

The Finnish and Swedish cross-sectoral concepts as inspiration for the development of crisis preparedness and resilience in the EU

The Swedish-Finnish Cultural Centre Hanaholmen organized a breakfast seminar in Brussels in cooperation with the Permanent Representations of Finland and Sweden to the EU on Friday, 9th of February 2024¹. The objective of the event was to offer perspectives on what role the European Union should play in the field of crisis preparedness and resilience in the future, as well as to present the views of Finland and Sweden on the topic. The EU's future priorities are currently being prepared for the new strategic agenda for 2024–2029, which will be adopted by the European Council in June 2024. The background context for the event was provided by the non-paper proposal of the Prime Minister's Office of Finland on EU Preparedness Union, drafted in December 2023². The proposal, as well as the Finnish and Swedish cross-sectoral preparedness concepts attracted strong interest among the multinational foreign and security policy experts attending the event.

The seminar, held at the Permanent representation of Finland to the EU in Brussels, was a continuation of the Hanaholmen Initiative³, a cross-sector bilateral crisis preparedness programme to strengthen civil defence cooperation between Finland and Sweden. The initiative, established by Hanaholmen in 2021, has been ground-breaking in bringing together from all sectors of society the countries' leading security experts. The initiative has been successful in increasing joint knowledge of the countries' different crisis preparedness systems and procedures, helping to identify cross-border government counterparts of, and providing practical opportunities for strengthened cooperation and coordination in the face of future crises.

Agenda of the Seminar

The welcome and introductory words of the seminar were given by Ambassador **Markku Keinänen**, Head of Mission to the Permanent Representation of Finland to the EU, and **Gunvor Kronman**, CEO of the Hanaholmen, who also moderated the event. The Finnish comprehensive security concept was introduced by **Petteri Korvala**, Secretary General of the Security Committee of Finland, and the Swedish total defence concept was presented by **Per Bolinder**, Sweden's newly appointed Civil Defence Policy Director from the Swedish Ministry of Defence. Comments on these presentations were provided by **Hans Das**, Deputy Director-General and COO of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) in the European Commission, **Leen Depuydt**, Director-General of the National Crisis Centre of Belgium, and **Jahier Khan**, Staff Officer of the Enablement and Resilience Section at the NATO HQ Defence Policy and Planning Division.

The seminar also included a panel discussion on the following topic: "How can the EU enhance its role to prevent, prepare and respond to different complex and parallel crises?". The panellists were **Andreas Jasper**, Head of EU and NATO Affairs of Saab, **Nicolas Kerleroux**, Director of ICPR⁴ in the Council of the European Union, **Florin Ursenau**, Head of the EU Commission's Crisis Management Unit, and **Lea Vainult**,

¹ Program of the "EU – Crisis Preparedness and Response" Seminar 9.2.2024.

² Prime Minister's Office of Finland 2023.

³ The Hanaholmen Initiative.

⁴ ICPR stands for integrated political crisis response.

Advisor of the National Security and Defence Coordination Unit at the Estonian Government Office. Concluding remarks of the seminar were provided by Ambassador **Mikaela Kumlin Granit**, Head of Mission to the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU.

Finland's proposal for the EU Preparedness Union

Enhancing crisis preparedness and resilience has become a key cross-sectoral priority for the EU in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The above-mentioned Finland's non-paper on the EU Preparedness Union responds to this need to ensure that all sectors contribute to an all-hazards approach, taking into account the increasingly important role of the private and third sector actors as well as the citizens. The main goal of the Union would be to ensure, through the first EU Strategy for Preparedness Union to be handled by the next European Commission, that the EU and its Member States are better prepared for increasingly complex, cross-border and multi-faceted crises that often occur simultaneously. The Union would bring all policy sectors together to seek to define common policy objectives and recommendations to increasing cooperation, peer-learning, and coordination.

Both the Finnish non-paper proposal and the Finnish and Swedish preparedness concepts were commended by the speakers and seen as inspiring initiatives for strengthening the EU's resilience.

Lack of horizontal EU structure and strategic EU-NATO cooperation

The Finnish and Swedish concepts were seen as successful, especially from the point of view of bringing different sectors together horizontally. The EU has a lot of room for improvement here. At the EU level, there are several structures and mechanisms for crisis management that can quickly be activated in response to a crisis. These include, for example, the Council of the European Union's crisis coordination mechanism the *Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR)* and mechanisms under the EU Commission such as the *Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)* and its coordinating hub *Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)*, resource bank *Civil Protection Pool*, and stockpile arrangement *rescEU*. However, EU crisis management is still carried out in silos and focusing on specific sectors and areas, leading to insufficient coordination and exchange of information between these instruments.

Strategic cooperation on preparedness and resilience between the EU and NATO is also limited and should be strengthened⁵. The seminar raised, for example, the idea of the EU host nation support arrangement, following a similar NATO mechanism. This could be used in a crisis, for example to organize cross-national rescue transports.

Cross-sectoral concepts of Comprehensive Security and Total Defence

The terminology related to resilience sparked discussion, as resilience is understood slightly differently both in the EU and NATO, as well as between the EU Member States. It is therefore important to clarify terminology and conduct comparative research on the different resilience solutions of the EU, NATO, and the EU Member States in order to streamline cooperation.⁶

In Finland, societal resilience is understood as a concept of comprehensive security, which is based on a citizen-centric whole-of-government approach. According to the Finnish concept, resilience of the society is built on the ability to maintain vital functions for society in all circumstances. The Finnish model titled "Security Strategy for Society" includes seven vital functions, which are secured through collaboration between the government, the authorities, business operators, organizations, and citizens – the vital functions are categorized as 1) leadership, 2) international and EU activities, 3) defence capability, 4)

⁵ See for example Isomarkku 2024.

⁶ Kuronen & Tölli 2023. A report by the *Elisabeth Rehn -Bank of Ideas* think tank analyses the terminological differences in the integrated security concepts of Finland, Sweden, and Estonia.

internal security, 5) economy, infrastructure, and security of supply, 6) functional capability of the population and services, and 7) psychological resilience.

In Sweden resilience is referred to as “total defence”⁷. The Swedish concept is divided into two pillars: military defence and civil defence. Sweden is actively rebuilding its total defence system, which was radically downsized after the Cold War in the 1990s and has implemented several bold reforms to modernize the system. Among the most prominent of these is the establishment of the position of Minister of Civil Defence within the Ministry of Defence, reactivation of civil conscription alongside military conscription, and the development of security of supply and business involvement. Additionally, to raise citizens’ awareness and involvement in preparedness, a circular “If Crisis or War Comes”⁸ has been sent to all households in the country.

The main difference between the Finnish and Swedish concepts is that the Swedish model is designed primarily for war preparedness and the Finnish model for all circumstances. However, the Swedish model can also be used for peacetime and hybrid crises if necessary. The seminar also highlighted that the EU could learn from the Finnish and Swedish concepts for developing wartime preparedness as a base for peacetime preparedness, for example by supporting organizations in the fields of critical infrastructure and defence industry.

Busting silos through operative coordination

The concepts of Finland and Sweden are well in line with the EU Commission's conclusions on developing preparedness and crisis response. They also provide tested practices for strengthening the EU’s resilience. Like the EU, however, also the Finnish and Swedish governance and administrative structures are siloed. Finland aims to break down sectoral fragmentation through its comprehensive security strategy⁹, which harmonizes national preparedness principles and guides preparedness in the various administrative branches. The strategy is prepared by the Security Committee, consisting largely of high-level officials from ministries and authorities.

Sweden, on the other hand, has recently established a National Security Council. Compared to the Finnish Security Committee, which assists and coordinates the ministries and authorities, the Swedish Security Council is a political and operational body. The Council is chaired by the Prime Minister and has several key ministers as members. Additionally, the Council is coordinated by a designated National Security Advisor.

As Finland’s Security Committee and Sweden's National Security Council have succeeded in bringing together fragmented sectors, they can provide useful lessons-learned not only for other Member States, but also for the development of the EU resilience and the possible EU Security Union as a whole.

Policy recommendations presented at the seminar to enhancing the EU's resilience:

- Creating a preparedness strategy for the EU, based on a whole-of-society approach (Finland’s non-paper proposal on the EU Preparedness Union)
- Strengthening strategic EU-NATO cooperation
- Establishing the EU host nation support arrangement, following a similar NATO mechanism. This could be used in a crisis, for example to organize cross-national rescue transports.
- Promoting involvement of the private and third sectors in EU preparedness cooperation. There is no structure in the EU to support the private sector and understand its needs.
- Developing EU wartime preparedness instead of peacetime preparedness, for example by supporting businesses working on critical infrastructure and the defence industry.
- Harmonization of resilience terminology between the EU, NATO, and EU Member States
- Synchronizing civil-military cooperation, e.g. in terms of terminology and exercises

⁹ The Security Strategy for Society (Finland) 2017. The strategy is currently being updated and expected to be published in 2024.

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PREPAREDNESS UNION – HARNESSING THE WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY APPROACH AT EU LEVEL

NON-PAPER BY FINLAND

Following the October 2023 European Council Conclusions, where the EUCO underlined *the importance of a **comprehensive and coordinated approach to the preparedness and crisis response of the European Union ensuring that all sectors contribute to an all-hazards approach***, the Council should invite the next Commission to present a **Preparedness Union Strategy**. This request could be expressed in more detail in the form of Council Conclusions during the Belgian Presidency of the Council. The main goal of the Preparedness Union would be to ensure that the EU and its Member States are better prepared for increasingly complex, cross-border and multi-faceted crises that often occur simultaneously.

The Preparedness Union should be based on a comprehensive **whole-of-society approach**, where the needs as well as contributions of **all policy sectors are taken into account**. **The Preparedness Union Strategy** would offer tools and a framework to map out the needs of each sector in order to form a coherent preparedness policy. The strategy would acknowledge the national competencies while identifying common policy objectives as well as defining the areas where the EU should further develop joint capacities. The division of work between Member States, the Council and the Commission would be further clarified. The Strategy would take into account the increasingly important role of the private and third sector actors as well as the citizens themselves as an integral part of societal resilience.

The Preparedness Union would seek to **define policy objectives and recommendations** in different sectors in the field of preparedness. These would be based on regular assessments for which there would be a jointly agreed evaluation framework and peer review mechanisms. The Commission would be a crucial contributor and facilitator of the assessments whereas the Council would define the policy objectives and recommendations together with the Commission.

In areas where the competencies allow, **EU legislation should be developed**. However, the core of the Preparedness Union would be **increasing cooperation, peer-learning and coordination**, with the aim of improving the level of preparedness of all Member States and the EU as a whole.

To make this happen, we **urge**...

...*the Commission to:*

- Develop and publish the first **EU Strategy for Preparedness Union**, based on political guidance from the Council;
- Have one **Vice President responsible** for the implementation of Preparedness Union and overall coordination of crisis management across the DGs;



- Develop a structure under the VP that would **coordinate different Commission strands of work** and links to the Council WP(s) on preparedness as well as in more operative matters to the IPCR; The VP and his/her staff would...
 - ...bring together foresight and situational awareness work from different sectors as well as from the National situational awareness work in order to...
 - ...produce threat scenarios and risk analyses and
 - ...to feed into the regular assessments in order to
 - ...feed into the Council's policy discussions.
 - ...guide, observe and coordinate exercises in different sectors;
 - ...facilitate the **involvement of the private sector actors** in different strands of work by establishing or facilitating to establish EU-level networks of private sector actors in the field of preparedness with the aim of awareness raising and promoting best practices;
- Ensure that commission's DGs support the Council's work in each sector, whereas the abovementioned VP would coordinate across the DGs;
- Develop **funding opportunities** for the implementation of the Preparedness Union in different sectors as well as horizontally through EU level projects;
- Begin systematically **evaluate the effects of new legislative proposals** on preparedness;
- Systematically **collect Ukraine's experiences** of operating in exceptional circumstances and utilize those experiences in the EU's preparedness work in all sectors.

...the Council to:

- Ensure a **preparatory structure that supports the whole-of-society approach** while avoiding overlapping work in different working groups. The Council should have **one working group that would look at preparedness horizontally** reporting to the General Affairs Council (not exclusively);
 - This horizontal WP should cover the whole cycle of preparedness: foresight, preparedness, response capability and recovery;
 - The WP should work on for example common policy objectives and recommendations, threat scenarios and risk analyses as well as joint exercises;
- Encourage **all council formations** and their working groups to deal with crisis preparedness from their own perspectives, in line with the whole-of-society approach. Depending on the policy sector and competencies, EU cooperation can take the form of legislation, Council conclusions, resolutions or recommendations (eg. soft law), ministerial policy debates or Commission expert working groups;
- Ensure that preparedness in different sectors is **regularly reviewed in political level discussions**;
- Systematically **collect Ukraine's experiences** of operating in exceptional circumstances and utilize those experiences in the EU's preparedness work in all sectors;



ANNEX

Examples of possible perspectives to whole-of-society approach in different Council formations

Possible themes in the General Affairs Council:

- *Main responsibility for developing horizontal crisis preparedness and monitoring the progress of the Preparedness Union*
- *Monitoring and development of IPCR's activities*
- *Development work related to safeguarding the Council's operation and decision-making ability in crisis situations*
- *Political guidance of the possible permanent horizontal crisis preparedness working group of the Council*
- *Coordinating issues related to MFF and Preparedness Union*
- *Hybrid threats*

Possible themes in the Foreign Affairs Council:

- *Consular matters in crisis situations*
- *EU actions in third countries in crises affecting them*
- *Trade policy, especially from the point of view of international production chains and security of supply issues*
- *The role of the defense sector in crisis preparedness*
- *Strategic Compass' links to preparedness*
- *Promotion of EU-NATO cooperation*
- *Hybrid threats*

Possible themes in the Justice and Home Affairs Council:

- *Civil protection, civil shelters and warning the population*
- *Planning related to host country support*
- *Preparation for CBRN situations*
- *Development of the Union Rescue Service Mechanism (UCPM), including the ERCC and RescEU*
- *Internal security issues*
- *Migration including instrumentalisation*
- *Protection of critical infrastructure and EU-NATO cooperation regarding it*
- *The protection of democracy, incl. questions related to election influence*

Possible themes in the Economic and Financial Affairs Council:

- *Financial market crisis resilience*
- *Strengthening the disturbance tolerance of payment traffic*

Possible themes in the Competitiveness Council:

- *Strengthening the internal market's crisis resilience and crisis preparedness*



- *Security of supply issues in the internal market*
- *Crisis preparedness as part of strategic autonomy and financial security*
- *The role of industrial policy in preparation*
- *Questions related to the availability of critical raw materials*
- *The role of R&D measures in preparation and anticipation*

Possible themes in the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council:

- *Securing traffic continuity in crisis situations*
- *Strengthening the needs of military mobility when developing European transport networks*
- *Cyber threats*
- *Strengthening the crisis resilience of digital and energy networks*
- *Strengthening crisis preparedness and security of supply in the energy sector*
- *Questions related to the protection of critical infrastructure*

Possible themes in the Agriculture and Fisheries Council:

- *Food security*
- *Water safety*
- *Animal diseases*
- *Questions related to storage and maintenance reliability*

Possible themes in the Environmental council:

- *Preparing for environmental crises*
- *Preparing for crises caused by climate change*
- *Climate resilience*

Possible themes in the Council for Employment, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Affairs:

- *Questions related to mental crisis resilience*
- *Operation of social safety nets in crisis situations*
- *Questions related to the availability and competence of critical employees in terms of security of supply*
- *Health threats*
- *Preparedness issues related to the availability of medicines and medical materials and equipment*

Possible themes in the Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council:

- *Questions related to the "Security of Supply" of competence and critical competence in terms of preparedness*
- *Digital education, improving media literacy and fighting disinformation*
- *Questions related to mental crisis resistance and social resilience*