Action Plan to Strengthen Game Industry in Helsinki

This "Action Plan to Strengthen Game Industry in Helsinki" is part of the Baltic Game Industry Project, aimed at strengthening the regional games industry and fostering a balanced and sustainable ecosystem.

This action plan is the result of the innovation dialogues that we carried out throughout 2018 which are documented here and where you can also find an English summary of the action plan.

Action plan

Part I – General information

Project: Baltic Game Industry

Partner organisation: City of Helsinki, Metropolia, Neogames Finland ry.

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant):

Country: Finland

NUTS2 region: Helsinki-Uusimaa (FI1B)

Contact person: Elina Tyynelä
              email address: elina@neogames.fi
              phone number: +35840 842 87 36

Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:
- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed: Implementation of the **Maailman toimivin kaupunki – strategy of City of Helsinki for 2017–2021**

ACTION 1 – Improving accessibility of public support measures for games industry SMEs

1. **The background** (please describe the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

As underlined in the joint cluster analysis, over 100 out of 250 game developer studios in Finland are located in Helsinki. Thus, when it comes to the amount of companies and industry talent Helsinki is the engine for digital growth driven by Finnish Game Industry.

At the moment Finnish Game Industry is beyond its recent hyper growth but the industry is still growing. New game development studios are established every year in Helsinki but the rate is slower than before. At the same time some of the studios established during the start-up boom in 2011-2015 have not been able to stay in business. This alone suggests that the local games industry ecosystem and its game development studios need now more and better targeted support to enable continuous renewal of local industry.

Innovation dialogues organised by the project highlighted the need for better support as well. Especially, the local games industry start-ups called for better community-based knowledge transfer actions. This was also noticed during the SWOT and TOWS analysis.

Consequently, the first meeting of the first internal games industry network of city officials and industry ecosystem stakeholders acknowledged:

- the necessity of public support and its smooth continuity
- obstacles in access to information on support instruments targeted for games industry
- demand for more attractive and accessible industry community spaces

2. **Action** (please list and describe the actions to be implemented)

City of Helsinki and Business Finland:

- Mapping the gaps in access to information on support measures targeted for both SMEs and amateur developers and games culture enthusiasts willing to fully exploit the innovation potential of their skills and knowledge
- Introducing targeted measures to bridge the identified gaps (e.g. event about funding opportunities to help SMEs to find funding)
- Identification of a lead body in city administration responsible for strategic development of support measures targeted for the industry and, together with identified body, institutionalising key support measures for local SMEs

3. **Targeted outcomes**
- Key industry stakeholders (e. g. SMEs) have improved access to information about support measures
- The city has stronger hands-on commitment on supporting its local gaming ecosystem

4. **Players involved** (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role)

City of Helsinki

- Implementation of the action

Neogames

- Local game developer community engagement in decision making
- Facilitating co-operation with Business Finland

5. Timeframe

City of Helsinki:

Step 1: Mapping and identifying the gaps and identifying a lead body responsible for the industry in city administration, Q1 and Q2 of 2019

Step 2: Bridging the gaps, Q3 2019 – Q2 2020

Step 3: Evaluating the impact of gap bridging actions and mapping the need for further actions in Q1 2020 and Q3 2020

Business Finland:

Step 1: Identifying best practices on games industry support Q2-Q4 2019

Step 2: Using identified practices for scaling up digitally distributed creative industries Q1 2020 ->

6. Costs (if relevant)

7. Funding sources (if relevant):

ACTION 2 – A public-private co-operation in city marketing and talent attraction

8. **The background** (please describe the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

According the joint cluster analysis, the slowdown in the hyper growth of Finnish Game Industry can be explained by intense competition in international games markets and global struggle to find employees. Although Helsinki based game developer studios have so far been fairly successful on global markets its future is overshadowed by lack of talent.

During the innovation dialogues, increased presence of local games industry in city marketing was noted to be crucially important for the growth of the industry, as more successful marketing measures allure new risk funding and foreign talent to the city. Finland and Helsinki area must be appealing place to invest in for investors and work and live for the top industry talents and their families. City of Helsinki, the neighbouring cities, games industry and also the national decision makers have great role in helping foreign talents to get interested to working and living in Finland and later on to settle in. In particular, close co-operation between these actors is crucial for the success of marketing activities.

Consequently, as concluded in TOWS and SWOT analysis, in order to tackle these challenges: the game industry needs to be more visible in the city marketing to allure both investors and global talents in Helsinki.

9. **Action** (please list and describe the actions to be implemented)

Talent attraction

- Establishing a Helsinki model for talent attraction (e. g finding ways to make local games culture and industry more visible for global industry actors and tourists visiting the city)
- Creating an established co-operation model for supporting talent attraction through cross-sector capacity building and coordination in city government as well as through public-private partnerships

Talent integration
- Finding ways to support global talents and their families in relocating to Finland and integrating in local community (e. g mapping ways to improve services provided by International House Helsinki)

10. **Targeted outcomes**
- Established best practices for supporting talent attraction
- Established partnership between the industry and the city in talent attraction
- Smoother integration process for talents and their families

11. **Players involved** (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role)

City of Helsinki

- Building a Helsinki model for talent attraction and co-operating with local games industry and games culture actors in implementing it
- Establishing a cross-sector working group making Helsinki and its services more accessible to non-Finnish or Swedish speaking citizens
- Identifying a lead body responsible for improving support measures for global talents and their families in relocating to Finland and integrating in local community

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- Facilitation of co-operation between industry and public administration
- Engaging local game developer community in decision making process (e.g. representing their interest in the aforementioned working group)

12. **Timeframe**

Step 1: Working group making Helsinki and its services more accessible to non-Finnish or Swedish speaking citizens maps vital services and their availability in English, Q1 2019

Step 2: Finalising the Helsinki model for talent attraction, Q2 – Q3 2019

Step 3: City of Helsinki and local game developer studios build up a co-operation model for talent attraction, Q2-Q3 2019

Step 4: Implementing the Helsinki model for talent attraction, Q4 2019 – Q3 2020

13. **Costs** (if relevant)

14. **Funding sources** (if relevant):
Project funding from new project.

ACTION 3 – A clear route for games industry professional for amateur talent

15. **The background** (please describe the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

As aforementioned in action 2, global struggle to find employees is a key challenge for Finnish Game Industry. In addition to helping global talent to in moving to Finland, the innovation dialogues addressed the importance of securing steady growth of local super talents as well. Although young talent in general and some art-for-art's-sake indie developers value their artistic integrity over financial ambitions, inclusive community and strong peer-learning culture enable business knowledge transfer for all community members. Earlier the young industry talents are exposed to business-driven game development practices easier it is for them to, if they wish to do so, take required steps to combine strong artistic vision with solid business practices. The earlier they have an opportunity to do so the better. This is why the young talents in Finland should enter the local games developer community as early as possible. Both formal games education and informal education activities on youth clubs for example play crucial role in this. It is very important to have spaces for these young talents to develop their skills and step by step move towards finding their own studio.

16. **Action** (please list and describe the actions to be implemented)

Tackling the barriers of entry to Finnish games industry and entrepreneurship for both young foreign and local talents
- Identifying and creating support measures helping both international and national students to find a route to entrepreneurship
- Implementation of BGI incubator pilot to learn how to best support young industry talents in taking their first steps in running their own business
- Implementation of BGI best practices, where applicable, on games industry incubators and finding support for the continuation of incubator activities

Intergenerational knowledge transfer
- Finding a way to build a mentoring system facilitating the intra-community knowledge transfer and better match-making for local internship positions in game development studios

17. **Targeted outcomes**
- A clear route to entrepreneurship for young talent
- Ensuring the continuation of incubator activities
- Well-established support measures for young talents helping them to find their place in games industry

18. **Players involved** (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role)

Metropolia

- Setting up BGI incubator pilot

City of Helsinki

- Clarifying the route to entrepreneurship to international and national students in co-operation with higher education institutes
- Further developing intra-community mentoring system bridging the gap between young and senior talent
- Implementation of relevant best practices mapped by the BGI project

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- Facilitation of co-operation between industry, education institutions and public administration
- Engaging local game developer community in decision making process
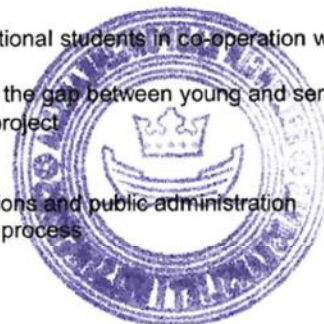
19. Timeframe

Step 1: BGI incubator pilot August 2018 – January 2020

Step 2: Building a mentoring system facilitating the intra-community knowledge transfer and better match-making for local internship positions in game development studios, Q1-Q2 2019

Step 3: Mapping the support measures helping students to find a route to entrepreneurship with BGI WP3, Q2 2019 – Q1 2020

Step 3: Implementation of mentoring system, Q4 2019- Q2 2020

Step 4: Implementation of BGI best practices, where applicable Q1-Q3 2020

20. Costs (if relevant)

21. Funding sources (if relevant):

Date and place: _25. 03 . 2019_

Signature: _____

Clarification of signature: _Santtu von Brum_

Stamp of the organisation (if available):