



## White Paper on Transnational Incubation Activities

*Output 3.2 of the BSGI Project*





The White Paper on Transnational Incubation Activities will provide full documentation of the pilot activities (webinars, themed workshop, autumn academy) for heightening the quality and fostering opportunities of international incubation through transnational collaborative actions. It will retrace the decision-making process and outline the rationale behind the chosen approach for each format. The white paper will describe organisational considerations, delineate the experience feedback and evaluation results and will form the basis for future actions as it will include recommendations on the lessons learnt.

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# 1. Executive Summary

The motivation behind the Baltic Sea Game Incubation (BSGI) project, co-funded by the Interreg BSR programmeme, was to strengthen the ecosystem of game business support which mostly takes on the form of incubators, some accelerators and other initiative such as game hubs or collectives.

Looking at the core work of game business developers and support, the key aspects defining their work and activities are in a nutshell: 1) offer salient knowledge on the game industry (e.g. trends), 2) transferring knowledge on running or setting up a game business and 3) providing access to the industry and capital.

The BSGI project explored how joint transnational activities could provided added value to local and regional business across Europe. The BSR is the hotspot of professional and community business support and thus they take the lead in instigating and demonstrating the beneficial impact and potential of transnational exchange and collaboration.

This White Paper deals with the first of the three above mentioned aspects. It is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).

For the second, knowledge has been generated in expert discussion on current (often siloed) practices on game business development and support and added to the knowledge gained during the prior project Baltic Game Industry (BGI) and compiled in the "[Roadmap to Game Incubation](#)".<sup>1</sup>

The third aspect was investigated in the peer-to-peer formats of an investor and mentor workshop respectively.<sup>2</sup>

This document summarises the conceptual decisions, the design considerations and the lessons learnt from the piloting of three explored formats of transnational incubation:

- **Webinars** as an online format where the shared effort would be in the dissemination and recruitment of experts for jointly determined topics with a rotation as operational and organisational method.
- **Basecamp** as an intensive learning experience both through an international peer-to-peer environment and the presence of multiple business development experts. The focus is on the provision of concentrated and undistracted work situation through "deceleration" in a reclusive location over several days.
- **Themed workshop** as another form of intensive support: the focus here lies on the topic or theme combined with a multinational peer-2-peer environment and expert support over several days. The themes are chosen for their "singularity", i.e. related to business models or orientation that are outside the scope of the more common business support expertise (e.g. serious or MX games)

We hope these recommendations and proposed activities will find a great interest in the community and be further developed by the industry. Please get in touch if you have any comments, queries or further recommendations and ideas: <https://balticseagames.home.blog/imprint/>.

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<sup>1</sup> BSGI Output 4.2: "Enhanced Baltic Sea Game Incubation Roadmap", Link: [bit.ly/33prR7K](https://bit.ly/33prR7K)

<sup>2</sup> BSGI Output 2.2: "White Paper on Competence Building for Mentors and Investors", Link: [bit.ly/3qFFE2Q](https://bit.ly/3qFFE2Q)

## 2. Designing a Summer or Autumn Academy and Bootcamp



### Conceptual approach and design considerations

#### Overall objective

An intensive format such as a Summer Academy was determined during BGI as a perfect opportunity for a transnational effort in game business development. We took our leaf from successful initiatives such as the Stugan experience ([www.stugan.com](http://www.stugan.com)) and Spelkollektivet ([www.spelkollektivet.com](http://www.spelkollektivet.com)) in Sweden, the jam sessions of the Game Camps project (<https://www.facebook.com/balticgamecamps>) funded by Interreg Central Baltic, or summer academy days at Academies of Fine Arts e.g., in Katowice. The idea was to join forces to allow young talents across BSR borders to boost their entrepreneurial skills and gain valuable input for their work: combining a transnational peer experience with intensive mentoring in a reclusive environment and a creative work atmosphere as a bootcamp-style activity over several days.

The model activities mentioned above have proven the exponential value of such focused formats but also demonstrated their fragility in terms of financial viability: they usually depend on private funding driven by national interests (such as Stugan) or on short-term funding as part of an EU-funded project (such as Game Camps) or situate themselves outside the framework of the professional game incubation community (such as Spelkollektivet).

The goal was to invite incubators' experts, mentors and game development companies for creating the creative environment for the participants to benefit from experts' support and get insights and polish the projects or pitches, as well as solving business model bottle necks, gaps or stalls, choose or improve the direction of the business development strategy.

The Autumn Academy/Bootcamp idea was fine-tuned in close cooperation with BSGI project partners as well as participants, who were actively involved in designing the programme, for increasing the potential for similar future events. Desk research was carried out on similar initiatives, providing elements feasible for the pilot activity, e.g. duration, mentoring programme, online and offline tools, links to potential mentors, focus of activities, overall goals to achieve, etc.

As a result of the discussions and insights from the research, the focus was set to provide value for different target groups, specifically:

- **startup teams** - creative environment, mentoring opportunities, peer to peer interaction for valuable insights and feedback on their business set-up, current game in production etc, to solve bottlenecks on their road to the market,
- **mentors** - provide access to young talents and incubators in the BSR area and networking opportunities in a laid-back creative environment, discuss their views and gaining critical input regarding their own practices and viewpoints,
- **incubators** - discuss cross-border incubation and cooperation topics for mapping and alignment of the incubation processes and future cooperation. Test and further develop the BSGI Autumn Camp concept.

Examples of specific goals for the start-up teams:

- preparing the teams for active participation at large events;
- improve and polish their project/pitch/business in an international game developer environment;
- supporting the teams for pre-launch activities of their games (e.g. feedback and testing).

Specific goals for participating incubators:

- discuss cross-border incubation topics with participating incubators, teams and external participants (mentors, teams, experts)
- get insight and feedback from the companies' teams, incubators staff community and external mentors.

## Lessons Learned

Overall, 34 participants attended the BSGI Autumn Bootcamp, including mentors, business developers from incubators and teams from 10 countries: Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, UK, Iran, Switzerland and Germany.

Based on the feedback of the participants with 21 total answers received (feedback questionnaire results available in the Annexes), with team members providing joint feedback, the event was a great success! On a scale of 1-5 (not at all...very much), the participants overwhelmingly appreciated the overall experience, organisation and quality of the bootcamp approach.

Regarding specific feedback, good mentors/teams balance was mentioned and the overall availability of mentors: 10 teams, 8 key mentors and additional incubator experts. Longer ice-breaker/intro sessions in a laid-back environment were suggested for future events for building trust between participants in the beginning of a similar event. Some teams took longer to open up, and then it was time to say farewells.

Flexibility of the structure of the event as well as the length of the event was mentioned both positive and negative. Some participants would have preferred more structure, more talks by mentors and additional variety of activities (e.g., extra personal time, no-distraction sessions). Different tracks could be made available to choose for in-depth discussions as per need e.g., marketing, publishing, specific tools, etc. Same content was suggested with an extra day.

Potential improvements included suggestions for assigning more time for preparation of the teams prior to the event and providing the opportunity for the teams to present their full pitches instead of short versions. Also, location should be closer to the main airport - current location was not that easily approachable with almost 3 hours from Tallinn.

## Target Group

The proposed target group for an Autumn Academy are start-up teams developing games, with an ongoing game project either recently released (few months before the Academy) or soon to be released in the period of 6 – 9 months following the Academy. The company should have had a playable demo available during registration. The academy pilot was open to all game platforms i.e., mobile, PC, consoles, VR.

The teams were limited to the maximum of 2 participants per team to ensure the possibility for more teams to participate and benefit the Academy. It was expected that companies will be participating, but also some teams which did not yet have a registered legal entity were accepted if they were ready to show a playable demo version. To benefit most from the Academy activities participating companies should have already had some experience.

Companies/teams had at least one case/goal while registering for the Academy. Having a case (topic or goal) allowed participants to remain focused and have better results at the end to help deliver the desired outcome. The cases/issues or topics were diverse: for example preparing for presenting their game at a large event, looking for investment or publishing, maybe looking for cooperation opportunities (could be subcontracting or offering specific skills in joint product developing). The programme was flexible and could thus be adapted to accommodate the specific cases/topics of the participants. Then suitable mentors were selected.

The second, smaller target group for the camp were staff members from the participating incubators. Part of the programme was dedicated to the topics relevant to the incubation programmes and the development of the incubators. The transnational incubation experience exchange was facilitated among the incubators, experts/mentors and the companies.

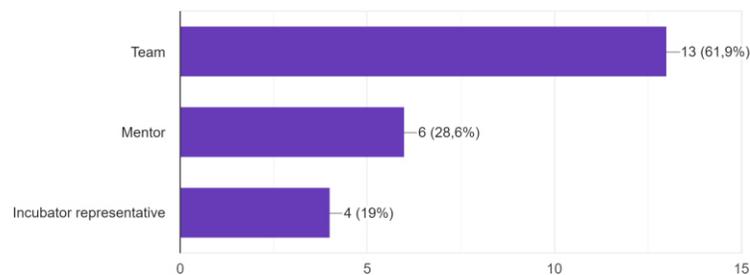
## Lessons Learned

According to the participant feedback, there was a good balance of the participants and topics available with excellent synergy between participants, that should be followed up in the future. Although we aimed for experienced teams only, eventually some early-stage teams were also present. This was not a bad approach, but the main focus of similar future events should stay on more experienced teams. This way, everyone would be on the same page and have similar expectations/experiences.



What was your role in the bootcamp?

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## Programme structure

### Length

The involved BSGI project partners went through several planning workshops before the event. Duration of the event was one of the key elements discussed. The final choice was between 3 to 6 days. The length of the programme depended on the teams and their needs, the needs of incubators was considered as well.

The final programme was decided for 2 travelling days and 3 full days at the venue (from Monday to Friday, November 8-12, 2021). This included flexibility for the introductions and team pitches, play-my-game sessions, individual team-mentor meetings, inspirational talks, networking events and time for working on own team/company/game issues. Participating incubators had additional time for presentations/peer reviews of their incubation processes.

A lot of flexibility was foreseen into the programme, for on-the-spot changes, if needed.

Additionally, the teams and mentors had the chance to introduce themselves in an online environment. Discord software was used as a facilitating platform.

### Lessons Learned

Main issue while planning the event was the potential threat of Covid for the whole organisation, incl. high potential for travel bans, so the project partners involved made a lot of efforts to have a plan B (fully online event) ready in case the country borders would be closed down. This also had an effect on the decision of the whole duration of the event. During regular times, the event would have been held a bit longer - 5-6 full days + travels.

One of the participants suggested having the same content with an extra day for more flexibility. Also, better organised mentor introductions to build trust from the start was suggested. Content-wise the event could be built followingly:

- first day: mentors presenting themselves briefly and teams presenting their games/businesses + their main aim for the bootcamp (implement feature, fix bugs, get advice on certain topic etc.)
- checkup in the middle of the bootcamp in front of mentor board or all participants to see progress and ask help/provide potential for synergy between teams
- final presentations on results of bootcamp during the final day

### Topics

The programme was initially planned to have masterclasses on different topics of game development based on the needs of participating teams, such as:

- Development / production: gameplay / testing, feedback, monetisation, retention, porting etc.
- Marketing: visibility, social media, approaching influencers, etc.
- Pitching: pitch deck, one pager, 3 min pitch, hybrid demo day for pitch practice and promotion
- Legal issues: shareholder agreement, staff contracts, IP, revenue sharing
- Funding: publisher / investor relations, public funding
- Business: cash flow planning, subcontracting services, team management software
- Other topics mentioned by teams during registration and during the event

These topics are usually covered by incubation programmes and some topics were pre-selected based on these programmes. The teams registering for the event noted their main current issues and the Autumn Camp programme was adjusted.

Expert sessions were planned with game incubators – e.g. speakers from Spelkollektivet and Tartu Science Park presented their case studies and discussions were facilitated about the possibilities of cross-border incubation: sharing and exchanging experiences, sharing tools/good practices and interesting cases.

## Lessons Learned

Overall, mentors and organisers were ready to approach case-by-case in the format of individual meetings with teams throughout the event, with daily presentations of their experience by some mentors.

After the first day, when everybody had the chance to familiarise themselves with participating teams, we held a roundtable with the mentors to finetune the approach for the second day. Based on the mentor experience from community events, instead of the initially planned one-on-one meetings, to provide the opportunity for peer-to-peer learning, and with the limited time available, teams brainstormed their key issues and shared these on a shared wall. Based on the key issues, an open round-table discussion was facilitated to share how to overcome these issues based on experience of the participating teams and mentors. The final choice of topics was focusing on: marketing, publishing, production and team culture + a few team-specific individual topics.

One of the key aspects was game development and gameplay + testing of their games between the teams. The teams may have expertise in specific topics, so they could act as mentors to other teams in their specific field of expertise. During the event we expected and received a strong investment in mutual peer to peer cooperation in testing, further development, fine-tuning, pitch preparation, feedback for the games under development, etc.

## Selection of Participants

The Autumn Academy was planned for around 10 teams and 5-6 external mentors, total 30-40 people. In addition to a public call published at the project website on <https://balticseagames.eu>, all the incubators involved in the BSGI projects and some external incubators (e.g. Spielfabrique from Germany and Spelkollektivet from Sweden) were asked to look at the teams they are incubating and invite 2 or 3 of them to participate in the Autumn Academy. The incubators know best at which stage of the development the team is and who could benefit best from this kind of creative environment. Considering possible cancellations because of Covid, the limits of the number of teams per incubator was flexible.

Based on the experience of similar events, during the registration companies were expected to provide a one-pager (template available [HERE](#)) and/or available pitch deck (free format), simple registration form consisted of:

- General information (company name, contacts)
- Funding (what is the situation in the company)
- What is the company seeking
- the range of revenue
- The team
- The company's/team's achievements
- Roadmap and key milestones of the company
- Market
- Competitive advantages
- Business/revenue distribution model

All these aspects should be described in concentrated short form and fit into one page. Most important section for organisers to consider and adjust the programme is the roadmap and key milestones of the company, also what they are seeking for. The teams were asked to provide the pitch deck for registration, if they had it ready.

After incubators suggested the companies/teams, the main organisers of the Academy had the right to refuse teams based on the quality of applications. The application process provided a clear view, what kind of teams will be participating. This also provided information for the programme to be modified and mentors selected/changed according to needs of participants.

Initially, the event was planned for the Summer of 2021, however, because of Covid circumstances (fast spreading of the virus and country lockdowns/travel bans), it was pushed to September and finally to November 2021. This provided a lot of time to prepare the participating teams, find mentors and prepare the programme according to needs of participants.

### Lessons Learned

The final participants were chosen from a combination of all the planned steps and with a focus on flexibility, because of potential risks involved regarding the potential spreading of Covid19 virus. Thus, not all incubators could provide experienced teams as high risks were involved with travelling during pandemics! So finally, it was a good turnup, with most of the teams already working not on their first game and having a more or less solid business and registered company. Some incubators added early-stage student teams, but their approach was also fine, as the focus was on publishing the first game as soon as possible and learning from the experience of other participants helped them focus better and reach the best possible result.

### Tools and Methods of Interaction

Event registration was available on <https://balticseagames.eu/bootcamp>. The participating incubators had the prerogative of choosing the teams from their region.

Main interaction tool before, during and after the event was Discord, where an event-specific channel was set up and managed, to let the participating teams, incubators and mentors introduce themselves already before the event. It was a flexible tool for building community before the start of the Academy. Different channels were created within the Discord, incl: general area (welcome, general chatting, LinkedIn shares, partners only and mentors only), team area (specific channels: shameless self promotion, i need help, test my game, offtopic, feedback/suggestions and useful links), mentor zone (with mentor one-pagers and direct contact opportunity), team-specific channels (team onepager, updates and direct contact channel).

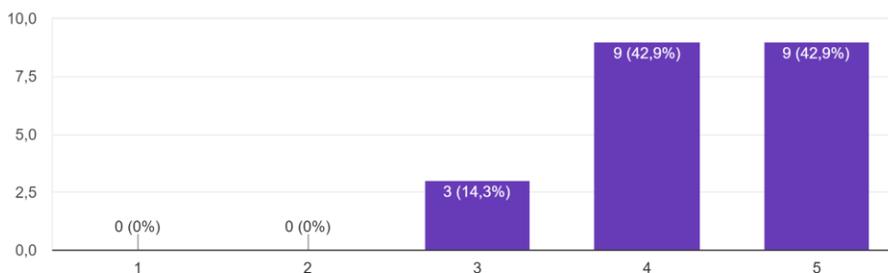
After the event, a feedback form was created and shared to gather information, analyse and use it for future adjustments of the Autumn Academy/Bootcamp concept.

### Lessons Learned

Discord provided a functional and effective tool to organise the event, prepare the teams, onboard mentors and keep everyone on the same page throughout the whole duration of the event.

How did you like the online communications tool used for the event - Discord?

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## Feasibility for continuation

The goal of BSGI Autumn Academy was to test and create the pilot which can be replicated in the future on a self-sustainable basis, where participants cover expenses (all expenses or some parts of it). Creating a viable concept and testing it in live environment was the main goal of this pilot activity.

There are 2 aspects showing the value of the Autumn Academy in the future:

- active involvement and feedback of the incubators/mentors in the preparatory phase and
- participants' positive feedback for the BSGI Summer Academy

Willingness to pay (if at least partly) the participation fee in similar future events was an important feedback of the success of the approach.

To organise similar events in the future, continuous networking with gamedev hubs, incubators, universities, etc. is needed, so there is a basis here to continue the activity in the near future. Key elements would be finding budget for mentor travels (some will be happy to contribute for free) and early stage teams. The professional teams already have budget available for this kind of cooperation.

# 3. Designing a themed workshop

## Objective and design considerations

Incubators aim to strengthen their regional game business and provide training and mentoring of the teams participating in their incubator. However, there is a lack of experts for certain topics. The goal of the Themed Workshop is to address these topics in-depth in a few-days workshop and address the problems companies are facing in certain fields bridging the gap of that knowledge. Themed workshops tackle complex topics which require strong interaction and enough time for discussion and experimental teamwork.

HTW Berlin was tasked with overseeing the design and implementation of a Themed Workshop pilot.

The workshop was to focus on a special topic in the field of game development that is usually underrepresented in the business development programmes, and address incubation teams and startups in particular. Due to the pandemic, this workshop was planned as a hybrid format, i.e. it was to take place as in-person event in the DE:HIVE (HTW's incubation and study environment), but also online.

The goal of this workshop was to address the issues and problems involved in drawing up a long-term financing plan for serious game productions in a dialogue between incubator teams and experts from the games industry. Individual expectations and problems of the teams were addressed in a workshop format and experiences on the subject were shared, as an interactive format with audience participation allows for more lively exchange.

In the future, the Themed Workshops should be self-sustainable. The goal is to test and create a pilot which can be replicated in the future on a self-sustainable basis, where participants pay the participation fee and cover part or all the expenses of the workshop. Creating a viable model for the Themed workshop is the larger goal of this activity.

### Lessons learned

Themed workshop was dedicated to the topic of financing serious games start-ups. Specific topics created the ambience for companies to tackle very individual problems which occur in various stages of the product development. Themed workshop concept was successful in terms of tackling complex topics which require strong interaction and enough time for discussion and experimental teamwork. Also, individual expectations and problems of the teams were addressed in a workshop format, teams shared experiences on the subject.

Companies that are willing to participate in this kind of event are start-ups and they lack financial resources. It was a very positive impulse in the process of organising the event that there was the possibility to cover participants' travel costs and event organising costs. Considering the initial stage of the company development, it is very unlikely that a lot of start-ups would pay for the Themed workshop, therefore this kind of workshop could be financed by other resources from incubators, investors, or specific funding programmes.

## Target group

In this type of workshop, the main target group were young start-ups looking for a sustainable business model for their company after initial success and interested in iterative and alternative solutions to the problem of sustainable financing of the company.

Another potential target group could be investors and publishers who would participate in the workshop to gain insight into the individual problems, expectations, and goals of game start-ups.

The third target group are the incubator staff seeking to bridge the knowledge gap in this topic and tackle the problem in-depth, gain experience and transfer it to the future incubation teams.

### **Lessons learned**

Selection of the topic is defining the target group of participants and experts who would be interested in taking part in the workshop. The wide topic allows selecting from a much bigger pool of teams and experts. The specific topic made an influence on the target group, its group was smaller than it was planned initially, there were not too many potential participants which meant less time and cost through less complicated selection procedures.

There were no participants from the investors' or publishers' side target group. Participants from this target group could contribute to discussions and offer solutions from their point of view to the teams developing new games.

## **Selection of the teams**

The organiser of the workshop addressed the incubators participating in the project. The goal was to review the teams in the incubation programmes which could benefit from tackling this specific topic. After the incubators suggested a few teams, the final selection was made by the organisers based on the best match case to the topic.

In this themed workshop, it was planned to have teams who released 1 or a maximum of 2 games. The main idea is to catch the teams in between releasing the games. There is a common problem among the start-ups after they founded the company and released the game successfully, made some revenue, but they come to a situation that they do not know how to make a sustainable business model and suffer from cash flow gaps.

It was planned to have 4-5 teams presenting their cases and a few more teams on a waiting list to join in case there is a last-minute dropout. As the emphasis lay on strong interaction amongst the teams, we deemed it more positive to keep the number of teams low.

### **Lessons learned**

It was not easy to get an overview of companies who would be interested in joining the Themed workshop. BSGI network partners helped to approach companies working in the serious games field and interested in topics on financing. Some teams were guided directly by partners, other teams heard the information through the BSGI network and approached the organising team directly. All the participants were welcome to apply. Companies received information on what they can expect from the workshop and how to prepare to get a maximum benefit. Before the selection of teams, a survey was sent to see what kind of questions they have, what kind of problems the companies were facing, what products they were working on, how many people they have in the company etc. The survey allowed us to have a better picture and select the teams matching the workshop topic. According to these indicated challenges the teams were selected, eliminating the teams not related to the topic. It was very difficult to match the teams amongst each other because they were on very different levels of expertise.

It was also difficult to match the teams with experts because there were teams who are very advanced and with their level of expertise could be taking on the role of expert themselves. There were teams, who were right at the start of their company development and they could have benefited more from the general topic. In the workshop, there was a dynamic between the teams. The more advanced teams were interacting with younger teams, there were intensive discussions and an open sharing spirit. In these discussions, all the teams benefited in some way.

Here is a question still open: what makes more sense, to invite the experts first and see what kind of programme we can offer and then scout for teams having confirmed programme and defined topics and experts, or to do the other way around, to have the teams selected first and then analyse what kind of

needs they have and invite experts accordingly. Organising this workshop both of these processes were conducted simultaneously. We invited experts and the teams at the same time, which led to the dynamic of having to match the teams and experts afterwards. The result was good, teams and experts were matching and participants benefited from the workshop. In case of a mismatch, there could have been a problem, therefore this aspect needs to be considered in the future when organising the Themed workshops, organising this kind of event one part needs to be invited first and then the 2nd part invited according to the match to have maximum benefit for companies from the workshop.

One of the lessons learned is about the decision on entry requirements. Entry requirements are needed at an early stage of organising the event, so everyone is informed and transparent about the selection procedure, what kind of teams are expected at the workshop; are their specific teams involved, or is the workshop open for everyone?

## **Programme design**

### **Duration of the workshop**

The Themed Workshop was planned for the end of September/early October for 3 days. The format of the workshop was hybrid. Considering all possible restrictions which can happen because of a pandemic, it was planned for teams to meet at the place of the event and participate in person and the broader audience could watch the workshop online.

The proposed structure of the workshop:

1st-day presentations of the companies and their cases, the problems and expectations for solutions;

2nd-day experts case analysis with participation of the audience solving the case and coming up with the best solution;

3rd-day was planned to happen after a few weeks, it was to be a reflection day. The results would be summarised, and teams could share how they are using and putting the solution into action.

### **Lessons learned**

It is hard to indicate the optimal length of the programme. From the participants' and organisers' experience, the selected length of 3 days was good, not too short to leave important topics behind and not too long as to keep the participants focused. The programme schedule was intensive, with a lot of topics tackled. Some of the participants conveyed the feedback that the programme was too full, there was a suggestion to have more breaks and more time for building connections, time to talk to each other, to have specific programme points dedicated to the networking. From a programme topics point of view, the ideal length would be 4-5 days to cover everything needed in a specific topic, but this length of programme might face the challenge of everyone being tired and not being able to focus.

The organising team considers that the 3 days format is optimal for everyone. Here the question of cost and benefit arises, the longer programme the more costs and there is a limit for the benefits companies can absorb during one workshop. From a cost-benefit point of view, within 3 days participants could get the maximum value with a considerable amount of costs. To determine the exact cost-benefit result more detailed research is needed. The teams can not always afford to dedicate more than 3 working days to the workshop. There were a few programme points that were missing and a longer programme could have benefited from that. The initial ice-breaker programme point was missing, also the networking indicated in the feedback of some participants. These 2 programme points could add half a day to the workshop.

## Topics

The planned Themed workshop was designed to convey a concise understand of various ways of developing sustainable financing models, what needs to be taken into account when growing a start-up, what business models are suitable for which projects, and how international markets can be approached. The topic choices were also connected to the availability of experts for the workshop.

### Lessons learned

While organising the workshop the goal was to target a more specific audience, therefore, during the preparation period the topic was narrowed down to „Long term financing for serious start-up games“. The financing topic is very broad, and the models used in the market can differ a lot depending on the games' users and existing model of releasing games. Serious games start-up financing requires a different approach than for pure entertainment games because it often has to provide an educational value on top of the fun aspect. Fun games start-up financing requires specific models as well but they are very different from the serious games sector.

The dynamic in teams' maturity levels and their ability to communicate and help to solve each others' problems were some of the most important lessons that were understood after the implementation of the workshop. Also, we came to understand that some practice, exercise, or task is needed for the icebreaking at the beginning of the workshop. At the end of the workshop, the communication was much better and there was an atmosphere of trust. Stretching the duration of the workshop could solve this issue, but a more effective way is to use existing tools called ice breakers, dedicate a part of the programme to that to create the open and trustful atmosphere needed for effective work. As an alternative for the ice breaker tools, an informal dinner can be organised on the first day of the workshop. After finishing the first day of the workshop everyone is free to talk to each other and network, informal communication helps to get to know each other which serves the same purpose of creating an open and trustful atmosphere. It is a good way to build a group feeling on the first day.

Another lesson learned is the time needed for the organisation of the workshop. During this workshop, planning time was too short. It is recommended to start organising at least 3 months before the planned event date. It is also important to decide whom to invite first: teams or experts. It is also important to have a team of 3-4 people working on organising the event because different skills are needed and responsibilities need to be shared accordingly.

The workshop agenda consisted of:

- Expert presentations, a presentation was followed by a Q&A session;
- Different business evaluation approaches presented to teams;
- Individual coaching sessions with the experts;
- Networking and sharing knowledge.

The mix of these different activities worked very well in this workshop, it ensured dynamics and covering of the topics important for companies.

Another lesson learned is to establish a better engagement with experts before the workshop. Every expert has their specific field of expertise, however, they didn't know the team's needs. Engaging with experts before the workshop and giving them feedback, what kind of teams are coming and what kind of challenges they are facing would allow them to better match the needs of teams and have a more effective outcome and satisfaction.

During the workshop, several evaluation methods were presented. The chosen approach was to give ideas about what these methods are and what teams could do further. This topic needs more time for the teams to familiarise themselves with to be able to use them later on their own. Time was insufficient for teams to absorb this knowledge. It is better to take one method and give it more time for everyone to learn it better. Some evaluation methods like game thinking can be conducted and combined with

network format, where teams sit at the table and instead of playing a board game, they can construct their own game reflecting business problems and challenges for acquiring funding. This topic could be on the first day of the agenda and serve as a way for the teams to get to know each other.

The best programme point was individual coaching, it gave the most benefit to the teams and it was also the most engaging part of the workshop. Every team had a very lively discussion with experts, which created a good working atmosphere in the room. They talked about challenges and imbibing the knowledge and experience from experts. Companies found this part most valuable of all the workshops. Coaching format alone could be a separate event of a few days, where experts with different expertise and teams come together and talk in individual sessions.

All the participants indicated that they liked networking and sharing ideas. It was good to bring everyone together because they had similar challenges and questions. For participants, it felt good to have fellow developers who share the same thoughts and troubles, this way they know they are not alone with their problems. During networking, participants were talking about ideas, problems sharing, and developing future projects together. Some participants indicated that networking and breaks were too short. The important lesson here while planning the workshop is to leave sufficient time for breaks, networking, and informal talks.

The success of the workshop relies very much on the openness of teams and experts. This openness is something that cannot be planned, it depends on the participants and experts. The organising team can set the atmosphere for that and use some tools. Generally, the teams are eager to open and share, they are ready, able, interested to open and talk on their topic. Teams do not seek only to present the product they are working on, but also like to talk about challenges that they meet along the way.

## Selection of topics procedure

A selection of topics was made through a prior survey of the incubation teams of DEHIVE and other teams from the BSGI network. The experts also provided topics that they would like to contribute to the workshop. Based on this survey, the existing needs in the incubation teams and available experts the topics were selected.

In the initial stage of organising the workshop, the team had in mind of proposing the topic of long-term financing for start-ups (in general). The idea was to talk about financing for all kinds of gaming start-ups. After discussing with the BSGI network and experts it became clear that the topic is too general, too wide to cover everything, and too open to ensure that coming teams have common issues.

Narrowing the topic allowed us to concentrate and look for the experts available to tackle the problems in this sector, as well as select start-ups working in the serious games field. This also served the original purpose of this format “Themed workshop”, as serious games production is not only not very common with teams applying for incubation, and vice versa the game business developers rarely have profound experience in serious game production, which in itself is highly heterogenous.

## Selection of lecturers / mentors

Lecturers and mentors were planned to be chosen in cooperation with participating incubators and would be a mix of external mentors and incubator staff. The selection of mentors was based on the theme of the workshop and the cases identified by the teams, it also depended on the available budget.

The mentors were selected according to the topic from:

- 1) Incubators, participating in the project, available mentors within the staff with needed expertise;
- 2) The close circle of project partners, screening network for available expertise on needed topics;
- 3) The external mentors publicly available.

Narrowing the topic to financing serious start-up games naturally narrowed down available experts as well as the teams to be invited. After narrowing the topic, the organising team of the event made an overview of all the known players in the serious games field in Europe and identified the topics which needed to be included in the agenda. The partners had already addressed “Serious game incubation” with two dedicated panels in 2020 during the BGI project. Therefore, key players in the field had already been scouted and invitations were sent out quickly.

There are a lot of angles to serious games, that amongst our list of experts we needed to find out which of them had knowledge on financing serious games for start-ups to share. This was a difficult task to define precise topics because their concrete expertise was not easy to limit down. Also, the pool of experts in this field is rather limited. The programme was only finalised once we knew which experts and teams were on board. There was no sense in defining the programme first and then invite teams as one would do it with a larger group of start-up teams and a more common field of expertise.

While choosing the experts, we were looking at how to cover 3 different areas in the topic of the serious game: the science behind the games, incubation of serious games startups, and production of serious games. Serious games should have a scientific foundation in some way, because of their often educational value. Some experts were therefore scouted from science. Then, we were looking for experts from the incubation side, somebody who recently founded the company, maybe the 2nd or the 3rd company, and who are experts in acquiring funding. We had experts from the field of serious games, game designers who produce serious games, and people from companies of serious games. This systematic approach of selecting experts from different fields ensured that various topics within the topic of the serious game were covered.

One of the first people who gave a positive response was Dr. Stefan Goebel. He has scientific background researching serious games working in the university.

Mr. Martin Thiele Schwetz, serious game developer, founder and CEO of Playing History was an expert from an incubation and games production point of view. Mr. Martin was a good choice because he recently founded a serious game start-up after working for 10 years in this field in another company. He had himself been going through the process of raising capital. He has expertise in serious games and incubation. Mr Martin Thiele Schwetz works with Dr Goebel to establish a quality assurance system for serious games.

Mrs Natasha Skult was an expert, a chairperson International Game Developers Association, founder and CEO of MiTale. She was a very successful choice as an expert because she has expertise in incubation as coach for the Turku Game Hub, and is part of a team producing serious games.

Dr Christian Rauda is an expert in law for game development and production, working with various incubators in Germany. He is a Lawyer at GRAEF REchtsanwaelte, specialist attorney for copyright and media law and industrial property law, information technology law. He has the expertise of legal matters regarding incubation which was very beneficial for start-ups talking about funding, planning when to grow the team, what to consider.

Mr Henrik Rump, CEO Quantumfrom Mobile Gmbh, is an expert in serious game development and quality assurance criteria. He is working for serious games that would have quality assurance criteria. He was an expert from serious games production point of view.

Mrs Anne Sauer is an expert in game design and project management, serious game development, and quality assurance, working at Playing History. She is experienced in incubation and funding of start-ups for many years.

### **Lessons learned**

In the retrospective, the organising team realised that the expert from the investors' side was missing. It would have been very useful to have someone from a financing institution or an investor, to get to know

what is important to them and how they want to be approached. This would have added more value for participants.

The remuneration of the experts has to be considered. The budget for this workshop was limited and the hybrid model of the workshop facilitated using limited resources. Most of the experts decided to participate online this way travelling costs were saved. The hybrid model also ensured that a variety of experts, also from other countries, could participate in the workshop.

There was a challenge to match the topics of expertise with the needs of the teams. While contacting the experts we asked them in detail what they could provide for the workshop and tried to match the needs of the teams identified in the survey. Some topics were mentioned by a few experts in the workshop.

One of the lessons learned is that it is important to create communication between participating experts before the event. It is difficult to invite all experts at the same time and give an overview of the event and coordinate with each other. But this coordination could have benefits for companies and is very recommended for future workshops, the experts would get to know each other, they can prepare presentations which are complementing and connected. While organising this workshop we talked to experts separately. This aspect could be easier if everyone participated in the event onsite. Then experts connect easier with each other, and exchange and comments happen naturally.

## Tools and methods for interaction

The social media channels of the organising institution and the BSGI project were used for interaction, i.e. LinkedIn, Facebook, Discord, Instagram, and Twitter to draw attention to the workshop as soon as it is confirmed and the agenda is drafted. The potential experts and teams were contacted individually.

The workshop was carried out on Zoom and Miro.

The incubation teams were invited from the Baltic region as participants, so there was an interaction between them and the speakers also considering the transnational exchange of experience. The broader audience could join online, listen and interact in the chat posting additional questions.

The workshop was conducted in a hybrid mode and a lot of lessons were drawn from this experience. A good setup was needed to increase the level of interactivity and active participation. There was a stage and a big video wall behind it, there was an audience facing the stage and a big screen behind the audience. The idea was that experts joining remotely would be displayed on this video wall and the camera was filming the audience. So that experts joining online could have the impression that they were being on stage and looking at the audience. And the other way around for the teams joining remotely we had another camera and zoom on the screen behind so that they would get an impression of being in the audience and being at a stage. This hybrid setup worked really well, both sides were covered, it helped with interaction among people being online and being in the location. The attempt to emulate the dynamics of people being on stage and being in the audience was made and it was very successful.

It was not difficult to prepare this kind of setup from a technical point of view. Only one microphone, 2 screens, 2 cameras, one zoom meeting and 2 computers were needed. One computer was joining Zoom from the stage, another from the audience. The microphone did not have a long enough wire, therefore people who wanted to ask a question had to come up to the stage in the event. It is important to have a wireless microphone in order to avoid small inconveniences like this.

For the 3rd day, there were individual coaching sessions, one computer for each expert was provided and each expert was put in a room with enough space in between so that they would not distract each other and have private space in case confidential information is shared. The goal was to create a safe, trustful atmosphere for sharing challenges and knowledge. Experts gave good feedback about individual coaching sessions. They had the impression that they really made an impact on the teams, they also got positive feedback from the teams.

## Lessons learned

This hybrid format worked well, but it was hard for experts as they did not see the audience like they could see if they were present e.g., they could not read the body language of the audience, reaction, and engagement. The presenting expert could not see if teams were interested or not. Individual coaching sessions worked well in this sense, that experts got feedback also from the teams.

Positive aspects of hybrid setup were: reducing carbon emission; less time/expenses for teams or experts; it fosters international collaboration.

Negative aspects for hybrid setup: less interaction; strict timetables are necessary, which means less space for improvisation in case there is a need for that; certain workshop methods or tools cannot be used as they require a uniform group format (for example break out rooms).

Some participants who could not travel for personal reasons could join online. Having a busy schedule, they attended some of the programme points, and could hop on and off the event. The hybrid format allows participants to be flexible in participation when there is no possibility to participate fully.

A hybrid event solution is necessary for the circumstances of covid-19 pandemics. Hybrid setup decision in the planning stage ensures that risks arising from virus control restrictions will not close the event before it has started. In case of tightening of restrictions at any moment, the event can be changed into an online format. On the other hand, this setup gives an opportunity for teams and experts who can travel to meet and network. In the perspective of the covid – 19 situation, it was good that there were not so many participants and some experts participated online. An increase of participants in the location would have increased the pandemic risk. Important to take all the measures and follow the regulations and common sense. The hosting university has a lot of responsibility, therefore puts a lot of emphasis on doing everything according to pandemic guidelines. In this sense, there are regulations from the government and even more strict regulations from hosting institutions, in this case, the university.

From the technical point of view, the workshop was well executed, there was no trouble hearing or any technical issues in zoom calls. Participants online were also engaged and interacting. Since some of the workshop methods cannot be used because it requires a uniform format, it is necessary to come up with new ways and methods for interaction in a hybrid way. It is also important to engage online participants more, for example, to ask them to turn their cameras on. Sometimes participants were in the chat in the zoom, but not introducing themselves. Since there was a huge video wall, it would have been nice if everyone turned the cameras on, they would feel more involved and participants in the location also would see who is there. In the planning stage of the event, it is important to think and come up with different ways and tools to engage the online audience more.

Moderating the event needs to be considered. The moderating person engaged in good discussions with those present, sometimes remembering belatedly that there are people also online and to involve the online audience in the discussion as well. A high level of awareness is needed for this challenging type of moderation, even more so as was here the case, if the moderator is also responsible for the hosting. The recommendation would be to make the roles of moderating the event and hosting the event separately, this way 2 people would be needed. In this case, someone could take care of participants online and the moderator could conduct the event without having in mind too many aspects.

In the event, there was one person at the computer writing the information to participants online which they could not get. Sometimes people were not talking into a microphone, so the information was given for online participants, but the role needs to include also the engagement of the online audience. People who are physically there get more attention and the online audience tends to be neglected. This challenge should be addressed in a hybrid setup. Important to mention that online participants can go online and offline, so it is impossible to see it every time when they are coming and when they are going and with that comes more information gaps.

Hybrid setup limits interaction in some way. There were a lot of presentations where people were listening and it was always a discussion after, but it was not interactive enough. It could have been more

interactive if everyone would be there in their presence. It is important to think of ways and methods to make it more interactive in a hybrid format. The hybrid format is more difficult than an online or physical event. Some methods cannot be used to ensure interaction, for example, break-out rooms, Miro board, or working in groups. The hybrid format was also successful because of the high participation of the audience, there were a lot of questions for the experts.

After the workshop, we conducted the survey. The results of the survey say that the workshop was well received and all the teams are interested in similar workshops in the future. Experts and teams indicated that they would like to attend such events more frequently. Teams and experts blend well together when it comes to challenges and questions.

To make interaction and participation better there is needed some method, tool, or activity for participants to get to know each other at the very beginning of the workshop. During the workshop, onboarding was loose, after the first day participants did not know all the names of each other. It would have been good for interaction if everyone from the team introduced themselves and not only the person presenting the product, also a simple good way is to put name tags. There could be some kind of prewarming activity or ice-breaker at the start of the event or in the evening before the event. This way teams could get to know each other before they start presenting their projects and go into the topics of serious games, maybe even trying the developing games. This problem was solved the next day after participants had more interaction. To have better interaction teams should be of a similar level to their start-up or product development. Different levels of teams create a challenge to find the experts fitting the needs of the teams. The mismatch of topics reduces the effectiveness of the workshop for more developed teams. However, different levels of teams give more interaction and experience sharing among the teams.

In the hybrid setup, online participants do not feel the same commitment to be there. Experts were informed that it is very beneficial to be in the first presentations to get to know the teams, however, this was not the case, some of the experts could not be there. It was very hard to establish the interaction and to have experts at the event all the time.

The first day teams were not able to open up on their specific problems, presentations were in pitch mode, teams presented what is good about their project. On the 3rd day, everyone was opening up and feeling comfortable, that's when individual coaching took place and teams felt confident enough to talk about their specific things. The opening point could be reached faster if methods of pre-warming or ice-breaking were used to create a sense of community.

Organising the workshop actively involved 4 people and some technical staff as well for the technical setup. Creating the concept, ideas and planning was done by 2 people, during the workshop 2 more people joined for conducting the event. During the event hosting and moderating were done by the same person and it was a challenge as mentioned before. Meanwhile, 2 more people were taking care of online participants and participants in the location. For online participants the main task was to give them the information they missed being said on the stage, take the questions and join them in the discussion. For participants in the location the main task was to give teams support, answer questions and organise what is needed. Hosting roles are needed to moderate the event, track the time, ensure that experts show up on time in case there are small delays in the programme.

One of the lessons learned organising the workshop is that more time for preparation and planning is needed. It is important to engage people ahead of time, set the tasks, and share the responsibilities. The technical setup is very important, professional technical people were responsible for this process.

## **Feasibility for continuation**

For organising this kind of topic, it is important to utilise external BSGI or any other incubators network resources to get the experts and the teams. It is impossible to find the teams, experts and conduct an international event for one organisation. It is very important to build this in the future together with

other incubators, agencies, or organisations like universities. A set of tasks could be shared among the organisations and the guidelines what kind of people to engage in this process, for whom is the event.

A serious game is a specific topic, and some teams working in this field feel lost, it is good to connect them into some community. There is a lack of events for serious games, where people can open up and share their ideas. Teams are looking for this kind of workshop and would like to attend in the future as well. For teams, it was good to connect with other companies working in the serious games field, exchange ideas and opportunities for collaboration.

While organising the workshop it is important to set the entry requirements. Entry requirements are needed at an early stage of organising the event, so everyone is informed and transparent about the selection procedure, what kind of teams are expected at the workshop; is a specific team, or is the workshop open for everyone. The decision of whom to invite first teams or experts is also setting the course of the workshop. Both approaches are possible. If experts are invited first then seeing the topics and available expertise the selection of the teams with specific problems is more effective. On the other hand, if teams are selected first then seeing their problems experts can be selected. If both of these groups are selected at the same time there is a risk of a mismatch and it will affect participants' satisfaction with the workshop.

The key players in the field should be identified for the best expert choice, it is important to look for experts working in different segments for example academia, incubation, investors, game production, and other fields. Selection from different fields ensures different approaches and broader perspectives for the teams tackling the specific topic.

Programme length must be considered. The organising team considers that the 3 days format is optimal for everyone. Here the question of cost and benefit arises, the longer programme costs more and there is a limit for the benefits companies can absorb during one workshop.

Workshop organising needs time and resources. It is recommended to start organising at least 3 months before the planned event date. The team of 3 -4 people working on organising can have different skills needed and share the responsibility. This way tasks can be separated and scheduled, each organising team member can concentrate on a special part of the workshop and coordinate with colleagues.

Hybrid setup is a challenge in the technical and management sense of the event but it can work well if certain aspects are taken care of. It is important to have enough staff for moderating, hosting, taking care of online and participants in the location. It is a challenge for experts as they do not see the audience. In the planning stage of the event, it is important to think and come up with different ways and tools to engage the online audience more.

Budget issues can be a setback for organising the workshop. This kind of event could be financed from different programmes or joint financing of incubators. Start-up teams more often are not able to pay for the workshop. If there is a possibility to cover the costs of start-up teams it would benefit the participation of those who need the knowledge, especially at the starting stage. When the workshop is organised for experienced companies, the financial model where they pay for the event could be used.

Specialised topics of the games industry can be conveyed very productively in intensive workshops of this kind. Thanks to the hybrid format, this is also very feasible internationally in times of travel restrictions. Experts also benefit from this type of workshop, as they can get a different perspective through exchanging their views with other mentors and coaches. The feasibility is low threshold. However, the preparation is quite intensive regarding the recruitment of teams and experts.

## 4. Joint International webinars

### Rationale

The game industry is fast growing and constantly evolving. For game business developers – often themselves former entrepreneurs – keeping up with all trends and changes is a challenge. Also, there are so many facets in the scope of entrepreneurial skills that one business developer will not have the same level of expertise for every topic and issue for which young entrepreneurs or teams need support. It is thus common practice for incubators to invite experts for specific topics and areas. For trends, there is always the opportunity to follow up during conference talks and keynotes. However, tickets to these B2B events are often not affordable for start-ups, hence they usually rely on local offers or on their incubators.

To help local business developers and incubators in providing that kind of expert knowledge to their young teams, we came up with the idea of joining forces in organising webinars and inviting industry experts highly active in the field or with specific expertise to share their knowledge on the topics needed. The shared activities were in the selection of topics, the search for experts, facilitating the contact for the organising entity, disseminating the event, in particular within their region and their teams. This way the regional organisation has also the opportunity of promoting itself as game business support expert.

Specific goals of the pilots conducted by the BSGI consortium were:

- To test the webinar format, concept, and design, and adjust if needed
- To test the impact of the cooperation, how it is working and giving value for the companies and covering some expertise for incubators
- To bring business development topics to the webinars as they are most needed and often lacking for game start-up companies
- Help young teams to acquire knowledge in the process of turning a hobby into business

The project partner Lithuanian Innovation Centre took over the organisational part of this pilot. We were testing if an international online webinar model coordinated by one or more incubators can create a platform to transfer knowledge to both start-ups and incubators cheaper, faster and solve the challenge of knowledge limitations by cooperation and joint action.

### The pilot experience

#### Impact Assessment and organising entity

In the process of organising the webinars for incubators and their teams we have come to understand that chosen approach of knowledge transfer to start-ups and mentors was not yielding the expected results. We see several reasons for that:

- The Lithuanian Innovation Centre as an organiser of these webinars was an outsider to the gaming community, bringing together a diverse audience. Not being part of the game industry and its daily working routine, it was impossible to gather a track record or result of the webinars' impact. As organisers, LIC could not contribute to a overarching goal for the participants, for example by following up on the knowledge transfer from the webinars in local activities such as further discussions with the mentor or coach on the specific relevance for a game project or a business creation.

- Webinars as self-contained knowledge units are difficult to measure for their impact or to apply success indicators in terms of benefit for business development as LIC had no contact with the participating teams on a day-to-day basis.
- To measure impact would be possible if webinars are running in one incubator, but in this case, the concept of this idea is different.

### **Lessons learned**

If the objective is to promote business support initiatives and organisations as the experts in their region and support them in their work and programme offer, then the webinar concept needs to be further elaborated to better distinguish itself from other offers such as online conference or organisations' youtube channel.

The principal drivers should be a group of professional business developers or incubators who collectively design the series (not only the individual topics) mapping out all the areas where they as business developers would need support – be it to better manage their own work or to fill gaps in their programme or enhance the quality of their offer.

They should use the webinars as basis for follow-up discussions with their teams – this would also distinguish the effort in live webinars from current repositories offering recorded talks (e.g. from Dutch Game Garden's "[Knowledge Vault](#)" or Academy, or the soon to be launched collection of videos from Spielfabrique).

If the group accepts a rotation mechanism in organising and budgeting the events, then the impact of the investment should be measurable. This evaluation and assessment through defined KPI again should be a joint commitment.

### **Target group and pilot participation**

Start-ups, young teams, young entrepreneurs naturally are the ultimate beneficiaries of all business support activities, including those that are fostering the support activities and ecosystem.

In the case of the webinars, the direct target group of the activity itself were both the game business developer and the game developers i.e., the webinar participants. But as a pilot, in order to demonstrate the viability and added value of such a transnational format for the business supporters' programmes, incubation/acceleration staff and managers, mentors, coaches etc. i.e., the collective organisers and drivers were the primary target. Though the number of business support initiatives and organisations are growing, this target group is still manageable. They will take the experience and carry this activity forward and use it to make their work more effective and of higher quality.

For the target audience (game developers), questions of engagement are relevant, in particular as the group itself is very heterogeneous with different knowledge levels.

The "public nature" of the webinars allows also other groups to benefit from the webinar even though they are not the conceptual target group: industry representatives, affiliated service providers, publishers, investors, and public authorities.

### **Lessons learned**

In webinars, start-ups were the largest participating group which is not surprising as topics were selected for this type of business. Incubation staff were mainly affiliated project partners.

In 3 pilot workshops, there were a total of 200 registered participants, and 140 joined the webinars. On average we had a very high 70% rate of participation. Remarkably, the largest number of participants came from smaller countries like Estonia or Lithuania. This can be explained by several reasons. One of the reasons certainly had to do with the fact that partners responsible for this work package were from Lithuania and Estonia. These partners were most involved in developing the concept, planning, scheduling, and so on which entailed a sense of ownership. It is very important that all co-organisers feel

ownership and ensure dissemination, connect more channels to attract companies. The process of registration illustrates the problem very well. When some partners were reminded that there are no participants from their country and they sent some emails, there was a stream of registrations within the next few days from these countries. Ownership and responsibility are very important for successful webinars.

Another reason for the high percentage of participants from small countries is the lack of institutionalised knowledge transfer structures (either lack of incubators, mentors, or other community events where game business knowledge is being offered). Finland, Germany, or Sweden have enough a strong community with established communication and event structures in place.

Another aspect of reaching the participants is related to communication channels. Lithuanian and Estonian participants were reached using Slack or Discord platform, using the local gaming industry associations channels. In this social media, there is a critical mass and the largest part of our audience. There was a visible increase in participant registrations after sharing the message. In Lithuania and Estonia gaming communities are much smaller and they flock to few channels, it is easier to reach them. In Germany, Sweden, or Finland the communities are significantly larger and national associations or regional network organisations offer a lot of webinars, thus our webinars might just not have had a lot of discovery in the abundance of competing online events.

In small countries, gaming industry associations are interested in disseminating information about this kind of event, there are not so many events taking place in this industry. They see interesting content and see the added value for their members.

It would be useful to ask participants when they register or perhaps better at the end of a webinar if they want to receive information about future webinars and this way create a mailing list of those who are willing. It would help to keep the participants informed after they signed for one webinar.

## **Programme**

### **Determining the duration**

The length of the International Webinar programme (pilot) is 6 months. While choosing the duration of the programme, we took into account different incubation programmes. We discussed that the suitable duration of a series of webinars should orient itself to the affiliated incubation cycles, to complement the incubation as an additional tool.

The most common duration of an incubation cycle is around 6 months, during this period a certain number of companies are incubated in their incubator. The International Webinar series could be aligned with the respective programmes to ensure maximum benefit of the incubees.

By adopting this format of webinar series, we recommend that the topics of the running incubation programme be in sync with the webinar topics.

### **Lessons learned**

The duration of the programme of 6 months has an advantage and a drawback. The caveat is that the summer months intervened during our pilot project, which distorted the planned concept because it makes no sense to organise the webinars in the summer months when it is impossible to find mentors and participants.

Our recommendation is to calculate cycles of 12 months needed in total for such a webinar series including the planning, organising, and implementing. The first 3 months are needed to assemble the organising team, plan the topics, set the dissemination channels, scout for experts. In these 3 months, the experts participating in webinars are booked in advance. This way the set of webinars can be

communicated very clearly, dates are then specifically laid out. All the players in the industry know ahead of full schedule including the topics of webinars.

A timetable of planning webinars could look this way. The start of planning is in January, the first workshops are conducted in April, May, and June, then there are a few months break, and the programme continues in September, October, and November. When the programme is laid out in advance, it is easy to announce when there will be another webinar on a particular topic, as well as announce the entire programme. This way participants can register for a few webinars in advance during the first registration. The last workshop topic could be left for participants to choose according to the surveys organised after every webinar event.

We did not test the approach of coordinating incubators' programmes with webinars during this pilot so that the incubator programmes could coincide with the webinars. We could not achieve this because programmes were already set and they did not match the organised webinars, there was no projected time available to match the programmes and we have not been able to test how this actually can be done.

## Topic selection

While selecting the topics we reviewed incubation programmes in the international game incubators, also there are topics indicated in BGI project reports.

We carried a survey with the incubation business developers as to the most urgent issues that might reach a large audience. We also gathered input from our stakeholders in Lithuania, Germany, and Estonia, what sub-topics could be covered in each of the above-mentioned topic areas. After selecting sub-topics, we asked all the stakeholders to indicate if the topic is relevant, not relevant, or very relevant. The voting gave us a picture of what is the real demand, what is a "must-have" for the teams and incubators. The stakeholders (gaming companies, incubators staff, mentors, and experts) indicated what knowledge is lacking in day-to-day activities.

All the voting results were put on the Miro board according to the topics and rating (not relevant, relevant, and very relevant), discussing and developing ideas in the workshop always keeping in mind the target groups and their needs. After this internal workshop, we came up with a list of the topics. Five very broad topics were selected that should be covered and focused on for 4 – 5 webinars: marketing, business model, funding, new trends/technologies, and legal.

### Lessons learned

In this pilot programme, we have tested several topics. The first topic was in the field of marketing about market placement and game discoverability. The 2nd topic was under the section of business models. We had presentations, Q&A on the topic of team formation and team selection for a successful project. There was also a funding topic about funding types and how to prepare the financial statements. We followed the developed concept of topics and took into account the recommendations.

The topics related to new trends and legal issues are not so relevant in this webinar concept because of the companies involved in the incubation process. New technologies and legal issues are very specific topics, and it is individual from case to case. It would be very difficult to attract the desired broad audience by choosing these topics. Another aspect is that companies participating in the incubation programme and developing prototypes don't yet face legal issues. Often, legal questions are answered by investors or publishers, and companies are not required to have a staff member dedicated to these issues, usually, they have a project manager, designer, and coder.

Most of the topics voted on in the polls are relevant to the marketing and business model, such as community building and similar topics.

The topic selection procedure proved to be very effective. The topics were relevant and wanted by the participants. Participants indicated in the surveys that they would like more webinars in the field of selected topics.

## Selection of lecturers / mentors

Lecturers were to be chosen in cooperation with participating incubators and constitute a mix of external experts and incubator staff. The selection of lecturers was based on the topics which we wanted to deliver to the audience, within the limits of the available budget.

The lecturers were selected according to their expertise from:

- 1) Incubators participating in the project, available experts within the staff with needed expertise; There is a list of available speakers, who have experience in presenting at regional events like GameOn, Digital Dragons, Nordic Games etc.
- 2) The project partners screening their network for available expertise on needed topics; Addressing also everyone close to the project to screen their respective network and provide contacts.
- 3) The external experts are publicly available. We reviewed in an online search lectures on relevant topics on Youtube or social media, and based our selection on the quality of the presentation.

### Lessons learned

The search for mentors among incubators participating in the project was not successful. From the very beginning, there was no expressed interest to make a presentation on some broader topic. It is not known why this reluctance, perhaps speaking to an international audience is not so simple and project partners were not confident to present and/or discuss. Speaking to a team is obviously a whole different matter.

Also, the presentation also requires time to prepare and this might be easier for experts who often take over the role of presenter or keynote speaker. Presenting to an anonymous group is about opening up about one's own experiences and being very sure about the general value of one's opinions. Whereas possibly game business developers feel more confident in conveying opinions and evaluations to specific challenges by a specific team.

External experts are one of the easiest ways to get someone involved in webinars when it is known that they already gave a presentation on the subject. If there is information that someone has spoken at a conference, made a public video, participated in knowledge transfer in one or the other way, that a person is an expert for that area, maybe there is information in some report of an incubation programme, in other words, it is known that expert has ready material for the topic then it was easy to get this expert onboard for our webinars. The expert needs a little adaptation of the presentation material to the webinar audience and is ready to speak. This is the most successful and assured way to find an expert for a specific topic. The remuneration for an expert in our project was 200 - 350 euros per 1-hour-Webinar for West European or US experts.

The most beneficial speakers are veteran with 10-20 years experience in the business, who had or still have a running business themselves, and feel comfortable sharing tips is for C-level executives and also admitting to failures made during their professional career.

The other selection method we applied, i.e. having project partners screen their network for available expertise on needed topics was also working well. What imports here is what has priority: topic or particular expert participation. Since we first picked a topic and then looked for a mentor/expert, the project partners helped us find out who was talking about the topic or where they had heard of any suitable CEO. It's hard to get in touch with people like that, but when someone they know writes, it helps to build trust and break the ice, making it easier to get these mentors/experts to get involved.

## Tools and methods for interaction

For International webinars, it is important to choose a webinar platform with user-friendly functionalities, assuring the required quality and also providing tools for interaction with the participants.

For the first webinars, the platform WebinarNinja<sup>3</sup> was used, but other platforms (BigMarker<sup>4</sup> and webinarJam<sup>5</sup>) were also tested in the upcoming webinars. The platform should have the registration and notification sending functionality, also it should provide the technical possibility to join a large number of participants. It would be advisable to choose a platform which allows asking questions live, using the microphone.

To increase the interactivity among the participants and the presenters, Discord channel can be used. Following the presentation, the expert should remain available for a certain length of time (20 – 30 min) for questions and discussions.

### **Lessons learned**

The chosen platforms (WebinarNinja, BigMarker and webinarJam) worked well. Various platforms have different advantages. It is important to have a function with the option to launch a survey inside the platform to receive feedback in the middle of the event or at the very end. If this functionality is absent, then the feedback rate is very low. In such cases, some bonus must be provided to entice feedback, such as an additional video or consultation. Because of the interactivity, it is really important to leave time for questions and answers.

Our format was about a 40 min presentation and 20 min questions. Participants want individual advice, so there were a lot of questions about specific problems participants are facing. We also received feedback that participants' names should be visible for other attendees - how many are participating, and similar information. We had a webinar when the participants were not seen and it was disturbing for a mentor and other participants as well because there is no sense of being part of the community, it's unclear how many of those participants are there, what is going on if someone is asking questions or not.

Truth be told, the anticipated level of the added value of a direct approach option with the speaker (Q&A through moderator and in the chat) as opposed to recorded sessions where a Q&A is not possible, was not met to our full satisfaction. In the end, the audience did not make as much use of the Q&A as expected. More investigation into the reasons for this need to be done. But seeing that even professional business developers seem reluctant to present a topic or their experience publically, we suspect that there is a certain timidity to risk "asking a stupid" question due to the fact that you have different experience and maturity levels. This is not the same as speaking up in a peer-to-peer environment.

The launch of a "Discord" channel is strongly advised although it was not done in the pilot for several reasons:

- The expert was paid for the presentation and webinar duration, and it is difficult to define an additional scope of commitment such as how long they should be available on "Discord" and how many questions they should be prepared to answer. There must be some win-win situation where both the expert and the participant benefit from it. It could be a prior agreement of the incubators when only representatives of certain incubators (mentors and representatives of companies) attend these webinars. In this case, the external expert can see the benefit that if they join the Discord and give advice, they can show it as a track record working with a certain incubator or for example the company being incubated will come pitching first to that expert if they are investors or publishers. In this case, an expert could have a contract with incubators that are participating in the webinars. For us, this could be a contract with an incubator representing these companies participating in the webinars. This way the community can be created, and the Discord channel would be supervised by the incubator.

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<sup>3</sup> Link to website: <https://webinarninja.com>

<sup>4</sup> Link to website: <https://www.bigmarker.com>

<sup>5</sup> Link to website: <https://home.webinarjam.com>

- "Discord" is a very useful tool for consulting and community meetings when participants have met earlier and known each other well, know what the product of the company is, are familiar with their challenges. This has not been the case in the pilot. If the Webinars follow an experience such as the game autumn camp (see below), then there is some trust to foster fruitful communication on Discord. If there was a physical meeting, then the expert can help companies more effectively because just signing in on Discord and getting a link to the game means that it will take at least half an hour to get to know the game. Discord groups should be closed so that people can trust and share their concerns and get expert advice.

## Summary of recommendations

There are several aspects important to make this concept feasible for incubators or any other organisation willing to take this up and implement it as a ready-to-use guideline.

In particular, an agreement between the different incubators is necessary to ensure to add value to their respective programmes by taking on a complementary role. Evaluation of the webinars is important for everyone to assess the added value for their programme. This survey would evaluate if external experts' presentations did effectively contribute to the incubation programme in a way that the incubators themselves could not have provided (lack of time, resources or knowledge).

The group of incubators need to be the owner of the webinars for them to be successful. It is very important that all co-organisers feel ownership and ensure dissemination, connect more channels to attract companies.

Another aspect of reaching the participants is related to communication channels. Slack or Discord platforms are the channels that are widely used in the gaming industry. Using the local gaming industry associations channels gave the best results. In this social media, there is the largest part of the audience. Good connections to gaming industry associations in the country increase the success of the programme. It would be useful to ask participants when they register if they want to receive information about future webinars and this way create a mailing list of those who are willing.

Our recommendation is to calculate 12 months of the total cycle needed for webinars including the planning, organising, and implementing. This way the set of webinars can be communicated very clearly, dates are laid out. All the players in the industry know ahead of full schedule including the topics of webinars.

Most of the topics voted on in the polls are relevant to the marketing and business model, such as community building and similar topics. In the process of topic selection, we gathered input from our stakeholders across borders. Having selected sub-topics, we asked a representative stakeholder group (gaming companies, incubators staff, mentors, and experts) to rate the sub-topics, thus providing us with a picture of what the real demand is, what is necessary for the teams and incubators. The stakeholders by voting indicated what knowledge is lacking in day-to-day activities. This process gave good quality results, participants evaluated positive topic selection and a high rate of participation was ensured.

External experts are one of the easiest ways to get someone involved in webinars when it is known that some expert has a presentation on the subject.

It is important to test the various platforms and how they match the needs of the webinar. Most importantly, it should include an option for a quick survey.

Make sure to have sufficient time for questions and answers, including time to overcome the first timidity and reluctance of asking questions.

Webinars should be a part of the incubation concept. It can complement incubation programmes that are coordinated and agreed upon by several game incubators. Here must be clear terms and conditions, also deadlines indicating when webinars happen, how everyone will benefit, and other aspects. The cost of one seminar could be around 1,500 euros depending on the number of speakers and adding the

organisation costs. Organisation costs include hours of the coordinator, needed to prepare for a webcast, moderating, inviting participants, scouting for experts, dissemination of information, and other activities. Part of this could be the commitment of the incubator group (owning the webinar series), and the incubators could take part of tasks in turn. Then, the cost is not too high and each incubator in turn could be willing to each cover one of the 5-6 series. If only the speaker fee of around 300 Euro plus the rent of the platform per webinar were to pay, and the organisation of the event would be covered by the incubators, the average expense per participant per webinar would be around 10 Euro. The cost would easily be justified on condition that the quality of the webinars rely on careful planning and a concerted effort to align the topics to complement the incubation programmes.

## 5. Conclusion

The three above-described pilots reflect an investigation into alternative and complementary incubation / acceleration approaches that would enhance and streamline individual incubation activities and programmes. The pilots demonstrated that the approach is sound and fit-for-purpose. The “missing link” between a pilot and its institutionalisation or sustainable implementation remains with the target actors, in this case organisations or initiatives supporting young game development teams on their way to becoming successful entrepreneurs, and their will to commit to these new practices or methodologies.

Although in theory all these types of organisations agree that they would wish for a) more exchange with their peers, b) stronger ties to investors and publishers, c) more mentor support and d) a richer programme to offer their teams, most incubators are publically funded and mostly chronically under-resourced, thus lacking staff, time and funds.

The here explored activities were to show the way to alleviate the burden by joining forces (thus splitting costs and time) for intensive measures that would ease their own workload and enrich their programme at the same time. However, this means at first a change in priorities and routine. In particular, to ultimately save time and funds for a better result, they would need to make time and invest some resources and make way for implementing and establishing these activities, e.g. by forming an alliance with other incubators and giving joint efforts a higher priority. Change is a stubborn thing: it needs a lot of cajoling and convincing. And the best way to convince is by demonstrating the benefit rather than talking about it.

The pilots not only were successful in the way of proving the soundness and benefit of the piloted concepts and schemes, but also in demonstrating their value to the participating parties who act as multiplier in interesting others in the schemes. What needs to follow now is to establish a structure, formal or informal, that would leverage the demonstration impact of the pilots. This requires some preparation for a feasible and meaningful foundation, but above all a trusting relationship. This was fostered by the BSGI expert talks, which were meant to take place physically, in particular towards the end of the one-year project BSGI, with a vision to circulate an agreement and memorandum of understanding and have it signed by a majority if not all participating organisations. The COVID-19 pandemic turned this into a too ambitious endeavour, but as the network has been established, the goal is not forfeited, it will just take a longer while. This does not diminish the excellent results from the pilots, on the contrary, the partners are resolved to continue and follow the track taken with these initial steps.

# Annexes

## Further information on Autumn academy

### Feedback

Feedback Form and answers (21 answered, some teams did answer together):

**1. Name(s), organisation and country**

**2. What was your role in the bootcamp?**

Team - 13 Mentor - 6 Incubator representative – 4

**3. When you heard about the idea of a camp as a means of intense mentoring, what was your first reaction or thought? What was the main incentive to join?**

Excellent way to find the time to work on the game in-depth, since we're not a full - time developer.

Sounded fresh and interesting. Good opportunity to learn from others and share my experience

Many people with different backgrounds to network

One week away from duties/kids sounded a little too much at first. The main incentive to join was the high number of participants and mentors.

The main incentive was that it's free. I also thought that it would be useful to spend some time in productive atmosphere and get new contacts

Excitement and curiosity. We wanted to join to meet people from the industry and chat about our situation and our struggles with experienced teams and mentors. Also we were excited to visit Estonia for the first time !

An excellent way to meet up people from various backgrounds and at various stages of their production / careers. The small number of people was perfect so that we'd be able to connect and chat with almost everyone

I promised Hanna and Henri to go without much info. I am very happy with that choice

I thought it be a fun learning opportunity and a chance to network

To gain general knowledge about making games but also a chance to get feedback and help with current games and problems. Possibly also a nice chance to do some networking in the game dev community

As part of the project, I found it to be a good test of a new format. Also an opportunity to network.

My initial reactions were, "Sounds like a great opportunity where I could be useful", "Hello impostor syndrome", "I need money", and "I hate traveling". Eventually though the main incentive ended up being that this would likely be a really good opportunity for my personal growth - changing the environment for a whole week, meeting a lot of people (both teams and other mentors), and giving back to the gamedev community.

I thought it sounded fun and interesting. The main incentive was to get some feedback on specific problems in our company and learn more about running a game company.

It will be an awesome weekend!

Wanted to do one myself 2 years ago, but didn't manage to find the resources.

I heard it during the Game Wave Festival in Latvia. My first reaction was great, it will be useful. And my main incentive to join was to progress my game further.

The main reason was networking. I'm new in Europe and always happy to find new friends and people who are passionate about gaming and teamwork.

Great idea, as far as I know was never done in such format in our region before. The main reason to join was networking, to find connections in other regional organisations and meet teams.

Great Idea for the video games studios and to create a real community of indie Devs ! We didn't have onsite event for so much time, it was lacking in the industry to create more bounds between people.

Incentive : networking with mentors, studios and incubators and discover different ways of thinking.

To see the tackles of the other teams, to help out others, if my background and skillset could provide help. And to get fresh perspectives on my own doings - there is never enough of fresh look at you own work.

To provide newcomers with as much pertinent industry-specific knowledge as possible.

#### **4. Do you feel the event kept what (you think) it promised?**

Yes / Sure / Definitely.

Yes, there was a lot of opportunity to get advice, feedback and contacts. Also the overall vibe was very positive.

Yes it was close to what we had in mind when reading about it.

Pretty much. The only issue would be the length of the camp: barely enough time to meet up everyone

I had no huge expectations but enjoyed my time and learnt a lot

Yes, I did expect the mentoring to be more physically separate with arranging meetings through some kind of system, having separate meeting rooms that are a little more silent. However, I ended up really enjoying the more open format of just talking to mentors and asking them questions in the work area, so I'm unsure if quiet meeting rooms would be better or not. Maybe it would be good to just have one or two meeting rooms available in case people would like a longer meeting with a mentor.

The promise was perhaps a little unclear, so the event definitely gave a lot more than it promised.

It went beyond my expectations!

To the fullest.

Yes, more than my expectation. A friendly event with lots of learning resting networking.

Yes, for me absolutely.

Yes, even if we didn't really discuss with other incubators about Cross-Border cooperation. The event was more focused on the games and studios, which was great too !

Yes. Maybe some "gamified" way of pushing all participants to have at least one session together with every mentor could be added, to get ice melting faster and have teams more actively looking for help themselves as well. It could even be checking the boxes of the matrix. But it would give a small initiative if team is a bit shy'ish :)

#### **5. How did you like the overall experience of the bootcamp? (1 - Not at all ... 5 Very much)**

4 - 8 participants    5 - 13 participants

#### **6. How did you like the organisation of the bootcamp - communications, registration, moderation, tools used, etc.? (1 - Not at all ... 5 Very much)**

3 - 2 participants 4 - 11 participants 5 - 8 participants

**7. How did you like the overall quality of the bootcamp approach - e.g. availability of mentors, peer to peer support, work environment, mix of participants, etc.? (1 - Not at all ... 5 Very much)**

4 - 6 participants 5 - 15 participants

**8. How did you like the overall quality of the programme structure - variability and length of sessions, availability of individual support from mentors and peer support etc.? (1 - Not at all ... 5 Very much)**

3 - 2 participants 4 - 11 participants 5 - 8 participants

**9. How did you like the online communications tool used for the event - Discord? (1 - Not at all ... 5 Very much)**

3 - 3 participants 4 - 9 participants 5 - 9 participants

**10. How did you like the venue? (1 - Not at all ... 5 Very much)**

2 - 1 participant 4 - 6 participants 5 - 14 participants

**11. How did you like the mentoring process? (both team and mentor perspectives welcome, can be further elaborated below) (1 - Not at all ... 5 Very much)**

3 - 2 participants 4 9 participants 5 - 10 participants

**12. How did you like the food? (1 - Not at all ... 5 Very much)**

2 - 2 participants 3 - 7 participants 4 - 6 participants 5 - 6 participants

**13. How did you like the free time activity possibilities? (1 - Not at all ... 5 Very much)**

3 - 2 participants 4 - 7 participants 5 - 12 participants

**14. What would you have done differently in general and where in hindsight would you change things?**

At first it was difficult to find the event programme. Was looking for it on Discord and couldn't find it.

Maybe prepare the team beforehand somehow?

Maybe even more of the connecting and networking events. And also, could last the whole week!

The venue was very far from Tallinn.

It was quite unusual that the schedule was very flexible, but I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. It created a very free atmosphere, which helps with networking.

I personally found a bit difficult to focus during the whole duration of the feedback on teams struggles sessions. It was a bit long and intense. But super insightful though.

Maybe 3 days is a little short. We barely had time to meet that we're already saying goodbye

The "open mentor/put questions on post-its" part was not very good. Either it should be moderated with a moderator that either puts a time limit on discussions, encourages more people to speak or pulls a full stop when a 3-5 people starts saying the same things or de-rails the conversation. The open format like that is great for people who like to talk, but it's terrible for people who does not.

You can also make different tracks, like one marketing, one creative etc. Those kinds of sessions should also be voluntary, so that the one's of us who doesn't want to listen can get some job done :)

Also, I would have liked some time slots where you encourage teams to talk to each other, and ask about things about their project. Some sort of "dating", but maybe for people with similar roles? I personally feel like I talked to few of the teams.

Also, make it easier to see who's a mentor and not! Like a different colored badge or something.

Perhaps more structure. The round table was fun but also felt there could be more variety in activities? Could have more talks by the mentors. Would prefer actual presentations with slides to the inspirational talks also. Could include topics like discussed in the round tables "pitching to publishers", "budget", "planning" etc. It was the first time so I'm sure it was a learning curve for everyone!

A better plan for the first day / welcoming event... Both in terms of some people arriving early and feeling like we missed out on getting to know people by simply being late. It was also quite a culture shock monday evening, so maybe start out with something more tame like a boardgame night and then ramp up to a sauna party on day 2 etc.?

We should have had more time to prepare teams. But it was understandable that it was difficult to brief people, since this was the first time doing this, so we could not give a lot of details. But overall it went really well.

Flexibility was definitely the strength of the event. No matter what, that shouldn't be changed. It was maybe a little confusing, as people didn't know what would happen next, but that didn't seem to matter much.

It was good that mentors got together to discuss what format would work best for the teams they had already met and gotten to know. Even if roundtables are the way to go for future events, the schedule should include the mentors sitting down and discussing the best way to help these specific teams.

This also means that the first day of mentors just getting to know the teams should definitely be kept for next time, too. Personally, I think I went a bit too far on the first day already, deep-diving into very specific advice rather than just saying hi to all the teams. (Some teams I met said they got the most relevant advice to their particular issues on the first day.)

I enjoyed the fact that there was plenty of time and the schedule wasn't fixed. Especially during the first day, I was able to look after my own well-being. I could take my own time to go around the work area and meet teams, but also take breaks, go out for a walk whenever I wanted to, or choose whether to participate in evening activities. There were enough mentors (and teams brought their own work with them) so that no single mentor was required to be present at all times.

This didn't work so well during the roundtable discussions. While they were great and they more than achieved their goal, I didn't like the "let's just get this over with" approach of sitting there until we'd finished a category, with no breaks. This was exhausting and didn't encourage teams about self-care. Also, in hindsight, we could easily have taken several breaks as well as had lunch earlier and come back to the roundtables. As it was, it seemed like once the roundtables were done after lunch on Thursday, teams were so exhausted that half of them just disappeared.

The event could have been longer by one day, but still with the same amount of content spread out over that period. This way, there might have been less rush to get the roundtables finished. Also, heard from some teams that they were just getting warmed up and able to talk freely with others on the last day.

Personally, I was able to determine whether I should or shouldn't participate in something for my own well-being, but I still felt like I was letting the event down a bit by not offering myself for more networking. So I can easily see that teams might try to participate in everything (even the things that are marked as "optional"), resulting in exhaustion. I'd suggest clearly indicating "personal time" in the schedule so that everyone could see they need to relax as well.

The venue was perfect for this - there were no distractions, the only things you could do on your free time was walk, do sports or relax. Much better than a conference that's been crammed so full that even if you do everything you can, you're still missing out.

The arrival sauna was a bit too much. A bunch of introverts, all strangers to each other, in a small room with loud music and shouting... nope, brain overload. 😊 Would be better to break the ice with something just a little bit more formal, so that people have some structure for saying hello to each other, instead of being thrown into the deep end of the pool.

I would have liked the event to start the day after arriving. After travelling for 13 hours it would have been nice to just sleep. I would have waited with the sauna party until day 2 or 3.

I think everything worked well, maybe the location could be more easy to access in this case mentors and teams could spend more time together.

More organised mentor introductions, longer and more insightful, to build trust from the start. Teams presenting their games + their main aim for the bootcamp (implement feature, fix bugs, get advice on certain topic etc..) Checkup in the middle of the bootcamp (1 vs 1, organisers vs teams) to see progress, help needed, break some ice with mentors / other teams they could have synergy with. Then perhaps final presentations or meeting with each team.

The exact format of the bootcamp was a bit foggy for me beforehand. It was just that I didn't know how much time we had for general discussion with mentors and actually developing features for our games or doing some marketing activities. In the end the format was great and I got a lot of feedback/tips, but didn't find so much time for making trailer video and gifs and marketing work. It was all working out great, but I just would have prepared differently, probably by preparing questions to each mentor.

I realised we've passed most of those problems and we are in right path. We believe great game done with a good team with different skills but we realised most of the team doing their art part outsource and it was the main different.

Would be great to have some kind of matchmaking tool, apart from Discord, to set personal meetings with the teams in advance, to have everything in one place and available for all participants to use. Kind of meet to match but smaller scale.

A bit more structured roundtable discussions, maybe with stricter time limits for questions and comments. Maybe it would be possible to use discord for the main topics and then collect and put main outcomes there (lots of work but might be useful later).

Mentoring is great and important for the studio. It is important to adapt the format to the needs of the studio. But I think it would have been better to organise before the exact format of the mentorship. The studio should have pitch med at the beginning and more formal 1 to 1 meetings with mentors would have been insightful for each project. I'm sure they learned a lot during the week from the round table and informal individual discussion, but I'm not sure they were able to reach a new level in their project.

That was mentioned already in Discord, but probably introductions of mentors by mentors themselves could be more thorough at the start.

I would have made the initial onboarding evening a little bit less noisy, as people who travel long distances are usually quite tired. Sauna is always great, but loud music in a large room with a single table can be a proper vibe killer.

For the mentoring part specifically, it would have been nice to do some mentor speed-dating where mentors and mentees rotate every 5 minutes or so, right at the start of the mentoring blocks to get to

know each other quickly and to see if there can already be topics which mentors can help out with. This would also give mentors a great deal of first impression knowledge to help plan the rest of the event.

**15. Do you believe such a format could be elaborated and gain traction with the start-up community? Would you be willing to pay for the travel and accommodation for similar event yourself in the future?**

Possibly.

Yes

Sounds good. Yes, probably would

Depends on the value proposition of the event.

I wouldn't be willing to pay only because I'm not that well off

It really depends on our status / what and how we are working on at the moment of the event. Our budget being tight, I don't know how much we could spare for this

Very likely, yes

yes and probably. maybe it could be one more day, but then we probably would need more rooms to work in.

I think so! It needs a bit of work but could definitely become something great and has a lot of potential. I had fun

I think it could be a good format to continue, but as a student, I wouldn't pay for attending a similar event in the future due to budget constraints

Yes (our organisation would send me). But if we decide to make it a paid event, we would need to be able to explain the the value better beforehand. Then it becomes a product, and the customer must evaluate if it's worth the price. I do not think the initial PDF intro "sold" the value of the event. At least the event was much better than advertised.

Applying the event to all start-ups instead of just game developers would probably reduce the amount of common ground between teams. Might also be quite difficult to find mentors with broad enough skills, making the advice more generic. On the other hand, having game developers mixing with other start-ups would certainly give lots of perspective (because gamedevs are often behind in business development in general), but I don't think it would work for a whole week's bootcamp.

If the event continues to be limited to game developers, the intense, week-long format definitely works. In particular, I believe that traction could be gained by staying in touch with gamedev hubs, universities, associations and the IGDA. These are the people who are in the best position to hear positive feedback from the teams they're involved with, and recommend the event to new teams.

As a mentor, I'm not sure if I'd be able to pay for travel and accommodation.

I think it could gain traction yes. Personally i don't have the funds, but maybe in the future I would want to pay for it, because it gave a lot of value to our company.

I believe this format could be continued, cannot comment on willingness to pay.

Yes.

Yes, the format was great. I would be willing to pay for such event if it is reasonably priced. Few hundred euros per person is ok, but over thousand is too much for me.

Yes, I will participate as long as valuable people participate in these kind of events.

Definitely, the price might be a sensitive question, but if it would be public/private funding combined it should work. Part of expenses might be covered by countries associations or other support institutions.

I think could be elaborated, but it will be difficult to pay for it, because it is a long travel.

I would think that this format could be developed further and would do good. I would maybe have a test-run once-twice more within a similar theme to get the best programme and routines. But then-again, when taking account the suggestions, it may already be ready to use for variety of areas.

Definitely

**16. Do you have any specific feedback what you liked or what you think was missing in the bootcamp?**

No

More comfortable chairs or different work areas.

Maybe some stretching or something during the day? Some quick, fun competitions to get the spirit up after lunch etc

I wish I could have stayed for longer.

It would be nicer if the weather was warmer :D

Overall, happy of the experience

Only complaint would be the access to food and the catering

I really like the open atmosphere! it was extremely easy (for me at least) to meet new people. I hope everyone feels the same :) (if everyone doesn't, maybe consider having some speed-dating etc)

I really disliked the ventilation, during the afternoons it was one oxygen molecule going from person to person.

My main feedback for the boot camp was above, but I was concerned with the location. Whilst the actual place is lovely (rooms were nice and I loved the saunas) the staff were extremely rude, and I wouldn't want to return. One yelled at me until I started crying during dinner, before throwing my food on a plate at me, and I'm still a bit confused why. I didn't understand the language. But it certainly added a huge dampener on the experience. My friend said it wasn't the first time they saw the staff act this way. It might be good to consider another location for future boot camps or speak to them about the behaviour.

I was very happy about the fact that there was a bus directly from the airport to the location, even if it was a long ride, it was just nice to not have to worry about public transport, catching trains etc.

I thought day 2 was a little weird with the 'try each others games' part, since it felt like half of the teams didn't make the effort to let you try their game or see what they are working on, were they having video conferences / working or what happened there? I would suggest a slightly more forced format or some kind of icebreaker exercise, just to get an idea of who the other teams were and what they were working on...

It was good that the programme was set beforehand, but also good that it was flexible enough to change. Good that we sat down with all mentores midway to discuss the status and to consider and redesign the content for the next day. The "roundtable" session seemed to be extremely well received. Also great with the one-on-one sparring. Fortunately the mentors actively walked around to engage the teams for one-on-one sessions. Maybe we could write that down as a "best practice" point for future mentors.

See above :)

I liked the workshop parts and also some of the group activities. It was nice that we had the choice to not attend certain activities that we weren't interested in.

Game devs are introverts. Don't start opening ceremony with sauna :D

More Estonian teams next time?

Entrepreneurs. In my opinion, making games is like other startups and as game developers, we are creating value for people's souls. There is no difference between gaming startups and other startups like

Bolt. We have to change our mindsets and successful entrepreneur can help. If there were some successful entrepreneurs as a mentor it would be better.

As a first event I think in general everything was great. Maybe more ways to facilitate personal time with teams would help. For example mentors could talk to the teams from their countries in advance and help to formulate the biggest needs and goals for them in the event, and then connect with the best suitable mentors for specific questions. Also the filtering by platforms might be helpful, for example mobile, pc/consoles, VR, for specific questions and topics.

Pitching session and formal 1 to 1 meetings between studios and mentors + meeting between incubators. I would say that some game's post mortem, but then again, Ott described pretty well how they made Death and Taxes, so that covers it. Nevertheless, this topic would be good topic to have permanently included :)

Communication about vegetarian food options was confusing.

### **17. What other question(s) would you ask if you were in our place?**

Did you manage to achieve your personal goals? (yes)

Would you like to join next time.

Would you recommend this to your colleagues

How did you like the weather?

I'd ask teams what was their goal for participating in the event and whether they reached that goal.

I think you covered most of it !

- how can I make the bootcamp more individualised to make sure every team gets the most out of the week?

- how can more activities be moderated/controlled to focus everyone's attention on what they need to do?

- where do babies come from?

- how does magnets work?

Ask more about each rating maybe? Like why did you rate this for food etc

Was the work to leisure ratio good? (Was there enough time to get work done and also relax / have fun?)

What was your take-aways?

What value did your team get from this event?

What would you say to another young startup team about this event?

What did you not get from the event (what did you miss)?

- What did your team get out of the bootcamp, and how did the bootcamp affect you personally?

- For teams who haven't yet released a game: Would you participate in the event again after releasing your first game?

Did something during the bootcamp make you uncomfortable?

Nothing

I would ask in what country I would prefer to have a similar event again. Estonia or Finland.

And I would ask which type of mentor talent would be beneficial next time. I think some marketing advice from people who have actually self-published a successful indie game would be great. Currently we had Aki, who had released several console games, but he didn't have to do much marketing, because of the platform. And Ott, who I've already questioned before :)

Which kind of mentors do you prefer to participate in?

Which season do you rather for this kind of event?

I'd ask for the longer-term commitment possibility, for example to help create the programme for next such event if it will happen. I'd gladly do it :)

What was the most impactful decision/thought that you implemented?

My answer would be: slim the project down to MINIMUM, make a launch, don't worry if it will not fly, collect the pieces and make a new launch with better result. Do not expect it to fly on the first run - if it happens, its good, but mostly the successful launch is the result of multiple tests on audiences and fixes on the way.

I would probably ask what was the overall impression of mentees present, asking about what were the most common threads in this round of mentees.

### **18. Any other recommendations, comments etc. to the above?**

Thanks to the team and mentors, I had a really nice time!

key info seem to get a bit lost on the server and communication on discord was not always easy. Otherwise thanks for everything, we had a great time !

i think i got it all. overall my experience was amazing and I will come to whatever you invite me to! i really want this boot camp to be all it can be! moi moi kiisupall

I thought it was a great camp, I learned a lot and had a great time overall!

It was quite far away from the airport. It might have been better to find a location closer to an airport. The location overall was good. The meeting room got a bit noisy sometimes, also from the sports or other guests (not a big problem, but a small issue).

It was great that food has 2 hours assigned, as this gave a lot of flexibility. It also allowed people who needed it to take a break.

Perhaps relax schedule a bit more? Some teams left the sticky note retrospective (or just started working on site) to work on their goals they themselves set for this bootcamp.

Thank you for making this bootcamp! It was hard work, and it showed!

Thanks for everything. It was a great experience.

Was great experience overall, hope it's not the only time :)

I suppose the food part could be arranged better with more variety and more options :)

Maybe separate menu for bootcampers from the rest of sporting-participants etc.

## Further information on Themed workshop

This was a hybrid event, with the target group (start-ups producing serious games) having had to be physically present to fully participate and benefit from the workshop. With Covid restrictions the event was limited to 12 people in the room. 7 of them were start-ups, 3 were supporting staff for the technical implementation (incl the hybrid format) and 2 were coaches.

### Timetable

28.10.2021				29.10.2021				30.10.2021			
Time	Programm Point	Comments	Additional Participants	Time	Programm Point	Comments	Additional Participants	Time	Programm Point	Comments	Additional Participants
10 - 11	Team/Project Presentation	Toplo + Miro 10 min + 5 min Q&A each Team	Stefan Göbel David Murphy	10 - 11	Friedrich Schadow	Recap/ Business Model Canvas/Game Thinking Method		10 - 11	Stefan Göbel	Quality Assurance in Serious Games	David Murphy
11 - 12	Team/Project Presentation		Stefan Göbel David Murphy	11 - 12	Friedrich Schadow	Business Model Canvas/Game Thinking Method	Anne Sauer	11 - 12	Anne Natasha Stefan	Individual Coaching	
12 - 13	LUNCH	Pizza + arrival Martin		12 - 13	LUNCH	Burger		12 - 13	LUNCH	Pizza	
13 - 14	Martin Thiele-Schweiz		Stefan Göbel	13 - 14	Friedrich Schadow	Business Model Canvas/Game Thinking Method	Anne Sauer Anne Sauer	13 - 14	Anne Natasha Stefan	Individual Coaching	
14 - 15	Hendrik Rump		Stefan Göbel	14 - 15	Stefan Göbel	Feedback and Target group Approach		14 - 15	Anne Natasha Stefan		
15 - 16	BREAK 15 min	Incubation and Law Remote	Stefan Göbel	15 - 16	BREAK 30 min	Serious Game Incubation Business challenges		15 - 16	BREAK 30 min		
16 - 17	start 16:15 Christian Raabte		Stefan Göbel	16 - 17	Natasha Skult 16:30	Serious Game Incubation Business challenges		16 - 17	Final Discussion/Evaluation Starting		David Murphy Anne Sauer Stefan Göbel
	End 16:18 Christian Raabte				Natasha Skult 16:50	Serious Game Incubation Business challenges			BREAK 15 min		David Murphy
	BREAK 15	Miro			BREAK 15 min				Final Discussion/Evaluation		Anne Sauer Stefan Göbel
17 - 18	16h challenges in Serious Games	17:30 End (30 min buffer)	Stefan Göbel	17 - 18	starting 16:45 Final Discussion/ Game Thinking Results						
18	Thank you and see you tomorrow!			18:00	Thank you and see you tomorrow!			17:00	Thank you and goodbye!		



BSGI Themed Workshop

### Photos

Impressions from the workshop at DE:HIVE, HTW Berlin

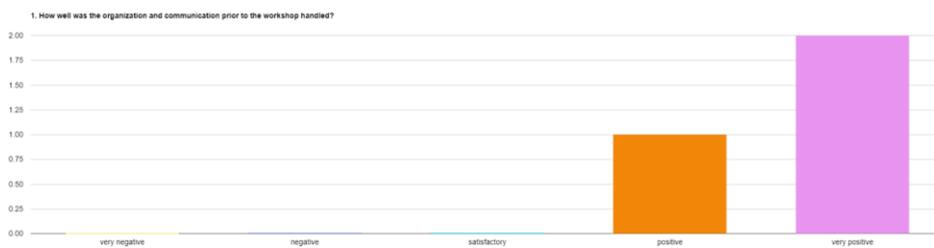




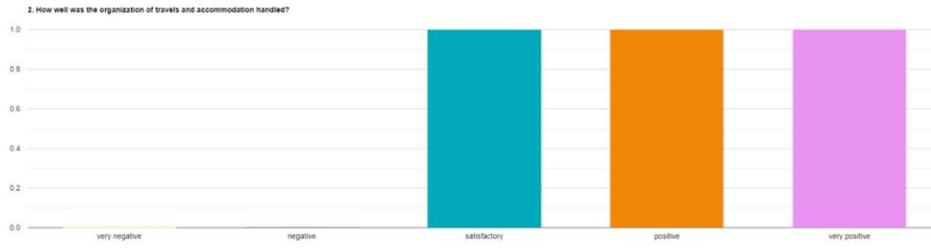
## Feedback

### Team Survey and answers 1/3

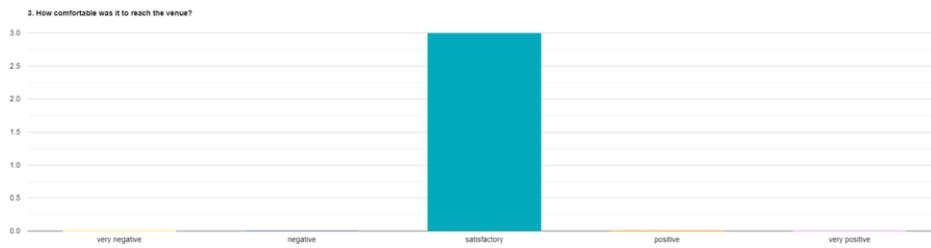
#### 1. How well was the organisation and communication prior to the workshop handled?



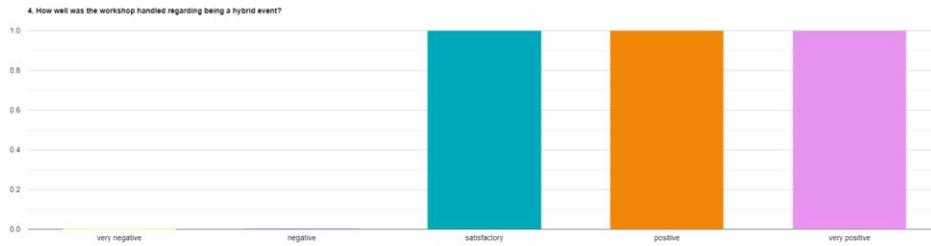
#### 2. How well was the organisation of travels and accommodation handled?



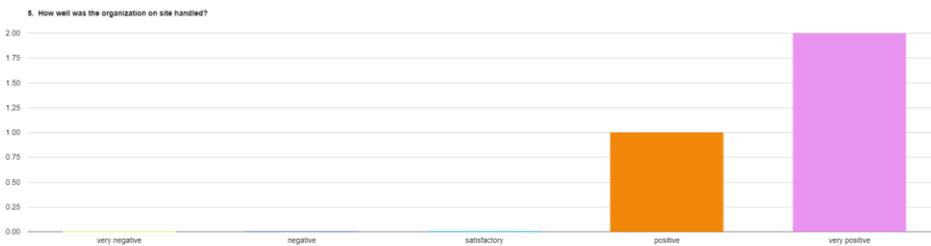
**3. How comfortable was it to reach the venue?**



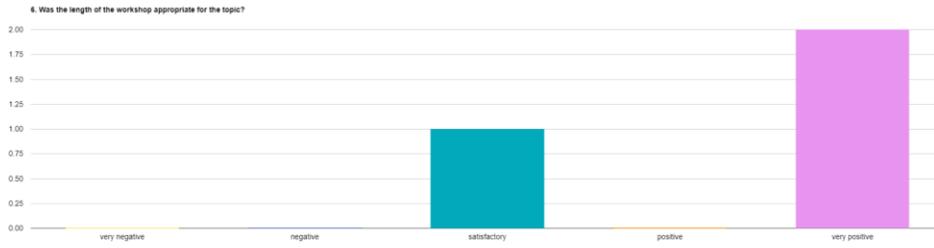
**4. How well was the workshop handled regarding being a hybrid event?**



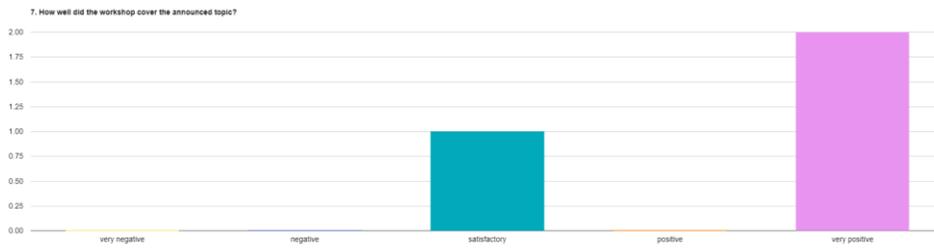
**5. How well was the organisation on site handled?**



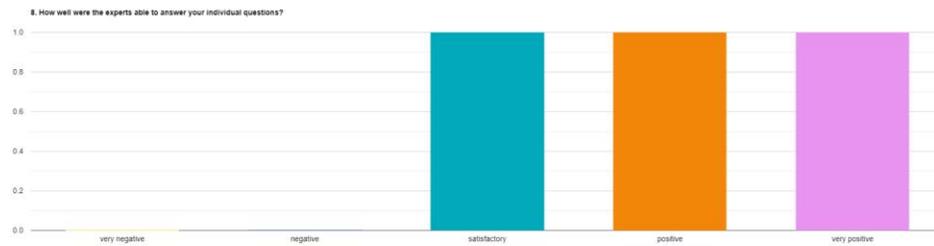
### 6. Was the length of the workshop appropriate for the topic?



### 7. How well did the workshop cover the announced topic?



### 8. How well were the experts able to answer your individual questions?



### Themed Workshop Team Survey and answers 2/3

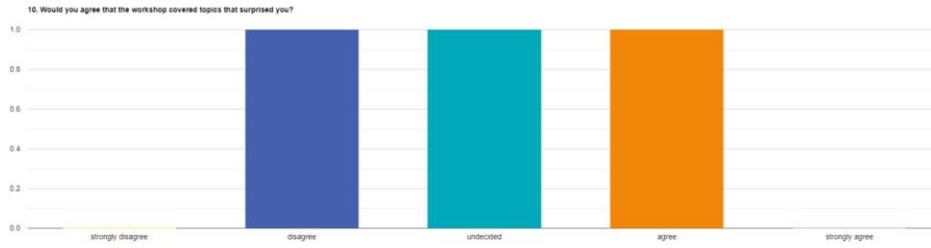
#### 9. How much of an impact does the workshop have on your future company planning?

We had a good chance to connect with other teams and experts, it helps us to gain knowledge during our development

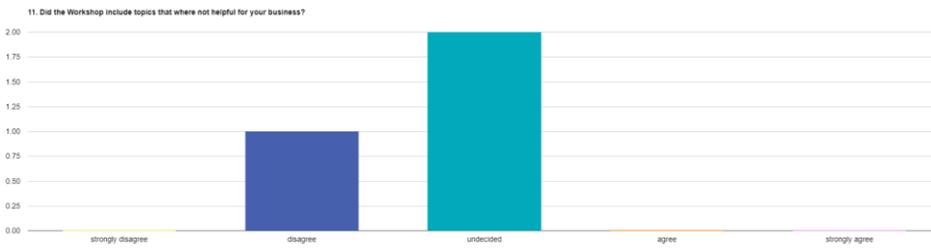
The workshop might have a positive impact on our penetration of the German and Finnish markets.

It had a big impact; providing us tools, collaboration and mentors to support our future.

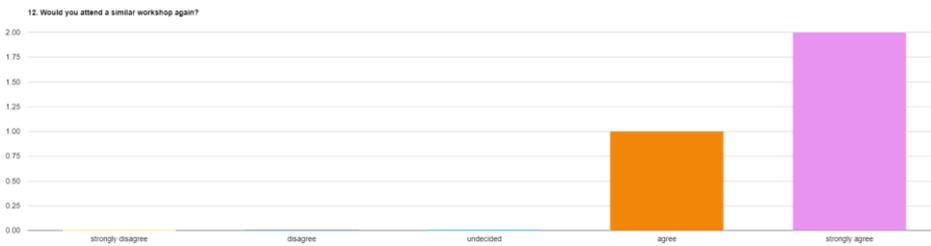
**10. Would you agree that the workshop covered topics that surprised you?**



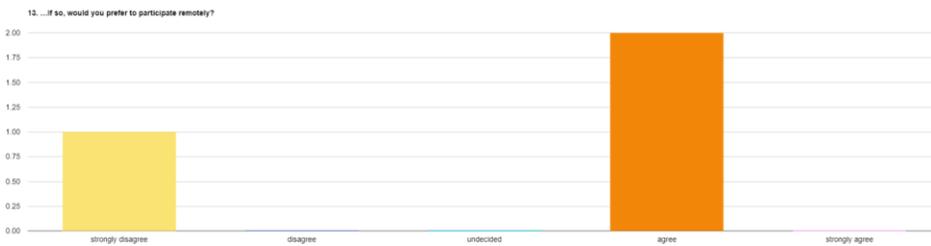
**11. Did the Workshop include topics that where not helpful for your business?**



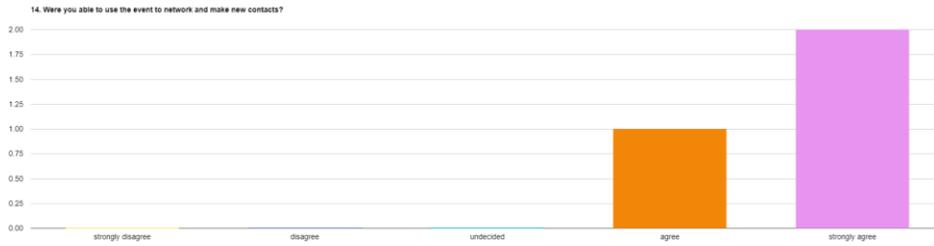
**12. Would you attend a similar workshop again?**



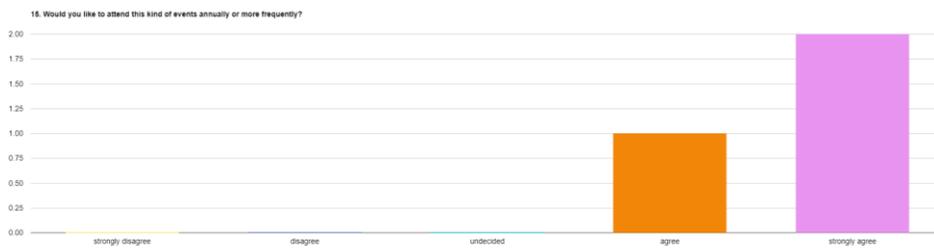
**13. ...if so, would you prefer to participate remotely?**



**14. Were you able to use the event to network and make new contacts?**



**15. Would you like to attend this kind of events annually or more frequently?**



**Themed Workshop Team Survey and answers 3/3**

**16. Please note your top 3 most important/valuable experiences in the workshop and rank them from 1 (most important) to 3.**

Experts connecting, Knowledge, Make friends

1: Networking with the experts, 2: Networking with the attendants, 3: workshopping our business case

1. Hearing other teams and companies, their experiences and thoughts about various topics, 2. Personal discussion with the mentors, 3. Creating the big picture of our company and seeing others notes in the Miro mindmap

**17. Please add more comments and give additional feedback here. Thank you!**

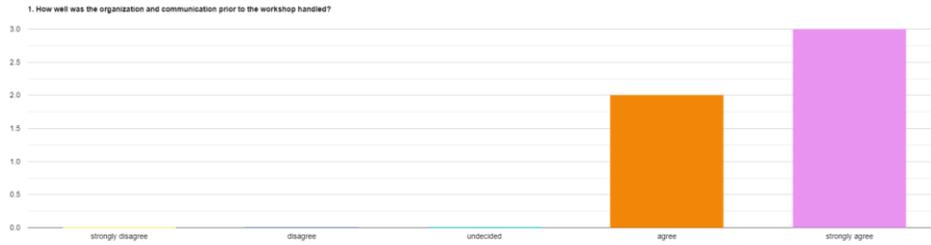
Not many teams and experts

I had a great time, and I feel that the trip was very valuable. Thank you!

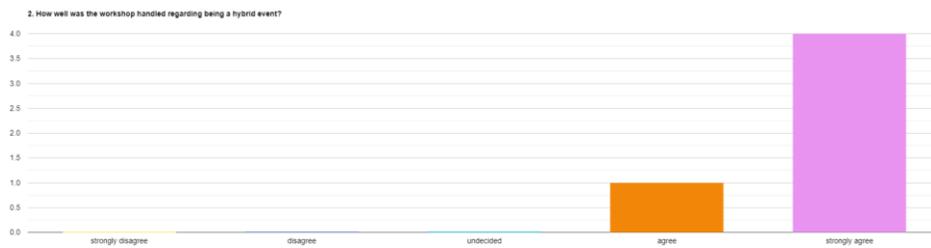
Overall great experience! The presentations were informative, remote work worked smoothly most of the time. The only thing I would improve on is actually these surveys and documents, better format needed. Thank you for gathering the experts and teams for this amazing workshop, hope to see you again!

## Themed Workshop Expert Survey and answers 1/4

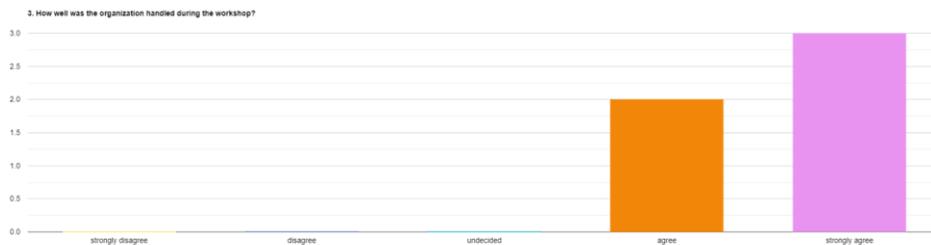
### 1. How well was the organisation and communication prior to the workshop handled?



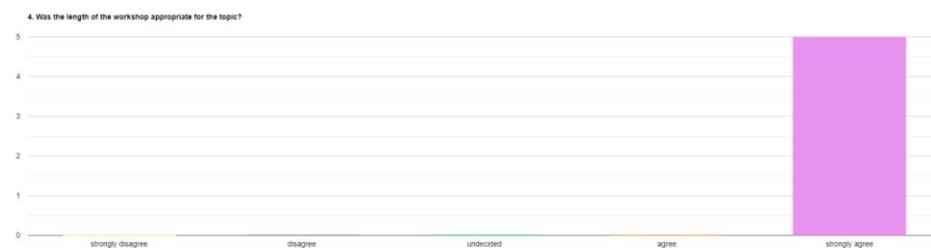
### 2. How well was the workshop handled regarding being a hybrid event?



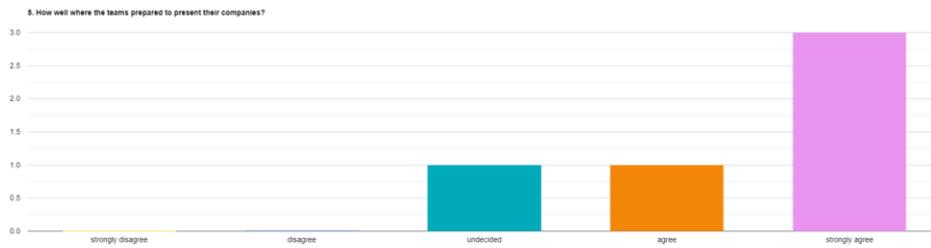
### 3. How well was the organisation handled during the workshop?



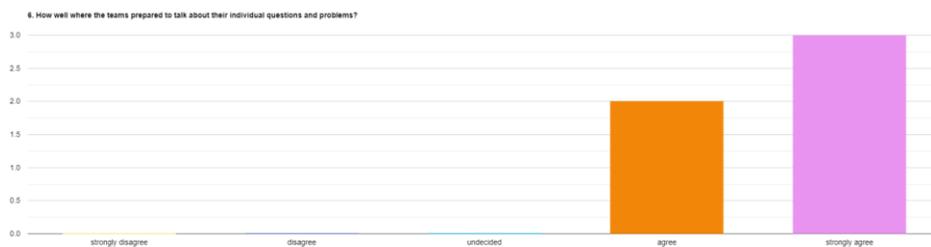
### 4. Was the length of the workshop appropriate for the topic?



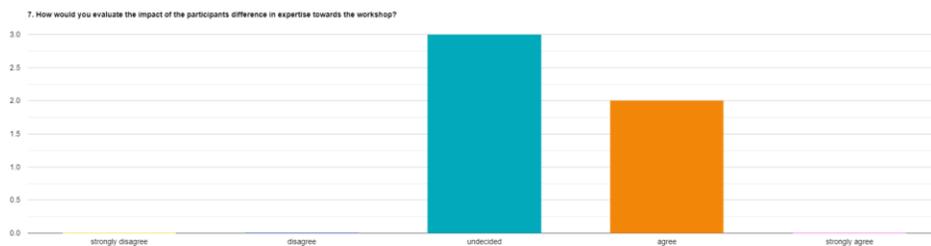
### 5. How well were the teams prepared to present their companies?



### 6. How well were the teams prepared to talk about their individual questions and problems?



### 7. How would you evaluate the impact of the participants difference in expertise towards the workshop?



## Themed Workshop Expert Survey and answers 2/4

### 8. How can we facilitate the workshop by adding new or different task before or during the workshop? Would you suggest an activity that improve the introduction process, self-awareness exercise etc.

Having name cards or tags would be helpful to get the names of all participants faster.

Maybe some kind of warm-up with the participants also to see with what attitude they are coming into the workshop and what they are planning or expecting to get out of the workshops. Then the presentations of each project group to follow up and see what the participants are working on.

Short team presentations (personnel, game idea, open issues) in advance would help.

The teams were at very different stages. While some were still very much at the beginning, others seemed to be much further ahead. Perhaps the space would have been there to give the participants room for

giving peer talks to discuss, similar to a bar camp. In general, it seemed to me that the exchange with the other participants was very much appreciated. Perhaps a little more space could be given to this? Or perhaps the participants could be given the opportunity to get to know each other and exchange ideas in advance (on a digital platform?).

**9. How did the workshop change your perspective on the current challenges of serious game incubation?**

Different angles were presented which were not obvious before

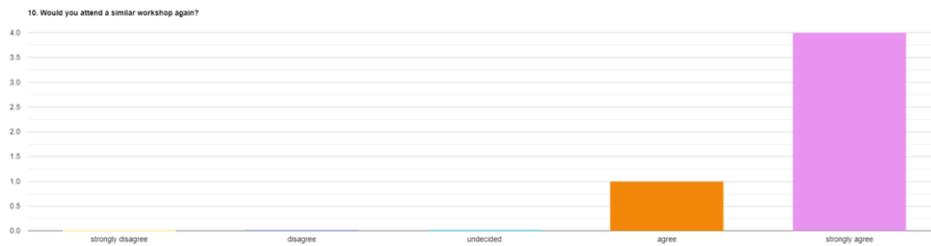
It is great how different the ideas and projects are in the serious games field but also really challenging for everybody to narrow down their specific use case and with that also the user needs of their target group.

No big changes, but underlining the importance of economic, ethic-legal and distribution aspects... apart from game design and game development.

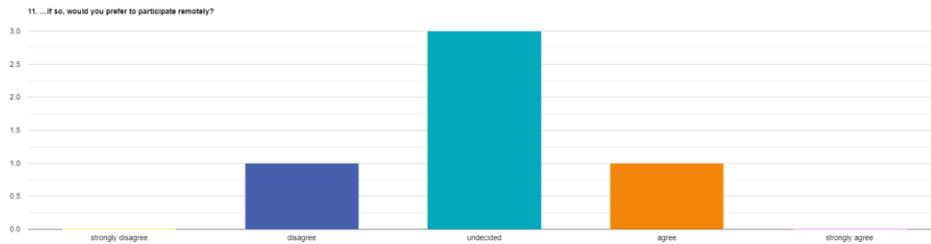
The workshop made me realise once again how important it is for teams to be aware of their focus (their target audience and their goal). One team in particular seemed to think more from the product and less from the target audience. I felt that this weakness was evident when talking to the other participants and experts. Therefore, such exchange opportunities are certainly very helpful, especially for newcomers in the industry.

**Themed Workshop Expert Survey and answers 3/4**

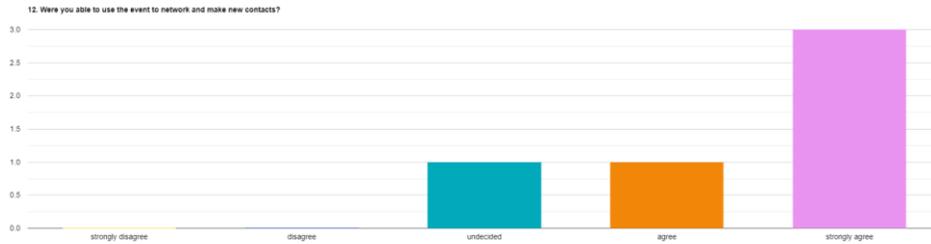
**10. Would you attend a similar workshop again?**



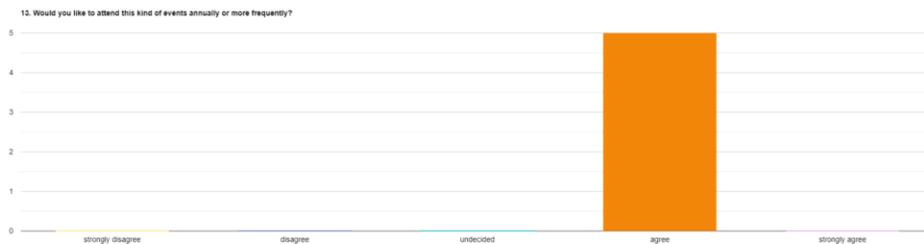
**11. ...if so, would you prefer to participate remotely?**



**12. Were you able to use the event to network and make new contacts?**



**13. Would you like to attend this kind of events annually or more frequently?**



**Themed Workshop Expert Survey and answers 4/4**

**14. Please note your top 3 most important/valuable experiences in the workshop and rank them from 1 (most important) to 3.**

1. Exchange with other experts, 2. Discussing the challenges for serious games, 3. Get to know the teams and their projects

1. Exchange with the participants, 2. Work on concrete issues, 3. Insight into new areas

1 Networking and socialising aspect of the participants, being together on location, 2 Impulse talks and Presentations from the experts and guests, 3 The excellent hybrid setup and eating lunch together with the participants

1 Learning about considerations/open questions of teams, what are the real problems? 2 Discussing of game ideas and quality criteria.

1. Communication of the teams not only with the experts, but especially among themselves was very valuable, 2. Expert talks were gratefully received. At the same time, it was especially the interactive or interpersonal moments where the teams worked on their own problems and asked questions that were particularly valuable. 3. I don't know to what extent this was done in advance, but I would have found it interesting to know in advance what the participants themselves hoped to get out of the workshop. That way, it might have been possible to address their needs more specifically here and there

**15. Please add more comments and give additional feedback here. Thank you!**

It was a great workshop with great experts and presentations; Friedrich did an amazing job with organising and handling all of the participants needs; Catering was great! And the feedback of the participants was also really positive :)

The hybrid event was well organised. Remote contribution worked very well. However, participation on-site would be better for personal discussions. If the Corona situation allows it... I'd prefer to come to Berlin/.. next time.

The event was not only a lot of fun but enriching on many levels for all involved. The hybrid character itself was well planned. Nevertheless, it turned out that those who were on site also used breaks to exchange thoughts/experiences and make contacts. Of course, those who were online were not able to do so. The evening activities were left to the participants. Since one participant went ahead briskly, the participants met later for socialising in bars. It might be worth considering whether to include "after-work drinks" in the planning as well.

## **Further information on the International Webinars**

# Enhancing Game Incubation

International Webinar Series

## TEAM BUILDING FOR GAME STUDIOS

Tuesday, June 1 2021



Joakim Achren, Founder at Elite Game Developers



LITHUANIAN  
INNOVATION  
CENTRE



TARTU SCIENCE PARK  
*Home of Business*



Hochschule für Technik  
und Wirtschaft Berlin  
University of Applied Sciences



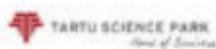
EUROPEAN  
REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
FUND

## Enhancing Game Incubation

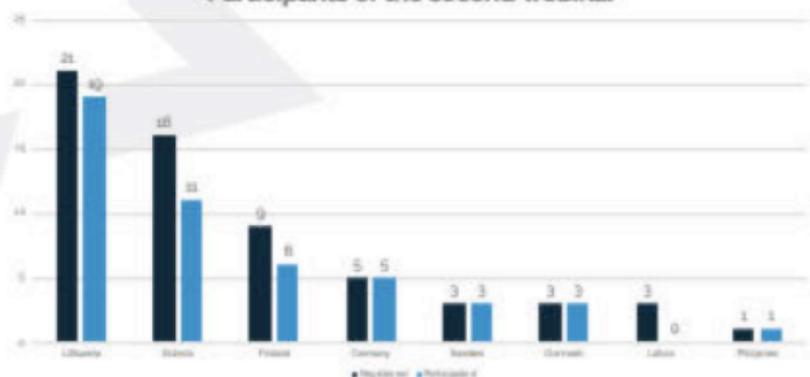
International Webinar Series

### HOW TO BUILD AND MANAGE A PERFORMING MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM?

Tuesday, June 1 2021, 15:00 CET



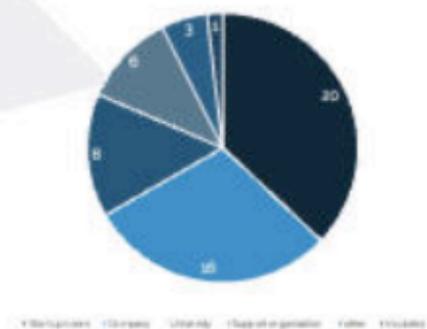
### Participants of the second webinar



2021-06-01

4

### Type of organisation



2021-06-01

5

## Enhancing Game Incubation

International Webinar Series

**GAME CHANGING FINANCES:  
ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW  
ABOUT INVESTORS**



Thursday, September 9 2021, 15:00 CET

15.00 CET Keynote: Jason Della Rocca, Co-founder of Execution Labs

## Enhancing Game Incubation

International Webinar Series

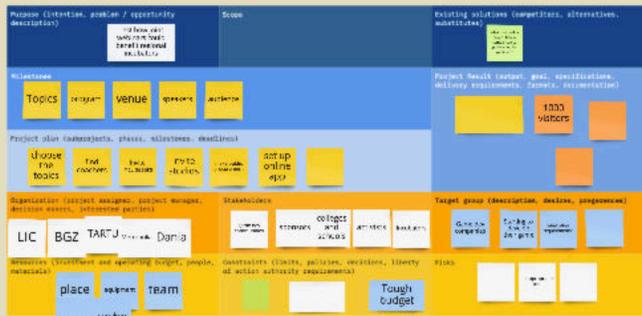
**NON-OBVIOUS  
ROADBLOCKS AND TIPS  
WHEN PITCHING FOR VC  
FUNDING**



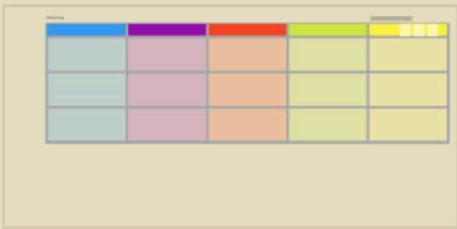
Registration Link: <https://tinyurl.com/5ea3fbz4>

Week 29 20th March

Project name: **Design of Webinar**

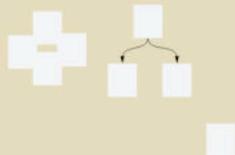


Voting

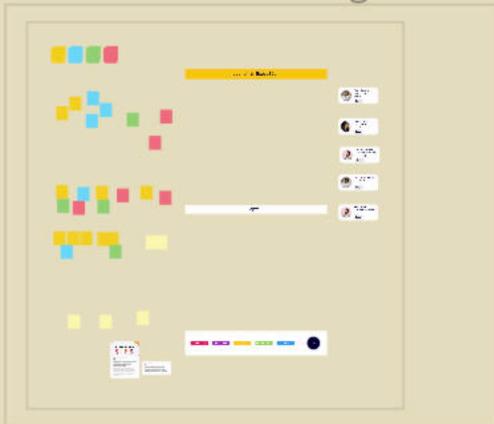


### Target Groups

Person Stage



### Webinar scheduling







WEBINAR REPORT

## **Game changing finances: all you need to know about investors**

Hosted by UAB Kirotech

Thu, September 9, 2021 4:00 pm (EEST)

# Webinar Statistics

## Conversion Rates

Invitation 0/0 (0.0%)

Open Rate

Invitation 0/0 (0.0%)

Click Rate

Email 0/0 (0.0%)

Registrations

Organic 0/204 (0.0%)

Registrations

Total 47

Registrations

Registered 28/47 (59.6%)

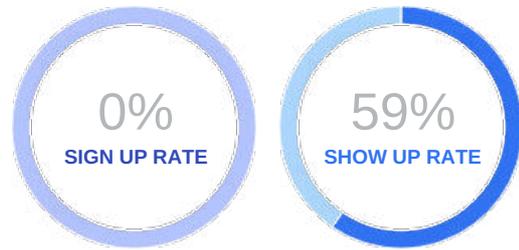
Attendees

Guest 0

Attendees

Total 28

Attendees



# Webinar Registration

## Webinar Page Traffic & Registration



# Webinar

## Attendance Summary

Started at 4:00 pm, Ended 5:30 pm

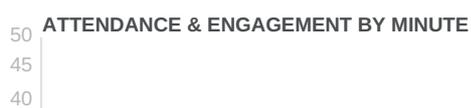
47 REGISTERED

28 ATTENDED

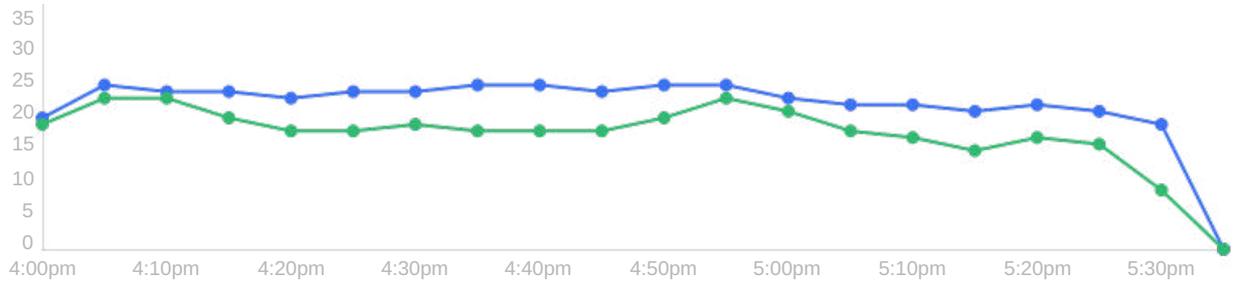
59.6% SHOW UP RATE

90 min SESSION LENGTH

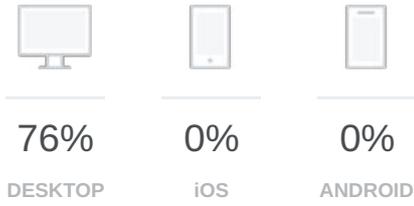
75.9 min AVG. TIME IN ROOM



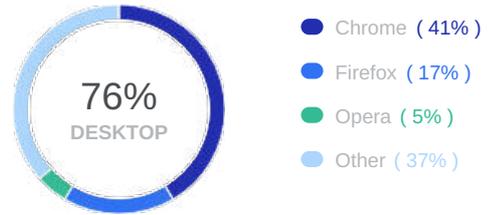
TOTAL ATTENDEES ENGAGED ATTENDEES



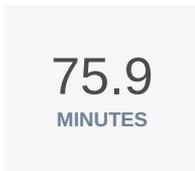
### Attendance by Device



### Attendance by Browser



### Time in Room



### Time Engaged



### Avg. Engagement



### Total Engagement



## THE PROJECT

The extension project “Baltic Sea Game Incubation – Piloting Network Activities to Foster Game Incubation in the BSR” (BSGI) builds upon the BGI-project and continues to work on boosting the game industry in the Baltic Sea Region – giving special attention to capacity building. Its main objective is to enhance business support of game incubators through strategic transnational collaboration with other game incubators in the Baltic Sea region (BSR). Joining forces in transnational cooperation will significantly raise the impact on industry development as opposed to acting alone. A viable international incubation network, a standardised incubation approach with powerful support tools and the expansion of the talent pool will enable young game studios and game developers to compete successfully in the game market and turn it into a growth market.

Read more at <https://baltic-games.eu/171/project-extension-bsgi/>

## PROJECT LEAD

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- Finland: Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Turku Game Hub
- Germany: HTW Berlin University of Applied Sciences
- Lithuania: Lithuanian Innovation Centre
- Sweden: Creative Crowd AB, Invest Stockholm

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