DANISH GAME INDUSTRY 1963-2026

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Before 1993

1963: Nimbi and GEO released as the first Danish computer games

1980s The first Danish commercial computer games are released - Kaptajn Kaper i Kattegat (1981), Zyntal's Escape (1986), The Vikings (1986) and Tiger Mission (1987) among them

1980s-1990s: The emergence of demoscene supports the game development in Denmark (later leading to the formation of companies like IO Interactive)

1988: "Eleva2ren" television program airs for the first time on TV2; later popularizing TV-based games such as OsWald and Skærmtrolden Hugo

1989: "Troldspejlet" television program that covered popular culture, games among them, airs by the Danish Broadcasting Corporation

1993-1996

The game industry in Denmark consists of a handful of companies, among them Savannah, Ivanoff, Studio 1-2, ITE and Deadline, with a strong focus on children's games

1993: The first Danish game education, private program "Space Invaders" is launched in Aarhus and runs until 2000

1995: The Ministry of Culture - through Kulturfonden funding - allocates funds for the development of computer games for the first time (funding received by Spagelse med forkastelse)

1997-1999

1997: Physical computer games included in Denmark's Legal Deposit Act; Royal Danish Library tasked to collect and archive games

1997: The new Danish Film Institute and The Media Council for Children and Young People are established under the Ministry of Culture

1998: The Danish Growth Fund invests in a game company for the first time providing funds to the company Envoy Interactive

1998: Kulturfonden is replaced by Kulturministeriets Udviklingsfond that continues to support experimental art, including game development

2000

MSc programme in Multimedia Technology (IT University of Copenhagen)

"Det er bare noget der er lavet: Børn, computerspil, vold og virkelighed (It Isn't Real: Children, Computer Games, Violence and Reality)" report commissioned by The Media Council for Children and Young People

Early 2000s: The Danish Broadcasting Corporation shows notable interest in featuring game content (e.g. Hundejagerken, Mujaffa Spillet and Cline minigames) on their website

2001

The first IGDA Denmark (International Game Developer Association) meeting in Denmark

BSc programme in Medialogy (Aalborg University)

Is Not a War Game employers establish a division for game employer representation within the Danish Producers' Association and in line with film, TV and advertisement

The first academic conference focusing on computer games "Computer Games and Digital Textualities" in Denmark organised at the IT University of Copenhagen

2002

Kulturministeriets Udviklingsfond is dissolved

Figureheads from Danish game companies Studio 1-2, Ivanoff, ITE and Savannah approach the Ministry of Culture with a proposal for a public funding scheme for game development

The New Media board is founded within the IT-Brancheforeningen with the purpose of promoting Danish cultural export and supporting Danish internet and media producers

"Gallup: Børn, Unge og Computerspil" report commissioned by The Media Council for Children and Young Adults to create a statistical view on Danish children's use and possession of computer games and consoles

2003

BSc programme in Character Animation (The Animation Workshop)

Center for Computer Games Research established at the IT University of Copenhagen

The Ministry of Culture initiates a mapping of the Danish game industry arguing for its potential in the Danish experience economy and the national importance

"Digital Games: A Danish Perspective" report by Media Desk Denmark

"Forskningsnotat om computerspil og skadelighed (Briefing Paper on Computer Games and Harmfulness)" commissioned by The Media Council for Children and Young People

The PEGI framework is introduced across Europe and replaces the earlier local game age labeling system in Denmark

"Rapport: Resultater fra SAFT (Safety and Awareness for Tweens) børnundersøgelsen" report commissioned by The Media Council for Children and Young People as part of EU Internet Action Plan with large-scale data collection across several northern countries

2004

Over the Edge Entertainment (later Unity Technologies) is founded in Copenhagen

Games published digitally or on the internet included in Denmark's Legal Deposit Act

"Nordiska Datorspel" report commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers surveying the available Nordic computer games for children and youth

IO Interactive is acquired by UK-based Eidos Interactive (that was later acquired by Japanese Square Enix in 2009)

Nordic Game Conference, an annual game developer conference, is held for the first time in Malmö, Sweden

2005

The Animation Programme at the National Film School of Denmark commissioned to lead DADIU - a collaboration between master's educations and art educations nationwide

MSc programme in Games (IT University of Copenhagen)

"The Danish Computer Games Industry Annual Mapping 2005" report by Copenhagen Business School

"Computerspil i videns- og oplevelsesøkonomien(Computer Games in the Knowledge and Experience Economy)" report by Mediestatistikrådet and the Danish Film Institute estimates the number of Danish game companies at 64 and the number of employees at 320

2006

Nordic Computer Games Program, a cultural funding scheme for producing children's games in the Nordic Countries, is launched by the Nordic Council of Ministers for a six-year period of funding

Copnova investment activities by the Central Denmark Entrepreneurship Fund (MIF) become available for games projects

The first Nordic Game Jam takes place at the IT University of Copenhagen co-organized with IGDA Denmark, Dignet Øresund and Over the Edge Entertainment (later Unity)

Producers' Association, together with Copenhagen Capacity, DI/ITEK and IT-Brancheforeningen, releases a strategy for developing the Danish game industry

Mid 2000s: Spilhuset established as a co-working space for game development companies (closed down in 2025)

"Computerspilkultur" report is published by Spiltanken, an independent collaboration between people with ties to computer game culture, education and industry, serving as a background and a proposal for Danish game culture policy

2007

The Danish Film Agreement 2007-2010 allocates 12 mil. DKK for development of digital games for children through the Danish Film Institute

"The Experience Industry - Perspectives for Entrepreneurship and Venture Capital" report by The Danish Growth Fund, its first (if) strategy for investment in games

2008

Copenhagen Game Collective formed as an artist group and community cultivating game making. Among activities, recurrent "indie" game spotlight in collaboration with Nordic Game Conference in Malmö

Computerspilzonen industry association is established with 30 mil. DKK funding to professionalise game development in Denmark between 2009-2012, supported by the Ministry of Industry, Business, and Financial Affairs

2009

The Social Democratic Party of Denmark (in opposition) proposes a national strategy for computer games

2010

The first data collection across Danish film, game, advertising, and TV industries, presented by Entertainment Copenhagen and written in collaboration with Computerspilzonen. This is a practice that has continued until today.

The first SpilBar - a professional networking event - is initiated by the Danish Game Council and DADIU and organised at the Filmhouse by IGDA, Unge Spilleudviklere, the New Danish Screen and Computerspilzonen

Upper secondary game education (Game College) and professional bachelor's game education (DANIA Academy) launched in Grenaa

2011

The Danish Film Agreement 2011-2014 allocates 20 mil. DKK for development of digital games for children and games with an educational purpose

"Indsamling og bevaring af danske computerspil (Collection and Preservation of Danish Computer Games)" report from Ministry of Culture

"Tiltrækning af kapital og optimering af afsætningsmuligheder for spilproduktion (Attracting Capital and Optimizing Sales Possibilities for Game Production)" report from the Ministry of Industry and Growth demanding more socially and economically (self)sustainable business modelling

Company incubator Arsenalet established by Viborg Municipality, Animation Workshop and Business Viborg

BA programme in Games and Interaction Design (Royal Danish Academy)

2012

Game Hub Denmark incubator is established with key locations in Grenaa, Viborg and Aalborg, cooperation with DANIA Academy and Viden Djurs (with operations starting in 2015)

The Nordic Computer Games Program is extended by three years for 2012-2015

2013

Interactive Denmark is established to continue the activities of Computerspilzonen and to encompass additional digital industries

Spilprisen annual game award established by Producers' Association

2014

"The Media Council and Computer Games" report by The Media Council for Children and Young People

Creative Europe funding (with key criteria of interactive narrative, European cultural values, international product reach, and production feasibility) comes into effect, offering funding to Danish game developers among others

2015

The Danish Film Agreement 2015-2018 allocates at least 40 mil. DKK for the production and launch of digital games and for game promotion with new cultural criteria (originality, challenge, quality, responsibility, Danish cultural context)

2016

"Media Society Denmark: Denmark at the Top as a Digital Nation" report from multiple institutions - among them Producers' Association, Interactive Denmark, Filmby Aarhus and The Animation Workshop - for a digital visual industry

Nordisk Games department of Nordisk Film production company and Egmont Media Group is founded for investment and ownership of game studios across Europe taking a leading role in facilitating local game industry events

MA programme in Game Art, Design and Development (Royal Danish Academy)

2017

IO Interactive completes a buyout from Square Enix to become an independent company and to retain the rights of their Hitman game IP

2018

Did nothing really happen here?

2019

Closing of Copnova investment activities by the Central Denmark Entrepreneurship Fund (MIF)

Vision Denmark is established by SYBO Games, Nordisk Film and Unity Technologies as a national cluster for digital visual industries. Interactive Denmark becomes absorbed into Vision Denmark

As the first country in the world, Denmark announces the "National Strategy for Esports" by the Ministry of Culture

"Denmark's Digital Visual Industry - The Socio-Economic Significance" report from Vision Denmark

"Mapping of Danish Talent Development in Film, TV, Games and Animation" report by TAW/VIA UC

"Growth Plan for the Creative Professions" report by the Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs

Royal Danish Library launches online registry of Danish games containing more than 10 000 titles and release versions

Weekly

2020

"Innovation and Innovation Collaborations in the Digital Visual Industry" report from Vision Denmark

The Danish game industry breaks its record, with revenue doubling to 1.7 bn DKK (Danish Statistics)

2021

"Work Force Analysis of the Digital Visual Industry" report by Vision Denmark

"Gaming and Gambling among Children and Youth in Denmark" report by VIVE, financed by The Danish Gambling Authority

"Online Games Gamble with Children's Data" report by IDA and DataEthics

"Children's Gaming Habits 2020" report by Danish Film Institute and The Media Council for Children and Young People

Creative Europe is renewed and comes into effect for the period 2021-2027; introduces an emphasis on gender balance, greener production, innovation, digital transformation and cross-sectoral collaboration

The Swedish conglomerate Embracer Group acquires Danish game companies Ghost Ship Games, 3D Realms and Slipgate Ironworks through several subsidiaries

2021: "The Role of State Intervention in the Danish Game Industry: An ecosystem analysis" master's thesis research by Helena Sokol

2022

"State of the Nation in Danish Games Industry: Consumption, Business and Framework for Growth" report by Producers' Association

"Analysis of the Climate Footprint in the Game Industry" report commissioned by Vision Denmark

EU approves enhancing the cultural and creative dimension of the video games sector in Europe as one of the main actions of work plan for culture 2023-2026

Historical documentary series on Danish game development "Loading - historien om Danmarks spilpionerer" airs on DR2

The Chinese conglomerate Tencent acquires Danish game company SYBO Games through their subsidiary Miniclip

The game INSIDE by Danish developer Playdead is exhibited at MoMA's exhibition in New York

2023

"#DKgame: Skærmtrolde, lejemordere og tagsurfere" exhibition at the Royal Danish Library

"Paths to Success: Data and Lessons from Danish game companies" report by the Royal Danish Academy

The Game Database, mainly covering 2010-2023, is published by the Danish Film Institute in collaboration with the Royal Danish Library

The Danish Minister of Culture Jakob Engel-Schmidt presents a ministerial vision for the Danish game industry at the "Games for the Future" event organised by the Danish Chamber of Commerce

Public broadcaster TV2 airs "Spies Behind the Screen" with one episode titled "Game Companies Manipulate our Children"

"Children's Gaming Habits 2023" report by the Danish Film Institute and The Media Council for Children and Young People

Arnt Jensen receives the honorary grant from the Danish Arts Foundation as the first game developer to receive it

Ghost Ship Publishing is founded as a division of Ghost Ship Games for investing in Danish games and companies

2024

Digital Services Act is in effect in EU to prevent illegal and harmful online activities

NIMBI - The Danish Institute of Game Development established in the Danish Film Agreement 2024-2027 with 33.8 mil. DKK allocated to the games sector

Games Denmark industry association established branching off of the Producers' Association

Gameworkers website launched jointly by four labour unions

Game Workers' Guild established

The first Copenhagen Gaming Week takes place in Bella Center

"Financial Youth Cultures across Gaming, Gambling and Investment" conference organized by the University of Copenhagen

"Education at play: Mapping of Supply of Education for the Danish Game Industry 2024" report by TAW/VIA UC

2025

Transfer of Games Scheme of 60 mil. DKK from The Danish Film Institute to NIMBI

The government allocates 1.8 mil. DKK for creating 'gaming groups' across the country targeting boys and young men; the initiative led by the Center for Digital Youth Care

Copenhagen municipality's funding support for media, including games, announced

"A New Strategy for Funding Content Intended for Children and Youth" report by the Ministry of Culture

"The Jutland Declaration: Shaping a Safe Online World" is signed by 27 European countries

"Investigation of Children's Use of Digital Media" report commissioned by The Media Council of Children and Young People, Center for Social Media, Tech and Democracy and Ministry of Digitalization

25th anniversary celebration of games education and research at IT University of Copenhagen

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