

Corps of Prison and Court Guard of the Slovak Republic

Measures adopted in relation to COVID-19

As of 20 March 2020

General information

At the country level

In connection with the occurrence of the first case of a person infected with the COVID-19 virus in the territory of the Slovak Republic, that was confirmed on 6 March 2020, *the Central Crisis Staff* met on that day. From its meeting came a number of measures to prevent the spread of the virus or slow down its progress.

On the basis of the proposal of the Chief Health Officer of the Slovak Republic, on 11 March 2020 the Government of the Slovak Republic declared *the Emergency Situation* in the whole territory of Slovakia in relation to the risk of spreading COVID-19. It is effective from 12 March 2020 and it means that the state is allowed to supply health care workers with protective equipment from the State Material Reserves, Slovak companies cannot sell such equipment abroad and similar. This situation does not interfere with the rights of people.

The Government of the Slovak Republic declared *the State of Emergency*, effective from 16 March 2020 for state hospitals, which was extended from 19 March 2020 to all health-related segments, regardless of the ownership. This implies an obligation for medical staff to ensure the exercise of health care and a ban on exercising the right to strike

The State of Emergency in the whole territory of Slovakia has not been declared yet (as of 20 March 2020).

Current measures in force in Slovakia:

- Prohibition of all visits to hospitals, social services homes, prisons; physicians shall be contacted by phone or electronically (in person only when necessary); prohibition of collective events (cultural, social and sport); cancelation of all foreign business trips and the acceptance of foreign delegations of all government departments; closure of aqua parks, ski resorts, entertainment venues, children's play areas, shopping malls and similar. An exception to these are drugstores, pharmacies and groceries shops, newsstands, banks, post offices, automobile maintenance services; restaurants are open only during lunch time and meals are only delivered;
- Suspended international train and bus transport through Slovakia, except for supplies. The operation of domestic trains is in holiday regime;
- The closure of all three international airports in Bratislava, Košice and Poprad for passenger transport. Private and cargo flights will not be limited;
- Border controls on all crossings (people are allowed to enter Slovakia only if they have permanent or temporary residence permit);
- The mandatory 14 days quarantine for all citizens who returned from abroad (a fine of 1650 EUR may be imposed on a citizen for failure to comply);
- The closure of all school and pre-school facilities, including universities, leisure associations;
- Prohibition of access to public transport vehicles, shops and similar services without protective equipment (mask and gloves).

At prison service level

The Security Council of the Corps met on 27 February 2020 and the Extraordinary Advisory Board of the Director General of the Corps took place on 28. February 2020 in relation to preventive measures in order to prevent spreading of the COVID-19. In this context, on 2 March 2020, a videoconference was held with all prison governors, that resulted in the establishment of the Crisis Staff at the level of the General Directorate of the Corps of Prison and Court Guard and the individual institutes.

In this connection, the Corps of Prison and Court Guard (hereinafter “the Corps”) adopted various preventive measures in order to prevent the spread of this disease. These measures were prepared and implemented already on 28 February 2020, still before confirmation of the first case in Slovakia. The measures are regularly updated in the view of development the situation in the country.

Furthermore, the Corps prepared a special internal regulation (Order of Director General, adopted on 7 March 2020) regulating anti-epidemic measures in connection with increased risk of an acute respiratory disease caused by the new COVID-19 virus in the Corps of Prison and Court Guard. More specifically, it regulates sanitation measures, measures of sanitary protection of persons, procedures in case of admission of inmates, control of persons entering prisons, tasks of the individual prison officers and medical staff, quarantine measures, tasks of the individual service sections (HR, justice guard, pre-trial and prison sentence execution, public procurement) and prison hospital.

Measures within the Corps

Among the most important are:

- All prison staff shall be informed in their prisons about obligations and restrictions that are related to their service tasks. In case a member of prison staff came from abroad or contacted person who were abroad, he/she shall inform his/her superior about this fact and also his/her personal physician that shall determine further procedure.
- At present, there are several inmates and prison staff who are in quarantine in compliance with the provisions of the Public Health Authority Measure when endangering the public health, issued by the Chief Health Officer of the Slovak Republic, due to their return from abroad or their admission to prison. The measure is the domestic quarantine for the prison staff and the isolation of the inmates concerned in prison facilities for 14 days.
- Individual prisons shall provide the hand disinfection for all prison staff as well as for prisoners performing the necessary activities within prison.
- Individual prisons shall ensure protective equipment for the prison staff in the form of face masks (Face masks are sewn from harmless materials in 7 prisons using inmates work. As of 18 March 2020, prisoners made more than 28 500 face masks that are gradually distributed).
- Other protective equipment is provided according to the specification of work that the particular person carries out in prison.
- Premises of prison facilities and motor vehicles shall also undergo disinfection.
- Germicidal lamps were purchased and placed to all prisons where are used for cleaning the premises (air and surfaces disinfection by UV radiation).
- Using of pre-trial detainees’ own clothes were temporary stopped because the Corps cannot verify its sanitary harmlessness.
- Prisoners’ requests for transfer to other prison facility were postponed in order to eliminate the possibilities of spreading the virus among prisons.
- Escorts (transfers) of inmates are carried out only when necessary.

Entering the facilities of the Corps

From 10 March 2020, the body temperature is measured to any person (including prison staff) entering any of the prison facilities. It is measured with contactless thermometer. The persons shall wear a face mask. The person who refused to be measured or his/her body temperature is more than 37.5 °C or has any symptoms of COVID-19 is not allowed to enter the prison facility. Prison staff shall also provide entering persons with the face masks, if they did not bring their own.

Procedure when admitting pre-trial detainees and prisoners

On admission of such person to prison, it is necessary to ensure:

- Entry medical screening shall be performed as soon as possible;
- In case there is no physician in prison in that time, authorised prison officer shall ensure the execution of personal search and measurement of body temperature;
- In case that the person has some symptoms of the disease (rhinitis, cough, sore throat, increased body temperature over 37 °C), the prison staff shall telephonically contact call centre of the respective Regional Health Care Office (phone numbers stated in the internal regulation) and proceed according the instructions of the operator in cooperation with the prison hospital;
- Each admitting person is placed in prison separately from the others for 14 days; during this period his body temperature is measured and such person is closely observed (preventive quarantine).

Inmates visits and contact

From 6 March 2020 all prison visits of inmates were stopped until further notice.

This is not applied for service official activities performed by criminal proceedings authorities (e.g. prosecutions, courts, police force and similar). The Corps contacted the agencies concerned (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Slovak Bar Association) and recommended them the limiting, respectively postponing the entry of representatives of the law enforcement agencies and performing such activities (visits) only when it is necessary for legal or other reasoned reasons. The measures regarding the entering the facilities of the Corps mentioned above are also applied to these agencies.

Due to cancellation of visits, the Corps wants to support the contact of inmates with their close persons and that in the form of making more phone calls and correspondence. In Slovakia, the costs connected with making phone calls are borne by inmates. In the view of above mentioned and after intervention of the Corps, the operator (company) providing telephoning for inmates, decided to provide one-time credit in the amount of 2 € (approximately 20 minutes of calling) to all inmates recorded in system of the Corps. Provided credit is valid from 17 March 2020 and inmates can use it until the time when the visits can be again performed. In case that the inmate does not use this credit, the rest of it shall not be paid to the inmate after his release from prison.

Work of inmates

On the basis of confirmed cases infected with the COVID-19, from 6 March 2020 there was stopped all inmates work carried out outside of the Prison Bratislava. From 13 March 2020 there is stopped also inmates work in external workplace that is in outskirts of Bratislava and is ensured by the Prison Hrnčiarovce nad Parnou. On 18 March 2020, 4 other prisons stopped operation of all external workplaces because of other obstacles (e.g. the lack of works for inmates in external workplaces due to anti-epidemic measures at the country level, the lack of protective equipment provided by cooperating entities and similar). *Remark: Slovak Prison Service has 18 prison facilities, including prison hospital.*

Other outside work of inmates placed in other prisons is on the decision of the particular Prison Governor, considering particular type of external workplace and possible risks.

In connection with inmates work and at current situation, various measures were approved and adopted, including following:

- The body temperature is measured to prisoners when leaving and arriving the prison and they are also provided with face masks or any other protective equipment necessary for works;
- In external workplaces out of prisons, there should be minimized the possibility of prisoners to be in contact with staff of cooperating entities (enterprises);

- In some cases, the Corps sold face masks to the cooperating entities, specifically to the staff that come into contact with prisoners;
- We also informed and asked cooperating entities for ensuring the disinfectants;
- The Corps shall intensively control the compliance with increased sanitary principles in external workplaces.

Service events

From 9 March 2020, there are cancelled until further notice:

- all service events and other events not work related in prison facilities and special-purpose facilities of the Corps,
- all events within international cooperation (foreign business trips and visits from abroad),
- all courses and training activities,
- prison tours.

Business trips and working meetings within Slovakia are limited and carried out only when it is necessary.

Measures connected with quarantine

Prison staff

The Corps shall ensure necessary measures and preparedness of our facilities (Therapeutic – Rehabilitation Centre in Omšenie, Therapeutic – Rehabilitation Centre in Kováčová, Training Facility in Santovka and parts of the accommodation premises of Training Centre in Nitra, as well as one part of the Accommodation Facility in Mlynská Dolina) for potential isolation and placement of the prison staff in the case of quarantine. For this purpose it is necessary to prepare adequate material-technical conditions, including preparing the sanitation plan.

For those who are not familiar with our facilities:

Centre in Omšenie and Kováčová and Facility in Santovka - are our special-purpose facilities that are used as venue for organisation of service meetings, trainings, family vacation during summer time and other similar events.

Training Centre in Nitra - is our training institute for all prison staff. It ensures courses, initial training and other education necessary for performing prison service tasks.

Accommodation Facility in Mlynská Dolina - is placed in our capital city Bratislava and its purpose is ensuring accommodation for prison staff from the General Directorate of the Corps, Prison Bratislava and for short stay of other prison staff, when necessary.

Due the fact that our measures stopped all service events not only in prison facilities but also in our special-purpose facilities (with exception of Accommodation Facility in Mlynská Dolina that is still partly in operation), the Corps plan to use them as the place of potential quarantine zone for the needs of our prison service.

Inmates

The Prison Hospital in Trenčín (hereinafter “hospital”) provides health care for accused and convicted persons from all over Slovakia. The hospital has taken preventive protective measures in relation to the serious epidemiological situation. Health care staff is provided with face masks and gloves as well as overalls and eye protectors. The hospital is committed to increased disinfection of the premises (chemical cleaning and the use of germicidal lamps) and increases the supply of medicines. The list of patients in the hospital is updated daily.

When the first case within the prison population will be confirmed, the hospital shall re-profile the pneumology and phthysiology beds to infectological beds. In the case of insufficient number of beds in these departments, other departments of the hospital will also be used. Stocks of preventive protective equipment, disinfectants and medicines will be increased for the period of three months. In the other departments of the

hospital only emergency medical care will be provided and the number of health care staff will be minimized for their safety.

The hospital will serve as a central workplace where inmates infected with COVID-19 will be transferred from all over Slovakia. As part of the epidemiological situation, the hospital cooperates closely with the Regional Health Care Office in Trenčín (e.g. sampling, patient and staff management, etc.).

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