



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

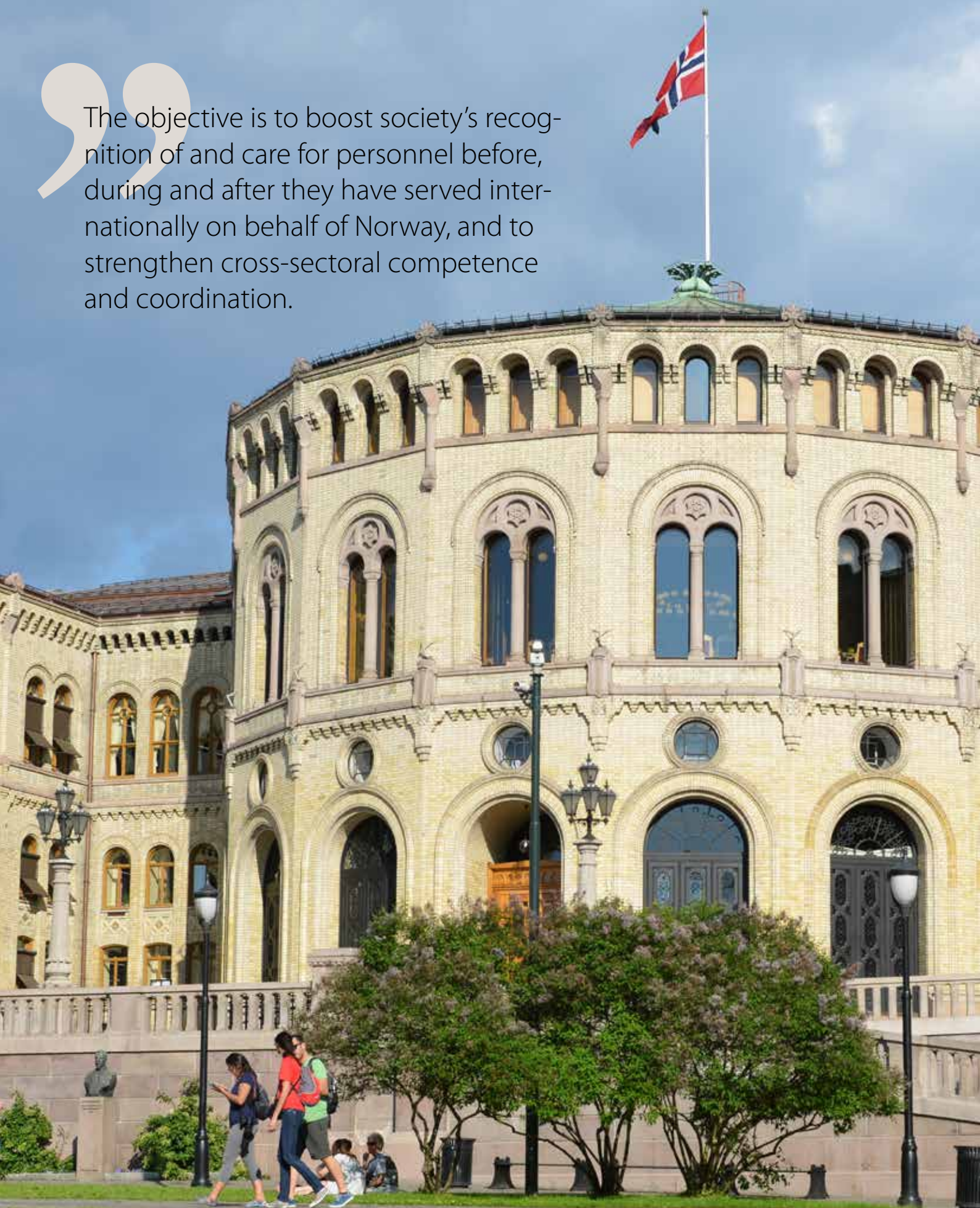
Follow-up plan

In Service for Norway

The government's follow-up plan for the support and care of personnel before, during and after international service



”The objective is to boost society’s recognition of and care for personnel before, during and after they have served internationally on behalf of Norway, and to strengthen cross-sectoral competence and coordination.





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PHOTO: ASGEIR SPANGE BREKKE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Foreword

The struggle for peace, stability and human rights is being conducted in a variety of ways across the globe. Norway participates in this effort through humanitarian aid and funding, support for political processes and, when necessary, military intervention.

We do so to support the values we hold dear, and to protect our national interests in an unstable world, where conflict in far away places can rapidly have consequences for ourselves, both nationally and regionally.

Our soldiers, police officers and other representatives from the justice sector make a substantial contribution to increased security and stability in other countries. Foreign service representatives regularly deal with demanding and distressing cases. Many are stationed in areas of upheaval and conflict. All of them perform difficult missions in countries where conditions are extremely challenging. Despite the stresses and strains of the situation in which they operate, they accomplish their tasks in an excellent manner.

For this they have the respect and gratitude of the Norwegian government and the country as a whole.

Everyone who has served internationally on behalf of Norway returns home with expertise that is extremely valuable, also for our country's business community. We must acknowledge and utilise this competence to an even greater extent than we do today. The government will follow up and reinforce the efforts that have been made in recent years to highlight the skills that returning service people have acquired, to communicate our gratitude and to give them our support. This is a responsibility that we all share – irrespective of sector or administrative level. We will now make a special effort to encourage the business sector to make use of this competence, and to ensure that the public welfare sector can provide more coordinated and more competent help to those who need it.

Fortunately, few people suffer serious injury while serving abroad, but the lives of those who are affected change dramatically. With this plan the government wishes to improve the way personnel are prepared for international service and followed up when they return.



Robert Eriksson,
Minister of Labour and Social Affairs



Ine Eriksen Søreide,
Minister of Defence



Jan Tore Sanner, *Minister of Local Government and Modernisation*



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Anders Anundsen,
Minister of Justice and Public Security



PHOTO: GABRIEL LUND, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

1 Introduction

The objective of this plan is to increase the recognition and support given to Norwegian personnel before, during and after they have served internationally on behalf of Norway.¹ This is a goal that the government unanimously endorses, and which will be followed up by the seven government ministers who have responsibility for the individuals concerned, either directly as their employer or in another capacity. In the same way as for the action plan *In Service for Norway*, the target group comprises all Norwegian citizens from the foreign service, justice and defence sectors who have participated or are participating in peacekeeping or peacemaking forces, or state-building efforts in other

countries. The umbrella term “personnel” is therefore used throughout the plan.²

The follow-up plan builds on *In Service for Norway* and the Report to the Storting No. 34 (2008–2009). Investigations conducted by the Office of the Auditor General of Norway, as well as recent research and evaluations of the action plan, form the basis for the arrangements and priorities included here.³

In Service for Norway has been a guide for efforts in this area for the past three years, and has played a major role in the improvements so far achieved. Through

¹ With respect to the Norwegian Armed Forces, the term “international service” in this context includes international operations. By definition an international operation is “any operation abroad that requires the use of military forces, and which is authorised by the Norwegian authorities” (Section 3 of the Armed Forces Personnel Act).

² For armed forces personnel this includes veterans who are participating or have participated in international operations.

³ See the list of evaluations and reports presented at the end of this document.



it we have taken a major step forward in our efforts to give personnel the support and recognition they deserve. They have been given a boost both politically and in the public consciousness, and have gained a clearer voice in the Norwegian public debate.

In Service for Norway contained 126 initiatives, most relating to the Norwegian Armed Forces. The vast majority of these initiatives have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented, through close collaboration between six government ministries. This cross-sectoral cooperation has been crucial to the success of the action plan.

The most important results are *firstly*, the establishment of a generous compensation scheme and an independent appeals body for compensation claims relating to veterans' mental health issues. An evaluation report on

this special compensation scheme was published in the spring of 2014. The Ministry of Defence will now consider whether any changes are needed in the management and administration of the scheme.

Secondly, the establishment of the Norwegian Armed Forces' one-year programme has provided personnel and their families with good follow-up for a period of 12 months after completion of their tour of duty. The one-year programme is a tool to prevent and identify injuries, and to give those who need it the support necessary to return to the workforce. Everyone who returns from an international operation must make a "decompression stop" on their way home. The purpose of decompression is to gain some physical and mental distance from the mission, undergo a medical examination, and obtain information about and, if necessary, a referral to further support and follow-up. That

personnel have the chance to readjust before they return to their loved- ones not only means a lot to the individual, but is also important in terms of preventing problems later on.

Thirdly, the creation of a Veterans Department within the Norwegian Defence Staff has been hugely significant. Its establishment has given every veteran an open door into the Armed Forces. Here they will meet other veterans who know what service in high-risk zones is all about. They can also seek advice and guidance about how to proceed if they need support or treatment.

Fourthly, considerable improvements have come about in the way society recognises those who have served overseas. Recognition means a lot to everyone who has taken part in hazardous operations on behalf of Norway, and to their families. Medal ceremonies attended by senior political figures have been introduced. Furthermore, the nation's highest honours can now be awarded for participation in international operations. Commemoration of Armed Forces Remembrance Day⁴ and the combined Liberation and Veterans' Day on 8 May has also been introduced as the visible expression of society's gratitude and appreciation.

However, recognition also has another, less visible side. The public's awareness of what a high-risk international mission entails, and the unique competence such a mission endows, is at least as important. Similarly, it is crucial for the individual concerned to receive adequate information about support schemes and treatment programmes, and to encounter competence and understanding in their dealings with the public sector. These are areas in which the results of the previous action plan can be improved.

Evaluations show that one of the greatest challenges for personnel today lies in their contacts with civilian

welfare services.⁵ Challenges resulting from their service abroad are often complex and require assistance from various different bodies, such as the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), the Norwegian Public Service Pension Fund (SPK), the Child and Family Protection Agency, public health and welfare services, and others. The various bodies may appear poorly coordinated. Furthermore, welfare services sometimes lack an understanding of the strains and difficulties that service abroad can involve, and their subsequent after-effects. Information about the routines for applications to and decisions by NAV and the SPK can be difficult both to obtain and to understand. Obtaining documentation from the Armed Forces, NAV and public health and welfare services is often time-consuming. Today (in 2014) there are still long waiting lists for specialists who have the competence needed to write specialist assessment reports. A lengthy decision-making process with an uncertain outcome is an additional source of stress.

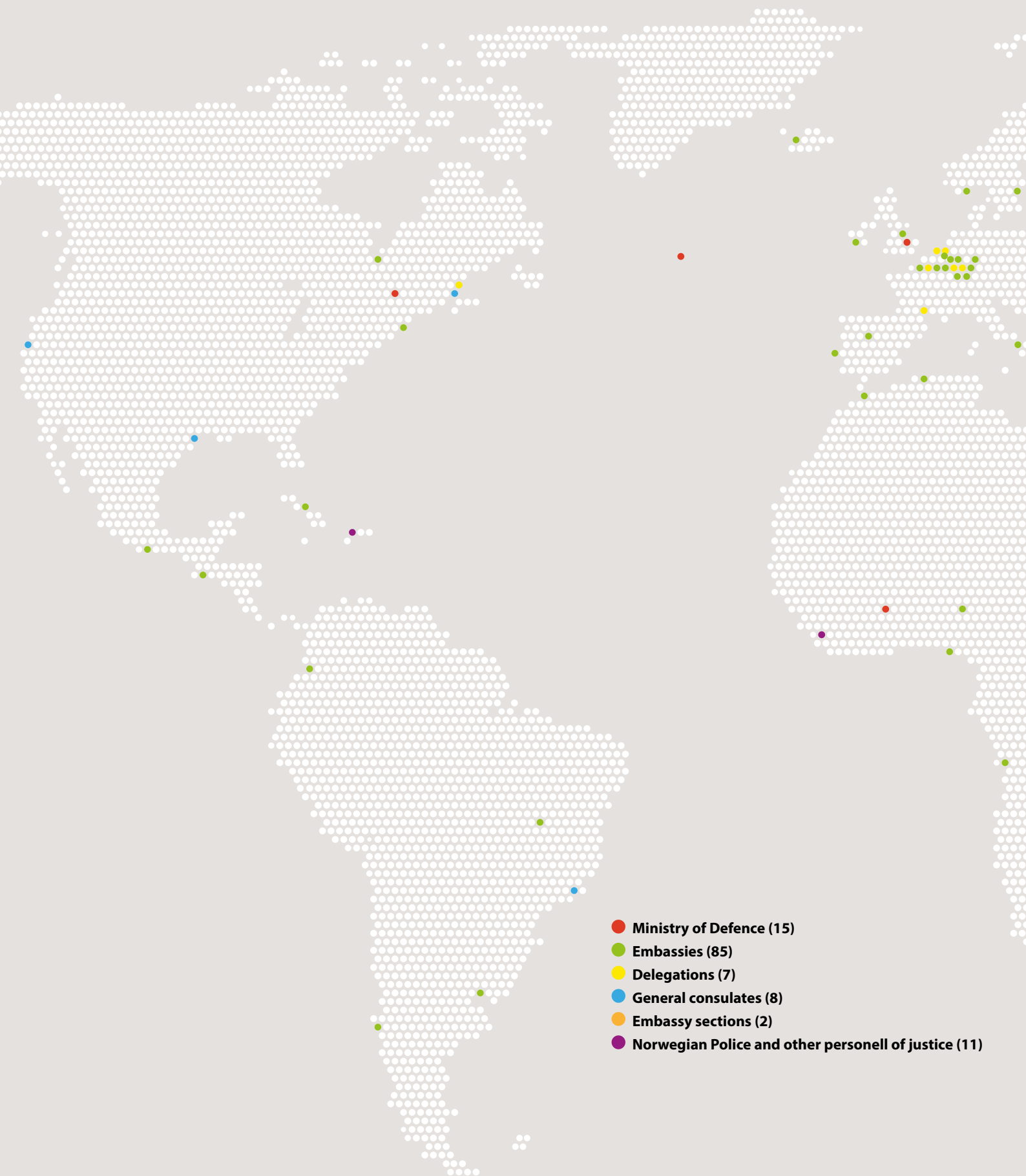
The Norwegian Armed Forces have done a lot to improve the situation for personnel who have taken part in international operations. Now the civilian sector will take a greater responsibility for ensuring that individuals receive the help and support they need and are entitled to. This is something the government unanimously endorses. Competence levels within the healthcare sector, the Child and Family Protection Agency and NAV need to be enhanced. The individual must be given better information about existing schemes and routines, and about their rights and opportunities for appeal. Administration must be centralised and the documentation requirements reassessed, with a view to simplification. A review of the compensation schemes available is also necessary. Local authorities play a key role, and it is at the municipal level that the challenges are greatest. Closer and more effective coordination within the civilian sector, with the focus on the municipal level, is therefore a key element in this follow-up plan.

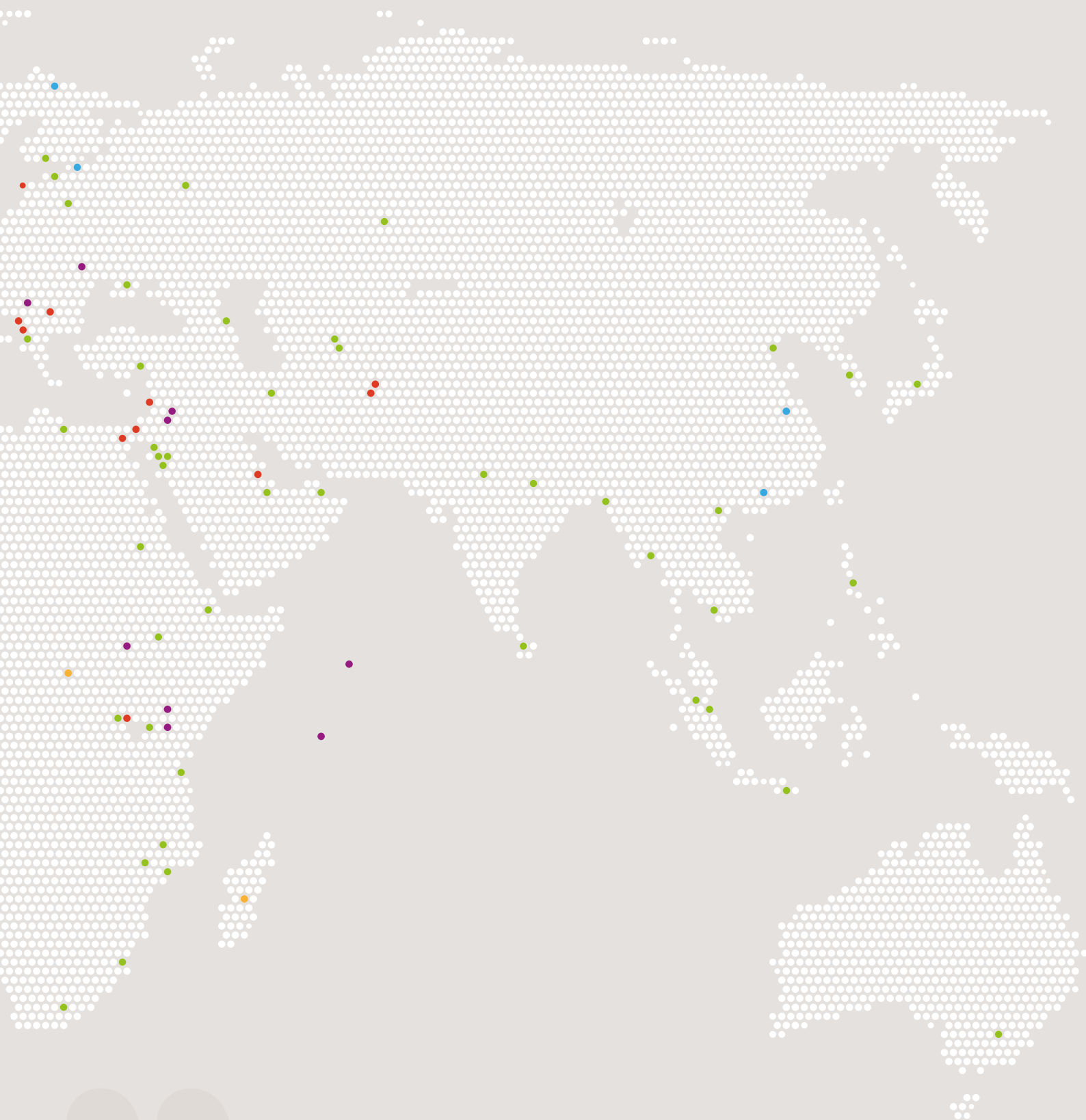
4 First Sunday in November

5 Pilot Project Østerdalen, final report (2014) Evaluation of the action plan *In Service for Norway*, PWC (2014)



PHOTO: GABRIEL LUND, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE





Norway's foreign service works to promote Norwegian interests, serve Norwegian citizens abroad and build a peaceful, fair and sustainable world.

(The Foreign Service's vision. From Strategy 2017.)



PHOTO: ASGEIR SPANGE BREKKE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE



As a global forum for international cooperation the UN is an important factor in securing peaceful development in the world, and – along with joint European and Nordic security arrangements – reinforces long-term stability and peaceful development in Norway’s neighbouring regions. The government will support and strengthen international cooperation in the field of security and stability.¹

¹ Political platform for a coalition government between the Norwegian Conservative Party and the Norwegian Progress Party (2013)

2 Types of service and personnel

Through their efforts Norwegian foreign service, justice and armed forces personnel support Norway’s foreign policy goals by promoting Norwegian interests, reinforcing an international legal system based on international law, and working for security, democracy and fundamental human rights. Norway’s contribution to preventing war and the emergence of threats, as well as its work for peace and stability in other countries, is an important part of this effort.

Norway’s contribution is multifaceted. Political, economic, humanitarian and development initiatives are equally important in the effort to build a peaceful, fair and sustainable world. The police help to rebuild or strengthen national law enforcement agencies in countries which are or have been in conflict. The efforts of the armed forces are primarily linked to security, and can play an important supporting role in paving the way for economic development, humanitarian aid and political consolidation. This in turn is crucial for the long-term stabilisation of society. Through their efforts armed forces personnel help to create a secure environment in which economic and political reconstruction can take place. As society slowly returns to normal, with a functional legal system and security capability, domestic security can gradually be left to the national authorities.

Norwegian personnel serving internationally are highly professional, and have considerable technical

expertise, flexibility and ability to tackle new situations. They are trained to lead, take responsibility, persevere and make difficult decisions under pressure. They have gained experience in working with people of different mindsets, as well as diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. Each one acquires skills that are valuable for Norwegian businesses and for society as a whole. They have made a contribution they can all be proud of.

But that contribution can also come at a high price. Many have witnessed human suffering or humanitarian disasters. They have experienced fierce fighting, transported the sick and wounded, and given life-saving medical assistance. They have put themselves in harm’s way, and risked their own lives. Such experiences can result in difficulties for the individual once their tour of duty is over. This applies both to those who serve and their families, who often live with worry and uncertainty, and who must shoulder the burden at home. They are not merely affected by the mission, they are part of the mission.

The extent to which individuals and their families require support and follow-up varies, partly as a consequence of the type of service, the number of missions and the stresses and strains the individual has been exposed to. Only a minority are affected. But for those who need help, society has a collective duty to provide care and support.



STATE SECRETARY IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HANS BRATTSKAR, IN THE UN. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

2.1 Foreign service personnel

Norway is represented by expatriate foreign service personnel in just over 100 locations around the world. The foreign service has 630 expatriate and 990 local employees, who regularly handle demanding and distressing cases. This can involve helping Norwegian citizens abroad, or responding to emergencies and political events. Many foreign service staff members and their families are stationed in areas of heightened risk, due to war or armed conflict, crime, serious pollution or other grave threats to their physical and mental health.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has, in connection with the security situation, defined certain foreign service missions as being particularly onerous, and orders expatriates to take regular breaks away. As per April 2014 these missions include Kabul, Islamabad, Juba, Cairo and Khartoum. Expatriate staff at these missions are followed up particularly closely, with health checks before, during and after their postings, preparatory training courses before departure, visits to the missions, and security measures and routines. Children are not allowed to join their parents, and at some missions there are restrictions on whether the individual's spouse/partner can accompany them.

The majority of those posted to foreign service missions are permanent ministry employees, and continue as such after their posting, either at another foreign service

mission or at ministry headquarters itself. Personnel are looked after under the normal duty of care that employers have. This includes personnel who have served at particularly onerous postings, and is irrespective of whether the individual is a permanent employee of the Foreign Ministry or on temporary secondment from their ordinary employer. Staff members are followed up largely within the normal company health service and by a provider of occupational medical health checks and tropical/travel medicine. Medical conditions in need of treatment are dealt with within the public health service.

2.2 Ministry of Justice and Public Security personnel

The Ministry of Justice and Public Security provides personnel for international operations from the police force, the Norwegian Crisis Response Pool and the Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning (DSB). The assignments and tasks undertaken vary considerably. All expatriate staff are followed up closely, with preparatory training courses before departure, discussions before and after the mission, visits to the location concerned and security measures.

Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning (DSB): Since the 1990s the DSB has deployed Civil Defence Force resources to carry out international aid work in the form of support for UN aid workers, with the emphasis on tented camps with accommodation and provisioning, as well as field communications support.



PHOTO: KÅRE M. HANSEN, NATIONAL POLICE DIRECTORATE

Police: Participation in international operations is not a primary task for Norwegian police forces, and is not part of their basic training. Nevertheless, since the UN operation in Namibia in 1989, over 1,200 Norwegian police officers have taken part in various missions for the UN, EU, OSCE or bilaterally, in a total of 35 different countries. The normal contract period is 12 months. Their assignments have at times been extremely challenging, and personnel have, in connection with certain operations, been armed for their own protection. Serving in countries where the normal infrastructure of society has broken down, either because fighting has occurred or is ongoing, is stressful. Some of the locations where Norwegian law enforcement officials have served have been isolated and remote, with all the challenges that entails. Several police officers have been exposed to life-threatening and traumatic experiences in war zones or other areas of armed conflict. Some have been taken hostage and had their health affected by climatic conditions or serious illness. No Norwegian police officers have been killed while in service for the UN, but some have been injured or become ill.

So far, all police officers seconded to such operations are currently in service (permanent employees). These individuals therefore have excellent opportunities for follow-up by an employer with an understanding of international peacekeeping operations. The same

opportunities are afforded to police officers who have served in international operations on behalf of the Norwegian Armed Forces.

As per April 2014, 46 Norwegian police officers are serving in international operations on behalf of Norway. Personnel are divided between operations in Haiti, Liberia and South Sudan for the UN, Djibouti and Palestine for the EU, Palestine for TIPH (Hebron), Serbia (Belgrade) for the OSCE, the Seychelles for Interpol, and East Africa (Nairobi) with Training for Peace (TFP).

Norwegian Crisis Response Pool: This unit was created in 2003. Its members are drawn from the prosecution and public defender services, the courts of justice as well as the prison and probation service. These individuals help to develop the rule of law in vulnerable states that are transitioning to democracy. Some of those posted from the Norwegian Crisis Response Pool have found themselves in the same situation as the police officers.

The majority of those posted from the pool are permanent employees within the justice sector, and continue in the same position after their assignment has concluded. Staff who are permanently employed within the justice sector, or who serve on temporary secondment from their ordinary employer, are looked after under the normal duty of care that employers have.

2.3 Armed forces personnel

The Norwegian Armed Forces must have the capacity to contribute to the entire range of international operations. This includes preventive stabilisation operations, peacekeeping operations and peacemaking operations. New types of operation, such as anti-piracy operations, must also be emphasised.⁶ As per May 2014 Norway is participating in operations in the Mediterranean off the coast of Syria, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Kosovo, Mali, the Middle East and South Sudan.

Participation in international operations will always involve various types of risk. The security situation in many theatres of operation is demanding. Armed forces personnel have participated in combat situations and fighting in the course of some operations. In other operations, while taking no active part in the fighting, there is still often a risk of coming under targeted attack, straying into the line of fire, experiencing acts of terrorism and kidnapping, exposure to IEDs and other unforeseen threats. The attacks aimed at Norwegian UN personnel in Afghanistan and Syria are a powerful reminder of the risks personnel are exposed to, and the importance of adequate measures to ensure their

safety. Since 2004 ten members of the Norwegian Armed Forces have been killed while serving abroad. The safety of personnel has a high priority. The Norwegian Armed Forces are working constantly to analyse the risks involved, and will always seek to avoid the taking of unnecessary risks. Considerable resources are devoted to preparation, information gathering, risk analysis and the development of materiel that can reduce the risk of injury to personnel. Nevertheless, the best method for preventing individuals from coming to harm lies in the selection process and the training they receive before deployment, as well as the follow-up they receive during their tour of duty, in connection with their repatriation and in the period following their return home.

Most of those who take part in international operations are either permanently employed by the Norwegian Armed Forces or employed on temporary contract. In addition, personnel who have previously completed their initial national service or have otherwise been employed in the armed forces also frequently take part. These individuals all have a civilian occupation and a civilian job from which they take temporary leave of absence for the duration of their participation in an international operation.

⁶ Proposition to the Storting No. 73 (2011-2012) Et forsvar for vår tid [A defence for our time]



PHOTO: KÅRE M. HANSEN, NATIONAL POLICE DIRECTORATE





PHOTO: FORSVARETS MEDIESENTER (FMS)

3 Objectives and initiatives

The overall objective of this follow-up plan is to strengthen society's recognition of and support for personnel before, during and after they have served internationally on behalf of Norway. This will be achieved by improving coordination between and increasing the understanding of agencies in the civilian sector. Coordination and knowledge-building play a key part in the objectives and initiatives detailed in this plan. Efforts will primarily be focused on the municipal sector, where the need for greater understanding and better coordination is most urgent. While collaboration between government ministries and sectors is well underway at the national level, it is important that this cooperation is reflected lower down in the system.

Coordination and knowledge-building are issues that transcend ministerial boundaries. The objectives in this plan are therefore cross-sectoral.

Four cross-sectoral objectives have been defined:

1. The government will prevent international service from having potentially negative consequences, through the identification and provision of adequate information on entitlements and support schemes.
2. The government will work to actively communicate society's gratitude and appreciation.
3. The government will work to ensure that personnel and their families receive the support they need and are entitled to.
4. The government will work to improve the competence of the civilian support structure through research-based education.

Subgoals and initiatives have been defined under each cross-sectoral objective. The bulk of the initiatives are cross-sectoral in nature. One or more government

ministries has overall responsibility for coordinating activities relating to each initiative. Each of the government ministries behind this plan will initiate measures within their own sector in order for the cross-sectoral objectives to be realised. Ministry-specific measures are not included in this plan.

3.1 Prevention of potential negative consequences.

The government will prevent international service from having potentially negative consequences, through the identification and provision of adequate information on entitlements and support schemes.

Adequate preventive measures will reduce the risk that international service will have negative consequences, both for the individual concerned and their families. Today's selection system is in itself an important preventive measure. From a prevention perspective, it is also important that the individual's physical and mental health be thoroughly assessed both immediately after their return home and over time. At the same time as personnel are actively sought out for such an assessment, mechanisms must be in place to enable individuals to make contact themselves if they need help. In this connection it is important to ensure that personnel and their families are given easily understandable information about health services, support schemes, entitlements and opportunities for appeal.

It is important that the health service has a good understanding of what it means to be in international service for Norway, as a basis for offering necessary and adequate health services of high quality. Similarly, any transition to the civilian labour market after the individual's return home should occur as rapidly



FOREIGN MINISTER BØRGE BRENDEN VISITED THE TYPHOON-HIT AREAS IN THE PHILIPPINES 8TH JANUARY 2014, TWO MONTHS AFTER THE DISASTER OCCURED AND HIT MORE THAN 14 MILLION PEOPLE 8TH NOVEMBER 2013. PHOTO: ASTRID SEHL, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

and as smoothly as possible. In this connection it is important to inform civilian employers of the valuable competences that returning personnel have acquired.

Preventive measures play a key role with respect to family members. Data indicate that family members' perception of the support system in this respect has improved. Nevertheless, there is still a need for greater understanding and further development of our efforts.

3.1.1 Subgoals

To minimise the percentage of serving personnel with injuries resulting from their service.

Initiative 1

Employers are to inform personnel of the potential health and social consequences of international service. Employers are to provide information about relevant services in the civilian sector.

Responsibility: MoD; supported by: MoH&CS, MoCE&SI, MoL&SA

Initiative 2:

The Ministry of Defence will contribute to the further development of routines to assess changes in the individual's physical and mental health after completion

of international service. Consideration will be given to the introduction of regular assessments, eg after two, five and eight years, as in Sweden and Denmark.

Responsibility: MoD, supported by: MoL&SA, MoCE&SI, MoH&CS, MoLG&M

Initiative 3

To enable the total strain borne by the individual due to international postings to be identified at an early stage it is necessary to review the norm for home leave, the applicable guidelines and how these may be tailored to the specific mission, including developing better management systems to obtain an overview of the individual's degree of strain.

Responsibility: MoD

Initiative 4

Individuals will have been empowered to personally contact the agencies they need help from through coordinated information, advice and guidance.

Responsibility: MoD, MoFA, MoJ&PS; supported by: MoCE&SI, MoL&SA, MoH&CS

Initiative 5

To ensure the best possible follow-up and treatment, the Ministry of Defence will facilitate the voluntary transfer of medical records from the Norwegian



PHOTO: COLOURBOX

Armed Forces to the individual's GP or other treating physician in the civilian health and welfare service. Transfer of medical records presumes the written consent of the individual concerned in compliance with the legislation in effect at that time.

Responsibility: MoD; supported by: MoH&CS

3.1.2 Subgoal

It is important to ensure that once the individual's tour of duty has finished their transition back into workforce occurs as rapidly and smoothly as possible. The percentage of those not in work more than 12 months after the end of their tour of duty shall not exceed the percentage of long-term unemployed in the general population.⁷

Initiative 6

The Ministry of Defence will monitor that evidence of the competence acquired by the individual while serving abroad is made available and documented in such a way that it can be used and understood by employers in the civilian labour market.

Responsibility: MoD

⁷ The 12-month time period corresponds to the OECD's definition of long-term unemployment, which is unemployment lasting longer than 12 months.

Initiative 7

The Ministry of Defence will consider whether improvements should be made to enable contract personnel to take courses of study to prepare them for a civilian career.

Responsibility: MoD

3.1.3 Subgoal

Personnel in international service and their families must receive sufficient information about health services, entitlements and support schemes, including appeal and ombudsman arrangements, to ensure their needs are met.

Initiative 8

The Ministry of Defence will help ensure that relevant websites in the defence sector are updated with links to established sites in the civilian sector, including those belonging to NAV, the Child and Family Protection Agency, the health and welfare sector and the Norwegian Public Service Pension Fund (SPK), to make the services available in the civilian sector known and easily accessible for personnel.

Responsibility: MoD; supported by: MoL&SA, MoCE&SI, MoH&CS



PHOTO: THOMAS BJØRNFLATEN/NYEBILDER.NO

Initiative 9

Employers are to inform their personnel of relevant support schemes and their statutory rights.

Responsibility: MoD, MoFA, MoJ&PS; supported by: MoH&CS, MoCE&SI, MoL&SA

3.2 The government will work actively to communicate society's gratitude and appreciation.

The efforts of those in international service are important to our national interests and security. Personnel are posted abroad on behalf of Norway, and many perform hazardous missions while in service. Recognising the significance of these efforts is a social responsibility. Society's gratitude and appreciation must be actively communicated to the serving individual and in the public domain. When communicating its appreciation, the government wishes to place particular emphasis on the high levels of competence and valuable experience that personnel can bring to the Norwegian workplace and the community at large.

3.2.1 Subgoal

The Norwegian population shall have a solid understanding of the work personnel in international service perform on behalf of the nation.

Initiative 10

The government will further develop a strategy for open and active communication to society of the work being

done by personnel in international service and the risks to which they are exposed.

Responsibility: MoD; supported by: MoJ&PS and MoFA

Initiative 11

A marketing strategy aimed at employers is to be devised to publicise the competence that individuals with experience of international service have to offer.

Responsibility: MoD

3.3 The government will work to ensure that personnel and their families receive the follow-up they need and are entitled to.

Personnel who have been injured or who suffer delayed after-effects from international service can find their dealings with the health and welfare services and agencies such as NAV and the SPK challenging. The government will initiate a series of initiatives to centralise and speed up NAV's administrative processes, simplify documentation routines, enhance and centralise competence, as well as improve coordination at the municipal level. Local authorities should draw up action plans, which will form an important foundation for improved coordination. In this connection local authorities will have much to gain from the mutual exchange of expertise and experiences. Compensation schemes are to be reviewed and simplified.

3.3.1 Subgoal

Improve coordination and competence with regard to the follow-up of personnel and their families at national and local levels.

Initiative 12

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will maintain the established competence environment at NAV Elverum and further develop it to include centralised assessment and decision-making in cases relating to personnel who have served internationally on behalf of Norway.

Responsibility: MoL&SA

Initiative 13

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will examine the feasibility and facilitate the establishment of a limited pilot project involving the creation of a decentralised “veterans liaison” scheme. This function will act as a supplement to the current national competence environment, and will be staffed by people who have themselves experience of international operations.

Responsibility: MoL&SA; supported by: MoD

Initiative 14

Efforts should be made to facilitate the development of and better coordination between local initiatives to support personnel who have served internationally. Local councils with a number of inhabitants who have seen international service on behalf of Norway are encouraged to draw up local or intermunicipal action plans. The action plans should resolve identified coordination challenges and needs that affect personnel and their families. Key elements in these plans should be competence-building, the specification of formal collaborations between relevant agencies, and procedures to meet the needs of target groups who require a variety of services.

Responsibility: MoL&SA, MoH&CS, MoCE&SI; supported by: MoD, MoLG&M

3.3.2 Subgoal

The terms and conditions of the special compensation scheme are to be clarified, and the existing financial schemes consolidated.

Initiative 15

The Ministry of Defence will draw up a clarifying memo to interpret and clarify the proof of claim requirements under the 35G and the 65G schemes.

Responsibility : MoD

Initiative 16

The Ministry of Defence will consider whether any amendments to the regulations regarding the special compensation scheme are required.

Responsibility: MoD

3.3.3 Subgoal

The time taken to process applications by NAV and the SPK are to be reduced from current levels. Administrative processing time in the civilian sector must be reduced. Entitlements under the special compensation scheme shall be set out more clearly.

Initiative 17

The Ministry of Defence will, in consultation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the SPK, draw up guidelines to reinforce the management and administration of the special compensation scheme.

Responsibility: MoD; supported by: MoL&SA

Initiative 18

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will ensure better administration procedures at the SPK, in order to cut processing times for compensation claims relating to mental and emotional injuries. Deadlines will be set for feedback when collecting available documentation, and for issuing reminders, should the requested documentation fail to materialise. When all the necessary documentation has been obtained, deadlines will be set for when a claim should be ready for payment. The deadlines will be set out in written descriptions of the routines concerned.

Responsibility: MoL&SA

Initiative 19

Training will be offered to mental health professionals to improve their expertise in writing specialist psychiatric reports in cases where personnel who have served internationally apply for compensation. This course is intended for specialists in clinical psychology or psychiatry.

Responsibility: MoL&SA

Initiative 20

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will consider centralising the processing of claims for occupational injury compensation in those cases where the injury relates to international service, in line with the existing treatment of disability cases. At the same time the



PHOTO: COLOURBOX

MoL&SA will implement procedures that speed up the decision-making process.

Responsibility: MoL&SA

Initiative 21

The Ministry of Defence will help in the development and implementation of a reporting system to ensure the documentation of incidents occurring during the individual's tour of duty which could subsequently form the basis for a claim for compensation.

Responsibility: MoD

3.4 The government will work to enhance the competence of the civilian support structure through research-based education.

For personnel who require follow-up, it is important to provide competence and understanding in the health sector and civilian administration. The government will work to enhance the competence of staff in the public sector who frequently come into contact with personnel who have served abroad, and with their families. Training schemes and courses will be held in, among other things, stress-related disorders and military psychiatry. Regional professional and competence networks will be continued. Collaboration with

Regional Resource Centres on Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention will be continued.

There is a need for more knowledge about and research into the challenges facing families in connection with international operations, with particular emphasis on the reaction of children to their parents' participation in this type of mission. It is important that personnel and their families are made aware of the normal challenges such a situation entails, and the opportunities available for help and counselling if required.

3.4.1 Subgoal

Personnel and their families must encounter competence and understanding in their dealings with service providers.

Initiative 22

The regional professional networks for deployment personnel are to be continued. Regional professional networks have now been established in all regions, and are led and coordinated by the Regional Resource Centres on Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention.

Responsibility: MoH&CS; supported by: MoD, MoL&SA, MoFA, MoLG&M



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Measure 23

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will continue its collaboration with the Regional Resource Centres on Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention. The organisation will participate in regional competence networks and train key individuals in, among other things, stress-related disorders.

Responsibility: MoL&SA

Initiative 24

The provision of training in military psychiatry is to be continued. The training scheme will enhance the competence of staff who frequently come into contact with the target group.

Responsibility: MoH&CS; supported by: MoD

3.4.2 Subgoal

Research-based education will help to raise service providers' level of quality and expertise.

Initiative 25

The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion will help draw up a knowledge status report and a plan for further research into the challenges families face in

connection with international operations. It is particularly important to investigate how children react to their parents' participation in this type of mission.

Responsibility: MoCE&SI; supported by: MoD

Initiative 26

The Ministry of Health and Care Services will help in the further analysis of the 2013 survey of veterans' living conditions, in order to identify improvement points for local authority health and welfare services and the specialist health service.⁸ Relevant initiatives in this plan will be assessed against the results of this survey.

Responsibility: MoH&CS; supported by: MoLG&M, MoD, MoJ&PS

Initiative 27

The Ministry of Defence will facilitate the further development of collaboration with civilian research and competence environments on issues relating to personnel who serve internationally on behalf of Norway.

Responsibility: MoD; supported by MoH&CS

8 SSB Survey of Living Conditions (2013)



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

4 Implementation and collaboration

4.1 Reporting and evaluation

The interministerial steering group (ISG) will coordinate the implementation of this follow-up plan. The individual ministry is responsible for following up objectives and initiatives within its own area of responsibility, and will report to the ISG semi-annually on its progress in relation to these.

An overall report on the achievement of cross-sectoral objectives and subgoals will be published annually. An evaluation of the follow-up plan will be undertaken by the end of 2017.

4.2 Collaboration with trades unions, professional associations and veterans' organisations

Trades unions, professional associations and veterans' organisations possess valuable insight, and are important partners in the development of personnel and veterans policies.

Trades unions, professional associations and veterans' organisations have played an important role in the implementation of the action plan *In Service for Norway*, and have participated regularly in meetings with the Ministry of Defence. Since the autumn of 2013 these

organisations' attention has been on the future and the follow-up plan. They have been important collaborators in the development of this plan, and have played a key role in shaping the various initiatives. The organisations have had the opportunity to meet representatives of the ISG to raise particular issues, put forward suggestions and offer feedback. Experience from this collaboration has been unequivocally positive and necessary to the work on behalf of veterans. This collaboration will continue to be important in the future.

4.3 National Veterans Conference

The annual National Veterans Conference will also be staged in 2014 and 2015. The conference will be evaluated in 2015.

4.4 International cooperation

Norway will continue to place great emphasis on cooperation with other countries with regard to the further development of its veterans policies, both bilaterally and within the framework of NORDEFECO.⁹

⁹ NORDEFECO (Nordic Defence Cooperation), the official name of the Nordic countries' partnership on defence matters

” The various ministries’ collaboration on the development of the government’s veterans policy is unique. The government will continue this collaboration to ensure that personnel serving internationally on behalf of Norway receive the recognition they deserve.



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