

Conclusions and recommendations of the National Audit Office

Cooperation between authorities in security services in sparsely populated areas

The purpose of the audit was to identify how the Ministry of the Interior and the Government have developed, steered and implemented cooperation between the authorities in charge of internal security in sparsely populated areas. Internal security services comprise police, rescue and border guard services that aim to respond to criminal activities, disturbances, accidents and threats to security, and to reduce damage and losses resulting from these. Emergency care services were included within the scope of internal security as central emergency response services, even though they are within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and within the responsibility of hospital districts.

Cooperation between the authorities aims to safeguard sufficient security services in sparsely populated areas in situations where the focus points of the activities of the security authorities have shifted to growth centres as a result of immigration. At the same time, the Government has expressed that security services must also be safeguarded in sparsely populated areas. Safeguarding emergency response services in sparsely populated areas requires more security service resources per capita than in growth centres. The effective organisation and production of security services in sparsely populated areas can produce savings or increase the service level.

The Ministry of the Interior must make guidance related to cooperation between the authorities in sparsely populated areas clearer and more consistent

The Ministry of the Interior provided active information-based guidance for cooperation between the security authorities in sparsely populated areas until 2014. After this, there have only been separate mentions of cooperation between the authorities in documents and guidelines that steer the activities of the security authorities. In 2016, guidance focused on safeguarding the statutory tasks of the authorities, even by reducing attempts towards cooperation. Guidance on the activities and finances of the security authorities has referred to goals set for cooperation in sparsely populated areas at a general level and the authorities have only been steered towards cooperation in certain years. The practical implementation of cooperation has been subject to local discretion.

In recent years, the development of local and regional security and, in particular, responsibilities for this development have not been clearly assigned to any regional party. At the same time, guidance on local and regional security planning has decreased. In recent years, municipalities and Regional State Administrative Agencies have not clearly known what they should do. Regional State Administrative Agencies, as regional coordinators of security planning, have focused on preparedness and they have only played a minor part in the large-scale development of everyday security and cooperation between the authorities.

When preparing future reforms of the local and regional government, questions related to the management and planning of security must be addressed in more detail. Similarly, the Ministry of the Interior must

emphasise that the management and planning of local and regional security requires clear cooperation structures and coordination between different parties at local and regional levels. These types of goals have already been outlined in the *Turvallisuutta kaikkialla (Security everywhere)* guidelines issued by the Ministry of the Interior in January 2019.

The Ministry of the Interior has provided little support for local and regional security planning in recent years

The preparation of local and regional security plans has clearly slowed down during the latter half of the 2010s. It is difficult to draw an overview of the current situation. No security plans have been collected, compiled or stored at a national level since 2014. Furthermore, the preparation or content of plans has not been assessed since 2011. Requirements set for security planning have remained unclear for municipal managers and local authorities. The aim is to clarify the situation of security planning in the *Turvallisuutta kaikkialla (Security everywhere)* guidelines.

Little attention has been paid to monitoring and spreading the practices of cooperation between the authorities

Cooperation between the authorities in sparsely populated areas has only been monitored within the central government by the number of tasks. As the benefits or effects of this cooperation have not been assessed systematically, the goals set for monitoring have not been fulfilled in this respect. However, the benefits of cooperation between the authorities have materialised in practical activities through the better ability to serve and the improved management of situations involving emergency response services.

The goals set for the stabilisation of experiments related to cooperation between the authorities and for spreading them at a national level have not been fulfilled. In certain areas, cooperation between the authorities has stabilised into a permanent operating model, and the Finnish Border Guard, in particular, is involved in this cooperation. Correspondingly, the Police of Finland has withdrawn itself from emergency response activities due to the scarcity of its resources.

Development in sparsely populated areas has focused on the identification and spreading of good practices. The audit findings of varying practices and a lack of monitoring concern the fulfilment of this goal. According to the National Audit Office, not all services need to be produced similarly in different areas. Then again, reliable, sufficiently harmonised and proven operating methods can guarantee security services at a minimum level and the quality of activities.

Cooperation between the authorities is restricted by jurisdictional boundaries and limited resources

Cooperation between the authorities functions well when tasks are carried out together or they are shared, and when mutual support is given. Then again, opportunities of cooperation can be limited by the lack of jurisdiction, resources and competence.

Placing any general emphasis on cooperation alone cannot overcome problems related to limited resources and competence or jurisdictional boundaries, or solve problems related to emergency response services in sparsely populated areas. The ability of cooperation between the

authorities to safeguard emergency response services is limited, in particular, with regard to public order and security.

In addition to a sufficient jurisdiction, the authorities need to have the time and opportunities required to support one another. The preconditions of the authorities engaged in cooperation should be strengthened by means of training and maintained competence. To improve cooperation between the authorities, it is also necessary to assess the distribution of tasks between the authorities and the need to develop the legislation in this respect. A new way of thinking and bold innovation are needed to safeguard security services in sparsely populated areas.

Recommendations of the National Audit Office

1. The Ministry of the Interior, together with other ministries responsible for security services, should ensure that guidance provided for cooperation between the security authorities has a harmonised content. This would improve the fulfilment of goals among different authorities.
2. The Ministry of the Interior should steer the management and planning of local and regional security so that local and regional activities would have clearer structures and responsibilities. At the same time, the content of cooperation should be harmonised, for example, by combining the practices of preparedness and security planning.