

# Corps of Prison and Court Guard of the Slovak Republic

## Measures adopted in relation to COVID-19

Update as of 10 June 2020

### General information

#### At the country level

- The first case of a person infected with the COVID-19 virus in Slovakia was confirmed on 6 March.
- In this connection, the Government of the Slovak Republic declared *the Emergency Situation* (effective from 12 March) and *the State of Emergency* (effective from 16 March). Despite of a gradual decrease of positive cases, this state is still in force (as of 10 June), but currently it is reassessed. According to our legislation the State of Emergency can last no longer than 90 days (it should end on 14 June). From the end of the State of Emergency in the country, further mitigation/release of measures in the prison service will take place.
- On the basis of the favourable epidemiological situation in Slovakia, the Government of the SR introduced 4 phases of the coronavirus measures release, while phase no. 1 was launched on 22 April. Each of these phases releases some of before imposed restrictions/ preventive measures, with their originally expected launch two weeks apart.
- From 20 May, Slovakia is already in phase no. 4. However, it should be noted that some of the preventive measures are still in place, such as wearing face masks indoors; prohibition of mass events over 500 persons; compulsory hand disinfection when entering interiors; observing the preventive sanitary measures; shops are closed on Sundays, considered as sanitary days (with exceptions), etc.

#### At the prison service level

- With the outbreak of the epidemic, the Corps of Prison and Court Guard (hereinafter “the Corps”) adopted various special anti-epidemic measures in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These measures follow conclusions of the Central Crisis Staff, measures and guidance adopted by the Public Health Authority of the SR and the Crisis Staff of the Ministry of Justice of the SR. The measures are regularly updated in the view of development of the situation in the country.
- Following the favourable situation in the country, the Corps prepared a special internal regulation (Order of the Director General) regulating adopted measures in the Corps in connection with decreasing the intensity of the epidemic of the COVID-19 in the SR (in force from 21 May). It regulates the sanitary procedures of the prison premises, sanitary measures, procedures in case of admission of inmates, control of persons entering prisons, tasks of the individual prison officers and prison medical staff, quarantine measures, tasks of the individual service sections (HR, justice guard, pre-trial and prison sentence execution, public procurement) and prison hospital.
- Moreover, the Advisory Board of the Director General meets regularly and videoconferences with Prison Governors are held on regular basis.

### Currently valid preventive measures in prison facilities

Among the most important are:

- Compulsory wearing of face masks in prison facilities (prison staff; inmates when out of cell/room);
- Washing hands and hand disinfection using alcohol based products;
- Social distancing of more than 2 metres (if service performance allows that);

- Using other personal protective equipment by prison staff (facemasks, gloves, respirators, eyes protectors, protective suits and footwear) according to the specification of work that the particular person carries out in prison;
- Increased emphasis on the disinfection of the premises of prison facilities and motor vehicles;
- Temporary suspension of wearing one's own clothes by pre-trial detainees (due sanitary harmlessness);
- Using germicidal emitters for cleaning the premises (air and surfaces disinfection by UV radiation).

### **Entering the facilities of the Corps**

From 10 March, the body temperature is measured to all persons (including prison staff) entering any of the prison facilities with contactless thermometers. The persons have to wear a face mask. The person who refuses to be measured or his/her body temperature is higher than 37.0 °C or has any symptoms of COVID-19 is not allowed to enter the prison facility. Prison staff serving at entries is equipped with personal protective equipment (face masks, gloves and in case they are in contact with another person more than 15 minutes, also eye protectors).

### **Admission of inmates**

On admission it is necessary to ensure:

- Entry medical screening shall be performed as soon as possible;
- In case there is no physician in prison in that time, an authorised prison officer shall ensure the execution of personal search and measurement of body temperature;
- In case the person has some symptoms of the disease (rhinitis, cough, sore throat, increased body temperature over 37 °C), the prison staff shall telephonically contact the call centre of the respective Regional Public Health Authority (phone numbers stated in the internal regulation) and proceed according to the instructions of the operator;
- Each admitted person is placed in prison separately from the others for 14 days; during this period his/her body temperature is measured and such person is closely observed (preventive quarantine);
- In case a person is from abroad, it is necessary to ensure taking samples for the COVID-19 test (from 6th to 11th day after admission of such inmate).

### **Taking samples for COVID-19 tests**

The Corps does not have a uniform procedure for taking samples of inmates for COVID-19 tests. Prison medical staff does not ensure taking samples for these tests. Some prisons carry out escorts of inmates to hospitals (infectious clinic) in order to get them tested, others use a Mobile testing unit for testing (a mobile ambulance/another vehicle adapted for taking samples) that ensures sampling. In case the inmate has a positive result of the COVID-test, he/she is immediately transferred to our Prison Hospital in Trenčín for further treatment.

### **Inmates visits and contact**

- From 6 March all prison visits of inmates were suspended until further notice. This prohibition of visits is still in force (as of 10 June).
- In order to eliminate the negative impact of cancelling visits, the Corps has already adopted various compensation measures – provision of one-time phoning free credit in the amount of 2 € (approximately 20 minutes of calling) to all inmates; the requirement of inmates to pay claims in order to purchase a credit for making phone calls was cancelled (*note: generally, inmates can purchase credit for making phone calls only up to the amount of their paid claims*); inmates were allowed to make phone calls more often.

- From 15 May, with the support the Minister of Justice of the SR, a project of **video-visits** for inmates with other persons was launched (close persons, other inmates) using tablets via Skype application. It is necessary to say that inmates have no legal right to them. Currently, inmates have the video-visits for free. **Conditions:** inmates can ask for a video-visit at least once per month for 20 minutes; juveniles and prisoners in open units once per week for 20 minutes; a maximum of 5 persons can be present during video-visit (this does not apply to persons younger than 15 years); prison officers perform surveillance.
- The suspension of visits does not apply to service official activities performed by criminal proceedings authorities (e.g. prosecutions, courts, police force and the like), defenders or advocates. The Corps contacted the agencies concerned (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Slovak Bar Association) and recommended them to limit or postpone the entry of representatives of the law enforcement agencies apart from cases when it is necessary for legal or other reasoned reasons. In case they are not allowed to enter the prison, a written confirmation on prison entry refusal is issued that states the reason why the contact with an inmate was not allowed.

#### Restoration of standard visits for inmates

- As of 10 June, the prohibition of standard inmates visits is still in force but their restoration is planned from 1 July;
- **Conditions:** one inmate can receive a visit of a maximum of 3 persons (including children); visit can last up to 1 hour; for now it would be only contactless visits – plexi-glass separation; invitation to visit of inmate will include also instructions on new rules for visit with connection to COVID-19;
- Visitors – their body temperature will be measured before entry (person over 37 °C will not be allowed to enter); they must wear face masks and perform hand disinfection; they must keep social distance and avoid any physical contact with inmate;
- After each visit – visiting premises will be disinfected using disinfectants and also with the use germicidal emitters (radiation at least 20 minutes);
- Video-visits will be an alternative to “restricted standard visit”, i.e. the video-visit can be realised by any inmate who decides, on the basis of any reason, not to make use of the possibility of the standard visit under these restricted conditions; in justified cases, the Prison Governor may allow video-visit in addition to the standard visit.

#### Work of inmates

On the basis of the confirmed COVID-19 cases, as of 9 March the inmates work in external workplaces (out of prisons) was gradually suspended in the places of high occurrence of confirmed cases or due to other obstacles (e.g. the lack of work for inmates due to anti-epidemic measures at the country level, the lack of protective equipment provided by cooperating entities and the like).

Prison Governors can decide on suspension of working activities of inmates in external workplaces, considering the particular type of external workplace and possible risks.

During the pandemic, the inmates were involved in the production of personal protective equipment in the internal workplaces in various prisons (these were distributed to prison staff, inmates but also to state agencies). Given a sufficient number of these products, the production was finished on 22 May with the final number of 295 263 produced face masks and more than 1000 protective suits.

Inmates also carried out an assembly of protective shields. Due to the favourable epidemiological situation in the country, the numbers of inmates working outside of prisons have increased again.

### Service events

From 9 March the following has been cancelled until further notice:

- all service and other events realized in prison facilities and special-purpose facilities of the Corps – partially restored from 6 May;
- all events within the international cooperation (foreign business trips and visits from abroad),
- all courses and training activities - partially restored from 6 May; from the middle of April we have started to provide certain education/training for prison staff also by alternative form – distance platform;

Further restoring or allowing service events in their full capacity will depend on the epidemiological situation in country.

### Measures connected with quarantine

#### Prison staff

The Corps ensured all necessary measures and preparedness of our facilities (Therapeutic – Rehabilitation Centre in Omšenie, Therapeutic – Rehabilitation Centre in Kováčová, Training Facility in Santovka and parts of the accommodation premises of Training Centre in Nitra, as well as one part of the Accommodation Facility in Mlynská Dolina) for potential isolation and placement of prison staff in the case of quarantine. From 21 May, only the Centre in Kováčová and the Centre in Omšenie serve for this purpose.

*Remarks: the Centre in Omšenie and Kováčová - are our special-purpose facilities that are used as venue for organisation of service meetings, trainings, family vacation during summer time and other similar events.*

#### Inmates

The Prison Hospital in Trenčín provides the health care for accused and convicted persons from all over Slovakia. The hospital has taken several preventive protective measures in relation to the serious epidemiological situation. Currently, the hospital serves as a central workplace where inmates infected with COVID-19 are transferred from all Slovak prisons. As a part of the epidemiological situation, the hospital cooperates closely with the Regional Public Health Authority in Trenčín (e.g. sampling, patient and staff management, etc.).

### Measures currently released in relation to inmates

- transfers of inmates between prison facilities
- coordinated group activities of inmates in adequate extent – education, leisure activities, cultural and awareness-raising activities, sports of inmates also with participation of external entities;
- restored operation of libraries, reading rooms, gyms and other rooms for collective activities;
- numbers of inmates working outside of prisons have increased;
- restoration of some disciplinary rewards (extraordinary visit permission, extraordinary prison leave, extraordinary permission of the parcel admission);
- restoration of worships;
- restoration of walks outside prisons;

### Changes and measures that have arisen in connection with COVID-19 and that are planned to stay in force after the end of the pandemic:

- in the future, the Corps will consider submitting a proposal for a change of the legislation of the SR in order to supplement there the institute of video-visits of inmates;
- Ensuring the necessary stock of protective face masks and personal protective equipment in the Central Storage of the Corps – for the possibility of fast implementation of preventive measures

- in case of appearance of epidemics related to diseases for which there is currently insufficient mass immunity within the population (e.g. coronavirus, flu, measles, pertussis, etc.);
- Increased use of germicidal UV-C emitters in places with increased exposure of persons from the external environment or in the premises with mass movement of inmates (e.g. visiting rooms, premises of mass catering, etc.) – in order to reduce the spread of infectious diseases;
  - Increasing the numbers of nurses or rescue workers in the Corps - for ensuring a greater access of inmates to health/nursing care and better diversification of prison medical staff during epidemics;
  - Retrofitting the prison hospital with necessary equipment (vital signs monitors, oxygen therapy equipment) - to improve the accessibility of specialised health care for inmates;
  - Ensuring stocks of fast diagnostic tests for COVID-19 - in case of the 2nd wave of the COVID-19 pandemic;
  - Preparing and ensuring the fast availability of Sanitation plan of individual prison facilities and quarantine centres; Crisis plan for the prison hospital in case of pandemic; Plan for the transformation of selected accommodation facilities of the Corps into quarantine centres.

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