



HANDBOOK FOR ORGANISING AN ESPORTS EVENT

How to organise your own esports event –
from idea to execution

This handbook was created within the Erasmus+ project “ACE – ambition, collaboration and esports development” and is based on practical experience, youth participation, and lessons learned from organising the Game in Tartu event. Its purpose is to support communities, young people, and youth workers in creating their own esports events.

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Photo credits:

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A photograph of an esports arena with several players at computer stations, overlaid with a magenta color filter. The players are wearing team jerseys and are focused on their screens. The arena has a high ceiling with visible lighting rigs and cables.

INTRODUCTION

“ Esports is not just gaming, it’s teamwork and shared responsibility. ”

1. INTRODUCTION

Organising an esports event may seem complicated and even a little intimidating at first. You have to think about tournaments, equipment, internet, volunteers, partners, marketing, and many other details. When bringing all of these elements together for the first time, it can easily feel overwhelming. At the same time, esports is one of the best ways to bring young people together, build community, and create an environment where learning happens through real action.

An esports event is not just about playing games. It is also about collaboration, responsibility, planning, problem-solving, and working towards a shared goal.

This handbook is designed to make the process clearer and more accessible. It is based on real experience, including situations where things did not go according to plan. These moments often provide the most valuable lessons.

This handbook is intended primarily for:

- young people and youth workers;
- communities that want to organise their own event;
- first-time organisers;
- those who have already organised something and want to improve next time.

Here you will find not only answers to what to do, but also:

- why certain things matter;
- what the most common mistakes are;
- what deserves more attention;
- what people tend to forget.

There is no single “right” way to organise an esports event. Every event is different depending on the venue, team, budget, and objectives. This handbook is not a rigid formula, but a toolbox from which you can take ideas that fit your situation.

If you are just starting out, you do not need to have all the answers. If you already have experience, you will likely find ideas for improvement. The most important thing is to begin. The first event is never perfect, but it is an important step. This handbook is here to help you take that step more consciously, confidently, and with fewer avoidable mistakes.



ESPORTS IN YOUTH WORK

2. ESPORTS IN YOUTH WORK

Esports can be a very powerful tool in youth work. It helps reach young people who already feel at home in gaming and digital environments, and it offers a way to support their development through that interest.

Esports is not only about gaming. **It also includes:**

- teamwork;
- communication;
- strategic thinking;
- coping under pressure;
- role distribution;
- responsibility.

In addition to players, organising an esports event also creates **other roles:**

- organisers;
- technical crew;
- marketing team;
- stream and production team;
- design and visual team;
- community management.

That makes an esports event an excellent platform for non-formal learning.

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF YOUTH WORK

It is important that an esports event is:

- safe
- inclusive
- based on clear rules
- free from discrimination
- mindful of breaks and digital well-being
- capable of dealing with conflicts

This means thinking through:

- codes of conduct;
- moderation both on site and online;
- how toxic behaviour will be handled;
- how to support young people who may feel anxious or insecure;
- how to avoid excessive screen time without breaks.

WHAT DOES IT OFFER YOUNG PEOPLE?

A good esports event can give a young person:

- the opportunity to belong to a community;
- experience of helping organise something meaningful;
- new skills and confidence;
- contacts and friendships;
- the opportunity to discover their strengths.

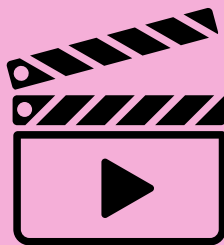
Young people may later go on to host their own tournaments and events.

What people tend to forget:

- esports is not only “gaming”, but also a learning environment;
- not every young person wants to compete – some want to contribute in other ways;
- breaks and physical activity matter;
- a safe environment does not happen by itself – it has to be created consciously.

When developed intentionally, esports can be a very strong youth work tool.

FOR MORE, WATCH THE VIDEO:



Aleksei Garanin:
Introduction





SETTING OBJECTIVES

3. SETTING OBJECTIVES

The first instinct is usually to pick the game: “Let’s do a CS2 tournament” or “Let’s do a FIFA tournament.” In reality, you should begin with a different question:

Why and for whom are we organising this event?

Do you want to:

- offer young people a safe and community-oriented gaming environment;
- develop young people’s organisational skills;
- test whether there is interest in a larger esports event in your city or community;
- create an annual tradition;
- use esports as a youth work tool?

The objective affects everything, starting with the scale of the event, how much money you need and how big the team should be, what kind of technical setup is required, who should be the partners and what will the programme look like.

If the objective is unclear, the whole organisation process becomes chaotic. One part of the team might imagine a community youth event, another a professional tournament, and a third simply an entertaining gaming day. The clearer the objective, the easier it is to make the next decisions.

Examples of event objectives:

- supporting youth initiative;
- creating a safe gaming environment;
- developing teamwork;
- promoting digital responsibility;
- bringing communities together;
- introducing esports as a tool in youth work.

If you want to use this handbook to demonstrate impact to decision-makers, it is worth **linking the event to youth work competencies. For example:**

- facilitating individual and group learning;
- programme planning;
- using evaluation practices;
- building networks;
- increasing youth participation.

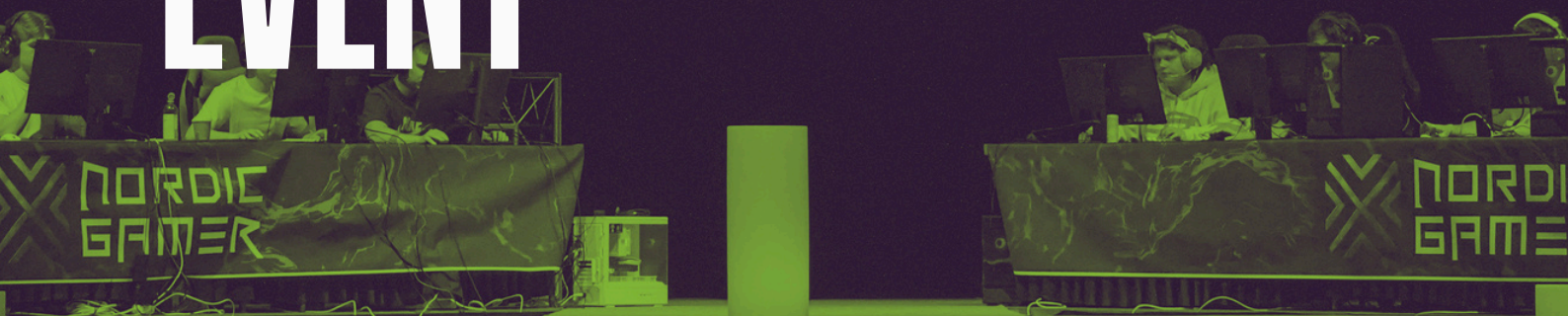


Recommendation:

write your objective down in one short sentence. If the whole team can repeat that same sentence, a large part of your foundation is already in place.



THE SCALE OF THE EVENT



4. THE SCALE OF THE EVENT

Before you start booking anything, you need to assess your capacity. The most important question is not **“What would we like to do?”** but **“What can we actually do well?”**

THERE ARE THREE SIMPLE LEVELS:

Small event

2-30 participants, one room, a simple tournament or an open gaming area.

This is an ideal first experience and it is the easiest to organize. Here you learn scheduling, communication, tournament handling, and participant guidance.

Medium-sized event

A few hundred visitors, a stage, a stream, volunteers, security, an expo area, and multiple tournaments.

This is already a complete project that requires several months of preparation and a clear division of roles.

Large event

Thousands of visitors, an international dimension, and professional production. This is not recommended as a first attempt.

It is important to understand that the value of an event is not determined by its size. A well-organised small tournament is always better than a chaotic large event.

What to think through immediately when deciding on scale:

- how many participants and visitors you want;
- is it a one-game or multi-game event;
- whether participants bring their own devices or you provide the equipment;
- is it a tournament, a festival, or a combination of both;
- If you want only a gaming area or also a stage, expo area, cosplay, and workshops.

Required equipment depends on the scale:

- consoles or computers;
- monitors;
- LAN or Wi-Fi solution;
- extension cords;
- spare controllers and spare cables;
- streaming equipment;
- headsets;
- tables, chairs, and signage.

COMMON TOURNAMENT FORMATS

Single elimination – one loss and the player or team is out. Simple and fast, but less forgiving.

Double elimination – a team or player is eliminated only after two losses. Fairer, but takes more time.

Round robin – everyone plays against everyone. Good for small groups, but time-consuming with many participants.

DATA PROTECTION AND SAFETY

The larger the event, the more important practical and legal issues become.

It is important to consider:

- parental consent for minors;
- photography and filming permissions;
- safe collection of participant data;
- online account security;
- codes of conduct.



Very important note:

The scale of an event is not determined only by the number of visitors. It is also determined by technical complexity, the volume of activities during the event, the number of partners, and how many areas need to function at the same time.



BUDGETING AND FINDING ADDITIONAL FUNDING

5. BUDGETING AND FINDING ADDITIONAL FUNDING

The biggest mistake people make is starting with marketing or prize money. In reality, you have to start with the budget.

The budget is your reality check. It tells you how big you can think. If your budget is 500 euros, there is no point in planning a stage, LED screens, and a professional stream. If your budget is 20,000 euros, you need to account for security, equipment, production, and a larger team.

WHY YOU SHOULD NOT RELY ON TICKET INCOME

Ticket income is a forecast, not a guarantee. If you build the whole event around the idea that ticket sales will cover the costs, you are taking a big risk. In reality, ticket income rarely covers the full technical production and logistics costs.

A better way of thinking is to first secure reliable funding. Then you can plan the costs easier and set ticket prices as the last thing.

COSTS THAT ARE OFTEN UNDERESTIMATED

- electricity and cabling;
- technical labour;
- cleaning and waste management;
- catering for volunteers;
- preparation time;
- transport costs;
- last-minute purchases;
- signage, tape, printed materials, and small supplies;
- water and snacks for the team;
- transporting equipment in and out.

These “small costs” often add up to a significant amount.

5.1. FUNDING OPTIONS

- local government support;
- project grants;
- sponsors;
- partners;
- ticket income;
- self-financing or external supporters.

SPONSORSHIP

Finding sponsors is a good way to reduce some costs, get prizes, and receive support for making the event happen. Esports events often depend on partners because the costs of equipment, production, streaming and prize pools can grow quickly.

MAIN SPONSORSHIP CATEGORIES

1. Financial sponsorship

Direct money into the event budget. This can be used to cover the prize pool, equipment, stage setup, advertising, or tournament systems.

2. Product sponsorship

Keyboards, mice, monitors, computers, drinks, snacks, prizes, or other necessary goods that can be used as prizes or during the event.

3. Service sponsorship

Streaming partners, casting, graphic design, photography, transport, technical support, or venue discounts.

4. Media sponsorship

Media partners help spread the event, create content, and increase visibility.

5. Long-term partners

Longer-term sponsors with whom cooperation can be built over multiple events.

WHAT KINDS OF COMPANIES CAN BE APPROACHED?

- technology and IT companies;
- game publishers and gaming-related businesses;
- telecom and internet service providers;
- food and beverage companies;
- educational institutions;
- youth sector partners;
- local businesses, centres, and cultural institutions.

The form of sponsorship always depends on the target group. If the event is aimed at young people, partner suitability should be considered accordingly.

WHAT CAN YOU OFFER SPONSORS IN RETURN?

Sponsors can be offered:

- visibility on social media;
- visibility on site on posters, screens, or stage;
- a dedicated expo area;
- giveaways with sponsor products;
- sponsor-named tournaments or special prizes;
- mentions in the stream or stage programme.

Be open to possibilities, but stay realistic. Do not promise more than you can actually deliver.



Very important note:

A general sponsorship package often works less well than a specific, needs-based request.

It is often much easier to ask for something concrete, for example:

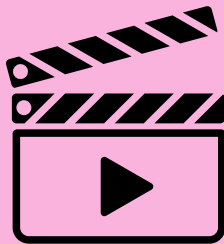
- drink support for volunteers;
- prizes for a tournament;
- discounted equipment rental;
- furniture or office supplies;
- transport.

That kind of request is much clearer and easier for a company to understand.

AFTER THE EVENT

Sponsors should always be thanked, informed about how the event went, sent photos and videos, and, if possible, invited to discuss future cooperation

FOR MORE, WATCH THE VIDEOS:



Sergey Shirkhodjaev:
How to attract sponsors and partners for your esports tournament



Antti Heinonen:
Monetization strategies





THE VENUE



6. THE VENUE

Many people choose a venue because it “looks cool.” In reality, you need to ask:

- is there enough electricity;
- is the internet connection sufficient;
- are cables allowed to be laid out;
- is there enough space for the audience;
- is there a separate area for the team;
- where are the evacuation routes;
- is ventilation good;
- is the temperature comfortable

If the venue supports the nature of the event, everything else becomes much easier to plan. If you choose a venue without checking its electrical capacity, you may later discover that it looks good visually but cannot support the event technically.

You should definitely ask for the building’s electrical plan. It will show how much capacity exists in the electrical cabinet and will immediately give you an idea of how large an event can realistically be organised there.

In addition to technical conditions, the venue also has to support the needs of guests:

- is there a cloakroom;
- where can people park;
- are there enough toilets;
- can catering be arranged;
- is it possible to create a rest area;
- is there a dedicated area for partners and organisers?

If the venue itself does not provide these solutions, the organiser must think about how to create them. The larger the event, the more important these practicalities become. It is also worth asking the venue manager for the full floor plan. This helps a lot in designing the layout, thinking through movement routes and planning technical areas.

Technical planning is not an exaggeration – it is about safety, functionality, and ultimately a good visitor experience.



THE TOURNAMENT

7. THE TOURNAMENT

One of the biggest mistakes in tournament planning is assuming that matches last exactly as long as the bracket says they will. In reality, you have to account for much more than just the average game length. Tournament flow is affected by technical pauses, players arriving late, disputes, server issues, audience expectations, streaming requirements, and sometimes completely unexpected situations.

That is why the bracket schedule should always be planned for longer than the average match duration. If one match runs late, it affects the entire day. This matters especially when the event also includes a stage programme, a broadcast or finals tied to specific times.

A good rule of thumb is to leave at least 20–30% buffer in each time block. You should also build in breaks and think through who is responsible for the live flow of the tournament and any changes that need to be communicated.

At minimum, tournament organisation should include:

- one person is responsible only for tournament flow and match progress;
- two people are responsible for server management;
- one person or a small team who can communicate with players and help resolve disputes.

It is also important to remember that demo recording takes time. The server should not be force-closed or reconfigured for the next match before the required files have been properly saved. This may seem like a minor detail on event day, but in reality it affects the entire schedule.

If the tournament is connected to a broadcast or statistics system, all external requirements must be clarified early.

In our experience, it was not known in advance that the servers also had to send data to HLTV. Because of that, part of the setup had to be changed, and a ready-made map pick-ban solution from mapban.gg had to be used.

Technical requirements like this must be discovered before the event, not at the last minute.

If everything starts running late, there must also be filler content ready. It is not enough to tell the audience, "Please wait a little."

In these moments, the following can help:

- sponsor messages;
- partner presentations;
- short interviews;
- brief stage announcements;
- pre-prepared visuals or videos.

To improve the player experience, it is also worth thinking about the sound setup. In a competitive format, a double-headset solution or another way to reduce outside sound may be needed in order to keep play fair.

A tournament is not just a bracket. It is a whole system where technical readiness, scheduling, player experience and audience expectations all meet. The more you think through in advance, the less you will need to improvise on event day.



EXPO, PARTNERS & GAMING AREAS

www.guil.com GUIL

8. EXPO, PARTNERS & GAMING AREAS

8.1. EXPO AREA

The goal of an expo area is to bring different organisations into the event and offer visitors something exciting in addition to esports competitions. A well-planned expo area helps balance the event – not every visitor comes only to play in the tournament or watch finals. Some people simply want to walk around, try something new, socialise, and explore.

The expo area should not focus only on esports and electronics. It should be playful, interactive and engaging. When looking for partners, do not limit yourself to computer games alone. Think more broadly about which organisations might appeal to young people, technology enthusiasts, or anyone looking for a fun, hands-on experience. The more diverse the expo area is, the more interesting the event becomes for people who are not taking part in tournaments.

Partner activities might include:

- a game, competition or challenge;
- a technology or electronics showcase;
- a project or exhibit display;
- board games, Kahoot!, rally simulators, VR headsets, console games or retro games;
- creative workshops or short hands-on activities;
- activities related to health, digital safety or well-being.

A big bonus is also when a company sells gaming-related or pop culture products on site. This adds another dimension to the expo area and can make the event feel more complete to visitors.

For example, at Game in Tartu, the public library participated with consoles, comics, and LEGO, a board game bar brought different games, and Silmatark offered eyesight testing. These examples show clearly that partners can be very diverse, and that diversity only enriches the event. Partners who connect gaming culture with important topics such as digital safety, health, or creativity often work particularly well.

FINDING EXPO PARTNERS

Start by thinking about organisations you have worked with before, or those involved in youth work, technology or gaming. Find their contacts and write directly to someone responsible for communication, marketing or community work. A message sent to a general email address can easily get lost or remain unanswered for too long.

If there is no reply, it is worth calling to ask whether the information was received. Talking about the event really matters. Many organisations do not decide on cooperation based on one email alone – they want to understand what kind of event it is, who is organising it and what role is expected from them.

It is a good idea to send partners a registration form right away, asking:

- the organisation's name and a short introduction;
- what they plan to do in the expo area;
- how much space they need;
- whether they need electricity and for what;
- how many tables and chairs they need;
- whether they need internet access;
- how many people will be attending from their organisation;
- whether they need parking or loading access.

The more accurate information you have before the event, the fewer last-minute questions and layout changes you will face.

LAYOUT PLAN

Once the responses are in, you should create a layout plan for the expo area. When placing partners, consider:

- space requirements;
- the location of power sockets;
- visitor movement routes;
- logical grouping of similar activities;
- visibility and sound;
- flexibility in case someone joins at the last minute or drops out.

The expo layout should ideally be sent to partners before the event. On site, partners should be welcomed by someone who knows their needs and can guide them to the right place. This helps avoid situations where a partner arrives and does not know where to go or what to do.

It is also useful to consider that some partners may need more support during the day than others. One may need only a table and power, while another may want more direct audience interaction or help setting up equipment. It is very useful if one person checks in with all partners at least once during the day, asks if everything is working, and solves any practical issues.

FOLLOW-UP

After the event, it is worth sending partners a thank-you message and a feedback form. Their thoughts and observations are very valuable for future events. It also leaves a professional impression if you send them a few photos or a short summary showing their contribution to the event.

8.2. STREAMERS

Bringing in local content creators and streamers is a good way to increase the visibility of the event. Streamers often have their own communities who may want to attend in person or watch online. In addition, they can stream from the venue, which helps generate even more interest.

To involve streamers, it is worth:

- creating a list of suitable creators;
- preparing a short, clear invitation;
- offering something motivating, such as free passes, giveaway tickets for their audience, a dedicated area or the option to stream from the event;
- personalising each invitation.

This kind of approach helps build positive working relationships and increases the event's visibility both before and during the event.

It is also important to think through practical questions. **If you invite a streamer on site, consider:**

- whether they have a suitable place to stream from;

- whether the internet connection is strong enough;
- whether the sound will disturb the surroundings or vice versa;
- whether they need a separate table, chair, or power supply;
- whether you want them to simply attend or also be part of the stage programme or tournament content.

The clearer the expectations, the better the cooperation.

8.3. LAN AREA

LAN area is a space where people come with their own devices and use a prepared desk, power supply and internet connection. It is an important part of community-building – people do not only come to play in tournaments, but also to spend time together, meet new people, and play spontaneously.

A good LAN area is not just a row of tables. **It has to be thought through:**

- each space must have enough power;
- the internet must be stable;
- cable routing must be safe;
- there must be enough space between tables;
- noise, lighting, and movement routes should be considered.

The LAN area should not be left for completely free play only. Organisers should consider adding smaller tournaments or team-based activities to help people interact and build new connections. If the LAN area is left entirely on its own, people may be physically present but never really share a common experience.

You should also think through:

- whether the number of seats is limited and whether pre-registration is needed;
- whether participants bring all their own equipment or whether some of it is provided;
- whether only computers are allowed or also consoles;
- what the usage rules are if the event runs late into the evening;
- how security and personal belongings are handled.

A LAN area can become one of the strongest community-building elements of the event if its purpose is not only “give people power and internet” but also “help them experience something together.”



GOSPLAY

9. COSPLAY

Cosplay is a hobby in which people dress up as their favourite characters. These characters may come from games, anime, films, TV series, comics or may be completely original. The cosplay community is closely connected to gamers and other geek-culture communities, which is why it fits very well as part of an esports event.

At Game in Tartu, there was a cosplay masquerade as well as cosplay-related workshops and talks. The masquerade was a simple and accessible competition format where participants registered on site, received queue numbers, and went on stage one by one to present their costumes. There was also a craftsmanship category where participants could show costumes they had made themselves, and judges evaluated their quality more closely.

Cosplay is not just an “extra” next to the programme. When done well, it brings a completely different energy to the event, broadens the audience, and helps attract people who may not come only for tournaments. It adds visual value, creativity and strengthens the sense of community.

WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN ORGANISING COSPLAY

- set the budget;
- decide on the competition format and rules;
- invite judges early;
- think about whether and what kind of workshops or talks you want to include;
- open pre-registration if needed;
- communicate with participants early and clearly.

Judges should be given a clear overview of what is expected of them and which costs can be covered. If prejudging is part of the programme, a private space should be arranged and the whole process should be planned calmly and respectfully.

Before the competition, participants should be informed multiple times:

- where and when registration takes place;
- how prejudging works;
- when and how they go on stage;
- how the awards ceremony works.

In cosplay, it is very important that participants feel supported. Costumes may be uncomfortable, movement may be difficult and performing can be stressful. If possible, a dressing room should be provided, or at least a calm place where participants can rest. It is also worth considering whether they can get to the stage without having to walk long distances or push through crowds.

If there is a craftsmanship category, it must be very clear:

- what conditions must be met to enter;
- what is being judged;
- whether the costume must be self-made and to what extent;
- how much time the judges need to make their decision.

For the future, it is worth considering a separate children's category, especially if the event is aimed at young people and families. This makes participation safer and fairer for younger children and their parents.

It is also worth thinking about how cosplay connects to the rest of the event. For example, judges can give a talk, participants can be part of a photo corner, or there can be short cosplay-related moments during the day that keep that community visible beyond the competition itself.

A young boy is shown from the chest up, wearing large headphones and a light-colored t-shirt with an 'XBOX' logo. He is looking down at a DJ mixer on a metal stand. The scene is dimly lit with a strong green glow. In the foreground, the metal frame of the DJ stand is visible, along with various cables and pieces of equipment, including a Pioneer DJ mixer. The text 'STAGE PROGRAMME' is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

STAGE PROGRAMME

10. STAGE PROGRAMME

A stage programme gives the event rhythm, creates emotion, and ties together different activity areas into one whole. At the same time, it requires very good preparation, because if the stage starts operating like a world of its own without supporting the rest of the event, confusion appears quickly.

Suitable stage content can include:

- tournament finals;
- discussions with partners;
- interviews with players, streamers and partners;
- cosplay programme;
- Q&A talks;
- musical or other short interludes;
- giveaways and audience activities;
- short updates about what is happening elsewhere at the event.

If the event has multiple stages, it is very important to think carefully about what happens on which stage and when. Two stage programmes should not compete with each other.



One important lesson was that the small stage worked well, but its operating hours should be linked to the expo area and audience activity. When the expo closes, part of the audience often disappears as well.

HOSTS

Stage hosts must be aware of current information and changes. If they are left without information, the quality of the entire stage programme suffers.

A host should not only read from a script, but also:

- energise the audience;
- improvise when necessary;
- fill pauses;
- interview visitors and partners;
- direct the audience to other activity areas, not only the stage.

What helps a host appear professional:

- preparatory work before the event;
- direct communication with the team;
- managing the emotions of the audience;
- time control;
- good voice and body language.

It is especially important that hosts receive ongoing updates about tournaments, delays, and programme changes. If a host has to guess or improvise without real information, the result quickly feels uncertain.

STAGE MANAGER

The role of the stage manager is very important. They help keep the schedule, make sure performers are ready on time and communicate with the backstage team. Without this role, the stage quickly becomes dependent on random agreements.

At minimum, the stage manager should make sure that:

- the next performer or segment is ready;
- the host knows what happens next;
- the technical team knows what needs to be started;
- any delays are communicated immediately.

A good stage programme needs pauses, buffers, and a thoughtful structure. It should not be just “something happening”, but a whole that supports the event.

It is also worth thinking about how to fill unexpected empty time. For example:

- short sponsor or partner introductions;
- pre-recorded videos;
- audience questions;
- quick on-site interviews;
- quiz moments or small giveaways.

If such material is prepared in advance, the stage programme becomes much more resilient when something shifts in timing.

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white t-shirt and a headset, is sitting on a white sofa in a call center. She is looking to her right. The background shows rows of cubicles. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent magenta color. Large, bold, white text is centered over the image.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

11. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

If everyone does everything, in the end no one really does anything. A good team does not necessarily mean a large team. **A good team means clear responsibility.**

The organising team should ideally be divided into at least the following larger areas:

- tournaments;
- expo area and partners;
- production and technical setup;
- marketing;
- volunteers;
- stage programme.

For larger teams, these areas can also work as departments with a clear hierarchy, each with a lead who reports to the main event organiser.

Each role should include:

- a clear task;
- a deadline;
- a team lead or responsible person;
- decision-making authority.

A clear task should be something that can be measured when it is completed.

If responsibility remains vague, the result is usually that the project lead ends up doing most of the work, some people do not take ownership, and decisions get delayed. Especially when working with young people, responsibility cannot remain only in words. If someone is given a role but has no real authority or no clear understanding of what they are supposed to do, actual responsibility never develops.

It is especially important to think through even the smallest on-site tasks before the event. If they are not clearly assigned, last-minute instructions and overload start to appear. Many problems do not happen because there are too few people, but because details were left at the level of “we’ll figure it out on site.”

OTHER THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- there should be some extra people in reserve;
- shifts and rest must be planned;
- communication channels must be clear;
- all important information should be kept in one shared system, such as Google Drive;
- Discord or another communication platform should be divided by topic;
- decisions should be written down, not left only as verbal agreements;
- before the event there should be one place where all key contacts and files are gathered, for example a shared document or sheet in the cloud.

It is also very useful to create a simple role sheet, listing:

- who is responsible for what;
- the main tasks of that role;
- when the person needs to be on site;
- who they report to;
- who their backup is if they are unavailable.

It is also worth thinking through which roles are critical and which are supportive. For example, if the tournament lead cannot attend, that is a much bigger issue than if one social media volunteer is missing. For critical roles, there should always be at least one person who can step in if needed.

In a well-organised event, the question “Who is handling this?” should not appear in the middle of a crisis. That answer should already be known.

FOR MORE, WATCH THE VIDEO:



Kimmo Leinonen:
[Team & volunteers management](#)





VOLUNTEERS

11. VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are one of the biggest strengths of an esports event, but also one of the biggest sources of confusion. It all depends on how well they are prepared, guided and supported. If the volunteer system works, the event moves much more smoothly. If it does not, questions, problems and gaps eventually land on the shoulders of the key organisers.

If a volunteer does not know exactly what they are supposed to do, they will usually wait for instructions, stay in the background or look for ways to avoid more difficult tasks. This is not always bad intent – often the reason is simply that the role was too vague or the person never fully understood their responsibility. That is why a volunteer system must never be based on the idea that “we’ll figure it out on site.”

A functioning volunteer system should include at minimum:

- a volunteer coordinator;
- a clear check-in system;
- a shift system;
- a quick communication channel;
- a person to contact with questions or concerns.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

The volunteer coordinator should not be someone who also has several other major responsibilities. This role needs real attention: welcoming people, tracking schedules, making changes, arranging breaks, maintaining motivation and solving problems. If the role is missing or treated as a side task, volunteer questions get spread across the whole organising team and information starts getting lost.

If possible, the volunteer coordinator should have at least one assistant. That way one person can manage the system while the other is physically available on site.

REGISTRATION FORM

It is worth creating a separate registration form for volunteers. This makes it much easier to understand who wants to contribute, when they are available, and which roles they feel most comfortable in.

The form could include:

- name and age;
- contact details;
- whether the person has a driver's licence;
- which days and time slots they are available;
- which roles they are interested in;
- whether they have previous experience;
- whether they have technical skills or knowledge of a specific game;
- whether they have any limitations or special needs;
- whether they have food allergies or dietary restrictions;
- whether parental consent is needed for minors.

If the event lasts several days, that should be clearly visible in the form. It is especially important to know whether a person is available for a full day, only a few hours or only one of the days. A lot of confusion begins when the organiser assumes one thing and the volunteer assumes another.

ROLES MUST BE UNDERSTANDABLE

Each volunteer role should clearly state:

- what they do;
- what they do not do;
- when they are expected to take initiative;
- who to turn to in a difficult situation.

Possible volunteer roles include:

- tournament assistant;
- technical support;
- expo area activity point supervisor;
- social media team member;
- stream assistant;
- commentator assistant;
- photographer or video team member;

- visitor guide;
- stage host or moderator;
- check-in desk assistant;
- backstage or organiser area support.

It is important to remember that not all volunteers are suited to all roles. One task may require technical ability, another strong communication skills, a third familiarity with a game or calmness under pressure. For example, you cannot assume that every volunteer can solve issues with a Meta Quest 3, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation, Xbox or rally simulator after just a quick explanation. The same applies when someone is asked to monitor tournament fairness or respond to suspicious behaviour.

ONBOARDING AND PREPARATION

If volunteers are expected to do more than simply be present, they should receive separate onboarding and practical preparation. A very good solution is to bring volunteers together before the event, explain the system as a whole and let them try out the tasks they will later perform.

This is especially important when a volunteer:

- handles sensitive equipment;
- helps manage a tournament;
- runs activity stations;
- has to solve problems independently;
- interacts with participants or partners;
- is being a host.

Preparation helps volunteers feel much more confident and also allows organisers to see whether a person fits the role they were assigned to.

SCHEDULING AND MOTIVATION

A schedule must exist, but it also needs to stay flexible. At a larger event, things can change throughout the day. One volunteer may need to leave early, one area may suddenly need more help, another may operate more independently than expected. That is why one person should be responsible for managing changes and communicating them quickly.

Volunteers should be selected primarily based on motivation. If a person is there out of their own free will and genuinely interested in the topic, they are usually more reliable than someone participating because of outside pressure or obligation. If you involve volunteers through schools, for example, you should expect that internal motivation may vary and therefore role distribution and guidance need to be even clearer.

WELL-BEING AND RECOGNITION

Volunteers should be provided with:

- drinking water;
- food;
- snacks if possible;
- a place to rest;
- thanks and recognition.

If a volunteer feels that they are cared for, they usually contribute much more. There is a big difference between feeling like “extra hands” or feeling like a real member of the team. Small things – a personal thank-you, warm food, a quick check-in or simply sincere recognition during the day – matter a lot.

WHAT PEOPLE TEND TO FORGET

- volunteers need information early, not the night before;
- everyone should have a contact person to message or call;
- a volunteer should not have to search for where they are supposed to be;
- not everyone can take a break at the same time;
- someone should always know where each volunteer currently is;
- after the event, volunteers should be asked for separate feedback, because they often see practical weak points more clearly than anyone else.



Well-managed volunteers are not just extra support. They are a key part of how the event functions.

MARKETING



12. MARKETING

Marketing is not just about making posts. It is about informing the community, engaging participants, and building trust. People do not attend an event simply because it exists – they attend when they hear about it in time, understand why it is interesting and see that it is really happening.

Marketing must begin early. If you announce the event only a week before it happens, a large part of the audience will not come. Even if the event itself is good, the information will not reach the right people and there will be no time to build excitement.

The most effective things are:

- consistency;
- showing real people;
- introducing the team;
- school visits and community engagement;
- a clear visual identity.

Based on experience, Instagram and TikTok worked very well. TikTok worked best because short, energetic and direct videos fit the format well. Facebook did not perform as strongly, but it can still be useful for older target groups, community groups or partners.

MARKETING CONTENT

When planning marketing, do not think only “we need posts”, but also what a person will actually understand from them. Can they tell:

- what kind of event this is;
- who it is for;
- what will happen there;
- why they should come;
- where to get tickets or how to register;
- whether there is something for them even if they are not playing in the tournament?

Good marketing does not only talk about the event in general — it shows concrete reasons to attend. **For example:**

- finals on stage;
- cosplay;
- streamers;
- the expo area;
- VR, simulators, board games;
- prizes;
- the chance to spend time with friends.

THINGS TO THINK THROUGH IN MARKETING

- event logo;
- social media visuals;
- website or information page;
- stream visuals;
- animations that improve the broadcast;
- publishing the schedule on time;
- introducing partners and teams;
- reminders about tickets or registration.

One important lesson was that the website worked well, but the schedule was published too late. Even if the exact times are not yet known, it is worth putting up at least a general day plan. The website should ideally have a dedicated person responsible for keeping it updated.

VISUAL IDENTITY

Visual identity matters much more than it first seems. If event posters, social media posts, the website, and stream graphics all look different, the whole event feels random. A consistent visual language makes the event look more professional and trustworthy.

Animations can add a lot to a stream. The same goes for intermission screens, sponsor blocks, tournament graphics and result displays. These things take time and should not be left to the last week.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Event marketing does not need to happen only online. The following also work well:

- school visits;
- promotion through youth centres;
- local community groups;
- partner channels;
- smaller pre-event activities or introductions.

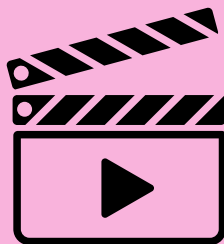
If partners, schools, or streamers share the event through their own channels, it helps the event reach a much wider audience than relying only on your own accounts.

WHAT PEOPLE TEND TO FORGET

- separate information for players and separate information for the general audience;
- post-event content such as recaps, photos, thanks and results;
- responding to comments on the website or social media;
- “last chance” reminders about tickets or registration;
- live content created during the event, which may still bring in people who are deciding.

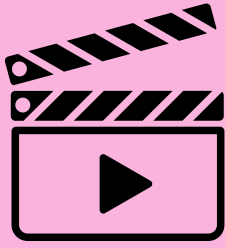
Marketing does not end when the doors open. It continues throughout the event and after it.

FOR MORE, WATCH THE VIDEOS:



Mark Zelinski:
[Build a website](#)





Mihhail Popov:
Digital advertising



Margarita Gavrilova:
Social media and content
marketing for tournament
promotion





TECHNICAL SETUP AND OPERATIONS

13. TECHNICAL SETUP AND OPERATIONS

Running cables, positioning tables, distributing power, managing the internet and testing the stream all take time. That is why a separate setup day or days must be planned. The larger and more technical the event, the more important this becomes.

If the setup is chaotic, the event will feel chaotic. If the setup is calm, systematic, and well thought through, it gives the whole day a much stronger foundation.

Do not underestimate the physical work involved:

- carpets or floor coverings;
- extension cords;
- cable covers;
- signs;
- tables and chairs;
- equipment placement;
- server and switch locations;
- connecting monitors, power and internet;
- setting up partner areas.

Extension cord reels should always be fully unrolled so they do not overheat.

ELECTRICITY

As a rule of thumb, you can estimate that one 16A phase can handle around four computer setups, but you must always leave a safety buffer. For example, if one setup consumes around 650 W, then four setups consume approximately 2.6 kW. One phase can handle around 3.7 kW, but you should never plan all the way to the limit.

With a three-phase setup, it is possible to handle a larger number of devices, but the electrical load must be calculated properly. This should never be based on guesswork. When it comes to electricity, consult a professional if possible.

It is also important to think about:

- whether stage equipment is on a separate power circuit;
- whether the stream and gaming area share the same load;

- whether partner areas add extra load;
- whether some devices draw more power when starting up than in normal use;
- whether to use a UPS (uninterruptible power supply) for critical tech, for example to keep a server from crashing during a power outage.

INTERNET AND CONTROL

Ideally, you should have direct control over the internet or at least a very clear cooperation plan with the venue's technical side. If the server, internet, stream or audio depend on outside parties, everything must be tested in advance.

Think through:

- whether you are using the venue's internet or bringing your own solution;
- whether all critical devices are connected by cable;
- whether Wi-Fi is only for the audience or also used for operations;
- whether the stream and tournament servers use the same network;
- whether there is a backup plan if the internet fails.

LAYOUT AND LOGISTICS

Technical setup and operations are not only about cables and devices. They are also about movement in the area. Planning a small event can be done on paper with measurements taken manually. For bigger events, it is highly advisable to request floor plans and measurements so you can make a layout in CAD software or another planning tool. If the team has enough technical proficiency, a 3D environment can also help.

You need to consider:

- how visitors move;
- how players move;
- where check-in is located;
- where the partners are;
- where the stage is;
- where the organisers area is;
- where problems can be solved calmly without standing in the middle of the audience.

If the room is too bright, it affects screens and the overall atmosphere. If there are too few chairs, discomfort appears immediately. If the layout feels random, the whole space quickly feels disorganised.

LESSONS LEARNED

The most likely problems occur:

- between the server and the network;
- in internet stability;
- in the stream;
- in sound;
- in announcements and communication;
- in layout logic and lack of furniture.

That is why the logistics plan must be clear: what happens, when it happens and what depends on what. The more different activity areas the event has, the more technical setup and operations need their own management.

WHAT PEOPLE TEND TO FORGET

- enough extension cords and spare cables;
- tape, signage and cable covers;
- spare mice, keyboards and adapters;
- a place to store tools and spare parts;
- a separate charging area or technical point;
- one person who is responsible only for the technical big picture;
- making sure people eat and drink during setup and event day;
- creating a risk management plan and playing through different scenarios.

When technical setup and operations are properly thought through, all the other areas become much easier to manage as well.



EVENT DAY

14. EVENT DAY

Problems always happen. It is important to have clear leadership, calm communication and be quick in decision-making.

If the schedule starts slipping, adjust it instead of panicking. If the technical side fails, reduce the scope, change the order or use a backup plan — do not let the whole event collapse because of it.

A good organiser does not avoid problems. A good organiser manages them.

START OF THE DAY

On event day, the whole team must know:

- who is responsible for what;
- how information moves;
- who to contact in case of a problem;
- what the critical points of the day are.

It is highly recommended to have a short briefing with the key team at the start of the day. That way everyone begins with the same information. The briefing should include:

- the schedule and possible risk points;
- roles and contacts;
- how changes will be communicated;
- what the first essential block is that must be ready.

DURING THE DAY

During the event, it is very important that someone keeps track of the bigger picture. If everyone focuses only on small problems within their own area, the overall logic of the event may start to fall apart.

During the day, it is useful to:

- have one person with a checklist so everything is done before the start of the day;
- have short check-ins with key people responsible for different areas;
- make quick decisions when something gets stuck;
- make sure organisers also get breaks;
- take notes on things that should be done differently next time.

CRISES AND DELAYS

The worst thing during delays is silence. The audience and participants usually accept a small delay much better when they understand what is happening. Silence creates uncertainty.

If a problem occurs:

- understand clearly what happened;
- decide who makes the final decision;
- pass the information on to the right people;
- communicate briefly to the audience or participants if necessary.

WHAT PEOPLE TEND TO FORGET

- everyone needs to eat and drink during the day, including the organising team;
- all key people should not disappear for breaks at the same time;
- if something is cancelled, there must be a backup plan;
- questions from volunteers and partners do not disappear just because the tournament is running;
- at the end of the day, it is useful to do at least a short internal summary so that important observations are captured immediately for the next day or next event.

The event day does not need to be perfect. It needs to be led.

A man with a beard and short hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt and dark tie, stands on a stage. He is holding a microphone in his right hand and looking slightly to his left. The background is dark with some faint, stylized text visible. The overall image has a greenish tint.

AFTER THE EVENT - REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK

15. AFTER THE EVENT – REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK

When the event ends, the work is not actually over. This is the moment when the greatest value for the next event is created. If this stage is skipped, the same mistakes repeat and the good solutions never become established.

Reflection means consciously taking the time to think through:

- what worked well;
- what did not work;
- what should be done differently next time;
- what you learned and what the team learned;
- whether the original objectives were achieved.

WHO SHOULD FEEDBACK BE COLLECTED FROM?

Feedback should not be collected from only one source. Valuable information comes from different groups:

- the organising team;
- volunteers;
- participants (players);
- visitors;
- partners;
- streamers and performers.

Each group has its own perspective. For example:

- a volunteer sees where the system is shaky;
- a player feels whether the tournament is fair and smooth;
- a visitor experiences the general atmosphere;
- a partner sees the professionalism of the cooperation and organisation.

HOW TO REFLECT

Reflection can be done in different ways:

- spoken discussion with the team;
- written feedback;

- individual conversations with key people;
- playful methods.

A very good practice is to hold a separate reflection meeting with the team a few days after the event. Not immediately that same night when everyone is exhausted, but not a month later either, when the details have already faded.

QUESTIONS THAT HELP DEEPER ANALYSIS

- Where did the biggest delays happen?
- What took more time than expected?
- What worked surprisingly well?
- Was there a lack of information?
- Which role was overloaded?
- Which role was underused?
- What is one thing that should definitely be changed next time?

INDICATORS FOR MEASURING IMPACT

Quantitative:

- number of participants;
- number of volunteers;
- number of visitors;
- number of tournament participants;
- livestream viewers;
- social media reach and engagement.

Qualitative:

- reflections from young people;
- development of competencies;
- participant and partner feedback;
- general atmosphere and sense of community.

What people tend to forget:

- asking partners for feedback;
- separate feedback from volunteers;
- collecting all results and statistics in one place;
- gathering photos and videos;
- sending thank-you messages.

FOLLOW-UP

After the event, it is worth:

- sending thank-you letters to partners, volunteers, and the team;
- sharing photos and an aftermovie;
- posting results and a recap;
- keeping the community engaged after the event.

Good follow-up makes organising the next event much easier.

A trophy on a pedestal in a dimly lit room with people seated at a table in the background.

LESSONS LEARNED AND PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

16. LESSONS LEARNED AND PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Every event teaches something. Some lessons come from planning, others only from experience. **Below are practical recommendations that tend to come up in almost every event.**

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- get enough sleep before the event;
- do not leave critical tasks to the last minute;
- test the technical setup in advance;
- plan alternatives and have contingency plans ready;
- make a demo tournament with volunteers participating;
- leave time buffers in the schedule;
- have backup plans if something does not go as planned;
- ask for help if something is unclear;
- drink water and eat, even as an organiser;
- keep communication clear and brief.

If Server A is the main server, Server B should already be running as a backup and there should be clear instructions on how to connect players to it. Contingency plans are best when they are not only written down, but also practised.

TECHNICAL SETUP AND TOURNAMENTS

- rent servers and test them in advance with actual players;
- make sure all games and accounts work;
- create a backup plan if the server fails;
- keep spare devices at hand;
- never assume that “it will probably work”.

PEOPLE AND TEAM

- do not underestimate human resources;
- make an execution timetable, event layout plan and electricity routing plan;
- do not give too many roles to one person;
- have backup people for key roles;
- communicate with the team continuously, not only before the event;
- notice overload and react to it;
- learn to say no;
- do not burn out.

SCHEDULING

- everything always slips at least a little;
- build breaks into the schedule for daily essentials;
- leave spare space to fill gaps;
- do not plan the programme too tightly.

WHAT PEOPLE TEND TO FORGET

- food and breaks for the team;
- clear information for visitors;
- backup plans;
- enough signage on site;
- simple but important things, such as room temperature, fresh air, chairs, toilets, rubbish bins and drinking water.

Sometimes the best advice is also the simplest: do not try to do everything at once. It is better to do less, but do it well.

CHECKLIST



17. CHECKLIST

Before the event, it is worth reviewing at least the following points:

PLANNING

- the objective has been defined
- the scale has been decided
- the budget has been made
- the venue has been confirmed
- key people who will lead the project have been chosen
- dates and schedule are in place

CONTENT AND PROGRAMME

- the tournament format is decided
- the stage programme has been planned
- expo area partners are confirmed
- cosplay and other side activities are planned

PEOPLE

- the team is in place
- roles and responsibilities are assigned
- volunteers have been selected and briefed
- contacts are gathered in one place

TECHNICAL SETUP AND LOGISTICS

- technical capacity has been checked;
- electricity and internet have been planned;
- the layout has been designed;
- necessary equipment exists or has been ordered.

MARKETING

- visuals are ready
- social media is active
- a website or information page exists
- the schedule has been published
- tickets or registration are open

DOCUMENTATION AND RULES

- rules of conduct exist
- permissions and agreements are in place
- tournament rules are written down
- a volunteer guide exists

BEFORE THE EVENT

- execution timetable;
- event layout plan;
- electricity routing plan

EVENT DAY

- the run sheet is ready
- the briefing is planned
- communication channels work
- backup plans exist

AFTER THE EVENT

- feedback forms are ready;
- thank-you messages are planned;
- result and statistics collection has been planned.

This checklist can also be turned into a separate table or spreadsheet, where each item has a responsible person and a deadline.

A photograph of a man and a woman on a stage, overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The man, on the left, has a beard and is wearing a dark jacket and a lanyard with a badge. He is holding a microphone in his right hand and a book in his left. The woman, on the right, has long blonde hair and is wearing a light-colored jacket and jeans. She is holding a book in her hands and looking towards the man. The background is dark and out of focus.

CLOSING REMARKS

CLOSING REMARKS

Organising an esports event is not only about making an event happen. It is a process that teaches much more than it may seem at first.

Throughout this handbook, many different topics have come up – tournaments, technical setup, marketing, volunteers, partners, stage programme, cosplay and logistics. All of these may seem like separate worlds, but in reality they are closely connected. If one part does not work, it will inevitably affect the others.

The most important lesson is not any specific tool, platform or solution. The most important thing is understanding that a good event does not happen by accident.

A good event is built on:

- a clear objective;
- thoughtful planning and execution;
- delegation and shared responsibility;
- open communication;
- the willingness to adapt.

One of the central ideas of this handbook is that you do not need to know everything before you begin. In reality, no one knows everything the first time they organise an event. What matters is starting, testing, making mistakes, and learning.

Almost every event brings situations you cannot fully predict:

- technology does not work as planned;
- the schedule slips;
- people do not arrive on time;
- an idea that looked good on paper does not work as well in practice.

These are not failures. They are part of the process. What matters is how you respond. Does panic take over or does a solution appear? Does the problem stop everything or does the event move forward anyway?

Organising an esports event is a very good environment for learning because it combines:

- technical thinking;
- creativity;
- the ability to stay calm in stressful situations;

- leadership;
- quick decision-making;
- responsibility.

It is not only about organising games. It is real project management.

From the perspective of youth work, its value is even greater. It gives young people the opportunity to:

- be part of something meaningful;
- take responsibility;
- try out different roles;
- learn to cooperate;
- and see the result of their work in a real, functioning event.

That experience stays with them. If you take only a few principles from this handbook, **these are the most important:**

- do not do it alone – ask for help if needed;
- a good team matters more than a good idea;
- share responsibility – if everyone does everything, in the end no one does anything properly;
- plan, but leave room for flexibility – things never go exactly according to plan;
- communicate more than feels necessary – lack of information causes more problems than a bad decision;
- test in advance – technical systems, processes, everything;
- take care of people – the team, volunteers, and participants;
- reflect afterwards – without reflection, there is no development.

And perhaps most importantly:

You do not need to make a perfect event.
You need to make a functioning event and learn from it.
Each time gets better.

If this handbook helps you avoid even one mistake, make one better decision or simply gives you the confidence to begin, then it has served its purpose.

Start realistically.
Do it.
Learn.
And do it better next time.

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