

Digital Athletics in Slovakia

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There is quite a rich history of competitive games being played on various levels in Slovakia. There were dozens of semi-professional teams in various games and even some professional organizations when eSports started to make waves. Now, just a few years later, most of them do not exist, as they were mostly run by teenagers that had to get a more 'serious' job and stop playing or organizing events. However, some have survived and many more are now starting again, as eSports is starting to be taken seriously on an economic level (Chart 1) as something people enjoy not only playing, but also watching.

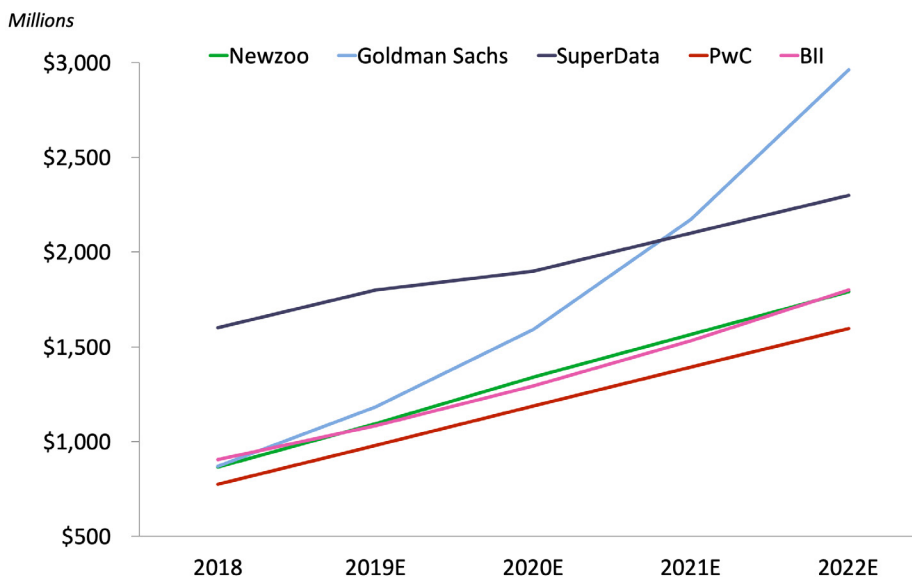


Chart 1: Global Esports Revenue Projections Through 2022

Source: REYES, M. S.: *THE ESPORTS ECOSYSTEM: The key players and trends driving the red-hot, fast-growing esports space that's on track to surpass \$1.5 billion by 2023.* [online]. [2019-12-09]. Available at: <<https://www.businessinsider.com/the-esports-ecosystem-2019-11>>.

All this falls well in line with Gartner's hype cycle that suggests there is always much media buzz at the beginning and after expectations peak, there is always a fall in interest followed by a slow but steady rise into the mainstream. If we take a look at the local gaming scene, there is already a lot going on and there is more to come. As you may have already read in our last issue, the national eSports association (saes.sk) has been formed and we should see some official national representation teams in selected games competing at international events. Meanwhile, many semi-pro teams are forming and looking for funding. Many already compete in Czech(oslovak) or international leagues. There are also many local tournaments and even the Slovak national eSports championship offering titles in eight games.

Recent developments in order to systematically improve the chances of success for Slovak players are also happening at the university level. In September, the local division

of the Czech based eSport agency Lancraft announced the first Slovak university league under the name UniCup. Its aim is to help develop teams that will stand together to fight through semester-long winter and summer seasons that will lead to public finals held in Trnava during the UniCon and Game Days festivals. In November 2019, the qualification phase of League of Legends has started and organizers promise to add more games soon. The first round of the league started with 30 teams from 10 Slovak universities.¹ One of them, the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava is also offering students the chance to earn credits for training and competing in tournaments.² We hope that this trend will catch on and spread to high schools, so that we can soon see more talents representing our country at an international level.

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Game Days 2019

Ivan Rokošný

Game Days is the one and only Slovak international digital-game festival. This unique event highlights innovative digital games that have artistic value, and focuses on their comprehensive presentation. From May 30 to June 2, 2019, Nádvorie, the Place for Contemporary Culture in Trnava, Slovakia, hosted this event bursting with talks and presentations by prominent digital game developers from Slovakia and abroad. The festival's aim is to raise awareness about digital games and spread information about new exceptional games under development. It is also a platform that promotes networking among professionals from the game development industry. Prominent figures from the Slovak and international game development sector presented their invaluable experience with progressive digital game creation to industry professionals and the general public.

The festival program took place in the facilities of Nádvorie. Presentations, talks and workshops took place in the lecture halls; the co-working space hosted the game jam and the hackathon. Concerts and other accompanying programmes took place in the exterior. The unique extensive basement space with beautiful brick arches served as a gallery for exhibitions and installations, one of which introduced Czechoslovak historical games on anti-regime resistance. As promised by the organizers, exhibitions by digital game scientists were also an important part of the festival. Competing creatures fought for victory in a big digital game quiz, curious fans tried out rare Slovak retro games from digital gaming's prehistoric times, and the program also included fun and bizarre things such as cre-

1 VOBECŤ, L.: *Unicup – univerzitní e-sportová liga v polovině skupin.* [online]. [2019-12-09]. Available at: <<https://www.lancraft.cz/Clanek/39/unicup---univerzitni-e-sportova-liga-v-polovine-skupin>>.

2 For more information, see: *Na TEDI začali vyučovať elektronické športy. Študenti vytvorili aj prvé súťažné tímy.* [online]. [2019-12-09]. Available at: <<https://fmk.sk/e-sporty/>>.