SECOND NEWSLETTER OF THE R U EU? PROJECT

PARTNERS AND STAFF

The R U EU? project is an interdisciplinary collaboration between 5 European Universities with the University of the West of Scotland as the lead partner:

• University of the West of Scotland (UWS)
• Open University of the Netherlands (OUNL)
• Tehničko veleučilište u Zagrebu (TVZ)
• University of Peloponnese (UoP)
• Bremer Institut für Produktion und Logistik GmbH (BIBA)

Colleagues with relevant content and methodological knowledge, pedagogical expertise and technical skills are working together to design and develop the game and support materials and to evaluate the game.

WELCOME TO THE SECOND NEWSLETTER OF THE R U EU? PROJECT. IN THIS NEWSLETTER WE WILL REMIND READERS OF THE AIM OF THE PROJECT AND REPORT ON THE PROGRESS ON THE PROJECT, ONGOING TASKS AND FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Aims of the R U EU? project

The “R U EU? a game-based approach to exploring 21st century European Identity and Values” project aims to develop a game-based approach to exploring 21st century European Identity and Values. The project is funded by an Erasmus + Strategic Partnerships for higher education grant and it is overseen by the British Council.
KEY STAFF WORKING ON THE PROJECT INCLUDE:

UWS: Dr. Elizabeth Boyle, Reader in Psychology and Dr. Murray Leith, Reader in Politics (project coordinators)

OUNL: Dr. Hans Hummel, Associate Professor; Jeroen Storm, Digital Product Developer

TVZ: Dr. Petar Jandrić, Senior Lecturer; Milan Bajić, Head of Multimedia

UoP: Dr. Athanassios Jimoyiannis, Associate Professor of Science and ICT in Education; Dr. Panagiotis Tsiotakis, Lecturer

BIBA: Dr. Jannicke Baalsrud Hauge, Associate Professor in Production Logistics; Nadera Sultana Tany

AIM OF THE R U EU? GAME

The game aims to help students across Europe to develop a better understanding of their own national and European identity and values, as well as those of others, to examine and reflect upon the impact of their own identity and values on their interactions with others, and to challenge them about their attitudes and prejudices in tackling problem solving tasks involving national and European identity. At a time of change across Europe, it is hoped that the game will provide an engaging platform for young Europeans to explore their views about some of the challenging issues relating to National and European identity.

RU EU? CONTEXT

It is useful to consider the context within which the R U EU? project is taking place. At a time when the political debates across the UK and the European Union are dominated by ‘Brexit’, it seems that, more than ever, we need to take time to reflect on what the EU and ‘European-ness’ actually mean. In the 1950s, the origins and aims of the EU were quite clear, i.e. to avoid any further conflict between European nations, and to create an ever closer union, and so far, the EU has generally been successful. Enmity between states has been replaced by a strong set of interrelated social, political and economic relationships. But the EU is now under challenge, with the rise of right-wing populist parties seeking changes to the operation of the EU or withdrawal from the Union entirely. Brexit is so far the most significant example and suggests that this is an important moment for us to explore the meaning of European identity and how it may reflect what has become a complex, diverse, multicultural and cosmopolitan organisation.
PROGRESS ON THE R U EU? PROJECT

The Erasmus+ funded R U EU? project is now well into its second year and continues to make good progress. The project has been given an extension until February 2020 so it has around 9 months to run and will now finish on 1st February 2020.

The Interim report on the R U EU? project was submitted to the British Council in September 2018 and was approved in October 2018. At that point the first 4 deliverables for the project, the design tasks, were completed. This included O1: the Literature Review and O2: the Resource Review which provided a useful theoretical and empirical framework on which to base the game, O3: The User Requirements Analysis and O4: The Content Specification. In recent months partners have taken ideas from these preliminary project activities and worked hard on O5: the design specification document that provides the blueprint for the game, as well as O6: the Game Development.

ONGOING TASKS: DEVELOPING THE R U EU? GAME

Developing a game is a complex exercise and has involved colleagues with relevant content and methodological knowledge, pedagogical expertise and technical skills working together to design and develop the game and support materials and to evaluate the game. Ideas for the game have taken shape slowly due to the complexity of the subject matter.

The game is a role playing game with a journalist narrative, where the player takes on the role as a freelance research journalist and his task is to compile a set of articles about European identity for his readers. The player will write about 5 different scenarios related to European identity:

1. Balance between national and EU identity
2. Rights of EU citizens to work across Europe
3. Rights of immigrants
4. Who is European anyway? - differences between nations
5. Changes in EU identity over time

HOMESCREEN

The picture below shows the player’s home-screen from which he can access the different game tools.
KEY TOOLS FOR THE GAME

For each scenario the player has access to a number of tools where he hears statements from different people with varying views both pro and anti the EU. The player has to carry out a range of tasks making judgements and decisions about the different content. The key tools are:

Mobile phone chat tool: this tool is used to present the game instructions to the player via their mentor.

Interview tool: using this tool players can carry out interviews with leading representatives of (a) pro EU and (b) anti EU representatives. Players select from a choice of 10 possible questions, 3 that they would like to ask their interviewees.

Discussion animation tool: this tool allows players to see conversations that the general public are having about European identity. Characters are located in a pub and the player has to identify the different perspectives that the characters have and to select statements that they most agree with.

Breaking News tool: this tool is always on and provides newsflashes about topics related to European identity. Players have to select the most relevant topics.

Laptop Final assignment tool: this tool is used after the player has used all the other tools and completed all the tasks for that scenario to help him pull together their final report.

INTERVIEW TOOL

The Interview tool allows the player carry out interviews with leading representatives of the leave (anti EU) and remain (pro EU) campaigns. The audience has submitted a number of questions, but there is a time limit of 5 minutes so the player can only ask 3 questions. The player has to decide which of the topics below he wants to ask the interviewee about? He has to select the most informative topics for people voting tomorrow.

DISCUSSION TOOL

In the Discussion Tool the player listens to a discussion between 3 people in a pub about an issue related to the EU, in this case the night before the Brexit vote in the UK.

• One is pro the EU (remainer)
• One is anti the EU (leaver)
• One is undecided

The player has to watch the video and decide which character is which on the basis of what they say.

He then indicates his agreement/disagreement with the interviewee’s response.
BREAKING NEWS TOOL

Breaking News is displayed at the bottom of the TV screen like the incoming NEWSFEED banner on Sky news. There will be 6 items on the NEWSFEED loop. The player’s task is to select the 3 that he feels are most relevant to the balance debate.

The player’s responses on the tasks are used for scoring and feedback later in the game when the player has to “publish” his article.

FINAL PARTNER MEETING IN ZAGREB IN JUNE 2019

Partners are currently making arrangements for the final partner meeting in Zagreb on 5th and 6th June 2019.

The picture shows the partners working together at the 3rd partner meeting in Bremen.

SPOTLIGHT ON KEY STAFF WORKING ON THE R U EU? PROJECT

ALAN WILLIAMS (UWS)

Alan Williams started work as Games Developer on the R U EU? project at the start of January 2019. Alan has started to build the game from the ideas developed during the first year of the project. Alan studied Computer Games Development at West College Scotland and continued with his studies achieving a First Class Honours degree in Computer Games Development at the University of the West of Scotland, Paisley, Scotland. Alan has a strong interest in game and level design alongside games and technology themselves. Alan played video games when he was growing up and was delighted that he could apply this knowledge and make a career from designing games! Alan has worked across multiple projects, with games engines such as Unreal Engine and Unity. He has knowledge of many programming languages such as C#, C++ (Blueprints Visual Scripting in Unreal Engine 4), HTML5 and JavaScript. He has worked with multiple integrated development environment frameworks for game and mobile including Phaser, jQuery and jQUERY Mobile.
NADERA SULTANA TANY (BIBA)

Nadera Sultana Tany is a student assistant in the Gaming Lab, BIBA. She is a Masters student in Digital Media – Media Informatics at the University of Bremen. Nadera completed her Bachelor in Computer Science and Engineering from Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Bangladesh. Nadera has over 4 years of working experience in Bangladeshi IT industry where she has served as an IT executive, Software Quality Assurance Engineer and also as an Implementation Engineer. Nadera joined the gaming lab at BIBA in November 2016. She assists Dr. Jannicke Baalsrud Hauge in different EU project management and documentation tasks and leads the quality assurance tasks for the games developed in those projects. Nadera was responsible for the requirements analysis RU EU7 project, and she wrote the requirements analysis deliverable document. Currently she is assisting in the development of one of the scenarios for the game. Nadera’s area of research interests are Serious Gaming, Human-Computer Interaction, Interaction design, Science and Technology studies, Conversational agents and the socio-cultural impacts these topics bring into the picture.

PROJECT WEBSITE

You can find further information about the project on the website: https://rueu-project.eu/

DISSEMINATION

Conference Presentations:
Partners are aware that the project is of interest to the learning technology community, the educational learning community and the social science community and we have presented the game ideas at a range of elearning and politics conferences as follows:

• In June 2018 Athanassios Jimoyiannis (UoP) presented the first project paper on “The Design of the RU EU? game: A game-based approach to exploring 21st century European Identity and Values.” at the TECH-EDU 2018, the International Conference on Technology and Innovation in Learning, Teaching and Education at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

• In July 2018 Murray Leith (UWS) presented “What’s in a Game? A Game-Based Approach to Exploring 21st Century European Identity And Values” at EDULEARN18, the 10th annual International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies at Palma de Mallorca (Spain).

• In December 2018 Elizabeth Boyle (UWS) presented “Linking learning outcomes and game mechanics in the early stages of the R U EU? Project” at the Games and Learning Alliance (GALA) conference in Palermo.

• In March 2019 Elizabeth Boyle (UWS) presented “A game-based Approach to exploring 21st century European Identity and Values.” at the Democracy@101 conference: Reflecting on the past, understanding the present, planning for a better future. The paper on the R U EU? project fitted well with the other papers that explored different aspects of Democracy, 101 years after the the Representation of the People Act in the UK.
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

• On 21-22 May 2019 Elizabeth Boyle and Alan Williams will give a presentation about the game at a Workshop on Serious Games for Cyber Security in organised by Manuel Maark, Heriot-Watt University

• In June 2019 Melody Terras (UWS) will present a paper “RU EU? A game-based Approach to exploring 21st century European Identity and Values” at “Bridging Boundaries: connecting learning, teaching and research. UWS Teaching and Learning Conference”.

• Duncan Sim (University of the West of Scotland, UK) will presentation a paper on “Learning about Europe through educational gaming: The development of an RU EU game?” accepted for the Royal Geographical Society conference. Session title: Geographies of education, teaching and learning.

PUBLICATIONS

As well as conference presentations the project also has its first publications:


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The present work was carried out as part of the R U EU? A game-based approach to exploring 21st century European Identity and Values project. This project is partially supported by a KA203 - Erasmus + Strategic Partnerships for higher education, grant; KA2, Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices; Grant Agreement no: Grant Agreement no: 2017-1-UK01-KA203-036601. This presentation does not represent the opinion of the European Community, and the European Community is not responsible for any use that might be made of its content.

ADVANCE NOTICE

During autumn 2019 the project aims to have the launch event for the game in London and at the same time two further dissemination events will take place in Zagreb and in Corinth.