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Crime prevention work in Sweden

Current situation and need for development 2018

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Authors: Malin Jonsson and Johan Lindblad

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention

Box 1386, SE-111 93 Stockholm, Sweden

Tel: +46 (0)8 527 58 400

info@bra.se

www.bra.se

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English summary

Summary

On 16 February 2017, Brå received a new mandate. The mandate includes describing crime prevention work each year in an annual report (Ju 0062/17). The first annual report focused on describing the establishment of the activities which Brå conducts in the form of support to local crime prevention work. In this annual report, the descriptions are supplemented by results from the questionnaire surveys regarding the local and regional crime prevention work, as well as a broader external analysis of work underway on national, regional, and local levels.

The purpose of the report is to provide a view of crime prevention work in Sweden. Emphasis has been placed on matters described as particularly important in the crime prevention programme entitled *Tillsammans mot brott* (Combating crime together. A national crime prevention programme) (Skr 2016/17:126), which the Government introduced in conjunction with Brå's conference, *Råd för framtiden 2017*.

The documentation for the report comes from external monitoring, questionnaires, Brå's development work, network meetings with the county administrative boards, plotting of national network structure, Brå's previous inventories of the work, and meetings, conferences, and lectures during the year, where Brå met approximately 4,500 people who work with crime prevention in some form.

National initiatives and Brå's development work 2017

During the spring, the Government presented the new national crime prevention programme, *Tillsammans mot brott* (Combating crime together. A national crime prevention programme) (Skr 2016/17:126). In it, the Government sets forth overall goals and ambitions for crime prevention work in Sweden. The programme focuses on society's shared responsibility for preventing crime and on including the commercial sphere and civil society in such work.

The areas in focus for the crime prevention work on the national level include socially disadvantaged areas, organised crime, and violent extremism. The Swedish Police have worked on developing the organisation and conditions for the strategic crime prevention work. New agencies and strategies, as well as changes in legislation during the year, will constitute important factors for the development of the various aspects of the crime prevention work.

At the beginning of 2017, Brå received a renewed and expanded mandate to support and coordinate national, regional, and local crime prevention work. During the year the support and coordination have been established and certain conditions for the work have been charted. An internet-based basic training has been produced and carried out in four rounds, the new coordinators at the county administrative boards have met at four network gatherings, and comprehensive methodology support has been given to seven socially disadvantaged areas as well as 16 additional municipalities with various challenges. The conditions for testing principles of focused deterrence against shootings have been inventoried and a pilot project has been initiated in Malmö in the form of group violence intervention.

The work of establishing a national network structure was also commenced during the year and, together, the activities constitute a sound framework for continued support for, and coordination of, the crime prevention work.

The local crime prevention work

The local parties' view of the work

Municipality police officers and municipal coordinators are the key parties in local crime prevention work. Accordingly, they responded to questionnaires regarding the processes, organisation, and content of the local crime prevention work.

The questionnaire results show that the crime prevention work competes for attention with other subjects, such as alcohol, narcotic, doping and tobacco policy (ANDT), public health, and safety. The issues which receive attention are not always those which reflect the crime problems faced by the municipality, but can just as easily involve how and by whom the issues were raised, as well as the resources available for the issues which were raised.

Organisation of the work

Slightly more than two-thirds of the respondents to the municipal questionnaires have a strategic job involving crime prevention tasks, and there are local crime prevention councils or equivalent strategic cooperation forums in most of Sweden's municipalities. Cooperation agreements and police-citizen partnerships have generally had an impact in a number of municipalities. The police's work with police-citizen partnerships also seems to have led to better cooperation between the police and municipalities. Almost all of the municipality police officers state that they will be able to maintain the police-citizen partnerships for 2017.

Most have a position related to safety

Brå asked coordinators of crime prevention work in the municipalities to respond to a questionnaire. Most of them have a position which involves safety (either as coordinator, strategist, or manager). Most have a position as coordinator or strategist for public health issues or crime prevention issues. The rest of them work, among other things, as unit managers, safety coordinators, and ANDT coordinators. In 2017, almost twice as many are working as safety coordinators than as did four years ago.

Difficulties in the work primarily involves a shortage of resources

An overwhelming majority of the respondents to the questionnaires experience that there are special difficulties or challenges in the crime prevention work. This primarily involves a shortage of resources and prioritisation in the organisation itself, difficulties in coordinating the crime prevention work, and internal difficulties in respect of management, attitudes, and a long-term perspective in the crime prevention work.

Executive involvement is important

Executive involvement and prioritisation of local crime prevention work are important. A comparison of different municipalities shows that the conditions for working strategically tend to

be better in the larger cities, despite the fact that the challenges are perceived as greater. To a greater extent, the local coordinators in these municipalities have a more distinctly crime preventive role. It is also in these municipalities that crime prevention work has come furthest. In such places, there is an executive body which has clearly seen a need to prioritise the work.

Expansion of the collaboration

Collaboration is fundamental to the crime prevention work, and crime prevention coordinators and municipality police officers state that they collaborate with a number of local actors. The most common situation is that of collaboration between the municipality and police.

The commercial sphere and civil society are other customary collaborating parties, but it is more common for municipalities and police to collaborate with civil society than with the commercial sphere. The municipality police officers state that they collaborate with both the commercial sphere and civil society parties to a greater extent than do the municipalities. Housing companies and shops are important collaboration parties in the commercial sphere. With respect to civil society parties, collaboration takes place primarily with religious organisations and sports associations. In the questionnaires, local coordinators and municipality police officers state that collaboration with universities and colleges is low. Most respondents to both questionnaires do not collaborate at all or collaborate to a very minor extent with universities and colleges in crime prevention work.

Knowledge base and content of the work

The studies show that the knowledge-based working method is well known among the crime prevention parties, but also show that people find it difficult to fully follow the knowledge-based process. Most of them follow the plotting and shared set of problems step, but have a tendency to follow the steps of analysis of cause and follow-up to a lesser degree.

A majority of the respondents to the questionnaires have carried out crime prevention measures of various types during the last year. On the other hand, there is a discrepancy between the local set of problems and the measures which are taken. The need to aim towards more knowledge-based work seems to continue to be significant.

The questionnaires show that both municipalities and the police primarily carry out general measures in other words *primary prevention*.

Slightly more than one-quarter of the measures comprise *secondary prevention*, which is oriented towards at-risk individuals, risk-filled activities, or risk-filled environments. Relatively few measures comprise *tertiary prevention*, which focuses on preventing recidivism and repairing damage caused by offences. The results generally show that the larger the municipality (including those in the particularly disadvantaged areas), the more the measures aim at preventing recidivism and repairing damage caused by offences (tertiary prevention). This is probably because of a higher level of problems, but it is also conceivable that it is a result of more directed knowledge-based work.

Is the support provided sufficient?

An important condition for the crime prevention work is to be able to have support when it is needed. The majority of respondents to both questionnaires perceive that they can turn to some party on the regional or national level if they need help to solve a task. The questionnaires show that almost one-half of the respondents in the smaller cities (municipalities with fewer than 15,000 residents but with a maximum of 40,000 residents in the largest densely populated areas) do not have any regional or national party to turn to as necessary; this is the highest figure of all municipal groups.

One way to support the crime prevention parties is through training and enhanced knowledge. Over one-half of the respondents to the municipal questionnaires do not have any training in crime prevention work, and the perceived need for training is greater than Brå's previous assessment. Over one-half have requested knowledge-enhancement measures, among other things regarding practical work, and functional methods and approaches. One-fifth would like to undergo a basic training.

The county administrative boards' crime prevention work

The regional crime prevention coordinators instituted at county administrative boards during 2017 are situated at various units, for example social sustainability, community planning, welfare, public health, community safety, and crisis preparedness. Most of them work full-time with crime prevention issues and the majority have previous working experience in the area.

Although the majority of the respondents to the regional questionnaire have also received some form of training in crime prevention work, there is a continued need for such training and knowledge-enhancement measures in their professional role.

Most of them state that they would like training in respect of criminological research and theories, or knowledge-enhancing measures in method support. Several also identify basic training. All of the respondents to the county administrative board questionnaires state that they conduct cooperation internally or externally in order to support and coordinate the local crime prevention work. Internally, the collaboration is conducted primarily with co-workers or units which work with issues such as ANDT, safety and crisis preparedness, gender equality, and violence in close relationships.

In respect of external cooperation, the respondents to the county administrative board questionnaire say that they primarily conduct the collaboration with municipal coordinators and police. All of the regional coordinators have told Brå that there is a need for development of crime prevention work in the county, primarily in respect of training and knowledge-enhancing measures.

Brå's assessment

During 2017, a large number of local crime prevention measures were undertaken by the police and municipalities, as well as by parties in the commercial sphere and civil society. The local initiatives reflect, among other things, a broad spectrum of measures with both a situational and a social focus. In many places, the commercial sphere and civil society are involved in the crime prevention work.

Industries such as retail, property ownership, public transport, and event organisation participate in the local work in various ways and are identified as important collaboration partners by crime prevention coordinators and municipality police officers. It can also be observed that commercial parties not only participate in the local working process, but also conduct a number of crime prevention and safety-creating initiatives.

Brå's new mandate, together with the county administrative boards' mandate, commenced

during 2017. One can see the start of a positive trend, but more time is needed to investigate the success of the work's impact on crime prevention work.

However, it is Brå's continued assessment that crime prevention work is generally given low priority. When there is no national coordinator in the area, there are reasons to try other routes, such as legislation or allocation of funds. Brå is also of the opinion that there is a significant need for additional knowledge among crime prevention parties. There are also reasons to develop the work on the basis of differences between various municipal groups and to improve the balance between social and situational crime prevention work.

Violent extremism is one area which has been afforded increased priority during recent years, and Brå is of the opinion that it is important that the work be integrated with other crime prevention work.

Based on the intentions of the national crime prevention programme, Brå has also identified several suitable areas for continued development. Today's commercial sphere is involved, often in local cooperation in the form of housing companies or retailers, but there is latitude for development, particularly on the national and regional levels. This is also linked to the need to energise the innovation in crime prevention work at all levels. It is also important that crime prevention and the creation of safety become a central part of community-building work and integrated into community planning, urban planning, integration work, and social sustainability.