

AUGUST 2017 – FINAL ISSUE

## Social Seducement newsletter – Issue #3

Welcome to the last issue of the Social Seducement newsletter!

After three exciting years of work, we have finally achieved our expected outcome, i.e.: the creation of an online game to support awareness and training on social entrepreneurship. In this final issue, we provide an overview of what we have achieved as well as links and contacts to keep the activities running and the game use growing in the future. Enjoy the reading!

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### About the project

The Social Seducement project has been co-funded by the European Commission in the frame of the Erasmus plus programme and running for 3 years (September 2014 to August 2017). It aimed to develop the key competences and skills of adults with disadvantages, and in particular unemployed adults, to help them start up a collaborative enterprise. It did so by developing and testing an online role play game, named Social PlaNet, which is supporting players in learning how to create and manage a social enterprise by entertaining them and helping them in the development of the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to cooperatively manage a social enterprise. To know more about the project and its results you can visit our web site: [www.socialseducement.net](http://www.socialseducement.net)

### Consortium

- Coordination: **The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (UK)**
- Business advisory: **Coompanion Gothenburg (SE)**
- IT support: **Ecobyte Techonlogy (IT)**
- Social entrepreneurs: **Le Mat (IT)**
- Social economy: **REVES -European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy (BE)**
- Pedagogical model: **Universidad Internacional de La Rioja (UNIR) (ES)**

## Game-based learning for social entrepreneurship addressing disadvantaged categories: the Social Seducement experience

*Social Seducement has developed a serious online role play game which trains people facing disadvantages in the labour market learn how to set up a collective social economy enterprise*

*Key pillars of the Social PlaNet game are: online peer-to-peer collaboration, development of knowledge skills and attitudes to manage a social enterprise and support by a facilitator*

About three years ago the Social Seducement partnership (Tavistock Institute, Coompanion, Ecobyte, Le Mat, REVES, UNIR), funded by the Erasmus + programme, set off on an ambitious journey: to develop a serious online role play game which trains people facing disadvantages in the labour market learn how to set up a collective social economy enterprise.

We started off with clear ideas about some of the corner stones of what we wanted to achieve: we wanted to develop a game where players can bring the full extent of their experience and backgrounds but in an 'alternative reality' where risk taking is a bit easier; we wanted a game that is played in a group – so that players could help each other and some of the risk of starting a business is shared; we wanted to focus on the process of setting up (rather than running) a business and through the game equip players with some hard and soft skills (knowledge, skills, behaviours). We were also clear that a facilitator was going to be required to support the group. The overall objective: to teach gamers new skill and improve their entrepreneurial potential!

The background research we carried out at the beginning of the project, surveying training and employment organisations across the five partner countries (Belgium, Italy, Spain, Sweden, UK) confirmed that there was a lack of local training provision on some of the soft skills we wanted to train with the game, and our search for similar games showed that there was not very much that focused on social entrepreneurship and the start-up process.

So our vision received some empirical confirmation, and we set off on a challenging process of developing a very innovative online game which had to square a lot of circles: focusing on process, being relevant across national boundaries, offering some 'hard' knowledge on social entrepreneurship whilst developing the crucial soft skills not often trained; incorporating the role of a facilitator; and enabling players to write a business plan at the end of the game. And it should be fun too!

Numerous consultations and a training week for facilitators later we were ready to pilot the game with nearly 200 players in our five countries. We diligently evaluated the results, and learned that... Players had fun!

*Our pilot players showed statistically significant increases in some key markers important for social entrepreneurship, such as ability to deal with unexpected events, problem solving and handling unexpected events*

However, that was not all. Our game, which we called SocialPlaNet, is demanding: it simulates a start up process, so requires a lot of players in terms of concentration and engagement with the technology and each other. However, probably because it is so demanding players get a lot out of it: they are much more able to understand what it takes to start a social enterprise, more are intending to start one than before they had finished the game. And our pilot players showed statistically significant increases in some key markers important for social entrepreneurship, such as ability to deal with unexpected events, problem solving and handling unexpected events.

We are excited and really encouraged by those results and have been working hard over the last months to raise awareness of the game in different settings so that more people and organisations can benefit from the experience. You can read more about these activities in the other articles of this newsletter

## Testing the Social Planet game: challenges and promising results

*During 2017, the SocialPlaNet game was tested with nearly 180 players from Belgium, Italy, Spain, Sweden and UK. Players either faced disadvantages in the labour market and were unemployed, or were social entrepreneurs; piloting also included a few teachers or trainers.*

*76 per cent of players surveyed enjoyed taking part; 77 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that what they learned in the game would be useful in their working life.*

*SocialPlaNet gameplay enhanced attitudes of social entrepreneurship; increased gamer's sense of self-efficacy and improved players' digital competences.*

*The game persuaded players that, as entrepreneurs, they could add value to the community rather than thinking only about the profit motive and personal benefit.*

During 2017, we piloted the SocialPlaNet game with nearly 180 players from Belgium, Italy, Spain, Sweden and UK. Players either faced disadvantages in the labour market and were unemployed, or were social entrepreneurs; piloting also included a few teachers or trainers. The piloting activities were organized by the professional Social Seducement facilitators – trained in supporting player groups as they work through the game. Three facilitators in each of the piloting countries took responsibility for recruiting players, e.g. through relevant networks working with particular groups or through organisations such as local authorities, NGOs, entrepreneurship organisations, Universities and others. Players' learning gains were evaluated by using a before and after questionnaire which covered satisfaction with the programme, attitudes to social entrepreneurship and effects on social inclusion.

Participating in the game was **generally a positive experience for players**: 76 per cent of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed taking part; 77 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that what they learned in the game would be useful in their working life.

**Attitudes to social entrepreneurship** also improved as a result of playing the game: the proportion of participants who understand what it takes to set up a social enterprise increased by 43 per cent; we achieved a 9 per cent increase in players who want to join a social enterprise and a 16 per cent increase in the proportion of players who intend to start a social enterprise.

Interestingly, playing the game also **increased gamers' sense of self-efficacy**. In the piloting group, the game achieved the most significant increases in assertiveness (“if someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want”), confidence (“I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events”) and problem-solving (“I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.”). Finally, we found that in playing the game players **improved their digital competencies**. For instance, the proportion of players who reported they were ‘very good’ at working with others online to produce resources increased from 23 per cent to 47 per cent.

Overall, playing the SocialPlaNet game seems to support a significant ‘mindset change’. On the one hand, working in the game convinced many players that they could become entrepreneurs. But the additional contribution the game made was to persuade players that, as entrepreneurs, they could add value to the community rather than thinking only about the profit motive and personal benefit. This ‘mindset change’ ultimately has had a positive knock-on effect on attitudes to social enterprise and social entrepreneurship and on potential for start-ups.

Importantly, all these changes did not significantly differ with regard to country or origin, gender, age, educational level or labour market status. The fact that benefits of playing are universal suggests a wide range of potential future users.

## Entrepreneurship education: Social economy and the added value of online role play games – an interview with Professor Jef Tavernier

*Jef Tavernier is one of the 16 facilitators running test sessions on the beta-version of the gamified learning platform. He does this together with a group of students at the VIVES University College in Kortrijk, Belgium.*

*In this short interview, the former teacher of economics, politician and civil society activist shares some of his thoughts on social economy, training and the potential of online tools used in training courses on (social economy) entrepreneurship...*

### **1. What was your motivation for teaching social economy?**

Throughout my whole life – in particular during my work for FEBEA (European Federation of Ethical and Alternative Banks) and as a local and national politician - I have been working on topics related to sustainable development and social aspects, including the social economy. It does not make sense to work *on* or *in* economy and entrepreneurship without considering social aspects. This applies both to the research field and to practice on the ground.

With FEBEA we published an atlas of good practices of social economy enterprises. It was in that period that VIVES, for which I already gave lectures on another subject matter, came up to me with the proposal to offer specific courses on social economy.

I started giving my first lectures on “social economy” in 2010, in the framework of the “International Business programme” of the VIVES university college - at that time for Erasmus students and students coming from third countries.

Later I also started teaching social economy at the University of Lille (France).

With the growing interest, at EU and the national level, in the single social entrepreneur, decreasing funds for everything which is “social” and increasing budget headings for entrepreneurship, we enlarged the title of the lectures to “Social economy and social entrepreneurship”.

### **2. Did social economy now find its place in education and training curricula of Belgian universities, VET institutions and other educational institutions?**

No. In existing curricula the subject “social economy” is still very much sidelined.

It is part of the training of social workers - here, however, with a focus on work integration enterprises, their legal context and possibilities to support these enterprises.

Specific chairs or Centres of Social Economy such as the one at Liège University are an exception.

In courses on economy, management and entrepreneurship ‘social economy’ is usually presented and discussed more ‘at the periphery’ and in a not very structured manner.

### **3. For which reasons do students choose to attend your lectures? Have they usually already been in touch with social economy enterprises?**

Each semester I work with approximately 20 students from different European and non-European countries. Some of them know or have already had experiences with social economy –

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*“...elements of competition between the players are not essential. The process of developing an idea together, in a different (virtual) environment, by using different types of tools (including the possibility to use a different kind of identity) is as such already fairly rich and diverting.”*

this is, however, a minority. Others are simply interested in the subject matter.

I always seek to create a link between the content of the course and the situation (of social economy) in the countries of origin of my students. Some of them discover for the first time what is actually happening “at home”. In the end of the course I ask my students to write a paper on their own country in order to enlarge their knowledge and interest and – maybe – opportunities to work in social economy once they have finished their studies.

**4. You accepted to test SocialPlaNet with your students. What could be, in this context, the added value of a gamified learning platform such as SocialPlaNet?**

Also at university, we should not only *talk* about entrepreneurship and its theory, but *show examples*. Yet, examples are not enough. Students should have the opportunity to *simulate*.

On the other hand, there are a number of business games, but more or less nothing on social economy and social entrepreneurship. Many business games use the Business Model Canvas. However, in the case of social economy we need a different Business Model Canvas which integrates, in each of its elements, considerations on social aspects and impact. This also requires new methodologies and tools. It appeared interesting and worthwhile to contribute to the creation of a game that does not have profit as its core idea, but the social objective.

**5. Some think the game character of SocialPlaNet could be lost due to the lack of competition between the players who are supposed to develop their business idea collectively. Do you share this opinion?**

In my view, elements of competition between the players are not essential. The process of developing an idea *together, in a different (virtual) environment*, by using different types of tools (including the possibility to use a different kind of identity) is as such already fairly rich and diverting.

## Raising awareness about the potential of games for social entrepreneurship and inclusion

*On 7 June 2017 the Social Seducement conference “Promoting social economy enterprise creation as a key tool for empowerment and active citizenship: The added value of online (learning) games” brought together approximately 60 persons representing social economy organisations, development agencies, public authorities, university and other education/training institutions, thinks tanks and (European) networks from different EU Member States and Montenegro.*

On 7 June 2017 in Brussels, a conference on the social economy and SocialPlaNet –a newly developed online role play game on the social economy, brought together approximately 60 persons representing social economy organisations, development agencies, public authorities, university and other education/training institutions, thinks tanks and (European) networks from different EU Member States and Montenegro. The event **“Promoting social economy enterprise creation as a key tool for empowerment and active citizenship: The added value of online (learning) games”** was organised in the framework of “Social Seducement”, an Erasmus+ project co-financed by the European Commission.

The event consisted of two parts:

**The morning session** gave participants the occasion to develop a deeper understanding of the values and the broad range of activities of social economy enterprises.

Canelle, Les Grignoux and Damnet – three Belgian social economy enterprises operating in the sectors of work integration, IT and culture - shared their experiences of setting-up and running this type of enterprise. They explained how they dealt with challenges such as fundraising, democracy and participation at the enterprise, training of employees etc.

The following session focused on training/education on social economy entrepreneurship, the legal context and support schemes in Wallonia, Brussels-Capital region and (partially) Flanders. Discussions around related opportunities and needs generated widespread agreement that broad alliances are needed to make social economy and the Social Business Model Canvas become one concept, alongside others present in (university) education, management courses, business support, labour market integration initiatives and entrepreneurship orientation courses for unemployed and other target groups. Entrepreneurship online tools such as SocialPlaNet were perceived to be able to contribute to this.

The SocialPlaNet game, test results and upscaling perspectives stood at the centre of the **afternoon session**. Project coordinator Kerstin Junge (Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, UK) gave participants an insight into the game (beta version), its story board and functioning, and presented early evaluation results, which included some critical feedback, but also some rather encouraging responses and outcomes, including increased self-efficacy amongst early players of SocialPlaNet.

*Would you like to test the game? Please have a look at [www.socialseducement.net](http://www.socialseducement.net)*

*Would you like to get to know more about the facilitator network? Please have a look at <http://www.socialseducement.net/facilitators-network>*

Kerstin's colleagues, Heather Stradling and Elizabeth Cory-Pearce shared experiences of the game from a facilitator's experience and gave reports on initial discussions (e.g. with social impact investors) about the future use and upscaling of the game.

Together with Renate Goergen/Le Mat, Kerstin Junge then introduced and launched the SocialPlaNet facilitator network which will serve interested current and future facilitators as a platform for exchange, further dissemination and recruitment.

The conference concluded with a panel discussion on pros and cons regarding online games as a tool to combat unemployment and social exclusion:

- Giannis Vikas, from the Athens development and destination management agency (GR), Gio Lodovico Baglioni, representing Sol.Co Camunia, a consortium of social cooperatives (IT) and Ana Umbelino, a city councilor in Torres Vedras (PT) who had already taken the opportunity to test the game, as well as
- Laurent Staner, a SocialPlaNet facilitator and gaming expert and Patricia Martinez, a delegate of the European network AEIDL (representing at the same time the Social Innovation Community initiative).

On risks or motivation not to play, speakers and other conference participants had the following thoughts:

- Some people, especially unemployed people, might feel somewhat "tired" of experiments.
- Not everybody might want to share such an experience with others, interact, set-up a joint initiative, co-decide...
- Some persons, when playing the game with others, might be tempted to follow more or less blindly the ideas of their 'playmates' without coming up (or daring to come up) with their own thoughts.
- Persons wishing to further improve and implement their business plan after having played the game might not be able to do this – e.g. due to a lack of finance.
- It is important to ensure an appropriate follow-up (players that have finished the game and created their Business Plan should have the occasion to be directed to organizations/institutions helping them to realize their plan if this is what they would like to do).

*The Social PlaNet game fills a gap, as existing programmes of (social economy) entrepreneurship education lack interaction and possibilities to simulate practical experiences*

When discussing the added value of the game, most speakers and participants agreed on the following:

- The game fills a gap, as existing programmes of (social economy) entrepreneurship education lack interaction and possibilities to simulate practical experiences.
- SocialPlaNet can be a means to help isolated individuals get out of their isolation and meet other (unemployed) persons to exchange information on their current situation and possible ways out.
- SocialPlaNet has the potential to give unemployed, disadvantaged persons 'some power', the possibility to be empowered instead of feeling patronized and sub-ordinated to indications by public authorities (e.g. agencies in charge of unemployment benefits etc.).
- Players see what they have created which is encouraging - they can develop a feeling of being "able to" and of self-confidence...

## What is next

Over the next months we will continue to work to support wider take-up of the game, most notably by:

- Making available in an easily accessible format links to the game and supporting documentation on the project website (<http://socialseducement.net/game-and-game-resources>)
- Supporting the work of the facilitator network (<http://socialseducement.net/facilitators-network>) by offering organisational or technical support for meetings
- Continuing to spread the word about the game with key audiences to expand its use among current and new target groups.
- Continuing to seek feedback on the game in order to explore opportunities for continuous improvement of the technology.