



**SIGMA**

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principally financed by the EU

## Public Administration: Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

*Mapping the EU member states' public administration responses to the COVID-19 pandemic  
(for EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood countries)*

**Denmark**

**5 April 2020**

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# DENMARK

## **Centre of Government, policy co-ordination and decision-making process**

- 1. How is the Government (council of ministers) functioning (organisation of virtual meetings, remote sessions etc.)?**

*Official government sessions are still not remote, but physical meetings have been limited to the absolute necessary. All political parties have been asked by the Speaker of the Parliament to review their legislative agenda and cut down on new legislative initiatives. No quotas have been issued but all parties are expected to contribute. Parliamentary committees have for the first time taken up remote sessions/videoconferencing on important issues.*

- 2. How are the crisis management and external communications co-ordinated within the Government? What is the role of the CoG in this? Is there a central strategy/guidance?**

*At the highest political level, external communication is handled by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), with the Prime Minister herself making regular briefings to the public, and the OPM is closely co-ordinating with the Danish Health Authority and the Employee and Competence Agency of the Ministry of Taxation.*

*While the activity levels of Government and Parliament are down to the lowest possible levels, the daily operational handling of the crisis has been handed over to the National Operative Unit (NOST). NOST was established in 2008 as a response to poor handling of the 2005 East Asia tsunami crisis, to provide a central co-ordination body in times of crisis (following evaluations that criticised the co-ordination and communication efforts). It is only activated in times of crises. All Government crisis management, across central and regional level institutions, is handled here. NOST is operationally headed by the police force, but permanent members also include the intelligence agencies, defence, emergency management authority, foreign ministry, traffic authority, and in this case, the health authority is also a core member. In addition, the energy authority, IT and food safety authority are also present. The same institutions meet in another crisis management body, the Central Operative Communication Unit, to co-ordinate communication. The last time NOST and the related Communication Unit were activated was when Denmark experienced a terror attack five years ago.*

- 3. Any arrangements (rules, working procedures) which aim to streamline and accelerate the Government decision-making process (as regards deadlines, public consultations, transparency, impact analysis)?**

*No, the general direction is to slow down activities of the Government and Parliament. All political parties have been asked by the Speaker of the Parliament to review their legislative agenda and cut down on new legislative initiatives. No quotas have been issued but all parties are expected to contribute.*

## **Public service and human resource management**

- 1. What arrangements regarding teleworking? What is the share of civil servants teleworking? What is the share of civil servants still coming to the office?**

*No precise data but all civil servants are teleworking unless explicitly exempted by management.*

**2. What other flexible working arrangement (part time work, distribution of working hours over 7 days...)?**

*The Government has made existing rules of “work sharing” even more flexible and less bureaucratic. As an alternative to termination, it is now easier to agree that working hours and therefore also pay are reduced for a maximum period of 13 weeks.*

**3. If civil servants cannot telework, how are they paid?**

*100% pay during teleworking. It is the responsibility of the employer to ensure that the employees have the equipment to be fully productive.*

**4. Are civil servants being sent on mandatory annual leave? If not, is use of annual leave recommended? Any other special arrangement on absence management?**

*The Government agreed with unions that large parts of nonessential public sector employees will take 5 days of annual leave.*

**5. Any new, special regulations for working overtime (removing limitations to overtime work e.g. for medical staff)?**

*No, existing agreements on the Danish labour market are flexible enough. Flexicurity a la Denmark.*

**6. Arrangement for paying for extra workload (health care)?**

*Decentralised, dependent on the union agreement (no actual cases that I know of).*

**7. What measures have been introduced to create fiscal space to fund health care, economic measures etc. against COVID-19 (salary cuts, freeze of recruitment, promotions...)?**

*None. Denmark is fortunate to have adequate fiscal space, so efforts are aimed at keeping as many people employed as possible during this period.*

**Accountability**

**1. How did you keep the national parliament operational? Any simplification of parliamentary procedures?**

*All political parties have been asked by the Speaker of the Parliament to review their legislative agenda and cut down on new legislative initiatives. No quotas have been issued but all parties are expected to contribute. Parliamentary committees have for the first time taken up remote sessions/videoconferencing on important issues.*

**2. How about the Ombudsman (e.g. overseeing the situation in prisons)**

*The Danish Ombudsman has received 70 complaints from prisoners or their relatives because visitation rights have been cancelled. The response issued has been that the Ombudsperson Institution cannot respond to a complaint directly and that complaints instead should be sent to the prison authority. The ombudsperson only has the mandate to deal with cases that have passed first instance and, if applicable, appeal procedures. Regulations do not currently permit the prison authority to prevent visitation.*

**3. Does administrative justice work? Have deadlines changed?**

*Essential court services are functioning but courts are in emergency state (reduced capacity). Almost all court cases (criminal, civil, administrative) are suspended. Not yet known regarding deadlines (no communication from the courts yet on this).*

**4. Any public debates on respect of principles of good administration (legality, proportionality, predictability) of protective measures?**

*The Danish Institute for Human Rights and the Legal Policy Institute have been vocal in their criticism of some measures of the emergency law passed by all political parties to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. They are monitoring the application of this emergency law and have reacted to for example, the temporary higher sanctions introduced and the violations of data protection rules.*

**Service delivery**

**1. Which services are being delivered (all, some, only the essential)?**

*Administrative services are still being delivered as most are digital.*

**2. Are there any modifications done to the obligations of:**

- i. *the administrations towards citizens/businesses (e.g. freezing of deadlines)?*

*No. The procurement authority has stated that the COVID-19 crisis does not count as force majeure to reassure companies that the State will not cancel contracts. Political parties have agreed to use public procurement to support businesses. This will apply at State level, and the Government will discuss the options of a similar approach at municipal and regional levels with the organisations Local Government Denmark and Danish Regions.*

- ii. *citizens/businesses towards public administration (reporting, payments of taxes, contributions, fees...)?*

*Yes, deadlines have been extended for both citizens and businesses for tax and labour market contributions.*

**3. Has the crisis initiated any simplifications or enhanced the use of alternative tools:**

- i. *in the internal procedures of the Government (e.g. acceptance of formal approvals over e-mail)?*

*No information.*

- ii. *in the administrative procedures with citizens and businesses (e.g. replacement of handwritten signature with scanned copies or simple exchange of mails)?*

*The vast majority is done with existing electronic signature anyway.*

## **Public financial management**

**1. Are COVID-19 response measures being introduced within the framework of or with reference to existing fiscal rules (budget deficit or public debt ratio limits etc.)**

*A range of new measures is already in place. Existing fiscal rules no longer apply. Denmark has adequate fiscal space. The authorities responded to the ongoing crisis by providing discretionary fiscal support to the tune of 2.5% of GDP (about DKK 60 billion). The increased spending will mainly finance additional health care needs and extraordinary budgetary measures to support workers and businesses. Another 2.5% of GDP in countercyclical support is expected to come through Denmark's strong automatic stabilisers—including from weaker tax receipts and higher social benefits. Temporary liquidity measures, including postponement of tax payments and government guarantees, will further support activity in the first half of year.*

*The Danmarks Nationalbank (DN) increased the policy rate by 15bps to -0.6%. The standing swap line with ECB was activated and its size was doubled to EUR 24 billion. It will remain in place as long as needed. In addition, the DN reached an agreement with the Federal Reserve to establish a USD 30 billion swap line that will stand for at least 6 months. The DN announced the launch of an 'extraordinary lending facility' which will make full-allotment, 1-week, collateralised loans available to banks at -0.5% interest rate on 20 March. On 19 March 2020, the DN expanded this facility to include 3-month variable rate loans, which will be available from 27 March 2020. The DN also increased the interest rate on the previously announced 1-week loans to -0.35%. The Danish authorities decided on 12 March 2020 to pre-emptively release the countercyclical capital buffer and cancel the planned increases meant to take effect later. The Financial Stability Authority also announced a case-by-case relaxation of regulation on the LCR requirement.*

*Denmark has enacted a massive stimulus package. See here for English summary: <https://e-markets.nordea.com/#!/article/56458/massive-package-to-support-the-danish-economy>*

**2. Are the cost of these measures being published?**

*Yes*

**3. Have budget users been asked to identify cost-saving measures to partially offset the cost of the response measures?**

*No*

**4. Are internal controls continuing to operate smoothly (electronic signatures)?**

*Yes*

**5. Does each budget user or at least ministry have a risk management strategy that envisaged emergency measures in response to a sudden crisis? How is staff and customer safety balanced against the need to deliver required services?**

*No information*