What can we learn from Swedish companies in wartime Ukraine

If Sweden faces a serious crisis or, ultimately, war, companies need to keep society's most important functions running. Food must be produced, transport must keep moving, and goods and services must reach their destinations. Business preparedness is therefore a crucial part of Sweden's total defence.

Commissioned by the Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency, Forever Sustainable has conducted the study Swedish companies' experiences of wartime Ukraine. It draws on survey responses from 31 companies and ten case studies of Swedish companies operating in Ukraine.

The starting point is the Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency's brochure Preparedness for businesses – In case of crisis or war[1] and the Swedish Armed Forces' and the Agency's publication Starting points for total defence 2025–2030.[2]

Preparedness that lasts over time



Swedish companies' experiences of wartime Ukraine (2026). Forever Sustainable.

For companies in Ukraine, the war has brought recurring disruptions. Power cuts, staff shortages and interrupted transport need to be managed while customers await deliveries and employees need security.

Companies have relocated or changed their operations. Backup arrangements have been expanded as new weaknesses have emerged. Ways of working developed for an acute crisis have become part of normal operations.



Synevo's sample collection site in Kharkiv, March 2022. Photo: Synevo.

[1] Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency (2026). Preparedness for businesses – In case of crisis or war. MCF0001.

[2] Swedish Armed Forces & Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency (2026). Starting points for total defence 2025–2030. FM2025-19772:3; MCF0048.

Experience to inform Swedish preparedness

31
companies in the survey

10
in-depth case studies

≈ 50
people in discussions

Years of experience in keeping operations running

The report is primarily aimed at those who run, lead or work in a small or medium-sized enterprise. The companies' experiences provide a basis for testing what must function, which dependencies could halt operations and how long backup arrangements can last.

When disruptions continue

Power cuts, staff shortages and interrupted transport need to be managed simultaneously. Companies have adapted production and ways of working while threats to employees and facilities have continued.

Staying also means sustaining jobs and operations that Ukraine needs.

Relevant to Swedish preparedness

The experiences are also relevant to municipalities, regions and public authorities. Energy, staffing, IT and transport require planning both within the company and together with others.

Ten lessons show how companies have acted and what Swedish organisations can prepare for now.

> "We believe in the future. Otherwise, we would never keep fighting. We will be here until the end."
>
> Larissa Bogdan, Vandra Rugs

Companies' self-assessed preparedness

38 %
Before February 2022

77 %
Summer 2026

Plans, resources and decision-making capacity need to work together when disruptions become prolonged.

Share fairly or very well prepared. Different questions: heightened alert or war before 2022; prolonged wartime conditions in 2026. 29 and 30 respondents, respectively.

The reference group included experts from the Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency, the Swedish Energy Agency, Business Sweden and Företagarna (the Swedish Federation of Business Owners).

Plans need to work when put to the test

01 Test preparations and make the lessons last

The war has shown the difference between having a plan and being able to use it. For 73 per cent, crisis management, continuity planning or clearer priorities have become permanent ways of working.

> Sigma Software had to find new evacuation transport when the contracted arrangements failed. These experiences have since informed the group's global continuity planning.

02 Decide what must function and for how long

A few days, two weeks or several months require different staffing, stocks and financing. Set a minimum acceptable level and decide what can wait when resources are insufficient.

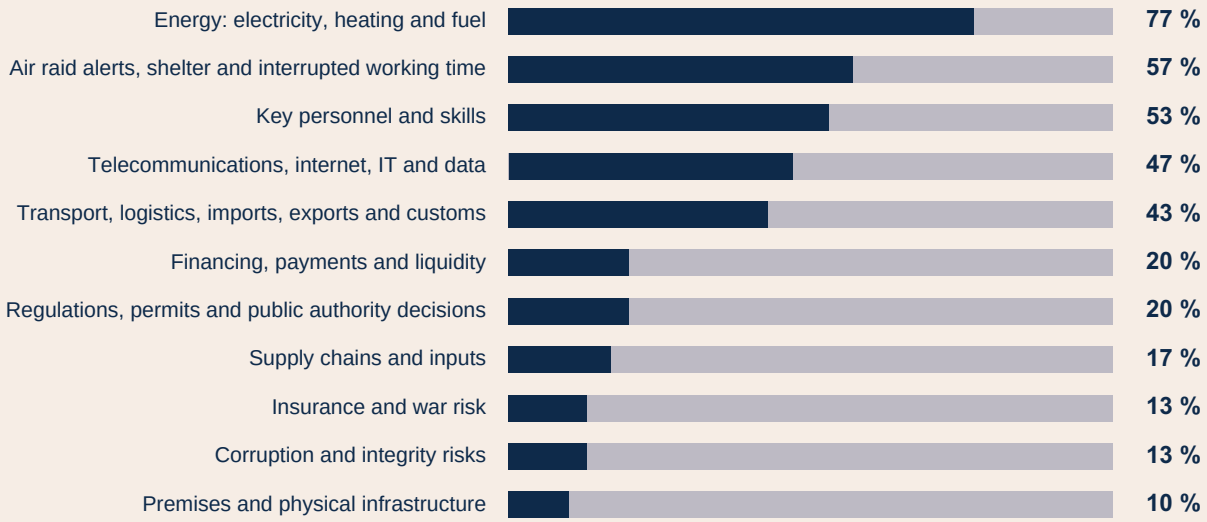
> When Synevo's laboratory in Odesa was damaged, samples were sent to Kyiv for analysis. Sample collection continued while the laboratory was repaired. The critical function could be kept running.

03 Map dependencies and how disruptions spread

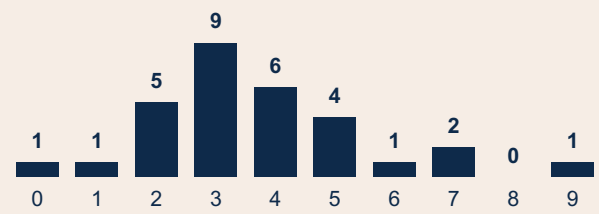
A power cut can affect production, water, IT and employees' daily lives simultaneously. Begoma's office in Kyiv uses battery backup and Starlink to plan transport. Follow the chain from supplier to customer and test what happens when several resources become unavailable.

Companies identify several critical factors

Share of companies identifying the factor as particularly critical to continued operations



Number of critical factors per company



77 % identify at least three factors

47 % identify at least four factors

3.7 factors on average (median 3)

People underpin preparedness

> “When the company is stable and wages are paid, it creates stability for people.”
>
> Galina Kreminets, Stritex

04 Secure staffing, security and skills

90 per cent report that mobilisation for military service and absence have affected operations. The same proportion have seen an increased need for psychosocial or family-related support.

Safety, caring responsibilities and recovery affect people’s ability to work. Knowledge transfer reduces vulnerability when a key person is absent.

At Stritex, work has provided wages, colleagues and a few hours away from the news. Employees support families while a husband or son serves in the armed forces. The company’s stability matters far beyond the factory.

Scania and Beredskapslyftet train women as truck drivers and mechanics. This broadens recruitment and helps the company and its customers address staff shortages.

05 Empower local managers and prepare deputies

83 per cent have achieved faster and more adaptable decision-making. 60 per cent have increased local decision-making authority. Support and resources from owners and head offices are also needed.

Who may make critical decisions? Who takes over during an absence? Deputies need information, system access rights and powers of attorney.

A mining equipment manufacturer has established a continuity management team outside Ukraine. It includes deputies for financial control, accounting and HR, among other functions, so that reporting and payments can continue.

Plans are updated during the war. Anyone taking over must be able to familiarise themselves with the tasks and responsibilities without starting from scratch in the middle of a crisis.



Women truck drivers trained by Scania and Beredskapslyftet. Lutsk, spring 2026. Photo: Beredskapslyftet.

The entire agricultural chain needs to function

Attacks on ports and grain storage facilities hamper exports. A Swedish-owned agricultural company has established a westward export route, bought railway wagons and dispersed fuel and inputs. Väderstad describes how fewer drivers and mechanics increase the need for reliable machinery and rapid service.

Backup arrangements need to work together

Companies have developed several backup arrangements as prolonged outages have exposed new weaknesses. Each solution needs fuel, servicing or a means of recharging.

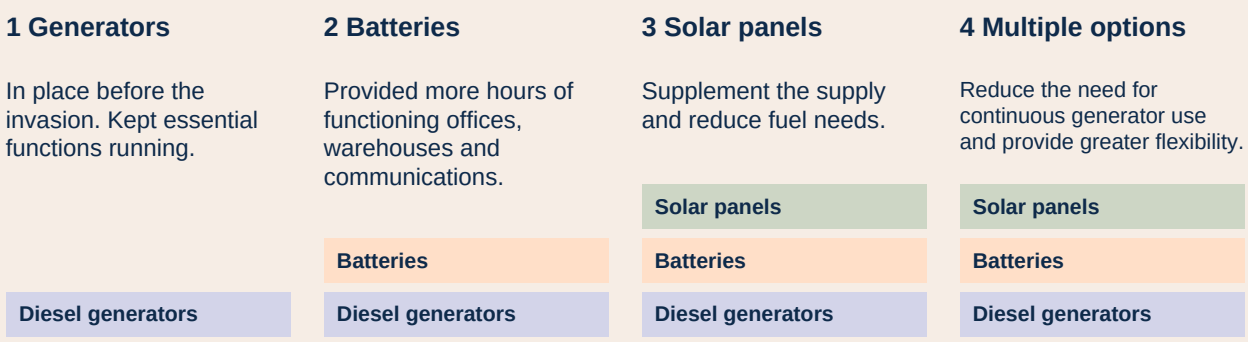
77 % identify energy as a critical factor for continued operations.

06 Build backup arrangements and trace their dependencies

Backup power can keep priority functions running. The ability to sustain operations also depends on how resources are replenished and which other functions must work. The main solution and its backup may also depend on the same supplier or transport route.

Väderstad has built energy preparedness in layers

New solutions complement earlier ones.



In the winter of 2025/26, batteries provided more operating hours without generators having to run continuously.

Water can limit endurance

Synevo's fuel stocks lasted three to four days, but its water reserves lasted two. Operations need to be able to replenish several resources while outages continue.

Equipment needs to withstand outages

Stritex supplemented its generator with battery backup and a UPS. An abrupt stop can damage a cutting machine. The backup arrangement also needed to protect the equipment.

Companies and energy providers need to clarify which functions should be prioritised, for how long and who is responsible for what.

Routes to restarting operations and restoring supplies



No heating in the rug workshop during the first cold winter in Kosiv, 2022/23, after fleeing Kakhovka. Photo: Vandra Rugs.

07 Secure alternative supplies and prepare to restart

Alternative transport routes and premises need to have known capacity and reasonable delivery times. Also prepare how operations can restart through repairs or relocation. Spare parts and technical expertise can be as important as new premises.

> When Scania's main facility in the Bucha area was occupied and damaged, spare parts deliveries were redirected to Lviv. Supplies continued from there, and the central warehouse could later be moved back to Kyiv.

> In late 2025, several pharmaceutical warehouses in Kyiv and Dnipro were destroyed. Distribution could continue because the distributors had warehouses at several locations across the country.

08 Finance continued operations and restart

The Ukrainian banking system has continued to function during the war. Companies have found solutions and helped one another. Emergency measures and investments need to be paid for even when revenues are uncertain.

Calculate the costs of continued operations and restarting. Discuss payment terms and the limitations of insurance with the bank, owners and business partners.

> Vandra Rugs relocated production and helped employees and families move to a new location. Advance payments from the Swedish parent company and 180 days' credit from the Spanish wool supplier made it possible to obtain materials before cash flow had recovered.
>
> Liquidity became a prerequisite for taking action and rebuilding the business.

The capabilities of companies and society are linked

09 Clarify what the company and society need from each other

93 per cent have contributed to Ukraine's societal resilience beyond their own operations. At the same time, companies need functioning energy, transport and communications. Their role in the network of customers, suppliers and societal actors matters for preparedness.

When a Llentab customer moved production from the Sumy region, the municipality in the Ternopil region helped with organisational matters. The companies provided investment, design and construction.

In Kosiv, the municipality provided Vandra Rugs with premises and permits. The company created jobs. In Stryi, Stritex also opens its shelter to neighbours.

The manufacturing exporter coordinates shifts and safe shutdowns with the electricity grid operator when electricity supplies are limited.

10 Develop the business as customers' needs change

Energy shortages increase the value of energy efficiency. Staff shortages make productivity more important, while recurring damage increases the need for repairs. Preparedness and business development come together in solutions that help customers keep operating.

Väderstad initially thought that farmers under pressure would choose cheaper or second-hand machinery. Instead, demand for productive and reliable machinery increased as fewer skilled employees had to farm the same areas of land.

Begoma established a subsidiary in Ukraine after the 2022 invasion, when disrupted trade routes created a need for new transport solutions. Through alternative routes and more carriers, the company helps customers continue importing and exporting.

Companies' collaboration has increased since February 2022

Share of companies reporting increased collaboration with each actor



"What matters is that every company must be able to act independently. In such a situation, you have to rely on your own resources."

Håkan Jyde, Scania

Municipalities, companies and infrastructure owners need to clarify responsibilities, contact channels and what each party can contribute. Test whether backup capacity holds up when several are affected at the same time: what do you need to manage yourselves, and who depends on you?

What the study shows overall

The study's multi-year perspective shows how preparations are tested, solutions are developed and dependencies change during an ongoing war. Its value lies in understanding the connections behind companies' solutions and what needs to be addressed jointly.

Continuity during prolonged disruptions often requires change. Companies have relocated production, rerouted transport and changed work tasks and decision-making processes. Preparations have created options for action. People have made them usable.

Planning needs to start from which functions must be maintained, at what minimum acceptable level and for how long.

The survey reveals patterns. The case studies explain how companies have acted and why the alternatives have worked. During a prolonged war, preparation, response and adaptation overlap. Learning connects them.

A company needs to be able to replenish resources, activate alternatives and restore lost capacity while new disruptions continue. Clear responsibilities and available resources make action possible.

Download and read the full report

The ten case studies provide a basis for discussing your own organisation's preparedness.
foreversustainable.se/insights

Report authors: Sophie Nachemson-Ekwall (project lead), Nathalie Beser, Anna Trane and Peter Davidson.

Book a conversation or workshop: info@foreversustainable.se · +46 70 340 23 52, +46 73 708 15 01

About Forever Sustainable

With sustainable business transformation as our foundation, we support organisations seeking to strengthen their role in total defence and civil preparedness.

Critical infrastructure

We help organisations strengthen energy infrastructure and sustainable energy systems.

Risk, governance and sustainability

We connect preparedness with value chain risks, the green transition and social sustainability.

Resilience, preparedness and continuity

Tailored workshops for management teams on critical functions, dependencies and options for action, based on the Ukraine study.

Business relations with Ukraine

We support partner dialogue and collaboration for recovery, reconstruction and resilient operations.

Forever Sustainable's resilience and preparedness team








tommy.borglund@foreversustainable.se
peter.davidson@foreversustainable.se
sophie.nachemson-ekwall@foreversustainable.se

pontus.cerin@foreversustainable.se
anna.trane@foreversustainable.se
edvard.unsgaard@foreversustainable.se