

game – the German Games Industry Association
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To the International Olympic Committee
Mr President
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Open letter re: e-sports

Berlin, 17 May 2018

Dear Mr Bach,

We read your statements on e-sports in Mannheimer Morgen and the Sport-Informations-Dienst with great interest. We are pleased that the international sports bodies are taking up this important subject and that you seek to discuss these developments in dialogue with the parties responsible for e-sports. In this exchange and the attempt to find common ground, we see great opportunities for all who are involved, and we view an open and impartial dialogue as extremely advantageous.

In the interview, you draw a direct connection between the viewing of e-sports as sporting events and the content of the games. This is, however, an inadequate characterisation – with respect to both conventional and e-sports. The physical and mental performance of e-sports athletes does not depend on whether a game simulates conventional sports content or is instead, for example, a tactical-strategic contest between teams in the world of fantasy. You even categorically exclude games which you describe as 'killer games' or games that 'glorify violence', and which in your view violate the values of the IOC. This calls for clarification: First, games that glorify violence are prohibited by German law across the board, and this description does not apply to a single e-sports title. Moreover, combative contests in games are a stylistic device, and are often athletic in character. They are about mastering a discipline, competition, winning and losing, strategy and tactics – and such games are to be found in the area of e-sports precisely for this reason. The situation is similar with the inclusion, in some cases for hundreds of years now, of classic (Olympic) sports such as boxing, fencing, judo, karate, shooting, biathlon, archery, wrestling and modern pentathlon. All of them simulate combat action.

Against this backdrop, we appeal to you and your committees to enter into the discussion about computer and video games and e-sports with open-minded interest, and to avoid constraining the debate from the outset with political terms of combat from the 1990s such as 'killer games'.

Over two billion people the world over now play computer and video games – including every second person in Germany. Sport simulations constitute only a small part of this. More than three quarters of all games carry voluntary industry minimum age ratings (USK) of 0, 6 or 12 years. The vast majority of games deal with subjects fully unrelated to violence. This fact should not be ignored by the organisations of conventional sports, which otherwise run the risk of stigmatising the players, and thereby also the e-sports athletes, through false categorisations. As a recognised cultural asset, computer and video games – like all other media – address themselves to what is happening in the world. They are a reflection of our society. Love, friendship, nature as well as violence, war and aggression find their way into computer games. Societal values are not conveyed by sport alone. In a unique way, games and e-sports do this as well.

Esteemed Mr Bach, let us work together in an unprejudiced way to find common ground and utilise the great opportunities before us.

We are game – the German Games Industry Association. Our members include developers, publishers and many other games industry actors such as e-sports event organisers, educational establishments and service providers. As the sponsor of gamescom, we are responsible for the world's biggest event for computer and video games. This year, gamescom takes place from 21 to 25 August in Cologne. We cordially invite you to visit the congress to get to know first-hand the exciting diversity of games culture and the great potential of our industry. Take advantage of this opportunity to experience some of the most thrilling e-sports tournaments and speak with active e-sports athletes as well as e-sports makers. We would also be glad to be able to discuss this subject with you in person at the gamescom congress. We look forward to the chance to meet you and continue our exchange, and we will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

With kind regards,



Felix Falk
Managing Director