

# Introduction

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It is a pleasure to submit to the reader this Biennial Report of the Centre for Labour Studies (CLS), the oldest centre at the University of Malta. This collection covers the two-year period from 2021 to 2022. It highlights the Centre's activities and encourages policymakers to reflect on the current labour market's challenges and opportunities.

As Malta's main learning, research and monitoring agency for industrial and employment relations with the European Union context, CLS diligently provides training and reports on significant events in the labour market. The sections below provide a brief overview of the Centre's activities during the past two years.

Learning Programmes. CLS has been offering learning programs since 1983, providing a workforce for Malta of CLS alumni working labour policy, human resource development and occupational health and safety. CLS serves the national requirements for education and training in the labour sector through the Diploma in Gender, Work and Society in collaboration with the Faculty for Social Wellbeing, Bachelor in Work and Human Resources in

collaboration with the Faculty for Economics, Management and Accountancy, Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety, and the Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development together with the Faculty of Education. The programmes aim to provide knowledge for officers, policymakers and employers and to promote social dialogue. The design of the curriculum seeks to develop working partnerships and promote synergies between academics, government, trade unions, employers and other actors from civil society involved in the field of labour relations. The programmes aim to sensitise people actively involved or interested in labour issues to current trends, relevant concepts and analytical tools pertinent to this area.

**National and International Research.** CLS provides information, advice and expertise on living and working conditions, industrial relations and managing change in Malta to support policy-making activities of national institutions, government, employers and trade unions.

A notable collaboration in place for many years is CLS's contribution to policy reports specific to Malta issued by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). CLS provides Eurofound with Malta-centric research, data and analysis on a wide range of social and work-related topics. The country-specific reports on Malta prepared by the CLS are published on the web or are used by Eurofound to produce comparative reports of the EU member states. Amongst the reports the CLS contributes to, the Working Life in Malta Report provides online information on the key characteristics of working conditions and opportunities across a range of economic and social parameters. Other reports to which the CLS contributes to include Eurofound's EU PolicyWatch, reports related to company restructuring, comparative analysis reports, representativeness reports, topical updates, and other ad-hoc research work.

**Outreach.** CLS's commitment to dialogue and engagement with its social partners and external stakeholders helps to ensure that its work remains relevant and impactful in the field of industrial and employment relations. Researchers and students enrolled in CLS programmes are provided with

interaction with industry and the public sector through interaction with management and policy leaders. On-site visits to industry and public policy partners are organised as part of the curriculum of the degree programmes.

CLS academics and students met with national policymakers during the seminar ‘Occupational Health and Safety in Malta: The Way Forward’ held in December 2022. Students from the bachelor’s programme discussed the regulation and management of specific sectors such as construction, the growth and regulation of the profession of health and safety in Malta, and emerging issues such as mental health at work.

CLS organised the Labour Studies Research Conference in February 2022 for internal and external stakeholders to present research findings achieved by academics and students. Research projects discussed during the conference included an analysis of how poverty in Malta has changed over the years and the factors that have influenced it. Leading researchers presented findings on the evolution of women in the Maltese labour market in the last sixty years, the working conditions experienced by migrant workers with the largest expatriate cohort of Filipino workers, and the effects of remote working conditions during the pandemic in the technology and telecommunications sectors. Researchers presented their thesis projects in the area of human resources and occupational health and safety.

In June 2021, CLS held a roundtable discussion between internal stakeholders and national leaders in the field, focusing on ‘Measuring and Understanding Inequality Dynamics in Malta’. The event highlighted the results of a national study in the area covering factors pertaining to education levels, labour market status, and the occupation of household members. The study found a modest inequality increase in recent years, which was mitigated in part through government intervention. The study reviewed the positive outcomes and unintentional consequences of policy intervention, and the need to continue reducing barriers to economic inclusion.

**Accreditation.** CLS seeks to improve competency standards within the profession. All programmes offered by CLS are accredited and recognised

in member countries of the European Higher Education Area through the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The system allows credits taken at one higher education institution to be recognised in other member countries and to be counted towards a qualification studied for at another institution. ECTS credits represent learning based on defined learning outcomes and their associated workload.

The Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety has received further recognition from an international industry-specific institution. The degree programme has been reviewed and re-accredited by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), the Chartered body and largest membership organisation in the world for health and safety professionals. By means of achieving re-accreditation, the CLS has ensured that the degree continues to meet the standards needed by contemporary health and safety practitioners whilst also providing the course with international visibility. Students who complete this course are eligible to become IOSH graduate members. This provides alumni with international networking opportunities whilst providing them with access to continuous professional development opportunities.

The report highlights the output of the dedicated members of academic and administrative professionals within CLS, which has a substantial, tangible impact on the provision of knowledge in the local and international labour sector, as well as the ongoing provision of trained specialists for the labour market in Malta.