

KEY OBSERVATIONS

PRIORITY TOPICS

■ Police

CONDITIONS OF DETENTION – Improve the material conditions in Detention and Preventive Arrest Centres (DPACs) including better access to natural light and ventilation, upgraded equipment, improved maintenance and relocating cells currently situated underground

REGIME – Provide an out-of-cell regime in the DPACs beyond the current one hour of access to an enclosed yard

■ Prison

CONDITIONS OF DETENTION – Adopt a systemic approach to address overcrowding and prison population inflation and take the necessary measures to ensure adequate material conditions and provide sufficient purposeful activities

STAFF – Fill vacant posts in operational, healthcare and social reintegration sectors, review and adjust official staff complements

DISCIPLINE – Repeal the provisions requiring prison healthcare staff to certify that prisoners are fit to undergo disciplinary punishment and those making self-harm and attempted suicide disciplinary offences

■ Detention facilities for children and young adults

STAFF – Fill vacant posts in operational, healthcare and social reintegration sectors, review and adjust official staff complements

USE OF FORCE – Review the use of force and means of restraint at the Târgu Ocna Educational Centre

CHRONIC ISSUES

■ Police

CONDITIONS OF DETENTION – Transfer the custody of persons held in pre-trial detention from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Justice and the prison administration.

GOOD PRACTICES

■ Prison

PREVENTION OF ILL-TREATMENT – New policy on the use of body-worn cameras by front-line prison officers and measures taken to ensure adherence to this policy

ACCESS TO SERVICES AND COMPLAINTS – Information technology equipment enabling prisoners to submit requests, petitions and complaints electronically

CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD – Expansion of facilities for video-conference calls and increased entitlement to free video calls for prisoners

■ Detention facilities for children and young adults

REGIME – Presence of an integrated school within the Craiova Detention Centre

THE CPT AND ROMANIA

Romania ratified the ECPT in 1994, and the Committee's first visit took place in 1995.

Since ratification, the CPT has carried out 14 country visits to Romania – 6 periodic and 8 ad hoc – including 75 visits to police establishments, 36 to prisons, 18 to psychiatric institutions, 13 social welfare and educational-correctional establishments and 2 to immigration detention facilities.

All the visit reports have been published. Romania did not accept the automatic publication of the visit reports.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 2025 visit, the CPT focused on the treatment of persons held in five police detention facilities, four prisons and two establishments for children and young adults in conflict with the law.

The cooperation received during the visit from the Romanian authorities was excellent. However, the principle of co-operation also requires that decisive action be taken to implement CPT's key recommendations. In this respect, additional efforts are necessary in particular as regards the persisting overpopulation of prisons and the regime and material conditions of detention in police establishments.

Law enforcement agencies

The vast majority of persons interviewed by the delegation indicated that they were treated respectfully and professionally by the police officers. The national authorities introduced a policy on zero-tolerance of violence which appears to have had an impact. However, a few allegations of physical ill-treatment were received, including from children, consisting mainly of slaps and punches to the face and body inflicted by police officers during apprehension or interrogation.

With regard to safeguards against ill-treatment in police custody, detained persons generally had the opportunity to notify a third party, were informed of their rights, and had access to a lawyer. However, efforts should continue to ensure that these rights are fully implemented in practice for all detainees, and that access to a doctor is guaranteed from the very outset of deprivation of liberty. In addition, further measures are required to strengthen the fight against impunity, including training on non-coercive interviewing and investigation techniques, enhanced use of technological tools, and providing prosecutors with their own investigators.

The CPT once again found very poor material conditions, including humidity, dilapidated mattresses, inadequate access to natural light and insufficient ventilation, and worn-out furniture in several Detention and Preventive Arrest Centres (DPACs), several of which were located below ground level. Hygiene was insufficient, and some Centres were occasionally overcrowded. Both the quality and quantity of the food offered remained inadequate. Despite repeated recommendations, no improvements have been made to the regime, which generally provided for only one hour per day of access to small, enclosed yards.

The Committee considers that a prolonged period of detention under such conditions could amount to degrading treatment. Urgent measures should be taken to offer appropriate conditions both in terms of material conditions and regime. As stated in the past, serious consideration should therefore be given to placing persons held in pre-trial detention under the authority of the Ministry of Justice and the prison administration.

Prison establishments

The CPT recognises the efforts in reforming the prison system as outlined in the [Action Plan for the period 2020-2025](#). Nevertheless, overcrowding in establishments for adults remains a challenge: prisons were operating at 119.5% of their official capacity and the prison population had grown by about 20% since 2020. Overcrowding was evident in all four establishments visited, with the highest levels found at Iași (140%) and Botoșani (130%) Prisons, with the pre-trial and admission sections generally being the most severely overcrowded.

The Romanian authorities should take steps to ensure that all persons in prison are held in decent conditions and with those living in multiple-occupancy cells afforded a minimum of 4 m² of living space each, excluding the sanitary annexe. Furthermore, in order to find a lasting solution to the overcrowding problem, the authorities should undertake a detailed analysis of the main factors contributing to this phenomenon, and thereafter define and implement adequate policies to modulate the prison population.

The CPT notes positively that concerted and determined action can have a considerable impact on preventing ill-treatment, as attested by the significantly lower prevalence of allegations of ill-treatment received as compared to previous visits. As an illustration, the delegation did not receive any allegation of physical ill-treatment by prison staff, including members of the special intervention group, at Craiova Prison. A similar situation was found at Iași Prison and only a few credible allegations were received at Botoșani and Bucharest-Rahova Prisons. The senior management in each prison should remain vigilant and committed to a policy of “zero tolerance” of ill-treatment by prison staff. In this context, the expansion of video surveillance in common areas in prisons and the systematic use of body-worn cameras during interventions are considered positive steps.

Inter-prisoner violence was overall limited in severity and frequency at Botoșani, Bucharest-Rahova and Craiova Prisons, taking into account the size of these establishments, with staff and management reacting appropriately to any incidents. At Iași Prison, inter-prisoner violence appeared significantly more prevalent notably amongst young adults in pre-trial detention and persons in the maximum-security unit, with serious incidents including sexual violence reported. While the response to isolated acts was adequate, the detection and the prevention require the development of a coherent strategy to combat inter-prisoner violence and intimidation in this prison.

Material conditions were satisfactory in some parts of the establishments visited, notably the new Pavilion C of the women’s section of Craiova Prison, the psychiatry units at Botoșani and Craiova Prisons and some sections of Bucharest-Rahova Prison. On the whole, however, overcrowding significantly undermined the efforts to provide adequate living conditions to the prisoners in the four prisons. In many multiple-occupancy cells and dormitories, prisoners were afforded a mere 2 m² to 3 m² of living space each and the equipment (lockable storage, tables and chairs/stools) was insufficient for the number of persons. The state of repair of the cells and their sanitary annexes was generally poor. Mattresses and bedding were often worn out and infestations of bed bugs and cockroaches were reported in all four prisons, despite regular disinfection.

During the visit, the delegation met persons in prison with special physical needs (ageing or with reduced mobility). Apart from an adapted cell in the women’s section of Craiova Prison, none of the prisons were appropriately designed or equipped to accommodate their needs. Structural adaptations and adjustments are required to ensure that these persons have access, on an equal basis with others, to reasonable accommodation and all essential facilities and services.

Staffing levels in the four prisons and throughout the prison system remain insufficient, particularly as regards custodial staff present in the detention areas. Sections with more than a hundred prisoners were often left under the responsibility of one or two junior officers, supervised by a senior officer. The social reintegration departments were better staffed compared to the situation found previously, but a number of posts remained vacant. It is urgent to reinforce staffing levels, based upon a review of the role and duties of prison staff. As regards the special intervention groups (EOS) operating in establishments with maximum-security units, the CPT reiterates its view that EOS should be dissolved, the staffing complements on the maximum-security units be augmented and a dynamic security approach implemented.

The report notes the efforts deployed by the Romanian authorities to expand the range of out-of-cell activities on offer. However, much more remains to be done to achieve the objective of enabling persons, both on remand and sentenced, to spend a reasonable part of their day engaged in purposeful activities of a varied nature, tailored to their needs. Action should be taken, at national level, to implement policies promoting prison work and vocational training with equal opportunities for women and men in prison.

As previously recommended, the maximum-security regime should be reviewed to offer more out-of-cell time and a greater range of activities, as well as the possibility of associating with other prisoners, based on an individual risk assessment. Decisive action should also be taken to ensure that handcuffing high-risk prisoners is not systematic and is always based on an individual and comprehensive risk assessment.

As regards the provision of healthcare, improvements were noted regarding access to medical consultations, including following a violent incident or use of force, and to the recording of and reporting on injuries. Nevertheless, healthcare staffing levels were clearly insufficient and require reinforcement in all four of the prisons visited, in particular general practitioners and nurses. Further action is also required to guarantee medical confidentiality; ensure comprehensive and, as regards women prisoners, gender-specific, medical screening upon admission to prison; and implement a comprehensive strategy to assist persons with drug-related problems. It also remains necessary to put in place a system of oversight by the Ministry of Health.

All the prisons visited held a significant proportion of prisoners having a mental health condition. All healthcare services included a full-time psychiatrist apart from Botoşani Prison. However, there were no clinical psychologists attached to these services, which meant that most of the prisoners did not have access to therapeutic interventions. The Romanian authorities should ensure that all prisons have appropriate input from a psychiatrist, clinical psychologists and, in due course, mental health nurses. Dedicated prison psychiatry units should be adequately staffed and able to offer a range of therapeutic options and structured activities tailored to the specific needs of the patients accommodated.

As for the use of means of restraint, the findings of the visit indicate that at Bucharest-Rahova and, to a lesser extent at Iaşi Prison, placements in padded cells (“protection rooms”) and instruments of mechanical restraint were used for punitive purposes. Steps are necessary to properly regulate placements in “protection rooms” as a measure of last resort, whereas the use of mechanical restraints in a prison setting should be immediately ended.

Turning to security measures, the use of tear gas spray in a prison setting should be reviewed; truncheons should no longer be routinely carried out by custodial staff in detention areas; and strip searches should, in all cases, be conducted in a manner respecting human dignity and intimacy.

In the four prisons visited, the disciplinary procedure appeared to be correctly conducted, and disciplinary solitary confinement was sparingly applied. However, the CPT recommends once again that self-harm and attempted suicide no longer be considered as disciplinary offences.

As regards contact with the outside world, the possibilities for video-conference calls installed during the Covid-19 pandemic have been expanded and new regulations have broadened the prisoners’ access to free video calls. The CPT reiterates that open visits for all prisoners should be the rule, with closed visits as the exception.

Detention facilities for children and young adults

The Romanian authorities are invited to reassess the location of the Educational and Detention Centres to take into account the place of origin of the children within the country, the best way to stimulate their reintegration into the community and the optimal catchment area to attract qualified staff to work with the residents.

In both Centres visited, the majority of residents spoke positively about staff. However, allegations of physical ill-treatment by security staff were received at the Craiova Detention Centre, including slaps and baton blows. At the Târgu Ocna Educational Centre, excessive use of force during interventions appeared to be an issue of concern. Effective investigations should be conducted into such alleged treatment and staff should be reminded that ill-treatment is illegal and unprofessional. Further, staff should receive training on the appropriate and proportionate use of force.

Inter-resident violence appeared limited and under control at Craiova Detention Centre. However, violence among residents in their rooms and in the yards appeared common in Târgu Ocna with allegations of sexual assaults also being made. The violence prevention policy should be urgently reviewed as well as room-share risk assessments of residents and the pedagogic and child-oriented approach enhanced.

The living conditions were acceptable in both establishments with residents being accommodated in collective rooms. However, at Târgu-Ocna, residents should be allowed to personalise their rooms, and the rooms should be better equipped. Further, the cage-like exercise yards at this establishment should be removed. The authorities are also invited to review the layout of establishments for children and young adults and move towards single-room accommodation.

At the Craiova Detention Centre, the applicable regime was commendable in terms of the number, variety and quality of activities, as well as life skills training. Education was central with the only integrated school in the country and 45 teachers assigned to the establishment. In contrast, the regime in Târgu Ocna was poorer, as educational and reintegration activities were limited. Both Centres were affected by a lack of staff, though the impact was more pronounced at Târgu Ocna.

The use of disciplinary measures generally seemed appropriate. The CPT welcomes that children in Educational or Detention Centres cannot be placed in solitary confinement as a disciplinary measure. However, it is regrettable that self-harm remained a disciplinary offence. Further, staff should stop carrying truncheons and handcuffs in detention areas, and the use of force and means of restraint should be reviewed at the Târgu Ocna Educational Centre.