

Press Release

Council of Europe Press Division

Ref: 045a09

Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 25 60

Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 39 11

pressunit@coe.int

internet: www.coe.int/press



47 members

Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belgium
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Moldova
Monaco
Montenegro
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
San Marino
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom

Council of Europe anti-torture Committee publishes report on Finland

Strasbourg, 20.01.2009 – At the request of the Finnish authorities, the Council of Europe's Committee for the prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (CPT) has published today the [report on its fourth visit to Finland](#), carried out in April 2008.

During the visit, the CPT's delegation examined, in particular, the safeguards offered to persons detained by the police, and the situation of remand prisoners held in police detention facilities. The visit report contains recommendations aimed at eliminating the practice of holding remand prisoners in police cells. In this context, the Finnish authorities have informed the Committee of plans to adopt measures to decrease the number of remand prisoners in police establishments and to shorten the periods spent by them in police custody.

The CPT's delegation also found that persons detained under the Aliens Act were still frequently held in police establishments. In this context, the Committee has recommended that the Finnish authorities consider the possibility of opening a second specialised holding facility for aliens, like the one opened in Metsälä.

The report also addresses in detail various issues related to prisons, in particular the phenomenon of inter-prisoner violence and intimidation as well as the situation of prisoners held in high security and closed units. The CPT has recommended that a national approach be developed to address the issue of "fearful" prisoners, and that a suitable programme of purposeful activities be provided to prisoners held in conditions of high security or segregated by court order.

The Committee was impressed by the high quality of the prisoner accommodation at Vantaa Prison; however, the original concept of a modern remand prison offering a variety of regimes while taking into account the interests of justice was compromised by overcrowding. Further, the CPT has called upon the Finnish authorities to end the practice of "slopping out" at Helsinki Prison, as well as elsewhere in the Finnish prison system. Particular attention was also paid to the treatment of prisoners suspected of concealing unlawful substances in their body ("body packers").

In addition, the CPT's delegation visited a State psychiatric hospital for forensic patients and civil patients considered dangerous or otherwise challenging (Vanha Vaasa Hospital) and, for the first time in Finland, a psychiatric unit for adolescent intensive care (the EVA Unit in Pitkänieni).

As regards the latter establishment, the CPT's delegation noted with concern that some of the juvenile patients were prevented from taking outdoor exercise, on occasion for weeks on end; the Committee has recommended that steps be taken to ensure that all juvenile patients are offered the possibility to take daily outdoor exercise. The delegation also requested that a detailed action plan be drawn up to reduce significantly recourse to seclusion at Vanha Vaasa Hospital; the Finnish authorities subsequently informed the CPT of steps to be taken in this regard and also indicated that procedures and methods used in all psychiatric facilities (such as seclusion) would be subject to review in the context of legislative reforms to be launched in the course of 2009.

The CPT's visit report is available on the Committee's website at <http://www.cpt.coe.int>

To receive our press releases by e-mail, contact : Council.of.Europe.Press@coe.int

A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member states.