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Immigrants given language and vocational training

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Immigrants held in detention centres are being taught basic language skills through an EU-funded project that also aims to give them cultural and job-seeking training to better integrate into society.

The project, worth €385,000, has just been launched at Lyster barracks.

Migrants in detention are provided with language training and a cultural orientation exposing them to Maltese society, as well as vocational training by a group of trained staff.

The project, called Cope - Coordination and Provision of Welfare Services in Closed Centres, is one of a series of projects funded by the EU to help Malta deal with immigration, said Jesmond Camilleri, the director of programme implementation at the Justice and Home Affairs Ministry.

He was delivering a presentation to members of the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (Meusac) who were briefed on Malta's immigrant situation.

Mr Camilleri outlined that, between 2004 and 2007, about €1.9 million in EU funds were committed to projects involving immigrants. These projects included the building and maintenance of detention and open centres, the purchasing of equipment for the Armed Forces, legal assistance to asylum seekers and the provision of food for detained immigrants.

About €117 million in EU funds had been allocated for the years 2007 to 2013 for projects that fell under three main areas: external border funds, European refugee funds and return funds.

The bulk of the sum, about €107 million, was going towards external border projects that include strengthening the AFM and police and enhancing border surveillance.

The EU was also giving Malta about €5 million in European refugee funds that will go towards projects aimed at ensuring that immigrants are kept in safe centres. These include setting up a database for the electronic management of asylum process documentation, seeking ways to implement responsibility sharing initiatives in the area of asylum and training personnel to deal with immigrants.

Another €5 million will be given in return funds for initiatives that cater for the repatriation of immigrants.