

ENABLE TOURISM

Supporting Accessibility in the Tourism Sector

Guidance Notes to Applicants

Directorate for Tourism and Economic Development
Ministry for Gozo



Introduction

Tourism is an important driver of the national economy. It is estimated that tourism contributes to around 50% of Gozo's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), both directly and indirectly. Tourism arrivals in Gozo in 2017, amounted to 215,184. This represented an increase of 13.3% over the previous year.

Tourism will continue to grow and according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), worldwide arrivals are expected to increase by 3.3% a year reaching 1.8 billion tourists worldwide in 2030.

The Ministry for Gozo is inviting interested licensed tourism operators in the accommodation sector, specifically hotels and guesthouses, to apply for this scheme, which is intended to target:

- Accessibility improvements in tourism establishments.

The Ministry believes that these type of investments should assist tourism accommodation providers to meet market needs and to help meet customer expectations about a business's ethical and social responsibilities.

These 'Notes to Applicants' are intended to assist prospective applicants in the submission of their applications.

WHAT ACCESSIBILITY MEASURES WILL BE SUPPORTED?

Accessible Tourism "is the ongoing endeavour to ensure tourist destinations, products and services are accessible to all people, regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities or age" (UNWTO). The World Health Organisation estimates that 15% of the global population, roughly 1 billion people, live with some form of disability.

Understanding the broader issues of visitor accessibility could be crucial to developing positive tourism experiences, boosting destination image and to increasing economic competitiveness by catering for different needs. Providing accessible tourism accommodation facilities, opens the door to a growing market and allows the destination to be experienced and enjoyed by a larger customer base.

Examples of measures falling under this area are being indicated below:

Targeted Area	Examples of measures/initiatives
Measures targeting enhanced accessibility in accommodation establishments.(List is not meant to be exhaustive and other measures will be considered.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ramps, portable or fixed• Handrails• Accessible public and private areas• Accessible signage, including braille and audio• Installation of hearing loops for audio visual equipment installed in accommodation establishments• Installation of alarm systems that incorporate audio and visual (ex: Flashing Lights) messages• Installation of automatic doors

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

The Ministry for Gozo will accept applications from licensed tourism operators in the accommodation sector, specifically hotels and guesthouses, registered with the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), and located in Gozo.

Interested entities should apply by filling in the electronic form, and submitting the required documents through the following link - <https://mgoz.gov.mt/en/Pages/eForms/EnableTourism.aspx>, by not later than the **30th June 2019**.

The applicant will receive a written reply on whether the application has been accepted within 4 weeks from when the application is submitted.

If the application is accepted, the Ministry for Gozo will conclude a grant agreement with the successful applicant. All interventions must be carried out by the **31st December 2019**.

Each application will be acknowledged in writing on the e-mail address provided in the application. Tourism operators should provide the requested information, including:

- Description of the business entity, and the type of accommodation being provided by the tourism operator;
- **The most recently paid licence with the Malta Tourism Authority.** The most recently paid licence means a copy of the operating licence together with a copy of the receipt of the applicable licence fee (or equivalent), covering the period inclusive of the date of submission of the application for grants under this scheme. Applications for which no licensing documents are submitted (but a licence to operate is required) or where the submitted documents are incomplete or outdated, will be considered ineligible.
- Outline the project/initiative that is being proposed under this scheme. This should include a project brief by a professional engineer/architect, depending on the intervention being proposed, justifying the initiative on the basis of improved accessibility. All infrastructural improvements must be certified to be in line with the *Access for All - Design Standards*: <http://crpd.org.mt/legislation/>.

Applicants must submit a signed de minimis declaration form indicating all de minimis aid received during the applicable three year reference period. The Ministry for Gozo will verify the submitted information and will ascertain that the applicant has neither exceeded, nor will exceed, with the aid granted through this scheme, the threshold of €200,000 in line with the De Minimis regulation¹ over a period of three fiscal years.

The Ministry for Gozo may decide not to accept an application if the applicant: (a) is not a registered tourism operator in the accommodation sector, specifically a hotel or a guesthouse; (b) is not located in Gozo; (c) if the intervention being proposed does not fall under any of the areas outlined in this scheme; and (d) if there is not sufficient proof provided, of higher efficiencies gained by the operator in terms of accessibility, as the final objectives for this scheme. Moreover any proposed intervention

¹ Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 of 18 December 2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis* aid (OJ L 352/1, 24.12.2013).

must directly benefit the location or building where the project is located. The Ministry for Gozo reserves the right to conduct on site checks prior to the project being undertaken as well as after the project is complete, to verify claims.

The Ministry for Gozo may also decide to close the applications earlier than indicated, subject to the allocated funds for this purpose being exhausted. A notice will be published on <http://www.gozo.gov.mt> in this case.

WHAT WILL THE MINISTRY FOR GOZO SUPPORT?

The Ministry for Gozo will support up to 50% of the eligible expenditure according to the indicated accommodation capacities below:

Accommodation Capacity	Eligible Expenditure (up to)	Maximum amount, 50 % of the eligible expenditure (up to)
Up to 40 beds	€ 10,000	€ 5,000
40 + beds	€ 20,000	€ 10,000

Eligible expenditure may include the technical equipment itself, civil works, consultancy and installation.

Eligible expenditure will only be reimbursed, after the project is concluded, and the documentation indicated below is provided:

- a dated report by a certified engineer/architect outlining, certifying all the interventions made, and the benefits that have been achieved by the targeted investment;
- a copy of all the invoices that are relevant to the works undertaken (including VAT receipts); and
- a signed state aid declaration form found to be submitted at application stage (**For state aid purposes applicants must not have received more than € 200,000 in *de minimis* aid from any government entity within a period of 3 years i.e. in the previous 2 fiscal years and the current fiscal year, this includes the aid being applied for under this measure).**)

In those instances where planning permits are required, the disbursement of funds by MGOZ shall be conditional on the submission of evidence, that works undertaken were covered by the required planning permits.

Only one application will be accepted from enterprises which are 'single undertakings'. This means that an operator may not apply under different companies or business entities but which basically fall under the same ownership. For the purpose of the scheme and the *de minimis* regulation under which this scheme will be operated, single undertaking includes all enterprises having at least one of the following relationships with each other:

- an enterprise has a majority of the shareholders' or members' voting rights in another enterprise;
- an enterprise has the right to appoint or remove a majority of the members of the administrative, management or supervisory body of another enterprise;
- an enterprise has the right to exercise a dominant influence over another enterprise pursuant to a contract entered into with that enterprise or to a provision in its memorandum or articles of association;

- an enterprise, which is a shareholder in or member of another enterprise, controls alone, pursuant to an agreement with other shareholders in or members of that enterprise, a majority of shareholders' or members' voting rights in that enterprise.

The Tourism & Economic Development Directorate may require further evidence in the case of ownership of specific enterprises. Failure to submit the information required may result in the application not being considered any further.

A Project cannot get funding from different sources. To this end the Tourism & Economic Development Directorate reserves the right to check with other entities whether the project has been put forward for funding from other sources, including EU funds. This will be done by disclosing information about the applicant and the proposed project, to other Government departments/entities that may operate similar schemes.

The Tourism & Economic Development Directorate may decide to close the scheme earlier than the indicated date, if the allocated funds for this purpose are exhausted. The Directorate will publish a notice on its website (<http://www.gozo.gov.mt>) to this effect, if this is the case.

Claims for reimbursements will only be processed after all the required documentation has been presented and this without any exception.

INFORMATION & DATA PROTECTION

Publicity

- a. In order to enhance transparency regarding the use of the Scheme's funds, general details of the operation such as the name of the Beneficiary; the title of the operations and the amount of public funding allocation to each Undertaking may be published.
- b. The Ministry for Gozo will provide a publicity poster to the Beneficiaries showing the fund sources of the Scheme. The applicant must place this poster in a prominent place within their premises.

Data Protection

All data is collected and held by the Ministry for Gozo and/or transferred to third parties in order to fulfil reporting functions, publicity, research and other Community obligations according to Law and in line with the provisions of the Data Protection Act² and the General Data Protection Regulation³.

² Data Protection Act, Cap 440 of the Laws of Malta

³ General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) EU 2016/679

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Beneficiary refers to the entity legally responsible for the application submitted and the recipient of the aid.

Eligible Applicant – An applicant who satisfies all the eligibility criteria, as follows:

- a) must be a licensed tourism operator in the accommodation sector, specifically hotels and guesthouses;
- b) must be registered with the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA);
- c) must be located in Gozo;
- d) must certify that he/she has neither exceeded, nor will exceed with the aid granted through this scheme, the threshold of €200,000 in aid received under the De Minimis regulation during the applicable three fiscal years;
- e) Further to article d) above, the Applicant must duly fill in the State Aid (De Minimis) Declaration and submit it with the application.