# National counterterrorism strategy

Version 2022

# National counterterrorism strategy

## Contents

# Preface

We are responsible for the safety and security of residents in Norway. Counterterrorism efforts are central to this work. The authorities shall prevent, protect against, and avert acts of terrorism. But we shall also be prepared to manage attacks if and when they occur.

The national counterterrorism strategy was presented in 2021. After an inclusive process, it resulted in the designation of several priority areas and measures to address identified needs and gaps. With the present revision of the strategy, the Government ensures continuity in this work. We have decided to uphold the priority areas and continue work to implement the individual measures.

Several recent incidents have illustrated the importance of cooperation and information-sharing between health services, security services, and the police in cases where mental health considerations affect preventative efforts. This cross-sectoral coordination is critical in preventing serious acts of violence, including terrorism. Unnecessary obstacles to cooperation must be removed. We have therefore identified a new prioritised measure aimed at better facilitating this cooperation, and we are already determining how to implement it in practice.

The Government has initiated several comprehensive assessments that are relevant to counterterrorism. We recently established a commission on extremism that will improve our knowledge of preventing radicalisation and extremism. The work will shed light on contemporary factors conducive radicalisation and extremism in Norway, and provide insight into how to address them moving forward. The commission shall present its findings in 2023. These will be taken into consideration when the Government develops a new action plan against radicalisation and violent extremism.

We have also established commissions on emergency preparedness and defence, respectively, as well as a task force that will evaluate use of force by the police. In addition, the National Police Commissioner and the head of the Police Security Service have established a task force that will assess the authorities' response to the attack in Oslo on 25 June 2022. The findings of these commissions and task forces will be relevant to counterterrorism efforts. When we have received their recommendations, we will consider whether there is a need to further revise the counterterrorism strategy.

The Government aspires to a criminal justice system that prevents more effectively, provides and efficiently allocates necessary resources, and ensures the presence of the police and emergency services throughout the entire country.

The evolution of the threat environment is influenced by many factors, both nationally and internationally. The situation can change quickly, and it can change over time. For instance, we do not yet know enough about how Russia's war against Ukraine will affect terrorist organisations, lone actors, and the threat they pose. We know that new technology will provide terrorists with new tools that will challenge counterterrorism efforts, but we do not know how. At the same time, these developments offer authorities new opportunities in our response, which we must make use of.

The Government's counterterrorism efforts must continuously evolve, and with an up-to-date strategic framework we make sure that we solve the most pressing challenges first.

Minister of Justice and Public Security
Emilie Mehl

# 1. Background and purpose

Terrorism constitutes a significant security challenge internationally and is also a threat against Norway. In recent years, Norway has experienced threats and violent attacks against public institutions, officials, and spaces, religious communities, and Norwegian citizens and commercial interests abroad.

The threat is wide-ranging and often arbitrary, underlining the importance of structured, targeted, and continuous efforts against terrorism. This is why the UN, EU and several comparable countries have developed their own counterterrorism strategies. The various strategies are adapted to the individual organisation or country's political and social frameworks and threat assessments, but to a large extent the core of the work against terrorism remains the same.

In *White Paper 21 (2012-2013) – Terrorism preparedness – Follow-up to Official Norwegian Report 2012: 14 Report from the July 22 Commission*, the Government's overall strategy to prevent and manage terrorism was presented. This was the guiding policy framework for several years. *White Paper 29 (2019-2020) Police Report* considers the concrete recommendations made by the July 22 Commission either implemented or under implementation by the end of 2020. At the same time, it acknowledges that counterterrorism efforts will never be complete.

The strategic framework must also be viewed in the context of recent international developments. Increased globalisation and mobility, shifts in the international security situation, technological developments, and increased digitalisation are examples of circumstances that have a significant impact on counterterrorism work. Counterterrorism measures shall prevent terrorist activities from taking place in and outside Norway, including against Norwegian interests and citizens abroad.

Furthermore, developments in the threat environment, both nationally and internationally, require a review of the strategic approach. Although terrorists' objective to force political change and induce fear in the public remains the same, the precise nature of the threats is continuously shifting. Threat actors rapidly evolve, characterised by a large degree of unpredictability and transnational influence. The traditional distinction between national and international security, as well as between national security and public safety, is less prevalent in the context of terrorism. This has implications for counterterrorism efforts.

Against this backdrop, the Government developed a new counterterrorism strategy in 2021. The challenges and gaps the strategy built upon are still relevant. It is important to ensure continuity in the work to address identified gaps and strengthen efforts in the field. In this revision, the Government has therefore reaffirmed its commitment to the overall direction of the strategy, while adding new priorities and measures.

It is important to employ a structured and comprehensive approach to counterterrorism in order to maximise the effectiveness of our efforts with the country's collective resources. The approach shall encompass all aspects of counterterrorism work, from prevention to crisis management.

The aim is to ensure that all residents in Norway can live freely in a safe society. The strategy shall give counterterrorism efforts a common framework and direction over time. It shall contribute to national resilience, as well as a holistic, coordinated, and effective counterterrorism response.

National counterterrorism efforts shall prevent radicalisation and violent extremism and attempts to commit acts of terrorism. At the same time, we must acknowledge that we cannot guarantee successful prevention in all cases. We must also be prepared to manage acts of terrorism if and when they do occur.

All counterterrorism measures shall respect the rule of law and fundamental human rights. Norway shall be a respected, recognised, and active partner that fulfils its international counterterrorism obligations.

The strategy builds upon earlier frameworks but has also incorporated input from several key stakeholders. These include, in addition to the ministries, relevant directorates and subsidiary

agencies, as well as academia, local government, and the private sector. Relevant reports, threat assessments, research, and other sources form the basis of review, including evaluations of terrorism-related incidents.

The strategy employs a knowledge-based approach that synthesises and applies research and other relevant expertise. It clarifies the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, describes the contemporary threat environment and emerging trends, and identifies prioritised areas of work to ensure the best outcome in collective counterterrorism efforts. The strategy's operating assumption is that broad cooperation across sectors, as well as between the state, local government, and private sector, both nationally and internationally, is a precondition for successful counterterrorism.

Measures identified in the strategy shall be funded through existing budgetary allocations.

## DEFINITIONS

**Radicalisation** is understood here as a process by which an individual increasingly accepts the use of violence to achieve political, ideological, or religious goals. A radicalisation process that results in violent extremism is characterised by an increasingly one-sided worldview, which does not permit alternative perspectives. This worldview is often experienced so acutely and severely that serious acts of violence are considered necessary and justified.

There is no universally accepted definition of **terrorism**, neither nationally nor internationally. In Norway, it is Chapter 18 of the penal code that defines acts of terrorism and terrorism-related acts. Similarly, there exists no generally agreed upon definition of different extremist ideologies, including Islamic extremism and right-wing extremism. Associated criminal behaviour, for instance certain hate crimes, can be related to terrorism, but are beyond the scope of this strategy.

## NATIONAL SECURITY ACT PROVISIONS RELATING TO PROTECTION AGAINST TERRORISM

The National Security Act § 1-1 a) on purpose and § 1-5 (1) e) on definitions stipulates that the Act shall contribute to the protection of Norway's

sovereignty, territorial integrity, democratic form of government, and other national security interests, including those related to core public functions and public safety. Although the Act does not reference acts of terrorism, it is clear from its legislative history that its purpose also includes counterterrorism through entities' self-protection.

## NORWEGIAN TERRORISM LEGISLATION

Chapter 18 of the Norwegian penal code defines terrorism and terrorism-related offences. § 131 lists several criminal offences punishable as terrorism if they are committed with intent to cause terror. These include *inter alia* serious bodily harm, murder, hijacking of aircraft or watercraft, and attacks against critical infrastructure. Generally, terrorist intent is present if an offence is committed with a purpose to disrupt public functions, induce fear in the public or coerce public authorities or an intergovernmental organisation, cf. sub-paragraph 2. § 132 defines aggravated terrorism offences.

The remaining provisions of Chapter 18 of the penal code define terrorism-related offences. These offenses pertain primarily to planning or abetting terrorism, including conspiracy to commit terrorism (§ 133), terrorist threats (§ 134), terrorist financing (§ 135), incitement, recruitment, or training to commit terrorism (§ 136), participating in a terrorist organisation (§ 136 a), traveling with a purpose to commit, plan or prepare terrorism (§ 136 b), and helping a suspect avoid justice for acts of terrorism (§ 137). These offenses are not themselves defined as acts of terrorism and does not require terrorist intent. However, several of these offenses will be regarded as acts of terrorism under § 131 if they are committed with terrorist intent. These include *inter alia* terrorist bombing and hijacking of aircraft and watercraft (§ 139). Chapter18 also criminalises participation in military activities in armed conflicts abroad, as well as recruitment to such activities, regardless of any link to terrorism.

Chapter 18 of the penal code has been amended several times in recent years. Several provisions have been added to reflect general developments in society as well as to fulfil obligations under international law.

# 2. Counterterrorism responsibilities and roles

Planning, attempting, and committing terrorism are criminal acts. Preventing and countering terrorism in Norway is a challenging task, requiring long-term cooperation between numerous stakeholders. Efforts are rooted in a shared responsibility and holistic approach. The work involves all government institutions and public entities that play a role in efforts to counter radicalisation and terrorism, from ministries to county municipalities to counties. In addition, close cooperation between the authorities, private sector, and public at large is required to maximise the impact of our efforts.

The Government has the overall executive responsibility for terrorism preparedness in peacetime and for crisis management in the case of attack. The responsibility for sectoral prevention, emergency preparedness, and relevant counterterrorism expertise is to a large degree delegated to the individual ministries, their subsidiary agencies, and the municipalities. The following provides a brief overview of key tasks in the field.

**The criminal justice sector**
*The Ministry of Justice and Public Security* is the civilian entity responsible for coordinating national security, including the national counterterrorism response. The ministry leads the national cross-sectoral efforts and coordinates the work of its own subsidiary agencies.

The police, particularly the Police Security Service (PST), is responsible for preventing, uncovering, and managing the most serious threats against national security. According to Police Act § 17 b, *PST* shall prevent and investigate sabotage and politically motivated violence or coercion, or offenses covered by the penal code's provisions on acts of terrorism and terrorism-related acts. PST's threat assessments and analytical reports constitute an important contribution to counterterrorism efforts across sectors and levels. PST also has important tasks related to the protection of Norwegian and foreign government officials. In addition, PST has

prosecutorial responsibility in criminal cases related to acts of terrorism and terrorism-related acts.

The regular *police* is responsible for preventing and countering crime, including terrorist incidents, on Norwegian territory, cf. Police Act § 2. The police's preventative work, operational readiness, and crisis management skills are crucial for national counterterrorism efforts. After the terrorist attacks of 22 July 2011, the police's ability to respond to terrorism and other serious crime has been significantly strengthened, particularly through the implementation of the Gjørv Commission's recommendations. Key examples include enhancing baseline operational readiness across the country, *inter alia* by the establishment of larger and more robust police districts and operations centres. The number of personnel dedicated to counterterrorism has increased, both among emergency personnel in general and national special operations teams. The latter are collocated at the police's special operations centre, which has also procured three new police helicopters with transport capability. Cooperation between the police, other emergency services, and the armed forces has been expanded and strengthened in several areas, for instance during immediate action rapid deployments and through the modalities governing the provision of emergency support from the Armed Forces to the police ("*bistandinstruksen*"). A cooperation agreement between the special operations units of Norwegian and Swedish police has also been established. The action plan for the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism has clarified the role of the police in prevention efforts. Among other measures, all police districts have been instructed to establish a focal point for radicalisation. Cooperative prevention efforts between local police and individual municipalities are regulated by mutually binding cooperation frameworks ("*politiråd*").

*The Correctional Service* is responsible for executing the sentences of individuals convicted under terrorism legislation, as well as preventing

radicalisation among inmates. The punishment shall be administered in a manner consistent with its purpose, which is to prevent recidivism and protect the public, cf. the Criminal Punishment Act § 2 (1). The punishment shall meet specified security standards and make use of the measures the Service has at its disposal to promote rehabilitation. The agency has developed specific guidelines for preventing and responding to radicalisation and violent extremism in correctional facilities. A radicalisation coordinator has been established in each region and radicalisation focal points in the local facilities.

*The National Security Authority's (NSM)* role in national counterterrorism efforts is regulated by the National Security Act. NSM is the cross-sectoral authority for preventative security services in Norway. The agency is responsible for coordinating preventative security measures and assesses the security of entities covered by the National Security Act. It is concerned with activity that may pose a threat against national security interests and core public functions, including terrorist attacks against critical targets and infrastructure. Additionally, NSM is the national policy centre for cybersecurity, which is also relevant to overall counterterrorism efforts.

**Defence sector**
The defence sector contributes in multiple ways to national counterterrorism efforts.

*The Intelligence Service* is a key actor, both through its own operations and its established cooperation with PST and other national entities.

*The Armed Forces* constitute an important resource through civil-military cooperation, including the provision of emergency support to the police in line with assistance modalities ("*bistandinstruks*"). Some of the Armed Forces' capabilities are particularly relevant and specifically tailored to supporting the police in the case of a terrorist incident. The mission and posture of the Armed Forces' Special Operations Command, Naval Special Operations Command, and helicopter units are adapted to satisfy the police's need for support, which partially determines the organisation, equipment, and training of these assets. This is also to a certain extent the case for transport aircraft, maritime surveillance aircraft, submarines, coastguard vessels, and the Home Guard. The Special Operation Forces maintain constant operational readiness to support the police, including hostage

rescue and counterterrorism. They also have the capability to conduct hostage rescue and other emergency rescue operations abroad. Additionally, the Armed Forces are responsible for managing situations in which the flight pattern of a civilian aircraft gives grounds to suspect it may be used as a weapon in a terrorist attack. Time is of the essence in such situations, and it is only the Armed Forces that have the required capabilities to respond to these threats.

**Other sectors**
All ministries are responsible for implementing and coordinating counterterrorism measures in their own sector as well as in the interaction across sectors.

*The Ministry of Foreign Affairs* is responsible for following up international cooperation as well as incident management involving Norwegian interests and citizens abroad, including acts of terrorism.

*The Ministry of Finance* has sectoral responsibility for counterterrorism efforts involving the prevention and detection of money laundering and terrorist financing. It also oversees the customs service to prevent the import and export of dangerous and/or illegal goods across borders.

Countering terrorist financing is an important aspect of preventing terrorism. Responsibility for this work is shared between several ministries and is based on the Government's strategy for countering money-laundering, terrorist financing, and financing of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Ministry of Finance share lead responsibility, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

*The Ministry of Health and Care Services* is responsible for health preparedness, including the provision of necessary health care and social services during emergencies, terrorist incidents, and disasters in peacetime and war.

*The Ministry of Transport* is responsible for the security of roads, railroads, air travel, and the postal system. The ministry shall monitor and strengthen the robustness of critical infrastructure and core functions in the sector.

*The Ministry of Petroleum and Energy* is responsible for energy security.

*The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development* has sectoral responsibility for electronic communications, and overall responsibility for setting safety and emergency preparedness standards in the sector. The Ministry also interfaces with private sector stakeholders and oversees security in the data centre sector.

*The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion is responsible for regulating and overseeing the petroleum industry's preparedness against attack.*

*The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries is responsible for regulating emergency and terrorism preparedness on ships and ports.*

**Cross-sectoral cooperation to prevent terrorism**
Preventative counterterrorism efforts are guided by the action plan against radicalisation and violent extremism. Nine ministries cooperate in these efforts, which are led by the ministries of Justice and Public Security; Labour; Children and Families; Defence; Health and Care Services; Local Government and Regional Development; Culture and Equality; Education and Research; and Foreign Affairs. Civil society also has an important role to play in preventative efforts. Additionally, the public at large can help prevent social isolation, which is one of several drivers of radicalisation.

Basic prevention begins early and is wide-ranging, encompassing kindergarten, school, and extracurricular activities. Critical work is done by schools, which instil democratic values and teach critical thinking and digital literacy.

Outreach to people and groups that are considered vulnerable to radicalisation, or who are to be rehabilitated, is conducted in an individualised manner through cooperation between various stakeholders and services. A national counselling and resource mechanism for radicalisation has been established at the regional resource centres on violence, trauma, and suicide prevention (RVTS). They provide capacity building, networking, and assistance to municipalities in specific cases, as well as counselling to individuals.

Elements of the action plans against racism and discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and religion; against antisemitism; and against discrimination and hatred towards Muslims are also relevant in preventing radicalisation.

**Local government**
County municipalities and municipalities have important roles to play in counterterrorism regionally and locally. This is particularly the case in efforts to prevent radicalisation, which require strong cooperation between various agencies, the police, civil society, and other stakeholders as a prerequisite for local efforts. Key components of this work include the cooperation frameworks between the police and municipalities, as well as the police's radicalization focal points and the municipalities' narcotics and crime prevention focal points (who coordinate local preventative measures to counter narcotics and crime).

County municipalities and municipalities are also responsible for ensuring the proper exercise of functions and tasks relating to security and emergency preparedness and management. This applies for instance to certain security measures in public spaces and temporary measures in connection with large-scale events, which are implemented in cooperation with the police. In the event of a terrorist incident, municipal emergency preparedness and management will be key to containing damage, restoring order, and maintaining the public's sense of safety.

**International counterterrorism cooperation**
The terrorist threat is international. As such, Norway's protection is strengthened through broad international cooperation. To achieve effective cooperation on for instance information and evidence-sharing, policy development, military measures, and police efforts to prevent and counter terrorism abroad, Norway actively participates in international organisations, coalitions, and programs against terrorism and violent extremism. These include the UN, EU, Council of Europe, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Global Coalition against ISIL, Financial Action Task Force (FATF), Interpol, Europol, Eurojust, and other organisations and networks. Norway also cooperates closely on counterterrorism with NATO allies, the Nordic countries, and other European countries. Membership in the UN Security Council 2021-2022 strengthens Norway's international platform during the term, including in the counterterrorism field.

Through bilateral and multilateral cooperation Norway seeks to prevent terrorism and address conditions conducive to terrorism. Norway additionally works to counter terrorists' ability to conduct attacks both across borders and in the conflict areas in which they are active. Other important contributions to international counterterrorism include efforts to counter terrorist financing; export control; work to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; border management; and military and police contributions to operations abroad. Norway also fulfils its obligations under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations to protect other states' diplomatic missions against security threats on Norwegian territory.

# 3. The terrorist threat environment

International terrorism has been a persistent challenge for several decades. Since September 11 2001, Islamic extremism, associated first with al-Qaida and later also ISIL, has been the subject of particular attention both nationally and internationally. The threat from Islamic extremism is still of concern. Over the past decade, right-wing extremists of different varieties have posed a threat to varying degrees in numerous countries, including Norway. Radicalisation to right-wing extremism is growing and is of increasing concern.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE THREAT ENVIRONMENT

The Police Security Service (PST) publishes a quarterly unclassified National Threat Assessment (NTV). The NTV is part of PST's public communications describing expected developments in the threat environment. In addition, PST publishes regular unclassified thematic reports on relevant topics within its areas of responsibility.

The Intelligence Service publishes an annual report (*FOKUS*) that provides unclassified analysis of current conditions and expected developments within thematic and geographic areas that the Service considers particularly relevant for Norwegian security and national interests.

The National Security Authority (NSM) publishes an annual unclassified risk assessment (*RISIKO*) on the likelihood of attack directly or indirectly damaging core public functions or interests. NSM also publishes unclassified thematic reports that are relevant to security activities, as well as an annual report on the national cyberthreat environment.

The services additionally produce classified annual threat and risk assessments and other reports to support policymakers.

The Police Directorate publishes the police's annual threat assessment. Among other issues, this report identifies linkages between different criminal threats, like organised crime and terrorism.

## The threat environment

According to PST's 2022 national threat assessment, Islamic extremism and right-wing extremism are expected to remain the most serious terrorist threats against Norway in the short term.

Radicalisation to right-wing extremism is expected to increase in the future. Extreme right-wing groups and individuals demonstrate a growing willingness to resort to terrorism to achieve their ends. The terrorist attacks in Norway on July 22, 2011 and in New Zealand on 15 March, 2019 are examples of incidents

that will continue to inspire right-wing extremists in the years to come. Right-wing extremism is fuelled by an increasingly diverse and intermixed ideological landscape, which also affects the threat environment. Right-wing extremists conduct much of their activity on social media, including closed transnational fora. Of particular concern is accelerationism, a strain of right-wing extremism that encourages physical combat in a perceived race war between whites and other "races," and which promotes the urgency of resistance.

The number of people in Norway expressing support to extreme right-wing terrorist attacks has increased. These people are inspired both by traditional neo-Nazism and Islamophobic and xenophobic ideologies. They vilify immigrants, Muslims, Jews, and people who are lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, trans, intergender or queer (LHBTIQ), as well as authorities, politicians, and traditional media.

Despite significant setbacks terrorist groups such as ISIL persist, both as an organisation and as an ideological project. ISIL inspires radicalisation to Islamic extremism. Strong Islamist networks still exist in many European countries. Different strains of Islamic extremism will maintain the intention to attack countries they perceive as being at war with Islam. Rudimentary attacks in highly populated areas, particularly against vulnerable social groups, or against symbolic targets such as the police and military, are currently considered the most probable.

The threat from Islamic extremists will vary over time. Even though Norway has a peripheral position in al-Qaida and ISIL's worldview, incidents in Norway that may be perceived as affronts to Islam may quickly spread on the Internet and in foreign media, thereby raising Norway's profile as a target. Similarly, incidents in other countries that extremist networks perceive as stigmatizing or provocative may affect the Norwegian and Nordic threat environment. Examples of this include the Danish caricature controversy in 2005, publications by the French magazine Charlie Hebdo, and the murder of a teacher in France in the fall of 2020, all of which affected the threat environment in Norway. Additional factors that may have an impact include Norwegian contributions to foreign military operations, and radicalised individuals who are released after serving terrorist sentences. Larger terrorist attacks and network-building among Islamic extremists in Europe can also

negatively affect the situation in Norway through increased mobilisation and radicalisation.

Extreme left-wing networks in Norway are small and comprised of a low number of groups. Some elements have been more active and violent in recent years, but the probability that they will attempt to conduct a terrorist attack in Norway in the short term is considered very low.

In recent years movements have emerged that consider the state illegitimate. They are driven by anti-state and conspiratorial theories. Such groups are growing in several European countries and can radicalise individuals. Several European countries have also observed an increase in activist groups campaigning for climate action and environmental protection. These have the potential to radicalise people also in Norway.

Global developments affect the threat environment at home, both nationally and locally. This is illustrated by ISIL's recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters, as well as the attack in New Zealand in 2019, which inspired the terrorist attack in Bærum the same year. There is a chance that threat actors based outside Norway will attempt to target Norwegian or other countries' interests or citizens on Norwegian territory, including embassies and visiting officials.

# Expected developments

Predictions regarding the future threat environment are naturally uncertain. The situation may change quickly, and there is no guarantee that future threats will manifest in the same way as present ones. Nonetheless, it is important to develop a general and holistic approach to expected developments. The following describes certain factors that may affect the threat environment in the years to come.

Russia's war against Ukraine is not expected to alter the threat assessment against Norway or the West in the short term. In the long term, however, the situation may have an effect on terrorist groups, lone wolf actors, and the threat they pose. Extremist foreign fighters in Ukraine may contribute to an increase in the capacity of extreme right-wing and Islamic networks. Yet the war is still expected to have a limited impact on the terrorist threat in European countries, among other reasons because the conflict lacks an ideological dimension encouraging attacks

against Western interests. Increased access to weapons and explosives may nonetheless affect the modus operandi of future terrorist attacks, rendering them more lethal.

The war in Ukraine may have consequences for Russian involvement in other conflict areas, such as the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. This may increase the freedom of movement of Islamic extremists in these regions, but it will not automatically increase the terrorist threat against Norway and the West.

The Covid-19 pandemic has generated new conspiracy theories that have exasperated anti-government sentiment among right-wing extremists. Other consequences of the pandemic, including increased polarisation as well as social isolation enabling the targeting and exploitation of vulnerable individuals, are considered factors conducive to radicalisation. We do not yet know enough about what consequences the pandemic and related public health measures have had on the threat environment. Polarisation, xenophobia, hate speech, and a harsher public discourse are factors that may affect the threat environment also beyond the risk of radicalisation.

The use of new technology by threat actors is expected to have the largest impact on the evolution of the threat environment. Emerging technologies, as well as increased access to and ability to use existing technologies, may affect how terrorists communicate and how they finance their networks and operations. It may also lead to new technology-based weapons platforms and modes of attack, including cyberattacks and drones. The enormous amount of electronic information, combined with extensive encryption, makes it even more challenging for authorities to uncover terrorist activity. At the same time, these developments offer authorities new opportunities in counterterrorism efforts.

There is reason to believe that more people will be drawn to violence in the future. Digital sub-cultures and various networks' use of and increased access to alternative media promoting conspiracy theories and fake news are conducive to radicalisation and violent ideologies. Humour that trivialises the use of violence and dehumanises people or groups, as well as the circulation of extremist material, are key components of this communication. Such Internet-based subcultures may contribute to lowering the threshold for the use of violence. Currently this is a risk particularly among Islamic and right-wing extremists. In the longer term, anti-state, eco-fascist or climate and environmental groups may follow suit. The emergence of new forms of extremism indicates that the traditional distinction between right-wing and left-wing extremism is becoming less relevant.

It is likely that perceived offenses, or the impact of incidents in other countries, will continue to affect the threat environment also in the long term.

In the years to come, former foreign terrorist fighters will be reintegrated into society after serving sentences in several European countries. Some of these may pose a threat as prominent figures inspiring radicalisation, so-called radicalisers, or as perpetrators of violence. Also of concern are prisons as potential sites of radicalisation, including for inmates who are not convicted of terrorist offenses.

# 4. Main counterterrorism areas and objectives

The overall goal of counterterrorism efforts in Norway is to contribute to preventing and handling acts of terrorism so that everyone can live freely in a safe society. In an open and democratic society, however, it will not be possible to avert all terrorist incidents. Available resources cannot be dimensioned to manage all imaginable scenarios. The main scenarios informing counterterrorism efforts must therefore correspond with the threat environment and expected developments. The leftover risk, meaning the risk that remains when we as a society cannot implement or prioritise additional risk-reducing measures, must be acceptable and kept as low as possible.

From this premise, the counterterrorism strategy is based on a realistic ambition to make the best possible use of the country's collective resources in the public and private sector.

The strategy builds on four main areas: *preventing, protecting against, averting,* and *handling* terrorism. A coordinated joint effort within the four main areas will ensure a holistic approach to counterterrorism.

Efforts within the four main areas have the following objectives:

**Prevent**
The objective of *preventing* terrorism is to prevent individuals or groups from radicalizing to accept the use of violence to achieve political goals, as well as preventing activities related to the planning and perpetration of terrorism.

**Protect**
The goal of *protecting against* terrorism is to secure society's assets, including the lives and well-being of citizens, as well as strengthening our preparedness and ability to withstand terrorist attacks.

**Avert**
The goal of *averting* terrorism is to obstruct the perpetration of a terrorist attack.

**Handling**
The goal of *handling* terrorism is to effectively stop ongoing and potentially ensuing attacks, limit damage, and restore normalcy.

For us as a society to ensure the effectiveness of our counterterrorism efforts, we must be able to fulfil many different tasks within these four main areas.

During the development of this strategy, we have conducted an extensive mapping exercise to collect information about the present situation and expected developments in the threat environment and other relevant factors. The focus areas reflect identified gaps and challenges in the four main areas of work and specify key measures for ongoing counterterrorism efforts.

# 5. Five focus areas and five prioritised measures

Based on counterterrorism objectives and known gaps and challenges, five focus areas have been identified. Measures within each focus area will direct counterterrorism efforts in the coming years:

• Regulatory development

• Technology development

• Threat communication

• Knowledge and expertise

• Cooperation

The focus areas are cross-cutting. That means that each one affects counterterrorism activities within several of the main areas of *preventing, protecting, averting* and *handling.* The broad, cross-sectoral work to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism is consistently emphasised, as it provides the most cost-effective approach to counterterrorism.

Five *specially prioritised counterterrorism measures* have been identified within regulatory development, threat communication, cooperation, and knowledge and expertise. If these measures are not implemented, national counterterrorism efforts will be weakened and/or the risk of terrorist attack may increase.

I. **Minimise possible gaps in the regulatory framework caused by technology development, particularly in cyberspace.**
In the short term this especially applies to further developing PST's legal basis and lacking legal force of sections of the Intelligence Service Act. Given advances in threat actors' use of cyberspace, these gaps constitute a significant weakness that will continue to grow if they are not addressed.

II. **Implement measures to improve communication between authorities and potential terrorist targets.**
The evolution of the terrorist threat, which is targeting a growing range of social groups and public spaces, requires a clearer and more focused communication of the threat from multiple levels of government. It is also necessary to better advise possible terrorist targets on potential security measures. Otherwise, they will not be able to implement measures to ensure the best possible protection against attack.

III. **Strengthen local cooperation against terrorist incidents.**
It is imperative that key stakeholders are familiar with each other's responsibilities and roles and can make use of each other's capabilities when handling a terrorist attack. This applies especially to cooperation between local police, local authorities, and the private sector. In addition, it is important to clarify the division of responsibilities for securing public spaces. Without enhanced local cooperation we risk weakening our ability to manage terrorist incidents.

**IV. Increase knowledge about reintegration challenges and measures.**
Reintegration should be guided by a knowledge-based approach to method development and the exchange of lessons learned on risk assessments and effective measures. It is a persistent challenge to ensure the lasting reintegration into society of individuals convicted of terrorism. There are examples in other countries of such people planning and/or perpetrating new terrorist attacks after serving their sentences. This is also a risk in Norway, as several Norwegians convicted of terrorism will be released from the correctional services in coming years. It will also be a persistent challenge for PST to assess which radicalised individuals constitute an actual threat. Therefore, knowledge in this area must be further developed.

**V. Better facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation in cases in which mental health issues and extremism are or may be relevant.**
Several incidents in which both mental health issues and extremism are or may be relevant have underscored the importance of following up individuals in a cross-sectoral manner. Proper coordination between health services, PST, and the police at large can be decisive in preventing serious acts of violence. Measures to better facilitate targeted information-sharing between these agencies, governed by confidentiality and privacy laws, will be assessed. Unnecessary obstacles to sharing sensitive personal information between public agencies will be removed, and for the purposes of prevention the need to amend the legal framework for sharing personal information between agencies will also be assessed.

These are the measures of highest priority, and follow-up action is underway. The measures are to be implemented and/or further developed in 2022-2023.

Several other measures have been identified that will contribute to achieving the strategy's goals. The compiled measures are sorted by focus area below. Some measures are already in process, while certain others require additional planning or assessment before implementation. There is no specified implementation period for the latter, but they are expected to inform policy development moving forward, on ministry or agency-level. Another assessment of priorities may be conducted when the prioritised measures have been implemented. Responsibility for ensuring implementation has been designated to the ministries specified in the table.

# Focus area 1
# Regulatory development

Developments in the counterterrorism field demand continuous assessment of the current legal framework's relevance and suitability to addressing challenges. The framework must, to the extent possible, grant authorities the latitude required to conduct effective counterterrorism. It must keep pace with rapid technological advancements, which offer threat actors new methods of attack and opportunities for encrypted communications, among other risks. It is also imperative that the framework is adapted to allow authorities to make use of the benefits that new technology offers counterterrorism efforts. Processes relating to framework development, including assessment, elaboration, adoption, and implementation, take time. A certain lag in these efforts is therefore inevitable.

The following measures to develop the legal framework will be key to confronting counterterrorism challenges in coming years:

| No. | Measure | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Further develop PST's legal basis for uncovering, tracking, stopping, and investigating terrorist networks and related activity in Norway, based particularly on needs arising from the misuse of cyberspace for terrorist purposes. The ability of Norwegian authorities to prevent and manage terrorism is constrained by the current legal framework. Continuous follow-up and development of the framework is necessary to meet new demands. | MoJ |
| 2 | Continue efforts to implement the remaining sections of the Intelligence Service Act regulating access to cross-border electronic data. The ability of Norwegian authorities to prevent and manage terrorism is constrained by limited implementation of the Act. | MoD |
| 3 | Unnecessary obstacles to sharing sensitive personal information will be removed. Certain legal restrictions on sharing sensitive personal information between public agencies are viewed as unnecessary. These may hinder efforts to prevent radicalisation. Amendments to the Public Administration Act on expanded access to information-sharing was adopted by Parliament in June 2022, and the new Public Administration Act § 13 g permits statutes establishing that confidentiality obligations under the Act shall not impede the sharing of information between public agencies, as long as the disclosure does not constitute a disproportional intrusion into the privacy of the concerned individual. A guidance note on confidentiality, the obligation to provide information, and the right to provide information is being finalised. An assessment will be undertaken to review whether efforts to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism require further amendments to the legal framework on the sharing of sensitive personal information between public agencies. | MoJ, MoH |
| 4 | Aspects of the current legal framework that negatively affect sectoral counterterrorism efforts shall be identified and addressed. This will help ensure that the tools at the authorities' disposal are adapted to current and expected future challenges. | All ministries |

# Focus area 2
# Technology development

Rapid technological advancement requires continuous oversight and efforts to confront threats and make use of new counterterrorism opportunities.

The increasing amount and availability of information is an asset, but it also creates challenges. For instance, it complicates efforts to detect and monitor threat actors, prevent radicalisation and terrorist attacks, and investigate and prosecute terrorism. The amount of existing information is larger than can be humanly processed and requires the effective use of information and communications systems. In the future, technologies such as big data analysis will be an important tool for more quickly and precisely processing data for counterterrorist purposes. In addition, we know from today's threat environment and its expected evolution that terrorists are exploiting the Internet and technology, possibly also to devise new methods of attack. This underscores the need to strengthen efforts in the technology sector, including by enabling authorities to take advantage of the opportunities new technologies offer.

The following measures related to technology will be key to confronting counterterrorism challenges in coming years:

| No. | Measure | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | Improve authorities' ability to uncover, track, stop and investigate terrorist networks and related activity through investments in and knowledge of technology. | MoJ, MoD |
| 6 | Implement Schengen border management systems effectively.<br>The measure will ensure enhanced oversight over access to Norwegian territory. | MoJ |
| 7 | Incorporate in plans, strategies, and research the development of knowledge, frameworks, and resources to meet future technological threats.<br>Further efforts in this area are necessary to prepare authorities for new threats and attack trends caused by technological advancements, including physical attacks by digital means. | MoJ, MoD |
| 8 | Facilitate the full utilisation of technology for counterterrorism purposes.<br>This includes *inter alia* communications, mapping technology, and drones. | MoJ and relevant ministries |
| 9 | Facilitate access to classified systems for national and international information-sharing.<br>The measure will support authorities' efforts to both prevent and manage terrorist attacks. | MoD and relevant ministries |
| 10 | Assess possible solutions to challenges arising from terrorist use of encryption technology, including cryptocurrencies. | MoJ, MoF, MoLGRD |
| 11 | Continuously monitor the development of new weapon systems and types that may be exploited for terrorist purposes, with the aim of countering them. | MoD, MoJ |

# Focus area 3
# Threat communication

A precondition for successful counterterrorism is that information about the current threat environment reaches authorities and other stakeholders who need it. Additionally, recipients must be able to convert this knowledge into relevant preventative measures. The evolution of the threat environment has shown that the range of entities considered potential terrorist targets changes over time. This makes demands on authorities' public communication of threat assessments.

There is a need for more concrete information about what the assessments mean for different recipients in order to help them improve their understanding of the threat. There is also a need for information and guidance on measures that potential terrorist targets can implement to protect their assets. With regards to particularly vulnerable targets, authorities must be especially active in their engagement. Communication to the public about the threat environment and what to do in case of attack must be conducted in a manner that avoids causing unnecessary fear.

Threat communication must be reciprocal. It is imperative that the public and other actors notify authorities of individuals who pose a radicalisation risk, or in the event they discover terrorist-related activity. Current trends underscore the importance of this point, as threat actors increasingly operate alone rather than in groups. The progression from radicalisation to the perpetration of a terrorist act may be swift. These factors challenge the ability of the security services to uncover terrorist activity.

The following measures related to communication will be key to confronting counterterrorism challenges in coming years:

| No. | Measure | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | Implement measures to better reach entities considered potential terrorist targets. | MoJ |
| 13 | Make available and communicate to relevant stakeholders' information and guidance on security measures. | MoJ |
| 14 | Assess the establishment of a pilot project for communicating terrorist threats and advising on countermeasures. The project should be limited to advising particularly vulnerable social groups, the public, businesses, and municipalities, for instance on securing public spaces. | MoJ |
| 15 | Clearly communicate to the public where and how they may notify authorities of a radicalisation risk. | MoJ |
| 16 | Clearly communicate to the public where and how they may notify authorities of terrorist-related activity. | MoJ |
| 17 | Clarify division of responsibilities for advising on security-related counterterrorism measures. | MoJ |

# Focus area 4
# Knowledge and expertise

Counterterrorism efforts must be knowledge-based. To ensure a holistic and cross-sectoral approach we must coordinate research. Knowledge gaps must be addressed to the extent possible. Duplication of research efforts should be avoided. Existing research in the field must be actively applied to benefit both policy development and practitioners. Key public stakeholders with counterterrorism responsibilities must therefore have dedicated structures in place for monitoring and using relevant research and other knowledge.

There is a particular need to improve our knowledge about the effect of preventative measures and about factors conducive to successful reintegration. The latter applies especially to those convicted of terrorism, but also to other radicalised people. Additionally, there is a need for more research on how security-related counterterrorism measures affect society and the population at large, including attitudes towards privacy and freedom of expression and movement.

PST has in recent years published thematic reports with increasing frequency. This has enabled the transfer of knowledge to a wider group of recipients, both in the public and private sector.

The following measures related to knowledge and competence will be key to confronting counterterrorism challenges in coming years:

| No. | Measure | Responsibility |
|-----|---------|----------------|
| 18 | Increase knowledge about preventing radicalisation and extremism. The Government appointed a commission on extremism in June 2022. The commission will examine factors conducive to radicalisation and extremism in Norway today, and assess how to better address these moving forward. It will deliver its findings in an Official Norwegian Report (NOU) by the end of 2023. | MoLSI |
| 19 | Establish dedicated structures to coordinate counterterrorism research and the transfer of knowledge between relevant authorities. | MoJ |
| 20 | Improve knowledge about reintegration-related challenges and measures. These efforts shall be guided by a knowledge-based approach to method development and the exchange of lessons learned on risk assessments and effective measures. | MoJ |
| 21 | Establish dedicated structures for communicating up-to-date knowledge to practitioners in all sectors. | All ministries |
| 22 | Ensure that the commissioning of counterterrorism research supports the continuous need for up-to-date knowledge about challenges, the threat environment, and effective preventative measures. | All ministries |
| 23 | Collect and apply research, knowledge, and lessons learned from other countries and relevant international partners. | Relevant stakeholders in the field |
| 24 | Assess the need for a dedicated plan to improve cybersecurity expertise. If the threat of terrorist cyberattacks increases, several stakeholders will have to strengthen their cybersecurity capabilities. Measures include assessing whether to develop a dedicated plan to ensure sufficient expertise among relevant counterterrorism authorities, or to incorporate this objective in other plans. | MoJ + all ministries |

# Focus area 5
# Cooperation

Counterterrorism efforts are a shared responsibility across sectors and levels. Dedicated cooperation frameworks have already been established nationally. These relate mainly to preventing and handling terrorism, but also to protecting and averting. However, the use of existing frameworks may be improved. This applies for instance to the cooperation between the correctional service and municipalities in reintegration, as well as to the cooperation between emergency services, municipalities, and the private sector during and after a terrorist incident. It is also possible to better utilise different sectors' capacities through the establishment of new cooperation frameworks, for instance between emergency services, the private sector, and local government. In addition, international fora may be engaged more actively.

The following measures related to cooperation will be key to confronting counterterrorism challenges in coming years:

| No. | Measure | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| 25 | Prioritise prevention as the cornerstone of counterterrorism efforts in all relevant sectors. <br> Affected ministries shall prioritise preventative work in their respective sectors and contribute to the horizontal coordination of measures and efforts. | All ministries |
| 26 | Develop a new action plan against extremism and radicalisation. | MoLSI |
| 27 | Clarify the division of responsibilities for protecting public spaces. <br> The measure includes ensuring coordination mechanisms comprised of national authorities, municipalities, and relevant businesses and private land and property owners. | MoJ |
| 28 | Strengthen local cooperation against terrorist incidents. <br> When useful and possible, emergency services shall include relevant stakeholders in the municipal and private sector in the planning, execution, and evaluation of local counterterrorism exercises. | MoJ |
| 29 | Ensure the efficient use and coordination of resources both internally within the police and externally with counterterrorism partners. | MoJ |
| 30 | Assess how to facilitate targeted information-sharing between health services, PST, and the police, in compliance with existing confidentiality and privacy laws, to adequately follow up individuals and risk-of-violence assessments. | MoJ, MoH |
| 31 | Assess enhanced cooperation between authorities and private sector resources. <br> The measures includes considering how to make better use of private sector resources in police efforts to protect against and manage terrorism, also after the initial emergency phase. | MoJ |
| 32 | Create an overview over relevant national cooperation frameworks in the counterterrorism field, based on identified gaps and challenges. <br> The overview will form the basis for identifying duplicative structures, as well as assessing the need to strengthen or expand existing frameworks and the potential need to establish new ones. | MoJ |

| No. | Measure | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| 33 | Contribute to strengthening European countries' joint health preparedness and cross-sectoral ability to manage chemical and biological terrorist attacks through participation in the "Joint Action Terror" project through 2023. | MoH |
| 34 | Identify and prioritise international fora for counterterrorism cooperation. | MoJ, MFA and MoD |

# 6. Implementation

A collective and holistic approach to counterterrorism will align national efforts with political and strategic objectives. It will ensure that efforts are coordinated, right-sized, and cost-effective. Strong management is a precondition for implementation of the prioritised measures.

All measures shall be further operationalised through projects developed on the basis of the strategy's specified priorities. The projects are developed by the appropriate ministries in consultation with relevant subsidiary agencies.

The projects are included in the ministries' management frameworks with the affected entities, are incorporated in the entities' strategic work, and, when relevant, in long-term planning.

The Ministry of Justice and Public Security coordinates the implementation of the strategy.