

Criminal Sanctions Agency

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Close relatives and children can visit prisoners as of 24 June

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The Criminal Sanctions Agency of Finland lifts the restrictions imposed due to the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, the enforcement of conversion sentences for unpaid fines and unconditional prison sentences will begin again as the use of the Emergency Powers Act was lifted in Finland on 16 June 2020.

The Criminal Sanctions Agency had to restrict the visits to prisons due to the coronavirus pandemic. The restrictions on the prisoners' right to receive visitors will be lifted gradually. At first, the prisons will allow supervised visits by the prisoners' close relatives and underage children as of 24 June.

The Criminal Sanctions Agency will review all instructions and restrictions issued based on the coronavirus. As the state of emergency was lifted, the restrictions will also be lifted because there are no longer grounds for them. The Criminal Sanctions Agency will decide on other restrictions concerning, among others, other visits and prison leave permits on Tuesday 23 July. All restrictions should be lifted by 1 July.

The decision on opening the activities arranged in prison was already made earlier.

The restrictions will be lifted without compromising on the prison safety and security. As the coronavirus still exists, the instructions issued to protect the prisoners and the staff will remain in effect.

The first restrictions to be lifted concern supervised visits by the prisoners' close relatives and underage children. In addition to the prisoner's own children, the underage children of the spouse living in the same household with the prisoner may visit the prisoner.

During the visits, particular attention is paid to sufficient distances and hand hygiene. In open prisons, visits may also be arranged outside if sufficient distances and supervision are maintained. During all visits, touching is absolutely prohibited.

The restrictions in the prisons have been extensive. Prison leaves have only been granted for particularly important reasons, such as the funeral of a close relative.

There have been no cases of coronavirus infections in the prisons. The preparedness group will monitor the coronavirus situation and the effects of the lifted restrictions in the prisons and community sanction offices and instruct the Criminal Sanctions Regions and the units. Prisons have many people who are especially vulnerable to the coronavirus.

Enforcement of conversion sentences for unpaid fines and unconditional prison sentences will begin

Since March, the number of prisoners has dropped by nearly 500. At the moment, Finnish prisons have approximately 2 100 prisoners of whom 239 are placed in probationary liberty under supervision.

There will be approximately 1 400 conversion sentences for unpaid fines in total to be enforced after lifting the restrictions.

Since the state of emergency and the use of the Emergency Powers Act were lifted on 16 June 2020, the enforcement of sentences can be started. The aim is to clear the backlog of enforcement cases in a controlled manner. The measures will be spread over a longer period of time within the limits of the law. The number of prisoner places and the resources available in the different phases

of enforcement will be taken into account. The possibility of spreading out the dates of reporting to prison and using the prison facilities nationwide allow more flexibility in this situation.

The enforcement processes, which were interrupted when the restrictions were implemented, will be continued and the enforcement processes of persons, who were sentenced during the restrictions, will be initiated. The revoked warrants of apprehension concerning prison sentences will be issued again on week 26 at the latest, and the warrants of apprehension of those who have not reported to prison can be issued now.

The safety of the staff and the clients will be taken into account in everything.

The Government decided to postpone the enforcement of new conversion sentences for unpaid fines and unconditional prison sentences by a separate Act until the end of July at the most due to the coronavirus pandemic. The aim was to restrict the admission of new prisoners to the prisons in order to minimise the effects of the coronavirus epidemic and prevent overcrowding in the prisons.

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