

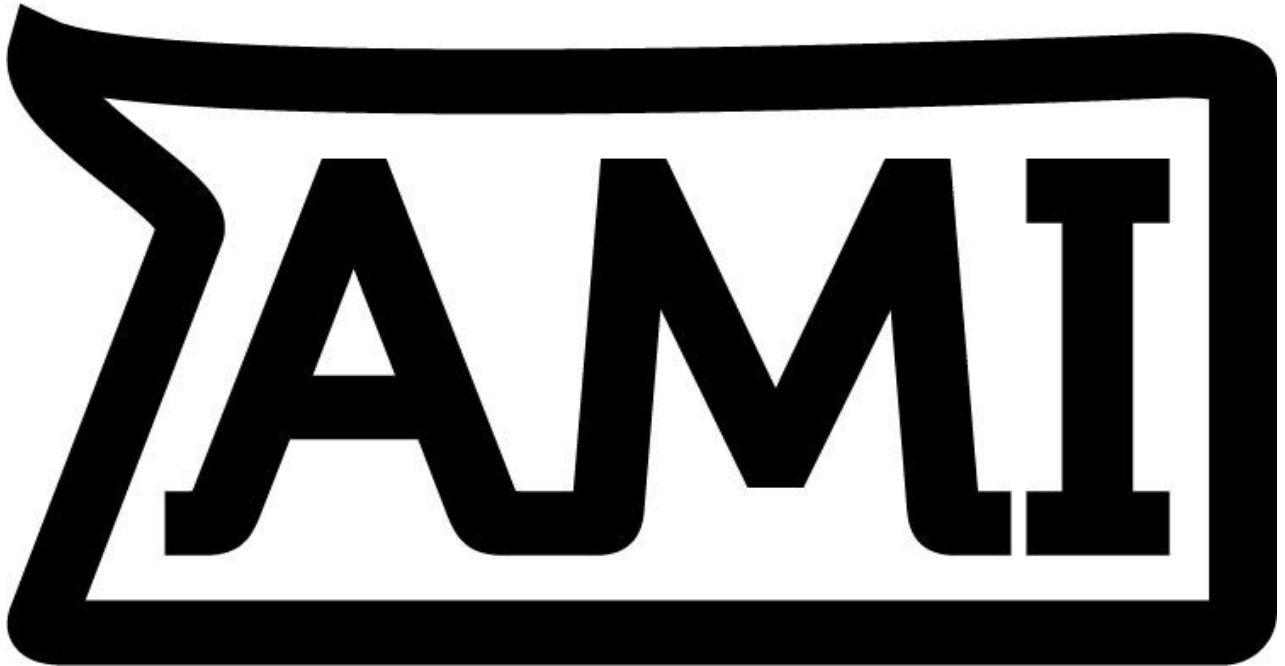


Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

EACEA

Education, Audiovisual & Culture
Executive Agency



**AMICITIAS: AMBIENT LEARNING AS A
COMPELLING INSTRUCTIONAL TOOL FOR
INTERLINGUISTIC AND INERCULTURAL SKILLS**

Progress Report

Public Part

Enter the full project number here

Project information

Project acronym: AMICITIAS

Project title: Ambient intelligence as a compelling instructional tool for interlinguistic and intercultural skills

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Executive Summary

AMICITIAS is an acronym for *Ambient Intelligence as a Compelling Instructional Tool for Interlinguistic and Intercultural Skills*. This project consists of several teams of international researchers, academics, teachers and programmers working on a language and culture educational game project, to be played using mobile devices in six real-world cities throughout Europe.

The AMICITIAS project is aimed at developing a series of videogames for mobile phones especially targeted at students of foreign languages. It is our main aim to provide these students with new tools that will help them improve their knowledge of 2 different foreign languages per game. Our videogames are locational, that is, they are devised in order to be played in a given location. In doing so, we hope that future players will be able to interact not only with their mobile phones but also with the local population and environment.

The educational goal is to improve linguistic, gestural and cultural knowledge within several European, multicultural cities.

We aim for the users to acquire skills necessary to accomplish specific 'game' tasks, both within the mobile application and also whilst exploring various culturally, geographically and historically interesting spaces and places within the cities.

The project integrates language learning into the process of playing and discovering, using the mobile game as a part of this process.

Our targeted group is made of teen-agers and young adults who are spending a short period of time abroad. They should have a previous knowledge of one of the three languages labelled as L1 (i.e. English, Spanish or Italian), and want to have a first contact with another language (L2; i.e. Arabic, Hindi, Catalan, Gaelic, Sardinian or Sicilian).

The main objectives of the project are:

- to investigate new learning styles:
- to propose hybrid models of language learning;
- to provide context-aware, location-based educational contents which make interactive language learning available anywhere, anytime to anyone;
- to promote intercultural understanding
- to promote mlearning

The consortium set up for this project is very large and varied. It includes the following institutions:

P01 UNIVERSIDAD DE CASTILLA-LA MANCHA, ES: Experts from the UCLM will develop the technical concept of the course and will be responsible for its technical implementation.

P02 UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD, UK: Design and implement the technical underpinnings of the games produced for the AMICITIAS project.

P03 STUDIAINITALIA, ES: Creation and delivery of materials, organization of treasure-hunt events in different cities; testing of the materials and evaluation and valorisation of the results.

P04 ENOVATION SOLUTIONS, IE: technical consultancy, support and expertise in mobile technologies.

P05 COME MAI, IT: Creation of contents for the teaching of Italian language and culture (together with partners 3 and 6) and Sardinian language and culture; testing,

P06 BABILONIA, IT: Creation, testing and dissemination of Italian and Sicilian courses, especially during the events organised in Taormina

Our courses are based on the integration of traditional, self-learning language materials and ambient learning approaches (such as content integration, context management and multimodal broadband access), which allows the creation of networks as a collaborative means, where real and virtual spaces become a space for growth and interaction between the on-line communities.

The introduction of new information technology instruments influences our type of communicative model: teachers and materials are no longer at the centre of the communicative process and no longer constitute the only source of knowledge.

During 2008, project partners have focused on:

-the development of a technical template that can easily be adapted into the 6 future games;

-the creation of a game narrative for each game, including provisional dialogues, characters, tracks, locations and activities, in paper form;

-the development of management and evaluation strategies.

Once the definitive technical template has been created, a final selection of narratives and activities will be made, and these will be adapted to J2ME in order to finalise the city games.

The results achieved so far are:

- Project handbook with general instructions and workplan for all partners.

- Technical research reports.

- A game prototype or technical template (tested in different mobile phone models).

- Game templates (including stories, activities and characters) in paper format.

- A list of language and culture activities in the targeted languages.

- Graphic material for the games.

- A collaborative website.

- A public website (under renovation).

- A series of presentations related to the project by each local group.

- A plenary lecture in an international conference.

- Press notes and other diffusion materials.

During the next months, the six games will be created from the template and new language and culture contents will be added. Furthermore, these materials will be tested in the six cities included in this project.

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1. Project Objectives

The AMICITIAS project is aimed at developing a series of videogames (6) for mobile phones especially targeted at students of foreign languages. It is our main aim to provide these students with new tools that will help them improve their knowledge of 2 different foreign languages per game in a funny and interactive way.

Our videogames are locational, that is, they are devised in order to be played in a given location. In doing so, we hope that future players will be able to interact not only with their mobile phones but also with the local population and environment; in order to achieve this, we will try to convert their initially touristic experience into a small set of language activities to be played in the streets of our cities.

The 6 games foreseen within this project are:

1. MISTERIO EN TOLEDO
2. MISTERIO EN BARCELONA
3. MISTERY IN BRADFORD
4. MISTERY IN GALWAY
5. MISTERO A TAORMINA
6. MISTERO IN SARDEGNA

Within each game, we are creating 3 different units, which include exercises in any of the 2 targeted languages and cultural topics.

Our targeted group is made of teen-agers and young adults who are spending a short period of time abroad. They should have a previous knowledge of one of the three languages labelled as L1 (i.e. English, Spanish or Italian), and want to have a first contact with another language (L2; i.e. Arabic, Hindi, Catalan, Gaelic, Sardinian or Sicilian). The six cities where the games take place are: Toledo, Barcelona, Galway, Bradford, Taormina and Trieri (Sardinia). Given the nature of these materials, participants will require a basic knowledge of internet and WHDs. As indicated above, these devices are becoming more and more popular, especially among young people (15-35 years old), which implies that this is our main targeted group. Young people (15-30) use video games more and more frequently but, as revealed by Keegan's analysis of needs referred to above, they don't normally their WHDs as learning tools. By mixing our didactic contents within an overall video-gaming framework, we expect that young people (especially tourists) will feel more attracted to participating in any the mysteries proposed here and, thus, improving their linguistic and communicative skills. The personal nature and small size of handhelds may in fact produce more collaboration among participants by isolating them from meaningful social interactions posit that the mobility of these devices can enhance inter-group collaboration: "Children can walk around, maintaining the flexibility of interacting with many other children, rather than limiting their collaboration to those on the computer beside them." Furthermore, "these devices support social interactivity, are sensitive to shifts in context, enable individualized scaffolding, and facilitate cognition distributed among people, tools, and contexts".

As explained above, course participants will have to communicate in at least two different foreign languages: a foreign language they have already study and another foreign language that is completely new to them. We expect that participants will want to learn more about the two languages included in each game once they have taken one of our courses, thus reinforcing the spread of language awareness among young people, not only of less widely used languages, but also of non-European languages which are becoming more and more important from a global point of view (such as Hindi and Arabic).

These are the main aims of the project, as described in the application form:

1. **TO INVESTIGATE NEW LEARNING STYLES:** Within the AMICITIAS project, we intend to develop a series of language courses for mobile devices based on the principles of ambient learning. It is our main objective that future course participants will be impelled to learn and practice, at least, two different but interrelated languages in a highly informal way (i.e. playing video games) but in a very realistic environment (normally during a trip abroad, but also in their own city), with a special focus on aspects of intercultural and multicultural communication. The learning process proposed here implies guiding participants through different kinds of real and virtual stimuli in order to reach a goal. All this is done collectively, seeking, sieving, and synthesizing experiences rather than in individually locating and absorbing information from a single best source. Our focus of attention is in fact on active learning based on both real and simulated experiences, giving participants frequent opportunities for individual and group reflection.
2. **TO PROPOSE HYBRID MODELS:** We are specially interested in raising participants' awareness on the common history and development of couples or groups of languages, related to each other either linguistically (e.g. Italian and Sardinian) or due to socio-historical factors (such as processes of migration, colonization, etc, as in the case of English and Hindi or Spanish and Arabic). In all these cases, we are working with pairs of languages with a shared history and, consequently, with a tradition of multicultural communication. By analysing and describing these communicative patterns, we intend to be able to produce materials participants will use in order to improve their knowledge of each couple of languages and of the intercultural skills required for their mutual understanding. All this will be done in an informal and funny way, with special attention to actual interaction with real speakers from different linguistic and cultural communities in each individual city or country included here.
3. **SPECIFIC PROJECT OBJECTIVES:** More exactly, the AMICITIAS project aims at:
 01. Providing context-aware, location-based educational contents which make interactive language learning available anywhere, anytime to anyone (LLP-Obj-H; KA2-2.1-3);
 02. Encouraging young people to become involved in foreign language learning and practicing through video games and other interactive activities downloaded into their HMD's (LLP-Obj-G; KA2 OpObj; KA2-2.1-1; KA2-2.1-4);

03. Encouraging participants to become more aware of the importance of being able to communicate in at least three different languages and to develop intercultural skills (LLP-Obj-G; KA2 OpObj; KA2-2.1-1; KA2-2.1-4);
04. Promoting intercultural understanding in Europe through the study of LWUTL languages (such as Italian, Gaelic) and regional languages (such as Sicilian, Sardinian), always within a multicultural perspective (LLP-Obj-G; KA2 OpObj; KA2-2.1-5);
05. Improving intercultural understanding between Europe and other continents and making Europe more competitive in a global context through the introduction of materials for the learning of global languages (Arabic and Hindi) (LLP-Obj-G; KA2-2.1.2; KA2-2.1-5);
06. Using mobile collaboration and ad hoc networks to support organisational learning (LLP-Obj-D);
07. Determining how video gaming and WHD can enhance foreign language learning in informal environments (LLP-Obj-H; KA2-2.1-3);
08. Looking at the techniques and best practice methods of teaching linguistic and intercultural skills using WHDs (LLP-Obj-J; KA2 OpObj; KA2-2.1-4);
09. Disseminating these methods and techniques at European level with all the relevant means, including workshops, conferences, scientific meetings, publications and websites (LLP-Obj-J).

2. Project Approach

DIDACTIC APPROACH

Our courses are based on the integration of traditional, self-learning language materials and ambient learning approaches (such as content integration, context management and multimodal broadband access), which allows the creation of networks as a collaborative means, where real and virtual spaces become a space for growth and interaction between the on-line communities. By presenting and distributing our materials within an interactive course, individual students will soon get reassurance that they are part of a group, so that they will feel more and more motivated to follow the lessons regularly. AMICITIAS is a cooperative project, in that students from different countries are invited to collaborate in the solution of a given mystery. It will be designed as a blended learning course, in which open and distance learning phases interchange.

The introduction of new information technology instruments influences our type of communicative model: teachers and materials are no longer at the centre of the communicative process and no longer constitute the only source of knowledge. Furthermore, the student is no longer limited to a mere receptive and passive role, but takes on an active role and has greater autonomy in the construction of the language learning process (learner-centred approach). The main task of teachers and tutors is to stimulate, motivate and enable the process of reception of knowledge from the environment, guiding and monitoring the progress of the pupils.

Our activities will be prepared using Hot Potatoes (or similar). Broadly speaking, we will create the following types of exercise:

1. interactive multiple-choice
2. short-answer
3. jumbled-sentence
4. crossword
5. matching/ordering
6. gap-fill

Once we have created these html activities, they can be transformed into Java 2 ME (mobile phone format) relatively easily.

Basic didactic guidelines:

-L1 activities (English, Spanish, Italian) are targeted at players with a good command of the language (B2), who can understand instructions easily and interact with the game and with the local population in that language. Special attention should be paid to:

1. Improving their fluency in such fields as new technologies, mass media and ecology.
2. Improving their knowledge of local society and culture.

3. Activities that imply interaction with local population will be preferred.

-L2 activities (Irish, Hindi, Arabic, Catalan, Sardinian, Sicilian) are intended for absolute beginners with no previous knowledge of the language. Broadly speaking, this corresponds to CEF pre A1, and includes the following list of can do's:

LISTENING:

- Recognise to the extent of matching pictures/identifying speakers with cues.
- Understand numbers and time.

SPOKEN INTERACTION:

- Ask and tell time and day and date.

SPOKEN PRODUCTION:

- Rely purely on a very finite rehearsed lexical organized repertoire of situation-specific phrases.
- Use some basic greetings.
- Say *no, excuse me, please*.

Related to L1 exercises, one of the ideas launched by some local groups (Bradford and Sardinia) was the fact that, in the future, these games may be of interest not only to foreign tourists who want to improve their English/Spanish/Italian and learn something about another language, but also to:

1. National tourists visiting any of these cities, who want to learn more about their history, culture and linguistic diversity (for example, an Italian tourist from Bologna spending a summer holiday in Sardinia).
2. Sons and daughters (first generation) of recent immigrants who want to practice the language of their parents and learn more about their culture (for example, the daughter of an Arabic speaking immigrant in Spain).

3. Grand-son and grand-daughters (third/fourth generations) of immigrants who have never studied the language of their forefathers and would like to have a first contact with that language and culture (for example, the grand-son of a Hindi immigrant in Bradford).

Also, we will pay special attention to the grammar and vocabulary shared by the two languages used in each local game (e.g. Arabic borrowings in Spanish, verb TO BE in Sardinian and Italian...).

This project deals with pairs of languages, and we want to call the layers' attention towards what is common to them, what is shared by them, what in sum facilitates their learning process.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

-A project handbook with general instructions for all partners. It is divided into 14 headings and covers all the aspects related to the project, from selection of characters to diffusion and valorisation.

-A game technical template (tested in different mobile phone models), developed by the University of Bradford. Using this template, we will make different databases in order to adapt it to each local game.

-Six game templates (including stories and characters): one game per city; each city game is divided into units/characters/tracks, where language and culture tasks are inserted.

-A list of language and culture activities in the targeted languages.

-A list of voice registrations, to be used in the dialogues and in the activities.

-Graphic material for the games: both drawings and pictures are included here.

-A collaborative website based on Moodle.

-A public website (under renovation).

-A series of presentations related to the project by each local group.

-A plenary lecture in an international conference on videogames, held by the University of Valencia in November 2008.

-Press notes and other diffusion materials.

-A project general meeting and three smaller meetings: the project general meeting was held in Toledo last November 2008. Furthermore, individual meetings between the organising institution (UCLM) and all the other partners have been held during this year.

-Other informal meetings have been held with local agents (language schools, tourist agencies, etc) during this year.

4. Partnership

-UNIVERSIDAD DE CASTILLA-LA MANCHA: The UCLM is the promoter and coordinator of the **AMICITIAS** project, along with the University of Bradford (P2). Experts from the UCLM will develop the technical concept of the course and will be responsible for its technical implementation. Experienced language teachers (of Spanish, English, Italian, Catalan, Gaelic and Arabic) and software developers will evaluate the products during the production process and take actively part in the dissemination and promotion of the final results. The UCLM will also have an important didactic role, and develop dissemination process and the development of dissemination materials. UCLM will prepare and host the 1st partner meeting, to be held in Toledo by the end of 2008.

-UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD: Our primary function within the project is to design and implement the technical underpinnings of the games produced for the AMICITIAS project. Three lecturers and a research student will be involved – David Robison will be co-ordinating Bradford’s contribution, linking and contributing to the conceptual, contextual and technical aspects of implementing language games through mobile devices, overseen by Professor Excel. Dr Gil Harel will be inputting into the pedagogical and e-learning aspects. PhD student and part time lecturer Anton Iacono will be programming and helping roll-out of the systems.

- Develop a small scale working ‘pilot’ version (Web-based and mobile)
- Populate with suggested learning tasks and data for two languages
- Implement and evaluate pilot in conjunction with partners
- Develop ‘real-time’ tools for communication between cities
- Address streaming media (mainly audio but possibly some video capacity as well)
- Address GPS or RDIF chip location-based functionality
- Contribution to implementation of fully working system

-STUDIAINITALIA: The **Studiainitalia** team will be involved in most phases of the project:

1. Creation and delivery of materials for the learning of Italian language and culture; collaboration with developers of materials for the teaching of Spanish, Sardinian and Sicilian.
2. Organization of treasure-hunt events in different cities;
3. Testing of the materials;
4. Evaluation and valorisation of the results.

Studiainitalia will work both in the development of materials in Italian, Spanish, Sardinian and Sicilian and in the organisation of a wide range of dissemination activities, including specially advertised group events where participants will be able to play the didactic video-games locationally and collectively in some of the various cities included in the project proposed here.

-ENOVATION SOLUTIONS: **Enovation** is the leader of the *Evaluation and Quality Safeguard* workpackage; it will provide technical consultancy, support and expertise in mobile technologies. Together with **Partner 2**, its experts will develop the technical concept of the material and will be responsible for its technical implementation: development of the online platform for the course; cooperation with the didactic team in order to develop the structure of the course and modules; creation of a working tool for delivering the contents and implementation of the course. Furthermore, **Enovation** will provide web creation, maintenance and hosting for the first 2 years.

-BABILONIA: The staff of **Babilonia** will work in the creation, testing and dissemination of Italian and Sicilian courses, especially during the events organised in Taormina (end of 2009).

-COMEMAI: The team of **Come Mai?** Will be implied both in the creation of contents for the teaching of Italian language and culture (together with partners 3 and 6) and Sardinian language and culture. Moreover, they will be participating in the various testing phases of the Italian and Sardinian materials and in their promotion and dissemination to a wide variety of targets (both locally and internationally).

The consortium set up for this project is very large and varied. To start with, we have two universities in the group, the **University of Castilla-La Mancha** (P1, Spain) and the **University of Bradford** (P2, UK). Both institutions have a wide experience in research projects in different areas.

More exactly, the University of Castilla-La Mancha will be represented by the Department of Spanish and the Department of Foreign Languages, as well as the Translators' Schools in Toledo, a leading institution in the teaching of Arabic and Hebrew languages and cultures.

As for the University of Bradford, both the School of Modern Languages and the School of Informatics will participate actively in the project. The School of Informatics is a leading institution in the creation and distribution of didactic contents for WHDs. They collaborate on a regular basis with the UK's National Media Museum (based in Bradford), which organises next year's Bollywood Awards (Festival of Hindi Cinema), a perfect change to collaborate in the development of our Hindi contents.

Cooperation between these two institutions has been continuous and regular since the establishment of a Socrates/Erasmus exchange programme.

In order to achieve our multiple goals, these two institutions have decided to find other partners for the other, relevant tasks. One of these is the private company **Studiainitalia** (P3), which specialises in the teaching of Italian as a foreign language, both in Spain and in Italy. Studiainitalia cooperates actively with a wide variety of academic institutions in Italy,

creating and proposing educational materials and activities. We will count on this partner both for the development of materials in Italian, Sardinian and Sicilian and for the organisation of a wide range of dissemination activities, including specially advertised group events where participants will be able to play the didactic video-games locationally and collectively in some of the various cities included in the project proposed here. Studiainitalia has worked for years with the Universidad the Castilla-La Mancha and with other Spanish university in the organisation of study trips and Erasmus exchanges between Spain and Italy.

Enovation Solutions Ltd. (P4) is an Irish business and information technology company specialising in **professional services** and **managed solutions**. Their highly experienced senior management team and 70+ IT consultants have successfully implemented bespoke, third-party and open source solutions to a wide client base in the finance, government, health and education sectors. Enovation Solutions Ltd. is collaborating with the University of Castilla-La Mancha in the development of language courses for mobile technologies (Europodians Project), within the Lingua2 Programme.

The Italian associations **Come Mai?** (P5) and **Babilonia** (P6), based in Sardinia and Sicily respectively, specialise in the teaching of Italian for foreigners, with special emphasis on local culture and arts. Together with Studiainitalia, both associations organise a wide variety of courses and cultural trips in these two Italian regions.

Many of the partner members have been collaborating for years, which has given us the chance to meet each other personally and work together in a variety of matters related to student exchanges and language teaching. Given the general structured adopted here, actual cooperation among partners is more than guaranteed, so that all partners will have a similar degree of involvement in the development of the project. Finally, by regularly delivering joint papers (for publication or presentation in conferences) produced by representatives from different partner institutions, cooperation among members will be reinforced.

Internal communication will be in English. In the first phase of the project, a website www.amicitias.eu (this will be moved to www.amicitias.eu/moodle in March 2009) will be used in order to facilitate communication, share documents, etc. We also intend to organize three general meetings and one technical meeting, plus frequent regional/working group meetings. We also would like to promote participation in international conferences.

5. Plans for the Future

This is our workplan for 2009:

WORK PLAN 2009

December-June 2009: Finalisation and technical implementation of language and culture contents.

January-April 2009: Creation of characters and other graphic materials for videogames.

February 2009: Marketing materials prepared.

March 2009: New public website set up.

June 2009: First treasure hunting activity to be held in Bradford.

June 2009: Second general group meeting.

July-August 2009: Other treasure hunting games organised in Toledo, Trier and Galway.

July-October: Preparation of game booklets

September 2009-October 2009: Treasure hunting activities in Taormina and in Barcelona.

October 2009: Third general group meeting.

September-November 2009: Finalisation of video games for the six cities.

May-December 2009: Diffusion and valorisation activities.

November-December 2009: Second evaluation stage.



Enter the full project number here

6. Contribution to EU policies

Lisbon Education & Training Progress Indicators

Foreign language learning: With the materials proposed here, students can improve their knowledge of up to two different foreign languages per course, increasing the average number of foreign languages normally learned by pupils in many European countries.

Lisbon Key Competences

Communication in foreign languages: We want participants to learn to communicate in the different languages they will have to use in each game. In order to do so, we will include not only very useful vocabularies and lists of expressions, but also gestural information and tools for the development of multicultural communication skills, which we consider basic.

LLP Horizontal policies

Promoting an awareness of the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity within Europe: multilingualism and multiculturalism are clearly present in all our materials. Our interest is on promoting awareness of the need to learn to communicate properly in a society that is becoming more and more mixed and varied, by taking advantage of already existing situations of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Complementarity with other policies

Youth in Action: As explained all over this proposal, the materials proposed here are intended at providing young people with opportunities for non-formal and informal language learning with a European dimension. Young people (between 15 and 30) are in fact the main users of video-games in Europe nowadays, and they are our main targeted group.

7. Extra Heading/Section

