The EPINOISI R&D project (http://www.media.uoa.gr/epinoisi) is implemented by the Laboratory of New Technologies in Communication, Education and the Mass Media of the Faculty of Communication and Mass Media Studies of the University of Athens (UoA NTLab, http://www.media.uoa.gr/ntlab) and funded by the Greek Operational Programme for Education and Initial Vocational Training 2000-2006 (EPEAEK II) during November 2007 – October 2008. The project's objective is to implement a specialized formation program for primary, secondary and special education teachers supporting students with mild mental retardation (MMR) and at the same time develop digital games-based learning (DGBL) material for MMR students to be deployed and tested within the special classroom, as part of practical seminars and hands-on activities.

The total duration of the EPINOISI formation program on DGBL for MMR extends to 300 teaching hours, of which 100 hours are allocated to seminars of theoretical formation and 200 hours to practical hands-on seminars, presentation of digital game-based educational material and supervised application of this material in the special classroom. Theoretical formation seminars are realised during May – June 2008, whereas practical activities and supervised classroom application of digital game-based learning material are implemented starting from September 2008. The 200 teachers attending this formation program have been selected from schools all over the country and are grouped in 20 formation classes located in 15 cities of Greece.

Besides the long-ago established importance of gameplay as a privileged framework for learning and socialization, which promotes equality alongside with acceptance of differences, motivation through challenge and absence of punishment in the case or errors, modern digital games enjoy a number of additional features such as their enhanced capability to simulate real-world and everyday-life situations in a straightforward fashion, as well as their ability to attract player's engagement through augmented playability mechanisms and balanced game feedback. All these features make digital games a most promising learning tool, in both formal and informal settings and for general and special education alike. The digital games-based material for MMR students currently under development within the EPINOISI project is based on game applications already available as well as developed from scratch, covering subject matter relevant to language and mathematics skills for everyday life, interpersonal relations and communication, acquaintance with adult life, selected topics from the curriculum of secondary special education, as well as digital creative activities.

For more details and updates on the EPINOSI project please check the project website at http://www.media.uoa.gr/epinoisi (english section under construction) and contact Dr. Dimitris Gouscos, email gouscos@media.uoa.gr.