

THE ASSOCIATION OF
FINNISH LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES
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Side Effects of Free Mobility
Problems Shared by Major Cities

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CITY SAFETY PLANNING

Finnish towns and cities have a long tradition of safety planning. The importance of fire safety has, for long, been emphasised in urban planning, and the work on traffic safety goes back 50 years. In 1999 some towns and cities started systematic and extensive safety planning at the initiative of the National Council for Crime Prevention.

At the turn of the millennium, the Finnish Police set the goal that all Finnish local authorities should be involved in the formulation of local safety plans by the end of 2003. The plans therefore focused on police tasks, crime prevention and the reduction of the level of violence. With plans drawn up for over 350 local authorities, the result was excellent. At that time, there were a total of about 450 local authorities in Finland.

Facts about Finnish local authorities

Today, there are 348 local authorities in Finland with a total population of 5.3 million. The local authority with the smallest population has only 116 residents while the largest one has 570,000 residents. The smallest local authority by area covers an area of no more than 6 km², water bodies excluded, the largest one an area of over 15,000 km².

The city of Helsinki, the largest local authority, and three other local authorities make up the Helsinki Metropolitan Area with a population of over a million and an area that covers almost 800 km². In contrast, the Province of Lapland, which covers the northernmost part of Finland, constitutes an area of almost 100,000 km², but a population of less than 200,000.

The majority of Finnish local authorities, 182, have a population of less than 6,000. There are only 24 local authorities with over 40,000 residents.

Based on these figures, it is reasonable to assume that the safety concerns vary greatly from one local authority to another. Safety matters are obviously easier to manage in small local authorities rather than in large cities.

Finnish local authorities have extensive self-government and they perform a wide variety of functions. The supreme decision-making power is exercised by a municipal council elected by local people. Local authorities provide the basic services for their residents. The most important services relate to social welfare and health care, education, environment and technical infrastructure. Well-functioning basic services are important for the safety of citizens and so is urban planning – also the responsibility of local authorities –, which lays a foundation for a safe living environment. Of the actual security services, local authorities are in charge of fire and rescue services, whereas the police service is the responsibility of the central government.

Internal Security Programme

The Internal Security Programme is a Government Resolution adopted in spring 2008. This is the second programme and runs until the year 2015. The programme was prepared through broadly based cooperation coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior, involving nearly 200 experts from ministries, government offices and agencies and NGOs.

Internal security is a state of society where everyone can enjoy the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the rule of law and a safe society without the fear or insecurity caused by crime, disruptions, accidents or any other phenomena in Finnish society or the increasingly globalised world at large.

The objective of the programme is for Finland to be the safest country in Europe in 2015.

The programme lists the following as the major challenges to internal security:

- *Social exclusion* has a wide impact on security, and it can lead to a life of crime. Transgenerational social exclusion undermines the security of children and adolescents. Social exclusion may also manifest itself in the form of non-participation in social activities or exclusion from society, which may lead to unpredictable behaviour.
- *Number of accidents*, as Finland has a particularly high number of accidents in the home and during leisure time, and the challenge is that the number will continue to increase as the population ages.
- *Relations between population groups*, as Finland is rapidly becoming more and more multicultural. Good relations between population groups promote security. The challenges here are successful integration and the prevention of social exclusion of immigrants.
- *Violence*, as Finland has a high rate of violence, much of it fuelled by alcohol. The challenge is to reduce the level of violence.
- *Major accidents*, as the risk of such accidents increases due to climate change and the increasing number of people moving to growth centres. As the volume of oil transports in the Gulf of Finland continues to grow together with passenger traffic, the risk of complex accidents becomes greater.
- *The vulnerability of society* is increased by the risks inherent in the wide use of and reliance on essential technological systems.

- *Cross-border organised crime* has increased steadily in Finland and is more professional and organised than before. Organised crime uses, to an increasing extent, legitimate businesses as fronts for criminal activities.
- *Cybercrime* relies on a sizeable cybercrime infrastructure that has evolved. The challenge here is to ensure information network security, which is a prerequisite for secure e-services. The number of criminal groups operating online across borders is growing.
- *Terrorism and violent radicalisation*, although at the moment there is no direct terrorist threat against Finland. The challenge is to prevent the international threat of violent radicalisation by, for example, preventing social exclusion and increasing civic participation.

The Internal Security Programme contains a total of 74 measures to combat these challenges. Several of the measures involve, in some form or another, local authorities.

Safety planning at local level

The local safety planning that was started a decade ago and its further development are among the central means of responding to the challenges of internal security at local level.

The objective of community safety planning is to promote the safety of citizens at level of local authorities. Local authorities are currently updating their own safety plans with a view to have them approved by municipal councils by the end of 2010. In Finland, the municipal council term is four years and through safety planning, each council sets objectives for safety promotion for the duration of the term.

The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities finds it important that local authorities are active in preparing safety plans and that safety matters are integrated into the everyday municipal operations and the planning of operations.

Safety is a very broad concept. For some, it may mean crime, for others, fire hazard, and still for others, information security. Some consider safety as the management of the financial risks related to municipal operations. The challenge for safety work is to be able to define the matters related to safety which, at a given time, need to be influenced and which are included in safety plans. Another challenge is how to integrate safety matters into the everyday operations. How to consider safety aspects in all decision making and every project?

Several actors contribute to safety and no-one alone can guarantee safety. Local safety work must be conducted in cooperation between municipal authorities, national government authorities at local level, NGOs and the business community. The importance of cooperation is emphasised by the fact that a report drawn up to promote local safety planning recommends that the management of planning be a joint responsibility between local authority executives and the supreme rescue and police services commands.

The divided responsibility has turned out to work quite well at a practical level. In many cases, the police and rescue commands have been active, but also local authority

executives have been committed to promoting safety. Especially the managers of larger cities consider safety to be a central means of urban development.

When preparing new safety plans, local authorities have successfully involved in the process different NGOs and businesses as well as the organisations and parishes (the Church) representing them. They have found out that these organisations and the Church play an important role in reaching the local people. I am particularly pleased that in Finland immigrants' own organisations have been actively involved in safety work and that they consider the promotion of the safety of the groups that they represent as one of their central tasks. It is easier for these organisations to approach people who fear or distrust authorities.

Local safety planning is a process where the first step is to outline the responsibilities, parties and an organisation for cooperation. The objective of this phase is to determine an organisation for safety planning work and to provide ample information to the participating organisations and the area's residents. Information can be disseminated in cooperation with local media.

The second phase of safety planning constitutes an evaluation of the present situation. This phase will result in a thorough analysis of the local operating environment, a survey of safety risks and conclusions on matters that need to be improved.

The third phase is an evaluation of the analysis and conclusions. This can be achieved through broad discussion between authorities, organisations and other actors involved. Residents will be offered an opportunity to give feedback and bring forward their own ideas. As a result, local authorities are able to identify matters that need to be worked on to improve safety.

The fourth step is to formulate a safety plan. In the plan, measures to improve safety are identified, and a timetable and the parties responsible for the implementation of the measures are agreed on.

The fifth phase constitutes the implementation of the plan. In practical terms this means that the measures proposed in the safety plan are integrated into local decision-making and that of other actors. Also, the financial and human resources needed to implement the plan are allocated. During this phase, the safety plan is linked to the financial and operational planning at local level, since the financing of the measures is decided on in local budget preparation.

The sixth, and final, phase is to evaluate the outcome and identify development needs for the next round of planning. The evaluation and reporting associated with it are an integral part of the plan, as they help ensure that the planned measures are, in fact, implemented and that the objectives are delivered to a satisfactory degree.

The Everyday Safety of Helsinki Citizens, a safety strategy adopted by the city of Helsinki in 2006, outlines how the city is organising its safety planning.

The document states that safety, the maintenance of safety and the improvement of safety at local level all require continuing cooperation between the city's offices and agencies. The city needs to engage the necessary cooperation partners from the

business community, the police, the Church and voluntary organisations, to name a few.

The maintenance of the everyday safety of citizens requires, above all, that the city carries out safety planning at many levels: at the level of central administration, offices and agencies, and city districts. In Helsinki, safety planning is based on a safety strategy adopted by the city council and the priorities outlined in the strategy. The responsibility for the coordination of the strategy and the monitoring of its implementation lies with the Safety and Preparedness Coordinating Division of the city's Administration Centre.

The overall objective of the city of Helsinki safety strategy is that the city will be able to maintain its current good safety level and improve the safety and its quality in the safety priority areas.

These priority areas include: experience of safety, accidents in the home and during leisure time, fire deaths, operating environment of businesses, crime and violence, and traffic safety.

Safety planning and side effects of free mobility

In this seminar, we have heard presentations and conducted debates on the side effects related to free mobility. They are very complex in nature and to influence the elimination or mitigation of these adverse effects requires cooperation between several actors at local level, for example in connection with safety planning. However, problems caused by these unwanted effects cannot solely be addressed through local safety work and cooperation between local actors. These problems can only be solved through cooperation between central governments and between local authorities and organisations operating in different countries.

Cities need to exchange experiences and disseminate good practices. To my mind, an interesting challenge would be to address the problems caused by the side effects of free mobility by establishing a Europe-wide cooperation model for local actors. One solution could be a common forum for European cities, which would hold regular meetings and which, besides exchanging experiences and good practices, would formulate a common action programme to address the problems and to enhance the exchange of experts between cities. The action programme should also include common procedures to decrease the need of people to travel from city to city in the hope of better standard of living, while, in reality, they end up begging on streets to provide for themselves.

I would like to conclude by wishing you all a very safe spring and summer.