

Prison Service of the Czech Republic

Quick stats:

- **Prisoners:**
 - o Positive COVID-19 tests: 0
 - o In quarantine: 8
- **Employees:**
 - o Positive COVID-19 tests: 8 (7 prison officer, 1 civil servant)
 - o In quarantine: 54

Summary of measures and actions on fighting COVID-19

With first cases appearing in Italy, the Prison Service of the Czech Republic (PS) started declaring home quarantine (first 14-day, then it was changed to 7-day) for its employees coming from affected countries. Currently, when the borders are closed, everyone coming from abroad is ordered a 14-day home quarantine by the government.

Later on, the PS started taking body temperature at entries to all its facilities including HQ (daily, affecting all entering people – staff, prisoners, lawyers...).

- The threshold for not allowing entry is set to 37, 5°C

Prisons, personnel and protection:

- All prisons shall prepare isolation cells and rooms for potential cases of infected inmates or for newly admitted inmates;
- Prisons have stocks of food and other material to be able to run for at least a 30-day period without shipments of supplies;
- Prisons do not allow entry for anyone whose body temperature is above 37, 5°C;
- All prisons are equipped with respirators (FFP3 category), gloves, goggles and protective suits;
 - o Prison personnel serving at entry gates must wear the respirators. The respirators would also be worn by medical personnel in the case of infection among inmates.
- Personnel must wear a face mask all the time when at work.
- General disinfection of common spaces is done more frequently. Disinfection soaps are available.
- The Headquarters uses home office for most of its employees.

Face masks, other protective equipment and production:

- The Czech Prison Service (during the weekend 13-15 March) started to sew 100% cotton reusable face-masks and also some single-use face masks (now sewn also from nanofiber material).
- Each employee has 6 face masks and each inmate has 3 face masks at their disposal.
 - o Inmates have to wear face masks whenever they leave their cell.

- The face masks are being sewn in almost every prison (tens or hundreds face masks per day).
 - o There are 2 large-scale productions among our prisons (thousands of face masks per day).
 - o Single-use face masks are sewn from nanofibre material (around 10 000/day)
- We also produce plastic face shields for medical personnel (also for public hospitals). The shields are printed on Prison Service's 3D printers, normally used during vocational training of inmates.
- We have a small scale production of protective suits as well.

Prisoners, personnel and health checks (admission, medical treatment):

- Newly admitted prisoners shall be put into quarantine (isolation cells) for a 14-day period. If they show symptoms of COVID-19 during this time period, they shall be transferred to our prison hospital.
 - o The PS's prison hospital prepared its infectious wing for such inmates. The PS has its own infection-ambulance vehicles.
- However, if infected prisoners were found among the prison population already in prisons for longer time (not newcomers), they would be moved to regular public hospitals treating COVID-19 patients (in cooperation with public health authorities).
- All prisoner-newcomers or those from transfers are to be examined by physicians. In these cases, and all other (regular ones) where direct physical contact between prisoner-doctor is not necessary, physicians must perform the examinations from behind partition glass (i.e. consultations).
 - o Where the situation allows it, using Skype is also possible and supported (telemedicine). Preventive health-checks were postponed; same as non-urgent medical interventions. Doctors shall perform their duties in a minimal-number-of-staff-manner (doctor+nurse) to avoid the risk of contracting COVID-19 and spreading it to other medical personnel.
- **Covid-19 Tests**
 - o If there is a suspicion of Covid-19 among prisoners, the tests are being carried out as soon as possible by a regional public sanitary body, not the prison service.

Prisoners (visits, prison leaves and "compensation" measures):

- Since 14th March 2020, all family-and-relatives visits to prisoners have been cancelled for the time corresponding with the State of Emergency declared by the Czech Government and prolonged since then until 30 April.
- This does not affect prosecuting authorities – but they must submit to other conditions mentioned below.
- **Compensation for prisoners:**
 - o one extra parcel above the legal limit (mainly food items, up to 5kg);
 - o more time for phone calls;
 - o Skype video-visits;

- can use more money from their budget for purchases in prison canteen;
- more treatment programmes activities;
- more “outside time” (walking yards).

Prisoner transfers, visits of/procedures agreed with state organizations etc.:

- Prisoner transfers were limited to a necessary minimum related to security reasons only;
- Procedures were agreed with Police regarding inmates handed over to the PS by the Police and vice versa. The authority which is handing over the prisoner is always responsible for their health state and for arranging medical care (the respective authority – Police or PS – will not accept individuals with body temperature over 37, 5°C);
- The PS asked prosecuting authorities to thoroughly consider each individual case of their entry into prison and decide carefully if it is really needed to visit the prison. They are encouraged to use other means of communication instead (telephone calls / video calls).
- Courts and judges were asked to use videoconference options (possible in all 35 Czech prisons) as much as possible to prevent prisoner transfers to courts or judges coming into prisons;
- PS limited entry of all other external workers (Probation and Mediation Service personnel, members of Churches and so on) in order to limit the traffic between prisons and the outer environment.
- Prison-leaves (as a benefit to prisoners) have been cancelled for now.

Other:

- Ministry of Justice communicates with courts – where it is possible, courts shall postpone commencement of custodial sentences;
- Hand in hand with courts limiting their agenda and operation, a specific branch of PS personnel (Judicial Guards – serving at courts / MoJ / state prosecutor's offices as security officers) is considered to be used in regular prison operation to help prison officers;
- Naturally, all official international outgoing or incoming visits were cancelled indefinitely. In a similar manner, all excursions for school groups and other interested persons were cancelled.

*Mr Jiri Kawan
International relations, HQ
jkawan@grvs.justice.cz*