

Gaming for Social Inclusion and Civic Participation: the INGAME project

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Abstract— Throughout the European Union, there is a particular need for practices that would provide educators with the devices necessary to create civic engagement locally and supra-nationally responsive. The INGAME project focuses on enhancing the acquisition of social and civic competences, fostering knowledge, understanding and ownership of values and fundamental rights with a strong focus on online games and digital skills for the development of civic literacy and skills of young adults. It is placed under the Erasmus + KA3 Social inclusion and common values: the contribution in education and training.

Keywords— social inclusion, civic participation, EU Citizenship, informal learning, educational online game, game-based learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the European Union (EU), there is a particular need for practices that would provide educators with the devices necessary to create civic engagement locally and supra-nationally responsive. Notably, the OECD report, "How's Life? Measuring Well-being - Civic engagement and governance" [1] identified declining levels of Civic Engagement among EU citizens, linked to limited accessibility to Civic Education and lack of knowledge of the EU civic environment by its citizens. The Internet and the World Wide Web offer an online structure for citizens through cyberspace where every person has the opportunity to act. Internet use in Europe is increasing, especially among younger users and at the same time, youth are, habitually, amongst the most disengaged groups of citizens. However, this generation of young adults, if given the chance and the appropriate motivation for involvement in civics, they could

also become the example and even educators of younger children [2].

Young people have the ability and the will to contribute as a group to the sustainability of their environment, as well as the knowledge to participate in decisions related to the digital society [3]. Moreover, promoting the participation of young people in political and social decision-making is essential to make societies more democratic and inclusive [4].

In this context, the INGAME project (Gaming for Social Inclusion and Civic Participation: A holistic approach for a cultural shift in education and policy) maintains transformative potential facilitating engagement with the wider community both at the local and at the EU level in a most innovative manner since some of the most successful means for building knowledge, skills and the values required for democratic citizenship relate to the growth of youth's abilities to practice civic problem-solving and engage in cooperative, project-based learning and simulations of real-world conditions [5]. Thus, we aspire to integrate the potential of digitally-mediated social environments into the fostering of innovative learning communities for the youth. Table 1 presents some details about the project.

In particular, INGAME involves developing an innovative information technology tool, its associated services and maintenance, the dissemination of results on pedagogical practices for fostering knowledge and promoting common civil values among young adult learners. This tool, an educational online game, will be distinguished by its attractiveness and high accessibility on the Internet. Moreover, our network's sound background and experience with theories of social learning and action, gender equality,

intercultural communication, civic education as well as our cutting-edge information technology experts can greatly sustain the design and development of this transformative, participatory game as well as expand the prospects of digitally-mediated social interaction for sustainable learning in the future.

This work is set out in five sections. The second section describes the institutions involved in the project. The third section presents the main characteristics of the project. The fourth section describes the main results of the project. Finally, the last section summarises the main conclusions.

TABLE I. PROJECTS DETAILS

Title	Gaming for Social Inclusion and Civic Participation – A holistic approach for a cultural shift in education and policy
Acronym	INGAME
Funding Entity	European Union
Call	Erasmus + KA3 Call: Social inclusion and common values: the contribution in the field of education and training - EACEA-21-2018
Reference	612166-ES-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN
Project leader	Francisco J. García-Peñalvo
Coordinator	University of Salamanca (Spain)
Partners	Asociatia Romana de Literatie (Romania) Educational Association Anatolia (Greece) Kauno Technologijos Universitetas (Lithuania) Danmar Computers (Poland) ZB&V BV – Zien, Beoordelen & Verklaren (Netherlands) Center for Social Innovation (Cyprus) Oxfam Italia Onlus (Italy) Symplexis (Greece)
Budget	620.172,00 €
Start date	15/01/2020
End date	14/01/2023
Web	https://ingame.erasmus.site/

II. THE CONSORTIUM

The project is coordinated by the University of Salamanca (USAL) through the GRIAL Research Group [6], an official and stable research group of the USAL and part of the Research Institute of Educational Sciences (IUCE)

The consortium consists of nine European institutions from eight European countries, covering a wide range of expertise and experience related to the scope and aims of the INGAME project, having a Pan-European outreach in their activities.

- University of Salamanca (USAL), one of the oldest Universities in Europe, is an experienced organisation in managing and evaluating international projects.
- Asociatia Romana de Literatie (RLA) is a nongovernment educational organisation initiated and functioning according to the Romanian and EU rules. ARL mission statement is to promote, develop and sustain educational programs and projects that lead to better educational services offered by learning organisations in Romania and abroad.

- Educational Association Anatolia is a private, non-for-profit educational institution imbued with the highest ideals of Greek, American and European education.
- Kaunas University of Technology (KUT) is the largest technical university in Lithuania.
- Danmar Computers LLC (DANMAR) is a private company providing vocational training and ICT solutions for various professional sectors and all age groups.
- Zien, Beoordelen & Verklaren (ZB&V) has developed out of a full-service advertising agency (established in 1994) and since 2008 has chosen a more specialised approach: storytelling in all its facets for individuals (e.g. personal stories/narratives), communities in general, organisations and teams.
- Center for Social Innovation (CSI), is a Research and Development organisation that focuses on fostering social innovation that can bring about a positive change to local, national, regional and global contexts.
- Oxfam Italia (OIT) is an Italian Development NGO, non-profit association, full member of the International Confederation Oxfam which involved 20 organisations networked together in more than 90 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from injustice of poverty.
- Symplexis is a non-for-profit organisation, aiming at elevating social cohesion, serving the modern needs of populations at risk of social exclusion and promoting human rights.

Furthermore, the consortium is completed with a set of 44 associated partners that do not receive funding for participating in the project but play an essential role in being multipliers.

III. THE PROJECT

A. The objectives

The project's main objective is to develop and implement innovative game-based methods as an informal education practice to cultivate civic values.

The project thus addresses one of the general objectives of the European Commission aiming at developing and implementing innovative methods and practices to foster inclusive education and promote common civil values. At the same time, it also addresses specific objectives, namely one that focuses on enhancing the acquisition of social and civic competences, and another on fostering knowledge, understanding and ownership of values and fundamental rights. The aims of the proposed project reflect the European Commission strategy in this area in the following ways:

- To facilitate the growth of the European Union as an advanced knowledge-based society and enhance social cohesion.
- To advance the development of active citizenship, intercultural understanding, gender equality and personal fulfilment in the member states.

- To promote the acquisition of civic competences and a sense of citizenship based on mutual appreciation, respect for human rights, other people and cultures as well as democratic rules, and the acceptance of cultural diversity.
- To observe, identify and analyse good practice in inclusive education and create a novel platform for the broader use of young adult learning practices across member states.
- To support the development of innovative ICT-based content and services with a practical focus on common values.
- To promote an awareness of the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity within Europe, as well as of the need to combat racism, prejudice and xenophobia.
- To make provision for learners with special needs, and in particular by helping to promote their integration into mainstream education and training.
- To promote equality between men and women.

- To contribute to combating all forms of discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

B. The Workplan

The work is organised into six Work Packages linked to achieving the objectives of the project (Fig. 1):

- WP1: Project Management and Quality Assurance. It is focused on ensuring the successful implementation of the project across the funding period.
- WP2: Mapping the INGAME Ecosystem of Needs, Practices Target Groups, Stakeholders and Mode of Work.
- WP3: INGAME Educational Design, Storyline and Narrative.
- WP4: INGAME Digital Play Environment Programming, Coding and Development.
- WP5: Capacity building of educators and stakeholders.
- WP6: Awareness Campaign, dissemination and exploitation. A set of cross-cut actions to ensure the transfer of knowledge produced within the project.

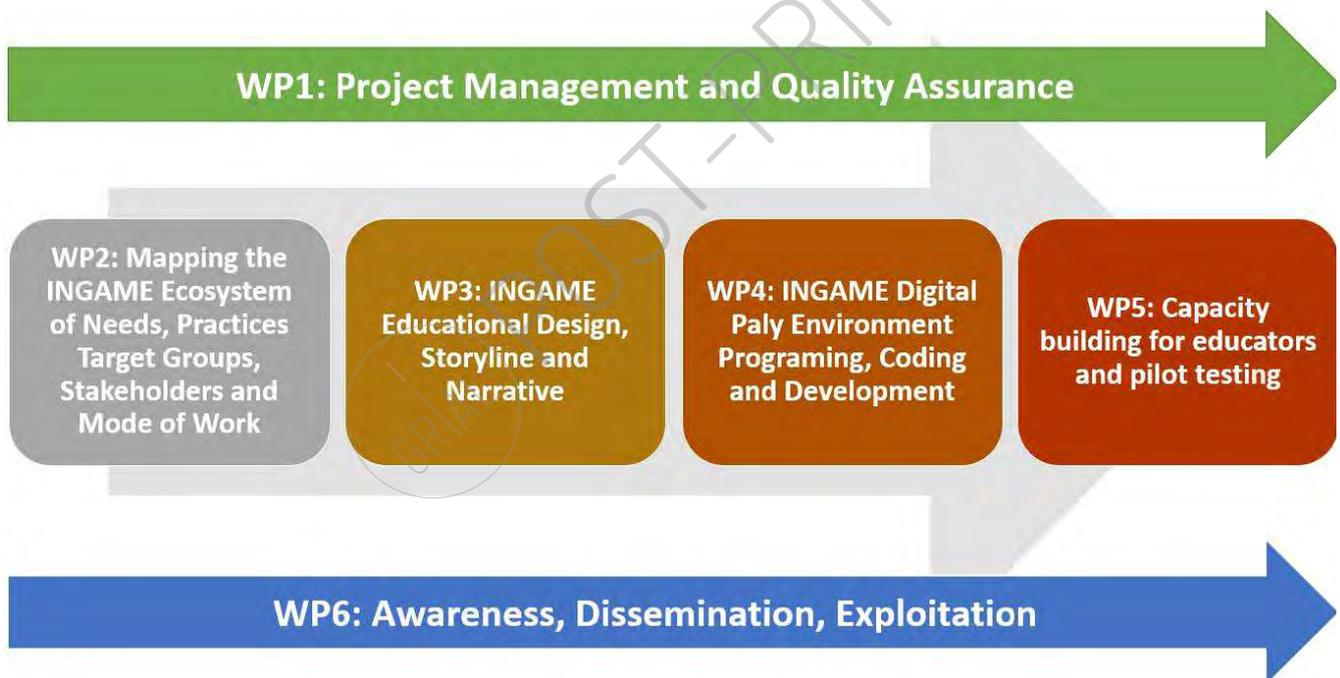


Fig. 1. Workplan.

IV. RESULTS

A. Mapping the INGAME Ecosystem of Needs, Practices Target Groups, Stakeholders and Mode of Work

The output refers to the Transnational INGAME Ecosystem Mapping Report which will be developed by compiling the INGAME National Reports and the EU Report developed by the project partners. The specific objectives under this activity are the following:

- To conduct a literature review on the pedagogical models for fostering awareness on issues related to

social inclusion, gender equality and civic participation for youth developing intercultural skills and positive attitudes with the use of games in both formal and informal learning environments for youth.

- To perform an in-depth analysis and evaluation of the existing games in the field of social inclusion, gender equality and civic participation in order to decide upon their appropriateness for learning via role playing. Part of this activity is the analysis of the limited findings available so far regarding

comparative approaches and the utilisation of ICT within this field.

- To investigate the learning and training needs of both the target groups and the stakeholders (EU Young Citizens, Training Providers, Universities, Volunteer Organizations, Policy Makers and Public Institutions) through focus groups and questionnaires.
- To analyse data and provide suggestions, recommendations, and guidelines for the development of a user-friendly, adaptable and widely accessible online game on awareness-raising on civic participation, social inclusion and gender equality among others.
- To develop the initial framework of recommendations to be provided to decision-makers at national, regional and European level.

B. *INGAME Educational Design, Storyline and Narrative*

This output encompasses the *INGAME* Educational Design, Storyline and Narrative of the game and the overall content for fostering EU citizens' positive attitudes towards civic participation, social inclusion, gender equality, developing intercultural skills and competencies.

The game storyboards and content outline will be divided into thematic topics comprised of sections with specific learning objectives, learning activities, related learning material and tools based on the philosophy of adventure and/or puzzle games.

C. *INGAME Digital Play Environment Programming, Coding and Development*

This result aims to develop the *INGAME* technological infrastructure in the software, where the game will run. It is expected that the game platform will be user friendly, interactive and attractive, while it will be available through the project's website. The game will also be developed to run on mobile platforms of smartphones and PDAs. In addition, the *INGAME* software will provide the opportunity for communication among the users; it will be linked with social media, while the *INGAME* Trainers and Policy Resources Manual (digital flip book) will be incorporated into the game's features. The technological infrastructure will be built following good practices identified in the mapping.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The *INGAME* project has a strong focus on online games and digital skills to develop civil literacy and skills of young

adults. This is a new area of skills development that will be fully developed and provided through sophisticated ICT tools, deploying the latest evolutions in educational technology by building on the umbrella skills of civic engagement through online gaming.

INGAME will, directly and indirectly, improve the digital, language, reading, communication and collaboration skills of its users and will also introduce and integrate gaming as a tool and method, specifically those relating to civic literacy and pedagogy. The innovative integration of digital technologies / serious gaming in educational practices shall motivate users for informal, out-of-classroom learning and civic engagement. The game's overall value will be to enhance critical reflection on social and political circumstances through simulated experiences, build skills, and stimulate interest for collective engagement with the wider community both at the local and at the EU level.

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