

Press release

Kick-off for "Auswärtsspiel": Expert panel initiates dialogue between games industry, foreign policy, and academia

- **Interdisciplinary panel with representatives of German and international games companies as well as academia and civil society convened**
- **Task of the committee: development of a public and practical questionnaire on the use of games in the field of foreign policy and public diplomacy**
- **"Auswärtsspiel" is a project of the Foundation for Digital Games Culture and has been funded by the German Federal Foreign Office since September 2022**

Berlin, November 16, 2022: Under the working title "Auswärtsspiel" the German Federal Foreign Office is funding a new project of the Foundation for Digital Games Culture on the mediation of foreign policy with games. Among other things, the project explores the question of how video games can convey a deeper understanding of the workings and mechanisms of foreign policy practice and narratives. This also raises awareness of how to recognize anti-democratic narratives or disinformation more easily in the context of games. To do justice to this complex topic, the Foundation and the German Foreign Office have convened an interdisciplinary panel of experts from foreign policy, game development, academia, and civil society. The panel will meet for the first time at a workshop on December 2, 2022.

Highly qualified representatives from the fields relevant to the project have been recruited for the "Auswärtsspiel" committee. Among them are Michaela Bartelt (Senior Director WW Localization, Electronic Arts) and Franziska Zein (Co-Founder, Fein Games) from the field of games development and distribution. Concerning games research and teaching, Lena Falkenhagen (author and professor, University of Applied Sciences Hamburg) and Manouchehr Shamsrizi (co-founder of gamelab.berlin at the Cluster of Excellence at Humboldt University and head of the Group for Gaming in International Relations) are among those taking part in the panel's work. From the field of foreign policy and civil society, Sarah Widmaier (Scientific Coordinator of the Research Program Culture and Foreign Policy, Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations) and Felix Zimmermann (Consultant for Games Culture, Political Education and Extremism at the Federal Agency for Civic Education) are among the experts.

Starting on December 2, the panel will collaboratively develop guiding questions on how to promote sensitivity for foreign policy narratives in games and, at the same time, a deeper understanding of their potential to mediate foreign policy issues. Following this event,

interdisciplinary formats such as an expert conference and a bar camp will be used to discuss how games can raise awareness of foreign policy content and mechanisms, but also how they might intentionally or unintentionally spread subtle disinformation. As part of a modding competition to test the potential of games in practice, participants will create their own modifications to game titles already established on the market. The developed approaches will be presented to the public in the form of live gaming sessions in front of an audience and corresponding online streaming events.

"Many successful games – e. g. of the strategy and simulation genre – already deal with relations between states and offer interesting approaches to making basic mechanisms of diplomacy more accessible," comments Çiğdem Uzunoğlu, managing director of the Foundation for Digital Game Culture, on the project's approach. "With the German Foreign Office, we want to go one step further. We want to show ways in which this mediation potential of games can be used to make current priorities and developments in German foreign policy more understandable to as many people as possible."

Peter Ptassek, Commissioner for Strategic Communication at the Federal Foreign Office, adds: "The practice-oriented questionnaire to be developed by the expert panel is intended to awaken sensitivity and comprehensibility for the functioning of foreign policy and for political narratives, especially in times of disinformation and black-and-white thinking. We would like to initiate a reflection and dialogue impulse for interested game producers and publishers, for researchers and teachers as well as for political institutions that would like to integrate games more strongly into their work. As a public document, the questionnaire serves not only the gaming community as a handout inviting reflection and creativity. We are concerned with the foreign policy-sensitized viewing of games, as well as the playful-reflective viewing of foreign policy."

On Foundation for Digital Games Culture

The Foundation for Digital Games Culture is the foundation of the German games industry and an ambassador for games and the opportunities they offer. Since our founding in 2012, we have initiated projects and programmes highlighting the manifold ways games can contribute to society. We are a non-profit organisation that is active nationwide. Our origins go back to an initiative of the German Bundestag (the national parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany) and the German games industry. Partners from fields such as administration, education, civil society, culture, media, pedagogy, politics, the protection of minors and scientific research take part in our projects, events, and studies. An equally broad-based council ensures the purposefulness, independence, and transparency of our work. game – the German Games Industry Association is our shareholder. More information on www.stiftung-digitale-spielekultur.de/en.



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