



CPT/Inf (2025) 05

## **Response**

**of the Latvian Government  
to the report of the European Committee  
for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman  
or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)  
on its visit to Latvia**

**from 22 to 31 May 2024**

The Government of Latvia has requested the publication of this response.  
The CPT's report on the 2024 visit to Latvia is set out in document CPT/Inf (2025) 04.

Strasbourg, 26 February 2025

**COMMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF LATVIA ON THE  
REPORT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR THE PREVENTION OF  
TORTURE AND INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR  
PUNISHMENT FOLLOWING THE AD HOC VISIT TO LATVIA CARRIED  
OUT FROM 22 TO 31 MAY 2024**

Having assessed the Report of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (hereinafter – the Committee) on the ad hoc visit to Latvia carried out from 22 to 31 May 2024 (hereinafter – the Report), the Government of Latvia provides the following information on the implementation of the Committee’s recommendations. At the same time, the Government of Latvia extends its appreciation to the Committee’s experts for their recommendations and suggestions, as they contribute to improving the situation by reducing and ultimately eradicating the informal prisoner hierarchy.

*General information* on significant past events that have a direct or indirect impact on reducing the informal prisoner hierarchy in Latvia.

1. On 1 September 2024, the **amendments to the “Code of Execution of Sentences of Latvia” came into force**, marking the second-largest reform of the prison system since Latvia regained independence. The amendments to the Code of Execution of Sentences of Latvia (hereinafter – the CESL) provide for the following:

1) **Transition to a two-tier prison system** (closed and open prison). The transition provides for a considerably smoother sentence execution process by significantly reducing the number of sentence serving regimes a sentenced prisoner must go through to qualify for placement in an open prison, and also to ensure a faster progression to a sentence serving regime from which conditional early release is possible.

Sentenced prisoners who begin serving their sentence at the lowest regime level of a closed prison may, after progressing to the highest regime level of the closed prison, qualify for transfer to an open prison once they have served half of their sentence (which is a more favourable regulation compared to the previous system). Meanwhile, those who are to begin serving their sentence at the highest regime level of a closed prison may qualify for transfer to an open prison once they have served  $\frac{1}{4}$  of their sentence (which is a more favourable regulation compared to the previous system). As a result, the sentenced prisoners are able to progress to the particular regime level or prison facility with broader resocialisation opportunities much more rapidly than before.

The impact of this reform has already become evident in the first few months after it came into force. After the reform came into force (from October to December 2024), 83 sentenced prisoners were transferred to the open prison, including one life-sentenced man who continues serving his sentence in the open prison section of Daugavgrīva Prison. To compare - 48 sentenced prisoners were transferred from January to September 2024.

2) **Prison units as one of the forms of individualisation of sentence execution (Article 13<sup>2</sup>, paragraph 4, of the CESL)**. Even prior to the amendments, the CESL provided for the creation of prison units; however, the amendments introduce a significant change on the purpose for creating those units. The amendments to the CESL provide that within a single sentence serving regime, units can be organised by the decision of the Head of the prison, grouping together prisoners with similar needs

or taking into account other specified criterion (characteristic), if this can contribute better to execution of the criminal sentence. This provides the possibility of creating units, e.g., for very high-risk or low-risk prisoners, prisoners involved in a specific resocialisation programme, prisoners with mental health issues, or those with mobility restrictions, etc. Additionally, the amendments to the CESL broaden the approach so that prisoners serving sentences at different regime levels can also be grouped in the same unit if necessary to address the resocialisation needs of certain prisoners. Prior to the amendments to the CESL, this option was only available at the Addiction Treatment Centre, where prisoners were included in the addiction reduction programme regardless of the security regime.

**3) The time during which a prisoner is denied advancement within the system of progressive sentence execution after violating the regime requirements has been reduced.** Until 1 September 2024, the CESL provided that one year must pass after the imposition of the punishment – placement in a disciplinary isolation cell – for the violation of the regime rules (Article 50<sup>3</sup>, paragraph 4, of the CESLL). This period has now been reduced to six months. For other punishments, that time has been reduced from six months to three months. This change in conditions accelerates, by two times, the opportunity for prisoners to progress within the system of progressive sentence execution, reaching a lighter security regime more quickly, where more resocialisation opportunities exist or where they can qualify for the transfer to an open prison or conditional early release.

**4) The procedure for executing a life sentence has been improved.** With the amendments to the CESL, the separate regulation regarding differences in the execution of sentences for life-sentenced prisoners was abolished. Therefore, as of 1 September 2024, the execution of life sentence is governed by the same legal norms as for other prisoners (scope of rights, procedure of sentence execution, etc.). Currently, life-sentenced prisoners begin serving their sentence at the lowest regime level of a closed prison, with the execution of the sentence following the same principles as for other sentenced prisoners, thereby providing life-sentenced prisoners with broader opportunities to engage in the resocialisation process and allowing for a more flexible execution of life sentence, while adhering to the necessary security standards.

In light of the above, appropriate structural changes were made in Jelgava and Daugavgrīva prisons.

**5) The regulation on the resocialisation of prisoners has been improved,** including by expanding the range of social rehabilitation measures for prisoners and incorporating the following measures (Article 61<sup>3</sup> of the CESL):

a) social rehabilitation programme – a set of targeted and structured measures aimed at promoting change in a prisoner, supporting personal development, acquiring or strengthening social skills, and providing the necessary support;

b) motivation programme – a set of targeted and structured measures aimed at facilitating the preparation of a prisoner for meaningful participation in the resocialisation process.

Article 61<sup>9</sup> of the CESL provides that the Head of the prison may allow the prisoners held in an open prison to attend leisure activities (e.g., cultural, informational, artistic, amateur, and sports events) outside the territory of the open prison to promote their successful integration into society. Additionally, Article 50<sup>6</sup>, paragraph 9, of the CESL was expanded, and it now stipulates that a prisoner may, with the permission of

the Head of the prison, visit governmental and municipal institutions, a sworn notary, a bailiff, a defence attorney, and a provider of state-guaranteed legal assistance if necessary to resolve social issues, in order to participate in probation programmes, receive state-guaranteed legal assistance, take part in procedural actions or preventive unemployment reduction measures in accordance with the laws and regulations on support for the unemployed and job seekers, provided that these services cannot be accessed remotely while in a prison.

6) **The regulation on the prisoner' right to communication has been improved**, e.g., the range of persons with whom a prisoner may stay during long-duration visits has been expanded, while short-duration visits may be replaced with video calls. Unfortunately, the further increase in the number of prisoner visits is still influenced by the condition of the available infrastructure.

7) The regulation on the prisoners' telephone calls has been clarified.

8) The issue of the duration of consecutive placements in the punishment isolation cell has been addressed. With the amendments to Article 71, paragraph 7, of the CESL, it was established that the duration of consecutive placements in the punishment isolation cell must not exceed 14 days, while in the disciplinary isolation cell (for minors), that duration must not exceed three days. This amendment, along with the improvement outlined in point 3, will reduce the negative influence of violations of the sentence serving regime on the prisoner.

Given the impact of this reform on the prison system, in 2024, the Ministry of Justice reissued orders regarding the sentence execution regimes established in prisons and the prison capacity (by slightly reducing it). As the reform increases the demand for places in open prisons, and considering the condition of prison infrastructure, it was decided in 2023 to transform Jēkabpils Prison into an open prison, and currently this process is ongoing.

A significant reform has been carried out in the sentence execution system at the national level, creating the conditions for the smooth progression of prisoners through the system of progressive sentence execution, which will help reduce the conditions favourable to informal prisoner hierarchy and address recommendations made in previous reports of the Committee (e.g., Recommendations 66, 90, 110, 112, 114, and 115 from the 2022 report).

2. On 11 January 2024, the European Court of Human Rights (hereinafter – the ECHR) delivered a judgment in the case of *D v. Latvia*, concluding that there had been a violation of the rights guaranteed under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment). In the judgment, the ECHR indicated that in order to prevent similar violations from recurring, Latvia must take measures to address the systemic issue identified in the judgment, namely, the social segregation of prisoners belonging to the “lowest caste”, their subjugation to criminal authorities within prisons, and the resulting inter-prisoner violence. This is the first case in which the ECHR, in accordance with Article 46 of the Convention, has outlined specific measures that Latvia must implement to comply with the judgment.

On 8 October 2024, the Government of Latvia approved the report “Measures to Reduce the Informal Prisoner Hierarchy in Prisons”.<sup>1</sup> The report states that *the Ministry of Justice and the Prisons Administration (hereinafter – the Administration) categorically oppose the internal prisoner hierarchy, as emphasized in the ECHR judgment, which also notes that prison officials have not supported the informal hierarchy. Within the scope of available resources over the long term, the Ministry of Justice and the Administration have made every effort to reduce the informal hierarchy.*

*The existence of the informal prisoner hierarchy is influenced by:*

- 1) prison infrastructure;*
- 2) staff attitude;*
- 3) recognised values and behavioural norms within the prisoner community (traditions and customs).*

*It is important to note that the informal prisoner hierarchy and its traditions represent a certain historical legacy which is gradually changing.*

*Two of the areas mentioned are those in which state action can have a significant impact on the existence of the informal prisoner hierarchy, i.e., providing infrastructure that meets the Committee’s standards and ensuring the availability of qualified staff. The third area (the values and behaviour among prisoners) can be influenced indirectly by governmental institutions:*

- by improving the resocialisation process through which an increasing number of prisoners become capable of making independent decisions, gaining knowledge, and acquiring skills to resolve various life situations and issues in a lawful manner;*
- by implementing various technological solutions in prisons, including high-quality and effective video surveillance systems;*
- by conducting regular security checks to identify and prevent potentially dangerous situations and limit the influence of the informal hierarchy.*

The Government has instructed the Ministry of Justice to prepare and submit, by 31 December 2026 and 1 July 2028, a report on the implementation of measures to reduce the informal prisoner hierarchy, including additional measures required to fulfil the task, if necessary.

Three regional events took place at the end of 2024,<sup>2</sup> during which a representative from the Ministry of Justice, presenting updates in the field of criminal sentence execution, informed the attendees, which included representatives from prisons, courts, the prosecutor’s office, the State Police, municipal police, and the State Probation Service (more than 300 participants in total across all events), about the findings of the ECHR judgment, the nature of the informal prisoner hierarchy, the causes of its existence, and the measures for reducing the informal prisoner hierarchy outlined in the report.

3. The process of adopting amendments to laws and regulations<sup>3</sup> is underway to address

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Cabinet of Ministers meeting of 8 October 2024 No. 41, §33.

<sup>2</sup> Meetings of the advisory councils of the territorial units of the State Probation Service held on 27 November 2024 in Riga, on 12 December 2024 in Jelgava Municipality, and on 17 December 2024 in Madona Municipality.

<sup>3</sup> Draft Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers 23-TA-1386 “Internal Rules of a Prison Establishment” and Draft Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers 23-TA-822 “Amendments to the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 3 January 2017 No. 23 “Internal Rules of a Prison Unit

**Recommendation 116 from the Committee’s 2022 report** (abolition of liability for self-harm).

The two legislative drafts, as recommended by the Committee, no longer provide for punishment of a prisoner for intentionally harming their own health. Additionally, in order to implement the Committee’s previously provided recommendation before new laws and regulations come into force, on 15 November 2023, the Ministry of Justice clarified the necessary actions to the Administration (in the event of self-harm by a prisoner, the prisons may record the fact **but not impose a penalty for it**).

**9. The CPT calls upon the Latvian authorities to significantly enhance their efforts to eradicate the influence of the informal prisoner hierarchy in the prison system, which is *inter alia* undermining the authority of the state, fuelling inter-prisoner violence, and promoting access to illicit drugs in prisons.**

In order to enhance the efforts to reduce the manifestations of the informal prisoner hierarchy and to consolidate the measures to be taken, the Ministry of Justice, together with the Administration, developed the **Action Plan for Reducing the Informal Prisoner Hierarchy and Implementing the Committee’s Recommendations** (hereinafter – the Action Plan) included in Annex 1 which outlines measures for the improvement of various areas. The Action Plan, along with the measures already initiated or completed since the delegation visit, will significantly reduce the likelihood of the existence of the informal prisoner hierarchy.

10. However, in recent years, both the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe have been encouraging member states, in the interest of transparency, to commit to the automatic publication procedure for future CPT visit reports and related government responses. This would allow CPT visit reports to be published one month after they have been transmitted to the authorities. The procedure envisages the possibility for a state to delay publication in a particular case.

**The CPT invites the Latvian authorities to agree with the automatic publication procedure as set out above.**

The concept behind this approach is acceptable, as long as there is the possibility for the state to request an extension of the publication deadline, especially in cases where the information outlined in the reports must be released together with the state’s response. However, to agree with the automatic publication procedure, a formal approval of the Government is necessary, which can be adopted until the next visit of the Committee.

12. According to the Latvian authorities, at the time of the visit, the total prison capacity was 4822 places and the total prison population stood at 3300 persons, that is, 68.2% occupancy, with the majority of prisoners still being accommodated in large-capacity dormitories.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, according to the Council

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Implementing a Resocialisation Programme for Reducing Addictions””.

<sup>4</sup> Multiple-occupancy dormitories with up to 30 beds, open throughout the day.

of Europe Annual Penal Statistics – SPACE I 2023<sup>5</sup>, Latvia’s incarceration rate decreased from 257.2 per 100 000 of population in 2013 to 171.5 in 2023.

This is a notably positive development; however, the incarceration rate in Latvia remains among the highest in Europe and **the CPT would like to receive information from the Latvian authorities regarding their plans to reduce it further, including the use of non-custodial measures at the pre-trial, trial and sentencing, and post-trial stage.**

It should be noted that, pursuant to Article 36 of the Criminal Law, a person may be sentenced to deprivation of liberty, probationary supervision, community service, or a fine as a primary sentence for a committed criminal offence. In Latvia, deprivation of liberty is imposed far less frequently than other penalties, such as community service.

Amendments to the Criminal Law that came into force on 1 January 2022 and the law “Amendments to the Criminal Law” adopted on 13 June 2024 that came into force on 1 January 2025 have substantially increased the likelihood of probationary supervision being imposed as a primary sentence for both adults and minors who have committed a criminal offence. Probationary supervision is an effective alternative to deprivation of liberty, enabling the correction of offender’s thinking and behaviour, the imposition of restrictions, and supervision in accordance with their age, individual psychological characteristics, and level of development.

Additionally, the Criminal Law provides for the possibility, under certain circumstances, to impose probationary supervision as a primary sentence even for a serious crime punishable by deprivation of liberty for a period exceeding five years or for an especially serious crime, as stipulated in the Criminal Law. Nonetheless, in certain cases, probationary supervision imposed for committing an especially serious crime may not achieve the purpose of punishment specified in Article 35 of the Criminal Law, i.e., to protect the public safety, restore justice, punish the offender for a committed criminal offence, resocialise the punished person, and to achieve that the prisoner and other individuals comply with the law and refrain from committing criminal offences.

In this regard, it is important to point out that these categories of offences pose a high level of public danger and threaten the most fundamental interests of the state and society. Therefore, the probationary supervision for such crimes is not acceptable, and the offender should be subject to actual deprivation of liberty instead.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice has been working on an initiative aiming at redirecting juvenile offenders to a system of compulsory correctional measures (thereby avoiding the imposition of a criminal sentence and its associated consequences).

13. The delegation was also informed that the construction of a prison in Liepāja, which according to the initial plans was supposed to be completed by 2019, was now finally under way, with an expectation that the new 1200 capacity prison,

<sup>5</sup> According to the SPACE I 2023 Report, the median and average incarceration rate in the Council of Europe member states is 106.5 and 123.9 respectively.

with solely double-occupancy cells, would enter into service from 2026.<sup>6</sup>

The CPT has repeatedly expressed its view that the risk of intimidation and violence is higher in large-capacity prison dormitories and that such accommodation arrangements are prone to foster the evolution of prison subcultures and to facilitate the maintenance and cohesion of criminal organisational structures. Moreover, apart from rendering proper staff control extremely difficult, if not impossible, such accommodation also inevitably results in a lack of privacy for prisoners in their everyday lives. Therefore, the cellular-type accommodation in the new prison is welcome.

However, the CPT would like to stress that it has serious misgivings about the construction of very large prison complexes, which have historically proven difficult to manage and unable to deliver the targeted services required of the various population groups they contain. Very careful design of the various components of the complex and the management structure will be essential in order to avoid possible negative implications for day-to-day contact between prisoners and staff, and to optimise opportunities for the delivery of a purposeful regime and prisoners' contact with the outside world.

**The Committee calls upon the Latvian authorities to take all possible measures to significantly speed up the process of modernising the prison estate, especially the conversion to cellular-type accommodation within reasonably sized establishments. The CPT requests that the Latvian authorities provide details of the modernisation plans and the current projected timescales for that process.**

With the new Liepāja Prison entering into service, the closure of certain existing prisons is planned (Course of Action 3 of the Action Plan). Given that the prisons in Latvia are currently not overcrowded, work is being carried out in parallel with the construction of the new Liepāja Prison to evaluate the existing prisons in order to decide which ones will be closed. This process will involve assessing both the condition of the prison infrastructure and other criteria relevant to its proper functioning, e.g., the location of the prison.

As a result of this process, by 1 May 2025, a report will be prepared to the Latvian Government on the development of prisons following the new Liepāja Prison entering into service (Measure 3.2 of the Action Plan), outlining specific prisons or prison sections to be closed (Measure 3.3 of the Action Plan), measures to reduce the number of large-capacity cells (Measure 3.4 of the Action Plan), and the steps for further development of the prison system, including the construction of at least one new prison and measures to fill spaces that meet the standards. With the new Liepāja Prison entering into service, at least three prisons or sections thereof are to be closed, while the remaining prisons will gradually reduce the number of prisoners in cells and living units, which will significantly contribute to reducing the likelihood of the existence of the informal prisoner hierarchy.

After the new Liepāja Prison enters into service, the prison system will provide 1704 places in conditions that fully meet the standards and in low-capacity cells, including:

- 80 places in Cēsis Juvenile Correctional Institution (double-occupancy cells);

<sup>6</sup> At the time of the 2024 visit, it was still not clear which prisons would be closed following the opening of the new prison in Liepāja.



- 200 places in the Addiction Treatment Centre (hereinafter – the Addiction Treatment Centre) of Olaine Prison (Prison Hospital of Latvia);
- 224 places in Valmiera Prison (94 places in the renovated investigation block and 130 places in the renovated closed prison cell block);
- the new Liepāja Prison (1200 places).

After closing several prisons in poor condition and once the prisoner placement is carried out under the new regulation, the number of prisoners in a cell will generally decrease.

Currently, options for reducing the number of prisoners placed in cells and living units in prisons are also being evaluated. For instance, in Jelgava Prison, in the areas with prisoners serving their sentences at the highest level of the closed prison regime, the capacity is currently being reduced. Additionally, all five-occupancy cells are to be converted into four-occupancy cells. In some four-occupancy and three-occupancy cells with beds arranged on two levels, the capacity is also to be reduced by removing the beds on the second level.

Given the positive impact of low-occupancy cells on reducing the informal prisoner hierarchy, the Administration plans to gradually reduce the number of prisoners in cells to four persons wherever possible. However, it should be noted that the prompt reconstruction of several large cells is not possible due to infrastructural peculiarities and other objective conditions.

The Administration has at its disposal the technical design developed under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism project “Establishment of Training Centre Infrastructure and a Model Prison Block for Training Opportunities within the Olaine Prison Territory” for an open prison block that was to be constructed within the territory of Olaine Prison (Prison Hospital of Latvia). The technical design provides for 50 double-occupancy cells in the block, adequate living units for the sentenced prisoners, staff facilities, etc. The feasibility of constructing that block during the next planning period of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism (2021–2028) or by securing other funding sources is currently being evaluated, aiming to increase the proportion of double-occupancy living units in prisons. Additionally, that technical design could also be used in other prisons if the Government were to support such a measure.

20. Valmiera Prison (capacity 506) was accommodating 217 adult male prisoners, including 51 on remand; all sentenced prisoners were serving their sentence in partly closed prison conditions. Sentenced prisoners were accommodated in five dormitory-type units with up to 30 beds per room, and remand prisoners were held in a separate block consisting of multiple-occupancy cells furnished with up to four beds. The delegation was informed that a new block with double-occupancy cells (capacity 200) would be opened in the summer of 2024; **the Committee would like to receive confirmation of this development as well as information on the impact that this new block has had on accommodation within the rest of the prison.**

The commissioning of the renovated block in Valmiera Prison began in January 2025, while the placement of the prisoners is expected to commence by 1 March 2025 (Measure 3.5 of the Action Plan). Once the renovated block in Valmiera Prison is opened, the situation in all prisons, including Valmiera Prison, will be evaluated to identify the prisons that require the transfer of prisoners to the renovated block the most.

23. The delegation was informed that there was no separate legal act establishing the procedure for recording and reporting injuries sustained by prisoners, and that medical staff followed the same procedure as for the medical examination of newly arrived prisoners.<sup>7</sup>

The duties of any medical practitioner working in Latvia regarding the completion of medical documentation are established by Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 4 April 2006 No. 265 “Procedure for Medical Documentation Management”. Annex 16 to that Regulation contains the Register of Individuals Admitted with Injuries Sustained as a Result of a Criminal Offence.

Furthermore, Annex 4 to Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 2 June 2015 No. 276 “Procedure for Implementation of Healthcare for Detained and Sentenced Persons” (hereinafter – Regulation No. 276) includes the prisoner injury record form and rules on the actions to be taken by the prison’s medical practitioner<sup>8</sup> upon detecting an injury, with those rules applying to all cases where an injury is detected.

To deepen the understanding of medical practitioners and other involved prison officials regarding the procedure and importance of recording injuries, training sessions will be organised (Measure 1.2 of the Action Plan).

24. Regrettably, based on its findings, the Committee must conclude yet again that the recording of injuries continues to be of very poor quality, notably at Daugavgrīva, Jēkabpils and Jelgava Prisons. The descriptions of injuries were generally rather succinct and vague, but of even greater concern was the fact that, in most cases, there was no record in a medical file of the statement made by the examined person regarding the circumstances of their injury;<sup>9</sup> **this is unacceptable, and it must be remedied immediately.**

**25. The Committee once again calls upon the Latvian authorities to ensure that injuries displayed by prisoners are always recorded in a detailed and comprehensive manner.**

**Upon admission to prison, every person should undergo a thorough medical examination following which a detailed record should be established. The same procedure should be followed after a violent incident within a prison establishment or whenever a prisoner is brought back to prison by the police, after having participated in investigative activities.**

**The record of such a medical examination should contain:**

**(i) an account of statements made by the person which are relevant to the medical examination (including the description of their state of health and any allegations of ill-treatment made by them),**

**(ii) a full account of objective medical findings based on a thorough examination;**

**(iii) the healthcare professional’s observation in the light of i) and ii), indicating the consistency between any allegations made and the objective**

<sup>7</sup> Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 2 June 2015 No. 276 “Procedure for Implementation of Healthcare for Arrested and Sentenced Persons”.

<sup>8</sup> 9. If a sentenced prisoner has sustained an injury or suffered poisoning, the medical practitioner shall, after providing medical assistance, submit a written report on the incident to the prison director.

<sup>9</sup> The internal inquiry files, on the other hand, included the statements of the injured prisoner.

**medical findings.**

**The record should also contain the results of additional examinations performed, detailed conclusions of the specialised consultations done, treatment applied for the injuries, or any further procedures conducted.**

**Recording of the medical examination in cases of injuries should be made on a special form provided for this purpose, with “body charts” for marking injuries that will be kept in medical file of the prisoner. Injuries should be photographed, and the photographs filed in the medical record of the person concerned. In addition, documents should be compiled systematically in a special trauma register where all types of injuries should be recorded.**

**The existing procedures should be reviewed in order to ensure that whenever injuries are recorded by a healthcare professional which are consistent with allegations of ill-treatment made by a prisoner (or which, even in the absence of allegations, are indicative of ill-treatment), the report is immediately and systematically brought to the attention of the relevant investigative authority.**

**The healthcare professional should advise the prisoner concerned that the writing of such a report falls within the framework of a system for preventing ill-treatment, that this report automatically has to be forwarded to a clearly specified independent investigative authority and that such forwarding is not a substitute for the lodging of a complaint in proper form. The results of every examination, including the above-mentioned statements and the healthcare professional’s opinions/observations, should be made available to the prisoner and to their lawyer.**

**The national authorities should offer special training to healthcare professionals on the manner in which medical screening of prisoners is to be performed, on the recording of any injuries observed, and on the reporting procedure.**

**The authorities should also ensure that there are no reprisals against any healthcare professionals in their duty to record and report injuries.**

**A centralised system for recording injuries should be introduced so as to better monitor the situation, detect incidents and identify potential risks in order to prevent inter-prisoner violence.**

All prisons are required to use injury record forms for recording of prisoner injuries, as provided in Annex 4 to Regulation No. 276. When completing the injury record form, the prison’s healthcare professional must describe both the subjective complaints and objective findings, including the local status of the injury. The form included in Annex 4 of the Regulation No. 276 contains a body chart which must be completed by the prison’s healthcare professionals. Furthermore, the prison’s healthcare professional must describe and record all injuries sustained by the prisoner in both the injury record form and the outpatient (inpatient) medical record. In addition, all additional examinations performed in relation to the injury, along with the information on injury treatment, must be recorded and stored in the medical file.

In order to ensure the implementation of the recommendation, in 2025, the Administration will provide training of prisons’ healthcare professionals on improving the recording of injuries and high-quality injury photography (Measure 1.2 of the Action Plan). Additionally, appropriate amendments to Regulation No. 276 are to be made to regulate the photographic recording of injuries, and the Administration will procure new photographic equipment in 2025.

Furthermore, the medical director of the Prison Hospital of Latvia organises monthly meetings with the heads of outpatient and inpatient facilities during which, in 2024, various relevant topics, including the procedure of completing injury record forms, were discussed on several occasions. In addition, in 2023, visual materials on the procedure for the recording of injuries were distributed to prisons' healthcare professionals.

For every sustained injury, in addition to completing the injury record form and performing the prisoner's examination, the prison's healthcare professional already prepares a report on the recording of injury, regardless of the cause of the injury, without specifying diagnosis and submits it to the prison management.

31. The prisoner from Jelgava Prison who suffered multiple facial fractures and a fractured finger was injured several days before the CPT visit to the prison and, at the time of the visit, was being treated in the Olaine prison hospital. According to the incidents register, he was found on the floor of the gym but had denied any inter-prisoner violence, claiming that he slipped and hit his head on the floor. It is noteworthy that on the day of the accident, the CCTV in the gym and in the corridor leading to the gym was not working (the Director blamed insufficient funding). The Committee also notes that one prisoner received a disciplinary sanction for trying to stop prison guards from entering the gym during the time of the incident.

The majority of prisoners interviewed by the delegation in Jelgava Prison knew about the incident but refused to discuss the details, suggesting the delegation talk to the *smotriaschij*.<sup>10</sup> The *smotriaschij* did, on the other hand, agree to talk about the incident and did not deny that it had been "an authorised" beating.

The delegation was informed that the case had been sent to the Investigation Department of the Prisons Administration. **The Committee would like to receive information on the results of this investigation.**

On 22 May 2024, criminal proceedings were initiated regarding the incident that occurred on 20 May 2024 in the gym of the living unit, where a conflict erupted between inmates, resulting in bodily injuries (bleeding face) to one prisoner. The pre-trial investigation was launched for intentional actions that have caused moderate bodily injury.

As part of the investigation, the scene of the incident was inspected, a photographic table was prepared, expert examinations were ordered, the victim's personal belongings were seized, several information requests were sent to various institutions, a decision was taken to recognise the person as a victim, the person was informed of his rights and obligations and questioned in the capacity of a victim, the witnesses were questioned, and the individual against whom the criminal proceedings were initiated was presented for identification.

The pre-trial investigation in the criminal proceedings is currently ongoing. After receiving the expert's opinion, the necessary procedural actions will be taken, and the criminal proceedings will be forwarded to the supervising prosecutor for the initiation of prosecution.

The Administration has concluded disciplinary procedure concerning disciplinary responsibility of prison officials for allowing such an incident to occur. Disciplinary actions have been imposed on four prison officials.

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<sup>10</sup> The "top prisoner"; see more on their role in the section on the informal prisoner hierarchy below.

36. Given the situation found in Latvian prisons as described later in the report, the numbers of injuries to prisoners, their attribution as accidents and the lack of investigations raise many concerns, including regarding the credibility of the official data and the state's seeming inability to ensure prisoner safety.

The fact that, in the majority of cases, the medical records did not contain any explanation by the injured prisoner concerning the origins of the injury or any medical interpretation offers no reassurance. **The Committee would like to receive the comments of the Latvian authorities on these issues, including upon their intended methods for establishing the possible causes of injuries when a credible statement from the injured prisoner is unavailable, as well as how they intend to effectively and reliably investigate incidents, so that the risk of injuries to prisoners in future can be properly understood and thus substantially reduced, and to protect victims of inter-prisoner violence from any further repercussions.**

If the prison administration has doubts as to the circumstances in which a prisoner has got an injury, the prison officials verify the information provided by the prisoner who has sustained the injury. This involves questioning of other prisoners and prison officials who were on duty that day, inspecting the site of the accident, and analysing the video footage. If, after performing those actions, the prison administration has reasonable grounds to suspect that the prisoner did not sustain the injury as a result of an accident, a prison official calls the prisoner for a conversation and encourages to reveal the true facts about the cause of the injury, expressing own assumptions about the cause of the injury and offering to separate the prisoner from other inmates who may be responsible for the injury, thereby protecting the prisoner from further harm by fellow prisoners.

From 3 May to 31 December 2024, the Administration implemented a pilot project under which devices that can be attached to the clothing of officials were used to record events in audio and video format during the transfer of prisoners to or from a medical facility outside the prison (hereinafter – the device). Officials from Riga Central Prison, Jelgava Prison, and Daugavgrīva Prison participated in the implementation of that pilot project. The efficiency evaluation of using those devices led to the conclusion that it disciplines both the officials and the prisoners being transferred. The officials who use the devices have confirmed that there have been significant improvements in prisoners' adherence to generally accepted behavioural rules and that complaints regarding the quality of officials' performance of their duties have decreased. In light of the above, on 20 December, a decision was taken to extend the pilot project implementation period until 31 December 2025. At the same time, it was decided to involve additional prisons in the pilot project. To this end, the Administration has acquired additional 42 devices and data storage units (servers), and it was instructed to implement the pilot project in all prisons.

The pilot project has shown that the use of this type of devices helps protect the prisoners from violence, as they are aware that their actions against other prisoners can be recorded by the device and may serve as evidence of any violations committed.

The Ministry of Justice is currently working on and intends to submit a proposal for amendments to the Criminal Procedure Law, stipulating that in the event of prisoner injuries, criminal proceedings must be initiated even without the prisoner's request if

the prison's physician has provided a conclusion that the bodily injuries were not caused by an accidental injury (Measure 5.1 of the Action Plan).

37. The Committee notes that according to Latvian legislation, if a person's bodily injuries, as evaluated by a forensic expert, do not reach the threshold of a slight injury,<sup>11</sup> the incident is not treated as a crime, and criminal proceedings are terminated based on Article 377, paragraph 1, point 2 of the Criminal Procedure Code, according to which the initiation of criminal proceedings is not permitted and initiated criminal proceedings must be terminated if the committed offence does not constitute a criminal offence.<sup>12</sup>

The Committee also notes that according to Article 7, paragraph 2, of the Criminal Procedure Code, criminal proceedings for the offence provided for in Article 130, paragraph 2, of the Criminal Code (intentional infliction of slight bodily injury), can only be initiated if a request has been received from the person to whom harm has been inflicted.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, the Committee further notes that in 2014, Article 130 of the Criminal Code was amended to add, as an aggravating factor, an intentional infliction of slight bodily injury committed by a person in a short-term place of detention or prison. In the Committee's opinion, this could be seen as an important step forward in the efforts to reduce inter-prisoner violence, since it allows a prosecution, even in the case of a slight injury without a request from the person concerned. However, it seems that not a single prisoner has been prosecuted according to Article 130, paragraph 3, point 4 during the last few years. **The Committee would like to receive the comments of the Latvian authorities on the application of the amended Article 130 of the Criminal Code together with information as to whether any prisoner has been sentenced according to this legal norm since it came into force, and if not, the reasons for that.**

Since 2015, the Investigation Department of the Administration has forwarded 13 criminal proceedings to the Prosecutor's Office for initiating prosecution pursuant to Article 130, paragraph 3, point 4 of the Criminal Law. According to the Criminal Procedure Information System, out of 13 criminal proceedings forwarded, two were terminated, six of them have been adjudicated, while five are still pending.

For general information on the number of persons sentenced under Article 130 of the Criminal Law, please see Annex 2. Detailed numbers about prisoners sentenced under that article are not available.

In cases where bodily injuries do not reach the threshold for a mild bodily injury, the perpetrator is not left unpunished, as they will face the penalty for the offence provided

<sup>11</sup> According to the Criteria for the establishment of the severity level of bodily injury, the level of severity and the causal link are determined by a forensic medical expert. The extent of an ongoing health disorder caused by a bodily injury is also determined during a forensic medical examination and is expressed in percentages. According to the Criteria, slight bodily injuries are those which have caused short-term health disorders from seven to 21 days or an ongoing health disorder, which is less than 10%.

<sup>12</sup> Depending on the status of the alleged perpetrator, the case is further investigated (and a person held responsible if found guilty) according to the Code of Administrative Offences or the Penitentiary Code (if the alleged perpetrator is a prisoner).

<sup>13</sup> The same article further provides that criminal proceedings may also be initiated without the receipt of a request from the person to whom harm has been inflicted, if such a person is not able to implement their rights themselves due to a physical or mental deficiency.

for in the CESL or the Law on the Procedure for Holding the Detained Persons . Information about the imposition of disciplinary sanctions was sent to the delegation representative of the Committee on 20 May 2024.

39. It is noteworthy that the overall official capacity of the four prisons visited by the CPT is 2493, which is 52% of the total prison capacity of Latvia. Based on the findings described in previous paragraphs, the Committee finds it difficult to believe that there were only 15 cases in 15 months when criminal proceedings into possible inter-prisoner violence were considered (with four cases initiated and 11 cases refused to be initiated after a preliminary examination by an investigator), given the multiple factors contributing to inter-prisoner violence set out in this report.

The Committee further notes that during that same period there were 30 cases in all the other Latvian prisons combined when criminal proceedings into possible inter-prisoner violence were initiated (or refused to be initiated after preliminary examination by an investigator);<sup>14</sup> that is, for the whole Latvian prison population of almost 5000 prisoners, there were only 45 such cases in 15 months. The Committee would like to receive the comments of the Latvian authorities on the reasons for such a low number of endeavours to investigate, with a view to prosecute, possible inter-prisoner violence in the four prisons visited by the CPT.

We would like to inform you that just before the delegation visit (on 7 May 2024), the total prison population stood at 3 344 prisoners, including 2 445 prisoners and 900 detainees. Thus, the total number of prisoners indicated in the Committee's report is incorrect. **We kindly request the Committee to correct that factual error in its report by replacing the text “population of almost 5000 prisoners” with the words “population of 3 344 prisoners”.**

In the remaining four prisons during that period, there were 30 criminal proceedings initiated or refused to be initiated into possible inter-prisoner violence, considering that the type of injuries sustained by the prisoners and their possible cause did not indicate signs of inter-prisoner violence, or the injury was clearly insignificant.

40. Furthermore, the Committee would like to address certain inconsistencies shown in Table 2, namely the number of criminal proceedings initiated (or refused to be initiated) in Daugavgrīva and Jelgava prisons during the first quarter of 2024, in light of the CPT findings reflected in the last column of the table.

According to the records examined by the delegation, in Daugavgrīva Prison, three prisoners suffered fractured ribs during the first quarter of 2024, and Table 2 shows that during that period criminal proceedings were initiated (and were reportedly still ongoing) into one possible case of inter-prisoner violence. However, in the other two cases there was a refusal to initiate criminal proceedings based on Article 377, paragraph 1, point 2 of the Criminal Procedure Code (the committed offence does not constitute a criminal offence).

**The CPT would like to receive information from the Latvian authorities as to whether these three cases (one of initiated criminal proceedings and two refusals) are linked to the three incidents of fractured ribs and, if so, the result of the case in which criminal proceedings were initiated.**

<sup>14</sup> Of which 24 were related to incidents which occurred in Riga Central Prison.

**Moreover, the CPT would like to receive information regarding the reasons which led to the refusal to initiate criminal proceedings based on Article 377, paragraph 1, point 2 of the Criminal Procedure Code into the two other cases. Explicitly, was it concluded in these cases by a forensic expert that a fractured rib constituted only a slight injury despite the fact that, according to the relevant Latvian legislation, fractures to one or several ribs without damage to internal organs constitutes a moderate bodily injury?<sup>15</sup>**

If, on the other hand, one or more of the three cases (one of initiated criminal proceedings and two refusals) are not linked to any of the three incidents of fractured ribs found by the CPT delegation, **the Committee would like to receive information as to what investigative actions have been taken to establish the nature of these incidents and, if they were a result of inter-prisoner violence, the identities of the perpetrators.**

Turning to Jelgava Prison, according to the records examined by the delegation, during the first quarter of 2024, one prisoner suffered fractured ribs<sup>16</sup> and yet no criminal proceedings were initiated or refused to be initiated into possible inter-prisoner violence in this case. **The CPT would like to receive information on what investigative actions have been taken to establish the nature of this incident.**

We would like to inform you about the following:

– The criminal proceedings that were initiated but afterwards terminated in accordance with Article 377, paragraph 5, of the Criminal Procedure Law<sup>17</sup> were related to chest injuries (stab wounds according to the expert's opinion).

– One case where a decision was taken not to initiate the criminal proceedings based on Article 377, paragraph 2, of the Criminal Procedure Law<sup>18</sup> involved a rib fracture. It was decided not to initiate the criminal proceedings, as the prisoner had sustained the rib fracture as a result of auto-aggression (self-harm), according to the information provided by the prisoner. Pursuant to the Criminal Procedure Law, a forensic expertise cannot be ordered.

– The second case where a decision was taken not to initiate the criminal proceedings does not involve a rib fracture.

In order to establish the nature of these incidents, explanations were obtained from the prisoners and prison officials during the departmental examination conducted by the Administration.

On 22 May 2024, the Administration initiated criminal proceedings into the incident that occurred on 20 May 2024 in the gym of the living unit, where a conflict erupted between the inmates, resulting in bodily injuries (bleeding face) to one prisoner.

<sup>15</sup> See paragraph 42 below for more information on inconsistencies regarding forensic expertise requested in Daugavgrīva Prison.

<sup>16</sup> The case concerning multiple facial fractures is from the second quarter of 2024 and is already addressed by the Committee in paragraph 31 of this report.

<sup>17</sup> The initiation of criminal proceedings shall not be permitted, and initiated criminal proceedings shall be terminated, if:

5) a person who is to be held or is held criminally liable has died, except where proceedings are necessary in order to exonerate a deceased person.

<sup>18</sup> The initiation of criminal proceedings shall not be permitted, and initiated criminal proceedings shall be terminated, if:

2) the committed offence does not constitute a criminal offence.



Additional information is provided in the response to the concerns raised in paragraph 31 of the Committee's report (see page 11 above).

42. The Committee would like to address the inconsistency between the information provided in Table 2 with that of Table 3 in respect of Daugavgrīva Prison.

According to the information in Table 2, during the first quarter of 2024, there was only one decision to initiate criminal proceedings into possible inter-prisoner violence and two refusals. However, Table 3 shows that forensic expertise was requested only once during that period despite the fact that three prisoners in Daugavgrīva Prison suffered fractured ribs during the first quarter of 2024.

**The Committee would like to be informed by the Latvian authorities whether, in the two cases where prisoners sustained rib fractures, a decision was taken to refuse to initiate criminal proceedings (based on the fact that the sustained injury did not reach a threshold of moderate injury) without requesting forensic expertise and, therefore, without having the result of an assessment by a forensic expert on the severity of the injury.**

In the two cases where prisoners sustained rib fractures the forensic expertise was not requested. A decision was taken to refuse to initiate criminal proceedings as the prisoners themselves stated that the rib fractures had been a result of auto-aggression (self-harm).

47. As the delegation was frequently told during the dozens of interviews it carried out with prisoners, there was a so-called *smotriaschij*<sup>19</sup> (top prisoner) in every prison<sup>20</sup> with deputies in every block or unit of a prison. All of the deputies were ensuring some semblance of respect for internal prison rules,<sup>21</sup> resolving conflicts between inmates, and authorising punishment for those violating the unwritten informal prisoner hierarchy rules, which could be exercised through the infliction of a beating, extortion, psychological threats, or lowering of a person's caste (for example, by forcing him to transfer to a *levyje* cell).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The word *smotriaschij* in Russian means "the one who oversees". They are appointed by the so-called *vor v zakone* (thief in law), a criminal at the peak of the criminal hierarchy, to monitor compliance with the rules of the informal prisoner hierarchy (the so-called *vorovskije zakony* (laws of thieves)), act as intermediaries between the administration and prisoners, resolve conflicts between inmates, and manage the common fund, the so-called *obschiak*.

<sup>20</sup> The prison management in each prison visited did not deny this and provided information on the identity of these prisoners and their cell/dormitory number. In Grīva Section, the delegation was informed that a previous *smotriaschij* of the prison had been transferred to Riga Central Prison a few months prior due to new criminal charges.

<sup>21</sup> As a *smotriaschij* in one prison told the delegation, "we have an agreement with the administration – we ensure that prisoners behave and in return, all of us are left in peace". A *smotriaschij* in another prison said, "the staff are not mistreating us (prisoners) so, in return, we are trying not to cause them any problems".

<sup>22</sup> See paragraph 46 above regarding negative effects of the informal prisoner hierarchy.

While acknowledging the crucial impact of staff shortages on prison management, the Committee has nevertheless repeatedly expressed its view that any partial relinquishment of the responsibility for order and security, which properly falls within the ambit of custodial staff, is unacceptable. It exposes weaker prisoners to the risk of being exploited by their fellow inmates. It is also contrary to the European Prison Rules, according to which no prisoner should be employed or given authority in the prison in any disciplinary capacity (see Rule 62).

**The CPT recommends that the Latvian authorities take urgent steps to put an end to the practice of using informal prison leaders, so-called *smotriascijie*, to maintain good order in prisons, returning this duty to the staff. Consideration might also be given in this context to segregating the informal leaders and their close circle from the rest of the prison population, based upon a considered individual risk and needs assessment. In order to regain control of the prisons, the Latvian authorities must also increase staff numbers significantly (see paragraphs 71 to 73 below).**

The prison management oversees the activities within the prison and ensures that decisions regarding the maintenance of order are made in accordance with laws and regulations, with these decisions being made by the prison management. By implementing preventive measures and conducting systematic surveillance the prison management and staff consistently ensure that violence or other illegal activities are not tolerated. Prisons continue to work purposefully on improvements, ensuring both order and safety as well as the respect for human rights within the prisons. Undeniably, prisons face staff shortages; however, the existing staff ensures order and security in prisons. Prison officials carry out the duties of monitoring prisoners, including by means of video surveillance technology, which facilitates supervision and reduces risks, such as those related to inter-prisoner violence or other illegal activities.

The segregation of informal leaders and their close circle from the rest of the prison population at the lowest level is already being implemented, and this practice will be upheld in the future.

In order to segregate first-time prisoners, protect them from being exposed to the informal prisoner hierarchy, and to prevent the evolution of prison subcultures, on 11 December 2024, the Administration sent out a letter to prisons instructing them to intensify control and ensure that remand prisoners who have not served a sentence in a prison before detention are allocated separately from other detained persons and prisoners, as stipulated in Article 11, paragraph 6, of the Law on the Procedure for Holding the Detained Persons.<sup>23</sup>

A similar approach applies to the segregation of first-time sentenced persons. In a letter dated 28 December 2024, the Ministry of Justice informed the Administration that first-time sentenced persons must be allocated separately from the rest of prison population and that such practice should be implemented in accordance with the applicable provisions of the CESL. Pursuant to Article 13<sup>1</sup> of the CESL, when deciding on the placement of a sentenced person in a specific prison, the Head of the Administration is

<sup>23</sup> Remand prisoners who have not served a sentence in a prison before detention shall be placed separately from other prisoners. Remand prisoners shall be placed in cells, taking into account internal security, as well as (whenever possible) personal characteristics and psychological compatibility.

required to assess security and crime prevention criteria, as well as evaluate whether a first-time sentenced person is at risk of being exposed to the informal prisoner hierarchy. This obligation of assessment is, in effect, currently imposed by the ECHR judgment. Similarly, when deciding on the allocation of a sentenced person in a prison in accordance with Article 13<sup>2</sup>, paragraph 1, of the CESL, their criminal background is taken into account. Thus, this provision allows for separate allocation of sentenced persons with different criminal backgrounds. Furthermore, Article 18 of the CESL establishes criteria for the allocation of sentenced persons, specifying the circumstances under which they must be allocated separately. One such case is outlined in paragraph 1 of that article, specifying that sentenced persons whose personal characteristics and criminal background negatively affect other prisoners or who oppress and exploit other prisoners shall be segregated. This provision allows for the separate placement of leaders and active enforcers of the informal prisoner hierarchy from those who are not involved in it or from first-time sentenced persons.

Therefore, the criteria for the placement and allocation of sentenced prisoners established in the CESL, in conjunction with the ECHR judgment, enable the allocation of sentenced persons, who have not served a sentence in a prison before, separately from the rest of prison population. Such measure will reduce the manifestations of the informal prisoner hierarchy in prisons.

As for the recommendation to introduce a well-considered individual risk and needs assessment, we would like to inform you that the current individual risk and needs assessment in prisons has the following purposes:

- 1) to identify the overall level of recidivism and resocialisation needs;
- 2) to evaluate the changes observed in the assessed resocialisation needs and overall risk level during the execution of the sentence.

The segregation of informal leaders and their close circle from the rest of the prison population should be based on individual safety risk and needs assessment rather than on the assessment of general recidivism and resocialisation needs which is used for planning the prisoner's resocialisation process. Therefore, Task 1 "Improvement of tools for the resocialisation of prisoners and probation clients" under the Course of Action 1 "Continue to improve resocialisation work with prisoners and probation clients in response to the challenges of the changing environment, including new target groups, as well as introducing a measurement system for the effectiveness of resocialisation work (criminal sentence execution)" of the Resocialisation Policy Guidelines for 2022–2027 provides, *inter alia*, for the development/acquisition of such a specific security risk assessment tool.

In accordance with the Implementation Plan of the Resocialisation Policy Guidelines for 2022–2027 for the Period 2025–2027, the measure "Introduction of a security risk assessment tool to ensure the proper implementation of the resocialisation process" is to be completed by 31 December 2027 by developing security risk assessment tools for prisoners and implementing them in practice, as well as training the prison staff in their use. The development/acquisition of the security risk assessment tool will be ensured within the EU Cohesion Policy Programme for 2021–2027.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Implementation rules for measure 4.3.4.7 "Ensuring preconditions for the employment of prisoners by improving the effectiveness of the resocialisation system, promoting the reintegration of former prisoners, equal opportunities, and active participation" within the framework of specific objective 4.3.4

The Ministry of Justice, together with the Administration, are currently working on the draft law “Law on Criminal Sentence Execution” (hereinafter – the LCSE) to improve the procedure of criminal sentence execution. The LCSE outlines the fundamental principles of criminal sentence execution, one of which is the principle of appropriate response, which, *inter alia*, provides for the assessment of security risks posed or potentially posed by a prisoner during the criminal sentence execution in cases specified by this law (assessment of the sentenced prisoner’s dangerousness).

48. Regarding other effects of the hierarchy, the delegation heard several allegations of extortion and psychological threats in the prisons visited. In Jēkabpils Prison, two elderly prisoners (both first time in prison) told the delegation that they had asked to be transferred from Unit 5<sup>25</sup> to a cell-type accommodation after they had started receiving threats from *blatnyje* in Unit 5<sup>26</sup> and demands to buy cigarettes and food from the prison shop (worth at least €30 per month).

In Grīva Section, the delegation interviewed a prisoner who had reportedly been transferred to the medical unit for his own safety. The prisoner (who was convicted of a sexual offence) alleged that he had been beaten by his cellmates upon arrival and then extorted for some five months<sup>27</sup> until he had finally filed an official complaint.<sup>28</sup> The delegation discussed this case with the management of Daugavgrīva Prison who confirmed that an investigation was ongoing; **the Committee would like to be informed of the results of this investigation.**

On 8 May 2024, criminal proceedings were initiated into an alleged extortion of EUR 1378 by prisoners in Daugavgrīva Prison from an individual who was not a prisoner during the period from December 2023 to 23 April 2024. The criminal proceedings were initiated pursuant to Chapter XVIII “Criminal Offences against Property” of the Criminal Law.

During the investigation, a decision was taken to recognise the person as a victim, the victim was informed of his rights and obligations, questioned, multiple requests were sent to various institutions, a decision was taken to request confidential information from a credit institution, and a witness survey was conducted. Currently, the pre-trial investigation is ongoing, and the instructions of the supervising prosecutor are being carried out.

50. The Committee notes that depending upon the management style of each prison director and the work of the internal intelligence staff, the influence of the

“Fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and improving employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups” under the ESF+ project No. 4.3.4.7/1/24/1/001 “Security: Responsible Resocialisation for Inmates (SRR1)”.

<sup>25</sup> A dormitory-type accommodation for prisoners sentenced to a temporary deprivation of liberty of up to three months for a criminal violation.

<sup>26</sup> In one case, a prisoner was allegedly threatened that he would be hanged and was even shown a rope. Another prisoner was threatened with a demotion to *levyje*.

<sup>27</sup> According to the prisoner, during that time his wife had transferred approximately €1200 to a specified account.

<sup>28</sup> According to the rules of the informal prisoner hierarchy, extortion is allowed only from a prisoner in the same caste, usually relating to some debts or conflicts outside the prison (many *blatnyje* interviewed claimed they would never take anything from a *levyj*), and extortion of the prisoners convicted of a sexual offence seemed to be the most common.

informal prisoner hierarchy varied across the four prisons visited, from quite restricted to rather dominant.

For example, in Jēkabpils Prison, the delegation heard from a number of prisoners that it was much more difficult in this prison to smuggle in illegal drugs or mobile phones and that the staff were expecting every prisoner to follow the internal rules.<sup>29</sup>

The delegation was therefore very concerned to hear that, in this prison, local efforts to fight the informal prisoner hierarchy had not always been properly supported by the central authorities.

Reportedly, some three years ago, a decision of the Director to transfer a *smotriashij* from dormitory accommodation to a cell (and thus to limit his access to other prisoners and his influence upon them) led to a mass hunger strike (instigated by the said *smotriashij*) which received a lot of media attention. A few days later, the Director was allegedly instructed by the central authorities to return the *smotriashij* to his previous accommodation; a move which was seen by the prison management and staff as a serious blow to their authority. **The CPT would like to be informed of the reasons why it was considered inappropriate by the central authorities to place the designated *smotriashij* in cellular accommodation.**

In the given case, the prison officials suspected that the prisoner was organising the supply of prohibited objects within the prison. As a result, on 18 August 2022, the prisoner was transferred from dormitory accommodation to a cell until the circumstances surrounding the organisation of the supply of prohibited objects in the prison were clarified. In accordance with Paragraph 91 of the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 30 May 2006 No. 423 “Internal Rules of a Prison Establishment”, in the absence of the Head of the prison, the the Head of the prison on duty may issue an order for the isolation of a prisoner for a period not exceeding 64 hours if the violation committed by the prisoner can only be stopped by placing them in a punishment or disciplinary isolation cell. By placing the prisoner in a closed cell, the possibility of influencing potential witnesses was prevented. As no evidence of unlawful actions by the prisoner was obtained, the prisoner was transferred back from the cell to dormitory accommodation on 19 August 2022. Thus, the transfer of the prisoner was in no way related to manifestations of informal hierarchy but was instead carried out to clarify the circumstances and respond promptly to the received information in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations.

55. Upon admission to a prison, newly arrived prisoners were reportedly asked by the staff which caste they belonged to, and within which unit they assumed they could be safely accommodated.<sup>30</sup> The Committee is concerned to note that there was almost no effort to separate first-time prisoners from re-offenders in the prisons visited. This meant that upon entering the cell or dormitory assigned to them, first-time prisoners were immediately subjected to an induction to the informal prisoner

<sup>29</sup> Indeed, as one prisoner told the delegation, appearing frustrated and bewildered: “Here they want everything to be done in accordance with the law, everything!” The prisoners interviewed in other prisons attested to the “bad” reputation of Jēkabpils Prison in that sense.

<sup>30</sup> A prisoner convicted of a sexual offence told the delegation that upon entering the cell of *levyjē* (due to the crime committed he was automatically a *levyjē*), he was asked by the inmates therein to show all the documents pertinent to his criminal case so that they could decide whether he could stay in the cell or should ask to be isolated (the most common outcome for prisoners convicted of a sexual offence). Allegedly, he was allowed to stay because the cell decided that he had not been granted a fair trial.

hierarchy (including being assigned to a caste) and had virtually no possibility of choosing whether they wanted to belong to it or not.

**The CPT recommends that the Latvian authorities ensure that persons convicted for the first time are kept separate from those who have previously been imprisoned; if necessary, relevant legislative changes should be adopted.**

**Consideration could be given in this context to designating special units/blocks within existing facilities to accommodate persons remanded and sentenced to prison for the first time.**

See the information under Recommendation 47.

57. All the maintenance work in common spaces was done (and paid for by the administration) by *levyje* and, of those, only the lowest category, *cherti*,<sup>31</sup> were cleaning the toilets. It is noteworthy that the latter were not able to have any other work (for example, in the prison manufacturing facility) due to security concerns regarding their safety. They spent most of their time locked in their cells, where they were accommodated for their own protection (at their own request or upon a decision of the administration).<sup>32</sup>

**The CPT recommends that the Latvian authorities take urgent steps to ensure that prisoners who are exposed to the risk of abuse by fellow inmates and those who do not (or no longer) wish to be involved in the informal prisoner hierarchy receive the management's full support including, if they so request, by being accommodated in separate living units (established to this end) offering adequate material conditions and regime tailored to their needs, and the necessary supervision by staff.**

In cases where prisoners require assistance or protection, they have the right to address the prison management or staff who, based on the evaluation of the situation, take the necessary measures. If there is a risk of threat, the prisoner may be transferred to another cell (unit, dormitory) or prison to ensure their safety and well-being. Prisons implement the Committee's recommendations, ensuring the compliance with human rights standards. Although the practical implementation of these recommendations may not always be fully successful, all necessary measures are taken to ensure the safety and dignity of the prisoners, fostering trust in the prison system and its operations, including:

- a prisoner who requests protection or is identified as vulnerable is accommodated in another living unit (i.e., separately from the perpetrator) with adequate living conditions;
- in most cases, the prison staff is present and ensures the surveillance and monitoring of the prisoners, including using their presence to prevent a risk of inter-prisoner violence;
- if necessary, the prisoner may address both a written application to the prison management and an oral request. In the application and request, the prisoners may express all their concerns, including the addressing of issues related to health and safety threats.

<sup>31</sup> The word *cherti* in Russian means devils. In almost all cases these were the prisoners convicted of a sexual offence.

<sup>32</sup> Interviews carried out by the delegation confirmed the validity of the security concerns. As one prisoner told the delegation, "the paedophiles are lucky that they are hidden from us in the cells".

60. During the meeting with the Latvian authorities at the end of the 2024 visit, they informed the CPT delegation that the action plan on the implementation of the judgment in the case of *D. v. Latvia* would be approved by the Government in October 2024.

In the Committee's view, it is crucial that such a plan includes measures to convert the current dormitory-type accommodation into cellular-type accommodation, to significantly increase custodial staff numbers (including ensuring that they are adequately remunerated, appropriately trained, and motivated), to further develop prisoner reintegration (with work, education and meaningful activities), to fight against the smuggling of and trade in prohibited objects, along with provision of adequate assistance to prisoners with substance-related problems, and to overcome the pervasively harmful effects of the informal prisoner hierarchy. **The CPT trusts that all these points have been taken on board in the action plan and would like to receive a copy of the action plan once it is adopted.**

For the Action Plan approved by the Government in the meeting held on 8 October 2024, refer to Annex 3.

62. In general, prisoners were rather reluctant to discuss anything related to illicit drugs with the CPT delegation. *Smotriashije* and *blatnyje* in all four prisons visited kept repeating that drugs were never sold and that inmates were only allowed to share them with each other for free.<sup>33</sup> However, as one staff member told the delegation, in reality inmates regularly contributed to *obschiak*, so that, when the drugs arrived, they would receive their due share.

Nevertheless, many *blatnyje* admitted that adherence to the drug sale prohibition was weakening. Furthermore, many of the lower caste prisoners interviewed by the delegation were rather bitter and disenchanted, claiming that *blatnyje* prohibited the sale publicly but were actually selling the drugs themselves.

The informal prisoner hierarchy is the key element in the illegal trade in drugs (and mobile phones) in Latvian prisons, and in their use to facilitate new crimes. **In many cases, these activities are closely linked to organised crime in the community and, as such, need to be tackled much more vigorously by the Latvian authorities.**

The CPT is concerned that in the not-so-distant future, when prisoners no longer respect the informal drug sale prohibition and want to take a part in such a lucrative business, there will be a major increase in illicit drug smuggling into the prisons, for which the Latvian authorities seem to be ill prepared. It is therefore crucial to have a comprehensive strategy to fight the supply of drugs into prisons and to provide a full range of medical and psycho-social assistance to prisoners with drug-related problems (see more on this in paragraph 70 below).

The State Police has pointed out that not all supplies of narcotic substances in prisons are linked to organised criminal groups. In cases where the State Police has information about a possible connection between organised criminal groups and the illegal circulation of drugs in prisons, the State Police takes all necessary operational measures

<sup>33</sup> They referred to the so-called *progon* from the Latvian *vor v zakone* which allegedly forbade the sale of drugs in prisons, supposedly due to the immorality of making profit from someone's pain and illness.

and investigative actions to stop and dismantle the criminal activities of the organised group in the illegal trade in drugs within prisons.

The tasks of the Serious and Serial Organised Crime Countering Department (SSOCCD) of the State Police include identifying organised criminal groups, their members, and their interconnections, preventing criminal activities, detecting and investigating crimes committed by organised criminal groups, organising crime-fighting actions against regional, interregional, and international groups, and organising, leading, and conducting investigations. Furthermore, the SSOCCD identifies the situation in the country regarding the illegal circulation of drugs, psychotropic substances, and their precursors, organises and coordinates counteraction measures, investigates crimes related to the illegal circulation of these substances committed by organised criminal groups and their members, and provides practical assistance to the criminal police units of regional police departments of the State Police in detecting and investigating crimes related to drugs, psychotropic substances, and their precursors, as well as in planning and coordinating large-scale interregional police operations.

In 2023, the State Police dismantled a total of 33 organised criminal groups (OCG), 3 mobile organised criminal groups (MOCG), 11 organised criminal groups that meet internationally recognised criteria for organised crime (international OCGi), and 3 mobile organised criminal groups that meet internationally recognised criteria for organised crime (international MOCGi), meaning that in 2023, the State Police dismantled 50 organised criminal groups nationwide.

In addition, in 2023, the State Police restricted a total of 21 OCG: 10 OCG, 4 MOCG, 1 international OCGi, and 6 international MOCGi.

In the first nine months of 2024, the State Police dismantled 12 OCG, 0 MOCG, 5 international OCGi, and 1 international MOCGi, i.e., in the nine months of 2024, the State Police dismantled a total of 18 organised criminal groups.

In the first nine months of 2024, the State Police restricted a total of 8 OCG, 2 MOCG, 6 international OCGi, and 3 international MOCGi, i.e., in the nine months of 2024, the State Police restricted a total of 19 organised criminal groups.

By the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of 5 December 2023 No. 867, the Organised Crime Prevention and Countering Plan for 2023–2025 was approved. The plan aims, among other objectives, at creating comprehensive conditions for law enforcement agencies to combat organised crime, including enhancing their ability to prevent and detect crimes committed by organised criminal groups, as well as developing tools to reduce the interest and capacity of such groups to engage in criminal activities in Latvia.

64. The Committee notes that according to the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 21 June 2022 No. 357, if there is a suspicion that a prisoner is under the influence of narcotic or other intoxicating substances, a rapid detection test is carried out.

If the rapid test is positive, further examination is carried out in a general hospital by a narcologist or other doctor with special training, in accordance with the procedure provided for in the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 2 June 2008 No. 394.

The delegation learnt that, with the exception of Jelgava Prison, testing to detect illicit drug use was performed by healthcare staff. In the Committee's view, this essentially non-medical task can affect the therapeutic relationship between



healthcare staff and prisoner-patients. **The CPT recommends that the Latvian authorities ensure that healthcare staff in prisons are not involved in testing to detect illicit drug use for disciplinary purposes.**

Pursuant to Paragraph 5 of the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 21 June 2022 No. 357 “Procedure for Inspecting an Individual in a Prison to Determine Whether They Have Used Alcohol, Narcotic, or Other Intoxicating Substances” (hereinafter – the Regulation No. 357), if there is suspicion of narcotic or other intoxicating substance use, an official shall use rapid tests for detecting the presence of narcotic or other intoxicating substances in a biological medium (test). Therefore, if a prison official suspects that a prisoner might be under the influence of narcotic or other intoxicating substances, a rapid test for detecting the presence of narcotic or other intoxicating substances is performed on-site within the prison.

According to the information provided by the Administration, since 2024, prisons’ health care professionals have not been involved in performing tests on a prisoner for narcotic or other intoxicating substances. Given that the relationship between medical practitioners and patients is an indicator of the quality and effectiveness of healthcare, that relationship must be based on trust, mutual respect, and transparency.

It is possible that in certain previous cases, health care professionals were involved as assistants to officials in performing the test. However, this could not have negatively affected the relationship between the prisoner and the health care professional, as a prisoner is not punished based solely on a positive rapid test result. In accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Regulation No. 357, if a prisoner’s test result is positive, further examinations are performed in accordance with the procedure specified in the laws and regulations on testing for the influence of alcohol, narcotic, or toxic substances. In addition, such further examination takes place in a medical facility outside the prison, as stipulated in the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 2 June 2008 No. 394 “Procedure for Testing for the Influence of Alcohol, Narcotic, or Toxic Substances”.

66. The delegation was informed that, in all prisons visited, the majority of prisoners were refusing to take drug tests (rapid detection and/or in a hospital).<sup>34</sup> This was explained by the simple fact that, according to Article 253<sup>2</sup> of the Criminal Code, unauthorised use of narcotic or psychotropic substances, committed by a person who had already been warned regarding criminal liability for such use, would lead to deprivation of liberty or probationary supervision, or community service, or a fine. Thus, prisoners were reportedly choosing to receive a disciplinary sanction for refusing a test in order to avoid an additional criminal sentence.<sup>35</sup>

The Committee notes that the number of drug tests performed in each of the four prisons seems to be very low considering their official capacities and turnover. However, as the delegation was informed, the Prisons Administration did not collect statistics on refusals to have a drug test, therefore, the available statistics in Table 4 can only present a very distorted picture of the number of inmates deemed to be using drugs, preventing the Committee from drawing further conclusions. **The CPT**

<sup>34</sup> This was confirmed by the information in the registers on disciplinary violations, where refusal to take a drug test was the most frequent violation in all prisons visited.

<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, in 2023, there were only two cases of criminal proceedings initiated into unauthorised use of narcotic or psychotropic substances by a prisoner.

**recommends that the Latvian authorities ensure the collection of this statistical data.**

On 3 December 2024, the Administration issued the Order No. N-1-2024-18147 “On Reports on the Performance of Prison Monitoring Divisions of the Prisons Administration” by which the prisons were instructed to compile data on cases (number of cases) where prisoners have refused to undergo an inspection aimed at detecting the use of narcotic or other intoxicating substances. Although that order was issued only in December, prisons have been recording those cases since July 2024.

	Riga Central Prison	Iļģuciems Prison	Olaine Prison	Jelgava Prison	Cēsis Juvenile Correctional Institution	Liepāja Prison	Valmiera Prison	Jēkabpils Prison	Daugavgrīva Prison	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of 2024
Refusals to undergo an inspection aimed at detecting the use of narcotic or other intoxicating substances (number of cases)	112	0	2	25	0	1	4	20	59	223

68. The Committee also notes that there were no harm reduction interventions to reduce the transmission of blood-borne viruses (needle and syringe exchange programmes, access to condoms, health promotion interventions focused on safer injecting behaviour and reduced sexual risk behaviour etc.). It was therefore not surprising to learn of new cases of HIV and Hepatitis C in the prisons visited.<sup>36</sup> Such a state of affairs is threatening the health and, indeed, even the lives of prisoners and, potentially, also those of prison staff, as well as perpetuating prisons as a reservoir of such diseases which spill back into the community.

**The CPT recommends that the Latvian authorities initiate OAT and the other above-mentioned harm reduction measures in all prisons as a matter of priority. Information, education and counselling on harm reduction should be widely implemented, including raising awareness on the risks of overdosing. Full information on the existence of such harm reduction measures should be given to prisoners by healthcare staff immediately after admission, using relevant and comprehensible formats as required.**

On 3 April 2024, the SRRI Project was launched, under which a study titled “Study on the Needs for Improvement of the Current Resocialisation Programmes of the Prisons Administration” was conducted. One of the outcomes of that study is the conclusion about the need to improve the resocialisation programme “Health Risk Management” (hereinafter – the Programme). The content of the Programme comprises five modules:

1. Life with Addictions
2. Infectious Diseases

<sup>36</sup> In 2023, four prisoners tested HIV positive in the prisons visited. In 2024, there was one such prisoner. As regards Hepatitis C, in 2023, 13 prisoners tested positive in the prisons visited and, in 2024, there were 59 such prisoners. The Committee notes that anti-retroviral therapy was available.

3. Sexual Relationships and Sexual Health
4. Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS
5. Maintenance of Health

The improvement of the Programme commenced in the second half of 2024 and it is expected to be completed by the end of 2025. This includes organising the training of prison staff on work with the Programme and its implementation in practice. The corresponding measure is included in Measure 2 of the Action Plan.

Furthermore, the health professionals in prisons inform the prisoners about harmful habits, sexually transmitted diseases, hepatitis C and B viruses, and HIV on a regular basis. Visual materials from the National Centre for Disease Control and Prevention regarding virus transmission are distributed on informational boards in prisons.

In addition, by 31 July 2025, the Administration plans to introduce a position responsible for planning and organising health prevention measures (Measure 7.6 of the Action Plan).

On 9 December 2024, a meeting was held with representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, and the Administration to discuss various issues, including the recommendations included in the Committee's report, resulting in a shared understanding of the continuation of regular cooperation. It was also decided to start working on reviewing the conditions regarding the fact that methadone substitution therapy cannot be initiated in prisons (Measure 7.5 of the Action Plan).

Annex 4 comprises information about the measures in prisons under the *Plan for Preventive Measures and Healthcare Service Improvement for Reducing the Spread of Alcohol and Narcotic Substance Use in Prisons for 2023–2025*.<sup>37</sup>

Keeping in mind that prisoners are one of the largest groups at high risk of infection with various infectious diseases, the *Public Health Guidelines for 2021–2027*<sup>38</sup> include a course of action with the task to ensure the education and training of professionals working in addiction prevention and reduction. This includes training for prison staff on the prevention of substance use and addictive behaviours.

Meanwhile, Course of Action 6 of the *Action Plan for the Prevention of HIV Infection, Sexually Transmitted Infections, Tuberculosis, and Hepatitis B and C for 2023–2027* also provides for various targeted measures for individuals in prisons, such as improving the epidemiological surveillance of human immunodeficiency virus infection (hereinafter – HIV infection), hepatitis C, and tuberculosis, as well as informing both the prison staff and prisoners about the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, HIV infection, tuberculosis, hepatitis C, and hepatitis B. For more information, refer to Annex 4.

In addition, the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (hereinafter – the CDPC) publishes various methodological materials on its website for medical practitioners,

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<sup>37</sup> Approved by the Cabinet of Ministers with the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of 25 October 2022 No. 773.

<sup>38</sup> Approved by the Cabinet of Ministers with the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of 26 May 2022 No. 359.

including both recommendations on alcohol addiction and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>39</sup> In order to assess the current situation, conduct public health surveillance, and monitor various diseases, the CDPC periodically conducts studies. For instance, in 2026, it is expected to conduct a regular study on trends in the use of addictive substances in prisons in Latvia.

Meanwhile, within the framework of the EU Cohesion Policy Programme for 2021–2027, a goal has been set to improve equal and timely access to high-quality, sustainable, and cost-effective healthcare, health promotion, and disease prevention services. As part of this initiative, which involves non-governmental organisations in implementing health promotion and disease prevention measures, the Ministry of Health plans to invite non-governmental organisations to include prisons as locations for activities targeted at specific groups.

69. The Committee is further concerned to note that the informal prisoner hierarchy in Latvia appears to be powerful enough to sabotage the work of the Olaine addiction treatment centre.<sup>40</sup> As the delegation learned during the visit, since its opening almost eight years ago, the centre has not even operated at half of its capacity<sup>41</sup> due to an informal prisoner hierarchy ban on prisoners from any caste other than the lowest one, *levyje*, attending the centre.<sup>42</sup> Further, as the delegation learnt from interviews with prisoners, even *levyje* upon returning from the Olaine Centre, sometimes had to be accommodated in a separate unit for security reasons like, for example, in Jēkabpils Prison.

This is another very sobering example of how the existence of the informal prisoner hierarchy in Latvia is negatively affecting the health of hundreds of prisoners in need of assistance for addiction-related problems; if an urgent solution is not found, the situation will only get worse. **The Committee would like to receive information on the steps being taken by the Latvian authorities to ensure that the Olaine addiction treatment centre can fully function, and that accommodation therein is not *de facto* limited to the lowest caste prisoners only.**

New, modern facilities tailored to the needs of sentence execution were built for the Addiction Treatment Centre, where prisoners are accommodated in double-occupancy cells. Prisoners participate in addiction reduction programmes, experiencing an environment that is fundamentally different from other prisons. The centre is staffed by appropriately qualified and trained officials (contact persons, all with higher education), and the daily routine of the prisoners is structured with meaningful activities, psychological counselling, team sports, and group events. The centre's infrastructure

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.spkc.gov.lv/lv/metodiskie-materiali>;

<sup>40</sup> The Centre reportedly offered two rehabilitation programmes – *Atlantis* (based on working with the person's past and present) and *Pathfinder* (more focused on developing social skills for reintegration).

<sup>41</sup> With an official capacity of 50, at the time of the CPT visit, there were only 20 prisoners in the Centre.

<sup>42</sup> Reportedly, many prisoners applied to go to the Olaine Centre because it was a requirement in their individual sentence plan. However, despite applying, only a very small number, and only *levyje* or those ready to be demoted, actually went there, due to the informal prohibition. Allegedly, the main obstacle was the fact that, in the Olaine Centre, inmates from different castes had to keep their food in the same fridges, use the same kettles, eat at the same table etc. *Smotriashije* interviewed by the delegation claimed that they were ready to “lift the ban” if the Prison Administration ensured that prisoners from different castes could co-exist separately in the Centre as they did in prisons but, according to them, the authorities were not willing to make such a compromise.

minimizes opportunities for informal hierarchy to emerge, with strict adherence to the principle of prisoners' equality, continuous presence of officials (with a support-oriented function), and other measures which, in general, foster a situation where informal hierarchy either does not exist (or is very limited) in the centre. These exact circumstances at the Addiction Treatment Centre have created a situation where representatives of the informal prisoner hierarchy actively organise countermeasures to reduce the prisoners' desire and motivation to go to the Addiction Treatment Centre, as they cannot create a convenient and desired system for themselves in that setting.

The issues regarding the occupancy of the Addiction Treatment Centre, as described in the Committee's report, have long been evaluated by the Administration, and it has been decided to implement radical changes to ensure that prisoners with addictions reach the Addiction Treatment Centre and receive appropriate help:

1) In 2025, the conditions for placing the prisoners in the Addiction Treatment Centre will be changed. In addition to the existing sections, new sections will be created for prisoners serving short-term sentences of deprivation of liberty, as the largest portion of this group have committed crimes under the influence of alcohol or drugs (e.g., drunk drivers, etc.). Those prisoners will be engaged in the improved Programme where one of the modules aims at tackling addiction-related issues. It is also planned to engage in the activities of the associations Latvian Anonymous Drug-Addicts and the Latvian Fellowship of Anonymous Alcoholics.

2) The programmes for the reduction of addictions currently implemented in the Addiction Treatment Centre will be updated within the framework of the SRRI Project (Measure 2.7 of the Action Plan).

3) The current model for selecting prisoners who wish to engage in the programmes offered by the Addiction Treatment Centre will be changed. Currently, the selection of sentenced prisoners for the addiction reduction programme is managed by the Addiction Treatment Centre coordinators working in prisons who consult the prisoners about the addiction reduction programme, the conditions for accommodation in the Addiction Treatment Centre, the scope and format of implementing the addiction reduction programme, as well as motivate them to participate in the programme. At the end of 2024, a pilot project was implemented in Riga Central Prison for a small group of prisoners, in which a contact person model was tested.<sup>43</sup> The outcomes of the pilot project have proven to be successful in several areas, and as part of the continuation of the pilot project on introducing contact persons in 2025, Riga Central Prison plans to entrust the selection of prisoners for placement in the Addiction Treatment Centre to prison officials responsible for managing the sentenced prisoner's resocialisation case (contact persons). The good practice of the pilot project is also to be implemented in other prisons.

With the gradual introduction of a model for the system of contact persons (Activities 2.2–2.5 of the Action Plan), the selection of prisoners for the addiction reduction programme at the Addiction Treatment Centre in the prison will be ensured by contact persons responsible for managing the resocialisation cases of the sentenced prisoners.

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<sup>43</sup> In addition, within the framework of the pilot project, on 25 November 2024, the senior inspectors of the Resocialisation Department were trained on issues regarding the selection for the addiction reduction programme.

70. As stated by the CPT in numerous reports, providing support to persons who have drug-related problems is far from straightforward, particularly in a prison setting. The approach towards substance use in prison should be part of a national drugs strategy, and should have, *inter alia*, as its goals:

- decreasing the supply of drugs into prisons;
- provision of medical and non-medical interventions (that is, psychosocial and educational programmes);
- provision of OAT to opioid-dependent prisoners at any stage of their imprisonment and other harm reduction measures;
- ensuring there is appropriate throughcare;
- developing standards, monitoring and research on drug issues;
- provision of staff training and development.

The policy should also highlight the risks of HIV or hepatitis B/C infection through substance use, and address methods of transmission and means of protection. It goes without saying that the multi-disciplinary task of drawing up, implementing and monitoring the programmes concerned must be performed by prison staff, in close cooperation with healthcare and other (psychosocial-educational) staff involved.

**The CPT recommends that the Latvian authorities develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to fight the supply of drugs into prisons and to provide a full range of medical and psychosocial assistance to prisoners with drug-related problems, considering the above remarks.**

See the information under Recommendation 68 and the information included in Annex 4 on the respective established measures in prisons.

Prison officials work on preventing the illegal supply and use of drugs by implementing the following measures:

- supervision and regular searches of prisoners;
- the inspection of visitors, postal items, and deliveries. Specialised equipment, such as x-ray machines, is used to this end. Furthermore, service dogs are deployed to detect hidden narcotic substances;
- the use of video surveillance technologies and regular patrols by officials through cells, units, or dormitories;
- regular inspections of cells, units, and other facilities to detect and confiscate prohibited objects;
- testing of the sentenced prisoners for the use of narcotic and psychotropic substances. In prisons, static security is continuously improved by enhancing measures, procedures, and technical equipment to detect and prevent prohibited objects from entering the prisons, including:
  - the improvement of engineering structures (construction of a new fence in Valmiera, modernisation of the camouflage fence in Riga Central Prison);
  - the improvement of technical equipment (use of active radars in prison territories, acquisition of quad bikes to improve mobility);
  - the improvement of the video surveillance system (in Riga Central Prison, Ilģuciems Prison, Cēsis Juvenile Correctional Institution, etc.);
  - the use of drones in service to identify individuals ensuring the supply of prohibited substances.

In 2024, in cooperation with a private company, a spectrometer was tested in one of the prisons. This device is widely used by law enforcement agencies and the penitentiary system in the U.S. to detect the presence of narcotic/psychotropic substances in correspondence, deliveries, and postal items. During testing, several false alarms were detected due to the presence of prohibited substance particles on objects. It should be noted that in the U.S., these devices are used exclusively for screening correspondence, as the prisoners are not allowed to receive any other items in the prison setting.

Based on the results of the meetings with U.S. colleagues in August – September 2024, special ultraviolet flashlamps were purchased for all prisons that help detect the presence of narcotic/psychotropic substances in correspondence and deliveries and are used during their inspection.

Technical solutions for blocking Wi-Fi signals were introduced. However, this solution operates only partially, as next-generation Wi-Fi routers with signal boosters are available on the Latvian market which, for the time being, cannot be blocked, only their signal strength can be reduced.

In addition, continuing the cooperation with the State Police, air space monitoring is conducted near three prisons, including joint preventive and practical measures to prevent the supply of prohibited substances/objects in prisons. Regular market analysis is carried out to find technical solutions for combating illegal drone flights.

Furthermore, preventive measures have been strengthened, i.e., the officials of the Administration's headquarters regularly participate in unannounced staff inspections in prisons, oversee the destruction of confiscated items, and, in cooperation with the Financial Intelligence Unit, analyse the movement of the prisoners' funds.

In 2022 and 2023, 118 criminal proceedings initiated pursuant to Article 387, paragraph 1, of the Criminal Procedure Law (hereinafter – the CPL) and 115 criminal proceedings initiated pursuant to Article 388, paragraphs 1 and 5, of the CPL, which were initiated by the Investigation Department of the Administration regarding the illegal circulation of narcotic drugs, were referred to the State Police departments. In those cases, the perpetrators were not prisoners.

At the end of 2024, the Ministry of Justice completed the revision of Article 309 of the Criminal Law, providing for criminal liability for smuggling prohibited communication devices or objects that can be used for unauthorised communication, as well as narcotic and psychotropic substances into prisons (it will no longer be necessary to prove the intent to transfer to the prisoner), and strengthening the liability for such offences. In addition, work is ongoing to amend regulations in order to reduce the prisoners' access to video game consoles that could be used for unauthorised communication. Once these amendments come into force, the illegal circulation of such substances and communication devices in prisons will be reduced, which will impact the prevalence of informal prisoner hierarchy. These and other activities are included in the measures under Course of Action 6 of the Action Plan.

In 2024, prison staff underwent training conducted by the leading specialists from the Riga Psychiatry and Narcology Centre on the topic "Psychotropic substances, their use and risks in prisons, and actions until the arrival of medical personnel".

As part of the SRRI Project, in addition to the aforementioned activities, it is planned to develop a screening algorithm to ensure effective selection of sentenced prisoners for participation in the enhanced addiction reduction program at the Addiction Treatment Centre (Measure 2.8 of the Action Plan).

73. In the Committee's view, the problem of inter-prisoner violence cannot be solved without the management and staff regaining control over the situation in prisons, instead of relinquishing power to the informal prisoner hierarchy and its leaders. To achieve this, custodial staff must be able to exercise their authority in an appropriate manner. This implies, *inter alia*, that the level of staffing must be sufficient to enable prison officers to adequately supervise the inmates, support each other effectively in the performance of their tasks and communicate with prisoners in meaningful ways, building trust and faith in their ability to protect them. Low numbers of custodial staff in prisoner accommodation areas increase the risk of both violence and intimidation between prisoners, and the tension between staff and prisoners, as well as precluding the development of the necessary positive relationships between them.

**The CPT once again calls upon the Latvian authorities to find an urgent solution to significantly increase the numbers of custodial staff working in direct contact with prisoners by providing them with much more attractive working conditions, and to ensure that they are adequately remunerated, appropriately trained, and motivated. If this is not achieved, decreasing the influx of illegal drugs and eradicating the influence of the informal prisoner hierarchy, and thereby substantially reducing inter-prisoner violence, will be virtually impossible.**

**Steps should also be taken to abolish the 24-hour shift pattern for custodial staff since it has an inevitably negative effect on professional standards; related staff concerns should be addressed as necessary.**

**Finally, the Committee would like to receive information on how the Latvian authorities intend to guarantee a full staffing complement in Liepāja Prison once it enters into service.**

When evaluating the staff's role in ensuring public safety, it is important to note that the successful execution of the Administration's functions (including the ensuring of public safety) relies on quantitative indicators of the employees, their qualifications, the organisation of their service duties, and the long-term strategy for personnel planning and development.

To reduce staff turnover in the long term, the management of the Administration continually makes improvements within the framework of developing a human resources management strategy. Specifically, modern solutions are introduced in staff management functions such as recruitment, training, development, performance management, and motivation. This includes the introduction of a new remuneration system for all Administration's employees other than its officials. Furthermore, every year, additional funding is allocated for increasing the remuneration of prison officials.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> See below the table "Additional allocated funding: Table 1 – Remuneration of Administration's



To improve the situation in the human resources sector, in 2022, the Administration conducted a staff survey to determine what changes would be necessary to improve the conditions under which service duties are performed in the Security Department and Supervision Department of prisons. Based on the survey outcomes and discussions with the prison management and headquarters' officials, a decision was taken in the autumn of 2022 to transition from a 12.5-hour shift schedule to a 24-hour shift schedule in the Security Department and Supervision Department of prisons, creating a model of a service duty schedule as suggested by the survey outcomes. As of 1 January 2023, prison officials in the Security Department and Supervision Department who perform duty shifts were assigned a 24-hour shift schedule (where they start their shift at 8:00 and perform their service duties by 8:00 the following day, followed by three days off). This change has reduced the turnover of supervisors and guards in prisons by lowering the staff's travel expenses and reducing the time spent commuting to the place of employment. Surveys conducted among newly hired officials suggest that for some, their motivation to serve within the Administration is linked to the availability of the 24-hour shift schedule, which confirms that the changes in the service duty schedule have increased interest in service within the Administration.

Thus, the transition from 12.5-hour shifts back to 24-hour shifts was implemented at the request of the prison staff.

As for staff recruitment, we would like to inform you that we continue to collaborate with the State Employment Agency (hereinafter – the SEA) and the job vacancy portal CV-Online, regularly providing information on job vacancies within the Administration to recruit the most suitable candidates. Information on job vacancies is regularly published on both the SEA website and Administration's website [www.Parvaldi.gov.lv](http://www.Parvaldi.gov.lv), under "Vacancies".

On 15 November 2022, the Administration participated in the campaign of the Ministry of Justice titled *Kļūdītis ir cilvēcīgi. Palīdzēt arī* (To Err is Human. So is Helping) which aimed at recruiting new employees and raising awareness among the public and the staff of institutions about the goals, daily operations, and specificities of the institutions and their benefits.

In the spring of 2023, the Administration participated in the event titled *Atvērto durvju dienas uzņēmumos* (Open Door Days at Companies) organised by the portal [Prakse.lv](http://Prakse.lv), during which prisons were visited by more than 30 individuals.

In May 2023, the representatives of the Administration's Personnel Management Department, the Training Centre, and Riga Central Prison visited schools and technical schools in Riga and Pierīga Region to inform the 10th and 11th-grade students – the prospective graduates – about the opportunity to pursue a career in the prison service, with a particular emphasis on the possibility of serving as a guard or supervisor. In July 2023, the representatives of the Administration attended the entrance exam orientation event at the State Police College to inform prospective students about the opportunity to start a career as a prison supervisor or guard.

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*officials. Additional allocated funding for increasing the remuneration of Administration's officials for the period from 2020 to 2024".*

During all the aforementioned events, informative brochures were distributed to attendees, summarising the Administration's mission, values, and the requirements for joining the service.

In 2024, efforts to promote careers within the Administration have expanded to social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and others, featuring specially designed promotional videos aimed at attracting new personnel.

At the end of 2024, the Administration participated in the event titled *Vakanču gadatirgus* (Job Fair) organised by the SEA in Riga and Daugavpils, during which the representatives of the Administration informed the attendees and job seekers about job and service opportunities.

To raise the interest of students and young people in joining the service, in 2024, the representatives from the Administration's Personnel Management Department, the Training Centre, and Riga Central Prison visited several schools and technical schools in Riga and Pierīga Region to inform the 10th and 11th-grade students about the opportunity to pursue a career in the prison service, with a particular emphasis on the possibility of serving as an instructor (guard or supervisor). During visits to educational institutions, their managerial staff received informative materials (including brochures) which are placed in libraries and information stands of educational institutions.

On 1 February 2023, discussions took place at Liepāja University with representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Administration, and the State Probation Service, highlighting the need for targeted engagement in the preparation of specialists in the field of prisoner resocialisation through in-service training.

With the new Liepāja Prison entering into service, at least three existing prisons will be closed. In order to ensure the operation of the new Liepāja Prison, the Administration will offer the officials from the closing prisons to continue their service in the new Liepāja Prison, and the staff already is showing interest in their transfer to Liepāja to serve in the new Liepāja Prison. In addition, over a set period, existing positions from the current Liepāja Prison will be relocated to the new facility. If the officials from the closed prisons do not agree to serve in the new Liepāja Prison, they may be temporarily reassigned as permitted by the law to ensure the effective fulfilment of service duties.<sup>45</sup>

The staff work and rest areas in both the renovated block of Valmiera Prison and the new Liepāja Prison will be equipped according to modern standards. The new Liepāja Prison is designed to incorporate modern prisoner security, surveillance, and safety technologies, allowing technology to replace the physical presence of staff, thereby enabling personnel resources to be more focused on direct interaction with a prisoner. This aspect (the replacement of physical presence of with technology) is highly significant, as it will allow a proportionally larger share of the new prison's staff to be allocated to the prisoner resocialisation process, fostering their active motivation to practice socially recognised values. The new prison will also implement a system of

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<sup>45</sup> Article 12, paragraph 1, point 1 of the Law on the Course of Service of Officials with Special Service Ranks Working in Institutions of the System of the Ministry of the Interior and the Administration.

contact persons which will establish a different type of relationship with prisoners, positively contributing to the reduction of informal prisoner hierarchy.

As previously mentioned and also outlined under Course of Action 2 of the Action Plan, the Administration will gradually introduce a system of contact persons starting in 2025, which will also generally contribute to the implementation of the resocialisation process, as it will place greater emphasis on each sentenced prisoner's individual resocialisation results and case-by-case assessments. Additionally, it will significantly increase the number of prison staff interacting directly with prisoners and spending extended time in direct contact with them.

By Order of the Minister of Justice of 1 December 2023, a Council of Experts was established to ensure the successful entering into service of the new Liepāja Prison and the implementation of the related amendments in the system of executing a custodial sentence and remand. The Council of Experts has developed a roadmap (action plan) for planning a timely staff recruitment and a smooth transition to a new approach in the execution of imprisonment, both in the new Liepāja Prison and in other prisons.

In recent years, significant efforts have been made to develop the staff training system. Within the framework of the ESF Project No. 9.1.3.0/16/I/001 "Strengthening the Efficiency of the Resocialisation System" (hereinafter – the ESF Project), implemented by the Administration under the specific objective 9.1.3 "Strengthening the Efficiency of the Resocialisation System" of the Operational Programme "Growth and Employment", four new training programmes (professional development programmes) for prison staff were developed:

- "General Knowledge and Skills in the Areas of Prison Security, Guarding, Supervision, Resocialisation, and Management for the Performance of Officer Service" (996 contact hours);
- "Specialised Competencies in Prison Management for the Performance of Officer Service" (614 contact hours);
- "Specialised Competencies in Resocialisation for Officer Service in Penitentiary Institutions" (370 contact hours);
- "Specialised Competencies in Prison Security, Guarding, and Supervision for the Performance of Officer Service" (942 contact hours).

Recognising the importance of well-trained prison staff in enforcing high-quality imprisonment, including the impact of adequately trained staff on reducing the prevalence of informal prisoner hierarchy, it was concluded several years ago that a modern and comprehensive training infrastructure and environment for prison staff must be ensured. Therefore, within the framework of the project No. 1-6.4/2-2019 "Establishment of Training Centre Infrastructure and a Model Prison Block for Training Opportunities within the Olaine Prison Territory" under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism programme "Correctional Services" (hereinafter – the NFM project), a new Training Centre was constructed within the Olaine Prison Territory. The new Training Centre building was commissioned on 5 December 2024, and the Training Centre is expected to commence its operation in the new building on 1 February 2025.

The new Training Centre building significantly increases the capacity of officials to be trained (accommodating up to 150 trainees simultaneously). It has prisoner “training” cells and other infrastructure that will enable more effective practical training in an environment closely resembling a real prison setting. Additionally, the facility also allows for the organisation of other training programmes (aimed at continuing professional development) for a large number of officials at once. It will implement the four new training programmes mentioned above and other training programmes for prison staff, e.g., training of contact persons, mentors, etc. With an area of 2500 m<sup>2</sup>, the Training Centre includes not only new classrooms for trainees and staff but also a reading room, a staff dormitory, as well as sports and practical training facilities. Furthermore, the Training Centre facilities are equipped with new modern training tools and a material-technical base that meet the requirements of vocational education programmes.

The construction of the Training Centre building marks a new stage of the prison staff training process, providing prison officials and staff with the opportunity to learn in facilities tailored to the specific needs of their service and work environment, using enhanced training content and new teaching methods for the acquisition of professional knowledge. The new Training Centre building and new training programmes will allow officials and staff acquire specific and diverse knowledge and skills to perform their duties more professionally and effectively, thereby contributing to greater public safety. This will significantly enhance the professional preparedness of prison officials, improve the quality of imprisonment, and increase prison staff resilience against the manifestations of the informal prisoner hierarchy.

The Training Centre already (even before opening the new building) operates as a vocational further education centre, implementing the following within the scope of its competence:

1. one licensed and accredited vocational further education programme “Prison Security” for officials of the prison corps of instructors with special service ranks;
2. four new professional development programmes for the Administration’s officials of the prison corps of officers with special service ranks;
3. the opportunity for all Administration’s employees to develop and enhance both their personal and professional qualifications, meet the labour demand by regularly updating their knowledge and improving professional skills necessary for the performance of service duties in addition to the aforementioned formal education programmes through non-formal education programmes, upskilling courses, and informative seminars. The Training Centre also maintains close collaboration with long-standing and reliable partners, including the State Probation Service and the State Administration School.

Thus, as a result of the synergy between the measures taken within the framework of the NFM Project and the ESF Project, from 2025 onwards, a comprehensive training system for prison staff will be in place (combining new and modern training content with appropriate state-of-the-art infrastructure), and the necessary conditions for adequately trained officials in prisons will be created, which correlates with the Committee’s recommendations.

It should also be noted that a system of qualification traineeship supervisors (mentors) was implemented in prisons as part of the NFM Project. In order to ensure that officials

undergo a training to acquire practical professional skills and competences tailored to the specific infrastructure and service organisation characteristics of each prison, as well as to reinforce the trainees' theoretical knowledge through practice and the acquisition of professional knowledge, new methodological guidelines for organising qualification traineeship in prisons was approved as part of the vocational further education programme by the Order of the Head of the Administration of 28 May 2021 "On the Approval of Methodological Guidelines for Organising Qualification Traineeship".

The task of the qualification traineeship supervisor consists in supervising and controlling the trainee's activities during the qualification traineeship and enhancing their professional understanding and competence to ensure, through training of highest possible quality, their readiness for performing professional service duties independently. In order to ensure a common understanding and requirements during the qualification traineeship programme, in 2021, a new non-formal education programme for qualification traineeship supervisors titled "Qualification Traineeship Supervisor for Training Centre Trainees" was developed at the Training Centre and approved on 4 October 2021 as part of the NFM Project, in collaboration with its partners (Norwegian Correctional Service Academy and Romerike Prison). Only those prison officials who have successfully completed the training programme for qualification traineeship supervisors are authorised to perform the duties of a qualification traineeship supervisor in prisons.

In order to promote the improvement of the qualification traineeship system, in 2022, 2023, and 2024, prison qualification traineeship supervisors participated in an experience exchange visit to Norway, specifically to Romerike Prison (the practice prison), where they expanded their knowledge and gained ideas on how to improve the role of the traineeship supervisor (mentor).

The internal security system in prisons comprises appropriately selected static security measures that ensure effective organisational security measures and promote dynamic security. In order for prison officials to be able to identify and prevent potential security incidents and maintain effective dynamic security, within the framework of the NFM Project, in collaboration with the Norwegian Correctional Service Academy, ToT (Training of Trainers) group training titled "Using Training Video Programmes in Staff Education when Leading Group Work" was launched in 2022, allowing prisons to build a common understanding of the concepts, role, and importance of static, procedural, and dynamic security in prisons, as well as the overall goals and principles of professional ethics and their role in a democratic society where respect and rule of law prevail. Since 2022, a total of 32 Administration's officials have completed the ToT training programme.

The aim of such training programmes is to enable participants to discover the benefits of equal, inclusive, and goal-oriented cooperation in prisons by sharing their experiences and knowledge. This fosters a safe and positive environment for every staff member and individual in prison setting. The training includes new group learning methods and tools, using the educational video materials "A Good Prison Official", "Dynamic Security", and "Change Management" developed with support of Norwegian collaboration partners to encourage prison officials to establish positive professional relationships with prisoners based on honesty combined with an understanding of their

personal circumstances and any risks posed by individual prisoners, while promoting awareness of the dynamics of organising life in prison.

In addition, to reduce stigmatisation and societal prejudices against former prisoners and to continue raising awareness about the crucial role of state and municipal institutions, family members, entrepreneurs, volunteers, and the broader community in the successful reintegration and prevention of recidivism of prisoners, in 2024, the Administration's Training Centre launched a training of volunteers in prisons.

The current regulation on the remuneration of Administration's officials was implemented in 2017, bringing significant changes to the determination of monthly salaries by implementing a system of evaluating the positions of officials, similar to the approach used for employees in other public administration institutions. In the following period, substantial measures were taken to increase and adjust the monthly salaries of the officials, introduce new motivating elements, and secure additional funding accordingly. In Latvia, the Administration's officials (along with the officials of internal affairs services who follow a common course of service) are practically the only category of employees whose remuneration has consistently increased every year in recent years. The table below shows the additional allocated funding for the remuneration of Administration's officials, with further remuneration increases planned for 2025.

**Additional allocated funding: Table 1 – Remuneration of Administration's officials. Additional allocated funding for increasing the remuneration of Administration's officials for the period from 2020 to 2024**

Measure	Allocated funding				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 onwards
1. <i>Priority measure for 2020–2022 “Increasing the remuneration of Prisons Administration's officials with a special service rank” (Minutes of the Cabinet of Ministers meeting of 19 October 2019 No. 42, §34)</i>					
<b>Administration</b>	<b>1 387 239</b>	<b>1 387 239</b>	<b>1 387 239</b>	<b>1 387 239</b>	<b>1 387 239</b>
2. <i>Having reviewed the informative report “On Proposals for Increasing the Remuneration of Employees of the Institutions of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice Responsible for Implementing the Measures for Strengthening National Internal Security” in the Cabinet of Ministers meeting of 19 April 2022 (Minutes No. 22, §38), it was decided to approve the increase in funding for the remuneration of officials of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice (Administration) responsible for implementing the measures for strengthening national internal security in response to Russia's large-scale military aggression against Ukraine and rising geopolitical risks for 2023 and annually thereafter in the amount of EUR 27 528 335, including EUR 3 537 936 for the Ministry of Justice (Administration), with corresponding increases in the ministries' baseline expenditures for 2023, 2024, and 2025.</i>					
- The monthly salaries of officials of internal affairs services and the Administration have been increased by an average of 10% compared to 2022.					
<b>Administration</b>				<b>3 537 936</b>	<b>3 537 936</b>
3. <i>Priority measure for 2023–2025 “Additional payment for work on holidays for officials with special service ranks”</i>					
<b>Administration</b>				<b>955 838</b>	<b>955 838</b>

Measure	Allocated funding				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 onwards
4. <i>Intersectoral priority measure for 2024–2026 “Remuneration of employees of the institutions of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice, including the Probation Service” within which it is planned to continue increasing the remuneration of officials of the Prisons Administration (Administration) initiated in 2023.</i>					
- The monthly salaries of officials of internal affairs services and the Administration have been increased by an average of 10% compared to 2022.					
<b>Administration</b>					<b>3 537 936</b>
<b>Ministry of Justice (Administration)</b>	<b>1 387 239</b>	<b>1 387 239</b>	<b>1 387 239</b>	<b>5 881 013</b>	<b>9 418 949</b>

Information on the average remuneration of Administration’s officials (before taxes) from 2017 to 2024:

Year 2017	1117
Year 2018	1174
Year 2019	1355
Year 2020	1370
Year 2021	1424
Year 2022	1441
Year 2023	1657
Year 2024	1722 (the calculation is based on a 6-month period in 2024)

The monthly salaries of the Administration’s officials were increased by an average of 10% in 2023, by 9% in 2024, and **further increases are planned for 2025**. In the 2025 budget, the Administration has been allocated an additional EUR 11.7 million for increasing the remuneration of officials with a special service rank (EUR 4 492 230) and for the designation of special additional payments for the performance of specific functions and tasks (EUR 7 185 523). On 18 December 2024, the Government conceptually supported the amendments to the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 13 December 2016 No. 806 “Regulations on the Procedure of Determining the Monthly Salaries and Special Additional Payments for Officials With Special Service Ranks Working in Institutions of the System of the Ministry of the Interior and the Prisons Administration” which, starting from 1 January 2025, provides for an increase in monthly salaries by an average of 10% for each official with a special service rank, as well as additional payments for the performance of specific functions and tasks (EUR 300 per month) for Administration’s officials.

In addition, the Ministry of Justice has launched a new initiative believing that in order to reduce vacancies among officials, it is necessary not only to increase the remuneration but also to expand the target group of individuals who may qualify for service within the Administration and internal affairs services. Therefore, the Ministry of Justice has developed a draft law “Amendments to the Law on the Course of Service of Officials with Special Service Ranks Working in Institutions of the System of the Ministry of the Interior and the Prisons Administration”. The amendments provide for changes to the age and education criteria for the recruitment of individuals for service in the internal affairs services and the Administration. This would allow to expand the group of individuals who may qualify for service in internal affairs services and the

Administration and could significantly improve the situation regarding the reduction of vacant positions and the implementation of the Committee's recommendations.

Alongside the initiative of the Ministry of Justice, during the 2025 budget adoption process, the Ministry of the Interior also developed a draft law "Amendments to the Law on the Course of Service of Officials with Special Service Ranks Working in Institutions of the System of the Ministry of the Interior and the Prisons Administration", as instructed by the Government. This draft law also partially includes the proposal from the project of the Ministry of Justice regarding the recruitment of individuals over the age of 40 for service, as well as significantly expanding the opportunities for officials to continue serving after the age of 50 while receiving both a pension and salary. On 9 October 2024, the draft law was submitted to the Government for consideration.

The planned measures for strengthening the capacity of Administration staff are listed under Course of Action 1 of the Action Plan.

74. The Committee notes with concern that access to psychiatric care for prisoners in the four prisons visited was inadequate, despite the presence of many inmates with mental health issues, in particular linked to addiction problems. The situation was particularly difficult in Jēkabpils and Valmiera Prisons, which received no input from a psychiatrist at all. In the CPT's view, the regular presence of a psychiatrist in prison enables prisoners with mental health problems to be identified in good time and given appropriate treatment.

**The CPT recommends that urgent steps be taken to ensure the regular presence of a psychiatrist in every prison.**

Since 16 December 2024, the Prison Hospital of Latvia has been employing a narcologist, along with three certified psychiatrists and a clinical psychologist.

Due to difficulties in finding a psychiatrist to work in Jēkabpils Prison and Valmiera Prison, as well as the lack of certain specialists in other prisons, telemedicine services (remote consultations with medical practitioners via phone or video) will be gradually introduced and developed in prisons throughout 2025. This will enable patients to receive medical consultations remotely. Currently, individuals outside the prison setting in Latvia already have the option to consult the relevant physician remotely via video call, phone call, or text communication. The use of telemedicine in cases where it is permitted will improve the prisoners' access to various specialists, enabling consultations within a shorter timeframe while also reducing the risks associated with physically transferring the prisoners to medical facilities outside the prisons. This issue was discussed, and a common understanding was reached during a meeting on 9 December 2024 attended by representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, and the Administration. Meanwhile, as for fostering the access to psychiatric care and the regular presence of a physician-psychiatrist in the prison, we would like to inform you that the Ministry of Health has opened discussions with the Ministry of Justice to tackle the issue of access to specialists (Measure 7.2 of the Action Plan).

Currently, if prisoners do not have access to a physician-psychiatrist in the prison, they are provided with a psychiatric consultation at a medical facility outside the prison if



necessary, or they are transferred to the 2<sup>nd</sup> psychiatric ward of the Prison Hospital of Latvia for examination, treatment, and determination of a treatment course.

75. Furthermore, the Committee learned that there was no systematic screening for tuberculosis upon admission to Valmiera Prison.

**The CPT recommends that the Latvian authorities ensure that newly arrived prisoners in all prisons undergo a comprehensive medical examination (including systematic TB screening) by a doctor or a qualified nurse within 24 hours of admission, followed by voluntary testing for HIV and hepatitis B/C.**

Pursuant to paragraph 10 of the Regulation No. 276, upon arrival at the prison, a medical practitioner must conduct an initial health examination of the prisoner within three days of arrival or immediately upon the instruction of the Head of the prison on duty. Paragraph 11 of the Regulation No. 276 stipulates that in the event that a prisoner is transferred to another prison, the medical practitioner of that prison must conduct a health examination of the prisoner within three days of arrival or immediately upon the instruction of the duty assistant. Meanwhile, in accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Regulation No. 276, if a prisoner is admitted to the Prison Hospital of Latvia, the hospital's on-duty physician must conduct a medical examination within two hours of the prisoner's admission or immediately upon the instruction of the duty assistant.

Thus, medical practitioners in prisons conduct the initial examination of newly arrived prisoners within three days of their arrival; however, if a newly arrived prisoner reports health complaints, pain, or if prison officials observe visible bodily injuries or suspect an illness upon admission, they must inform the prison's health professionals who will immediately conduct a medical examination.

During the initial health examination, all newly arrived prisoners undergo a chest X-ray at the prison for diagnostic purposes and are offered voluntary testing for hepatitis and HIV. Valmiera Prison has been long facing difficulties in finding a radiology assistant to perform X-rays on-site within the prison. Therefore, prisoners are taken to a medical facility outside the prison territory for X-ray examinations, and they must be placed on a waiting list along with other individuals needing this service. Given this situation, the prisoners in Valmiera Prison did not undergo a chest X-ray immediately. Instead, they underwent that examination once their turn arrived at the medical facility to receive the necessary healthcare service.

76. The Latvian authorities informed the Committee about their plans to place the Prison Hospital under the authority of the Head of the Prison Administration as a separate and independent unit, from 2025. According to the authorities, this will allow more optimal remuneration of healthcare staff to be ensured, as well as improve the overall management of the provision of healthcare in prison. The authorities also informed the CPT about the plans to increase cooperation with the Ministry of Health, in particular on the provision of psychiatric care to prisoners.

The CPT notes in this regard that the policy trend in Europe has favoured prison healthcare services being placed, either to a great extent or entirely, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health.<sup>46</sup> In principle, the CPT supports this trend. In particular, it is convinced that a greater participation of health ministries in this

<sup>46</sup> See also Rules 40.1 and 40.2 of the European Prison Rules and the Commentary to these rule.

area (including as regards recruitment of healthcare staff, their in-service training, evaluation of clinical practice, certification and inspection) will facilitate the provision of good quality healthcare for persons held in prison, as well as the implementation of the general principle of equivalence of healthcare in prison with that in the wider community.

The Administration plans to transform the Prison Hospital of Latvia into an independent unit of the Administration by 1 July 2025, thereby creating the conditions for a more efficient model for healthcare resource management and strengthening the independence of physicians.

We recommend deleting the part of the sentence in paragraph 76 of the Committee's report that reads "*this will allow more optimal remuneration of healthcare staff to be ensured*", given that the establishment of the Prison Hospital of Latvia as a separate and independent institution of the Administration will not change the levels of remuneration of healthcare staff. In the institution's view, it will improve to overall management of healthcare provision in prisons.

In the meeting held on 9 December 2024, the representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Administration, and the Ministry of Health discussed that recommendation and came to the conclusion that the provision of healthcare services in prisons is an intersectoral issue requiring close cooperation between the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health is already providing support, which includes various specific initiatives regarding prisons outlined in the Ministry of Health's policy planning documents that address the development of the healthcare system. Furthermore, the Ministry of Health currently ensures the operation of the healthcare system in society, where prisoners receive healthcare that exceeds what is available within the prisons, including emergency healthcare services. Physicians employed in prisons are certified through the general process of certifying healthcare professionals, as established by the Ministry of Health. Furthermore, physicians working in prisons are subject to unified quality control of activities of healthcare professionals, with that process being managed by the Health Inspectorate. In addition, health professionals employed in prisons, for the most part, also work in public healthcare institutions and undergo training specified for their specific specialty.

The meeting participants agreed to restore a regular inter-institutional cooperation format (which existed before the COVID-19 pandemic), within which meetings will be held at least once every quarter to address issues related to improving cooperation.

Furthermore, it was also agreed that the Ministry of Health will explore the possibility of designating prison healthcare institutions or the Prison Hospital of Latvia as a place for residency training, thereby increasing the interest of young physicians in working in prisons (Measure 7.2 of the Action Plan).

**Action Plan for Reducing the Informal Prisoner Hierarchy and Implementing the Committee's Recommendations**

		<b>Deadline for implementation</b>	<b>Responsible institution</b>	<b>Annotations / implementation stage</b>	<b>Source of funding</b>
<b>1. Measures for strengthening the capacity of the Administration staff</b>					
1.	Supplementing of Administration staff training programmes with content based on findings outlined in the ECHR judgment	July 2025	PA	<i>Performance indicator: 4 new training programmes have been supplemented</i>	Within the budget allocated to the PA
2.	(Annual) training of medical and other staff to improve the recording of injuries sustained by prisoners	July 2025	PA	<i>Performance indicator: the number of individuals trained each year</i>	Within the budget allocated to the PA
3.	Continuous improvement of the Administration staff capacity through training in line with the annual training plan	From July 2025 – permanently	PA	<i>Performance indicator: the number of officials trained annually in the four new training programmes of the Administration (including on the ECHR judgment)</i>	Within the budget allocated to the PA
4.	Commencement of the training process in the new Training Centre building, providing a comprehensive training for the Administration staff	1 July 2025	PA	<i>Performance indicator: commencement of training of the Administration staff in the new Training Centre building</i>	Within the budget allocated to the PA

5.	<p>Measures for filling staff vacancies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determine regional salary rate for regions with the highest number of vacancies;</li> <li>2. Expand the group of individuals qualified for service within the Administration;</li> <li>3. Continue dialogue with the Ministry of the Interior on revising the physical fitness requirements for officials.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1 January 2026;</li> <li>2. 1 October 2025;</li> <li>3. 1 January 2026.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PA</li> <li>2. MoJ</li> <li>3. MoJ</li> </ol>	<p><i>Performance indicator:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provision of competitive remuneration;</li> <li>2. Amendments to the Law on the Course of Service of Officials Ranks Working in Institutions of the System of the Ministry of the Interior and the Prisons Administration;</li> <li>3. Amendments to laws and regulations.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Within the budget allocated to the PA;</li> <li>2. No state budget funds are required;</li> <li>3. No state budget funds are required.</li> </ol>
6.	<p>Improvement of working conditions for staff:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Modernization of equipment in work and rest areas in the renovated block in Valmiera Prison in accordance to the latest standards.</li> <li>2. Construction of new security rooms within the renovated block of Valmiera Prison, along with the installation of modern security technologies, ensuring both effective security and comfortable working conditions.</li> <li>3. Equipment of the staff work and rest areas in the new Liepāja Prison in accordance to the latest standards and the use of advanced prison security, surveillance, and safety technologies.</li> <li>4. Initiation of the adaptation process for staff work and rest areas, aligning with modern</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1 March 2025</li> <li>2. 31 December 2025</li> <li>3. 30 April 2026</li> <li>4. 31 December 2027</li> </ol>	PA	<p><i>Performance indicator:</i></p> <p>modern working conditions have been provided to the prison staff</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Within the budget allocated to the PA;</li> <li>2. Within the budget allocated to the PA;</li> <li>3. Within the budget allocated to the PA;</li> <li>4. In accordance with the Government's decisions under Measure 3.2.</li> </ol>

	working conditions, as part of the overall prison building reconstruction.				
<b>2. Further development of the resocialisation system for the prisoners</b>					
1.	Further implementation of the resocialisation policy	On a permanent basis	MoJ, PA	<i>Performance indicator: the Implementation Plan of the Resocialisation Policy Guidelines for 2022–2027 for the Period 2025–2027 has been submitted to the Government for consideration.</i> <b>The performance indicator has been reached: the Implementation Plan of the Resocialisation Policy Guidelines for 2022–2027 for the Period 2025–2027 was adopted by the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of 1 October 2024 No. 799.</b>	Within the budget allocated to the Administration <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The development of the resocialisation policy is established by the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of 8 June 2023 No. 344 “On the Implementation Plan of the Resocialisation Policy Guidelines for 2022–2027 for the Period 2023–2024”.

2.	Initiation of the procedure for approving the contact person model at one prison	Completed	PA	<p><i>The performance indicator has been reached:</i></p> <p><i>1. By the order of the Head of the Administration of 25 September 2024 “On Approval of the Model for the System of Contact Persons”, a pilot project was implemented in Riga Central Prison of the Administration from 1 October to 30 November 2024 to approve the model for the system of contact persons.</i></p> <p><i>2. On 27 December 2024, the Administration received a report from Riga Central Prison of the Administration regarding the results of the approval of the model for the system of contact persons.</i></p>	Within the budget allocated to the PA
3.	Gradual implementation of the contact person model in Riga Central Prison	31 December 2025	PA	<p><i>Performance indicator: Administration’s report</i></p>	Within the budget allocated to the PA

				<i>on the implementation of the model for the system of contact persons in Riga Central Prison</i>	
4.	Approval and implementation of the system of contact person in Valmiera Prison	31 December 2025	PA	<i>Performance indicators: 1. Administration's report on the approval of the model for the system of contact persons and the outcomes in the context of Valmiera Prison; 2. Administration's report on the implementation of the model for the system of contact persons in Valmiera Prison.</i>	Within the budget allocated to the PA
5.	Implementation of the system of contact persons in the new Liepāja Prison	30 April 2026	PA	<i>Performance indicator: Administration's report on the implementation of the model for the system of contact persons in the new Liepāja Prison</i>	Within the budget allocated to the PA

6.	Improvement and implementation of the resocialisation programme “Health Risk Management”	31 December 2025	PA	<i>Performance indicators: 1. Administration’s order on the implementation of the programme; 2. 20 prison staff members were trained in using the programme.</i>	Within the budget allocated to the Administration <sup>2</sup>
7.	Improvement and Implementation of the addiction reduction programme (hereinafter – the Addiction Reduction Programme) offered by the Addiction Treatment Centre of Olaine Prison (Prison Hospital of Latvia)	31 December 2026	PA	<i>Performance indicators: 1. Administration’s order on the implementation of the Addiction Reduction Programme; 2. 20 staff members working in the Addiction Treatment Centre of Olaine</i>	Within the budget allocated to the Administration <sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Measure 4.2 will be implemented as part of the Administration’s SRRI Project specified in the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 5 December 2023 No. 726 “Regulations on Implementing Measure 4.3.4.7 “Ensuring Preconditions for the Employment of Prisoners by Improving the Effectiveness of the Resocialisation System, Promoting the Reintegration of Former Prisoners, Equal Opportunities, and Active Participation” Within the Framework of Specific Objective 4.3.4 “Fostering Active Inclusion with a View to Promoting Equal Opportunities, Non-discrimination and Active Participation, and Improving Employability, in Particular for Disadvantaged Groups” under the EU Cohesion Policy Programme for 2021–2027”.

<sup>3</sup> Measure 4.2 will be implemented as part of the Administration’s SRRI Project specified in the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 5 December 2023 No. 726 “Regulations on Implementing Measure 4.3.4.7 “Ensuring Preconditions for the Employment of Prisoners by Improving the Effectiveness of the Resocialisation System, Promoting the Reintegration of Former Prisoners, Equal Opportunities, and Active Participation” Within the Framework of Specific Objective 4.3.4 “Fostering Active Inclusion with a View to Promoting Equal Opportunities, Non-discrimination and Active Participation, and Improving Employability, in Particular for Disadvantaged Groups” under the EU Cohesion Policy Programme for 2021–2027”.



				<i>Prison (Prison Hospital of Latvia) have been trained in using the Treatment Reduction Programme.</i>	
8.	Development of a screening algorithm for the selection of prisoners for participation in the Addiction Reduction Programme and their engagement in addiction reduction activities	31 December 2026	PA	<i>Performance indicator: PA's order on the implementation of the screening</i>	Within the budget allocated to the Administration <sup>4</sup>
<b>3. Measures for improving the prison infrastructure</b>					
1.	Commissioning of the new Liepāja Prison	30 April 2026	MoJ PA	<i>Performance indicator: placement of prisoners in the new Liepāja Prison</i>	Within the budget allocated to the MoJ <sup>5</sup>
2.	Informative report to the Government on the development of prison facilities following the commissioning of the new Liepāja Prison	1 May 2025	MoJ PA	<i>Performance indicator: the informative report was submitted to the Government for consideration</i>	No state budget funds are required for drawing up the report
3.	Closure of three prisons or parts thereof upon the entry into service of the new Liepāja Prison	31 December 2027	PA	<i>Performance indicator: Orders of the Ministry of Justice on closure of prisons</i>	Within the budget allocated to the PA

<sup>4</sup> Measure 4.2 will be implemented as part of the Administration's SRRI Project specified in the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 5 December 2023 No. 726 "Regulations on Implementing Measure 4.3.4.7 "Ensuring Preconditions for the Employment of Prisoners by Improving the Effectiveness of the Resocialisation System, Promoting the Reintegration of Former Prisoners, Equal Opportunities, and Active Participation" Within the Framework of Specific Objective 4.3.4 "Fostering Active Inclusion with a View to Promoting Equal Opportunities, Non-discrimination and Active Participation, and Improving Employability, in Particular for Disadvantaged Groups" under the EU Cohesion Policy Programme for 2021–2027".

<sup>5</sup> The construction of the new Liepāja Prison is established by the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of 12 February 2013 No. 50 "On the Concept of Developing the Prison Infrastructure".

4.	Measures for reducing the number of large-capacity cells: 1. To reduce the number of prisoners in large-capacity cells in other prisons following the commissioning of the renovated block of Valmiera Prison; 2. Following the entry into service of the new Liepāja Prison: 2.1. to discontinue the use of large-capacity cells; 2.2. to commence the reconstruction of buildings in other prisons in order to reduce the number of large-capacity cells.	1. 1 August 2025 2. 31 December 2027	PA	<i>Performance indicators:</i> <i>1. Number of prisoners transferred from other prisons to Valmiera Prison;</i> <i>2. Number of closed prisons or prison sections.</i>	1. Within the budget allocated to the PA; 2.1. Within the budget allocated to the PA; 2.2. in accordance with the Government's decisions under Measure 3.2.
5.	Initiation of prisoner's placement in the renovated block of Valmiera Prison	1 March 2025	PA	<i>Performance indicators:</i> <i>1. Commissioning of the renovated block of Valmiera Prison (by 31 January 2025);</i> <i>2. Initiation of the placement of prisoners (by 1 March 2025).</i>	Within the budget allocated to the PA
<b>4. Other measures</b>					
1.	Adoption of the Law on Criminal Sentence Execution	1 October 2026	MoJ	<i>Performance indicator:</i> <i>adoption of the Law on Criminal Sentence Execution by the Saeima</i>	No state budget funds are required for the development of the draft law

2.	Development and implementation of tools for the assessment of the prisoners' dangerousness	31 December 2027	PA	<i>Performance indicator: three assessment tools have been implemented</i>	Within the budget allocated to the Administration <sup>6</sup>
3.	Training of judges regarding the findings outlined in the ECHR judgment in the Academy of Justice's developed training programme	On a permanent basis	MoJ	<i>Performance indicator: the number of trained judges in line with the training plan for each year</i>	Within the budget allocated by the MoJ <sup>7</sup>
4.	Development of guidelines for reducing the informal prisoner hierarchy	1 May 2025	MoJ	<i>Performance indicator: the guidelines have been developed and incorporated into the training programmes of the Administration</i>	No state budget funds are required for the development of the guidelines
5.	Transition to a two-tier prison system, providing better individualisation of prisoners, more efficient sentence enforcement, and broader use of conditional early release	1 September 2024	MoJ	<b>The performance indicator has been reached: on 1 September 2024, amendments to the "Code of Execution of Sentences of Latvia" came into force, and since then, the custodial sentence is</b>	No state budget funds are required

<sup>6</sup> Measure 4.2 will be implemented as part of the Administration's SRRI Project specified in the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 5 December 2023 No. 726 "Regulations on Implementing Measure 4.3.4.7 "Ensuring Preconditions for the Employment of Prisoners by Improving the Effectiveness of the Resocialisation System, Promoting the Reintegration of Former Prisoners, Equal Opportunities, and Active Participation" Within the Framework of Specific Objective 4.3.4 "Fostering Active Inclusion with a View to Promoting Equal Opportunities, Non-discrimination and Active Participation, and Improving Employability, in Particular for Disadvantaged Groups" under the EU Cohesion Policy Programme for 2021–2027".

<sup>7</sup> Under the investment 6.2.1.3.i "Establishment of a single training centre for the development of the qualifications of judges, court staff, prosecutors, assistant prosecutors, and specialised investigators (interdisciplinary matters)" of the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

				<b>executed in both closed and open prison conditions.</b>	
<b>5. Strengthening of the investigation process</b>					
1.	Submission of proposals to the CPC working group for the initiation of criminal proceedings in cases of prisoner injuries, regardless of the prisoner's request, if the prison's physician concludes that the bodily injuries were not caused by an accidental injury	1 March 2025	MoJ	<i>Performance indicator: the proposal was submitted</i>	No state budget funds are required
2.	Delegation of the competence for investigating all offences committed by prison officials in prisons to the Internal Security Bureau	1 January 2025	MoJ	<b>The performance indicator has been reached: amendments to the "Code of Execution of Sentences of Latvia came into force on 1 January 2025.</b>	No state budget funds are required
<b>6. Improvement of security matters</b>					
1.	Adoption of new internal prison rules by the Cabinet of Ministers, including restrictions on the unauthorised communication devices to enter the prison	1 May 2025	PA	<i>Performance indicator: prisoners have no access to video game consoles that pose a risk of unauthorised communication</i>	No state budget funds are required for the development of new regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers
2.	Posting of the draft law "Amendments to the Law on the Procedure for Holding Detained Persons" on the legislative draft portal for public consultation (restrictions on the unauthorised	1 April 2025	MoJ	<i>Performance indicator: prisoners have no access to video game consoles that pose a</i>	No state budget funds are required for the development of the draft law

	communication devices to enter the investigative prison)			<i>risk of unauthorised communication.</i>	
3.	The amendments to the “Code of Execution of Sentences of Latvia” specifies that prisoners who have not previously served a sentence in a prison shall be allocated separately from the rest of prison population.	1 October 2026	MoJ	<i>Performance indicator: the Saeima has adopted the amendments to the Code of Execution of Sentences</i>	No state budget funds are required for the development of the draft law
4.	Advancement of the Draft Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers “Procedure for Visiting Prisons” (24-TA-324) (on restriction of unauthorised circulation of medications in prisons) for adoption	1 April 2025	PA	<i>Performance indicator: visitors to prisons have a restricted ability to bring medications into the facility</i>	No state budget funds are required for the development of the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers
3.	Initiation of amendments to Article 309 of the Criminal Law, introducing criminal liability for the smuggling of unauthorised communication devices into prisons	1 May 2025	MoJ	<i>Performance indicator: initiation of the advancement of the draft law</i>	No state budget funds are required for the advancement of the draft law
4.	Advancement of proposals for amendments to the Prisons Administration Law regarding the control of prisoners’ funds	1 September 2025	MoJ	<i>Performance indicator: advancement of proposals</i>	No state budget funds are required for the advancement of the draft law
<b>7. Improvement of the treatment process and strengthening the role of the health professional’s</b>					
1.	Transformation of the Prison Hospital of Latvia into an independent Administration unit, thereby creating conditions for a more efficient healthcare resource management model and strengthening the independence of physicians	1 July 2025	PA	<i>Performance indicator: the PA has issued an order on the transformation of the PHL</i>	Within the budget allocated to the PA
2.	Evaluation of the initiative to develop residency opportunities for future physicians at the Prison	31 December 2025	MoH	<i>Performance indicator: at least two resident doctors have been</i>	No state budget funds required for the

	Hospital of Latvia (or its branches, i.e., Medical Departments of prisons)			<i>assigned to the Prison Hospital of Latvia</i>	development of the initiative
3.	Improvements to the Inmate Information System (IIS2), initiating the implementation of the healthcare processes in IIS2	31 December 2028	PA	<i>Performance indicator: a healthcare module/register has been established in IIS2</i>	Within the budget allocated to the PA
4.	Implementation and development of telemedicine services in prisons	31 December 2026	PA	<i>Performance indicator: the number of prisoners consulted remotely within a year</i>	Within the budget allocated to the PA
5.	Review of conditions for initiating methadone substitution therapy in prisons	1 July 2026	MoJ, MoH, PA	<i>Performance indicator: the conditions, restrictions, and required changes in laws and regulations have been evaluated</i>	No state budget funds are required for reviewing the conditions
6.	Establishment of a position in the Prison Hospital of Latvia to ensure the development of preventive measures, including the implementation of harm reduction and other preventive measures related to infections, addictions, etc.	By 31 July 2025	PA	<i>Performance indicator: the position has been established</i>	Within the budget allocated to the PA

*Abbreviations:*

*Ministry of Justice – MoJ*

*Prisons Administration – PA or Administration*







	Effective sentence					1			1			
	Community service											
	Effective sentence										1	
	Article 130, paragraph 3, point 2											
	Deprivation of liberty											
	Effective sentence							1				
	Compulsory work											
	Effective sentence			1				1				
	Article 130, paragraph 3, point 4											
	Deprivation of liberty											
	Effective sentence							1				
	Article 130, paragraph 3, point 5											
	Deprivation of liberty											
	Effective sentence					1						
	Compulsory work											
	Effective sentence									1		
	Article 130, paragraph 3, point 6											
	Deprivation of liberty											
	Effective sentence					2	2		2			
	Suspended sentence					2	2	3	3	1	1	
	Compulsory work											
	Effective sentence					4	10	3	1			
	Fine											
	Effective sentence							1				
	Temporary deprivation of liberty											
	Effective sentence										1	
	Community service											
	Effective sentence										1	
	Article 130, paragraph 3, point 6											
	Compulsory work											
	Effective sentence					1						

### Action Plan<sup>1</sup> for Reducing the Informal Prisoner Hierarchy

		<b>Deadline for implementation</b>	<b>Responsible institution</b>	<b>Source of funding</b>
<b>1. Measures for strengthening the capacity of Administration staff</b>				
1.	Supplementing Administration Staff Training Programmes with content on the findings outlined in the Judgment	July 2025	Administration	Within the budget allocated to the Administration
<i>Performance indicator: 4 new training programmes have been supplemented</i>				
2.	Continuous improvement of the Administration staff capacity through training	From July 2025 – independently	Administration	Within the budget allocated to the Administration
<i>Performance indicator: the number of officials trained annually in the four new training programmes for Administration (including on the Judgment)</i>				
3.	Commencement of the training in the new Training Centre building, providing comprehensive training for Administration staff	1 July 2025	Administration	Within the budget allocated to the Administration <sup>2</sup>
<i>Performance indicator: commencement of training for Administration staff in the new Training Centre building</i>				
4.	Transformation of the Prison Hospital of Latvia into an independent Administration unit, creating conditions for a more efficient model for healthcare resource management and strengthening the independence of	1 July 2025	Administration	Within the budget allocated to the Administration

<sup>1</sup> Approved in the Cabinet of Ministers meeting of 8 October 2024 (Meeting Minutes No. 41, §33) when reviewing the informative report “Measures to Reduce the Informal Prisoner Hierarchy in Prisons”.

<sup>2</sup> The new Training Centre Building is expected to be constructed and put into service as part of the Administration’s project specified in the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 2 April 2019 No. 140 “Regulations on Implementing the Programme “Correctional Services” under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism for the period 2014–2021”.

	healthcare practitioners			
<i>Performance indicator: changes in the Prisons Administration Law, including the by-law and the internal regulations of the Prisons Administration</i>				
5.	Transition to a two-tier prison system, providing greater opportunities for the individualisation of prisoners, more efficient execution of sentences, and broader use of conditional early release	1 September 2024	MoJ	Within the budget allocated to the Administration
<i>Performance indicator: amendments to the Code of Execution of Sentences of Latvia of 20 June 2024 has come into force</i> <b>The performance indicator has been reached: on 1 September 2024, amendments to the Code of Execution of Sentences of Latvia came into force, and since then, the custodial sentence is executed in both closed and open prison conditions.</b>				
6.	Reduction of vacancies within the Administration by expanding the target group of individuals eligible for service in the Administration	1 July 2025	MoJ	No state budget funds are required
<i>Performance indicator: the draft law “Amendments to the Law on the Course of Service of Officials with Special Service Ranks Working in Institutions of the System of the Ministry of the Interior and the Prisons Administration” (24-TA-1472) has come into force</i>				
<b>2. Further development of the system for the resocialisation of prisoners</b>				
1.	Further implementation of the resocialisation policy	On a permanent basis	MoJ	Within the budget allocated to the Administration <sup>3</sup>
<i>Performance indicator: the Implementation Plan of the Resocialisation Policy Guidelines for 2022–2027 for the Period 2025–2027 has been submitted to the Government for consideration.</i> <b>The performance indicator has been reached: on 28 August 2024, the draft project “Implementation Plan of the Resocialisation Policy Guidelines for 2022–2027 for the Period 2025–2027” was submitted for consideration at the Cabinet of Ministers meeting.</b>				
2.	Initiation of the procedure for approving the contact	15 January 2025	Administration	Within the budget allocated to the Administration <sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The development of the resocialisation policy is established by the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of 8 June 2023 No. 344 “On the Implementation Plan of the Resocialisation Policy Guidelines for 2022–2027 for the Period 2023–2024”.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

	person model in one prison			
<i>Performance indicator: commencement of the implementation of a pilot project in one prison</i>				
3.	Gradual implementation of the contact person model in prisons	31 December 2027	Administration	Within the budget allocated to the Administration <sup>5</sup>
<i>Performance indicator: implementation of the contact person model in 2 prisons</i>				
<b>3. Measures for improving the prison infrastructure</b>				
1.	Entering into service of the new Liepāja Prison	30 April 2026	MoJ Administration	Within the budget allocated to the MoJ <sup>6</sup>
<i>Performance indicator: allocation of prisoners in the new Liepāja Prison</i>				
2.	Informative report to the Government on the development of prisons following the entering into service of the new Liepāja Prison	1 April 2025	MoJ Administration	No state budget funds are required for drawing up the report
<i>Performance indicator: the informative report was submitted to the Government for consideration</i>				
3.	Closure of three prisons or sections thereof following the entry into service of the new Liepāja Prison	31 December 2027	Administration	Within the budget allocated to the Administration
<i>Performance indicator: Issuance of the Ministry of Justice orders on closure of prisons</i>				
<b>4. Other measures</b>				
1.	Entering into force of the Law on Criminal Sentence Execution	30 April 2026	MoJ	No state budget funds are required for the development of the draft law
<i>Performance indicator: entering into force of the Law on Criminal Sentence Execution</i>				
2.	Development and implementation of tools for the assessment of the	31 December 2027	Administration	Within the budget allocated to the Administration <sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> The construction of the new Liepāja Prison is established by the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of 12 February 2013 No. 50 “On the Concept of Developing the Prison Infrastructure”.

<sup>7</sup> Measure 4.2 will be implemented as part of the Administration’s SRRP Project specified in the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of 5 December 2023 No. 726 “Regulations on Implementing Measure 4.3.4.7 “Ensuring Preconditions for the Employment of Prisoners by Improving the Effectiveness of the Resocialisation System, Promoting the Reintegration of Former Prisoners, Equal Opportunities, and Active Participation” Within the Framework of Specific Objective 4.3.4 “Fostering Active Inclusion with a View to Promoting Equal Opportunities, Non-discrimination and Active Participation, and Improving Employability, in Particular for Disadvantaged Groups” under the EU Cohesion Policy Programme for 2021–2027”.

	prisoners' dangerousness			
<i>Performance indicator: three assessment tools have been implemented</i>				
3.	Training of judges in using the training programme of the Academy of Justice on findings outlined in the Judgment	On a permanent basis	MoJ	Within the budget allocated by the MoJ <sup>8</sup>
<i>Performance indicator: the number of trained judges in line with the training plan for each year</i>				

It should also be noted that the Ministry of Justice is currently working on guidelines for the Administration to reduce the informal prisoner hierarchy, with the development expected to be completed by autumn of 2024.

The Ministry of Justice acknowledges that, even after the implementation of the measures outlined in this plan, continuous efforts will be required to reduce the informal prisoner hierarchy. Furthermore, as for the process of executing the Judgment, it might be necessary to provide further information regarding the measures aimed at addressing the informal prisoner hierarchy, including those already in the implementation stage. It should also be noted that by the end of 2024, Latvia will receive the Committee's report following the visit carried out in 2024 which will include further conclusions and recommendations. Depending on the content of the Committee's recommendations, additional measures may be required during the process of preparing responses.

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<sup>8</sup> Under the investment 6.2.1.3.i "Establishment of a single training centre for the development of the qualifications of judges, court staff, prosecutors, assistant prosecutors, and specialised investigators (interdisciplinary matters)" of the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

**Plan for Preventive Measures and Healthcare Service Improvement<sup>1</sup> for Reducing the Spread of Alcohol and Narcotic Substance Use in Prisons for 2023–2025**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Performance indicator</b>	<b>Responsible institution</b>	<b>Co-responsible institutions</b>	<b>Deadline for implementation</b>	<b>Source of funding</b>
1.5.	To develop and implement substance use prevention measures in prisons (for prisoners) and for probation clients.	Improved skills and knowledge among prisoners and probation clients in maintaining and improving their own health, as well as and the health of those around them, concerning substance use, including harm reduction strategies.	Substance use prevention measures in prisons (for prisoners) and for probation clients have been developed and implemented.	MoJ, PA, SPS	CDPC	1 <sup>st</sup> half of 2024	Required additional funding – <b>EUR 1658 each year</b>
2.1.	To expand the availability of naloxone hydrochloride-containing	Naloxone hydrochloride-containing medication is available to	Amendments to laws and regulations have been developed to improve the circulation of naloxone hydrochloride-containing medications.	NHS, MoH, CDPC	Medical institutions, MoI, MoJ, PA, SPS, NGOs	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of 2025	Required additional funding in 2023 – <b>EUR 462 097</b>

<sup>1</sup> Approved by the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of 25 October 2022 No. 773.

	medications to individuals with opioid dependency (including those released from imprisonment, probation clients) and their relatives.	individuals with opioid dependency and their relatives.	<p>A naloxone programme has been developed and implemented for individuals with opioid dependency (including those released from imprisonment, probation clients) and their relatives.</p> <p>Increased access to naloxone hydrochloride-containing medications for the employees of the State Police (SP), the State Probation Service, prisons, and other staff members, with training provided to the staff in the use of the medication.</p>				In 2024 and onwards every year – <b>EUR 924 194</b>
5.5.	To engage narcologists to work in prisons and to cover the travel expenses from the state budget for the probation clients to be	Narcologists have been engaged to work in prisons and are available to work with probation clients.	<p>At least 1 narcologist has been assigned to each prison.</p> <p>On average, travel expenses for public transportation to access narcology services have been covered for 70 probation clients annually.</p>	MoJ	PA, SPS, MoH	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of 2024	Required additional funding – <b>EUR 51 996 each year</b>

	able to reach a narcologist.						
5.6.	To continue the implementation of training for health practitioners and healthcare support staff (general practitioners, other primary care specialists, health specialists, health practitioners working in prisons, and health practitioners working with the clients of the State Probation Service clients) to enhance	Training has been provided to health practitioners and healthcare support staff to enhance knowledge and skills in addiction prevention and treatment.	Training has been provided to health practitioners and healthcare support staff.	MoH	RSU, LU, PA	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of 2025	Required additional funding – <b>EUR 7000 each year</b>



	knowledge and skills in addiction prevention and treatment. <sup>2</sup>						
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**Action Plan for the Prevention of HIV Infection, Sexually Transmitted Infections, Tuberculosis, and Hepatitis B and C for 2023–2027<sup>3</sup>**

<b>Course of Action 6</b>		<b>Prisons</b>					
<b>No.</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Performance indicator</b>	<b>Responsible institution</b>	<b>Co-responsible institutions</b>	<b>Deadline for implementation</b>	<b>Funding</b>
6.1.	To enhance the epidemiological monitoring of HIV, HCV, and TB in relation to prisoners and those released from imprisonment.	Objective information is available for planning and implementing measures in prisons concerning HIV, HCV, and TB issues.	An information summary with data analysis and issues related to the spread and monitoring of HIV, HCV, and TB, as well as the post-imprisonment involvement of individuals in treatment	MoJ, MoH, CDPC	PA SPS NHS	Starting from 2023, at least every two years	Within the current state budget funding

<sup>2</sup> To be implemented as part of measure 4.1.2.6 “Improvement of training opportunities for medical staff, including by improving access to further education” of the specific objective 4.1.2 “Improvement of equitable and timely access to quality, sustainable, and cost-effective healthcare, health promotion, and disease prevention services, while enhancing the efficiency and resilience of healthcare systems” under the EU Cohesion Policy Programme for 2021–2027.

<sup>3</sup> Approved by the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of 28 June 2023 No. 408.

			and the factors hindering it, is published on the CDPC website at least once every two years.				
6.2.	To expand opportunities for involving the prison medical staff in the healthcare of prisoners infected with HIV, HCV, and STIs.	Improved access to treatment and prevented risks to the continuity of HIV and HCV treatment in prisons, with at least two specialists available in prison who can prescribe the necessary medication for HIV treatment.	Amendments to laws and regulations have been made to simplify the procedures for the treatment of prisoners with HIV and HCV.	MoH	MoJ PA	1 <sup>st</sup> half of 2023	No funding
			At least 16 prison physicians were trained on HIV, HCV, STI treatment, diagnostics, and prevention issues.	MoJ, PA		1 <sup>st</sup> half of 2024	Within the current state budget funding
6.3.	To enhance the skills of prison specialists in motivating the prisoners to undergo HIV and HCV testing.	To increase the number of prisoners who undergo HIV and HCV testing.	Informative material has been prepared, and training has been conducted for prison staff to motivate the prisoners to undergo HIV or HCV testing.	MoJ, CDPC PA		2 <sup>nd</sup> half of 2024	Required additional state budget funding in 2024 – <b>EUR 5600</b>
6.4.	To ensure access to the HIV register for health	To improve the exchange of information on HIV cases	Health practitioners working in prisons have	MoJ, MoH, PA		2 <sup>nd</sup> half of 2023	Within the current state

	practitioners working in prisons.	between the CDPC and health practitioners working in prisons.	access to the HIV register.	CDPC			budget funding
6.5.	To inform the PA and SPS staff, prisoners, and probation clients about the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of STIs, HIV, TB, HCV, and HBV.	Broader opportunities to raise awareness among the prisoners and probation clients about HIV, TB, HCV, HBV, reducing stigma and myths, and encouraging their cooperation in the diagnosis and treatment of these infections.	In each prison, inmates and probation clients in the SPS territorial units have access to developed informational materials, such as visual infographics, displayed in visible areas, covering four main topics (STIs, HIV, HBV, and HCV).	MoJ, MoH, CDPC PA	SPS	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of 2023	Within the current state budget funding
			At least one educational seminar has been held every two years for PA and SPS employees on the risks of STI, HIV, TB, HCV, and HBV infections, as well as their prevention and treatment issues.	MoJ, MoH, CDPC PA	SPS	2 <sup>nd</sup> half of 2027	Required additional state budget funding in 2025 and 2026 – <b>EUR 4600</b>
6.6.	To explore the possibility of implementing harm reduction	To improve the exchange of information on HIV cases	A pilot project has been implemented to explore the possibilities for harm reduction measures in	MoJ, MoH PA	CDPC	1 <sup>st</sup> half of 2026	No funding

	measures in prisons.	between the CDPC and health practitioners working in prisons.	prisons, and recommendations have been prepared for the broader implementation of harm reduction services in prisons.				
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