



PLAY YOUR SKILLS

RESEARCH STUDY REPORT SUMMARY

Graz, July 2020

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Objectives and results

The main aim and result of the Play Your Skills project is the development, testing and mainstreaming of a mobile gaming app which has the following core tasks:

- Motivate NEETs (young people who are not in education or training) also people with fewer opportunities to take part in vocational education (at least to get in contact with guidance and counselling services from VET providers).
- Raise their self-esteem and self-awareness in an immediate and prompt way.
- Raise their confidence in the competences they already have, even though they have dropped out of the education and VET systems.
- Inform them about their vocational opportunities and bridging to VET counselling services in the local area of the target group members.

Play our Skills Research Study

In order to obtain concrete and current data on the NEET target group, the project conducted a survey on two levels with different stakeholders during the research phase. Our goal was to learn more about the habits of young people at risk from their smartphone use. We wanted to find out how they use electronic devices, which applications are particularly appealing to them at the moment and what the parameters of an app suitable for the target group must have. We were interested in their approach to advertisements in gaming apps, as a basis for the development work in IO 2. In this way, we will have a better understanding of the motivational factors of the target group.

The Play Your Skills project partners also approached VET professionals to get their views on smartphone use by young people at risk. In particular, we turned to adult educators, trainers, youth workers, street workers and educational and career counsellors who work with our target group or are in contact with them. We wanted to learn more about their approach towards our project and proposed tool and their assessment of how helpful an app can be for our target group.

The survey method chosen for the project was an online survey developed during the first project meeting in November 2019. As a result of this development, two different surveys for NEETs and VET professionals were created.

In order to get a clear picture of the skills needed to enter the labour market, we interviewed labour market experts. Our aim was to establish the level of expertise and understanding from people who know the local and regional labour market in the partner countries well and also know our target group (NEETs.) These interviews were short and had a clear focus on the view of the competences required by the labour market. We were also interested in the existing skills gaps that do not match the requirements of the labour market. What are the obstacles for young people at risk to enter the labour market? How could these obstacles best be overcome? Of course, we also asked the experts for an assessment of our app.

To complete our activities, the project did a desktop research about various existing apps that covers at least one of the eight defined key competences.

NEETs Survey

The smartphone use of our target group is a very important starting point for our project plan. In order to prioritise the needs of our target group, we asked young people at risk, how they use their smartphones. We collected data regarding the importance of understanding NEETs in all our 6 project partner countries.

Results of the NEETs survey

In summary, the analysis of the responses to our survey shows that the NEETs target group was well reached. In total 253 people participated in the survey, 152 people filled it in completely, but 62 people did not complete the survey. The project also sees this as a special characteristic of the target group, where a lack of self-confidence and low frustration tolerance can prevent them from getting tasks done. The gender distribution among the persons who provided information was as follows: 53.42% female, 44.72% male, 1.86% other. The average age of the respondents in our survey was 21.16 years. We received 126 answers to the question about the highest educational level. 9.52% said they had no degree, 38.89% specified EQF level 2 and 30.95% EQF level 3-4, which means that 79.36% (100 out of 126 respondents) are at level 4 or below. Our respondents are very ambitious in their goals. More than three quarters of the respondents see themselves in employment, in further education or travelling in the coming year. So, there is a very clear idea of changing and improving their current life situation. This is a very positive aspect for us. When it comes to barriers that prevent people from achieving their educational or career aspirations, "fewer opportunities in my town/city" or "not knowing what I want to be" were mentioned most frequently.

The results of the survey showed that the smartphone is a permanent, daily companion for young people. They use it intensively and carry it with them permanently. The most frequently used apps fall into four categories. Social media apps are used most frequently, followed by music & audio, entertainment and gaming apps. Instagram and WhatsApp are by far the most commonly used social media platforms of the respondents.

The eight most popular apps:

1. Instagram: 24,25%
2. WhatsApp: 15,85%
3. YouTube: 8,40%
4. Spotify: 6,50%
5. Facebook: 5,10%
6. TikTok: 3,33%
7. Netflix: 3,17%
8. Snapchat: 2,70%



VET - Professionals Survey

To get a comprehensive picture of the smartphone usage of our target group, we also asked VET professionals for their expertise. This group of people are in contact with NEETs and can provide important information for our project plans. The questions about the use of Apps in professional dealings with the target group also provide information about whether the use of Apps is part of the everyday training routine.

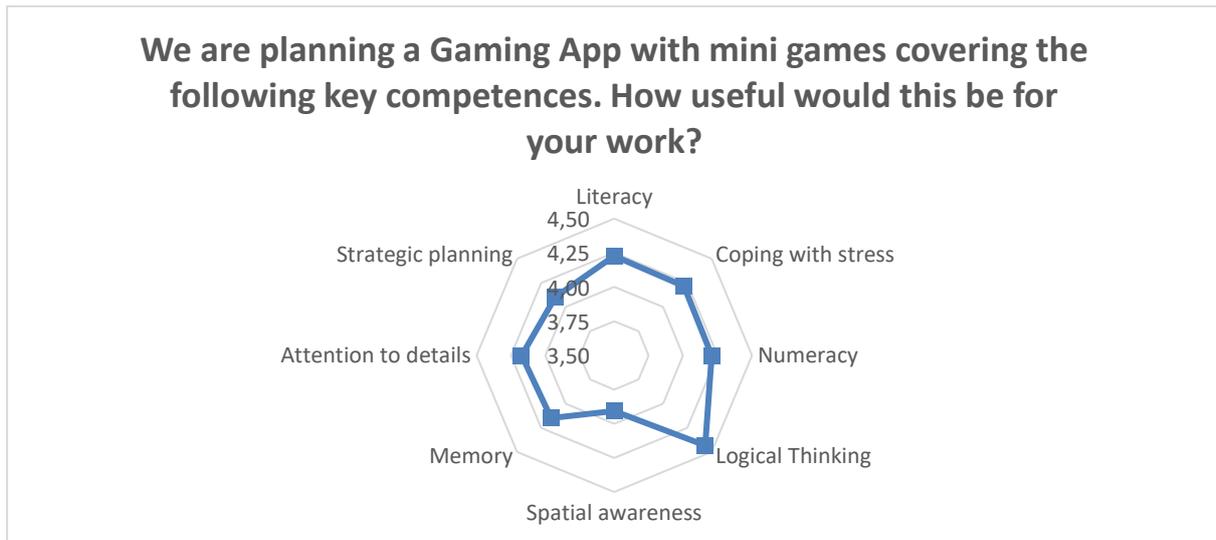
Results of the VET-Professionals Survey

In total, we have reached 197 VET professionals, 56.85% of the respondents also work professionally with NEETs. The majority of the people interviewed work as teachers/trainers in the VET sector. Altogether, more than half of all participants in the survey (57.01%) gave us this answer. 18.69% work as employment advisers, followed by 16.82% who work as counsellors and 7.48% as social workers. The survey reached more women (58.33%) than men (41.67%), the average age of the respondents was 42.40 years. In terms of the highest level of education, 25.38% of our respondents said they had achieved EQF Level 5 -6. Another 21.83% achieved EQF Level 7 – 8 and 48.73% did not give us an answer to this question. The results of the answers given clearly show that VET professionals all have higher educational qualifications.

Usage of learning apps

When asked about the use of learning apps by VET professionals, one can see country-specific differences. 72.00% of the Spanish speaking VET professionals stated that they also use learning apps in their work. This is significantly higher than the average value of the received answers (42.13%). In total, the "yes" and "no" answers almost balance each other out (42.13% to 40.10). Learning apps are not a complete unknown to professionals, but they are rarely used in training

Very relevant for our project work is the assessment of the importance of key competences for the VET professionals. The predefined choices ranged from "Totally Unuseful (1)" to "Totally Useful (5)". Each one of the 8 specified competencies were rated by the respondents as being of above-average importance (> as 3). A closer look at the individual results shows that 7 of the 8 proposed competences achieved a value above 4 ("Useful"). Only the competence "Spatial awareness" remains just below this value at 3.91. The key competence "Logical thinking" is by far the best rated with an average of 4.43. This is followed by "Literacy", "Coping with stress", "Numeracy", "Attention to details", "Memory" and "Strategic planning". These 6 competencies are very close together in the rating.



Barriers to use a gaming app

In the survey, we asked the VET professionals to name the barriers they found using a gaming app. In summary, it can be said that the VET professionals are quite positive about the use of a gaming app. 36.56% said that they did not see any barriers in using it, many of them gave a very positive feedback to this idea. The concerns that were mentioned can be roughly divided into two categories:

Lack of resources: VET professionals pointed out that some young people do not own a smartphone or have too little data credit available. Some mentioned that not all young people have access to the Internet. When used in class, it is also not possible to ensure that each participant is provided with his or her own device.

The smartphone as a disruptive factor: Some VET professionals stated that the smartphone easily distracts young people from learning. The temptation to get out of the learning app and use the smartphone for other things is high. Some VET professionals reject learning with the smartphone because they believe that it leads to social isolation. In the survey, we also asked the VET professionals whether they themselves have received further training in the use of educational apps. 16.24% answered this question with "yes", 56.85% with "no", 26.90% gave no answer. The result shows that the use of learning apps in adult education is not yet standardised and that there is a need for train the trainers courses offered in this area.

The question of the assessment of the key competences for the labour market resulted in the following result: By far the most important competence rated was communications skills with 13.06% of all answers. In second place came the problem-solving competences (8.81%) and in third place the social skills (8.30%). It is noticeable that all of the predefined competences are given importance; apart from the communication skills, all other competences are closely related. Not surprisingly, the English language answers have hardly given any importance to the foreign language skills.

Interviews with Labour Market Experts

The majority of the interviewed stakeholders think that our listing of key competences are all relevant for the entry into the labour market. Around half of respondents have explicitly stated that sufficient knowledge in basic skills (Literacy, Numeracy, ICT skills) is very important for entering the labour market. These basic skills may lead to a placement into the labour market.

The interviewees also added important skills from their perspective. Communication skills, critical / logical thinking including the skills of decision making and problem solving, emotional skills, self-awareness, self-control, self-motivation, empathy, effective interpersonal relationship and stress management.

The main gaps between the needs of the world of work and the competences of NEETs is according to the experts the demand of work experience, lack of personal and social skills, an educational system that does not match the needs of the labour market and commitment from both sides.

The best way to engage young people within the labour market would be mentoring and support, on the job training and a stronger linking of educational systems and the world of work.

The answer to the question if a gaming app can reconnect NEETs to the world of work was a resounding "yes" for the majority of respondents. Some interviewees expressed concern that this app could also distract young people. How interesting such an app can be was shown by the fact that the interviewed experts immediately thought about how this app could look like. According to the respondents, it is very important that this gaming app allows them to progressively develop skills and increase their self-confidence.

Desktop Research

A matrix for the desk-based research was developed and can be downloaded on our website www.playyourskills.eu

This matrix contains relevant information for the project. Besides the competences covered there is also a short description of the app contents. Furthermore, a reason for the selection of this app can be confirmed. A further category in this matrix is dedicated to the reference to the project plans of the Play Your Skills project. This consists of a description that is considered in the app development. Since the app to be developed will be available in 5 languages, one column of the matrix is dedicated to the available languages. Basically, the project was looking for free downloadable apps (at least in the basic version).