

Government Communication

2023/24:67

Resistance and decisive action
— a national strategy against
organised crime



Government of Sweden

Foreword

The destructive power of organised crime was underestimated for too long in many sectors of society. But we have seen what it does to our safety and security, what it does to the trust in our society, and the long-term risk of harm this poses to our freedom and democracy.

Lethal gun violence has more than tripled in the last 10 years. Furthermore, we see that victims of this violence, to a greater extent than before, are third-party individuals. We see that more children, and younger children, are both criminals and victims of crime. According to the Police Authority, the criminal economy has an estimated annual turnover of SEK 100–150 billion.

We are talking about criminality that poses a systemic threat to our society, with a great capacity for violence, which is silencing witnesses, threatening social workers, infiltrating government agencies and political parties, and defrauding our welfare systems. This calls for both resistance and decisive action – organised crime must be prevented and combated with the full collective force of society.

Society's resistance against to organised crime must be fundamentally strengthened. The Swedish Government has therefore developed Sweden's first national strategy against organised crime. The strategy aims to provide a distinct direction and guidance for



*Ulf Kristersson
Prime Minister*



*Gunnar Strömmer
Minister for Justice*

the work and efforts to combat organised crime, and to reduce the vulnerabilities that organised crime exploits. And the purpose is concrete and decisive action.

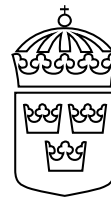
The strategy identifies five key areas where this work needs to be strengthened: Efforts must target individuals to *stop criminal careers*. *Criminals' supply of illegal weapons and explosives needs to be reduced* and we must *destroy the criminal economy*. *Society must become more robust in order to resist the unlawful influence* of criminal actors. It must become *more difficult to misuse the system for identification*, and *government agencies must have more possibilities to exchange information*.

With this strategy, our hope is that all powers of society can be mobilised – at local, regional, national, and international level – to effectively combat organised crime.

Only by working together can we win the fight against these criminal actors, safeguard each individual's safety and security, and preserve our free and open society.

Government Communication

2023/24:67



Resistance and decisive action – a national strategy against organised crime

Comm.
2023/24:67

The Government hereby submits this Communication to the Riksdag.

Stockholm, 1 February 2024

Ebba Busch

Gunnar Strömmer
(Ministry of Justice)

The Communication's principal content

Organised crime threatens society and its functions. The capacity for violence, the financial structures and the parallel social structures that organised crime actors have built up in Sweden have both a direct and indirect impact on people's sense of security and their safety, and on vital functions of society. Society's resistance must be fundamentally strengthened. To this end, the Swedish Parliament and the Government have prioritised measures to combat organised crime in the state budget. The national strategy aims to give this work a clearer direction, and to reduce the vulnerabilities exploited by actors in organised crime. The strategy describes the problems in detail, provides guidelines for measures, and outlines the most important current and planned work in this area. The needs are extensive and concerns a range of policy areas. Five strategic objectives are to guide this work: stop criminal careers, reduce the supply of illegal firearms and explosives, destroy the criminal economy, build robustness against unlawful and undue influence, and safeguard systems for reliable identification and an efficient provision of information.

Organised crime must be fought with the full collective force of society. Deeper cooperation between government agencies, municipalities, regions, the business community and civil society is therefore important. The cross-border nature of organised crime also means that it must be fought in cooperation with other states.

Table of contents

1	Organised crime threatens society and its functions	4
1.1	Adaptable actors committing offences in different arenas.....	5
1.2	A national strategy for powerful collective efforts of society as a whole.....	7
2	Stop criminal careers.....	9
2.1	Countering young people being socialised and recruited into crime	9
2.2	Increase the prosecution of serious offences in criminal milieux	12
2.3	Improve protection of society and reduce the risk of re-offending.....	14
2.4	Direction of further work	16
3	Reduce the supply of illegal firearms and explosives	18
3.1	More effective efforts to avert illegal importation and smuggling	18
3.2	Increase the risk of detection and prosecution.....	19
3.3	Stricter control functions	20
3.4	Direction of further work	21
4	Destroy the criminal economy	21
4.1	Avert the exploitation of public funds.....	22
4.2	Prevent companies and other legal persons from being used for criminal purpose	24
4.3	Fight drug-related criminality	26
4.4	Increase the recovery of the proceeds of crime	27
4.5	Exploit the potential in administrative measures.....	28
4.6	Direction of further work	29
5	Build robustness against unlawful and undue influence	31
5.1	Safeguard the integrity of public decision-making.....	32
5.2	Prevent threats from the inside	33
5.3	Direction of further work	34
6	Safeguard systems for reliable identification and an efficient provision of information	34
6.1	A more coherent system for identity administration with greater use of biometrics	35
6.2	Improve the possibilities for information exchange	36
6.3	Improve access to information in digital environments	37
6.4	Increase the use of technical aids	38
6.5	Direction of further work	39
7	Shared responsibility and commitment.....	40
7.1	Government agencies' crime prevention tasks to be reviewed	40
7.2	Close government agency cooperation to continue	41
7.3	Develop international cooperation	42

7.4	Direction of further work.....	44	Comm.
	Extract from the minutes of the Government meeting on 1		2023/24:67
	February 2024	45	

1 Organised crime threatens society and its functions

Organised crime poses a significant threat to Sweden. Criminal networks and the offences they commit have become one of the major challenges of our time. Ultimately, fundamental values such as democracy, the rule of law and trust between people, and between citizens and the state, are under threat. The capacity for violence, the financial structures and the parallel social structures that organised crime actors have built up in Sweden have both a direct and indirect impact on people's sense of security and their safety, and on vital functions in society. Organised crime exists all over the country and is a significant problem for actors at national, regional and municipal level. It poses a threat to Sweden's welfare systems, the business sector and civil society, and not least to Sweden's inhabitants. The perception of Sweden abroad is also affected, which in the long run risks affecting our ability to attract for example investments and tourism.

The measures taken thus far to combat organised crime have not been sufficient. Gun homicide has increased sharply in Sweden since the early 2010s. The escalating spiral of organised crime related violence in 2022 resulted in an increase in the number of deaths from gun violence, up from already high levels. The number of confirmed cases of gun homicide noted per year more than tripled between 2011 and 2022, from 17 to 63 cases. The trend in 2023 showed a continued high level. This sharp rise in gun violence makes Sweden stand out from the rest of the EU where instead, during the 2000s, both lethal violence in general and gun homicide decreased. Also, the number of explosions related to organised crime activities drastically in 2023. According to preliminary statistics, 156 completed offences were reported during 2023, compared with 90 in 2022.

Violence is no longer just a phenomenon that occurs in conflicts between criminals in larger cities but is also occurring in other parts of the country. The nature of the violence has also changed over time. More of these acts are execution-style, with the obvious intention to kill – not just harm – the victim. The attacks not only target individuals who are part of criminal networks, but also family members. Increasingly, violent crimes are being committed outdoors and in public environments or are targeting private homes. Automatic weapons have become more common, and both victims and perpetrators are younger. More often, the violence is committed by perpetrators who do not know their targets. This increases the risk that third party will be harmed or killed, which has been the case on several occasions. The development is making people feel less safe and secure, and risks undermining trust in the judicial system.

However, violence related to organised crime and criminal networks is the most brutally apparent manifestation of much deeper problems. Alongside the violence, crime that is profit-driven and less conspicuous is being perpetrated. This type of crime too is extremely serious, as it affects various processes and sectors in the society, with consequences for Sweden's inhabitants, for the public administration and the business community. Ultimately, the vital functions of our society are threatened.

1.1 Adaptable actors committing offences in different arenas

Comm.
2023/24:67

Organised crime is multi-faceted and constantly changing, which is why there are no simple explanatory models or any generally accepted definition that cover all its dimensions. One definition developed within the multi-agency cooperation against organised crime highlights four elements: at least two people, who collude to commit multiple serious offences, over time, for financial gain. Family-based networks feature prominently Among the criminal networks that the Swedish Police Authority assess as a threat to society are the family-based networks, but there are also various types of international networks with established support functions in Sweden.

There is no single measure that alone can counter and combat all aspects of organised crime. The threats are of varying kinds and have different types of negative consequences. Organised crime actors are adaptable and flexible in terms of the offences they commit and operate both nationally and globally. Their offences include murder, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, human trafficking, appropriative offences, welfare fraud, fraud, and other types of economic and financial crime.

Technological developments in the finance sec have created new opportunities for criminals to move property, launder money, and evade taxes. Corruption, infiltration, and unlawful influence as well as obstructing the course of justice are used to obtain advantages, for example through government agency decisions, or in attempts to influence the legal process. Organised crime's international links are clear and have grown stronger over the years. The rapidity of digital development has meant that serious crime can be orchestrated, organised, and carried out from abroad, further hampering supervision and control by public authorities. Being able to communicate in secret, for example by using encrypted apps, is often a prerequisite for criminal schemes nowadays.

Chances of big financial gains drive organised crime

Economic crime of various kinds has developed into a major component of, and a driver for, organised crime. Much of the proceeds of crime are reinvested in criminal activities, giving criminal actors even greater power.

Organised crime that targets the welfare system involves large amounts of money each year and weakens welfare and our safety nets. This type of fraud involves criminal actors systematically misappropriating benefits and payments on fraudulent grounds, as well as operating and using publicly funded welfare activities to gain access to public funds. The evasion of taxes and charges has also become an increasingly important arena for organised crime. This includes excise offences, VAT evasion and economic crime linked to cross-border trade.

Furthermore, fraud offences have increased greatly and are now an important and growing source of finance for organised crime. The transition to the digital arena has been particularly apparent in this context, where faster and smoother ways of making purchases and payments and doing one's banking have made things easier for criminals too. Even

complex cybercrime has become more common within organised crime. This type of crime can have a major impact on technical infrastructure and affect vital functions in society and the business community. It is also an area in which society as a whole has shown a lack of technical capacity to protect itself.

Illegal drug trafficking continues to be a key source of income for organised crime. This illicit trade generates violence and conflicts in criminal circles and often provides a gateway to criminal networks for young people.

Yet another livelihood for organised crime actors is work-related crime. Pay gaps, differences in social security systems, and the opportunities afforded by free movement within the Schengen Area among other things have combined to increase the incidence of human exploitation in labour-intensive industries. The evasion of taxes and charges as well as infringements of work environment legislation expose serious operators to unfair competition and risk eliminating them from the market, which in the long term can stunt Sweden's economic growth. Work-related crime, human trafficking and human smuggling are growing problems globally. They risk increasing even further in times of economic decline, war, and other crises. This crime is often organised and cross-border and involves the ruthless exploitation of people in vulnerable situations.

Illegal trade, treatment, or disposal of waste is another area of crime where big profits can be made. The relevant government agencies assess that crime related to waste management is grossly underestimated and that the problem will grow as the costs of compliance with legal waste management regulations rise. According to these government agencies, the need for environmental and climate policy measures also risks opening the door to more widespread crime in this area.

Problems exists throughout the country but some areas particularly vulnerable

Organised crime and the violent conflicts exist throughout Sweden and is no longer limited to metropolitan areas. Unsafety and exposure to criminality are particularly high in the roughly 60 geographical areas in Sweden that the Swedish Police Authority classify as vulnerable, based on several criteria linked to the rate of serious crime and the area's socio-economic situation. The higher incidence of organised crime in these areas has led to attacks on vital functions in society such as the Police, emergency services and ambulance services. Threats to communications, food supply and transport also occur more frequently in these areas.

The areas designated as 'particularly vulnerable' also feature the presence of parallel social structures. This means that to varying degrees there is a local social order that includes an alternative/parallel system for the economy and the administration of justice, and norms that differ from the norms of the society in general. Criminal actors can have a major influence in these areas. Some criminal actors are able to offer jobs and accommodation and provide services such as bank services, protection and security. In the long run, parallel social structures mean a society within the society that is subject to its own norms and rules and is outside the

control of the state. The presence of parallel social structures in Sweden thus risks undermining the democratic social order and challenging the rule of law and the state's monopoly on violence. Comm. 2023/24:67

1.2 A national strategy for powerful collective efforts of society

Organised crime has been spreading throughout Sweden for too long. Society's resistance against organised crime must be fundamentally strengthened. To this end, in the state budget the Riksdag and the Government have prioritised measures to strengthen efforts to combat organised crime. For example, allocations to the judicial system are expected to increase from SEK 69 billion to SEK 90 billion in the period 2023–2026. This strategy sets out a clear direction for long-term work within the framework of the Government's priority to strengthen the work to fight organised crime. At the same time, work to prevent crime and to avoid young people being drawn into a life of crime are being intensified.

Combating organised crime requires a greater common understanding of this problem within government agencies, municipalities and regions, and a greater degree of mobilisation in the community at large. The fight against organised crime concerns many more than just the law enforcement authorities. Ultimately, all sectors of society are responsible for contributing to this work. The crime prevention and law enforcement perspective needs enhancement in more policy areas. Government agencies need more knowledge about how organised crime exploits legal structures and address it through countermeasures.

In the fight against organised crime, it is inevitable to manage conflicts between objectives and balance different interests. Recent developments in Sweden illustrate the need to shift the balance in many of the trade-offs that have previously applied. Redress for victims of crime, as well as the need for social protections, control functions and effective law enforcement, need to be given greater weight in policy, and in the work of the government agencies.

However, law enforcement must always fully respect human rights and the principles of the rule of law. Crime must only be combated with means that belong in an open, democratic society governed by the rule of law that are necessary, have a legitimate aim and are proportional. Nor can law enforcement replace preventive measures of the social kind. A strong state governed by the rule of law and a strong welfare state are essential.

Five strategic objectives for enhanced resistance

This national strategy against organised crime aims to give a clearer direction for the efforts to build greater resilience to organised crime and to reduce the vulnerabilities that organised crime exploits. The needs in this area are broad and span a range of policy areas.

Five objectives are to guide this work:

- Stop criminal careers

- Reduce the supply of illegal firearms and explosives
- Destroy the criminal economy
- Build robustness against unlawful and undue influence
- Safeguard systems for reliable identification and an efficient provision of information.

By stepping up efforts to achieve these objectives, which each have their own sub-objectives, we can improve society's protective factors and thus also increase its capacity to prevent and combat organised crime from exploiting, threatening, and harming our society. Concrete policy intentions brought together in a national strategy improve the conditions for the collective power of the system, where multiple actors are pulling in the same direction based on their respective areas of responsibility. The strategy describes the problems in detail, provides guidelines for measures, and outlines the most important work and the work planned by the Government moving forward.

The strategy does not claim to provide a comprehensive picture of all the work being done, or the full need for reforms, to combat organised crime. There is not enough space in this strategy to give a full account of what is being done and needs to be done. Moreover, organised crime is not static: criminals adapt rapidly to changes in circumstances. Society's countermeasures also need to be equally adaptable. Important aspects of the Government's work to increase safety and security and reduce the burden of crime in Sweden are also described in the *National strategy against violent extremism and terrorism – prevent, avert, protect and manage* (Govt Comm. 2023/24:56). In addition, the Government intends shortly to decide on a social prevention strategy against criminal networks and other crime. Together with other important preventive and law enforcement efforts at the national, regional, and local levels, the measures described in these three Government communications are contributing to the achievement of the objectives decided by the Riksdag regarding crime reduction and improved safety and security in Sweden.

Implementation and follow-up of the strategy

A number of Government inquiries and assignments are in progress or planned, in order to the fight organised crime. Work toward the strategy's objectives will continue within the Government Offices. Based on the strategy and its aim, the Government intends to prepare and decide on government agencies assignments, inquiries, government bills and ordinances, etc. in the usual manner.

The Government's work is largely about creating the conditions for government agencies, municipalities, and other actors in society to work effectively. Besides the work initiated by the Government, how government agencies, municipalities and regions, the business community, civil society, and other actors respond within their own decision-making mandates and areas of responsibility. Each act's understanding their own role and taking responsibility for ensuring that

their own activities are participating fully in the fight against organised crime is crucial if this fight is to be won.

Comm.
2023/24:67

The Government intends to regularly follow-up efforts and measures within each strategic objective area and return to the Riksdag with a comprehensive report on the progress of the work to combat organised crime.

2 Stop criminal careers

Objective: Sweden will increase its capacity to prevent and ultimately to stop criminal careers. The number of individuals in criminal milieux and the number of criminal networks will be reduced.

Work towards this objective includes

- countering young people being socialised and recruited into crime
- increasing the prosecution of serious offences in criminal milieux
- improving social protection and reducing the risk of reoffending

Organised crime has grown rapidly and extensively. Far too many individuals in today's Sweden seem to see a criminal life as a norm and an identity. This trend must be stopped. Society must make this clear with an unequivocal rejection of all forms of crime. Besides broad social preventive efforts, specific initiatives must be taken that target people who are at risk of being involved in crime. In cases where offences have already been committed, they must lead to prosecution at a higher rate than currently, with commensurate penalties, and measures need to be implemented to prevent reoffending.

2.1 Countering young people being socialised and recruited into crime

Ever younger individuals are found, as both victims and perpetrators, in connection with serious violent crimes and conflicts between criminal networks. The Swedish Police Authority has assessed that approximately 1 000 children and young people are getting involved in local criminal milieux each year (*Bob – barn och unga i organiserad brottslighet 2023*, report to the Government by the Police Authority, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care). According to the Swedish Police Authority, most of the recruitment base for organised crime is found among children and young people in the so called vulnerable geographical areas. The fact that children and young people are exposed to criminal behaviours in their everyday lives and in their neighbourhood increases the risk of them developing non-normative behaviours and becoming involved in criminality. This exposure is particularly evident in the vulnerable areas, where the presence of organised crime is high. Poorer living conditions, weaker school results,

overcrowding in housing and large numbers of children in these areas means an additional higher risk at the individual level, and at the same time an increase in the burden on certain important social protection functions such as social services and schools. It becomes a vicious cycle where crime in vulnerable areas establishes a breeding ground for further crime and strained social functions, which contribute to a normalisation of crime and other non-normative behaviours.

A study carried out by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (2023:13) concerning children and young people in criminal networks shows that children can be rapidly inducted into criminal networks and that their participation in serious offences begins immediately. According to the study, there is deliberate recruitment of children into criminal networks, carried out by older children and young people. By engaging younger children who are used in the drug distribution and in other criminal activities, older children or young people can earn more money and pursue a career in the networks. Continuous new recruitment is part of the network's business model. Making older members financially dependent on the participation of the younger ones not only provides incentives for recruitment but also makes it more difficult to exit from these networks.

Socialising and exploiting new generations of young people into committing serious offences is harmful not only to these individuals but also to society. These problems need to be tackled from multiple angles. That means reducing the capacity of criminal networks as well as reducing the disadvantage of these children. In order to gain in-depth knowledge of criminals that are active within the networks in Sweden, the Government has tasked the Swedish Police Authority with regularly producing situational assessments of the number of criminals in the networks in Sweden, including children and young people (Ju2023/01941). Young people who are at risk in becoming involved in serious crime are often known to, for example, schools, social services and the Police. Nevertheless, government agencies are not able to address young individuals in high-risk environments before it is too late. Therefore, crime prevention work must be developed at both the general and individual levels. This requires earlier interventions and better cooperation between the Police, schools, social services, healthcare system and other local actors.

In order to streamline this work, the Government has tasked a number of government agencies¹ with establishing a new structure for systematic and long-term cooperation between authorities and actors at the national, regional and local levels. The Government. The target group for this work is children and young people who are at risk of committing or have committed serious offences in milieux linked to organised crime. The structure for cooperation aims to halt further criminal behaviour by means of concrete, individualised measures (Ju2023/02529).

¹ 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, the Swedish National Agency for Education and the Swedish Prosecution Authority.

The Government also expanded the scope of the “Safe and secure schools inquiry” (*Skolsäkerhetsutredningen*) to include information sharing between schools, social services and law enforcement authorities for crime prevention purposes (Dir. 2023:120) and set up a delegation for crime prevention in the social services area (S2023/02342).

Comm.
2023/24:67

In parallel with this, an inquiry is under way whose remit is to propose system involving youth crime committees based on the Danish model but adapted to Swedish conditions (Dir. 2022:106 and 2023:26). In order to better avert, investigate and prosecute crimes committed by young people and prevent children and young people from being drawn ever deeper into the criminal environment, the Government has also commissioned an inquiry into whether expanded powers to arrest and detain persons under the age of 18 are needed (Dir. 2023:102). The inquiry is also looking into the possibility of the Police detaining children and young people suspected of crime for a certain period of time in order to hand over the child/young person to for example the social services or their parents. The inquiry’s task also includes proposing how a system that would allow the use of covert coercive measures targeting persons under the age of 15 who commit serious crimes should be designed. Such a change would improve the chances of investigating crimes successfully and, where applicable, targeting those who exploit children for criminal purposes.

It is also important to ensure a well-functioning youth care system and in particular effective work to prevent re-offending among children and young people who are placed in “homes for care or residence” (*Hem för vård eller boende*, HVB) or in the National Board of Institutional Care’s special residential homes for young people because they have committed crimes. The number of young people with links to criminal networks managed by the National Board of Institutional Care has increased substantially in recent years. Measures are needed to address the shortage of space and capacity, and growing needs for security, staff and skills in this regard. The Government has therefore tasked the National Board of Institutional Care to develop a concrete plan on how to increase the capacity (S2023/03077) and has proposed an increase in the funding of the Board. In addition, the Government has decided on an inquiry to review the possibilities for room searches, body searches, and entry controls as well as isolation in connection with daily rest periods (S2022:C). The Government also intends to review the tasks and organisation of the National Board of Institutional Care, and its powers when young people are placed in homes for care or residence. Furthermore, an inquiry has been appointed to review the Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act (1990:52) (Dir. 2023:160).

In its forthcoming strategy in the area of crime prevention, the Government intends to describe areas for action of the social prevention kind that are especially important in order to avoid children being involved in and exploited by criminal networks, and to prevent re-offending. Such actions are necessary to reduce the number of individuals in these criminal network milieux in the long term and sustainably.

Work to counter threats and violence in the domestic sphere are also central to averting socialisation into violent and criminal behaviours. In order to ensure coordinated, long-term and effective work to prevent and combat domestic violence and honour-based violence and oppression, the

2.2 Increase the prosecution of serious offences in criminal milieux

More criminal offences must lead to prosecution. Very often, the individual's path to a life of crime began with less serious offences, which then escalated into more serious offences. Society must put a stop to this in time. Holding those who commit offences to account is fundamental to maintaining trust in and respect for the judicial system. Unfortunately, too many perpetrators currently avoid prosecution, even for very serious offences. This is not acceptable in a democratic state such as Sweden governed by the rule of law. Taking another person's life cannot lead to higher status and promotion in a criminal career. It must result in prosecution and punishment. Perpetrators must face the consequences of their actions, further acts of violence must be prevented, and victims of crime and their relatives must receive the redress that is possible.

Violent crimes in criminal milieux are generally difficult to solve. Fewer gun homicides in criminal milieux are solved than other offences involving lethal violence, even though extensive investigative measures are used and consume considerable resources. The increase in gun homicide in criminal milieux has led to a decrease in the overall clearance rates, for lethal violence offences.

Around the criminal networks is a widespread culture of silence where threats and fear of violence from the networks leads to people not daring to testify or even talk to the law enforcement authorities at all. This culture of silence has also spread beyond the networks and can lead to criminal investigations being dropped and the perpetrators being released due to a lack of evidence. As part of breaking the culture of silence and increasing prosecution rates, the Government has commissioned an inquiry to produce a proposal for a system of anonymity for witnesses (SOU 2023:67). The inquiry's report is currently being prepared in the Government Offices.

Other aggravating circumstances in these investigations concern the high degree of forensic awareness in criminal milieux, which means that the perpetrators are successful in avoiding leaving any traces behind. These actors are also adapting to the risk of their communications being monitored or otherwise being subject to covert coercive measures. These offences are more often preceded by planning than other acts of violence, and more perpetrators are involved.

During a review of criminal investigations of gun homicide in a criminal milieu carried out by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, the Council found that the Swedish Police implement many measures in these investigations and that these crimes have high priority. To a large extent, other factors than measures carried out by the Police that determinate whether or not a case is solved, such as the neglect or mistakes by the perpetrator. All in all, this type of lethal violence places great demands on the investigation work, which must be carried out promptly

and systematically and with great care if these crimes are to be solved. The report also identifies more surveillance cameras and enhanced cooperation between police investigation functions and the Swedish National Forensic Centre as important factors for achieving higher a higher clearance rate (2023:4).

Comm.
2023/24:67

Even though the nature of the lethal violence poses challenges in the investigations, it is of paramount importance that the prosecution rate for violent crimes increases. There is also need for a greater capacity in the legal system to prevent violent crime. In the case of serious offences with links to criminal networks, there is often a need for measures to mitigate ongoing conflicts and to counter direct acts of revenge through more violence. This parallel work is leading to increased demands on the head investigator and on ways of working so as to maintain a common and up-to-date picture of the situation and to improve information flows both within the Swedish Police Authority and between the Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Prosecution Authority. A project is being carried out at the Swedish Police Authority to increase its operational capacity to prevent and investigate serious crime with links to criminal networks, in light of a government task in the area among other things. For example, it aims to develop the ways in which investigators, intelligence operations, and forensics work together.

In order to deal with the increasingly challenging crime rate, the authorities require a needs-based mix of skills. For many years, the legal system, and in particular the Swedish Police Authority, has received a large amount of additional funding that has enabled the number of employees, including the number of police officers, to rise. The number of police officers per 100 000 inhabitants in Sweden has increased in recent years, but the police to civilian ratio remains too low. The Government's aim is that the Swedish Police Authority can expand so that the police to civilian ratio is at least equivalent to the average in the European Union. This growth is funded for 2024. Through the 2024 Budget Bill, the Government has laid the foundation for continuing this growth, with proposals for additional funding starting from 2025. The Swedish Police Authority has also been allocated resources for improving its technical capabilities, including in the area of CCTV surveillance, which is described in Section 6.4. However, it is not enough to improve the police to civilian ratio. The Government also considers that the Police Authority's effectiveness must improve in order to achieve the desired results.

The serious situation in Sweden, with the high levels of violence connected to criminal networks, and a high terror threat level assessment, has also resulted in a Government assignment to the Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Armed Forces through which the authorities are to with deepen their cooperation in areas that can contribute positively to combating crime that threatens society and its functions, and where the Armed Forces can provide support to the Police Authority in accordance with the existing regulations (Ju2023/02208).

When investigating serious crimes, especially crimes committed within criminal networks, access by these authorities to covert coercive measures is often a crucial prerequisite. On 1 October 2023, legislative amendments came into force that give law enforcement authorities expanded powers to

use covert coercive measures, including their use to stop particularly serious crimes from being committed within criminal networks.

Furthermore, the Government intends to present legislative proposals that will give the Police expanded powers to use biometrics in law enforcement. The technical possibilities of identifying people with biometrics have developed rapidly. The Biometrics Inquiry has submitted proposals that would enable more persons suspected of a crime to be identified by their fingerprints, DNA, facial recognition, or similar information on individual distinguishing features (SOU 2023:32). The proposals are being processed within the Government Offices.

In close cooperation with government agencies and other relevant actors, the Government will continue the work to ensure that the agencies have the tools they need to combat serious and lethal violence.

2.3 Improve protection of society and reduce the risk of re-offending

Besides the need for more criminals to be prosecuted, there is a need for a thorough review of the criminal legislation to look into how penalties could better reflect the seriousness of the crime and provide stronger protection against individuals who are dangerous to society. The main purpose of criminal policy is to reduce crime and increase safety and security. The penal system, including the sentencing system, plays a key role. Criminal penalties serve pressing interests when it comes to protection of society, such as preventing further criminal activity and providing safety and security for victims. Longer custodial sentences for criminals, at least for certain categories of crime and for frequent and repeat offenders, has a crime prevention effect, since the person serving a prison sentence is physically prevented from committing further offences. The penalties also provide an opportunity to implement initiatives so that the convicted does not commit new offences after the sentence has been served.

As a basis of reform work in this area, the Government has initiated several important inquiries. One inquiry has been tasked with reviewing the ranges of punishment and reforming the sentencing system (Dir. 2023:115). Another inquiry is to consider and propose changes to the legislation on conditional release and probation, that could mean enhanced protection of society in the event of serious and repeated offending, reduce the risk of reoffending, lead to greater safety and security for victims of crime, and result in stronger responses to misconduct and re-offending. In supplementary terms of reference, the inquiry has been tasked with considering whether a new, indefinite deprivation of liberty penalty called ‘preventive detention’ should be introduced, and to submit proposals on how such a sentence might be formulated (ToR 2023:74).

Yet another way to strengthen social protection may be to introduce the option to deport members of criminal gangs who do not hold Swedish citizenship, even if they have not been convicted of a crime. This option exists today for other crimes that threatens society and its functions under the Act concerning Special Controls of Certain Aliens (*Lagen (2022:700)*

om särskild kontroll av vissa utlännigar). The Government also intends to make it a criminal offence to participate in criminal networks. An all-party commission of inquiry has therefore been tasked with investigating whether changes to Sweden's constitutional freedom of association should be made that would allow participation in criminal gangs to be made a criminal offence (Dir. 2023:83).

The basic premise when determining the penalty for a crime is that the punishment should be proportionate to the crime's seriousness. Today, the penal system treats juveniles and younger adults differently – in determining the length of penalties as well as the choice of penalty. This can mean that juveniles and younger adults who commit serious offences have their sentences greatly reduced, or that they are sentenced to special juvenile sanctions. At the same time, there has been a trend towards even younger minors in criminal milieux as enablers or perpetrators, also of serious offences. As criminality exists even at very young ages, society must be able to act forcefully and take measures that can put a stop to a criminal career in time. Younger people who commit offences must be met with clear and credible responses at an early stage. An inquiry has therefore been appointed to review whether to completely abolish the reduced sentence for young adults over the age of 18 but under 21 years, and whether to reform the reduced sentence for juveniles. The inquiry will also consider a reduction in the age of criminal responsibility and look into certain sanction questions (Dir. 2023:112). In addition, special juvenile prisons will be established for which the Prison and Probation Service will be the responsible authority. These prisons must be specially adapted for children and to provide for children's rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Proposals on how to do this have been presented in the report "Review of the rules governing custodial sentences for young people" (*En översyn av regleringen om frihetsberövande påföljder för unga*, SOU 2023:44), which is being processed within the Government Offices.

The Government's reform of criminal policy will result in an increased burden on the Prison and Probation Service. A number of measures are being taken to ensure that the reforms are effective while being able to handle the increased burden. Continued expansion of the Service is essential. Therefore, the Riksdag and the Government have decided to increase funding to the Prison and Probation Service for 2024. Existing facilities need to be fully utilised. The Government also intends to investigate the possibility of renting prison places abroad. In addition, measures are being taken to increase the number of transfers of convicted foreign nationals to their home countries. The basic principle is that, as far as possible, prison sentences should be served in the state with which the convicted person has the strongest connection.

This is important for preventing further offending after the sentence has been served. Whether it is a prison sentence or a non-custodial sentence, the aim should be that the sentence marks the end of the convicted felon's criminal pathway. The controls and support measures offered by the Prison and Probation Service to felons on conditional release who are under surveillance are important measures for preventing re-offence alongside measures taken by other actors in society.

However, exiting a criminal milieu can be a difficult and complicated process. The support offered to defectors from criminal networks must continue to be developed. Even a small reduction in re-offending is significant when it means reducing the human suffering and other miseries associated with crime. In light of this, the Swedish Police Authority, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, the National Board of Institutional Care and the National Board of Health and Welfare have been tasked with strengthening and developing the work to support defectors from criminal, violent, extremist and honour-based environment throughout the country. In addition, they are to continuously integrate the results of this development work into their normal operations.

Structured work to prevent re-offence is also needed by individuals who are not part of specific exit programmes. Work to support defectors and other efforts to stop and prevent continued criminal behaviour is dealt with in the Government's upcoming social prevention strategy to combat criminal networks and other crime.

2.4 Direction of further work

- The structures for cooperation between responsible actors to prevent and halt young people's offending must be developed and made more effective.
- The law enforcement authorities' conditions, powers and methods for preventing, investigating and prosecuting serious offences must be regularly reviewed and developed in pace with trends in offending.
- Inhabitant's and society's need for protection from individuals actively engaged in offending, and the legitimate right of victims to redress, must be given greater weight when designing criminal law legislation, and initiatives to prevent continued offending must be developed.
- The capacity to enforce deprivations of liberty must be increased.

Key actors

Parents and other individuals and networks closest to children and young people are of great importance for their circumstances, values and prospects of developing a non-criminal lifestyle. Municipalities through social services, the regions through the healthcare system, and preschool and school organisers are able to identify children with special needs early in their lives, and to contribute various kinds of support to the child and their family. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention works with national crime prevention support measures and the county administrative boards with regional crime prevention support measures and coordination with municipalities, among others. Civil society and associations, especially the sports movement, have a role to play in providing a context and contributing to safety and security and meaningful leisure activities for both adults and children. Measures in this area are dealt with in the Government's forthcoming social prevention strategy to combat criminal networks and other crime.

In order to avert further escalation of offending, work with the investigation and prosecution of crime, as well as the enforcement of sanctions and work to prevent re-offence are all of great importance. Therefore, important actors are the Police, prosecutors, the courts, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, and the National Board of Institutional Care. The Police are also an important partner in relation to other actors such as social services and schools, and can provide information and contribute preventive initiatives. Comm. 2023/24:67

Government agencies other than those involved with law enforcement can also contribute to the work of preventing, investigating and prosecuting crime, for example by detecting suspected criminal activity promptly that can be reported to the law enforcement authorities. Furthermore, municipalities, civil society and the business community can make a contribution through important initiatives aimed at preventing re-offending.

3 Reduce the supply of illegal firearms and explosives

Objective: The supply of illegal firearms and explosives for illegal purposes must be reduced.

Work towards this objective includes:

- averting their illegal importation and smuggling to a greater extent
- increasing the risk of detection and prosecution for offences related to illegal firearms and explosives
- strengthening controls and supervision of handling and trade in firearms and explosives.

A decisive underlying factor in the recent serious and lethal violence is access to firearms and explosives. According to the Swedish Police Authority's assessment, criminal networks' access to both firearms and explosives is generally good. Firearms and firearm parts are smuggled into the country, but the authorities also believe that illegal domestic production of firearms is growing. Explosions can be carried out with smuggled-in grenades and mines, stolen explosives for civilian use, or homemade improvised explosive devices (IED). Reducing the supply of firearms and explosives is an important part of making it more difficult for criminal networks to commit violent crimes.

3.1 More effective efforts to avert illegal importation and smuggling

Smuggling provides criminal groups with a large proportion of the firearms used in shootings and a large proportion of the illegal drugs sold in Sweden. The big flows of people and trucks, as well as flows of packages by mail and courier to Sweden, require effective tools and efforts to reduce the risks associated with border crossings and to prevent the inflow of illicit goods. This can be done through government agency cooperation and international operational responses to stop firearms smuggling, efforts to prevent inflows via mail and parcels, and targeted border controls. The war in Ukraine and the numbers of firearms in circulation as a result of this war further accentuates the need for action. The Swedish Police Authority sees a risk that arms smuggling from Ukraine, Russia and neighbouring countries will increase significantly in the future.

On 1 August 2023, the Police were granted expanded powers in border areas, which mean enhanced possibilities to undertake internal controls of aliens, and to prevent or detect crime by means of body searches and searches of vehicles. The Government also intends to submit proposals for expanded powers for Swedish Customs, and an inquiry is in progress in the area (Dir. 2023:43). However, further measures are necessary to increase the impact of this work at the border. One part of this is to strengthen Swedish Customs' law enforcement activities. The agency's

appropriation will therefore be increased by SEK 100 million in 2024. Further increases in appropriations are expected for 2025–2029.

Comm.
2023/24:67

Another aspect of reducing domestic access to illegal firearms and countering firearms smuggling to Sweden is to eliminate the sources. Since the sources are largely located abroad, it is important that Sweden is a strong voice and actor in international arenas where firearms issues are dealt with. This means working strategically to influence common regulation towards combating and making it harder to use and spread of illegal firearms and about operational cooperation with law enforcement authorities in other countries.

The full benefit of the National Firearms Centre that the Swedish Police Authority and Swedish Customs established in March 2023 needs to be exploited. The National Firearms Centre is expected to make it possible to identify phenomena and threats related to illegal firearms at an earlier stage. The Centre also provides a better basis for cooperation, both internationally and with relevant companies, such as postal and courier companies and arms dealers. A number of European countries have set up a counterpart to Sweden's National Firearms Centre.

3.2 Increase the risk of detection and prosecution

Manufacturing, acquiring, bearing, handling, concealing, and transferring illegal firearms must entail a real risk of both detection and prosecution. The authorities need expanded powers to search for firearms and other dangerous objects, identify perpetrators and prosecute criminal acts. The Government Offices is currently preparing a proposal on the introduction of a system with time-limited and geographically defined security zones. One of the aims of this system is to prevent and avert shootings and explosions (Ds 2023:31). A system of this kind exists in Denmark and allows the Danish police to conduct body searches and searches in vehicles in geographically defined areas for the purposes of crime prevention.

An international outlook also reveals that the authorities in some comparable countries have explicit powers in relation to entrapment, referred to as entrapment measures. Entrapment can be used, for example, against individuals who demonstrate intent to buy or sell illegal firearms. In Sweden there is no explicit statutory regulation of entrapment, which can create uncertainty about when and how the method may be used. It is important to ensure that the potential in entrapment is fully utilised. The Government therefore intends to appoint an inquiry to propose a legislative regulation of entrapment that will strengthen the capacity of the law enforcement authorities in this regard.

The Offensive Weapons Act has recently been the subject of several measures aimed at adapting it to current circumstances. The Government has submitted proposals for amendments to the Offensive Weapons Act, which mean that from 1 January 2024 the penalties are tougher for certain offences that enable shootings and explosions. The tougher penalties relate to the more serious forms of firearm offences, violations of the permit requirement for explosives, firearms smuggling and the smuggling of explosives (Govt Bill 2023/24:33). However, there is still a need for

measures to make the legislation on illegal firearms and explosives more effective. Among other things, the manufacture of illegal firearms needs to be countered more effectively. The Police's seizure of remodelled starting pistols and gas guns indicates that criminals are increasingly being supplied with firearms through illegal manufacturing. The Swedish Police Authority, Swedish Customs and the Swedish Prosecution Authority have also warned of a new trend of 3D-printed firearms and firearm parts. Hybrid firearms, which are a mix of factory-made and homemade firearm parts, are also becoming more prevalent.

3.3 Stricter control functions

To prevent firearms and explosives from falling into the wrong hands, effective and appropriate provisions and procedures are needed in relation to supervision, handling, and trade in these types of products. This perspective also needs to extend beyond the country's borders, as weak legislation in other countries is having a negative impact on the situation in Sweden. It is a considerable problem that certain firearms and firearm parts that require a permit in Sweden may be sold without a permit requirement in other EU Member States. Active dialogue and working with others within the EU to strengthen and coordinate the legislation for different firearms and firearm parts therefore remains urgent.

It is also important for Sweden to work for stricter EU rules on 'bangers'. Bangers in this context refers to pyrotechnic articles intended for entertainment (firecrackers), but which can be as powerful as an explosive charge and cause serious injury to people and damage to property. Bangers are banned in Sweden, but they are permitted in several other EU countries. Illegal imports have increased significantly in Sweden and many people who order these products are under 18 years of age. In 2023, the European Commission started a project aimed at revising the Pyrotechnic Articles Directive. Within the framework of this project, Sweden intends to work for stricter EU rules on bangers.

Supervision, controls and monitoring of activities and individuals who handle explosives and other hazardous substances must be improved. The lack of supervision and regulatory compliance among private actors that deal in explosives poses a risk that explosives for civilian purposes become accessible to criminal actors. Considering this, the Government has tasked the eleven government agencies included in the National Forum for Explosive Safety with stepping up and developing efforts to stop illegal detonations of explosives. Among other things, these government agencies are to identify vulnerabilities that place explosives at risk of falling into the wrong hands and take urgent action to reduce these vulnerabilities (Fö2023/01615).

Furthermore, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) has been commissioned to develop a national permit register for explosives, which aims to allow municipalities and government agencies to share each other's permit decisions. In the long term, this will make it easier for the municipalities and MSB to ensure proper supervision of explosives. The register will also be used by companies that sell and transfer explosives in

order to verify the validity of operators' permits. The goal is that the statutory amendments required for the register will be in place in July 2024. Comm. 2023/24:67

3.4 Direction of further work

- Work to prevent firearms and explosives from being smuggled into Sweden must be stepped up.
- The relevant authorities need to be given more effective tools and powers to prevent, detect, investigate, and prosecute offences linked to firearms and explosives.
- The regulatory framework and control functions concerning firearms and flammable and explosive materials must be strengthened, both nationally and internationally, in order to impede the illegal handling of these products.

Key actors

Swedish Customs, the Swedish Police Authority, the Swedish Prosecution Authority and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency are key government agencies in the work to reduce the supply of firearms and explosives for illegal use. Municipalities and county administrative boards also play a key role with their tasks of issuing permits and carrying out inspections. Postal and courier companies and freight companies that transport goods by land and sea and in air traffic are important for detecting and limiting illegal trade and imports. Traders who trade in or otherwise handle legal firearms and explosives need to help prevent these products from being used for illegal purposes. The same applies to shooting associations and others who use guns for lawful purposes.

4 Destroy the criminal economy

Objective: It should be more difficult to enrich oneself from and invest in criminal activities. Criminals must be prevented from benefiting from the proceeds of crime, and more of the proceeds of crime must be recovered.

Work towards this objective includes:

- averting the appropriation of public funds
- preventing companies and other legal persons from being used for criminal purpose
- fighting drug-related crime
- increasing the recovery rate of the proceeds of crime
- exploiting the potential in administrative measures.

Financial gain is one of the main drivers of organised crime. Criminal activity results in a considerable redistribution of funds from taxpayers and victims – both individuals and companies – to criminal individuals and networks. The proceeds of crime not only provide basic livelihoods and status-enhancing consumption for criminal individuals, but are also used to reinvest in criminal activities, including terrorism. The profit from crime is used, for example, to buy up companies, thereby opening the door to legitimate markets. The big financial gains from organised crime are also an incentive for actors involved to use violence to combat competitors and not lose market shares in the criminal economy.

By striking at opportunities for criminals to enrich themselves from crime, society can reduce the incentives to engage in crime and prevent that profits from crime is used to build up even stronger and better-organised criminal activities. Crime should not pay off. Intensified measures are required to prevent enrichment, as well as measures to recover the proceeds of crime.

4.1 Avert the exploitation of public funds

Welfare fraud is a lucrative source of income for organised crime. Welfare fraud involves criminal actors systematically appropriating welfare system benefits and payments on fraudulent grounds. But it also involves criminals themselves operating businesses in the welfare system in order to access public funds. The total size of incorrect payments from government welfare systems is estimated to have amounted to around SEK 15–20 billion in 2021 (Govt Bill 2023/24:1). The Swedish National Financial Management Authority has estimated that about 90percent of these incorrect payments were caused by applicants. Of these, the Authority estimates that on average 56percent can be suspected of being intentionally caused. However, it is unknown to what extent organised crime is involved, with regards to these specific figures.

How successful government agencies can be in preventing incorrect payments and criminal offences that target the welfare systems and other publicly funded support systems is affected by the design of these systems. This includes, for example, the extent to which a payment is based on information that can be retrieved from or verified against a reliable source. Sweden's welfare systems are largely based on trust, and on information received from the applicant. A number of steps have been taken towards improving government agencies' verification capabilities, which is a development that must continue. It is important to stop incorrect payments from being made at all, as it is much more difficult and costly to recover the funds through legal disputes subsequently. The Government therefore aims to ensure that new forms of state aid are designed in a way that reduces the risk of fraud and incorrect payments.

Certain welfare benefits are particularly susceptible to fraud by individuals and networks within organised crime. These include the assistance allowance, dental care subsidy, and the state wage guarantee. It is important that the regulatory framework and control options for the aid in question are reviewed in order to stop the flow of money to criminal

actors. The Government intends to review what measures should be taken to prevent an unreasonable escalation in costs, offending and incorrect payments within the assistance allowance. Furthermore, the Government intends to transfer responsibility for the payment of the state wage guarantee from the county administrative boards to the Swedish Tax Agency in order to improve controls and thereby prevent abuse of the wage guarantee. In addition, the Government has appointed an inquiry to conduct a major review of the wage guarantee system (Dir. 2023:168).

An important measure to prevent incorrect payments and welfare fraud was the establishment of the Swedish Payments Agency on 1 January 2024. The Authority will administer a system of transaction accounts for payments from certain government agencies and carries out data analyses and audits with the aim of preventing, averting, and detecting incorrect payments. The Swedish Payments Agency will complement the existing control functions of other government agencies. The Government has appointed an inquiry chair to analyse the legal basis for connecting the municipalities to the Payments Authority's activities and to submit proposals on the legislation for this (Dir. 2023:63). Furthermore, another inquiry has been tasked with investigating how a special protection in criminal law, equivalent to that provided in the Benefit Crime Act (2007:612) and support to individuals, can be introduced that also covers state aid to companies and other legal persons (Dir. 2022:25).

The risk of welfare crime targeting municipalities and regions has been highlighted more and more in recent years, including the problem of the presence of unserious actors in personal assistance and home care services, and as care providers. As of 1 July 2023, municipalities have been given a statutory responsibility to work with crime prevention. It is therefore important that municipalities become more aware and knowledgeable about economic crime and welfare fraud so that this can be included in their systematic prevention work. Work to combat welfare fraud must encompass the entire public sector, whether it concerns payments to individuals, grants to associations, or a procured good or service. As a member organisation, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) can be an important source of support in the work to improve competence in preventing and combating the fraudulent exploitation of the welfare system in municipalities and regions.

Public procurement is a risk area for crime that needs more attention. Public procurement in Sweden annually turns over almost SEK 900 billion. This corresponds to almost one-sixth of Sweden's GDP. Public procurement legislation is intended to ensure that public sector organisations open up their purchasing to competition so that tax revenues can have the maximum effect and that EU companies can do business with the public sector on equal terms.

However, these large amounts combined with a lack of monitoring make public procurement vulnerable to criminal exploitation. In their cooperation with municipalities and regions to combat organised crime and work-related crime, government agencies have noted that at times contracting authorities have signed contracts with criminals who act in various capacities through companies and through non-profit associations. Since criminals acting in companies often do not pay taxes, fees or wages, nor do they comply with other labour law terms and conditions and work

environment legislation, as other companies do in the market, they can keep their bids low in the procurement process, resulting in unfair competition. The companies may also have deliberately, from the outset, planned on going bankrupt or not carrying out their contractual obligations. In light of this, it is important that public procurement is supervised effectively and the right conditions for supervision are provided. The Government has recently proposed legislative amendments to that effect (Govt Bill 2023/24:3).

Contracting municipalities, regions and government agencies should be able to get support in connection with procurement in order to identify at an early stage, where possible, tenderers who have criminal intentions or who have links to organised crime. A number of government agencies possess information that could be helpful and useful to contracting authorities and entities in their efforts to ensure that criminal and rogue actors are excluded from public sector contracts. A report containing a proposal that the Swedish Companies Registration Office should be made responsible for the provision of a system that provides coordinated information from relevant government agency databases to contracting authorities in public procurement (SOU 2023:43) is currently being prepared in the Government Offices. However, it is also important that contracting authorities and entities work actively to control abnormally low bids, monitor that what has been agreed is in fact delivered and, if necessary, terminate the contract. In a report, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention points out that it is often challenging for municipalities to monitor compliance with contracts (2022:1).

In view of the considerable sums involved in public procurement, it is also a risk area for corruption. Work to combat corruption and other unlawful and undue influence is dealt with in Section 5. Measures to prevent the use of companies and other legal persons for criminal purpose are described in Section 4.2.

4.2 Prevent companies and other legal persons from being used for criminal purpose

Organised crime systematically uses companies to commit crimes. Large payments from the welfare systems are made to companies. It is through companies that taxes and charges related to labour or goods can be evaded. With a company, workers from third countries can be imported. Similarly, companies are used to varying degrees in the smuggling, transport and stockpiling of drugs. It is a recurring problem that both legal and illegal activities are merged behind the corporate façade which makes detection and investigation difficult.

In order to protect the legal sphere from criminal exploitation, it is generally important that government agencies are assigned tasks and powers that enable them to act as effective gatekeepers, for example through permit application procedures, but also that they can act beyond this phase, for example by having the power to revoke issued permits and licenses to practice. If companies used for criminal purpose do not get into the system, they cannot abuse it either. Today, for example, there is false

information stored in the Swedish Companies Registration Office's registers which allows unserious actors to pursue businesses based on false or misleading information. The Government will take measures to prevent limited companies and other companies from being exploited for fraud and other economic improprieties. Part of this work is based on the report Companies and crime (*Bolag och brott, SOU 2023:34*), which among other things proposes that the Swedish Companies Registration Office should have a clearer checking role in registration matters.

False wages declarations are another problem for the reliability of public registers. Because companies controlled by organised crime provide false declarations about wages earned by individuals to the Swedish Tax Agency, criminal actors can give the impression of having a legal pensionable income that qualifies them for the sickness allowance and a credit rating and gives them the prerequisites to hold funds in bank accounts or real property. For example, a false income can generate lifelong, incorrect pension payments. Currently the Swedish Tax Agency has no power to change or flag incorrect individual details submitted in employer declarations. A report is currently being drafted in the Government Offices containing proposals for changes that can be expected to counter the use of false data on individuals in employer declarations to some extent (SOU 2023:47).

An effective permit application procedure and the supervision of actors operating in the welfare sector is also urgently needed. The Health and Social Care Inspectorate (IVO), the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, the Swedish Economic Crime Authority and others have pointed out shortcomings in the rules governing permit application procedures and the supervision of actors operating in the welfare sector, which could lead to supervision and permit application procedures not being as effective as they could be. There is therefore a need to review the regulatory framework and IVO's conditions and powers to prevent rogue and criminal actors from operating in publicly funded activities. Work has begun in this area. For example, an inquiry into more effective supervision of social services (Dir. 2022:65) and an inquiry into increased control of the dental care sector is in progress (Dir. 2022:108). However, further measures to strengthen the IVO's conditions need to be taken.

Cartels – illegal collaborations where two or more competing companies cooperate to prevent the proper functioning of the market – reduce competition and damage a healthy economic life and may have links to organised crime or constitute organised crime. Supervision of competition that is well-resourced and effective can help to reduce the damaging effects of cartels and to combat organised crime.

The Government has appointed an inquiry to improve the conditions for combating economic crime. Part of its assignment is to review the task and design of the Swedish Economic Crime Authority (Dir. 2023:90). Furthermore, work within the government agency cooperation to combat work-related crime needs to be intensified and developed (A2023/01693). The Delegation against work-related crime has been tasked with monitoring this work and proposing measures for improved cooperation and greater efficiency in the efforts to combat work-related crime (Dir. 2021:74). The Delegation's upcoming report will be prepared in the Government Offices with the aim of proposing measures to combat work-

related crime more effectively, so that these efforts hit the criminal economy harder, as well as the organised crime in the corporate environment and human exploitation through labour.

Also, non-profit associations and foundations are being abused by criminal actors to commit fraud, for example, to receive grants from the public purse. In many ways, setting up an association is easier than starting a company. There is no legislation governing non-profit associations. The Swedish Tax Agency has conducted a number of investigations of associations that have received grants and assesses that the risk of grant fraud is high. According to the Tax Agency, the number of unreported cases is probably high. There is no national register of all associations that have received grants and the size of incorrect payments of grants to associations is unknown.

In light of this, there is a need to take measures to prevent economic crime linked to associations and foundations. These include expanded controls of public grants to civil society organisations. Following a recommendation from the Swedish National Audit Office (RiR 2023:7), the Government intends to return to the question of letting a government agency investigate questions concerning setting up a central database that includes all available public grants to civil society and the organisations that have received this kind of support. A government assignment has also been given to the Swedish Agency for Public Management to analyse the work at a number of government agencies and organisations to ensure that payments of state aid to companies and other legal persons are correct and how this can be improved (Fi2022/03248).

4.3 Fight drug-related criminality

Illicit drugs in the community have enormous damaging effects on life and health and are a substantial cost to society. In addition, the European Commission describes drug trafficking within organised crime as one of the most serious security threats facing Europe today, and that the situation is escalating. In order to fight drug-related criminality, law enforcement measures need to be combined with preventive work to reduce demand.

Drug trafficking is one of the main profit-generating activity of organised crime and is estimated to represent about one-fifth of the global crime proceeds. Based on material from the encrypted communication platform EncroChat, the Swedish Police Authority has estimated that the most central actors in this material traffic between 100 and 150 tonnes of illegal drugs each year in Sweden. Large quantities of cocaine, for example, enters Swedish ports via the container flow from South American ports. Sweden also functions as a transit country for drugs, meaning that some of the drugs brought into the country are intended for other countries.

Drug trafficking is one of several components that drive the lethal violence between criminal networks. Drug trafficking is also a gateway for the young to a criminal lifestyle. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention's study of children and young people in criminal networks shows how children are brought into networks to expand illicit drug

distribution chains. According to the Swedish Police, drugs such as tramadol are also often abused by the criminals who commit serious offences, in particular violent offences, in order to make them emotionally inured to the violence and thus better able to bring themselves to carry out these acts.

Comm.
2023/24:67

The cross-border organised illegal trafficking in drugs has strengthened the activities of criminal networks and increased the supply of illegal drugs in Sweden. New marketplaces have been established online and the use of social media and encrypted apps has simplified the process of buying and selling illegal drugs, even for new groups. It is also more common now to supply drugs to the home and in the flow of mail. The Swedish Police Authority estimates that over one million consignments of narcotics are sent annually via Sweden's flow of domestic mail.

On 2 January 2023, amendments to Sweden's Postal Act came into force that allow postal services operators to breach confidentiality and provide information related to suspected criminal activity to law enforcement authorities. This helps to increase the risk of detection of illegal goods such as drugs and firearms sent by letter and parcel within the country. In addition, there may be reason to further improve the possibilities for combating drug trafficking via the flow of mail. This may include, for example, an expanded legal basis for carrying out controls, as well as drug-detection equipment and routine X-ray scanning. Swedish Customs has much experience of the use of special search and detection dogs for checks of mail from abroad.

The Commission's Communication on the EU roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime sets out 17 measures within four priority areas to be implemented during 2024–2025, in close cooperation with Member States and EU institutions and authorities, together with international partners. The measures are within the areas of strengthening the resilience of logistics hubs such as ports, dismantling criminal networks, disrupting their business models and confiscating their profits, crime prevention, and international cooperation (COM (2023) 641 Final).

4.4 Increase the recovery of the proceeds of crime

It is of great importance that criminals do not get to keep the proceeds of their criminal activities. Therefore, the rate of recovery of the proceeds of crime needs to increase. Confiscation legislation allows the authorities to confiscate profits from those who have engaged in criminal activities. Overall estimates made by Europol indicate that authorities within the EU confiscate less than 2 percent of the proceeds of organised crime. There is thus plenty of scope for improvements in this area. As part of this, the legislation and law enforcement need to focus more on assets with criminal origins rather than to individual offences, which is termed asset-oriented law enforcement.

To ensure that the confiscation provisions are clear, easy to apply and suited to the challenges of our time, the Government is working on a proposal for new confiscation legislation. A proposal referred to the Council on Legislation for consideration recommends the introduction of

a new form of confiscation, which in short means that property such as cars, cash or watches can be confiscated from an individual who lacks the financial means to acquire such property legally (unexplained wealth).

Success in recovering of the proceeds of crime requires that relevant government agencies work effectively and exploit the possibilities of the legislation. This includes practising the planned legislation, which is expected to offer greater powers for confiscation. A number of government agencies are involved in the work: the Swedish Police Authority, Swedish Customs, the Swedish Tax Agency, the Swedish Prosecution Authority, the Swedish Economic Crime Authority and the Swedish Enforcement Authority. Further steps need to be taken to develop the work of these government agencies and to achieve a clearer follow-up of the outcome of the work performed, for example through the collection of more statistics. The Government intends to task relevant government agencies with streamlining and strengthening their work to increase the recovery rate of the proceeds of crime.

In many cases, when assets are discovered at the homes of criminals, the question of whether the property should be confiscated as well as whether it should be garnished to cover the criminal's debts arises. An inquiry has been tasked with considering whether law enforcement authorities in addition to the Swedish Police Authority should be able to assist the Enforcement Authority with garnishment acting on its behalf (Dir. 2023:90).

4.5 Exploit the potential in administrative measures

Administrative measures mean that public administration uses administrative rules – not criminal law – to reduce the risk of abuse of important areas, and to disrupt and make it more difficult for criminals to engage in criminal activities. This is an essential complement to regular law enforcement and should be used more widely than today. In this area, the municipalities, regions, county administrative boards and other administrative authorities are key, rather than law enforcement authorities. Important actors are also those in the private sector.

That administrative authorities have access to correct information and documents as a basis for decision and have the prerequisites to make correct decisions from the start, constitute important administrative measures. Additional examples of administrative measures are when the Swedish Tax Agency decides to raise taxes or tax surcharges or conducts residency checks that result in a decision on a change in the population register. The Swedish Migration Agency has the power to decide on expulsions and can reject applications for work or residence permits. In the social security area, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the Swedish Pensions Agency examine repayment cases and in addition can reject an application or reduce or suspend payments. The needs mentioned in Section 4.2 on preventing companies and associations from being used as instruments of crime are administrative measures – through strengthening gate-keeping functions in the form of controls, issuing permits and supervision, these measures prevent criminals from being

given access to the legal systems that apply to running a business, and thus prevent criminals from abusing them. Administrative measures are also important in other areas covered by the strategy, such as reducing the supply of firearms and explosives and stopping criminal careers.

Comm.
2023/24:67

The Government is working towards more effective rules. Among other things, a government inquiry has submitted a report on better controls on transfers of real property units. Furthermore, The National Land Survey has been tasked with describing how – based on current, but also amended, technical and legal conditions – it can contribute to prevent and combat crime that can be attributed to real property units. In addition, an inquiry is in progress into a new pre-emptive purchase act that will propose a ground for pre-emption prior to the transfer of real property units that will enable municipalities to combat organised crime in this area. This inquiry will also propose changes to legislation to enable the conveyancing of real property by means of electronic conveyancing documents, which could improve the seizure of evidential matter by the authorities and traceability, and lead to better conditions for the detection of fraud.

What one government agency discovers in its administrative work can also be of great importance for another government agency, region or municipal administration. For this work to be successful, it is therefore also necessary to know what the responsibilities of other administrations and government agencies are, and for there to be good facilities for government agencies and administrations to share and process this information. Measures to improve information exchange are presented in Section 6.

4.6 Direction of further work

- Sweden's welfare systems and other publicly funded support systems should be designed in a way that prevents and averts fraud and incorrect payments. Legislation in other areas too should be designed as far as possible in a way that prevents and stops financial gain through crime.
- Government agencies should continue to develop and strengthen their efforts to avert incorrect payments. It is necessary to balance the need for control, and the service requirements under the Swedish Administrative Procedure Act.
- Municipalities, regions, and government agencies need to be given better support when conducting public procurements through better conditions for checking suppliers to reduce the risk that companies linked to organised crime are awarded contracts and to prevent work-related crime and other crime. The follow-up of concluded contracts also needs to be improved to that end.
- Through systematic work, municipalities can prevent, detect, and avert economic crime that targets the municipality or is related to municipal decisions.
- Increased initiatives to combat organised crime in the business environment need to be taken, including preventing the use of companies as instruments of crime. This includes ensuring an effective

regulatory framework linked to permit application procedures and the supervision of actors operating in the welfare sector in order to enable more effective supervision and examination of these companies.

- The government agency cooperation to combat work-related crime needs to be further developed in order to strengthen the fight against fraud, breaches of regulations and work-related crime.
- The relevant government agencies need to be better placed to prevent and prosecute the use of incorrect individual and company financial incomes statements.
- Measures should be taken to prevent non-profit associations and foundations from being used as instruments for committing fraud.
- Substantial prevention and law enforcement work to combat illicit drugs must be done, both nationally and within the EU.
- Recovery of proceeds of crime must be intensified through changes in legislation and efforts targeting the relevant government agencies to ensure that the possibilities provided by the confiscation legislation are in fact fully used in practice. There needs to be clearer follow-up of the outcome of government's work with the recovery of the proceeds of crime, including enhanced controls of proceeds at risk of being taken out of the country.
- Through systematic work, municipalities, regions, government agencies and relevant actors in the private sector can increase their capacity to utilise administrative measures as instruments to prevent organised crime.

Key actors

A large number of actors are affected by the work to prevent criminals from enriching themselves from crime. These include national, regional and municipal actors who decide on and disburse financial support, exercise supervision, keep registers, procure goods and services, contribute to the funding of the public sector, and fight crime. The Swedish Economic Crime Authority, Swedish Companies Registration Office and Swedish Tax Agency are key actors in the work to prevent companies and other legal persons from being used as instruments of crime. The Swedish Companies Registration Office and the National Land Survey can play a more important role in stopping the registration of companies and real property units under false identities. The Swedish Work Environment Authority has a coordinating role in the government agency cooperation to combat work-related crime. When it comes to recovering the proceeds of crime, the Swedish Economic Crime Authority, Swedish Prosecution Authority, Swedish Police Authority, Swedish Tax Agency and Swedish Customs are all key actors.

The business community plays an important role in prevention, for example in the areas of work-related crime, fraud, and money laundering. Everyone in the community – private individuals as well as legal persons – has a vested interest in not falling victim to crime that targets Sweden's economy. This is also a public interest. Acting in a manner that reduces the risk of crime is important in combating the growth of the criminal economy.

5 Build robustness against unlawful and undue influence

Comm.
2023/24:67

Objective: Unlawful and undue influence have no place in Swedish society, neither in the public nor the private sector.

Work towards this objective includes:

- safeguarding the integrity of public decision-making
- preventing threats from the inside in the form of insiders and infiltrators.

According to political science research, high-quality, well-functioning public administration based on impartiality is a decisive factor for a country's prosperity. There are strong positive correlations between the quality of social institutions and various measures of human well-being, including public health and economic prosperity. Central principles for achieving high quality in the governance of societies are a constitutional state and the rule of law, impartiality, competence, non-discrimination, incorruptibility, and recruitment of public officials based on their merits. Public administration that citizens trust is also considered to lead to greater interpersonal trust, which has also been identified as a key asset for societies that are successful in terms of human welfare (Bo Rothstein, *De samhällseliga institutionernas kvalitet*, RJ:s skriftserie 4, 2015; *Myndigheter att lita på. Demokratins grundbult* the anthology *Demokratins framtid* eds. Barrling och Holmberg, Sveriges riksdag 2018).

Sweden has traditionally ranked high in indices that measure social prosperity and quality of public administration. A high level of trust in public institutions has been created and maintained through institutional stability and integrity in public administration. However, there is an increasing and worrying trend that the performance of official duties in both the public and private sectors is being challenged, and that organised crime is more distinctly present.

Unlawful and undue influence are tools for organised crime to take control and gain benefits. Criminals are dependent on people who, in their occupational role, make decisions in government agencies or issue certificates. This can lead to criminal actors exerting undue influence in connection with, for example, measures at municipal level targeting young people or other local decisions. Criminals can also try to infiltrate government agencies. This influence does not need to be explicit; it can be of a more subtle kind that is nonetheless fully conscious and structured. The purpose may be to induce an official to make a certain decision or refrain from making a certain decision. This can lead to a form of self-censorship and to the development of a culture of silence.

These problems also affect the business community. According to the Swedish Police Authority, employees of companies in certain industries are particularly exposed to corruption, infiltration and other unlawful influence. These include employees at banks, real estate agents and accounting and law firms. There are also examples of 'insiders' in Swedish

port authorities that create vulnerabilities and enable smuggling in maritime traffic.

We must stop unlawful and undue influence, infiltration, and corruption from taking hold in Sweden. Awareness and knowledge of these problems need to be improved, and initiatives implemented to defend and uphold the values that form the foundation of a well-functioning society. This work is cross-sectoral and affects all policy areas.

5.1 Safeguard the integrity of public decision-making

Public decision-making must be impartial and based on objective grounds. This presupposes employees who feel safe and secure and who perform their duties correctly. Measures need to be taken to reduce the vulnerability of civil servants to violence, threats and harassment. The report “Stronger protections for civil servants against violence, threats and harassment” (*Ett starkare skydd för offentliganställda mot våld, hot och trakasserier SOU 2024:1*) presents proposals which would mean that certain particularly vulnerable civil servants’ names would not be shown on decisions and other documents that record measures and would entail stronger protection for information about civil servants and their relatives. Furthermore, other proposals mean that the penalty for violence or threat against a public official would be increased and that a new offence targeting insulting behaviour towards a public official is introduced. The report has been referred for consultation.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention has been tasked with analysing unlawful influence targeting individual elected representatives, political parties, and decision-making assemblies at all levels, and exerted by actors and groups who present a threat to society and its functions, and with proposing measures to counter this (Ju2023/00880). Special attention is to be paid to combating the unlawful influence of actors and groups within organised crime and in criminal networks. In addition, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention is to provide a picture of some parts of municipal activities that are especially vulnerable to unlawful influence, such as social services.

Corruption risks need to be regularly discussed, prevented and managed in both public and private sector. It is important that the work against corruption in public administration is developed and strengthened. On behalf of the Government, the Swedish Agency for Public Management has analysed corruption risks in the municipal sector and recently submitted proposals for government initiatives and recommendations to municipalities and regions on how they can improve their efforts to combat corruption (2023:13). The current action plan against corruption in public administration expired at the turn of the year 2023/2024. The Government intends to develop a new action plan that takes a broad approach to efforts to combat corruption and unlawful influence.

5.2 Prevent threats from the inside

Comm.
2023/24:67

Research and government agency reports have shown that actors within criminal networks use enablers on the inside of an activity – known as insiders – to facilitate criminal behaviours, commit offences, avoid detection, avoid or reduce criminal penalties or other sanctions, and launder the proceeds of crime in legal sectors. This may include, for example, government personnel or municipal employees, real estate agents, auditors, bank officials or lawyers who abuse their positions of trust. There is also a risk that individuals with links to organised crime seek employment in specific activities for the purpose of obtaining information or exerting influence. The Swedish Police Authority among others assesses that intensified law enforcement could lead in turn to criminal actors intensifying their attempts to get access to information from inside government agencies.

In Sweden today, there are labour shortages in many industries. There is a need to recruit staff in both public and private sector activities, now and in the future, and some of these activities are classified as security sensitive. In addition, there are different rates of staff turnover, depending on the employer. Despite a challenging labour situation, it is important to maintain robust and diligent recruitment processes. All employers must take responsibility in this context and avoid employing individuals who may be unsuitable for a particular position. Security-sensitive activities are subject to specific requirements in the protective security legislation. The protective security legislation deals primarily with threats to Sweden's national security in the form of espionage, sabotage, and terrorist offences, and not with the danger posed by organised crime. For activities that are not covered by the Protective Security Act – that is, most activities – it is up to the employer to assess the need for background checks and to carry them out.

The threats that can arise from within activities through infiltration or other unlawful influence must be taken very seriously. There is currently a lack of deeper and broader analysis of the role and function of these enablers and the role of insiders in offences committed by criminal networks. The Government has therefore tasked the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention with studying the role and function of enablers or insiders in criminal acts committed by criminal networks (Ju2023/01510). The task includes identifying and proposing preventive and countering measures.

Other analyses should also be made of how vital functions in society can be protected from infiltration and what rule changes may be required to ensure such protection. It is essential that employers have the tools needed to conduct thorough and secure recruitment processes as part of the routine protection of their activities. One measure that could be considered is to review the government agencies' powers to conduct background checks and their access to data from different registers as part of their internal security work. Work also needs to continue at the government agency level to develop the work to combat the insider problem and raise internal awareness of and knowledge about this problem.

5.3 Direction of further work

- The protection of public administration against unlawful and undue influence will be reviewed to safeguard the integrity of public decision-making.
- A new anti-corruption action plan will be developed that will take a broad approach to efforts to combat corruption and unlawful influence.
- The protection of vital functions in society against infiltration from organised crime needs improvement.
- It is important that affected employers in both the public and private sectors develop their work to combat the insider problem and raise internal awareness of and knowledge about this problem.

Key actors

Public administration, the private sector and civil society are all at risk of being subjected to unlawful and undue influence and need to protect their activities from this. This requires a high level of awareness among both employers and employees and requires them to take responsibility in this area. It is particularly important that the municipal sector pays attention to this problem, since its broad areas of responsibility, powers to make decisions that can have considerable consequences for the individual, issuing of permits and their control and inspection activities all entail clear vulnerabilities. In addition to their responsibility to protect their own activities, government agencies that operate within the legal system have an important role in investigating and prosecuting crime and, if necessary, assisting with protective measures and other types of crime prevention measures.

6 Safeguard systems for reliable identification and an efficient provision of information

Objective: Identity administration in Sweden must be reliable and sound. It must not be possible to exploit it for various forms of abuse and crime. Government agencies and other relevant actors must be able to share information efficiently when the purpose is preventing and investigating criminal offences.

Work towards this objective includes:

- achieving a more coherent identity management with greater use of biometric data
- improving the possibilities to collect, store, exchange and otherwise process data
- improving access to information in digital environments
- increasing the use of technical aids.

Deficiencies in identity systems have contributed to how extensive the problems of organised crime, social exclusion and welfare fraud have become in Sweden. Various forms of identity abuse feature in cases of fraud and offences targeting our welfare systems. Substantial work needs to be done to create a system for identities that is effective, coherent, secure, and sustainable over time. The security level of physical and digital documents used for identification purposes must be adjusted to the need for more reliable control functions that the growing digitalisation of society entails.

Government agencies and other relevant actors must also be given better possibilities to collect, store, exchange and otherwise process data efficiently. Today, government agencies act primarily on the basis of the information available in their own systems, rather than on the basis of an overall picture. This means that the force of society to combat organised crime is significantly weaker than it could be. To some extent, this is justified by privacy considerations. At the same time, both society as a whole and the threat from organised crime have grown and developed in a way that requires a re-examination of what constitutes a threat to privacy and how people's privacy is best protected. The need to be protected from crime and unsafety, and to safeguard Sweden's functioning and welfare, has grown increasingly stronger. In order to increase the capacity of government agencies to prevent and combat crime, a shift in perspective is needed in how this information is viewed. Information held by various government agencies, at least within central government, should be seen as a collective strategic resource that a government agency should be able to access and use when it needs to.

An effective provision of information also requires that government agencies can obtain information from digital environments, as these are an important arena for criminal activities. As the information society grows, the amount of data stored also increases. It is essential that Sweden's government agencies can keep up with this development.

6.1 A more coherent system for identity administration with greater use of biometrics

The misuse of identity documents by utilising false personal data and problems related to electronic identification are common features in various forms of criminal schemes in organised crime. It is therefore important to strengthen the system for identity administration and those actors that issue or in their work rely on an identity document, electronic identification, or other form of certificate are equipped with an effective means to combat identity abuse.

One way to strengthen the system for identity administration and prevent the misuse of personal data is to use biometric data to a greater extent for the identification, verification and checking of individuals residing in Sweden. Another way is to limit the number of actors that are responsible for identity administration and issuing identity documents, and to strengthen cooperation between government agencies in these matters, as

well as to limit the identity documents that are accepted when reliable identification is required. Responsibility for identity management is currently divided between several actors, and many different types of documents – both physical and digital – are accepted as proof of a person’s identity. It is a system that in many ways makes it difficult to verify and to have an accurate picture of, for example, the authenticity and validity of identity documents.

As part of the work to achieve more reliable identity administration, the proposal from the ID Card Inquiry of 2017, on a new regulatory framework for government identity documents (SOU 2019:14) is being processed in the Government Offices. The proposal from the inquiry is that there should be two kinds of universal and secure identity documents: passports and a public identity card. The documents are to be called public identification documents. The public level also needs to play a more prominent role when it comes to electronic identification. The Inquiry for secure and accessible digital identity has submitted proposals on how a cost-effective government electronic ID at the highest authentication level can be designed and provided by the Agency for Digital Government (SOU 2023:61). The central government budget for 2024 included additional funding to the Swedish Police Authority to finance the start-up costs of a new government identity card, and to the Agency for Digital Government for the development of a government electronic ID.

The population register should reflect where the population is residing, as well as identity and family circumstances so that various society functions have correct information on which to base decisions and actions. The data in the population register can be used as the basis for a number of rights for the individual, in relation to society and to other individuals. It is therefore important that the data is consistent with their actual circumstances. If the population register is incorrect, it has major spill-over effects. The Swedish Tax Agency has reported on a government assignment to propose measures to improve the population register through a census. The Agency has submitted a proposal on how a situational picture of the population could be produced and reported (Fi2023/02399). The proposals are being processed in the Government Offices. In addition, an inquiry is to look into increased powers for the Swedish Tax Agency in law enforcement and population registration. An inquiry chair has been tasked with reviewing the penalty provisions in the Population Register Act (1991:481) and submitting proposals on how an expanded criminal responsibility should be designed. The assignment also includes reviewing whether the Swedish Tax Agency’s scope for using biometric data in its population registration activities can be strengthened. The inquiry chair will also investigate whether the Swedish Tax Agency should be given increased powers in law enforcement (Dir. 2023:134).

6.2 Improve the possibilities for information exchange

Many government agencies and other actors have data that is needed in preventive and law enforcement efforts, and it has been pointed out in

various quarters that the current regulations do not provide the basis for sharing and processing this data to the extent needed in these efforts. In addition to the need to remove confidentiality barriers, the data protection legislation for relevant actors needs to be reviewed and adapted. In principle, for this information exchange to be effective, the information must be exchanged electronically. In this context, the register statutes of the relevant government agencies are of great importance.

The need for an effective and legally secure information exchange is not limited to exchanging information with or between law enforcement authorities. It is of great importance that other government agencies and actors with relevant information are also permitted to exchange information with each other for the purpose of detecting criminal schemes and preventing crime. These may include government agencies that make payments and those that exercise supervision and conduct inspections of business activities. The goal of increasing information exchanges is to reduce society's vulnerabilities to the methods used by organised crime, especially vulnerabilities in the welfare and tax systems.

The issue of improved possibilities for information exchange between government agencies is a high priority of the Government, and intensive work with inquiries and the drafting of new legislation is therefore in progress within the Government Offices. An inquiry chair has been tasked with considering and proposing ways to improve the possibilities for exchanging information on individuals within and between government agencies and other bodies equated with government agencies. This task includes considering and submitting proposals on a general provision that would make it possible to disclose confidential information for the protection of individuals to another government agency, both on request and on that agency's own initiative (Dir. 2023:146).

At the same time, the Government Offices is processing proposals from an inquiry titled "Increased information flows to law enforcement – A new general rule" (*Ökat informationsflöde till brottsbekämpningen – En ny huvudregel SOU 2023:69*). Proposals are also being prepared for increased information exchange for government agencies, municipalities and unemployment insurance funds, as submitted in the ministry communication Increased information exchange (Ds 2022:13). The inquiry's task included mapping the information that relevant actors need in order to make correct decisions on payments from welfare systems and to combat work-related crime. The Government will continue to work intensively on these issues and take the additional measures necessary to provide the conditions for an effective and legally secure information exchange.

6.3 Improve access to information in digital environments

Virtually all criminal investigations have a digital component. Development when it comes to increased access to encryption and anonymisation services combined with global access to digital services is creating more and more challenges when investigating and preventing

crime. This is particularly true when it comes to organised crime, which often requires communication between different criminal actors. Successful operations with, for example, EncroChat and Sky ECC, where foreign police forces managed to access information on encrypted communication platforms, clearly show the need for access to encrypted communications in readable format for the ability to prosecute organised crime. The information ended up being of great value for the investigation and prosecution of serious criminals in Sweden.

The requirements on, and the possibility to regulate, the IT sector are mainly governed by EU law. The market for digital services is global and cross-border. Sweden therefore needs to work actively to ensure that a law enforcement perspective is included in the further development of the Union's policy and legislation in this area. This is important in order to improve access to digital information for effective law enforcement, and in avoiding that new legislation or policy developments further hampering the task of the law enforcement authorities to prevent, detect and investigate crime. To this end, during the Swedish Presidency of the EU in the spring of 2023, a high-level group was set up to identify and propose solutions to challenges related to access to information in digital environments for effective law enforcement.

6.4 Increase the use of technical aids

Technical aids in the form of CCTV cameras, for example, are important for increasing the collection of information and enabling a digital presence as a complement to a physical presence. CCTV cameras in public places can create security and safety, and can be used as a tool in the authorities' crime prevention work. Surveillance material can also be of crucial importance in criminal investigations, especially when it comes to investigations with links to organised crime, which are often accompanied by a culture of silence and fear of testifying.

It is important that the rules in the Video Surveillance Act do not result in unjustified obstacles to law enforcement and security-enhancing efforts. It needs to be easier for municipalities and regions to be able to monitor streets and squares with CCTV cameras. In light of this, the Government has tasked an inquiry chair with proposing measures to facilitate CCTV surveillance for municipalities and regions, among others. The inquiry chair is also tasked with analysing the need for increased possibilities to use CCTV cameras in order to combat crime and maintain public order and safety (Dir. 2023:40). In addition, the inquiry chair has been tasked with proposing further relaxations of the rules for the Swedish Police Authority when using CCTV surveillance in its operations (Dir. 2023:182).

The Police Authority's CCTV surveillance capabilities have been gradually building since 2017. In the 2022 budget, the Police Authority was allocated both a permanent and a one-off strengthening in resources with a view to augmenting its technical capabilities, which have included investments in developing its capabilities to gain access to encrypted communications, and to CCTV cameras, both fixed and mobile. In the

Swedish Police Authority's appropriation directions for 2024, the Government requested a report on how the Authority is ensuring a continuous increase in the number of fixed CCTV cameras to at least 2 500 by the end of 2024. In parallel with this, the Police Authority's possibilities for viewing data from other camera systems needs to be investigated. The Government has therefore tasked the Swedish Police Authority, Swedish Transport Administration and Swedish Transport Agency with submitting proposals on how the Police Authority can be given increased access to existing camera systems linked to state transport infrastructure within the framework of the current regulations (Ju2023/02261). CCTV cameras are also important in Swedish Customs' operations. A project is being carried out in Swedish Customs to use fixed and mobile cameras to expand its capability to select relevant control objects.

The development and use of digital tools such as artificial intelligence will be very important for the authorities' capabilities to fight organised crime. This is not just about using digital tools to investigate certain types of crime and to ensure public order and safety. It is also about being able to identify, manage, sort through, and draw conclusions based on data sets in all types of information processing for both crime prevention and crime investigation purposes. Besides the authorities themselves being able to benefit from artificial intelligence, it is important to prevent and stop developments in AI services being exploited for criminal purposes. Technological development needs to be monitored to provide an understanding of what the vulnerabilities are that could be exploited for criminal activities in the future.

6.5 Direction of further work

- A coherent and reliable identity management that hinders the misuse of identities needs to be established. Biometric data must be used more widely than at present for the identification, verification and checks of individuals.
- Government agencies' possibilities to collect, store, exchange and otherwise process data in an appropriate, legally secure and efficient way must be improved. The possibilities for information exchange provided in the legislation must be used by the relevant government agencies to prevent and detect crime.
- The need to prevent and investigate crime should be taken into account when designing regulations governing digital services.
- The possibilities of using technical aids in crime prevention and crime investigation work must be developed continuously. There must be increased possibilities for using CCTV surveillance for the purpose of combating crime and maintaining public order and safety.

Key actors

The Swedish Tax Agency, Swedish Migration Agency and Swedish Police Authority are key actors in ensuring reliable identity management. The Agency for Digital Government is the provider of the Swedish system for

electronic identification. The National Government Service Centre (Statens servicecenter) carries out periodic checks of identity documents at the Centre's service offices, primarily on behalf of the Swedish Tax Agency, but also on behalf of other government agencies. Municipalities, including municipal enterprises such as public housing companies, and certain government agencies have an important role to play in noting and reporting suspected errors in the population registration to the Swedish Tax Agency.

If increased legal possibilities is to be of practical use, when it comes to collect, store, exchange and otherwise process information in preventing and investigating crime, relevant actors must also exploit the possibilities. These include government agencies, municipalities and regions, as well as relevant actors in the business community such as banks and electronic communications providers.

7 Shared responsibility and commitment

Organised crime must be combated with the joint capacity of society. Individual responsibility as well as collective work are important for this work to be successful. Everyone who is able to play a role in this work should take responsibility for contributing with what they can. This also means a responsibility to allocate resources and acquire knowledge. Individuals can also contribute too, for example by acquiring information on how to protect themselves against crime and not acting in ways that support or risk supporting criminal activities. In addition, increased and deeper cooperation between government agencies, municipalities, regions, the business community and civil society is important. Existing structures need to be developed and broadened. The cross-border nature of organised crime also means that organised crime must be fought in cooperation with other states. Cooperation between countries – both inside and outside the EU – is essential to be able to effectively tackle organised crime.

7.1 Government agencies' crime prevention tasks to be reviewed

As of 1 July 2023, municipalities have been given a statutory responsibility to work with crime prevention. Furthermore, an inquiry is in progress to investigate to what extent cooperation should be mandatory between the public domain and property owners in order to strengthen security in the built environment (Dir. 2023:99). How to clarify the responsibilities of central government agencies in preventing crime in their respective areas also needs review. More government agencies may need to be given tasks in this area in their mandatory instructions.

To varying degrees, the central government agencies that pay out welfare benefits today have tasks in their instructions or appropriation directions that require them to ensure that incorrect payments are not made

and to combat welfare fraud. For example, an inquiry has submitted a report which proposes that the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, Swedish Pensions Agency, Swedish Board for Study Support, Swedish Migration Agency and Swedish Public Employment Service should have an explicitly regulated responsibility to prevent welfare fraud (SOU 2023:52). The report is being prepared in the Government Offices of Sweden.

Comm.
2023/24:67

For other government agencies that are not in the law enforcement field, there is often no explicit mandate to identify risks for crime. Explicit crime prevention tasks may also be needed for government agencies that, for example, exercise supervision, grant permits, keep registers, procure services or pay out financial support to companies and other legal persons such as associations and foundations.

7.2 Close government agency cooperation to continue

In the Government's assessment, work within the government agency cooperation carried out since 2009 as part of the special cooperation structure to combat organised crime has been a model for government agency cooperation that has functioned well, even though the different tasks and circumstances of the government agencies also entail challenges. This cooperation currently includes twelve government agencies and twelve 'network agencies'. The agencies work strategically as well as operationally with a common direction decided by the heads of the agencies, but based on their own responsibilities, roles and tasks. The work is organised in a Strategic Cooperation Council consisting of the heads of the agencies, a national operational council, a national intelligence centre with steering group, and seven regional cooperation councils with regional intelligence centres. There are also eight action groups within the Swedish Police Authority and operational agency resources at the other participating agencies. The Act on the Obligation to Provide Information in the Context of Cooperation against Certain Types of Organised Crime (*Lagen 2016:774 om uppgiftsskyldighet vid samverkan mot viss organiserad brottslighet*) allows the agencies to breach confidentiality and exchange information about a well-defined and limited group of individual criminals.

The government agency cooperation work as well as the efforts of each government agency individually have generated results in the form of the prosecution of serious offenders and recovery of proceeds of crime. However, this has been insufficient to stem the tide of organised crime. The strategically important actors dealt with in the framework of the cooperation constitute only a handful of the total number of actors in organised crime.

In order to expand the target area and increase the impact of the fight against organised crime, this cooperation should continue to have priority in the relevant government agencies. The fundamentals are in place in the form of the stable structure for operational work across agency boundaries that has been built up. The Government intends to closely follow this work.

7.3 Develop international cooperation

Organised crime knows no national boundaries. Cooperation between countries is therefore essential in order to combat organised crime effectively. Europol has estimated that around 70 percent of criminal gangs in the EU operate in at least three countries, and that 50 percent of gang members are not EU citizens. Serious offenders who are Swedish citizens also sometimes seek refuge in other countries and direct their activities from there. Information that is relevant in Swedish preliminary investigations may exist outside Sweden's borders. Furthermore, the proceeds of crime are transferred to other countries where they enable investments in legal structures and facilitate more offending. It is therefore important that Sweden is actively involved in international law enforcement and that – in their concrete, operational activities – the relevant government agencies take full advantage of the opportunities offered by international cooperation.

Incorporate a clearer crime prevention perspective into international cooperation

Sweden should strive for involvement in international law enforcement with the proactive goal of preventing criminal activities that are part of, or contribute to, cross-border organised crime that targets Sweden. To a relatively large extent, international law enforcement cooperation is focused on prosecution processes and other criminal law matters. In order to achieve a long-term positive effect on security in Sweden and to reduce the burden on the legal system, greater attention needs to be paid to preventing, averting and impeding cross-border crime at its source, and to make Sweden a less attractive country to commit crime in.

In order to work proactively, international law enforcement cooperation outside the EU is also of importance. A law enforcement perspective should permeate bilateral cooperation partnerships as well as support to international peace and security efforts. International development cooperation can also contribute by strengthening the conditions for law enforcement. Wars and conflicts affect Sweden's security and prosperity through refugee flows, as breeding grounds or refuge for terrorism and violent extremism and as breeding grounds or transit stops for organised crime, such as firearms smuggling, drug trafficking and human trafficking. The Government will continue to work actively across a broad front to promote increased international cooperation against organised crime.

Strengthened police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters within the EU and with non-EU countries

Police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters means that states and the authorities in different states assist each other with measures concerning such matters as the exchange of information, investigation of offences, prosecution of offences, and enforcement of penalties and

confiscation orders. At the same time, digital development and relations with certain countries outside the EU pose new challenges.

Comm.
2023/24:67

Sweden participates in a number of different international collaborations that give law enforcement authorities opportunities to exchange information with each other and carry out joint operational interventions. Information is mainly exchanged by providing information on request, but in some cases, it is possible to get direct access to other countries' national databases, EU-wide databases or some of Interpol's databases. EU judicial cooperation, which is based on the principle of mutual recognition, also offers a number of other instruments, including the European arrest warrant, the European investigation order and joint investigation teams, all of which contribute to successful investigations and prosecutions. The Union's judicial cooperation office, Eurojust, has an important role to play in enabling and streamlining cooperation between the judicial authorities of the Member States in practice. In addition to EU cooperation, being able to issue alerts for persons internationally through Interpol notices is an important tool for law enforcement authorities.

Within the EU, work to develop and expand the law enforcement authorities' toolboxes is continuous. A new instrument that is seen as useful in the fight against cross-border crime is the proposal on the transfer of proceedings in criminal matters presented by the Commission in April 2023. This instrument means that the entire proceedings in a criminal matter – from preliminary investigation to conviction – can be transferred from one Member State to another. This can have benefits in the form of reduced duplication of work and better coordinated investigation measures. The Electronic Evidence Regulation will also enable Swedish law enforcement authorities to directly approach service providers within the EU and request information that could constitute evidence, which is seen as facilitating this cooperation.

Beyond the work within the EU, it is important for Sweden to continue to work closely with its neighbouring countries in the Nordic region. In 2024, Sweden holds the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Sweden's Presidency will focus on the exchange of knowledge and experience between the Nordic countries on organised crime, welfare fraud, violent extremism and terrorism, and the transfer of execution of sentences.

Sweden also has extensive international judicial cooperation with countries outside the EU. This work is primarily based on international conventions and agreements negotiated within organisations such as the Council of Europe and the UN, and on bilateral agreements between countries. Swedish criminals sometimes move to or invest the proceeds of their crime in certain third countries with which Sweden has limited judicial cooperation. To achieve higher success rates, existing tools need to be better utilised, but there is also a need to consider new ways of working. The issue of improving cooperation with certain third countries should be highlighted at EU level in order to put more pressure on states that do not cooperate on judicial matters. This is also urgent in order to execute refusal-of-entry and expulsion orders and thus avoid potential security risks and that members of criminal networks remain in Sweden.

Sweden will continue to work actively at the Government and government agency levels – within and outside the EU – for international

police and judicial cooperation to function well. This includes promoting the appropriate development of Interpol, Europol and Eurojust, and actively contributing to the development and expansion of the law enforcement authorities' toolkits.

7.4 Direction of further work

In order to increase the participation of government agencies and strengthen national and international cooperation for achieving the objectives of this strategy:

- central government agencies' responsibility to prevent, detect and report crime in their respective areas of activity will be reviewed
- the government agency cooperation to combat organised crime will continue with a high level of ambition
- a clearer crime prevention perspective will be incorporated into international cooperation, both within the EU and in cooperation with states outside the EU
- the law enforcement authorities will be given greater powers and more tools to cooperate effectively and with legal certainty across national borders.

Extract from the minutes of the Government meeting on 1 February 2024

Present: Minister Busch, chair, and ministers Billström, Svantesson, Ankarberg Johansson, Edholm, J Pehrson, Waltersson Grönvall, Jonson, Strömmer, Forssmed, Tenje, Forssell, Slottner, M Persson, Wykman, Kullgren, Liljestrand, Brandberg, Bohlin, Carlson, and Pourmokhtari

Rapporteur: Minister Strömmer

The Government hereby adopts the Communication Resistance and decisive action – a national strategy against organised crime

Orders:

The Riksdag Printing Office, 100 12 Stockholm, Sweden

Email: order.riksdagstryck@riksdagen.se

Telephone: +46 8 786 58 10

Cover photo: TT Nyhetsbyrå AB