

REPORT FOR EUROPRIS  
ON COVID-19 PREVENTIVE MEASURES

ALBANIAN PRISON SYSTEM

For more than two weeks, measures have been taken across the country to prevent the spread of COVID-19, strengthening health control, restricting the movement and transfer of vehicles and individuals, restricting gatherings, informing the public about symptoms, risk, protection, prevention etc.

In this context, assessing the high-risk prison environment for the spread of infections, the Ministry of Justice and the General Directorate of Prisons (GDP) have taken immediate action regarding informing senior management and all other levels on the risk, prevention and management of prisoners in emergency situations. A number of approaches has been taken such as:

▪ **Drafting and approving orders and instructions**

1. Normative Act No 7/2020 of the Council of Ministers on the granting of temporary permission to final sentenced prisoners to stay at home for a period of three months. More than 500 hundred prisoners of final court decisions have benefited.
2. Order No. 91, dated 09.03.2020 of the Minister of Justice “On the taking of measures in the Institutions for the Execution of Penal Decisions (IEPD) to prevent the spread of COVID-19”.
3. Order No. 92, dated 09.03.2020 of the Minister of Justice “On the taking of measures in the Institutions for the Execution of Penal Decisions to prevent the spread of COVID-19”.
4. Order No. 2729, dated 09.03.2020 of the Director-General “On the taking of hygienic-sanitary measures to prevent the spread of acute respiratory infections, including COVID-19”. virus (COVID-19)
5. Order No. 2846, dated 11.03.2020 of the Director General “On the Establishment of the Task Force on GDP and the Penitentiary Institution for the Implementation of COVID-19 Prevention Measures”
6. Order No. 2996, dated 14.03.2020 of the Director General “On, visits and inspections at the IEPD in the framework of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19”
7. Order No. 90, dated 14.03.2020 of the Minister of Justice “Taking measures for the establishment of quarantine infrastructure in the Prison Hospital”.
8. Order No. 103, dated 16.03.2020 of the Minister of Justice “On the approval of the plan of organizational and administrative measures for the smooth operation of the work and activity of the Ministry of Justice and its subordinate institutions, in the framework of preventing the spread of COVID 19
9. Order No.95, dated 10.03.2020, of the Minister of Justice “On Measures for Services at Counters”
10. Instruction No. 6, dated 19.03.2020 of the Minister of Justice “On measures to be taken for the quarantine service with a view to dealing with suspected cases of COVID 19 in the Institutions for the Execution of Criminal Decisions”

11. E-mails are sent almost daily to the IEPDs and the staff of the GDP (Task Force), with instructions on safeguards, inspection conclusions, tasks to secure the safeguards themselves, etc.

- **Implementation of the protocol**

Immediate measures have been taken for the equipment with protective means such as (masks, gloves, disinfectants, detergents, soaps, thermometer, etc.) of all employees who enter the regime of residence of convicts. It is estimated that on average every day 3,000 security personnel, basic and intermediate level, social workers, medical workers and other maintenance workers, cooking services, etc. are introduced into the living space.

Measures were taken to place protective and hygienic means at all IEPDs at entry points and implementation of health protocol.

Persons admitted to prison with security measure have been placed in observation rooms and monitored for 14 days.

At all duty shifts, security personnel and others are subject to health control, temperature measurement, interviewing, disinfection, and protective equipment.

In all penitentiary institutions, disinfection of living and outdoor areas is carried out constantly.

In all prisons, meetings with family members have been cancelled.

In order to maintain family contacts, 64 computers have been deployed in all institutions for Skype communication. On average, 45 video calls are completed per day (in a population of 5400 prisoners).

A procedure related to the management, implementation, security and planning of skype communication was sent to the IEPD.

Inspections have been carried out in all IEPDs, in most of them more than twice. Inspections were carried out by the Director General as well as other directors. In addition to GDP staff, inspections were also carried out by Ministry of Justice staff.

Inspections have affected the mobilization, motivation and immediate improvement of the situation.

- **Health situation**

As to 01.04.2020 data no symptoms associated with COVID-19 have been identified in prisoners, pre-trial detainees and prison staff.

The health staff has been assigned as the main structural body for the situation management. COVID-19 prevention protocols are applied daily, along with disinfections.

Chronic patients and the elderly prisoners are kept under constant control.

The staff was also kept under control, where they were checked during the assignment. Employees who have been identified with fever and who have had contact with returnees have been left at home and in co-operation with the family doctor and 127 have been examined without problems.

- **Security situation**

The General Directorate of Prisons has given clear instructions to pay special attention to security issues, such as

- Control of security elements
- Managing convicts' behaviour
- Obtaining information, evaluating and addressing it
- Identify any signals or concerns that affect security
- Behaviours and attitudes of dangerous convicts
- Vulnerable people, especially those with mental health problems and the risk of suicide

- **Psycho-emotional state**

Prisoners and pre-trial detainees have been informed of restrictive measures and have generally agreed to this situation without any reaction. It is understandable that their ability to adapt to constraints is higher than that of free people, as they are already isolated and only a few other constraints such as visits, lack of group activities, etc. have been added.

The level of complaints and requests has been low. There is a general concern but no panic. Mitigation measures such as skype communication have eased the tension of missing meetings.

- **Reports**

All IEPDs report on daily basis (twice a day on 8:00 am and 4:00PM) on the measures and the general situation

GDP, also reports on daily basis to the Ministry of Justice and the Prime Minister and to the GDPR Task Force

There is intense communication on whatsapp and email between members of the TASK Force of the GDP

- **Staff willingness to cope with the situation**

Prison staff are aware of the responsibility, mission and the risk. It is to be welcomed that in this difficult situation, but also in other situations such as the earthquake, prison staff have been highly mobilized and ready to respond to their duties without any complain.

There have not been any days of unjustified absences at work

No breach of security rules and procedures has been registered.

Transportation difficulties have been created and this has been overcome so far by collaborating with the employees themselves.

- **Inspections**

In the framework of measures to prevent the spread of COVID 19 inspections were carried out every day in all IEPDs.

The GDP has adopted a checklist, which is at the disposal of the inspection staff but also of the directorates themselves from time to time for self-audit.

***Checklist of issues to be inspected for COVID 19 spread measures***

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No.	Issues being inspected	Evaluation
1	<b>Information measures</b>	
1.1.	Employees of all services are informed about their duties, responsibilities, risk	
1.2.	Rules posted, warning posters, meetings documented, instructions given, etc.	
1.3.	Convicts and pre-trial detainees are informed about the rules of protection, restrictions, what to do and what not to do	
2.	<b>Protection measures</b>	
2.1	Employees who enter the facility are checked by a physician, temperature is measured, hands disinfected, instructed	
2.2.	Employees who enter the premises of convicts and pre-detainees are provided with masks, gloves, disinfect their hands	
2.3.	Is disinfection provided at entry points into the regime	
2.4.	Is there water, soap, detergent in the toilets	
2.5	Do visitors (lawyers, lawyers, etc.) who work inside the IECD wear masks?	
2.6	Are all persons entering inmates' premises, employees, visitors, etc. (temperature, signs of COVID-19) etc checked?	
2.7.	<b>State of hygiene; supply of detergents, cleaning tools</b>	
2.8.	Are the premises disinfected?	
2.9	Culinary hygiene, quality of cooking, storage of champagne, menu display etc.	
2.10.	Supply of medicines	
3.	<b>Evaluation and examination of new admissions and health screening</b>	
3.1	Accommodation of new entries in the observation Their number Their state of health Examinations Needs and risks assessment Facilities and equipment hygiene	
3.2	Conducted visits Suspected cases Hospitalized cases Chronically ill	
3.3	Staff health status Suspected cases Absence at work for disability Absence for other reasons	
4.	<b>Communication of convicts with family</b>	
4.1	Number of computers installed for video call	
4.2.	Number of skype communication requests	
4.3.	Number of people who have communicated with skype Number of cases	
4.4.	Number of video calls not realized	
4.5	Food received from family members Number of cases	

	Telephone communication with family members Number of cases	
5.	Security problems	
5.1	Management of activities, according to operating hours, exit entrance, sector change, room change	
5.2	Recorded incidents Among the convicts Convicted with staff Cases of aggression Suicide attempt Food refusal etc. Cases of stimulating destructive behavior Negative impact on others Spread panic Failure to comply with the requirements for preventive measures etc.	
5.3	Control of security elements, operation of cameras, control equipment etc.	
5.4	Control for entry and exit security Prevention of prohibited items	
6.	Psycho-emotional state Request complaints Time management Information about the situation Individual counselling Handled cases	
7.	<b>Documentary management of all work</b>	
	Service graphs Planning books on duty Persons assigned by the Task Force to stay in the IECD Task Force Meetings Reports etc.	