IO3. GUIDELINES FOR VET STAFF
SHORT VERTION

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is a short version of the Play Your Skills Guidelines for VET Staff. The full version is also downloadable from www.playyourskills.eu in English, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

These Guidelines are addressed to VET staff (career counsellors, mentors, job-coaches, trainers, educators, etc). The Guidelines will help VET staff to:

- Understand the background strategy of the PLAY YOUR SKILLS mobile gaming app
- Use the data developed by App users and communicate with them (through communication windows opened in the App) to provide them feedback & suggestions on how to further develop their competences
- Make use of the pop-up promotion videos in the App
- Deduct improvement potential for their own VET programmes based on the data produced by the app about competences, needs and requirements of the target group.

Please, read the full version of the Guidelines to get a detailed overview of the project and its background.

If you want to know more about Play Your Skills you can contact the project team at contact@playyourskills.eu or via our Facebook page.
2. How to use the Play Your Skills Mobile Gaming App?

User manual

2.1 Technical Specifications for using the app

- Min. Android version 6
- Required space when downloading: 85mb
- For Apple devices, minimum requirement is IOS 11
- An internet connection is required for registering and saving the scores.
2.2 Download and register

After having downloaded the Play Your Skills App on your mobile phone using the Google Play Store or the Apple Appstore, you will need to click on the Sign-in button:

The first time you access the App, you will be required to create your account. In order to do so, you have to choose:

- a prefix (among different adjectives);
- a name (among different animals, cities, etc);
- a number through the combo box.

You can even decide to create your account using a random user.
2.3 Access at the Mobile App

When your account will be settled, you access directly to the main page, called Dashboard, which contains the games, the ranklist and the settings options.

Settings is an important element of the dashboard, as it allows you to have short explanations on how to use both the app and the games, set different features of the App such as if you wish to be visible in the ranklist, the language interface that you want to use, if you want to have background sounds, etc
2.4 How to play the Play Your Skills games?

The app features five fun mini games, trains your skills, makes you track your progress and gives you insights about your competences.

Play the games to collect all 7 badges.

Share your success with others (friends, family but in particular with your mentor!).

How to play the games?

When you enter your Dashboard, on the star, click the game you want to play with.

Otherwise click on the Games tab, and then on the name of the game you want to play with.
PAIRS:
Find the pieces that belong together.
Level 1: Only matching pairs are active.
Level 2: Possible pieces are active.
Level 3: All pieces are active - find the ones you can remove.

MEMORY:
Find the matching pairs.
MINES:
Click on the fields to open them, but avoid hitting a mine. The numbers you see on the field tell you how many mines there are hidden around the field you opened. You can click on the button of the top, between the numbers, to choose if you want to identify a mine with a flag or to click on the field to open it.

ODD ONE:
Find the word that does not match the others.
**BLOCKS:**

Order the falling pieces so that they form lines without any holes. Full lines will disappear. Form as many lines as you can without any pieces touching the top. You should press the right part of your screen to move the piece to the right, and the left part of your screen to move it to the left. On the bottom you have a button to rotate the piece and another to bring it down quickly. You need to do a scroll down to have access to the lower buttons.

Some games, such as Memory and Odd One, allow users to select the level they want to play with. This feature is enabled as far as the 1st level has been completed. Otherwise it is not possible to change level.
2.5 Communication with NEETS through communication windows in the App

Throughout the game, some popup windows appear. These windows provide you small information on:

How to play the games

The level, the score and the trained competence you have reached in the game you have just played

As well as windows indicating each time you earn a badge.
But what is a badge?

Badges are gamification elements. More specifically, they are a digital way to acknowledge learner’s work. For example, students might receive a badge if they achieve certain levels of success on assignments, or if they do additional work, such as submitting a draft or sharing notes with another student. They may even be the result of simple participation: accessing the course five times a week over the course of a semester could be the way to earn a badge. Student badges may be displayed to other learners in the class as a means to encourage competition or to demonstrate the variety of badges which can be earned.

This is what happens in Play Your Skills. Each time the young NEET accomplish something (e. g. complete a game) the youngster earns a badge.

In the Play Your Skills app there are three different types of badges but in total there are seven specific badges aimed at making young people interested in continuing to play the game.

Types of badges:

The first reward is the Welcome and first time you play a game;

The second reward (a specific badge for each game) is earned the first time you complete the first level of a game;

The third badge is earned when you complete the game, becoming an “expert”.

[Image of a phone displaying a badge interface]
Here we show you the seven categories of badges of the Play Your Skills app:

1) Newbie

2) Pairs

3) Memory

4) Odd One

5) Blocks

6) Mines

7) Whiz

To check the badges earned, the player can go to its Dashboard and see the collected badges.
2.5.1 Communication with NEETs through promotional videos

From time to time, while playing, users will see short promotional videos aimed at engaging even more NEETs in VET education and in the labour market. These short videos will pop up at certain stages during the games and will try to provide users more information about vocational education and training opportunities as well as information about different professional careers. Therefore, they are intended to guide players to a VET education and to show them that they can get VET guidance and information. More in detail, we speak about three videos: "VET Information", "Skills and Competences" and "VET Guidance", which are presented within the Play Your Skills app itself.

There are also advertising videos in other apps (e.g. the project DITOGA [www.ditoga.eu]) to promote the Play Your Skills app. More in details, we speak about three other videos: "Download", "All Games" and "Visit us"), which are used to promote the Play Your Skills app in other apps and to invite their users to download the Play Your Skills app and visit our website.

The project videos are available in all partner languages and you can watch them from the following link:

and on the project's YouTube channel:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTR_F1SoHKo52QqUwaiyXnQ.
2.6 Sharing games’ scores of App users

While playing the games, users will gain scores and will reach levels in each game. They can share their results (shown through a small chart) with their mentor / VET counsellor / VET staff (or even with friends!) Simply click on the “Share” button each time it appears (e.g. as far as you end the game) and send it via e-mail, WhatsApp or print it for your mentor!

As already mentioned, competition can motivate students and can be leveraged by leaderboards or ranklists that showcase the distribution of scores that students have accumulated through various learning activities (in our case, through each game). However, caution must be taken when constructing leaderboards because displaying all students in order of point totals can be a disincentive for students at the bottom.

The Play Your Skills app offers the possibility to have two different kinds of ranklists: a ranklist which includes the total scores earned by players in the games all together, and a second ranklist where the scores gained by players are displayed per each game:
2.7 Working with NEETs based on the results achieved in the Mobile Gaming App

How could you combine the results achieved by each player (represented in the chart) with the competence assessment tools and methods or with the motivational tools you already use in your daily work with NEETs?

The app offers facilitation of communication between app users (NEETs) and their mentees: NEETs’ communication about the skills trained in the app is facilitated through the app by buttons to send emails directly and by offering screenshots as well as download and sharing options for the achievements made in the app. While appearing to be only a gaming app, there are also underlying "background" functions that support NEETs in their path towards a VET education and/or career. The partnership views on the usage of this app is that it is a great way to motivate NEETs to work and develop their skills and competences. Since these games have no solid empirical evidence and are not validated, we cannot infer that these will enhance the mentioned competences.

However, the data retrieved from the app (and summarized through the different charts with the player achievements) can be used to engage youngsters in many important interventions like increasing NEETs motivation and confidence, identifying interests, strengths and creating a new narrative that is more useful to their wellbeing and for their career, and hopefully a gateway to the labour market.

As a mentor, you can use the App and its results (shown in the graphs that it is possible to share) to work with NEETs in their personal integration plan. You can, for example, start the conversation with your client; we will describe here below some questions and statements that can be used to engage and further develop these themes.
Motivational /Promoting a new narrative:

- I can see that you’re good at this!
- I notice that you improved with practice.
- You achieve success when you put effort on it.
- In what other situation did you achieve success?
- How did you overcome some Hurdles in other situations?
- Something that we cannot make it right now, is just something that we didn’t try, practice or train it enough.

Identifying interests:

- In what else are you interested?
- What themes do you search\ read during your free time.
- What do you enjoy to do?

Identifying strengths:

- In what do you received compliments?
- When people talk good things to you in relation to work/ school, what do they mention.

Therefore, this chart can be useful for VET staff (coaches, mentors, VET trainers, career counsellors, etc) to work with the available competences/skills, in career orientation and in support to find the right career path/ VET course. The Play Your Skills app can be an entertaining way for NEETs, to develop and identify their skills!

To enhance the usage of the data provided by the App through the results chart and of the Play Your Skills app in general, the partnership has developed additional information that career counsellors, coaches, mentors etc may consult in support of their work. In fact, on the project website it has been created a section where you can find information about vocational education and training paths in all project partner countries: https://www.playyourskills.eu/en/vet-information/

This information is also available in all project partner languages.

In the project website you can also find a section where we have listed the different competences NEETs can acquire through the gaming App, in relation to different VET professional fields (please, read paragraph 5.2 of these Guidelines). You can access this information from the following link: https://www.playyourskills.eu/en/professional-fields/

This information are complementary to the Play Your Skills App and allow mentors to provide a better support to their young clients. VET staff, as well as the youngsters, can also access these two sections from the “More Information” heading of the Settings page.
3. PERSONAL INTEGRATION PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCES: additional tools for mentors & trainers

In this chapter we want to provide mentors and trainers additional tools they may use with their young clients (mainly NEETs), in order to identify their skills and competences. These tools can be used in addition to the Play Your Skills App as part of the personal integration plan for the development of competences:

KnackApp

KnackApp https://knackapp.com/ is a gaming app founded in 2015, available for Apple and Android devices, which focuses on discovering and signalling the user’s talents and skills, connect with education and learning programs, get discovered by employers, and find job opportunities.

The game is available in many languages, including English, Chinese (Mandarin), German, Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, Hindi, Russian, Dutch, French, and Tagalog, which makes it useful for people in more than 120 countries, universities, colleges, governments, and social impact organizations.

The KnackApp team’s aim is to use technology innovation to tackle social and economic challenges and create pathways to education and employment opportunity, alleviate poverty, reduce inequality, and foster inclusion.

The game is equipped with three mini games that test skills and competencies useful for the labour market needs. With these results, the it creates a competency/skill profile that can be useful for the user to discover more about himself, as well as connect with employers and other job opportunities.
The app starts off with a sign-in/sign-up page, where users must insert their e-mail and password to create a personal profile.

After having signed-up, a puzzle game called Meta Maze automatically starts.

The instructions to play it are given the same time the game starts. After a few tries on the puzzling game, a memory feature appears. It involves a task similar to the “Pair” card game (which all of the cards are laid face down on a surface and two cards are flipped face up over each turn. The objective of the game is to turn over pairs of matching cards.

After the Meta Maze game, a new game automatically opens-up, with the same instruction method as the one previously described. This is the Dashi Dash. This main theme for this game is table waitering. In this game, users are given different plates associated with a specific facial expression (disgust, happy, angry, contempt, fear, surprise), and they have to serve the specific plate to the respective customer (judging by their facial expression). Each customer has its’ own time limit, so for a happy customer (more points) the gamer must attend to him on time. At first, only 3 facial expressions are available, but as the gamer moves up on levels, different expressions are added, and customers patience decreases (there is less time to serve).

The object of both Meta Maze and Dashi Dash is to reveal how people behave, plan, perceive and make decisions in real time. It also measures cognitive abilities, social skills and personality traits considered important for specific jobs. Stress management and task planning are also tested in the Dashi Dash game, since gamers have limited time to make decisions and plan their objectives to achieve a certain goal.

Finishing the Dashi Dash game, the Bomba Blitz game pops-up automatically, with the same instruction method as the previous games. This game is similar in tasks as the famously known game “Angry Birds”, where you must shoot objects off a slingshot to a given target. The first level involves putting out the fire (target) to keep it from burning the plants. The tasks become more demanding as the game progresses, and filling up the balloons with water is added to increase difficulty. At this stage, gamers have to manage the time they have at their disposal to shoot the balloons and filling them up.

At this point, the app demands a $ 1.99 payment for the user to access a complete the skill/competence profile (“My other strengths”), and an additional $2.99 for career choice suggestions (“My career paths”).

This fee is a big handicap for people who are already unmotivated to find jobs and seek educational help (especially NEETs).

After the user has paid for “other strengths” and “career paths”, (s)he is given a complete competency profile, with job suggestions correspondent to his/her competency results.

One important aspect of this app is that these results are not definitive. The gamer can play the games as many times as (s)he desires, update their scores and consequently update their career suggestions.
Wheel of competences

The following Wheel can complement the Play Your Skills App. Mentors can use the Wheel of Competences to help NEETs in the assessment of their skills (e.g. if their skills have been improved/developed thanks to the app games) during each counselling session: