

Suomenlinna Open Prison - Finland

Introduction



Suomenlinna open prison is located in Helsinki, the capital of Finland. The facility is located on one of the islands that make up the Suomenlinna district, a district of Helsinki. Suomenlinna open prison was founded in 1971 as a subordinate to Helsinki Provincial Prison. It was established so the people in detention could help with renovating and maintaining the Suomenlinna fortress which is UNESCO world heritage. Renovating and

maintaining the fortress is still one of the possible activities for the residents but the possibilities have broadened since then. Suomenlinna open prison has developed into an independent institution and was transformed into an open prison in 2006. The facility is managed by the Finnish Prison and Probation Service (also known as RISE).

Scale

Suomenlinna open prison has a maximum capacity of 90 residents. Residents live in small-scale housing units. The units accommodate six to sixteen people.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiated
- Community-integrated

Differentiation

Target group:

The target group of Suomenlinna open prison are male adults who are approximately within zero to four years of completing their sentences. Despite this timeframe, the typical duration of residency in Suomenlinna open prison ranges from six to twelve months. Individuals serving longer sentences may transition to this facility if they are already adhering to a sentence plan in a closed prison. Those with shorter sentences can fulfill their entire sentence at Suomenlinna open prison. Residents must fit an open environment. This means they have to be motivated, suitable for an open prison, substance-free and they

must be willing to change their habits. The majority of residents are from the Criminal Sanctions Region of Southern Finland.

Forms of security:

Suomenlinna open prison operates under an open model, allowing residents the freedom to move around the facility and leave for work or educational activities. Security within Suomenlinna open prison primarily relies on relational measures, with minimal procedural and static security measures in place.



Static security in the facility is limited. The most important static security measure is an electronic ankle tag. This allows guards to track the residents of the facility. In addition to electronic monitoring, attendance checks are also conducted on moments that are indicated on their daily schedule. A small yellow fence surrounds the prison, however it is low. The main goal of the fence is not to keep incarcerated people in but to keep tourists out that visit the island for other reasons. Some locations are under camera surveillance. To guarantee the sobriety which the residents must agree to, periodic Breathalyzer or urine tests are conducted.

Few procedural security measures are implemented. Visits in Suomenlinna Prison are limited. The only possibility to receive a visit is during the weekends or on a holiday between 11:30 and 13:30. Residents must request a visit before Wednesday at 21:00. Unsupervised visits are not allowed, however residents are allowed to request a 12 hour leave to visit family once a month. If rules are violated, residents risk being sent back to a closed prison.

Activities:

As a resident of Suomenlinna open prison, there are various activities available. The most important aspect of life in this facility is participation in useful activities. While work is a common activity, it is not mandatory; residents can also engage in education, voluntary work, or other productive pursuits. Typically, residents participate in activities such as construction, woodworking, metalworking, or property maintenance five days a week. In addition to the jobs available within the facility, there are also opportunities for civilian work outside the prison.

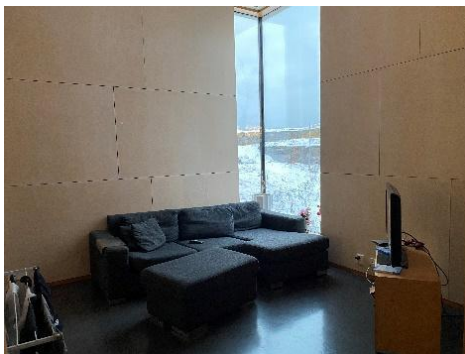
Residents can enrol in an educational programme. Education is available within the facility or outside the facility. Within the facility vocational education is provided by 'Keuda'. Residents can choose a vocational qualification in construction, property or gardening.

In their free time the residents can participate in activities within the facility. These activities include sports like jogging, going to the gym, outdoor games and during summer they can also play football, basketball or table tennis. Within the facility residents can go to a sauna or play instruments during their free time. Residents can also choose to do their own groceries and cook for themselves as the living units have a small kitchen, however most residents eat the food prepared in a large common kitchen.

All activities serve a rehabilitative purpose. When a resident arrives at the facility, a sentence plan has already been created. The resident, together with their senior instructor, works to develop a plan for achieving the goals outlined in the sentence plan. This process helps prepare the resident for eventual probationary freedom. The senior instructor evaluates the resident through a 'VAPSU-team,' a meeting where staff discuss any challenges or potential changes to the residents' weekly schedule.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:



Suomenlinna prison is located on a group of islands which is located off the Finnish coast near Helsinki. A total of approximately 800 inhabitants¹ live across the six islands that make up Suomenlinna. The island is also a tourist attraction as it houses a fortress that is UNESCO world heritage. It is located on the edge of the village. Despite the facility not being open to the public there is community integration. Residents are able to

work and study outside of the prison.

Suomenlinna Prison looks like a small 'village' with housing units. In a housing unit each resident has its own room however the kitchen, living space and sanitary facilities are shared between the residents that live in that housing unit. These living units exhibit a rather homely ambience. Outside and leisure areas are shared among the residents.

¹Suomenlinna – Fortress and history. (n.d.). *People of Suomenlinna*. Retrieved March 5th, 2024, from <https://www.suomenlinna.fi/en/fortress/people-of-suomenlinna/>

Interaction with the community:

Because Suomenlinna open prison operates under an open model, residents are able to engage with the local community through work, education, and other activities. Located on an island with a small population, the prison is on the outskirts of a village. Residents interact with the local community by working in various roles, such as assisting with the renovation and restoration of the fortress. They also have the opportunity to visit the public library. The local government plays an important role in facilitating this interaction by helping the residents find work opportunities, as well as providing housing and social services to support their reintegration into society.

Suomenlinna Open Prison

Founded: 1971

Capacity: 90

Security level: Low

Nearest city/town: Helsinki
(Finland)

Nature of interaction: Visited
and by RJN (27/11/2023)

Publicity/ read more

- Prison rules of Suomenlinna Open Prison:
RISE. (2019). *Service de l'application des sanctions pénales Région Sud*.
https://www.rikosseuraamus.fi/material/collections/20210512172518/7QFbyxqcL/Suomenlinnan_vankilan_jarjestyssaanto_1.12.2019_FR.pdf
- About Suomenlinna open Prison on their website:
RISE. (n.d). *Suomenlinna Prison*.
https://www.rikosseuraamus.fi/material/attachments/rise/esitteetenglanti/6KdJUhCKN/Suomenlinnan_vankilan_esite_EN.pdf