



FRANKFURTER  
BUCHMESSE



# ARE VIDEO GAMES THE UNEXPECTED NEW ALLY OF BOOKS?

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## About Frankfurter Buchmesse

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Frankfurter Buchmesse is the international publishing industry's biggest trade fair and the most important international marketplace for content – from novels and children's books to academic databases and stories for films, games and virtual reality experiences.

Publishing professionals from around the world meet here with partners from the gaming industries and other related creative and cultural industries, sparking new partnerships and business models. In the Games Business Centre on the fairgrounds, experts from the publishing and gaming industries come together in a targeted manner.

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# 1. Introduction & Objectives

**The book and video game industries, once seen as separate creative ecosystems, are now finding some common ground. As the line between reader and player becomes thinner every year, both industries are seeing new cross-industry projects emerge and climb the charts.**

**The experimentation stage has long been crossed, yet misunderstandings and mistrust remain.**

This paper aims to fill key knowledge gaps, especially for book publishers, and help them better understand the creative, strategic, and financial potential of working with game studios. It provides an overview of the global video game market and its value chain, supported by examples of successful collaborations, insights into upcoming opportunities, and the challenges that may arise.

In a context of digital transformation and shifting audience habits, this document is for anyone in publishing ready to explore new ground, rethink business models, and enter this shared creative space between the two industries.

# 2. Who is Spielfabrique?

Founded in 2016, Spielfabrique has developed an international and cross-border expertise of the video game industry. From mentoring indie game studios looking to bring their first game to market or established indie studios looking to scale up, to its consulting business towards public entities, Spielfabrique has built a comprehensive understanding of the video game ecosystem.

Spielfabrique has partnered with Frankfurter Buchmesse and the Bologna Children's Book Fair to create a programme that helps establish new bridges between the video game and book industries.

The goal? Bringing talented video game studios to our dedicated Game Centre in both book fairs to connect with book publishers and other key players from the industry to create new opportunities and open each other create minds.

Book publishers interested in exploring synergies with the video game sector are invited to connect with the Spielfabrique team to arrange individual meetings with participating studios.

## Thierry Baujard

Thierry excels in funding creative industries, directing companies in Audiovisual, Gaming, MusicTech, FashionTech, and is the founder of the pan-European network, Media Deals.

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Emma comes from the Sustainability and Agriculture research field but has over the years worked closely with multiple creative industries. She is in charge of various Cross-Media projects and part of the communication team.

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Fernanda is Project Manager at Spielfabrique, supporting their cross-media projects like LMPG, KinoGames, and the Book Fair, as well as community building. She co-founded Beat Em Hub and Games Ground Berlin, a government-funded gaming industry festival and conference where she manages the B2B programme and curates speakers and mentors.

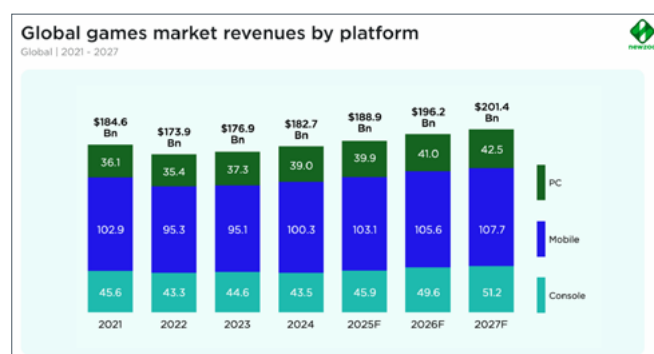
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### 3. Market overview & economic relevance

Video games are now one of the largest forms of digital entertainment, with a growing global market in constant evolution. For book publishers, the interactive and transmedia nature of games opens new ways for collaboration, co-creation, and IP development.

According to the Global Games Market Report 2024<sup>1</sup>, published in June 2025 by Newzoo, the global video game industry generated approximately \$ 183 billion in revenue in 2024 and is forecasted to reach nearly \$ 189 billion in 2025, with steady growth projected through 2027 at a compound annual rate of around 3.3 %. This positions the global video game industry as a larger market than either film or recorded music.



Source: Global games market revenue by platform from Newzoo (May 2025)<sup>2</sup>

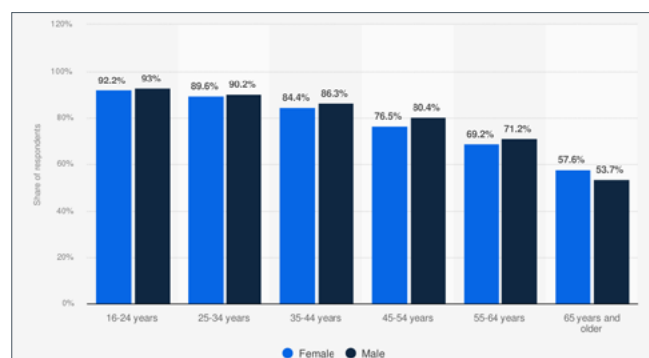
Geographically, the United States is the leading country in revenue, with around \$ 46 billion in 2024, followed closely by China at \$ 47 billion. Other top markets include Japan (\$ 18.4 B), South Korea (\$ 7.4 B), Germany (\$ 6.6 B), and the United Kingdom (\$ 5.5 B), highlighting the global nature of this industry.

According to the Europe Gaming Market Report 2025, published by Cognitive Market Research Europe in 2025, Europe's gaming market as a region represents a significant share: \$ 75 billion, accounting for over 30 % of global gaming revenues, and is experiencing rapid growth: it is expected to grow to over \$ 125 billion by 2031. Within the DACH region (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland), Germany leads with projected 2025 revenues of \$ 14.9 billion, while Austria and Switzerland contribute around \$ 1.5–2 billion each and are growing at a healthy 8–9 % annually. The structure of the industry has shifted almost entirely to digital.

Today, 95 % of all game sales occur online, either via direct download or cloud streaming. Physical sales now make up only 5 % of the total. Within the broader market, mobile gaming dominates, generating nearly \$ 92 billion in 2024, which is about 49 % of the global total. Console games account for roughly \$ 51 billion (28 %) and PC games \$ 43 billion (23 %), though boundaries between platforms are increasingly fluid due to cross-platform releases and cloud gaming technologies.

The adoption of services based on subscriptions is accelerating, with a global revenue from gaming subscriptions expected to reach \$ 99 billion in 2025. Cloud platforms like Xbox Cloud Gaming, GeForce Now, and PlayStation Now are growing rapidly, allowing smooth play across devices and removing barriers for casual audiences. Newer technologies like 5G gameplay optimisation, augmented reality (AR), and artificial intelligence (AI) are helping to create new user experiences, offering more responsive worlds and adaptive storytelling mechanics using emotions.

The gaming audience has changed considerably in the last decades: it is now broader, more diverse, and more mature. Worldwide, the total number of gamers is estimated between 3.04 and 3.24 billion, with an average age between 33 and 36 years. In the U.S. alone, 40 % of players are aged 18 to 34 years old, while nearly 30 % are aged 50 or older. Gender distribution is nearly equal, with 48 % of gamers identifying as female. These figures are erasing outdated assumptions that games are for children or young men, while putting into light the potential of interest in emotionally engaging and narrative content.



Source: *Share of internet users worldwide who play video games on any device as of 3rd quarter 2024, by age group and gender from Statista (2025).*<sup>3</sup>

A particularly important feature of the industry is its decentralised development model. Indie studios, often misunderstood as small or niche, represent over 80 % of the global development workforce. And 99 % of games released on Steam, one of the biggest distribution platforms, in a given year come from independent creators. These studios can range from solo developers to well-organised teams with dozens of employees.

### **Gamification, which is the application of game mechanics in non-game contexts, is another growing frontier.**

Over 70 % of Global 2000 companies (Forbes' annual ranking of the 2000 largest publicly traded companies in the world) are now using gamified systems in training, marketing, education, and employee engagement. This approach has been shown to increase engagement by 100–150 %, cut training time by up to 50 %, and is expanding in sectors as diverse as healthcare, finance, and e-commerce.

Perhaps the most exciting trend for publishers lies in the rise of games based on strong stories. Over the past five years, Game of the Year (GOTY) winners have consistently

favoured titles with rich narratives, characters, and world-building. From *It Takes Two* and *Baldur's Gate 3* to *Elden Ring* and *Final Fantasy VII Rebirth* (a top nominee in 2024), deep emotional storytelling and complex world-building have become defining traits of critically acclaimed games. Even recent indie hits like *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33* show a growing appetite from players for unique narrative experiences.

In terms of sales and community love, games like *Elden Ring* (25M+ copies), *Baldur's Gate 3* (15M+ copies), *Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom* (21M+ copies), and *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33* (3.3M copies in 33 days) have won players' hearts and consoles. *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33*, the first game of the independent French studio Sandfall Interactive, has received enthusiastic community response (from very positive reviews to deep lore analysis), proving that players are increasingly attracted to games offering emotional depth, rich storytelling, and immersive worlds.



Source: *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33 from Sandfall Interactive.*

This is in part due to the aging player base, many of whom now prefer games that mirror the emotional depth and intellectual complexity of literature or cinema. Advances in AI and game engines have made branching narratives, emotional decision-making systems, and dynamic story paths possible, making it possible to empower players to experience unique, highly personalised arcs.

This shift towards narrative complexity has a commercial impact beyond the game itself. Titles with strong stories translate well into streaming content, generating millions of views across Twitch, YouTube, and TikTok through Let's Plays, story analysis, and reaction videos.

**Players form communities around favourite characters, debate game endings, and create derivative works like fanfiction or mods. All of this deepens engagement and drives long-term brand loyalty.**

According to analysis from gaming industry experts, several game genres are approaching or exceeding saturation points<sup>4</sup>, particularly those marked by intense competition, such as first-person shooters, Multiplayer Online Battle Arena, mobile battle royale (last-player-standing multiplayer), and more. Experts cite multiple factors for this trend, including extremely high development costs (often exceeding \$ 100 million), market consolidation around major publishers, established player loyalty for bigger IPs with the same focus, and the diminishing impact of innovation. However, as previously mentioned, opportunities remain in the space of genres such as narrative games with mechanical depth. This is likely due to factors observed in studios behind recent market hits: the focus on delivering unique player experiences that fulfill specific psychological needs, sometimes using or quoting existing IPs, and engaging with pre-established communities.<sup>5</sup>

**Behind this market expansion, we can also find very powerful technologies and tools that can provide complex immersion factors.**

Game engines (where Game developers are creating a game) like Unity and Unreal make it easy to develop visually rich but also interactive worlds. Furthermore, AI allows responsive NPC (Non-Player Character) behaviour and storylines tailored and re-tailored for the player.

**AR (Augmented Reality) and VR (Virtual Reality) open up spatial storytelling methods that mix physical and virtual reality. Even interactive books and narrative games can evolve via mobile and browser-based platforms, allowing for branching paths, multimedia layering, and direct reader/player agency. Subscription and cloud-based distribution further support episodic or serialised content, offering new ways to connect literature and games.**

The power of storytelling is amplified by the increasing importance of intellectual property (IP). Well-managed game IPs are being adapted into successful films, TV series, podcasts, novels, and merchandise. Iconic examples include Arcane expanding the [League of Legends](#) universe, [The Last of Us](#) becoming a critically acclaimed HBO series, [Fallout](#) reaching new audiences through Amazon Prime, and [Cyberpunk 2077](#) gaining a second life thanks to the Edgerunners anime. Other examples include [The Witcher](#) on Netflix, [Super Mario Bros.](#), a record-breaking animated film, [Dungeons & Dragons](#) with a cinema relaunch, and [Five Nights at Freddy's](#), a box office hit. Even indie games with strong narrative mechanics like [Disco Elysium](#) and [Life is Strange](#) are being adapted into series or films.



Source: *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* from CD Projekt Red -  
*The Witcher* adaptation from Netflix

The market for cross-media collaboration with video games is estimated at \$ 4.4 billion in 2025, with projections reaching \$ 6.2 billion by 2030. Crucially, a strong IP allows original creators to not only protect their worlds but also build long-term narrative franchises across multiple channels, deepening fan investment and generating sustainable cultural impact.

Video games today are a cultural must but also a rich ecosystem for cross-media narrative, transmedia IP development, and interactive storytelling design.

The maturity of the audience, the rise of digital platforms, and the technological constant evolution provide a fertile ground for book publishers to collaborate, invest, or expand. This is not simply a licensing trend; it's a new way to forge and tell stories!

## 4. Best practices & case studies

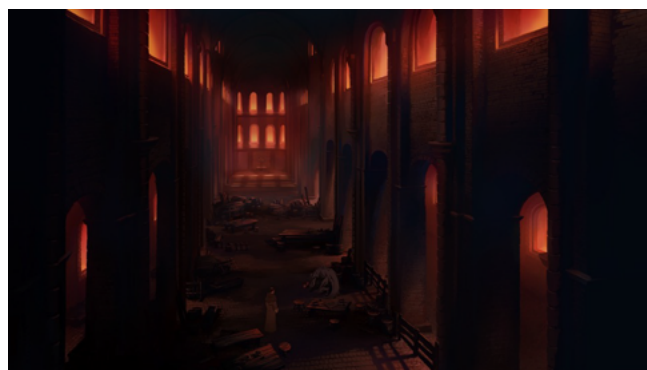
Video games offer book publishers a unique opportunity to revitalise, globalise, and expand the reach of their IP through interactive storytelling. From successful book-to-game adaptations to novels born from game worlds, these transmedia strategies are creating new revenue streams, fan engagement, and long-term franchise value.

Some of the most impactful video game IPs of the past two decades began as book IPs or became literary properties themselves. The best examples show how mutual respect between authors and game developers, combined with clear IP structures and creative collaboration, can lead to a cross-media success.

One of the most prominent adaptations is *The Witcher*, originally a fantasy novel series by Polish author Andrzej Sapkowski. CD Projekt Red, at that time an independent studio, licensed the IP and transformed it into a blockbuster RPG (Role-Playing Game) franchise. *The Witcher III: Wild Hunt* became a cultural and commercial phenomenon, introducing the books to a worldwide audience. Notably, CD Projekt did not own the book IP; instead secured the rights (to create a game IP) via a flat-fee agreement. That agreement was later renegotiated by Sapkowski, who asked for royalties from the game IP after the game's success.<sup>6</sup> This case illustrates how both author and developer can benefit from each other over time, and how flexible, evolving licensing models are crucial for cross-media growth.

Another standout is *Metro 2033*, based on Dmitry Glukhovsky's dystopian sci-fi novel originally published for free online in 2002. After gaining popularity, the book was printed in 2005 and adapted into a video game in 2010 by Ukrainian indie studio 4A Games. Glukhovsky retained all IP rights and was closely involved in the game's development, writing dialogue and overseeing the adaptation of his universe. The game's atmospheric success led to sequels, helping the book series get translated into over 35 languages. This case showcases a rare but powerful model: direct author-studio collaboration on a narrative adaptation at an indie level.

Similarly, Ken Follett's book, *The Pillars of the Earth*, was adapted by German indie studio Daedalic Entertainment into a point-and-click adventure game in 2017. The team negotiated the license directly with Follett and received his active input throughout development, even casting him in a voice role. The game's episodic format mirrored the book's structure and sold over one million copies. It remains one of the few examples of a high-profile historical fiction novel turned into a successful indie game through respectful and collaborative adaptation.



Source: *The Pillars of the Earth* from Daedalic

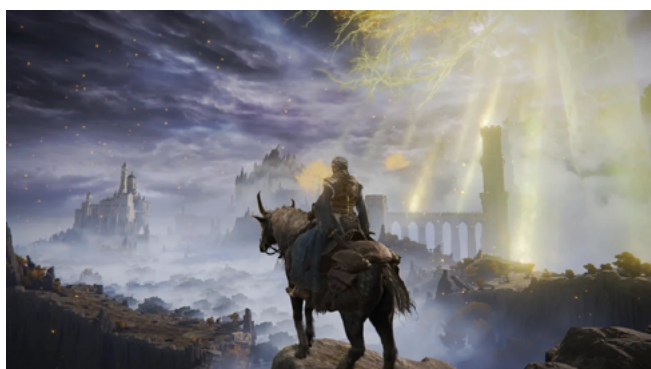
In other cases, rights are typically managed by publishers or estates rather than the authors themselves. Examples include *The Lord of the Rings* (licensed via Middle-earth Enterprises), *Dune* (Herbert Estate), Agatha Christie's murder mysteries (licensed via her literary estate), and *The Wheel of Time*, which involved rights secured from Tor Books and the Robert Jordan Estate. These types of arrangements emphasise the role that agents, estates, and publishing houses play in managing IP relationships with game developers.

Game studios are also turning to public domain literature for creative inspiration. These titles require no licensing, yet offer built-in narrative depth. For instance, *Black Myth: Wukong*, based on the classic Chinese novel Journey to the West, has become a global sensation with over 20 million units sold and multiple Game of the Year awards. Other titles like *Lies of P* (inspired by Pinocchio) and *Bloodborne* (infused with Lovecraftian horror) reinterpret classic literature in new, atmospheric formats. Even games inspired by national literary treasures, like *Snufkin: Melody of the Moominvalley*, help revive and globalize niche IPs, bringing beloved regional characters to entirely new markets.



Source: *Snufkin: Melody of the Moominvalley* from Hyper Games

Though not based on a specific book, *Elden Ring* is a standout example of how a celebrated author can shape a game world. George R.R. Martin was heavily involved in the craft of the game's mythological backstory, bringing his fantasy expertise to FromSoftware's dark universe. The collaboration helped create a rich setting that contributed to the game's massive success—over 25 million copies sold and a Game of the Year win—proving how writers can expand their storytelling impact through games.



Source: *Elden Ring* by FROMSOFTWARE

Literary inspiration also flows the other way: many games have expanded into books. Franchises like *Halo*, *Mass Effect*, *Assassin's Creed*, *StarCraft*, and *Diablo* have published novel lines that build upon their respective universes. These books deepen lore, bridge narrative gaps between sequels, and offer fans additional perspectives, serving both as canonical extensions and marketing tools that keep audiences engaged between releases.

Even indie or cult games have spawned successful publishing lines. *Five Nights at Freddy's*, *Myst*, and *Bendy and the Ink Machine* have all inspired best-selling novels, while *Alan Wake* and *Dead Space* were accompanied by a piece of fiction to expand their storytelling impact. These examples highlight how stories in games can be rich and naturally evolve into literary IPs, giving publishers a new role in the game-to-book value chain.

Book-to-game and game-to-book adaptations demonstrate how interactive storytelling can elevate literary properties into global franchises. Success depends not just on licensing but on narrative integrity, mutual respect between authors and developers, and clear IP frameworks that allow long-term expansion. Publishers who engage early with developers or proactively manage adaptation rights stand to peak into new markets, audiences, and monetisation models.

Video games are inherently global by being distributed on international platforms and translated sometimes into dozens of languages. This gives literary IP a unique opportunity to transcend borders in a way traditional publishing cannot always achieve.

**Collaborating with game studios is not merely about adaptation; it's about addition, transformation, and storytelling without limits.**

## 5. Potential for publishers

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Book publishers are used to expanding their IP to other media. For years, we have seen it with cinema, television, and animation.

The adaptation and collaboration are relatively straightforward, as audiovisual projects are often a one-to-one adaptation of the book. In that case, the film producer is “taking an option” on the book rights for the film, and when the movie’s financing is approved, he can fully purchase the rights (license) for the film. The fee for the option and the rights depends on how famous the book or the character is. It is also possible that the book publisher could become a co-producer of the film if there is an interest in sharing the revenues of the film. In that topic, video games are offering approaches that are slightly different from the audiovisual industry.

**Video games are, by definition, an interactive medium that allows a closer relationship with the audience, often referred to as a community.**

Communities offer opportunities for adaptation based on feedback, starting as early as the pre-production phase. Furthermore, video games are distributed through different global platforms (such as Steam, Xbox, Epic, etc), offering automatic access to them worldwide. This also means that video games are often localised (translated) into other languages for optimal distribution.

The interactivity inherent in video games sets them apart from all other media, making direct, one-to-one adaptations from books challenging, creating a need for reinterpretation of the storyline. Video games are opening new options to develop narrative. They are based on non-linear gamification mechanisms, in opposition to classical linear mechanisms often used in books.

**For this reason, video game mechanisms could be considered as distant relatives of interactive fictions or gamebooks.**

This leads us to a vaster topic: what are the advantages of the gamification of books? In a nutshell, it can enhance engagement from the audience and create a new revenue stream from an already established IP.

### **We could cite:**

- / Developing new stories and projects based on the universe or a special character of a book or a comic.
- / Offering undiscovered content and stories to new audiences worldwide in their own language.
- / Updatable and expandable content that can help grow the interest of the community.
- / Freemium and Premium subscription models or In-App purchase. With the increase of platforms, a monthly subscription allows the audience or community to access content on an unlimited basis.
- / Game studios integrated into a publishing group to facilitate the translation of books into gamified content.

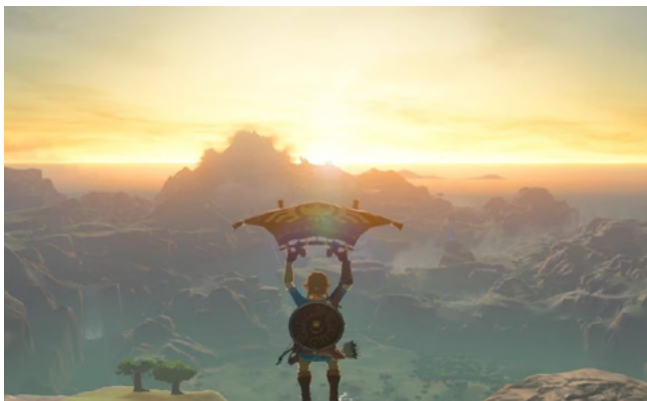
**But before considering an advanced partnership, there is a need to create spaces where the industries can properly communicate. That said, there are different ways for book publishers to engage in the video games sector and create discussions around Intellectual Property (IP) rights:**

- 1) For well-known brands that can be easily recognised by the audience, licensing the rights is a common solution. The project can be based on a specific book, story, or just on a character and/or universe. However, the video game industry operates under its own economic logic: studios often finance the development themselves, even when working with licensed IP. As a result, license deals typically involve borrowing elements from the book IP to create a new game IP, whose rights are frequently held independently from the original book publisher.
- 2) In some cases, a game based on an existing IP can be developed through a co-development model. Rather than a traditional high-cost license, the IP holder and the game studio collaborate closely, possibly starting with a low-cost option agreement, sharing both creative input and production responsibilities. In that case, the funding will still come mostly from the video game studio, though the book publisher could be sharing some of the funding responsibilities. However, the final revenue share

will be divided between the co-producers. This model can be used to boost a local or relatively new IP and build a more interactive brand.

- 3) The game project can also be created from a brand new IP, with the support of the author or writer, and developed fully with a video game studio. The funding will also mostly come from the game studio, even though the author will be involved in the project. The model has the advantage of being created for cross-media collaboration: A book giving more context on a specific character or developing the lore of the universe, but also films, series, audio-fiction, or music.

The options are complementary, unlimited, and have the potential to create strong and implicated communities. In such cases, total revenues generated by the IP can be shared across stakeholders, rather than being split separately by medium (e.g., book sales vs. game revenues).



Source: *The Legend of Zelda Breath of the Wild* by Nintendo

**It is often said that new generations are more eager to play a game than read a book.**

**But what if the truth lies more in collaboration rather than competition? New media can be an opportunity to keep developing an interesting IP, expand its content universe, access new markets, audiences, and ultimately create new revenue streams.**

## 6. Challenges

In the upcoming years, collaboration between book publishers and game developers will probably be more frequently seen. But in order to achieve its full potential, it is crucial to reinforce the understanding of game development within the book industry.

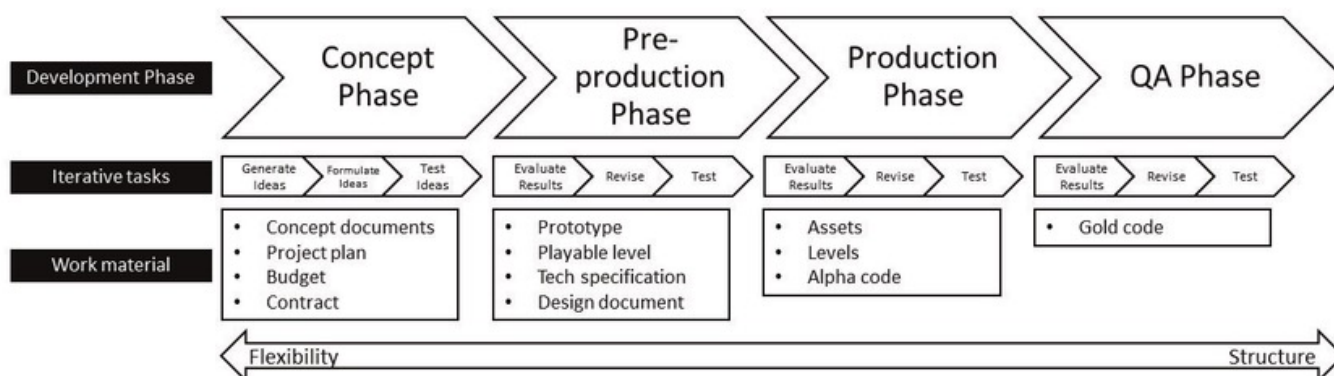
The development of a game is coordinated by a game studio or a solo developer who creates a concept and develops it until the end of the production. Because of the industry's fluidity and operational diversity, we can find many different types of studios.

To ease the understanding, we will sort them into three categories (by size):

- / Indie game studios (up to approximately 50 employees) developing games with a budget between € 200 K and € 1,5 M
- / AA studios are larger companies, not privately owned (between 50 and 100 employees) with a budget above € 1 M and max € 10 M.
- / AAA Game studios, the largest and most famous companies (100+ employees), with projects above € 50 M.

Each size comes with its own type of collaboration and game developers. Understanding the differences makes the collaboration and, therefore, IP negotiations easier.

The development part could be divided into four main phases:



Source: *Being Local in a Global Industry: Game Localisation from an Indie Game Development Perspective* (Markus Toftedahl, 2022)<sup>7</sup>

The diversity in operating systems doesn't only apply to development structures. Distribution systems, like in other media, can also be classified into different categories. To broaden its audience, a game can be released on various platforms, each with its own rules, audiences, and marketing strategies. The revenues generated by the sales of the games on those platforms are the main revenue coming back to game developers. The three main types of platforms are PC, consoles, and mobile. On PC and consoles, games can be distributed both in physical form (CDs, cartridges, etc.) and in digital form (downloaded through platforms), while mobile is completely digital (Google Play). It is important to note once again that physical distribution is in decline. Following Xbox and Sony, Nintendo has also moved entirely to digital releases in its new Nintendo Switch 2, released in June 2025.

If we are turning our attention back to game development, there are a couple of aspects that have to be highlighted: it is a collective work with sometimes no clear boundaries between artists, writers, or even musicians. It also means that there is no specific right attached to the game except the right to develop the project. This can be explained by the global reach of games, which is different from a territorial approach used in films, for example. The funding of video games is based on the studio's own investment, public funding, private financing, and a possible game publisher attached to the project. Since it is a challenging time for funding, a diversified funding strategy is often developed corresponding to the financial needs and the project development.

It starts with the concept phase, where the core idea of the game is created. This includes rough outlines of the theme, genre, and gameplay direction. Next comes pre-production, where the team defines the game's story, characters, art style, and main mechanics. This phase sets the foundation for how the game will play and feel. In between the pre-production phase and the production phase, there is the prototype and vertical slice stage. Here, a small but functional section of the game is built to test how everything works together. It's also used to pitch the game to publishers or decide whether to self-publish. Usually, when a studio still has enough budget or has signed a publisher, it enters a production phase where the full game is built.

### **The team creates all the content, refines the gameplay, and prepares the game for release.**

Once the game is playable, QA teams test everything. They look for bugs, balance issues, and anything that breaks the player experience. The goal: make sure the game is sturdy and playable before launch. The full development cycle usually takes between 1 and 3 years, depending on the scope and size of the game.

In the last paragraph, we mentioned a key player in the industry: the game publisher. A game publisher usually provides financial help to the studio, but is also responsible for the following activities:

- / Marketing and promotion of the game
- / Localisation (Translation)
- / Quality Assurance Tests
- / Play Test with real players
- / Distribution management on the different platforms

### **Each deal is different, but depending on project size, publishers generally take at least 30 % of the revenue share, after marketing costs have been reimbursed.**

These costs are typically recouped only through the game's own revenue. Today, with online platforms, social media, and less funding coming from publishers, many game studios are turning to self-publishing. It is not just to avoid commission cuts, it is also to build and own their community, which can be valuable for future releases. The video game industry is still young and constantly evolving. Most changes are driven by tech upgrades (better internet, game engines, 3D, and now AI). New devices also keep pushing new ways to play, from mobile to VR to next-gen consoles.



Source: *Shadow of the Colossus* by Team Ico

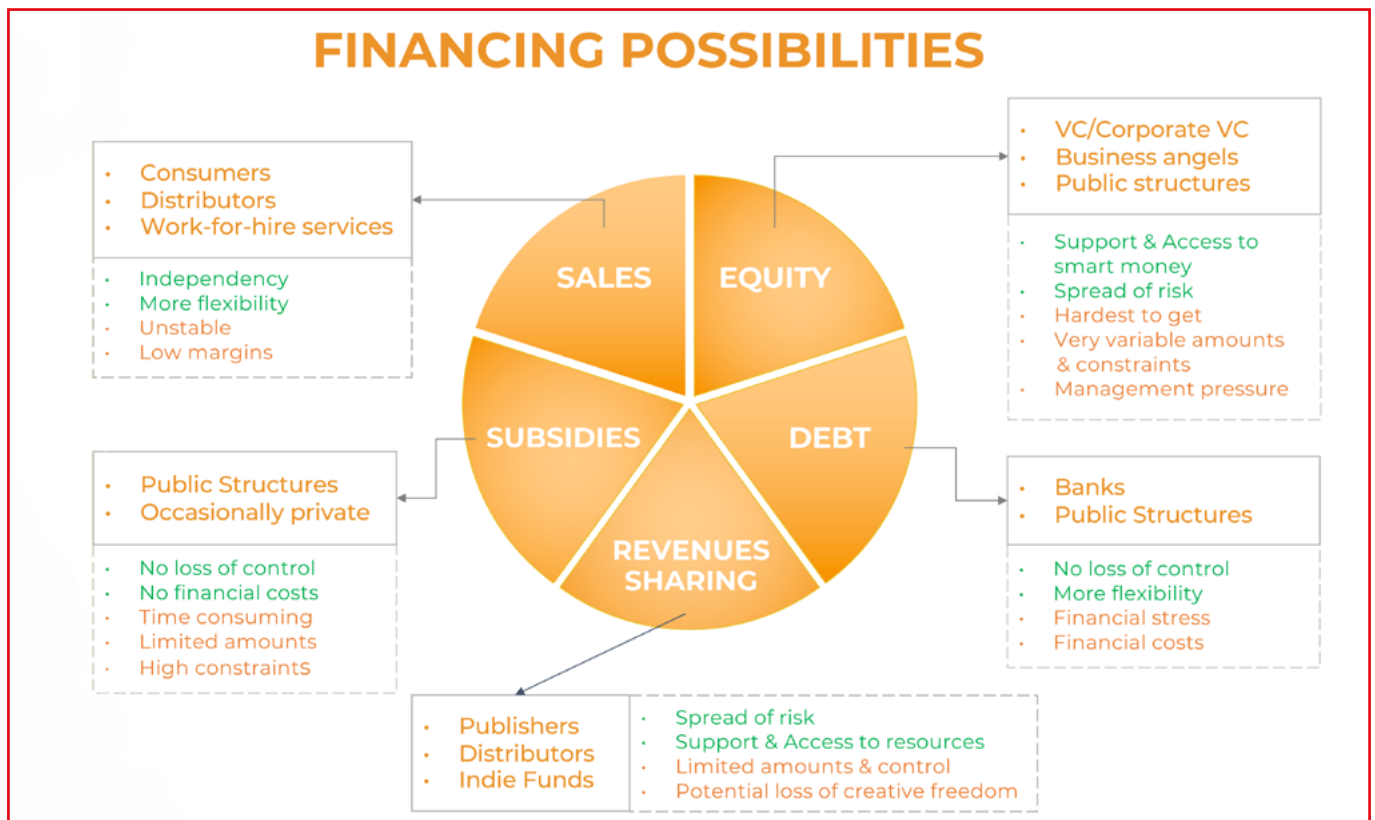
## 7. Funding opportunities

As presented in Chapter 4, collaborations with game studios are an interesting way to develop IP universes while sharing budget responsibilities with the video game studio.

In the video game industry, many studios that released a game were supported by funds and grants. The question is then, what funding opportunities are available? And also, how can book publishers benefit from them? Video game studios have access to different sources of financing:

- / The studio's own investment, especially at the beginning of the project to work on the concept.
- / For the prototype, public funds can be used in some countries for Research and Development. Some, like the CNC in France, have dedicated funding to video games.
- / Some cash rebate instruments (or tax credit) are offered in some countries as in the film industry, offering a percentage discount on all the expenses incurred in the country.
- / Private funding may also be used at the project or company level. Private companies, but also a publisher, can financially support the project in exchange for a revenue share.

The COVID period witnessed a stronger private investment in the game sector, driven by lockdowns and the massive increase and engagement of players. Since then, private investment has decreased, returning to its previous expansion curve. Other funding sources, such as crowdfunding platforms, are also used, not only to raise money but also to test market interest in the project. Finally, debt financing remains limited to a few countries with a history in the sector, as most banks still lack the necessary awareness and expertise in video game development.

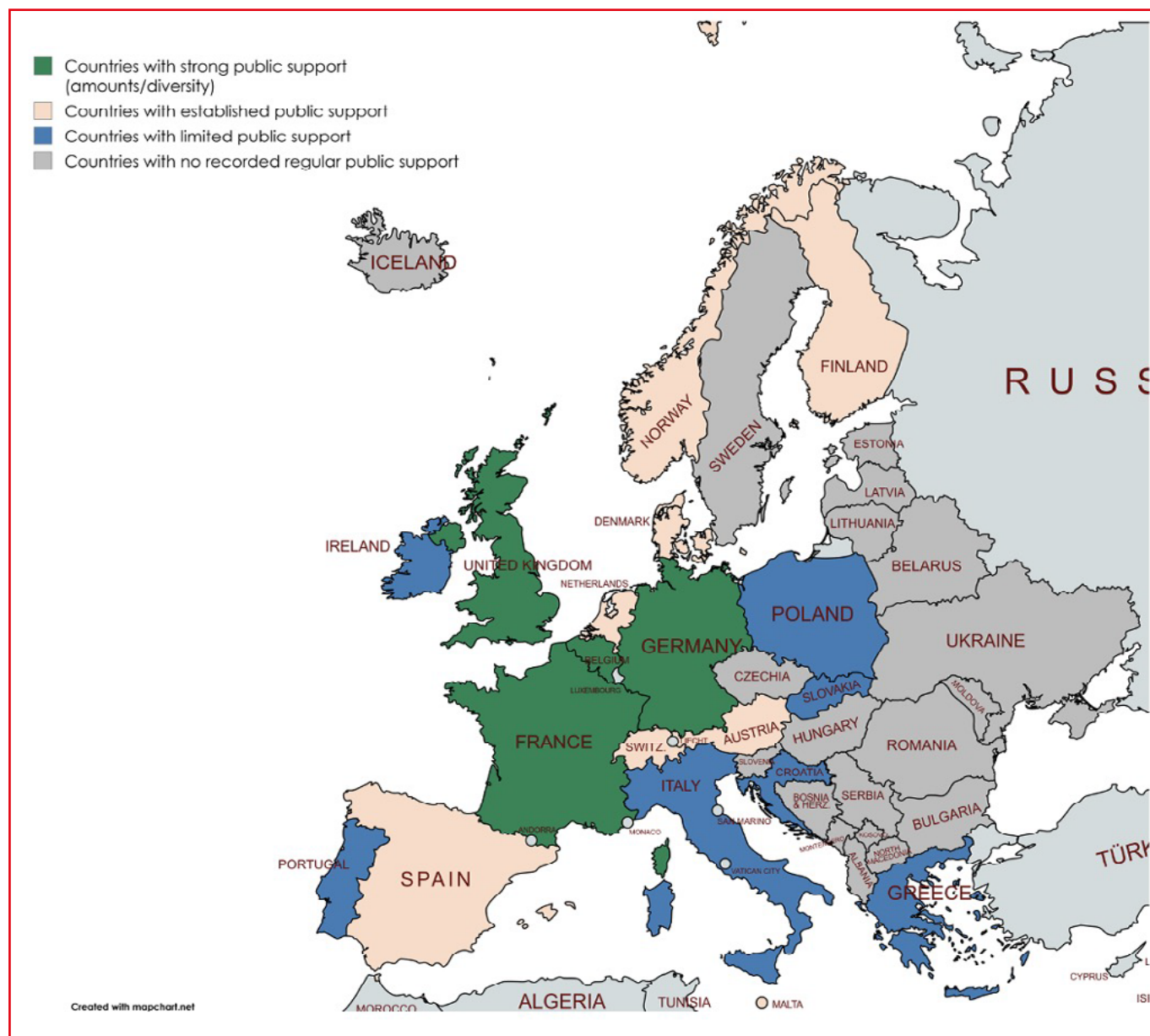


Source: Indie Plaza from Spielfabrique and Jamaste<sup>8</sup>

As in the film or animation industries, co-production may also be used in video games to access public or private funding from different countries. In some European countries, public funding is increasingly allocated for video games. France or Norway, for example, have been supporting the industry for years, while countries like Hungary currently offer no support at all. However, these disparities are starting to narrow, as many European countries are now creating new funds or increasing their budgets for game development. France currently offers the highest level of public funding in Europe, with nearly € 100 million available each year across various schemes, including a tax rebate for projects developed in the country. It's important to note that public funding can cover a maximum of 50 % of a game's total budget.

Below is a map showing the maturity level of public funding in European countries as of 2024.

Access to funding is always a challenge in the creative industries, but financing a video game is possible through a mix of sources that help balance the playing field between different financial actors. As the industry is still young and growing, new funding mechanisms are likely to emerge in the coming years. Book publishers, for example, can access game-specific funding if they collaborate with game studios through genuine, win-win partnerships built around a clear strategy for video games.



Source: Spielfabrique for the "IRIS 2024 Legal challenges and market dynamics in the video games sector" study<sup>9</sup>

## 8. Recommendations

As interest grows in adapting literary intellectual properties (IPs) into video games, it's clear that both book publishers and game developers need clearer ways to collaborate. This chapter outlines key recommendations for bridging the gap between these industries, offering practical strategies and formats for successful partnerships.

Publishers seeking to bring their IPs into the game space must first identify the right development partners. For large, internationally known properties (e.g., Tintin, Asterix), this often means a straightforward licensing model, similar to those used in film: the publisher or rights holder grants the game developer a license in exchange for a fee, royalties, or both. In these cases, studios with proven experience in working with licensed content are the best fit. However, smaller publishers or niche IPs may benefit more from collaboration-based models. In such arrangements, the publisher and developer co-develop the project, sometimes sharing creative input, production responsibilities, or even revenue. This model works particularly well when the collaboration originates from the author or artist themselves, especially those already engaged with game development or interested in cross-media storytelling. For agents and publishers, this can offer a fresh publishing angle (e.g., releasing a novel based on the game) while providing artists with broader exposure.

In order for this cross-industry cooperation to work, both sides must understand each other's workflows and limitations. While film licensing is relatively standardised, game development varies significantly in scope, timeline, and budget. Straight licensing (with clear IP usage boundaries) is more straightforward; however, collaborative projects require greater trust, communication, and alignment of goals.



Source: *Hollow Knight* by Team Cherry

Book publishers should understand that in collaborative models, most of the revenue typically goes to the game developer, due to the high costs and long development cycles. In these cases, the benefit to the publisher may lie more in long-term brand expansion than short-term returns. Publishers should also be open to adaptations that focus not on one-to-one stories but on building immersive universes, which games are particularly well-suited to explore.

### **One of the biggest barriers to collaboration is the lack of shared spaces and structured matchmaking.**

At game industry events (like Gamescom or GDC), developers are often too busy with business-to-business meetings to connect with publishers. Similarly, at book fairs, literary professionals may not know how to approach game companies, and their time is also mostly focused on their efforts within their own industry. To address and hopefully solve this, we recommend pilot events that mirror successful formats from the film industry, such as pitching sessions similar to those at Berlinale, where publishers and authors could present their IPs to an audience of developers. These could be organised by type of project (license-based, co-creation, IP-universe building) and scale (indie, AA, AAA), making it easier for both sides to find aligned partners.

**Therefore, book publishers can take this opportunity to open the discussion with promising veteran studios that have the capacity and will to create cross-collaborative projects.**

Additionally, cross-industry panels, networking mixers, and matchmaking tools at both book and game events could help foster the relationships needed to launch these projects. Portfolio pitching—where writers showcase adaptable works and game studios present their capabilities—could help both sides better understand what's possible.

**For publishers, the benefits depend on the model. In licensing deals, they may receive upfront payments and royalties. In co-development models, returns are less guaranteed, but the long-term visibility of the IP may grow.**

In some cases, publishers might even develop new books based on the game's universe or bring the game's visual identity into future print editions. These hybrid approaches can offer new revenue streams and market reach, but they require careful coordination and commitment. Ultimately, both sides must recognise that successful collaboration hinges on clear goals, shared expectations, and mutual respect for each medium's demands. As the example of Mediatoon and others suggests, some infrastructures are emerging, but stronger networks, events, and shared language are still needed to fully unlock the potential of book-to-game and game-to-book adaptations.

## 9. Outlook and Conclusion

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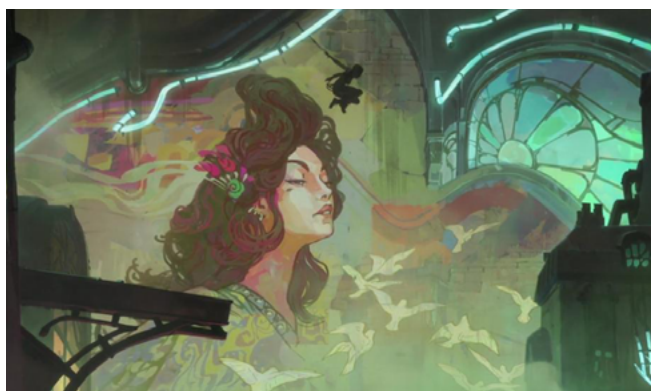
While collaborations between the book and video game industries are already taking place, they have yet to become mainstream.

The potential is clear: combining immersive storytelling with interactive experiences opens new creative and commercial doors. As technology advances and audiences demand richer, more engaging content, this intersection will only grow stronger.

### **For book publishers, now is the time to act.**

Getting involved early means having a say in how these partnerships evolve, owning valuable rights, and reaching new audiences directly. Waiting risks losing ground to more agile players who understand that the future of storytelling is cross-media.

This is not just about finding new revenue streams; it's about staying up to trends in a rapidly changing market. Publishers who embrace collaboration today will be the ones leading the industry tomorrow.



*Source: Arcane - League of Legends by Riot Games and Fortiche Production*

So, what's the way forward? The answer lies in a behaviour shared by every creative industry: opening your door and your network to new people. Spielfabrique, Frankfurter Buchmesse's and Bologna's Bookfair Game Centres are an open opportunity for book publishers to discuss with studios that have the capacity and will to create cross-collaborative projects. This could be the chance to create tomorrow's new hit.

## 10. Appendix & further resources

### A. Acknowledgements

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We are also grateful to the Frankfurter Buchmesse for providing the platform, the momentum, and the international dialogue that made this publication possible.

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### C. Recommended reads:

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