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# Survey on Esports Player Organizations in Finland -



Bachelor of Business Administration

Esports Business

Spring 2020



KAMK • University  
of Applied Sciences

## **Abstract**

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**Title of the Publication:** Survey on Esports Player Organizations in Finland

**Degree Title:** Bachelor's Degree in Esports Business

**Keywords:** electronic sports, gaming, player organization

This thesis was commissioned by the Finnish Esports Federation (SEUL). SEUL is working as a national union for computer, console, mobile and other electronic sports in Finland. SEUL strives to increase the visibility of esports in Finland and participates in esports industry research, development, protection of player's interests and communication.

The aim for this Bachelor's thesis was to collect information and analyze the data related to the size, structure and actions of esports player organizations in Finland. Electronic sports in Finland is a constantly developing industry. Since esports industry is quite young, the amount of research data is minor in every division of esports. This thesis focuses on player organizations because of the author's own interest. The content of the thesis provides exact numeric information about working roles, activity, and professional players in Finnish esports organizations. The thesis provides an information base that can be used for comparison purposes in later stage, when following the development of Finnish esports organizations. In addition, this thesis highlights some of the current challenges in player organization actions, and esports player professionalism.

As a suggestion from the principal or client, the research data was collected mainly with phone interviews. The responses were collected to a questionnaire form and transferred to figures that help to interpret and examine the data. The total number of respondent organizations was fifteen and it can be considered as a convincing sample group, especially because the available organization sampling is still very limited in Finland. The mission for the research was to gather information that would benefit people who are working in the industry, mainly by introducing some topics that would need most attention in the future development work.

The research displayed that policies in the industry are still shaping, especially regarding to youth work, player contacts and compensations. This research is one of firsts in Finland in its own area, and addresses that further research would be extremely important, especially if we wish to understand how esports industry is developing in Finland in the future.

## **Forward**

During the thesis project, I found questions and problems for which I could not find answers from the existing materials and sources. Therefore, it was extremely important to have the support and advice from the professionals and experts working in the esports industry.

I would like to express my gratitude towards the people in the industry who have helped me during my thesis work. Thank you, esports player organization representatives for being open minded and responding to my interview questionnaire. I appreciated your time, interest and encouragement which helped me to execute my research.

Thank you for the people who have been working as a consultant when I was looking for advice. I highly appreciate the straightforward attitude and passion among the people working in the industry. I wish and want to believe that my research will benefit also the ones who were giving me industry related advice and information.

In addition, thank you for the Finnish Esports Federation and especially Mirka Tukia, for suggesting me this interesting topic. I appreciate your support and advice during the thesis work. It was rewarding to work with a meaningful thesis topic, and I feel it was important to have a fluent communication with the thesis commissioner.

Finally, thank you for my advisors in Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, Janus Pitkänen and Jani Vattula, who guided me with patience and encouragement. Your advice was useful and essential. Positive and humorous guidance with the freedom to do tasks in my own way was occasionally the best way to encourage me to proceed with my thesis process.

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## **List of Symbols**

**CS:GO:** Counter-Strike: Global Offensive

**CPL:** Cyberathlete Professional League

**eSM:** The Finnish Esports Championship

**EVO:** Evolution Championship Series

**FEL:** Finnish Esports League

**FPS:** First-person Shooter

**LAN:** Local Area Network

**LoL:** League of Legends

**MMORPG:** Massively multiplayer online role-playing

**NHL:** National Hockey League

**OWL:** Overwatch League

**RTS:** Real Time Strategy games

**RPG:** A Role-playing game

## 1 Introduction

Esports, which stands for electronic sports, are competitive video games played between teams or a player, within a wide variety of computer, mobile or console games. This thesis discusses the current development of esports organizations in Finland and is implemented as an interview research. The thesis is commissioned by Finnish Esports Federation, SEUL LLC. SEUL is a Finnish non-profit- organization.

The purpose of the study is to examine the current structures, size and activities in Finnish esports organizations. Esports continues its worldwide growth and the general knowledge about the current situation of the Finnish esports organizations is important not only for Finnish Esports Federation, but also to those who can use this research as a comparison ground for subsequent studies related to later changes in esports industry in Finland and as a tool for creating an overall image about the development of the esports player organizations in Finland.

This research presents the current situation and development of Finnish Esports organizations that who have player representation and are registered to the Business Information System (BIS). BIS is a registration service maintained by Finnish Patent and Registration Office and the Finnish Tax Administration. In addition, the research covers BIS registered non-profit associations that are known to have active player representation. The research was expanded to non-profit associations to receive more research data and because many traditional sports clubs are currently strongly involved in esports in Finland.

The theoretical section of the thesis supports the background information about esports player organizations and assists to understand the results of the research. The main aims of the research are to discover how large esports organizations are in player representation and how many organizations are there in Finland. The research questions cover also the gender and age structure of the organizations, the number of employees and their roles in the organization. One section of the research is focused on esports professional players' position as an employee in the organization.

## 2 Theoretical background

This chapter focuses in introducing esports as a phenomenon and the background of the industry b. In addition, the theory section provides general information about esports organizations and focuses on the research question themes in order to support subsequently the interpretation of the research results.

The first part of the theory chapter is focused generally on the current development of esports industry and history worldwide. Subsequently, the first chapter continues to a presentation of most well-known and largest Finnish esports events and leagues and aims at opening esports context in Finland. The second chapter of the theory introduces the formulation and foundation of esports organizations and deepens to the description of non-profitable esports organizations and esports player organizations with the theme of professionalism in gaming.

The third chapter introduces the main work roles inside an esports player organization. Some roles recur in most of the organizations and are not dependent on the size of the organization and therefore it is useful to have a general understanding of their roles inside a player organization. In addition, the third section describes the current situation concerning age and gender distribution in the organizations and youth work in the esports industry. The final chapter focuses on esports related professions and introduces career opportunities in the industry.

### 2.1 Overview of the current development of esports

In practical terms, esports can be described as “competitive pro and amateur video gaming that is often coordinated by different leagues, ladders and tournaments, and where players customarily belong to teams or other sporting organizations who are sponsored by various business organizations.” (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017:1) Yet, a couple of decades ago video games were known mainly as a leisure time entertainment and it was not predictable that the generalization of Internet and the development of technology could someday unite 60 million people worldwide to watch other people playing, like in League of Legends Mid-Season Invitational in 2018. (Statista, 2019)

Over recent years, esports has increasingly professionalized, and as mentioned in Hamari's and Sjöblom's (2017) definition, esports has developed towards a more organizational direction, where organizations take care of the rights and practical arrangements related to player career and competing. The global esports market revenue will be nearly 1,096 billion in 2019 and the growth is estimated to increase revenue to 1,79 billion dollars for next year, 2020. (Statista 2019) In addition, in year 2019 esports reached over 443 million viewers, from which 45 percent were esports enthusiasts. (Newzoo 2019) Consequently, it is logical that also the industry around esports develops and increases along with the revenue growth.

Playing for hundreds of thousands, or even millions of euros, in front of the global million-headed audience is likely to be a dream for every player who is targeting to be a professional player in the international level. Only the best players can access the major tournaments and leagues such as League of Legends World Championship, The International, Overwatch League (OWL) or Evolution Championship Series (EVO). (Rönkä 2018: 69,72)

Despite of the auspicious growth of esports, the industry is still complicated and the structure of tournaments incoherent. The young age of the industry is a reason why esports league and tournament actions are not stabilized, and the industry needs persistent and coherent development. The lack of coherence can be noticed also from the inconsistency in games chosen to major tournaments. The selection of games played in tournaments can vary in every tournament and new tournaments are published yearly causing constant changes to the international esports tournament calendar. (Rönkä 2018: 69).

### 2.1.1 Brief history of esports

As long as there have been computers, there has been computer games and competition between players. The roots of esports can be tracked as far as to 1960s, albeit the first significant esports like event can be claimed to be the Intergalactic Spacewar! - Olympics in 1972. Arcades in 1970s and 1980s gathered people together to play games such as Pac-Man, Donkey Kong and Pong and hence preparing people for the revolution of the game consoles and the generalization of the internet in the change of 1990s. (Rönkä 2018: 11-13)

According to Michael G. Wagner (2016), the emerge of esports is often described as a universal cultural phenomenon of global importance. However, the gaming culture in 1990s was separated



to eastern and western value systems. The United States and Europe represented the western culture, and Korea represented the eastern culture.

After the generalization of internet, releasing First Person Shooter- games (FPS) such as Doom (1993) and Quake (1996) caused the birth of playing teams, formed by online players who afterwards began to compete against each others in online tournaments, especially in the United States and Europe. One of the notable events in 1997 was Cyberathlete Professional League (CPL) tournaments in front of live audience, witnessing the potential of esports as a spectator sport. When Counter-Strike (CS) was released by Valve in 1999, it replaced Quake with its popularity and has been since then one of the most popular and mostly played games in western esports events. (Wagner 2016).

Whereas west was focusing in FPS- games, the eastern culture and especially Koreans preferred Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG) and Real Time Strategy Games (RTS) over FPS games. (Wagner 2006) The 1997s Financial Crisis combined with a Korean newly built telecommunications network created a net cafe phenomenon and enabled the massive growth of gaming especially among unemployed Korean citizens with unlimited free time. Strategy Game StarCraft, published by Blizzard, was one of the most popular games in Korea, and the best players were able to earn significant property by playing it. (Rönkä 2018)

Subsequently, the popularity of StarCraft swing to other countries, but Koreans already had a preeminent lead in the game. In Korea, gaming was already commonly acceptable leisure time activity and while rest of the world was only warming up towards esports, Korea was already the world's leading esports country. Since there has been several events that have had the attempt to bring western and eastern gaming cultures closer to each other, but the cultures have remained separated and continue developing to their own directions. (Wagner 2016)

During the 21st century, minor tournaments have grown to major ones and the number of attendees has increased from hundreds to thousands. Gaming is not only a home activity anymore; the best players have the possibility to play on huge sport and trade show arenas. The increased interest and popularity of the industry have attracted sponsors from computer manufacturers, energy drink companies and traditional sports clubs to join esports. Tournament prize pools, as well as the amount of audience, are growing rapidly to millions, employing simultaneously enormous amount of people from tournament organizers to coaches, managers, casters and industry experts. (Rönkä 2018: 20,21)

### 2.1.2 Finnish esports events and leagues

In Finland, esports events have been strongly connected with LAN-events (local area network events), where people congregate with computers to the same place with the purpose of playing video games together. However, due to increasing commercialism in the industry, the number of leagues and commercial tournaments increases annually. The volume in Finnish tournaments is relatively small compared to the most famous esports tournaments internationally. To familiarize with the industry, it is worthwhile to explore the most well-known esports events in Finland.

Assembly can be stated as the major gaming and esports related event in Finland. Assembly has been arranged every year since 1992 and currently the event is arranged in Helsinki twice a year. Assembly can be described as a place where the digital culture and lifestyle presents itself. During recent years, gaming has become an essential part of the event and therefore Assembly Winter is aimed at gamers especially. (Assembly 2019) In addition, the first Finnish Esports Championship was arranged in connection with Assembly 2016 with games Starcraft II, CS:GO and Hearthstone. Assembly had the privilege to organize the competition until January 2019, when Assembly presented that they want to relinquish the rights to other organizations. (Hartikainen, 2006)

Lantrek is the second largest computer festival arranged in Finland, Tampere, since 2001. From a LAN party of 20 people Lantrek has grown to an event with more than 6000 visitors (2019) who are all interested in games, computers and competing. During Lantrek, there will be several professional and casual player tournaments arranged in the event, such as in 2019 European Championship League in NHL game with a 10 000- euro prize pool. (Lantrek 2018)

Vectorama is the largest LAN event in Oulu, Northern Finland. The event has been held since year 2000 and because of the popularity of the event, Vectorama has been held in a local ice hockey arena since 2014. In 2019, all 555 computer seats were sold out and over 2000 people visited the event. Dota 2 Finnish Esports Championship Final and CS:GO Semi-final were arranged during the Vectorama 2019. (Vectorama 2019)

Arctic Invitational is the largest ever held Finnish Esports Tournament. Arctic Invitational was arranged for the first time on 14 September 2019. The event was held in Hartwall Arena in Helsinki and the main event Arctic Invitational CS:GO by Lenovo Legion had a 100 000euro prize pool. Finnish esports teams were represented by SJ Gaming which was eliminated before the Grand Final. (Arctic Invitational 2019) The Grand Final was played between Brazilian FURIA and German

CR4ZY. FURIA won the Grand Final and cashed nearly 60 000 euros. (Liquipedia 2019) Arctic Invitational gathered from 4000 to 5000 visitors and reached altogether 698 079 viewers online. The average amount of viewers simultaneously was 11 470 people. (Ilta-Sanomat 2019)

Finnish Esports League (FEL) was established in 2015 and the organization has arranged a variety of multiplayer video gaming competitions since 2016. The competitions in Finnish Esports League are played mainly online, although semi-finals and finals are commonly organized in connection with the biggest computer and gaming events in Finland. The company targets to build continuity to Finnish esports scene producing professional and high-quality entertainment simultaneously for industry followers. The most significant national league in CS:GO, and the only nation league in Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Siege, are both organized by FEL. Additionally, FEL organizes tournaments for Blizzard games Overwatch and Hearthstone, and in the future FEL is expected to expand the range of games in the national league. (FEL 2019)

"The core meaning of The Finnish Esports Championship (eSM) tournaments is to increase the visibility of electronic sports in Finland, build a base for sustainable competing activities and increase youth activity with the activities provided by Finnish Esports Federation" (SEUL 2019). The Finnish Esports Federation (SEUL) organizes the distribution of yearly eSM tournaments in different games and genres to multiple organizations. In 2019, eSM tournaments were played in 16 different games in which 8 were new games in eSMs. (Ilta-Sanomat 2019)

## 2.2 The inception of esports organizations and non-profit organizations

In the traditional esports organization model players who were interested in the same games gathered in teams independently and participated in gaming competitions by paying the entry fee by themselves. If they were good enough, they had a chance to have return of investment from the tournament prize money. Since then, the industry has developed to more commercial and professional and soon esports provided diverse ways to earn income: merchandise, sponsorships, stream advertising and fan products. New ownership groups were built alongside with new revenue opportunities, and new groups began to have their own teams in several games. Those groups developed into their current form and constituted organizations, which take care of the practical issues such as creating merchandising, marketing players and sponsorships on behalf of players themselves. (Van Sloun, 2018)

According to research Pelaajabarometri 2018 executed by Jani Kinnunen, Pekka Lilja and Frans Mäyrä from Tampere University, 88,1 percent of Finnish people from 10-75-year play games at least once a month. According to this same research, youth under 20 years uses on average 13 hours per week for playing games. (Pelaajabarometri 2018) Because only a minority will be professionals, the majority are casual players who play competitive games alone or with friends. The popularity of playing competitive games as a hobby generates esports clubs, educational organizations and gaming related event organizations.

Non-profit organizations in esports industry are organizations that promote esports and its affect to public welfare and development of the industry. Non-profit organizations do not target for profit and act often with government support. Non-profit organizations might be eligible for tax-exempt status or receive tax deductible contributions as well. Non – profit organizations in Finland are for example Finnish Esports Federation and student or sport clubs. Student and sport clubs organize events, viewing parties and other activities related to esports.

As mentioned, one of the Finnish non-profit organizations is Finnish Esports Federation (SEUL) which was established in December 2010 and since then it has been operating as national union for computer, console, mobile and other electronic sports in Finland. SEUL strives to increase the visibility of esports in Finland and participates in esports industry development, protection of player's interests and communication. Members of SEUL are educational institutes, communal operators, organizer's in Finnish esports events and people who are playing or working in esports organizations and teams. Most of the actions are executed with the work of SEUL volunteers. In addition, SEUL is in responsible of yearly Finnish Esports Championships eSM, which has been arranged since 2016. In order to participate to eSM, player needs to claim a player license from a service maintained by SEUL. (SEUL 2019)

### 2.2.1 Esports player organization

The operations of esports player organizations vary according to game and type of league in which the esports organization has a game representation. Regardless of the game or league, team element is generally extremely important. As in traditional sports, also in the esports industry, different esports organizations can be contrasted to traditional sports clubs. It is common that large esports organizations have teams in several games and the number of team members will depend on the game being played. In CS: GO for example, games are played most often

between two teams, five players in each team. However, in official games teams may retain a reserve player as well. Most players are recruited to teams by playing a specific game in a high level continually or through networking. (JKCP 2019)

### 2.2.2 Definition of a professional esports player

Professional players are often employed into a player organizations or clubs which support players and might have signed a player contract with a player. Player contract defines the terms of co-operation between organization and individual player and can be compared to contract of employment. Player participates to game tournaments in his or her own game and represents his or her own organization and is practicing in return of a compensation mentioned in the contract. In return for services provided by organization, player engages to promote organization and organization sponsors. Besides the continuity and orderliness, services provided by player organizations include also covering travel and other expenses and players' personal development processes like coaching. Many Finnish players are members in Finnish esports organizations, but the most famous Finnish players play mainly in international organizations. However, recently there has been Finnish organizations like ENCE, represented in international esports tournaments. (SEUL 2019)

### 2.3 Esports player organizations' structure and main roles

Simultaneously with esports industry expansion the career opportunities in the industry are diversified and growing. Growth of industry work positions has created recruiting websites like Hitmarker, which introduces available esports industry workplaces globally. Even though there are many career opportunities in esports player organizations, only the largest organizations can afford to have many employees and therefore employees frequently might work with several tasks simultaneously. For example, Organization Manager can be in responsible of the overall development of the organization and, in addition, work simultaneously marketing, recruiting, sales and sponsorship related tasks. This chapter describes the general roles inside most of the player organizations: Player, General Manager, Coach, Community Manager and Marketing Manager.

Professional player can be defined as a person who earns his or her livelihood by playing. Player can have a full- or part-time work relationship with organization or company, and he or she can play target-oriented in both – national and international tournaments. In esports, as well as in traditional sports, the most successful and popular players have fans and followers and in the highest esports competition levels players can earn reward and sponsor income from tens of thousands to millions of euros. (SEUL 2019)

Esports Organization Manager, which means often the owner, oversees all the operations in the organization. Manager decisions will lead the direction that organization operates. Manager daily tasks are diverse and can include for example sales, marketing, recruiting and finance related work. If organization has employees who take care of the tasks, employees report and confirm their suggestions from Organization Manager. Working as an Organization Manager requires long working hours, consistency, creativeness and many other entrepreneurial characters. (British Esports Association 2019)

Agent work duties in esports industry are similar with the tasks of agent in traditional sports. Agents' main duty is to look after the benefits of a player, whether that is negotiating contracts or building partnerships. Other agent tasks are player representations, player brand building, paper works, and legal issues related to players career. In return for their work, agents charge commission from the confirmed deals and contracts. Sometimes agent work tasks can be wide and include even travel arrangements, life coaching and marketing related tasks. As an agent, you need strong knowledge about legal areas of employment, wide network and good communication and negotiation skills. (British Esports Association 2019)

Like agent, also coach role in esports industry is similar with coach's role in traditional sports. Coach leads the team and works in very close connection with players. Coaches plan game strategies and helps to keep the relationships between players in balance. Coaches help players to develop by following their strengths and weaknesses. If organization does not have a separate analyst, it is possible that also analyst duties like collecting and following the stats are included to coach work. Before beginning a coach career, it is a necessity to own a wide knowledge at a particular game, and capability to play the game in a notable level yourself. As a coach it is important to follow the changes in the game, follow all the available data, and use it for developing the team or a player. (British Association 2019)

Esports is a fast-changing industry and people in marketing tasks must follow the trends constantly. Some esports organizations outsource marketing to PR or Marketing offices, and some can execute marketing without an external help. Marketing Manager's purpose is to inform and promote the organization which eventually should increase organization income. Marketing strategies can include certain slogans, brand building and long-term plan for raising organization fanbase. Currently, general marketing channels in esports are streaming platforms like Twitch and social media channels like Twitter and Instagram. Marketing persons' work can often include tasks related to communications like writing press releases, blog news and updating organization website. (British Esports Association 2019)

Community Managers works in close relationship with Marketing Managers and often Community Manager work can include same tasks as Marketing Managers. Several esports teams have a loyal and large fanbase and in the gaming culture fans are often active in messaging and following gaming related platforms like Twitch or forums established by esports organizations. Therefore, for marketing purposes is necessary to keep in track with the reactions, ideas and feedback from the fans in order to create right kind of content for organization and team fans and followers. In addition, with Twitch and forums, Communication Managers might have to use several other platforms like Youtube, Twitch, Reddit, Snapchat and Discord. Community Manager must know a certain game, but also the customer demographic throughout, or participating to discussions could not be possible. (British Esports Association 2019)

Esports organizations can keep on running only if organization earns money. The purpose of the player organization is to help players to achieve the highest level of performance, which would also mean significant amount of price money. However, only a minimal number of players can reach the highest level and therefore the people in responsible of organization incomes are organization salespersons like Account and Partnership Managers, and Sales Executives. Salespersons strike deals with partners and sponsors by trading products, services and other utilities in return of goods or financing. Salespersons need to have a wide network and good communication skills. They are actively in connection with partners and sponsors and constantly looking for new opportunities and partners. (British Esports Association 2019)

### 2.3.1 Gender and age distribution in esports

In esports and gaming, the player and follower base has been strongly centered to youth population worldwide. Based on the research in 30 countries in year 2019, it is stated that 50,4 percent of gamers are under 30 years old. (Newzoo 2019) As for esports especially in Finland, during the year 2017, 11 percent of the people from 10 to 14 years and 10 percent of the people from 15 to 19 years had played esports competitively within 12 months. When comparing the results to Finnish people age from 20 to 34 years the comparable percent is 5. (Statista 2019)

Albeit gender variability in gaming have been moderated and already 46 percent of gamers are females, the gap between gender representation in competitive gaming and media content producing, or using, is yet conspicuous. (Newzoo 2019) As *Pelaajabarometri 2018* states, only 0,8 percent from females were playing competitive games whereas corresponding percent with males were 6,4 percent. Similar results can be seen what comes to watching games, because 30,8 percent of males were watching other than esports related gaming and responding number for females were 6,8 percent. According to analyzed data, collected by *Pelaajabarometri 2018*, females do not use competitive gaming for gambling or publish any recorded online materials from their gaming. (*Pelaajabarometri 2018*)

### 2.3.2 Youth work in esports

As has been found in chapter 2.3.1 Gender and age distribution in esports, the majority of the esports audience and players are youth from 10 to 19 years. Because of the large amount of youths in the industry, it is necessary to pay attention to the educational aspects of gaming and esports in youth work. In Finland, SEUL is one of the organizations, which has focused on implementing both- education and youth work. Due the young age of the industry, there are still many open questions on how to create a sustainable and stable environment for young players to play, grow and educate themselves simultaneously.

Luckily, also player organizations have begun to pay attention to mentioned issues. One example of a Finnish esports player organization with secure player development path is SJ Gaming who recently announced they have hired professionals who will start a player development program



with the aim of contributing the change of responsible exercise and competing culture in electronic sports. Another example of youth work among esports organization in Finland is YMCA Esports from Tampere, which is an organization that has currently a junior group of 30 weekly participants, who are training every week in YMCA Esports gaming lounge.

Although many esports hobbyist are playing games at home, there are already many organizations like YMCA Esports which provide a possibility to play with friends for example in youth centers and LAN- events. If esports is correctly exploited, it could provide a nontraditional lane towards efficient and customized youth work that notices the youth groups that have been earlier unreachable. From esports a youth can find new friends, improve communication and social skills and often youth players are interest to spend time and effort for their hobby. Spending much time for playing can cause concern to parents and therefore guidebooks like The Game Educator's Handbook are helping parents to understand but also define rules for their children's hobby among gaming and esports. (SEUL 2019)

#### 2.4 Working opportunities in esports industry

Like any other work, esports in professional player level is a full-time work. It demands similar investments than traditional sports; commitment, effort and thousands of hours practicing. It is not easy to reach the highest level of the scene and competition is hard and ruthless. Average time for professional player career is only few years and the salary which players earn varies considerably. In the other hand, if a player succeeds globally on the highest level of a game, it is possible to earn millions. If a career as a professional esports player does not happen, or after a player is retired from being a professional player, it is possible to find many other industry related careers. (JKCP 2019)

For understanding esports working opportunities, it is worthwhile to understand the industry environment. According to esports professions figure, created by Nico Besombes (2019), esports related professions can be divided to ten main content which are entertainment, education, administration, business, sales and marketing, communication, information and technology, events organization, media, and performance optimization. Each of the mentioned sections divides to tens of different professions and thereby provides a wide range of career opportunities for future esports professionals. (Besombes, N. 2019)

Like the earlier presented careers in section 2.2.1 Player organization, also other esports related career opportunities exist in the esports industry. Following paragraphs include general description of most known work titles. Roughly said, working opportunities can be divided to business-related careers and technical careers. Technical careers are concentrated to gaming industry in general and are careers like software engineers, developers, coders and video game designers. Additionally, business-related are for example careers in sales, production and marketing. Below are presented few of the most common business-related career opportunities in esports industry.

Broadcasting and production are playing crucial part in esports industry. Generally, the majority of esports audience in tournaments and leagues are people who follow games on stream, online. Therefore, technicalities must work fluently. In addition, broadcasting and production professionals are responsible of the functionality of microphones, headphones, screens, projectors and event schedules. Occasionally production materials must be prepared beforehand, for example interviews. During the event broadcast and production workers prepare hardware's, solve arising problems, follows that games are displayed to stream followers correctly and ensure that all technology related issues for event participants and other employees are running smoothly through the event. (British Association 2019)

Sponsors and partnerships are playing an important part with esports team funding's. Commonly co-operation terms include marketing or advertising partner in one form or another. Content creator can produce versatile material ordered by sponsors, but also internal content provided by a certain team, event or even a game producer. Content creator can also work as a freelance journalist and create news and stories related to games, teams or esports in general. However, content creator is often focused to entertainment instead of news, unlike esports journalist. (British Esports Association 2019)

Currently one extremely popular content creator group are streamers and youtubers who create video content online and create revenues with advertising and fan donations. In Finland there are esports player organizations like Havu and SJ Gaming, who have recently involved stream teams to organizations in entertainment purposes, and to reach audience who do not watch TV anymore. Streaming means listening to music or watching a video in real time. Downloading the content is not possible with streamed content like webcast and live events.

Esports is strongly focused on sending content online. However, the popularity of visiting live events is increasing and so is the need of event managers. Event manager responsibilities include the follow of the overall success of a tournament or league and commonly event managers work as a leader for teams in responsible of event arrangements like technics, sales and marketing.

In addition, with earlier mentioned career opportunities there are professions like observer, host, admin, referee, teacher and many more that could not be introduced in this thesis without diving too deep in the information flow.

### 3 Research starting point, method and implementation

Esports is a fresh and new industry and the amount of available information is still minor. In Finland new esports organizations are born monthly or even weekly, but simultaneously organizations are also dying, because the life cycle of organizations tends to be often short in esports industry. Esports related studies are becoming more popular, but available secondary data related to the structure of organizations in Finland is still minor.

Research addresses the current development of esports player organizations in Finland. The aim of the research is to collect and analyze information received from Finnish esports player organizations. Research questions are developed to measure the size, structure and actions in Finnish esports player organizations.

Esports organizations in the research are defined to be the Business Information System (BIS) registered companies who have a Business ID in Finland and which are maintaining competitive gaming actions. Because the purpose of the research is to receive wide amount of replies, and sampling in Finland is limited, also some nonprofit associations like associations under traditional sport clubs with competitive gaming actions are included to the survey.

#### 3.1 Research method

The aim of this research is to collect information about Finnish esports player organizations, because currently there are not enough secondary data available for analyzing the current status and development of esports player organizations. For the suggestion of the commissioner, this survey will be implemented as a phone interview. Phone interview will be executed from the base of a questionnaire, designed by author and established to Google Forms program.

Research method can be a quantitative or a qualitative method, or a combination of both, if methods support each other's. However, the focus is usually pointed to one of the two options. Replies to this research will collect primarily numeric information related to organizations and therefore the focus is in quantitative research. Because interviews will be executed by phone and replies might therefore be wider than just numeric information, qualitative research method is used to support quantitative research method in this research.

Quantitative research method describes and interprets phenomena with functions and measurement methods which collect numeric research data. Quantitative research is based on measuring, and as a result for quantitative research, the researcher will have an observation material that includes numerical value. Numerical value can be used subsequently for statistical analyzing procedures. If research is executed with question form, the questions in the research form are so called structured questions where answers are given with numbers. Aim for statistics is to measure, compress and explain numerical material with the help of statistical characteristics. (Vilpas, P. 2018, p. 1-2)

In addition, statistics and quantitative research can find correlation between variables and explain phenomena's and predicts in development. Draft versions include too much numbers for conclusion composing about the traits of the phenomenon in the research. In quantitative research the large body and representativeness of the research is essential, or the results cannot be considered trustworthy. In quantitative research the different stages of the research can be divided to five parts:

- 1) Determination of the research problem and questions
- 2) Composing a research plan
- 3) Composing question form and collecting materials
- 4) Statistical processing of the material
- 5) Conclusions

(Vilpas, P. 2018, p. 3)

Whereas quantitative research method is focused on numeric information, qualitative research method allows replicants to structure their answers spontaneously. Qualitative research enables examining how replicant perceives an action or inner content when participating to an event or a process. Qualitative analyze can be used for estimating an object which is so unclear that using a qualitative research method is not meaningful for the purpose of the research. When using qualitative method, the replicant is not expected to answer for given options. In qualitative research it is researches task to collect coherent explanation from the received data. (Vilpas, P. 2018, p. 1)

### 3.2 Research implementation and analysis

Data for this thesis research will be collected with a questionnaire. The interview was executed with phone calls to organizations and offering a possibility to answer the questionnaire on the phone. According to BIS search, there are 42 BIS registered esports organizations in Finland with the word *esports* mentioned in the organization description. After associations who does not have competitive gaming actions and inactive organizations are excluded from the list, there are 20 esports player organizations remaining to contact for the survey. In addition, associations under traditional sport clubs with competitive gaming actions are included to total number of survey organizations because the aim is to enable a wider sampling for the research.

If organization representative was not willing or capable to answer questionnaire on the phone, or if a contact person was not available via phone, the link to questionnaire was sent via e-mail, Discord or other available and suitable contact channel.

Author has chosen Google Forms as a questionnaire platform, because

- 1) It is easy to use
- 2) Author has earlier experience in using Google Forms
- 3) The usage of Google Forms is free of charge

The list of organizations and organization contact details were collected with the help of SEUL and BIS- online search engine and organizations' web pages.

For analyzing the data, author was using Google Forms tool for organizing all replies. Research replies collected by phone interview were collected and written to Google Forms at the time of interview. With Google Forms author was able to collect all questionnaire replies to Microsoft Excel Sheet, where replies were changed to Pivot tables and charts for examining the results more closely with the help of research literature.

## 4 Results

This chapter reviews the results of the research. At first, I will summarize the requirements for interviewed organizations and the amount of received replies. After background information I will continue to research questions and answers focusing at first to organization employees' roles, gender distribution and organization actions. Secondly, I will continue to question and answers that cover organization player actions, contracts and professionalism, and finally results cover the information about gender distribution among organization players.

### 4.1 Background of the organizations in the research

Fifteen esports player organizations responded to the survey. The organization representatives who were interviewed were in charge in each esports organization. The job descriptions of the respondents were, for example, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer or other role in the organization board of directors. The locations of the organizations were around Finland, but the focus in locations was in southern Finland.

All interviewed esports organizations are Finnish. However, some of the largest organizations have activities in international esports tournaments and leagues outside Finland. esports organizations of all sizes that have active esports player representation were included in research because the aim of the research was to ensure adequate sampling for the research results.

The Interviews were executed in Finland and most of the respondents were Finnish and therefore the questionnaire was written, and the interviews were executed in Finnish as well. All collected replies have been transferred to charts and translated into English.

### 4.2 Structure and activities of esports player organizations

The main theme of the thesis was to find information of esports player organization structure and actions. This chapter addresses the answers that were collected with interview research. Ques-

tions were strongly focused in finding information about the general structure and sizes of a Finnish esports organization but also about the policy in player and team management and gender distribution in organization.

In the first question of the interview organizations representatives were asked to define different roles and amount of people in each role within the organization by using the most general organization roles as an option. In addition, respondent had an opportunity to define other roles that were not presented as an option. Players were excluded from the first question. Question was wide and therefore each role that was an option to choose in the questionnaire, is presented as its own figure.

The question about the organization coaches included coaches in game strategy, exercising and mental well-being of players. Number of coaches included the volunteer coaches who are not working in the organization as a paid labor.

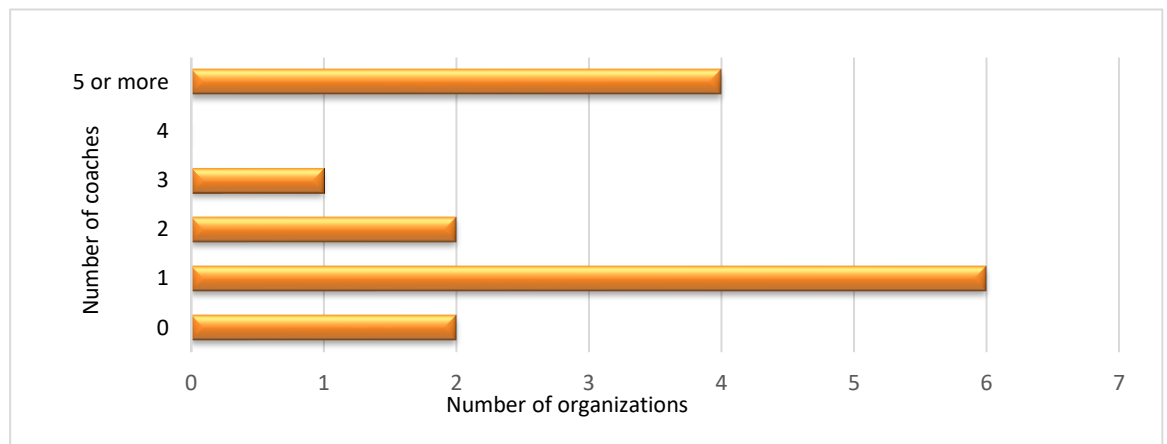
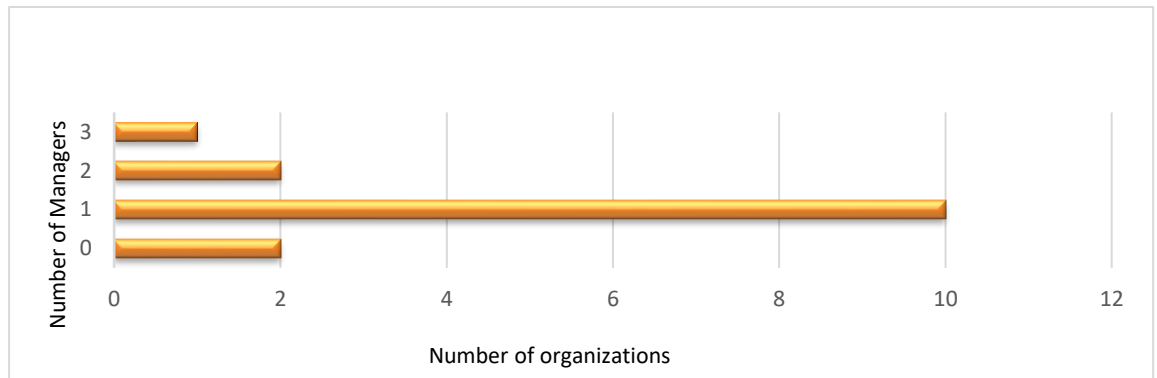


Figure 1. Number of coaches in organization (n=15)



The question about the organization managers included leading persons in esports player organization. Interviews pointed out that the role of an organization manager in many minor organizations included often also other responsibilities like accounting, marketing and legal tasks. Figure



## 2. Number of Managers in organization (n=15)

The question about marketing persons in esports player organization included marketing and content creation persons, who's main responsibilities in the organization is to plan, create and publish content for organizations' web site, social media and other possible channels that organization uses for communication. Number of marketing persons included volunteers who are not working in the organization as a paid labor.

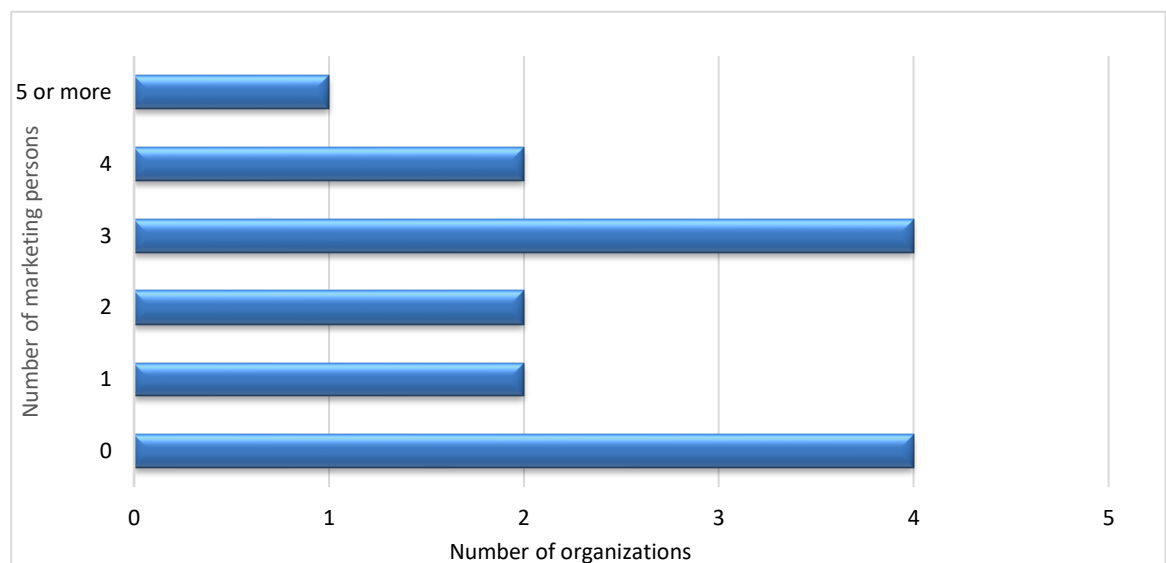


Figure 3. Number of Marketing persons in organization (n=15)

Production persons in organization are defined to be people who are in responsible of technics like broadcasting, equipment related to broadcasting, hardware's and all preparations and problem-solving tasks that can appear during broadcasts and live events. Number of production persons included volunteers who are not working in the organization as a paid labor.

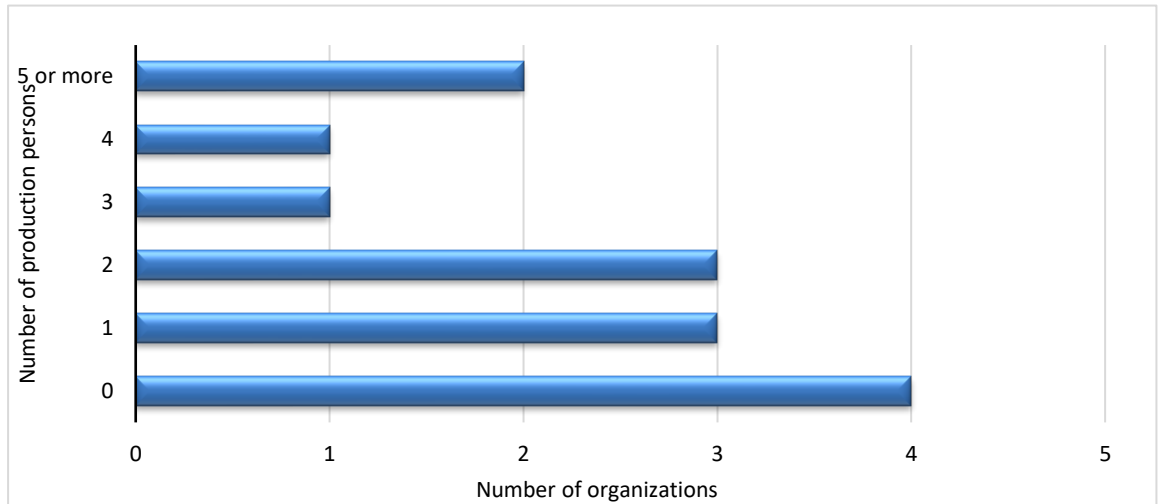


Figure 4. Number of Production persons in organization (n=15)

Finance and Law Persons in organization cover organizations' own Lawyer or own Accountant, who is in responsible of all the legal or financials issues in organization. All organizations had maximum 2 employees in these mentioned tasks. Six of the organizations did not have a separate employee in law and finance. Seven of the organizations has one person in mentioned tasks and two organization has two persons in law and finance roles.

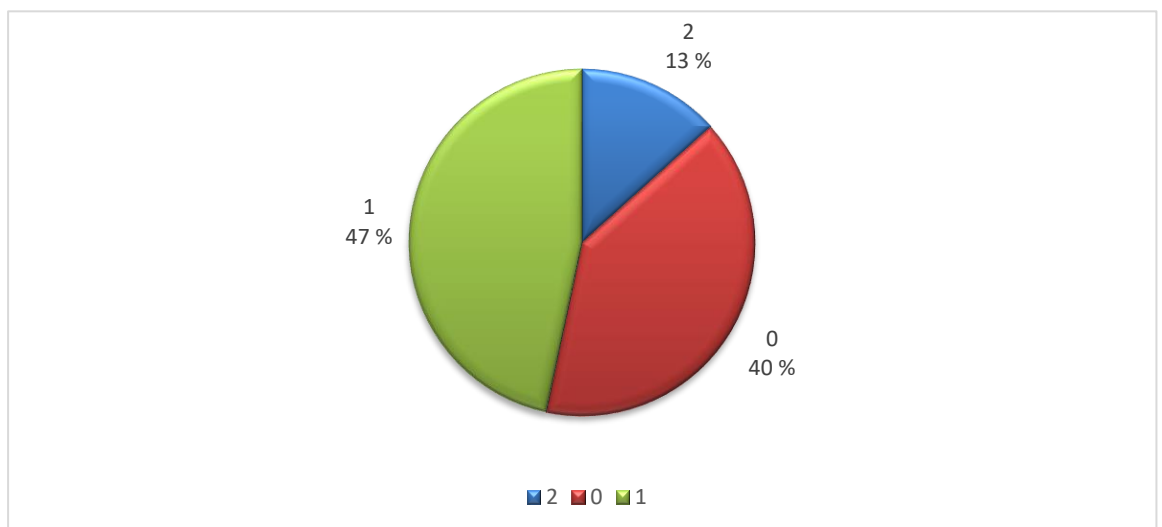


Figure 5. Number of legal and finance persons in organization (=15)

Streamers in this research are defined as persons who streams video games live for an audience under organizations' name. Streamers were represented in each organization.

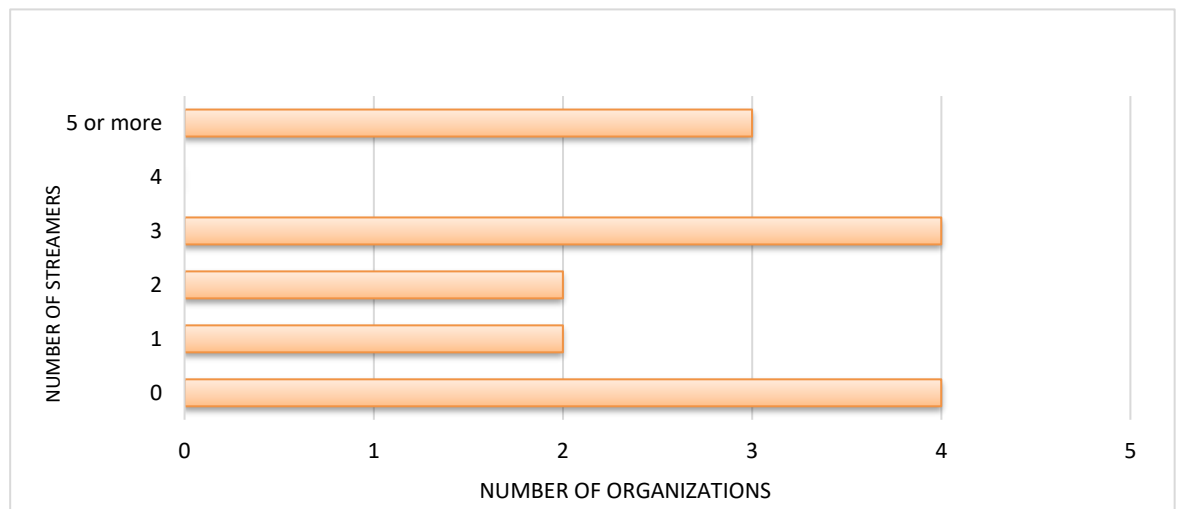


Figure 6. Number of organization Streamers (n=15)

In addition, there are other roles in the organizations that were not mentioned in the given options. The respondents were asked to tell how many persons in their organization work in other roles and with a separate question the respondents were asked to specify what the other roles are. Other roles in the organizations were for example the leader of youth work, operative director, esports specialist, team leader, player trail developer, programmer, project manager, stream manager and moderators.

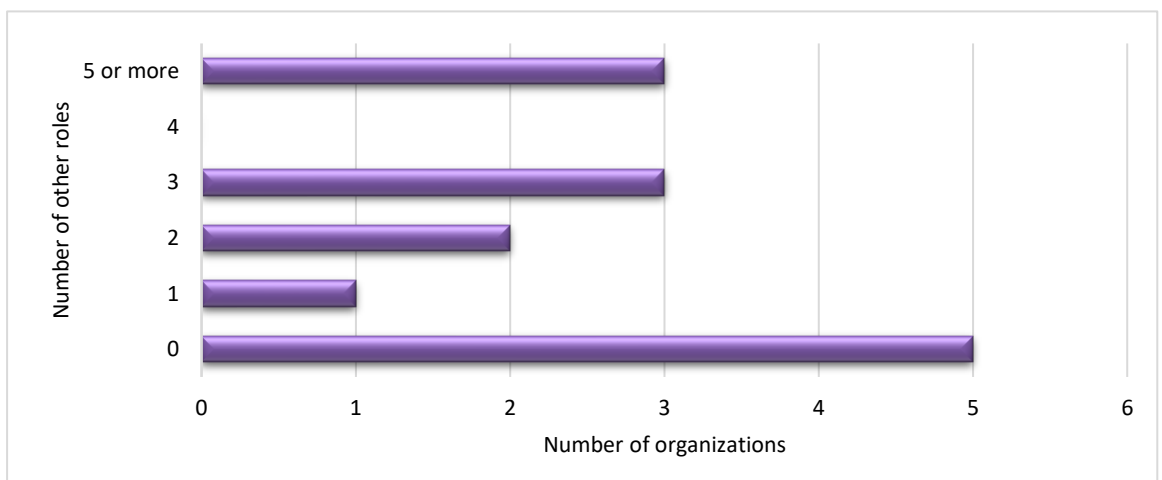


Figure 7. Other roles in organization (n=15)

The second question in the survey research was employees' gender distribution in the organization. It is generally known that the esports industry is still a male-dominated industry and therefore it is beneficial to understand how many women are working the industry.

The players of the organization were excluded from this question, because gender distribution among the players was separated as its own question. The charts below describe the number of male and female employees in the organizations. As it can be noticed from Figures 8 and 9, the results support the assumption that the presence of females in the organizations is still minor compared to males.

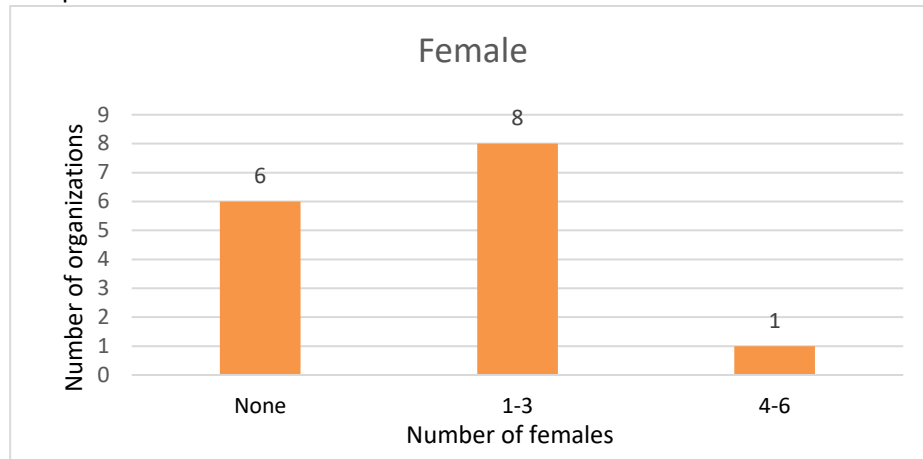


Figure 8. Number of females in organization (n=15)

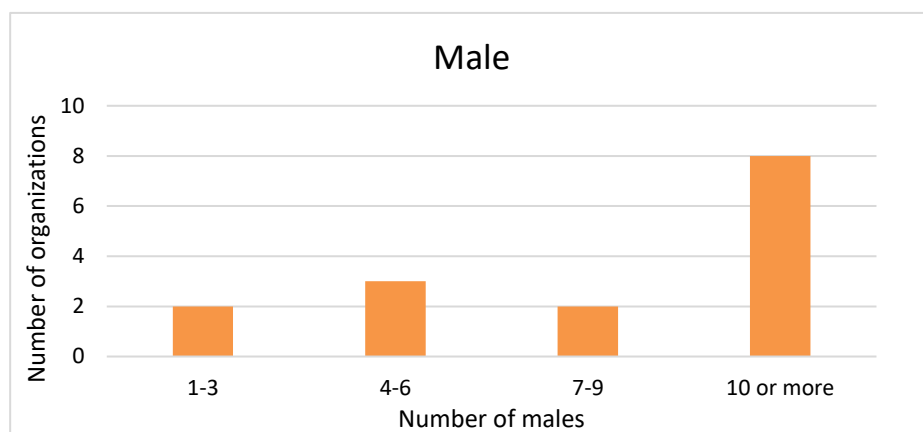


Figure 9. Number of males in organization (n=15)

The third question in the research examined of organization actions in the field of esports and asked from organization representatives in how many different games they have a player representation and in which games. The purpose of the question was to define how many teams or representative player organizations have and measure the size of the organization. The aim for the follow-up question was to receive understanding of the popularity of esports games among the organizations. If the organizations have representation in the same games, it can be interpreted as information about major amateur player numbers.

As can be noticed from Figure 10, majority of the organizations has a player representation in maximum 5 different games. Furthermore, it can be seen from Figure 11, that Counter Strike Global Offensive, *CS:GO*, is represented in 14 organizations from the total amount of 15. The significant number in *CS:GO* representation messages how strong position game has in Finnish market and esports industry in general. Second common game among interviewed organizations is Fortnite.

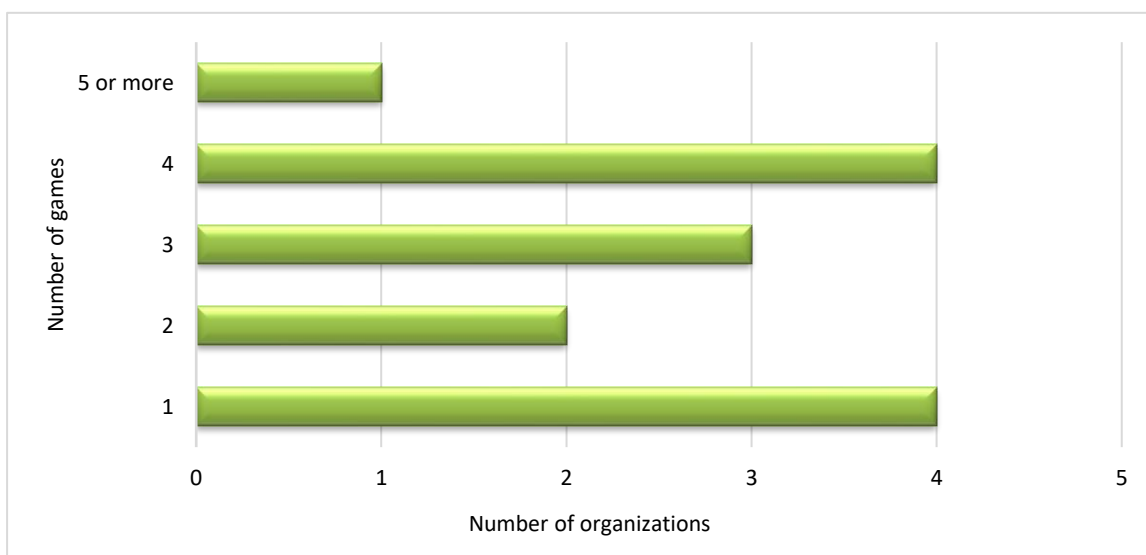


Figure 10. In how many games organization has a player representation? (n=15)

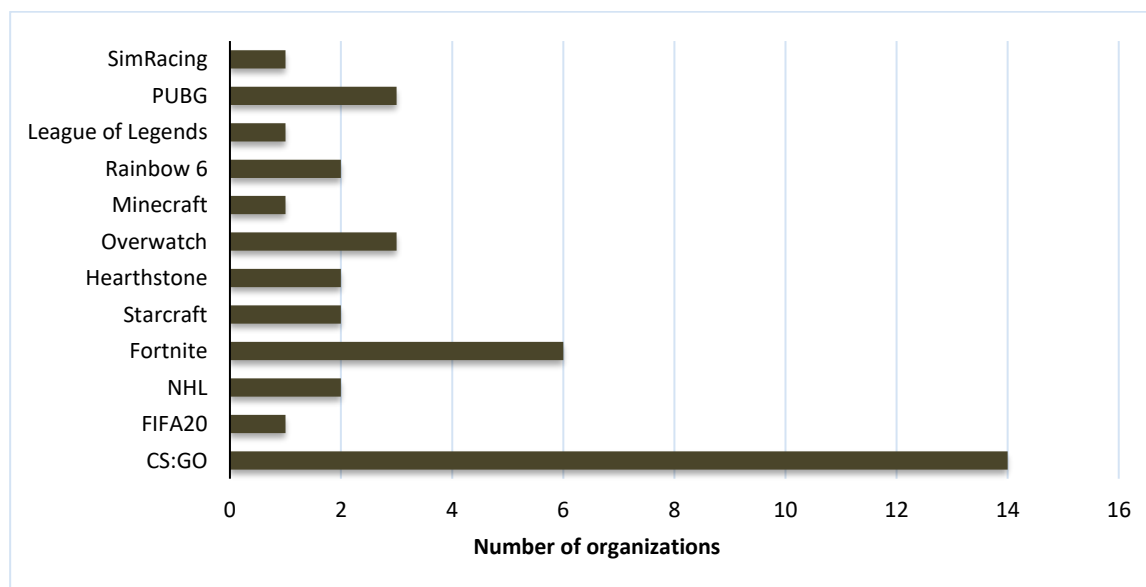


Figure 11. In which games organization has a player representation? (n=15)

In the fourth survey question, the respondents were asked to estimate the number of leagues or tournaments that the players of the organization would participate during the upcoming year

2020. Esports industry and esports organizations are constantly changing and the respondents were asked to estimate the coming year, because the actions compared to the previous year can increase rapidly, especially as for the recently established organizations. Therefore, it can be more accurate for an organization to estimate a year forward. The question was specified to include online tournaments and leagues along with live events.

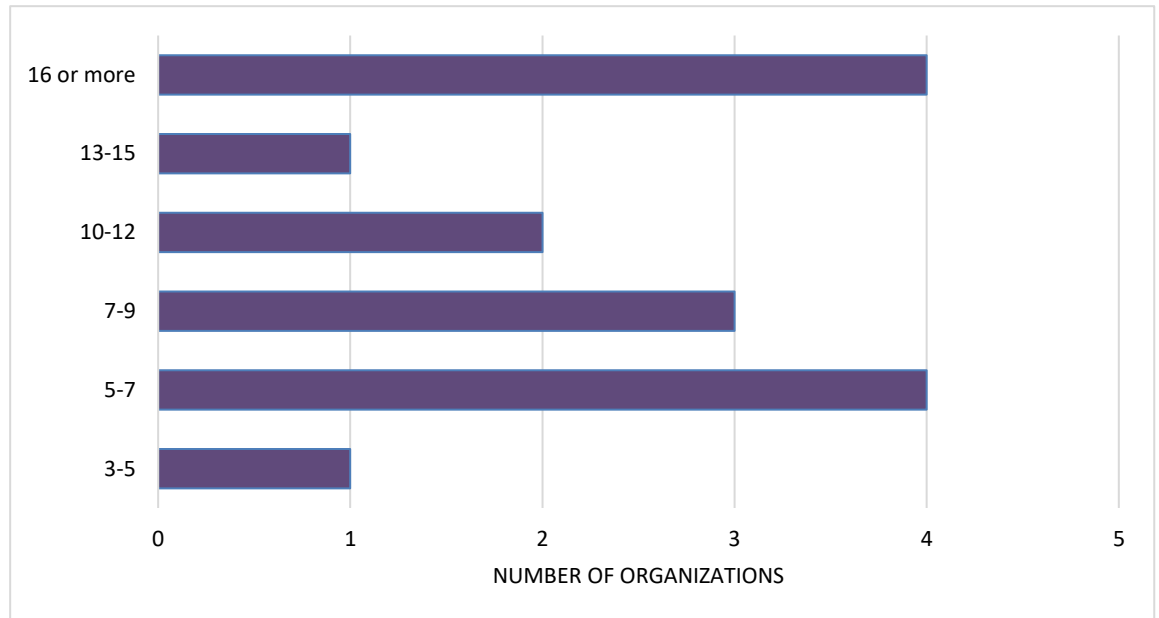


Figure 12. In how many leagues and/or tournaments organization is competing in one year? (n=15)

Responses demonstrate the size differences between organizations. Minor organizations have fewer representing players and therefore the number of tournaments or/and leagues is less than in bigger organizations where is more professional full- day players who attend regularly to competitive gaming.

#### 4.3 Player contracts and player gender distribution

Second part of the questionnaire was centered to player's role in the organization. Second section included questions about the number of professional players in the organization, player contracts, player compensation and the gender distribution of players. Even though questionnaire is executed anonymously, there were few organizations which could not reply all the questions without breaking their confidentiality obligation. Therefore, some questions include less than fifteen replies.

First question in the second questionnaire section concerned the number of professional players in the organization. In this questionnaire the definition for professional player was a full-time work employment in which a player works a minimum number of hours defined as such by players' organization. The question was open, and organization representative could determine the number of professional players to the questionnaire by themselves.

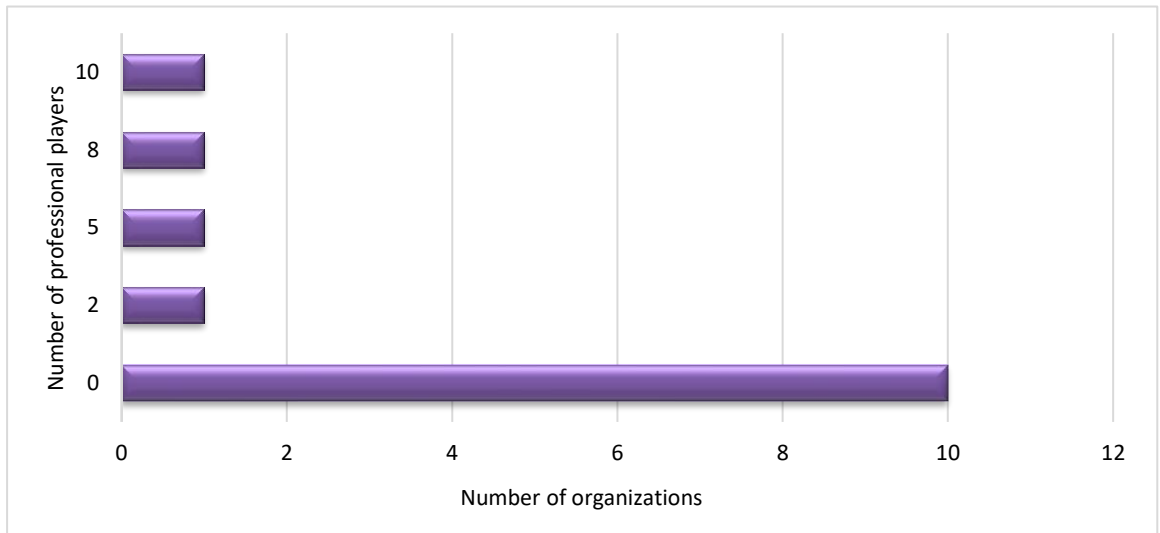


Figure 13. How many professional players organization has? (n=14)

As can be noticed from the Figure 13, majority of organizations did not have any professional players in the organization. The significant number of non-professional players can be explained with the young age of the players. The younger the player is, the more likely is that a player is still studying full-time. In addition, the esports scene is evolving constantly and the issue with professionalism and securing players subsistence in Finnish organizations continues developing.

The second question in organization player focused section concerned player contracts. Respondents were asked to specify how many players in the organization had signed a player contract with the organization. Short introduction to player contracts can be found from thesis section 2.2.1 Player Organization. The question was open, and organization representative could determine the number of player contracts to the questionnaire by themselves.

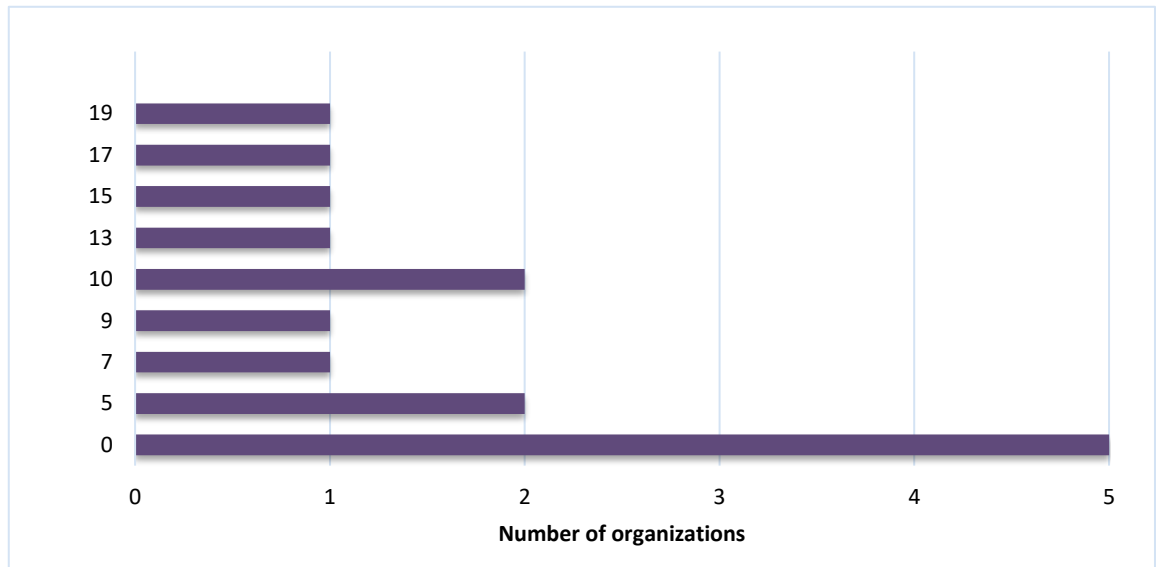


Figure 14. With how many players organization has a player contract? (n=15)

In many minor organizations question about player contracts was a challenging issue, especially if most of the organization players are under 18 years old. Organization representatives stated that organization did not want to bond young players whose main purpose was to have fun by playing. Young age of a player can have an impact of players capability to engage and honor an agreement with organization.

Inside the organizations the knowledge and lack of experience was one of the issues that emphasized while considering if organization should bind player contracts. Formulating a contract between an organization and a player requires an understanding of a legal circumstances that must be noticed in the player contract templates. In Finland we have still esports player organizations who does not have a legal understanding inside the organization, and therefore legal counseling from outside the organization is often necessary.

On the third question organization representatives were asked to define if players in the organization receive salary or other compensation for their effort. If respondent chose *other compensation*, he or she had the opportunity to specify the nature of the compensation. The questionnaire did not include a chance to choose both options and therefore, the results have been explained in the separate paragraph after Figure 15.



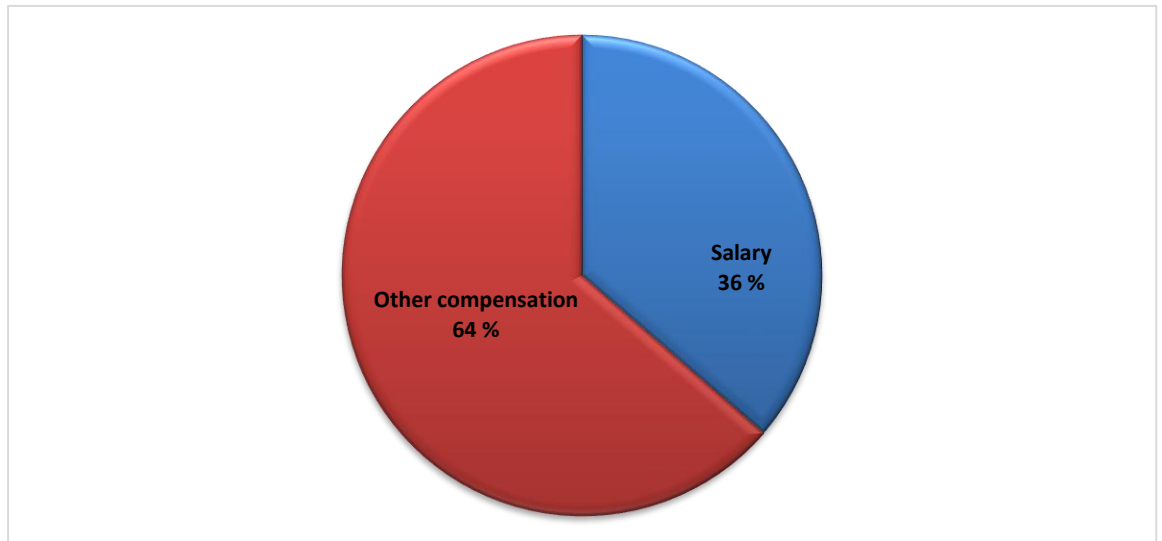


Figure 15. Do players receive salary or other compensation for their effort? (n=11)

As figure 15 presents, minority of the interviewed organizations uses salary compensation to organization players. However, two of the organizations used a result-based monetary compensation and bonuses. Other two organizations stated that organization had both compensation methods. Part of the organization players had salary compensation and the other part other compensation. Mentioned two organizations have been included to salary section in the Figure 14.

Other compensation methods in organizations were gaming equipment's, tournament travel costs, tournament or league entry fees, practice environment, sponsor goods and organization's support in player development.

The final question in the interview concerned about the gender distribution of player in the organization. Question was divided to the number of males and females, within the given number frame.

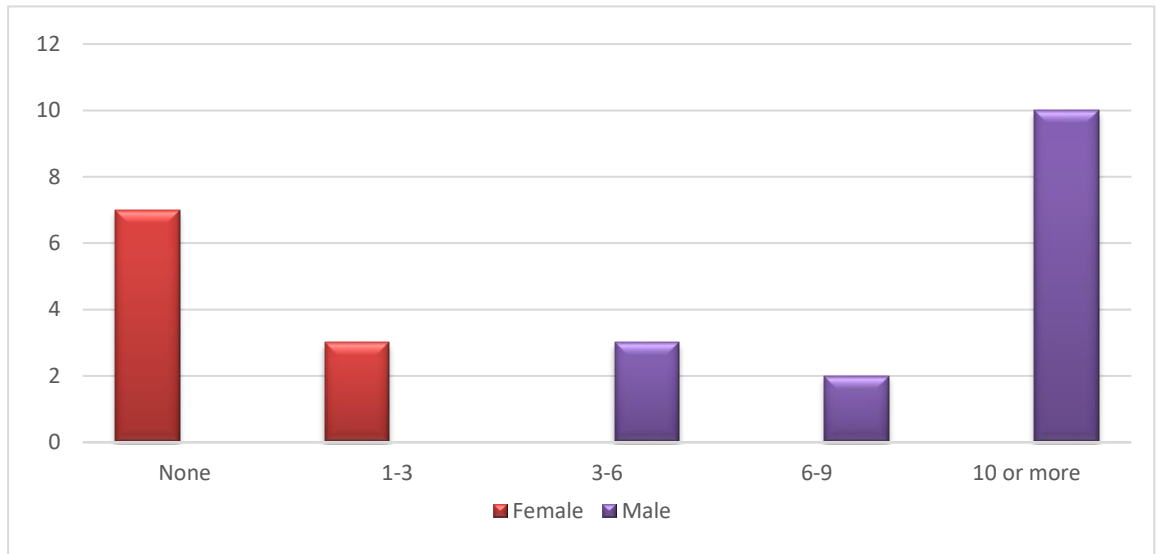


Figure 16. Gender distribution of players. (n=15)

First two bars in Figure 16. describe the number of female players in the organization and latter three bars the number of male players in the organization. It can be noticed that the number of female players is minor. Only three organizations stated they have female players in the organization whereas each interviewed organization had at least 3 male players, but generally more than 10 male players.

The number of females was higher in the other roles of organizations which can be explained with streamers, who were separated to one of the organization roles in the first question of the interview. Streaming is a growing phenomenon and according to Twitch Top Streamers ranking at least two female streamers were among the top 20 Twitch streamers in February 2020. So far, the reasons behind the popularity of streaming ahead of competitive gaming among females has not been research enough, and therefore it is not possible to explain the reasons behind the phenomenon.

## 5 Conclusion

The aim for this thesis was to outline the current position and development of Finnish esports player organizations. The theory section was conducted by using available secondary data: online databases and publications, internet pages and literature. The research section was conducted by phone interviews to organization representatives and the data was collected into a questionnaire form, from where it was transferred and translated to the presentation of the research results.

Conducting the theory section of the thesis proceeded smoothly. Albeit the number of available material and especially literature resources and research are minor, there were reliable and beneficial sources available. It was recognized already beforehand that the interview section would be the most challenging part of the thesis work. Finnish esports player organizations are not listed, or either gathered to any kind of register, and therefore the only option was to determine the terms for the organizations that would be involved in the survey. With the help of the thesis commissioner, it was decided that all the BIS registered and clearly visible and active player organizations would be included. An organization was considered active or visible, if it could be found from the running esports leagues, tournaments or if it had recent publications in organization social media channels.

The representatives of the esports player organizations responded the interview questions about organization structure, actions, activity and players. The research results about player organizations' structure showed that in addition to stabilized roles such as general manager, coach, streamer and marketing or salesperson presented in the theory section, there are multiple variables for the roles inside of an esports player organization, depending on the organization size and games with player representation. However, as mentioned in the theory section, the research proved that the number of females in the industry organizations is still minor, especially among the players.

When measuring the actions of the player organizations, it was surprising how strong position one game, CS:GO, had in the organizations. Only one of the fifteen organizations did not have a player representation in CS:GO. According to the results, a majority of the organizations had a player presentation in maximum five different games and because CS:GO, as a game, has such a strong position among organizations, the importance of developing player teamwork skills must

be a current topic in the majority of the Finnish esports organizations. When asking in how many leagues or tournaments organizations have player representation in one year, the majority of the organizations responded it will be more than sixteen, or from five to seven. The responses support the fact that new leagues and events are established annually and one reason for the development can be the increasing commercialism in the industry.

The second section of the questionnaire addressed issues related to player professionalism and the current position of professionalism in Finland. When comparing the facts of the theory section about professional players and the results of the research, it can be stated that the professionalism and player contracts are an issue that must be developed in some areas. The results show that only a minority of the players can play as full-time professionals. However, the situation with player contracts begins to be in order, excluding some of the youngest players, as can be interpreted from the theory section related to youth work in esports industry. A policy about compensation methods for players, found from the Finnish Esports Federation webpage and introduced in the theory section, supported the research results. According to the research, it is still common that players receive compensation in various ways, not only with monetary compensation.

The research can be considered successful. During the research, a plan was designed, the target for the response percentage was set to 75 percent from the total number of twenty organizations, and that was exactly the result which was achieved. The results can be used for a later comparison, while conducting a research about the development of the esports organizations in Finland. While interviewing organizations, there were many supportive comments about the necessity of the research. In my opinion, the interest towards the study messages the usefulness of this thesis to people who are working in the esports industry.

## 6 Discussion

In this final section I will list some challenges during the thesis project and open issues that were discovered during the interviews. These? topics did not fit to the main structure and context, but did encourage ideas, and are therefore mentioned in this separate section.

Since a register for the esports player organizations does not exist, it was extremely challenging to find esports organizations for the research, without even mentioning the phone numbers for organization representatives. Variable contact channels were used for finding information about organizations and people, and in the end the number of esports player organizations that responded was fifteen. The interviews were executed during February 2020.

The interviews and results which are presented in this work, are as expected. Esports industry, and especially esports industry in Finland, is growing fast and developing constantly. Organizations are struggling to follow the development and there are numerous issues such as player contracts, player licenses and securing a safe player path for young players that must be developed as soon as possible. However, interviews witnessed simultaneously the existence of dedicated and passionate esports professionals in the industry, who are working constantly with the development of the issues that are lacking behind.

During my thesis work, I discovered many times that I did not have any numerical material which I could use for comparison purposes concerning esports in Finland. In addition, the message from organizations during my interviews was very clear. The need for research work in Finnish esports environment is desperately desired. The research could be conducted in the future on the following areas in esports: youth work, volunteer work in esports, esports business possibilities, player registrations (license and contracts), registration structure for esports organizations and streaming.

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## Appendices

## Appendix 1 Esports Organization Questionnaire

This questionnaire is conducted as a part of a thesis research about esports player organization's in Finland. The purpose of the questionnaire is to measure the size, structure and actions in Finnish organizations.

Esports organizations in this research are BIS (The Business information System) registered companies that have a Business ID in Finland, and which are maintaining competitive gaming actions.

1. Organization name
2. Roles and the respective number of employees within the organization (excluding players)?

	0	1	2	3	4	5 or more
Coach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manager	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing/Community and Social Media Manager	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Production/Broadcasting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Legal/Finance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Streamer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. If you chose "Other", describe what?



**4. Gender distribution of employees (excluding players)**

	None	1-3	4-6	7-9	10 or more
Male	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Female	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**5. In how many games?**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

**6. In which games?****7. With how many players organizations has a player contract?****8. How many players organization has? (Player who play as their full-time work)**

9. Do players receive salary or some other compensation for their effort?

Do players receive a salary or some other compensation for their effort?

- Salary
- Other compensation

---

If you chose "Other compensation" in earlier question you can define it in this section.

10. In how many leagues and/or tournament organization is competing in one year?

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 5-7
- 7-9
- 10-12
- 13-15
- 16 or more

**11. Gender distribution of players**

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 5-7
- 7-9
- 10-12
- 13-15
- 16 or more

