



Extract from the report to the  
Public Accounts Committee on  
the Danish Prison and Probation  
Service's maintenance of buildings

September  
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## I. Introduction and conclusion

1. An extraordinary effort is required to ensure that the buildings of the Danish Prison and Probation Service (Prison Service) are in a well-ordered and secure condition. This was the objective set for a new multi-year agreement for the Prison Service running from 2008 to 2011. The agreement was entered by the then government, the Danish People's Party and the Liberal Alliance party in February 2008. With the agreement followed additional funding of approximately DKK 80 million for major refurbishment works in the period.

The realization that an extraordinary effort was required was prompted by, for instance, Rigsrevisionen's report no. 5 from 2005 on the maintenance of the government estate. The report stated that the Prison Service had estimated a maintenance and refurbishment backlog of approximately DKK 1.6 billion (approximately DKK 1.8 billion in 2012 prices).

2. This report is about the maintenance of the Danish state and local prisons. Rigsrevisionen initiated the study in October 2011.

The rationale of the study is the two-sided challenge that the Prison Service is facing: The Prison Service is required to ensure that state and local prisons are in a well-ordered and secure condition while at the same time performing the maintenance in a financially efficient manner. A new multi-year agreement for the Prison Service is expected to take effect from 2013, and it is therefore important to examine how the Prison Service has handled the maintenance in the period 2008-2011.

In addition to the estimated maintenance and refurbishment backlog, Danish state and local prisons are generally exposed to extensive vandalism, wear and tear. Since 2009, the Danish state and local prisons have accommodated a growing number of prisoners, which makes maintenance increasingly difficult. At the same time, the majority of the Danish state and local prisons date back to before 1900 and are built to meet the requirements of that time in terms of serving of sentence, work environment, security, etc. In addition to that, several of the buildings are protected and of special architectural or historic interest, which is a challenge when the buildings are to be adjusted to meet the requirements and political decisions of today, such as guarantee of treatment, physical separation of prison gang members and ordinary prisoners, and zero-tolerance for drugs.

3. The objective of the study is to assess whether the Prison Service and the Ministry of Justice have ensured efficient maintenance of the Danish state and local prisons in the period 2008-2011 to the extent that they can be considered to be in a well-ordered and secure condition. The report answers the following questions:

- Has the Prison Service planned and prioritized maintenance to ensure optimal use of funds?
- Has the Prison Service estimated the need for maintenance in a transparent manner?
- Has the Ministry of Justice actively monitored whether the state and local prisons are in a well-ordered and secure condition.

There are five closed and eight open prisons in Denmark of which four have detention units. To this should be added the Copenhagen prisons, 36 local prisons scattered around the country and one closed institution for detained asylum seekers.

**Maintenance** involves repairs arising from wear and tear.

**Refurbishment** involves renewal of building parts to extend their life.

The two concepts are jointly referred to as *maintenance* in the report. When relevant for the study, we differentiate between the two concepts.

In 2011, a total of 4,000 prisoners served their sentence in a state prison or were held in custody in a local prison.

## MAIN CONCLUSION

The Prison Service is responsible for implementing the sanctions imposed by the courts in the best possible way, both in respect to the security of society and the rights of, and later opportunities offered to, the convicted offender. The buildings and their maintenance provide the physical framework for, and underpin, the core tasks that the Prison Service is required to perform. The buildings also represent a considerable fixed asset, and it is important that this asset is maintained by the Prison Service to a standard that does not unduly reduce its value. Good maintenance therefore contributes to ensuring that the Prison Service performs its core tasks in the best possible manner and that the government's assets are properly administered. The Ministry of Justice has the overall responsibility for the area and is instrumental in ensuring that the Prison Service administers the area in an efficient, effective and professional manner and makes the most of available resources.

Rigsrevisionen finds that the Prison Service and the Ministry of Justice are unable to provide evidence that the state and local prisons are maintained and brought into a well-ordered and secure condition in a financially efficient and effective manner.

The Prison Service is operating only with short-term planning of maintenance projects. The Prison Service has no long-term plan determining the level of maintenance required to meet future challenges.

The Prison Service has not defined the standard of maintenance required to ensure that state and local prisons meet the current demands in respect to incarceration. Thus neither the standard of the buildings nor the functional requirements for the state and local prison buildings have been determined.

A number of small maintenance works are executed by the state and local prisons and prioritization of maintenance projects therefore needs to be coordinated between the state and local prisons and the Prison Service to ensure that the condition of the buildings is as required. The current level of coordination is considered inadequate.

Rigsrevisionen finds that the Prison Service does lack access to management tools that can provide transparency in the cross-sectoral prioritization of the maintenance projects in the short and long term. It is therefore not clear how the Prison Service prioritizes professional and financial considerations in the management of the maintenance projects.

Rigsrevisionen welcomes the Prison Service's intentions to document routinely its considerations in respect to prioritization, involve its external consultant in the overall prioritization of the maintenance projects and work out a ten-year maintenance plan.

Rigsrevisionen recommends that the Prison Service should define performance management targets for the condition (functionality and quality) of state and local prisons. Rigsrevisionen also recommends that the Prison Service should coordinate the prioritization of maintenance projects with the state and local prisons in both the short and long term to ensure cost-effective achievement of the targets. Rigsrevisionen welcomes the Prison Service's initiative to define criteria for the quality of the buildings.

In 2007 the Prison Service estimated the maintenance and refurbishment backlog at approximately DKK 363 million and approximately DKK 1,098 million, respectively, i.e. a total backlog of approximately DKK 1,461 million (2012 prices). For 2012 the Prison Service has made a preliminary estimate of the maintenance backlog of approximately DKK 290 million (2012 prices), but has not estimated the refurbishment backlog. Rigsrevisionen finds that the Prison Service should estimate also the refurbishment backlog to facilitate monitoring of the development in the total maintenance backlog.

The Ministry of Justice has not taken a sufficiently active part in the monitoring of the Prison Service's maintenance of state and local prisons, considering that the multi-year agreement for 2008-2011 reflected political focus on the area. The ministry has not defined satisfactory performance targets in the executive service contracts as to how the maintenance performed by the Prison Service can ensure that the buildings are in a well-ordered and secure condition. The ministry does not have a complete overview of the size of the maintenance backlog and is therefore not in a position to follow up on the development and provide the best possible basis for decisions should maintenance become a focal area also in a new multi-year agreement.

It is essential that the Prison Service and the Ministry of Justice have an overview of the total maintenance backlog and takes an active role in determining the desired condition of state and local prisons. In times of economic strain, the Prison Service must prioritise maintenance to ensure that the overall value of government assets remains stable.

The main conclusion is based on the following sub-conclusions:

*Has the Prison Service planned and prioritised maintenance to ensure optimal use of funds?*

The Prison Service is unable to provide evidence that its planning and prioritisation of building maintenance have ensured effective and efficient use of funds. The Prison Service does not have a long-term maintenance plan addressing future requirements in relation to the condition of state and local prisons. This means that the Prison Service is unable to determine how maintenance projects should be organised to ensure that they meet the requirements of the future. Building survey reports are worked out for each state and local prison. The reports include prioritised lists of the maintenance tasks that need to be executed. Up until the end of 2010, the building survey reports had certain shortcomings which went unnoticed by the Prison Service. The maintenance projects are managed by the Prison Service and the state and local prisons, but the projects are neither routinely nor adequately coordinated. It is therefore difficult to determine how the maintenance projects are prioritized across state and local prisons, nor is it clear which professional and economic considerations that provide the basis for the final prioritization.

*Has the Prison Service estimated the need for maintenance in a transparent manner?*

The Prison Service has not estimated the need for maintenance in a transparent manner. The overall targets set for the standard of state and local prisons do not specify the desired condition of the buildings. As a result the financial estimates of the maintenance and refurbishment requirements are unreliable. At the same time the Prison Service does not on a regular basis check whether the funds are used for maintenance, refurbishment or other activities. The Prison Service is therefore unable to provide evidence that funds are used cost-effectively and thereby ensuring that the buildings are in a well-ordered and secure condition.

*Has the Ministry of Justice actively monitored whether the state and local prisons are in a well-ordered and secure condition?*

The Ministry of Justice has not actively monitored whether the state and local prisons are in a well-ordered and secure condition. The ministry made not efforts to ensure that the estimated maintenance backlog appearing from the 2007 building survey report was appropriate. Moreover, the ministry did not enquire into the standard that state and local prisons could be expected to achieve on the basis of the funds allocated in the multi-year agreement for 2008-2011. At the same time, the performance targets, which are guiding the ministry's management, are not designed to allow the ministry to monitor progress made in the state and local prisons in respect to the condition of the buildings.