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NATO Glossary providing Finnish and Swedish equivalents to key NATO terminology

The Finnish NATO Glossary was compiled by the Prime Minister's Office in Finland in cooperation with various parties in Finland and Sweden.

The Translation and Language Division consists of 77 language specialists (translators, terminologists, language technology specialists, service coordinators) in three units: Swedish Language Unit, Foreign Languages Unit and Language Services Unit. The Division provides translation, language and terminology services to all government ministries. Most government texts are compiled in Finnish but those that are handled by the government or parliament or those that are communicated to the public need to be translated into Swedish as well in a bilingual country with a Swedish-speaking minority. The Translation and Language Division is also responsible for terminology work in government and glossaries and guidance are published for the purposes of the state administration and all relevant actors. The glossaries and guidance are available on the Government website at <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/translation-and-language-services> and key glossaries (like the NATO Glossary) are also published in the online Government Termbank Valter (www.valter.fi).

When Finland took steps towards NATO membership in 2022-2023, policy papers, legislation and information to the public needed to be written and translated. This all led to a need for harmonized NATO terminology. A 1-year terminology project was launched in January 2023 to find recommendations for Finnish and Swedish equivalents of terms used in NATO. The official project has already ended but the work still continues a bit less intensively. The project had a steering group and a working group, both consisted of terminologists, language specialist and defence or NATO experts from Finnish ministries, the Finnish Defence Forces and the Institute for the Languages of Finland. In addition, the contents were circulated for comments among partners in Finland, Sweden, the Permanent Representation of Finland to NATO and the Finnish and Swedish language units of the Council of the European Union. The aim was that the Swedish terms could be used both in Finland and Sweden and comments for terms and definitions were requested from the Swedish Defence University, the Swedish Armed Forces and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The NATO Glossary was prepared, circulated for comments and published in parts (in June 2023, November 2023 and February 2024). It contains nearly 220 concepts and focuses on key terminology needed in government and communication to the public. It includes:

- names of organizations in NATO's political and military structure
- titles used in NATO
- key concepts related to NATO's core tasks and purpose
- key concepts related to defence planning, force generation, operating environment and actors
- names of key agreements.

The work always started with understanding the meaning of the NATO-specific terms and finding information on how the concepts are understood in NATO (not only in Finland but in the alliance as a whole). If NATO's official terminology database NATOTerm had a definition, it was always used. When no definition was given in NATOTerm, the project group used definitions from other sources, primarily from NATO texts. When no definition was found, the project group formed one on the basis of NATO texts. The

working group noticed that national interpretations of a term or usage of a term may vary from country to country and it was important to choose target language terms so that they correspond to the NATO's definition. Even though there may be several terms in Finnish, the equivalent has to be selected so that it corresponds to the NATO definition. Sometimes information on national variation or differences between terms needed to be given in the glossary.

Main challenges in the project included that there was relatively little prior expertise in NATO's activities and that, especially in the beginning, Finnish NATO experts were busy on the eve of membership elsewhere. In addition, very little was written in Finland about NATO in Finnish or Swedish before the government proposal on joining NATO, so there were few sources for Finnish or Swedish terms. Many organization names had never been used in Finnish or Swedish or different versions could be found so they needed to be either created or harmonized. The NATO command structure is quite different from national structures and no national system could be copied, for instance, in the names of various commands. Comments from experts were sometimes contradictory and it was difficult to solve these problems. The question was who should decide. The project group often relied on the opinions of military or NATO experts but the group saw to the compliance of language rules and consistency with other terms in the glossary. It was also a challenge to decide what terminology needed to be included in the glossary for government and administrative purposes. The aim was to compile a glossary of Swedish terms that could be used, besides Finland, in Sweden too and Swedish opinions needed to be heard too. Even though Sweden became a member almost a year later, cooperation between the two countries was extremely fruitful right from the start in both terminology work and in translation of treaties and agreements.