



**Convention against Torture  
and Other Cruel, Inhuman  
or Degrading Treatment  
or Punishment**

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**Committee against Torture**  
**Seventy-ninth session**

**Summary record of the 2074th meeting\***

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 16 April 2024, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Heller

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\* No summary record was issued for the 2073rd meeting.

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

### **Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention**

*Seventh periodic report of Austria (CAT/C/AUT/7; CAT/C/AUT/QPR/7)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Austria joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Austria**, introducing his country's seventh periodic report (CAT/C/AUT/7), said that Austria had a long tradition of active engagement in advancing the international system for the promotion and protection of human rights. The Government attached particular importance to the implementation of international human rights obligations in relation to the absolute prohibition on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It had given careful consideration to the recommendations made in that regard by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) following its seventh visit to Austria, in 2023. The country's policy of zero tolerance towards any act of torture or ill-treatment was reflected in the comprehensive legal provisions on torture contained in its criminal and administrative law and in its constitutional law, of which the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights) formed part.
3. As recommended by the Committee against Torture, the Austrian Ombudsman Board had been made fully compliant with the Paris Principles and it had been accredited with category A status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions in March 2022. The Board had its own separate budget, and its human and financial resources had recently been increased to strengthen its independence. Although Parliament was tasked with electing the Board's members, it did not have the power to dismiss them. Indeed, the Board's independence had been demonstrated in the somewhat critical report it had submitted to the Committee.
4. The recently established Investigation and Complaints Office for Allegations of Police Ill-Treatment (Police Complaints Office) had become operational in January 2024. The Office was responsible for investigating allegations of ill-treatment by the police on behalf of the public prosecutor's office of the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The Office operated separately from the Ministry's police branch, and safeguards had been put in place to ensure its independence. For example, its activities were monitored by an independent advisory board made up of legal and medical experts, academics and representatives of civil society. The advisory board also had the power to receive individual complaints.
5. A series of counter-terrorism measures had been implemented following the terrorist attack in Vienna on 2 November 2020, including actions intended to prevent the spread of extremist ideas, to improve investigation methods and cooperation between the competent authorities, to control dangerous persons more effectively, to make weapons laws stricter and to strengthen legislation combating terrorism, religiously motivated extremism and radicalization in prisons. The principle of safeguarding human rights had been at the heart of the related amendments to the Counter-Terrorism Act, which had entered into force in 2021 and 2022.
6. The Protection against Violence Act 2019 had strengthened victim protection and introduced new measures designed to prevent violence and ill-treatment, particularly of women. For example, perpetrators of violence could now be forbidden to approach victims or to enter their homes. In 2023, the police had held 234 conferences with representatives of victim protection facilities to discuss individual cases. Awareness-raising campaigns were organized for men and health-care personnel, and law enforcement officers, judges and public prosecutors also received special training. The Government had recently commissioned a study to analyse the risk factors and motives behind the country's high rates of violence against women and femicide over the previous 10 years. The results had demonstrated the complexity of the problem and had only strengthened the Government's resolve to pursue its prevention efforts.

7. Austria had approved 195,000 applications for international protection between 2015 and January 2024. In 2023, 743 unaccompanied minors had been granted international protection and, as at February 2024, 1,637 unaccompanied minors had received basic welfare services in specialized facilities. The principle of non-refoulement was respected throughout the State's asylum and return procedures. Furthermore, a Joint Operational Office had been opened in Vienna in 2016 to provide a space where law enforcement officials from across Europe could work together to combat trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and conduct joint international investigations.

8. In 2020, the national law enforcement authorities had put in place a comprehensive system to record incidents of hate crime and hate speech, including details of the motives behind each case. The new system had been synchronized with the databases maintained by the judiciary. Some 95 per cent of the Austrian police force had received compulsory training on dealing with those offences and, since 2021, the Government had published an annual report on hate crime.

9. Lastly, Austria was committed to providing law enforcement personnel with robust human rights training and attached particular importance to upholding human dignity during arrest and detention procedures. Members of the judiciary were encouraged to participate in both national and European training activities on human rights. The basic training provided for prison staff included instruction on human rights, and 2,600 judicial guard officers had received follow-up training on that subject. Since 2002, around 26,000 employees of the Federal Ministry of the Interior had taken part in awareness-raising activities on all forms of discrimination, including racism, antisemitism and xenophobia, organized in cooperation with the Anti-Defamation League.

10. **Mr. Liu** (Country Rapporteur) said that he wished to know whether there had been any recent cases that demonstrated the State party's commitment to treating torture as a serious crime and to punishing all acts of torture in a manner that was commensurate with their gravity. In that regard, he would welcome statistical information on the number of cases of torture and ill-treatment in which the aggravating and mitigating circumstances provided for in section 33 of the Criminal Code had been applied, including specific details of the different penalties that had been imposed.

11. He wished to know how effectively the State party implemented the recommendations made by the Austrian Ombudsman Board in its capacity as the national mechanism for the prevention of torture. In particular, given the close link between the prohibition of torture and the protection of all human rights, he would welcome further information on any action taken to respond to the Board's appeal to the authorities to enact laws and provide sufficient budgetary funding to create the general conditions required to safeguard human rights. He would also be interested in receiving further information on the monitoring activities carried out by the Board, including details of the types of police operation it oversaw. Confirmation as to whether its visits were announced in advance and whether the Board collaborated with other organizations, in particular non-governmental organizations, would also be appreciated.

12. The State party's report suggested that the questioning of an accused person would not be postponed in order to wait for his or her lawyer if such a postponement would result in the period for which the person was held in custody prior to a decision on his or her pretrial detention exceeding 48 hours. He wished to know whether the State party would consider taking special measures to uphold the rights of the accused person in those circumstances, such as amending its legislation to provide for the possibility of extending the maximum custody period. It would also be useful to know whether the accused person was able to raise an objection, request a review or seek other remedies when the criminal investigation authority exceptionally decided to deny his or her defence lawyer access to pretrial proceedings. He would be interested to hear why, according to the most recent CPT report, a lawyer was still not provided free of charge during police questioning to all adult detainees who could not afford to pay for a lawyer themselves. He wondered what measures were being taken to address that particular shortcoming.

13. The Committee would welcome further information on the steps taken by the State party to reform its legislation on preventive detention (*Massnahmenvollzug*). In particular, he would like to know what action was being taken to implement the recommendations made

by the Austrian Ombudsman Board concerning the equitable treatment of persons held in preventive detention, regardless of their age at the time of the offence committed, and the provision of adequate care and rehabilitation services for detainees with mental illness. In the light of the concern expressed by CPT that “ordinary” prisons in Austria were not suitable for the meaningful implementation of preventive detention, it would be helpful to know what steps the State party was taking to ensure that all persons held in preventive detention enjoyed conditions and treatment of an adequate standard.

14. Specific data on the significant increase in occupancy rates in preventive detention facilities would be welcome, as would an update on the establishment of additional treatment places in the relevant institutions in response to that situation and on any increase in the supportive measures in place, the number of health-care professionals on staff and the amount of financial support available. He was also keen to hear about steps taken by the judicial and administrative departments to carry out structural reforms of health-care provision in prisons and to coordinate human resources, particularly in the light of reports of shortages of psychiatrists and nurses at some facilities.

15. He would be grateful to receive data on the number of appeals filed by applicants for international protection deemed to have arrived from safe countries of origin, the percentage of applicants who filed such appeals and the success rate of those appeals.

16. He wished to know whether agencies or mechanisms had been established to support children, persons with disabilities, victims of torture and other vulnerable groups who had been victims of trafficking in persons. He would also like to know whether the State party had considered establishing a formal mechanism to swiftly identify asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons with specific needs, provide them with tailored accommodation and refer them to relevant specialized services. He was keen to hear how the State party ensured that evidence of torture and ill-treatment experienced by asylum-seekers in their countries of origin or transit was documented, as required under the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol). In addition, he wondered whether the State party had considered establishing a protocol for the sharing of such information and other relevant information on the specific needs and vulnerabilities of asylum-seekers with the responsible authorities and the courts. It would be interesting to hear how the State party ensured that asylum-seekers with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments were not subject to detention.

17. He would appreciate an explanation regarding reports that uniformed police officers with basic first aid training had been assigned to the medical unit of a migrant detention centre to perform duties normally carried out by nurses. He wondered how, in those circumstances, detainees’ right to a confidential medical examination was upheld. Information on any steps to be taken to improve the situation would be welcome.

18. It would be helpful to receive information on the treatment of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and on any measures to be taken in the future to improve protection for such children. He would also like to know whether unaccompanied minors were assured of placement in appropriate facilities and of immediate transfer of custody and whether a legal amendment facilitating the automatic assignment of guardianship to suitable caretakers would improve the situation in that regard. In addition, he would appreciate information on any developments regarding the creation of culturally sensitive best practice models or innovative educational models tailored to the unique needs of unaccompanied minors.

19. He wished to know whether the State party held data, disaggregated by sex, age, health condition and country of origin, on the number of people who had been returned, extradited or expelled from Austria since the Committee’s consideration of the previous periodic report. Data on the number and outcomes of appeals filed by asylum-seekers with respect to their asylum applications would also be appreciated. In the light of the December 2023 judgment of the Austrian Constitutional Court, he was curious to hear whether the State party would consider adopting revised legislation to ensure that legal assistance and representation for asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons was truly independent and that their interests were defended, and whether the State party would contemplate extending the provision of legal assistance to all first-instance asylum procedures. He also wished to know whether the

State party would consider increasing the staff of the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum to address its increased workload. Information on measures taken to improve material conditions in federal facilities accommodating asylum-seekers would be welcome.

20. He would like to hear about measures taken to monitor the treatment of the two individuals referred to in paragraph 132 of the State party's report, who had been extradited from Austria on the basis of diplomatic assurances as to their protection from ill-treatment. He wondered whether the State party remained of the view that a successful outcome had been achieved in both cases, and he would like to know whether other individuals had since been extradited under similar conditions.

21. The Committee would welcome information on steps taken by the State party to provide regular, targeted training on the standards of treatment and rights of asylum-seekers to persons working with them, including social care staff, as well as to asylum adjudicators, judges, law enforcement officers and health-care personnel; to implement and routinely evaluate comprehensive, ongoing training for public officials on the legal, psychological and cultural aspects of the asylum process; and to invest in culturally sensitive capacity-building to improve asylum case management. It would be useful to hear whether any follow-up mechanisms or measures were in place to monitor the long-term effectiveness of training programmes for prison guards and police officers. Lastly, he was interested in learning about the key strengths of such programmes, any areas for improvement identified in recent evaluations and any measures that the State party planned to take to address them.

22. **Mr. Iscan** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would welcome clarification of the status of international treaties such as the Convention, as well as the jurisprudence of international judicial organs to which Austria was a party, in the hierarchy of Austrian legislation. He wondered whether, in the event of doubt regarding the compatibility of an international treaty with national legislation, the Austrian courts would seek a preliminary ruling from the relevant treaty body, as they were required to do from the Court of Justice of the European Union if such a doubt arose in respect of European Union law.

23. He would be grateful to receive updated information on the current situation regarding interrogation rules, instructions, methods and practices and arrangements for custody, as well as the frequency with which they were reviewed. Relevant statistical data for the period under consideration would also be welcome, including data on any deaths in custody, indicating the place of detention, sex, age, ethnic origin or nationality and cause of death of the deceased.

24. He would be grateful for clarification of the State party's current laws on pre- and post-trial alternatives to detention and its use of such alternatives. In 2022, it had been reported that the State party's prison population rate was 93 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants, which was below the average observed across Council of Europe member States of 118 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants. He wondered whether a more recent figure was available and whether the delegation could provide updated statistics on the prison population. Clarification of the State party's reply to the issue raised in paragraph 23 (b) of the list of issues prior to reporting (CAT/C/AUT/QPR/7) would be welcome so that the Committee had an accurate understanding of new detainees' access to medical examinations within 24 hours of their admission to detention facilities.

25. The Committee would welcome further information on the State party's use of solitary confinement. It also wished to learn whether the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules), which contained guidance in that regard, had been incorporated into the State party's laws and training programmes.

26. He would like to know whether incommunicado detention was permitted in law and in practice. If that was the case, it would be useful to learn under what circumstances incommunicado detention was allowed, what body was competent to authorize it and whether the State party maintained a register of individuals who had been subjected to it. Statistical data on the use of incommunicado detention and details of any plans to abolish it would also be appreciated.

27. The delegation should indicate whether complaints of torture and ill-treatment were investigated promptly and impartially by an independent body and whether the State party collected statistical data pertaining to such complaints, for the purpose of keeping interrogation rules under systematic review. He also wished to know whether the State party had introduced any laws or legislative amendments to address the discrepancy observed in 2019 between the number of allegations of torture and ill-treatment and the number of investigations and convictions, whether public prosecutors were competent to initiate ex officio investigations when there was reason to believe that acts of torture or ill-treatment had been committed and to order a forensic medical examination of the alleged victims, and whether the alleged perpetrators were automatically relieved of their duties and prohibited from making further contact with the victims. Statistical data on the work of the newly established Police Complaints Office would be appreciated. In the light of the State party's comments in its reply to the issues raised in paragraph 26 of the list of issues prior to reporting that investigations into four prison service employees who were alleged to have neglected a 74-year-old inmate in Stein Prison had been discontinued following a finding that the employees had not grossly violated their duty of care to the prisoner, he would appreciate clarification of what exactly was meant by the term "grossly".

28. The delegation might wish to describe the current legislative framework governing the use of lethal force and comment on the compatibility of that framework with the Convention, the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the United Nations Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement. He would like to learn whether any allegations of unnecessary and excessive use of lethal force against protestors had been made in recent years. If so, could the delegation provide information on the investigations conducted and the prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators? The Committee would also be grateful for data on the use of rubber or foam bullets by police officers during demonstrations, including on the number of complaints, prosecutions, convictions and sentences handed down.

29. He wished to know whether the State party continued to consider that its experience of the use of Tasers had been positive. Information on any complaints concerning the use of such weapons and the steps taken to address those complaints would be welcome. It would be useful to learn what had been done to ensure that law enforcement and prison officers were able to identify that an individual was pregnant or had signs of cardiac damage and thus comply with the prohibition on the use of Tasers on such individuals. He wondered whether the State party would consider aligning its laws and policies on the use of Tasers with the Committee's recommendations on the matter, in which it was stated in particular that such weapons should not form part of the equipment used by staff in places of deprivation of liberty, including mental health facilities.

30. The Committee would welcome detailed information on the amendments made to the Counter-Terrorism Act in recent years. It also wished to know whether the State party had adopted or considered adopting a counter-terrorism strategy and a strategic plan aimed at combating radicalization leading to terrorism. It would be helpful to hear whether all law enforcement officers participated in counter-terrorism training programmes and whether a means of assessing the impact of such programmes had been developed. The delegation might wish to explain the State party's stance on ratification of the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism.

31. He would like to know whether the 1982 treaty between Austria and Liechtenstein, which established that individuals convicted in the latter would be transferred to Austrian prisons to serve their sentences, was consistent with the Convention. He would appreciate clarification as to whether the responsibility of ensuring that such individuals were afforded fundamental legal safeguards, including access to a lawyer, family visits and medical examinations, fell to the Austrian authorities or those of Liechtenstein and whether the Austrian Ombudsman Board was competent to investigate allegations concerning their treatment. He wondered which country's authorities would conduct investigations, hand down convictions and provide redress to those individuals should their rights under the Convention be violated. It would also be useful to learn which State would be accountable to the Committee when issues concerning those individuals arose and in the event that one of them lodged a complaint with the Committee.

32. **Mr. Buchwald** said that he would appreciate clarification as to whether paragraph 36 of the Asylum Act, which provided for the implementation of special border controls following the declaration of a threat to public order and national security, authorized public security agents to remove individuals who had entered the country illegally without giving them the opportunity to have an asylum application assessed by the relevant authorities. In cases in which agents decided to remove an asylum-seeker from the country, he wondered whether the individual concerned was able to appeal that decision and, if so, whether the appeal would have suspensive effect.

33. **Mr. Vedel Kessing** said that he would like to know what had been done to ensure that the Police Complaints Office was independent and perceived to be so by victims of alleged police ill-treatment. It would be useful to learn whether the Office was able to provide victims with financial compensation or redress or make recommendations to that effect.

34. **Mr. Contesse** said that he would be interested to hear whether the State party's courts had ruled on the legal status of the recommendations made to it by the United Nations human rights treaty bodies and whether there had been cases in which those recommendations had been cited as sources of authority. He would also welcome examples of cases in which the courts had applied the principle of non-refoulement on an ex officio basis.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.55 a.m. and resumed at 12.20 p.m.*

35. **A representative of Austria** said that the delegation would provide preliminary responses to the Committee's questions at the current meeting and would then reply in greater detail during the second part of the dialogue.

36. **A representative of Austria** said that the Police Complaints Office had begun its work on 22 January 2024 and currently employed 30 staff members. To date, it had received 123 allegations of ill-treatment, most of which remained under investigation. Its multidisciplinary team included not only investigators but also a psychologist and a human rights expert. All staff members had to undergo specific training on various issues, including human rights and interrogation techniques. In the interests of transparency, regulations were in place to ensure that any instructions given to the Office were submitted in writing and copied to the advisory board. The Office did not have the authority to award redress to victims, who were instead required to file a civil claim for damages. It worked under the guidance of public prosecutor's offices in criminal cases but also investigated disciplinary matters that fell below the threshold of criminal liability, reporting its findings to the relevant disciplinary supervisor, who then had to decide whether or not to take additional measures.

37. **A representative of Austria** said that the penalty for acts of torture pursuant to section 312a of the Criminal Code, namely 1 to 10 years' imprisonment, was the same as for crimes of comparable gravity. The range of the penalty meant that courts could exercise their independence by imposing a sentence tailored to each individual case. Crimes against humanity and war crimes against persons were punishable under sections 321a and 321b of the Criminal Code, respectively. In both cases, the penalty for the basic offence was 5 to 15 years' imprisonment. It was for public prosecutors to assess whether or not there were aggravating circumstances. Sentencing data did not include aggravating factors, with the exception of that mentioned in section 33 (1) (5) of the Criminal Code, namely racial, xenophobic or other particularly reprehensible grounds, which was subject to a reporting obligation. However, no such report had been made during the period under review.

38. **A representative of Austria** said that medical treatment in detention was based on the principle of equivalence with that provided to persons not deprived of their liberty. Inmates unable to receive adequate treatment in prison were escorted to a hospital or medical practice. The Government Programme for the period 2020–2024 provided for amendments to preventive detention provisions in line with recent judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. In December 2022, a law had been passed to amend regulations governing preventive detention in forensic-therapeutic centres. The amendments had entered into force on 1 March and 1 September 2023. In addition, the Criminal Code had been amended to replace language that stigmatized mental illness, incorporate stricter criteria for assessing the risk of recidivism and bring the timeline for renewing detention into conformity with the jurisprudence of the Court. Juvenile offenders could be subjected to preventive detention in a forensic-therapeutic centre only if the offence committed was punishable by life

imprisonment or a maximum prison sentence of at least 10 years. Case conferences had to be held at least every three years to consider the conditional release of persons who had been detained in such a centre for 10 years or more.

39. The Code of Criminal Procedure had been amended to provide for alternatives to pretrial detention in a forensic-therapeutic centre and the possibility of appointing an expert in clinical psychology in cases where a psychiatrist was not available in a timely fashion, thereby avoiding procedural delays, since a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist was required to be present throughout all trials that might result in a person's preventive detention. A bill introducing a second raft of reforms to the Code had been revised in the light of the Government Programme and was being finalized by the Federal Ministry of Justice. Cornerstones of the reforms included introducing a separate law on the enforcement of preventive detention, maintaining a clear organizational and physical separation between forensic-therapeutic centres and regular prisons, clarifying the legal position of persons in preventive detention, improving the judicial protection afforded them, enhancing the conditional release process and the quality of post-rehabilitation support, and establishing special regulations for juveniles.

40. During the transitional period for the implementation of the law passed in December 2022 to amend regulations governing preventive detention in forensic-therapeutic centres, numerous preparations had been made for release management. It had become apparent, during that process, that certain minimum conditions could not be guaranteed outside the prison system, particularly in terms of psychiatric care, the provision of which had been under sustained pressure ever since the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. It had therefore been decided not to proceed with the unconditional release of juvenile offenders who had already spent at least 15 years in preventive detention or who had committed a less serious crime for which continued detention was not justified, thereby giving the *Länder* and health-care facilities more time to ensure that the individual needs of each offender could be met upon release. In accordance with section 17c of the Juvenile Court Act, for each offender concerned, a case conference must be convened immediately or, if conditional release had not yet been granted, by 31 December 2023. Case conferences brought together all persons involved in an offender's care in prison and those affected by the offender's possible release, including treating psychiatrists and psychologists, representatives of the probation service, the aftercare and health-care facilities of the *Länder* and, if possible, relatives of the offender. Together, they worked to create the necessary conditions for release and prevent relapses, including through the provision of therapy.

41. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall prison occupancy rate had been brought below 90 per cent through measures such as postponing the enforcement of sentences and increasing the use of electronically monitored house arrest. Since the end of the pandemic, the rate had begun to rise again but was being continuously evaluated and managed to prevent overcrowding to the extent possible. Renovation works, mainly at the Vienna-Josefstadt prison, which was the largest in the country, meant that there was currently reduced capacity. Electronically monitored house arrest had been introduced as an alternative to detention on 1 September 2010. As at 15 March 2024, some 3.4 per cent of persons who would otherwise have been in detention facilities had been serving their sentence under house arrest, an expansion of which was being considered to relieve the burden on the prison system.

42. Each year, prisons were allocated the number of posts needed to fulfil their statutory mandate. As at 1 March 2024, a total of 96.7 per cent of prison guard posts had been filled. The Director General of the Prison Service was constantly endeavouring to fill vacant posts, including through targeted public relations campaigns and efforts to recruit newcomers, in particular women and persons of migrant origin. The Prison Service Academy organized regular online recruitment days, the most recent of which had taken place on 20 March 2024. Furthermore, two recruitment officers had started work on 1 July 2023.

43. Members of the judiciary were offered ongoing training to ensure full compliance with human rights standards. A compulsory human rights module had for many years been included in the four-year training programme for prospective judges and public prosecutors. Appointed judges and public prosecutors had an explicit obligation to undergo further training in the area of fundamental and human rights, a topic that had featured in the judicial office examination since 2008. Specialist seminars on family and criminal law and training



courses on equal treatment, combating racism, fundamental rights and interculturalism were held on an ongoing basis. There was a training module on judicial and modern history for judges, prosecutors, public servants and prison staff that dealt in detail with antisemitism, racism and National Socialism. Members of the judiciary were also able to participate in European training activities, in particular those organized by the European Judicial Training Network and the Academy of European Law, and in exchange programmes with other European Union member States. The topic of human rights was also a key component of all basic training programmes in the prison service. Since 2012, more than 2,600 prison officers had received follow-up training on the topic at 170 events. The content of training programmes was constantly reviewed by the Prison Service Academy.

44. **A representative of Austria** said that steps taken in recent years to increase the number of health-care professionals had included encouraging more persons to train in psychology, creating new training pathways, facilitating recognition of foreign degrees, awarding financial incentives to all student nurses, granting competence extensions to nursing assistants and increasing care worker salaries.

45. **A representative of Austria** said that, in 2023, the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum had received 58,000 asylum applications and had granted international protection in 24,000 cases. Its staff had numbered 1,194. The average duration of the asylum procedure at first instance had stood at five and a half months, within the legal limit of six months. The number of pending cases had decreased significantly, from 44,400 at the start of the year to 28,000 at the end. Staff at the Office received comprehensive training, which included modules developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on vulnerability and flight, interviewing women, children and young people in refugee and asylum procedures and meeting their special protection needs, protection checklists, and dealing with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer applicants. The training given also included content produced by the International Organization for Migration and non-governmental organizations, together with modules on dialogic communication, intercultural communication and the asylum interview method devised by the European Union Agency for Asylum.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*