



Extract from the report to the
Public Accounts Committee on
the Danish Police Reform

August
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I. Introduction and results

1. The Danish police reform took effect on 1 January 2007 and 12 new police districts were established as a result of the reform. Each police district is headed by a commissioner. The commissioners report to the chief executive officer of the police, the National Commissioner, who has the overall responsibility for the police in Denmark. The Minister of Justice is the chief police authority. The Ministry is supervising the National Police and is responsible for the reporting to the Folketing (parliament).

2. In the spring of 2008, the Danish media reported that the number of unsolved cases had increased since 2006 and that the police had made fewer charges, allegedly due to the police reform. At the same time, it was reported that the number of reports received by the police was on the increase. On 17 September 2008, the Public Accounts Committee therefore requested Rigsrevisionen to conduct a major study of the police reform. The questions raised by the Public Accounts Committee will appear from appendix 1.

3. In a memorandum to the Public Accounts Committee of 2 December 2008, the Auditor General outlined the possible organization of the examination of the police reform and it was subsequently decided to launch the study.

4. The overall objective of the study was to evaluate progress made with respect to the implementation of the police reform. Based on the questions raised by the Public Accounts Committee, Rigsrevisionen addressed the following five issues:

- Have the preparations and follow up on the police reform been satisfactory up to now?
- Has the police performance changed compared to 2006?
- Has the police implemented performance management?
- Has the police handled finance management in a satisfactory manner?
- Has the police informed the Folketing correctly about the implementation of the police reform?

5. The study mainly concerns the period August 2006 to the end of 2008. However, the study also addresses the accumulated deficit for 2008 and the initiatives taken in this relation in 2009.

In the context of this report, the term "the police" is referring to both the National Police and the 12 police districts.

MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The police reform is comprehensive and entailing fundamental changes of the organization and management of the Danish police.

The extensive preparations made by the National Police, have taken the police districts through a structured process of re-organization. The performance of the police has dropped more and over a longer period of time than expected. However, the trend for 2009 is positive. Also police response time has developed in a positive direction. The National Police could have launched initiatives to reduce the drop in performance earlier. The police districts have followed up on the problems they have encountered in the process, but the National Police should have been more supportive of the efforts made by the police districts to implement the police reform. Furthermore, the police reform has become much more expensive than anticipated, and the police has not been able to document that the objectives set with respect to release of resources have been achieved up to now.

The reform calls for decentralization of the finance and accounting function from the National Police to the police districts. One year after the decentralization, the administration of finance and accounting in the police districts is not satisfactory, and even the quality of basic finance management needs to be improved. The National Police has not kept control with its own expenditure to the extent required. As a result, the police recorded an accumulated deficit of DKK 341 million in 2008. Furthermore, the National Police has not to the extent required supervised and supported the police districts with respect to their finance management. For instance, the National Police has not ensured that the personnel in the districts had the required qualifications. In June 2009, a policy decision was made according to which DKK 651 million would be allocated to the police to cover the deficit and the cost-overrun.

Rigsrevisionen finds that the Folketing has been correctly informed of the progress of the police reform.

This overall assessment is based on the following findings:

The preparations for the reform made by the National Police and the police districts have been satisfactory. The police districts have followed up on the reform in a satisfactory manner. However, the National Police has not to the extent required followed up on and supported the districts in their efforts to solve the problems that emerged in the process, like for instance the competence gap and the organization of the police. Moreover, the police reform has been significantly more expensive than expected, and it has not as planned released 200 man-years for operational police work in 2008.

Preparations for the reform

- The preparations made by the National Police and the police districts have been extensive and structured. The National Police has developed relevant plans of action, guidelines and tools that the police districts have used to establish the new districts. However, the preparations did not include an analysis of the problems that could emerge in connection with the implementation, which explains that, for instance the scope of the competence gap was underestimated.

Staffing in the new police districts

- In spite of the fact that the reform called for new management competencies, only two police districts had prior to the recruitment process defined the competencies required of the new managers.
- The distribution of staff took place primarily on the basis of staff's requests with respect to geographical location rather than on the basis of the districts' requirements for specific competencies. The police districts should have had a better overview of staff competencies and should have attached much more importance to the competencies when staff was distributed. For instance, the staffing problems in the control centres could have been reduced, if the districts had ensured that a sufficient number of staff in the control centres had the required qualifications to organize and guide the police patrols.

Implementation problems and adjustments

- Shortly after the implementation of the new organizational structure, the police districts carried out evaluation activities and focused on gathering data on problems encountered in the process. The police districts have tried to solve the problems. The National Police could have been more active in its efforts to collect information from the districts on the problems and contribute with solutions when relevant.
- The districts are no longer as uniformly organized as originally intended because the police districts have solved the problems related to the re-organization individually. They thereby deviate from the original framework set up by the National Police in order to, for instance prevent autonomous management at the local police stations. The National Police has not addressed the issue, nor informed the police districts whether these deviations in organization are considered appropriate. According to the National Police, consultants are examining the issue, and the top management of the police will discuss the framework of the districts' organization when the consultants have completed their work.

Efficiency gains related to the reform

- Management has been trimmed by 76 man-years, but the amount of time reserved for management tasks has not been reduced from 2006 to 2008. Neither can the National Police document that the police has achieved the objective set for 2008 concerning the release of 200 man-years for operational police work.
- With the passing of the finance bill for 2009 and the package of bills designed to fight gang-related crime, the police received grants to expand the police force and take on administrative personnel in order to release police officers for other tasks. Thereby the cost of the police reform has increased significantly beyond what was originally expected.

Overall, the police performance has dropped more than expected when the results from the initial reform years 2007 and 2008 are compared with the results from 2006, i.e. the year preceding the police reform. However, figures from the 1st quarter of 2009 seem to indicate a positive development. The National Police could have reduced the drop in performance earlier, if it had launched initiatives to bridge the competence gap, for instance. In the years of reform, 2007 and 2008, police response time has been reduced, which means that in cases of emergency, the police arrives at the scene faster than before the reform.

- The police has processed fewer cases within criminal law in 2007 and 2008 compared to 2006. The performance of the twelve police districts varies, but in general, the results have not been on level with the increase in number of cases. Thus the number of reports leading to a conviction has dropped from 2006 to 2008. However, figures relating to the 1st quarter of 2009 are indicating a positive trend.
- There has been a negative development in the case-processing time, as the number of cases leading to a conviction measured over a five-month period in 2008, was lower than in 2006. However, figures relating to the 1st quarter of 2009 are indicating a positive trend in case-processing time.
- Productivity has also dropped as it took the police more hours to process a report with ensuing conviction in 2008 than in 2006. Figures relating to the 1st quarter of 2009 are indicating that police productivity on nation-wide basis is now on level with 2006. However, only half of the police districts contribute to this trend.
- The negative development in number of criminal convictions is reflected in the decreasing satisfaction with the police among citizens who have reported a crime or offence in the period 2006 – 2008.
- On average, the police is now responding faster to emergency calls, and the number of cases with long response time has been reduced in the period 2006-2008. Furthermore, figures relating to the 1st quarter of 2009 seem to indicate that this trend will continue.

The police has in recent years worked with performance management and has developed various management tools. Performance management in the police is still in its early phase and much work still needs to be done to establish it firmly in the organization. As an example, the commissioner contracts are not used as a management tool, the management information systems at hand are not used to their full potential by the police districts, and finally only a few of the police districts follow up on the performance targets regularly.

- The commissioner contracts are largely identical and the performance targets set are not reflecting the fact that crime rates vary from one district to the next. Furthermore, the contracts are signed several months into the year concerned, which limits the possibilities of using the contracts as a management tool.
- Neither the responsibility of the group management, the information flow nor the distribution of responsibility in the other networks is clear to the police districts. The National Police will endeavour to make the functions and roles of the networks more transparent.

- Not all the districts have set performance targets for their activities based on the targets contained in the commissioners' contracts, and based on the targets that have been defined on the basis of the local crime rates. Neither do all the districts follow up on the combined targets regularly. Some districts have not yet determined the scope and frequency of reporting, nor to whom they shall report.
- The National Police has developed management information systems for the police districts. But the National Police should more actively disperse the knowledge of the management information systems and promote their application along with the standards set for reporting to the top management of the police districts.

The police is not handling finance management in a satisfactory manner and does not meet with the requirements of good finance management in the state set by the Danish Agency for Governmental Management. The basic finance management performed by the police is inadequate, the police districts are short of the competencies required to manage the decentralized finance management functions, and the National Police is not following up on the budgets to the extent necessary. These factors have contributed to the accumulated deficit of the police of DKK 341 million in 2008, and to the political agreement of June 2009 to grant DKK 651 million to the police. The Ministry of Justice was not aware of the accumulated deficit till early February 2009.

Distribution of tasks

- The overall distribution of tasks between the National Police and the police districts with respect to finance management is clear.

The police grant and expenditure

- The allocation of the operational grant did not take into consideration the level of operating costs in the individual police districts. All the police districts exceeded their operating budgets and spend less than budgeted on salaries in 2008. The National Police should therefore re-consider the grant to the police districts with respect to the distribution between operating costs and salary costs.
- In 2008, the National Police did not require the police districts to forward their budgets and neither did the National Police follow up on the budgets to the extent necessary. The National Police has in the course of May 2009 developed a new model for financial management, which is intended to improve the follow-up on the police budget.

Supervision of the police

- The Ministry of Justice and the National Police were not aware of the accumulated deficit of DKK 341 million before the closing of the accounts in 2008. Not all the expenditure incurred by the police in 2007 and 2008 has been reviewed and included in the financial statement for 2008, but it will be included in the financial statement for 2009. If the closing of the accounts had been performed correctly by the police and had included the expenditure relating to the year in question, the accumulated deficit for 2008 might have been even larger. On the other hand, a subsequent review has shown that DKK 85 million of the deficit was caused by an allocation error that will be corrected in 2009.

- In June 2009, it became clear that the police needed a grant of DKK 651 million. The final mapping of the cost overrun in the operational area will take place as part of a budget analysis exercise that will be conducted in the autumn when the Ministry of Justice has an overview of the excess spending broken down on cost items.
- Traditionally, the police is keeping within its budgets, and this is one of the reasons why Rigsrevisionen is of the general opinion that the Ministry of Justice's supervision of the finance management in the police has been adequate. However, for the remainder of the reform period, the Ministry of Justice should intensify its supervision of the police, in particular with respect to the effectiveness of the finance management and the reliability of the accounts.
- The National Police is planning to incorporate a change of, for instance the procedures governing financial reporting in a new model for finance management. In doing so, the National Police should ensure that the police districts forward their approved accounts on time so that they can provide the basis for the National Police's monthly reporting of the accounts to the Ministry of Justice. This did not occur in 2008.

Supporting the finance management in the police districts

- Finance management in the police can be improved. Furthermore, the competencies of the personnel in the finance functions in the police districts need to be developed. The National Police has stated that procedures concerning the overall finance management will be tightened and re-organized.
- The National Police must be more supportive of the police districts' efforts to perform their tasks and provide assistance to the districts within development of competencies, IT, and finance management.

The Ministry of Justice has reported correctly to the Folketing concerning the police performance and the progress of the reform during the period under audit.

- Reporting to the Folketing in relation to the implementation plan prepared by the Ministry of Justice took place in March 2008 and in April 2009. I.e. with an interval of one year. The reporting addressed only whether the various reform projects had been implemented on time. The Ministry of Justice has stated that in the future, reporting will take place at intervals of six months, and will include an assessment of whether the projects are working as intended in the police districts.
- The quality of the key indicators on the police performance that the Ministry of Justice has reported to the Folketing is considered sufficiently good to present fairly the results achieved by the police. However, in certain areas of the reporting, some degree of uncertainty is to be expected. The Ministry of Justice has stated that specific reservations made regarding the quality of data will in future appear from the key indicators, etc., when relevant.
- The first report on complaints over the police prepared by the National Police was not exhaustive, but according to the Ministry of Justice nor was that the purpose of the report. Later, the police prepared another report, which included more complaints made against the police.