

Editorial:

A Picture of Gozo

A recent publication (*Gozo in Figures 2012*: National Statistics Office, 2014), an update of a previous publication, presents interesting data relating to the situation in Gozo as well as a detailed picture of the changes that have taken place in the last five years. In summary, we find that since 2008:

- The population of Gozo has stabilised with a population of just over 31,000, and an average live births of just over 290 annually.
- The disposable household income in Gozo as a whole has increased by 17.6% up to €240 million, which is just under that of Malta.
- The average income has increased by 11.3% to €20,618. This is less than the average for Malta (€22,379). In other words, the average Gozitan earns 8.5% less than one working in Malta. There is considerable variation between the various regions in Malta, where, in some regions, the average earning can reach above €24,000.
- The employment rate in Gozo has increased by 11.6% which is higher than that in Malta where there was an increase of 9.6%. However, the female employment rate is still relatively low, (at 37.6%, which is not different from that of Malta).
- The number of tourists and hotel accommodation has increased by 11% (from 73,482 to 81,715 in 2013).
- The number of passengers on the Gozo Channel ferry has increased by 11.5% (from 3.9m in 2008 reaching 4.4m in 2013). Likewise the number of vehicles increased by 11.5% reaching 1.19m.
- There has been a consistent decrease in the number of livestock in Gozo, indicating a gradual de-ruralisation of the island.
- It is pleasing to note that the number of cultural events organised by the local councils in Gozo (96 in 2012) was higher than any other council, with the exception of the Southern Harbour region. Likewise, the expenditure on cultural events (€21,306) was higher than the average spent in Malta, and second only to that of the Southern Harbour region.
- The number of book loans from the Public libraries in Gozo was 106,222 in 2012 (compared to Malta 741,945). This translates to 3.8 books per person in Gozo which is double the figure for Malta (1.9 per person).

In general, one gets the impression that the overall picture in Gozo is not as bleak as has been painted in some quarters, and compares reasonably well with that in Malta, where some regions are doing better and some worse. One gets the impression also that a special effort is being made to encourage cultural activity, including book-reading, both of which areas seem to be more prominent in Gozo compared to most regions in Malta.

Other information deals with situations relating to the economy, employment, business activity, water and waste management, rural and urban statistics, pensions and others. This is a very useful summary of activity in Gozo, essential reading for anyone interested in assessing how Gozo is getting on.

Maurice Cauchi

