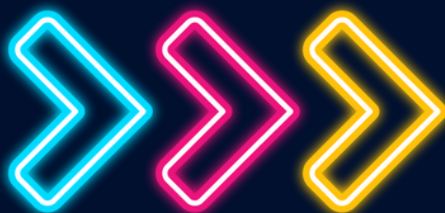




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VIDEO GAMES FOR GOOD

Exploring Diversity and Representation in Video Game Characters

<https://www.videogames4good.eu>

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Duration:	120 – 180 minutes
Age:	16 – 20 years
Group size:	Groups of 4 or pairs
Aim:	To raise awareness about the diversity and inclusivity in character representation in video games
Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To sensitise participants about the diversity, representation and identity of people and cultures in video games • To consider and reevaluate their perspectives on biases in gaming, i.e., gender, culture, race etc • To aid participants in understanding the impact of representation on self – perception and community building • To inspire creativity in representing different cultures, stories and characters through gaming
Material needed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of games or scenarios for participants to analyse and critically evaluate • Character profiling templates for participants to fill in • Materials or art supplies to design the characters

This workshop aims to raise awareness of how video game characters can support accessibility and inclusivity. Participants begin by identifying and discussing characters that effectively foster inclusion, exploring the traits and storylines that make them impactful. Building on these insights, participants design their own characters and develop story elements that promote diversity and representation. Using the interactive Forum Theatre method, they bring these characters to life, gaining hands-on experience in creating authentic, empathetic, and meaningful designs that address the needs of underrepresented players while avoiding stereotypes and tokenism.



Workshop Structure



1. Icebreaker and energiser game (5-10 minutes):

- Begin with an interactive activity to energise participants and encourage collaboration.

2. Identifying characters that support inclusion (15-20 minutes):

Instructions:

- In pairs, participants choose a character from any video game, movie, or story that they believe supports inclusion and diversity.
- Encourage them to reflect on specific elements of the character's design or role, such as:
 - How the character challenges stereotypes.
 - How the character represents underrepresented groups or abilities.
 - How the character's storylines foster empathy and accessibility.

Tip: You can provide them with a list of characters to support them.

3. Discussion (10-15 minutes):

- Facilitate a group discussion where pairs share their chosen characters and explain their reasoning.
- Highlight recurring traits or storylines that make these characters effective in supporting inclusion, such as authentic representation, adaptability, or meaningful contributions to the narrative.

4. Presentation on Inclusive Character Design (15–20 minutes):

Objective:

- Provide participants with insights into how characters in video games can support inclusion and diversity.

Content:

- Examples of characters designed to support accessibility and diversity, such as:
 - Characters with disabilities (e.g., those with assistive devices or adaptive abilities).
 - Characters with rich cultural or personal backgrounds that challenge stereotypes.
 - For example: Kratos from God of War, Mario, Lara Croft, Bayonetta, Ellie from The Last of Us, Zelda, Kassandra from Assassin's Creed Odyssey, or even nameless avatars from multiplayer games. *NB: These examples are not perfect representations of diversity, but they provide an initial glimpse into the variety of fictional characters that exist in the gaming world.*
- Discuss how character design, narrative choices, and gameplay features can enhance inclusion.
- Identify common pitfalls, such as tokenism or oversimplification

5. Designing characters that support inclusion (30–40 minutes):

Instructions:

- Participants work in small groups to design a character concept.
- Provide a character design template to guide participants through:
 - The character's traits and backstory.
 - How the character supports inclusion in the game world (e.g., accessibility features, representation, or overcoming barriers).
 - Possible story elements or challenges the character might face in fostering inclusion.

Guidance:

- Emphasise creating characters that authentically represent diverse experiences.
- Ensure that storylines highlight the impact of these characters in fostering empathy, community building, or accessibility.

6. Forum Theatre (50-60 minutes):

Scene Creation (15 minutes):

- Groups create a short scene where their characters interact in a game scenario.
- Scenes should demonstrate how their characters support inclusion, challenge stereotypes, or address barriers.

Forum Theatre (35 minutes):

- Each group performs their scene while other participants observe.
- Observers can pause the scene to ask questions, propose alternative actions, or suggest improvements.
- Groups refine and replay their scenes based on the feedback.

7. Debriefing and reflection (10-15 minutes):

Discussion points:

- Unity of characters and storylines:
 - Reflect on how thoughtful character design and meaningful storylines can work together to support inclusion and accessibility.
- Key takeaways:
 - Discuss how participants can apply these principles to other creative or professional contexts.
- Future applications:
 - Encourage participants to explore inclusive design further in their projects, emphasising the importance of authentic representation and meaningful engagement.



References



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