

Experts warn that prisons might lead to radicalization of prisoners

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Despite the fact that a third of prisoners in Malta are foreigners, until now it never emerged that the Corradino Corrective Facility resembled other prisons as a source for radicalization of prisoners. This was the conclusion of a European symposium as part of the European Union Sera Project, which is trying to address the problem of prisoners' radicalization and which was frequently the cause of terrorist attacks in European countries.

The EU Sera project is aimed at making an indepth assessment on radicalization and see what can be done to avoid it. The project started in France last December and its partners include Malta, Italy, Spain, Belgium and Turkey. A symposium which examined the radicalization process in prisons was organised by the Criminology Department at the University Residence in Lija.

Dr Sandra Scicluna, Senior Lecturer at the Department, said that it does not emerge that in Malta radicalization exists, however it will be right for authorities to be aware of the problem and avoid situations that create an environment for radicalization, including in prison.

"In prison they are alone, feel certain anger etc...they come out radicalized from prison and commit atrocious crimes to kill many people; they place bombs", Dr Scicluna said.

She added that the fact that there is only one prison in Malta and voluntary organisations visit foreign prisoners, helps these people not to feel being abandoned.

The symposium was also addressed by foreign experts, including two Belgians who said that the radicalization problem in prisons is well felt; the most exposed are foreign nationals who, however, are born in Belgium and many times live in poor districts where there is a concentration of people that also leads to radicalization. They related examples of what happened in the past years.

"In his district having not that much chances than other Belgian youngsters have and then he's involved in ideas, involved in fantasy but also in trying to mean something, to make something in his life," Benedict Leesen said.

The experts stated that the perception that these persons appear aggressive, with beards or with a low level of education may be mistaken.