

# Broadcasting in Gozo

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## Introduction

Since the advent of pluralism in the Maltese islands following the enactment of the Broadcasting Act in 1991, a number of local radios have sprung up, both on a nationwide and community level. Gozo has not been an exception to this phenomenon. One of the nationwide radio stations – Radio Calypso – used to broadcast from Gozo. Currently ten radio stations of a community nature broadcast within Gozo and the Broadcasting Authority also has a pending application for a nationwide television station originating from Gozo. Furthermore, Gozo has contributed to raising programme standards in the archipelago's media landscape.

## Nationwide radio stations

There are 12 nationwide radio stations, divided as follows:

Public Service Stations:	Radju Malta Radju Parlament Campus FM
Political Stations:	Radio 101 Super 1 Radio
Religious Stations:	RTK Radju Marija
Commercial Stations:	Bay Radio Calypso 101.80 Smash Radio Capital Radio Xfm 100.2

Out of the twelve nationwide radio stations none of these operate from Gozo although Radio Calypso – not to be confused with the radio with the same name currently operating from Malta – used to broadcast from Gozo.

## The rise and fall of Radio Calypso

The liberalization of radio broadcasting attracted considerable interest from the commercial sector,

so much so that demand outnumbered the supply of nationwide radio broadcasting frequencies. When the Broadcasting Authority, in 1993, came to allocate the last two remaining radio frequencies which had not yet been assigned from the original ten, it had received three applications but had only two frequencies available. In the circumstances, it was decided to give precedence to and to assign one frequency to the Gozitan Radio Calypso on the grounds that it would be the only company operating a national radio from Gozo, whilst the second frequency ended up being shared between the other two applicants – the University of Malta and the Social Action Movement.

In July 1992, the Broadcasting Authority received an application from Radio Calypso Ltd. for a 24-hour mainly music service aimed at the 30+ population. The programme format was described as being middle-of-the-road / easy listening music and had to include news and speech programming covering the arts, culture, interviews, and competitions. What was original about this nationwide radio station application was that it would originate from Gozo and would present the Gozitan dimension on a national level. Furthermore, it was also stated that morning and lunchtime programmes were to include relaxing music interspersed with appropriate news items, quizzes, and competitions as well as religious programmes. Finally, Radio Calypso, it was proposed, had to devote 75 per cent of its transmission time to English programmes and the remaining 25 per cent to programmes in the Maltese language.

The station's application was approved by the Broadcasting Authority and a licence was issued to Radio Calypso Ltd. on 30 March 1993. Radio Calypso commenced regular transmissions from its stations in Gozo on 1 August 1993.

From a promise of performance exercise carried out by the Broadcasting Authority in 1994, it resulted that the station's programme content based on an average week's performance

produced the following breakdown:

Programme Genre	Weekly Average	Percentage
Music	152.00 hrs	90.00%
Discussions	6.00 hrs	3.57%
News	5.00 hrs	2.95%
Miscellaneous (incl. adverts)	5.00 hrs	2.95%
Sports	0.4 hrs	0.34%
General Information	0.05 hrs	0.13%

Following its first year of operation, although Radio Calypso kept to its promise to be a 24-hour mainly music station, the Broadcasting Authority reported that it had not adhered strictly to its programming content in so far as news, religious programming, and the Gozitan dimension were concerned.

When the Broadcasting Authority had announced the awarding of Radio Calypso's broadcasting licence, it was stated that it was the first radio service with an element of foreign expertise and shareholding and that it was also the first station to be based in Gozo.

Calypso Radio Ltd.'s original licence expired on 29 March 2001. It was, nonetheless, renewed for a further eight-year period till 29 March 2009. However, the then station owners decided to transfer the company's shares to another company which owned a community radio station broadcasting from Rabat, Malta. It was Radju Marija which took over Calypso Radio's broadcasting frequency and hence Calypso Radio ceased to broadcast. The relative transfer of shares was approved by the Broadcasting Authority on 1 July 2004. Since then, there have been no other nationwide radio services which originate in Gozo.

### Community radio stations in Gozo

There are ten community radio stations which broadcast from Gozo to locations situated on the same island. The table hereunder gives the list of these Gozitan radio stations, their respective frequency in the FM band, and the locality of their catchment area.

No.	Radio Name	Frequency	Location
1	Radju Katidral	90.9MHz	Victoria
2	Radju Vizitazzjoni	92.4MHz	Gharb
3	Radju Sokkors	95.1MHz	Kercem
4	Radju Margerita	96.1MHz	Sannat
5	Radju Bambina	98.3MHz	Xaghra
6	Radju Prekursur	99.3MHz	Xewkija
7	Lehen il-Belt Vittorja	104MHz	Victoria
8	Radju Sacro Cuor	105.2MHz	Fontana
9	Lehen il-Qala	106.3MHz	Qala
10	Radju Luminaria	106.9MHz	Nadur

All the above radio stations tend to be predominantly of a religious nature, contrary to the position in Malta where community radio stations can be philanthropic or musical in character or run by clubs, whether sports or band ones. Nevertheless, at the moment of writing, it appears that the phenomenon of opening non-religious community radio stations has not yet caught up in Gozo.

In Gozo, the first two-year community radio to be awarded a broadcasting licence was Radju Lehen il-Qala which started broadcasting on 25 July 1996.

### Broadcasting Authority Programme Awards

The Broadcasting Authority's Programme Awards were designed to stimulate healthy competition between broadcasters working in the various radio and television services; to demonstrate that talent is appreciated and rewarded; and to achieve excellence – both in content as well as technically – in television and radio programming which, in turn, would enhance the status of programme producers.

#### *Radju Lehen il-Qala*

One of the winners in the 2002 Broadcasting Authority Awards was Radju Lehen il-Qala through the programme 'L-Edukazzjoni ta' Uliedna', co-produced by Lelio Spiteri and Horace Mercieca. According to the Broadcasting Authority jury's report, this discussion programme on the subject of the National Minimum Curriculum was a simple programme technically, yet both the host and the invited guest were well-versed on the subject. Although the jury considered the topic to be a daunting one for the lay person to understand,

complex jargon was clearly explained, facilitating further dialogue. Phone-ins were sensitively handled and both the host and guest rendered the topic approachable.



Mr Lelio Spiteri, receiving award for the programme ‘L-Edukazzjoni ta’ Uliedna’, during the 2002 Broadcasting Authority Awards.

### Independent production houses in Gozo

A reputable independent production house in Gozo which has made a name by, amongst other things, winning various Broadcasting Authority and Institute of Journalists awards is Citadel Video Communications. This company produces ‘Għawdex Illum’ which has won the Broadcasting Authority’s Awards in 1996, 2000 and 2001 as well as ‘Żmeraldi’, itself a Broadcasting Authority Awards winner in 2003, both programmes broadcast on the public service broadcaster, Television Malta (TVM). Moreover, Citadel Video Communications under the leadership of Mr Alvin Scicluna has also won the Broadcast Film Journalism category of the 15th Malta Journalism Awards organized by the Institute of Maltese Journalists.

In its 2003 report, the Broadcasting Authority Jury commented on ‘Żmeraldi’ as follows:

*‘Another quality children’s programme that avoids worn-out clichés and patronisation. It is well presented and researched and has a very good impact. Camera technique and picture quality are of the highest quality particularly on location. Sound quality is consistently good as is the editing, lighting and graphic design of the programme.’*

As to ‘Għawdex Illum’, the Broadcasting Authority Jury Panel was of the opinion that:

*‘The series of ‘Għawdex Illum’ is way above others in most aspects, particularly in presentation, photography and the technical aspect. In fact some episodes are indeed exceptional. Although dealing with the niche subject of the little sister island, it is varied enough in the themes that it tackles during each programme to qualify as a magazine programme. Footage is relevant and of exceptional quality and, most importantly, the aim of a magazine programme is reached – it keeps the viewer interested by means of varied, light subjects moving smoothly from one to another.’*



Mr Alvin Scicluna receiving award for the programme ‘Zmeraldi’, during the 2003 Broadcasting Authority Awards.

### Telever

On 28 March 2001 the Broadcasting Authority received an application from Gozo from Ver Co. Ltd. to operate a nationwide television station by the name of Telever. The aim of this station is to provide formation and information, education, and entertainment. Insofar as formation is concerned, Telever will aim, when operational, to contribute to the formation of the whole person through art, spirituality, culture, current affairs, science, and faith. It intends also to provide information through local, regional, and international news services. With regard to its educational mission, it aims to be a religious station where space will be provided to voluntary and humanitarian organizations and with programmes focusing on cultural and social themes. As to the entertainment component of the proposed television station, it is proposed that this will be based on programmes aimed at the leisure market as well as attempting to introduce new sources and performers.

On 21 March 2002 the Authority approved a television broadcasting licence to Telever. It did so after it had examined the relative application

from the legal, financial, and programme content point of view. But the station was not authorized by the Authority to commence broadcasting as the company had to purchase the relative transmission equipment and to carry out the necessary test transmissions. Naturally, the broadcasting frequency assigned is an analogue frequency whilst recent developments in the broadcasting landscape require that new television licences be issued for digital broadcasting. Hence the position at the moment of writing is that Telever is studying the current television broadcasting scenario to determine how it will proceed in the near future.

### **Court case instituted by Radju Katidral**

Radju Katidral (previously known as Radju Belt Vittorja) had applied for a one-off community radio licence and for a two-year radio licence. Similar applications for both a one-off community radio station and a two-year radio station were filed by Lehen il-Belt Vittorja.

In 1999, the Broadcasting Authority had decided to issue a licence for one-off events to both stations but refused to grant a two-year community radio licence to Radju Katidral (owned by the Victoria cathedral) and to Lehen il-Belt Vittorja (owned by the Victoria basilica). Such a decision was then based on two reasons: (1) that the station names were similar; and (2) that they were both religious stations transmitting the same type of programmes within the same community.

The first problem was solved as Radju Belt Vittorja was re-designated Radju Katidral. As to the second reason for refusal, the Broadcasting Authority insisted that both stations should unite as they were both religious stations transmitting to the same community in Victoria, Gozo. The Authority requested its chief executive to meet both applicants. On 17 February, 2000 the Broadcasting Authority chief executive called both parties concerned to a meeting in order to inform them of the Authority's decision and to learn their views thereon.

Both radio stations agreed to explain to the Broadcasting Authority their respective positions in writing and also requested a meeting with the Authority to answer any queries it might have in their respect and to put their case to it. The matter was preceded by a court case instituted by Radju

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