



# White Paper on **LEGO<sup>®</sup> SERIOUS PLAY<sup>®</sup>**

*A state of the art of  
its applications in Europe*

**Elisabetta Frick**  
**Stefano Tardini**  
**Lorenzo Cantoni**  
Università della Svizzera italiana  
Lugano, Switzerland

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® (LSP) is a facilitated workshop where participants respond to tasks by building symbolic and metaphorical models with LEGO bricks and present them to the other participants.

LSP was invented at the end of the 1990s upon request of the LEGO Company itself, which wanted to find new ways of developing its own strategy. Thanks to the contribution of Johann Roos and Bart Victor and – later – of Robert Rasmussen, in 2002 LSP was officially launched. Initially LSP consisted of two standard applications: Real Time Identity and Real Time Strategy. In 2010 the basic principles and philosophy of LSP were made open source, and new applications were created, such as URL – User Requirements with LEGO.

LSP builds on a set of basic values, which can be summarized as follows:

- The answer is in the system.
- Everyone has to express his/her reflections.
- There is no ONE right answer.

The LSP Core Process is based on four essential steps:

- The facilitator poses a challenge.
- Participants build their answers using LEGO bricks.
- Participants share their answers with other participants.
- Participants reflect on what they have seen and heard.

The LSP concept is founded on some key theories: the importance of play as a way to learn through exploration and storytelling; constructionism; the hand-mind connection as a new path for creative and expressive thinking; and the role of the different kinds of imagination.

LSP facilitators have created communities: the most important ones are Serious Play Pro (<http://seriousplaypro.com>) and Strategic Play Room ([www.strategicplayroom.com](http://www.strategicplayroom.com)); in the social media it is possible to find other communities or groups related to LSP, in particular the groups on LinkedIn seem to be particularly active.

The scientific literature on LSP can be divided into two main categories:

- Publications focused on theories and concepts behind LSP (e.g., constructionism, play, imagination, hand-mind connection, etc.) and on the methodology itself (e.g.: its principles, history, goals, etc.). This category includes many publications by the inventors of the methodology and some publications by other authors who focus on specific aspects of LSP.
- Publications presenting concrete applications of LSP (examples, use cases, research findings...). The cases presented in these publications cover a wide range of topics in several sectors, including strategy development, company identity, cultural integration, training, service improvement, product development, user requirements for online applications, and so on.

In order to better understand how LSP is used in Europe in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), in May 2013 an online survey was launched as part of the S-PLAY project, and European LSP facilitators



were invited to fill it in. The questionnaire received 84 full responses. European respondents are mostly male (78.6%) and aged between 41 and 50 (39.3%) and 30-40 (35.7%). They come from the United Kingdom (12), Denmark (11), Germany (9), Netherlands (9), and 18 other European countries. 61.9% declared themselves independent workers, while 47.6% of them are employed by a company (more than one answer was allowed). Most of the respondents are fresh facilitators: 74.6% of them obtained the LSP certification after 2010.

When it comes to what facilitators are using LSP for, 62 of them (73.8%) use it for training activities, 70 (83.3%) for consulting. LSP is used also for team building and team development (9 respondents), teaching/education (7), strategy development (6), research and projects (6), coaching (4), and business models (3). The Real Time Strategy application is used or has been used by 88.1% of the respondents, Real Time Identity by 77.4% of them, while 48.8% of them use other personalized LSP applications.

65.5% of respondents use or have used LSP in large companies (more than 250 employees), 54.8% in medium ones (up to 250 employees), 51.2% in small companies (up to 50 employees), and 40.5% in micro-entities with 10 employees or less.

The online survey was followed by five semi-structured phone interviews with selected LSP facilitators, in order to get more details about their practices with LSP. It emerged that LSP is mostly used as a part of wider counseling interventions, i.e., LSP workshops are often integrated with other methods for achieving a specific goal. Interviews suggested also that facilitators usually start to use LSP standard applications, then, when they are experienced, they personalize them.

# INTRODUCTION

## THE S-PLAY PROJECT

This White Paper is a deliverable of S-Play (LEGO SERIOUS PLAY for SMEs – <http://s-play.eu>), a 2-years project funded by the European Union under the Lifelong Learning Program (LLP) – Leonardo da Vinci – Transfer of Innovation (project number: 2012-1-PL1-LEO05-27421).

S-Play involves six organizations from five EU countries representing Research & Development, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Education and the IT sector: University of Information Technology & Management of Rzeszow (Poland), Università della Svizzera italiana (USI, Lugano, Switzerland), Foundation for Research & Technology-Hellas (FORTH) in Greece, IHK-Projektgesellschaft mbH in Ostbrandenburg (Germany), University of Durham (United Kingdom), and Wirtualis Sp. z o. o. (Poland).

The main goal of S-Play is to adapt the LSP applications developed at USI (URL – User Requirements with LEGO, and LLED – LEGO Learning Experience Design) to the requirements of SME training. The project has the following objectives:

- To adapt the LSP methods and LLED guidelines to the needs of SMEs.
- To raise awareness and popularize LSP methods among Vocational Education and Training (VET) organizations and trainers, business support organizations, associations of enterprises, etc.
- To raise awareness of SMEs for the need to increase competencies of owners and staff, which could be done by innovative and attractive approaches such as LSP.

## THE WHITE PAPER

The aim of this White Paper is to present an overview of the state-of-the-art of the use of LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® (LSP) methodology among European SMEs, focusing in particular on application in training activities.

The White Paper is divided into three sections:

- 1) In the first section, LEGO SERIOUS PLAY is introduced and described, mainly through the words of its major players and of the official LSP documents. The methodology is first presented with regard to its history, main applications, basic principles, and theoretical foundations. Then, the main actors of the LSP community are presented as well as their presence on the internet.
- 2) In the second section, a literature review on LSP is presented. The main scientific literature on LSP is analyzed, focusing especially on the uses of LSP for training purposes.
- 3) In the last section, the findings of a survey of LSP facilitators in Europe are presented. The goal of the survey was to understand who is using LSP in Europe, how and what they are using LSP for, which methods and applications facilitators are using.



# ABOUT LEGO SERIOUS PLAY

## THE HISTORY OF LSP

The history of LSP starts in the mid-1990s, when the LEGO Company was facing the big challenge of new toys entering the market, such as videogames. Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, owner and CEO of the LEGO Company at that time, was dissatisfied with the results of the strategy-development sessions with his staff: the business of LEGO was about imagination, but the results of these sessions were all but imaginative (Rasmussen, 2006; Kristiansen, Hansen & Nielsen, 2009).

In the same years, Johann Roos and Bart Victor, two professors at the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) in Lausanne (Switzerland), were investigating new techniques for strategy development: “when Kristiansen, Roos, and Victor connected, they noted their similar dilemmas, as well as the values they shared – which saw people as the key to company success, and strategy as something you live rather than something stored away in a document” (Rasmussen, 2006, p. 57).

LEGO decided to fund research on this problem, and created a separate subsidiary: Executive Discovery. In 1999, Robert Rasmussen, who was director of research and development for the educational division of LEGO company, joined Executive Discovery, moving the work of the team into the development phase: “over the course of several years and after more than 20 iterations, our team made LEGO Serious Play the reproducible and robust methodology it is today” (Rasmussen, 2006, p. 57).

Executive Discovery brought the methodology to market, and in 2002, the LSP process was

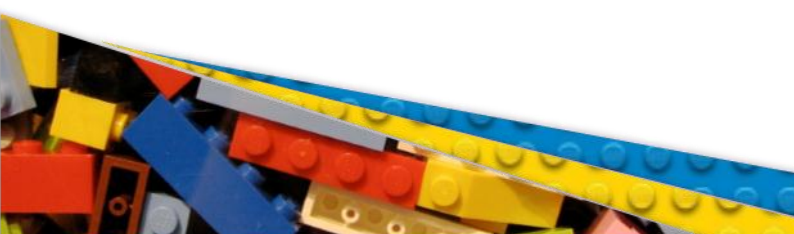
officially launched. In the following years many companies, nonprofit / NGO groups, and governmental bodies used it.

In 2004, LEGO decided to merge Executive Discovery into LEGO. In 2010, LEGO launched a community-based business model for LSP.

## THE APPLICATIONS

The standard applications of the LEGO SERIOUS PLAY method are three: 1) **Real Time Identity for You**, whose goal is to allow participants to understand themselves and their colleagues better; 2) **Real Time Strategy for the Team**, which aims at unlocking the full potential of a team quickly, effectively, and deeply; and 3) **Real Time Strategy for the Enterprise**, a process to continuously develop strategies in an unpredictable world. Until 2009, Real Time Identity and Real Time Strategy were the only possible applications of the LSP method. After the shift to the community-based business model, however, the basic principles and philosophy of LSP were made open source and LSP has been seen more as a language than as a pre-defined methodology (Kristiansen, Hansen & Nielsen, 2009). The three standard applications still remain, but facilitators are now free to design workshops following their own needs.

The Faculty of Communication Sciences of the Università della Svizzera italiana (USI, Lugano, Switzerland) has developed an application to design online communications: **URL – User Requirements with LEGO**, which supports the definition of strategies in online communication by helping the elicitation of user requirements for web applications (Cantoni et al., 2011). Another application is



currently under development at USI: **LLED – LEGO Learning Experience Design**, which aims at supporting instructional designers in the planning of a learning experience.

## THE CORE OF LSP

LEGO SERIOUS PLAY “is a facilitated workshop, where participants are asked different questions in relation to an ongoing project, task or strategy. The participants answer these questions by building symbolic and metaphorical models of their insights in LEGO bricks and present these to each other” (Kristiansen, Hansen & Nielsen, 2009, p. 78).

LSP “offers a sophisticated means for a group to share ideas, assumptions and understandings; to engage in rich dialogue and discussion; and to work out meaningful solutions to real problems” (LEGO SERIOUS PLAY, 2010, p. 10).

LSP builds on a set of basic values that can be summarized in the following (quotations from LEGO SERIOUS PLAY, 2010, p. 17):

- **The answer is in the system.** No one in the group has the answer to the challenge (neither the facilitator nor the group’s leader); therefore, LSP “is all about participants expressing themselves and listening to each other”.
- **The multitude of contributions to the dialogue is the important part.** In LSP workshops, everyone has a voice and has to express his/her reflections and thoughts – never to produce ‘correct’ answers.
- **There is no ONE right answer.** Different views and different

perspectives are a good thing, and must “come out in the open without anybody saying which is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’”.

The LSP methodology is based on the Core Process and on seven Application Techniques. The Core Process has four essential steps:

### 1. Posing the question

The facilitator presents the challenge to the participants. The challenge must have no obvious or “correct” solution.

### 2. Construct

Participants build their answer to the challenge using LEGO bricks. While building their models, participants assign a meaning to them and develop a story covering the meaning. In doing so, they construct new knowledge.

### 3. Sharing

Participants share their stories and the meanings assigned to their models with each other, and listen to the stories of other participants.

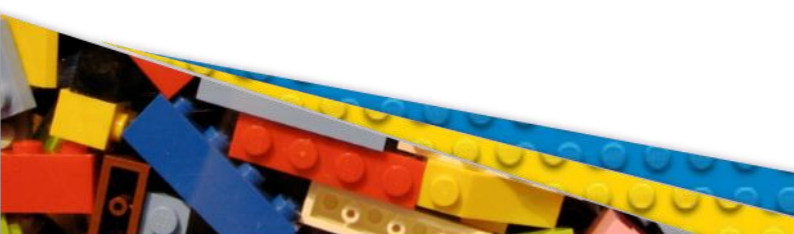
### 4. Reflection

The facilitator encourages participants to reflect on what they have heard and seen in the models.

The seven Application Techniques (AT) are:

1. Building individual models
2. Building shared models
3. Creating a Landscape
4. Making Connections
5. Building a System
6. Playing Emergence and Decisions
7. Extracting Simple Guiding Principles

An LSP workshop typically takes from half a day to a couple of days. It always starts with a skills building section, i.e., a set of exercises that aim at introducing participants to the method and making them acquainted with it.



Then, the 'real' workshop starts with the first AT (Building individual models), which is the only mandatory one, and may be used with other ATs, if needed.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

LSP is founded on some key theories:

- 1) Play
- 2) Constructionism
- 3) Hand-mind connection
- 4) Imagination

### **Play: Learning through exploration and storytelling**

Play is a voluntary activity, "limited in time and space, structured by rules, conventions or agreements among the players, uncoerced by authority figures, and drawing on elements of fantasy and creative imagination" (Rasmussen Consulting, 2012, p. 1).

In organizations, play can be seen as an intentional gathering of participants who want to use their imagination, agree that they are not directly producing a product or service, and agree to follow a special set of rules.

Adult play is often undertaken with an explicit purpose in mind. Four purposes of adult play have been recognized as relevant for LSP: social bonding, emotional expression, cognitive development, and constructive competition.

Two key components in serious play are storytelling and metaphors. "In organizations, stories contribute to the production, reproduction, transformation, and deconstruction of organizational values and beliefs" (Rasmussen Consulting, 2012, p. 3). According to Boje (1991), through stories

members have the power of challenging their organizations. In this perspective, metaphors are an important means for storytelling, which can generate new ways of understanding things, thus playing an active, constructive and creative role in human cognition (Schon, 1971).

### **Constructionism: Building knowledge by building things**

Moving from Piaget's theory of constructivism, Seymour Papert, who was a colleague of Piaget, extended his theory to the fields of learning theory and education, stating that "learning happens especially well when people are engaged in constructing a product, something external to themselves" (LEGO SERIOUS PLAY, 2002, p. 9). According to Papert, constructing things and constructing knowledge go on simultaneously, reinforcing each other: "when people construct things out in the world, they simultaneously construct theories and knowledge in their minds" (Rasmussen Consulting, 2012, p. 5).

Constructionism is not only about children's learning, it is more widely about making formal and abstract ideas more concrete and tangible, therefore easier to understand. Concrete thinking, i.e.: thinking with and through objects, is a mode of thinking that is complementary to abstract and formal thought. At the core of both constructionism and LSP is the idea that "when we 'think with objects' or 'think through our fingers' we unleash creative energies, modes of thought, and ways of seeing that most adults have forgotten they even possessed" (LEGO SERIOUS PLAY, 2002, p. 12).

The level of engagement that participants often reach when they are in a 'hands on' process is what Csikszentmihalyi calls 'flow', i.e., "a state of concentration or complete





absorption with the activity at hand and the situation. (...) The flow state is an optimal state of intrinsic motivation, where the person is fully immersed in what he or she is doing” (Kristiansen, Hansen & Nielsen, 2009, p. 81). This concept of flow is central in LSP workshops.

### **Hand-mind connection**

“The essence of LSP is building on the complex interplay between the hands and the brain” (Kristiansen, Hansen & Nielsen, 2009, p. 3). The idea behind LSP is that using the hands to build 3D-models of pieces of knowledge, ideas and feelings “opens up a new path for free, creative and expressive thinking” (Gauntlett, 2007, p. 130). More than 50 years ago, neuroscientists found that a surprisingly large part of the human brain is dedicated to control the hands (Penfield & Rasmussen, 1950). This profound interconnection between the brain and the hands means “that the hands are not simply a valuable place to get information ‘from’, or to manipulate objects ‘with’, but also that thinking with the hands can have meaning in itself” (Gauntlett, 2007, p. 130).

### **Imagination: Tapping into our creativity**

The ability to ‘image’ or ‘imagine’ something is typical of human beings. The term ‘imagination’ has three basic meanings: to describe something (descriptive imagination), to create something (creative imagination), to challenge something (challenging imagination). The interplay of these three kinds of imagination makes up so-called strategic imagination, which is the source of original strategies in companies.

Descriptive imagination is the kind of imagination we use to “evoke images that describe a complex and confusing world ‘out

there’”; it also enables us to make sense of it and to see new possibilities and opportunities (LEGO SERIOUS PLAY, 2002, p. 14).

While descriptive imagination allows us to see what is there in a new way, creative imagination is the kind of imagination that allows us to see what is NOT there, i.e., to create something really new. It is the essential feature of visioning, brainstorming, thinking “out of the box”.

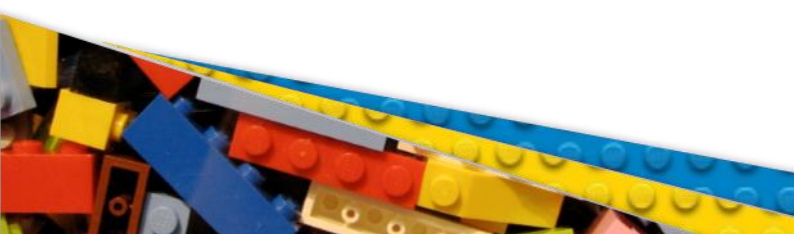
While creative imagination adds new elements to what is already there, “challenging imagination starts from scratch and assumes nothing”. Making often use of deconstruction and sarcasm, through challenging imagination “we negate, contradict, and even destroy the sense of progress that comes from descriptions and creativity” (LEGO SERIOUS PLAY, 2002, p. 16).

## **LSP COMMUNITIES IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA**

The **official website** of LEGO SERIOUS PLAY ([www.seriousplay.com](http://www.seriousplay.com)) mentions two **communities** of LSP practitioners: Serious Play Pro (<http://seriousplaypro.com>) and Strategic Play Room ([www.strategicplayroom.com](http://www.strategicplayroom.com)). The first one has more than 600 members, while the second one counts about 400 members. Both communities are open to everyone and provide space for discussions and exchanges. It is also possible to create sub-groups, e.g., for specific interests or for participants who have attended the same workshop.

The research on the LSP presence on social media has been restricted to the following communities/platforms.

**LinkedIn** seems to be the preferred exchange platform for LSP facilitators and for people interested in this methodology. There are 15



different groups about LSP, some of which are local (from Netherlands, New Zealand, Latin America, etc.). The largest group has more than 200 members and is simply called “LEGO SERIOUS PLAY™”. In most of the groups there are open discussion forums where members post messages quite regularly.

The LEGO SERIOUS PLAY interest page in **Facebook** has about 400 ‘likes’, but the community of practitioners is not so active in this social network: only one local community page has been found, the LSP Romania.

In **Twitter**, the hashtag #LEGOSERIOUSPLAY is often used, and many European facilitators are “tweeing” about their activities related to LSP and their workshops. The LSP community on Twitter seems to be quite lively.

Several presentations about the methodology or about specific workshops have been found on **content sharing websites** such as Flickr, SlideShare and YouTube. Contents are published by individuals (participants or facilitators) or by the companies providing LSP services.

**The Association of Master Trainers** in the LEGO SERIOUS PLAY method, founded by Per Kristiansen and Robert Rasmussen, is the main body authorized to deliver training workshops for future certified facilitators. They regularly deliver worldwide certification training in designing and facilitating workshops with the LSP method. The Association does not have a website; information about training programs for future facilitators can be found on the Serious Play Pro community website, and on the websites of Per Kristiansen’s and Robert Rasmussen’s consulting companies:

- Trivium (Per Kristiansen):  
<http://trivium.dk/facilitator-training>
- Rasmussen Consulting (Robert Rasmussen):  
<http://www.rasmussenconsulting.dk>



## LITERATURE REVIEW

Since LEGO SERIOUS PLAY is a young methodology, the literature about it is not so wide. However, it has been found that the method is present in several publications.

Publications about LSP can be divided into two main categories:

- Publications focused on theories and concepts behind LSP (e.g.: constructions, play, imagination, hand-mind connection, etc.) and on the methodology itself (e.g.: its principles, history, goals, etc.).
- Publications presenting concrete applications of LSP (examples, use cases, research findings...).

Some publications merge both these contents in a unique paper, presenting first the principles of LSP and then one or more use cases.

Please, note that the following literature review does not pretend to be exhaustive, but presents just a selection of publications.

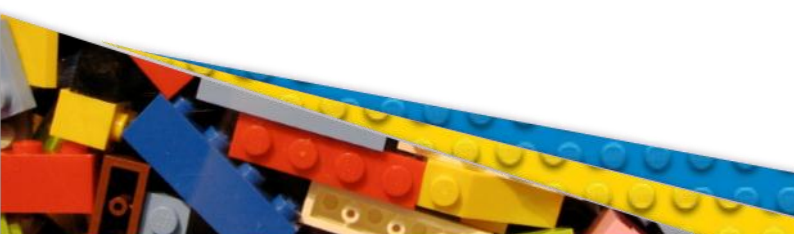
### **PUBLICATIONS ON LSP THEORIES AND CONCEPTS**

Starting from the papers of the first category, the “Open Source Introduction to LEGO SERIOUS PLAY” seems to be the only official document on LSP. It is available on the LEGO SERIOUS PLAY website (<http://www.seriousplay.com/19483/HOW%20TO%20GET%20IT>) under a Creative Commons license. This is an open source document, which has been published in 2010, when the LSP community decided to open the process to everyone. The document focuses

on the basic principles and philosophy of LSP: the core process, the etiquette, the skills buildings, the metaphors, the role of the facilitator, etc. Although the document does not provide a detailed roadmap for specific LSP applications, an example of how a workshop can be designed and structured is offered (pp. 36-37).

The most important contributions about LSP underpinning theories are the publications of the Imagination Lab ([www.imagilab.org](http://www.imagilab.org)). Founded in 2000 and active until 2006, the Imagination Lab was an independent and non-profit research foundation based in Lausanne, Switzerland. Its director, Johan Roos, was actually one of the founders of LEGO SERIOUS PLAY. The Imagination Lab published a series of working papers ([http://www.imagilab.org/research\\_workingpapers.htm](http://www.imagilab.org/research_workingpapers.htm)) and a series of short publications for practitioners ([http://www.imagilab.org/research\\_nextpractice.htm](http://www.imagilab.org/research_nextpractice.htm)) reporting the findings of the research about serious play in organizations.

While some articles introduce LSP in a generic way, presenting the basic principles, the core process, the benefits, etc. (Statler & Oliver, 2008; Lloyd-Smith, 2009; Hansen, Mabogunje & Haase, 2009; Schulz & Geithner, 2011; Hadida, 2013), some others are more focused on specific topics, such as the definition and peculiarities of play and serious play (Linder, Roos & Victor, 2001; Roos & Grey, 2004; Roos, Victor & Statler, 2004; Statler, Heracleous & Jacobs, 2011), the hand-mind interaction (Bürgi, Roos & Jacobs, 2001), the use of metaphors and analogical reasoning (Jacobs & Heracleous, 2004; Jacobs, Statler & Roos, 2005), the LEGO bricks and LSP as language (Said, Roos & Statler, 2001; Kristiansen,



Hansen & Nielsen, 2009), the three kinds of imagination (Roos & Victor, 1999; Da Silva Correia, 2007).

For instance, Karp (2005) stresses the importance of the externalization of mental models and organizational assumptions through modelling, while Bürgi & Roos (2003) underline the multimodal strategy imagery defining LEGO SERIOUS PLAY as “a highly multimodal tool. It allows rich organizational images to be physically constructed (use of kinesthetic/haptic information), seen and visualized (use of visual information) and verbally enriched and evaluated (use of narrative information)” (p. 72).

Some articles illustrate and examine the links between LEGO SERIOUS PLAY and other methods or practices. For instance, Hinthorne & Schneider (2012) describe the synergies between LSP and the Participatory Development Communication (PDC) stating that both encourage active participation, stimulate critical reflection and dialogue, etc. Again, Grienitz & Schmidt (2012) speak about LSP and the scenario technique, proposing an approach where the two methods are integrated in order to achieve an additional benefit.

Finally, some publications present URL, a specific application of LSP for eliciting user requirements for online applications. The application was first called Real Time Web (Cantoni et al., 2009a; Cantoni et al., 2009b) and at a later time the name changed to URL – User Requirements with Lego (Cantoni, Faré & Frick, 2011).

## PUBLICATIONS ON LSP USE CASES

Many publications present one or more use cases and concrete applications of the LEGO SERIOUS PLAY method. In most cases the name of the company where LSP has been used has substituted by a fictitious name (if this is the case, the fictitious name is written in *italic*).

In Bürgi, Roos & Jacobs (2001) the case of Orange, the international telecommunications company, is presented. A 2-day LSP workshop was conducted with a group of senior managers. The specific objective of the workshop was “to generate content for organizational strategy grounded in the power of the brand, but which acknowledged that the organization was experiencing challenges that were fundamentally different from those it had faced during its explosive growth phase” (Bürgi, Roos & Jacobs, 2001, p. 14).

Three other articles present the case of Telecommunications Companies. Jacobs & Statler present a 2-day intervention “designed to explore *TelCo's* identity, its environment and its strategic challenges through the process of serious play” and which used *what-if* scenarios (2004, p. 14). Oliver and Jacobs tell about *EuroTel*, a European-based Communication Company, which had a 2-day intervention with seven members of the corporate strategy team as well as three managers from the human resources department. The aim of the intervention was “the construction of a shared representation of the organization’s identity, and a shared set of guiding principles which would be intended to provide guidance to team members’ actions and decision making processes in the event of unexpected events” (Oliver & Jacobs, 2004, p. 10). The last company is *HantelCo*, where the strategy-intervention involved nine



participants. In the interviews that were done after the workshop one of the participants stated: “it was helpful to see many aspects of the strategy in a different light from the traditional ways like the PowerPoint presentation approach” (Bürge & Roos, 2003, p. 75).

Other papers (Oliver & Roos, 2003; Oliver & Roos, 2004) speak about three different multinational companies, one in packaging, one in chemistry and one in the software field. The organizational identity workshops involved six to ten participants for each company.

Jacobs et al. present the case of a packaging industry company, where a “strategic facilitated conversation” with a group of four executives was held. The aim was to “extract and share the four executives’ perceptions of the business and their understandings of how to deal with strategic issues in general” and to identify and articulate “the nature of the after-sales support threats in particular” (Jacobs, Statler & Roos, 2005, p. 11). Jacobs & Heracleous introduce the case of a Swiss bank where a one-day strategy workshop involved 47 managers divided into six groups. Participants were invited to work around the concept “I know my banker” for generating a collective sense-making process (Jacobs & Heracleous, 2004). Roos, Victor & Statler (2004) present four different case studies. The intervention at the LEGO Company (eight 5-days workshops involving 352 managers); a half-day session with four participants in a multinational packaging firm; a 1-day LSP strategic planning process workshop that involved two groups of six participants each in an aluminium firm; and a 2-days intervention with 12 managers in a fine chemical firm (Roos, Victor & Statler, 2004). The case of *Chemcor*, another chemical firm, shows how

Real Time Strategy was run during three separate sessions with three divisions of the company (Bürge, Victor & Lentz, 2004).

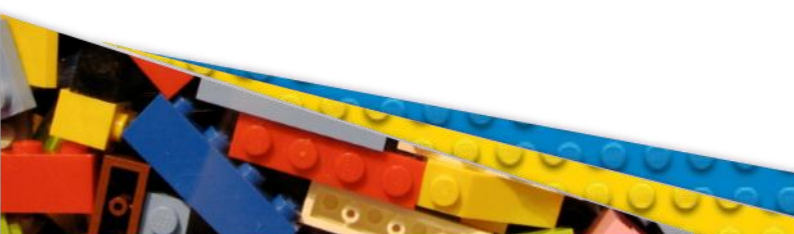
Previ (2012) mentions three success cases: 1) a medium-size company in the informatics sector had a one-day workshop with eight participants after the group acquisition; 2) a young talents program of a multinational in the banking sector ran a one-day session with 100 people for enhancing cultural integration; 3) a multinational enterprise in the energy sector proposed a session for managerial learning for new middle-level employees (Previ, 2012, pp. 110-115).

LSP has also been used within the NHS (National Health Service in UK) in the context of the “NHS at home” project. The aim of the project was to help professionals to illicit their personal narratives and collectively envision opportunities for service improvements and new product development (Swann, 2010, 2011, 2012)

The literature review shows that LSP is mostly used in its original applications (identity and strategy related issues), but some publications show that it is also used for other goals.

One paper presents the use of LSP for identifying the obstacles that impede the realization of product and service development in a medium-sized Dutch engineering consulting firm (Letiche & Hagemeyer, 2004).

Kyvsgaard Hansen & O’Connor (2008) illustrate two different examples. The first one is about *Alfa*, a company developing and manufacturing sound-equipment for professionals and musicians, which holds a half-day workshop with eight people in order to create a new or alternative understanding of the context in which the company will



market its future products. The second one is about the Danish Department of the Red Cross, which, through a session of less than four hours, wanted to develop a shared view of what the base-camp is.

Some use cases in the field of scientific research have also been found. Roos & Grey provide two different examples: a group of scientists working in the fields of nanotechnology and virtual reality, and a board of cross-section people in a research organization. In the first group LSP helped the scientists to “gain deeper insight into the different agendas of the other participants”, while, in the second group, the workshop helped to reconcile the point of view of seniors and young people where the generation gap was wide (Roos & Grey, 2004, p. 4). The case presented by Schulz & Geithner (2011) illustrates a 3-day workshop with an interdisciplinary research group of 10 people. The aim of the session was to provide a project vision. In another case, LSP was used to change the project scope in a collaborative project of the Health and Care Administration of Copenhagen Municipality called *The Good Elderly Life* (Hansen, Mabogunje & Haase, 2009).

Gauntlett (2007) presents a project in which LSP is used to explore individual identities. LSP sessions have been run with students, academics, unemployed people, architects, charity managers and social care workers to provide insights into how individuals present themselves, understand their own life story, and connect with society.

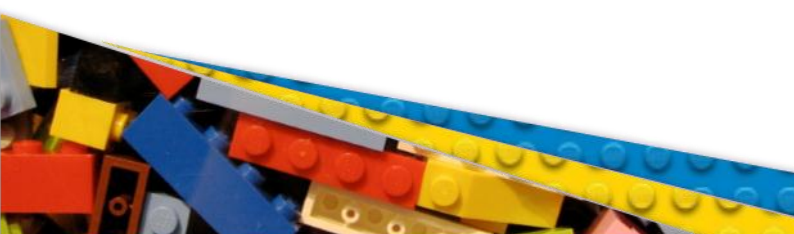
Also the publications about URL present some use cases: the first case is a half-day session with 14 participants for rethinking the online communication of an international luxury cruise company (Cantoni et al., 2009b); the

second one is another half-day session with 10 participants for re-designing the website of a large Swiss NGO (Cantoni et al., 2009a).

Finally, some publications present cases of use of LSP in the academic field: Nolan (2010) reports how students at Higher Education level used LSP to articulate their learning autobiographies, current situations, orientations to learning, and aspirations. His research is focused on using LSP among students in order to better understand their needs, interests and aptitudes as a starting point for designing personalized learning. The research involved 327 students and 30 staff members and results showed that they all found the process very useful.

Bulmer (2009) reports a case study where LSP was used in the Engineering Design classroom at the University of New Brunswick (Canada) to awaken students’ creative energies and spur innovation. LSP workshops were run in the *Technology management and entrepreneurship* class and in the *Team design* project course with the aim of increasing confidence in the ability to be creative, improving communication/collaboration and providing a new approach focused on idea generation and innovation. After four years of experience with LSP in classrooms, the researcher states that “LSP can be considered a useful complementary teaching and learning technique to keep engineering students engaged, facilitate team discovery and reinforce team building” (p. 6).

Eriksen & Tollestrup (2012) present a project of the Aalborg University, which involved students in a series of workshops for healthcare sector employees. LSP was used first as an “ice-breaker” exercise, then to have participants build their “view on their working place” (p. 3).



# LSP FACILITATORS IN EUROPE

## THE SURVEY

The first milestone of the S-Play project concerned the proper identification and analysis of all relevant LSP resources. In order to establish the state-of-the-art of LSP in Europe an online survey has been created. The goal of the survey was to understand who is using LSP in Europe, how and what are they using LSP for, and which methods and applications are facilitators using.

The invitation to participate was sent to a list of about 70 facilitators in Europe, whose contacts were found in online social networks, online communities, companies' websites, etc. The link to the questionnaire was also published on the S-Play project website, on the two main LSP online communities (Serious Play Pro and Strategic Play Room), on two LSP groups in LinkedIn, on the eLab (eLearning Lab of USI) website, and on Twitter, using the hashtag #LEGOSERIOUSPLAY. Finally, both Per Kristiansen and Robert Rasmussen contributed to the promotion of the survey, by forwarding the invitation to their lists of facilitators.

The questionnaire, available in 6 languages (English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Polish), was online from May 3<sup>rd</sup> to May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013. It was divided in two main sections, the former about personal information, the latter about the use of LSP, with a total of 23 questions (see Appendix 1 for the complete questionnaire in English).

## THE MAIN FINDINGS

The results of the survey offer an overview on the use of LSP in Europe. In 20 days, the online questionnaire received 84 full responses. In general, the survey generated a lot of interest, not only among European facilitators but also in the worldwide LSP community. Also, several facilitators showed their willingness to contribute more to the survey: 59 facilitators declared their availability to be contacted later on for an in-depth phone interview.

### Personal information

18 respondents are female (21.4%), 66 are male (78.6%). As regards age, the majority of respondents are between 41 and 50 (39.3%) and 30-40 (35.7%). 23.8% are over 51, only one person is under 30.

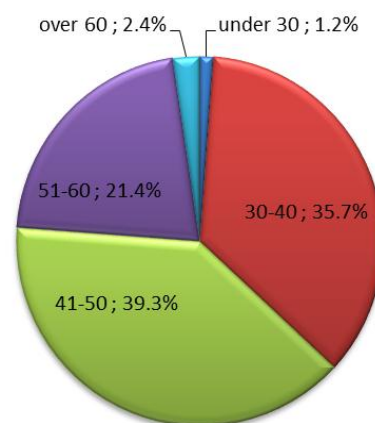
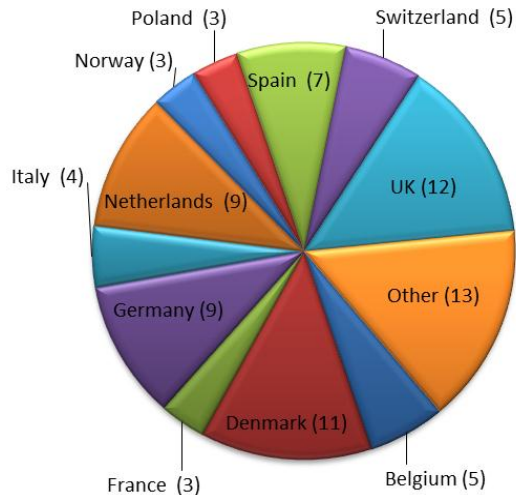


FIGURE 1 – AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The most represented countries are the United Kingdom (12 respondents), Denmark (11), Germany (9) and The Netherlands (9). The other respondents come from Spain (7), Switzerland (5), Belgium (5), Italy (4), Poland (3), France (3), and Norway (3). In the *other* category (13 respondents in total) the

countries with fewer than 3 respondents have been grouped: Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Slovenia (see **FIGURE 2**).



**FIGURE 2 – COUNTRIES OF RESPONDENTS**

Selecting only the respondents who use LSP for training activities AND work with medium, small and micro enterprises (56 out of 84), it emerges that all Italian respondents use LSP for training activities with SMEs, while in Netherlands and Belgium fewer facilitators use LSP for training activities with SMEs (4 and 2, respectively).

61.9% of the respondents declared themselves independent workers, while 47.6% of them are (also) employed by a company (more than one answer was allowed). Respondents employed in a company were asked to provide the company name: through this answer a list of 52 different European companies has been drawn up.

The large majority of the respondents have got an LSP trainer certificate (92.9%). This could be due to the fact that invitations were sent to the members of LSP communities and that the title was *Survey for LEGO SERIOUS*

*PLAY facilitators in Europe*: some non-certified facilitators may have thought that the survey was not addressed to them.

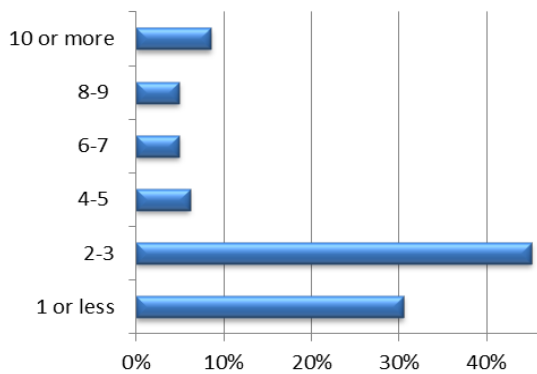
The certified facilitators were invited to indicate where and when they obtained the certification. The majority of the respondents (74.6%) obtained the certification after 2010: 14.9% in 2010, 25.4% in 2011, 25.4% in 2012 and 9.0% in 2013 (see **TABLE 1**). Only 25.4% did the certification before 2010. Although it was not explicitly required, some facilitators also mentioned the trainer who trained them and delivered the certificate: 12 have indicated Per Kristiansen (Trivium), 7 Robert Rasmussen (Rasmussen Consulting), and 3 Katrin Elster (Strategic Play).

Year	Facilitators	%
2001	2	3.0
2002	1	1.5
2003	2	3.0
2004	1	1.5
2005	3	4.5
2006	2	3.0
2007	1	1.5
2008	2	3.0
2009	3	4.5
2010	10	14.9
2011	17	25.4
2012	17	25.4
2013	6	9.0
	67	100.0

**TABLE 1 – YEAR OF THE CERTIFICATION**

Similar results emerge from the following question: three-quarters of the respondents are fresh facilitators, i.e., they have been using LSP for 3 years or less, while 7 respondents (8.5%) have been using the method for 10 years or more (see **FIGURE 3**).





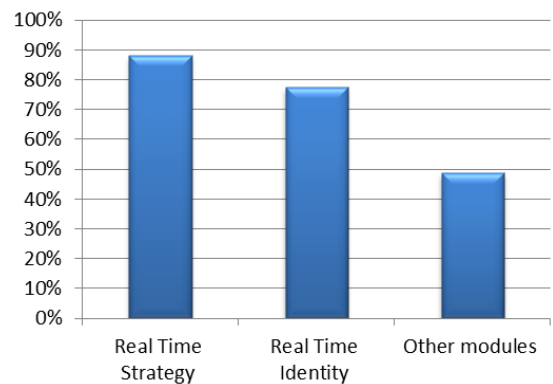
**FIGURE 3 – HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN USING LSP?**

**LSP use**

When it comes to what facilitators are using LSP for, 73.8% of respondents use it for training activities, 83.3% for consulting (more than one answer was allowed). Under the *other* field, respondents mentioned: team building and team development (9 persons), teaching/education (7), strategy development (6), research and projects (6), coaching (4), and business models (3). Leadership, innovation, interviews, product development, future scenarios and change management have also been mentioned.

Respondents were asked to indicate which applications of LEGO SERIOUS PLAY they use or have used. 88.1% of them indicated Real Time Strategy, 77.4% Real Time Identity, 48.8% other applications (see **FIGURE 4**). The high percentage of respondents who have indicated the alternative modules prove that the method in these last years has become more flexible and that many facilitators create their own customized LSP workshops. This has also been confirmed by Per Kristiansen in a phone interview.

Under the *other modules* field, respondents mentioned several personalized modules, which are used for the activities mentioned in response to the previous question.



**FIGURE 4 – LSP APPLICATIONS USED**

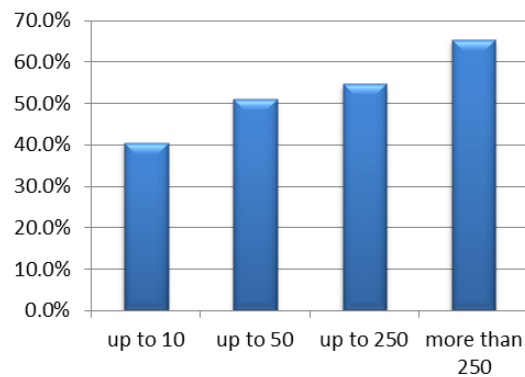
As regards the LSP modules adopted, no significant difference emerges for the 56 respondents who use LSP for training activities AND work with medium, small and micro enterprises: the percentage of use of Real Time Strategy, Real Time Identity and of personalized modules are similar to the global results.

In **TABLE 2** the business sectors of the facilitators' clients are listed. 60.7% of facilitators have applied LSP in the educational field, 40.5% in the manufacturing field and 36.9% in the Public Administration. Within the *other* field some respondents mentioned: pharmaceuticals, universities, media, information & technology, design, entertainment, IT aviation, arts, non-profit organizations, life sciences, food industry, finance, banks, etc.

Business sector	%
Education	60.7%
Manufacturing	40.5%
Public administration and defense; compulsory social security	36.9%
Health and social work	33.3%
Other	32.1%
Transport, storage and communication	26.2%
Other community, social and personal service activities	26.2%
Financial intermediation	21.4%
Construction	19.0%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods	14.3%
Hotels and restaurants	13.1%
Electricity, gas and water supply	11.9%
Real estate, renting and business activities	11.9%
Extra-territorial organizations and bodies	9.5%
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	6.0%
Mining & quarrying	3.6%
Private households with employed persons	2.4%
Fishing	1.2%

**TABLE 2 – BUSINESS SECTORS OF THE CLIENTS**

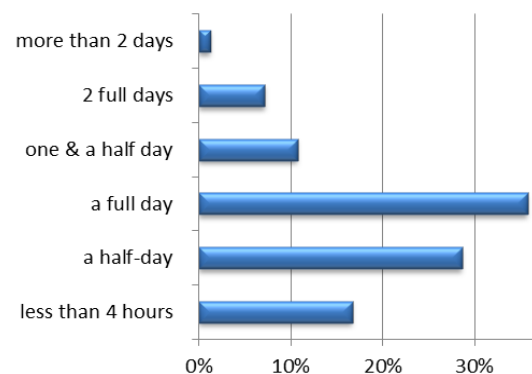
In order to know more about the clients of LSP facilitators, a question about the size of the companies they are working with was asked. It emerges that 65.5% of respondents work with large companies (more than 250 employees), 54.8% with medium ones (up to 250 employees), 51.2% with small companies (up to 50 employees), and 40.5% with micro-entities with 10 employees or less (see **FIGURE 5**).



**FIGURE 5 – N. OF EMPLOYEES IN CLIENTS' COMPANIES**

Three facilitators are also using LSP in their universities or schools, which actually are not considered as clients. Two respondents also work(ed) with very large companies, i.e., with about 2000 or 10000 employees.

The most common workshop duration is a full day (35.7% of the respondents chose this option), followed by a half-day (28.6%), less than 4 hours (16.7%), one and a half day (10.7%), and 2 full days (7.1%). Only one facilitator leads workshops that last more than 2 days (see **FIGURE 6**).



**FIGURE 6 – WORKSHOPS' DURATION**

The last two questions of the questionnaire were about the number of workshops led by facilitators in the last year and, as an yearly average, in the last five years.

TABLE 3 shows that the percentages of the two columns are rather similar, and that the majority of the respondents leads from one to five LSP sessions per year. It is interesting to notice that 15.5% of the respondents have run more than 20 sessions per year on average in the last 5 years; on the contrary, 7.1% of respondents have not run LSP workshops either in the last 12 months or in the last 5 years.

Number of sessions run	Last 12 months	Average last 5 years
none	7.1%	7.1%
1-5	46.4%	39.3%
6-10	21.4%	22.6%
11-15	14.3%	13.1%
16-20	6.0%	2.4%
more than 20	4.8%	15.5%

TABLE 3 – SESSIONS RUN BY FACILITATORS

For the respondents who use LSP for training activities AND work with medium, small and micro enterprises (56 out of 84), an interesting difference emerges when it comes to the number of sessions run in the last 12 months: it seems that LSP facilitators working with SMEs for training activities are more active than average: 4 of them (7.1%) have run more than 20 sessions in the last year.

**Interviews**

After the closure of the online survey, during June 2013, five semi-structured phone interviews were carried out in order to have more details about facilitators’ experiences. The interviewed persons were selected among the list of the facilitators who answered the online survey declaring their availability for a phone interview.

Interviews suggested that the LEGO SERIOUS PLAY method is mostly used as a part of a

wider counselling intervention with a group of people in a company. In other words, LSP workshops are often integrated with other methods for achieving a specific goal.

Facilitators were asked to mention how their customers chose the LSP method. In three cases the facilitator proposed or recommended LSP and in two cases the director (or another internal person of the company) already knew the methodology, and interested and curious to try it.

Interviews suggested also that facilitators usually start to use LSP standard modules and then, with the experience, they personalize them, even adding to the LEGO bricks some non-LEGO toys.

During the interviews, facilitators spontaneously mentioned some “lessons learned” or recommendations on LSP use:

- Learning the context is crucial for success.
- Asking the right questions is fundamental.
- The facilitator has to be a good consultant.
- LSP is only one tool.
- The cost of the official LSP kits can become a barrier.
- It has not to be too playful.
- Do not make big decisions until you have finished playing.
- Do not confuse the model with the real world.
- The best time to run LSP workshops is before or after holidays.
- Make a gift of the models.



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## **WEBSITES:**

Imagination Lab: <http://www.imagilab.org/>

LEGO SERIOUS PLAY official: <http://seriousplay.com>

Rasmussen Consulting: <http://www.rasmussenconsulting.dk>

S-Play Project: <http://s-play.eu>

Serious Play Pro: <http://seriousplaypro.com>

Strategic Play Room: [www.strategicplayroom.com](http://www.strategicplayroom.com)

Trivium: <http://trivium.dk/facilitator-training>



# APPENDIX 1 – THE QUESTIONNAIRE

## SURVEY FOR LEGO SERIOUS PLAY FACILITATORS IN EUROPE

Welcome to the Survey for LEGO Serious Play facilitators in Europe!

The goal of this survey is to establish the state-of-the-art of the LSP methodology in Europe. We want to know things such as where and how LSP is being used, who participates and which methods and applications facilitators prefer to use.

This survey is part of the S-Play Project, which is a European project aimed at adapting LSP methodology to the needs of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and will result in tools that you can use in your work. A more detailed description and further information about this project can be found at: <http://s-play.eu/>

The survey should only take about 5-10 minutes of your time and your answers will be used for research purposes only. The information will help us draw a complete picture of LSP in Europe, so we kindly ask you to forward the invitation to all the LSP facilitators you may know. The survey is meant to be individual, as such, more than one facilitator in each company can fill it out.

Your contribution is very important to us! We would also like to invite you to tell us more about your experiences in a telephone interview. If you would like to contribute and help us in our study, please leave your contact details at the end of the survey.

We will share our findings with you in a white paper that will be available on the project website from late June / early July 2013. Help us create innovative new tools for LSP now. Your contribution in filling out the survey will make a difference to our final outcome - which is a package for you - the LSP facilitators of Europe.

There are 23 questions in this survey.

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

1 First Name \*

Please write your answer here:

2 Last Name \*

Please write your answer here:

3 Sex \*

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Female
- Male





#### 4 Age \*

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- under 30
- 30-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- over 60

#### 5 Country \*

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- |  |   |                                      |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Albania                | <input type="radio"/> Germany               | <input type="radio"/> Norway         |
| <input type="radio"/> Andorra                | <input type="radio"/> Greece                | <input type="radio"/> Poland         |
| <input type="radio"/> Armenia                | <input type="radio"/> Hungary               | <input type="radio"/> Portugal       |
| <input type="radio"/> Austria                | <input type="radio"/> Iceland               | <input type="radio"/> Romania        |
| <input type="radio"/> Azerbaijan             | <input type="radio"/> Ireland               | <input type="radio"/> Russia         |
| <input type="radio"/> Belarus                | <input type="radio"/> Italy                 | <input type="radio"/> San Marino     |
| <input type="radio"/> Belgium                | <input type="radio"/> Kazakhstan            | <input type="radio"/> Serbia         |
| <input type="radio"/> Bosnia and Herzegovina | <input type="radio"/> Latvia                | <input type="radio"/> Slovakia       |
| <input type="radio"/> Bulgaria               | <input type="radio"/> Liechtenstein         | <input type="radio"/> Slovenia       |
| <input type="radio"/> Croatia                | <input type="radio"/> Lithuania             | <input type="radio"/> Spain          |
| <input type="radio"/> Cyprus                 | <input type="radio"/> Luxembourg            | <input type="radio"/> Sweden         |
| <input type="radio"/> Czech Republic         | <input type="radio"/> Republic of Macedonia | <input type="radio"/> Switzerland    |
| <input type="radio"/> Denmark                | <input type="radio"/> Malta                 | <input type="radio"/> Turkey         |
| <input type="radio"/> Estonia                | <input type="radio"/> Moldova               | <input type="radio"/> Ukraine        |
| <input type="radio"/> Finland                | <input type="radio"/> Monaco                | <input type="radio"/> United Kingdom |
| <input type="radio"/> France                 | <input type="radio"/> Montenegro            | <input type="radio"/> Vatican City   |
| <input type="radio"/> Georgia                | <input type="radio"/> Netherlands           |                                      |

#### 6 Employment (related to the LSP activity) \*

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Selfemployed
- Employed in a company

#### 7 If you work for a company, please provide the company name:

Please write your answer here:

#### 8 Website (company, personal or both):

Please write your answer here:

9 Are you a certified LSP facilitator? \*

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes  
 No

10 If yes, where and when did you obtain your certification?

Please write your answer here:

## LSP USE

11 How long have you been using the LSP methodology? \*

Please write your answer here:

12 What do you use LSP for? \*

Please choose all that apply and provide a comment:

- Training  
 Consulting  
Other:

13 Which application of LSP do you use (or have used)? \*

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Real Time Strategy  
 Real Time Identity  
 Other modules

14 If you use another module, can you briefly describe it? (name, goals, ...)

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was at question '13 [13]' (Which application of LSP do you use (or have used)?)

Please write your answer here:

15 Your clients are in which sectors? \*

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Agriculture, hunting and forestry  
 Fishing  
 Mining & quarrying

- Manufacturing
- Electricity, gas and water supply
- Construction
- Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods
- Hotels and restaurants
- Transport, storage and communication
- Financial intermediation
- Real estate, renting and business activities
- Public administration and defence; compulsory social security
- Education
- Health and social work
- Other community, social and personal service activities
- Private households with employed persons
- Extra-territorial organizations and bodies
- Other:

16 The size of your client companies is? \*

Please choose **all** that apply:

- micro-entities (up to 10 employees)
- small companies (up to 50 workers)
- medium-sized enterprises (up to 250 employees)
- big enterprises (more than 250 employees)
- Other:

17 How long are your workshops? \*

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- less than 4 hours
- a half-day
- a full day
- one & a half day
- 2 full days
- more than 2 days

18 How many sessions did you run in the last 12 months? \*

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- none
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- more than 20

19 In the last 5 years, how many sessions per year did you run (on average)? \*

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- none
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- more than 20

### **ADDITIONAL INFO**

20 Would you be available for a brief phone interview? \*

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

21 If yes, please indicate here your contact details (e-mail and phone number) \*

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'Yes' at question '20 [20]' (Would you be available for a brief phone interview?)

Please write your answer here:

22 Would you like to be informed when the white paper with the results of this survey will be published? \*

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

23 If yes, please leave us your e-mail address:

**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'Yes' at question '22 [22]' (Would you like to be informed when the white paper with the results of this survey will be published?)

Please write your answer here:

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Thank you for your time spent taking this survey! Your response has been recorded.

Visit our website at <http://s-play.eu/>!

S-Play project Team

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**Contact:**

USI – eLab: eLearning Lab  
Via Giuseppe Buffi 13, CH-6904 Lugano, Switzerland  
tel. +41 58 666 47 60  
fax +41 58 666 4647  
e-mail [elab@usi.ch](mailto:elab@usi.ch)  
[www.elearninglab.org](http://www.elearninglab.org)  
Twitter @eLab\_USI

