

The official launch of the *Gozo Artisan Network*

On October 23, 2020, the *Gozo Artisan Network*, an association of Gozitan artisans, was officially established with the aim to strengthen the art and crafts sector in the tourism industry, and to create a territorial quality mark that can enhance the product value and the destination offer of the island. A statute was formally presented by the Ministry for Gozo that will regulate the Association and its associates, and the quality label. This was signed by the core stakeholders that participated in the pilot project.

The *Gozo Artisan Network* and the territorial quality brand is the result of a pilot project within the Interreg Europe Destination SMEs Project, that is financed by the Interreg Europe Programme 2014-2020 funds. The allocated budget for the pilot action is Eur54,000.

The Gozo Ministry is participating in the Project together with six other partners. During the first phase of the Project, through the interregional exchange of policies and best practices, an action plan was presented. It was concluded that the collaboration and exchange between craftspeople, and a quality label to certify made in Gozo products will assist the growth and competitiveness of these economic operators. This best practice is being implemented in the second phase of the Project through the pilot action.

Speaking at the press conference during the signing and setting up of the association, Gozo Minister Clint Camilleri said that the first priorities of the association will be to launch a public call for artisans in Gozo to seek membership and to organize itself for the benefit of its members. He said that the project's aim is to increase the product's value.

Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds, Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi, stressed that the collaboration on the project gave an opportunity to the Gozo Ministry to benefit from a pilot project that led to this association for the benefit of Gozitan artisans and their products.