



YoungRes

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Serious Games
are more
than Fun

Strengthening **European Youngsters Resilience** through Serious Games



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This project has received funding from the European Union's ISF-P programme under grant agreement N° 823701



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SOURCES:
• "Ten Myths About Serious Games", BEN SAWYER | 30 OCTOBER 2007 9:42 AM, Escapist magazine.com
• Material from Teaching Controversial Issues, © 2015 Council of Europe

In Europe, young people do not often have an opportunity to discuss controversial issues in school because they are perceived as too challenging to teach, e.g. issues to do with extremism, gender violence, child abuse, or sexual orientation.

Unable to voice their concerns, unaware of how others feel or left to rely on friends and social media for their information, young people can be frustrated or confused about some of the major issues which affect their communities and European society today. In the absence of help, they might have no reliable means of dealing with these issues constructively and no one to guide them.

Public concern arising in the aftermath of several high-profile incidents of violence and social disorder in different European countries has combined with new thinking in education for democracy and human rights to make the handling of controversial issues in schools a matter of educational urgency.

Opening-up the school curriculum to these issues raises pedagogical questions- such as how to protect the sensitivities of students from different backgrounds and cultures, how to prevent friction in the classroom, and how to teach contentious material even-handedly, avoiding criticisms of bias. It also raises questions about academic freedom and the role of the teacher's own beliefs and values.

Serious + game serious games an oxymoron or a tautology?

For some the expression 'serious games' appears to be a contradiction.

The idea of using games for purposes other than fun was first formulated in the book *Serious Games* by Clark C. Abt (1975):

“We are concerned with serious games in the sense that these games have an explicit and carefully thought-out educational purpose and are not intended to be played primarily for amusement.”

MYTH:
SERIOUS GAMES ARE ALWAYS SERIOUS

What makes a game a serious game is the designers' choice to make their game more than entertaining to the player. For instance, the Swiss AIDS Federation created an advergame to educate people about the need to engage in safe sex practices.

Fun game, serious purpose

Introducing the YoungRES European project

YoungRES focuses on education to build effective resilience of youth on polarisation that boosts their critical thinking ability, especially building on Brandsma's polarisation management model, which is according to RAN, "the best defense against polarisation and extremism".

This ultimately **strengthens active citizenship, democratic value, cultural diversity and builds the ability for individuals to challenge stereotypes, discrimination and extremist attitudes and behaviors**. It also improves the ability for individuals to critically analyse propaganda and battle peer pressure while fighting for ideals in a non-violent way.

Taking into account this ultimate goal and due to the development of a new eLearning platform that incorporates elaborated concepts of

serious gaming, which are beyond the traditional expertise of school educators, YoungRES boosts teacher and frontline practitioner training in a way to create an institutional environment that allows youths to maximize their benefit from this innovative approach.

The YoungRes project overcomes the challenge of efficient interaction with youth and vulnerable population at risk of radicalization or polarization.

It helps youth and vulnerable groups to develop critical thinking, in order to improve their resistance to polarized ideologies.

To this end, it integrates serious games in the prevention educational policies, develops new collaboration models and an argumentation - gaming learning platform, in order to have a meaningful societal impact.

Join the "game" for a serious purpose



Project partners activities include:

- Development + test of an educative methodology based on digital resources (specifically, serious games), to prevent radicalization and polarization
- Creation of serious games (and other digital content) to allow students to counter radical and polarized ideas
- Development of a set of controlled studies in education contexts in Spain and Finland to test the methodology
- Creation of an online platform to test serious game-based approach for polarisation identification and tracking, to provide qualitative and quantitative assessments of polarisation risk, to share resources and to train educators and other stakeholders in the methodology proposed.