

PLAY, REFLECT, ACT!

SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

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Project Introduction

The Play, Reflect, Act! project is an Erasmus+ Small Scale Partnership in Youth, implemented between 15th May and 14th April 2025 by two partner organizations, Learning Designs from Turkey and Food for Thought from Germany.

The project explores the potential of combining video game-based learning with face-to-face non-formal education to engage young people aged 13 to 18 on issues of inclusion, diversity, gender, disability, and identity. The initiative responds to key Erasmus+ priorities including digital transformation, youth work innovation, and the promotion of equality and non-discrimination.

The project is grounded in the shared expertise of its partner organizations: **Learning Designs (Ogrenme Tasarimlari)** team brings a strong background in participatory workshops and youth training, while the **Food for Thought** partner contributes digital tools and video games developed to raise awareness on social issues. Through this collaboration, the project has co-designed a dynamic and adaptable workshop package that integrates educational video games, Sibel's Journey and Leila's Play with interactive discussions and creative activities.

Across three core workshops, focused on gender and identity, neurodiversity and disability, and audiovisual media production, the project offers a safe space for youth to reflect on social challenges and express their views. A participatory methodology lies at the heart of the initiative: feedback is systematically collected through discussion rounds, pre- and post-workshop questionnaires, and follow-up interviews to refine the workshop package and ensure its relevance to participants' needs and lived experiences.

The project aims not only to improve the quality of youth work and digital literacy, but also to foster critical thinking, empathy, and social awareness among teenagers. Additionally, project builds a sustainable, transnational partnership between the organizations and to share the developed materials with a wider network of educators, youth workers, and civil society stakeholders, thereby amplifying its long-term social impact.

Research Framework

Social Impact Assessment Procedure

The social impact assessment framework of the Play, Reflect, Act! project was designed to systematically evaluate the effectiveness, relevance, and transformative potential of its workshops on young participants and partner organizations. The framework integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods to capture short-term outcomes and emerging long-term impacts.

The social impact assessment aimed to:

1

Understand how the workshops influenced young people's knowledge and attitudes on topics such as inclusion, diversity, and disability.

2

Document participants' experiences with digital learning tools, especially video games, as part of a non-formal educational environment.

3

Assess the capacity-building outcomes for the partner organizations.

The assessment followed a participatory and iterative approach. Key tools and procedures included:

- **Pre- and Post-Workshop Questionnaires for Participants:** Administered before and after each workshop to capture measurable changes in knowledge, awareness, and attitudes. These questionnaires focused on topics covered in the games (Sibel's Journey, Leila's Play) and related activities.
- **Pre- and Post-Project Focus Group Discussions with Partner Organizations:** Structured focus group sessions were held with representatives from both partner organizations at the beginning and end of the project. These discussions explored expectations, assumptions, organizational learning goals, and perceived impacts over time. The pre-project focus group helped clarify baseline capacities and strategic motivations, while the post-project focus group provided space for reflection on organizational change, capacity-building outcomes, and future collaboration strategies.
- **In-Depth Interviews with Participants:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a select group of workshop participants to gather deeper insights into the workshops' impact over time. These interviews explored how participants internalized and acted upon the workshop themes, how their views on inclusion and diversity evolved, and whether the workshops influenced their social behaviors, confidence, or future aspirations.

Stakeholders

Main stakeholders are the participants and partner organizations.

This social impact report specifically examines two primary stakeholder groups: the teenage participants who took part in the workshops, and the partner organizations that collaboratively developed and implemented the project. The table below outlines their roles and relevance within the scope of the Play, Reflect, Act! project.

Participants



Young people aged 13–18 from Turkey and Germany. Attended workshops using educational video games and audiovisual media; provided feedback through surveys, discussion rounds, and interviews; central to measuring the project's impact.

Partner Organizations



Food for Thought developed digital games (Sibel's Journey, Leila's Play); facilitated workshops in Germany; led audiovisual production workshops.



Learning Designs co-designed and facilitated workshops in Turkey; contributed to content development.

Secondary Stakeholders

- **Parents of Teen Participants:** While not directly involved in the workshops, parents were indirect beneficiaries. The project offered them a window into progressive, youth-oriented education on sensitive social issues, and helped foster dialogue at home.
- **Youth Workers and Educators:** Teachers, social workers, and other professionals may adopt the final workshop packages for use in their own settings. They represent an important vector for scaling the impact.

Stakeholder Engagement

The following table summarizes the key stakeholder groups and their involvement in the Play, Reflect, Act! project. It is also worth noting that the social impact consultant observed the Leila's Play workshop in Turkey as part of the evaluation process.

Stakeholder	Activities
Participants in Turkey	Participant groups aged between 13-18 took part in the Sibel's Journey workshop held on 23.11.2024 and 14.12.2024. They later participated in Leila's Play workshop on 09.02.2025 and 28.02.2025. Pre-test and post-test surveys were administered before and after each workshop to assess changes in participants' knowledge and attitudes. The same group later joined the Game Jam (audiovisual media workshop) from 01.03.2025 to 03.03.2025. All workshops were held at the Learning Designs office. Following the Game Jam, the participants met with their peers from Germany in an online session to present the games they had designed.
Participants in Germany	Participant groups aged between 13-18 took part in the Sibel's Journey workshop held on 18.01.2025 and 19.01.2025. The Leila's Play workshop followed on 22.02.2025 and 23.02.2025, The Game Jam (audiovisual media workshop) was conducted from 8.03.2025 to 10.03.2025. Pre-test and post-test surveys were administered before and after each workshop to assess changes in participants' knowledge and attitudes. Following the Game Jam, participants met with their peers from Turkey in an online session to present the games they had created.
Partner organizations	They were involved in design, organization and facilitation of all of the workshops and events. A workshop focus group with project team was conducted by the social impact consultant on November 18, 2024 and a workshops focus group was conducted on April 8, 2025. Project team members from both Learning Designs and Food for Thought have participated.

Theory of Change

A Theory of Change (ToC) is a strategic tool used to map how and why a project achieves its intended outcomes. It lays out the logical pathway between the resources and actions (inputs and activities) and the resulting short-, medium-, and long-term changes (outputs, outcomes, and impact). This framework helps visualize the relationships between project elements and makes explicit the assumptions behind each stage of change.

In the context of the Play, Reflect, Act! project, the Theory of Change has been developed for two key stakeholder groups: the participants and the partner organizations. It draws upon the project's design and implementation process, as well as insights from the post-project focus group discussions.

For the purposes of this report, the terms are used as follows:

- **Inputs** refer to the resources invested in the project, such as funding, staff, tools, and knowledge.
- **Activities** are the concrete actions taken, like designing and facilitating workshops or organizing meetings.
- **Outputs** are the direct, measurable results of these activities (e.g., number of workshops held or games produced).
- **Outcomes** describe the changes in behavior, knowledge, skills, or attitudes among stakeholders over time. These may be short-term (immediate changes) or medium-term (sustained shifts).
- **Impact** refers to the broader, long-term change that the project ultimately contributes to, even if indirectly.

The following chapters outline the specific Theory of Change pathways for participants and partner organizations involved in the Play, Reflect, Act! project.

ToC for Participants

Component	Description
Inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educational video games (Sibel's Journey, Leila's Play)• Trained facilitators and workshop materials• Safe physical and digital spaces• Digital tools (tablets)
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interactive workshops combining gameplay and group discussion• Game Jam audiovisual production workshop• Peer interactions and reflection sessions• Pre- and post-workshop surveys and optional interviews
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participation in 3 structured workshops• Creation and presentation of digital games• Completed feedback tools (surveys, interviews)
Short-term Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased exposure to concepts like gender, consent, inclusivity, and discrimination• Greater confidence in expressing opinions• Initiation of group dialogue and peer learning
Medium-term Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved critical thinking• Greater empathy and self-awareness• Application of inclusive language and behaviors• Recognition of different lived experiences
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth become more engaged, aware, and inclusive community members• Workshop model creates a replicable, youth-centered framework for education on sensitive topics

Results and Analysis for Participants

To evaluate the impact of the Play, Reflect, Act! workshops on participants, a mixed-method approach was used combining surveys and interviews. Pre- and post-test surveys were shared before and after both Sibel's Journey and Leila's Play workshops to capture changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions related to workshop themes. In order to ensure accessibility for all participants, the surveys were translated into Turkish, German, and English.

Due to differences in school schedules and availability, a group focus discussion was not feasible. Instead, follow-up one-on-one interviews were conducted with participants by phone. These interviews provided deeper qualitative insights into the personal reflections and learning outcomes experienced by the participants throughout the project.

According to the survey results, this word cloud represents the terms most frequently used by participants to describe their experience in the project. :



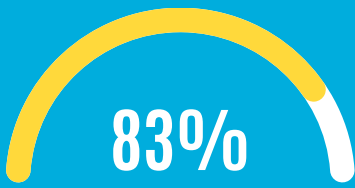
14 Average age of the participants

30 Participants answered the pre-tests

22 Participants answered the post-tests

Given the young age of the participants, it was observed that they were not particularly eager to answer lengthy or detailed questions. Therefore, the surveys were designed to be optional for each question, as requiring responses might have discouraged completion, many participants tend to exit the survey if they encounter a question they do not want to answer. As expected, the number of pre-test responses was higher than post-test responses. In Turkey, Sibel's Journey, which introduced topics related to sexual orientation and gender identity, led to more polarized responses. Some participants found the content "eye-opening" and "thought-provoking," while others showed discomfort or disinterest, describing it as "weird." The project team observed that this resistance may stem from limited cultural exposure to topics related to gender identity and sexual orientation. This challenge is further discussed in the next chapters of the report.

Results and Analysis for Participants



The percentage of participants reported that this was their first time attending a workshop on this topic.



The percentage of participants expressed interest in learning more about diversity in the future after attending the workshop.

The survey results indicate that 83% of participants were attending a workshop on this topic for the first time, and 61% expressed interest in learning more about diversity in the future. This points to a meaningful level of engagement and curiosity among young participants, even when the subject matter was unfamiliar or challenging. Additionally, 78% of participants found the workshop appropriate for their age group, though some commented that some topics felt more suited to older youth, especially when concepts were entirely new to them.

Feedback from the project team supports these findings and highlights how participants' responses varied across locations and age groups:

- Team members described moments of curiosity and positive engagement, especially during concept-building activities around equality and accessibility. Participants asked many questions, showing genuine interest when they could relate the material to real-life experiences or school projects. This integration with everyday life was seen as a strength of the workshop.
- The team emphasized that Leila's Play was generally received more positively and felt "safer" for participants. Sibel's Journey, on the other hand, exposed underlying tensions and highlighted the importance of preparatory activities and trust-building. Some facilitators noted that participants felt the topic was being introduced too suddenly, expressed through verbal feedback or avoidance behaviors like skipping parts of the game.
- In both Turkey and Germany, digital access and format played a role. In some lower-income districts or among groups less familiar with digital storytelling, there was resistance to the game format itself. In particular, the lack of German voice-over in the game at the time of the workshops posed an accessibility barrier for some participants who were unwilling to read extended text. This shortcoming is currently addressed by the project partner and the game will soon be accessible with German voiceovers included. This highlighted the importance of localized, accessible content and clear communication around workshop expectations (especially when framing the activity as a "game").
- While majority of the participants in Germany found the content appropriate for age, and learned new concepts some of the older participants (ages 17–18) reported that they would benefit from a deeper and more complex discussions. It became clear that age influenced engagement. Future projects may benefit from grouping participants by age to better tailor content and interaction.

Participant Reflections

The one-on-one interviews provided rich insights into participants' experiences, preferences, and emotional responses throughout the workshop process. Several recurring themes emerged across interviews, which can be grouped under engagement, group dynamics, learning outcomes, and suggestions for improvement.

High Engagement Through Interactive Formats

Participants consistently described the workshops as fun, engaging, and different from traditional learning environments. Game-based activities, Sibel's Journey, Leila's Play, and the Game Jam are particularly memorable. Even those with prior doubts about the digital format or coding tasks ended up enjoying the creative process:

"It was really fun to play together on the couch... I actually learned a lot about coding as well."

"I thought it would be too basic or too technical, but I ended up having fun even with the parts I thought I'd be bored."

Safe and Supportive Group Atmosphere:

Several participants highlighted the warm and inclusive environment, attributing it to both the physical space and facilitators' attitude. The combination of games and group interaction appeared to ease social anxieties and encourage openness:

"At first everyone was a bit distant... but after the first game, people really warmed up. The setting and decoration helped too, it felt cozy and welcoming."

"Our facilitator was really warm and approachable. I don't usually open up easily, but she made me feel comfortable."

Exposure to New Perspectives:

For many participants, the workshops introduced unfamiliar topics and broader social concepts, prompting reflection and growth.

"I realized there are so many different kinds of people out there. It reminded me that the world is big, and diverse."

"When asked if they (participants) had ever met a queer person, some initially said 'no' but queer participants replied, 'well now you have,' which shifted the conversation."

Discussions around structural discrimination also created space for peer learning. In one workshop, Black youth spoke about their experiences with racism in school, prompting reflection among others who had never considered this dimension before.

Reflections on Game Jam

The Game Jam portion of the workshop allowed participants to creatively apply the knowledge and inspiration they had gained from Leila's Play and Sibel's Journey. Working with Scratch, Unity, and Bloxels, they designed and developed their own digital games over multiple sessions. Despite the enthusiasm observed during the activity, the survey turnout was low, only four participants from both countries completed the Game Jam feedback forms. This aligns with the feedback received from participants during interviews who noted survey fatigue and a general reluctance to fill out forms.

Learning Outcomes and Skill Development

Among those who completed the survey, participants reported learning new skills both in technical and social domains. They described the process as an opportunity to understand:

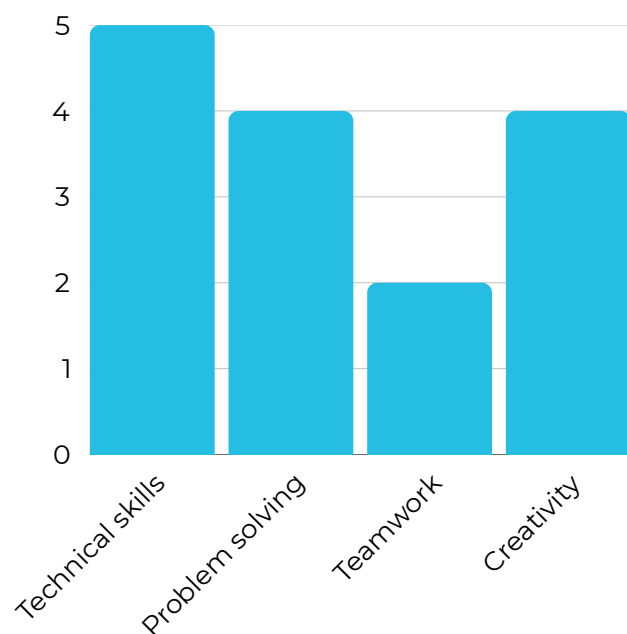
- Teamwork and collaboration in creative processes
- Story and topic development
- Game mechanics and programming using Scratch
- The connection between social topics and interactive storytelling

Participant responses included:

"Designing my own game sounded like a dream I thought I could never achieve."

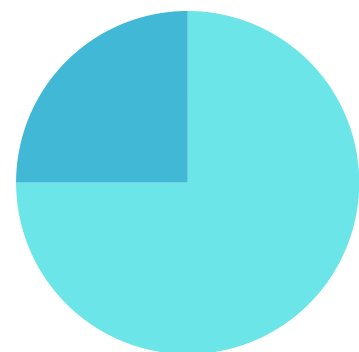
When asked whether they would like to continue designing games after the workshop, a mix of responses suggests that while not all participants plan to continue, the majority felt positively toward game design as a creative outlet.

Despite the small sample size, these responses indicate a positive learning experience that fostered creativity, social learning, and enjoyment. Future iterations of the Game Jam could build on this foundation by offering more structured onboarding for those unfamiliar with coding, and by simplifying feedback mechanisms to better accommodate youth preferences.



Skill Areas Developed (Participants could select more than one area)

Full game design and development
25%



Simple game creation
75%

Scratch Proficiency Levels
Among Participants

ToC for Partner Organisations

Component	Description
Inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interdisciplinary teams from two organizations• Erasmus+ funding• Existing digital tools and youth work experience
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-design of workshop packages• Iterative facilitation and adaptation of workshops• Weekly coordination meetings• Pre- and post-project focus groups• Joint events and dissemination planning
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalized, adaptable workshop package• Cross-country implementation of workshops• Documentation of feedback, challenges, and outcomes• Strengthened partnership between organizations
Short-term Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced facilitation and project management skills• Improved communication and problem-solving across teams• Recognition of local contextual needs and flexibility in planning
Medium-term Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of a shared pedagogical approach across institutions• Institutional learning around inclusion, youth engagement, and digital pedagogy• Increased confidence in managing uncertainty and adapting to field realities
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Both organizations emerge with tested, transferable methods for inclusive youth engagement• Stronger foundations for future collaborations• Contribution to the broader ecosystem of non-formal digital education in Europe and beyond

Impact on Partner Organizations: Focus Group Analysis

The focus group discussions with partner organizations before and after the project revealed several layers of transformation and insight, reflecting both the learning curve and the evolving engagement with the themes of inclusion, diversity, and digital learning.

Increased Capacity to Facilitate Difficult Conversations

One of the most powerful areas of learning for partner organizations was the challenge of facilitating conversations around sensitive social issues, particularly those related to gender identity and sexual orientation through the workshops on Sibel's Journey. These sessions exposed both the emotional limits and structural barriers faced by facilitators when approaching topics that participants had never discussed before or that may contradict prevailing societal norms in their local context.

Facilitators observed that certain subjects triggered visible discomfort and emotional withdrawal in some of the participants in Turkey. These reactions highlighted an absence of prior exposure.

"These weren't topics where they felt safe, especially gender identity. I saw 'escape, escape, escape' even in the feedback form."

Such feedback emphasized the necessity of emotional preparation before delving into complex discussions. Facilitators noted that starting immediately with high-stakes topics, especially without an existing relationship of trust, could cause participants to retreat or disengage. Therefore partners expressed that, one of the ways to ensure this trust and increase the readiness of participants could be through longer sessions with with broader, relatable topics such as friendship, identity, or everyday choices, and only after trust is built gradually move into more sensitive themes like gender identity or bodily integrity.

Introducing these topics through characters in games was effective in sparking engagement, but needed to be supported by structured reflection time and possibly preparatory workshops that focus on emotional literacy and group cohesion.

In this sense, the project significantly expanded partners' capacity to notice, hold, and respond to complex emotional reactions from youth participants. It encouraged a shift from content delivery toward co-creating emotionally responsive educational spaces - ones where disagreement, discomfort, or silence could be met with curiosity and care rather than correction or avoidance. Many partners cited this as one of the most transformative aspects of their involvement.

Impact on Partner Organizations: Focus Group Analysis

Reflection on Cultural Context and Variation

Partner organizations emphasized that participant responses to the same content differed significantly depending on the local cultural and social context. This variation was most notable between the workshops held in Turkey and those conducted in Berlin. While the games and activities especially those dealing with themes such as LGBTQIA+ rights, migration, and discrimination were consistent across both locations, the level of openness, emotional safety, and participant engagement varied widely.

In Berlin, facilitators observed that most participants approached sensitive topics with ease and curiosity. The youth seemed more familiar with diversity-oriented concepts and had prior exposure to themes such as queerness or racial discrimination in their everyday environments.

“Our experience in Berlin was very different... Our participant didn’t react at all to Sibel—it was something they already encountered in their daily lives.”

“For example, in our group, there were queer kids, and half of the children came from an alternative school background. They already had experience reflecting and talking about social topics.”

In contrast, some Turkish participants were encountering these issues for the first time, often in a context shaped by conservative social norms and limited discourse on rights-based topics.

“In Turkey, it’s the opposite, there’s a culture built around not talking about these topics. We felt that the children were reacting based on the propaganda they’re exposed to.”

This difference in receptivity underscored the need to adapt facilitation strategies to local contexts. This prompted a reflection on the importance of pacing and sequencing, beginning with less polarizing themes and building toward deeper or more sensitive ones.

“Holding a meeting before Sibel, to build group dynamics and allow for extended introductions, could have helped prepare the children.”

In one Berlin workshop held in a socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhood, facilitators also encountered unexpected difficulties. Though the city context was more open in general, accessibility issues such as the lack of a German audio version of the game at the time of workshops and the digital format created disengagement among some participants.

“In another neighborhood, there was resistance to the digital method... The absence of a German voiceover at that time limited accessibility, we now see how important that is.”

These experiences made it clear that cultural openness alone does not guarantee smooth engagement. Socioeconomic background, educational exposure, digital literacy, and language accessibility all play crucial roles in how well participants can interact with workshop content. As a result, organizations now place greater value on conducting contextual assessments and adapting both content and methodology accordingly.

Impact on Partner Organizations: Focus Group Analysis

Strengthening Project Management Skills: Communication and Problem-Solving

Beyond its educational and facilitative dimensions, the project offered a valuable learning environment for partner organizations to sharpen their project management capacities especially in cross-team coordination, communication, and adaptive problem-solving. The project required multiple teams, spanning facilitators, coordinators, and digital support to collaborate across countries, languages, and organizational cultures. This complexity prompted a clearer distribution of roles and responsibilities and fostered a greater appreciation for transparent and frequent communication.

“At first we had difficulty communicating, but as the process went on, it became clearer who was doing what. Everyone started consulting each other, which strengthened our teamwork.”

This iterative collaboration improved the organizations' ability to work more effectively in multi-stakeholder contexts, a skill that will benefit them in future cross-border or multi-partner projects.

The challenges of coordinating youth workshops across different cities, adjusting for cultural sensitivity, and balancing diverse participant needs tested the organizations' capacity for flexible planning. Teams had to revise timelines, adapt content delivery, and navigate unexpected absences or hesitations from youth participants, all in real time.

“We needed far more flexibility than we anticipated. We developed a stronger reflex for finding real-time solutions.”

This experience built confidence in adaptive facilitation and project design, equipping teams to be more agile and participant-centered in future programs. Managing workshop venues, travel schedules, participant permissions, accessibility concerns, and digital tools also honed organizations' skills in logistics and operations. Some partners reflected on the importance of considering local infrastructural realities and social contexts early in planning to prevent barriers to participation. This learning is now likely to inform future risk assessment and contingency planning efforts.

Having completed a bi-national, youth-centered, rights-based program using creative tools, organizations emerged from the experience with greater confidence in taking initiative, managing uncertainty, and navigating complex delivery environments.

This confidence can now translate into more ambitious programming efforts, stronger donor engagement, and bolder curriculum development in their future work.

Impact on Partner Organizations: Focus Group Analysis

Capacity Building Through Exposure to New Tools and Methods

The project provided a significant opportunity for partner organizations to expand their facilitation toolbox, particularly by introducing them to digital and creative pedagogies that were previously unfamiliar or underutilized in their programming. Participants highlighted how the use of a mixture of tools like Scratch, Unity, and Bloxels, as well as the integration of game-based learning and narrative facilitation, opened up new possibilities for engaging with youth in meaningful and participatory ways.

For some facilitators, this was their first time working with a digital game creation tool as a central medium for rights-based education. They reflected on the accessibility and creative potential of games as a vehicle for storytelling, collaboration, and identity exploration. This reframed their understanding of digital tools not just as technical skills training, but as a means to promote dialogue and self-expression.

One facilitator noted:

“Normally we don’t work this much with digital tools, but using Scratch was very instructive for us. We can adapt this to other topics too.”

The project also introduced a co-creation model, where young participants were not just learners but creators, designing characters, writing storylines, and deciding which social themes to explore. For organizations, this shift from facilitation to collaboration represented a deeper form of youth participation. It encouraged them to consider how they might restructure their own program methodologies to allow more room for youth-driven content.

“Creating such a participatory structure was both very challenging and very educational. It was new for us to see young people take such ownership of the process.”

By the end of the program, several team members expressed strong interest in embedding creative, interactive formats into their standard curricula and workshop structures. This signals not only a temporary shift in facilitation methods but a long-term transformation in the pedagogical approach, which could enhance youth engagement across their future work.

Areas for Improvement

While the project was largely successful in creating inclusive, engaging, and thought-provoking workshop environments, several areas for improvement emerged through both participant feedback and the reflections of the project team.

1. Streamlining Evaluation Tools

Participants, particularly younger ones, reported that completing multiple surveys throughout the project was tiring, which in some cases reduced their engagement with the evaluation process. While pre- and post-test surveys administered immediately before and after each workshop are typically considered more reliable for measuring short-term learning outcomes, an alternative approach could be to implement a single, consolidated final impact assessment survey. Although such retrospective assessments may be influenced by memory limitations or post-hoc rationalization, they allow participants to evaluate their journey holistically. By reflecting on their initial attitudes and knowledge alongside their post-workshop state, participants may offer deeper insight into the workshop's impact on their perspectives, confidence, and understanding over time. Future iterations of the project could consider piloting a simplified impact survey format to balance data quality with participant engagement.

2. Timing and Scheduling Challenges

Some participants in Germany felt the sessions started too early in the day, affecting their engagement. Additionally, facilitators reported that youth in large cities like Berlin and Istanbul had dense schedules, making it difficult to maintain attendance across multi-day workshops. Suggestions included splitting longer sessions across two shorter days and improving initial time planning to fit young people's availability.

3. Accessibility and Venue Issues

A few participants reported difficulties reaching the venue in Istanbul. While for some participants, workshops took place in easy-to-access areas, for others required long distances to travel.

4. Recruitment and Consent Limitations

Both in Turkey and Germany, the team struggled to reach enough young participants, particularly due to limited access to schools and the need for parental consent in conservative contexts. In Turkey, some schools expressed that while they supported gender equality, they would not allow parental consent for sessions exploring LGBTQIA+ topics. In Germany, team members noted a lack of connection with youth organizations that could have broadened outreach. Early partnerships with schools and youth groups, and framing workshops in a way that encourages informed consent and openness, may help.

Areas for Improvement

5. Local Adaptation and Flexible Facilitation

The project team emphasized that the same workshop content landed differently in different contexts. Facilitators found that customizing content, adjusting game elements, simplifying language, and creating room for reflection, was crucial. Ongoing local adaptation, co-design with facilitators, and space for mid-process changes were key strengths of the project that should be maintained and expanded.

6. Readiness and Trust-Building with Sensitive Content

As discussed previously, workshops that touched on gender identity or sexuality revealed differing levels of emotional readiness. Facilitators noted that more time should be devoted to trust-building and group dynamics before addressing such issues. Pre-sessions, introductory games, or reflective discussions may help establish a safer atmosphere.

7. Intergenerational Dynamics and Framing

The team also reflected on how workshop framing can affect participation. Some children arrived with the impression that the event would be purely recreational ("I thought we were just going to play a game") and were surprised or confused by the social topics. Others felt they were being asked to share views before trust was built.

8. Team Learnings and Organizational Capacity

From a project management perspective, the team highlighted the importance of flexibility, transparent communication, and shared ownership. The process challenged assumptions, required real-time problem-solving, and helped build collective learning. Facilitators emphasized the need for clearly defined but flexible roles, attention to youth-led facilitation styles, and continual reflection. This process not only impacted the participants but also shaped the team's approach to inclusive education, youth engagement, and cross-cultural collaboration.

These reflections provide a foundation for refining future editions of the Play Reflect Act project, ensuring that workshop spaces remain inclusive, relevant, and genuinely empowering for all young participants.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Play, Reflect, Act! project successfully piloted an innovative, youth-centered approach that combined digital game-based learning with participatory workshop methods to explore issues of diversity, inclusion, and identity. The project not only fostered critical thinking and creative expression among young participants but also strengthened the organizational capacity of the partner teams to deliver inclusive, adaptive, and emotionally responsive programming. Insights gained from both participant and facilitator feedback highlight the value of culturally sensitive facilitation, trust-building, and flexible implementation strategies. While areas for improvement remain, the project has laid a strong foundation for scaling and refining this model in future initiatives. By centering youth voices and encouraging collaborative learning, Play, Reflect, Act! contributes meaningfully to the broader landscape of non-formal education and social impact work across Europe.