



Authority-wide actions against organised crime

– shortcomings in steering and monitoring

Background

Following commission from the Swedish government, authorities have collaborated to combat organised crime, both within and outside of the judicial process since 2008. A total of twelve authorities participated: The Public Employment Service, The Economic Crime Authority, Försäkringskassan, The Prison and Probation Service, The Enforcement Authority, The Coast Guard, Migration Agency, Police Authority, Tax Agency, Security Service, Customs and The Prosecution Authority. They have created a joint organisation and structure to conduct intelligence work and to issue decisions for conducting operational efforts at national and regional levels. The operations are extensive – the authorities estimate that between 2013 and 2018, they invested over 2.8 million work hours into the efforts and have incurred costs of at least SEK 1.4 billion.

In 2015, the Government ruled that this authority-wide work against organised crime should be developed further. Consequently, they tasked the authorities with implementing organisational changes and enabling cooperation on a local level, with special focus on marginalised areas. The final presentation of the government assignment has been made, however operations continue.

The aim of this audit has been to assess whether the government and collaborating authorities have ensured that the joint work against organised crime was conducted in such a way that operational targets can be met.

The audit asks two questions:

1. Has the Government guided the authorities in a clear and coordinated manner?
2. Have the participating authorities created the conditions necessary for meeting the objectives?

Results of the audit

The findings and assessments from the two audit questions are presented below. The summary ends with the conclusions of the Swedish NAO.

Has the Government guided the authorities in a clear and coordinated manner?

The Government has not provided a focus for the authority-wide work or provided clear steering for the authorities' participation

The Swedish NAO believes that the authorities and responsible departments agree that the overall objective of the authority-wide work is to cooperate to fight organised crime. However, it has been left to the authorities to formulate the fixed objectives of this joint work. At times during the 2008-2017 period, the task has been presented in some appropriation directions of individual authorities, however no authority explicitly mentioned the work in their 2018 appropriation directions, and no authority other than the Police Authority includes the operation in its instructions. The Swedish NAO believes that continuing this work must be included in the general tasks of the authorities, thereby avoiding any conflicting objectives.

Authority-wide operations are to be financed within the framework of each authority's administrative appropriations. Hence, the Government has not specified the amount of funding to be allocated to the operations. Between 2013 and 2018, five authorities requested financing for their participation, however these requests were rejected. Four of twelve authorities currently believe that financing of this authority-wide work is problematic. In addition, the majority do not believe that the Government has been clear about how the work against organised crime is to be prioritised in relation to other operations.

There is no regular coordination or monitoring of each authority

Government monitors the authority-wide work through the joint annual report compiled by the Swedish Police Authority. However, the Government Offices do not conduct any regular follow-up of each authority's individual contributions to this work. Nor does it appear that there are regular informal discussions between the Government and the authorities regarding this work. Furthermore, there is no regular coordination between the departments responsible for the steering of the participating authorities, nor is there one designated department to oversee the combined contributions as a whole.

Have the participating authorities created the conditions necessary for meeting the targets?

The authorities have the necessary internal conditions

Representatives from the authorities collaborating in this work against organised crime believe that they have been given the right conditions from their own authority to understand their responsibilities and powers as part of this collaboration, how the work is to be prioritised amongst regular tasks and how they are to spread knowledge within their particular authority.

Strategic objectives determine intelligence work and the operations

The Swedish NAO has found that the focus of this authority-wide work is governed by the jointly established strategic objectives. This information is based upon questionnaires conducted by the Swedish NAO, in which the majority of authority representatives included in various collaboration forums responded that the strategic objectives govern the operations. It became apparent from the Swedish NAO's scrutiny of documents that the authorities all worked based on the current focus of existing documents that formed the basis for decisions regarding national operations.

The authorities have not created sufficient conditions to determine whether the operation has met its objectives

The authorities have formulated objectives, but have not assessed whether they have been attained in relation to their formulation. In the annual feedback to the Government, the authorities have stated that they have found it difficult to assess their attainment of the objectives, their effects and social benefits. Furthermore, the authorities state that following up on the operational work is challenging. In addition, the follow-up is hindered by the absence of jointly agreed and used follow-up methods, and that the authorities operate different follow-up organisations. Furthermore, there is only a brief presentation of the reportedly extensive regional operations. The majority of the authorities are also unable to provide the time and costs incurred from this collaboration at a regional level.

Summary of the Swedish NAO's conclusions

The Swedish NAO believes that to a certain extent, the authorities have created sufficient conditions for their collaboration, however they have not created sufficient conditions to be able to follow-up on operations and subsequently issue a statement on the attainment and efficiency of the objectives.

The Swedish NAO also believes that the Government has not provided adequately clear and coordinated steering of the authorities involved in this collaboration. A large portion of the Government's responsibility has been allocated to the authorities and so they have been given

great room to interpret the task and determine its scope. Hence, follow-up is of particular importance, not least as the scope of the work continues to increase in terms of the participating authorities and the portion of resources being used. Nevertheless, the Swedish NAO believes that the Government has not sufficiently followed operations to ensure they meet their objectives.

Based on the assessments presented above, the Swedish NAO concludes that neither the Government nor the authorities have ensured that operations are run in such a way that the objectives can be achieved, especially as there are insufficient conditions for the authorities to state if the joint objectives have been achieved. In relation to this, there is also a lack of information necessary for following the total use of resources, hence why there is even less opportunity to state an opinion on the efficiency of the collaboration.

Recommendations

The Swedish National Audit Office recommends that the Government

- ensures that steering of the authority-wide work is coordinated regularly. This is to be able to clarify the steering of the matters raised by the authorities.
- regularly monitor the authority-wide operations regarding their use of resource and results to ensure that the objectives are met and that there is sufficient basis for its continued steering. This applies to the work conducted by the individual authorities and to the authority-wide work as a whole.

The National Audit Office recommends that the participating authorities

- create the conditions necessary to fairly and reliably present the use of resources and the results of joint activities, thereby ultimately assessing the efficiency of the operational objectives being met.