

For members of the press

Estonian prisons do not have separate PR officers. For quick, reliable, and clear answers to any prison related question, members of the press are asked to e-mail the Prison Service's press information unit at vanlapress@just.ee [1].

If a member of the press wishes to communicate with a prisoner, it will take place on the same premise as in the case of prisoners' family members. This means that members of the press have the right to be in correspondence with prisoners, a prisoner has the right to call a journalist using the prison's pay telephone at prescribed times, and, if requested by a prisoner, the two may meet in the framework of a short-term visit.

Neither the prison nor the Ministry of Justice mediates the prisoners' contacts to members of the press. Also excluded is a search of prisoners that meet a journalist's desired parameters or agree to an interview, and forwarding their names to members of the press. Prisoners may not be photographed or filmed.

§ 23 of the Republic of Estonia Imprisonment Act very precisely formulates the objective of the prisoners' contact with the outside world: to facilitate the prisoners' contacts with their families, relatives and other close persons in order to prevent breaking the prisoners' social links.

The European Court of Human Rights has also found that restrictions on a prisoner's right to communicate with the media are justified. A prisoner can present their opinions to the media in writing or through an attorney.

Nevertheless, unlike other countries, exceptions have been made for journalists in Estonia: in the interests of a state based on the rule of law, members of the press are permitted to visit and communicate with prisoners. The foremost objective of the above communication is to ensure public monitoring of the activity of prisons.

Members of the press have the right to sound record their meetings with prisoners; use of cameras in such meetings is prohibited. If you wish to bring a sound recording device to your visitation of a prisoner, you must file a relevant request upon submitting your application for a visit. Without prior agreement, you will not be allowed to enter the prison with a sound recording device.

Source URL: <https://www.vangla.ee/en/news-and-numbers/members-press>

Links:

[1] vanlapress@just.ee