

Abstract

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THE ADJUSTMENT OF PERSONNEL IN THE PRISON ADMINISTRATION

The goal of this audit was to determine whether prison personnel have been adjusted to meet changes in the operating environment as well as new emphases adopted in prison objectives at the end of the 1990s. How have these changes been visible in the number and structure of employees and in the development of personnel skills to meet changes in the content of prison work and new forms of operation? Attention has also been focused on how result management and its implementation in the prison administration have supported adjustment. The starting point for the audit is 1994, when the State Audit Office completed an audit concerning the effectiveness of the use of personnel in the prison administration. The audit extends up to 1999.

The number of prisoners declined throughout the 1990s, following a trend set in the 1980s. The number of personnel did not change in a corresponding manner, however. This resulted in a significant increase in annual spending per prisoner. Gross spending per prisoner amounted to FIM 199,200 in 1994 and FIM 252,600 in 1999. The nominal increase was 26.8%.

During the same period the prison population became significantly harder, with more prisoners convicted of violent crimes and drug offences and in professional crime, efforts to continue criminal activities while in prison, growth in the number of foreign prisoners, prisoners' substance abuse and poorer health, marginalization and multiple problems.

Existing prison facilities are in many cases in poor condition and do not meet current requirements operationally. These factors cause security problems and difficulties in arranging monitoring and activities for prisoners.

According to the prison administration's programme of principles and result objectives, one goal of the prison administration is to assist in reducing recidivism and terminating the development of social maladjustment reproducing crime.

New forms of activity adopted in recent years include drug rehabilitation programmes and activity programmes aimed at teaching knowledge and skills to help prisoners adopt a way of life without crime.

These facts should be taken into consideration in evaluating the need for personnel. The audit found, however, that with the long and steady decline in the number of prisoners, during which the number of personnel remained more or less the same, the prison administration has shown little preparedness to carry out reductions in personnel which have become necessary for economic reasons. A similar lack of preparedness can also be observed in the development of personnel, which became timely in

the 1990s as a result of the hardening of the prison population and changes in the content of prison work caused by new objectives.

The audit revealed the following factors which influence the adjustment of personnel to operating methods according to approved objectives. Many prisons operate with the same personnel and organizational structure as before, although a considerable change has taken place in the content and objectives of prison work. This supports the continuation of activities according to old and familiar operating models. Special attention should be focused on the efficiency and effectiveness of prisons' internal division of labour and hierarchy. This is primarily the task of prison management. Central administration should, however, direct the attention of prison management to means which can be used to bring work arrangements and the division of labour in line with needs. Central administration should also draw attention to the implementation of result management in prisons. The full use of result management tools would promote the internalization of the programme of principles and new emphases as well as the taking of responsibility for input.

The audit indicated that personnel feel that they have received inadequate support in implementing the programme of principles and the objectives derived from it at the practical level. This is reflected in uncertainty concerning their effect on the content of work. This uncertainty is debilitating and is also reflected in the fact that personnel have not yet approved current objectives in a way which would promote their achievement.

The effective use of personnel is impeded by the fact that guards' pay is largely dependent on supplements for shift work. This also hampers the implementation of new forms of operation and the instilling of a sense of responsibility and team spirit, which have been regarded as insufficient in the prison administration. The State Audit Office has urged the Ministry of Justice to reform the pay system in the field.

The State Audit Office has considered it important to implement projects aimed at reforming basic training in the prison administration. Owing to the change in the content of prison work and the increasing demands of tasks, professionals with a broader training are required. It is also important to support in-service training arranged by prisons individually or jointly, so that the supply and content of training can be made to correspond better to the practical needs of guards and supervisors in particular. Cooperation and contacts between central administration and the Prison Administration Training Centre should be further developed. Since most prison personnel have completed very narrow basic training, attention should still be focused on in-service training and the preparation and implementation of personal development plans. The creation of a polytechnic certificate in the field would significantly improve the prison administration's competitiveness in comparison with associated fields.

In spite of the prison administration's investments in activities aimed at maintaining employees' working capacity and in early rehabilitation, the effects have not been easy to observe. In occupational fitness work the emphasis has shifted to the welfare of the entire work community and measures to improve the work climate. In the opinion of the State Audit Office, this trend should be continued and its effects should be regularly monitored.

The audit indicated that the activities of the Ministry of Justice's Department of Prison Administration as the director and developer of prisons has been somewhat deficient. The biggest problems have concerned strategic and long-term management and the implementation and completion of development plans.

The Ministry of Justice and the Department of Prison Administration started many significant development and reform projects in the 1990s. Their completion was often delayed, however, or projects were not implemented in full. Many of these projects would have provided possibilities to eliminate or alleviate problems in the prison administration. Operational management has taken up a large part of the department's time. Furthermore, the large number of projects has made it impossible to concentrate on individual projects with sufficient emphasis. Implementation and monitoring have been deficient. In the opinion of the State Audit Office, the setting of clear priorities would have improved possibilities to ensure the completion and practical implementation of projects and reforms.

The audit also investigated in what way the result management system has supported the adjustment of personnel. In the opinion of the State Audit Office, result management does not have a sufficient directing effect on prisons' activities or the reform of the content of work at individual facilities. The proper development of the structure of personnel and the fair and effective distribution of personnel among different facilities are matters which the management system should be able to influence. The State Audit Office considers it important to continue developing the result management system.

In this development work the completion of several projects which were under way at the time of the audit also has significance at the practical level. The further development of the regional division and regional director model to meet objectives and goals concerning the improved effectiveness of result management and the efficient division of labour and cooperation among facilities is one significant project. The defining of the principles for dividing prison appropriations and the clarification of principles for dimensioning prison personnel should also bring their own improvements to the system.

The Ministry of Justice has stated that, in connection with the reform of the administration of the execution of punishment, questions regarding the division of labour between central administration and facilities as well as authority and the division of responsibility will also be clarified. The need for clarification is quite apparent from the results of the audit.

Against this background, the State Audit Office believes that the Act on the Administration of the Execution of Punishment which will come into force on 1 August 2001 signifies a necessary and proper change in the prison administration.