

In Focus

A VIRTUAL PRISON

The electronic ankle is slowly getting a wider use in Swedish correctional care. Offered both as an alternative to short prison sentences and for parolees who have been sentenced to long prison terms, it allows offenders to serve their sentences at home and hold a job, but at the same time remain under intensive supervision.

The first electronic ankle, also called "footcuff" or "tag", was attached to a prisoner in Sweden on August 11, 1994. Intensive supervision by means of an electronic monitoring device started off as an alternative only for sentences carrying short prison terms. In 2001, a pilot project for inmates serving longer sentences was initiated. A person sentenced to a minimum of two years in prison was given an opportunity to serve the last one to four months of this sentence at home while wearing an ankle.

Shortage of space is not the main reason for this experiment with intensive electronic supervision although Swedish prisons are overcrowded. The main goal is to reduce the risk of recidivism.

"We know that the transition from prison to life on the outside is a very critical period, and we hope that the ankle will ease the adjustment to an 'ordinary' life," says Annika Lovén at the Ministry of Justice.

In the spring of 2004, Sweden's National Council for Crime Prevention published its evaluation of how 203 individuals had fared for a period of six months after the end of their respective periods of conditional release from prison with intensive electronic supervision. The social situation had improved greatly during the time they were fitted with the ankle. When they left prison, 52 percent had a home of their own. When the follow-up period ended, this figure had climbed to 72 percent. The same improvement applied to work. When they began their period with the ankle, 31 percent had paid employment. At the end of the period, 56 percent held a job.

A majority of the group of 203 were first-time offenders, and many already had a functioning structure that they could return to after completing their sentence.

The positive figures can also be attributed to the fact that conditional release always occurs with backing from the Probation Service. There is a careful selection process and an evaluation of the prisoner is done before he is considered eligible to be fitted

with an ankle. The preconditions for being considered are a maximum of one previous conviction and no record of bad behavior while in prison. The applicant must be drug-free, have access to approved housing with electricity and a telephone and the possibility of such activity as work or studies.

Individuals convicted of crimes against a close relative, or non-Swedish citizens who are supposed to be deported after completing their sentence, have little prospect of being released from prison with the ankle.

Together with their contact person, inmates draft a plan for their period of supervision at home. Probation Service then equips the person's home for supervision. A mini-computer plus a modem as large as a shoe box is installed. The computer contains a receiver that picks up signals from the ankle and must unconditionally be left on, day and night. The convict's schedule, for example departure for work, arrival at home and other scheduled activities outside the home, is programmed into the computer.

When the convict has been "tagged" with a transmitter attached to one ankle, he or she must follow this daily schedule exactly. Improvisations are out of the question. If the person is supposed to leave home for a job at 7:30 a.m., a margin of perhaps five minutes before and five minutes after is accepted. If this time is not respected, the computer sends an alarm to a monitoring center. Equally tough rules apply at the end of the working day. A person who usually takes the bus home may not suddenly get a ride in a neighbor's car and arrive home early, or the computer will react immediately. At the workplace, there is a specially designated contact person who sends an alarm if the convict does not arrive at work. This is because the computer does not operate at the workplace.

A couple of times a week, inspectors from the Probation Service visit the convict's home. Their task is to check that everything is working according to schedule as well as to perform a drug test. A convict with an electronic ankle must abstain from all drugs. Not even a glass of wine is tolerated.

A convict who violates any of the regulations is brought back to prison and must complete the sentence there. A minority, six percent according to the National Council report, have to return to prison because they cannot handle the combination of prison discipline and home life. For the majority, the strict rules are helpful. The Swedish government now wants to expand intensive electronic supervision. *Ingmarie Froman*



Female students are being discriminated at university because they have better grades

HÖGSKOLE-DISKRIMINERING

S Den 1 juli 2005 infördes nya förbud mot könsdiskriminering. Sedan dess uppmanas taxiåkare att byta tjejtaxor mot "solotaxor" för alla som åker taxi sent.

Frisörer uppmanas att ändra sina prislistor så att de tar betalt efter kundens hårlängd i stället för att ha olika herr- och dampriser.

Samtidigt ser myndigheterna mellan fingrarna när universitet och högskolor runt om i Sverige systematiskt ägnar sig åt könskvotering. Framför allt handlar det om kvotering av män vid antagning till utbildningar man tycker att andelen kvinnor är för hög.

Bakgrunden är att kvinnor sedan flera år har bättre gymnasiebetyg än män och att högskoleförordningen sedan 1 januari 2003 tillåter 10% godtycke vid antagning för "att öka den sociala och etniska mångfalden".

Karlstads universitet har bestämt att jämn könsfördelning är uppnådd när andelen män och kvinnor är minst 40 respektive 60 procent. För att en manlig sökande ska få förtur krävs inga andra meriter än att ha blivit godkänd i gymnasiet och att man har sökt den aktuella utbildningen i första hand. På sjuksköterskeutbildningen antogs totalt 76 studenter varav 11 män var inkvoterade. Hela 71 kvinnor som nekades plats på utbildningen hade högre betyg än den manliga sökande med lägst betyg som kvoterades in.

Nu har Centrum för rättvisa lämnat in skadeståndskrav mot universiteten i Karlstad och Örebro på totalt 360 000 kronor för tre unga kvinnors räkning. Om universiteten inte medger att de gjort sig skyldiga till en otillåten könsdiskriminering och betalar skadestånd till de drabbade kommer universiteten att stämmas i tingsrätt.