

Government Communication

2023/24:56

National strategy against
violent extremism and
terrorism – prevent, avert,
protect and manage



Government of Sweden

Foreword

The state of security in Sweden has changed and worsened. We face three main parallel threats to our internal security – terrorism and violent extremism, various state actors engaging in hostile acts towards Sweden, and serious organised crime. This threatens individuals' freedom, safety and security, and ultimately our democracy.

The threat from terrorism varies over time, both in terms of actors and intensity. However, it has been a constant presence in Sweden and around the world for the past decade. The latest Swedish national strategies addressed the threat from international terrorism. Today we face a broader

and more complex threat. We have experienced attacks in Stockholm in 2017, Visby in 2022 and Brussels in 2023, among others. We must be prepared for the fact that the threat will persist for a long time.

Work to protect society against terrorism must therefore be persistent, long-term and strategic. Having goals and focus areas in a national strategy has been a success factor in this work. At the same time, we must adjust our work in light of new challenges and experiences.

Therefore this new national strategy counters the threats from both violent extremism and terro-



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rism, through initiatives in four clear strategic areas: *Prevent* violent extremism and terrorism. *Avert* terrorist attacks and other ideologically motivated crimes. *Protect* people and functions in society. *Manage* the situation during and after an attack.

As an example of concrete adaptations, the strategy integrates measures against violent extremism with the extensive work on preventing terrorist offences, thus clearly bringing preventive actions into focus. Although various measures are primarily aimed at averting attacks, the strategy also clearly highlights the need to be prepared and handle a situation in

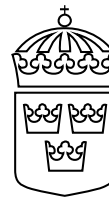
which attacks or other similar crimes nevertheless are committed.

With this strategy, it is our hope that the force of our entire society can be mobilised – locally, regionally, nationally and internationally – to effectively combat terrorism and violent extremism.

Only by working together will we be able to subdue actors' intent on weakening our democratic foundation and undermining trust in society and its institutions. This is how we can protect the safety and security of individuals, and preserve our free and open society.

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2023/24:56



National strategy against violent extremism and terrorism – prevent, avert, protect and manage

Comm. 2023/24:56

The Government hereby submits this Communication to the Riksdag.

Stockholm, 4 January 2024

Ebba Busch

Gunnar Strömmer
(Ministry of Justice)

The Communication's principal content

The Government has prepared a new comprehensive national strategy against violent extremism and terrorism and, in the budget, has prioritised measures that reinforce national security in order to provide a long-term focus for efforts in Sweden locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

The strategy is divided into four areas: *Prevent*, *Avert*, *Protect* and *Manage*. These areas encompass the actors in society that are engaging to avert crime linked to violent extremism and terrorism and, if such crimes are nevertheless committed, to enable managing their consequences. It is difficult to protect society against all threats, but through all relevant actors in society having a clear role in this work, conditions are created for successful efforts to reduce the threats against Sweden and Swedish interests abroad.

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1 Intensified efforts to combat violent extremism and terrorism

Our society shall be characterised by openness, democracy and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms. People shall be able to move around safely and freely, participate in gatherings and express their views without fear of subjection to threats or violence. Violent extremism and terrorism are threatening these fundamental values. Actors within these groups use violence and threats of violence to create division, polarisation and fear, with the overall aim of harming institutions, groups and individuals so as to influence developments in society.

Sweden has faced new challenges that require forceful action. In the budget, the Government has prioritised measures that reinforce Swedish national security. Appropriations for the judicial system are expected to increase from SEK 69 billion to SEK 90 billion for 2023–2026. This strategy describes the threat scenario and sets a clear focus for the long-term work within the framework of the Government’s priorities.

1.1 About violent extremism and terrorism

Violent extremism consists of movements and individuals that adopt and legitimise violence as a means by which to implement extreme ideological opinions and ideas. However, such movements or individuals do not always engage in actual violence. Violent extremism can take different forms, from individuals or groups supporting, planning or inciting others to commit ideologically motivated crimes in various ways, to individuals or groups physically or psychologically harassing, threatening or seriously harming other people. There are also anti-democratic movements that are not linked to any extremist movement and that promote anti-democratic objectives, such as the establishment of a totalitarian or theocratic form of government or the abolition of fundamental rights and freedoms for certain groups in the population. Threats also come from movements that embrace non-democratic means, but with objectives that are more diffuse.

In the case of expressions of violent extremism, general provisions of criminal law apply, for example for assault, unlawful threats, agitation against a population group or other crimes against public order or against individuals. As an aggravating circumstance in the assessment of penalty value, in addition to the conditions applying for each specific type of offence, particular consideration shall be given to whether a motive for an offence has been to insult a person or a population group on grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation, transgender identity or expression or another similar circumstance. This general regulation on aggravating circumstances and the provisions on agitation against a population group and unlawful discrimination constitute the offences that are usually designated as hate crimes. Hate crime legislation aims to provide specific protection for acts committed against individuals or groups on grounds of, for example, their ethnic origin, sexual orientation or transgender identity or expression.

A terrorist offence is when someone commits or attempts to commit an intentional offence, such as murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, sabotage or hijacking, which could be detrimental to a country or an intergovernmental organisation. In order for a crime to constitute a terrorist offence, the intention must have been to seriously intimidate a population or part of a population, improperly coercing a public body or an intergovernmental organisation to take or refrain from taking a measure, or seriously destabilising or destroying fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures in a country or in an intergovernmental organisation. A number of groups, individuals and entities are listed under the United Nations (UN) counter-terrorism sanctions. Besides this, individual states or groups of states, such as the EU, can have their own sanctions lists of groups, individuals and entities with a view to averting terrorist financing. Sweden is bound by the sanctions imposed by the UN and the EU. Numerous states, including Sweden, have criminalised participation in a terrorist organisation.

The term ‘radicalisation’ refers to the process by which a person or group begins to accept violence for political or ideological purposes. Violent extremism and terrorism do not arise in a vacuum. Social ills, polarisation and political events can contribute to creating anti-democratic sentiment and discontent which, in turn, can provide a hotbed for violent ideologies and extremist groups to take hold.

In the strategy, ‘violent extremism’ is used as an umbrella term. To describe the crimes committed by individuals within violent extremist environments and within anti-democratic movements, but which are not terrorist offences, the terms hate crime, ideologically motivated crime or crime that threatens democracy are used.

1.2 A new threat scenario against Sweden and Swedish interests

The threat from violent extremism and terrorism has become increasingly complex and difficult to combat. Not least, the plethora of digital platforms contributes to the ability to disseminate violent messages and terrorist content on a broad front, and to the cross-border nature of the threats. Violent extremist environments are constantly changing and are fuelled by political events and social crises, both nationally and internationally. War and armed conflicts can be a hotbed for violent extremism and terrorism, and thus also for other crimes such as illegal arms trafficking, drug trafficking, tax crimes, money laundering and different forms of human trafficking. The dissemination of terrorism-related material in digital environments and false information about various armed conflicts further aggravates existing points of conflict.

The threat scenario is more complex than before

The main driving force behind ideologically motivated crime and terrorism is no longer confined to the three main extremist environments in Sweden, i.e. violent Islamist, right-wing and left-wing extremist

environments. Violent extremism has undergone ‘hybridisation’, meaning that people both within and outside of extremist environments pick out certain parts from a number of extreme ideologies and conspiracy theories, and then compile them based on their own personal worldview and perception of who the enemy is. Today, the threat of attack comes from both terrorist organisations and from ideologically motivated lone actors who can carry out attacks by relatively simple means. Violent propaganda that various actors disseminate on social media plays a key role both in radicalisation processes and in the planning of violent acts.

Violent extremism follows developments in society at large. The fact that digital platforms have become central to all communication, as well as a tool for payment services and for the control and governance of core functions in society, has also made it easier for terrorist organisations and violent extremist groups to disseminate propaganda, radicalise and recruit new members, coordinate and plan attacks and generate financial resources. Although the prevalence of terrorist content in the open, more public part of the internet has declined in recent years, such content is still easy to access in an increasingly digitalised society. Anonymisation services, new technologies and encryption have increased opportunities for acting covertly. This has made it difficult for law enforcement authorities to determine who is behind the information being shared and assess how many threat actors are online. Violent extremist messages on digital platforms can also lead to people previously unknown to the judicial authorities developing intentions and capabilities for committing acts of violence and terrorist attacks.

Violent extremist environments also use digital platforms and constantly adapt their messages and methods to attract and recruit young people. In recent years, the number of minors in Sweden with the intention and ability to participate in violent extremism and terrorism has increased, which has led to a heightened risk of violent crimes and attacks being committed in places closely linked to young people, for instance schools and other familiar places where they are present.

A broader threat to democracy has emerged

There is also a broader constitutional threat to Sweden consisting of different activities aimed at weakening democratic society and undermining trust in society and its institutions. The broader threat is linked to the development of organised crime, violent extremism and terrorism. For a long time, events both in Sweden and abroad have led to Sweden and Swedish interests being the object of targeted information campaigns from foreign actors. The dissemination of false information, rumours, disinformation and propaganda glorifying violence aggravates clashes in society and undermines trust in society’s core institutions, and can also contribute to a heightened threat against various representatives of society. There is a risk that this course of events will also fuel radicalisation into violent extremism and contribute to lowering the bar for engaging in a violent extremist environment, which in turn can increase the threat of attacks against Sweden.

A report by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe from 2022 – Hate speech and fake news (SALAR, 2023) – describes how hate speech increased during the pandemic. Access to digital tools that can be used anonymously or under a false identity has, according to the report, created numerous and varied opportunities to subject elected representatives to disinformation campaigns, cyber-attacks, defamation and other online hate speech. According to the Council of Europe’s report, xenophobic, homophobic, transphobic, racist and misogynistic slurs and fake news are detrimental to local and regional democracy as a whole, as these can contribute to harassing and bullying groups that are often under-represented in political life.

It is important to identify the disinformation and the false rumours that are disseminated by actors in Sweden because this is picked up and exploited by violent extremist environments, for instance in their own propaganda. The Swedish Defence Research Agency has, on behalf of the Swedish Security Service, produced a report entitled *Rutten demokrati – konspirationspropaganda, rasism och våld* (Rotten democracy – Conspiracy propaganda, racism and violence) (Swedish Defence Research Agency, 2023). According to the report, the relationship between political activity in digital environments and in physical reality is complex, and legal and illegal activities take place in parallel. Some actors claim that they are completely beyond Swedish legislation, while others systematically test the boundaries of what can constitute criminal activity. Based on the analysis, the agency concludes that knowledge is needed about the ideological context and about the link between ideology and acts of violence, in order to enable combating violence effectively.

Children and young people spend much of their time on various digital platforms, including gaming platforms. These platforms serve an important social function, but there is also a downside that consists of racism, sexism and anti-democratic expressions. In the report *Hatbrott och andra brott som hotar demokratin, delredovisning 1* (Hate crimes and other crimes that threaten democracy – interim report 1) (Swedish Police Authority, 2022), the Police Authority determines that, for generations born in the 2000s, and who have grown up in a digitalised world, subjection to crime in the digital world is as real as if the crime had been committed in the physical space. Subjection to online abuse is much more common among younger age groups. According to the 2023 Swedish Crime Survey, almost 6 per cent of the age group 16–19 reported that they had been subjected to online abuse. The equivalent share for people aged 65 or above is between 0.6 and 0.9 per cent. Another factor that the Police Authority highlights as a consequence of heightened digitalisation is the increased vulnerability in society’s infrastructure. Cybercrime, such as attacks on authorities’ and municipalities’ websites, is committed regularly.

According to the Swedish Police Authority, there has been an increase in attempts at undue influence and undue influence offences at different workplaces targeting public officials, elected representatives, journalists, opinion-leaders, but also in relation to other professional groups such as researchers. The report *Mellan salafism och salafistisk jihadism – påverkan mot och utmaningar för det svenska samhället* (Between Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism – Influence and Challenges for Swedish

Society) (Swedish Defence University, 2018) shows, for example, that people within this extremist environment can attempt to influence agency decisions within social services. It also occurs that people who have ties with this extremist environment take up employment within healthcare, schools and social care, and it is therefore important to ensure that a person offered employment with a municipality or a public-sector employer does not have any ties with such criminal activity that they pose a risk to the operations.

1.3 A new comprehensive strategy against violent extremism and terrorism

In order to counter the threats posed by violent extremism and terrorism and to counteract the push and pull factors for violent extremism, including in digital environments, intensive cooperation is needed, both nationally and internationally. Preventive measures are needed to reduce polarisation, radicalisation and recruitment into violent extremist and terrorist groups. Effective preventive measures that avert acute threats are also needed. Protecting essential services and the exercise of our rights and freedoms is crucial. In the event of a terrorist attack, swift and resolute intervention is necessary to restore security. Citizens shall be able to trust in society's institutions and that Sweden remains a safe country to live in.

Based on previous strategies, Government commissions and action plans, and with account taken of developments in Sweden and abroad, the Government has reinforced and developed this work. In this context, particular mention can be given to: Extensive financial investments in the judicial system, particularly in the Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Security Service; the establishment of the Swedish Centre for Preventing Violent Extremism (CVE) at the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention; legislative efforts to achieve appropriate and comprehensive criminalisation of terrorist offences; bolstering anti-terrorist financing measures; and commissioning competent authorities with training staff, developing guidance and support, intensifying cooperation and exchanging information.

The Government's comprehensive strategy is aimed at the challenges associated with both the threat of new terrorist attacks, and the risks associated with the development of violent extremism in Sweden and abroad. This new comprehensive strategy against violent extremism and terrorism covers all forms of violent extremism, but also the anti-democratic movements and networks that can provide a hotbed for problematic developments in society. The strategy replaces the previous strategies Prevent, preempt and protect – the Swedish counter-terrorism strategy (Communication 2014/15:146) and Actions to Make Society More Resilient to Violent Extremism (Communication 2014/15:144).

Four strategic areas

The strategy is divided into four areas: *Prevent*, *Avert*, *Protect* and *Manage*. These areas encompass the actors in society that are engaging to

avert crime linked to violent extremism and terrorism and, if such crimes are nevertheless committed, to enable managing their consequences. In the same way as previously, the areas therefore aim to describe the roles and responsibilities of different actors and thus to provide guidance for the work as a whole. The breakdown also aims to facilitate following up on measures.

Purpose, structure and scope

The aim of the strategy is to provide support for long-term efforts. Society needs to be one step ahead of actors who want to harm Sweden and Swedish interests.

The structure of the strategy roughly follows the breakdown below. Section 2, *Prevent* focuses on reducing growth, preventing the risk of radicalisation of children and young people and increasing resilience to disinformation, false rumours and violent extremist propaganda. Section 3, *Avert* concerns measures aimed at threatening actors and at averting the possibility of funding and access to weapons and other means. Section 4, *Protect* concerns the important work to protect democratic society, its institutions and fundamental rights and freedoms, and continuing to identify risks and vulnerabilities. Section 5, *Manage* addresses how terrorist attacks or ongoing deadly violence is to be managed, the importance of accountability and initiatives for victims. In each area there are a number of objectives which, in turn, provide the framework for the focus of the work ahead.

The strategy overlaps with crime prevention and efforts to combat organised crime. Experience from law enforcement agencies shows clear links between organised crime and violent extremism and terrorism, for example as regards human trafficking and arms trafficking. These different groupings target similar forms of criminal activity and exploit society's vulnerabilities.

From the research overview *Män, maskulinitet och våldsbejakande extremism – en kunskapsöversikt* (Men, masculinity and violent extremism – an overview of insights (CVE, 2022)), it is clear that misogyny is central in violent extremist environments, which is linked to conservative understandings of gender, in which men and women are considered to be essentially different with very different roles in society and activism alike. Misogyny can be expressed in different ways, but often concerns the control of women's sexuality and the (re)introduction of men's power and supremacy in the public and in the private spheres. Violent extremist environments are dominated by men and violence is used to assert masculine status. The report highlights that there are overlaps between ideologically motivated violence, and domestic violence. Efforts to combat violent extremism and terrorism are therefore important to violence prevention work to combat men's violence against women.

Racism can be an expression of violent extremism, but racism and similar forms of hostility are also expressed in other ways in society. Preventive work against racism is primarily carried out within the framework of the national plan against racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime, as well as the five action programmes that supplement it

and include actions against Afrophobia, antisemitism, antigypsyism, Islamophobia and racism against Sami. The Living History Forum coordinates the plan and follows up the work on the action programmes. In addition, in accordance with its instructions, the agency has the task of promoting work for democracy and human rights.

1.4 Strategic premises for the work on combating violent extremism and terrorism

The work to combat violent extremism and terrorism must be pursued with means that are compatible with the principles of democratic rule of law. One important premise for the Government is that fundamental rights and freedoms and principles of the rule of law must be respected in all actions. Ultimately, it is about protecting our democracy and free and open society.

The work sometimes involves complex trade-offs between different interests and objectives, and shall not contribute to stigmatisation or risk leading to discrimination that can provide a hotbed for polarisation and further radicalisation. For example, in terms of risks of discrimination, it is important that the work is not conducted using such means or methods that would risk involving discriminatory ethnic profiling; that is, law enforcement agencies making a discriminatory selection of people who are to be subject to various forms of interventions related to their ethnicity or origin. Extensive freedom for the individual to participate in different ways in society-wide advocacy is crucial for a form of government to be called democratic. Restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of information may only be imposed to serve purposes that are acceptable in a democratic society. Nor may they go beyond what is necessary to serve the purpose, nor be to such an extent that they pose a threat to free formation of opinion. Constitutionally protected rights and freedoms, such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of demonstration, must be safeguarded.

Regulation of terrorism under criminal law

There have long been provisions in the Swedish Criminal Code that criminalise acts that may constitute terrorist offences. Regulation of terrorist offences under Swedish criminal law, which is largely based on international instruments, is an important part of national counter-terrorism. Since 1 July 2022, provisions governing terrorist offences are primarily found in the Terrorist Offences Act (2022:666). The Terrorist Offences Act replaces the Act on Criminal Responsibility for Terrorist Offences (2003:148), the Act on Criminal Responsibility for Public Provocation, Recruitment and Training concerning Terrorist Offences and other Particularly Serious Crime (2010:299) and the Act on Criminal Responsibility for the Financing of Particularly Serious Crime in Some Cases (2002:444).

The Terrorist Offences Act is essentially a restructure and recast of the provisions in the aforementioned Acts with a view to attaining appropriate, effective and transparent regulation. It contains provisions for the

implementation of the UN International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism with additional protocol, Recommendation 5: Terrorist Finance Offence by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the UN Security Council Resolution 2178, and Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism (the Counter-Terrorism Directive) and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA and amending Council Decision 2005/671/JHA.

The Terrorist Offences Act regulates criminal liability for terrorist offences, participation in a terrorist organisation, association with a terrorist organisation, financing of terrorism or particularly serious crime, public provocation to terrorism or particularly serious crime, recruitment for terrorism or particularly serious crime, training for terrorism or particularly serious crime and travel for terrorism or particularly serious crime. The regulation also contains provisions on ancillary offences, on what is meant by particularly serious crime and terrorist organisation under the law, as well as on aggravating circumstances, confiscation and monetary seizure.

Work has been in progress at the Council of Europe for some years to update the definition of terrorist offences in the Council of Europe's counter-terrorism convention. Sweden has endorsed the initiative and is participating in the formal convention negotiations that began in 2023.

Hate crimes and other crimes that threaten democracy

'Hate crime' is a collective term for the crimes agitation against a population group and unlawful discrimination, as well as the general regulation on aggravating circumstances in Chapter 29, section 2, point 7 in the Swedish Criminal Code. The latter provision means that if a motive for the crime has been to insult a person or a population group on grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation, transgender identity or expression or another similar circumstance, this shall affect the penalty value in a stricter sense. It is important that professionals have sufficient knowledge of motive-driven crime to enable swiftly identifying motives for crimes of undue influence or hate crime linked to violent extremism and terrorism.

The Swedish Police Authority has defined crimes against democracy as crimes targeting elected representatives, journalists and artists with a view to intimidating or preventing them from participating in public and democratic discourse. In the cluster of crimes that threaten democracy, there are also crimes of undue influence, such as unlawful threats and harassment aimed at silencing officials or swaying their decisions in various matters.

Cooperation and coordination at national, regional and local level are essential

The four strategic areas of the strategy should be seen as important links in a chain. Important prerequisites for successful work are both individual

responsibility and a common effort. The work requires advanced preparedness for the fact that violent extremism and terrorism can change rapidly and that new phenomena can affect the threat scenario. The authorities concerned need to be able to quickly summon the right actors and coordinate actions from local to regional and national level, and vice versa. Synergies, lessons learned and experiences need to be harnessed at all levels.

So that the strategy may serve as a tool that can contribute to working effectively, the national authorities that have existing networks and coordination responsibilities for various issues in the fields of *Prevent*, *Avert*, *Protect* and *Manage* need to take the lead in coordinating efforts. Sweden's breakdown into regions and civil areas and the division of responsibilities between the central government and municipalities are important starting points for the national authorities' coordination of actions. Through their extensive activities, faith communities and civil-society organisations form an important link between authorities and citizens. Cooperation between authorities, faith communities and other relevant actors needs to be developed further. The private sector, such as transport companies and real estate companies, banks and technology and security companies, can also have important tasks in the cooperation needed for various initiatives.

International cooperation is a necessity

International cooperation and the exchange of knowledge and experience are fundamental to the ability to develop efforts in all areas of the strategy. Sweden shares many challenges with its Nordic neighbours, with Member States of the EU and with other non-EU states. Work to comply with international law and human rights and to bolster the rule of law shall be the focus of international efforts. Sweden must work to ensure that measures to prevent violent extremism and terrorism assume a prominent role in international collaboration.

The joint effort within the EU to combat violent extremism and terrorism is primarily pursued in the Council Working Party on Terrorism (TWP) and the Council Working Party on Terrorism (International Aspects) (COTER). There is also a working group in the EU on sanctions against terrorism (Working Party on restrictive measures to combat terrorism – COMET), which e.g. analyses the basis for proposals for sanctions listings with a view to averting terrorist financing. The European Commission is also an important actor for cooperation within the EU and supports Member States in, for example, preventive efforts against radicalisation for violent extremism and terrorism. The Commission's 2020 Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU – Anticipate, prevent, protect, respond – shows that support for Member States in preventive efforts needs to be strengthened further. The Commission therefore intends to establish a new knowledge hub for radicalisation issues from 2025.

The Commission has also initiated cooperation on violent extremist propaganda in digital environments. The EU Internet Forum (EUIF) has been a collaborative venture between the Commission and a number of digital platforms since 2015. The purpose of the forum is to develop

preventive measures to avert digital platforms from being used by actors who disseminate illegal and harmful material, such as the dissemination of violent extremist propaganda and terrorism-related materials. Within the framework of the EUIF, the Commission produces reports and methodology resources that Member States can use in their work.

Since 2003, the Council of Europe has had a working group on counter-terrorism: The Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT, formerly CODEXTER, Committee of Experts on Terrorism), which includes Sweden. In recent years, CDCT has also focused on developing strategies for preventive measures aimed at young people and on measures against violent extremism.

The UN is a central organisation in global preventive efforts for countering violent extremism and terrorism, and as a forum for dialogue and safeguarding pluralism. Through political engagement and with financial contributions, Sweden works in the UN to ensure global sustainable development, not least in light of the work for democracy and sound social governance being important to creating stable societies. Sweden provides extensive core funding to the UN, for example the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which works with counter-terrorism and engages staff in operations abroad for the UN, the EU, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and within the framework of the Global Coalition Against Daesh. Swedish contributions to both civilian and military international crisis management operations can help to combat and prevent terrorism and violent extremism. Interpol's operations are also important to efforts to combat cross-border crime, including combating terrorism and violent extremism.

Counter-terrorism is an essential part of NATO's collective defence and contributes to the Alliance's core tasks. Counter-terrorism efforts are guided at an overarching level by policy guidelines (NATO's Policy Guidelines on Counter-Terrorism), which Sweden has fully endorsed. Sweden has also provided significant funding for NATO's work in this field.

The online dimension must form an integral part of the work

The online dimension must be integrated into the work and is an important part of all four areas of the strategy. Here are some examples: In order to *Prevent*, knowledge about the development of conspiracy theories, racism and violent extremist propaganda in digital environments is needed. This knowledge needs to be integrated into preventive efforts so that it may be translated into effective measures. In order to *Avert* the dissemination of terrorist content, the content must be quickly removed from different digital platforms. There are now new, legal possibilities, particularly through Regulation (EU) 2021/784 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 on addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online – the TCO Regulation. To *Protect* society against violent extremism and terrorism also aims to reduce the vulnerability of digital infrastructure by, for example, reinforcing protection against cyber-attacks. In order to *Manage* the situation during and after an attack, digital

tools and new communication channels afford possibilities to rapidly disseminate information to those affected in the event of a terrorist attack. The EU Crisis Protocol, which was put in place after the terrorist attack in Christchurch in March 2019, not only provides swift information-sharing to relevant authorities and companies outside the EU, but also the ability to quickly trace and secure evidence in the digital environment.

1.5 Implementation and follow-up

The following sections describe the strategic areas *Prevent*, *Avert*, *Protect* and *Manage* which, according to the Government, form the basis for society's long-term and sustainable work on tackling the threat from violent extremism and terrorism. Each section sets out objectives and the focus of the work ahead. Combating violent extremism and terrorism will remain a priority issue, and measures taken by the Government primarily aim to lay down conditions to enable authorities, municipalities and other actors in society to conduct effective and knowledge-based work. For example, the Government may decide on commissions for authorities and appoint inquiries into pressing issues, and submit proposals for amended or new legislation. The Government intends to continuously monitor the work in each strategic area and revert to the Riksdag with a comprehensive report on how the agencies' various activities and remits contribute to the objectives of this strategy.

2 Prevent violent extremism and terrorism

Objectives

- Preventive efforts against violent extremism and terrorism should be integrated into crime prevention work.
- Reduce the growth of violent extremism and terrorism.
- Reduce the risk of the radicalisation and recruitment of children and young people into violent extremism and terrorism.
- Bolster resilience against false information, rumours and disinformation.

Preventive work against violent extremism and terrorism aims to tackle – systematically and based on knowledge – the underlying causes of extremism and terrorism. It also aims to prevent extremist movements from recruiting more people. The work is chiefly aimed at reducing the growth of violent extremism and the scope of radicalising structures. For growth to be halted, action needs to be directed both at people who might be inspired by extremist environments, and at groups and people who find themselves in a risk environment and have exhibited signs of behaviour that could lead to violent extremism or terrorism.

2.1 Preventive efforts against violent extremism and terrorism should be integrated into crime prevention work

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On 1 July 2023, the Municipal Responsibilities for Crime Prevention Work Act (2023:196) came into force. The Act aims to ensure that the municipalities' crime prevention work is prioritised, effective and based on knowledge. Under the Act, municipalities must prepare a status report of local crime, take a position on the need for measures and decide on an action plan. The municipality shall have a coordinating function for crime prevention issues that shall, for example, coordinate and support the implementation of the municipality's work and serve as the municipality's point of contact with external actors. In order for the Act to be implemented effectively and local crime prevention efforts to be strengthened in general, the Government has reinforced the support measures of both the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention and the county administrative boards in crime prevention work. The Government has also allocated funds for which municipalities will be able to apply for certain crime prevention measures.

Municipalities need support and guidance

Preventive work against violent extremism and terrorism is the part of the general crime prevention effort in which a number of actors are responsible for developing initiatives at the national, regional and local level. In order for preventive efforts against violent extremism and terrorism to be effective, they need to be integrated into local crime prevention work and be included in local status reports, written agreements and collaboration with relevant actors. Challenges and threats related to violent extremism and terrorism can change rapidly, which requires the issues to be coordinated with, or addressed within the scope of, the local coordination function that municipalities must have in place under the Municipal Responsibilities for Crime Prevention Work Act. The report *Myndigheternas förutsättningar att arbeta mot våldsbejakande extremism* (Agencies' Abilities to Work Against Violent Extremism, Swedish Defence Research Agency) (2023) describes how organisations that operate on ideological grounds pose a particular challenge to authorities conceptually and legally, and that this is the case in particular for aspects that concern the dividing line between legitimate and criminal activities. These challenges should be managed in the continuing work.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Municipalities should be supported in integrating preventive work to tackle violent extremism and terrorism into local crime prevention efforts.
- The Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, including CVE and the county administrative boards, shall provide support and guidance to the municipalities in local crime prevention work.

2.2 Reduce the growth of violent extremism and terrorism

Efforts need to be focused on breaking processes that can lead to radicalisation of individuals or groups. A core element of this work is continuing to develop and disseminate knowledge about expressions of racism, violent extremism and terrorism-related materials in digital environments, and how it can affect individuals, and constantly capture new currents and phenomena that can affect the growth of extremist environments.

For these efforts to be successful, key actors need to possess knowledge of effective measures. Professionals and other stakeholders need support from national authorities, information on status reports, knowledge and guidance on preventive initiatives, and to develop cooperation in various matters. They also need knowledge about work approaches that can bolster trust in core functions such as schools and social services, and counteract the dissemination of conspiracy theories and false rumours. Professionals also need to possess the skills and ability to manage the information that comes to their knowledge and to implement knowledge-based initiatives. All actors need to be aware of their remit, roles and responsibilities and should cooperate on relevant actions. The work of authorities may need to involve more actors, such as associations, faith communities and private-sector actors to a greater extent. It is not uncommon for civil-society organisations to be the first to highlight problems and develop new preventive activities. For example, numerous organisations have developed their own initiatives for preventing radicalisation among children and young people and for providing support to at-risk individuals and their families. These organisations play an important role in lowering thresholds into community support and assisting people involved in extremism and their families, who might often hesitate to contact the authorities.

The joint efforts of authorities need to be more effective

It is crucial that authorities at national, regional and local level have a solid ability to prevent individuals from being radicalised and recruited into violent extremist and terrorist groups. The ability of authorities to identify radicalising structures, such as certain anti-democratic associations in society, must be sound. The same applies to outreach efforts that may affect individuals' intention to commit or support terrorist activities, or other acts founded on violent extremism. This means that authorities at the national, regional and local levels need to possess knowledge and tools for counteracting polarisation, disinformation and violent extremist propaganda, and for working to prevent and combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crimes as well as other crimes that pose a threat to democracy. In strategic cooperation, common status reports and problem scenarios can be important in identifying the need for different measures.

CVE has an important role in keeping together the joint work of authorities to combat violent extremism and terrorism, and can offer support to professionals. CVE also has a network of government agencies

that meet regularly. For certain operational activities, there is closer collaboration with the Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Security Service. To enable developing strategic efforts, the Police Authority and the Security Service consider that government agencies need to share assessments and analyses, common status reports and problem scenarios to a greater extent with professionals working on developing initiatives at the local level.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Coordination between national, regional and local levels needs to be developed. The preventive capabilities developed by authorities at the national, regional and local levels jointly and individually should be systematised and deepened.

Knowledge is fundamental for effective measures

Compiling knowledge, evaluating initiatives and conducting research on violent extremism and terrorism are fundamental to the ability to develop crime prevention, law enforcement and safety-enhancing efforts. Important actors in this work are the Swedish Defence University and the Swedish Defence Research Agency. The Swedish Research Council is responsible for a ten-year national research programme on crime, aimed at providing new knowledge about the causes and consequences of crime as well as methods for preventing and combating it. The University of Gothenburg has a specific undertaking to develop and disseminate knowledge and methods for reducing recruitment into violent ideologies and movements and racist organisations, which is run by the Segerstedt Institute.

Besides the research and analysis performed by researchers at various institutions and agencies, analysts and investigators at agencies also develop knowledge as part of their operations or within the scope of various government commissions. For example, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention produces official crime statistics, evaluates reforms and conducts research to develop new knowledge and provide support for local crime prevention efforts. Since violent extremist environments can change rapidly, status reports also form an important basis. In this context, of note is the National Centre for Terrorist Threat Assessment (NCT), which analyses events, trends and circumstances that affect the short- and long-term terror threat.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Continue to develop knowledge and conduct research on crime that threatens democracy.
- Key actors that provide support to professionals should have systems for sharing knowledge about current status reports, evaluations, reports and current research findings.

Develop outreach work at prisons and in the probation system, and in special residential homes for young people

An important part of efforts to reduce the growth of and prevent terrorist offences and ideologically motivated crimes is to prevent radicalisation in prison environments and to avert repeat offending, not least by providing support to individuals wishing to leave violent extremist environments and who need help in achieving this. The prison environment can be a hotbed for radicalisation, and release from prisons can pose a security threat if individuals are still radicalised, or have been radicalised while serving time. The work of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service to prevent repeat offending, which is based on research and the principles of risk, need and responsivity, includes interventions for individuals serving both custodial and non-custodial sentences. The Swedish National Board of Institutional Care (SIS) has developed methodology support for work with defectors, and the agency also runs a training initiative for psychologists, treatment providers and security coordinators at SIS. The Swedish Police Authority, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care (SIS) and the National Board of Health and Welfare have an ongoing commission to reinforce and develop work on support for defectors from criminal, violent extremist and honour-related environments throughout Sweden (Ju2021/03331). The agencies shall seek to ensure the establishment of operations for defectors where needed in Sweden and develop outreach so that more people can obtain help with leaving their life of crime behind them. The commission also includes minors under 18 years of age. The Swedish Police Authority is responsible for coordinating the agency-wide commission concerning operations for defectors. The commission includes the distribution of central-government funding to municipalities for defector support initiatives. The operational work is mainly carried out at the local level as part of municipal social services and in collaboration with the relevant agencies. The municipalities also procure defector operations from private companies and non-profit organisations. The Swedish Prison and Probation Service and the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention may provide government grants to organisations active in the field of preventing repeat offending. For example, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention can issue government grants under the Government Grants for Preventive Work Against Violent Extremism Ordinance (2019:1282). It is important that the relevant authorities ensure the quality of these initiatives so that the work is conducted effectively.

Focus of the work ahead:

- CVE shall continue to develop support for professionals who meet at-risk individuals, and those who may pose a risk to society, with a view to getting more people to leave violent extremist environments.
- The Swedish Police Authority, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care (SIS) and the National Board of Health and Welfare shall continue to develop and quality-assure support and guidance for initiatives for defectors from violent extremist environments.

- Municipalities and organisations shall have a continued possibility to apply for public funding to develop and continue to run activities that provide support to individuals wishing to leave violent extremist environments.
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No public funding shall be allocated to anti-democratic activities

Each year, the public sector allocates grants to civil-society organisations and private actors in the welfare sector. In recent years, reports have emerged that operations linked to violent extremism or other anti-democratic environments are in receipt of these funds.

The allocation of public funding to activities linked to violent extremism or other anti-democratic environments can contribute to the growth of such environments in Sweden and risk damaging the legitimacy of the benefits systems that they exploit to fund their activities. It is therefore important to ensure that control mechanisms are in place to prevent the allocation of public funding to anti-democratic operations. Numerous funding agencies and organisations have also reinforced their controls. The Government Offices is preparing the proposals that have been submitted in the report *Rätt mottagare – granskning och integritet* (The right recipient – Scrutiny and integrity) (SOU 2021:99) aimed at preventing the allocation of public funding to operations linked to violent extremism or other anti-democratic environments. The proposals include the establishment of a central support function at CVE.

Foreign funding of faith communities

In its reports *Mellan salafism och salafistisk jihadism – påverkan mot och utmaningar för det svenska samhället* (Between Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism – Influence on and Challenges for Swedish Society) (Swedish Defence University, 2018) and *Salafism and salafistisk jihadism 2.0 – påverkan mot och utmaningar för det Svenska samhället* (Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism 2.0: Influence on and Challenges for Swedish Democratic Society) (Swedish Defence University, 2022), the Swedish Defence University has studied the Islamist environment in Sweden, thus including both extreme religious groups and violent extremist groups. In the latter report, the university describes a number of Swedish institutions with various forms of ties to extreme religious environments which, between 2002 and 2018, have received financial aid from financiers based abroad.

Focus of the work ahead:

- It should be ensured that control mechanisms are in place to prevent the allocation of public funding to operations with ties to violent extremism or other anti-democratic environments.
- The Government intends to appoint a commission of inquiry that will review a ban on foreign funding of faith communities and other civil-society organisations linked to Islamism and extremism.

2.3 Reduce the risk of the radicalisation and recruitment of children and young people into violent extremism and terrorism

Children have the right to protection from all forms of violence and exploitation and often lack the knowledge and ability to understand and handle extremist messages. Sometimes, they are also in a state of dependence on adults who may have the explicit purpose of reaching out to children. Studies show that children are more exposed than before to propaganda featuring extremely violent material. This includes interactive forums and streaming and gaming platforms used by younger people. The report *Extremister i gamingvärlden; Svenska barns upplevelser av antidemokratiska rörelser på spelplattformar* (Extremists in the gaming world: Swedish children's experiences of anti-democratic movements on gaming platforms) (Sverok, 2023), in which Sverok has compiled questionnaire responses from 700 individuals interested in gaming between the ages of 12 and 20, describes how one in ten people who play computer games online on various digital platforms has, at some point, encountered attempts at recruitment by anti-democratic movements. Expo also highlights these worrying developments in its report *Foul Play in the Gaming Space— an introduction to the gaming world and the exploitation by right-wing extremists* (Expo, 2023). Actors in violent extremist environments seeking out places where children are found is nothing new. Some of these actors have been trying for a long time to reach out to minors, be it presence in the digital or the physical world.

Reinforce the resilience of children and young people to anti-democratic messages

In the work to prevent the radicalisation and recruitment of minors, it is important to consider that the generations born in the 2000s have grown up in a digitalised world. More than half of all children aged 9–18 also play online games. The adult world's lack of knowledge about the digital lives of children and young people may mean that they do not create the means for countering, or are not equipped for dealing with, information about propaganda or recruitment attempts online. Many minors find a sense of belonging and unity online on gaming platforms where a racist and extremist mindset is not challenged but rather amplified and encouraged. There is a risk of anti-democratic messages, racism and misogynous messages taking hold among children and young people. Extreme thoughts are mixed with messages that encourage violence, making it difficult to determine who actually has an intention to harm society and commit criminal acts.

Another challenge is algorithmic reinforcement applied by social media, which means that anyone who accesses certain material will be able to access even more similar material. Extremist environments exploit this and use the gaming world's symbols and humorously packaged messages, which thus gain broad dissemination. It can also be difficult to judge what constitutes illegal content and what falls within the bounds of freedom of

expression. The ability to share content anonymously can make it difficult to determine who is behind information shared online. Professionals need to have access to knowledge about the propaganda being disseminated in digital environments, including on various gaming platforms. With CVE's function to collect and disseminate knowledge about violent extremism based on research and proven experience, and to promote knowledge-based practice, improved conditions are in place for this today. Since 2022, the Swedish Defence Research Agency has had a permanent remit to map violent extremism and racism in digital environments. In a number of reports, the agency has highlighted how the internet and social media have enabled niche subcultures and violent extremist groups to disseminate messages glorifying violence. These messages have a bearing both in radicalisation processes and in planning acts of violence and terrorism.

It is important that professionals have access to tools to enable outreach on various digital platforms that young people use on a daily basis. The Swedish Defence University's study *Webbpolisier, gaming och kontranarrativ – digitalt förebyggande arbete mot extremism och våldsbejakande extremism* (Online police, gaming and counternarrative – digital preventive work to prevent extremism and violent extremism (Swedish Defence University, 2022) analyses 15 online initiatives that have been developed in different countries and how these initiatives are used to prevent extremism. The study highlights examples of police and social services work online, and demonstrates the importance of these actors establishing a dynamic online presence in their daily work. The analysis shows that, in online work, it is important to distinguish between those working with early preventive initiatives and those providing interventions to individuals who have been identified as at-risk.

The Security Service has highlighted that digital platforms can be a risk environment for young people who feel bad. Many young people who have had plans for, or who have committed, attacks at schools, have mental health problems. There is also much to suggest that the radicalisation process for minors progresses faster than for adults, and that it is the violence in the propaganda that attracts them rather than ideology and politics. Children and young people need support in developing their resilience to anti-democratic messages. The Swedish Media Council, now the Swedish Agency for the Media, works to empower children and young people as conscious media users and protect children from harmful media influences. The agency is tasked with promoting media and information literacy in Sweden. School staff and student health professionals are in a good position to capture signals from individual students and from peers. Knowledge of violent extremism, and the ability of school staff to assist with interventions, are key components of preventive efforts and therefore need to be reinforced. Parents also need to possess knowledge about the messages to which children and young people can be exposed in social media and on gaming platforms. The Government has tasked the Public Health Agency of Sweden with collecting and compiling knowledge about the link between health effects and digital media use among children and young people. The agency shall, for example, produce age-appropriate guidance and distribute and communicate this to children, young people, parents and guardians and other actors. The assignment is being carried

out in collaboration with the Swedish Agency for the Media (S2023/01669).

Focus of the work ahead:

- Relevant authorities shall continue to develop knowledge resources and status reports on racism, violent extremism and terrorism-related materials in digital environments.
- Professionals need the right tools to enable them to take action that prevents threats and hatred, violent extremism and terrorism, including in digital environments.

Schools and risks of radicalisation of children and young people

Children's dependence on adults and the risk of radicalisation also affect schools, preschools and other educational institutions. In recent years, a number of principal organisers of charter schools have had their approval to operate revoked by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate due to the existence of links between Islamist extremism and schools, which has posed a risk to pupils. Therefore, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, as tasked by the Government, has intensified its supervision and other scrutiny of confessional schools and other schools in which the Swedish Schools Inspectorate considers there is a risk scenario in terms of extremism and Islamism, or in terms of students otherwise being exposed to influences aimed at counteracting fundamental rights and freedoms or democratic governance (U2022/04068). In connection with this, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate has produced support materials for municipalities regarding owner and management examination.

The Government has also extended the aptitude assessment that the Swedish Schools Inspectorate and municipalities are to make when examining applications from individuals to be approved as principal organisers within the school system. As part of this aptitude assessment, 'terms of democracy' were introduced in January 2023 through an amendment to the Education Act (2010:800). In addition, the Government has decided on supplementary directives (dir. 2023:109) to the Inquiry on profits in schools (U2022:08). The Inquiry Chair shall consider, among other factors, whether it is possible and appropriate that only legal persons domiciled in Sweden or in another EU or EEA country shall, through direct or indirect ownership, be able to have a significant influence over the operations of a preschool or a school and, if necessary, propose such regulation.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Schools, preschools, other educational institutions and, ultimately, all children and young people shall continue to be protected from anti-democratic activities.

The need for cross-sectoral cooperation to identify children and young people at risk

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In the work to prevent the radicalisation of children and young people and their recruitment into violent extremism and terrorism, it is crucial that activities be based on the particular needs and susceptibility of children and young people. Just like when criminal gangs recruit, extremist environments usually attempt to reach out to boys. The work needs to be firmly rooted within the scope of school and social services operations, and established cooperation needs to be in place with other relevant actors, including in healthcare. A good education at a safe and secure school that works with schools' democratic role prevents young people from engaging in violent extremism. Schools can also make a big difference for children who are in, or at risk of falling into, a violent extremist environment and for how children are affected by messages from such environments.

Professionals in the school system need support in how to respond to and deal with pupils who express an interest in violent extremism. The commission (dir. 2022:86) to the Schools Security Inquiry (U2022:04) sets out that greater focus needs to be placed on preventive efforts and on cooperation between relevant actors and agencies. It is therefore important that schools, irrespective of the principal organiser, including after-school care, be invited to participate in local collaborative structures between social services and the police. The National Agency for Education provides guidance for the initiatives of schools in this area, and the National Board of Health and Welfare provides knowledge resources in the field for social services staff. To provide social services professionals with better means for possessing the knowledge and capabilities required to prevent and counteract crime among children and young people, the Government has tasked a special inquiry with reviewing the requirements for the social worker qualification (dir. 2023:121).

A great deal of the security-related initiatives implemented so far in schools in this area have focused on the acute stage when a school attack is committed. Schools need support in developing capabilities for detecting and preventing children and young people from being radicalised and committing acts of violence, both within and outside of schools. CVE offers municipalities support through a mobile support team and a support function in the form of a helpline service for professionals. CVE has also developed methodology resources that can be used by social services professionals in the event of concerns about the existence of violent extremism in individual cases. The methodology resources have now been adapted, as instructed by the Government, for use in the school system (Ju2023/02708).

There are also examples of important actions by civil society organisations. Save the Children runs the Concerns Hotline for Radicalisation, and Exit at Fryshuset, the Flamman ungdomarnas hus youth recreation centre and Agera Värmland provide supportive initiatives for children, young people and parents.

The Government has tasked the Swedish Police Authority, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, the county administrative boards, the National Board of Health and Welfare, the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care (SIS), the

National Agency for Education and the Swedish Prosecution Authority with establishing a collaborative structure, for cohesive work with children and young people who are at risk of committing, or who are committing, serious crimes, in environments linked to organised crime (Ju2023/02529). The purpose of the collaborative structure is to reinforce and enhance efficiency in efforts to prevent children and young people from falling into serious crime through concrete actions and initiatives. The aim is also to ensure that effective and appropriate measures are taken when children and young people are involved in serious crime. The report of the commission is to be presented no later than 6 December 2024 with an interim report no later than 31 May 2024.

The Government has also tasked the National Board of Health and Welfare with developing and supporting the dissemination and implementation of national knowledge resources that can be used by healthcare and dental care professionals when meeting individuals involved in or affected by criminal networks or other violent environments (S2023/02981). In this work, special consideration shall be given to situations that prompt reports of concern as well as other concerns for children and young people.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Children have the right to protection against all forms of violence and exploitation. Recruitment of children and young people into violent extremism must be stopped. The development of cooperation between schools, social services, the police and other actors needs to continue.

2.4 Strengthen resilience to disinformation and anti-democratic narratives

Different actors disseminating disinformation and various anti-democratic narratives in digital environments can lead to ideologically motivated violent crimes and terrorism. Experience shows that it is not only children and young people, but also adults, who can be susceptible and at risk of radicalisation. Conspiracy theories that gain widespread dissemination can develop into a serious threat to society, and to important institutions and different professional groups. Artificial intelligence (AI) is already being used to produce fake news and, as technology advances, it will likely become increasingly difficult for a citizen to determine whether, for example, a video clip is authentic or not. It is a challenge that the dissemination, conditions for and content of disinformation campaigns can rapidly change in nature and contribute to a heightened threat scenario, which can affect different authorities, activities and representatives of society. Disinformation and anti-democratic narratives can be harmful but are not always illegal, which needs to be taken into account in preventive work.

Increase awareness and promote the depiction of Sweden

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Sound awareness of and a fact-based depiction of Sweden helps to build resilience against disinformation and malign information influence. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and missions abroad play a key role in providing a fair depiction of Sweden adapted to a local context abroad. Missions abroad also have an important task of detecting and sounding the alarm about malign information influence against Sweden and Swedish interests abroad. The Swedish Institute is tasked with disseminating information and knowledge about Sweden and promoting Swedish interests internationally. The agency's operations shall aim to increase international interest and confidence in Sweden. The agency achieves this through, for example, communication in Sweden's official social media channels for which the Institute is responsible. Communication in these channels, which have over three million followers (September 2023), is in English, Russian and Arabic. The Institute also supports the Foreign Service's missions abroad with material for communication concerning and promotion of Sweden. The Swedish Institute is also tasked with analysing and assessing the depiction of Sweden abroad. This work forms the basis for the Institute's communication and the Foreign Service's public diplomacy and promotion of Sweden internationally.

It is important that more authorities stand prepared to pay attention to various disinformation campaigns that are disseminated within Sweden and that could affect their operations. Authorities therefore need to have sound external monitoring and stand prepared to swiftly produce facts and information in various relevant languages if needed.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Work on disseminating fact-based knowledge about Sweden and Swedish authorities' responsibility and efforts to counteract disinformation and false rumours shall be conducted with a long-term and sustainable approach over time.

Counter propaganda from external threat actors

The Psychological Defence Agency has a central role in countering foreign malign information influence activities. The agency shall identify, analyse and provide support in the response to foreign malign information influence and work with a preventive approach to counter it, for example through knowledge-enhancing measures.

In the Psychological Defence Cooperative Council, the Psychological Defence Agency unites a number of authorities with the aim of bolstering society's resilience and contributing to better common operational capabilities in the event of incidents.

The Government has tasked the agency with an assignment to strengthen capabilities for resisting both foreign malign information influence against the social services and foreign malign information influence directed at Sweden in 2023 related to the burning of religious scriptures (Fö2023/00277).

The Psychological Defence Agency also identifies new challenges. In the report *Malign foreign interference and information influence on video game platforms: Understanding the adversarial playbook* (Psychological Defence Agency, 2023), researchers at Lund University, tasked by the Psychological Defence Agency, studied influence campaigns from foreign powers over gaming platforms. The researchers have identified more than 40 different influence techniques that have successfully targeted gaming domains. According to the report, attempts at influence can, for example, concern contributing to reframing perceptions of aspects occurring in reality, and creating polarisation between different groups.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The psychological defence shall contribute to strengthen the population's ability to detect and resist malign influence campaigns.
- The Psychological Defence Agency shall continuously develop and disseminate knowledge about malign information influence activities in the form of disinformation and conspiracy theories in different digital environments.
- The Psychological Defence Agency and other relevant agencies shall cooperate with a focus on joint initiatives to prevent malign information influence activities in the form of conspiracy theories from taking hold.

Counteract the spread of rumours and disinformation about the social services

The Government has tasked the National Board of Health and Welfare with counteracting the spread of rumours and disinformation about the social services. The commission includes proposing measures to build long-term trust for social services among children, young people and families who need support and assistance. The National Board of Health and Welfare shall identify and support the development of effective and sustainable working methods that can contribute to increasing confidence in the social services' operations. Through the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the National Board of Health and Welfare shall communicate information to the Swedish missions abroad as well as to foreign emissaries in Sweden about the remit and responsibilities of the social services as regards children, young people and families. The Government has also reinforced the remit of the National Board of Health and Welfare such that the agency shall increase its presence on social media and develop alternatives to existing information texts about the social services. The Swedish Institute shall support the National Board of Health and Welfare in its work on investigating and compiling the information disseminated, and the Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities shall assist the National Board of Health and Welfare with knowledge of how faith communities or civil society organisations can be involved in efforts to combat the spread of rumours and disinformation (S2022/03244).

Focus of the work ahead:

- With a view to bolstering trust in the social services’ measures among children, young people and families who are in need of support and to counteract disinformation and the spread of rumours, the National Board of Health and Welfare shall continue to promote producing information for relevant target groups about the social services’ measures.

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Mapping of how the campaign against social services affects the school system

The distrust of social services caused by the disinformation campaign against them can also lead to distrust of schools. The Government has therefore tasked the National Agency for Education with mapping and analysing how the malign influence campaign against Swedish social services has affected, and is affecting, the school system (U2023/02765). The agency shall also provide examples of collaboration between schools, social services and police, as well as other successful initiatives in which the school system has contributed, or is contributing, to preventing the spread of disinformation and conspiracy theories. Furthermore, the National Agency for Education shall also map and analyse the extent to which staff in the school system file reports with the social welfare board pursuant to Chapter 14, section 1 of the Social Services Act (2001:453) in the event of knowledge or suspicion of harm to a child. A question that is particularly relevant to the commission is whether threats and violence or fear of threats and violence cause staff to refrain from reporting matters. The commission will be conducted in consultation with the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, the Psychological Defence Agency, the Agency for Support to Faith Communities, the Police Authority, the National Board of Health and Welfare, the Schools Inspectorate, the Security Service and the Swedish Defence Research Agency.

Focus of the work ahead:

- In order to prevent and counteract this kind of rumour-spreading, the relevant authorities need to invite schools into the work on status reporting and analyses.

Increased need for dialogue and measures to promote safety

Work on dialogue and security-enhancing measures needs to be developed. It is important that authorities at the national, regional and local level create conditions for coordinating measures and initiatives, from local to national level, so that synergies, lessons learned and experiences are harnessed. The relevant authorities have both an individual and joint responsibility for reinforcing this work.

The Swedish Defence University’s report *LVU-kampanjen – Desinformation, konspirationsteorier, och kopplingarna mellan det inhemska och det internationella i relation till informationspåverkan från icke-statliga aktörer* (The LVU (Care of young persons special provisions act) campaign – Disinformation, conspiracy theories and the links between

the domestic and the international in relation to information influence from non-state actors) (Swedish Defence University 2023) describes how measures against disinformation need to be combined with measures that address the underlying vulnerabilities and points of conflict that exist in Swedish society, and which provide a basis enabling disinformation campaigns to take hold. In this context, coordinated initiatives by agencies and municipalities are needed.

A number of agencies have different remits for enhanced dialogue and cooperation in preventing disinformation and the spread of rumours and in preventing violent extremism. To give further impetus to this work, the Government has tasked CVE, in collaboration with the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, the Agency for Support to Faith Communities, the Psychological Defence Agency, the Agency for Youth and Civil Society, the Police Authority, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Security Service to enhance collaboration and cooperation between government agencies and other relevant actors, with the aim of preventing radicalisation and the spread of violent extremism (Ju2023/01903). Dialogue shall be held with faith communities and other relevant actors, for example with associations and civil society organisations and with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. The report of the commission will be presented by 29 August 2024.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The work on dialogue and safety promotion measures at the local level with a view to counteracting polarisation, radicalisation and various expressions of violence shall be reinforced and developed.

Key actors in the area Prevent

Key actors in the preventive work are professionals in schools and after-schools, social services, healthcare, police, prisons, the probation service and special residential homes for young people. The actions of civil society organisations including faith communities, together with the actions of parents and relatives, are also tremendously important to preventive work.

CVE has an important role in keeping together the joint preventive efforts of authorities to combat violent extremism and terrorism. The CVE network includes authorities that have, or have had, government commissions concerning violent extremism and terrorism or a related area. The following are included: The Ombudsman for Children, the Living History Forum, the Swedish Defence University, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, the Swedish Migration Agency, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, the Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, the Swedish Psychological Defence Agency, the Swedish Defence Conscription and Assessment Agency, the Swedish Police Authority, the Segerstedt Institute (University of Gothenburg), the Swedish National Agency for Education, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, the National Board of Health and Welfare, the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care, the Swedish Agency for the Media, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, the Swedish

3 Avert terrorist attacks and other ideologically motivated crimes

Objectives

- The Counter-Terrorism Cooperative Council shall intensify its cooperation to prevent and avert violent extremism and terrorism.
- Improve access to and the exchange of information.
- Intensify efforts to combat financing violent extremism and terrorism.
- Develop efforts to avert the dissemination of terrorist content on digital platforms.
- Identify individuals who pose a security threat.
- Reduce the possibility of access to weapons and other means of attack.

There will always be people who develop the intention and ability to commit or support terrorist attacks or other criminal acts that are rooted in violent extremism. Averting violent extremism and terrorism is therefore ultimately about identifying individuals who may have developed the intention and ability to commit serious acts of violence or terrorism. In order to access these individuals and the organisations to which they belong at an early stage, law enforcement agencies work with private actors, such as banks and financial institutions, with initiatives to prevent funding opportunities and access to other means of committing an attack. The remit of law enforcement authorities also includes preventing actors in violent extremist environments from attempting to influence the functions of democratic governance through harassment, threats, violence, coercion or corruption.

In order to avert hate crimes, ideologically motivated crime, violent extremism and terrorism, law enforcement authorities need to have appropriate, judicially sound and effective tools, and be able to operationalise the NCT's strategic assessment of the terror threat in and against Sweden and Swedish interests. Law enforcement authorities also need to develop their cooperation with other agencies; in this context, the Swedish Security Service's cooperation with the Swedish Migration Agency can be mentioned. Authorities also need to be able to collect and exchange information and use new technologies, for instance to scan through large volumes of digital information. The Swedish Police Authority underscores that knowledge is needed to identify the ideological component in different types of crime.

3.1 The Counter-Terrorism Cooperative Council shall intensify its cooperation to prevent and avert violent extremism and terrorism

The Counter-Terrorism Cooperative Council is currently a network of 15 authorities aimed at improving coordination and enhancing efficiency in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism at the national level. The Council was established in 2005 on the initiative of the Swedish Security Service. The Council agencies meet regularly and have a good dialogue at the strategic level. The terror threat level assessment is an important instrument, especially for enabling agencies and organisations to take adequate measures.

Intensified cooperation 2023–2026

In July 2023, the Government tasked the government agencies of the Counter-Terrorism Cooperative Council with developing and intensifying their cooperation, and considering whether there may be reason to review which authorities the Council shall include (Ju2023/01781). The Council will also consider whether some of the work processes that are in place within the inter-agency collaboration initiative to combat organised crime can be used in counter-terrorism cooperation. The Security Service shall, in cooperation with other authorities, report on the commission annually on 1 September 2024–2026.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The Security Service shall coordinate long-term development of efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism as part of the operations conducted in the Counter-Terrorism Cooperative Council, as instructed by the Government in July 2023.

3.2 Improve access to and exchange of information

Effective collaboration is an important part of well-functioning work to combat violent extremism and terrorism. Such collaboration requires relevant actors to be able to exchange information where needed for the task. Access to information is crucial to enable detecting and evaluating security threats, and to enable government agencies to avert terrorist attacks or other ideologically motivated crimes. The possibility of collaboration and exchanging information, both at the strategic level and in operational activities at national, regional and local level, is therefore of great importance. Agencies must have access to adequate information at the right time and they must also have an opportunity to process and analyse this information and act based on it. One challenge for agencies is to identify the information that another agency may need and how it can be shared in an effective and judicially sound manner.

The Government considers that agencies should be able to exchange classified information to a greater extent. A special inquiry has been tasked

(dir. 2023:146) with considering and proposing improved possibilities for exchanging information within and between agencies and other bodies subject to the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act (2009:400). No later than 30 August 2024, the inquiry shall submit an interim report, including on the instruction to present proposals for a general possibility to disclose information subject to secrecy for the protection of individuals to another agency. The final report is due by 28 February 2025.

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Increased possibilities to share information

In order to reinforce crime prevention, the Swedish Police Authority has, through an amendment to the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act (2009:400), obtained simplified and extended possibilities to share information with social services in order to prevent terrorist crime. The social services have also, through an amendment to the Social Services Act (2001:453), obtained extended possibilities to share information with the Police Authority and the Security Service. The report *Ökat informationsflöde till brottsbekämpningen – En ny huvudregel* (Increased flow of information to law enforcement – a new general rule) (SOU 2023:69), which contains proposals aimed at enabling agencies and other actors to share information with law enforcement authorities when needed in order to prevent and combat crime, is now being prepared within the Government Offices. To make it easier for schools, social services and the police to share information for crime prevention purposes and to enable more effective cooperation between these actors, in August 2023 the Government decided on a supplementary directive (dir. 2023:120) to the Schools Security Inquiry. The report of the commission will be presented by 29 September 2024.

Although agencies have gained greater opportunities to share information, there may still be uncertainty at the local level as to what information can actually be shared with other agencies. Issues concerning violent extremism and terrorism can also be perceived as intimidating and difficult to deal with. Professionals at all levels may therefore need to obtain support and guidance on these issues from the responsible authorities, which is an important basis for effective and judicially sound exchange of information. The commission to the National Board of Health and Welfare (S2023/02981), to produce and support the dissemination and implementation of national knowledge resources that can be used by healthcare and dental professionals when meeting individuals involved in or affected by criminal networks or other violent environments, also aims to contribute to providing staff in these sectors with comprehensive knowledge about relevant legislation.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The ability of agencies and other relevant actors to exchange information with law enforcement authorities shall be improved.
- Professionals should have access to support and guidance about relevant legislation, such as information-sharing and secrecy.

Covert coercive measures to avert serious crime

Besides the collection of information through open channels and through intra-agency cooperation nationally and internationally, information may need to be collected in other ways. Digitalisation and rapid technological advancements have led to a constant change in the way violent extremist environments communicate.

Covert coercive measures are therefore often crucial for combating serious crime and thus increasing safety in society. This is especially true of crimes committed in criminal networks. Since 1 October 2023, law enforcement authorities have been able to use covert coercive measures to investigate more crimes, and preventive coercive measures may be used in more cases to avert particularly serious crime that occurs within criminal networks.

A special inquiry has reviewed the conditions for using biometrics as a tool in law enforcement. The aim is to enable more individuals suspected of a crime to be identified using fingerprints, DNA, facial images or similar data on individual features. The report *Biometrics – for more effective law enforcement* (SOU 2023:32) is being prepared within the Government Offices.

On 29 June 2023, the Government decided on the committee terms of reference *Extended possibilities to use coercive measures against children and young people* (dir. 2023:102). It is currently not possible to use covert coercive measures against crime suspects under the age of 15. The inquiry has therefore been tasked with proposing how an order should be devised that would enable using covert coercive measures against individuals under the age of 15 and who commit serious crimes. The remit of the inquiry also includes analysing and taking a position on how preventive coercive measures may be used against people under the age of 15. The report of the commission will be presented by 20 December 2024.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Law enforcement authorities need to be able to use covert coercive measures more effectively so as to avert, investigate and prosecute serious crimes.

Ability to store, process and analyse large volumes of information

The Government has tasked a special inquiry to conduct a review of the provisions governing the Swedish Security Service's processing of personal data pertaining to national security (dir. 2023:64). The aim is to create appropriate rules adapted to today's needs and opportunities. The report of the commission will be presented by 15 November 2024.

The European Commission has submitted proposals for a regulation on harmonised rules for artificial intelligence (AI). The aim is to introduce EU-wide legislation on AI that will protect fundamental rights, promote positive aspects of AI use and ensure free movement of AI systems. The regulations will also affect the ability of law enforcement authorities to use AI in their operations. It is important that respect for fundamental rights

such as the protection of privacy is upheld in the implementation of the proposal.

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Focus of the work ahead:

- The Security Service’s processing of personal data relating to national security needs to be based on appropriate rules that are adapted to current needs and technical possibilities.
- The Government is working to ensure that implementation of the EU regulation on AI will not have any adverse impact on Swedish authorities’ work with national security and their ability to conduct effective law enforcement using new technologies.

Improve access to information associated with encryption and data storage

During the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the High-Level Group on access to data for effective law enforcement was established to find new ways of working forward on matters concerning law enforcement authorities’ access to information. Led jointly by the Presidency the Council of the European Union and the Commission, the group unites relevant actors at senior official level and expert level in the form of working groups. These are to address operational challenges for law enforcement in matters concerning access to information, especially related to encryption and data retention. The high-level group will work for one year from June 2023. The aim of the group’s work is to present concrete proposals on how access to information can be improved. The proposals will be developed with respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, and with due consideration for technical needs and existing requirements concerning information and cybersecurity. The group will submit its recommendations to the Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI) ahead of a new Commission taking office in the autumn of 2024.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Sweden shall continue to pursue the issue of law enforcement authorities’ access to information as part of the High-Level Group on access to data for effective law enforcement.
- Sweden shall work to enable the group to present concrete proposals on how access to information can be improved at EU level ahead of a new Commission taking office.

3.3 Intensify efforts to combat financing violent extremism and terrorism

Violent extremist organisations and terrorist organisations use both legal and illegal means to obtain funding to sustain themselves and their operations. Financing violent extremism and terrorism may consist of financially supporting various forms of operations or activities aimed, for example, at increasing recruitment and radicalisation capabilities.

Individuals in violent extremist environments can also fund their activities through crime, such as tax crime or benefits crime. It is crucial to be able to identify whether there is an ideological component in different types of financial crime.

Avert terrorist financing

Terrorist financing means providing financial support to such activities by collecting, providing or accepting money or other property. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention's report *Finansiering av terrorism en studie av motåtgärder (Financing of terrorism – a study of countermeasures)* (2021:6) describes how knowledge and efforts are generally better for combating money laundering, while financing terrorism is often perceived as more complex to understand and tackle. Terrorist financing is probably more difficult to detect, as it is often a matter of legally acquired money used to fund illegal activities. In most cases, a large amount of capital is not needed to finance, plan, prepare and perpetrate a terrorist attack. It is therefore important to prevent even small sums from reaching their intended destination. Unlike money laundering, the purpose of which is to conceal the origin of assets, terrorist financing is about concealing the intended use of the assets. Funds that finance terrorism may have originated from illegal activities or have been raised lawfully.

International work is largely dominated by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which prepares recommendations in this area and evaluates the extent to which Member States comply with the recommendations. Sweden is a member of FATF. The EU has comprehensive administrative regulations in the field of money laundering and terrorist financing. The regulations set requirements for a number of authorities and private actors. Both the UN Security Council and the EU have adopted international sanctions against listed individuals, groups and entities with a view to averting terrorist financing. The sanctions include freezing assets and a ban on making funds available to listed individuals. On 1 January 2024, the Freezing of Assets Act (2023:677) came into force. Under the Act, which lays down the conditions for Sweden to fulfil its international obligations in the field of sanctions, a decision to freeze assets can be issued for anyone who can reasonably be suspected of an offence under the Terrorist Offences Act or for anyone convicted of an offence under that Act.

The Security Service is responsible for investigating crimes related to terrorist financing, but also for preventing, detecting and averting such offences. Financial intelligence activities are chiefly conducted by the Swedish Security Service and by the Financial Intelligence Unit at the Swedish Police Authority (often referred to as the Financial Intelligence Unit), which is a section of the Intelligence Unit within the national operations department of the Swedish Police Authority. The authorities cooperate and exchange information. Under the administrative regulations, in particular the Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (Prevention) Act (2017:630), different types of business operators, such as banks and brokerages, shall report suspicious transactions to the Financial Intelligence Unit. Under the same regulations, the Financial Intelligence

Unit and the Security Service have the possibility of requesting information directly from the business operators. Several different types of business operators, not least banks, are required to have systems for monitoring, identifying and reporting suspicious transactions and activities. Actors such as clearing houses and providers of financial infrastructure for immediate payments also play an important role in providing information to these authorities. The Security Service and the Financial Intelligence Unit also exchange information with foreign counterparts with respect to financial aspects of criminal activities, including suspicions of terrorist financing. In the EU, legislation is being developed aimed at enabling financial intelligence units and law enforcement authorities to immediately obtain information on bank accounts belonging to suspected criminals, whether in their own or in another EU country.

The Swedish Police Authority leads the national anti-money laundering and terrorist financing coordination function, which includes 16 agencies and one organisation. One of the tasks of the coordination function is to regularly prepare a national risk assessment of money laundering and terrorist financing. In order to tackle these problems, each involved authority and all relevant private actors need to develop capabilities for detecting and combating terrorist financing within the scope of their operations.

New approaches for terrorist financing

The emergence of anonymised transfer methods, such as cryptocurrencies, has provided better opportunities to actors in violent extremist environments to circumvent financial control systems. This has impeded detecting, investigating and prosecuting suspected financing of criminal activities. In recent years, there have also been developments whereby terrorist financing occurs through companies, foundations and associations.

The Security Service and the Police Authority have observed that currency exchange operations play a central role in laundering criminals' gains from their crimes. Money transfer operations can also be used for illegal purposes and terrorist financing. To combat money laundering in the operations of financial institutions, as of 1 January 2024, the Currency Exchange and Other Financial Activities Act (1996:1006) requires that anyone engaged in currency exchange or other financial activities (financial institutions) must register with Swedish Financial Supervisory Authority, and that the latter shall verify that these registered financial institutions comply with anti-money laundering legislation and intervene against those engaged in misconduct.

As approaches to terrorist financing changes, relevant authorities and banks are developing their capabilities for sharing information. Since 1 January 2023, the Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (Prevention) Act (2017:630) has contained provisions enabling law enforcement authorities to cooperate with Swedish Financial Supervisory Authority and banks or with supervisory authorities for the purpose of preventing, averting or detecting money laundering or terrorist financing. As part of this collaboration, a participant is obliged to disclose information to

another participant notwithstanding secrecy or confidentiality. The work needs to keep pace with crime trends. One example of this is the need for clearly definable indicators of terrorist financing so that more authorities and banks know what to look for.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The Police Authority and the Security Service shall continue to develop their cooperation with other agencies and relevant private actors in order to intensify efforts to combat terrorist financing. Each actor involved needs to take responsibility for identifying problems and developing intervention within the scope of their operations.

Identify criminal activities linked to violent extremist environments

Many people in violent extremist environments commit crimes. The offences include financial crime and fraud, but also the collection of funds to finance crimes that threaten democracy, and for their own activities and members' livelihoods. As mentioned earlier in section 1.3, there are links between violent extremism and organised crime. In many cases, extremist environments and organised crime target the same type of criminal activity and exploit the same vulnerabilities in society. Cooperation also exists between extremist environments and organised crime in areas such as illegal arms trade. Income from crime not only provides a livelihood for actors in violent extremist environments, it is also used for reinvestment in criminal activities. In this respect also, it is important to identify the ideological component of various types of crime so as to tackle the activities of violent extremist environments. That way, efforts to combat hate crimes and crime that threatens democracy can also be developed.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Law enforcement authorities should continue to develop the exchange of knowledge and experience about hate crimes and crimes that threaten democracy in order to prevent financing of such crime and improve capabilities for identifying ideological components in different types of crime.

3.4 Develop efforts to avert the dissemination of terrorist content on digital platforms

It is crucial to avert the dissemination of terrorist content on the internet and in various social media, because the disseminated materials contribute to fuelling violent extremism. Continued enhancement of capabilities for identifying, detecting and removing material, together with active participation in international cooperation in this area, is necessary.

Remove and avert the dissemination of terrorist content online

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On 7 June 2022, the EU Regulation on Addressing the Dissemination of Terrorist Content Online (the TCO Regulation) came into force. On 1 July 2023, the Act (2023:319) Supplementing the EU Regulation on Addressing the Dissemination of Terrorist Content Online came into force. The Act supplements the TCO Regulation and contains rules that allow the Police Authority to decide on periodic penalties and administrative fines for hosting services providers. The Act also enables the necessary exchange of information between the Police Authority and the Security Service. The TCO Regulation authorises competent authorities to issue orders to hosting services, such as social media, to remove certain terrorist content or to make it inaccessible. An order can be issued to a hosting service located in another EU country. The competent authority can also, if a hosting service is exposed to terrorist content, decide in certain circumstances that it shall take specific measures to protect its service against the dissemination of terrorist content. However, the most common way among EU Member States to remove terrorist content is to report it to hosting services for voluntary removal in accordance with the service's terms of use.

In Sweden, the Police Authority is the competent authority for handling TCO cases. However, the key actors in this endeavour are hosting services such as social media. The large hosting services in particular have, in recent years, identified and removed large volumes of terrorism-related content on their own initiative, improved their preparedness for accepting reports filed by authorities and organisations, and participated in various collaborations with EU institutions and EU Member States, not least within the scope of the EU Internet Forum. An important actor in this field is also Europol which, since 2015, through the Internet Referral Unit (IRU), has been assisting Member States with analyses, examines material and reports material to online actors. Several states have developed their own IRU units aimed at reinforcing analyses of terrorism-related material disseminated in digital environments.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The Police Authority and the Security Service shall, in cooperation with other relevant authorities and organisations, develop the application of the TCO Regulation, the collaborative opportunities it affords and the work on filing reports with service providers to prevent the dissemination of terrorist content originating from Sweden or targeting Sweden and Swedish interests.

Continuing challenges call for international collaboration

Although the prevalence of terrorism-related content has decreased in the open part of the internet, challenges presented by the dissemination of such content persist. Terrorism-related content continues, for example, to be disseminated on websites not covered by the TCO Regulation and that are run by terrorist organisations beyond the reach of Member State

authorities. Another challenge is algorithms applied by social media, meaning that anyone who accesses certain material will be able to access even more similar material. A study presented by the European Commission in the summer of 2023 confirmed the hypothesis that increased interaction with terrorism-related content is further amplified by the algorithms applied. Future challenges also include AI, which provides new opportunities to create content and will thus also affect possibilities of producing terrorist-related material and disseminating it.

A particularly concerning development in recent years has been live-broadcast terrorist attacks. The Christchurch attack in New Zealand in March 2019 is one of the most notable, and led to the global collaborative initiative Christchurch call for action, which Sweden has joined together with some fifty other countries, the European Commission and numerous civil society organisations and online companies. Within the EU, as a result of this initiative, a crisis protocol has been prepared to ensure a rapid response by authorities, Europol and online companies to limit the dissemination of terrorist-related material.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Cooperation within the EU and internationally on averting the spread of terrorist-related material shall continue to be developed. Swedish authorities shall play an active role in the exchange of knowledge and experience within the EU Internet Forum and participate in the work conducted by Europol.

3.5 Identify individuals who pose a security threat

A key aspect of the work to avert terrorist attacks and other ideologically motivated crime is to identify individuals who pose a security threat to Sweden. The work involves both identifying those who are present in Sweden, and preventing individuals who pose a security threat from entering the country or Schengen area over the EU's external border. A crucial aspect of this work is that EU Member States make full use of common European information systems and databases, such as the Schengen Information System (SIS). There is a comprehensive exchange of information within the context of police cooperation and judicial cooperation in criminal matters that is important, and which the relevant authorities should utilise to identify individuals who pose a security threat and prevent their entry into Schengen. A key aspect of this work also concerns identifying lone actors so as to avert ideologically motivated violent crimes and terrorism.

Control of aliens

The ability to identify individuals who may pose a security threat to Sweden in connection with border checks, both at external and internal borders, is crucial. The Police Authority is responsible for checks on individuals crossing an external border; that is, to and from non-Schengen countries. In order to prevent threats to public order or internal security, in

August 2023 the Government tasked the Police Authority with intensifying work on internal border controls; that is, Sweden's border with another Schengen country (Ju2023/01805). The report of the commission will be presented by 1 March 2024.

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The Police Authority is also tasked with conducting internal controls on aliens within Sweden's borders if there is a good reason to assume that the alien lacks the right to remain in this country, or if there otherwise is a special cause for the control. On 1 August 2023, the Police Powers in Border Areas Act (2023:474) came into force. The Act primarily grants, the Police Authority extended powers at and around certain airports, ports and railway stations, road bridges to or from other countries and border crossings on public highways. These powers give the Police Authority greater possibilities in such areas to, inter alia, perform internal controls on aliens, carry out body searches and to search means of transport to prevent or detect criminal activities, and to carry out camera surveillance.

In order to identify individuals who pose a security threat, it is crucial that the authorities have effective tools for verifying the identity of individuals during internal controls on aliens. The legislative amendments that came into force on 1 January 2024 provide the authorities with better means to clarify in more cases the identity of aliens and their right to be in Sweden, and to ensure that passports and other identity documents are available to the authorities.

Schengen visas can be issued to third-country citizens from certain countries and territories for short stays. The countries concerned are listed in an Annex to the EU Visa Code (Regulation (EU) 2019/1155 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 amending Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas). Article 21 of the EU Visa Code stipulates that, while checking whether the applicant fulfils the entry conditions, it shall be verified that the applicant is not considered to be a threat to public policy, internal security or international relations of any of the Member States. According to Article 22 of the Visa Code, a Member State may request consultation with authorities of other Member States during the examination of applications lodged by nationals of specific third countries or specific categories.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Border control shall be effective and judicially sound and shall be conducted in a non-discriminatory manner. This also follows from the Schengen regulations in the form of the Schengen Borders Code.

Aliens cases with security aspects

The Security Service is responsible for preventing individuals who pose or could potentially pose a security threat to Sweden from staying or establishing themselves in the country.

The Aliens Act (2005:716) contains special provisions on how certain cases with security aspects – security cases – are to be managed. As regards aliens who, it is considered, may pose a serious threat to national security or who may be prospective terrorists, there is a special law besides

the Aliens Act – the Special Controls of Certain Aliens Act (2022:700) – which regulates the more qualified security cases.

In efforts to detect potential security threats in the migration process, the Swedish Migration Agency and the Security Service cooperate. In recent years, the authorities have reinforced their cooperation and a core element of the cooperation is the consultation process that takes place by reason of the Aliens Act. Based on aspects known about the person and their background, contacts and activities, the Security Service makes an assessment in this consultation process of the risk of that person posing a threat to Sweden's security or public security, and expresses its opinion thereon to the Swedish Migration Agency. The Security Service can also insert a block into the Swedish Migration Agency's case management system if the authority receives incriminating information about a person who lacks Swedish citizenship or a residence permit for Sweden. The block entails that the Migration Agency may not grant an application for, for example, a residence permit without first consulting the Security Service. That way, the changing threat scenario is met, including aliens who pose a security threat.

One challenge is dealing with individuals issued with a refusal-of-entry decision or an expulsion order because they are considered to pose a security threat under the Aliens Act, but who, due to temporary impediments to enforcement, cannot be refused entry or expelled. Under current regulation, such individuals are normally granted a temporary residence permit, which may appear unreasonable or inappropriate for several reasons. A residence permit can prevent the expulsion order from being enforced immediately when the impediment to enforcement ceases, and also enables the alien to travel to other EU Member States. It is important for the security of both Sweden and other EU countries that an alien who is to be refused entry or expelled on grounds attributable to Sweden's security will not be given the possibility of travelling freely within the EU and that he or she is removed as soon as possible.

On 2 November 2023, the Government adopted the bill Certain amendments to the regulations concerning security cases under the Aliens Act (Prop. 2023/24:36). The Government's proposal aims to make the regulatory framework more fit-for-purpose and entails, among other things, that it shall be possible to revoke a residence permit in certain cases if it can be assumed that the alien will engage in state-sponsored corporate espionage or activities related to terrorism. It shall also be possible to revoke an alien's passport on security grounds, and cases in which the Security Service recommends that an alien shall not be granted an alien's passport, or that such a passport shall be revoked, shall constitute security cases under the Aliens Act. It is proposed that the amendments come into force on 1 March 2024.

According to the Special Control of Certain Aliens Act, an alien may be expelled from Sweden if it can be assumed that the alien, in light of what is known about his or her previous activities and other circumstances, will commit or otherwise participate in an offence under the Terrorist Offences Act (2022:666), or could pose a serious threat to Sweden's security. The matter of expulsion is raised upon application by the Security Service. The expulsion order is decided by the Swedish Migration Agency and can be appealed to the Government. The Security Service can, in connection with

applying for expulsion, take the alien into custody. If it is deemed sufficient, the alien may instead be placed under supervision. A decision on supervision may also mean that the alien is prohibited from leaving a certain area, is obliged to present him or herself to the Police Authority at certain times, or is obliged to surrender his or her passport or other identity document. The regulation also contains provisions that, under certain conditions, enable the use of coercive measures in cases where the enforcement of an expulsion is not possible under the law.

The Government has appointed an inquiry to propose, inter alia, a stricter regulation with increased possibilities for decisions of removal of aliens from Sweden due to shortcomings in honest lifestyle requirements (dir. 2023:158). As examples of such shortcomings, the inquiry shall take into account participation in violent or extremist organisations. The report shall be presented by 15 January 2025.

Citizenship cases

The Swedish Citizenship Act (2001:82) contains provisions concerning when an alien, following application, can be granted Swedish citizenship. The Act contains provisions on security cases. A security case is defined as a case in which the Security Service has proposed to the Migration Agency that the application be rejected on grounds pertaining to national or public security. The Migration Agency's decisions in such cases are appealed to the Government instead of the regular court hierarchy consisting of the Migration Court and the Migration Court of Appeal. The stated reason for this divergence from the regular court hierarchy is that it is the Government that bears ultimate responsibility for national and public security.

The Government has appointed an inquiry that is to submit proposals for stricter requirements for acquiring Swedish citizenship. The inquiry shall, among other aspects, propose requirements for longer residency in Sweden for acquiring citizenship (dir. 2023:129). A citizenship applicant having resided in Sweden for a certain period of time could be a condition for assessing whether the person poses a threat to Sweden's security. The Security Service has requested an extension of the timeframe for acquiring citizenship through naturalisation by at least two years. It can take a long time to detect certain types of activities that pose a threat to security and, in many cases, it is not possible to obtain information from the authorities of the former home country. Requirements for longer residency in Sweden would therefore improve the authorities' ability to obtain information and assess the alien's way of life over time. The report of the commission will be presented by 30 September 2024.

A parliamentary committee (dir. 2023:83) has been tasked with examining whether the right to citizenship should be amended to enable revoking the citizenship of a dual citizen who has committed systemic crime, crimes against humanity or certain other international crimes or other very serious crimes, or whose citizenship was acquired based on false information or other improper procedure. The report of the commission will be presented by 1 December 2024.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The forms of cooperation between the Security Service and the Migration Agency function well and require further development to enable responding to a changing threat scenario.
- Sweden shall work towards a better cooperation with authorities in receiving countries so that more expulsions can be enforced.
- Sweden's capabilities for dealing with individuals who pose a security threat under the Aliens Act, but who cannot be removed from the country for some time, need to be reinforced and the Government intends to investigate these issues.

Identify suspected individuals in the international travel flow

Air passenger data has become a valuable tool in combating terrorism, for example through the ability to identify high-risk travellers and confirm suspects' travel patterns. Air passenger data consists of advance passenger information (API) and passenger name record data (PNR). The collection and processing of both categories of data is regulated at EU level. A review of Council Directive 2004/82/EC of 29 April 2004 on the obligation of carriers to communicate passenger data – the API Directive – is currently under way. There is an urgent need for increased collection of API data from the aviation sector and for the quality of data to be improved while upholding EU data protection rules. The Commission is currently analysing the conditions for collecting and processing passenger data from shipping and land transport also. The Government looks forward to this analysis.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Authorities should continue to work on developing accessible and new technologies in identifying high-risk travellers and the travel patterns of suspected individuals.

Limit threatening actors' scope for action in Sweden

In recent years, the Police Authority and the Security Service have intensified and developed their cooperation on limiting the freedom of action of threatening actors within violent extremist environments in Sweden. This collaboration is primarily pursued within Redex (reducing extremist environments) which is the name of the collaboration model developed by the authorities in their preventive and curtailment work against violent extremism. The collaboration concerns improving the effectiveness of initiatives through the exchange of intelligence information. With this information as a basis, the authorities prepare individual action plans against specific individuals, networks and platforms. Each police region has a Redex centre with functions from both authorities and a coordinator. Redex can also support other police operations, such as through training initiatives, which enhances efficiency in police investigations of criminal activities with ties to actors in violent extremist environments. In some cases, the Redex collaboration can also

involve municipalities and certain municipal operations, and be implemented in collaboration with CVE.

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Focus of the work ahead:

- The Security Service and the Police Authority should further develop their work within Redex and, where relevant, develop initiatives involving other actors, such as municipalities and private actors.

Develop the ability to detect lone actors

Lone actors are not a homogeneous group and the reasons why a perpetrator chooses to act alone may vary. These individuals are often at the periphery of, or outside, established extremist environments and have often been inspired and radicalised over digital platforms. They may have contact with people on the digital platforms who support the planning and implementation of an attack, but when they then perpetrate the attack, they act alone.

For individuals with vulnerabilities or other risk factors, the messages of violent extremists on digital platforms can lead them to develop the intent and ability to commit violent acts. These people may also have a type of vulnerability that can make them attractive to recruit for attacks. Minors are also a special risk group.

The Security Service describes a course of events in which different driving forces are combined and sometimes compiled into a personal ideology, not least over the internet and social media. The conviction that is built up can be a mixture of everything from religious belief, racism and xenophobia to misogyny and conspiracy theories. Many of the attacks that have been committed in the West in recent years have been carried out by lone actors not previously known to the police and not belonging to any known group or network. The motives have often been multifaceted with a combination of violent ideologies as well as individual drivers and vulnerabilities.

To develop the ability to detect lone actors before they commit an attack or other serious crime, continuous insight into the nature of this type of crime and knowledge about possible interventions are needed. It is also important to integrate what potential perpetrators may express in different digital forums into general risk and vulnerability assessments and into assessments of whether an individual poses a security threat. Collaboration also needs to be developed between law enforcement authorities and other relevant actors. An important part of the work is the ability to share information. There are already provisions in the Swedish Criminal Code whereby employees may be obliged to file a report with the Police Authority if, in the course of their work, they become aware of certain imminent or ongoing crimes. Besides this obligation to provide information, there are also numerous secrecy waiver provisions in the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act, whereby information about an individual can be disclosed in certain situations when there is a risk of crime. There may be reason to review whether more such secrecy waiver provisions are justified so as to enable, where relevant and where the situation permits, an exchange of information in cases where staff, in the

course of their work, come across, for example, someone who is exhibiting behaviour potentially indicative of a risk that a crime will be committed.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The exchange of information between law enforcement authorities and schools, social services and healthcare and other relevant actors shall be further developed as needed.

3.6 Reduce the possibility of access to weapons and other means of attack

Attacks can be carried out with relatively simple means, such as firearms, cutting and stabbing weapons, vehicles used as weapons or crude improvised explosive devices. Firearms and explosives can also end up in the wrong hands and be used for this purpose. It is not possible to completely eliminate the risk of perpetrators acquiring such means, especially not simpler means such as cutting and stabbing weapons or vehicles used as weapons. Efforts to reduce the access to weapons need to focus both on the means that are known and on new ones that may be used. The work of authorities and municipalities to protect society against attacks, such as protection of places and protection of individuals who may be targets of an attack, is therefore also crucial. Section 4 of the strategy *Protect* provides a description of actions to protect people and the functions of society.

Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) substances are examples of other means that can be used to carry out attacks. Certain chemicals can be used in the manufacture of explosives, so-called explosives precursors. Rapid technological development will also bring new weapon types. This could, for example, include self-made 3D-printed firearms and the use of drones for terrorist purposes.

Reduce access to weapons and increase control of explosives and CBRN substances

According to the Police Authority, criminal networks are well supplied with weapons and explosives. Weapons and their components are smuggled into the country, but the authorities also assess that illicit domestic weapons manufacturing is growing. Attacks can be carried out with smuggled grenades and mines, explosives for civilian use that have been stolen, or self-made explosives. Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and the amount of advanced weapons donated to Ukraine in order to strengthen the military capabilities of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and their ability to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity, leads to a need for measures that reduce the possibility of perpetrators and terrorist organisations to gain access to these weapons and means of attack.

Cooperation between law enforcement authorities and other relevant authorities is important in order to stop the illegal use of explosives for civilian use, homemade explosives and CBRN substances. On 5 October 2023, the Government decided on a commission to the authorities that are

part of the National Forum for Explosives Safety to intensify and develop the work to stop illegal explosions (F62023/01615). The commission was given to the eleven authorities that are part of the forum, and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency coordinates the work. Concerned authorities shall, among other things, identify vulnerabilities that can put explosives at risk of falling into the wrong hands and take immediate action to reduce these vulnerabilities.

An effective regulatory framework in the area is also central. Due to a new EU Regulation, Regulation (EU) 2019/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the marketing and use of explosives precursors, stricter rules regarding their handling came into force in 2019 and are fully applied since 1 February 2021 (prop. 2019/20:154). The new regulation means, among other things, that Member States' possibilities to grant exemptions for the handling of several listed substances are limited. Furthermore, the obligation to report suspicious transactions as well as significant disappearances and thefts of explosives precursors to the national contact point is extended. In addition, there are requirements for awareness-raising measures and increased surveillance. When it comes to nuclear substances, the regulations for nuclear control are important factors in the preventive work.

In 2021, several amendments to the Flammables and Explosives Act (2010:1011) entered into force (prop. 2020/21:158). The aim was to increase control over those who deal with explosives and contribute to breaking the trend with an increased number of explosions in society. The amendments made processing permit applications more extensive, while the regulation concerning the possibility of revoking permits was clarified and expanded. Furthermore, changes aimed at strengthening control were implemented, such as limitations on the validity period of certain permits and extended right to prescribe regulations.

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency is currently developing a national permit register for explosives, in accordance with the mandate in the appropriation directions for 2023. The permit register aims to give municipalities and authorities access to each other's permit decisions. It will also be able to be used by companies that sell and convey explosives to check that operators' permits are valid. Overall, the permit register will provide a better picture of issued permits for explosives, which can help prevent explosives from falling into the wrong hands. In October 2023, the Government announced that the legislative amendments required for the register will be fast-tracked, with the aim of having them in place by July 2024.

CBRN contingency at EU level is in many respects quite good, but there are parts that need to be developed. During Sweden's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2023, CBRN was a particularly prioritized area in the Working Party on Civil Protection (PROCIV). Within the framework of the work in PROCIV, Sweden, together with other Member States, produced Council conclusions in a very short time that contain measures that the Member States and the Union undertake to implement in order to strengthen contingency regarding CBRN-related threats. The Council conclusions were adopted by the Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHA) on 8 June 2023. Examples of areas highlighted in the Council conclusions are the need for improved early warning capacity,

Member States' need for regular CBRN-specific information related to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and solutions to facilitate Member States deploying civil protection-related CBRN capabilities to countries affected by conflict.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The work to prevent weapons and explosives from being smuggled into Sweden must be developed.
- Authorities need to be given more effective tools and powers to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute crimes related to weapons and explosives.
- Authorities need to continuously develop their cooperation relating to the illegal use and handling of explosives and CBRN substances.
- Sweden must continue to assume an active role and pursue issues that contribute to safer handling of hazardous substances within the EU.

Key actors in the area Avert

The Swedish Security Service bears national responsibility for averting terrorist offences. The Security Service is the convening body of the Counter-Terrorism Cooperative Council. The Council currently consists of the Swedish Security Service, the Swedish Police Authority, the Swedish Economic Crime Authority, the National Defence Radio Establishment, the Swedish Armed Forces, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, the Coast Guard, the Swedish Migration Agency, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, the Swedish Tax Agency, the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority, the Swedish Defence Research Agency, the Swedish Transport Agency, Swedish Customs and the Swedish Prosecution Authority. The National Centre for Terrorist Threat Assessment is a permanent working group with staff from the National Defence Radio Establishment, the Military Intelligence and Security Service and the Swedish Security Service.

The Swedish Police Authority bears overall responsibility for order and security in Sweden and shall provide effective operational support to the Swedish Security Service. The National Operations Department (NOA) and its law enforcement development unit bear overall responsibility for developing police capabilities in the field. NOA also includes the Financial Intelligence Unit, which is responsible for intelligence operations concerning money laundering and terrorist financing. Furthermore, the Swedish Police Authority is responsible for the coordination function to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, which consists of the Swedish Companies Registration Office, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, the Swedish Economic Crime Authority, the Swedish Estate Agents Inspectorate, the Swedish Financial Supervisory Authority, the Swedish Enforcement Authority, the County Administrative Board of Skåne, the County Administrative Board of Stockholm, the County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland, the Swedish Police Authority, the Swedish Inspectorate of Auditors, the Swedish Tax Agency, the Swedish Gambling Authority, the Swedish Security Service, Swedish

Customs, the Swedish Prosecution Authority and the Swedish Bar Association.

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Postal and courier companies and freight companies operating on land, at sea and in air traffic alike are important for detecting and restricting illegal trade and imports. Business operators who trade in or otherwise handle, convey, import or export legal weapons and explosives are also important actors in preventing the products from being used for illegal purposes. The same applies to rifle clubs and other entities that use guns for lawful purposes.

The Swedish Board of Agriculture, the Swedish Chemicals Agency, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority and the county administrative boards are examples of licensing authorities for the handling of CBRN substances. Other authorities, for example the Public Health Agency of Sweden, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences have tasks within the field of CBRN. In terms of explosives, it is the municipalities and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency that examine applications for and issue permits under the Flammables and Explosives Act, and they are responsible for monitoring compliance. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency is also responsible for the National Forum for Explosives Safety. The forum includes – besides the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency – the Swedish Armed Forces, the Swedish Defence Materiel Administration, the Swedish Board of Agriculture, the Coast Guard, the Swedish Police Authority, the Swedish Security Service, the Swedish Defence Research Agency, the Swedish Transport Administration, the Swedish Transport Agency and Swedish Customs. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) will be offered a place in the forum.

4 Protect people and society's functions

Objectives

- Society's preparedness shall keep pace with developments in methods of attack.
- Further develop work on risk and vulnerability analyses.
- Constitutional rights and freedoms shall be actively protected.

Vulnerability refers to how much and seriously a system is affected by an incident. The degree of vulnerability is determined by the ability to predict, manage, resist and recover from the incident. The heightened complexity in the threat scenario has meant that there are today a great number of potential targets against which actors in violent extremist environments could act. Possible locations where attacks might be committed have also increased. In addition, there is a heightened risk of weaknesses in the protection of essential services being exploited to perpetrate attacks or other activities aimed at destabilising society. Work on protecting society against violent extremism and terrorism aims to reduce vulnerability in society by, for example, physical barriers or other security-enhancing measures that generally improve the ability to resist or limit the damage caused by a terrorist attack or other criminal acts that are founded on violent extremism. These efforts also aim to protect the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms, such as freedom of expression and freedom of religion.

This work requires collaboration between all involved actors. Initiatives in this area span a wide range of authorities and other actors and encompass numerous types of expertise. This includes expertise within physical protective barriers, advanced IT technology, risk and vulnerability assessments and security assessments.

4.1 Society's preparedness shall keep pace with developments in methods of attack

In order for the work to protect society against attacks to be effective, there needs to be an awareness in society and among responsible authorities that potential methods of attack are constantly evolving. The NCT's full-year assessment of the terror threat against Sweden and Swedish interests constitutes an important basis for assessing the need for actions and protective measures. This applies to both potential targets of attacks and potential locations for attacks. The heightened complexity in the threat scenario has meant that there are today a great number of potential targets against which actors in violent extremist environments or lone actors could act. Targets can be chosen based on what individuals and groups express, what locations symbolise or based on an ambition to harm as many people as possible, for example in large crowds, at religious sites or events, in schools or other buildings and locations of importance to society.

A safe and secure public environment

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Public places are the common environment in which people move around, such as streets, squares, public transport, train stations, airports, shopping centres and religious sites. An important part of the work on protecting society from attacks concerns creating a safe and secure public environment. This may include different types of physical protection in places where there are lots of people, or in particularly vulnerable places. It can also include camera surveillance in public places. The basis for improving safety in public environments also involves procedures and planned measures to enabling dealing with different incidents.

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency is engaged in efforts to improve security in public environments and raise public knowledge and awareness about terrorism, etc. As part of this work, the agency has, together with the Swedish Police Authority, developed *Vägledning: Säkerhet i offentlig miljö: skydd mot antagonistiska hot och terrorism* (Guideline on Protection of Public Spaces: Protection against antagonistic threats and terrorism) (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2019). The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency has trained representatives of arenas and events and representatives of the largest faith communities. The latter was done alongside the Agency for Support to Faith Communities. The central-government grant for security-enhancing measures for civil society organisations has been significantly increased, and part of these funds have been specifically allocated to reinforcing the security and safety work of individual churches and individual faith communities.

Work to create a safe and secure public environment needs to be prioritised, and intra-agency collaboration and cooperation need to be developed at the national, regional and local level. There may also be a need to develop collaboration and cooperation between authorities and other actors, such as faith communities, business operators and construction companies.

The work to create a safe and secure public environment also requires responsible actors to be aware that protective measures taken shall not be disproportionate and make the general public feel unsafe.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Relevant actors shall have access to knowledge of necessary and effective measures.
- NCT's analyses shall be operationalised by relevant authorities with a view to reducing vulnerabilities and bolstering protection against terrorism and violent extremism.
- Coordination between the national, regional and local levels on procedures to enable dealing with different incidents needs to be developed.

Specific challenges in the school environment

Recently, the state of security and threat scenario in the school system have changed for the worse, which is linked, among other factors, to the development of violent extremism. A number of cases of serious violence

have been committed in primary and secondary schools, some with fatal outcomes. The majority of these acts have been committed by minors acting alone and not previously known to the police. To counteract these developments, the Government has tasked a special inquiry with investigating and submitting proposals for measures to improve the work on safety in the school system (dir. 2022:86, 2023:22 and 2023:120). The inquiry shall submit proposals on how preventive efforts to combat acts of violence in the school system can be reinforced through both national and local measures, and propose an appropriate organisation of local or regional operational cooperation bodies. The inquiry shall also propose how statutory responsibility for crime prevention work should be designed for the school system. In the inquiry's first interim report, Society against school attacks (SOU 2023:28), proposals are presented to the effect that the CVE shall be tasked with providing support to municipalities, authorities and other actors in efforts to prevent school attacks.

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency has, in collaboration with the Police Authority and CVE, prepared guidelines for schools: *Våldshandlingar med stora konsekvenser för skolan – en vägledning för skollledning, skolpersonal och säkerhetsansvariga* (Acts of violence with major consequences in schools – a guide for school management, school staff and security heads) (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2023). The guide focuses chiefly on describing how schools can improve security and protection for pupils and school staff, but also contains information about the work on combating radicalisation and violent extremism. The guide describes how all schools should have a plan that sets out how the school shall prepare for, act upon and recover from an attack, for example. It also describes how each individual school should devise its plan based on its specific conditions and identifiable risks in a risk and vulnerability analysis.

Focus of the work ahead:

- CVE, the Civil Contingencies Agency, the National Agency for Education, the National Board of Health and Welfare, the Police Authority and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions shall continue to provide support to actors in the school system on how they can develop their work on tackling the challenges that exist.

Reinforced protection of critical infrastructure

Critical infrastructure needs to be protected, and this protection needs to be adapted based on the threat. The Government has tasked the Swedish Transport Administration and the Swedish Transport Agency with jointly investigating the need to reinforce protection for Swedish railways and public transport (LI2023/03011). The Swedish Defence Research Agency conducts continual work to enable assessing the threat that non-state actors will use CBRNE substances (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear substances and explosives) to cause adverse impacts in society.

Sweden participates in the European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection (EPCIP), which was initiated after the terrorist

attacks in the United States and Europe in the early 2000s. The overarching objective of the programme is to improve protection of critical infrastructure in the EU. The threat from terrorism is prioritised, but protection of critical infrastructure is to be based on a strategy that covers all relevant threats. An important part of the programme is the ECI Directive (Directive 2008/114/EC on the identification and designation of European critical infrastructures), which covers the energy and transport sectors.

In December 2022, Directive (EU) 2022/2557 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on the resilience of critical entities and repealing Council Directive 2008/114/EC was decided (the CER Directive). The Directive, which replaces the ECI Directive with effect from October 2024, aims to broadly improve resilience in society among public and private actors, competent authorities and in the Union as a whole. The CER Directive requires Member States to identify actors ('critical entities') that provide essential services within the sectors of energy, transport, banking, financial market infrastructure, healthcare, drinking water, wastewater, digital infrastructure, public administration, space as well as food production, processing and distribution. The aim is to reinforce the ability of critical entities that provide essential services to prevent, resist and manage disturbances or disruptions, whether caused by natural disasters, terrorist attacks, pandemics or other serious incidents. The Government has tasked a special inquiry with proposing the adaptations of Swedish law needed to implement the CER Directive (dir. 2023:30). The report of the commission will be presented by 23 February 2024.

Following the sabotage of gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea, in October 2022 the Commission presented a proposal for a Council Recommendation on measures to strengthen the resilience of critical infrastructure in the EU. The Council Recommendation was adopted by the Council in December 2022 and proposes voluntary measures that can be taken even before the CER Directive has been implemented. The Council Recommendation has a broad approach, identifying a number of particularly prioritised sectors – energy, digital infrastructure, transport and space. Also, particular emphasis is placed on critical infrastructures of cross-border significance and in which disturbances would have a major adverse impact on multiple Member States. The Council Recommendation contains proposals for action in the Member States, and proposals for action at the EU level. The actions concern aspects such as the exchange of information, stress tests and exercises.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Implementation of the new CER Directive shall help to strengthen society's resilience and capabilities for dealing with antagonistic threats.

4.2 Further develop work on risk and vulnerability analyses

Weaknesses in society risk being exploited by actors in violent extremist environments to perpetrate attacks or other activities aimed at destabilising society. It is therefore important that there is an awareness in society of what the threats comprise, the activities to be protected and the actions needed to ensure full protection.

Improve society's robustness

For effective protection of essential services across the entire threat spectrum, continuous analysis and knowledge are needed of vulnerabilities, threats or risks that can seriously threaten, harm or impair capabilities within essential services ahead of or during peacetime crisis situations and in a heightened state of alert. Each authority is therefore obliged to identify any essential services within its field of responsibility and conduct systematic work to enable upholding its own essential services, and seek to ensure that other actors in the field of responsibility also conduct such work. At least once every two years, the authorities shall evaluate and compile the results of this work in a risk and vulnerability analysis. Because a large proportion of essential services are privately owned and run, this work requires collaboration between private and public actors. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency plays an important role in moving this work forward. The agency offers support in the form of training and advice, both to public and private actors, aimed at reinforcing capabilities for identifying and systematically upholding essential services.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The threat from violent extremism and terrorism shall be clearly included in the work on risk and vulnerability analyses.

Ensure full information security and cybersecurity

The heightened digitalisation of society and society's increased dependence on information technology have caused information security and cybersecurity to be a matter of national and international security. Vulnerabilities and deficiencies in digital networks and society's information management risk being exploited by actors in violent extremist environments. This may include attempts to steal data of importance to the security of Sweden or individuals, and attempts at malign influence on decision-making. Digitalisation brings complex dependencies and vulnerabilities that need to be addressed.

The entity that bears responsibility for an operation is also responsible for ensuring that the level of information security and cybersecurity is sufficient. In recent years, numerous cyber-attacks have had major consequences for society, including in Sweden, which has further highlighted the importance of operations ensuring that they have full

information security and cybersecurity. The CERT-SE (Computer Emergency Response Team) function at the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency can provide support in efforts to manage and prevent IT incidents.

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In December 2020, the Government tasked the National Defence Radio Establishment, the Swedish Armed Forces, the Swedish Security Service and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency with establishing a national cybersecurity centre, to deepen cooperation in the field of cybersecurity (Fö2019/01330). The overall goal of the National Cybersecurity Centre (NCSC) is to reinforce Sweden's collective capabilities for preventing, detecting and managing antagonistic cyber threats and other major IT incidents. The authorities shall cooperate closely with the Swedish Defence Materiel Administration, the Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority. There will also be collaboration with private and public actors. In 2023, the Government tasked the National Defence Radio Establishment, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, the Swedish Armed Forces and the Swedish Security Service with two tasks. One is to bolster cooperation with the business sector within the framework of the NCSC, and the other concerns developing work on situational reporting (Fö2023/00907 and Fö2023/00906). In October 2023, an inquiry was tasked to submit proposals on how main responsibility for the coordination, development and implementation of the centre's activities should be designed, including the centre's secretariat function (Fö2023:01606). The interim report of the commission is to be presented no later than 29 February 2024 and the final report no later than 30 April 2024.

In 2017, the Government decided on a national strategy for information and cybersecurity in society. Much has changed since then. Heightened digitalisation, rapid technological development combined with a worsened state of national security and an altered landscape place new demands. The Government has begun work on developing a new information and cybersecurity strategy that is expected to be decided in 2024.

Through the Information Security for Essential and Digital Services Act (2018:1174), the Directive (EU) 2016/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 concerning measures for a high common level of security of network and information systems across the Union (NIS Directive) was implemented in Sweden. The Directive was the first EU-wide legislation to impose legal requirements on measures to raise the common level of cybersecurity in the Union. It has now been replaced by Directive (EU) 2022/2555 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union, amending Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 and Directive (EU) 2018/1972, and repealing Directive (EU) 2016/1148 (the NIS 2 Directive). The NIS 2 Directive addresses the increasing digital threat to the EU and the rising internal interdependencies between sectors and across national borders. The new Directive covers more sectors and will affect many more operators than today – both private- and public-sector actors. Vast areas of public administration will be covered by the new regulatory framework.

The NIS 2 Directive is supplemented by the CER Directive on the resilience of critical entities, which aims to ensure the general non-cybersecurity-related resilience of actors deemed critical to society's

essential services. The Directive shall contribute to improving the resilience of public and private actors and of the Union as a whole. The special inquiry that has been tasked (dir. 2023:30) with proposing how the CER Directive is to be implemented will also propose the adaptations of Swedish law needed for the implementation of the NIS 2 Directive. The report of the commission will be presented by 23 February 2024.

In the 2024 Budget Bill, the Government proposes that a cybercampus be established in Sweden to reinforce both skills supply and research within cybersecurity. In 2024, SEK 25 million is being contributed to establish the new campus. As of 2025, SEK 40 million will be contributed annually.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Implementation of the NIS 2 and CER Directives, and a new national cybersecurity strategy, shall help to bolster society's resilience and capabilities for dealing with antagonistic threats.

Protective security to be developed further

Protective security is about protecting information and activities of importance to Sweden's security against espionage, sabotage, terrorist offences and certain other threats. Protective security also concerns protecting activities that are covered by an international protective security commitment that is binding on Sweden. An entity that to any extent is engaged in security-sensitive activities must under the Protective Security Act (2018:585) to investigate the need for protective security, plan and take protective security measures and undertake controls of its own protective security. Protective security measures cover the areas information security, physical security and personnel security. It is the responsibility of each operator to keep themselves informed, perform assessments and conduct their activities in accordance with the regulations in force in the field of protective security. A number of authorities also conduct supervision in the area.

Access to expertise in the field of protective security needs to be sound to enable society to maintain strong protection of security-sensitive activities and classified information. The Swedish Security Service, the Swedish Defence University and the Swedish Armed Forces have, as tasked by the Government, proposed measures to reinforce skills supply in the field of protective security (Ju2022/02042). In the 2024 Budget Bill, the Government proposes that the Swedish Defence University be allocated special funding for courses and research within protective security. The initiative provides the Swedish Defence University with the right means to enhance and scale up courses offered within protective security. In 2024 and 2025, SEK 11 million will be provided, of which SEK 4 million will be permanent research funding.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Expertise in the field of protective security needs to be enhanced to enable society to maintain sound protection of security-sensitive activities and classified information.

4.3 Constitutional rights and freedoms shall be actively protected

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All citizens are covered by constitutionally protected rights and freedoms, which include freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of demonstration. In order for elected representatives, journalists, cultural creators and everyone else to feel safe in expressing themselves, these and other rights and freedoms need to be actively protected. It is also important that people feel secure in sharing their thoughts and opinions in digital environments, moving around freely, participating in gatherings and practising their faith and wearing religious symbols without fear of subjection to threats or violence.

Protect the exercise of rights and freedoms

In Sweden, freedom of expression, assembly and demonstration is far-reaching. These rights and freedoms are protected by the Constitution and can only be restricted through laws. Some such restrictions on freedom of demonstration are contained in the Public Order Act (1993:1617). Under the Act, a permit is required to organise a public gathering, such as a demonstration, in a public place. It is the Swedish Police Authority that examines permit-related matters. The possibility of refusing permits is limited and may only be granted if so necessary on grounds relating to public order or security at the gathering, or for traffic-related considerations.

It is the organiser of a public gathering that is responsible for order and security at the gathering. Sometimes, however, certain interventions are required from the Police Authority at the site of the gathering. The Police Authority has special dialogue police officers and special police tactics at gatherings such as demonstrations. The tactics comprise numerous different elements and aim to reduce the risks of conflicts, for instance through effective communication. If crime is committed and it falls within the Security Service's field of responsibility, there are procedures for cooperation and coordination between the authorities.

The Police Authority has an ongoing dialogue with faith communities aimed at making people feel safe in practising their religion. The Police Authority has also implemented safety-enhancing measures at places of religious gatherings. Camera surveillance may also form part of the protection of such places and buildings. Organisations and faith communities can also apply for central-government grants to improve the safety of the premises for their activities, regardless of whether they own or rent such premises. Certain meeting places and operations can, even if they are not frequently subjected to crime, be exposed to a greater threat than other places. This may, for example, concern the buildings of the Riksdag and the Government, polling stations, media offices and premises used by faith communities. In cases where actors direct threats or perpetrate various crimes targeting such places or operations, it is the task of the Police Authority to investigate such matters and to take relevant security measures.

The Government has tasked a special inquiry with investigating the conditions for and submitting legislative proposals that would enable circumstances that threaten Sweden's security to be taken into account in the examination of permits for gatherings (dir. 2023:123). The aim is to create appropriate rules, based on today's needs, that reinforce the protection of Sweden's security, while at the same time safeguarding freedom of expression and demonstration. The report of the commission will be presented by 1 July 2024.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The Police Authority shall ensure adequate protection and monitoring of public gatherings and develop their tactics for reducing the risk of conflicts in such contexts. The Authority shall also provide individualised support and information to those who are nevertheless subjected to crimes at such gatherings.
- The Police Authority and other relevant agencies shall be in continual dialogue and collaboration with groups that consider themselves vulnerable.

People shall not be limited by fear in their daily life

There is a need for safety-enhancing measures and sound communication of relevant information so that people are not limited by fear in their daily life. It is also highly important that information that can be conveyed to the public about the current threat scenario or risk of a terrorist attack is communicated in a straightforward, calming manner. General fears in society can lead to people no longer feeling safe in crowded places, on public transport, when participating in demonstrations and other public gatherings, or in sharing their opinions in digital environments. Police presence can help allay people's fears.

The spread of disinformation about Sweden is picked up by actors outside Sweden who are intent on harming Sweden and Swedish interests abroad. These actors can also question our constitutional rights and freedoms, women's rights and the rights of LGBTQI persons. Some of these can use this as a pretext for committing acts of violence, for example against Swedes who are abroad or against staff posted at Swedish missions abroad. The state of national security is affected by hybrid warfare, not least through information and malign influence operations directed at Sweden and Swedish interests abroad.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Relevant authorities should communicate measures to combat violent extremism and terrorism in a reassuring way.
- Relevant authorities, including missions abroad, need to continuously ensure appropriate protection for their staff and stand prepared with the ability to reinforce it in the event of an elevated threat scenario.
- In the event of an elevated threat scenario against Sweden and Swedish interests abroad, the relevant authorities, including missions abroad, need to be able to provide readily available information in different languages about relevant legislation, such as constitutional rights and

freedoms and how protection of these rights is manifested in concrete terms.

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Key actors in the area Protect

All actors at national, regional, and local level that conduct security-sensitive activities have obligations to investigate the need for protective security, plan and implement protective security measures and undertake controls of their own protective security. Under the Protective Security Ordinance (2021:955), the Security Service and the Armed Forces are tasked with providing advice on protective security to certain designated actors, such as the Government Offices and the Riksdag, upon request. In their capacity of supervisory authorities under protective security legislation, the Security Service and the Armed Forces shall also provide guidance on protective security within their respective supervisory areas. The Police Authority can provide advice concerning facilities not covered by protective security legislation. Furthermore, the National Defence Radio Establishment can support government agencies and individual business operators that handle information that is deemed sensitive from a vulnerability angle or that concerns security or defence policy.

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency shall be a driving force in preventive and vulnerability-curbing measures, working with coordination between relevant actors, contributing to reducing the consequences of crises and following up on and evaluating society's crisis contingency efforts.

5 Manage the situation during and after an attack

Objectives

- Society shall be able to swiftly intervene against and halt an attack.
- Authorities shall have preparedness for dealing with new types of attacks and aggression.
- Develop tools and cooperation for investigation and prosecution.
- Develop support for victims of terrorism, hate crimes and crimes that threaten democracy.

While many initiatives and measures prevent, avert and protect society from violent extremism and terrorism, there must also be contingency for managing a situation in which an attack is being or has been committed. The aim of the work in this area is to ensure that society has the necessary capabilities for intervening and halting an ongoing attack. The work also aims to ensure that the impact on society of such crime is limited, that victims of terrorism, hate crime and crime that threatens democracy obtain support and justice, and that perpetrators are arrested and prosecuted.

5.1 Society shall be able to swiftly intervene against and halt an attack

In the event of an attack, it must be possible for multiple actors to swiftly act simultaneously in order to address the immediate needs arising from the incident, and the needs arising in society as a consequence of the attack. There must be effective intervention to halt the attack, while people need help and society's functions need to be restored. This work requires rapid and effective cooperation and a clear division of responsibilities and capabilities among responsible actors to swiftly implement coordinated initiatives. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency's Guide – *Vägledning – samverkan vid pågående dödligt våld i publik miljö* (Collaboration in the event of ongoing deadly violence in public spaces)(Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2019) describes how attacks are often perpetrated by simple means, the perpetrators are often willing to sacrifice their lives, the acts of violence are in most cases over in 15 minutes and can, at worse, result in numerous severely injured casualties. The police need to secure scenes and perpetrators rapidly and have great capabilities for acting despite an ambiguous situation. Casualties need to be quickly attended to and transported to hospitals, while there needs to be high alert for secondary attacks or follow-on incidents. The police and other actors also need to be able to accept information from witnesses in order to search for perpetrators.

The need for tactical capabilities for swift action

Police officers on the ground are those who will intervene and respond to a terrorist attack. Others who may be able to arrive on site very early on and take action are, for example, security guards or other staff, such as transport or school staff, or ordinary citizens. The time aspect is critical. The basic tactical capabilities of police officers on the ground are crucial for the ability to initially deal with a terrorist attack, and there are procedures for how police officers are to act during ongoing deadly violence. At the regional level, there are regional intervention groups consisting of police officers with special training to tackle aspects such as serious violent crime. The Counter-Terrorist Unit within the Police Authority's national operations department is Sweden's ultimate police resource for tackling situations that are so serious, unusual or risky that they cannot be addressed within ordinary police operations. The Counter-Terrorist Unit needs to arrive on the scene as quickly as possible. To enable halting an ongoing attack or preventing new attacks from being committed, the perpetrator and any co-perpetrators need to be identified, located and detained. Buildings and places may need to be evacuated and searched, while preliminary investigation measures such as sealing off a crime scene and securing evidence need to be taken. The National Bomb Squad (NBS) at the Police Authority examines and disposes of dangerous objects and plays a key role in securing locations so that others can perform their duties. The capacity for strategic and operational leadership in critical conditions is crucial to the ability to manage an attack. Municipalities are responsible for emergency services in terms of emergency response in the

event of accidents and imminent danger of accidents in order to prevent and limit harm to people, property or the environment. Municipal emergency services have special resources for dealing with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) incidents.

In terms of interventions at sea, the Counter Terrorist Unit cooperates with the Coast Guard where needed. If multiple terrorist attacks were to be perpetrated simultaneously, if they are cross-border in nature or if a terrorist attack were to continue for a long period of time, there may be a need for additional police reinforcements. The national special intervention units within the EU work together in the Atlas Network to increase and equalise participating states' capabilities for combating terrorist attacks. The exchange concerns both sharing knowledge and field exercises. To enable the same kind of cooperation with Norwegian special intervention units, a separate agreement has been signed with Norway. Through the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, a 'solidarity clause' was introduced through Article 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which entails an obligation for Member States to assist each other upon request in the event of a terrorist attack or natural disaster. The EU and its Member States have the use of instruments and resources for emergency service interventions both in the EU and internationally.

In the event of a terrorist attack or ongoing perpetration of deadly violence in a public environment (PDV), good cooperation between the Police Authority, emergency services and healthcare and medical services at the attack scene is crucial to assisting any casualties. PDV covers a spectrum of incidents, with the common denominator being that one or more perpetrators are subjecting the public to lethal violence that does not usually end until the violence is halted by someone other than the perpetrators themselves. The emergency and healthcare services must reach the scene quickly to assist casualties and limit immediate impact. According to the research study *Räddnings- och sjukvårdsinsats vid terrorhändelse* (Emergency response in the event of a terrorist incident (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2019), such attacks differ from the injuries that healthcare professionals are accustomed to dealing with. Tending to detonation and shrapnel injuries, shootings of unprotected people at close range with directed-energy weapons, or other injuries caused by very strongly intentional violence requires special instruction and training. Effective and coordinated action in PDV incidents is based on the relevant actors being mentally prepared, which can be achieved through actor-wide planning, training and exercises.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Responsible actors shall conduct joint training courses, and train staff from the emergency services and the police as well the various units within healthcare together. If necessary, other actors, such as security companies, store staff, etc. shall also be offered the possibility to participate in exercises.

Support provided by the Swedish Armed Forces to the police

Under certain conditions, the Armed Forces can provide support to the Swedish Police Authority and the Security Service, pursuant to a number of laws and ordinances, such as the Civil Protection Act (2003:778) and the Swedish Armed Forces' Support for Civilian Activities Ordinance (2002:375). The Armed Forces' resources are used to support the police in searches for missing persons and handling of explosives. There is also a possibility for the police to obtain support from the Armed Forces with helicopter transportation in connection with various police actions, under the Swedish Armed Forces' Helicopter Transport Support to Swedish Police Ordinance (2017:113). Under these regulations the Armed Forces' staff may not be deployed in situations where there is a risk that they may use force or violence against individuals.

The possibility for the Police Authority and the Security Service to request support from the Armed Forces in the form of interventions that may involve the use of violence or force against individuals is limited to certain situations in the fight against terrorism in accordance with the Swedish Armed Forces' Support to the Police in Combating Terrorism Act (2006:343) (the Support Act). Such a request for assistance requires the support to avert or otherwise intervene against an act that may constitute a terrorist offence, or attempt, preparation or conspiracy to or failure to divulge or avert such an offence. The intervention must also require special resources to which neither the Police Authority nor the Security Service have access to, for example access to air and naval forces. The Support Act does not allow the authorities to request the Armed Forces' support based on a general need for staff reinforcements. In addition, as a general rule, support may only be requested if the Government has granted its consent. In October 2023, the Government tasked the Armed Forces and the Police Authority to deepen their cooperation in areas where a positive contribution can be made to combating systemic crime, and where the Armed Forces can provide support to the police under existing regulations (Ju2023/02208). Concerted efforts are also needed to support the police in the work caused by the increased level of the terror threat. An interim report of the commission is to be presented no later than 2 April 2024 and a final report no later than 15 October 2024. The Government has also appointed a special inquiry to assess, among other aspects, whether the possibilities for the police to request and receive support from the Armed Forces should be expanded and, if so, how (dir. 2023:143). The report of the inquiry will be presented by 15 April 2025.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The Armed Forces and the Police Authority shall deepen their cooperation.
- The legislation that regulates when the Armed Forces may provide support to the police with interventions that may involve violence or force against individuals, for example in the form of surveillance duties, shall be reviewed.

County administrative boards' and authorities' support for municipalities

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The operations of municipalities provide the basis for crisis management. According to the County Administrative Boards' Contingency Planning and Tasks Ahead of and in Times of Heightened Alert Ordinance (2017:870), the county administrative boards' tasks include possessing capabilities, in the event of a serious crisis affecting the county or prompting a need for collaboration with municipalities or other actors, for immediately establishing a management function for aspects such as coordination and information. The county administrative boards shall serve as coordinators for contingency planning within their geographical area and, ahead of, during and after a crisis, work to ensure a coordinated and common focus for the measures needed. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency stands prepared to support the county administrative boards and other authorities with collaboration through, for example, interoperability conferences if needed in the event of a particular incident. The Preparedness of Government Agencies Ordinance (2022:524) encompasses more than 60 agencies. The purpose of the Ordinance is that agencies under the Government, through their operations, shall reduce vulnerability in society and develop sound capabilities for performing their tasks in peacetime crisis situations and times of a heightened state of alert.

Focus of the work ahead:

- In a crisis, the county administrative board shall work for coordination and collaboration, and support the county's actors in the effort to focus society's actions and resources so as to minimise the consequences for society.
- Within the scope of their remit to reduce the vulnerability of society, contingency planning authorities shall further develop their work on providing support to municipalities.

Effective crisis communication

Capabilities for protecting and guiding people in the event of a terrorist attack can be crucial to protecting people's lives and health. The Important Public Announcement (IPA) system is a warning and information system used to warn and provide guidance in the event of serious incidents and accidents, such as terrorist attacks or nuclear accidents. The channels available for transmitting such messages are radio and television broadcasts, messages to fixed-line and mobile phones and by sirens through the outdoor warning system. On 1 January 2024, the Important Public Announcement Act (2023:407) came into force. The new Act provides for collective regulation to ensure an effective, robust and secure IPA system that will work in times of both peace and war. The new legislation will also ensure an effective air-raid warning system which, under the new regulation, is incorporated into the IPA system.

One of the most severe consequences of a terrorist attack, besides the direct damage it causes, is the risk of heightened fears and a diminished

sense of safety among the population. This can in turn affect people's confidence in society's actors and inclination to follow the advice and recommendations of the responsible actors. It is also important to consider the need to reach out to victims and other particularly vulnerable groups after a terrorist attack. Communication between agencies, the general public and the media can be crucial in how a crisis or incident unfolds. The Security Service bears specific responsibility for communication in the event of a change in the terror threat level, in the event of an attack being committed or other terrorist-related incidents. It cooperates with the relevant operations and within the Counter-Terrorism Cooperative Council. Warning and information coordination are tremendously important in efforts to improve safety, allay fears and build trust, counteract disinformation and rumour-spreading, convey decisions, advice and recommendations and, not least, to help victims to deal with and overcome the crisis. In this work, consideration also needs to be given to the possibility of accepting important information from the public to deal with the crisis. In the event of a crisis or in times of a heightened state of alert, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency is tasked with ensuring that relevant actors have the opportunity to coordinate information for the public and the media. In the event of a terrorist attack, it is also of great importance that agencies and other responsible actors can quickly communicate openly, jointly and credibly to the public and the media. They also need the ability to respond swiftly to questions and adapt the information to different target groups. The website [Krisinformation.se](https://www.krisinformation.se) provides society's collective crisis information in the form of verified information from agencies and other responsible actors. The website also contains preventive information concerning terrorism and what an individual should do in the event of a terrorist attack. There is also the website [Lilla.krisinfo.se](https://www.lilla.krisinfo.se), which is aimed directly at children and young people with verified and child-adapted information about current events and crises and which also aims to teach children what they can do in a crisis situation.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency shall continue to work to ensure that relevant actors coordinate their information for the public and the media in a crisis.
- Authorities and other relevant actors, such as radio and television, need to be involved in the information coordination effort. The work shall focus in particular on common messages, advice for the public, the ability to accept information and adapted information for different groups.

5.2 Authorities shall have preparedness for dealing with new types of attacks and aggression

Actors in violent extremist environments exploit society's vulnerabilities. As society evolves, new vulnerabilities and thus new threats emerge. Operations that may suffer attacks and aggression need to be identified,

and action taken. However, it is difficult to achieve comprehensive protection. Preventive protection measures must therefore be effective and work, and there must be equally good capabilities for detecting attacks and anomalies to enable swiftly taking effective measures to halt and avert attacks and to restore operations and functions after any damage caused.

Reinforced capabilities for managing cyber-attacks

Increasingly advanced technology means that infrastructure, operations within electricity supply or electronic communications and other security-sensitive or essential operations – such as hospitals and other healthcare facilities, prisons, drinking water supply and information supply – are more at risk than before of being attacked. Developments abroad, with war in Sweden’s vicinity meaning that new technology is tested in warfare, lead to more people coming across know-how and means for new methods of attack. The fact that cyber-attacks might more likely be used in terrorist attacks and other ideologically motivated violence requires society to have capabilities for dealing such an attack at the national, regional and local levels alike. The ability to deal with systemic cyber-attacks should be a natural part of contingency to enable addressing the situation during and after an attack.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Authorities need to have preparedness for dealing with systemic cyber-attacks.

A need for heightened preparedness within healthcare

Based on an altered threat scenario from terrorism, and health threats from infectious diseases, demands on the preparedness of the healthcare sector also increase. Extensive efforts are under way to reinforce and enhance preparedness and resilience within healthcare so that such operations can be upheld in peacetime crisis situations, in times of a heightened state of alert and, ultimately, in war. The long-term work on preparedness within healthcare is being conducted on a broad front and involves agencies, regions and municipalities. The National Board of Health and Welfare is the agency that bears sectoral responsibility for health, care and social care. This means that the agency has an extended responsibility for intensifying coordination between authorities and other actors, but also for driving developments in preparedness within health and social care ahead of and during peacetime crises, times of a heightened state of alert and in war. In September 2022, the National Board of Health and Welfare reported on how national capabilities for dealing with mass casualties can be reinforced, and submitted proposals for national training and exercise plans for medical contingency planning for a state of catastrophe, civil defence and national coordination of training and exercises (S2021/02920). In March 2023, the Government tasked the National Board of Health and Welfare with reinforcing the capabilities of the healthcare sector for tackling incidents involving certain hazardous substances and with urgently strengthening national and regional

capabilities in the event of mass casualties (S2023/01047). Within the framework of the commission (S2023/01226) to strengthen national and regional capabilities for dealing with mass casualties, the National Board of Health and Welfare supports the regions, for example in producing and implementing regional mass casualty plans. The agency is also developing a national uniform system for triage in the event of mass casualties.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The National Board of Health and Welfare shall continue to support and strengthen the ability to deal with mass casualties within the health care sector.

Initiatives require well-functioning collaboration

Society must jointly, within each area, take responsibility for and develop safety in society and resilience to terrorist attacks and serious violent crimes. Prior experience of crises has helped to improve capabilities for managing the consequences of an attack. The Police Authority has conducted extensive work to swiftly and resolutely intervene in an ongoing incident. The evaluation performed by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency after the attack on Drottninggatan in 2017 shows that inter-agency cooperation essentially worked well (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2018). However, the agency highlights that relevant authorities should improve at using social media swiftly and systematically in crisis situations, not least to reach out rapidly and broadly with their information. This also aims to undermine the dissemination of rumours and unverified information by using verified information.

Terrorist attacks in Sweden and abroad have led to gleaning further experience and developing working methods. This experience has improved capabilities for dealing with the consequences of attacks. Continued sound ability to act effectively and implement coordinated measures requires clearly defined responsibilities and well-functioning cooperation between the relevant actors. In the work ahead, developing coordinated operational procedures, capabilities for communication and exchanging information, for example through the Rakel radio communications network, joint and regular training and exercises, and cooperating also in normal everyday conditions are of tremendous importance. In international cooperation, it is Nordic neighbours in particular with which Sweden may need to cooperate in the event of a terrorist attack. In the event of an attack on one Sweden's diplomatic missions abroad, procedures for cooperation with other countries are needed to reduce impact both during and after the incident.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Among actors responsible for public order and security, the emergency services, the healthcare sector and school operations, a particular focus on collaboration should impact the various actors' planning and procedures. This should form the basis for cooperation on special contingency planning for serious violent crimes and terrorist attacks.

- The Security Service, the Police Authority and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency need to cooperate with other actors so as to identify risks of new types of attack at an early stage.
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5.3 Develop tools and cooperation for investigation and prosecution

Holding perpetrators of crimes linked to violent extremism or terrorism to account for their acts is fundamental to upholding confidence in and respect for the rule of law. It is also important for victims and their relatives to be able to obtain the justice that is possible.

Terrorist offences

The Swedish Prosecution Authority has the National Security Unit, which deals with cases and matters processed at the Security Service. Specialised prosecutors work at the National Security Unit, with specific responsibility for investigating terrorist offences, bringing action and pursuing cases in court. Terrorist offences include participation in a terrorist organisation, association with a terrorist organisation, financing of terrorism or particularly serious crime, public provocation to terrorism or particularly serious crime, recruitment for terrorism or particularly serious crime, training for terrorism or particularly serious crime and travel for terrorism or particularly serious crime. Sufficient specialist expertise within investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences is essential to enable attaining satisfactory quality in investigations and guaranteeing rule of law for the individual. Criminal cases can be extensive and require in-depth expertise on the part of law enforcement authorities and courts alike, for example in terms of threat scenarios, methods and trends characteristic of such crime.

Eurojust, a close criminal justice cooperation within the EU, provides support in international cooperation to enable conducting effective investigations into terrorist offences. Europol, the EU police cooperation, can provide support to Member States in investigations and intelligence work.

The rules requiring individuals to present themselves at certain times at the Police Authority, as laid down in the Special Controls of Certain Aliens Act (2022:700), are an important instrument for preventing and averting terrorism and enable systematic checks on aliens who, pending expulsion, pose qualified security threats.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Relevant authorities shall continue their cooperation aimed at prosecuting more individuals guilty of terrorist offences, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.
- They shall, in other cases also, work to ensure that individuals suspected of participating in crimes linked to violent extremism or terrorism, and who are covered by the Security Service's remit, are

prosecuted or subject to administrative measures that fall within the remit of the authority concerned.

Hate crimes and other crimes that threaten democracy

Since 2015, the Police Authority has been building up its efforts to combat hate crimes and other crimes that threaten democracy across Sweden, including with the help of a national coordinator and operational development officer, as well as a specially designated investigator-in-charge and other investigators. Effective investigative capabilities are crucial for the victim's possibility of redress and for underpinning confidence in the police in these matters. As part of this work, the Police Authority has developed cooperation with the Swedish Prosecution Authority, the Living History Forum and the Security Service, as well as with universities and other higher education institutions. Besides the fact that victims do not always report a crime, the perpetrator can be anonymous. The report *Hate crimes and other crimes that threaten democracy, interim report 2* (Swedish Police Authority, 2023) describes how there is a need to create basic skills in securing evidence online. The Police Authority highlights that there is still work to be done on improving capabilities in this very area of IT-related crime, and in establishing robust follow-up of criminal investigation capabilities and clearing of such crimes.

Focus of the work ahead:

- The Police Authority needs to continue to develop its work on investigating and prosecuting perpetrators for hate crimes and other crimes that threaten democracy.
- The Police Authority and other agencies need to develop their work against IT-related hate crimes and other crimes that threaten democracy.

International cooperation is required for accountability and prosecution

Local and regional conflicts in other countries can develop into international crises, with implications also for Sweden, Swedish security and Swedish interests abroad. Not least, conflicts can lead to the spread of violent extremism and terrorism. Terrorist organisations can exploit popular uprisings, armed conflicts and wars for their purposes, for example to spread propaganda but also to conquer land areas. This can develop into a serious threat to the civilian population in such areas and internationally, as terrorist organisations can inspire or incite terrorist attacks in other countries. Besides terrorist offences, individuals can commit war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide as part of terrorist organisations. Terrorist organisations operate across borders and people in different parts of the world can jointly recruit, plan and commit terrorist crimes.

It is chiefly men who are recruited into terrorist organisations or armed units abroad. However, it does occur that women, children and families are recruited for the establishment of terrorist organisations in a land area,

as was the case during the Daesh-declared caliphate in Iraq and Syria between 2014 and 2019. Travel from Sweden to another country to join terrorist organisations was extensive during 2012–2016 and Sweden operates nationally and internationally to ensure that a similar situation does not arise again.

It is important to identify and analyse individuals who may have participated in the activities of terrorist organisations and to prosecute them for the crimes they may have committed. It can be a matter of many different types of crime. There is a link between terrorist organisations and organised crime and between sexual violence, men’s violence against women, human trafficking and human smuggling as part of the operations of terrorist organisations, as highlighted in numerous UN resolutions on terrorism and international security.

For a number of years, there has been international cooperation to gather evidence for the various crimes of terrorist organisations in order to hold the perpetrators to account for all their committed crimes and to bring justice for victims. The UN has initiated international evidence-gathering mechanisms such as the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) and the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD), with which Sweden has also entered an agreement. Sweden also supports UNITAD with investigators and experts from the Swedish Police Authority. In addition, Sweden provides financial support to improve UNITAD’s capabilities for sharing information and evidence with investigations in other countries, including Sweden. The Government has also provided funds to the International Centre for Counter Terrorism (ICCT) to conduct a study and also to develop a database covering all countries where trials on terrorist offences and war crime trials have taken place. Based on the information they have gathered, ICCT has identified challenges, areas for improvement and good examples in the work to prosecute individuals, both for terrorist offences and for all other crimes that these individuals may have committed, including crimes that have affected girls and women. The main purpose of the ICCT study and database is for the knowledge base to lead to the instigation of more proceedings (Ju2023/02472).

Focus of the work ahead:

- Development of international cooperation on the accountability for and prosecution of terrorist offences, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide shall continue.

5.4 Develop support for victims of terrorism, hate crimes and crimes that threaten democracy

The Swedish system for support and protection for crime victims involves many different actors. Social services, for example, bear overarching responsibility for providing support and assistance to crime victims and their families. The Police Authority has an obligation to inform crime victims and witnesses of their rights. This task is crucial for crime victims

and witnesses to have their rights respected. The Police Authority is also responsible for certain protection matters, such as conducting an individual protection assessment to determine a plaintiff's need for special protective measures during the preliminary investigation and the trial. In addition, the actions of civil society organisations target a wide range of crime victims who have more or less pronounced specific protection and support needs. For example, victim support centres can be found in most places in Sweden.

Swedish Crime Victim Authority has, in its 2023 appropriation letter, been tasked with identifying what support is being given to crime victims today and proposing a model for regular follow-up of the support (Ju2022/03704). The Swedish Crime Victim Authority shall, within the framework of the commission, also consider and propose different alternative coordinating actors as regards support and initiatives for crime victims. The final report is due by 28 June 2024.

A crime victim may be entitled to state compensation for criminal injury if the perpetrator lacks the ability to pay damages, and if there is no insurance to cover the damages. This right may also exist if the perpetrator is unknown. The Swedish Crime Victim Authority processes applications for such compensation. The authority also has the task of promoting crime victims' rights, highlighting their needs and interests and serving as an information and knowledge centre for crime victims.

A particularly vulnerable group of crime victims

The term 'victim of terrorism' covers both those who are directly affected, and family members of people whose death was caused by a terrorist offence. Victims of terrorism have been identified in numerous contexts as a particularly vulnerable group of crime victims; see, for example, Article 22 of Directive 2012/29/EU of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (the Crime Victims Directive). One reason for this is the nature of the terrorist offence. The purpose of terrorist acts is precisely this – to instil fear and to frighten people. The tremendous media interest generated by a terrorist crime can also make victims particularly vulnerable. In this context, children and young people can be especially vulnerable, particularly in cases where some form of attack is directed at the school environment. People who have previous experience of traumatic events or who belong to the group that is the target of the attack may also need support. The same applies to other groups, such as people with mental illness or disabilities. Not uncommonly, terrorist attacks are directed at public places that are also visited by tourists, and often affect people who are not residents of the country where the crime is committed. For them, dealing with practical issues and a legal process in a foreign country can be particularly stressful. In efforts to provide support to victims of terrorism, account needs to be taken of the specific needs of children and young people for information, support and assistance.

Both the Crime Victims Directive and the Counter-Terrorism Directive (see section 1.4) refer to the specific needs of terrorism victims in terms of support and protection. The Counter-Terrorism Directive contains

criminal law provisions as well as provisions on the protection, support and rights of victims of terrorism. The Directive stipulates that there shall be support services directed at the specific needs of terrorism victims.

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The Swedish Crime Victim Authority has produced information materials aimed at victims of terrorism, which is available on the authority's website and in the form of information sheets that are sent to relevant authorities and organisations in the event of a terrorist offence. Since 2021, the Swedish Crime Victim Authority has also been tasked with serving as Sweden's national contact point for victims of terrorism within a specific network forming part of work in the EU (Ju2021/03329). The network aims to facilitate the rapid exchange of information and assistance in the event of a terrorist attack through contact points that are responsible for providing information on the system that is available for support, assistance, protection and compensation for crime victims. The Swedish Crime Victim Authority has been tasked with developing the work as a national contact point for victims of terrorism. The final report will be presented by 19 April 2024 (Ju2023/02215). When reporting a crime, the Police Authority is also obliged to provide information about the rights of crime victims and where they can find support.

Support for victims of hate crimes and crimes that threaten democracy

According to the report *Självrapporterad utsatthet för hatbrott* (Self-reported exposure to hate crime) (Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, 2020), one fifth of all crime victims stated that there was a hate crime motive, according to the 2019 Swedish Crime Survey. It is also common for there to be more than one hate crime motive. In the study, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention describes self-reported subjection to hate crime based on three major crime surveys: The Swedish Crime Survey, the School Survey on Crime and the Politicians' Safety Survey. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention's in-depth analysis shows how it is most common to have been subjected to hate crimes because of skin colour, nationality or ethnic background. The second most common motive in all three surveys is the victim's religious affiliation, followed by the victim's sexual orientation.

According to the *Politikernas trygghetsundersökning* (Politicians' Safety Survey) (Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, 2023), a total of three out of ten elected representatives reported that they had been subjected to some form of threat and harassment, or violence, vandalism and theft in 2022. Among elected representatives who were subjected in 2022, 43.3 per cent state that they are affected in their position of trust. In the report *Hate speech and fake news* (SALAR, 2023), the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions highlights that it is disturbing to see how online hate speech or verbal attacks from upset and angry citizens can quickly turn into physical attacks on elected representatives. SALAR has developed support materials for municipalities and regions for their work to enable providing support to vulnerable people. The organisation emphasises that it is important that each municipality and region establish roles and responsibilities

concerning the security of elected representatives, for example in guidelines and action plans. Support for elected representatives who are subjected to threats and hatred is provided in each municipality or region in the first instance.

Municipalities and regions can obtain support from SALAR when elected representatives have been subjected in this manner. There are also specific support centres. The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Rights (RFSL) has a crime victim support centre for LGBTQI persons. Through its support centre, RFSL also runs a national hotline. At the local level, the police collaborate with municipalities, schools, businesses and non-profit organisations to increase knowledge about hate crimes. Communication with organisations representing groups that are especially vulnerable to hate crimes is particularly important.

Focus of the work ahead:

- Actors working with supporting crime victims should possess knowledge of ideologically motivated crimes and the different needs of individuals for support and protection depending on the nature of the crime.

Key actors in the area Manage

The Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Security Service bear the main role in intervening against and halting terrorist attacks. The emergency services, SOS Alarm and healthcare services need to be able to provide rapid support and assistance to casualties in the event of serious violent crimes and terrorist attacks. The municipalities are responsible for the municipal emergency response services. Under certain circumstances the Armed Forces and Coast Guard can provide support to the Police Authority and Security Service. Information must also be disseminated to the general public through various media. For example, Swedish Radio has the task of broadcasting important public announcements (IPA).

Each authority is responsible for its contingency planning. According to a special Government decision, certain authorities shall also have the duty officer function, with the task of initiating and coordinating the initial work to detect, verify, alert and inform in peacetime crisis situations. The tasks of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency include supporting the relevant authorities' coordination of crisis response measures. The social services are responsible for support and assistance for crime victims, although voluntary organisations also have initiatives in this area. The Swedish Crime Victim Authority processes applications for criminal injury compensation and is also tasked with highlighting the needs of crime victims, and serving as an information and knowledge centre for matters concerning crime victims.

Ministry of Justice

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Extract from the minutes of the Cabinet Meeting on 4 January 2024

Present: Minister Busch, chair, and Ministers Svantesson, Edholm, Waltersson Grönvall, Jonson, Strömmer, Forssell, Malmer Stenergard

Rapporteur: Minister Strömmer

The Government hereby adopts the communication National strategy against violent extremism and terrorism – prevent, avert, protect and manage