

Vanaja Prison - Finland

Introduction



Vanaja Prison is an open prison for women located in the countryside of Hämeenlinna, Finland. The Vanaja prison was founded in 1994 and is owned by the Prison and Probation Service of Finland (also named RISE) under the regulation of the Ministry of Justice. Criminal policy in Finland is known for its focus on a welfare society, where well-being, education and employment of the population are seen as key elements of a safe society. To achieve this, their main focus is on the reintegration of people in prison with the use of open detention as a standard for $\frac{1}{3}$ of the people in detention.

Scale

The Vanaja Prison can accommodate up to 57 people. The residents live in separated small-scale house units for five people and one larger family house dedicated to mothers or fathers with their children.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiated
- Community-integrated

Differentiation

Target group:

Vanaja Prison houses mainly adult women, regardless of the stage of their sentence. Whether lifelong sentences or minor offenses leading to shorter detention periods, all women are welcome here. The Vanaja prison is known for its family house, which provides housing for mothers or fathers and their babies up to the age of three. There is a specific house dedicated to this purpose, offering a range of specialized services.

Forms of security:

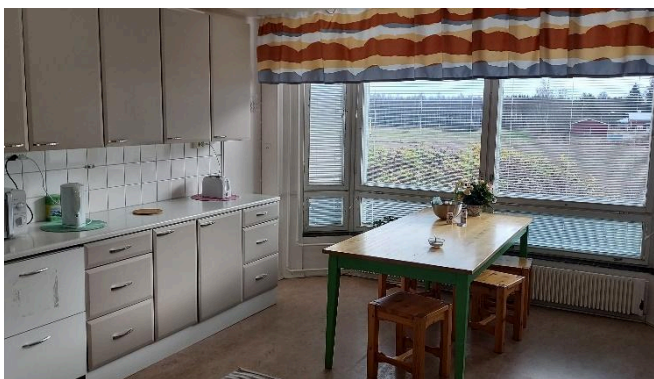
Vanaja Prison is considered the most open detention facility in Finland. The security primarily relies on relational security, while procedural and static security measures are relatively minimal. This main focus on relational security requires a strong personal commitment from each member of the staff in order to create good relations between residents and staff. Relational security in Vanaja Prison is described as almost 100% a matter of good relations.



The static security includes one video camera only. It is fitted at the entrance of the premises. Wearing an electronic bracelet around the ankle is a must. This is complemented with other static measures, such as allowing internet communication and social media in the facility but only from supervised computers.

In Vanaja Prison, procedural security doesn't only entail following a set of established rules and guidelines, it also requires a commitment to the community's norms and mindset. Rules involve residents presenting themselves at the reception desk every morning between 7.30 and 8.00 or being submitted to drug and alcohol tests after leaving and returning to the facility for authorized reasons like family visits.

Activities:



Because Vanaja Prison is an open prison, most of the daily activities take place outside the facility. Residents are in charge of their own schedule. However, there is a general schedule that indicates the daily programme, such as when residents are expected to do grocery shopping, when visits are allowed and in between which hours they are allowed to leave

the facility. The residents are obligated to work during the day. Once a week, all the residents are taken all together to the local supermarket. Cooking and housekeeping are mostly shared activities. Residents are allowed to go to various locations for leisure activities, work or education but the staff always needs to know where the person is going.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

Vanaja Prison is located in the countryside of the city of Hämeenlinna. Hämeenlinna is a town in southern Finland, about 100 kilometers north of Helsinki. It has a population of 68 043 (2022).¹ Known as a traditional, administrative, educational and cultural town, Hämeenlinna has a rich history dating back to the Middle Ages. In the past, the Vanaja prison was a place for people with disabilities. When the prison was built in the 1950s, it was initially a rehabilitation center for young people.

Today a private road, just off of the main road, leads to the facility. As a result, the facility is surrounded by a green area, near a forest and a lake, which are part of the facility. Despite being so isolated, it is still accessible by public transportation.

The architecture of Vanaja Prison is designed to create a unique and comfortable environment for its residents. It looks like a small village and consists of different apartment houses, of which one of them is a family house, and one main house spread out over the vast ground of the facility. Each apartment house consists of four to five bed rooms, a shared kitchen, a shared bathroom, a shared living room and a laundry area. Among those apartment houses, one is dedicated to families. The family house offers specific services, such as a shared family living room, a private relaxation area for breastfeeding, for example. The design of this apartment is more oriented to children.



The main house accommodates the head offices and common rooms, like a lobby, a TV-room and sports room. The lobby is the only place where residents are allowed to have internet access and where a pay phone has been installed. All the different houses have a homely atmosphere and are warmly decorated by using plants, carpets, handicrafts etc.

¹Hämeenlinna (Municipality, Finland) - Population Statistics, Charts, Map, Location, Weather and Web Information. (2022). *City Population*. Retrieved October 12th, 2023, from http://citypopulation.de/en/finland/admin/kanta_h%C3%A4me/109__h%C3%A4meenlinna/

Interaction with the community:

Although the facility is located outside the community, interaction takes place between the residents and the community. On the one hand, Vanaja Prison makes use of general services from the community, such as the medical center, hospital, public library, education... In addition, the residents go to the local supermarket and mostly work outside the Vanaja Prison. On the other hand, the facility provides services to the community like gardening. Sometimes they organize an open day in the summertime. This event is quite popular in the community.

Vanaja prison

Founded: 1994

Capacity: 57

Security level: Low

Nearest city/town:

Hämeenlinna (Finland)

Nature of interaction:

Visit by FARAPEJ

(01/11/2022)

Publicity/ read more

- About Vanaja Prison at the official website of RISE (Prison and Probation Service of Finland):

Vanaja Prison. (n.d.). *RISE*. Retrieved June 7th, 2023, from Rikosseuraamuslaitos. <https://www.rikosseuraamus.fi/en/index/units/prisons/vanajaprison.html>

- About the rules in the Vanaja Prison:

Disciplinary regulations of Vanaja Prison. (2017, 1 december). *RISE*. Retrieved June 7th, 2023, from https://vankeinhoito.fi/material/attachments/rise/jarjestyssaannot/jarjestyssaannotenglanti/sJRMYZFXd/Vanajan_vankilan_jarjestyssaanto_englanniksi_voimaan_1.12.2017.pdf