

After Nokia, a mobile games boom in Finland

November 14 2013, by Matti Huuhtanen



CEO Duane Atkins of Ezyinsights company poses at the leading company startup conference "Slush" event in Helsinki, Finland, on Wednesday Nov. 13, 2013. Finland has found there's life after Nokia in a bustling startup scene as Slush brings together the early-stage startup scene in the Northern Europe and Russia region along with top-tier angel investors and venture capitalists from Europe and the US. (AP Photo / LEHTIKUVA, Milla Takala) FINLAND OUT - NO SALES

From mobile phones to mobile games. Finland has found there's life after Nokia in a bustling startup scene that's produced hugely popular game apps from "Angry Birds" to "Clash of Clans."

Mobile gaming is fast becoming the Nordic country's new flagship export industry, with revenues expected to double to 2 billion euros (\$2.7 billion) this year.

About 150 [game developers](#) were showcasing their ideas to global investors this week at the annual Slush conference—a hotspot for startups in Europe. The conference, which ended Thursday, has tripled in size from 2012, with investors representing [venture capital funding](#) worth more than \$60 billion.

"The whole startup thing here is amazing," said New Zealander Duane Atkins, a former Nokia engineer who founded a startup of seven people in Helsinki providing software for social networks.

Many Finns hope startups in general and game developers in particular will preserve Finland's position as a high-tech hub as an era ends with the sale of the phone division of Nokia—once the industry bellwether—to Microsoft.

Although still small compared with Nokia, which in its prime had annual revenues of more than 30 billion euros, the games industry employs some 2,200 people in more than 180 companies nationwide.

According to UBM Tech, a global business information and data company, Finland ranked third in a survey this year of 300 leading European game developers who were asked where in Europe they thought the best games would come from five years from now. Only Germany and Britain—much bigger countries—ranked higher. Finland's neighbor Sweden ranked fourth.



Jorma Ollila, chairman of the Board of Royal Dutch Shell company speaks at a leading company startup conference "Slush" event in Helsinki, Finland, on Wednesday Nov. 13, 2013. Finland has found there's life after Nokia in a bustling startup scene as Slush brings together the early-stage startup scene in the Northern Europe and Russia region along with top-tier angel investors and venture capitalists from Europe and the US. (AP Photo / LEHTIKUVA, Roni Rekoma) FINLAND OUT - NO SALES

One of the most buzzed-about Finnish game developers is Supercell, creator of "Clash of Clans" and "Hay Day"—top-grossing apps for Apple's iOS software in more than 100 countries.

Supercell started making the games for tablets in 2011 with half a dozen people. Last month, the company announced it was selling a 51 percent stake to Japanese investors for \$1.5 billion.

Supercell chief Ilkka Paananen said Finns have focused too much on

Nokia, a company that became a symbol of the small nation's successes and failures.

"There will never be another Nokia, and there shouldn't be. We need to spread knowhow much more broadly," Paananen told The Associated Press, adding Supercell wants to invest in Finnish startups to help newcomers who show promise.

"We have so much talent here that there's no reason why we can't make this a new Silicon Valley," he said. "It won't be the same as in the U.S. but nevertheless a regional hub—just as it seems to be already becoming."

An older company in the fast-changing industry, where success is often counted in months rather than years, is Rovio Entertainment, whose "Angry Birds" became an instant smash hit after its release in December 2009. At Slush on Thursday, Rovio's chief marketing officer Peter Vesterbacka announced that the game has been downloaded 2 billion times.

Founded in 2003 in Espoo near the Nokia headquarters, Rovio has turned into an international franchise that employs more than 700 people worldwide, including in the United States, China, Japan and Britain.

Many smaller startups are hoping for similar success at the annual Slush event, which has also caught the attention of senior political leaders.

Finnish Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen, accompanied on stage by the deputy prime minister of neighboring Russia—a major investor in startups—opened the event by appealing to the audience "to open their minds to new trends."

Antonio Conati Barbaro, the head of Alleantia, an Italian firm that

provides cloud-based software for computers, said he believes Finland—a country of 5.3 million with long, dark winters—is the right place to sense trends in the industry. Last year, the Finnish government spent more than 135 million euros on startups.

"I have visited many startup meetings in Europe, but this is a must," he said. "And you can see the Finns are taking startups seriously."

© 2013 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: After Nokia, a mobile games boom in Finland (2013, November 14) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-11-nokia-mobile-games-boom-finland.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.