

# Mentored Game Bootcamp: A Unique Peer2Peer Experience

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Baltic Sea Region



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RESILIENT ECONOMIES AND COMMUNITIES

**BSG-Go**

**Project Information**

“BSG Go! Scaling-up Baltic Sea Game Support”

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BSG GO! explores and pilots promising solutions to shape a resilient support environment for the young and growing game developer studios and as a result minimise the threat they face in times of crisis.

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## Executive Summary

The gaming industry is witnessing significant growth, leading to an increased demand for effective mentorship to support emerging developers and entrepreneurs. While many mentorship programmes prioritise the needs of mentees, the requirements of mentoring are usually neglected. Being an experienced developer or entrepreneur does not inherently provide the necessary skills or frameworks for efficient mentoring.

There is no textbook reference for determining the competences expected from game development mentors, it is an emerging practice, more common and appreciated in some industries than in others, and often carried out in isolation, solely based on one's personal (and thus limited) experience. As all other stakeholders of the game industry, mentors meet and talk regularly, e.g. during game conferences, but they rarely work together in the same environment or with the same team and they even much rarer talk about their work practice and methods.

Acknowledging this gap, our focus has shifted from merely inspiring new mentors to actively supporting seasoned mentors by fostering a meaningful exchange amongst this peer group. During a prior project experience<sup>1</sup>, we discovered that game bootcamps offer a perfect environment for such an exchange.

Instead of only focusing on the peer group "young talents and entrepreneurs", the usual target group for a bootcamp and the actual reason for a mentor to join a camp, we developed a program for a bootcamp that would cater for the primary group of "mentees" but also fostering an exchange on mentoring practices and methods.

With this paper, we hope to encourage and inspire other hubs or mentoring organizations to enhance their training programs and bootcamp to benefit both the teams and their mentors.

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<sup>1</sup> The Autumn Academy bootcamp in the BGI/BSGI project: [https://baltic-games.eu/media/bsgi\\_o3.2\\_white\\_paper\\_on\\_transnational\\_incubation\\_activities\\_2022-07-12.pdf](https://baltic-games.eu/media/bsgi_o3.2_white_paper_on_transnational_incubation_activities_2022-07-12.pdf)  
<https://interreg-baltic.eu/projects/bsg-go>

## The Bootcamp Format

The chosen bootcamp format has been shaped after the military and coding bootcamp experiences, moving teams and mentors to a slightly secluded area, with all taken care of at the same location, e.g. catering, accommodation, Internet connection and programme. While the peer-to-peer learning value had been recognised as a salient part of this type of exercise, the assistance of experienced game development mentors also forms an indispensable part of the success of such focused and secluded learning environment. Additional input was received from highly popular, longer-term game-development-focused bootcamps, such as the Stugan initiative (<https://www.stugan.com>), an acceleration programme where teams work and live together in a Swedish forest by a lake for two months or the Spelkollektivet (<https://www.spelkollektivet.com>), a remote (in the literal sense) co-living and co-working space location where teams can stay until they have finished their game project or run out of funds. Overall, an international game development bootcamp can be a melting pot of ideas, skills, and cultures, leading to enriched learning experiences and the creation of games that resonate on a global scale.

Commonly, game camps are targeting emerging studios and usually focus on delivering both group sessions and tailored one-on-one mentoring, addressing the specific needs of the participating teams. Key areas of support included company strategy, game design, process management, and market readiness. Participants also benefited from peer networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities with other teams, mentors, and incubators.

The BSG Go! approach used this environment to run in parallel a unique peer-to-peer learning opportunity for mentors. Mentors, as outlined above, often must rely on their own experience to guide a team and give meaningful advice. The camp, however, provides them with a rare hands-on opportunity for experiencing and observing how other mentors work with their teams and hence could “compare notes” on the same set of teams. The fact that they live under the same roof for some days, thus bond and socialise, fosters a “safe and trustful space” for honest and open exchange instead of the more competitive atmosphere at conferences where attracting attention for their teams is the dictating agenda.

The camp format targets active mentors who already are working with teams. With a multi-day event, they were able to check on the teams during the morning, then get together with the other mentors while their teams worked (and acted on the advice given in the morning), and the evenings available for presenting their business approach as well as games, playing each other’s games, etc.

Previously, this has been more about the peer-to-peer aspect for the developers but now provided an additional layer for the mentors. We stimulated the discussion among mentors by introducing the Skills Matrix, a knowledge base collating an array of 78 competences grouped in 14 categories for mentors and team leads.<sup>2</sup> In fact, it was the camp that proved an additional point that we came to understand while developing the Skills Matrix: young entrepreneurs need to aspire to these skill sets as much as prospective and active mentors, and senior managers, producers or team leads in a company are in-house mentors and will just as well benefit from honing their “mentoring” skills as any mentor. What

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<sup>2</sup> Read more about this formidable tool: <https://interreg-baltic.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Skills-Matrix-Explained.pdf>

started as a parallel level for mentors resulted in a lively exchange between mentors and young entrepreneurs.

We saw the same effect with another tool we piloted during the camp: the “Start-up Assessment Board” which indicates milestones in the different phases that a studio undergoes during its growth from incubation and start-up to acceleration and scale-up to a mature and successful company. This workflow acts like the proverbial coin with its two sides: one indicating what studios need to achieve (thus as assignment tool from mentor to mentee or producer to dev team) and the other designating the competence areas a mentor or team lead needs to be proficient in. Again, originally dedicated to the mentor peer2peer exchange, it soon attracted the teams to join in the discussion.

Mentors could assess the impact of the camp by comparing their preparation talks and former mentoring approach or recommendations as a baseline with their post-care, now having tapped into the other mentors’ experiences and their “comparing notes” as learning curve.

One important aspect is the international nature of the bootcamp: different business cultures or industry support and development policies will help to think out of the box and at the same time better assess one’s own circumstances and thus be better equipped to deal with them. This is a benefit for both teams and mentors.

In addition, the event provided a platform for participating incubators and mentors to exchange best practices, align tools and processes, and explore cross-border incubation and mentoring opportunities. This collaborative approach aimed to enhance the overall resilience and capacity of the game development ecosystem in the Baltic Sea Region, ensuring long-term benefits for both mentors and studios.

# Designing a Mentoring Game Bootcamp

## Participants

### Determining optimal amount and profiles

To ensure the intended exchange and learning impact described above, it is important to define exactly the mixture of participants, experience level, professional profiles, team maturity etc. you wish to have. In our experience, the total should not exceed 35-40 participants. Apart from budgetary constraints, too large a group would counteract the objective of creating a supportive and intimate environment.

The group mix should a “critical mass” of mentors: e.g. one mentor bringing max 2 teams with max 2 persons each could mean 1 mentor in a. group of 5. 40 people would roughly mean 8- 12 mentors and 15-18 teams (à 2 persons), which obviously is a feasible maximum. Though quite large, this would just about allow for a fruitful exchange of expertise and tools between mentors, personalised mentoring to teams, meaningful peer-to-peer interactions, and a sense of community throughout the event.

The key strategy is to prioritise quality over quantity, to foster a deep engagement with the programme and among each other, maximising the event’s impact.

### **The Mentoring Game Bootcamp Experience:**

*Due to last-minute cancellations for health reasons, our Mentoring Bootcamp had 25 participants from diverse backgrounds and expertise from Lithuania, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia and USA. The participants included 10 seasoned game development mentors, 1 industry experts, and 14 representatives from game development companies at various maturity stages of which 3 are both mentors but joined as team members. This international mix created a dynamic and collaborative atmosphere, fostering cross-border exchange of ideas and experiences.*

*This carefully curated group ensured a balance between teams seeking support and mentors eager to exchange knowledge and test innovative tools developed within the BSG Go! project. The result was a collaborative, hands-on environment that benefited all participants, fostering learning, networking, and growth.*



BSG Go! mentor bootcamp participants

### Selection process

Instead of an open invite to teams, the process is curated via hubs and mentors. Meaning that these are addressed first and the criteria for the team selection would be discussed with them. They would meet prior to the invites and present the teams they would invite to join the camp. This requires a

network of mentors and hubs to tap into such as the League of European Game Dev Hubs<sup>3</sup> and the IGDA SIG Incubation discord to reach out to such an expert group.

One can also think of the core group being the tandems mentor + team/mentees, plus some extra experts that would complement specific knowledge, e.g. if the mentors bring several VR teams along, a VR expert could be a beneficial addition. Depending on the amount of interested mentors and teams, the curation could consider a strong peer orientation among the teams, i.e. similar maturity stage, same genre, same platform, same technology. Still, it is strongly recommended to ensure enough different background in other respects, in particular for a good international mix.

### ***The Mentoring Game Bootcamp Experience:***

*The selection process was designed to ensure a diverse and dynamic mix of teams and mentors from across the Baltic Sea Region. Organising partners from Finland, Denmark and Lithuania played a key role, each tasked with adding 2–3 game development teams and 2–3 mentors to the participant pool. Their contributions ensured a strong representation of expertise and innovative projects. This was complemented with an open call to the League.*

To better accommodate the participating parties and as a final curation process, it is advisable to have an online questionnaire as part of the registration process, covering following key areas:

1. **General** company information and main contacts at the company + bootcamp participants.
2. **Elevator Pitch** - a concise, one-line description of the company and the current game in production, highlighting its unique essence.
3. **Unique Selling Point (USP)** - explanation of what makes the game special, its target audience, and the factors that keep players engaged with links to demos, trailers, or other promotional materials.
4. **Market Opportunity** - description of the game's market segment and trends, identification of gaps in the market, and main competitors. Insights into how the game design leverages these opportunities to attract the target audience.
5. **Milestones and Roadmap** - progress and achievements to date, including time and financial investments made. Future plans for the game, such as dates for soft launch, beta testing, and global release.
6. **Business Model** - information on the game's availability (e.g., platforms such as mobile, PC, or consoles). Revenue model, including whether the game is free-to-play (F2P), premium, or uses another approach.
7. **Funding** - current funding and revenue details and additional funding needs, such as seed investments, grants, or venture capital.
8. **Specific Goals and Needs for the bootcamp** - areas where mentoring was required, such as game design, marketing, or business strategy. Specific requests, such as finding a publishing partner or overcoming production challenges.
9. **Links to Current Products** - links to existing projects, such as mobile store listings or Steam pages, to provide mentors and organizers with direct access to the team's work.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://gamedevhubs.eu/>

This detailed registration process allowed the organising team and mentors to assess each applicant's readiness and needs, ensuring a high-quality, impactful bootcamp experience for all participants.

**The mentors** had to fill in a similar online questionnaire with general description and contacts, highlights from the background regarding experience in game development activities, key areas of knowledge when mentoring.

## Programme design

As the programme will have to be tailored either to a prior orientation (e.g. VR or Green Game bootcamp) or to the registered (curated) group of teams and their requirements, it doesn't make sense to recommend a "blueprint" version.

The concept of a bootcamp requires some "playing by ear" flexibility if the idea of peer2peer learning is to be made the most of. Of the two aspects: participants and programme, giving the former a lot of thought with regards to the conceptual approach and desired impact, weighs much more than any elaborate, sophisticated, over-thought programme with clocked structure filled to the brim with planned content. The bootcamp programme is to tease out discussions and open exchange, so naturally there should be some content structure to kick-off for unreserved reflexions, spontaneous association, uninhibited question, trustfully speak one's mind. It makes sense to have some prepared presentations to stimulate discussion and also redirect the flow, if it starts to become redundant or losses its energy.



Instead of concise recommendations of a programme structure and content, we outline and explain our programme which worked well and might stimulate a similar designed programme or at least one based on the insights we present in this document.

### ***The Mentoring Game Bootcamp Experience:***

*The programme was carefully crafted to encourage collaboration, creativity, and skill development among participants while fostering a unique mentor-focused approach.*

### ***DAY 1 – Arrival day:***

Participants arrived during the afternoon and evening, settling into the serene venue. The evening featured a welcome dinner and engaging icebreaker activities to support the bonding of participants. This relaxed start helped establish connections and set a collaborative tone for the days ahead.

**DAY 2:**

We kicked off with an optional morning walk or run, followed by a hearty breakfast. The formal sessions began with introductions and presentations, allowing participants to showcase their activities and game/business roadmaps, achievements, share their key strengths, and outline their current challenges. These insights laid the groundwork for meaningful mentoring discussions. The afternoon extended into collaborative sessions, including the introduction of the Skills Matrix tool, which offered participants a chance to evaluate their skills. The day concluded with a networking dinner and a lively "play the games" session, where teams demonstrated their projects and received valuable feedback.

**DAY 3:**

We focused on deepening the mentoring experience. After the morning walk and breakfast, participants attended a masterclass by Aki Kanerva, an experienced mentor and game developer from Finland, complemented by Q&A session. Workshops followed, targeting both teams and mentors. Teams explored their support needs, information gaps, and approaches to finding mentors, while mentors participated in discussions on improving their mentoring skills and processes. Evening sessions bridged perspectives, with teams sharing their mentoring experiences, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas. The day ended a networking dinner and a sauna session, offering a relaxing conclusion and informal networking to the week's intensive activities.

**DAY 4:**

It began with a feedback session from the previous day and set-up for the final full day of the bootcamp. During mentor workshops, two tools were presented developed in the BSG Go! project: the MENTAT Tool,<sup>4</sup> presented by Emil Lundedal Hammar,<sup>5</sup> and Mentoring tool presented Allan Abildgaard Kirkeby. The workshop was useful both ways - to enhance mentoring processes and provide feedback for the usability of the tools and suggest improvements. The afternoon featured focus time, enabling teams to work on their projects while engaging in one-on-one mentoring sessions. A networking dinner and a serene forest walk wrapped up the day.

**DAY 5 – departure day:**

The participants gathered for breakfast and a final wrap-up session. Feedback was shared, and farewells were exchanged as buses and cars departed for Tartu, Tallinn and Riga. The bootcamp successfully combined structured sessions, networking opportunities, and a mentor-centred focus, leaving participants equipped with valuable tools, insights, and connections to propel their work forward.



<sup>4</sup> The tool itself: <https://ghs-gceko.ondigitalocean.app/> and the explanatory introduction:

[https://interreg-baltic.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/MENTAT\\_Assessment\\_Prognosis\\_Tool.pdf](https://interreg-baltic.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/MENTAT_Assessment_Prognosis_Tool.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://interreg-baltic.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Game-Startup-Status-Board-User-Manual.pdf>

## Tools and methods of interaction

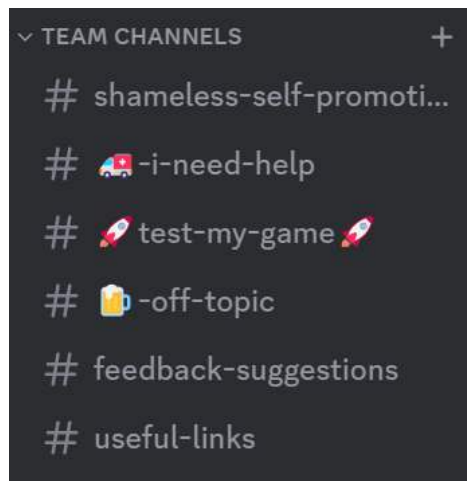
### Google Forms

Google forms were used for the registration and feedback activities. The main questions covered the topics described above in Selection process description.

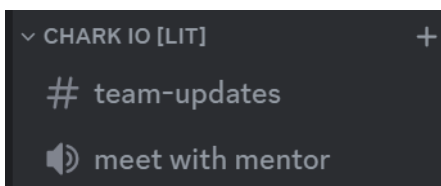
### Interaction platform - Discord

Main interaction platform was Discord, a free communication platform that enables users to engage through voice calls, video calls, text messaging, and media sharing. Initially designed for gamers, it has evolved into a versatile tool for various communities, including education, art, and business. Users can create or join servers - dedicated spaces organized into topic-based channels for discussions and activities. As of 2024, Discord boasts approximately 150 million monthly active users and 19 million weekly active servers.

For the bootcamp, a dedicated server was set up (see screenshots below) with shared channels for sharing the team and mentor profiles as well as links to websites, one-pagers, pitch-decks, Steam pages, promotional materials, games, etc.



Additionally, both mentors and teams had specific channels to share relevant information and meet before and after the event.



### Mentor and incubator tools

Several BSG-Go! tools have been tested during the bootcamp:

- Skills Matrix tool, developed by Dania was presented and tested with positive feedback from participants
- Mentat Tool
- Mentoring tool for mentors working with teams#

## Feedback and post-care

The success of the bootcamp lies not just in its intensive sessions but in the relationships and opportunities it fosters. Implementing a strong feedback mechanism and a structured post-care approach ensures that the impact extends far beyond the bootcamp, strengthening the entire ecosystem of game developers, incubators, and mentors.

Needless to say, that feedback is highly important, for increasing renown and improve quality from lessons learned, and if that is an option: to get funding for the next camp. It should rather be a more detailed questionnaire than a quick rating/raking tool such as Mentimeter or Slido. To not make it too heavy, a mix of open questions and rating/ranking is advisable.

Feedback provides suggestions for improvements and overall positive experience will also encourage other hubs to join forces and do their own transnational camps.

Using the chosen communication platform for post-care does not only have the advantage of being able to come back to the mentors (not only your local mentor), but also for mentors being able to continue co-mentoring and remain in touch with the team. It can lay the basis for future collaboration between hubs and teams, e.g. studio exchange visits or taking on another studio's staff member for a time, it could lead to mentors working outside their region or mentors working for a time in another hub. It strengthens the emerging relationships and contacts between mentors and among teams.

The feedback questionnaire we used was probably too long, but we used this as a learning experience for all parties involved, thus more information was needed. Overall, the focus on feedback could be asked from the following perspectives:

- Overall organizational topics (venue, format, logistics, etc.)
- Program effectiveness and team takeaways
- Mentor perspectives and how to their role was supported and enhanced

A Feedback questionnaire should balance structured rating scales (e.g., ranking the usefulness of sessions, mentor interactions, networking opportunities) with open-ended questions that allow participants to elaborate on their experiences.

The bootcamp's value does not have to end when participants return home. A well-structured post-care approach, with e.g. periodic check-ins in Discord or inviting participants to other events, ensures continued engagement and long-term benefits for both teams and mentors. Teams could occasionally ask advice from mentors. This also enables co-mentoring, where mentors can exchange insights, discuss ongoing challenges, and refine best practices collaboratively. Additionally, stronger relationships between teams and hubs set up during the bootcamp can lead to tangible collaborations, such as: studio exchange visits, where mentors or teams visit other incubators to learn from their peers and increase opportunities to collaboration outside their region.

# Organising a Bootcamp

## The location and venue

### Location:

Choosing the right venue is one of the most decisive factors for the success of the bootcamp, alongside the participant mix. Based on good practices from previous events and learnings from our piloting activity, the ideal location should strike a balance between accessibility and a remote, distraction-free environment that **fosters deep work, creativity, and community building**.

While the bootcamp should take place in a **calm, countryside setting**, to avoid distractions. To ensure ease of travel for people outside organising country, it must remain accessible from the nearest airport, ideally with a bus transfer or organized shuttle for participants. Ensuring smooth arrival and departure logistics helps reduce travel stress and maximizes the time spent at the bootcamp.

### Venue:

The ideal venue should be self-contained, offering accommodation, working spaces, and communal areas all in one place. To create the best environment for both focused work and informal exchanges, the venue should have the following elements:

- rooms for accommodating all participants: 30-40 rooms to host the entire group. In smaller venues, some participants should share rooms.
- multiple working spaces with one large plenary meeting room and several smaller rooms for mentor-team discussions, and workspaces with strong Wi-Fi and ample power outlets.
- catering options: either full catering (restaurant on-site) or a mix of self-catering and catered meals, ensuring flexibility and convenience. There should also be options for vegans/vegetarians and other people with special dietary restrictions.
- networking & social spaces: A common lounge area, evening gathering space, and outdoor seating to foster informal discussions and relationship-building.
- recreational facilities: Bonus amenities like a gym, pool, sauna, or campfire/BBQ area add to the experience, helping participants unwind and strengthen their connections during free time.

### **The Mentoring Game Bootcamp Experience:**

*In Estonia, TSP team organised the bootcamp at Kääriku Sports Center (<https://kaariku.ee/en>), 205km away from major airports in the Baltics (Tallinn and Riga airports). The location ticked all the boxes described above, except being too far away. This included extra costs and some inconveniences for the participants, as people arrived from different countries during slightly different times. Thus, some had long waiting times either during arrival or departure from Tallinn.*

*The BSG Go! bootcamp venue was procured by TSP team and partly funded by Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme for the whole duration, including common working area, accommodation, catering and sauna for final networking during the last evening. Travel of experts and startup teams from other countries were covered by BSG-Go! partners involved in organisation of the event.*

## The timing

### The duration of the camp

Careful planning of the timing and duration of the bootcamp is just as critical as selecting the right venue. From choosing the right season to structuring the daily agenda, multiple factors contribute to ensuring a smooth and productive experience for both teams and mentors.

Scheduling the event outside of major vacation times (e.g., mid-summer, Christmas) ensures better availability of both mentors and teams and helps avoiding peak holiday periods, when airports are over-crowded and travel costs high. The best months tend to be late Spring (May-June) or early Autumn (from second half of September-October) when work schedules are more stable, and travel is less expensive. Also, a remote bootcamp in a countryside setting is best enjoyed when participants can make use of outdoor areas. Early autumn or late spring provide the best balance of pleasant temperatures. As the focus is on game developers, checking the global and regional game industry calendar (e.g., Gamescom, Nordic Game, GDC, Slush, etc.) ensures that key mentors and participants are not double-booked.

### The timing

The timing of the bootcamp—from the season to the daily schedule—has a major influence on its success. A well-planned, balanced approach ensures optimal participation, focus, and engagement, making the event both productive and enjoyable for all involved. We planned a full week from Monday to Friday, allowing mentors and teams to join during workdays, and choose if they want to take advantage of remaining the weekend. Monday and Friday being arrival and departure days, makes them useful for introduction and wrap-up, but in particular for socialising activities. Full impact days would then be 3 days.

From the feedback received, some felt it could have been one day less, others would have appreciated one more day. The three days can be very intense. In the end, we believe it all depends on the programme preparation – which is reflected in the somewhat opposite feedback (see appendix): some wanted more programme, some more self-organised time. It thus requires very careful reflection on the programme and the type of participants to determine the optimal duration. Overall, the ideal length of a bootcamp should allow for deep work and engagement without fatigue. And a well-paced daily agenda helps balance focused work, mentor interactions, and networking while preventing exhaustion.

### Preparation time

With this format of involving a large mentor group, curating participating teams and determining the criteria for participation before sending out open invites to cooperating game hubs and incubators, one needs to start at least 5-6 months beforehand with the preparation, in particular as most mentors and co-organisers will be doing this next to their regular jobs.

### ***The Mentoring Game Bootcamp Experience:***

*Our bootcamp in Kääriku provided an excellent setting for an immersive game development mentoring experience, with many positives in terms of venue, structure, and networking opportunities. However, as with any event, there were also challenges and areas for improvement in any future editions.*

**The Pros**

Kääriku Sports Center (<https://kaariku.ee/en/>) provided an **all-in-one venue**, including accommodation, workspaces, and recreational areas within the same complex, minimizing distractions and allowing for a fully focused environment in a secluded location. The scenic countryside with forests and lakes added a relaxing atmosphere, which helped balance intense work sessions with moments of downtime. As an extra, access to a sauna, gym, and sports facilities added a refreshing touch, allowing participants to unwind and recharge.

Pre-event coordination via **Discord as the main communications tool** provided the opportunity to start networking already before the event and follow-up after the bootcamp.

The **flexible program** with both structured sessions (presentations, mentor talks) and self-directed work time helped participants apply insights immediately to their projects and balance between mentoring, working time, and networking.

**The Cons**

At the same time, while Kääriku's isolation was beneficial for focus, the **lack of direct transport connections** made it difficult for some participants to reach the venue and we had extra effort to manage arrivals and departures with extra costs.

In the feedback form, some participants considered the **program as too flexible**, e.g. the initial introduction and pitching sessions took too much time and the one-on-one mentoring was not structured enough. In the future events, consider having structured and timed pitches for participant introductions. Additionally, a clear mentor-team matching system could be tested to ensure all teams get structured attention by all mentors.

**The social programme**

Food & Drink:

Food plays an important role next to games and sports in hobnobbing. And it poses a real challenge for the organiser, both when deciding on a venue and then ensuring the provision of food according to the venue circumstances.

“Conference packages” have the advantage that the costs for accommodation, food and workspace (including equipment) can be shared equally among the participants. This often covers breakfast and coffee/drinks during the day and at least one meal. And the costs are not much higher than the “room-only” costs. However, usually only medium-to-high standard hotels offer such packages, and the question is whether this fits the ambience one wishes to create with young game developers.

On the other hand, “cooking together”, taking care of the kitchen together, is also perfect for bonding, and it might be a better fit in the type of venue. It also allows for people (over this stretch of time) to adapt the meals to their wishes and dietary requirements. It might be less expensive and more diverse than conference package catering. But it needs a lot more organisation work.

Some social activities (e.g. sauna or sports with special equipment like hockey, etc.) might require extra costs of which participants need to be made aware of beforehand or which might have to be covered by the organisers. At the same time camping, hiking and walking around in countryside is for free and at the same time a great bonding experience.

**The Mentoring Game Bootcamp Experience:**

*A social programme is essential to balance the intensive mentoring and work sessions, fostering stronger relationships between teams and mentors in a relaxed setting. Beyond structured learning, informal interactions will create trust, camaraderie, and long-term professional connections that extend beyond the bootcamp itself.*

*At Kääriku, evening activities played a crucial role in strengthening the peer-to-peer environment. Events such as networking dinners, campfire discussions, and sauna sessions provided informal spaces where participants could unwind, exchange experiences, and share personal insights into the challenges of game development and sharing not only the good, but also the bad and the ugly. These settings helped break down barriers, allowing both teams and mentors to connect beyond their roles and titles.*

*For future bootcamps, the social programme should remain an integral part of the schedule, with a mix of structured networking events and free time for spontaneous interactions. Activities like BBQs, outdoor hikes, casual game nights, or even light-hearted competitive gaming sessions could further enhance team bonding. Ensuring that social events feel natural rather than forced allows participants to build connections organically, which can translate into lasting industry partnerships and future collaborations.*

**Checklist: Preparing the Bootcamp****Planning and concept development (6-12 months prior to the event)**

- Onboard co-organisers and establish the initial budget and program (format, duration)
- Onboard key partners and sponsors for covering or sharing the costs
- Onboard the mentor group: research, reach-out, explanation, meetings
- Mentor curation meetings for determining team mix and if necessary additional experts

**Venue selection and logistics (6-9 months prior to the event)**

- Consider availability of accommodation, larger meeting space, breakout rooms, internet connectivity, catering options and recreational areas (e.g. sports, sauna, BBQ, etc.)
- Confirm venue booking and negotiate contract details
- Prepare instructions for bookings (if participants should individually book and pay or some/all costs are covered by sponsors and organisers, ask special dietary needs of participants), arrivals (add recommendations and links for buses/trains/taxis), other info (organiser contacts, and country-specific instructions)

**Participant selection and invitations (4-6 months prior to event)**

- Create an application/registering process for teams and mentors (what kind of information you need in addition to contact data)
- Create info packs to selected participants (agenda, mentor profiles, team intros, venue, logistics, food, etc.)
- Set up a communication platform, e.g. Discord for pre- and post-event interaction
- Check, if any additional equipment is needed and what should teams bring along – e.g. VR goggles, large screen, consoles, hybrid event equipment (360° Camera).

**Content development (3-4 months prior to the event)**

- Confirm hosts and speakers for inspirational talk
- Confirm mentor-led sessions and mentor-team matchmaking
- Prepare other tools and resources needed
- Plan social program and informal networking

**Event logistics and communications (1-2 month prior to the event)**

- Confirm venue, logistics, and room assignments
- Arrange catering and dietary requirements
- Finalize transportation details (arrivals/departures, shuttle times, pickup points)
- Ensure technical setup and Wi-Fi connectivity (extra power chords are needed!)

**During the bootcamp**

- Welcome and check-in of participants
- Facilitate the program (hosts)
- Capture photos/videos for documentation and promotion (ask permission for sharing from all participants)
- Have flexibility for the schedule

**Post-camp follow-up and evaluation (1-3 months after the event)**

- Distribute detailed feedback questionnaires to participants
- Organize follow-ups/check-ins after 1 and 3 months
- Keep Discord active for ongoing mentorship and collaboration
- Share lessons learned and good practice within future external events/meetups
- Document the event for future improvement, funding and sponsorship applications

**Budget considerations**

Obviously, the question of how to budget this type of bootcamp and which expenses need to be met leads to questions about which costs to allocate to whom, how to ensure that pre-financing will be available and where possible/desirable to limit costs. Budgeting a bootcamp requires careful early planning and allocation of costs with the focus on ensuring **financial feasibility while keeping participation accessible** for participants. The budget should balance necessary expenses, potential sponsorships, and cost-sharing strategies, ensuring that high-quality mentorship and infrastructure are available without making participation prohibitive.

**Potential funding sources** are a mix of funding by organisers (existing projects and programs at hubs/incubators/universities, etc.), regional and EU funding (projects focusing on international cooperation), corporate sponsorship (one key sponsor or different sponsors supporting ecosystem development) and potentially participation fees.

There are 2-3 main cost categories to be considered:

1. Staff time of organisers and affiliated hubs/mentors
2. Expenses for the implementation: travel and logistics, accommodation, subsistence, equipment, venue, consumables.
3. Remunerations for external experts

## Ad 1:

This can either be covered by the hubs or organisations (universities, accelerators etc.) through the salaries or remunerations they pay their staff/mentors anyway, or specifically for this event.

It could also be allocated to participating teams, which obviously is the case for professional bootcamp organisations – but they would not be the target group of this document, so this is not a feasible option.

## Ad 2:

In addition to 1.) the bootcamp will incur the same costs for their participating staff as for the other participants. So, even if 1.) is covered by already existing budgets for the staff/mentor time, attending the bootcamp will require these expenses on top:

- Travel (flights/train/ship) to nearest city: to lower the costs for this, early preparation and invitation/registration/commitment from the participants help lower costs
- Shuttle to venue: in many cases, this might need to be centrally organised (if not offered by the venue, then by renting minivans).  
**Note:** the driver should have all passengers sign a waiver and as being a private passenger in case of an accident – otherwise by law, this might be considered a taxi and for this often a special licence is needed. For this reason alone, it is better that the organiser covers those costs and does not re-allocate them to the participants, because that then would in fact be a taxiing service
- Accommodation and subsistence: as mentioned above, there might be conference packages that would cover both plus the workspace rent and would make it easy to re-allocate to individual participants (to be negotiated with the venue for individual invoicing). Another option is to employ a travel agency to deal with this and split the costs evenly.  
 If self-catering option is of interest, then possibly transportation/delivery needs to be added to the actual costs and how to split this amongst the group (a common kitty perhaps).
- Equipment and consumables

## Ad 3.:

This might be different types of “experts”, e.g. a mentor not covered by an organising hub but prepared to come with their teams (e.g. on the open invitation round) – here at least additional costs for 2. will need to be considered and should probably be covered by the teams, if they are not part of a hub, otherwise they might pay.

Depending on the programme, you might want to have a specific expert (without team) join (e.g. AI or VR or IP legal expert) on site for a short time or the whole time (thus also incurring 2.) costs) or online (giving a talk / or being available at certain periods on Discord). This will highly likely entail a remuneration expense for this expert.

While costs 1.) are usually covered by the organising hubs/institutions, cost categories 2.) and 3.) will either be covered by participants themselves or be sponsored or a mix of both.

If hubs are involved, they might be able to get their teams’ costs sponsored, e.g. by their municipalities for “internationalisation” of the regional start-ups. The organising entity might get regional support for bringing international stakeholders to their region and putting it on the map for the industry.

As such camps as proposed here are unlikely to be done by professional camp organisers (becoming then too expensive for European game start-ups, where – in contrast to the US for example – the

business culture and entrepreneurial mindset is not as willing to spend a lot of resources on training and learning), we recommend to keep costs as low as possible while focusing on a functioning work environment (good internet etc.) and a surrounding that fosters socialising (countryside, outdoor or group activities, space for get togethers), and less on “luxury” and hype locations. Early preparations would then also make acquisition of sponsored budgets more feasible.

### ***The Mentoring Game Bootcamp Experience:***

#### ***Key lessons learned***

*Early planning is crucial: Securing the venue and travel arrangements well in advance significantly reduces costs. A well-structured budget and time management plan ensures a high-quality, sustainable bootcamp while keeping costs under control. Clear role division with co-organisers, early cost estimates, and diversified funding sources significantly ease financial and operational pressure.*

*Balancing costs and accessibility: A well-functioning, all-in-one venue is key to a smooth bootcamp experience, but cost efficiency should be prioritized over luxury.*

*Funding diversification: A mix of hub/institutional support, sponsorships, and public funding can help cover expenses without overburdening participants*

*Organiser time estimate: Although, the venue selection, budgeting and co-organiser outreach might start already 12 month+ before the event, key organisation activities take no more than 6 months + 1-3 months post-event follow-up.*

*Mentors time estimate: before the event, mentors should plan for 2-4 hours for preparing a short overview of their skill-set and experience, checking the team introductions, engaging with some of them in Discord, 3-5 days of active mentoring at the venue (6-8 hours/day) and 2-4 hours for post-event feedback and follow-up activities. (total 30-40 hours/mentor)*

*Costs involved / possible pre-financing involved: main expenses for the event are travel, accommodation, catering, venue rental, and external expert fees. Some pre-financing should be available for potential venue deposit, travel costs and consumables. Cost-sharing with co-organisers is possible, if planned way ahead targeting a mix of sponsorship and public funding.*

## Appendix – The Mentoring Game Bootcamp Experience

### Feedback Survey

Link to feedback form was shared with all participants after the event. Overall, the BSG Go! Mentoring Bootcamp was highly appreciated for its unique format, which combined intensive mentoring, peer-to-peer learning, and networking opportunities. Participants valued the international mix of teams, mentors, and incubator representatives, as well as the cozy and secluded setting that fostered deep collaboration. However, several areas for improvement emerged, particularly regarding the structure and communication of the program.

Feedback was provided in both open answers as well as on Likert Scale (1 Not at all – 5 Very much) to the following questions:

- How did you like the overall experience of the bootcamp? (Avg answer 4.625)
- How did you like the organisation of the bootcamp - communications, registration, moderation, tools used, etc.? (Avg answer 4.25)
- How did you like the overall quality of the bootcamp approach - e.g. availability of mentors, peer to peer support, work environment, mix of participants, etc.? (Avg answer 4.125)
- How did you like the overall quality of the program structure - variability and length of sessions, availability of individual support from mentors and peer support etc.? (Avg answer 4)
- How did you like the online communications tool used for the event - Discord? (Avg answer 5)
- How did you like the venue? (Avg answer 4.875)
- How did you like the mentoring process? (both team and mentor perspectives welcome, can be further elaborated below) (Avg answer 4.625)
- How did you like the food? (Avg answer 3.875)
- How did you like the free time activity possibilities? (Avg answer 4.125)

Main strengths of the bootcamp

- 1) **Engaging content and participants:** Participants highlighted the diverse expertise of mentors and the variety of teams as major strengths. Many appreciated the friendly atmosphere, with some forming lasting professional connections and friendships. Free-time activities were generally well-received but could benefit from more icebreaker sessions at the beginning to help newcomers feel at ease.
- 2) **Mentor and peer to peer learning:** Mentors benefited from the opportunity to exchange insights and tools, while teams gained valuable feedback and new perspectives on their projects.
- 3) **Venue and environment:** The secluded and cozy setting, combined with networking activities like forest walks and sauna session, created a supportive and intimate environment for collaboration.
- 4) **Tools and insights:** The mentor presentations and tools discussed were frequently mentioned as highlights, providing practical guidance for participants.

Areas for improvement

- 1) **Program Structure and time management:** Several participants noted that some sessions were too long, particularly the team presentation segments, leading to fatigue and reduced engagement. More structured timeboxing and shorter sessions were recommended.

- 2) **Communication and scheduling:** Many participants expressed the need for a clearly communicated daily schedule, shared well in advance and accessible during the event (e.g., pinned on Discord).
- 3) **Mentorship process:** While the availability of mentors was praised, feedback indicated the need for more structured one-on-one mentoring sessions, rather than relying solely on informal interactions. Additionally, a broader range of mentors with technical expertise was requested to balance the focus on business and creative aspects.
- 4) **Hands-On Activities:** Some participants, especially introverted individuals, suggested incorporating more interactive elements like mini-game jams or other collaborative tasks to foster deeper engagement.
- 5) **Discord Usage:** While Discord was effective as a communication platform, its structure was noted as chaotic. Suggestions included consolidating channels, using pinned posts for key information, and dedicating a channel for resources and links

## Participant recommendations

As a standalone tool, bootcamps can be organised either in the beginning of an incubation process to get the incubator teams on the same page and introduce key staff of the incubator and external mentors or as a standalone event for hand-picked international teams and mentors from already ongoing or finished incubation programmes.

Based on the participants' feedback, below a few recommendations.

### Enhanced programme structure

- Implement stricter timeboxing for presentations to avoid fatigue.
- Incorporate more hands-on activities like workshops or mini-game jams.
- Provide dedicated time for teams to work on their projects and receive focused mentor support.

### Improved communication

- Clearly outline expectations for participants and mentors, including session formats and objectives.
- Share a detailed daily schedule with participants well in advance and keep it easily accessible during the event (e.g., a pinned post on Discord).

### Diversified mentorship

- Include mentors with technical expertise in addition to business and creative skills.
- Facilitate structured one-on-one mentoring sessions and assign mentors to specific teams or topics to ensure equal participation.

### Better use of tools

- Streamline the Discord server by reducing channels, using pins for key information, and organising resources in a centralised location.
- Assign a dedicated Discord manager to oversee communication and improve usability.

### Participant engagement

- Plan additional bonding activities at the start of the bootcamp to help participants connect in an informal setting.

- Foster an inclusive environment by moderating discussions to ensure quieter participants also have a chance to contribute.

## Budget and Feasibility

The budget for the bootcamp was around 15K EUR for 25 participants and included the following cost categories without staff costs for time spent on preparation and implementation:

- Venue for a week incl. accommodation, meeting rooms and socialising area. Extra costs for any additional sessions, e.g. traditional sauna sessions in Estonia and Finland.
- Catering for a week – depending on the venue and availability of catering service providers at or near the venue.
- Logistics – this depends a lot on the country and the venue location. As the bootcamp was far away from any major airport (appr. 210 km from Tallinn and 205 km from Riga Airport), special shuttle buses were organised for participant transfer. Also, international partners covered travel costs of external experts and teams.
- Expert costs – speaker fees and travel cost can be very expensive. However, for some mentors, this is a nice opportunity to take a few days off and enjoy networking with peers. Thus, not all experts asked any fees for participating.
- Coffee breaks - this can be either part of the catering costs or standalone budget line. This time, a coffee machine was rented for the whole week and coffee/tea/milk/sugar/honey was bought from a supermarket, which is more budget friendly, than catering service.
- Miscellaneous costs – e.g. post-its, paper, pens, etc. Minor cost category, but needs to be taken into account, when planning for specific brain-storming sessions, etc.

Long term feasibility would be either joining already available resources of incubators and organise this as a joint cross-border activity or utilise a combination of funding from participation fees and private sector sponsors.

## Detailed programme of the event



<b>Day1 -Monday</b>	<b>Teams</b>	<b>Mentors</b>	<b>Hubs</b>
Afternoon	Arrival/Check-in		
Evening	Welcome Dinner + icebreaker with a nature walk/boardgames		
<b>Day 2 – Tuesday</b>	<b>Teams</b>	<b>Mentors</b>	<b>Hubs</b>
8.00-10.00	Morning walk/run + Breakfast		
Morning session 10-12:30	Intro, presentations by all participants, intro of plans for the bootcamp. Max 5 slides, incl.video/pics main achievements/key strengths and current struggles/key topics/needs for mentoring. + Add to Discord.		
12.30-14.30	Networking lunch		
Afternoon session 14:30 – 17:00	Morning session continues.		
17.00-18.00	Skills Matrix intro by Allan and optional self-evaluation with Skills Matrix.		
18.00-20.00	Networking dinner and play the games session		
<b>Day 3 – Wednesday</b>	<b>Teams</b>	<b>Mentors</b>	<b>Hubs</b>
8.00-10.00	Morning walk/run + Breakfast		
10:00 – 12:30	Mentor Masterclass on how to build and launch a successful game: Aki Kanerva + Q&A		
12.30-14.30	Networking lunch		
Afternoon	Teams workshop: What kind of help they are looking for? What kind of information is hard to find? How to find a mentor?	Workshop on mentor skills and mentoring Processes. Round-table. Topics from Skills Matrix.	
Evening	Session: teams' experiences with mentoring Workshop on mentoring processes and mentor programs continues with teams' perspective.		
18.00-20.00	Networking dinner + walk in the forest		
<b>Day 4 - Thursday</b>	<b>Teams</b>	<b>Mentors</b>	<b>Hubs</b>
8.00-10.00	Morning yoga + Breakfast		
Morning	Mentor Masterclass + Q&A		
12.30-14.30	Networking lunch		
Afternoon	Focus time (own tasks) + Individual team-mentor meetings	Mentor program wrap-up + MENTAT TOOL presentation and testing (Emil Lundedal Hammar, RDA)	
Evening	Wrap-up and feedback session		
18.00-21.00	Networking dinner and Sauna session		
<b>Day 5 – Friday</b>	<b>Teams</b>	<b>Mentors</b>	<b>Hubs</b>
8.00-10.00	Breakfast + final wrap-up/feedback session		
10.00	Buses/cars leaving to Tartu/Tallinn		