

ANTTI LEPPILAMPI & ATTE JÄNTTI (Eds.)

ESGE'S Journey

**DEVELOPING ESPORTS
KYMENLAAKSO**
**Lessons learned and
future ambitions**

XAMK
University of Applied
Sciences



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

Leverage from
the EU
2014–2020

KYMEN
LAAKSON
LIITTO



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INSPIRE

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Antti Leppilampi

Introduction

Greetings dear reader

The ESGE project has come to an end. It's been quite a ride! When we started in late 2019, we could only imagine small parts of what actually might happen. Now in 2022, we can be grateful about the many different projects, events, and workshops we have implemented, which have all helped to support and develop the esports ecosystem in the Kymenlaakso region.

One of the biggest aims of ESGE was to study esports business and we have been fortunate to help two new companies to be born. Student-led Digital Barracks became the first company to focus on esports business in Kymenlaakso. They helped us with many different esports events during the project. Psychologist from Kotka, Simo Nuutinen started his work as an esports


psychologist with help from ESGE. Simo was contacted by one of the most known PUBG teams in Finland, and he got the opportunity to work as an esports psychologist for a team that was competing for the world championship in 2021. The project also managed to help three esports coaches to find work in local sports academies. It's possible for any student from high school, vocational school or South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Science Xamk to apply for esports training in Kymenlaakso.

Together with the ESGE project team, we also managed to build a new esports event concept the "Kymenlaakso Cup". The event has been now held twice, first in 2020, and then again in 2021. It brought together students from high schools, and vocational schools in Kymenlaakso region. Altogether, the 2021 event gathered 110 students from the local area to play against each other, the event had

around 1,300 unique viewers for the online stream. Besides these experiences, we made several other experiments that we will share with you in this publication.

About this publication

In 2019, we got together with 30 esports professionals from Kymenlaakso and asked for their input to help us identify where ESGE could focus with this project. The esports professionals gave us concrete ideas and helped us to construct a roadmap for our project. In this publication, we will go through all the noteworthy events, and we will provide you with details on the current state of Kymenlaakso's esports field in 2022. Our aim for this publication is to be as open as possible so that you can learn from our work. We will describe the experiments that worked well, but also describe experiments



When the ESGE project ends, we are hoping that new students will continue to facilitate the network.

that did not go as planned. Mistakes are how we learn after all! The reason behind being open with our reflection is that we believe that you, as a reader, will get more benefit from our results project processes and from reading this publication.

The ESGE project would not have succeeded as it has, without the help from students working with the staff members. The students have helped with several areas like marketing, building the community in Discord, social media marketing, organizing tournaments in Finland and against foreign universities, conducting research, organizing events, hosting esports webinars, and producing and updating websites. The ESGE project at its largest size had 10 students working at once, which was a positive surprise. The project aimed to give all the students the responsibilities they wanted, to help them with their working lives. You can

also hear some experiences from the students working on the project in this publication.

Currently in 2022, we are in a situation where our esports network in Kymenlaakso is examining its next steps. The network that ESGE built will continue in Discord under the name ESGE network, but also with a community hosted by Xamk students. We could see from the beginning of the project that the best way to build something that lasts is to involve the students and give them as much responsibility as possible. When the ESGE project ends, we are hoping that new students will continue to facilitate the network. We are yet to know where our communities will end up, but now it seems like the students in Xamk will be continuing to maintain the esports / gaming channels. This brings continuity to the esports field in Kymenlaakso and a possibility to build new projects and activities.

Introducing **the ESGE team**



Antti Leppilampi

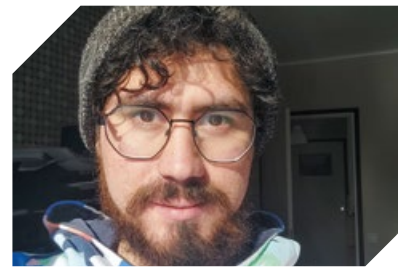
What a fantastic project ESGE has been. I have had the privilege to get to know many lovely people from the esports and gaming field, and have gotten to know the esports industry in Finland in more depth. We managed to get in touch with many people in the field, and together we have successfully developed the esports ecosystem in Kymenlaakso. None of the developmental steps could not have been done individually. I can say from my side, and quite likely from our teams side as well, that we learned a lot during the whole project. Lastly, huge thanks to everyone who got to work in the ESGE project team. I'm so proud of you, and everyone I got to work with. You have taught me so much and made me a better project manager. Thank you.



Atte Jääntti

I'm a 23 year old guy who has a long history with technology, videogames and eSports. I joined the ESGE project due to my eSports knowledge, past eSports coaching experience. I was also a second year data analytics student at Xamk. This very publication was fast approaching, and ESGE sought data analysis to help visualize their journey.

What really makes me me, is working with other people. Whether it is an evening get together, or an ESGE get together, I am most comfortable when I am facilitating and making others happy. One day I aspire to help others work happier by being a great team leader!



Damian Santibanez

My name is Damián Santibáñez Ávalos. I am a Chilean student of International Digital Business, at Xamk University, Kouvola. At the beginning of 2021, I was offered the opportunity to do an internship at the ESGE-Project, which I accepted gladly. Since then, I have come a long way and we have done a lot together. At the end of 2021 I was offered the possibility to continue my internship as a project worker so I could continue working with ESGE and develop further the work I started.

My focus in ESGE has been teams, events, and the community surrounding esports, ESGE and Xamk. Besides, I have created a lot of visual material, some of which related to this publication and others were related to events and marketing. I have also overseen international events, communications, and community management. I have also tried my best to take an active role in the creative part of our work, thinking creatively in the development of our network and activities. I am incredibly happy with the work done here, and I cannot wait to see what the esports environment will be like in the future. It is a good feeling to think that the ESGE Project was the first seed for so much to come.

” *One day I aspire to help others work happier by being a great team leader!*

– Atte



Eemi Kondratjeff

Hey! My name's Eemi, I'm 22 years old and I'm a third year Digital International Business student specializing in marketing. I study in Kouvola, where I've been living my whole life. I've been working for ESGE since the beginning of 2021, and it's been a great and enjoyable experience. I've garnered valuable experience from real-life cases and made some connections I wouldn't have otherwise. I'm an avid gamer and very interested in the esports industry. My dream job is to work in esports because I've loved gaming my whole life and what could be better than making a living from the things you love the most? I'm sad to see ESGE coming to an end, but eventually all good things do!



Jade Hirvonen

I worked with ESGE for two years as a project worker. I was a leader on the marketing team and I was highly involved with organizing events and marketing related issues.



Otso Saari

Hi! I'm Otso, a 22-year-old marketing student at Xamk, Kouvola Campus. I have a long history in gaming, but more so on the playing side of things as opposed to tournament or event organization and marketing. I have a keen interest in youth wellbeing and believe esports can play a key part in that. It can be positive or negative, as it all depends on the usage of the media. I am also an avid sports fan. Seeing esports develop I believe there are lots of relatively uncovered similarities between those two fields, especially in youth developmental processes.



ESGGE'S Journey

ESGE ESPORTS GAMING ECOSYSTEM OUR PATH

2019

PROJECT START

ESGE - eSports Game Ecosystem project, part of Xamk's Digital Business Research and Development area, starts.

01.09.2019**NHL 2019 TOURNAMENT**

Our first tournament. On NHL we held a 2v2 tournament. Also Testuasema joined us to share tips on health and body well being.

11.12.2019**FIRST "GET TOGETHER"**

First time we gather in our weekly Get Together meeting. This recurrent meetings are the foundation of ESGE and we kept having them until the end of the project.

DECEMBER**KYMI OPEN CS:GO**

In collaboration with Gaming Barracks we organized a school CS:Go open tournament for students from Kymenlaakso. 250€ of prize!

15.5.2020**KYMI OPEN VALORANT**

In collaboration with Gaming Barracks we organized the Valorant version of the KymiOpen for schools of the region

8.8.2020**DIGITAL BUSINESS HACKATON**

We participated in a hackaton to create a business solution around the conceptualization of an event. Many interns joined us after this event.

15.10.2020**JOB POSSIBILITIES IN ESPORTS WEBINARS**

The first webinar of a series of 7 webinars and podcast with special guests, around the esports field including business, wellbeing and opportunities for the young and youth workers.

FROM 12.11.2020

2020

SCHOOL TOURNAMENT: ROCKET LEAGUE

Also in collaboration with Gaming Barracks we hosted a 2v2 Rocket League tournament for students from Kymenlaakso.

29.4.2020**ESPORTS NEW COMPANIES WEBINAR**

We hosted a webinar for people interested in forming an event or esports-related company with Lasse Salminen (CEO - Havu Gaming).

29.4.2020**WEB SEMINAR WITH ENCE**

We hosted an online event with Mika Kuusisto, CEO of ENCE. He spoke about his experience in the esports field.

4.11.2020**WEBINAR FOR PARENTS**

We organized a webinar to answer questions related to esports and video games for parents of the region

6.5.2020**KYMENLAAKSO CUP**

Improved version of the Kymi Open in collaboration with Digital Barracks. Young from all corners of Kymenlaakso played CS:Go and Rocket League. 1258 different viewers of the stream.

14.11.2020**PUBLICATION**

We made a publication analyzing the situation of the Esports in the Kymenlaakso region. "Selvitys elektronisen urheilun nykytilanteesta ja mahdollisuuksista Kymenlaaksolle"

7.5.2020**GAMING FOR EVERYONE WORKSHOP**

Christmass collaboration with Female Gaming Finland. We hosted games and key note speakers around the subjects of video games and inclusion.

10.12.2020



Antti Leppilampi

The journey of **ESGE**

In this section, we want to share with you the most interesting events from the project, which supported the development of the esports ecosystem in Kymenlaakso. Our team did many beneficial experiments during the ESGE project, varying from esports tournaments for students to open tournaments for any esports enthusiasts. The most hyped tournaments were Kymenlaakso Cup (which arose as a concept from the project), and lastly, our final tournament Kino Cup. We had beneficial help from Digital Barracks. We helped them to become a student led company which provides digital media services. They oversaw the technical facilitation for us during the tournaments and also contacted the teams which provided beneficial support for us.

Secondly, in this section we will describe some of our experiences in organizing webinars. One of ESGE's main aims was to offer

information about job opportunities in esports, and we organized two series of job webinars, where our team member Prakhar Sharma interviewed people working in the esports field. We also contacted the CEOs from two of Finland's most famous esports organizations Havu and Ence. Their CEOs gave informative talks with examples of how to lead an esports organization, and what kind of employment possibilities exist in the field.

We organized several workshops during the project, and one of the most memorable was organized together with the association of Female Gaming Finland. During our two workshops with them, we discussed about the role of women in gaming, and heard about the attitude towards women in gaming and in esports. The workshops taught us that there are many, who feel there is a need to develop and improve the chat

culture online. The culture can be rude to the player experience of some women which is why there is a need to address this. Each of our workshops ended with playing games online, and we continued our cooperation with them throughout the whole project.

All these great concepts could not have happened without our first get-together in 2019, where we invited 30 people that were interested in developing esports in Kymenlaakso. During the get-together we set up aims with the group, imagining different possibilities about how we could develop the field. According to my notes we managed to actualize all of our dreams, at least partially. We share how the activities were made from dreams and turned into reality, and open in the end, how a new Xamk Community Hub will continue the project's work in the future.

Jade Hirvonen

Job opportunities in eSports – Webinar series

The Job Opportunities in esports – webinar series talks about the many working possibilities the field has to offer. Each episode had an esports professional as a guest and the host of the webinar Prakhar Sharma interviewed them. All the guests talked about their past and how they had ended up in the field of esports and playing games. The webinar series lasted two series and we did seven episodes that were livestreamed to ESGE's YouTube channel. The first series was done at the end of 2020 and the second during Spring 2021. All the episodes can be found from ESGE's YouTube channel.

Series 1

The first episode was about esports in general and the guest was Marianne Määttä from Female Gaming Finland association, which is a video gaming community for women and gender minorities. The episode's theme was to discuss about women and gender minorities in the esports field, and also the actions of the Female Gaming Finland association.

In the second episode the guest was Ville Pelkola from Gaming Barracks (the company name is nowadays Digital Barracks). This episode's theme was about event production in esports. Ville explained what kind of gaming events Gaming Barracks has organized and what needs to be thought of when organizing a gaming event.

The third episode's theme was game design, and the guest was Marko Haaja from Kuura Games. Marko told us about game design, the theory of the field, and what can people learn from the subject.

In the fourth episode, the guest was Jani "Yambba" Rinne, who did his internship for ESGE. He was responsible for the Discord network and the other social media channels of the project. This episode's theme was streaming. We covered what does streaming mean, where can it be done, what can be streamed and why. Jani shared his tips on how you can get started with streaming and what things should be taken into account when streaming.

Series 2

The second series of the webinar started with Violeta Ivanova as the guest, who is a physiotherapy and gaming professional. Violeta talked about how during gaming, and especially with esports, it is important to take care of your physical health.

On the second episode of this series the guest was Arttu Hämäläinen. He focused more on the role of the esports commentator and told about his commentator experiences and shared some tips for the followers.

On the third and the last episode of the webinar series, the guest was the esports psychologist Simo Nuutinen. Simo shared points on the role of psychology on the esports field and told us about what kind of support a psychologist can offer for an esports athlete.

Antti Leppilampi

Kymenlaakso Cup – The event concept we created

The Kymenlaakso Cup was a great event that we organized twice with the team from Digital Barracks. The first event was organized at the end of 2020, and the second event was held in May 2021. Both events managed to gather students from the municipalities of Hamina, Kotka, Kouvolaa, and Pyhtää. During the event, we worked in close cooperation KTP – a local Football club – who were our main partner for the events. KTP has their own interests in developing an esports club system for their organization, and we did our best to help them.

The tournament winners received gift cards as prizes from the PC-store “Jimms”, and the winner received a trophy that was given to them in their school. In both events, the main trophy went to the high school of Elimäki. The prize was very much wel-

comed by the team, and their captain said to the ESGE team at the last tournament that he now seriously considers starting a full time esports career. Both tournaments gathered approximately 1,000 unique viewers that followed the tournament via Twitch online channels. Each tournament also included viewers cheering for their teams and commenting on the tournament. We quickly learned that the fans in esports are like any other sports fans, so we needed to establish ground rules and a good chat policy for each tournament.

We are hopeful that the Kymenlaakso Cup will continue after the first events. We could notice after two tournaments that there is a need for such an event. Schools in Finland compete with other sports events against each other, so why not with esports as well? The project managed to gather many profes-

sionals together from Kymenlaakso and if anyone would be interested in organizing an event, they can join ESGE’s discord channel through our website xamk.fi/esports.

All in all, the Kymenlaakso Cup proved to us that esports interests people in Kymenlaakso. The concept received great feedback each time from participants which led to demand for more events. The Kymenlaakso Cup was a useful event, since it was targeted at schools, which led to many teachers and principals becoming familiar with the esports concept. Based on the feedback we received, the esports field in Kymenlaakso would benefit if the event concept would continue in the future.



KIERTOPALKINTO
CS:GO -mestari
Kymenlaakso -Cup

Damian Santibanez

Engaging the Kymenlaakso and Xamk community

During the ESGE project, we have been trying to engage the Kymenlaakso community, especially businesses, young students, and university students in our activities. Due to how new the esports environment is in the region, it has not always been easy to have high engagement, but with good marketing, and direct contact with the different parties involved, we have been able to build a healthy network of connections and interests that has a promising future and keeps growing.

To reinforce the Xamk Esports community, ESGE has also put together the first 4 teams composed uniquely by Xamk students in the games of Counter-Strike: Global Offensive and League of Legends. These teams have been paving the way for participation in the national and international esports scenes by way of friendly international matches, tournaments, and other events that these teams from Xamk have had the chance to participate in.

Other than tournaments and webinars, we've also used other tools to reach out and engage with people. We have been generating awareness around the field of esports through contacts with many different organizations. In order to build more

bridges in the esports scene, we've worked with businesses with and without experience in video games, traditional sports teams from the region such as KooKoo and KTP, and other parties. This has effectively helped to create awareness and opportunities in the field. Now at the end of the project, our mission has yet to finish. We are establishing guidelines for a series of esports oriented courses for Xamk students interested in the esports field. The courses are planned to be available during the 2023.

Finally, with the future in mind, we have capitalized on the interest for esports in the Xamk community and created a Discord server that works, and will keep working, as a hub for all people around the university interested in the field. It also functions as a connecting point for collaborations between our esports teams, and teams from foreign universities. We expect this to be a bridge for more future educational and friendly collaborations between different universities from Finland, Europe, and the world.

Next we will give tips for new Discord channel developers. We made Discord our meeting channel, where we shared information about esports in Kymen-

We expect this to be a bridge for more future educational and friendly collaborations between different universities from Finland, Europe, and the world.

laakso and organized meetings. Discord is a great platform to try different ways to engage participants for the network. You can arrange gaming nights, livechats to watch tournaments and webinars like we did. Discord includes several technical settings that can help develop the user experience of the channel. We recommend to try different settings along the way, but for a quicker development we suggest to choose one person who knows how to use Discord to be the channel administrator. That's how we did it, when we recruited students to develop the channel, and that was a great experiment for us.

One minor challenge for us was how to participate the Discord network. We recruited people to our Discord-channel through a website, where the participants needed to fill information telling what they wanted to do in our channel. We received lots of requests about what people wanted to do, and fulfilled these wishes with gaming nights and workshops. Besides this, the attendance was surprisingly low many times. This is why we recommend a person building a new Discord server to think about how could they get people involved for the server in the beginning.

Atte Jäntti

Sport Academy eSports & Coaching Experiences

At the end of the summer of 2021, Kouvola and Kotka sports academies started their search for esports athletes. For the first time ever, these sports academies started to provide esports training, including both professional coaching and weekly practices. ESGE was contacted to help find applicants for coaches and athletes. After finding coaches through an internal search, ESGE turned to finding applicants for the esports program by contacting local schools. Our target audience was students graduating from 9th grade - moving to high school and vocational studies, as well as those in the first year of vocational studies. The age range of our target audience was from 15-18-year-old players.

ESGE took the main responsibility for the marketing campaign. We made posters, advertised on social media, put up posters at schools and created descriptions of the esports coaching. Due to the advertising campaign, both Kotka and Kouvola sports academies found an esports athlete to train under them. While we hoped for more applications, we realised that this is just the first time this has been done. It will take a while for this to become a common-

place option for new applicants, instead of a taboo.

The first year of coaching was a success. Kouvola's coach was Atte Jäntti, and Kotka's coaches were Jani Pykälistö and Miko Kourula. Each coach was given the opportunity to experiment with new coaching methods and solutions when creating the new esports training programme. Originally, the coaches were preparing to coach a full team of 5 players, but as we did not have that many applicants they had to change their plans. Team coaching turned into single coaching, but the same goal of coaching full teams of players remains for the future!

The coaches were not the only ones who learned a lot through this experience. The ESGE team gained a lot of new knowledge and experience on how to run an effective marketing campaign, which we were able to put to good use during the application period of spring 2022. While the ESGE project is ending, we hope new esports projects may be able to help both Kotka and Kouvola sports academies to keep growing their esports divisions to the size of full teams.



ETELÄ-KYMENLAAKSON
URHEILUAKATEMIA

Atte Jännti

NuPa CSGO Club

In the autumn of 2021, Kouvola's youth organization Nuorten Paikka (NuPa) chose to support esports by hiring someone to run an esports team of young Counter-Strike: Global Offensive players. ESGE was contacted by a youth worker named Riku Tähtinen, in hopes of us knowing someone who could run such a team. Thankfully, ESGE's work with Kymenlaakso's sports academies meant that we had contacts with a few esports coaches, of which Atte Jännti was chosen to run the team. The goal of the team was to participate in an esports tournament.

The team was comprised of 5 young men, between 13 and 18 years old. The skill level of each individual player was not a part of the criteria for this team, as the goal was not to win the tournament, but rather to arrange a pilot of an esports club for youth. Thankfully skill levels were not too far apart, with everyone being novices at competitive play. This team experiment lasted a few months, and ended in the Kino Cup tournament, but unfortunately the team could not participate.

The team operated at the youth organization Nuorten Paikka. They have equipment to facilitate up to 6 PC gamers at the

same time. Practice happened once a week there and would last 2-3 hours. During practice, the team played Counter-Strike: Global Offensive together, and their coach Atte Jännti would arrange strategic training, or fill in if a player was missing. After all, five players was a necessity for teamplay with a full team, so it is important to have that many players.

The club experience in general was successful since it gave Nuorten Paikka the necessary guidelines for esports coaching. We set up a developmental issue with a focus on making sure that the coaching would continue. After the club was over, we discussed could this kind of coaching be done without projects such as ESGE so that youth workers could receive the basic knowledge on esports coaching. This way, young people would continue to get support related to esports and they could continue their training in sports academy, if they want to rise from the hobby level to a professional level. Hopefully future projects will resolve these challenges.



” *Sometimes cooperation with others gets delayed, and that can mess up your own plans. Being ready to adapt is crucial!*

Damian Santibanez

Xamk: Esports – providing purpose to the team

Friendly International Matches

With the Xamk esports teams up and running, we had the important task of providing them with a purpose and a reason to exist. We wanted to motivate the players with activities to look forward to, and to push them to keep playing regularly and develop their team synergies. We kicked this off with the large collaboration: the Itmo Tournament.

ITMO Tournament friendly match

Part of our team organised collaboration with ITMO University from St. Petersburg. After our first meeting with them, they decided to invite the whole team to the next meeting so that we could create an event together to be held with both universities. The focus was around the theme of video games and as you might expect,

quite naturally, teams from both universities played against each other. The idea evolved quickly into a tournament between Xamk and ITMO.

The tournament concept however, forced us to confront a harsh reality. While ITMO had several teams in many games, we were just at the stage of gathering our first team, and we did not have as many players inside Xamk to organize a pre-tournament like our international colleagues hoped.

When we faced this, it was a large communication challenge to figure out how to combine the reality and expectations of both sides. At the end, we succeeded overcoming our first challenge.

With much effort we gathered the players needed for playing CS:GO, League of Legends, and Hearthstone games. Sadly, in the last meeting before the event, ITMO informed us that due to internal bureaucratic issues, they were not ready to partici-

pate in the event yet. The event was moved from the end of September to the end of November 2021.

As a team, we were quick to accept the change and adapt to the new date, regardless of the logistical issues that this brought us. The players and teams from our side were informed and we promised to announce more information when we would know the full event details. However, we felt a bit dragged down by this. It had taken a lot of effort for the whole team to organize and set everything up. The new date meant that we needed to adapt a series of things, from marketing to the players and teams themselves.

Finally, on the 27th and 28th of November we held a smaller event with them. We decided to drop the game Hearthstone and simplify the event from two weekends to a single weekend activity. The League of Legends and CS:GO teams that we managed to gather together faced the best ITMO teams,



who were winners of their own internal ITMO tournament. This event was streamed in Twitch, and while the size of both institutions was very different, our players were happy to be a part of such an event.

Friendly match with Florida Universitarià

While we were handling the hectic arrangements with our Russian colleagues, we discovered the possibility to cooperate with a university from Valencia (Spain). For us, this was a great opportunity to keep expanding our international network, and at the same time, bring more activities to our established League of Legends teams while trying out new event formulas.

We met with the two Florida Universitarià representatives at the beginning of September and quickly ideated the kind of event we wanted to organise together. This resulted in an evening of webinars

and friendly League of Legend matches. We decided that both universities would each bring a speaker for the webinars. Our Spanish colleagues hosted a very interesting talk about esports professional careers with the company Squarebox. We offered the stage to Simo Nuutinen to speak about psychology esports performance. These talks were hosted on the event Discord server and Twitch channels. After which, the casters went to the caster room and the players ahead to the League of Legend arena where they faced each other. It was a very productive and fun afternoon, rich in content, communication, and fun moments.

Conclusion

From these experiences, we realised how difficult it can be to collaborate with organisations from different backgrounds. It is often hard to know beforehand what are the potential challenges that might arise in the collaboration, as well as the objectives that the other party want to achieve. It is

important to try to understand the other party and also be flexible and adapt, while we try to achieve our own goals too. Sometimes, expectations are not met and this can bring about friction and frustration. While other times, sometimes by sheer luck, we can have very fruitful cooperation just because the aims of both parties happen to align. In our experience, it is rather important to consider all possible goals, objectives, and identify any possible points of contention in the early stages of planning, so as to avoid any (unpleasant) surprises along the way.

We concluded that we need to build the spirit of collaboration together. When there is friction or problems along the way, everyone must remember that all parties involved want to get the best result, one way or another. Overall, both collaborations were a success for us, as the main objectives for them were achieved. At the same time, they were a great and valuable learning experience for everyone involved, and we would encourage everyone to look beyond the borders of their project, institution or even country, for other people, teams, and projects to work and collaborate with. This can bring great value for the stakeholders and the people involved in your enterprise, such as enhancing everyone's skills to work as a team and achieving something greater than what only one party could achieve by themselves.



Antti Leppilampi

The Kino Cup

The Kino Cup was the grand finale of ESGE's events. The main aim of the event was to gather all the best practices and learnt experience from previous events to ensure the best possible outcomes for the Kino Cup event. We started the planning of the event a year before. We discussed with our team what we wanted to accomplish with the event, and how we wanted the participants to feel afterwards. Our small team decided that the final aim should be to provide a wow-effect for all the participants.

The year 2021 included two larger events from our side. Before the Kino Cup, we

organized the Kymenlaakso Cup for high schools in Kymenlaakso for the second time. We managed to get approximately 1,300 viewers online, and 110 participants. The event was held online due to Covid restrictions. The fear of Covid had a huge effect on the planning of the Kino Cup. We had to cancel many events during 2021, which made us change the plans for Kino Cup several times. In the end, we decided that we would try to organize a hybrid event, with the qualifiers held online, and the finals live. This was a brave decision since none of us had organized esports events live before.

We faced many challenges while planning the tournament, but while we did not necessarily achieve the 'wow' effect for the participants that we wanted, the tournament was still a success. The tournament gathered around 600 viewers online and live. This was a decrease in our viewers from the last event, which was a slight surprise for us. We explore some of these potential reasons more at the end of the publication.



” *So we dreamt bigger.
What if we had a
community of ALL
Xamk gamers?*

Damian Santibanez

Creating a Gamers Community at Xamk

In Spring 2021, we thought it would be a good idea to gather a more stable team of players that we could call upon to represent Xamk in esports collaborations, tournaments, and friendly matches. We sent out an invitation for the players of games League of Legends and Valorant, to gather enough players for the upcoming event we were organizing with ITMO university from Russia. While the tournament was postponed, the invitation attracted many answers from the Xamk community. We did not manage to gather enough players to form a Valorant team, but League of Legends was very high in demand.

We gathered the League of Legends players into a new Discord server, and started form-

ing teams. We ended up with two teams, with a captain to lead each of them. One of the captains, Atte Jääntti, ended up working for ESGE half a year later! We decided to have a team that was orientated towards the casual fun experience of playing together, and another team that would focus more on the competitive aspect of the game, so Tea Time and V-Kings were born.

The Xamk players who formed these two League of Legends teams turned out to be extremely active. It made us realise that there must be a lot of demand for video games activity with other Xamk students. So we dreamt bigger. What if we had a community of ALL Xamk gamers?

During January 2022, we opened the Discord server to all Xamk students, sending out an invitation to anyone interested in games. In less than 24 hours, we had grown from 30 users to 150 users. To celebrate the opening of the server, we arranged a small event where new and old users joined to play some games.

We keep organizing similar events weekly, as we connect with interested partners to work together to host new kinds of events. We are enthusiastic about the potential to expand this idea so that we can provide students with even more interesting events, and to hopefully maintain some of the esports ecosystem created during ESGE, after the project ends

Damian Santibanez

Female Gaming Finland and Xamk Gaming Hub (FGF & XGH)

An event took place on Friday 18th of February 2022, that we'd been looking forward for quite some time. To promote both Female Gaming Finland Ry and Xamk Gaming Hub, we decided to host a small event and share a nice moment together between our communities. Members of each community cross-joined each other's Discord communities, as we advertised the event through the week leading up to the event itself. On Friday 18th at 18:00 we kicked off the event in our Xamk Gaming Hub Discord server's Main Sofa room. We played party games – such as Trivia Murder-party, a trivia game where your knowledge may save you from a serial killer – from Jackbox Partypack, hosted by one of the organisers from Female Gaming Finland.

We got around 10 players that came to have a great evening, leaving in a good mood for the weekend after 2 hours of relaxing games. “It was nice playing with you, so thank you” commented one participant in our general chat and “Thanks for the games, had fun” followed by a cat-heart emoji said another, with many agreeing through reaction emojis to both comments.

The cooperation with Female Gaming Finland was very informative for us. It gave us lots of insight on how women in the gaming field and esports feel how they are treated. Based on the conversation during our workshops there's a mixture of experiences. Some women said that they haven't had negative experiences, but many said the opposite. We quickly noticed that there was a need for a conversation such as this, where women could share what kind of behavior they had faced online.

Our key takeaways from these two workshops were that the conversation needs to continue and we need to get men to speak online as well. That's a one way to continue the development, and it could be done through a new project. We hope we can repeat another collaboration where both communities get to benefit from each other, by reaching more people and promoting some healthy interactions between the members of both online communities.



A large, abstract yellow shape on the right side of the page, resembling a stylized arrow or a jagged edge pointing towards the center.

ESGE in
numbers
and
figures

Atte Jääntti

ESGE & Social Media

In two and a half years, ESGE has experienced a lot and with those experiences, data has been building up. We've used social media actively for advertising and outreach, and in this section, you'll see some facts summarized from our data journey.

During the two and a half years of ESGE, we ended up using four different social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok. The differences of these platforms meant a requirement for different kinds of content, to match their demographics and medium. For example, we created some video content exclusively for TikTok, as its a video-based platform.

During ESGE, we made over 500 posts across all our platforms, including six TikTok videos. We also livestreamed through Twitch. TV for 492 minutes, with 4544 minutes viewer time. Most of our events included a livestream, so an online audience could follow us from all around Kymenlaakso.

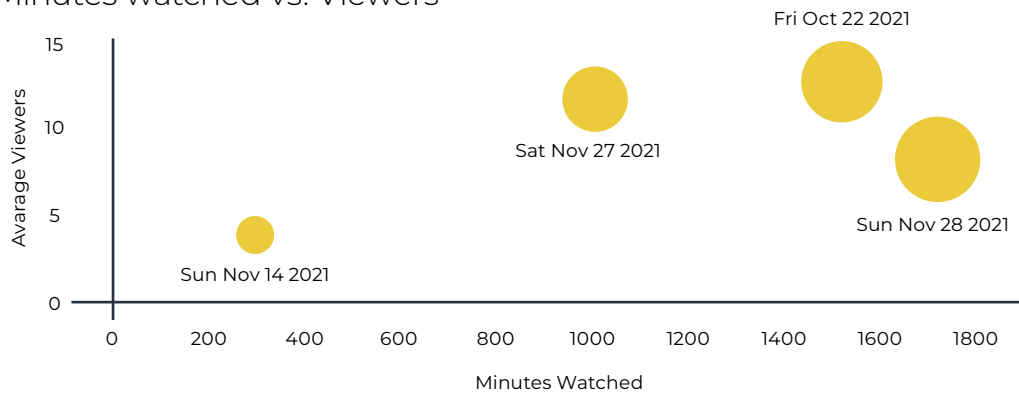
Average Average Viewers vs. Average Max viewers



Minutes streamed vs. Watched



Minutes watched vs. Viewers



In the ‘Minutes Watched’ vs. ‘Viewers’ visualization, you can see which of our live broadcasts were the most popular. On Sunday 14th November, we livestreamed the last day of KinoCup, featuring NHL, casted by T-Panda. On Saturday 17th November Itmo Cup’s CS:GO games were played between Xamk and Itmo university students. On Friday 22nd October another international event happened between Xamk and Florida Universitaria, where students from both universities played League of Legends against each other. And the event with the most time watched, aired on Sunday 28th November, was Itmo Cup’s League of Legends games, casted on both the ESGE channel, and in Russian on Itmo’s own Twitch channel.

One conclusion from these livestreams is clear, international events have a lot of interest. While the viewer count isn’t extremely high, the international events gathered a lot of minutes watched, which means that either a small number of viewers watched the whole event, or that viewers kept changing, but their total count remained similar through the broadcast.

We also saw considerable activity on Twitter, throughout the project. In the next page is a visualization of Tweet visibility of the three most busy months of ESGE.

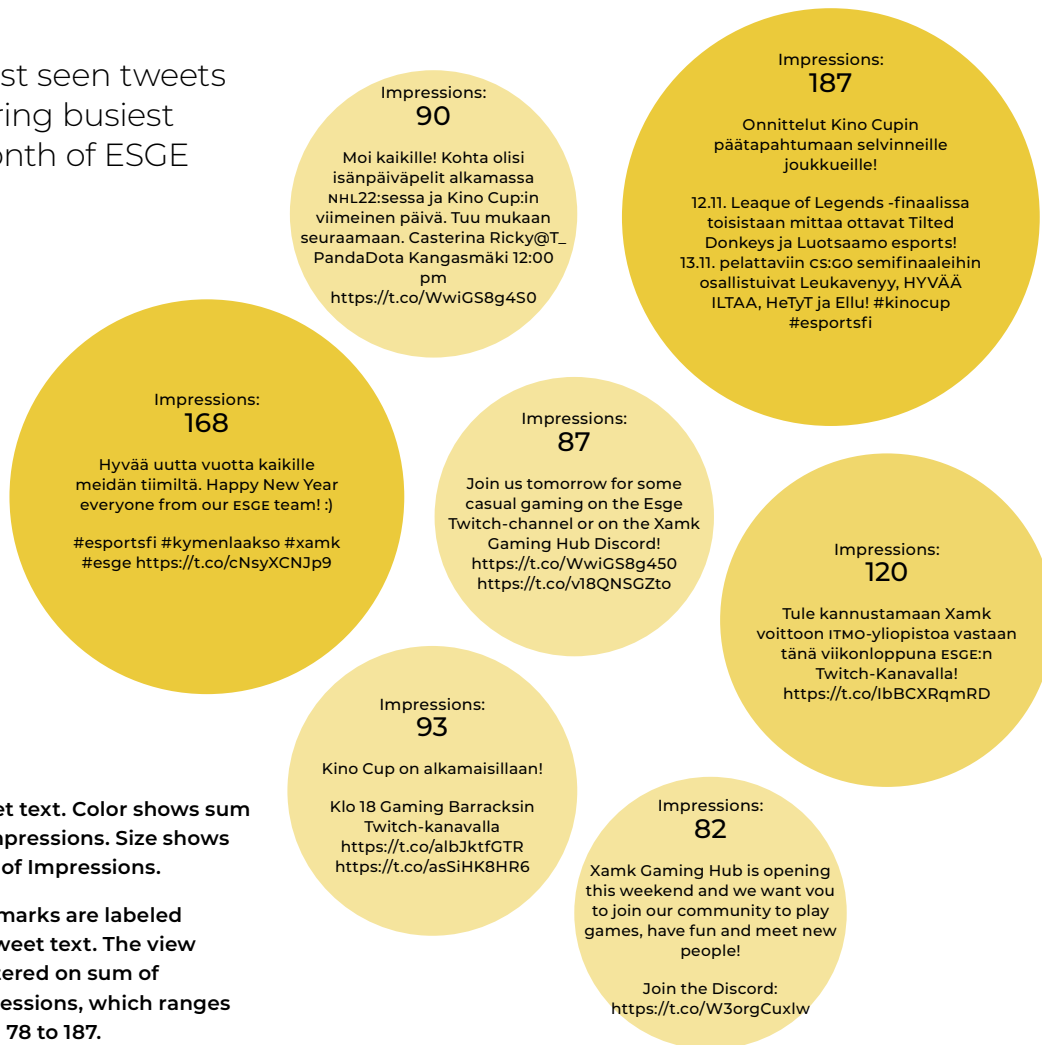
The visualization shows the most seen (impressions) tweets. The circles present the impression count differences between

the tweets, so a larger circle means more visibility. You can also see the tweet contents in each circle!

Social Media has been a friend of ESGE since the start. It’s a more prevalent part of business advertising, and community management year by year. We’ve all learned a lot through using it in the past two and a half years. So, here’s a few tips for other projects who use a lot of social media!

If you ever plan to use your social media data for analysis or visualization – which you should – you should take it into consideration as early as possible. Some social media websites give restricted analytics access, e.g., Twitter Analytics data is available for the last

Most seen tweets during busiest month of ESGE



Tweet text. Color shows sum of Impressions. Size shows sum of Impressions.

The marks are labeled by Tweet text. The view is filtered on sum of impressions, which ranges from 78 to 187.

three months only. Therefore, if you want to summarize a project's length (2,5 years) of Twitter data, you'll need to remember to capture it at least every three months. Every social media platform has its own issues and quirks, so make sure to research them early on in whatever project you'll use them.

One of the biggest challenges we faced with all the social media platforms was the amount of viewers each post. We tried all different kinds of post updates, bringing something new each time for a picture,

video or just a normal text message. Still, the number of clicks was often low. On some updates we got more engagement. We reflected on why some posts were more engaging and discovered three interesting points. The first was, the more the post was shared, the more clicks we got. The second was, the more people we show in a picture, the more likes it gets. The last one was, the more creative we got with a video, the more viewers it got. Our realization was that we should have done more data analyzing related to our social media updates during

the project. We should have stopped once a while to reflect on what we can learn from successful posts, and what to improve to make our project more visible.

Analytics can help enhance marketing by giving insight into what kind of content, posted at which times has really worked, and what hasn't. After all, how can we improve our content and posts, if we don't have an accurate understanding on our current performance, or how it compares to others?

Antti Leppilampi

ESGE'S Partners & Network

One of ESGE's main goals has been to bring together people who are interested in esports and build an ecosystem around them. When we started in 2019, we noticed that there were plenty of interest towards esports in Kymenlaakso, but they were missing a network. And since the interest existed, but the knowledge towards the esports was so low, we decided to start with the phrase 'network' instead of 'ecosystem'. We decided that network is an easier word to understand and is essentially something far more concrete than an ecosystem.

We managed to build a network that consists of youth clubs around Kymenlaakso, associations, companies, and sports organizations. Suddenly we realized that since the network consists of many different kinds



of organizations, and as such we need to visualize the network for ourselves, and for the whole ESGE network. When the visual was ready (see above), we realized how heterogenous our network actually is. The network consists of different kinds of organizations with different kinds of needs, but we were happy that all of them had the desire to take esports forward.

Our youth work partners operating in Hamina, Kouvola, Kotka and Pyhtää have done great work with getting young people together to play and participate in esports. Hamina has their own esports room with the right equipment to practice. They also started their own esports club to take the training to a new level. Kouvola did the same by starting their own esports club with one esports coach that was found from the ESGE network. Kotka is thinking about putting together a similar esports club as is the youth club in Pyhtää. ESGE organized 2 tournaments that gathered together many players from Pyhtää which shows that their municipality also has interest towards esports. The city of Pyhtää conducted a survey and the results showed that some 70 local youngsters are interested in esports.

The closest association that ESGE had was the cooperation with Female Gaming Finland. We did 3 workshops together with them. These workshops received positive feedback from the participants. In the second workshop, we discussed about gaming culture and how women are treated when gaming. The workshop revealed that while there is good behavior in the field,

but also lots of poor and inappropriate behavior which means that the esports and the gaming field requires intervention so that the women players are not subjected to bad behavior. Therefore, when we plan the next esports project, we should focus on addressing the behavior culture online.

One of the aims of the ESGE project was to support new companies in the esports field. We managed to help set up two new companies. The first was the psychology service Simo Nuutinen, and the other was the media factory Digital Barracks. Both are a crucial part of our network. Simo's work is an example that shows how esports psychologists are needed in the field. He was quite soon connected through our ESGE network to the best PUBG team from Finland, "Skade". They participated in the world championships at the end of 2021 and Simo was their main esports psychologist. Digital Barracks on the other hand, was our right hand when planning our events. Starting from the online events like the Kino Cup, and Kymenlaakso Cup, Digital Barracks helped us to organize the hybrid event Kino Cup. It was great to see how our cooperation taught us both important lessons during the project. ESGE's main role was to administer the events, and contact the schools to find participants, and Digital Barracks did the technical planning of the events.

Lastly, ESGE has had important collaboration with sports organizations like KTP, KooKoo, Kouvolan urheilukaatemia, and Etelä-Kymenlaakson urheilukaatemia. The

sports teams KTP and KooKoo have shown interest in esports throughout the ESGE project, but we have not had that many events with them. KTP was our main partner in a tournament dedicated to schools around Kymenlaakso, but our purpose is to help them to start their own esports school. KooKoo on the other hand is thinking about their vision and hopes to support their NHL console team. One of the aims for the future could be to combine these two teams with Kouvolan urheilukaatemia and Etelä-Kymenlaakson urheilukaatemia. ESGE helped two of these organizations to start esports training. In 2021 autumn, three esports players training with the support of trainers that were found by ESGE. This training is currently in the pilot phase, but hopefully 2022 will bring more esports players for the academies.

As you can see, the network consists of a variety of organizations, and the interest in esports is high in Kymenlaakso. The next point might be to continue development the network and take it to the next level. Municipalities and their youth associations have young people who want to play and to learn about esports. Associations like Female Gaming Finland do an amazing job in supporting a healthy culture of conversation in the gaming field. Companies in the Kymenlaakso region want to support the field through their services. Lastly, sports organizations have realized the importance of esports, and want to help youngsters in the field. ESGE is ending soon, and the next project however that works has a stable background on how to continue forward.

Key takeaways

” *Our hope is that you can learn from our experiments so that you don't make the same mistakes as we did, and so you can learn from what worked well for us.*

Antti Leppilampi

What our journey taught us

As you noticed from the earlier sections, we conducted many experiments and events during the project. The get together in 2019 set up many dreams to accomplish, and they did not all happen as we had hoped, in part due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but luckily we still managed to move forward with all the activities in some way. In this section, we will describe more openly, where we succeeded, and where we failed. We will also mention some notes on what kind of impact Covid had for the project's implementation. Luckily, the esports field can get together online easily, so our project did not suffer from the pandemic as much

as some other fields, but it did have an influence on our work. The most notable effects were some cancelled events and we organized two hybrid events, where we experimented how to organize an esports tournament during a pandemic. The hybrid events happened in Kotka Pasaati mall during the Kymenlaakso Cup event 2021, and with our final event Kino Cup.

We try to be as open as possible in this section. Our hope is that you can learn from our experiments so that you don't make the same mistakes as we did, and so you can learn from what worked well

for us. Firstly, I could say that the esports captures peoples interest in Finland. We had contact with people and organisations from different media, where we were invited to share our experiences from the field and address the often asked question, is esports a real sport or not?

Many people have their own thoughts on this, but we did our best to express the message that esports can be included as sports the more competitive your esports hobby gets. We tried our best to share the sports side in esports in each event we organized. During Kymenlaakso Cup,

” *Lastly, and we can't stress this enough, but the importance of marketing is hugely important during a project.*



we closely cooperated with КТФ – football club by showing interviews from one of their players between the match breaks of our tournaments. In our final tournament Kino Cup, we had a sponsor advertising their products during the match breaks, and we also invited 2 players from the professional esports team SJ Gaming to share their knowledge about esports. The participants during the event had a possibility to play against one of their gamers in 1-on-1 with CS:GO.

Lastly, and we can't stress this enough, but the importance of marketing is hugely

important during a project. As previously mentioned, esports is an interesting trend, and we often noticed that it was easy to invite people to our events at first, but at the end of 2021 we noticed a slight decrease in attendance at some of our events. We had the possibility to discuss with our partner networks from different regions, who had made the same observation, but the marketing played a crucial role at the same time. By the end of the year 2021, the esports players might have had many different events to choose from, but the importance of marketing is that we should express through our messaging what makes

our events different from others. On some events we succeeded with that, but in some, we could have improved. All in all, now when the project is ending, we know much more. We know where the eSports field is in Kymenlaakso 2022, and we have some ideas on how to advance the field further.

Damian Santibanez

Pasaati – Organizing a hybrid esports event

While we were running the Kymenlaakso Cup in collaboration with Digital Barracks Oy, we organized an information afternoon at the Pasaati shopping mall in Kotka. To provide some context, we visited them on the 30th May 2021, when every event was fighting to deal with the Covid pandemic and very few managed to happen.

Despite the logistical issues, our colleagues from Pasaati and our team kept being positive about organizing a family friendly, Covid-safe stand, where we could inform people about the esports projects in the region. Additionally, we offered Covid-safe snacks, and streamed the Rocket League final matches that were being played and streamed from Kouvola for the Kymenlaakso cup that same day.

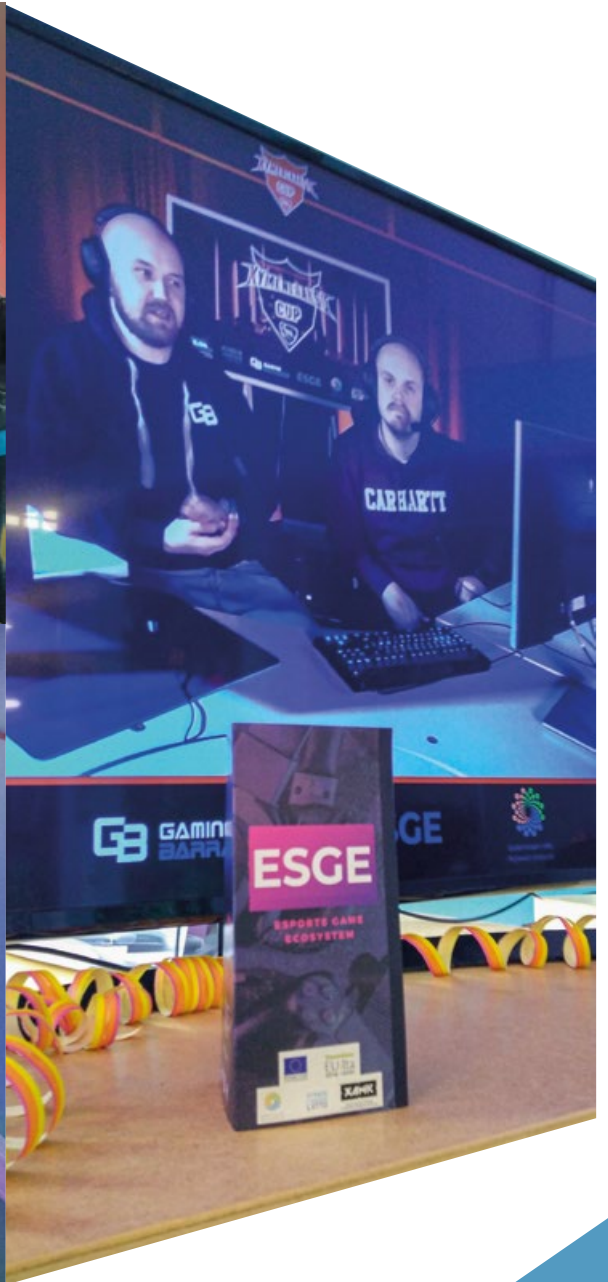
We started preparing for the visit to Pasaati a couple of days before, as we wanted to create ambience in the room they provided for us. The idea was to give life to the empty

store at the entrance from the Kotka Kaupatori that they provided for us. We filled the white empty space with ambience lights, screens where the games were happening, and futons, were the most engaged viewers watched hours of the broadcast.

We managed to spread information about esports and our project safely, despite Covid. We saw parents dragged in by their kids to see what we were doing, and we had the opportunity to inform them about esports that their children were so interested in.

Even though there were many doubts when this happened, the visit was a success. Special thanks go to the team at Pasaati shopping mall, who helped us make something safe and fun during hard times. The Rocket League games streamed from Kouvola were brought to Kotka and we had the chance to share with the customers and families our work in a positive atmosphere.





Otso Saari

B2B marketing for dummies or “how I learned to stop worrying and tolerate the chaos”

B2B marketing as well as organizing events have always been of great interest to me, even if I spent most of the classes on these topics in a state between wakefulness and sleep. Come summer 2021, however and these skills (which I honestly thought I would never use) became of utmost importance. I was told to contact companies on behalf of ESGE for sponsorship and event organizing purposes, in a week no less.

I began this adventure into B2B marketing with panic-induced studying on the topic, as I had little real idea how to conduct such business, much less real life experience or confidence in speaking to actual company representatives. The company I was to have a meeting with was the ice hockey team KooKoo from Kouvola, as they had expressed interest in being part of an esports event we were organizing at the time. As a person who doesn't follow or even really understand ice hockey, I was not thrilled about this being my first experience meeting with company representatives. I struggled to find a starting point to estab-

lish common ground. I was relieved by the fact that as a UAS project, we had no real way or need to find financial aid from these companies, which I figured would make the process easier on me, and possibly even for our counterparts from KooKoo.

A website instructed me to find something that we can offer them and vice versa. Focusing on our offerings helped to lift the heavy veil of sleep deprivation around my memories of past lectures on the topic. Following the proven process of shuffling through YouTube videos of less-than-optimal quality, I started to put together a list of things to mention in my pitch as well as thinking of possible questions they might ask and in-depth responses to them. As a thick-accented man on YouTube said, “it is better to be prepared to answer every and all questions”.

Come time for our meeting, I was nervously pacing around my apartment reciting my speech with different intonations, word choices and varied levels of excitement to

prepare myself, making sure it didn't sound too memorized or practiced while trying to pump in as much caffeine before the call. The first meeting went as meetings usually go. They were human too and we got along just fine. KooKoo seemed very interested in our ideas for the event and being a part of it. We scheduled a new meeting a few weeks into the future to catch up with them about how the event marketing and organization had progressed and it was over. Of course, I stressed about the future meetings as well, but nothing as drastic as this first one.

I think the lesson behind this short tale of trial and triumph is to pay attention in school and not to stress too much about pitches. If they are well researched and contain interesting propositions for both parties, then they will probably go well. However, KooKoo ended up losing interest over the event and not participating a few months later, so to all new marketers and event organizers: be prepared for that as well, it happens.

Otso Saari

Youth and esports

We have all heard about the supposed negatives of gaming, young people becoming more and more antisocial and depression numbers rising year-by-year. What I, and many like me, would like to propose that gaming is not such a negative way to spend time. It helps too, if parents are knowledgeable about the topic. At its core, competitive gaming is a highly social activity in the way most traditional sports are. A study found that 57% of teens made friends online and the most common way being through gaming.

Esports is slowly becoming more recognized as a competitive field, with most teenagers today playing video games. The massive quantity of gamers requires that there would be a safe introduction to Finnish esports, but also, this creates opportunities for natural and easily accessible networking opportunities for young people, along with possible new friends, teams, and job opportunities in the future.

It is important to recognize, that while esports can offer social opportunities as well as career ones, it also has a role in the increased amount of antisocial behavior from young people, as well as links to depression and social anxiety according to certain sources. This is believed to be caused by the addictive nature of game design, as the partial reinforcement effect (PRE) rewards gam-

ers enough to keep them playing, but not predictably enough to bore them. This can make it very hard to stop playing and search for new positive reinforcement. Esports, and especially daily gaming, can be very addictive and the links to decreased school performance must be recognized, especially if the child or teenager tends to spend most of their time online. Online echo chambers have also been linked to radical movements and misinformation, which should be kept in mind.

Bullying has also moved online, in massive quantities in fact. Online bullying, like bullying in real life situations, is a difficult problem to overcome. Parents need to be aware of how online bullying occurs and how to mitigate it, especially if they have younger children. Online bullying, at least in Finland, has become an issue, however it might be easier to provide proof of bullying by taking screenshots or video recordings. It is also important for parents to realize, that while bullying has moved online, turning off your computer or smartphone is not always the solution, as most online bullying involving young people comes from people they know in real life.

The interesting part of this equation, that often gets forgotten or swept under the rug is the fact that most of our daily activities in our working and social lives are rapidly

moving online. Computer and internet literacy is an increasingly important skill, and in some fields a strict requirement. There are some bonuses to gaming according to studies, especially with children getting used to the online world and computers. A link between fan and playing behavior of online gamers and traditional athletes has also been uncovered in studies regarding online behavior. This can act as a link to parents, helping them understand their childrens' fondness of online gaming as well as helping to find common ground with their pastimes, that could at first glance seem nothing alike.

In the case of ESGE, while social media marketing helped gather these groups together, most of the viewership in ESGE tournaments comes from word-of-mouth communication. This is due to the interconnectedness of real life and the patterns of online communications among young people. ESGE is a strong proponent of health in the gaming world, both mental and physical. A good balance is important with gaming to avoid unhealthy habits and health issues caused by gamers who remain seated for long periods of time. ESGE has organized events in the Kymenlaakso area to further this understanding, as well as bringing gamers an opportunity to socialize and compete with like-minded people.

Social Networks



Eemi Kondratjeff

Managing social media at ESGE

Looking at managing social media from the outside, it might seem like not much goes into it. Before joining the ESGE-project, I had no previous experience in professional social media management and didn't know what to expect regarding the amount of work it required. Managing social media at ESGE has been a good choice as a first position, since the stakes are relatively low and there is quite a lot of freedom when it comes to the type of content that goes out on different platforms.

Throughout my internship, I've gained experience on a handful of different areas of social media management. One of the areas that I was the most interested in was paid advertising, which I was able to try out before and during the Kino Cup event. Although it was intriguing, it was

also a bit intimidating when dealing with the budget, because we had to make sure there were not any extra zeros anywhere. It was very interesting to witness the rise in traffic with the use of paid advertising, this helped to cement my trust in the power of social media.

My social media management experience at ESGE has been a pleasant one. It gave me opportunities to try out different techniques and learn a lot during the process. I feel like this position has given me a lot and overall, it has been a great experience with a lot of freedom to learn aspects of the job at my own pace. Unfortunately, the experience is coming to an end, but I'm happy knowing that I'll be well prepared for the next position (hopefully) soon.

” *After each worry, we discussed, how could we change that in the future.*

Otso Saari

The importance of esports projects for young people

Despite what worried parents, teachers and school directors might think, the esports environment keeps growing year-by-year and the young, and not so young, are actively participating and involved in the scene. Nonetheless, the worries of the adults are not unfounded. As excessively long hours sitting in front of the screen, the isolating environment that they play in alone in their rooms, and the exposure to unregulated content and “toxic” behaviours from other players are all issues that affect the development of young people, especially when left unchecked.

Therefore, an increasing number of studies are defending the idea of including esports as extracurricular school activities for students around Europe.^{*} The idea of leaving such an environment unchecked is more and more evident to be a wasted opportunity. This is further supported by the studies that shed light on the number of benefits

* <https://www.athensjournals.gr/sports/2018-04SPO.pdf#page=81>

that esports can have for young people when practiced in a healthy environment.

As a society, through new projects and ventures we have the possibility to provide our kids, teenagers, and young adults the tools for making the most out of the games they love. The most sceptical among us might as, “why would we provide more gaming? Don’t they play enough at home?”

A study titled “Positive Personal Development through eSports” of young players, shows how some players are reaping benefits from esports that go well beyond the game itself, and echoes in the players’ life development skills. Benefits related to strengthening their capacity for commitment, cooperation, initiative, and personal growth are only the surface. In the study, it is pointed out that also deeper abilities such as emotional self-regulation (maintaining composure in high stress situations for better performance), personal growth, and even finding purpose and enjoyment

in their life, are developed and achieved by the players through their esports careers.”

Other benefits work just as any other sports or club activities. Better communication, the feeling of belonging, developing interpersonal relationships and social skills, reducing stress levels, learning new skills, improving self-esteem, as well as learning about your strengths and weaknesses and making long lasting friends that can last the whole life by finding “your” group of people that shares your interests, are all benefits that can be found in esports activities as well.

Therefore, the need to create such spaces and projects is evident. Through them, we will have the power to tailor and create spaces and opportunities for the whole community. Parents, teachers, and school directors could be given the tools to utilise

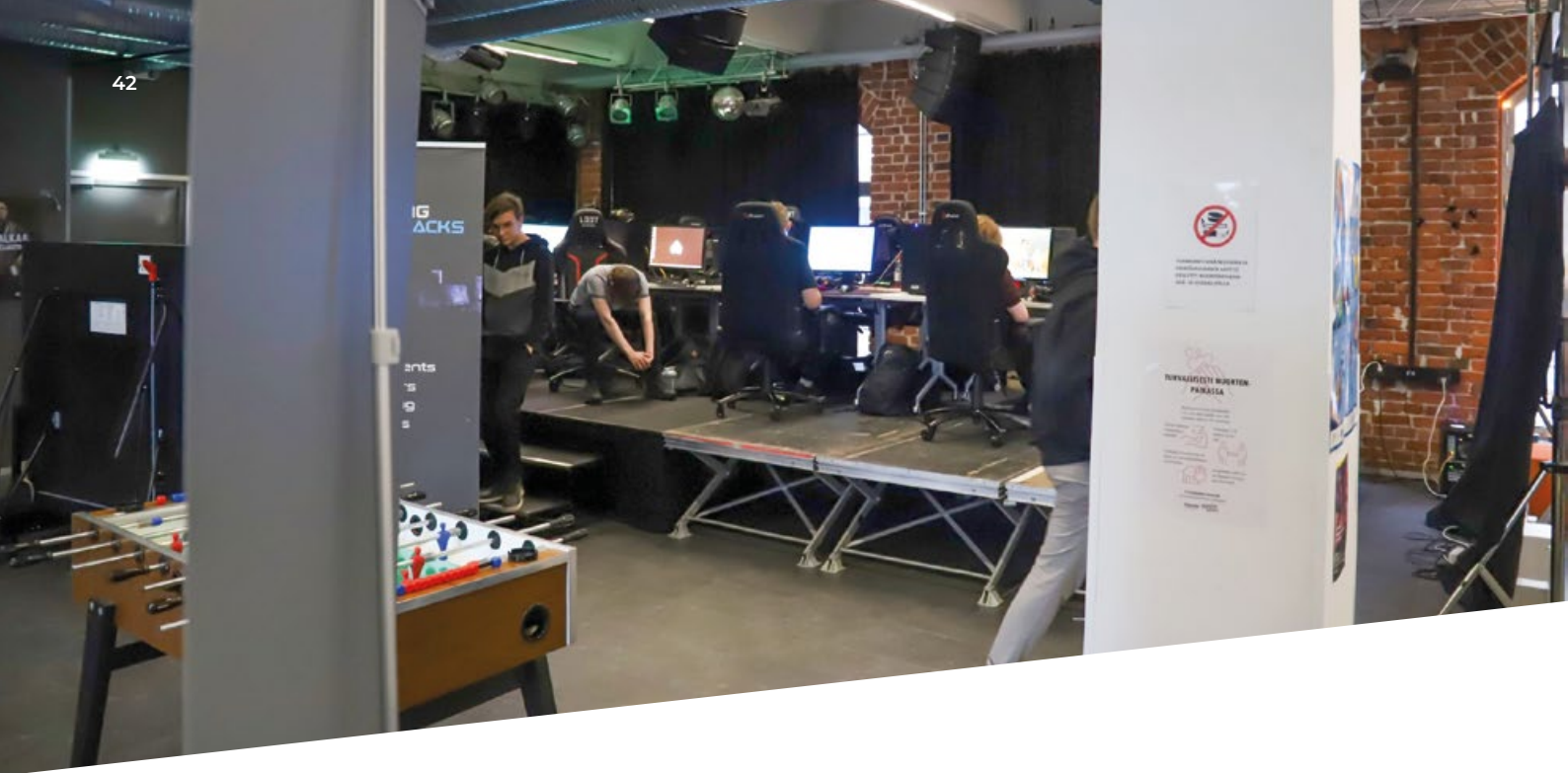
** <http://unsworks.unsw.edu.au/fapi/datastream/unsworks:54819/bin8449a367-a871-43aa-ac90-1bc6e6f65fe7?view=true>



this new “esports phenomena”. Having a controlled environment for young people and opening new opportunities for them will not only help us generate positive development environments (around something they like), but also give us the tools to help kids that have might problems with video game addiction or social issues. Through different projects we can provide the necessary tools to help young people and those who guide them combat these issues. In

conclusion, developing this field would be a valuable tool for the development of the mental health of young people.” Helping the development of other parties (besides young people) would open career and business opportunities, that benefit the young adults in the long run and create the prospective of a better future for the region’s youth.

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*** <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/667775>



Antti Leppilampi

Kino Cup lessons learned

As often happens, the planning of the Kino Cup event went smoothly, until the first difficulties arose. The first difficulty came when a month before our event our team's marketing employee found a new job as our esports professional, who was a project worker too. Changes like these are normal in project life, when contracts are ending, but they still had a large effect on our work. At the same time, we learned that we had to change the venue of the event. Some miscommunication occurred when discussing with the previous venue manager.

Luckily, we managed to find a new venue quite quickly from our ESGE network partner at Kouvola Youth club. This was a great decision since we could go directly to where the young people are. The changes intro-

duced by some of our staff members leaving was solved by giving more responsibility for the interns of the ESGE project.

The planning continued, and suddenly we were in the event week. At the end of the week, one of our possible fears came true, when a Xamk employee caught Covid. This affected the whole department where much of the IT equipment that was supposed to be used in the Kino Cup was locked down, and as such we could not use them in the event. The new restrictions made us decide to stop promoting the live event, and instead focusing on promote the online event.

The challenges continued during the first day of the event. We had problems with

the internet and with some of the computers that were borrowed from a partner, but eventually we got things rolling! The matches needed to be stopped a couple of times due to internet problems, but at the end of the day, the players participating in the finals were happy, and that's what matters the most. One of the most important moments of the day though, was a reflection session that we did at the end of the day. We went through a round, where each of us could tell things that worked today, and things that needed developing. This was a crucial moment, where everyone got to share their worries, and hear that their concerns would be taken care of. After each worry, we discussed, how could we change that in the future. Luckily, each concern had a solution, and as such, it made

everyone feel more positive about going to work the next day to continue.

On Saturday, things worked way more smoothly. Of course, there were still some issues related to the Internet connection, but on that day the whole staff team had become a group of people working side-by-side. During Saturday, we were visited from one of the most famous esports organizations from Finland, SJ Gaming. They brought their most well-known rookie

player – Jimmphant, and the participants in Kino Cup had the possibility to challenge him in the game of the day, which was cs:GO. One of the best moments was when one of the participants told us that “This was such a great day. I now feel like I could start studying esports more to get better in the field”.

People want to get many participants for an event and focus easily on the measurable effects, but people too often forget that

qualitative issues matter too. The quote above that was given by one of the participants of the event reminded us about that. Even though we did not get as many viewers as we did with Kymenlaakso Cup on the same year, we offered something valuable for people who love esports. We gave them a platform and a base that they could continue forward from.



Eemi Kondratjeff

Leading the marketing team

I worked as the leader of the marketing team and I had three students working with me. Working as a marketing team leader was a natural choice for me since I had been responsible for ESGE's marketing before in social media channels. Besides that, I had also done marketing in my previous work. We shared every member in ESGE into separate teams, which I thought was a good solution. This gave each student their own responsibility, and the work duties were clearly divided.

We met with the marketing team about once a week and discussed what each team member had done, and if there had been any challenges. During the meetings, we worked together on some larger concept and discussed what each of us will do next.

We had shared our inner channels with the team, which each of us were facilitating. That way each team member did not have too much work to do and everyone could take care of their own duties. If the marketing team did not have a person who understood Finnish, then the Finnish ESGE team members came to help.

During the autumn of 2021, I moved permanently to another project, which is why I needed to leave ESGE. I could leave the spot without worrying, since I knew the marketing would work well in the future too. It has been a pleasure to follow what the marketing team has done after I left. ESGE and the people working in the team will always have a special place in my mind.



Hopes for
the future
after ESCGE

Antti

The ESGE project has been a great learning experience for me, and I hope for the whole team as well. We have managed to create many different kinds of events, and have gotten so many people together to build something new. I can say that we have been helping to push esports forward in Kymenlaakso, and now, someone else needs to continue our legacy, and take things further forward.

We have big hopes for our new Discord server. It can serve as a community, where gamers can meet up, and plan things in the future. The community includes only Xamk students at the moment, and we are hoping to give them as clear tools as possible for them to keep developing esports locally. During the project, we managed to build an esports office in our campus in Kouvola, where we have two computers that anyone can borrow and use for their events. If someone wants to organize an event, they can start planning it in the Discord Community or even through a website, where we will gather all the relevant esports info.

Lastly, our partners have been doing great job in developing their own esports dreams. Municipalities in Kymenlaakso have their own hopes related to esports, and some have started their own esports clubs, and some are planning to start them. The sports academies are starting to provide esports training. Lastly, Xamk is planning to start its own esports education in 2023. As you can see, a lot is happening in the near future! Let's hope that these things catch on, and the great development continues in Kymenlaakso. It has been a great ride, and more will come!

Atte

I hope that the direction of future Kymenlaakso esports development will focus on the youth and young people. While companies and events are important, the development of our future always starts where most esports professionals start their esports journeys: childhood. I wish to see youth organizations enable youth to pursue esports by forming related as well as encouraging good behaviour while doing so.

I believe that the next necessary step to localize esports will be in the hands of sports organizations. It's a wasted resource that youth from across Finland do not have well supported opportunities to form teams around their video game hobbies. Now, those most dedicated might make it to the pro-level on their own ability alone. But it does not have to be this way. Organizations could support young people to develop their own esports skills, and reach higher than ever before.

And lastly, I have been extremely happy to see how far we've already come with the destigmatization of video games as a hobby. When I got into esports, games themselves were mostly a nerd thing. Now, youth clubs have better gaming computers than what I own currently! The progress has been truly inspiring. Yet, there's still a long way to go before most parents understand the possibilities of games and eSports developing invaluable soft skills for a child's future

Damián

During my nearly two years at ESGE, first as an intern and then as a project worker, I have seen how from nothing, a network of new different ventures has been slowly developed in Kouvola and Kotka. I live in Kouvola, and any project that has is aimed at engaging young adults, teenagers, and kids, is a huge contribution to the healthy development of those groups. When projects intend to create more opportunities and safe environments for young people to socially interact and cultivate a hobby, through any venue, such as esports, it inspires me. Additionally, esports is an ever-growing industry, and involvement in this area can create excellent opportunities for new and old businesses. I hope that more teams, more tournaments and more events will be held in the Kymenlaakso region.

On a more personal note, and as a Xamk student, I wish that the work to create a community that has students from all the Xamk campuses can continue through the Xamk Community Hub and extend into offline spaces as well. I would love to see this community that started in Discord go well beyond the online world, and we could see students from all over Xamk, interested in different extracurricular activities come together over coffee to share their beloved hobbies, online and offline. In a more realistic and short-term vision, I see this community active in the next few years, gathering together students and alumni, under the official supervision of an institution would be already a dream come true.

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