

# Supervision to combat waste crime

AREAS OF CONTINUOUS NORDIC  
COOPERATION BASED ON A  
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE NORDIC  
COUNTRIES' SUPERVISION SYSTEMS AND  
WORKING METHODS



SWEDISH ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION AGENCY

# Supervision to combat waste crime

A study of the Nordic countries' supervision systems and working methods

October 2024

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## ABOUT THE STUDY

The study "*Supervision to combat waste crime – A study of the Nordic countries' supervision systems and working methods*" has been conducted by Ensucon AB, commissioned by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. The purpose of this comparative study is to showcase good practices, promote cooperation, build knowledge, and facilitate exchanges of experiences, thereby contributing to strengthening the Nordic countries' ability to conduct effective and appropriate work against waste crime.

In 2024, Sweden holds the chairmanship of the Nordic Council of Ministers. This study is one of the priorities of the Swedish chairmanship and is financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The study, initiated in February 2024, has focused on understanding the supervisory systems of Nordic countries in combating illegal waste management. It is based on four interconnected parts: a literature review, interviews, a workshop, and a final report. The interviews and workshop have been carried out with representatives from the Nordic countries.

The suggestions for areas of continued Nordic cooperation express the perspectives of the report authors and do not represent the Nordic Council of Ministers or any of the national governments.

## DATE

2024-10-15

## Key findings

An analysis of key findings of the study is presented to highlight similarities, differences, challenges, and good examples from the Nordic countries.

### RESOURCES AND FINANCING OF SUPERVISION

Fee-based supervision, reflecting the polluter pays principle, is common. All countries face a lack of time and resources for effective supervision, with additional funding needed for proactive supervision and method development.

### PLANNING OF SUPERVISION

Planned supervision is common, with Norway, Finland, and Sweden using risk-based planning, while Iceland, Denmark, and the Faroe Islands apply it partially. Reactive supervision is generally rare. Existing resource shortages hinder effective supervision planning and undermine effective and equitable supervision.

### METHOD AND TECHNOLOGY IN SUPERVISION

Supervision methods are similar across the Nordic countries, with sampling being rare but potentially strengthening enforcement. Opinions on unannounced supervision differ; its impact and funding are unclear. Supervision of transboundary shipments of waste often involves unannounced inspections, but sampling and supervision after office hours are rare. Views differ on office-hour supervision, with some arguing for its importance, while some see unannounced visits as more critical. Improving methods through increased sampling and unannounced, reactive, or out-of-hours supervision can be investigated on a national level.

### COOPERATION WITH OTHER AUTHORITIES

Clear legal divisions of responsibilities among supervisory authorities are vital for effective governance. Time and resource constraints impede collaboration, while limited data sharing across countries and between authorities hampers the detection of criminal operations in waste management. Additionally, there is a lack of forums for strategic communication on waste crime and case-specific coordination at regional and local levels.

### BURDEN OF PROOF

Supervision is generally trust-based, which is positively regarded in general, but many interviewees believe that a more stringent, control-based approach is necessary. Waste classification responsibility lies with the waste producer or operator. When cases are reported to the police, challenges arise as the burden of proof shifts from the operator to the prosecutor.

### CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Instructions and warnings are the most common consequences for violations, viewed positively as they encourage operators to improve. In some cases, low penalty fees for waste crimes fail to deter illegal activities, as the fines are often outweighed by potential profits. Additionally, no country has established effective structural cooperation between supervision and the legal justice system, leading to challenges in aligning approaches, particularly in evidence collection.

## Challenges and areas of continuous Nordic cooperation

The aim of the study is to showcase good practices, build knowledge, and facilitate exchanges of experiences. Furthermore, it aims to foster continued cooperation between the Nordic countries. The results of the study have culminated in two common challenges, that could be effectively addressed through collaborative efforts at the Nordic level. The table below summarizes the challenges and proposes actions for addressing these challenges within the Nordic cooperation.

CHALLENGES	AREAS OF CONTINUOUS NORDIC COOPERATION
<p><b>Availability of data and tracking of waste</b></p> <p>Improving waste tracking and data-sharing capabilities between authorities can facilitate better coordination and informed decision-making, ultimately strengthening oversight and accountability in waste management practices.</p>	<p><b>Develop methods and systems for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased waste tracking</li><li>• Better availability for sharing data between authorities</li></ul>
<p><b>Lack of international cooperation and communication</b></p> <p>Improving international cooperation and communication among Nordic countries is essential for effectively addressing waste crime, as it allows for coordinated responses, better resource use, and targeted strategies for local and regional challenges.</p>	<p><b>Utilize national authorities and the existing international networks as a catalyst for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developing forms for international cooperation on combating waste crime</li><li>• Developing platforms and systems for international communication regarding specific cases on a regional and local level</li></ul>