



PREPARING FOR A RAINY DAY: WHAT CAN EU MEMBER STATES LEARN FROM FINLAND'S APPROACH TO RESILIENCE?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The EU faces growing threats from geopolitical tensions, pandemics, hybrid warfare, and climate change. These challenges require resilience that extends beyond military readiness to include robust civilian preparedness. In the 21st century, the need for rapid responses to complex threats has increased, demanding civilian sector involvement to ensure national security. Finland's Comprehensive Security Model provides a valuable framework for crafting a unified EU resilience strategy.

Key recommendations include:

Extending resilience beyond military readiness:

Civilian preparedness is essential for addressing modern, multi-faceted crises. The EU must integrate civilian aspects into its security strategies across diverse member states.

Replacing rigid structures with flexible systems:

Authorities must have clear mandates, resources, and legal backing to act effectively. A centralised body, such as a national supply and preparedness agency modelled after Finland's National Emergency Supply Agency (NESA), can coordinate cross-sectoral collaboration while accommodating national differences.

Strengthening public-private collaboration:

Risk mitigation and crisis preparedness benefit from partnerships between public authorities and private actors. This cross-sectoral collaboration and alignment ensures business continuity and societal stability during large-scale crises.

Establish an "EU Centre of Excellence for Preparedness":

Inspired by Finland's NESA, this non-regulatory body would research best practices, share crisis strategies, and support harmonised yet flexible security of supply resources across EU member states, ensuring interoperability and cooperation against 21st-century threats.

By embedding flexibility, fostering partnerships, and balancing centralised coordination with localised adaptation, the EU can develop a comprehensive whole-of-society resilience framework. This strategy will strengthen Europe's capacity to withstand and adapt to future challenges, ensuring security and stability for its citizens.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die EU steht vor zunehmenden Bedrohungen durch geopolitische Spannungen, Pandemien, hybride Kriegsführung und den Klimawandel. Diese Herausforderungen erfordern eine Resilienz, die über militärische Bereitschaft hinausgeht und eine robuste zivile Vorsorge einschließt. Im 21. Jahrhundert ist die Notwendigkeit für schnelle Reaktionen auf komplexe Bedrohungen gestiegen, wobei die Einbindung des zivilen Sektors entscheidend ist, um die nationale Sicherheit zu gewährleisten. Das finnische Modell der umfassenden Sicherheit bietet einen wertvollen Rahmen für die Entwicklung einer einheitlichen EU-Resilienzstrategie.

Wesentliche Empfehlungen:

Resilienz über militärische Bereitschaft hinaus erweitern:

Zivile Vorsorge ist unerlässlich, um modernen, vielschichtigen Krisen zu begegnen. Die EU muss zivile Aspekte in die Sicherheitsstrategien ihrer Mitgliedsstaaten integrieren.

Starre Strukturen durch flexible Systeme ersetzen:

Behörden benötigen klare Mandate, ausreichende Ressourcen und rechtliche Grundlagen, um effektiv zu handeln. Eine zentrale Einrichtung, wie eine nationale Agentur für Versorgung und Vorsorge nach dem Vorbild der finnischen Nationalen Notvorratsagentur (National Emergency Supply Agency, NESAs), könnte die sektorübergreifende Zusammenarbeit koordinieren und nationale Unterschiede berücksichtigen.

Öffentlich-private Zusammenarbeit stärken:

Die Risikominderung und Krisenvorsorge profitieren von Partnerschaften zwischen öffentlichen Behörden und privaten Akteuren. Diese sektorübergreifende Zusammenarbeit und Abstimmung gewährleistet die Geschäftskontinuität und die Stabilität der Gesellschaft in großangelegten Krisensituationen.

Ein EU-Kompetenzzentrum für Vorsorge etablieren:

Inspiziert von Finnlands NESAs könnte diese nicht-regulatorische Einrichtung bewährte Verfahren erforschen, Krisenstrategien teilen und eine harmonisierte, aber flexible Versorgungssicherheit in den EU-Mitgliedsstaaten unterstützen. Dies würde die Interoperabilität und Zusammenarbeit gegen die Bedrohungen des 21. Jahrhunderts gewährleisten.

Indem Flexibilität verankert, Partnerschaften gefördert und zentrale Koordination mit lokaler Anpassung ausbalanciert werden, kann die EU einen umfassenden gesellschaftsweiten Resilienzrahmen entwickeln. Diese Strategie wird Europas Fähigkeit stärken, sich mit Blick auf zukünftige Herausforderungen anzupassen und diese zu bewältigen, um Sicherheit und Stabilität für seine Bürgerinnen und Bürger zu gewährleisten.

INTRODUCTION

In an era of heightened tensions and increased security concerns stemming from Russian unpredictable hostilities and a faltering liberal, rules-based world order (World Economic Forum, 2024), Europe is seeking effective strategies to bolster its civilian and military security. While armament has clearly been the visible focus in the public debate lately (SIPRI, 2024), we stress that military capability is not enough to ensure Europe will withstand future crises, be it economic or military, conventional, or cyber. These threats may seem theoretical in the same way as a global pandemic or a war in the heart of Europe was seen only a few years back or tangible threats that creep in slowly, such as climate change. To this end, the president of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen commissioned a report from the former Finnish president Sauli Niinistö, to highlight the need for civilian and defence preparedness, and comprehensive security across EU member states. In her speech announcing the report commission to Niinistö von der Leyen reiterated the shuttered illusion of permanent peace in Europe and praised the breadth with which Finland look at preparedness: "Every part of the Finnish society is able to help safeguard vital functions in times of crisis, ensure basic supply for the population and support defence forces in their duties. This is what true preparedness looks like. And this is what makes Finland so resilient as a nation. So we have a lot to learn from Finland. It is a specific mind-set, and I believe we should adopt it more widely in Europe." (European Commission, 2024a)

Niinistö's report from October 2024 emphasised the need for a unified resilience

strategy to tackle rising threats. It promotes a Comprehensive Security model largely influenced by the Finnish model, with a whole-of-government approach where security considerations permeate all public policy and engage all sectors of society, from businesses to private citizens. Key recommendations include establishing EU-wide preparedness standards and strengthening intelligence cooperation among member states. To bolster these efforts, the report calls for dedicating 20 % of the EU budget to resilience and crisis preparedness (European Commission, 2024b). These ambitious measures aim to position the EU as a more capable security actor able to respond swiftly to diverse, multi-domain threats. This policy paper aims at providing a background to Niinistö's report, reviewing key aspects of Finnish national civilian preparedness – with a focus on the security of supply coordinator National Emergency Supply Agency, NESAs – and presents policy recommendations for the consideration of the EU member states.

Preparedness is resilience

We begin by defining and contextualising preparedness as a part of resilience in the context of Finland, EU, and NATO. On a national level, resilience can be defined as anticipation, resistance, recovery and adaptation, emphasising proactive preparedness and learning from crises (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2021). Reflecting on the definition, resilience can be understood as an emergent property of a series of sequential phases consisting of preparedness, response, and recovery. Successful resilience derives from well planned and executed preparedness activities. Subsequently,

Finland has advocated for a Preparedness Union Strategy for the EU, which would aim to ensure that the EU and its member states are better prepared for “increasingly complex, cross-border and multi-faceted crises that often occur simultaneously” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2024). Preparedness should be based on a comprehensive whole-of-society approach with contributions of all policy sectors. This description highlights the significant demands and strains modern threats may place on national security. And finally, in the context of NATO - the backbone and real muscle of European defence and security - preparedness is embedded in NATO's definition of resilience in the military context as the capacity to prepare for, resist, respond to, and quickly recover from shocks and disruptions. The principle of resilience is rooted in NATO's Article 3 that concerns civilian preparedness and business continuity of governments (NATO, 2024). Hence, from the point of view of comprehensive security, resilience dramatically extends beyond military domains when striving to upkeep normal operations under severe stress; this is clearly seen in the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Brovko, 2024).

The Finnish Comprehensive Security Model

Finland's resilience strategy, encoded in the country's 'Comprehensive Security Model' (Valtonen, V., & Branders, M., 2021), meets these definitions by a wide margin. It integrates military and civilian efforts to safeguard national sovereignty and ensure the livelihood and security of its citizens against internal and external threats. The model involves broad, intimate

cooperation across authorities, businesses, NGOs, and citizens, thereby maintaining and enhancing vital societal functions and psychological resilience. Key to this strategy is the active regulatory involvement of authorities in planning, supervising, and monitoring all society wide functions needed to weather severe crises.

Even though the comprehensive security model is somewhat shared by (Wigell, Hägglund, Fjäder, Hakala, Ketola & Mikkola, 2022) neighbouring Nordic countries (in Sweden named “total defence”) (Adamson, Moyer, 2024), the Finnish resilience model draws upon the country's unique characteristics. By its independence in 1917 Finland was one of the poorest European countries and later wrecked by a long war with the Soviet Union during WWII. The model is rooted in this history and a political realism that Finland had to practise in the post-war period (Huoltovarmuuskeskus, 2023). Threatened by its geographical proximity to Russia, Finland developed specific strategies to cope with geopolitical tensions, and enhance its security and preparedness. This included traditional defence measures such as mandatory conscription but also an all-party policy of intimate diplomatic relations with Russia (Forsberg, Moyer & Kähkönen, 2022) - sometimes pejoratively referred to as a period of finlandisation. However, membership in the EU in 1995, close Nordic and international collaboration, and a recent membership in NATO in 2023 has severed the politically motivated ties with Russia (Forsberg & Moyer, 2022). Evidently, the country has also evolved significantly since the 1940s on several fronts. Finland now ranks high in various global country comparison listings of societal and economic development (United

Nations, 2024; Reporters without Borders, 2024; World Economic Forum, 2024; World Happiness Report, 2024; Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy, 2024) but its population is still highly committed (79 %) to defending Finland at whatever outcome in war (Ruotuväki, 2024), which is significantly higher than in most European countries. The country has nonetheless managed to keep resilience in its essence.

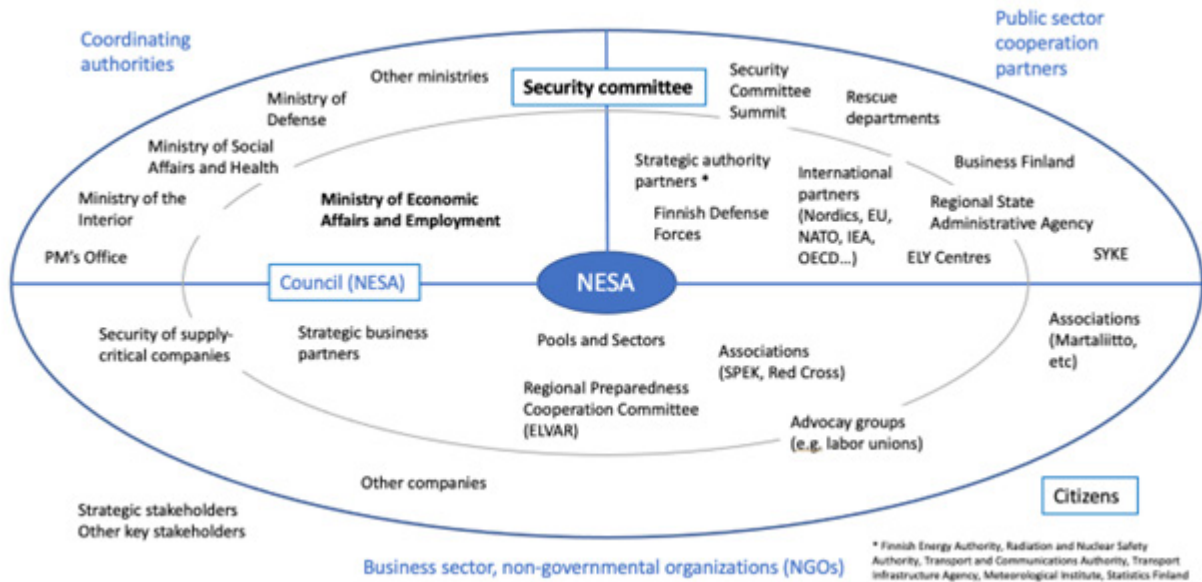
During the last decade changes in the operational environment in Europe has put preparedness activities under severe pressure, where the timeframe for reaction has significantly shortened from months to even days. On the military side this became evident with the appearance of the Russian “little green men” in Crimea during the 2014 Russo-Ukrainian war (Brookings, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic was a similar wake-up call for civilian preparedness. At the outbreak of the pandemic actions were needed within days as within weeks EU-borders started to close, putting national preparedness activities at pressure (Suomen Varustamot, 2022), exemplifying the shortened time frame. With the changing threat environment demanding faster responses than before, resilience should be encouraged and strengthened on both the regulative and operational levels, well in advance of a crisis.

The Finnish national emergency supply agency

The Niinistö report outlines a series of recommendations aimed at bolstering the European Union's collective security and resilience. A central theme of the report is the need for enhanced public-private cooperation to build resilience across

critical sectors. This includes strengthening information-sharing and coordination mechanisms, equipping private sector actors for preparedness and crisis response, and reinforcing the security of supply for critical goods during emergencies. It also emphasises the importance of systematically integrating private sector expertise into the development of preparedness policies and emergency planning.

One key proposal is the adoption of a “preparedness-by-design” principle, particularly in the context of the anticipated revision of the EU's public procurement directive and related regulations. This would embed resilience considerations into procurement processes from the outset. Additionally, the report calls for the establishment of a physical resilience framework for key manufacturing industries, complemented by industry-specific preparedness plans (European Commission, 2024b). Many of the recommendations outlined in the Niinistö report are already being implemented in Finland, showcasing how national strategies can align with broader EU-level security goals. A prime example is the establishment of a joint EU stockpiling strategy to incentivise and coordinate public and private reserves of critical resources (European Commission, 2024b). In Finland, this role is embodied by the National Emergency Supply Agency (NESA) (Huoltovarmuuskeskus, 2024), which lies at the heart of the country's comprehensive security model. It is an internationally nearly unique public agency that not only withholds the role of ‘security of supply’, ‘preparedness’ and ‘continuity management’ but is also the central coordinator of national preparedness in Finland collaborating with the private and third sector (Ministry of Economic Affairs



Key networks and stakeholders, NESA. (Adoption of Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2021)

and Employment of Finland, 2021). In its earliest form, Finnish security of supply was moulded after an equivalent model from Switzerland already in the 1950s and in its current form NESA was founded in the early 1990s. Since its inception NESA has evolved from material storage of vital resources such as fuels and food to its current state of responsibilities. According to the law on security of supply, NESA is responsible for ensuring the functioning of technical systems vital for security of supply, secure the essential production of goods and services including the production of goods supporting the military defence, and manage state security stockpiles (Finlex, 1992). The goal of NESA's work is to ensure that the most severe emergency situations can be managed with national measures (Huoltovarmuuskeskus, 2024). Each ministry directs and monitors the implementation of tasks related to securing the vital functions of society within its sector and the development of

the operational capacity required for these tasks. The Finnish national organisational preparedness culture aims for continuous learning, experimentation, and adaptation. A characteristic of Finnish preparedness is the strong inclusion of the private sector in the readiness activities through public-private partnership (PPP). At the heart of this system are pools coordinated by NESA. These pools cover all sectors essential for a functioning society including critical infrastructure, logistics, industry (including defence industry), construction, primary production and food supply, trade and distribution, healthcare, digital security and media. These seven sectors, and their 22 pools are coordinated by NESA and aimed at monitoring, investigating, planning, and preparing measures to improve supply security in their respective industries. The pools are led by the non-governmental industry associations and established through agreements with NESA. They bring together some 1500 actors from both the public and

private sectors designated as critical for the security of supply and preparedness in Finland (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2021)

Benefits of the industry-led approach in the pool system is that the PPP-framework is evaluated as a more dynamic approach than detailed regulation by authorities. It gives the relevant players the required skills without bringing too burdensome bureaucracy upon them. Additionally, the pools enhance collaboration and ensure a broad investment by all players in the preparedness activities, which on a macro level benefits all actors.

The energy supply pool oversees preparation and contingency planning for energy production, transmission, and distribution by companies (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2021). This proactive planning ensures Finland's energy supply and distribution during crises. The national grid operator Fingrid Oyj coordinates the pool, with power companies participating in its activities to maintain continuity in all situations. The pool also participates in national preparedness exercises and organises training for contingency managers. NESAs have also struck power production reservation agreements with companies in the pool.

As a comparatively small nation (compared to its military size) Finland does not have an abundance of domestic defence corporations producing war time equipment (Forsberg, Kähkönen & Öberg, 2022). Therefore, the Finnish Defence Forces (FDF) Logistics command has production reservation agreements with specific Finnish companies to produce war-time equipment, such as gunpowder and

ammunition. These production reservation agreements are struck with over 1000 non-military Finnish private sector companies. As a central preparedness coordinator NESAs collaborate closely with the FDF. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine the FDF published that it had activated some of its agreements to produce equipment for times of crises to test and refine the scheme (Helsingin Sanomat, 2024). These agreements are voluntary and rely partly on the companies' wish to support the defence of the country but can also stipulate investments from the FDF in the production facilities and equipment reserved for state of emergency production. The collaboration with the public authorities has also ensured that the companies in the pools can request special rights for their critical employees to be freed from military service during crises to ensure business continuity

Another key component of the Finnish model is the emphasis on individual and household preparedness. The "72 hours concept" advocates that all households prepare to cope independently for at least three days in case of a disruption, storing sufficient food, water, and medicine supplies and being aware of where to find reliable information during emergencies (Pelastustoimi, 2024). Finland's "72 hours concept" serves as a best practice that could inspire an EU-wide recommendation for household preparedness, promoting self-sufficiency across all member states in emergencies.

Finland's civil defence shelters are an unique and integral part of its emergency preparedness strategy (Forsberg, Moyer & Kähkönen, 2022). Designed to protect civilians during emergencies (City of

Helsinki, 2024), Finland has approximately 50,500 civil defence shelters (Ministry of the Interior of Finland, 2024) that can accommodate 4.8 million people, covering roughly 86 % of the population and a significant part of urban areas. Designed with multi-purpose in mind, in normal times, the shelters are used for other purposes, including sports halls, parking lots, or metro stations. While Finland's civil defence shelter system is among the most comprehensive, the EU can consider a collective strategy to enhance civilian protection infrastructure across member states.

Adapting rigid structures for a flexible and unified EU response

The Finnish National Emergency Supply Agency exemplifies how public-private cooperation can enhance preparedness. A comparable EU-wide framework could build on this model while simultaneously adapting to diverse member state contexts. The comprehensive security model offers valuable insights into how a nation can build preparedness through a whole-of-society approach. However, as we highlight, the increasingly complex and fast-moving nature of modern threats requires a shift from rigid structures to more flexible, process-oriented thinking. Understanding and predicting the dynamics of change has become inherently challenging which requires pragmatic solutions. To navigate this challenge, it is important to view national preparedness through a lens that captures the interconnections between various sectors and the synergy effects that emerge. This broad perspective helps identify critical areas where interventions are most needed. Rather than aiming for a static state of perfect preparedness, the

focus should be on building the capacity to sense, respond, and transform in the face of disruptions.

Given the urgency stemming from the complex threats of the 21st century, EU member states ought to ensure a sufficient level of national civilian resilience. We therefore recommend establishing a non-regulatory standard-setting Centre of Excellence for EU-wide preparedness and security of supply which emulates key learnings from the Finnish NESAs model. The core function of the Centre would be to research best practices, and share information regarding preparedness activities such as stockpile levels and best approaches to crises between member states. The depth and width of implementation of elements should however stand with each member country to make use of the dynamic approach. An end goal of the work of the Centre is to ensure that EU member states have sufficiently harmonised security of supplies coordinating structures that are interoperable and allows EU-wide cooperation to mitigate threats.

By complementing their strong structural nation-specific foundations with a more process-oriented mindset, EU member states can further strengthen their resilience in the face of an uncertain future. This approach, balancing stability and flexibility, centralised coordination and decentralised adaptation, offers insightful lessons for countries seeking to navigate an increasingly complex world.

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