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NORDIC COUNCIL STRATEGY ON SOCIETAL SECURITY



Introduction

The common system of values shared between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, and the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland, is strong. Democracy, the rule of law, human rights, equality and sustainable development are basic elements in our societies.

In addition to their closeness in terms of values, culture and geography, the Nordic countries are facing many of the same challenges in societal security and emergency planning. It is important to point out that, generally speaking, work on security and emergency planning in the Nordic countries runs very smoothly. The work of the many parties involved is invaluable.

The security authorities in the Nordic countries name the following as potential threats to societal security: natural disasters, including volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, forest fires, flooding, extreme weather events, pandemics, transport accidents, nuclear power accidents, terror attacks, cyberattacks, pollution of drinking water, oil spills in the sea, and problems of supplies of energy, electricity or food. These are threats that could have an impact on a Nordic country, and that could also have cross-border consequences. Sharing our collective knowledge, experience and emergency planning would make the Nordic region better equipped, so there is every reason to co-operate and to help each other when necessary.

Democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and trust in each other and the societal institutions are crucial for ensuring safe and well-functioning societies. These are some of the main strengths of the Nordic region and, together, we bear a responsibility for ensuring that this continues in the future.

The Nordic ministerial co-operation on societal security, emergency planning, major accidents and crises is anchored, for example, in the Haga Co-operation, the vision document Ett robust Norden utan gränser ('A Robust Nordic Region Without Borders') and The Nordic Solidarity Declaration. The Nordic Defence Cooperation NORDEFCO Vision 2025 also contains many items relating to civil security. The Stoltenberg Report has left, and continues to leave, an imprint on co-operation between the countries on societal security.

The Nordic Council expresses its support for adopted agreements and the important work that is already taking place in the Nordic countries, but emphasises the *need for improvements and a more systematic follow-up of what has been decided*. In this document, we want to highlight themes that we feel are of special importance for the future. This is not an exhaustive strategy, and the Nordic Council may update the document as and when necessary.



A clear Nordic mandate

The Nordic populations are very positive to the Nordic co-operation. In a survey¹ carried out by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2017, more than 90 percent of the respondents stated that the Nordic co-operation was important or very important, with 60 percent saying it was very important. The list of areas in which Nordic citizens feel it is important to co-operate is topped by defence and security issues.

Nordic co-operation on foreign affairs, defence, and security policy is currently *outside* the remit of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The same applies to co-operation on emergency planning, major disasters and crises. This does not mean that the Nordic Council of Ministers does not engage in these areas, but that there is no clear and overall plan for the Council of Ministers' involvement. In view of the broad public support for Nordic co-operation on security issues, the Nordic Council is of the opinion that it is high time that the Nordic Council of Ministers – the leading Nordic inter-governmental body – is given a clear mandate in these areas. The Nordic Council therefore calls for:

- the Nordic governments to assess how the Nordic Council of Ministers can best be involved and support the Nordic co-operation on foreign affairs and security policy, including Nordic co-operation on societal security and emergency planning.

Clearer Nordic structure and leadership

Since 2009, the ministers responsible for the Haga Declarations have usually held an annual meeting. The leaders of the emergency planning agencies in the Nordic countries have also met annually at the 'Nordic Director-General Meeting'. Denmark is represented by the Danish Emergency Management Agency, Finland by the Ministry of the Interior, Iceland by the National Policy Authority, Norway by the Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection, and Sweden by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency.

The Nordic Council looks positively on annual meetings, both at ministerial and senior official level, but is concerned about whether this frequency is often enough and whether the structure and mandate are sufficiently clear. Individual experts and institutions from which the Nordic Council has received input report that there are areas within societal security in the Nordic region that lack agreements and policy documents. Others report a lack of clear Nordic leadership, and a common Nordic situational awareness and focus. The actors are sometimes uncertain about what type of mandate they have to drive and develop the Nordic co-operation. At times, it may be unclear when involvement at political level is needed, for example in the form of a government agreement, which may hamper new initiatives.

Some also report that there are still many border obstacles between the Nordic countries that can stand in the way of efficient collaboration in the fields of societal security and emergency planning. Many express the need for joint Nordic exercises, training, and courses involving scenario-based tasks. This can help to build up a common culture for crisis management, with better understanding of each other's frames of reference and methods of working. It would also make it easier to identify and remove bottlenecks in the collaboration.

The Nordic Council calls for efficient joint Nordic emergency planning that, at short notice and without border obstacles and doubts about roles and responsibilities, can be made available and allow the countries to help each other in the event of major crises. The Nordic Council therefore calls for:

- the Nordic governments to set up an independent commission with the mandate to evaluate how to optimise Nordic co-operation on societal security.
- the Nordic governments to assess whether the policy lines in the Nordic co-operation on

¹ <https://www.norden.org/en/news/stronger-together-co-operation-popular-among-those-living-nordic-region>



emergency planning are sufficiently defined, and what may need to be clarified.

- the Nordic governments to prepare/update a review of joint resources and mobilisation opportunities, and a joint Nordic risk analysis and emergency plan.
- the Nordic governments to, as soon as possible, prepare a tangible plan for identifying and removing border obstacles that are currently preventing Nordic co-operation on societal security and emergency planning.
- the Nordic governments to draw up a systematic programme for joint Nordic exercises and training courses in emergency planning, and to allocate sufficient resources for this.

Information in some documents and reports on societal security² shows that Finland, Sweden and Norway have established collaboration in many areas, but that the collaboration does not include Denmark (with the Faroe Islands and Greenland) and Iceland. The Nordic Council emphasises the importance of ensuring that this has reasonable grounds and cannot be attributed to coincidence. The Nordic Council therefore calls for:

- the Nordic governments to evaluate whether the 'Nordic added value' and collaboration opportunities between the Nordic countries have been sufficiently explored.

Peace-making and conflict-prevention

The Nordic Council is of the opinion that peace-making and conflict-prevention are important for societal security, both in the Nordic region and globally. The Nordic Council therefore calls for:

- the Nordic governments to strengthen the Nordic co-operation on peace-making and conflict-prevention.

- the Nordic governments and the Nordic Council to consider a possible follow-up of the recommendations presented in the report **New Nordic Peace** from April 2019.

Cybersecurity

Cyber threats are a constantly increasing problem for societal security, and the Nordic region has everything to gain by standing united in tackling the new challenges. In addition, a strengthened joint Nordic international collaboration would be of great significance. The Nordic Council therefore calls for:

- the Nordic governments to extend the Nordic-Baltic collaboration on cybersecurity.
- the Nordic-Baltic countries to continually share assessments of threats in the cyber field.
- the Nordic countries to, as far as possible, ensure that the Nordic countries outside the EU or NATO will have access to collaboration on cybersecurity in their organisations.
- the inclusion of cybersecurity as a key part of the joint Nordic transatlantic dialogue on security policy.

Overarching security and police collaboration

The overarching security³ will ensure efficient and coordinated action by society's collective resources in connection with emergencies, disasters or major incidents. The aim is to maintain vital societal functions and to protect life and property. Municipalities, the civil population and businesses in the Nordic region should all have emergency awareness and a clear understanding of how they can contribute to the overarching security.

The police is the authority that, in peacetime, has main responsibility for a country's internal security. The security situation has changed in the Nordic region in recent years, and the threats are far more

2 For example, the report '**Så bygger vi säkerhet i Norden**' ('How We Are Building Security in the Nordic Region') by The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB).

3 By 'overarching security', here we are referring to society's collective contingency resources, comprising the military defence, civil defence, the police, and civil contingency agencies.



composite than previously, which increases the strain on police resources.

The Nordic region continues to be among the regions in the world with the highest level of trust in public authorities. This trust is part of the 'Nordic gold' that we must protect.

The Nordic Council is of the opinion that more systematic Nordic police collaboration, and better Nordic coordination of the overarching security, will strengthen societal security and the population's feeling of safety. The Nordic Council therefore calls for:

- the Nordic governments to further develop and adapt the Nordic police collaboration to solve problems caused by lack of resources and new threats.
- the Nordic governments to strengthen the Nordic police collaboration on cybercrime and technical investigations at crime scenes (forensic work).
- the Nordic governments to evaluate whether there are areas where the police and the defence forces in the Nordic region should collaborate more, and coordinate their activities to counter any threats in a more effective way.
- the Nordic governments to increasingly develop best practices in the work to tackle hybrid threats and cyber threats, and evaluate whether there are areas where the defence and civil contingency agencies should further develop and coordinate their activities to tackle these types of threats.
- the Nordic governments to further develop best practices for involving businesses, municipalities and the civil population in the work on emergency contingency planning.

Forest fires and fatal fires

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges

of our time, and this could also have fatal consequences for societal security. According to climate researchers, we can expect warmer summers and more extreme droughts in the future, with increased risk of forest fires. Help from neighbouring countries can be crucial for tackling disasters, as we saw during the forest fires that raged in Sweden and Norway in the summer of 2018.

The Nordic countries currently work largely independently on preventing serious fires, including fatal fires. The level of ambition, methods and allocated funding vary greatly from country to country, and there are big differences between the Nordic countries in terms of causes of fires and the number of burn injuries per 1000 inhabitants. This indicates that the Nordic countries could benefit greatly from increased collaboration and sharing of experiences on fire prevention. The Nordic Council therefore calls for:

- the Nordic governments to evaluate the possibilities for a joint-Nordic fleet of fire-extinguishing aircraft.
- the Nordic governments to prepare a joint Nordic strategy for fire prevention.

Food and energy supplies

In 2017, the report Nordic Energy Co-operation: Strong today – stronger tomorrow was published. The report clearly highlights the importance of strengthening collaboration on energy in the Nordic region. However, the security of energy supply was not addressed in the report, despite this being a key issue for how we should develop the energy solutions of the future. The Nordic Council observes that the collaboration structure and knowledge is somewhat lacking in this area. The Nordic Council is also of the opinion that contingency planning to ensure supplies of important foodstuffs can be strengthened with increased Nordic collaboration. The Nordic Council therefore calls for:



- the Nordic governments to carry out an analysis of how Nordic collaboration on energy can contribute to greater supply security.
- the Nordic governments to carry out a consequence analysis regarding food supply in the Nordic region in the event of serious crises.

Health collaboration

Collaboration on contingency planning regarding health and medical treatment is nothing new for the Nordic countries. A Nordic **Public Health Preparedness Agreement** on helping each other in disasters and emergencies came into force in 2003, and the **Svalbard Group** has a special mandate from the Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs to follow up contingency planning. The Nordic Council sees potential for further development of the collaboration, for example with regard to supply of medicines and the operative planning regarding external attacks. The Nordic Council therefore calls for:

- the Nordic governments to coordinate activities to ensure supplies of important medicines and other health-related materials.
- the Nordic governments to strengthen the health collaboration in terms of being better prepared in the event of attack on one of the Nordic countries.

CBRN collaboration

In view of the complex threat and risk picture, strengthening the Nordic collaboration on chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear threats would be of great benefit. The Nordic Council therefore calls for:

- the Nordic governments to, as soon as possible, carry out a joint Nordic review of which resources are at their disposal for combating CBRN threats, and how they can quickly and efficiently help each other if and when necessary.

Emergency services

NORDRED is the Nordic collaboration for the emergency services. The Nordic Council is of the opinion that this important collaboration should be further developed and strengthened, and that obstacles to cross-border collaboration should be identified and removed. The Nordic Council therefore calls for:

- the Nordic governments to prepare a joint Nordic strategy for optimising the emergency services.

Emergency communication

There is great need for secure communications to enable exchange of information. The emergency networks in Finland (Virve), Sweden (Rakel) and Norway (Nødnett) are already closely connected, enabling actors in law and order, security and health to efficiently communicate and collaborate. Denmark and Iceland are still outside this arrangement. The Nordic Council therefore calls for:

- the Nordic governments to continue the work to ensure robust and borderless emergency communication throughout the Nordic region, ensuring that Denmark and Iceland are connected to the Nordic emergency network as soon as possible.

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