

DIAGNOSING SAFETY DEVELOPMENT IN PASVALYS DISTRICT

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Abstract

Purpose – to analyse and evaluate the activities of Pasvalys municipality in terms of safety development in the district.

Methodology - Document analysis and empirical qualitative study. Semi-structural interviews were conducted with representatives of the main institutions ensuring safety in Pasvalys district). 12 interviews were completed with experts from the Police Headquarters, Pasvalys municipality, Fire and Rescue Board, Wards, Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Findings – while going deeper into the problem itself on theoretical level, it was established that equally important roles are played both by local societies and local institutions.

After having analyzed the activities of Pasvalys district in terms of residents’ safety it was found, that institutions involved in safety issues interact in analyzing risk factors and the main risk groups, collaboration between institutions is efficient. Statistic data shows the movements towards positive changes in some safety areas. Such change can be understood as a reflection of effectiveness of safety measures.

There are some areas where the municipality could put more efforts. The Concept of Safe Municipality is not fully implemented. There is lack of motivation in collaboration between nongovernmental organizations. Establishment of volunteer organizations is not encouraged within municipality. District lacks youth centers. Here is not enough information spread for public about the results of activity in safety field.

Research limitations/implications –in this research paper there are mentioned different preventative measures, programs, analyses, but, alas, they do not allow to evaluate the real effectiveness of all those measures, as safety situation depends not only on preventative steps made, but also on physical safety measures. For example, educational work can be hardly measured, since it is very challenging and requiring other studies to evaluate how an individual masters the given information. Therefore, the research pictures general trends in safety development rather evaluates overall effectiveness of safety development activities in Pasvalys district.

Practical implications – referring to theoretical and practical investigation premises, some offers are done to institutions ensuring safety in Pasvalys district in order to make safety measures improved.

Value – the investigation is exceptional the way it investigates and evaluates how in a concrete local place (in this case in Pasvalys district municipality) safety assuring institutions

work to ensure safety among local residents. Also an outline of possible threats and actual risk groups in this particular region is presented.

Keywords: safety, municipality, safe municipality.

Research type: research paper.

Introduction

Safety is one of the major human existence elements. To ensure safety of citizens, property, and environment not only different safety assuring institutions (hereinafter – SAIs), such as international organisations, government, municipality, but also citizens, should act together. Such collective action should be purposefully directed towards the common goal, i.e. to increase citizens’ safety feeling. There is not a single municipality in Lithuania, which does not face the problems in the field of public safety. This is proved by the statistical data including information on crimes, fires, mortality rate caused by external factors and injury extent. Government, municipality institutions and organisations related to security assurance assess the importance of safety promotion to community members. All these organizations implement projects and programs helping to improve the present situation. Some programs do not ensure a long – term influence and only partly reduce some risk factors. Consequently, it is important that all institutions functioning for safety assurance would work for common goal and implement means reinforcing local communities, because their contribution to safety assurance might be very significant (Pitrėnaitė, 2011).

The aim of this article is to analyse and evaluate actions of SAIs for increasing citizens’ safety in Pasvalys district Municipality. The objectives are:

1. Define theoretical aspects of safety assuring;
2. Investigate actions of SAIs and municipality for increasing citizens’ safety in Pasvalys district.

To achieve the objectives, the activity and results of SAIs are presented, the implementation of Safe Municipality Concept in Lithuania and in Pasvalys district are reviewed. The research covers analysis of scientific literature, legal acts and other relevant documents such as decrees of local institutions, plans, reports, statistical data, projects, and programs. Along with document analysis semi-structured interviewing method was applied. The interviewees were representatives from the most important SAIs in Pasvalys district. There were done 12 interviews with experts from The Police Headquarters, Pasvalys municipality, Fire and Rescue Board, Wards. One more interview was conducted with employee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs who is monitoring the public actions to increase the safety. A questionnaire for interviews was designed of several blocks of questions: questions related to the exposition of risk groups, actions of SAIs, citizens’ information/involvement, and evaluation of safety condition in Pasvalys. Interview data was analysed by grouping it according to the categories and sub – categories. The main interview categories have been excluded: safety/safety risk factors, process, collaboration and result.

Safety Assuring Peculiarities on the Municipality Level

The perception of safety is widely interpreted, and this is influenced by education, social dependence and age. Therefore, due to effects of these factors, safety is treated differently. According to Šlapkauskas (2005), safety is a state of defence and protection against the danger and confidence in your own knowledge. Scientist investigating trauma prevention, define safety as a „ state or situation characterized by adequate control of physical, material, or moral threats” (Nilsen, et al., 2004). Moreover, it is observed, that safety helps to create environment which accelerates economic growth, service is provided effectively, social exclusion is being decreased (Mikuskienė et al, 2011). Anyway, it is acknowledged, that safety in different dimensions is a high priority requiring phenomenon.

Contemporary safety activities are being executed on a few levels: international, national, local, group and individual (Buzzan 1997; Babachinaitė, 2006, Matulionyte, 2008). Going through history, safety insurance of citizens, property and environment has been government’s responsibility for a long time, but new threats and risk factors occur on the local level (Quarantelli, 2001). Municipality institutions are closer to a person. As a result, they have to involve communities into common activities, providing knowledge and capability which could help to struggle against the rising threats. It is very important to develop the communication between different sectors and organizations, to involve more implementers into safety promotion activities, and encourage more community members get involved into these activities (Merzel ir D’Afflitti, 2003). Such integrated community safety has potential to prevent community from various threats, giving adequate reaction to occurring threats.

In Lithuania different means are applied, programs and projects that are oriented to the increase of citizens’ safety are implemented. In public discussions, related to the safety promotion, insufficient action towards assuring safety on the governmental level is mentioned (Astrauskas et al., 2012). Some of the factors reducing efficiency of safety promotion are lack of resources needed to implement these activities, failure to apply systematic approach to safety, lack of inter – institutional collaboration, slow community involvement.

Analysis of performance of safety assuring institutions in Pasvalys district

The research results demonstrate that every safety assuring institution in Pasvalys district directs its activity towards several phases: risk evaluation and assessment, identification of risk groups, preparation and implementation of threat and risk management measures, monitoring of security state and its changes.

The results of empirical research have revealed which areas require bigger concentration in mitigating the safety risk factors and reducing their evidence probability. The factors mentioned above reduce citizens’ safety feeling and aggravate the

quality of life. Three categories of safety risk factors have been distinguished in Pasvalys district: 1) social, e.g. crime, violence, assault, accidents; 2) technological, i.e. incidents in manufacturing and processing companies; 3) natural factors, i.e. karst phenomena. The results of the research relate exposure to social factors with individuals, belonging to social risk groups, i.e. lonely, antisocial mothers with many children, people having served a sentence, juvenile who belong to the children risk groups and are watched by the police. These groups are a great concern not only for SAIs, municipality and ward, but for the community and every citizen as well.

Safety assuring is a goal which has not been reached yet. The research shows, that SAIs highlight their activities towards:

- Management of the most relevant social risk factors;
- Protection of social groups at risk.

Pasvalys district SAIs in general and Municipality in particular implement diverse measures to achieve goals in aforementioned areas: measures to reduce crime, educational – preventive activity , safety measures for home environment traffic safety assuring measures , the role of municipality in the safety area, safe municipality concept and informing of society.

Measures to reduce crime. The research depicts the implementation of a wide range of threat preventions pursued by SAIs. The priorities are reinforcement of children and juveniles’ safety, safe home, establishment of safe environment, citizens’ involvement. SAIs implement numerous socially directed preventive programs. The biggest program to be mentioned is “Be safe”. This preventive program includes a lot of elements, i.e. organizers, directions of a program, and is based on the principles of collaboration. This program is implemented by Pasvalys Police Unit in collaboration with not only state institutions, active rural communities, but also with police supporters, citizens intolerant to crime, and others.

Educational – Preventive Activity. The research revealed the outcome of the activity implemented by Pasvalys district Municipality, Police Unit, Fire and Rescue Department, educational institutions, showing shared commitment of all institutions in public safety education. It includes organization of civil defence days at schools, organizing trainings of traffic safety, safe behaviour in streets and safe behaviour with fire. Interest in safety is encouraged by youth involvement into the shared activity. Juvenile delinquency is one of the most relevant insecurity areas. Therefore, Pasvalys Police Unit applies different measures to reduce juvenile delinquency (see Table 1). Police Unit implements program encouraging young people to join groups of police supporters. Despite the fact, that this program provides good results, it is difficult to find a positive correlation with the improvement of the state of crime.

Table 1. Educational – preventive activity

Implemented measures	Respondents' attitude	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Organization of civil protection days; -Traffic safety, -Trainings of traffic safety and safe behaviour with fire; -Youth involvement into the shared activity; -Individual conversations; -The youth are invited to volunteer in service. 	<p>It is necessary to choose the equivalent between relevance of information and its perception and correct interpretation for different age groups.</p> <p><i>“...in understandable language explain children how they shouldn't behave...”</i></p> <p><i>“...the development of youth centres in urgent...”</i></p> <p><i>“...it becomes a tradition to visit the first graders...”</i></p>	<p>Positive changes noticed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The number of police supporters grows rapidly; -The decrease of the number of juveniles suspected of (charged with) criminal offences; -Prevention directed towards age groups; -Collaboration; -It is difficult to evaluate comprehension of educational activities.

Safety measures for home environment. Two measures are being implemented for safer homes. The first is oriented on protecting home from burglaries. In collaboration with the Municipality, Police Unit, mobile service providers, one button press devices were provided to social groups at risk, i.e. to pensioners and disabled. The second direction is home protection against exposure to fires. To achieve this goal, representatives of Fire and Rescue Department visit farmsteads according to the list, which are compiled by the representatives of borough. During such visits preventive advice is provided, electrical installations are inspected, the state of heating system is evaluated. It is noticed that non – governmental organizations pay attention to people who belong to social risk groups. Fire detectors are installed in homes of socially supported families and lonely mothers of many children. Effectiveness of the implemented measures is illustrated by the fire statistics. The number of fires recorded from 2002 to 2012 decreased three times (from 360 fires in 2002 to 109 fires in 2012, Department of Statistics, 2013).

Table 2. Safe home environment assuring measures

Implemented measures	Respondents' attitude	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One button press devices were provided. -Visits to farmsteads – preventive advice was being provided, -Inspection of electrical installation, heating system, -Fire detectors were installed. -Raids in youth places of entertainment, -in crowded places. 	<p><i>„We hope that tight and friendly collaboration and the measures mentioned above will decrease the amount of fires“.</i></p> <p>Being under the influence of alcohol, the youth raise rows, accost passersby, and pollute the environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The benefit of collaboration with the non-governmental organizations. -Effectiveness of the measures is illustrated by the statistics. -Prevention according to the risk groups; -according to the direction. -safe neighbourhood groups are being created.

Traffic safety assuring measures. Traffic safety in the district is assured by organizing raids in youth places of entertainment, single inspections of vehicles and drivers, active citizens. This is depicted by the growing number of trust calls, when the citizens inform about possibly drunk drivers or criminals. This phenomenon illustrates the increase of citizens’ consciousness, however, it does not show measure influence on traffic safety, because in the reports of Police Unit there is no sign of the decrease in accidents caused by drunk drivers (Activity of Public Police Unit, 2013).

Table 3. Traffic safety assuring measures

Implemented measures	Respondents’ attitude	Outcome
-Systematically organized raids: -single vehicle inspections, -drivers’ sobriety inspection.	<i>”Even if sometimes the calls do not confirm, people gain courage, confidence, they are not afraid to call and clearly state their opinion”.</i>	-Growing number of trust calls. - A tendency of decrease in accidents caused by drunk drivers.

The role of municipality in the safety area. Municipality (as institution) is expected to carry out a few roles in the field of safety development at local level. The Municipality initiates the common actions of diverse SAIs in order to achieve better results, calls the meetings, where the representatives of SAIs can share important information, acquire knowledge, and make strategic decisions. On the Municipality’s initiative, different trainings are being organized, where it is evaluated, how every SAI can effectively work in case of an emergency. Striving to increase an operative and effective reaction to possible emergency, Pasvalys District Municipality has signed plans of mutual assistance with Panevėžys District Municipality and Pakruojis District Municipality, and project of a plan has already been prepared with Biržai District Municipality.

Table 4. The role of Municipality in increasing safety

Objective	Methods	Respondents’ opinions	Expected/present results
Focus of all safety assuring bands	Call of meetings	It is important to strengthen the bands of SAIs	-on-going collaboration -exchange of information -exchange of knowledge
Observation of activity	Training during emergencies	It is observed how the institutions react in case of an ecologic emergency.	Real reaction time is being observed.
Teaching	Complex training	<i>„We only participate, however we do not govern”.</i>	Inter-institutional collaboration is being observed and evaluated.
Reinforcement of the Municipality role in the safety area	Implementation of safe municipality concept	-Safe municipality concept – theory. -Lack of resources.	-Usual activities are being declared as measures of safe municipality concept.

Safe municipality concept (further – SMC). In order to integrate activity of institutions operating in safety area, and involve local citizens, on the initiative of The Ministry of the Internal Affairs in February, 2011 safe municipality concept was established regarding the resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (Safe municipality concept, 2011). SMC allows enhancing the abilities and roles of the municipalities in safety promotion area, involving citizens into safety reinforcement activities. The document covers possible directions for activities in safety promotion in municipalities and recommendations for their implementation. Reviewing the reports of SMC implementation in 2011 and 2012, it was observed, that the number of municipalities, where the SMC anticipated objectives were reached, has increased in 2012 comparing with results of 2011. This illustrates, that the implementation of the concept of safe municipality becomes a more important priority in the municipalities.

Analysing results of SMC implementation in Pasvalys district Municipality, some means were introduced from SMC: Coordination Commission for children and youth socialization programs were established, Anti-corruption Commission and Traffic Safety Commission were established. Moreover, measures oriented to safety development were determined in the Strategic plan: the increase of long – term continuous programs, directed towards prevention of children and juvenile delinquency, their social education and common crime prevention; installation of video cameras in potentially dangerous places in Pasvalys; preparation of public order protection strategy with the involvement of a society (shared patrols and so on). Increase of collaboration between social partners , by involving initiatives of communities and private sector into the implementation of measures; also by involving the representatives from communities and non – governmental organizations into the work of commissions. The implemented measures show, that the Municipality acknowledges the importance of safety to human welfare. However, like most municipalities in Lithuania, Pasvalys District Municipality does not undertake to implement the regulations of SMC to the whole extent. However, it tends to declare some obligatory measures set by other laws as the measures under SMC implementation.

Informing of society. Continuous information and involvement of society is being organized with the help of media. In the local newspaper and in the website of The Municipality, citizens are informed systematically about the threats and safety assuring activities. It is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the media, because changes of safety state are influenced not only by preventive factors, but by physical security measures as well. Information of the society is very significant for the development of self – defence culture.

Table 5. Informing and involving of society

Implemented measures	Respondents' attitude	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Presentation of information in the local newspaper “Work; -in the website; -in information stands. -Giving information about threats related to seasons; -Polls in the Municipality, in the website. 	<p><i>“It is important not only implement preventive activities, but educate citizens with the help of all public information measures about possible emergencies and ways to avoid them”.</i></p>	<p>It is informed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Personally; -In media; -On the Internet. -Information is not only educational, but it is motivating as well. -It is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of information measures.

SAIs in Pasvalys district strive to solve safety problems in their responsibility area. However, it can be observed, that it is performed unsystematically in some cases. To eliminate rising problems, proposals of activity improvement are given (see Table 6).

Table 6. Proposals to improve activity of SAIs

Area to be improved	Proposal	Expected result
Implementation of Safe Municipality Concept (SMC) in Lithuania and in Pasvalys District.	Ministry of the Internal Affairs – create interactive platform on the Internet for the implementation of Safe Municipality Concept.	Exchange with the good practice, information about the rising problems, a tight interaction between governmental level institutions and municipalities – higher motivation to develop SMC.
	Ministry of the Internal Affairs – organize annual events to discuss the results of SMC.	
	To Pasvalys District Municipality – together with the social partners consider the possibilities to activate the implementation of SMC.	More effective and more efficient activity of safety promotion.
Antisocial and/or criminal behaviour which is a threat to citizens in Pasvalys District	Control risk groups systematically.	Decrease of antisocial activity.
	Develop activity of youth centres.	Decrease of juvenile delinquency.
A demand to raise citizens' activity in reinforcing safety in Pasvalys District.	Develop measures of information and involvement of society.	Increase of citizens' consciousness.
	Activate the establishment of voluntary associations.	Abundant resources, stronger force.
	Work together with non – governmental organizations more actively.	

The research shows that Safe Municipality Concept is vaguely implemented not only in Pasvalys District, but in all Lithuania. To solve the mentioned problem a bigger effort

to implant ideas of the concept is needed, not only from controlling institutions, i.e. Ministry of the Internal Affairs, but from the municipalities as well. After having solved the problem it is believed, that safety promotion activity would become more effective and more efficient on the municipality level.

Decrease of threats of antisocial and criminal behaviour would make the present safety state better. Therefore, it is proposed to control risk groups, develop activity of youth centres. The implementation of measures would decrease antisocial activity of youth and other risk groups.

Safety conditions in the district depends not only on the activity of SAIs, but also on the citizens' self – defence culture. Therefore, in order to create a safer environment, self - defence culture should be enhanced. This could be achieved by some measures, i.e. informing society to a larger extent, involvement of citizens to the decision making process and activating of the establishment of volunteer associations. These measures would help to not only educate the citizens' consciousness, but get additional resources as well when society is involved.

Conclusions

The concept of public safety focuses on three areas: the security of inhabitants, their property and environmental protection. It is necessary to assess the fact that insecurity is not only criminality. It is a broader concept and covers areas of safe traffic, children's safety, fire – prevention, threats of natural disasters etc. To solve problems connected with security and protection in a combined way, there is a necessity to join diverse institutions for the common purposes. Such tasks are to be solved not only by the institutions and by their territorial subdivisions of national level, but also by municipal subordinal institutions and offices, and by the municipality itself. Other institutions, such as cultural, educational, religion-related and other organizations could contribute to safety promotion as well.

In order to hold risk factors under control and reduce possible danger for inhabitants, their property and environment, the Pasvalys' district municipality together with other preventative institutions in the district territory make all possible attempts to ensure and enhance safety. The statistic data of a security alteration show the positive changes on security in the district.

An extreme and constant attention is needed to mothers with many children, single mothers, anti – social mothers, those just returned back from imprisonment, also to delinquent children. These groups of people are concerned as the main risk groups that require much more municipality's attention than all the rest. To achieve better results, responsible institutions analyze and evaluate risk factors and risk groups, since each factor requires a different combination of activities of certain institutions.

In Pasvalys district municipality and in most other district municipalities throughout Lithuania the concept of safe municipality takes idle steps forward. Taking into account that the concept stimulates the cooperation of different institutions and inhabitants to achieve common goals, it would be purposeful to activate the introduction

of the concept into practice. Ministry of Internal Affairs could put more proactive efforts to stimulate implementation of the concept of safe municipality, not only collect and analyze the results of the concept realization.

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