



GRDA

FEEDBACK STATEMENT

MALTA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR 2050

ISSUED BY THE
MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND ENTERPRISE

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Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050

Feedback by the Gozo Regional Development Authority

Sustainable development is a term much used today and as a result might be subject to unclear understanding. However, it is essential and pertinent to highlight the significance of sustainable development as laid down and emphasized within Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050. This applies even more for a reality such that pertaining to Gozo, where there is intense competition and multiple claims for the use of very limited space.

The Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050 presents a broad vision in terms of sustainable development. This strategy focuses on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is in line with the vision of the Gozo Regional Development Authority (GRDA)¹.

The GRDA supports Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050. The benefits of sustainable development will positively impact the Maltese Islands including Gozo and its inhabitants. However, in order to reach the desired goals, as mentioned within the strategy, synergies between different ministries is necessary. The GRDA is actively involved in the formulation of national strategies and policies in order to make sure that Gozo's development is factored in, within the planning, assessment and implementation stages of any Government intervention which will have an impact, whether significant or not, upon the community of Gozo.

Gozo was recently chosen to participate in the EU Mission "100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030", a fund under Horizon Europe. The aim of this mission is to have 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030, an ambitious target of the European Green Deal and in line with the EU's commitment to global climate action under the Paris Agreement. Through this mission, Gozo, through the Gozo Regional Development Authority, will receive technical advice and assistance from the Mission Platform (managed by the NetZeroCities consortium), which will lead to the publication of the Climate City Contract. The Climate City Contract entails the commitments, action plan and investments. Eventually, Gozo will be recognised as a Climate-Neutral and Smart City, hence creating an increased opportunity for funding relevant projects and participating in pilot projects. It is important to note that such recognition may be revoked if Gozo does not follow the Climate City Contract.

¹ Regional Development Strategy for Gozo 2021 – 2030 Consultation Document. Gozo Regional Development Authority. https://grda.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GRDA_Gozo-Strategy-Report_VH_WEB_OP2.pdf.

Hence, Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050 must lay particular emphasis upon the importance of reaching this target, when launching its development strategy for Gozo. Becoming climate-neutral means reducing greenhouse gas emissions as much as possible while compensating for the remaining emissions. This means that a multitude of actions must be undertaken in order to obtain this result, and this Sustainable Strategy must make this, a priority when tackling the isle of Gozo.

As to the blue economy, this is of key importance to Gozo, given the island's high coastal ratio and its direct connection to the tourism industry, which is one of the main economic drivers of the island. Hence, the challenge is to promote sustainable tourism practices in coastal and marine areas, ensuring positive externalities for the environment, the workers and the community. Gozo seeks to achieve sustainable tourism through the several measures outlined under priority area 6, within the Regional Development Strategy for Gozo consultation document.

GRDA also views the marine environment vis-à-vis its double insularity and the other inherent disadvantages related to Gozo's peripherality and physical access. It is a fact that sea transport currently remains the sole mode of transportation connecting Gozo with the main Island of Malta. Thus, as highlighted within the consultation document Regional Development Strategy for Gozo 2021 – 2030, in the priority area for infrastructure and accessibility, various measures are mentioned in order to enhance Gozo's blue economy.

Being a small island, Gozo has the potential to act as a testbed for innovative solutions and pilot projects in the offshore renewable energy sector and the green marine transport sector. Such solutions and projects would enable the island to achieve its goal of carbon neutrality and potentially become a centre for research on marine offshore renewable energy. This would potentially provide high-quality green jobs for local employees while also luring highly qualified foreigners to the island.

When it comes to the Cultural Heritage, the draft Regional Development Strategy which was published as a consultation document in July 2021 by GRDA, tried to address some of these issues. More specifically, it included and acknowledged the following points:

- The need to maximise the benefits originating from having economic growth based on quality of life and the appreciation of tangible and intangible heritage.
- Contributing to a strategy that prioritizes balance and sustainability that stems from the community level and reaches up to engage with public and private sectors including Government, Ministry for Gozo, local authorities, businesses and civil society.
- Develop identifiable cultural expressions that support strong community participation.
- Main challenges and opportunities identified may centre on immediate and short-term future plans for improving transport and commercial (including tourism) connectivity to Malta and abroad while making good use of high-visibility international platforms like the possibility of hosting the European Capital of Culture in Victoria in 2031.

Moreover, when it comes to urban development, the GRDA, had proposed that in view of the fact that there is wide acceptance that investment in Gozo in real estate should be encouraged to be sustainable and hence incentives must address quality, the following suggestions were proposed:

- The incentive for the purchase of property in Gozo in effect as from 2018 whereby, individuals benefit from an overall reduction in stamp duty, from 5 per cent to 2 per cent should be stopped.
- Discriminate between type of properties with small units being subjected to either higher stamp duty and/or additional fees.
- The minimum floor area should be increased to disincentivize the construction of small units.
- An assessment to explore ways how to internalise costs should be undertaken so prices of properties reflect 'fully' the cost to society.

It is to be highlighted that prioritizing sustainable development leads to an improved quality of life.

The GRDA examined this document in view of the Regional Impact Assessment (RIA)² as per Article 8 (1) (f) of the GRDA Act. In line with the established methodology, the GRDA has initiated a Screening Process to determine whether a RIA study is required. From preliminary analysis, the Screening Process does not suggest that the proposed intervention / strategy, requires a full Regional Impact Assessment Study.

² Regional Impact Assessment System: A Non-Technical Guideline (2021). Gozo Regional Development Authority. https://grda.mt/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/GRDA_Regional-Impact-Assessment-System-revised_02.02.22.pdf.



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