

The Serious Sport project is centred on the development and acquisition of sports-related competencies for fitness/ sports coaches, trainers (and others sourced with the teaching of fitness, skills, strategy and tactics in competitive indoor and outdoor games) through the use of digital sport games and associated technologies. Through the consolidation of the competencies associated with sports and fitness training and the facilitation of learning through the emerging field of game based learning, the project seeks to support improvements in quality and innovation in vocational education and training systems, institutions and practices and to support to initial and continuous training and improvement of professionals and amateurs.

The main aim of the Serious Sports project is to innovate the training and learning processes and practices in vocational training, specifically sports training with a focus on the area of tactics and strategies. Modernising higher education will be a by-product of this project by utilising the effective learning method game-based learning plays in education. The project seeks to address the European priority of LDV – “Support to initial and continuous training of VET teachers, trainers, tutors and VET institution manager” listed as part of the LLP strategic priorities 2011.

In particular this project has the following objectives:

- To promote and support the use of game based learning in the area of team sports through the creation of a prominent European bank of resources for sports trainers which will provide information related to digital sport games and for the acquisition and transfer of competencies through sports and fitness games.
- To enhance the use of game based learning in all areas of sport.
- To support the recognition and evaluation of social, communication and organisational skills acquired in formal, non-formal and informal scenarios.
- To conduct secondary research to identify/review the contribution and potential contribution of game-based learning to sports people.
- To develop a game framework to aid sport trainers understanding of their sport through game-based learning.
- To pilot the game with a representative range of participants across the partners states.
- To provide the VET system with a 'good practice' guide, scalable, applicable and transferable in training courses for initial and continuous professional development.

- To valorise the project results across the partners states and beyond.

Although sport plays a major role in the world of digital games nowadays, from sports simulation to "exergames" to sports management games , the role of games in sports remains a rarely used practice. The role of games to facilitate and contribute to sports and sports coaching has not been realized. Though techniques such as immersive and 3D environments may be used at the highest levels of some sports for professional athletes, more accessible means need to be introduced for sports/ fitness coaches in training or who lack the resources to use high-end technologies such as these.

The Serious Sports project will endeavour to bridge this gap between sports and digital games through the use of the emerging pedagogy of game-based-learning (GBL) to commit to the delivery of skill and knowledge for sports/ fitness training. There have been a number of EU funded projects (ENGAGE, TOUAREG, DISCOVER - in which one or more of the consortium were involved in) in the last few years that show that there is a high potential and strong interest in the application of games for learning. This rapidly-developing pedagogical field offers a myriad of new opportunities for learning which the project intends to exploit - to fulfill the programme operational objective of "development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning". The area of sports education in particular represents an extremely viable source for the implementation of GBL, as a number of competencies can be taught through digital games for sport, ranging from motor-competence skills through wireless controllers (wii, kinect, etc) to cognitive competencies such as sports techniques, rules, terms, etc. through sports simulation games and tactics/ strategies through sports management games.

Sports/ fitness coaching, in particular tactics/ strategies, are predominantly taught in a classroom or on the sports field. Whilst these are necessary and valuable learning environments, the lack of a computer-based environment or use of computer-based learning techniques results in a paucity of technological innovation in the sector and does not make use of the large number of teaching possibilities which elearning can provide - particularly in the context of the current climate of social networks, video-sharing and massively multiplayer online games. Consequently, this has resulted in the area of coaching being left behind as so many other VET sectors move forward.