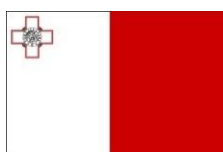


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The Local Development Strategy for the Majjistral Action Group Foundation Territory September 2016



Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014-2020

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***The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
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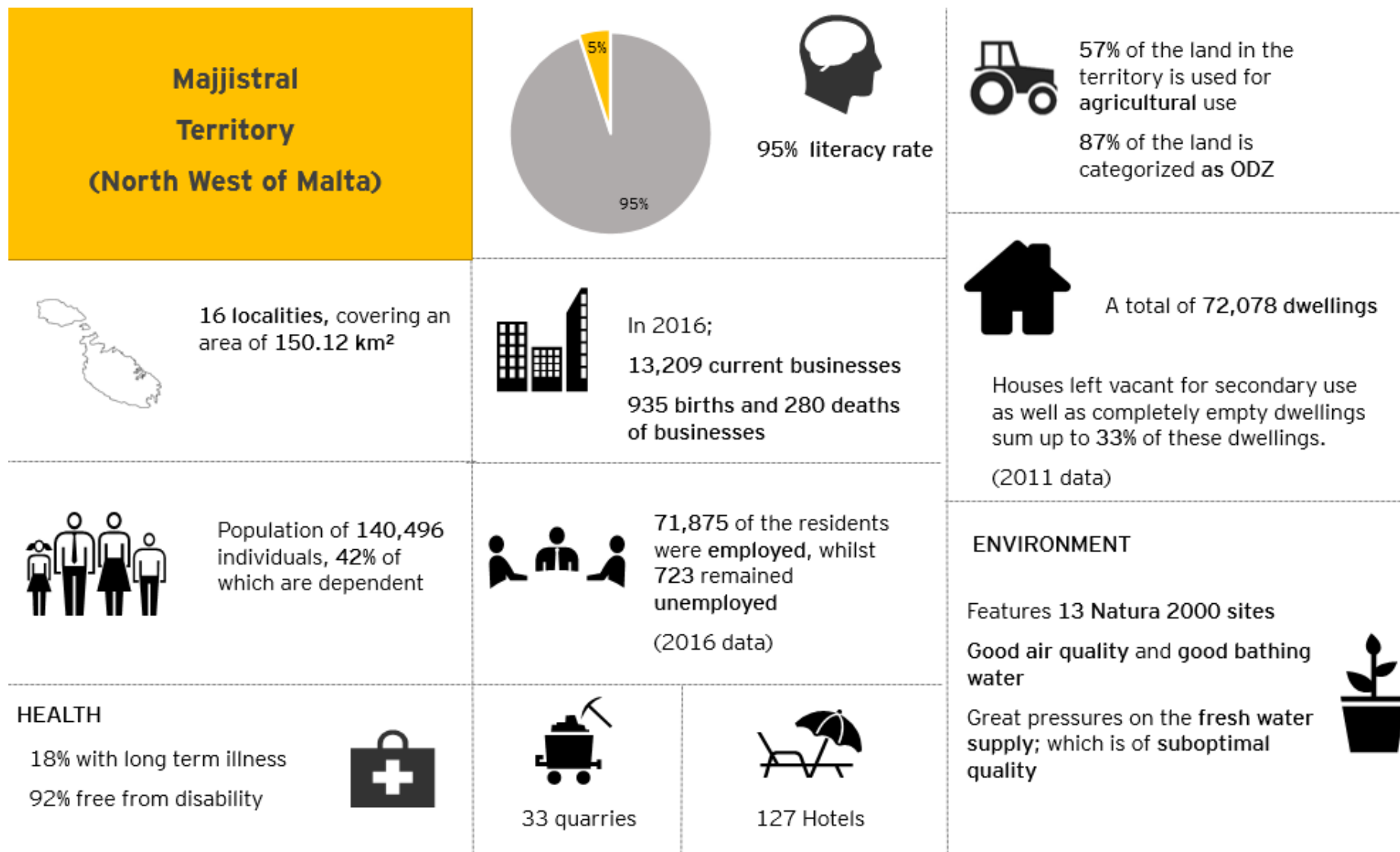
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A snapshot of the Majjstral territory



List of abbreviations

AGM	Annual General Meeting
AIR	Annual implementation report
ARPA	Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency
CLC	Corine Land Cover
CLLD	community-led local development
DC	Decision Committee
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
ERA	Environment and Resource Authority (ERA)
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
EC	Evaluation Committee
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
LAG	Local Action Group
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale
LPIS	Land Parcel Identification System
MA	Managing Authority
MAGF	Majjistral Action Group Foundation
MEPA	Malta Environment & Planning Authority (now split between PA and ERA)
MSDEC	Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NSO	National Statistics Office
ODZ	Outside Development Zone
OP1	Operational Programme 1
PA	Planning Authority
PCM	Public Consultation Meetings
RDP	Rural Development Programme

1. Introduction

The Leader Programme (LEADER) was first implemented in Malta under the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme (RDP). LEADER is a Community Led Local Development (CLLD) initiative aimed at integrating “development processes designed to engage, enable, resource and empower local communities in undertaking their own local development”.¹

A CLLD has three major components which are vital and are considered to be the local territory development ‘trinity’ – these are:

- The local territory
- The partnership
- The Local Development Strategy (LDS or Strategy)

In this regard, the document at hand will be targeting the latter bullet – that of putting forward a local development strategy for the Majjistral (North-West) territory of Malta.

LEADER emphasizes the need for local participation in the Programme and in the creation of the LDS. Indeed, the process adopted is that of a bottom-up-approach, giving great importance to an inclusive local participation to ensure citizens’ needs, validation as well as ownership of the Strategy. This process allows the inclusion of local knowledge, expertise, skills and ideas which are often overseen in more centralised and nation-wide strategies. Therefore, LEADER is an important initiative that targets the specific needs of each locality, as described by the citizens themselves.

The target of the 2014-2020 Programming Period is to continue helping the existing Local Action Groups (LAGs) to build on the foundations of the previous programming period and improve on the areas which were suboptimal. LAGs are aimed at supporting both the consolidation as well as the development of their territory in order to target the specific needs of the area and devise policies and strategies to address such needs.

Within the Majjistral territory, the Majjistral Action Group Foundation (MAGF) initiated its operations in 2008 to kick-start the LEADER process, through the clustering of a number of local councils and private operators all situated in this region of Malta. In June 2009, resources from Measure 341 (Skills acquisition, animation and implementation) under the 2007-2013 RDP were tapped into for capacity building purposes. Additionally, the MAGF also benefitted from LEADER funds under the same 2007-2013 RDP, gaining valuable experience on the tapping, utilisation and implementation of such funds.

In line with the LEADER process, this document is presented by the MAGF in relation to the Majjistral territory. However, it is pertinent to note that the Foundation is still classified as a potential LAG, and hence any reference to “Foundation” or “LAG” within this document is being made with this premise in mind.

Additionally, this report is being presented on the basis of information held to date, and indications/feedback provided by the MA to date.

¹ European Network for Rural Development (2016), *LEADER Local Development Strategies (LDS) Guidance on design and implementation*, p.1

2. Area and population covered by the Strategy

This section describes the proposed areas within the territory as well as the population of each locality. This enables an understanding of the characteristics of the territory, thus creating the context for a Strategy aimed at targeting the area's particular needs.

The starting point for any LDS is to identify the different localities within the territory in question which fall within the definition of a "rural area", as defined in the 2014-2020 RDP – these criteria relate to:

1. having a population density lower than 5,000 persons per square kilometre; AND
2. having not less than 10% of the area of the locality defined as "agricultural land"; AND
3. having not less than 35% of the locality defined as "outside development zone"².

In order to ascertain whether the localities fall within these pre-determined criteria various data sources were used. For the population density (criterion 1), the latest available National Statistics Office (NSO) data was used³. The percentage of area outside development zone (criterion 3) was collected from the latest available Planning Authority's (PA) datasets⁴.

In terms of the percentage of agricultural area within a locality, three different data sources that provide different estimates for this percentage had to be considered. These included:

- NSO Census (2011)⁵ – the document provides an overview of the total utilised agricultural land in hectares (ha) declared by farmers according to the locality of residence. This means that if a farmer had agricultural land in, say, the South of Malta, but resided in the North, the agricultural land would appear under the farmer's address and hence be included in the North (when in actual fact it is geographically located elsewhere).
- Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) data – the LPIS provides agricultural land cover per Local Council and is provided by the Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency (ARPA) within the Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate (MSDEC). The LPIS is a supporting tool in the form of a spatial register that helps farmers, who intend to apply for aid under any of the area-related aid schemes, to identify any agricultural parcels intended to be listed in the annual declaration for EU aid. As a result, this source captures only land that is registered by farmers/land managers under EU aid measures (referred to as Pillar I) – while this might be a high proportion, it might not necessarily reflect all agricultural areas.
- Corine Land Cover (CLC) inventory data (2006) - this is a Pan-European initiative coordinated by the European Environment Agency and producing land cover/land use information in CLC maps using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology to map different classes of agricultural land. It is pertinent to note that CLC uses a Minimum Mapping Unit of 25 hectares (ha) for areal phenomena and a minimum width of 100 metres for linear phenomena. Hence this resolution might not be sensitive enough to provide precise information about land use/cover in Malta, given

² The European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development (2015), *Malta – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020*, p.154

³ NSO (2014), *Demographic Review*

⁴ Within an Outside Development Zone, the PA includes all areas outside the development zone, as per the 2016 PA Geographic Information Systems (GIS) datasets.

⁵ NSO (2011), *Census of Population and Housing 2011*.

Malta's small size. It is, however, still possible to sum the land use cover of different agricultural land classes for each Local Council and arrive at a reasonable estimate.

It is evident that all three sources have their own limitations. Following consultation with the Funds and Programme Division (i.e. the Managing Authority for the RDP funds) and other concerned bodies, a decision was reached to use the 2006 CLC inventory data. These discussions also indicated that updates source data related to the CLC is available, but that the exercise leading to the mapping of land use/cover in Malta was not available at the time of writing this document.

Upon using the chosen data source, it was concluded that the Majjistral territory for the 2014-2020 Programming period differed slightly from that highlighted in the previous Local Development Strategy. During the course of the Programme LEADER 2007-2013, San Gwann, Mosta and Zebbug were included as part of the Majjistral territory as outlined in the LDS for the LEADER Programme 2007-2013. Under the new programming period, Swieqi was added in whilst Lija has been removed from this territory.

The Majjistral territory for this programming period consists of sixteen (16) localities situated on the North-West side of Malta, covering a substantial part of Malta's rural areas and associated coastlines. The localities within the territory, classified within the NSO's/ Local Administration Unit's districts, are⁶:

Western

- Mtarfa
- H'Attard
- Had-Dingli
- Rabat (Malta)
- Siggiewi
- Iklin
- Haz-Zebbug (Malta)
- Mdina

Northern

- Mellieha
- Naxxar
- Mosta
- St. Paul's Bay
- Gharghur
- Mgarr

Northern Harbour

- San Gwann
- Swieqi

⁶ NSO (2014), *Demographic Review 2013*

Figure 1: Majjistral Territory



Table 1 presents the population of each locality as well as the three defining criteria for being classified as rural territory and making part of the MAGF territory, as previously discussed.

One of the most important characteristics of any territory is its population. This effects the needs of the area and the extent of demand for particular services, use of resources and hence strategic needs. In 2014, Malta's population stood at 429,344, whilst the total population of the Majjistral region stood at **140,496**⁷. Therefore, 33% of the total Malta population resided in the Majjistral region in 2014.

Over the past decade, the total population of Malta increased by nearly 6% whilst the Majjistral region increased by around 9%, leading to a higher than average annual growth rate of circa 1% per annum, as opposed to the average national 0.6% growth rate. This growth will have implications on the territory and acts as a background to this LDS. It is also pertinent to note that further significant demographic changes have been observed in Malta, which might not yet be captured by the latest available population figures. A considerable influx of foreign workers, driven by the economic and political challenges being faced in neighbouring countries, as well as Malta's current positive economic performance (2015: Malta 6.3%; Euro area: 1.7%, EU: 2.0%⁸), have led to increased demand for housing, resources and usage of other amenities, and this needs to be kept in mind within any Strategy setting given it is likely not to be a temporary phenomenon.

⁷ NSO (2016), *Demographic Review 2014*

⁸ European Commission (2016), *Spring 2016 Economic Forecast*

In addition, the Majjistral's total area is equal to circa 150.12Km². The largest locality within this territory is Rabat with an area of c. 27 Km². This is followed by Mellieha (22.64 Km²), Siggiewi (19.88 Km²) and Mgarr (16.12 Km²). The smallest locality is Mdina with an area of just 0.89 Km².

Table 1: Criteria to qualify as part of the Majjistral region

Council Name	Population	Area (sq Km)	Population Density (pop/sq Km)	% Agricultural land	% ODZ area
CRITERION/ THRESHOLD			<5000.0	>10.0%	>35.0%
Attard	10,761	6.64	1,620.6	51.50%	72.70%
Dingli	3,599	5.67	634.7	57.80%	94.20%
Gharghur	2,689	2.02	1,331.2	83.10%	84.70%
Iklin	3,205	1.73	1,852.6	71.10%	71.10%
Mdina	233	0.89	261.8	82.60%	93.30%
Mellieha	8,926	22.64	394.3	38.50%	91.20%
Mgarr	3,543	16.12	219.8	69.50%	97.00%
Mosta	19,806	6.78	2,921.2	53.10%	65.80%
Mtarfa	2,582	0.72	3,586.1	41.60%	52.80%
Naxxar	13,376	11.57	1,156.1	42.70%	79.60%
Rabat (Malta)	11,176	26.60	420.2	59.00%	95.60%
San Gwann	12,739	2.62	4,862.2	34.10%	35.90%
St. Paul's Bay	17,791	14.53	1,224.4	66.00%	83.40%
Siggiewi	8,327	19.88	418.9	66.20%	95.10%
Swieqi	10,125	3.05	3,319.7	34.60%	42.00%
Zebbug (Malta)	11,618	8.66	1,341.6	64.80%	82.10%

3. Needs of the Territory

This section assesses the territory from a socio-demographic, economic and environmental aspect using data available, with the aim of providing a list of key internal strengths and weaknesses of the area, but also external opportunities and threats.

The LDS will not be implemented in a vacuum but rather in a vibrant and dynamic community. It is therefore important to look at the major factors which characterize the territory – this will provide the context for the Strategy, thus helping in formulating policies and project measures in line with such needs. This analysis is however constrained by the availability and timing of such data – where not available, a number of proxies have been used.

1.1 Social, Economic and Environmental Analysis

1.1.1 Demographic Analysis

Table 2 provides a disaggregation of the population figures per locality. The 16 different localities show a varying degree of change over the past 9 years. St. Paul's Bay has seen the highest increase in inhabitants with a c. 25% increase, followed by Swieqi (+19%) and Mellieha (+14%). On the other hand, three localities experienced a fall in population; namely Iklin, Rabat and Mdina, with the latter recording the major fall at around 19%.

These movements reflect the way the local populations move within the country – Swieqi has seen an increased number of developments in the past decade. Moreover Mellieha and St. Paul's Bay are no longer considered localities fit only for summer residence. Rather they are localities where the Maltese are establishing residences throughout the year, especially considering the increase in property prices in other parts of Malta (making housing less affordable). Moreover, St. Paul's Bay has also been characterized by a strong influx of foreigners choosing this area as their place of residence. The same area has also seen an increase in the number of apartments replacing terraced houses.

Mosta still remains the locality with the highest number of citizens – 19,806 individuals, followed by St. Paul's Bay (17,791) and Naxxar (13,376). Mdina has the lowest population (233 citizens). As previously mentioned, 33% of the total Malta population resided in the Majjistral region in 2014.

Locality	2005	2011	2014	% Change (2005 -2014)	Annual Growth (2005-2006)
	Census 2005	Census 2011	DR 2014	Calculation	Calculation
MALTA	404962	416055	429344	5.68%	0.63%
Attard	10405	10520	10761	3.31%	0.37%
Dingli	3347	3495	3599	7.00%	0.78%
Gharghur	2352	2613	2689	12.53%	1.39%
Iklin	3220	3134	3205	-0.47%	-0.05%
Mdina	278	237	233	-19.31%	-2.15%
Mellieha	7676	8605	8926	14.00%	1.56%
Mgarr	3014	3449	3543	14.93%	1.66%

Mosta	18735	19650	19806	5.41%	0.60%
Mtarfa	2426	2564	2582	6.04%	0.67%
Naxxar	11978	12802	13376	10.45%	1.16%
Rabat (Malta)	11473	11193	11176	-2.66%	-0.30%
San Gwann	12737	12128	12739	0.02%	0.00%
Siggiewi	7931	8140	8327	4.76%	0.53%
St. Paul's Bay	13412	16478	17791	24.61%	2.73%
Swieqi	8208	8775	10125	18.93%	2.10%
Zebbug (Malta)	11292	11542	11618	2.81%	0.31%
Total - Majjistral	128484	135325	140496	8.55%	0.95%

Source: NSO (2006), Census 2005 & NSO (2012), Census 2012 & NSO (2016), Demographic Review 2014

Population Density

Even though the population figures are very important, numbers alone are often not enough to understand the implications on the region. Hence the population's figures must either be broken down further or paired with other metrics to make sense of them. For instance, the population density (population per km²) helps in assessing the degree of concentration of individuals in a locality. As shown in **Table 3**, such a metric will inevitably have an impact on the environment and quality of life of the individuals in the area.

Locality	Area (km ²)	2005		2014		Percentage change
		Population	Population Density	Population	Population Density	
MALTA	315.2	404,962	1284.8	429344	1362.1	6.02%
Attard	6.64	10405	1567	10761	1620.6	3.42%
Dingli	5.67	3347	590.3	3599	634.7	7.53%
Gharghur	2.02	2352	1164.4	2689	1331.2	14.33%
Iklin	1.73	3220	1861.3	3205	1852.6	-0.47%
Mdina	0.89	278	312.4	233	261.8	-16.19%
Mellieha	22.64	7676	339	8926	394.3	16.28%
Mgarr	16.12	3014	187	3543	219.8	17.55%
Mosta	6.78	18735	2763.3	19806	2921.2	5.72%
Mtarfa	0.72	2426	3369.4	2582	3586.1	6.43%
Naxxar	11.57	11978	1035.3	13376	1156.1	11.67%
Rabat (Malta)	26.6	11473	431.3	11176	420.2	-2.59%
San Gwann	2.62	12737	4861.5	12739	4862.2	0.02%
St. Paul's Bay	14.53	13412	923.1	17791	1224.4	32.65%
Siggiewi	19.88	7931	398.9	8327	418.9	4.99%
Swieqi	3.05	8208	2691.1	10125	3319.7	23.36%

Zebbug (Malta)	8.66	11292	1303.9	11618	1341.6	2.89%
Total - Majjistral	150.12	128,484	855.9	140,496	936	9.35%

Source: NSO (2006), *Census 2005* & *Demographic Review 2014* & Ministry of Resources and Rural Affairs (2009), *Rural Development Programme for Malta 2007 – 2013*.

In 2014 the localities with the highest population density were San Gwann (c. 4,860 population per km²), Mtarfa (c. 3,590) and Swieqi (c. 3,320). The least dense were Mgarr (c.220) and Mdina (c.262). It is also worth noting that over the past 9 years, St. Paul's Bay recorded the highest increase in density (+32.65%), reflecting the increase in population previously discussed. Similarly, the locality experiencing the highest fall in density was Mdina (-16.19%), once again following the decrease in population of the area.

Malta's average population density in 2014 stood at c. 1,360 persons per km², whilst that for the Majjistral Region stood at 936 individuals per km².

Population Characteristics

A number of other characteristics are also important to understand the structure of the Majjistral region. **Table 4** below disaggregates the population by age group. It is worth noting that Mtarfa holds the highest percentage of the youngest cohorts – that is individuals aged between 0-14 years at 23% (but absolute numbers are small, thus limiting comparison), followed by Gharghur at 19%. On the other hand, Mdina holds the highest proportion of 65+ which are equivalent to 34% of its population, followed by Rabat at 22%. These figures are important to shape the strategies in line with the needs of the populations of the particular area. Percentage wise, the Majjistral region does not show significant variations from the Maltese figures.

Locality	0-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Attard	1,603	1,656	1,300	1,404	1,729	1,422	1,406
Dingli	571	544	504	513	505	519	339
Gharghur	495	278	443	432	336	342	287
Iklin	416	645	367	334	626	484	262
Mdina	14	26	27	13	32	45	80
Mellieha	1,368	1,065	1,130	1,232	1,260	1,186	1,364
Mgarr	579	544	521	482	521	415	387
Mosta	3,083	2,913	2,899	2,749	2,891	2,417	2,698
Mtarfa	588	354	271	532	411	191	217
Naxxar	2,073	1,888	1,828	1,895	1,991	1,661	1,466
Rabat (Malta)	1,395	1,307	1,427	1,305	1,445	1,834	2,480
San Gwann	1,768	1,867	1,615	1,552	1,858	1,882	1,586
St. Paul's Bay	2,472	1,890	2,597	2,529	2,375	2,243	2,372
Siggiewi	1,282	1,177	1,249	1,106	1,130	1,188	1,008
Swieqi	1,387	1,324	1,234	1,344	1,411	1,206	869
Zebbug (Malta)	1,945	1,549	1,803	1,544	1,572	1,589	1,540
MALTA (absolute)	61,505	55,312	60,462	54,129	57,336	59,470	67,841
MALTA (percentage)	15%	13%	15%	13%	14%	14%	16%
Majjistral (Total)	21,039	19,027	19,215	18,966	20,093	18,624	18,361
Majjistral (percentage)	16%	14%	14%	14%	15%	14%	14%

Source: NSO (2012), *Census of Population and Housing 2011 Preliminary report*

Moreover **Table 5** shows that as a general rule the population of each locality is divided equally between males and females, with the only exception of Mdina whose population is made up of 56% females and 44% males – again, in this case, the small absolute numbers limit any meaningful analysis of such trends.

Table 5: Population by gender					
Locality	Males	Females	Total	Males (%)	Females (%)
Attard	5,198	5,322	10,520	49	51
Dingli	1,795	1,700	3,495	51	49
Gharghur	1,326	1,287	2,613	51	49
Iklin	1,590	1,544	3,134	51	49
Mdina	105	132	237	44	56
Mellieha	4,276	4,329	8,605	50	50
Mgarr	1,744	1,705	3,449	51	49
Mosta	9,662	9,988	19,650	49	51
Mtarfa	1,252	1,312	2,564	49	51
Naxxar	6,396	6,406	12,802	50	50
Rabat (Malta)	5,459	5,734	11,193	49	51
San Gwann	6,034	6,094	12,128	50	50
St. Paul's Bay	8,276	8,202	16,478	50	50
Siggiewi	4,060	4,080	8,140	50	50
Swieqi	4,387	4,388	8,775	50	50
Zebbug (Malta)	5,839	5,703	11,542	51	49
MALTA	207,185	208,870	416,055	50	50
Total Majjistral	67,399	67,926	135,325	50	50

Source: NSO (2012), *Census of Population and Housing 2011 Preliminary report*

1.1.2 Social Profile

After having examined the basic demographic characteristics of the residents in terms of population, density, age and gender, it is imperative to also look at their social profile.

Health

The health of the residents is another vital characteristic to be analysed prior to proposing any strategies.

According to the Census of 2011, 18% of the North-Western district suffered from long-term illness or conditions. This stood at a slightly lower rate than that of the Maltese average, as described in the **Table 6** below.

Table 6: Long Term Illness and/or health condition

District and age group	With illness/ health condition	Without illness/ health condition	Total	With Illness	Without
MALTA	83,102	334,330	417,432	20%	80%
North West	22,183	99,711	121,894	18%	82%
0-9	635	11,348	11,983	5%	95%
10-19	990	14,088	15,078	7%	93%
20-29	902	16,199	17,101	5%	95%
30-39	1,343	16,470	17,813	8%	92%
40-49	2,357	14,444	16,801	14%	86%
50-59	4,302	13,082	17,384	25%	75%
60-69	5,689	8,726	14,415	39%	61%
70-79	3,761	3,704	7,465	50%	50%
80-89	1,861	1,426	3,287	57%	43%
Over 89	343	224	567	60%	40%

Source: NSO (2012), *Census of Population and Housing 2011*

Note: The above district includes Hal-Balzan and Hal-Lija which do not make part of the Majjistral territory – whilst they do not take into account Swieqi and San Gwann.

Statistics regarding disability are not categorized per locality but rather by district. The 16 different localities falling under the Majjistral region make up the entire Northern district, part of the Western district and another two localities of the Northern Harbour. For the purpose of this Strategy, these three districts have been taken into account.

About 92% of the relevant population suffers from no kind of disability. About 2% suffer some physical impairment and another 2% suffer from a mental health condition. The remaining percentage was composed equally of people suffering from deafness or partial hearing loss, blindness or partial sight loss or specific learning difficulties.

Type of disability/difficulty	Western	Northern	North West	MALTA
Mental health condition	2%	1%	2%	2%
Deafness or partial hearing loss	1%	1%	1%	1%
Blindness or partial sight loss	1%	1%	1%	2%
Intellectual disability	1%	0%	0%	0%
Specific learning difficulty	1%	1%	1%	1%
Development disorder	0%	0%	0%	0%
Physical disability	3%	2%	2%	2%
Other disability	0%	0%	0%	0%
Do not have any disability or difficulty	91%	92%	92%	92%

Source: NSO (2012), *Census of Population and Housing 2011*

Note: The above district includes Hal-Balzan and Hal-Lija which do not make part of the Majjistral territory – whilst they do not take into account Swieqi and San Gwann.

Education

Educational attainment is another important socio-economic indicator. When looking at the literacy of the region at hand, it seems that the Majjistral region is fairing slightly better than the Maltese average. Whereby for the latter 93.6% of the population were literate in 2011, for the Majjistral region this percentage was 95%. Nevertheless, it is also important to keep an eye out for particular localities

which have illiteracy rates higher than the Maltese average - the highest is recorded in Zebbug (c. 8%), followed by Siggiewi (7.5%) and Gharghur (7.2%). The complete data set for literacy rates is shown below in **Table 8**.

Table 8: Literacy Rates per locality – 2011						
Locality	Literate		Illiterate		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Attard	9,238	96.6	330	3.4	9,568	100
Dingli	3,033	95.6	140	4.4	3,173	100
Gharghur	2,125	92.8	165	7.2	2,290	100
Iklin	2,852	96.9	90	3.1	2,942	100
Mdina	222	94.9	12	5.1	234	100
Mellieha	7,569	97.1	224	2.9	7,793	100
Mgarr	2,967	95.1	153	4.9	3,120	100
Mosta	17,096	95.9	722	4.1	17,818	100
Mtarfa	2,120	94.2	130	5.8	2,250	100
Naxxar	11,122	96	467	4	11,589	100
Rabat (Malta)	9,583	93	716	7	10,299	100
San Gwann	10,576	95.6	488	4.4	11,064	100
San Pawl il-Bahar	14,148	96.2	559	3.8	14,707	100
Siggiewi	6,833	92.5	558	7.5	7,391	100
Swieqi	7,764	98.7	103	1.3	7,867	100
Zebbug (Malta)	9,473	91.9	837	8.1	10,310	100
MALTA	353,878	93.6	24,074	6.4	377,952	100
Total Majjistral	116,721	95%	5694	5%	122,415	100%

Source: NSO (2012), *Census of Population and Housing 2011*

Table 9 illustrates the highest educational level attained for Malta as well as for both the Northern and Western District, which, as explained above, are being used as an approximation for the Majjistral region. The proportion of people without schooling is in line with the national average, at 2%. Yet for higher educational levels, upper secondary, post-secondary as well as for tertiary education, the North-Western region has higher attainment percentages than the national average.

Table 9: Highest Educational Level Achieved (2011)							
District	No schooling	Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary	Post-Secondary Non Tertiary	Tertiary	Total
Western	951	9,358	18,046	9,439	2,817	8,702	49,313
Northern	600	8,598	20,796	11,253	3,509	8,918	53,674
North-Western	1551	17956	38842	20692	6326	17620	102987
% of NW	2%	17%	38%	20%	6%	17%	100%
MALTA	5,948	71,254	145,639	64,076	18,792	49,995	355,704
% of MALTA	2%	20%	41%	18%	5%	14%	100%

Source: NSO (2012), *Census of Population and Housing 2011*

Note: as previously explained, the above districts have been used as proxy for the Majjistral region, given data is only available within this NSO districts classification. The North-Western districts hence include Hal-Balzan and Hal-Lija which do not make part of the Majjistral

territory – whilst they do not take into account Swieqi and San Gwann.

Employment

From the Census 2011 data, it seems that around 58% of the population aged 15-69 year residing in the North-Western district were employed. This was higher than the national average of 48% (2016 latest figures for ages 15-64: 64.3%⁹).

Registered unemployed is at (15-64yrs) 3% for the district (2011 national average: 4%; 2015 latest figures for ages 25-74: 5.4%)¹⁰. 22% of the population aged 15-69 years was inactive in 2011. Even though lower than the Maltese average, this can be still be regarded as an opportunity for the region, as it holds a number of potential workers who have still not joined the labour force.

Locality	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	Total
North	48,141	1,532	10742	48,141
Western	25,047	1,188	9335	43,526
North-West	53,243	2,720	20,077	91,667
Malta	170,897	13,228	73109	311,241
% North-West	58%	3%	23%	
% Malta	55%	4%	22%	

Source: NSO (2012), Census of Population and Housing 2011

Note: The above district includes Hal-Balzan and Hal-Lija which do not make part of the Majjistral territory – whilst they do not take into account Swieqi and San Gwann.

Upon request Jobsplus provided the numbers of individuals who are employed and registered unemployed in each locality. Overall in the Majjistral region as per latest data available, nearly 72,000 individuals are employed (c. 32% of all employed individuals in MALTA) whilst 723 people remain unemployed (c. 21% of all national unemployed). This information is illustrated in **Table 11** below.

Locality	Employed	Registered Unemployed
Attard	5,391	34
Dingli	1,762	18
Gharghur	1,259	11
Iklin	1,677	11
Mdina	120	2
Mellieha	4,712	41
Mgarr	1,816	16
Mosta	9,999	92
Mtarfa	1,022	15
Naxxar	6,668	66
Rabat (Malta)	5,328	58

⁹ NSO(2016), *Labour Force Survey: Q1/2016*, p.3

¹⁰ Eurostat (2016), *Unemployment by sex and age - annual average*. Available at: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do/> Accessed on 06 September 2016

San Gwann	6,485	68
St. Paul's Bay	10,696	193
Siggiewi	4,021	38
Swieqi	5,400	18
Zebbug (Malta)	5,519	42
MALTA	208,482	3,511
Total Majjistral	71,875	723

Source: JobsPlus

Table 12 depicts the percentage of people from each locality employed in a particular occupation. Overall, in the Majjistral region the most common type of occupation is “services & sales workers” – at 19% of the total employed person, followed closely by “Professionals” at 18% and “Elementary occupations” at 14%. This falls in line with the Maltese average, where similar percentages are observed for these same three occupations. Despite the region being categorized as a rural area, only 1% of individuals in employment work in agriculture, fisheries or forestry, with the exception of Mgarr and Rabat – at 3% and 2% respectively. This is the least common type of occupation alongside the armed forces (1%). Despite certain differences amongst localities, the Majjistral Region still seems to be very much in line with the national averages in terms of the type of occupation.

Table 12: Employment Figures by Main Occupation – Full time and Part time (February 2016) – Percentages										
Locality	Armed Forces	Managers	Professionals	Technicians & Associate Professionals	Clerks & support workers	Services & sales workers	Skilled Agricultural, fishery & forestry workers	Craft & related trades workers	Plant & machine operator & assemblers	Elementary Occupations
Attard	0%	14%	27%	15%	15%	14%	0%	6%	3%	7%
Dingli	1%	5%	17%	13%	12%	18%	1%	11%	5%	17%
Gharghur	1%	12%	19%	12%	12%	16%	1%	9%	4%	14%
Iklin	1%	11%	22%	15%	14%	19%	0%	6%	3%	10%
Mdina	9%	15%	3%	6%	9%	0%	1%	0%	6%	50%
Mellieha	0%	11%	15%	14%	12%	21%	1%	7%	4%	14%
Mgarr	1%	8%	14%	10%	9%	19%	3%	8%	5%	21%
Mosta	1%	9%	20%	13%	14%	19%	1%	8%	4%	12%
Mtarfa	2%	6%	15%	14%	16%	20%	0%	9%	4%	14%
Naxxar	1%	13%	21%	14%	13%	16%	0%	7%	4%	10%
Rabat (Malta)	1%	7%	17%	12%	12%	18%	2%	9%	4%	18%
San Gwann	1%	10%	19%	14%	14%	20%	0%	7%	4%	12%
St. Paul's Bay	0%	8%	12%	12%	12%	24%	1%	9%	4%	18%
Siggiewi	1%	6%	18%	13%	13%	18%	1%	8%	6%	16%
Swieqi	0%	20%	23%	15%	15%	16%	0%	3%	1%	4%
Zebbug (Malta)	1%	6%	16%	12%	11%	16%	1%	10%	7%	18%
Total Majjistral	1%	10%	18%	13%	13%	19%	1%	7%	4%	14%
Total Malta	1%	9%	18%	12%	14%	18%	1%	8%	5%	15%

Source: Jobsplus

Another employment categorization is that of industries/ economic activity of the occupation. This allows for a better understanding of which industries are the most important for the Majjistral population. This type of grouping can be observed in **Table 13** below. From the data it seems that the most common economic activity undertaken in the Majjistral Region is wholesale and retail (16%), followed by a 13% in public administration & defence and a further 10% working in the accommodation and food service sector.

Comparing these figures with the national averages, it seems that the major sectors are quite similar. As one would expect, manufacturing was less prominent in this area given most industrial estates are located elsewhere (11% of the local workers in Malta vs. 8% in Majjistral).

Table 13: Number of Employed as per economic activity- Full time and Part time (February 2016)						
	Males	Females	Total - Majjistral	% Majjistral	Total Malta	% Malta
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	1,159	186	1,345	2%	2832	1%
Mining & Quarrying	121	16	137	0%	394	0%
Manufacturing	4,638	1,426	6,064	8%	22421	11%
Electricity, Gas, Steam & Air Conditioning Supply	10	7	17	0%	63	0%
Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management & Remediation Activities	407	59	466	1%	1821	1%
Construction	4,012	300	4,312	6%	12059	6%
Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles	6,811	4,722	11,533	16%	31723	15%
Transportation & Storage	2,571	642	3,213	4%	10654	5%
Accommodation & Food Service Activities	4,487	3,017	7,504	10%	17643	8%
Information & Communication	1,800	809	2,609	4%	7444	4%
Financial & Insurance Activities	1,713	1,832	3,545	5%	9442	5%
Real Estate Activities	346	241	587	1%	1488	1%
Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities	2,558	2,164	4,722	7%	12106	6%
Administrative & Support Service Activities	3,242	2,388	5,630	8%	16587	8%
Public Administration & Defence; Compulsory Social Security	4,218	5,021	9,239	13%	30941	15%
Education	1,369	2,640	4,009	6%	10334	5%
Human Health & Social Work Activities	611	2,165	2,776	4%	7990	4%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	1,343	858	2,201	3%	7248	3%
Other Service Activities	679	1,189	1,868	3%	5025	2%
Activities Of Households as Employers, Undifferentiated Goods & Services - producing Activities of Households for own us	3	11	14	0%	33	0%
Activities of Extraterritorial Organisations & Bodies	116	88	204	0%	234	0%
Total	42,261	29,705	71,965	100%	208,482	100%

Source: Jobplus

Level of Dependency

The age structure of the population will have an impact on the needs and requirements of the area - this is because the number of minors as well as elderly affect the level of dependency within an area, and hence the quality of life of residents. **Table 14** below illustrates both the dependency ratio as well as the old-age dependency ratio for the 16 localities making up the Majjistral territory.

The dependency ratio is calculated through the summation of the population aged 0 to 14 years of age and the 65 or older and dividing by the total population of people aged 15 to 64. Intuitively, the old age dependency ratio divides the number of elderly (65+) by the population aged between 15 and 64.

Data from the 2011 Census shows that the Majjistral's dependency ratio stood at 42% as opposed to the national average of 45%. The old age dependency ratio was also lower for the territory under inspection at c. 20%, as opposed to the national c. 24%.

It is worth noting that Mdina seems to have the most dependent population (65%) being a reflection of the higher percentage of elderly as already specified in previous sections. In fact the old age dependency rate is the highest at 55% - but, again, this is due to the small population size of this locality. This is closely followed by Rabat whose dependency ratio is quoted at 53% with an old age dependency 34%. On the other hand, the least "dependent" locality was found to be Iklin with a dependency ratio of c. 28% and an old age dependency of 11%, followed by Swieqi at 35% and 13% respectively. These figures are important when considering which strategies to implement, as it gives a better picture of the characteristics of the people living in the region.

Table 14: Dependency ratio by locality (2011)		
Locality	Dependency %	Old age Dependency %
Attard	40.1	18.7
Dingli	35.6	13
Gharghur	42.4	15.7
Iklin	27.6	10.8
Mdina	64.8	55.2
Mellieha	46.7	23.5
Mgarr	39	15.8
Mosta	41.6	19.4
Mtarfa	45.8	12.1
Naxxar	38	15.7
Rabat (Malta)	52.8	33.8
San Gwann	38.3	18.1
St. Paul's Bay	42	20.5
Siggiewi	39.1	17.2
Swieqi	34.9	13.3
Zebbug (Malta)	43.2	19.2
MALTA	45.2	23.7
Total Majjistral	42.0	20.1

Source: NSO (2012), Census of Population and Housing 2011

Households

It is important to look at the number and structures of private households in order to understand the

requirements of the region's citizens. The average age of private households in the Majjistral region is slightly lower than the Maltese average (53 vs 54 years). Overall, the structure of households in the region is very similar to that of the national typical one. The most common household is composed of two individuals (27% of all households in the region), followed by a 3 person household, 4 person and 1 person household respectively – all around 20% each. Large households make up a very small percentage of all the households in the region. This is a reflection of the changing characteristics of the contemporary families – as couples have less children and extended families are on the decline.

While the above figures indicate the general average of the localities, one can also observe that different localities have different family structures reflecting local demographics. For instance, it is worth noting that Mdina and St. Paul's Bay have the majority of households composed of one individual (at 33% and 37% respectively). On the other hand, the most common type of household in Iklin and Attard is composed of four individuals (32% and 27% respectively).

	Average age	1	2	3	4	5	6 or more	Total
Attard	52.6	407	788	815	902	282	88	3,282
Dingli	52.3	138	270	276	297	112	38	1,131
Gharghur	50.7	201	258	228	187	66	19	959
Iklin	53.3	87	222	231	311	100	31	982
Mdina	63.8	30	22	16	14	7	1	90
Mellieħa	53.2	684	973	684	628	194	51	3,214
Mġarr	51.6	184	319	263	278	98	39	1,181
Mosta	52	1,154	1,722	1,585	1,640	479	158	6,738
Mtarfa	46.8	74	150	186	244	80	23	757
Naxxar	51.7	812	1,187	1,001	1,118	302	92	4,512
Rabat	57.1	948	1,249	898	707	246	93	4,141
San Ġwann	54	663	1,128	990	930	322	141	4,174
Siġġiewi	53.1	474	702	647	639	217	100	2,779
St Paul's Bay	50.2	2,714	2,268	1,231	818	274	103	7,408
Swieqi	51.1	656	842	632	725	239	65	3,159
Żebbuġ	53.1	615	1,064	936	913	322	114	3,964
Majjistral	52.9125	9841	13164	10619	10351	3340	1156	48471
Malta	54.2	34,637	42,651	32,741	29,535	9,634	3,782	152,980
% of Majjistral		20%	27%	22%	21%	7%	2%	100%
% of Malta		23%	28%	21%	19%	6%	2%	100%

Source: NSO (2012), *Census of Population and Housing 2011*

Dependency can sometimes lead to the need for institutional care and homes catering for such needs. Around 2%¹¹ of the territorial population resides in an institutional home, making up about 25% of the Maltese population in institutional households. This information is dependent on the number of such homes in this territory, given that once a resident moves to an institutional care home, his or her address is amended to refer to that home.

In this regard, the territory includes a number of old people's homes and day centers, including:

¹¹ Whereby total population of MAG territory in 2011 was equal to 135,325 individuals and the number of residents in institutional homes was that of 2,215.

- Mtarfa Home For the Elderly, run by government
- Elderly Centre Mosta, run by government
- Dar il-Madonna tal-Mellieħa, run by government
- Roseville (Attard), run through public-private partnership
- Villa Messina (Rabat), run through public-private partnership
- Casa Arkati (Mosta), run through public-private partnership
- Central Home (Mosta), run through public-private partnership
- Holy Family Home (Naxxar), run through public-private partnership
- Dar Saura (Rabat), run through public-private partnership
- Dingli Day Centre, run by government
- Mtarfa Day Centre, run by government
- St. Paul's Bay Day Centre, run by government
- Mosta, Day Centre, run by government
- Naxxar, Day Centre, run by government
- Mellieħa, Day Centre, run by government
- Siggiewi, Day Centre, run by government
- Mġarr, Day Centre, run by government

It is pertinent to note that the impact of such homes on the region depends in the mobility of the homes' residents – in case where residents stay within the confines of such homes, one could refer to the existence of a community within a community, having little, if any, impact on the region.

There is a clear sign that in the Majjistral region a greater number of females reside in such homes rather than males (67% vs 33%), which could reflect the differences in life expectancies between gender. 25% of people using such accommodation in the Majjistral region resided in homes in Attard, whilst 19% resided in Mosta and another 19% resided in Rabat, as indicated in **Table 16**.

Locality	Males		Females		Total		
	Number	% gender distribution	Number	% gender distribution	Number	% of Majjistral	% of Malta
Attard	204	36.6	354	63.4	558	25%	6%
Dingli	13	92.9	1	7.1	14	1%	0%
Gharghur	-	-	5	100	5	0%	0%
Iklin	-	-	-	-	-	0%	0%
Mdina	3	15	17	85	20	1%	0%
Mellieħa	49	27.8	127	72.2	176	8%	2%
Mġarr	-	-	13	100	13	1%	0%
Mosta	71	16.6	357	83.4	428	19%	5%
Mtarfa	33	26.4	92	73.6	125	6%	1%
Naxxar	62	51.7	58	48.3	120	5%	1%
Rabat (Malta)	158	38.1	257	61.9	415	19%	5%
San Gwann	7	19.4	29	80.6	36	2%	0%
St. Paul's Bay	49	32.2	103	67.8	152	7%	2%
Siggiewi	57	52.8	51	47.2	108	5%	1%
Swieqi	-	-	-	-	-	0%	0%
Zebbug (Malta)	36	80	9	20	45	2%	1%
MALTA	3,872	44.5	4,838	55.5	8,710	100	100%

Total Majjistral	742	33%	1473	67%	2215	100%	25%
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Source: NSO (2012), Census of Population and Housing- Preliminary Report 2011

Childcare is also another important aspect of the day-to-day lives of the citizens of each locality. Over the past few years we have seen a significant increase in child day-care centers, reflecting the different labour market dynamics, whereby nowadays mothers are more inclined to continue working as opposed to a few years ago, as well as various government incentives (EU funding for child care centre investment, free child care for end-user, tax credits for returning mothers). In 2009, there was a total of 43 childcare centres locally – nowadays the Ministry for Education and Employment indicates that there are currently 12 governmental childcare centres and 66 private ones, many of which form part of the free child day centre scheme.¹² Circa 26% of these childcare centres are located in the region under study – amounting to 20 childcare centres in the different localities in the Majjistral region, as illustrated in the list below:

- St. Cecilia's Kindergarten, Attard
- Thi Lakin School, Zebbug
- The Playhouse Child Care Centre, Gharghur
- Nannakola Child Care Centre (Vista Coop), Gharghur
- Little Owls Child Care Centre, Iklin
- San Anton Day Care Centre , Mgarr
- Child Jesus Educare Centre, Mellieha
- Neverland, Mellieha
- Pizzi Pizzi Kanna Smartkids (Fes), Naxxar
- San Luigi Childcare Centre, Naxxar
- Victoria Nursery School, Naxxar
- Little Minds Learning Centre, Rabat
- Is-Sardinella Smartkids Child Care Centre (Fes), San Gwann
- Smiles, San Gwann
- Bye Mama Childcare Centre, San Gwann
- Kid's Haven, San Gwann
- Abc Child Care Service, San Gwann
- Bright Sparks Child Care Centre, San Gwann
- Id-Denfil Child Care Centre (Fes), Siggiewi
- Jolly Jumpers Nursery And Child Care, Swieqi

1.1.3 Economic Profile

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth

GDP growth is a key indicator of how productive the area under study is. However, figures at a regional level are not available. The only official data available is published by the NSO and Eurostat and relates to the figures of Malta and Gozo, which can be compared to other European counterparts as well as other foreign countries¹³. As indicated in the figures below, and as already mentioned in previous

¹² Ministry for Education and Employment, available at: <https://www.gov.mt/en/Services-And-Information/Business-Areas/Education%20and%20Learning/Pages/Early-Years.aspx>. Accessed on 16 August 2016

¹³ The NSO provides GDP estimates at a national level, while an exercise has also been undertaken by the NSO to estimate the Gozo's regional GDP. No split by Malta districts is available.

sections, Malta has experienced GDP growth which is above the EU average.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Malta	3.5%	1.8%	2.9%	4.5%	3.5%	6.2%
EU 28	2.1%	1.7%	-0.5%	0.2%	1.5%	2.2%

Sources:

Eurostat (2016), *Real GDP growth rate – volume*, Available at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tec00115&plugin=1>. Accessed on 07 September 2016

Eurostat (2016), *Gross domestic product at market prices*. Available at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tec00001&plugin=1>. Accessed on 07 September 2016

Business Activity

Even though GDP and productivity figures are not available at a locality level, one can still gauge business activity in the area through other indicators. **Table 18** illustrates the number of businesses by size (i.e. by number of employees), as well as the number of business births and deaths in each locality in the territory.

In 2016 (up to the time of writing) 935 businesses (including self-employed applications) were opened in the Majjistral region, circa 36% of all new Maltese businesses. On the other hand 280 companies closed down. This has brought an increase of 655 enterprises in the Majjistral region compared to prior year. It is

Moreover, it is worth noting that, similar to the national trend, most companies in this region are classified as small enterprises, with less than 10 employees. Indeed 94% of companies have less than 10 employees in total.

	Businesses			Size by no. of employees		
	Births	Deaths	Increase in Businesses	0-9	10+	TOTAL
Attard	58	19	39	957	58	1015
Dingli	17	9	8	n/a	n/a	302
Gharghur	19	5	14	221	8	229
Iklin	20	3	17	279	12	291
Mdina	n/a			32	7	39
Mellieha	76	24	52	936	33	969
Mgarr	23	7	16	499	7	506
Mosta	164	27	137	1904	73	1977
Mtarfa	n/a	3		n/a	n/a	54
Naxxar	108	23	85	1169	57	1226
Rabat (Malta)	59	24	35	1181	23	1204
San Gwann	107	26	81	1340	91	1431
Siggiewi	31	11	20	637	9	646
St. Paul's Bay	137	50	87	1671	77	1748
Swieqi	77	29	48	842	25	867
Zebbug (Malta)	39	20	19	698	7	705
Majjistral	935	280	655	12366	487	13209

Malta	2,622	942	1,680	38691	2212	40903
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Source: NSO (2016) - Data forwarded by email

Note: n/a = not available

Agricultural Sector

One of the most important characteristics of the localities being categorized as part of the Majjistral territory is indeed the rural areas it holds. A large part of the area is characterized by fields used for crop production and livestock rearing as well as vineyards.

Table 19 indicates the percentage of agricultural land per locality as well as the classification of the land in terms of development zones. Overall, 57% of the territory is defined as “agricultural land” and 87% of the same territory is defined as ODZ area. Gharghur seems to hold the highest percentage of Agricultural land (83%), whilst Mgarr has the highest proportion of ODZ areas.

Council Name	Local Council Area (sq km)	Total Agri (sq km)*	% Agriculture	Development Zone Area (sq km)**	Outside Development Zone Area (sq km)***	% of ODZ
Attard	6.64	3.42	51.50%	1.8	4.8	72.70%
Dingli	5.67	3.28	57.80%	0.3	5.3	94.20%
Gharghur	2.02	1.68	83.10%	0.3	1.7	84.70%
Iklin	1.73	1.23	71.10%	0.5	1.2	71.10%
Mdina	0.89	0.74	82.60%	0.1	0.8	93.30%
Mellieha	22.64	8.72	38.50%	2	20.7	91.20%
Mgarr	16.12	11.21	69.50%	0.5	15.6	97.00%
Mosta	6.78	3.6	53.10%	2.3	4.5	65.80%
Mtarfa	0.72	0.3	41.60%	0.3	0.4	52.80%
Naxxar	11.57	4.94	42.70%	2.4	9.2	79.60%
Rabat (Malta)	26.6	15.7	59.00%	1.2	25.4	95.60%
San Gwann	2.62	0.89	34.10%	1.7	0.9	35.90%
St. Paul's Bay	14.53	9.6	66.00%	2.4	12.1	83.40%
Siggiewi	19.88	13.17	66.20%	1	18.9	95.10%
Swieqi	3.05	1.05	34.60%	1.8	1.3	42.00%
Zebbug (Malta)	8.66	5.61	64.80%	1.6	7.1	82.10%
Total Majjistral	150.12	85.14	57%	20.07	130.05	87%

Sources

* Corine Land Cover (CLC) inventory data updates of 2006

** PA (2016). For this exercise the **Development Zone** includes all the areas within scheme, Urban Conservation Areas and Industrial Areas as per 2016 Planning Authority's GIS datasets. Figures are rounded off to the nearest 0.1 sq km

*** PA (2016). For this exercise the **Outside Development Zone** includes all the areas outside the Development Zone as defined above as per 2016 Planning Authority's GIS datasets. Figures are rounded off to the nearest 0.1 sq km

Table 20 also illustrates the area of land (in hectares) as declared by farmers. This table shows that 51% of the declared land by farmers makes part of the Majjistral region. It is also worth noting that out of this declared land, 89% is used for agricultural purposes, confirming the importance of such a territory in terms of agricultural and farming. As previously explained, it is to be noted that this area

of agricultural land is related to the area of residence of the farmer. Hence some of the land might not be situated in the Majjistral region but only classified as such because the farmer lives in the area – and vice versa.

Locality	Total area declared by farmers (Ha)	Utilised agricultural area (Ha)	Unutilised agricultural area -(Ha)	Other area (Ha)
Attard	127.5	115.5	2.2	9.8
Dingli	323.4	263.1	9.7	50.6
Gharghur	110.8	97.3	1.8	11.7
Iklin	21.4	20.2	0.1	1.2
Mdina	16	13.6	0	2.4
Mellieha	580.7	494	9	78
Mgarr	929.5	803	14.9	111.5
Mosta	803.5	727.7	14	61.8
Mtarfa	100.3	88.5	0.4	11.4
Naxxar	300	257.5	3.1	39.4
Rabat (Malta)	1,211.50	981.4	38.2	191.9
San Gwann	125.8	106	1.1	18.7
St. Paul's Bay	494.6	439.3	12.5	42.8
Siggiewi	828.2	780.3	1.6	46.3
Swieqi	37.1	28	0.8	8.3
Zebbug (Malta)	571	516.9	10.8	43.4
Majjistral	6581.30	5732.20	120.20	728.90
Malta	12940.10	11452.80	253.30	1234.00
Majjistral as a % of Malta	51%	50%	47%	59%

Sources: NSO (2012), Census of Agriculture 2010

Indeed, the Majjistral region is home to the Pitkali – the place where Maltese farmers meet to sell their produce in Ta' Qali – limits of Attard. Moreover one also finds a good number of agricultural production entities focusing on honey, olive oil and sundried tomatoes, as well as citrus being produced in Mgarr, Wardija and the Pitkali area, amongst others. **Table 21** clearly demonstrates that the North West region has the highest distribution of agricultural produce over the entire Maltese distribution, especially in terms of fruit and berry plantations.

	Olives (ha)	Vineyards	Fruit and Berry plantations	Citrus
Southern Harbour	7.5	41.8	9.5	5.1
Northern Harbour	18.6	17.7	13.4	5.8
South Eastern	13.2	52.6	9.6	2.8
West	35	197.1	170.8	32.2
North	40.2	230.8	129.6	6.8
Gozo and Comino	25.8	74	38.7	58.6
MALTA	140.3	614	371.6	111.3
North West Share	54%	70%	81%	35%

Sources: NSO (2012), Census of Agriculture 2010

Note: as previously discussed, the above district includes Hal-Balzan and Hal-Lija which do not make part of the Majjistral territory – whilst they do not take into account Swieqi and San Gwann.

Moreover, according to the Census of Agriculture 2010 published by the NSO, 50% of the total registered farmers of Malta and Gozo were registered in the North-West district. This continues to confirm the importance of agricultural enterprises in the Majjistral region.

Agricultural activities have a strong link with the use of scarce resources, including groundwater and the land itself. In terms of the various groundwater sources found across the Maltese islands, it is clear that more than half of such sources are found in the North-West Region – hence more pressure on the ground water is found in these areas, especially so given farming activities are more pronounced in these areas.

	On-farm ground water sources
Southern Harbour	229
Northern Harbour	227
South Eastern	446
West	927
North	1100
Gozo and Comino	478
MALTA	3407
North West Share	59%

Sources: NSO (2012), Census of Agriculture 2010

Note: The above district includes Hal-Balzan and Hal-Lija which do not make part of the Majjistral territory – whilst they do not take into account Swieqi and San Gwann.

Additionally the Majjistral area also houses a number of livestock-rearing farms. Table 23 below presents information with regards to the livestock farms and population in the North-West district. The area holds around half of the pig population of the Maltese islands and more than a third of the cattle, sheep and goat populations. These farms may also add to the pressures on the land area, such as through the waste produced.

	North-West district	Malta	Percentage
Pig farms	42	100	42%
Pig population	23759	47,465	50%
Cattle farms	108	281	38%
Cattle population	5166	14883	35%
Sheep holdings	-	-	-
Sheep population	4437	10526	42%
Goat holdings	-	-	-
Goat population	1646	4627	36%

Sources: NSO (2016), Agriculture and Fisheries 2014

Note: The above district includes Hal-Balzan and Hal-Lija which do not make part of the Majjistral territory – whilst they do not take into account Swieqi and San Gwann.

Tourism Sector

The Majjistral Region also contains a good concentration of holiday settlements and is a very important contributor to the Malta tourism product. When looking at the Malta Tourism Authority's licenses for hotels it is clear that the Majjistral region holds a large number of such establishments, with the highest concentration being that of the 4 Star hotels (at 55%). One of the major localities which hosts a great number of hotels remains St. Paul's Bay. Indeed a survey carried out by the Malta

Tourism Authority has shown that one fourth of all respondents of tourists visiting Malta in 2014 had stayed at St. Paul’s Bay. Mellieha also ranked highly, with 10.2% of respondents residing in the locality.¹⁴

Amongst other accommodation options, Majjistral offers two major 5-star hotels, one in Mdina and one in Mellieha. **Table 24** provides details of the concentration of tourist establishments in the territory.

	2 Star	3 Star	4 Star	5 Star	Total
Malta	20	54	40	13	127
Majjistral	5	19	22	2	48
%	25%	35%	55%	15%	38%

Sources: Malta Tourism Authority (2016), *Hotels Licenses*. Available at: file:///C:/Users/maria.giulia.pace/Downloads/HOTELS[2].PDF. Accessed on 17 August 2016

Many tourists also tend to gravitate towards the Majjistral region to visit places of interest. The following table (**Table 25**) indicates the percentage of tourists in Malta who have visited particular areas in Malta. The highlighted localities refer to those areas which fall within the territory under study. Mdina and Rabat are the second most visited places in Malta (visited by 72% of the tourists), followed by the St. Paul’s Bay area, at 53%. It is therefore clear that the Majjistral region is not only important for hosting the tourists but also as an attraction in itself with great historical sites as well as touristic attractions like restaurants, bars and beaches amongst others.

Location	%
Valletta	91.3%
Mdina/Rabat	72.0%
Three Cities	31.7%
Marsascala	13.5%
Mellieha	38.0%
Sliema	61.0%
St. Julians	45.3%
Paceville	19.7%
St.Paul’s Bay/Bugibba/Qawra	53.0%
Dingli	25.0%
Marsaxlokk	44.9%
Mosta	39.0%
Hagar Qim/Mnajdra	18.7%
Wied iz-Zurrieq/Blue Grotto	23.9%

The area also hosts a number of foreign language schools which attract youths studying English, especially during the summer months. These are found in Attard as well as St. Paul’s Bay. Other attractions include Popeye’s Village in Mellieha, horse riding schools in Ghajn Tuffieha and the Maghtab area and a shooting range in the same locality. The area, being such a hub for tourists, is relatively well served by bus routes – except for more peripheral areas where frequency and routes will obviously be reduced.

¹⁴ Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) (2015), *Market Profile Analysis Year 2014*

Construction and quarrying

Given Malta's limited natural resources and the availability of different stone types, construction has always been a key industry for the island. PA records show that up till 2006 in Malta there were a total of 28 hardstone quarries and 60 soft-stone quarries in operation. This represents the latest data available with regards to quarries in Malta, but it is common knowledge that since then a number of such quarries have become disused, or have seen a change in use.

In the Majjistral region, there are various Lower and Upper Coralline limestone quarries. In 2006 (latest data available) 68% of hardstone quarries in Malta were found in this region, covering 75% of the total area of such quarries, as illustrated in **Table 26**.

Table 26: Hardstone quarrying in the Majjistral territory		
Localities	Number of quarries	Total Area (sq m)
Attard	1	56,760.78
Dingli	5	332,031.21
Mellieha	2	56,496.84
Mgarr	2	60,721.32
Mosta	1	35,537.46
Naxxar	3	200,138.03
Rabat	1	42,773.35
San Gwann	1	27,352.56
Siggiewi	2	105,055.24
Zebbug	1	60,183.72
Total Majjistral	19	977,050.52
Total MALTA	28	1,299,820.81
Percentage	68%	75%

Sources: MEPA (2006). Available at: <https://www.mepa.org.mt/file.aspx?f=2330>. Accessed on 18 August 2016

On the other hand, most of the soft-stone quarries are situated in Gozo or in the Southern parts of Malta, mostly in the Mqabba areas. Soft-stone quarries in the Majjistral region in fact make up only around 23% (in terms of both number and area) of the total soft-stone quarries on the Maltese islands, as demonstrated in the table below.

Table 27: Softstone quarrying in the Majjistral territory		
Localities	Number of quarries	Total Area (sq m)
Gharghur	2	43,755.57
Iklin	2	15,940.98
Siggiewi	10	169,462.35
Total Majjistral	14	229,158.9
Total Malta	60	1,010,931.47
Percentage	23%	23%

Sources: MEPA (2006). Available at: <https://www.mepa.org.mt/file.aspx?f=2330>. Accessed on 18 August 2016

It is worth noting that despite the economic activity generated by this industry, quarries are heavily

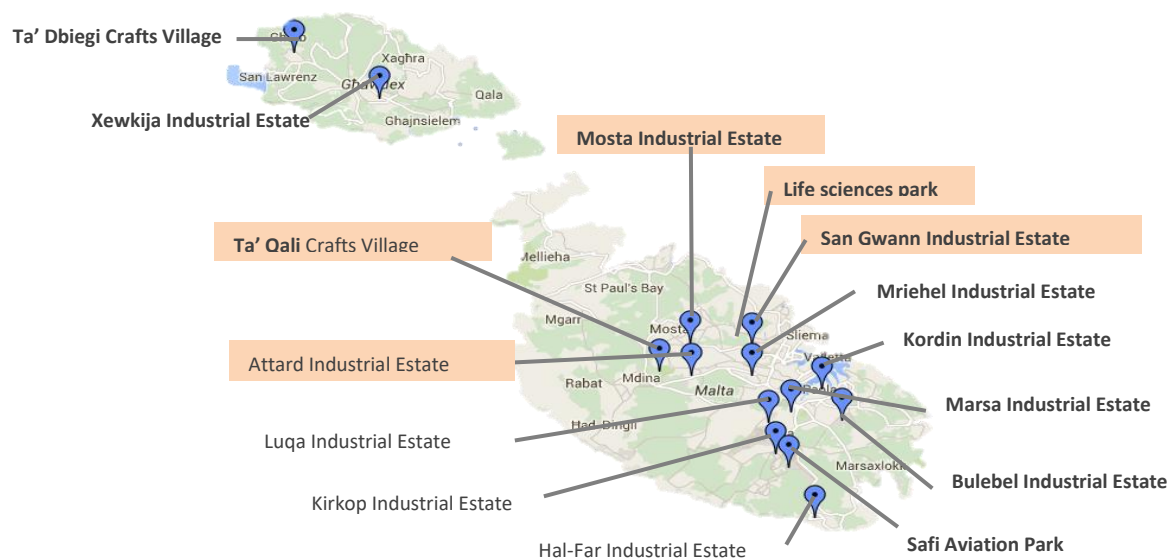
regulated due to their potential environmental impacts, including noise and particle pollution. On the other hand, disused quarries may act as an eye sore and might require re-engineering to minimise the impact on the landscape.

Industry

There are 12 industrial estates, 2 crafts villages and 1 Life Sciences Park in Malta – all fall under the management of the Malta Industrial Parks Limited, a government entity. In addition 2 other parks are managed privately - one in Kalkara and another in Xaghra.

The Majjistral territory does have some industrial presence in it, yet the major industrial estates are found in the south of Malta. As illustrated in **Figure 2**, only 3 industrial estates (Attard, Mosta and San Gwann), a Crafts Village in Ta’ Qali and a Life Sciences Park in the limits of San Gwann are present.

Figure 2: Industrial Estates in Malta



Sources: MIP website. Available at: <http://www.mip.com.mt/industrial-zones>. Accessed on 18 August 2016

Fisheries

St. Paul’s Bay, Mellieha as well as the limits of Siggiewi and Mgarr are found on the coastline. Hence fishing cannot be ignored as a vibrant business aspect for the territory. According to NSO records, in 2014 there were 1,194 fishing vessels registered within the Majjistral territory. The total registered vessels in Malta were 2,976. Hence the territory under study comprised around 40% of such vessel fleet. As clearly pointed out in the table below, a good number of fishing ports are present in the Majjistral territory, allowing for the fishing industry to continue to flourish and sustained.

Moreover one should also note that a number of fish farms are also present in the areas mentioned, such as at St. Paul’s Bay and Mellieha. Similar to the discussion on the quarrying industry, the presence of such an industry brings about both positive economic spill-over effects, but also potential negative repercussions on the environment,

Table 28: Stock of fishing licences by type of vessel and current base port: 2014

Locality	Total
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Anchor Bay	9
Armier	37
Bahar ic-Caghaq	19
Bugibba	71
Ghar Lapsi	55
Gnejna	191
Little Armier	4
Marfa	13
Mellieha Bay	109
Mgarr	289
Mistra Bay	27
Qawra	56
Ramla tal-Qortin	13
Ramla Tat-Torri	8
Salina	22
St. Paul's Bay (Il-Gillieru)	74
St. Paul's Bay (Il-Vecca)	90
St. Paul's Bay (Tal-Ghazzenin)	1
Xemxija	103
Xemxija (Il-Fekruna)	3
Total Majjistral	1,194
Total MALTA	2,976

Sources: NSO (2015), *Transport Statistics 2015*

1.1.4 Environmental Profile

The Majjistral region can be considered to be a very rich area in terms of cultural and natural assets. Nevertheless, a number of growing pressures are putting more stress on the area's environment, including:

- Intensification of agricultural activity, groundwater extraction and fishing
- Hard stone quarrying
- Number of holiday and accommodation establishments, as well as historical sites and touristic attractions, increasing influx of visitors
- Population density rising, with increases higher than the national average

In this respect it is important to look at the different characteristics of the environment so as to obtain a basic understanding of the current state of the environment and how this can be maintained and/or improved. For the major part of the indicators to be listed below the MEPA report *The Environment Report Indicators 2010-2011* was used.

Settlements

Table 29 below provides details with regards to the number of dwellings and occupancy status in the Majjistral localities. This is based on the latest data available, which refers to 2011. There have been considerable developments in the property market, fuelled by changing demographics (smaller sized households, foreign workers), macro-economic factors (low interest yield scenario, making lending cheaper, but also forcing people to look at property as an attractive store of wealth), and government

measures (relaxation in certain planning regulations, reduced stamp duty for first-time buyers, schemes to attract foreign investment, relaxation of inheritance laws).

As an overarching trend, the Majjistral territory seems to have witnessed an increase of 72% in total dwellings between 2008 and 2011. This was composed of an increase in both occupied and vacant properties. Part of this increase is the fact that an additional four localities are now being considered to be part of the territory whilst only Lija has been excluded. Nevertheless all localities seem to have witnessed an increase in total dwellings, with the sole exception of Mdina, which has seen total dwellings decrease by 1%, occupied dwellings decrease by 8% whilst vacant property increasing by 13%. This is however a direct result of the nature of this small unique fortified city.

Locality	2005			2011			Change		
	Total	Occupied	Vacant	Total	Occupied	Vacant	Total	Occupied	Vacant
Attard	3418	3006	412	4,069	3,282	787	19%	9%	91%
Dingli	1198	1033	165	1,424	1,128	296	19%	9%	79%
Gharghur	1037	824	213	1,339	957	382	29%	16%	79%
Iklin	1031	930	101	1,124	979	145	9%	5%	44%
Lija	1185	945	240	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mdina	146	98	48	144	90	54	-1%	-8%	13%
Mellieha	5190	2694	2496	6,251	3,208	3043	20%	19%	22%
Mgarr	1164	953	211	1,748	1,181	567	50%	24%	169%
Mosta	N/A	N/A	N/A	8,359	6,738	1621	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mtarfa	748	681	67	840	757	83	12%	11%	24%
Naxxar	4789	3935	854	5,973	4,508	1465	25%	15%	72%
Rabat (Malta)	4804	3925	879	5,346	4,127	1219	11%	5%	39%
San Gwann	N/A	N/A	N/A	4,921	4,161	760	N/A	N/A	N/A
Siggiewi	2917	2504	413	3,341	2,772	569	15%	11%	38%
St. Paul's Bay	14207	5445	8762	17,593	7,397	10196	24%	36%	16%
Swieqi	N/A	N/A	N/A	4,478	3,151	1327	N/A	N/A	N/A
Zebbug (Malta)	N/A	N/A	N/A	5,128	3,958	1170	N/A	N/A	N/A
Majjistral	41834	26973	14861	72078	48394	23684	72%	79%	59%

Source: NSO (2007), *Census of Population and Housing 2005* NSO (2012), *Census of Population and Housing 2011*

In the period 2008-2011, the greatest increase in dwellings was registered in Mgarr (50%), Gharghur (29%), Naxxar (25%) and St. Paul's Bay (24%). Nevertheless the greatest increase in occupied households was in St. Pauls Bay (36%). Vacant property has been increasing throughout the region, with the highest increases being recorded in Mgarr (169%), Attard (91%), Gharghur (79%) and Dingli (79%). Recent developments have increased demand for property, hence reducing the stock of vacant properties. These localities are not considered to be places dedicated to summer residences and hence any vacant property held could be due to other reasons (secondary residence, investment, buy to let, stuck in inheritance tussles). The 2011 Census indicated that Gharghur and Mgarr (24.3% and 23.3% respectively) had the highest percentage of completely vacant dwellings in their locality¹⁵. In the year 2011, there was an average of c. 16% (11,620 dwellings) completely vacant properties in the Majjistral territory. The Census also provides information on the state of such vacant property. Only about two-thirds of total properties were deemed to be in a good state (possibly ready for sale). As

¹⁵ NSO (2012), *Census of Population and Housing 2011*

previously indicated, no more recent data is available locally.

Additionally, the table below presents both the average and median property prices of all the localities making part of the Majjistral Territory. This data covers the period June 2015 to April 2016, and is based on online listings of the major real estate agents' property websites in Malta.

Locality Name	Properties for sale	Average price for sale	Median price for sale
		€	€
Attard	1,012	330,054	190,123
Dingli	178	626,085	174,000
Gharghur	356	458,744	204,985
Iklin	192	780,169	334,715
Lija	256	494,545	210,000
Mdina	20	1,270,666	762,500
Mellieha	1,375	480,553	256,116
Mgarr	276	436,379	170,000
Mosta	1,972	327,556	169,500
Mtarfa	112	393,737	185,255
Naxxar	1,398	442,264	196,832
Rabat	741	595,502	212,500
San Gwann	702	348,902	175,000
Siggiewi	583	358,219	185,343
Swieqi	1,256	590,284	297,000
Zebbug	981	403,981	175,000
MAGF average		441,091	

Source: LionMalta; EY analysis

This table indicates the highest average property prices are in Mdina whilst the lowest in Mosta. Clearly, the analysis also depends on the sample size and type of property for sale.

These prices could also be effecting the inter-territorial mobility of the population, however one must keep in mind that this latter movement is not only affected by the property prices but also by the rental rates of property. Nevertheless such data seems to be unavailable in the public domain.

Biodiversity

The territory also boasts of a good number of natural designated areas, as demonstrated in **Table 31** below. These specially designated areas have been set to ensure that specific habitats and species residing in these environments are protected due to both their national and international importance.

	Malta		Majjistral	
	Number	Area in sq Km	Number	Area in Sq Km
Special areas of Conservation	34	41.95	14 ¹	7.87(*)
Special areas of Conservation - Marine	5	190.78	2	32.99
Special Protection Areas	13	16.53	5	8.54

Area of ecological importance	73	not provided	34 ²	not provided
Bird Sanctuaries	26	16.55	11	4.66
Sites with historical trees	6	0.160	5	0.15
Nature Reserve	3	0.19	1	0.11
Protected Beaches	11	0.314	6	0.19
Tree protection areas	30	5.35	19	4.005

Sources: MEPA (2012), *The Environment Report Indicators 2010-2011 – Data sheets*. Available at: <http://www.mepa.org.mt/teri2010-2011-biodiversity>. Accessed on 18 August 2016

¹ Excluding coastal cliffs of circa 23.16 Km sq

² Excluding some coastal cliffs

In the Majjistral territory one also finds ecologically important areas such as il-Buskett, is-Simar, il-Mizieb, is-Salini and St. Paul's Islands, amongst others. A number of protected beaches are also found in the Majjistral territory, more specifically in the Mellieha and Mgarr region. Some of these beaches have also been granted the "Blue Flag" certification. All the coastline of the North-West region is also protected.

Natura 2000 sites

In an attempt to protect the biodiversity in its different member states, the EU has created the Natura 2000 network of protected sites designated under the Habitats and Birds Directives, which require special protection due to their intrinsic value of the habitat or species.

As at the end of 2011 Malta had 27 terrestrial sites and another marine site under the Natura 2000 network, covering a total area of 50.50 Km². Also, in 2011 another 4 marine sites were proposed to be designated as Natura 2000 sites, which were then granted. This led to 32 different sites being listed, with a total coverage of 232.79 Km². Out of these sites, 13 are located within the Majjistral territory and cover 18% of the total area under such Directive, equivalent to 41.01Km², as illustrated in **Table 32** below.

Table 32: Natura 2000 Sites under the Habitat Directive	
Site Name	Area (km ²)
Il-Ballut tal-Wardija	0.20
Is-Simar (limits of St. Paul's Bay)	0.58
Is-Salini	0.24
L-Ghadira s-Safra	0.02
L-Inhawi tar-Ramla tat-Torri u tal-Irdum tal-Madonna	0.75
Wied il-Mizieb	0.25
L-Inhawi tal-Ghadira	0.98
L-Inhawi tal-Buskett u tal-Girgenti	2.45
L-Inhawi tal-Imgiebah u tal-Mignuna	1.76
Il-Gzejjer ta' San Pawl (Selmunett)	0.11
L-Ghar tal-Iburdan u l-Inhawi tal-Madwar	0.69
Zona fil-Bahar Bejn Rдум Majjiesa u Ras ir-Raheb	8.49
Zona fil-Bahar fl-Inhawi ta' Ghar Lapsi u ta' Filfla	24.51
Total Majjistral	41.01

Sources: MEPA (2012), *The Environment Report Indicators 2010-2011 – Data sheets*. Available at: <http://www.mepa.org.mt/teri2010-2011-biodiversity>. Accessed on 19 August 2016

Additionally, in relation to the Birds Directive, Malta has 13 sites covering a total area of 16.53 Km²

classified under Natura 2000, with some being also considered under the Habitat Directive. Five of these sites, totalling 8.54 Km² (equivalent to 51% of the total local area under such Directive) are found in the Majjistral Region as specified in **Table 33**.

Site Name	Area (km ²)
Is-Simar (limits of San Pawl il-Bahar)	0.58
L-Inhawi tar-Ramla tat-Torri u tal-Irdum tal-Madonna	0.75
L-Inhawi tal-Ghadira	0.98
L-Inhawi tal-Buskett u tal-Girgenti	2.45
Rdumijiet ta' Malta: Ras il-Pellegrin sax-Xaqqa	3.78
Total Majjistral	8.54

Sources: MEPA (2012), *The Environment Report Indicators 2010-2011 – Data sheets*. Available at: <http://www.mepa.org.mt/teri2010-2011-biodiversity>. Accessed on 19 August 2016

Air Quality

Another indicator used to assess the environmental profile of the Maltese islands is air quality. **Table 34** shows that air quality within the Majjistral region seems to be above the Maltese average, with lower levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and benzene.

Locality	SO ₂ (µg/m ³)	NO ₂ (µg/m ³)	O ₃ (µg/m ³)	Benzene (µg/m ³)
Attard	3.41	28.23	97.61	1.39
Bugibba	3.14	19.27	112.69	1.11
Dingli	3.41	12.63	121.74	0.94
Mellieha	3.9	20.02	116.81	1.53
Mgarr (Malta)	3.9	16.18	119.89	1.04
Mosta	4.06	34.28	93.14	1.48
Naxxar	3.89	16.73	102.63	1.2
Rabat	3.57	26.1	112.32	1.68
San Gwann	3.78	27.86	100.83	2.04
Siggiewi	2.68	14.36	123.5	1.05
Swieqi	2.51	24.42	24.42	1.4
Zebbug (Malta)	2.7	27.85	98	1.51
Average Malta	4.90	26.13	100.85	1.56
Average Majjistral	3.41	22.33	101.97	1.36
Average for the region as a % of Malta	70%	85%	101%	87%

Sources: MEPA (2012), *The Environment Report Indicators 2010-2011 – Data sheets*. Available at: <http://www.mepa.org.mt/teri2010-2011-air>. Accessed on 19 August 2016

Note: Data for Mellieha, Mtarfa, Gharghur, Mdina, Iklin and St. Paul's Bay was not available. Bugibba was included as part of the St. Paul's Bay region.

Ground level ozone (O₃) in the Majjistral region is slightly higher than the Maltese average. This air pollutant is formed through the reaction of nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds emitted from traffic and power generation emissions in the presence of sunlight. Nevertheless the majority of O₃ affecting Malta is of trans-boundary nature. MEPA stated that “the highest O₃ concentrations

continued to be recorded in rural localities less affected by traffic”¹⁶.

Water

Water is a very important resource, which in Malta is very scarce due to the lack of mountains and lakes. Indeed local water originates from the groundwater extracted from the aquifers and through desalination processes produced through the three reverse osmosis found in Malta and operated by the Water Services Corporation (WSC).

Locally this resource is put under great pressure through competing users. Private household are the highest consumers of water. In 2010 they consumed 68.7% of all billed consumption. 14.1% of consumption came from the services sector, including the government, tourism and commercial sector.¹⁷ Data on private water supply in terms of fresh ground water is not available, yet it is clear that the over-extraction of groundwater is leading to the great risk of depleting the resource or that of polluting it. Another source of groundwater pollution could be represented by any pesticides which might still be used in local agriculture (discussed later).

Another indicator showing the quality of water in the Maltese islands is the chloride concentration in the aquifers, resulting from sea water intrusion as well as over-extraction of water. The threshold values against which levels are compared to are specified in **Table 35**. In 2011, the highest average chloride concentration was found at Pwales, which makes part of St. Paul’s Bay and thus makes part of the Majjistral territory. In 2011, out of six ground-water bodies found in the territory, four exceeded the thresholds and two had no data available.

Groundwater body	Threshold values and quality standards	2009	2010	2011
Malta Mean Sea Level	1000 mg/l	626.72	662.33	780.65
Mizieb Mean Sea Level		292.70	419.90	n/a
Kemmuna Mean Sea Level		397.40	576.50	558.00
Gozo Mean Sea Level		625.23	593.50	659.21
Pwales Coastal	500 mg/l	2,430.70	2,332.00	2,994.50
Mellieha Coastal		1,296.10	547.00	765.50
Marfa Coastal		878.90	1,037.50	923.00
Rabat-Dingli Perched	210 mg/l	194.33	n/a	n/a
Mgarr-Wardija Perched		183.10	192.50	233.50
Mellieha Perched		143.40	294.00	350.00
Ghajnsielem Perched		294.70	339.00	354.50
Nadur Perched		152.60	77.10	91.00
Xaghra Perched		196.05	333.50	472.50
Zebbug Perched		261.60	366.00	237.50
Victoria-Kercem Perched		250.35	335.50	398.25

Unit: mg/l

Source: Malta Resources Authority, as quoted by MEPA (2012), *The Environment Report Indicators 2010-2011 – Data sheets*. Available at: <http://www.mepa.org.mt/teri2010-2011-freshwaters>. Accessed on 19 August 2016

Another indicator of the quality of the fresh water in Malta is the level of nitrates in groundwater. This is usually a result of anthropogenic activities, such as the use of fertilizers in fields which then leak to the groundwater.

¹⁶ Sources: MEPA (2012), *The Environment Report Indicators 2010-2011*, p. 19

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 31

Table 36: Level of Nitrates in groundwater bodies			
Groundwater body	2009	2010	2011
Malta Mean Sea Level	73.90	70.20	64.2
Mizieb Mean Sea Level	34.10	45.10	n/a
Kemmuna Mean Sea Level	35.90	24.90	14.7
Gozo Mean Sea Level	49.40	50.40	47.5
Pwales Coastal	364.60	378.50	488.0
Mellieha Coastal	335.40	32.70	32.6
Marfa Coastal	213.40	252.30	289.0
Rabat-Dingli Perched	137.30	186.90	195.3
Mgarr-Wardija Perched	139.00	119.70	133.2
Mellieha Perched	91.80	200.70	206.5
Ghajnsielem Perched	99.90	122.50	118.0
Nadur Perched	88.40	49.50	50.7
Xaghra Perched	215.20	178.60	185.0
Zebbug Perched	315.90	198.40	213.5
Victoria-Kercem Perched	133.50	152.10	158.5

Unit: mg/l

Source: Malta Resources Authority, as quoted by MEPA (2012), *The Environment Report Indicators 2010-2011 – Data sheets*. Available at: <http://www.mepa.org.mt/teri2010-2011-freshwaters>. Accessed on 19 August 2016

The EU limit value of 50mg/l of nitrate levels was exceeded by 11 out of 15 groundwater bodies in 2011, 4 of which were bodies found in the Majjistral territory. The highest levels were once again found in the Pwales area, at 488 mg/l.

On the other hand, bathing water quality in Malta is considered to be particularly high, with 97.7% of coastal areas considered to be of excellent quality over the years of 2008-2011. This is a very important factor for the Maltese, especially given that much of the local summer time leisure is associated with beach and water activities. In this regard, Malta is in line with EU requirements in terms of the EU Bathing Water Directive and the Barcelona Convention. Unfortunately data as per beach or swimming zone was not readily available and hence extraction of patterns with regard to the Majjistral region were not possible. With increased economic activity and competing sea uses, leading to increased traffic, the quality of bathing water remains an environmental measure which needs to be kept closely monitored.

1.2 SWOT Analysis

In order to further analyse the needs of the area, the following section highlights the internal strengths and weaknesses of the territory, as well as the external opportunities and threats. The Strategy is aimed at coming up with measures that:

- (a) attempt to minimize both weaknesses and threats;
- (b) attempts to minimize the weaknesses and to maximize tile opportunities;
- (c) are based on the strengths of the territory that can deal with threats in the environment; and
- (d) maximize both strengths and opportunities.

The following factors which will be outlined have been derived from the analysis of the data referred to in this section, as well as evidence-based observations through community participation and

stakeholder involvement (these processes are discussed in more detail in latter sections). The factors are not presented in any order of importance or merit. The tables below also present any linkages between these factors and (a) the RDP themes identified in **Section 4.1.1** of this LDS; (b) the three main strategic needs identified in **Section 4.2.3** of this LDS; and (c) the measures presented in **Section 5** of this LDS.

Strengths	RDP themes/ Strategic needs/ LDS measures Actions
Lower level of long term illnesses when compared to the Maltese average	
Lower level of dependency on the population of the region relative to the Maltese average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 1: Cultural and social development
Higher employment rates than national average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 1: Cultural and social development
Positive increase in new businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 3: creation of business and trading opportunities, particularly in niche areas of the rural economy
Presence of large areas of land dedicated for agricultural purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 2: Investment in environmental and sensible landscaping of the rural areas • RDP Theme 4: Landscape and environment • LDS Measure 4: Development of green infrastructure
Area of agricultural and rural importance, supporting agro-biodiversity and positively contributing to the territory's economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 2: Investment in environmental and sensible landscaping of the rural areas • RDP Theme 4: Landscape and environment • LDS Measure 4: Development of green infrastructure
High percentage of ODZ areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 2: Investment in environmental and sensible landscaping of the rural areas • RDP Theme 4: Landscape and environment • LDS Measure 4: Development of green infrastructure
Coastal and marine areas have a significant recreational and touristic value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LDS Measure 3: Promotion of the cultural heritage
Relatively high number of natural designated areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 2: Investment in environmental and sensible landscaping of the rural areas • RDP Theme 4: Landscape and environment • LDS Measure 4: Development of green infrastructure

Relatively good air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 1: Cultural and social development
Number of beaches with good bathing water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDP Theme 1: Water, wastes and energy - improving sustainable use and generating renewable energy
Limited manufacturing activity, thus leading to less environmental impacts and limited requests for large land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDP Theme 1: Water, wastes and energy - improving sustainable use and generating renewable energy
Presence of localities and sites having important cultural assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 2: Investment in environmental and sensible landscaping of the rural areas • RDP Theme 4: Landscape and environment • LDS Measure 3: Promotion of the cultural heritage
Presence of a Tourism hub, including accommodation as well as numerous attractions	
Touristic areas acting as entertainment hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LDS Measure 3: Promotion of the cultural heritage
Active civil organisations e.g. farming and agricultural organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 2: Investment in environmental and sensible landscaping of the rural areas • RDP Theme 4: Landscape and environment • LDS Measure 3: Promotion of the cultural heritage

Weaknesses	RDP themes/ Strategic needs/ LDS measures Actions
Lack of data available at regional levels (in terms of health, education, GDP etc.)	
Increased environmental pressure due to high population density and increased economic activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 1: Cultural and social development
Conflicting use of environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDP Theme 1: Water, wastes and energy - improving sustainable use and generating renewable energy
Lack of information and interpretation facilities for visitors and tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LDS Measure 3: Promotion of the cultural heritage
Numerous alleys and pathways in a run-down state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDP Theme 4: Landscape and environment
Water sources under pressure, especially water extracted from the aquifers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDP Theme 1: Water, wastes and energy - improving sustainable use and generating renewable energy

Little water catchment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RDP Theme 1: Water, wastes and energy - improving sustainable use and generating renewable energy
Lack of infrastructure in various sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Need 1: Cultural and social development
Increase in properties, including vacant properties	
Little investment in crafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LDS Measure 5: Training and education
Limited collaboration between operators and stakeholders within the territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous LDS measure (subsequently removed from LDS following discussions with Managing Authority): Innovation, co-operation and strengthening of the knowledge base LDS Measure 6: Trans-national and inter-territorial co-operation
Limited funding for social and cultural activities, and for organisations implementing such programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LDS Measure 2: Strengthening a healthy cultural identity LDS Measure 3: Promotion of the cultural heritage
Limited availability of sports facilities within the territory	

Opportunities	RDP themes/ Strategic needs/ LDS measures Actions
Increasing population in the area leading to more economic activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Need 1: Cultural and social development. Strategic Need 3: creation of business and trading opportunities, particularly in niche areas of the rural economy
Slightly younger population than national average, potentially leading to greater willingness to innovate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Need 1: Cultural and social development
Higher literacy rates and educational attainment compared to the national average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Need 1: Cultural and social development
Untapped labour forces resources through inactive population	
Increasing child care centers	
Possibility of restoring cultural buildings and artefacts for improved tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LDS Measure 1: Restoration of assets and sites of artistic and cultural value
Exploiting local crafts and investing in them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LDS Measure 5: Training and education
Coordinate between places of interest to create Tourism Information Centre's and utilise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LDS Measure 3: Promotion of the cultural heritage

technology to digitise information	
Opportunities to showcase traditional farming techniques in rural settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDP Theme 2: Maltese quality produce
Potential of creating synergies amongst different localities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LDS Measure 6: Trans-national and inter-territorial co-operation
Trend towards informal educational systems and accreditations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LDS Measure 5: Training and education
Use of existing sporting institutions to promote inclusivity	
Promotion of local produce and agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDP Theme 2: Maltese quality produce
Potential for innovation, leading to the development of more sustainable farming techniques within the territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous LDS measure (subsequently removed from LDS following discussions with Managing Authority): Innovation, co-operation and strengthening of the knowledge base
Greening of cities and open spaces identified as key for the improved well-being of the territory's communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 2: Investment in environmental and sensible landscaping of the rural areas • RDP Theme 4: Landscape and environment • LDS Measure 4: Development of green infrastructure

Threats	RDP themes/ Strategic needs/ LDS measures Actions
Increasing population in the area may bring more pressure on resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 1: Cultural and social development.
Increased population density leading to more pressure on land, water and air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 1: Cultural and social development.
The importance of quarrying for hard-stone in the area brings about environmental repercussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDP Theme 1: Water, wastes and energy - improving sustainable use and generating renewable energy
Urban sprawl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 1: Cultural and social development.
High activity in fisheries putting pressure on coastal zones	
High activity in terms of agriculture and livestock rearing putting pressure on land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDP Theme 3: Sustainable livestock.
Very limited knowledge transfer in terms of crafts and trades with the risk of long term loss of knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous LDS measure (subsequently removed from LDS following discussions with Managing Authority): Innovation, co-

	<p>operation and strengthening of the knowledge base</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LDS Measure 5: Training and education
Limited land available in other areas of Malta, leading to increased land use pressure in the region	
Calls for increased development in Gozo (including permanent links), leading to greater pressures on connecting areas	
High visitation patterns to coastal areas, and in particular sandy beaches, leading to the loss of biodiversity	
Agricultural abandonment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 2: Investment in environmental and sensible landscaping of the rural areas • RDP Theme 4: Landscape and environment • LDS Measure 4: Development of green infrastructure
Loss of traditional knowledge associated with agriculture and fisheries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Need 3: Fostering development of skills, knowledge base and transfer
Limited availability of funding for collaboration and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous LDS measure (subsequently removed from LDS following discussions with Managing Authority): Innovation, co-operation and strengthening of the knowledge base
The loss of cultural heritage due to limited funding for restoration activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LDS Measure 1: Restoration of assets and sites of artistic and cultural value

The next sub-section provides a description of the implications the above factors could bring about¹⁸:

Strengths

- The population residing in the North-West region, being the proxy used for the Majjistral region, suffers less than the Maltese average from long-term illnesses. Though the difference is marginal, this could be due to the lower traffic congestion, and could imply that the Majjistral population is healthier and fewer resources are required to be dedicated to health and hence can be targeted to other needs of the society.
- In the Majjistral region one also finds a lower dependency ratio (42% vs. 45%), whilst the old age dependency is lower at 20% as opposed to the national average of 24%. Indeed, this ratio is also a reflection of a marginally younger population in Majjistral. This means that the population in the region under study does not have to support as many individuals as the national average and can dedicate the resources they earn to other uses.

¹⁸ European Network for Rural Development (2016), *LEADER Local Development Strategies (LDS) Guidance on design and implementation*, p.

- On the basis of 2011 data, in the North-West region, slightly more people are employed as opposed to the national average. This means that the territory is more economically active and productive.
- Moreover, looking at businesses opening up in Malta in the year 2016, 36% of all new business activities emanate from the territory.
- The area is known for its rural and agricultural importance, with a good number of wine presses, olive yards, and farmers' markets, amongst others. Agriculture is very much part of the economic activity especially in areas such as Ta' Qali (mainly because of Pitkalija) and Mgarr.
- Indeed, a good percentage of land is dedicated to agricultural purposes – more specifically 57% of the land – again highlighting the importance of the rural aspect of the region.
- The area is also very important in terms of its coastal zones – with around 20 base ports and 40% of the total fishing licences being registered in the area.
- Another stronghold of the Majjistral region is that there are various protected environmental zones, including Natura 2000 areas. This ensures that certain habitats and ecological sites are protected and not disrupted.
- Additionally the quality of the air in the area tends to be relatively good – this means there is less pollution in the area, reducing the negative impacts on the health of the residents.
- The manufacturing activity in the territory is limited – there are only 3 industrial estates, a science park and a crafts village present. This has positive implications on the environment of the area since pollution from production and waste is reduced.
- The Majjistral region dons a great number of beaches with good bathing waters. This is another reason why the area is known by locals and tourists for its recreational potential.
- The region also has great cultural heritage, with various artefacts, buildings, trades and customs of historical value. This gives value to the area as well as attracts tourists.
- Indeed, the Majjistral area can be considered to be a touristic hub. 38% of the hotels in Malta are found in this region, with 55% of 4 star hotels being situated in the area. Moreover various touristic sites are found in the region, including St. Paul's Bay, Mdina and Rabat.
- The region is also considered to be an area of entertainment. As already stated the area has a number of beaches, such as Golden Bay, Gnejna, St. Paul's Bay, and Ghadira. Other recreational places include the national park of Ta' Qali, the equestrian school at Ghajn Tuffieha, various restaurants and bars, a shooting range at Bahar ic-Caghaq and many others. This means that the region is a dynamic hub, celebrating life and culture.
- There is also a very vibrant and active resident base with a number of different organisations allowing for the interaction of the citizens. These include farming and agricultural organisations, church groups, scouts, band clubs, environmental NGOs and many others. This allows for the area to continuously seek innovation.

Weaknesses

Despite the positive aspects mentioned above, the territory suffers from a number of weaknesses which this Strategy aims to address:

- It is imperative to add that data for some localities is limited and hence this impedes in-depth analysis per region and therefore prevents the correct measures to target the needs of the areas. This is partly made up for through the wide stakeholder consultation process (discussed in latter sections).

- Coordinated information for tourists is also lacking, hence often losing the benefits that one could enjoy through the synergies flowing from the proximity of the different localities.
- Given the vast cover of rural land, Majjistral is characterised by a number of alleys and pathways. Yet many of these are run-down, leading to difficult accessibility for tourists and being damaging to the farmers' machines and equipment.
- The agricultural activity in the area puts great pressure upon the land as well as water sources – leading to over-use of soil, soil dispersion and pollution of the aquifers
- Indeed, the Majjistral area is witnessing increased stress on its water sources, mainly groundwater, with high chloride concentrations as well as nitrate leakages.
- There are also limited processes of water catchment – leading to the scarce water resource to be quickly depleted.
- The area also suffers from lack of infrastructure and accessibility, especially for people with disability.
- The number of properties in the area has been rising (by 72% between 2008 and 2011). Though more recent data is not available, the trend has likely persisted in recent years. This is decreasing the open spaces and increasing the 'crowding effect'.
- Despite the presence of the crafts village and a number of trades in the area, there is little investment in the crafts from a national level.

Opportunities

The Strategy also takes into account opportunities which might arise and which can be tapped to improve and develop the region further:

- The population of the region is increasing. This could result into a higher labour force and more economic activity, production as well as consumption. This increases the standard of living of the community.
- Having a slightly younger population could act as an opportunity to have more workers and educate them in various ways to take on particular trades or crafts specific to the region and avoiding the loss of knowledge. Moreover this also helps in decreasing the dependency ratio of the area.
- The average literacy rates and educational attainments of the population of the territory are slightly higher than the national average. This could translate into the provision of high quality service provision.
- Despite a lower inactivity rate than the Maltese average, there is still a good pool of inactive people who can be seen as untapped labour force. Through targeting of such individuals the region could potentially increase its labour force, productivity and economic activity.
- The above point can also be brought about given the increase in child care centres. At the moment in the region there are 20 centres. These can assist parents, especially mothers, to return to the labour market.
- The Majjistral region is very rich in culture and historical buildings and artefacts, yet some of them require upkeep and investment in their refurbishment. This can be seen as an opportunity to restore such assets and use them as an attraction for tourists as well as a way to increase the value of the locality. Such investment also generates activity in the region.
- Given the presence of a number of crafts in the area, more investment could help the localities to capitalise on these activities, which are often left un-marketed.

- The importance of the agricultural sector in this area could help in developing and using new farming techniques. This would not only assist the farmers themselves but also increase the productivity of the entire area.
- There is also an opportunity to create informal educational systems to pass on the knowledge and the trades as well as create an accreditation system so as to ensure that Maltese produce is recognised and promoted.
- The area has a number of sporting institutions and areas - these can be used to promote inclusivity in the society, by creating specific activities for vulnerable groups.
- Given the importance of rural areas as well as agriculture, one can see the opportunity to use such already existing systems to further promote the local produce and agricultural systems.

Threats

Apart from opportunities, external forces could also act as a threat to the stability and growth of the area. It is for this reason that the Strategy is being written with these threats in mind:

- As already specified the population of the area is on the increase. Even though this has been categorised as an opportunity, this could also act as a threat in that the more people there are in the area, the higher the pressure on the resources such as water, air and land as well as on the infrastructure of roads, sewage, telecommunication and others.
- Similarly the population density is also on the increase, creating great pressures on the area.
- Another threat, given the increase in population, is the possible urban sprawl. Given the increased number of individuals residing in the areas, housing might start to extend in areas currently regarded as free spaces, and hence the rural identity of the area might be depleted.
- The Majjistral region is also known for the importance of the hard-stone quarrying in various sections of the territory. Despite this being a lucrative economic activity the quarries do have serious environmental implications on the area – including noise and particulate pollution. Once the quarries are closed down and excavations are terminated, the quarry also remains a problem, being an eye sore and many times needing some sort of re-engineering.
- Another economic activity important for the area is that of fisheries, with a good number of licences fisherman in the coastal localities, as well as fish farms. This activity puts great pressure on the coastal zones and might also lead to the threat of over-fishing, as well as other polluting effects.
- Similarly the high activity in agriculture, especially in areas like Mgarr, might be a threat to the land as well as the water table. The rearing of livestock also brings about problems in terms of waste production, which might contaminate the water table and bring about a problem of disposal.
- Currently there seems to be very limited knowledge transfer of particular crafts and trades through the generations. Such trades might be specific to the area and there is a risk of it being lost once the older generations die out. The loss of knowledge would not only lead to the know-how of the trade itself but will also impoverish the culture of the region, given that many trades will be lost in time.

4. Description and objectives of the Strategy

1.3 Setting the scene

As the means by which the strategic objectives of the LEADER programme are to be implemented, the Local Development Strategy (LDS) must be in line with the Europe 2020 strategy and the overall objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In order to be strategically aligned, the LDS needs to be oriented towards the objective of achieving balanced territorial development of rural areas, which is one of the three overall CAP long-term objectives that have been identified for EU rural development policy in the 2014-2020 period.

Furthermore, the LDS should also contribute towards the priorities of the European rural development policy, with particular focus on priority 6 which is that of promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

1.3.1 Malta's partnership agreement and the rural development programme

The overall strategy and objectives of the LDS need to be guided by the framework approach and prioritisation that Malta has adopted in its definition of the Community Led Local Development (CLLD) and LEADER in its Partnership Agreement (PA) for the current programming period. Malta's intention in this respect is to use the LEADER approach for the delivery of actions that serve to promote social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas. The LEADER approach is intended as a key delivery method for interventions aimed to strengthen the wider rural economy and quality of life, besides also contributing towards the achievement of thematic objectives for SMEs and social inclusion.

The PA goes on to identify the priority actions for LEADER as those that shall aim to stimulate new business activity and help support rural incomes and standard of living, including interventions such as farm diversification, investment in cultural and natural heritage, social inclusion, co-operation and knowledge transfer. The PA also places emphasis on the need for the LDS to reflect the specific needs of the designated territory which it covers.

In setting the vision and the high-level strategic objectives of the LDS, one needs to be constantly reminded of the distinguishing characteristics of the LEADER programme - the bottom-up-approach and the inclusive, local participation it promotes. These elements must serve as the foundations of the LDS and also as the backdrop against which local knowledge and ideas that are otherwise not given priority in central strategies and national programmes are translated into an integrated and inclusive LDS.

In defining this LDS, one also needs to be guided by the fact that this is the second cycle of implementation of the LEADER programme in Malta (since it was launched in the programming period 2007-2013), and therefore, while this presents an opportunity to address deficiencies and to improve the delivery of the value of the LEADER actions, it is acknowledged that the aim of the 2014-2020 rural development policy is to build on the

foundations and recognition that have been created in the previous cycle.

The contribution of the LDS to the focus areas and the cross-cutting objectives of Malta's rural development policy are well-defined. It is recognised that Local Action Groups (LAGs) play a key role in developing networks or clusters of small-scale producers and other stakeholders that can work together to develop rural tourism. This networking aspect is also given importance as a means by which LAGs can share experiences and engage in knowledge transfer operations both within their own territory and outside or trans-nationally, via co-operation actions. The power of the LDS to bring together different actors from diverse backgrounds and motives to collaborate for a common result is a defining feature of the LDS, and the Malta Rural Development Programme (RDP) places deserved importance on this aspect.

In terms of type of actions that are given priority for support by the LEADER programme, the RDP identifies cultural, touristic and artisanal interventions, interventions that encourage economic growth and jobs, innovation, capitalisation of rural assets, family farming, farm diversification, co-operation and knowledge transfer, as well as the use of ICT.

It is a requirement for the LDS to serve as a mechanism for the contribution of the cross-cutting objectives of the Malta RDP – the environment, innovation, and climate action. These elements are seen to result mainly as a consequence of the selection of projects, however it is recognised that LEADER offers scope to programme actions that are directly intended to serve environmental sustainability and innovation.

Finally, it is important to programme LDS measures by grouping types of activity together in a logical manner, by themes to form coherent packages rather than as individual actions. In accordance to the requirement for the LDS to be structured around one or several of the themes defined by the Malta RDP, these themes may be viewed as horizontal topics that help to integrate Union priorities for rural development at a programme level. The five main themes in the Malta RDP are:

- Theme 1. Water, wastes and energy: improving sustainable use and generating renewable energy
- Theme 2. Maltese quality produce: improving quality, traceability, strategic marketing, adding value, branding and promotion
- Theme 3. Sustainable livestock: improving resource efficiency, competitiveness and productivity, and welfare
- Theme 4. Landscape and environment: managing habitats and features
- Theme 5. Wider rural economy and quality of life: developing rural tourism, rural skills and promoting social inclusion

1.3.2 The previous local development strategy

In recognition of the need to build upon the previous experience and reputation of the LEADER programme attained during the period 2007-2013, it is important to consider the

vision and strategic objectives that were established in the LDS for the Majjistral region. This exercise serves to provide a context for highlighting areas of convergence of strategy as well as divergence of approach of the current LDS with respect to the previous one.

The vision for the Majjistral LDS (2007-2013) 'to be people-driven and focused on creating a regional identity, bringing the community together, and empowering it to make positive changes to enable sustainable economic, social, and environmental development' was translated into a number of strategic objectives, which were:

- To facilitate data collection/integration for the Majjistral Region including indicators illustrating economic, social, and environmental trends for the region.
- To foster the creation and consolidation of a regional identity
- To improve marketing initiatives of the Region's assets on a territory-wide level.
- To improve mobility and accessibility in the Region.
- To improve and/or create synergies between tourism, agriculture and catering.
- To upgrade and embellish the Region through better environmental management implemented through a variety of actions.
- To further enhance these assets and the tourism value of the Region, the Strategy will support initiatives to promote and enhance the landscape of the Region as one of its key assets.
- To ensure that recreational and other activities that impact on the environment are sustainable as well as to raise awareness on sustainable development and the environmental issues of the Region and its localities.

1.4 Setting the strategy

1.4.1 Intervention logic

First and foremost, the LDS is a tool for funding of operations within the territory and for this purpose it must abide to the principles of the LEADER approach and fulfil the criteria that define a strategy that is adequate and fit-for-purpose in that it provides a means by which actions that add value to the region are implemented. This is a balance that can only be attained by building a strategy that allows for actions that are bound to the opportunity that is to be created rather than to the issues that need to be overcome. In this regard, the SWOT analysis provides the necessary foundation for the intervention logic behind each measure.

What this LDS sets out to do is the result of an analysis of the geographical and socio-economic profile of the region, particularly how it changed in recent years, against the background of the culture and historic traditions which define it. This analysis is complimented by the results of a wide and sufficiently long-lasting consultation which served to give form and substance to specific proposals and types of operations that would otherwise have remained more generic or unknown.

In view of the importance attached to balanced territorial development, this strategy aims to be widely inclusive, to accommodate the diversity and the richness of the territory and its people, and to ensure that no person is left outside, and no idea, however embryonic or risky, is left behind. This is the means by which the strategy builds on the strengths of the region, providing focus through the objectives that have been identified on the basis of the most

pressing needs emerging from the said analysis and prioritisation.

The need for focus is also a strong requirement in view of the fact that the strategy cannot accommodate all proposals and wishes. In this respect, focus is provided by choosing to build in areas that have a strong foundation (e.g. culture and traditions and the arts), and by targeting sectors and activities that have potential. In this respect the SWOT analysis provides excellent evidence.

The question of how well these actions serve the good of the community and how much of a mark they do leave, long after the project is done, is also a constant that helps define priorities. This approach is used to delineate the scope of the strategy to something that given the limitation of budget, addresses with more rapidity the issues that although not urgent, are most important. These are the long-term goals that require careful planning in order to be achieved.

Added focus is also provided through measure design and the in-built targeting, thresholds, selection criteria and prioritisation of operations and/or target groups. Again, this approach needs to be conducted in a manner that strikes the right balance between stimulating and supporting value-added operations and ensuring that the strategy remains truthful to the principles of inclusion and solidarity.

The LDS must serve the very strong sense of identity of the people in the territory, and the manner in which this identity is established through land and stone and the way things have always been done. The challenge here is to strike a balance between the need to steer growth and development in traditional territory as well as serving more innovative objectives and ideas.

The LDS acknowledges that the need for ownership and direct action often conflicts with the adoption of a collaborative approach and that this is a reality that is not easily changed. The need to encourage co-operation, and to stimulate a collaborative approach among different entities with separate agendas, e.g. by joining up different localities, each with its own culture and identity, would also need to respect the wishes of the people in terms of what they want to do, and how far they are willing to go.

1.4.2 Setting the vision

In essence, the LDS is a strategy fabricated by the people and for the people, with the unique aim to create opportunities for a better quality of life. These are opportunities for valorising the assets of the territory; for transforming the local know-how into a prospect for business and pleasure; to give space to the smaller projects that normally lag behind in the list of priorities; to enable people who, for one reason or another are not performing as well as the rest of the local community of which they form part; to provide some form of resilience in the face of happenings that challenge the traditional status; and to empower the people to move forwards and be part of the same inevitable change that transforms their territory and their way of life.

This is the vision that guides the strategy and the logic that underpins the measures and

actions that have been programmed in order to achieve the objectives that have been chosen by and agreed with the people living and using their territory and working to make it better.

1.4.3 Defining the needs

The base of needs that this strategy is intended to address builds on the needs identified in the territorial analysis, the consultation process, and the experience of the Majjistrat Foundation, within the overarching need to ensure that all actions that are supported by the LEADER fund have a broad social impact on the community. In this respect, the socio-economic profile of the territory, its geographical and landscape typologies, and the findings of the consultation, bear most relevance to the overall strategic visioning of the LDS and the definition of priority objectives and how these needs and objectives are to be translated into tangible actions and projects.

Firstly, as evidenced by the turn-out to public consultation meetings, and the number of responses/proposals received in one form or another, the LEADER programme enjoys the confidence of the people to deliver value to the community. As a result of the experience gained from the previous programme there is a positive and sustained response to the call for participation in the definition of needs and priorities for action. This response is matched with an expectation that the current LDS should be able to support a larger quantity of better-quality projects. On account that the overall budget allocation for LDS actions for the Majjistrat region cannot support a large number of projects, the LDS needs to be focused towards achieving high-priority objectives while at the same time ensuring equitable distribution and inclusion. These considerations determine the structure of the LDS measures, including criteria such as the relative weighting of actions, the budget capping and upper thresholds of expenditure for certain cost items, where applicable.

This also means that the good reputation that the LEADER programme enjoys needs to be safeguarded, so that it can continue to deliver value to the rural community. For this reason, the LDS dedicates due emphasis on the implementation and management capacity of the Majjistrat Foundation, including the organisation and capacity of the group, and the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that need to be set in place.

Experience from the previous programme pointed to the need for a more focused strategy, and better streamlining of operations that is proportionate to the administrative and implementation capacity of the management structures, as well as an increased drive towards collaborative actions and integrated operations, in view of the need for concerted projects that make use of common resources and assets while serving to embellish and promote the region, or parts of, as a whole.

The results obtained from the implementation of LEADER projects during the previous programme also mean that certain actors within the territory are now ready to move on to projects that build on the work that has already been done; in a sense this means that there is potential for second-phase actions that are more ambitious, more innovative and perhaps, riskier, albeit to a limited extent.

The consideration of proposals and the prioritisation of these ideas in combination with the analysis of the area and the population of the Majjistral region showed a predominance for measures serving three main strategic needs:

1. Continued cultural and social development and promotion of the cultural heritage;
2. Investment in environmental and sensible landscaping of the rural areas;
3. Fostering development of skills, knowledge base and transfer.

The need to continue to invest in the cultural and social development of the Majjistral region is resonant with the results of the SWOT analysis which showed that major strengths of the territory include the fact that localities have a rich cultural heritage, and that the region is already a tourism hub, and includes accommodation and a number of tourist attractions. This means that investments in the cultural and social landscape of the rural areas in the Majjistral region have the ability to translate into the identified opportunities for restoring cultural sites and exploiting local crafts and arts. The need for investment in the cultural heritage also addresses elements that have been identified as weaknesses, namely the limited investment in the crafts and arts that are associated to the rural areas, and the lack of information that is available to visitors to the region and its attractions.

The importance attached to improving the environmental and landscape quality of the region, mostly through projects that create new urban green infrastructure within the built up areas of the villages and in the urban fringe, reflects the fact that although the region enjoys a relatively high percentage of ODZ areas and protected/designated sites of natural importance, it is also afflicted with issues related to conflicts of use of the natural environment. Urban green infrastructure projects are therefore seen not only as a means for improving the aesthetic quality of the localities, and thus making the areas more attractive for residents and visitors alike, but more as additional green spaces for recreation, leisure, social interaction and learning, that can support the well-being of the community.

The need to invest in knowledge transfer especially in areas of arts and crafts that are intimately connected to the Majjistral region, targets one of the threats that have been identified, which is the risk of long term loss of knowledge and skills in certain trades. The opportunity to invest in the arts and crafts trades of the region and to exploit these rural assets for business opportunities is seen as something that is likely to be taken up by local actors in the region, particularly because of the relatively younger population and higher levels of education attained when compared to national averages. These factors also provide a stronger rationale for innovation and knowledge-transfer actions with the potential to generate economic activity.

On this basis, the strategic objectives that define this LDS and thus delimit the scope of supported interventions, in order of priority, are the following:

1. To invest in the development of the cultural landscape and social heritage of the territory;
2. To invest in the development of the environmental landscape of the rural areas;
3. To invest in the transfer of skills and development of the knowledge base of the rural communities;
4. Facilitating farm diversification and rural enterprise

Together, these strategic objectives are geared towards the improvement of the quality of life of the people and the improvement of the quality of the environment of the areas, by creating new or improved opportunities for business and/or recreation, and by making the areas more attractive for residents and visitors.

This means that while the present strategy intends to address priorities that had been already identified in the previous 2007-2013 strategy, it tries to do so in a more focused way. In recognition of the experience gained by the Majjistral Foundation and by local actors in the Majjistral region, the present strategy allows more scope for creativity and innovation. This also builds on developments in the region that have changed the economic and social profile of the population.

Therefore, in combination with the horizontal objectives described in the following sections, the three identified strategic objectives serve to define and shape this LDS and lay the foundations for the rationale and intervention logic for each of the programmed measures.

1.5 Consistency, complementarity and synergy

1.5.1 Correspondence to the themes of the rural development programme

The analysis of the findings and the prioritisation of needs showed a strong correspondence to two themes of the RDP – the theme dealing with the wider economy and quality of life, and the theme on landscape and the environment. This preference comes as no surprise. Firstly, it is to be recalled that theme 5 of the Malta RDP for a wider rural economy and quality of life embodies the elements of rural development on a local level that go beyond the agricultural sector. In fact, this theme has ranked highest in the list of desired outcomes when these were grouped by theme during the consultation process for the preparation of the Malta RDP.

Secondly, it is known that non-LEADER measures of the RDP provide all types of support for investment and improvement in farm production, farm business, infrastructure for agriculture, agriculture-related services (including insurance), non-productive investments, support for quality schemes of agricultural products, etc., and that the LDS needs to complement rather than duplicate any of the RDP measures in principle and in scope and thus provide support for activities that take place around the same agricultural land supporting the production of food, and latch onto the rural fabric woven by the agriculture-based communities.

As envisaged in the RDP, the theme for a wider rural economy and quality of life is the repository of activities that can flourish in rural areas, almost exclusively. These are rural tourism, farm diversification, rural business start-ups and entrepreneurship, rural services, inclusive employment (for women, young, vulnerable), and life-long learning in areas that do not form part of the core topics of national curricula. These activities are made possible by

the mix of resources that are found in rural areas as opposed to urban, more densely populated areas with little or no agricultural activity – traditions that are passed on from one generation to another, life around the village core, artisanal arts and crafts, local varieties and breeds and related recipes, land, soil, valleys, water, rural structures, rural architecture, religious feasts and cultural traditions that are enshrined in the calendar of the community, sacred art, architecture, chapels, the list goes on.

The Malta RDP identifies landscape and the environment as one of the major strengths of the programming area. The budgetary allocation to this horizontal theme reflects the importance given to this theme, also as a result of the prominence it received during consultation with stakeholders, ranking second in the overall list. The Malta RDP goes on to define the environment as an important economic and cultural asset and recognises that the cultural landscape is perhaps even more distinctive and unique than the natural environment, showing evidence of centuries of habitation and layers of rich archaeological, historical, and cultural heritage.

In this strategy, the measures that are aligned to the achievement of the goals of the thematic area of landscape and the environment of the Malta RDP, particularly the development of green infrastructure, and the restoration of sites and assets of cultural and artistic value to a lesser extent, are designed in recognition of the strong attachment that the people have to their environment whether natural or cultural, and in appreciation of the wealth, perhaps still to be exploited, that their environment holds. The overarching aim of these and other measures that result in an improvement in the quality of the environment, is to empower people to act as guardians of this heritage, and to be able to make use of the resources available in a sustainable manner, one which guarantees benefit and durability in time.

1.5.2 Complementarity with other funds and the EAFRD

As LEADER is a method used for rural development on the local level, its scope covers in principle all the instruments supported by the EAFRD. Therefore, in order to ensure complementarity with other funds, including the EAFRD that is normally structured around standard (“top-down”) operations, this strategy realises the added value that LEADER operations are meant to achieve through specific eligibility conditions as for example: small scale projects, integrated projects (with more than one objective), innovative/experimental projects including pilot projects and studies, area-based projects, and cooperation projects. This emphasis on small-scale operations is in fact one of the determining criteria for the delineation and demarcation with other funds including the EAFRD.

In addition, bearing in mind that the non-LEADER measures of the RDP are targeted towards the improvement of agricultural productivity, also in terms of quality, the scope of actions for the measures programmed within this LDS excludes agricultural primary production activities. This provides for complementarity with the non-LEADER EAFRD measures, and also fosters development in other sectors of the rural economy that are not equally served by other funds.

The fact that the RDP already provides support for actions that are normally also supported by LEADER, such as farm diversification activities, including social, educational and health services that can be provided by rural enterprises building on the farm assets, effectively

means that the LDS cannot include similar measures, even if these are considered as classical LEADER-type interventions. The issue is that adequate demarcation between such measures in the LDS and measures in the RDP could not be established.

In consideration of the need to provide access to LEADER funds to all sectors of the business and social community in the Majjistral region, including the agricultural community, who is also represented by a number of organised agrarian societies and producers' associations, the measures in this LDS have been programmed to encourage and foster initiatives by these agrarian groups that capitalise the rural heritage provided by agriculture and are aimed towards continued cultural and social development, in line with the major strategic objective of this strategy. Examples of such initiatives include the setting up of new activities and experiences in the region that build on the agricultural traditions, practices, products and implements, as well as the relationship that the sector has with natural resources, the weather, and the history and the culture of the rural communities and that provide opportunities for the creation of new cultural and/or commercial activities such as agricultural interpretation/heritage centers, tours and trails building around culinary/gastronomic experiences, and educational initiatives such as promotion of a health and nutrition aspects in schools.

This feature of the LDS is considered an important element that serves the principles of inclusion and integration since it provides an opportunity for an important group within the rural society of the Majjistral region to participate in the advancement of the territory's economic and social development.

The issue remains, however, that since there is no line of demarcation between farm diversification actions that can be supported by the RDP and those that can potentially receive support under this LDS, it is impossible to provide access to members of the agricultural community who wish to invest in their farm holdings in order to improve their economic performance, mainly through the provision of farm diversification services. In considering this issue, one needs to bear in mind that measures for the diversification of business and the creation of new economic opportunities, also by providing support to farms, are considered to be an example of a classical intervention in the LEADER domain. Moreover, these measures would be structured in such a way as to provide increased accessibility to funding (as well as a higher aid intensity) to smaller-scale interventions that are conducted by farmers who do not necessarily have the financial capacity to invest in large-scale investments, and tend to receive less priority when assessed against the same set of criteria as other farmers with better financial standing.

The fact that the RDP 2014-2020 is wider in scope than the previous programme, as well as that it precedes the programming of the LDS means that it was not possible to identify the means by which the two programmes could complement each other in terms of supporting farm diversification activities. It is to be recalled that the previous LDS supported a number of projects intended to improve agricultural operations, also through the management of measures supporting interventions such as improving the infrastructure for agriculture, and development of rural tourism as a form of farm diversification service. This means that members of the agricultural community look towards the LEADER programme as a possible source of funding for agriculture-related investments, particularly in cases where conditions

could be stipulated to favour very small enterprises that would benefit from the type of assistance that the MAGF can provide, by way of being more knowledgeable about the local and specific situations.

On the basis of this type of knowledge about the territory, and the very strong drive for measures that support farm diversification activities in the Majjistral region, demonstrated by the consultees and the wider stakeholders group, a separate measure for farm diversification and fostering rural enterprise has been programmed in this LDS. In view of the recognition that at the time of programming this strategy, a clear line of demarcation with the relevant measure of the RDP could not be established, this measure is not being included in the action programme, but positioned as a 'dormant' measure that would potentially be activated on condition that the required demarcation is established. In accordance to discussions on the subject, this demarcation could possibly be set through a minimum threshold for investment in the RDP measure – e.g. minimum investment of 50,000 EUR, permitting the corresponding LDS measure to support investments below that threshold.

In the absence of such demarcation, the LDS measure for diversification remains on the reserve list (see **Appendix 1**) as "optional" (e.g. in case there are budget savings from other measures). This proposition to include a separate measure for farm diversification in the LDS that can only be activated once the necessary safeguard mechanisms are put in place to guarantee that there is no risk of double funding for the same or similar type of operations, is a very significant element of the strategy for the Majjistral region, in recognition of the community which it serves. In this respect, the MAGF commits to maintain the dialogue with the Managing Authority for the RDP so that this measure can be activated and launched as early as possible in the implementation cycle of the LDS.

1.5.3 Consistency and coherence

It is important to guarantee that all operations supported by the LEADER programme on a local level are in synergy with national policies and developments. This aspect is particularly relevant for policy areas such as culture, life-long learning, enterprise, tourism, waste, agriculture, employment, water, energy, climate action and the environment. For this reason, the consultation with the public was preceded by an expansive consultation with policy makers in each of the areas of relevance to the design of this strategy. The aims of this exercise were to make sure that LEADER actions are in line with national policies and plans, thereby using this process of consultation as a cross-check mechanism for the 'bottom-up' prioritisation of proposals, and to identify potential areas for local action within the national plans that can feed into the programmed measures as examples for possible projects.

Having national policy as a reference framework for possible LEADER-type action ensures internal coherence of the LDS, and a consistency of approach, by providing a foundation on which the rationale for each measure can be based.

1.6 Horizontal objectives

1.6.1 Equal opportunities

This LDS makes use of the same principles with regards to the setting of selection criteria that are adopted in the RDP, by including social criteria to enable preference to be given to proposed interventions that contribute towards the promotion of equal opportunities, equality, non-discrimination and improved accessibility.

1.6.2 Environmental sustainability

The quality of life of people living in rural areas is dependent on the natural environment and the rural resources it supports. In turn, the impact of operations in the rural areas, and especially of interventions in the non-built environment, could include undesirable effects, such as irreversible modification to natural habitats and landscapes. It is therefore extremely important that projects and actions that are implemented through the LDS respect the environment and environmental sustainability principles.

The approach taken to guarantee the environmental sustainability of operations undertaken in the ambit of the implementation of the LDS is on two levels. Sufficient budgetary allocation is directed towards the measure for the development of green infrastructure that addresses the priority objective of investing in the environmental landscape of rural areas. The list of possible operations that are likely to emerge under this measure include rehabilitation of gardens and small, green areas, creation of new open green spaces on derelict/degraded sites, installation of green belts and corridors within the localities and connecting different localities in rural areas, use of green infrastructure for the provision of environmental services within the urban spaces, interpretation and training, awareness and education.

At another level, the LDS sets out the principles of environmental sustainability through the establishment of environmentally-relevant eligibility and selection criteria. Where relevant and possible, eligibility criteria include conditions that are intended to ensure that the interventions do not result in any type of damage to the environment, and that they respect the environment in which they are set, in other words, the development must be fully compatible with the surrounding environment. When considering development of any type outside of the built-up areas, for example, one way to test whether the proposed development is justified is to ask whether it would have been possible for that development to take place in the urban zone.

Other considerations that need to be considered, either as eligibility criteria, or in the set of more detailed requirements in the relevant call for applications and accompanying guidelines for action, would be related to the site suitability for the type of proposed development, the absence of irregularities and illegalities on the land in question, the compliance to domestic permitting regime and guidelines on the development in Outside Development Zones (ODS), whether the project shall result in a demand for engineered infrastructure and/or increased

vehicular access and emissions, etc. As stated earlier, the general guiding principle that is reflected in the eligibility criteria is that the proposed project fully respects the environment. In addition, in line with national policy, interventions in the countryside/ODZ should not result in the formalisation of these areas and should make use of eco-materials and green building techniques. In this way, the distinctive aesthetic quality of these rural areas is maintained, and the form of the land and the arrangement of species, habitats and non-living elements is not disturbed.

With respect to climate action, although the same approach is being taken in this LDS as that for the environment, it is acknowledged that the impact of LEADER actions on climate is less relevant than that on the environment and the landscape.

1.6.3 Innovation

Again, the need to stimulate innovation is achieved by providing support for operations that are targeted towards innovation, within the scope of actions that are provided for in the relevant measure, and by integrating, as much as possible, elements of innovation in selection criteria and in measure design. By way of providing support for relatively more risky, innovative operations that are reliant on joint collaboration among different local actors, the measure for innovation, collaboration and development of the knowledge base is a central driver of innovation and as such a major contributor to the cross-cutting objective of instilling innovation as a central pillar of rural development policy.

1.6.4 Co-operation

The need for co-operation to mitigate against the limited value of stand-alone operations, but more importantly as a tool for joint ownership and transfer of experience, is addressed through the same dedicated measure that is intended to support innovative projects, by way of demanding that the formation of the group or cluster is a pre-condition for eligibility. The same principle is also adopted in other measures where preference is given to collaboration through the setting of relevant selection criteria.

5. Definition and development of the Action Plan

This section puts forward a number of measures which will allow the LAG to meet the objectives outlined in this strategy as in the previous section.

As indicated below, each objective has a number of different measures under which various projects will be categorized and which will allow the LAG to meet the needs of the territory.

The objectives and their related measures are the following:

Priority objective 1: To invest in the development of the cultural landscape and social heritage of the territory

Measure 1: Restoration of assets and sites of artistic and cultural value
Measure 2: Strengthening a healthy cultural identity
Measure 3: Promoting the cultural heritage

Priority objective 2: To invest in the development of the environmental landscape of the rural areas

Measure 4: Development of green infrastructure

Priority objective 3: To invest in the training and transfer of skills of the rural communities

Measure 5: Training and education

Other Objectives

Trans-national and inter-territorial co-operation

Running costs and animation

Another measure was also designed following feedback received from various stakeholders through the different communication channels adopted. This relates to a farm diversification initiative, but following discussions with the MA, we understand that such an initiative is also being contemplated through the RDP. As a result, this measure is being removed from the suggested LDS financial budget, and shown in **Appendix 1** as “optional” (e.g. in case there are budget savings from other measures), for illustration purposes and is subject to MA’s approval.

These measures are further explained in the action plan below. For each measure there is a clear explanation of the aim, rationale and scope behind each action, a general description of the measure as well as the indicative list of eligible beneficiary/ies for such action. Eligible and non-eligible costs will also be mentioned so as to ensure that applications are not aimed at covering non-eligible costs, nevertheless one should be made aware that such costs are only indicative and the LAG will provide a more detailed list in the guidelines published for each call. The Action Plan also puts forward suggested eligibility and selection criteria which will help the LAG choose and rank applications. The level of support, as well as the budget allocated per action are also outlined. In order to ensure the good monitoring and evaluation processes a list of targets and indicators for each measure are also set out. This section will also outline the risks in implementing the strategy and any mitigation factors already established. Finally the overall assessment and relevance of each action will be looked into.

In the case of all measures, the MAGF will issue guidelines at the time of the launch of the calls for applications, to finalise and confirm the various aspects of each measure, including, for instance, the beneficiaries¹⁹, and eligibility and selection criteria.

¹⁹ Local Councils should note the content of Circular Number 19/2016, which tackles local councils’ participation in LAG measures and LAG membership.

1.7 Restoration of assets and sites of artistic and cultural value

Measure Code: LDS 19.2.01

1. Aim, Rationale and Scope of Action

a. Specific Objectives

The general aim of this measure is to invest in the cultural and historical heritage of the territory as a means to develop the touristic product of the area. The purpose is to support the one-time restoration of small-scale sites and objects of artistic, cultural and historical importance so as to develop opportunities for educational and tourism activities.

The specific objective of this measure is to, by the end of the applicable programming period, improve the economic and environmental performance of the LAG territory through 15 projects resulting in the restoration of artefacts and small-scale sites that have a historical and cultural link to the territory, as well as proven tourism potential and educational value.

b. Rationale

The analysis of the LAG territory and findings from the consultation exercise have shown that several stakeholders own, or have access to, items and artefacts with a clear historical and cultural link to the territory which would benefit from conservation and restoration practice. Given the cultural and historical value of these artefacts, their conservation and restoration and subsequent inclusion in educational programmes, heritage trails and other tourism activities is expected to provide opportunities for the promotion of local culture and identity, fostering job creation and facilitating the diversification of the economy of the rural areas making up the LAG territory.

This measure supports the one-time restoration of these small-scale items, while also promoting the cultural and historical identity of the LAG territory by developing opportunities for educational and tourism activities related to the artistic, cultural, historical and inspirational value of the restored items.

The territory is also rich in sites of artistic, cultural and historical importance. These include military structures and other small buildings of architectural and/or archaeological importance, including rural structures and free-standing features worthy of conservation. Unique features, such as stone features and antique fountains, are also found in gardens in the rural areas. Sites of importance include rural chapels, shrines, and other stone features, in the vicinity and in the valleys, including caves with religious history, old bridges and archways. In view of the intrinsic historic and architectural value of these sites, as well as their immense potential as part of the touristic product of the areas in which they are situated, it is justified to support actions that lead to the careful restoration and conservation of these important assets.

c. Scope of action

This action supports the restoration of small-scale sites and objects of significant cultural and historical value to the territory, *in conjunction* with the development of educational and tourism activities relating to the subject of restoration.

It is to be noted that projects that do not include the associated educational and/or promotional

and/or information activity with a related minimum expenditure within the limit stipulated, shall not be considered for support.

2. General description of the Action

a) Description of the type of operation

Based on the analysis of the territory and the findings of the consultation exercise, the following list presents best estimates of the type of operations that are likely to be supported through this measure:

- the conservation of paintings of significant artistic and historical value in conjunction with the development of educational information dissemination about the artefact and its cultural and historical significance;
- the restoration of *objets d'art*, located within the territory and which have a religious, cultural or historical significance to the community, together with their inclusion in a heritage trail;
- the restoration of local statues or street niches and their inclusion in a heritage or tourism trail;
- the restoration of historical archives found on the territory accompanied with opportunities for youth education;
- the restoration of chapel facades and shrines, and the exhibition of sacred art and historical objects to the youth/ community;
- the conservation/restoration of features of historical importance within sites that are accessible to the general public e.g. public gardens;
- the restoration of sites and rural structures of architectural and/or archaeological importance, such as military rooms, parts of fortifications, and rooms of historical and/or traditional importance;
- the restoration of artefacts found in the interior of registered VOs and NGOs premises that are accessible to the general public free of charge.

b) Type of support

The form of support provided by this measure is a grant support in the form of reimbursement of eligible costs that have been actually incurred and paid, together with, where possible, contributions in kind. If the project is selected for funding, only costs incurred upon signing of the contract with MAGF will be considered eligible.

c) Action intervention logic

Malta's tourism policy focuses on sustainable tourism growth, in particular through increasing tourist numbers during off-peak months and attracting quality tourists. Rural areas are seen as potential areas where employment can be increased through the diversification of agricultural activities. Similarly, in Malta's Partnership Agreement (PA), cultural heritage is recognised as a key asset for the Maltese Islands as it contributes to Malta's identity and makes a direct contribution towards Malta's tourism sector and thus towards economic growth. The PA identifies the conservation, protection, promotion and development of the cultural and historical heritage as a key objective, and recognises the need for efforts to protect and promote the cultural and historical heritage with a view to contributing towards Malta's tourism product.

The restoration of small-scale sites and assets as provided for under this measure will complement initiatives under Investment Priority 6c 'Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage' of Malta's Operational Programme I (OP1). Under this priority, the government will

support the protection, conservation and development of cultural and historical sites. Actions supported through this measure will contribute towards boosting Malta's economic competitiveness, the generation of sustainable employment in supporting ancillary areas including the creative sector, the preservation and sustainable reuse of the built historical environment and the enhancement of the quality of life of citizens. Small-scale interventions under this measure will also provide opportunities to improve the tourism product at the locality or territorial scale, which will add to the value of larger scale initiatives under OP1 whilst strengthening the cultural and historical identity and tourism product at a more local level.

The Malta RDP identifies the need to enable local actors to develop market products and rural tourism experiences, in order to enhance the quality of life within rural areas. The implementation of this measure is projected to support interventions aimed at fostering local development by adding value to the socio-economic and environmental aspects of the territory. Historical sites and artefacts within the territory are seen as an asset with significant cultural and historical value, and which provide an opportunity to promote local development. This measure will support one-off small scale restoration projects to promote the cultural and historical identity and develop the tourism product of the LAG territory, whilst encouraging job creation, cooperation, diversification and capitalisation of rural assets.

d) Contribution to cross-cutting objectives of the rural development programme

The restoration of sites and objects of cultural and historical value and the associated implementation of educational and tourism programmes will promote confidence in the territory's rural tourism product and provide opportunities for capacity building, both of which are aspects associated with an improved rural economy and quality of life, as identified within the innovation cross-cutting objective of the RDP.

The environmental and climate action objectives are reached through the measure's obligatory element of education and awareness, also through interpretation and exhibition of the sites and artistic objects, as a means to instill in the community a sense of pride and care for the cultural and historical landscape as part of the wider environment.

3. Eligible Beneficiaries

The following are considered eligible beneficiaries for the purpose of this measure:

- Local councils
- Registered voluntary organisations and non-governmental organisation (regularly registered with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, in line with the Voluntary Organisations Act 2007, and regularly operating within the Majjistral territory)
- Natural persons

4. Eligible and non-eligible costs

The eligible costs to be reimbursed through this grant support relate to two types of investments:

- Type 1: Structural investments that are directly related to the restoration of the site or object.
- Type 2: Non-structural investments associated with the development of educational, tourism and

information dissemination initiatives.

In view of the importance that restoration actions result in the promotion of the cultural and historical heritage of the rural area for tourism and educational purposes, type 2 investments in education, promotion and information activities shall make up a minimum of 5% and up to 10% of the total eligible costs of the project.

Both eligible and non-eligible costs outlined in this section make part of indicative lists which can be further augmented once guidelines for each call/measure are published. The LAG reserves the right to make such lists more complete.

Only costs incurred from the date of signing of the contract/grant agreement with the MAGF shall be eligible. The MAGF shall issue more detailed guidelines at the time of the launch of the calls for applications for this measure.

a. Eligible costs

In the case of the restoration of sites, costs incurred are only eligible if investment operations are in line with all relevant planning, environmental and development permits, including, permits from the authorities competent for the restoration and heritage, where applicable.

The following is an indicative list of the eligible costs relating to the structural investments (type 1):

- a. the improvement of immovable property;
- b. general costs linked to expenditure referred to in point (a), such as architect, engineer and consultation fees, feasibility studies and also research costs related to the restoration project;
- c. the following intangible investments: acquisition or development of computer software and acquisitions of patents, licenses, copyrights, trademarks.

General costs referred to in point (b) are eligible up to 10% of the total eligible costs of the project.

In terms of type 2 operations, the following running costs that are related to the development of educational, tourism and information dissemination initiatives are also eligible for support but are capped at 10% of the total eligible cost of the project.

b. Non-eligible costs

The following is an indicative list of the costs that shall not be eligible:

- a. interest on debt;
- b. value added tax except where it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation;
- c. Works in kind.

5. Eligibility and selection criteria

a. Eligibility criteria

The following general eligibility criteria shall apply for the evaluation of proposals for actions to be supported under this measure:

- Submitted application (including a Contracting Schedule and Disbursement Schedule) is fully completed and duly filled-in with details required by the DC to be able to evaluate the application for eligibility and selection;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate that he/she forms part of (or is the legal representative) the beneficiary/applicant organisation;
- The proposed project will be implemented within the eligible territory of the Majjstral region;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate evidence of sufficient financial capacity required to finance the project and to fund the private financial component;
- The proposed project contributes to the general and specific objectives of this measure;
- The proposed project contributes to at least one indicator target;
- The item/artefact/site must be accessible to the general public and must be free of charge;
- Between 5% and 10% of the total eligible costs of the project are related to tourism-related promotion, education and information activities.

b. Selection criteria

An evaluation of the proposed actions that meet all the eligibility criteria shall be carried out in accordance with the selection criteria set out in the grid below. This permits the proposed actions that are eligible for funding to be ranked with priority being given to proposals that are deemed to be more value-for-money.

Although some of the selection criteria may be seen to overlap with eligibility criteria, their inclusion in the selection permits the evaluators to assess the quality of the evidence that is presented in the project proposal in relation to a specific criterion, and thus to be able to give preference to higher-quality project proposals.

To be considered for funding or to be placed on the reserve list, a project proposal must pass all the eligibility criteria and must also obtain a minimum of 50 marks out of the total marks allocated to the selection criteria.

The following table presents suggested selection criteria for this measure – marks are being shown for illustrative purposes only and are subject to further change following confirmation of such measures.

	Selection criteria and sub-criteria	Maximum points
1	Relevance to the objective of the measure	20
1a	Evidence of cultural and historical value of the site/asset in question	5
1b	Evidence of the tourism potential of the site/asset that is to be restored	5
1c	Evidence, through the project plan, of adequate information and promotion activity (also demonstrated through budget allocation)	10
2	Link to the territory	20
2a	Evidence that the site/asset to be restored has a historical link to the area	10
2b	Evidence that the site/asset to be restored is linked to other sites/assets of cultural and historical value in the same area	5
2c	Evidence that the site/asset to be restored is linked to other sites/assets of touristic value in the same area	5
3	Type of project	20
3a	The project is an integrated project in that incorporates the achievement of more than one objective	5

3b	The project is area-based and targets more than one site/asset within the same area	10
3c	The project is a co-operative project; in that it involves collaboration with at least one local council from the Majjistral territory	5
4	Social impact on the community	15
4a	The project's information and education components are targeted to children	5
4b	The project's information and education components are targeted to youths	5
4c	The project's information and education components are targeted to persons with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	5
5	Preparedness	15
5a	Evidence that the necessary consultation with stakeholders and regulatory entities has taken place	10
5b	The development permitting process has already been initiated (where applicable)	5
6	Sustainability	10
6a	Evidence that the project has a neutral or positive impact on the environment and the climate	5
6b	Evidence that the project has a neutral or positive impact on gender and other forms of non-discrimination policies	5

6. Level of Support – aid intensity

The beneficiary will be granted financial assistance amounting to up to 80% of the total eligible expenditure. The co-financing element must be borne by the applicant.

7. Budget allocation towards Action

The total budget allocation under this measure is 410,400 EUR. Actions for the restoration of small-scale sites shall be capped at a total eligible cost of 40,000 EUR; actions for the restoration of objects shall not exceed a total eligible cost of 12,000 EUR.

8. Targets and clear, adequate indicators to measure the success of the action

About 15 projects leading to the one-time restoration of small-scale sites and artefacts accompanied with the development of educational and touristic activities or the preparation of information dissemination material.

	Indicator	Target	Indicator Type
1	Number of beneficiaries receiving support for investment in non-agricultural activities in rural areas	19	RDP PI
2	Number of small-scale restoration projects of sites of important cultural value	11	LDS-specific PI
3	Number of small-scale restoration projects of artefacts of important cultural value	8	LDS-specific PI
4	Total number of programmes promoting the cultural identity of the LAG territory through informational, educational and tourism activities	15	LDS-specific PI
5	Number of visitors to the projects per year	500	LDS-specific PI

9. Risks in implementation and mitigation factors

A main risk associated with this measure is the lack of knowledge transfer and dissemination activities leading to a lower socio-economic impact of the project. This risk is being mitigated by supporting activities associated with information dissemination and through the inclusion of selection criteria that favour projects with tourism potential and an increased awareness of target groups.

Another risk associated with this measure is that of providing support to activities that could be easily transferable to other territories. In such a case the proposed activities would have a weak dependence on the territory and its people. This risk is being mitigated through the requirements for strong territorial attachment in the selection criteria.

10. Overall assessment and relevance of the Action

This measure promotes the cultural identity of the territory by supporting projects which restore artefacts and other small-scale cultural assets as well as sites of unique historical and architectural value. In addition, the measure ensures a positive socio-economic impact on the territory's community by fostering the development of opportunities for educational and tourism activities relating to the restored site or object. This is in line with Malta's Tourism Policy focus on sustainable tourism growth, and Malta's PA which recognises cultural heritage as a key asset contributing to Malta's identity, tourism industry and economic growth.

This measure is particularly relevant to the objective of this LDS of investing in the cultural landscape of the rural areas and sustaining activities that leave a positive socio-economic impact on the territory's community. This measure complements other measures falling under the objective to invest in the capital assets of the territory and to develop the tourism product, and may serve as a precursor to the implementation of actions under the measure for marketing and promotion.

This measure also complements other measures intended to strengthen the cultural identity of the region, and improving the social performance, including the measure for strengthening the cultural identity, and the measure for training and education. These synergistic measures are expected to sustain activities that protect and restore the territory's cultural heritage, including small-scale historical assets and traditional practices, whilst developing opportunities for collaboration between local actors and improving accessibility and the availability of information about the territory.

1.8 Strengthening a healthy cultural identity

Measure Code: LDS 19.2.02

1. Aim, Rationale and Scope of Action

a. Specific Objectives

The overall objective of this measure is to strengthen a healthy cultural identity in the rural community and to improve the quality of life of people living in rural areas by providing improved and easier access to high-quality cultural and social activities as a means for personal development, expression, and entertainment.

The specific objective is, by the end of the applicable programming period, to improve the social performance of the LAG area through actions leading to at least 19 actions resulting in improved/upgraded cultural activities and/or development of new activities and in 2,500 participants to the cultural activities.

b. Rationale

The analysis of the territory and the results of the consultations have both demonstrated a uniquely strong element of the community's need to establish its identity, on a regional as well as on a local scale, through cultural and social activities, and a strong emphasis on the need to invest in projects that develop this cultural heritage of the rural community. In this sense, culture is seen as a driver and a destination.

As the analysis of the territory and its population shows, and as rightly echoed by the public on more than one occasion during consultation sessions, culture is the cradle that best accommodates the diverse activities and interests of a rural community that is continuously in evolution. Culture is a dynamic concept and a multi-functional vehicle, one that reflects the aspirations of the community, while providing a means for expression and development as well as for the improvement in the quality of life of the individual and society.

Against this evidence, the need to support the development and strengthening of cultural and social activities in their many and very diverse forms, is both logical and justified, as these activities represent the people's way of life within the rural communities. The rationale to encourage a very wide scope of actions with a cultural dimension stems from the evidence of the existence of a wide spectrum of cultural activities, and a desire to continue to build on the already established cultural heritage, as well as expand on it. With this reasoning, the aim is two-fold: to ensure that no group or sector is excluded, however small or under-represented it is, as long as it has a genuine intent to engage in the creation and development of cultural activities with true links to the rural territory in which it operates, and to stimulate the further development and growth of this rich cultural and social fabric of the community.

This measure is built on the premise that without the necessary investment in the infrastructure, these cultural and social activities would not be possible. This need is more evident when one considers that most of the activities in question are run by local voluntary groups, with little or no access to alternative sources of funding. The intention is therefore to use the LEADER fund to provide support for the necessary initial infrastructure to be put in place, such that the activity can be sustained in the

longer term.

c. Scope of action

This measure is intended to provide support for the setting up and/or quality improvement of activities, events, experiences and sessions of cultural and social value, that have a strong link to the historical, social and cultural development of the locality or the region, build on the rural heritage of the areas, and that are aimed to provide a means of entertainment and recreation, social space and expression for members of the community. Support under this measure shall be provided for the creation and/or development of activities in any one or a combination of the following areas²⁰: arts and crafts (including performing arts, dance, film, literature and theatre productions; trades and artisanal crafts and products), music, sports, adventure (including outdoor adventure and scouting), life skills (including survival and leadership skills), gastronomy and culinary experiences, agrarian traditions and heritage, and trades and traditional practices (including fisheries and farming).

This measure supports interventions that are aimed to invest in the infrastructure for new or improved²¹ cultural and social activities to take place within the Majjstral territory. Such investment refers to improvements to moveable property/premises from which the group operates, and other related ancillary investments in equipment and facilities that are necessary for the activity or event.

This measure shall not support the maintenance of existing/on-going cultural and social activities.

2. General description of the Action

a) Description of the type of operation

Based on the analysis of the territory and the findings of the consultation exercise, the following list presents best estimates of the type of operations that are likely to be supported through this measure, in relation to the creation of new activities, or the development of existing ones:

- theatrical productions related to traditions.
- cultural/ social clubs' activities.
- activities, including exhibitions and events by agrarian societies.
- cooking and tasting experiences for products of traditional origin.
- activities related to artisanal, arts and crafts products.
- sports, outdoor adventure, and leisure and fitness activities.
- permanent exhibitions of objects of unique cultural/artistic/historical value.
- experiences involving various forms of arts focusing on the engagement of the participants.

²⁰ The support provided through this measure should be aimed at creating a LEADER legacy – through sustainable projects. For instance, a theatre production should look into investment in props rather than investments in a one-time event.

²¹ During the application process, in the case of proposed improvements to existing activities, prospective applicants will be asked to provide details of the (a) current Situation of the event in question; (b) weaknesses that are being faced; and (c) a plan of action to improve such activities to address such weaknesses.

b) Type of support

The form of support provided by this measure is a grant support in the form of reimbursement of eligible costs that have been actually incurred and paid, together with, where possible, contributions in kind. If the project is selected for funding, only costs incurred upon signing of the contract with MAGF will be considered eligible.

c) Action intervention logic

As shown in the analysis of the territory, the region boasts of a very rich cultural heritage and a strong desire to build on that heritage for the well-being of the community, and as means to develop the tourism product.

The consultation findings, including evidence from the previous programme, steer the need to design this type of measure for the strengthening of the cultural base with maximum flexibility, in order to permit the various forms of actions being contemplated by the community. In practice this means that while certain limitations shall still need to be applied, such as the capping on investments in tangible assets, the type of activities that are to be implemented through this measure, as well as the manner in which they shall be executed, might be different from each other, and that this needs to be reflected in a broad scope.

Although having a wide scope and permitting a diverse group of activities, this measure shall serve to accommodate actions with a unifying objective – that of serving to strengthen the cultural identity of the rural community as a means to foster social coherence. This aim is the common element that needs to be demonstrated, with evidence, in the supported actions. In order to achieve this objective, the supported investment in the infrastructure needed for the cultural activities must demonstrate strong links to the territory in terms of the connection to the land and its geography, and/or to the traditions of the area, on the basis of historical evidence. Another common element for these actions is the need to demonstrate that the cultural and social activities shall not only be created and developed, but also sustained in time.

This type of programming – wide-scope, flexible approach, evidence of territorial attachment, and sustainability of actions which involve durable investment as per Article 71 1305 – provides the platform for achieving the core objectives of community-led local development in that it contributes towards balanced territorial development by supporting actions that serve to improve the quality of life of individuals and groups within the community, particularly those who might have limited access to other activities either because of price or difficulty to travel to more central/densely populated areas with a higher density of leisure activities or with more advanced/high-tech entertainment centers.

The scope of action for this measure falls within the Government's stated scope of interventions for the implementation of the LEADER actions as established in the Partnership Agreement for Malta (GoM, 2014), as a type of intervention aimed at fostering local development with the aim of promoting social inclusion, also through the capitalisation of rural assets (in this case the cultural base and social performance).

In line with the Malta Rural Development Programme (GoM, 2015), the scope of actions for this measure shall aim to support actions that strengthen the local identity and the local profile of the community, and that improve the quality of life and the attractiveness of the local area.

This measure is linked to theme 5 of the Malta RDP for a wider rural economy and quality of life.

d) Contribution to cross-cutting objectives of the RDP

The contribution of this measure to the cross-cutting objectives of climate and the environment is promoted through the requirements for environmental sustainability embedded in the selection criteria, whereby preference is given to activities that demonstrate how the environmental/climate impact is being reduced (e.g. the activity has sound waste-management and/or green transport arrangements) and activities that incorporate an element of education and communication on the local environment.

These elements in turn contribute towards the innovative aspect of the measure, moving away from the more 'traditional' way of doing things on a single discipline, but rather striving to combine different aspects of the local culture.

3. Eligible Beneficiaries

The following are considered eligible beneficiaries for the purpose of this measure:

- Local councils
- Registered voluntary organisations (regularly registered with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, in line with the Voluntary Organisations Act 2007, and regularly operating within the Majjistral territory)
- Registered non-governmental organisations
- Private entities²² (legal persons)

4. Eligible and non-eligible costs

The following is an indicative list of eligible and non-eligible costs for the purpose of this measure. More restrictive guidelines may apply, as provided for in the call for applications.

Only costs incurred from the date of signing of the contract/grant agreement with the MAGF shall be eligible. The MAGF shall issue more detailed guidelines at the time of the launch of the calls for applications for this measure.

a. Eligible costs

The eligible costs to be reimbursed through this grant support consist of the following:

²² In the case of private entities, only small and micro enterprises within the meaning of Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC are eligible for funding.

- Direct project costs associated with the development and/or creation of the cultural or social activity, including professional fees, leasing of space and equipment, purchase of small instruments and activity equipment, amongst others;
- Improvements to immovable property, that are necessary for the development/creation of the activity and without which the activity could not take place.

The following is an indicative list of the direct project costs that may be supported under this measure when these relate to the development/creation of the activity:

- Expenses related to knowledge capacity building of historical, geographical, traditional/folkloristic documentary evidence;
- Costs of procurement of specialist services, including experts' fees (such as historians, artists, designers, chefs, etc.) and area-specialists (literature, art, music, theatre, sports, nutrition, outdoor adventure, etc.). The costs of these specialists shall only be supported for the duration of the projects and upon demonstration of evidence of their direct contribution to the implementation of the action;
- Purchase of equipment and instruments that are to be used for the realisation of the cultural activity, such as equipment for the high-quality delivery of the cultural activity/event/experience, including audio-visual equipment, and instruments that are either necessary for the delivery of the activity/event/experience, or that are to be transmitted to the participants to enable them to engage in the activity including musical instruments, sports equipment, etc.
- Procurement of durable activity aids and accessories including traditional costumes, props, designs, printed material, graphical aids, training resources (such as compasses, torches, maps, guidebooks, etc.), artefacts, antiques, collectable items, apparatus, etc.
- Leasing of temporary facilities and infrastructure, such as leasing of premises, mobile toilets, tents, exhibition stands, information panels, etc. which are needed for the organisation of the proposed events will be capped at 20%.

The improvements to immovable property must be in line with all relevant planning and development permits where applicable.

The following are eligible costs relating to investments in infrastructure:

- a. the improvement of immovable property;
- b. the purchase of new equipment up to the market value of the asset;
- c. general costs linked to expenditure referred to in points (a) and (b), such as architect, engineer and consultation fees.

General costs referred to in point (c) are eligible up to 10% of the total eligible costs of the project.

Improvement to immovable property and the purchase and installation of machinery/ equipment (fixed assets), shall not exceed 70% of the total eligible cost of the project.

All costs shall be eligible if incurred within the project duration (between the project start date and termination date).

b. Non-eligible costs

The following costs shall not be eligible:

- a. interest on debt;
- b. value added tax except where it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation;
- c. contributions in kind;
- d. non-durable accessories and small equipment such as sportswear and training aids such as footballs, cones etc;
- e. second hand equipment;
- f. Works in kind.

5. Eligibility and selection criteria

a. Eligibility criteria

The following general eligibility criteria shall apply for the evaluation of proposals for actions to be supported under this measure:

- Submitted application (including a Contracting Schedule and Disbursement Schedule) is fully completed and duly filled-in with details required by the Decision Committee to evaluate the application for eligibility and selection;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate that he/she forms part of (or is the legal representative) the beneficiary/applicant organisation;
- At application stage, the applicant is to include a declaration (signed by the VO Commissioner), stating they are in line with their respective reporting requirements;
- The proposed project will be implemented within the Majjstral territory;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate evidence of sufficient financial capacity required to finance the project and to fund the private financial component;
- The proposed project contributes to the general and specific objectives of this measure;
- The proposed project contributes to at least one indicator target;
- The project proposal contains evidence of the cultural and/ or social activity that is to be created and/ or developed as a result of the investment;
- The project proposal contains evidence of the social/ cultural/ historical link of the activity to the Majjstral territory, or to any of its localities;
- The project involves the setting up of one or more regular events and not a one-time event.

b. Selection criteria

An evaluation of the proposed actions that meet all the eligibility criteria shall be carried out in accordance with the selection criteria set out in the selection criteria grid below. This permits the proposed actions that are eligible for funding to be ranked with priority being given to proposals that are deemed to be more value-for-money.

Although some of the selection criteria may be seen to overlap with eligibility criteria, their inclusion in the selection permits the evaluators to assess the quality of the evidence that is presented in the project proposal in relation to a specific criterion, and thus to be able to give preference to higher-quality project proposals.

To be considered for funding or to be placed on the reserve list, a project proposal must pass all the

eligibility criteria and must also obtain a minimum of 50 marks out of the total marks allocated to the selection criteria.

The following table presents suggested selection criteria for this measure – marks are being shown for illustrative purposes only and are subject to further change following confirmation of such measures.

Table 39: Selection Criteria for 'Strengthening a healthy cultural identity'		
	Selection criteria and sub-criteria	Maximum points
1	Relevance to the objective of the measure	25
1a	Evidence of cultural value of the activity (evidence of significance of activity in terms of the cultural and social heritage of the locality/area)	10
1b	Evidence of the tourism potential of the cultural activity (to attract non-residents)	5
1c	Evidence that the activity is to be conducted on a regular basis in the annual calendar of events	10
2	Link to the territory	15
2a	Evidence that the cultural activity has a historical and social link to the cultural heritage and traditions of the area	5
2b	Evidence that the cultural activity is geographically linked to the territory (link to the land/area)	5
2c	Evidence that the cultural activity is linked to other activities of cultural and/or touristic value in the same area	5
3	Type of project	20
3a	The activity is targeted towards the achievement of more than one objective (cultural exchange, leisure & entertainment, skills building, etc.)	10
3b	The activity involves local actors from different sectors of arts and crafts and popular culture	10
4	Social impact on the community	15
4a	The activity is targeted to children and youths	5
4b	The activity is targeted toward the elderly	5
4c	The activity is targeted to persons with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	5
5	Preparedness	15
5a	Evidence that the necessary arrangements have been made with local actors that are to be involved in the development and delivery of the activity	10
5b	Evidence that the necessary permits (in the case of improvements to immovable property) have been obtained, or are in the process of being obtained from the relevant authorities	5
6	Sustainability	10
6a	Evidence that the project has a neutral or positive impact on the environment and the climate	5
6b	Evidence that the project has a neutral or positive impact on gender and other forms of non-discrimination policies	5

6. Level of Support

Aid intensity

The beneficiary will be granted financial assistance amounting to up to 80% of the total eligible expenditure. The co-financing element must be borne by the applicant.

7. Budget allocation towards Action

The total budget allocation under this measure is 498,190 EUR. The following capping levels shall apply:

- €40,000 for major investment;
- €20,000 for smaller scale investments;
- €10,000 for events

8. Targets and clear, adequate indicators to measure the success of the Action

At least 19 projects leading to the creation of new cultural and social activities and/or the significant improvement of existing ones.

	Indicator	Target	Indicator Type
1	Number of beneficiaries receiving support for investment in non-agricultural activities in rural areas	22	RDP PI
2	Number of new/improved quality cultural and/or social activities in the LAG area	22	LDS-specific PI
3	Number of participants to the cultural activities per year, up to end of programming period	1,750	LDS-specific PI

9. Risks in implementation and mitigation factors

The main risk associated with this measure is that of providing support to activities that could be easily transferable to other localities; in other words, activities that have a weak dependence on the territory and its people. This risk is being mitigated through the requirements for strong territorial attachment in the selection criteria.

10. Overall assessment and relevance of the Action

This measure is very relevant in the overall scheme of type of measures programmed under this LDS and the relative weighting dedicated in monetary terms. The weighting attached to this measure reflects the importance given to this type of activities, revolving around popular culture in the rural villages, by the people, and as such it is a recognition of the need to continue to invest in the cultural and rural heritage of the region.

The measure also reflects the overall strategic framework of the LDS, providing focus for actions that build on areas with a strong foundation (popular culture and traditions).

1.9 Promotion of the Cultural Heritage

Measure Code: LDS 19.2.03

1. Aim, Rationale and Scope of Action

a) Specific Objectives

The general aim of this measure is to invest in the marketing and promotion of the unique cultural and natural heritage of the rural areas as a means to continue to develop the tourism product.

The specific objective of this measure is, by the end of the applicable programming period, to improve the economic performance of the LAG territory through the implementation of 9 projects in cultural and eco-tourism marketing and promotion.

b) Rationale

It is recognised that rural areas are rich in assets of cultural and natural importance that are not exploited for tourism purposes to the same extent as major attractions in capital and larger cities. At the same time, these rural areas have the potential to serve as part of the overall touristic package that is to be experienced by the visitor to Malta, also helping to alleviate the pressure on main places of interest with limited carrying capacity. In order for these rural areas to feature on the visitors' list of sites to visit/things to do, the touristic attractions need to offer the same quality of experience, improved connectivity and facilities, excellent content and sufficient visitor time. In other words, the tourist needs to be offered a number of high-quality attractions/sites that are equipped with the necessary facilities, building on points of unique interest (such as traditional knowledge and experiences), preferably animated by local residents, and that are situated within short distances even if in different localities, thus allowing for the possibility of joint tours and/or trails that center on a particular theme or product or type of experience.

The need to record, document and translate knowledge that is in danger of being lost is undeniable. In many localities in rural areas, the only surviving tradesman with the know-how and the history of the traditions and the trades is of old age, and unless this information is captured, there is a risk that the heritage will be lost upon his death. The need to address this issue, and to develop the cultural and traditional knowledge base, is in line with the national drive to build a digital platform for Malta's touristic product. In this context, the use of modern technology that is not only more accessible, but also permits user interactivity, is greatly encouraged. As mentioned earlier, while one locality might not have the necessary density of attractions/sites of interest to afford the tourist an entire day experience, the possibility of combining a number of attractions/sites of interest across neighbouring villages/localities adds value to the touristic experience and improves the cost-effectiveness of the individual operations.

Evidence obtained from the analysis of the territory and the consultation findings indicates that the LAG territory has a significant tourism product, which may not be fully exploited due to the lack of information dissemination and promotion activities. This measure aims to promote the territory's cultural and natural heritage and improve accessibility to rural assets of touristic importance to visitors through tourism-oriented actions such as the installation of sign-posting, the recording of local knowledge, and the use of various information dissemination methods, including interactive applications in social media, dedicated websites, and other ICT applications, either as stand-alone

initiatives or joined up in the setting up of tours and trails of touristic importance.

c) Scope of action

This action supports the marketing, branding, promotion and dissemination of information related to the cultural and natural heritage; the setting up of heritage tours and trails joining up different attractions/sites of touristic importance.

2. General description of the Action

a) Description of the type of operation

Based on the analysis of the territory and the findings of the consultation exercise, the following list presents best estimates of the type of operations that are likely to be supported through this measure:

- area-wide sign-posting to render the localities more accessible for non-residents and tourists;
- cooperation between tourism operators, local councils and organisations based within the territory to develop and promote trails and tours that build around sites of natural and cultural importance;
- the recording, documentation, promotion and dissemination of information, in printed and digital formats, about artefacts, museums, local rural actors and sites of cultural heritage and natural value within the territory, and
- the branding of a unique product or experience within the territory, including the one-time design and development of marketing plan.

b) Type of support

The form of support provided by this measure is a grant support in the form of reimbursement of eligible costs that have been actually incurred and paid, together with, where applicable, contributions in kind where possible, contributions in kind. If the project is selected for funding, only costs incurred upon signing of the contract with MAGF will be considered eligible.

c) Action intervention logic

In line with the goals of Malta's tourism strategy, which identifies the need to develop opportunities for rural tourism, this measure of this LDS provides an opportunity to develop collaboration between local actors and to improve the marketing and dissemination of information regarding the cultural and natural heritage of the territory. The eco-tourism and rural tourism potential, and the increasing recognition of the value of the cultural landscapes, is recognised as an opportunity for balanced, territorial development.

The need to improve communication and develop networks in order to enable local actors to create and market products and rural tourism experiences is also recognised in the Malta RDP, where opportunities for farm diversification activities and collaboration for the development of rural tourism services are provided.

As shown by the analysis of the territory and the consultation findings, this measure serves as an

important tool for the provision of opportunities for the development of tourism services, and for bringing together local actors and economic operators with a similar agenda. The set-up of cultural and natural heritage trails and tours, building around local products, techniques, food, sites and objects of interest, serves to foster collaboration between local actors, improve their economic performance and result in a better tourism product of the territory. Through these interventions, this measure aims to develop cooperation, increase tourism visits and develop new rural tourism experiences within the territory.

d) Contribution to cross-cutting objectives of the RDP (innovation, climate and environment)

Activities carried out under this measure are expected to promote value-added innovation in rural development through the development of rural tourism, which in turn fosters business innovation. Innovation in the cultural dimension is also spurred through the selection criteria favouring the mix of technology as a platform for tradition, in what is considered a positive clash of generational differences and an excellent mode of transmitting knowledge from one generation to the next and sustaining the traditional heritage in time.

3. Eligible Beneficiaries

The following are considered eligible beneficiaries for the purpose of this measure:

- Local councils
- Registered Voluntary organisation (regularly registered with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, in line with the Voluntary Organisations Act 2007, and regularly operating within the Majjistrat territory)
- Registered non-governmental organisation
- Private entities²³ (legal persons)

4. Eligible and non-eligible costs

Both eligible and non-eligible costs outlined in this section make part of indicative lists which can be further augmented once guidelines for each call/measure are published. The LAG reserves the right to make such lists more complete.

Only costs incurred from the date of signing of the contract/grant agreement with the MAGF shall be eligible. The MAGF shall issue more detailed guidelines at the time of the launch of the calls for applications for this measure.

The eligible costs to be reimbursed include; investments associated with the development of marketing, branding, promotion and information dissemination activities, including experts' and professional fees (market research, designers, etc.) and the procurement of related services (website development, promotional material, etc.) as well as installation of physical infrastructure for promotion and information (sign-posts, boards, information panels, etc.).

²³ In the case of private entities, only small and micro enterprises within the meaning of Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC are eligible for funding.

a. Eligible costs

Indicatively direct project costs that are necessary for the implementation of such operations shall be eligible for support. There is no capping on the expenditure in favour of professional and ancillary services as long as these are directly related to the implementation of the marketing and promotion project.

The costs of rural actors participating in heritage trails will also be an eligible cost. This will be further specified through a standard rate per hour outlined in the guidelines published in terms of this measure.

b. Non-eligible costs

The following is an indicative list of costs that shall not be eligible:

- a. interest on debt, except in relation to grants given in the form of an interest rate subsidy or guarantee fee subsidy;
- b. value added tax except where it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation;
- c. works in kind.

5. Eligibility and selection criteria

a. Eligibility criteria

The following general eligibility criteria shall apply for the evaluation of proposals for actions to be supported under this measure:

- Submitted application (including a Contracting Schedule and Disbursement Schedule) is fully completed and duly filled-in with details required by the Decision Committee to evaluate the application for eligibility and selection;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate that he/she forms part of (or is the legal representative) the beneficiary/applicant organisation;
- The proposed project will be implemented within the eligible territory;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate evidence of sufficient financial capacity required to finance the project and to fund the private financial component;
- The proposed project contributes to the general and specific objectives of this measure
- The proposed project contributes to at least one indicator target.

b. Selection criteria

An evaluation of the proposed actions that meet all the eligibility criteria shall be carried out in accordance with the selection criteria set out in the grid below. This permits the proposed actions that are eligible for funding to be ranked with priority being given to proposals that are deemed to be more value-for-money.

Although some of the selection criteria may be seen to overlap with eligibility criteria, their inclusion in the selection permits the evaluators to assess the quality of the evidence that is presented in the project proposal in relation to a specific criterion, and thus to be able to give preference to higher-

quality project proposals.

To be considered for funding or to be placed on the reserve list, a project proposal must pass all the eligibility criteria and must also obtain a minimum of 50 marks out of the total marks allocated to the selection criteria.

The following table presents suggested selection criteria for this measure – marks are being shown for illustrative purposes only and are subject to further change following confirmation of such measures.

Table 41: Selection Criteria for ' Promotion of the Cultural Heritage'		
	Selection criteria and sub-criteria	Maximum points
1	Relevance to the objective of the measure	20
1a	Evidence of touristic value of the aspect/ asset to be promoted	10
1b	Evidence of cultural value of the aspect/ asset to be promoted	5
1c	Evidence that the activity capitalises on local knowledge	5
2	Link to the territory	20
2a	Evidence that the aspect/ asset to be promoted has a historical link to the area	10
2b	Evidence that the aspect/ asset to be promoted is/are linked to other objects of cultural value in the same area	5
2c	Evidence that the aspect/ asset to be promoted is/are linked to other objects of touristic value in the same area	5
3	Type of project	20
3a	The project is an integrated project in that incorporates the achievement of more than one objective	5
3b	The project is area-based and targets more than object/site of interest within the same area	5
3c	The project is a co-operative project; in that it involves three or more local actors	10
4	Economic and social impact on the community	15
4a	The project shall result in an increase in revenue for businesses	10
4b	The project shall include initiatives favoring vulnerable groups	5
5	Preparedness	15
5a	Evidence that the necessary consultation with stakeholders and business operators (e.g. in tourism sector) has taken place	10
5b	Evidence that the proposed project is fully compatible with the policies and objectives of Malta's tourism policy, including rural tourism policies, on the basis of consultations and communications with the relevant competent authorities	5
6	Sustainability	10
6a	Evidence that the project has a neutral or positive impact on the environment and the climate	5
6b	Evidence that the project has a neutral or positive impact on gender and other forms of non-discrimination policies	5

6. Level of Support

The beneficiary will be granted financial assistance amounting to up to 80% of the total eligible

expenditure. The co-financing element must be borne by the applicant.

7. Budget allocation towards Action

The total budget allocated towards this measure is 111,410 EUR. Individual actions shall be capped at 10,000 EUR for stand-alone/isolated operations, and at 18,000 EUR for actions involving joint collaboration which may result in tours and trails involving at least 2 different actors.

8. Targets and clear, adequate indicators to measure the success of the Action

	Indicator	Target	Indicator Type
1	Number of projects by the end of the applicable programming period	8	LDS-specific PI
2	Number of visitors per annum per project	100	LDS-specific PI

9. Risks in implementation and mitigation factors

Several small operators are expected to contribute to the tourism and cultural product of the territory. A real risk associated with this is the limited ability of relatively small-scale operators to attract enough tourists to make their operations sustainable. This risk is being mitigated through selection criteria that incentivise cooperation between operators and other local organisations. A higher limit on expenditure applies in the case of joint operations.

Increased visitation by tourists to rural areas may lead to negative environmental impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems, particularly as a consequence of vehicular access and human trampling. This risk is being mitigated through the inclusion of selection criteria that favour projects including measures to mitigate environmental impacts and which provide evidence of consultation, and support, of the proposal by the relevant environmental and planning authorities.

10. Overall assessment and relevance of the Action

This measure aims to improve access and information dissemination about the territory to promote its cultural and natural heritage, leading to positive socio-economic impacts. This is in line with Malta's priority of increasing rural and sustainable tourism. This measure complements the LDS measure for the restoration of sites and assets of artistic and cultural significance and offers the possibility of investing in the tourism product of the area after the completion of the restoration project. The implementation of these measures is expected to be associated with synergistic impacts on the territory's operators leading to improved access of the territory by tourists and non-residents, whilst developing opportunities for collaboration between local actors and improving accessibility and the availability of traditional knowledge about the territory and its people.

1.10 Development of green infrastructure

Measure Code: LDS 19.2.04

1. Aim, Rationale and Scope of Action

a) Specific Objectives

The general aim of this measure is to invest in green infrastructure of the territory as a means to develop the touristic product of the area. The purpose is to support the development of green infrastructure within the LAG territory through the management and protection of biodiversity in rural areas and embellishment of open spaces.

The specific objective of this measure, by the end of the applicable programming period, is to improve the environment performance and quality of life of LAG communities through the development/improvement of green infrastructure in about 9 projects leading to the enhancement and greening of open spaces within the territory which are freely accessible to the public.

b) Rationale

Green infrastructure delivers essential ecosystem services which underpin human well-being and quality of life. The European Commission defines green infrastructure as a strategically planned network of high quality natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, which are designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and protect biodiversity in both rural and urban settings²⁴.

Green infrastructure is multi-functional, performing many functions within the same spatial area and providing several benefits to local communities. These include the protection of cultural heritage, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, provision of open and recreational space amenities for local communities, increased carbon sequestration, improved flood water management and air quality regulation. The analysis of the territory and consultation findings has shown that the LAG territory has access to existing green infrastructure, with important natural and cultural heritage and requiring protection, whilst presenting several opportunities for further development of green infrastructure to improve the quality of life of the LAG communities.

This measure has therefore been designed to support projects that, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, facilitate the development and implementation of green infrastructure within the LAG territory through the management and protection of biodiversity in rural areas and enhancement of open spaces in village core areas, in the outskirts of the same villages, as well as to provide an interconnected network of green spaces between localities.

c) Scope of action

This measure supports projects that protect existing green infrastructure resources and/or facilitate the development of new elements of green infrastructure in conjunction with related activities for the education, awareness, information and communication on the environmental and climate benefits of

²⁴ Building a green infrastructure for Europe. European Commission 2013

green infrastructure within the community.

The scope of action includes the installation of green infrastructure components and related ancillary works, and educational/information actions as a type of non-productive investment with a clear benefit for biodiversity and climate change adaptation.

The scope of action includes the restoration and establishment of infrastructure needed for the management of habitats, including the restoration of rural walls (capped at 15% of the total proposed project cost) and rural landscape features, soil conservation and water management, the replacement of alien species, the planting of new vegetation, and the maintenance of existing species.

It is to be noted that projects that do not include the required educational and/or promotional and/or information activity with a related minimum expenditure within the limit stipulated, shall not be considered for support.

2. General description of the Action

a) Description of the type of operation

Based on the analysis of the territory and the findings of the consultation exercise, the following list presents best estimates of the type of operations that are likely to be supported through this measure:

- the use of native vegetation and trees in the landscaping of open spaces for the creation of recreational spaces, whilst promoting informal education about LAG territory's biodiversity through interpretation;
- the regeneration and/or embellishment of open spaces in village core areas and rural outskirts through the development of green infrastructure, accompanied by information on the benefits of green infrastructure within the built environment;
- the upgrading and embellishment, through the use of natural and eco-friendly materials, of open green spaces such as gardens, together with programmes for the promotion of benefits of biodiversity and the ecosystem services which it supports, e.g. pollination;
- the creation of green belts and green corridors within the territory, linking different localities, and providing a means of educating and interpreting the importance of green infrastructure for biodiversity, climate and air quality;

b) Type of support

The form of support provided by this measure is a grant support in the form of reimbursement of eligible costs that have been actually incurred and paid, together with, where possible, contributions in kind. If the project is selected for funding, only costs incurred upon signing of the contract with MAGF will be considered eligible.

c) Action intervention logic

The actions supported through this measure are intended to result in an improvement of the natural and semi-natural landscape of the rural areas, and the development and improvement of new, green infrastructure with the general aim to enhance open spaces within the territory, improve the quality of life of the LAG community, amongst others, through improved opportunities for recreation, and sports and leisure activities.

Projects supported by this measure complement measures within the RDP aiming to enhance the rural landscape of Malta by supporting forestry-related actions, non-productive investments for the purpose of agri-environmental/climate objectives, and the restoration of habitats and landscape features. This measure complements larger-scale, non-productive investments under the Malta RDP by providing support for smaller-scale, similar initiatives that can be implemented in the localities. As such, this measure is complementary to the RDP Measure 04 which targets the restoration of rubble wall and appropriate landscape features, sub-measure 4.4 which provides support for capital works within the framework of an agri-environment-climate schemes, which may include the restoration and establishment of infrastructure needed for the management of habitats, including rubble wall restoration, and RDP Measure 10 which supports the restoration, soil conservation and water management where there is no significant economic return to a farm or other rural business.

This measure is also in line with Action 37 of the “Greening our Economy – Achieving a Sustainable Future” policy document, which targets the identification of areas of public land to serve as components of green infrastructure. The measure is expected to contribute to the target of the Malta’s National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) of maintaining ecosystems and their services by establishing green infrastructure and restoring key ecosystems (Target 2). The NBSAP also identifies to importance of strengthening the components for building a green infrastructure (EN4), and improved spatial planning safeguarding the local countryside from urban sprawl and supporting urban biodiversity (S16).

d) Contribution to cross-cutting objectives of the rural development programme

The loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, ground water pollution and increased greenhouse gas emission are identified as key environmental problems in Malta. The management of habitats and features to increase local biodiversity whilst mitigating environmental pressures is a cross-cutting environmental and climate change objective of the RDP. The promotion of biodiversity and improved forest management and rubble wall restoration are considered as being important in raising awareness of the impacts of climate change and how to enable adaptation.

The development of green infrastructure within the territory will also promote confidence in the territory’s rural tourism product whilst improving the quality of life of the territory’s communities. The improvement of the wider rural economy and quality of life is a key cross-cutting innovation objective of the RDP.

The environmental significance of actions implemented under this measure is further augmented in view of the requirement for inclusion of a project component that is dedicated towards education, awareness, information and communication on environmental issues in the context of the rural setting.

3. Eligible Beneficiaries

The following are considered eligible beneficiaries for the purpose of this measure:

- Local councils
- NGOs (regularly registered with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, in line with the Voluntary Organisations Act 2007, and regularly operating within the Majjistral territory)

4. Eligible and non-eligible costs

Both eligible and non-eligible costs outlined in this section make part of indicative lists which can be further augmented once guidelines for each call/measure are published. The LAG reserves the right to make such lists more complete.

Only costs incurred from the date of signing of the contract/grant agreement with the MAGF shall be eligible. The MAGF shall issue more detailed guidelines at the time of the launch of the calls for applications for this measure.

The eligible costs to be reimbursed through this grant support relate to two types of investments:

- Type 1: Structural investments that are directly related to the development of existing/ new green infrastructure.
- Type 2: Non-structural investments associated with the development of educational, awareness, information and communication initiatives.

In view of the importance that restoration actions result in the promotion of the natural and environmental heritage of the rural area for environmental educational purposes, type 2 investments in education, awareness, information and communication activities shall make up a minimum of 5% and up to 10% of the total eligible costs of the project.

a. Eligible costs

In the case of the development of new and/ or existing green infrastructure projects, costs incurred are only eligible if investment operations have been preceded, *where applicable*, by an assessment of the expected environmental impact in accordance with relevant legislation. *This applies only where the investment is likely to have negative effects on the environment.* The investment in new and/ or existing green infrastructure must be in line with all relevant planning and development permits, including consultation on permits and/or guidelines issued by the authorities competent for the environment and resources, where applicable.

The following indicative list presents the eligible costs relating to the structural investments in both new and/ or existing green infrastructure (type 1):

The construction or improvement of immovable property;

- a. General costs such as landscape architects, irrigation/water engineers, project management costs and consultation fees, feasibility studies, the acquisition of patent rights and licences up to a maximum 10% of the total eligible project cost;
- b. The costs of establishing green infrastructure/landscape/soil management plans;
- c. Fencing and other works needed to facilitate conservation management, including protection of water and soil;
- d. Restoration costs of ecological habitats and landscapes and features;
- e. The costs of propagation material (seeds, seedlings, saplings, etc.) used for structural changes, planting, under-planting, edges and borders, belts, etc., and the related plant prevention, (e.g. poles, irrigation equipment, and any individual plant protection requirements as appropriate);
- f. The costs of materials and/or services, labour used for the above-mentioned investments for improving the environmental or public amenity value of both new and/or existing green open

- areas;
- g. The cost and installation of street furniture, lights, bins amongst others;
 - h. The cost of purchasing and planting of native species of trees and plants/shrubs. A capping of cost per plant shall be specified in the guidelines of the measure

Type 2 costs that are related to the development of educational, tourism, information and dissemination initiatives are also eligible for support but should be between 5% and 10% of the total eligible cost of the project.

b. Non-eligible costs

The following indicative list presents costs that shall not be eligible:

- a. The purchase of machinery and real estate;
- b. Purchase and planting of non-native species of trees and plants/ shrubs;
- c. Maintenance costs;
- d. Interest on debt, except in relation to grants given in the form of an interest rate subsidy or guarantee fee subsidy;
- e. Value added tax except where it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation;
- f. "simple replacements", as determined by the Foundation Decision Committee following guidance received by the Managing Authority;
- g. Works in kind.

5. Eligibility and selection criteria

a. Eligibility criteria

The following general eligibility criteria shall apply for the evaluation of proposals for actions to be supported under this measure:

- Submitted application (including a Contracting Schedule and Disbursement Schedule) is fully completed and duly filled-in with details required by the Decision Committee to evaluate the application for eligibility and selection;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate that he/she forms part of (or is the legal representative) the beneficiary/applicant organisation;
- The proposed project will be implemented within the eligible territory;
- Project site shall not exceed 0.5hectares;
- Project site shall not be situated on agricultural land and/or on Natura 2000 sites or any other site of national importance;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate evidence of sufficient financial capacity required to finance the project and to fund the private financial component;
- The proposed project contributes to the general and specific objectives of this measure;
- The proposed project contributes to at least one indicator target;
- Between 5% and 10% of the total eligible costs of the project are related to non-structural investments in environmental educational, awareness, information and communication;
- The proposed project is compatible with the surrounding environment, and respects the wider environment;
- The proposed project must be freely accessible to the public.

b. Selection criteria

An evaluation of the proposed actions that meet all the eligibility criteria shall be carried out in accordance with the selection criteria set out in the grid below. This permits the proposed actions that are eligible for funding to be ranked with priority being given to proposals that are deemed to be more value-for-money.

Although some of the selection criteria may be seen to overlap with eligibility criteria, their inclusion in the selection permits the evaluators to assess the quality of the evidence that is presented in the project proposal in relation to a specific criterion, and thus to be able to give preference to higher-quality project proposals.

To be considered for funding or to be placed on the reserve list, a project proposal must pass all the eligibility criteria and must also obtain a minimum of 50 marks out of the total marks allocated to the selection criteria.

The following table presents suggested selection criteria for this measure – marks are being shown for illustrative purposes only and are subject to further change following confirmation of such measures.

Table 43: Selection Criteria for 'Development of green infrastructure'		
	Selection criteria and sub-criteria	Maximum points
1	Relevance to the objective of the measure	20
1a	Evidence that the project contributes to the conservation of biodiversity	5
1b	Evidence that the project contributes to the creation of green carbon sinks and makes use of species of conservation value that are either native or indigenous	5
1c	Evidence that the project contributes to the creation of recreational spaces for visitors	10
2	Link to the territory	20
2a	Evidence that the area proposed for the intervention has a documented link to the natural history of the area	10
2b	Evidence that the area proposed for the intervention has a documented link to the socio-demographic development of the area	5
2c	Evidence that the area proposed for the intervention is linked to other sites of ecological value in the same area	5
3	Type of project	20
3a	The project is an integrated project in that incorporates the achievement of more than one objective	10
3b	The project is area-based and targets more than one element of green infrastructure within the same area	5
3c	The project is a co-operative project; in that it involves more than one local actor	5
4	Social impact on the community	10
4a	The project's information and education components are targeted to children	5
4b	The project's information and education components are targeted to youths	5
5	Preparedness	20
5a	Evidence that the necessary consultation with stakeholders and regulatory entities has taken place	10
5b	The development permitting process has already been initiated (where applicable)	10

6	Sustainability	10
6a	Evidence that the project has a positive impact on the environment and the climate	5
6b	Evidence that the project has a neutral or positive impact on gender and other forms of non-discrimination policies	5

6. Level of Support

The beneficiary will be granted financial assistance amounting to up to 80% of the total eligible expenditure. The co-financing element must be borne by the applicant.

7. Budget allocation towards Action

The total budget allocation towards actions under this measure is 499,120 EUR. Individual projects shall be capped at 50,000 EUR.

8. Targets and clear, adequate indicators to measure the success of the action

About 9 projects leading to the development of green infrastructure to improve the quality of life of the communities of the LAG territory.

	Indicator	Target	Indicator Type
1	Number of beneficiaries receiving support for investment in non-agricultural activities in rural areas	9	LDS-specific PI
2	Number of projects receiving support for the development of green infrastructure	9	LDS-specific PI

9. Risks in implementation and mitigation factors

A main risk associated with this measure is the transformation of existing open spaces with significant agricultural and green infrastructural value into more formalised environments. This risk is being mitigated through the inclusion of the eligibility requirement that the project is compatible with the existing land uses and habitats and the inclusion of relevant selection criteria.

Another risk is the introduction of alien species during landscaping. This is mitigated through the inclusion of relevant criteria favoring indigenous species of conservation value and through a requirement for documented evidence of consultation with the relevant authorities.

Another main risk is associated with the design of environmental spaces that are not conducive to improved use of these spaces by the territory's communities. This is being mitigated through a requirement for the development of green infrastructure that leads to improved recreational uses and educational opportunities relating to the environment and the green infrastructure of the territory.

10. Overall assessment and relevance of the Action

This measure is relevant to national policies relating to the protection of biodiversity and its sustainable use. The Action ensures positive environment impacts through the protection of biodiversity in the territory's rural areas whilst promoting projects for the landscaping and greening of open spaces. In addition, the Action ensures a positive socio-economic impact on the territory's community by promoting the use of these sites for education, and tourism and recreation.

1.12 Training and education – *This Measure will not be Launched due to the Covid-19 Pandemic Situation*

Measure Code: LDS 19.2.05

1. Aim, Rationale and Scope of Action

a) Specific Objectives

The general aim of this measure is to promote training and education in areas of relevance to the territory and which benefit the community. In this way this measure is intended to sustain traditional arts and crafts and themes of popular culture that are associated with the rural heritage of the region and that are at risk of disappearing from the territory. Such courses will be offered to the local community free of charge. This measure shall also help to achieve the respect and preservation of cultural diversity in its various forms of expression. It is considered as an important instrument for the socio-economic development of the territory.

The specific objective of this measure is, by the end of the applicable programming period, to improve the economic and social performance of the LAG territory through 8 training and education actions aimed at engaging people from within the rural community and create opportunities for teaching and training for persons with proven competence, skills and experience in the relevant sector²⁵.

b) Rationale

Training in crafts and other traditional activities, trades and practices, shall provide opportunities for young persons (though not exclusively) to learn trades while revitalizing the fading activities from which individuals could supplement their incomes. Training seeks to support the narrative of communities and individuals working to preserve traditions and cultural practices that have great importance to them. Though traditions change over time, new generations often reinterpret cultural practices in order to strengthen identities and communities. These perspectives will need to be considered in the curriculum.

c) Scope of action

Support under this measure shall be provided to the delivery of new training and education activities in trades, arts, crafts and themes of popular culture that can be demonstrated to have a strong link to the traditions and history of the territory and its people. Support shall be provided to cover the costs of the organization and delivery of the training and education activities, as long as these take place within the duration of the project.

Training and education activities shall include various forms of knowledge transfer and education,

²⁵ During the application process, and where applicable, prospective applicants will be asked to provide evidence of their “competence” (e.g. CVs; reference to past experiences and years in sector; any qualifications/ certificates, and third party references; completion certificates of training attended or prototypes/ works performed, etc.)

including organised courses, workshops, and informal learning methods²⁶.

2. General description of the Action

a) Description of the type of operation

The operation is focused on training of individuals or groups of individuals (including trainer the trainer) in a specific art, craft, trade or traditional practice associated with the cultural and rural heritage of the territory.

The range of training initiatives may be various but they would all be intended to support crafts and traditional activities associated with the territory. The training would be expected to cover both practical and theoretical perspectives. An example would be training in say glass blowing. The glass blowing activity illustrates the combination of technology and tradition which is peculiar to arts and crafts. For centuries, glass-blowers have passed down their secrets to a select few who continue to captivate the crowds. Training would therefore help to preserve a traditional activity and help combine both technology and tradition.

Another example would be say workshops for young children aimed at giving the children a chance to explore their creativity in a specific art or craft. The workshops as in the case of training in a specific art, craft or traditional activity would need to be taught by people with the necessary competence/ experience in the sector. This is deemed as a requirement and trainers would need to provide evidence of their ability to train others. Except for workshops as described above, all training programmes would need to satisfy the minimum requirement for certification by the national competent authority (the National Commission for Further and Higher Education).

b) Type of support

The form of support provided by this measure is a grant support in the form of reimbursement of eligible costs that have been actually incurred and paid, together with, where possible, contributions in kind. If the project is selected for funding, only costs incurred upon signing of the contract with MAGF will be considered eligible.

c) Intervention logic

This measure addresses the need to preserve the cultural heritage and traditions of the rural areas by facilitating the necessary mechanisms for inter-generational transfer of knowledge. The logic behind this intervention is to train residents from the territory in areas of traditional arts or crafts or activities associated with popular culture that are considered worthy of financial support.

In this way it is intended to safeguard traditions whilst developing new ideas to generate more interest in the activity, as well as a means for providing supplementary income to the trainers in

²⁶ During the stakeholder consultation process, a number of potential applicants have expressed their interest in training and education measures, but mentioned that the provision of such training should not necessarily be linked to any formal recognition/ accreditation. While being aware of this consideration, the LAG is currently in the process of identifying any applicable standards that should be followed in such type of measure. Such standards will be reflected in the eventual application form.

addition to that from sale of their products so that they can, in turn, continue to invest in their own professional development.

d) Contribution to cross-cutting objectives of the RDP

This measure complements the overall aims of the Leader Programme in that it supports the territory's social and economic development. Terms such as "creative economy," "creative class," and "cultural economy" are becoming key objectives for community leaders within the territory and this measure helps to achieve these emerging and innovative objectives. In essence, this measure could help to improve a community's economic potential; it could create a foundation for defining a sense of place; attract new and visiting populations; integrate the visions of community and business leaders who could 'exploit' the benefits derived from the development of skilled crafts persons; and of course contribute to the development of a skilled group of persons within the territory. The recognition of a community's arts and culture assets is an important element of economic development and economic development is enhanced by concentrating creativity through both physical density and human capital.

3. Eligible Beneficiaries

The following are considered eligible beneficiaries for the purpose of this measure:

- Local councils
- Registered voluntary organisations
- Registered non-governmental organisation
- Private entities²⁷ (legal persons)
- Natural persons

4. Eligible and non-eligible costs

Both eligible and non-eligible costs outlined in this section make part of indicative lists which can be further augmented once guidelines for each call/measure are published. The LAG reserves the right to make such lists more complete.

Only costs incurred from the date of signing of the contract/grant agreement with the MAGF shall be eligible. The MAGF shall issue more detailed guidelines at the time of the launch of the calls for applications for this measure.

a. Eligible costs

The following is an indicative list of eligible expenditure that shall relate to the cost of organising and delivering the training and education activities within the project period. The following is an indicative list of eligible costs under this measure.

- Personnel costs of trainers and specialists for the delivery of training
- Venue costs
- Hire of facilities to deliver training events

²⁷ In the case of private entities, only small and micro enterprises within the meaning of Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC are eligible for funding.

- Marketing and promotion of training events/courses
- Publication of training materials – CDs, memory cards/sticks, booklets, folders, handouts
- Purchase of materials and supplies for practical demonstration sessions (e.g. fabric, wood, paint, glue, glass, chemicals, ceramic, clay, etc.)

b. Non-eligible costs

The following is an indicative list of costs that shall not be eligible:

- a. interest on debt, except in relation to grants given in the form of an interest rate subsidy or guarantee fee subsidy;
- b. value added tax except where it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation;
- c. works in kind.

5. Eligibility and selection criteria

a. Eligibility criteria

The following general eligibility criteria shall apply for the evaluation of proposals for actions to be supported under this measure:

- Submitted application is fully completed and duly filled-in;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate that he/she forms part of (or is the legal representative) the beneficiary/applicant organisation;
- The proposed project will be implemented within the eligible territory;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate evidence of sufficient financial capacity required to finance the project and to fund the private financial component;
- The proposed project contributes to the general and specific objectives of this measure
- The proposed project contributes to at least one indicator target;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate that they are qualified and competent for the training in question;
- The training programme to be offered free of charge;
- With the exception of workshops, the proposed training programme/s would be need to meet the minimum requirements for certification and accreditation in line with the requirements of the national competent authority for further and higher education;
- The proposed course is not being provided by any other institution (e.g. MEDE, Lifelong learning, Jobsplus etc.) locally (in Malta) at the time of the call.
- Agri-related training for farmers is available under RDP Measure 1 and will not be made available in this measure;
- Only training and educational activities that are not already being offered by other entities²⁸ will be made available.

b. Selection criteria

An evaluation of the proposed actions that meet all the eligibility criteria shall be carried out in

²⁸ The LAG understands that some of the existing courses offered by the Life Long Learning Department are provided to persons from 16 years over. It is therefore noted, that, in order to ensure both sustainability and the smooth transfer of knowledge of specific skills and trades, existing courses can be made available to children up to 15 years of age.

accordance with the selection criteria set out in the grid below. This permits the proposed actions that are eligible for funding to be ranked with priority being given to proposals that are deemed to be more value-for-money.

Although some of the selection criteria may be seen to overlap with eligibility criteria, their inclusion in the selection permits the evaluators to assess the quality of the evidence that is presented in the project proposal in relation to a specific criterion, and thus to be able to give preference to higher-quality project proposals.

To be considered for funding or to be placed on the reserve list, a project proposal must pass all the eligibility criteria and must also obtain a minimum of 50 marks out of the total marks allocated to the selection criteria.

The following table presents suggested selection criteria for this measure – marks are being shown for illustrative purposes only and are subject to further change following confirmation of such measures.

Table 47: Selection Criteria for 'Training and education'		
	Selection criteria and sub-criteria	Maximum points
1	Relevance to the objective of the measure	20
1a	Evidence of high educational value of the proposed training	10
1b	Evidence that the training topic is of cultural heritage conservation value (topic is a trade or art or craft in danger of being lost)	10
2	Link to the territory	15
2a	Evidence that the topic of training has strong links to the history, culture and traditions of the area	10
2b	Evidence that the training builds on local knowledge and interpretation of that knowledge	5
3	Quality of training programme	20
3a	Training programme incorporates local knowledge that has been recorded/documentated in digital format	5
3b	Training programme has a high-quality hands-on/practical session (participatory content)	10
3c	Training programme makes use of interactive digital media/ICT applications	5
4	Social impact on the community	15
4a	Training programme is to be developed and delivered to persons who are currently not in gainful full-time employment	5
4b	Training programme is targeted to children and/or youths	5
4c	The project's information and education components are targeted to persons with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	5
5	Preparedness	25
5a	Training programme has already obtained national accreditation	15
5b	Evidence that the training programme has been submitted to the relevant authorities for review and accreditation received	10
6	Sustainability	5
6a	Evidence that the project has a neutral or positive impact on gender and other forms of non-discrimination policies	5

6. Level of Support – aid intensity

The beneficiary will be granted financial assistance amounting to up to 80% of the total eligible expenditure. The co-financing element must be borne by the applicant.

7. Budget allocation towards Action

The total budget allocation under this measure is 131,000 EUR. Individual actions shall not exceed a total eligible cost of 15,000 EUR.

8. Targets and clear, adequate indicators to measure the success of the action

At least 8 projects leading to the delivery of training and education activities in the traditional arts and crafts and themes of popular culture:

	Indicator	Target	Indicator Type
1	Number of beneficiaries receiving support for investment in non-agricultural activities in rural areas	8	RDP PI
2	Number of training programmes delivered in the territory by the end of the applicable programming period	8	LDS-specific PI
3	Number of participants to the training programmes per year, by the end of the applicable programming period	160	LDS-specific PI

9. Risks in implementation and mitigation factors

The main risk associated with this action is continuity of the training activity over the medium term. It is for this reason that the training activity must meet the minimum requirement of the national competent authority as this would require engaging qualified trainers as well as the setting of minimum standards for training inputs and outcomes.

10. Overall assessment and relevance of the Action

By way of overall assessment, the project would be deemed successful if it can be sustained over the medium term both financially and in terms of the effectiveness of training which as part of the training outcomes would be expected to generate enhanced interest in a particular traditional activity. In this context, the action is deemed relevant to the overall objectives of balanced territorial development and improvement in the quality of life of people in rural areas. This measure complements the training, dissemination of information and demonstration actions of the Malta RDP, which are primarily (though not exclusively) intended to support training in the agricultural sector, with a focus on the five needs of the Malta rural landscape.

The value and significance of this measure also needs to be seen in the context of the synergistic aspect it creates with the LDS measure to support a healthy cultural identity through the development of cultural activities in the same sectors that are being targeted through this measure.

1.7 Inter-territorial and trans-national co-operation

Measure Code: LDS 19.3

1. Aim, Rationale and Scope of Action

a) Specific Objectives

To support the design and implementation of joint project/s with other LEADER LAGs.

By the end of the applicable programming period, to implement at least 1 cooperation project that will foster transnational and inter-territorial cooperation.

b) Rationale

The action allows the LAG, together with farmers, producers and other regional actors, to interact with other groups. The implementation of joint projects with other LAGs will add a wider national and international perspective to the actions supported by the LAG. Transnational and inter-territorial cooperation is expected to strengthen the regional identity by providing opportunities for networking, developing regional tourism and marketing of the LAG's territorial products outside of the territory.

The analyses of the territory and the consultation findings have shown that the promotion of the cultural identity of the region and the protection of its natural heritage will benefit from opportunities for sustainable and rural tourism, and from activities that will encourage the development of markets and direct sales of the territory's products at an inter-territorial and transnational scale.

c) Scope of action

This action will support initiatives that promote the regional cultural identity and natural heritage, and which encourage rural tourism, which may lead to the development of markets and direct sales of the territory's products in Malta and abroad.

Transnational and inter-territorial projects implemented under this action will target the following elements:

- i. the promotion of the identity of the territory in Malta and in partner countries through a better strategic marketing of regional products and cultural and natural assets;
- ii. the development of linkages and sharing experiences in order to promote entrepreneurship and business innovation;
- iii. the promotion of social inclusion and development of opportunities for local collaboration

2. General description of the Action

a) Description of the type of operation

The LAG will prepare for participation in a transnational and an inter-territorial cooperation project. In the case of inter-territorial cooperation, the LAGs in Malta can propose a joint project of a national dimension, while trans-national projects will involve LAGs from Malta and other EU member states or EU non-member states.

Responsibilities of each partner within a cooperative action will be identified in a Cooperation and Partnership Agreement. The agreement will include an agreed budget, project objectives, the

activities for joint implementation in order to accomplish the objectives, the role of each partner, and the final financial contribution of each partner within the project. Cooperation actions between LAGs/partners will be implemented under the responsibility of a coordinating LAG.

b) Type of support

Contracts with bodies to deliver specific–exchanges, visits, training, information and promotion activities and other initiatives identified as being eligible under this action.

The following indicative operations are identified as being eligible for support under this action:

- training;
- capacity building exercise/s;
- organisation of events and events planning;
- support for innovation in products / services in rural areas;
- adoption of common methodological and working methods;
- communication and networking;
- marketing activities,
- activities to support job creation and sustain existing jobs, and
- other expenses (including flights, accommodation, per diem, insurances and shipping expenses amongst others)

c) Action intervention logic

Cooperation is a fundamental means for LAGs to improve local knowledge, understanding, and awareness, and a means to access to new information and ideas, to learn from experiences of other regions or countries, to stimulate and support innovation, and to acquire skills to improve the quality of delivered services.

d) Contribution to cross-cutting objectives of the RDP (innovation, climate and environment)

This action contributes to an improved wider rural economy by promoting the cultural identity and developing rural tourism through collaboration with other LAGs. The development of an inter-territorial and a trans-national project will provide opportunities for knowledge exchange, training and skills development and for marketing the tourism and Malta's quality produce.

3. Eligibility and Selection

The eligibility and selection criteria for this measure fall under the Managing Authority's remit, which will be launching this measure.

4. Level of Support – aid intensity

Projects may be supported up to 80% with the remaining 20% coming from private contributions. State Aid regimes apply.

5. Budget allocation towards Action

The budget allocation towards this action (still to be confirmed by the Managing Authority at the time of finalizing this report) amounts to €204,000 and is distributed as follows:

Preparation and implementation of co-operation activities of the local action group: 17,000 EUR
 Inter-territorial co-operation: 68,000 EUR
 Transnational co-operation: 119,000 EUR

6. Targets and clear, adequate indicators to measure the success of the Action

At least 1 project, coordinated by the LAG, will be implemented under this action. Through transnational and/or inter-territorial cooperation, and the involvement of stakeholders and operators within the territory, this action will promote the Region, its cultural identity and products, and natural heritage.

Table 51: Indicators for 'Inter-territorial and trans-national co-operation'			
	Indicator	Target	Indicator Type
1	Number of cooperative projects	1	LDS-specific PI
2	Number of participating local operators and stakeholders	15	LDS-specific PI

7. Risks in implementation and mitigation factors

The main risk associated with this measure is that of supporting activities that would not lead to an improved long-term tourism potential of the territory. This is being mitigated primarily through the focus on stakeholder participation, enabling the latter to develop own networks and to participate in markets, which may lead to increased opportunities for direct sales of products relating to the territory.

8. Overall assessment and relevance of the Action

This action meets the goals set in the RDP by enabling LAGs to engage in trans-national co-operation projects with a view to learn about similar activities in other Member States and to develop national and international networks for collaboration and market development. In particular, efforts will aim to further develop rural tourism through new collaborations between LAGs, producers and other stakeholders.

1.8 Running costs and animation

Measure Code: LDS 19.4

1. Aim, Rationale and Scope of Action

a. Specific Objectives

To support running and animation costs linked to the management of the LDS.

b. Rationale

The efficient administration of the LAG is crucial for the success of the LEADER programme within the territory. This measure supports the running costs of the LAG to implement the LDS. In addition, this action will also support the training of the LAG staff and members of the Decision Body involved in the implementation of the strategy. Costs related to the animation of the LDS are also supported through this measure. These may include information dissemination events on the LAG's initiatives and projects, promotional events, and networking sessions. Given the importance of efficient management systems in the implementation of the LDS, activities associated with monitoring and evaluation, and bookkeeping and legal-related specific issues, of the LAG activities and projects will also be supported.

Training sessions organized for the LAG staff themselves can be given by the MA through TA funding. Additionally if budgets permit, LAG staff would attend the ENRD events organized annually in Brussels.

c. Scope of action

The efficient implementation of the LDS and the administration of the LAG is crucial for the success of the LEADER programme. This measure supports the running of the LAG to effectively implement the LDS and efficiently manage LAG activities and projects. Animation activities promoting activities and the provision of training and information sessions are important for developing links between local actors and projects and for stimulating the local development process. These will be held as far as the budget permits for such sessions to be developed.

2. General description of the Action

a) Description of the type of operation

The following operation types are supported by this action:

- Running Costs
- Animation
- Training

This measure supports the following running costs:

- running cost of the LAG linked to the management of the implementation of the strategy consisting of operating costs;
- personnel costs,
- training costs,

- costs linked with communication, and
- costs linked to the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy

The main task, for the LAG is implementation of the strategy, but it must also undertake the following administrative functions:

- Animation of the territory in order to facilitate exchange between stakeholders, to provide information and to promote the strategy and to support potential beneficiaries with a view of developing operations and preparing applications;
- Preparation and publication of public calls in line with the LDS;
- Receipt, analysis, assessment, selection and contracting of projects;
- Management, Monitoring and implementation of the strategy, and
- Bookkeeping and legal-related specific issues

b) **Type of support**

- i. Reimbursement of eligible costs actually incurred and paid, together with, where applicable, contributions in kind and depreciation;
- ii.
- iii. flat-rate financing, determined by the application of a percentage to one or more defined categories of costs.

The following types of support will be provided under this measure:

- During implementation, at the level of each local development strategy, the running and animation costs for each LDS shall not exceed 25% of the total public costs for this strategy.
- Running and animation costs are directly related to the strategy and will target specific activities aimed to consolidate LAG capacity. The LAG shall create procedures and instructions for the assessment/monitoring of its own LDS, which will become an instrument contributing to the management of local groups and to the collection of useful data at the programme level.
- The support for animation aims to facilitate the exchange between stakeholders, the provision of relevant information, the promotion of relevant financing opportunities included in the strategy, and to support potential beneficiaries to prepare applications within the defined territorial areas.
- Animation activities may be carried-out by the LAG staff members.
- The types of support for running and animation costs linked to the management of the strategy implementation are laid down in Art 35 (1) d, e of CPR 1303/2013.

c) **Action intervention logic**

Under the LEADER programme, the LAGs are tasked with the development and implementation of the approved LDS. Measures within the LDS are based on the priorities of the territory's communities and aim to enhance the quality of life of rural communities by involving local actors. LEADER will support initiatives that conserve the local cultural and natural heritage, implement cultural and tourism-oriented interventions, foster economic growth and job creation, and promote cooperation, education and knowledge exchange. This measure supports the running of the LAG and the implementation of the strategy, and aims to create the conditions for an efficient administration of the LAG, which is considered as being critical for the implementation of the LDS and the promotion of

local partnerships.

The LEADER approach is about a proactive 'animation' of the territory that develops links and partnerships between local actors to promote local development. Animation activities are important for the promotion of opportunities for knowledge exchange and awareness creation, but also to support potential beneficiaries in developing their operations and preparing applications. Raising awareness of the approach adopted by the LEADER programme is important for stimulating the local development process and for creating opportunities for collaboration and project development. Activities carried out by the LAG will include training and information sessions on LEADER, local development, project applications and the LDS. These are important to facilitate the development of bottom-up approaches that better identify the local needs and solutions, engage the local stakeholders and improve the potential for collaboration and innovation.

d) Contribution to cross-cutting objectives of the RDP (innovation, climate and environment)

The implementation of the LDS is expected to contribute to the three cross-cutting objectives of the RDP, as explained in each measure presented within the LDS Action Plan. In addition, the implementation of 'Measure 12 - Running Costs and Animation' will contribute to the improvement of the wider rural economy and quality of life by involving local actors, promoting local development and encouraging economic growth and job creation within the territory.

3. Eligible Beneficiaries

Running costs: LAGs or the (legal) structures clearly entitled to carry out the LAG management tasks.

Animation: LAGs or the structures clearly charged with animation tasks

4. Eligible and non-eligible costs

This measure will enter into force once the LDS has been approved and preparatory support no longer applicable.

Eligible costs

Running costs:

Costs linked to the management of the implementation of the strategy consisting of operating costs, personnel costs, training costs, costs linked to communication, financial costs as well as the costs linked to monitoring and evaluation of the strategy as referred to in point (g) of Art. 34(3) CPR

Animation:

Costs of animation of the CLLD strategy in order to facilitate exchange between stakeholders, to provide information and to promote the strategy and to support potential beneficiaries to develop operations and prepare applications

5. Selection criteria

N.A.

6. Level of Support – aid intensity

- 100% of the costs
- The EAFRD will provide support for 75% of the respective measure budget with the remaining 25% covered from National contribution
- An advance payment may be provided subject to a relevant bank guarantee or equivalent for investment type actions, subject to MA's consideration.

7. Budget allocation towards Action

552,500 EUR (indicative)

8. Targets and clear, adequate indicators to measure the success of the Action

By the end of the applicable programming period, the implementation of the following initiatives leading to an improved quality of life for the communities of the LAG territory:

	Indicator	Target	Indicator Type
1	Number of training sessions for LAG staff and members of the Decision Body	3	LDS-specific PI
2	Number of information and networking sessions carried out by the LAG	6	LDS-specific PI
3	Number of potential beneficiaries receiving support whilst developing operations and preparing applications	30	LDS-specific PI
4	Number of projects implemented by the LAG within the framework of the LDS	50	LDS-specific PI

9. Risks in implementation and mitigation factors

The main risk associated with the implementation of this measure is the possible low uptake by the local communities of initiatives carried out by the LAG. To mitigate against this risk, the following mitigating actions will be undertaken:

- This risk is mitigated through the strong local connections developed by the LAG, with local councils, operators and the territory's community during the implementation of the previous LDS (2007-2013), and by the robust public consultation carried out during the development of the new LDS.
- The LAG will make use of digital (e.g. website, social media profiles) and printed (e.g. newspapers, local publications) media to inform the community of initiatives, calls and services provided.

Another risk relates to cost overruns. In this regard, in terms of mitigating actions:

The financial plan section provides a split of the running costs throughout the first five years of the programming period²⁹.

Moreover following the public consultation meetings it is clear that there is great appetite for the LEADER funds amongst a number of rural actors. Yet given the limited budget not all good proposals and projects will be undertaken and funded.

- In this regard the only way to mitigate such a risk is to prioritize the projects through the scrutiny of the applications and the use of the selection criteria system.

10. Overall assessment and relevance of the Action

This measure supports activities carried out by the LAG to efficiently implement the LDS and to animate the territory by developing links and partnerships between local actors. The measure is particularly relevant to the objective of the LDS of protecting and make sustainable use of the cultural and natural capital of the territory and to leave a positive socio-economic impact on the territory's community. This will be done by providing support to local operators and stakeholders to develop and manage projects implemented under the LDS. Through this projects and other local-scale initiatives, the LAG will promote the local cultural and natural assets, and create synergies and opportunities for developing rural tourism and fostering education and employment within the territory.

6. Transposing needs and Objectives into Projects

The analysis of the socio-economic and geographical profile of the Majjistral territory and the evidence provided by the bottom-up participatory approach of the rural communities living in the region have provided the basis for the programming of a total of five measures.

Firstly, the measures are structured around the needs that have been identified as a result of this process, and therefore build on the need to address the three priority objectives of cultural and social development, environmental investment, and fostering a healthier knowledge base. The prioritisation of objectives and corresponding actions is reflected in the relative budgetary allocation directed to these measures.

Secondly, all the measures programmed in this strategy have been framed within the limits of the set of LEADER-specific and horizontal objectives that have been described in the preceding sections – balanced territorial development, bottom-up, participatory local action, small scale, value-for-money projects, and a strong attention to social inclusion, innovation, collaboration, and the environment.

Taking the set of strategic objectives that have been established for Majjistral region, the following

²⁹ Given that the programming period envisaged seven operational years, the financial plan section also provides an update of discussions held with the MA on this matter.

measures have been programmed for this LDS.

Priority objective 1: To invest in the development of the cultural landscape and social heritage of the territory

Measure 1: Restoration of assets and sites of artistic and cultural value

Measure 2: Strengthening a healthy cultural identity

Measure 3: Promoting the cultural heritage

Priority objective 2: To invest in the development of the environmental landscape of the rural areas

Measure 4: Development of green infrastructure

Priority objective 3: To invest in the training and transfer of skills of the rural communities

Measure 5: Training and education

1.9 Priority objective 1: Development of the cultural landscape and social heritage of the territory

The three measures that were programmed in fulfilment of social and cultural development of the Majjstral region are intended to complement each other – restoration of assets and sites focuses on the numerous objects and features of cultural and historic value that are found in rural areas, including village cores and other sites of interest; the strengthening of a healthy cultural identity is intended to support the investment in the infrastructure needed for creating new or improved content for cultural activities, and the promotion of the cultural heritage measure is aimed at creating opportunities for tourism by building on these same rural assets that the region possesses.

The total budget for these three measures is 820,000 EUR, amounting to approximately 59% of the total budget for implementation of operations under this LDS. Such a high budget allocation is justified only if one appreciates the importance of culture and arts and traditions in the life of the rural communities – culture as the cradle that accommodates all the different activities and interests of the community, and as a means through which the people identify themselves and their connection with the territory. Objects of cultural value and activities of cultural importance reflect the aspirations of the community, and provide a means of expression and development that is conducive to an improvement in the quality of life.

The measure for the promotion of the cultural heritage programmed under this priority objective serves to support joint tourism-oriented projects (e.g. tours and trails) that are intended to promote the rich cultural heritage of the localities in the Majjstral region, in a manner that is complementary to national tourism policy and initiatives including the digital platform. As mentioned earlier, this measure is complementary to the other two measures programmed under this priority objective, and in practice this means that some of the beneficiaries of the restoration and cultural activities measures might also wish to access support for the promotion of the same cultural object or activities, and that the timing of launching of applications and selection of projects should allow for such possibilities, since these synergies maximise the benefit that is to be derived.

For all the three measures under this priority, the rationale is to build on the very strong foundations that the region offers – active organisations that are run on a voluntary basis and even so are able to

create value in their localities; and a rich cultural heritage, enshrined in stone and in traditions that are not yet written – and to support the conservation, the maintenance, the upgrading and the continuation in time of these symbols of the community that carry so much importance in themselves. This link to the territory and to the history of the locality is an important element that defines priority for support, and is reflected in relevant selection criteria in each of the measures.

The potential for the actions and projects that are to be supported to achieve more than one objective is given consideration in the selection criteria. The achievement of these and other horizontal objectives such as collaboration and social inclusion is a common element in measures under this priority objective, and is propelled through the use of appropriate selection criteria.

1.10 Priority objective 2: Development of the environmental landscape of the rural areas

The single measure for the development of green infrastructure programmed under this objective carries approximately 33% of the total budget for implementation of operations under the strategy (i.e. a budget of 499,120 EUR), reflecting the importance that the communities of the Majjistral region attach to actions that improve the environment and the landscape of the areas, as a means to create open spaces of ecological, recreational and educational value. This budgetary allocation is justified on the basis of evidence from the SWOT analysis that shows that although the region has a number of protected sites of ecological importance, the environment is subject to pressures as a result of the conflict between different users. The analysis of the territory and the consultations findings also show that there is a strong demand for greener spaces, even within the urban fabric, and that these elements of green infrastructure can be created around or within existing sites of cultural and historic value as a means to complement the rural features and so as to integrate features that can support biodiversity and related ecosystem services.

This measure aims to achieve a number of objectives that are also of pivotal importance in other strategies and programmes – including the national biodiversity strategy and the RDP. This measure complements a number of measures under the RDP that are directed towards non-productive investments, investments for the achievement of agri-environment-climate objectives, afforestation and other actions that result in the amelioration of the state of agricultural land and its surrounding areas. The line of demarcation between the measure in this LDS and other similar initiatives within the Malta RDP is thus provided by the small-scale type of operations that the LDS supports by way of stipulating that the project area shall be less than or up to 0.5 hectares, in comparison to larger-scale projects that are made possible under the RDP; as well as by targeting a different spatial focus - green infrastructure projects are to take place in urban areas including village cores and outskirts, and in the areas connecting different localities in the same rural area.

Although the main focus of this measure is environmental sustainability, it has been designed to achieve other aims as well, including educational, collaboration, promotion of the territory, and added-value social impact, through the use of relevant selection criteria for this purpose.

1.11 Priority objective 3: Training and transfer of skills

The need to invest in skills development and training activities is seen as an important cross-cutting

objective of any funding programme that is meant to serve the social and economic advancement of the communities. In setting the parameters for the measure that has been programmed in this LDS, the challenge was to ensure that support caters for areas that are not included in other funded programmes, and that support is targeted towards actions that have a special value to the rural community by way of being intimately linked to the territory. This principle determined the scope of focus and the type of operations that are to be supported under the measure for training and education.

The rationale of training and education is to promote such activities in areas of relevance to the territory and which benefit the community as a means to sustain traditional arts and crafts and themes of popular culture that are at risk of disappearing from the territory. This training provides opportunities for young persons (though not exclusively) to learn trades while revitalising the fading activities from which practitioners could supplement their incomes. The training seeks to support the narrative of communities and individuals working to preserve traditions and cultural practices that have great importance to them. Other education and informal learning activities are intended to instill in young children an appreciation of the rural and traditional heritage of the areas, including its rich agrarian heritage.

The total budget allocated to this priority objective of transfer of skills is 131,000 EUR, which translates into approximately 9% of the total budget for operations implemented under the LDS.

7. Financial Plan

This section provides a breakdown of the financial allocations for the delivery of the envisaged measures within this Strategy.

1.12 Overall Financial Plan

This financial plan has been drawn up after taking into account the outcome of the stakeholder consultation process, discussions with the Decision Committee and LAG Manager, as well as lessons learnt from the previous programming period. The financial plan has been prepared on the basis of the 2014-2020 RDP Programming Period. Actual disbursement of funds (excluding running costs – discussed separately below) is planned to start in the first half of 2018 and are expected to continue until 2023, as some actions and their relative payments will continue to flow for a period of three years following the end of the current programming period.

1.13 Methodology

The Priority Axis as outlined in the RDP for 2014-2020 has acted as a foundation for the overall financial plan hereby outlined.

In total the RDP plans to use €129 million of public money that is available for the 7-year period 2014-

2020 (€97 million from the EU budget and €32 million of national co-funding).³⁰ The RDP outlines that, out of this amount, €6.5 million will be devoted to the support for LEADER local development. The contribution rate of the EARDF will be equal to a 75% of such costs, amounting to €4.875 million.³¹

The table below indicates how the total amount dedicated to the LEADER Programme will be subdivided into the different tasks. These indications have been based on Measure 19 estimates.

	Total LEADER (€)
Preparatory Support	150,000
Support for the implementation	4,125,000
Running Costs and animation	1,625,000
Co-operation activities:	
LAG	50,000
Inter- territorial	200,000
Transnational	350,000
Total Amount	6,500,000

Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister & Ministry for European Affairs (2015), *Launch of the LDS Guideline*, p.11

This total will have to be divided amongst the 3 LAGs established in the Maltese islands. On the basis of previous Programming Period as well as the decisions communicated by the MA, the Majjistral territory will be indicatively apportioned c. **34%** of the funds in order to implement the outlined Strategy. This will therefore amount to a total of **€1,402,500**, which the LAG will be able to dedicate to the various activities outlined in this Strategy. This is still an indicative percentage/ figure and will have to be confirmed by the MA.

Based on this budget, more granular sub-plans have been allocated to each of the measures identified in this Strategy. The table overleaf provides a breakdown of such allocation per measure as well as a breakdown and rates under which each action falls, and the maximum grant applicable per action.

1.14 Allocation by action by year

The LAG will not implement all actions and objectives in the same year and certain measures might also take more than one year to be initiated and implemented fully. Therefore the following table provides a breakdown of the allocation by type of action each year.

Actions	Total LEADER Budget	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Priority objective 1: To invest in the development of the cultural landscape and	820,000	10.0%	15.0%	20.0%	25.0%	30.0%

³⁰ European Commission (2014), *Factsheet on 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme for Malta*. Available at: <https://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/European%20Agricultural%20Fund/Documents/RDP%202014-2020/RDP2014-2020%20-%20EC%20Factsheet.pdf>. Accessed on: 9 September 2016

³¹ The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (2015), *Rural Development Plan*. p.624

social heritage of the territory						
Priority objective 2: To invest in the development of the environmental landscape of the rural areas	499,120	10.0%	15.0%	20.0%	25.0%	30.0%
Priority objective 3: To invest in the training and transfer of skills of the rural communities	131,000	10.0%	15.0%	20.0%	25.0%	30.0%
Trans-national and inter-territorial co-operation	204,000	0.0%	20.0%	25.0%	25.0%	30.0%
Running Costs	552,500	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%
Total	2,156,500					

On the basis of the above table, it is envisaged that up to 70% of the budget will be taken up by Year 4.

As shown in the above table the costs are being apportioned over a period of 5 years as per the previous programming period. However, the current programming period envisages seven years of eventual operation of the LAG. In this regard, given that the running costs according to the LAG's projections and the financial plan shown above would be exhausted after Year 5, discussions are currently underway with the MA on how to provide for and extend funding for the remaining two years of the programme.

Table 47: Overall budget by action

Objective	Actions	Target no. of actions	Capping level 1	Capping level 2	Budget allocation	% of budget
Investing in the development of the cultural landscape and social heritage of the territory	Restoration of assets and sites of artistic and cultural value	15	12,000	40,000	358,000	23.5
	Strengthening a healthy cultural identity	19	10,000	40,000	434,000	28.5
	Promoting the cultural heritage	9	10,000	18,000	97,000	6.5
Development of the environmental landscape of the rural areas	Development of green infrastructure	9	50,000		499,120	33
Training and skills transfer	Training and education	8	15,000		131,000	8.5
Other activities	Trans-national and inter-territorial co-operation	1			204,000	
	Running costs and animation	1			552,500	
Sub-Total (excluding Trans-national, inter-territorial co-operation, running costs and animation) – rounded					1,400,000	100,00
Total					2,156,500	

It is worth noting that through the public consultation meetings, it has become evident that appetite for local actions is quite large and hence it follows that given the limited funding available, some desirable actions will not be funded. In order to mitigate as much as possible this problem the MAGF will be as selective as possible, through the use of the selection criteria – so as to make sure that the projects funded are the ones expected to yield most results to the territory. Moreover the LAG will also take on monitoring and evaluating processes to make sure that the funds are being used well.

8. Communication and publicity plan

This section describes the activities for the rural stakeholder animation and general public awareness of the LDS.

The **MAGF** shall be responsible for disseminating the Strategy to the general public, in order to help in raising awareness of the LDS as well as communicate the funding opportunities to potential beneficiaries. Therefore a good communication plan is necessary to make sure that the LDS is publicized and maximum involvement of residents is obtained.

The following plan is aimed at advertising the EU Leader Programme, the Strategy developed as well as the application and selection process of related projects. This plan is consistent with the one outlined in the 2014-2020 RDP. Moreover it is also in line with the EU's legal provision for EU funding – specifically Annex III of implementing Regulation EU 808/2014.

Objectives

The aim behind such a communication plan stands on four pillars:

- 1) Advertising and increasing the public awareness with regards to the EU Leader programme
- 2) Divulging the salient points of the LDS amongst the residents and other stakeholders
- 3) Maximising the number of potential beneficiaries by increasing the awareness of the opportunities for involvement
- 4) Keeping track of benefits and success stories of the funds resulting from the programme

Contents

The publicity carried out shall focus on disseminating to the public the following content:

- Basic information with regards to the LEADER programme
- The main objectives and actions of the Strategy
- The way forward in terms of proposing projects and applying for funds (including timeframes)

Target groups

The Strategy must be communicated in different ways to different audiences. For this reason it is important to be aware of the various groups that will be targeted so as to be able to shape the communication process accordingly. The actions outlined in the strategy shall be presented in a concise and less technical manner, adapted to the target audience. The envisaged target audience/beneficiaries for each measure/ action are presented in this Strategy's **Chapter 4: Definition and development of the Action Plan**.

The Strategy and the way forward in terms of submission of projects shall be presented to:

- The Funds and Programme Division (FPD), the Managing Authority for the RDP funds – prior to the submission to the European Commission for approval
- Decision Committee members of the MAGF
- Government entities involved in this Strategy's stakeholder consultation process

- Individuals and entity representatives attending the public consultation meetings
- Individuals and entity representatives that provided their feedback/ project proposals via email/ social media
- Past and potential beneficiaries of the LEADER (who might already be included in groups 4 and 5 above)
- Other individuals/ entity representatives included in the database compiled for the purposes of this Strategy's public consultation exercise (might already be included in groups 4-7 above)
- Other stakeholders of the territories such as local councils, clubs, NGOs that are not already included in the database above
- Other members of the general public not included in points 4-8 above

Information Channels

In order to reach the different target groups mentioned above a variety of communication channels shall be utilized accordingly:

- Technical information meetings shall be held with the MA as well as MAGF board so as to explain the Strategy in detail, the envisaged timeframes as well as the process to be taken in order to evaluate potential applicants for funds.
- An information session of a less technical nature open to any individual wishing to attend shall be held, whereby the salient points of the Strategy, timeframes as well as the process to submit applications shall be outlined. The information session can take the form of a workshop in a Majjstral locality for each Measure to be launched, always aimed at helping potential beneficiaries understand better the possibilities of the LDS.
- The MAGF will also be available for individual meetings with interested and potential applicants for each measure and will also make use of Local Councils to disseminate information about the Measures. Local councils who would be interested to hold a meeting in their particular locality to inform the public about any measures launched or to be launched will be assisted by MAGF in that MAGF officials will be available to attend the meeting to explain about the measure/s.
- The evaluation of the 2007-2013 RDP found that television is one of the most effective medium to reach the target audience for the LEADER Programme. Therefore this medium could be used in the following ways:
 - Having specific advertisements in relation to the Strategy, if such a budget is made available to the LAGs
 - MAGF representatives being present on discussion or informative programmes
 - Developing specific features describing past projects and promoting the new programme - again depending on the budget that is made available to LAGs
- The LAG shall decide on having a press coverage in relation to the publication of the LDS through a press release or similar media events which would in turn reach a wider spectrum of people and enable increased awareness. In some cases, press releases can be published free of charge, while in other cases a paid advert is required to be able to also have coverage.

- MAGF shall consider the possibility of publishing a brochure with basic information on LEADER, the new Strategy as well as the way forward for funds' application. These leaflets shall then be distributed to the target audience described above.
- Articles in relation to the objectives of the LDS and the way forward could be published in newspapers, organisational newsletters and in periodical publications such as magazines of the NGOs etc.
- A summary of the salient points of the Strategy will be included in MAGF's website, Facebook page, as well as sent via e-mailshot.

Budget

In order to carry out the above communication and publicity plans, the following indicative list of actions are envisaged. The budget for each action will depend on the M19.4 budget.

- Information session
- Press adverts
- Brochure – design, publication and dissemination
- Facebook – boosting posts

Depending on the available budget, MAGF would need to decide on marketing allocation on the basis of budget availability, and a cost-benefit analysis.

Information for the applicants and potential beneficiaries

The Majjistrat LAG shall make sure that the applicants and any other potential beneficiaries of the fund will have access to all the relevant information related to the programme and the application process, including but not limited to:

- (a) The funding opportunities
- (b) The timeframes
- (c) The administrative procedure to be followed in order to qualify for the financing, from accessing the application form, its completion, and documentation to be provided
- (d) The process of application examination
- (e) The eligibility condition of selected projects
- (f) The staff responsible for explaining the operations of this structure
- (g) The duty of the beneficiaries to inform the public about the support received through the programme.
- (h) The process of examination of any complaints

Information for the general public

The MAGF will also be responsible for passing on the following information to the general public through a specific medium chosen by the LAG itself:

- (a) The content of the LDS
- (b) Any updates made to it
- (c) The major success stories following the strategy

Other

Every type of communication and information disseminated shall display both the European Union emblem, the Leader logo and the MAGF logo, so as to ensure that viewers are aware that the publicity is related to actions funded by this LDS.

9. Implementation Plan

This section maps out the whole process for the implementation of the strategy at hand. A specific time plan is put forward to describe the time frames to be taken in managing, monitoring, evaluating as well as controlling the LDS. This plan supports other sections of the LDS, most specifically the design of the LDS and the structure as well as role of the MAGF.

1.15 Overview

This section highlights the steps required in order to implement the LDS. The process moves from the initial issuance of the LDS tender, to its adjudication with various intermediary steps leading to the final reimbursement of funds to the beneficiaries. Below is an explanation of the various steps to be taken, some of which have already been completed, to ensure the successful implementation of the LDS.

The implementation process can be subdivided into three consecutive stages, with other tasks to be executed at each stage. The three main phases are;

1. The drawing up of the Strategy
2. The selection of the projects
3. Monitoring and re-imbursement

The MA, the Agricultural and Rural Payments (“Paying Agency” or “ARPA”) and the MAGF share responsibilities in terms of this implementation plan. The roles and responsibilities of each entity are outlined below as required by the Guidelines to LAGs on the design and development of the LDS prepared by the MA for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development³².

Managing Authority

The MA is responsible for the following;

- Contracting the LAG (MAGF)
- Providing guidelines with regards to the LDS content and structure

³² Managing Authority for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (2015), *Guidelines to Local Action Groups: How to design and develop the Local Development Strategy*, pg. 40

- Approving the LAG's proposal of preparatory actions prior to LDS drafting
- Reviewing and evaluating the LDS
- Approving the LDS
- Allocating the budget
- Approving any cooperation projects put forward
- Approving operational budgets
- Monitoring and evaluating MAGF and LEADER

MAGF

The LAG (MAGF) is responsible for the following;

- Establishing the preparatory actions prior to the development of the LDS. This has already been carried out and included the issuance and adjudication of a request for quotations from third parties to be subcontracted with respect to consultancy services for the drawing up of the LDS
- Implementing the LDS
- Implementing projects of a cooperative nature taking care of any preparatory actions necessary
- Monitoring and evaluating the LDS
- Any other roles defined in the operating rules issued by the MA.

Paying Agency (ARPA)

ARPA is responsible for the following;

- Receipt of payment claims
- Processing and verifying claims
- Making payments as per verified claims
- Carrying out controls on beneficiaries having received payments

A meeting bringing together the three entities should be set up following the issuance of the operating rules by the MA and the issuance of the MOP by ARPA. The agenda will revolve around discussing and clarifying each entity's role and responsibilities with respect of the administration and execution of the LDS as well as the various controls that the LAGs should be affecting during project evaluation. Moreover it is being recommended that regular monthly meetings are held between the 3 authorities in order to keep abreast of what is happening with each call and handle any problems arising during the programming period.

1.16 Indicative time plan

The below is an estimate time plan outlining three main stages identified in implementing the strategy.

Phase 1 of the implementation - 'Strategy formulation' – has almost been fully completed. Hence, the Gantt chart with the timeline (monthly) of this phase is presented separately.

The timing of Phase 2 '*Project Selection*' and the subsequent Phase 3 '*Monitoring and reimbursement*' in the below Gantt chart is presented in general terms (in terms of duration of quarters for each call)

and are not linked to fixed calendar timing. This is because Phase 2 will commence with the issuance of calls, which is currently not known with precision.

Also different actions/ activities might vary considerably for different calls/measures depending on their nature, number of applicants, duration of selected projects and unforeseeable circumstances. This time plan must therefore be considered as indicative, serving as a planning tool for the timely implementation of the Strategy within the Programming Period ending 2020 (completion of selected projects can extend beyond this period).

Each step will be explained in greater detail in the following sub-section, which will give a more in depth analysis of each step and task required to be fulfilled so as to ensure the strategy is well implemented.

Figure 3: Phase 1 implementation timeline

Phase 1: Strategy Formulation	2016								
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
LDS tender - Request for quotations - Adjudication									
Public consultation meetings - Preparation & publicity - Meetings									
Drafting of Strategy									
Strategy finalisation - Consultation Process - Submission to MA - MA approval - Publicity									

Figure 4: Indicative implementation time plan – Phases 2 & 3

Phase 2: Project selection	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
Issue of calls - MAGF, MA, ARPA meeting - Administrative preparation & call drafting - Issue & Publicity								
Receipt of applications and administrative checks - Open call - Administrative and validity checks								
Evaluation of Projects - Evaluation by EC								
Project Selection - Selection by DC - Publication of results - Appeals								
Award notice & contracting of beneficiaries								
Project Monitoring - Monitoring and control checks including on-site visits - Monitoring and evaluation reports								
Re-imburement - Request for re-imburement and submission of documentation - Checks by PA - Re-imburement								

1.17 Implementation flow

Following the above Gantt Charts, below is a further explanation of the implementation flow of the LDS. The first step, Strategy Formulation is nearly completed, but nevertheless outlined in this subsection for completeness sake.

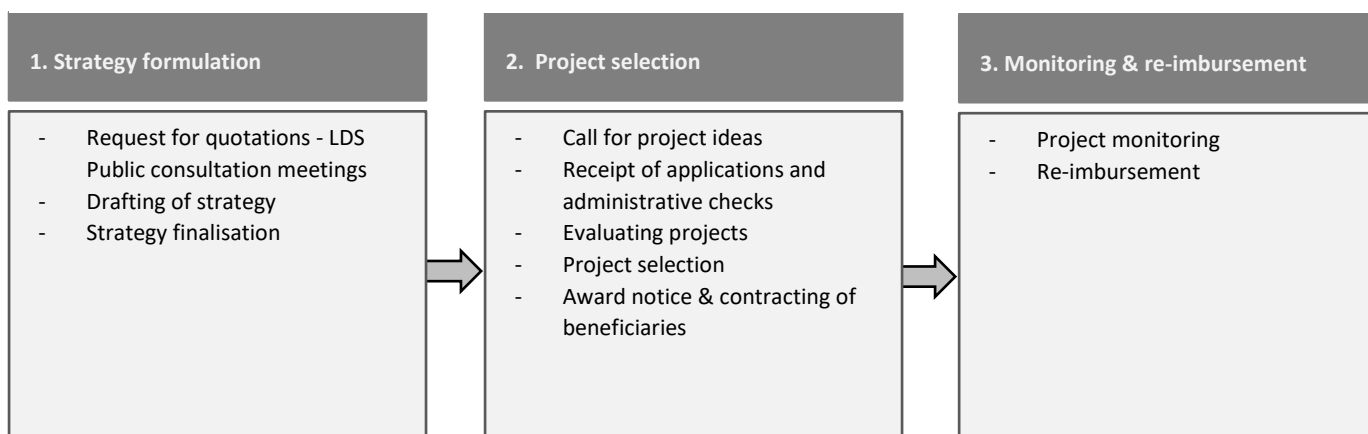
This section provides a more detailed description of the tasks performed so far. Other sections of this Strategy also explain in more detailed planning activities/ tasks to be performed in different parts of the implementation plan, namely:

- The communication plan described in Section 8, outlining the communication aspects related to the implementation of this Strategy;

- Section 1 considers project monitoring aspects in further detail; and
- Section 12 explains the organisational structure of the LAG.

The following is a brief description of each phase and also the interlinked tasks which needs to be undertaken at each stage so as to ensure the correct implementation of the Strategy:

Figure 5: Implementation Flow



Phase 1: Strategy formulation

This phase has already been completed, nevertheless it is still outlined here under to ensure that the whole process is made available to the reader. It also allows for a better understanding of other phases which are also interlinked.

Request for quotations - LDS

In April 2016, the MAGF issued a call for third parties to put forward quotations in terms of their consultancy services to be provided with respect to the development of the LDS. The Tender reached adjudication stage by June 2016.

Public consultation meetings

One of the fundamental principles of the LDS is community involvement in a bottom-up approach. In order to reflect this a number of public consultation meetings have been carried out in order to obtain the input from a variety of stakeholders directly interested in the MAGF territory. These included meetings with governmental entities as well as three consultation meetings open to the general public. The meetings were held in July 2016 in Attard, Mellieha and Naxxar. Section 11 outlines the approach adopted in terms of preparing for such meetings.

Moreover a number of other individual meetings (one to one) with stakeholders that could not attend any one of the meetings were held by MAGF officials during July and August 2016. The MAGF also considered any other feedback that had been noted by the LAG in previous years during meeting held with the Majjistral community members and stakeholders.

Drafting of Strategy

This Strategy was then drafted based upon the assessment of the needs emerging from the public consultation meetings and stakeholder consultations and a first draft of this Strategy was submitted to the MAGF on the 12th September 2016.

Strategy finalisation

After discussing the draft with the MAGF Decision Committee, its salient features were discussed in a public consultation meeting open to the general public.

The strategy was then finalised at the end of September 2016, following a final discussion with the MAGF Decision Committee. This was then submitted to the MA for its final approval.

Following the MA's submission of feedback, amendments to the Strategy (if any), and eventual approval, to be obtained from the MA (if any), the MAGF and the MA will proceed with making this Strategy publicly available and publicising the salient points of the finalised Strategy in line with the indicated communication and publicity plan (Section 8 of this Strategy).

This step is of utmost importance to ensure that the community is aware of the strategy and is considered to be an imperative step for the implementation of the strategy. Workshops, information events as well as training set up in different localities might help in informing potential beneficiaries with the possibilities of this LDS.

Phase 2: Projects selection

This phase refers to the whole process leading to the final projects selection and the contracting of the selected beneficiaries, starting from the issuance of calls.

Call for project ideas

The process starts with the issuance of calls for projects by the MAGF for the submission of applications for funding under the measures set out in this Strategy. Such calls will feature a number of details including but not limited to;

- information on deadlines
- the link to the application form to be filled in
- Guidance notes and any other documents accompanying such a call.

The number of calls that will be issued may depend upon the final budget allocated to the MAGF by the MA. The LAG aims to be in a position to start issuing calls between the first and second quarter of 2017.

The MAGF might consider issuing the calls gradually over time so as to avoid administration overburden stemming from the required vetting and checks of applications. Calls could thus be issued over an extended period of time, with the order of issue being decided by the LAG after considering estimated average project duration under each call, the envisaged number of applications to be received, and the urgency for projects to be underway in each of the measures.

The MAGF will have to publicise such issues in order to ensure that all interested parties are made aware of such calls. This can be done through a variety of media channels, ensuring a wide reach, as

outlined in the communication plan.

As already specified a meeting bringing together the three aforementioned parties; the LAG, the MA and the PA will be held. This will allow them to discuss and clarify the respective responsibilities. This will streamline operations, avoid duplication of efforts and ensure that the applicants' needs are addressed efficiently.

Receipt of applications and administrative checks

Typically a call will be open for a minimum of 30 days even though this might vary based on the type of measure. During this time the potential beneficiaries are to submit their application forms to the MAGF.

The EC (composed of the LAG Manager, the LAG secretary and any technical expert needed by the LAG) will undertake the administrative and eligibility checks by carrying out a verification of the eligibility of the project itself (in terms of the eligibility criteria set out in the call documents) and the verification of the supporting documentation. MAGF will notify those applicants in case of missing documentation or in cases where the EC needs any clarifications. Applicants will be asked to provide the required missing information within a notified period and failure of doing so will result in their disqualification, with the applicant being informed through a rejection letter.

Evaluating and marking projects

The EC will review the administrative and technical aspects of each application, drawing up an administrative and technical report on each proposed project, providing pre-recommendations to the DC on such basis (In the case of projects deemed ineligible, only the administrative report will be drawn up). These reports will be reviewed by the DC members who will also evaluate the eligibility of such projects (including the projects that had been deemed ineligible by the EC). After evaluating the reports including eligibility of projects, the DC will evaluate the information provided in each application against the selection criteria set out in the call and award marks for each criterion accordingly. The DC has also the right to request other information and clarifications on the project. Further information on the structure, roles and responsibilities of the DC is provided in Section 12 focusing on the LAG structure.

Project Selection

The DC will select the projects to be granted LEADER funds, based on the pre-chosen scoring method. Results will be published on the Committee's website, indicating the selected, on reserve and rejected projects along with the marks obtained by each project.

Failed applicants will received a notification letter explaining the reason why their project was not selected and informing of their right to appeal within a specified timeframe. This letter will be forwarded to them by the LAG.

An independent appeals board/ committee will be established by the MAGF so as to review any appeals put forward. The appointed chairperson of this Board will first review and assess the validity of the reasons of appeal and the supporting documentation provided by the appellant before presenting the appeal before the whole board/ committee for assessment. The decision taken by this Board shall be final and non-contestable.

The LAG must keep note of all evidences and must record each step of the process. This will allow for transparency and accountability. This means that minutes must be taken for all meetings and decision making, documenting the salient points of the selection process.

Award notice and contracting of beneficiaries

Once all the above steps are completed, the MAGF will publish the final result and proceed to notify the applicants of projects eligible for financial support with award notices. This will also indicate the approach and the subsequent steps to be undertaken for the support and funding conditions to be regulated by a signed contract.

In the case of a rejection, the communication to each concerned applicant shall be accompanied by a summary of the relevant reasons relating to the rejection of such application.

Appeals procedure

Any person, having or having had an interest or who has been harmed by an alleged infringement or by any decision taken in the proposed award process, may file an appeal by means of an objection before the DC, which shall contain in a very clear manner the reasons for their complaints.

The objection shall be filed within ten calendar days following the date on which the Evaluation Committee has put forward the proposed award decision outcome.

The objection shall only be valid if accompanied by a deposit, which amount shall be indicated in the application process.

The DC will nominate an Appeals Review Board, who, after evaluating all the evidence and after considering all submissions put forward by the parties (EC and applicant), will decide whether to accede or reject the appeal.

Phase 3: Monitoring and fund re-imburement

This phase refers to the subsequent process of monitoring selected projects, and ensuring the re-imburement process runs smoothly.

Project monitoring

Section 10 of this strategy highlight the need of the correct monitoring processes to be undertaken once the beneficiaries have been contracts and the projects are underway. This is necessary to ensure that the contract conditions are respected and time frames are adhered to.

Re-imburement

The PA will then take care of the re-imburements. The facility of interim payments will be provided by ARPA.

Beneficiaries are required to submit a request for reimbursement to ARPA along with other financial documentation (invoices, receipts, certificate of works and any other relevant documentation).

The LAG will assist the beneficiaries through this process. The roles of the MAGF and ARPA in this

regard is to be clarified during meetings to be held between the two at the beginning of Phase 2. Final payment will be effected once an on-site check is carried out by ARPA and administrative checks that confirm adherence to the contract are performed.

10. Monitoring and evaluation

This section sets out a plan for the monitoring and evaluation of the LDS. Specifically, indicators, milestones and targets are set within this plan, as well as a data collection plan to enable the LAG to collect the information required to calculate these indicators on a periodic basis. The scope behind the monitoring and evaluation phase is to identify those actions that might be lagging behind, and objectives which are not being reached, so that corrective action can take place.

Monitoring and evaluation is another important step of the LDS. Once the Strategy is launched, the calls for projects are published and the projects start being implemented, there will be need for a thorough assessment of the results and impacts of the Strategy/ actions. These must be looked into to make sure that the Strategy and the LEADER programme are truly being fruitful and also allow for the administration to assess where improvements can be made.

In this regard the evaluation of the LDS and the LEADER forms part of the hierarchy of evaluating contribution of the RDP, whereby information is moved on from local to regional to national to EU levels.³³ Indeed, monitoring and evaluation are obligatory tasks of the RDP³⁴. At a national level the MA must set up an evaluation plan as specified under the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Rural Development 2014-2020 and then file an Annual Implementation Report (AIR) on the RDP implementation, each year from 2016-2024.

Hence LAGs are required to monitor and evaluate their own LDSs which would in turn feed into the larger evaluation exercise – that is, the evaluation of the RDP. This, even at a lower regional level, still requires the correct planning as will be specified in this sub-section.

1.18 Objectives

Monitoring and evaluation are not to be considered an end in themselves, but rather a means to reach a number of other objectives:

- The evaluation of the LDS allows the LAG to **capitalise on the learning process**, that is, making use of experiences to increase the value added of the Strategy. Apart from the 2007-2013 LEADER experience, the LAG will also obtain valuable information from the current LEADER programme as it is implemented;
- It helps in **improving the implementation process** already in place, by understanding which targets are being reached and which still have to be attained – allowing the LAG to focus resources where they are needed the most;
- It acts as a **good foundation for future programmes**, whereby past mistakes are avoided and successful steps are repeated;
- The monitoring and evaluation also helps people managing the programme as well as the beneficiaries to be **accountable**, especially given the programme is funded, directly or

³³ http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader/leader-tool-kit/monitoring_evaluation/evaluation_planning_enx

³⁴ Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 Art 34.3 (g)

indirectly, through taxpayers' monies. This sense of transparency allows the public to trust that the LEADER is truly adding value to the whole territory.

- It also allows the MAGF to update its LDS according to information derived from the programme being implemented on the condition that the MA allows it to do so.

1.19 Indicators

In order to examine how the projects are being carried out and whether their objectives are being reached, the LAG will make use of a number of different indicators. These indicators are 'measures' which will allow the LAG to gauge the success of the Strategy and measure its value added. They are usually quantifiable measures which look at objectives reached, resources mobilised, outputs accomplished or particular effects being obtained.

Overall the LAG will use indicators at three different levels. The first two levels are made mandatory through a) the common rules for the LEADER programme and through b) the local RDP. Other indicators which the LAG will use have been devised by the action group itself in order to reflect the specific needs and structures of the territory and the LDS.

1.19.1 Common Indicators for LEADER

The first level of indicators to be used for the monitoring of the LDS are those prescribed by the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Systems, being common indicators for the LEADER programmes across the EU. As already specified LDSs are based on regional bottom-up approach and therefore reflect much of the diversity of each region. Nevertheless these indicators set at an EU level allow for a basic set of data to be collected by all Member States and their LAGs – thereby allowing for a degree of comparability.

The Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 Annex 4 outlines four major types of indicators: **context**, **target**, **result** and **output indicators** as outlined in the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Systems. The Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) NO 834/2014 Annex 1 also states that **impact indicators** must be collected.

Context indicators are those indicators which set the scene and describe the baseline scenario in which the LDS is being drawn up in. Many of such indicators are already outlined in the Section describing the characteristics of the territory.

Target indicators refer to indicators whereby a specific objective is to be reached – for instance the creation of 'x' amount of jobs. These are usually found at a result level.

Result indicators are there to measure the direct and immediate effect of the programme. They provide information on changes in behaviour as well as performance or results for the beneficiaries. These can be measured both in monetary terms and physical terms. As shown in the table below, the Commission Implementing Regulation specifies a number of results and target indicators for LEADER, and which must be collected and passed on by the LAG to the MA.

It is to be noted that even though as indicated in the tables below some data will be collected annually, the LAG will rely greatly on national data and since this is an external source, data may or may not be update annually.

Table 48: Results and Target Indicators			
	Indicator	Source of data	Frequency
R22/T21	% of rural population covered by the Local Development Strategy	NSO data sets	Annually
R23/T22	% of rural population benefitting from improved services/ infrastructure	NSO data sets & Beneficiaries' applications	Annually
R24/T23	Jobs created in supported projects	Beneficiaries	Upon application (estimate); thereafter annually

Source: EU (2014), *Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 Annex 4*

Output indicators are more specifically related to the results obtained when processing inputs through the RDP. Their purpose is to show the introduction of something new in the system.

Table 49: Output Indicators		
Indicator	Source of data	Frequency
Total Expenditure	LAG Administration	Annually
Number of projects supported by LDS		
Number of applications received		
Number of applications awarded		
Number of beneficiaries receiving advice and similar support from the LAG		
Number of training days to LEADER staff by the relevant authorities		
Number of trained beneficiaries/ attendees to training		
Number of cooperation projects supported	Beneficiaries applications	Upon Application
Population covered by the LAG	NSO	Annually

Source: EU (2014), *Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 Annex 4*

1.19.2 Indicators in line with the local RDP

The RDP highlights a number of indicators which should be monitored in order to evaluate the effects of the policy on the environment, in relation to the five themes it highlights:

- Theme 1 – Water, wastes and energy
- Theme 2 – Maltese Quality Produce
- Theme 3 – Sustainable Livestock
- Theme 4 – Landscape and the Environment
- Theme 5 – Wider Rural Economy and Quality of Life

By transposing these indicators on a regional level, one could also identify how territorial development is being achieved. This allows an assessment of LEADER and its impact on the region through the

fulfilment of such aims. Indeed the below are indicators emanating from the RDP³⁵ - however it is again important to note that the LEADER Strategies are designed using a bottom-up approach, making sure there is no overlap with measures and actions emanating from the larger funding programmes, including the RDP itself. Hence some of the below indicators reflect priorities set for the RDP, but not priorities set by the community within the LDS.

Table 50: Indicator emanating from the local RDP		
Indicator	Source	Frequency
Number of projects targeted for the conservation and management of natural assets/ protected natural sites	LAG Administration	Annually
Number of projects providing public space/ recreation activities		
Number of projects in relation to renewable energy sources		
Number of projects implemented that include soil conservation		
Number of water management projects		
Number of waste management projects		
No. of projects targeting the restoration of cultural heritage features, improvements of the cultural landscape		
Total investment in renewable energy sources and % funded by LDS	LAG Administration + Beneficiaries' applications	Upon Application
Total investment in livestock and % funded by LDS		
Areas (ha) concerned by investments in saving water		
Location of projects with respect to groundwater safeguard zone		
Total investment in water management projects and % funded by LDS		
Total investment in waste management projects		
Total energy produced from new renewable energy sources	Beneficiaries	Upon application (estimate) - Annually thereafter
Environmental impact assessment results on the landscape assessment	MEPA & Beneficiary	Upon Application

Source: RDP Malta, p.559

³⁵ Ministry for European Affairs and Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto (MEAIM) (2013), *RDP access Malta's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020*. p.559

1.19.3 Specific indicators for the Territory

The LAG has also decided to employ a number of indicators specific to the territory and in line with the measures set out in the LDS, to ensure that measures are successful and set benefits within the Strategy are being realised. The below indicators will be analysed and compared in relation to the target indicators outlined in Section 5, as per the different measure.

Table 51: Specific Indicators in relation to the Majjstral LDS			
Measure	Indicators (*)	Source	Frequency
General - For all measures	Number of funds needed for project	Beneficiary	Upon Application (Estimate) and Follow up (Actual)
	% of funds obtained through LDS	LAG Administration & Beneficiaries	Upon Application (Estimate) and Follow up (Actual)
	Time elapsed between application - notification of approval and drawdown of funds		Annually (Follow up)
	Number of jobs created	Beneficiary	Upon Application (Estimate) and Follow up (Actual)
LDS 19.2.01: Restoration of assets of artistic and cultural value	Number of beneficiaries receiving support for investment in non-agricultural activities in rural areas	LAG Administration & Beneficiaries	Upon Application (Estimate) and Follow up (Actual)
	Number of small-scale restoration projects of sites of important cultural value		
	Number of small-scale restoration projects of artefacts of important cultural value		
	Total number of programmes promoting the cultural identity of the LAG territory through informational, educational and tourism activities		
	Number of visitors to the projects per year		
LDS 19.2.04: Development of Green Infrastructure	Number of projects receiving support for the development of green infrastructure	LAG Administration & Beneficiaries	Upon Application (Estimate) and Follow up (Actual)
LDS 19.2.03: Promotion of the Cultural Heritage	Number of projects by the end of the applicable programming period	LAG Administration & Beneficiaries	Upon Application (Estimate) and Follow up (Actual)
	Number of visitors per project per year		
LDS 19.2.02: Strengthening a healthy cultural identity	Number of beneficiaries receiving support for investment in non-agricultural activities in rural areas	LAG Administration & Beneficiaries	Upon Application (Estimate) and Follow up (Actual)
	Number of new/improved quality cultural and/or social activities in the LAG area		

	Number of participants to the cultural activities per year, up to end of programming period		
LDS 19.2.05: Training and education	Number of beneficiaries receiving support for investment in non-agricultural activities in rural areas	LAG Administration & Beneficiaries	Upon Application (Estimate) and Follow up (Actual)
	Number of training programmes developed and delivered in the territory by the end of the applicable programming period		
	Number of participants to the training programmes per year, by the end of the applicable programming period		
LDS 19.2.06: Innovation, co-operation and strengthening of the knowledge base	Number of applicants receiving support for non-agricultural activities in rural areas	LAG Administration & Beneficiaries	Upon Application (Estimate) and Follow up (Actual)
	Number of pilot/development projects in the LAG area		
LDS 19.3: Transnational and inter-national co-operation	Number of cooperative projects	LAG Administration + Beneficiaries	Upon Application (Estimate) and Follow up (Actual)
	Number of participating local operators and stakeholders		

(*) Numerical target for this measure is available in **Section 5** of this Strategy.

1.20 Data sources and collection

As clearly indicated in the previous section, the evaluation and monitoring process will entail the collection of different data derived from a variety of data sources. The LAG plans to collect data from the sources considered to be most reliable and competent.

Desktop research is the first step for data collection. This process will allow the LAG to gather enough information on the background of the territory, especially in terms of contextual indicators. Through the use of standard data sources, the LAG will be able to compare data through time and extract patterns. **Section 2** of this Strategy includes various indicators providing contextual background to the territory.

This type of research typically focuses on **secondary data sources**, enabling a fast and less costly collection of basic data which is already aggregated and ready for use.

The LAG will utilise NSO data in order to carry out some of its evaluation processes - the NSO publishes various press releases and periodic data sets, plus can also provide data upon request (if such data is available). Similarly, other data can be derived from the PA and the Environment and Resource Authority (ERA; formerly MEPA). These have specific data sets, such as permits awarded etc. which are already collected and compiled in data sets ready for use.

The data collection process from these sources might vary. The LAG will be able to derive some data through the desktop research by accessing publicly available data of such entities, from any of their reports, publications or websites. The LAG can also request any other data it requires, which might not be in the public domain but still held in the databases of the above mentioned sources. Alternatively, the LAG might partner with these entities, which might want to collect primary data themselves, which they would then forward to the LAG but also use for other purposes in their own operations.

Other data required for the evaluation process will be obtained through **primary sources**, more specifically from the applicants and/or beneficiaries of the programme. This is the preferred method used by the LAGs since data can be updated regularly. When relying on secondary data this might not always be the case.

The collection of data from primary sources can be divided into two different stages.

Stage 1 would entail information collected upon application stage. This would include data such as estimated total funds required for the proposed project; amount to be obtained through LDS as well as estimates of the results to be obtained through the project e.g. estimated jobs created etc. Depending under which measure the applicant would be filing their project, they would need to provide specific estimates in line with the indicators specified above.

Stage 2 would involve the follow-up collection of data. This would not apply to all applicants but only to the beneficiaries/accepted applicants. Once the project is underway these beneficiaries will be contacted on a regular basis (very often annually - up until 2023³⁶), so as to obtain information on the various processes of the programme, their implementation as well as the results of the project. For example, requests could include the time taken till the reimbursement of funds and the actual number of jobs created by the project. Once again, the data to be collected will depend on the measure under

³⁶ AIRs will have to be provided up to the year 2024; hence data will still have to be collected up to the previous year

which the application is filed.

Such data collection is very much in line with the LDS bottom-up approach since it allows for a participative evaluation approach, allowing for data to be collected directly from the citizens in the territory. This does not mean that the data to be collected will simply be qualitative. Indeed the LAG will make sure that quantitative data will also be collected so as to be able to gauge the added-value of the LEADER programme.

The collection of data within the Stage 1 described above will be mostly limited to the collection of data from the application form, which will be drafted by the LAG in line with set MA guidelines, and approved by the MA. These application forms will be formulated in a way to ensure that the minimum basic information required is collected in these initial stages. Nevertheless, the LAG will also keep in mind a balance between asking for an adequate amount of information while not making the application process unnecessarily complex, since this might discourage applicants.

Stage 2 will be more complex. The annual follow-up of the beneficiaries will predominantly be done through **specific ad-hoc requests**. In this regard, surveys had been used by the MA during the programming period 2007-2013 for the RDP's evaluation³⁷ and proved to be one of the most effective approaches. Surveys can be done by phone, on a one-to-one basis or online, depending on the target audience in question. This will enable the evaluator to gather the information necessary to understand how the programme is effecting the territory and its citizens. Other evaluation techniques might be also employed to gauge particular indicators - such additional methods could include site-visits, interviews as well as case studies, amongst others.

Apart from collecting data from external sources, some of the data used to populate the above indicators will already be in the LAG's possession, such as the amount of funds disbursed or the number of applicants as well as awardees. This will be a result of collaboration with the paying authorities as well as the regular updating of the system regulated by the authorities. In this case there will be no need for any specific collection requirements since such information is usually already being used by the LAG for administrative purposes. Rather, the LAG will make sure that such data is properly collected, classified, analysed and presented.

1.21 Collation, evaluation and reporting of data

Collection of data is only the first step of the evaluation plan. The Evaluation Committee made up of LAG representatives will then have to put all the information together and analyse it, observing trends and comparing the data to specific benchmarks, as indicated in the approved LDS – therefore allowing for the evaluation process to start.

The Majjistral LAG will be using a mix of two approaches - a **participatory evaluation** and a **self-evaluation technique**.

The participatory evaluation will require the residents of the territory to put forward their own evaluation of the LEADER both through surveys and consultation meetings. This will undoubtedly lead to a major qualitative information to be collected. Yet the Evaluation Committee and LAG, when devising the data collection tools, must make sure that quantitative information is also collected.

³⁷ Ministry for European Affairs and Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto (MEAIM) (2013), *Malta's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020*. p.603

On the other hand the self-evaluation technique means that the LAG will use its own expertise to carry out such analysis, as opposed to external evaluation which would require an external evaluator to be brought in the process. This means that some of the LAG staff making part of the Evaluation Committee must be trained so as to build their own analytical skill set and be able to reflect on specific and important elements of the LDS. The appointment of an external evaluator is not excluded, but would require the necessary funds to be allocated to the LAG.

This approach fits in with the LAGs work and other internal monitoring and reporting, especially when considering the LAG's know-how of the systems, projects and territory, as well as 2007-2013 LEADER experience. In addition, throughout the programming period, this internal monitoring system might give the LAG greater empowerment to improve the Strategy results. Nevertheless it is important to point out that this system still requires the same amount of evidence and firmness when applying the various principles as an external evaluation would require.

The trained staff will then be able to compare the data gathered to the targets set earlier for each specific measure as specified in **Section 5**.

Once all the data necessary has been collected and analysed by the internal team, a report highlighting the major findings will be compiled. This report will present the findings and relay information to the MA - which will then use the information to populate its RDP Annual Implementation Report (AIR).

Reporting will also be important so as to inform the general public, NGOs, businesses, territory residents and any other stakeholder of the findings and allow for the correct promotion of the LEADER programme locally, both at a territorial but also at a national level.

1.22 Responsibilities and Roles

For the monitoring and evaluation of the LEADER to be carried out it is important to specify the different roles of the people and entities concerned. This will enable individuals to take ownership of each step and ensure the effective implementation of such evaluation plan.

Even though the MA and ARPA do have an important role to play at a national level, the LEADER programme will be evaluated by the LAG, being the closest entity to the territory and the most familiar one to the projects at hand.

As previously mentioned, the LAG will set an **Evaluation Committee** who will also be tasked with implementing the evaluation plan, with the assistance of the LAG manager, who will also make part of the EC. They will have the role of identifying the necessary data required from internal administrative records as well as collect the data from other external sources as required.

If applicable, the Evaluation Committee will also design surveys/ interview questions once the Strategy is approved and launched. The LAG manager will also be responsible for doing site visits or interviews when/if necessary. The information collected will be put together in an evaluation report.

The **EC** will draw up a summary of the report highlighting the most salient points underlining the areas in which the programme seems to have excelled and the areas in which objectives and targets have not been reached – or been suboptimal.

This summary shall then be presented to the **LAG Board**. For the purposes of monitoring and evaluating the LDS, this stage within this evaluation process would suffice. Nevertheless since the LDS

and LEADER make part of a wider RDP, the Board will have to ensure that the methods and sources used for reporting were reliable and adequate and approve the report which will then be forwarded to the MA.

The MA will then have the role of including the information outlined in the report in its own AIR – evaluating the RDP as a whole. This will then have to be presented to the Commission at an EU level.

It is also worth noting that the LAG might also be requested to give a preliminary account of the LDS evaluation and monitoring to the MA prior to the final report - this will allow the MA to start preparing the AIR as necessary and within the specified timeframes.

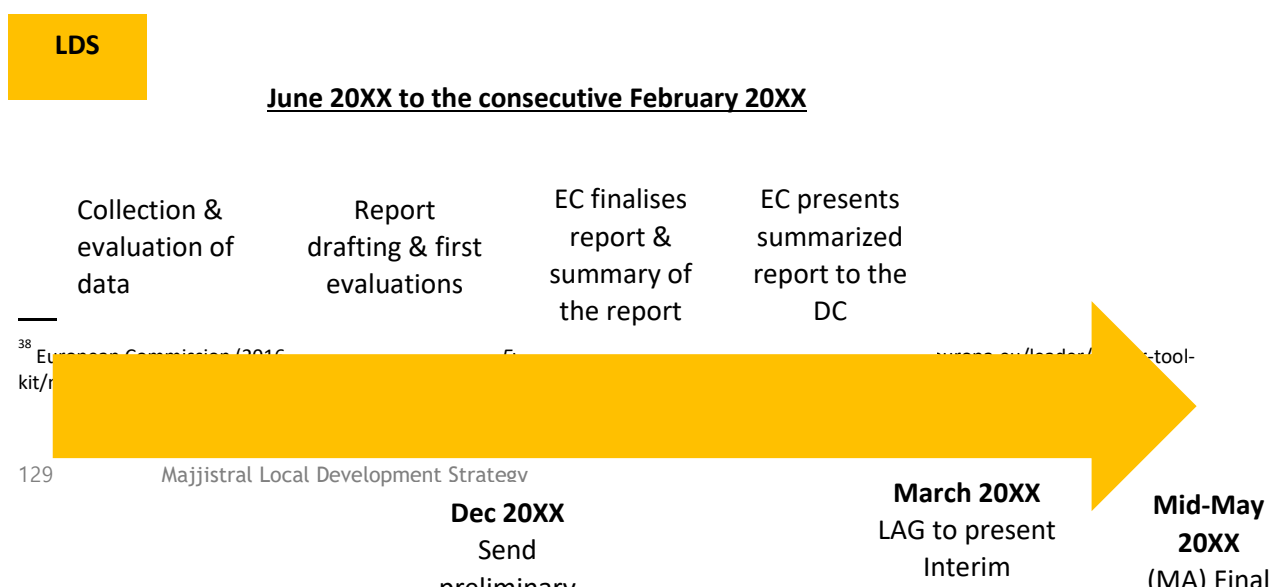
1.23 Time frames

For the monitoring and evaluation process to be effective an adequate and appropriate time plan must be devised so as to ensure that all steps are carried out on time.

The EC indicates that the LAG must set out its timeframes through a process of retro planning³⁸. This refers to the fact that the LAG should first establish the major milestones of both the LDS as well as the RDP and then work backwards at what steps must be taken so as to implement such milestones. Since the LAG must meet both the LDS evaluation requirements as well as the RDP mandatory requirements, the plan has been drafted to coordinate between the two requirements so as to save on time and resources and avoid additional work.

Given this approach, the following timeframes is envisaged in terms of the monitoring and evaluation plans to meet both LDS and RDP milestones:

Figure 6: Timetable of the monitoring and evaluation plan (annual specimen)



The final draft of the AIRs will be presented mid- May annually and following discussions and feedback with the Monitoring Committee, the final AIR should be published by end of June. Hence the evaluators, amongst which the LAGs, must send their own evaluation reports ahead this deadline. Indeed, the Interim Evaluation Report is envisaged to be forwarded to the MA by the end of March.

The current programming period rules require the MA to submit AIRs reporting on the previous calendar year: 2016, 2017 (Enhanced AIR), 2018, 2019 (Enhanced AIR), 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023. Therefore the above process will have to be carried out each year.³⁹

Apart from the data collected upon application (which has to be collected only once and kept in the administrative files), all other indicators must be collected annually so as to maintain the right track record of the changes brought about by the LEADER projects. This is necessary since not all projects will bear fruit on the first year. Indeed some measures might take long to implement whilst others might witness benefits which take long to materialise or which do so over multiple years.

The LDS evaluation report will then also be disseminated amongst relevant stakeholders in the territory and made publicly available, so as to be able to circulate the results as already described in the section on the Communication Plan.

11. Community Involvement

This section outlined the processes undertaken by the LAG in order to ensure the involvement of the local communities in the development of the Strategy.

As previously explained, the LEADER utilizes a bottom up approach through the input and involvement of the local community, rather than having a central body deciding on the projects that need to be done in line with national priorities.

In light of this approach the drafting of the strategy was preceded with meetings with policy makers directly concerned with the Majjistral Territory as well as wider consultations with the general public.

³⁹ Ministry for European Affairs and Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto (MEAIM) (2013), *RDP access Malta's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020*. p.604

1.24 Policy makers

Meetings with various governmental entities (Ministries, regulators, other decision-making bodies) were held to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the past programme and see what needs to be done to ensure the implementation of this Strategy.

Consulted policy makers include the following 14 entities:

- Funds and Programme Division, Ministry for European Affairs and the Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto
- Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division, Ministry for European Affairs and the Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto
- Measures and Support Division, Ministry for European Affairs and the Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto
- Agriculture Directorate, Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change
- Policy and Planning Directorate, Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change
- Agriculture And Rural Payments Agency, Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change
- Department for Local Government, Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government
- Local Councils' Association
- Policy and Planning Directorate, Ministry for Tourism
- Policy and Planning Directorate, Ministry for Energy and Health
- Sustainable Energy and Water Conservation Unit, Office of the Prime Minister
- Lifelong Learning Department, Ministry for Education and Employment
- Malta Planning Authority, Office of the Prime Minister
- Malta Environment and Resources Authority, Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change

Such meetings served as a backbone to further understand developments in national projects, as well as the pipeline of projects that could affect the territory, so as to avoid duplication (but this was unlikely given national projects have larger budgets) and see where LDS projects can complement national work.

Policymakers also put forward ideas on where they see the LEADER programme focusing on, given their sectorial viewpoint. A number of these policymakers were also sent a draft of the measures for their further input.

1.25 Public Consultation meetings

In order to kick start the drafting of this Strategy, public consultation meetings were set up to gauge the local community's perception of the area's strengths, assets, needs and opportunities.

Different approaches were used to inform the public regarding the LEADER programme, the need for a Strategy, consultation meetings that were to take place as well as any next steps identified.

1.25.1 Before the meetings

Three venues were chosen in different localities within the territory to provide interested parties with better access to such meetings. The localities chosen were Attard, Naxxar and Mellieha. An agreement was reached to hold such meetings in each chosen locality's respective public school, hence making use of schools' halls to cater for those interested in attending.

Once the venues were determined, the general public was informed. Adverts on local newspapers which included a poster highlighting the main objective of these meetings, the available dates/venues, and the registration details. A total of six adverts were published on three major local newspapers (one in English and two in Maltese-based newspapers). The adverts were published on the two consecutive Sundays before the first public consultation meeting.

A Facebook page was also set up for the whole consultation process ("Majjistral Public Consultation"), together with respective event pages for each consultation meeting. The Facebook page also served as an online forum whereby stakeholders had the opportunity to exchange ideas, ask questions regarding the whole process and discuss ways of improving outcomes from the last strategy. In order to spur discussion, after each meeting a leading quote or topic highlighted throughout that meeting was posted on this page.

Posters were printed and distributed to Local Councils, parish churches, band clubs, football clubs, schools and other local organization, asking them to affix them on their noticeboards, given such venues are frequented by various territory stakeholders. Emails were also sent to public entities such as MEUSAC so as to market such meetings on their respective websites or e-newsletter.

The LAG manager also participated on a radio programme to explain the remit of LEADER and provide stakeholders with the available dates for these meetings. Furthermore, press releases were also written and sent to all media, emphasising the importance of LEADER with its unique bottom-up focus and also the role of the local community in presenting their views to aid the drafting of the Strategy. Not all media published such press releases.

Apart from the use of local newspapers and social media, stakeholder were also informed of the meetings through phone calls (where land line numbers were available), the use of bulk SMS (where mobile phone numbers were available) and emails (where an email address was provided).

A separate Majjistral-branded email was set up for this purpose. Part of the database was made available by the LAGs, but further research was carried to fill in data gaps and add other entities that might not have been included.

1.25.2 During the meetings

Attendees were asked to sign an attendance sheet with registration details before each meeting.

A priori, the LAG and team of expert had planned to divide the group within each session into 5 thematic groups with a moderator in each group, however in the first public consultation meeting it was noted that keeping all the stakeholders together in one room stimulated more ideas and more discussion so the same one room method was used for the rest of the sessions.

Each public consultation meeting was started with a brief overview of the LEADER programme, the desired outcome of the meeting as well as a call for action for participation in the discussion. It is pertinent to note that, given LEADER funds allocated under the current programming period are less than previous funds (especially when one considers the fact that previously LAGS also administered Measure 313 related to Local Council's embellishment projects and M125 related to the improvement of access roads for farmers), attendees were informed of this at the outset. Attendees were advised that large infrastructural projects (typically proposed by Local Councils) might need to be financed under other programmes, and that cooperation between different localities might be a way forward to address such limited funding. Attendees were also invited to put forward project ideas that are based on the principles of improving economic prosperity within the region, promoting social inclusion and safeguarding the natural environment.

Given the wide publicity for these meetings, a large number of participants from different sectors/ economic areas, with projects of a different nature in mind, attended. The main discussions that were raised throughout the PCMs included the undertaking of various projects in order to continue ameliorating the quality of life.

Participants included amongst others;

- Private entities and natural persons including farmers, crafts persons amongst other rural actors, looking to expand or improve their day to day activities
- Farmers interested in embarking on agritourist-related diversification projects
- Local councils looking to take on embellishment projects
- Local councils ready to create a variety of locality-based activities
- Band clubs and other entities and natural persons operating in the arts and culture sector
- looking on increasing their and the locality's cultural heritage
- NGOs putting forward projects to increase their reach and improve the impact on their beneficiaries/ target audience.
- Skilled individuals looking to transfer their skills to others
-

Additionally, during the meetings a short questionnaire was distributed amongst all participants to be able to understand their opinion on the LEADER and what issues they came across in the past programme, as well as asking them to rate the sessions and put forward further suggestions. The meetings were all minuted (and are being submitted as separate documents with this document).

The LAG manager also met different rural stakeholders on one to one meetings when these could not attend the consultation sessions.

1.25.3 After the meetings

Each attendee was sent an email with further information, offering them the further opportunity to email/ call/ post on Facebook or use private messaging in case of other ideas or questions not addressed during the meeting. There were also cases where attendees preferred not to speak out during the meeting due to their deemed sensitivity of the project being considered. These individuals then directly contacted the LDS team via the means mentioned above.

Some individuals/ entities requested one-to-one meetings to present further information regarding

their projects. However, to remain impartial, given the limited funding available and not to raise any expectations and/or false hopes, the LDS team offered these individuals the possibility to present their project ideas via phone or email, while one-to-one meetings were addressed to the LAG teams.

1.25.4 Before submitting the draft

Another public consultation meeting was convened to discuss the draft measures (following approval from the DC members) and the general selection criteria. Again, any feedback received during this meeting was taken into consideration in this report.

12. LAG Structure, roles and procedures

This section of the LDS looks into the set-up of the LAG and the implementation capacity, including the organizational structure and roles for each constituent of this structure.

1.26 The legal structure of the LAG

As stipulated in the Common Provision Regulation, Local Action Groups shall design and implement the community-led local development strategies. In this regard, and following up on the work initiated under the 2007-2013 RDP LEADER programme, the MAGF (MAGF: “Majjistrat Action Group Foundation”) was set up as an autonomous non-profit making foundation⁴⁰ in the year 2012.

The legal and juridical representation of the Foundation is vested in the Chairperson, together with the Secretary of the DC of the Foundation (the DC is equivalent to the Board of Directors in a commercial entity). On the other hand, the Committee may appoint any one or more Committee members or staff to appear as necessary from time to time in the name and on behalf of the Foundation in any judicial proceedings and in any deed, contract, instrument or other document whatsoever.

MAGF is considered to be a body corporate with a distinct legal personality. Hence, as specified in the Statute, it can institute legal actions and enter into contracts. This allows it to carry out a variety of tasks including:

- Engage in any business, project or undertaking that may be deemed desirable or necessary and that is consistent with the objectives of the partnership,
- Hold and dispose of finances for the purposes of both its functions and operations
- Carry out financial administration; including borrowing or raising finances in accordance with the budgets available,
- Apply, receive, administer and disburse EU and national funds related to its projects,
- Set up operational groups to achieve all or any of the purposes for which it has been established,

⁴⁰ MAGF (2012), *Statute Majjistrat Action Group Foundation*

- Act as the administrative actor for the implementation of the approved LDS, including but not limited to issuing calls for proposals, receipt of applications, evaluation of applications and monitoring the satisfactory performance of the whole process,
- Doing all such things and entering into such transactions as are incidental or conducive to the exercise or performance of its functions
- Employ Staff members.

The Foundation is a non-profit organization as defined under the Voluntary Organization Act, Chapter 492. Yet it is still able to carry out activities and undertakings of a commercial nature for the purposes of funding the implementation and furtherance of its aims and objectives, and thus ensuring its sustainability. Indeed the MAGF also has the power to trade or carry on commercial activities – but only if the proceeds of such activities are destined to the social purposes for which the Foundation has been established for in the first place and also in accordance with Title III of the Second Schedule of Chapter 16 (Civil Code) of the Laws of Malta.

1.27 LAG objectives

The main objectives of the Foundation include the following:

- Promoting and improving the territory through a holistic approach with the aim to upgrade the quality of life of the rural community;
- Consolidating a public-private partnership with the intention of becoming a LAG;
- Define and implement an area-based LDS for the North West of Malta;
- Practicing a bottom-up approach in decision-making for both the elaboration and implementation of the LDS;
- Participating in inter-territorial and trans-national actions, together with other partners or Leader-type organizations
- Participating actively in the National Rural Network (when operational), European Network for Rural Development as well as any other LEADER-related network.

1.28 LAG structure

The Foundation is made up of both public and private partners from locally based socio-economic sectors. Specifically, 44% of representation within the DC are public partners (local councils) whilst the remaining the remaining 56% are private partners.

The term of office of each DC member is three years and has also have 4 individuals covering the following roles; a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Treasurer and DC Secretary. These 4 roles must be filled in by two Public Partners and two Private Partners.

- The Chairperson of the DC, together with the DC Secretary, is the legal representative of the Foundation. The Chairperson will also have the role to liaise with the Manager of the LAG, schedule meetings and set up the agenda, as well as issue invitations to thirds parties so as to attend Decision Committee meetings when necessary.

- In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson must assume the former's functions. The Vice Chairperson also replaces the Chairperson in case of temporary absence or in case of any other impediment from the Chairperson's part. The Decision committee might also give the chairperson some other particular tasks.
- The Secretary will be responsible for taking minutes of the DC's meetings and circulate them in a timely manner whilst ensuring their endorsement.
- The role of the Treasurer is that of overseeing the proper financial management of the Foundation;

The Decision committee meets regularly every month so as to take any necessary decisions with regards to the Foundation.

1.29 Membership

The foundation is an all-inclusive organization and is open for application, for both private and public members.

Private applicants must specify their association with the Majjstral Region's social, economic and environmental spheres.

The foundation keeps two different registers – one for its Public Partners and the other for its Private partners – which are updated regularly.

A member shall cease to be a member if a motion for such removal leads to a 60% of higher vote of all members present at the General Meeting for such action.

A membership fee also applied for the Public Partners. It is important to note that under the 2007-2013 LEADER programme, Local Councils' membership in the LAG was against the payment of a membership fee. Local Councils who failed to pay the stipulated fee were not allowed to apply for projects. However, in such a case, the local entities and private individuals within that locality were still eligible to participate in such programme. The LAG intends to adopt the same procedure for the 2014-2020 programme.

1.30 Roles and responsibilities

The following sub-section provides details on the roles and responsibilities of the constituents of the LAG structure. However, before focusing on the demarcation of internal roles, it is pertinent to start with the link between the Managing Authority and the LAG.

1.30.1 Managing Authority (MA)

The MA is responsible for programme planning, implementation, delivery and evaluation of the RDP

funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and hence the LEADER since it makes part of the RDP.

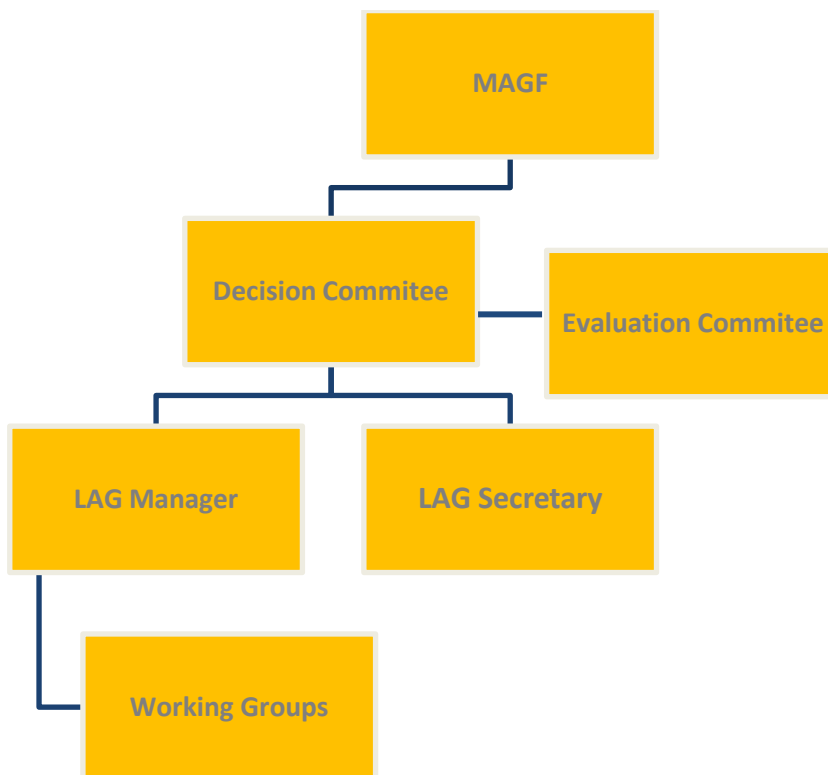
The main role of the MA is to manage and implement this Programme in an efficient, effective way in respect to:

- Selection of applications for funding according to established criteria (in the case of the LEADER, applicants refers to the LAGs, not the end beneficiary within each territory);
- Monitoring and evaluation with regards to the implementation of the Programme;
- Communication and publicity activities to ensure that the programme reaches prospective beneficiaries;
- Reporting obligations to the EC on the progress of implementation;
- Provision of necessary information regarding obligations and requirements;
- Liaising with ARPA by providing all the necessary information regarding procedures to be followed and controls before payments are affected.

Hence the MA governs the overarching LEADER programme whilst the Foundation governs the territorial implementation of it. This is the tie between the two entities.

The LAG; in this case the MAGF, is made of other different subgroups and it follows a specific structure, which is illustrated in the below **Figure 7**.

Figure 7: LAG Structure



The DC is responsible for selecting a LAG Manager, who employed by the Foundation, shall have the role of the day-to-day management of the Foundation.

Working groups might also be established by the Decision Committee in order to assist in the efficient and effective administration of the strategy; given their area of expertise and know how in thematic

fields.

1.30.2 Foundation Decision Committee

The DC is the decision-making body in relation to all activities within the LAG and is also responsible for all the recruitments and appointments throughout the whole process, as previously indicated.

All decisions taken during the DC's meetings is formally recorded in the minutes, by the LAG secretary or LAG manager in the absence of the LAG Secretary. This Committee is also in charge of evaluating the correct implementation of the LDS.

Additionally, the DC will act as supervisor of all the initiatives undertaken under the LEADER.

The DC generally meets regularly (typically once every month), but has the autonomy to meet as the needs arise (on the Chairperson's discretion or if requested by the LAG manager or any other committee member), to direct the running of the Foundation and take strategic decisions.

The current DC is made of nine members, with five coming from the private sector and four from Local Councils. The DC might also appoint and refer to thematic working groups when taking decisions.

A quorum (with at least five Committee members) has to be reached for the proceedings of the DC to be initiated and continued. Decisions are taken by means of voting by the DC members present only. In case there are equal votes on a motion, the Chairperson has a casting vote. The Committee also regulates its own procedure and takes decisions on matters related to:

- The running and ongoing operations of the Foundation;
- Launching of projects/ measures;
- Monitoring of projects during and after realisation;

A DC member cannot vote for a decision if he or she has direct conflict of interest in the matter (e.g. being a direct personal financial beneficiary in the project). DC members must act with prudence, diligence and attention in both the execution of their duties and the exercise of their powers. Execution of business and procedures are conducted in a fair and transparent way and all potential beneficiaries are offered equal opportunities.

Additionally, it also the DC's remit to ensure that the projects/ measures endorsed by it are administered efficiently, effectively and with efficacy and also that the rules and criteria of the responsible authorities are adhered to.

In this regard, all decisions taken by the DC need to be in conformity with the Commission Guidelines, EU regulations, national legislation, the 2014-2020 RDP, the LAG's eventual grant agreement with the MA and the Operating Rules issued by the MA.

The role of the DC includes the assessment and review of all pre-recommendations made by the Evaluation Committee (EC – discussed in more detail later), giving points to each eligible project and eventually ranking and selecting the projects together with the subsequent allocation of funding. Where the DCs decision is not in accordance to the pre-recommendations made by the EC, reasons

backing the decision must be documented.

In cases where the DC members have a conflict of interest, these cannot sit on the selection board assessing that particular call (this aspect is discussed in more detail later). Once the selection process is concluded, the DC will proceed to publish the preliminary result.

The DC will also need to set up an autonomous and independent Appeals Board. Any appeals presented must be lodged with the Chairperson of the Appeals Board. No members from the DC or EC can be nominated to sit on this Board. The outcome of the appeals process is final and cannot be altered by the DC.

The MA has the right to undertake checks on the process to verify the results and ensure a fair and transparent process. In case of irregularities identified by the MA, the LAG will be requested to revise the process accordingly.

1.30.3 Evaluation Committee

The DC shall appoint an EC which would consist of a Manager and a Secretary; which would also be the LAG Manager and LAG Secretary respectively. These members will hold no voting rights, but will simply have the role of checking applications and taking on an administrative role.

If the need arises, the LAG may request a technical expert, depending on what expertise is required. He/ She will be responsible for additional technical checks of certain applications.

The sole role of the EC is one that evaluates all project proposals as well as tenders and make pre-recommendations to the DC on administrative and technical aspects of each application.

The role of the EC is to assess project applications, and ensure that:

- The projects meet the eligibility criteria set in the respective guidelines,
- The projects are complementary to the objectives set out in the LDS,
- The projects contribute to the economic, social and environmental background,
- The applications are administratively compliant and that quotations are valid, comparable and legitimate.

Two reports shall be prepared following such an analysis:

- (a) Administrative Report – this report should include an administrative checklist signed by the Secretary of the EC, who shall be responsible for the first set of administrative checks, and then signed and verified by the LAG Manager who shall be responsible to verify the first round of checks undertaken by the Secretary.
- (b) Technical Report - this report should include a reference to verifiability of costs, feasibility of projects, reasonableness of costs and timing. The Project Assessment Sheet is to be attached to this report.

Following the EC's input the DC will be able to evaluate and perform any other technical checks deemed appropriate on projects before ranking and selecting projects. Moreover checks will be undertaken by the LAG to ensure that no other funding has been sought for the project proposals

presented by liaising with the competent bodies that oversee this aspect.

1.30.4 The LAG Manager

The LAG manager is appointed by the DC and together these have the role of appointing an LAG as well as ensure the sound operational and financial management of the LAG and the overall management and implementation of the LDS in line with the procedure set by the MA in the Operating Rules.

The Manager will be responsible for liaising with the MA whenever necessary and shall also be available for meetings with the MA.

He/ She will be responsible for updating the DC on the implementation of the actions identified in the Strategy as well as on the management and administration of the Foundation on a regular basis.

It is crucial to take into consideration that the budget allocated to LEADER is very limited and hence the operations of the LAG and the Manager's remit are curtailed by the running costs funding available. In this context, the Manager will be key in the successful implementation of the LDS, given these budget limitations.

The Manager must hence be able to tackle situations that require prompt and flexible solutions and also have deep knowledge of EU project management, the local government system, NGO legislation, and public procurement principles, amongst others.

The Manager must be able to realise when consultation is required in order to tackle ad hoc matters which may arise and which require expertise not possessed within the LAG. The LAG Manager is also the Manager of the EC.

1.30.5 The LAG Secretary

The LAG also has utilised the services of a secretary in the past programming period and will take the same course for the LEADER programme 2014-2020. The LAG secretary has the role to assist the Manager in its operations, in particular from an administrative and secretarial point of view.

The employment of a Manager and a secretary allows the LAG to have better scrutiny of work especially during the course of evaluation of projects submitted to the LAG during the programming period.

The following table provides a summary of the roles and responsibilities of each body/ entity/ person.

Table 52: Roles and responsibilities	
Body	Role
Managing Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage and implement this Programme in an efficient, effective and correct way • Report progress of implementation to the Commission • liaise with the Paying Agency
Decision Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage and make decisions for the Foundation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointing the LDS Manager (and Secretary) • Evaluate the correct implementation of the LDS • Supervise all initiatives undertaken under the LEADER • Appoint the EC • Assess and review all pre-recommendations made by the EC • Set up an autonomous and independent appeals board
Evaluation Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check all applications • Evaluate all project proposals • Make pre-recommendations to the DC • Prepare an administrative and technical report
LAG Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the MA whenever necessary • Ensures the sound operational and financial management of the LAG together with the LAG accountant*. • Oversees and implements the LDS • Update the DC on the implementation of actions identified in the Strategy

* The accountant function, as well as the external auditor, are normally outsourced. They play a key role in the successful financial management of the LAG. Keeping the accountant informed on all financial matters, ranging from the approval of invoices to the administration's funding decisions, pays back in all reporting. Auditors also help in giving administrative and financial advice throughout the year,

1.31 Addressing conflict of interest

In order to avoid cases of conflict of interest, DC members as well as the EC members are requested to declare any direct interest they may have in specific matters from the onset or as soon as the issue arises.

A record of such interest will be maintained at the office of the MAGF and accessible by the Members of the foundation.

In the case that potential conflict of interest exists, DC members will not be able to sit on the selection board. Discussions on the matter will only start once the particular member leaves the meeting. Upon conclusion of the item the member will be able to rejoin the group, after which point further discussions on the item will not take place.

1.32 Training and development

The LAG Manager, Secretary, the DC, members of the LAG and other stakeholders can be supported by external key experts through the training actions identified for LAGs within the LEADER programme.

Having knowledgeable persons in the LAG is a key element to ensure that the LEADER programme is well implemented. The specific skills and expertise required to manage the programme can be attained through training of the personnel and DC members

The LAG Manager must be well versed in the operational and financial management of the LAG and hence specific training in this regard must be given. This is also applicable to other audit matters. Public speaking can also be considered a plus, since the manager will be required to attend various

meetings in which he/ she will need to be actively involved in throughout the whole process. Needless to say, the LAG Manager should also have the necessary management skills to ensure the sound management of the Foundation.

It is important for all LAG members to familiarise themselves with the list of criteria stipulated in the LEADER Operating Rules. The LAG staff should also be provided with training to help them acquire evaluation skills. Like various other public tenders, the LEADER projects have to be evaluated in an objective manner and a score is given based in a pre-determined list of criteria. All LAG staff and members should be provided with the necessary training to undertake such evaluation by the local responsible authority. Other areas, such as the identification and recording of conflicts of interest, are also vital for all LAG members to be acquainted with.

13. Sources of information

EC, (2015), Malta – Rural Development Programme

EEA, (2006), Corine Land Cover

Local Councils Act, Chapter 363

MA (2015), Guidelines to Local Action Groups

MA (2015), Operating Rules for the 'LEADER' Programme

MAGF (2012), Statute Majjistral Action Group Foundation

NSO (2010), Census of Agriculture

NSO (2014), Demographic Review

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2014), Partnership Agreement of Malta 2014-2020

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2015), Communication Strategy for Malta – European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development 2014-2020

Planning Authority (2016), GIS dataset

14. Appendix 1: Additional measure emerging from territory stakeholders

Measure title: Facilitating farm diversification and rural enterprise

Measure Code: Not applicable

Note: In view of strategic considerations that are explained in detail in section 4.3.2 of this document, the measure for farm diversification and rural enterprise has been included as a dormant measure within this LDS that would only be activated should a suitable demarcation with the measure 6.4 of the RDP supporting similar interventions, be established.

Given the very strong demand for support for these types of interventions allowing small-scale investment in farm assets for the provision of business services such as social and/or therapy agriculture, and educational farms, shown by a significant number of local actors, such as small producers and persons wishing to invest in rural business development on a small scale, the MAGF sees that sufficient evidence and justification exists to include this type of measure, albeit on the reserve list for the time being, within the strategy for the Majjstral region.

As explained in previous sections, this proposition is seen to serve many important functions including that of ensuring that the LDS is built around genuine bottom-up needs of the community, that it is inclusive, and that the LEADER programme supports small-scale projects that in some cases do not have the same ability to compete for funds when assessed against criteria that cater for larger investments.

It is precisely with this evidence and rationale that the measure for facilitating farm diversification and rural enterprise has been programmed. In recognition of the need for demarcation with the RDP measure, the following measure has been designed to support small-scale interventions up to an investment level of 50,000 EUR.

1) Aim, Rationale and Scope of Action

a. Specific Objectives

The general aim of this measure is to facilitate farm diversification and rural business, with a special focus on social and educational agriculture. The objective is to support rural business activities that are of interest to the territory and beyond, and that are intended to educate consumers and to provide other social services connected to the rural environment.

The specific objective of this measure is, by the end of the applicable programming period, to improve the economic and social performance of the LAG territory through projects leading to the development of educational/social centers.

b. Rationale

This measure allows for creativity on the part of potential applicants and is deemed highly relevant given that the territory can be identified with particular agriculture products that can be showcased in a local setting. Showcasing agricultural products such as vintage wine and olive oil can attract visitors to the territory who can learn about the history and traditional production methods, as well as about the territory itself. This builds on the variety of genuine, wholesome products that are found solely within the territory, and are known for their unique quality. Moreover, this type of business activity can generate revenue from sales and educational tours that can be injected in characterisation efforts, aimed to continue to guarantee the authenticity and quality of the product.

The consultation findings also show the possibility for supporting existing social agriculture services, particularly when these are intended to provide a partial income or therapy to vulnerable persons, persons with disabilities, or people with social issues, and to create new services for the same purpose. These include the use of farm animals, and aromatic plants/herbs for therapy, the transformation of farms into multi-sensory play-grounds, and the provision of other forms of social agriculture services.

c. Scope of action

This measure supports farm diversification and creation of rural business activities of two types:

- The modernisation and/or upgrade of premises for the creation of small-scale educational farms and/or farm shops;
- The modernisation and/or upgrade of premises for the creation of small-scale centers for the provision of social agriculture services (therapy, employment, mobility and leisure).

This measure shall only support investment operations which do not exceed a total investment cost of 50,000 EUR.

2) General description of the Action

a) Description of the type of operation

Based on the analysis of the territory and the findings of the consultation exercise, the following list presents best estimates of the type of operations that are likely to be supported through this measure:

- the showcasing of typical agricultural products in specially designed small-scale farm shops and outlets, supported by research aimed at producing interactive facilities, workshops, or publications related to the agriculture products and their historical association with the territory;
- the creation of small-scale centers aimed at educating residents and non-residents of the territory about the nutritional value or about the benefits of typical and traditional agricultural produce and knowledge about the techniques used in traditional farming, including indigenous breeds in livestock farming;
- the development of small-scale demonstration farms for education focusing on the use of sustainable, innovative techniques (such as vertical farming, hydroponics, integrated pest management, etc.);
- the transformation of farms/premises into small-scale centers for therapy and leisure and mobility.

b) Type of support

The form of support provided by this measure is a grant support in the form of reimbursement of eligible costs that have been actually incurred and paid, together with, where possible, contributions in kind. If the project is selected for funding, only costs incurred upon signing of the contract with MAGF will be considered eligible.

c) Action intervention logic

This measure is intended to create business and employment opportunities by capitalizing on rural assets and resources that are unique to the territory and offer possibilities for the development of products and services that cannot be created elsewhere. This link to the territory – the ‘terroir’, the varieties, the breeds, the rural communities and social clusters – is the central premise for this action, because it provides the unique distinction and a barrier of demarcation to other larger-scale initiatives that support rural business development. In this way, this measure may be seen to complement RDP measures for farm business development, farm diversification and development of joint collaborative action for creation of social agriculture services and other rural services to the community.

The programming of the measure, also through the selection criteria and other requisites, is intended to fulfil business-oriented objectives in a socially-sensitive manner, by creating opportunities for the consideration of social needs within the community. The emphasis on small-scale interventions, even when the actions are intended to result in the creation of farm shops, outlets, demonstration centers, and other premises for the carrying out of business activities, aims to ensure that preference is given to projects that would not be cost-effective without the support, and serves to give priority to projects with a social agenda.

As such, this measure is a classical LEADER-type intervention supporting balanced territorial development and development of the wider rural economy, structured around the capital assets of the rural areas and the social needs of the people within the territory.

d) Contribution to cross-cutting objectives of the RDP

Support for farm diversification and rural business growth is a cross-cutting objective of the RDP that is seen to contribute to innovative developments as a younger and more highly-trained generation enters into the rural development sector. The innovative element of this measure is strengthened via its emphasis on social inclusion and integration in the scope of actions, and the facilitation of social agriculture services, that are, by their nature, innovative for Malta.

3) Eligible Beneficiaries

The following are considered eligible beneficiaries for the purpose of this measure:

- Registered voluntary organisations (regularly registered with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, in line with the Voluntary Organisations Act 2007, and regularly operating within the Majjistral territory)
- Non-governmental organisations
- Private entities (legal persons) limited to micro and small enterprises defined in the EU recommendation 2003/361 , and regularly operating within the Majjistral territory
- Natural persons

4) Eligible and non-eligible costs

Only costs incurred from the date of signing of the contract/grant agreement with the MAGF shall be eligible.

The following is an indicative list of eligible and non-eligible costs. More detailed lists may be issued by the MAGF in the specific call for applications.

a. Eligible costs

The eligible costs to be reimbursed through this grant support relate to investments in property and assets, and related expenses.

In the case of improvement to immovable property, costs incurred are only eligible if investment operations have been preceded, where applicable, by an assessment of the expected environmental impact in accordance with relevant legislation. The improvement in the immovable property needs to be in line with all relevant planning and development permits, where applicable.

The following are eligible costs relating to structural investments:

- a. the improvement of immovable property;
- b. the purchase of new machinery and equipment up to the market value of the asset;
- c. general costs linked to expenditure referred to in points (a) and (b), such as architect, engineer and consultation fees, fees relating to advice on environmental and economic sustainability, including feasibility studies;
- d. the following intangible investments: acquisition or development of computer software and acquisitions of patents, licenses, copyrights, trademarks.

General costs referred to in point (c) are eligible up to 10% of the total eligible costs of the project.

All costs shall be eligible if incurred within the project duration (between the project start date and termination date).

b. Non-eligible costs

The following costs shall not be eligible:

- a. interest on debt, except in relation to grants given in the form of an interest rate subsidy or guarantee fee subsidy;
- b. value added tax except where it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation.

5) Eligibility and selection criteria

a. Eligibility criteria

The following general eligibility criteria shall apply for the evaluation of proposals for actions to be supported under this measure:

- Submitted application (including a Contracting Schedule and Disbursement schedule) is fully completed and duly filled-in with details as required by the Decision Committee to evaluate the application for eligibility and selection;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate that he/she forms part of (or is the legal representative) the beneficiary/applicant organisation;
- The proposed project will be implemented within the Majjstral territory;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate evidence of sufficient financial capacity required to finance the project and to fund the private financial component;
- The proposed project contributes to the general and specific objectives of this measure;
- The proposed project contributes to at least one indicator target;
- The proposed project shall not exceed a total cost of 50,000 EUR.

b. Selection criteria

An evaluation of the proposed actions that meet all the eligibility criteria shall be carried out in accordance with the selection criteria set out in the selection criteria grid below. This permits the proposed actions that are eligible for funding to be ranked with priority being given to proposals that are deemed to be more value-for-money.

Although some of the selection criteria may be seen to overlap with eligibility criteria, their inclusion in the selection permits the evaluators to assess the quality of the evidence that is presented in the project proposal in relation to a specific criterion, and thus to be able to give preference to higher-quality project proposals.

To be considered for funding or to be placed on the reserve list, a project proposal must pass all the eligibility criteria and must also obtain a minimum of 50 marks out of the total marks allocated to the selection criteria.

The following table presents suggested selection criteria for this measure – marks are being shown for illustrative purposes only and are subject to further change following confirmation of such measures.

Table 53: Selection Criteria for 'Facilitating farm diversification and rural enterprise'		
	Selection criteria and sub-criteria	Maximum points
1	Relevance to the objective of the measure	20
1a	Evidence of financial feasibility of proposal through business plan	10
1b	Evidence of the educational value of the proposal	5
1c	Evidence of the social value of the proposal	5
2	Link to the territory	20
2a	Evidence that the proposed project capitalises on rural resources that are found within the territory (breeds, varieties, landscape features, other rural assets of importance that are distinct in the area)	10
2b	Evidence that the proposed project links to other similar initiatives of rural enterprise in the area	5
2c	Evidence that the proposed project links to other similar initiatives of educational and/or social value in the area	5
3	Type of project	20
3a	The project is an integrated project in that incorporates the achievement of more than one objective (business, education, tourism, social inclusion, environment, etc.)	10
3b	The project is area-based and is to be conducted in more than one location/facility	5
3c	The project makes use of a product that has achieved certification (product of quality) in accordance to the relevant national criteria	5
4	Social impact on the community	15
4a	The project foresees the employment of persons from a socially-disadvantaged background	10
4b	The project provides educational content that is targeted to children or to persons with learning difficulties	5
5	Preparedness	15
5a	Evidence that the necessary consultation with stakeholders and regulatory entities has taken place	10
5b	The development permitting process has already been initiated (where applicable)	5
6	Sustainability	10
6a	Evidence that the project has a neutral or positive impact on the environment and the climate	5
6b	Evidence that the project has a neutral or positive impact on gender and other forms of non-discrimination policies	5

6) Level of Support – aid intensity

The beneficiary will be granted financial assistance amounting to up to 80% of the total eligible expenditure. The co-financing element must be borne by the applicant.

7) Budget allocation towards Action

Individual projects shall be capped at a total eligible cost of 35,000 EUR.

8) Targets and clear, adequate indicators to measure the success of the action

The following table relates to projects leading to the development of educational farms/social farms and the creation of up to one new job for each project.

	Indicator	Target	Indicator Type
1	Number of beneficiaries receiving support for investment in non-agricultural activities in rural areas	Tbd	RDP PI
2	Number of small-scale educational/social farm outlets	Tbd	LDS-specific PI
3	Number of jobs created	Tbd	LDS-specific PI

Tbd = to be determined

9) Risks in implementation and mitigation factors

The risks are mainly related to the capacity of the applicant to provide own financial resources where applicable and to be able to execute the project on time. This risk is mitigated through the use of relevant criteria for evaluation and selection of projects.

The risk of double funding similar operations, or parts of, through this LDS and the RDP is to be mitigated through the setting of the 50,000 EUR threshold for investments; moreover, the MAGF shall commit to maintaining a constant dialogue with the Managing Authority and the Agency for Payments to ensure that such risks are identified at an early stage of the application process, and eliminated.

10) Overall assessment and relevance of the Action

By way of overall assessment, this measure provides for the creation of opportunities that make use of unique capital assets found in the rural areas, to address social and economic needs of the rural communities. The significance of this measure results from the value that these synergies provide, by facilitating actions that are aligned with national priorities and the spirit of LEADER programmes, and by providing scope for actions that, by virtue of their inclination towards the social enterprise sector, would not be eligible for support in funding programmes with a stronger economic agenda.