Concept for Game Mentoring and Investment Workshops

Output 2.1 of the BSGI Project

BALTIC SEA GAMES

Interreg Baltic Sea Region

EUROPEAN UNION

EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

The concept for game mentoring and investment workshops translates the intention of work package 2 to pilot transnational actions that would encourage the private-for-profit sector to engage with incubators and start-ups. Following this rationale, the output will summarise the decision-making process that led to the consensus on the most suitable concept for the competence building pilot workshops to be carried out with mentors and investors.

Editor & Publisher

BGZ Berliner Gesellschaft
für internationale Zusammenarbeit mbH

Pohlstraße 67

D – 10785 Berlin

phone: +49 (30) 809941-0

fax: +49 (30) 809941-20

info@bgz-berlin.de

www.bgz-berlin.de

Authors

Creative Crowd AB (Anneli Danielsson, Lars Lindblom, Johan Lindner)

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (Suvi Kiviniemi)

Turku Game Hub (Natasha Skult)

Pictures

Title page: © BGZ & Mindaugas Mikulėnas

All other remaining graphics are the proprietary property of the members of the Baltic Sea Game Incubation project.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License excluding its photographs.

_____

Berlin, May 2021

Content

1. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR GAME INVESTORS AND MENTORS 4

2. A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TOWARDS A GAME INVESTOR WORKSHOP 5

Investor Survey 6
Respondent Profile 6
Respondent Background 6
Investment Type 7
Preferred Company Features 8
Investment Support 8
Conclusions 10

From Survey to an Event 10
Event Plan 11
Time and Place 11
Set-Up 11
Agenda 12
Preparations Needed 12

3. A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TOWARDS A GAME MENTOR WORKSHOP 13

Mentor Survey 13
Respondent Profile 13
Subgroup Profiles 14
Motivations for Mentoring 15
Reasons for Not Mentoring Yet 16
Being a Mentee 16
Challenge of Being a Mentee 17
Challenges a Mentor Could Have Helped to Solve 17
Mentoring Support 18
Useful Topics for Mentoring Education 19
Conclusions 20

From Survey to an Event 21
Pilot Workshop 21

4. CONCLUSIONS 23

5. ATTACHMENTS 24

Investor Survey 24

Mentor Survey 30

1. Capacity Building for Game Investors and Mentors

A healthy business ecosystem needs certain support structures for start-ups and entrepreneurship to ensure its continuous growth and influx of young talents. Incubators and accelerators are the most common forms of business development support for IT and games industries. Among the most important areas they provide help with are funding and knowledge sharing, for which the most important people are investors and mentors. For sustainable growth and development, an ecosystem needs their business developers to be able to involve and collaborate with savvy investors and a culture of mentorship. Consequently, the remit of incubators and accelerators should include supporting the individuals willing to invest money and/or time.

These are the goals of work package 2 of the BSGI project:

- to pilot capacity building models for investments and mentoring in the game industry by finding ways to support current and prospective game investors and mentors
- to demonstrate the added value of such support for the business development programmes, thus offering higher quality and efficient support for young game studios and start-up teams.
- to encourage incubators, accelerators and similar interest organisations to collaborate in the organisation of such support measures

This document describes the research, planning and efforts taken towards those goals in spring 2021.

2. A Conceptual Approach Towards a Game Investor Workshop

One of the goals of the project is to develop and test a concept for an investor workshop to encourage investors to invest in game start-ups and thus build capacity for investments in the game industry. The target group for this workshop is busy and strict about the ways they use their time; early on, we decided to only implement the concept once to avoid exhausting their interest. This in turn added pressure to the need to plan the event very carefully and put a heavy emphasis on getting high quality feedback from the participants.

In accordance with the objectives of the project we started by repeating the overall goal, and then discussed different mindsets, ideas, and scenarios for the workshop. A preliminary schedule was set up, followed by discussions about what type of investors the project wanted to reach and comparisons of the teams' experiences of investors in different countries.

The discussions led to the conclusion that we needed to know more about the investors´ momentums, needs and desires before creating the concept for the workshop. Hence, a survey was conducted. This was also considered to be a good way to reach the target group, since it gave us a reason to make personal contact with different investors in our networks. The survey provided an opportunity to make the investors aware of the coming event, offering them the possibility to register their interest to take part in it.

We placed great emphasis on formulating the questions in the survey. Several team meetings took place, and a few investors from our networks were also involved in the process. The investors feedback showed, amongst other things, that the international context was thought to be particularly interesting, and a good reason to engage in the coming workshop event. It also made it obvious that a great "sales pitch" was needed when contacting the investors. A template was made explaining the context and purpose of the survey. We then used the template as a guideline when contacting the investors for the survey, with our own adaptations.

In total 88 invitations to the survey were sent to known investors and investor networks and 47 answers were compiled.

Investor Survey

Before designing a more detailed programme for the investor competence building event, we endeavoured to better understand the needs of investors who are interested in backing game companies. A survey was conducted to give us some relevant insights.

The survey targeted people who invest or are interested in investing in the game industry, whether as private investors or in a professional role. This target group included game-curious angel investors, VC fund employees, game industry veterans interested in becoming investors, and everything in between.

With this in mind, the project group shared the survey with hand-picked people and organisations, ranging from private angels and angel networks to venture funds. The survey was sent to 88 recipients, and they were encouraged to further share the survey with their own investor networks. The recipients were mostly European.

The survey was open for 26 days, 10.3.-4.4.2020. During this time, it got 48 responses. One of the responses had a duplicate with identical answers from the same person. This duplicate was removed from the results.

Some core figures and tables are included in the text; others can be found in attachments.

Respondent Profile

Respondent Background

30% (14) of the respondents were located in Sweden. Other countries were Finland (19%; 9), Germany (13%; 6), Lithuania (13%; 6), UK (6%; 3), Denmark (6%; 3), Netherlands (4%; 2), Estonia (4%; 2), USA (2%; 1) and Thailand (2%; 1).

Over half of the respondents (55%; 26) had more than 10 years of experience in the game industry in some role. By a mistake, the survey did not have the option to choose “no experience in games at all”, so the option “1-2 years” also includes those people - some of them had commented about this in the next open field question.

32% (15) of respondents had no experience in investing yet, and 13% (6) had experience in investing, but not yet in games. 26% had done occasional game industry investment, and 30% regular.

The data shows a trend towards more experienced industry people also being more likely to invest in it either regularly or occasionally. People with little or no experience in games are overrepresented in the group that has not invested yet in games or at all. However, almost half of the respondents that have not invested at all yet are industry veterans with 10+ years of experience (see table below).

The majority of respondents (68%) were part of some investor networks, either formal or informal. These networks ranged from an unofficial group of friends to angel organisations to participating in a VC fund.

$InvestorRole*$GameExperience Crosstabulation

			Experience in games[a]					
			0-2 years	3-5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	15+ years	Total
Role related to investing[a]	Interested in investing	Count	7	0	1	4	3	15
		% of Total	14,9%	0,0%	2,1%	8,5%	6,4%	31,9%
	Investing in other industries	Count	5	0	0	1	0	6
		% of Total	10,6%	0,0%	0,0%	2,1%	0,0%	12,8%
	Some investment in games	Count	0	2	0	2	8	12
		% of Total	0,0%	4,3%	0,0%	4,3%	17,0%	25,5%
	Regular investment in games	Count	1	3	2	2	6	14
		% of Total	2,1%	6,4%	4,3%	4,3%	12,8%	29,8%
Total		Count	13	5	3	9	17	47
		% of Total	27,7%	10,6%	6,4%	19,1%	36,2%	100,0%

Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

The majority of respondents (68%) were part of some investor networks, either formal or informal. These networks ranged from an unofficial group of friends to angel organisations to participating in a VC fund.

Investment Type

Most of the respondents did relatively small investments in games. The most common ticket size was 10k-50k (26%; 23). Other popular options were <10k (19%; 17), none yet (15%; 13), 50k-100k (15%; 13) and 100k-500k (12%; 11). Larger options were rarer: 500k-1m (7%; 6), 1-5m (3%; 3) and 5m+ (4%; 4).

The most popular stage to enter as an investor was “Start-up stage - starting production, testing with customers” (42%; 43 responses). “Growth stage - market fit found, investment goes to marketing” was the second most popular option (28%; 29), closely followed by “Idea stage - market research, proof of concept & pre-production” (42%; 43). “Mature stage - profitable company, invest to accelerate growth” was the least popular (9%; 9).

There is a correlation between bigger ticket sizes and later stages of investment; investors with bigger ticket sizes are more likely to be interested in growth stage and mature companies (see table below).

$CompanyStage*$TicketSize Crosstabulation

			Preferred ticket size[a]								
			None yet	€ <10k	€ 10k-50k	€ 50k-100k	€ 100k-500k	€ 500k-1m	€ 1m-5m	€ 5m +	Total
Preferred stage to enter as investor[a]	Idea stage - market research, proof of concept & pre-production	Count	5	8	12	9	5	1	0	1	19
		% within $TicketSize	45,5%	61,5%	66,7%	81,8%	62,5%	33,3%	0,0%	25,0%	
	Start-up stage - starting production, testing with customers	Count	10	12	18	11	8	2	1	1	33
		% within $TicketSize	90,9%	92,3%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	66,7%	50,0%	25,0%	
	Growth stage - market fit found, investment goes to marketing	Count	7	9	10	5	5	2	2	3	22
		% within $TicketSize	63,6%	69,2%	55,6%	45,5%	62,5%	66,7%	100,0%	75,0%	
	Mature stage - profitable company, invest to accelerate growth	Count	3	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	7
		% within $TicketSize	27,3%	15,4%	11,1%	9,1%	25,0%	66,7%	100,0%	75,0%	
Total		Count	11	13	18	11	8	3	2	4	37

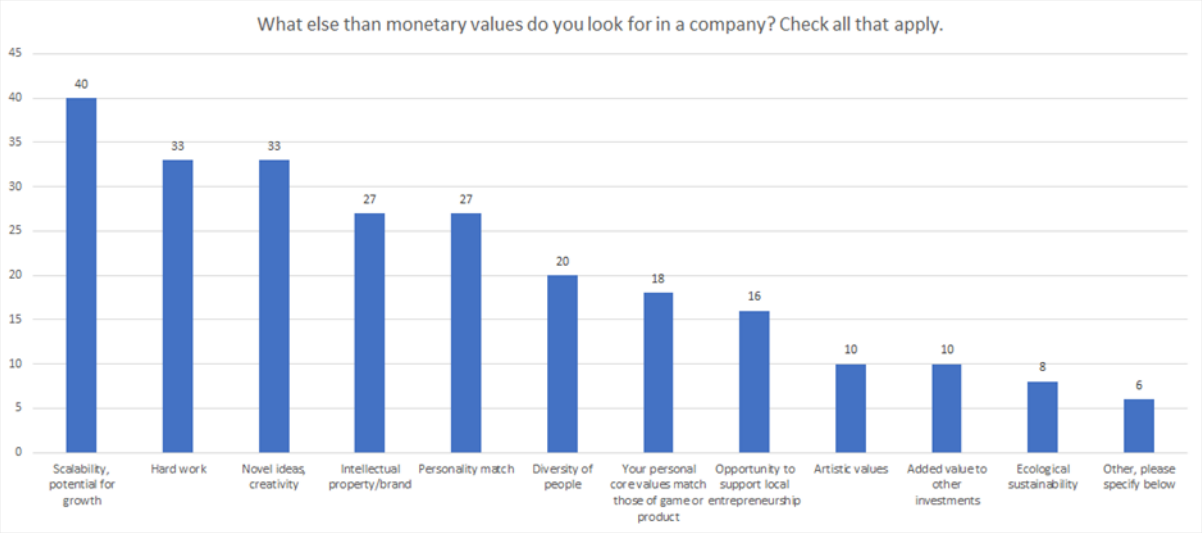
Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Preferred Company Features

The respondents appreciated companies having industry seniors as their mentors. A clear majority was either slightly more (45%; 21) or more (38%; 18) inclined to invest in a company that has mentors. For 17% (8) there was no difference; no respondent saw mentors as a negative factor. One respondent pointed out in an open question that name-dropping is not appreciated; the mentors need to be active and relevant to add value.

When asked what they were looking for in a company other than monetary values, 40 respondents (83,3%) - a clear majority - chose “scalability; potential for growth”. Other highly appreciated features were “Hard work” and “Novel ideas, creativity” tied with 33 respondents (68,8%), and “Intellectual property/brand” and “Personality match” tied with 27 respondents (56,3%). “Diversity of people” was chosen by 20 respondents (41,7%).



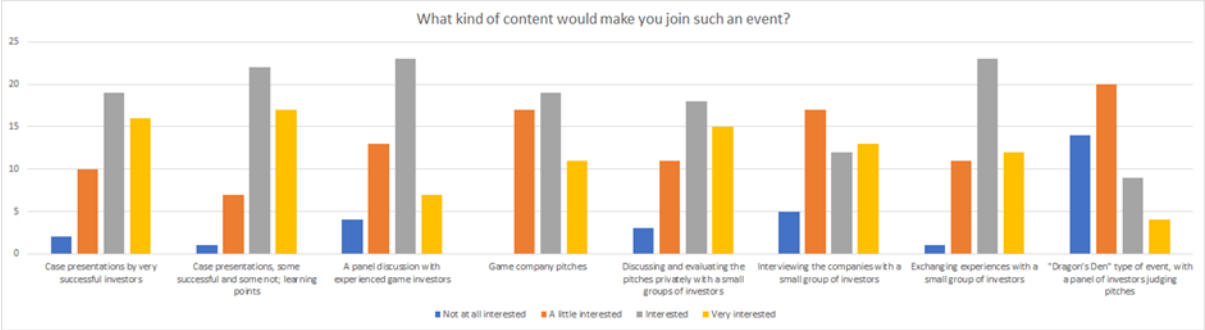
The most common “Other, please specify” response was, by a large margin, “Team”. There were some variations, like the track record, experience, capability to deliver, and team drive. This option should be added to the list of options if further research is done.

Investment Support

To the question “which of these has helped or would help you to invest in games”, 94% of respondents selected “co-investment opportunities or making investments alongside others” to be helpful or very helpful. “A network of game investors” was found to be helpful or very helpful by 72% of the respondents, “hearing the experiences of other game investors” by 70%, and “having veterans as strategic advisors” by 68%. On the other hand, the majority of respondents found all the suggested forms of education to be of little or no help at all. “Education in investing in games specifically” was selected to be little or no help by 53% of respondents, “education in the ins and outs of the game industry” by 62%, and “education in investing in general” by 66%.

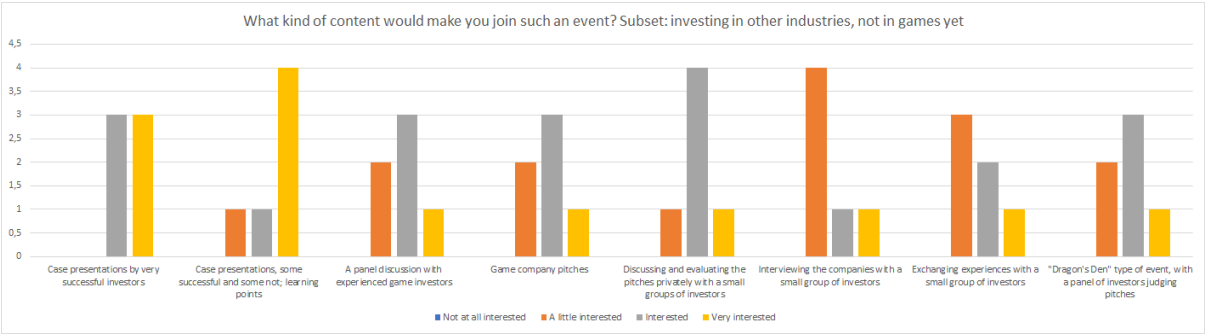
We also asked the respondents to specify what kind of content would make them join an investor event. 83% of the respondents were interested or very interested in “case presentations, some successful and

some not; learning points". Two other popular options were "case presentations by very successful investors" and "exchanging experiences with a small group of investors", both with 74% interested or very interested respondents. "Game company pitches were less interesting (67%), but "discussing and evaluating the pitches privately with a small group of investors" (70%) was more interesting than the pitches themselves. "Interviewing the companies with a small group of investors" was interesting or very interesting for 53% of the respondents. The least interesting option by far was "'Dragon's Den' type of event, with a panel of investors judging pitches" with only 28% of the respondents finding it interesting or very interesting.



When comparing preferences in event content with the preferred ticket size and years of experience in games, no clear differences were found. Investors with different ticket sizes and different levels of experience in the industry all had roughly the same preferences.

However, when comparing preferences in event content with the respondents' roles in relation to investing, some differences became visible. Respondents who invest in other industries but not in games yet, were more likely to be very interested in case presentations, both very successful cases and cases with varying success. On the other hand, they were less likely to be very interested in discussing and evaluating the pitches privately with a small group of investors, and less likely to be interested or very interested in interviewing the companies with a small group of investors and in exchanging experiences with a small group of investors. They were also slightly more interested in a "Dragon's Den" type of event than any other group of respondents.



The respondents also had the opportunity to talk more about their needs in two open field questions, "If education would help you invest in games, what kinds of topics would be the most useful?" and "What else would help you to invest in games?". These fields were, in practice, used interchangeably, and thus were analysed together.

By a large margin, the most common theme in these responses was practicalities of investment - structuring investments, co-investing, investment terms and rules and taxation. The second most common theme was the metrics of measuring the success of a game company. A handful of respondents also mentioned the need to understand the games market and the business of games better.

The respondents had the opportunity to leave their contact information at the end of the survey, if they were interested in hearing more about the investor event the project is planning to organise. A clear majority, 83%, of the respondents decided to leave their information.

Conclusions

We reached our target audience well with the survey, and several investor networks were eager to help us spread the word. Furthermore, 83% of the respondents chose to leave their contact information to hear more about the competence building event. There clearly is interest in this type of event.

When it comes to questions about support for investment in games, there was a clear trend in responses: the options that investors appreciate the most have to do with sharing experiences with and learning from other investors, preferably with the added value of personal contact with them.

An interesting exception to this were respondents with experience in investing in other industries, but not in games yet; they were less interested in direct interaction with other investors than other respondents. However, it is worth keeping in mind that this subset is quite small and contains only 6 respondents; it is possible that this result would not be repeated in a new survey.

Many of the respondents mentioned the practicalities of investing as a topic that would enable them to invest in games. Combined with the fact that co-investment was one of the most interesting forms of support for the respondents, we can assume that topics considering the practical side of co-investment would be of interest to many investors.

From Survey to an Event

After several discussions and analysing the survey results, we made the following decisions:

1. The event should actively involve the investors and give them opportunities to discuss game investment and learn from each other.

2. The amount of money invested in games differs a lot, and investors of all sizes have shown interest towards the event. Small-scale investors and large-scale investors have different points of view and experiences, and it could be interesting to give them different questions to discuss.

3. The international context is something to highlight. Involving participants from more than one country gives extra value. The moderators, participating companies etc should come from several different countries.

4. Due to the pandemic the participants need to be able to attend the investor workshop online. If physical meetings and travel are possible, many would like to be given the opportunity to attend the workshop on site. A blended meeting would be a good solution. There might even be the option of several physical events across the BSR linked via streaming. The proper technical solution making this possible to implement should be considered.

Event Plan

Time and Place

October 28th, 2021

Skellefteå Sweden, as a part of the Arctic Game Week event. Possibility to attend physically or digitally.

The event will be combined with the Arctic Game Conference, which attracts a lot of international visitors both from the industry and the public yearly. This connection gives the event better visibility and makes it more attractive for its busy target group.

A digital connection to Berlin Game Week will also be established to further enhance this effect. Thus, investors will be able to join the event at the location in Skellefteå, at the remote location in Berlin, or remotely from their own office.

This hybrid solution combined with a demanding target audience sets the bar high when it comes to technical solutions. The setup needs to be carefully planned to answer the needs, and it will be tested beforehand at a smaller, local investor workshop on June 9th in Luleå.

Set-Up

- 1-2 moderators on site
- 1 moderator online
- 2 camera set-up
- 2 technicians
- 3 LED TV's for panelists

- Online voting system (Mentimeter solution)
- Solution for breakout sessions

- Streaming solution
- Combine with meet-to-match

Agenda

1. Introduction and overall scope - Game industry opportunities - Early investments
2. A game company describing the journey
3. Panel discussion - Successful investments in games (small investors)
4. Panel discussion - Failures in game investments (large investors)
5. Pitches from game companies (5 min each + 5 min questions)
6. Moderated breakout sessions to discuss pitches
7. Feedback from each breakout session to the group
8. A road to co-investment.
9. Online voting questions (mentimeter) during the workshop to involve the participants and to get input for the evaluation

Preparations Needed

Looking for a suitable technical solution, planning details and preparing procurement

- to be done May to September 2021

Test the technology and set up in a smaller scale, done at a local investor workshop

- to be done June 9th in Luleå Sweden.

Complete a time-schedule, especially taking into account

- the recruitment of participating companies, moderators etc
- preparation of a detailed agenda
- producing and sending invitations

3. A Conceptual Approach Towards a Game Mentor Workshop

Together with the partners of the BSGI consortium, we have been developing a programme for establishing the best practices and guidance for mentors in the games industry through a mentor workshop programme. The games industry has many mentorship programmes that operate in either a regional or international capacity, and there are more mentors joining these programmes each year. While traditionally mentorship programmes focus on the needs and support for the mentees, both as individuals or start-up teams, no programme to support (prospective) mentors of the industry has been developed. Therefore, within this project we are aiming to build an agile support system for the mentors regardless of their previous experience in mentoring.

To better understand the needs of the target group, we decided to launch a survey for mentors and potential future mentors in the game industry. The survey also provided an opportunity to make the mentors of various backgrounds and expertise aware of the planned pilot event for competence building, offering them the possibility to register their interest to take part in it.

Mentor Survey

Before designing a more detailed programme for the mentor workshop, we needed to better understand the needs and expectations of game industry mentors and people who would like to mentor in games, and correlate this with the experiences and expectations of mentees. A survey was conducted to provide us with relevant insights.

The survey targeted people who work in the game industry and are, have been or would like to start mentoring others. With this in mind, the project group shared the survey in their networks and on channels that reach the target group, like the IGDA Finland Facebook channel.

The survey was open for 28 days, 30.3.-25.4.2020. During this time, it got 65 responses.

Some core figures and tables are included in the text; others can be found in attachments.

Respondent Profile

Despite the project group's efforts to share the survey internationally, most of the respondents were from Finland (27; 41.5%). Second most respondents were from Denmark (14; 21.5%). Other countries were Sweden (6; 9.2%), Lithuania (5; 7.7%), Estonia (5; 7,7%), United Kingdom (3; 4.6%), Germany (2; 3.1%), and Spain, Singapore, and Norway with one (1,5%) respondent each.

Most respondents had been working in the game industry for 3-5 years (24; 36.9%) or 5-10 years (17; 26.2%). 9 respondents (13.8%) had worked in the industry for 10-15 years, 8 respondents (12.3%) for 1-2 years, and 7 respondents (10.8%) for 15+ years.

A large majority of respondents had at least some experience in mentoring in the games industry; either occasional (21; 32.3%), some regular (20; 30.8%) or years of regular experience (6; 9.2%). 15 respondents (23.1%) were interested in mentoring but had no experience yet, and 3 respondents (4,6%) had experience in mentoring outside of the games industry.

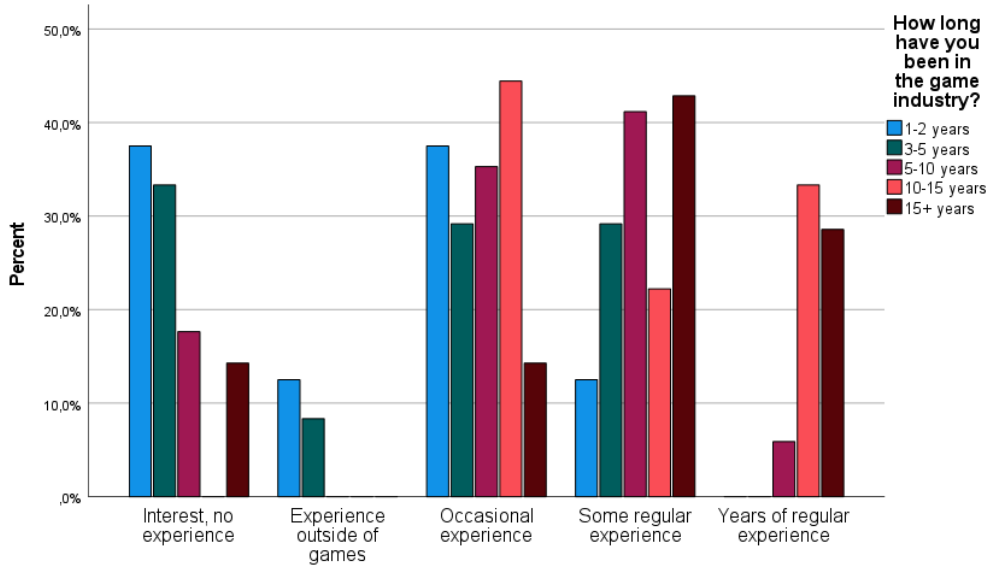
The question about mentoring experience was used to share the respondents in subgroups; respondents with no experience in mentoring in games yet got slightly different questions from those with experience in mentoring in games. Furthermore, both subgroups answered a question about being mentored themselves and the ones who responded yes, also answered some questions about their experiences as a mentee.

Subgroup Profiles

The subgroup of respondents with no experience in mentoring in games (18 respondents) includes respondents who were interested in mentoring but had no experience yet (15), and respondents who have experience of mentoring outside of games (3).

The subgroup of respondents with experience in mentoring in games (47 respondents) includes respondents who have occasional experience (21), some regular experience (20), or years of regular experience (6) in mentoring in games.

The subgroup with no experience in mentoring was more likely to have little experience in games in general; however, it also includes some more experienced professionals. Respectively, the subgroup with experience in mentoring largely consists of experienced professionals, but also includes some less experienced respondents who have started mentoring early in their career (see chart below).



Motivations for Mentoring

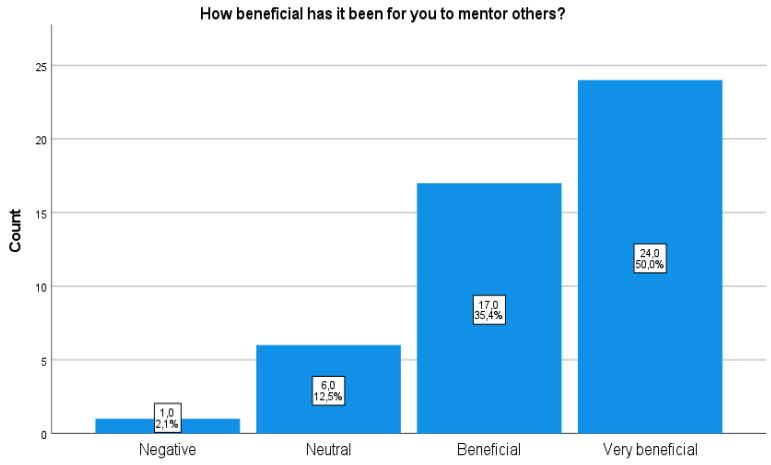
For respondents with no mentoring experience in games yet (18 respondents), the most common reasons to be interested in mentoring are “give back to the community” (18; 100% of the subgroup) and “I learn from it too” (17; 94.4%). “Networking with future collaboration partners and co-workers” (13; 72.2%) and “deep discussions with interesting people” (12; 66.7%) were also common motivations. “Fresh ideas from juniors” was selected by 8 respondents (44.4%), and “It would help me get forward in my career” by 5 respondents (27.8%). 2 respondents (11.1%) selected “other, please specify”; both specifications were related to social gratification.

Respondents with experience in mentoring in games (47 respondents) were largely motivated by the same factors as the subgroup with no experience. The most common motivations were “give back to the community” (42; 89.4% of the subgroup) and “I learn from it too” (42; 89.4%). They were followed by “networking with future collaboration partners and co-workers” (37; 78.7%) and “deep discussions with interesting people” (34; 72.3%), which were both slightly more common than in the other subgroup. “Fresh ideas from juniors” was slightly less common (20; 42.6%).

“Other, please specify” was chosen by 9 people (19.1%) in this subgroup. Specifications were related to different forms of social gratification and strengthening the local community. One respondent also mentioned finding a new job through mentoring.

The subgroup with experience in mentoring had two more options than the other subgroup, both about mentoring as a part of one’s professional role. “It comes with my work role” was selected by 16 respondents (34%) and “I’m paid to mentor” by 7 respondents (14.9%). It’s worth noting that none of these respondents only selected these options as motivations for their mentoring; they were all also motivated by other factors.

A large majority of respondents found it either very beneficial (50,0%; 24) or beneficial (35.4%; 17) for themselves to mentor others. A minority found it neutral (12.5%; 6), and only one respondent (2.1%) found it negative.



Reasons for Not Mentoring Yet

Respondents with no experience in mentoring in games (18 respondents) were asked to select the reasons why they have not mentored yet. The most common reasons were “lack of knowledge on how to mentor” (8; 44.4% of the subgroup) and “I need more experience in the industry” (8; 44.4%). They were followed by “lack of important professional knowledge” (7; 38,9%) and “I don’t know how to find someone to mentor” (5; 27.8%). “I don’t have the time” and “I came to think of it only recently” were chosen by 3 respondents (16.7%) each.

4 respondents selected the option “other”. Their specifications included lack of confidence, experience being from making games as a hobby and not commercial games, and no-one asking to be mentored. One respondent also mentioned that they actually have mentored, but it was not official.

The respondents also had the option to answer the open question “if education could help you become a mentor, which subjects would be the most useful ones?” 13 respondents wrote an answer to this question. Their responses included many soft skills, like gaining confidence, learning teaching methods and expectation management, and understanding how to inspire and motivate others. Some mentioned professional skills, either more general, like public speaking or building a portfolio, or very specific ones, like game pr and marketing, 3d art, or game project management. Several also mentioned that they need to learn how to mentor and what mentoring is in the first place.

Being a Mentee

Both subgroups were asked if they have received mentoring themselves. Of the subgroup with no mentoring experience, 50% of the respondents (9) had received mentoring, and 50% had not. Respondents with mentoring experience had received mentoring more often; 74.5% (35 respondents) reported they had received mentoring at some point.

Of all respondents, 69.2% (44 respondents) had received mentoring at some point. Among the respondents with 15+ years of experience in the industry, 85.7% had received mentoring. Respondents with 10-15 years or 5-10 years of experience were significantly less likely to have received mentoring - 66.7% and 61.1%, respectively. Of respondents with 3-5 years of experience, 70.8% had received mentoring, and of those with 1-2 years of experience, 62.5%.

Respondents who have received mentoring at some point were also asked if they are still receiving mentoring sessions. Most of them, 70.5%, answered no. There was a clear correlation between experience in the industry and receiving mentoring sessions. 50.0% of respondents with 1-2 years of experience were still receiving mentoring sessions. For respondents with 3-5 years of experience, the percentage fell to 38.9%, for respondents with 5-10 years of experience, 20.0%, and 10-15 years of experience, 16,7%. None of the respondents with 15+ years of experience were receiving mentoring.

The respondents who are no longer receiving mentoring were also asked to specify the reasons why. There were several repeating themes among the 27 responses: changes in life situations (moving to different companies, starting studies, etc), not knowing the right person to ask to mentor, not having the need for a mentor right now, and fixed term mentoring ending. There were also several respondents who were not sure whether their relationship with a more experienced professional counts as mentoring or

not, and some that used to have a formal mentoring relationship that later became informal/occasional. Some other reasons for not having mentoring relationships anymore were covid, mentee feeling like they should pay, and industry/companies tending to lack mentorship.

56,8% of the respondents (25 respondents) found being a mentee very beneficial, and 25,0% (11 respondents) found it beneficial. 15,9% (7 respondents) found it neutral, and 1,5% (1 respondent) negative.

Challenge of Being a Mentee

The respondents were also asked to talk about the challenges they have faced as mentees. 35 respondents wrote a response to this open question.

Some of the challenges were very practical. Time management was a clear and common repeating theme; respondents found it challenging to book meetings with the mentor, find the time to think about all the things discussed, and do assignments they were given by their mentor. Several respondents wished they had a clearer framework for mentoring - when to meet, what to discuss, which kinds of questions to ask. Finding the right mentor was also a common challenge; both finding a mentor with the right professional skills and finding a personality match were mentioned several times.

Many respondents also identified more abstract challenges. Reinterpreting the learnings and mentors' stories to the mentees' own situation was a common issue. In some cases, the mentee also felt the mentor did not understand the differences between their own and the mentee's situation. One respondent mentioned being frustrated with their team members after mentoring and hoping their mentor could also teach the rest of the team.

Identifying and bringing out the real issues and discussing them honestly had been a challenge to several respondents. These issues often had to do with the mentee's lack of confidence, fear of sounding stupid, or feeling of being overwhelmed by the situation and the learnings. One respondent mentioned that their status as a member of a minority added to the fear of not being taken seriously by mentors. Some of the respondents also felt they could not trust their mentors to respect the confidentiality of the discussions; in one case, the mentor was assigned by the mentee's workplace, and the mentee was afraid of the mentor relaying the discussions to their superiors.

Challenges a Mentor Could Have Helped to Solve

At the beginning of the survey, all the respondents were asked to identify a challenge a mentor could have helped them solve in the beginning of their career. 53 respondents wrote an answer to this open question.

Many of the responses to this question were clearly dependent on the life situation and/or career path of the respondent. Some of the responses were related to starting up a career after graduation, and some about game entrepreneurship and running your own business. Some of the responses were very practical and hands-on, related to details of specific professional skills. Some, of course, were more general and relevant in all of these situations.

Among the more general topics, one of the most common was networking - understanding the importance of networking, how to network, and practical support in getting to know the right people. Many mentioned that having a mentor could have helped them gain confidence early in their careers. Mentorship was also often seen as an opportunity to take the time to think about the issues at hand on another level and see them from a new perspective. It was mentioned that mentoring can help to understand other people's perspectives, and to get honest opinions of people who are outsiders to the situation and thus less biased. Furthermore, it was mentioned that a mentor can help the mentee to set career goals and understand the bigger picture of the industry.

Among the responses related to starting up a career, the responses had themes like building a portfolio, identifying career paths, preparing for job applications and interviews, and being patient when trying to break into the industry. Some of the mentions of networking were also tied specifically to networking with the goal of landing a job.

Responses related to entrepreneurship included some very abstract things, like being more realistic, failing fast and treating ideas as raw material rather than a guide. On the other hand, some responses were very practical and hands-on; ways of financing a company, business models, understanding the game market, marketing and getting visibility, making a business plan, and scoping projects (down).

Responses related to practical, hands-on professional skill development included learning the best practices of personal workflow, finding good resources, and "how to make a good game".

Mentoring Support

Both the respondents with experience in mentoring and the ones with no experience yet were asked to identify what kind of support they would find useful as mentors. The questions were slightly different; "would you be interested in…" for the former group, and "what would help you become a mentor in games" for the latter. The response options were the same for both groups: "education in how to mentor", "education to fill professional knowledge gaps I have", "help in finding people to mentor", "hands-on support in being a mentor", and "a network of mentors for peer support. There were clear differences between the responses in these two groups.

Most of the subgroup with mentoring experience would find education in mentoring to be interesting; 20,8% (10 respondents) responded they would be very interested, and 35,4% (17) would be interested. 37,5% (18) would maybe be interested, and only 6,3% (3) would not be interested. The subgroup with no experience in mentoring was even more interested in mentoring education. It was found to be very helpful by 33,3% of the group (6 respondents), and helpful by 38,9% (7). 16,7% (3) found it to be little help, and 11,1% (2) thought it would not help.

Education to fill gaps in professional knowledge was also interesting for a clear majority of both subgroups. Of respondents with mentoring experience, 35,4% (17) would find it very interesting, 39,6% (19) interesting, 18,8% (9) possibly interesting, and only 6,3% (3) uninteresting. Of respondents with no mentoring experience yet, 22,2% (4) would find it very helpful, and 55,6% (10) helpful. Little help and would not help were both selected by 11,1% (2) respondents.

Help in finding people to mentor was clearly more interesting for people with no experience in mentoring yet. Of respondents with mentoring experience, 20,8% (10) would be very interested in it, and 29,2% interested. 33,3% (16) would be possibly interested, and 16,7% (8) not at all interested. Of respondents with no mentoring experience, 27,8% (5) would find it to be very helpful, 50% (9) helpful, and 16,7% (3) little help. No respondent chose “would not help”.

Hands-on support in being a mentor was also clearly more interesting for people with no experience in mentoring yet. Of respondents with mentoring experience, only 18,8% (9) would be very interested in it, and 27,1% (13) interested. 41,7% (20) would be possibly interested, and 12,5% (6) not at all. The subgroup with no experience in mentoring found hands-on support was found very helpful by 27,8% of respondents (5), and helpful by 50% (9). 16,7% (3) found it to be of little help, and 1,5% (1) no help.

A network for mentors for peer support was found to be interesting by both groups. Of respondents with mentoring experience, 29, 2% (14) found it very interesting, 39,2% (19) interesting, and 25,0% (12) possibly interesting. Only 6,3% (3) did not find it interesting at all. Of respondents with no mentoring experience, 72,2% (13) found it very helpful, 11,1% (2) helpful and 16,7% (3) little helpful. No respondent chose the option “would not help”.

Useful Topics for Mentoring Education

Both respondent subgroups were asked which subjects of education they would find most useful for their mentoring, and if they have any other ideas on what would help them. These were open and optional questions, and a majority of both groups decided to write a response.

Both subgroups raised similar topics when asked about the subjects of education. The biggest difference was that respondents with mentoring experience more frequently mentioned topics around psychology, soft skills and communication; these topics did come up several times also with the non-experienced subgroup, but even more with the experienced one. These topics included active listening, inspiring others, giving feedback, and supporting growth, among other things.

Both groups also mentioned practical mentoring topics more than once - how to structure mentoring, what kinds of tools and processes to use, creating goals, and teaching methods. The challenges of mentoring people with a different role to yours was also mentioned.

The respondents also raised some topics that are clearly a part of their professional skill set. The most common one was marketing and other visibility work, including mentions of platform specific marketing, publishing, and successful indie game launch examples. Other topics mentioned were art in its different forms, game architectures, game design, programming, funding, team dynamics, and business development.

“Regional knowledge for different regions game funding and development scene” was mentioned once by an experienced mentor. Another experienced mentor mentioned they would like to have a crowdsourced reading list of recommendations by other mentors.

When asked to mention anything else that would help them mentoring, the respondents came up with a wide array of suggestions. A clear structure for both mentoring and finding people to mentor was mentioned several times. Peer support also was brought up repeatedly; it was also mentioned to build confidence. One respondent was hoping to get a mentor who would mentor them on mentoring. A couple of respondents were hoping for a toolkit, reading lists and learning resources, or a guide on different mentoring structures and learning styles. Mentor training was also mentioned a few times. One respondent was hoping to learn more patience, and one was waiting for a time when it would again be possible to meet face to face after COVID.

Conclusions

Soft skills, like communication, supporting growth, and understanding others and their motivations were a common theme throughout the survey results. Mentions of confidence - both building your own and supporting others' - came up several times, too. Education on soft skills could support the culture of mentoring effectively. These skills are also useful for nearly anyone's professional development, no matter their specific profession.

While some hard skills were also brought up, education on them would be complicated to organise. The skill level of experienced industry professionals is already high and varies a lot. Especially in games, it is also shared in tens of specific sub-skills. Organising mentor education on professional hard skills is not necessarily realistic. However, supporting mentoring, possibly peer-mentoring, even in the later stages of a career could address this need.

Another topic that was brought up a lot was the practical side of mentoring - structures, matching mentors, and mentees, setting goals etc. A clear framework for mentoring would make it more effortless for busy professionals, and thus make the continuation and success of mentoring relationships more likely.

Potential new mentors were especially interested in having a peer support network for mentoring. Having the support and gentle pressure of a community of mentors could help fresh mentors to succeed and gain confidence.

The respondents were also asked if they would be interested in mentoring locally, mentoring internationally, or in the workshop itself, and offered an option to leave their contact details. 73,8% (48) respondents mentioned being interested in the workshop, 73,8% (48) in mentoring locally, and 58,5% (38) in mentoring internationally. While the percentage of respondents interested in mentoring internationally is lower than that of respondents interested in mentoring locally, it is still significantly high. This challenges the common belief that people are mostly interested in supporting their own communities with mentoring.

From Survey to an Event

The target group for the mentor workshop are game industry professionals who wish to start or advance in their mentorship practice, learning about practical tools, soft skills, and personal leadership. After analysing the survey, we decided it would be beneficial to have the target group of the workshop be a mix of professionals with mentoring experience and ones who are only planning to start mentoring others; this will enhance peer learning.

With the survey we have discovered that the main challenges for the mentors have been defining the scope and goals of the mentoring, keeping up the long-term communication with the mentees and confidence in their own expertise. With the mentor workshop we aim to provide concrete tools and guidelines that would support new as well as more experienced mentors in their practice.

The mentor workshop plans were set according to the project aims and goals, starting with setting the schedule, preparation for the content and keynote speakers during the pre-production phase and towards the execution plans. The partners within this consortium have been carefully discussing, planning, and exchanging ideas for developing roadmap and content of the project outcome.

The discussions took place at meetings as well through email threads, formulating the questions of the survey as well as the content planning for the mentor workshop. With wide networks from each partner, we were able to establish channels of communication with the target group.
On top of guiding the development of the mentor workshop, the findings of the survey and the pilot workshop will also be used to finetune the approach to mentoring for the BSGI Academy test run in work package 3.

Pilot Workshop

To test our early concept for the mentor workshop, we decided to run a pilot workshop with a small, handpicked audience - a balanced mix of people with and without mentoring experience. This pilot group would then give us detailed feedback, which we can use to further develop the concept before organising a bigger workshop in the autumn.

The plan for the pilot workshop is as follows:

Time
Jun 3, 2021 - 05:00 PM Helsinki

Agenda
17:00 - Welcoming words
17:15 - Keynote: Renee Gittins, Executive Director of IGDA
Guiding Light: How to Empower Others Through Mentorship
18:00 - Workshop (group work), facilitator: Natasha Skult
No worries, I got it!

18:30 - Presentations, results of the group work

19:00 - Summary and review, closing words

19:15 -> Open discussion, feedback, and networking

The angle of the pilot workshop is to encourage and empower mentors, as well as give them a clear understanding of mentoring and some practical tools. Mentors will also work together and network. This is well in line with the results of the survey; giving mentors and mentor candidates encouragement, peer support and practical tools should empower them in their role.

Directly after the pilot workshop the mentors will be encouraged to give feedback to enable us to develop the workshop further. We will also have one participant who is tasked specifically to observe and take notes. On top of this, there will be a focus group discussion with handpicked participants a few days after the workshop. This combination should give us plenty of feedback to work on.

4. Conclusions

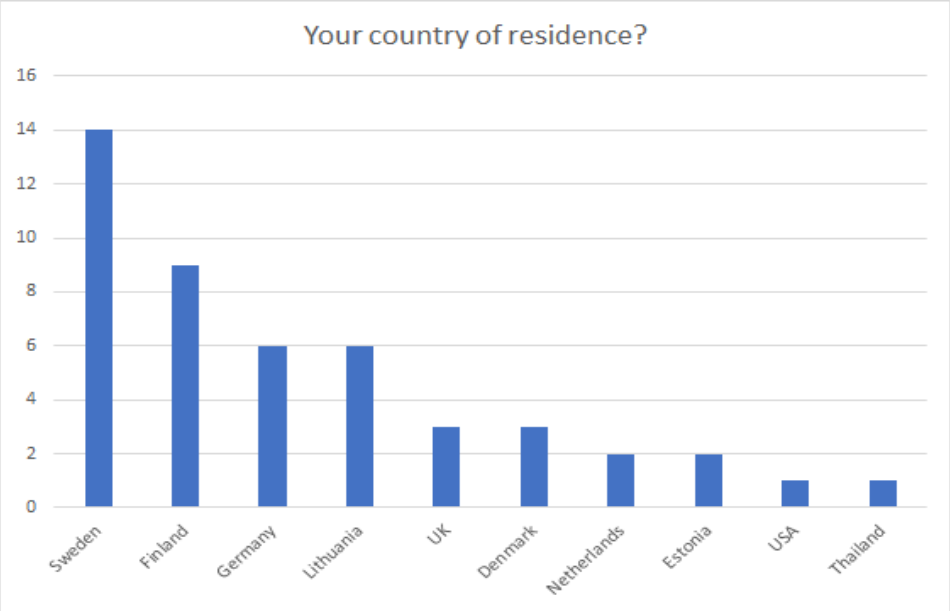
The surveys conducted in the project gave us great and informed insight into the needs of mentors and investors. On top of this, they also gave us an opportunity to scout the level of interest, get some visibility among the target groups, and gather contact details of people interested in the workshops.

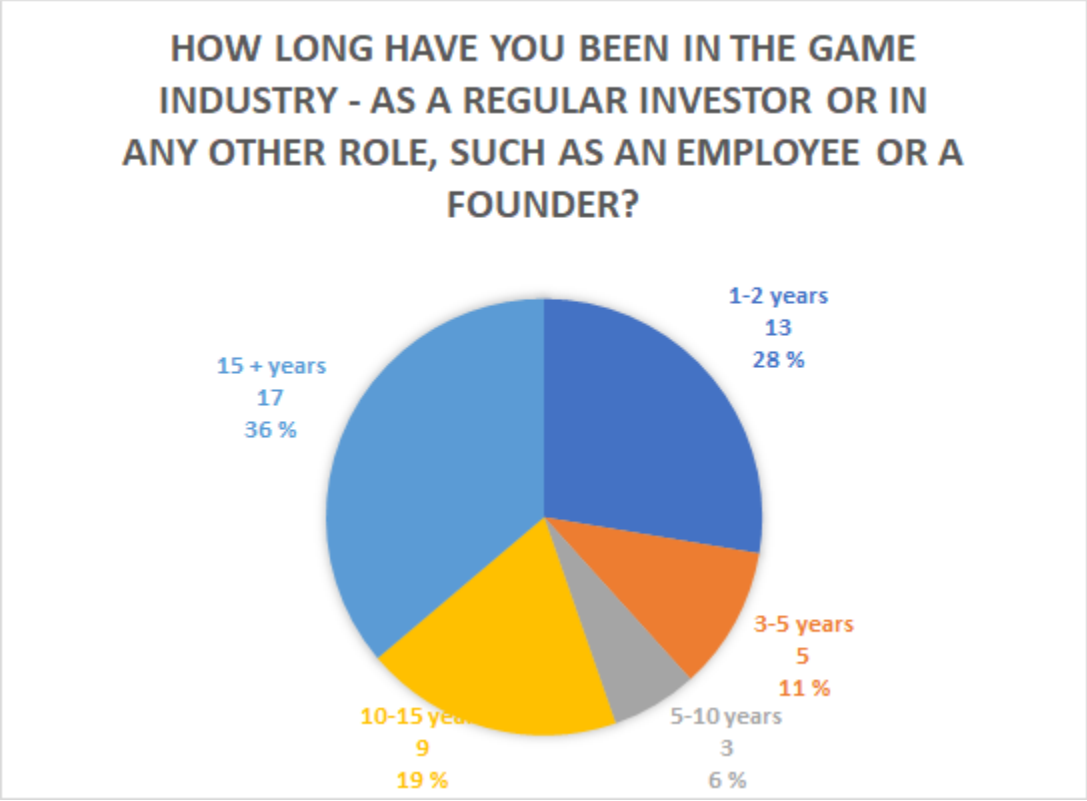
According to the surveys, both mentors and investors appreciate peer support, peer learning, and getting concrete tools for their work. For investors, concrete tools could mean clear information on the practicalities of investing, especially investing together with other investors. For mentors, it could take the form of a framework for mentoring. Mentors also recognise lack of confidence as a pain point and would appreciate encouraging and empowering. Concentrating on peer support and peer learning could also help tackle this issue.

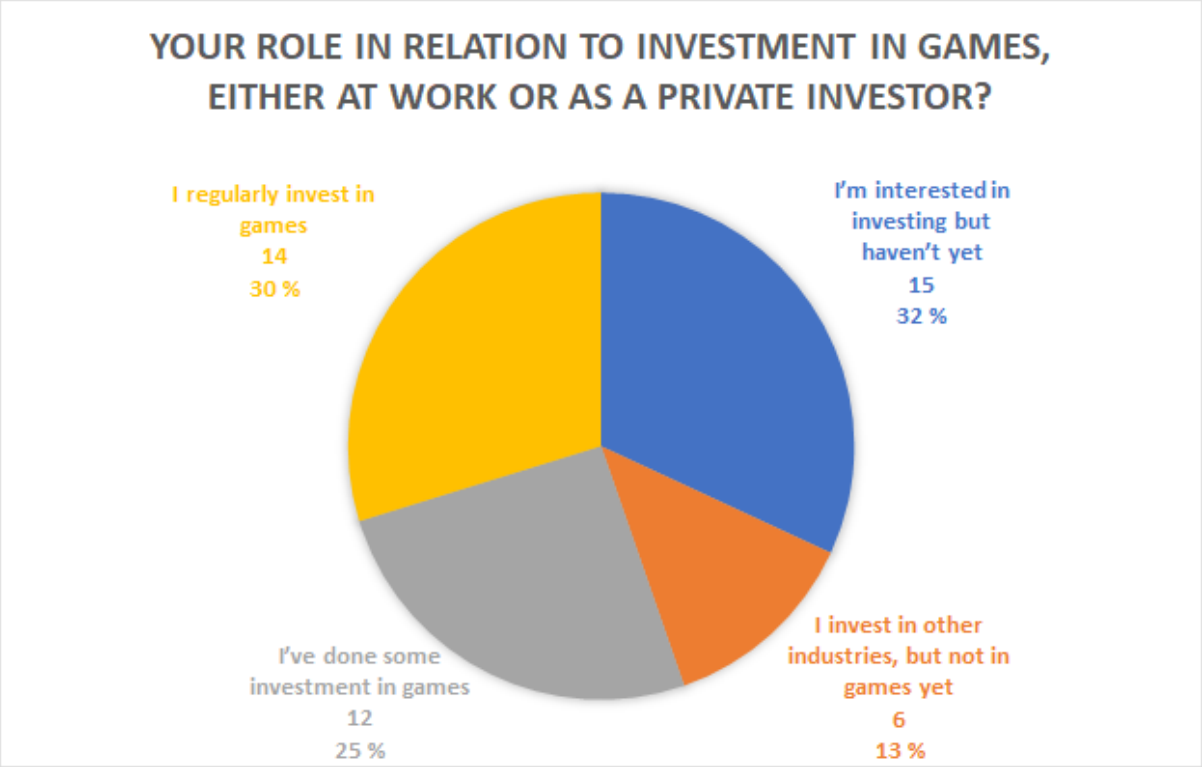
The surveys showed us that there is significant interest towards these kinds of efforts to support the supporters of the game industry. Respondents for the surveys were easy to find; a majority of them left their contact information to hear more about the workshops; pilot workshops gathered interest and a great test audience. With the survey data and feedback from the pilots, we have a great opportunity to develop very impactful workshop concepts both for investors and mentors in the game industry.

5. Attachments

Investor Survey





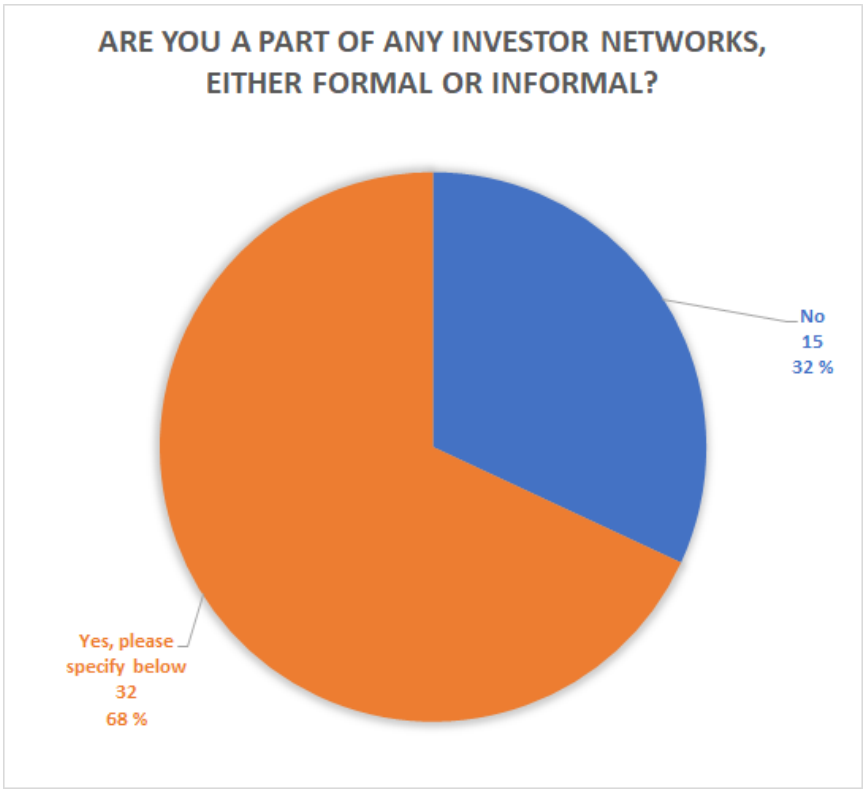


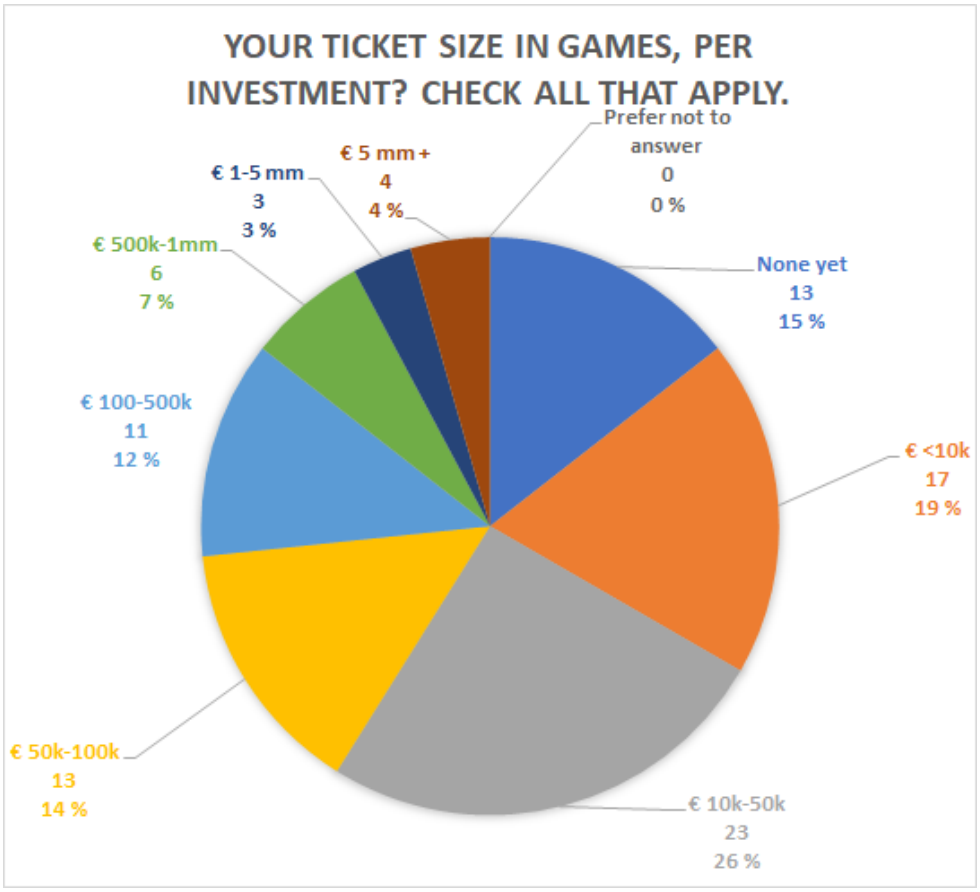
$InvestorRole*$GameExperience Crosstabulation

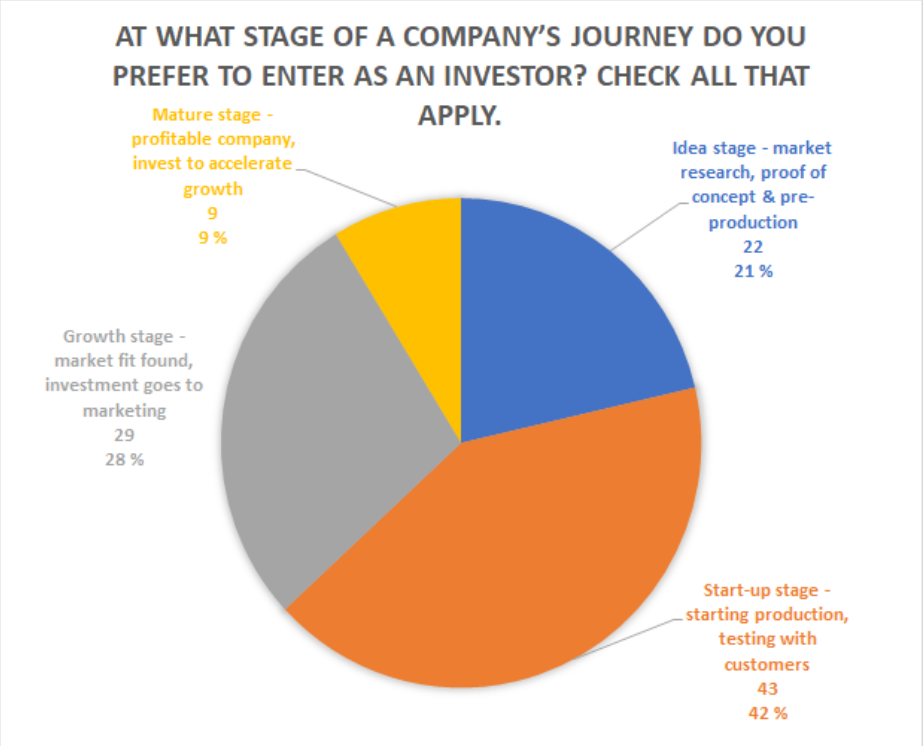
			Experience in games[a]					
			0-2 years	3-5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	15+ years	Total
Role related to investing[a]	Interested in investing	Count	7	0	1	4	3	15
		% of Total	14,9%	0,0%	2,1%	8,5%	6,4%	31,9%
	Investing in other industries	Count	5	0	0	1	0	6
		% of Total	10,6%	0,0%	0,0%	2,1%	0,0%	12,8%
	Some investment in games	Count	0	2	0	2	8	12
		% of Total	0,0%	4,3%	0,0%	4,3%	17,0%	25,5%
	Regular investment in games	Count	1	3	2	2	6	14
		% of Total	2,1%	6,4%	4,3%	4,3%	12,8%	29,8%
Total		Count	13	5	3	9	17	47
		% of Total	27,7%	10,6%	6,4%	19,1%	36,2%	100,0%

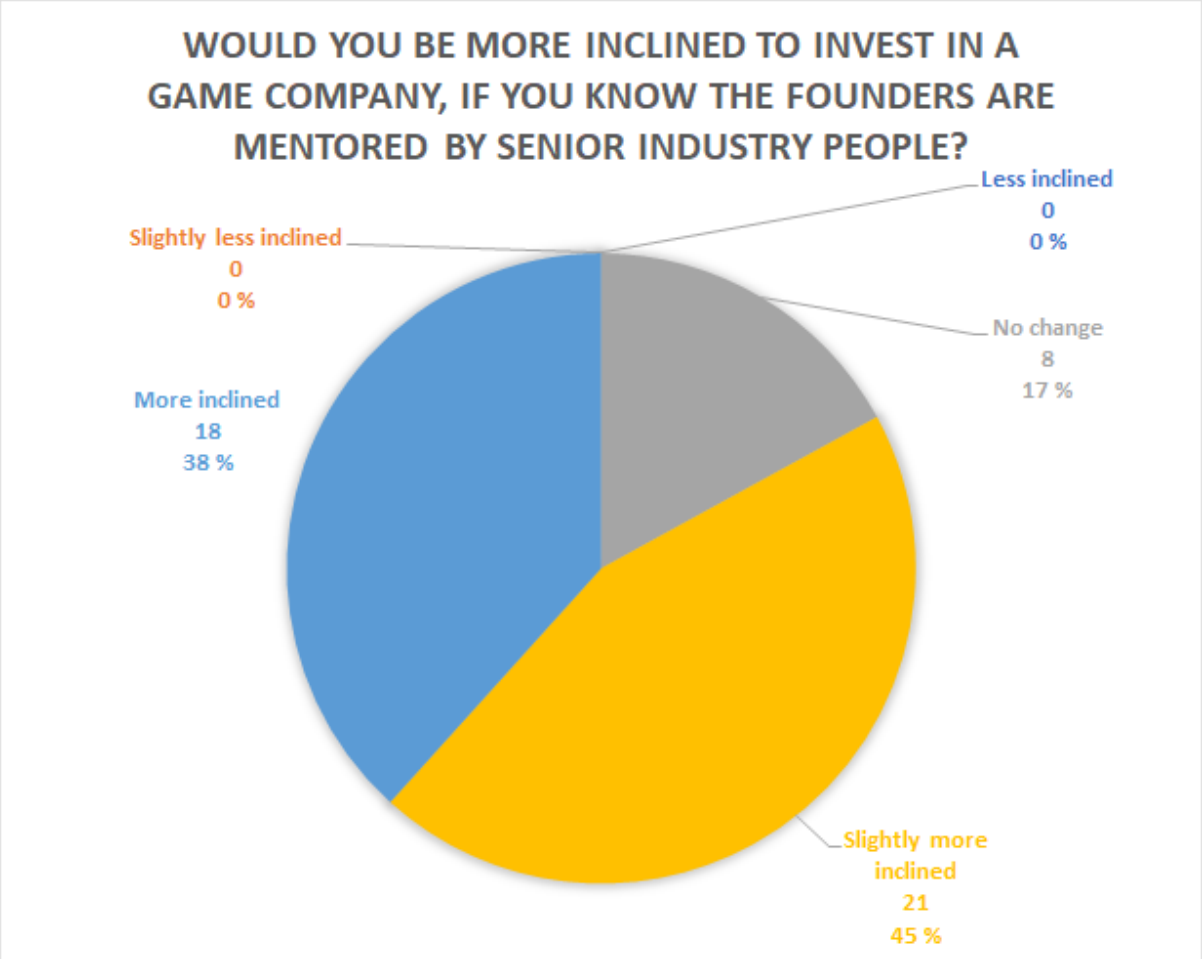
Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

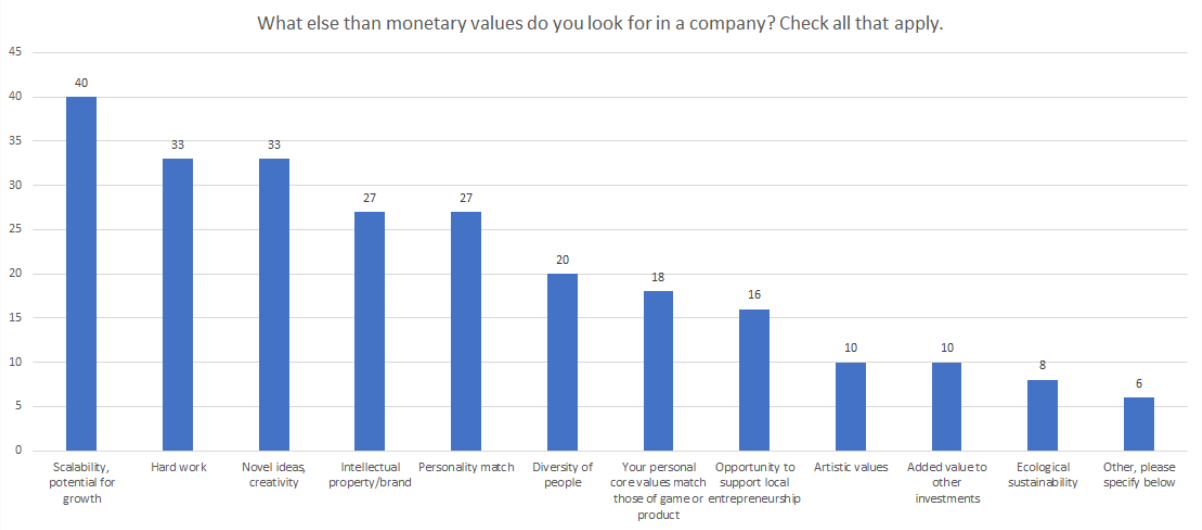
a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

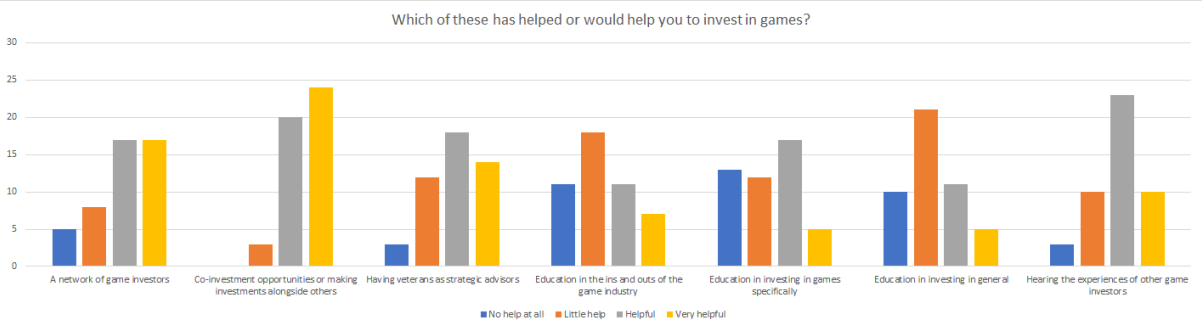

ARE YOU A PART OF ANY INVESTOR NETWORKS, EITHER FORMAL OR INFORMAL?
No
15
32 %
Yes, please specify below
32
68 %

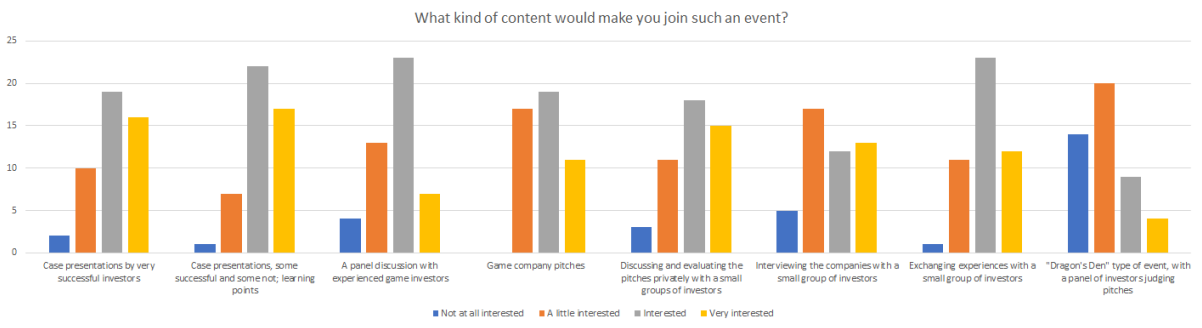

YOUR TICKET SIZE IN GAMES, PER INVESTMENT? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.
Prefer not to answer
0
0 %
None yet
13
15 %
€ <10k
17
19 %
€ 10k-50k
23
26 %
€ 50k-100k
13
14 %
€ 100-500k
11
12 %
€ 500k-1mm
6
7 %
€ 1-5 mm
3
3 %
€ 5 mm+
4
4 %


AT WHAT STAGE OF A COMPANY'S JOURNEY DO YOU PREFER TO ENTER AS AN INVESTOR? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.
Mature stage - profitable company, invest to accelerate growth
9
9 %
Idea stage - market research, proof of concept & pre-production
22
21 %
Growth stage - market fit found, investment goes to marketing
29
28 %
Start-up stage - starting production, testing with customers
43
42 %


WOULD YOU BE MORE INCLINED TO INVEST IN A GAME COMPANY, IF YOU KNOW THE FOUNDERS ARE MENTORED BY SENIOR INDUSTRY PEOPLE?
Less inclined
0
0 %
Slightly less inclined
0
0 %
No change
8
17 %
More inclined
18
38 %
Slightly more inclined
21
45 %


What else than monetary values do you look for in a company? Check all that apply.
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
40
33
33
27
27
20
18
16
10
10
8
6
Scalability, potential for growth
Hard work
Novel ideas, creativity
Intellectual property/brand
Personality match
Diversity of people
Your personal core values match those of game or product
Opportunity to support local entrepreneurship
Artistic values
Added value to other investments
Ecological sustainability
Other, please specify below


Which of these has helped or would help you to invest in games?
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
A network of game investors
Co-investment opportunities or making investments alongside others
Having veterans as strategic advisors
Education in the ins and outs of the game industry
Education in investing in games specifically
Education in investing in general
Hearing the experiences of other game investors
No help at all
Little help
Helpful
Very helpful


What kind of content would make you join such an event?
25
20
15
10
5
0
Case presentations by very successful investors
Case presentations, some successful and some not; learning points
A panel discussion with experienced game investors
Game company pitches
Discussing and evaluating the pitches privately with a small groups of investors
Interviewing the companies with a small group of investors
Exchanging experiences with a small group of investors
"Dragon's Den" type of event, with a panel of investors judging pitches
Not at all interested
A little interested
Interested
Very interested

$InvestorRole*EventContent1 Crosstabulation

			Case presentations by very successful investors				
			Not at all interested	A little interested	Interested	Very interested	Total
Role related to investing[a]	Interested in investing	Count	2	3	3	7	15
		% within $InvestorRole	13,3%	20,0%	20,0%	46,7%	
		% of Total	4,3%	6,4%	6,4%	14,9%	31,9%
	Investing in other industries	Count	0	0	3	3	6
		% within $InvestorRole	0,0%	0,0%	50,0%	50,0%	
		% of Total	0,0%	0,0%	6,4%	6,4%	12,8%
	Some investment in games	Count	0	3	7	2	12
		% within $InvestorRole	0,0%	25,0%	58,3%	16,7%	
		% of Total	0,0%	6,4%	14,9%	4,3%	25,5%
	Regular investment in games	Count	0	4	6	4	14
		% within $InvestorRole	0,0%	28,6%	42,9%	28,6%	
		% of Total	0,0%	8,5%	12,8%	8,5%	29,8%
Total		Count	2	10	19	16	47
		% of Total	4,3%	21,3%	40,4%	34,0%	100,0%

Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

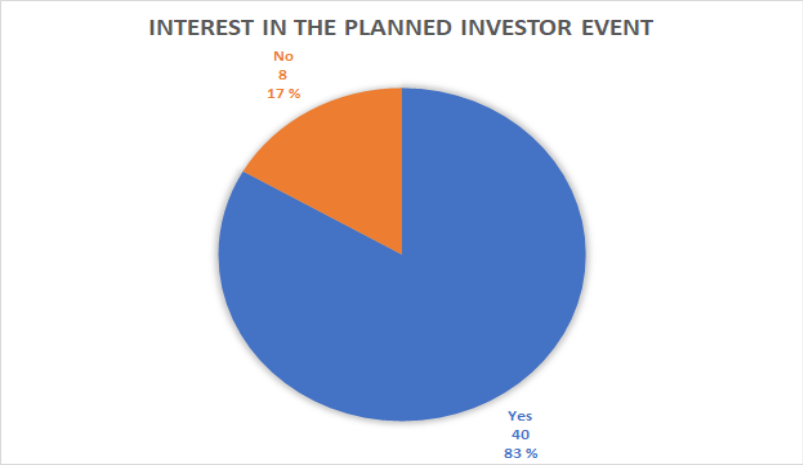
a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

$InvestorRole*EventContent3 Crosstabulation

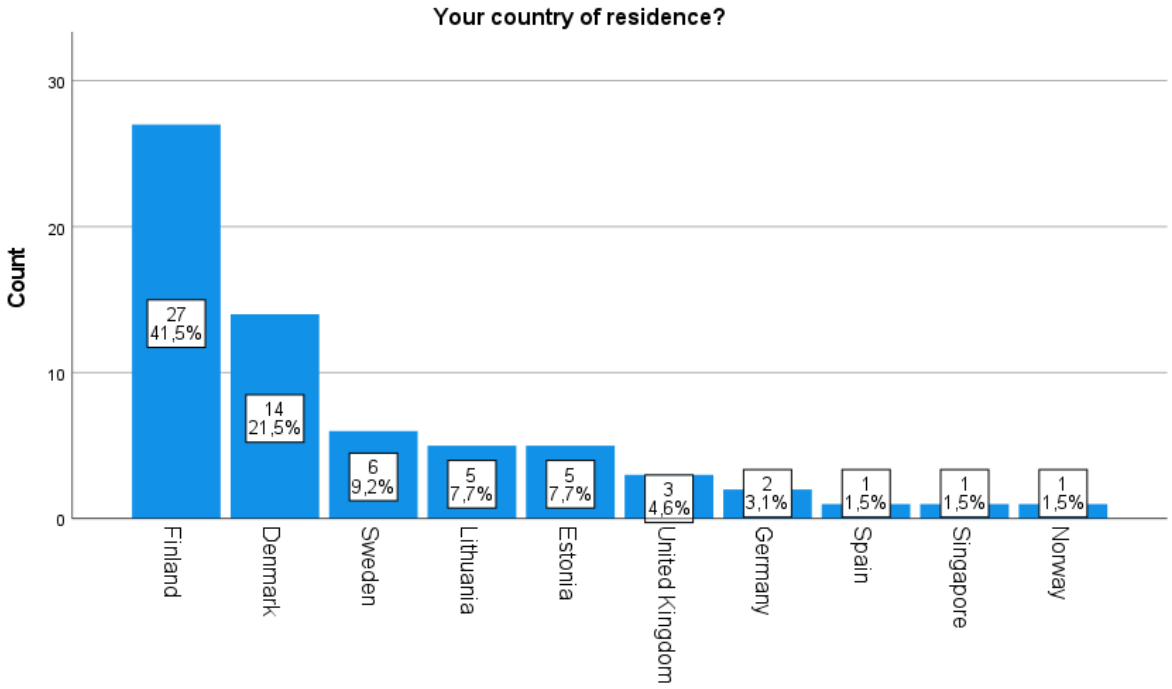
			A panel discussion with experienced game investors				
			Not at all interested	A little interested	Interested	Very interested	Total
Role related to investing[a]	Interested in investing	Count	2	4	6	3	15
		% within $InvestorRole	13,3%	26,7%	40,0%	20,0%	
		% of Total	4,3%	8,5%	12,8%	6,4%	31,9%
	Investing in other industries	Count	0	2	3	1	6
		% within $InvestorRole	0,0%	33,3%	50,0%	16,7%	
		% of Total	0,0%	4,3%	6,4%	2,1%	12,8%
	Some investment in games	Count	1	4	6	1	12
		% within $InvestorRole	8,3%	33,3%	50,0%	8,3%	
		% of Total	2,1%	8,5%	12,8%	2,1%	25,5%
	Regular investment in games	Count	1	3	8	2	14
		% within $InvestorRole	7,1%	21,4%	57,1%	14,3%	
		% of Total	2,1%	6,4%	17,0%	4,3%	29,8%
Total		Count	4	13	23	7	47
		% of Total	8,5%	27,7%	48,9%	14,9%	100,0%

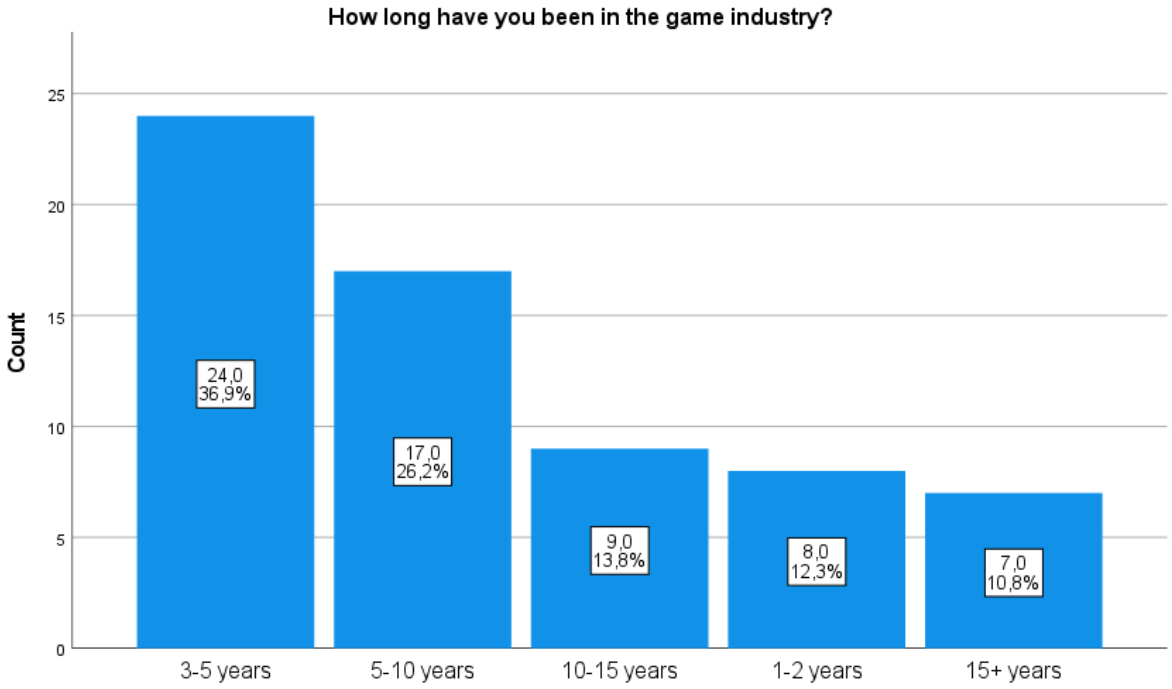
Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

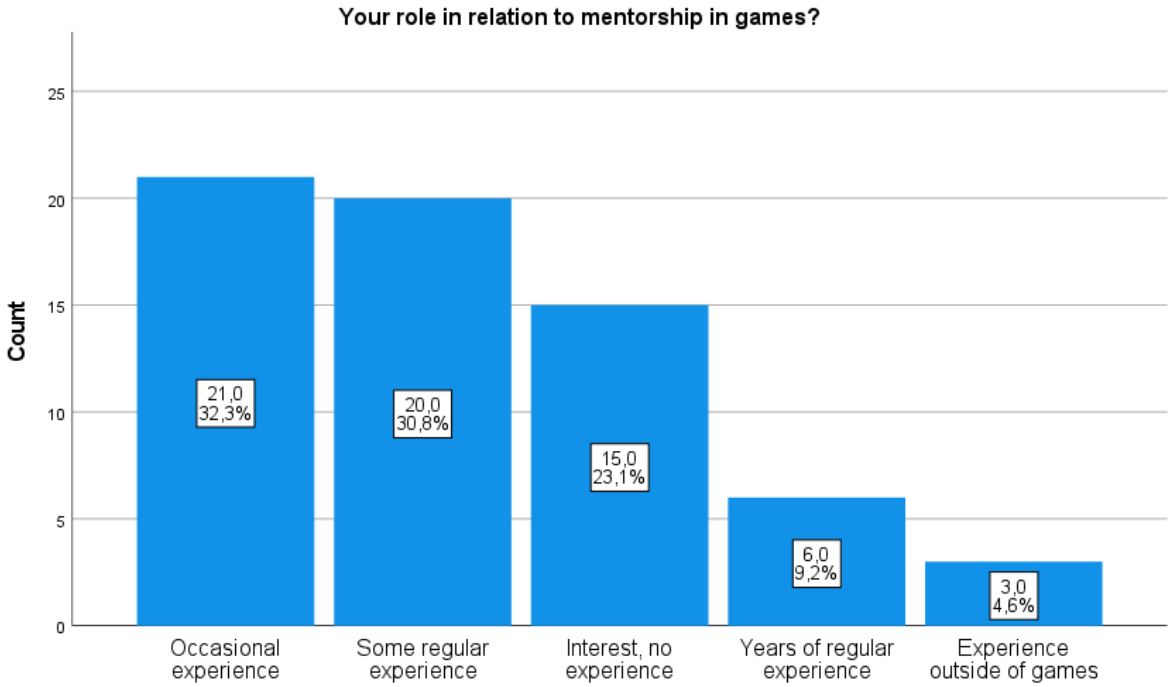
a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

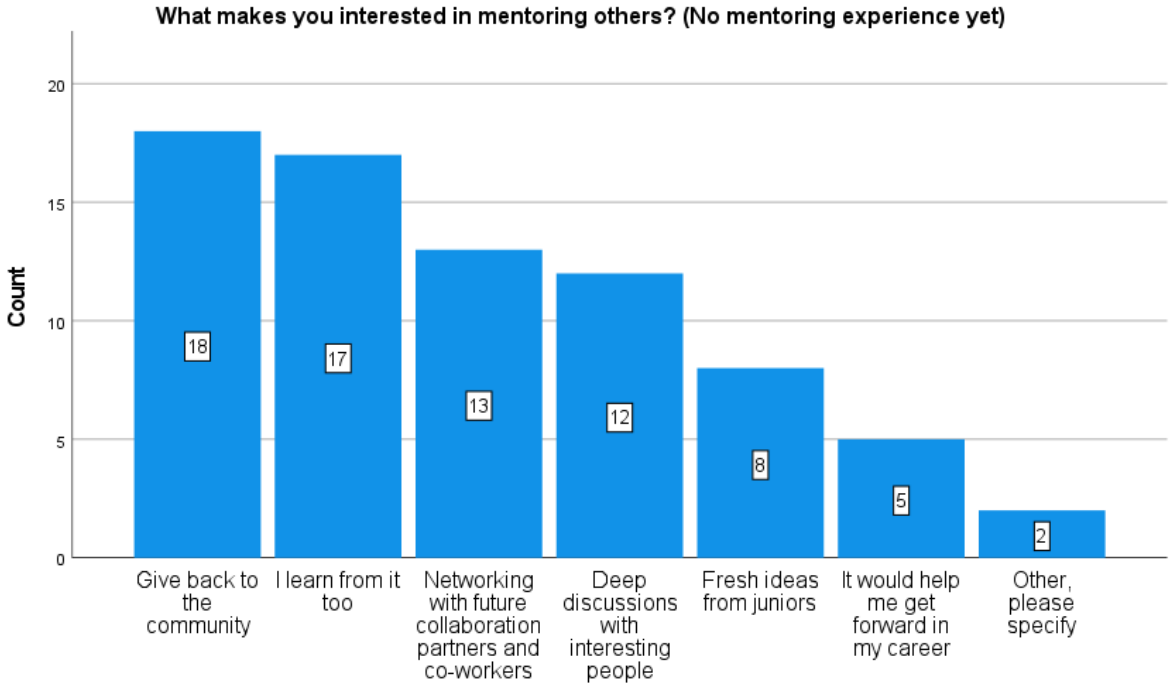


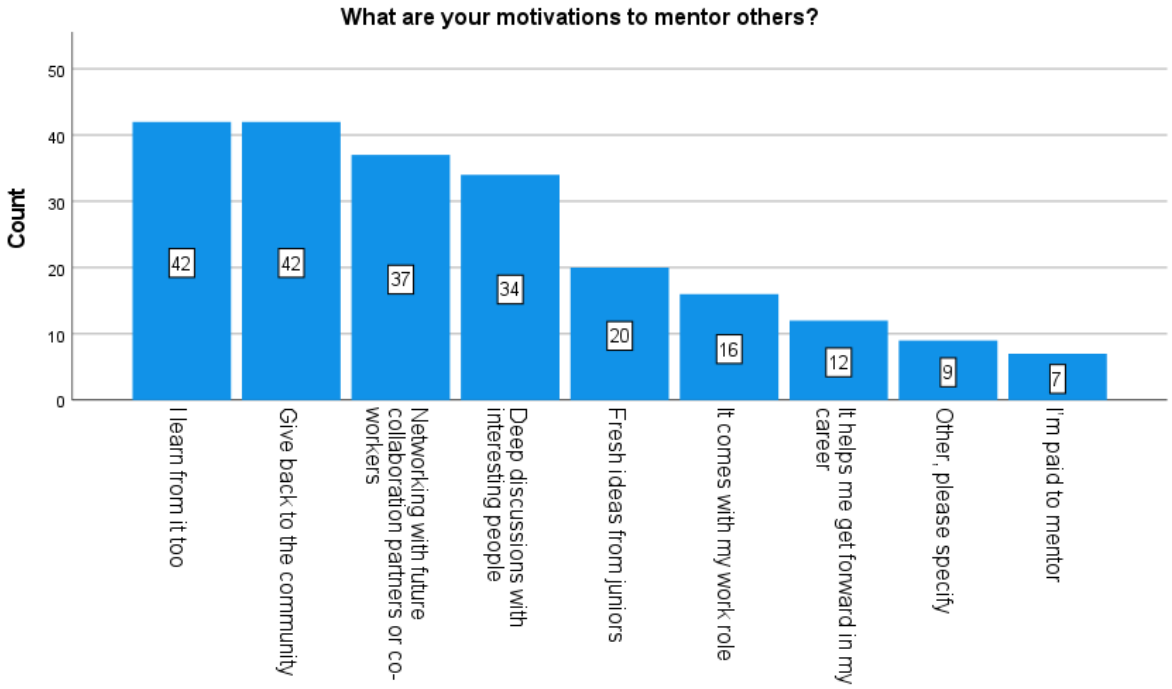
Mentor Survey

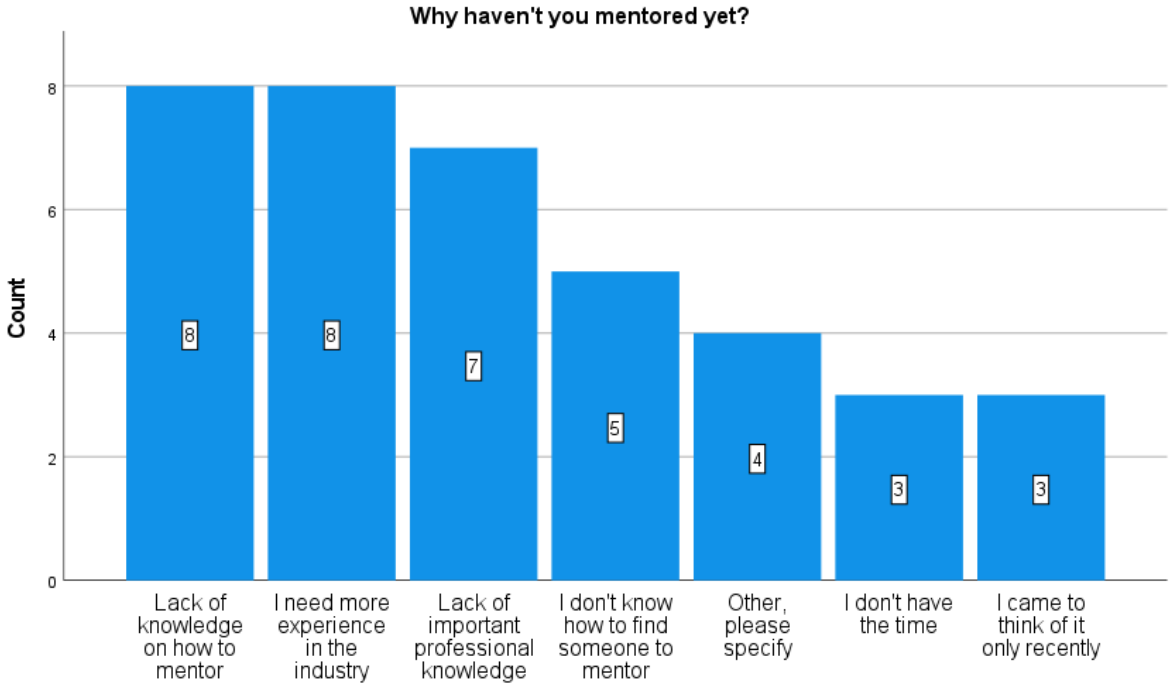


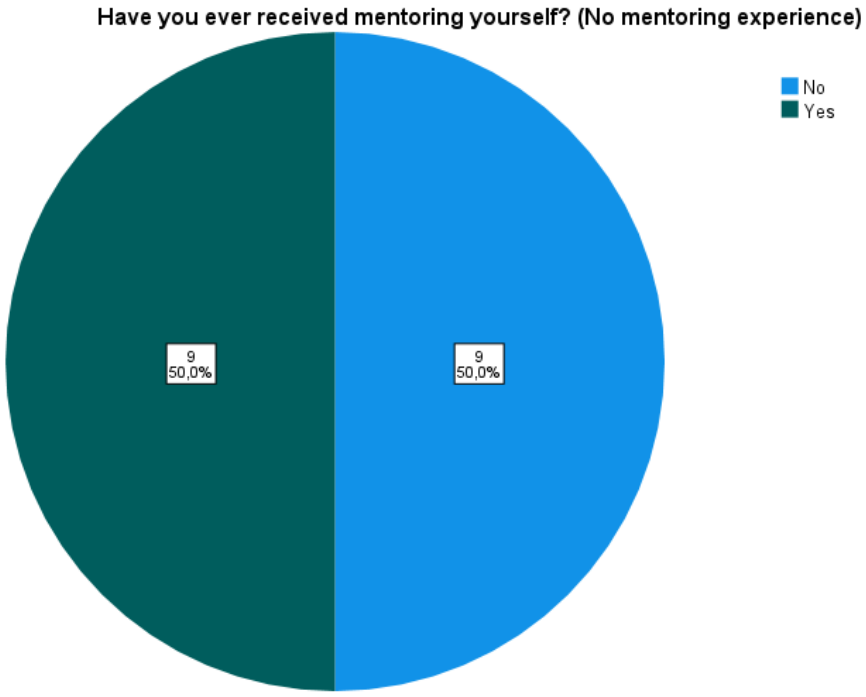


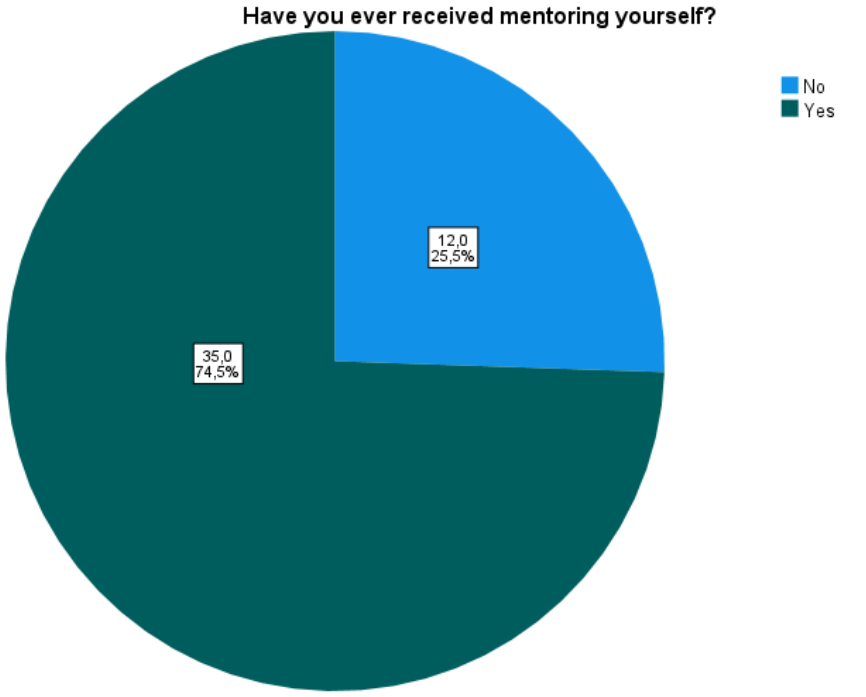

Your role in relation to mentorship in games?
Count
25
20
15
10
5
0
21,0
32,3%
20,0
30,8%
15,0
23,1%
6,0
9,2%
3,0
4,6%
Occasional experience
Some regular experience
Interest, no experience
Years of regular experience
Experience outside of games


What makes you interested in mentoring others? (No mentoring experience yet)
Count
20
15
10
5
0
18
17
13
12
8
5
2
Give back to the community
I learn from it too
Networking with future collaboration partners and co-workers
Deep discussions with interesting people
Fresh ideas from juniors
It would help me get forward in my career
Other, please specify


What are your motivations to mentor others?
Count
50
40
30
20
10
0
42
42
37
34
20
16
12
9
7
I learn from it too
Give back to the community
Networking with future collaboration partners or co-workers
Deep discussions with interesting people
Fresh ideas from juniors
It comes with my work role
It helps me get forward in my career
Other, please specify
I'm paid to mentor


Why haven't you mentored yet?
Count
8
6
4
2
0
8
8
7
5
4
3
3
Lack of knowledge on how to mentor
I need more experience in the industry
Lack of important professional knowledge
I don't know how to find someone to mentor
Other, please specify
I don't have the time
I came to think of it only recently


Have you ever received mentoring yourself? (No mentoring experience)
No
Yes
9
50,0%
9
50,0%

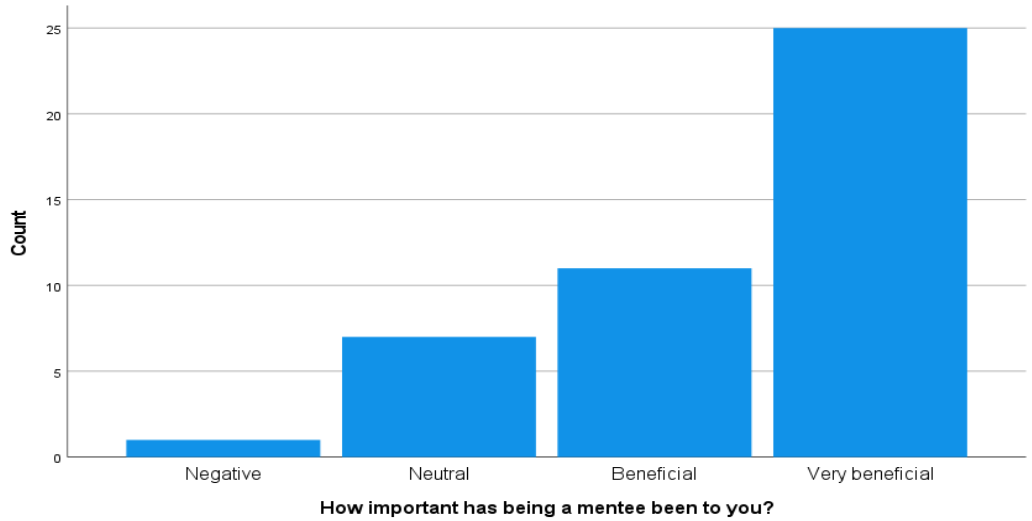

Have you ever received mentoring yourself?
No
Yes
12,0
25,5%
35,0
74,5%

Have you ever received mentoring yourself? * How long have you been in the game industry? Crosstabulation

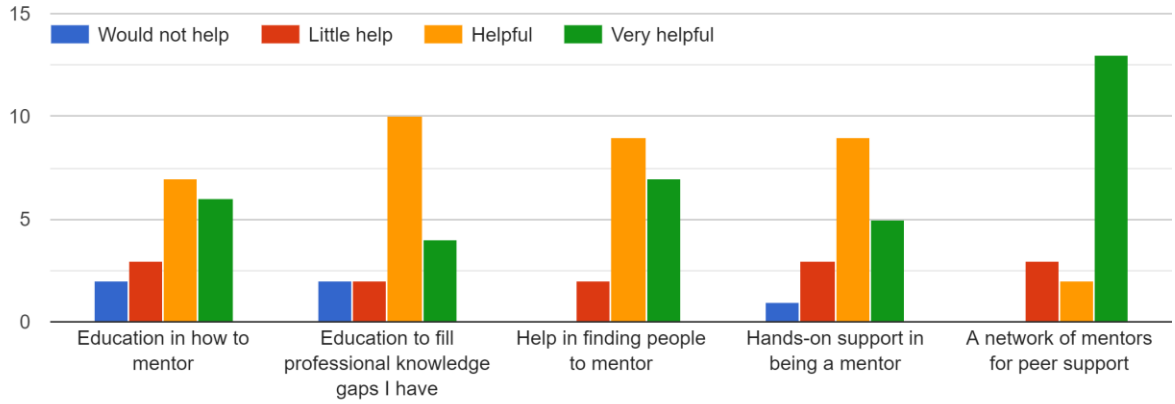
			How long have you been in the game industry?					
			1-2 years	3-5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	15+ years	Total
Have you ever received mentoring yourself?	No	Count	3	7	6	3	1	20
		% within How long have you been in the game industry?	37,5%	29,2%	35,3%	33,3%	14,3%	30,8%
		% of Total	4,6%	10,8%	9,2%	4,6%	1,5%	30,8%
	Yes	Count	5	17	11	6	6	45
		% within How long have you been in the game industry?	62,5%	70,8%	64,7%	66,7%	85,7%	69,2%
		% of Total	7,7%	26,2%	16,9%	9,2%	9,2%	69,2%
Total		Count	8	24	17	9	7	65
		% within How long have you been in the game industry?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
		% of Total	12,3%	36,9%	26,2%	13,8%	10,8%	100,0%

Are you still receiving mentoring sessions from your mentors? * How long have you been in the game industry? Crosstabulation

			How long have you been in the game industry?					
			1-2 years	3-5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	15+ years	Total
Are you still receiving mentoring sessions from your mentors?	No	Count	3	11	8	5	4	31
		% within How long have you been in the game industry?	50,0%	61,1%	80,0%	83,3%	100,0%	70,5%
		% of Total	6,8%	25,0%	18,2%	11,4%	9,1%	70,5%
	Yes	Count	3	7	2	1	0	13
		% within How long have you been in the game industry?	50,0%	38,9%	20,0%	16,7%	0,0%	29,5%
		% of Total	6,8%	15,9%	4,5%	2,3%	0,0%	29,5%
Total		Count	6	18	10	6	4	44
		% within How long have you been in the game industry?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
		% of Total	13,6%	40,9%	22,7%	13,6%	9,1%	100,0%



What would help you become a mentor in games?



Would you be interested in...

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

BGZ Berliner Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit mbH
Pohlstr. 67
DE – 10785 Berlin
phone: +49 (30) 80 99 41 11
fax: +49 (30) 80 99 41 20
info@bgz-berlin.de
www.bgz-berlin.de

Managing Director: Dr. Hilde Hansen
Chairman of the Supervisory Board: Jürgen Wittke
Shareholders: State of Berlin, Berlin Chamber of Small Business and Skilled Crafts
Register court & number: Amtsgericht Berlin, AG Charlottenburg, HRB 21 292

PROJECT PARTNERS

- Denmark: Dania Academy
- Estonia: Tartu Science Park Foundation
- 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

The project “Baltic Sea Game Incubation” has been funded with support from the European Regional Development Fund. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the ERDF cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.