



THE  
JOURNEY  
TODAY

# Manual for *What Now?*

A larp for *The Journey Today* project

## Welcome

Welcome to *What Now?*, a participatory experience about the journey refugees take through Europe every day. *What Now?* is a larp (live-action role-playing game) that focuses on the difficult decisions refugees have to make on their journey through the European Union and the often very serious consequences those choices have. Almost everything you will need for this game is in the Print PDF version (or in the box set if you have a physical copy).

In this manual, you will learn how to prepare, set up and run this educational larp. It is not complicated, but you need to prepare a bit before you invite the participants to join you. Please read the full document from start to finish before you run the larp.

## What is *What Now?*

In *What Now?*, your participants will enact young refugees, who have just arrived in Greece and are now trying to reach a friend or family member somewhere on the continent. The participants will experience some of the choices, challenges and unfair situations refugees and migrants run into on their journey through Europe. Will you have enough food, water and money to reach your destination? Only time will tell.

### **A note on portraying real-life experiences in a larp context:**

We are very aware that playing a larp cannot compare to the actual experience. The fear of being assaulted by nationalists or arrested by the government does not really translate into a larp of a few hours in a classroom.

What we are aiming for with *What Now?* is a small glimpse into the lived experiences of thousands of adults and children who are going through this ordeal right now. By engaging with some of the same dilemmas and situations refugees go through, travelling Europe in the immersive and participatory medium of role-playing and larp, we are sure that the participants will learn details and emotionally connect in a way that is impossible to do in the context of traditional classroom teaching or a guided tour, for example.

## What is larp

A larp (live-action role-playing game) is a form of role-playing game where the participants physically portray their characters. It can be described as theatre without an audience or script. The players pursue goals within a fictional setting while interacting with each other in character as a refugee. The outcome of player actions may be mediated by game rules. The most well-known type of larping is fantasy larping where you step into a world and portray humans, orcs and elves for example. In this larp, we will be much closer to our world, and the participants will take on the role of refugees. If you want to know more about educational larps like this one, just google “edularp” and you will find a lot of games and literature to dive into.

## The project *The Journey Today*

The Journey Today is about migrant journeys overland and by sea to Europe funded by the ERASMUS+ Programme. The project aims to increase awareness of the ever-increasing multiculturalism of Europe. We want to create awareness, as well as tolerance to our cultural diversity through analogue games and immersive video.

See more at [www.thejourney.today](http://www.thejourney.today)

Get in touch with us: [contact@thejourney.today](mailto:contact@thejourney.today)

## Credits

What Now is designed by **Participation | Design | Agency**, a Malmö-based boutique agency consulting with public sector and arts institutions and private companies in education, games, and entertainment. Get in touch with us: [bjarke@participation.design](mailto:bjarke@participation.design)

Graphic design is done by Impact Unified, a startup with a mission to make engaging mobile games with a huge impact. Get in touch with us: [contact@impactunified.com](mailto:contact@impactunified.com)

## Versions

There are two versions of the game. The print version and the box version. The print version is a series of PDFs that you need to print and prepare yourself. The box version comes with everything included. If you are interested in purchasing a box version and having it shipped to you, get in touch with us at [contact@thejourney.today](mailto:contact@thejourney.today) for pricing.

## Requirements

*What Now?* is a larp for 15–30 participants. It can be played by 7th graders and up. The larp requires the participants to understand basic written English, but can be played in any language. The larp needs to be run by 1–2 people depending on experience and will take about two hours including setup, briefing and a short time for reflection at the end.

### **You need the following:**

**The print-yourself version of *What Now?*:** This demands some preparation before running the larp. Numerous cards need to be cut out and passports need to be folded. You need to provide 4-8 traditional six-sided dice and 4-8 pens and blocks of paper depending on the number of participants.

**The box version:** Here all physical materials are included in the box except 4-8 pens and paper depending on the number of participants.

## Schedule

The proposed schedule is:

**15 min** – setup and preparation of the room.

**20 min** – participant briefing.

**60 min** – playing the larp.

**15 min** – reflection round.

**10 min** – clean-up.

This amounts to a total of 120 minutes. You can adjust the times as you see fit. It is possible to shorten the runtime of the larp to 40 minutes, but less is not recommended.

## Physical game elements

The game consists of the following elements. You might not need all the elements if you are fewer participants than 30. If you are more than 30 participants, you will need an extra version of the game.

### 40 Refugee Passports

This is the main document for participants. It is the character they are going to play. It contains a bio of the refugee and what starting items they have. The document also functions as the passport they will have to show at border crossings during the game.

### 30 Maps of Europe and How to Play

Here you have a map of Europe with the possible routes through Europe. Each border crossing is marked with a black dot and a number that shows the difficulty of crossing. On the back, you have a short description of how to play and all the rules of the game. There is also an overview of all the items you can get in the game.

### Item Cards

These yellow cards are all the items the refugees can have in the larp. Each character has some starting items listed in their Passport. They also get to pick three extra item cards on a first come, first served basis.

**N.B.** One card needs to be removed from the Item Card deck before starting and kept by the game runner. The card is the Schengen Visa Card.

### Goal Cards

These blue cards are the possible destinations for the refugees. At the beginning, the participants will draw a random card, which will be the destination the refugee is trying to reach.

### Event Cards

These green cards represent the random encounters you will have during the journey. Some are good and will make the journey easier, while others are bad and will make the journey a lot harder. In each round, the participants will draw one event card, do what it says on the card and put the card back in the pile unless stated otherwise.

### NPC Guides

In the game, there are three participants not starting as refugees but as NPCs (non-player characters). These are people and institutions the refugees will meet on their journey. The three NPCs are the Border Control, the NGO and the Human Trafficker. There are three documents with descriptions of the NPCs and what they need to do during the game. More on this later.

## What to print and cut for the print version

If you are using the print-yourself version downloaded from The Journey Now website, you need to print and cut all the above elements to be able to play the larp. It is necessary to be able to print on both sides of the paper, since the various elements have a front and a back.

1. Print the manual. It is always a good idea to print an extra as a backup.
2. Print the passports. Fold them, so the text is on the inside. There are 40 in total. If you are less than 30 participants, you only have to print 10 more than there are players.
3. Print the map/cheat sheet. You will need one for each participant, plus five extra as backups.
4. Print the three NPC guides. Again, it is good to print extras as backups.
5. Then print all the cards. Preparing these is the most work-intensive part of the preparation. You need to cut and sort the cards by type, and then shuffle the green Event and blue Goal cards. The Item Cards do not need to be shuffled.

## The setting of *What Now?*

As already described, *What Now?* is a larp about the experience of travelling through Europe as a refugee trying to reach friends or family. On this journey, you will have to make hard decisions that will determine if you reach your end goal, are arrested or something even worse. Not all is bad, though. You will meet kind and helpful people on your way. But not all refugees who try will reach their goal.

Europe in the larp is naturally a simplified one. We have tried to make a map of Europe that shows some of the various difficulties and opportunities you can meet. Bear in mind, the larp was made in 2022-2023. Maps and situations change, so the game might not reflect the situation as it is when you engage with the game.

## The goal of the larp

The goal of the larp is not to win. There are no winning conditions and there will not be a participant that is best at the game. Larp is a collaborative medium, and only by playing the larp together will the experience be as rewarding as possible. Remind the participants to take it slow, make sound decisions, and try to do their best to perform their character.

## Game flow overview

*What Now?* is loosely structured in-game rounds where each participant must do certain actions in order to play. A summary of the flow for a quick overview can be found on the back of the Europe maps for quick access. This is what the participants will do during the game.

The flow of *What Now?*

### Getting ready

1. You pick a passport (your character), then read the description of the refugee.
2. Pick a random blue Goal card. The city on the card is where you need to go.
3. Take the number of Item cards that are on your passport.
4. Pick 3 extra Item cards of your own choice.
5. Take a map/cheat sheet.

## Playing the game

6. Find travel buddies.
7. Play your actions.
8. Draw a random Event card.
9. Eat and drink
10. Find a place to sleep.
11. Continue the next round until you succeed or fail in reaching your goal.
12. Draw a new passport and start over.

At the end of this manual, you will have a full rundown of all the details of the list above.

## How to set up the larp

Please adjust this setup guide to fit your needs. It is best to have plenty of space, so all participants can talk without raising their voices. If you only have one classroom to play the larp setup the NPC stations in each corner to make it easier to hear each other. Have all the game materials in the last corner.

1. Set up three tables for the NPC stations. Put the NPC guides and requirements for each NPC on the table.
  - a. **NGO:** 10 Euro cards, Pen and paper and something to keep time. Could be a mobile or watch.
  - b. **Human Trafficker:** Something to keep the time, 6 Euro cards. Map of Europe.
  - c. **Border control:** A six-sided die and the border map.

A good way to set up this station is with two tables with less than one meter of space in between. This narrow passage represents the border control gate. The border police sit at one table and the space between the tables is where the refugee goes to cross the border. You can mark the floor with tape to symbolize the border crossing. Make sure there is room for the refugees to queue. Queuing is part of the design, as refugees have to queue a lot on their travels. If you are 25–30 participants, it is advisable to have two border controls, so the game doesn't slow down too much.
2. On a fourth table take all the remaining game elements and place them so it is easy for the participants to locate.
  - a. Place the passports in a few piles.
  - b. Take the yellow Item cards and sort them by type. Place them face up so it is easy for the participants to find what they need.
    - i. Take the Mobile, Euro, Sleeping Gear, Family Jewels and Food and Water and place them for themselves. These are the starter items in the passports.
    - ii. Take the rest of the Item cards and place them in piles.
    - iii. Remove the Schengen Visa Card as this cannot be picked by the participants but only gained during play.
  - c. Take the green Event Cards, shuffle them and place them in a pile.
  - d. Take the blue Goals Cards, shuffle them and place them in a pile.
3. Make space so the participants can mingle.

You are now ready to run the larp.

## Briefing of participants and runtime management

If you have never run a larp before, don't worry. Follow the steps below and you will do fine. It is a good idea to read this part of the manual a few times before you run the larp to familiarise yourself with the structure and wording. You can read the text below in italics to the participants during the briefing, or come up with your own wording. It is recommended to follow the structure of the briefing as it gives the right information at the right time.

1. **Gather the participants** and tell them that they are about to play a larp. Explain what a larp is and that it will take approximately two hours.
  - a. **Introduction.** *Welcome to What Now? It is a larp about the experience of travelling through Europe as a refugee trying to reach friends or family. On this journey, you will have to make hard decisions that will determine if you reach your end goal, are arrested or something even worse. Not all is bad, though. You will meet kind and helpful people on your way. But not all refugees who try will reach their goal.*
  - b. **The Goal.** *You cannot win this game. No points are counted and there will not be a participant that is best at the game. Larp is a collaborative experience, and only by playing the larp together will the experience be as rewarding as possible. Remember to take it slow, make smart decisions and do your best to act as your character.*
  - c. **NPCs (Non-Player Characters).** You should pick three participants who will start as the border guard, NGO and human trafficker and tell them that they will be briefed as soon as you start the first round. They can choose to play refugees later on if they want to, swapping roles with the first participants to either succeed or fail in reaching their destination city. They can still take a passport and map now so they can follow the rules briefing.
2. **Set the world and the stakes.**
  - a. *Welcome to Europe. You will be playing a young refugee who has just arrived in Greece by a small boat crossing the Mediterranean. It was scary and cold and you have never been so terrified in your life. You were in the middle of the ocean with strangers in a tiny boat that looked like it would sink at any moment. You hope never to do that again.*
  - b. *Each of you will soon pick a passport with a character description. Your goal is to reach a friend or family member somewhere in Europe. Where that is and who you will play, you will find out in a short while.*
3. **Describe the rules of the game.** Here it is important to be short and clear. There are quite a few rules but the participants only have to use a few rules at a time. And they will have a How to Play rules overview on the back of their map.

You don't have to brief everyone on the specific NPC rules. You can go through them with the participants playing them when the other players are looking for travel companions.

- a. *I will now go through the rules of the game. You don't have to remember everything now. You will have a description of all the rules and how to play. (Show them the back of the map with the rules.) But please pay attention.*

4. **The game runs as follows:**

- i. **Passport:** *You start by picking a random passport. This is your character. In the passport is a description of you, what items you have brought on your journey and if you have someone here that you know. (Let them pick a passport but tell them not to open it yet)*
- ii. **Goal Card (Blue):** *Then you pick a random blue card. This is the city you are trying to reach. It could be Paris, Berlin or somewhere else. The reason you are going there is that you know someone. Could be an aunt or a friend. (You can let them pick from the pile or hand out the cards randomly)*
- iii. **Read the character:** *Now you have 3 minutes to read the passport and the blue card. During the game, you will be asked about details so you better be sure you remember the most important information. If you don't then people might think you are lying.*  
*(Let them read the character. Remind them about the time when there is a minute left)*
- iv. **Map and How to Play:** *Next you will get a map with the possible routes you can go to your destination city (Give them the map). You start at the Greek Island Lesbos, marked with a red and black dot. ●*  
*If you turn the map over you will have a summary of how to play the game to the left and to the right you will have a description of all the Item cards that you can get.*
- v. **Starter Item Cards (Yellow):** *Now you will go and get your starter item cards that are mentioned in the passport. The cards are the yellow ones. When you are done then you come back here.*
- vi. **Extra three starter items:** *You now get to pick three extra items. You can choose freely among the items that are left. Some are more useful than others. It all depends on the strategy you choose. You have 2 minutes to choose. Be quick!*

b. **The game round**

- i. *You now have your character, all the items you start with and where you need to go. The next step is to plan your journey. For you to be able to do that I will explain what you need to do in each round and how to read the map.*
- ii. **Rounds and actions.** *The game is made up of rounds, each round being a day in the life of your refugee. In each round, you have 2 actions. You decide what you want to do with those 2 actions. You can either cross a border via the border guard or hire a human trafficker to take you across a border illegally.*

c. **Map explanation and border crossing die roll**

- i. **Start, borders and routes.** *You have just crossed the Mediterranean Ocean in a small boat and need to go through Europe to your destination city. Look at your map. As said before you start at the Greek island Lesbos which is marked by a red dot ●.*  
*On the map, you can see the possible routes you can take. To get to your city*



*you need to cross many borders. Every time there is a black dot ⊙, it means you are at a border.*

- ii. **Border Crossing.** *To cross a border you need to go to the border guard and show your passport. (Point to the Border Guard post) You will go there, stand in line and when it is your turn you will show your passport to the Border Guard who might ask you some questions. Could be about what your name is and where you are going for example. The Border Guard will ask you what border you want to cross and you show them on the map.*
- iii. **Border crossing die roll.** *On the map, you can see there is a number with a plus next to it. The higher the number, the more difficult it is to cross the border. There is always a chance you can cross but some borders are very hard. Often refugees are denied entry at borders without reason. Or maybe your papers are not in order. This is represented by a die roll.*

*So if the number is 3+ for example then the border guard must roll 3 or higher to let you cross. If the number is 5+ then the roll has to be a 5 or a 6 to let you cross. If you are travelling with other refugees, they also need to see if they get through. So just because you are let through it doesn't mean they are too.*

- d. **Random Events.** *When you have used your actions, you will go and draw one green event card. This is a thing that happens on your journey that day. It can be a good thing or it can be a bad one. Maybe you get help from a stranger or the local police harrasses you. Do what it says on the card. Some cards are played right away, while others you get to decide when to use them.*
- e. **Food and Water.** *Now you need food and water. You have all started with some food and water. Every round you will need to spend one Food and Water card. If you do not have any left you need to get some or the game is over for your refugee. You can either get some from your friends or you can buy, steal or beg for food.*
  - i. **Buy.** *You can buy Food and Water. It will cost you 1 Euro card for 2 Food and Water cards*
  - ii. **Steal.** *You can steal but there is a chance you get caught. For every Food and Water card, you need to roll a die and if you roll a 5 or a 6 you are arrested and the journey ends.*
  - iii. **Beg.** *If you choose to beg for food you will spend a lot of time begging on the streets of where you are. This means that you will get 1 Food and Water card for free but in the next round, you will only have 1 action because it took a long time to beg.*
- f. **Sleep.** *Finally, you need to find a place to sleep. Again you have different options. You can buy a bed in a hostel, sleep somewhere outside or you can get the NGO to help you with a place to sleep.*
  - i. **Buy.** *To buy a bed in a hostel it will cost you 1 Euro Card.*
  - ii. **Outside.** *If you have sleeping gear, you can sleep outside without any penalties. If you do not have sleeping gear, you only have one action next round because you have been cold during the night and are tired.*



- g. If you could change something about how this works, what would you change?

This concludes the manual for this larp. Below is the 'How to play' guide that is also on the back of the map for easy reference.

One final thing. If you take photos while running the larp we would love for you to share the photos on Instagram with the hashtag #TheJourneyToday.

Hope you have a great experience!

## How to Play Guide

### Before game starts

1. Pick 1 Passport. This is your character.
2. Pick 1 Goal Card. This is where you want to go.
3. Take the starting items you have in your Passport.
4. Now pick 3 extra Item Cards of your choice.
5. Find people to travel with. It is safer to travel together.
6. Make a travel strategy.

### During the game

#### 1. You have 2 actions per round before you need to eat and sleep

The following things cost 1 action:

1. Crossing a border.
2. Paying a Human Trafficker to take you across the border illegally.

#### 2. How to cross a border

1. **Border Crossing:** Go to the border police and show your passport. The difficulty of making it across is shown on the map.
2. **Illegal crossing:** Climb through the border fence. The difficulty is 1 higher than at the border.
3. **Human Trafficker:** Pay Euro Cards to cross.  
Prices are for up to 4 Refugees:  
2+ border cost 4 Euro Cards.  
3+ border cost 6 Euro Cards.  
4+ border cost 8 Euro Cards.  
5+ border cost 10 Euro Cards.

#### 3. When you have used your actions, you will draw 1 Random Event card.

This can be good or bad for you.

#### 4. Now you need food and water. Spend 1 Food and Water card.

If you have no Food and Water cards, you can get cards in the following three ways.

1. **Pay for food:** Use 1 Euro Item to get 2 Food and Water cards.
2. **Steal 1 food:** Free but caught on 5+. If caught, you are arrested and your journey ends.
3. **Beg for food:** You can beg on the street and gain 1 Food and Water card, but you will lose 1 action next round because it takes time.

#### 5. Finally, you need a place to sleep

There are three ways to sleep:

##### 1. Sleep outside

No penalties if you have the Sleeping Gear card. If no Sleeping Gear, you freeze and lose 1 action next round.

Roll a die. On a roll of 1, you are robbed during the night.

1. If you are alone, you lose all your items except your money.
2. If you are 2 people, you lose half your items each except your money.
3. If you are 3 people, you lose 1 item each.

##### 2. Pay for a Hostel

Cost 1 Euro card per night per person.

##### 3. NGO helps you to a bed

Free, but only a few spots every night. Talk to the NGO for help.

#### 6. Start next round

7. If you run out of food and water or get arrested, your journey ends, and you need to draw a new character and start over.



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