Criminal Detention in the EU Conditions and Monitoring

National Standard

Country	Detention Issues	Key provision	Legal Instrument	NPM Recommendation	NPM Recommendation year	NPM report URL
Finland	Time not in cells	Prisoners and those in police custody must be provided with the opportunity to spend at least an hour per day outdoors unless there is especially cogent reason against this based on a prisoner's health condition or maintaining prison order or security. Activities in prisons may include work, studies on different levels, substance abuse work and leisurely activities.	Imprisonment Act (Vankeuslaki/Fängelselag)	The NPM noted concerning police detention that only a few prisons have facilities for activities outside the cells. As a rule, the outdoor exercise yards at police prisons are small. Some of them are so enclosed and secure that there is no view outside and, for instance, tobacco smoke remains in the space for a long time. It is questionable whether being in such areas can be called outdoor recreation at all. Renovations are not considered unexpected exceptional circumstances that would justify limiting the right of persons deprived of their liberty to outdoor exercise. Cells do not usually get natural light and do not often have TV and electrical sockets. Concerning prisons, the NPM noted that in certain prisons, many units have been designated as substance-free units. To be accommodated in these units, prisoners must agree to give a urine sample whenever requested. In practice, this commitment is a prerequisite for being allowed to participate in an activity or live in an open unit. The NPM emphasised that prisoners who do not wish to commit to a substance-free life should also have the opportunity to participate in activities or be placed in an open unit. Accommodation cells had no night lights or reading lights. There were not enough facilities for children's visits or they were otherwise inappropriate for the purpose. The outdoor exercise area had no rain shelters or benches. The area was also too small considering the number of prisoners outside at the same time. A prison's ability to take in prisoners with mobility impairments seemed very problematic even though the prison should have a cell for persons with disabilities.	2016	http://www.oikeusasiamies.fi/documents/20184/76480/NPM+report+2016/6492da79-50eb-4037-b66c-0887cdaeca8a

Country	Detention Issues	Key provision	Legal Instrument	NPM Recommendation	NPM Recommendation year	NPM report URL
Finland	Time not in cells	Prisoners and those in police custody must be provided with the opportunity to spend at least an hour per day outdoors unless there is especially cogent reason against this based on a prisoner's health condition or maintaining prison order or security. Activities in prisons may include work, studies on different levels, substance abuse work and leisurely activities.	Imprisonment Act (Vankeuslaki/Fängelselag)	After the visit, the NPM asked the prison to provide a report on how many hours of activities the prisoners had attended in a certain week. The situation appeared to be quite good on weekdays, when the majority of prisoners spent more than eight hours per day out of their cells. In the weekends, however, the situation was clearly worse. In addition, the female prisoners' extremely poor ability to function set limits on their placement in activities. The Deputy-Ombudsman noted that open units were difficult to achieve merely by increasing the amount of activities. The Deputy-Ombudsman did not see why cell doors could not be open also when there was no organised or supervised activity going on in the unit (4653/2018).	2018	https://www.oikeusasiamies.fi/documents/20184/76480/NPM+report+2018/c2d8ea10-670c-4b14-8639-4fcd7fd9e241
Finland	Time not in cells	Prisoners and those in police custody must be provided with the opportunity to spend at least an hour per day outdoors unless there is especially cogent reason against this based on a prisoner's health condition or maintaining prison order or security. Activities in prisons may include work, studies on different levels, substance abuse work and leisurely activities.	Imprisonment Act (Vankeuslaki/Fängelselag)	The Ombudsman alerted the prison governing bodies to the fact that it is neither acceptable nor legal to keep prisoners inactive in their cells. The NPM report notes that this problem often comes from the lack of resources in prisons.	2020	https://www.oikeusasiamies.fi/documents/20184/39006/summary2020/2de02ec5-378a-4cf3-8948-89f346b2be3a
Finland	Time not in cells	Prisoners and those in police custody must be provided with the opportunity to spend at least an hour per day outdoors unless there is especially cogent reason against this based on a prisoner's health condition or maintaining prison order or security. Activities in prisons may include work, studies on different levels, substance abuse work and leisurely activities.	Imprisonment Act (Vankeuslaki/Fängelselag)	The Deputy-Ombudsman decided to investigate on his own initiative the opportunities of foreign prisoners to follow TV programmes (757/2019*). In his decision of 16 January 2020, the Deputy-Ombudsman asked the Central Administration Unit of the Criminal Sanctions Agency to investigate how easy it is for foreign prisoners to access international TV programmes in different prisons. He also asked the Central Administration Unit to find suitable ways for prisons to subscribe to foreign TV channels as soon as possible. The Deputy-Ombudsman asked the Central Administration Unit to report the measures taken by prisons. He also noted that he will pay attention to the access of foreign prisoners to foreign-language TV programmes on his future visits.	2020	https://www.oikeusasiamies.fi/documents/20184/42383/2020-fi/b5bc6780-d9cd-41a7-adb6-2f0a5dc29b5f

Country	Detention Issues	Key provision	Legal Instrument	NPM Recommendation	NPM Recommendation year	NPM report URL
Finland	Time not in cells	Prisoners and those in police custody must be provided with the opportunity to spend at least an hour per day outdoors unless there is especially cogent reason against this based on a prisoner's health condition or maintaining prison order or security. Activities in prisons may include work, studies on different levels, substance abuse work and leisurely activities.	Imprisonment Act (Vankeuslaki/Fängelselag)	The Ombudsman emphasised the importance of organising daily outdoor exercise [in detention and police custody facilities]. He stated that enabling adequate outdoor exercise is about taking care of the basic needs and also about respecting human dignity. Outdoor exercise of persons deprived of their liberty may be restricted only on grounds laid down by law. The Ombudsman is of the view that efforts should be made to arrange outdoor exercise to those persons deprived of their liberty who have been exposed to coronavirus by organising it at times when there is no one else in the common areas. In any case, outdoor exercise should be arranged at least to those whose deprivation of liberty lasts several days.	2021	https://www.oikeusasiamies.fi/documents/20184/39006/summary2021-final-web2.pdf/5db7cabe-7725-2976-c10d-5e0b25654651?t=1668780796307
Finland	Time not in cells	Prisoners and those in police custody must be provided with the opportunity to spend at least an hour per day outdoors unless there is especially cogent reason against this based on a prisoner's health condition or maintaining prison order or security. Activities in prisons may include work, studies on different levels, substance abuse work and leisurely activities.	Imprisonment Act (Vankeuslaki/Fängelselag)	According to the Deputy-Ombudsman, the obligations and objectives laid down in legislation as well as international recommendations on time and meaningful activities outside the cell were not sufficiently implemented in Kuopio Prison, even though the problem has already been known for a long time. At this point in the NPM visit report, reference was made to the prison action plan, which stated an almost continuous and already partly chronic shortage of human resources that is challenging especially for the supervising staff.	2021	https://www.oikeusasiamies.fi/documents/20184/39006/summary2021-final-web2.pdf/5db7cabe-7725-2976-c10d-5e0b25654651?t=1668780796307

DISCLAIMER The information presented here is collected under contract by the FRA's research network FRANET. The information and views contained do not necessarily reflect the views or the official position of the FRA.

http://fra.europa.eu/en/databases/criminal-detention/

Copyright © 2025 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights