

Summary: Correctional Treatment in Finland in 2000

Correctional treatment forms a part of the system of penal sanctions. Prison administration enforces prison sentences and imprisonment for nonpayment of fines imposed by the courts and takes care of pretrial detention.

The aim of prison administration is to promote security in society by maintaining a lawful and secure system of enforcing sanctions. It also aims at reducing recidivism by influencing the factors giving rise to and sustaining criminal behaviour.

In order to achieve these goals, sentences are to be enforced in a way promoting the security of both the community, the convicts and the staff. At the same time the chances of the convicts to get along in society and adopt a way of life without crime are to be promoted.

The Organization

Prison administration is subject to the Ministry of Justice. The Prison Department of the Ministry of Justice directs and supervises prison administration and the work of institutions belonging to it. The Prison Department also supervises probation and after-care at large and the enforcement of alternative sanctions, eg community service.

Prison Administration enforces prison sentences imposed by the courts and takes care of detention and custody in connection with trials. Prison Administration comprises in all over 30 prisons in different parts of Finland, 17 closed institutions and 15 open institutions, some of which are subject to a closed institution, and the Mental Hospital for Prisoners and the Prison

Staff Training Center. In order to improve the quality of correctional treatment and result management, the penal institutions have according to the division into provinces been divided into three prison administration districts: the prison administration districts of Southern Finland, Western Finland, and Eastern and Northern Finland.

In 2000 the concepts central prison, provincial prison, auxiliary prison, juvenile prison, open prison and adult education college were omitted from the names of the penal institutions. From now on the institutions are all called prison complemented by the location. This reform became effective on 1 January 2001.

- closed prisons accommodate inmates sentenced to prison and persons serving imprisonment for nonpayment of fines. Some of the closed institutions are remand prisons accommodating primarily pretrial detainees but convicts and default prisoners as well.

- open institutions accommodate persons working or taking part in some activity and being considered suitable for the freer conditions in open institutions compared to closed institutions and being assumed not to abscond from the institution. Inmates in open institutions are also required to commit themselves to abstinence from intoxicants. The emphasis of activity is put on preparing the inmates for liberty.

- the Mental Hospital for Prisoners is a nation-wide institution intended for prisoners in need of psychiatric treatment. It also carries out mental examinations of persons accused of an offence.

- the Hospital for Prisoners, working in con-

nection with the Hämeenlinna Prison, gives hospital treatment to prisoners needing such treatment.

– the Prison Staff Training Centre answers for basic and advanced training leading to an examination in correctional treatment. It organizes education, development and expert services and produces publications.

At the end of the year there were in all 3 287 (3 424) confirmed prison beds in the penal institutions. Of these, 2 309 (2 407), ie 70 per cent, were located in closed institutions, while 978 (1 017) prison beds, ie 30 per cent, were located in open institutions.

Agencies cooperating closely with Prison Administration, though administratively independent, are the Prison Affairs Council and the Prison Court. The Prison Affairs Council makes statements and takes initiatives on matters belonging to the field of activity of the Prison Department. The Prison Court is a special court belonging to the central administration of the administrative sector of the Ministry of Justice. It decides on the incarceration of dangerous recidivists and on whether young offenders are to serve their sentence in a juvenile prison.

The Inmates

The average number of prisoners in 2000 was 2855, ie about one hundred more than the year before. More severe legal praxis is to be considered the main reason for the present growth of the prison population.

The biggest prisoner group, about one third, are offenders sentenced for serious violent crime as their principal offences. Every fifth was sentenced for homicide or attempted homicide. The number of convicted first-timers in prison was slightly below 30 per cent in recent years. A follow-up study carried out at the Prison Department showed that about 60 per cent of the inmates returned to prison within five years, whereas the corresponding figure among young prisoners (below 21 years) was ca 90 per cent.

The number of young prisoners (below 21 years of age) increased during the year under

review. At the end of the year their number was 123, whereas the corresponding number the previous year was 87. The number of women prisoners was at the end of the year 142, ie slightly more than the previous year. The number of pre-trial detainees has in two years grown about 30 per cent and was at the end of the year almost 400 persons. The number of default prisoners has also gone up: their number is slightly over 100 in the institutions.

The Enforcement of Sentences

The Prison Department as the supreme enforcement agency, and the district court bailiffs (in Lapland also the rural police chief) as local enforcement agencies to whom the Prison Department dispatches the enforcement order, take care of delivering the convicted persons to the penal institutions.

In 2000 a total of 17 265 judgements were gathered in the register of convictions kept by the Prison Department. 4 146 of them were related to community service, and 139 to youth sentences.

The Ministry of Justice can decide that imprisonment for nonpayment of fines and prison sentences of maximum two years be served in open institutions. In 2000 in all 2447 prisoners were ordered to serve in open institutions.

The Ministry of Justice may postpone the beginning of enforcement due to illness or pregnancy of the convicted person. In 2000 in all 765 matters of postponement were dealt with. Postponement was granted in 16 per cent of the cases.

Sentences imposed in Norway, Denmark, Sweden or Iceland may be enforced and supervised in Finland. Correspondingly, sentences pronounced in Finland may be enforced and supervised in the other Scandinavian countries. There were 81 enforcement requests received during the year under review. There were 88 cases concerning the transfer of enforcement from Finland to a Scandinavian country becoming pending.

Persons sentenced to prison may be released on parole having served two thirds of the sen-

tence, or on special grounds having served half of it. During the year under review 3 877 prisoners were released on parole, 22 per cent were placed under supervision by the Probation Association.

Prison Activities

Activities organized for the inmates during working hours are work, study or other activities organized or accepted by the penal institutions. The aim of these activities is to improve the prisoners' chances of coping with life in society after release. The individual capacity to work and act of each prisoner is being assessed in order to find purposeful forms of activity suiting him or her best.

During the year under review an average of 1 263 inmates, ie 44 per cent, were working in jail. The most important fields of activity were industrial production, farming, handicraft, construction, real estate maintenance and household work. The labour colonies were mainly working on projects assigned by the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the National Board of Antiquities. In all 103 inmates were daily going to civilian work outside the institutions in 2000.

Studying in jail has become slightly less common. During the year, an average of 312 inmates, ie 11 per cent, were daily studying. The bulk of the studies were related to acquisition or improvement of vocational skills. Training taking place in prison is mostly organized by outside educational establishments. In all 135 prisoners were studying outside the institutions.

The prisons try, through target-oriented programmes of activity, to reduce intoxicant abuse and otherwise promote the inmates' chances to lead a life without crime. The number of prisoners, daily taking part in some target-oriented activity programme or some activity sustaining the capacity to work and act remained the same as the year before. The average amount was 173, ie ca 6 per cent of the prison population. The bulk of the target-oriented activity programmes consisted of various programmes for intoxicant abusers. Besides, there are courses in Cognitive

Skills and other programmes enhancing life-control skills, training in job-seeking skills and rehabilitative camps.

There are, further, various leisure-time activities. The leisure-time clubs in the institutions were gathering in all ca 17 000 times. Above all, physical exercise was organized for the inmates. In addition to activities under direction, the inmates were in their leisure time also independently taking part in various hobby activities, physical exercise and music activities.

Prisoners are entitled to receive visitors at times reserved for visits during weekends and on special grounds at other points of time as well. Most of the visits take place under supervision. Visits by close relatives and other persons can also be granted without supervision.

Prisoners may be granted a permission to leave only if it is considered probable that they will observe the conditions of permission. Permissions to leave may be granted when half of the sentence has been served, either due to the length of the sentence or on other, particularly important, grounds. During the year under review there were 14 524 applications for leave, and permissions were granted in 73 per cent of the cases.

During the year under review, reporting on public disturbances was enhanced. In 2000 there were 44 escapes and 9 attempted escapes. From open institutions 56 inmates left without permission.

Despite more intensive control, there were considerably less drugs being confiscated than during recent years. In order to test the use of intoxicants, almost ten thousand urine tests were taken during the year.

Prison Staff

The staff strategy of Prison Administration aims at securing that Prison Administration is optimally capable of performing the tasks assigned to it and of coping with the changes taking place in this respect. For this to be possible, we need accurately dimensioned, well-motivated, satisfied and skilled staff.

At the end of 2000 there were 2 540 full-time officers in Prison Administration. Over half of the prison staff is performing tasks of supervision and guarding. In recent years, however, the staff structure was developed and job descriptions were extended by directing staff contributions more than previously at the inmates' programmes of activities and grassroots work and at the prevention of intoxicant abuse among the inmates.

Research and Development

Development projects in Prison Administration were carried out in the spheres of prison staff education, the processing of personal prisoner data, and staff dimensioning. In financial administration, the investigation of decisions improving productivity was continued.

During the year under review, a project for reorganizing the tasks relating to penal policy and sentence enforcement in the administrative field of the Ministry of Justice was started. The reformed organisation shall include a new Prison and Probation Agency, a central administrative agency responsible for directing the work of both Prison Administration and Probation Administration, and for their common assignments of enforcement and administration. The Prison Department is to be abolished, and a new Criminal Policy Department, answering for the strategic direction of the whole administrative field, will be founded at the Ministry of Justice. The new organization will start working on 1 August 2001.

During the year Prison Administration real estate property was transferred to the Government Real Estate Agency, from now on renting out the premises to the prisons. The transfer was carried out at the beginning of 2001.

Probation and After-Care

Probation and after-care also belong to the administrative sector of the Ministry of Justice. The Probation Association, governed by public law, answers for community sanctions carried out at liberty. These are eg community service

and youth sentences, and supervision of parolees and conditionally sentenced young offenders. The work of the Probation Association is supervised by the Prison Department of the Ministry of Justice.

Community service of minimum 20 and maximum 200 hours can be imposed instead of unconditional prison sentences of maximum eight months. Community service is unpaid work performed under supervision. In 2000 community service was started by 3 315 (3 630) and completed by 2 770 (2 979) convicted persons. The amount of community service sentences went down during the last two years.

Supervision, though, has increased. During the year 2 720 (2 588) conditionally sentenced young offenders were put under supervision, and the number of parolees under supervision was 2 207 (2 182). Supervision has started emphasizing the significance of cooperation with other authorities as well.

The youth sentence experiment was being carried out in seven local court districts. Youth sentences consist of youth service (10-60 hours) and supervision (4-12 months). In all 127 (94) youth sentences were enforced in 2000. The experiment will go on to the end of 2001.

Prison Administration Finances

The operational expenses of Prison Administration amounted to 692.1 millions FIM in 2000. The revenue, mainly from convict labour, amounted to 66.8 millions FIM. The price of one inmate's day in prison, calculated from prison service expenses and revenues, was ca 600 FIM. Almost 70 per cent of the operational appropriations of Prison Administration were used for staff salaries.

International Cooperation

International cooperation in recent years extended from traditional Scandinavian-Finnish cooperation to the Baltic countries and the Russian border districts, and to various projects with the Western countries.

Finland takes part in the NordBalt project,

carried out by the Scandinavian and the Baltic countries and coordinated by the Council of Europe. Eight Finnish prisons have twin prison relations with a prison institution in a Baltic country. In Finnish-Russian border-district cooperation the most important tangible project is a health-care project started in 1998 in the Karelian Republic with the aim of developing the

treatment of patients with tuberculosis. In developing the substance of prison work, cooperation with Prison Service authorities in Northern America and the UK played a significant role in recent years.

In addition to bilateral cooperation, Finland actively participates in prison service cooperation within the Council of Europe.