

Inspection visit to Tallinn Prison

Summary

Between 13 and 15 March 2017 the advisers of the Chancellor of Justice made an unannounced inspection visit to the facilities of Tallinn Prison, which are located in Magasini Street. The Chancellor of Justice last visited Tallinn Prison in 2014.

During the visit, the advisers of the Chancellor of Justice had confidential conversations with 45 inmates in smaller and large groups, they talked to various staff members of the prison, and took a tour in the territory and rooms of the prison. They also conducted random checks of documents. A medical expert was involved in the visit.

The efforts made by the prison in ensuring the security of female inmates placed in Tallinn Prison must be recognised. The prison has complied with several recommendations made by the Chancellor of Justice. A practice worth following is the playroom and joint activity room as well as toys for children who come for a longer visit. The clothing given to people placed in solitary confinement is of better quality than the respective clothing of other prisons. The renovation of solitary confinement chambers, chambers for minors and young people as well as the rooms of the addiction rehabilitation department of female inmates also deserves mentioning.

According to the expert, the availability of the medical service in the prison is very good. Emergency medical assistance both in and outside the prison is well-organised. The staff have been properly trained and understand how to react quickly in the case of an emergency. The medical equipment designated for the provision of health care services is modern and corresponds to the prison's needs. The conditions of keeping of medical records containing the personal data of the inmates meet all the modern data protection rules.

In spite of repairs carried out in certain parts of the prison, the living conditions have largely not improved over the years and the buildings of the prison in Magasini Street are extremely depreciated. The argument made by the prison administration, according to which it is economically impractical to carry out major construction works in buildings that will be abandoned once the new facilities are complete, can be understood. However, the knowledge of new buildings of Tallinn Prison, which will be constructed in the future, does not in any way improve the situation of the people currently serving their sentence. The living and washing rooms of the current inmates of Tallinn Prison must be in order, too.

The Chancellor of Justice requests that the contents and the frequency of provision of the set of hygiene supplies given to inmates who do not have sufficient funds be revised. The practice in issuing hygiene supplies meeting the special needs of female inmates must be changed.

People's privacy must be ensured in the prison's washrooms and all inmates must be able to use the shower at least twice a week. The showers of the washrooms must be in a working order.

Inmates located in E buildings of the prison must be able to train outdoors every day. Walking areas must be equipped with resting facilities that allow the inmate to operatively contact prison officers (e.g. call buttons, etc.). The Chancellor of Justice asks not to use the walking areas of the solitary confinement building and to allow inmates placed in solitary confinement to stay

outdoors in accordance with the requirements. The prison must also assess if the prison clothing is sufficient for staying outdoors in cold weather.

The Chancellor of Justice asks the prison to regularly and more frequently provide inmates with national daily newspapers. Efforts must be made to make information given via the mass media more available to Russian-speaking inmates.

The possibilities of use of the telephone by people (incl. arrested people) in closed departments must be increased. Short meetings with family members and, in particular, children must, as a rule, take place without being separated by glass. The physical environment of the waiting room must be improved and materials introducing the rules and procedure of meetings (incl. in the most widespread languages such as Russian, English) must be made available. Instead of demanding that people who have come for a longer meeting undress themselves completely, the prison must prefer less intrusive measures (scanners, etc.) and change the search practice.

The Chancellor of Justice asks the prison to improve the conditions of spending leisure time and the outdoor training facilities for minors and young inmates. More attention must be paid to involving young people in instructed activities and to closer communication between the prison staff and young people.

Currently, inmates with reduced mobility have it difficult to access various parts of the prison without assistance. The Chancellor of Justice requests that such inmates be placed in cells adjusted to their needs and that obstacles to their movement in the rooms and territory of the prison be removed.

A report on the use of physical force, a service weapon, special equipment or a restraining measure and examination of the state of health of an offender should as accurately as possible record data on a medical examination. A decision to use restraining measures upon taking an inmate outside of the prison for the purpose of medical procedures must be associated with circumstances describing the specific escorted person. The escort documents must, among other things, indicate whether, under what circumstances, for how long and which restraining measures were used and whether and on what reasons the escort team was present at the provision of the health care service.

In the opinion of the medical expert involved in the inspection visit, more attention must be paid to the prevention of the spread of infectious diseases in the prison. More attention must be paid to the provision of mental health support services as well. In the opinion of the expert, the involvement of third parties (e.g. guards) in each and every medical examination for security purposes violates the confidential trust relationship between the doctor and the patient and in that regard the prison must change the practice. Software enabling the full functionality of the information system of the medical documents of the prison must be put into use.

The expert also finds that the rooms and the so-called medical cells designated for the provision of the health care service are largely completely unfit for the purpose and desperately need to be repaired. The expert found the regular cells and washrooms to be anti-sanitary. The expert argued that the imprisonment conditions of people with reduced mobility (e.g. in a wheelchair) had not been adjusted to their needs and were unsuitable.