



Report

**to the Greek Government
on the ad hoc visit to Greece
carried out by the European Committee
for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman
or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)**

from 22 November 2021 to 1 December 2021

The Government of Greece has requested the publication of this report and of its response. The Government's response is set out in document CPT/Inf (2022) 17.

Strasbourg, 2 September 2022

CONTENTS

| | | |
|------------|--|-----------|
| I. | INTRODUCTION | 5 |
| A. | The visit, the report and follow-up..... | 5 |
| B. | Consultations held by the delegation and co-operation encountered | 6 |
| C. | Context of the visit..... | 6 |
| D. | Immediate observations under Article 8, paragraph 5, of the Convention..... | 8 |
| II. | FACTS FOUND DURING THE VISIT AND ACTION PROPOSED..... | 9 |
| A. | Prison establishments | 9 |
| 1. | Preliminary remarks | 9 |
| a. | prison reform | 9 |
| b. | prisons visited | 13 |
| c. | Covid-19 | 14 |
| 2. | Ill-treatment..... | 15 |
| a. | ill-treatment of prisoners by staff | 15 |
| b. | inter-prisoner violence | 16 |
| 3. | Conditions of detention | 18 |
| a. | material conditions..... | 18 |
| b. | regime | 22 |
| c. | transgender prisoners | 24 |
| d. | prisoners on protection | 26 |
| 4. | Prison staff | 27 |
| 5. | Health care | 30 |
| a. | health care services in prison..... | 30 |
| b. | Korydallos Prison Special Health Centre | 35 |
| c. | Korydallos Psychiatric Hospital for Prisoners..... | 37 |
| d. | deaths of persons detained in the Korydallos Prison Complex | 38 |
| 6. | Other issues | 39 |
| a. | discipline..... | 39 |
| b. | contact with the outside world..... | 41 |
| c. | information on rights and complaints procedures | 41 |
| 7. | Athens Transfer Centre for Prisoners under the Hellenic Police | 43 |
| 8. | Transfer of Prisoners by the Hellenic Police..... | 43 |
| B. | Concluding remarks | 45 |

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The visit, the report and follow-up

1. In pursuance of Article 7 of the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (hereinafter referred to as “the Convention”), a delegation of the CPT carried out a visit to Greece from 22 November to 1 December 2021. The visit was considered by the Committee “to be required in the circumstances” (cf. Article 7, paragraph 1, of the Convention). It was the Committee’s eighteenth visit to Greece.¹

2. The visit was carried out by the following members of the CPT:

- Alan Mitchell, President of the CPT and Head of delegation
- Djordje Alempijević
- Olga Noyanova
- Elsa Bára Traustadóttir
- Elisabetta Zamparutti.

They were supported by Hugh Chetwynd, Head of Division, and Sebastian Rietz of the Committee's Secretariat, and assisted by Martin Lomas, Deputy Chief Inspector of Prisons in England and Wales, United Kingdom (expert).

3. In the course of the visit, the following prison establishments were visited by the CPT’s delegation:

- Chios Prison
- Corfu Prison
- Korydallos Men’s Prison
- Korydallos Special Health Centre for Prisoners
- Kos Prison
- Nigrita Prison.

Targeted visits were also carried out to the Athens Transfer Centre for Prisoners under the authority of the Hellenic Police and to Korydallos Psychiatric Hospital for Prisoners.

4. The report on the visit was adopted by the CPT at its 107th meeting, held from 28 February to 4 March 2022, and transmitted to the Greek authorities on 10 March 2022. The various recommendations, comments and requests for information made by the CPT are set out in bold type in the present report. The CPT requests the Greek authorities to provide within three months a response containing a full account of the action taken by them to implement the Committee’s recommendations, and replies to the comments and requests for information, formulated in this report. As regards the recommendation in paragraph 19, the CPT would like to be provided with an interim response within three months and a complete response within six months.

¹ The visit reports and the responses of the Greek authorities on all previous visits are available on the CPT’s website: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cpt/greece>.

B. Consultations held by the delegation and co-operation encountered

5. In the course of the visit, the delegation held meetings with Eleftherios Oikonomou, Deputy Minister of Citizens Protection, and Sofia Nikolaou, General Secretary for Anti-Crime Policy, as well as with Ioannis Stalikas, Head of the General Directorate of Crisis and Prison Management, Prokopios Prokopiou, Head of the General Directorate of Anti-Crime and Penitentiary Policy, and other senior officials responsible for prison matters from the Ministry of Citizens Protection.

The delegation also met Andreas Pottakis, the Greek Ombudsman, and representatives from his Office in their capacity as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM).

6. On the whole, the CPT's delegation received excellent co-operation during the visit by the Greek authorities at all levels. The delegation had rapid access to all places of detention it wished to visit, was able to meet in private with those persons with whom it wanted to speak and was provided with access to the information it required to carry out its task.

The Committee wishes to express its appreciation for the assistance provided to its delegation during the visit by the management and staff in the prisons visited as well as to the support offered by its liaison officer from the Ministry of Citizens Protection, Mr Georgios Thrapsaniotis.

7. That said, the CPT must recall once again that the principle of co-operation between Parties to the Convention and the Committee is not limited to steps taken to facilitate the task of a visiting delegation. It also requires that decisive action be taken to improve the situation in the light of the CPT's recommendations. In this respect, the CPT remains concerned about the dire state of the Greek prison system and the lack of action taken to address the Committee's recommendations contained in previous visit reports to improve the situation (see paragraph 10).

C. Context of the visit

8. The decision to carry out an ad hoc visit to Greece was taken by the CPT due to the lack of clear evidence and indicators provided to the Committee that the situation for persons detained in Greek prisons was improving. The response of the Greek authorities to the CPT's 2019 visit report did not reassure the Committee that concrete steps were being taken to address the very significant deficiencies raised in that report. Further, there appeared to be no strategic plan, with clearly defined goals and benchmarks, to tackle the systematic shortcomings of the Greek prison system as identified by the CPT.

The fact is that the situation in Greek prisons has not significantly improved since 2011, when the Committee issued a public statement² and, more especially, the systemic deficiencies as regards prisons outlined in the CPT's 2015 and 2019 visit reports³ remain. The definitive action required from the Greek State as a whole to regain control of the prisons and to move beyond a warehousing of prisoners has not materialised.

² See Public Statement concerning Greece: [CPT/Inf \(2011\) 10](#), 15 March 2011.

³ See [CPT/Inf \(2016\) 4](#) and [CPT/Inf \(2020\) 15](#), respectively.

The findings of the CPT's November/December 2021 visit to Greece demonstrate once again that the overarching problems of persistent overcrowding in totally inappropriate material conditions and chronic shortage of staff continue to compound the many additional shortcomings in the prisons visited, such as an impoverished regime, inadequate health care and continued high levels of inter-prisoner violence and intimidation.⁴

9. The CPT has taken note that the current Greek Government entered office in July 2019 and that it inherited a chronic crisis in the prison system. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, these issues are not new and there has been a repeated failure to address the systemic needs of the prison system by successive governments. There continues to be a lack of forward planning whereby the resources required to operate a prison system capable of accommodating 12,000 persons (currently) in decent conditions with a clearly defined pathway to reintegrate back into the community are allocated.

It is a policy choice of the Greek Government to promote a penal policy with sentences that are much longer than in other European countries (see paragraph 16). The criminal law reform of June 2019 and subsequent amendments to the Criminal Code was an opportunity to promote the decriminalisation or downgrading of a number of offences, to reduce sentence lengths, and to promote non-custodial measures and sanctions as main sentences. The consequences of these reforms will become evident in due course. The emphasis of the authorities since July 2019 has been to restore a semblance of order within prisons, notably Korydallos Men's Prison, and to promote the building of new prison establishments both to increase capacity and to close certain older facilities.

10. In the report on its 2019 visit to Greece, the CPT once again urged the Greek authorities to take concrete action to tackle the two overarching problems of persistent overcrowding and chronic shortage of staff in the prisons and to implement the recommendations on prison matters made in its previous visit reports. The Committee emphasised that if no progress was made or achieved towards this end, it might well consider setting in motion the procedure provided for in Article 10, paragraph 2, of the Convention.⁵ The findings of the CPT's 2021 visit demonstrate that, for almost a decade, no tangible progress has been made to address the Committee's very serious concerns under Article 3 of the European Convention of Human Rights as outlined once again in this report and that there is little evidence to indicate that the situation will improve in the near future. Consequently, the CPT has decided to set in motion the procedure provided for in Article 10, paragraph 2, of the Convention.

In the *Concluding remarks* to this report, the Committee reiterates its fundamental concerns, and that urgent action is required to address them. It hopes that decisive action by the Greek authorities to implement the CPT's recommendations will render the issuing of a public statement unnecessary and that the constructive dialogue and cooperation developed over the years can be enhanced in addressing the Committee's concerns and, more specifically, the critical state of prisons in Greece.

⁴ See also the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers' Deputies decision on the supervision of the execution of the [Nisiotis group of cases against Greece](#) of 10 March 2022. These cases concern inhuman and/or degrading treatment of the applicants on account of the poor conditions of detention in Greek prisons between 2008 and 2018 and where the European Court of Human Rights found violations of Article 3. Further, it should be noted that as of March 2022, some 727 applications concerning prison conditions are pending before the European Court of Human Rights.

⁵ Article 10, paragraph 2, reads as follows: "If the Party fails to co-operate or refuses to improve the situation in the light of the Committee's recommendations, the Committee may decide, after the Party has had an opportunity to make known its views, by a majority of two-thirds of its members to make a public statement on the matter."

D. Immediate observations under Article 8, paragraph 5, of the Convention

11. During the end-of-visit talks with the Greek authorities, on 1 December 2021, the CPT's delegation made three immediate observations under Article 8, paragraph 5, of the Convention. The Greek authorities were requested to ensure that:

- at Kos Prison, persons who are tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus are held separately from other prisoners to reduce the risk of transmission and subsequent illness. More generally, overcrowded and unhygienic dormitory-style accommodation is not conducive to reducing the risk of infection.
- at Corfu Prison, the three cells in K Wing used for disciplinary/protection purposes be taken out of service immediately. Further, the remaining cells in K Wing should, within one month, be either completely renovated or permanently taken out of use. The transgender women held on K Wing should also be moved to alternative accommodation within one month.
- at Korydallos Special Health Centre for Prisoners, the patient HH be provided with new prostheses for his arms and that, in the meantime, he be offered the necessary around the clock care to provide for his needs.

These observations were confirmed by letter of 6 December 2021 when transmitting the delegation's preliminary observations to the Greek authorities.

On 7 January 2022, the Greek authorities informed the CPT on the actions taken in response to these immediate observations and on other matters raised by the delegation at the end-of-visit talks. This response has been taken into account in the relevant sections of the present report.

II. FACTS FOUND DURING THE VISIT AND ACTION PROPOSED

A. Prison establishments

1. Preliminary remarks

a. prison reform

12. In the report on its 2019 visit, the CPT once again highlighted that the two overarching problems of overcrowding and chronic shortage of staff compounded the many additional shortcomings in the prisons visited: including, very poor material conditions, lack of hygiene, the absence of an appropriate regime and high levels of inter-prisoner violence and intimidation as well as an insufficient provision and inadequate medical care in prisons.

Following the legislative elections of 7 July 2019, a new Government under Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis took up office. One of the first actions taken by the Government was to transfer the responsibility for anti-crime policy and prisons from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Citizens Protection. The initial focus of the Government has been on reforming the Greek criminal law and prison legislation and taking measures to improve security in the prisons. Since March 2020, this focus has shifted towards preventing the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in prisons. Further, at the time of the visit, a new Strategic Plan for the prisons for 2021-2023 was being drawn up.

13. Overcrowding has been a constant feature of the Greek prison system for many years and modulating its increase in recent years was largely achieved by the adoption of emergency measures under Law 4322/2015,⁶ which were extended in 2016 and 2017. Nevertheless, these interventions sought only to manage the problem and were not accompanied by policies to address the causes of overcrowding. In far too many instances, persons in prison continue to be held in overcrowded cells or dormitories offering less than 4m² of living space, and in many instances less than 3m², per person.

At the outset of the visit, the Greek authorities informed the CPT's delegation that a central plank in their strategy to resolve overcrowding and to improve material conditions in prisons was the building of new establishments, which would result in more than 3,000 additional places. In particular, new 600-place prisons will be built in Chalkida, Ioanina and Kourounes, Lassithi in Crete as well as a Model Open Labour Prison in Megalopolis. The prison in Drama (600 places) has been completed and will open once staffing resources are available. Further, Korydallos Prison Complex will be replaced by a new 2,000-place Judicial Prison Complex in Athens (Aspropyrgos). Upon completion of these new prisons, certain existing establishments such as Chalkida and Ioanina Prisons will be closed.

In the CPT's view, constructing new prisons is not likely, in itself, to provide a lasting solution to the problem of overcrowding. For instance, between 1997 and 2019 the prison estate in Greece more than doubled its capacity yet overcrowding was not resolved. Addressing this problem calls for a coherent strategy, covering both admission to and release from prison, to ensure that imprisonment – including pre-trial detention – really is a measure of last resort as recommended in paragraph 17.

⁶ These measures included the introduction of early release schemes, the adoption of non-custodial alternatives to detention, special or alternative arrangements for certain vulnerable categories of prisoners and the limitation of imprisonment for juveniles.

The CPT would like to be informed whether the financing and staffing provision for the above proposed facilities have been obtained. Further, it would like to receive an indicative timetable for the opening of each of these establishments. As regards the new Judicial Prison Complex in Athens, the CPT would like to receive details about the plans for the different components of the Complex, including the intended prisoner profile and staffing arrangements.

14. At the time of the November/December 2021 visit, the prison population stood at 11,182⁷ for a capacity of 10,175 places (i.e. a prison occupancy rate of 110%).

However, the distribution of prisoners across the prison estate, and even within individual prison establishments, means that overcrowding is far more severe than indicated by the figure of 110%. Indeed, at the time of the visit, 24 of the 34 prisons were overcrowded, with 15 prisons having an occupancy rate of above 130% of their official capacity, including large prisons such as Korydallos Men's (152%), Larissa (134%) and Patras (137%), while Komotini Prison accommodated 280 prisoners for a capacity of 166 places (i.e., an occupancy rate of 172%) and Ioanina Prison held 126 persons for 66 places (i.e., an occupancy rate of 190%).

By contrast, certain prison establishments such as the rural prisons of Agia Chania and Kassandra Chalkidiki were operating at only 35% of their capacity and Tirintha Argolida Prison held only 47 persons for a capacity of 302 places. This is mainly due to the strict criteria for transferring prisoners to these rural prisons.⁸ Further, the official capacities for the Korydallos Psychiatric Hospital for Prisoners (261 places) and the Korydallos Special Health Centre for Prisoners (253 places) far exceed the real capacity of these institutions and should be revised down. Further, these capacities should be counted separately from the rest of the prison system given that these institutions service the rest of the prison estate with patients often only spending short periods in these institutions before returning to a prison establishment.

The CPT recommends that the Greek authorities take the necessary steps to put in place a more even distribution of the prison population across the prison estate, bearing in mind the need to consider proximity to the prisoner's family or residence. In addition, the criteria for the transfer of persons to the rural prisons should be reviewed.

15. More generally, the CPT wishes to stress once again that a prison cannot function effectively if it is operating at 100% of its capacity. There must always be some margin for transferring prisoners from one wing to another or for receiving additional prisoners or for taking back prisoners on temporary release. The Council of Europe's *White Paper on Prison Overcrowding* states that "if a given prison is filled at more than 90% of its capacity this is an indicator of imminent prison overcrowding. This is a high-risk situation, and the authorities should feel concerned and should take measures to avoid further congestion."⁹

The CPT recommends that the Greek authorities take this precept into account when calculating the official prison capacity and the number of places available within the prison estate and when looking at projections for the prison population in the future.

⁷ That is, a rate of imprisonment of 104 per 100,000 inhabitants, a figure which is close to the European median value according to the Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics – [SPACE I 2020](#), Table A.

⁸ Article 3 of Law 4760/2020 lays down the criteria of eligibility for transfer to a rural prison and exclude, *inter alia*, persons who have committed a disciplinary offence and who have not qualified for a leave permit.

⁹ See Section 20 of the [White Paper on Prison Overcrowding](#) – CM(2016)121-add3, 23 August 2016.

16. In the report on its 2019 visit, the CPT referred to the study prepared by the Council of Europe on *Reducing Prison Overcrowding in Greece*,¹⁰ based on discussions with the Ministry of Justice in December 2018, which set out the root causes driving prison overcrowding.

In a nutshell, the report noted that a breakdown of the sentences imposed by Greek courts on persons in prison illustrated that, compared to other European countries, sentences are particularly long while at the same time the rates of release are below the European median. The report also noted that total crime rates within Greece have decreased significantly over the past decade and are lower than the European median.

The report concluded that “the combination of relatively low crime rates and very long prison sentences clearly indicates that Greek prison overcrowding is in the first place the result of a very severe penal policy and legislation”. The subsequent analysis highlighted how more punitive legislation and practice was introduced for certain crimes (e.g. drug offences) in recent years, resulting in penal inflation and prison overcrowding.

In March 2021, an updated report on *Reducing Prison Overcrowding in Greece* concluded that the revision of the Criminal Code in 2019 appeared to take into account Council of Europe standards in moderating the sentences of certain crimes. It also highlighted that the success of the reforms will be determined by an effective implementation of the community sanctions and measures by a well-staffed and well-resourced Probation Service. At the same time, the updated report again pointed to the high number of persons sentenced to long terms of imprisonment as a factor driving overcrowding. For example, as of January 2021, 84% (6,856) of sentenced prisoners were serving long-term prison sentences of over five years in Greece compared to a Council of Europe median of 35%.¹¹ The amendments to the Criminal Code adopted in November 2021 will lead to further increased sentences for a number of crimes.¹²

17. The CPT recommends that the Greek authorities urgently and vigorously pursue efforts to combat prison overcrowding, by investing and placing further emphasis on non-custodial measures in the period before the imposition of a sentence, increasing the use of alternatives to imprisonment and adopting measures to facilitate the reintegration into society of persons deprived of their liberty. The CPT would like to be informed of the impact of the criminal legislation reforms since June 2019 on sentencing policies and on the use of non-custodial measures.

Moreover, the CPT reiterates that it is essential that the adoption of non-custodial measures in law be accompanied by providing judges and prosecutors with the necessary education, and by ensuring that the appropriate infrastructure is in place.

¹⁰ See Report on [Reducing Prison Overcrowding in Greece](#) prepared by the Action Against Crime Department, Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law, Council of Europe, March 2019.

¹¹ See Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics – [SPACE I 2020](#), pages 51, 53 and 55 (as updated in April 2021).

¹² Law 4855/2021 notably extended the imposition of mandatory life sentences for several serious crimes. It has also further restricted the eligibility criteria for conditional release and restricted alternatives to imprisonment or non-custodial sanctions and measures (such as suspended sentences or electronic monitoring).

18. In the report on its 2019 visit, the CPT stated that the first Strategic Plan for the Penitentiary System (2018-2020) was a step in the right direction. Nevertheless, it advocated that there was a need to flesh it out further and to include both specific timelines and human and financial resources required for implementing the various objectives, notably for improving conditions of detention and the modernisation of infrastructure; human resources development (including initial and on-going training programmes¹³ and welfare of staff); reducing overcrowding; ensuring the security of staff and inmates; preparing for reintegration of prisoners into the community; and improving health and social care services. For each of these objectives there needs to be specific actions and yearly benchmarks to enable a measurable assessment of the outcomes.

Further, it is important to provide financial projections over a medium to long-term period (five- to ten-years) showing how the planned provision will be met and implemented within the resource levels available. Extra-budget financing requirements from European institutions and partners should be clearly laid out and promoted.

Moreover, the role and input of other actors within Greece such as the Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Health need to be more clearly elucidated. Co-ordination and co-operation among these actors should be enhanced. Further, if prisons are to move beyond warehousing inmates, much more needs to be done to develop offender management programmes and vocational training courses which will assist prisoners in preparing for their return into the community. This also implies developing a properly resourced and functioning probation service which can support prisoners in their transition from prison to the community, notably in respect of accommodation and employment. Above all, there remains a critical need to invest much more resources in recruiting and training prison officers.

These comments remain pertinent as the follow-up Strategic Plan for 2021-2023, adopted by the Ministry of Citizens Protection in January 2022, does not fully address these issues and appears to be aspirational rather than a detailed roadmap with benchmarks and clarity about what will be achieved and with what means.

19. The CPT recommends that the Greek authorities adopt a revised Strategic Plan, which includes a detailed implementation schedule, with a view to setting out a more detailed plan for the years ahead, taking into account the above remarks. In particular, the following areas should be covered and addressed:

- **the mission of prisons and the values according to which prison staff will work;**
- **the size of the prison estate and the range of the prison types that it will include;**
- **the range of activities, including education and vocational training, that will be provided and the amount of access that detained persons, including those on remand, will have to them;**
- **the introduction of specific offender management programmes to assist prisoners in preparing for their return into the community;**
- **the human resource requirement needed to run the prisons professionally (notably, prison officers), giving competence profiles for the key roles;**

¹³ See also European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC), [Guidelines regarding Recruitment, Selection, Education, Training and Professional Development of Prison and Probation Staff](#), 25 April 2019.

- **the role and input of the Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs in education-related activities and vocational training;**
- **the role and input of the Ministry of Health in the provision of health care, including as regards the staffing of health-care services in prisons;**
- **financial projections over a five year period, showing how the planned provision will be met and implemented within the resource levels available, as well as extra-budgetary funding requirements.**

The CPT would like to receive a copy of the revised Strategic Plan, including detailed information on the financing earmarked, with a breakdown for its various elements within a period of six months.

b. prisons visited

20. In the course of the 2021 visit, the CPT's delegation carried out follow-up visits to Korydallos Men's Prison, Korydallos Special Health Centre for Prisoners and Nigrita Prison. It also visited Corfu Prison for the first time since 1997 and Chios Prison for the first time since 2009 and carried out a first-time visit to Kos Prison. In addition, the delegation paid a targeted visit to Korydallos Psychiatric Hospital for Prisoners.

Chios Prison, built in the 1960s, is located on the island of Chios near the west coast of Turkey. At the time of the visit, the prison had an official capacity of 82 places and was accommodating 103 adult men (i.e. an occupancy rate of 125%) in nine dormitories; there were also two cells for disciplinary or separation purposes.¹⁴ Some 75% of the prisoners were foreign nationals and 91 persons were sentenced, including five to life imprisonment.

Corfu Prison, located in the town of Corfu, is an old, cramped facility dating back to 1834 for adult men. The prison consists of a small circular three-storey building in the centre, which is used for educational activities, administration and the prisoners' canteen, and 10 two-storey wings which radiate out from the centre.¹⁵ There are nine accommodation wings (A to I), each with 15 cells, and the tenth wing (K) with nine cells for disciplinary or separation purposes. Each wing has access to an outdoor exercise yard. At the time of the CPT's visit, the prison was accommodating 237 persons for an official capacity of 138 places (i.e. an occupancy rate of 171%). The vast majority of men (227) had been sentenced to more than five years of imprisonment and had been transferred to Corfu to serve their sentences. The remaining seven men were detained on remand. Corfu Prison had also been designated as the establishment to accommodate transgender women and, at the time of the visit, held three transgender women on K Wing.

¹⁴ At the time of the CPT's previous visit to this establishment in 2009, it had been holding 157 persons.

¹⁵ The offices of the Director and of the administrative personnel are located in a separate building outside of the prison. Upon entering the prison, there is an 11th wing of seven cells which had apparently been used to accommodate political prisoners in the 1970s but which was supposedly no longer used.

Korydallos Men's Prison was most recently described in the report on the 2019 visit and there have been no changes since.¹⁶ At the time of the 2021 visit, it was accommodating 1,885 persons for an official capacity of 1,200 places (i.e. an occupancy rate of 154%), which represents an increase of some 200 persons since April 2019. Most persons were held on remand (61%) and there were 1,131 foreign nationals (the largest numbers being from Albania, Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Georgia, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan).

Korydallos Special Health Centre, located in a three-storey building adjacent to the prison, was accommodating 128 patients for an official capacity of 253 beds.

Kos Prison is a small prison located on the island of Kos, around 4 km from the west coast of Bodrum in Turkey. At the time of the visit, the prison had an official capacity of 56 places and was accommodating 97 adult men (i.e. an occupancy rate of 173%) in three dormitories and five small cells. Some 60% of the of the inmates were foreign nationals and 52 were sentenced, including one to life imprisonment.

Nigrita Prison, located remotely from the city of Serres in the north of Greece, was described in the report on the CPT's 2019 visit.¹⁷ At the time of the 2021 visit, all five wings, each consisting of two separate accommodation units, were operational and the prison was accommodating 714 male adult prisoners for an official capacity of 600 places (i.e. an occupancy rate of 119%). There were 487 foreign nationals (68% of the population) comprising 37 nationalities.

c. Covid-19

21. The CPT acknowledges the steps taken by the Greek authorities to reduce the risk of propagation of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in prisons. At the time of the visit, all prisoners entering a prison had to take a rapid antigen test. Thereafter, if the persons were unvaccinated, they had to quarantine for 7 days (Chios Prison), 10 days (Nigrita Prison) or 14 days (Korydallos Men's Prison) in a small unit, with additional negative rapid antigen tests required before the persons would be released from quarantine and allocated to an ordinary accommodation wing. While at Chios Prison, there had been no known positive cases of Covid-19, at Korydallos Men's Prison, 90 prisoners were positive at the time of the visit on 23 November 2021. Further, at this latter prison all persons attending the school or working in the kitchen were tested twice a week, and during the weekend prior to the delegation's visit, all prisoners in the facility had been tested.

As regards vaccination, a Ministerial Order made vaccination for staff mandatory although staff could still come to work if they presented an authorised rapid antigen or PCR test twice a week. As for prisoners, they were offered the possibility to be vaccinated. As of 17 December 2021, 61% of prisoners and 64% of staff had been vaccinated.

The CPT would like to receive updated information on the measures being taken to contain and mitigate the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in Greek prisons, and notably at Korydallos Men's Prison. Further, the CPT encourages the Greek authorities to pursue their efforts to offer all prisoners and staff the possibility to be vaccinated.

¹⁶ See [CPT/Inf \(2020\) 15](#), paragraph 33.

¹⁷ See [CPT/Inf \(2020\) 15](#), paragraphs 28 and 30.

22. The challenge of managing the pandemic is rendered more complex by the extreme overcrowding in many establishments which provides a breeding ground for the transmission of the virus. This is particularly the case in overcrowded and unhygienic dormitory-style accommodation. For example, the Covid-19 situation encountered in the small Kos Prison was particularly problematic, despite the marked efforts of the Director and his staff, as persons recently tested positive for the virus had to continue to be placed with other prisoners in large dormitories due to a lack of alternative accommodation to isolate them.

At the time of the visit, the prison was effectively in a state of lockdown with 24 active cases of Covid-19 among the 97 prisoners, with positive cases having been detected in all three dormitories where detained persons had less than 3m² of personal living space in very poor material conditions, but only three cells for up to seven persons were available for quarantine purposes. Consequently, at the end of the visit, the delegation invoked Article 8, paragraph 5, of the Convention and requested that immediate action be taken at Kos Prison to ensure that persons who are tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus are held separately from other prisoners to reduce the risk of transmission and subsequent illness. This required reducing the numbers held in Kos Prison. More generally, it is necessary to drastically reduce the overall prison population by resolutely combating prison overcrowding and progressively phasing out dormitory-style accommodation to avoid similar situations in which such intervention is rendered necessary, in times of a public health crisis.

By communication of 7 January 2022, the Greek authorities informed the CPT that immediate measures had been taken to transfer 33 persons from Kos to other prison establishments thus reducing the numbers held in the prison to 64 (i.e. 114% of its official capacity) and enabling the establishment to operate “normally”. **The CPT welcomes the rapid action taken. As regards prison overcrowding, reference is made to the comments and recommendations made in paragraphs 13-17 above.**

2. Ill-treatment

a. ill-treatment of prisoners by staff

23. In the course of the visit, most detained persons met by the CPT’s delegation stated that custodial staff behaved correctly towards them. At the same time, prisoners stated that they had little contact with custodial officers as they were quasi absent from the wings. The one exception was at Corfu Prison, where the delegation received a few allegations of physical ill-treatment of prisoners (punches and kicks) by certain prison officers which apparently took place either in the cells or in the reportedly disused wing at the entrance of the establishment and was perceived as being inflicted as a punishment for challenging orders given by prison officers.

Further, at Corfu Prison, concordant allegations were also received that a few challenging prisoners were placed overnight in certain of the cells on the reportedly disused wing as an informal punishment. A visit to these cells showed that, in fact, they had been recently used with dirty blankets and a foam mattress lying on the floor as well as a couple of empty water bottles and faecal matter on the toilet of one cell. The cells were totally unacceptable for holding persons even for short periods (dirty, damp, dilapidated, no running water, no access to natural light, crumbling walls and limited ventilation). In its current state, this wing must be closed permanently.

The CPT recommends that the Greek authorities reiterate to custodial staff at Corfu Prison the clear message that physical ill-treatment of prisoners is wholly unacceptable and will be sanctioned accordingly. The management at Corfu Prison should demonstrate increased vigilance in this area, by ensuring the regular presence of prison managers (including the director) in the detention areas, their direct contact with prisoners, the investigation of complaints made by prisoners, and improved prison staff training.

The CPT also recommends that the cells in the wing at the entrance of Corfu Prison be closed permanently. Further, all suspected violations of the prison rules should be dealt with in accordance with the prescribed disciplinary procedures.

b. inter-prisoner violence

24. The CPT's delegation found that the high levels of inter-prisoner physical violence evident in all the prisons visited in 2019 had reduced, with fewer instances of severe injuries resulting in hospitalisation. Further, at Korydallos Men's Prison, there was no longer a pervasive climate of fear present on the wings. The Greek authorities explained that improving security within the prison system was a priority, with better controls of all goods and persons entering prison establishments and targeted transfers from one prison to another of violent prisoners or of those threatening the good order of a prison. If properly and fairly applied these measures represent a start in tackling the phenomenon of inter-prisoner violence.

However, the delegation found once again that much of the inter-prisoner violence and intimidation remains unreported as prisoners do not believe that staff can help them. Indeed, stronger prisoners or groups of prisoners run the wings in each of the larger prisons visited laying down the rules and often deciding which prisoners can stay or be admitted to their wing. In this regard, the underlying dynamic within prisons has not changed since 2019 and it is to be seen to what extent the restrictions imposed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic have contributed to the reduction in severe instances of inter-prisoner violence.

In sum, most Greek prisons still do not provide a safe and secure environment for prisoners which is directly linked to the continued shortages of staff, resulting in control being ceded to groups of particular prisoners, often formed along ethnic lines, within the accommodation wings. The number of prison officers must be increased substantially, and a dynamic security approach be introduced, within prisons.

25. As mentioned above, the situation at Korydallos Men's Prison had improved and it was positive that prisoners were now locked in their cells between 13h00 and 14h30, in accordance with the official regime rules. Nevertheless, the situation remains combustible and dangerous for both prisoners and staff. At the time of the visit, the four main wings (A-D), each with 117 cells on three floors and holding between 228 and 449 prisoners, were still staffed only by a single prison officer. The situation was no better on Wing E which was holding 340 persons, primarily in dormitories. The role of the custodial officer on this wing was to act as a "turnkey", spending much of his time locking and unlocking the wing gates for the constant flow of individual prisoners attending or returning from services in other parts of the establishment.

The CPT's delegation again received multiple allegations of intimidation and violence perpetrated by other prisoners and many prisoners continued to possess make-shift knives for self-protection. Complaining was still considered unthinkable, according to the persons met, as victims not only expected that no action would be taken officially but also feared reprisals from other prisoners.

At lock-up, there were still only two officers responsible for transferring the hundreds of prisoners from the yard and corridors into their cells; the sense of vulnerability and the fear of being overwhelmed at any moment continued to place a great strain on these officers. The CPT's delegation observed once again that the prison only "functioned" due to the fact that the officers were assisted by certain prisoners who were essentially carrying out prison officer duties, such as receiving all requests for exiting a wing and recording which prisoners left and entered the wing.

In such conditions, it is difficult to see how one or even two prison officers can be expected to know what is happening within a wing, let alone keep control. Clearly, such an approach to the management of prisons forsakes their duty of care to all prisoners thus undermining their legitimacy and opening the door to corrupt practices.

26. As set out in the CPT's report on its 2019 visit, while the situation at Korydallos Men's Prison is more extreme, it is not unique. The 2021 follow-up visit to Nigrita Prison found there was still a clear hierarchy of stronger groups of prisoners within the wings, and that prisoners who did not follow the internal order would be intimidated or even beaten or chased off the wing. Indeed, the prison management explained that the Wing that caused them the most trouble was the one where there was no clearly defined hierarchy among the prisoners to maintain order.

By contrast, at the small prisons of Chios and Kos, the delegation found that there was less inter-prisoner violence and intimidation and that most instances of severe violence would result in the persons concerned being transferred off the island to another prison. Nevertheless, at Chios Prison, the delegation found that violent incidents were not always recorded, or the perpetrators disciplined. At Corfu Prison, the allocation policy was based upon nationality and language and each wing appeared to have a hierarchy of prisoners who kept order and there were few instances of inter-prisoner violence. Supervision of prisoners was almost entirely through CCTV with prison officers only entering the wings four times a day to unlock and lock the cells.

27. Inter-prisoner violence, to a large extent, continues to be fuelled by a number of factors, notably, chronic understaffing, overcrowding, the influence exercised by stronger groups of prisoners, poor material conditions, a lack of activities and a high prevalence of illicit drug use. At the same time, there is an absence of a proper risks and needs assessment of prisoners upon admission and of any categorisation of prisoners based upon such an assessment. The Committee must reiterate that the duty of care which is owed by the State to those in their charge includes the responsibility to protect them from other inmates who wish to cause them harm.

Addressing the phenomenon of inter-prisoner violence first and foremost requires that staffing levels be radically increased. Moreover, the existing skills and expertise of prison staff should be expanded by providing further specialised training. Prison staff must be alert to signs of trouble and both resolved and properly trained to intervene. The existence of positive relations between staff and prisoners, based on the notions of dynamic security and care, is a decisive factor in this context; this will depend to a large extent on staff possessing appropriate interpersonal communication skills. It is also obvious that an effective strategy to tackle inter-prisoner violence and intimidation should seek to ensure that prison staff are placed in a position to exercise their authority in an appropriate manner.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Greek authorities devise an effective national strategy concerning the prevention of inter-prisoner violence and intimidation, in the light of the above comments. Such a strategy must include a risk and needs assessment and an appropriate allocation based on this assessment of every prisoner entering the prison system, the proper control of the wings by prison staff, the separation of stronger groups of prisoners from other prisoners, a reduction in overcrowding and the provision of activities. There must also be an improvement in the proper recording and reporting and the thorough investigation of suspected cases of violence and intimidation and, where appropriate, the adoption of suitable sanctions or other measures, as well as the development of effective violence reduction interventions. Above all, as a prerequisite, any strategy will require a significant increase in the number of prison officers, over and above those currently being recruited (see also paragraph 52).

3. Conditions of detention

a. material conditions

28. Once again, the CPT's delegation found that the provisions of the 1999 Greek Penitentiary Code¹⁸ are simply no longer adhered to with regard to standards of accommodation and norms for a safe environment, including health care and hygiene, to be provided to each prisoner. In far too many instances, persons in prison are left to fester in overcrowded and totally inappropriate conditions which may be considered as amounting to inhuman and degrading treatment. There has been little if any progress made in improving the living conditions for prisoners in Greece in the 11 years since the CPT issued a public statement on the poor state of Greek prisons.

29. At *Corfu Prison*, each of the nine accommodation wings consisted of six cells on the ground floor and nine cells on the first floor accessed via a narrow corridor (0.8m wide) which led from a small communal area, equipped with a table and chairs, a fridge and a hotplate. The cells (measuring less than 6m²) mostly accommodated two persons and were equipped with a bunk bed, a table and chair, a television, a fan and a radiator. The sanitary annexe, accessed via a curtained partition, ran alongside the cell (0,8m x 3,3m). Conditions were more cramped in cell no. 15 in each wing as the toilet and sink was located within the cell, separated only by a plastic sheet from the bed, and these cells also often accommodated two persons. Cells of 6m², excluding the sanitary annex, should only accommodate one person.

¹⁸ Law 2776/1999 (Government Gazette A 291).

Further, many of the cells were dilapidated and in need of renovation, and the sanitary annexes often contained blistering and mouldy walls and broken plumbing. The prison management informed the delegation of a rolling programme to refurbish (i.e. paint) each wing but the delegation found that even the recently refurbished Wing I could not be considered as offering decent living conditions. The wings were airy and cold and the radiators in the cells did not function. In addition, to the cold, many prisoners complained about the claustrophobic conditions, the lack of hot water and the damp in the cells. Further, water pressure was too low on the upper floors for the water to flow properly and the quality of the water was poor, requiring inmates to purchase bottled water.

In view of the aged and dilapidated buildings and the lack of space on the wings, **the CPT recommends that, at Corfu Prison, the Greek authorities take urgent steps to reduce the occupancy levels to no more than one person per cell. Further, a programme of refurbishments, including as regards the operation of the radiators, fixing the plumbing and protecting the walls from condensation, should be carried out in each wing, and detained persons should have access to clean drinking water free of charge.**

30. At *Chios Prison*, the accommodation consisted of nine dormitories (the last of which was in the final stages of being refurbished and was not in use). At the time of the visit, only two dormitories offered slightly more than 4m² per person while three dormitories offered less than 3m².¹⁹ In addition to overcrowding, material conditions and hygiene in the dormitories were generally poor (windowpanes missing or broken, no heating, insufficient hygiene and cleaning products and the presence of cockroaches, lice and bed bugs). Further, only some detained persons had access to lockable space.

At *Kos Prison*, the information gathered showed that each of the three dormitories was severely overcrowded,²⁰ with persons detained in Dormitory 1 being offered less than 2m² of living space each and those held in Dormitories 2 and 3 being provided with less than 3m² each. The delegation also noted that in Dormitories 1 and 3 two persons had to sleep on mattresses placed on top of the ceiling of the sanitary annexe and several others in Dormitory 1 slept on mattresses on the floor. When the prison was not locked down, prisoners reportedly had access to a large exercise yard with a football pitch, basketball court and fitness equipment and could eat their meals communally in the dining room.

The CPT calls upon the Greek authorities to reduce the occupancy levels in the dormitories at both Chios and Kos Prisons to ensure that each prisoner is provided with at least 4m² of living space, excluding the sanitary annexe. The unoccupied bunk beds in certain of the dormitories should be removed. Steps should also be taken to maintain the dormitories in a decent state of repair and to ensure that they are regularly disinfected and that prisoners are provided with sufficient cleaning materials to keep themselves and their cells clean.

¹⁹ Dormitory 1 measured 48m², was equipped with 11 sets of bunk beds and held 16 persons; Dormitory 5 measured 42m², was equipped with 9 sets of bunk beds and held 16 persons; and Dormitory 7 measured 42m², was equipped with 9 sets of bunk beds and held 17 persons.

²⁰ Each of the three dormitories was equipped with 15 sets of bunk beds: Dormitory 1 held 36 persons in 66m², Dormitory 2 held 26 persons in 70m² and Dormitory 3 held 27 persons in 66m².

31. At *Korydallos Men's Prison*, each of the four main wings (A, B, C, D) contained 117 operational cells (9.5m² including the sanitary facilities) spread across three floors. These wings should accommodate no more than 234 persons, on the basis of two persons per cell. However, with the exception of A Wing (234 persons), the other wings were grossly overcrowded with many cells accommodating three or four persons with some holding even more.

Wing B was, once again, the most overcrowded with 449 prisoners (i.e. most cells offered only 2-3m² of living space per person and some cells even less as they held as many as five prisoners). Persons were accommodated in generally very poor conditions: mattresses and blankets were filthy, cells were infested with cockroaches and bed bugs, several cells had mould on the walls and ceilings. There was a general lack of hygiene accentuated by the fact that many of the prisoners had no money and no family to support them, and no hygiene and cleaning products were issued by the prison.

In Wing C, which was holding 413 prisoners, there was a stark contrast between the state of the cells on the first floor and those on the other two floors. The first-floor cells were clean, in a good state of repair and properly equipped. The cells on the ground and second floors, mostly occupied by persons from the Roma community, were holding as many as six persons in some cells (i.e. 1.5m² of living space each) and their appalling conditions resembled those described above in respect of Wing B. The conditions in Wings A and D were generally better aided by the fact that nearly all the prisoners had relatives to assist them. Nevertheless, D Wing was severely overcrowded²¹ and even on these wings, hygiene was a problem and, as on the other wings, many of the showers did not work and were not screened. Further, in none of the cells on the four wings was there a call bell to alert staff in case of need and notably during hours of lock-up.

The fifth large accommodation unit, Wing E, was also severely overcrowded accommodating 390 persons in multiple-occupancy dormitories many of which offered less than 3m² of living space per person and a few even less than 2m².²² They were also in a state of advanced dilapidation (mould present on the ceilings, broken windows, exposed wiring, broken tiles and flooring of the sanitary annexe, only one of four toilets functioning). Further, there was no functioning artificial lighting in the basement rooms 8 and 9, no piped hot water to any of the rooms in the basement and there was a lack of hygiene and cleaning products throughout the wing.

Many prisoners acknowledged that certain provisions were distributed by the prison administration, but they described the access to clothes, cleaning materials and other necessities as "totally random". Indeed, it appeared that for a number of foreign nationals clothes and other personal belongings were only acquired when other prisoners left the establishment.

Throughout the prison, the electrical wiring was incredibly dangerous as additional appliances such as fridges, heaters and makeshift showers were attached haphazardly and in an inexpert manner to the grid. Further, the delegation observed that as prisoners invested their own money into the upkeep of their cells so the cells became de facto their property which resulted in the occupants deciding on who should be permitted to share their cell if a space became available.

²¹ It held 316 persons, two-thirds of whom were of Albanian origin.

²² For example, Dormitory 8 held 35 men in 67m² (13 sets of bunk beds and nine persons sleeping on mattresses on the floor) while Dormitory 9 measured 35m² and was accommodating 23 persons (seven sets of bunk beds and eight persons sleeping on mattresses on the floor and one person did not even have a mattress). Cells on the ground and first floors of Wing E provided similar cramped accommodation, and on the second floor, Dormitory 1 held 22 persons in 40m² (i.e., also less than 2m² of living space per prisoner).

The CPT once again calls upon the Greek authorities to take urgent steps to significantly reduce the extreme overcrowding at Korydallos Men's Prison. A phased programme should be devised to reduce the occupancy levels from the current three or more prisoners per 9.5m² cell to no more than two per cell and to reduce the occupancy levels in the dormitories to ensure that each prisoner is provided with at least 4m² of living space, excluding the sanitary annexe. Further, it is essential that the Greek authorities ensure that all prisoners are provided with a minimum standard of basic living conditions in order to meet the decency threshold as set out in the CPT's 30th General Report of May 2021.²³ To this end, steps should also be taken to maintain the cells and dormitories in a decent state of repair and to ensure that they are regularly disinfected and that prisoners are provided with sufficient cleaning materials to keep themselves and their cells clean. Finally, action must be taken to ensure that persons from the Roma community and foreign nationals in Korydallos Men's Prison are not discriminated against.

32. At *Nigrita Prison*, each of the 10 two-storey accommodation units contained 20 cells, with a capacity to accommodate a maximum of 60 prisoners. Each cell measured 13.5m², including the fully partitioned sanitary annexe (toilet, washbasin and shower), and was equipped with one set of bunk beds and a single bed, a table and chairs and a built-in storage area. Access to natural light and ventilation were generally adequate. On each floor there was a common area initially equipped with a hotplate, fridge and several washbasins. On the ground floor of each unit there was a common area as well as a small coffee shop. A large concrete outdoor exercise yard, equipped with several sinks, exercise bars and basketball hoops, was attached to each accommodation unit.

As was the case in 2019, the living conditions varied from wing to wing depending on whether the prisoners had access to funds outside of the establishment. For example, conditions in Wings B2 and C2 were again noticeable poor, with a number of cells requiring refurbishment (broken windows, mould in the sanitary annexes, toilet flushes not working, missing furniture and mattresses worn and infested with bed bugs). The common areas of these wings were dilapidated and generally dirty. Hygiene on these wings was poor. Both of these units were persistently overcrowded, each accommodating 75 persons at the time of the visit with many cells holding four or even five persons (with one of two persons sleeping on mattresses on the floor). A similar state of affairs was evident in Wing E1 which was accommodating 73 persons. A constant complaint made by prisoners in these wings was that there was an insufficient supply of hygiene and cleaning products provided by the prison authorities, as well as a lack of access to shoes and clothing.

In the light of the preceding remarks, **the CPT reiterates its recommendation that no ordinary accommodation cell in Nigrita Prison accommodate more than three persons so as to ensure that each prisoner is provided with at least 4m² of living space, excluding the sanitary annexe, and that all prisoners must have their own bed to sleep on. A rolling programme of maintenance of the wings should be put in place, including regular disinfection of accommodation areas, and prisoners must be provided with appropriate quantities of hygiene and cleaning products.**

²³ See the section on "A decency threshold for prisons – criteria for assessing conditions of detention" in the 30th General Report of the CPT: [CPT/Inf \(2021\) 5](#), paragraphs 63 to 81.

33. In all the prisons visited, except Kos Prison which had its own organic vegetable garden, the delegation received complaints about the food in particular as regards the quality (lack of nutrition and fresh fruit) and monotony of meals served. Many prisoners supplemented the food provided by cooking their own meals, if they had the necessary resources. However, many prisoners had no additional financial resources and were not even provided with cutlery and plates with which to eat their meals. At Korydallos Men's Prison, the situation was particularly desperate given that the kitchen was producing many more meals than it was officially equipped to provide. The delegation observed a large bucket of food being delivered to each dormitory of the basement of E Wing where prisoners had to divide it up using plastic containers and then use their bread as a spoon to feed themselves. In C Wing, where a similar situation prevailed many persons complained that there was insufficient food for everyone. Further, the basic hygiene norms for the delivery and distribution of food to all the wings were not respected.

The CPT recommends that the Greek authorities ensure that all prisoners are able to eat their meals in dignity through being provided with cutlery and plates, and that hygiene norms are improved regarding the delivery and distribution of meals, notably at Korydallos Men's Prison. Additional efforts should also be made to ensure that a wide variety of foods should be made available in the right proportions to enable prisoners to maintain an adequately nutritious, sufficiently calorific and well-balanced diet, as well as access to plenty of fluids.²⁴ Those with insufficient incomes should receive additional financial assistance in prison to enable them to purchase basic items that are not provided free of charge by the prison authorities.

b. regime

34. The legal basis governing the general daily routine in Greek prisons was described in the report on the CPT's 2005 visit²⁵ and has remained largely unchanged. In spite of legal provisions regulating the entitlement of all prisoners to educational activities and vocational training, work, organised physical exercise, cultural and recreational activities,²⁶ the activities offered remain wholly insufficient for the number of prisoners.

The hours during which mainstream accommodation cells are unlocked and prisoners can move around freely in the wings (and in the exercise yards) are essentially the same across all Greek prisons, with minor local variations. These times are usually between 8h00 and 13h00 and again between 15h00 and 20h30 (21h00 in summer), with access to the yards until half an hour before sunset. As the Committee has stated in the past, the amount of out-of-cell time and access to daily outdoor exercise is good.

35. The approach to work was described in detail in the report on the 2009 visit.²⁷ It remains in essence a remission scheme (for example, a cleaner would obtain 23 days remission for every full month worked while a kitchen worker would obtain one day of remission for every one day worked) rather than a means by which to engage prisoners in a purposeful activity or to form part of a personal development plan or preparation for release. It is also a primary incentive for good behaviour.

²⁴ See also Rule 22. 2 of the [European Prison Rules](#), as revised in 2020.

²⁵ See [CPT/Inf \(2006\) 41](#), paragraph 93.

²⁶ See Articles 34 to 50 of the Penitentiary Code.

²⁷ See [CPT/Inf \(2010\) 33](#), paragraph 105 and 106.

In the course of the visit, the CPT's delegation was informed by prison management of the rule that prisoners who are prescribed psychotropic medication are deemed unfit to work. Such a rule has no medical justification and not only deprives certain prisoners from working to gain remission from their sentences but, as the delegation learned, may also lead them to stop taking their medication with negative implications for their well-being as well as posing the prison management further challenges. **The CPT recommends that such a rule be rescinded.**

36. In all the prisons visited, the management attempted to create as many "jobs" as possible. It should be noted that most of the jobs entailed only a few hours of work per day. Thus, at Nigrita Prison, there were 365 workers (for a population of 719) including 220 cleaners, 35 kitchen staff, 39 cafe and supermarket workers, 9 assistant nurses, 8 barbers, 8 painters, 13 messengers and some prisoners working on maintaining the establishment. A similar situation was observed in the other prisons²⁸ visited although at Korydallos Men's Prison the proportion of prisoners offered jobs was far lower.²⁹ Apart from specialist jobs (e.g. electrician, plumber), work was allocated on a 'first come first serve' basis without any assessment of a prisoner's needs.

Prisoners would usually be granted work for three months at a time after which they would have to wait approximately six months or more before they were offered another job. Inmates who had received a disciplinary sanction were not eligible for work for a certain period (usually six months to one year). Only a few jobs (kitchen, skilled prison maintenance work) could be carried out for longer periods.

37. The promotion of "Second chance schools" in some of the prisons visited represents a positive development for offering prisoners with a school education. At Corfu Prison, 27 persons were enrolled in two classes and attended the school each weekday morning for three hours; given the lack of activities in the prison it was surprising that not all of the 34 available places were filled. At Korydallos Men's Prison, 111 persons were enrolled in primary and secondary school and 12 in university courses, with another 19 persons undertaking a Greek language course. However, there were more than 650 applications for primary and secondary school but due to the limited space and a lack of teachers, numbers were severely restricted.³⁰ At Nigrita Prison, 97 persons from 18 different nationalities were attending the school three hours every morning from Monday to Friday, with the courses provided by five full-time State teachers and three part-time teachers funded by extra-budgetary resources. Every day of attendance at school counts as two days served of the prison sentence.

²⁸ At Corfu Prison, 110 out of 237 prisoners had a job (notably, 81 cleaners, 10 kitchen staff, 6 maintenance, 7 storekeepers); Chios Prison, 90 workplaces had been created but at the time of the visit only 55 out of 103 prisoners had a job while at Kos Prison, all 80 workplaces for 97 detained persons were filled (notably 26 cleaners, 9 kitchen staff and 20 persons involved in maintenance or working as an electrician, plumber, painter etc.) which was inventive for a prison with an official capacity of 56 persons.

²⁹ At Korydallos Men's Prison, the prison had created 624 work positions but at the time of the visit only 405 positions were filled (notably, 160 cleaners, 19 office worker assistants, 33 kitchen staff, 25 assistant nurses, 25 maintenance workers, 12 painters, 15 electricians and 22 canteen workers) for a population of 1,885 prisoners.

³⁰ For example, the Arts School, in which 80 persons were enrolled, was closed as there was no teacher.

38. In all the prisons visited, there was a clear lack of any organised recreational, sports/gym or vocational activities on offer. Sentenced prisoners were not provided with a sentence plan to map out their time in prison into which they could also input with a view to preparing for their future release back into the community. For life-sentenced prisoners, in particular, there was little to structure their time. Further, there were no offender management programmes available.

39. Given that most of the work offered was largely notional (e.g. cleaning for an hour or two a day), for the vast majority of inmates in all the prisons visited, there was nothing with which to occupy their days other than watching television, hanging around the wing corridors and walking in the yards.

The authorities must take proactive measures if they want to avert the prison system from becoming an even greater breeding ground for criminality. As prisoners approach release back into the community, they need to be prepared for that step, to possess a degree of self-worth and to feel capable of leading a life away from crime. A regime which provides for varied activities is a vital component in the preparation for release, as well as being beneficial for the running of the prison.

The CPT calls upon the Greek authorities to improve substantially the programmes of purposeful activities on offer to inmates (both remand and sentenced), including educational, vocational, sports and recreational opportunities, in all prisons. It also reiterates its recommendation that the elaboration of sentence plans for prisoners with their input be introduced; consideration might be given to starting with life-sentenced prisoners.

c. transgender prisoners

40. *Corfu Prison* – a male adult prison – was the designated establishment for accommodating transgender women who were either on remand or sentenced to a term of imprisonment. The criterion adopted by the Greek authorities for whether a person was considered as transgender appeared to be one of self-declaration. However, it should be noted that there were no specific policies in place for the management or care of the transgender women.

The CPT considers that transgender persons should either be accommodated in the prison section corresponding to their gender identity or, if exceptionally necessary for security or other reasons, in a separate section which will best ensure their safety. If accommodated in a separate section, they should be offered activities and association time with the other prisoners of the gender with which they self-identify.

At the time of the visit, there were three transgender women being held in *Corfu Prison*. There were no female custodial officers employed by the establishment which meant that the daily oversight of the women was carried out only by male custodial officers. This is not appropriate as such units should have a preponderance of staff from the same gender as the prisoners.

The CPT recommends that the Greek authorities draw up a clear policy and guidelines for the management of transgender prisoners which guarantees that their specific needs are catered to, in line with the above-mentioned principles.

41. The transgender unit was located in K Wing, which consisted of nine cells along a narrow corridor (0.6m wide). The first three cells comprised the disciplinary unit with a metal grille gate separating them from the remaining six cells used for accommodating the three transgender women and one male prisoner.³¹

The women were effectively left to their own devices every day within the confines of their cells, the narrow corridor, a small kitchen/utility room and the outdoor exercise yard. They were not offered any activities. The cells measured a mere 6m², including an unpartitioned floor level toilet, and were equipped with a bunk bed, a small table and chair and a radiator which did not work. The cells were in a dilapidated state.

At the end of the visit, the CPT's delegation requested that the Greek authorities transfer the transgender women to alternative accommodation within one month. By communication of 7 January 2022, the Greek authorities informed the CPT that the three women had been transferred to Korydallos Women's Prison, where a small unit with its own yard had been recently renovated for them. This is to be welcomed.

The CPT would like to be informed about the exact layout of the unit at Korydallos Women's Prison, the activities offered to the women as well as the staffing arrangements. It would also like to be informed whether there is any association between the transgender women and the cisgender women on remand in the rest of the establishment. Further, it would like to be informed of the number of transgender women accommodated in the unit as of 1 June 2022.

42. The women made no complaints of their daily treatment by staff. However, they did explain that they had been subjected to a strip-search upon their admission to the prison which had entailed them removing all their clothes and standing naked while male officers examined whether they were concealing any forbidden item. Such a procedure is totally inappropriate and was perceived as degrading by the women.

The CPT considers that a strip-search is a very invasive and potentially degrading measure and should only occur when absolutely necessary and based on justifiable risk. When carrying out such a search, every reasonable effort should be made to minimise embarrassment and maintain as much as dignity as possible; detained persons who are searched should not normally be required to remove all their clothes at the same time, e.g. a person should be allowed to remove clothing above the waist and get dressed before removing further clothing. In addition, the search should be carried out by a custodial officer of the same gender as the person being searched and, as a rule, a second officer of the same gender should also be present during any strip-search as a protection for detained persons and staff alike.

The CPT recommends that the Greek authorities ensure that all searches of prisoners comply with the above-mentioned requirements.

³¹ See paragraphs 44 and 78. The male prisoner had been located on the wing in the same cell for more than six years to protect him from other prisoners. This person was locked in his cell except during the lunchtime lockdown between 13h00 and 15h00 when he was offered access to the exercise yard.

d. prisoners on protection

43. The CPT recognises that it may, at times, be necessary to remove prisoners from the general prison population and place them in separate accommodation for their own protection. As a rule, such separation should be for as short a period as possible; all appropriate measures should be taken to facilitate the reintegration of the persons into the general prison population, either in the same establishment or in another one. If a prisoner has to be separated for his/her own protection, that decision must be properly reasoned, documented and reviewed at regular intervals. In the course of the visit, the CPT found that most of the decisions taken to place prisoners in separate accommodation for their own protection were still taken on an informal basis, without proper procedures and safeguards in place.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Greek authorities ensure that all decisions to separate prisoners for their own protection be properly reasoned, documented and reviewed at regular intervals.

44. At *Corfu Prison*, the delegation met a prisoner who had been held alone in a cell on K Wing, on the same corridor as the transgender and disciplinary units. The cell (6m²) was dirty and dilapidated (plaster on the walls was blistering and crumbling) and equipped with a bunk bed, table and chair. It contained an unpartitioned floor-level toilet, blocked with a bottle to prevent rats coming out, and a sink. His cell was unlocked between 13h00 and 15h00 each day during which time he usually cleaned the yard and took a shower. He had been accommodated alone in the same cell for six and a half years with no possibilities to associate with other persons. He also received no visits. Due to the crime for which he was sentenced, he was still considered to be at risk of violence from other prisoners. **The CPT recommends that, at Corfu Prison, efforts be made to provide the prisoner concerned with some structured activities and social interaction with other persons.**

45. The living conditions in Special Area C in *Korydallos Men's Prison* were once again³² in an appalling state. The five cells along the back corridor were accommodating 14 prisoners (reportedly accused of sexual offences); each 6m² cell was accommodating two or three persons, with one prisoner sleeping on a bed and the others on mattresses on the floor or sharing the bed. Each cell contained an unpartitioned toilet. The mattresses were dirty and worn, there was no in-cell artificial lighting, mould was present in several cells and hygiene was poor. Cell 9 had water leaking from the ceiling onto the floor. The detained persons spent their time hanging about the corridor or in their cells or in the small enclosed concrete yard. The single shower available for the unit was dilapidated and possessed no artificial lighting and was not always accessible throughout the day. The persons held there were generally in transit for a few weeks or months due to a court case and awaiting transfer to another prison establishment.

In the four cells that could be accessed from the front corridor, the conditions for the seven occupants were similarly poor. Cell 2 accommodated three persons in 6m², with one person sleeping on a mattress on the floor. The cell was dirty and possessed no artificial lighting and there was no access to natural light, and the floor level toilet was filthy and not partitioned. These prisoners were offered no activities and, as they were not supposed to associate with the prisoners on the other corridor, access to the small outdoor yard was apparently not offered every day. Moreover, one of the persons in Cell 2 was disabled and could not walk unaided and yet no measures were put in place to support him.

³² See [CPT/Inf \(2020\) 15](#), paragraph 39.

The CPT calls upon the Greek authorities to take immediate steps to ensure that no more than one prisoner is accommodated in each of the nine 6m² cells in Special Area C at Korydallos Men's Prison and that every prisoner has his own bed. Further, the cells should be properly refurbished and all prisoners in the Special Areas must be offered at least one hour of outdoor exercise every day and access to purposeful activities. The CPT would also like to be informed of the number of persons held in each of the Special Areas of Wings C, D, E and F on 1 June 2022.

46. At *Nigrita Prison*, the two cells near the reception area were used for the accommodation of vulnerable persons. At the time of the visit, one cell accommodated an older prisoner who was bed-ridden with a terminal illness and a second prisoner who had requested to be placed on protection after self-harming. This latter prisoner who was grappling with substance use took on the charge of caring for the older prisoner (feeding him and giving him water). In the adjacent cell was a foreign national from Iraq who spoke neither Greek nor English and was suffering from a long-standing bullet wound to his leg. The two cells were clearly not adapted for stays of more than a day or two as they were equipped only with a bed (no table or chairs) and had no access to hot water and no sockets for television or other appliances. They also had no access to any outdoor yard. In the circumstances, the placement of these prisoners in these two cells was appropriate, at least for a short period, and the prisoners themselves preferred to be located at the reception area rather than on the main wings.

The CPT recommends that the two cells be appropriately furnished if they are to be used for stays of longer than 48 hours and that all persons accommodated in these cells be offered at least one hour of outdoor exercise every day. Further, if these cells are to be used for accommodating vulnerable persons, including prisoners with physical disabilities, they must be adapted and furnished accordingly.

4. Prison staff

47. The dire staffing situation in all the prisons visited was glaring and clearly undermined the functioning of the prison system. Regrettably, no progress has been made by the Greek authorities to remedy the totally inadequate staffing numbers in prisons since the CPT raised this issue explicitly in 2011 public statement on Greece in respect of prisons.

The CPT has repeatedly stressed that an inadequate number of custodial staff renders prisons insecure for both prisoners and staff; in particular, it impedes any efforts to maintain effective control, which often leads to stronger groups of prisoners being able to exercise their powers unchecked over other inmates. The delegation observed in the prisons visited how the inmate population was separated along ethnic/cultural lines and that within each of these specific groups there was a defined hierarchical structure, which all inmates adhering to that group were obliged to follow. It was also evident that prison staff in many instances relied upon the leaders of these groups to maintain order in an establishment.

Furthermore, low staffing levels make it nearly impossible to provide an acceptable regime for prisoners.

48. In line with the CPT's observations during its 2019 visit, at *Nigrita Prison*, a normal day shift had only eight custodial officers, a deputy Chief Guard and the Chief Guard on duty for 719 prisoners accommodated across 20 landings (floors) and the separate disciplinary unit. This is clearly insufficient for the prison to operate efficiently taking into account that officers had to be placed in the control booths of the five operational wings and at least one in the central control office. Officers were needed for escorts to the school, health care and workplaces and for managing new admissions and departures. A single custodial officer sat alone in a sombre booth between the two units of a wing, supervising more than 130 prisoners by looking at several computer screens for hours on end. This is hardly an approach which can lead to the development of supportive relationships with prisoners and represents the opposite of a dynamic security approach. Moreover, it is not only dangerous for both prisoners and staff but also negligent of the welfare of the custodial officers concerned.

49. At *Korydallos Men's Prison*, nothing has been done to improve the numbers of custodial staff within the prison since the 2019 visit. With an overall complement of 133 custodial officers, an optimal day shift consisted of around 33 officers (including three assistant chief guards) supervising the wings, yards, corridors, kitchen, visiting areas, infirmary, stores, school and security. For a population of 1,885 prisoners, such staffing numbers are dangerously and irresponsibly low. The five large accommodation wings continued to have only one or two custodial officers responsible for supervising 238 to 449 prisoners. Such a state of affairs represents a dereliction of the duty of care invested in the State when it deprives a person of their liberty as well as placing the staff member in a situation where he cannot exert any authority and must consider his own safety. Indeed, a single custodial officer can only "manage" the wing with the support of several prisoners who sign on and off the wing and with the authority of the leaders among prisoners.

50. The custodial officer staffing levels in the other prisons visited were less dramatic. At Corfu Prison, there was a complement of 62 custodial officers (including the Chief Officer) in place with 12 vacancies for a prisoner population of 227. Nevertheless, the management was particularly concerned that staff had accumulated over 1,000 hours of overtime which had not been compensated. At Chios Prison, 31 of 40 custodial officer positions were filled and, at Kos Prison, 28 of 38 positions. Such numbers would be acceptable if the prisons were not so severely overcrowded. **The CPT recommends that steps be taken to fill the vacant positions of custodial officer as soon as possible in all three prisons.**

51. The Greek authorities informed the CPT's delegation that the 2017 recruitment process for custodial officers had been delayed as apparently the physical fitness tests could not be organised during the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, by communication of 7 January 2022, the Ministry of Citizens Protection informed the CPT that on 28 December 2021, the results for 557 positions within the Ministry had been approved and that a further 381 planned positions had also been approved. This is welcome news. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether all these recruited positions are for the prisons and, even if they are, it remains largely insufficient to ensure a full complement of custodial staff in all prisons.

52. **The CPT calls upon the Greek authorities to take the necessary steps to ensure that the number of custodial officers working at Korydallos Men's Prison and Nigrita Prison as well as at the other large model-type prisons are significantly increased. Further, the CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Greek authorities review the staffing levels in all Greek prisons to identify the numbers required to guarantee an effective control and a safe environment for prisoners and staff alike. To this end, the Committee wishes to be informed of the staffing complement of custodial officers that the Greek authorities deem to be necessary to ensure the proper management and operation of each prison accompanied by the number of custodial officers currently in place at each prison.**

The Committee would also like to receive information on the initial training course that the newly recruited custodial officers are required to undergo before being deployed to work in a prison and on the prisons to which the new staff were deployed.

Moreover, the CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Greek authorities take steps to improve the working conditions of prison staff in Greece, notably by phasing out the widespread recourse to double shifts and unpaid overtime.

53. The CPT's delegation was impressed that many of the staff it met remained dedicated to their jobs despite their poor working conditions and the lack of support from the state authorities.

Staff need to be provided with support, including through training courses and recognition of the challenging duties they have to perform, all of which are currently absent. The Ministry of Citizens Protection must invest not only in increasing the number of prison officers in the establishments but also in their training and professional development. Staff should be offered a minimum number of days of in-service training every year, both as a means to refresh their skills and to develop team building. With over half of the prison population made up of foreign nationals, such training must include promoting learning in the areas of diversity and inter-personal skills. Professional training should also be provided for senior prison managers and possibilities for career development should be promoted. Staff should also be paid salary which is commensurate with their functions.

Further, the CPT considers that the staffing within prisons should mirror society and, to this end, mixed-gender staffing can have a positive impact. The presence of male and female staff in all prisons can have a beneficial effect in terms of both the custodial ethos and in fostering a degree of normality in a place of detention. In addition, greater efforts should be made to recruit staff members from some of the larger minority groups that make up the prison population such as Albanian, Arabic, Pashtu and Urdu speakers.

54. **The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Greek authorities develop a comprehensive plan for staff training, including on intercultural communication, in order to strengthen the motivation and performance of prison officers.**

As part of the plan, the CPT would like to be informed about the in-service training envisaged for all prison officers, and the prospects of promoting mixed-gender staffing within prisons and of recruiting staff with diverse language skills. Professional training for senior prison managers should be provided with a view to introducing a professional management career path within the Greek prison system. Increased resources should also be put towards supporting staff, notably by means such as mentoring and the provision of individual psychological counselling when required.

55. The lack of staffing resources does not only concern custodial officers but also other posts such as administrative personnel, social workers and psychologists, as well as external perimeter guards. All the prisons were severely understaffed in these areas. For example, there was no social worker or psychologist working at Corfu, Chios and Kos Prisons which clearly has an impact on preparations for returning to the community, contacts with the outside world and other welfare needs of prisoners. Moreover, the inability for the prison administration to provide information to prisoners and answer their requests in a timely fashion has an impact on the good order within an establishment. The delegation noted that some prisons had to use inmates for maintaining security equipment and assisting with financial accounting operations due to lack of qualified staff.

The CPT recommends that the Greek authorities take steps to fill the vacant staff posts in the prisons, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that every prison has an appropriate input of social workers and psychologists.

5. Health care

a. health care services in prison

56. The widespread deficiencies identified by the CPT during its previous visits regarding the state of health care services in prisons were again evident during the 2021 visit. Problematic issues such as access to health care, medical screening upon arrival, medical confidentiality and health care policy regarding substance misuse are all compounded by the persistent severe shortage of health care staff and the continued lack of integrated management of health care services.

The CPT noted that a cooperation programme between the Greek authorities and the Council of Europe to support health care in prisons resulted in a number of protocols, guidelines and a manual being drawn up and a series of training sessions being initiated. They represent a welcome start, but much more fundamental action is required if prisons are to be in a position to provide an equality of care to persons in prison.

57. As regards health care staffing, at Chios Prison, a rural doctor visited the prison two to three mornings a week. She was supported by a clerical assistant and a custodial officer, who was responsible for the preparation of all medication to be dispensed by other officers. The delegation found that the doctor was carrying out her tasks professionally but needs to be supported by a nurse.

At Corfu Prison, a doctor visited the prison twice a week for a total of eight hours supported by one full-time nurse; however, the doctor was leaving the island to work in Athens and the nurse was expected to be absent for personal reasons for the whole of 2022, with no replacements in place. A dentist also visited twice a week for a total of five hours. However, there was no visiting psychiatrist (around 10 consultations per month took place in the local hospital), nor any psychologist input. Consequently, the health care service was effectively being managed by the two custodial officers, who were present during doctor consultations and who had access to all medical records. Such health care staffing resources are totally inadequate for the needs of more than 220 prisoners.

At Kos Prison, there had been no rural doctor since 9 September 2021 and health care duties were carried out by a cardiologist (three hours a week) and a GP (one hour twice a week). They were supported by a prisoner working as an assistant nurse, who had a first aid certificate and who appeared to work seven days a week, preparing the medication for dispensing, carrying out the SARS-CoV-2 rapid antigen tests and maintaining the medical records. The provision of tele-medicine with a hospital in Attica was expected to start in 2022.

58. The situation at Korydallos Men's Prison had not improved since 2019. There was a cardiologist who acted as a health care co-ordinator and who was employed on a full-time basis. He was supported by four part-time GPs who each visited the establishment for two hours per week and two additional GPs who visited once a week for seven hours between 16h00 to 23h00. In addition, there was a pharmacist and 14 medical doctors³³ contracted to provide specialist services once a week. However, there were only two full-time nurses (both of whom were on medical leave at the time of the visit) and five prison officers assigned to the medical unit, who reportedly had no medical training.

One dentist³⁴ was present twice a week for a total of five hours. In addition, five prisoners were working as medical orderlies, due to the lack of health care staff. For an establishment of 1,885 inmates this is totally insufficient.

59. The lack of health care staff at Nigrita Prison was particularly alarming. There was only one nurse working three 12-hour shifts every week, which meant at nights, weekends, Mondays, Thursdays and on public holidays there was no health care professional in the prison. The nurse was supported by three prisoners working as assistant nurses who had access to all premises, medication and documentation. A doctor from the community health care centre visited the prison on a rota basis once a week for five hours (usually Tuesdays) which undermined any continuity of care. The waiting time to see a doctor was approximately two weeks. Psychiatric consultations took place once a week online which, although an improvement with six to eight patients seen each week, was far too little to meet the needs of the population.³⁵ A dentist visited twice a week. Clearly, such staffing levels are totally inadequate for an official prison population of 600 and even more when occupancy levels were above 700 persons.

Moreover, the delegation learned that access to specialist care at Nigrita Prison was becoming more difficult as such specialisations as ophthalmology, oncology and gastroenterology were no longer available in the nearby city of Serres but required transfers to Thessaloniki.

³³ Including a urologist, a haematologist, a surgeon, a pulmonologist, a neurologist, an orthopaedist, three psychiatrists (two of whom had not worked since July 2021 and the third had held no consultations in October and November 2021), a dermatologist, an endocrinologist, an ophthalmologist and a cardiologist.

³⁴ A second dentist had been dismissed after being caught smuggling a mobile phone into the prison.

³⁵ There was a waiting list of 38 patients to see the psychiatrist; it should be noted that roughly 35% of the population were persons with substance use problems and that 200 persons in the prison were receiving psychotropic medication.

60. In light of the serious staff shortcomings identified above, **the CPT reiterates its recommendation that, as an initial measure, the Greek authorities urgently reinforce health care staffing levels as follows:**

- at Chios and Kos Prisons, ensure each prison has a daily nursing presence;
- at Corfu Prison, ensure the input of the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of 0.5 general practitioners and of two FTE nurses;
- at Nigrita Prison, ensure the input of the FTE of 1.5 general practitioners and reinforce significantly the qualified nursing complement to at least 6 FTE nurses; nursing staff should be present in the prison every day of the week;
- at Korydallos Men's Prison, ensure the input of the FTE of 3 general practitioners and of 12 FTE nurses, at least two of whom should have mental health work experience.

At Corfu Prison, arrangements should be put in place to ensure there is a regularly input by a psychiatrist and a clinically trained psychologist. Further, the number of dental and psychiatric consultations should be increased, notably at Korydallos Men's and Nigrita Prisons.

61. The CPT also reiterates its long-standing recommendation that prisoners should not be involved in the performance of health care tasks, and under no circumstances should they perform the dispensing of medicines and/or have access to medical records. The CPT wishes to receive a timetable for the phasing out of using prisoners for carrying out health care tasks in the establishments visited.

In addition, the CPT reiterates that, in principle, prison officers should not perform medical duties. Pending the recruitment of sufficient healthcare staff, prison officers who do not possess the relevant qualifications should not carry out nursing functions. Further, any qualified prison officers working in the health care service of a prison should be under the authority of the senior doctor/nurse manager responsible for the service.

The CPT would also like to receive further details about the arrangements to provide tele-medicine at Kos Prison.

62. The practice of preparing and dispensing medication was again found to be fundamentally unsafe in all the prisons visited. For example, prisoners engaged as assistant nurses were preparing and dispensing medication, including psychotropic drugs, in the wings without any presence or supervision of custodial or health care staff. **The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the system of medicine dispensing and administration be reviewed in order to ensure it is both safe and accountable.**

63. Medical screening upon admission should generally be carried out within 24 hours, initially by a nurse and thereafter by a doctor, if required. However, this was still not the case in any of the prisons visited. At Korydallos Men's Prisons, all newly arrived prisoners are tested for Hepatitis B and C and for HIV and offered a chest x-ray. In contrast, in the other prisons visited, medical screening simply consisted of asking questions on the basic medical history and taking blood pressure. However, quite a few prisoners had not been seen for more than a week after admission and some had no entries in their medical file. Indeed, except for Chios Prison, the medical files were frequently poorly annotated, and the delegation noted that doctors might record nothing in the medical files despite having seen a number of prisoners during a session. Further, screening for infectious diseases is not routinely carried out and a physical examination only takes place if the prisoner raises a medical issue.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Greek authorities ensure that every newly arrived prisoner be comprehensively interviewed and physically examined by a doctor or a fully qualified nurse reporting to a doctor within 24 hours of admission, and that the results be diligently noted in the prisoner's personal medical record. Further, all newly admitted prisoners should be routinely offered screening for transmissible diseases such as Hepatitis B and C, HIV and Tuberculosis.

64. As regards the screening for and recording of injuries, the CPT has repeatedly stressed the important role that health care staff can play in the prevention of ill-treatment through the diligent and accurate recording of injuries. To this end, the CPT has described in detail what the record drawn up after the medical examination of a prisoner – whether newly arrived or following a violent incident in the prison – should contain.³⁶ At the time of the 2021 visit, there was still no standard practice for the recording of injuries and the delegation observed that the entries in the trauma registers and in the personal medical files were generally scant. Moreover, there were no clearly defined standard procedures in place for doctors to report any allegations of ill-treatment by police officers to the competent prosecutor.

In the CPT's view, the accurate and timely documenting and reporting of forensic medical evidence will often be crucial for the effectiveness of investigations into allegations of ill-treatment, which in turn will act as a strong deterrent against the commission of ill-treatment in future. For prison medical services to fully play their role in preventing ill-treatment, it is incumbent on every prison doctor to comprehensively screen, record and report all injuries noted on prisoners as set out by the Committee in previous visit reports. In the course of the 2021 visit, the CPT met several prisoners who made allegations of ill-treatment by the police but who had not been properly examined by a doctor upon entry to prison and for whom there was no proper recording of injuries in the medical file.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that steps be taken in all establishments to ensure that the record drawn up after the medical examination of a prisoner – whether newly arrived or following a violent incident in the prison complies with the procedures set out by the CPT in paragraph 50 of its report on the 2019 visit. Reference should also be had to the Istanbul Protocol of 1999 on the effective investigation and documentation of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

³⁶ See [CPT/Inf \(2014\) 26](#), paragraph 129; see also the section on documenting and reporting medical evidence of ill-treatment in the 23rd General Report of the CPT's activities: [CPT/Inf \(2013\) 29](#), paragraphs 71 to 84.

65. The CPT's delegation observed that medical confidentiality at Corfu, Korydallos Men's and Nigrita Prisons remains a serious concern. For example, at Korydallos Men's Prison, a prisoner in each wing collected requests from the inmates to see a doctor or a nurse, and he often helped the other prisoners to write the application. In the health-care unit, the prisoners are seen in open spaces, with custodial staff, other patients and inmate personnel present. There is no privacy when the prisoners talk to the health-care workers. Furthermore, the inmates working in the health-care unit have access to all medical files. Indeed, the job of the prisoners working in the health-care unit in four of the five prisons visited was specifically to administer the medical files.

The CPT reiterates its long-standing recommendation that the Greek authorities take the necessary steps to guarantee medical confidentiality both of consultations and of medical data. This necessitates recruiting additional nurses as recommended above (see paragraph 60).

66. As regards substance use and the programmes in place to address it, the CPT's delegation found that a similar situation to that described in the report on the 2019 visit pertained in the prisons visited.³⁷ The Centre for the Treatment of Drug-dependent Persons (KETHEA), provides psychosocial counselling and motivational support for prisoners, but without any opioid agonist treatment. Moreover, the number of counsellors remained far too low: for example, there were only four such counsellors at Korydallos Men's Prison.

As regards the Organisation Against Drugs (OKANA), it still cannot provide any opioid agonist therapy within prison which is a serious deficiency given the high level of need for such a treatment among prisoners. More generally, psychiatrists met in prison who work with detained persons with drug addiction problems again highlighted the lack of interpretation services to ensure clear and accurate communication with patients.

67. The CPT considers that prison provides an opportunity to address drug use concerns prior to inmates returning back into the community. The assistance offered to prisoners with drug-related problems should be varied; detoxification programmes with substitution treatment for drug-dependent patients should be combined with genuine psycho-social and educational programmes. The setting up of a drug-free wing in prisons for certain categories of prisoners, *inter alia* those having completed treatment programmes prior to or during imprisonment, can be positive, as the experience from Korydallos Prison demonstrates.

Further, all health care staff and, more generally, prison officers should be given specific training on drug-related issues. Effective throughcare in partnership with community-based agencies and organisations addressing drug-related issues should also be put in place. Currently, there are elements of this assistance through KETHEA and OKANA present in the larger prisons visited. However, there is a need to expand their work and to develop a comprehensive approach towards substance use in prison as part of a national strategy.

The goals should be *inter alia*: eliminating the supply of drugs into prisons; dealing with substance use problems through identifying and engaging drug users, providing them with treatment options and ensuring there is appropriate throughcare; developing standards, monitoring and research on drug issues; and the provision of staff training and development.

³⁷ See [CPT/Inf \(2020\) 15](#), paragraphs 53 and 54.

68. In the light of the above remarks, **the CPT calls upon the Greek authorities to draw up a comprehensive strategy for the provision of assistance to prisoners with drug-related problems, as part of a national strategy concerning substance use. Within this national approach, the Committee recommends that OKANA should be able to offer opioid agonist therapy in prisons and that sufficient interpretation services be made available to support the work of the psychiatrists and psychologists. Further, the number of counsellors working for KETHEA should be increased.**

In addition, the CPT recommends that the Greek authorities start compiling statistics on substance use among prisoners in order to gauge more accurately the needs and the extent of the problem and thereby better identify the measures required to tackle it.

b. Korydallos Prison Special Health Centre

69. The CPT's delegation undertook a follow-up visit to the Special Health Centre to evaluate whether the quality of treatment for patients had improved since the 2019 visit, and to see to what extent the Centre had been transformed into a professional care-oriented medical facility.

70. A positive development related to the reduction in the number of patients from 191 in 2019 to 85 at the time of the 2021 visit, with those HIV positive prisoners previously accommodated within the Special Health Centre now being located across the prison system as the CPT had recommended. Nevertheless, the official capacity was still 253 places and patients' rooms remained rather cramped as the excess beds (around half in each room) had not been removed.

In general, the patient rooms were clean and tidy, with good access to natural light and ventilation. The mattresses had been replaced since 2019 and the bedding was clean. On the other hand, the washing and toilet areas on each floor were still in a poor state of repair (missing windowpanes, no showerheads).

71. There had also been an improvement in the medical staffing presence, with the number of resident doctors up from seven to 13.³⁸ They were present on weekdays from 7h00 to 13h45, and a separate duty resident doctor covered the hours of 15h00 to 7h00 and weekends. In addition, there were 14 visiting specialists (psychiatrists, dermatologists, an ophthalmologist, a cardiologist and an ear, nose and throat surgeon). However, there was still a lack of formal process in exchanging information on patients between the specialists and the treating doctors, and much depended on the individual relationships between doctors.

On the other hand, the nursing complement of ten permanent staff remained far too low, exacerbated by the fact that two of the nurses were suspended as they had been unwilling to take the Covid-19 vaccination. In practice, this resulted in two nurses on duty during the day (7h00 to 13h00), one nurse on duty in the afternoon (13h00 to 19h00) and one nurse on duty at night (19h00 to 7h00), who also has to provide cover for the Korydallos Men's and Women's Prisons as well as the psychiatric hospital. Such provision is clearly insufficient to meet the needs of the hospital and, indeed, the delegation noted that the nurses spent most of their time occupied with the administration of medication only.

³⁸ They include two GPs, a urologist, a radiologist, a dentist, two microbiologists and a psychiatrist, with six employed by the Ministry of Citizens Protection and seven by the National Health Service.

Consequently, several bed-bound or patients with physical disabilities still require assistance from other prisoners to ensure that their most basic care needs including washing, toileting and assistance with eating can be met. Urgent steps must be taken to ensure that all nursing care work is undertaken by qualified health care personnel.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Greek authorities, and notably the Ministry of Health, take urgent steps to significantly increase the number of qualified health care personnel employed at the Special Health Centre. Further, systems should be put in place to ensure a better coordination and exchange of information between medical staff.

72. As was the case previously, there was still no single comprehensive multi-disciplinary medical record opened and maintained for each prisoner. Doctors tended to write in their own individual daily journals while nursing staff wrote in a separate daily journal. Patients still do not have an individual care plan, and it was not possible to fully understand the chronology of a person's care given that the information was recorded in a variety of different places. Further the individual entries of the doctors tended to be very brief and did not describe the patients' care needs. It is high time that an adequate medical records system as well as an individual care plan for each patient be introduced.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Greek authorities ensure that a single computerised electronic health record be established for each patient. Further, an individual care plan should be drawn up for each patient.

73. The CPT's delegation found that the system of medicine dispensing and administration at the Special Health Centre was yet again fundamentally unsafe. The nurses essentially took medicines from their original packages (some of which were unlabelled) and put them in a small envelope which contained only the patient's name. Nursing staff asserted that they knew which medicines were which on account of their colour. All psychotropic medicines were ground up together to form a fine dust which was then swallowed by the patient in front of the nurse. Each patient had a written record of their medication in the form of an administration sheet, which the nurse transcribed from the doctor's prescriptions. Review of the administration sheet set out that often there was no start or end date included with the medicines.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the system of medicine dispensing and administration be reviewed in order to ensure it is both safe and accountable.

74. One patient (HH) met by the delegation was struggling with his daily living needs as he had no forearms and required new prostheses. At the time of the visit, he was paying for another prisoner to assist him which was neither appropriate nor effective; notably, he still has to go to the toilet on his own which was a degrading experience on each occasion. HH needed to be provided with effective assistance for his daily living needs including eating, washing and going to the toilet until such time as new prostheses for his arms could be provided. At the end of the visit, the delegation invoked Article 8, paragraph 5, of the Convention and requested that immediate action be taken to provide HH with new prostheses for his arms and that, in the meantime, he be offered the necessary around the clock care to provide for his needs.

By communication of 7 January 2022, the Greek authorities informed the CPT that a request for new prostheses was awaiting approval from the 2nd Health District of the Ministry of Health and that in the meantime a prisoner (voluntarily) has been appointed to cater to the daily needs of HH and that HH is also being followed closely by several medical specialists. No information is provided as to whether the designated carer has received any training to carry out his carer functions. Further, the CPT is not reassured that such an arrangement is substantively different to the one encountered by its delegation at the time of the visit and that HH's daily needs are being met without him being placed in a state of constant anxiety and vulnerability towards other patients.

The CPT wishes to be updated on the provision of the new prostheses and the precise nature of the care being afforded to HH.

c. Korydallos Psychiatric Hospital for Prisoners

75. The CPT's delegation undertook a highly targeted visit to the Psychiatric Hospital to follow-up on the recent deaths of a number of patients therein, including an apparent suicide by hanging of a patient, for which the official information recorded was particularly sparse.

The visit revealed an institution which has been so neglected that it was unable to provide appropriate care to its patients. Most shocking was the fact that for a psychiatric hospital accommodating 160 patients, there was no resident psychiatrist and only 15 hours of weekly psychiatric input provided by five different doctors. Moreover, there were only two full-time nurses, one of whom was suspended as she had refused to be vaccinated against Covid-19. Two custodial officers were partly working as nurses, and were tasked with the administration of medication. The staffing situation was particularly dire. The director of the hospital was exasperated and recognised that, apart from two psychologists and four social workers, the institution sorely lacked the required staffing to fulfil its role as a hospital.

The delegation also examined the room where the patient had committed suicide and found that the cell was sombre, unfurnished and cold with a filthy mattress and blanket and a blocked toilet that was leaking wastewater onto the floor. It was totally unsuitable for accommodating patients and yet one patient was being held there at the time of the visit.

The CPT recommends that the Greek authorities take urgent action to significantly reinforce the staffing complement at the Korydallos Psychiatric Hospital for prisoners, notably in respect of psychiatrists and of nurses. At the same time, steps should be taken to abolish the practice of involving prison officers in the performance of health-care duties in the hospital. Further, the living conditions in which patients are accommodated should be improved.

d. deaths of persons detained in the Korydallos Prison Complex

76. In the course of the visit, the delegation learned about a significant number of deaths that had occurred in the previous two years in the Korydallos Prison Complex and notably in the Psychiatric Hospital for Prisoners where there had been 19 deaths since the beginning of 2019.

The delegation's forensic doctor examined a number of autopsy reports drawn up following the deaths which revealed serious deficiencies in the quality of post-mortem examinations concerning the absence of important indicators (weight and measurement of organs), photographs not systematically taken nor properly indexed, lack of histological studies, lengthy delays in the completion of the autopsy and conclusions not supported by the evidence (such as toxicological results). In one case, the body of the deceased person contained post-mortem rodent bites on both hands, his cheek, both lower extremities and the right side of the abdomen.

Further, upon visiting the Forensic Bureau of Piraeus which is responsible for carrying out autopsies of deaths at the Korydallos Prison Complex, it became apparent that there were no national standards for the completion of autopsies. In addition, the fact that a single forensic medical doctor and a technician were responsible for carrying out some 800 autopsies a year, including supposedly attending the scene of the death and the court hearings, it is evident that the autopsies cannot be carried out as professionally as good practice requires.

In conclusion, the autopsies fell far short of the requirements set out in the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Rec R(99)3 Recommendation on Harmonisation of Medico-Legal Autopsy Roles. Moreover, there was no investigation into the cause of each death to see whether any lessons could be garnered to prevent future deaths, especially when it was a case of a person taking his (or her) own life.

The CPT recommends that the Greek authorities ensure all autopsies comply with the Council of Europe Recommendation on Harmonisation of Medico-Legal Autopsy Roles. Further, a practice of carrying out thorough inquiries into deaths in custody with a view to learning lessons and improving operating procedures should be instituted.

77. In the CPT's view, more active suicide prevention efforts are needed, through the provision of supportive monitoring and the development of trusting relationships between patients/prisoners and staff. More generally, the limited availability of staff – coupled with the absence of meaningful activities – undermined any efforts towards the prevention of self-harm and the associated risk of suicide.

The CPT would like to be provided with a copy of the protocols in place to identify and manage persons identified as being at risk of self-harming or attempting to commit suicide within the different establishments making up the Korydallos Prison Complex. As regards the lack of staff, reference is made to the recommendations made in paragraphs 52, 55, 60 and 74.

6. Other issues

a. discipline

78. The provisions of the 1999 Penitentiary Code dealing with disciplinary sanctions and procedures have been described in previous reports and do not call for any particular comment.³⁹ As regards more particularly the sanction of disciplinary confinement, it may not exceed 10 days (five days for remand prisoners).

The CPT's delegation examined the disciplinary procedures and the sanctions imposed in each of the prisons visited. In general, limited resort was had to disciplinary sanctions and, in particular, solitary confinement as a disciplinary punishment was applied sparingly. For example, there were 149 disciplinary cases at Nigrita Prison in 2021 (up to 22 November) for a prisoner population of around 720. At Korydallos Men's Prison, there had been an increase in the resort to disciplinary proceeding from 593 in 2019 to 797 in 2021 (up to 22 November) which for a high turnover population of more than 1,800 is by no means excessive. In all the prisons visited, the management would attempt to get prisoners who posed a threat to the good order of the establishment transferred to another prison in addition to receiving a disciplinary sanction.⁴⁰ Requests would be submitted to the Central Transfer Committee (KEM) which decided on all transfers from one establishment to another.⁴¹ In the circumstances of an overcrowded and understaffed prison system, such an approach was understandable.

79. At Chios Prison, there had been 11 cases of disciplinary punishment both in 2021 and in 2020, including six cases of solitary confinement in 2021. However, there was no register or recording on the use of the disciplinary cell (8.5m²) and, in the course of the visit, several prisoners claimed that while serving a period of 5 to 10 days in solitary confinement, they had not been offered access to outdoor exercise. Complaints were also received that the prisoners had not been able to present their account of the incident during the disciplinary hearing and that they had not been provided with a copy of the disciplinary hearing. Certain persons also alleged that the disciplinary cell had at times accommodated up to four persons, including as a disciplinary punishment and for Covid-19 quarantining purposes.

At the end of the visit, the Chios Prison Director said that a proper register on the use of the disciplinary cell would be opened and that all movements into and out of the cell would now be recorded. The Director also stated that he would ensure that all aspects of the disciplinary hearing were fully respected and that all persons were provided with a copy of the disciplinary sanction handed out. **The CPT would like to receive confirmation that a comprehensive register on the use of the disciplinary cell at Chios Prison has been instituted.**

³⁹ See Articles 21.3 and 65 to 71 of the Penitentiary Code.

⁴⁰ For example, 51 persons were transferred out of Korydallos Men's Prison in 2021 (up to 24 November) for reasons of good order.

⁴¹ For instance, in September 2021, the KEM only approved the transfer of 8 of the 12 persons for whom the management of Nigrita Prison had requested a transfer due to a lack of available spaces in other prisons.

80. At Corfu Prison, the first three cells on K Wing were designated for prisoners serving a disciplinary sanction of solitary confinement. They were also used for persons who needed to be taken off the other wings for protection purposes and also, more recently, for persons who had tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The three cells were in an appalling state of hygiene and dilapidation. The cells measured less than 6m², including a 1.5m² raised concrete plinth at the back of the cell where the unpartitioned floor level toilet was located. There was no running water in the cell although staff claimed that the flush could also be used for drinking water and cleaning purposes. The cells had no access to natural light as the barred window had been covered over with a screen from the outside and while one cell had a bright artificial light which apparently was not turned off at night, another cell (no. 2) had no functioning artificial light; the person accommodated in that cell for two weeks at the time of the visit had spent almost all his time in the dark. Further, the persons located in the disciplinary cells were not offered one hour of outdoor exercise every day.

At the end of the visit, the CPT's delegation invoked Article 8, paragraph 5, of the Convention and requested that the Greek authorities close the three disciplinary cells until such time as they have been completely renovated. By communication of 7 January 2022, the Greek authorities informed the CPT that the three cells in question had been taken out of service on 6 December 2021 and that funding was being sought for their complete renovation. **The CPT welcomes this rapid reaction by the General Secretariat for Anti-Crime Policy and would like to be informed about the renovation of the cells and when they intend to be brought back into service.**

81. At Nigrita Prison, the conditions observed in the separate 10-cell segregation unit had been improved since 2019, with the unit having been recently painted and the in-cell sanitary fixtures repaired. At the time of the visit, the unit was accommodating one person who had tested positive for Covid-19, six persons in five cells who were in quarantine, two persons in one cell who had been involved in a fight on the wings and were now ostensibly on protection, and one person who was considered vulnerable with mental health issues. As in 2019, the unit was only supervised remotely by CCTV.⁴² The Covid-19 positive persons and the six persons in quarantine were not offered any out-of-cell time during their period of confinement. The two persons on protection shared a cell, with one of them sleeping on a mattress on the floor and were unlocked during the day and able to roam the corridor but they were not however offered access to the outdoor exercise yard. There was no staff supervision when the meals were distributed by prisoners to the cells via the hatches in the doors.

Further, there was still no register on the placement of prisoners in the segregation unit nor any daily log to record all movements of prisoners in and out of their cells.

The CPT recommends that the Greek authorities ensure that all persons placed in a segregation unit are offered a minimum of one hour of outdoor exercise every day. Further, the unit should always be supervised by staff when occupied and a register established to record all placements and movements within the unit.

⁴² It was unrealistic to expect the single officer responsible for Wing E and its 140 prisoners to also supervise the segregation unit.

b. contact with the outside world

82. The importance of maintaining good contact with the outside world is recognised in Articles 51 and 52 of the 1999 Penitentiary Code. Nevertheless, there has been no progress to ensure all prisoners are offered the equivalent of one hour per week of visits and particularly “open” visits around a table, which is especially important for promoting and maintaining contacts with children,⁴³ as well as for facilitating the process of progression to a less restrictive regime. In exceptional circumstances, for example for security-related reasons or to protect the legitimate interests of an investigation, visits could take place in booths and/or monitored. Any decision to impose closed visits must be well-founded and based on an individual assessment of the potential risk.

In all the prisons visited, many of the telephones were broken. Moreover, while the CPT welcomes the nascent arrangements made in the prisons visited to initiate Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) communications between prisoners and their families, the service is still too limited. In particular, in those prisons located on the islands or large distances from major urban areas and accommodating large numbers of foreign nationals, the opportunities to use VOIP should be increased. This also entails reviewing the extensive documentation that foreign nationals and their families are required to produce in the Greek language to qualify for the use of VOIP.

The CPT recommends that the Greek authorities increase the opportunities for prisoners to maintain contact with their families, in the light of the above remarks. It would like to be informed specifically about such opportunities at Chios, Corfu and Kos Prisons. Further, telephones in the prisons should be repaired.

c. information on rights and complaints procedures

83. In all the prisons visited, prisoners complained about the lack of transparency in prison procedures and the absence of information to assist them in understanding how the prisons operated and what rights they were entitled to. The prisoners interviewed by the CPT’s delegation all stated that they were not provided with any brochures informing them about the regime or other details of the institution, and that they usually learned about the rules, rights and obligations from other prisoners. In none of the prisons was the publication “Prisoner’s A-Z on rights and obligations” available or being distributed to new arrivals. It was also unfortunate that in none of the waiting rooms where prisoners were placed when they first entered a prison was there any information on the establishment and its routines, let alone in different languages.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that all newly admitted prisoners be provided with the introductory brochure about prison life. Further, foreign-national prisoners should be provided with information in a language they understand.

⁴³ See Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2018\)5](#) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States concerning children with imprisoned parents, adopted on 4 April 2018.

84. There is still no proper system of internal complaints available within the prison system.⁴⁴ In the prisons visited, inmates could make requests (or complaints) for various services by filling out a paper and placing it in a locked box on the wings. However, there was no clear policy regulating the complaints system, with timelines for responses and possibilities to appeal to a higher body if the complaint was rejected, or even who should be responsible for investigating a complaint, especially if it concerned the Director or Chief Guard. Nor were the complaints recorded or any attempt made to compile statistics on the various types of complaints which might inform prison policy.

The CPT repeats that a proper internal complaints system needs to be put in place; for example, prisoners ought to be able to make written complaints at any moment and place them in a locked complaints box on a prison landing (forms should be freely available); all written complaints should be registered centrally within the prison before being allocated to a particular service for investigation or follow-up. In all cases, the investigation should be carried out expeditiously (with any delays justified) and prisoners should be informed within clearly defined time periods of the action taken to address their concern or of the reasons for considering the complaint not justified. In addition, statistics on the types of complaints made should be kept as an indicator to management of areas of discontent within the prison. Of course, prison officers should be encouraged and empowered as far as possible to resolve complaints themselves and only where this is not possible should recourse to a written procedure be promoted.⁴⁵

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Greek authorities introduce a formal system of complaints in all Greek prisons, taking into account the above remarks.

⁴⁴ See, *inter alia*, [CPT/Inf \(2016\) 4](#), paragraph 95.

⁴⁵ See also the section on complaints mechanisms in the 27th General Report of the CPT: [CPT/Inf \(2018\) 4](#), paragraphs 68 ff.

7. Athens Transfer Centre for Prisoners under the Hellenic Police

85. The CPT's delegation carried out a follow-up visit to the Athens Transfer Centre for Prisoners, which is the main transfer hub in Attica for prisoners undergoing a prison transfer or awaiting a court appearance or a medical appointment. The centre consists of 29 cells split among four wings for an official capacity of 120 places; most of the cells measured 20m² and contained five concrete plinths.

Occupancy levels were down with the highest number staying overnight in 2021 being 46 persons and usually it was lower; for example, at the time of the visit there were eight male adults with a further 20 persons expected later in the day. Stays were usually only one or two nights unless a person tested positive for the SARS-Cov-2 virus, for instance, in which case they would remain in the centre for up to 10 days. The delegation also noted positively that the electronic and paper records were kept in good order. Likewise, it welcomed the introduction of weekly sessions with a psychologist for staff to discuss situations of violence and managing challenging prisoners, including those with a mental disorder or displaying anti-social behaviour.

Overall, compared with the situation found at the time of the 2019 visit,⁴⁶ the Centre provided improved conditions. The cells and corridors had been painted, the heating system and artificial lighting repaired, and the sanitary facilities were nearly all functioning properly. All areas of the facility were generally clean although some of the cells remained grim (poor lighting, dirty and graffiti on walls). The delegation again received complaints about the poor quality of food, the lack of hygiene products and the lack of access to outdoor exercise.

The CPT trusts that the good management found at the Transfer Centre will be maintained and steps taken to remedy the deficiencies noted above. In particular, the CPT recommends that all persons held longer than 24 hours be offered one hour of outdoor exercise every day and be supplied with the necessary hygiene products.

8. Transfer of Prisoners by the Hellenic Police

86. As regards the transfer of prisoners, the situation remained the same as that described in the report on the 2019 visit.⁴⁷ The only positive developments had been the acquisition of one new bus and one new police car for the transport of vulnerable persons. Moreover, the Greek authorities had not responded to the recommendations set out in the 2019 visit report intended to improve the conditions under which prisoners were transferred around the country. In particular, the CPT's delegation found that no steps have been taken to reduce the occupancy levels in the small, secured compartments in the transport buses which continued to hold four persons in 1.2m² even during long journeys of several hours or more.

⁴⁶ See [CPT/Inf \(2020\) 15](#), paragraphs 115 and 116.

⁴⁷ See [CPT/Inf \(2020\) 15](#), paragraphs 124 to 130.

87. The CPT considers that transfers of prisoners should always be carried out in a humane, secure and safe manner. When vehicles are equipped with secure compartments, individual cubicles measuring less than 0.6m² should not be used for transporting a person, no matter how short the duration. Individual cubicles measuring some 0.6m² can be considered as acceptable for short journeys/distances only; however, cubicles used for longer journey/distances should be much larger. Compartments or cubicles intended to transport more than one person should offer at least 0.6m² of personal space. Further, all transport vehicles should be clean, sufficiently lit and ventilated, and heated or air-conditioned appropriately.⁴⁸

In addition, necessary arrangements should be made to provide prisoners with drinking water as required and, for long journeys/distances, with food at appropriate intervals. In the context of long journeys, arrangements should be made to allow prisoners to have access to sanitary facilities or to satisfy the needs of nature in conditions offering sufficient privacy, hygiene and dignity. When travelling by road, this implies the organisation of regular stops.

Prisoners should be transported in vehicles suitably designed and fit for that purpose, taking due account of all relevant safety requirements in order to protect prisoners. In particular, all vehicles which are used for the transfer of prisoners should be regularly maintained and equipped with appropriate safety devices such as safety belts.

The Greek authorities should also take steps to prevent intimidation and verbal abuse being perpetrated by prisoners against their fellow passengers. In particular, women should not be placed together with men in the same transfer vehicles.

88. The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Greek authorities urgently review the current arrangements by which the Hellenic Police transfer prisoners in Greece. In particular, they need to ensure that:

- **the capacity of the secure coaches is reduced as no more than two persons should be held in the 1.2m²-compartments and no more than one person in the 0.6m²-cubicles. In the longer term, the existing vehicles should be adapted or replaced, taking into consideration the above-mentioned standards of personal space;**
- **all secure transport vehicles are clean, sufficiently lit and ventilated, and heated or air-conditioned appropriately;**
- **prisoners are provided with drinking water as required and, for long journeys/distances, with food at appropriate intervals;**
- **prisoners are offered access to sanitary facilities at regular intervals, in conditions offering sufficient privacy, hygiene and dignity;**
- **all transfer vehicles are regularly maintained and equipped with safety belts, so as to guarantee the safety of prisoners during transfers. They should also be fitted with means to enable prisoners to communicate with escort staff;**
- **appropriate measures are taken to prevent prisoners being subjected to intimidation and verbal abuse by fellow prisoners. In particular, female prisoners should not be transferred together with male prisoners in the same secure vehicle.**

⁴⁸ See also the CPT factsheet on transport of detainees of June 2018: [CPT/Inf \(2018\) 24](#).

B. Concluding remarks

89. “The CPT has observed a steady deterioration in the living conditions and treatment of prisoners over the past decade. [...] The CPT has highlighted in its reports the unsuitable material conditions, the absence of an appropriate regime and the poor provision of health care. It has found that due to the totally inadequate staffing levels, effective control within the accommodation areas of some of the prisons visited has progressively been ceded to groups of strong prisoners. All these issues are compounded by the severe overcrowding within most Greek prisons.”

This was the damning assessment drawn up by the CPT when it took the extraordinary step on 15 March 2011 of issuing a public statement in respect of Greece on the situation in prisons.

90. A decade later and there has been no tangible improvement in the treatment of prisoners. During the last 10 years, the CPT has closely monitored the situation in Greece, carrying out visits to prisons on five occasions (2011, 2013, 2015, 2019 and 2021). Further, it has engaged actively with the Greek authorities through High Level Talks and promoting co-operation with the Council of Europe to reform the prison system. Nevertheless, there has been a continued lack of strategic direction and investment by successive governments to address the chronic crisis within prisons. The fundamental question of what kind of prison system Greece wants to operate has not been addressed. Once this question is comprehensively answered, the requisite funding and resources must be made available to see through its realisation.

Far too many prisoners in Greece continue to be held in conditions which represent an affront to their human dignity. The agenda must be to ensure that prisons move away from merely warehousing persons in overcrowded, dangerous and poor conditions with no purposeful activities to places which offer decent living conditions and prepare persons for reintegration back into the community upon their release. In addition to providing adequate places for prisoners, this requires above all investing in sufficient competent staff to manage prisons and provide the requisite support to persons held in prison.

This is not merely a problem to be resolved by the Ministry of Citizens Protection (which is currently responsible for prisons) but one that must be addressed by the Government, as a whole, together with the Hellenic Parliament and the judiciary. Reforming the prison system is a long-term project which must go hand-in-hand with urgently improving the daily life of prisoners. The CPT has set out in this report the strategic questions (see paragraphs 10 and 17) and issues that need to be addressed and acted upon to reform the prison system.

91. The current situation in the prisons represents a poor reflection of Greece and it runs contrary to European norms and values as enumerated in the revised European Prison Rules of 2020. The time has come for the Greek authorities to change this narrative.

The CPT wishes to receive from the Greek authorities a comprehensive response to the issues set out in this report and, in particular, on how they plan to reform the prison system as a whole in accordance with European standards.