

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this visit was to examine the treatment of persons accommodated in residential care homes. To this end, the CPT delegation visited four privately run institutions, two in the state of Lower Austria – Beer Home in Neulengbach, SeneCura Home in Purkersdorf, and two in the state of Styria – Sanlas Holding Margarethenhof Home in Voitsberg, and Althea Koralmblick-Frauental Home in Frauental an der Laßnitz.

The delegation received no allegations, and found no other indications, of ill-treatment of residents by staff in the establishments visited. On the contrary, many residents spoke very positively about staff, and the atmosphere in the homes visited appeared generally relaxed and welcoming.

The living conditions in all homes visited were good or even very good in terms of living space, maintenance of facilities and the standard of hygiene. Most residents were accommodated in single rooms with en-suite facilities, which were bright, clean, spacious, and provided a homely and individualised environment with a sufficient degree of privacy.

The CPT notes that all homes visited, except for the Margarethenhof Home, were experiencing staff shortages which were felt both by management teams (who were trying to address the problem by reducing the capacity of the institution, recruiting temporary staff or training and hiring staff from other countries) and the residents (who seemed to self-censor their requests for staff assistance, like, for example, to have shower more often or to be accompanied outside in a wheelchair).

On a positive note, the Committee notes that the staff of residential care institutions are legally required to undergo regular continuous professional development covering a wide variety of topics and recommends that the Austrian authorities ensure the implementation of this requirement and that prevention of violence in care is an integral part of staff training.

As regards care provided to residents, the report also positively notes that every resident had an electronic individual written care and rehabilitation plan which demonstrated an individualised approach in terms of care needs, therapeutic interventions and occupational and recreational activities, and which was subject to a periodic review (effectively involving the resident whenever possible). The plans were based upon professional, theoretical care models, aiming for an individual-needs-based, systematic and structured approach to multi-disciplinary care.

Furthermore, the Committee positively notes that the system of reporting freedom restriction measures to the network of residents' representatives (*Bewohnervertretung*) who then actually check their proportionality and, if in doubt, challenge them in court, is a very strong safeguard. However, the CPT was concerned to note that not all cases of pharmacological freedom restriction measures were recorded as such and reported.

As regards legal safeguards, the CPT recommends that the Austrian authorities ensure that every admission to a residential care institution based on the application of a person or their representative is accompanied by a legally valid contract signed by the person concerned or by their representative.