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Response

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

from 8 to 17 October 2024

This response has been made public under an automatic publication procedure introduced by the Slovenian authorities.

The CPT's report on the 2024 visit to Slovenia is set out in document CPT/Inf (2025) 13.

Strasbourg, 9 October 2025

INTRODUCTION

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT/the Committee) carried out its sixth periodic visit to Slovenia between 8 and 17 October 2024. The delegation's visit focused on three institutions: two under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice (Ljubljana Prison and Koper Prison) and one under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future (Lukavci Special Social Welfare Establishment). After the visit, the CPT, in accordance with Article 10(1) of the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, prepared a report for the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, which includes various recommendations, comments and requests for clarification.

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia has thoroughly examined the report received; it welcomes the positive assessment of the report and pledges to continue its efforts to maintain and further improve the situation, while taking all identified shortcomings and inadequacies seriously and with due care and confirming its commitment to addressing and improving them.

In its response, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia lists the measures needed to be taken to implement the recommendations and provides replies to the comments and requests for clarification. The response was prepared by the Ministry of Justice, the Prison Administration of the Republic of Slovenia, the Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future and the Ministry of Health, in cooperation with certain prisons and local courts.

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the response at its session on 23 June 2025.

RESPONSES TO INDIVIDUAL POINTS OF THE REPORT WITH RECOMMENDATIONS, COMMENTS AND REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Listed below are the points of the report where the CPT makes various recommendations, comments and requests for information and expects a response from the Slovenian authorities.

A. PRISONS

18. The CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities vigorously pursue their efforts to manage the prison population. The Committee trusts that, in their efforts, the authorities will take due account of the principles listed in the relevant recommendations of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers.¹ Particular attention should be focused on the possibilities of alternatives to remand detention. The Committee would like to receive updated information on the impact of the measures to tackle prison overcrowding and understaffing which have been put in place by the Slovenian authorities, as well as an update on the construction and taking into service of the new prison in Ljubljana.

¹ See, in particular, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. R(99)22 concerning prison overcrowding and prison population inflation, Recommendation Rec(2006)13 on the use of remand in custody, the conditions in which it takes place and the provision of safeguards against abuse, Recommendation Rec(2003)22 on conditional release (parole), Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)1 on the Council of Europe probation rules, Recommendation Rec(2014)4 on electronic monitoring and Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)3 on the European Rules on community sanctions and measures. Reference is also made in this context to the substantive section on combating prison overcrowding of the 31st General Report of the CPT (CPT/Inf (2022) 5 – part).

The Ministry of Justice and the Prison Administration of the Republic of Slovenia (URSIKS) take the CPT's recommendations seriously and consider them important professional guidance for the further development of the criminal sanction enforcement system and the improvement of the living conditions of prisoners.

We are aware that prison overcrowding and its consequences for living conditions, the quality of treatment and the work of staff are among the key systemic challenges to be addressed. Therefore, the Prison Administration **continues to actively implement measures to manage the number of prisoners**, drawing on the recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in designing the appropriate solutions.

A number of systemic measures have been prepared to ease the staffing shortages in the prison system. In line with the recent state administration pay reform, which came into force on 1 January 2025, the Prison Administration has already transposed measures into the prison system, and positive financial results for staff are expected to take full effect after the end of the three-year transition period. The pay reform introduces a comprehensive system for increasing and modernising public sector pay, eliminating pay disparities and introducing higher minimum wages. It transfers jobs to new pay grades with phased wage increases in six instalments, automatic adjustment to inflation and performance bonuses. It supports social justice, incentives and the efficiency of public services. Significant efforts are also being made to improve the status of staff through job classification (in one or two titles, in accordance with the applicable regulations). The Act Amending the Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions Act (ZIKS-1I), adopted during the visit, supplemented the possibility of the (temporary) performance of the duties and tasks of a judicial police officer by other staff in the prison system who had previously been employed as judicial police officers. The Decree on determining intensified security conditions due to staffing or accommodation problems in prisons and on taking provisional measures (ZVR), which was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia following the Act Amending the Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions Act, has been extended several times in this part, and the current measure remains in force until mid-October 2025. Thus, since the adoption of the legislative amendments on the basis of this measure, 11 contracts have been concluded for the performance of judicial police work by internal staff who were employed in other positions. In addition, 14 contracts were concluded with external individuals for the performance of judicial police tasks and duties, and 30 contracts for temporary or occasional work, under which individuals (retired persons) perform judicial police tasks. Under unchanged conditions, a new proposal to extend the measure, which is having at least some positive effects, is expected to follow the same line.

It should be noted that in the period between the Committee's visit in October 2024 and mid-June 2025, we managed to reduce the total number of prisoners by just over 10%. During this period, 126 new recruitment procedures were carried out (more than 80% of which were for judicial police officers), with just over 16% of new candidates successfully selected (55% of whom were new judicial police officers).

In parallel, **construction and preparatory work for the construction and use of a new prison in Ljubljana (Dobrunje)**, which will significantly contribute to relieving the burden on existing capacities and enable more modern and humane living conditions, are proceeding as planned. The new prison, which will have a capacity of 388 inmates, will provide society, prisoners and staff with a modern, safe, humane, inclusive and resocialisation-oriented prison. Above all, we are gaining additional capacities for the operation of the prison

and functional and energy-efficient premises, which are either not available or are only partially acceptable at the current location in Ljubljana, but are necessary for the enforcement of the sentences of imprisonment, remand detention and alternative remand detention under the act governing minor offences. The new building will provide premises for group work, occupational therapy, leisure activities, training and education, various treatment programmes and (family) visits, sick rooms, living units for a high-security ward for persons with physical and functional disabilities, premises for persons protected under the act governing the witness protection and an open ward (currently operating in Ig). It will also include recreation areas and walking areas, separated for remand prisoners and sentenced prisoners, as well as parking spaces for service vehicles, staff and visitors. The prison will be built to meet all the requirements for modern and cost-efficient security. The entire prison will be centrally managed, enabling monitoring and control from a single location. In addition, the layout of the premises and their connections is designed to ensure routes are as short, separate and secure as possible, which will facilitate the work of judicial police officers. Another important addition will be rooms for hearings and videoconferencing, as well as a training centre for all prison staff. **The new prison facility is scheduled to begin operating in December of this year or early 2026.** It is expected that upon the taking into service of the new establishment, inmates will be transferred from the current location of Ljubljana Prison and the Ig open ward (all categories of inmates). The new building will not only solve the problem of overcrowding in Ljubljana Prison, but will also relieve the space constraints in all overcrowded men's prisons in Slovenia.

The Prison Administration remains firmly committed to finding systemic solutions that will enable the sustainable operation of the system and improve professional standards while respecting the rights of prisoners.

In the opinion of the Ministry of Justice, further development and growth of community sanctions within the framework of probation and efforts to find alternatives to remand detention is another means to alleviate the pressure on the prison system.

22. /.../ While acknowledging the particular challenges posed by the combination of overcrowding, understaffing and language barriers, the CPT recommends that it be reiterated to staff at Koper Prison that they must treat prisoners in their custody with respect, and that any form of verbal abuse of prisoners is unacceptable.

URSIKS agrees that all forms of violence are unacceptable and will continue to emphasise respectful treatment of prisoners at various levels. As part of its regular tasks in prisons and periodic training, URSIKS continuously raises awareness among staff about the importance of treating prisoners with respect. We emphasise that any form of verbal violence against prisoners is totally unacceptable.

To this end, a notice was posted on all internal notice boards on 20 May 2024, clearly stating: *"Any form of abusive behaviour, including verbal insults or provocative behaviour towards prisoners, is unacceptable and will be dealt with and sanctioned accordingly."*

Employees are to consistently address prisoners using the polite you form and strive to communicate in a language that prisoners understand.

26. /.../ While taking due note of these steps, in light of the findings of the visit, the CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Slovenian authorities vigorously pursue their efforts to prevent and combat inter-prisoner violence and intimidation. Management and staff at Koper and Ljubljana Prisons, as well as in other prisons in the country, should be encouraged to remain constantly vigilant and use all appropriate means at their disposal to this aim, in particular, risk and needs assessment and ongoing monitoring of prisoner behaviour (including the situation in the cells, for example, where justified by the risk assessment, by more frequent, random visits by staff), as well as the classification and allocation of individual prisoners with a view to ensuring that prisoners are not exposed to other inmates who may cause them harm, and timely and appropriate interventions when episodes of inter-prisoner violence occur. This will require sufficient staffing levels and the presence of staff in direct contact with prisoners, enabling prison officers to adequately supervise them and support each other effectively in the exercise of their duties (see also paragraphs Error! Reference source not found., and Error! Reference source not found. and following). Reference is also made to the recommendation set out in paragraph Error! Reference source not found. as regards the need to provide meaningful activities for persons in prison.

Efforts to prevent violence and intimidation, and protect the most vulnerable prisoners remain one of the fundamental priorities of URSIKS. Staff in prisons, especially judicial police officers, take immediate action whenever they detect violence or threats, either on the basis of direct observation or after receiving information from prisoners or other sources.

We are aware that not all conflicts are detected or reported in a timely manner, particularly when they occur within accommodation areas where there is no permanent physical staff presence. Therefore, prisons strive to build trust between staff and prisoners and promote a culture of open communication and timely reporting of disagreements and potentially threatening situations.

In order to effectively implement all measures to prevent violence among prisoners, it is essential to have an adequate number of trained staff, particularly those in direct contact with prisoners. Despite existing staffing constraints, prisons strive to ensure a constant presence of judicial police officers in the busiest areas.

URSIKS remains committed to preventing violence and strengthening security in all prisons. To this end, internal evaluations will continue, internal guidelines will be updated as necessary, and staff training to manage conflict situations and protect all prisoners, especially the most vulnerable, will be strengthened.

27. /.../ The CPT recommends that management and prison staff at Ljubljana Prison remain strongly committed to the protection of all prisoners and deal firmly with any signs of hostility and persecution. Particular attention should be paid to prisoners in a vulnerable situation due to the nature of their crime. Further, measures to ensure that all prisoners can benefit safely and equally from their entitlements, including an open-door policy, outdoor exercise and access to a phone, should be systematically implemented.

In its work, URSIKS consistently implements the fundamental principle of respect for human dignity and the safety of all prisoners. To this end, it already implements multifaceted and systematically designed measures aimed at preventing any form of hostility, violence, discrimination or persecution within the prison environment. Employees are informed and reminded of the importance of preventing any form of hostility, violence, discrimination or persecution through various training and education programmes, information is posted on notice boards and regular meetings are held at individual locations. The principle of zero tolerance for violence is one of the key values of the operation of all prisons.

Special care and additional measures are aimed at protecting vulnerable groups of prisoners. These include individuals who are in a particularly vulnerable position due to their personality traits, psychosocial circumstances, past experiences or the nature of the crime they have committed. In these cases, the individuals concerned are often more susceptible to various forms of pressure, exclusion or abuse by other prisoners due to stigma, security risks or special needs.

As part of its professional approach, URSIKS ensures that such persons are treated in an individual and professional manner and with an emphasis on protective mechanisms. Their classification, placement and monitoring are based on **a comprehensive risk and needs assessment** prepared by a professional team within the prison. This takes into account a number of factors, such as psychological state, previous experience, relationships with other inmates, behaviour within the prison and potential vulnerability.

The legal basis for implementing these measures is clearly laid down in the Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions Act (ZIKS) **and in the Rules on the Enforcement of Prison Sentences, which lay down specific provisions on the placement, protection and monitoring of individual groups of prisoners.** In addition to the legal framework, URSIKS is committed to continuous professional development and the ongoing adaptation of measures based on evaluations, internal analyses and feedback from practice.

Efforts to ensure open and trustworthy communication between staff and prisoners are also a priority, as this is the basis for the timely identification of distress, risk detection and the prevention of conflict escalation. Employees are regularly trained to recognise and deal with vulnerable persons and to manage complex interpersonal situations within the prison.

URSIKS will continue to maintain high standards of protection for prisoners, especially vulnerable groups, and will continue to provide professional training, update internal guidelines and improve practices based on the principles of humanity, justice and security.

28. /.../ The CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities take steps to ensure that all prisoners at Koper Prison who are accommodated in multiple-occupancy cells are provided with at least 4 m2 of living space per person (not counting the area taken up by the in-cell sanitary facilities), and that every prisoner is provided with a proper bed. Immediate steps should be taken to ensure that prisoners are not obliged to sleep on mattresses on the floor. Given the cramped conditions observed during the visit in the cells at Koper Prison, the Committee trusts that the authorities will strive to ensure that the cells are used only for their intended occupancy as soon as possible.

URSIKS is aware of the importance of ensuring adequate living conditions for all prisoners, including standards regarding minimum living space and adequate equipment in accommodation area.

The Koper Prison is currently facing significant space and staffing constraints, particularly due to the increase in the number of prisoners in recent years, which has resulted in occasional exceeding of optimal accommodation capacity. Nevertheless, even under the given circumstances, the prison strives to ensure decent living conditions for all inmates. Mattresses on the floor are used only when other accommodation options are not immediately available. Such situations are addressed as they arise by reallocating individuals between different wards or departments, or through temporary transfers to other prisons. Currently, all prisoners have their own beds; no auxiliary beds or mattresses on the floor are currently being used.

The Koper Prison will continue to strive for gradual improvement of spatial conditions. To this end, proposals for infrastructure adjustments have already been prepared and options for long-term capacity relief by transferring a certain number of inmates to other prisons have been envisaged. At the same time, activities are underway to improve staffing levels, which is key to ensuring a safe and dignified stay for inmates.

We are aware that certain shortcomings still exist, and we will therefore continue to focus on finding systemic solutions and further improving material conditions in all prisons.

29. /.../ The CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities ensure that cells with windows only in the ceiling and cells with frosted glass windows are not used for the long-term placement of prisoners.

With regard to the Committee's recommendation that cells with windows only in the ceiling or with frosted glass windows should not be used for the long-term placement of prisoners, we would like to clarify that such accommodation units are used at Koper Prison only in exceptional cases and for short periods of time, usually only in the event of temporary overcrowding at the facility.

We are aware of the importance of natural light for the psychophysical well-being of prisoners, which is why such rooms are not intended for permanent accommodation. When they are used, it is a temporary solution, while actively seeking opportunities to transfer persons to more suitable accommodation as soon as possible. In this area, the prison is also striving to improve spatial conditions and to implement standards of humane treatment, in accordance with legislation and professional recommendations, taking into account the current capacities and limitations of the system.

33. In light of these findings, the CPT recommends that, at Ljubljana Prison, the Slovenian authorities:

- **continue their efforts to maintain the establishment in a good state of repair and cleanliness; cells should have a suitable temperature;**
- **take steps to ensure that all prisoners accommodated in multiple-occupancy cells are provided with at least 4 m² of living space per person (not counting the area taken up by the in-cell sanitary facilities); preferably, the national standard for living space in prisons should be respected;**
- **ensure that the number of chairs/stools and lockers is commensurate with the number of persons accommodated in the cell.**

The Ljubljana Prison regularly and systematically monitors cleanliness and sanitary conditions. Sanitary inspections are carried out once a month by the prison's healthcare staff, accompanied by the head of the treatment sector and the operational heads of the departments. The purpose of these inspections is to monitor hygiene conditions and take preventive measures to maintain the health of prisoners. Special care is taken to ensure that remand prisoners are accommodated in clean, well-ventilated and properly maintained premises. Although the prison responds promptly to all cracks and damage observed, some defects stem from the building's age and deterioration and cannot be permanently remedied without major construction work. In certain cases, it is difficult to identify the source of the problems, as the defects are most likely hidden in the structure of the old walls, which for security reasons, cannot be extensively opened or demolished to avoid causing further structural damage. Given that the move to the newly built prison is planned for the end of the year, we expect that most of these infrastructure problems will be completely resolved.

During the summer months, the prison actively responds to high temperatures with the following measures: installing fans in corridors and accommodation areas, as well as opening and ventilating rooms, making

particular use of the morning hours to significantly reduce the temperature in the rooms. These measures have proven to be effective in practice.

The number of inmates has decreased slightly in recent months, which has allowed for better spatial allocation within the prison. Within the limits of the available possibilities, individuals are being reallocated wherever possible to improve their living conditions. This standard will be fully complied with in the new prison.

In connection with the recommendation that each cell should have an adequate number of chairs and lockers, we would like to report that the situation is improving in accordance with the reduction in the number of inmates. Additional chairs are being placed where possible, ensuring that the furniture does not obstruct security procedures and allows for safe supervision. In the new building, all cells will be equipped in accordance with the standards for the intended number of inmates, thus ensuring a permanent solution to this problem.

34. /.../ The CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities take urgent steps to ensure that whenever prisoners with reduced mobility are held at Koper and Ljubljana Prisons, as well as in any other prison in Slovenia, the necessary reasonable adjustments are made to enable them to participate in institutional life on an equal basis with other prisoners. To this end, the necessary arrangements must be made to ensure that they can independently use sanitary facilities and have access to outdoor exercise.² Further, prisoners with reduced mobility should be motivated by staff to participate in institutional life, including by regularly taking outdoor exercise.

URSIKS fully agrees with the Committee's recommendation that prisoners with reduced mobility should be provided **with reasonable and effective adjustments**, enabling them to participate in institutional life on an equal basis with other prisoners – from basic care, exercise and access to sanitary facilities to participation in activities and living in a safe environment.

In prisons, persons with mobility impairments are provided, depending on available capacities, with **accommodation in appropriately adapted premises**, such as hospital rooms with adapted access to bathrooms and basic care. All prisons are always ready to take immediate action upon the admission of a prisoner with limited mobility and, if necessary, to activate additional internal adjustments to ensure the safety and dignity of such person.

We emphasise that the situation of prisoners with disabilities **will be significantly improved with the opening of the new prison**, where the new premises will be fully **adapted**, both architecturally and functionally, to the requirements of prisoners with mobility impairments and those who need additional care due to their age. The unit will be separated from the rest of the population, ensuring greater privacy, security and peace. Nurses or **other professional staff** will be permanently present in their immediate vicinity to provide medical care and other support.

Each inmate with reduced mobility will have **independent access to sanitary facilities**, as well as the option of moving around outdoors **independently**, separately from other inmates, if they so wish. Greater staffing capacity will also enable participation **in organised group activities**, which is crucial for maintaining psychosocial balance and strengthening the sense of inclusion.

² The Committee refers to [Recommendation No. \(98\)7](#) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to Member States concerning the ethical and organisational aspects of health care in prison (paragraph 50), according to which structural alterations should be made to assist wheelchair users and persons with physical disabilities in a manner similar to that provided in the outside environment.

URSIKS will continue to strive to establish systemic conditions for **a dignified life for persons with disabilities** and their full **inclusion** in all aspects of the prison environment.

43. In light of these findings, the CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities make further efforts to provide additional out-of-cell time and activities to remand prisoners held at Koper and Ljubljana Prisons. Particular attention should be paid to the situation of remand prisoners held under the closed-door regime at Koper Prison and those held on the ground floor at Ljubljana Prison. The aim should be to ensure that all persons held in prison (including those on remand) spend a reasonable part of the day (that is, eight hours or more) outside their cells, engaged in purposeful activities of a varied nature, such as work (preferably paid work with vocational value), education, sport and recreation or socialisation. Further, the CPT encourages the Slovenian authorities to ensure that remand prisoners held at Ljubljana Prison can take their daily outdoor exercise in the larger outdoor yard, which has to date been reserved for sentenced prisoners.

We would like to explain that, for security reasons, remand prisoners held at Ljubljana Prison are currently not allowed to move around in the large outdoor yard reserved for sentenced prisoners, as the security infrastructure of this space does not currently allow for adequate supervision and prevention of possible escapes. The prison is aware of the space constraints, overcrowding and lack of staff, particularly judicial police officers, which affect the scope and frequency of organised activities.

Nevertheless, the prison actively strives to enable as much exercise and activities outside the accommodation area as possible. Certain leisure, sports and other activities are available and are carried out in accordance with security assessments and staffing capabilities. In addition, inmates in individual wards are allowed to move around the corridors at certain times.

The prison is striving to expand the range of activities through the gradual reorganisation of schedules, transferrals and cooperation with professional services and external contractors. An important step forward is the inclusion of such content in projects planned under the European Cohesion Policy, where URSIKS plans to introduce occupational therapy, education, courses and leisure activities, which will be fully implemented after the move to the new prison.

The new prison will enable greater inclusion of remand prisoners and sentenced prisoners in various programmes, including regular employment, which will allow for the full implementation of the prison's work programme. URSIKS remains committed to finding solutions including in the current circumstances, but in the long term, the move to the new facility will enable much more effective implementation of structured daily activities.

Koper Prison is also aware of the importance of the time that prisoners spend outside their cells and, in particular, the value of their involvement in specific activities such as sports, employment, courses and educational content. The situation in the remand section, where remand prisoners have the least opportunities to spend their leisure time actively, presents a particular challenge. Nevertheless, the prison strives to integrate remand prisoners into life there, including through occasional sporting events (e.g., football matches), employment opportunities and the organisation of short courses. However, all this is severely limited by a significant staff shortage, particularly judicial police officers, who ensure the basic level of security in the prison.

In the current situation, any additional activity for remand prisoners poses a potential security risk, both for them and for the staff. The prison has difficulty ensuring even a basic level of security, which means that additional activities can only be carried out if there is a substantial increase in staffing levels.

URSIKS will continue to pay particular attention to the goals related to improving the quality of life of all prisoners, including remand prisoners. In the current situation, we are striving to make the best possible use of existing space and staffing resources, but in the long term, these goals can be fully achieved by upgrading the infrastructure and increasing staffing capacity.

44. /.../ "Special security regime": However, a few prisoners who were subjected to this regime and who were interviewed by the delegation said that they did not know why this regime had been imposed on them, had not been informed of the duration of the measure and were not aware whether there was a possibility to lodge an appeal. The CPT recommends that steps be taken to ensure that all remand prisoners placed under the closed-door regime at Koper Prison and, where relevant, in all other prisons in Slovenia, be duly informed in writing of the reasons for the imposition of the measure, its duration and, if relevant, the possibility to appeal.

We would like to clarify that **there is no so-called "closed-door regime" for remand prisoners** as a formalised form of remand detention. This is an **inaccurate term**, as the prison does not impose restrictions on regimes in accordance with the system applicable to sentenced prisoners. Instead, in individual cases, remand prisoners are subject to **security instructions**, which are internal professional documents prepared on the basis of individual security assessments.

Security instructions are issued for individual cases of remand prisoners and are based on professional judgement, which includes an assessment of the risks to security, order and discipline in the prison. The purpose of the instructions is **to ensure an adequate level of protection for the individual, other remand prisoners or staff**, but they do not constitute an administrative decision and are therefore **not served** on the remand prisoner, nor are they subject to legal remedy.

The security assessment on which the instructions are based is reviewed weekly **by the prison's expert group**. In this process, it is assessed whether there are still reasons for continuing to apply the security instructions. The remand prisoner is **verbally informed of the findings**, and the content of the discussion and the decision are **duly recorded**.

Security instructions are usually applied in the following cases:

- **serious violations of the house rules and daily routine** in remand prison (e.g. possession of prohibited items or substances, disturbance of other prisoners or staff),
- **the need to protect a particular remand prisoner** (e.g. in the case of persons accused of criminal offences against children and minors, where there is a risk of conflict or danger from other prisoners).

We also emphasise that the supervision over the enforcement of remand prison **is carried out weekly by the presidents of the courts or judges of particular district courts**. If any deviation from the prescribed standards or violation of the rights of remand prisoners were found during these supervisions, **the prison would be immediately notified in writing**. To date, there have been no such findings at Koper Prison.

47. As regards staffing levels, Koper Prison was visited by a general practitioner twice a week, for a total of 12 hours. The nursing team comprised two nurses employed by the Ministry of Justice and a contracted nurse from the local public healthcare facility. The nurses were present from 6:00 to 14:00; if necessary, one nurse could work from 8:00 to 16:00. A dentist visited the facility once a week for six hours. These staffing levels appeared by and large to be adequate. However, given the prison population at the time of the visit³, it would be useful to extend the attendance of the general practitioner by the equivalent of a half-time post.

We consider the recommendation related to the proposal to increase the presence of a general practitioner by the equivalent of a half-time post at Koper Prison to be reasonable and in line with our own efforts, especially during periods of increased numbers of inmates or greater healthcare needs. In this regard, we will examine the possibilities for expanding the scope of medical care in cooperation with healthcare providers. Efforts to expand the scope of outpatient services therefore remain one of the priorities of the management of Koper Prison. In addition, Koper Health Centre has long been bringing attention to the need for an additional psychiatric outpatient service, but this initiative has not yet been implemented. As for the composition of the healthcare team in the prison, we confirm the Committee's finding that two nurses are employed directly by URSIKS. They are on duty in the morning (between 6:00 and 14:00 or between 8:00 and 16:00), with the schedule being adjusted to the general practitioner's availability and other staffing requirements. We strive to provide the highest quality of health care to prisoners at all times and will take any suggestions for improvement seriously.

48. At Ljubljana Prison, there was a pool of five GPs, who held consultations three times a week from 8:00 to 13:00, that is, for a total together of 15 hours per week. A dentist visited once a week for six hours. The CPT notes that the attendance of general practitioners has remained unchanged since the 2017 visit, despite the fact that the prison population in the establishment increased from less than 150 to more than 250 persons, that is, by more than 65%. The Committee considers that such presence is insufficient for the current prison population and recommends that the Slovenian authorities take steps to ensure the presence of general practitioners at Ljubljana Prison for at least 30 hours per week.

Considering that the number of prisoners has increased significantly in recent years, URSIKS asked the Ministry of Health to increase the office hours of certain outpatient services. The proposal was taken into consideration by the competent authorities, and discussions have already begun with Ljubljana Health Centre regarding the gradual implementation of the agreed changes to be implemented for Ljubljana Prison. The approved office hours have thus been increased for the general outpatient service from 18 hours per week to 24 hours, plus as needed, psychiatric care from 8 hours per week to 24 hours per week, plus as needed, and dental care from 6 hours per week to 12 hours per week. The office hours of health care provided at Ljubljana Prison have thus been extended from 32 hours per week to 60 hours per week, or by an additional 28 hours per week.

As part of this, dental care has been expanded – a dentist now works twice a week for six hours at Ljubljana Prison, which means a total of twelve hours per week. The general healthcare team has also been strengthened and currently visits the prison four times a week, and agreements are still being made on the exact organisation of schedules and implementation.

It is important to note that medical examinations are also provided on weekends and holidays, as a general practitioner comes to the prison to examine all newly admitted inmates.

³ The CPT recalls that the prison was holding 164 prisoners.

In organising the healthcare service, Ljubljana Prison is currently facing space constraints, as the outpatient facilities are also used by the psychiatric outpatient service. This requires careful coordination of schedules and human resources. The comprehensive introduction of an expanded programme of healthcare services will be possible with the relocation of the prison to new premises, where there will be sufficient space for the simultaneous operation of several healthcare teams. We anticipate that the appropriate organisation and accessibility of healthcare will be fully established at the new location of the prison by the end of this year.

49. The nursing team was composed of two nurses employed by the Ministry of Justice and one nurse contracted from the local healthcare centre.⁴ Nurses were present in the prison from 6:00 to 15:00 on working days. The possibility to allocate an additional post of a nurse so that a nurse can also be present in the afternoon, was considered at the time of the visit.

Given the size of the prison population at Ljubljana Prison, the CPT strongly supports this initiative and would like to receive confirmation that an additional nurse's post has been allocated to Ljubljana Prison.

In accordance with the recommendation of the CPT Committee and taking into account the increase in the number of prisoners, URSIKS, together with Ljubljana Prison, examined the possibilities for expanding the team of nurses. We have completed the recruitment process for an additional nurse, but unfortunately no candidate was selected in the process, as no one fully met the professional requirements of the position. Nevertheless, we are fully aware of the importance of a permanent and expanded presence of healthcare staff in the prison, and we will therefore proceed with a new public call for applications.

At the same time, a new job classification is being prepared, as we are striving to employ six nurses as part of the future organisation of the healthcare service in the new prison in Dobrunje. They will also perform their duties in the planned nursing ward for individuals who need additional assistance with basic daily activities, chronically ill prisoners and prisoners with mobility impairments. The nurses will also work in the afternoons, which will further improve the availability and continuity of healthcare in the prison.

We are aware that strengthening the healthcare service is crucial for ensuring professional, accessible and continuous health care for inmates, and we will therefore continue to actively strive to achieve this goal.

50. At Koper Prison, distribution of medication was carried out by nurses during their working hours and by judicial police officers in the evenings and at the weekends /.../. Consequently, the CPT considers that medication should preferably be distributed by healthcare staff. Further, the Committee recommends that the Slovenian authorities introduce a supervised intake procedure for medications susceptible to abuse in all prisons, to be performed solely by healthcare staff, to minimise the possibility of diversion of medication.

The intake and records of medications received by prisoners are kept by nurses employed in the prisons. During their absence (weekends, holidays, etc.), nurses prepare the therapy in advance using a cassette system. The medications prepared in this way are then distributed to prisoners by judicial police officers. If the prisoner does not take the medication, the judicial police officer informs the nurse upon their return to work. The nurse then informs the doctor who prescribed the therapy.

⁴ The nurses employed by the Ministry of Justice were mainly responsible for arranging appointments with specialists outside the prison, delivering medicines from the pharmacy and distributing certain medicines on working days. The nurse from the local healthcare centre was mainly responsible for triaging patients and assisting doctors in the prison.

In addressing this issue, we also refer to the expert opinion of medical expert Dr Zdenka Čebašek Travnik, MD, specialist in psychiatry, which was included in the report of the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Slovenia in his capacity as the National Preventive Mechanism during a visit to Dob pri Mirni Prison in 2015. The expert explicitly emphasised at the time that prisoners may keep medications that do not have a psychotropic effect with them and take them in accordance with the prescribed therapy, as they are adults who must take responsibility for their own health.

However, psychotropic or psychoactive drugs prescribed by a doctor or specialist psychiatrist are subject to stricter control in prisons. The therapy is prepared in advance in boxes labelled with the patient's name, which are distributed by a nurse in the prison's outpatient clinic. After distribution, they are collected by judicial police officers from the shift supervisor and handed over to the individual prisoners. The prisoner must take the medication immediately in the presence of a judicial police officer. The method of administering the medication, as described by the expert, was not found to be inappropriate

We are aware that the recommendation that medication be distributed exclusively by healthcare staff is professionally justified, but it cannot be fully implemented given the current staffing levels in all prisons. URSIKS will look into ways to increase the number of healthcare staff and will work with the Ministry of Health to make sure that medications are distributed by qualified healthcare staff to the greatest extent possible.

51. At the time of the visit, four prisoners held at Ljubljana Prison were receiving long-acting injectable buprenorphine (extended-release buprenorphine/XR-BUP). The CPT notes in this respect that XR-BUP addresses concerns of diversion and offers a safe and effective treatment option. The Committee calls on the Slovenian authorities to extend this treatment option whenever appropriate.

URSIKS is aware of the importance of extended-release buprenorphine (XR-BUP) treatment as a safe, effective and scientifically proven form of treatment for opioid dependence. This form of therapy reduces the potential for drug diversion and enables better therapeutic stability for individuals in a closed environment.

The addiction treatment programme is implemented within the public healthcare network at the appropriate professional level. The therapy is provided by experienced psychiatrists who strictly follow national guidelines for the treatment of addiction.

All persons struggling with opioid addiction are offered the possibility of treatment with XR-BUP. For this purpose, the microdosing method (microinduction) is used in practice, which is considered a more patient-friendly approach compared to conventional methods of introducing therapy. Despite the clear advantages, however, there are specific characteristics of the prison environment that make only a part of individuals decide to join the programme. Among other things, adverse effects at the site of application (e.g. pain, local inflammation) have been reported, causing some individuals to discontinue treatment.

We emphasise that all persons with disorders stemming from the use of psychoactive substances have access to regular psychiatric treatment, which is provided in accordance with national guidelines. Psychiatrists decide on the most appropriate form of treatment based on a clinical assessment, and individuals are also given the opportunity to express their own wishes and preferences. Before opioid substitution therapy is initiated, it is always checked whether all medical conditions for its initiation are met.

We are aware that XR-BUP represents an important step forward in preventing drug abuse and trafficking within the prison, but its introduction depends in each case on the individual's clinical picture, the doctor's professional judgement and the prisoner's willingness to participate in the treatment.

53. /.../ The CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities take steps to ensure that this guidance is fully implemented in practice. *In particular, as a general rule, all medical examinations of prisoners should be conducted out of the sight and hearing of prison officers, under conditions fully guaranteeing medical confidentiality, unless, exceptionally, the healthcare professional concerned expressly requests otherwise in a given case. Further, an end should be put to the practice of handcuffing prisoners during medical examinations or consultations.*

At URSIKS, we are aware of the importance of protecting confidentiality in the relationship between healthcare professionals and patients, which also includes the conditions under which medical examinations and consultations are conducted. Therefore, we consistently strive to ensure that all medical examinations are conducted outside the sight and hearing of judicial police officers, except in cases where a specific clinical or security assessment explicitly indicates otherwise. Such exceptions are documented in the medical records and in the personal file of the prisoner, where the security assessment is kept. They are justified from the point of view of the protection of healthcare staff or other persons.

With regard to the use of restraints (handcuffs), we emphasise that their use during medical examinations is strictly limited and used only in exceptional cases – when there are justified security reasons related to dangerous behaviour or specific risks. Even in these cases, the decision to use restraints is based on an individual risk assessment, in accordance with internal security protocols.

We would like to emphasise that, in accordance with the first paragraph of the same Article, the doctor, during the examination, determines the type and location of any injuries, their cause, records the prisoner's statements about how the injuries occurred, and assesses the consistency between the alleged behaviour and the medical findings. If necessary, the injuries are also documented. If the doctor detects signs of improper use of coercive measures, they inform the prison director. If the sentenced prisoner refuses a medical examination, they are asked to make a written statement; if they refuse to do so, an official record is made.

With regard to the use of restraints (handcuffs), we emphasise that, in accordance with Article 86 of the ZIKS-1, the sentenced prisoner is not, in principle, handcuffed during a medical examination, unless there are justified security reasons related to dangerous behaviour or the risk of escape, self-harm or violent behaviour. If the sentenced prisoner is restrained, the doctor may request that the restraints be removed. In this case, the judicial police officer informs the doctor of the reasons for the restraint and notifies the commander or, in their absence, the operational manager, who decides on further security measures. In such cases, the use of restraints is also based on an individual risk assessment and is in accordance with internal security protocols. In light of the Committee's recommendations, we will further review existing practices in particular prisons and, where necessary, upgrade internal guidelines to bring them more into line with international standards and CPT recommendations. We will pay particular attention to training judicial police officers and healthcare staff on the importance of medical confidentiality and the proportionate use of security measures.

54. Access to specialist care was ensured by transferring prisoners to local healthcare facilities. However, due to understaffing, prison staff were not always available to escort the prisoners and appointments needed to be re-scheduled. The implementation of the recommendation set out in paragraph 69 will help to remedy this shortcoming.

Access to specialist health care is ensured by referring prisoners to local healthcare facilities. In practice, due to staffing constraints, it is not always possible to provide an escort by judicial police officers, which occasionally leads to the postponement of already agreed appointments for specialist examinations.

URSIKS will endeavour to ensure that appointments for specialist examinations are carried out within the scheduled time frame and that postponements for organisational reasons are kept to a minimum or eliminated as far as possible

57. /.../ The Committee recommends that the Slovenian authorities take steps to ensure that a dedicated trauma register is established and properly maintained at Koper and Ljubljana Prisons and, where relevant, in all other prisons in Slovenia, in which all injuries observed during any medical examination, whether displayed by prisoners upon admission, following a violent event in prison, or on any other occasion, are duly recorded.

URSIKS is aware of the importance of systematic and transparent management of data on injuries sustained by prisoners, which can be crucial for ensuring their health, safety and respect for human rights. Currently, measures are being implemented specific prisons such as Ljubljana Prison and Koper Prison, which include documenting injuries upon admission, after detected extraordinary events and in cases of self-harm or violence.

Ljubljana Prison has an information system in place for recording injuries, which enables traceability and transparency of data from a security perspective. Koper Prison intends to upgrade its existing practice of documenting injuries upon admission and in medical records by introducing a special table to be kept by healthcare staff, in which all injuries detected will be recorded.

In practice, injuries are already recorded in safety and medical records, which enables basic traceability and action by the competent services. However, we are aware that better coordination of existing records could further contribute to transparency and timely action.

URSIKS will strive to prepare uniform internal guidelines for reporting injuries, which will assist prisons in consistently and comparably recording such events within the framework of existing information systems. As part of the procedure for reporting injuries that could indicate ill-treatment, the Ministry of Health is preparing professional guidelines for healthcare staff. Regardless of this, URSIKS has its own reporting procedures relating to the recording of injuries from a security system perspective. Particular emphasis will be placed on linking health and security data, while ensuring consistent protection of personal data and the meaningful and professionally justified use of information for further work and analysis.

At this stage, URSIKS does not plan to introduce a special register, but wishes to implement existing procedures consistently, proportionately and in a meaningful and coordinated manner in all prisons, which we believe will contribute to the objective pursued by the Committee's recommendation.

58. /.../ The CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities put in place a clear reporting procedure of injuries indicative of ill-treatment, in light of the above considerations. Care should be taken to ensure that all healthcare professionals examining prisoners, whether they are employed by the prison or by the public health network, are duly informed of the procedure and their ensuing obligations to report injuries. The CPT trusts that all healthcare professionals working in prisons will be adequately trained on documenting, interpreting and reporting injuries (see also the remarks and recommendation set out in paragraph 110).

URSIKS is fully aware of the importance of early recognition and appropriate action in cases of injuries that could indicate ill-treatment of prisoners. In accordance with applicable legislation and existing internal procedures, all healthcare professionals, regardless of whether they are employed in prisons or in the public healthcare system, are required to record injuries to prisoners and report them.

In practice, injuries are detected upon the admission of a prisoner, during medical examinations, after violent incidents, or on the basis of reports made by prisoners themselves. In cases where there is a suspicion that injuries may be the result of inappropriate treatment, healthcare staff always inform the prison management. With regard to the procedure for reporting injuries that could indicate ill-treatment, we would like to clarify that the Ministry of Health is responsible for establishing this procedure, as also indicated by the response to recommendation No. 110. This procedure also provides for the training of doctors throughout the Republic of Slovenia. URSIKS will participate in the training of healthcare staff working in prisons in the area of identifying, documenting and reporting injuries. These are the tasks that fall within the competence and professional domain of the health sector.

62. /.../ The CPT trusts that the Slovenian authorities will continue their efforts to engage drug-using prisoners in the treatment and assistance programmes. Further, the Committee recommends that extensive harm reduction advice be provided to prisoners and staff alike, to increase awareness of the potential effects of and risks associated with the use of Spice, including the need for emergency interventions and transfer to a medical or psychiatric setting due to Spice-induced psychosis, and the elevated risk of convulsions and of respiratory depression.

URSIKS strives to actively involve prisoners who use drugs in various forms of treatment, psychosocial support and harm reduction. In all prisons, prisoners are offered treatment for addiction, methadone maintenance programmes, counselling and therapy sessions, cooperation with external organisations and individual assistance plans. Thus, in the context of harm reduction, prisoners, in addition to opioid substitution therapy, also have access to individual counselling, information about harmful drug use and anonymous HIV and hepatitis testing. Before their release, prisoners receive a leaflet on preventing an overdose and measures to be taken in the event of an overdose. They are also informed about the possibility of obtaining naloxone for home use and are informed about measures to be taken in the event of an overdose through posters in the prisons.

As part of URSIKS, leaflets on the effects of synthetic drugs and forms of assistance were prepared and translated into ten different languages. In addition to institutional treatment for addiction, prisoners had the opportunity to attend individual and group counselling provided by counsellors from the Project Man Association, Narcotics Anonymous self-help groups and the Stigma Association for the Reduction of Drug-Related Harm, which offer assistance in the field of addiction.

We are aware that the use of synthetic cannabinoids, especially so-called Spice, poses a new and serious risk to both the health of inmates and the security of prisons. Therefore, URSIKS, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, the National Institute of Public Health and external experts, will strengthen systematic information and counselling for both prisoners and staff through the following measures:

- **preparing and distributing information materials** on the dangers and effects of Spice use, including risks to mental health (psychosis, convulsions, respiratory depression);
- **training for staff**, in particular judicial police officers and healthcare staff, to recognise the signs of poisoning and take appropriate action in emergencies,
- **more intensive counselling for prisoners** within existing harm reduction programmes,
- **the establishment of protocols for emergency intervention** and, where necessary, transfer of prisoners to a forensic psychiatric unit.
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We strive for a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, rapid identification of health risks, appropriate treatment, and long-term support for individuals in giving up the use of prohibited substances. In doing so, we aim to enhance the safety and well-being of all those involved in the criminal justice system.

63. /.../ The CPT recommends that, in addition to any external investigation, an internal inquiry be carried out into every death in prison, with a view to learning lessons, improving operating procedures within the prison and refining the system of prevention in place, including as regards the protective measures afforded to vulnerable prisoners.

Further, efforts should be continued to ensure that prisoners at risk of suicide are offered regular and frequent contact with staff to provide psychosocial support, are engaged in purposeful activities, and are afforded individualised preventive measures, such as more frequent night checks.

URSIKS agrees with the purpose of the recommendation that every case of death in prison should be thoroughly investigated with a view to learning lessons, improving the operation of the system and strengthening protective measures, especially for vulnerable groups of prisoners.

Firstly, we would like to explain that the law on the death of a prisoner lays down the necessary procedures under which the president of the competent court appoints a commission to determine the cause of death. The director of the prison is also a member of this commission, so that, in the opinion of URSIKS, this is not an entirely external investigation (third and fourth paragraphs of Article 67 of the Rules on the Enforcement of Detention; Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*], Nos 36/99, 39/02, 114/04, 127/06, 7/07, 112/07, 62/08, 16/09 and 41/17).

Regardless of the activities of this commission, in practice, **a comprehensive internal expert analysis** is carried out in each such case within the framework of a special task force for the prevention of self-harm and suicide, led by the General Office of URSIKS.

The task force includes representatives of various professional services and representatives of the judicial police, who jointly analyse the circumstances of the case, identify any shortcomings and propose improvements, which are then implemented in the operations of a specific prison. In addition, the General Office of URSIKS itself conducts a comprehensive internal professional inquiry into each case, ensuring the objectivity and transparency of procedures within the system.

The purpose of these activities is to systematically assess all the circumstances of the incident, identify any systemic or operational shortcomings and prepare specific proposals for improvements, which are then implemented by URSIKS at the level of the entire system. We believe that this approach already meets the requirements for an objective and substantive internal investigation or inquiry.

Ljubljana Prison has a coordinator specifically responsible for dealing with suicide risk, who is in regular contact with prisoners identified as being at increased risk. The coordinator interviews each person and, based on an assessment of the level of risk, prepares a monitoring plan. In cases of high risk, more frequent checks are carried out, sometimes several times a night, with immediate psychiatric examination at the Crisis Intervention Unit of the Outpatient Psychiatric Centre in Ljubljana or examination by the psychiatrist in the prison, who refers the person to the Forensic Psychiatry Unit at the University Medical Centre Maribor. Vulnerable persons are in regular contact with professional staff, psychologists and coordinators, and psychosocial support is provided systematically and on an individualised basis. We are aware of the seriousness of each such incident and ensure that all available mechanisms and professional expertise are always used to prevent suicide, while the General Office continuously strengthens the systemic response in all prisons.

At the same time, URSIKS implements a number of measures under **the Strategy for the Prevention of Suicide in Prisons**, which include:

- appointment of **suicide risk coordinators in prisons**,
- **individual risk assessment** and preparation of a monitoring plan for each person at risk,
- **increased supervision** and more frequent night checks in cases of high risk,
- **psychiatric and psychological treatment**, including crisis interventions and the possibility of transfer to the Forensic Psychiatry Unit at the University Medical Centre Maribor,
- inclusion of prisoners in **targeted activities** that strengthen their psychosocial stability.

All measures are implemented with the utmost professionalism, taking into account the individual needs of each person. URSIKS will continue to actively monitor, evaluate and improve systemic responses in order to ensure a safe, professional and respectful environment for even the most vulnerable individuals in the system.

65. At Koper Prison, the delegation met a prisoner who was confined to his bed and who had been held in the establishment since August 2024, following his transfer from abroad. He had a number of serious somatic and mental health problems and was in need of nursing care (in particular, he was incontinent and needed help with eating). /.../ On 5 February 2025, the Slovenian authorities informed the CPT that the person had been transferred to a social welfare establishment. The CPT welcomes this development. However, the CPT trusts that the Slovenian authorities will take the necessary steps to ensure, in light of this experience, that, in the future, similar cases will be addressed in a faster and effective manner.

URSIKS would like to express its gratitude for the recognition of the positive move forward in relation to the transfer of a bedridden prisoner from Koper Prison to a more appropriate social welfare establishment. The case was exceptional in its complexity, as it involved simultaneous somatic and mental health issues that far exceeded the usual capabilities of treatment within the prison system.

Based on this experience, we will work with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future to start setting up **better protocols for quickly identifying prisoners who need to be placed in social welfare establishments.**

- **early involvement of social welfare establishments,**

- **faster multidisciplinary assessment of an individual's condition,**
- **accelerated search for alternative accommodation options** in compliance with legal procedures.

At the same time, we will continue to strive for further **interministerial cooperation** in order to ensure more appropriate living conditions for prisoners in need of care and social assistance.

In this regard, **as part of the planning of the new prison in Dobrunje**, we expect a significant systemic shift: **the infrastructure will include a special section for prisoners who, due to age, immobility or chronic illness require enhanced social assistance and nursing care.** The purpose of this section will be to provide dignified, professionally appropriate and safe care for this vulnerable group.

69. /.../ Consequently, the CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities vigorously pursue their efforts to fill the vacant posts of prison officers at Koper and Ljubljana Prisons and, more generally, in the whole prison system, as raised already in the 2017 report. Reference is made to the request for information formulated in paragraph 18.

URSIKS agrees with the Committee's recommendation that ensuring an adequate number of judicial police officers is key to the efficient and safe operation of prisons and to ensuring the fundamental rights and dignity of prisoners. The lack of staff in this area remains one of the key structural challenges of the prison system, which we are addressing with a number of measures and initiatives.

In the period following the Committee's visit, numerous **open competitions were held**, cooperation with the Employment Service of Slovenia was strengthened and **promotional activities were organised to present the profession of judicial police officer**, both at career fairs and in secondary schools and local communities. We have also strengthened the **opportunities for more flexible employment** (employment of assistants, retirees on the basis of work contracts and administrative support staff).

Despite intensive efforts, interest in the profession of judicial police officer remains low, especially due to the **complexity of the work, the shifts, constant exposure to stressful situations and low starting salaries.** The number of applications for vacancies is often insufficient to fill vacant positions, especially in larger and more demanding prisons such as Ljubljana Prison and Koper Prison.

On 1 January 2025, Ljubljana Prison employed 117 judicial police officers, which is below the permitted staffing standard (135 positions). On 20 May 2025, in Koper Prison, which has 100 classified job positions, only 60 judicial police officers were employed. Absences, overwork and the staffing gap also affect the quality of work and the number of sick leaves.

The expected move to the new prison in Dobrunje, which will be more modern in terms of organisation and architecture and larger in terms of space, **requires reinforcement of the staff, especially in the judicial police segment.**

URSIKS will continue its activities in the future to:

- enhance the promotion of the profession in the public,
- seek systemic solutions to improve working conditions and advancement opportunities,
- cooperate with other authorities and departments in preparing long-term solutions in the field of human resources.

Reinforcement of the staff **remains a priority** for URSIKS, as it represents the foundation for the efficient, safe and professional operation of prisons and the implementation of all procedures in accordance with legislation and international recommendations.

70. /.../ However, in both prisons visited, the delegation heard some allegations that the actual visit time afforded to prisoners was sometimes shorter as it included the time needed for the escort from the accommodation area to the visiting room and for the security check. The CPT recommends that this shortcoming be remedied.

URSIKS strives to respect the rights of prisoners, which include regular contact with their loved ones. We are aware of the importance of visits for maintaining family and social ties and for the rehabilitation process. With regard to the Committee's finding that in some cases the actual visiting time also included the time it took to complete escort procedures and security checks, we would like to explain that we have already addressed this issue in the prisons and taken appropriate measures.

At Ljubljana Prison, this finding was further discussed at the management level, where all staff was again given **clear instructions** that each visit must last at least one full hour, regardless of the time needed for escorting prisoners and implementing security checks. The implementation of the instructions will be regularly monitored and, if necessary, measures will be taken in the event of any deviations.

This practice **was not identified** at Koper Prison. According to the assurances of the prison management, the visit time is **recorded only when both the prisoner and the visitor are present in the visiting room**, regardless of the duration of the preceding procedures. At the same time, the management regularly responds to any complaints from prisoners, which are dealt with in a documented and verifiable manner.

In order to ensure consistency and transparency, URSIKS will continue **to closely monitor the implementation of the rules on visits in all prisons**.

71. /.../ The CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities take steps to ensure that the layout of the visiting facility at Koper Prison is reviewed to offer adequate privacy to prisoners and their visitors. Further, the Committee trusts that care will be taken to ensure that the new prison which is being constructed in Ljubljana will provide adequate visiting facilities, sufficient in size for the capacity of the prison.

URSIKS is aware of the importance of ensuring adequate privacy during visits between prisoners and their loved ones, as quality interpersonal relationships are an important factor in maintaining family ties and successful resocialisation.

At Koper Prison, the architectural design of the visiting facilities has been designed to allow for maximum privacy, while also taking into account the security aspects that are necessary due to the different security regimes of prisoners. Inmates serving sentences under a more lenient regime have the option of visits without supervision in a specially designated area where they can be completely alone with their family members.

URSIKS sees the Committee's recommendation as constructive encouragement for further improvements. The possibility of additional privacy protection through appropriate technical solutions (e.g., partial darkening with foil) will be examined, insofar as this is possible from a security perspective.

In this regard, we emphasise that, as part of the construction **of the new prison in Dobrunje**, special attention will be paid to the design **of spacious and functionally modern visiting rooms**, which will be in line with the capacity of the prison in terms of size and layout and will allow for a higher level of privacy and human contact in a safe environment.

73. /.../ The CPT welcomes the arrangements to make free-of-charge VoIP calls and encourages the Slovenian authorities to consider how they could be further extended.

URSIKS would like to thank the Committee for recognising its efforts to date in establishing free-of-charge VoIP calls and fully shares the view on the importance of maintaining regular contact between prisoners and their loved ones, which contributes significantly to maintaining mental stability, reducing feelings of isolation and facilitating successful resocialisation.

VoIP calls have proven to be an effective form of modern communication that complements traditional forms of visits and telephone contact. These calls are already being made in all prisons using prison tablet PCs, with access technically limited to verified applications such as Skype.

We are aware that there are currently differences in the frequency and availability of VoIP calls between sentenced prisoners and remand prisoners, mainly due to organisational and staffing constraints. Therefore, URSIKS, together with the prisons, **is actively exploring options for expanding the use of VoIP technology**, including in terms of greater inclusion of socially vulnerable individuals, and seeking solutions for more regular calls for remand prisoners.

To this end, **we are also considering the implementation of a comprehensive digital communication system** that would enable secure, controlled and accessible electronic communication (video calls, correspondence, service subscription) within a unified technical system for all prisons. Such a system would contribute significantly to the standardisation, greater accessibility and long-term sustainability of digital communication options for prisoners.

URSIKS remains committed to the further development of solutions that will enable prisoners to maintain contact with the outside world to the greatest extent possible.

77. /.../ However, the delegation still received some allegations that, in response to breaches of disciplinary offences, certain measures were applied to prisoners, such as the introduction of partitioned visits, placement under a closed regime in a single-occupancy cell or a ban on access to the gym for a certain time period. It would thus appear that these measures were imposed as an informal punishment to circumvent the formal disciplinary procedures and the above-mentioned safeguards which accompany them. The CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities take steps to ensure that administrative measures or informal punishment do not circumvent formal disciplinary procedures.

URSIKS fully supports the principle that all measures taken against prisoners that constitute an interference with their rights or freedoms **must be carried out in accordance with the prescribed procedure and subject to appropriate supervision and complaint mechanisms.**

All prisons are required to conduct disciplinary proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions Act (ZIKS-1), which clearly defines the types of disciplinary offences, possible sanctions and the right of the sentenced prisoner to defence and legal protection.

In relation to the Committee's finding, **we will call on the management of all prisons** to review the practice of implementing all measures such as temporary bans on visits, restricted access to common areas, bans on access to the gym and similar, and **ensure that these do not serve as a substitute for formal procedures**. If such measures are imposed, they must be based on clearly defined security reasons, be documented and be limited in time.

80. The CPT notes that in Ljubljana Prison [...], the placement was duly extended by means of a written decision at 12-hour intervals and that the overall length did not exceed the maximum of 72 hours provided for by the relevant legislation. Nevertheless, it wishes to point out that any such placement should be as short as possible and that meaningful human contact should be regularly provided to the persons concerned to help them calm down. The CPT trusts that this guidance will be implemented at Ljubljana Prison.

URSIKS is aware that placing a prisoner in a special room, temporarily removing their clothing and putting them in a special two-piece protective suit constitutes a serious interference with the personal dignity and integrity of the individual. Therefore, such a measure is used **only in exceptional cases** when there is an **immediate danger to the life or health of the prisoners or others**, and when safety cannot be ensured by less severe means.

The fundamental policy of prisons, including personal searches, is simply to prevent persons in this specially secured area from harming themselves or others in any way. In other words, the assessment and decision to place an individual in a special area is thoroughly considered and is only carried out when absolutely necessary, and consequently, a personal search is also necessary, which is carried out as soon as it can be done safely, and above all in accordance with the applicable legislation, taking into account the safety of the person placed in the special area as well as that of the staff.

Ljubljana Prison, where such a measure has been used in practice, carries out the procedure **in accordance with the law**, which specifies the maximum duration of the measure (up to 72 hours) and **the mandatory issuance of a written decision every 12 hours**, which allows for an ongoing assessment of the justification for continued placement. In each such case, a **personal search** is carried out as soon as it can be done safely, taking into account the safety of both the prisoner and the staff.

URSIKS also **fully agrees with the Committee's** recommendation that any placement should be **as short as possible** and that the prisoners should also be provided with regular human contact in these conditions, **which may contribute to calming them down**. To this end, the guidance is that such persons should be in contact **with a psychologist, professional staff or healthcare staff** whenever this is safely feasible. Internal monitoring of the use of this measure has also been established, including documentation of the reasons, duration, contacts and initial assessment of the condition.

In the future, URSIKS will continue to monitor the implementation of this measure at the system level with the aim of ensuring that it is used only as a **last resort**.

82. Prisoners placed in the padded cell were systematically asked to undress and were provided with a special suicide-proof white overall. The CPT reiterates its view that if prisoners are placed in a padded cell, they should only be obliged to remove their clothes and wear special suicide-proof clothing if necessary on the basis of an individual risk assessment.

URSIKS agrees with the Committee's view that measures involving the removal of clothing and replacement with protective overalls in a specially secured area should be applied only on the basis of an individual risk assessment **based on the specific security, health or psychological circumstances of each individual case.**

In the Slovenian prison system, such a measure **is intended as an extreme security measure** that may only be used for clearly defined reasons **specified in Article 236 of the ZIKS-1, for example in the event of a threat to life, health, escape or violent behaviour on the part of the prisoner.** The decision to place a prisoner in a special secured area is always accompanied by an expert assessment, **which also includes an assessment of the need for alternative clothing intended to protect the life and physical integrity of the individual.** This clothing – often referred to as a "protective suit" – is not intended as punishment or standard procedure, but is part of a **security assessment in exceptional cases**, when there is an immediate risk of self-harm or violence.

Prisons, including Ljubljana Prison and Koper Prison, **carry out individual risk assessments** for each measure of this kind. The removal of personal clothing and replacement with protective clothing is therefore **not carried out automatically or routinely**, but always after a prior expert assessment, which is documented.

In the coming period, URSIKS will further strengthen its recommendations for the consistent use **of individualised risk assessments** in all cases where protective suits are used, with an emphasis on the proportionality of measures and respect for the dignity of the individual.

86. /.../ However, it remains the case that the information materials shown to the delegation did not contain information on the possibilities and procedures to lodge complaints internally, within the prison establishment. Moreover, a few allegations were heard at Koper Prison that no information was provided upon admission in writing and newly admitted persons had to rely on advice provided by fellow prisoners. These deficiencies should be remedied.

URSIKS fully agrees with the Committee's recommendation that prisoners should be clearly and unambiguously informed of their rights upon admission, including the possibilities and procedures for lodging complaints within the prison system.

Upon admission to the prison, the operational manager provides the prisoner with basic information, and a copy of the house rules and daily schedule. The material is available in Slovenian, Italian, English and German, and receipt of the material is documented with a signature. If the prisoner does not understand any of these languages, assistance is provided by staff members or interpreters, and in urgent cases by other prisoners who speak the relevant language.

Within 48 hours of admission, a professional staff member contacts the person and introduce them to life in the prison and the system of operation, including the possibilities for submitting complaints, initiatives and

applications, also with the use of machine translation if necessary. Written complaints may be lodged at any time, either in person, through professional or other staff members of the prison, or anonymously by placing them in a designated mailbox. Complaints may also be addressed directly to external supervisory institutions. Remand prisoners are additionally visited weekly by a court representative, which provides an additional safeguard for the exercise of their rights.

Despite the existing mechanisms, URSIKS agrees with the Committee's recommendation that access to information should be further improved and that information material should also include clear written instructions on the possibilities for lodging internal complaints. To this end, we will:

- ensure that this material is provided to every new prisoner upon admission,
- provide additional training to staff involved in the admission process to ensure consistent implementation of the information provision.

87. /.../ However, while complaints lodged by prisoners were included in their individual administrative files, it remains the case that there was no central register of complaints which would give an overview of the complaints and steps taken to address them. The CPT considers that all written complaints should be registered and statistics on the types of complaints made should be kept as an indicator to management of areas of discontent within the prison. The Committee reiterates its recommendation that the existing procedures and practice at Koper and Ljubljana Prisons, and, where relevant, in all other prisons in Slovenia, be reviewed, in light of these remarks.

URSIKS agrees with the Committee's recommendation that the systematic recording of written complaints by prisoners and the analysis of their content could be a valuable source of information for identifying areas of discontent among prisoners and for guiding improvements in the operation of prisons. In all prisons, we enable prisoners to submit written complaints **directly and anonymously**, most often via confidential mailboxes in the wards or with the help of prison staff. Complaints addressed to external institutions are recorded separately, which enables traceability and an official response. Complaints addressed directly to a prisoner **are filed in their personal file**, which enables individual consideration and action where necessary.

Based on the Committee's recommendation, **URSIKS will look into ways to simplify the analysis of the content of complaints without introducing any additional burdensome record-keeping requirements.** To this end, some prisons, such as Koper Prison, are already developing **a basic electronic tool** that will enable the monitoring **of repetitive and substantively significant complaints** (e.g. regarding living conditions, staff conduct, access to services, etc.), which will provide a better insight into the broader issues without the need to record every minor individual comment.

At URSIKS level, we do not plan the establishment **of a central register of all complaints**, but rather **targeted monitoring of thematic areas of discontent** that are relevant for systemic improvements. In this way, we will ensure **transparency and a focus on quality**, while maintaining the **operational efficiency and administrative sustainability of the system.**

88. /.../ The CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities take steps, including by amending the relevant regulations, to ensure that prisoners who are searched are not required to remove all their clothes at the same time; that is, a person should be allowed to remove clothing above the waist and get dressed before removing further clothing.

URSIKS agrees with the Committee's recommendation that personal searches of prisoners should be carried out in a manner that **respects human dignity** while ensuring **the necessary level of security** in prisons.

Personal searches involving undressing are carried out exclusively on security grounds and in cases where there is a reasonable suspicion of an attempt to introduce prohibited items or substances. They are carried out without the presence of other prisoners and by professionally qualified staff of the same sex as the person being searched. The procedure is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions Act, which stipulates that the sentenced prisoner is allowed to wear two-piece substitute clothing for the duration of the search. After the upper body has been searched, the sentenced prisoner may put back on the upper part of their searched clothing before the search of the lower body continues. This ensures that the search is carried out in a gradual and discreet manner, which contributes significantly to the respect for human dignity.

In accordance with the fifth paragraph of Article 236.f of the ZIKS-1, a written order is issued for a personal search, stating the reason and date of the search. As a rule, searches are not carried out during the night-time rest period of prisoners, unless postponement would be dangerous.

In this regard, URSIKS is aware of the importance of a personal approach and the sensitivity of such procedures for individuals. We will therefore strengthen the training of judicial police officers who carry out personal searches with the aim of:

- raising awareness of respect for dignity aspects,
- using appropriate communication and a professional attitude,
- and consistently observing the principle of proportionality when conducting searches.

We believe that through professional conduct and appropriate communication by staff, we can ensure that every search is carried out in the least intrusive manner, in accordance with legal provisions and without the need for further amendments to the regulations that already provide a clear legal basis and limits for such intervention.

B. SOCIAL WELFARE ESTABLISHMENTS

92. Considering that non-coercive care for persons with challenging behaviour requires adequate environment and a sufficient number of suitably qualified staff, the CPT would like to receive updated information on the verification process of secure wards and the staffing situation in social welfare establishments, and on the progress achieved in de-institutionalisation of these establishments, including secure wards.

According to data collected and processed by the Association of Social Institutes of Slovenia, as of 31 December 2024, a total of 1,198 persons were employed in special social welfare establishments, providing support to 2,030 users.

In March 2024, the Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future published the Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia for deinstitutionalisation in social welfare for the 2024–2034 period, which envisages that 3,500 people will be moved from social welfare establishments for people with disabilities to the community over the next ten years.

The Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future has also prepared a draft amendment to the Social Assistance Act, which introduces a new community support service that will enable people from such establishments to move into the community, and also establishes a partial moratorium on new admissions to social welfare establishments for people with disabilities. A public call for tenders is being prepared to set up 16 multidisciplinary teams to provide community support. Each team will be tasked with moving at least 20 users from social welfare establishments to the community. With regard to secure wards, the Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future is currently working to include the service "aftercare", which would include provision of support services for recovery after discharge from a secure ward, in the Mental Health Act. This will enable greater transition from secure wards to the community, as the average length of stay in a secure ward is currently very long, precisely because of the lack of services that would enable people to transition to the community.

The Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future has made significant progress in the verification process. In 2024, the Ministry prepared and adopted new Rules on technical, spatial and staffing requirements for the verification of secure wards at institutional care providers and the verification process (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, [Uradni list RS], No 34/24), which regulate the spatial and staffing requirements for the verification of secure wards. In accordance with the Mental Health Act, in July 2024 the Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future established a register of social welfare establishments with secure wards. The register provides an overview of the network of secure wards by type and occupancy and ensures up-to-date information on the actual occupancy of the network of secure wards, as social welfare establishments where secure wards are organised must update the data regularly, no later than three days after it is created or changed. With the establishment of the register and network of secure wards, we believe that the problems of overcrowding in secure wards will be eliminated. Furthermore, with high-quality, long-term care and support in the community in the future, we believe that the number of placements in secure wards will decrease.

The Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future, on the basis of the Government Decision No 02400-4/2024/7 of 14 March 2024, established a working group to prepare the legal basis for the establishment of a specialised unit for the treatment of persons with the most severe forms of mental disorders. We believe that the establishment of a specialised unit will eliminate the identified systemic shortcomings in the placement of persons who need constant supervision and protection in order to ensure their own safety and/or the safety of others in overcrowded and spatially and staff-wise inadequate secure wards of social welfare establishments. The establishment of a specialised unit will contribute significantly to eliminating the problem of overcrowding in secure wards in social welfare establishments, especially if its operation and purpose are geared towards community-based approaches and working methods, as envisaged by the Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future.

In 2023, the Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future commissioned a targeted research project entitled "Transforming secure wards into community-based facilities for adults and children with disabilities", which was carried out by the Faculty of Social Work, Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia and the Institute of Criminology at the Faculty of Law at the University of Ljubljana. The aim of the project was to gain a comprehensive insight into the current situation and to develop guidelines for the transition to community-based care in accordance with the Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia for deinstitutionalisation in social welfare for the 2024–2034 period. The study included secure wards of special and combined establishments and specialised units for children and adolescents. The report found that the current system does not comply

with international commitments to community living and does not offer adequate alternatives to institutionalisation. Users are hospitalised for long periods of time and forced placement does not ensure rehabilitation or individual treatment. The study commissioned by the Ministry confirms the need for legislative changes and the development of community-based forms of support that are better tailored to individual needs and will replace the current long-term placements.

The Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future is committed to a successful strategic transition to community-based care and is effectively addressing the challenges in the system of secure wards with a view to improving the quality and accessibility of services for users.

93. /.../ The CPT would like to receive updated information on the pilot project of a closed unit for children at Dornava Centre for Training, Work and Care, including its results, and the plans of the authorities following the completion of the pilot project.

The Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future considers the treatment of children and young people with the most severe emotional and behavioural disorders a priority and seeks ways to establish different forms of support for children and young people with disabilities. In doing so, it strives to find comprehensive solutions to the problem. In 2020 and 2021, based on the findings of a working group coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and expert assessments by practitioners in establishments, two projects were launched to upgrade services for children and young people with psychosocial disabilities and the most intensive needs, which were taken over by the Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future after its establishment. The two projects were implemented due to the identified need to provide support to children with disabilities with the most intensive needs who have been placed in institutional care by court order and require additional specialised protective therapies.

The projects are being implemented in cooperation with two special care and education centres (Special Care, Work and Education Centre/ZUDV Dornava and Special Care, Work and Education Centre/CUDV Draga). The Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future has provided funds to improve technical conditions and adaptation and to improve staffing conditions through additional recruitment in the field of social care and health care. The two establishments have prepared protocols and guidelines for the admission and work with children and young people. The Ministry has also included two closed units for children at the Dornava and Draga Special Care, Work and Education Centres in its research on secure units mentioned in the previous point. The research showed that one of the centres works successfully with children using positive behavioural support approaches, while the other often uses therapeutic and special protective measures⁵.

Based on the results of the study, the Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future is seeking more appropriate ways to provide support to children with disabilities with very intensive needs. It is preparing solutions within the framework of proposed amendments to social welfare legislation that would provide services preventing institutionalisation, as well as community support services for children with intensive needs.

⁵ Link to the research results: fsd.unilj.si/raziskovalno_in_razvojno_delo/projekti/arhiv_projektov/2023101712552214/#publikacije (Poročilo o raziskavi V5-2335)

The Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future believes that children and young people with the most severe emotional and behavioural disorders, and their families, should be provided with assistance and support as early as possible, with the aim of preventing the placement of children in establishments.

97. /.../ The CPT trusts that staff at Lukavci Social Welfare Establishment will remain vigilant to any signs of inappropriate interaction between residents, with a view to protecting their privacy and safety. To this end, the CPT considers that toilets and shower rooms should be fitted with lockable doors, with locks enabling staff to enter if necessary, and the level of supervision should be enhanced.

The Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future has announced that the Lukavci Social Welfare Establishment has provided an explanation regarding the increase in the level of supervision: at unit 1 ("Grad"), where 38 residents live, 24-hour staff presence is ensured. One healthcare professional is present during the night shift, two healthcare professionals (a healthcare technician and a nursing assistant) are present during the morning shift, and two healthcare professionals (a healthcare technician and a nursing assistant) are present during the afternoon shift. A registered nurse is also assigned to Unit 1 ("Grad"), but is not present at all times. Residents are able to participate in occupational therapy activities with an occupational therapist and an animator. A ward assistant and a caretaker are also present at this unit during the morning and afternoon shifts.

Information on privacy and safety in toilets and bathrooms: in the toilets and bathrooms of the "Grad" Unit at the Lukavci Social Welfare Establishment, locks have been installed on the doors to allow staff to enter if necessary.

99. While the CPT acknowledges that the resident accommodated in this room spent most of their time out of the room, it considers that, wherever possible, rooms without an outside view should not be used for the long-term accommodation of residents.

At the Lukavci Social Welfare Establishment, they explained that the space where the window is located under the ceiling is intended for the implementation of a special protective measure – physical restraint with straps. Due to previous placements of residents by court order for placement in a secure ward, which required placement even if there were no vacancies, they were forced to place them in common areas (living room with the dining area). In the search of a more suitable accommodation solution, the room for the implementation of a special protective measure – physical restraint with straps – was converted into an accommodation room, thus eliminating the need for accommodation in the living room with the dining area. The resident currently accommodated in this room is aggressive and poses a threat to others, so it is not possible for him to share the room with anyone else.

100. Further, in addition to using rooms intended for two residents as triple-occupancy rooms on ward VO D, one room on this ward for socialising and activities had to be transformed into a double-occupancy bedroom.⁶ While it provided adequate material conditions overall (even though it did not, unlike the other rooms, possess a sanitary facility), this room could under other circumstances be used for activities for smaller groups of residents, de-escalation of conflicts and calming down agitated residents, with a view to avoiding the use of restraint measures (see also paragraph Error! Reference source not found.).

⁶ The room measured approximately 18 m2.

At the Lukavci Social Welfare Establishment, they explained that there are double-occupancy bedrooms in the secure ward D. Due to court decisions on placement in the secure ward, an additional bed had to be added to the rooms, as well as to the room for socialising and activities. The room for socialising and activities was vacated on 9 January 2025 and was reinstated to serve its original purpose until 9 March 2025. Due to a court decision on placement in the secure ward, the room is now occupied again.

101. /.../ According to the management of the establishment, it was planned that "Grad" would be closed down in the context of the de-institutionalisation of social welfare establishments. The CPT encourages the Slovenian authorities to implement these plans and would like to receive more detailed information in this respect, including on the expected timeline.

The Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future has prepared a plan for the entry of individual establishments into the transformation process based on the methodology for selecting social welfare establishments that will enter the transformation process in the 2024–2027 period (the period of the first action plan StaDI24-34). The establishments will enter the transformation process in the following order: Zavod Hrastovec, Dom na Krasu, Dom Lukavci, Impoljca, Dom Nine Pokorn-Grmovje (DNPG), Prizma Ponikve, Marof and Petrovo Brdo. Regardless of the order in which the establishments are listed, other social welfare establishments that express interest and prepare a transformation plan may also enter the transformation process under the first national action plan.

104. /.../ The CPT recommends that the multidisciplinary approach towards residents be strengthened and that a single comprehensive care plan be prepared for each resident. In addition to their participation in the drawing up and review of their individual treatment plans, residents should be provided with a written overview of the basic elements of the plan, where appropriate, in a manner they can understand.

The pilot project for the deinstitutionalisation of the Dom na Krasu, which was first within the competence of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and then transferred to the Ministry of Solidarity-Based Future in 2023, is the establishment that in the process of transformation identified the problem of the fragmentation of different plans for users, together with the Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia. As part of the project, the personal planning method was upgraded so that users now have a single comprehensive plan that covers all their needs and is no longer divided into different disciplines. The Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future has already been working to promote a multidisciplinary approach and prepare a comprehensive plan tailored to users' needs and written in a manner they can understand, and will continue to do so in the future.

110. The CPT trusts that this guidance will be duly taken into account when the aforementioned form for the recording of injuries is drawn up and will be subsequently effectively implemented in practice at Lukavci Social Welfare Establishment, as well as in other social welfare establishments in Slovenia. As envisaged by the Slovenian authorities, this will imply the provision of training to the relevant healthcare professionals.

With regard to the form that will standardise data recording and ensure that medical records contain a description of objective medical findings (including the type, location, size and specific characteristics of each injury found) and an assessment of the consistency between the alleged ill-treatment and the medical findings, the Ministry of Health explains that it has submitted the draft form with instructions and enclosures to the Medical Chamber of Slovenia for expert review. The guidelines of the Istanbul Protocol and the guidelines of the CPT report were taken into account when preparing the draft form.

111. /.../ The CPT recommends that when a resident at a social welfare institution dies unexpectedly, an autopsy should be carried out, unless a medical authority independent of the institution indicates that an autopsy is unnecessary. This will ensure that a potential conflict of interest is avoided.

In line with the recommendation of the Committee, the Ministry of Health explains that, according to Article 10 of the Rules on the conditions and manner of performing post-mortem examinations (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*], No 99/22), an autopsy is mandatory in cases where the cause of death cannot be determined, at the request of the doctor who treated the deceased, and in cases of suspected infectious disease. In cases of unclear or insufficient cause of death, an autopsy may be requested by the local coroner of the crematorium prior to cremation. An autopsy may also be performed at the request of the spouse, common-law partner, partner in a civil partnership or unregistered partnership, children and adopted children, or, in their absence, the deceased's parents, if they disagree with the established cause of death. The Ministry of Health considers that this ensures adequate supervision of the post-mortem examination.

121. The use of a PRN prescription for rapid tranquillisers: /.../ The CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities take the necessary steps to ensure that this guidance is duly taken into account when amendments to the Mental Health Act are being drafted and are without delay effectively implemented in practice at Lukavci Social Welfare Establishment and, where relevant, in all other social welfare establishments in Slovenia.

The Ministry of Health will carefully examine the Committee's recommendation in cooperation with experts, health and social care providers and non-governmental organisations within the framework of the Ministry of Health's working group, which is preparing a proposal for amendments to the Mental Health Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*], Nos 77/08, 46/15 – Constitutional Court Decision, 44/19 – Constitutional Court Decision, 109/23 and 136/23 – ZIUZDS; hereinafter: ZDZdr), which provides the legal basis for the use of special protective measures in both social welfare establishments and psychiatric hospitals.

122. /.../ The CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities take the necessary steps to ensure that the capacity of secure wards which is reflected in the number of attributed staffing posts is respected. This, together with measures to fill the existing vacancies and to ensure sufficient presence of staff on the secure wards, in line with the recommendation formulated in 0, will help to ensure that staff in the establishment are in a better position to de-escalate tensions and manage agitated and violent residents by their own means, without recourse to the police. More generally, this will facilitate the decrease of the need to use means of restraint, including chemical restraint.

The Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future has set up a working group to establish a specialised unit for the treatment of persons with the most severe forms of mental disorders, which is expected to be located in the community. We believe that the establishment of a specialised unit will eliminate the identified systemic shortcoming regarding the placement of persons who require constant supervision and protection in order to ensure their own safety and/or the safety of others in overcrowded and spatially and staff-wise inadequate secure wards of social welfare establishment. The setting up of a specialised unit will contribute significantly to eliminating the problem of overcrowding in secure wards in social welfare establishments.

127. The CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities take the necessary steps to ensure that the vacant posts at Lukavci Social Welfare Establishment are filled. Further, the necessary measures should be taken to ensure that at least two staff members are deployed on each secure ward at night, as envisaged.

In 2024, the Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future adopted the Act Regulating Temporary Measures to Improve Personnel and Working Conditions and the Capacities of Providers of Social Assistance and Long-Term Care Services. It provides for the financing of several measures: co-financing of national vocational qualifications; co-financing of modern technologies and aids (with the aim of reducing the workload of staff); co-financing the costs of acquiring the required education, which is a prerequisite for employment with the provider; co-financing staff scholarships; co-financing the involvement of volunteers; co-financing integration programmes for the employment of non-citizens of the Republic of Slovenia and financing additional tasks of the Employment Service of Slovenia to support the employment of foreigners; provision of funds for activities to establish a model of quality and safety, management and reporting of quality indicators, computerisation of monitoring and reporting of quality indicators and training of staff in the field of quality management and human resources management. The measures are intended to alleviate staff shortages and at the same time improve the quality of social welfare services.

At the Lukavci Social Welfare Establishment, they explained that they have ensured the presence of two members of staff on duty at night in two secure wards, which, however, are not verified. For the other three secure wards, a medical technician is always available in the central infirmary of the establishment and can be called in as needed.

130. /.../ The CPT would like to receive confirmation that residents and their guardians receive a copy of the court decision on their involuntary placement in a secure ward or its extension.

The Ministry of Justice sent a letter to all 44 local courts in Slovenia that are responsible for issuing decisions on placement in a secure ward of a special social welfare establishment under the Mental Health Act, requesting them to confirm the method of service. The courts responded and confirmed that court decisions (decisions on placement in a secure ward without consent or on the extension of such a decision) are served in person to the addressees, i.e. the person whose placement is being decided, as well as to their representative (a lawyer appointed by the court *ex officio*) and to the guardian or closest relatives of persons in the custody, in person using postal services. In some cases, the decision is also served on social welfare establishments. The courts receive signed service receipts. All evidence of service is kept by the court in individual court case files.

132. The CPT recommends that the Slovenian authorities take the necessary steps to ensure, including by amending and/or supplementing the relevant legislation, that this guidance is effectively implemented in practice at Lukavci Social Welfare Establishment, as well as in other social welfare establishments in Slovenia.

With regard to the Committee's recommendation, the Ministry of Health explains that it agrees with the recommendation, as both the ZDZdr and the special regulation, the Patient Rights Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*], Nos 15/08, 55/17, 177/20 and 100/22 – ZNUZSZS; hereinafter: ZPacP) as a general regulation, duly stipulate that consent must be obtained from the patient for treatment on the basis of an appropriate explanation provided by the doctor to the person in direct contact, in a considerate, comprehensible manner, in full and in a timely manner, regarding the patient's state of health and the probable development and consequences of the disease, the aim, type and method of treatment, the likelihood of success and the expected benefits and outcome of the proposed treatment, the possible risks, side effects, negative consequences and other inconveniences of the proposed treatment, including the consequences of

not undergoing treatment, and any other treatment options. Both Acts also duly regulate the cases in which health services may be provided without the consent of the person concerned.

The Ministry of Health will therefore promote education and awareness-raising among staff in social welfare establishments on the protection of the human rights of persons in institutional care, with particular attention being paid to the protection of patients' rights, including the right to decide independently on treatment.

133. /.../ The CPT recommends that a simplified information leaflet be developed and, where appropriate, provided to residents upon admission.

The Ministry of a Solidary-Based Future announces that at the Lukavci Social Welfare Establishment, they have followed the recommendation and posted a simplified leaflet on the establishment's notice boards.

Upon admission to the Dom na Krasu establishment, each user receives a leaflet entitled "Complaint Procedures" or an information leaflet. Complaint procedures are also posted on the notice boards of the establishment and of the residential group care.

At Dom Nine Pokorn Grmovje, special attention is paid to this area. Upon admission, each resident admitted to a secure unit receives a simplified information leaflet with pictures, prepared in accordance with their level of understanding. The leaflet includes:

- basic information about life in the secure unit and its organisation,
- residents' rights,
- important contact details and telephone numbers,
- options for filing complaints and compliments.

In addition, each resident also receives:

- a leaflet on the representatives of persons with mental health issues,
- a list of residents' rights in a clear and understandable form,
- house rules in the form of a leaflet,
- summary information on complaint procedures, presented on two pages in a simplified form, containing all the key information for lodging complaints within the establishments and with external bodies (e.g. the Ombudsman, patient rights advocate, mental health rights advocate, the Ministry, Social Affairs Inspection Service, etc.).

Zavod Hrastovec establishment reports that it has prepared two information leaflets for newly admitted residents of secure wards: one for the secure ward in the residential unit in Lenart, where residents with cognitive decline are placed, and another for the secure wards at the establishment's headquarters in Hrastovec Castle. They do not have simplified leaflets or leaflets in easy-to-read form, but they are aware of the importance of accessibility of information and plan to prepare such materials in the future.

134. /.../ The CPT recommends that steps be taken to ensure that residents (as well as staff) are familiar with the possibility to place complaints into confidential complaints boxes and the procedure that will follow.

Some establishments (e.g. Dom na Krasu) use internal rules on the right to give compliments, express opinions, make suggestions or comments and lodge complaints, and on the manner of their resolution. All

complaints are initially reviewed by the Commission for admissions, transfers and discharges. Upon admission, users also receive a leaflet entitled "Complaint Procedures" or an informational leaflet. Complaint procedures are also posted on notice boards. A box for complaints, compliments and suggestions is located in the secure unit of Dom Nine Pokorn Grmovje and is intended for residents. The box is opened every 14 days by a secure unit's member of the staff, who checks its contents. Each opening is duly recorded in a log. All complaints received, including anonymous ones, are dealt with by the Complaints and Compliments Committee of Dom Nine Pokorn Grmovje, which operates in accordance with internal procedures, ensuring confidentiality, impartiality and timely resolution of issues. Residents are regularly encouraged to express their opinions, compliments and complaints, including anonymously, and staff are available to assist them as needed, with a clear emphasis on respect for privacy. In addition to the physical box, we also provide regular information on the possibilities for complaints and how they are handled: via notice boards and notices posted in visible places within the secure unit,

- with the provision of individual information upon admission,
- through verbal communication by staff, adapted to the individual's ability to understand.

Key information is permanently posted on notice boards:

- contact details of patient rights advocates and mental health rights advocates
- important numbers for help and support,
- a summary of residents' rights.

Zavod Hrastovec reports that it has a Complaints and Compliments Committee, which manages 33 complaint and compliment boxes (19 at the establishment's headquarters and 14 at external units). The boxes are emptied once a month in the presence of at least two members of the Complaints and Compliments Committee, and every 14 days at secure units. At least one resident is present during each emptying. The Complaints and Compliments Committee operates in accordance with the Instructions for the handling of applications submitted by residents of Zavod Hrastovec, which precisely define the procedures for recording applications and the manner of consideration and resolution of individual applications. Residents are informed of the possibility of submitting complaints and compliments verbally upon admission and in writing via notices posted in visible locations in the units. Staff do not have the option of submitting complaints in confidential complaint boxes.

The Ministry of Solidarity-Based Future will propose to the establishments that they hold meetings with residents and staff to renew information on the purpose of the boxes for compliments and complaints and the procedure for handling complaints and compliments.

CONCLUSIONS

In line with its international obligations and fundamental values of respect for human rights, Slovenia remains committed to the consistent implementation of the provisions of the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. It also actively pursues the implementation of the CPT's recommendations and continues to seek constructive cooperation with the Committee.