

Sweden and Finland begin new cooperation program for civil preparedness

Hanaholmen, the Swedish-Finnish Cultural Centre, has taken the initiative to a new cross-sector, bilateral **crisis preparedness program**, which will strengthen civil preparedness in Sweden and Finland. The program will start in 2021 and is carried out in collaboration with the Swedish Defense University and the Security Committee in Finland with support from the Swedish-Finnish Cultural Foundation and both countries' governments.

"The initiative of Hanaholmen – the Swedish-Finnish Cultural Centre on deepening the cooperation between Finland and Sweden in crisis preparedness is an excellent contribution to the further development of our current cooperation," say Finland's and Sweden's Prime Ministers, Sanna Marin and Stefan Löfven, in a joint statement.

The Prime Ministers both remark that expectations amongst inhabitants in both Sweden and Finland are pointing in the same direction: more cooperation, more joint solutions.

"This also emerges from this autumn's opinion polls, conducted by the research agencies Novus in Sweden and Kantar TNS in Finland. A majority of the countries' inhabitants takes a positive view of a closer Nordic crisis preparedness cooperation," emphasizes Chris Heister, Chairman of the Swedish-Finnish Cultural Foundation in Sweden, and Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Chairman of the Foundation in Finland.

In recent years, Sweden and Finland have increased their cooperation in military defense. The cooperation has developed gradually through personal contacts and a deepening mutual knowledge of each other's defense structures.

The conviction has long existed that Swedish-Finnish defense collaboration ought also to include civil preparedness, including cyber threats. Several steps have already been taken in that direction, but what is new is the explicit cross-sectoral strategic objective with the program.

"During the summer and autumn of 2020, we conducted an extensive survey with two external advisers, former ambassadors Anders Ljunggren and Peter Stenlund. After the exploratory talks, both ambassadors recommended a strengthened bilateral crisis preparedness collaboration. As the initiative has received strong backing from Sweden's and Finland's governments as well as from central agencies and organizations, we are now ready to get to work," says Hanaholmen's CEO, Gunvor Kronman.

The Swedish Defense University, which carries out various training courses in crisis preparedness, among other things, welcomes the initiative and views the development it implies for Finnish and Swedish cooperation positively:

“We currently lack a cross-sector, strategic, bilateral civil preparedness program, in which all central players in society are involved. This program will play a very important role, which can help us better prepare for future crises. We have carried out high-level training since the 1950s, of which the renowned Solbacka-courses are an example, and we believe that this training will complement the needs of the system and the countries greatly,” says Brigadier General Fredrik Ståhlberg, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the Swedish Defense University.

Finland’s Security Committee, which assists the Government and ministries in matters pertaining to comprehensive security, also looks forward to the new program.

“We have a long tradition of Nordic collaboration in various areas of society, but none of our previous programs have covered so many different sectors of society. The new program can further build on and integrate, at least partially, the already existing Haga cooperation within the rescue sector and the Svalbard cooperation within healthcare,” says general secretary Petri Toivonen of the Security Committee.

The new crisis preparedness program is called *The Hanaholmen Initiative* and is based on the following pillars: contact, knowledge, and coordination. The program includes an annual high-level forum with central decision-makers within civil preparedness, as well as a training course with exercises. The forum and training course will be held in the autumn of 2021.

The training builds on expertise development regarding current issues, best-practice experiences, and study visits to important actors. The newly acquired knowledge is then converted in various relevant contexts through simulations and decision-making training. The training is aimed at persons who are involved in strategic leadership within crisis preparedness within primarily state and regional agencies, civil society, the business community, and related research. The training will be conducted in English (Crisis Management & Civil Preparedness) to ensure broad participation from both countries.

In addition to individual leadership development, a specially expressed goal during the training is also to identify development needs within Swedish-Finnish cooperation. The focus is initially on Sweden and Finland, but there is a readiness to broaden the initiative to include the other Nordic countries.

Hanaholmen will be responsible for the administrative and practical implementation of the program, while the Swedish Defense University and the Security Committee are responsible for the training. An advisory group with experts from Sweden and Finland will assist Hanaholmen in its work.

“Hanaholmen is used to functioning as a neutral and reliable meeting place for central foreign, defense and training policy projects and programs. Furthermore, Hanaholmen has extensive experience in engaging civil society and the business community, something which is important, because civil preparedness issues must include all parts of society,” notes Jan-Erik Enestam, former Finnish Minister of Defense and Chairman of the Experts’ Advisory Group.

Read more about the new crisis preparedness program and see the two prime ministers' joint statement here: www.hanaholmen.fi/sv/kulturcentrum/hanaholmen-initiativet/

You will also find more details about the Novus and Kantar TNS surveys.

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