

Inspection visit to short-term detention premises of Viljandi Police Department of Police and Border Guard Board

On 15 April 2021, the advisers of the Chancellor of Justice made unannounced inspection visits to the short-term detention (up to 48 hours) facilities of the Viljandi Police Station of the Southern Prefecture of the Police and Border Guard. A family doctor participated in the inspection visit as a healthcare expert.

The same premises were used as the detention cells of the Viljandi Police Station until April 2021, i.e. as a [house of detention within the meaning of the Imprisonment Act](#). The premises were used for short-term detention only a few weeks before the visit. As a result, detainees can take advantage of opportunities in these premises that are often unavailable during short-term detention. As a positive, detainees are fed three times a day and there is a walking yard where they can be out in the fresh air if they wish. Detainees can take a shower. It is commendable that the documents examined during the inspection (in particular the reports regarding intoxicated persons taken to recover from intoxication and the reports for the detention of a suspect) were generally well documented. Inter alia, the documents contained important information for the prevention of ill-treatment of detainees: the duration of the application of direct coercion, informing relatives about the detention of a person, etc.

In the summary of a previous [inspection](#), the Chancellor of Justice has explained the main requirements for facilities of short-term detention. The Chancellor of Justice was also guided by these requirements when inspecting the detention cells of the Viljandi Police Station.

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) has [emphasised](#) that cells of police stations should be maintained in a satisfactory state of repair and have adequate lighting (including access to natural light).

The Chancellor of Justice inspected the same facilities of detention facilities in 2017 and [found](#) that there was a lack of natural light in the cells, as the windows were small considering the size of the cells and the glass bricks used to fill the openings did not let in enough light. The Chancellor of Justice asked to ensure that windows (window size and window material) allow a sufficient amount of natural light to enter the chambers.

At present, the glass brick windows of the detention cells of Viljandi Police Station have been replaced with windows that are more translucent, but due to the placement of the windows deep in the window groove, their size and the bars located in front of the windows, not enough daylight is let into the cells.

A solution could be to remove the bars and, if necessary, replace the window material for safety reasons. The Chancellor of Justice's inspections of detention facilities have shown that alternative security devices (e.g. impact-resistant glass) can often be used instead of bars, which ensure that people are properly detained but do not block daylight from entering the premises. The Chancellor of Justice asks that it be considered whether various solutions could be implemented in the temporary detention cells of Viljandi Police Station in order to allow sufficient natural daylight into the cells. The cleanliness of the detention cells is commendable, but several cells are in need of repairs.

The police station had several over-the-counter medicines available for detainees. Unfortunately, these also included outdated medicines (No-Spa 40 mg tablets, Septolete omni

3 mg/1 mg lozenges). In order to protect human health, it is important that the authority has an overview of available medicines and that unsuitable (e.g. expired) and unnecessary medicines are properly [utilised](#). The use of expired medicines can be life-threatening.