

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1450/09

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to the Council

Subject: Italian prison conditions and a European Prisons Charter

Recent figures published by DAP (the Italian Prisons Service) show that fully 51% of prisoners in Italy are awaiting trial.

The Campania region has the largest number at 4 351, and the region's Poggioreale prison holds the national and European record for overcrowding, with 2 544 prisoners, 2 200 of whom are awaiting trial. In addition to the problem of overcrowding Poggioreale is short of prison wardens, resulting in a minimum movement system, with the prisoners almost always locked in their cells.

In September 2008 a delegation from the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, a Council of Europe body, made a brief visit to Poggioreale to interview some of the newly arrived prisoners awaiting trial. The CPT report, however, has yet to be published on the organisation's website.

Given the above, could the Council clarify:

1. Whether it intends to urge the Committee for the Prevention of Torture to carry out inspections in those Member State prisons where grim conditions have been reported that violate the fundamental human rights of prisoners, such as at the Poggioreale prison in Naples?
2. What initiatives it has taken or intends to take in order to coordinate the adoption of a common position in favour of a revision of the European prison rules that will ensure a higher standard of protection for prisoners?
3. What is the current state of play regarding a European Prisons Charter covering all the Council of Europe's member countries (Council of Europe recommendations 1656 and 1747) and what efforts has the Council made heretofore in order to encourage the drawing up of such a charter?