

Inspection of the Vao Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers

On 12 May 2014 and 14 May 2014 advisers to the Chancellor of Justice paid an own-initiative inspection visit to the Vao Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers.

The work of the accommodation centre is organised by AS Hoolekandeteenused. Pursuant to Subsection 32 (3) of the Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens, an administration contract for the provision of the service of a reception centre for asylum seekers was entered into between the Ministry of Social Affairs and AS Hoolekandeteenused on 11 April 2013.

32 people were staying at the reception centre at the time of the inspection visit. 26 of them were asylum seekers and six had been granted international protection. There were four adult women and four minors among the residents of the centre. One of the children was a newborn; two were two years old; and one was nine years old.

The Chancellor of Justice makes the following recommendations as a result of the inspection visit:

1. guarantee that a primary health check is organised within a reasonable time for persons who arrive at the centre. Tests whose necessity should be assessed each time should also be defined in cooperation with a family doctor;
2. enter into a contract with a family doctor for providing health services to the residents of the centre which defines the services provided to the residents of the centre and the procedure for service provision;
3. upon the provision of health services, organise interpreting into an understandable language and involve a professional interpreter at the expense of the centre if possible;
4. allow children to visit a dentist at the expense of the centre. The Chancellor of Justice also asks the centre to inform parents of this opportunity, because they are not aware of this and are afraid to ask about dental treatment for children because only the extraction of teeth is offered to adults;
5. organise the provision of psychological counselling for asylum seekers. If possible, such counselling should be provided regularly on the premises of the centre to make it accessible, and people must be informed of this option;
6. consider the possibilities of organising language training in a more efficient manner (incl. the division of learners into different groups depending on their level of advancement);
7. promote projects and activities to offer work and professional activities to asylum seekers in order to preserve the habit of work, provide opportunities for work activities with practical outputs and promote coping on the labour market;
8. when the building is reconstructed, take into account the need to guarantee independent access to the building for special-needs people and to inform the Chancellor of Justice of the timeframe within which this is planned to be organised. The Chancellor of Justice also advises the centre to analyse how services are provided to persons who require third party assistance;
9. explain the opportunities open to the children living in the centre to attend nursery schools and how the relevant costs are covered. The Chancellor of Justice also asks the centre to inform the parents of the relevant opportunities.

The Chancellor of Justice would like to highlight the extremely open and helpful manner in which the employees of the accommodation centre treat the residents. The residents described that life in the centre was organised with a focus on family life and said that the attitude of the

staff towards them was wonderful. The Chancellor of Justice also commends the accommodation centre for teaching English to the asylum seekers in addition to Estonian, which is required by law. The Chancellor of Justice acknowledges the contribution of the accommodation centre and NGOs to the creation of leisure opportunities for the asylum seekers.