

gamescom dev 2026 to Spotlight Panel on Europe's Game Talent Recovery

"Green Shoots" session brings together five voices from across Europe's game industry in Cologne

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, August 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [gamescom](#) dev 2026, the developer-conference track running August 23–25 in Cologne, Germany, will feature "Green Shoots: Mapping Europe's Game Talent Recovery in 2026 and Beyond" — a panel bringing together five voices from across the European game industry to examine where the region's talent market is headed as the industry moves from survival to recovery. The session was authored by Fiona Cherbak, founder of [Rocket Game Talent](#) and former talent lead for both Xbox Game Studios and Sony PlayStation, who was invited by [gamescom dev](#) leadership to speak on European game talent issues.



Panelists deliver "Green Shoots" session at gamescom dev 2026

“

European studios need real intel on what's working for game talent. Fiona and her panelists bring the kind of global perspective and practical guidance we want to offer our audience this year.”

Nico Balledda, Head of Program, gamescom dev

The invitation reflects gamescom dev's recognition that a clear-eyed conversation about Europe's talent recovery benefits from a global vantage point needs to be had, paired with the specific co-development dynamics reshaping European studios today. The panel will unpack the hiring and recruitment indicators that separate sustainable recovery from short-term contract spikes, and what developers, studio leaders and investors should be watching as the window opens further.

“European studios don't need another recap of what went wrong the last two years — they need real intelligence on

what's working and where the opportunities are right now,” said Nico Balledda, Head of Program for gamescom dev. “Fiona and her fellow panelists bring exactly the kind of global perspective

and practical, data-driven guidance we wanted to offer our audience this year.”

Moderated by Cherbak, the panel features four additional industry leaders, each representing a distinct vantage point on how European game talent is being sourced, staffed and led today:

- Carlos Estigarribia — VP of OV Entertainment, a Portugal-based co-development studio with staff across the EU and South America, offering a studio-side view of how European co-dev teams are scaling and staffing across borders as demand for cost-effective, senior-level development grows.
- Joe Kataldo — composer, sound designer and owner of Mad Wave Audio, whose game credits include H3VR, The Last Night, and Hyperparasite, plus sound design for trailer campaigns including The Fall Guy and Mission: Impossible. Based in the U.S., Kataldo runs an Italy-based sound design team serving EU and North American clients, giving a firsthand view of how distributed, cross-border teams are becoming standard practice in game audio.
- François Roughol — founder of Design Direction on Demand, a World, Level and Mission Design Director with over 20 years in AAA development; credits include Ghost of Tsushima and BioShock Infinite. Based in France and working with teams and clients across the EU and North America, Roughol's fractional practice reflects the growing shift toward senior, on-demand design leadership as studios rethink full-time hiring.
- Fabio Cristi — one of Italy's most experienced game producers, with 30 years in the industry across game studios including Milestone and 505 Games. Now working independently as a fractional Senior Producer/Program Manager with clients across the EU and UAE, Cristi's cross-regional client base illustrates how European production talent is increasingly in demand well beyond the continent.

Cherbak's appearance at gamescom dev continues her track record of global talent leadership:



Fiona Cherbak of Rocket Game Talent leads session at gamescom dev



gamescom dev logo with date

she staffed and shipped both Bioshock Infinite for 2K Games (Game of the Year 2013), and God of War for Sony PlayStation (Game of the Year 2018); led talent operations for 23 Xbox Game Studios first-party teams including Gears of War, Halo, and Forza; co-founded Women in Games International, now over 20 years in operation; co-founded Boston Festival of Indie Games, now in its 14th year; and was invited to the White House in 2015 for the Women in Games Initiative.

Cherbak will also co-lead an additional workshop session during gamescom dev focused on career counseling and job application processes. Details will be announced as they're confirmed.

gamescom dev 2026 runs August 23–25 in Cologne, Germany, as the developer-conference track ahead of the main gamescom show floor, which runs August 26–30 at Koelnmesse. Registration and full programming details are available at devcom.global and gamescom.global.

About Rocket Game Talent

Rocket Game Talent is a boutique talent operations firm founded by Fiona Cherbak, former Talent Acquisition Lead at Sony PlayStation Worldwide Studios and Lead Talent Program Manager at Xbox Game Studios. The firm provides world-class hiring expertise and talent strategy to game studios of every size, worldwide. To learn more, visit www.rocketgametalent.com.

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