



MCAST Strategic Plan 2022 – 2027 Public Consultation Process

Daniel Borg

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Intervention

First of all I would like to congratulate you for this Strategic Plan 2022-2027. Though this is a draft proposal for consultation, I think that it tackles in a very appropriate manner many themes which are and will become more relevant in the years ahead.

How Can MCAST address better the needs of the Gozitan Labour Force.

As regards the needs of the Gozitan Labour Force, I think we must look ahead. We cannot look any more to the traditional needs but must look ahead to what we want to achieve.

To this end I would like to refer to the Transversal Theme 2 relating to Greener Sustainability. The proposed strategic plan in fact highlights that “the transversality of sustainability as an underpinning theme in this Strategic Plan looks at building a greener workforce, shrinking our carbon footprint, and be a source of sound financial management.” (2021, p.11)

As a Gozo Business Chamber we are looking towards the advancement of the green economy in Gozo. To this end I think that this transversal theme is an important one where more focus should be put on Gozo.

I also read with interest MCAST’s thrust under ‘Strategic Objective 2’ (Strengthen Quality and Relevance to enhance the students’ learning experience) to innovate its curriculum, especially when it comes to digital skills. I think that this is very relevant for Gozo, especially since we are looking at how digitalisation can assist in bridging the gap, that Gozo currently faces in terms of economic development. Significant investments have been done in Gozo in the Xewkija Digital Innovation Hub, and the second fibre optic link which offers the required redundancy to companies in the digital sector setting up shop here.

I also think that the third transversal theme is also important for Gozo ‘Community College and a College for the Community.’ Here the document mentions the aspect of on-line learning. This is an aspect which I think can enable further students from Gozo to pursue certain studies at MCAST, so in this regard I really encourage MCAST to further pursue this route. While I understand that for certain courses which are especially hands on this might be difficult, hybrid learning, offering the required

flexibility, where certain parts are taught online, while others are taught physically can be the way forward.

I have also noted that MCAST is rethinking its role. In fact the strategic plan highlights the need to “identify new partners and create new uses for our campuses that are civic-minded and attract new niches.” (2021, p. 17) The Gozo Business Chamber has for the past two years held its Annual General Meeting at an educational institution here in Gozo. This has led our members to experience first hand the facilities of this educational institution, but also to come in close contact with a new reality here in Gozo. I think it is very important for our institutions to partner with civil society on such events, which can lead to further exposure and engagement.

How Can Gozo based companies built a closer relationship with MCAST

Obviously, I think that Gozo based companied can built a closer relationship with MCAST. Under strategic objective 3 (Position Work-Based Learning at the heart of all professional and vocational training programmes offered by MCAST) one of the initiatives mentioned in the document is to create and sustain relationships. One of the measures earmarked under this initiative targets particularly the creation of industry clusters where in particular “small and micro enterprises might need a coordinated approach or different models to create ‘training consortia’ to maximise the potential of promoting and developing a culture of apprenticeships.” (2021, p.22) This can be very valid for Gozo. Thus even very small companies can benefit from such apprenticeships.

Also, a closer relationship can be built by focusing on the needs of Gozo based employees. This may imply as already indicated a stronger focus on hybrid learning or complete online learning. Also the need to target courses for foreigners who work with Gozo based enterprises. The latter is an issue which is relevant for both Maltese and Gozo based companies.

Also, a point, which is close to my heart, is that when it comes to Gozo, while obviously any measure taken must be evidence based, when launching new courses we must be courageous. We cannot limit ourselves only to numbers. If we limit ourselves only to numbers we will not create any opportunity in Gozo. I strongly believe that if we provide the necessary courses and continue to ameliorate the present campus, MCAST will continue to remain a success story in Gozo.

As highlighted previously, the green economy for Gozo has immense potential, and there is already support for Gozo to become carbon neutral prior to malta. I read with interest under strategic objective 7 (Incentivise the development of applied research and sustainable innovation across the College), one of the measures being to ‘focus on scientific research, encourage innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers.’ (2021, p. 36) In this regard I think that one could consider specific courses which can be offered at the Gozo Campus on a national level related to the green economy

I think one of the main success points for MCAST has been its alignment to industry and also where Government as the prime mover in the policy arena wanted the economy to move. I think this should also be the prime focus for Gozo, aligning also

its curriculum in Gozo also to the specific areas which will be indified by the Regional Development Strategy which will be formulated in the coming months.

The experiences of Gozo-based companies when hosting apprentices

Generally the experience of Gozo-based companies when hosting apprentices is a positive one. We are currently experiencing a lack of skilled workers. MCAST employees are highly trained. So, in this case they also benefit the business entity as they provide valued input to the business concerned.
