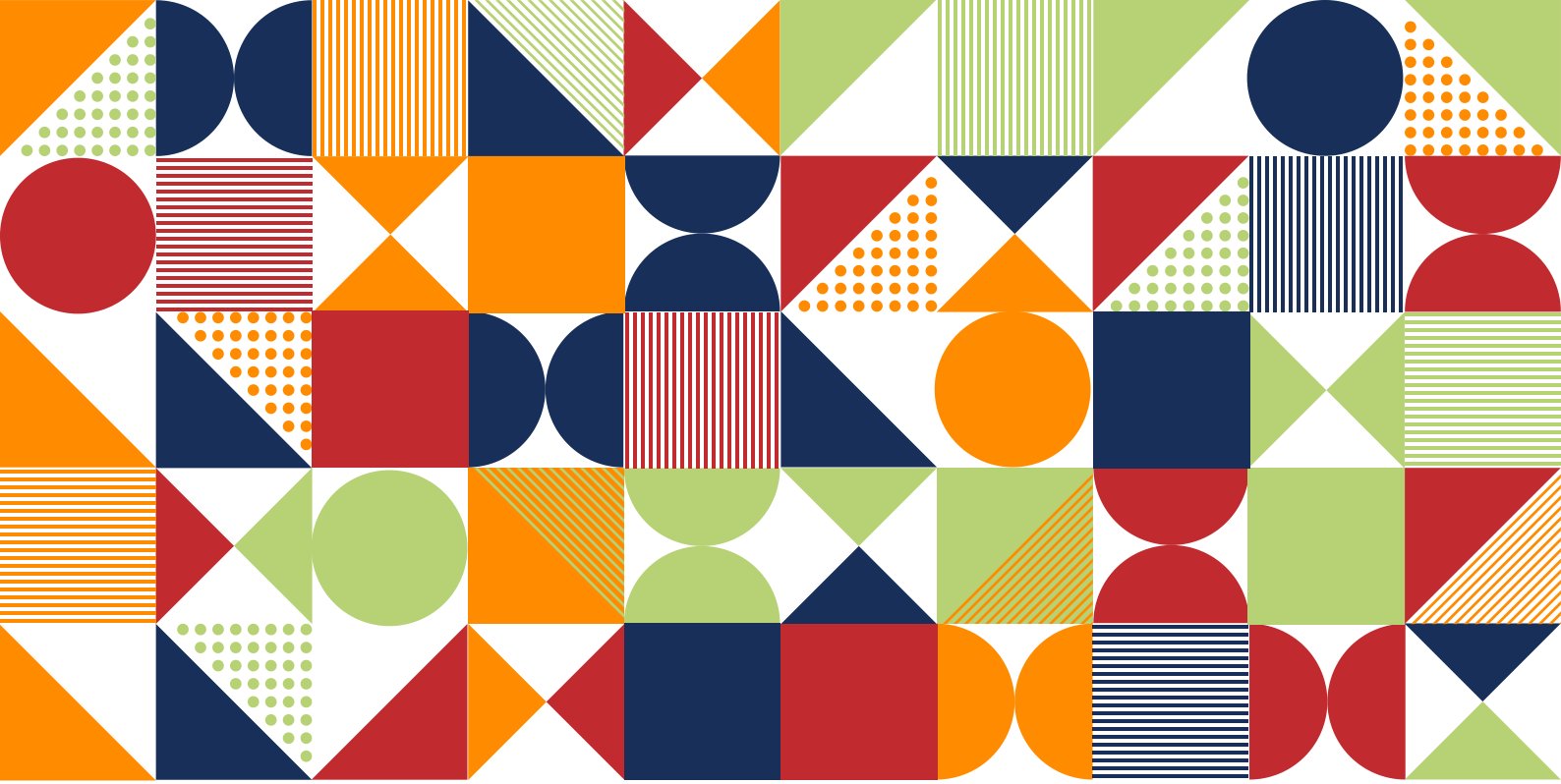

DEGSE

Digital Gamification For Youth Work Booklet

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Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the booklet

This booklet aims to explain what digital gamification is, why it can be useful, and how it can be applied in activities that support young people's skills, motivation and participation.
The booklet also presents an overview of existing tools, platforms and real practices from across Europe. It highlights how digital gamification can support social entrepreneurship, creativity and active citizenship among young people.

1.2. Target audience

This resource is designed for:

- Youth workers and youth leaders
- Trainers, facilitators and educators
- NGOs, community organisations and social enterprises working with young people

The booklet can be used by both beginners and more experienced professionals. No advanced technical skills are required.

1.3. How to use this booklet

The booklet is organised into thematic chapters. Each chapter can be read independently or used as a step-by-step guide.
Youth workers can use the booklet to design new activities, improve existing programs or explore tools that match the needs of their target groups.
Trainers can integrate the content into workshops or non-formal learning sessions. NGOs can use it to plan projects, create educational materials or build staff capacity.

1.4. Key definitions

Gamification

Gamification is the use of game elements, such as points, badges, missions or challenges, in a non-game context. Its aim is to increase engagement, motivation and participation.

Digital gamification

Digital gamification uses these game elements within digital environments. This includes online platforms, apps, digital escape rooms, simulations and interactive storytelling. Digital gamification allows youth workers to mix playful learning with digital tools that young people already use and enjoy.

Youth work

Youth work is a non-formal learning practice that supports the personal, social and educational development of young people. It creates safe spaces for young people to explore their skills, collaborate with peers and take part in community life.

1.5. About the project

This booklet is produced within the Erasmus+ project "Digital Escape Rooms for Social Entrepreneurship" (2024-2-BG01-KA220-YOU-000292991). It is implemented by a partnership of five organisations:

- Korenyak Foundation (Bulgaria) – Beneficiary
- European Gamification in Learning and Education – EGLE (Belgium)
- Centrum Edukacyjne EST (Poland)
- Escape4Change SlaVS s.r.l. (Italy)
- Rinova Málaga Sociedad Limitada Unipersonal (Spain)

The project is focused on the use of digital escape rooms and gamification techniques for supporting social entrepreneurship education in youth work. The partnership conducts research, develops games and learning resources and creates practical guidance for professionals.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Educational benefits of gamification in non-formal youth work

Gamification has recently become a valuable tool in education and youth work. In non-formal learning settings, where participation and creativity are particularly valued, gamification can raise engagement and foster key competencies that traditional methods sometimes miss.

In contrast to formal schooling, **youth work** often relies on experiential learning and peer interactions. Gamified approaches complement these principles by offering motivational incentives that make learning experiences more rewarding. For example, incorporating badges and levels into a youth program can help participants realise their progress and celebrate achievements, and as a result, remain motivated over longer periods.

Gamification also fosters social connection. Many youth programs focus on collaboration and community building, which are also features of multiplayer games that include cooperative challenges or shared missions. In such playful contexts, young people experience learning as something active and communal rather than imposed or competitive.

Moreover, gamification is in line with the principles of competence-based learning promoted by frameworks such as Youthpass in European youth work. It helps participants develop and reflect on transversal skills like communication, digital literacy, creativity and resilience in the course of playing and taking challenges. When well-designed, gamification thus brings many educational benefits.

2.2 Gamification vs. Game-Based Learning vs. Serious Games

Although often used interchangeably, gamification, game-based learning, and serious games represent distinct approaches along a continuum of playful learning design. Understanding their differences helps youth workers choose the right strategy for their educational objectives.

Concept	Definition	Example in youth work
Gamification	Use of game mechanics (points, badges, levels, challenges) in a non-game context to increase engagement.	Introducing badges and missions for participants in a volunteering program to encourage consistent participation.
Game-Based Learning (GBL)	Learning through games, using pre-existing or specially designed games as learning tools.	Playing a digital simulation where participants manage a community project and learn about teamwork and resource management.
Serious games	Full-fledged games created with an educational or social purpose beyond entertainment.	A digital entrepreneurship game where players run a virtual start-up to learn financial literacy and innovation.

Gamification focuses on structure and motivation; GBL emphasizes learning through gameplay; and serious games aim at immersive learning experiences with explicit educational objectives. In practice, youth workers often combine these approaches, gamifying activities, integrating educational games and even co-creating serious games with young people.

2.3 Psychology of motivation and engagement

Gamification's success relates to its ability to raise motivation. One of very influential frameworks explaining this is Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan. SDT distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and argues that sustainable engagement arises when three psychological needs are fulfilled.

- **Autonomy**: the need to be in control of one's actions and choices. Gamified activities that offer meaningful choices, such as selecting missions or customizing avatars, enhance ownership and initiative.

- **Competence**: the need to feel effective and accomplished. Providing clear goals, feedback and achievable challenges allows participants to experience progress and mastery. Levels, experience points or feedback messages reinforce this sense of accomplishment.

- **Relatedness**: feeling connected with others. Social interaction, collaboration and recognition within gamified environments strengthen participants' sense of belonging and purpose.

When gamification aligns with these needs, it fosters authentic motivation and young people engage not just for rewards but because the experience itself is meaningful and enjoyable. Conversely, when gamification relies solely on extrinsic motivators without addressing autonomy or purpose, engagement tends to fade quickly.

Gamification also benefits from insights in Flow Theory. Flow relates to a psychological state of deep concentration and enjoyment that arises when challenges are well balanced with skills. A well-designed gamified program keeps participants in this "sweet spot," avoiding both boredom and frustration.

2.4 Linking gamification to entrepreneurial skill development

Entrepreneurship in youth work is not merely about business creation. It's rather about cultivating a mindset of initiative, creativity and resilience. Gamification can play a significant role in nurturing these competencies.

1. Experiential risk-taking
Games involve taking risks and learning from failure in a safe environment. Gamified challenges simulate this by rewarding experimentation, resilience and iteration, all vital traits for young entrepreneurs.

2. Goal orientation and strategic thinking
Progress mechanics like quests and missions mirror the entrepreneurial process of setting goals, managing resources and overcoming obstacles. They train youth to plan strategically and adapt to changing conditions along the way.

3. Collaboration and networking
Multiplayer gamified tasks encourage communication, negotiation and leadership which are the skills central to both social and business entrepreneurship.

4. Creativity and innovation
Gamification's emphasis on problem-solving invites creative thinking. When youth co-create game elements (e.g., inventing missions or designing challenges), they practice innovation and ideation in tangible ways.

5. Reflection and self-awareness
Integrating reflection stages helps participants articulate their learning and build confidence in their abilities.

Thus, gamified learning environments can act as micro-worlds of entrepreneurship in playful, low-stakes contexts.

2.5 Summary

Gamification offers a bridge between youth culture and learning. Grounded in motivational psychology and experiential pedagogy, it can transform non-formal youth work into a more participatory, creative and empowering experience. Able to differentiate gamification from related concepts like game-based learning and serious games, youth workers can make informed choices of the best approach in a given context. And if they can connect these methods to entrepreneurial competence development, gamified youth work becomes a platform for learning key skills useful in the real world.

3. Landscape Analysis of Digital Gamification Tools

3.1 Comparative table of 15 platforms/tools

Name	Description	Main Features	Cost	Accessibility/ Inclusivity	Strenghts	Limitations	Use case/ Best for
You(th) Play – Virtual Planet	Hybrid ecological game: VR + board version for environmental education.	Story missions, real-world action tasks, facilitator guides, VR and board modes.	Free for NGOs / Erasmus+ funded.	Hybrid format increases access; board version good for low-resource settings.	Multi-format; strong youth testing; local civic follow-up.	VR version limited to facilitated workshops; public digital access limited.	Environmental education, blended workshops, civic actions.
ARIS	Mobile-based platform for location-based scavenger hunts and interactive stories.	Raising climate change awareness and system thinking	Free / open-source.	Mobile-responsive; WCAG depends on developer choices.	Full creative control; cost-free.	Requires developer skills for advanced features; no built-in inclusivity defaults.	Place-based civic engagement, community mapping, local data collection.
Youthwork .Digital (YMCA Romania)	Digital resource platform for youth workers. MOOC modules + gamification templates.	MOOC, templates, practice tools, peer-sharing, facilitation packs.	Free and public.	Designed for inclusion; multilingual; simple UI.	Ready-to-use, tested in Balkan contexts, good for vulnerable groups.	Less real-time interactivity vs larger game platforms.	Capacity building, tools for vulnerable youth, facilitator training.

Name	Description	Main Features	Cost	Accessibility/ Inclusivity	Strenghts	Limitations	Use case/ Best for
Wooclap	Live interaction platform for polls, quizzes and class engagement.	Live quizzes, polls, word clouds, timers, analytics.	Free basic; paid tiers.	Browser/mobile friendly; cross-device.	Very easy, real-time feedback; good for hybrid sessions.	Limited storytelling/game narrative; question limits on free plan.	Live sessions, formative assessment, language practice.
S'cape (Genially tools)	Free toolkit/extensions to enrich Genially-based escape games.	Drag and drop, timers, scoring, puzzle widgets, scripts for Genially.	Free	Works in Genially; learning curve for extensions; French language.	Rich extension set; no-code scripts; active community.	Available mainly in French; internet required.	Designing Genially escape rooms; language learning, interactive storytelling.
Canva	Visual-design platform used to create clickable interactive presentations / games.	Drag-and-drop templates; internal hyperlinks; export options.	Free; Pro paid.	Browser/mobile; easy for beginners; good for visual accessibility if designed well.	Very easy design; prints and digital exports; fast prototyping.	Lacks built-in game logic (scores/timers); limited real-time interactivity.	Quick interactive presentations, printable game assets, asynchronous escapes.
Kahoot!	Quiz-based game platform for real-time and asynchronous play.	Live quizzes, polls, reports, integration (Zoom).	Free basic; premium.	Mobile-first; localized interfaces; needs internet.	Widely adopted; fosters competition and engagement.	Internet dependence; limited open-ended tasks.	Knowledge checks, scaffolding before immersive sessions.
Mentimeter	Interactive presentation tool for polls, word clouds, QandA.	Word clouds, ranking, anonymous input, live visuals.	Free limited; paid plans.	Browser-based; multilingual; accessible input options.	Inclusive participation, good for quiet voices.	Not strongly "game-like"; needs internet.	Participatory planning, inclusive polling, remote workshops.
GooseChase	Mobile scavenger-hunt app with GPS missions and photo tasks.	GPS missions, leaderboards, live galleries, multimedia submissions.	Free small; premium for larger use.	Mobile-only; English UI; hybrid options possible.	Highly engaging, outdoor learning, fosters teamwork.	Connectivity and mobile requirement; language constraint.	Outdoor civic/environmental hunts, heritage trails.

Name	Description	Main Features	Cost	Accessibility / Inclusivity	Strenghts	Limitations	Use case/ Best for
Twine	Open-source authoring tool for interactive branching stories.	Non-linear passages, variables, multimedia, export to HTML.	Free	Cross-platform; accessibility depends on authoring choices.	Easy start for non-programmers; powerful when extended.	No built-in collaboration; accessibility depends on author design.	Interactive narratives, branching decision-based learning scenarios.
Miro	Collaborative digital whiteboard for brainstorming and co-creation.	Infinite canvas, templates, real-time collaboration, integrations.	Free limited; paid plans / education discounts.	Multi-device; language options; limited advanced accessibility.	Excellent for co-creation and remote teamwork.	Free plan limits; needs stable internet and bandwidth.	Co-design workshops, mapping entrepreneurial ideas, team planning.
ClassDojo	Classroom behaviour and communicatio n app (points, portfolios).	Points system, avatars, messaging, portfolios.	Free core; paid family subscription	Multi-language; mobile friendly; used in primary settings.	Strong family engagement; simple behaviour gamification.	May overemphasize extrinsic rewards; privacy concerns.	Primary-school engagement, SEL, parent–school communication.
Genially	No-code interactive content creator (presentations, games, quizzes).	Interactive buttons, animations, tracking, templates.	Free / Pro / Master (paid tiers).	Aims accessibility; mobile rendering issues for some interactions.	Very versatile; strong gamification features; visual appeal.	Some mobile limitations; export and analytics on paid plans.	Interactive presentations, dissemination, public-facing escape games.
HMH Classcraft™	Classroom role-playing platform turning learning into RPG-style quests.	Quests, avatars, rewards, teacher analytics, behaviour tracking.	Subscription (institution pricing).	Multi-platform; aims for inclusive engagement.	Strong engagement, scalability, data for teachers.	Cost for institutions; less deep game customization.	Whole-class gamified curricula, SEL, long-term engagement.
Duolingo	Gamified language-learning app with levels, streaks, achievements.	Levels, XP, streaks, adaptive tasks, leaderboards.	Free; Duolingo Plus paid.	Mobile-first; widely accessible; supportive for many learners.	Highly engaging; research-backed pedagogy; very scalable.	Limited real conversation practice; not a full fluency solution.	Self-paced language learning, microlearning, multilingual youth groups.

3.2 Criteria for evaluating tools (usability/cost/inclusivity/accessibility, etc.) - summary of evaluation

The short summary below captures how the 15 examined tools score across the project's key dimensions.

- **Usability and learning curve** - Tools like **Canva, Genially, Kahoot!, Wooclap** and **ClassDojo** score high for ease of use. They require little training and allow quick prototyping. Tools that offer greater flexibility (ARIS, Twine, Miro) provide more design freedom but demand more technical skill from facilitators.

- **Cost and licensing** - A strong mix exists: many high-value tools have usable free tiers (Kahoot!, Genially, Canva, Twine, ARIS, Youthwork.Digital). Premium platforms (Classcraft, Genially Pro, GooseChase premium) can add advanced analytics or scale but require budgets from NGOs or educational bodies.

- **Accessibility and inclusivity** - Hybrid and low-tech options (You(th) Play board version, Canva exports, Genially + S'cape tools) are best for inclusion and low-connectivity contexts. Several platforms are mobile-first (Kahoot!, Duolingo, GooseChase), which increases reach but may exclude users without smartphones. Accessibility often depends on authoring practices: open-source tools (Twine, ARIS) can be made accessible but need deliberate design to meet WCAG guidelines.

- **Adaptability and customization** - Open or no-code platforms (Twine, ARIS, Genially + S'cape) allow deep customization suited to local contexts and social entrepreneurship scenarios. Miro and Canva enable co-creation but may need glue tools to add scoring or progression mechanics.

- **Scalability and sustainability** - Platforms with cloud infrastructures and wide adoption (Duolingo, Classcraft, Kahoot!, Genially) scale easily and can reach many users. Sustainability also depends on community resources and offline versions. Projects found that hybrid solutions (digital + printable) offer the best sustainability in low-resource settings.

- **Technical requirements and reliability** - Tools that require stable internet or advanced hardware (VR for Virtual Planet, GooseChase outdoors with GPS) can limit rural uptake. Ensure fallback low-tech versions or offline exports.

- **Data and evaluation features** - Tools with analytics (Wooclap, Genially Pro, Kahoot!, Classcraft) support monitoring and evaluation. For many NGOs, simple reporting (completion rates, quiz scores) is sufficient, but measuring long-term learning or entrepreneurship outcomes requires additional evaluation design.

- **Community and support** - Platforms with active communities or extensive tutorials (S'cape/Genially community, Twine community, Youthwork.Digital) help practitioners adopt and adapt tools faster. Open-source communities also enable peer sharing and reusable templates.

- **Bottom line**: No single tool is perfect. Choose according to your priorities - **inclusion and offline capability** (choose hybrid/printable + simple mobile tools), **rapid prototyping** (Canva, Genially), **rich branching narratives** (Twine, ARIS), **live interaction and assessment** (Wooclap, Kahoot!, Mentimeter), or **full-class RPG engagement** (Classcraft).

3.3 Case examples of use in youth work - lessons learned and challenges faced (summary)

Below are short, practice-focused lessons and challenges drawn from the real use-cases described in the analysis. These points reflect what worked well and what to watch out for when applying the examined tools in youth settings.

Lessons learned (what worked well)

- **Hybrid formats increase reach.** The **You(th) Play – Virtual Planet** hybrid (VR + board) enabled participation across urban and rural sites. When digital content is paired with offline formats, inclusion improves.

- **Low-barrier entry tools build capacity fast.** Platforms like **Youthwork Digital, Canva and Genially** let youth workers create meaningful gamified activities with minimal training. They are ideal for quick pilots and for organisations with limited technical expertise.

- **Location-based and civic tools produce tangible outcomes**. **ARIS** and **GooseChase** turned youth into active data-collectors and community advocates (e.g., mapping pollution hotspots; heritage trails), producing real policy input and local actions.

- **Live-interaction tools boost participation and reflection. Wooclap, Kahoot! and Mentimeter** successfully supported live debriefs and formative checks that helped translate gameplay into learning.

- **Open-source and no-code tools enable creative narratives. Twine** and **ARIS** empowered co-creation of branching scenarios relevant to social entrepreneurship and ethical dilemmas.

- **Practical challenges reported.**

- **Connectivity and device gaps.** Many youth in rural or under-resourced settings lack reliable internet or devices. Projects overcame this by offering printable or board versions, and by preloading content where possible.

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- **Accessibility is not automatic.** Tools rarely guarantee WCAG compliance by default. Even accessible-looking platforms require conscious authoring practices (alt text, readable fonts, captions) to ensure real inclusion.

- **Technical skills and facilitation matter**. Powerful platforms (ARIS, Twine, Miro) require facilitator training. Projects emphasise investing time in facilitator upskilling and pilot tests before roll-out.

- **Balancing gamified rewards vs. intrinsic learning.** Some platforms risk over-reliance on extrinsic motivation (leaderboards, points). Practitioners reported the need to design reflection and meaning-making stages so learning persists after the game.

- **Sustainability and funding for premium features.** Premium plans (GooseChase premium, Classcraft institutional licenses, Genially Pro analytics) enhance functionality but need budget planning. NGOs should weigh free/hybrid alternatives or seek educational discounts.

Practical tips from the field

- Always pilot with a small group; collect qualitative feedback and technical logs.
- Provide low-tech fallbacks (printables, offline PDFs) for every digital activity.
- Combine live interaction tools (Wooclap/Kahoot!) with narrative tools (Twine/Genially) to mix assessment with immersion.
- Embed debrief/reflection as a compulsory stage to transform play into learning and entrepreneurial thinking.

4. Current Practices in Youth Work

4.1 Success stories and practical applications by youth organizations/youth workers

Across the 15 examined practices, several recurring success patterns appear:

- **Low-cost, high-engagement designs work well.** Projects using board games or card-based scenarios (FutureForge, GOE I, ERSE) achieved strong engagement and are straightforward for youth workers to run with minimal resources. These formats proved especially useful in youth centres and career guidance workshops.

- **Digital simulations expand reach and depth.** Digital escape rooms, 3D virtual worlds and serious games (E-SCAPE, EDGE, BC4ESE) enabled safe practice of complex scenarios - employability, workplace decisions, eco-social entrepreneurship - helping participants rehearse behaviours and see consequences without real-world risk. These tools also supported remote delivery and blended formats.

- **Gamified credentials and micro-badges boost motivation and recognition.** Platforms with structured missions and badges (iDEA, YBI elements) showed high completion and sustained participation, useful where formal recognition or motivation is needed.

- **Methodological capacity-building multiplies impact.** Projects that trained youth workers and provided open handbooks/tutorials (GROW, Gaming4Skills, GDL) enabled many frontline practitioners to design and adapt gamified activities - creating a multiplier effect beyond project pilots.

- **Social entrepreneurship and inclusion are well served by scenario learning.** ERSE, BC4ESE and EDGE used scenario-based gamification to raise awareness of social business models and to practice inclusion-focused decision making - leading to concrete educational resources and motivated participants inclined toward social ventures.

Practical application tips reported by practitioners:

- Use debrief/reflection after play to translate experience into learning.
- Localise scenarios to match participants' socio-economic context.
- Combine low-tech and digital options to maximise accessibility.

4.2 Lessons learned and challenges faced

The projects also reported several recurrent challenges and lessons:

- **Resource and technical requirements.** Digital platforms and 3D worlds (E-SCAPE, EDGE) can demand higher tech capacity (equipment, stable internet, technical expertise). Practitioners must plan for fallback low-tech versions and budget for technical support.

- **Need for facilitator training.** Effective learning depends heavily on facilitators' ability to run scenarios and lead reflective debriefs. Projects emphasise investing in training (GROW, Gaming4Skills) and providing clear facilitator handbooks.

- **Measuring learning outcomes quantitatively is hard.** Many projects deliver rich qualitative feedback but lack long-term quantitative impact data (employment rates, enterprise creation). This limits robust evidence for funders. Future initiatives should build simple monitoring frameworks into pilots.

- **Accessibility and inclusivity must be designed in.** Projects working with neurodiverse or disabled youth (EDGE) show that accessibility requires deliberate design (UI, clear instructions, pacing). Retro-fitting accessibility is costly - so include it from the start.

- **Cultural sensitivity and localisation are essential.** Scenario content (e.g., radicalisation, entrepreneurship) must be culturally adapted; otherwise transferability suffers. Projects recommend partnering with local organisations for localisation.

- **Sustainability beyond project funding.** Tools that rely on platforms or ongoing moderation face sustainability risks. Open-access materials and capacity building (handbooks, CoPs) are pragmatic ways to ensure continuation.

5. Digital gamification for social entrepreneurship

5.1 How gamification promotes entrepreneurial thinking

Digital gamification integrates game designelements into non-gamecontexts to enhance engagement and motivation (Deterding et al., 2011). In social entrepreneurship, gamification serves as a powerful tool to foster entrepreneurial thinking, promote innovative solutions to societal challenges, and engage communities in meaningful ways. This report explores how gamification promotes entrepreneurial mindsets,examines game-based scenariosaddressing social issues such as sustainability and inclusion, and maps escape room principles to entrepreneurship education.

Gamification promotes entrepreneurial thinking by creating interactive environments that stimulate problem-solving, risk-taking, and resilience - key attributes of successful entrepreneurs. By incorporating elements such as rewards, leaderboards, and progress tracking, gamification encourages individuals to experiment and iterate, mirroringthe entrepreneurial process(Hamari et al., 2014). For instance, gamified platforms like SimVenture simulate business scenarios where users make strategic decisions, fostering critical thinking and adaptability (SimVenture, n.d.).

Moreover,gamification enhances intrinsic motivation, which is crucial for sustaining entrepreneurial endeavors. According to Kiili (2005), Digital games facilitate flow states by providing unambiguous feedback and structured goals, promoting sustained engagement. This aligns with entrepreneurial thinking, where individuals must navigate uncertainty and setbacks. For example, gamified learning platforms like Kahoot! engageusers through competitive quizzes, promoting quick decision-making and collaboration (Kahoot!,n.d.). Such environments cultivate a growth mindset, enabling aspiring entrepreneurs to view challenges as opportunities (Burnette et al., 2020).

5.2. Game Scenarios Addressing Social Issues

Gamified scenarios are increasingly used to tackle social challenges, such as sustainability and inclusion, by engaging players in immersive problem-solving experiences. These scenarios leverage game mechanics to raise awareness, encourage behavioral change, and inspireinnovative solutions.

5.2.1 Sustainability

Games like Eco challenge playersto build sustainable civilizations while managing environmental resources (Strange Loop Games, n.d.). Players must balance economic growth with ecological preservation, fostering systemsthinking - a critical skill for social entrepreneurs addressing climate change. Similarly, the "World Climate Simulation" engages participants in role-playing as policymakers negotiating global climate agreements, promoting collaborative strategies for sustainability (Climate Interactive, n.d.). These games align with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), encouraging players to develop actionable solutions (United Nations, 2015).

5.2.2 Inclusion

Gamified scenarios also promote social inclusion by simulating diverse perspectives and fostering empathy.For example, "Spent" is an online game where players make financial decisions as low-income individuals, highlighting systemic barriers to economic inclusion (Urban Ministries of Durham, n.d.). Such games encourage players to design inclusive solutions, a key aspect of social entrepreneurship. Another example is Mission US, which uses historical role-playing to explore issues of race and gender,fostering dialogue on equity (WNET,2021). These scenarios demonstrate how gamification can engage communities in addressing social inequalities.

5.3 Mapping Escape Room Principles to Entrepreneurship Education

Escape rooms, as immersive gamified experiences, offer a unique framework for entrepreneurship education by simulating high-pressure, collaborative environments. The principles of escape rooms - puzzle-solving, teamwork, and time management - map directly to entrepreneurial competencies.

5.3.1. Puzzle-Solving and Problem Identification

Escape roomsrequire players to identify and solve puzzles, mirroring the entrepreneurial processof recognizing marketgaps and devisingsolutions. According to Nicholson (2015),escape rooms foster analytical thinkingby presenting complex challenges that require creative approaches. In entrepreneurship education, gamified escape rooms can simulate scenarios like developing a sustainable business model, encouraging students to thinkcritically and innovatively.

5.3.2 Teamwork and Collaboration

Successful escape room experiences depend on effective communication and collaboration, skills essential for entrepreneurial ventures. Wiemker et al. (2015) highlight that escape rooms promote trust and role delegation, preparing participants for team-based entrepreneurial projects.For example, a gamified escape room designed for social entrepreneurship education could task teams with solving a community-based problem,such as improving access to education, fostering collaborative innovation.

5.3.3 Time Management and Resilience

Escape rooms impose time constraints, teachingplayers to prioritize tasks and adapt under pressure - key entrepreneurial skills.Inan educational context, escaperooms can be designed to simulate funding pitches or project deadlines, preparing students for the fast- paced nature of entrepreneurship.

5.4 Summary

Digital gamification offers transformative potentialfor social entrepreneurship by fostering entrepreneurial thinking, addressing social challenges through immersive game scenarios, and leveraging escape room principles in education. By engaging individuals in interactive, problem-solving environments, gamification equips aspiring entrepreneurs with the skills and mindset needed to drive social impact. As gamified approaches continue to evolve, their integration into entrepreneurship education will play a critical role in shapinginnovative solutions to global challenges.

6. Inclusive and Accessible Gamification

Digital gamification can play a central rolein promoting inclusive learning environments for young people. By integrating playful and digital elements that accommodate diverse abilities, experiences, and backgrounds, youth workers can foster engagement, collaboration, and creativity among all learners.Research highlights that when gamification is designed with inclusion in mind, it enhances participation and motivation for students with varied profilesand needs (McCrindle, 2013; Magnago and de CastroNunes, 2024; Consuegra de Sucre et al., 2025). To achieve this, inclusion should not be treatedas an afterthought but embeddedthroughout the design process, from concept to implementation.

6.1 Designing Games for Neurodiverse Learners

Neurodiversity encompasses a wide range of cognitive profiles, including autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and other variations in learning and information processing. Games designed with these learners in mind benefit all participants by promoting clarity, flexibility, and engagement.

A first important principle is that of **multimodal communication**. To make a game multimodal, combinetext, visuals, audio, and interactive feedback. Thismakes content accessible todifferent cognitive styles. For example, written instructionscan be complemented byicons or narration, andvisual cues can guide learnersthrough complex tasks.

Flexibility and learner control are also key principles. Allowing players to adjust the pace, skip optional challenges, or disable timers supports those who struggle with attention or time pressure. Similarly, clear structure, predictable progress indicators, and consistent navigation help reduce cognitive load and anxiety.

Finally, designers should avoid **sensory overload** by limiting the use of flashing lights, sudden sounds, or crowded layouts. Providing settings to adjust volume, brightness, or visual effects allows each learner to personalise their experience. In short, games for neurodiverse learners should be adaptable, clearly structured, and sensitive to individual differences, ensuring that every participant can focus on the joy of learning rather than the barriers of design.

6.2 Accessibility Standards: Font, Colour, and Navigation

Accessible designensures that all learners, including those with sensory, motor, or cognitiveimpairments, can interact with digital games effectively.

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) provide a strong foundation for ensuring inclusivity in gamified learning environments. The table below summarises key accessibility standards relevant to youth workers designing or selectingdigital tools.

Design Element	Best Practices
Font and typography	Use sans-serif fonts (e.g., Arial, Verdana) with adequate size (12–14 pt or larger). Avoid decorative or condensed typefaces. Maintain sufficient line spacing for readability.
Colour contrast	Ensurea high contrast between the text and the background. Avoid relying solely on colour to convey meaning; combine colourswith icons or labels.
Navigation and interface	Provide clear, consistent menus and icons. Avoid hidden navigation. Support multiple input methods (keyboard, touch, voice). Maintain a predictable layout.
Adaptability	Allow users to adjust font size, mute or modify sound, enable subtitles, or reduce animations. Offer control over timing and pacing.
Accessible multimedia	Includecaptions for audio, alt-text for images, and transcripts for videos. Check compliance with WCAG 2.1 AA standards.
Cognitive accessibility	Usesimple language, clear instructions, and short sections of text.Break tasks into smaller steps and highlight key points visually.

These standards not only improve accessibility for learners with disabilities but also enhance usability and comfort for all users. By following them, youth workers create a more equitable and engaging digital environment that promotes participation rather than exclusion.

6.3. Tools and Templates for Inclusive Design

Youth workers and educators can rely on a variety of existing tools and templates to integrate inclusion into their gamification projects. These resources support each phase of design, from planning and co-creation to evaluation and improvement.

Resource / Tool	Description
GameOn Project	Platformoffering manuals, best practices, and co-design tools for inclusive game development.
Microsoft Game Accessibility Workshop Toolkit	Set of workshop materials and checklists for building accessibility awareness among designers and facilitators.
Inclusive Design Brief Template (HIVO)	Planningtemplate ensuring accessibility and user diversity are integrated from project inception.
PartiPlay Co-Design Kit	Participatory design toolkit developed for neurodiverse learners.
Accessibility Checklists (Learning Guild, GiftAbled, etc.)	Practical checklists for cognitive accessibility, multimodal content,and sensory design.

Thesetools help operationalize inclusiveintentions, providingpractical guidance for professionals who may not have a technical background in design. They also encourage reflection, collaboration, and continual improvement, core principlesof inclusive youth work.

6.4. From Principles to Practice

Creating inclusive gamified learning environments requires intentional, iterative practice. The following steps can guide youth workers in embedding accessibility into their projects:

1. **Assess needs early** by consulting youth about their abilities, preferences, and challenges. This participatory step avoids assumptions and fosters ownership.

2. **Integrate inclusion from the start,** rather than as a later adaptation. Early planning ensures that accessibility is structurally embedded.

3. **Prototype and test iteratively** with diverse groups, collecting feedback from learners with varying profiles.

4. **Provide training** for facilitators on accessibility tools, neurodiversity awareness, and inclusive facilitation methods.

5. **Offer flexibility** within the game: multiple paths, adjustable difficulty levels, and optional features help cater to individual comfort levels.

Magnago and de Castro Nunes (2024) emphasise that successful inclusive gamification also depends on adequate infrastructure and staff training. In the same vein, McCrindle (2013), Patzer et al. (2018), and Consuegra de Sucre et al. (2025) collectively show that gamification, when thoughtfully designed, enhances motivation, collaboration, and participation across all learning profiles.

6.5. Summary

Inclusive and accessible gamification is not only about compliance with accessibility guidelines but also about embracing diversity as a source of creativity and engagement. When youth workers integrate accessibility principles into their gamified learning experiences, they open opportunities for every young person to participate fully, regardless of cognitive, physical, or cultural differences. In this sense, inclusive gamification becomes a powerful tool for equity, empowerment, and lifelong learning.

7. Implementation Guide for Youth Workers

7.1 Practical tips on what to consider when planning and organizing gamified activities (e.g., choosing the right tools; adapting to your target group's needs; troubleshooting, etc.)

When organizing gaming activities, several elements must be taken into consideration, such as: the main objective, the target group, the ability to be as inclusive as possible, the choice of the toolkit, the launch of the mission, and the explanation of the rules.

Properly analysing and addressing these elements allows for the creation of a gaming activity that achieves substantial success.

Let's look at them in more detail:

1. **Objective definition**: before starting, the objectives to be achieved must be defined, outlining precisely what we want young people to be able to do or know by the end of the program.

2. **Target group analysis**: not all young people are the same. the effectiveness of gamification depends on adapting to their needs and context.
   - **Assessment of digital skills:** is the group comfortable with complex apps (e.g., moodle/classcraft) or do they require simple and familiar tools (e.g., kahoot! and google forms)?

- **Motivational preferences** (Bartle's player types):
  - **Achievers**: they want to see levels and skill trees.
  - **Explorers**: they love unlocking hidden content and discovering the narrative.
  - **Socializers**: they respond well to peer-feedback and team projects.
  - **Competitors**: they might appreciate public leaderboards, but always balance with team play.

3. **Inclusivity check:** it must be possible to ensure that the design does not penalize anyone. therefore, input options must be offered, and the colour contrast on the chosen platforms must be verified. this last point is fundamental and is worth further exploration to break down the so-called "digital barriers."

It is necessary to create an inclusive design that ensures all participants, regardless of their physical or cognitive abilities, or their familiarity with technology, can participate fully and meaningfully.

To do this, it is necessary not only to:

1. **Diversify the challenges** by including quests that reward different skills: analysis, reflection, creativity, and verbal interaction (and therefore not just speed);

2. **Always provide step-by-step guidance** for the game dynamics, avoiding the assumption of prior familiarity with gaming, but also and above all to adhere to the principles of the WCAG (web content accessibility guidelines): perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust.

A clarifying table is proposed below.

Accessibility Barrier	Inclusive Solution in Digital Gamification	WCAG Principle
Visual/Color Blindness	Use high contrast and do not rely on color alone to convey crucial information.	Perceivable
Hearing/Deafness	Always provide subtitles or transcripts for briefings or motivational videos.	Perceivable
Motor/Mobility	Ensure that interactions are possible via keyboard or simplified input.	Operable
Cognitive/Dyslexia	Use clear and cohesive language. Avoid time-based penalties for complex tasks.	Understandable
Technological	Offer diverse input options (e.g., submit answers via plain text).	Operable

3. **The Choice of the Digital Toolkit**

It is preferable to avoid using a single "all-in-one" app. It is better to opt for a hybrid approach that is economical and flexible by combining different platforms (e.g., LMS for structure, Kahoot! for engagement, Badgr for certification).

The Three Layers of the Ideal Toolkit:

Layer (Function)	Primary Purpose	Examples of Tools (Free/Freemium Options)
1. The Engine (LMS/Structure)	To provide immediate Points and rewards for daily engagement.	Google Classroom, Moodle, local e-learning platforms.
2. The Feedback (Quick PBL)	To provide immediate Points and rewards for daily engagement.	Kahoot!, ClassDojo (for points), Quizizz.
3. The Proof (Certification)	To create Badges and Skill Trees that have external value.	Badgr, Open Badges, skill tree visualized on Miro.

4. **Selection protocol**
    - **Prioritise the engine**: choose the management platform (LMS) that ensures autonomy and comprehensibility.
    - **Easy integration**: verify whether the feedback and proof tools can be easily integrated (e.g., a link to badgr after completing a quiz on google classroom).
    - **Pilot test**: test the tech stack with a small group of "beta testers" (a few trusted young people) before the official launch to identify bugs and complications.

5. **Mission launch phase and rules**

The way gamification is presented will determine its acceptance, and it is therefore crucial to conduct a good initial briefing following these guidelines:

- avoid using the word "course": use more appealing names such as "the alpha mission," "the leaders' academy," or "the exploration of the future."
- clarify the rules clearly and patiently.
- it is essential to present yourself as a guide and not as a "teacher." words like "game master" or "mentor" who guides young people through the narrative and maintains game balance are preferable.

Finally, managing the leaderboard and competitive risk is essential for the activity's success. specifically, if you decide to use a leaderboard:

- it's better to use multiple leaderboards: not just for total points, but also for creativity points, collaboration points, or peer-to-peer help points. this rewards different types of players and makes the game inclusive.
- the frequency of leaderboard updates is preferably at variable or surprise intervals to keep engagement high.
- locus of control: ensure that young people feel they have control over their scores (if they commit, they earn; it's not based on luck).

7.2 Monitoring, evaluation, and feedback

Gamification is a process of continuous improvement that requires adjustments based on game data.

a. continuous monitoring: use data generated by digital tools to quickly identify challenges:

- stagnation point ("the grind"): if a specific task is slowing down or discouraging most young people, it is a "dead zone." reduce the difficulty, break the task down into micro-quests, or increase the reward (xp) to make it more appealing.
- churn rate: if young people stop logging in, extrinsic motivation is not sufficient. review the narrative or introduce a new team dynamic to reactivate social motivation.

b. feedback and redesign cycles

- game feedback vs. learning feedback:
  - game feedback: points, level up (automatic and immediate).
  - learning feedback: specific comments on performance and suggestions for improvement (from the game master/youth worker).
- end-of-mission questionnaires: ask the young people directly:
  - "what was the most rewarding challenge?"
  - "which quest did you not like (and why)?"
  - "were you able to use your spendable points for something useful to you?"

It is important to use this information to apply a "patch" (game/program update) before the launch of the next cycle, ensuring that each iteration is more engaging and accessible than the previous one.

Below is a detailed table for monitoring and evaluating whether a game was more or less successful (more or less effective) based on the most objective measurements possible through specific key performance indicators:

KPI Category	Game Metrics	What it Measures
Engagement	Login Frequency (Streak), Completion Rate	Effectiveness of the narrative and access bonuses.
Learning	Average Time to Level Up, Quiz Scores	Speed of acquisition and actual knowledge transfer.
Retention	Churn Rate	Ability to maintain interest over the long term.

8. Conclusion

Digital gamification offers youth workers a powerful and flexible way to engage young people, support their learning and encourage active participation. By combining game elements with non-formal education, digital tools can strengthen motivation, collaboration and creativity, while also helping young people develop key skills for social entrepreneurship and personal growth.

This booklet provides an overview of current theories, practical methodologies, digital platforms and real examples from Bulgaria, Belgium, Italy, Poland and Spain. It also highlights the importance of accessibility and inclusive design, ensuring that all young people can benefit from gamified learning experiences.

The resources, tools and recommendations presented here aim to support youth workers, trainers and organisations in designing meaningful, playful and impactful activities. The project partnership hopes that this booklet will inspire new approaches, encourage experimentation and contribute to a wider use of digital gamification in youth work settings.

9. Annexes

9.1 Bibliography and further reading (Please, use the APA Citation Guide, uploaded in the folder):

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9.2. Contact info of project partners:

Foundation Korenyak (Bulgaria):

- Address: Bulgaria, Sofia, 10 Vihren Str.
- Email: foundation.korenyak@gmail.com
- Website: www.korenyakproject.org

European Gamification in Learning and Education (Belgium):

- Address: 15, Rue Gabrielle Petit, 7022 Mons, Belgium
- Email: europeangle.network@gmail.com
- Website: https://egle-network.eu/

Centrum Edukacyjne EST (Poland):

- Address: Wadowice, Al. M.B. Fatimskiej 66
- Email: fundacja@est.edu.pl
- Website: www.est.edu.pl

Escape4Change SIaVS s.r.l. (Italy):

- Address: via Medardo Rosso 5 Torino
- Email:info@escape4change.com
- Website:escape4change.com

Rinova Málaga Sociedad Limitada Unipersonal (Spain):

- Address: Polo Digital, Edificio 1 Tabacalera, Avenida de Sor Teresa Prat, 15 Málaga, Spain, 29003
- Email: info@rinova.es
- Website: https://rinova.es/

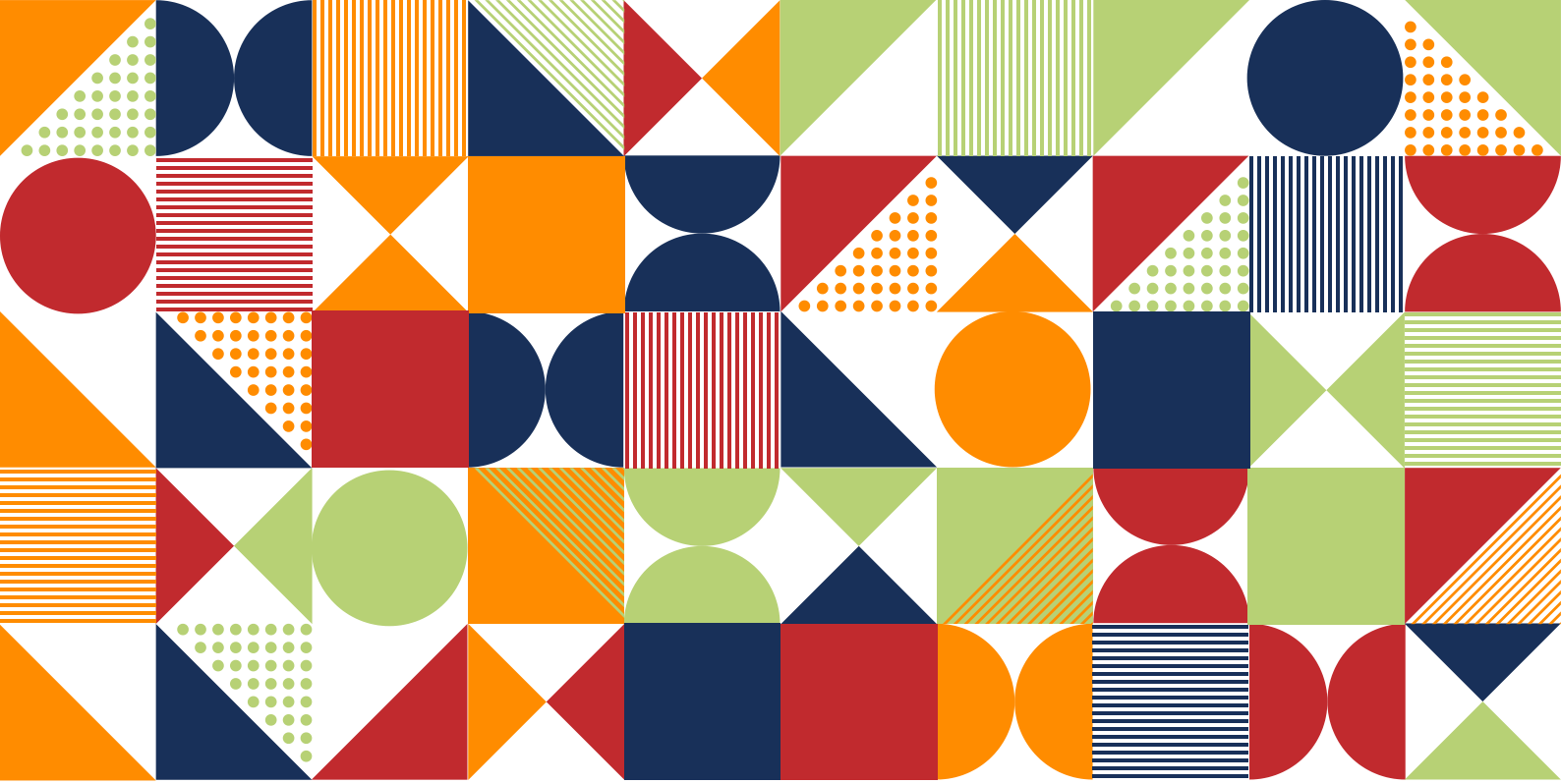
9.3. Annex - Examples of gamification in social entrepreneurship education - Table of examples across the partner countries (direct connection to the “Current Practices Report”)

Practice	Organisation/ Country	Target audience and main objectives	Gamification method (core elements)	Impact / Results (summary)	Transferability
FutureForge	Mundus Bulgaria (FutureForge Erasmus+) - Bulgaria.	Youth (14–30), youth workers, career guidance practitioners. Objectives: career exploration, future skills, capacity building for youth workers.	Board-game based workshops; gamified toolkit (100 workshop packages); scenario decision-making, role-play, points, cooperative challenges, debriefs.	Outputs: “Skills and Professions of the Future” guide, Gamification Toolkit, piloted LTTAs; positive trainer feedback and active participation.	High - board game + toolkit localisable; suitable for youth centres, schools, career guidance.
BC4ESE (Eco-Social Entrepreneurship)	BC4ESE consortium - Croatia, BiH, Montenegro, Serbia, Belgium (regional project).	Young people in the Western Balkans/Europe. Objectives: promote eco-social entrepreneurship, sustainable business skills.	Digital role-model education; online simulators of eco-social business scenarios; points, badges, leaderboards, scenario outcomes.	18 teachers and 18 non-teaching school staff, and approximately 855 secondary students.	Playful and emotionally engaging methods.
E-SCAPE Project	University of Chemical Technology and partners - Bulgaria + Greece + EU partners.	HE students, recent grads, trainers, non-formal educators. Objectives: transferable skills (problem-solving, digital competence, teamwork), employability.	Digital escape-room scenarios and a 3D virtual world; scenario guides, reflection and skills mapping.	Outputs: Teaching Framework, several scenarios, 3D platform, impact and multiplication guide; qualitative improvements in understanding soft skills.	Strong - scenario guides enable localisation; technical resources helpful but simpler modules possible.
ERSE (Edu. Rescue of Social Entrepreneurship)	ERSE consortium - Belgium + partners (Cyprus, Portugal, Greece...).	Young professionals in NGOs, youth orgs, educators. Objectives: social entrepreneurship awareness and skills, ICT learning model.	Educational escape rooms (ERs) as central tool; scenario-based immersive learning; pedagogical guide + production manual.	Produced guide, production manual, 18 synopses and 12 full scenarios, e-platform, reflective booklet; positive feedback from partners.	High - open-access materials, multilingual resources; suitable for schools, NGOs, trainers.

Practice	Organisation/ Country	Target audience and main objectives	Gamification method (core elements)	Impact / Results (summary)	Transferability
Gaming4Skills	Consortium (Spain, Cyprus, Romania, Belgium).	School educators, trainers. Objectives: integrate video games into formal education; cross-curricular competence building.	Use of existing video games as learning tools (spectator/creator/single/group play); pedagogical entry points, teaching sequences.	Outputs: booklet, decision tool, 4 libraries of pedagogical sequences; helped teachers adopt game-based strategies.	High - resources adaptable across subjects and curricula.
Gamification of Digital Learning (GDL)	European consortium (Greece, Romania, France, Italy, Poland, UK).	Secondary school teachers and learners. Objectives: digital pedagogy, inclusion, teacher readiness for digital gamification.	Methodology compendium, technical toolbox, e-learning modules, pedagogical sequences.	Multilingual resources empowering educators; improved engagement and digital competence.	High - multilingual and adaptable materials for various education systems.
Play the Way! (Youth Exchange)	Development Support Foundation Innovator - Poland.	Youth (18–30) in exchanges. Objectives: employability, CV/interview skills, confidence.	Participants design labour-market themed games; role-play, interactive challenges, peer teaching.	Reported improved CV/interview readiness and self-confidence; positive participant feedback.	High - replicable at NGOs; needs facilitators and cross-cultural setting.
GaMYTHication	Green Elephant Foundation (Fundacja Zielony Słoń) - Poland.	Youth (18–30) in Erasmus+ exchanges. Objectives: storytelling, rhetoric, intercultural awareness.	Gamified storytelling (Hero's Journey), LARP, escape-room design, avatar creation, team role-play.	Improved language, rhetoric, teamwork and public speaking; positive evaluations.	High - adaptable across exchanges; needs storytelling facilitation and simple props.
Game Changer	Logos NGO - Poland.	Youth 12–30. Objectives: tolerance, civic engagement, inclusion; counter radicalisation.	Offline Social City Games + online RPGs (Roll20, Discord). Role-playing, negotiation, decision-making, simulated civic challenges.	Engaged local youth; online reach across Poland; high immersion and discussion on civic values.	High - replicable by NGOs; requires digital platforms and trained facilitators.

Practice	Organisation/ Country	Target audience and main objectives	Gamification method (core elements)	Impact / Results (summary)	Transferability
Youth Business International (YBI)	Youth Business International (global, HQ UK) - implemented in Spain and beyond.	Young entrepreneurs 18–35, especially underserved. Objectives: mentorship, finance, enterprise skills, inclusive economic development.	Scenario-based learning modules and entrepreneurial challenges (digital elements), mentorship progression (less classic gamification, more challenge/simulation).	Wide reach (50+ countries), hundreds of thousands impacted; strong local affiliate model and private partnerships.	Very high - flexible, localised model; digital platform allows remote scaling.
RadicalGAME	Radicalisation Awareness Network / EU consortium - Belgium and partners.	Young people, educators, community leaders. Objectives: prevent radicalisation, foster critical thinking and inclusion.	Card-based gamification (physical/online cards), scenario decisions, reflective debriefs; online platform version.	Promotes dialogue and resistance to extremism; expected to increase critical thinking and awareness.	Adaptable - physical and digital formats; needs cultural sensitivity and local partnerships.
iDEA (Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award)	Open University (UK) - online global platform.	Youth (10–19 mainly). Objectives: digital/enterprise skills; awards and badge system to motivate learning.	Online missions, points, badges, tiered awards (Bronze/Silver/Gold), certification - strong gamification mechanics.	>2.3 million users, 17.2M badges completed, 216k awards; multiple ed-tech accolades (data from report).	Extremely high - online platform, easy to adopt; minimal local adaptation needed.
Gamification of Employment (GOE I)	Consortium (Spain, Italy, Portugal, Romania).	Youth at risk of exclusion/unemployment (including disabilities, migrants). Objectives: transversal competences, employability, inclusion.	Board games selected for skills practice; Educator Handbook, participant diaries, evaluation tools.	Qualitative evidence of improved communication, adaptability, confidence; 7 workshops across partners.	High - low cost board game approach; Educator Handbook supports replication.

Practice	Organisation/ Country	Target audience and main objectives	Gamification method (core elements)	Impact / Results (summary)	Transferability
EDGE (Enhancing Disabled-people Greatness and Employability)	Consorzio SIR / Melazeta and partners - Italy + EU partners.	Young people with intellectual/relational disabilities. Objectives: employability, inclusive hiring, entrepreneurial mindset.	Serious Game (Melazeta's FairPlay) - avatar workplace scenarios; replayable decision-based simulations; complementary mindfulness and mentoring.	Delivered serious game, Inclusive Companies Handbook, training and branding for inclusive employers; positive multimodal impact.	High - designed for accessibility; pilot across countries; resources and platform facilitate adoption.
GROW (Gamify youR yOuth Work)	Consortium (Italy, Greece, Spain, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro)	Youth organisations and youth workers, esp. working with fewer opportunities. Objectives: capacity building in gamification methods.	Methodology and pedagogical approach: handbook, video tutorials, curricula, Community of Practice.	Strengthened youth workers' skills and practice; local trainings created multiplier effects and peer support.	High - freely available materials and CoP support large-scale transfer.



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