

Who | Institutional Profile

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| Institution | <u>Estonian War Museum</u> – General Laidoner Museum |
| Location | Viimsi, Estonia |
| Short Description | <p>The Museum of the Estonian War of Independence (EWM) was established in 1919 and restored in 2001 under the name of the Estonian War Museum – General Laidoner Museum. According to the museum's statutes, its tasks include locating, collecting, preserving, researching and disseminating objects and materials related to Estonian military history as well as researching military history and developing international relations with other relevant institutions. The permanent exhibition and temporary exhibitions of the War Museum tell stories about wars fought in Estonia, the service of the Estonian people in the militaries of other countries and wars fought elsewhere in the world with the participation of the Estonian people.</p> <p>Viimsi municipality near Tallinn, Estonia. The museum is located in an old manor house. The museum underlines their aspiration that “the whole of Estonia is a military museum” due to the rich and manifold military past of the country.</p> |
| Ownership | Public |
| Size | The museum staff amounts to 17 FTEs (apart from the Military Orchestra, which is also a branch of the museum). Last year the museum's number of visitors reached a record level of 33,000. |

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| Approach to Digital | <p>Input by Patrick Rang, Tanel Mätlik, Eli Pilve, Marti Taru</p> <p>We are a small museum and we do not have an ICT department or even an ICT specialist (the technical maintenance of computers and other devices is outsourced). Thus we are a bit unsure concerning the possibilities and deployment of ICT. On the other hand, Estonia is an advanced country in terms of ICT use and penetration on the state and organisational level. Several services are available only online and electronic use of the rest is highly recommended. This applies also for museums and memory institutions. And, of course, we see how the world around us is becoming more and more digital. But a museum should retain its core – the authenticity of the exhibits cannot be expressed only through digital means. The ‘feeling’ in the museum (whatever it may contain – to see, hear, touch, smell, taste, experience and take part etc.) is key to providing visitors with a worthy and fun experience, but it can be complemented by ICT.</p> <p>Our approach and attitude is to stand in the middle ground: not to rush foolishly to implement all fashionable innovations, but combine the best possibilities the digital and ‘traditional’ solutions provide, comply with the national rules and regulations of digitising our collections and making them publicly available and in a way that would make our visitors happy.</p> |
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What | Case

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| Project Title | Innovation in Audience Analysis and Engagement in Estonian War Museum |
| Timeframe | November 2022 – June 2023 |

Concept & Approach

Estonian War Museum (EWM) is in a unique position compared to other Estonian museums. Our aim and role is not only to exhibit and promote Estonian military heritage, but to effectively contribute to achieving the objectives in the Estonian National Defence Development Plan (ENDDP) that stresses the conception of comprehensive national defence. The objectives of ENDDP foresee the active role of youngsters in the comprehensive national defence prior, during and after the conscription service – and as foreseen in ENDDP – visit to EWM helps you to be better prepared for protecting your homeland, if needed.

The starting point was: how to achieve it? How to attract more youngsters to the museum and make the visiting experience a case of edutainment? Should we focus more on ICT? If so, then what and how?

The way to find out – according to our hypothesis – was to analyse the relevant audience (youth and children) in EWM, their experience, their attitude, their expectations and wishes in the given context. And based on the analysis, to describe new participation formats and platforms to be implemented post-project.

Today, EWM and its position in the society is not what it used to be. The war in Ukraine has changed the scenery: and we have become an institution constantly in the highlight and even headlines, which creates even higher and greater requirements.

As part of the project, we organised a web-based survey and focus-group interviews with children and youngsters. In the course of the project we decided to expand the scope of the survey to include also the target group members who have not visited EWM and to widen the focus also to youngsters from abroad. Altogether we had 449 responses (285 from Estonia and 164 from various foreign countries).

The main findings were:

- Museums have a future! We are not ‘dinosaurs’, youngsters are interested in museums, and they visit them more often than initially assumed. EWM is not an exception.
- A positive museum experience is based on how the ‘point’ is expressed. Even if the topic / museum covers an area that seems less interesting, the exhibition, its delivery, guide, accompanying possibilities in the museum etc. may change the visitor’s attitude.
- A positive museum experience must be edutaining, combining both fun and knowledge (and practical aspects, if possible). The practical aspects could be either DIY approaches or simulations (ICT).
- Somewhat surprisingly, the youngsters are not that keen on ICT to be used in the exhibition and service delivery. It seems that we, the older generation, pay too much attention and focus on the ICT devices that the youngsters use constantly. For them this is just ‘something’ that has been present almost always (and the more advanced possibilities are just technical improvements, nothing more), just like we are used to, say, washing machines. The youngsters expect that the exhibitions in museums are mainly traditional and static, with digital and interactive solutions complementing them. The role of the latter is rather confined to the possibilities they contain to enlarge (or alternatively, to simplify) and enhance / differentiate the message the exhibition carries.
- Nothing replaces the professional personal touch and the feeling that you are welcome and awaited.

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| Benefits & Impact | We now know better what youngsters think and feel about a museum (not only us, but in general) and can design future exhibitions, exposition development and service delivery better. We should not be afraid and worried that the digital component in our museum is not that prevalent. Instead, we should focus on specific aspects in the exhibition development (ICT as means to enlarge / simplify the content; simulations). |
| Limits & Drawbacks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First and foremost, staff available. We are a small museum, where ‘everyone does everything’ and we are continuously multi-tasking. The war in Ukraine put us under specific pressure and additional workload, but this was a force majeure that could not be anticipated or risk managed. ● Internal fears and unreasonable assumptions, for example, the youngsters care only about ICT and everything we have developed needs to be redone. |
| Future Prospects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quite a clear overview on the direction we shall develop EWM – specific project ideas ● Repeat the survey in 3-4 years – what has changed? Taking also into consideration the improvements we shall be making meanwhile. |
| Key Take-Aways | <p>EWM specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More practical solutions to the museum, from DIY to ICT-based simulations. ● Combine DIY with museum education, widen the latter to also older target groups (12+) ● Pay more attention to our outdoor area. <p>General (and EWM specific)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ICT is just means, not an objective. ● ICT is not everything. |
| Involved Parties | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Püünsi School (test-group) ● Viimsi Gymnasium (test-group) |



Test groups, Estonian War Museum



Test groups, Estonian War Museum