

Pämu County, Estonia



The Internal Security Game of Pärnu County

Keyword(s):

Security Education

Introduction

The broader context of the initiative concerns regional responsibilities regarding education and lifelong learning. In smaller towns and villages far from bigger centres, it is important to be able to react in risk situations since help may not always be readily available. Thus we saw the necessity to provide proper instruction and training to our communities on security practices.

Main challenge

We realised the necessity of having people in our communities who would know what to do in risk situations and/or who to get into contact with, whether it's a snow storm, a bike accident, a fire or something else. We wanted to do something so that people would feel safer, which is how we came up with the game to boost learning about security in our region. As no learning is complete without practice, we found it important to give people the opportunity to put their knowledge to a test in practical exercises, so this is how the format of the game was born.

A main challenge was to make it clear to people why it is vital to learn about security and how it is very much for their own benefit. We put in effort to make them realise that in remoter areas such skills and knowledge are all the more important compared to bigger centres. Getting the point across that the more we're aware of our own responsibility to help our community, the stronger we stand together.



Timing

The idea was born many years ago and in 2016 it just happened that such people and authorities who agreed to carry it through came together. However, during that time the topic of protecting personal property was especially relevant because we had numerous cases where Latvian and Lithuanian vans were detected exploring the perimeter and people's houses were robbed, especially in the border villages of Pärnu County, so that raised a good deal of concern. In our first game, we played through such situations in order to prepare people in case something like this happened to them, but we wouldn't say it was a reason in itself to take initiative.

Objective

The main objective was to make communities more secure and people more educated when it comes to emergency situations or potential risks.

Target group

The initiative wasn't/isn't limited to anyone, absolutely everyone can come. Adults, children, people from other counties etc.

Geographical range

The initiative ranges across Pärnu County. The game takes place annually, and the winning village is the next to host the event in the following year, with our help of course. Nobody is expected to do it alone. Therefore, we move across the county thanks to which we are able to reach more people year by year.

Stakeholders and partners

Partners are the police, board guard, neighbourhood watch, rescue board, PSAP (public safety answering point), Red Cross, hunters, Public Road Administration, Elektrilevi (energy company), the Railway Administration, the explosive disposal unit, women's shelter, the Defence League and a few others. 15 to 16 different partners are involved. They help organise the games by setting up checkpoints, bringing training materials and giving instructions. They also help out with the prizes for the participants. Usually, institutions like the rural municipality mayor, a minister or chancellor are invited to make a welcome speech at the beginning of the event day.

We don't do anything special to engage them, they're always willing to come. We call them and ask whether they'd like to contribute to our game, and they always gladly agree to come and prepare their checkpoint and bring materials. This is how they contribute, by helping create the game every year, so our partners are very much engaged in our initiative.

Strategy / materials

The initiative wasn't backed by any policy initiatives or anything like that. The idea in itself is just so wonderful that everyone was happy to join it.

To communicate the initiative the Radio is asked to make announcements about us before the event every year, the parish newspapers are contacted to include our advertisement and we use our social media channels to inform people about our game. Every year a journalist puts together a recap of the game and participants in the paper.

The programme welcomes absolutely everyone. There aren't any limitations as to who can attend. The initiative is, thus, inclusive.

We've learned to really value doing things together, it draws us closer together and brings us joy. We feel more secure. We've learned that the topic of security is something that one can go on learning and exploring forever, so there's no such thing as repeating something too much.

Resources

We have foreseen funding for catering and tokens for the participants (e.g. safety reflective bags, fire blankets, emergency kits etc. depending on the year). Our staff, however, is completely volunteer-based.

Compliance with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

Certainly, our strategy is in alignment with SDG 4 goals, but generally as well. Our trainings are free for all, we have involved professionals who provide quality education on security, we promote lifelong learning and by bringing people together we're actively contributing to increased levels of self-sufficiency on the level on communities.

Innovation(s)

We think the entire game is innovative because no one else has done it before. There may be some smaller events like this, but not on this scale. We operate across the whole county. Our format in itself is innovative.

Evaluation

Taken that our objective is to bring awareness and educate our residents on security, their rights and responsibilities, seeing to it that they are able to protect their property and behave according to the law, we're sure that there are many who have benefited from our trainings.

Stakeholders can probably discern some positive signs of better educated people when it comes to security measures.

Success parameters

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Impact

We've received feedback from our participants who are grateful for the knowledge they've received, they're better informed of risks and have practical experience. They're very pleased with our trainings. We think that these positive emotions are definitely indicative of the good impact we've had.

People's well-being, feelings of security and communal unity have improved.

Impediments

Concerning finances, we rely on the non-profit Association of Local Authorities of Pärnu County, but this year we didn't get the funding. The reason being the timing of the call for proposals, so we had to manage with our own funds. We thought about asking participation fee in our first year, but it didn't seem right. In other cases besides funding we cannot really name any challenges.

Replicability

There are good chances our strategy can be replicated. A precondition is to cooperate with partners who find the initiative meaningful and who are ready to contribute by helping to organise the game. We are happy to invite other organisations to participate in our game so that they can see for themselves how it works.

Concluding remarks

Seeing that security starts from ourselves we work towards making our communities more secure and stronger by bringing them together and training our people to become better informed and skilled in risk situations, thus increasing each individual's ability to contribute to the well-being of our communities.

Website/Social Media profile(s) of the initiative

The initiative doesn't have its own website nor Facebook profile. It's being promoted through other pages like Pärnumaa Kodukant Facebook page.

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