

CASE STUDY

Law firm to offer services to start-ups

Like many other Maltese firms, Ganado Advocates does a considerable amount of corporate social responsibility that you never hear about. However, this year's initiative needs publicity for the simple reason that it wants to recruit beneficiaries.

Project Anew will offer start-ups the services of this law firm, managing partner Louis Cassar Pullicino explained.

This is by no means the firm's first foray into corporate social responsibility. Three years ago, however, it put its campaigns on a more structured basis, setting up a committee chaired by one of the firm's partners to select suitable beneficiaries, allocating a percentage of income – not profits – for worthy causes. These were not tied itself down to particular sectors and the recipients varied over time, with last year's project having an emphasis on education, for example.

Project Anew is going to take a different approach, combining two different elements: enhancing the firm's *pro bono* work, linked with professional legal initiatives that would really help budding entrepreneurs.

"We want to help young and innovative potential entrepreneurs set up – 'young' not necessarily in the sense of age but in the sense that we want to help those who have never gone into business before, rather than established ones who want to try something new," Dr Cassar Pullicino said, adding that these would most likely be involved in sectors like IT, science and finance, mirroring the development of Malta at the moment.

"We are also not excluding the social entrepreneur, so if anyone has an idea which has a social objective – addressing a community problem – we can also help with that."

The services offered will vary from case to case, tapping into the enthusiastic expertise of Ganado Advocates' 81 professionals, of which 68 are lawyers.

However, the firm anticipates that the most likely assistance sought will be with preparations for getting finance, setting up the company and its structure, all the way to securing intellectual property rights – such as the registration of a design or of a patent.

"As a member state of the EU, there are various European instruments that can afford protection within the EU – so we can help with trademarks on a pan-European level," he said.

The firm has left the scheme flexible, not setting any cap on the amount of hours that any beneficiary can enjoy or any cap on the time period over which the services can be offered.

"We were considering a possible scenario where we would give the



assistance for a year – but decided not to get bogged down as projects do not always go as planned and we did not feel it would be fair to cut off an initiative just because the clock runs out!"

The assistance Ganado Advocates can offer is not limited to direct services: it can also share its considerable network with the beneficiaries.

"We summarise our offering as international commercial law, meaning that our day-to-day work brings us into regular contact with numerous people and institutions, whether foreigners doing business here or clients in Malta doing business in other jurisdictions.

"We are also the exclusive Maltese member firm in the Lex Mundi professional services

network, which has over 160 member firms – totalling more than 21,000 attorneys. This gives us access to a number of jurisdictions in various continents, including guaranteed initial advice when there is a problem – within 24 hours."

The firm's lawyers are excited about the project, seeing it as a great way to get involved in a hands-on way with dynamic start-ups, besides

rounding out their corporate social credentials.

"The point is to do CSR so this is not a soft attempt to advertise our services in any way. I want to reassure any applicants interested in the scheme that there are no strings attached. At the end of the scheme, there will be no binding obligation of them to use our service going forward. On the contrary, we will wish them all the best," he said.

Ganado Advocates is not stopping there: it is offering one start-up office space within its award-winning premises in Valletta for an initial period of six months.

"We are aware of other initiatives for start-ups – including office space – and will seek to complement them, as we feel that we are in a position to offer particular services which will be another piece of the jigsaw for them," Dr Cassar Pullicino said.

Those interested should send an e-mail to ProjectAnew@ganadoadvocates.com.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - PHASE 1

PARTIAL REVIEW TO THE CENTRAL MALTA LOCAL PLAN (2006) Magħtab Area

The Planning Authority has been requested by the Government to initiate the partial review of the Central Malta Local Plan for the Magħtab Area given that the development patterns in this area cannot be satisfactorily managed solely on the basis of the 2006 approved local plan.

The proposed objectives include:

- To define the boundary for a Magħtab Planning Strategy;
- To prepare a land use framework which designates distinctive character areas within Magħtab to address conflicting land uses;
- To prepare a policy framework for each character area which seeks to:
 - i. Contain urban sprawl;
 - ii. Protect the environment;
 - iii. Strengthen agricultural activities
 - iv. Enhance residential amenity, and
 - v. Contain and regulate existing industrial and or commercial activities
- Identify additional measures to protect and enhance the character of the Magħtab Planning Strategy Area.

The map area that will be effected by this review maybe viewed on the Authority's website www.pa.org.mt/public-consultation.

Individuals and organisations are being invited to send their submissions on these objectives.

Representations are to be made in writing to the: Director of Planning, Review of CMLP – Magħtab Area Planning Authority, St. Francis Ravelin, Floriana

or through e-mail address: magħtab.cmlp@pa.org.mt

Submissions are to be received by the Authority not later than 07th October 2016.

"There are no strings attached"