

# Who are other national bodies conducting visits?

As well as a NPM there may be other bodies carrying out visits to places of detention or undertaking work that is relevant to the NPM mandate. These visits may be regular or may be on an ad hoc basis.

- Internal inspectorates. Many states have established internal inspectorates within or as a government body. They are characterised by their dependence upon the authorities they are meant to supervise. They may be based within a specific ministry or department, for example an internal prison inspectorate based within the agency responsible for prisons, or may be a department in themselves. An internal inspectorate's role can be limited to checking or auditing compliance with procedures and policies, or broader to include respect for human dignity and human rights.
- Other independent bodies. A [National Human Rights Institution](#) and/or Ombudsperson usually has a broad mandate to monitor and promote respect for human rights, and may have the power to examine individual complaints. Some states have specialised ombudsmen institutions focused on a specific topic, for example an Ombudsperson for children or for the military. Although they may not be a NPM, their mandates may extend to visiting places of detention and to issues of criminal justice.
- In some states specialised oversight bodies have been established. These bodies often have a double mandate both to examine conditions of detention in the places under that Ministry's control and advise the Ministry on necessary improvements. For example, some states have health inspectors who monitor the quality and safety of mental health and disability services.
- Lay visitors. Some states have a scheme allowing members of the public to visit certain places of detention. Members of the public are appointed as being able to carry out this role. They can visit certain places of detention, see the facilities, inspect records, and observe interactions between staff and those who are detained.
- NGOs. Human rights NGOs and civil society groups may get authorisation to visit places of detention based on agreement with the authorities or within law or regulations. These visits may be on a regular basis or may be ad hoc.
- Parliamentarians. In some states members of parliament or a parliamentary commission have the mandate or powers to visit places of detention. This mandate varies; in some states parliamentarians can visit without authorisation whereas in others they must seek permission first.
- Judges and prosecutors. In some states judges and/or prosecutors have the mandate to visit places of detention. This may be to conduct general monitoring of conditions or for a specific purpose, such as to guarantee the individualisation of a sentence or to offer an appeal of the authorities' decisions.

# Why coordinate with other bodies conducting visits?

The [Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture \(SPT\)](#) has stated that a “NPM should establish sustainable lines of communication [...] with other relevant national and international actors in the field of prevention of torture, including the SPT, and with civil society organisations”.

While keeping in mind the unique role, mandate, and independence of the NPM, coordination can be useful at a technical level and strategically: to maximize the impact of the NPM.

## Technical cooperation

Coordination between bodies that visit places of detention will enable each of the bodies to perform their specific role while not duplicating the work of other bodies. Working together should also enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Bodies are able to share, collate, and check information with each other. They can discuss issues, how solutions may be implemented, follow-up on implementation, and advocate for changes. Each body will have its own role and mandate, and be able to contribute to these discussions from their own point of view.

NPMs and other bodies may be able to share information about issues that they are seeing. Exchanging information is particularly important for NPMs who do not have a complaints function. Receiving information about complaints from another body can enable a NPM to identify ongoing issues, aid discussion on which place or places of detention to visit, and contribute to developing the strategy or plan of the NPM. Because they often have access to more information (including person information) than other monitoring bodies, in exchanging information NPMs need to be extremely careful to respect the confidentiality, security, and sensitivity of that information.

Coordinating with other bodies in the follow-up of recommendations may be beneficial. The other bodies may be able to provide information on the implementation of recommendations. When a recommendation is not being implemented they can discuss the reasons why and possible means of ensuring implementation.

When views align they can work together on issues, advocating for changes, and ensuring implementation. Bodies may be able to cooperate to push for implementation of recommendations and rectification of issues together as a coalition.

Creating change can be more effective when numerous bodies are advocating for the same or similar recommendations.

## Strategic cooperation

Beyond these more technical aspects of cooperation, it is important to underline the strategic benefit for NPMs of working with others. In particular, by targeting other monitoring and inspection bodies through recommendations and dialogue, NPMs can encourage them, over time, to work in a more preventive way.

Influencing the methodology, thematic perspectives and understanding of the importance of torture prevention among other monitoring bodies can make them work in a more torture preventive way. This has an important multiplier effect because specialised monitoring bodies may be more regularly in specific detention environments than the NPM, with its broad mandate covering all types of places.

In many countries, for example, sectors covered by the NPM mandate have dedicated supervisory or inspectorate bodies.

Follow-up with such bodies is key to prevention, including by pointing out the weaknesses and strengths of the various supervisory bodies' focuses and working methods.

The importance of this kind of cooperation has been stressed by a number of NPMs who see other monitoring bodies as both a key source of information as well as a key target of recommendations and advocacy. Among the most sustainable achievements of NPMs may be changes not only in conditions and treatment in detention but also changes in the practices and procedures of other monitoring bodies.

# How to coordinate with other bodies conducting visits?

As in question 2 above, how to coordinate can be broken down into both technical and strategic aspects.

## Technical coordination

How to coordinate with other bodies who undertake visits will be dependent on the structure and situation of the NPM, and on the structure and situations of the other body or bodies including whether or not they are independent from government.

Some NPMs have an informal relationship with other bodies where they may meet or share information when a need or issue arises. Others have a relationship that is formalised by a memorandum of understanding, which sets out each party's requirements and responsibilities. How the bodies and the NPM decide to cooperate will depend on their specific mandates, needs, and relationship to the government.

A good practice is to consider who should be in contact with whom. It may be appropriate for the NPM chair(s) and staff to have working relationships at different levels with other bodies. It may be useful to have an established point of contact within each body.

NPMs coordinate with other bodies in various ways. Some hold regular meetings, hold meetings on an ad hoc basis, undertake joint visits, co-operate on certain issues, exchange information, and undertake joint activities such as conducting training.

In exchanging information a NPM needs to be careful to respect confidentiality, security, and sensitivity of information. NPMs should be guided by the do no harm principle.

A new NPM should ascertain what other bodies conducting visits exist within their state. The NPM may wish to meet with them to establish a relationship and discuss how to ensure continued cooperation.

Finally, it is important to underline that when engaging in cooperation, the NPM must nevertheless be careful to remain independent. Coordination and cooperation do not necessarily mean agreement. This is particularly important in the context of visits and information sharing, where a precondition to cooperation must be to ensure that other monitoring bodies fully respect the do no harm principle and the confidentiality and security of information.

## Strategic coordination

Following on from the points made in question 2 above, the NPM has a variety of ways in which it can maximize its impact by engaging strategically with other monitoring bodies.

This can be done in relation to the three levels of: understanding, thematic perspectives, and methodology.

Strategic coordination may involve training and education for staff of other monitoring bodies on the added value of the preventive approach. It also includes dialogue at different levels on both the approach and on particular themes and priorities. NPMs may also choose to direct specific recommendations at other monitoring bodies in order to encourage them to change or adopt particular practices or methods or to take on particular priorities.