

Women in Prison: Lithuania

Analysis from the National Preventive Mechanism

| August 2024



Lithuania



UNCAT Ratification	OPCAT Ratification
1 February 1996	20 January 2014
National Preventive Mechanism (NPM)	
Seimas Ombudspersons (Parliamentary Ombudspersons of Lithuania)	
NPM legal framework	NPM operationalisation
Law on the Seimas Ombudspersons No VIII-950 (3 December 1998) and its amendments No XIV-1997 (25 May 2023)	Since 2014
NPM structure	NPM composition
Human Rights Division within the Office of the Seimas Ombudspersons	6 staff members (4 women)

I. Facts and Figures

Prison population	Women in prison - Characteristics	Prisons for women	Prison staff
Total prison population	Foreign women	Total number of women’s prisons	Prison staff in women-only prison ¹
4,548	5	5	107
Women in prison (total)	Pregnant women	Women only prison ²	Women prison staff in women-only prison
216 4.75%	3	1	85
Women serving a sentence	Roma women ³	Mixed prisons with special unit for women ⁴	
180	46	4	
Women in pre-trial detention			
36			
Source: Lithuanian Prison Service, 31 July 2024	Source: Lithuanian Prison Service, 31 July 2024	Source: Lithuanian Prison Service, 31 July 2024	Source: Lithuanian Prison Service, 31 July 2024

¹ Panevėžys prison

² Panevėžys Prison

³ Information gathered by the Lithuanian NPM during the visit conducted to Panevėžys Prison on 9-11 January 2024.

⁴ Vilnius prison; Kaunas prison; Šiauliai prison; Pravieniškės 2nd prisons unit which provides personal healthcare services.

II. Recommendations

Access to healthcare

- + Increase access to personal health care in prison by increasing access to medical appointments and timely personal health care services, including preventive examinations for women through preventive programmes.

Mental health

- + Ensure the availability of psychological services tailored to the individual needs of all inmates, to address the shortage of psychological services in Panevėžys Prison (either by recruiting more psychologists on a contract basis or by organising psychological services in other ways), and to undertake measures to ensure that all inmates' psychological needs are re-assessed, that all inmates are provided access to quality psychological services tailored to their individual needs regularly, and that the prison's staff is regularly reminded of the methodical assistance provided by the prison psychologist.

Life in prison: regime and activities

- + Ensure quality employment activities for inmates, address the lack of human resources (by recruiting and attracting more officers or staff responsible for organising and implementing employment) and take measures to organise and implement employment activities that respond to the needs of inmates belonging to groups in situations of vulnerability (other nationalities, elderly persons, foreign inmates and inmates with disabilities etc.).

III. Detention Issues

Access to mental healthcare

The psychologist is involved in the initial assessment of all new prisoners in terms of their internal risks (history of violence, tendency to violence, suicidal attempts or thoughts, etc.), emotional state (anxiety, guilt, hopelessness, appetite changes, anger, hostility, depression, sleep disturbances, etc.), marital status and other circumstances relevant to adaptation (substance use, bereavement, anxiety, interpersonal relationships, health, financial problems, etc.) in an assessment to identify the person's difficulties in adaptation, carry out a psychosocial assessment and complete a questionnaire. A simplified version of this questionnaire is also available in English, Russian and French.

A reassessment of the psychological services of convicted persons shall only be carried out when the psychologist finds, during the initial assessment, that the person tends to self-harm or has suicidal thoughts and/or intentions. In this case, the person shall be monitored according to an individual monitoring schedule. The assessment of the randomly selected individual workbooks with the inmate shows that if the inmate in the institution has self-harmed, attempted suicide or expressed such thoughts, the responsible staff member of the Resocialisation Unit shall make a suggestion in the certificate/recommendation on the specifics of the inmate's supervision, inter alia, to intensify the individual supervision of the sentenced person, to apply complex psychological, medical and social assistance, and to inform the members of the institution's Crisis Management Team in the event of any significant changes in the behaviour or mood of the sentenced person.

The assessment of the randomly selected prisoners' resocialisation plans revealed that, following an initial assessment of the inmate's internal risk, the initial assessment of the inmate's internal risk revealed suicidal ideation and severe emotional state and placed the inmate on the register of

prisoners at risk of self-harm or suicide attempts, and placed them at a very high level of risk. The psychologist recommends that measures be taken to ensure the inmate's safety and that she be provided with the necessary comprehensive assistance (psychiatric, psychological, etc.). The psychologist shall periodically monitor and reassess the risk of the non-convicted person on the register.

An assessment of the data from the logbook of individual admissions to a specialist of the Resocialisation Unit for the year 2023 showed that all the inmates who had self-harmed, and 7 out of 9 inmates who had suffered violent bodily injuries in the institution caused by intentional acts of the detainee or the convicted person, were given counselling from a psychologist. A psychiatrist's assistance is provided only if the inmate requests it.

Thus, unless it is established that a person has self-harmed or attempted suicide while serving a sentence, no reassessment of the psychological/emotional state and need for psychological services of other prisoners is carried out.

At the time of the NPM inspection in January 2024, Panevėžys Prison had one psychologist on staff and two psychologist posts were vacant. The prison administration informed that volunteer psychologists are used to at least partially meet the need for psychological support for inmates. Methodological support is organised by the Prison Service for the staff of the prison. Emotional support is provided to inmates, if necessary, by the staff of the Resocialisation Unit, by a member of the prison staff with a degree in psychology, but who does not officially perform this function, and by a case manager who works with inmates with addictions.

However, both the administration of the institution, the psychologist working there and the inmates interviewed during the inspection acknowledged that the availability of psychological services to inmates in the institution is not sufficient.

Panevėžys Prison has a part-time mental health nurse but, at the time of the NPM visit, it was vacant, and there is no psychiatrist in the institution, so inmates are referred to a psychiatrist working at Pravieniškės Prison No. 2 (hospital) as needed.

An information notice on free emotional support by telephone was posted in the tele-dating and telephone room and in the corridors of the accommodation blocks, where inmates were allowed to call the numbers indicated (the Hope Line, the Youth Line, the Silver Line and the Women's Helpline) twice a week for at least 60 minutes. However, calls to the mentioned helplines cannot be made under privacy conditions, as the phones are hung up in common areas where they can be heard by unauthorised persons, and, according to the inmates interviewed, they do not seek emotional support by telephone for this reason.

At the time of the inspection, the prison did not have a rehabilitation centre for inmates with alcohol or drug addiction. The staff said the centre had been closed due to a lack of human resources. At the time of the inspection, the prison's medical unit had one case manager who was able to assist inmates with addictions on an as-needed basis. The inmates interviewed who were addicted to narcotic drugs stated that they were attending a methadone programme but only because they had no other choice. They would like to give up this programme and fight their addiction by completely giving up all substances, but they cannot do so because they are not sure whether they would receive the necessary support (physical and mental health care and social activities) and assistance from the prison staff, as there is no longer a Rehabilitation Centre. With the methadone programme being the only option, the inmates feel a great deal of anxiety and dissatisfaction with their current state, which contributes to the deterioration of their psychological well-being.

During the NPM inspection, it was found that the psychologist (crisis management specialist) of the Resocialisation Unit of Panevėžys Prison carries out an initial assessment of all newly-arrived inmates, and during the initial assessment she verbally informs the inmates of the possibility of contacting the

institution's psychologist as required, provides individual counselling and support to inmates, participates as a crisis management specialist in the activities of the Crisis Management Team and provides counselling to inmates in suicidal crisis and suicidal tendencies. However, due to the lack of human resources and the workload, the psychologist working in Panevėžys Prison is not able to perform other functions. For example, the psychologist does not provide methodological and practical assistance (awareness on mental health) to inmates, relatives of inmates, officials and employees of the institution within the scope of competence and does not conduct group psychotherapy or psychoeducation sessions. However, sometimes invited persons conduct conferences in the institution.

Prisoners can participate in three programmes approved by the Prison Service: an art therapy programme, a social skills programme, and an adaptation programme. The adaptation programme is offered to all new arrivals, the art therapy programme is offered once a week to a group of no more than eight inmates, and the social skills programme was recently completed by a group of fifteen inmates. The prison administration noted that it is impossible for the prison to include more inmates in these programmes and to run more approved programmes and group psychotherapy sessions for inmates due to a lack of human resources.

Inmates with addiction problems are offered to join an anonymous group of people with addiction problems and are counselled by a case manager, who is assigned to the institution. However, the inmates interviewed during the inspection regretted that their participation in this anonymous group is formal, as they do not feel any real benefit from it, and that it is impossible to ensure the anonymity of the persons participating in the group, as both the inmates and the institution's staff are still aware of who is participating in the group.

The staff interviewed during the inspection indicated they had not received training recently that included a gender perspective to be able to identify when women may feel distress and respond to women's needs and refer to specialised support.

Access to healthcare

Prisoners' access to all necessary and timely personal health care services, including preventive examinations for women under the preventive programmes, is insufficient, as there is no flexible access to a family doctor. For example, breast cancer screening requires a referral from a family doctor and a mammogram at the Panevėžys polyclinic, but proactive information about this and other women's health screening programmes is not provided due to limited access to a family doctor. The family doctor in Panevėžys Prison works on a part-time basis and sees inmates once a week: two days a month, she comes to the prison, and the other two days, she consults inmates from a distance.

Life in prison: regime and activities

A lack of social activities has been noted due to a lack of human resources. Inmates interviewed who do not have harmful habits (addiction to alcohol or psychoactive substances) and who are not interested in spiritual activities stated that there is a lack of social activities. Having assessed the records of the Resocialisation Unit's logbook of individual appointments with a specialist in 2023, it has been noted that, during the consultations with the staff, the inmates have emphasised that the lack of activities harms the inmates' psychological well-being and leads to psychological problems, such as anxiety, uncertainty, the urge to run away, to engage in activities that are harmful to health.

IV. Women in special situations of vulnerability

Women with disabilities

At the time of the NPM inspection, the prison's activities areas (gym, assembly hall, outdoor exercise area, chapel, three libraries, production workshop) and most of the other facilities were inaccessible to persons with reduced mobility. Although at the time of the inspection there were no prisoners with disabilities and no prisoners using wheelchairs or other mobility aids, this does not negate the fact that the premises were not accessible.

Foreign women

The two libraries in the prison contained books and relevant printed materials (legal, philosophical, scientific, and fiction literature) that were also available in foreign languages, Russian and English, and were therefore also suitable for foreign women prisoners who knew these languages.

Women belonging to ethnic minorities

Roma women

The Roma inmates interviewed by the NPM during its visit stated that they were satisfied with the prison's opportunities to study and work, felt safe in their work environment, and did not receive any bullying from other inmates or staff. Prison staff also stated that they try to motivate Roma inmates to pursue education and work and that the Roma inmates present in the prison are keen to engage in work and study activities. The inspection revealed that the specialists of the Re-socialisation Unit, considering the intersectionality of the characteristics of the groups in situations of vulnerability and the inmates belonging to them (nationality and age), plan to organise computer literacy training courses for older Roma inmates.

V. Alternatives to detention

Panevėžys Prison has a home for children and mothers inside and outside the premises. The child and mother's home at Panevėžys Prison shall be inhabited by mothers raising children to the age of three years, who may be transferred to the child and mother's home outside prison premises, taking into account the child's best interests. Such transfer may be extended annually under the procedure laid down in Article 71 of the Code of Execution of Penalties, but no longer than the child's eligibility to be enrolled in a primary education programme.

The establishment and operation of the child and mother's home in the place of detention shall be governed by the internal rules of procedure of the penitentiary institution. Although the child and mother's home outside prison premises is formally an open-type place of detention (practically is a semi-open type of place of detention since not all women meet the criteria for an open-type place of detention)⁵, women do not wear ankle bracelets (digital monitors) and may go out into the city, work and study according to pre-agreed and approved routes. Thus, the possibility of serving a sentence in the child and mother's home outside prison premises is also available to women, if not a child, who would have to serve their sentences under a closed or semi-open regime.

⁵ Mothers who do not qualify for transfer to an open-type prison are moved to a child and mother's home outside the prison in the best interest of the child. This helps avoid the situation where the child must be handed over to relatives or placed in the care of a foster parent at the age of three. Instead, the child can live with the mother and be under her care.

The rules governing admission to halfway houses are standard for both men and women. They are regulated by Article 37 of the Code of Execution of Penalties and by a Description of the procedure for the preparation and submission of documents for transferring prisoners from one place of detention to another and modifying the conditions of detention imposed on them⁶, and Description of the operation of a specialised open-type place of detention⁷. Still, the percentage of women inmates queuing to enter a halfway house is proportionately lower than that of men, so more of them are admitted to halfway houses.

VI. Other relevant NPM information on women in prison

+ Lithuanian NPM, [Report of the visit to Panevėžys prison](#), January 2024

This report is part of the Global NPM report on Women in Prison.
Access the full report here: www.apt.ch/global-report/

⁶ Approved by the Director of the Lithuanian Prison Service by decree No V-85 of 7 February 2023.

⁷ Approved by the Director of the Lithuanian Prison Service and the Director of the Lithuanian Probation Service by decree of the Lithuanian Probation Service of 30 June 2023, No V-497/V-163.