

AmendMe: a Tabletop Game to Teach the European Parliament's Legislative Process

Martin Sillaots, Mikhail Fiadotau
Tallinn University, Tallinn, Estonia
martin.sillaots@tlu.ee
mikhail.fiadotau@tlu.ee

Abstract: The European Parliament Role-Play Game (EP RPG) is a multiplayer simulation in which the players take on the role of Members of the European Parliament (MEP). The game aims to help young European citizens understand the EU law-making process and to increase their interest in politics. It exists in a physical version, available to play on-site in Brussels and in many other capital cities all over Europe, as well as a virtual version that can be played in any suitably sized location, provided there are at least 16 players and a stable Internet connection.

While the existing versions of the EP RPG strive to reach different audiences, they may still not be equally accessible to all players. For example, playing the physical game requires advance planning and travel, which may be a challenge for schools in rural and remote areas. Meanwhile, the virtual game may be difficult to play at schools with an unstable internet connection or limited hardware resources, or by smaller groups who would like to play outside of class.

This paper focuses on developing a tabletop version of the EP RPG optimised for accessibility to a broader range of players. The game design focuses on game elements that support discussion among players and has them reenact key aspects of the EU legislative process, such as decision-making, compromise, and voting. Feedback from the pilot playtesting was encouraging and confirmed that the game was engaging and educational, but revealed that its content and mechanics require further adjustment.

Keywords: European Parliament, role-play game, legislative process, educational tabletop game

1. Introduction

Apart from the sanitation, medicine, education, wine, public order, irrigation, roads, the freshwater system and public health, what have the Romans ever done for us?

(Monty Python, 1979)

Amid the rise of populist nationalism, many European citizens have voiced criticism of the EU for a perceived loss of member states' sovereignty, questioning: "What has the EU done for us?" This scepticism largely stems from a lack of understanding of how the European Union works, what its main institutions are, and what responsibilities they have. To protect the EU and its democracy, its governing institutions must therefore educate the public on how they work (Cowley & Stuart, 2015). Against the backdrop of political disengagement among youth, games have shown tremendous pedagogical potential to "impact motivation ... and ... foster civic competences" (Delgado, 2021).

A prominent example is The European Parliament Role-Play Game (EP RPG): a simulation of the EU legislative process, in which players take the role of Members of European Parliament (MEP). The goal of the game is to help young citizens understand the law-making process and increase their interest in politics. The game is available in two versions: physical (<https://visiting.europarl.europa.eu/et/education-learning/role-play-game>), developed by Media Farm in 2010, and virtual (<https://virtual-role-play-game.digital-journey.europarl.europa.eu>), initiated by ICF NEXT and continued by SGI. Despite the name, the physical game is powered by several computers and smartphones. However, it can only be played on the premises of the Parliamentarium in Brussels and Europa Experience centres in state capitals all over Europe, subject to advance reservation. The virtual game is more flexible, yet it requires a large group of players (16–40), a big enough physical space (typically, a classroom), a stable Internet connection, and a reasonably up-to-date smartphone for each player. This limits the game's accessibility, for example, for rural youth, who traditionally face more access barriers to civic participation (Trivelli & Morel, 2021), and for those interested in playing the game as an extracurricular or home activity.

To address this issue, this study focuses on creating a low-cost, accessible version of the EP RPG titled *AmendMe*. The study is guided by a design question: how to design a tabletop game that teaches the EU

legislation process and is engaging to play? The paper presents the initial design, as well as player feedback gathered during testing.

2. Background

As Sillaots and Fiadotau (2023) demonstrate, parliaments across Europe and beyond have used physical and digital games in their educational outreach, including to teach the legislative process and increase citizens' interest towards politics—the two central goals of this study. Among these examples, tabletop games are particularly relevant due to their higher accessibility, in terms of both technology requirements and suitability for players with limited game experience (Sousa et al., 2023). At the same time, despite their apparent simplicity compared to videogames, “board games can express very nuanced political positions and stimulate a critical reflection” (Quasdorf, 2020), and have been shown to increase both player motivation and understanding of politics (Thananithichot, 2025).

A common approach in civic education is to use existing commercial board games to foster discussion of political concepts and processes (Bridge, 2014). Some educators take it further, modifying (or having students modify) classic games for educational purposes (Castronova, 2015; Mattlin, 2018; Kuo et al., 2023). An alternative approach is to develop an original board game tailored to the intended learning content, for example, local and national elections (Thananithichot, 2025; Anggraeni, 2023), foreign policy (Hemmert, 2021), migration (Medda-Windischer, 2021), or environmental policy (Chen, 2022). The approach taken in this paper lies between these two poles: it is an adaptation not of a commercial game but of the original EP RPG, tailored to a different mode of play.

The physical and virtual versions of the EP RPG share similar features. Players take on the roles of Members of the European Parliament and are assigned to one of four political groups. In this capacity, they are tasked with working on a legislative proposal, balancing their political group's agenda with the demands of various stakeholders. Players discuss the legislative proposals in committees, present their views, vote on amendments and make decisions in plenary sessions (EP, 2025). The target audience is young people (14–18 for the physical game and 16–20 for the virtual one), though the games can also be played by older users. Both versions are playable in all 24 EU languages and rely heavily on technology. The physical game synchronously utilises 18 computers, up to 32 smartphones, and various multimedia devices. The virtual game requires an internet connection, a facilitator's computer and screen, loudspeakers, and a personal smartphone for every player.

A somewhat similar game is *Legislate?!*, “a board game to teach UK civil servants how a bill is created, debated, and implemented” (Cabinet Office, 2018). The game takes a group of 2–8 players through the legislative process from initial idea to implementing the law. Similar to a traditional roll-and-move game, players roll dice to advance along a board that represents the full cycle of the legislative process, picking up cards that either hinder or facilitate their progress. The first player to reach the final space—a fully implemented bill—is the winner. *Legislate?!* serves as a useful reference due to its smaller scale and relative simplicity, which are key design requirements for the accessible adaptation of EP RPG. Yet, progress in the game is based on luck rather than player skill, which diminishes its engagement and learning value.

Overall, there is a shortage of research into the design of parliamentary games, and this is a gap this paper aims to address.

3. Methodology

This study follows the principles of **research for design** (Downton, 2003) and consists of three main phases: (1) ideation, (2) game design, and (3) game piloting.

For ideation, a project-based course was conducted at Tallinn University in autumn 2022. After playing the physical EP RPG, students from various disciplines were invited to generate and prototype alternative game ideas to convey the same learning content. The resulting prototypes served as a source of inspiration for the board game adaptation.

The design of the adaptation followed the approach outlined by Adams (2014). After a game concept was established, the game's core mechanics were defined, for which game content was created (game events, bill

amendments, etc.) A spreadsheet was used for game balancing. Finally, a paper prototype was created using placeholder art.

The piloting phase involved students from the Digital Learning Games MSc programme at Tallinn University. To give participants a point of reference, they were invited to play both the physical and virtual versions of the EP RPG prior to the prototype. 15 students of various nationalities playtested the game in four groups, with an average playtime of 45 minutes. While the sample size was small and participants' age range is higher than that of the intended end users (16–20 years), piloting with a small, more experienced group of players with expertise in game design was essential to identify potential issues before testing with end users.

An online questionnaire was used to assess the suitability of the overall game design, activities, and content were, and to gather ideas for future iterations. Most questions consisted of a predefined list of options related to specific game activities; participants were also encouraged to elaborate using free-form responses. The full questionnaire is available at <https://forms.gle/WvEvqCMhvsDXrtbu9>. Abductive content analysis (Ulla, 2017) was used to process qualitative responses through open coding and quantification of codes. The full dataset is accessible at: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1oQ_4l4pulgagdQVwUMQs9OsfO9XY0SVheSUTkvxf11c8/edit?gid=2008244401#gid=2008244401

4. Game Design

4.1 Game Idea and Concept

During the ideation phase, university students designed four prototypes of a board game adaptation aimed at making the EP RPG accessible to a wider audience. Some of these were accurate from an educational perspective but too complex for young players. Others reused the mechanics of popular games (e.g., *Monopoly*) but sacrificed essential parts of the learning content in the process. Ultimately, an original game design was created that drew on successful elements from different prototypes.

The main premise of *AmendMe* is similar to the original EP RPGs: a group of players assume the role of MEPs and must navigate a challenge facing EU member states (in this case, Russia's threat to European security). Players must tackle the challenge by negotiating a legislative proposal: a directive on strengthening EU defence cooperation and security policy. Each player represents one of four political groups—Ecology, Tradition, Liberty, Solidarity—and receives a set of predetermined amendments to the legislative proposal. Players deliver public speeches to present their viewpoints, discuss the merits of each amendment, and make decisions by voting. In addition, they must respond to unforeseen in-game events (breaking news, change requests from other EU institutions, etc).

Like the original EP RPG, the adaptation seeks to explain the EU legislative process and to promote democratic values and civic engagement, targeting young people: students aged 16–20. Unlike the original game, it is playable in a much smaller group (2–4 players) to make it more accessible.

4.2 Game Rules

1. Each player is randomly assigned to a political group (Ecology, Tradition, Liberty, Solidarity).
2. A legislative proposal (directive) is placed on the table.
3. All amendment cards are randomly dealt among players (9 cards per player).
4. Players may exchange amendment cards to assemble a hand of amendments that best represent their political group's values.
5. Each player starts with an equal number of political credits (5 coins).
6. The youngest player begins by playing an amendment card that they believe to have the highest chance of passing and generating the most fame. The player must deliver a speech to promote the amendment.
7. Other players discuss the amendment's pros and cons. After the discussion, players vote on whether to accept the amendment. In the case of a tie, the outcome is decided by a coin flip.
8. If the amendment is accepted, the player who proposed it earns political credit according to the number specified on the card. The accepted amendment card remains on the table as part of the legislative proposal.
9. If the amendment is rejected, the card is removed from play.

10. The same player draws and plays an event card from the deck. Events can positively or negatively impact one or all players (e.g., lose or earn political credit or trigger extra actions). The relevance of the response to the event is decided by voting.
11. Play proceeds to the next player in clockwise order.
12. The game ends once all articles of the legislative proposal have at least one accepted amendment. The final step is a vote on whether to accept or reject the resulting legislative proposal with all its accumulated amendments.
13. Winning condition: The player who earned the most political credit is declared the winner.
14. Losing condition: If a player runs out of political credit, they are expelled from the EP.

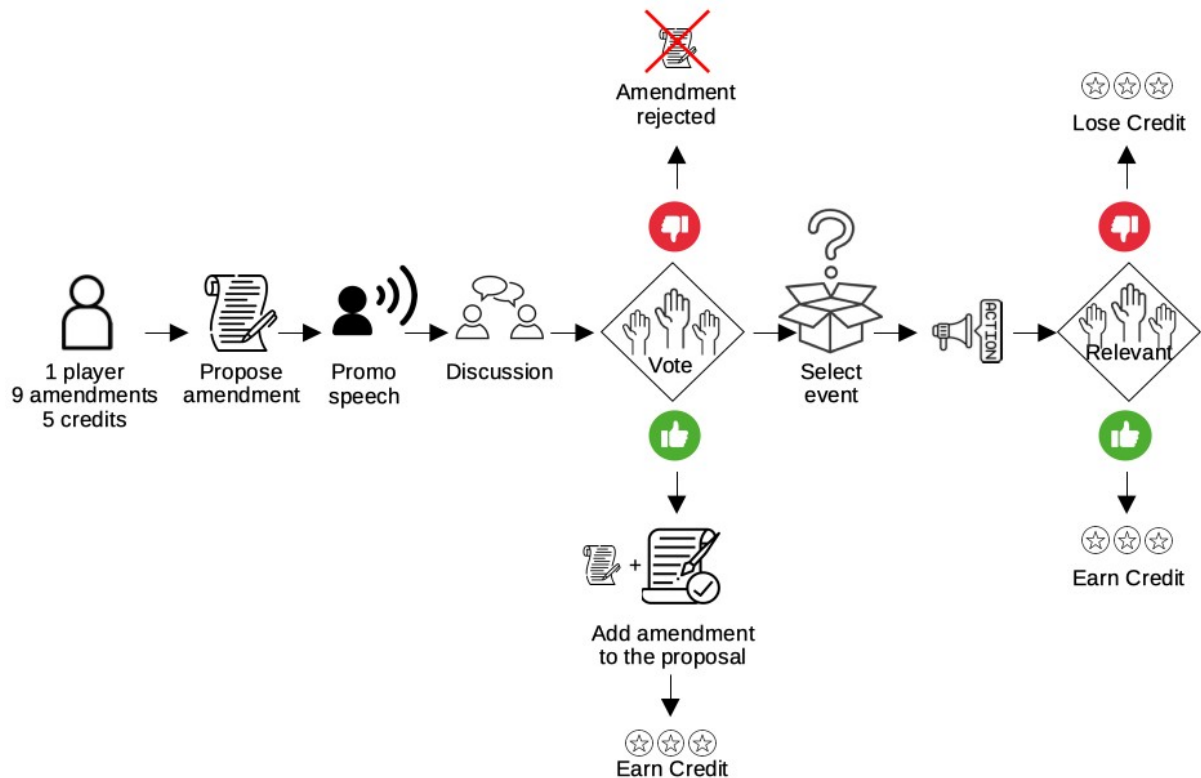


Figure 1: Visual representation of the game turn for an individual player.

4.3 Game Content

The game includes the following components:

- 4 political group profile cards
- 1 legislative proposal card
- 36 amendment cards
- 36 event cards
- 100 political credit coins

Amendments are divided into seven categories, corresponding to the articles of the legislative proposal:

1. Collective Security
2. Resource Sharing
3. Defence Innovation
4. Crisis Response Mechanisms
5. Energy Security
6. Diplomacy
7. Unity, Awareness, and Resilience

The list of amendments underwent several iterations; a spreadsheet was used to ensure that each political group had a balanced number of usable amendments. The current version is available here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1g4X0FMODass3R1Ex8t7pxoqyD7V6waTQqWjxi0Ln3bo/edit?usp=sharing>

Game event cards are divided into seven categories, each with distinct mechanic:

1. Political scandals: all players, or the one who picked the card, lose points.
2. Good news: all players, or one player, earn points.
3. Council intervention: players exchange amendments, with no effect on points.
4. Stakeholders' intervention: players vote on whether to accept the intervention. If accepted, a coin flip decides the outcome (earning or losing points).
5. Question from a stakeholder: the player who drew the card must respond. Other players decide if the answer merits one point.
6. Question from the media: the player who drew the card must answer, earning one point if the answer is at least one full sentence.
7. Breaking news: all players must comment on the course of action. Each player earns one point (or avoids losing one point) if their comment is convincing.

The full set of game assets is available online:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_EWceirptdYQ4zC7bU_qTGFxOBrdKsW9jBlue9OfLdo/edit?tab=t.0.

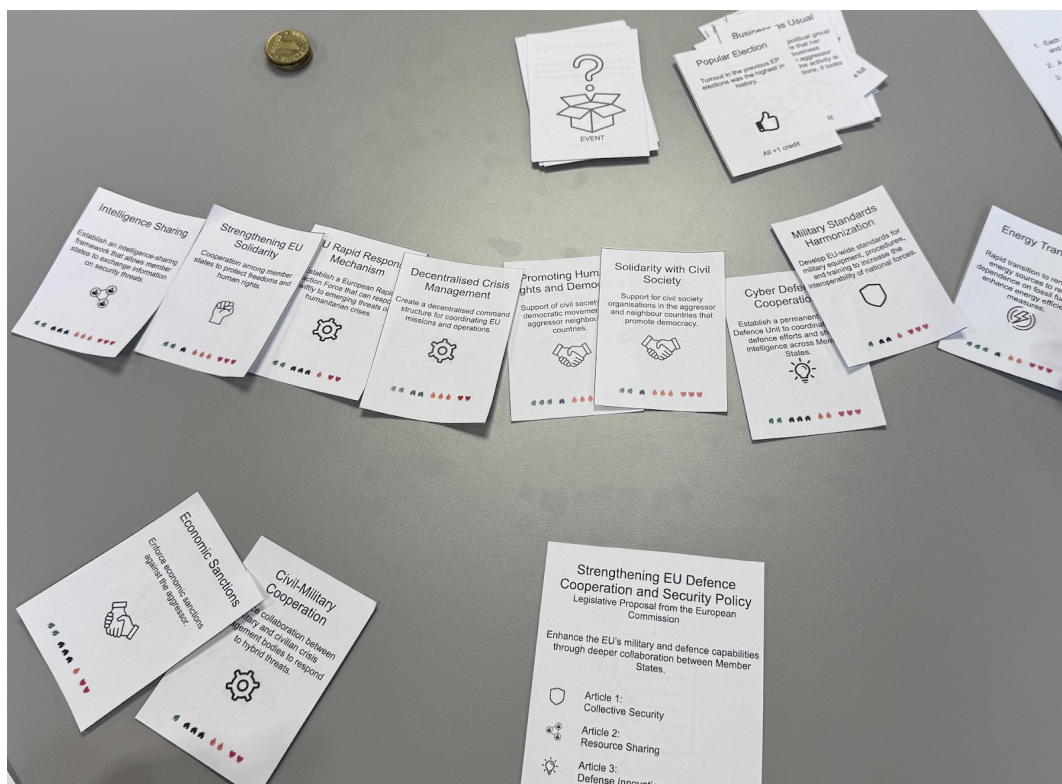


Figure 2: Game playtest: Accepted amendments (centre), legislative proposal (bottom centre), game events (top), one player's cards (bottom left), and some political credit (top left).

5. Playtesting Results and Discussion

In general, players expressed satisfaction with the game experience (4.07/5), with most players reporting enjoying the game session. By comparison, the same students rated their satisfaction slightly higher for the physical game (4.45) and marginally lower for the virtual one (4.04).

Only one out of 15 students was not satisfied with the tabletop game (rating their experience 1/5). In their freeform feedback, this player described the experience as boring and involving too much reading. While this response was an outlier among the current playtester group (postgraduate students specialising in learning game design), it highlights a potential risk when testing with its intended target audience of younger players.

5.1 Feedback on the Game Components

Table 1: Players' feedback on the game components

Game Component	Like	Dislike	Total
Suggesting amendments	0	-1	-1
Giving speeches	1	-4	-3
Discussions	4	-2	2
Voting	1	-3	-2
Game events	6	-1	5
Creating new amendments or events	2	-1	1
Collecting political fame	1	0	1

When asked to evaluate individual game components, players appreciated the game **event system** the most (6 out of 15 players selected it as their favourite), with four respondents citing unpredictability as a key factor in maintaining engagement. One player commented: "The Game Events bring the interesting aspect of unpredictability into the game. Sudden interviews or uncovered political scandals make the game feel more alive and engaging to play". Another player pointed out that events ensured that there was "action going on... not just verbal discussions". Conversely, one player mentioned the game events as the least appealing game component, citing her frustration with the point loss mechanic due to negative events. This suggests that the number of events where players lack control over the outcome may need reducing.

Players also enjoyed the **discussions** (4/15) because they allowed them to dig deeper into the topic (mentioned twice), were fun, and got everybody involved. At the same time, two of the players did not enjoy the discussions, because they did not relate to their political group's positions on the issue and/or specific amendments. One player stated: "Theoretically, the discussions are a very engaging and important part of this game. In practice ... sometimes I didn't know why the party I belonged to would rate a suggested amendment very low". She explained this was because "the info cards of the parties only highlighted what I had to stand for and not what I was opposed to, which made taking a stand a bit confusing at times". This lack of transparency was in fact an intentional design choice, mirroring how real-world political groups tend to imply, rather than clearly state, what they oppose to avoid alienating potential voters.

One player enjoyed the opportunity to **create** new amendments or game events using empty cards because "it allows the player to let their creativity run loose". Another player, however, lamented that they "never actually got the chance to suggest any new amendments or events". This suggests a need to provide a more clearly-defined opportunity for players to create new game content.

Public speaking was the least favoured game component (four players mentioned disliking it), with one participant commenting that "it did not feel very necessary". They added that "it was sometimes difficult to know how the amendments related to our party's political standpoints". This suggests that, even though the political groups' stances on amendments were presented to players through the game content, the game was not always successful at getting players to deeply engage with the content. As such, despite public speaking being an integral part of an MEP's job, it may be beneficial to limit speeches in the game to specific occasions such as event responses.

Some students (3/15) did not enjoy the **voting** activity, citing the imbalance of the game content whereby amendments were rarely rejected. One player commented: "People tend to choose the amendment with more support, which makes the game less fun. And people will be more focused on the numbers than the actual amendment". In contrast, another player pointed out that she liked the voting the most because "it gave the impression of 'winning' when an amendment I suggested was accepted". These contrasting views suggest that, for further iterations of the game, amendments should be designed to be more ambivalent and not equally attractive to most political groups. An alternative solution is to change the scoring mechanics to a system where political groups may lose points if amendments unfavourable to their agenda are accepted. Limiting the number of amendments available to a player at any given time can also force them to find a way to argue for worse options, encouraging persuasion and negotiation.

5.2 Feedback on Game Content

To evaluate the suitability of the game content, players were asked to provide feedback on the content of the amendments and game events. (It is possible that some content was not drawn during the playtest and thus is not reflected in the evaluation. This can be addressed by additional testing.) It was interesting to observe that some students, despite their game-design background, evaluated the content through the prism of its realism (how well does it represent solving a security crisis in real life) rather than gameplay (how to create an engaging and varied game experience). In future iterations, the feedback questionnaire should include clearer instructions.

Two of the amendments were singled out by two players as their favourites:

- Cyber Defence Cooperation: “As cyberattacks are a growing threat to our real everyday life, we had a really active discussion on this topic, trying to figure out where the line is between cyber freedom and security”.
- Promoting Human Rights and Democracy: “I think this is such a global goal for all societies”.

Several other amendments (Decentralised Crisis Management, Diplomatic Engagement, Disarming and Peacebuilding, Encouraging Resilience, European Defence Fund, Innovation in Defence Technologies, Strengthening EU Solidarity) were highlighted by individual players.

Three amendments were received less positively:

- EU Battlegroups (mentioned by three players): e.g., one of the players complained about “not understanding why my party (ecology) was against this amendment. I couldn't figure out how to make my position clear in the discussion with the others, breaking the immersion we had until then”.
- Decentralised Crisis Management (mentioned 2 times): “When crisis hit [sic], there is need for swift decision to be taken [and decentralised crisis management prevents that]”.
- Cultural Exchange and Heritage Protection: “Everyone agreed [on this amendment]”.

The last example points to the game's biggest issue: if the amendment is universally appealing, it is not good from a game design perspective. Content should create more controversy, discussion, and variety in voting. In this sense, the other two examples are in fact valuable in that they generate debate.

Two game events were highlighted as positive by multiple players. The Sauna event was mentioned three times, as it was deemed funny. The Bribery event (where the player had a choice whether to accept the bribe) was mentioned by two players, one of whom described it as an unexpected opportunity to benefit. Conversely, another player did not like this event because “it promotes corruption”. Six other game events were listed as their favourite by one player each (Anti-Corruption, Council's Amendment, Fake Jobs, Interview, Nepotism, and People for Peace). This suggests that the current events are largely balanced and accommodate different player preferences (some events generated both positive and negative feedback). Two of the players responded that they enjoyed all of the game events.

One event that may need calibration in the next iteration is the Interview, which two respondents criticised (“It didn't really work as intended. No real discussion was brought up for learning potential”), pointing to a need for more guiding questions and scaffolding.

5.3 General Feedback

Players provided conflicting feedback on the **clarity** of the game's rules. Most found the game rules to be sufficiently clear, with one player stating: “I liked that overall the rules were easy to remember, so we could come into a kind of flow while playing”. The game facilitator took extra care to make sure that the game rules were communicated clearly, explaining them and guiding the players during the first turn rather than requiring them to read the rules on paper. However, at least one player found the rules to be too complicated:

There were too many mechanics that the players had to keep in mind, so I guess it was difficult for the players to enjoy the game. Even after one hour, it seemed that the cards had to be explained to the players.

Two players pointed out that the game's **scoring mechanics**—especially the value of amendments for different political groups—required better balance. (As noted earlier, most of the proposed amendments were

accepted, making it too easy to earn points. One of the players commented: “In our group, we ended up voting almost everything through”.) Although point variation did in fact exist, players often failed to perceive it. One player suggested changing the scoring mechanics to include both positive and negative feedback:

Make people lose political fame when an amendment their party is opposed to actually wins the vote. This would lead to more heated discussions, making the game more interesting. Or just make people gain/lose more political fame through the game events to provide more fluctuation in points, therefore more concern for one's own position.

One concern that game authors had before the game testing session—the theme of the game (Strengthening EU Defence Cooperation and Security Policy) being perceived by players as overly serious and anxiety-inducing—was not borne out by player responses. One player summed it up: “I like that the game reflects the reality of the modern world as the topic is very serious”.

In conclusion, despite the need to adjust the game content and balance some mechanics, players generally enjoyed the game. One player even remarked: “I’d buy it”.

6. Summary

This study contributes to a growing body of literature on civic education through serious games. Specifically, it explores the design and pilot testing of *AmendMe*, a tabletop game aimed at teaching the legislative process of the European Parliament. The game offers an accessible alternative to the existing physical and virtual versions of the European Parliament Role Playing Game. Feedback from pilot testing indicated a generally positive reception, with the game considered enjoyable, informative, and clear in terms of gameplay. Game events and group discussions were the most appreciated mechanics, due to the unpredictability of the former and the player interaction facilitated by the latter. However, the feedback also points to a need for further balancing, as the amendments were deemed too uncontroversial and winning too easy.

Overall, the findings support the argument that tabletop games can foster political interest, soft skills, and collaborative learning, and that they can be an accessible alternative to digital formats. Thanks to being freely distributable and easy to set up and play, *AmendMe* can be used in classrooms, youth workshops, or extracurricular settings without the need for advanced infrastructure. This sets it apart among the limited number of learning games focused on EU-level governance and legislative process.

Several areas require further investigation to fully validate and refine *AmendMe*. One of these pertains to balancing the game mechanics—particularly voting dynamics, scoring system, and amendment content—to make decision-making more meaningful and the game more challenging. The next iteration of the game should be tested with its intended audience (16–20-year-old students) to evaluate its accessibility, engagement, and content comprehension among younger players. A further step would be to empirically assess game’s impact on learning outcomes and attitudes toward civic participation.

While the starting point for the project was to make the EP RPG accessible to wider audiences, *AmendMe*’s own accessibility (for example, for dyslexic players, colourblind players, etc.) needs to be tested. Once the game content is finalised, it should be translated into multiple languages, have professional art assets integrated, and have playing instructions and marketing materials prepared for broader release.

The fact that piloting outside of the primary target group produced positive feedback suggests that *AmendMe* has the potential to be generalised to a wider audience. The modular structure of the game’s content (amendment, rules, political groups, etc.) supports adaptation to different complexity levels and legislative areas, as well as integration into broader civic education curricula.

7. Ethics Declaration

The game was tested with university students. No personal or demographic data were collected. Therefore, ethical clearance was not required.

8. AI Declaration

Generative artificial intelligence (Grammarly, ChatGPT) was used to proofread and edit the text of the article.

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