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Crime prevention in Sweden

Current status and development needs 2019

**The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) –
centre for knowledge about crime and crime prevention measures**

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) works to reduce crime and improve levels of safety in society. We do this by providing factual information and disseminating knowledge on crime, crime prevention, and the justice system's reactions to crime.

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This is a summary of the Brå report Det brottsförebyggande arbetet i Sverige. Nuläge och utvecklingsbehov 2019

This summary can be downloaded from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention's website, www.bra.se/publikationer.

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Summary

On 16 February 2017, Brå received a new mandate to describe Swedish crime prevention each year in an annual report. The purpose of this report is to provide a view of crime prevention in Sweden in 2018 on the local, regional, and national levels. Brå has placed emphasis on matters described as particularly important in the *Tillsammans mot brott* (Combating against crime) crime prevention programme (Skr 2016/17:126). This year's report has specifically focused on describing the functioning of the local knowledge-based cooperation process for crime prevention and the existing development possibilities. The documentation for the report comes from external monitoring, questionnaires, causal analyses which have been obtained, interviews, Brå's development work, network meetings with the county administrative boards, and Brå's previous inventories of the work, as well as meetings, conferences, and lectures during the year, where Brå met approximately 6,000 people who work with crime prevention in some form.

National initiatives during the year

A number of national initiatives were put in place during 2018 in order to enhance crime prevention. One such initiative was the Swedish Riksdag's declaration regarding a clear role for municipalities in crime prevention. This would entail clearer legislative regulation of the municipalities' work, which can thus strengthen their cooperation with the police and other actors. Other focus areas in 2018 were crime prevention tied to community planning, violence in domestic relationships, and juvenile delinquency.

Brå's development work in 2018

During 2018, Brå continued developing its work of supporting and coordinating national, regional, and local crime prevention based on the renewed and expanded mandate which the agency received. In 2017, the work was structured and mapped out, and the prerequisites were identified; this formed the basis for the continuation of the work in 2018. The county administrative boards' mandate as regional crime prevention coordinator progressed in 2018, and Brå then provided support to build up the operations. In 2016, Brå launched a focused method and process support scheme to a number of areas (known as *type areas*) in order to support the development of local, knowledge-based, crime prevention. This work was concluded in 2018, and a number of experiences from the project can be used in the development work going forward. Brå also carried out a national consultation process in 2018 as a consequence of the government's mandate to create a national network structure for crime prevention. The 24 national actors identified in the *Tillsammans mot brott* crime prevention programme were invited to participate in the consultation and they emphasised the importance of common communications and implementation efforts. The consultation process made it clear that national networks are needed in order to strengthen crime prevention in respect of:

- harmonisation, for example in respect of the agencies' process support to local crime prevention;
- coordination of the efforts which have already been made;

- new networks, for example in order to prevent young people from beginning a criminal lifestyle.

Brå has previously pointed out that there is a significant need for crime prevention training for local actors. As a result, in 2017, Brå created an online-based basic training in the subject. At the beginning of 2018, this basic training entered its second year.

One crime problem which has received particular attention during recent years is shootings between individuals with ties to criminal groups and networks. With this as a starting point, Brå has initiated a cooperation project in order to test the Group violence intervention (GVI) method in the form of a pilot project in Malmö which is financed in part through the Internal Security Fund (ISF). During 2018, Brå has also worked on disseminating best practice in various forms in order to support crime prevention actors, and has also allocated funds for evaluation, and produced a number of reports bearing on crime prevention.

The county administrative boards' crime prevention

2018 has seen a development of regional crime prevention in the form of establishment and further development of networks, training, and consultative support. It is clear from the local questionnaires to municipalities and police that the county administrative board is one important party supporting the crime prevention. At the same time, it is also clear that there are few local actors who are supported in initiating local crime prevention measures, particular those which cross municipal boundaries and which are geographically-specific crime problems. Of the respondents to the county administrative board survey, 76 per cent state that they work fulltime with crime prevention issues.

The local crime prevention and the cooperation process

The description of the local work is an enlargement of the results from last year's report *Det brottsförebyggande arbetet i Sverige, nuläge och utvecklingsbehov 2018* (Crime prevention in Sweden, current status and

development needs 2018) (Brå, 2018a). One conclusion which was drawn at that time was that there are difficulties surrounding some of the steps in the cooperation process. Brå also pointed out that there are significant differences in the local work in terms of how far along they have come, the needs which exist, and the need to adapt support and offer different solutions to different types of municipalities. It is against this background that Brå has chosen to follow up on and expand know-how regarding crime prevention, on the basis of the method support in *Samverkan i lokalt brottsförebyggande arbete* (Cooperation in local crime prevention) (Brå, 2016) and *Orsaksanalys i lokalt brottsförebyggande arbete* (Causal analysis in local crime prevention) (Brå, 2018f).

Organisation of the work

The responses from local actors make clear that there are fora for strategic cooperation, for example an overall advisory committee, in place in almost 90% of the responding municipalities. However, it is also clear that, like last year, both municipalities and the police perceive crime prevention as having a lower priority than other substantive issues. Most municipalities have one or more individuals charged with coordinating crime prevention. The majority of the respondents in the municipal questionnaire are situated in municipal management functions and have a strategic and overall function. Almost one-third work with rescue services or with a rescue services association. "Safety coordinator", "crime prevention coordinator/strategist", or "public health coordinator/strategist" are the most common position titles. However, there are very few (approximately one-fifth) who work full-time with crime prevention issues. In general, the situation is relatively the same as that described last year, even if, for example, the number of overall cooperation fora seem to have increased somewhat. The majority of municipal police officers work with strategic crime prevention in one municipality (47 per cent). It is, however, relatively common for a municipal police officer to work in two or three municipalities (43 per cent). The number of area police officers differs among the municipalities, ranging from 0 to 32 area police officers per municipality. One-fifth of the responding municipal police officers state that there are no area police officers in the

municipalities where they work, which is a total of 64 municipalities. Taken as a whole, the results show that the possibilities to conduct area police operations vary throughout the country, since the number of area police officers is unevenly allocated.

Cooperation process

The first step in the cooperation process is to determine the organisational structures, prerequisites, and capacity. In the second step, the organisation's own perception of the local set of problems is clarified. Inventories are often conducted, particularly within the police, but it is common that they take a very general approach.

In the joint preparations, the parties – most often the municipality and the police – must compile their sets of problems and analyse the problems and their causes. Municipalities and police state that the problems most often identified in the inventories are narcotics offences, road traffic offences, and public order problems. Usually, municipalities and police make it a priority to cooperate on, and work with, these specific crime problems. The next step is to analyse the causes of the identified problems. Municipalities and police state that it is difficult to conduct full causal analyses and that they have done their best based on their expertise. Several interview subjects specifically request support from others within the police and the municipality in order to be able to conduct causal analyses. However, there are also several examples where clear problem descriptions and causal analyses are carried out on a local basis.

Based on the most common crime problems – narcotics offences, road traffic offences, and public order problems – it is possible to discern some differences between the areas of responsibility and efforts of the municipalities and the police, which is also to be expected since they have different fundamental mandates. The municipality often assumes responsibility to provide information on a more generalised level, while the police have a somewhat greater focus on locations or specific individuals. The police have a greater responsibility to act, primarily in respect of addressing narcotics, public order problems, and, when relevant, even violent offences. The municipality tends to perform more work associated with residential

burglaries and vandalism, often in the form of neighbourhood watches and clean-up. This also applies to traffic offences, where the municipality uses its opportunities to modify the physical environment while the police, to a greater extent, provide information and perform various checks.

Both police and municipalities have conducted various types of follow-ups on their measures but, irrespective of the crime problem, production follow-ups are most common. On the other hand, effect follow-ups are relatively uncommon. Often the most prioritised problems (narcotics offences and public order problems) have the lowest rate of follow-up. It is significantly more common that both municipalities and police follow up on measures associated with residential burglary.

There is much to indicate that the police assume significant responsibility for problems which also affect other actors, e.g. the municipality, schools, and property owners.

Brå has identified a number of areas for development which are deemed particularly important in terms of strengthening crime prevention in local cooperation processes. In brief, these entail that parties to local crime prevention should, to a greater degree:

- have a clear, problem-oriented perspective, where the work is based on the problems and describes the problems as meticulously and concretely as possible;
- have a sound understanding of the crime problem before the analysis, and dare to rewind the process if more information about the problem is required;
- prioritise common causal analysis;
- document the work, since this gives greater certainty that the perception is shared and regarding who is responsible, as well as a better possibility of follow-up;
- in the causal analysis, focus more on direct causes of the crime problem arising at just the specific times and places, and where appropriate, work on the basis of the five overall strategies for situational crime prevention:
 - increase the effort required to commit an offence;

- increase the risk of discovery of the person who intends to commit an offence;
- reduce the reward for the person who commits an offence;
- reduce the risk of provocations which can lead to offences;
- remove excuses for those who commit offences;
- see the knowledge-based working approach as part of operations, not as an add-on.

Brå's assessment

During 2018, the county administrative boards developed their regional support work, new legislation was set in motion, and a number of agencies, Brå, and other actors continued working with the crime prevention mandate. Despite the fact that these organisational prerequisites and support structures have been enhanced, one cannot yet say that this has led to any general, intensified, practical crime prevention. Several of the challenges which Brå identified in last year's report remain. Ongoing development work must continue in order to strengthen the crime prevention and to realise the intentions behind the Government's crime prevention programme. The challenges in the crime prevention have been thoroughly analysed in this year's report and can be summarised as follows.

1. Need to increase the prioritisation and knowledge regarding crime prevention issues

In Brå's assessment, one of the most important areas for development continues to be increased prioritisation and increased interest in crime prevention issues, particularly from local decision-makers, but also from national agencies. One possibility for clarifying the importance of crime prevention and increasing its priority which Brå also highlighted in last year's report (Brå 2018 a) is the possibility to enact legislation regarding the municipalities' responsibility for crime prevention. Wording in a programme is not sufficient to induce national agencies to push on crime prevention issues – it also requires clearer governance in the form of wording in appropriation directions and in individual mandates. For the police, this year's analysis makes clear that there is a lack of area police in many municipalities, and they are

often a prerequisite for implementing the plans which are produced.

2. Need for more focused work based on the cooperation process

This year's report specifically focuses on the local knowledge-based process and it is important to further strengthen this work in order to achieve greater effectiveness of the crime prevention measures which are carried out. The new information arising from this year's analysis is that the crime problems which are inventoried are often described too superficially and generally to be operationalised and become the subject of a causal analysis and concrete efforts on the part of the municipality and the police, as well as other actors. Accordingly, all actors need to work on creating more concrete depictions of the problems and focused analyses of specific and local crime problems. Taken as a whole, it is clear that there are relatively few municipalities and local police areas which have conducted a good-quality causal analysis. Far too many lack the ability or resources to carry out all of the steps in the analysis, which results in important elements being skipped. Many state that conducting causal analyses is particularly complicated. The measures should, to a greater extent, be based on direct causes of crime problems and focus on places, perpetrators, and victims rather than on general efforts. These efforts would thus have better prerequisites for achieving the desired effect.

3. Need to involve more actors and increase innovation capacity

The work of strengthening and involving civil society and businesses in crime prevention needs to be intensified, among other things with more strategic initiatives from companies and industry organisations which, in turn, can enhance the conditions for the local actors. Innovation capacity within the crime prevention also needs to increase, both in respect of new efforts, as well as in areas such as design and product development. At the same time, innovations and research need to be used and the will – or perhaps the courage – to try and to evaluate different types of methods and crime prevention needs to increase. In order to know more about what works in terms of crime prevention and how to work most effectively, it is important to strengthen follow-up work and evaluation in the local crime prevention area,

preferably to a higher degree than is the case today, in cooperation with institutions of higher education and universities.

In the assessment, it is important to consider that not much time has passed since the crime prevention was strengthened, that there are still significant variations between municipalities and local police areas, and it is difficult to measure such a development. It is also likely that the measures and efforts undertaken during the year will have an impact on the work in the future. For example, the work of national networks and the county administrative boards' regional support could contribute to increasing prioritisation within the area. The regional organisation which has been worked up by the county administrative boards is deemed to have contributed to an enhanced support structure for the municipalities. This has been positive but, in Brå's opinion, it is important that the growth continue and that the support becomes even more concrete. The cooperation and networks provide a sound framework, but the work now needs to make further contributions of practical support to the local crime prevention actors.

Although it is not possible to say that the work in general has taken a step forward since the crime prevention programme was implemented, there are individual examples and positive tendencies on the national, regional, and local levels which are worth highlighting.

Strengthened local structure

Some municipalities, primarily those with a smaller number of inhabitants, have introduced or expanded the role of the local crime prevention coordinator; one such example is the municipality of Bjuv. It also seems that a somewhat greater number of municipalities have overall strategic cooperation work in place (local crime prevention council or the like). One can also see a tendency towards developing a more analytical and knowledge-based approach in a number of the causal analyses which have been sent in to Brå from, for example, Kungälv, Falkenberg, Norrköping, Vårgårda, Helsingborg and Örebro.

Increased interest in situational prevention

Interest in crime prevention and safety creation issues in urban planning and sustainable urban development has increased among professional

groups that are relevant in that context. Specific handbooks and guidelines have been produced locally, for example in Huddinge and Haninge, and broader initiatives have also been taken for cooperation regarding different types of locations or incidents.

There are adaptations to different conditions

The work on a concrete model for the cooperation process, EST (*effektiv samordning för trygghet*; Eng. *effective coordination for safety*), as well as other similar operative cooperation efforts have spread to several municipalities. These include municipalities with challenges surrounding socially disadvantaged areas which were included in Brå's development project, for example Borås, as well as smaller municipalities such as Götene. Work with police-citizen partnerships has also generated development of the common work in municipalities with limited resources, such as Dorotea, Lycksele, Sorsele, Storuman Vilhelmina, and Åsele.

Taken as a whole, Brå's assessment is that the support structures for crime prevention have been strengthened and that the issues have received sharper focus, but that several previous challenges remain. However, there are individual examples which may indicate that the enhancement efforts have started to show results in intensified operative work, and if this enhancement is maintained, the conditions exist for a more pronounced future development.