



GAMES & LEARNING



Co-funded by the
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TBG-Project

Intro

The main objectives of this project are promoting inclusion and diversity in adult education, improving the competences of educators and other adult education staff and to give concrete advice on how to use games in adult education including European values such as inclusion, diversity, participation and engagement.

Games can be adapted to the most different kind of learners and can communicate even the most difficult topics in an understandable manner. Because of this, new and innovative ways of conveying knowledge and reaching the target group of adult education need to be explored to catch the initial attention of learners.

They guarantee a low-threshold participatory introduction to the topics that can be adjusted to the needs of the participants and the learning effects can be significantly higher than with classical knowledge transfer through teacher-centred teaching.

In times of digital transformation and more and more virtual learning due to the pandemic, we also want to cover this field to reach learners and educators online with our videos on best practice games.

There are a huge number of games that can be used in this field, but barely anyone does have an overview on them and which contents and competences they address. We tackled this problem by collecting best practice games, showing their strengths and weaknesses and commenting how they can be used in a proper manner.

Four different partners developed this manual-toolkit. They all come from different countries: Latvia, Netherlands, Spain and Germany.

Together, they worked out three project results:

1. PR1 Study
 - A study about the state of the art and advice for the use of games in adult education
2. PR2 Toolkit
 - a toolkit about how to make one's own educational game and final recommendations for stakeholders
3. PR3 Game Collection
 - a commented collection of different kinds of games that can be used in adult education with videos about best practice games, suggestions and explanations

Aims of the project

One of the main priorities is to improve, promote and contribute to “inclusion & diversity in all fields of education”, focussing on adult education. Games are creative strategies that can deal with special learning situations, blockades, uncertainty and more. Therefore, they create a better learning situation and atmosphere that is beneficial, especially for disadvantaged learners. The validation of informal and non-formal knowledge, competencies and soft skills is easier using games because standard tests can be difficult for disadvantaged learners by not being adapted to their needs. They also create an empowering and motivating learning atmosphere because the barrier between learner and teacher that may exist in some cases can be overcome more easily. That makes it easier to convey knowledge and to have a discussion at eye level between educators and learners. Through this better relationship a better integration of participants in educational offers is achieved, dialogues can be established and cultural, social, generational and other personal barriers can be overcome during playing of games.

Info about Partners

In this project there are four different organisations from 4 countries that give in their experience, work and passion.



As a non-profit organisation with many years of experience, Germany (HochVier) provides learning activities, such as summer universities and language courses. They were founded in 2004 and are an independent provider of political and cultural education.

HochVier organizes regional education seminars, especially in rural Brandenburg, on topics such as regional development, democracy education, cultural and ethnic diversity, as well as methodological workshops such as "Games in political education". The organisation is using games regularly in its work.



The organisation rooted in Spain started in 2005 and has years of experience when organising cultural activities and involvement possibilities with local communities. AC Amics de la Biblioteca de la Fonteta is non-formal education organisation providing learning opportunities to the people in their area (youth, adults and children). The organization is focused at empowerment and active citizenship.

In the project, they can contribute by sharing expertise about the use of games in the work with disadvantaged learners, because they are very active in the field of inclusion through education.



Latvia's partner-organisation, named ISMA- „Izglītojo spēļu un metožu asociācija”, has many years of experience and is a non-governmental association.

Their main sectors are educational activities for trainers, teachers and other educators. This organisation wants to bring together developers of educational games and methods and wants to promote a culture of using games and methods in educational processes.

Latvia has a lot of experience in using games as a tool for learning engagement.

GAMES & LEARNING

“Games and Learning”, an organisation rooted in the Netherlands, is a small company specialized in serious games and game-based learning. The aim of Games&Learning is to create serious games that help players to reach certain goals, to learn and also to have fun. This organisation has developed lots of different games and as a result they have experience that will be important in this project.



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Output PR1 Studies: Current application of games in adult education, description of benefits, methods and approaches from different countries

This is the conclusion of four individual studies on the current application of games in adult education in Germany, Spain, Latvia and the Netherlands. The approaches and focal points of the individual studies vary (as does the situation in the individual countries), but all studies contains information on

- adult education/lifelong learning systems
- games in adult education
- field researches
- examples of good practise

It was produced as part of the Teaching by Gaming (TBG) project by educational organisations from Latvia, Netherlands, Spain and Germany.

Adult education/Lifelong learning systems

Adult education and a lifelong learning system exist in all four countries, although providers, forms and, above all, funding differ greatly.

In Germany the following content areas are distinguished in adult and continuing education:
continuing vocational education and training
general continuing education
civic continuing education

The landscape of providers in Germany is very heterogeneous in all of these areas. In continuing vocational education and training, the main providers are the chambers of industry and commerce and the chambers of crafts and trades, as well as private and trade union organisations; in general continuing education and training, the adult education centres (Volkshochschulen) and other public and private providers. There are well over 2,000 state-recognised and publicly funded institutions in Germany, of which around 1,000 are adult education centres. The adult education institutions run by companies, chambers of commerce and industry are of similar chambers of commerce and industry. In addition, there are numerous private and commercially and commercially run institutions. They differ greatly in size and programme profile and probably also in the quality of the work they do. Altogether, it is estimated that there are about 40,000 legally independent adult education institutions in Germany.

A special system exists in the field of civic education with the state-run Federal Centre for Civic Education and 16 federal state centres as well as a large number of independent providers (of which only a handful are party-affiliated).

The system in the Netherlands is similarly organised (except in the area of civic education), with one of the highest levels of participation in further education in Europe.

Almost 20% of 25-65 year olds participate in training and courses (mostly nonformal learning).

In contrast, participation in continuing education in Spain, Germany and especially Latvia is below the European average.

The educational offer of Adult Education in Spain constitutes a wide field of activities, referring to both formal and non-formal education. These activities are aimed at the population over 16 years of age who for various reasons did not finish their studies, do not have any qualifications or simply want to broaden or renew their knowledge. The various training levels include:

1. Basic training: It would include a first level of literacy, a second level of knowledge expansion, with the possibility of accessing Secondary Education. The public administration will periodically convene tests so that people over 18 years of age can directly obtain the Graduate Certificate in Compulsory Secondary Education. The continuation of the training would consist of access to the baccalaureate to obtain access to higher education, although those over 25 years of age will be able to access the University directly by passing a specific test.
2. Vocational Training: These are teachings for qualification in the professional field.
3. Mentor Classroom: It is an open and distance training project that offers a series of courses. Its objective is to deliver the training wherever the person is, such as, for example, to people in rural areas or in prisons.
4. Spanish for immigrants: These are specific teachings that have specialized teachers for people from other countries who want to learn Spanish.
5. Non-formal education: It offers a wide range of training courses, whose basic objective is personal development for active participation in social, political and economic life.

Funding for continuing education is regulated differently (and often inadequately) in the individual states. However, the situation is most challenging in Latvia:

There is no single state budget financing (and never has been) adult education. It is mostly financed through projects (Structural Funds) and there are separate sectors (teachers, health, agriculture etc.) that have their own funding.

At present, the project “Improvement of Professional Competence of Employed Persons” of the State Education Development Agency (VIAA), also known as “Learning for Adults”, which will be increasingly developed by 2023, makes an ambitious contribution to adult education.

According to the Adult Education Survey conducted within the framework of the co-operation project “Development of the Latvian Education and Skills Strategy” of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Latvia, the most important barriers to engaging in adult education are finances (tuition fees are too high, no employer support), time (training is not compatible with the work schedule, place of study is difficult to reach) and family responsibilities (need to devote time to family).

Closer cooperation between the public and private sectors is envisaged. In parallel with the continuation of support for training, it is also planned to develop the concept of Skills Funds,

in which part of the funding for employee training would be invested by the state, and the other part by employers.

Games in adult education

In all areas of adult education in Germany, i.e. in vocational, general and civic CET, games are used, developed and reflected, albeit to varying degrees.

Playful learning has gained in importance again in Germany in recent years. This concerns not only learning with digital media (videos, e-learning, video games, virtual reality, etc.), but also forms of human interaction (role-playing games, simulation games, board and card games).

There are some of German-language publications from Germany, Austria and Switzerland on games in adult education. These often deal with the use of games in teaching and vocational training, digital games and games in civic education. The German study presents some of these publications and their key messages.

The Dutch study examines (also on the basis of relevant literature) the question: What exactly is a game? and states: “In recent years there has been a strong growth in the use of serious games in learning situations, both internationally and in the Netherlands. Games are increasingly used as a means to learn, to change behavior or to convey emotions. Gaming has several unique characteristics and advantages over more traditional learning methods. ...

There are many reasons to choose games as an educational tool. To name just a few:

It's a safe way to experiment

Evoking behavior

Evoking emotions

Offer different forms of interaction

Offer control & feedback

Feedback loops during and after playing a game

Offer perspective on action

Creativity

Are fun!

and points to the importance of context and target group.

The study also has an interesting chapter on the small but active and fast-growing game industry in the Netherlands.

The Spanish study notes:” The presence of the game or some of its elements in learning environments is becoming more frequent. The conception that the game is only an entertainment activity for leisure time is changing as it is verified that its use in educational activities favors the acquisition of certain skills, competencies and content.” and examines the two teaching-learning processes *Game-Based Learning*, which consists of using a game to provoke learning (Escape Rooms and “Educational Breakouts” are two game proposals that can be included in this group) and *Gamification*, which is based on using game elements to design learning experiences that could take place without enjoying the playful component, but which, when planned following the guidelines that characterize this methodology, turn them into attractive and motivating proposals for the students.

The Latvian authors also point out that “in recent years, the integration of game elements into educational processes and the use of games in adult learning have become increasingly

popular.” but “it must be acknowledged that the majority of adult educators, especially those providing education through public agencies, still use generally accepted formal education methods - lectures, Powerpoint presentations, etc. - which do not provide an interactive learning process and do not encourage active participation. In particular, the use of games and the integration of gaming approaches more take place in companies in the business sector, both international and local. Especially those, who are open to the new ideas and care about their employees.

However, it should be noted that the choice of teaching style and the inclusion of appropriate methods in the teaching process depends more on the willingness and particular skills of adult educators. Adult educators who are developing their professional skills and willing to learn new methods also in their work use interactive methods in teaching but still part of adult educators approach learning process formally.”

The study points to a number of successful seminars/methods/games in Latvia.

Field researches/Examples of good practise

All four studies contain results of extensive field research and examples of good practice.

The Latvian study presents some organisations and educational games developers and sums up on the basis of interviews with stakeholders, representatives of adult education organisations and educators: “We can see that the use of games in Latvia is still at an early stage, when individual people or organizations use them, but in general, it is not a stable part of the adult education process in society. We also see that the depth of using games (only as an energizer or reflection assistant, or already as part of the learning process) depends on each lecturer and the institution itself. There is also no single place for gaming enthusiasts to learn about new gaming opportunities. And there is not a completely clear opinion in society about the benefits of introducing gaming in education.”

The interviews in the Netherlands also show interesting results and personal insights: It is striking that many of these people play games both at home and at work/training, but 30,4% does not play games at work/training for various reasons. A larger group does use games at work/training, with an equal number doing so occasionally or several times a week.

Games are used for/with:

- group dynamics and vision development
- agile training
- business studies
- work field deepening
- mathematics, language, business subjects, bilingual education
- team building and discussing stress
- executive functions
- soft skills and cooperation
- mediating learning
- spatial insight

Games play a role in informal learning, but not (yet) in formal learning. A trainer/teacher must first be 'warmed up' to games before he will use them himself. Research into the learning benefits of games may contribute to games being taken more seriously in education.

The respondents use a wide variety of used/existing games: board games, card and dice games, puzzles, escaperooms and also digital quizzes such as Kahoot.

The Dutch study ends with a description of needs of the interviewed educators:

There is a very high need for material (more games), a budget to buy that material, practical information on the use of games and examples from others. There is a smaller need for training and coordination with colleagues. Most respondents did not have an opinion on policy regarding the use of games in education.

The German study shows a wide range of resources and game collections for educators on analogue games as well as digital game based learning in adult education resources and game collections on games in civic education.

It ends with an excursus on the use of games in HochVier's educational work. In their educational work for human rights and democracy, HochVier also and increasingly use games - in all phases of the educational and group process - in the introductory and getting-to-know phase, for evaluation as well as for imparting knowledge, finding solutions and deepening.

The Spanish authors visited various adult schools and conducted interviews on the use of games in these institutions.

When they asked about games in the adult schools that they visit they found two different answers. On one hand, some schools doesn't use game at all in their lessons and courses. On the other hand, other schools use games as a part of the learning process of their students.

Focusing on this last ones, they give them some examples of the different options and games that they normally use every year and in what subjects or courses they do it.

They found that the most popular subject for the use of games was MATHS and LANGUAGES. There are also different examples of games that they use in different subjects or special situations like: Puzzles to work memory skills, Map games for geography, Timeline for history etc.

Games not only help in learning the content of the lessons but also building a group at the school as the students lose the embarrassment of talking or interacting with their peers while playing. Thanksto the games, the students relate "going to the school" with "having fun" which motivates them a lot and keeps them focused on their academic goals.

This is very important in a learning process, especially if it's a long term process like most of the courses they do at the adult schools.

For the adult educators, they try to use games that that meet characteristics like the ones was mentioned above but they would love to have a guide or a "coordination" that makes it easier to use and apply the effects of the games on the classroom.

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