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The ministries' emergency preparedness for handling crises

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose and conclusion

1. This report concerns how nine selected ministries do to prepare for major accidents and disasters that cannot be handled with their usual resources and routines. Hereafter, we refer to major accidents and disasters as “crises”.

2. It is crucial for society and for citizens’ sense of safety and security that the authorities are sufficiently prepared to handle crises such as cyberattacks, droughts, storms, floods, pandemics, and pollution incidents, cf. “National Risk Profile 2025” and “Danish Security and Defence towards 2035”.

Major human, economic and environmental consequences may occur if the ministries are not adequately prepared. Shortcomings in the authorities’ emergency preparedness may result in a crisis being prolonged and its consequences becoming greater than necessary. The same applies if coordination between authorities is insufficient and responsibilities are unclear, causing critical tasks to fall between the cracks.

All ministries must have a plan for how to act in the event of a crisis. This follows from the Emergency Management Act. In addition, ministries are expected to conduct exercises and evaluate their preparedness. Exercises help managers and staff understand how they should act in a real crisis, and evaluations of exercises and crises provide lessons to improve preparedness. This follows from the guidance on integrated emergency planning. The Ministry of Resilience and Preparedness (hereafter the Ministry of Preparedness) is responsible for coordinating preparedness and advising the ministries, as set out in the Emergency Management Act.

3. The purpose of the study is to assess whether the ministries are adequately prepared for a crisis. We answer the following questions in the report:

- Do the ministries comply with statutory requirements for emergency preparedness planning?
- Do the ministries follow key recommendations from the Ministry of Preparedness regarding emergency preparedness planning?
- Does the Ministry of Preparedness comply with statutory requirements for coordination and advisory responsibilities?

National Risk Profile

In the publication National Risk Profile, the Danish Resilience Agency identifies the major crises that may affect Denmark, and the risks that all ministries should be prepare for. In the 2025 edition, the agency assessed that Denmark currently faces the most serious and complex risk and threat landscape since the Second World War.

Danish Security and Defence towards 2035

According to the report from the Security Policy Analysis Group, the changing threat landscape may increase the need for coordination and management across authorities and sectors.

The Ministry of Preparedness

The Ministry of Preparedness was established on 29 August 2024. Until this date, the Ministry of Defence was responsible for coordinating national preparedness planning and advising the authorities – including responsibility for providing guidance on integrated emergency planning. This responsibility has now been transferred to the Danish Resilience Agency under the Ministry of Preparedness.

4. We have examined emergency preparedness planning for the period 2022–2024. The study focuses on nine selected ministries that play a central role in the state's preparedness, either due to an overarching coordinating function or because their areas of responsibility carry particular crisis risks, cf. "National Risk Picture 2025". These are the Ministry of Preparedness, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Interior and Health, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities, the Ministry of the Environment and Gender Equality, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We have examined emergency preparedness planning in the nine ministries and their 38 subordinate authorities. These authorities, designated by the ministries for emergency preparedness planning, are the focus of our examination.

5. Rigsrevisionen initiated the study in January 2025.



Conclusion

Overall, the ministries are not adequately prepared for crises. Rigsrevisionen finds this unsatisfactory. During the period 2022–2024, most ministries complied with the requirements of the Emergency Management Act. However, in seven out of nine ministerial areas, some authorities did not follow key recommendations for conducting exercises and evaluating their preparedness. Moreover, the Ministry of Preparedness has not provided sufficient support for cross-government coordination. Given the serious threat landscape, it is particularly important that the ministries continuously strengthen their preparedness.

Most ministries comply with the statutory requirements

All authorities – except the National Police – have submitted updated emergency preparedness plans to the Danish Resilience Agency in accordance with the law. However, the agency identified shortcomings and areas for improvement in the emergency preparedness plans of all nine ministerial areas in 2023. These included gaps in the restoration of societally critical functions, crisis management and crisis communication. Since then, several authorities have considered how to address the identified shortcomings, yet ten authorities across four ministries had not done so during the study period.

Under the law, ministries must set indicative guidelines for emergency preparedness planning in regions and municipalities. The Danish Resilience Agency has stated that each ministry must assess when this is relevant. Three ministries have set guidelines. The remaining six ministries considered the statutory requirement only in connection with the present study. The Ministry of the Environment and Gender Equality has assessed that setting guidelines is relevant and has initiated the work. The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries is currently assessing its relevance. The Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have concluded that setting guidelines is not relevant within their areas. Rigsrevisionen finds it unfortunate that several ministries only addressed this statutory requirement in 2025, even though it has been in force since 1993, when the Emergency Management Act came into effect. In addition, municipalities have requested guidelines for emergency preparedness planning.

Most ministries do not follow key recommendations

In seven of the nine ministerial areas, some authorities do not follow key recommendations from the Danish Resilience Agency, either because they do not conduct annual exercises or because they do not evaluate their exercises and crises. This entails a risk that ministries will not improve their preparedness and may repeat previous errors. Only the Ministry of Preparedness and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs fully comply with all key recommendations.

The Ministry of Preparedness does not fully comply with the statutory requirements

The Ministry of Preparedness does not fully comply with statutory requirements for coordination, as it has not updated the overarching national plan designed to support cross-government coordination during a crisis. The plan was last updated in 2019, despite significant changes in roles and responsibilities since then, and is therefore outdated. This may result in poor coordination among the authorities responsible for handling a crisis.

The Ministry of Preparedness advises the other ministries, for example through guidance material and meetings. However, the guidance material does not clearly specify the minimum requirements for emergency preparedness planning, nor does it describe the ministries' task of setting guidelines for emergency preparedness planning in regions and municipalities.

Rigsrevisionen recommends that the Danish Resilience Agency strengthen its guidance material to clarify minimum requirements and describes the ministries' task of setting guidelines for emergency preparedness planning in regions and municipalities.