

# Country Report: Latvia

Most of the information in this report (including statistics) was gained from a field visit by the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) to Ilguciema women's prison in July 2005. The visit included two lengthy interviews with the deputy governor, a senior staff member and the head of the Mother and Baby Unit (MBU). A tour was taken of the health centre, classrooms, MBU, juvenile unit, visiting block and a Middle Security Unit. Brief interviews were held with a prison doctor, senior guard and the prisoners, including juveniles, in the presence of guards. Full details of the visit are available on our website at <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/prison/latviavisit.pdf>

Other sources are Council of Europe documents, the Penal Reform International Handbook and a research project for the Central and Eastern European Network of Drug Services in Prison. Unless otherwise stated, information is from the visit by QCEA.

## 1. Introduction

According to the International Centre for Prison Studies, the total prison population in Latvia in June 2006 was 6,676, with a prison population rate of 292 per 100,000 (based on an estimated national population of 2.29 million). Prisoners awaiting trial accounted for 26.5 per cent of the prison population.<sup>1</sup>

The prison system in Latvia consists of a staff training centre and fifteen prisons, of which three are investigative detention centres for prisoners awaiting trial. There are also pre-trial units in five other prisons. There are three types of prison regime: closed, semi-closed and open. Within these types there are three levels of regime.<sup>2</sup>

After Latvia gained full independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, several legislative changes were brought in: the creation of a National Human Rights Office in 1995, a new Criminal Law which brought in alternative sanctions to prison, and a draft Amnesty Law providing for the release or reduction of sentences for minors, pregnant women, women with infant children, the disabled, and the elderly. The Latvian prison service was demilitarised, prisons were put under the control of trained, professional guards, and training programmes were implemented.<sup>3</sup>

However, the 2004 report on Latvia by the UN Committee against Torture raised concerns over police brutality, prison overcrowding, the length of legal proceedings and the lack of access to lawyers, legal aid, and lack of contact with families. It also recommended that, inter alia, Latvia provides statistics in its next report, disaggregated by age, gender and country of origin, on prosecutions and penal and disciplinary sentences.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *International Centre for Prison Studies*, World Prison Brief, Prison Brief for Latvia [on-line], accessed 15 March 2007, available at <http://www.prisonstudies.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Morag MacDonald, 'Country Report for Latvia (20-27 July 2003)', *Research Project for the Central and Eastern European Network of Drug Services in Prison (CEENDSP) in Co-operation with the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations* (Birmingham: University of Central England, 2004), p.4. Also available on-line at <http://www.uce.ac.uk/crq/publications/drugservices/latvia.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> **Communication from the United Nations Committee against Torture:** UN Committee against Torture, Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee against Torture: Latvia, CAT/C/CR/31/3, (February 2004), pp.1-7. Available at <http://www.universalhumanrightsindex.org/documents/828/432/document/en/pdf/text.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

## 2. Women prisoners in Latvia

Women prisoners made up 5.6 per cent of the prison population in June 2006.<sup>5</sup> There have been no officially registered rapes in police custody. There is anecdotal evidence of sexual harassment in police custody and demands of sexual services from women on prostitution-related charges.<sup>6</sup>

### Prisons

Ilguciema prison is a semi-closed prison for women and juveniles in Riga, and the only women's prison in Latvia. In May 2003 it held 473 prisoners, although the official capacity of the prison was 389.<sup>7</sup> In July 2005 there were 384 prisoners, including 246 sentenced prisoners and 138 prisoners awaiting trial.

*Table 1: Numbers of pre-trial and convicted prisoners (both adult and juvenile) - statistics provided by the prison during visit by QCEA, July 2005*

	No. of Prisoners	% of prison population
Adults sentenced	241	63
Juveniles sentenced	5	1
Adults awaiting trial	133	35
Juveniles awaiting trial	5	1

According to MacDonald's 2004 report, overcrowding at Ilguciema is a problem, and the specialist staff at the prison had trouble finding space for confidential interviews with prisoners.<sup>8</sup> QCEA found that, in general, the buildings were in poor condition, and that the material deprivation is due to lack of resources and not a deliberate part of the regime. Staff said, 'The budget is too small and we got 4% less for the second half of the year. We can't buy clothing for the women and have to depend on charity, also for shoes and bed linen, as it is difficult to find the money for this. Some parts of the prison require renovation'.<sup>9</sup> The gardens and yards were large though unkempt. The prison is made up of low buildings spaced around the site rather than one large building which mean fresh air and natural light are more readily available.<sup>10</sup>

### Sentencing

The average sentence is three and a half years. Offenders get six months for minor crimes involving theft; those who cannot pay fines may be in prison for between thirty and forty days. Prisoners may get early release for good behaviour. There is only one lifer in the prison. There are no women imprisoned for prostitution. In the last decade, the proportion of women convicted for drug crimes and violent offences has grown from 6.1 per cent in 1992 to 39.7 per cent in 2000, which represents a huge increase.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *International Centre for Prison Studies*, World Prison Brief, Prison Brief for Latvia [on-line], accessed 15 March 2007, available at <http://www.prisonstudies.org/>

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Coyle *et al.*, 'Women in Prison in Central Europe', *Prison Reform International: Information Pack: Women in Prison* (2002), p. 52.

<sup>7</sup> Morag MacDonald, *Research Project for the Central and Eastern European Network of Drug Services in Prison (CEENDSP)*, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> QCEA visit to Ilguciema Prison, July 2005. Available at <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/prison/latviavisit.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Coyle *et al.*, *Prison Reform International: Information Pack: Women in Prison*, p. 53.

### Number of prisoners at Ilguciema prison between 1994 and 2005

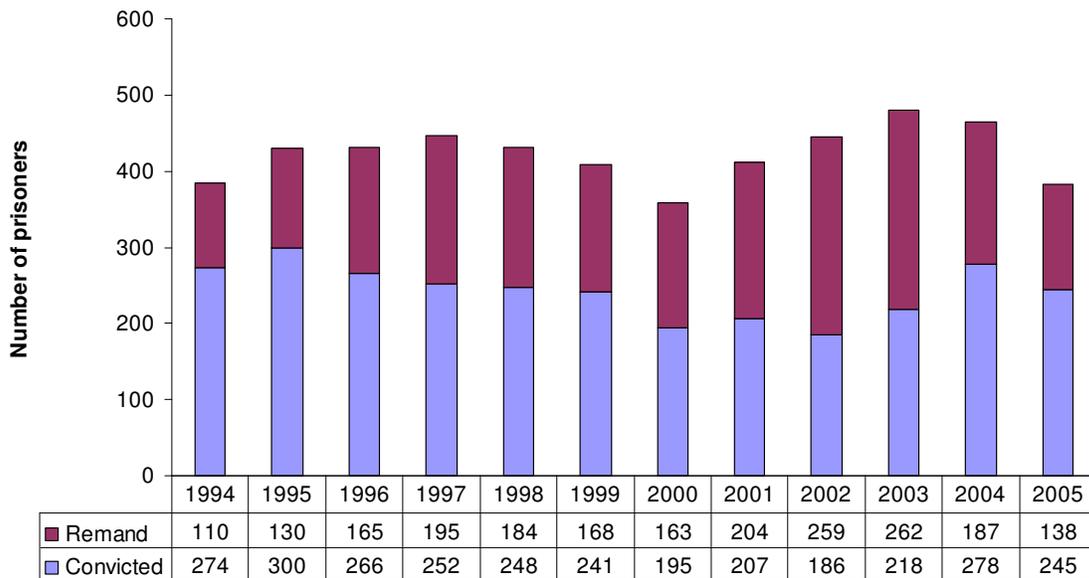


Figure 1: Numbers of prisoners at Ilguciema between 1994 and 2004. Statistics provided by the prison during visit by the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA), July 2005.

### Age distribution of prisoners at Ilguciema Prison, July 2005

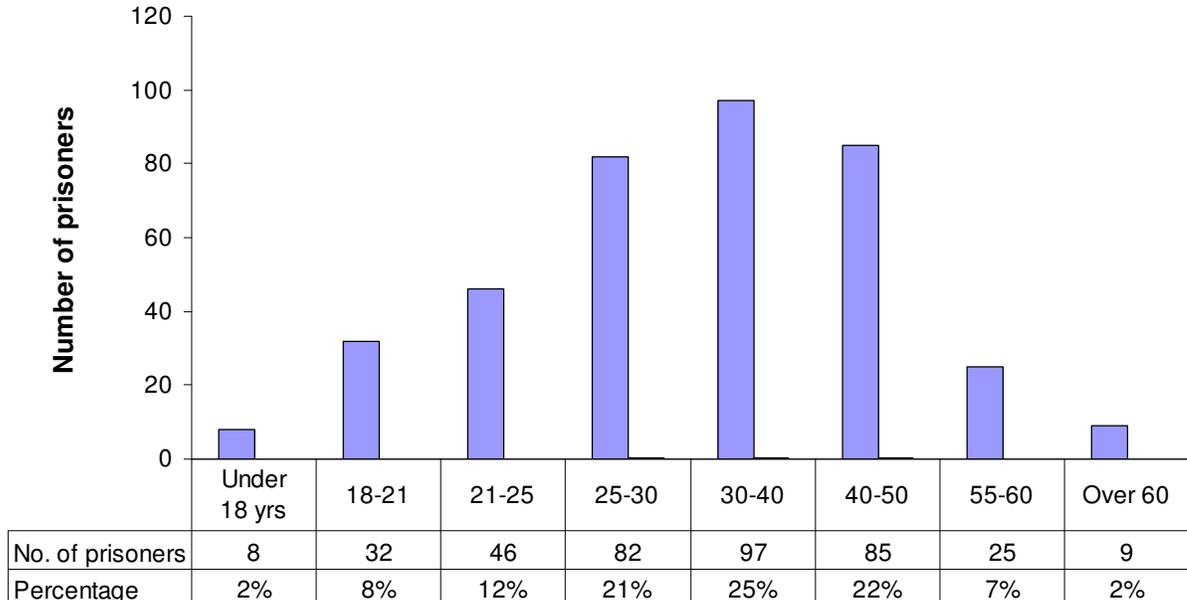


Figure 2: Age distribution of prisoners at Ilguciema prison. Statistics provided by the prison during visit by QCEA, July 2005.

### Crimes for which prisoners were imprisoned or sentenced for at Ilguciema, July 2005

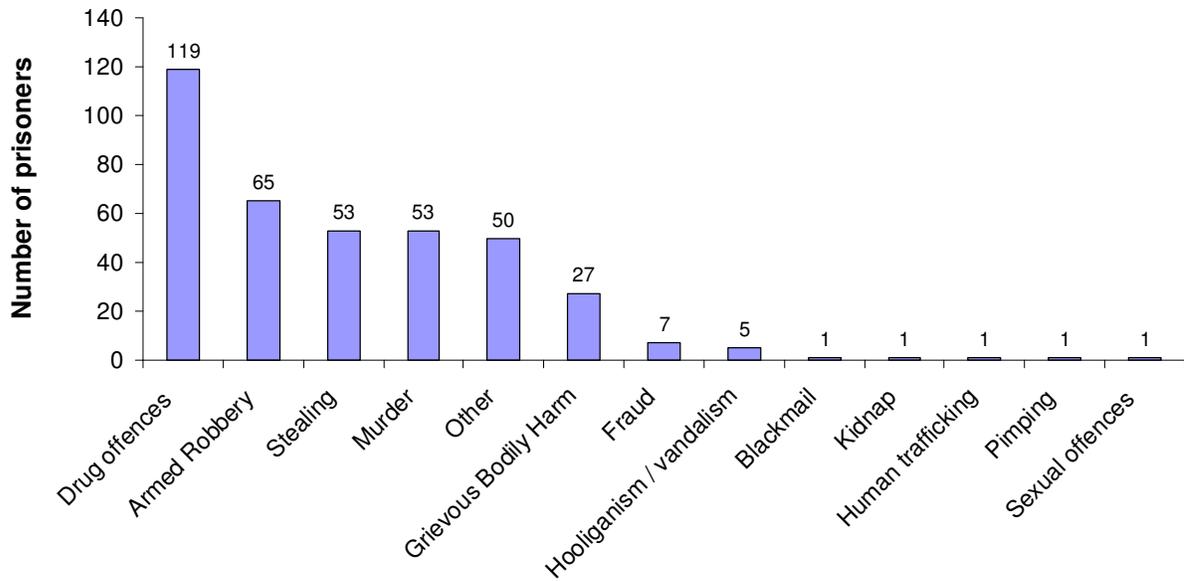


Figure 3: Crimes for which prisoners have either been imprisoned awaiting trial, or have been sentenced for at Ilguciema prison. Statistics provided by the prison during visit by QCEA, July 2005.

### Length of sentence of prisoners at Ilguciema prison, July 2005

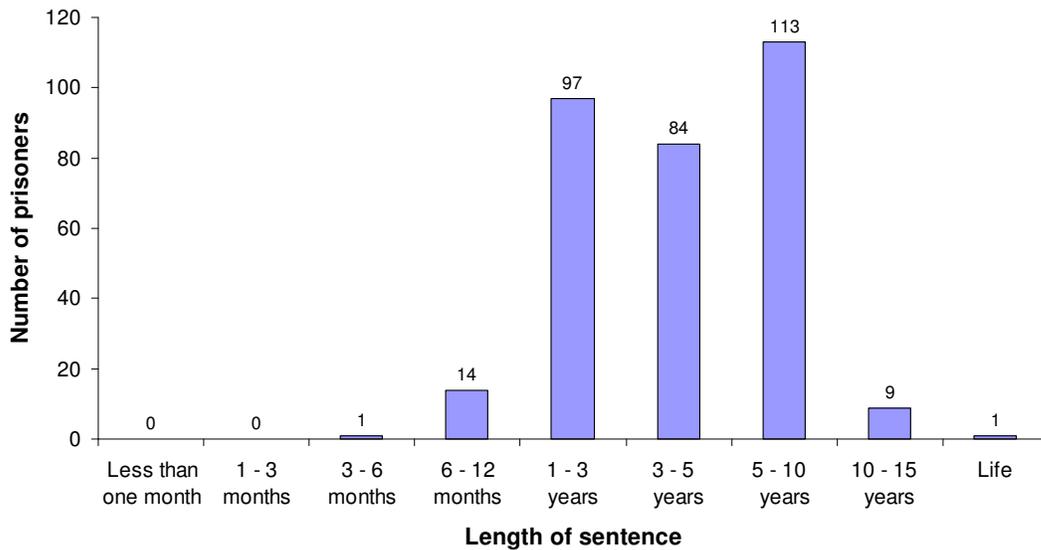


Figure 4: Sentence length of prisoners at Ilguciema prison, July 2005. Statistics provided by the prison during visit by QCEA.

### **3. Women on remand**

According to the 1999 report by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), female remand prisoners held at Ilguciema suffered from overcrowding, poor material and hygienic conditions and a poor programme of activities.<sup>12</sup>

### **4. Contact with the outside world**

#### **Visits**

The visiting block was small with poor material conditions and was generally spartan and depressing. There was one crowded room for visitors with chairs and small tables. A guard “goes past every ten minutes”.

Visits last for two hours and take place on Saturdays and Mondays. By law, visitors should be behind a barrier, but they do not find this necessary so relatives are allowed to touch and hug. Most prisoners get visits. Visitors are only searched if the authorities are suspicious. Prisoners are strip-searched after visits and we were told by the staff that prisoners “did not have a problem with this”.

There are separate rooms where prisoners can stay with their families for forty-eight hour visits. Bedrooms contain only beds, a chair and table and crockery for meals. There is a very small, windowless sitting room with one small sofa and a television. There is a small windowless kitchen so families can cook together; families can bring as much food as they want to, but no alcohol. Rooms are always available for those who want overnight visits as there is a schedule in place for visits. Contraception is provided.

The number of visits allowed varies for different prisoners. There are three stages: if prisoners are in the first fifth of their prison sentence they are allowed four short and four long (forty-eight hour) visits a year; the next level is six short and six long visits a year and the last stage is eight short and eight long visits a year.

In fact, friends and relatives are usually unable to use all these visits, due to the unavailability and cost of transport, especially for those in full-time work and those who live in rural areas.

Relatives coming for long stays need a medical certificate. Those with alcohol addiction are not allowed to come and visit.

#### **Leave**

The prisoners have seven days holiday from prison per year. This is dependent on good behaviour and on the conditions where they will be staying. Relatives write an application to host the prisoner and guarantee security, the prison then contacts the police to check the address. The police may say the security risk is too high and the vacation will not be allowed. If prisoners' relatives are in bad health additional leave is granted.

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<sup>12</sup> Communication from the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT): CPT, *Latvia* (Volume 2: For the record 2001, The European Human Rights System). Available at <http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord2001/euro2001/engtext/vol2eng/latviaecpt.htm>

## **5. Motherhood in prison**

### **Pregnancy and birth**

Women give birth in hospital and have pre-checks and scans in prison. A guard goes with them to the hospital and they are not handcuffed. During the birth the guard waits outside the door. Doctors at the hospital do not like the presence of guards. At present there are four pregnant prisoners. Pregnant women are allowed a walk of an hour and a half every day instead of an hour. If a woman wishes to have an abortion this can be arranged and is free.

Whether or not a child should reside in prison with their mother is decided by the 'Orphan Court' or 'Child's Rights Agency' which is part of the new Ministry of Children and the Family. Its first priority is the welfare of the child and one of its concerns is to keep families united; it also deals with adoption. This agency carries out expert inspections and found Ilcugemia to be good. As soon as a woman becomes pregnant a decision is made which may take a few weeks. The prison supplies information to the court in writing. A woman may decide to give a child to relatives but most wish to keep their children with them in prison. One woman was refused a place in the Mother and Baby Unit with her second child as it was said she did not care properly for her last child (she did not visit the child when he/she was in hospital for six months).

### **Babies in prison**

Ilguciema prison has a childcare unit for fourteen women and their babies. Children are permitted to remain with their mothers in prison until they are four years old.<sup>13</sup> At the time of the QCEA visit there were eleven children up to four years of age with their mothers in the prison.

Mothers with babies under one year live in a special MBU in which conditions were very good, staff having made this a priority. The unit can hold six women with a maximum of twenty children. In July 2005 there were eight women in the unit, but this did not appear to cause serious overcrowding problems.

In the unit there is a small sitting room with a television and storage units and a kitchen where mothers prepare baby food. The individual bedrooms are all slightly different with large windows and are painted in pastel colours. Bedrooms contain a bed, a chest of drawers and a cot, including some soft furnishings: rugs, curtains and tablecloths. The women have photos and personal belongings, children's mobiles and toys.

A nurse is on duty twenty-four hours per day and a female doctor is in charge of the unit. There is a room for medical treatment. Off this room is a bedroom for new mothers to adjust to the unit before they move to one of the rooms with the other mothers. New mothers are taught how to care for their babies.

Children up to four years old live in the MBU while their mothers live in normal prison accommodation. Mothers of older children go to work/school and are required to visit their children twice a day in the unit. Older children have a separate dormitory with paper decorations on the walls. There is a large playroom with toys and a small playroom with more toys and little desks. A US Methodist church sponsored Montessori training and these principles are written up on the wall. There is a large garden with swings, sandpit and slide that the mothers and children can use whenever they like. There is a large kitchen where nurses prepare food according to nutritional requirements for the older children.

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<sup>13</sup> Morag MacDonald, *Research Project for the Central and Eastern European Network of Drug Services in Prison (CEENDSP)*, p. 6.

There are no mothers with drug or alcohol addictions but we were told mothers would not be denied visits if this were the case.

Upon release, the mother is given two sets of papers for her child/children; one which includes the child's residence in prison and one which does not, so that the woman can use whichever is more suitable for welfare or job seeking.

Pregnant women and babies receive extra food and are entitled to additional packages from their relatives.<sup>14</sup>

## Children on the outside

The prison authorities know when the children of prisoners held in care move orphanages and help them to keep in correspondence with their mothers. If the child is younger than four years they will help with the paperwork to allow that child to reside in the prison. The prison does not keep statistics on children of prisoners outside the prison as it is 'not their task to know'.

## 6. Health

The health centre has six specialists including a gynaecologist, psychiatrist, dentist, and an ear, nose and throat specialist. There are five nurses. The health centre is small but appeared to be well-equipped. There are consultancy rooms and surgeries and small, clean rooms for patients with large windows, mostly with two beds to a room. Patients have radios, newspapers and magazines.

Women are able to have a general health check every three months. QCEA was told that medical care was likely to be better inside the prison than outside as it is freely available and the opening hours are good. Prisoners wait a maximum of one week before seeing the doctor. All women are able to see the doctor in privacy and are allowed to attend the onsite medical centre without supervision. Juveniles have separate times for attending the centre.

Prisoners can shower once per week, showers are in good condition and there is hot water three times each week. However, one prisoner said that "two of us have to shower together in a cubicle or the water runs out. We can have cold showers any time in summer". There are toilets in the separate cells; otherwise they are off the corridor.<sup>15</sup>

Food is of reasonable quality according to staff at Ilguciema; however the menu is the same every week. Prisoners get salad every day, but fruit is not available except for the children in the MBU. There is a special diet for pregnant prisoners. Prisoners in a focus group felt that they lacked vitamins.<sup>16</sup>

Prisoners are given a compulsory health check when they start their sentence, including an AIDS test and gynaecological tests. Tuberculosis is tested for on arrival and prisoners are sent to the hospital if they test positive. Generally, this is not a problem at Ilguciema, despite TB increasing in the country as a whole.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Coyle *et al.*, *Prison Reform International: Information Pack: Women in Prison*, p. 53.

<sup>15</sup> Morag MacDonald, *Research Project for the Central and Eastern European Network of Drug Services in Prison (CEENDSP)*, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21.

## Mental health

A large number of the women suffer from mental illness which may be exacerbated by drugs and alcohol. Some prisoners have learning difficulties. There are no cases of schizophrenia.

According to the prison deputy governor the courts may not recognize an offender is mentally ill, but when they are in Ilguciema this may be noticed and the woman is transferred to a mental hospital. This has happened three times in recent years.

There is one psychologist in the prison. There was one case of suicide eight years ago. There is a small minority of self-harmers. There is a procedure in place which is put into action immediately as soon as this practice is noticed, involving the psychotherapist, psychiatrist and a social worker. According to the prison doctor, the prisoners can “tell her everything” and some bring photos of their family to her. A prisoner told us she would speak to the chief of the unit if she had personal problems.

## HIV and sexual health

Prisoners accounted for thirty per cent of newly infected HIV people in 2001.<sup>18</sup> About 100 of the prisoners have AIDS and this information is kept confidential. Some prisoners arrive at the prison not knowing they have AIDS and only find out on being tested. There can be a delay in receiving test results. Medical care and drug treatment is given for AIDS. HIV positive prisoners can be discriminated against e.g. put into isolation unnecessarily, although this is changing. HIV positive patients do not always get an adequate diet. In theory, information on AIDS is given to all prisoners. However, in practice, this happens only when the health staff think it is necessary and prisoners expressed a wish for more information. The AIDS centre ran a project in the prison providing information, training and materials; this was very successful but has now stopped because funding ran out.<sup>19</sup>

MacDonald reported that DiaLogs, an NGO supporting HIV positive people, was planning to start an information and through-care project in several prisons including Ilguciema.<sup>20</sup>

## Substance addiction

Drug use has risen dramatically since reconstruction in Latvia, as in other Eastern European countries. In 1999, 410 people were registered as drug dependent in Latvia and there are now over 15,000, sixty-five per cent of whom are considered to be intravenous drug users.<sup>21</sup> Illegal drugs are cheap, a single dose of heroin costing less than a Big Mac in McDonalds. Drugs are readily available in schools and there has been an increase in heroin use amongst teenagers. Possession of illegal substances twice in one year is punishable by up to two years in prison, or a considerable fine.<sup>22</sup>

Although women prisoners thought they would be able to get drugs into the prison they were worried about getting caught and on the whole preferred not to use drugs in prison.<sup>23</sup> However there are cases of drug addiction for all drugs except cocaine. Ninety per cent of drug addicts

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<sup>18</sup> Morag MacDonald, *Research Project for the Central and Eastern European Network of Drug Services in Prison (CEENDSP)*, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 24.

have hepatitis C.<sup>24</sup> There is no national drugs policy in Latvia which impacts on provision in prisons.<sup>25</sup> MacDonald writes that ‘little is provided in the way of rehabilitation for drug dependent prisoners’. According to staff, this is due to a lack of money, staff, and rooms.

At Ilguciema there is not a specific drug rehabilitation programme but all prisoners are able to get help with drug and alcohol problems, although the prison doctor said that some ‘do not recognize they are ill’. Drug addicts can get substitution drugs. Serious cases are treated at the Central Hospital. Alcoholics can see the psychotherapist for one-to-one support, but she is not a trained drugs worker.<sup>26</sup> Peer support is not used in prison, for example through the use of Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous.<sup>27</sup> There are no needle exchange programmes in prison.<sup>28</sup> One prisoner from Ilguciema said that “some staff are very negative about drug users in here.” However, some staff did recognize the crucial importance of drug treatment programmes.<sup>29</sup>

On release, offenders with drug and alcohol addiction may continue their programmes in the community; a prison doctor will register them. The same happens for AIDS sufferers. However, staff admitted that continuing a drug programme can be difficult on release.

## **7. Education, work and training**

### **Education**

Ilguciema prison has a contract with a vocational school from which prisoners can gain diplomas. Their success is celebrated with a graduation ceremony; the name of the prison is not recorded on these certificates. There are two sewing groups and one hairdressing group; in 2005 a chef’s diploma was added. There are not enough places for the number of women who want to take part. There are also recreational art classes. After consultation with the prisoners it is hoped that a new vocational qualification will be offered in 2006; the prison hopes to offer a qualification in design later. A member of staff from the juvenile unit said that having three courses on offer was good for a Latvian prison. Education is complicated by some prisoners speaking Russian and some Latvian. There are language classes available in Russian, Latvian and English.<sup>30</sup>

There is also a contract with a night school offering education up to age fifteen/sixteen. There is no academic education at a higher level than this. There are approximately fifteen or sixteen people in every year of education up to age ten/eleven, and between five and ten people in the later grades. Prisoners going to school do not have to work. Prisoners may spend half a day at school and half gaining a vocational qualification.<sup>31</sup>

There are several good-sized classrooms equipped with blackboards and sewing machines and a hairdressing salon, where the public can get their hair cut. Apart from the salon and the sewing

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<sup>24</sup> QCEA visit to Ilguciema Prison, July 2005. Available at <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/prison/latviavisit.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Morag MacDonald, *Research Project for the Central and Eastern European Network of Drug Services in Prison (CEENDSP)*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>26</sup> QCEA visit to Ilguciema Prison, July 2005. Available at <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/prison/latviavisit.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Morag MacDonald, *Research Project for the Central and Eastern European Network of Drug Services in Prison (CEENDSP)*, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> QCEA visit to Ilguciema Prison, July 2005. Available at <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/prison/latviavisit.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

equipment (old equipment and materials from a company), the classrooms are bare and under-resourced. The women keep what they make in sewing classes.

The prison population at Ilguciema consisted of half Latvian speakers and half Russian speakers. Courses in Latvian are provided for the Russian speaking women and there is an examination they can take that, if passed, provides them with a certificate showing language proficiency. This is important, as without it they cannot get a job.<sup>32</sup>

## Work

Legislation requires prisoners to work if they are able to but jobs cannot always be provided; around eighty per cent of prisoners have jobs; this is more than in the local men's prison. The prison tries to divide the work into shifts so that as many prisoners as possible have the opportunity to work. Juveniles have to go to school if they do not have an education; they can work six hours per day in the school holidays. Recently, the prison received a new contract for sewing and gluing packages. Sometimes the standard of work is not high enough and the work is not accepted by the company.

Prisoners get paid less than the general population. Wages are paid into bank accounts and not given in cash. If they have been sentenced to pay a fine or child maintenance they have to pay this out of their wages but this cannot be more than half of their wages. Prisoners can spend money in the prison shop and send money to their children. Some spend money on medicines that are not available from the health centre or on other health consultants. We were told some prisoners do not have the initiative to work and so get low wages, others have money sent them by their families. Prisoners can have part of their wages held back for release (this used to be compulsory). Legally, prisoners should receive a minimum amount of money when released but in fact there are no funds for this. Clothing, shoes and money to get back home is provided plus twenty Latvian lats (28.50 euros).<sup>33</sup> Those with children get children's things too. On release, prisoners will register at the Employment Office to get welfare as they are registered as 'employed' whilst in prison.<sup>34</sup>

## 8. Minority groups

### Juveniles

In October 2005, juveniles made up 2.7 per cent of the Latvian prison population.<sup>35</sup> In July 2005 there were ten juvenile girls at Ilguciema; five awaiting trial and five convicted. Juveniles awaiting trial and sentenced juveniles are not supposed to be kept together, but the court allowed this because conditions are good in the unit. The longest sentence is for one year and the shortest is for eight days. All the girls are aged between sixteen and eighteen, but stays can be extended until age twenty-one.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Morag MacDonald, *Research Project for the Central and Eastern European Network of Drug Services in Prison (CEENDSP)*, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> For comparison, the monthly gross statutory minimum wage in Latvia in 2006 was 90 lats, equivalent to 128 euros on 1 January 2006 (Federation of European Employers). See on-line <http://www.fedee.com/minwage.html>

<sup>34</sup> QCEA visit to Ilguciema Prison, July 2005. Available at <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/prison/latviavisit.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> *International Centre for Prison Studies*, World Prison Brief, Prison Brief for Latvia [on-line], accessed 15 March 2007, available at <http://www.prisonstudies.org/>

<sup>36</sup> QCEA visit to Ilguciema Prison, July 2005. Available at <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/prison/latviavisit.pdf>

The juveniles share a home-like unit, next to the Mother and Baby Unit, which includes a sitting room with easy chairs, rugs, and a kitchen where they can cook their own meals if wanted. There is a small, windowless room which is used as a chapel; they told us that they pray there when they are sad. There is a good sized, well-equipped gym with purple walls, half a dozen machines, weights, aerobic mats, etc. They have aerobics and dance classes every day which they clearly enjoy. The girls share bedrooms which are rather small and dark, but with personal belongings and soft furnishings. There are two toilets and showers upstairs. There is a large garden adjoining the Mother and Baby Unit garden which they look after themselves; they also painted the walls themselves. They are allowed in the garden whenever they like except at night. There are two pet doves in the sitting room and two computers with games and a drawing programme.<sup>37</sup>

Before conviction, some of the girls were in school, but not all. All are now in education in the grades for between ages eleven/twelve and fifteen/sixteen, mostly in the two higher grades (except for three who had graduated inside the prison). Both those who had graduated and those still in education took vocational qualifications. Those in prison for the longest amount of time had graduated from all the vocational courses.<sup>38</sup>

The policy of the unit is not to separate juveniles from the outside world. An effort is made to provide different activities for the girls such as handicrafts, a poetry competition, plays and dances. There is a piano which one girl plays. A favourite activity is drawing. Volunteer organisations and NGOs from various countries have visited for workshops and courses, including male tutors to create normal conditions. These included spiritual care and a course designed especially for teenagers, dealing with women and sexual health, anger management, emotions, and communication. When the girls take part in activities like plays they get thanks from the administration and are taken on excursions such as a walk around the city or a trip to the zoo.

Juveniles on remand may phone home four times each month, and sentenced prisoners six times each month. Phone cards can be bought from the prison shop or sent by families. Girls share these with each other if a girl does not have one. They may send as many letters as they want. They are allowed twelve long visits and twelve short visits per year. Both parents and girls are searched. On Mothers' Day there is a two-hour visit for which they prepare a singing concert and bake things to eat on the day; the parents also bring food to eat together. They get ten holiday days per year. Families can send as much money as they want.

Juveniles may talk in confidence with tutors or the psychiatrist if they have problems. Seven of the ten had used drugs in the past and three had not tried drugs. They can go to the health centre any day they wish.<sup>39</sup>

Clothing is limited and by law juveniles are not allowed more than ten photos and letters in their room at one time. Old letters can be stored in a warehouse until their release.

In general, the girls seemed satisfied with the conditions, although we did not interview them in private. The head of the unit told us conditions may well be better for them here than at home. The girls seem to have a good relationship with the head of the unit who was quite young and did not wear a uniform. They asked what conditions were like in the West, such as what time juveniles have to go to bed. The girls said the worst thing about being in prison was missing their families and not having people who were close to them and that they were sometimes bored.

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<sup>37</sup> QCEA visit to Ilguciema Prison, July 2005. Available at <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/prison/latviavisit.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

## Foreign nationals

In October 2005, foreign sentenced prisoners made up 0.5 per cent of sentenced adult prisoners.<sup>40</sup> In July 2005, only three foreign national prisoners were being held at Ilguciema Prison. Two of these were awaiting trial and all were held for drug offences. Previous crimes committed by foreign nationals include drug offences, illegal immigration (from Belarus), and the organisation of trafficking.

## 9. Security and punishment

Various prison rules are designed to prevent bullying although it does still occur.<sup>41</sup> Verbal abuse is not tolerated and physical fights are punished.

Under Latvian law women may be held in solitary confinement for ten days (fifteen for men) and this period of time may be renewed twice.<sup>42</sup> Women are also entitled to larger cells than men.<sup>43</sup>

## Middle-Security Unit

There is one unit chief for between forty and seventy prisoners, and guards work only at night. The doors to the bedrooms are not locked and prisoners are free to come and go as they do not have a schedule. They are free to use the yards and gardens of the prison. The guard knocked on the bedroom door before we entered and generally guards seemed to treat the women with respect.

The material conditions in the middle-security unit were noticeably poorer than the specialist units so far described. The flooring was concrete, the rooms were quite dark with few furnishings and not cheerful, empty bed frames were piled up in one room. They did have personal belongings, radios and sometimes TV (prisoners pay for the electricity used). There is a large, under-equipped kitchen with fridge, kettles etc. where prisoners can cook the food they buy. It is locked at night. There was also a library. We spoke to one prisoner who worked in the library and said it was one of the good jobs.

We asked several women what their main worries were in prison. These were finding work and a home after release and not being able to help their children.

## 10. Staff and management

All members of staff seemed committed to their job and were willing to talk to us. They freely acknowledged faults in the prison such as the poor condition of the buildings. They seemed to have good relationships with the prisoners. At the end of the QCEA visit, the Deputy Governor,

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<sup>40</sup> *International Centre for Prison Studies*, World Prison Brief, Prison Brief for Latvia [on-line], accessed 15 March 2007, available at <http://www.prisonstudies.org/>

<sup>41</sup> Morag MacDonald, *Research Project for the Central and Eastern European Network of Drug Services in Prison (CEENDSP)*, p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> **Communication from the CPT:**

CPT, *Report to the Latvian Government on the visit to Latvia carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment from 24 January to 3 February 1999*, CPT/Inf (2001) 27 (November 2001), paragraph 174.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, paragraph 92.

the head of the MBU, and a senior guard were all eager to know what we thought of the prison. They asked how it compared to conditions in the West and ways in which it could be improved.

The head of the MBU told us about conferences she had attended on issues such as contact with families. There had been a long discussion in Latvia about the ages up until which the children of prisoners should be held in prison and she had succeeded in pushing the age up from two to four years. Staff members had had discussions with MPs and were interested in alternatives to custody and ways of improving contact with families.

Staff utilised external connections well. Good practice and other information were exchanged with NGOs and charities, and these organisations were used to provide services.

When a senior staff member was asked what she would like to change about the prison she replied: more space allowing two prisoners per room and more showers; more people working directly with prisoners such as tutors and more psychiatrists etc. to deal with prisoners' problems; the government to intervene more with tax reductions and benefits enabling prisoners to earn a living.

Training programmes for staff include aggression management, psychology and health protection. There is six months of compulsory training at the police academy and a college for prison workers. When recruiting guards they look for those with secondary education and professional training. Unit chiefs have a university degree; the head of the juvenile unit has a psychology degree. Officers have higher education.

Staff try to work in a multidisciplinary way "as we can't survive if we don't". Representatives from all departments meet each morning. A course of lectures runs on Fridays on new laws, reports from foreign countries and so on, and this provides a space for staff to share ideas.<sup>44</sup>

## **11. Additional information**

### **Spiritual Programme Unit**

This unit has sixteen places and is designed for women following a course of spirituality. There are three chaplains and eight teachers who are prisoners themselves. Prisoners must participate in the programme for three months before entry, and entry relies upon good behaviour. Prisoners may be removed from the programme for breaking the rules.

There are three stages of the diploma and it is equivalent to the first level in theology in university. This enables the women to preach, teach or continue their education upon release. Women taking the diploma can also go to the regular academic classes.

There is a stricter regime in the unit than in the rest of the prison but the conditions are better. There are two libraries and a kitchen where they can cook products that they buy themselves. There is a pet bird. There are four people to a bedroom. In the bedrooms (which are wallpapered) there are: two wardrobes, tables with tablecloth and chairs, mirrors, bedside tables, TVs, radios, plants, kettles, and rugs. Women are able to subscribe to magazines and can also knit and sew.

Anyone may attend worship in the chapel.

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<sup>44</sup> Morag MacDonald, *Research Project for the Central and Eastern European Network of Drug Services in Prison (CEENDSP)*, p. 29.

## Release

There is minimum help in the community for ex-offenders. The probation service is a recent addition to the Latvian criminal justice system. Offenders are worked with for six months prior to release and then in the community. There is a need for social service provision, particularly for the homeless. There are no halfway houses for women. A parliamentary deputy in Riga has just started an apartment with three places for women; there is a night lodging house with twenty places for homeless people. Women ex-offenders may lose their parental rights if they are homeless after release.

Prisoners who have work experience have more chance of finding a job than those that do not, but employers appear to be reluctant to employ ex-offenders.

## Other

For recreation, the prisoners put on dances, fashion shows, and plays. The graduation ceremony is a big event for the prisoners.

Sex between women prisoners is generally ignored by the authorities unless it is perceived as being harmful to others.<sup>45</sup>

Weddings can be, and have been, held at Ilguciema prison.

They do not have a social worker; the chief of the unit has to fill in for this role. None of the prisoners we saw wore uniforms.

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<sup>45</sup> Morag MacDonald, *Research Project for the Central and Eastern European Network of Drug Services in Prison (CEENDSP)*, p. 25.