is currently almost impossible in France to question such behaviors, as people tend to become defensive and downplay the seriousness of these incidents.

Another issue Seydi BA highlights is that some Black clients refuse to work with him because he is Black. One client’s mother told him, despite his excellent work, “[I don’t] want the judge to think we’re being communal or something like that, so I’ll choose another lawyer.” He states that some colleagues discourage clients from hiring him because of his race. He concludes: “This can slow down careers, but at the same time, we have clients who specifically come to us because we are better able to understand certain situations.”

Link to the video (in French): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkim0RegBBc

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL COURTHOUSE
MR. MAHAMAT and MR. DIALLO







Racism in the legal profession

Real-life situation that inspired this scenario:

In a report by the media outlet StreetPress published on March 17, 2025, Franco-Senegalese lawyer Seydi BA reflects on the racism he has experienced in his professional environment. He explains that by dressing in a simple sweater, chinos, and sneakers—or even in a three-piece suit—he can easily be mistaken for a defendant, particularly by prison guards. While waiting for his client for 45 minutes in the visiting room, he recalls hearing a guard ask his colleague: “But what’s he doing out there?”

He also notes the change in the guard’s attitude once he replies that he is a lawyer: “Ah, sorry, Maître, sorry!”—though the damage is already done. He recounts an incident outside the professional entrance of the Paris courthouse, where he was taking a break with his associate, who is also Black. A colleague arrived and showed him his professional card, thinking Seydi BA was a security guard. Seydi BA pointed out that he was a lawyer, so the colleague, head down, then showed his card to Seydi’s associate, also a lawyer. Realizing his mistake, the colleague left briskly.

Seydi BA speaks of a feeling of humiliation and indignation, as these kinds of scenes often occur in public. He reflects: “I still completed seven years of study, I’ve always done everything to avoid being mistaken for a defendant, and yet people still take me for a defendant or a detainee. What more can I do? How can I prove my legitimacy, so I am recognized for who I truly am?”

He expresses frustration that it is currently almost impossible in France to question such behaviors, as people tend to become defensive and downplay the seriousness of these incidents.

Another issue Seydi BA highlights is that some Black clients refuse to work with him because he is Black. One client’s mother told him, despite his excellent work, “[I don’t] want the judge to think we’re being communal or something like that, so I’ll choose another lawyer.” He states that some colleagues discourage clients from hiring him because of his race. He concludes: “This can slow down careers, but at the same time, we have clients who specifically come to us because we are better able to understand certain situations.”

Link to the video (in French): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkim0RegBBc

Participa City



Note on language and context: Our European project consortium has made every effort to use inclusive and sensitive language throughout these materials; however, linguistic and cultural differences between language versions may affect nuances of wordings, and we rely on users to apply the materials thoughtfully and sensitively in their own context so that they support reflection on discrimination without reproducing it.

Images generated using AI (Sora | Gemini) for illustrative purposes

https://participa-city.eu

Project N°: 2024-1-DE02-KA220-ADU-000255284

CC BY SA

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.