

REPLAY

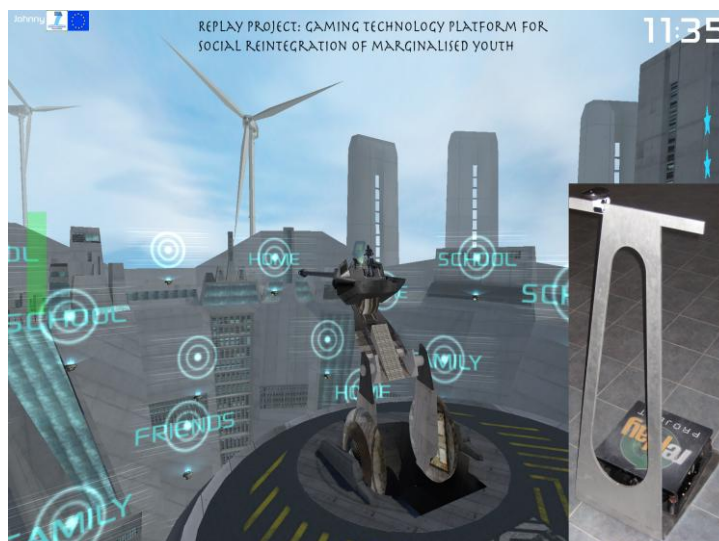
A game to help reduce the risk of youth marginalisation



Playing games can help young people open up and communicate better, particularly in complex situations. This is the bottom-line of the EU-funded project REPLAY (Gaming Technology Platform for Social Reintegration of Marginalised Youth), which has developed an interactive video game to help facilitate the communication between marginalised young people due to anti-social behaviour and the experts (i.e. social workers, teachers) who assist them.

For whom?

REPLAY is not a therapy in itself but a tool for professionals to assess and address "low-level" anti-social behaviour (e.g. verbal abuse, vandalism, bullying) amongst children aged 10 to 14 years who are at risk of marginalisation. It helps experts **manage re-educational programmes in day centres for youngsters** and can also be used as a **preventative and assessment tool within anti-social behaviour programmes** in schools.



A phase of the REPLAY game: in response to a question, players have to quickly "shot" the targets linked to selected words

REPLAY: the game

As youngsters are usually very familiar with video games, playing, instead of feeling the pressure of a face-to-face interview, helps them relax and open up. This facilitates the discussion and makes it easier for experts to better understand the child's behaviour and take the appropriate steps to help. Children are willing to play the REPLAY game because it is entertaining, is based on the latest 3D interactive technologies and creates a highly interactive, immersive and engaging environment.

Before starting the game, the expert explains to the child how the game works, determining a sort of "a priori" agreement to engage them. By being aware of their responsibility and the active role they will play, children tend to stick to the agreement and play the game until the end and are available to replay it a few times.

The game is structured in **two phases: "game run" and "replay"**. During the "game run" phase the player "travels" at high speed through a futuristic world and, along the path, has to respond to some questions and make choices which are linked to very concrete situations – for example: "Jack has tried smoking and knows it makes him feel

very sick. There is a corner in the school grounds where Jack's two best mates go at break times for a cigarette. Supervisors never go there. They ask him to join them. They say it's cool and that girls like boys who smoke. What should Jack do? a) Say no and explain that smoke makes him feel sick; b) go with them and smoke a whole cigarette; c) go with them and pretend to smoke." Questions cannot be skipped: answers are compulsory if further progress within the game is to be made. The immediacy of the children's reactions is key to maximising the chances of a spontaneous and truthful response. Questions and challenges are not meant as tests with right or wrong answers, but aim at understanding values and motivations behind the child's behaviour, explore personal values, emotions and uncover the way the individual makes decisions.

During the second phase - "replay" – the expert (who sits with the child throughout) replays the activities and the responses together with the child and starts a discussion on his answers and choices and on the reasons behind them.

What makes REPLAY different

REPLAY presents a **mix of didactic content and play in** the form of a game, engaging players in learning in a very natural way. Although there are a few other similar products available, REPLAY is **the first** project in the world that uses serious gaming technology as an assessment/preventative tool for anti-social behavioural programmes in schools and educational centres.

Moreover, REPLAY is **flexible**, i.e. has been designed to allow easy configuration of content and activities, making it possible to develop different versions of the game quickly and cheaply and to adapt them to other sectors. This opens up a wide range of **market opportunities** in different application areas, e.g. games for autistic children and language-learning games.

Status and next steps

The project is currently at its final stages and will be completed by September 2010. It has been tested **on around 180 users by 60 experts** in schools and evaluation centres in Spain, United Kingdom and Romania, and demonstrations have been carried out across Europe and beyond. The goal is to bring the project to **50% of private and public schools** in the UK, Spain and Romania and 20% in the other EU countries within the next five years, and to cover **80% of the EU schools** in ten years.

Moreover, the adoption of the game as a preventive tool can bring additional benefits by reducing by 40% the number of children enrolling in re-educational programmes, with estimated cost-savings of more than **5 million EUR per year** in countries like the UK and Spain.

The feed-back gathered by the experts – together with the outcome of a socio-

REPLAY @ a glance

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Consortium:

- Brainstorm Multimedia, Spain
- InnovaTec, Spain
- Toy Research Institute (AIJU), Spain
- White Loop, UK
- University A.I.Cuza, Romania
- Centro de Dia "El Cerezo", Spain
- Rotalent, Romania

Contact:

Francisco Ibáñez, Brainstorm Multimedia
(project coordinator)
Tel: +34-60-6103025 - francisco@brainstorm.es

Project website: www.replayproject.eu

To know more: REPLAY channel on YouTube - www.youtube.com/replayEC

ethical evaluation currently being carried out - will be used to develop a **second "generation" version of the game**, with improved functionalities and content.

Opportunities to **bring a full product to the market** by the end of 2010 are being explored with potential partners in Europe and in the US, and *ad hoc* versions of the game are being developed for specific markets.

For further information:

ICT for Inclusion

Tel: +32 (0)2 29 90245

Directorate General for Information Society and Media

European Commission, BU31 01/66, B-1049 Brussels Belgium

einclusion@ec.europa.eu

<http://ec.europa.eu/einclusion>

www.replayproject.eu