

Information about the enforcement of sentences in Finland 06-06-2016 / Criminal Sanctions Agency (Rikosseuraamuslaitos, RISE)

This information sheet is designed to give you an overall understanding of the Finnish prison system. Each prison has specific characteristics, for example the regime structures or work opportunities may differ. However, this information sheet should give you some background information to the sort of support you can expect if you are a Finnish national or permanently living in Finland looking to transfer back to Finland.

What happens when I arrive at the prison?

Which prison will I go to?

When you return to Finland from abroad, you will be normally taken to Vantaa Prison at first. From Vantaa Prison, you can be transferred to a prison that is closer to your actual home town. The transfer decision is made by the Assessment Centre. You will be heard before the decision is made.

What happens when I get there?

- You will be taken to the reception area of the prison and may be held with other prisoners whilst you are waiting to be processed.
- You will be searched in the presence of a witness (arrival check).
- The arrival check includes the establishment and recording of identity, the recording of personal distinguishing marks, as well as the listing and checking of the property brought by the prisoner. Remember to write down all the necessary phone numbers from your phone during the reception.
- You will be given a prisoner number, which is unique to you.
- As part of the arrival check, staff will take your photograph, which will be logged on your file.
- During the arrival check, you may have to change on prison clothes in some situations.

Who will I meet?

- As part of the induction process, staff will tell you more about prison life and what you need to do. You can also ask about matters that concern you.
- On the arrival, you will be informed of prison conditions as well as your rights and obligations. Prison staff will give you a leaflet called Information for Prisoners and the Prison Rules. You can also find them on the notice board of your ward.
- Within 72 hours from your arrival, a member of health care staff will check your health.
- You will be taken to a cell where you will stay for the first few days. There may also be other prisoners, who have just started their sentences, in the same cell.
- You can also ask other prisoners to explain how the everyday life of the prison works.
- Depending on what time you arrive, you will meet other staff and be allocated a personal officer.

What happens to my property?

- You may possess a reasonable amount of private property in prison. The possession of an article, substance or your own clothes may be denied in some cases by the law. If you are not allowed to take a specific piece of property with you in your cell, you can request a written decision, which can be appealed. For example, some prisons have televisions in every cell in which case you cannot bring your own. All electronic equipment which the prisoner wish to take in to the cell will be thoroughly checked and the prisoner is responsible for the cost of this checking.
- A member of reception staff will make an inventory list of everything you have brought with you. Everything else will be kept in a safe place for you and you will get them back when you leave, except for anything dangerous or against the law.
- Your friends and family can also send or bring items to you. Ask the staff for further instructions.

Will I be able to make a phone call?

- You will be allowed to make a phone call and will be told about how to arrange for friends, family or a lawyer to visit you.

Visits

The prison has visiting hours when you can arrange your social visits (from family and friends).

Each prisoner has the right to accept visitors under necessary supervision at times reserved for visits as often as this is possible without causing detriment to the order and operations of the prison. A visit may be allowed also at times other than those reserved for visits if this is necessary with a view to the contacts of the prisoner or for another special reason.

The visit of a close relative, another close person and, where necessary, also of another person may be allowed unsupervised (*unsupervised visit*) if this is justifiable in order for the prisoner to maintain his or her contacts or for another corresponding reason and if the visit does not cause danger to the prison order or security or the safety of the prisoner or another person nor detriment to the operation of the prison.

On arrival, your visitor will usually have to leave their personal possessions (including jackets, handbags and phones) in a locker which is normally located at the entrance to the prison. The visitor will have a personal key to the locker. Visitors have to pass through a security check (similar to those at an airport) before being allowed enter into the visiting room. Supervised visits usually take place in a large visiting room where the prisoner and visitor sit either at a table or at a long counter.

Closed prisons organise special children's visits when the prisoner is able to spend time with children. During these visits, they are able to play together. These visits are applied for separately and the kinship has to be proven officially.

What will my cell be like?

Prisons have different types of wards with regard to their level of supervision and operations.

Prison staff will decide on your placement in a ward and a cell.

You may have to share a cell with another prisoner or prisoners.

The majority of cells have toilets. Showers are either in the cells or in the ward. You are allowed to use the shower every day. In most prisons, you also have a possibility to use the sauna. The cells are also equipped with internal phones which you can use to contact prison staff.

To contact other prison staff than the ones working in your ward, you need to fill in a general inquiry form. The forms can be found at your own ward and will be sent forward on a daily basis.

Healthcare in prison

The Prisoners' Health Care Unit is responsible for arranging the health care and medical treatment as well as medical rehabilitation in accordance with the medical needs of the prisoner. The Prisoners' Health Care Unit has hospitals and policlinics in the different units of the Criminal Sanctions Agency. The Prisoners' Health Care Unit operates under supervision of Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

If your illness or injury cannot be appropriately treated or examined in the Prisoners' Health Care Unit, you have to be temporarily transferred outside the prison for treatment or examination under necessary supervision.

If you are transferring from overseas and have a medical condition, you should consent to the transfer of your medical records from the country you are transferring from. If you come from a country or area of high risk of dangerous infections, tell it to the nurse already at the first meeting.

Prison Regime

Daily regimes or schedules in prisons vary, depending on the prison.

The prisoners are obliged to work, study, or participate in some other activity in prison. The goal of the different activities is to promote the prisoners' abilities to live without crime, i.e. to improve their working and functioning capacity as well as to support substance-free lifestyle.

Many prisoners get a chance to work while carrying out their sentence, for example handcraft, woodwork, metalwork or agriculture. Prisons have separate workshops and pay for the work. You can also work around the prison itself, doing roles in places such as kitchen, laundry or cleaning.

The prisons organise versatile education in co-operation with the educational institutions. The prisoners are offered vocational, orientating, and general education. University and polytechnic studies are available in form of distance learning. On certain conditions, the prisoners can also study in educational institutions outside the prison in the daytime. Studying outside the prison on a study permit is possible usually in open prisons. The educational institutions give the prisoners study certificates, which include no indication of that the studies were completed in prison.

Prisons also arrange courses to help prisoners get new skills, e.g. learning to read and write, use computers, develop their problem-solving and anger-management skills, whilst in prison.

All prisons have gym facilities that you will be able to access, depending upon the regime. Some prisons also have a sports hall or hobby room.

Where possible, church services, prayer meetings and other religious events are arranged in the prison in accordance with the needs of the prisoners. Prisoners are provided the possibility to meet the spiritual representative or other representative of their own religion. All prisons have premises suitable for the practice of religion. If your religion includes a special diet or a food restriction, you need to contact the prison staff or the prison health care by a general inquiry form as soon as possible after you arrive in prison.

Sentence Plan

An individual plan will be drawn up for you for the serving of the term of sentence, release and parole (*sentence plan*).

The sentence plan includes your placement and activities during the sentence term as well as possible probationary liberty under supervision, conditional release and permissions of leave. The plan will be supplemented with a release plan and a supervision plan well in advance of your probable release.

The sentence plan is drawn up in the Assessment Centre. More detail will be added to the plan in the prison where you are placed.

The plan can include referrals to offence focussed behaviour programmes such as anger management or sex offender treatment programmes.

It might also be identified that you need additional support dealing with issues such as drug/alcohol addiction and so you would be referred to the organisation within the prison to deal with this.

Closed or open prison

Prisoners serve their sentence either in a closed or an open prison. Prisoners, who are deemed to adapt to freer conditions than the conditions in closed prisons, are placed in open prisons. Prisoners placed in open prisons are required to commit themselves to abstinence from substances. Remand prisoners cannot be placed in an open institution.

In closed prisons, prisoners who wish so can also be placed in so-called contract wards where they commit themselves to abstain from substances and undergo necessary tests controlling their abstinence. In these contract wards, the abstinence is supported, among other things, with the help of various programmes. All closed prisons have a dog trained to detect narcotics. Even if you do not sign a contract for abstinence from substances, you may be tested. Your results need to be negative if you apply for an open prison transfer, permissions of leave and family visits.

Permission of leave

You may, on application, be granted a permission to leave the prison for a short period of time (*permission of leave*).

The purpose of the permission of leave is to support the prisoner to maintain his or her contacts, promote his or her placement in society, and decrease the detriment resulting from the loss of liberty.

How do I transfer to a different prison?

We understand that one of the reasons why you may wish to transfer back to Finland is to be closer to your family and friends, and the Criminal Sanctions Agency recognises the importance that these relationships may have on your resettlement and so will endeavour to make this process as simple as possible for you.

When placing prisoners in prison, the municipality of residence of the prisoner, the maintenance of contacts with his or her close relatives or other close people, his or her age, sex, state of health, the number of sentences passed, the earlier criminality of the prisoner and his or her own wish as well as the possibilities of his or her placement in the activity required in the sentence plan will be taken into account in accordance with the sentence plan. When making the decision on placement, also the possibilities of the prisoner to attend to matters relating to the enforcement of imprisonment in his or her own language will be observed.

You can be transferred to another prison. It depends on many factors such as if the transfer promotes the implementation of the sentence plan or is otherwise justifiable and it can be assumed that you will adjust to the conditions of the other prison. You can also request a transfer yourself.

A map of all the prisons in Finland has been provided on the last page of this guide.

Gradually towards freedom

Offenders sentenced to imprisonment will be released on parole when they have served two thirds of their sentence. If the offence was committed under the age of 21 years, the corresponding time is half of the sentence. Prisoners, who have not served a prison sentence within three years preceding the current offence, will be released on parole when they have served half of their sentence or, in case of a sentence imposed for an offence committed under the age of 21, when they have served one third of their sentence.

Conditionally released parolees are imposed a probationary period, which can last at most three years. The probationary period can include supervision, which is arranged and implemented by the community sanctions offices of the Criminal Sanctions Agency. If the parolees are found guilty of new offences during the probationary period, a court decides whether they also lose their parole.

Prisoners can be placed in probationary liberty under supervision outside the prison a maximum of six months before their release on parole. The prisoners are presumed to comply with abstinence from substances and other conditions of the probationary liberty. An implementation plan is prepared for probationary liberty. The compliance with the conditions of the probationary liberty is supervised in various ways.

Preparation for freedom

Besides the placement in an open prison, the prisoners can be given an opportunity to take responsibility and practise for normal life during the prison term by, among others, placing them in a release unit or a unit preparing for freedom. In the release unit, the main focus is on the intensive preparation for the transition to freedom both with support and independently. Intensive release measures are also carried out in co-operation with outside institutions.

Rights

The content of imprisonment is loss or restriction of liberty. The enforcement of imprisonment may not restrict the rights or circumstances of a prisoner in any other manner than that provided in the law or necessary due to the punishment itself.

Prisoners have rights, such as:

- protection from bullying and racial harassment
- being able to get in contact with a lawyer
- healthcare including support for a mental health condition
- spending in minimum an hour outside in the open air each day
- using the prison library.

What do I do if I have a problem?

In the first instance, you should find someone within the prison you can talk to. This might be a member of staff or another prisoner.

If you cannot find a solution to your problems in the prison, you can write and send a complaint, for instance, to the Region Centre of your criminal sanctions region or the Central Administration of the Criminal Sanctions Agency.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman also investigates complaints from prisoners.

There is a list of the main authorities supervising the operations of prisons and health care services on the notice boards of the prisons wards.

How do I contact the Criminal Sanctions Agency?

The Criminal Sanctions Agency is responsible for the enforcement of sentences in Finland. Criminal Sanctions Agency is also authorized authority in deciding of transfer of prisoner between Finland and EU / Nordic countries. It operates under the direction of the Ministry of Justice and implements the criminal policy defined by the ministry.

Criminal Sanctions Agency (RISE)

Central Administration

Lintulahdenkuja 4

00530 Helsinki

Finland

Telephone: (switchboard) +358 (0) 29 56 88500

Email: rise.kirjaamo@om.fi

Website: <http://rikosseuraamus.fi>

Questions related to transfer of prisoners: kvtp.rise@om.fi

PRISONS AND COMMUNITY SANCTIONS OFFICES 2016

PRISONS

1. Helsinki
2. Hämeenlinna
3. Jokela
4. Juuka
5. Kerava
6. Kestilä
7. Kuopio and Kuopio Release Unit
8. Kylmäkoski
9. Käyrä
10. Laukaa
11. Mikkeli
12. Naarajärvi
13. Oulu and Oulu Release Unit
14. Pelso
15. Pyhäselkä
16. Riihimäki
17. Satakunta (Köyliö and Huittinen)
18. Sukeva
19. Sulkava
20. Suomenlinna
21. Turku
22. Vaasa
23. Vanaja (Vanaja and Ojainen)
24. Vantaa
25. Vilppula
26. Ylitornio

COMMUNITY SANCTIONS OFFICES

27. Helsinki
28. Häme (Hämeenlinna ja Lahti)
29. Joensuu
30. Jyväskylä
31. Kouvola (Kouvola and Lappeenranta)
32. Kuopio (Kuopio, Iisalmi and Kajaani)
33. Mikkeli (Mikkeli and Savonlinna)
34. Oulu (Oulu and Kokkola)
35. Pori
36. Rovaniemi (Rovaniemi, Kemi and Kuusamo)
37. Tampere
38. Turku (Turku and Ahvenanmaa)
39. Uusimaa (Espoo and Vantaa)
40. Vaasa (Vaasa and Seinäjoki)

- CRIMINAL SANCTIONS REGION OF SOUTHERN FINLAND
- CRIMINAL SANCTIONS REGION OF WESTERN FINLAND
- CRIMINAL SANCTIONS REGION OF EASTERN AND NORTHERN FINLAND
- prisons
- community sanctions offices

