

A Local Development Strategy for Gozo 2023-2027

Consultation - August 2023

The Gozo Business Chamber's Feedback on the Consultation Process

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THE GOZO BUSINESS CHAMBER

1. Introduction

The Chamber welcomes positively the public consultation to discuss the Local Development Strategy for Gozo 2023 – 2027, which strategy will guide the disbursement of funds under the LEADER programme.

Taking into account that the main measures under the previous programmew were the following:

- **Measure 1:** Develop an ICT media platform for the valorisation of Gozitan lifestyle concept - Gozo in 21st Century Media;
- **Measure 2:** Maximise the contribution of Gozitan agriculture to the Gozitan culinary tradition, its evolution and future sustainability - A Truly Holistic Gozitan Gastronomy;
- **Measure 3:** Develop Gozo's all-season tourism product offering - Gozitan Attractions and Innovative Events for all Season;
- **Measure 4:** Improve the attractiveness of living in Gozo for young persons and young families - Rejuvenating Gozo;

And based also on its previous experience with respect to the last implementation period, the Chamber would like to provide the following feedback.

2. The Administration related to the implementation of these Projects.

The Chamber would like to comment on the administration required under the previous programming period. This was quite complex, especially for small NGOs like the Chamber with very limited resources. The Chamber is therefore requesting that the level of administration required is aligned to the amount of the financial allocation, especially when it comes to the documents being requested (especially at application stage), and the procedures that need to be implemented.

The new programming period also needs to take into consideration that certain cost items such as staff costs are significant for small entities like the Chamber. Staff costs are an important cost item, especially in the case of NGOs who have limited sources of revenue. Having a lower funding threshold (as was the case under the previous programming period) jeopardises small entities such as the Chamber assuming a lead partner role in such projects.

It is also important to note that under the previous programming period certain objectives consisted in recruiting new employees to an organisation. Considering small realities like the Gozo Business Chamber whereby projects are a necessary pre-requisite to retain existing employees, certain conditions which may not be easily reachable especially for certain small realities be they business, public, or NGOs like the Chamber need to be considered. Moreover in the case of small NGOs like the Chamber, retaining existing employees in the future would rest on the entity getting more projects. This needs to be considered in view of the fact that it is a pre-requisite that certain employees would need to remain with the organisation for a certain number of years.

3. Partnerships

The previous programming period required partnership with other entities (local council, businesses and NGOs). While this idea is a good one in principle, in practice this led to a lot of difficulties, especially when it comes to the documents to be requested to the partners, at application stage, and also when it came to the effective implementation of the project.

This also led to situations whereby partners were being requested to participate in a bid, without than actually being involved in the effective implementation of the project. It is thus important that in the new

programming period, partnership is not an obligatory pre-requisite to participate in a particular bid. In this regard, project bids need to be considered on their own merit and on the value they add to a particular measure. Moreover, if there are partners, these need to be effective players within the project's implementation process.

4. Entrepreneurship

The Chamber believes that an important work stream related to the next programming period should be tied to enhancing entrepreneurship in Gozo.

The Chamber has for the past four years been working on this concept through its flagship initiative: 'The Youth 4 Entrepreneurship Gozo'.¹ This has proved a very effective programme. After its initial launch, an effective partnership was built with Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ, and also with other entities such as the JAYE Foundation which focuses its efforts on enhancing a sense of entrepreneurship among youth. This led to specific sessions being developed to coach prospective applicants. The specificity of this programme lies in the fact that contrary to other programmes it builds on the self-confidence of individuals. While the contest is open to everyone, it is mostly Gozitan individuals who apply, as the idea needs to be related to Gozo. Every year a specific theme is selected, with the focus in the past years being on areas such as sustainability and digitalization. These were and still are European wide themes, but most of all, they are areas which have great potential for Gozo such as digitalisation, and sustainability.

This programme has also proved an effective platform for youth as subsequent to their participation in this contest they went on to participate in other programmes or actually try to start their idea.

It would therefore be ideal if there is a next step which would complement such type of programmes but which is intrinsically tied to the reality of Gozo.

However, it is also important that we seek to develop a sense of entrepreneurship at a very young age. In this regard the Chamber has developed a programme which seeks to enhance a sense of entrepreneurship among youth and small children. This programme targets students from primary level going up to upper secondary. It is to be noticed that similar programmes are already being implemented in Malta through the JAYE Foundation. It would be ideal if such programmes seeking to raise awareness on entrepreneurship in schools are also implemented in Gozo. The programme developed by the Chamber takes into consideration the specific reality of Gozo. Nonetheless, while the Chamber has invested significantly to develop the teaching resources, it does not have the required resources to implement this programme on the ground. It would be ideal if such funds were made available through the Leader Programme.

5. Alignment of the Local Development Strategy to the Regional Development Strategy

In 2021 the Gozo Regional Development Strategy published for consultation 'The Regional Development Strategy for Gozo'². It is important that while the Foundation retains its distinctiveness, the strategy that is published by the Gozo Action Group Foundation would not conflict but complement

¹ You can see an overview of this year's edition here:

<https://gozobusinesschamber.org/event/youth4entrepreneurship-gozo-2023/>

² GRDA (2021), *Regional Development Strategy for Gozo 2021 -2030* (online) : https://grda.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/GRDA_Gozo-Strategy-Report_VH_WEB_OP2.pdf [accessed 28 August 2023].

the Regional Development Strategy that is going to be published by the Gozo Regional Development Authority. To this end the Chamber highlights the importance for discussions to be held between the two entities to ensure that these two strategies would be complementary to each other.

6. Conclusion

The Leader Programme has proved to be a very effective tool through concrete projects and initiatives which have made a difference to the Gozitan community. As indicated in the response to this consultation the Chamber believes that this should continue to be the case for the upcoming programming period.
