

Inspection visit to the detention facilities of the Tartu Police Station

On 27 January 2016, advisors of the Chancellor of Justice made an unannounced inspection of the detention facilities of the Tartu Police Station of the Southern Prefecture of the Police and Border Guard Board (hereinafter the Tartu Detention Facility).

Representatives of the Rescue Board and State Agency of Medicines participated in the visit. Both the State Agency of Medicines as well as the Rescue Board will open independent supervision proceedings against the Tartu Detention Facility and, therefore, the recommendations of the Chancellor of Justice do not touch upon the handling of medicinal products or fire safety.

The personal files of detainees checked at random had been properly drawn up.

Based on interviews with detainees and the tour of the detention facility, it was concluded that the main problems were related to the detention conditions of the detention facility and with ensuring the rights granted to detainees by rights established in the legal order. During the inspection, the following was established:

- in the detention facility, detainees cannot regularly access national or local newspapers. According to the officials of the detention facility, they have no newspaper subscription and therefore the detainees receive newspapers irregularly;
- there are six outdoor courtyards which the detainees can use at least once a day for an hour. The courtyards had a partial roof cover that offered protection against precipitation, but there were no benches or seating facilities in the courtyards;
- the detention conditions of the cells need to be modernised. For instance, the hygiene corner is not separated from the rest of the cell by a wall or screen, the furniture in the cells is broken, the walls and ceilings of the cells are tainted. Some cells do not have a window, which means that no natural light reaches the cell;
- only one officer is on duty at the detention facility to ensure supervision on two floors. In recent years, there have been multiple deaths of detainees in various cells. In a considerable number of cases, the death is to a lesser or greater extent related to the fact that the supervision exercised over the detainees in the cell was insufficient. The Chancellor of Justice has emphasised that the police must make every effort to reduce the number of deaths. One of the measures is to improve supervision.