

**Question for written answer E-001924/2023/rev.1**  
**to the Commission**  
Rule 138  
**Chiara Gemma (ECR)**

**Subject:** Overcrowding of prisons and shortage of prison staff

According to the Council of Europe's SPACE I report, the official density rate in European prisons is 107.4%. This situation, together with the endemic problem of staff shortages, is causing a general decline in the well-being of prison staff.

As also highlighted in a study on 'Prisons and detention conditions in the EU' (2023), there are no harmonisation measures setting minimum standards for detention conditions at EU level, as competence for prison matters lies exclusively with the Member States. In any case, poor detention conditions give rise to serious problems that undermine the fundamental EU values and principles on which judicial cooperation on criminal matters is based.

The Council of Europe has issued recommendations on the recruitment, selection, training and development of prison and probation staff with a view to safeguarding fundamental rights and freedoms in detention centres (2019 Council of Europe guidelines). In light of this, what is the Commission's view of this situation and what practical steps could the Member States take to ensure that overcrowding and staff shortages do not undermine detention conditions, particularly for women, psychiatric patients and vulnerable groups?

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