

“Courage does not mean that you are not afraid”

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In the novel *Levantin kyy* (2013), by author and journalist Matti Rönkä, the protagonist thinks back on the lessons learned in his security training: “Courage does not mean that you are not afraid; a courageous person recognises and acknowledges danger. A courageous person is simply able to carry on, as attentive and efficient as before.”

With some interpretational freedom, those sentences crystallise in an excellent manner the core idea of safety. Whether it involves personal or institutional competence regarding fire safety, traffic safety, occupational safety, data security, environmental safety, health, accidents, crime or any other area under the concept of safety, the recognition of risks and preparation for them form a central basis for safety competence in all areas of human life.

After the recognition of risks and acknowledging a potential danger, the decisive factor is the ability to function. Depending on the context, the ability to function or, in the authority context, the ability to perform or provide services can be determined in several different ways. At its simplest, the ability to function is formed by an individual’s personal properties (physical, psychological and social) in relation to the requirements of the situation at hand.

The preparedness and performance of the authorities is the institution’s (e.g. the police) ability to perform the tasks and obligations allocated to it by law or other regulations in the manner and scope required by the specified result and target levels in the prevailing operating environment.

Making Finland the safest country in the world

One goal of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä’s Government Programme is to make Finland the world’s safest country to live, conduct business and work in. Another goal is to safeguard the services of internal security and judicature as well as the ability to function of the authorities in all of Finland.

Is Finland a safe country? Have we been successful in risk recognition and preparing for them? Do we have the ability to function when faced with threats and dangers? In order to answer these questions, it is essential to define whether we are approaching the question through subjective emotion or an objective assessment.

One objective assessment to this is provided by a study published jointly by IEP (Institute for Economics and Peace) and IPSA (Police Science Association) in August 2016. According to the said study, Finland is the world's second safest country after Singapore. The goal of the WISPI (The World Internal Security and Police Index) index is to measure the ability of the internal security 'mechanisms' to respond to the challenges of internal security now and in the future.

Finland thrived in entities measuring processes, lawfulness of operations and results. In the entity regarding capacity (incl. the number of police officers), Finland ranked below the average.

Also subjective safety has been assessed recently. On 19 September 2016, Helsingin Sanomat newspaper reported that the sense of security of Finns is among the best in the world referring to a study that compared the freedom of children to move about in 16 countries.

The Finn's sense of security is explained by, among other things, a solid social cohesion, low level of corruption and trust in the institutions and, in particular, in the family and loved ones. These conclusions can be obtained, for example, from the most recent corruption comparison of Transparency International, where Finland ranked second in the 2015 comparison, and the State of Societal Security in Finland (SPEK 2015) study.

Also deviating assessments have been made. A survey conducted by the Advisory Board for Defence Information (ABDI) in late 2015, the most visible change from the survey of the previous year was seen in the increase of the sense of insecurity. Now, two-thirds of the respondents considered the future more unsafe than the present; a year ago, a little over half shared that view.

Strategy work for internal security

In the report on the internal security, the authorities have recognised new threats to the internal security of Finland, and the security environment has changed permanently. The new threats

include the deterioration of the relationship between Russia and the West, extensive illegal entry as well as hybrid and cyber threats. At the same time, the old threats and authority tasks have remained. Scarce resources require the adaptation of operations and prioritising the authority tasks. The fact that external and internal security can no longer be separated is characteristic of the new security status. The threats are complicated and they change quickly; predictability has weakened. No change for the better is in sight.

We are, however, a highly educated and hardworking people, able to regenerate and equipped with a strong identity holding all the keys to our success in our own hands. Internal security is the basis of the Finnish democracy and affluent society. Our future can be built on it.

The internal security strategy prepared under the lead of the Ministry of the Interior is the Government's most central document in the specification of the internal security of the future. The strategy document determines the path and measures that will make Finland the safest country in the world to live, conduct business and work in.

Reaching this goal will require the commitment of the entire society in the work needed to achieve the goal.

Each of us is responsible for ensuring the promotion of security competence so that the information, competence, attitude and values of individuals and institutions alike support resilience and ability to function in all different situations.

Have a safe autumn,

Harri Martikainen