

# Malta: A new therapeutic centre will soon offer specialised treatment for young drug and alcohol abusers

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*Services for young drug and alcohol abusers used to be absent in Malta, resulting in situations where young people were treated with adults, at times by being sent to prison or housed in Malta's mental hospital. The creation of a new therapeutic centre for adolescents through close state-church cooperation will soon fill this important gap as it will provide young people with specialised rehabilitation services.*



## Description

In an expression of how the State and the Church, which has very strong roots in Maltese society, can collaborate for the common good, the State has donated land to Caritas Malta to build and run a new therapeutic centre for adolescents battling drug and alcohol addiction. The State has also entered into an agreement to support its running.

Caritas Malta has been involved in providing services for the rehabilitation of adult drug users for many years, but it had no places where adolescents could be assisted in a separate facility from adults. In the absence of adequate places to host such youths, these were often housed in prison or at Mount Carmel, the mental hospital. Neither environment is conducive to rehabilitation especially for this special group. Through this project adolescents will no longer be placed in these environments. Instead, they will follow tailor-made programmes which are more adapted to their age.

Besides the professional services required to help rehabilitation, the new centre will include facilities such as a place for agricultural activities, a pet therapy area and a multi-purpose gym.

The centre, which has required an initial investment of €3.3 million, will be run by Caritas and will house up to 20 adolescents. The current State-Church agreement covers a three-year period,

during which the centre is being built and will eventually become operational. This agreement will cost the State around four million euros in the first three years, of which about 2.7 million will be for residential services and 1.3 million for services within the community and therapy.



## Outlook and commentary

This is an important development. Drug and alcohol addiction among young persons is very problematic in Malta and the services currently provided by both the State and the Church are not enough. The practice of sending young drug and alcohol abusers to prison or to a mental hospital was certainly not conducive to rehabilitation. This new facility will be able to provide specialised and tailor-made services to this special group.

Among therapeutic professionals, this development has been hailed as a very important initiative that will help very young persons willing to improve their lives to have access to adequate resources to do so.

What this new development does not do is to provide an outreach programme for persons who suffer from these addictions but have no will to change their life-styles. Such an outreach initiative, which is still missing in Malta, would be extremely important.

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## Further reading

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