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BECOMING ACTIVE CITIZENS THROUGH MINECRAFT-ENHANCED VIRTUAL TOURISM

Games can engage and motivate learners, offering hands-on practice and chances to rehearse skills and make mistakes without negative consequences (de Freitas & Ritchey, 2013). One game that has proven especially effective in this context is Minecraft. **Minecraft, a sandbox video game, is increasingly used to support learning across subjects and age groups.** Its open-ended and immersive environment enables learners to interact with digital worlds, promoting creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking (Karsenti et al., 2017). This form of learning is increasingly recognised as effective, particularly when combined with real-world themes such as sustainability, cultural awareness, and civic participation. Building on this evidence, the **MineTOUR project** has begun full production of a set of Minecraft Education scenarios that introduce young people to sustainable and ethical tourism.

Players begin their journey at the Green Haven Hotel, a virtual model of an eco-friendly lodge. From this hub, they teleport to five different European locations, each featuring a themed task that teaches key sustainability principles:

- **Cyprus** → Protection of loggerhead turtle nests, cleaning a beach and educating tourists on safe interaction with wildlife.
- **Greece** → Reconstructing part of the Parthenon using VR drawings and answering heritage questions.
- **Netherlands** → Designing a sustainable tulip festival that balances appearance with local community needs and environmental care.
- **Romania** → Restoring a polluted river, creating habitat for endemic species and designing nature-based tourism activities.
- **Spain** → Organising a more sustainable version of La Tomatina festival with waste reduction strategies and inclusive design.

The activities aim to build learners' digital skills while helping them understand the social, cultural, and environmental aspects of tourism.

For more information about the MineTOUR Project, visit www.minetour.eu or social media at www.facebook.com/minetourprojecteu/ and <https://www.instagram.com/minetourprojecteu/>

