

Conclusions and recommendations of the National Audit Office

Police traffic control

The audit covered police traffic control, which is part of the road safety work carried out by the police. The police monitor traffic, detect and prevent traffic offences and work to improve road safety. The police cooperate with other road safety actors in road safety work. The aim of the audit was to determine whether police traffic control has been planned and organised so that it can achieve the performance targets set for it.

There is now less focus on road safety in central government than in the past

Finland has pledged to meet the European-wide target under which the number of road deaths should be halved and other road safety improvements achieved by the year 2020. In Finland, the number of road deaths relative to the population is below the EU average. However, the number of road fatalities has declined more slowly in Finland than in countries where the number of road deaths has traditionally been low.

Over the past five years, a number of unconnected developments have led to a situation where fewer road safety measures are now drafted in different parts of central government. Road safety work has been overshadowed by more acute and visible security threats and there has also been a shift in strategic priorities. In the long term, this will not contribute to the achievement of the targets set for road safety and traffic control.

There has been a reduction in the resources allocated to traffic control

There has been a reduction in the resources allocated to police traffic control (especially to the surveillance of heavy traffic), a result of the cuts in the police budget in recent years. This has led to lower person-year totals in traffic control, a reduction in visible traffic control and the allocation of traffic sector resources to other tasks. There is now less steering and coordination of traffic control at national level. Developing traffic control operating practices in accordance with the available resources is the responsibility of the traffic sectors of regional police departments.

There has been a weakening of strategic steering in traffic control over the past few years

There has been a weakening of strategic steering in road safety and traffic control over the past few years. The Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Ministry of the Interior have not prepared joint development policies for road safety and traffic control since 2015. Compared to the previous Government resolution, the Government resolution on traffic matters (2016) only contains a small number of policy statements on police traffic control and the Ministry of the Interior does not have any strategy or development programme for police traffic control.

There has been a reduction in performance guidance of police traffic control and road safety work during the period covered by the audit. One

reason for this is a more strategic approach to performance guidance, in which the emphasis in performance guidance is on the areas mentioned in the Government Programme or areas where major changes are required. However, under the principles of performance guidance, the performance guidance of core activities should also be ensured. The national priorities for traffic control each year are set in performance discussions between the National Police Board and regional police departments. The performance guidance of traffic control would be more effective if a higher priority was given to traffic control results in the performance agreements.

No external evaluation of the effects of the Pora III reform, which changed the structure of traffic control, has been commissioned even though the Administration Committee called for such an assessment. It is important to assess the success of the changes already made because an ex-post evaluation supports the implementation of future changes.

[Recommendations of the National Audit Office](#)

The Ministry of the Interior should enhance the strategic steering and performance guidance of traffic control and road safety and assess the need for the development of traffic control and the effectiveness of the activities.