

# VISIT REPORT

Moldova  
June 2025



# CPT

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE  
FOR THE PREVENTION OF  
TORTURE AND INHUMAN OR  
DEGRADING TREATMENT  
OR PUNISHMENT

**AD HOC VISIT**

3 - 12 June 2025

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Prevention of Torture and Inhuman  
or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

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# KEY OBSERVATIONS

## PRIORITY TOPICS

### ■ Prison

**INFORMAL PRISONER HIERARCHY** – Urgent measures to tackle the phenomenon of informal prisoner hierarchy

**SEGREGATION AND ISOLATION MEASURES** – Measures to improve material conditions and regime for persons held under Article 206 protection

**CONDITIONS OF DETENTION** – Measures to improve material conditions for the general prison population

**COMBATING IMPUNITY** – Steps to ensure that effective investigation is carried out into reports on injuries indicative of inter-prisoner violence which are submitted from prisons to the prosecutor's office

## THE CPT AND MOLDOVA

The Republic of Moldova ratified the ECPT in 1997, and the Committee's first visit took place in 1998.

Since ratification, the CPT has carried out 18 country visits to the Republic of Moldova – 7 periodic and 11 ad hoc – including 59 visits to police establishments, 57 to prisons, 8 to psychiatric institutions, 5 social welfare establishments, 1 to military detention facility, and 1 to border and immigration detention facility.

Moldova accepted the automatic publication process of the visit reports since 29/04/2011.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 2025 *ad hoc* visit, the CPT delegation re-examined the treatment and detention conditions of persons held in prison. To this end, it visited Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, Prison no. 6 in Soroca and Prison no. 15 in Cricova.

The cooperation received by the delegation from the national authorities and at Prison no. 6 in Soroca was excellent. However, at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, the delegation was initially not shown one building which was accommodating prisoners, and, throughout the visit to Prison no. 15 in Cricova, the delegation received incomplete or misleading information from staff.

Further, the principle of cooperation is not limited to facilitating the work of a visiting delegation but also requires that decisive action is taken to ensure that recommendations made by the Committee are effectively implemented in practice. Although the CPT noted progress in certain areas, it also became clear that the CPT's long-standing recommendations concerning the key issues, namely, the informal prisoner hierarchy and the resulting inter-prisoner violence and intimidation, remain largely unimplemented. Further, poor material conditions for the majority of persons held in prison, poor regime of activities offered to incarcerated persons and low staffing levels in prisons insufficient to effectively control the establishments remain issues of concern.

During the visit, the delegation received no allegations of physical ill-treatment of prisoners by staff in any of the three establishments visited. However, this is hardly surprising given the findings concerning the informal prisoner hierarchy controlling the prisons.

As regards inter-prisoner violence, many prisoners in all three establishments visited again described the overall atmosphere of intimidation and violence used by the informal prisoner hierarchy to impose their rules on other persons held in prison. As was the case during previous visits, prisoners were regularly found with injuries clearly indicative of inter-prisoner violence. In most cases, due to the atmosphere of fear created by the informal prisoner leaders and their close circles, the omnipresent intimidation, and the lack of trust in the staff and their ability to guarantee safety, persons who had been victims of inter-prisoner violence did not complain, or, if found by staff with injuries, refused to provide a plausible explanation as to the origin of their injuries.

Moreover, many prisoners whom the delegation attempted to interview were reluctant and often visibly scared to speak, due to fear of reprisals they may face from the representatives of the informal prisoner hierarchy for having spoken with the delegation. Most strikingly, at Prison no. 15 in Cricova, prisoners from higher castes actively interfered in the interviews being carried out by the delegation, tried to prevent other prisoners from speaking to the delegation, or even put pressure directly on the delegation members to stop their interviews. Staff members who were present remained astonishingly passive in these situations.

The situation of persons considered to be "humiliated" or "untouchable", that is, those on the lowest caste of the informal prisoner hierarchy, remains a matter of serious concern to the CPT. The delegation once again received many complaints of frequent verbal abuse, systematic demeaning and dehumanising behaviour by other persons held in prison, threats of physical violence if they failed to follow the informal "code of conduct", and physical violence. As repeatedly stressed in previous visit reports, the CPT considers that their situation could be considered to constitute a continuing violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Similar to those considered to be "humiliated", prisoners belonging to the so-called "*neputiovie*" caste were subjected to frequent instances of inter-prisoner violence and were accommodated in comparably poor material conditions.

Many persons held in the prisons visited still perceived segregation from the general prison population pursuant to Article 206 of the Enforcement Code as the only way to escape the threats posed by the informal prisoner hierarchy. Unlike during the previous visit carried out in 2022, requests for segregation under Article 206 were in most cases granted swiftly. It is also positive that prisoners interviewed by the delegation were now aware of the possibility of requesting this measure. However, it remains the case that, in most instances, these persons were held in former disciplinary isolators which provided poor material conditions, and were subjected to impoverished regimes.

For a number of reasons detailed in the report, it appeared that there continued to be tacit acceptance of the informal hierarchy and their “rules” by prison staff and even, to a certain extent, tacit “agreement” between staff and informal prison leaders when it comes to ensuring “order” among prisoners and the “smooth operation” of the establishments.

Despite the steps taken by the Moldovan authorities, difficulties in attracting new staff and the resulting understaffing remained a major challenge. Consequently, the numbers of custodial staff present in detention areas remained very small, and they were not in a position to have effective control over the situation and could neither be aware of, nor effectively intervene in instances of inter prisoner violence.

In conclusion, the CPT considers that, despite the efforts made by the authorities, the problem of inter-prisoner violence remains largely unaddressed and prisons still generally fail to ensure safe environment for persons held in prison. This is directly linked to a number of factors, most notably the chronic shortage of custodial staff, the *de facto* relinquishment of authority and control over the prison population to informal prison leaders, and the existence of large capacity dormitories and/or freely accessible unlocked rooms in interconnected sectors. At the same time, the plan of the Moldovan authorities to introduce a new progressive system of enforcement of imprisonment sentences remains unimplemented, and there is still no proper risk and needs assessment of persons upon their admission to prison, nor a classification of persons to identify in which prison, block or cell they should be placed.

In light of these findings, the Committee once again calls upon the Moldovan authorities to take resolute action, without further delay, to tackle the phenomenon of informal prisoner hierarchy and to prevent inter-prisoner violence and intimidation throughout the prison system. The highest priority should be afforded to the implementation of the SAFE Roadmap to Europeanisation of Moldovan Prisons which was adopted by the authorities following the CPT’s 2022 visit.

The delegation once again observed striking differences in material conditions and an unequal distribution of prisoners. Despite some improvements, material conditions in the three establishments visited remained very poor for most prisoners: they were accommodated in dilapidated multi-occupancy cells and large-capacity dormitories, many of which were poorly ventilated, had insufficient access to natural light, dirty walls, damaged floors and dangerous improvised electric wiring, and there was a lack of personal storage space. Moreover, some of the large-capacity dormitories were seriously overcrowded (although the prison system as a whole and the three prisons visited were operating below their official capacity) and provided absolutely no privacy. Most communal sanitary facilities seen by the delegation were in a poor state of repair and hygiene and the capacity of some was clearly insufficient. In stunning contrast, informal prison leaders and their close circles were dwelling in spacious, well-equipped rooms or even flats consisting of several rooms.

The Moldovan authorities should ensure that all persons held in prison are evenly distributed throughout the available accommodation and be treated equally and benefit from similar material conditions, and that every person held in a multiple-occupancy cell/dormitory is provided at least 4 m<sup>2</sup> of living space (not counting the area taken by the in cell sanitary facilities). Further, cells and dormitories should be kept in an adequate state of repair and should be clean, suitably equipped and sufficiently lit and ventilated.

Persons held in the three establishments visited benefitted from an open-door regime and could move freely around the establishments, and some efforts were made to offer them work, education and a few other activities. Nevertheless, the fact remains that a significant proportion of them were most of the time not engaged in any purposeful activity and idled their days away, sitting or wandering around and talking to other persons. The Moldovan authorities should redouble their efforts and further develop the programme of activities offered to prisoners in the establishments visited.

The delegation observed several improvements and even good practices as regards the provision of healthcare. However, staffing levels for healthcare staff were low in all three establishments visited. It is a matter of particular concern that the only post of a medical doctor in each of the establishments was vacant. The CPT noted the praiseworthy efforts made by the current healthcare staff, in particular nurses, to provide good quality healthcare, to carry out screening upon admission and to record injuries. However, the absence of a medical doctor *de facto* obliged nurses to assume responsibility for medical acts which were outside the scope of their professional competence and should be performed by a medical doctor.

As regards recording and reporting of injuries, a detailed injury report form which included a body chart to mark traumatic injuries was completed by healthcare staff. However, the quality of the record and of the description of injuries varied and should be further improved.

In addition, the initial injury reports sent to the prosecutor's office contained only a very superficial description of the injuries observed and the quality of the incident files which were subsequently collected in the prisons visited and sent in hardcopy to the prosecutor's office varied. Steps should be taken to ensure that all injuries indicative of inter-prisoner violence are promptly and comprehensively reported to the prosecutor's office. This will enable the prosecutor's office to take immediate steps to effectively investigate these cases.

# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. The visit, the report and follow-up

1. In pursuance of Article 7 of the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (hereinafter referred to as “the Convention”), a delegation of the CPT carried out a visit to the Republic of Moldova from 3 to 12 June 2025. The visit was considered by the Committee “to be required in the circumstances” (cf. Article 7, paragraph 1, of the Convention). It was the Committee’s 18th visit to the Republic of Moldova.<sup>1</sup>

2. Ever since its first visit to Moldova in 1998, inter-prisoner violence and intimidation in prisons, largely linked to the well-established and long-standing informal hierarchy amongst prisoners, have been matters of grave concern to the CPT.

The findings of the most recent visit, carried out in December 2022, showed that many key recommendations repeatedly made by the CPT in previous visit reports remained unimplemented. This concerns in particular the recommendations related to the informal prisoner hierarchy and the resulting inter-prisoner violence and intimidation, and also the poor material conditions for the majority of persons held in prison, the poor regime of activities offered to incarcerated persons, and the low staffing levels in prisons which are insufficient to effectively control the establishments.

3. In light of these findings, the CPT decided to carry out an ad hoc visit to the Republic of Moldova. The main objective of the visit was to re-examine the treatment and conditions of detention of persons held in prison, and to assess the progress achieved by the Moldovan authorities in the implementation of the recommendations formulated by the Committee after its previous visits.

To this end, the delegation visited Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, Prison no. 6 in Soroca and Prison no. 15 in Cricova.

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

- Hans Wolff (Head of delegation)
- Ewa Dawidziuk
- Tinatin Uplisashvili
- Dmytro Yagunov.

They were supported by Petr Hnátík of the CPT Secretariat and assisted by a team of three interpreters, Sergiu Buftenc, Alexandru Melenciuc and Elena Dolghii.

5. The report on the visit was adopted by the CPT at its 118th meeting, held from 3 to 7 November 2025, and transmitted to the authorities of the Republic of Moldova on 21 November 2025. The various recommendations, comments and requests for information made by the CPT are set out in bold type in the present report. The CPT requests that the Moldovan authorities provide within three months a response containing a full account of action taken by them to implement the Committee’s recommendations, along with replies to the comments and requests for information formulated in this report.

## B. Consultations held by the delegation and cooperation encountered

6. In the course of the visit, the delegation held consultations with Veronica Mihailov-Moraru, Minister of Justice, Sorin Popescu, State Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, Stela Braniște, Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Justice, Alexandru Adam, Acting Director General of the National Prison Administration, and other senior officials from the Ministry of Justice and the National Prison Administration.

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1. The visit reports and the responses of the Moldovan authorities on previous visits (if published) are available on the CPT website: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cpt/republic-of-moldova>.

The delegation also met Ceslav Panico, People's Advocate (Ombudsperson), Vasile Coroi, People's Advocate for the rights of the child, and senior representatives of their office, as well as other representatives of the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) established under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT).

The CPT appreciates that the Moldovan authorities invited the Ombudsperson to attend the end of visit meeting at which the Committee's delegation delivered its preliminary observations to the authorities.

A full list of the national authorities, other bodies and non-governmental organisations with which the delegation held consultations is set out in the Appendix to this report.

7. The cooperation received by the delegation from the national authorities and at Prison no. 6 in Soroca was excellent. The delegation was granted rapid access to this establishment, was able to meet in private with those persons with whom it wanted to speak, and was provided with access to the information required to carry out its task.

The Committee wishes to express its appreciation for the assistance provided to its delegation before, during and after the visit by its liaison officer, Stela Braniște, of the Ministry of Justice.

8. However, it is regrettable that at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, the delegation was initially not shown one building which was accommodating prisoners, and was not provided with a list of prisoners living therein. Moreover, lists of prisoners accommodated in other parts of the prison were incomplete and it became clear that the most up-to-date lists were not maintained by the staff, but by informal prison leaders (see also paragraph 45).

Further, throughout the visit to Prison no. 15 in Cricova, the delegation received incomplete or misleading information from staff; for example, on the use of a swimming pool located in the central courtyard of the prison, on a stock of tobacco stored in one of the gyms, and on the reasons for the strikingly different material conditions in different rooms accommodating prisoners.

**The CPT trusts that the Moldovan authorities will take the necessary steps to ensure that future visiting delegations will be provided with full and accurate information about the situation in the establishments to be visited, without any attempts to mask the reality.**

9. Further, as repeatedly stressed in previous visit reports, the principle of cooperation between Parties to the Convention and the Committee, as set out in Article 3 of the Convention, is not limited to facilitating the work of a visiting delegation. It also requires that decisive action be taken to ensure that recommendations made by the Committee are effectively implemented in practice.

In this respect, the CPT notes positively the steps taken by the authorities since the last visit, most notably the adoption of the SAFE Roadmap to Europeanisation of Prisons (see paragraph 22) and the conclusion of an agreement to build a new prison in Chișinău (see paragraph 16). Further, legislative amendments were adopted which have removed self-harm from the list of disciplinary offences, and the quality of food provided in prisons has improved following the approval of a new norm. Certain improvements were also observed during the visit with respect to the recording and reporting of injuries. In line with the CPT's long-standing recommendation, the authorities confirmed that all juvenile prisoners had been transferred from Prison no. 13 in Chișinău to Prison no. 10 (Goian Juvenile Prison).

However, it also became clear that the CPT's long-standing recommendations concerning the key issues, namely, the informal prisoner hierarchy and the resulting inter-prisoner violence and intimidation, remain largely unimplemented, despite the adoption of the aforementioned SAFE Roadmap. Further, the delegation once again observed strikingly unequal material conditions provided to prisoners. As in the past, material conditions were particularly poor for prisoners from low castes of the informal hierarchy (so-

called “*neputiovie*”<sup>2</sup> and even more strikingly for the lowest cast, the “humiliated”<sup>3</sup>). Further, the lack of any regime activities for the majority of prisoners and the low staffing levels in prisons remain issues of concern.

**As already stated in several previous visit reports, with reference to Article 3 of the Convention,<sup>4</sup> and while noting the steps which have been taken by the Moldovan authorities since the 2022 visit, the CPT once again calls upon the Moldovan authorities to take decisive action to address the long-standing recommendations made by the Committee. Continuing failure of the authorities to take effective steps to improve the situation in prisons, in particular as regards the phenomenon of informal prisoner hierarchy and the resulting inter-prisoner violence and intimidation, will oblige the Committee to consider having recourse to Article 10, paragraph 2, of the Convention.<sup>5</sup>**

## **C. Immediate observations under Article 8, paragraph 5, of the Convention**

10. During the end-of-visit talks with the Moldovan authorities held in Chişinău on 12 June 2025, the delegation outlined the main facts found during the visit. On that occasion, it made three immediate observations under Article 8, paragraph 5, of the Convention. The Moldovan authorities were requested:

- to ensure that every prisoner held in a multiple-occupancy cell/dormitory at Prison no. 15 in Cricova is provided at least 4 m<sup>2</sup> of living space; persons held in prison should be fairly distributed throughout the available accommodation areas and empty beds should be removed;
- to ensure that all prisoners in sectors 2 and 3 at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani have access to adequate sanitary facilities;
- to take immediate steps to guarantee the safety of one particular prisoner held at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, for example by transferring him to a different establishment.

The Moldovan authorities were requested to provide, within three months in respect of the first two immediate observations and within one month in respect of the third immediate observation, an account of the steps taken to implement them.

11. The immediate observations were confirmed by letter of 24 June 2025, when transmitting the delegation’s preliminary observations to the Moldovan authorities.

By letters of 24 July and 24 September 2025, the authorities informed the CPT of the measures taken in response to the immediate observations and of other matters raised by the delegation at the end-of-visit talks. These measures have been assessed in the relevant sections of the present report (see in particular paragraphs 26, 60 and 62).

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2. Literally translated as “those who lost their way” or “those who cannot be trusted”, these were prisoners who refused to obey the “rules” of the informal prisoner hierarchy and/or were perceived as cooperating with the authorities because they were engaged in paid work. Many prisoners segregated for their protection under Article 206 (see paragraphs 34 and foll.) had previously belonged to this caste.

3. These persons have been rejected by other persons held in prison for various reasons, such as being accused or convicted of a sex offence, because of their sexual orientation, for having been sexually abused, for illicit drug use or having mental health problems; this category of prisoner also included those who refused or were unable to contribute to the illegal collective fund managed by the informal prison leaders (see paragraph 25). It should be noted that several sub-categories exist even within the caste of “humiliated”.

4. Article 3 reads as follows: “In the application of this Convention, the Committee and the competent national authorities of the Party concerned shall co-operate with each other”.

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

## II. Facts found during the visit and action proposed

### A. Prison establishments

#### 1. Preliminary remarks

##### a. recent developments concerning the prison system

12. Between 2022 and 2023, due to the amnesty declared in connection with the 30th anniversary of the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Moldova,<sup>6</sup> the prison population decreased from 6 084 to 5 695 persons. Thereafter, while the number of sentenced prisoners remained relatively stable (approximately 4 720 persons), the number of those held on remand increased steadily from 964 persons in 2022, to 1 123 in 2024, and further to 1 212 persons on 26 May 2025. According to the information provided by the Moldovan authorities, this increase was caused by the growing number of persons remanded in custody on corruption charges.

As of 26 May 2025, the prison estate was accommodating 5 934 persons for an official capacity of 6 622 places (occupancy rate approximately 90%).<sup>7</sup>

13. However, although the prison system as a whole and most prison establishments were operating below their official capacity,<sup>8</sup> the delegation once again observed serious overcrowding in a number of cells and dormitories in all three prisons visited (see paragraphs 36 and 59). Undoubtedly, this was caused by the strikingly uneven distribution of prisoners within the establishments, a situation closely linked with the phenomenon of informal prisoner hierarchy.

Moreover, according to the 2024 [SPACE I Statistics](#) (Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics on Prison Populations), the prison population rate per 100 000 inhabitants in Moldova on 31 January 2024 was 235, which is well above both the European average (121.7) and median (104.8) levels, and one of the highest in the Council of Europe area.

14. Further, the official capacity of prisons was formally calculated on the basis of the requirement of 4 m<sup>2</sup> of living space per incarcerated person. However, it was brought to the delegation's attention that the sum of square metres of living space in all cells/dormitories in each establishment, divided by 4 m<sup>2</sup>, was considered the official capacity. Indeed, this resulted in a higher capacity than if the actual living space in individual cells/dormitories was taken as a basis for the calculations. The Moldovan authorities acknowledged that there was a need to re-calculate the official capacity of the prison estate and individual prisons.

**The CPT would like to be informed of the re-calculated capacity of the prison estate and individual prisons in Moldova.**

15. Several steps have been taken by the Moldovan authorities since the 2022 visit to manage the prison population and the occupancy rate of the prison estate.

In particular, amendments to the Criminal Code and the Administrative Offences Code extended the possibility of an early release from prison, or of replacing the unserved part of the prison sentence with a more lenient punishment, to all types of criminal offences, introduced the possibility of early release for life-sentenced prisoners who have served at least 25 years of imprisonment, and extended the possibilities to apply alternatives to imprisonment and be placed in an open prison.

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6. Law no. 243/2021.

7. The official capacity of the prison estate had remained unchanged since the 2022 visit.

8. The only exceptions were Prison no. 11 in Bălți (345 prisoners for a capacity of 258 places (occupancy rate of 134%) and Prison no. 13 in Chișinău (858 prisoners for a capacity of 570 places (occupancy rate of 151%)).



The CPT encourages the Moldovan authorities to vigorously pursue their efforts to reduce the prison population in Moldova. 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, 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.

16. As regards the construction of new prisons, the authorities had acquired the necessary plots of land and were launching a tender for the construction of a second block of a new remand prison in Bălți, with a capacity of 300 places.<sup>9</sup>

The construction of a new establishment which would replace Prison no. 13 in Chișinău had been repeatedly postponed in the past. It is a promising development that in January 2025, the Moldovan Government and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) signed an agreement to construct the new establishment. The project is funded by the Government of Moldova, with part of the amount secured as a loan from the Council of Europe Development Bank. The new facility is expected to have a capacity of 1 050 places. At the time of the 2025 visit, the design documentation was being reviewed by UNOPS. It was planned that the construction should be finalised by the end of 2028.

**The CPT would appreciate receiving updated information on the progress of the construction of the second block of a new remand prison in Bălți and of the new prison in Chișinău, including the expected timelines.**

17. The report on the 2022 visit<sup>10</sup> contains a detailed description of the plans to introduce a new progressive system of enforcement of imprisonment sentences. Its aim is to ensure the individualisation of the execution of imprisonment, gradual reintegration of prisoners into society and reduction of prison overcrowding, as well as, more generally, shifting the emphasis from a punitive to rehabilitative policy and strengthening safety in prisons. The initial placement into an enforcement regime may be progressively changed, depending on the danger posed by the prisoner and the results of individual sentence programmes. Prisoners considered to be dangerous and informal prison leaders who promote the informal prisoner hierarchy will initially be placed in the closed regime.

According to the information provided by the authorities during the 2025 visit, implementation of these plans will represent a major overhaul of the prison system which will require a new legal framework and for which significant funding will be needed. For the time being, priority has been given to the construction of the new remand prison in Chișinău.

**The CPT would like to receive updated information on the progress achieved in the implementation of the progressive system of enforcement of imprisonment sentences, including the expected timeline, and on any legislative amendments adopted in this context.**

#### **b. establishments visited during the 2025 visit**

18. As already indicated, in the course of the 2025 visit, the delegation visited Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, Prison no. 6 in Soroca and Prison no. 15 in Cricova.

*Prison no. 2 in Lipcani* was visited for the first time by the CPT. The establishment was taken into service in the 1950s and initially served as a military barracks, before being turned into a juvenile prison and later a prison for adult men. Prisoners were accommodated in three separate sectors: Sector 1 had a capacity of approximately 60 places and was holding former law enforcement officers,<sup>11</sup> Sector 2 (capacity of some

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9. The construction of the first block, with a capacity of 650 places, had been finalised prior to the 2022 visit.

10. See [CPT/Inf \(2023\) 27](#), paragraph 13.

11. This sector was the only specialised sector of this type in Moldova.

250 places) was used for ordinary accommodation of prisoners and Sector 3 (capacity of some 50 places) served as a protection unit for prisoners segregated under Article 206 of the Enforcement Code (see paragraph 34 and foll.). At the time of the visit, 15 working prisoners were accommodated in a separate building within the prison compound, but outside the three sectors. With an official capacity of 363 places, the establishment was accommodating 311 adult sentenced men.

*Prison no. 6 in Sorooca* was previously visited by the CPT in 2015 and 2018. It was formally divided into two zones, each comprising several old buildings. The two zones together housed eleven sectors mainly consisting of dormitories, each dormitory having a capacity of up to 50 places. In addition, Sector 12 (capacity of 56 places) and the former disciplinary isolator located nearby were cell-type units and were holding prisoners under Article 206 protection. With an official capacity of 753 places, the establishment was accommodating 665 adult sentenced men.

*Prison no. 15 in Cricova* was previously visited by the CPT in 2004. Prisoners were accommodated in six sectors. Sector 1 (capacity of 33 places) consisted of cells and was accommodating prisoners under Article 206 protection. Sectors 2 to 5 contained rooms and dormitories of varying size, the biggest dormitories measuring some 80 m<sup>2</sup>. Large dormitories in Sector 6 had been partitioned into smaller rooms for four to six persons and were accommodating persons considered to be “humiliated”. With an official capacity of 452 places, the establishment was accommodating 380 adult sentenced men.

## **2. Ill-treatment by staff**

19. The delegation received no allegations of physical ill-treatment of prisoners by staff in any of the three establishments visited. However, this is hardly surprising given the findings concerning the informal prisoner hierarchy controlling the prisons (see the following section of this report).

## **3. Inter-prisoner violence and intimidation**

### **a. previous dialogue with the authorities**

20. Ever since its first visit to Moldova carried out in 1998, inter-prisoner violence and intimidation in prisons, largely linked to the well-established informal hierarchies amongst prisoners, have been matters of grave concern to the CPT.<sup>12</sup> In several visit reports, the Committee called upon the Moldovan authorities to take resolute action, without further delay, to tackle the phenomenon of informal prisoner hierarchy and to prevent inter-prisoner violence and intimidation throughout the prison system.<sup>13</sup>

Above all, the Committee considered that this would require putting in place a system of appropriate risks and needs assessment, depriving informal prison leaders of their privileges, providing prisoner accommodation based on smaller living units, having sufficient numbers of appropriately trained staff and ensuring the management’s full support for prisoners who are at risk of abuse by other inmates and for those who do not wish to be involved in the informal prisoner hierarchy.

21. However, the most recent visit carried out in December 2022 found that many key recommendations related to these issues remained unimplemented.

Consequently, in the report on that visit, the CPT requested that the Moldovan authorities put in place a clear holistic strategy, with timelines for its implementation, to tackle the phenomenon of informal prisoner hierarchy and to prevent inter-prisoner violence and intimidation throughout the prison system, which would include the steps necessary to implement the recommendations made by the Committee.<sup>14</sup>

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12. Reference is made in this context to the CPT Standard on Informal Prisoner Hierarchy ([CPT/Inf \(2025\) 12](#)). An in-depth study of the phenomenon can be found in a Council of Europe publication entitled “[Baseline study into criminal subculture in prisons in the Republic of Moldova](#)” (March 2018).

13. See, for example, paragraph 58 of the report on the 2020 visit ([CPT/Inf \(2020\) 27](#)), paragraph 26 of the report on the 2018 visit ([CPT/Inf \(2018\) 49](#)) and paragraph 55 of the report on the 2015 visit ([CPT/Inf \(2016\) 16](#)).

14. See [CPT/Inf \(2023\) 27](#), paragraph 36.

22. In response, the authorities developed and adopted<sup>15</sup> a SAFE Roadmap to Europeanisation of Moldovan Prisons (further referred to as “SAFE Roadmap”).

The SAFE Roadmap defines four objective to be achieved by 2027: (i) to ensure security, order and discipline in all prisons, (ii) to increase access to quality services and useful activities, (iii) to modernise facilities and infrastructure, and (iv) to ensure efficient administration of resources and good governance.

Concrete measures to be taken include allocation of prisoners in equitable conditions and placement of prisoners under Article 206 in better living conditions, separation of high-risk from low-risk prisoners and first-time offenders, protection of vulnerable groups of prisoners, introduction of progressive regimes and provision of regime activities (including work), and recruitment and training of staff. Measures to improve the infrastructure include the construction of a new prison in Chişinău and resuming phase 2 of the construction of Bălţi Prison, and dividing big dormitories into smaller accommodation units at Prison no. 18 in Brăneşti and Prison no. 4 in Cricova.

The CPT welcomes the adoption of the SAFE Roadmap. However, as noted already in paragraph 9, concrete steps are now needed to effectively implement the plans contained therein, in order to address the key issues, that is, the phenomenon of informal prisoner hierarchy and the resulting inter-prisoner violence and intimidation. In this context, see the recommendation set out in paragraph 55.

#### **b. situation observed in the establishments during the 2025 visit**

23. As was the case during previous visits, according to the documentation examined by the delegation, in particular injury reports sent from prisons to the prosecutor’s office, individual medical files of persons held in prison, and records in the SIA PARC electronic database (see paragraph 68), prisoners were regularly found with injuries clearly indicative of inter-prisoner violence, such as haematoma around the eyes, large bruises on the backs and buttocks, and traumatic injuries to the face and head.

In most cases, due to the atmosphere of fear created by the informal prisoner leaders and their close circles, the omnipresent intimidation, and the lack of trust in the staff and their ability to guarantee safety, persons who had been victims of inter-prisoner violence did not complain. If found by staff with injuries, they refused to provide an explanation as to the origin of the injuries or indicated causes which were at best vague (“there was some sort of an incident”) or, more often, clearly inconsistent with the injuries observed (such as “fell from a bed”, “slipped in the shower”, “fell on the stairs” or “hit himself”).

24. In all three establishments visited,<sup>16</sup> many prisoners whom the delegation attempted to interview were reluctant and often visibly scared to speak, asked to interrupt the interview, or even refused to be interviewed at all. Some of these prisoners stated explicitly that this was due to fear of reprisals they may face from the representatives of the informal prisoner hierarchy for having spoken with the delegation.

When delegation members entered detention areas, prisoners from higher castes of the informal prisoner hierarchy systematically attempted to follow them, and/or to remain present during interviews with other prisoners, and/or control what was being said.

Most strikingly, at Prison no. 15 in Cricova, prisoners from higher castes actively interfered in the interviews being carried out by the delegation, tried to prevent other prisoners from speaking to the delegation, or even put pressure directly on the delegation members to stop their interviews. They refused to leave the room where interviews were supposed to take place in private, claiming that this was not in line with “their prison rules”. Staff members who were present remained astonishingly passive in these situations.

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15. The SAFE Roadmap was adopted by the Order of the Minister of Justice no. 244/2024.

16. The notable exception to the tense atmosphere and violence described in the following paragraphs was Sector 1 at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani which was accommodating former law enforcement officers. As regards the situation of persons held under Article 206 protection, see paragraphs 34 and foll.

Such aggressive interference with the work of a CPT delegation is unprecedented, seriously impeded the work of the delegation and, combined with the passive approach of staff, is a clear indicator that the establishment is entirely controlled by the informal prison leaders, with staff appearing afraid to exercise their authority (see also paragraph 46).

25. Despite these attempts to prevent interviews, many prisoners in all three establishments visited agreed to speak with the delegation. They again described the overall atmosphere of intimidation and violence used by the informal prisoner hierarchy to impose their rules on other persons held in prison, including the obligation to regularly pay a “fee” (“*nalog*”) to an illegal collective fund (“*obshchak*”) managed by the informal prison leaders.

The intimidation and violence included systematic extortion,<sup>17</sup> threats of beatings and physical violence, including slaps, punches to the face, head and back, and severe beatings with a wooden shovel or a wooden mop stick to the buttocks, backs and thighs, that is, to parts of the body hidden by clothing. These violent acts, which were inflicted as a punishment for having failed to follow the informal rules, including the obligation to pay the aforementioned “fee” or debts incurred because of forced gambling, took place in the presence of other prisoners, in order to spread fear, ensure obedience and demean the victim.

In several cases, injury reports examined by the delegation contained descriptions of injuries which were consistent with the allegations of inter-prisoner violence made to the delegation by the prisoners concerned, although these persons officially indicated other causes of injuries.

26. For example, at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, the delegation met one prisoner who had been found, in March 2025, with the following serious injuries: excoriation and haematomas on the head and a large haematoma on the back part of the right thigh clearly indicative of a blow with a shovel. Allegedly, he was severely beaten on 7 March 2025 with a wooden shovel on his buttocks and legs in Sector 2 because he refused to pay to the illegal collective fund maintained by the informal leaders.

When interviewed by the delegation, he feared for his safety and was scared that he would be subjected to further violence by other prisoners.

Moreover, as far as the delegation could ascertain, the pictures of the large haematoma clearly indicative of a blow with a shovel, which were included in the injury report file, had never been transmitted to the prosecutor’s office, reportedly because the electronic system broke down (see also paragraph 70).

At the end of the visit, the delegation made an immediate observation under Article 8, paragraph 5, of the Convention, and requested that the Moldovan authorities take immediate steps to guarantee the safety of the prisoner concerned, for example by transferring him to a different establishment. The delegation asked to receive, within one month, an account of the steps taken to implement this immediate observation.

By letter of 24 July 2025, the Moldovan authorities informed the CPT that the person concerned had been transferred to Pruncul Prison Hospital (Prison no. 16) on 13 June 2025 and then to Prison no. 11 in Bălți on 2 July 2025.

Further, an investigation was initiated concerning “the altercation” involving the person concerned and other individuals, which had taken place in Prison no. 2 in Lipcani.

**The CPT welcomes the steps taken by the Moldovan authorities and would like to be informed of the outcome of the investigation.**

27. In all three establishments visited, several prisoners interviewed during the visit stated that persons who had been subjected to inter-prisoner violence and who had visible injuries had been obliged by informal prison leaders to remain in the accommodation areas and avoid any contact with staff, and had not been allowed to participate in roll calls – under the pretext that they felt unwell – until their injuries had healed.

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17. For example, prisoners may be “offered” a cell phone or a TV and then asked to pay for it, forced to gamble, or made to drink alcohol and pay for it. Refusal to accept would result in a beating. The extortion sometimes allegedly even extended to families and friends of prisoners.

Moreover, the delegation received several allegations in Sector 2 of Prison no. 2 in Lipcani and at Prison no. 15 in Cricova that persons who had been subjected to inter-prisoner violence had even been prevented by prisoners from higher castes from seeing healthcare staff. Furthermore, at Prison no. 15 in Cricova, prisoners from higher castes allegedly remained present during medical examinations of other prisoners; indeed, in their presence, prisoners did not indicate plausible explanations for the injuries they displayed. This makes the procedure of recording and reporting of injuries inefficient (see also the recommendation formulated in paragraph 76).

28. The findings of the 2025 visit and the data provided by the authorities once again indicated that a number of instances of inter-prisoner violence remained undetected as the victims were systematically intimidated by the perpetrators, under the threat of further violence, to neither complain to staff nor request medical examination.

According to the data provided by the authorities, for the whole prison system in 2022, there were only 148 registered instances of inter-prisoner violence, 128 instances in 2021 and 157 instances in 2024.

However, the number of injury reports submitted from prisons to the prosecutor's office was again incomparably higher: 569 reports in 2022, 852 reports in 2023 and 930 reports in 2024.

29. As regards the situation in the three establishments visited, in the first three months of 2025, 10 injury reports were submitted from Prison no. 2 in Lipcani to the prosecutor's office, 25 injury reports from Prison no. 6 in Soroca, and five reports from Prison no. 15 in Cricova.<sup>18</sup> However, during the visit, the delegation could not gain a clear picture as to the follow-up given by the prosecutors to these injury reports and the outcome of the criminal investigations which may have been initiated. This information was not available in the prisons as no feedback was provided either to prison management or healthcare staff from the prosecutor's office.

Consequently, at the end of the visit, the delegation asked to receive an account of the steps taken by the prosecutor's office as a follow-up to these reports, as well as the number of criminal investigations initiated by the prosecutor's office and their outcome (such as the number of indictments lodged with the courts, number of acquittals, number of convictions and the overview of the sanctions imposed).

30. By letter of 24 September 2025, the Moldovan authorities provided detailed data on the number of complaints alleging acts of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment for the period of 2022 to 2025, the number of criminal proceedings initiated by the prosecutor's office and the number of judgments issued in these cases.

However, these aggregated data do not make it possible to identify the action taken by the prosecutor's office in the individual cases referred to above, that is, those cases in which injury reports were submitted to the prosecutor's office from the three prisons visited.

Consequently, **the CPT reiterates its request to receive an account of the steps taken by the prosecutor's office as a follow-up to the injury reports submitted to the prosecutor's office in the first three months of 2025 from Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, Prison no. 6 in Soroca Prison and Prison no. 15 in Cricova, as well as the number of criminal investigations initiated by the prosecutor's office and their outcome (such as the number of indictments lodged with the courts, number of acquittals, number of convictions and the overview of the sanctions imposed, with an indication of the offence according to the Criminal Code for which the persons concerned have been indicted and convicted, or the reasons for which they have been acquitted).**

Further, **the CPT recommends that feedback be systematically provided from the prosecutor's office to the prison management (who should in their turn inform healthcare staff) on the steps taken by the prosecutor's office in the reported cases.**

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18. As regards the contents of the reports and the quality of recording of injuries, see paragraph 69.



### **c. specific situation of prisoners considered to be “humiliated” and so-called “neputiovie”**

31. The situation of persons considered to be “humiliated” or “untouchable”, that is, those on the lowest caste of the informal prisoner hierarchy, was the same as described in detail in previous visit reports<sup>19</sup> and remains a matter of serious concern to the CPT.

As during previous visits, the delegation received many complaints of frequent verbal abuse, systematic demeaning and dehumanising behaviour by other persons held in prison, threats of physical violence if they failed to follow the informal “code of conduct”, and physical violence.

The informal rules obliged them to avoid contact with other persons held in prison and their belongings, to walk on the side or along the walls, to not look into other persons’ faces, to not use expletives when interacting with other persons, and to not access communal sports and recreational facilities used by other prisoners. They were also prevented from using the same laundry facilities that the general prison population had at their disposal and, at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, had to use dilapidated outside toilets (see also paragraph 62) and were only allowed to take water from an outside tap.

Further, these persons were used as manpower for “dirty” work: they were compelled to clean accommodation and communal areas (including toilets) for free and to collect rubbish, and were not permitted to work with other persons held in prison. In addition, they continued to be systematically accommodated in the poorest conditions to be found in the prisons visited, usually in separate rooms or dormitories.

32. As repeatedly stressed in previous visit reports, the CPT considers that the situation of persons regarded as “humiliated” could be considered to constitute a continuing violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits, *inter alia* all forms of degrading treatment and obliges state authorities to take appropriate measures to prevent such treatment, including by other persons held in prison.<sup>20</sup>

33. Similar to those considered to be “humiliated”, prisoners belonging to the so-called “neputiovie” caste<sup>21</sup> were subjected to frequent instances of inter-prisoner violence and were accommodated in comparably poor material conditions. Allegedly, they were in some cases obliged to work as servants for prisoners from higher castes, making their beds and laundry, cleaning and cooking for them.

### **d. protection under Article 206 of the Enforcement Code**

34. Pursuant to Article 206 of the Enforcement Code, persons held in prison may request that measures be taken to ensure their personal safety. Prison staff are obliged to take immediate steps to this end.

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19. See, for example, [CPT/Inf\(2023\) 27](#), paragraph 24 and foll.

20. The CPT wishes to point out that in the case of [S.P. and Others v. Russia](#) (no. 36463/11 et al., §§ 108-109, 2 May 2023), the European Court of Human Rights examined the situation of applicants who belonged to a particularly vulnerable category of “outcast” prisoners and had been subjected to segregation, humiliating practices and abuse in their daily life while in detention, and had been at a heightened risk of inter-prisoner violence. The Court concluded that being subjected to such treatment, for years, had amounted to inhuman and degrading treatment, in violation of Article 3 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Similarly, in the case of [D. v. Latvia](#) (no. 76680/17, § 51) concerning a prisoner belonging to the lowest caste (that is, “kreisie” in the Latvian context), the Court found that the applicant’s physical and social segregation, coupled with restricted access to basic prison resources and denial of human contact, has led him to endure mental anxiety that must have exceeded the unavoidable level of suffering inherent in detention, even though he had not been subjected to physical violence. That situation, which he endured for years on account of his position in the lowest caste of prisoners in an informal hierarchy, amounted to a treatment prohibited under Article 3 of the Convention.

21. Literally translated as “those who lost their way” or “those who cannot be trusted”, these were prisoners who refused to obey the “rules” of the informal prisoner hierarchy and/or were perceived as cooperating with the authorities because they were engaged in paid work. Many prisoners segregated for their protection under Article 206 (see paragraphs 34 and foll.) had previously belonged to this caste.

35. In practice, the measures taken under Section 206 took the form of segregation from the general prison population and many persons held in the prisons visited perceived such protection as the only way to escape the informal code of conduct and the threats posed by the informal prisoner hierarchy.<sup>22</sup> As already observed during previous visits, it is positive that most persons segregated under Article 206 who were interviewed by the delegation stated that, within the segregation units (or cells), they felt relatively protected from the informal prisoner hierarchy.

The findings of the visit indicate that, unlike during the previous visit carried out in 2022, requests for segregation under Article 206 were in most cases granted swiftly. It is also positive that prisoners interviewed by the delegation were now aware of the possibility of requesting this measure – in line with the recommendation made by the CPT after the 2022 visit, they had usually been informed thereof upon their admission to prison (or already knew about it because of a prior prison term).

However, the delegation still received a few allegations in all three establishments visited that prisoners from higher castes learned about requests for Article 206 protection lodged by other persons and approached them, in an attempt to persuade them to withdraw their requests (see, for example, the individual case described in paragraph 26). Moreover, at Prison no. 15 in Cricova, the delegation heard a few isolated allegations that following their “initial classification interview” with informal prison leaders (see paragraph 45), newly arrived prisoners were not “accepted” to the living zones and were “placed in segregation” by the informal leaders, purportedly under Article 206.

36. Material conditions offered to persons held under Article 206 protection remained very poor overall.<sup>23</sup>

At Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, persons under Article 206 protection were accommodated in a separate protection sector (Sector 3), in cells which were holding between one and six persons.<sup>24</sup> While these cells in principle provided sufficient living space per person,<sup>25</sup> the conditions in two single-occupancy cells (former disciplinary solitary confinement cells which each measured 6 m<sup>2</sup>) were cramped, virtually all space being taken up by the cell equipment;<sup>26</sup> in addition, these two cells had very poor access to natural light. Further, in several cells, the in-cell sanitary facilities were dilapidated, with no light and broken toilets which did not flush.

At Prison no. 6 in Soroca and Prison no. 15 in Cricova, persons under Article 206 protection were accommodated in former disciplinary isolators, cells intended for the “initial” (cellular) regime, or “quarantine” cells for newly admitted prisoners, many of which were seriously overcrowded: at Prison no. 15 in Cricova, several of these cells provided at best 3.5 m<sup>2</sup> of living space per person and, in addition, had very poor access to natural light.<sup>27</sup> The situation was even more serious at Prison no. 6 in Soroca where the living space provided per segregated person varied between 2 and 3.5 m<sup>2</sup>.<sup>28</sup>

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22. At the time of the visit, 19 persons were being held under this protective measure at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, 74 at Prison no. 6 in Soroca and 30 at Prison no. 15 in Cricova.

23. In addition to the specific shortcomings described in the following text, cells accommodating persons under Article 206 in the three establishments visited also displayed most of the deficiencies for the general prison population described in more detail in paragraph 59.

24. Before being turned into a protection unit, Sector 3 was used as a “quarantine” for newly admitted prisoners or for disciplinary solitary confinement.

25. Single-occupancy cells measured between 6 and 10 m<sup>2</sup>, double-occupancy cells around 11 m<sup>2</sup>, cells for three prisoners measured some 20 m<sup>2</sup>, and those accommodating six persons approximately 30 m<sup>2</sup>.

26. Unless indicated otherwise, the cell sizes indicated in this report exclude the area taken by the in-cell sanitary facility.

27. Sector 1, which was accommodating persons under Article 206 protection, consisted of cells located on the ground floor and in the basement. There were seven cells in the basement (an additional six cells which had no access to natural light had been taken out of use) and another seven cells on the ground floor.

28. Sector 12 consisted of 12 cells which were each accommodating between two and 10 persons. The formal disciplinary isolator had another 12 cells used for Article 206 protection and an additional cell for disciplinary solitary confinement (which was empty at the time of the visit). The following are examples of the sizes of these cells: 5 m<sup>2</sup> for one person, 6.7 m<sup>2</sup> for two persons, 6.8 m<sup>2</sup> for three persons, 15 m<sup>2</sup> for six persons, 15.5 m<sup>2</sup> for eight persons, and 35 m<sup>2</sup> for ten persons.



Further, in several cells at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani and Prison no. 15 in Cricova, the delegation could see infestation with insects.

37. As regards the regime and activities, the situation of persons held under Article 206 protection at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani was better in that they were accommodated in a separate sector and benefited from an open-door policy throughout the day (that is, usually between 7:00 and 20:00). They had an opportunity to grow vegetables in their sector, had occasional access to a modest gym reserved for them and a very rare access, under staff supervision, to a sports field. Some of them participated in three-monthly reintegration programmes. However, the fact remains that for most of the time, they were idle, watching TV, using PlayStation and associating with other persons from the same sector being their only activity.

38. In the other two establishments visited, some efforts were made to alleviate the situation of persons held under Article 206 protection and provide them with some out-of-cell time. They were offered between two and four hours per day of outdoor exercise and some of them participated in reintegration courses once or twice a week and, at Prison no. 6 in Soroca, had daily access to a gym.

Despite these efforts, the regime to which they were subjected for prolonged periods of time (that is, for years on end in many cases) remained very impoverished. They were spending most of the time in idleness, with nothing to do except for reading, watching TV, playing chess and doing handicraft in their cells.

As already observed during previous visits, the outdoor yards to which they had access consisted of rather small<sup>29</sup> and oppressive bare concrete boxes without any horizontal view. They were equipped with a table and chairs/benches, but had no sports equipment except for a rusty horizontal bar in some. Moreover, most of the outdoor boxes at no. 15 in Cricova did not feature a shelter against inclement weather. Given their size and the lack of equipment, they made any genuine sports activity inconceivable and offered little relief from the otherwise stagnant environment.

Not surprisingly, the main complaint the delegation received from persons under Article 206 protection concerned the overwhelming idleness and the amount of time they spent locked up in their cells, in striking contrast with the open-door regime in other parts of these two establishments.

39. Furthermore, in all three establishments, the total absence of work opportunities for these persons meant that they could not gain days to be deducted from their prison term and obtain an early release from prison (see also paragraph 54).

40. As already observed during previous visits, these features of Article 206 protection dissuaded prisoners who neither felt safe in the establishments, nor wished to abide by the informal rules, from requesting this measure.

41. In sum, in particular at Prison no. 6 in Soroca and Prison no. 15 in Cricova, due to the simple fact that they refused to follow the rules imposed by the informal prison leaders and requested protection, these persons were subjected, for years on end, to extremely poor material conditions and impoverished regime; these conditions, in the CPT's view, are incompatible with human dignity.

42. According to the information provided by the authorities after the 2022 visit, it was planned that, by the end of 2023, the prison administration would transfer persons who have requested protection under Article 206 to separate living areas in three prisons (located in the north, south and the central parts of the country) to ensure that they have "unrestricted access" to activities, while ensuring their segregation from the informal prison leaders. The creation of such protection units is also envisaged in the SAFE Roadmap referred to in paragraph 22.<sup>30</sup> At the time of the visit, these plans had still not been implemented.

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29. These boxes usually measured between 12 and 16 m<sup>2</sup> (with the exception of one bigger yard measuring 38 m<sup>2</sup> at Prison no. 6 in Soroca).

30. Another possibility considered at the time of the 2025 visit was to transfer those persons either to Prison no. 5 in Cahul or to Prison no. 17 in Rezina, which offer cell-type accommodation.

#### **e. tacit acceptance of the informal prisoner hierarchy by staff**

43. The findings of the visit suggest that there continues to be tacit acceptance of the informal hierarchy and their “rules” by prison staff and even, to a certain extent, tacit “agreement” between staff and informal prison leaders when it comes to ensuring “order” among prisoners and the “smooth operation” of the establishments.

44. First of all, the delegation once again observed striking differences in material conditions, in terms of state of repair and equipment, as well as the available living space, between informal prison leaders and their close circles on the one hand, and the general prison population, most notably those considered to be “humiliated” and “*neputiovie*”, on the other. The former continued to live a very comfortable life inside prison, with all possible amenities (for more details, see paragraph 58). Moreover, the delegation again received allegations that the refurbishment and equipment of the cells of leaders was paid for by the illegal collective fund referred to in paragraph 25.

In all three establishments, visiting facilities for long-term (conjugal) visits available to prisoners from higher castes offered significantly better material conditions than those reserved for other prisoners. Moreover, at Prison no. 15 in Cricova, the delegation heard allegations that children who came to visit prisoners considered to be “humiliated” were not allowed to use the playroom available to other children visitors.

45. Further, in some cases, the informal prison leaders still gained access to persons newly admitted to the prisons and “interviewed” them to make their own initial “classification” and decide on their placement in rooms/dormitories. For example, at Prison no. 15 in Cricova, these initial interviews took place through a window in the room accommodating kitchen workers, which lead to the unit containing quarantine cells for persons newly admitted to the prison.

Moreover, in some cases, informal prisoner leaders and their close circles still learned about requests lodged by other prisoners for protection under Article 206, and tried to persuade them to withdraw the requests.

As already mentioned in paragraph 8, at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, lists of prisoners maintained by the administration were incomplete, and the most up-to-date and complete lists, indicating the allocation of persons to rooms/dormitories were actually in the possession of prisoners “appointed” by informal prison leaders.

46. Most strikingly, at Prison no. 15 in Cricova, prisoners from the higher castes were using an outdoor swimming pool and had a large pile of fresh tobacco stored in one of the gyms. The explanation provided by some staff that the tiled pool in perfect state of repair with turquoise water, featuring a constantly running water filter, was in fact a water tank for firefighting, and that the tobacco was merely leftovers from cigarette butts which were collected so that the tobacco could be re-used, was clearly misleading; this raises a serious issue of cooperation (see also paragraph 8).

Further, as already noted in paragraph 24, staff members who witnessed interference by prisoners from higher castes in interviews carried out by the delegation and their attempts to prevent other prisoners from speaking, remained astonishingly passive in these situations and appeared afraid to exercise their authority; this is a clear indicator that staff are not controlling the situation in this establishment.

Finally, allegations were received in this establishment that prisoners from higher castes remained present during medical examinations of other prisoners who had been victims of inter-prisoner violence (see also paragraph 27).

47. By letter of 24 September 2025, the Moldovan authorities informed the CPT that, at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, a new internal procedure had been put in place to ensure that the preparation and updating of lists of prisoners and their accommodation is now exclusively carried out by designated staff members. Further, the swimming pool at Prison no. 15 in Cricova had been emptied and the reception of dried tobacco leaves had been temporarily ceased, to avoid abusive practices. The CPT welcomes these steps.

48. In addition, the Committee acknowledges that a few prisoners interviewed during the visit, in particular at Prison no. 6 in Soroca, stated that the collaboration between the official prison management and the informal prison leaders is weaker than in the past, that the management is less inclined to rely on the latter and is steadily tightening the formal rules, that the situation is incomparable with that of the early 2000s and that the system of informal prisoner hierarchy is “decomposing year after year”. As one prisoner put it, “now it is the administration who is in charge, not the bandits”.

The CPT also notes that, according to the information provided by the Moldovan authorities, the number of requests for protection under Article 206 of the Enforcement Code lodged by prisoners who did not wish to be affiliated with the informal prisoner hierarchy has been steadily growing in recent years, from 525 such requests in 2021 to 569 in 2022, 852 in 2023, 930 in 2024, and to 515 in the first quarter of 2025.

#### **f. staff**

49. According to the information provided by the Moldovan authorities, several steps have been taken to recruit new staff and to make the job of a prison officer more attractive. For example, salaries have been increased by 30% since 2020, and various training activities had been developed and were being offered to staff, in cooperation with a prison staff training centre in Romania, the Moldovan Ombudsperson’s Office, the public prosecutor’s office and civil society organisations. Training curricula included various topics, including risk and needs assessment and treatment of vulnerable groups of persons held in prison.<sup>31</sup>

However, the authorities acknowledged that despite these measures, difficulties in attracting new staff and the resulting understaffing remained a major challenge.

50. Of a total of 2 942 posts of various categories of staff in the prison system, 357 (12%) remained vacant.<sup>32</sup> As regards the situation in the three establishments visited, at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, 11 of 113.5 posts (10%) were vacant, at Prison no. 6 in Soroca 16 of 203 posts (8%) and at Prison no. 15 in Cricova 13 of 153 posts (8.5%).<sup>33</sup>

At Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, there were four to seven members of custodial staff deployed inside the establishment who worked in a 24-hour shift, reinforced by an additional four during the day.<sup>34</sup> At Prison no. 6 in Soroca, the night shift consisted of eight to 12 members of custodial staff in a 24-hour shift and there were an additional 18 during the day.<sup>35</sup> At Prison no. 15 in Cricova, the 24-hour shift consisted of seven to eight members of custodial staff who were reinforced by an additional five during the day.<sup>36</sup>

51. Considering that most prisoners in the three establishments visited were accommodated in large open dormitories or rooms, and interconnected sectors,<sup>37</sup> within which they were free to move most of the time, the numbers of custodial staff present in detention areas remained very small. Consequently, they were not in a position to have effective control over the situation and could neither be aware of, nor effectively intervene in instances of inter-prisoner violence.

Moreover, as already emphasised in previous visit reports, the CPT considers that the pattern of 24-hour shifts will inevitably have a negative effect on the quality of the work of prison officers.

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31. It should be noted that several prison officers with whom the delegation spoke during the visit mentioned positively these training activities.

32. There would, however, appear to be an improvement in comparison with the situation at the time of the 2022 visit, when 520 of 2 940 posts (approximately 18%) were vacant.

33. Due to the moratorium on recruitment of state employees for budgetary reasons, eight vacant posts at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, seven vacant posts at Prison no. 6 in Soroca and 12 vacant posts at Prison no. 15 in Cricova could not be filled.

34. In total, Prison no. 2 in Lipcani employed 31 members of custodial staff (two additional posts were vacant).

35. In total, Prison no. 6 in Soroca employed 64 members of custodial staff (four additional posts were vacant).

36. In total, Prison no. 15 in Cricova employed 40 members of custodial staff (there were no vacant posts of this category of staff).

37. It is recalled that Prison no. 2 in Lipcani was accommodating 311 persons, Prison no. 6 in Soroca 665 persons and Prison no. 15 in Cricova 380 persons.

## **g. conclusions and recommendations**

52. In light of the findings described in the preceding sections of this report, the CPT considers that, despite the efforts made by the authorities, Moldovan prisons still fail to provide a safe and secure environment for prisoners. As in the past, this is directly linked to a number of factors, most notably the chronic shortage of custodial staff, the *de facto* relinquishment of authority and control over the prison population to informal prison leaders, and the existence of large-capacity dormitories and/or freely accessible unlocked rooms in interconnected sectors.

At the same time, the plan of the Moldovan authorities to introduce a new progressive system of enforcement of imprisonment sentences remains unimplemented, and there is still no proper risk and needs assessment of persons upon their admission to prison, nor a classification of persons to identify in which prison, block or cell they should be placed. The increased vulnerability of some persons admitted into prison (such as persons accused or convicted of sex offences, LGBTQI+ persons, persons with mental health problems or illicit drug use) clearly calls for the need to identify potential risks and vulnerabilities in order to prevent these persons from being subjected to violence and exploitation by other persons held in prison.

53. Resolving the problem of inter-prisoner violence and intimidation will require that the management and staff regain control over the situation in prison establishments. First of all, prison staff should be in a position to exercise their authority in an appropriate manner. This implies, *inter alia* that the level of staffing must be sufficient (including at nighttime) to enable prison officers to supervise adequately the activities of persons held in prison and to support each other effectively in the performance of their tasks. Addressing the phenomenon of inter-prisoner violence also requires that prison staff be particularly attentive to signs of trouble and be properly trained to intervene in a determined and effective manner at the earliest possible stage. To this end, initial and ongoing training programmes for staff of all grades should continue and should include the issue of managing inter-prisoner violence.

Further, the existence of positive relations between staff and prisoners, based on notions of dynamic security<sup>38</sup> and care, is of utmost importance; such relations can help to overcome the habitual reluctance of victims (or witnesses) to denounce the perpetrators of inter-prisoner violence.

54. In addition, it will be necessary to develop a daily regime offering persons held in prison meaningful activities and facilitating their social reintegration (see the recommendation set out in paragraph 66). The possibility to earn money through paid work, gain days to be deducted from their prison term, and obtain early release from prison will help to incentivise persons held in prison to cooperate with the official authorities and to renounce the informal prisoner hierarchy and its code of conduct.

55. In light of the above, **the CPT once again calls upon the Moldovan authorities to take resolute action, without further delay, to tackle the phenomenon of informal prisoner hierarchy and to prevent inter-prisoner violence and intimidation throughout the prison system. In this context, the highest priority should be afforded to the implementation of the SAFE Roadmap. In particular, the Moldovan authorities should:**

- i. put an end to the practice of using informal prison leaders to maintain good order in prison;**
- ii. segregating the informal leaders and their close circle from the rest of the prison population, on the basis of a proper individual risk and needs assessment, as foreseen in the concept of the progressive system of enforcement of imprisonment sentences referred to in paragraph 17, will facilitate these efforts;**

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38. Dynamic security is the development by staff of positive relationships with prisoners based on firmness and fairness, in combination with an understanding of their personal situation and any risk posed by individual prisoners (see Rule 51 of the European Prison Rules and paragraph 18.a of the Recommendation Rec (2003) 23 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states on the management by prison administrations of life sentence and other long-term prisoners).

- iii. **deprive informal prison leaders and their close circles of the privileges which other prisoners do not enjoy, including as regards material conditions** (see also the recommendation formulated in paragraph 61);
- iv. **deprive informal prison leaders of the possibility of accessing persons newly admitted to prison and performing their “caste designation”;** in this context, it should be reiterated to prison staff that any staff member facilitating such contact will be sanctioned;
- v. **provide prisoner accommodation based on smaller living units;**
- vi. **put in place a system of evidence-based risk and needs assessment, classification and allocation of individual persons held in prison, to be carried out by qualified staff, with a view to ensuring that they are not exposed to other prisoners who may cause them harm** (taking due consideration of the risk certain persons held in prison may pose to other inmates by promoting or imposing the informal prisoner hierarchy);
- vii. **ensure that the management and staff provide full support and ensure safe environment for persons who are exposed to a particular risk of abuse by other persons held in prison** (including persons accused or convicted of sex offences, LGBTQI+ persons, persons with mental health problems or illicit drug use) and those who do not (or no longer) wish to be involved in the informal prisoner hierarchy, including, if they so request, by being accommodated in separate living units, which will ensure adequate material conditions and regime, and the necessary supervision by staff;
- viii. **continue their efforts to effectively recruit and train staff and ensure continuous supervision (including at night) in detention areas. This will require significantly increasing the number of custodial staff working directly with prisoners in detention areas. Steps should also be taken to abolish the 24-hour shift pattern for custodial staff.**

Further, **the Committee recommends that the Moldovan authorities take steps to ensure that during daily roll calls, prison staff see all prisoners to ensure timely detection of injuries. Prisoners who, for health-related reasons, stay in accommodation areas during roll calls should be visited by healthcare staff.**

56. As regards the situation of persons held in segregation from the general prison population under Article 206 of the Enforcement Code, **the CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Moldovan authorities take steps to ensure that all requests for measures under Article 206 are treated as confidential by staff; in this context, it should be reiterated to prison staff that revealing such information, or enabling the access of informal leaders or their close circles to persons requesting this measure, is unacceptable and that any staff member doing so will be sanctioned accordingly.**

Further, **the Committee recommends that the Moldovan authorities implement their plans to establish separate, fully-fledged living units for persons requesting protection under Article 206. This will make it possible to ensure that former disciplinary isolators, quarantine cells and cells intended for the initial (cellular) regime are not used for the accommodation of persons segregated under Article 206.**

For as long as these persons are accommodated in these areas, **the CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Moldovan authorities take urgent steps to ensure that their accommodation areas have sufficient capacity and provide adequate material conditions and regime, in particular:**

- **every person accommodated in a multiple-occupancy cell should be provided at least 4 m<sup>2</sup> of living space (not counting the area taken by the in-cell sanitary facilities);**
- **cells should enjoy good access to natural light;**
- **cells should be regularly disinfected.**

In addition, **the Moldovan authorities should explore how the very restrictive regime for these persons held at Prison no. 6 in Soroca and Prison no. 15 in Cricova, as well as, as applicable, in other prisons in Moldova, could be eased, for example by increasing the out-of-cell time available to them. In this context, steps should be taken to ensure that these persons are offered daily outdoor exercise in facilities which are sufficiently large to allow them to exert themselves physically (as opposed to pacing around an enclosed space or standing and sitting in a small box).**

Finally, **efforts should be made to provide persons segregated under Article 206 with paid work, to make this measure more attractive and to ensure that these persons can meet requirements for early release from prison.**

## **4. Conditions of detention for the general prison population**

### **a. material conditions**

57. Material conditions in Sector 1 at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, which was accommodating former law enforcement officers, were on the whole acceptable. This sector contained rooms for up to 16 persons which, to some extent, had been refurbished, although by the prisoners themselves, and provided sufficient living space.<sup>39</sup>

Most large-capacity dormitories at Prison no. 6 in Soroca (with up to 25 places) had been converted into smaller rooms for between four and 10 persons several years ago, and Sector 6 at Prison no. 15 in Cricova<sup>40</sup> which had consisted of one large dormitory had been partitioned into rooms for up to six persons. All these rooms provided a minimum of 4 m<sup>2</sup> per person at the time of the visit.

Despite these improvements, material conditions in the three establishments visited remained very poor for most prisoners.

58. In Sector 2 at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani and at Prison no. 6 in Soroca and Prison no. 15 in Cricova, the delegation once again observed striking differences in material conditions and an unequal distribution of prisoners.<sup>41</sup>

As observed during previous visits, informal prison leaders and their close circles were dwelling in spacious rooms or even flats consisting of several rooms. The most luxurious of these rooms were equipped with large double beds, sofas and leather armchairs, lockers, mirrors, kitchenettes with multi-drawer fridges, coffee machines and microwave ovens, large flat-screen televisions, video game consoles, stereo systems with floor standing speakers and fish tanks. They had new parquet or carpet on the floor and were decorated with paintings, many of which symbolised the informal status of the person who occupied the flat.

59. In stunning contrast, most prisoners were accommodated in dilapidated multi-occupancy cells and large-capacity dormitories, many of which were poorly ventilated, had insufficient access to natural light, dirty walls, damaged floors and dangerous improvised electric wiring, and there was a lack of personal storage space.

Moreover, the large-capacity dormitories in Sector 2 at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani and at Prison no. 15 in Cricova, which were accommodating between 25 and 30 persons, were seriously overcrowded and provided absolutely no privacy. The bunkbeds were crammed together, creating a labyrinth of narrow aisles just wide enough for one person to pass through, and were separated with makeshift partitioning made of blankets and sheets to give at least some impression of elusive privacy. In several such dormitories at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, the living space provided per person was around 2.5 m<sup>2</sup>. Even more strikingly, two large

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39. For example, a room for three to four persons measured some 16 m<sup>2</sup>, a room for nine persons measured approximately 70 m<sup>2</sup>, and a room accommodating 11 persons (with a capacity of 16 places) measured 90 m<sup>2</sup>.

40. This sector was accommodating prisoners considered to be "humiliated".

41. Material conditions in Sector 3 at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, which was accommodating persons under Article 206 protection, are described in paragraph 36.



dormitories at Prison no. 15 in Cricova measured 45 and 54 m<sup>2</sup> and were holding 25 and 26 persons respectively, thus providing 2 and 1.8 m<sup>2</sup> per person.

This not only clearly falls short of the national standard and the CPT's minimum standard of 4 m<sup>2</sup> per prisoner in a multiple-occupancy cell, but also gives rise to a *strong presumption* of a violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.<sup>42</sup>

As was the case during previous visits, these overcrowded large-capacity dormitories were in particular accommodating persons regarded as "humiliated" and "*neputiovie*".

The CPT must once again stress that it is the prison administration's responsibility to ensure that all persons are held in decent conditions. Giving certain persons free rein to exploit their wealth, and even more so the funds extorted from other persons held in prison (see paragraph 44), to create distinctly better living conditions for themselves clearly goes against the objective of management and staff regaining control over prisons, establishing their authority and creating positive relations between staff and persons held in prison. Indeed, for other persons held in prison, seeing the informal prison leaders who have all possible privileges and exclusive powers is a strong incentive to engage in the informal prisoner hierarchy and rise up the ranks by oppressing others.

60. In light of the level of overcrowding observed at Prison no. 15 in Cricova, at the end of the visit, the delegation made an immediate observation under Article 8, paragraph 5, of the Convention, and requested that the Moldovan authorities take steps to ensure that every prisoner held in a multiple-occupancy cell/dormitory at Prison no. 15 in Cricova is provided at least 4 m<sup>2</sup> of living space; persons held in prison should be fairly distributed throughout the available accommodation areas and empty beds should be removed. The delegation requested to receive, within three months, an account of the steps taken to implement this immediate observation.

By letter of 24 September 2025, the Moldovan authorities informed the CPT that one large-capacity dormitory in Sector 4 at Prison no. 15 in Cricova had been partitioned into smaller rooms, measuring between 16 and 20 m<sup>2</sup>, and the occupancy levels had been decreased to ensure compliance with the minimum standard of 4 m<sup>2</sup> per person. Similar measures will be taken between September and October 2025 with respect to the second large-capacity dormitory in the same sector.

**The CPT welcomes the steps taken by the Moldovan authorities and would like to receive confirmation that the second large-capacity dormitory in Sector 4 at Prison no. 15 in Cricova has now been partitioned into smaller rooms. It would also like to be informed of the current occupancy of the newly created rooms.**

61. More generally, in light of the findings of the visit, **the CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Moldovan authorities take steps to ensure that:**

- **all persons held in prison are treated equally and benefit from similar material conditions; consideration should be given to drawing up a list of items/equipment that prisoners are allowed to keep in general; permission for any additional items could be the subject of an incentive scheme, designed to encourage and reward good behaviour and participation in prison activities;**
- **every person held in a multiple-occupancy cell/dormitory is provided at least 4 m<sup>2</sup> of living space (not counting the area taken by the in-cell sanitary facilities); persons held in prison should be evenly distributed throughout the available accommodation;**
- **cells and dormitories are kept in an adequate state of repair and are clean, suitably equipped and sufficiently lit and ventilated.**

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42. The European Court of Human Rights held that "[w]hen the personal space available to a detainee falls below 3 m<sup>2</sup> of floor surface in multi-occupancy accommodation in prisons, the lack of personal space is considered so severe that a strong presumption of a violation of Article 3 arises" (see [Muršić v. Croatia](#) [GC], no.7334/13, 20 October 2016, paragraph 137).



62. Most communal sanitary facilities seen by the delegation in the three establishments visited were in a poor state of repair and hygiene.

Particular reference must be made to the situation at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, where the outside communal toilets in Sector 2 (which persons considered to be “humiliated” were obliged to use) and Sector 3 (for persons segregated under Article 206)<sup>43</sup> were simply appalling. These floor-level dry toilets were filthy, overflowing with human waste, and emitted a foul stench. They were unfit to be used by human beings.

At the end of the visit, the delegation made an immediate observation under Article 8, paragraph 5, of the Convention, and requested that the Moldovan authorities take steps to ensure that all prisoner in Sectors 2 and 3 at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani have access to adequate sanitary facilities. The delegation wished to receive, within three months, an account of the steps taken to implement this immediate observation.

By letter of 24 September 2025, the Moldovan authorities informed the CPT that a series of works had been carried out following the CPT visit to improve sanitary conditions, to create adequate facilities for prisoners and to increase the sustainability of the sanitary infrastructure. In particular, a non-functional toilet in the prison yard has been demolished. The floors and walls of the toilet in Sector 3 were covered with tiles and the door was replaced to ensure privacy. In Sector 2, complete reconstruction of the toilet was underway, including the replacement of the sewage system, tiling the floors and walls, and the installation of water collection tanks, to ensure efficient consumption of water.

The CPT welcomes the steps taken by the Moldovan authorities. **The Committee trusts that the Moldovan authorities will take steps to ensure that all sanitary facilities at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, Prison no. 6 in Soroca and Prison no. 15 in Cricova are cleaned, refurbished and maintained in an adequate state of repair and hygiene.**

63. Moreover, the capacity of some toilets, in particular at Prison no. 15 in Cricova, was clearly insufficient. For example, there were only two toilets on one floor for 70 persons; this regularly led to queues and waiting time for up to one hour. Such arrangements are unacceptable and incompatible with human dignity. **The CPT recommends that the Moldovan authorities take steps to ensure that toilets at Prison no. 15 in Cricova have sufficient capacity. The implementation of the recommendation set out in paragraph 61 concerning the even distribution of persons held in prison throughout the available accommodation will facilitate these efforts.**

## **b. regime**

64. Persons held in the three establishments visited benefitted from an open-door regime and could move freely around the establishments, and some efforts were made to offer them work, education and a few other activities.

65. At Prison no. 2 in Lipcani,<sup>44</sup> 38 persons (albeit some of them only part-time) had a paid job in general maintenance, cleaning, or working in the kitchen or boiler room. Another 27 persons had access to a woodwork workshop as an unpaid reintegration leisure activity (for up to two hours per day).<sup>45</sup> Four prisoners were allowed to leave the establishment during the day and work in town. Some prisoners from Sectors 1 and 2 (that is, those not considered to be “humiliated”) had access to a football pitch, a tarmac basketball court, and a gym.

At Prison no. 6 in Soroca, up to 100 persons had a paid job in the establishment’s industrial zone for external companies (automotive industry, production of a wire-mesh fence) and some 90 persons were paid household workers. Vocational training for electricians was no longer being offered. Some prisoners had access to a gym and an indoor sports hall where they could play football, volleyball and table tennis.

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43. Cells in Sector 3 had in-cell sanitary facilities which could be used at night, when prisoners were locked in their cells.

44. It is recalled that, at the time of the visit, Prison no. 2 in Lipcani was accommodating 311 persons, Prison no. 6 in Soroca 665 persons and Prison no. 15 in Cricova 380 persons.

45. Allegations were received, however, that the wooden souvenirs and board games (for example, backgammon boards) were in fact used by the informal leaders for gambling.

At Prison no. 15 in Cricova, some 60 persons carried out paid household work and another approximately 30 had access to a carpentry workshop as a leisure activity. The establishment also offered vocational training for welders, plasterers and carpenters, for approximately 20 persons each. Further, several short-term or one-off programmes and events were organised, such as sports matches, board games, handicraft, development of social skills, preparation for release, violence reduction programme and healthcare education.

66. Nevertheless, the fact remains that a significant proportion of incarcerated persons in all three establishments visited were most of the time not engaged in any purposeful activity and idled their days away, sitting or wandering around and talking to other persons. The CPT must point out that an open-door arrangement, although alleviating the monotony of day-to-day life and allowing for more association between prisoners, cannot substitute for a programme of purposeful activities.

It is also noteworthy that several prisoners interviewed during the visit told the delegation that they would like to have a paid job which, in addition to earning some money, would allow them to earn days to be deducted from their prison term and obtain an early release from prison. This concerned in particular persons held under Article 206 protection (see also paragraph 39).

**The CPT recommends that the Moldovan authorities redouble their efforts and further develop the programme of activities offered to prisoners at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, Prison no. 6 in Soroca and Prison no. 15 in Cricova. Alongside these efforts, care will need to be taken to ensure that all prisoners, regardless of their “caste” within the informal prisoner hierarchy, are able to participate in the activities offered. The aim should be to ensure that all persons held in prison spend a reasonable part of the day (that is, eight hours or more) outside their cells, and have equitable access to purposeful activities of a varied nature: work (preferably paid work with vocational value); education; sport; recreation/association.**

## 5. Healthcare

67. The delegation observed several improvements and even good practices as regards the provision of healthcare. For example, the recording of injuries had improved, healthcare staff no longer wore custodial staff uniforms, screening upon admission to prison was reasonably good and acts of self-harm were no longer regarded as a disciplinary offence. Further, medication appeared to be available in sufficient quantities and range, and was distributed to prisoners by healthcare staff. However, low staffing levels of healthcare staff remain an issue of major concern.

68. As regards recording of injuries, as already observed during the 2022 visit, all injuries observed on prisoners were registered in central trauma registers maintained in the establishments visited and in individual medical files.<sup>46</sup> Further, a detailed injury report form which included a body chart to mark traumatic injuries was completed by healthcare staff. At Prison no. 2 in Lipcani and Prison no. 6 in Soroca, colour photographs of injuries were taken and included in the documentation. This, however, was not the case at Prison no. 15 in Cricova, where no pictures of injuries had been taken for several months preceding the CPT visit, reportedly because the camera had broken.

The quality of the description of injuries has improved in comparison with the situation observed during previous visits. However, at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, some of the injury descriptions still lacked sufficient detail and, at Prison no. 6 in Soroca and Prison no. 15 in Cricova, the records contained insufficient description (or none at all) of the allegations made by the prisoner concerned as to the origin of the injuries. Further, the records examined by the delegation in the three establishments did not systematically include observations concerning the consistency between the allegations and objective medical findings.<sup>47</sup>

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46. In addition, a brief note was made in the SIA PARC prison database in the electronic record of the prisoner concerned.

47. Reference is made in this context to the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ([Istanbul Protocol](#)), revised version published in June 2022.

While acknowledging the improvements achieved so far, **the CPT recommends that the Moldovan authorities continue their efforts, including through the provision of training to healthcare staff working in prison, to ensure in the three prisons visited and, as appropriate, in other prisons in the country, that the record drawn up after medical examinations of prisoners contains:**

- i) an account of statements made by the persons concerned which are relevant to their medical examination (including their description of their state of health and any allegations of ill-treatment),**
- ii) a full account of objective medical findings based on a thorough examination (supported by a body chart for marking traumatic injuries and colour photographs of injuries), and**
- iii) the healthcare professional's observations in light of i) and ii), indicating the consistency between any allegations made and the objective medical findings.**

**The results of the examination should be made available to the prisoners concerned and their lawyers.**

69. As for the reporting of injuries, within 24 hours of the detection of any injury, so-called "special communication" was sent by e-mail via the Zimbra platform to the prosecutor's office. This communication, however, contained only a very superficial description of the injuries observed and did not make it possible for the prosecutors to select cases with injuries indicative of inter-prisoner violence to which immediate follow-up should be given.

70. An incident file was then collected and sent in hardcopy to the prosecutor's office within 30 days. The quality of these files varied among the three establishments visited.

At Prison no. 6 in Soroca, the files were comprehensive and contained, in addition to the record of the statement made by the prisoner and by prison officers, detailed injury report forms (including body charts) completed by healthcare staff, and colour photographs of injuries.

At Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, injury report forms were not sent to the prosecutor's office and the transmitted documentation only contained body charts and poor quality, black and white photographs of injuries which made it difficult to assess (or even see) the injuries. Moreover, as far as the delegation could ascertain, pictures of serious injuries were sometimes not transmitted (see the case of alleged inter-prisoner violence referred to in paragraph 26).

At Prison no. 15 in Cricova, only illegible copies of body charts were sent to the prosecutor's office (as noted above, no pictures of injuries were taken in this establishment).<sup>48</sup>

**The CPT recommends that the reporting of injuries from prison to the prosecutor's office be improved further. In particular, the necessary steps should be taken to ensure that all injuries indicative of inter-prisoner violence are promptly and comprehensively reported to the prosecutor's office, including injury report forms drawn up in line with the recommendation set out in paragraph 68, and body charts completed by healthcare staff, and colour photographs of injuries. This will enable the prosecutor's office to take immediate steps to effectively investigate these cases. The prisoner concerned should be advised that submitting these materials to the prosecutor's office falls within the framework of a system to prevent and investigate cases of inter-prisoner violence and that such reporting procedure is not a substitute for the lodging of a formal complaint.**

71. Staffing levels for healthcare staff were low in all three establishments visited. It is a matter of particular concern that the only post of a medical doctor in each of the establishments was vacant. While Prison no. 15 in Cricova was at least visited by a medical doctor who was in charge of the medical unit but was mostly occupied with administrative work, no general practitioner attended the other two prisons.

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48. See paragraph 29 as regards the follow-up given by the prosecutor's office to the injury reports.

At Prison no. 2 in Lipcani,<sup>49</sup> the nursing team comprised five nurses who worked between 8:00 and 17:00, with one nurse staying until 20:00 and one being present at all times. The establishment was visited by a psychiatrist twice a week and by a dentist who worked in the establishment for 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE).

At Prison no. 6 in Sorocea, the nursing team was composed of four nurses only; they worked from 8:00 to 17:00 on working days and were on call at the weekend. The establishment also contracted a dentist and a dental technician (each for 0.25 FTE), and a pharmacist. A psychiatrist from Pruncul Prison Hospital attended only once every three months, which was clearly insufficient.

At Prison no. 15 in Cricova, there were four nurses (one of whom was on long-term absence) and the establishment contracted a psychiatrist, a dentist and a pharmacist, each working for 0.5 FTE. Nurses were in principle present at all times; however, due to the aforementioned long-term absence of one of them, on every fourth day there was no nurse present in the establishment at all.

The CPT noted the praiseworthy efforts made by the current healthcare staff, in particular nurses, to provide good quality healthcare, to carry out screening upon admission and to record injuries. However, as was already pointed out in the report on the 2022 visit, it is clear that in particular at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani and Prison no. 6 in Sorocea, the absence of a medical doctor *de facto* obliged nurses to assume responsibility for medical acts which were outside the scope of their professional competence and should be performed by a medical doctor.

**The CPT recommends that the Moldovan authorities give the highest priority to filling the vacant posts of general practitioners at Prisons no. 2 in Lipcani, Prison no. 6 in Sorocea and Prison no. 15 in Cricova. As an immediate measure, the Moldovan authorities should ensure the regular presence of a medical doctor (or, as an absolute minimum and a temporary measure, a regular supervision of the provision of healthcare by a medical doctor) in the establishments in cooperation with the local healthcare facilities.**

**Further, the presence of a psychiatrist at Prison no. 6 in Sorocea should be increased to at least one day a week, and the number of nurses should be increased.**

**Finally, steps should be taken at Prison no. 15 in Cricova to ensure that nurses on long-term absence can be replaced.**

72. The need for an increased attendance of a psychiatrist at Prison no. 6 in Sorocea is well illustrated by the case of a prisoner whom the delegation interviewed during the visit to this establishment. The person concerned had been serving his prison term since 2007 and had been hospitalised at Pruncul Prison Hospital (Prison no. 16) 24 times. However, the last hospitalisation had taken place in April 2022. When met by the delegation, he appeared to have serious mental health problems, did not properly take care of his personal hygiene and wore dirty, shabby clothes. His speech was incoherent and he suffered from auditive and visual hallucinations.

At the end of the visit, the delegation raised the case of this person with the Moldovan authorities. The delegation considered that he needed to be transferred to a suitable environment, within or outside the prison system, in which appropriate support and care by qualified staff can be continuously provided.

By letter of 24 July 2025, the Moldovan authorities informed the CPT that on 16 June 2025, the person in question had been transferred to Pruncul Prison Hospital to receive specialised treatment. On 25 June 2025, he underwent a psychiatric evaluation by a specialised commission in an outside psychiatric facility, operating under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. On 3 July 2025, he was transferred to Prison no. 9 in Pruncul, where he can be provided psychiatric treatment (and receive specialised care) by a psychiatrist employed by the establishment.

The CPT welcomes the immediate steps taken by the Moldovan authorities.

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49. It is recalled that Prison no. 2 in Lipcani was accommodating 311 persons, Prison no. 6 in Sorocea 665 persons and Prison no. 15 in Cricova 380 persons.

73. As far as the delegation could ascertain, access to other specialist care did not pose a major difficulty; prisoners were either transferred to a local healthcare centre or to Pruncul Prison Hospital.

74. It is also positive that, in line with the recommendation made by the CPT in the report on the 2022 visit, healthcare staff no longer wore custodial staff uniforms.

75. The initial medical screening of newly admitted persons was conducted shortly after admission and included a physical examination. It is also positive that systematic screening for tuberculosis by Mantoux test and, on the basis of a clinical suspicion, blood tests for transmissible diseases (such as syphilis, hepatitis B/C and HIV) were usually carried out in remand prisons.

However, there was no clear picture of the epidemiological situation with regard to these illnesses in the prisons visited. **The CPT recommends that the Moldovan authorities take steps to ensure that the information obtain through systematic screening for infectious diseases upon admission to prison is evaluated and made available to healthcare staff in prisons to which prisoners are transferred, in order to improve the prevention of the spread of these diseases and adapt treatment strategies.**

76. As regards access to healthcare, persons held under Article 206 protection who were locked in their cells or sectors were visited daily by healthcare staff. Other prisoners were in principle free to move within the establishments during the day and could access healthcare facilities, usually during dedicated slots for their sectors/zones.

However, as already noted in paragraph 27, the delegation received several allegations in Sector 2 of Prison no. 2 in Lipcani and at Prison no. 15 in Cricova that persons who had been subjected to inter-prisoner violence had been prevented by prisoners from higher castes from seeing healthcare staff. Moreover, at Prison no. 15 in Cricova, prisoners from higher castes allegedly remained present during medical examinations of other prisoners. Such a lack of medical confidentiality is unacceptable and a severe breach of medical ethics.

**The CPT recommends that the Moldovan authorities take the necessary steps to ensure that medical confidentiality during medical examinations/consultations is fully respected. Further, a confidential pathway to access healthcare services should be put in place, for example by installing letterboxes for requests for medical examinations/consultations, which would be emptied exclusively by healthcare staff.**

77. It is positive that the state of repair of the infirmary at Prison no. 6 in Soroca has significantly improved since the 2018 visit and that all the rooms now provided acceptable material conditions. It is also positive that medical facilities in all three establishments were equipped with ECG machines and nurses were trained in resuscitation techniques.

However, defibrillators were dysfunctional due to faulty batteries. Further, at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, no medical oxygen was available and there was mould in the medical consultation room. **These deficiencies should be remedied.**

78. As regards drug use, it is positive that a needle and syringe exchange programme was in place in all three establishments visited and that treatment with medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD)<sup>50</sup> was available and could be newly prescribed at Prison no. 6 in Soroca and Prison no. 15 in Cricova. While this treatment was not available at Prison no. 2 in Lipcani, the delegation was informed that in the rare case of a prisoner requiring MOUD, he would be transferred to another establishment in which this treatment was available; this arrangement apparently did not cause any major difficulties.

79. Prison healthcare services continued to be subordinated to the Ministry of Justice. According to the Moldovan authorities, discussions were still ongoing concerning a possible transfer to the Ministry of Health.

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50. Usually methadone or buprenorphine.

In light of the shortcomings described above, in particular the difficulties in attracting new healthcare staff to work in prison and in ensuring the adequate presence of various categories of healthcare professionals in prisons, the CPT wishes to point out once again that the policy trend in Europe has favoured prison healthcare services being placed, either to a great extent or entirely, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health.

In principle, the CPT supports this trend. In particular, it is convinced that a greater participation of health ministries in this area (including as regards recruitment of healthcare staff, their in-service training, evaluation of clinical practice, certification and inspection) will facilitate the provision of good quality healthcare for persons held in prison, as well as the implementation of the general principle of the equivalence of healthcare in prison with that in the wider community.

# APPENDIX I – List of the Authorities met during the visit

## National authorities

### Ministry of Justice

- Veronica Mihailov, Moraru Minister of Justice
- Stela Braniște, Deputy Secretary General, CPT liaison officer
- Sorin Popescu, Secretary of State
- Gabriela Scutea, EU High Level Adviser
- Andrei Briceac, Governmental Agent
- Felicia Zagorean, Head of the Cabinet of the Minister
- Doina Maimescu, Head of the Governmental Agent Department
- Dumitru Burduja, Consultant, International Relations Division
- Mihaela Balan, Consultant, International Relations Division

### National Prison Administration

- Alexandru Adam, Director
- Vladislav BușmachiU, Deputy Head, Planning Analysis and Monitoring Directorate
- Eugeniu Carama, Head of the Directorate for Security and Regime
- Corina Zamfirov, Head of the Legal Directorate
- Iulian Jantuan, Head of the Human Resources Directorate
- Vasile Solomonuic, Head of the Directorate for Capital Investments and Engineering
- Miroslav Șendrea, Head of the Directorate for Management and Logistics
- Sergiu Buzdugan, Head of the Directorate for Statistics, Detainee Records, and Transfers
- Nelea Caras, Deputy Head of the Health Directorate
- Ana Zaharcenco, Head of the Directorate for Social Reintegration

### General Prosecutor's Office

- Eugeniu GORE, Prosecutor, Unit for Combatting Torture

## Ombudsperson and the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM)

- Ceslav Panico, People's Advocate (Ombudsman);
- Vasile Coroi, People's Advocate for the rights of the child ;
- Vladimir Cojocar, Secretary General, Office of the People's Advocate;
- Oxana Gumennaia, Deputy People's Advocate;
- Alexandru Zubco, Head of the Torture Prevention Department;
- Gheorghe Bosii, Member of the Council for Torture Prevention;
- Arcadie Astrahan, Member of the Council for Torture Prevention.
- Dionisie Spînu, Main consultant, Torture Prevention Department, Office of the People's Advocate
- Elena Paladii, Main consultant, Torture Prevention Department, Office of the People's Advocate
- Marcel Moraru, Member of the Council for Torture Prevention
- Iurie Levinte, Member of the Council for Torture Prevention

## Non-governmental organisations

- Promo-Lex Association



## **“NO ONE SHALL BE SUBJECTED TO TORTURE OR TO INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT”**

*Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights*

**E**stablished in 1989 by the Council of Europe Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the CPT's aim is to strengthen the protection of persons deprived of their liberty through the organisation of regular visits to places of detention.

The Committee is an independent, non-judicial preventive mechanism, complementing the work of the European Court of Human Rights. It monitors the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty by visiting places such as prisons, juvenile detention centres, police stations, immigration detention facilities, psychiatric hospitals and social care homes. CPT delegations have unrestricted access to places of detention, and the right to interview, in private, persons deprived of their liberty. They may access all the information necessary to carry out their work, including any administrative and medical documents.

The CPT plays an essential role in promoting decency in detention, through the development of minimum standards and good practice for states parties, as well as through coordination with other international bodies. The implementation of its recommendations has a significant impact on the development of human rights in Council of Europe member states and influences the policies, legislation and practices of national authorities regarding detention.



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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.