

# INFORMATION SHEET FOR SWEDISH PRISONERS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

---



**KRIM:  
VÅRD**

**WE BREAK THE VICIOUS CIRCLE**



Kriminalvården

This information sheet is designed to give you an overall understanding of the prison system in Sweden. Each prison will have specific differences for example there might be different work opportunities, but this should give you a bit of background information to the sort of support you can expect if you are a Swedish national, looking to transfer back to Sweden.

### 1. WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT THE INSTITUTION

The first thing that happens when you arrive at an institution is that you are registered. On registration, you will receive all the clothes you will need at the institution. You are not allowed to use your own clothes. The institutions allow you to take certain private things to your room, for example photos.

#### Information

After you have registered you will be taken to your unit and your room. The room is also called a cell. There you will be given information on everything you need to know during your time at the institution. You are usually allowed to make a first phone call to someone close to you to say that you have arrived at the institution. You will also be given a special contact person who is one of the warders on the staff. The contact person is the person who handles whatever needs to be dealt with during your time in prison. The contact person is also the person who prepares you for the time when you are released.

### 2. VISITS

As an inmate at an institution, you are entitled to receive visits.

#### Who is allowed to visit me?

Family, relatives and friends may visit you. Each visitor must be approved by the institution. The institution checks for example whether the visitor has committed any crime and is on the criminal register.

#### Can my children visit me?

Visitors under 18 are welcome to visit provided they have written permission to do so from the person who has custody of them. Normally they must be accompanied by an adult.

#### How do I arrange a visit?

The person who is to visit you must first supply personal details to the institution. The institution will check who the visitor is and whether for example he/she is on the criminal register. The visitor will receive a letter at home stating whether approval has been granted and specifying the permitted visiting times. The visitor may then ring the institution to book a

time. You can find the visiting hours for the institution by checking the institution's website.

#### What are the visitors allowed to bring?

Institutions vary in what they allow visitors to bring. Contact the institution you intend to visit to find out the details of what is permitted. Food and drink are usually prohibited. Books and newspapers and money are usually allowed.

#### What happens at a visit?

The visitor must be able to show proof of identity. The visitor can be searched before the visit. Sniffer dogs may be used when the visitor is being searched. You yourself will be searched before and after the visit.

#### Further information on visits

Visitors may come at special visiting times. The visiting time lasts for an hour or a couple of hours. Visitors who come from further afield may visit you for half or a whole day. At closed institutions you may meet the visitor in special visiting rooms. At some large institutions there are special visiting apartments where you can be with your family for longer periods. Most closed institutions have child-friendly visiting rooms.

Sometimes staff remain present and supervise proceedings throughout the entire visit. This happens when the institution staff feel there might be a security risk with the visit. In such cases you and the visitor will not be allowed to touch each other.

### 3. LEISURE ACTIVITIES

You will have opportunities for suitable leisure activities during your time in prison. This is stipulated in law. What you are allowed to do in your leisure time largely depends on the institution at which you are held. The older, closed institutions offer the least in terms of leisure activities. At the new, open institutions there is more to do.

#### Games, exercise and sports

Most institutions have billiards, table tennis and darts in the places where the inmates are allowed to congregate. There are usually facilities for working out and doing strengthening/keep fit exercises. Many institutions have indoor facilities for ball games or table tennis or outdoor football pitches made from asphalt, grass or gravel.

#### Nature and culture

Many institutions have libraries where you can borrow books from municipal or city libraries. Sometimes the institution might show a film on a screen or on the institution's own TV.

The church arranges meetings and there are courses in, for example, cookery, guitar playing and exercise or keep-fit. Sometimes associations come and arrange meetings.

### Outdoor activities

If you are at a closed institution, there are few opportunities for outdoor activities. You may be allowed out at least 1 hour a day.

## 4. MONEY AND FINANCE

### Money from the National Prison and Probation Service

When you are in prison, you receive money for the work you do there. The current rate is around SEK 13 per hour.

## 5. DRUGS

At the institution you are not allowed to possess or use alcohol, narcotics or other drugs. Nor are you allowed to use medicine that has not been prescribed for you by a doctor. If you use alcohol or drugs, it may mean that a conditional release is granted later than might otherwise have been the case. A conditional release is where you are released earlier than the original term of your sentence. If you are in possession of narcotics at the institution, you may be reported to the police as this is a crime. Those who visit you may not bring with them alcohol or drugs for you. The medicines you need will be given to you by a nurse or other member of staff at specified times each day.

## 6. CHECKS AND SECURITY

When you are at an institution, the staff will carry out checks on you and do whatever is necessary each day to ensure security at the institution. The number and degree of security checks carried out depends on the institution you are held at.

Here you can read about the different sorts of checks and security measures that are common at the institutions.

### Locking in

At certain times you will be locked in your cell. At closed institutions you are usually locked in at 8 pm. At open institutions you are usually locked in at 10 pm.

### Searches

The staff will search you and your cell. They may do this several times a day. They will check to ensure that you do not have anything that is forbidden at the institution. The most common search that you will experience is a superficial body search. Here the staff

will feel over your clothes and they also have the right to feel what you are carrying in your pockets. Sometimes the staff carry out more detailed searches if, for example, they suspect that you have something on you that is forbidden. Sniffer dogs may be used with all the different types of searches. The staff normally always search you when you are to move to another place at the institution or if you are to go outside the institution. You will be searched before and after receiving visits. The person visiting you can also be searched. A sniffer dog may also be used here.

### Urine sample and other tests

You are not allowed to have or drink alcohol or to have or use narcotics at the institution. You may have to supply a urine sample so that the staff can check that you are following the rules with regard to alcohol and narcotics.

### Checks on letters

The institution has the right to check private post sent to you. When the post is checked, the staff tape the envelope closed again. When you receive the letters, the staff will say if they have checked them. The institution has the right to withhold letters if they contain something that might be dangerous to other people's lives or health or if they might disturb the order or security at the institution.

### Isolation/solitary confinement

The institution has the right to place you in solitary confinement if, for example, you are violent. Solitary confinement means that you will be locked in a cell for the whole day (and night) apart from other inmates. Solitary confinement is also called isolation.

### Other checks and security

When, for example, you are to visit the hospital, you may have to wear handcuffs. The staff may monitor your visits and listen to your telephone conversations. The staff may also supervise your periods of absence.

## 7. TELEPHONE AND LETTERS

When you arrive at the institution, you are normally allowed to make an arrival call, a first telephone call to someone close to you. If you wish to make more calls, you need a special permit. The Swedish Prison and Probation Service has devised a special telephone system for inmates of institutions.

### Telephone permit

When you wish to ring a family member or friend, you have to ask for a telephone permit. The institution checks the telephone number you wish to ring. The institution can say no if the check shows that your telephone call might be a security risk for the institu-

tion or might make it more difficult for you to go back into society. You usually only receive permission to ring to a landline. You may therefore not be allowed to ring someone who only has a mobile phone. You may be allowed to ring abroad but closed institutions also check telephone numbers abroad.

You must have a special payment card or telephone card to be able to ring. You can purchase the card at the institution. You must therefore pay for your private calls yourself. The institution can pay for your calls to authorities, for example social services or the probation service. You are not allowed to have your own phone at the institution.

### Letters

When you are at an institution, the staff may open and sometimes even read through private letters that arrive for you as well as letters that you send. Letters to Swedish lawyers or letters to authorities are not opened. The letters are checked to ensure that they do not contain anything that is forbidden.

## 8. RELIGION AND FAITH

All inmates are entitled to pursue their faith or religion and to follow the dictates of that faith while they are in prison. It makes no difference which particular faith the inmate follows.

### Prison chaplains

Most institutions have a priest from the Swedish Church and a pastor from a free church. At the larger institutions there may be priests from the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Muslim imams, lay workers or parish assistants. These usually hold religious services and other meetings. The larger institutions have special chapels or special rooms for worship or for religious meetings.

### Nav, the council for spiritual welfare

Each institution has a council for spiritual welfare called Nav. This is a group which is responsible for the spiritual welfare of the inmates, in other words it aims to help those in prison with, for example, questions about faith and the meaning of life. Nav includes prison chaplains and others. The Christian Council of Sweden trains prison chaplains so that they are specially geared to ministering to the spiritual needs of prisoners.

## 9. HEALTHCARE

There is usually a nurse at the institution. You are entitled to meet the nurse when you arrive at the institution and thereafter as the need arises. Doctors visit the institution at specific times. If you are ill, you will receive the care which the doctor prescribes

for you. If necessary, you may receive care outside the institution, for example at a health centre. You may also stay in hospital for short or long periods of time... When you are in prison, you are entitled to acute dental care. This is if you have toothache and need immediate dental treatment. You are entitled to basic dental care. Standard care is available with check-ups and repair of cavities. To receive basic dental care, you must have a sentence of 3 years or more.

## 10. OCCUPATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Occupational activity is compulsory at all institutions. This means that you must do something. Compulsory occupational activity also means that you must do something to earn the money you are entitled to when you are at the institution. The law stipulates how much money you are entitled to receive. The current rate is around SEK 13 per hour. There are various activities you can choose:

- Work
- Study
- Programs

### Work

The work might involve assembling things for a factory or packing things. You can work in an engineering workshop, or help maintain the institution through joinery work or washing and cleaning. At some institutions you can both work and train, for example a training course run by Arbetsförmedlingen.

### Study

Practically all institutions have study facilities. You can study subjects from compulsory basic school level and upper secondary school level. You can also study at university through distance learning, in other words you study at the institution but you are a registered student at a university. Many inmates work and study at the same time.

### Programs

A number of programs provide treatment and help with alcohol or drug problems. There are also programs geared to helping you with the specific problems that caused you to offend.

## 11. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

During the time you are at the institution, you can be granted periods of absence. You may be granted leave of absence from the institution for a short period of time and then return. There are two types of absence: normal leave of absence and special leave of absence.

### Normal leave of absence

Normal leave of absence is to enable you to maintain contact with your family and your life outside the institution, for example so that you can meet friends or look for work. Before being granted your first leave of absence, you must have completed a certain proportion of your sentence, in other words, the time you have been sentenced to spend in prison

You must served a quarter of your sentence before you are allowed your first leave of absence. The institution will also check to ensure that it is appropriate for you to be granted leave of absence. It is not an automatic certainty that you will be granted leave of absence after the periods specified in the regulations. The institution's investigation may show that there is a risk that you will abuse your leave of absence, in which case they may say no to your request for leave. With normal leave of absence the periods of time can vary in length. Your first period of absence by yourself may only last a few hours. After this the periods may become longer and longer but they never exceed 3 days and 3 nights.

### Special leave of absence

The aim is for you to make the most of the times when you are granted normal leave of absence. However, if there is something which simply cannot be dealt with through normal leave of absence, you may be granted special leave of absence. A typical case might be if a close relative becomes seriously ill and is in hospital. One special kind of leave of absence is called respite leave. This may be granted if you are sentenced to a long period in prison. The earliest time that you may be granted respite leave is 2 years after the day you were first taken into custody. After this you may receive respite leave once a year. During respite leave you are accompanied by staff who supervise you and the period of leave usually lasts 4 hours.

### Checks and supervision

The institution may decide that you are entitled to leave with supervision. This may be granted if the institution believes there is a risk that you might abuse your leave of absence but that you nevertheless need to have the time off. With supervised leave staff from the institution follow you during your period of leave. When you are alone on leave, the institution always draws up a plan of leave with you. You must follow the plan and there are always rules that you must follow. For example, the institution must be able to call you when you are on leave. A common rule is that you are not allowed to drink alcohol.

### Implementation plan

The institution prepares for your release by drawing up a plan for the period of your sentence at the pri-

son. This is your implementation plan. The institution carries out a thorough study of your life in terms of: What is your financial situation? Do you have any debts? Which schools have you attended? Do you have any family? Are you an alcohol or substance abuser? Do you have somewhere to live?

You and your contact person use the implementation plan to see what you want to do while you at the institution. You might make contact with the enforcement service so that you can pay off your debts. You might speak to the study director so that you can undertake compulsory school level education. You might contact the employment office to find out, for example, if there is a course in welding.

### Progress meeting

Institutions have treatment-planning conferences. These are meetings where you and your contact person check how things have gone since the last meeting in terms of the implementation plan. Various other people might be present at the planning conference. These might include the prison inspector at your institution, work supervisor, employment officer, someone from your family or a priest.

When the time for your release approaches, you and your contact person increase your preparations. It may now be time to contact the social services in your home area to ensure that you will have money when you come out. If you have been granted a conditional release, you will be put in contact with the probation service when you come out. This might provide you with a probation officer, a person who will stay in contact with you to ensure that you do not re-offend. The probation officer will be your support and will also help you with contacts and other assistance that you might need.

## 12. APPEALS

When you are at the institution, the National Prison and Probation Service will make many decisions about you. They may, for example, refuse to allow you to have a personal stereo or they may decide to move you to another institution. The National Prison and Probation Service must always decide as stipulated in the Penal Care Act and other laws, for example the Secrecy Act.

If you think that the National Prison and Probation Service have made a wrong decision, you have the right to appeal against what they have decided. You may write and complain about what you feel is wrong. Write to the National Prison and Probation Administration. If you wish to appeal against what the National Prison and Probation Administration has decided, you should write to Förvaltningsrätten

(county administrative court). The County Administrative Court is not connected with the National Prison and Probation Service. If you require help in making your appeal, your contact person will assist you. You may also complain to the Parliamentary Ombudsman or the Chancellor of Justice if you think that you have been unfairly treated.

### 13. WHEN WILL I BE RELEASED?

When you have served two thirds of your sentence, you should be released on parole, unless there are exceptional reasons.

You are normally released early in the morning on the date that is determined for your release. If you are unable to arrange any clothing yourself, the institution must help you with clothes suitable for the time of year. If you have not received money from social

services, the institution must give you a release allowance and maybe money for the journey home. Throughout your entire period in prison, at the time of your release and in the period immediately after your release there are many people and authorities who can help you. How much help you derive from these people depends upon you. If you make contact and show that you are interested in changing your life, you will also receive more help.

#### Probation

When you are released on parole the Probation Service will decide whether you should have probation. A probation officer is a person who will help and support you when to readapt to society.

Probation ends after one year if you do not misbehave during the conditional release.