Co-funded by the European Union

VIDEO GAMES FOR GOOD

Community Problem Identification and Solution Development

https://www.videogames4good.eu

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. Project number: 2023-2-CZ1-KA220-YOU-000183158

YuzuPulse LogoPsyCom materahub VISAS IESPĒJAS Eppas

Duration:	6 weeks (2 hours per week)
Age:	18- 26 years
Group size:	4-6 partners per team
Aim:	To equip learners with skills to address societal challenges through game development, connecting theoretical concepts with community engagement.
Objectives:	• Analyse societal challenges using research and interviews. • Integrate problem-solving mechanisms into game design. • Develop a prototype and present its social impact.
Material needed:	• Access to research databases • Game development tools • Presentation software

This activity will help learners develop problem-solving and creative thinking skills by addressing real-world societal issues through video game prototypes. The activity begins with participants researching social challenges, followed by brainstorming sessions to integrate these challenges into game narratives or mechanics. Through the iterative development of prototypes, they apply game design principles to create meaningful representations of the issues. The activity culminates with presentations to peers and community stakeholders, enabling learners to refine their solutions based on constructive feedback.

Workshop Structure

Week 1:
In the first week, participants form groups and are required to research a social issue within their local environment. This research can be completed online (on social media or otherwise) or by consulting local newspapers. Once the learners have chosen an issue, they identify the relevant stakeholders and contact them. By engaging with stakeholders, they gain an in-depth understanding of the problem.

For example, participants might identify that local parks are often empty. By visiting the park, interacting with social media groups and contacting the municipality, they may uncover several reasons:
1.The park lacks amenities such as benches, playgrounds, bins, and sports facilities, making it unappealing for extended visits.
2.The parks are full of litter, discouraging people from visiting them.
3.There are safety concerns, such as inadequate lighting at night.

Week 2:
Once the participants have established the issue, week 2 will begin with a brainstorming session. The group will discuss the information they collected from the sources, using this data to develop ideas for potential game mechanics or narratives that reflect the problem.
For example:

1. If the participants want to increase the park's use, they could design a game in which they take on the role of a guardian, similar to Gardenscapes or Homescapes. The task of this guardian is to revitalise the park, so the game would include cleaning up the park, organising events, and upgrading the amenities by finishing levels. This game would mirror real-life solutions to revitalising the park.
2. If the participants wish to focus more on creating a park that is accessible to everyone, they could also create a narrative-driven design. In this game, the players take on different perspectives, such as those of a younger child or an elderly person.

Week 3 & 4:
In the following two weeks, the learners further develop their game designs. They refine their understanding of the issue while developing their initial game prototypes. This task can be adapted to the group's skill level.

- Beginners can focus on designing characters, writing storylines, or sketching levels on paper or Canva. This requires little experience and provides a doorway into the world of game design.
- More advanced participants can use interactive platforms such as Twine (for text-based storytelling) or Unity (for complex game design).

If we take the issue of underused parks, participants could, for example, design a prototype that does the following three things (keep in mind that the games do not need to be developed but can be created on paper or on Canva):

1. Involves a simulation of a park where the player has to make decisions related to management and maintenance.
2. Involves a puzzle game where players get points every time they finish a level, allowing them to progress and upgrade the park.
3. Uses AR to allow players to visualise the park that they are improving.

Week 5:
One of the final steps is to present the prototype to a smaller group to gain feedback. Learners can present their prototypes to other participants or the stakeholders they initially consulted. For example, in the case of underused parks, they might show the prototype to a municipality representative or a local community group. The feedback they gather will focus on the effectiveness and impact of their prototype.

Week 6:
The last week centres around refining the prototypes based on the feedback from week 5. Once the design has been finalised, participants can reflect on the process by writing a piece on:

- The social issue they chose;
- The prototype they developed and how it addresses the issue;
- The way their game would be able to inspire real-world change.

A game about underused parks could educate players on community engagement, inspire local initiatives, or raise awareness of the challenges faced in urban planning.

References

- Classy. (n.d.). How entrepreneurship can solve social problems. Retrieved from https://www.classy.org/blog/5-ways-entrepreneurial-thinking-can-solve-social-problems/

- Pisani, A. (2023). The future of community problem-solving and the role of community-based innovation nonprofits. Future of Work. https://www.mifutureofwork.org/advice/the-future-of-community-problem-solving-and-the-role-of-community-based-innovation-nonprofits/

- Peoria Magazine. (2010). Solving problems with social entrepreneurship. https://www.peoriamagazine.com/archive/ibi_article/2010/solving-problems-social-entrepreneurship/