

Slovak Arts Council: Grants to Support Digital Games Creation

Maroš Brojo

The gaming industry represents a significant driver of advanced economies. Slovakia does not want to lag behind in this respect. There are some possibilities of how to support the development of digital games. One of them is also offered by the Slovak Arts Council, which subsidizes the creation of digital games and helps to start business activities by using the creative and artistic potential of game designers. The Slovak Arts Council is a self-governing public institution guaranteeing support of art activities, culture and creative industry. The Council replaced a substantial part of the former grant system of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic and is independent of the central bodies of state administration. Its main mission is the support of "live" arts and culture with a special focus on diversity. The Council provides grants especially for the creation, production, distribution and presentation of works of art; support of international cooperation; educational programs in the fields of art, culture and creative industry; grants for individuals who contribute to the development of arts and culture in a creative way or by research.

Support for the creation of gaming and non-gaming multimedia works in the Slovak Arts Council was first launched in 2017. In 2018, under the previous call, the Council supported 25 of 47 applicants. Nowadays, the third call of the sub-program is in progress. Digital game developers can apply for non-repayable subsidies at various stages of digital game creation. The total amount of the subsidy set for all projects is 350,000 EUR in 2019.

The Slovak Arts Council supports the creation of digital games in three different phases that follow each other seamlessly, with a one-year deadline set for each phase. Overall, at the stage of development and production, the Council can finance a part of the costs of up to a maximum of 95% of the total project budget. The remaining minimum 5% corresponds to the amount of mandatory co-financing that the applicant must provide from other sources. Individual phases refer to creative scholarships, vertical slice development and final beta version production.¹

In 2017, the Slovak videogame community welcomed the De Minimis grant aid as a positive step, allowing individuals and smaller studios to create digital games without the need for complete funding from their own resources. However, the grant scheme budget is not suitable for larger digital game studios. They cannot, from a sum of 100,000 EUR, which represents the maximum subsidy per entity, cover a sufficiently large part of their costs. However, the Slovak Arts Council is not focused on them in its major targeting. It supports games with an emphasis on artistic value, educational aspects or innovation, limiting thus its scope in this way. Thanks to this setting, the Council prefers projects with a certain added value, thus influencing the improvement of digital games quality created in Slovakia. The support is not sufficient for all though. The Council's representatives also evaluate the creation of a multimedia support sub-program positively. This can be seen from the budget increase in 2018. The sub-program enjoys great interest – nearly 100 projects have applied for funding in 2 years of its existence.

¹ For more information, see: www.fpu.sk.

Event Horizon and LARPs in Slovakia 2019

Lukáš "Elf" Reviľák

Event Horizon, o.z. is a residents' association focusing on development, support and education in the field of cultural, social and educational events. It not only organizes LARP by itself, but also helps other organizers and educates a new generation of LARP organizers. Their art and scientific-research activities include, for example, the professional conference Slovak LARP Talks (Slovenské hovory LARPové), intended not only for organizers of LARP and other role-playing games, but also focused on an exchange of experiences and a diverse professional discussion, social games in cooperation with Connect Coworking and Dungeon Pub, discussions with writers, creative lectures and workshops, how participants can cheaply prepare everything necessary (not only) for their LARP. In 2019, besides Event Horizon, other groups are also organizing as well as participating in several LARPs throughout the whole of Slovakia.¹

At the beginning of April, the fourth part of the *Prešov Watch* (Prešporské hladky) will take place. LARP is situated within the world of books series by Russian writer Sergei Lukyanenko (Night Watch, Day Watch etc.). Despite the continual storyline, LARP is suitable for everyone without need for any special training, besides creating their own character. The same month, *VIC Stolen Lives*, by main organizer Ján "RG" Strašiták, from the World of Darkness world will also be held, this time in the shadows of Bratislava. In this international LARP, fans of vampires can join one of the vampire clans.

May is particularly suitable for fans of post-apocalyptic themes. From May 9-12, a post-apocalyptic LARP will take place in the village of Mníchova Lehota near Trenčín, that, however, requires thorough preparation according to the instructions of the organizers Ragnar and Lokern. At the same time (May 11), Event Horizon will bring a fantasy battle game *The Border* (Hranica) from the world of the *Kingdom of Wine* (Kráľovstvo vína).

On the first two days of June, you can LARP-hike inspired by the world of J. R. R. Tolkien, the *March of Rangers through the Mountains of the Wind* (Pochod hraničiarov Veternými vrchmi), that will be held for the seventh time. The organizer Bibi Zelíková will once again lead the participants through the beautiful countryside around Trenčín, who will certainly enjoy exciting battles in the Middle-earth. June 21-23 will be promising for superheroes and supervillains, who will measure their powers in Nová Dubnica within the urban LARP *Oakfell City: New Era* by Sára and Michal Fúsik. The core of LARP will not be fights, but the game itself and surviving the conflicts.

July 15-22 is planned for the thirtieth year of the *DobrofantH*, taking place in Krásnohorská Dlhá Lúka, where at least one game is hidden every year. This year, the main game, *The Great FantH* directed by Lukáš "Geroja" Levický, will introduce to participants the world of Game of Thrones. The end of July (July 25-28) is reserved for the largest LARP in Slovakia, *Kingdom of Wine* by Event Horizon. It is a humorous game in the style of Terry Pratchett. Traditionally, it takes place in the forests a short distance from the Červený kameň Castle. Kingdom of Wine welcomes many newcomers among players each year, so no LARP experience is required. With the arrival of autumn, the residents' association PanzerHaus will realize *Project Exodus*, a one-day post-apocalyptic survival LARP that will

¹ Remark by the author: More information and a calendar of events are available at www.larpy.sk.

take place in the vicinity of the preserved military observatory in Bratislava Rača. The main motive will be to compete with players for limited resources and food. Participants will experience hunger, winter as well as “primitive conditions” and constant reconsiderations of their survival chances. LARP from another area will be *Mars 2037* by E&H Games, which will take participants to a base on Mars and introduce them to life there. *Mars 2037: The First Run*, from 2017, took place in the Botanical Garden of Košice, and the story was full of secrets, mysteries, and intrigues.

Trnava Game Guild

Michal Kabát

The Trnava gaming community is growing. The regional town of Trnava, which is close to the capital of Slovakia, has been providing good conditions for young creative people in recent years. Students maybe go to vote at their residence, but they live, study, and even more often work in Trnava. Their opportunities are going to be developed also by a new non-profit organization, which responds to the growing amount of young people interested in digital games. The *Trnava Game Guild* is thus reacting to the impulse of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, where the first students of the complete 5-year study program Theory of digital games will be finishing next year.

Regarding Slovakia, some organized game development communities exist mainly in Bratislava or Košice, and there are only a few game studios, which can employ new people. Apart from them, there are indie developers and freelancers, and many of them are also in Trnava. They are the primary target of the Trnava Game Guild that would like to offer them a space for mutual communication and cooperation to support creating and financing of common projects. At present, the Trnava Game Guild is looking for financial sources and a suitable residence, but its members have been already working on various projects. Besides game development, they organize game jams, festivals and game-related events, through which they are trying to strengthen the local community as well as promote the idea that digital games are a valuable part of our culture and a vital segment of the economy, progressing in time, when many others stagnate or disappear.

The main goal of this effort is to spread awareness about job opportunities within this field, in various positions from digital game design, trade and consumption, and other related opportunities related to the area of culture and sport. The next step should be the expansion of gaming education to secondary and basic schools. Primarily, this will be done in cooperation with the Hemisféra association offering courses *Gamecraft* (for children aged 8-12, it has already been offered in Trnava and Bratislava for 4 years) and *LevelUp* (for older students, starting in Trnava this autumn). According to our current experience, young people are not only interested in gaming, but also in the creation of games, and with even greater passion than their older colleagues.

In addition to courses, the Trnava Game Guild will assist its members in grant application processes and provide opportunities for investors' support through planned acceleration and incubator programs. It wants to be helpful also during the promotion of its members' creation and activities at domestic and foreign events. The official opening of the Trnava Game Guild is planned at the beginning of June at the Game Days 2019 festival (www.gdays.sk) in the Little Berlin Cultural center, located in one of Trnava's squares, Trnavské Nádvorie.

