How video games are helping shape Europe’s digital future

Virtual worlds

MARCH 7-9 2023

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an event organised by
How video games contribute to technological developments

MIP Farreng highlighted that there was a need for the European Union to pay more attention to the huge potential of Europe’s video games industry in terms of culture, art, innovation and Europe’s technological sovereignty. This innovation is crucial for the future of the EU and a great strategic enjeux vis-à-vis the US and China.

Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology, Interactive Technologies (DG CNECT), Rehana Schwinninger-Ladak talked about the huge potential for jobs that new tech is creating. There will be an upcoming non-legislative initiative on Virtual Worlds.

The Commission stated that there is sufficient regulation and said that the development of the industry should be supported. In terms of what needs to be done to boost the EU tech sector, it was highlighted that the lack of big EU players (e.g. platforms and related innovation ecosystems), fragmentation of the European industry, problems for start-ups to scale up and risk of killer acquisitions, lack of awareness and understanding of potential benefits and a skills shortage. Virtual worlds will need to reflect EU values and respect EU legislation; where people are safe, confident and empowered; that are open and interoperable; that promote growth and development of industry.

Did you know?

The health sector uses VR technology from video games. Hiring VR teams to enhance products and services for surgical training.

A study has found that video games could be a useful educational tool for training surgeons.

VR headsets are used for simulations to help astronauts in mission preparation.
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52% of the European population between the ages of 6 and 64 plays video games.

Official inauguration of the “Virtual Worlds” exhibition

MEP Laurence Farreng: “It is important to show that video games matter. With one in two European playing video games, this is part of everyday activity and inclusive regardless of age, gender and nationality. Video games should be at the centre of education. This is only the beginning — and important to see how Europe can benefit from video games and how video games can benefit from Europe.”

MEP Tomas Frankowski: “Esports cannot be compared to or regulated as traditional sports. There is a window of opportunity to develop esports.”

MEP Ibán García del Blanco: “There is a need to support an industry with huge potential that employs nearly 100,000 people in the EU and supports other industries. The sector is often demonised but there are lots of positive things including benefits to players including concentration and focus. There is a need for more women in the sector and an adequately skilled workforce.”

MEP Viola von Cramon acknowledged how useful video games can be for pedagogical support and life-long learning and that video games were pioneers in the digital transposition.

Member of Commissioner Gabriel’s cabinet, Lauriane Bertrand, acknowledged the support that video games provide to society at large especially in the areas of healthcare and education, saying that video games are truly a force for good.

Emma Ihre, Head of Sustainability, Embracer Group: “Europe must be able to attract and retain the talent needed to make our incredibly diverse games. 2023 is the EU year of skills. Embracer Group and ISFE members look forward to working with the EU institutions to make sure we educate and train our students and workforce.”
How video games in education prepare for the jobs of the future

MODERATOR
Shahvolla Savved, Head of Education, Ukie (the association for UK Interactive Entertainment)

PANEL
MEP Iñigo García del Blanco, (S&D, ES) Introductory words
Hans Martens, Head of Digital Citizenship, European SchoolNet: New iteration of the Games in Schools project
Prof. Anesa Hosein, University of Surrey: presented her research on how video games can help close the gender gap in STEM fields
Liesbeth Last, Teacher: Practical uses of video games in the classroom

MEP Alexis Georgoulis, The Left, (GR) Conclusion

How video games are helping shape Europe’s digital future

MEP Iñigo García del Blanco: “Video games present a huge opportunity for schools to create an engaging learning method that helps teamwork, creativity, memory, focus and can transform learning into something joyful. Learning by play led to positive results in students of all ages. Games can improve language learning, stimulate creativity, build new skills, boost digital literacy and digital skills.”

Video games are an economic and cultural powerhouse that need to be understood — hence his pilot project in CULT committee in 2020, “Understanding the value of a European video game society”.

The Commission is now preparing a comprehensive report and engaging with the sector, involving all stakeholders. It was highlighted that the CULT INI report on esports is calling for the creation of a supportive plan, a long-term game strategy, for talents to be encouraged, to defend cultural diversity, to protect IP and to protect consumers.

Hans Martens, Head of Digital Citizenship, European SchoolNet announced the new iteration of the Games in Schools Project. You don’t need to be a gamer to bring games into your school, but there are so many pressures including a lack of infrastructure, the need to convince the school leadership and to adapt the existing curriculum. It was announced that a new central piece of research will be launched this year to improve understanding of the educational benefits of video games to include a survey, case studies and expert input. The study will also aim to establish the best games for teachers to use in the classroom as well as the obstacles and how to overcome them.

Please find the study here: https://www.europeanschoolnetacademy.eu/courses/course1+IGS+GameCourse+2020/about

Did you know?

Teacher, Liesbeth Last, from KU Leuven and VITI Roeselare (technical school) followed on with an enthusiastic endorsement of the benefits of using video games in the classroom. She talked about the ways how games make learning more engaging, make it simpler to teach the usually difficult-to-reach students, and give the students a lot of self-confidence. She also spoke about how using games in her school had brought different ages of students together.

Ms Last explained how she uses videogames to assist pupils learn vital skills like entrepreneurship needed to navigate a labour market transformed by technological change. She called for game ambassadors by technological change.

She reiterated that video games can help acquire skills and competences, transform teaching help learners with special needs, increase inclusion and participation. He said we need to promote videogames – to invest in the sector. Finally, he stated that there was a need to find a balance between playing in the digital space and in the physical space.

Did you know?

Game-based learning, assessment and Roblox

Roblox highlighted the benefits of game-based learning, fun and engaging promotes communication and collaboration and builds resilience. The challenges, that have been identified are that it’s difficult to get it into classrooms, there is a lack of empirical evidence to show the value and there is of course the need for technology. Roblox contribution to education: A Roblox community fund to help build games to launch, in schools including “Mission Mars”, “Roboza” and “Pathogen Patrol”.

CLOSING REMARKS BY MEP Alexis Georgoulis (The Left, GR)

MEP Alexis Georgoulis wrapped up the session by stating that it was a good moment, on International Women’s Day 2023, to acknowledge that videogames can help close the gender gap.

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How video games are helping close the gender gap in STEM fields

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How video game companies are promoting female talent in top-tier competitions (also known as esports)

Claudia Beaton, ESL Face IT Group – GG for All is about anti-toxicity and is an ESL CSR initiative. GG for All is structured around 4 pillars:

1. Toxicity and fair play: Three years ago, the AI program Minerva was launched with the goal of moderating toxicity and bullying at the FACEIT platform, allowing the automatic moderation of toxic players. This is a game changer because, previously, moderation could only be achieved through human intervention.

2. Universal Participation: ESL advocates for marginalised populations to participate in esports as well.

3. Metal and Physical Well Being: There is collaboration with key esports players to promote messages to newcomers about the importance of focusing on their mental health.

4. Environmental impact: Meeting the Paris Agreement and reducing climate impact has also meant significant investment in sustainability.

Women players saw this as "the time has come" and they had been waiting for this opportunity for years.

Charlie Sirc, ESL FACEIT Group explained that Women’s esports competitions or organisations typically have lower budgets as well as smaller sponsorships. The initiative’s major goal was thus to make it equal. The competitions are open to everyone, but only a few

47.8% of European game players are women

Ann Becker, Head of Policy and Public Affairs ISFE talked about how today about 22% of the workforce in the video games sector are women – with the industry aiming to grow that further. However, to put that figure in perspective, it is already above the number of women in the ICT sector as a whole (17% according to EU Commission data).

ISFE is a Corporate Ambassador of Women in Games, and a big achievement has been the launch of the Women in Games guide “Level Playing Field”. It is a guide that aims at inspiring companies to do more in terms of Women in the video game sector (representation in companies, in games, etc.) with examples of best practice and input from video game companies. WIG France has recently released an important guide on how to improve diversity in the sector. There are a lot more initiatives at the national level led by video games trade bodies.

Hege Botman’s story:
Hege is a former professional player who spent almost two decades playing Counter-Strike. VALORANT, and League of Legends. She is a CS@GO expert. She now works as an on-air analyst.

Hege made the decision to leave it to the new generations the chance to compete when ESL Impact was introduced. ESL Impact provided also other work prospects and allowed her to participate in the broadcasting of the competition. Hege has an IT background that she says she would not have had if it hadn’t been for video games. She also stated that she was fortunate to grow up in a welcoming community in Norway. Hege pointed out that the online environment is very aggressive.

This creates a climate that is not welcoming to women, and many desire to stop or form women-only teams to feel safer. She maintained that attempts to solve this issue must continue.
Sustainability Day
How video games can be used to deliver on the Green Deal

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The video game sector leads by example among the creative and cultural sectors, and has developed innovative ways to collaborate and inspire action, notably through global partnerships under the aegis of the UN-facilitated Playing for the Planet Alliance.

2. Video games have a unique opportunity to inspire change and raise awareness towards its players through gameplay and innovative storytelling. More and more games include content related to climate change and this is something that is positively welcomed by players.

3. Assessing its environmental impact as a video game studio is an essential step towards understanding and reducing its carbon emissions, but many challenges lie ahead and retrieving data among various stakeholders in the value chain is cumbersome and difficult.

4. The shadow of regulation is needed, building and strengthening instruments that have already proven their ability to start change, such as the Games Consoles Voluntary Agreement to increase energy and resource efficiency for video games devices.

PRESENTATIONS

Member of the European Parliament Niklas Niennaß introduced the roundtable. The presentations highlighted that the objective of the EU Climate Law is to achieve climate neutrality in the EU by 2050 and by reducing carbon emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. The video games sector, like any industry, has a responsibility to act to reduce its impact but also has the unique ability to use its medium to raise awareness on climate change.

UNEP insisted on the seriousness of the climate emergency and called on all actors to act for a better future individually, the industry but also regulators. Video games have the power to change the hearts and minds of players, notably by including powerful messages on climate change as part of their content. In 2022, 42 studios participated to the Green Game Jam, potentially reaching more than 275 million players globally. The Alliance’s Annual Impact Report was published during the event, showcasing the collective action the games industry is taking to reduce its carbon footprint.

Some of the sessions included:

- The video game sector, also with the involvement of consoles. This alone constitutes a significant increase in computing power while still consuming as much energy than the previous generation of consoles. Circular economy aspects (so-called “resource efficiency”) are also not forgotten and many requirements of the GCVA relates to information to consumers on repairability and availability of spare parts.
- One instrument in particular has been key in driving innovations within the sector, also with the involvement of Member States and of the European Commission: the Games Consoles Voluntary Agreement (the GCVA). The GCVA allowed for the new generation of PlayStation consoles to achieve significant increases in computing power while still consuming as much energy than the previous generation of consoles. This alone constitutes a massive technological achievement only made possible by the GCVA providing a framework driving change in how consoles are designed. Circular economy aspects (so-called “resource efficiency”) are also not forgotten and many requirements of the GCVA relates to information to consumers on repairability and availability of spare parts.

Europe’s video games sector is committed to sustainable production and consumption.