

# BALTIC RIM ECONOMIES

## FINLAND – SWEDEN

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**ARON  
EMILSSON**  
Two countries –  
one mission



**MAIMO  
HENRIKSSON**  
Finland – Sweden  
relations on a new  
level



**MICAEL  
BYDÉN**  
A strong Swedish-  
Finnish defence  
cooperation



**KARI  
HÄKÄMIES**  
We need a new  
survey on the  
relationship between  
Finland and Sweden



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# BALTIC RIM ECONOMIES

**The Centrum Balticum Foundation publishes  
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demia, as well as several other experts con-  
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Editor-in-Chief | Kari Liuhto  
(responsible for writer invitations)

Technical Editor |  
Sonja Lavonen

Centrum Balticum  
Vanha Suurtori 7  
FI-20500 TURKU, Finland

[www.centrumbalticum.org/en](http://www.centrumbalticum.org/en)

[centrumbalticum@centrumbalticum.org](mailto:centrumbalticum@centrumbalticum.org)

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# EXPERT ARTICLES

<b>Aron Emilsson</b> Two countries - one mission	<b>5</b>	<b>Marcus Prest</b> Green is better	<b>25</b>	<b>Lena Rekdal</b> Negotiations between Finns and Swedes: Directness versus Deliberation	<b>43</b>
<b>Maimo Henriksson</b> Finland – Sweden relations on a new level	<b>6</b>	<b>Harry Jansson</b> The Åland Autonomy and demilitarization in a changing security environment	<b>26</b>	<b>Merja Kauhanen</b> Varying role of local wage bargaining in public sector in Finland and Sweden	<b>44</b>
<b>Karl Magnus Johansson &amp; Tapio Raunio</b> Government communication in Finland and Sweden	<b>7</b>	<b>Annastina Sarlin</b> Paradoxical potentials in the Nordic archipelago	<b>27</b>	<b>Kjell Skoglund</b> Swedish language in business – What is the point?	<b>45</b>
<b>Katja Valaskivi</b> Global crises have shown the weaknesses of nation branding practices for Finland and Sweden	<b>8</b>	<b>Hans Lindberg &amp; Tomas Häyry</b> Limitless possibilities in a sustainable growing region	<b>28</b>	<b>Charlotta af Hällström-Reijonen</b> The changing view of Finlandisms in Finland Swedish	<b>46</b>
<b>Madeleine Sjöstedt</b> Sweden's national brand from a Finnish perspective	<b>9</b>	<b>Riitta Björkenheim &amp; Anna Måtts-Fransén</b> A green shipping corridor between Vaasa and Umeå	<b>29</b>	<b>Martin Sundin</b> The new Language Centre – promoting the Finnish language in Sweden	<b>47</b>
<b>Micael Bydén</b> A strong Swedish-Finnish defence cooperation	<b>10</b>	<b>Jukka Kujala &amp; Roger Danell</b> Haparanda and Tornio – cross border cooperation	<b>30</b>	<b>Björn Teir</b> One country – two languages	<b>49</b>
<b>Pär Stenbäck</b> Entering a new phase	<b>11</b>	<b>Daniel Smirat</b> All politics is local – the next era of Finnish- Swedish cross-border collaboration in the Bothnian Arc region	<b>31</b>	<b>Vappu Renko</b> Comparing Finnish and Swedish regional cultural policies	<b>50</b>
<b>Peter Stenlund</b> Closer than ever – there are more steps to take	<b>12</b>	<b>Tuula Ajanki</b> On region three countries: Cooperation in the Torne Valley	<b>32</b>	<b>Stefan Björkman</b> Konstsamfundet – contributing to a better Finland	<b>51</b>
<b>Magnus Christiansson</b> Sweden in NATO	<b>13</b>	<b>Laura Ervo</b> The Code of Judicial Procedure from the year 1734 – An example of Finnish-Swedish co-operation	<b>33</b>	<b>Susanna Pettersson</b> Art Scene infrastructures, values, and public discussion	<b>52</b>
<b>Gunvor Kronman</b> NATO: "Finland and Sweden can take on a leading role in civil preparedness"	<b>14</b>	<b>Ander Ahnild</b> Geopolitics and Swedish-Finnish trade interests	<b>35</b>	<b>Markus Westerlund</b> Similar but different: How cultural differences affect business	<b>53</b>
<b>Carl Marklund</b> Close neighbours, divergent partners? Finnish-Swedish cooperation rekindled in the light of crisis	<b>16</b>	<b>Carin Hallerström</b> NFU - 100 years of Nordic cooperation	<b>36</b>	<b>Veronica Hertzberg</b> How to integrate in Swedish in Finland?	<b>54</b>
<b>Hannele Taavila</b> Deepening police cooperation between Finland and Sweden	<b>18</b>	<b>Mats Eriksson</b> Strength in alliance	<b>37</b>	<b>Tuire Liimatainen</b> Redefining Finnishness in Sweden	<b>55</b>
<b>Iina Sahramäki</b> Environmental crime prevention needs to be agile	<b>19</b>	<b>Sarah Kilpeläinen</b> Developing Nordic energy cooperation	<b>38</b>	<b>Jaan Siitonen</b> Language skills – the superpower that increases our security?	<b>56</b>
<b>Kimmo Kohvakka</b> Collaboration within the civil protection between the Nordic Countries	<b>20</b>	<b>Vilma Rissanen</b> Gaining a foothold in the Swedish e-commerce market	<b>39</b>	<b>Karin Perhans &amp; Johan Kuylenstierna</b> Developing knowledge with true added value	<b>57</b>
<b>Paula Mikkola</b> Border information service Sweden-Finland-Norway	<b>21</b>	<b>Michael Lindholm</b> The digital business development future	<b>40</b>	<b>Chris Heister</b> Finnish-Swedish research cooperation: Lessons from the Tandem Forest Values Initiative	<b>58</b>
<b>Kari Häkämies</b> We need a new survey on the relationship between Finland and Sweden	<b>23</b>	<b>Elna Nykänen Andersson</b> Beyond Moomin and Marimekko: Updating Finland's image in Sweden	<b>41</b>	<b>Janne Holmén</b> University autonomy in Finland and Sweden	<b>59</b>
<b>Erik Söderholm</b> Centuries-long connection to Stockholm still going strong	<b>24</b>	<b>Erik Sandberg</b> Contemporary logistics challenges in used clothing supply chains	<b>42</b>	<b>Ov Cristian Norocel</b> Gender in Nordic right-wing populism	<b>60</b>



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ARON EMILSSON

# Two countries - one mission

Expert article • 3442

**M**y home and the cultural heritage I manage is located in one of Östergötland's beautiful archipelagos, where the sea meets the mainland. Across the waters of the Baltic Sea, it is not very far to Åland and Finland. Once one country, today two countries and sovereign states, but with a common history and close ties. We are two countries with a common mission; to protect our home on earth, our common values, our culture and our languages, one of which we share. We are two countries that protect our freedom and our self-determination in a new security policy environment in Europe, where our countries are considered by Russia to belong to their sphere of interest and where, if the Russian regime prevails, we do not have the right to control our security policy choices ourselves. In short, we are two countries with the common mission to protect our way of life.

As spokesperson of foreign policy for the Sweden Democrats and since the 2022 election as chairman of the foreign affairs committee, I spend much of my waking hours analyzing and commenting on the security policy situation. This is from a conservative perspective as a representative of my party combined with a Swedish and Nordic perspective in general as a representative of the committee. Basic questions I believe we should ask ourselves are: Who are we as people? What are we defending? Who are we defending ourselves against and how do we become stronger together?

As a true Nordicist and after eight years in the Nordic Council in various capacities, it is clear to me that we are a family and a family takes care of each other. Ice-cold winds are blowing from our great neighbor to the east, which since 2014 has waged a war against Ukraine, and which since February 24th, 2022 is waging a full-scale invasion against the same country. This means that we now face the most serious security situation since the Second World War and the most serious and most large-scale war in Europe since the same time. In this situation, Nordic gathering and coordination is required.

There are good conditions for further strengthening and deepening our defense and security cooperation and to look after our common home at a time when a new security policy architecture is emerging in Europe. There are also good conditions for writing the next chapter in Swedish-Finnish cooperation. It is no coincidence that Sweden and Finland have the closest and deepest defense cooperation, which has proven to work well and has been successful. We will have to deepen and refine that, now in a new time and era, with neo-Stalinist Russia as a neighbor and within the Nordic dimension of NATO.

The next chapter should not float freely without context, but be part of the broad catalog of security policy reports with its analyzes and proposals, such as the Bjarnason report with a focus on the broad total defense, including civil defense and crisis preparedness. The Hague Declarations are central there. They are aimed at the ability to deal with serious accidents and crises and the restoration of functionality. At the same time, the Hague declarations are not alone sufficient to meet today's threats and needs, which was illustrated, among other things, in connection with the Corona pandemic and on that occasion, moreover, it was a time of peace. Next time there may be a different condition.

In a state of crisis or war, cross-border cooperation and resilience need to function fully. Declarations and reports need to be taken care of by active political will in both our countries and ambassadorships in order to be gradually translated into practice and functional work that can be felt

on the ground and in the daily work between authorities. It needs to apply to joint Nordic infrastructure investments, supply lines of food, medicine and critical spare parts where at least Sweden for the moment are used to and dependent on "just in time" imports outside the Nordic outer border. In this regard Sweden can learn from Finland. Our common resilience and endurance need to be strengthened, especially when normal trading patterns do not work. There we can assist each other, collaborate and coordinate our assets. Our countries are a family of values that share a long history and borders and our joint assets are of great significance. Our defense industry is unique and at the international forefront through, for example, the vital capabilities of underwater, aircraft and combat vehicles.

The Sweden Democrats have put forward a motion that the regulations and the possibilities for strategic export and export control of military equipment need to be reformed and modernized in a new security policy environment and era of acts of war in our immediate area. Old regulations are outdated. In recent years, I have visited a large part of the Swedish defense industry and I'm always struck by the innovation capacity and high-quality production and how it forms a foundation worldwide, in the Nordic dimension of NATO and for Ukraine's fight against Russia. In our northernmost city, Kiruna, the space base Esrange is located, a unique capability for the Nordics and Europe, which can be developed in our common interest.

The vision of the Nordic region as the world's most integrated region must not stop at rhetoric, but needs to become effective political practice. Sweden and Finland can be pioneering here. We are two states with the right to choose our own security policy choices. A responsibility to our ancestors and towards our children. The naive years of closing down the civil defense and disarmament of the military defense in Sweden are thankfully over and hopefully consigned to history. A new era of awareness has begun and the Nordic-Baltic family where Sweden and Finland have a special kinship can go far. We can go from ideas to practice, impact and true integration of operability in times of peace as well as in times of crisis and war. Both of us in NATO. Two countries with one mission. Resilience and freedom. ■



## Aron Emilsson

Member of the Swedish Parliament (SD),  
Foreign Policy Spokesperson for the Sweden Democrats, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Riksdagen, Parliament of Sweden  
Sweden

aron.emilsson@riksdagen.se



MAIMO HENRIKSSON

# Finland – Sweden relations on a new level

Expert article • 3443

First the pandemic and then the Russian full-scale attack on Ukraine has had a big impact on the relations between Finland and Sweden. The pandemic taught the Nordic states that they need to cooperate when a crisis hits, because crises can be dealt with only together. Besides, many national measures have effects that stretch over the border. The pandemic also made it difficult for Finnish companies to establish themselves on distant markets. Thus, the neighbouring region became more attractive also from a business point of view. The pandemic and its lessons learnt thus had a significant effect on the relations between the Nordic countries, especially on the relations between Finland and Sweden.

When Russia attacked Ukraine in February 2022 and took the war to a completely new phase, did this at the same time bring the relations between Finland and Sweden to quite a new level. It has rightly been analyzed, that the intensity in the contacts between the two countries has not been this high since World War II, when Sweden in many ways helped Finland in its fight against the Soviet Union.

The Russian invasion immediately led to security policy processes in both countries. These processes were characterized by close coordination. Ministers including the Prime Ministers, the Speakers of the Parliament, many sectoral ministers as well as delegations of all sorts met in spring 2022 as the two countries nationally started to prepare for decision making. Soon the key questions were: will both countries end up with the same conclusion i.e. to file in an application to join NATO? And when that started to become probable arose the next question: will both countries be able to file in that application in a synchronized way? An outcome with one country within NATO and the other outside would complicate things not only for the two countries, but for NATO as a whole.

The political leadership in both countries managed to coordinate and synchronize so well, that Finland and Sweden handed in their membership applications to NATO at the same moment on Wednesday morning, 18 May 2022. Well, due to the French alphabetical order used within NATO was Finland's application handed over to NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg eight seconds before the Swedish one...

Finland and Sweden had started to increase their defense cooperation already in 2014, after the Russian annexation of Crimea and the Russian war actions in Donbass. This cooperation was developed with the political instruction of "no limits". In the new situation, work done during the past ten years has proved to be very useful. Finland and Sweden will continue this close defense cooperation including joint exercises also as NATO members, because such a smooth cooperation between two member states benefits NATO as a whole.

What we then have witnessed in autumn 2022 and now in 2023 is that quite many organizations - be it a ministry, an authority, a company or a university - try to identify its counterpart in the neighbouring country. The Finnish experts or leaders travel to Sweden and the Swedish ones travel to Finland. The goal is to make a joint analysis of the state of things, in order to be able to make up a joint crisis action program. The new geopolitical situation has taught us that we need to build up national and regional

resilience. The pandemic in its turn taught us that crisis action programs cannot be national, they need to be joint programs. Finland needs joint plans above all with Sweden, but also with the other Nordic states.

In these days we must secure our logistical routes and the functionality of our transport and infrastructure, we need to ensure our energy resources and build up security of supply. We also have to have a certain level of self-sufficiency in agriculture - or make sure that we have a good division of labour with our neighbours. We need to have enough national extraction of key raw materials and an extensive enough national production of certain industrial items - or make sure that we have it together with our neighbours.

In light of all these processes it is no surprise that the new Finnish government in its program states that Sweden is Finland's most important bilateral partner. These are not empty words - we are currently witnessing a never before seen stream of visiting Finnish ministers and delegations to Sweden. All the new ministers and parliamentary committees now want to visit Sweden.

The positive thing is that both countries have things to learn from each other. Finland has due to its history been strong in matters such as national defense and security of supply. Also energy, both nuclear power and wind power, have emerged as new themes where Finnish experiences interest Sweden. For some time already education has been an area of interest. Sweden in its turn can be a model for Finland what comes to robust state finances, the internationalization of companies and labour market mechanisms.

We are lucky to have each other, Sweden and Finland. I hope that also you know your counterpart in the neighbouring country! ■



**Maimo Henriksson**

Ambassador of Finland

Embassy of Finland in Stockholm





KARL MAGNUS JOHANSSON &amp; TAPIO RAUNIO

# Government communication in Finland and Sweden

Expert article • 3444

Communications is one of the most pressing challenges facing government day by day. Government communication – defined broadly as the structures, practices and processes of the executive in its communication aspects – is required to handle those challenges. In this article, we outline the main elements of government communication in Finland and Sweden and then contrast the two countries. Our analysis covers both broader, over time developments as well as communication during the crises of the early 2020s.

## FINLAND

The Finnish case displays a relatively clear trend towards centralization of government communications to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), but certainly much weaker than in Sweden. In Finland party-political advisors, particularly in PMO, have become significant shapers of government-media relations, while the civil servant media staff seek to maintain a neutral position. Through constitutional reform the role of the PMO has become considerably stronger in recent decades, and this extends to communication. Centralization to PMO is further facilitated by strategic management thinking in recent governments, with cross-sectoral programmes and key targets coordinated from the PMO. Party politics also facilitates centralization: Finnish governments are typically ideologically heterogeneous multi-party coalitions, and centralizing communication more to the PMO is logical when the goal is to ensure that the government speaks with one voice. However, individual ministries as well as cabinet parties and their ministers continue to produce their own communication, and therefore it is a question of finding a balance between centralization and delegation to ministries (Niemi et al. 2019).

During COVID further centralization of communication to PMO took place, but again it was far from complete, with individual ministries, ministers, and public sector agencies also releasing their own information. As Finland's foreign and security policy leadership is shared between the president and the government, particular attention has been paid to coordinating the public positions of the two executives after Putin's attack into Ukraine.

## SWEDEN

The level of centralization is higher in Sweden, both regarding organizational structures and strategic leadership from PMO. There are two major trends: a steady increase in the number of staff dedicated to communications and a strengthening of the government's structures for communication. Over time, government communication has become highly centralized around the prime minister (Johansson 2022). However, the centre-right government which came to power in October 2022 has been partly undoing some of this centralizing strategy. It is a governing coalition consisting of three political parties and relying on an agreement with the nationalist Sweden Democrats, largest of the four cooperation parties but outside the government. That agreement extends to principles for external communication. The press secretaries are now employed in the ministries, as was the situation before the new, more centralized communication framework was adopted in 2014. It was a framework where press secretaries became more closely linked to the prime minister, through their employment in PMO. Moreover, it introduced daily morning meetings led by the head of press at PMO. That procedure, too, has been relaxed with the new government. Even so, a lot is still controlled from the PMO, which provides overall leadership and has incentives for a unified structure.

A mixed picture for the government's communications during COVID also applies to the Swedish case, with contrasting interpretations of the extent to which there was central control. Regardless of how crisis or management is framed, in times of crisis the need to respond comprehensively prompts a more controlling media management of the central government. Russia's war in Ukraine is another case in point.

## SUMMARY

In summary, the organizations relating to government communication in Finland and Sweden are broadly similar, yet different (Johansson & Raunio 2020). Significant concerns about functional efficiency explain the similarity and are reflected in institutional arrangements. The governments are under pressure to become more coordinated, enabling a greater integration of communications. That requires increasing resources devoted to communications and a management system run from the political centre. Therefore, the trend towards a more centralized approach is likely to continue. But even with more centralized arrangements, coherent communication is challenging when considering that in the age of social media coalition parties and individual ministries have their own interests to defend. Yet, it is clear that Finland and Sweden are, to varying extent, examples of a more centralized coordination of government communications to the media through the office of the prime minister. ■

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**Karl Magnus Johansson**

Affiliate Professor of Political Science  
Södertörn University  
Sweden



**Tapio Raunio**

Professor of Political Science  
Tampere University  
Finland



KATJA VALASKIVI

# Global crises have shown the weaknesses of nation branding practices for Finland and Sweden

Expert article • 3445

Sweden was among the very first countries in the Western Europe to introduce a nation brand in 2005. The brand focused on the equality, innovativeness and progressiveness of the country. These emphases were inspired by a theory of Professor Richard Florida who in his book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) asserted that highest levels of economic growth can be detected in open and tolerant metropolitan areas where artist, musicians, technology workers mingle and there is no discrimination against homosexual people.

Finland started its own project in 2008 by establishing a nation branding committee to “re-imagine Finland’s image and to build a national brand for the demands of the 21st century”. The committee published its nation branding report “Mission for Finland” in late 2010 stating among other things that the strengths of Finland are that its people share same values (on progress, equality and innovativeness) and that the Finns are pragmatics who orient towards solving problems without complicating things with unnecessary politics. According to the report, this made Finland a “doctor of the world” and an easy place to live in for the desired top-notch workforce.

The logic of nation branding is that all nations are in a constant competition with each other over highly educated workforce, tourists – and in general, over growth and competitiveness. Success in competition required a strong brand that would distinguish the country from others. Paradoxically enough, during the first decade of the new millennium both Sweden and Finland branded themselves as *the* modern functional welfare state.

In order to understand why nation branding circulated so widely and why it became such a transnational policy fashion, it is necessary to look into the historical situation. After the collapse of Soviet Union, there was an urgent need for the post-Soviet countries in Europe to convince other nations that they are “normal” states well on their way towards capitalism and a democratic system. Western PR and advertising agencies as well as media companies (including the UK national broadcaster BBC) were eager to gain their portion of this new market and began selling their services to the governments of these post-Soviet countries. During the same time the proliferation of media and communication technologies was accelerated with the introduction of internet and later social media.

The collapse of Soviet Union also generated theories about the primary importance of soft power in international politics. Introduced by the American political scientist Joseph Nye in 2004, the concept of soft power referred to a country’s ability to persuade and attract other countries without using hard, military power. At the time this perception was with the belief that creative and tech industries would increase the competitiveness of Western countries losing their manufacturing industries to countries of cheap labor. When at the same time the resources of public sector – including bodies responsible for international relations – were severely cut because of neoliberalist ideas of the new public management, branding with the help of consultants was seen as a tool for distinction and increasing visibility for competitiveness and growth. Together with creative industries and culture, branding was perceived as a vehicle for country image building and even enhancement of diplomatic relations.

Critical research on nation branding practices pointed out early on that the weakness of the idea of nation branding is the core value of competitiveness. To see nation branding as a feasible policy measure, one must perceive the world as an arena where nations compete against each other; a zero-sum game in which are only winners or losers. Combined with the current commodified and algorithmic communication environment with vulnerabilities that enhance spread of disinformation and even propaganda, self-serving and one-directional modes of communication such as branding can among other things contribute to erosion of trust in international relations.

The so-called refugee crisis in Europe in 2015 already made nation branding acutely problematic for both Sweden and Finland. The connectedness of the world suddenly became visible when instead of top-notch workforce and cosmopolitan experts both Finland and Sweden began to attract refugees from the Near East, who were not considered the desired target groups of nation branding. Finland even introduced a counter-branding campaign to discourage further immigrants from taking Finland as their destination.

Since the Russian invasion on Ukraine in early 2022, the of NATO membership negotiations of Finland and Sweden have demonstrated that it is in fact a privilege and luxury to for ministries and diplomats to spend their working time in thinking about a country image. If not sooner, it has now become evident that the might of “hard power” has not vanished from international relations. It is, however, even more important to understand that if the humankind continues to see itself as divided into competing nations, it is close to impossible to innovate processes of dialogue for limiting the climate disaster on this planet that we all share. ■



Photograph by  
Mika Federley.

## Katja Valaskivi

Professor in Religious Studies and Media  
Research  
University of Helsinki  
Finland

Director  
Helsinki Research Hub on Religion, Media  
and Social Change  
Finland

Research Programme Director, Datafication  
Research Programme  
Helsinki Institute for Social Sciences and  
Humanities  
University of Helsinki  
Finland





MADELEINE SJÖSTEDT

# Sweden's national brand from a Finnish perspective

Expert article • 3446

## Sweden and Finland – a complicated relationship

The relationship between Sweden and Finland is both historically and culturally significant. And complicated. Johan Strang, professor at the Centre for Nordic Studies at the University of Helsinki, likens it to the dynamic between two siblings – with Finland as the 'youngster' in the family. Strange calls it a kind of 'little brother syndrome', i.e. an imbalanced relationship.

There are several explanations for why the countries share a special relationship. One is the fact that Finland was part of Sweden until 1809. Another factor is Sweden's stance during World War II, where Finland, unlike Sweden, suffered heavy losses. A third factor is Sweden's economic development during the post-war period, where Sweden emerged as one of Europe's major industrialised nations. The imbalance in the relationship is also evident in how people in Finland tend to know significantly more about Sweden than vice versa.

Sweden and Finland's relationship is especially relevant against the backdrop of the countries' joint application to NATO. How strong is Sweden's national brand in Finland today?

## Signs of Sweden's deteriorating image in Finland

According to the Swedish Institute's studies of Sweden's image, Finnish news coverage of Sweden is both in-depth and extensive. Sweden is mentioned in a variety of contexts, including the position of the Swedish language in Finland as well as military issues and the education system, all of which reflects the countries' close relations. The studies also suggest that the Finnish general public has a deep knowledge of Sweden and that the Swedish national brand remains strong in Finland. Sweden is referenced as a model country in several areas, such as social economics and exports. Finns associate Sweden with openness, modernity, equality, and a high standard of living.

However, one aspect of Sweden's image in Finland has significantly deteriorated: the perception of Sweden as a safe and secure country. Here, Sweden ranks substantially worse than neighbouring countries Norway and Denmark. The Swedish Institute's EU study indicates a similar trend, with only 40 per cent of respondents in Finland stating that they believe Sweden is developing in the right direction. Twenty per cent report that they do not at all agree with the statement, which is a considerably higher percentage than in other EU countries. One reason may be the news coverage of Sweden in recent years, which has increasingly highlighted Sweden's unique approach during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the country's societal challenges, among other things.

## Challenges linked to crime – a growing focus

Regarding Finnish news coverage, we can observe a growing trend of highlighting and reporting on Swedish societal challenges, often those linked to crime and migration. There are also longer news articles offering in-depth details on developments in Sweden in recent years, often with the expressed desire to avoid similar developments in Finland. This increased focus on crime in Sweden is likely due to a combination of factors. Previously, the media image of Sweden as a country with extensive problems has primarily appeared in countries like Norway and Denmark. There, the term 'the Swedish condition' is often used to reference the situation relating to migration and crime in certain Swedish suburbs. In Finland, a similar expression has come into use: 'the Swedish way'. Like 'the Swedish condition', this new expression refers to a negative development tied to migration and crime. So far, the Swedish Institute's analyses show only a limited use of 'the Swedish way' in Finnish news coverage. Even on social media, its use seems limited to a relatively small group and, in those cases, extends only to issues around crime and migration. This is a narrower application than in Norway and Denmark, where the corresponding term has expanded to include a number of other areas.

## The NATO process seems to have brought the countries closer

Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine has redrawn the geopolitical map. Despite that Sweden's strong national brand appears to have taken a hit, the two countries seem more closely aligned now than they have been in a long while. Sweden's somewhat weakened image in Finland has not impacted Finnish willingness to visit, do business with, or otherwise cooperate with Sweden. The fact that Sweden and Finland jointly applied for NATO membership in 2022 shows close cooperation and a united foreign policy.

Just like at earlier points in history, outside circumstances are a reminder that Sweden and Finland share as many common interests and as strong a bond as ever – but now with a significantly more equal relationship. ■

**Madeleine Sjöstedt**

Director-General  
Swedish Institute  
Sweden



MICAEL BYDÉN

# A strong Swedish-Finnish defence cooperation

Expert article • 3447

**T**he Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine marks a pivotal moment in European security dynamics. As a direct consequence of the Russian invasion, Finland previously this year joined NATO with Sweden expected to soon follow suit. All in all, the strategic importance of the northern region has increased considerably over the past year and a half, clearly underlining the significance of the bilateral defence cooperation between our two countries.

Over the years, our bilateral defence cooperation has played a key role in enhancing our joint capabilities for peace, crisis, and conflict. Both our countries share common military strategic and operational dilemmas to deal with. Together, through our close defence cooperation, Sweden and Finland raise the threshold for an armed attack on one of us, or on both of us, thereby contributing to increased regional stability and security. Future prospects for even closer collaboration are promising.

This cooperation holds political significance, showcasing our commitment to regional security and stability, while also building confidence and trust among neighboring countries and allies, reinforcing NATO's overall defense posture.

Our countries are linked not only by culture and values but also by climate and geography. We engage in daily cooperation and exercises in this geography, regardless of season or weather conditions. By doing so, we build interoperability and common situational awareness, and we get to know each other very well. In a time of crisis, personal networks are invaluable assets.

Both Sweden and Finland are renowned for their defense capabilities, including well-trained personnel, advanced technology, and innovative solutions. Defense cooperation between Finland and Sweden strengthens our individual defense capabilities, extends our operational reach, and cultivates a deeper sense of security in our region. This cooperation has fostered interoperability, enabling seamless coordination and collaboration at all levels of conflict. This is particularly vital in the context of the Baltic Sea region and sub-Arctic operations, where our combined presence and extensive experience enhance deterrence and situational awareness.

Given our current and future security landscape, collaboration with like-minded partners has become increasingly imperative. We view Northern Europe, encompassing the High North, the North Atlantic, and the Baltic Sea Region, as a single strategic entity. This perspective necessitates close cooperation among the Nordic nations and with other regional actors, including the Baltic States, the United States, and the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF).

The 360-degree perspective embraced by NATO is highly important to us. We recognize that security threats encompass not only military aspects but also political, economic and social dimensions.

A unified approach to defence, in alignment with NATO's principles, enhances deterrence and dissuades potential adversaries from aggressive actions. This cooperative approach underscores the collective strength of NATO and the importance of the transatlantic unity in maintaining peace and stability along NATO's eastern border.

The Swedish-Finnish defense cooperation contributes to NATO by bolstering readiness, situational awareness, deterrence, interoperability, and collaboration in exercises and operations.

Strides are now also being taken towards deeper Nordic operational cooperation. Such measures are complementary to our respective national plans and to allied planning – to the benefit of our collective security. We can make effective common contributions to the alliance, particularly in our area of expertise, and shoulder a particular regional responsibility. A strong Nordic Defence cooperation benefits and complements NATO and other fora, such as EU and JEF.

Finally, as we continue to deepen our cooperation bilaterally as well as in other fora, the strength of our cooperation lies not only in shared values but also in our shared determination to confront the challenges of today and tomorrow. ■



**Micael Bydén**

General, Supreme Commander of the Swedish Armed Forces  
Sweden



PÄR STENBÄCK

# Entering a new phase

Expert article • 3448

**M**ost observers, including journalists and politicians, seem to agree that Finland and Sweden are entering into a new phase in their bilateral relationship. Of course, the reason spells NATO. Two questions could be asked: Is a NATO membership really needed to improve or deepen an already close relationship? Second, Will NATO membership somehow change the nature of this bilateral relationship?

It is well known that defence cooperation between the two countries has flourished since 2014 after the Crimean coup. Everything seemed possible, apart from a formal defence alliance. The defence ministers, we were told, met each other more often than with their families...

I guess Finland at some stage would have ripened to a formalisation, but I doubt Sweden would have been ready to take that step in the absence of a more concrete threat. However, when Finland made its intention to join NATO in the spring of 2022 clear, a bilateral alliance suddenly was an alternative to Swedish membership. But this was just a late, desperate improvisation to avoid a problematic decision that awaited the social democrats governing Sweden.

So, my answer to the first question above is: Yes, NATO is needed to tear down the last barriers for an integration of Swedish and Finnish defence planning and operative cooperation. The long-time, history-based Swedish hesitation to abandon its alliance-free position would have prevented a formal union, regardless of the ever-deepening cooperation between the two countries.

Personally, during a decade or more, I have promoted an ambitious model for Swedish-Finnish cooperation. With a slight exaggeration it has been stated that this cooperation is the closest possible between two independent nations, perhaps most successful in a global perspective. If this is a fact, I think it is fair to ask why this cooperation has not produced any supranational institutions? Neither country has, as far as I know, suggested to transfer some of its activities to a bilateral body with full authority to take binding decisions on behalf of the two countries.

Considering the amount of power that the two countries have delegated to the European Union, it is remarkable that the same countries have not been able to agree on anything similar. Perhaps time will come and if it comes, civil defence and preparedness may be the right area for a start. Russia's invasion of Ukraine underlined the importance of advance storage of essential items and the risks caused by long and uncertain supply chains. From a Finnish perspective, the Swedish ports are critical due to the facts of geography.

My second question relates to the time after the Swedish NATO membership has been secured. What follows is that both countries will become fully integrated into the structures of the alliance and they form a common space in all military planning. Does this mean that there is still room for bilateral initiatives? I believe that there should be because I am sure that NATO does not have the answer to all questions with relevance for our security.

Sweden will gradually catch up with Finland in the fields of civil preparedness and training of conscripts serving as reservists. Hopefully, the authorities will seize the opportunity to streamline procedures and procurement along and above the rules of the alliance. One-sided reliance on the alliance is not wise – wisdom is to accept that our countries remain first-hand responsible for their national defence.

2022, the historical year of change, brought our countries together but it also revealed some differences. A respectable section of the Swedish population considered the long history of military non-alignment as an integral part of the national heritage and appreciated the image of Sweden as a global peacemaker with a humanitarian mission. Joining a defence alliance is seen by some as break not only with the past, but also with a lesser role for Sweden in the global community.

Finland, on the other hand, made a quick and rather effortless policy change, much rooted in historical and wartime experience.

It remains to be seen if this difference in accepting the inevitability of change will reflect on coming foreign policy making. Before 2022, I maintained that, eventually, successful defence cooperation between our two countries will demand some level of foreign policy coordination. Both in theory and practice it is difficult to imagine obvious discrepancies between policies in these fields.

When the Swedish NATO membership is completed, this issue will come to the fore. Even though it has become harder to point at big foreign policy differences, it seems rational that we consult both within EU and NATO in a systematic way. Preferably, also Norway should be part of such close consultations – our cooperation in the north is something which must give an impetus to a closer relationship when we all three countries are members of the same alliance. ■



**Pär Stenbäck**

Minister, Chair of the New Foreign Policy Society of Finland  
Finland

par@stenback.fi



PETER STENLUND

# Closer than ever – there are more steps to take

Expert article • 3449

**F**inland and Sweden are closer than ever, during modern times. Simultaneous applications for membership in NATO and parallel ratifications of the membership were meant to fulfil the hand-in-hand process.

Finland became member in the Alliance last spring whereas Sweden is still waiting for ratifications in Turkey and Hungary. The Vilnius Summit gave new optimism of getting Sweden's membership into force in early autumn. Since then, the political atmosphere has turned in a complicated direction. As a result of Islamist campaigning against Sweden and provocative Quran burnings Turkey may have become more reluctant to finalize the membership process during this autumn. Let us still hope that Sweden has become a full-fledged member by the time this article is published.

The delay in the ratification process has already caused harm in the entire Northern flank of the Alliance. There is an urgent need to fully include Sweden in defence planning for the North in a situation when we can't see any end of Russia's attack war on Ukraine. Deep bilateral cooperation between Sweden and Finland helps to some extent but can't fully compensate the absence of Sweden in the deepest, concrete planning in NATO. Turkey and Hungary are in this issue behaving disloyally with Northern allies and the whole alliance.

The complications in the Swedish NATO process are revealing differences between Sweden and Finland. Some Swedish interlocutors admit that Turkey had a point in raising the need for better cooperation especially with their country in fighting terrorism – PKK-affiliated activists have been able to root themselves in the Swedish society to a totally other extent than in Finland. By now both Sweden and Finland have fulfilled their commitments with Turkey and taken concrete steps in fighting terrorism within the frame of rule of law.

Finland's and Sweden's NATO membership is giving a boost to Baltic Sea Rim economies. With stronger security, the whole region, with the obvious exception of Russia and Belarus, will become more attractive for investments and assist countries in adapting their economies to a world in disorder.

For still many years to come the security of European NATO allies are dependent on assistance from the United States. Finland and Sweden are engaged in negotiations with the US on bilateral defence cooperation agreements, which would facilitate both exercises and assistance during crisis and war. We need to prepare for situations where the US is expecting loyalty from us in the case the divide between democracies and authoritarian countries would lead to open conflicts and even military incidents.

Finland may have easier to acquire the alliance identity than Sweden. Neutrality and some sort of exceptionalism has for long been an essential ingredient in the identity of the Swedish nation. It is obvious that the main part of the Swedish people was taken by surprise by the fast decision on NATO membership. In Finland nonalignment was basically a pragmatic security solution, much easier to revise as a reflection of the security situation.

The need for intense dialogue on foreign and security policy is not over with the NATO membership. Both countries must consider their role in the alliance. One of the challenges ahead is the balancing between Europe and the US, taking into consideration political risks both in the US and in the EU. A new Trump period will most likely make it difficult for allies to swallow everything offered from Washington while still being dependent on US military back-up. A further strengthening of far-right populist forces in EU-countries would hinder a positive development of the EU's role as security provider. While working for a stronger EU and making the best of any political situation in the US there is an obvious need for deeper Nordic cooperation as well as further deepening of Finnish/Swedish bilateral cooperation.

We need actions to strengthen the security of supply at many levels, transatlantic cooperation, the EU, among Nordic countries as well as bilaterally between neighbours. As the current slogan says, Sweden and Finland cooperate better than ever. Allow me a reminder. We witnessed another tone only a few years ago, during the initial phase of the Covid-pandemic. Actions were taken without proper dialogue and consideration of effects for the "most integrated region in the world". Hanaholmen, the cultural centre for Sweden and Finland, got deeply concerned and made a successful initiative to strengthen bilateral ties in crisis preparedness.

For the time being there is a good government-level awareness of the need for intense bilateral cooperation – the Prime Ministers have agreed to organize regular joint meetings of both Governments, with similar meeting of Germany and France as a model. This should not be limited to the present Governments – there is a need for a long-term institutionalized arrangement regardless of political fluctuations and changes in the composition of Governments. And as a reminder, Sweden still insists to stay outside the EMU, joining the euro would be a crucial step towards the most integrated region in the world. ■

**Peter Stenlund**

Ambassador (ret), former Permanent Secretary of the MFA  
Finland



MAGNUS CHRISTIANSSON

# Sweden in NATO

Expert article • 3450

On June 28 2022 Sweden and Finland were invited to join NATO. During a symbolic ceremony at the NATO Madrid Summit, all the central actors gathered in front of the cameras, as if to replicate a “family photo” in mini format: representatives from Sweden, Finland and Turkey, as well as Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. It was finally happening: Sweden and Finland would join the Atlantic Pact.

But how did Sweden get to this point? Over a few hectic months, a country strongly associated with neutrality had moved its policy from emphasizing continuity to altering the very foundations of its security. Further, what journey awaits in the future and what strategic consequences does a future NATO membership have?

The end of the cold war is often described as the starting point for a major shift in Sweden’s security policy. Sweden became Europeanized and internationalized, and this has been a gradual process regardless of the parties in government. The policy of neutrality was cultivated during the post-WWII hegemony of social democracy in a “double policy” of secret cooperation with NATO. The center-right government under Carl Bildt 1991-1994 started the reform process, and following the EU membership in 1995 policy was adjusted to military non-alignment, which reflected participation in the European supranational project. In 2009 Sweden declared a unilateral policy of solidarity with the EU and Nordic countries, a policy built on expectations of mutual help among the Nordic countries. However, the contemporary setting for a double policy is indeed different, and indeed the Russian escalation on 24 February doomed the existing policy.

Arguably, the most direct strategic effect in transatlantic affairs after the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine was the emergence of a new northern flank. Unlike the northern flank of the Cold War, Finland is now in the picture and Sweden has finally scrapped its double policy, and the two countries seems to march hand-in-hand in step with the trend of multinational defence cooperation. However, seen from a process perspective there are three notable differences between the NATO membership applications in Sweden and Finland: the NATO option, the public opinion and the turnaround. For Finland, the process towards NATO membership began already in 1995, with the EU membership and a declared “option” to join NATO. In essence, the basic mechanism behind the Swedish and Finnish applications seems very similar to the fairytale “The three little pigs”. The fifer pig (Sweden), lacking a strong defence and ambitions to join an alliance, is scared by the big bad wolf and engages in closer cooperation with the slightly more realist and capable fiddler pig (Finland). After February 24, following a quick assessment of the risks involved, the fiddler pig drags the fifer pig up to the practical pig (NATO), who has built a more solid house together with 29 other pigs.

On the national level, there are two main challenges for Sweden as member of NATO: to learn and to *decide*. Seen from one perspective, NATO is an international organization with a multitude of 154 committees with different working processes, as well as a huge staff structure, and the new members will have to learn it. It is within these structures that a large part of Swedish officers (ca. 150-250) will serve. Further, Sweden needs to learn the organizational dynamics of NATO. As the diplomatic negotiations with Ankara 2022-23 have shown, NATO is an arena where 31 different strategic agendas collide, and individual member states decide to play different roles and make different priorities (and interpretations) of the common commitments.

The European security system is in transformation. Institutions are either scrapped (Council of Europe), in angst about Russian membership (Arctic Council) or searching for new roles (EU and NATO). In a longer perspective, Sweden and Finland must deal with a military strategic situation on the new northern flank where Russia is both weakened by the war in Ukraine and whose position has dramatically deteriorated. The Finnish buffer is gone. The Gulf of Finland has become a choke point where the alliance may stop Russian shipping through the Baltic Sea. Russian air and naval bases on the Kola Peninsula will be particularly vulnerable. This presents both Sweden and Finland with the challenge of handling a situation as front state (Finland) and staging area (Sweden) in the alliance, which if nothing else reduces the scope for solo acting on the diplomatic level. The point is that the strategic issue Sweden must decide upon concerns which multinational baskets the country should put its military eggs in. ■

## Magnus Christiansson

Dr., Assistant Professor  
Swedish Defence University  
Sweden

[Magnus.christiansson@fhs.se](mailto:Magnus.christiansson@fhs.se)



GUNVOR KRONMAN

# NATO: "Finland and Sweden can take on a leading role in civil preparedness"

Expert article • 3451

**W**hilst multilateral and international agreements and cooperation is more and more challenged, the realities faced by citizens all over the world are increasingly the result of global developments. When a crisis hits, it seldom respects national borders.

The Swedish-Finnish crisis preparedness program the Hanaholmen Initiative was launched in August 2021 as a direct response to the lack of international scenario-planning and cooperation during the corona pandemic. The aim of the program is to strengthen cooperation between Finland and Sweden before and during civilian emergencies such as fires, floods, hybrid threats, pandemics, and war.

The program is planned and delivered by Hanaholmen, the Swedish Defense University and the Finnish Security Committee in close cooperation with the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) and the Finnish national emergency supply agency (NESA). In other words, all the central actors within the field of civil preparedness in Finland and Sweden are involved in the program.

At the heart of the program is an annual course, which follows the seven baseline requirements for national resilience identified by NATO as particularly important for civilian crisis preparedness. These include a resilient energy supply, a robust transport system and efficient management of large population movements. According to Jörg See, Nato's Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Defence Policy and Planning at the NATO HQ in Brussels, Finland's and Sweden's approach to civil security is both sophisticated and well structured, and he believes that Finland and Sweden can take on a leading role in civil preparedness within the alliance.

## Sweden and Finland - learning from each other

On the 24th of August 2023 the Finnish think tank *Elisabeth Rehn - Bank of Ideas* published a report<sup>1</sup> on integrated security in Finland, Sweden and Estonia. The report focuses on several dimensions of security, such as traditional military security, international relations, leadership and civil crisis preparedness and management.

Interviewing leading security experts from all the three focus countries, the researchers noted that the interviewees knowledge of the security systems of the reference countries was very limited, but that they were eager to learn more and to increase trilateral ties and cooperation. At the same time, the report also points out the siloed nature of the national administrative systems and the "...lack of cross sectoral cooperation and exchange of information". These observations are in line with the experiences we have had in the Hanaholmen Initiative.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.bankofideas.fi/publications/integrated\\_security\\_in\\_the\\_northern\\_baltic/](https://www.bankofideas.fi/publications/integrated_security_in_the_northern_baltic/)

The Hanaholmen Initiative focuses specifically on cross-sectoral cooperation and every course starts with a thorough introduction of the security concepts in both countries. During the first course in 2021, the teachers noted a thorough lack of this basic knowledge among both the Swedish and Finnish participants, just as the above research paper points out.

The Hanaholmen Initiative does not replace any existing Swedish-Finnish collaborations such as the Haga cooperation within the rescue sector and the Svalbard cooperation within healthcare. Quite on the contrary, it builds on the lessons learned from those programs, adding a different theoretical and practical breadth. Previous collaborations did not encompass all parts of society, including civil society and the business community, which is very important since civil security is largely dependent on private activities and business efforts.

## The importance of a solid contact network

The basic idea of the Hanaholmen Initiative training course is that to manage a crisis in the best possible way, there needs to be an efficient, solid contact network between different sectors of society, both nationally and internationally. There also needs to be easy to understand and open communication, a clear distribution of responsibility and well-equipped emergency stockpiles, as well as excellent logistics that allow the smooth delivery of medication and other such necessities. All planning should be carefully done in advance, because when a crisis hits, there is seldom time or opportunity to create new and functioning forms of cooperation. As the Vice-Chancellor of the Swedish Defense University Robert Egnell recently put it: when the tanks roll across the border, there is no time to discuss the division of labor between decision makers.

The Hanaholmen Initiative is an advanced training course and consists of two modules of which one takes place in Finland and the other in Sweden. A course consists of approximately 20 participants, who come from all sectors of society and hold leading positions in companies and organizations that are critical to Finland's and Sweden's ability to function in a crisis.

Since we also want to make sure that the thoughts and ideas of the course participants come to use, the training program is followed up by a high-level forum. The forum consists of decision makers, business leaders, civil servants and security experts from both Finland and Sweden, who address the observations that have come up during the training program.

## An international role model for bilateral cooperation

Now that Finland has become a member of NATO, and Sweden soon is about to become one, the civil defense area needs to be harmonized with the military strategy, improving societal security along with military defense. As Hasit Thankey, head of the enablement and resilience section in





Expert article • 3451

NATO's defense policy and planning section pointed out during a seminar at Hanaholmen in August, it's all about resilience, about recognizing the societal vulnerabilities and preparing better.

The focus on societal security will offer both Sweden and Finland tremendous opportunities but will also require adaptation and major financial investments. Crisis preparedness is dependent on fixed resources that are mainly created on a national basis, which means that various forms of bilateral and international cooperation require not only good planning, but also enough allocated time and economic resources.

Within the EU, the Critical Entities Resilience Directive, or CER, which entered into force in January 2023, will require measures and resources to strengthen the resilience of important societal activities. The EU is currently also working on a common stockpiling project, which, once ready, shall serve all EU countries.

All the actors involved in the Hanaholmen Initiative are aware that crisis management first and foremost takes place within the framework of the nation state and its democratic system where all sectors of society, from private companies to cities and disaster preparedness organizations, are involved. At the same time, and just as the Nordic prime ministers pointed out in a statement in 2021, we live in a reality where cross border crises and disasters require more, not less, international cooperation. Here Finland and Sweden and the Hanaholmen Initiative want to serve as role models and source of inspiration for other nations in Europe and beyond.

**Gunvor Kronman**CEO  
Hanaholmen  
Finland

CARL MARKLUND

# Close neighbours, divergent partners? Finnish-Swedish cooperation rekindled in the light of crisis

Expert article • 3452

Over the past years, bilateral collaboration between Finland and Sweden has deepened and intensified in several important policy areas. The two countries have a long history of close cooperation, which has traditionally been channelled through regional Nordic institutional settings, such as the Nordic Council, and, more recently, through joint fora of Baltic regional cooperation. Today, arenas such as NATO will serve as testing grounds for continued Finnish-Swedish cooperation, thus raising the question as to how Finnish-Swedish bilateral links are likely to develop in near future. This question, in turn, is partly motivated by the double tendency pointing simultaneously towards both convergence as well as divergence in the contemporary policy choices of the two countries. Contemporary as they may be, these convergences and divergences also reflect deep-seated historical factors and sentiments that now return to the forefront of regional awareness. They are likely to impact upon the two countries' responses to joint political challenges and thus the direction of bilateral collaboration itself.

Recently, Finnish-Swedish cooperation has gained a new sense of urgency, above all following the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. During the Covid crisis, the two countries – whose economic and social life is deeply integrated through intensive trade, travel and transnational migration and settlement over generations – suddenly found themselves pursuing highly divergent policies regarding pandemic management, affecting all of the above.<sup>1</sup> Finland chose controlling internal and external travels and enacting testing and quarantining early on, while Sweden pursued a policy of “wait-and-see”, including voluntary recommendations, avoiding a nation-wide “lockdown” and initiating an initially selective vaccination campaign. Just as in the other neighbouring Nordic countries, Sweden became associated in Finnish public opinion with a relaxed, possibly even careless, attitude to the pandemic which to some extent signalled a shift in the Finnish perception of Swedish political culture as marked by ambitious societal concern and precautionary planning. Now, Sweden appeared to follow a highly liberal course of action.<sup>2</sup> While Finland and Sweden have long cooperated on matters of public health, subsequent investigation has shown that consultations between the relevant authorities initiated

between the two countries as per standard operational procedures relatively soon petered out as a result of highly divergent views not only on the nature of the pandemic but also on the possible countermeasures against it. As such, it is a recent example of Finnish-Swedish divergence, primarily caused by pre-existing differences in terms of administrative traditions, political culture and available resources and legal instruments between the two countries. In an interesting reversal of roles, Sweden has increasingly begun to look to Finland for policy examples, not the least in the field of public health, educational policies and civil defence, and there are currently several fora for intra-authority collaboration being established on these issues.<sup>3</sup>

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has caused a direct and immediate rethinking of both Finland's and Sweden's traditionally neutral foreign policy, resulting in simultaneous applications from both countries for NATO membership in spring 2022. While Finland's accession has been relatively smooth, with the country gaining its membership in April 2023, Sweden's path has been markedly more turbulent and torturous, despite attempts from both Finland and Sweden to link up the individual accession processes.<sup>4</sup> Key points of contention concern Turkish and Hungarian objections to Swedish criticism of the status of democracy in the two long-time NATO members, Turkish demands for extradition of Kurdish activists in Swedish asylum as well as requests for US guarantees of making American military technology available to Türkiye. During 2022-2023, Anti-Islamic activities as well as violence instigated by organized crime in Sweden has further aggravated the Swedish-Turkish relationship. While the integration of both Finland and Sweden within the control and command structures of the Western defence alliance has been complicated by this disjuncture in the accession process, bilateral defence cooperation between Finland and Sweden is already well underway, as is intra-Nordic defence cooperation. For example, Finland and Sweden have already concluded a defence agreement and have since conducted numerous joint exercises. This in turn has been facilitated by the overarching intra-Nordic defence cooperation, Nordefco, originally designed towards streamlining acquisitions and training, but now increasingly geared towards operational and tactical coordination. A key example is the agreement concerning closer coordination between the

1 Carl Dahlström & Johannes Lindvall, “Sweden and the COVID-19 Crisis,” Working Paper Series 2021:9, QoG The Quality of Government Institute, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg (October 2021); Yohann Aucante, *The Swedish Experiment: The COVID-19 Response and its Controversies* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2022).

2 Johanna Rainio-Niemi, “Koronakriisi ja valtio. Suomen ja Ruotsin mallien vertailua,” in *Kosmopolis*, Vol.50, No.2 (2020), pp.162-173.

3 Försvarshögskolan, *Nytt samarbete mellan Sverige och Finland ska stärka civil krisberedskap*, <https://www.fhs.se/arkiv/nyheter/2021-01-07-nytt-samarbete-mellan-sverige-och-finland-ska-starka-civil-krisberedskap.html>.

4 Trilateral överenskommelse mellan Turkiet, Finland och Sverige, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/220628-trilat-memo.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/220628-trilat-memo.pdf).



Expert article • 3452

Air Forces of the Nordic countries, which in effect spells the creation of a highly capable joint “Nordic Air Force” of some 250 fighter aircraft, if not in name.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Finland and Sweden already collaborate closely with NATO, including on operations and through frameworks such as the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) as well as in the context of Operation Interflex, the training of the Ukrainian Armed Forces on site in the UK in response to the Russian aggression.<sup>6</sup> The recent leak on the Balticconnector pipeline connecting the two NATO allies Estonia and Finland has affected the Nordic gas market already and recurrent, if yet low-level, cyberattacks against regional authorities in both Finland and Sweden over the past years confirm the relevance of closer Finnish-Swedish cooperation on issues of civil defence and preparedness.

With their relatively similar economic structures, heavily dependent upon their export industries for their wellbeing, and their commitment to overall similar political values and geographical proximity, it is evident that Finland and Sweden can benefit substantially from further collaboration. But it is equally evident that this collaboration tends to intensify during times of crisis, and crises are historically prone to generate tension and divergence. It will therefore be of particular interest to observe how the two neighbours will handle the challenges ahead. ■

### Carl Marklund

Associate Professor, Nordic Studies  
Institute of Contemporary History  
Södertörn University  
Sweden

5 Jack Detsch & Brawley Benson, “Nordic Air Force Takes Flight,” *Foreign Affairs* (June 21, 2023).

6 *Military Balance* (2023).



HANNELE TAAVILA

# Deepening police cooperation between Finland and Sweden

Expert article • 3453

**T**raditionally, police authorities in the Nordic countries have worked together for decades and have a practical approach to collaboration in crime prevention. Nordic police cooperation is essentially based on international treaties, EU law and national legislation. The Nordic National Police Commissioners as well as their deputies meet regularly once a year to agree on strategic cooperation. These practices are well-established and structured. In addition, we also collaborate at the operational level by means of joint meetings and seminars. Thus, Nordic police cooperation is both effective and regular.

Finland and Sweden share a border, their national legislation is similar in many respects and historically the Swedish language has united our two countries. The organisational structures of the police in both countries are also much the same, and our security problems do not differ much either. However, in recent years Sweden has seen a significant increase in gang crime, which has exacerbated their internal security challenges. Hence, the current internal security situation in Finland differs from that in Sweden.

The Finnish-Swedish border region in the north is an exceptional cross-border area with a community structure that does not comply with national borders (Tornio-Haaparanta area). It is another prime example of collaborating more effectively, where cross-border interaction and cooperation in different areas of life is intense. Against this background, it is actually very clear that police cooperation between our countries is active. Due to the changing security environment, there is a desire to further intensify our collaborative efforts.

It is already possible for the Finnish and Swedish police, under certain conditions, to pursue a suspect across national land borders. Officers conducting the pursuit also have the right of detention. In addition, Finland and Sweden may organise joint operations to maintain public order and security and to combat crime, as well as other joint operations in which designated officers take part in operations on the territory of one or the other State. Furthermore, the competent authorities of our two countries may assist each other in major events, disasters and serious accidents. By informing each other as early as possible of situations with cross-border implications and by exchanging relevant information, the authorities seek to prevent crime and maintain public order and security. They also carry out and coordinate the necessary police actions on their territory in situations with cross-border implications and, as far as possible, send officers, experts and advisers and supply equipment at the request of the Member State on whose territory the situation has arisen. The Finnish and Swedish special intervention units (in Finland, the Special Police Task Force, known as KARHU) can provide assistance and/or operate in each other's territory in cases where one of them has made a request to do so. The Nordic countries also cooperate closely in utilising police and customs liaison officers sent abroad.

Deepening police cooperation between two countries has several objectives. Firstly, improving the exchange of information between the authorities of the two countries is key. Sharing information enables rapid and effective action to prevent and solve crimes. Secondly, introducing more possibilities for collaboration between police forces is an essential element of closer cooperation. For example, joint operations allow police officers to learn from each other's best practices, develop their professional skills and strengthen their expertise in different situations. This creates a foundation for a long-term partnership and synergies that benefit both countries. Thirdly, the use of technology is crucial in closer cooperation and one where Finland and Sweden could achieve more results by working together, for example in developing different innovative solutions.

The latest step in strengthening police cooperation is the 'Agreement on Police Cooperation in the Border Area', signed by the Finnish and Swedish Interior Ministers on 19 October 2021. The Agreement serves to strengthen the existing good cooperation between the Finnish and Swedish police, thereby improving the maintenance of public order and security and the prevention, detection and investigation of crime. The most significant change to current practice means that Finnish or Swedish police officers could cross national borders to carry out an urgent police task in either country without the situation having already arisen in the officers' home country. Before the Agreement can be applied, each country must make the necessary changes to their national legislation and train the police officers involved. This will take some time.

Overall, closer police cooperation between Finland and Sweden is a meaningful step towards stronger and safer Nordic collaboration. ■

## Hannele Taavila

Police Director

Ministry of the Interior, Police Department  
Finland[hannele.taavila@gov.fi](mailto:hannele.taavila@gov.fi)

IINA SAHRAMÄKI

# Environmental crime prevention needs to be agile

Expert article • 3454

INTERPOL and UNEP have estimated that environmental crime is one of the world's most widespread crime phenomena. Environmental crime includes cross-border crime, organized crime, corruption and shadow economy. Nordic and Baltic countries are not protected from this global phenomenon. However, our societies' view on environmental crime prevention is relatively narrow, which weakens the effectiveness prevention of environmental harm.

Usually, when we talk about environmental crime, we refer to crimes committed during business activities. In this sense, environmental crime is one form of economic crime and also public discussion and official documents often refer to this aspect of environmental crime. Private individuals may also perpetrate an environmental crime for example by releasing motor oil into the soil, dumping waste or releasing refrigerants from household appliances into the atmosphere. Further, environmental crime is transnational phenomenon. Multinational organizations move their business to less regulated regions and for example illicit transportation waste to third world countries is profitable.

Typically, the discussion of environmental crime also involves the view of victimless crime or illegal activity, which ultimately involves breaking an administrative rule, such as exceeding pollution limits defined in environmental permits — environmental crime becomes somewhat of an administrative problem and a faceless crime. However, international studies show that the number of cancer patients has increased in areas with illegal dumping sites; illegal processing of textile waste releases toxins from dyes into waterways; illegal logging contributes to climate change and causes floods; and hunting and trade of protected animal species threatens to drive rare animal species to extinction.

No matter whether one discusses environmental crime in Finland or in Sweden, society and business produce significant amounts of environmental pollution and other environmental harm. Policies affect the conditions under which an environmental *harm* becomes an environmental *crime*. Economic aspects influence environmental crime prevention — we direct official resources to the prevention of environmental crimes that cause the most damage to the economy. There are also limitations and deficiencies in the public administration that have consequences on the fight against environmental crime. Professional cultures influence how authorities interpret environmental harm. For example, preliminary investigation authority lean on to the reason-to-suspect threshold, while the environmental administrative authorities emphasize the restoration of the environment.

The profile of authority response to environmental crime is not unified between Finland and Sweden. Significantly more environmental crime is reported to the police in Sweden than in Finland. This largely due to the Swedish administrative authorities' obligation to report all the suspected environmental crime to the police. As a comparison, in Finland, administrative authorities respond to illicit activities often through administrative sanctions and only the most suspicious or severe cases are reported to the police.

In order for the authorities to handle large amount of reported crime in Sweden, environmental crime has become so called fine crime. For instance, prosecutors issue corporate fines to corporations violating environmental regulation. In Finland, corporate fine can only be issued by the courts as a part of conviction and it is fairly rarely demanded by the prosecutor as a part of environmental crime cases.

At the moment, environmental crime prevention is hardly proactive. Prevention is currently relying on environmental crime prevention through criminal enforcement. Sanctions are seen as a warning example to others possible perpetrators. However, as the sentences are small, they do not act as the desired deterrent. As comparison between Finland and Sweden has shown, relying of sticks is relatively weak enforcement strategy. It is evident that carrot and sermons are also needed.

Environmental crime requires joint investigation teams, cooperation between administrative authorities and information sharing among Nordic and Baltic countries. Furthermore, environmental crime prevention must include the private and third sector. Internationally, environmental crime research produces information on the new ways to prevent environmental harm and crime. For example, in Australia, a court focused on environmental regulation applies innovative sanctions to environmental criminal sentences. Besides, restorative justice practices are applied in the prevention of environmental crimes.

In order for the environmental crime prevention to be effective, Nordic and Baltic countries, such as Finland and Sweden, need to embrace agile and innovative enforcement and open-minded approach to crime prevention. ■



**Iina Sahramäki**

Postdoctoral Researcher  
Institute of Criminology and Legal Policy,  
University of Helsinki  
Finland

[iina.sahramaki@helsinki.fi](mailto:iina.sahramaki@helsinki.fi)



KIMMO KOHVAKKA

# Collaboration within the civil protection between the Nordic Countries

Expert article • 3455

Civil Preparedness cooperation has traditionally, in the first place, been considered a national responsibility of each country. It is an area where for example EU and NATO have had quite a limited presence.

On the other hand, the Nordic cooperation in this regard has been active over the years. Nordic societies are generally considered resilient towards crises.

## Haga cooperation

A central part of the cooperation has, since 2009, been the so called Haga cooperation. The ministers responsible for civil protection met at the Haga Palace outside Stockholm for discussions on strengthened Nordic cooperation in the area. The common and overarching goal of the political Haga cooperation is to prevent and limit the potential consequences of major accidents, natural disasters and other crises and emergencies. The vulnerabilities and threats, are to a large extent common in nature in all the Nordic countries and there is a shared understanding of the value of cooperation in strengthening the resilience of the societies in the region. Haga cooperation gives a regional example of strengthening resilience. The cooperation is based on political declarations (Haga I from 2009 and Haga II from 2013).

There are differences in how the countries each organize their work in civil preparedness and there are also differences in the arrangement of the various Haga ministers' specific responsibilities. In 2023 Denmark is represented by the Minister of Defence, Sweden by the Minister of Civil Defence (in the Ministry of Defence) Norway by Minister of Justice and Public Security, Iceland by the Minister of Justice and Finland by the Minister of the Interior.

## Operational level

There are also differences between the Nordics when it comes to the organization of the work on the operational level. In Denmark, Sweden and Norway there are dedicated civil preparedness Agencies, which report to the Ministries in charge. In Iceland the Civil Protection and Emergency Management under the Police, is in charge also for these questions. In Finland the Department for Rescue services in the Ministry of the Interior has a double role. It is covering both the ministerial policy questions and is in charge for coordinating the operational work. There is pros and cons for both arrangements. A dedicated Agency for these themes would most probably give more operational resources.

## NordCiv Secretariat

In the beginning of 2023, the Nordic Directors-Generals in charge for civil preparedness decided to intensify operational co-operation at agency level by establishing a Nordic NordCiv Secretariat to structure

and coordinate the work. The model for the secretariat was the Nordefco Secretariat of the Defence Administration. The Secretariat has prepared its own rules of procedure and an annual work scheme on the key events in Nordic co-operation. The secretariat's task is to support and coordinate the preparation of Directors-General's meetings and other Nordic meetings, and to provide input for Nordic co-operation at political level (Haga level). From Finland the Ministry of the Interior participates in the work.

## Nordic civil-military cooperation

The civil-military cooperation is an increasingly important part of also civil preparedness. In general, the Finnish comprehensive security model does not make rigid distinctions between military and civil preparedness, as these in many cases are interlinked. The Defence Forces may provide executive assistance to other authorities to protect the society.

The civil-military cooperation is also a vital topic in the Nordic cooperation and the so-called Haga-Nordefco cooperation has been established in 2021. As a new NATO ally we find this cooperation to be an increasingly important topic. The experiences from old Nato allies Denmark, Norway and Iceland in this regard are especially interesting. We know they have had promising development on mutual dialogue between the civil and military sides in the area of civil preparedness.

## Baltic Sea Region cooperation

The Nordic countries are members in the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). Its activities have gained more importance due to the drastically changed safety situation in the Baltic Sea Region. Russian aggression against Ukraine has strengthened the need in the CBSS Member States to cooperate with respect to resilience of the citizens, preparedness in the region and for more harmonised practices. During the Finnish presidency (July 2023 – June 2024) common priorities focus on citizens - to strengthen their safety and security awareness, resilience and their own preparedness.

The role of the CBSS could be more active, building more harmonized processes in the region as well as strengthening the dialogue with the EU DG ECHO and the UNDRR. In these topics the Nordic Countries with democratic and well-developed civil societies can have a more visible and pro-active role now and also in the near future. ■



**Kimmo Kohvaka**

Director General for Rescue Services  
Ministry of the Interior  
Finland





PAULA MIKKOLA

# Border information service Sweden-Finland-Norway

Expert article • 3456

**F**reedom of movement has been the right of Nordic citizens since 1950's and we have had the Nordic agreement about a common labor market. However, as every Nordic country still has the sovereign right to decide their own legislation, they are not totally harmonized and especially regarding free movement of citizens, problems with border obstacles can occur. Many problems can be avoided if citizens acquire the necessary information in advance.

Border Information Service (BIS) Sweden-Finland-Norway has worked since 2011 to deliver cross-border information and to assist in tackling border obstacles between our countries. The purpose is to make it easier for private individuals and companies to move, commute, study or conduct business as freely as possible across the borders between the Nordic countries. BIS Sweden-Finland-Norway is one of the three Nordic Border Information Services operating on the borders of Sweden-Denmark (ÖresundDirekt), Sweden-Norway (Gränstjänsten Norge-Sverige), and Sweden-Finland-Norway (Rajaneuvonta Ruotsi-Suomi-Norja).

All Nordic Border information services perform similar activities in different regions. They inform about questions that people must pay attention to when moving to work or study in another Nordic country. They identify cross-border obstacles in the region, raise awareness, and work with local and national authorities to find potential solutions to them. They are also cooperating with other border regions to find common solutions. If any solution cannot be found, BIS will forward the question to the Nordic Council of minister's Freedom of Movement Council. Border Information Services will also monitor the solution seeking and follow up the implementation of amended legislation.

Border obstacles are problems which are caused by varying national laws and administrative procedures which hinder access to work, education, emergency services, business, local public transport, and health care, for example.

A cross-border worker (or frontier worker) is defined as an individual that works in one country and resides in another country (political criterion) to which the worker returns daily or at least weekly (time criterion). Cross-border workers can be affected by several legal and administrative obstacles that are interlinked.

The issues of social security, tax systems and labor law remain a national competence. Social security systems are not harmonized and vary across the Nordic countries. Problems are further aggravated by a lack of, or inconsistent information (e.g. knowledge about responsible offices, transparency in taxation). Difficulties can arise for cross-border workers due to differences in the interpretation of EU and national legislation, and challenges in the administrative cooperation between authorities at national and local level between the countries.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has worked systematically to remove obstacles from cross-border freedom of movement since 2008. Many people are involved in this work, such as the Freedom of Movement Council, Info Norden, and the dedicated Border Information Services. The

objective is to remove a handful of obstacles every year, and to ensure that national legislation does not instigate new obstacles. According to EU, removing one fifth of all obstacles could lead to GDP growth by 2 percent in border regions, and one million new jobs. Therefore, avoiding any new additional cross-border obstacle is a pivotal task.

It is important to note that the role of BIS and Info Norden is not to solve cross-border obstacles, but to identify obstacles and facilitate the process to resolve them. Most cross-border obstacles can only be solved by legislators. The main task of Border Information Services and other cross-border organizations (cross-border committees) is to provide legislators with the evidence and information that they need for taking necessary actions, and to secure their engagement in the work.

Border Information Service Sweden-Finland-Norway has two offices in border regions, one in the twin-city Tornio-Haparanda and another in Storjford municipality in Norway. North Calotte Council is the responsible administrative organization for the operation and receives annual support from the Nordic Council of Ministers for this work.

North Calotte region consists of the northernmost regions of Finland (Lapland), Sweden (Norrbotten) and Norway (Nordland, Troms and Finnmark). However, the Border Information Service is not limited by geography. The service is nationally available to anyone who needs to find out more about operating across the Nordic borders. Questions and enquiries can be sent from all over the country.

It is important, however, to keep in mind that the BIS is not an authority, which would have the mandate to provide correct answers to detailed questions. BIS can assist with information about whom to ask for answers at an authority, but the contacts should be taken by the customers themselves. BIS does not either work as a translation office or an advocate. In shorter terms, BIS works as a facilitator or intermediary of contacts between the customer and responsible authorities.

The future is in the north. Large investments in green transition are planned in the northern areas of our countries. At the same time, demographic development (ageing population, outmigration, low nativity) in the northern regions is challenging the ambitious economic plans. No region alone will be able to meet the envisaged demand for labor in the coming years. Free movement of labor across the national borders will increase in the coming decades.

BIS Sweden-Finland-Norway has established EURES-partnerships with national labor market authorities. EURES aims at assisting cross-border workers and students as well as employers who wish to recruit labor from the other side of the border. EURES-staff from three countries has access to vacancy databases of both sides of the border. Additionally, the comprehensive EURES-network organizes information seminars and job days for jobseekers and / or employers. They make a significant contribution to the free labor movement in the Nordics.

A functioning cross-border transport infrastructure will encourage labor mobility. Differences in housing and living costs can have a



Expert article • 3456

big impact on cross-border mobility. Some more challenges, such as insufficient command of the language in the country of work or lacking recognition of qualifications, are also affecting cross-border mobility. BIS Sweden-Finland-Norway discusses these challenges with relevant actors in seminars and annual meetings.

Setting up physical information service centers is costly and less effective for border regions with very long borders and several cross-border access points. Such information services can be complemented with interactive web-based solutions. These are currently under development for the Border information service Sweden-Finland-Norway.

**Paula Mikkola**

Secretary General  
North Calotte Council / Pohjoiskalotin  
neuvosto  
Finland

[paula.mikkola@lapinliitto.fi](mailto:paula.mikkola@lapinliitto.fi)

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KARI HÄKÄMIES

# We need a new survey on the relationship between Finland and Sweden

Expert article • 3457

People tend to refer to Nordic cooperation with praise – and, undoubtedly, there are good reasons for it. Since the 1950s, the Nordic countries have engaged in mutual interaction, with the results to show for these efforts. The most concrete example is passport-free travel, which guarantees that Nordic residents do not need a passport when travelling from one country to another. The Nordic countries have also conducted pioneering cooperation in many fields, such as social services and education.

The Nordic Council was a forum that brought together politicians from these different countries. However, as their lofty goals became reality in a very short time after the wars, people began to ignore the Council. Naturally, some politicians remained fascinated by Nordic collaboration, but as foreign and security policy were practically excluded from the Council's purview, each country's top political brass began dismissing the achievements of the Council's meetings.

The Nordic countries also began to diverge in their foreign and security policies. Denmark and Norway applied for NATO membership, Finland signed the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, or YYA Treaty, with the Soviet Union, and Sweden remained outside all military alliances while participating actively in foreign policy debates during Olof Palme's term, before nearly dismantling its entire defence force over the following decades.

This situation remained relatively stable until Russia began accelerating its acts of aggression in different directions. For a very long time, the whole of Western Europe remained far too naive towards Vladimir Putin's actions. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, many were forced to reconsider their stance. The direction of Sweden and Finland also became crystal clear: their future would be with NATO.

Although both countries tend to wax poetic about their past political collaborations, their mutual political history has been anything but smooth. Their most serious setback was when Sweden submitted its application for EC membership without informing Finland in advance. President Mauno Koivisto is said to have been traumatised for life by Sweden's actions. Another mishap occurred when Sweden decided to remain virtually silent while Paavo Lipponen, Finland's ex-prime minister, was aiming for the presidency of the European Commission.

Sweden typically saw Finland as a kind of little brother whose actions did not interest it to any great degree. Sweden's political elite in Stockholm remained unaware of most Finnish politicians and artists. However, the NATO process has served to equalise their relationship. The largest daily newspapers in Sweden began to feature news stories and even entire sections dedicated solely to Finland.

Each country is free to make its own choices, but it is clear that when it comes to NATO, Finland and Sweden should act together. There are many reasons for this. And perhaps both countries should consider whether joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization will result in other changes in their societies and not just in their foreign and security policies. I would even recommend carrying out a separate survey on this, either jointly or separately.

For decades, Finland's political compass always pointed east. Now it has nearly closed its eastern border and ceased any official interaction, and this situation is unlikely to change in the next few years. Finland is thus becoming more western and turning towards Sweden instead of Russia.

There may be other reasons for this westward trend than just Russia's military aggression. The green transition is proving to be a huge change, and future industrial players may feel increasingly forced to relocate to where clean electricity is available in Finland. Western Finland features the best prerequisites for this.

Increasing cooperation should also be considered at the regional level. The cities of Umeå and Vaasa have gone the farthest in their efforts, as they have even based their activities on a shared urban strategy and own a ship that operates between the cities.

It is also worth emphasising the ability of Finns to speak Swedish. In recent years, many young Finns have elected to mindlessly neglect their Swedish studies, even though they would surely benefit from truly knowing the language of their neighbours.

For Finland, its NATO membership signals a westward turn, a newly heightened sense of emotional liberty and, hopefully, an increase in all kinds of cooperation with Sweden. One great symbolic example of this is that the daughter of Ulf Kristersson, Sweden's Prime Minister, has decided to pursue her studies at Hanken School of Economics in Helsinki – and, of course, the fact that the Finnish Prime Minister was there to help them assemble her new Ikea furniture. ■



Kari Häkämies

Region Mayor  
Regional Council of Southwest Finland  
Finland



ERIK SÖDERHOLM

# Centuries-long connection to Stockholm still going strong

Expert article • 3458

The connection between Turku and Stockholm has served as one of Finland's most important international maritime routes for many centuries. Representatives of the Crown and the church as well as students and pilgrims heading to Continental Europe travelled via the cities separated by just a short sea voyage already in the Middle Ages. The most extensive sailing, however, comprised of the voyages by the burghers of Turku, as Turku's right to conduct foreign trade gave them a strong advantage.

## Regular liner services since 1898

The end of 1898 marked an all-new era in the history of the Port of Turku, as regular liner service begun between Turku and Stockholm. Initially operated with one weekly departure, the traffic increased gradually, and daily departures started in 1912. With the regular service to Stockholm and functioning wintertime traffic, the Port of Turku became one of the leading Finnish ports already at that point in time. After the Second World War the passenger volumes on the Turku–Stockholm route increased rapidly, and in the 1960s there were already one million passengers travelling on the route.

The quick growth of the passenger volumes resulted from the start of modern car ferry traffic in 1961. The first ship on the route was Silja's Skandia and one year later the same shipping company's Nordea. Turku's position as the main harbour for traffic to Stockholm was sealed, when Viking Line also started its car ferry service from Turku to Stockholm in 1973. Since then these two shipping companies together with the Port of Turku and City of Turku have actively developed their readiness to serve both passenger and cargo transports between the cities.

The sea connection between Turku and Stockholm is also important to Finland's emergency supply. That was again emphasised during the coronavirus pandemic, when the continuity of cargo transports on the route was secured through support of the National Emergency Supply Agency, although passenger traffic ceased almost completely due to the travel restrictions.

## Major investments in vessels and port infrastructure

The development of vessel traffic requires major investments. Shipping companies have over the decades purchased new vessels for the route so that at present the fleet operating between Turku and Stockholm is the most modern in the Baltic Sea. The vessel sizes have more than doubled from the 102-metre Skandia to the newest 223-metre-long Viking Glory. The passenger volumes and cargo capacity have grown even more. Nordea was able to take 1,200 passengers and had a cargo capacity of 429 lane metres. The corresponding figures for Viking Glory are 2,800 passengers and 1,500 lane metres.

As the vessels have grown and the number of passengers has risen at best to nearly four million, the ports have been upgraded at the same time. The berths have been extended, terminals and field areas have been expanded, and road traffic in the port has been enhanced to make it run more smoothly. In recent years, the Port of Turku has invested e.g. in

the automated mooring and unmooring system. The new automooring equipment provides much needed extra time to the short turnaround time of ships, as there is just one hour to move thousands of people out of and into the ship and carry out e.g. the cleaning and supplementation routines.

## Long-term co-operation for the environment

In addition to efficient traffic and services, the Port has invested in environmentally sound operations. One of the biggest projects was the NextGen Link project, partly funded by the EU, which aimed at increasing the environmental soundness of maritime transports on the route between Turku and Stockholm. The project was implemented from 2017–2021 and the participants were the Port of Turku, City of Turku, Viking Line, Port of Mariehamn, and Port of Stockholm. Investments within the project included the world's first passenger ship using liquefied natural gas (LNG) as fuel, commissioned by Viking Line, and the automooring equipment installed in the Port of Turku. At present, both of Viking Line's vessels on the route run on LNG, and Tallink Silja has also introduced environmentally safer technology. The new stock of vessels generates lower greenhouse gas emissions, and the design of the ships also takes into account other environmental aspects, including wave formation.

## Ferry Terminal Turku will introduce a new era

The Ferry Terminal Turku project will upgrade the passenger harbour in Turku into a centre of maritime travel that meets the requirements of fast-paced, smooth and safe ship traffic. At the same time, the goal is to create a unique maritime district in the Turku passenger harbour that will serve both tourists and local citizens, offering various activities within a walking distance from the Turku city-centre.

The joint project of the Port of Turku, City of Turku, Viking Line and Tallink Silja comprises of the new joint terminal for passenger traffic as well as significant changes in the quay structures, outdoor areas, and traffic arrangements. In addition to passenger traffic, Ferry Terminal Turku will also serve the cargo transports between Finland and Scandinavia which is important to the business world. The project is due for completion at the turn of the year 2026–2027. ■



**Erik Söderholm**

Managing Director  
Port of Turku Ltd  
Finland



MARCUS PREST

# Green is better

Expert article • 3459

**T**he initiation of a green corridor between Turku and Stockholm is a way to present proof of a working sustainable concept. Besides the evident environment advantages, being first also opens up potential large profits from new technologies, economy and community development.

Since the summer passengers on the Viking Line cruise ferries *Grace* and *Glory* can choose to pay an extra biofuel-fee. This add-on cost pays for the difference between more expensive biofuels compared to cheaper fossil fuel. For a single passenger travelling one-way between Turku and Stockholm the add on sum is 2 euros and 30 cents. This is a concrete step in developing a green corridor, a carbon neutral transport route between the logistical hubs of Finland and Sweden.

– In Finland the logistics hub is located between Helsinki and Hämeenlinna. In Sweden the hub is situated between Stockholm and Örebro. It should be possible to eliminate the emission effects on the sea lane used by Viking Line connecting the hubs between Turku and Stockholm says **Magnus Gustafsson**, head of research and docent in industrial economy at Åbo Akademi University. He leads a project that aims to connect different actors like Viking Line, Rauma Marine Construction, SSAB, Wärtsilä and Kempower. He is also a partner at the PBI research institute, who have developed the business model for the green corridor.

– A green corridor means more than sea transport. Road transports and other related activities should also be included.

In this context a logistics hub means the area where the main share of the industrial activity of a state is situated. Planning the infrastructure, business concepts and legal framework that enables a carbon neutral corridor between these hubs is a way of providing a proof of concept; proof that one has a working model – an important step for a more sustainable future.

Besides the obvious value in protecting the environment, the concept has great potential business advantages for those who invest first. The number of separate parts and the complexity of individual bits is great enough for other nations to be interested if a tested and working concept is provided.

– The technology to build fuel efficient carbon neutral vessels already exists, says **Håkan Enlund**, sales and marketing director, at Rauma Marine Constructions.

– What is needed is a demand for implementing the technology. By creating a green corridor one shows how all the different pieces are assembled in practice. The legal framework is stress tested, as well all other processes. Being able to carry through tests is valuable since you can't see everything that needs to be adjusted from the drawing board.

RMC has continually built advanced ships in small batches and therefore has not committed time and recourses to long intervals before being able to take the next step. It is this kind of thinking Magnus Gustafsson says is one of the strongest aspects of Finland:

– Bluntly put; it is our knowledge and skill base that is our greatest resource. It's neither our forests nor our minerals the success of this country is built upon. What we have is an ability to build expensive attractive high-tech products, rather than producing cheaply in bulk. But this also demands that we apply our skills. In the green transition we are in right now there is a unique opportunity for us to become world leading.

**Heikki Hellsten**, head of logistics at SSAB Europe, the largest producer of commercial steel in the Nordics, wants SSAB to take the lead in the green transition.

– Our goal is to be completely carbon neutral by 2030.

That is an ambitious goal, considering the SSAB steel factory in Raahelä alone produces 7 percent of the total emissions of carbon dioxide in Finland. A billion euros worth of investments in new technology will change the manufacturing processes throughout the company. The carbon neutrality ambition on SSAB's part concerns the whole production cycle from ore mining, electrolysis, steel manufacture and transport to the customer.

– Nobody gets that excited if we say that a certain part of the process is carbon neutral. But if we say that we can offer a product that is carbon neutral end-to-end, then we have something real to offer. There is a demand on that kind of product, and the demand will increase.

It is actors like SSAB that create pressure for change: they are large enough to be able to affect the market and supply in for example road transports, but also maritime transports. SSAB is happy about Viking Lines initiative to provide renewable biogas as a fuel alternative for transports.

– To Viking Line this latest step from LNG to LBG, meaning from natural gas to biogas, is a part of a process that started in the 1980:s. This is no end point, but a part of our continuous development work taking care of the Baltic Sea, and our archipelago, says **Harri Tamminen**, freight director at Viking Line.

Presently biogas and carbon neutral transports and processes are more expensive than those using fossil fuels. A part of the market incentives to make a green transition derives from laws concerning emission trade and the emission fees the European Union plans on implementing on products produced outside the Union. Both Hellsten and Tamminen also want to see a certification system and measurability for reliably proving the product and the services are manufactured according to the strict emission demands one has committed to.

– Those who operate on the same market should adhere to the same rules, says Tamminen.

Gustafsson says the transition to sustainability demands more from all actors.

– By placing high demands on ourselves, we will create better technology and with the same ambition we also create better jobs and a cleaner environment. And the green corridor exists already, people and businesses can start buying the services straight away – and that in turn will improve the whole line of supply. ■



**Marcus Prest**

Editor  
Åbo Akademi University  
Finland





HARRY JANSSON

# The Åland Autonomy and demilitarization in a changing security environment

Expert article • 3460

**Y**ou can understand the Ålanders in a way. For centuries they have been exposed to the crossfire of big politics and the gusts of war. By strictly observing existing agreements, they try to keep their homeland free from war and its military accessories."

These words, written by the military researcher Bertil Stjernfelt more than 30 years ago, can still in the autumn of 2023 very well sum up the attitude of the Ålanders regarding what has become part of their national identity: the status of the Åland Islands as both demilitarized and neutralized territory closely linked to an autonomy based on international law.

Altogether, Åland's status is unique in the world with its combination of political autonomy for the population and a geographically defined zone free of military elements in peacetime.

Considering the tumultuous era we are living through, as a result of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, it is worth pointing out that Åland has always taken every opportunity to further consolidate its status under international law. This was for example done in connection with the EU accession in 1995, when a special protocol confirming Åland's special status under international law was added to the accession treaty of Finland, Sweden and Austria. The confirmation of the special status of Åland has remained unchanged also as the EU treaties have been updated.

Over the years, the Ålanders have shown that they are prepared to defend their special status, regardless of external pressures and hostile actions. In 1938, over 4 000 Ålanders (a significant part of the then adult population of the islands) gathered in a protest against the Finnish and Swedish plans to fortify Åland as part of their response to the growing threat of war. The Ålanders thus opposed any deviation from the 1921 Åland Convention on the non-fortification of the islands, even though Sweden, as both a signatory and guarantor power, was suddenly on the other side of the table.

Ever since the League of Nations' decision on the Åland issue in Geneva in 1921, the special status of Åland combined with the geopolitical importance of the archipelago has been reflected in the relations between Finland and Sweden. These relations have developed in a dramatic way if we consider that in 1917 to 1921, the countries were extremely close to war because of the Åland dispute, whereas they today are characterized by consensus and cooperation, not least in terms of military cooperation.

Russia's brutal war of aggression against Ukraine has undoubtedly had the greatest negative impact on the world since the horrors and suffering of the Second World War. Finland and Sweden's sensationally rapid change of course in security policy in 2022, from neutrality to NATO membership as the only right thing to do, also put Åland in the spotlight once again on the international arena.

From the Åland side, we have always been firmly convinced that if NATO membership becomes relevant for Finland, Åland's internationally recognized status will be fully taken into account by a peace seeking alliance whose very existence is based on democracy and respect

for international law. This clear starting point has also been reflected in the policy document on the demilitarization and neutralization of Åland adopted by the Åland Government in 2015: the conventions on Åland's status must be respected in any negotiations on Finnish NATO membership.

The above-mentioned Ålandic wish was fully realized during the NATO negotiations in 2022, as Finland's confirmation that all the international agreements on Åland's special status would continue to be fully respected did not raise any objections from the alliance's 30 Member States. This positive part of the NATO process was also reinforced both by the fact that the Åland Government was represented during the crucial meetings in Brussels and by the fact that the Finnish Government regularly kept the Åland Government informed about every step taken.

Despite the positive events mentioned above, the agreements relating to the demilitarisation and neutralisation of Åland are currently the subject of an extensive investigation by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The reason for this is that under the peace agreements of 1940 and 1947, Russia has the right to maintain a consulate in Åland with the explicit task of monitoring compliance with the demilitarization of the islands. At a time when states are declaring each other's diplomats persona non grata, the existence of the Russian consulate in Åland has been questioned. Why allow such a diplomatic mission on NATO territory?

For us on Åland, it remains clear that both Finland and the international community has a responsibility to stick to a rule based order where international treaties are fully respected by all parties. Moreover, it would be unwise for a small country like Finland to be the one to withdraw from peace agreements at a time when we all depend on greater respect for democracy and freedom. There is also a time after Ukraine has won this war, and then we will still need arenas for dialogue that lead our development in the right direction. If we see a possibility that Åland's status can serve as an inspiration in several ways in the now war-torn areas, it would be wrong in this situation to deprive the Åland solution of any of its important components. ■



**Harry Jansson**  
Deputy Head  
The Government of Åland

[harry.jansson@regeringen.ax](mailto:harry.jansson@regeringen.ax)





ANNASTINA SARLIN

# Paradoxical potentials in the Nordic archipelago

Expert article • 3461

**W**ithin the Baltic Sea region and the connecting sea there occurs a fair amount of cooperation. In the past we were totally dependent on the sea, especially when it came to shipping. To this day, we still are. In this short article however, the focus is on the archipelago areas and the perhaps quite unexpected circumstances.

Employment and entrepreneurship both in Stockholm- Åland and South-West Finland archipelagos are literally on a solid bedrock. These areas are characterized by high numbers of small business owners. The livelihoods are often combinations of diverse income sources and are therefore also somewhat secure ones. The challenge is to split the total income (statistical data) to estimate the value of each share. Additionally, the archipelago or island society is a complex web, an ecosystem dependent on diverse factors.

**Factor one: accessibility and the time consumed from point A-B.** The travel and transport costs affect the daily life of the residents in the archipelago. Sea transports are on average 5 times more expensive and 3 times more time-consuming in the Stockholm archipelago compared to transportation on mainland. In fact, according to our migration report, this is the most crucial aspect regarding the decision to move to, remain or to move from your island. **Infrastructure and connections that are continuous and reliable is the spine** not only to stabilize an all-year-round life, but to stimulate the economy.

**Factor two: major seasonal fluctuations.** We all are aware of the popularity of archipelago as such, during holidays in July. Nordic Archipelago cooperation is currently finalizing a mobile-data analysis. The preliminary results show that at least 35 million visited the sample area during the year 2022. Both the mainland of Åland and Pargas are excluded, due to challenges in identifying the difference of visitors and permanent residents. The data include visitors and the majority share of these are second-home owners. If this data is compared with for example Finnish National parks, altogether 3.5 million visitors in 2022. The amusement park Gröna Lund hosted 1.2 million visitors the same year. However, these results cannot be compared totally directly, as different calculating tools have been in use.

Even more interesting is to compare the visitor per capita. On a European level the most visited cities are Dubrovnik; 36 visitors per capita and Venice; 21 visitors per capita. Comparing the visitor numbers of the archipelago to the areas referred "tourist to local ratio", e.g., in Sandhamn Sweden where the resident population is only 106, the visitors per capita is 969. In Korpo Finland, where the resident population is 880 the annual visitors per capita is 18. When comparing the numbers gained by mobile data, 11 million visitors in South- West Finland (mainland Pargas excluded) the tourist to local ratio is even more astonishing. There are less than 20 000 inhabitants in the sample region, meaning at least approximately 550 visitors per capita.

**Factor three: the seasonal fluctuations create a schizotypic pattern.** This new concept is described in the article "Welcome to Schizotopia: understanding co-production for sustainability in Swedish island communities". The paper describes the state of a split landscape and the severe effects of it in terms of pressure on infrastructure, water resources and other environmental and social perspectives.

**Factor four: the archipelagos in the Baltic Sea region have great potential** and an opportunity to transform into a more sustainable tourism business. A change into sustainability both in economical (in form of a prolonged season), environmental (pressure on nature resources) as well as social perspectives. To ensure accessibility and future regional planning, a dialogue with authorities is required. Commitment in between entrepreneurs and a more specified co-marketing and common development would make a difference e.g., easily booked services. In both Finland and in Sweden there are several actors working on this, many of them are projects, for example "Light in the Dark - Increasing resilience in rural and coastal tourism in the northern Baltic Sea Region by developing off-seasons experiences". The project unites the common interests and possibilities in coastal areas, involved in this project are the Baltic countries, Finland, Sweden and Åland. In order to gain success in a sustainable way, the key word is cooperation. ■



**Annastina Sarlin**

Collaboration Manager  
Nordic Archipelago Cooperation  
Finland-Åland-Sweden

info@skargardssamarbetet.org



HANS LINDBERG &amp; TOMAS HÄYRY

# Limitless possibilities in a sustainable growing region

Expert article • 3462

**T**he two largest and most prosperous cities in the Kvarkenregion, Umeå and Vaasa, in northern Europe, have reached a strategic agreement regarding tackling future challenges together. The two cities already own a joint harbour company as well as a ferry company, which runs the world's most environmentally friendly ferry Aurora Botnia across the sea between Finland and Sweden.

The cities Umeå and Vaasa have the shared vision of enhancing limitless possibilities in a sustainable growing region. Hence, they will cooperate even closer than previously within the following four focus areas:

1. An innovative, integrated, growing and sustainable business sector.
2. A competitive region that attracts talents.
3. Attractive urban and living environments.
4. Umeå-Vasa – shared experiences.

## “Courage to embrace change”

Our vision is that we, Vaasa and Umeå, will be an inspirational example of a region with limitless opportunities. We have set out, in a true co-Nordic spirit, to become an integrated inclusive region that have the courage to embrace change.

Firstly, EU aims to establish an internal market within its borders, work for sustainable development based on well-balanced economic growth and price stability, market economy with high competitiveness and social progress. Secondly, according to the vision from the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2019 will the Nordic Region be the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030.

To realize this vision, three strategy areas are prioritized: a green Nordic Region, a competitive Nordic Region, and a socially sustainable Nordic Region. Finally, the strategies within EU as well as the visions for a more integrated Nordic region go well together with our joint strategic vision in the Kvarken region.

The municipality of Umeå and the City of Vaasa are also founding principal members of the Kvarken Council EGTC, which is the first EGTC in the Nordics and one of the Nordic Council of Ministers' official border committees working to develop cross border cooperation and remove border obstacles.

Why are we doing this?

We believe that we need to join forces and work together to win the global competition of attractive labour markets, improve the conditions of new talents staying in our region as well as strengthen the innovative business environment for our companies and organizations.

## Attractive cities with a global mindset

Our cities rank the highest in Europe, when measuring the development and well-being of the population. Social progress is a society's ability to meet the basic human needs of its citizens, establish the building blocks that allow people and communities to improve and maintain quality of life and create the conditions for all individuals to reach their full potential. Vaasa and Umeå are great places to fulfil these goals and live a happy and good life.

## 500 years of collaboration

The cities of Vaasa and Umeå already have a long tradition of cooperation for several centuries. Through a long-term and developed collaboration, we will continue to focus on our urban qualities with sustainability, participation, and accessibility in focus to increase the interaction between the cities and build an even more competitive region.

We have a global mindset to everything we do. We have access to qualified labour, cost-effective and environmentally sound transport systems, as well as the proximity to innovative environments within the business sector and within our eight universities.

We have the availability of a broad internationally renowned education, qualified care, a broad labour market with global innovative companies as well as a rich cultural and leisure life that make the cities attractive to live in.

A new chapter has begun as the saga of our region continues. There are lots of opportunities and we are looking forward to welcoming you to the Kvarkenregion, where innovation, sustainability and new groundbreaking opportunities awaits you. ■



**Hans Lindberg**

Mayor  
Umeå Municipality  
Sweden



**Tomas Häyry**

Mayor  
City of Vaasa  
Finland



RIITTA BJÖRKENHEIM &amp; ANNA MÅTTTS-FRANSÉN

# A green shipping corridor between Vaasa and Umeå

Expert article • 3463

Cooperation between Finland and Sweden has a long history, both official — after all we were part of Sweden for hundreds of years — and informal. Collaboration is diverse, both voluntary and structured. As regards logistics, the main forms of cooperation are NLC Ferry Oy Ab, also known as Wasaline, the joint port company Kvarken Ports, owned by the City of Vaasa and Umeå Municipality, and the collaboration through the Kvarken Council EGTC.

Since the late 40's, there has been a transport service running to meet the transport needs for people and goods in the Baltic Sea over the Kvarken strait. Today, Wasaline transports passengers and goods across the Kvarken strait on a daily basis. This is the northernmost all-year round ferry crossing in the world. The route cuts across the Unesco world natural heritage site. The transport link bypasses 830 km of land route with a 70 km long shortcut across a narrow maritime area. The modes of the link have direct connections to existing rail, road and maritime networks on both sides of the border between Sweden and Finland. It also connects the two north-south going EU Core Corridors Scandinavian–Mediterranean and North Sea Baltic.

Wasaline's Aurora Botnia is a great example of northern maritime know-how. The vessel is designed to be one of the most environmentally friendly, with machinery running on a dual fuel and battery solution. The RoPax ferry runs mainly on liquefied natural gas, LNG, but the vessel is also able to utilize biogas. An ongoing plan for how to implement future climate friendly fuels is important for the Kvarken connection. Moreover, the ferry terminals on both sides Kvarken have installed onshore power and charging, serving Aurora Botnia. Everything from the ferry's design to passenger flows and customer experience takes the environmental aspects into account. The first year of operation, the emissions of carbon dioxide decreased with more than 67% per departure, compared to the old ferry.

**Kvarken Ports** is a joint port company for Umeå and Vaasa. The ports on both sides are preparing for a transition to climate neutral operation. The Port of Umeå is right now investing 140 MEUR to prepare the port for larger ships, multimodal capacity, handling fossil free fuels, onshore power supply (OPS) and new more environmentally friendly solutions. The same is happening in the port of Vaasa, as further steps for serving larger, more environmentally friendly ships are being taken, as well as preparations to become a future energy hub. Broadening of the fairway and extension of the main cargo quay are a continuation of the overall development plan, of circa 60 MEUR, that has already included investments in e.g. LNG terminal and OPS charging stations built in 2021–2022.

**Kvarken Council** is the first fully Nordic EGTC area. An EGTC can be described as a grouping within the EU, with the purpose of promoting cross-border cooperation. For the Kvarken Council, this brings about new opportunities to develop and strengthen the region with the help of cross-border cooperation projects. The long-term, and strategic, ambition to develop the east–west transport link along road E12 from Finland to the Atlantic coast in Mo i Rana, Norway has ended up in many infrastructure projects and improvements lead by the Kvarken Council through the years. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and Sweden's and Finland's application for NATO membership, the importance of this east–west connection for military mobility and supply have come into a new focus.

Both the Municipality of Umeå and City of Vaasa have set significant environmental targets. The municipality of Umeå has been appointed as one of EU's 100 climate neutral and smart cities by 2030. Umeå has a good starting point, with low CO2 emissions, renewable electricity, and a strong commitment for collaboration towards climate neutrality. The City of Vaasa has responded to the global climate challenge by setting the goal of being a carbon neutral city in the 202X. Close cooperation with companies in the Nordic region's most important energy technology cluster EnergyVaasa is the key to achieving this objective. These companies aim to help reduce emissions globally by developing solutions for smart power grids, shipping, sustainable energy, and energy efficiency.

More to come...

At the moment, political work on the joint development strategy of the City of Vaasa and Umeå Municipality is under way. The aim is to enhance cooperation between these “neighboring cities” in the fields of transport, business, communication, culture, and sports. The strategy emphasizes the development of the transport system.

The partners on both sides of Kvarken want to be an international inspiration and forerunner of the green transition when it comes to maritime innovations and green shipping and have the function as a living lab for scalable solutions for decarbonization of the shipping sector. The goal is to be a platform that stimulates new collaborations utilizing logistics, and new environmentally friendly innovations in a creative way, as well as supports regional growth and gradually develop a completely fossil-free multimodal transport chain.

To sum it all up, a truly integrated and green shipping corridor already exists between Vaasa and Umeå, and together the two cities have the possibility to go far. ■



**Riitta Björkenheim**

Development Director  
Vaasa Region Development Company VASEK  
Finland



**Anna Måttts-Fransén**

Logistics Expert  
Vaasa Region Development Company VASEK  
Finland



JUKKA KUJALA & ROGER DANELL

# Haparanda and Tornio – cross border cooperation

Expert article • 3464

In the northern reaches of Europe lie the neighboring cities of Tornio in Finland and Haparanda in Sweden. Here, a dynamic and bustling land border emerges as the crossroads between the East and West, witnessing over 14 million border crossings each year. The Tornio River, which meanders into the Gulf of Bothnia, serves as the natural demarcation between these two nations in this region.

Haparanda and Tornio synergistically form a geographic logistics hub, primed for a green transformation that can propel their travel prospects. Looking ahead to 2024, a fully electrified rail-road connection is set to bridge Finland and Sweden, establishing an environmentally conscious transit route from Helsinki to Stockholm and Narvik. The convenience of four nearby airports—Kemi-Tornio, Rovaniemi, Oulu, and Luleå—guarantees swift global accessibility. Additionally, the sea-ports in Röyttä and Luleå stand as major conduits for the distribution of dry-bulk goods to a worldwide market.

These cities boast two prominent employers: Ikea in Haparanda and Outokumpu in Tornio. Together, they constitute a vibrant northern hub for commerce, resonating with a shopping index of 314. Circular economy initiatives and renewable energy pursuits take center stage, evident in endeavors involving wind and solar power, a biogas refinery, and substantial investments in the northern landscapes of Sweden and Finland.

The distinctive geographical positioning of Haparanda and Tornio begets a significant influence, affording access to the commercial arenas of three distinct countries—Sweden, Finland, and Norway. Notably, the municipalities of Haparanda and Tornio account for around 31,000 inhabitants, forming an available local target demographic. Moreover, within a 500-kilometer radius, the surrounding areas encompass approximately 1 million individuals, creating a vibrant and extensive market.

A myriad of educational opportunities enriches the region. Within a 90-minute travel range, the universities of Lapland, Luleå, and Oulu beckon. Tornio proudly hosts two campuses—the University of Applied Sciences and the Vocational School of Lappia. Similarly, Haparanda offers a Folk High School, while Kalix's equivalent lies a mere 50 km away. The collaborative educational center, Utbildning Nord, catering to students from Finland, Norway, and Sweden, finds its home in the neighboring municipality of Övertorneå.

The historical significance of the border cannot be understated, shaped by geopolitical shifts spanning centuries as Sweden and Finland's borders evolved. A vivid example is the division of the village of Kukkola in 1809, an occurrence that did not sever the shared fishing culture and the enduring use of meänkieli, a common language that spans both sides of the Torne Valley. The distinct fishing technique of dipnetting or "lippous" is on track to attain recognition as a bilateral candidate on UNESCO's intangible heritage list. Unified by the Provincial Museum of Torne Valley, situated in Tornio, the cultural landscape seamlessly blends Swedish, Finnish, and local traditions.

Inhabitants of these cities traverse the border daily for work, education, shopping, family engagements, and leisure pursuits. This border activity extends to encompass tourism, work-related commuting to construction sites and industries in northern Sweden, as well as the regular transportation of goods.

The cooperative bond between Haparanda and Tornio traces its roots back to 1987 when a foundational agreement was signed, although informal collaboration had existed since the 1960s. The core mission remains centered on fostering, intensifying, and expanding the partnership between the two cities. To actualize these aspirations, the cities engage with both national and international partners across various projects. Additional agreements, such as a joint sewage treatment plant in Haparanda and a nursery agreement allowing parents from either city/country to enroll their children in the neighboring city/country's nursery, underscore their shared commitment to collaboration. Guiding this joint endeavor is a cross-border development specialist, jointly employed by both cities, tasked with overseeing and enhancing collaborative projects. Consistent interaction between the City boards, City councils, and a supervisory cooperation board further cements this alliance.

This cooperative relationship brings forth both advantages and challenges. Distinct laws and regulations between the two countries necessitate a delicate balance, while global crises such as the recent pandemic can engender distinct responses. Notably, the pandemic's impact served as a poignant reminder of the border city's vulnerability to external factors.

The Twin City cooperation stands as a local heritage in itself, and these cities are resolutely exploring novel avenues to deepen and advance their collaboration, foreseeing its role in meeting future needs. ■



**Jukka Kujala**

Mayor  
City of Tornio  
Finland



**Roger Danell**

Director  
City of Haparanda  
Sweden



**DANIEL SMIRAT**

# All politics is local – the next era of Finnish-Swedish cross-border collaboration in the Bothnian Arc region

Expert article • 3465

**T**he bridge between Finland and Sweden in Tornio-Haparanda, often referred to as the world's most peaceful border, serves as a testament to the idea that peace can flourish when nations prioritize diplomacy, communication, and the well-being of their citizens. For decades, this bridge in the heart of the Bothnian Arc region has symbolized how local communities and neighboring people from both sides of the Tornio River have come together, creating a common ground for cultural exchanges, collaborative projects, and commuting. Despite geopolitical shifts and border changes over time, the strong ties between the people on both sides of the Gulf of Bothnia persist.

The Bothnian Arc is a border area straddling the state border between Finland and Sweden, extending from the Swedish city of Skellefteå to Kalajoki in Finland, following the coastal territories, forming a horseshoe shape around the Gulf of Bothnia. Labor and skills supply vary significantly across the Bothnian Arc area. The two mid-sized cities, Oulu in Finland, and Luleå in Sweden, act as magnets for the region's competences, attracting numerous global IT firms, manufacturing industries, and universities.

The formalization of cooperation between Finnish and Swedish municipalities in the Bothnian Arc began in the late 20th century with the establishment of cross-border cooperation organizations like the Bothnian Arc and Kvarken Councils, laying the foundation for more structured collaboration in the modern era. Thanks to the green transition taking place in the Bothnian Arc region and the evolving security situation around the Baltic Sea, this region has gained new significance, heightening the need for enhanced cooperation. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has amplified the urgency of the green transition throughout Europe, with a particular focus on raw materials such as rare minerals from northern regions, which now play an increasingly critical role in the European Union's self-sufficiency and supply security. Lately, new areas of collaborations have been prioritized in the fields of sustainable tourism, transport systems including infrastructure development.

The Bothnian Arc region stands at the forefront of the green transition, with various industries shifting toward fossil-free production. Emission-heavy industries, including steel plants, are rapidly transitioning to fossil-free operations in Boden and Luleå. Major investments are underway to secure renewable energy sources, with Europe's largest wind farm currently under construction in Markbygden, near Piteå. Finland is also actively contributing to these efforts with 40% of Finnish wind power is produced in the region of Northern Ostbothnia where the Finnish part of Bothnian Arc is located. The Finnish city of Oulu, one of the largest cities in the world for its latitudes, is developing global level digital tools to contribute to the green and digital transition providing better public services and bringing high value to everyday life of citizens and societies the whole region.

Furthermore, dedicated initiatives have been launched to protect the rich marine environment of the Bothnian Bay and promote a sustainable fishing industry. This transition is generating new job opportunities in renewable energy, green technology, and sustainability sectors, with the local workforce adapting through education and skills development. The ongoing green transition in the Bothnian Bay requires collaboration among government entities, businesses, and society at large. By prioritizing sustainability and environmentally conscious development, the Bothnian Bay can preserve its natural beauty, enhance its economy, and contribute to global climate change mitigation efforts.

The next era of local and municipal collaboration in the Bothnian Arc holds promise. By further collaboration and dialogue within the Bothnian Arc region, we contribute to the realization of Nordic Councils of Ministers vision about the Nordic Region to be the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. However, it also demands further investments in roads, railways, ports, and digital integration to unlock the region's full potential. Enhancing the area's appeal includes investing in services, affordable housing, and the adaptation of foreign workers. Harmonizing road transport regulations, securing EU funding for cross-border projects, jointly promoting work-related immigration to Finland and Sweden, expediting green industry permit processes, and close cooperation on various political levels are all essential. With the right strategy, the bridge in Tornio-Haparanda will not only serve as an example of local collaboration but also as a symbol of the creation of a modern, sustainable, and prosperous future. ■

**Daniel Smirat**

Chair  
Municipal Assembly in the City of Luleå  
and the Finnish-Swedish Bothnian Arc  
Association  
Sweden





TUULA AJANKI

# On region three countries: Cooperation in the Torne Valley

Expert article • 3466

## Interest representation and partnership in the Torne Valley

The Council of Torne Valley is a cross-border partnership and interest representation organisation, as well as one of the border committees funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Council of Torne Valley includes 14 member municipalities in Finland, Sweden, and Norway. Apart from one, all member municipalities are also border municipalities.

The region of the Council of Torne Valley includes Finland's only land border with Sweden and part of the land border between Finland and Norway. This region is special due to its shared history and culture. It is often thought that the Torne Valley only includes Finnish and Swedish border municipalities, overlooking the fact that the Kven people of northern Norway originate from the Torne Valley. It is typical in this region that both family members and more distant relatives live on different sides of three borders. Daily cross-border commutes, hobbies in other countries, and the cross-border uses of health, culture, and other services are also common in the border municipalities of the Torne Valley.

Considering the inhabitants and businesses of the member municipalities, the Torne Valley has been at the heart of great changes. The Coronavirus pandemic began in 2020, affecting the daily lives of those especially who visited other countries on a daily basis. As the decision-makers in our countries did not have a concrete understanding of the unique cross-border life in the Torne Valley, a truly tri-partite interest representation and partnership organisation such as the Council of Torne Valley was needed.

## Cross-border labour market and business region – The Torne Valley Pilot Region

During the Coronavirus pandemic, the decision was made to invest in the Torne Valley Pilot Region, seeking to secure special rights for the inhabitants of the border municipalities. The decision made by the Finnish Government on 19.8.2020 to allow the inhabitants of border communities to cross borders on other business besides work-related business was a unique and significant decision in the entire Nordic region. The decision was grounded precisely on the cross-border family ties existing in the three-country area. The decision demonstrated that it is possible to secure special rights by means of interest representation and strong justifications.

The role of the Torne Valley and the entire Northern region is growing in all three countries due to significant investments. Mining industries, tourism, forestry industry, and the green transition together with the planned wind farms to increase electricity generation are very important societal investments. Large-scale investments require more labour, which means more residents in the region.

The purpose of the Torne Valley Pilot Region is to get decision-makers in Finland, Sweden, and Norway to understand and see the special characteristics of the Torne Valley, meaning its nature as a business and labour market area that crosses the borders of the shared domain. The operating region of the inhabitants and businesses in the border municipalities of Sweden, Finland, and Norway needs to be a full circle, not a semi-circle as it currently often is due to country-specific legislation.

The Torne Valley Pilot Region is a concrete way to move towards the vision of the Council of Torne Valley of creating the most integrated border zone in all of Europe, and it also incorporates grassroots work towards the Vision 2030 of the Nordic Council of Ministers, which aims to turn the entire Nordic region into the world's most sustainable and integrated region by the year 2030.

## The Torne Valley in the heart of security of supply

Because of its cross-border railway and road networks, the Torne Valley region is an important node for the supply security of the Nordic region and all of Finland. It is vital for the businesses and people of the Torne Valley to have well-functioning cross-border traffic networks, railway connections, airfields, and road networks in all three countries. The changing security status in Europe with the achieved NATO membership of Finland and the coming membership of Sweden has made the decision-makers in all three countries turn their attention towards infrastructure projects in the Nordic region. The importance of supply security has increased, and the only railway connection currently existing between Finland and Sweden is across the Torne River at Tornio-Haparanda. Highway E8 runs in the Torne Valley on the Finnish side, being currently the most important traffic connection between Northern Finland and Northern Norway, but also a significant connection for the businesses and people in Northern Sweden. The significance of route E8 in terms of supply security has increased after Russia's attack against Ukraine.

Working infrastructure and the cross-border railroad connection are important pull factors. The completion of the upgraded Haparanda Line in 2012, the ongoing electrification of the Tornio-Laurila railroad connection, to be completed in 2024, and the decision to electrify the Tornio-Kolari connection are extremely important decisions for northern traffic connections. The goal of the Nordic Council of Ministers is to further improve cross-border mobility, and Sweden, Finland, and Norway must all better account for the importance of the Torne Valley in the future. ■

**Tuula Ajanki**

Executive Director  
Council of Torne Valley





LAURA ERVO

# The Code of Judicial Procedure from the year 1734 – An example of Finnish-Swedish co-operation

Expert article • 3467

The Code of Judicial Procedure (4/1734) is still valid in Finland today. The Code was originally Swedish because in 1734 Finland formed the eastern part of Sweden. In 1809, Finland became an autonomous part of Russia but even then, Swedish laws remained in force. The Code was abolished in Sweden in 1948 when the current Swedish Code of Judicial Procedure (1942:740) was introduced. At that time, Finland was already an independent state but after the Second World War the development of legislative reforms in the field of procedural law was not that rapid. The Swedish model remained even in independent Finland from 1917 onwards. Of course, the contents of the 1734 Code have been amended many times but these reforms have always only been partial and thus the Code has never been reformed in its entirety.

## Nordic co-operation

Due to this, Finnish and Swedish (East-Nordic) procedural law (= the rules of courts and court proceedings) is still almost identical today. Of course, there are differences in the detail, but the general system and the principles have the same basis. In addition, legislative co-operation is based on the Helsinki Treaty from 1962. It is a framework for Nordic co-operation that is established in the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. Therefore, also current reforms are normally developed in co-operation. The Helsinki Treaty promotes the close ties that exist between the Nordic peoples as regards culture as well as law and society at large. It aims to implement uniform laws in the Nordic countries in as many ways as possible.

## Different culture – varying interpretations

Even if the rules are similar, the interpretation of them can, however, vary. The variations in interpretation emanate from the different culture and mentality that exists as a result of Sweden's modern history.

In Sweden, the ideology of *folkhemmet* (a Social Democratic welfare state for the people) illustrates recent Swedish social history well. It still profoundly affects the way Swedes see themselves today. Finland has not had the same experience, even though both countries are welfare states. The idea of *folkhemmet* strongly affects Swedish culture and the Swedish way of living, especially regarding social connections. It highlights the importance of group participation in decision-making. This mindset affects the legal culture as well, including the ways in which legal tools are used and laws are interpreted.

## Sweden as a role model

The attitude towards the Swedish legal system has been extremely positive in Finland and Sweden is usually seen as a good role model, especially in the legislative culture, which can safely be followed. Still, the Swedish model has not been directly copied in Finland; instead, the Finnish legislator is often cautious and waits for a more thorough

evaluation based on the Swedish experience before the Swedish model is followed with legislative reforms. By doing so, the Finnish legislator often uses Sweden as a test lab. This method is easy due to the common background and similarities in jurisdiction. Swedish models or experiences are not even perceived as legal transplants in Finland but rather are seen more as 'domestic products'.

## Jurist identity

Another reason why Finland easily adopts Swedish reforms and learns from the Swedish experience, is the strong common East-Scandinavian jurist identity, which is built mostly through regular Nordic contacts and co-operation in practice. In their daily lives, Nordic lawyers and researchers frequently keep in touch, particularly with their Swedish colleagues. Especially in Finland, Swedish case law and scientific literature are carefully followed, referenced, and used in Finnish research but also, for instance, in courts by judges and lawyers. In Sweden, this tradition is less common due to the language barrier.

## Adjudication

Day-to-day adjudication differs more than the working collaboration in the legislative field. The reason for this is that the toolboxes of Swedish and Finnish judges are not identical. Whenever a new interpretation is needed due to new practical circumstances and needs, if the legislator has not yet reacted with amendments, the Finnish courts normally interpret the valid sections of a law in an instrumental way to reach the best working solution in a new situation. This type of common sense belongs in the toolbox of Finnish judges and is not found to be illegal or risky.

However, this is not the case in Sweden. Especially before joining the EU in 1995, Swedish courts were very careful and extremely bound by the *travaux préparatoires* and their wording. Thanks to Europeanisation, this has changed somewhat since the early 2000s. Still, the difference between the neighbouring countries is significant in this sense. The more creative Finnish way of interpreting and applying valid sections of the law is strange to a Swedish judge due to the nature of Swedish culture where all needs must be considered before a decision is made. Therefore, the courts usually prefer to wait for the legislature's (parliament's) reaction if new needs in society demand new interpretations. The solution, therefore, is not for the courts to interpret the current law in a new manner but instead for the parliament to introduce a new law.

The other reason can be found in Finnish history. During the autonomous period, legislative reforms were not easy to realise in Finland. Therefore, Finnish legislation was static for a period of time and not subject to development. The Russian period and its challenges led to rapid developments in independent Finland and to some flexibility in applying and interpreting laws to correspond with the demands of the era in question.



Expert article • 3467

**Summary**

Legislative co-operation in the field of procedural law is a good example of Finnish-Swedish co-operation which is partly based on the common historical background of the two countries but also on the practical benefits of Nordic co-operation. Due to their common history and geographical position, it is easier for Sweden and Finland to co-operate compared to the other Nordic countries. East-Nordic co-operation is a natural way of maximising synergies between the two neighbouring countries. ■

**Laura Ervo**

Head of Unit, Law, Doctor, Professor of Law  
Örebro University  
Sweden

[laura.ervo@oru.se](mailto:laura.ervo@oru.se)

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ANDER AHNLID

# Geopolitics and Swedish-Finnish trade interests

Expert article • 3468

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has brought Sweden and Finland closer together than ever before since the two countries separated in 1809. When Sweden hopefully soon joins Finland as a Nato member, the two countries will again be bound to each other by security guarantees.

Sweden and Finland do not only bring strong military capabilities to Nato. Their accession also adds two of the world's most innovative and well-functioning economies to the Nato family – an important asset in its own right.

Openness to trade and investment is a key base for Sweden's and Finland's economic standing. A critical question is therefore: how should Finland and Sweden act in order to maintain their positions as competitive trade leaders in the EU and Nato as well as globally, given present geopolitical challenges and global economic uncertainties?

Evidence shows that openness to trade spur productivity, competitiveness and innovation. Thus, it is evident that Finland and Sweden have a strong joint interest in maintaining openness for international trade and a well-functioning EU single market, despite contemporary challenges.

Consequently, as EU members, Finland and Sweden should continue to cooperate to influence the EU common trade policy in a liberal direction.

This is presently a tall order, both for EU-internal and global reasons. Brexit has substantially weakened the pro-liberal trade camp in the EU. Globally, the United States has abdicated from trade leadership. It has securitized its trade relations due to rivalry with China and it is rejecting traditional free trade arrangements, as they are deemed to harm American workers. From this position, the US has rendered the dispute settlement function of the World Trade Organization (WTO) useless and dismissed agreements on new trade openings.

Nevertheless, Sweden and Finland have a strong interest in WTO and in making sure that the EU continues to be the prime guardian of the global trading system.

In addition, Sweden and Finland should continue to support EU negotiations for the completion of new free trade agreements with suitable partners. The recently finalized agreement with New Zealand might not cover large trade volumes, but it is a good model for additional agreements, such as the forthcoming one with Australia. Up-dated agreements with Chile and Mexico are under way. Hopefully, a deal can soon also be closed with Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay). If possible, agreements with India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand would also be welcomed.

Under present geopolitical conditions, trade openness between reliable partners remain key. The National Board of Trade Sweden has therefore proposed closer trade links between the EU and the Pacific countries that are united in the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), including through use of relevant rules of origin.

The lack of an open Transatlantic market can be seen as the missing link in the present security architecture. It makes sense for Sweden and Finland to continue to back an EU-US free trade pact, despite the present lack of support in Washington. Meanwhile the two countries should promote facilitation of trade and investment through the EU-US Trade and Technology Council, the hopefully upcoming deal on strategic commodities and similar means.

As a new European Commission and European Parliament will begin their five years mandates in 2024, Sweden and Finland should do their utmost to influence the newcomers to maximize the gains from trade.

Fostering competitiveness was a key theme of Sweden's EU presidency in the first half of 2023. It is also an EU priority for Finland, as stated by Prime Minister Petteri Orpo at the Turku Europe Forum. Sweden and Finland should seek to withstand the temptation to pursue single market policy through sector-by-sector approaches, as the present Commission is inclined. The Single Market is subject to increased fragmentation, which needs to be halted. The drive to reduce over-regulation should be supported, as should the Commission proposal for setting-up national "Single Market Offices" to address single market barriers.

In this context it also makes sense to look at the Nordic region which has the vision to become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. Fulfillment of the vision would establish a Nordic role model for other EU regions to follow, since Nordic integration takes place in accordance with EU-legislation, under which Norway and Iceland partially form part as members of the European Economic Area (EEA).

In a report from 2022 the National Board of Trade Sweden proposes closer Nordic integration in the area of trade through mutual recognition of goods, closer cooperation in standardization, on free movement for services and between Nordic Solvit-centers. In addition, it is proposed that the Nordic countries improve cooperation on implementation of relevant EU directives in order to minimize discrepancies. To the extent proposals like these cannot be implemented by all five Nordic countries, Sweden and Finland could go ahead bilaterally and show a path forward for the others to follow. ■



**Ander Ahnlid**  
Director General  
National Board of Trade  
Sweden

[anders.ahnlid@kommerskollegium.se](mailto:anders.ahnlid@kommerskollegium.se)



CARIN HALLERSTRÖM

# NFU - 100 years of Nordic cooperation

Expert article • 3469

This year, the Nordic Financial Unions (NFU) celebrated its 100th anniversary and, thus, 100 years of Nordic cooperation with a grand conference in Kirkkonummi, Finland. The Anniversary Conference was a significant milestone for the cooperation among the Nordic financial unions. NFU has played a crucial role in fostering a fruitful partnership between Finland and Sweden for many years.

NFU was founded in 1923 when Danish, Norwegian and Swedish banking Unions gathered for their first congress in Gothenburg. A few years later, in 1932, a representative from the newly formed Swedish Bank Employees Union in Finland attended an NFU Congress as an observer and the union became an official member the following year. At the first meeting after the war in 1945, the Finnish Bank Employee's Union, founded in 1938, participated for the first time. The following year, the two unions merged and became member of NFU. Initially, the cooperation within NFU was between bank unions but later also included insurance unions.

NFU has often played the role of facilitator between its different Nordic members. In the 1960s, NFU advocated for the same rights of finance employees regardless of the Nordic country they were based in. Sweden, for instance, was the first country to close their banks on Saturdays in the early 1960ies, while Finland followed a couple of years later thanks to NFU's lobbying efforts. By 1971, all Nordic countries had resolved the issue. The progress made in this case was only possible thanks to collaboration across borders. Another example of Nordic cooperation within NFU where Finland received support is the three-day bank strike in 1963. The strike was due to a lag in salary levels and different views on future salary trends. As a result, the fellow Nordic countries agreed to provide financial assistance to their Finnish counterparts.

Trade union Pro (Ammattiliitto Pro), founded in 2011, is one of NFU's members, representing among else Finnish banking and insurance workers. Pro's Senior Advisor for international affairs, Rauni Söderlund, stresses that the Nordic union cooperation has proven to be most effective. As a former Finnish Nordea employee and shop steward, Rauni Söderlund remembers the Finnish Banking Crisis of the 1990s, the most severe of the contemporary Nordic banking crises. The governmental intervention included bank takeovers, direct monetary assistance, and temporary blanket guarantees to the banks. "The pragmatic help by our Swedish and Nordic colleagues gave us an effective tool, especially access to their war chest and thus their strike funds. It gave us leverage," comments Rauni Söderlund.

Another example of how Finnish bank trade unionists could rely on their Swedish counterparts was that the Swedes used their systematic advantages to include Finnish trade union representatives. Board-level representation has traditionally empowered trade unions in Sweden. In this scenario of cross-border takeovers, Swedish trade unions also selected Finnish colleagues for their respective seats on the bank's board of directors. Rauni emphasises this fact: "This kind of solidarity will not be forgotten!"

Joanna Koskinen, Chairman of Nousu (Nordea Union Suomi) and member of the board of the Nordic union in Nordea Group, highlights the strong collaboration between Swedish, Finnish, and the other Nordic members. The cooperation occurs daily, and one aspect that she emphasises is the Diversity and Inclusion Group. She explains that Sweden is a role-model in this area, they are considered the leading country in diversity matters and have a significant influence on the other Nordic countries, including Finland.

Liisa Halme, Pro's Liaison Manager on Industrial Policy in the Insurance Sector, shares other examples of Swedish-Finnish cooperation, such as the cooperation with Forena (the insurance trade union Sweden) in the European Works Council. For big insurance companies, this comes at times as a shock. Liisa is quite frank about her experience and mentions that many board members are taken aback when they learn about the cross-border collaboration between trade unions. Jimmy Johnsson, Chief of staff at Forena, underlines the long tradition of cooperation between Forena and VVL, and nowadays Pro, both between secretariats and within the Nordic insurance companies, such as If.

All three trade unionists agree that cooperation between the countries occurs on a daily basis and that this collaboration is essential in ensuring the best possible outcomes for employees. This is especially important given that employer organisations are often prone to playing off one union against the other. Moreover, cooperation between Finnish and Swedish unions provides a valuable opportunity to learn, support each other, and adopt preventative measures.

Over the years NFU has continued to evolve in line with the sector. Today NFU is a strong lobbying organisation, being the voice of the Nordic finance employees at the European level. ■



**Carin Hallerström**

General Secretary  
NFU – Nordic Financial Unions  
Stockholm, Sweden

[cha@nordicfinancialunions.org](mailto:cha@nordicfinancialunions.org)



MATS ERIKSSON

# Strength in alliance

Expert article • 3470

**F**inland and Sweden share many similarities as Nordic countries do. By tapping into the two countries' skills and strengths we can combine in a mutual desire for continuous improvement, which is of benefit to them as individual nations inclusive of the wide range of industries and businesses they host – and, of course, the people living within them.

The similarities the two countries have are e.g. similar legal systems and economic- and social models. Smaller countries, like Finland and Sweden, typically do not have a large enough domestic market and by having a genuine openness to trade it provides chances to overcome the limitations of size. By accessing larger markets it gives opportunities to achieve economies of scale in production, strengthening resilience, achieving a higher sustainable rate of growth, and diversifying their economies. Furthermore, Finland and Sweden have strong national roadmaps for research, development and innovation, targeting to increase the volume and quality of RDI activities, strengthening competence centers and various exosystems.

The countries share a long history too, often mirroring each other's journey – for example, with both joining the European Union in 1995, and both applying to join NATO following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The need for close and ongoing cooperation and interoperability is crucial, not least from a security perspective in a changing and challenging situation, with Finnish and Swedish governments and armed forces working closely together from a bilateral defense perspective. It extends to the wider strategic level too, including from a business and economic viewpoint. There are, of course, some practical and cultural differences in terms of the two countries, but their many shared values – such as high ethical standards, openness, fairness and teamwork – underpin the alliance. Both Finland and Sweden are often regarded to be some of the most gender equal countries worldwide, with their welfare systems and legal and political frameworks encouraging gender equality and women's rights. Indeed, in 2022, Iceland, Norway, Finland, and Sweden made up four of the five highest ranked countries in the global gender gap index, an index which takes national gender gaps on political, economic, educational, and health-based criteria into consideration. This builds a good base for the economics and cooperation between the countries.

As an organization, Sandvik (of which business area Sandvik Mining and Rock Solutions is part) bases its decision-making and day-to-day activities upon the values mentioned above, which undoubtedly facilitates a strong cooperation between the Swedish and Finnish parts of our operations. (Sandvik is, of course, a truly global organization, but is firmly rooted within those two countries, which indeed underpin its own internal culture emphasizing on diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I)).

Sandvik Mining and Rock Solutions is firmly committed to driving a more sustainable mining industry, with mining essential for the world's energy transition. Already recognized as the industry leader in the transition towards automation, digitalization and electrification, Sandvik Mining and Rock Solutions' employees are the ones who will continue to help drive the change, and the organization continues to acquire and develop the competence required to support rapidly evolving technologies. The Finnish-Swedish cooperation exists right down to grass roots level within our own organization, with colleagues sharing their thoughts and ideas and embracing continuous innovation as they work together to improve safety, productivity and profitability – for our own organization, and for our customers.

The Finnish-Swedish collaboration that we see within our own organization is a microcosm of what exists at the international level: when it comes down to it, it is all about people working together for mutual benefit, uniting in the face of shared challenges and solving problems. It requires a spirit of trust and a desire for "win/win", with both parties benefitting equally from the relationship. It is not about negotiation, where one party seeks to gain more, but about seeking the best for both, always looking to the future, with both countries and their peoples at the heart of everything. It naturally helps that the countries have a lot of similarities which makes the cooperation more efficient and productive.

Most relationships are facing challenges from time to time, and Sweden and Finland are no different. Cultural and linguistic differences are sometimes a source of difficulties and can also cause some misunderstandings. For example, one of the cultural differences is that Finns like individual responsibility, while the Swedes are more for group responsibility. Also meeting cultures differ, Swedes want to discuss to get everyone's opinion and a common "buy in". Finns, however, often want action quickly which leads to one deciding. Maybe this have to do with more quiet Finns and more talkative Swedes?

Anyway, at country level, and at organizational/individual level, it comes down to good relationships. Finland and Sweden have forged a strong relationship over the course of history, conducted in a spirit of friendship and mutual respect, with both equally committed to ensuring the success of an alliance which is of benefit to both. The importance of that alliance has become increasingly clear in recent times and Sandvik Mining and Rock Solutions is proud of the part that it plays in supporting it at a local/organizational level. ■



**Mats Eriksson**

President  
Sandvik Mining and Rock Solutions, Sandvik Group  
Sweden



SARAH KILPELÄINEN

# Developing Nordic energy cooperation

Expert article • 3471

The Nordic countries have a long tradition in regional cooperation and share an understanding of the benefits cooperation can bring, including but not limited to a cooperative approach to the energy transition. There is a strong commitment to the overall goal of establishing the Nordic region as the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. Facilitating a successful energy transition to an energy system based on low-carbon sources plays a key role in achieving this vision and using the positive impact of Nordic cooperation here is key.

Research has shown that Nordic stakeholders hold a deep-seated conviction of Nordic cooperation as a central tool in realising the energy transition. The region-wide interests in carbon neutrality and sustainability serve as guiding interests in developing the shared Nordic work on the energy transition. There is a common understanding that the Nordic countries should build on the existing strength of Nordic cooperation and on the international image of the Nordic countries as leaders in the energy transition in order to not only facilitate their regional energy transition but to leverage their impact on the international level as well.

Further developing and strengthening Nordic energy cooperation to achieve these goals requires building on the existing strengths of cooperation and the underlying common interests of sustainability and carbon neutrality. Especially the role of informal cooperation and exchange among various actors across all political levels has proven to be of importance in developing Nordic energy cooperation. Informal cooperation also supports the communication of a common Nordic perspective that is given weight in the EU as well as internationally.

When looking to further possibilities for deepening Nordic cooperation on energy, also its limits have to be clearly acknowledged. A key factor here are the respective national interests that stem from the diverse national energy profiles in the Nordic region, such as the role afforded to bioenergy or the role of nuclear energy. The diverse national energy systems play a key role in shaping not just energy transitions in the Nordics but also the ways in which Nordic cooperation can be put into practice. Acknowledging these national interests and their impact contributes to a realistic picture of what Nordic energy cooperation can achieve. Differences in national perspectives also concern what is seen as the most suitable way to approach common policy goals and the implementation and choice of policy instruments.

The heterogeneity of the Nordic region has to be brought to the forefront when discussing the potential for developing Nordic energy cooperation. Acknowledging the diversity in set-ups in the region also makes a convincing case for the need for cooperation. Establishing strong mechanisms for cooperation is one way to sidestep a possible contestation in the Nordic energy transition as cooperation provides a forum to support better understanding of respective national interests, highlight common lines of thought, and provide an early chance to explore challenges in the energy transition. It is also clear, that balancing between common Nordic interests and national interests is key in ensuring to not place expectations on Nordic energy cooperation that per its institutional structure is not able to fulfil.

It is of importance that national interests do come together under the wider Nordic interests of sustainability and carbon-neutrality that guide high-level policy agreements and the setting of policy-targets. Effectively managed, the diversity of national interests is a strength of the Nordic region in achieving its energy transition targets. Sustainability and carbon neutrality are more generic interest strongly tied to the values and ideas at the core of the Nordic region. Thus, they contribute as reference points and provide continuity despite possibly diverging national and stakeholder specific interests. Further developing regulatory processes that are able to balance between stability, necessary to ensure trust and participation, and flexibility, necessary to encourage experimentation and fast adaptation, is necessary.

The heterogeneity of the Nordic region should be brought to the front more. This is one way to balance strong national interests with Nordic interests and, overall, avoid putting expectations on Nordic cooperation that, per its institutional structure and set up, it is not able to fulfil. In addition, while the experiences of developing Nordic cooperation can serve as useful starting points for developing cooperation mechanisms in other regions, there should also be a keen awareness for the need to cautiously balance between highlighting the Nordic experience in cooperation and acknowledging the impact of different regional settings and different paces of the energy transition in other parts of the world. ■

**Sarah Kilpeläinen**Postdoctoral Research Fellow  
Tampere University  
Finland



VILMA RISSANEN

# Gaining a foothold in the Swedish e-commerce market

Expert article • 3472

**D**igitalization and e-commerce in the forefront of it have been the major drivers shaping the Swedish retail market over the last decade. The Swedish e-commerce turnover almost quadrupled in the 2010s, culminating in the pandemic years with accelerating growth rates hitting new records. Today, the nearly three decades long consecutive growth in the Swedish retail has ended and e-commerce growth has bounced back from the figures boosted by the pandemic.

E-commerce has opened new growth and internationalization opportunities for brands and retailers in Sweden and globally. Compared to its neighbouring Nordic-Baltic countries, Sweden has been several years ahead in the e-commerce development. Being a forerunning market in the region has created opportunities, but also higher expectations for companies expanding to Sweden.

Localised offering, including language, marketing, customer service, and payment and delivery options, is basics for companies planning for internationalisation. The Swedish consumer is demanding, and the level of service and user experience throughout the customer journey need to be top notch to meet the local standards. However, to gain attention and trust among the Swedish consumers and to succeed in Sweden, companies need to look beyond e-commerce.

## Sell brand and values, not products

What value will you add to the market? That's a question all companies planning an expansion should consider. The competition in Sweden is tough, and to have a strong brand, an appealing story and a clear concept is extremely important to manage to stick out from the crowd. It is essential to understand that compared to the neighbours in the region, Swedish consumers make emotionally driven decisions. In Sweden, consumers buy brand and values, and product into the bargain. Thus, a concept that works perfectly in markets where the product itself and its functionalities are highly valued doesn't sell by itself in Sweden.

Swedish digital native brands and e-tailers have been successful in finding unaddressed opportunities in the market, for example in terms of price point or target group and creating well-packaged concepts around them. Focusing on a niche category has been a successful strategy for many brands. For example, in the early 2010s the watch brand Daniel Wellington and the sneaker brand Axel Arigato, or the phone case brand Ideal of Sweden and the eyewear brand Chimi Eyewear more recently, have all in common a clear concept with a focus on a narrow product category and a target group. All these brands have also been forerunners in using social media channels, especially Instagram, as their key marketing platform.

For e-tailers, finding the right niche is equally important, and it doesn't have to be about the products or the assortment. Apotea, an online pharmacy, has been one of the most popular e-commerce stores because of their strong focus on logistics and delivery. For many years, Apotea was setting the standard for fast and smooth customer experience in Sweden. On the other hand, two beauty e-tailers, Lyko and SkinCity, have created a concept around experience, inspiration and high level of service.

## Herd instinct

Swedish consumers are trend sensitive and tend to show herd behaviour. It turns out that in one of the world's most individualistic countries, the consumption is relatively collectivist. Swedes like to buy same products and services as everyone else, which makes trends fast spreading and powerful.

Because of the emotionally driven decision making and the tendency to herd behaviour, building relationship with consumers is extremely important. Over the last decade, e-commerce brands have built relationship with customers primarily on social media, although other channels have also gained popularity especially in the most recent years. For example, Matilda Djerf, an influencer who started her own brand Djerf Avenue in 2019, has created her own community, Angels Avenue, in connection to her web shop to enable interaction between the brand's fans and the brand. Similarly, Lyko, the beauty retailer, has created Lyko Social, an online meeting place for their beauty interested customers.

Taking the brand experience and the relationship building to a next level, many Swedish e-commerce brands and e-tailers are going from clicks to bricks and investing in physical places, by opening pop-up or flagship stores or creating collaborations with selected physical retailers. For example, the aforementioned Djerf Avenue has had popular pop-ups in Stockholm and in New York, Lyko is opening a flagship store in a prime location in Stockholm later this year, and the sneaker brand Axel Arigato is using their stores to create inspiring events and experiences for customers.

As a final word, the ability to be agile, quickly adapt to trends and renew in the changing environment is essential for long-term success. And long-term should be the only existing time perspective for companies aspiring to gain a foothold in Sweden and to create traction in the challenging market. ■

## Vilma Rissanen

Senior Advisor  
Business Finland  
Sweden



MICHAEL LINDHOLM

# The digital business development future

Expert article • 3473

**W**e are at a turning point of digital development, which has been boosted by the availability of a bunch of new technologies such as AI, as well as the vast amount of data collected across the globe every second. We can read about huge digital development steps in various business areas and no single business area is left untouched.

Unfortunately, Europe has fallen behind when talking about business models based on data. These solutions are currently centralized to a few large players mainly from USA and China, with India as one of the fastest growers. It is harder than ever to publish digital products without “thinking globally”.

Earlier, Europe has pretty much neglected digital business development. We have started seeing a change only during the last five or ten years. The new Digital Europe programme with a planned budget of 7,5 billion euros is a substantial resource which has the potential to boost some digital development in the fields of healthcare, manufacturing, and sustainability, among others. Where do we find our real opportunities? Should we link up and cooperate with the large players, should we rely on clever start-ups, should we focus on our existing SME growth companies, or something else? Should we focus on a broad variety of solutions? We have certainly not lost the game and I do have thoughts on how we in the Nordic countries can stay at the top spots in the ranking of digital masters.

There are strong indications of digital development directions where we have a strong foundation in Nordic cultures and ways thinking. Our societies are built upon skills, democracy, equality, and fairness. They are strong foundations for success. Research driven and more modular, and data driven solutions that are driven by strong business models, as well as deep vertical business – these all play major roles in the bigger picture. This is a big hurdle and at the same time a game changer for most of the business areas. Traditional software development companies are transforming towards deep business knowledge consulting, whereas domain-specific “traditional” companies are moving towards heavy data-based business models, but these models are in most cases not strong enough. Collaboration, clever sharing of data, and functionality work together to enable new opportunities and thereby new avenues for business.

I am currently working on the Smart City Digital Twins research project, regionally funded by Southwest Finland. One of the goals for this project is to find out the right ways for developing shareable modular digital twin software solutions for four cities in Finland, Poland, and Lithuania. Here's an example: Who has not run into the situation of having to download a new set of apps for every city or country you visit? There are apps for every purpose, from local services to long distance travel. City infrastructure XR modelling, data related to decision making, traffic management, XR experiences solutions, etc. are often developed in parallel for every city, which creates unnecessary costs. Another example is the question of who owns the data. Could we maybe rebuild the ownership so that the individuals own their data, or so that the data is connected to owned objects like cars or buildings? What if we could agree on modular sharable

models where the individual can also monetize their own data and the owned object data? What if we could agree on a model where residents/ owners of a building can decide how they want to share the available data for purposes such as energy optimization?

The key for the above ideas to succeed requires new business model thinking, data sharing via e.g., open API's (Application Program Interface, a very common way of sharing data and functionality) where a variety of service providers cooperate with larger digital platforms. Finland and Sweden, with their closely intertwined and comparable infrastructures and cultures, opens possibilities that not many neighbouring countries have. We have the data, the skills, as well as the social and cultural thinking needed for starting business models with modular open data sharing. We need to get around the traditional thinking of linear processes dedicated to certain tasks and move our sights towards more horizontal business thinking. We should also open regional funding opportunities to enable pilot projects that involve international partners for faster piloting, where failure is allowed.

There are some movements towards this on the EU level. Last year Finland published a national API strategy document initiated by the government headed by then prime minister Sanna Marin. Simultaneously, Business Finland started a Data Economy programme with the goal of creating more data based modular business models. We are happy to collaborate, just give us a call! ■

*Turku Science Park Ltd is a non-profit development company funded by 11 municipalities in Southwest Finland. We work closely with universities, companies and the public sector helping all parties in the field of business development, research, and cooperation.*



**Michael Lindholm**

CEO / Network Manager  
Musaa Oy / Turku Science Park Ltd  
Finland



ELNA NYKÄNEN ANDERSSON

# Beyond Moomin and Marimekko: Updating Finland's image in Sweden

Expert article • 3474

**F**inland and Sweden are often seen as siblings, and for a reason. For as long as we can remember, there has been rivalry between us. A love-hate relationship, but also a fundamental feeling of belonging together.

In this relationship, Finland has traditionally been the little brother: smaller, with a lower standard of living and with a difficult language spoken by even less people than Swedish. Further away from the West that has held a powerful allure to Swedes for ages, and closer to the East that has interested them less, at least when it comes to travel, studies or cultural influence.

For decades, Finland's country image in Sweden remained pretty much intact. It was shaped by the factors mentioned above, but also by Finland's fate in World War II, the war children evacuated to Sweden, and in the 60s and 70s, the waves of Finns who came to Sweden for higher wages and blue collar occupations. When the Finnish cultural institute in Stockholm, think tank Magma and the Swedish-Finnish Culture Fund asked the research company Novus to find out what Swedes thought of Finland in 2017, the image that appeared was one of a well-liked but grey and old-fashioned country. The respondents could only name a few iconic brands or cultural figures such as the Moomintroll or Marimekko, and no newer, contemporary names. The Finns were seen as quiet, even depressed. Due to lack of knowledge, the survey said, Finland's image in Sweden was outdated and stereotypical. Some people said that Finland was seldom covered in Swedish news, and that Finnish popular culture was to them a "black hole".

When I started as Finland's press and cultural counsellor in Sweden in 2019, the mission from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was clear. We needed to update Finland's country image in Sweden and make Finland more interesting – especially to the younger generation, being the future politicians, business leaders and opinion builders.

To that end, we have carried out varied activities. In 2020, our short video *Till dig som svensk är* (To you who's a Swede) compared Finland's Independence Day with Sweden's National Day and managed to both entertain and inform the audience about Finland's history and present day. In 2021, our collaboration with Swedish food influencers brought Finnish food brands and innovations to new audiences. In 2022, our social media campaign *Finsk standard* (Finnish standard), seen by around 200 000 Swedish youths, looked at how Finnish schools teach kids future skills, like understanding disinformation and AI. In 2023, we will launch a digital campaign to attract Swedes to study in Finland. Our country image work also entails continuous contacts with the media, networking, press trips and social media content on themes such as Finnish innovations, cultural offerings and travel destinations.

The embassy's work is, of course, just a drop in the ocean when it comes to the forces that shape Finland's country image. Over the past decade, several significant developments have had an effect on how Swedes see Finland. Finland's success in the PISA school surveys and the World Happiness Report have not gone unnoticed. Finns were praised in for their preparedness and way of handling the corona pandemic, and

former prime minister Sanna Marin became hugely popular – prompting many people to ask why such a young female leader had not been fostered in Sweden, considered a model country for gender equality, but in Finland instead. The increasing interest culminated in the countries' Nato process that started after Russia's invasion to Ukraine. Swedish media saw Finland as taking the lead, while Sweden, for once, was the one following.

In early 2023, the embassy, Finnish cultural institute, Magma and the Swedish-Finnish Culture Fund commissioned a new Novus survey on Finland's image in Sweden. And while our image is by no means not entirely different today, it is more nuanced. Quite a few Swedes are now able to mention Sanna Marin by name and some might even get president Sauli Niinistö's name right. Around half of Swedes see Finland as an equal country, compared to 26 per cent in 2017. Interest in Finland is increasing, with Finnish history and societal debate as top areas. Young people, especially men, are increasingly interested in Finland. Finland's Eurovision Song Contest representative Käärijä has started to fill out that popular culture black hole at least a little, and Finland is relatively widely covered in Swedish media. More than once, journalists have turned the old metaphor on its head: Finland is now the big brother.

Country images change slowly, and lots remains to be done. Interest in Finnish culture is still low, and it remains to be seen whether the current situation is permanent or merely a temporary change in reputation. But one thing is sure: the past years have opened the Swedes' eyes to Finland, and we – Finnish companies, artists, politicians, diplomats, any field really – should make the most of this opportunity. ■



**Elna Nykänen  
Andersson**

Press and Culture Counsellor  
Embassy of Finland in Sweden



ERIK SANDBERG

# Contemporary logistics challenges in used clothing supply chains

Expert article • 3475

**T**he textile and fashion industry is one of the most polluting industries in the world and it needs to become more circular. Effective and efficient logistics practices in conjunction with post-consumer used textiles plays a crucial role for that. Sweden and Finland are two countries with high innovation pace and requirements on sustainability performance in this context. Learnings from these countries hence hold a key for improved industry performance.

Circular material flows of post consumer-used textiles typically involve activities such as collection, sorting, storage, transportation, repairing, recycling, and second-hand sales. These flows are currently organized and managed by a large number of different actors, including retail companies, second-hand retailers, and sorting companies. In Sweden, Finland, and other Nordic countries, charity organizations play a major role, but there is also an increasing number of commercial players participating in these flows. Together, they constitute a complex ecosystem of actors with an increasingly important role for the industry's overall sustainability performance.

From a logistics perspective, circular textile flows present many classical logistics challenges but in a new context. Some examples that become evident as the volumes in these flows increase are as follows:

*Customer-oriented collection:* Currently, more than half of the textiles consumed each year are thrown away as household waste, and there is hence great potential to increase collection volumes and by that make them available for reuse- or recycling purposes. We have long talked about "convenience" in customers' online purchasing processes (last-mile logistics), and now it is time to continue reviewing how convenience can be developed in conjunction with donation and collection (first-mile logistics). In particular, there is a need to create a larger range of collection opportunities that satisfy customer preferences.

*Cost-effective logistics flows:* As volumes increase in circular flows, cost-effectiveness becomes increasingly important, especially considering the already fierce competitive situation where virgin materials and labor costs in connection with linear production are very low. Costs for handling, transportation, and storage play a crucial role in creating profitability in circular flows. Local flows need to be coordinated with complex global ecosystems to maximize the value from the collected textiles, requiring a well-functioning logistics structure. Another issue is the fact that many circular business models rely on handling and storage of unique products (e.g., pricing or photography for online sales), which complicates standardized processes that contribute to economies of scale and cost-effectiveness.

*Use of new technology:* One way to create cost-effectiveness is to leverage new technology, such as increased automation. This is especially important in connection with the labor-intensive sorting of textiles in the recycling flow. In Sweden, for example, there is a commercial actor, Sysav, which uses near-infrared and visual spectroscopy (NIR/VIS) in its facility (SIPTEx) to sort textiles by fiber type and color.

*Managing material flows:* Increased automation, not the least in sorting, introduces new types of logistics challenges. Large-scale automated sorting has several similarities with process industries where a smooth and predictable inbound flow of materials is important to ensure a steady "production" and utilization of machines. Large-scale sorting into different fractions also highlights the need for the design and configuration of the entire subsequent supply chain. In general, this entails increased requirements for adequate inventory management, forecasting, and information sharing throughout the supply chain.

*System analysis:* Another logistics-related challenge, for example, in conjunction with introduction of new circular business models, is the ability to conduct a system analysis to ensure that the costs and environmental impact associated with transportation and handling do not exceed its benefits. An essential question that is increasingly being asked is whether different circular business models are truly environmentally "good." What energy consumption or carbon emissions are caused, for example, by clothing rentals that require multiple transports and washes? In addition to environmental impact, the total logistics costs may also need to be analyzed more carefully. Generally, many system analyses today tend to overlook many of the logistics activities that arise in circular material flows, so it is important to add a logistics perspective when conducting this type of analysis. ■

**Erik Sandberg**

Professor  
Linköping University  
Sweden

[erik.sandberg@liu.se](mailto:erik.sandberg@liu.se)



LENA REKDAL

# Negotiations between Finns and Swedes: Directness versus Deliberation

Expert article • 3476

**T**he Finns have been the Happiest People in the World since many years and when I was asked to write about "Negotiations between Finns and Swedes: Directness versus Deliberation" I found it an "mielenkiintoinen kysymys" which translated is "an interesting question".

The negotiation dynamics between the direct and Happy Finns and the slightly less Happy and deliberation oriented Swedes often display the differences.

One of my first jobs in New York, in the 80s, was at the American-Scandinavian Foundation, which interestingly enough covered all the five Nordic countries. Cultural exchange and scholarships were part of what the Foundation was and is still doing.

I was an administrator to the Executive Director and the Board of Trustees during a capital campaign, fundraising for a new commercial real estate to house our cultural events. The Nordic Trustees were businessmen heading up successful Nordic subsidiaries such as, SAAB, Kone, Nokia, Maersk, Norsk Hydro, banks along with financial institutions. The Trustees were heavily engaged in the fundraising. Apart from bringing in large donations themselves they also reached out to companies with a Nordic connection.

The Finnish Trustee was incredibly efficient and his style was different from the Swedish trustees. He simply contacted his network, told them what to do, how to donate and not seldom gave them an idea of a suitable amount. He was direct and productive. It worked and the Finnish companies were the ones to lead the way in the capital campaign.

Sweden and Finland share corporate structure. We are essential trade partners to one another, there are many Finnish-Swedish companies and we are often part of the value-chain for each other. Collaboration is important and efforts are made to maintain a good relationship with each other on all levels, official as well as private.

In Sweden there is a consensus culture. As the founder of a relocation company, the talents that our client companies leave in our care, are from parts of the world that typically have a shorter road to a decision. Expats are often concerned of the longwinded discussion model in the Swedish workplace while Swedes talk about inclusion. Decisions are made as a group and the responsibility for the decision is shared.

For Swedes deliberation is necessary. Every decision small or big should be thoroughly thought about, discussed and looked at from many angles by many people. A new policy or decision should be futureproof and be relevant longterm.

Finns on the other hand are known to trust their leader to make decisions. They are fast and direct and the leader takes responsibility. Finns are also no stranger to adapting along the way while Swedes want longterm strategies.

Negotiations between Swedes and Finns are interesting. Finns are resolute, expect fast action and focus on the outcome rather than the negotiation process. Also, Finns are no strangers to re-negotiation. The books by Richard D. Lewis were widely read in the 90s and for a consensus driven Swede it is valuable to learn about the power of silence. While Swedes may be deliberators and slow to come to a decision, they are also talkative when seeking consensus and wanting to move to a group

decision that many can be pleased with. While a Finn although direct, speak less and can get a Swedish negotiator nervous by being silent way beyond the Swede's comfort zone.

Many years ago we had a Finnish client and we carried out immigration and relocation services for them in Sweden. If we had emphasized the common goals and mutual benefits of the negotiation the outcome could have been better for both parties. They renegotiated the pricing and service content several times during the course of our collaboration. The negotiations were quite one-sided and at last they had us at a breaking point and we ended the service agreement.

They were quite taken aback by this and they came to Stockholm for an exit meeting. Even during this meeting and handover they still wanted to renegotiate pricing again and asked us to reconsider. We said no and a large part of that was believing we weren't a good match as client and service provider. With years of hindsight I see how we could have been better negotiators on both sides.

How can our negotiation styles be combined to both countries benefit? Firstly, plan and research internally (keep the Swedes happy) and when working with Finns use logic, speed and facts (cater to the Finns). Experts say that while we often share a language we don't share business culture.

The Nato membership application seemingly followed the Finnish and Swedish stereotypes. The Finns made a fast decision and stood by it. The Swedish government was slow to change their stance on the benefits of being neutral in spite of geopolitical realities. To change their position the top politicians in the Social Democrat party travelled around Sweden getting their members on board for a Nato application.

In my line of work, employee based immigration, we have a longstanding partnership with a Finnish firm based in Helsinki. We have had weekly meetings for many years. In 2006, the Swedish Migration Agency digitized the entire immigration process and was a guiding light to our Nordic neighbours. Well established methodologies were used and there was great consensus internally to adopt the change. Finnish representatives came to Sweden to see how well it worked. When a first time work permit was approved in 6 minutes the head of the Swedish transformation team said "We just did a bicicleta like Zlatan".

In the 2020's the Finnish Migrii has taken the leadership and is trying out new visa types and simplifying processes. The Finnish corporations are direct and the politicians are listening.

In a perfect world the Swedes can be deliberating longterm plans while learn from Finns model by overturning decision, modifying strategies and adjusting along the way. ■



**Lena Rekdal**

Founder

Nimmersion AB, an Immigration and Relocation Company  
Sweden

lena@nimmersion.com



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MERJA KAUHANEN

# Varying role of local wage bargaining in public sector in Finland and Sweden

Expert article • 3477

**F**inland and Sweden are both countries with a long tradition in collective agreements. Both countries are small open economies where the role of exports for economic growth is significant. Sweden is also one of Finland's most significant competitor countries. In public discourse, Sweden is often used as a model country for Finland for local bargaining, where local agreements are common, and there is no legally mandated general applicability of collective agreements. However, in Sweden, collective agreements cover nearly 90 percent of wage earners, and wage disparity is among the lowest in Europe.

The aim of this brief article is to focus on differences in the role of local wage formation in public sector agreements in Finland and Sweden. Before going to this topic, it is useful to present some other comparison information of the collective bargaining systems in both countries from more general perspective. Characteristic features of collective bargaining system in both countries are the high level of organization rates on both sides, high coverage of collective agreements, central role of the collective agreements in the labour market, and the labour peace obligation resulting from agreements, a two-tiered agreement system with a sectoral level and a local level, with the sectoral level being central of the two levels.

In both countries the trend in the collective bargaining system has been towards decentralization, i.e., move towards a bigger role played by local level bargaining. At the same time a characteristic feature of the model in both countries is the important role given to the export industries as setting the norm for the pay rise which other industries cannot exceed. In Sweden there is more consensus of this type of pattern bargaining, but in In Finland not all employee side social partners have accepted this model.

A significant feature is that in both countries the collective agreements define the minimum level for the terms and conditions of employment applicable in a particular sector. The significance of national-level agreements in local wage negotiations in Sweden varies significantly depending on the type of local collective agreement. Medlingsinstitutet classifies collective agreement types into seven different categories based on how much flexibility they allow for local bargaining: (i) Local wage formation without restrictions, (ii) Local wage formation with a fallback provision defined in collective agreement on the size of pay increases if local parties cannot agree on the pay increase, (iii) Local wage formation with a with a fallback provision and some form of individual guarantee if local parties cannot agree on the size of a pay increase. (iv) Pay pot with individual guarantee or alternatively a minimum increase defined in collective bargaining, (v) Pay pot without individual guarantee – the collective agreement defines the pay increase but leaves the distribution to local negotiating parties, (vi) General increase and pay pot – the

collective labor agreement defines a general increase for everyone, and a locally divided wage pot, and (vii) General increase – the collective labor agreement specifies the level of a general increase for everyone. Similar type of classification for pay rise types has been used by Tulo- ja kustannuskehityksen toimikunta previously in Finland.

Using these kind of classifications makes it possible to compare differences in the role of local level wage formation in the public sector agreements between Finland and Sweden. According to Medlingsinstitutet statistics more decentralized wage formation types dominate in the public sector in Sweden (unlike in the private sector). In the public sector in 2020, 52 percent of wage earners were within the scope local wage formation without restrictions (type i), and 12 percent were in the scope of local wage formation with a fallback provision (type ii). Nearly all white-collar workers in the public sector were covered by these two types (i-ii). For blue collar workers in the public sector the most common type was type v where collective agreement defines the pay increase but leaves the distribution to local negotiators.

In Finland the latest comparison statistical information is from 2018. It interestingly shows that in Finland the role of local bargaining on wages is not all as significant in the public sector collective agreements than in Sweden. Both in municipalities and in state sector, for all or nearly all employees pay rise was a combination of a general wage increase and a locally divided wage pot. Even today the generally agreed part dominates.

In both countries public sector employment is female dominated and includes a lot of workers in occupations such as nurses and teachers. For these groups it has been difficult to improve their relative wages when wage rises have been restricted by wage norm set by export-oriented industries. In Sweden the transition of public sector employees in these occupations towards local wage formation without restrictions reflects these difficulties. ■



**Merja Kauhanen**

Chief Researcher  
Labour Institute for Economic Research  
Labore  
Finland





KJELL SKOGLUND

# Swedish language in business – What is the point?

Expert article • 3478

**E**nglish language is considered to be the lingua franca of our age, in business, in culture and in all interhuman communication. All other languages are secondary and, in many cases, limited to a specific country or region. But there are certain advantages connected to usage of for example Swedish language in Scandinavia. There are historical, social, and practical reasons for Finns to improve and develop their Swedish skills, in particular for making better business.

Swedish is one of the two official languages in Finland. This is a reminiscence of the 800 years of common history, when Finland was named the province of East-Sweden. Trade and labor force crossed the Baltic Sea, which was a domestic territory of the Kingdom of Sweden. Finns also joined the Swedish army to fight for power and influence in Europe, as Sweden was one of the five great powers during the 17th and 18th century. After the Russian victory in 1809 many Swedish speaking citizens decided to stay in Finland and to maintain commercial and cultural connections to their contacts in Sweden. Swedish was still the dominating language in business, in higher education, at courts and in public administration in Finland, although Finnish language slowly strengthened its position.

Even today, you need to prove you have sufficient knowledge of either Finnish or Swedish to apply for Finnish citizenship. Government authorities and many municipalities are obliged to offer public services in Swedish. Around 290 000 inhabitants declare that Swedish is their mother tongue and basic Swedish skills are common among Finnish speaking persons with higher school examination. Still, there is a language barrier between Finland and the other Nordic countries. We can see many examples of Finnish politicians, athletes, musicians, and businessmen, who automatically turn into English in conversations or interviews with their Scandinavian counterparts. And their English is often poor and staggering. The risk of misunderstanding each other is always obvious.

## **Why Swedish?**

The question is why Finnish business representatives should use Swedish in their contacts to Scandinavian customers and partners. Why step onto thin ice when you feel insecure and awkward using Swedish instead of English?

The answers are as evident as the question. All businessmen and politicians know that more resources mean more freedom of action. A financially strong company can operate independently, a person, who speaks other languages than English, for example Swedish, German, French, Chinese or Spanish, has a source of wealth to be used to build stronger relationships and to enhance the position of the company abroad.

Using Swedish makes communication easier with partners, customers, and media. Using the language of the target market also creates a positive impact – Swedes have in general a positive attitude towards Finland, and they appreciate that Finnish businessmen try hard to communicate in Swedish. The links between Finnish and Swedish companies, politicians,

journalists, and other influencers are strong – we should show respect towards each other to preserve this positive mood. This is also true for interaction between academic researchers and scientists, though English has established itself as the common global language for scientific papers and reports. But some nice small talk between the learned men and women of the Nordic countries may open new doors – research cooperation between our universities adds new strengths and we should not reinvent the wheel by looking to far for new information.

There are more reasons for Finns to use Swedish. Learning Swedish opens a market with 20 million inhabitants in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, with a high level of income and with similar demands as in Finland – making it easy to adapt the products and services. Swedish websites are surprisingly much more efficient in targeting customers in Scandinavia than a general English webpage. Swedish skills are very valuable, when establishing a business in Sweden – it is much easier to communicate with the tax department and other government authorities in the national language. Mentioning public services – Sweden offers Finnish services to inhabitants in many municipalities thanks to the Act of Administrative Areas for minority languages.

Business intelligence also becomes much easier if you have Swedish skills. Considering that Sweden is the second most important market for Finnish companies it is vital to gather market information about trends, competitors, legislation, and financial development. Reading newspapers, blogs, newsletters, and reports in Swedish offers the management of the Finnish company valuable facts and a good basis for strategic decisions.

To conclude – English will work for communication in Scandinavia, but it will always offer you a second-class ticket. If you want your business to prosper in the best possible way, use Swedish to obtain a first-class ticket. It is a cheap investment with an excellent ROI rate. ■

**Kjell Skoglund**

CEO

Finnish-Swedish Chamber of Commerce  
Stockholm, Sweden



CHARLOTTA af HÄLLSTRÖM-REIJONEN

# The changing view of Finlandisms in Finland Swedish

Expert article • 3479

**F**inland Swedish, that is, Swedish spoken in Finland, is considered as a variety of Swedish. The term *Finlandism* is used in reference to a word, an expression or a linguistic structure which is used only in Finland Swedish, or which has a different meaning in Finland Swedish and standard Swedish. The third category of Finlandisms covers linguistic items that occur much more frequently in Finland Swedish than standard Swedish.

Most Finlandisms are used more or less interchangeably with their standard Swedish alternatives. In other words, the standard Swedish term is also acceptable. However, there are also instances where the Finlandism is hard to replace, as there seems to be no close enough equivalent in standard Swedish.

Traditionally, language planning for Finland Swedish has taken an opposing view towards Finlandisms. The aim has been to maintain unity between standard Swedish and Finland Swedish. This goal originates in the national romanticism of the nineteenth century and has been considered as a survival strategy for the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland. This line of thought emphasises that a linguistic distancing from standard Swedish would be rather harmful when the population of speakers is small.

The most influential advocate for the idea that Finland Swedish language should adhere to the standard Swedish norm was the philologist Hugo Bergroth (1866–1937). In his book *Finlandssvenska. Handledning till undvikande av provinsialismer i tal och skrift* ("Finland Swedish. Guide to the avoidance of provincialisms in speech and writing", 1917, 1928) he summarised his language planning ideology. The title of the book says it all.

His language planning programme was designed to ensure that Finland Swedish adheres to standard Swedish. This means that Finlandisms are basically to be avoided.

It should be noted that there are many similarities in Bergroth's view and the views of modern language planners' in regard with Finlandisms. Nevertheless, the development of society, as described below, has contributed to a progressively more liberal approach to Finlandisms.

The 1920s witnessed strict edits of literary works where Finlandisms were erased with a heavy hand, based on Bergroth's book. It was essentially only the literary modernists who protested against this ideal.

The language struggle of the 1930s in Finland between so called Fennomans and Svecomans probably contributed to an increased unity among the Swedish-speaking people on the issue of language planning in Finland. As a reaction to accusations made by the Fennomans, the Swedish speakers wanted to demonstrate and prove that Finland Swedish was not an unusable dialect.

During World War II, the language struggle calmed down. Nevertheless, the time of war strengthened the Bergrothian ideology. The influence of Finnish on Finland Swedish was discussed extensively. The military terminology, strongly influenced by Finnish, was widely used during this period, not only in official texts by the government but also in the media and in everyday spoken language. The common impression was that the Finnish influence was particularly strong during this period.

In the 1950s, protest voices expressed a new need of loosening up the norms. Too tight a linguistic uniformity was considered to impede Finland-Swedish writers and authors. These voices became even stronger in the 1970s. The empowerment of Finland-Swedish identity coincides with the ethnic mobilization of minorities in different parts of Europe, influenced by the radical student movements at the same time. The Finland-Swedish mobilisation movement *Hurrarna* emphasised the link between language and identity. In the book *Hurrarna. En stridsskrift om finlandssvenskarna* (Gösta Ågren ed., 1974) Bergroth and his schoolbook *Högsvenska* was severely criticised, and it was stated that "the Finland-Swedes are no longer humble" in relation to the language elite. With the reformation of comprehensive school in Finland in the 1970s, *Högsvenska* was removed from the curriculum.

An important turning point was seen in 1976 when the *Research Institute for the Languages of Finland* was founded, and language planning became a government-run effort. With this new institutional status, language planning was professionalised, its scope widened, its impact increased, and its focus shifted increasingly on public language. Today, the focus is on language used by the media and by the authorities. This shift means that modern Finland-Swedish language planning does not concern itself with the language practices of private citizens anymore, nor with the language of fiction. The strict, dogmatic editing of fiction of the kind that was practiced in the early 20th century is completely unthinkable these days. Furthermore, it is very rare that the professional language planner of today would try to standardize Finland-Swedish pronunciation. This manoeuvre is thinkable only when addressing speaking journalists, and only in some genres. Today's language planners prefer to take on an advisory role, and they emphasise the role of context in expression.

However, this does not mean that Finland-Swedish language planning has abandoned its essential goal. It is still considered an important value that Swedish in Finland develops in a close parallel with Swedish in Sweden, and that it does not diverge into a separate language. And it is the Swedish in Finland that must follow the development in Sweden, not the other way around. ■



Photograph by May Wikström.

**Charlotta af Hällström-Reijonen**  
PhD, Head of Department  
Institute for the Languages of Finland  
Finland



MARTIN SUNDIN

# The new Language Centre – promoting the Finnish language in Sweden

Expert article • 3480

The position of the Finnish language in Sweden is a topical political issue with deep historical roots. Until 1809, Finland and Sweden were one and the same state, united under the same monarch, legislation, administrative structure and state church. But the population had several different mother tongues. The largest of these languages were Swedish and Finnish. Within today's Swedish borders, Finnish has been spoken at least since the Middle Ages, probably considerably longer.

While the status of Finnish and Swedish has occasionally been a conflict-filled political issue in Finland from the 19th century onwards, the position of the Finnish in Sweden has long been something of a non-issue. Everyone in Sweden was expected to master Swedish, and there are numerous examples of strong historical pressure to assimilate Migration from Finland to Sweden has taken many different forms over the centuries. It has been continuous, but decreased significantly after 1809. An important stage is the labor-related migration that took place from Finland to Sweden during the 1960s and 70s. In total, it is estimated that approximately half a million Finns came to Sweden after the Second World War. Most of these had Finnish as their mother tongue. This wave of immigration ebbed in the latter part of the 1970s.

The large-scale immigration and new political winds have had great significance for the Finnish language in Sweden. In 1977, the Swedish government decided that municipalities would be obliged to offer mother-tongue education to students whose mother tongue is not Swedish. The possibility of conducting bilingual education was also eventually regulated by law.

There are no official statistics on languages in Sweden, but it is estimated that 200,000 – 250,000 inhabitants of Sweden are Finnish speakers. Since the 1980s, the number of Finnish speakers has gradually decreased and so has the number of students studying Finnish at school. The government inquiry of mother tongue teaching in 2017 was able to state that participation in mother tongue teaching in Finnish decreased from approximately 10,000 students in the academic year 1994/95 to a minimum of approximately 3,000 in the academic year 2007/08. According to the Swedish Education Agency, the number of students in the 2021/2022 school year was 4 657.

It was only in 2000 that the Finnish language received an official legal status in Sweden when the government ratified the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages. Sami, Finnish, Meänkieli, Romani Chib and Yiddish was then recognised as national minority languages. In the Language Act, which came into force 2009, public authorities were given a special responsibility to promote and protect the national minority languages. In 2000, a law on the right to use Finnish, Sami language and Meänkieli in contacts with administrative authorities and courts entered

into force. It also stipulated a right to be offered preschool and care for the elderly in these languages. The right was linked to five administrative municipalities in northern Sweden. The rights were clarified in 2010 through The Act on National Minorities and Minority Languages. Today, 66 out of a total of 290 municipalities in Sweden are administrative municipalities for Finnish.

In 2005, the Swedish Parliament decided to establish language policy goals, and the decision led to the state's language policy efforts being brought together. The Language Council was formed as a department within the Institute for Languages and Folklore (Isof). As early as 1975, the Swedish-Finnish Language Committee had been formed. The board consisted of the Language Council and today there are two employed language experts in Finnish at Isof.

With experiences from the Sami language centre, established in 2010, The Sweden Finnish Delegation and The National Association of Swedish Tornedalians, pushed the issue of forming a corresponding centre for Finnish and Meänkieli. In a report to the Ministry of Culture in November 2015, it was proposed that a joint language centre for the languages be established as part of Isof. The task of the Language Centre would be to actively promote and stimulate the increased use of Finnish and Meänkieli in society, disseminate knowledge about revitalisation, provide expertise and develop methods to strengthen individuals' ability to use and reclaim their languages. The proposal for a language centre was picked up by the inquiry into a strengthened minority policy that the government appointed in 2016. The inquiry suggested that Isof investigate the forms for establishing language centres for Meänkieli and Finnish and the conditions for establishing language centres for Romani Chib and Yiddish. The government gave such a task to Isof in June 2018. Isof proposed in 2019 that four language centres should be established.

In December 2021, Isof was tasked with setting up the language centres, in accordance with the proposal submitted by Isof. However, the assignment was time-limited to three years and Isof was also to produce indicators for the long-term survival of the languages. Isof started building the language centres in the spring of 2022. Today, three so-called language promoters in Finnish work at the agency. Isof has also strengthened its expertise in revitalization, multilingual terminology and language technology aimed at national minority languages. The Finnish language centre works in various ways to promote and stimulate increased use of Finnish in society and among individuals. The centre provides expertise, develops methods to strengthen individuals' conditions to use and regain Finnish, and spreads knowledge about revitalization. Except for individuals, the activities are targeted for example at schools, municipalities, other government authorities and Sweden Finnish associations.



Expert article • 3480

The formal rights linked to the language have been strengthened, but Finnish still has a pressured situation as both the contexts for speaking the language and the amount of the speakers have decreased in recent decades. However, many testify to an increased willingness among residents in Sweden with a Finnish background to identify themselves as Sweden Finns and an increased interest among young Sweden Finns in Sweden Finnish and Finnish culture, even among those who do not speak the language. At the same time, the need for personnel who can speak Finnish has increased. For example have those who came to Sweden during the 1960s and 1970s reached an age that means they often need elderly care, and there is a lack of speakers to meet the need.

Developments in the outside world have made the already strong ties between Sweden and Finland even stronger. In order for Finnish to survive in Sweden into the future, long-term and purposeful efforts are required from public actors in Sweden, as well as a commitment and a will from the Sweden Finnish minority in Sweden. The establishment of a language centre is one of many efforts needed to maintain and develop Finnish as a living language in Sweden. ■

**Martin Sundin**

Director General  
Institute for Language and Folklore  
Sweden



BJÖRN TEIR

# One country – two languages

Expert article • 3481

**C**ulture and identity are the forces that hold societies together in times of crisis; the glue that binds together the mosaic of nation-building. But culture and identity can also break the fabric of society.

The importance of culture for the resilience of individuals to cope with difficult situations is evident when society undergoes major transformations or faces crisis due to external threats. Some recent examples of the importance of culture and a strong identity for resilience have been seen in Europe during the coronavirus pandemic, and not least in the cohesion and heroic efforts of the Ukrainian people to free their country from the Russian aggressor.

There are also many cases where what is encompassed by the broad concepts of culture and identity break up societies. The breakup of the former Yugoslavia into several small states in the 1990s and 2000s is an example of conflicts in which political leaders used ethnicity and religion, combined with very strong nationalist agitation, to break up a melting pot of different ethnic groups, all in the pursuit of power and economic gain.

Swedish culture in Finland has a long history. The country's more than 600-year history as the eastern part of Sweden laid the foundation for Finland as a Western nation. Our administrative tradition, our legal system and civil society, our way of doing business, Finnish culture and the importance of the Swedish language and Finland-Swedish culture in the development of today's Finland are deeply rooted in our country's development as part of Sweden. Our common development from the Middle Ages to 1809 has left its mark on what became independent Finland in 1917.

The Russian period 1809–1917 can be defined in many respects as favourable to Finland. The country enjoyed a long period of autonomy and retained both the foundations of the legal system created and the laws enacted during the Swedish era. The autonomous Finland of that period has been described by historians as a second Sweden; it was based on Swedish law and administrative structure, with Swedish as the language of administration and education.

In the latter half of the 19th century, the language issue became politicised, and the Finnish nationalist movement exacerbated linguistic tensions. Under the motto 'one country, one language', demands were made to "Finnishize" the state administration and universities. The movement saw Swedish – the language most widely used in administration, education and trade – as a burden and considered Swedish to be a link to Sweden. They saw the language as provocative in relation to the Russian Emperor as Grand Duke of Finland.

As a reaction to the Finnish nationalist movement, a similar movement emerged in the Swedish-speaking world. Swedish speakers increasingly began to define themselves as a separate ethnic group, the Finland-Swedes, although the term Finland-Swedish itself was not established until the 1910s. This led to a division in society, with two parallel nationality movements and a division of associations based on language.

At the end of the 19th century, Great Russian nationalism led the Russian authorities to start assimilating the peoples of the great empire. In Finland, this led to a significant reduction in the country's autonomy. Resistance to this imperialist oppression united the Finnish people regardless of language and led to the developments that eventually resulted in Finland's independence in 1917.

It took time, but gradually Finland matured to the point where the old motto gave way to a new one: 'one country – two languages'. After independence in 1917, this was also enshrined in the new nation's constitution: Finnish and Swedish became the country's national languages.

The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS) was founded as an association in 1885, as part of the Swedish nationality movement described above. The purpose of the SLS is to preserve, explore and spread knowledge about Swedish culture in Finland. SLS acts as a scientific society to promote domestic research on Swedish language and literature and promotes Finland-Swedish literary activities through prizes and grants. SLS is funded by the proceeds of a fortune of around EUR 2 billion, which has been generated by donations, mainly from private individuals, since the foundation of the organisation.

At a time when geopolitical tensions dominate and the neighbour with which we share a 1,340 km border has chosen a path that isolates the country and sets its development back hundreds of years, Finland's western roots and orientation have new relevance. The relevance of Swedish in Finland in today's social climate has attracted renewed interest, as has the role of culture and identity as societal pillars. In many ways, we are closer to Sweden than we have been in the last 215 years. This creates good operating conditions also for an organisation that works to preserve, explore and highlight the relevance of the Swedish language and Finland-Swedish culture in Finland, as a cohesive glue for a stable and favourable societal development. ■



Photograph by  
Janne Rentola.

**Björn Teir**

CEO

Society of Swedish Literature in Finland



VAPPU RENKO

# Comparing Finnish and Swedish regional cultural policies

Expert article • 3482

Culture was distinguished as a specific area of political concerns in Finland, Sweden and other Nordic countries in the 1960s upon the emergence of the welfare state. The established 'Nordic Model' in cultural policy included the public authorities assuming a substantial responsibility for cultural life, the promotion of an equal access to culture and welfare-oriented support systems to individual artists.

Decentralisation—a shift of state power from central to more local branches of the state—was introduced as a guiding cultural policy principle. In this context, the regional level was involved in promoting culture as one of the main sectors for public policies.

Finland and Sweden provide different institutional contexts for the construction of the regional cultural administration.

Sweden is a country with hundreds of years of independence, basing its cultural policies on feudal and aristocratic traditions. Finland has developed its national cultural policies and public cultural institutions within a much shorter time span.

For long, Finland used to constitute a Swedish province during which time many common administrative structures were developed. The self-governing regions were only reintroduced into the Swedish political system after Finland had become a part of the Russian empire before gaining independence. This led to a divergence in the two countries' regional administrative structures that remains visible today: the self-governing regions in Sweden have gained a key responsibility for regional cultural policy whereas the Finnish regional cultural administration is characterised by a multi-actor structure.

Within the Finnish regional administration, cultural policy power and responsibilities are currently distributed by legislation among four organisations. The regional cultural administration includes 18 regional councils [Finnish: maakunnan liitot], six Regional State Administrative Agencies [aluehallintovirastot, AVI], 15 Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment [elinkeino-, liikenne- ja ympäristökeskukset, ELY] and 11 regional offices and 13 regional arts councils of the Arts Promotion Centre. As the different numbers show, the organisations have differing geographical areas of operation. The organisations' administrative tasks and responsibilities also vary: each approaches culture from the perspective of their general mission and tasks. Simplified, culture is perceived as a tool for regional development (regional councils), as a public service (AVIs), as business (ELYs), and as arts (Arts Promotion Centre).

In Sweden, the main responsibility for regional cultural policy has been addressed to the 21 regional councils [Swedish: region]. The regional councils are self-governing authorities directly elected by the citizens. The County Administrative Boards' [länsstyrelse] responsibilities in regional cultural policy have been limited to coordinating the regional development in line with national policy goals in cultural heritage.

The regions' role in Swedish cultural policy has been increasingly emphasised by the introduction of a Cultural Cooperation Model

[kultursamverkansmodellen] that marked a major cultural policy shift. First introduced in 2011, the model granted the regions a right to reallocate national cultural funding within the regional level. To receive national funding, each region is required to produce a regional cultural plan in cooperation with municipalities and in dialogue with the cultural sector and civil society.

The different regional administrative structures make comparing Finnish and Swedish regional cultural policies difficult.

In Finland, the multi-actor and multi-border nature of regional cultural administration has been found to complicate the construction of regional cultural policy. Each organisation has different aims, and no distinct organisation has been addressed the main responsibility for regional cultural policy coordination.

In Sweden, the responsibility for regional cultural policy coordination has been clearly addressed to the regions with distinct geographical borders. The regional cultural plans serve as a platform for discussing policy contents. However, the stagnant state cultural funding has led to a situation where the state funding to a distinct region is not likely to increase, no matter how ambitious regional cultural plan the region creates. This can diminish the regional actors' motivation to participate in preparing the regional cultural plans.

Despite structural differences, the regional cultural policy activities conducted in Finland and Sweden have been found to be in many ways similar: the regional organisations define culture as a policy field, decide on operations and connect actors in their distinctive regions. Unlike in Finland, the Swedish regions also finance and maintain many regional cultural institutions.

Starting from 2023, self-governing regions were established in Finland for health, social and rescue services provision. While culture remains excluded from these wellbeing services counties' tasks, the self-governing regions represent a significant change in Finnish regional policy. They may also have cultural policy implications. Especially the municipalities' increasing differentiation in cultural service provision may provide arguments for reconstructing the Finnish regional cultural administration according to the Swedish model. ■

## Vappu Renko

Researcher

Center for Cultural Policy Research Cupore  
Finland

Doctoral Student

Department of Social Sciences and  
Philosophy, University of Jyväskylä  
Finland





STEFAN BJÖRKMAN

# Konstsamfundet – contributing to a better Finland

Expert article • 3483

**T**he owners of a commercial enterprise can – at a given time – resolve to update its strategy, change focus and direction. Actually it is the duty of the board and management to present alternatives to shareholders in this respect.

For a foundation or an endowment the purpose is fixed. We are both guided and constrained by the intent and purpose as defined by our founders. In Konstsamfundet's case it is an individual. It takes a strong will to both accumulate significant wealth and also to decide to donate it for a set purpose. In order to understand Konstsamfundet we have to consider Dr Amos Anderson.

Amos Anderson's personality is elusive. Biographers have tried to describe the man, but capturing his most inner thoughts have proven an impossible task. This especially as he ordered his private correspondence destroyed at his death. Nevertheless, we have some idea of the contours visible to the outside. A self-made man building businesses. A ruthless businessman, not afraid of playing hard ball. A cosmopolite seeking international influences both in business and arts. A religious man, with a deep interest in mysticism. A patriot wanting to contribute to a bilingual young nation. A showman with big gestures and weakness for gold and glitter.

Amos Anderson and Konstsamfundet were, for the first twenty years, practically one and the same. Konstsamfundet was his alter ego, a Venetian mask to hide under, yet still aware that everyone knows who is behind it. A signature. An apparatus. A blank sheet of paper among many in a desk drawer. A self-made intended heir.

What is it like today? When Konstsamfundet looks at itself in the mirror in the morning, is it Amos Anderson who looks back? The honest answer is no. The heir itself is now more than 80 years old, and Amos Anderson died more than 60 years ago. Konstsamfundet has clearly taken on its own identity and lives in its own time. The memory of Anderson is still there, but no one now active in the association has personal memories of him.

Most of the concrete monetary funds that Amos Anderson bequeathed have now been largely converted into a new form.

Hufvudstadsbladet, the main Swedish language newspaper remains partially in the association's possession. As well as a stake in Stockmann, the retail company Anderson invested in 1919. Both operate in industries that are undergoing major upheavals where Konstsamfundet has chosen to ally with industry experts in joint ventures.

The Forum quarter in Helsinki was developed in the eighties to be the palace of commerce that Amos Anderson and his chosen architect dreamed of and sketched out in the twenties, before the Wall Street crash. The sale of Forum has provided the bulk of the capital that is now a diversified international investment portfolio and forms the economic backbone of Konstsamfundet.

The Amos Anderson Art Museum shared a long-term residence with Dr Anderson at Yrjönkatu Street 27. For a few years now, the Amos Rex Museum has had its own building and a distinct identity of its own. Konstsamfundet is actively involved as an owner and developer of the entire Lasipalatsi block. The block is next door to the Forum quarter. It is hard to imagine that Amos himself did not think about the old barracks plot that lay dormant there after 1918.

Dr Anderson's summer paradise, Söderlångvik, and the large estate around it, has recently been faithfully renovated. He would recognize himself in it. Although he might be surprised by some of the artwork choice, since most of Konstsamfundet's art collection has been purchased after his death.

The pillars of Anderson's ideals live on. Participating actively in building a better Finland. Transcending linguistic and political boundaries. Keeping the window open to the continent, and seeking new ideas. Daring to think big, daring to take the initiative. We do not see a contradiction in actively supporting the Swedish language culture and education in Finland, and these broader goals. A bilingual Finland is a better Finland.

In both Amos Rex and Söderlångvik, Konstsamfundet aims for quality that will earn respect both locally and internationally.

An institution cannot be a person, and does not have to. Amos Anderson's emotional depths and heights were deeper and higher than Konstsamfundet's. He had secrets that were known to few, while we who work at Konstsamfundet today have a professional relation to the foundation. It is an important part of our lives, but not all of it. Moreover, we are living in a time when we do not have to hide our innermost feelings under threat of fines and imprisonment.

That said, I dare to believe that we have retained some of Dr Anderson's better character traits. At the same time, I sincerely hope that we have managed to rid ourselves of some of the less attractive facets. At the very least, we want to be more transparent and consistent. We have tens of experts in arts, culture and education advising us on grants. We also seek outside expert advice to guide us in terms of investment and allocation.

In order to secure the future Konstsamfundet has diversified its portfolio of seven hundred million euros internationally in different asset classes. We support arts, culture and vocational training with twelve million euros annually, over half of it directed to Amos Rex and Hufvudstadsbladet. ■

**Stefan Björkman**

CEO

Föreningen Konstsamfundet r.f.

Finland



SUSANNA PETTERSSON

# Art Scene infrastructures, values, and public discussion

Expert article • 3484

Swedish and Finnish art and culture have grown hand in hand. There is not one without the other. When Finland fell into the geopolitical gap after 1809, it had to establish the structures for cultural life from “nothingness”, as the leading historian, author and professor Zacharias Topelius (1818-98) put it. Sweden, being the former mother country, formed a model and Russia, being the new host, created a reference. Balancing between the two became characteristic for decades to come when Finland as a nation built its identity. Sweden, on the other hand, did not have to negotiate its integrity, but to continue strengthen it. This has left a mark in both cultures.

In the following, I have chosen to review infrastructures, values and policies, and public discussion in relation to the development of the art and culture scenes in Finland and Sweden.

**Solid infrastructures.** Countries in general need investments in infrastructures and organizations that can foster culture. Let us compare capitals Stockholm and Helsinki from this perspective. During the 21st century in Helsinki Central Library Oodi (2018), and art museum Amos Rex (2018) have opened their doors to the public. A new architecture and design museum is being planned. The extension of the Nationalmuseum is due in 2027. In Stockholm Nationalmuseum was renovated in 2018 (but not extended), and Liljevalchs+ was opened in 2021. The Nobel Prize Museum (planned for 2031) is one of the rare new initiatives in the horizon despite several concrete needs such as investing in ArkDes (architecture and design museum), rethinking the needs of the iconic Moderna Museet that is one of the signature sites in Stockholm, and admitting that Nationalmuseum requires an extension.

The biggest differences are linked with will-power and agility. Finnish authorities (government, city), private foundations and even the business sector have found ways to co-finance projects together. Swedish initiatives are slow to move because of the cautious decision-making processes and the tendency to bury ideas and needs under the long-lasting surveys, especially at the government level. Working across the sectors is also rather rare.

**Values and policies.** What is the value of culture in the society? How is it voiced? During the pandemic, Swedish minister Amanda Lind talked about the *critical* and *important* functions in the society. Her stand was clear: culture is needed, and it is especially important in times of the crisis. The resilience and well-being of people were at stake. She was also a keen advocate for artists. In Finland, the government rhetoric focused on other issues and culture and artists losing their living was clearly not a priority. Regulations and restrictions dominated.

When looking at the government programs, the situation looks different. In Sweden *Tidöavtalet* (2022) mentions culture only in connection with the so-called culture canon that should define “the Swedish culture”. The Finnish government program from June 2023 addresses culture from a wider perspective. Interestingly, when asked, none of the Finnish political parties were in favor of “canonizing” culture. The freedom of expression, and diversity are – and should be – core values. Art exists for arts sake.

**Public discussion.** In Sweden culture is celebrated and debated in the news, radio programs, in the printed media and podcasts to mention a few. The perspective is seldom toothless, quite on the contrary. Problematic cases are brought to limelight: such as sverigedemokraternas initiatives to censor art. In Finland the biggest challenge is related to the declining space allocated to culture. Exhibitions, theatre performances, concerts, books, and films get less and less visibility. However, counting the clicks is not a sign of intelligence. One should dare to talk about important issues, not just the ones that attract masses.

To summarize: Sweden has more space for public discussion, but the country suffers from weak public governance that tries to embrace culture by canonizing it. This will influence the reliability of the public sector. Sweden set more focus on artists in the time of crisis than Finland, but on the other hand it stumbles more often in public scandals regarding the censorship of art. Finland is more agile in finding ways to build new infrastructures for culture. It also has a rather innovative funding system that brings different stakeholders together, from the public governance to private foundations and even companies benefiting the artists, the audiences, and organizations – but funding will be a topic for another article.

What is needed then? Ambition, will-power for investments and new ways to collaborate, and celebration of culture as a superpower in the society. ■

## Susanna Pettersson

Dr., CEO  
Finnish Cultural Foundation  
Helsinki, Finland

Adjunct Professor  
University of Jyväskylä  
Finland

Former Director General  
Nationalmuseum  
Sweden

Former Director  
Ateneum Art Museum/Finnish National  
Gallery  
Finland



MARKUS WESTERLUND

# Similar but different: How cultural differences affect business

Expert article • 3485

Understanding cultural differences can make or break a business in an era of globalization. Cultural diversity, a phenomenon that was once exclusive to immigration-heavy countries, is now a common feature everywhere. Integration of world economies and technological advancements have made international business interactions easier.

**Cultural diversity affects everything.** When working as strategy consultants, we have seen that cultural differences extend to almost every aspect of business: communication, hierarchies, leadership styles, negotiation tactics, etiquette, work ethics, values, and how to manage international teams. The risk of misunderstandings is quite high. Understanding the nuances of different cultures can create an environment that impacts business operations super-positively. This competence is essential in our business.

**Technology is an opportunity.** Inspiringly, technology and AI can significantly help bridge cultural gaps and improve alignment. Many organizations have realized this potential. They use virtual tools for intercultural communication, online training platforms, and artificial intelligence. AI affects every aspect of business and can be a great tool for solving cultural complexities.

**Communication.** In business communication, language barriers, nonverbal cues, and differing communication styles can greatly influence the dynamics of business interactions. Cultures vary significantly in their approach to expressing opinions and giving feedback. For instance, some cultures prefer direct communication, while others favor a more indirect approach.

**Organizational hierarchy** has a significant impact on the way businesses operate. Companies in some cultures may place more emphasis on rank and authority, while others may favor an open, flat organizational structure. Similarly, cultural differences can have a great effect on leadership styles. In some societies, strong leaders are expected to make all the decisions and provide clear directives to those beneath them, while other cultures may favor a more collaborative approach.

**Negotiation** is an important element of business culture that cultural differences can heavily influence. Members of some cultures tend to be direct and competitive in their approach to negotiations, while others prefer a more indirect and collaborative style. Etiquette has a major role to play in global business culture. For example, some countries require hosts to provide gifts for their foreign business partners, while others consider this practice unnecessary or even inappropriate.

**Cultural values** can also affect work ethics, attitudes toward time management, and motivation. For instance, punctuality is highly valued in some cultures, while it is less important or even frowned upon in others. Certain cultural values may encourage workers to take initiative and show creativity, while others may encourage a more conformist attitude.

**Managing International Teams** is challenging due to the need to bridge cultural differences and understand the expectations of each team member. Organizations can successfully manage multinational teams with careful planning, strategy, and an understanding of cross-cultural communication. You can sensitively build cultural intelligence and adaptability!

So, how can we foster effective collaboration between different cultures?

**Introducing the Playbook.** One solution is to create a common 'Playbook'. This means that the organization collects feedback from its team through a survey to understand better where the challenges lie. Based on this information, solutions can be developed together and documented. The 'Playbook method' has proven to be very effective in practice. It solves pressing issues and strengthens team cohesion and cultural understanding. Digital tools and AI make this process very cost-effective and efficient today.

**In conclusion,** understanding and respecting cultural differences in business is not merely a 'nice-to-have' but an essential factor for global success. Building trust takes time when working with people from other societies. More and more businesses are realizing the importance of including culture as a competitive edge in their strategies. Leading companies invest in playbooks, cultural training, and employee awareness programs. By doing so, they foster a more inclusive environment and position their business to thrive in the global marketplace. ■

**Markus Westerlund**

CEO, founder

Rdigo Ltd

Helsinki, Finland

markus.westerlund@rdigo.com



VERONICA HERTZBERG

# How to integrate in Swedish in Finland?

Expert article • 3486

**W**hile Finland is a bilingual country and Finnish and Swedish are both national languages one could think that it could be equally easy to integrate either in Swedish or in Finnish, or that the information of both possibilities would be presented on equal matters. Unfortunately it is not really that easy. Swedish is a de facto minority language and some officials tend to have some doubts about integrating into "another minority". Approximately 5% of Finland's population consider Swedish as their mother tongue, they mostly live on Finland's western and southern coasts. In the Capital Region; Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, and Kauniainen, which are all bilingual, over 65,000 are registered Swedish-speakers.

It is fairly common that newcomers don't even get the information that you could integrate in either Swedish or Finnish.

Nevertheless the new Government has stated that 5 - 10 % of those moving into Finland should integrate via Swedish, so for the moment there are some positive signals about Swedish in that sense, though it remains to be seen what kind of action they will take to make this happen. At the moment there are no data on how many that have integrated either in Swedish or in Finnish, we really have no clue, and we don't really know how they define the word integration, is it only those that have gone through an integration education or also those who have integrated and feel included in some other ways.

People are moving to Finland for several different reasons, some will come here for higher education (mainly delivered in English), some will move here for work, others are refugees or asylum seekers, Some are moving here as spouses and other family members. Depending on the circumstances for people moving in there are different kinds of support and different paths to integrate into the society, also different needs as well as different expectations.

While the authorities hardly ever actively propose Swedish as the integration language, I would like to point out some cornerstones when a language choice will be made and when it's good to have an active role while choosing the language of integration.

First and foremost, if one has the right for an integration plan and the integration education, it could be good to ask for the integration education in Swedish. The integration education lasts for 1 ½ years and will give you a good knowledge in Swedish. The goal is that the level of language proficiency will be so high that one has reached the language knowledge that is required to apply for Finnish citizenship.

But integration education and language tests are just one part of integration, the other part is the surrounding society where you can come be a part of the Swedish speaking community.

A popular way to be included in a community is, at least if one has children, is to let the children attend the Swedish speaking daycare and education. Try to be active in the events and happenings that the school and the parent organization arranges. Usually the families are fairly open to newcomers, even if some can be a bit shy and not so talkative.

The Swedish community is rich in cultural activities where one can acquaint oneself with the Swedish culture and practice the language, such as theaters, literature, choirs, a Swedish TV and two radio channels and several newspapers. Within the Swedish community one can also find some hobbies, be brave, join an association that practices the hobby you are interested in, or start a new hobby. In most of the cities you can find adult education centers that will provide you with hobbies and activities in a wide range.

Even if you initially focus on Swedish-language integration training, you might want to explore Finnish in the future. There are job opportunities in Swedish, but since many jobs require proficiency in Finnish, you might need to study Finnish at some point. Knowing both Finnish and Swedish is a valuable asset in the Finnish job market that enhances your opportunities.

To integrate in Swedish is to integrate in the Nordics. Through the Swedish language, the entire Nordic region opens up to you.

As a conclusion one could say that the officials are not that eager to suggest the Swedish pathway for those moving into the country, and it might be good to know both Swedish and Finnish if one is about to stay in Finland for a longer period of time. The Swedish community is smaller but it might be easier to be a part of that community. Sometimes you have to be active and ask or find the Swedish option, as when you are looking for integration education, or are about to register your child education. Then it might also be easier and faster, at least for those that already master an indo european language to learn Swedish. ■

## Veronica Hertzberg

Vice Head of the Organisation  
Team Leader of the integration team  
Föreningen Luckan rf.  
Helsinki, Finland

veronica.hertzberg@luckan.fi



TUIRE LIIMATAINEN

# Redefining Finnishness in Sweden

Expert article • 3487

The notion of “Sweden-Finnishness” (*sverigefinskhet*, *ruotsinsuomalaisuus*) encompasses two interrelated dimensions in present-day Sweden: the mid-20th-century Finnish mass migration to Sweden and Swedish minority politics. The former links Sweden’s Finnish population with the Finnish nation-state and its emigration history, while the latter pertains to the experiences of historical minority communities within the framework of the Swedish nation-state project. Consequently, the notion of Finnishness has experienced a transformative period in Sweden over the past few decades.

Sweden has always attracted Finns, owing to the close cultural ties and geographical proximity, as well as the countries’ long shared history as part of the same kingdom. The presence of Finns in the capital city of Stockholm can be traced back to the Middle Ages, and the migration of Finnish settlers, known as ‘Forest Finns,’ to central Scandinavia began in the 16th century. In modern times, however, the most renowned and substantial Finnish community in Sweden comprises those who migrated to the country after the Second World War.

The significant Finnish postwar migration to Sweden constitutes the largest migratory wave in the history of independent Finland. It was fueled by a combination of economic, political and social factors in the postwar decades. As Finland grappled with political tensions, high unemployment rates and housing shortages in the aftermath of the wars, Sweden’s booming economy and advanced welfare system presented more promising employment opportunities and an elevated standard of living. Moreover, the Nordic countries’ adoption of the principle of free movement in the 1950s eased migration between the two countries.

The first migrants did not identify as Sweden-Finns or actively pursue specific cultural rights, as they saw their stay in Sweden as temporary. However, this changed in the 1980s due to socio-demographic and political shifts. By that time, many Finns had chosen to settle down in Sweden. Furthermore, Sweden’s political shift towards multiculturalism in the preceding decade had supported the rights and agency of ethnic minority communities. In addition, a growing awareness of Finns’ long-standing presence in Sweden empowered Sweden-Finnish advocates, enabling them to challenge the classification of Finns as immigrants and assert their linguistic and cultural rights as well as belonging within the Swedish nation-state. Consequently, the 1980s witnessed a surge in ethnopolitical mobilization, marked by school strikes and ethnic campaigning.

Over the next decade, Sweden-Finnish minority claims took on a different significance, following the increasing international emphasis on safeguarding national minorities and their languages in the post-1989 Europe. In 2000, Sweden officially recognized Jews, Roma, the indigenous Sámi, Sweden-Finns and Tornedalians as the nation’s five national minorities, along with their respective languages. A crucial criterion was their historical ties to Sweden before the 19th century, although the Finns’ immigrant background prompted some deliberations during the ratification process.

The new field of minority politics has reshaped the Swedish national identity by transitioning it from a homogenous nation-state narrative to one that embraces multiculturalism throughout its history. For Sweden-Finns, this has incorporated their post-war migration story as just one part of a much broader narrative of Finnish influence and experience in Sweden. Many issues touching upon Sweden-Finns, such as the declining numbers of Finnish speakers, are now prominently viewed through the lens of minority politics, alongside with the debates of the injustices faced by other national minorities as part of the culturally and linguistically homogenizing nation-state project. On the other hand, the minority recognition has provided Sweden-Finns with new frames and tools for action, as well as novel collective symbols, such as the Sweden-Finnish flag and the Sweden-Finnish national day.

Today, it is estimated that over 700,000 people in Sweden have Finnish ancestry spanning three generations, with approximately 80 % being second or third generation Finnish descendants. While the number of the older generations of Finnish migrants is declining, Sweden continues to attract new immigrants from Finland, albeit to a lesser extent than in the past. Despite the prevalence of the new minority narrative of Sweden-Finnishness in decision-making and particularly education, individual experiences remain diverse. As people navigate their ethnic, cultural and linguistic heritage in a shifting political landscape, new perspectives of Finnishness inevitably emerge, with some attaching to their parents’ and grandparents’ migratory histories and others adhering with topical questions concerning national minorities. This highlights the importance of viewing Finnishness in Sweden as a dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon. ■



**Tuire Liimatainen**

Research Fellow  
Migration Institute of Finland  
Finland

[tuire.liimatainen@migrationinstitute.fi](mailto:tuire.liimatainen@migrationinstitute.fi)





JAAN SIITONEN

# Language skills – the superpower that increases our security?

Expert article • 3488

In August 2023, the Finnish President Sauli Niinistö attended the Swedish radio program Sommarprat (Summertalk), in which the guest discusses important and personal topics accompanied by their chosen favourite music. President Niinistö talked about the war in Ukraine, how the Finnish NATO-membership came to be, his personal experiences about Sweden, and above all about his relationship with the Swedish language.

In his opening remarks he told a story from April 2015, when he participated in a concert together with his wife Jenni Haukio and the then Prime minister of Sweden Stefan Löfven. They spoke Swedish with each other and during their discussion it turned out that both Löfven and Haukio had the same favourite poet: Finnish Eeva Kilpi. Löfven could even recite Kilpi's poems from memory. This impressed President Niinistö so much that he decided to start his episode with this story.

This story is a great reminder of how a common language and cultural understanding has a big influence and how it can tie people and countries together. When talking about how to make our alliances stronger, we tend to concentrate on the harder security aspects, as for example increasing the defence spending, buying new weapon systems, or military exercises. As these are very important elements of our security, we often forget to mention language skills, cross-country relationships, or daily grassroot networks as major factors that bind us together and create the corner stone for our shared values that also ultimately legitimizes our military alliances among the ordinary people. For instance, the Finnish Institute of International Affairs' report on Nordic resilience (2022) highlights the benefits of strong grassroot networks between the countries that makes the Nordic countries more resilient for outside threats.

## The Language Learning Process – one must meet people

The reason why language learning is an effective way to strengthen our alliances lies in the process of learning a language. Let us say that a Norwegian person called Jarl decides to learn the Estonian language. For him to become fluent in Estonian, he must spend thousands of hours with people who speak the language, and maybe even move to the country for a while. As a by-product, this creates friendships and a network that then starts to open different opportunities for him both professionally and socially.

Jarl could even meet his partner in Estonia and then build a family with bilingual children. At this point Jarl's parents and siblings might become more interested in Estonia and start visiting the country. Also, many of Jarl's Estonian friends and family visit Norway regularly. Just through Jarl's decision to learn Estonian tens of people build cross-border relationships and strengthen mutual cultural ties among citizens in both countries.

Let us say that tens of thousands of people in the Baltic Rim area would do the same thing as Jarl. Suddenly there are many families, careers and networks that run like a web throughout the entire region. Of course, we already see many cases like Jarl's, but I claim that with certain decisions, investments, and incitements, we could birth more similar stories. Cultural exchange and other forms of soft power have been done for decades between the Western countries and this has had a major effect, why countries feel connected and why they are willing to defend each other. However, more could still be done, and new forms of soft power are welcome.

## Language ambassadors – simple method with a large impact

Learning a language is not easy and it is a big investment in time and effort for an individual. Therefore, a great deal of motivation is needed if one wants to learn a new language as well as a clear ROI – return of investment – should be involved. This begs the question: how to concretize the benefits and opportunities brought by a language?

"Kielilähettiläät – Språkambassadörerna" was founded in 2019 with the goal to concretize language benefits. The organization coordinates language ambassadors to visit schools to talk about their own inspiring experiences with language learning and to increase the understanding of what a great personal resource being able to speak another language really is. At first, a language ambassador, just like President Niinistö, usually did not know what opportunities the language could unlock. The goal of the visit is to awaken the student's inner motivation to learn and use new languages.

So far, we have focused on Swedish and Finnish, and our language ambassadors have visited over 1850 classes around Finland and reached almost 40 000 pupils. Over 90 % of the teachers see our method as a key component of language learning, especially when it comes to increasing the motivation among the pupils.

In 2022 we started to organize visits to Sweden. A Swede that moved to Finland tells their story about how they ended up in Finland and why Finland could be a great opportunity for other Swedes as well. Our future goal is to start implementing the language ambassador -method in the Nordics.

## Proposals from the author:

In 2022, according to research centre Sipri, the Baltic Rim countries' (excluded Russia and Belarus) defence spending totalled 102 billion dollars. Increased defence spending is necessary, but in addition to this more investments in forms of soft power should be formed such as

- Implement the "Language ambassador"-method in all Baltic Rim countries
- Create an exchange program (3-6 months) for civil servants to work in another Baltic Rim country and provide them with support to learn the language during their stay
- Create shorter exchange programs for pupils so that they can live in another Baltic Rim country during a school year
- Increase language teaching and create incentives for adults to learn new languages ■



## Jaan Siitonen

Executive Director  
Kielilähettiläät – Språkambassadörerna  
(Language Ambassadors)  
Finland

Jaan.siitonen@kielilahettilaat.fi

[www.kielilahettilaat.fi](http://www.kielilahettilaat.fi)





KARIN PERHANS & JOHAN KUYLENSTIERNA

# Developing knowledge with true added value

Expert article • 3489

**T**he concept of 'Nordic added value' is intriguing. A study funded by NordForsk recently set out to describe the concept in the light of Nordic research and innovation. In general terms, the concept is described as "strategic co-operation on areas where a Nordic approach generates added value for the countries and peoples of the region". This raises a couple of interesting questions. What characterizes an area where co-operation should take place? How can added value be achieved that truly benefits all people?

One of the most obvious areas where Sweden and Finland have much in common is forestry and the developing bioeconomy. Both countries have very long traditions of using and managing their forests for a variety of purposes. Forest-based products and services are at the heart of the bioeconomy in both countries, with a large share being exported to the EU and beyond. The two countries have similar natural conditions and opportunities, but also share the same challenges. In several key aspects of how forests are managed and how the forest raw material is used in society, quite different development paths are possible.

Six years ago, when Finland celebrated 100 years of independence, Sweden's official gift to Finland was a bronze sculpture and a bilateral research programme for young scientists in the field of forestry. This demonstrates the strong common ground between the two countries when it comes forest-related issues. The initiative attracted considerable academic interest in both Sweden and Finland and three joint calls have since then been launched. However, with a continuation being considered by our research council and our counterparts in Finland at the moment, it will be important to define and strengthen the purpose of the collaboration.

As regards bioeconomy, Finland has already adopted its second version of an official bioeconomy strategy, while Sweden is in the final stages of developing its first. The objectives of both strategies are centered on increasing the economic added value from biobased resources, decreasing the dependence on fossil-based energy and products, strengthening security of supply, as well as contributing to rural development, employment and social and ecological values. Both countries' strategies thus focus on a range of different types of societal benefits. Both strategies also emphasize a strengthened knowledge basis as fundamental to development.

This, however, does not necessarily mean that efforts and initiatives into research and innovation to support knowledge development are, or should be, evenly distributed among these different clusters of societal benefits. When deciding how best to allocate the limited resources available for new research, the added value of investments can be argued to be greatest in areas where the shared challenges are complex, where the current state of knowledge is unstable and rapidly evolving, where effective sectoral policies are hampered by the lack a sufficiently robust basis, and where progress towards agreed national and global societal goals must be substantially accelerated.

In the context of forests and bioeconomy, such efforts may include areas such as policy instruments at different levels of governance, social innovation, changing markets, under-exploited symbioses between different sectors, land ownership issues, redistribution of opportunities to use resources and waste streams, and the potential to understand in depth the drivers, dynamics, power balances and interactions between different types of actors shaping the development. And, underpinning all of these, the issue of a fair distribution of all the benefits generated by forests and the bioeconomy.

Developing knowledge on the issues above requires a systems approach, often based on multi- or transdisciplinarity. In order to contribute to common goals across borders, collaboration must also be characterized by reciprocity and a genuine willingness to learn from each other. The EU is now developing several key policies and frameworks for how the use of forests and the development of the bioeconomy in the EU can contribute most effectively to shared international objectives. This requires an active and attentive exchange of knowledge where both Sweden and Finland would benefit from contributing openly and constructively to both research and policy development.

Thus, a meaningful and powerful interpretation of Nordic added value might be to focus most efforts of joint action towards shared challenges, where we have the most to learn, rather than shared areas of strength. The different development paths that are possible in these areas can most likely be far more easily navigated and paved together. ■



## Karin Perhans

Deputy Head of Department and Senior Advisor  
Formas – The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning  
Sweden

karin.perhans@formas.se



## Johan Kuylenstierna

Director General  
Formas – The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning  
Sweden

johan.kuylenstierna@formas.se



**CHRIS HEISTER**

# Finnish-Swedish research cooperation: Lessons from the Tandem Forest Values Initiative

Expert article • 3490

Since ancient times, forests have been part of the Finnish and Swedish soul. Forests have shaped our countries, cultures and communities. They provide resources for jobs, sustainable growth, construction, recreation, biodiversity, climate action and much more. Forests may be the one thing that unites our countries more than anything else. In an EU-perspective, the two countries are completely dominant in terms of forest areas. One third of the total forest area in the EU is in Sweden and Finland.

This was the background behind Sweden's official gift to the Republic of Finland in 2017, on the occasion of its 100th anniversary. The gift was intended to strengthen the two countries' cooperation on forest research. It was named Tandem Forest Values, which means that Sweden and Finland together will safeguard their forests through joint research and knowledge exchange. The gift consisted of twelve postdoctoral positions, and to promote deeper collaboration, these positions were divided between the two countries.

The cost amounted to 24 million SEK and the project was financed by the Swedish government in collaboration with private foundations in Sweden. The Swedish-Finnish Cultural Foundation was the initiator and driving force behind the initiative.

Tandem Forest Values has later evolved in two additional application rounds, which focused on research projects rather than postdoctoral positions. The application rounds were funded by both Sweden and Finland. Thus, the gift turned into a joint effort. The projects in the third round will be finalised by 2024.

A total of 94 million SEK was allocated from 2017 to 2023. This sum should be interpreted as a positive sign for more collaborative research between the two largest forest nations in the EU. Additionally, the Formas Research Council in Sweden and the Finnish Academy plan to issue a fourth call for proposals in 2024. This has made the gift become a gateway for long term investments.

At the same time, the gift became a wakeup call. It highlighted the fact that research on forest and forest industry are relatively small areas of cooperation between our countries' governments. This is notable considering the importance of forests for our countries and the EU's interest in forest-related issues.

The key outcome of Tandem Forest Values was the establishment of an intergovernmental memorandum of understanding between the Swedish and Finnish governments. Therefore, in June 2022, a declaration of intent was signed, which initially extends until 2027 and applies regardless of any changes of government.

The declaration consists of three parts and summarises the lessons learned about the collaborative policies in the Tandem Forest Values project. The first part of the declaration focuses on encouraging the responsible governmental authorities, institutes and other equivalent

entities, in the respective countries, to regularly announce bilateral calls for proposals. The idea is for the declaration of intent to act as a lever, allowing the countries to jointly optimising their existing national resources for forest research. While this may seem obvious, however, we have learned that it hasn't been the case so far. In times when the countries' budgets are becoming increasingly limited, and the demand for cutting-edge research is growing, they will be compelled to rethink and increasingly coordinate their national research funds.

The second part involves keeping each other informed during the development of national programmes related to forestry issues and research, and considering whether any initiatives could be carried out bilaterally to achieve greater impact. Tandem Forest Values has made it increasingly clear that forests must meet a growing number of socio-political needs. This is not only the case in Sweden and Finland but also for a European perspective. In the future, new national forest programmes will be developed in Sweden and Finland. Therefore, a bilateral consensus on forest research is both natural and necessary. We have understood that it will become even more important for the countries to coordinate, and cooperate, with each other within the EU to address the importance of forest research when it comes to address future needs and challenges.

The third part of the declaration of intent is that the countries should mutually address significant issues that hinder expanded research cooperation between universities and institutes in Finland and Sweden. Sometimes, there is an overestimation that the bilateral and Nordic cooperation have eliminated all border barriers. Tandem Forest Values has showed is that there are still practical problems with a bilateral exchange when it comes to research staff.

The natural progression would now be for the intergovernmental declaration of intent to evolve into a more concrete bilateral cooperation plan. Ideally, this could be decided at the upcoming joint government meeting between Sweden and Finland in 2024. ■

**Chris Heister**

Chair

Tandem Forest Values Committee

For more information about Tandem Forest Values, see

<https://kulturfonden.net/projekt/tandem-forest-values/>



JANNE HOLMÉN

# University autonomy in Finland and Sweden

Expert article • 3491

**D**ue to their common history, Finland and Sweden share many similarities. However, important differences have also developed in constitutional law, political culture and governance. These are also reflected in the implementation of international trends in higher education governance.

Both countries have tried to increase the economic and social output of universities while adhering the ideals of increased autonomy. The protection for academic freedom and university autonomy has been strengthened in legal texts, while the influence of external stakeholders over the governance of higher education has increased. At Finnish universities, the second trend has been slowed by the Constitutional law committee's interpretation of the constitutional safeguards for university autonomy.

This reflects a greater emphasis in Finnish political culture on counterbalances to the political government. Similar checks and balances on political power over universities have been introduced in other constitutions revised after periods of societal upheaval, such as in California in the 1870s. Thus, many differences in Swedish and Finnish reforms of higher education are rooted in old differences in political culture formed during Finland's period as a part of the Russian empire and during the civil war. The prospects that the country could be ruled by autocrats or revolutionaries made Finnish political culture value institutions independent of political power. Sweden lacks similar experiences, and government has been perceived as benevolent. There, political culture was shaped by the long reign of the Social Democratic party, and constitutional counterweights were considered undemocratic brakes on the will of the people.

The defence of collegiality at Swedish universities after the so-called autonomy reform in 2011 has mainly focused on maintaining collegial bodies at the departmental level. Autonomous universities of the Finnish model, where the majority of the board is elected by the collegium, has not been envisioned. Only recently, after the emergence of a strong Swedish populist party, the constitution's stipulation that government is obliged to promote its values in all areas of society have been put into question.

In both countries, higher education institutions have been reshaped into new legal entities, such as foundations and joint stock companies, in an attempt to make them more independent, competent to manage their finances, and able to engage in international cooperation. In Finland, practical concern seems to have dominated, particularly an ambition to keep costs down, while in Sweden openly ideological concerns were aired.

In the Finnish University reform of 2009, new forms of legal entities were part of a reform package inspired by top-down business management. Thereby these new forms, the foundations and associations under public law, became associated with reduced internal collegiality and democracy, although this is not a necessary consequence of shifting to a legal entity with greater autonomy. The simultaneous Swedish autonomy reform, which facilitated top-down management without a restructuring into autonomous legal entities, left faculty in an even more powerless position.

The rationales behind the Swedish and Finnish experiments with the legal entities have been similar, and so have the suggested reforms. An idea of transforming Swedish universities into independent legal entities was put forward around the same time as Finnish universities became associations under public law. However, the greater reliance on public agencies in Sweden and the familiarity with a multiplicity of legal entities in Finland made the transition of universities into independent legal entities seem natural in Finland, while it was too radical in the Swedish context.

Universities related to national security, such as the defence universities and in Finland also the Police University of Applied Sciences, are still government agencies, and remain tied to the Departments of Defence and the Interior. Perhaps they are not expected to interact with society and attract external funding to the same degree as other universities.

Globalisation and European integration have levelled out some differences between the countries' systems of higher education. Internationalisation will probably continue to assert pressure on higher education reform. For example, Swedish state universities are still hindered from entering agreements in international collaborations, as they are not independent legal subjects.

Future reforms will inevitably be influenced both by global trends and by the political environment in which they originate. An understanding of how international currents interact with historically evolved national cultures of governance is vital when evaluating alternative paths forward.



**Janne Holmén**

Associate Professor in the History of Education  
Department of Education, Uppsala University  
Sweden

Janne.holmen@edu.uu.se



OV CRISTIAN NOROCEL

# Gender in Nordic right-wing populism

Expert article • 3492

**A**s we approach the mid-2020s, right-wing populist parties have consolidated their presence in mainstream politics across the Nordic region; from the Finns Party (Perussuomalaiset/Sannfinländarna) to the Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna), and the Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti). Even though most of these parties still present themselves as political underdogs, they have become political actors that are no longer ignored by the mainstream parties and play a significant role in national parliaments. One means to achieve this influence has been to present the policies aimed at curbing (or even ending) migration as political solution to the challenge of preserving the world-renown Nordic model of welfare.

However, the ideal of committing to an agenda of achieving a level of gender equality and equal opportunity, which represents a cornerstone of the Nordic welfare, has proven much harder to live up to. The challenges faced by the right-wing populist parties on issues of gender can be grouped into two interrelated categories. The first challenge is the very ideological foundations that inspire right-wing populist policies. These foundations are anchored in traditional and conservative understandings of gender as a chromosomal binary (men, and women) that informs an unequal power dynamic between men and women. This power inequality is then consolidated in the traditional nuclear family formation (father; mother; children), which is proclaimed as the only desirable form of organizing personal life. However, as we well know, life is more complicated than this. Family constellations, include not only men and women and their direct offspring, but also children from previous relationships, mono-parental families, and those with different living arrangements. Besides, marriage equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other non-binary persons (in short, the LGBT+ community) is recognized by law in all these countries (in Sweden since 2009, in Denmark since 2012, and in Finland since 2017). These ideological foundations have determined how these parties have approached issues of gender equality and rights for the LGBT+ community, which materialized in their general opposition to enlarging abortion rights for women, providing in vitro fertility services on a need basis to all, or legislating for marriage equality, to name just a few. In this context, the discussion about migration manifests as a preoccupation with the defense of "our (Nordic) women" or "our LGBT+ community" from the attacks and advances of migrant men, and concern with the hierarchical distinction between "already gender equal" Nordics and the "backwardly patriarchal" migrants, which discloses a way of thinking inspired by ideas of racial hierarchies and white superiority.

The second challenge is represented by the type of voters and party members these ideological foundations have attracted. Electoral research in all these countries has come to a general conclusion: there is still a significant difference between men and women when it comes to voting preferences for right-wing populist parties. More clearly, although the differences have become less pronounced in recent elections, more men than women have voted for the right-wing parties across the Nordic countries. Several party leaders have admitted they are still struggling to package the policies, which their traditional and conservative ideological

foundations inform, and make them more palatable to women voters. Another strategy to increase their share of the female vote has been to promote women party members to positions of visibility in the party, up to and including the role of party leader. The few women that have succeeded to become party leaders, may be regarded, in a very narrow sense, as pioneers of gender equality within the internal political structures, which are dominated by men who jealously guard their privileged positions. However, while in Denmark and more recently in Finland women have been elected at the helm of right-wing populist parties, they are still to break the infamous "glass ceiling" in Sweden. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that the presence of women in key positions in right-wing populist parties does not mark an impetus for change in the ideological trajectory of these parties, towards a more inclusive or equal approach. If anything, the presence of women in these positions merely provides a less confrontational and more palatable front for the policies of these parties, which are still solidly anchored into the same old traditional and conservative understandings of gender. ■



Photograph by Sarah Hirani.

Ov Cristian Norocel

Associate Professor  
Lund University  
Sweden

