

Slovak Arts Council: Grants to Support Digital Games Creation

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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.