

# The Swedish National Audit Office

## IT Support at the Swedish Police

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### **Background**

The Government has commissioned the RRV to study and evaluate the rationalisation programmes that have been implemented by the Swedish police. This assignment was reported on in report number 9 (see below). This study of IT support in the police has been performed as a self-initiated complement to the Government's assignment.

The study has focused on shortcomings in the decision-making procedures used by the police for IT investments, as well as on shortcomings in the implementation and use of IT. It has been mostly based on questionnaires and interviews with users. Management aspects have also been studied.

Where IT support is concerned, a process of change is taking place in the police under the direction of the National Police Board (RPS). It is emphasised in this report that the RRV regards this process of change as a significant process. It focuses on a number of problems that are described in the report. Also in other respects there are great similarities in the perception of problems between the RRV and those responsible for IT at the RPS. The RRV therefore fully supports the ongoing process of change in the police force.

The police were early users of IT for operational support. In the 1970s the Swedish police were well to the fore in their use of IT in comparison with other countries but, in the opinion of some, the 1980s were the lost years for IT in the police. In the beginning of the 1990s centrally-developed systems for local operations started to be spread to the police agencies and, some years later, IT support was given more emphasis and the IT infrastructure was extended. Today the Swedish police use a large number of computerised routines in their work. This requires high levels of know-how in respect of the functions of IT support and also makes considerable demands on the design and user-friendliness of IT support.

Developments have also had the effect that demands on management have increased, at all levels. This applies to the management of the operation, administration and development of IT support and to making optimal use of the potential offered by IT for increasing efficiency. The RRV's study, which is based on a thousand questionnaires and a hundred interviews, provides an empirically well-substantiated picture of how the police meet these demands.

If measured in terms of functions and numbers of systems, the police have extensive IT support. Over the years the users have grown accustomed to many of the shortcomings in the systems, but it is clear that many of the deficiencies are of significance where the use of resources is concerned. Police personnel spend, on average, 2.5 hours every working day in front of their computers and some of that time is taken up by duties that do not add any value to the results of operations.

There are problems and shortcomings in the following areas:

- There are considerable deficiencies in the *availability and usefulness* of IT support. IT support cannot be accessed in police cars and at scenes of crimes. If a policeman comes to a police station outside his own district, it will often take him about one hour

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to log in. The 40 systems in use have not been combined into manageable entities with common logging-in procedures and interfaces for the users.

- There are deficiencies in the *administration of investments*. The work done on systems administration is unsystematic and the heads of the police agencies do not take the opportunities to direct the administrative work.
- There are great deficiencies in the *implementation of new investments*. The projects are large and too protracted. Considerable delays often occur. The support of the police agencies is not obtained for major investments. All in all the risk of serious shortcomings is considerable.

The RRV draws attention to the following causes of the problems:

- Most importantly there is a great lack of relevant strategic management in all parts of IT operations, i.e. in the selection of investments, in their implementation and administration. The RPS and the police agencies do not co-operate to the necessary extent where management is concerned.
- The competence and responsibilities of heads of the agencies are inadequate for the development of police operations and for the use of IT in this process.
- Users skills are not of the quality necessary to make efficient use of the investments. Nor does the training of users fulfil reasonable requirements.
- Shortcomings in financial management complicate the implementation of investments and administration of existing IT support.
- The police do not have sufficient ability to communicate with the outside world, for example to provide a true and fair picture of police work and of the way in which people in different parts of the country have reason to regard their security situation.

The RRV presents a main proposal and certain other proposals to remedy the causes of the shortcomings in IT support.

### ***The RRV's main proposal***

The RRV proposes that the RPS and the police agencies draw up a common strategy for IT and other forms of operational development. The strategy should ensure that there are strong and clear links between the development of IT support and other programmes to develop operations. The work on the strategy should lead to decisions being taken on the most essential aspects in the most important areas for the development of operations. One main issue for the police is how it should strike a balance between investments to realise the potential of IT support to increase efficiency, and investments in major system development projects.

The RPS should also produce an IT and operational development strategy for its own IT support.

### ***The RRV's other proposals***

The intention of the RRV's other proposals to the RPS and the police agencies is to draw attention to essential issues relating to the focus of activities which should be given consideration in the strategy work. However, the RRV cannot specify the priority and dimensions which should be given to the programmes under each proposal. It is of utmost importance that the programmes proposed by the RRV below are designed and

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dimensioned on the basis of the considerations arising from the proposed strategy process.

In the opinion of the RRV, action should be taken along the following lines:

- Improve accessibility and usefulness of the IT support.
- Give special attention to training of managers and users. This should improve efficiency in the implementation and use of existing IT support and should also improve the management of the development of IT support.
- Provide for extensive co-operation between the RPS and police agencies where the supply of information and development of IT support for the police are concerned.
- Survey and analyse management and operational processes. Programmes to develop IT support will not be successful unless a balance is struck with other types of systematic and recurrent development programmes for operations and management processes. The RPS should initiate and co-ordinate systematic surveys, measurements and analyses of these processes and thus make it possible to develop the processes.
- Create an information security strategy.
- Reduce exposure to risk in IT operations until better conditions for IT operations have been developed.
- Improve the exchange of information between the police and the outside world.
- Give consideration to other forms for the production of IT support and IT services before the organisation of IT operations in the RPS is finally approved.

Finally, the RRV also addresses certain proposals to the Government on the issues in question:

- The Government should follow up the process of change in order to support the ambitious new start for IT operations initiated by the RPS.
  - The Government should ensure that an in-depth analysis is made, independently of the police force, of the needs of the police in respect of sensitive personal data.
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