

## **Response**

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

**from 1 to 4 April 2025**

The Government of Cyprus has requested the publication of this response.  
The CPT's report on the 2025 visit to Cyprus is set out in document CPT/Inf (2025) 39.

Strasbourg, 10 December 2025

The Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) performed an ad-hoc visit to Cyprus from 1 to 4 April 2025, pursuant to Article 7 of the European Convention, which established the CPT. The details of the visit, including the composition of the delegation, places visited and the Committee's recommendations, comments and requests for information are contained in its Report to the Cypriot Government, which was adopted by the CPT on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025 and transmitted to the authorities of Cyprus on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2025.

This report provides the Government's responses to the findings and recommendations made by the CPT during its April 2025 visit. It outlines the measures to address the issues raised, highlights ongoing reforms, and reaffirms Cyprus's commitment to uphold the highest standards of humane treatment and the rule of law.

The Cypriot authorities value the constructive dialogue established with the Committee and view the CPT's observations and recommendations as an essential contribution to the continuous improvement of national standards and practices in the field of human rights and the prevention of torture and ill-treatment.

## **FACTS FOUND DURING THE VISIT AND ACTION PROPOSED**

### **A. Nicosia Central Prisons**

#### **1. Preliminary remarks**

##### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 15: The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to develop a new prison policy which will include measures both to reduce the prison population in a sustainable manner and to improve the operation of NCP (capacity which can be held in decent conditions, staffing, programmes, healthcare, etc.). This policy should include a clear legislative and political strategy/roadmap, with sufficient resources allocated. 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.**

**To start with, this policy should review whether there could be an increased application of alternatives to detention for particular groups of current prisoners, such as:**

- persons held on remand;**
- short-term sentenced prisoners (including those foreign nationals sentenced for illegal entry on counterfeit immigration documents**
- children; and**
- women who are eligible for progression to the open prison but cannot do so due to lack of availability.**

**More generally, stakeholders in the policy and roadmap should include the Government, the Parliament and the judiciary. Prosecutors and judges should also be sensitised, through the appropriate channels, with these above principles. It should include a holistic review of Cypriot sentencing policy, as well as concrete measures to increase the use and range of alternatives to detention, such as significantly increasing the use of the electronic tagging system for risk-assessed prisoners.**

## **Reply:**

The Cyprus Prisons Department (CPD) warmly welcomes the CPT's recommendations and fully shares the underlying principle that the sustainable reduction of the prison population must be achieved through a broad and holistic use of alternatives to detention, as per the Recommendations of the Council of Europe. The CPD recognises that measures such as the significant expansion of electronic monitoring, community sanctions, and other non-custodial options are essential tools in any modern penal policy.

### **1. Electronic Monitoring for pre-trial detainees**

The CPD stands ready to facilitate a much wider application of electronic monitoring, which is considered a valuable, proportionate, and rights-respecting tool for low-risk offenders. A Bill for the electronic monitoring of pre-trial detainees has been prepared and submitted to the Attorney General's Office for legal vetting.

### **2. Application of “Treatment of the Accused User or Substance Dependence Persons” (Law 41/2016).**

Another significant measure for the tackling of overcrowding is the application of *Law 41(I)/2016*, which applies to persons who are dealing with substance use and abuse issues. NCP in cooperation with the Cyprus National Addictions Authority, ensures that all persons held meet the criteria, are informed that they can apply for evaluation and if fitted they can be referred to drug treatment programmes instead of receiving any other sentence. This is regulated through a court treatment order, so in case of its violation the person will re-appear before the court and will be sentenced. In the context of this procedure, a total of 81 prisoners have benefited during the period 2023-2025. However, even after the sentencing by the Court and during the imprisonment, a procedure is in place where the prisoners, upon evaluation, continue serving their sentence in community based treatment programmes.

### **3. Short-Term Sentenced Prisoners and Foreign Nationals**

For prisoners serving short custodial sentences, including foreign nationals convicted of migration-related offences, the CPD actively facilitates voluntary return respecting international law, in close cooperation with the Deputy Ministry of Migration and International Protection and with the consent of the Attorney General.

This inter-agency mechanism is designed to reduce population pressures and to enable the swift return of eligible foreign nationals to their countries of origin.

### **4. Access to the Open Prison**

The CPD has introduced and implemented in 2025 a new risk-assessment and classification tool (**Annex 1**) enabling foreign prisoners to be transferred to the Open Prison. This tool has been specifically developed to facilitate the assessment and classification of foreign prisoners, in order to identify those who may be eligible for transfer to the Open Prison under the Department's regulations and security framework.

#### **According to this tool:**

- **Immediately upon admission**, prisoners serving a short sentence and presenting no security concerns are placed in the Open Prison without delay. It should be noted that the provision applies only following an individualised assessment, in strict compliance with the CPD Regulations and the established risk and security evaluation procedures of the CPD.

This ensures that no prisoner is transferred automatically or without a thorough evaluation of all relevant security and behavioural factors.

- This policy both reduces the pressure on close prisons wings but also enhances rehabilitation through larger community contact and structured employment opportunities.

## **5. Women's Open Prison**

The issue of accommodation for women eligible for progression to the Open Prison has now been fully resolved. Female prisoners are transferred to a dedicated and separated Open Prison facility, where they enjoy all the privileges and programmes provided for in the relevant legislation and internal regulations, ensuring full equality of treatment and tailored support.

## **6. Children and Young Adults under 21**

All persons under 21 years of age are housed in a separate, purpose-designed wing, ensuring age-appropriate living conditions, education, and psychosocial support.

Furthermore, in cooperation with the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare, the CPD is actively advancing plans to create an independent facility for children in conflict with the law. This project reflects the Government's and the Department's firm commitment to meet international standards, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## **7. Parole Board**

Furthermore, the Parole Board plays an essential role in the evaluation and reintegration process. Over the past three years, a total of 51 prisoners have been released on parole, demonstrating the effective and balanced operation of the Parole Board as a key mechanism for gradual reintegration into society.

## **2. Ill-treatment**

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 23: The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to ensure that the NCP management urgently reviews its violence prevention policy to establish measures to more adequately and accurately record, respond to, investigate, and prevent inter-prisoner violence.**

**These measures should include the adoption of a comprehensive anti-bullying policy, as well as systematic and regular risk assessments for the allocation and placement of prisoners. They should also cover training of staff in proactive measures to identify and report to management any risk of inter-prisoner violence, as well as the regular monitoring of CCTV cameras and ensuring their good operational maintenance.**

**More front-line prison staff should be deployed to the most problematic blocks (where most of the injuries are occurring) to help address these issues, and to enable a dynamic security approach to be applied in line with the above precepts.**

### **Reply:**

The CPD fully shares the CPT's objective of preventing and addressing inter-prisoner violence and has adopted a comprehensive, multi-layered framework to record, respond to, investigate and prevent such incidents. The following measures are in place and continuously reinforced:

## **1. Comprehensive protocol for the Operation of Prison Wings**

The CPD has prepared a detailed Protocol for the Operation of Prison Wings, which establishes clear and comprehensive procedures for the daily management and supervision of all detention areas.

At present, the Protocol is undergoing a comprehensive evaluation and approval process by the competent authorities, prior to its official adoption and implementation. It is expected to be approved and put into effect by mid-November 2025.

This document provides a standardised framework governing the daily operation of all prison wings, including staff duties, communication procedures, supervision routines, security checks, prisoner movements, and emergency response protocols.

The purpose of this initiative is to ensure uniformity, transparency, and accountability on the management of all detention areas, in line with the principles of good governance and human rights compliance.

Upon completion of the evaluation process, the Protocol will be formally approved and implemented across all prison wings, accompanied by targeted staff training to ensure consistent and effective application in practice.

## **2. Protocol for the Prevention and Management of Sexual Abuse Incidents**

The CPD maintains a policy of zero tolerance towards any form of sexual abuse, harassment, or exploitation within the prison environment. Recognising the seriousness of such incidents and their profound impact on the safety and dignity of all persons in custody, the CPD has prepared and commenced the implementation of a comprehensive Protocol for the Prevention and Management of Sexual Abuse Incidents as of 16 October 2025 (**Annex 2**). The Protocol codifies and consolidates already existing policies, rules and practices in a single, coherent document for the better management of incidents of such nature.

This Protocol establishes a clear, structured, and confidential framework for the reporting, assessment, investigation, and management of any alleged or suspected case of sexual abuse involving prisoners or staff. It also defines preventive measures, support services for victims, and disciplinary and criminal referral procedures for perpetrators.

The document covers, inter alia:

- Immediate reporting and responding obligations for staff and prisoners;
- Protective measures for alleged victims, including medical, psychological, and social support;
- Internal investigation procedures in coordination with the Prison Board
- Confidentiality and data protection safeguards; and
- Training and awareness initiatives for all staff members to ensure early detection, appropriate response, and prevention of such incidents and to avoid re-victimization.

Through this initiative, the CPD reaffirms its unwavering commitment to safeguarding the physical and psychological integrity of all prisoners, in full alignment with the European Prison Rules and the recommendations of the CPT and the UN.

## **3. Psychosocial Support Office**

A dedicated *Prisoners' Psychosocial Support Office*, staffed by licensed social workers working as prison officers, provides direct counselling, manages incidents of violence, and liaises systematically with the Prison Medical Services, Mental Health Services and the Security Office to ensure the holistic protection of all parties involved.

## **4. Combating Ill-Treatment Policy**

Prison Orders issued and circulated on a regular basis, reaffirm both the zero tolerance that must be demonstrated towards ill-treatment and the absolute prohibition of ill-treatment and remind staff that any inappropriate behaviour entails disciplinary sanctions. The Directorate has repeatedly made clear to both staff and prisoners that there is a zero tolerance policy to any abuse by the NCP staff

and has alerted the staff to be aware of any incidents of violence and inform immediately the Directorate.

## **5. Specialised Staff Training**

Mandatory training at the Prisons Academy—grounded in international human rights standards and the principle of non-discrimination—helps officers to identify early warning signs of bullying or violence and to report proactively to management.

Recognising the importance of continuous professional development, the Prison Department has incorporated *Specialised Prisoner-Management Courses* into the Prison Academy curriculum. These cover communication skills, conflict resolution, intercultural awareness, teamwork and self-defence techniques. Training sessions are delivered both to newly appointed officers and to all serving staff.

## **6. Reinforcement of Front-Line Staffing**

In 2024, 50 officers were recruited, while in 15 October 2025, 33 additional officers were recruited. Priority will be given to the most challenging Blocks to enable a dynamic-security approach.

Recent promotions (six officers to Sergeants, four Sergeants to Inspectors, four Inspectors to Superintendents) ensure that each Block now has an Inspector or Superintendent maintaining daily contact with prisoners and investigating complaints on site.

The CPD confirms that, for the first time since 2008, a comprehensive Organisation and Staffing Study is currently under way.

This study conducts a detailed analysis of the Department's current organisational structure, existing posts, staffing levels, operational gaps, functional needs, and statutory obligations. Its primary objective is to provide a data-driven and evidence-based framework to support the proper staffing and reorganisation of the CPD in alignment with its modern operational requirements and the evolving correctional environment.

The study covers:

- An in-depth assessment of all existing posts and duties, including those directly related to security, rehabilitation, healthcare, and administrative support;
- Identification of critical shortages and workload imbalances;
- Mapping of emerging needs and new functions arising from the Department's expanded mandate; and
- Recommendations for organisational restructuring, redeployment of resources, and the creation of new posts where justified.

The ultimate goal of this initiative is to ensure that the CPD is properly staffed, efficiently organised, and adequately equipped to meet both its security obligations and human-rights responsibilities, while maintaining high professional standards across all units.

## **7. Educational Programmes for Prisoners**

The Prison Education Programme delivers classes to prisoners on communication, stress management, intercultural sensitivity, conflict resolution, diversity appreciation, cultural awareness and self-confidence. These initiatives foster personal development and a more harmonious prison environment.

## 8. CCTV Upgrade and 24-Hour Monitoring

The mobile phone tracking system is being installed gradually and its installation will be completed in all wings by November 2025. The procurement regarding the phone blocking system will be carried out by the end of 2025, while its installation will be completed by September 2026. The new CCTV Surveillance system will be delivered by September 2026. Special training programmes for a large number of staff have been designed and implemented to enhance the Centre's operational capacity.

## 9. Continuous Staff Engagement

Beyond written circulars and training, management holds quarterly meetings with all CPD officers to reiterate the policy of zero tolerance for ill-treatment and to discuss operational challenges, share best practices and collect suggestions for corrective or preventive measures, including those related to inter-prisoner violence.

## 10. Detailed Incident Recording and Accountability

In order to ensure full transparency and accountability, every incident or complaint on alleged ill treatment is meticulously documented, along with the investigative steps taken and the preventive or disciplinary measures imposed.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 24: In parallel, the CPT recommends that prison staff should be clearly and regularly instructed that any staff tolerating, encouraging, or colluding in punitive action taken against prisoners by other prisoners will be subject to criminal or disciplinary proceedings.**

### **Reply:**

The CPD reiterates its unwavering commitment to tackle all incidents of staff tolerating, encouraging or colluding in punitive actions taken against prisoners by other prisoners. There is a zero tolerance approach towards this matter and all prison officers have been warned that in case of any such incident, they will be subject to criminal or disciplinary proceedings.

## 1. Comprehensive Staff Training and Continuous Professional Development

All newly recruited and existing staff members receive mandatory training at the Prisons Academy on the Prisons Law and Regulations, which govern the treatment of prisoners in full respect of human dignity and without any form of discrimination. The training is based on international prison standards and reinforces the duty to prevent, report, and never condone violence or reprisal of any kind.

In addition, officers regularly participate in specialised educational programmes, courses, seminars, and conferences in Cyprus, abroad, and online. Indicatively training initiatives completed in 2025 include:

- Treatment of Prisoners
- Security Physical Examination and Security Examination of Places
- Prison Safe (specialised treatment and protection of LGBTQI prisoners)
- Treatment of Drug Users
- Emergency Situations: Constitutional and Civil Procedures
- Human Rights and Drug Use
- Developing Comprehensive Drug Treatment Systems in Prison

These programmes ensure that all CPD officers understand their legal and ethical obligation to act immediately against any inter-prisoner violence and to report misconduct by other prison officers

## 2. Accountability

The Republic of Cyprus has clearly demonstrated their determination to uphold the rule of law and prosecute staff misconduct. Following the 2022 incident where a prisoner was murdered as a result of inter prisoner violence, three CPD officers were criminally convicted:

- One Chief Officer (Sergeant) was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment, suspended, and
- Two Officers were sentenced to three years' imprisonment each.

These convictions send the strongest possible message that any tolerance, encouragement, or facilitation of violence will result in criminal sanctions.

Moreover, with the conclusion of the criminal proceedings, the Ministry of Justice now proceeds with disciplinary action. As a result, six more officers are under investigation for possible disciplinary offences regarding the incident.

This process highlights the CPD's commitment to full transparency, accountability, and the maintenance of the highest professional standards.

## 3. Conditions of detention

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 29: The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to urgently reduce the occupancy levels in all blocks, starting with in Blocks 1A and B, 8A, and 10A. To this end, it should be ensured that, at the very minimum, cells measuring 6 m<sup>2</sup> are only used to accommodate one prisoner and that the living space in multiple-occupancy cells is at least 4 m<sup>2</sup> per prisoner, and that all cells are adequately ventilated.**

### **Reply:**

The CPD shares the CPT's concerns regarding occupancy levels and reaffirms its commitment to ensure that material conditions of detention fully respect the dignity and well-being of all prisoners.

### **1. Strategic Reallocation of prisoners to Address Overcrowding**

In direct response to the challenge of overcrowding, the Department has undertaken a comprehensive reallocation of prisoners to optimise the use of existing infrastructure. A key measure was the transfer of prisoners convicted of sexual offences—a population steadily increasing both in numbers and in sentence lengths—from Block 1B, which had become critically overcrowded, to Block 11, the newest prison block.

Block 11 was specifically designed to accommodate up to 232 persons, allowing two prisoners per cell, and its facilities were evaluated thoroughly to ensure the safety, security, and well-being of those transferred.

This reallocation has significantly reduced the population pressure on Block 1B and, by extension, on other detention areas.

Prisoners from other highly populated blocks are being gradually redistributed, with the dual objective of:

- guaranteeing that cells measuring 6 m<sup>2</sup> are occupied by only one prisoner, and
- ensuring that multiple-occupancy cells provide at least 4 m<sup>2</sup> of living space per person, as recommended by the CPT.



## **2. Ongoing Infrastructure and Ventilation Measures**

All cells are subject to regular inspections of ventilation and air quality, and maintenance schedules are in place to ensure a safe and healthy living environment.

The central air-conditioning systems installed in the prison wings — providing both cold and warm air — are maintained by the Department of Electromechanical Services of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works, which is the competent authority for such infrastructure. These systems are configured to circulate and supply clean, fresh air throughout the wings.

In addition, all cells are equipped with windows, allowing the natural inflow of fresh outdoor air and ensuring proper ventilation.

The CPD continues to work on medium- and long-term infrastructure upgrades to achieve decongestion in prison blocks and improve the living conditions for all prisoners.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 30. The CPT once again calls upon the Cypriot authorities to guarantee that all prisoners have access to the toilet promptly when required.**

### **Reply:**

#### **1. Current Access Arrangements**

Prisoners accommodated in Blocks 3, 4A and 9 have direct and unrestricted access to in-cell toilet facilities at all times. In all other Blocks, CPD are instructed to respond without delay to call-bell requests for toilet access, both during the day and throughout the night. To this end, circulars have been sent to all CPD officers

#### **2. Ongoing Evaluation of In-Cell Sanitation Upgrades**

To achieve compliance with CPT standards, the CPD examines the possibility of installing toilets with external plumbing in every cell across the establishment.

This evaluation includes technical studies on hydraulic installations, cost assessments and timelines, with the aim of providing in-cell sanitation wherever structurally possible.

#### **3. Monitoring and Accountability Measures**

To ensure that CPD officers consistently respond to prisoners' calls:

- Random sample checks of the CCTV system are carried out during evening and night shifts, focusing on the time taken to answer call bells.  
In line with the Department's policy of zero tolerance toward negligence or dereliction of duty, any delay or omission identified in the performance of official duties leads to the immediate initiation of disciplinary procedures
- To date, disciplinary investigations have been concluded and adjudicated by the CPD Director, ensuring full accountability and compliance with the internal regulatory framework. Furthermore, one disciplinary case has been formally referred to the General Attorney for legal opinion as to whether criminal offences may also be established.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 31: The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities take urgent and swift action to ensure that all accommodation cells meet the above criteria. In particular, the CPT would like to be informed of the actions taken in Blocks 1A and B, 8A and 10A.**

## **Reply:**

### **1. Targeted Actions in Blocks 1A, 1B, 8A and 10A**

Specific measures have been implemented in Blocks 1A, 1B, 8A and 10A:

- Redistribution of prisoners to other Blocks, including the new Block 11,
- Regular monitoring of occupancy levels
- Continuous maintenance of ventilation and lighting systems, ensuring compliance with CPT standards.

To this end, a CPD inspector has been appointed to monitor the progress of these measures and provide suggestions for further improvement to the CPD Directorate.

### **2. Personal Living Space and Daily Out-of-Cell Time**

All efforts are made to ensure that every prisoner has:

- An individual bed and personal locker,
- Adequate furniture within the cell, and
- Heating, sufficient artificial and natural lighting, proper ventilation and daily access to fresh air.

Each cell is equipped with its own window, allowing prisoners to freely regulate the level of natural light and fresh air according to their preference.

Equally important, from 07:00 to 17:00 all prisoners are free to leave their wing and to remain, for as long as they wish, in open communal recreation areas. After the wings close at 17:00, prisoners may still circulate freely within their entire wing until 21:00 on weekdays and 22:00 on weekends and public holidays. This regime provides extensive opportunities for movement, social interaction and access to communal facilities well beyond the minimum international standards.

### **3. Changes to Communal Areas**

To improve overall living standards and reduce overcrowding, the CPD has:

- Installed lockers in all communal spaces so that prisoners can securely store their belongings,
- Reduced the population of shared dormitories, thereby increasing the personal living space per prisoner,
- Placed large communal refrigerators and televisions in shared areas to improve daily living conditions

## **Recommendation:**

**Par. 32: The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities put in place measures to ensure, at the very least, protection from the harms of passive smoking, such as the designation of smoke-free accommodation and the establishment of a policy on the prohibition or restriction of smoking in areas of common use. All areas should be adequately ventilated and programmes should be established to help prisoners address nicotine dependence.**

## **Reply:**

### **1. Strict Prohibition of Smoking in Common Areas**

In line with the legislation of the Republic of Cyprus, smoking is strictly prohibited in all public and communal spaces, including but not limited to the kitchen, school, gym workshops and all areas of general use.

Clear and visible “No Smoking” notices are posted throughout all Blocks to remind both prisoners and staff of these rules. All such areas are equipped with adequate ventilation systems, ensuring proper air circulation and compliance with public-health requirements.

## **2. Allocation of Accommodation Based on Smoking Habits**

During the admission and classification process, every new prisoner according to his/her smoking habits is allocated to cells with other prisoners of similar preferences, thereby reducing the risk of passive smoking and promoting a healthier living environment for non-smokers.

## **3. Support for Smoking Cessation and Nicotine Dependence**

The CPD actively supports prisoners who wish to stop smoking:

- Educational seminars on the dangers of smoking and methods for cessation are held regularly by the Prisons’ School.
- Arrangements are underway to extend the Governmental Smoking-Cessation Programme, currently offered at the State General Hospital, so that it can also be delivered on-site at the CPD. Due to the very limited number of requests, the programme faces practical challenges to be held inside the prison environment.
- Any prisoner who wishes to use nicotine patches may obtain them through the *Prison Medical Services* following a simple request and medical evaluation.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 38: The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to support the NCP management in expanding the range of regular purposeful activities, vocational training, education and organised sport on offer to all prisoners (in a range of commonly spoken languages).**

**In particular, immediate steps should be taken to ensure that a wider range of education, library access, purposeful activities, work and organised sports are offered on a regular basis to prisoners held on Blocks 1B, 3, 4A, 8A, 10, 10A and B, and 11.**

### **Reply:**

The school of the newly converted Block 11 has already started its operation offering the prisoners access to educational programmes.

The CPD is committed to offering a variety of educational, recreational, and sports activities aimed at enhancing prisoners’ rehabilitation, personal development, and reintegration into society. The programmes are open for all prisoners including foreign nationals, and align with international human rights standards and recommendations from international organizations

In 2024, a total of 824 prisoners participated in educational activities; Among them, 250 prisoners were engaged in formal education, including secondary education programmes

Additionally, prisoners had access to higher education through distance learning programmes in collaboration with private universities, allowing them to pursue degrees in Law, Psychology, and Business Administration (11 prisoners- 7 men 4 women).

Regarding non-formal education, 320 prisoners attended courses such as Greek and English language classes, each provided for 4.5 hours per week, and personal development seminars covering topics such as emotional intelligence, anger management, and reintegration strategies.

Vocational training was another key area, with 254 prisoners receiving hands-on training in fields such as automotive mechanics, air conditioning maintenance, solar panel installation, and beauty-related trades such as professional makeup and hairstyling.

A significant portion of the educational initiatives targeted foreign nationals, who represented 437 of the total 824 participants. Tailored language programmes in Greek and English, multilingual educational materials in Arabic, French, Romanian, Russian, Hindi, and Chinese, and expanded translation services were introduced to facilitate their participation in educational and legal processes.

Since 01/01/2024, new educational initiatives have been introduced, including psychology classes conducted in English for 90 minutes per week, focusing on stress management and reintegration. The prison library has been enhanced with additional multilingual books, particularly in Arabic, French, and Romanian. Furthermore, new vocational courses in IT and digital skills have been launched to better align with modern employment needs.

In 2024, additional emphasis was placed on expanding athletic opportunities, including the organization of inter-wing football championships, friendly matches between inmates and external amateur teams, and the introduction of weekly group fitness classes led by certified trainers. These activities not only promote physical health but also reinforce values of teamwork, discipline, and fair play.

Cultural and artistic activities are equally encouraged, with theater workshops, musical ensembles, book clubs, and multilingual film screenings, in which foreign inmates constitute 40% of participants. A highlight of the 2024 cultural calendar was the collaboration with the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra, which performed a special concert within the prison, offering a unique and emotionally enriching experience to the inmate audience.

Since the beginning of 2025, new recreational and sports activities have been introduced, including expanded film screenings featuring a greater selection of foreign-language films, new art therapy sessions aimed at helping prisoners' express emotions and cope with imprisonment., yoga and mindfulness sessions designed to improve mental well-being are in the next plans.

As of January 2025, the CPD has implemented further improvements in the area of vocational training by upgrading the prison's carpentry workshop and establishing a brand-new professional training room. New machinery and a new production line have been installed with the primary objective of engaging more inmates in hands-on, productive labor.

These workshops are now better equipped to offer structured training and work opportunities, allowing inmates not only to acquire but also to certify their skills in woodworking and related technical trades.

The CPD plans to further enhance these facilities to accommodate an even greater number of participants and continue fostering employability and rehabilitation through certified professional development.

#### **4. Women prisoners**

##### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 39. The CPT recommends that every prisoner should be provided with their own bed.**

##### **Reply:**

The CPD takes seriously into account the CPT's recommendation. However, the persistent challenge of overpopulation has inevitably impacted occupancy levels across certain prison blocks. After CPT's visit, corrective measures were taken immediately to ensure that every prisoner is provided with their own bed.

Furthermore, continuous coordination with the Cyprus Police is carried out to manage the admission flow of female prisoners, ensuring that the female population never exceeds the available beds.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 41: Nevertheless, staff and prisoners felt frustrated that they could not communicate more easily given the large number of exclusively French-speaking foreign national women held there. This was despite requests for increased interpretation and translation services. It was therefore particularly challenging for staff to adequately assess the women's specific needs and potential vulnerabilities (including at initial screening and healthcare interviews and on an ongoing basis throughout their time at NCP). This also fuelled a perception of discrimination.**

**The CPT recommends that this be addressed, and that means of interpretation (including French) be provided for all women who need it upon their initial entry to the prison, at medical consultations and on an ongoing basis, as required (see also section 8(a) Prison Staff)**

### **Reply:**

All newly admitted prisoners receive a booklet outlining their rights, obligations, and the internal prison rules, which is handed to them and explained by staff during the three-step admission process. This booklet was already available in five languages (Greek, English, Turkish, Arabic, and Georgian) and, in 2025, was additionally translated into five more (Spanish, Chinese, French, Romanian, and Bulgarian). It is also posted inside all prison Blocks so it remains visible to every prisoner, and each prisoner is allowed to keep their own copy throughout their imprisonment.

At the same time, every new arrival is allocated a cell that the responsible Inspector visits daily in order to assist with any questions or practical needs. Whenever necessary, a professional interpreter is called to facilitate communication, including for medical consultations.

Furthermore, prison officers who speak French were frequently—often on a daily basis—assigned to duties in Block 3, precisely to assist the French-speaking female population and ensure that communication barriers were minimised.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 42. The CPT therefore reiterates its recommendation that immediate steps be taken to ensure that all prisoners have adequate quantities of essential personal hygiene products free of charge, including sanitary towels.**

### **Reply:**

The CPD provides every prisoner with essential personal hygiene products free of charge.

- Upon arrival: Each prisoner receives consumables and hygiene items such as shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrush, razor blades and soap, as well as sanitary towels for women.
- Throughout imprisonment: Soap and sanitary towels are replenished without charge.

Towels, bed sheets and blankets are also provided and replaced when necessary.

Prisoners with limited financial resources are further assisted with clothing, shoes, tele-cards, cigarettes, canteen coupons and other basic necessities.

In addition to the Officers and Sergeants of each Wing, the Psychosocial Support Office actively monitors and ensures that vulnerable or indigent prisoners—particularly those at risk of pressure or exploitation—receive cigarettes, footwear, clothing and other essential items whenever required.

Special attention is given to women prisoners, who receive dedicated care both from the Wing Sergeants and the Psychosocial Support Office. Sanitary towels are always provided free of charge to every woman prisoner who needs them

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 44: The CPT recommends that the women held in Block 3 have access to the main prison gym and varied organised sports on a regular basis, including in the green spaces of the prison, and enjoy access to vocational and other purposeful activities, and education of an appropriate level, equal to that provided to men prisoners at NCP. Further, the Committee recommends that the activities provided to all prisoners should be purposeful, tailored to progression, reintegration and preparation for release to the community, and non-gender stereotyped.**

**Reply:**

Block 3 has its own fully equipped gym, and a certified Gym Instructor visits every day and on Saturdays, ensuring that all women prisoners have regular, structured opportunities for physical exercise and organised sports.

Regarding green spaces, the large external pitch is situated directly in front of the four main male wings. For security reasons, it is not suitable for women's use. However, the women's unit has a large private internal garden with rich vegetation, which is carefully maintained to provide a pleasant environment for recreation, relaxation and outdoor activities for the women.

The educational opportunities offered to women are identical in level and content to those provided to men, encompassing general education, vocational training and purposeful activities aimed at progression, reintegration and preparation for release. Programmes are designed to be non-gender-stereotyped, focusing on skills development and personal growth to support each prisoner's future reintegration into society.

For further information on activities, please see reply 38 as above

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 45. The CPT recommends that the Open Prison be expanded and made accessible to women as well as men, on an equal basis**

**Reply:**

As of 23 July 2025, women prisoners may now access the Open Prison on an equal basis with men. A separate, fully equipped women's facility, located outside the Closed Prison, can accommodate up to eight women under conditions of reduced security.

Women admitted to the Open Prison follow the same regime as men, working outside in positions such as the CPD's canteen, clothing storage, electronics storage and gate-area cleaning, and they enjoy the same benefits of progression, including regular home leave, extended family time and the opportunity for outside employment—without any discrimination.

The men's Open Prison can accommodate up to 60 prisoners at any given time. Beyond the Department's human-centred approach and commitment to reintegration, admission to the Open Prison also plays a significant role in reducing overcrowding in the Closed Prison.

All applications for admission to the Open Prison are examined promptly and individually. To illustrate the Department's steady progress and the expansion of access:

- 2023: Out of 181 applications evaluated, 118 prisoners were approved and transferred to the Open Prison.
- 2024: Out of 112 applications, 70 were approved.
- 2025: 01-09/2025: Out of 196 applications, 102 have already been approved.

This upward trend clearly demonstrates the CPD's continuous efforts to broaden eligibility, enhance rehabilitation opportunities, and support successful social reintegration for both male and female prisoners.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 47: The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities:**

- **develop prison admission procedures to take account of the gender-specific needs of women prisoners. This should include screening for sexual abuse or other forms of gender-based violence inflicted prior to entry to prison, and to ensure that such information is considered in the drawing up of a care plan for the woman in question;**
- **develop clear policies and regulations on the management of women prisoners, which are gender-sensitive and trauma-informed, which are aimed at providing protection against any form of sexual or gender-based violence and (re)traumatisation and at fostering a prison environment of safety and stability;<sup>24</sup> and**
- **provide interpretation services in the commonly spoken languages of the prisoners, including French, when necessary and especially for all foreign nationals sentenced on illegal alien entry charges.**

### **Reply:**

Upon admission, every woman prisoner undergoes a comprehensive assessment to identify individual needs, including post-trauma disorders, suicide risk, or self-injury. In addition to the mandatory medical examination by a General Doctor/Physician, all newly admitted women are evaluated by the Mental Health of the CPD and are regularly reassessed throughout their imprisonment. Where indicated, they are referred to doctors of all specialties and receive any necessary treatment or medication.

Regarding the screening for gender-based violence, the Istanbul Protocol is systematically applied at admission. If a woman is identified as a victim of sexual or gender-based violence, all designated protective and therapeutic procedures are immediately **activated** and form part of her individual care plan. Discussions are also under way with the Mental Health Services to introduce specialised therapeutic interventions specifically addressing gender-based violence and trauma recovery.

To further strengthen communication and interpretation, and in addition to the measures described in Reply No. 41, the CPD is in the process of purchasing portable translation devices to facilitate real-time multilingual communication—particularly important for foreign nationals and for medical or mental-health consultations.

These combined measures ensure that gender-sensitive, trauma-informed, and safety-oriented policies are embedded in admission procedures and in the daily management of women prisoners, thereby protecting against sexual or gender-based violence, preventing re-traumatisation, and fostering an environment of stability and trust.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 48: In light of the above, the CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities provide regular and refresher trainings in conflict management and de-escalation for staff at Block 3.**

### **Reply:**

Please see Reply No. 24 regarding the extensive and ongoing training provided to all CPD officers—men and women alike—on the treatment of prisoners, including conflict management and de-escalation techniques. Both newly recruited and existing officers regularly attend the CPD' Academy and participate in continuous professional development through seminars, courses, and conferences in Cyprus and abroad.

## **5. Children and young adults**

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 49. The CPT encourages the swift transfer of children to a more suitable facility as soon as possible. The CPT would appreciate an update on these plans as they progress.**

### **Reply:**

An ongoing inter-departmental project, led by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order is under way, for the construction of a dedicated juvenile facility, which is scheduled for completion by the end of 2026.

The creation of this specialised establishment reflects the State's commitment to a child-centred and rights-based approach to juvenile detention.

Until the new establishment is ready, minors are accommodated in a specially designated wing of the CPD. This wing provides:

- Exclusive areas for physical exercise, including their own outdoor field and fully equipped gym.
- Special educational programmes and dedicated teaching hours exclusively for minors. When minors attend a class where adults are present, strict safeguards are applied so that no interpersonal relationships can develop.
- Controlled participation in wider educational or social activities only when it is clearly in the minors' best interests and always under close supervision, ensuring no substantive contact with adult prisoners.

Any occasional association with adult prisoners occurs only in exceptional, carefully supervised circumstances, again solely for the minors' benefit and with no opportunity for relationship-building.

These arrangements will remain in force until the dedicated juvenile facility is completed and fully operational by the end of 2026.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 50. The CPT recommends that increased attention should be paid to the need for careful risk assessment to ensure the safety and security of children who mix and share cells with young adults.**

### **Reply:**

- Persons under the age of 21 are detained in a designated wing to ensure the safety of minors in detention.

Even though, the imprisonment of minors is used only as a last resort, In the case when minors—male or female—are imprisoned, the CPD takes all possible precautions to ensure their protection:



- Careful cell allocation is applied so that, no child under the age of 18, shares a cell with young adults, even when housed in the same wing.
- Permanent staff is posted to this wing so they can provide consistent supervision, support, and appropriate management of the unit.
- Enhanced monitoring and regular oversight are implemented to guarantee the child's safety and well-being throughout their stay.

These protective measures will remain in place until the dedicated juvenile facility—scheduled for completion by the end of 2026 becomes operational

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 55. Pending the opening of the new centre, the CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities take measures to provide children and young adults held in the Juvenile Block (8A) with appropriate living conditions and access to a wide range of daily purposeful, vocational and structured activities, with the aim to help them progress and prepare them for reintegration into the community.**

**Further, the Committee recommends that child and young adult smokers and non-smokers should be offered separate well-ventilated accommodation, and designated areas for smoking should be established in certain common areas of Block 8A (see also section 3. Conditions), along with programmes to help stop smoking.**

**Sentence plans should be tailored to individual needs and designed to fulfil the functions of personal and social development, rehabilitation and preparation for release, in light of the European Rules for Juvenile Offenders subject to sanctions or measures.**

**In addition, increased attention should be paid to the food provided to children and young adults, to ensure that it is adequate both in terms of quantity and nutritional value. Children and young adults should have access to additional food, available on the Block between main meals, to meet their specific nutritional needs. Appropriate heating and ventilation should be provided. Pest infestations, such as bedbugs, should be immediately addressed.**

### **Reply:**

Minors and young adults accommodated in Juvenile Block 8A have daily access to dedicated outdoor and indoor spaces for their physical exercise, including their own sports field and gym, while special educational programmes and exclusive teaching hours are organised for their educational advancement and personal development. These activities are designed to foster purposeful engagement, vocational skills, and gradual reintegration into the community.

According to a recent decision of the Court of Appeal (Decision no:258/2025) in which the applicant raised the issue of a "detention area for children," a letter from the Department of Prisons was accepted as evidence. The letter stated that there is a separate wing for the detention of young male offenders (16 to 21 years old), that they are held separately from the other prisoners, and that there is available space to accommodate minors.

As regards smoking issues, please see reply no. 32.

Regarding, nutrition, seven different dietary plans are currently implemented to meet the diverse nutritional and medical needs of prisoners: gastric diet, diabetes, cardiopathy, hypolipidemic, vegetarian, vegan, diet for Muslim prisoners, and a general diet. Through these options, children and young adults— including those with allergies or other specific requirements—are fully covered.

Since October 2024, the CPD has recruited two professional Chefs, to further improve food quality. Thanks to modernised kitchen procedures, upgraded equipment and carefully selected ingredients, the meals provided to minors are healthy, balanced, and of high quality. All young prisoners are offered breakfast, lunch, dinner, fruits and snacks in adequate and satisfactory quantities.

Regarding pest infestations (including bedbugs), the CPD conducts regular spraying and inspections in cooperation with the Health Department, applying all necessary preventive measures such as daily cleaning, sealing of cracks and holes, and proper waste management, ensuring a clean and healthy environment.

## **6. Foreign nationals**

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 60: The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities should ensure that foreign national prisoners are afforded in practice equal rights and treatment to those afforded to Cypriot prisoners. In this respect, the principle of non-discrimination should be respected, in line with international norms prohibiting discrimination.**

**It also reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities should increase the support provided to foreign nationals in NCP through, inter alia:**

- appointing a dedicated foreign national liaison officer;**
- ensuring that written information on prisoner rights, obligations, and house rules is provided upon admission, in a range of the most commonly spoken languages and in an accessible format, including information on immigration procedures to be systematically given to foreign nationals; and**
- ensuring foreign national prisoners have recourse to interpretation services when required.**

### **Reply:**

Please see reply no. 41 regarding the overarching principle of equal rights and treatment of foreign nationals.

The CPD maintains close and continuous cooperation with the Migration Department of the Deputy Ministry of Migration and International Protection.

- Migration Officers visit the CPD on a daily basis to meet foreign nationals, discuss their needs and legal options, and ascertain whether they wish to apply for asylum or request voluntary return/deportation to their country of origin.
- This cooperation ensures that up-to-date information on immigration procedures is systematically provided to all interested prisoners

Further practical measures include:

- Written information on prisoners' rights, obligations and house rules available in multiple languages. These multilingual booklets are both handed to each foreign national upon admission and posted in common areas, allowing prisoners to consult them at any time and remain fully aware of their rights.
- Interpretation services provided whenever required CPD has already initiated the procurement for the purchase of portable translation devices to further facilitate communication in real time.
- The Office of Psycho-social Support and the Reception & Release Office jointly acting as liaison units for foreign nationals, in coordination with the Migration Department and other competent services to safeguard their rights and facilitate communication throughout their stay and at the point of release.

In addition, the CPD has developed a dedicated assessment tool for the admission of foreign nationals to the Open Prison. This initiative has already proven effective, as foreign nationals have successfully progressed to and are currently accommodated in the Open Prison, ensuring equal opportunities for rehabilitation and gradual reintegration.

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 61. Many of these male and female foreign national prisoners were held in large dormitories accommodating 12 to 30 persons in cramped conditions, with some sleeping on mattresses on the floor. Many wanted to be repatriated but, allegedly, very few had the necessary access to the Aliens and Immigration Department to submit their cases.**

**Given the situation of severe overcrowding, the Committee calls upon the Cypriot authorities to review the policy, legislation, and end the practice of imprisoning this category of foreign nationals in NCP.**

**Reply:**

As already mentioned, efforts are being made by the CPD to activate procedures so that third-country nationals may return to their countries of origin at their own request, in close cooperation with the Migration Department. The procedure in all cases is the following:

- Whenever a foreign national submits a request for repatriation, the CPD immediately informs the Migration Department, and the case is examined to determine whether the person fulfils the legal requirements for deportation, with the consent of Attorney General.
- In cooperation with other Government Departments, a comprehensive review of the current policy and relevant legislation is underway, with the aim of identifying alternative measures to imprisonment for foreign nationals held for migration-related offences, in line with European and international best practices.

Through these coordinated actions, we aim to reduce the number of foreign nationals and to provide swift, lawful means for voluntary return or deportation

## **7. Healthcare services**

### **a. healthcare staffing and the administration of medication**

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 63. The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to replace all prison officer medical orderlies with qualified nursing staff.**

**Reply:**

The CPD fully acknowledges the need to replace prison officer medical orderlies with qualified nursing staff.

- Repeated written requests have been formally submitted to the Ministry of Health, detailing the operational and clinical concerns and requesting the immediate recruitment of qualified nursing staff to cover all shifts and units of the Prison Medical Centre.
- Until the recruitment of the nursing staff, trained prison officer medical orderlies continue to provide basic first aid and support strictly under the supervision of the prison doctors and the visiting physicians of the State Health Services ensuring that no interruption of medical care occurs.

The CPD Directorate remains in constant communication with the Ministry of Health, emphasising the imperative need for permanent placement of qualified nursing staff

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 64. The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to ensure that the dispensing of medicines only be undertaken by qualified pharmacy or nursing staff, and not by prison officers. Further, the procedure and organisation of medication dispensing should be reviewed to ensure that prisoners receive the correct medication at the right time (see also section c. medical confidentiality below).**

**Reply:**

Please see reply no. 63

**b. Medical Screening and Recording of injuries**

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 68. The CPT again calls upon the Cypriot authorities to take the necessary steps to ensure that the record drawn up after the medical examination of prisoners – whether newly arrived or following a violent incident in the prison – contains:**

- i) an account of statements made by the persons which are relevant to the 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, 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.**

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

**The healthcare professional should advise the prisoner concerned that the writing of such a report falls within the framework of a system for preventing ill-treatment. Further, that this report must automatically be forwarded to a clearly specified independent investigative authority, and that such forwarding is not a substitute for the lodging of a complaint in proper form.**

**The results of every examination, including the above-mentioned statements and the healthcare professional's opinions/observations, should be made available to the prisoner and to their lawyer.**

**Reply:**

With reference to the procedures applied in cases of injuries or self-harm incidents involving prisoners, please be informed of the following:

**1. Injury / Self-harm Registry**

A special registry for injuries and self-harm incidents has been introduced and implemented since 5 January 2025 at the CPD Infirmary **(Annex 3)**. The register enables the systematic recording, monitoring, and evaluation of all relevant incidents, ensuring prompt investigation, accountability, and follow-up care in each case.

- A dedicated recording template is used, capturing the type of injury, the object or method by which the injury occurred, and the photographic documentation of all visible lesions.
- All documentation, including photographs, is filed in the prisoner's individual medical record, ensuring compliance with medical confidentiality requirements.
- The registry is mandatory for every case and its completion is closely monitored by the responsible medical officers.

## **2. Protocol for Prison Wings**

In the expected Protocol for the Operation of Prison Wings, which will be put in place by mid-November there is a detailed section describing the handling of injury and self-harm incidents, ensuring that front-line staff follow a uniform and well-defined procedure.

## **3. Immediate Multidisciplinary Notification**

From the very first moment of any incident, there is direct notification of the:

- Mental Health Services,
- Office of Psycho-social Support for Prisoners, and
- Prison Security Office,

so that a multidisciplinary response and management plan can be implemented without delay.

## **4. Medical File Updates and Case Documentation**

Following the initial entry in the register, a comprehensive update of the individual medical file is carried out. This includes:

- a full and detailed account of the injury,
- the prisoner's own statements relevant to the incident,
- the objective medical findings and observations of the examining health-care professional, and
- the consistency assessment between the prisoner's statements and the clinical findings.

When a case is to be reported to the Police or prosecutorial authorities, photographs of the injuries are taken for evidentiary purposes, following all necessary procedures for consent and confidentiality.

In cases that are not reported as a criminal complaint, the special Anatomical Body Chart (**Annex 4**) is used to mark precisely the locations of any injuries observed.

## **5. Suicide Prevention and Continuous Monitoring**

Incidents that present a high risk of self-harm or suicide are subject to close multidisciplinary monitoring, which includes:

- continuous psycho-social support from the CPD Office of Psycho-social Support,
- psychiatric assessment and follow-up by the Mental Health Services, and
- immediate implementation of enhanced observation and protective measures.

Through these measures, the CPD ensures thorough documentation, immediate multidisciplinary involvement, and full alignment with the CPT's recommendations on the management of injuries and self-harm incidents.

### **c. medical confidentiality**

#### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 69.** The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to ensure that the confidentiality of medical data within the prison is guaranteed. Healthcare staff may inform prison officers on a need-to-know basis about the state of health of a detained person; however, the information provided should be limited to that necessary to prevent a serious risk for the detained person or other persons, unless the detained person consents to additional information being given.

The CPT also reiterates its recommendation that, as a general rule, all medical examinations/consultations of prisoners should be conducted both out of the sight and out of the hearing of non-medical persons (namely, custodial staff, other prisoners or civilian people), and in conditions that fully guarantee medical confidentiality.

Taking due account of the need to ensure the safety of healthcare staff while exercising their duties, the presence of non-healthcare staff during the examination at the request of the healthcare professional may be warranted in exceptional cases. Prison officers should, when appropriate, fully apprise the healthcare professional of any relevant prior behaviour on the part of the prisoner, but the final decision should rest with the healthcare professional. Any such exception should be limited to those rare cases in which, based on an individual risk assessment and after consideration of less intrusive security measures, the healthcare professional considers the presence of prison officers is necessary to fully contain the perceived risks posed by the prisoner. For instance, consideration should be given to ensuring the presence of additional healthcare personnel. Another option may be the installation of a call system, whereby healthcare staff would be in a position to rapidly alert prison officers in those exceptional cases when a prisoner becomes agitated or threatening during a medical examination/consultation.

**All healthcare professionals should receive training on the applicable rules and how to react in high-risk situations.**

#### **Reply:**

The CPD fully recognises the importance of safeguarding the confidentiality of all medical data and of ensuring that medical examinations and consultations are conducted in conditions that respect professional secrecy.

As already stated in the paragraph 63, the CPD faces practical difficulties due to the limited number of nursing staff. In cooperation with the Ministry of Health, the CPD is actively working to resolve this staffing shortage through targeted recruitment and secondment of qualified healthcare personnel, so that clinical duties are carried out exclusively by medical professionals.

Where non-healthcare staff is used, strict safeguards are applied:

- Medical data sharing is strictly on a need-to-know basis. CPD officers receive only the minimum information necessary to prevent a serious and immediate risk to the detained person or to others, and solely with the detained person's consent unless an overriding risk is identified.
- Medical examinations/consultations are, as a general rule, conducted out of the sight and hearing of non-medical staff. The presence of custodial staff is permitted only in exceptional circumstances, following an individual risk assessment and at the request of the attending healthcare professional.
- Alternative safety measures are prioritised. In particular, as part of the ongoing renovation of the prison medical facilities, call-alarm buttons will be installed in all medical rooms and in the offices of the Psychosocial Support Unit. This will allow healthcare staff to call upon immediate assistance when needed and ensure that the presence of a prison officer inside the medical office will be required only when specifically requested by the attending doctor.

#### **d. drug use treatment and mental healthcare services**

##### **Recommendation**

**Par. 78. The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to ensure that prisoners held in Blocks 10 and 10B are:**

- afforded adequate access to natural light and sufficient artificial lighting in each cell;**
- offered access to varied and purposeful, rehabilitative or therapy-based programmes and activities; and**
- afforded more time outside.**

**The CPT also calls upon the Cypriot authorities to ensure prisoners held in 10B are each provided with a bed and, if the safer cells are used for ordinary accommodation purposes, that they be properly furnished and equipped with furniture and electrical sockets.**

**Overall, prisoners in Block 10 should only be placed there if they have specific and urgent mental health needs and do not qualify for transfer to a mental healthcare facility, and only for the shortest possible duration, with regular reviews of the necessity of their placement.**

##### **Reply:**

The transfer of a prisoner to and from Block 10 is decided exclusively by the Mental Health Services of the CPD, strictly on the basis of the individual's mental health condition and clinical assessment. The Prisons Department only facilitates the process and placement in Block 10 occurs only when clinically necessary and for the shortest possible duration, with regular multidisciplinary reviews of the prisoner's condition.

Conditions of Accommodation:

- All rooms in Blocks 10 and 10B are equipped with large windows that provide ample natural light, in addition to adequate artificial lighting.
- Each cell in Block 10 and Block 10B accommodates one prisoner only and is furnished with a single bed and the necessary equipment for safe and hygienic living.
- Prisoners in Blocks 10 and 10B both have access to their own separate outdoor yard, which remains open daily from 07:00 to 17:00, allowing ample time for outdoor activity and natural ventilation.
- All therapeutic or rehabilitative programmes offered in Block 10 are exclusively designed, organised, and implemented by the Mental Health Services, as the competent authority for mental healthcare.

Through these measures, the CPD ensures that placement in Blocks 10 and 10B remains a short-term, clinically driven intervention, with living conditions and therapeutic opportunities.

##### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 79. Further, as concerns Block 10B, the Committee was not at all convinced that adequate placement criteria had been established or sufficient safeguards put in place. Without these, placement in this block risked being totally unregulated and not for mental healthcare purposes. In light of this, the CPT requests that the Cypriot authorities share the criteria of placement on Block 10B.**

##### **Reply:**

Block 10B functions as a transitional unit between Block 10 and the larger mainstream wings of the Central Prison.

The principal criteria for placement include:

- Individuals with frequent or repeated incidents of self-harm or ongoing suicidal ideation who do not meet the strict admission criteria for Block 10 but continue to require enhanced monitoring.
- Prisoners who have recently self-harmed on multiple occasions and need a period of stabilisation in a smaller, closely supervised environment.
- Prisoners who express significant difficulty coping in large wings and who, following professional assessment, request accommodation in a smaller unit for their mental well-being.
- Prisoners who have been victims of assault or credible threats from other prisoners and whose personal safety would be at risk in a mainstream wing.

Placement is never punitive and is reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains clinically and operationally justified. The aim is to provide a short-term, supportive environment before either return to a mainstream wing or transfer to a specialist mental-health facility if clinically indicated.

**Recommendation:**

**80. The CPT notes that this practice (double dose on Saturdays for all blocks) remains poor clinical practice as it can cause oversedation on the double-dose day and then withdrawal symptoms the next day, and it reiterates its recommendation that the practice of double dosages be ceased as a matter of priority.**

**Reply:**

The CPD has taken specific operational measures to support the daily administration of buprenorphine in conditions that protect both the health and safety of detainees:

- **Dedicated accommodation:** Every effort is made to house prisoners receiving buprenorphine treatment primarily in Blocks 1 and 2, where they can be grouped together for easier, daily supervised administration of their medication.
  - **Secure transfers:** For prisoners who reside in other wings, daily secure transfers to the Gate Office are arranged so that they can safely receive their prescribed dose without disruption.
- Cooperation with Mental Health Services:** The CPD has formally requested the reinforcement of nursing staff within the Mental Health Services to ensure that seven-day-a-week buprenorphine distribution is feasible and sustainable.

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 81. As for food and fluid refusal, the situation had not changed since 2023. There remained no specific prison policy in place for the management of prisoners refusing food or fluids. The CPT reiterates its recommendation the establishment of a formal written procedure on managing food and fluid refusal by prisoners**

**Reply:**

A written procedure for the management of prisoners refusing food or fluids already exists in the Prisons (General) Regulations, specifically Articles 83, 84 and 85 (**Annex 5**).

In addition to the legal framework, each case is subject to an individualised assessment and management plan, with close cooperation between the medical service, the Mental Health Services, and the CPD Directorate to safeguard the detainee's health and fundamental rights.



#### **e. prevention of suicide and self-harm**

##### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 82. NCP should, as a matter of urgency, establish a comprehensive and robust suicide prevention policy and ongoing prevention programme. Moreover, the CPT reiterates its recommendation that a central register be kept recording all incidents of self-harm and suicide attempts, to enable management and external monitors to have a clear picture of the situation at NCP.**

##### **Reply:**

A central registry is maintained recording all incidents of self-harm and suicide attempts.

Further, no suicides have occurred since January 2023, reflecting the high priority given by the CPD to suicide prevention and the early detection of self-harm risks.

Whenever suicidal ideation or self-harm behaviour is identified:

- Immediate medical care is provided at the prison clinic for any injuries.
- A prompt assessment is carried out by the Mental Health Services, followed by coordinated management involving the CPD Psychosocial Support Office and the Security Office to ensure a multidisciplinary response and appropriate monitoring.

These measures form part of the CPD's ongoing suicide-prevention strategy and reflect its commitment to safeguarding the mental health and life of every person in custody.

#### **8. Other issues**

##### **a. prison staff**

##### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 84. The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to review the deployment of front-line staff and increase the presence of custodial staff on the most problematic blocks, where inter-prisoner violence occurs more regularly. It also recommends that more effort be made to recruit staff with a range of languages, where possible.**

##### **Reply:**

As aforementioned, 33 new prison officers were recruited in 15 October 2025. Furthermore, during 2024 the CPD successfully recruited 50 additional officers, strengthening staff deployment across all wings and improving supervision, particularly in areas where inter-prisoner violence had previously been of concern.

In addition, by the end of October 2025 all remaining vacant prison-officer posts, currently totalling 120—will be formally announced for recruitment, with the explicit aim of reinforcing the front-line presence

These measures, combined with ongoing targeted training and the continued effort to attract candidates with a range of language skills, are designed to ensure safer and more effective front-line staffing.

## **b. discipline and security measures**

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 88. The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to review this practice of placing prisoners in provisional disciplinary isolation following a suspicion that they may have committed a disciplinary offence, and before a formal charge is brought, and ensure that:**

- provisional disciplinary isolation does not last longer than a few hours; - that is only be used as an exceptional measure; and**
- that it complies with due process safeguards; these should include that confinement to a cell for longer than a few hours, about an incident giving rise to a disciplinary procedure, should not occur without the prisoners being charged, and being allowed to be heard on the matter and to explain their behaviour to a senior prison officer reporting to the director, as well as prisoners being given the written decision and informed about their right to appeal.**

### **Reply:**

In practice, when a serious incident occurs, the prisoner remains confined either in their own cell or, where necessary, in another single cell only until the disciplinary investigation is completed, which is always carried out as swiftly as possible.

The recommendation for limiting such confinement to a few hours is already reflected in Regulation 151(1)(a)(b)(c) of the Prisons (General) Regulations (**Annex 6**). Under this provision, temporary confinement may be used solely in exceptional and extreme circumstances—not as a disciplinary punishment, but to safeguard the interests of the concerned prisoner, protect other prisoners, or immediately restrain violent or seriously disobedient behaviour.

Moreover, full procedural safeguards are guaranteed:

- Detailed records and minutes are kept in every case and reports are issued immediately upon completion of the investigation.
- Regulation 160 A(1)) explicitly requires that any confinement in a solitary cell is imposed only by the Director's decision and only after the prisoner has been given the opportunity to be heard.
- Even in cases where such confinement is applied twice within the same day, the prisoner exits the cell between these periods, ensuring regular out-of-cell time and access to basic daily activities.

These provisions ensure that temporary confinement remains exceptional, time-limited, and strictly regulated, fully complying with the principles of due process and proportionality.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 89. The CPT recommends that the NCP management further review its disciplinary proceedings to ensure that any offence is investigated, adjudicated and any sanction is given promptly and, in the case of criminal offences, that reports are immediately forwarded to the public prosecutor for appropriate criminal action. It would also appreciate being sent a copy of the NCP internal disciplinary regulations.**

### **Reply:**

The CPD Directorate places great emphasis on the prompt completion of all disciplinary procedures, in full compliance with Regulation No. 156 (**Annex 7**). All investigations are carried out transparently, and prisoners are always informed of the reasons for any confinement.

Once an investigation is concluded, the indictment is delivered to the prisoner, who is summoned to give testimony. During this process, formal minutes are kept and every decision is fully justified. The prisoner's views are heard and carefully considered before any sanction is imposed.

Particular importance is placed on ensuring that disciplinary cases are adjudicated as swiftly as possible. Since 2023, delays in the hearing and determination of disciplinary offences have become exceptionally rare.

In cases that may constitute criminal offences, the Police is immediately notified so that an independent investigation can be carried out without delay.

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 90. In this regard, the CPT again calls on the Cypriot authorities to amend the relevant provisions of the Prison Regulations, as well as any other applicable legislation, to ensure compliance with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and that only an independent judge can deal with disciplinary proceedings which may result in loss of remission.**

**Reply:**

The CPD Directorate notes that disciplinary sanctions which may affect remission are, in practice, rarely imposed and most often concern the suspension of remission rather than its permanent loss. The suspension of remission is applied strictly within the framework of the Prisons (General) Regulations and under full procedural safeguards.

**c. contact with the outside world**

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 91. In this respect, the CPT again invites the authorities to expand Voice over Internet Protocol technology and consider expanding its use, notably for foreign national prisoners.**

**Reply:**

NCP provides the option to foreign prisoners to contact their relatives and friends online through Microsoft Teams.

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 92. The CPT recommends that all prisoners be offered the opportunity to inform their families or a third person free of charge upon their admission to the prison, and that thereafter indigent prisoners be provided with support to maintain contact with the outside world. Further, steps should be taken to provide privacy booths for the payphones. Lastly, Block 10A should be provided with an additional phone, to enable equality of access to the telephone in comparison to the other blocks.**

**Reply:**

Upon admission and during the initial interview process, all new prisoners are given the opportunity to make one telephone call free of charge in order to inform their families or a third person of their detention.

Furthermore, through the CPD Psychosocial Support Office, indigent prisoners may either (a) call their family members or legal counsel directly or (b) receive a free phone card to maintain contact with the outside world.

In addition, the replacement of the old card-telephone system is already under way. The contracted provider has formally committed to increase the total number of telephone booths from 38 to 51 throughout the CPD ensuring better access for all prisoners.

Finally, Block 10A will be equipped with an additional telephone so that prisoners in this unit enjoy equal access to telecommunication facilities compared to other blocks.

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 93. Lastly, several foreign national prisoners alleged that many letters they had sent were not received by their relatives, and that they were not receiving letters sent by their relatives. Equally, indigent foreign national prisoners could not send letters to their families, as they could not afford the stamps, and many did not understand the internal prison application system which needed to be completed to be allowed to post a letter from within the prison. The Committee recommends that the prison management address these issues.**

**Reply:**

Prisoners who wish to communicate with their families by post but lack the financial means to purchase stamps may apply for financial assistance from the CPD Directorate.  
The CPD explicitly states that No interference takes place regarding the correspondence of prisoners

**d. complaints procedures**

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 96. The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to ensure that:**

- all internal prisoner complaints are registered centrally within the prison before being allocated to a particular service for investigation or follow-up;**
- all internal prisoner complaints are investigated expeditiously (with any delays justified), and prisoners informed within clearly defined periods of the action taken to address their concern, or of the reasons for considering the complaint unjustified;**
- statistics on the types of complaints made are kept, as an indicator to management of areas of discontent within the prison; and**
- any oral complaints are addressed and systematically recorded and registered, in adherence to principles of confidentiality.**

**Reply:**

A dedicated file has been created where all complaints placed in the CPD Directorate's complaints box are recorded, and the entire management process is documented and stored in the complaints folder. Furthermore, all written complaints submitted through the Wing Officers are recorded, and the management process is documented and filed in the prisoner's individual file. In the case of an oral complaint, the officer who received it records the incident in a report, and upon completion of the management process, it is stored in the complaints folder.

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 97. Equally, all staff should be trained in the importance of the complaints' system and their role within this system. In addition, prisoners should be fully informed of their right to complain and the method by which to do so (for example through brochures, written information and posters) and provided with the means by which to make their complaints (paper/pens/forms, etc.).**

**Reply:**

The Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman) deals with the promotion and protection of the rights of prisoners. The Commissioner's firm position is that anyone who is deprived of his personal liberty in any form of detention or imprisonment is entitled to respect and dignity. The prisoners may, by letter, at any time of their imprisonment, contact the

Commissioner in order to complain of any violation of their rights or any problems they may face in Prison. A complaint can be submitted to the Commissioner, by letter, which can be placed in the special box in every Block, clearly labelled «Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights “OMBUDSMAN” These letters, are not subject to the control or inspection of the Director of the CPD. Every week, an Officer of the Commissioner’s Office inspects these boxes, in all blocks and collects the content. At the same time, a complaint may be lodged with the Commissioner by the prisoner’s relatives or his lawyer on his behalf.

Regarding the submission of the prisoners’ complaints within the CPD there are letter boxes in all areas, accessible to prisoners. There, the prisoners can submit a complaint to The Director. The appointed CPD officer opens the box on a monthly basis, collects the letters without opening them and then forwards them to the Director, who gives instructions on how to deal with the complaint, according to the case. The Director usually gives instructions to prisons managers to investigate the complaints and immediate interventions are made when necessary.

The prisoners can also submit complaints or requests on a daily basis by handing them to the Inspector of their Block who investigates the issue immediately.

Prisoners are aware of their rights to submit their complaints as they are informed of their rights and responsibilities, upon arriving at the establishment.

Moreover, the Commissioner has the authority to initiate ex officio investigations into any matter concerning prisoners’ rights. These mechanisms provide multiple, independent channels for prisoners to raise concerns, ensuring that their rights are protected and that any issues can be addressed promptly and impartially.

Following your recommendations, the Prison Board — an internal mechanism of oversight and accountability within the Prison Department — has been re-established by a decision of the Council of Ministers.

The mission of the Prison Board is to investigate prisoners’ complaints, monitor living conditions, and submit recommendations to the Minister of Justice.

In essence, this constitutes an internal complaints examination mechanism, ensuring the timely investigation of complaints, the prompt notification of prisoners regarding the outcome of such investigations, and the implementation of corrective measures where necessary.

The staff is also fully aware and is trained on the importance of the complaints’ system and their role within this system mainly through their training at the prison Academy.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 97. Further, the CPT reiterates its recommendation that management ensure that prisoners are informed of the Prison Board’s composition and independent mandate, and that both prisoners and Prison Board members should have unimpeded and confidential access to complaint boxes in all blocks.**

### **Reply:**

The composition of the Prisons Board is clearly posted in all Blocks and is visible to both prisoners and officers.

Both prisoners and Prisons Board members have unimpeded and confidential access to the complaint boxes located in all Blocks. Prisoners may, at any time during their imprisonment, submit a complaint to the Prisons Board regarding any violation of their rights or any problems they may encounter in the prison. Complaints may be submitted by letter and placed in the special box in every Block, clearly labelled «PRISONS BOARD». These letters are not subject to the control or inspection of the Director of the Prison Department.

Every week, an Officer of the Prisons Board inspects these boxes in all Blocks and collects the content. Complaints may also be lodged on behalf of prisoners by their relatives or legal representatives. These procedures ensure that prisoners have confidential, independent, and direct access to the Prisons Board, safeguarding their right to submit concerns without any interference.

## **B. Law enforcement agencies**

### **2. Ill-treatment**

#### **Recommendation**

**Par. 100: The Committee recommends that the Cypriot authorities place greater emphasis on the training of police officers in interviewing criminal suspects. The CPT would also like to be provided with details of the present Cyprus Police Academy curriculum concerning police interviews of victims, witnesses and suspects**

#### **Reply:**

The Cyprus Police Academy has incorporated training in interview techniques based on the PEACE model, which has been implemented in the United Kingdom for several years, for interviews with victims, witnesses, and suspects. The training provided by the Cyprus Police is addressed to police cadets, experienced officers, as well as ranking officers, as follows:

Training Provided to Police Cadets:

1st Semester		
Subject	Theory	Practice
Investigations – Interview Techniques and Statement Taking	4	18
Rights and Handling of Detainees	3	5
Code of Ethics regarding the Handling of Suspects	3	
Torture / Degrading / Humiliating Treatment	2	
Handling of Juvenile Persons	2	
Good Practices in Case Investigation		3
2nd Semester		
Rights and Handling of Detainees	5	7
Equal Treatment of Men & Women in Employment and Vocational Training	2	
Sexism and Racial Discrimination	5	
Rights of Suspects	3	
Protection of Crime Victims and Witnesses	5	2
Rights of Children in Conflict with the Law (suspects, accused, arrested, detained)	3	
Completion of Investigation File including Statements from Victims, Witnesses, and Suspects	3	20
Completion of Death Inquiry File including Statements from Witnesses		7
Quality Service	6	
4th Semester (University of Cyprus)		

Policing and Human Rights	6 ECTS	
5th Semester		
Video-Recorded Statements	3	
Interview-Based Handling of All Categories of Vulnerable Persons	45	11

#### Training for Sergeants:

Development of Administrative and Professional Skills	
Subject	Duration
Comprehensive approach to all types of interviews, following the PEACE model, covering victims, witnesses, and suspects	31 hours

#### Basic Training Programme for officers Involved in Investigations (Criminal Investigation Department (CID) & Police Stations)

For Experienced Police Officers in CID and Stations	
Subject	Duration
Comprehensive approach to all aspects of investigating any offense, including conducting oral and written interviews with victims, witnesses, and suspects, following the PEACE model	Five (5) weeks

#### Advanced Level Training Programme

For Officers Serving in CID and Police Stations Involved in Investigations	
Subject	Duration
Advanced-level approach to investigating cases and other serious incidents, with a particular focus on victims, witnesses, and suspects	Two (2) weeks

#### Videotaped Statement Training Programme

Target Audience: Investigators serving in the CID	
Subject	Duration
Focuses on conducting interviews using technological equipment (videotaped statements) and preparing the testimony for court,	

following established procedures for presenting such testimony. The training is provided by experienced service experts with many years of specialization in this field in the United States	Three (3) weeks, mostly practical training conducted by experts
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### **Recommendation**

**Par. 101: The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities ensure that police officers throughout Cyprus are instructed, at regular intervals, that all forms of ill treatment of persons deprived of their liberty – including verbal abuse, racist behaviour and threats – are unprofessional and illegal and will be sanctioned accordingly).**

### **Reply:**

The demonstration of zero tolerance towards torture and racist behavior is a top priority for the Police. To ensure strict adherence to this principle, regular circulars and guidelines are circulated to all police officers, emphasizing the absolute prohibition of any form of torture, inhumane, or degrading treatment and racist behaviour. These directives aim to reinforce professional conduct, safeguard human rights, and promote accountability within all levels of law enforcement, reflecting the unwavering commitment of Police to uphold the dignity and rights of every individual.

Following the receipt of the Report, a new circular was sent to all Police officers, stressing the importance of zero tolerance towards ill-treatment and racist behavior, emphasizing that any violation of these principles constitutes a disciplinary and/or criminal offense, depending on its severity.

Furthermore, Police Standing Order 5/3, “Rights of Detained Persons,” which forms part of the Cyprus Police Academy curriculum both during basic training and specialized programmes, includes specific provisions regarding the treatment of detainees. It provides that every detainee is entitled not to be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment, or any form of physical, psychological, or mental violence. The same Police Standing Order strictly prohibits:

- Torture,
- Threats of torture or assault,
- Threats of future retaliation against him/her or anyone related to him/her,
- Promises of favor, or
- Any pressure intended to elicit a confession.

Moreover, Police Standing Order 1/106, enacted in 2022, outlines the procedures for handling complaints of ill-treatment submitted by citizens against the Police, in accordance with the instructions of the Attorney General. According to these instructions, the Police is not authorized to proceed with the investigation of the complaint. Instead, the Independent Authority for the Investigation of Allegations and Complaints against Police, in consultation with the Attorney General, appoints an independent criminal investigator to examine the complaint. The results of the investigation are then submitted to the Attorney General for further instructions. This procedure ensures that complaints are investigated effectively and impartially.

These rights are also incorporated into the two-day training programme provided to Police officers serving at Detention Centers, which is part of the annual curriculum of the Cyprus Police Academy. For the year 2025, the training programme is scheduled to take place in November.

### **3. Safeguards against ill-treatment**

### **Recommendation**

**Par: 104: In order to dispel speculation about improper conduct on the part of police officers and to remove potential sources of danger to staff and detained persons alike, the CPT recommends that any non-standard issue objects capable of being used for inflicting ill-treatment should never be kept in offices where detained persons may be interviewed or held, and should be immediately removed from all police premises where persons may be held or questioned. Any such items seized during criminal investigations should be entered in a**



**separate register, properly labelled (identifying the case to which they refer) and kept in a dedicated store**

### **Reply**

A circular letter providing instructions to all Police Stations and Criminal Investigation Departments regarding the removal of such items from detention and interrogation areas was issued. In particular, the instructions stated: "In order to prevent any suspicion of inappropriate conduct and to ensure the safety of both personnel and detainees, all non-standard items that could potentially be used for ill-treatment must be removed from detention or interrogation areas. Any items seized during the course of criminal investigations shall be securely stored in a specially designated area".

### **Recommendation**

**Par. 106: The CPT reiterates its recommendation that all detained persons should be expressly informed, without delay and in a language, they understand, of all their rights, their legal situation (including the grounds for their detention) and the procedure applicable. To this end, detained persons should be systematically provided with a document setting out this information; the document should be available in the languages most commonly spoken by those concerned. If necessary, documents should be available in an easily accessible format, and the services of an interpreter should be made available.**

**Particular care should be taken to ensure that detained persons are actually able to understand their rights; it is incumbent upon police officers to ascertain that this is the case**

### **Reply:**

Following the receipt of the Report, a letter was sent to all Police officers, reminding them that all persons arrested or detained shall be informed of their rights, both orally and in writing, in accordance with the provisions of the law. To this end, a written statement of rights must be provided in a language comprehensible to the individual, allowing them to read and retain it throughout the period of their detention. Additionally, it was emphasized that a detainee who does not speak or understand the language of the Police has the right to free assistance from an interpreter. Interpretation shall also be provided for communication with a lawyer or a doctor.

Moreover, the Police provides every detainee with the document "Rights of Detained Persons", which includes, among others, the following rights:

- The reasons of his/her arrest or detention and the offence that he/she is accused of having committed,
- The right of access to a lawyer,
- The right of free legal aid/assistance and the conditions required for such assistance,
- The right of interpretation and translation,
- The right to remain silent and the right against self-incrimination,
- The rights of communicating with a lawyer and / or any other persons in order to inform them about the arrest and/or detention,
- The place of detention,
- The right of access to the material of the case,
- The right to inform the consular authorities or any other person,
- The right of access to urgent medical care,
- The maximum time of detention, and
- The right to challenge the lawfulness of the arrest and detention.

When the document is not available in a language the person understands, the detainees are informed orally of rights in a language they understand. The document is subsequently provided without undue delay in the appropriate language, and the detainee is asked to sign a statement confirming that they have received a copy.

It is also important to note that, according to the law, the arrested person has the opportunity to read the document and may retain it throughout their detention. The document has been translated into 20 languages: Greek, English, Turkish, Arabic, Bulgarian, French, Georgian, Persian, Ukrainian,

Polish, Russian, Romanian, Serbian, German, Spanish, Hungarian, Bengali, Sinhalese, Filipino, and Vietnamese.

These rights are also incorporated into the two-day training programme provided to Police officers serving at Detention Centers, which is part of the annual curriculum of the Cyprus Police Academy.

### **Recommendation**

**Par. 108: The CPT has repeatedly recommended that a written register be kept of when a detained person first requests to make a call to notify a third person of their detention, when this request is granted, or, if denied, the reasons for such refusal. During its visit to Lakatamia Police Detention Centre, the delegation found no such written record. The CPT calls on the Cypriot authorities to remedy this shortcoming**

### **Reply:**

Cyprus Police has incorporated the recording of a detainee's initial request to make a notification call to a third party into the "Detainee Personal Record," which is part of the Police Standing Order 5/3.

Furthermore, a circular letter was circulated to all officers, emphasizing that immediately upon arrest, all detained persons have the right to be informed—in a language they understand—that they may communicate in person with a relative, employer, or any other person of their choice, without undue delay and in the presence of a Police officer. Any temporary restriction of this right must be explicitly documented and justified.

### **Recommendation**

**Par. 110: The CPT once again calls upon the Cypriot authorities to take the necessary measures to ensure that all persons detained by the police – including persons detained under the aliens legislation – have an effective right of access to a lawyer as from the very outset of their deprivation of liberty and at all stages of the proceedings. To this end, the CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities introduce a more effective legal aid system for persons in police custody who are not in a position to pay for a lawyer so that this right may be effectively enjoyed**

### **Reply:**

Immediately after the arrest of any person, and without undue delay, the detained person is entitled to personally contact a lawyer of his/her choice by telephone, without any other person being present. These rights are included in the document "Rights of Arrested/Detained Persons" and Police Standing Order 5/3.

- Access to a lawyer is granted:

- (a) before interrogation by the Police or other competent authority;
- (b) promptly before the person is brought before the Court;
- (c) during an investigation or gathering of evidence by the Police or other competent authority.
- (d) upon deprivation of the person's liberty, without undue delay.

-Access to a lawyer includes the right to:

- (a) have a private meeting and contact with the lawyer who is representing the detained persons at any time whatsoever;

(b) request the presence and the participation of their lawyer during the interrogation, in order to provide them with clarifications with regard to the procedure which is being followed and to advise them on the procedural rights related to the interrogation.

(c) request the presence of their lawyer during the investigation or gathering of evidence in the event that, according to the legislation, the detained person is entitled to attend to the specific interrogation procedure.

Cyprus Police ensures the confidentiality of all communications between the detainee and his/her lawyer, including meetings, correspondence, telephone conversations, and other permitted forms of communication. Immediately after arrest—or, if the arrest occurs outside a police station, upon admission to the station—the detainee is provided with a list of the names and telephone numbers of all lawyers registered in the “Register of Practicing Lawyers.”

If detained, the person is entitled to confidential meetings with their lawyer at any day and time in a private room within the detention facility, out of the sight and hearing of Police members. During these meetings, the detainee may receive and provide confidential instructions, either orally or in writing. Meetings with lawyers take place in specially designated areas or visiting rooms, where no cameras are installed, to ensure confidentiality.

If the detainee lacks sufficient financial resources to exercise the right of access to a lawyer during the interrogation stage, he/she may inform the Police officer in charge of the interrogation by signing a relevant form. The detainee will then receive a list of lawyers willing to provide their services, and the lawyer of the detainee’s choice will be informed by the Police.

All detained persons have the right to send and receive letters to and from their lawyer without the letters being opened or read by Police, except in exceptional cases where the officer in charge has reason to believe an illegal object is enclosed. In such cases, the letter is opened and inspected in the presence of the detainee, without reading its contents.

Following the receipt of the Report, a circular was sent to all members of the Police emphasizing that a person arrested should be allowed, immediately and without undue delay, to communicate by telephone with a lawyer of their choice, without any other person being present. It was further stressed that all detainees are entitled to confidential meetings with their lawyer in the detention facility at any time and day, in a private area, without limitations.

Additionally, Cyprus Police has distributed the two updated lists ((i) lawyers registered in the “Register of Practicing Lawyers” and (ii) lawyers providing free legal aid), provided by the Bar Association, to all relevant departments, giving instructions to inform all detainees of their right of access to a lawyer in accordance with the law.

These rights are also incorporated into the two-day training programme provided to Police officers serving at Detention Centers, which is part of the annual curriculum of the Cyprus Police Academy.

### **Recommendation**

**Par. 112: The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities put in place a system of visiting doctors at police stations and detention centres. Further, as a matter of urgency, the practice of police officers carrying out healthcare duties should be ended and the current system of storage and management of medication at police detention centres reviewed**

### **Reply:**

Cyprus Police awaits the legal opinion of the Attorney General of the Republic regarding the provision of healthcare services in detention facilities in general, and specifically in large-capacity detention centers.

With regards to the recommendation included in the 2023 Report concerning the system of visiting doctors, the State Health Services Organization responded to the request made by the Police, stating

that the personal doctors of detainees are responsible for conducting medical examinations and issuing prescriptions, as they are familiar with each detainee's medical history. Regarding the administration of medication by police officers, the Organization clarified that such administration does not require the involvement of healthcare professionals.

As regards administration and handling of medication for detainees, the following were included in the Police Standing Order:

-Initial Assessment: Prior to being admitted to a detention facility, every arrested person is asked whether they are taking any prescribed medication. If so, they are required to hand over the medication along with the corresponding medical prescription.

-Unavailability of Medication: If the detainees do not have the medication in their possession, they are allowed to contact relatives and/or their attending physician to have it delivered. If this is not possible within a short period, and in case the detainee indicates an urgent need for medication, arrangements are made for the detainee to be examined by a physician. If the detainee reports a need to take medication while in detention, the detention facility staff ensures its administration.

-Admission to Facility: Upon admission, all medication and prescriptions are handed over to the Police officers, verified, and duly recorded.

-Storage: All medication—whether in the detainee's possession at the time of arrest, provided by relatives, or supplied following medical instructions during detention—is securely stored either with the detainee's personal property or in a designated secure area.

-Administration: Medication is administered in the prescribed dosage and at the prescribed times, under the supervision of a Police officer, who records its administration. Detainees are not allowed to retain medication for self-administration.

-Transfers: In the event of transfer to another detention facility, all medication and prescriptions are handed over by the escorting officer to the receiving officers, with proper verification and record-keeping.

### **Recommendation**

**Par. 113: The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities take steps to ensure that a person competent to provide first aid (who holds a valid certificate in the application of cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED) is always present in every police holding facility; all police holding facilities should be equipped with an AED**

### **Reply:**

Cyprus Police includes First Aid training in the basic education programme. At the Cyprus Police Academy, police cadets are trained using "The Authorized Manual of St. John Ambulance, St. Andrew's First Aid, and the British Red Cross." The programme consists of 42 teaching hours, and upon completion, trainees are certified as First Aiders.

The First Aid training course in the basic education programme follows the specific international protocols outlined in "The Authorized Manual of St. John Ambulance, St. Andrew's First Aid, and the British Red Cross." Both trainers and trainee officers are certified upon completion of the programme, and their knowledge is updated every three years.

While Cyprus does not provide specialized pre-hospital first aid training, all police officers receive the same basic First Aid training regardless of their department, as they may be reassigned from office duties to operational duties at any time.

All police vehicles are equipped with one Individual First Aid Kit.

The First Aid Kit includes:

- Twenty adhesive dressing (plasters) in assorted sizes

- Six medium sterile dressings
- Two large sterile dressings
- One sterile eye pad
- Six triangular bandages
- Six safety pins
- Disposable gloves
- Two roller bandages
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Alcohol-free wound cleansing wipes
- Adhesive tape
- Plastic face shield or pocket mask
- Alcohol gel

A significant number of detention centers and police stations in Cyprus are already equipped with AEDs. Nevertheless, an assessment will be conducted to determine whether additional facilities require such equipment.

#### **Recommendation**

**Par. 114: The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities put in place an effective system to provide detained foreign nationals who do not understand Greek with the services of either an interpreter or telephone interpretation whenever such persons have to sign a statement or require assistance in exercising their rights**

#### **Reply:**

Following the receipt of the Report, a letter was sent to all Police officers, stressing that a detainee who does not speak or understand the language of the Police has the right to receive free assistance from an interpreter. Additionally, interpretation services shall be provided for communication with a lawyer or a doctor. Assistance from an interpreter is provided from the electronic list of translators and interpreters maintained by the Police, which can be accessed by all Police officers

#### **Recommendation**

**Par. 115: The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities take steps to ensure that police custody records are accurately maintained**

#### **Reply:**

Circular letters regarding custody records are circulated on a regular basis. According to the last circular, which was aligned with the CPT's recommendations, all required data must be recorded accurately and systematically, both in the Detainees' Electronic System and in the Detainees' Individual File. The officer in charge of each Detention Center is responsible for conducting frequent checks of these records to ensure full compliance, verifying that the information is complete, accurate, and up to date.

Furthermore, the Professional Standards, Audit, and Inspection Directorate of Cyprus Police has been instructed to perform thorough inspections of the custody records maintained at all Detention Centers.

This obligation is also incorporated into the two-day training programme provided to Police officers serving at Detention Centers, which is part of the annual curriculum of the Cyprus Police Academy.

### **Recommendation**

**Par. 117: The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities put in place a robust complaints system for persons detained by the police, which should include the provision of information about the complaints procedures and mechanisms available in the initial written information given to detained persons on arrival, and the installation of locked complaints boxes with confidential complaints forms in relevant languages in all police stations and detention centers, which are emptied regularly by an independent police body as well as other relevant external inspectorate bodies**

### **Reply:**

Cyprus Police has proceeded with the purchase and installation of complaint boxes/mailboxes in all police detention facilities. Additionally, a relevant complaint form was prepared for completion by detainees, in accordance with CPT' recommendations. However, the response of the Independent Authority for the Investigation of Allegations and Complaints against the Police, in order to amend the Police Standing Order and the document "Rights of Detained Persons", is still pending.

## **4. Conditions of detention**

### **Recommendation**

**Par. 118: The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities ensure that all police custody cells be maintained in a good state of repair and hygiene, and that all cells grant access to natural light and functioning artificial lighting**

### **Reply:**

According to Police Standing Order 5/3, every detainee has the right to live in a reasonably sized cell, provided with basic amenities and sanitary conditions, adequate lighting and ventilation, and suitable equipment for resting.

Constant efforts are made by the relevant Police Departments to further improve the conditions of detention in all Police Detention Centers, including Menoyia Detention Center for Irregular Migrants, in order to meet the CPT recommendations. A dedicated Committee inspects all Police Detention Centers in Cyprus and submits reports to the Chief of Police with recommendations for improving detention conditions. In addition, circular letters are issued on this matter emphasizing that detention centers must be kept clean at all times.

Detention centers must be kept clean at all times. Officers in charge must frequently visit and inspect detention centers to ensure that all establishments are kept in a good state of hygiene. For this purpose, the Police maintains a contract with a private company for the cleaning and disinfection of detention centers. In addition to this, dedicated staff visits regularly all Police facilities to maintain a good state of hygiene.

Regarding call bells and artificial lighting, all Detention Centers are equipped with functioning communication bells and artificial lighting. In the event of a malfunction, the competent service is notified for repair.

During **2023**, the detention centers of Nicosia Central Station, Agios Dometios Police Station, Oroklini Police Station, Athienou Police Station and Aradippou Police Station have been renovated. A specially designed room for detainees with suicidal tendencies or violent behavior has also been established at the Oroklini Police Station detention facilities and at the Menoyia Detention Center.

In **2024**, the detention centers of Kophinou and Germasoyia Police Station have been renovated. Additionally, a specially designed room for detainees with suicidal tendencies or violent behavior has been established at Paphos Central Police Station. Furthermore, air conditioning units have been installed in the outdoor exercise area of the Detention Center of Paphos Central Police Station and

an outdoor exercise area for detainees has been created at the Detention Center of Ayia Napa Police Station.

In 2025, the following are under way:

- Renovation of the detention center of Xylotymvou Police Station.
- Installation of air conditioning units in the outdoor exercise area of the Lakatamia Detention Center.
- Energy upgrade of the detention facilities at the Ayia Napa Police Station.
- Replacement of the detention room door at Kokkinotrimithia.
- Study for the replacement of the roof covering the outdoor exercise area at the Limassol Central Police Station detention facilities.

### **Recommendation**

**Par. 119: The CPT once again calls on the Cypriot authorities to prevent extended detention in police custody of individuals held under criminal law beyond 72 hours and to keep the detention of administratively detained persons in police establishments to an absolute minimum (that is, no more than 24 hours)**

### **Reply:**

The Constitution contains strict provisions as to the duration of detention of a person. Pre-trial detention is strictly regulated also through the Criminal Procedure Law, CAP 155(CPL), which stipulates that the judge, on application made by a Police officer, where it appears that the investigation of an offence has not yet been completed and under strict conditions, has the power to remand an arrested person in the custody of the Cyprus Police. The following conditions must be met:

- (a) A specific offense has been committed for which the suspect has been arrested.
- (b) There is evidence/testimony that reasonably links the suspect to the commission of the crime/s under consideration.
- (c) The interrogations have not yet been completed and briefly describe what must be performed.
- (d) The detention of the suspect is considered necessary to avoid the possible influence of the investigations (influence of witnesses, destruction of evidence, escape, etc.).

The Constitution prescribes that the judge before whom the arrested person is brought, shall as soon as possible, and in any event not later than 3 days from such appearance, either release the arrested person on such terms as may deem fit or remand him on custody. The arrested person may be remanded in custody from time to time for periods not exceeding 8 days at one time. The total period is 3 months (Section 24 of the CPL and Article 11.6. of the Constitution).

As regards the length of detention of persons during remand, CPL provides that an arrested person can be deprived of his/her liberty or be detained by the CP for a maximum period of 24 hours following the arrest, until he/she is brought before a court of law. At the end of that period, the person must either be released or be heard by a judge who will decide on the continuation of his/her detention

Immigration detainees held under the Aliens and Immigration Laws, are transferred directly to Menoyia Detention Centre which serves as a pre-departure centre, prior to deportation. However, due to the centre's limited capacity (128 persons) detainees can also be held in Police Detention Centres. Towards this end, 6 Police Detention Centres (Lakatamia, Paphos, Limassol, Paralimni, Polis Chrysochous and Evrichou) which have outdoor exercise area and separated wings for criminal and immigration detainees were designated for detaining administrative detainees, until their transfer to Menoyia Detention centre

A new Detention Centre for administrative detainees, with a capacity of 800 persons, in the Limnes area of Larnaca is currently under construction. The new facility will be gradually delivered: first, the

Administration Building and Zone 1 will be delivered by the end of January 2026, while the remaining zones are scheduled to be delivered in April 2026.

### **Recommendation**

**Par. 121: Further to the recommendation contained in the report on the 2023 visit, the Cypriot authorities informed the CPT that a committee of police officers planned to visit the detention areas to find ways to allow access to fresh air and sunlight and to help regulate the high temperatures. However, at the time of the 2025 visit, no action appeared to have been taken in the police stations visited: cell windows remained covered with mesh or were made up of opaque glass blocks, which reduced the level of natural light entering the cells. Furthermore, the courtyard in Lakatamia Police Detention Centre remained enclosed by opaque plastic sheeting, effectively transforming it into an enclosed indoor yard. The CPT reiterates its recommendation that these shortcomings be rectified**

### **Reply:**

The Committee appointed by the Chief of Police visited the Police Detention Centers with outdoor exercise areas and recommended corrective measures, particularly at the Aradippou, Paphos, and Limassol Detention Centers. The recommendations were adopted, and the Departments were notified to begin the improvement works.

The Cyprus Police will duly consider the CPT's recommendation concerning Lakatamia Detention Center. In this regard, a formal request has been submitted to the Department of Public Works and the Department of Electromechanical Services for the installation of an air-conditioning and ventilation system in the courtyard. It is also noteworthy that Lakatamia Detention Center already has an outdoor exercise area providing access to fresh air and sunlight.

### **Recommendation**

**Par. 122: The CPT reiterates its recommendation that all persons detained for 24 hours or longer be provided with at least one hour of outdoor exercise each day**

### **Reply:**

The Police Standing Order 5/3 provides for the following:

#### **Outdoor Exercise:**

The officer in charge of each Detention Center implements a schedule ensuring that detainees have access to the outdoor exercise area for a sufficient duration, at least twice daily, with each session of one-hour minimum.

Concerning Police Detention Centers without an outdoor exercise area, efforts are made so these are used solely for the detention of individuals for a maximum period of 24 hours.

#### **Transfer for Extended Detention:**

In cases where a detainee is to be held for longer than 24 hours, every effort is made to transfer the individual to a facility equipped with an outdoor exercise area, thereby guaranteeing the detainee's right to at least one hour of outdoor exercise per day.

## **5. Other issues**

### **Recommendation**

**Par. 123: The CPT reiterates its recommendation that steps be taken to increase the presence of custodial staff in detention facilities, ensuring that staffing levels are maintained in line with official standards**

### **Reply:**

First, it should be noted that, continuous and intensive efforts are being made to increase the presence of custodial staff in detention facilities. From May 2023, when the Commission visited



Cyprus, until today, the number of staff in most Detention Centers has increased. A corresponding list of staff numbers is attached as an **Annex 8**.

### **Recommendation**

**Par. 124: The CPT recommends that appropriate safeguards be in place to ensure that police officers may be identified and can be held accountable for their actions (for example, by way of a clearly visible means of individual identification on the uniform, such as a name or a number)**

### **Reply:**

A letter was circulated following the receipt of the Report, giving orders to police officers serving in Detention Centers to wear their uniform in accordance with Police Order 1/38. Special attention must be given to shoulder insignia and identification badges, so that they are clearly visible, particularly in cases involving the investigation of complaints of mistreatment.

## **C. Immigration detention establishments**

### **(i) First Reception Center Pournara**

#### **1. Preliminary Remarks**

### **Recommendations**

**Par. 129: Considering that asylum seekers should only be deprived of their liberty as an exceptional measure, the CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities cease the routine practice of initially depriving asylum seekers of their liberty.**

**Par. 149: The delegation found that vulnerability assessments were not systematically undertaken. Assessments were only performed if a person was flagged as potentially vulnerable during the pre-screening assessment or during the registration procedure. The inconsistent application of vulnerability assessments may hinder the proper identification of vulnerable persons.**

**Par. 151: The CPT considers that asylum seekers, who should only exceptionally be detained as a measure of last resort after a careful and individual examination of each case, should be afforded a wide range of safeguards in line with their status, going beyond those applicable to irregular migrants. The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities cease the practice of routinely depriving asylum seekers of their liberty in the Pournara First Reception Centre.**

**Par. 152: During the 2025 visit, the delegation found that foreign nationals continued to be deprived of their liberty in Pournara without a formal decision and without access to the consequent applicable safeguards. Such a situation may amount to arbitrary deprivation of liberty and given that detention could last for an undefined period of time lasting from few weeks to several months, this left detained persons in a state of uncertainty.**

### **Reply:**

Detention is indeed a measure of last resort, according to article 9ΣΤ of Refugee Law, that also provides that no one should be detained only on the basis of their status as asylum seekers. The same article provides the conditions and rules that should be followed during detention, to ensure the principle of necessity and proportionality. Detention orders are subject to appeal and detainees have also the right to submit a request for free legal aid.

It should be clarified that First Reception Centre Pournara is not a detention Centre but a First Reception Centre and for this purpose, it is funded by the European Commission (EC). All third country nationals who enter the Republic of Cyprus irregularly, are referred to the First Reception Centre for the implementation of all procedures as described in the relevant Standard Operating Procedures agreed by all competent departments under the coordination of the Commission.

Hence, applicants are not held in the same facilities as ordinary prisoners and the conditions in the Reception Centre do not resemble prison conditions. Further, families in Pournara are prioritized in terms of the reception procedures and are released as soon as possible, especially if they have a place to stay outside of Pournara. Also, officers from the Social Welfare Services are placed in Pournara, in order to assist them with finding a place of residence.

According to the related EU and national law, third country nationals who enter the Republic of Cyprus illegally should be placed in a designated - by the national authorities - centre, for screening purposes – for the least duration possible, as it will be explained below. According to a Ministerial Council decision of 2025, Pournara has been designated as a screening centre where all related screening procedures will take place, in the context of the EU Screening Procedure Regulation (2024/1356). Thus, third country nationals are not released from the centre before the completion of screening process and unless all medical exams for STIs and other contaminated diseases are completed. Further, before their release, third country nationals go through a vulnerability assessment so that the authorities can offer the appropriate –depending on the case – reception conditions, and offer – if deemed necessary – appropriate housing to vulnerable persons.

In the context of the newly introduced EU framework on Migration and Asylum, Asylum Procedure Regulation (2024/1348) along with the Return Border Procedure Regulation (2024/1349) establish a mandatory border procedure for asylum and return process at the external border of the territory. Not all third country nationals will have the right to enter the territory of the country, and until such right is granted, the authorities must host and accommodate them in designated closed reception centres.

### **Recommendation**

**Par 130: Staff and detained persons complained to the delegation of challenges to asylum seekers finding accommodation in the community. There appeared to be both lack of state-provided accommodation of vulnerable persons and a lack of affordable rental accommodation. The shortage of affordable housing was further exacerbated by the Minister of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance's decision to increase the Waiting period for asylum seekers before they are allowed to work from one month to nine months. This measure meant that asylum seekers were unable to work and earn an income for the first nine months after arrival, thus limiting their financial resources. As a result, they faced greater difficulties securing rental accommodation. While the Asylum Service offered five days of free accommodation outside the facility to help individuals find housing, many of those interviewed by the delegation, reported that this was insufficient time. As a result, despite the majority of persons met expressing a keen desire to leave Pournara, many were reluctant to accept the offer, fearing it would lead to homelessness after the five days. The CPT would appreciate the comments of the Cypriot authorities on this matter.**

### **Reply:**

In regards to the challenges faced by asylum seekers in finding accommodation in the community, it should be noted that the personnel of the Social Welfare Service that is placed in Pournara, provides help asylum seekers, and especially vulnerable persons and families with minors, to secure an appropriate accommodation after the completion of asylum reception procedures.

Regarding the waiting period of asylum seekers before they are allowed to work, it is worth mentioning that the Recast Reception Conditions Directive (EU) 2024/1346 (expected to apply from June 2026), reduces the maximum waiting period for asylum seekers to be granted access to the labour market from nine months to six months (article 17). Consequently, the current waiting period of 9 months will be reduced, however it is up to the government's discretion whether to apply the maximum waiting period.

## 2. ill-treatment

### Recommendation

**Par. 131: The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities ensure that staff, notably police officers, at the Pournara center are instructed, at regular intervals, that all forms of ill-treatment of persons deprived of their liberty – including verbal abuse, racist behaviour and threats – are unprofessional and illegal and will be sanctioned accordingly**

### Reply:

The demonstration of zero tolerance towards torture and racist behavior is a top priority for the Police. To ensure strict adherence to this principle, regular circulars and guidelines are issued to all police officers, emphasizing the absolute prohibition of any form of torture, inhumane, or degrading treatment and racist behavior. These directives aim to reinforce professional behaviour, safeguard human rights, and promote accountability within all levels of law enforcement, reflecting the unwavering commitment of the Police to uphold the dignity and rights of every individual.

Following the receipt of the Report, a new letter was sent to all Police officers, stressing the importance of zero tolerance for ill-treatment and racist behaviour, emphasizing that any violation of these principles constitutes a disciplinary and/or criminal offense, depending on its severity.

## 3. Living Conditions

### Recommendation:

**Par 133: The living conditions in the facility had much improved and the delegation noted that many of its 2023 recommendations in this regard had been implemented. The delegation was encouraged to see that in the “main camp” and “safe zones” tents had been replaced with prefabricated units. The facility’s general state of hygiene was much better; a cleaning programme was in place and refurbishment of the centre was underway. Additionally, the delegation found separate showering and toilet areas for men, women and children, most of which were clean. Despite this, as in 2023, cockroaches continued to be commonplace throughout the facility. The CPT recommends that further fumigation and additional measures be taken to remove pests from Pournara.**

A weekly room cleaning schedule was established under the guidance of the centre’s institutional officers and social support officers. In collaboration with the pest control company that CAS employed, and for the purpose of reducing and eliminating the presence of harmful insects, pest controls are carried out every fortnight. Additionally, residents clean their rooms twice a day.

### Recommendation:

**Paragraph 134: The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities take immediate steps to ensure that all persons deprived of their liberty are provided with sufficient living space as well as a pillow and the use of washing machines to wash their clothes.**

### Reply:

In regards to the comments included in the report for sufficient living space in the rooms, we would like to note that 4, 6 or 8 persons can be accommodated in the rooms, that include bunk beds. All rooms have the same space, i.e. 29 square meters. Pillows are not provided.

Regarding the provision of a sufficient number of washing machines, this requirement will be implemented with the finalization of the expansion project of the centre (expected delivery date: end of 2025), where there will be special laundry areas. Considering the operation of the centre on the basis of the Screening Regulation, it is expected that the length of stay in the centre for the completion of registration, lodging of asylum application and reception, will be reduced from 30 days

to 7 (as the deadline for screening provided in the Regulation). Consequently, the use of washing machines will not be an immediate need.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 135 – 138:** The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities end the detention of families with children and of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). Where exceptionally they are detained, the authorities must offer them a range of constructive activities (with particular emphasis on enabling a child to continue their education and to undertake sports).

More generally, the CPT reiterates its recommendation that a regular programme of purposeful and structured activities (educational, recreational and sports) be implemented for persons detained for longer than a few days.

### **Reply:**

Living conditions in the centre have been improved significantly with the decongestion of the Centre. In this regard, tents are no longer used and all residents are housed in rooms. Repairs have been made to the air conditioners, toilets, and bathrooms. The expansion project provides for the creation of a dining room and a shop from which residents will be able to purchase products, while in the emergency zone the rooms will include lockers.

The time to complete the reception procedures held in Pournara has been reduced to 5 – 7 days. The results of the blood tests are available within 2 days and the results of the Mantoux test are available within 3 days. Residents are informed of the schedule of their stay in the Centre and of the cases in which their stay may be extended.

As for unaccompanied minors, their reception procedures are completed within 1 week, including the age determination interview that is carried out whenever deemed necessary. Then, the unaccompanied minors are transferred to appropriate shelters and accommodations. The same applies for separated children, who may, on the other hand, stay with adult relatives, if the Social Welfare Service decides that this decision serves the best interest of the child.

Further, there is immediate prioritization of procedures for vulnerable persons, such as people with disabilities, serious illnesses, single families, families with minor children, and the elderly, so that they are immediately released from the Pournara Reception Centre. A “pre-registration screening” has been established, which is carried out by social workers, who, in addition to the material reception needs, record any apparent vulnerability and medical care needs of asylum seekers so that, the procedures department and the medical staff of the Centre, will be immediately informed for prioritization. Cyprus Police has also been involved in this process, and therefore in the event of identifying elements of vulnerability, an immediate report and referral to the competent personnel is made.

Vulnerable persons, such as families with children, are offered appropriate accommodation by the Social Welfare Services upon their release from the centre.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 139:** Food was distributed three times a day by means of scanning individual meal cards. The delegation found that dietary needs were accommodated. While many persons reported being satisfied with the food, many others, including children reported that food provided was insufficient in quality and quantity. Detained persons were permitted to order food via delivery services; however, since the beginning of 2025, strict rules prohibited the entry of most food items.

While the CPT welcomes the accommodation of special dietary needs, it considers that the current food policy, particularly the restrictions on external food should be re-evaluated.

**Reply:**

The delivery of take-out food is permitted in the Centre, only by companies that have an operating certificate from the Public Health Service, so as to ensure the health protection of residents. The residents of the Centre have the option to order food for delivery from 12 midday until 6pm.

**Recommendation:**

**Par, 140: The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities ensure that persons deprived of their liberty in Pournara are provided with clothes and footwear (adapted to the season), according to their needs. Persons deprived of their liberty should be provided with several sets of underwear which are personal to them.**

**Reply:**

The centre has entered into a collaboration with the Red Cross and a process has been established to record needs for clothing and footwear and meet those needs on a weekly basis.

In addition, they are all provided with an 'entry kit' with essentials of personal hygiene, including toothpaste, toothbrush, refillable water bottle, fork, bed sheets, blanket, towel, soap, and shampoo.

**4. Healthcare****Recommendation**

**Par. 142 : Healthcare staffing levels had improved. One doctor, one nurse and a pool of 12 part-time nurses were employed. Additionally, a health visitor visited the centre daily to perform childhood immunisations. Persons requiring hospital care were usually sent, without an escort, by taxi to Nicosia General Hospital. Interpretation was available for medical consultations.**

However, access to mental healthcare services remained undeveloped with the psychologist assigned to the facility conducting only pre-screening assessments. The CPT calls on the Cypriot authorities to remedy this shortcoming. Reference is also made to the recommendation in paragraph 149.

**Reply:**

In collaboration with the Red Cross, access to a psychologist at the centre was ensured once a week, pending the signing of the agreement with the State Health Services Organization which provides for the presence of a clinical psychologist and a psychiatrist at the centre.

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 144: Medical records were poorly maintained. Despite the Cypriot Government stating that steps were being taken to establish a comprehensive medical record, this was not yet the case by the time of the delegation's visit. The CPT reiterates its recommendation that a single comprehensive medical record be maintained for each person detained in the Pournara centre.**

**Reply:**

The medical staff in Pournara maintain a personal folder for each resident, which now also includes the result/form of the preliminary medical examination that is going to be carried out in the context of the EU Screening Regulation.

**5. Unaccompanied and separated children and other categories of vulnerable persons**

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 145:** The CPT wishes to recall its position that every effort should be made to avoid resorting to the deprivation of liberty of a foreign national who is a child. Moreover, the CPT consider that UASC should not be deprived of their liberty.

The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities end the detention of UASC and other categories of vulnerable persons in the Pournara First Reception centre. The CPT reiterates its recommendation that all such persons be immediately transferred to more suitable accommodation.

**Reply:**

As mentioned above, the release of vulnerable persons and UASC from Pournara remains a priority, hence as soon as the reception procedures are finalized, they are released from the centre. With the guidance of the Social Welfare Services, UASC and persons with serious vulnerabilities are accommodated in appropriate housing facilities.

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 146:** The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities reduce the delays in the age assessment procedure and in DNA testing.

**Reply:**

Regarding UASC, their reception procedures are completed within 1 week, including the interview with the Police, fingerprints, interviews with the guardians and issuance of the confirmation and ARC, and the age determination interview which is conducted whenever deemed necessary. In case of referral to medical age examinations – a last resort measure activated only in case of indeterminate doubts – the procedure extends to maximum another 2 weeks. Then, the unaccompanied minors are transferred to appropriate shelters and accommodations by the Social Welfare Service.

Consequently, no delays are occurred in regards to the age assessment procedure. As explained above, the age determination process is carried out during the reception stage of a potential minor asylum seeker, when reasonable doubts arise about his or her age.

Regarding the conduct of DNA tests, Asylum Service is currently in consultation with the police authorities who are authorized to order the DNA test, with the aim to find a way to reduce the time that is required for the procedure to be finalized.

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 147:** The CPT considers that UASC should be provided with prompt and free access to legal and other appropriate assistance, including the assignment of a guardian or legal representative.

While UASC in Pournara, were routinely assigned to a guardian, they did not receive free access to legal assistance. In fact, none of the children with whom the delegation met had contact with a lawyer.

**Reply:**

Regarding the access of residents to legal assistance, it is noted that the Asylum Service has granted access to representatives of UNHCR and the Cyprus Refugee Council who can advise residents in accordance with their respective procedures. However, the newly introduced EU framework on Migration and Asylum provides for the provision of free legal assistance to all asylum seekers throughout the procedures, and it is therefore expected that by mid-2026, appropriate procedures will be established for their effective access to legal assistance.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 148: Whenever children are held in dedicated sections in the Pournara First Reception Centre, they must be offered appropriate living conditions and support. Therefore, the CPT reiterates that the Cypriot authorities must take steps to ensure that all children are:**

- provided with clothing and shoes appropriate for the weather, as well as sufficient quantities of hygiene products;**
- provided with sufficient food of a varied nature containing the necessary vitamins and nutrients for growing children and adolescents;**
- offered activities of a diverse nature, including more time to exercise outside, regular activities suitable to their age, organised sport and education;**
- offered greater age appropriate psychological and trauma-informed counselling support, as required, along with legal advice and information in a language they can understand on the asylum process and their specific situation.**

### **Reply:**

- The centre has taken measures in collaboration with the Red Cross to meet clothing and footwear needs.
- In collaboration with the medical centre, special nutrition programs are determined where necessary.
- The centre's interactive events have been enriched, with Greek language learning centres, football field, and the creation of an "activity zone", while with the implementation of the expansion project, there will be another playground. In addition, NGOs such as the Red Cross and the St. George Foundation carry out various activities at the Centre, on a daily basis.
- Social workers appointed in the centre conduct social support groups twice a week, where they provide counselling programmes and psychological support programmes in collaboration with the psychologist who is active in the centre. Further, UASC are immediately appointed a guardian thus they have direct communication with them in the centre.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 153: The CPT recommends that detained persons be systematically informed of the establishment's house rules both verbally and in writing. The information brochures should outline the house rules, asylum seekers' rights, legal assistance and complaints' procedures and be written in simple, accessible language which they can understand. For individuals who cannot understand the brochure, appropriate assistance should be provided, including through alternative communication methods and the provision of accessible formats.**

### **Reply:**

In regards to Pournara, all recommendations of paragraph 153, are included in the info-provision brochure. Information provision is carried out during the 1st day of entry to the centre, with the assistance of interpreters, and the brochure is given to the applicants, in their language of understanding.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 154: The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities make further efforts to ensure that foreign nationals deprived of their liberty in the Pournara First Reception Centre can effectively exercise their right of access to a lawyer. This should include the right to have access to legal advice and the right to benefit from access to free legal aid.**

### **Reply:**

In regards to access to legal advice and free legal aid, as mentioned above, in regards to paragraph 147, Asylum Service has granted access to representatives of UNHCR and the Cyprus Refugee Council who can advise residents in accordance with their respective procedures. However, the

newly introduced EU framework on Migration and Asylum provides for the provision of free legal assistance to all asylum seekers throughout the procedures, and it is therefore expected that by mid-2026, appropriate procedures will have been established for their effective access to legal assistance.

Further, it should be noted that Pournara hosts only asylum seekers and not persons that received the decision of Asylum Service in regards to their asylum application. Hence, applicants have the right to appeal against a negative decision of Asylum Service. With the lodging of the recourse, the applicants have the right to file an application for legal aid. Legal aid in such cases is granted as per section 6B of the Legal Aid Law 2002 (L. 165(I)/2002). This prescribes (amongst others) that an applicant may receive legal aid subject to the following conditions: (a) that legal aid concerns only the first-instance adjudication of the recourse before the Administrative Court and (b) that according to the Administrative Court's judgment there is a real chance of success of the recourse.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 155: The delegation found a continued lack of formally established and effective complaint procedures, including a lack of codification on how complaints should be handled. Internal complaints could either be made orally or through one of three complaint boxes located in different areas of the centre, but no post-boxes or guidelines were in place for persons deprived of their liberty to lodge complaints with external bodies. The CPT recommends that a complaints procedure be drawn up in order to govern the complaint process, which observes certain basic principles: availability, accessibility, confidentiality/safety, effectiveness and traceability.**

### **Reply:**

In relation to the ability of residents to submit confidential complaints, it is noted that a complaints box has been placed in each zone of the Centre, in the administration office area. Residents may submit their complaint by filling out the complaint form, without mentioning their name or other personal information, except for their entry number, and place it in the box. Complaints are collected once a week and a reception officer calls the residents to discuss the complaint and resolve any issues presented. This process ensures the principle of confidentiality. Further, a digital "incident book" has been created, where all incidents that occur in the centre are recorded, along with the level of risk, the actions taken, the results, and the name of the officer that handled the issue.

In this regard, however, with the creation of the independent mechanism for monitoring the fundamental rights of asylum seekers in the context of the implementation of the Pact, asylum seekers' access to an appropriate complaints authority will be ensured. A weekly report on the incident book is sent to the coordinator of reception sector of CAS.

### **Recommendation:**

**Par. 156: While the delegation was encouraged to hear from the Asylum Service that there are plans to implement a complaints record, the CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities take measures to ensure that avenues are readily accessible to persons held at the Pournara Centre, both internally and externally (to an appropriate complaints authority), to make complaints confidentially; that detained persons are informed, orally and in writing (in the most commonly spoken languages), of such avenues of complaint; and that the Asylum Services management team establishes a central register of complaints.**

### **Reply:**

Further to what is mentioned above, with the appointment of the independent mechanism for monitoring the fundamental rights of asylum seekers in the context of the implementation of the Pact, asylum seekers' access to an appropriate complaints authority will be ensured.



**Recommendation:**

**Par.157:** It is positive that detained persons has access to their mobile phones and that Wi-Fi was operational throughout most of the facility. While persons deprived of their liberty in Pournara could receive two visits a day from family or friends, visits were only permitted to last for 10 minutes and took place at the main gate in a dilapidated, open-sided shelter, furnished with only a few chairs. The approach to visits should be reviewed, both as regards the amount of time for visits, and the conditions in which they take place, which should respect the privacy of persons and be child-friendly in nature. The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities take the requisite measures in light of these remarks.

**Reply:**

Although Pournara is a closed centre, the concept of visiting hours has been established, and operates on weekdays from 12 noon to 4 pm and on weekends from 9 am to 4 pm, hours during which relatives of the residents have the right to visit them in the centre.

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 159:** The CPT recommends that a centralized electronic database be established, wherein all relevant information concerning each resident is systematically recorded, including personal details, case information, accommodation location and relocations, applications, incident reports, disciplinary actions and many other pertinent data.

**Reply:**

An electronic database has been established, where all relevant information concerning each resident is systematically recorded, including, inter alia, personal details, individual entry number, date of entrance and date of release, and ARC. Information related to the application of asylum, contact information, vulnerability results and referrals, among other information, are included in the centralised electronic database of the Asylum Service that is currently updated according to each step taken by the authorities. Access to that database was given to other authorities as well such as the Migration Department, Police, and the Labour office.

**Recommendation:**

**Par. 160:** In this context, the CPT recommends that if a measure of segregation is imposed, the foreign nationals concerned should be provided with a copy of the relevant decision and information on the possibilities to appeal the measure to an outside authority. Any measure of segregation should be time-limited, and a separate register should be established (setting out full information such as the date and time of entering and leaving, grounds of segregation, etc).

**Reply:**

Segregation measures were not taken on an individual level as a form of punishment for any reason or in the context of any incident. Segregation measures were taken as a way to ensure each individual's safety and security within the centre, especially in time that the centre hosted residents in its full capacity.

**(ii) Airport short-term point of entry facilities****Recommendation**

**Par. 164** The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities take steps to limit the detention of foreign nationals in the airports' holding facilities to no more than 24 hours

and, in the event that it is not possible to respect this limit, that they be transferred to another, suitable holding facility. Pending these arrangements, all detained persons should be offered at least one hour of access to fresh air every day and arrangements put in place for them to be able to receive visits from relatives, close acquaintances, and a lawyer.

Further, the CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities take the necessary steps, including by amending the relevant legislation, to clearly regulate by law the grounds for the detention of foreign nationals refused entry into Cyprus and deprived of their liberty in airport holding facilities. This should include the maximum length of detention (24 hours) as well as judicial control of, and possibilities for appeal against, their detention.

The CPT would also like to be provided with an update on the legal advice provided by the Attorney General of the Republic on the transfer of persons refused landing to another suitable place outside the airport

#### **Reply:**

##### **Access to Daily Outdoor Exercise**

The implementation of this recommendation is currently not feasible under the existing circumstances for the following reasons:

- (i) There is no immediately accessible outdoor area within the premises of Larnaca Airport.
- (ii) There is no secure fenced area that could allow for one hour of outdoor access without creating a significant risk of escape.
- (iii) The nearest outdoor area is located at a considerable distance from the detention premises, which would directly affect the smooth operation of the Passport Control Center.
- (iv) Returning detainees to the holding area would require security checks (access control/search by the Airport's private security company), making the process complex and time-consuming.
- (v) Additional staffing would be required, consisting of officers performing guarding duties, not passport control officers.
- (vi) The situation would become even more challenging when more than one inadmissible passenger needs to be moved (there are usually more than six on a daily basis).

It should be noted that over 95% of passengers depart on the first available flight within 24 hours, or maximum, within three days. When deemed necessary, inadmissible passengers may be allowed to leave the holding area and move under escort within the airport premises.

##### **Visits by Relatives, Close Acquaintances, and Lawyers**

Foreign nationals placed in the holding area are entitled to communicate and meet with relatives, persons of their choice, their employers, or lawyers. All inadmissible passengers are already afforded the opportunity to receive such visits, and no one has never been deprived of this right. They are fully informed of their rights and are provided with a booklet with their rights in a language they understand.

##### **Amendment of Legislation on Grounds for Refusal of Entry**

The grounds for refusal of entry into the territory of Member States are defined in Article 6(1) of the Schengen Borders Code. Specifically, refusal of entry is governed by Article 14 of the same Regulation, which regulates such cases of inadmissible passengers. Entry into the territory of Member States is prohibited to third-country nationals who do not meet all the entry conditions set out in Article 6(1), provided they do not fall within the categories described in Article 6(5).

Refusal of entry is imposed through a reasoned decision specifying the exact grounds and is taken in accordance with national law, with immediate effect. Each passenger is provided with a written refusal-of-entry form stating the reasons, which they are requested to sign.

##### **Legal advice provided by the Attorney General of the Republic**

The question raised by the Police concerning the legality of transferring persons who have been refused entry into the Republic to another location no longer arises, as the issue now appears to be regulated by EU Regulation 2024/1349 (Border Procedure Regulation) and EU Regulation 2024/1356 (Screening Regulation). Specifically, the aforementioned Regulations provide for the following:

- Regulation 2024/1356 establishes procedures for verifying the identity of third-country nationals (TCNs) who enter Member States without meeting entry conditions, with the aim of swiftly referring them to the appropriate procedure (asylum or return to their country of origin). Article 8 of the Regulation provides that the screening procedure shall be carried out in a suitable and appropriate location.
- Regulation 2024/1349 establishes procedures for the rapid examination of asylum applications lodged at the external borders. Article 4 provides that TCNs and stateless persons whose applications have been rejected shall not be allowed to enter the territory of the Member State and shall remain in a location at the external borders, in transit zones or in another location within the territory of the Member State. Article 5 of the Regulation further provides that the applicant may be detained, pending the examination of the application, in a designated facility.

To this end, the Police is in consultation with the Deputy Ministry of Migration and International Protection regarding the determination of the facilities to be designated under the aforementioned Regulations.

Based on the above, it appears that the holding areas at Larnaca and Paphos Airports will be used—once the detention/accommodation locations are agreed—solely for persons who are refused entry into the Republic (refused landing), who will be able to depart on the next available flight. These individuals will not remain in the holding area for extended periods, as those who submit an asylum application or are arrested will be transferred to the designated facilities determined pursuant to the above Regulations.

### **Recommendation**

**Par. 166: The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities take the necessary steps to ensure that in all airport holding facilities:**

- every foreign national subjected to a refusal of entry decision and detained in holding areas be provided, without delay, with an individual detention order;
- all foreign nationals deprived of their liberty be systematically and fully informed, without delay and in a language and format they can understand, of their rights and the procedure applicable to them. Detained persons should especially be informed of their right to have access to a lawyer, which includes access to free legal aid, and be placed in a position to effectively exercise this right in practice as from the very outset of deprivation of liberty. To this end, a list of organizations providing legal aid should be made available in all detention areas;
- every foreign national detained for more than 24 hours is subjected to health screening (for example, by means of a standardized questionnaire completed by healthcare staff) as soon as possible after their admission, by a doctor or a nurse reporting to a doctor;
- the screening includes a physical examination of the person concerned and is carried out in close cooperation with a (clinical) psychologist in order to assess the following issues: chronic illnesses, medication, infectious diseases, substance use, physical disabilities, mental disorders, suicide risk, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of having been a victim of violence (including sexual or gender-based violence) or human trafficking

## **Reply:**

### **Detention Orders**

Every foreign national held in detention who is subject to a refusal-of-entry decision, is treated in accordance with the Schengen Borders Code. The legislation does not provide for the issuance of detention orders in such cases. Therefore, each individual is provided with a written refusal-of-entry form specifying the reasons for refusal, which they are requested to sign.

### **Rights of Foreign Nationals**

All foreign nationals placed in the holding area of Larnaca Airport are fully informed of their rights and provided with a rights booklet in a language they understand, which is also displayed in the detention area. If a foreign national does not understand the language, they are entitled to free assistance from an interpreter. They are also provided with every possible facilitation to exercise their right to communicate with a lawyer of their choice, without the presence of any other person. In cases where detainees lack sufficient means to secure legal representation, they are given a list of lawyers, who offer their services under the legal aid scheme, including their names and contact details.

### **Visits by Relatives, Close Acquaintances, and Lawyers**

Foreign nationals placed in the holding area are entitled to communicate and meet with relatives, persons of their choice, their employers, or lawyers. All inadmissible passengers are already afforded the opportunity to receive such visits, and no one has been deprived of this right. They are fully informed of their rights and are provided with a rights booklet in a language they understand.

### **Medical Examination**

Every foreign national has the right at any time to undergo a medical examination, receive treatment, or be monitored by a doctor of their own choice. They may contact the doctor personally by phone. If the detainee does not wish to choose a doctor, a government doctor is arranged by the officer in charge of the holding area to provide medical care or monitoring.

In cases where no specific request is made by the passenger, the on-duty airport nurse is initially informed and provides the necessary medical care. If the nurse deems it necessary for the passenger to be examined by a specialist doctor, the individual is transferred to the hospital for further examination. All passengers are fully informed of their rights and provided with a rights booklet in a language they understand.

### **Cooperation with a (Clinical) Psychologist**

During the assessment of each passenger prior to placement in the holding area, if unusual behaviour is observed or the individual declares suffering from a chronic illness, the provisions of Police Standing Order 5/3 are applied.

In particular, if during assessment mental disorder, or suicide risk is identified or suspected, immediate psychiatric evaluation is arranged with the person's consent.

In addition, the mental condition of the passenger remains under close monitoring by the staff, with further measures implemented as necessary— including systematic observation every 30 minutes for health or safety reasons — and administration of prescribed medication where required.