CONVEY

Digital Education for Gender Equality

GAME MANUAL

CONVEY – Counteracting sexual violence and harassment: Engaging Youth in schools in digital education on gender stereotyping"

Ref. *JUST/2015/RDAP/AG/SEXV/8572*

Related Activity:
WS1.3 – Videos with testimonials
Author: *CESIE*

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this project has been to develop four interactive online games that introduce players to the topic of gender-based violence. By the means of stories portraying gender-stereotyping and gender-based violence, the project seeks to familiarise youth with the complexity of the issue, as well as equip them with some real-life stories that personalise the issue. In order to engage the intended target group in the development of the games we used a participatory design process. The project set up peer groups from the six partner countries to help design the storylines, expert groups consisting of survivors of gender-based violence, psychologists experienced in supporting women victims of violence and social workers to help frame the learning objectives, as well as a team to conceptualize the storylines and incorporate game play. In the following sections we will go over of the research that we conducted on gaming for behavioural change and lastly a manual on how we developed the CONVEY games.

INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Please download the game from: https://notagame.eu/

Available languages
    The CONVEY video game is available in 4 different languages:
- English
- Italian
- Bulgarian
- Greek
    Depending on the chosen language, the subtitles on the game and on the videos after each chapter will change accordingly.

- **Setting up your account**
    - In order to play the CONVEY video game, the player needs to set up an account.

    - To set up an account (single player / multiple players) one of the available names needs to be selected. The names which are available at the moment correspond to names of great women from different fields, such as science, sports, organizations in support of women's rights and women's rights movements.

    - A number after the name will be automatically assigned as well. Therefore, your username will be composed by - the chosen name # a number - eg. *CURIE#456*. This will make your username unique.

- Please note that no email address nor any kind of personal data is required to set up an account. This decision was made in order to avoid any data protection issue we may have encountered otherwise, considering videogame players are underaged. Nonetheless, this means that passwords cannot be retrieved if lost as no external email address is on the database. Therefore, in case of forgotten password, the player simply has to set up a new account.

- Internet connection: Internet connection is only needed to set up an account, not to play. Hence, if the account had already been created while the computer/phone was connected to the Internet, no internet connection is needed to play the CONVEY video game.

- **Logging in and out**
  Once the players logs out of the game, a new log in is needed. The username is saved by the device you play in, therefore, there is no need to type it again. Only the chosen password needs to be typed.

- **Retrieving your password**
  While the username is automatically retained by the device you use to play, the password needs to be inserted each time that you wish to log in. Passwords are not saved anywhere due to the data protection issues mentioned above. In case of forgotten password, a new account needs to be set up again and the game has to be started from the beginning.

- **Teams**
  - Creating a team
   Each player may create a team and choose a team name as shown below.

- Inviting people into a team
  Each team can invite other players from any part of the world into the team by using their username (which means they need to know the username of the person they want to invite)
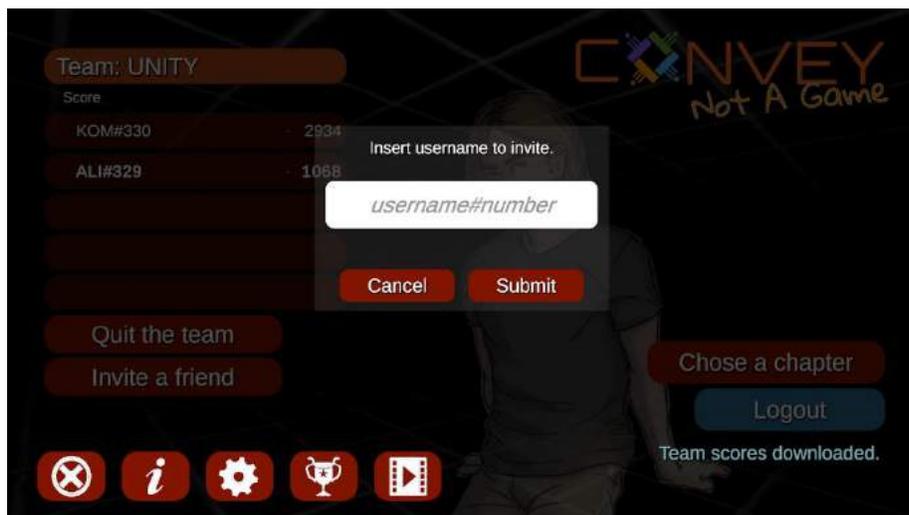
- Joining an existing team
  To join an existing team players need to be invited into it. They cannot join a team by themselves. Therefore, in order to do so, the player has to give her/his username to one of the members of the team they want to join and be invited, as explained in the section above.

- Leaving a team
  To leave a team, the 'Quit the team' bottom needs to be clicked as shown below.

- Points earned as a team
  Playing in a team does not mean players inside the team play against one another as this would defy the educational purposes of the videogame. Instead, in a cooperative manner, the points of all member players on the team add up. This way all existing teams compete for points in the leaderboard for teams.

- **Access to chapters of the game**
  - There are 5 chapters in total. The first chapter is always unlocked. Once the first chapter is completed, chapters 1,2,3 and 4 are unlocked. Chapter 5 only unlocks once all other chapters are completed. It means that Chapter 1 needs to be played in order to unlock the following chapters.

  - Please note that if you complete Chapter 1, you log out and then log in from the same device, you will have access to the following chapters as explained above. Nonetheless, if you change device, even if you log in into the same account, the game will start from Chapter 1, meaning that all other Chapters will be locked.

- **Videos**
  The game features 9 videos co-developed with survivors of sexual violence, harassment and gender-based violence in the UK, Bulgaria, Greece and Italy, in the framework of the CONVEY project. At the end of Chapters 1-4 one content-related video will unlock and be played automatically. The other 5 remaining videos can be found in Chapter 5 and in the following specific section of the menu that contains all of our survivors' videos. Videos may be found under the 'video' button:
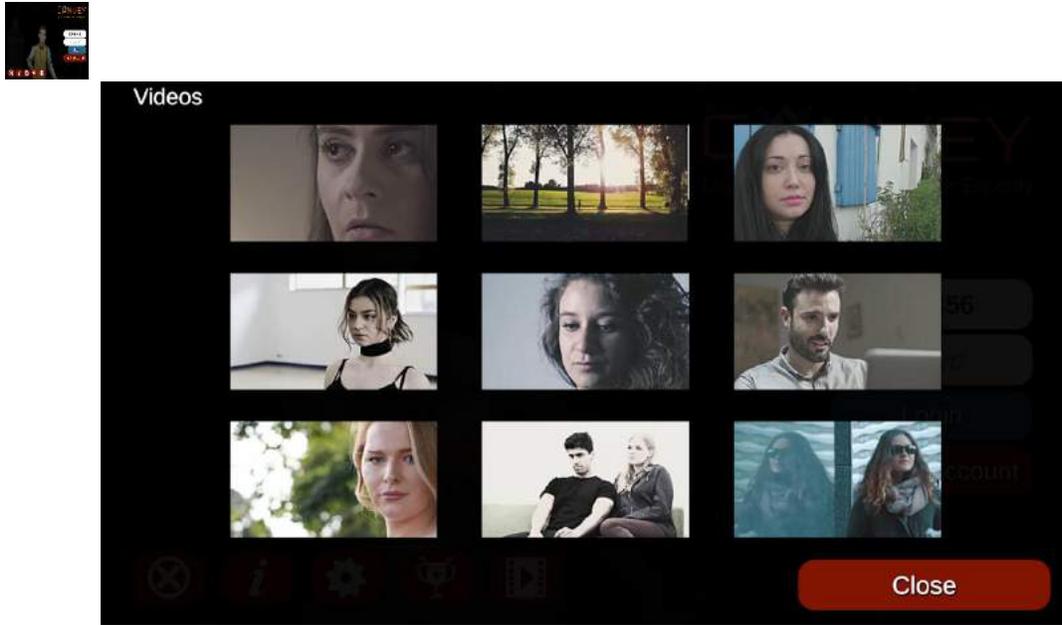
GAMING FOR BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

The first video game ever developed was a simple tennis game created by the American physicist William Higinbotham in October of 1958.[1] Higinbotham, working at Brookhaven National Laboratory in New York at the time, came up with the idea of having an interactive game present during in his labs' annual 'visitors' day'. Tired of the countless dry exhibitions that evoked little reflection from the visitors, Higinbotham believed that an interactive demonstration of the work they did could engage the visitors in a novel way. Higinbotham's might unknowingly have pioneered the gamification movement, famously quoted saying that *"it might liven up the place to have a game that people could play, and which would convey the message that our scientific endeavors have relevance for society*"[2].

Today, a plethora of commercial brands, international organizations, as well educational institutions use video games, digital and analogical, as tools to engage and interact with their audience. Gaming has become a tool to further social causes and drive awareness on a wide-ranging set of issues,

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[1] "This Month in Physics History: October 1958: Physicist Invents First Video Game." *APS Physics*, A Publication of the American Physical Society, Oct. 2008, www.aps.org/publications/apsnews/200810/physicshistory.cfm.

[2] Ladd, Brian C., and Christopher James Jenkins. *Introductory programming with simple games: using Java and the Freely available networked game engine*. Hoboken, NJ, John Wiley & Sons, 2011.

including but not limited to; poverty, cancer, bullying, homosexuality mental health, as well as sexual and gender-based violence.[3] When speaking about gaming as a learning tool there are a number of terms being used to describe the phenomenon. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, we will be referring to gaming as a tool for learning, as *gamification*. Gamification has been defined as "the use of game design elements in non-game contexts" [4].

Gamification can be a powerful learning tool, enabling both active and critical learning.[5] Proponents of game-based learning advance that digital games can "teach and reinforce skills important for future jobs such as collaboration, problem-solving, and communication."[6] Amongst problem-solving skills we find that there is a positive correlation between gaming and the ability to perform evidence based decision-making.[7] To see positive results as it relations to gamification, however, research furthers that it is vital that players that engage with online games in an education setting, have the possibility to discuss and reflect on the issues they have been taught. A study done by Fengfeng Ke recommends that teachers try to connect the content of the game with the curriculum so that students are able to transfer their new knowledge into the classroom and their everyday life.[8] A review of 17 studies on the game design by Ke found that instructional support is essential, as it allows players to not only learn how to *play* the game, but also how to successfully extract the knowledge that has been embedded into the game[9]

Still, games that seek to instil positive messages of intergroup cohesiveness and empathy in their players have had very little previous research to ground their approach. Research conducted by Dicheva et al. in 2015 found that a majority of the scientific research on gamification focus on describing possible game mechanisms and dynamics, and that only a small number of studies focus on the actual

[3] "14 Video Games That Tackle Important Social Issues." *TeachThought*, www.teachthought.com/technology/14-games-tackle-important-social-issues/.

[4] Deterding, Sebastian, et al. "From Game Design Elements to Gamefulness: Defining "Gamification"." *Proceedings of the 15th International Academic MindTrek Conference on Envisioning Future Media Environments - MindTrek 11*, 2011, pp. 9–15., doi:10.1145/2181037.2181040.

[5] Gee, James Paul. *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

[6] Larsen McClarty, Katie, et al. *A Literature Review of Gaming in Education*. Pearson, 2012, *A Literature Review of Gaming in Education*..

[7] Miller, Craig. "The Gamification Of Education." *Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning*, vol. 40, 2013, pp. 196–200. *www.journals.tdl.org*, journals.tdl.org/absel/index.php/absel/article/view/40/38.

[8] Ke, Fengfeng. "A Qualitative Meta-Analysis of Computer Games as Learning Tools." *Handbook of Research on Effective Electronic Gaming in Education*, IGI Global, New York, 2009, pp. 1–32.

[9] *ibid*. 23

effectiveness of using gamification elements in an educational setting.[10] So on one hand we know that the most popular game mechanisms are points, badges and leaderboards, and that that most utilized gamification design principle in education contexts are " social engagement, freedom of choice, freedom to fail and rapid feedback."[11] What we do not know however, is what the long-term effects of gamification are.[12] Kaufman and Flanagan therefore set out to answer this one crucial question; "*how can designers effectively craft games that both provide an meaningful immersive experience and produce beneficial effects for individuals and society at large*?"[13]

The Embedded Design Approach

In their article "A Psychologically 'Embedded' Approach to Designing Games for Prosocial Causes" Kaufman and Flanagan introduce the concept of "Embedded Design". Yet before outlining the "embedded design" approach, we will take a look at the three obstacles that can prevent behavioural change in players, as they have been identified by Kaufman and Flanagan.[14]

The first obstacle identified was that exposure to unwanted behaviours and perceived societal problems could inspire conformity in players and a need to hold on to the very behaviour, belief or attitude, that the game seeks to eradicate.[15] The second obstacle was that explicit messaging within a game against a certain issue ran the potential of setting of a psychological defence in players[16] Meaning that instead of changing the desired behaviour, players may instead feel that their ability to choose and make valuable choices for themselves is being infringed upon.[17] This in turn can inspire an internal resistance to the message, ultimately impeding any behavioural change. The third obstacle elaborated

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[10] Darina Dicheva, Christo Diche, Gennady Agre and Galia Angelova. Gamification in Education: A Systematic Mapping Study. Educational Technology & Society, 18 (3), 2015

[11] *ibid*

[12] Vlachopoulos, Dimitrios and Agoritsa Makri. 2017.The Effect of Games and Simulations on Higher Education: a Systematic Literature Review. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education.* 14:22

[13] Kaufman, G., & Flanagan, M. 2015. A psychologically "embedded" approach to designing games for prosocial causes. Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace, 9(3), article 5.

[14] *Ibid*. 2

[15] Ibid

[16] Ibid

[17] Ibid

upon in their research was that players might not even be aware that they themselves need an intervention at all, thus making it even harder to get through to them with the message.

What Kaufman and Flanagan propose in order to circumvent these psychological patterns is an "embedded design" approach. [18] The "embedded design" approach is based on the idea that the persuasiveness, and essentially success of a game, rests on the game's ability to convey a message without making its intent too obvious. They identify two ways that a game can use the strategy of embedding. Firstly, you have the strategy of "intermixing". Intermixing focuses on mixing "on-topic" and "off-topic" content in a way that camouflages the game's real intent. Secondly, you have the strategy of "obfuscating". Obfuscating takes advantage of game genres and seeks to attract players to a game by using a game genre that normally would not be associated with the topic. An empirical studies on two games utilizing the embedded design approach, namely "Buffalo" (obfuscating strategy) and "Awkward Moment" (intermixing), found that prosocial games that fail to mask their intent, or are too explicit in their approach, have a lower probability of persuading players.[19] Corollary, games that employ an embedded design strategy have a higher probability of generating a more susceptible and compassionate attitude in its players.[20]

In our development of the CONVEY games we utilized the "embedded design approach". Ultimately, we wanted the games to be able to market themselves and be on par with the current standard of online games, with or without the added educational element. When talking to our peer consultants it was very important for the team developing the games, to know whether or not the peers felt that this game was entertaining and worthwhile playing. From our research on the "embedded design approach" we knew that over-focusing on the educational elements of the game, could deter young people from wanting to play the games. Instead we felt that creating scenarios that rendered familiarity with the target group, and characters that evoked empathy in the players, had a much greater potential of swaying attitudes and behaviours in the players. Furthermore, by choosing to develop games where the player would have to investigate a crime and on their own discover who the perpetrator was, we felt that we were giving the players a sense of autonomy. We didn't want to create

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[18] Ibid

[19] Ibid. Kaufman and Flanagan. 2015.

[20] Ibid.

a moralistic game, which according to Kaufman and Flanagan could trigger a psychological defence in the players.

MANUAL ON HOW TO CREATE AN AWARENESS RAISING ONLINE GAME

1. HOW DID WE DECIDE ON THE TARGET GROUP?

The overarching goal of the CONVEY project has been to counteract sexual violence and harassment in schools by engaging youth in digital education on gender stereotyping. Project objectives were therefore to develop an online simulation game based on up-to-date research results and with the active participation of the local consulting groups of young people (peer consultants) and of an expert group including survivors of gender-based violence. Secondly the objective was to educate and contribute to behavioural and attitude change amongst young people in the field of sexual violence, harassment, digital media and gender stereotyping.

We wanted to change behaviours early and because it could be used in an education setting.

2. HOW DID WE DEVELOP THE STORIES?

In order to create games that would be appealing and attractive to the intended target group the project adapted a participatory model. This approach was grounded in a belief that an active involvement of the target group and main users of the game would be detrimental for the overall success of the games. In our development of the online games we therefore relied heavily on feedback and input from peer consulting groups from the six partner countries. The six peer groups consisted of 15 students (maximum) between the ages of 14 -18. Each partner country was responsible for conducting three meetings with their peer group. The aim of these meetings was to determine the peers' level of knowledge about the issues at hand and to create a common base of understanding from which to proceed. Secondly the aim was to have them develop the stories using scenarios and

characters that evoked familiarity with the target group. When asked to share their motivation to be a part of a peer consulting group, the peers answered:

> "To learn more on the problem of sexual harassment and to know how to deal with situations like these; to enrich my knowledge on the topics and our feedback to be used for continuation of this project in the future; to protect myself and others from sexual violence; to gain skills that will help me to protect others; to help me be more informed on everything related to me as a girl and maybe as a future victim"

The first peer consulting meeting focused on introducing the peers to each other and creating a safe space for dialogue and reflection. Additionally, it sought to create a common understanding of key concepts, such as; gender-based violence, gender stereotyping, sexual harassment, gender roles, difference between sex and gender etc. Following this meeting, and prior to the second peer consulting meeting, we developed two conceptual game ideas that we presented to the group at the second peer consulting meeting. During the second meeting we then asked the group to provide us with feedback on a number of relevant issues in regard to the game proposals, namely; the feasibility of the game, if participants found the proposals appealing and intriguing enough to be able to attract attention amongst young people and how they found the awareness raising aspect of the game proposals. These feedbacks then served as a springboard from which we could further develop the games. We also specified with the peers that the game ideas needed to be viable in all the countries involved in the project, and possibly across the EU. Furthermore, that the games needed to have a transnational and transcultural character to them. The peers were then asked to vote on the storylines and rank them in from the *best* to the *least preferred* storyline.

However, the feedback from the peers were not the only source of feedback and project partners were also invited to provide feedback on the games. Thus prior to the third peer consulting meeting a discussion arose amongst the coordinating organisation CESIE and the partner organisations as to the playability of the game. The concern was that the storylines that had been developed, although good, did not lend itself well to the format of an engaging and interactive online game. We knew that we would have to develop a game that would be able to compete with existing online games and our goal was to produce a game that was on par with the current standard of online entertainment. In developing games focused on gender-based violence, a very serious issue, we learned that we had perhaps neglected the importance of entertainment and gameplay. Although the storylines were good

and capable of producing our desired learning outcomes, they did not necessarily allow for engaging gameplay.

We therefore had to back to the drawing board and try to restructure our current game proposals in a way that players of the game would have more autonomy. We wanted to create stories where players had to use their own judgement in order to uncover episodes of gender-based violence. We also wanted there to be a real interaction between the players and the platform. Our solution was to combine our two previous game proposals and create an investigation game. In the following section we will elaborate more upon how we developed the gameplay for the CONVEY games.

3. HOW DID WE DEVELOP THE GAME PLAY?

We decided to go for an investigation type style of game-play as we felt that it highlighted the criminal nature of the abuses. In the games players impersonate the investigator and he or she has to uncover a crime related to gender-based violence. During the game the player can also experience flashbacks that shows parts of the investigator's personal history story with gender-based violence, or the victim's story. Sometimes, the player also has the opportunity to make a difference in the game by for example choosing different paths during dialogues, or by choosing different actions during the interactive story. We decided to include this element of choice because we believed it could lead to the player developing more empathy with the victim. By going for an investigation type style of game-play we furthermore believed that players would get a more intimate look into the consequences of gender-based violence. Without necessarily overly focusing on the survivors' victimhood. Another benefit was that the by creating storylines built upon dialogues between the investigator and the different characters, including the victims,we were in a position to incorporate tips about available support mechanisms within making our intent too obvious.

In all four of our games we added different game mechanisms, such as easter eggs, achievements, collectables, mini-games etc. We also included a scoring system to make the player feel rewarded and as a way to add competition between the players. The point system is based on how many collectables, dialogues and hidden easter-eggs players find in the game, but also on the minigames and on how much time you take to solve them. You can however improve your score by

replaying the game. We decided to add minigames to our stories because they improve players' interaction and gives the player an opportunity to step back from the story and let the information sink in. Mini-games were additionally a good addition to the point system. The easter- eggs were incorporated into the games as a way to make the player more alert whilst playing the game, while simultaneously providing us with an opportunity to add statistics about sexual violence within the easter egg. Together with the easter eggs, we also made it possible for players to gain achievement points. The easter-eggs could be used by players to improve their score and unlock achievements. We also added a multiplayer function that enhanced the competition factor between peers, ultimately making the game more engaging. But since the game doesn't allow us to have a proper multiplayer experience, we decided to create two different options for players, one single-player option, and one team option. This way players are in a position to join a team upon registration and add his or her points to the overall team score.

4. HOW DID WE GET FEEDBACK ON THE GAME?

As elaborated upon in previous sections the CONVEY project recruited young students between the ages of 14-18 as peer consultants for the online game. Their role was to contribute to the development of the online game by providing feedback and ideas for the content. The peers recruited for this project were very motivated and ultimately their feedback proved instrumental in the conceptualisation and design phase.

Simultaneously we established an expert consulting group in each partner county consisting of two female survivors of sexual violence or women who have had experienced sexual harassment; one psychologist; and one social worker. The role of the expert group was to contribute to the learning component of the game, complementing the work and feedback of the peer consulting group. The expert group was expected to attend three meetings with their partner organisation and discuss the content of the games. The expert groups started meeting after the conceptualisation and design phase, and thus were given the final version of the games. In that way they were in position to give more specific feedback on the content of the games. This also allowed them to provide us feedback on whether or not the games were in line with the overarching aim of the project. Questions posed to the expert group included: does the game aptly address issues relevant to gender based violence?; does the

game appropriately condemn gender-based violence?; does the game appropriately portray the emotional and psychological hardship felt by victims of gender-based violence?; is adequate attention given to support-services in the games? and; to what extent do the games challenge gender roles and stereotyping?

In recruiting female survivors for the expert group, the requirement was that they had to have been victims of gender-based violence. Within that requirement however, there was no specification as to what type of gender-based violence they had to have been victims of. This point is important to note because the experience of your experts can have a direct impact on the type of feedback you receive. In developing our games for example, we wanted to include as many different types of gender-based violence as possible. We therefore made four distinct storylines focusing on domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape and revenge porn. And although our expert groups were more than capable of providing feedback on all four storylines, they definitely provided more detailed feedback on the storylines that were the most similar to their own personal experiences.

In hindsight we therefore see that a way to circumvent this would be to have an expert group that consisted of women who had experience with different types of gender-based violence. One way of doing this would be by having each project partner form an expert group with survivors that had experience with a specific type of gender-based violence. This way we would make sure that each storyline had been reviewed by persons with a personal understanding of the mechanisms and power dynamics at play. One way that we did safeguard our project against this, however, was by also engaging a social worker and psychologist. The social worker and psychologist were active participants in the meetings and added timely and valuable advice for the development of the storylines.

5. TIME MANAGEMENT?

It is no secret that time management is essential for any project. If your project also involves other partners, it becomes even more evident how crucial it is to structure your work effectively. Developing an online game is no easy feat and setting clear deadlines and check-in points will be prove itself necessary as you move along with the project. Nevertheless, it is important to note that although

you should treat your deadlines as absolutes, life is unpredictable and there might be unforeseen events that make it difficult for you to meet said deadline.

In developing the CONVEY games our team consisted of six partner organisations located in six different European countries. Each partner had the responsibility of carrying activities in their own respective countries. In addition to scheduling and executing meetings with the peer consulting groups and expert groups, the partners were also required to conduct desk research on sexual violence, sexual harassment and the role of digital media in reinforcing gender stereotypes leading to inequality and violence. However, working with multiple partners does increase the likelihood of having logistical and time management issues and in developing the CONVEY game we also did experience delays in our game development.
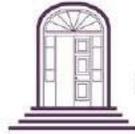
The delays faced during the conceptualisation phase of the CONVEY game were linked to the fact that the schedule of development meetings with the consulting groups had to be adapted to the local context and the needs and availability of the local groups. There are a number of possibilities as to why this would happen: 1. Recruiting young people aged 14-18 willing to be a part of the peer consulting group would mean involving schools or youth centres or other youth groups, and adapting to their availability, and school holidays in case of school students; 2. the schedule of the students could be conflicting, making it hard to find an appropriate meeting time within the set deadline. In addition to this, we also found that in some cases it was difficult to find survivors of gender-based violence who felt comfortable enough to speak with us. However, when dealing with a sensitive topic such as gender-based violence, this is to be expected, and it is important to be cognizant of how such issues can affect your overall time management. In other words, be aware of who your audience is and who you are trying to reach. A game aimed at informing adults on ways to increase their level of daily physical activity will have a much larger pool of people to choose from when putting together a peer consulting or expert group. In contrast, a game aimed at informing young children with type 1 diabetes about the importance of taking their insulin shots, will have a smaller pool to choose from.

As a result, deadlines had to be postponed during the conceptualisation phase of the game. These postponements in turn led to the postponement of the finalisation of the game. Therefore, a vital tip would be to set ambitious, yet realistic goals, while planning for mitigating measures that will help

you reach your goals in case of delays. The process of developing an online game that is both educational and worthwhile playing is a marathon, not a sprint - so take your time to get it right.