

Factsheet



Video Games and Sustainable Development Goals

Digital Citizenship Education, Video Game Culture and Education for Sustainable Development



— Digital Citizenship Education means – among other things¹ – working to nurture a positive video game culture for tomorrow's citizens. The more aware future generations are of the characteristics, the potential risks, and the potential opportunities of video games, the more it will be possible to build a society where both players and game developers will be ready to engage in shaping a better and more sustainable future.

— Video games, in this sense, are a very powerful medium: one that can create meaningful experiences able to impact players' minds and help them developing the *values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge* necessary to participate responsibly in society, understanding the importance of the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* and the need for a more equitable and sustainable world.

THE VALUE OF INDEPENDENT VIDEOGAMES

Despite the overshadowing presence of videogames coming from well-funded big-productions (so called TripleA games), smaller projects, called independent games (or, indie-games), are a valuable form of entertainment.

Their smaller scale allows for greater freedom in terms of topics addressed, game mechanics, quality of the narratives, and many more aspects. Moreover, they offer an opportunity for education, especially when it comes to education for sustainable development.

Independent games are privy to be incredible contributors to our society, whether by design or by coincidence. They serve as cultural, educational and entertaining instruments and they can support education for sustainable development.

1. Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)10 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on developing and promoting digital citizenship education

The examples of videogames which introduce topics such as gender equality, poverty, social and economical inequalities, health and well-being, climate change, are many:

- ▶ *Once upon a tile* (by We Are Muesli: <https://wearemuesli.it/itch.io/once-upon-a-tile>): A finalist in the Gaming Challenge convened in 2015 by UNESCO's Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), *Once Upon a Tile* is the prototype of a "(not so) casual game" designed to promote values related to the 17 SDGs through straightforward game mechanics.
- ▶ *Terra Nil* (by Free Lives: <https://www.terranyl.com/>), *Highwater* (by Demagog Studio: <https://demagogstudio.com/Highwater>) or *Endling - extinction is forever* (by Herobeat Studios: <https://handy-games.com/en/games/endling/>): are games that are not created with the specific intention to educate for sustainable development, but, they deal with clean energy, climate change, respect of nature, poverty and inequalities.
- ▶ *Chicory: A Colorful Tale* (by Wishes Unlimited: <https://chicorygame.com/>) transcends traditional video gaming, serving as a platform for self-expression and introspection in its vividly hand-drawn world. This game encourages creative exploration and provides a psychologically nurturing space for reflection. The game promotes inclusivity, celebrating diversity and individual voices. It underscores that beauty thrives in contexts of inclusion and self-expression, echoing beyond the game to resonate with broader aspects of human existence.

One of the factors that hinders educational practitioners in using Video Games to promote SDGs is the lack of knowledge about which are the right games to promote them. This is why it is important to highlight initiatives that valorise such games, such as:

- ▶ Events that can gather game developers, teachers and policymakers and promote a dialogue between them;
- ▶ Training materials conceived for educators, parents and gamers which focus on the connections between video games and the SDGs;
- ▶ The construction of a SDG/Video Games classification system: a sort of PEGI²-like classification system which can be used to look for the most suitable video games to talk about a given SDGs.

VIDEO GAMES TO PROMOTE SDGs

Molleindustria is an independent game development studio focused on creating meaningful and "political" video ludic experiences. The use of the work "political" is to be understood in its wide meaning: every media product is not neutral as it presents a specific (and partial) point of view. In this sense, every videogame is political.

One example of political video game that can be used to promote awareness toward SDG 7 "Affordable and clean energy" is *Green New Deal Simulator* (<https://molleindustria.org/GND/>): a card driven video game where the player is the president of a fictional nation based on the United States of America and needs to take political decisions about the transition to a post-carbon economy while ensuring full employment.

Another example is *Ismy*: a game funded by the Metropolitan City of Cagliari (Italy) which represents a very interesting model of interactive geo-telling and storytelling of a Cagliari's historically neighbourhood called "Is Mirrionis". The game, supported by a webapp for mobile devices based on Walklets, combines walking, exploring and activities in real-world places, creating and alternating experiences of those places through blended/augmented/amplified «reality».

Games such as this enable players to cultivate relationships with urban spaces and develop sustainable ways to explore, live and interact with the urban spaces.

This kind of games, with their distinctive features, shift relationships and attitudes towards the environment.

Hence, they could be harnessed to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

USEFUL LINKS



We are muesli official website: <https://wearemuesli.it/it/>
Molleindustria official website: <https://molleindustria.org/>



To learn more about Digital Citizenship Education and its Video game Culture Working Group, go to: www.coe.int/dce

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2. PEGI provides age and content classifications for video games in 38 European countries. The age rating confirms that the game content is appropriate for players of certain age. PEGI considers the age suitability of a game in terms of contents and not the level of difficulty. For more info: <https://pegi.info/>