

Video game goodies are new frontier for Deutsche Boerse

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The market for trading virtual items used in video games like World of Warcraft could be worth up to \$46 billion per year, according to Hamburg financial startup Naga

Magic armour and virtual hats will soon join Siemens, Volkswagen and other blue chips in trading on the German stock market.

Deutsche Boerse on Thursday announced plans for an innovative [market](#) in video game items—weapons, artefacts and other performance-boosting add-ons in online gaming.

The Frankfurt-based market operator has joined forces with Naga, a Hamburg financial startup, to create a market where players can buy and sell objects from their games for real-life cash.

Their joint venture, Switex, will be "the first standardised and independent market for trading virtual game items," the two firms said in a statement.

Naga says it will provide technological expertise while Deutsche Boerse brings market operational experience to the table.

They estimated the market is worth up to \$46 billion (43 billion euros) per year.

For years there has been a bustling unofficial market in gaming items, which players can earn by defeating enemies and completing quests or by crafting virtual raw materials found in game worlds.

Players use eBay or other online marketplaces to buy and sell weapons and equipment that boast special advantages or sought-after aesthetics, in-game currency, or whole player characters that have been advanced to a high level.

One site specialising in items for the popular fantasy role-playing game World of Warcraft was on Thursday offering cyber-steeds ranging in price from around \$10 (9.50 euros) to \$5,000.

Buying gizmos, rather than earning them the hard way, helps cash-rich, time-poor players reach a higher level in double-fast time.

But the trade also makes grassroots gamers complain that newcomers are buying their way to higher status, in what is often a hierarchy-conscious community.

"We want to finally create a market for this grey zone," Naga spokesman Alexander Braune told AFP.

Some publishers already provide platforms for trade, but "there is no single global market that unites all games," he said.

"The platform will be independent, none of the [game](#) development firms are involved in operating it," said Deutsche Boerse spokesman Heiner Seidel.

A neutral third party will set prices for each object according to supply and demand, he said.

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