



RIKSREVISIONEN

*Summary:*

Crime prevention by the police

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## Crime prevention by the police

*– have the ambitions been achieved?*

### Summary

#### **Summary assessment**

Considerable investments have been made since the beginning of the new century to bring about planned crime prevention. The police currently plan such prevention activities for a cost of about SEK 5 billion a year. In recent years the government and the police have taken certain initiatives towards improvements. Among other things, a control model has been introduced which is intended to support problem oriented and knowledge based working methods within the police force. Measures have also been applied to improve evaluation expertise within the force.

Still, the overall picture of the audit by the Swedish National Audit Office (SNAO) is that there is considerable scope for improvement of crime prevention efforts by the police. Much work remains to be done for things to work well and in accordance with the intentions of the government authorities. The audit shows that the police have carried out considerably less planned crime prevention work than intended, and that the effects of the work which has been done are not clear. Neither is the police force living up to the requirements for problem oriented and knowledge based working methods.

An important explanation for the deficiencies of crime prevention efforts is that there is relatively little knowledge about which methods are effective. Intelligence reports and supporting documents for planned actions also frequently lack sound problem analyses. Within the force there is furthermore often a lack of basic information about how crime prevention is carried out, how much time and expenditure goes into it, and what the results are. Additionally, more specialisation support is

needed. For example, training in crime prevention is insufficient. SNAO's assessment is that these shortcomings are primarily due to inadequate management and control at all levels, from the government and the National Police Board to operative management at the county police authorities, and to inadequate support from the National Council for Crime Prevention.

## **Purpose of and grounds for the audit**

The purpose of the audit has been to establish whether planned crime prevention efforts by the police are working well. This has been assessed on the basis of statements by the Riksdag (the Swedish parliament) and the government on how the police should operate in order to achieve the overall objective of reducing crime. These statements consistently emphasise that crime prevention efforts by the police must be *planned, proactive and problem oriented*, must be done in *cooperation* with other stakeholders and must be *knowledge based* in the sense that they must be built on intelligence reports and knowledge about which measures are effective.

The grounds for the audit include several indications of deficiencies in crime prevention efforts by the police. For example, the police have invested considerable resources in crime prevention without having had sufficient knowledge about what works and seemingly without having achieved the objectives for crime reduction. There have also been indications that crime prevention is not being carried out to the extent and in the way that was planned.

It is of great importance that crime prevention efforts work, both in view of the considerable physical and psychological damage that crime often causes, and in view of the fact that crime prevention efforts cost a lot of money and take up many policemen's working hours.

## **Results of the audit**

The audit has led to the following key conclusions and observations:

### *Inadequacies in overall management*

Overall control by the government and the National Police Board of crime prevention efforts has not worked well. The government has not

provided the police with satisfactory conditions in the form of objectives that are set for a longer period and are specific, measurable, relevant and fixed in time. Over the last few years the government has changed the objectives for crime prevention efforts every year.

Additionally, in SNAO's view, the government's objective of 20 000 new police officers, in combination with the objective of a more visible police force, limits the possibilities for the police to choose the best ways to achieve the overall objectives. One way that the National Police Board controls the police authorities is by specifying a number of national priority areas and perspectives. The objectives set for crime prevention efforts are not clear and are becoming increasingly difficult to measure. It is further not clear which of the national priorities refers to crime prevention efforts.

The government has not made it clear to which extent the police are to work with planned crime prevention in relation to other core activities. Neither has the government demanded that the National Police Board adopt a definite position on important strategic issues, nor has it given the National Council for Crime Prevention sufficient commissions with a direct significance for the crime prevention efforts of the police.

In SNAO's assessment, this inadequate control has led, among other things, to considerably less crime prevention work being carried out than was planned.

### *Clarity and strategic decisions lacking on important issues*

Within the police force there is a lack of clarity and an inconsistency about what crime prevention is, as well as about what crime prevention efforts should be made, where and by whom. This lack of clarity also applies to the role and responsibility of the police in cooperation. Strategically important issues which have not been clarified include to what extent the police should work with planned crime prevention in relation to incident-based tasks (in particular of priority degree 3), what priority crime prevention efforts should have in training, as well as what should be controlled centrally and locally, respectively. The lack of positions which are clear and in mutual accord on important strategic issues is due to deficient management and control of crime prevention efforts by the police.

### *Important information on crime prevention is lacking*

There is a lack of basic information about what crime prevention work the police do, how it is done and who does it. This is despite the fact that

the police in the last few years have planned to invest about SEK 6 billion annually in crime prevention (of which SEK 5 bn on planned activities and SEK 1 bn on incident-based activities). There is also a lack of reliable information about how much time is spent on crime prevention efforts of different kinds and on the results of these efforts, both locally and nationally. This is due to deficiencies of documentation, follow-ups and time reporting. The lack of clarity about what crime prevention efforts are can also contribute to difficulties in producing relevant information. The consequences of this are that it becomes difficult to control, support and improve crime prevention efforts. This creates the risk that the police do not focus their activities in the best way, so that the right things are done in the right way and to the right extent.

*The national police intelligence model (abbreviated PUM in Swedish) is not fully functional in practice*

Broadly speaking, all of the approximately 9 000 police officers on patrol duty are affected, to varying degrees, by the police investment in working with planned crime prevention operations. The planning, implementing and following up of these actions has come to rely heavily on the national police intelligence model (abbreviated PUM in Swedish). However, PUM has not been fully applied at the county police authorities. This shows up in inadequacies in the planning process, particularly in the lack of problem oriented analyses in the intelligence reports, the lack of problem specification in supporting documents for planned actions and in the lack of important information in follow-ups.

A consequence of the planning inadequacies is that the operations are typically general in nature and focused on traditional police methods such as street patrols, visibility, various alcohol operations and traffic controls.

*A large part of planned crime prevention efforts are not carried out*

County police authorities planned to carry out considerably more pre-planned crime prevention work than has actually been done. Based on the data which has emerged in the audit, SNAO estimates that only half of the time set aside for planned crime prevention efforts has been used.

Emergencies and incidents have priority, but incident-based police work takes up considerably more time than what was estimated in overall scheduling. Planned efforts are adapted to incident-based activities, and there is a risk that many planned operations are cancelled unnecessarily.

Views on whether planned operations should be cancelled by incident-based tasks – particularly those of priority degree 3, which make up about 60 per cent of all incident-based tasks – vary from one county police authority to another.

Additionally there is a tradition within the police force of focusing on action and investigative work. It has not been clarified to what extent the police should do planned crime prevention in relation to other core activities. The majority of national and local objectives are furthermore formulated for investigation and prosecution. Considerably fewer objectives have to do with crime prevention efforts.

All of these factors affect the possibilities of carrying out planned crime prevention work.

### *Police work is insufficiently problem oriented and knowledge based*

The police are meant to work in a problem oriented and knowledge based manner, which is not sufficiently the case. The audit provides several examples of this. Problem specifications are missing from more than half of all supporting documents for planned actions. Additionally, criminal intelligence analyses are rarely systematic. Neither do the analyses consider those factors which are fundamental for problem oriented police work. This, together with inadequate training, indicates that there is a lack of analytical expertise in the police force.

A structured exchange of experiences, knowledge and information is also lacking within the police organisation. There are deficiencies in documentation and follow-ups of crime prevention work, which becomes particularly problematic when new working methods are to be tried out. From the interviews it emerges that the police force has not fully absorbed the evidence and experience based methods advocated by the National Police Board.

Inadequacies in training in the crime prevention area and a tradition of working in a certain way affect the possibilities of doing knowledge based and problem oriented work. The consequence of this is that the police continue to work in a traditional manner.

### *Knowledge support from the National Council for Crime Prevention is insufficient*

One of the important tasks of the National Council for Crime Prevention is to ensure that there is usable knowledge within the authorities of the

justice system, and to provide a foundation for control by the government and the authorities.

It is important for the police to know which police measures are effective. However, the National Council for Crime Prevention has carried out few evaluations that contribute knowledge about which crime prevention measures have an effect on crime levels. There is also a lack of compilations of international research for many crime prevention methods. Neither does the National Council for Crime Prevention have any comprehensive and current catalogue of crime prevention methods which have been deemed effective or promising around the world. The National Council does not sufficiently adapt existing research to police activities by making it accessible and usable as a form of support in practical police work.

The government has given few commissions to the National Council in respect of publications with a direct significance for crime prevention efforts by the police. The National Council is charged with initiating research and evaluations, but has not identified needs and initiated effect evaluations to a sufficient degree. The police have rarely requested evaluations from the National Council, except over the last year.

The fact that there is a general lack of knowledge about which police methods have an effect on crime levels makes it more difficult for the police to work in a knowledge based manner.

### *More training is needed in crime prevention*

There is remarkably little basic and further training which deals specifically with crime prevention. This applies both to those in operative work, in criminal intelligence, and to those who lead and manage crime prevention efforts. The only course with a mainly crime prevention perspective in basic training is a shorter course of about five weeks that deals with criminology and preventive work. In national further education, no crime prevention courses with an emphasis on a proactive, problem oriented and knowledge based approach were held during 2008 or 2009. Some training has been done with criminal intelligence personnel, but this has not corresponded to the needs that exist within the force.

There are also large variations in local further training. This is explained buy the fact that the National Police Board and county police authorities' managements have not made crime prevention training a priority in relation to other activities. Neither have the police been involved in specialisation planning in a long-term and structured fashion.

The inadequacies in training lead to a lack of consistent and sufficient expertise for the police to be able to carry out proactive, problem oriented and knowledge based crime prevention work.

## **SNAO's recommendations**

The audit has resulted in the following recommendations to the government, the police and the National Council for Crime Prevention:

### *The government*

- The government should ensure that follow-ups of results, times and costs of police crime prevention efforts are improved. The purpose of this is to better be able to set objectives for the activity and clarify what trade-offs the police should be making between planned crime prevention efforts and their other core activities.
- The government should consider how increased knowledge about effective crime prevention measures is best guaranteed, and whether the National Council for Crime Prevention should continue to be charged with evaluating the effect of police methods for crime prevention.
- In developing a new police training programme, the government should clarify and secure the programme's crime prevention component.

### *The police*

- The National Police Board should clarify a number of important strategic questions and conditions with regard to crime prevention efforts by the police:
  - what crime prevention efforts are within the police force
  - to what extent specialisation and training are required
  - what type of knowledge crime prevention efforts are to be based on and what kind of support is needed from e.g. the National Council for Crime Prevention
  - what analysis expertise is needed within the police force and where it is needed
  - which of the national priorities in police planning assumptions refer to crime prevention activities, and the relevance and measurability of the objectives

- what role and responsibility the police are to have in cooperation.
- The National Police Board should ascertain the reasons for the gap between planned and implemented pre-planned crime prevention activities, and adopt measures to reduce this gap. For example, the National Police Board should make clear what priority pre-planned crime prevention efforts are to have in relation to incident-based tasks, particularly those of priority degree 3.
- On the basis of the above, the National Police Board should review the police intelligence model (PUM), and in the process analyse whether the problems indicated by the audit have to do with the model itself or with the implementation of the model. The possibilities of improving and simplifying the planning and follow-up process, including the PUM-A tool, should also be considered.
- The county police authorities should improve documentation and follow-ups of work and time for crime prevention efforts and increase the exchange of knowledge and experience within and between police authorities.

#### *The National Council for Crime Prevention*

- The National Council for Crime Prevention should, in dialogue with the police, analyse and determine what knowledge support needs exist for police crime prevention efforts. The National Council should then provide knowledge support that is properly adapted to police needs.