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**INGAME**  
Gaming for Social Inclusion and Civic Participation

# INGAME

**INGAME – Gaming for Social Inclusion and Civic Participation – A holistic approach for acultural shift in education and policy**

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## INGAME Transnational Report

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# 1. Introduction

This report is part of the INGAME project (Gaming for Social Inclusion and Civic Participation - A holistic approach for a cultural shift in education and policy) funded by the EU and carried out by a consortium of 9 organisations from EU countries - Spain, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Romania, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Poland.

The project aims to increase the skills and civic participation of young adults aged between 18 and 35 by using an online game called INGAME. This game intends to give users the opportunity to learn from the simulated experience by improving critical thinking about social and political circumstances, building new skills and stimulating interest in collective action.

This Report will describe and analyse the main results of the research carried out in the countries that make up the partnership and in the wider European context. In particular, the research methodology has seen the implementation of two phases, a desk-based research conducted by all partner organisations through Literature Review and a field-based research conducted in each country through online questionnaires.

The desk-research concerned the analysis of existing policies, studies, projects aimed at promoting the civic participation of young adults, social inclusion and gender equality, both in general and in relation to the use of new technologies. Increasing the extent of participation also means promoting social inclusion, especially of those people most at risk of marginalisation and discrimination. New digital technologies enable people to overcome physical barriers, to access information and knowledge, to connect with others, to have and give voice, and thus to participate. In this context, online games, increase this potential, allow people to immerse themselves in scenarios and settings that are difficult to represent in reality and thus to put themselves "in the shoes of others", to be protagonists. Video games and, in particular, serious games<sup>1</sup>, offer a new way of transmitting the concepts of integration and inclusion, educating people to understanding and diversity. They manage to involve people more, to make them live the stories. "In a game, all players are equal. No prior knowledge is necessary, so anyone can participate"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Serious games are games that have another purpose besides entertainment. They are used to promote learning and behavior change. The power of serious games is that they are entertaining, engaging and immersive. Serious games combine learning strategies, knowledge and structures, and game elements to teach specific skills, knowledge and attitudes. <https://grendelgames.com/what-are-serious-games/>

<sup>2</sup>Lisa Hu from the Netherlands report.

In the first research phase, the partners identified existing good practices in the use of serious games to promote civic engagement, social inclusion and gender equality for young people. The objective of this analysis was to identify gaps and issues related to existing practices, which INGAME can fill or deepen.

Field-based research, on the other hand, saw the creation in each country of three online questionnaires, two addressed to two distinct groups of young adults aged between 18 and 35 years and one addressed to stakeholders<sup>3</sup>.

With the questionnaires, we tried to explore the degree of civic participation of young people, how widespread the knowledge and use of gamification in education and serious games is among young people and stakeholders; what are the recorded needs of the target group and stakeholders in the partner countries; how to integrate game-based learning into stakeholders' activities.

This report will be structured, therefore, in two parts: in the first one, the results of the desk-based research in each country and at European level will be reported and in the second one the results of the three online questionnaires will be related and described.

In conclusion, the suggestions of the interviewed young people and stakeholders for the future development of INGAME will be described, so that with this game we can respond as much as possible to their needs and expectations.

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<sup>3</sup>The project is directly addressed to EU young citizens (18-35). The project holders are: Youth training institutions, Higher Education Institutions, Research and Development Centres, Public Institutions and Social Services, Local Authorities, Local Community Groups and Authorities, Youth Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, Professional Networks, Policy Makers, International Organizations, EU Bodies. The project is expected to particular focus on two important stakeholders: Policy makers at local, national and European Level, research and training community in social inclusion/civic participation/ pedagogy/educational technology.

## 2. Key findings from Desk Research: the national and European contexts

### 2.1. The civic engagement of young people: policies and initiatives

The issue of young people's participation and commitment mainly concerns the complex and often multi-faceted relationship between civil society and institutions. If there is a government commitment to solidarity and assistance, there is of course a greater commitment on the part of citizens and young people.

In **Italy**, as in the rest of Europe, there has been a significant decrease in the civic and political participation of young people in recent years (Istat, 2017). In 2019, the *National Youth Council*, the body representing young people, was established with the aim of ensuring and increasing their participation in the civil and political life of the country, promoting their active citizenship and supporting the activities of youth associations.

However, it is important to underline that this decrease in participation should not be interpreted as a general lack of interest of young people in politics and society, but as a loss of interest and confidence in the Italian party system.

Young people are experiencing unconventional forms of participation. Their civic engagement is mainly through new technologies. The Internet, for example, offers young people the possibility to engage in voluntary activities, to support campaigns even beyond the borders of their own community and country, to have the possibility to create a wider change.

It is important to talk about civic engagement in schools. In Italy, with the entry into force of Law no. 92 of 20 August 2019, from 2020, the introduction of compulsory teaching of civic and environmental education in the first and second cycle of education has been envisaged.

Civic engagement in **Greece** is closely linked to the evolution of the third sector (civil society) and volunteering, which despite its origin in the principles of democratization and solidarity, so far remains very weak at national level. It is characteristic that, to date, there are no reliable data on the number of third sector organizations in Greece, the number of volunteers and their profile, their geographical spread and other key issues that could provide a clearer picture of civic engagement trends in the country.

In recent decades, civic engagement activities and interventions have increased thanks to the funding opportunities offered to NGOs/CSOs by donors and in particular by the European Commission.

However, a strong civic education policy and mentality is still lacking and there is still a close link between civil society and political interest (in the sense of institutionalised opportunities for civic engagement and participation). Education plays a key role in the political socialisation and civic education of children in Greece, yet the question remains whether the current education system has the capacity to train conscientious and active citizens.

Among the initiatives developed, we have: the project "**Responsible Digital Citizenship**"<sup>4</sup>, presented in Greece by a private public school in Greater Athens (city of Rafina). The specific project aimed at improving digital citizenship and the skills of students and teachers using game-based learning technologies in line with different components of the digital citizenship framework in Greece and Europe.

According to the Diagnosis on the situation and opinions of young people in **Spain** contained in the Youth Strategy 2020<sup>5</sup>, the articulation of the forms of social and political participation of young people takes place mainly through voting. It is the only action that stands out in percentage terms for the majority of the group, taken globally, which rises to 63% in the over-18 age group. In addition to voting, between 23% and 30% of young people say they took part in a strike (27%), signed protest petitions (26%) and took part in allowed demonstrations (22%). The tools that young people use to learn about current affairs have evolved from traditional and mass media such as television, the press or radio, and one in two young people in Spain currently use the Internet as their primary source of information. And four out of ten, it is reported mainly through social networks. It is worth highlighting the incorporation of **virtual methods of political participation** (forums and discussions on the internet, sending or exchanging messages via mobile phone or email ...).

In 2014, the **Romanian** government defined a strategy for young people called *National Youth Strategy 2014-2020*, which is still in force. In this official document there is a list of legal documents concerning the rights of young people in the Romanian context.

As in Greece, there are no centralised data on civic participation of pupils, young people or the general population in Romania: activities have been carried out on time mainly with the support of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and sometimes with European financial support.

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<sup>4</sup><https://digital-citizenship.org/it/home/>

<sup>5</sup> *Estrategia Juventud 2020*, approved by the Council of Ministers, 12 September 2014. This Strategy aims to promote policies and services for young people in areas such as employment, participation, youth associations, volunteering, values for living together, etc.

The participation of members of vulnerable groups in voluntary activities is almost non-existent and is not encouraged by the current legislative framework. The level of tolerance for vulnerable groups has increased significantly in recent years, but discrimination continues to contribute to the social exclusion of these groups.

According to the *Civil Society Institute* in **Lithuania**, citizens' participation in civic activities has decreased during the past year and almost three quarters of people do not belong to any kind of organisation.

Those who made a civil commitment during 2019 did so through: charitable donations (39% of respondents involved), voluntary environmental cleanliness (32%) and commitment to the actions of local communities (26%). However, participation in these activities has been steadily decreasing over the last decade. Compared to 2012, the number of people donating to charity has decreased by 9%, participation in voluntary environmental clean-up has decreased by 22% and local community engagement has decreased by 11%. 2019 saw an increase in only one type of civic activity: the signing of petitions online (23%) and offline (13%). Commitment to all other activities showed a slight decline or fluctuated within the margin of statistical error. Participation in civic organisations and movements remained remarkably stable (8%).

**Poland** has one of the lowest levels of civil society participation in terms of content, most NGOs (almost 40%) are active in the leisure sphere, less than 23% in the cultural sphere, about 10% in education and social sphere and 6% in regional development. Only 1.8% of NGOs deal with political and human rights issues.

The biggest obstacle to building civil society is the poor financial situation. The main sources of funding, in addition to voluntary contributions, are public funds, which account for almost 36%. The share of public funds supporting civil society is two or three times lower than in Western European countries.

According to a survey conducted by CBOS in 2019, 68% of adult Poles did not carry out civic social activities. It is also worth noting that more often than others, respondents aged between 35-44 years (40%) and 18-24 years (39%) stated that they are active members of civic organisations.

The youngest respondents (18-24 years old), among them mainly pupils and students, stand out for the number of people active in sports associations, clubs and associations (14%), as well as in youth organisations such as scouting, clubs and student associations (9%) and in art, choir, dance or theatre groups (7%)".

Among the initiatives aimed at promoting greater citizen participation, using new technologies, we have Spaceu2019.

**Spaceu2019<sup>6</sup>** is an online tool for the 2019 European Parliament elections, designed for mobile EU citizens voting in their country of citizenship or residence. The tool is an interactive database that informs people about their electoral rights and allows them to compare the conditions and requirements for participation in the political process. The main objective of Spaceu2019 is to create an informed and active citizenship throughout Europe and to get citizens to vote.

In the **Netherlands** there has been an increasing social involvement of young people in response to an increasingly individualistic society (not only the Dutch one). Young people are more often donors, do more volunteering and are more often politically active (Halman, Sieben, 2011).

Sometimes citizens take action because they feel that the government has failed to fulfil certain tasks (such as climate targets); sometimes this involvement goes against the will of the government itself (e.g., in providing assistance to migrants who have exhausted all legal remedies). Dutch people taking part in collective actions have more confidence in others, but are less satisfied with the functioning of democracy.

There is also concern about the reduced political participation of some groups: citizens for whom democracy works less well, i.e., those who feel unrepresented, resign (Wennekers, Boelhouwer, 2019, p.225), i.e., naturalised (im)migrants, LGBTI, or people with disabilities.

To promote the participation and social inclusion of all, it is important to start with civic and social education. According to Slob's<sup>7</sup> new law proposal "Clarification of the assignment of citizenship in basic education", schools must promote "active citizenship and social cohesion", teaching pupils "the fundamental values of the democratic rule of law" as well as "social and civic competences" to participate in society. Social and civic education are important aspects of citizenship, including the transfer of values, the promotion of autonomy and independence. Coexistence with others is an important part of this.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://spaceu2019.eu/>

<sup>7</sup> Arie Slobis Minister of Primary- and secondary Education and Media.

An example of a project to promote citizen participation is **Democratic Challenge**<sup>8</sup>. A bottom-up experimentation programme involving the collection and support of experiments for the renewal of local democracy, through new and innovative forms. These include the democratic tools such as practical examples, handouts, training toolkits, studies, essays and checklists. Democratic challenge also provides the user with the Democratic Games (related to local democracy). What has been proposed is to map, facilitate, link concrete experiments in local democracy and learn from them.

**Cyprus** ranks 23rd among EU countries in terms of formal and informal volunteering, active citizenship of people aged 16 and over (Eurostat, 2015).

At the EU DG and EU Youth Conference in Cyprus entitled "Youth Participation and Social Inclusion", representatives of various youth organisations and government officials from EU Member States, candidate and other countries discussed how youth participation leads to the social inclusion of young people, with particular attention to young people with a migration background. The importance of participation of young people and youth organisations especially in the decision-making process was underlined as an important factor for the creation of inclusive, democratic and prosperous societies. In recent years, several initiatives have been implemented to promote youth participation. These include

the **EmpoweringYou** project, which addresses the alienation and social and political withdrawal of many young Europeans, the "Civic Participation" project, which aimed to lay the foundations for an established academic programme in Cyprus on the theme of Civic Participation, with the aim of providing students and professionals from CSOs in Cyprus and the Euro-Mediterranean region with theoretical understanding and practical knowledge in the field.

At a more general **European level**, a study on the situation and trends of youth participation among different groups of young people was presented by the European Commission in 2013, exploring the merits of various aspects of participation (SALTO Youth, 2014, p. 27). Today, young people's civic engagement is inseparable from the digital media landscape, and research suggests that the old frames they consider "online" and "offline" as completely separate experiences are inaccurate for young people today. Young people's digital civic engagement may be fairer than traditional forms of civic engagement, but this can only happen in contexts of widespread digital access (Cho & All, 2020, p. 6). Digital technologies remove barriers and promote communication at different levels. E-

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<sup>8</sup> [www.democraticchallenge.nl](http://www.democraticchallenge.nl)

participation is a means to promote the empowerment of young people and their active participation in democratic life.

With this objective, the YouthMetre project funded by the European Commission and coordinated by the European Association of Geographers, an NGO based in Belgium, with five partners located in different Member States of the European Union (EU), was born. The project is aimed at young people between 18 and 30 years old. The project allows young people to get in touch with policy makers to improve youth policies in local authorities, regions and European countries. YouthMetre creates an innovative tool that will give young people access, through a digital dashboard, to information on how their policy makers are working in different youth sectors. In addition, examples of good practice are presented to help authorities to improve their activities.

## 2.2.Social Inclusion

The project partners identified the main risk factors of social exclusion in different national contexts. The analysis showed that youth exclusion is often linked to lasting economic crises (Greece and Italy) or other structural factors (Lithuania and Poland).

In **Greece**, the long crisis has aggravated poverty and social exclusion, leading to a growing exclusion of young people from the labour market. This has caused an alarming increase in the phenomenon of **NEETs** (Not in Education, Employment or Training), to which, however, the Greek government has not given effective responses, instead implementing a policy of greater support for the needs of the elderly population as beneficiaries of national welfare, thus increasing the phenomenon of brain drain. Despite the fact that Greece is not ranked among the OECD countries with the worst performance in terms of income inequality or poverty, social exclusion is unusually high for an EU country (the percentage of Greeks at risk of poverty/social exclusion was 32% in 2018 according to the Greek Statistical Office- representing more than a third of the total population- while the EU-28 average for the same period was 22.5%). To respond to this situation, since the beginning of 2017, the government has implemented a minimum income guarantee programme called Social Solidarity Income (KEA)<sup>9</sup>.

Also in **Italy**, a sign of the difficulties encountered by young people is the high number of **NEETs**, young people who do not have or are not looking for work, do not study and are not engaged in training or professional updating activities. In 2018 almost 1 young Italian out of 4 aged between 15 and 34 years was in such conditions, with an incidence of NEET almost 4 percentage points higher than in 2005 (Maslennikov M., 2019). Among the factors involving a risk for young people to become NEET were (Agostini C., Sacconi T., 2020, p. 34): a disability, the female gender, a migration background, a low level of education. In Italy the number of NEETs is higher among girls and young people of foreign origin (16%). (Agostini C., Sacconi T., 2020, p. 37-38).

In order to provide answers to this category of young people, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies has launched the Youth Guarantee initiative, through which it implements guidance, education and training and job placement measures in support of young NEETs.

In **Cyprus**, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth of Cyprus manages the "Actions for Social and Educational Inclusion (DR.A.S.E.)". (EASEA, 2019). The main objective of this project is to

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<sup>9</sup>Hellenic Statistical Authority (2019). 2018 Survey on Income and Living Conditions. Press release risk of poverty 212018 Survey on Income and Living Conditions. Retrieved from the internet on April 3, 2020 from: [www.statistics.gr](http://www.statistics.gr) ' documents.

support the Cypriot population living below the poverty line or at risk of poverty and social exclusion; to improve learning outcomes; to reduce school failure and delinquency; and to strengthen social cohesion by reducing the risk of marginalisation and social exclusion. The Youth Board of Cyprus<sup>10</sup> funds groups of young people and youth centres for educational, entertainment and sports activities and the purchase of equipment for youth centres that aim to improve social inclusion and participation of young adults in Cyprus.

Other projects aiming at social inclusion are "The Stage for Social Inclusion", which focuses on the theme of social inclusion, providing support through theatre techniques (Mejzlik, 2019). The project "IEUME" ([www.ieume.com](http://www.ieume.com)) aims to support, through innovative educational tools, the integration process of people with a migration background.

The "SOCL@LL" project aims to generate a paradigm shift in the way schools and communities operate and cooperate to create innovative approaches for social inclusion. The emphasis is on the promotion of participatory and empowerment tools for the creation of creative and sustainable solutions designed by the main stakeholders within an entire school structure and through local social workshops, organised in a European network supported by a virtual platform.

These initiatives demonstrate that there have been attempts to address social inclusion issues, sometimes within gamified approaches. However, there is a lack of a comprehensive video game, implemented wholesale for general purposes or more specific objectives such as the social inclusion of young people in Cyprus.

In **Romania**, more than a third of young people are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, the highest rate in Europe. The employment rate among young people was 20.6% in 2014. More than this, the employment rate among young girls was 16.1%. In 2012, 16.8% of young Romanians were included in the **NEET** category- young people without any professional involvement.

One of the documents defining the fight against social exclusion and promotion of social inclusion is the JIM (Joint Document in the field of Social Inclusion - Join Inclusion Memorandum). It was developed by the Romanian government together with the European Commission in order to promote social inclusion and fight poverty in Europe by 2010. Social inclusion has become a national priority, especially after Romania's integration into the European Union. This has been achieved

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<sup>10</sup> <https://onek.org.cy/>

through various projects and strategies that have targeted people considered at risk. Among them, people belonging to the **Roma community** and in particular children. It must be considered that two out of ten Roma children do not go to school and the most common reason is the lack of financial resources. One in six Roma parents explains the children's low participation in school due to ethnic discrimination. More than 80% of Roma parents say they want at least secondary education for their children, but more than 75% of Roma children do not finish eight years of school. This is why national programmes have been set up to regulate early education, expanding the "*School After School*" and "*Second Chance*" programmes and launching programmes to improve the socio-economic situation of Roma communities.

The extent of social exclusion of young people in **Poland** against the background of the EU Member States puts Poland in an average position. The conditions that put the population in a state of social exclusion are residence in marginalised and poor regions (which hinders the exercise of fundamental rights and threatens their future), and disability, especially among young people. Young people with disabilities feel that they do not belong to the same community as their peers, which also affects their degree of participation.

On the educational level, in order to support these young people who demonstrate different types of exclusion, since 1 September 2011, Polish schools and other educational institutions have started to integrate a model for providing and organising psychological and pedagogical assistance to pupils and students, their parents and teachers (MEN 2010).

Together with Poland's accession to the European Union, new policies for the inclusion of young people at national level were introduced such as the State Youth Strategy 2003-2012 (with the aim of creating the right conditions for young people aged 15-25 to enable them to participate in social, cultural and political life on an equal footing with other social groups); the National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2020 and the National Long-term Development Strategy-Poland 2030.

In the **Netherlands**, migrants, in particular of Turkish or Moroccan communities, and people with disabilities are among the groups at highest risk of exclusion, stigmatization and discrimination<sup>11</sup>.

The Dutch report highlights the risks of social exclusion of transgender and LGBT people. The former occupies one of the lowest steps in the country's social structure. They occupy lower socio-economic positions than their compatriots and tend to be less wealthy and more exposed to the risk of absolute

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<sup>11</sup>When it comes to the aspect of 'discrimination', there is a distinction to be made between perceived discrimination and actual discrimination. Perception of discrimination is in itself sufficient to have an impact on people's behaviour and emotions.

poverty. The latter are more likely to experience disrespectful behavior and various forms of cyberbullying than heterosexual people. However, the use of new digital technologies among young people certainly contributes to the diffusion of information and new altruistic ideals: spatial, temporal and cultural distances are shortening, the perception of the need for ethics, coexistence and care for the planet is increasing.

The main challenges related to the social inclusion of young people in **Lithuania** are youth unemployment and labour market integration, non-formal education and youth entrepreneurship. Socially excluded young people usually come from socially vulnerable families, families whose parental rights were limited, orphanages, young people living in remote/rural areas, children of migrant workers and immigrants, children of ethnic minorities, young people with physical or mental disabilities and unemployed young people. Despite economic growth, rising household incomes and falling unemployment, indicators of inequality and poverty in Lithuania remain among the highest in the European Union and raise the greatest concerns. Improving general and youth social security and reducing social exclusion remain among the priorities of social policy. Lithuania is committed to strengthening the social inclusion of young people, especially those not working or studying, and to improving the protection of workers, including immigrants. Emphasis has been placed on increasing opportunities for young people furthest from the labour market to participate in the implementation of active inclusion measures. Services were planned for the activation of voluntary activities of young and elderly people, projects for the implementation of local employment initiatives, strengthening the skills of disabled people, socio-cultural services and labour market integration services.

In **Spain**, it was highlighted how the transformations introduced by the new technologies both in Western adult societies and in developing countries can have an impact on the young population, which has significantly different opportunities from those of previous generations. The rapid spread of information, communication and knowledge through the Internet and social networks has made it possible to overcome spatial, temporal and cultural distances.

In this context, it is encouraging to see that, in the face of so many changes, the altruistic ideal is still compatible with these times of pragmatism and accelerated technological change. The Youth Observatory (INJUVE Observatory) already sees the possibility that concepts such as "collective intelligence" and "collaborative intelligence" will be increasingly present among young people and that the perception of the need for ethics, coexistence and care for the planet will increase among them.

On 17 October 2019, on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, Eurostat published a report on the situation of poverty and social exclusion in the **European context**. The data show the picture of the situation and some trends in the phenomenon: in 2018, 109.2 million people, or 21.7% of the population of the European Union, were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Compared to the EU average, some population groups are more at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The most affected are women, children, young people, people with disabilities, the unemployed, single-parent families and those living alone, people with a lower level of education, people born in a country other than their country of residence, people without work and, in most Member States, those living in rural areas (EUROSTAT, 2019, p. 70). The situation of the non-EU population in the EU is particularly relevant in view of the growing need to respond to the influx of asylum seekers. People from non-EU countries are generally worse off than those living in their country of origin. In 2017, people living in the EU but born in a third country had a social exclusion rate of 38.3% (EUROSTAT, 2019). Young people in Europe are unable to realise their productive potential and are exposed to a higher risk of poverty or social exclusion. Youth unemployment increased by almost 8% compared to pre-2008 levels and stood at 20.3%. The new migration phenomena have brought with them several social inclusion challenges. Therefore, it is essential to work for the implementation of the rights of all young people in Europe, including the most excluded and marginalised. The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 aims to promote social inclusion especially of marginalised young people by providing legal protection and strengthening international legal instruments to combat all types of discrimination and incitement to hatred, recognising that young people are subject to multiple forms of discrimination. Furthermore, the Strategy believes that young people should be guaranteed access to information and knowledge of the spaces, opportunities and experiences available to them.

In conclusion, we can say that the analysis of the social inclusion dimension has led the partners to highlight the complexity of the issue, emphasizing the different factors of exclusion and, therefore, the subjects who are mostly at risk of marginalization. From this analysis, it emerges that young people are among the categories mostly at risk of exclusion, a risk that increases when other aspects such as gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin, socio-economic conditions and level of education are added to the young age.

Promoting inclusion also means allowing people to participate in the democratic processes of their country and more generally of the European community. This is precisely why it is necessary to develop projects, which in an innovative and effective way can respond to the needs of young people, include them, listen to them and thus show them that their participation is essential for the future of

Europe. A project such as the INGAME one, which exploits the potential of new technologies, succeeds in overcoming those barriers that are sometimes at the root of social exclusion.

## 2.3. Gender Equality

The issue of gender equality in the various contexts of the countries studied by the partners appears mostly homogeneous. In most countries, the area where inequality is most evident is in employment. In cases, as in Italy and Cyprus, there has been a gradual improvement in data on employment and social participation of women in the national context, although it is still far from achieving real equality. In **Italy**, for example, the Supreme Court<sup>12</sup> has often dealt with the issue of discrimination against women in the workplace and, in its ruling no. 14206 of June 5th 2013, it took the opportunity to strengthen the principle of equality expressed by the law, which expressly forbids workers from being treated differently on the basis of sex, for example, in assigning tasks or awarding qualifications, etc.

Although the law provides for the protection of women's rights and men's rights, discrimination continues to exist, and these rights are still denied.

Unlike Italy, the disparity between women and men in **Lithuania** is not so much in work as in the power sector (32.5 points) and time (50.6 points).

Also in Lithuania, legislation (Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men) prohibits any discrimination- direct or indirect- based on sex, including sexual harassment and an independent equal opportunities ombudsman has been appointed. Following recommendations by various professionals and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), several improvements were made to the Law on Equal Treatment (2005) and the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1998) in 2016. The amendments to the Equal Treatment Act (2005) include, firstly, prohibiting potential employers from asking jobseekers for information about their family situation, age (except where required by law), private life, family formation and attitudes to family planning. Third, equal opportunities for women and men in the purchase of goods and services must be guaranteed, including less favorable treatment of women due to pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding (except where required by law).

**Greece**, like Lithuania, is progressing very slowly towards gender equality compared to the EU-28 average (51.2 points compared to 67.4). This led the General Secretariat for Gender Equality of the Greek Ministry of the Interior to adopt, in 2016, the National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender

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<sup>12</sup> In Italy, the Supreme Court is at the top of the ordinary jurisdiction; one of the main functions that are conferred by the Basic Law on the Judiciary of 30 January 1941 no. 12 (art. 65) is to ensure "the exact observance and uniform interpretation of the law, the unity of the national objective law, compliance with the limits of the various jurisdictions."

Equality 2016-2020- which replaced the previous National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2010-2013- followed by the recent (on 26-3-2019) adoption of the new law number 4604 on substantial gender equality and sexual violence (SGBV).

In **Poland**, Article 33 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland enshrines the "Principle of equality between women and men"<sup>13</sup>. However, even here some gender inequalities persist, especially in access to self-employment and on the political front (out of 460 MEPs, only 131 are women, which is less than 28.5%). The OECD report "Entrepreneurship at a Glance 2017" indicates that there are 1,471 thousand self-employed men and 731 thousand self-employed women in Poland (date for 2016 or the nearest known date). This shows that self-employment is still the domain of men in Poland.

Poland manages and participates in many programmes and projects aimed at encouraging women's entrepreneurship and inviting women to undertake technical studies and to study scientific profiles.

In **Spain**, equality between women and men appears among the desirable social objectives for young people in Spain: the overwhelming majority believes that such equality makes society fairer and facilitates personal development.

According to a poll led by (2008) the Youth Institute (INJUVE) on Youth and Gender equality, the majority of young women have not perceived discrimination in the different social spheres in which they operate, although it should be noted that discrimination in the field of gender still persists in the society. In the country, gender-based violence appears as a social problem that generates a considerable number of victims among the female population.

Gender differences (men and women) are still large in the **Netherlands**. In particular, there is a difference in the time spent on paid work, which for men is around 33 hours a week and for women around 21 hours.

When we talk about equal treatment, we are referring to equal treatment for every human being, this also includes policies to promote equal treatment for LGBTI people. The current Dutch government has dedicated much attention to LGBTI emancipation in the coalition agreement (Rutte III Cabinet 2017), also addressing issues such as cyberbullying and victimisation, in general and specifically for LGBTI people (Van Beusekom, Kuyper, 2018, p.35).

The Dutch Minister of Education, speaking about gender equality and media influence, acknowledged that "choices made by girls, boys, men and women are still too often determined by external influences. There is too little diversity in the media. [...] Unbalanced representation and stereotyped images perpetuate specific ideas about gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity. They influence our

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<sup>13</sup> Dz.U.1997.78.483 - The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2nd April, 1997.

behaviour and opportunities in society and choices made by girls, boys, men and women are still too often determined by external influences"<sup>14</sup>. Also in education, girls and boys make choices based on stereotypes and therefore, they do not have the real possibility to choose the path of study or the job that best suits their talents. (Voortgangsrapportage Emancipatie, 2019, Minister Van Engelshoven). It is necessary to pay more attention to education in order to start, from an early age, an educational path based on equality and to eliminate stereotypes and thus bring about a real cultural change. In **Italy**, Law 119/2013 has moved in this direction by introducing an Action Plan against sexual and gender-based violence, which provides for the promotion of adequate training of school staff against violence and gender discrimination and the increase of awareness, information and training of students in order to prevent episodes of violence against women and gender discrimination.

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<sup>14</sup> Voortgangsrapportage Emancipatie, maart 2019 (pdf). Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap. Van Engelshoven is Minister of Education, Culture and Science. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-onderwijs-cultuur-en-wetenschap/documenten/rapporten/2019/03/14/voortgangsrapportage-emancipatie>.

## 2.4. Game based learning and serious games

One of the most innovative methods applied to education is gamification. It involves the use of game elements in learning environments to achieve better learning outcomes for students. The playful nature of this methodology encourages learning, as it generates a positive experience in the student, who learns while having fun. This reinforces students' motivation and commitment.

Currently, one of the most advanced tools in the educational landscape is serious games, able to combine play with educational elements. Their aim is to share, in a playful context, an effective and enjoyable training experience in which the user, and his/her choices, are at the centre of the game. In this part we want to analyse the applications of new technologies and online games to the educational/training context for young people and in the promotion of civic participation, social inclusion and gender equality in the countries that make up the partnership.

In both **Greece** and **Italy**, the use of online games in education is not yet very developed. In **Greece**, however, there are good examples developed in the private sector, mainly through the development of European projects, and not within the public education system. Although most teachers, educators and trainers see positively the integration of Web 2.0. technology in the school curriculum, most of them also point out the lack of willingness of the Greek system to achieve this in terms of infrastructure, pedagogical methodology and mentality.

Among the examples of projects developed in this field, the following project deserves a mention

*"I-Decide"*<sup>15</sup> which aims to promote evidence-based policy making through the development of an innovative game-based toolkit, accompanied by a relevant mobile application. The aim here is to eliminate inequalities in learning outcomes and marginalisation by supporting school leaders, school staff and policy makers to engage in a shared and inclusive decision-making process.

In **Romania**, the playful approach to education was introduced in 2008, exclusively to promote the inclusion of seniors in mainstream education. Subsequently, the institutional acceptance of play as an educational tool for integration and social inclusion has allowed the birth of programmes and projects that have extended the scope of application from children with cognitive disabilities to children of all disadvantaged categories. Game/play has therefore been seen as a general method of inclusion.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.idecide-project.eu/index.php/en/>

The project "*Let's be schoolmates*" (a programme supporting inclusive schooling and student-centred teaching in a multicultural environment, developed by the Children in Difficulty Foundation, Project No. 2018 - EY-PICR-R1- 0004, funded by Norwegian funds), generated a "Collection of games promoting inclusion" in 2019, aimed at teachers, specialists working in the field of psychoeducation and children.

There are many examples of games and projects that have developed the idea of gamification applied to education. Among them the project

"*ProActive: Encouraging teachers' creativity through game-based learning*" (505469- LLP- 1-2009-1-ES- KA3- KA3MP) can be considered one of the pioneers, especially since it provided the material "When educators become game creators. A guide to creative learning practices based on games".

As an application applied to training, we will mention in this context only a few examples like:

**ClassDojo**, a digital classroom management system, which gamifies the educational process.

<https://www.classdojo.com>

**Classcraft** is a gamification platform similar to World of Warcraft. Each student can choose a character, which can be a fighter, a magician or a therapist. If a student does a positive thing (answers a question well, helps colleagues, excels) they receive experience points. <http://www.classcraft.com>

**MinecraftEdu**- in this application, users can receive avatars with which they can create their own profile of the game character. <http://education.minecraft.net> and <http://minecrafteu.com>

In **Lithuania**, e-Inclusion issues are receiving increasing attention not only from state institutions but also from the private sector. The success of some e-Inclusion projects that can be used as examples of good practice in Lithuania usually lies in public-private partnership, bottom-up initiative and concrete solutions to e-Inclusion problems. However, government initiatives are even more in the form of conceptual and declaratory documents than real actions.

New technologies can support socio-economic inclusion processes for populations at risk of exclusion such as migrants, young people at risk, elderly people. In the study, *Digital Games for Empowerment and Inclusion*, it was highlighted how digital games are applied to issues of interest for social inclusion policy and to inform future policy options. Kaunas is the cradle of the Lithuanian gaming industry and the centre of gaming culture. Game developers and gamers have organised events such as the largest

gaming convention in the Baltic States "GameOn"<sup>16</sup>. During the GameOn event, teams working together develop and pilot games directly.

In **Cyprus**, the emergence of new technologies and their use by beneficiaries for purposes other than simple entertainment is in its cradle. Official sectors of the government have not yet approved video games, but instead support the idea that video games promote violence and are especially harmful to young people (e.g., the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus). For this reason, educational games that have been developed so far at national level mostly take the form of digital gamified activities. Furthermore, Cyprus has not yet developed video games that are thematically linked to social inclusion, gender equality and social participation; this gap underlines the need for a project like INGAME.

In **Poland**, the use of games as an educational method was included in early childhood education some time ago. According to a research entitled "Gamification in academic education - possibilities and limitations of its utilization in the student's education", conducted in 2016 at the University of Rzeszow, gamification can be a valuable method to build student involvement in the process of their education.

The *Powererplayergame*, for example, is an educational package that includes a strategy game, an online guide and materials for teachers. The main objective of the game is to introduce the concept of entrepreneurship developed according to the principles of sustainable development between 12-15 years old, to improve key competences and skills relevant to the labour market, to increase creativity and innovation in school education and to improve the educational outcomes of young people. Another project is *LezioniACTIVE e gamificaTion* for greater social inclusion. This project is aimed at young people and its main objective is to exchange experiences of interactive classroom activities, to improve the quality of education and to involve students in participation. The main themes of the project are social inclusion, diversity and peer learning. The project uses different teaching methods such as gamification, active lessons, street games and artistic activities.  
<https://www.erasmusactivate.com/>

The *project - Gamification*- Innovative solutions for social issues- instead, consists of a 7-day training course for youth workers and youth leaders from partner countries (Poland, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, Malta, Lithuania, United Kingdom and Czech Republic). The course aims to develop operational skills through learning innovative methods of social activation of young people, including gamification. The project has created a network of organisations using gamification in youth work

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<sup>16</sup> <https://gameon.lt/en/>

(also through the creation of "IDEA-KIT"), able to support each other and replicate good practices in different social contexts in Europe. <https://cetplatform.org/gamification/>

**Spain** is a country with a strong immersion in the use and consumption of ICT and the school system has (in particular public centres) significant technological investments.

Most young Spaniards already belong to a generation of digital natives, which makes them quite competent in the use of new technologies. However, according to EJE / LB2011, only 2.3% of young people use the internet at school, university or library. This implies that the country has a certain deficit in the professional, educational and occupational use of ICT.

According to Mar Chicharro Merayo's research in *Revista de estudios de juventud 106*, "La juventud en la pantalla" (2014), in 2012, 67.8% of young people confessed their passion and sympathy for the use of consoles and video games, showing a growing interest compared to previous years.

The use of serious games- and therefore video games whose purpose is not exclusively entertainment - has become increasingly popular in a wide group of professional sectors (education, health, defence, information, etc.) and has received considerable academic attention in recent years in Spain. As examples of serious games for empowerment and awareness of gender equality, Salvador Gómez García in *Revista de estudios de juventud 106*, analyses two products: Wonder City (NBC, 2013) and Half the Sky Movement: The Game (Frima Studio, 2013).

Since 2015 **Italy** has adopted Law 107/2015, which encourages the use of new technologies to increase students' skills, but the use of digital resources in school practice is not yet widespread. The recent health crisis and the need to develop distance learning have highlighted the need to develop innovative initiatives, using new technologies as a tool for training and inclusion.

Video games and gamification are new tools for education and learning. If well embedded in the curricular experience they can foster the development of problem solving, learning through doing, intensifying relationships. In Italy, thanks to the support of private individuals and NGOs, the use of such tools has started to spread in schools.

One example is **Maggie. The treasure of Sehat**<sup>17</sup>. The game was created to tackle important mathematical issues. Maggie is not a scientist and to continue the adventure she must acquire specific scientific skills. In this way the most important concepts are presented in a non-invasive way, becoming an engaging part of the story without distorting it. Playing boys and girls in the role of a

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<sup>17</sup><https://www.soroptimist.it/maggie/>

nice, adventurous, curious, brave, determined problem-solver, at ease with logical mathematical thinking, capable of achieving successful goals is a transversal way to propose a different model of femininity.

Although serious games are not yet widespread, many companies in Italy are dedicated to the creation of these products. In 2017 the first edition of **LET'S PLAY**, the first video game festival, was held in Rome. An event during which video game operators, fans of the sector and institutions discussed the economic future of the sector and all possible uses of these tools in the cultural, social, educational, health and sports fields.

In the **Netherlands**, the use of serious games is highly developed, including at an institutional level. Ministries and Municipalities, in collaboration with universities and/or private promoters, experiment with participatory initiatives and "tools".

Some municipalities, for example, have used serious games (not online) to make citizens aware of the tasks and problems faced by the city council and to involve residents in democracy and history in a new way<sup>18</sup>. Others have created real (offline) role-playing games in which citizens were given a role, with their own goal. For example, a councillor who wants to spend as little money as possible on the game, or a councillor who thinks it is important that as many residents as possible are satisfied. Together the players solve the problems<sup>19</sup>.

Other examples of serious games are:

**Restart** is an educational programme of the Dutch Open Air Museum in Arnhem. This programme aims to raise awareness of migration among schoolchildren. In a "fun" and interactive way, students experience what it means to be a migrant. At the entrance, a museum employee checks the students' (homemade) passports. They have just become "citizens on trial" of the fictitious "Anderland" (Other Country). <https://www.ijsfontein.nl/projecten/restart>

**Hero's game**. A game aimed at children aged 5 to 8 in primary school that deals with the theme of bullying. In the Hero Game children get to know each other in class in a completely new way by answering questions about themselves. In this way, the children explore themselves and other children in a different way from the everyday situation and discover that they have more in common than they thought. <https://www.ijsfontein.nl/projecten/zapp-heldengame>

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.twynstragudde.nl/cases/escape-room-verbindt-inwoners-aan-de-democratie>

<sup>19</sup> <https://youtu.be/foDB7DUKBbl>

*Shadow Game* is a story of "coming of age", an adventure film through Europe with teenagers (migrants) as guides. Crossing borders in Europe, "The Game", as migrant children call it, is a life-threatening endeavor. In search of a better life, these children are often travelling for years. Meanwhile, they grow up and develop their identity. *Shadow Game* tells their story in a long documentary, a series of webdocs, a game and a photographic project. Not everything has been developed yet. <https://www.prospektor.nl/shadow-game-nl>

A recent study<sup>20</sup> on the state of digitisation in schools in the **European Union** showed that 63% of nine-year-old children do not attend a highly digitised school (with adequate equipment, fast broadband and high connectivity). 70% of teachers in the European Union recognise the importance of training in teaching and learning methods using digital tools, but only 20-25% of students have competent and digitally motivated teachers. With the Digital Education Action Plan (2018-2020) the European Commission wanted to support Member States and education and training institutions in developing measures to promote the use of new digital technologies, adapt all forms of education and lifelong learning and support the development of the digital skills needed to live and work in an era of rapid digital change.

The **GVET project** uses gamification to develop an interdisciplinary capacity building programme for all those professionals working with children in migrant contexts, in order to improve their skills and strengthen their role in child protection.

Two other interesting projects that use video games to address issues of social inclusion, youth participation and gender equality are Games4Sustainability and E-games: Empowering youth work.

**Games4Sustainability** is a platform that collects more than 100 games and simulations organized in a Gamepedia. The games are divided according to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Users can search for the game that best suits their needs.

**"E-games": Empowering youth work** is a project, developed within the EC Youth Programme, which provides youth workers (working in youth centres, local authorities, youth project organisers) with a series of multimedia games for use in youth work. The games are divided by themes: human rights, intercultural learning, tolerance, youth project management, information for young people.

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<sup>20</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/newsroom/cf/dae/document.cfm?doc\\_id=1800](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/dae/document.cfm?doc_id=1800)

What emerges from this review is that new technologies, gamification and serious games are considered tools both for the dissemination of knowledge, in the purely educational field, and for the promotion of civic participation and social inclusion. In some countries we are still in an initial phase of knowledge and experimentation, in others the use of these tools is more frequent and rooted. In most countries, technological and content innovation and experimentation is carried out by the private sector and NGOs, thanks to the support of European funding programmes.

Among the projects mentioned, there are not many that precisely target young adults, but as we have seen, they are one of the categories most at risk of social exclusion. This makes a project like INGAME even more necessary.

## 2.5. Good Practices

This section lists only some of the examples of serious games and projects considered good practice in the different countries that make up the partnership and in the wider European context.

The games described below deal in different ways with the themes addressed by the INGAME project and in particular with those of civic participation and social inclusion. Only one, in the wider European context, deals specifically with gender equality issues.

Although they are considered good practice, the games described leave ample scope for integration that INGAME can fill by responding more closely to the demands of the project target group, young adults.

**Netherlands**<sup>21</sup>: *Terra Nova Minimaatschappij (Terra Nova Mini Society)*<sup>22</sup>. This is an innovative and successful serious game developed for schools with the help of students, teachers and many others.

In the meantime, hundreds of children and young people have started talking to each other through Terra Nova. Although it is not an online game, but a board game, it answers to the criteria (involvement, results, effects) put down by researchers and game developers we spoke to.

It is a game and discussion tool to put difficult social issues at the centre of attention. Using a storyline on an uninhabited island, players discuss their ideal society. During their adventure, they are challenged by moral dilemmas. They explore what is 'right' for them and what is not and take matters into their own hands to organise something for this. With Terra Nova, students create their own miniature society in teams of five on an uninhabited island. They experience what it means to be part of a society by being allowed to run/govern one themselves. The game also perfectly fits to be played by (young) adults.

This is citizenship education beyond knowing the state: it provides a moment and opportunity for children *and* (young) adults to weigh up for themselves what is needed for a well-functioning society (e.g., fairness, equity, inclusion, migration/refugees, cooperation).

**Greece**: *City of Errors*<sup>23</sup> - The City of Errors initiative involves a cross-media platform that aims at combining the documentary genre with the principles of mobile gaming in order to make problem

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<sup>21</sup> [www.lisahu.nl](http://www.lisahu.nl); <https://youtu.be/n9lAyxRmoWl>

<sup>22</sup> IN GAME, National Report, Netherlands, p. 40.

<sup>23</sup> <https://cityoferrors.com/new/>

solving an entertaining activity. It has been created during the years of the financial crisis in Greece (2011 – 2014). The platform has two main components, which involve:

- A web-documentary series titled “Life in a City full of Errors” that is based on everyday storytelling about the problems that the citizens face presented from the side of the people who try to actually deal with the problems in question.
- A mobile iOS application aimed at promoting the direct participation of citizens in the alleviation of everyday problems. The use of the application requires login with a Facebook account that allows the uploading, categorization, geolocation and sharing of photo-stories about the actions that the users engage with, in order to fix the identified city problems. To date, a number of relevant actions have been uploaded with some of the most popular tags branded with keywords such as: #solidarity #equality #animal rights #education #get together #urban.

**Italy:** “*Nei miei Panni*”<sup>24</sup> (In my Cloths) is a video game that challenges the participant to live a month as a foreigner.

The interesting aspect of this game that can be used as a food for thought in the development of INGAME is the use of two elements:

- the score corresponding to the player's response, which prompts him or her to think more about his or her choice and then try both to empathize with the character and to inquire.
- the data and information provided. Once the player has made her/his decision, the game provides a look at the real situation in the country using data from official sources.

**Romania:** *Gamify Your Teaching*<sup>25</sup>, a 2015 Erasmus + project, carried out by a consortium of 7 European countries: Romania, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Great Britain, Spain and Greece.

GAMIFY includes seven scenarios on various themes of entrepreneurship as follows:

increasing self-confidence, market research, setting and visualising objectives, understanding whether self-employment is right for me, developing a business model, the role of social media in setting up a business, how to start and run a business at home.

**Poland:** *EntrInno*<sup>26</sup> is a project funded by the European Commission to address the need for optimizing the development of entrepreneurship and innovation in Europe. Its main focus is to enhance the skills of young EU citizens, a crucial population of a progressive, entrepreneurial and market-based economy and society. For that purpose, an interactive online game was developed, which is accessible online and offline, and can be adapted to fit various contexts. This game is serving

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.unar.it/NeiMieiPanni/english/index.html>

<sup>25</sup> <http://gamify-project.eu/it/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://entrinno.org/game/>

the development of entrepreneurial and leadership skills as well as innovation, creativity and cooperation.

EntrInno project was addressed to young adults (aged 18 – 35). In effect of project implementation, an educational on-line game had been created. At the beginning, the partners had conducted research about existing pedagogical models for fostering entrepreneurial and innovation skills, about training needs of young people as well as evaluation of existing games in the field of promoting entrepreneurial and innovation skills. The state of art report was created which served as the basis for the game. The game was made available via computers and mobile devices.

**Lithuania:** *3D VR game*- The aim of this project is to present the vehicles which are used nowadays in the Lithuanian armed forces. The technological solution includes the following three products: a virtual tour for the web, a virtual tour for virtual reality (Oculus platform) and a 3D shooting game created for virtual reality (Oculus platform). Virtual tour (for both web and VR) includes the M113 armored personnel carrier, a helicopter and a military airplane (Spartan). High-quality panoramic images were taken using stereoscopic photography so that the depth is sensible when viewing in VR application.

**Cyprus:** In *Against All Odds*, the player takes the role of a refugee, and plays through twelve stages- depicting his/her persecution and flight from his/her native country, through to eventual integration into a foreign country as an asylum seeker. Complementing the game is a repository of facts detailing the history of asylum, and refugee testimonies. A teacher's guide section provides discussion points and lesson ideas for the classroom. In the workshops, which lasted two school periods of each class from each selected school, students were asked to play specific parts of the game and expressed their thoughts and perceptions on refugee issues.

**Spain:** among the most significant initiatives undertaken to give more options to young people as actors and not just receivers of technology from different perspectives (professional, social, leisure and free time), we note the **INNGAMES program**. It is an INJUVE program<sup>27</sup> aimed at promoting and consolidating the culture of entrepreneurship, employability, training and innovation in the field of new technologies, especially in the creation of software in the field of video games among young people who wish to undertake and who have not completed their secondary school studies or are of post-compulsory education age.

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<sup>27</sup><http://www.injuve.es/noticia/se-prepara-inngames-2015>

## Europe

**INCREA<sup>9</sup> - Erasmus+ Project (Italy, France, England, Greece, Slovenia, Spain)** aims to promote the social inclusion of migrants through the development of modules and training activities that take into account the different characteristics of individuals to support them in their integration process into European societies, improving their language and business skills. INCREA's partnership is that it deals with the issue of immigration, but directly addresses migrants, supporting them in an innovative way in the acquisition of skills that will be useful for them to live in the new country. The goal of the game is to reach the Big Office in time. To win the game all players (maximum 4) must reach the finish line. The questions in the game are exclusively related to the world of work in big companies, from the curriculum to the behavior in the office and important notions related to how to do your job in the best way, true-false questions (if you are wrong, you will be given a short explanation of why the answer is not correct). A middle ground between the game of the goose and trivial pursuit. Not really immersive, but it is interesting the way the theme is approached and its being a cooperative rather than competitive game.

**Like Gender Equality<sup>28</sup> - Erasmus+ Project (England, Bulgaria, France, Germany)**. The aim of the project is to create awareness of, and provide training tools to tackle, gender aspects in digital media. The media being targeted is any that contains gender stereotypical content, especially video games, advertising, and websites. Like Gender Equality is funded by Erasmus+, as part of the EU's drive to make gender equality a social and professional priority.

The game is not very funny and interactive, but it makes you think about those stereotyped images that surround us and that we use in our everyday life.

**MissionEurope<sup>29</sup>** consists of 6 fun mini-games and quizzes related to topics of Community interest, ranging from the labour market, environmental protection, to mobility in Europe and immigration. The aim is to counter the widespread phenomenon of skepticism and dissatisfaction that is currently affecting many young Europeans, struggling with the uncertainty of the future.

Some mini games are more playful than educational (e.g. "flying alien in Europe"), while others are exclusively educational such as "healthy food vs junk food".

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<sup>28</sup><https://fbcfn.gcm-corp.com/jeux-template/games/erasmus/v110/>

<sup>29</sup><https://play.missioneuropoproject.eu/>

### 3. Key findings from Field Research

In this section we present the results of the field-based research, which was carried out by conducting online questionnaires to young adults aged 18-35 and to stakeholders (policy makers, members of youth organisations, cultural associations, NGOs, etc.).

Before the health emergency occurred, two focus groups and an online questionnaire were planned to be carried out in this phase of the project. The focus groups were to involve 5 young adults aged 18-35 and 5 stakeholders, respectively, in each country that makes up the INGAME project partnership. Despite the emergency, we managed to involve young people and stakeholders in the project, by replacing the two focus groups with two online questionnaires.

Therefore, three online questionnaires were carried out, targeting three different groups of people.

The aim of the **first questionnaire** (Q1) was to assess the knowledge of the young respondents (aged 18-35) about policies and practices developed in their home countries to promote the participation of young adults, as well as their knowledge of initiatives that use new technologies to promote discussion on global issues such as participation, gender equality and social inclusion.

The **second questionnaire** (Q2) sought to understand the difficulties that stakeholders face in developing activities that increase the level of civic engagement of young people and their knowledge of innovative approaches to promote the debate of topics such as social inclusion and gender equality.

The **third questionnaire** (Q3), on the other hand, focused on investigating the degree of participation of the young people interviewed in specific initiatives of public interest and to understand what issues motivate them to participate and by what means. In addition, we wanted to find out what young people think about the role of new technologies in promoting social inclusion and gender equality and what they think are useful initiatives for promoting youth participation.

### 3.1. Questionnaire 1- Young Persons Aged 18-35

This questionnaire was answered by **47 young people** aged between 18 and 35, 23 women and 24 men.

As a first question, we asked the participants what "**civic engagement**" meant to them (question 5). In the different countries that make up the partnership, common words emerged, such as the key words: *community*, *common good*, *responsibility* towards others and the environment, active *participation*. In very few cases the word "vote" was used to describe civic commitment. More in detail:

In **Spain** and **Lithuania** civic engagement has been defined not only as those actions and projects that address public issues, but also as a sense of responsibility and care for the environment. The attention and responsibility towards everything around us have also been stressed by **young Romanians**.

In **Italy**, civic engagement has been defined as "the possibility that each of us has to walk a path of social justice", making ourselves available to the community. Only one person out of 6 identified civic engagement with traditional forms of participation and therefore with voting. In addition to the young Italian, the **Polish** also identified civic commitment with participation in elections, as well as commitment to the community, responsibility and interest in everything that happens around us.

For young people in **Cyprus**, civic engagement means having critical thinking and participating actively both physically (e.g., participating in protests) and digitally (e.g., online petitions) with the aim of addressing and solving existing problems or making changes in the local community and society in general.

In the **Netherlands**, young people believe that civic engagement means, first of all, informing themselves about political, economic and international issues and then taking action by volunteering or otherwise engaging personally and developing activities that serve a public purpose.

A useful tool to foster the civic engagement and participation of young adults (question 6) is formal and non-formal education according to respondents in **Italy, Spain, Greece** and **Poland**. Schools can make young people participants and protagonists, for example by organising educational programmes that help them understand the importance of civic engagement (**Greece**).

In order to increase their degree of participation, young people need to know the possibilities of civic participation that exist, to receive information and examples on how they can make a civic engagement (**Lithuania**), to understand how their actions can have an impact on the country (**Poland**). They also want to have the opportunity to express their ideas, to make their voice heard (**Italy** and **Greece**).

Among the activities that can increase the level of youth participation, **Polish young people** refer to debates with other young people, where they can exchange opinions, confront each other, as well as voluntary activities, social spots and information videos.

In **Cyprus**, digital activities such as video games are considered useful for this purpose. These are understood as those digital social environments where people have the opportunity to enhance their interest and passion in specific domains of society through gaming, in order to invest in a better future for societies. An example of such activities is the Global Game Jam. Voluntary activities, such as beach rubbish collection, tree planting, can also foster young people's civic engagement, developing teamwork and thus other-oriented thinking.

In addition to voluntary activities, youth in the **Netherlands** believe that young people's civic engagement can be stimulated through structured state programmes such as (compulsory) social service after completing secondary education, study/training placements in civil society organisations, institutions and government. For some young people interviewed it would also be useful to include in the school-educational pathway activities to raise awareness and knowledge of the "other" such as organizing trips that allow, for example, people from different national backgrounds to share an experience.

We asked young adults if they are aware of initiatives promoting young people's civic engagement, gender equality and social inclusion (question 7). **Young Romanians** believe that holding conferences, summits, meetings, trips, games without violent content, are useful in promoting youth participation and addressing issues such as gender equality and social inclusion.

A specific suggestion has been made in **Cyprus**, in terms of enhancing gender equality via gaming. More specifically, taking into consideration that gaming industry targets mostly men, a good example of combating gender inequality is a practice such as the existing organization of "Fighting Game Community". Fighting game community consists of gamers who play fighting games, and the community is connected based on the passion for fighting games<sup>30</sup>.

Also in **Spain, Poland** and **Lithuania**, the initiatives most familiar to young people interviewed are those aimed at promoting gender equality, such as co-education activities in schools from a gender perspective (**Spain**) and actions for gender equality in the IT sector (**Lithuania**), while in **Italy**, the **Netherlands, Poland** and **Greece**, young people have a greater knowledge of awareness-raising activities in schools and universities.

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMEHa8udcVk>

When we asked young people if they are aware of new technologies and innovative approaches (serious games, game-based learning) to discuss social issues such as gender equality and social inclusion (question 8), most of the respondents in **Italy**, **Greece** and the **Netherlands** stated that they are not aware of them. In **Cyprus** and **Romania**, young people stated that they use new technologies and online games mainly for relaxation and entertainment. However, as shown by the responses given by young **Cypriots**, while participants are using technologies just for fun it seems that they are indirectly involved also in digital literacy practices.

Among the online games most popular among young **Lithuanians**, are those used for educational purposes.

In **Poland** and **Spain**, most respondents stated that they are aware of the existence of new technologies used to promote social issues, but have never had the opportunity to use them, while one of the people interviewed mentioned Ms Monopoly, a board game (not online) that celebrates women inventors and therefore indirectly addresses the gender issue.

## 3.2. Questionnaire 2 – Stakeholders

**57 stakeholders**, 41 women and 16 men answered this questionnaire.

What emerged from the interviews carried out in the different national contexts is that the activities that could increase young people's civic participation (question 5) are those that, first of all, take into account the interests of young people themselves, give them a voice and confront them with the real results of their direct civic commitment. It is important to develop initiatives that promote civic engagement in schools and universities, carry out awareness campaigns, promote the participation of young adults in public debates, events and workshops. All this using innovative, engaging and youth-friendly tools, such as social media.

The Stakeholders have identified, in the different countries where the questionnaires have been carried out, some initiatives that we can consider successful in promoting the civic engagement of young adults (question 7). Among these we have:

Vouliwatch ([vouliwatch.gr](http://vouliwatch.gr)), Active Citizens Fund ([www.activecitizensfund.gr/en](http://www.activecitizensfund.gr/en)), FoteiniKypseli ([www.fotinikipseli.gr](http://www.fotinikipseli.gr)) and integration courses consisting of modules on Greek language learning and cultural orientation in **Greece**.

In **Italy**, the interviewees indicated as successful initiatives, Europe Goes Local, which tends to localize youth policies, and the recognition of the Youth Worker as a protagonist; Europiamo, which aims to bring the new generations to European opportunities, promotes the participation of young people in civil society and shares good practices among those involved; Model United Nation, simulation of the work of the United Nations in which the role of ambassador is played by the students.

In **Romania**, successful initiatives in promoting the civic participation of young people are the national campaigns supported under the National Strategy for Community Action. These promote volunteering for students and young people through local and national initiatives aimed at developing altruism and their involvement in activities that expand the civic and community spirit.

In **Lithuania** they have Laisves (Freedom) TV which organizes many initiatives in Lithuanian schools. The initiatives are successful because students are encouraged by famous and highly respected people and because they also address the values and interests of young people; "Let's do it", an initiative to clean up the environment where students can feel part of a community that takes care of them; Red Nose Initiative - Young doctors wear red noses and visit hospitals as clowns to psychologically support child patients; Big Brother Big Sister initiative.

SzlachetnaPaczka is a social project in **Poland** that combines know-how and modern technologies, creating systemic solutions through which volunteers help the needy. Also, in Poland we find Młodzieżowa, which consists of mobilizing informed participation in elections, encouraging young people to take an interest in current socio-political issues and Żonkile- social and educational campaign, commemorating the Warsaw ghetto revolt.

In the **Netherlands**, successful initiatives are those that use the language of the target group, have clear objectives, provide authentic examples and convey a simple and tangible message. These include exchange programs/internship projects (e.g., working in a nursing home or helping in the hospitality sector), such as Young Impact<sup>31</sup> or Thecportal<sup>32</sup> and **Jinc**.

JINC helps young people between 8 and 16 years of age to have a good start in the labour market. Through the JINC program they get acquainted with various professions, find out what kind of work suits their talents, and learn how to apply for a job.

The stakeholders interviewed in **Spain** highlighted the great difficulty in involving young people from villages in activities promoting civic engagement. In this context it would be interesting to see how initiatives using new technologies can overcome these barriers and allow anyone to participate in initiatives that promote the civic engagement of young people.

We also asked stakeholders whether they are aware of innovative approaches (such as online gaming, serious gaming, game-based learning) that can be used to discuss global issues such as social inclusion and gender equality (question 8). What emerged from the analysis of the questionnaires is that, in most of the countries that are part of the partnership, stakeholders are aware of new technologies and innovative tools such as online games and virtual reality used, however, mainly in education, for knowledge transfer and language learning. Only in **Italy**, most of the interviewees (6/10) stated that they have never used such tools even though they acknowledge their usefulness. More in detail:

In **Greece**, many respondents stated that they are aware of such innovative approaches and have used them in other European projects. In particular, the most popular were online gaming, virtual reality and mobile devices. A small number of participants, although aware of these new technologies, declared that they have not yet used them.

In **Italy**, 6 out of 10 people are not familiar with this type of technology, but they are interested in learning more about it, recognising its potential usefulness in addressing global issues, such as social

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<sup>31</sup> <https://youngimpact.nl>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.techportal.nl/junior-innovation-challenge>

inclusion and gender equality. Three people said they are familiar with these innovative tools and one of them used them for educational purposes.

The stakeholders who participated in the questionnaire in **Cyprus** believe that digital and online technologies are a very important factor in attracting and involving young people on issues of active citizenship and discussing issues of international interest (e.g., climate change, gender equality, poor health care). The contribution of digital social media and other innovative approaches such as online gaming, serious games, game-based learning can also be very useful for young people. These technologies have already been used at a younger age, for example in teaching practice (public school) to make classes more attractive and involve students in the learning process, in order to achieve goals that would be difficult or impossible to achieve without them.

In **Romania**, respondents used international platforms, such as Yammer, to discuss inclusion issues and develop support and communication networks. Innovative technologies have also been used in training contexts with students and teachers participating in the training, as they allow to adapt learning to students' interests. New technologies are indispensable in this period, they facilitate communication in record time and offer practical approaches to the problems of contemporary society.

In **Lithuania**, 5 out of 6 people stated that they know and have used the new technologies, especially in language teaching and study projects. Using the new technologies also to address global issues, such as social inclusion and gender equality, is considered useful because it meets the needs of the younger generation. All the participants of the questionnaire in Poland, have heard about new technologies, online games, game based quizzes and think that this is a very interesting approach because it allows quick learning.

In the **Netherlands**, some people involved in the questionnaire stated that they are aware of these technologies, but they only have direct experience with games focused on knowledge transfer, aimed at increasing the level of empathy of the players, and they have not used them to address issues such as social inclusion and gender equality. An interesting initiative is Bibendo ([www.bibendo.nl](http://www.bibendo.nl)), an online platform through which libraries develop and offer their own applications. Some people interviewed used technologies based on VR and AR (Augmented Reality) to address issues such as physical disability, bullying, democracy, e.g., games that simulate city councils.

Also, **Spain**, respondents used Virtual Reality in education and mobile learning technologies to improve students' communication and social behaviour.

### 3.3. Questionnaire 3- young adults

A total of **233 young people** aged between 18 and 35, 133 women and 100 men took part in the questionnaire.

This group of young people were also asked what "civic engagement" meant to them (question 5) and what emerged was a fairly common view in different national contexts. Civic engagement is defined as **responsibility** and **respect towards** the community, keeping oneself **informed** about the development of actions at local, European and global level, active **participation** of citizens in the democratic decision-making process (voting), **voluntary activities**, demonstrations, opinion polls, events. Engaging in activities of **public interest** and acting for the **common good**, bearing in mind the needs of others. It is essential to **be aware** of one's role in solving common problems, contributing to the construction of the world and a better future for us and the environment in which we live.

Most of the people involved in this questionnaire have participated in initiatives in support of civic and social issues in the last two years (question 6). The countries where the level of youth participation has been highest are Spain (85%), Italy (80%) and Netherlands (75%). As far as participation methods are concerned, the majority of respondents in Italy, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Poland participated in **Online Petitions** such as those disseminated through change.org; in **square demonstrations, marches, sit-ins** in Greece and Spain, and **awareness campaigns on social networks** in Romania.

The arguments that prompted people to take action (question 7) were: University-related issues (e.g. the merging of departments), environmental issues, human rights, anti-racism, antifascism, in **Greece**; environmental causes, immigration and press freedom in **Italy**; the corruption, the illegal deforestation and the environment, transport and highways, education, bullying and trafficking in human beings, minority rights in **Romania**; gender equality and environmental protection in **Lithuania**; defence of one's rights and environmental issues in **Poland**; environmental issues such as climate change and the decrease in the amount of waste going to landfills, a better education system and a better working environment for teachers, educators and professors, a better public health system and demonstrations against racism towards refugees, xenophobia and racial discrimination in **Cyprus**; support for the less fortunate, the right to equality and climate protection (climate change) and the fight against pollution in the **Netherlands**; gender violence, the fight against terrorism and environmental protection in **Spain**.

We can summarise the causes that have led young people to become active in three macro areas: **Environment**, **Education** and **Human Rights**, including in the later area all issues related to equal treatment, i.e., initiatives against racism and xenophobia, bullying, inequality and gender violence, support to disadvantaged people and ethnic minorities. Environmental protection issues have prompted action by young people in all countries that are part of the consortium.

We asked the participants in the questionnaire if they are aware of any initiatives on young people's civic engagement that could be considered "good practices" (question 10).

Among the good practices identified by the young **Greeks**, we have humanitarian initiatives such as disability awareness, support to the elderly, theatre of the oppressed; initiatives addressing environmental issues, such as planting trees, collecting waste; political issues, such as Council and European Parliament simulations, initiatives through Erasmus+ projects, student protests and recreational projects, such as TED talks.

In **Italy**, 53.3% of respondents are not aware of good practices in this field. While 46,6%, identify among the good practices, awareness raising activities in schools, promotion of voluntary activities, Friday for Future and National Civil Service.

In **Cyprus**, 42,4 % of the participants stated that they are not aware of initiatives on civic engagement of young people that they would consider as good practices. Among the good practices identified, we have Cyprus Youth Diplomacy organization, where every young person interested in international relations, politics and diplomacy can organize and participate in events and conferences on diplomacy to which well-known diplomats and politicians are invited; Cyprus ComiCon; Cyprus Youth Council; European Youth Parliament; Makerspaces, Facebook groups and educational activities.

In **Romania**, 73,3 % of the participants mentioned the volunteer programmes and projects carried out and promoted by several local NGOs.

In **Lithuania**, young people have identified as good practices Baltos pirštinės (white gloves); getting discounts for participating in voting or receiving a gift bag to donate blood; Laisvės TV (freedom TV); volunteering work such as food distribution.

In **Poland**, 71% of the young people interviewed admitted that they were not aware of any initiative on youth civic engagement. Those who were aware of it mentioned: WOŚP- an annual event involving thousands of people from all over Poland; Youth Parliament; IAMEUROPE; Europe for Citizens; Doctors Without Borders; SzlachetnaPaczka; Erasmus+.

In the **Netherlands**, among the good practices we have: Civil disobedience; the Extinction Rebellion and Eye Film Museum Amsterdam, where disadvantaged young people, poorly educated school

classes and refugees are offered the chance to learn without having to pay. A responsible way to show what a community should offer to people who have less, or who have never felt challenged to learn something about culture.

**Spain**, 75% of the respondents are not aware of initiatives on youth civic engagement, while 25% consider good practices in promoting youth civic engagement campaigns disseminated through Instagram; voluntary camps; voluntary activities in support of sick people, in foundations and shelters; rubbish collection on beaches and in natural parks; support to campaigns carried out by organisations such as PACMA, Amnesty International or Greenpeace; work experience in NGOs or other humanitarian organisations.

Concerning the role of technology in promoting social inclusion and civic participation (question 8), young people in all countries agree that new technologies have an important role to play in promoting the above-mentioned issues. They make communication easier (**Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland**) by allowing people with common interests to come into contact (**Poland**), more isolated groups (**Cyprus**) and minorities (**Spain**) to express themselves and make their voice heard, people with disabilities to participate (**Greece, Lithuania, Netherlands**), to overcome physical barriers. New technologies allow more people to access information (**Italy**), to become more aware of social injustices, pushing people to take action in favour of a cause. New technologies also promote a deeper understanding of situations and issues, for example through the VR technology (**Netherlands**). In such a way it could improve people's quality of life (**Lithuania**).

While in all countries young people interviewed consider the new technology a useful tool to promote social inclusion and equality, knowledge of **game-based learning** initiatives (question 9) is not particularly widespread.

In **Greece** most of the interviewees stated that they are not aware of any example (22/30), but they believe that such initiatives can improve learning and enable people to understand the perspectives of others through role play. Among those who stated that they are aware of game-based learning initiatives, the most widespread are Duolingo, a game-based learning platform for foreign languages; game platforms associated with Erasmus+; the theatre of the oppressed; Mikrapaidia & "Kidmedia (educational games for primary school children, the latter for SEN children); GameLab (MIT); ENTRINNO (EU funded).

Also in **Italy**, 23 people out of 30 do not directly know game-based learning initiatives, but they consider it a good idea to involve students. Among the people who have, instead, declared to know these initiatives (7), the best-known experiences are the games to learn foreign languages, Minecraft Education and Minecraft uncensored library.

In **Cyprus**, almost half (42,4) of the participants answered that are not aware of any game-based learning initiatives, while some of them mentioned as game-based learning initiatives the following: "Assassins Creed" an action-adventure stealth video game with an interactive journey in Ancient Greece and references to ancient Greek mythology; Lumosity and Elevate; EU funded projects e.g., CSI Children First and the Augmented Reality game "Pokemon Go".

In **Romania**, 13 of the 30 participants responded that they are not aware of game-based learning initiatives. The learning initiatives mentioned are Beaconing and Izibac. Participants recognize that learning through play is more effective, but the methods must be applied in a professional way to be effective.

In **Lithuania**, the young people interviewed referred to numerous game-based learning initiatives, such as Design thinking; game planning theories (e.g.: <https://www.game-cities.com/>); on prevention, health; VR-based chemistry learning; Kerbal Space Program. World of Warcraft; educational games, programs such as Duolingo, Code combat; GameON; history lessons at the virtual museum exhibition; "Videogames for teachers" project, development of applications for social and emotional learning, which is also based on gamification; non-formal education initiatives for KTU students, the badge craft system; Facebook city building and the civic education game "Our City".

The data collected from the survey in **Poland**, shows that most of the respondents are familiar with game-based learning initiatives. Various games are given as examples: Board games (Monopoly); WINGS; Stratagame; SIMS (which teaches us how to manage money); Educational applications such as Duolingo, Babble; Rubby Warrior; Codlin Game; Score hunter; Hotel Giant.

Respondents think that this approach is very good, thanks to games we learn faster, because knowledge is given to us in a very attractive form, so we are able to remember more.

In the **Netherlands**, the young people interviewed provided some examples of game-based learning initiatives, such as: Minecraft; Redcat to learn arithmetics; Squla, games and online quizzes for learning school subjects, aimed at elementary school children; Kahn Academy, which collects video lectures, uploaded through the popular video sharing service YouTube; Pandemic, gives an image of how to fight a pandemic; TypeRacer is an online website that uses a competition to learn how to write better.

Kahoot (game-based learning platform) and a language learning application like 'Duolingo' (it has a reward system, you can level up, do better than your friends/unknown ones).

In **Spain**, 15 out of 20 people answered that they were not aware of game-based learning initiatives. Those who are aware of these initiatives mentioned language learning games or games for children and cooperative learning- Montessori.

Opinions on **gamification** (question 11) and, especially, on the possibility that it can be used to improve critical reflection on the social and political situation of young adults (question 11) are very positive in almost all countries where the questionnaire was submitted. In **Italy**, 73.3% of the respondents believe that gamification can be used to improve critical reflection on the social and political condition of young adults. For example, by showing the specific situation to be dealt with from a different and more engaging point of view, making the topics covered lighter and the experience more enjoyable.

Young **Cypriots** agree with the definition of video games, as useful tools for promoting socialization, young people's commitment and the need for professionalism, even if until now they have been mainly used as entertainment tools. Through video games, many people will have the opportunity to get in touch with opinions they have never shared before. These games can help to develop critical thinking and decision-making on different social issues and problems.

Also, according to young **Romanians**, gamification could be used to improve critical thinking about the social and political situation of young adults, including real life aspects, exercises and awards for good social behaviour. Participants also mentioned the importance of introducing gamification into education. Only one person interviewed opposed the use of gamification for social purposes. In Poland, the participants in the questionnaire believe that through the use of simple scenarios and by combining the educational and recreational aspects, online games can stimulate critical thinking. Moreover, by connecting games to social networks, communication and confrontation between people can be encouraged.

Also, for most **Spanish** respondents, gamification can improve critical thinking about the social and political situation of young adults. Through role-playing games, for example, people can feel included, without prejudice, in an equal perspective. The use of these games can highlight social and political problems and address them in a playful way.

Besides the positive opinions there are the negative ones that gamification is "a mistake for education" because it stimulates too much individual competitiveness.

In **Greece**, many respondents expressed doubts about the possibility of using gamification to improve critical reflection on the social and political situation of young adults or little knowledge of the topic. According to some respondents, in fact, the development of critical thinking depends on multiple aspects, such as age, social environment etc. Moreover, there is a fear, also expressed by a young Spanish person, that gamification leads to too much competition.

On the other hand, a part of the interviewees consider gamification useful when using a youthful and entertaining user interface and at the same time developing a civic/humanitarian dimension (e.g., promoting cultural values, human rights, reducing stereotypes), emphasizing strategic thinking in politics and offering a diversity of materials.

According to young people in the **Netherlands**, gamification gives young people the opportunity to show the consequences of political decisions through gamification, for example, through a social game where several players together have to make complex choices that will have logical consequences.

It is important pinpointing the misconceptions that exist when looking at how young people can and *want* to learn things, have them tested in real life and translate them into a game form, so that the foundation lies in something that seems to work in the shared reality and what they can (re)apply there.

In **Lithuania**, young people believe that gamification can provide a partial solution to the decline in student motivation and engagement that the school/university system is facing today. In particular, the environment of educational institutions (schools, colleges, universities) could benefit a lot from gamification not only for graduate recruitment strategies, but also for the content of courses and curricula.

Gamification can be used as a tool to stimulate a greater participation of young people and allow them to acquire a deeper knowledge of social and political circumstances, organizing content in a more attractive way, with the possibility of greater sharing among young adults.

*In conclusion*, what emerged from the questionnaires is that young adults in the different countries of the partnership, want to participate and ask to be heard. In order to take civic action some people need to be guided, to know examples of how they can participate and act for the common good, so that they can then choose and engage in society. The young people interviewed showed their civic commitment mainly online through petitions and awareness campaigns on social networks, but also offline, in events, voluntary activities. There is a lot of curiosity about the use of new technologies, game-based learning initiatives and gamification. Their knowledge is not widespread and their use is

mainly applied to the knowledge of languages, to the deepening of school subjects and to the facilitation of training processes. They are not widely used to address social issues such as social inclusion and gender equality. However, the interviewees, both young people and stakeholders, expressed not only the interest in knowing and using online games that can tackle these issues in a playful way, but also the need for innovative tools that can convey these messages, making them attractive to young people.

### 3.4.Recommendation for the INGAME development

The people who participated in the questionnaire, young people and stakeholders, were asked to give us some suggestions on the characteristics that they think the INGAME game should have.

First of all, the game should **simulate real situations**, it should be based on realistic social and political issues, for example, a game that **fight racism, social inequality**, learning through experience, socialisation and meeting other people.

In order to stimulate critical reflection on political and social issues of young adults, one could, for example, create a game that starts with membership of a political party (or youth organisation) and aims to become prime minister at the end of the game. The player must slowly make his/her way through the party, each time confronting himself/herself with certain social and political choices.

When dealing with "serious" issues, however, **s/he must not lose the playful aspect**. It must have **captivating graphics** and an **engaging narrative**. It is necessary to find a perfect balance between the development part related to the gameplay and the contents of the game. The objectives of the project should not overwhelm the game itself.

The game must be **accessible** to everyone, easy to understand and be accompanied by **clear instructions** on how to proceed and the objectives to be achieved. Anyone, even those without experience, should be able to understand how to move from one **level** to another.

It must exploit the **immersive** character of video games, allowing the player to empathize with the character, create an emotional bond with him/her (e.g., GLaDOS in the Portal series). In the definition of avatars, possible differences in genre, origin, promoting diversity must be taken into account.

It should stimulate the player's creativity, for example by allowing him/her to create his/her own game environment using the tools of the game.

In addition to informing and entertaining, the game should **stimulate debate, discussion** and **encourage players to engage**.

For this purpose, it is preferable to create a **multiplayer** game, in which players act as a team, make decisions together, are expected to confront and listen to each other if they want to advance in level, gain scores and then solve problems. The game must therefore be **interactive** and allow players to communicate with each other both during the game and afterwards. For example, the video game could be connected to **facebook** or other **social networks** and allow players to confront each other, discuss the topics of the game and the results achieved.

The game must be free access and available on **multiple devices**. Not only PCs, but also mobile devices.

The game could be accompanied by examples of good practice, information material and quizzes that can be used in schools. For example, at the end of the game, players could talk with each other, online *and* offline, about the feelings that the game has given them, the impressions and thoughts they have been aroused. The game could be accompanied by an app distributed through Facebook and YouTube, which players could download and use to learn more about the game.

INGAME should stimulate further reflection and propose further insights, depending on the game choices. Through the description of good practices, for example, players could be given ideas on how to activate themselves in real life so that the learning of online knowledge and skills can be followed by offline civic engagement.

## 4. Conclusions

This analysis shows that young people are among the categories most at risk of exclusion, a risk that increases when other aspects such as gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin, socio-economic conditions and level of education are added to the young age.

Promoting inclusion also means allowing people to participate in the democratic processes of their country and more generally of the European community. This is precisely why it is necessary to develop projects which, in an innovative and effective way, can respond to the needs of young people, include them, listen to them and thus show them that their participation is essential for the future of Europe.

A project such as INGAME, which exploits the potential of new technologies, succeeds in overcoming those barriers that are sometimes at the root of social exclusion.

Today, young people's civic engagement is inseparable from the digital media landscape, and research suggests that the old frames that they consider "online" and "offline" as completely separate experiences are inaccurate for young people today. Young people's digital civic engagement may be fairer than traditional forms of civic engagement, but this can only happen in contexts where people, young people in particular, have the opportunity to access and make their voices heard through digital skills.

What emerged from the analysis of the questionnaires is that, in most of the countries that are part of the partnership, both young people and stakeholders consider digital and online technologies as useful tools to address the issues of active citizenship, social inclusion and gender equality. However, their use is limited, in practice, to language learning and school-based knowledge transfer.

New technologies, especially immersive technologies such as video games, enable young people not only to develop empathy but also to learn by doing, stimulating and encouraging creativity, concentration, collaboration and critical interaction.

However, the use of serious games to address issues of social interest, such as the issues mentioned above, is still at an early stage in most countries. The greatest developments have been achieved through the initiative of private companies and NGOs.

A report by the Pew Internet & American Life Project<sup>33</sup> found that young people who engage in a "civic" gaming experience are more frequently engaged in supporting social causes both online and

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2008/09/16/teens-video-games-and-civics/>

offline: they explore the themes covered by the game, support election campaigns, participate in fundraising and voluntary activities.

As Joseph Kahne, director of the Civic Engagement Research Group at Mills College, said, "games that simulate aspects of civil and political life have the ability to promote civic skills and player engagement. Parents, teachers and all those working with young people should be aware of the great diversity of video games- so that they can take full advantage of games and their civic potential" (PND, 2008).

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## 6. Annex: Online questionnaires

### Q1- young persons aged 18 – 35 years

1. What is your gender?

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2. What is your age?

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3. Are you currently engaged in a study or work activity?

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4. If yes, which one?

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5. What does civic engagement mean to you?

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6. What kind of activities do you think should be delivered to increase the participation of young adults in public life in general and more specifically, their civic engagement?

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7. Do you know any policies, practices and interventions for promoting young civic engagement, social inclusion and gender equality? If so, should they improve or change?

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8. Are you aware of new technologies (digital tools and mobile devices like GPS, PDAs, Tablet PCs, Virtual Reality, hand-held technologies, mobile learning technologies, etc.) and innovative approaches (like for example Online Gaming, Serious Games, Game-based Learning) that can be used to discuss global issues, like social inclusion and gender equality? If yes, have you ever used them and why?

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9. We are developing an online game, called INGAME which will allow users to learn from simulated experience enhancing critical reflection on social and political circumstances, build skills and stimulate interest for collective action. What would an online game like INGAME need to attract your interest? Which features would you like the game to have?

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10. Do you have additional notes or suggestions that you think could be useful for our research?

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## Q2- stakeholders

1. What is your gender?

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2. What is your age?

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3. What is the type of your organization?

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4. Which factors influence the civic engagement of young adults?

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5. What kind of activities do you think should be delivered to increase the participation of young adults in public life in general and more specifically, their civic engagement?

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6. What are the main difficulties you face in involving young people in civic engagement activities?

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7. In your area of work, do you know of successful initiatives aimed to improve civic participation of young people and their attention to social inclusion or gender equality issues? If so, which are the main elements of success?

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8. Are you aware of new technologies (digital tools and mobile devices, Virtual Reality, handheld technologies, mobile learning technologies, etc.) and innovative approaches (like for example Online Gaming, Serious Games, Game-based Learning) that can be used to discuss global issues, like social inclusion and gender equality?

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9. We are developing an online game, called INGAME which will allow users to learn from simulated experience enhancing critical reflection on social and political circumstances, build skills and stimulate interest for collective action. What would an online game like INGAME need to attract young interest? Which features would you like the game to have?

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10. Do you have additional notes or suggestions that you think could be useful for our research?

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### Q 3- target group

1. What is your gender?

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2. What is your age?

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3. Are you currently engaged in a study or work activity?

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4. If yes, which one?

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5. What does civic engagement mean to you?

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6. Have you participated in any of these initiatives in the last two years?

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7. What was the cause?

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8. Do you think that technology could play a role in promoting social inclusion and equal participation? If yes, how? If not, why not?

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9. Are you aware of game-based learning initiatives? If so, could you name these? what do you think?

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10. Do you know of any initiatives on young people's civic engagement you consider 'best practices'? If yes, name them.

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11. According to you what are the most successful activities and practices for fostering civic participation, social inclusion and gender equality among young people (i.e. diversity-days with games, workshops, exhibitions, theatre, round-tables/debates, competitions on drawings, photographs, etc.)?

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12. How do you think Gamification could be used to enhance critical reflection on social and political circumstances of young adult?

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13. Do you have additional notes or suggestions that you think could be useful for our research?

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Gaming for Social Inclusion and Civic Participation