



NATIONAL AUDIT
OFFICE OF LITHUANIA

PREPAREDNESS OF INSTITUTIONS TO RESPOND TO EMERGENCIES

9 February 2022

No VAE-1

SUMMARY

Relevance of the Audit

National security is the basis for the country's prosperity and development processes and only by guaranteeing it the sustainable development of the country may be ensured¹. Public security is an integral part of national security and includes the protection of legitimate interests of a man and the State, including the protection against natural or man-made disasters². About 660 emergency incidents occur each year in Lithuania due to intentional or unintentional human activities or due to natural phenomena and other circumstances³. Over the period of 2018–2020, 56⁴ municipal-level and 3 state-level emergency situations have been declared⁵. One more state-level⁶ and 8 municipal-level emergency situations have been declared in 2021.

The Programme of the Eighteenth Government approved by the Seimas stipulates that the State shall be prepared to respond to different threats and ensure the continuity of vital functions in all circumstances. This requires a clearly managed and well-coordinated threat assessment, prevention, and response mechanism involving all public authorities.

¹ The Lithuanian Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030" approved by Clause 1.3 of the 15/05/2012 Resolution No XI-2015 of the Seimas.

² Public Security Development Programme 2015–2025 approved by Clause 3 of the 27/05/2015 Resolution No XII-1682 of the Seimas.

³ The Overview of Civil Protection System State in Lithuania in 2020. Internet access: <https://pagd.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys-1/civiline-sauga/civilines-saugos-sistemas-bukle> (accessed on 15/10/ 2021).

⁴ 2020 Activity Report of Fire and Rescue Department under the Ministry of the Interior. Internet access: <https://pagd.lrv.lt/lt/administracine-informacija/planavimo-dokumentai> (accessed on 15/10/2021).

⁵ Resolutions of the Government: 04/07/2018 Resolution No 633 on drought, 03/07/2019 Resolution No 668 on drought, 26/02/2020 Resolution No 152 on the risk of COVID-19 disease (corona virus infection) spread.

⁶ Resolution No. 517 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 2 July 2021 "On the Declaration of the Extraordinary Situation and the Appointment of the State Commander of National Emergency Operations".

It is crucial to ensure that preparedness to respond to threats becomes an integral part of the institutional activities through the planning of actions and allocation of resources⁷.

According to the data of the Fire and Rescue Department⁸, there is little improvement in the preparedness of institutions for emergencies: In 2019, 13 in 30 state institutions and 13 in 60 municipalities were only partially prepared and in 2020 – 11 and 12, respectively.

With the increase in emergencies in Lithuania, which change the normal life of society and cause long-term consequences, it is important to coordinate the preparedness of emergency situations and manage them properly, therefore, in view of the relevance of the topic, the National Audit Office decided to audit the preparedness of institutions to respond to emergencies.

Objective and Scope of the Audit

The objective of the audit is to assess whether institutions are prepared to respond to emergencies.

Key audit questions:

- whether the limits of responsibilities of the emergency management system subjects are distributed;
- whether legal instruments have been created for the application of special measures (restrictions) that help to manage emergency situations;
- whether the existing risk assessment performance system ensures the identification of high and very high risk hazards that may cause emergencies;
- whether the existing emergency management system ensures that the management of all the possible high and very high risks that may cause emergencies is planned.

Audited entities:

- The Ministry of the Interior as it coordinates the activities of entities of the civil protection system, with the exception of the Government, in accomplishing the tasks of the civil protection system assigned to their competence⁹;
- Fire and Rescue Department as it is an institution of the civil protection system which, within the sphere of its competence, directs the activities of the civil protection system¹⁰.

Audit limitations: during the audit, we did not assess the emergency management plans of selected companies or companies operating in the field of regulation, where part of the information on personal data has security classification marking.

⁷The Programme of the Eighteenth Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved by Clause 237 of the 11 December 2020 Resolution No XIV-72 of the Seimas.

⁸ The Overview of Civil Protection System State in Lithuania in 2019 and 2020. Internet access: <https://pagd.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys-1/civiline-sauga/civilines-saugos-sistemas-bukle> (accessed on 15/10/ 2021).

⁹ Law on Civil Protection, Article 10(1).

¹⁰ Ibid., Article 12(1).

To achieve the objectives of the audit, we assessed the data and information provided by six ministries¹¹ and six municipalities¹², we interviewed all (14) ministries and all (60) municipalities and communicated with the representatives of the Environmental Protection Agency, Radiation Protection Centre, Vilnius University Faculty of Law, a working group set up under the 01/02/2021 Decree No 11 of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania which was assigned to develop an effective crisis and emergency management model by 30/06/2021, the Association of Lithuanian Municipalities, Government Strategic Analysis Centre.

The period audited is 2018–2020. Data from 2015 has been used to assess trends and changes related to the periodicity of conducting risk analyses and updating the National Emergency Management Plan after carrying out the National Risk Analysis; Data of 2015–2021 was used to assess state-level emergencies that took place under the supervision of the selected ministries.

The audit has been performed in accordance with the Public Auditing Requirements and International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions. The scope and methods of the audit are described in greater detail in Annex 2 Audit Scope and Methods (p. 49).

Key Results of the Audit:

Emergency preparedness needs to be approved due to a lack of inter-institutional coordination, the National Emergency Management Plan does not cover 5 potential high and very high risks identified in the National Risk Analysis, the responsible and supporting authorities do not plan all the actions and measures required to manage emergencies. A clearer legal regulation would ensure targeted and consistent management of these situations.

1. Effective emergency management requires proper legal regulation and inter-institutional coordination to address shortcomings in its preparedness

- The Government Emergency Commission, which has been tasked with assessing the institutions' preparedness for emergencies and taking measures to improve¹³ it, did not take sufficient actions: 2019 proposals to improve preparedness do not specify the specific institutions to which they are addressed and the deadlines for their implementation; in 2021, the readiness was not assessed and no proposals were submitted. In order to eliminate the state-level shortcomings in preparedness identified during the civil protection exercise, it is necessary to coordinate operational objectives and the need for resources in different institutions. The elimination is

¹¹ Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of Transport and Communication, Ministry of the Interior, and Ministry of Agriculture, which are assigned to be responsible for the organisation of the elimination of the majority of state-level emergencies and their consequences or to participate in emergency management as supporting institutions under the National Emergency Management Plan.

¹² Alytus City Municipality, Klaipėda City Municipality and Šilutė District Municipality were selected on the basis of professional judgement and having regard to recent emergencies; Vilnius City Municipality, Švenčionys District Municipality and Vilnius District Municipality were selected as falling within the zone of the nuclear facility's precautionary urgent protective actions or advanced planning zone.

¹³ Law on Civil Protection, Article 11 (4)(1).

delegated to the participants of exercise and it is not coordinated. The Fire and Rescue Department and the Ministry of the Interior¹⁴, being the entities coordinating the activity civil protection system¹⁵, do not have information of what actions the participants of the exercise take to eliminate the shortcomings. Without eliminating the shortcomings, there is unexploited potential for improving the preparedness for these situations (Sub-section 1.1, p. 16).

- Having assessed the declaration of 56 municipal-level and 4 state-level emergencies in 2018–2020, we determined that municipalities declared these situations¹⁶ in accordance with the grounds for their declaration laid down by law while the state-level declaration of emergencies (2 cases out of 4) did not meet the legal requirements. In 2018, the Government did not declare an emergency for African swine fever outbreaks although it had been already declared by 5 municipalities¹⁷; on 26 February 2020, an emergency situation regarding the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic was declared¹⁸ on the proposal of the Government Emergency Commission, although the Law on Civil Protection¹⁹ does not provide for the possibility to declare an emergency due to the spread of the epidemic. When making decisions on legal regimes and their constraints to manage threats and risks, the rule of law shall be upheld (Sub-section 1.2, p. 18).
- No criteria or conditions have been determined to identify crisis situations. The Government is planning to develop and adopt amendments to the Law on Civil Protection and the Basics of National Security of Lithuania, laying down the legal framework for the selected common model for emergency and crisis management. Without laying down the criteria or conditions, there is unexploited potential to properly identify a crisis situation, establish it and prepare for its management (Sub-section 1.2, p. 18).
- The legislation does not provide for a process for assessing the validity of an emergency, i.e. whether the actual situation meets the conditions and criteria for declaring it. Without assessing the need for its continued operation to manage threats and consequences, it may be unjustifiably continued (Sub-section 1.2, p. 18).
- The criteria for emergencies laid down in the legislation²⁰ and their estimates do not allow all municipalities to declare an emergency. For instance, an emergency due to the interruption of wastewater disposal or the interruption of electricity supply may be declared when the provision of these services is interrupted for more than 20 thousand people, although 18²¹ municipalities have a smaller population. If the

¹⁴The Description for the Regulation for Organisation of Civil Protection Exercise approved by the 08/09/2010 Resolution No 1295 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, Clauses 15.2 and 16.

¹⁵ The Ministry of the Interior coordinates the activities of entities of the civil protection system, with the exception of the Government, in accomplishing the tasks of the civil protection system assigned to their competence; the Fire and Rescue Department coordinates the organisation of emergency prevention, the activities of residents, state and municipal institutions and agencies, other agencies and economic entities in the sphere of civil protection and plans the national preparedness for the implementation of civil protection tasks in the event of an emergency.

¹⁶ 2018 – 2, 2019 – 1, 2020 – 1.

¹⁷ Law on Civil Protection, Article 26 (1)(2).

¹⁸ The 26/02/2020 Resolution No 152 of the Government “Declaring a State of National Emergency”.

¹⁹ Law on Civil Protection, Article 2

²⁰ “The List of Emergency Criteria” approved by the 09/03/2006 Resolution No 241 of the Government.

²¹ Internet access: <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?hash=684e50e2-6cf6-426f-8d20-8b3e3856bdd2#/> (accessed on 05/01/2022).

municipality does not declare an emergency, in order to eliminate the consequences, it will not be able to use the additional resources necessary for its management and to make important decisions on the organisation of the protection of the population. Municipalities declare an emergency after receiving confirmation from the investigating (hydrometeorological, radiological investigations) responsible authorities²² of an emergency that has reached or exceeded the estimates, however, these investigations take a long time, thus, municipalities may not declare an emergency in time (Sub-section 1.2, p. 18).

2. The process for conducting a qualitative analysis of potential hazards and emergencies needs to be improved

- In 2010, the European Commission recommended²³ the appointment of an authority responsible for coordinating the performance of the National Risk Analysis but no such authority has been designated in Lithuania. We have found that the development of National Risk Analysis in 2013 and its revision in 2015 and 2018 was coordinated by the Fire and Rescue Department although this function is not defined to it by law. In 2013, The European Parliament and the Council adopted the decision²⁴ that set out requirements for the Member States to develop risk assessments at national level every three years and submit them to the European Commission. In 2013–2018, the National Risk Analysis was carried out in time and until 31 December 2020, the Analysis has not been updated in accordance with the Regulation of the European Commission and the Parliament²⁵ that was amended in 2019. In Lithuania, there is no methodology, model or methods for performing this analysis that would be adapted to the country's needs and governance structures, as recommended by the European Commission to the Member States²⁶. Authorities shall conduct risk analyses of potential hazards in their management area or territory in accordance with the National Risk Analysis²⁷. We identified shortcomings in the performance of risk analysis by ministries and municipalities:
- 5 of the 6 selected ministries²⁸, designated as responsible authorities under the National Emergency Management Plan do not manage information on potential hazards in the areas where public authorities or bodies of their management area have to develop emergency management plans and establish operation centres for these situations: only 2 of the 14 ministries²⁹ have established a procedure for information management which is followed by the entities operating in their

²²Annex 1 to the "Description of Procedure for Exchange of Information about the Event, Emergency Event or Emergency Situation", as approved by Order No 1V-114 of 30 March 2007 of the Minister of Interior: Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, State Nuclear Power Safety Inspectorate, Ministry of the Interior, Radiation Protection Centre, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

²³"Risk Assessment and Mapping Guidelines for Disaster Management" by the EC (SEC (2010) 1626 final). Art. 4.

²⁴Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013, Art. 6.

²⁵Decision (EU) 2019/420 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 March 2019.

²⁶EC notice – "Risk Management Capability Assessment Guidelines" (2015/C 261/03), Clause 4.1., European Commission notice – "Reporting Guidelines on Disaster Risk management", (2019/C 428/07), Art. 1(1.2.)

²⁷National Risk Analysis 2018, p. 10.

²⁸The Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Energy.

²⁹The Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health.

management area and providing risk analysis results to the Ministry (Section 2, p. 23).

- 5 of the 6 selected municipalities³⁰ did not assess and did not include from 45 to 69%³¹ of 39 potential hazards provided for in the methodological recommendation³² of the Fire and Rescue Department. None of the 6 selected municipalities³³ assesses data on risk analyses conducted by the entities operating in their territories, although they can assess it as according to the law³⁴, they collect data required for civil protection tasks from all the civil protection system entities and residents in the municipality (Section 2, p. 23).
- Institutions have not updated the risk assessment at the required intervals, although they must review and, if necessary, update it at least every 3 years³⁵. 2 in 6 selected ministries³⁶ and 2 in 6 selected municipalities³⁷ were late in reviewing and updating risk analyses from 4 to 6 years (Section 2, p. 23).

Without the designation of the entity, coordinating the National Risk Analysis and in the absence of a methodology, model or methods for its conduction, all high and very high risk hazards may not be identified at the national level and management actions and measures may not be properly planned in the National Emergency Management Plan. If institutions do not manage information on the potential high and very high risk hazards identified by entities operating under their management and in their territory, if they do not update risk assessments at regular intervals and if municipalities do not assess all the identified potential hazards, it is not ensured that management actions and measures for high and very high hazards are envisaged in the emergency management plans of the institutions (Section 2, p. 23).

3. Emergency preparedness process is to be improved.

- The National Emergency Management Plan³⁸ does not include management actions for new high and very high risk hazards identified in the National Risk Analysis: 2015 – Cyber Attacks, Chemical Accidents; 2018 – Cyber Attacks, Mass Disturbances, Terrorist Attacks, Threat to State Security, Major Industrial Accident. The legislation does not provide for the periodicity of updating the National Emergency Management Plan. 4 in 6 ministries³⁹ that were designated as responsible/supporting authorities did not envisage actions and measures in their plans for the management of 3–13 state-level emergencies and 6 selected municipalities designated as supporting institutions – 7–

³⁰ Alytus City Municipality, Vilnius City Municipality, Šilutė City Municipality, Švenčionys City Municipality and Vilnius District Municipality.

³¹ Vilnius District Municipality. – 61%, Šilutė District Municipality – 45%, Švenčionys District Municipality – 63%, Alytus District Municipality – 69 %, Vilnius City Municipality – 47%.

³² Annex 1 to the “Methodological Recommendations for the Municipal Emergency Risk Assessment” as approved by Order No 1-189 of 2 June 2011 of the director of The Fire and Rescue Department.

³³ Municipalities of Alytus, Vilnius City and Šilutė, Švenčionys, Vilnius District Municipality.

³⁴ Law on Civil Protection, Article 14(17).

³⁵ Methodological Recommendations for Emergency Risk Analyses in the Ministry, Other Institution or Agency, Municipality approved by Order No 1-189 of 2 June 2011 of the director of Fire and Rescue Department.

³⁶ Ministry of National Defence and Ministry of Environment.

³⁷ Alytus City Municipality and Švenčionys District Municipality.

³⁸ The National Emergency Management Plan approved by the 2010/10/2010 Resolution No 1503 of the Government.

³⁹ The Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

8 emergencies. If the National Emergency Management Plan is not updated and responsible and supporting authorities do not plan management actions and measures for the emergencies provided for in the National Emergency Management Plan, the preparedness to manage high and very high risk hazards is not guaranteed (Sub-section 3.1, p. 28, Sub-section 3.2, p. 29).

- Institutions, after conducting the analysis of potential hazards and emergencies, plan actions and measures to guarantee an effective response to imminent or actual emergencies and the elimination of their consequences. We have found that
 - 2 of the 6 selected ministries⁴⁰ did not plan actions and measures in their emergency plans for 2–10 high and very high risk hazards identified during the risk analysis and 3 out of 6 selected municipalities⁴¹ – 2–4 (Sub-section 3.2, p. 29).
 - 4 of the 6 selected ministries⁴² did not envisage the procedure for public alert and warning in the emergency management plans. 2 of the 6 selected municipalities⁴³ have shortcomings in their procedures for the imminent or actual emergency, for example, the alert scheme for an imminent or actual emergency is not included (Sub-section 3.2, p. 29).
 - 2 of the 6 selected ministries⁴⁴ have not envisaged the transmission of contact details at the inter-institutional level with other civil protection entities. The emergency management plan of 1 of 6 municipalities⁴⁵ did not include a scheme for exchanging information on the imminent or actual emergency with other institutions or bodies (Sub-section 3.2, p. 29).
 - 4 of the 6 municipalities⁴⁶ have not envisaged 8–58%⁴⁷ of accommodation of the minimum population in collective protection structures⁴⁸ during emergencies (Sub-section 3.2, p. 29).

If institutions do not envisage management actions and measures for all high and very high risk hazards, the public warning and communication, exchanging information on the imminent or actual emergency with other institutions, organising the population evacuation and accommodation of the minimum population, preparedness for the management of emergencies is insufficient (Sub-section 3.1, 9.29, Sub-section 3.2, p. 29).

- The Fire and Rescue Department carries out the assessment of the preparedness of the institutions for emergency situations and the inspections of the civil condition of the institutions according to the quantitative criteria, no qualitative assessment criteria have been determined. This does not allow for more comprehensive

⁴⁰ The Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of National Defence.

⁴¹ Šilutė District, Vilnius City, Vilnius District.

⁴² The Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Ministry of Environment.

⁴³ Klaipėda City, Šilutė District.

⁴⁴ The Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Ministry of Environment.

⁴⁵ Klaipėda City Municipality.

⁴⁶ Šilutė District Municipality, Švenčionys District Municipality, Vilnius City Municipality, Vilnius District Municipality.

⁴⁷ Šilutė District Municipality. – 21%, Švenčionys District Municipality – 16%, Vilnius City Municipality – 8%, Švenčionys District Municipality – 58%.

⁴⁸ Resolution No 529 of 12 May 2010 of the Government “On the Approval of Description of Procedure for Determining the Need for Collective Protection Structures”, Clause 7.

verification of whether the management actions and measures selected by the institutions are appropriate for emergency management (Sub-section 3.3, p. 33).

Recommendations

To the Government:

1. In order to improve the preparedness of the institutions for emergency management and to implement the provided proposals for the improvement of the preparedness of the institutions for emergency management, to clarify the competencies and responsibilities of the entities coordinating the preparedness for emergency situations (1 key audit result).
2. In order to achieve the guarantee of the validity of the response to an evidence-based emergency, to envisage the assessment process of the emergency compliance with the conditions or criteria for its declaration (1 key audit result).
3. In order to prepare for the proper management of crisis situations, to lay down criteria in the legislation for the identification and declaration of crisis situations (Key audit result 1).

To the Ministry of the Interior:

4. In order to guarantee a high-quality and systematic risk analysis, to designate an authority to coordinate the performance of the National Risk Analysis (Key audit result 2).
5. In order to enable the identification and periodic assessment of all potential high and very high risk hazards at the national level, to adopt National Risk Analysis Methodology (Key audit result 2).
6. In order for the responsible and supporting institutions to manage information on potential risks in their management area and to plan actions to manage all possible high and very high risk hazards identified in the National Risk Analysis, to establish a procedure for developing the National Emergency Management Plan with envisaged processes of plan updating and reviewing (Key audit results 2 and 3).
7. In order to ensure that in the event of a large-scale emergency, municipalities could promptly declare the emergency and manage it effectively, to specify the criteria for emergencies and their estimates (Key audit result1).

To the Fire and Rescue Department:

8. In order to guarantee that authorities envisage effective emergency management measures, we recommend establishing qualitative criteria for assessing the preparedness to respond to emergencies (Key audit result3).