
Trade unions in Malta

Godfrey Baldacchino

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Mapping unions in the 'New Member States'

This report on Maltese trade unions forms part of a wide-ranging project, initiated and coordinated by the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), which aims to map changes in unionisation and the varying organisational structures of unions in the 'New Member States' (NMS) of the European Union (EU).¹ Although there is a burgeoning literature on the present and future prospects of unionism which includes some of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (for example, Gall 2009; Phelan 2009, 2007), trade union morphology in these countries is rarely studied. Moreover, the smaller countries are often omitted, as are the Mediterranean islands – and since 2004, EU member states – of Cyprus and Malta. While rigorously scrutinised data on union development are available for almost all countries that joined the EU before 2004, basic information on trade unions in the NMS is largely lacking. This is not to say that no data are available on union membership and structure for the NMS.²

At the time of the enlargement of the EU to the east, pioneering research was conducted on the representativeness of the 'social partners' in the NMS (UCL-INT 2004). Since then, similar reports focusing on particular economic sectors have been published regularly by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, although not from a historical perspective.³ Additionally, the European Social Survey has provided data on union membership for most NMS.⁴ Finally, although largely based on the research mentioned above, the 'Database on Institutional Characteristics of Trade Unions, Wage Setting, State Intervention and Social Pacts' (ICTWSS) of the Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies includes limited quantitative data on trade unions in the NMS (Visser 2009).⁵ Apart from the

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1. For more information on the project, please contact Kurt Vandaele (kvandaele@etui.org) or Jeremy Waddington (jeremy.waddington@manchester.ac.uk).
 2. Reliable comparative data on union membership and density are also available on non-European countries, in particular for those countries which are members of the OECD (Visser *et al.* 2009; Visser 2006).
 3. See <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu>
 4. See <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>
 5. Golden (2009) and her colleagues also developed a database on industrial relations. The database contains annual data on unions, employers, collective bargaining and labour market institutions. The geographical coverage of the database comprises 20 member of the OECD but the OECD member countries of the CEE economies are not included. Coverage starts in 1950 and ends in 2000.

ICTWSS database, however, union membership data for the NMS countries remain restricted to certain years and are difficult to compare; disaggregated information is extremely rare (compare Kohl 2008; Carley 2009, 2004, 2003; Visser 2003). Given the often political nature of membership claims, published membership data on unions in CEE countries are often inaccurate, particularly during the initial period of the transformation from centrally planned economies to post-communist market economies.

The ICTWSS database covers 34 countries between 1960 and 2007 and provides numerous quantitative indicators on industrial relations. The ICTWSS database incorporates material from several databases, including that on the 'Development of Trade Unions in Western European Societies' (DUES). The DUES database is the result of a long-term endeavour – the project started in 1985 and a historical data handbook was published fifteen years later – and provides information on the trade union movements in fifteen Western European economies since 1945 (Ebbinghaus and Visser 2000b). As a statistical compendium, *Trade Unions in Western Europe since 1945* offers an important basis for studying trade union trends over time and across geographical space within Western Europe. In focussing on the provision of a cross-national data set, the handbook is biased towards quantitative analysis (Hyman 2001: 206). Nevertheless, even though statistical methods are only 'primitive tools as far as explanation is concerned' (Sayer 1992: 198), the database helps generate a comparative understanding of trade union development. Such an understanding can be enhanced if the quantitative patterns and relationships are complemented with causal analyses that place them within the evolving context and structures of capitalist society.

Understandably, unions in the NMS – particularly those based in the CEE economies – were not included in the data handbook in 2000, 'given the short time span and still developing state of unionism' (Ebbinghaus and Visser 2000a: 10). However, the reasons for undertaking union morphology research on those economies are now more compelling. First, after almost ten years, the temporal scope can be extended to a sufficient medium-term historical perspective. For obvious reasons, the year 1990 will, for most CEE countries, be the first year of data collection, although free and independent unions started a decade earlier in Poland, with the strike movement at the shipyards of Gdańsk and the formation of Solidarność in 1980.⁶ Additionally, with EU accession, the transformation process towards unfettered capitalism, with distinctive industrial relations systems based on weak macro-corporatist structures, has been accomplished (Hassel 2009; King 2007; Kohl and Platzer 2004). Union structures above industry or sectoral level have also become relatively stable. Nevertheless, for a range of different reasons, particularly unions in the CEE countries have had to wage a defensive struggle in the wake

6. For several countries, the data coverage starts some years later because only then did they become independent states. This is the case for the Baltic States, the Czech and Slovak Republics and Slovenia.

of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union (Ost 2009; Dimitrova and Petkov 2005; Kubicek 2004; Crowley 2004; Crowley and Ost 2001). Moreover, de-unionisation in CEE has been more marked than in any other region of the world and explains, to a certain extent, why the pattern of unionisation across the EU member states has turned into a ‘mildly convergent trend’ (EC 2009:21) today.

Even though increasing union membership is only one of the resources for re-empowering the labour movement, facilitating and encouraging academic research on trade union recruitment techniques, organisational changes and outcomes with regard to the composition of membership is undoubtedly worthwhile for assessing the ‘political geography of union organising’ (Herod 1998: 17). As a first step towards a better understanding of ‘the link between union structure, practices and effectiveness’ (Fiorito and Jarley 2008: 203-204), this ETUI project seeks to provide systematic cross-sectional and time series data on union membership and structures in the NMS. Additionally, for each country a historical profile of the formation and development of the trade union movement will be written by country experts. Together with a discussion of methodology and working methods, which are in essence similar to those of the DUES project, the historical profiles will be bundled and published in a first book volume. In the meantime, reports will be published by the ETUI on single countries. The country reports should be considered as interim reports since the Annex presents information only on the organisational histories of trade unions that are still active today. Additional time series data on unionisation and information on union formation and organisational changes (including on dissolved unions) will be provided in the upcoming book. The series of country reports starts with one on Malta, written by Godfrey Baldacchino, a country that is for various reasons rather an ‘outlier’ in this mapping exercise.

First, union data are available for a much longer time span than in the CEE countries. Since the Registrar of Trade Unions was established in 1930, reliable union data have been available and, as Baldacchino reports, ‘union membership statistics have been published annually and without fail since 1946’. This meticulous collection of union data is not the only ‘inheritance’ from the British Empire. Malta’s industrial relations system is characterised by a decentralised structure, with the shop steward being the quasi-monopoly arrangement for workers’ representation at the enterprise level. Furthermore – but not surprisingly, given the dominance of the enterprise level – the authority of the union confederations over their affiliates is weak. Moreover, the two main trade unions have their own seats on the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development, alongside the Confederation of Malta Trade Unions (CMTU). A relationship between the General Workers’ Union (GWU) and the Malta Labour Party has always been present, but this has fluctuated in both intensity and form over time. This linkage is more prominent than the one between the Labour Party and the union movement in Britain, but, in contrast to the United Kingdom, political differences, especially the dominance of Roman Catholicism in Maltese society, have led to a fragmented union landscape, with the *Union Haddiema Magħqudin* (UHM, Union of

United Workers), affiliated to the CMTU, as a 'natural' competitor to the GWU. Union fragmentation has increased, both internally and externally, in recent years. The two main trade unions have seen the rise of different sections in their internal structures, while their dominance has been weakened, especially since the establishment of the Forum Unions Maltin (FORUM), which comprises mainly small occupational unions and professional associations, except for the Malta Union of Teachers that has recently become an affiliate and which is Malta's third largest union. Nevertheless, while many occupational unions come and go, the GWU and UHM, as general unions, are still fairly comprehensive in their coverage of the workers of Malta. Today, more than one in two workers is a trade union member in Malta, one of the highest unionisation rates in the EU.⁷

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7. It should be noted that this rate excludes pensioners.

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1. Introduction

Malta, an archipelago – the two main islands are Malta and the smaller Gozo – was a strategic British colony until independence in 1964 and, for that reason, domestic labour relations tend to reflect the circumstances prevailing in the ‘mother country’. As a result, the colonial authorities were lukewarm to – or, at best, mildly supportive of – workers’ associations early on, and remained so until independence. Malta boasts a fairly high level of trade union density; indeed, one of its trade unions has one of the highest relative national membership densities in the world. Moreover, being a relatively small state (a total of 401,000 inhabitants on just 316 km² of land), there are no regional affiliations or distinctions, although the smaller sister island of Gozo (30,000 inhabitants on 64 km²) has sporadically acted as a geographical (sub-national) basis for affiliation. Again, largely as a function of the country’s small size and associated membership base, most unions have not felt the need to affiliate to a confederate structure. The Roman Catholic religion is also a significant social force in Malta – the country is today the only European state not to have legalised either abortion or divorce – and this has been a fundamental inspiration for the setting up and running of various trade union organisations.

2. Basis of trade unionism in Malta: collective bargaining at the enterprise

Contemporary industrial relations in Malta reflect the legacy and traditions of 164 years of British colonial rule (Rizzo 2009). The basic point of reference for Maltese trade unions at the workplace remains the shop steward. The shop steward – a British invention – is the key union representative at the enterprise level and the fulcrum around which union activities (including membership canvassing and recruitment) are organised. Other than the basic conditions of employment and the national minimum wage – which are established by law – wages and all other working conditions are essentially determined through bipartite, enterprise-based collective bargaining. The legislation merely establishes the ‘floor’, or minimum conditions, of employment for those employees in enterprises where there is no recognised trade union representing a majority of employees and, hence, not covered by a collective agreement. Recognition of a trade union for bargaining purposes at a particular enterprise is normally based on the membership exceeding 50 per cent of the workforce. There is, however, an increasing trend for ‘distinct occupational categories’ within a workforce to set up their own trade union, and to obtain separate recognition. There are also cases – especially involving German-owned manufacturing firms – in which a trade union is recognised by an employer and a collective agreement is negotiated, even though the union does not have the majority of employees in that firm as its members.

Sector-wide or nation-wide bargaining, supported by an appropriate institutional framework, is glaringly absent. Contrary to practice in much of the European Union (EU), there is no significant demand in Malta for sectoral bargaining. Both employers’ associations and trade unions vigorously defend enterprise-based collective bargaining: it is seen as introducing a level of flexibility to wage policy by allowing enterprises which can afford it to pay higher wages and to offer better conditions. Enterprise-specific agreements can be customized. They also tend to create a competitive environment whereby wage increases can be negotiated in competition between companies operating in the same sector. This, as the leading employers’ associations warn, could lead to an upward inflationary spiral driven by wage increases, however; if such increases are not linked, or matched, to productivity, the mechanism would negatively affect the country’s overall competitiveness. But Malta’s small size and high social visibility, and the various opportunities to meet at national-level corporate, state, religious and community events and fora, permits its employers and trade union leaders, and their national associations – a very small cadre of key players at any time – to be keenly aware of the standard rates and conditions applicable, even in very specific economic sub-sectors (Zammit and Brincat 2006, *passim*).

Since 1948, Maltese governments have sought continuously to incorporate trade unions in the formulation of national labour, economic and social policy, rather than trying to marginalize them (Baldacchino 1993; Rizzo 2003b: 63). The machinery for regulating growing trade union involvement in the (also growing) private sector of the Maltese economy passed into law via the Conditions of Employment and Regulation Act (CERA) of 1952 and, later, the Industrial Relations Act (IRA) of 1976. Tripartite social dialogue at national level was institutionalised in 1990 through the setting up of the Malta Council for Economic Development (MCED). In 2001, this institution was given legal status by the enactment of the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD) Act (Chapter 431 of the Laws of Malta). The institutionalisation of this social partnership mechanism may have contributed to relatively more harmonious industrial relations in the ensuing period (Zammit 2003: 116). This tripartite social dialogue was also conducive to the enactment of the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (EIRA), which came into force in December 2002. This Act, promulgated following prolonged discussions among the social partners, overhauled and consolidated local industrial and employment relations legislation. Indeed, a review of developments in Maltese industrial and employment relations during the first five years of Malta's EU membership (2004–2009) must be considered within the context of the provisions of the EIRA and its subsequent amendments.

A landmark item of legislation, EIRA amalgamated the two previous labour law provisions, namely CERA and IRA. The key innovations introduced in this Act were meant to overhaul any defunct features of labour law, recognise new forms of work organisation and conform to the provisions of the EU's *acquis communautaire* (Baldacchino 2003: 213). Most of the rights enshrined in the Social Charter, on the basis of which EU social policy has been designed, had already been provided for in Maltese legislation prior to the coming into force of EIRA. From 2004 to 2008, 37 Legal Notices related to EIRA, consisting of Regulations transposing the EU labour directives, were drafted and approved by Parliament (Ministry for Social Policy 2009). Notable with regard to the transposition of these EU Directives is the fact that they failed to generate any national debate. The only Directive that did generate such a debate – indeed, well before EU accession (Baldacchino 2000) – was the Working Time Directive. Malta is one of the few EU member states that has opted not to apply Article 6 of the Working Time Directive concerning aspects of working time which specify a maximum average working week (including overtime) of 48 hours. The Maltese social partners, employers *and* all leading local trade unions, as well as the government, have vehemently expressed their disagreement with the initiative taken by the European Parliament in May 2005 to repeal the opt-out clause. Within the EU, the 'opt-out' is most widely used by Malta and the United Kingdom, realigning once again Maltese industrial relations practices with those of the former colonial administrator (EIROnline 2005a).

The directive concerning employee rights to information and consultation was the last labour relations directive to be transposed into national law after Malta acceded to the EU in May 2004. Legal Notice 10 of 2006 transposed this

directive for companies employing over 150 employees; the threshold has since been lowered to, first, 100 and (in March 2007) 50 workers. Employers are thus obliged to make practical arrangements and call regular meetings with workers' representatives to inform them about the strategic objectives of the company, its economic activity and employment prospects. The right to genuine and timely information and consultation is intended to guarantee protection to employees, especially in cases of collective redundancies. Maltese trade unions are, however, very suspicious of measures embedded in this legal provision that may lead to the establishment of other 'worker representatives' in which trade unions are not present; these may be officially recognised by employers as proxy representatives of workers, with a view to undermining the activity and legitimacy of trade unions proper. Moreover, trade union officials maintain that enforcement agencies should focus their attention on undertakings with a non-unionised workforce, since in those undertakings where trade unions are represented, the unions themselves can deal adequately with the issues addressed in the Directive. The implementation of the Directive's regulations would be much more effective amongst the non-unionised work force. However, there seems to be no evidence of a monitoring exercise on the implementation of these regulations amongst the latter. In any case, over 99.8 per cent of businesses in Malta, with 49 employees or less, remain unaffected by this Directive.⁸

In one notable case, recent events have seen the elimination, rather than the consolidation, of a decidedly non-Anglo Saxon, European practice, whereby workers would be elected as directors to sit on (still one-tier) company boards. In 1987–90, there were 20 directors elected by, and from among, workforces in 11 different (mainly state-owned or -controlled) enterprises, but including one private firm (Rizzo 1997). Malta Drydocks, then Malta's largest enterprise, had its whole Board of Directors composed of elected worker representatives between 1974 and 1997 (thus practising full worker self-management) (Rizzo 2003a). This epoch of worker participation was driven by three successive Labour governments (1971–87) and (initially) supported by the Nationalist governments (1987–96); the initiative was inspired by pragmatism in the face of unhealthy industrial relations and poor worker morale. The largest local trade union cooperated with the scheme, but not enthusiastically, since it feared that its own role would be curtailed. In retrospect, worker participation fell victim to the strong undercurrent of traditional, oppositional union-management tactics (Rizzo 1996). The last seat for an elected 'worker-director', on the board of the Bank of Valletta, was abolished in December 2008.

8. According to 1997 data, only some 260 out of 23,560 firms in Malta's private sector employ 50 or more workers (Cassar 2003: 20, extrapolated from Table D). More recent data are not available.

EU accession has given Maltese worker representatives the right to participate at transnational level. EU Directive 94/45/EC on the establishment of a European Works Council (EWC) was transposed into Maltese law through the enactment of the appropriate regulations in 2003. However, nearly all companies with their headquarters in Malta which have operations abroad do not employ sufficient workers outside Malta to come within the scope of the Directive.⁹ Meanwhile, Maltese trade union representatives have been involved in the EWCs of some foreign-based multinationals with operations in Malta, even before the transposition of the Directive (EIROnline 2004b).¹⁰ Some limited evidence of the Europeanisation of local industrial relations at enterprise level relates to the setting up of works councils. Air Malta plc, the national airline, is the company with the largest number of recognised trade union bodies in Malta (EIROnline 2005b). Air Malta does not fall under the scope of the EU directive on European Works Councils due to its relatively small size and the limited geographical distribution of its workers. However, in 2004, it decided to set up a Works Council, the only one of its kind in Malta, in order to increase and improve communication between the management and the workers. As its introduction was not mandatory, the Works Council can be viewed as a demonstration of a positive attitude towards employee participation at a time which has seen the reduction of workers' representation on the boards of several Maltese organisations following the implementation of privatisation schemes and restructuring exercises. The Air Malta collective agreement, signed in 2004 in the context of a restructuring exercise, lay down provisions for the setting up of a Works Council – 'Malta's first "social pact" at company level' – to ensure that Air Malta's targets are reached and to enhance the dialogue between unions and management. The first meeting of this Works Council was held in January 2005 (EIROnline 2004a). The operation of this Works Council was later on used as a pretext by the Minister to abolish the post of the elected 'worker director' at Air Malta, on the grounds that the setting up of this Council made the post of 'worker director' superfluous.

9. The known exception is the Corinthia Group, which operates in the hospitality industry and both owns and manages hotels in various European and North African countries, as well as in Malta.

10. These companies include Thomas De la Rue, Brandstätter (Playmobil) and Trelleborg (European Commission 2007).

3. Genesis and evolution of trade unionism: three epochs

The earliest known trade union body in Malta was, like many others set up after it, the local branch of a trade union based and registered in the United Kingdom. This was the Amalgamated Engineering Union, and its earliest known records go back to 1855. It folded in 1972, making it the oldest national trade union in continuous existence in Malta. Yet the earliest known trade union organisations are predated by an association of employers. The Malta Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise was set up as a voluntarily constituted body and officially recognised in Malta in 1848. This detail is an important reminder of how organisations have been resorted to by the representatives of capital to defend and advance their sectoral interests, even before those of workers. This is a fairly exceptional occurrence, however: in most other industrialised countries, employer organisations were established after the national organisation of trade unions.

The character of trade union bodies in Malta initially resembled that of provident and benevolent societies, keen to advance the individual well-being of their members – for example, by providing loans or covering funeral expenses – and not necessarily to engage in any type of collective representation or of negotiation with employers.¹¹ Three of these benefit societies were locality based: in the capital city Valletta, and the suburban towns of Senglea and Zabbar. Nevertheless, other than with regard to the sister island of Gozo, no other trade union body in Malta has had an explicit geographical or regional constituency. Some of the earliest unions were combinations of workingmen (union membership in Malta was restricted to male members until 1937) who were essentially self-employed and therefore did not enter into waged or salaried relationships. The acceptance of trade unions consisting of organisations of such self-employed workers – such as bus drivers or farmers – persisted until 1977, when the composite category of ‘combinations of employers and employees’ (started officially in 1946) was discontinued, following the promulgation of the Industrial Relations Act (Act 30 of 1976). The fact that such organisations were set up may indicate that their purpose was to lobby, apply pressure to and defend their interests from the encroachment of the state, using the protection that the law afforded.

¹¹. This practice lasted until 1937, after which such benefit, benevolent or friendly societies were no longer recognised as trade unions.

Finally, even in the early days of Maltese trade unionism, the Royal Malta Dockyard was already the spawning ground for a number of left-leaning trade union bodies, most of these being branches of British unions and inspired by the zeal of Englishmen. One of these – the Fitters’ Union – was heralded as an independent, class-conscious, labour union and open to several categories of workmen, as early as 1884 (Attard 1984: 4). This was ‘a landmark in Malta’s social history’ (Agius 1991: 20). However, ‘as soon as [the union] was set up, some priests attacked it and did their utmost to destroy it because they accused it of spreading Protestantism in Malta ... the Bishop also decided to condemn it’ (Bonnici 1990: 25). Soon, the Fitters’ Union had to transform itself into a ‘mutual help society’, was obliged to add the word *Cattolica* (Catholic) to its original name and accepted the presence of a Spiritual Director appointed by the Archdiocese (Agius 1991: 23). Such was the hegemonic control of the Catholic Church over Maltese social thought and action at the time. It is worth noting that, even as late as the 1960s, the leaders of the Malta Labour Party (MLP) were excommunicated by the Catholic Church, which feared that they were harbouring and peddling communist sentiments. They were refused the holy sacraments and buried in unconsecrated ground. Voting for the (centre-left-leaning) MLP (now *Partit Laburista* or Labour Party [LP]) in the 1962 and 1966 general elections was deemed to constitute ‘mortal sin’. The rift was only patched up in 1969, two years before the MLP was voted into power.

Table 1 Cleavages in Maltese unionism and union recognition at national level

Union organisations	Type	Orientation	Political party	Recognition at national level
CMTU (1959)	Confederation	All encompassing	No formal affiliation	Yes: MCESD (since 1988)
FORUM (2004)	Confederation	All encompassing	No formal affiliation	No
GWU (1943)	National Union	Left-leaning but all encompassing	LP (labour front – 1946; statutory fusion 1978–92)	Yes: MCESD (since 1988)
UHM (1978)	National union	All encompassing	No formal affiliation	Yes: MCESD (since 1991)

Analysis of the evolution of the trade union movement in Malta suggests that its history can best be divided into three distinct periods. The first, which lasted from the early rumblings of worker association in the mid-nineteenth century to the early 1940s, consisted in the establishment of small, craft- or trade-based affiliations, organising either relatively unskilled workers or specific grades in the public service, and acting as branches or affiliates of unions based in Britain. They were (apart from the Fitters’ Union) largely inspired by the social teachings of the Catholic Church (and especially the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of 1891) and its associated principles of benevolence and solidarity. These organisations were not key agents in social, economic or political change. However, a Trade Union Council was set up in 1921 to provide for the election of two senators representing workers in the National Assembly. From 1925, trade unions affiliated to foreign unions were barred from participating in this election.

The second period, which lasted 35 years (from 1943 to 1978), was dominated by the spectacular establishment of the General Workers' Union (GWU) in October 1943 as the first all-grades multi-sector union in Malta and its explosive debut on the social, economic and political scene. The GWU towered head and shoulders above all other union bodies in Malta for over three decades. Former GWU official Harold Walls (1989: 13) once described the GWU as 'the biggest trade union in the world' in terms of the proportion of the Maltese population its membership represented. Since the Union was set up, its considerable public support, negotiating strength and political leverage have been impossible to ignore. In 1946, the GWU agreed to set up a 'joint front' with the MLP for the forthcoming national election, which the MLP won (possibly thanks to the GWU's endorsement). The British colonial administration set up a Labour Coordination Committee in the late 1940s, replaced by a Malta Government Joint Council (1950–68) to engage the unions (and especially the GWU) in public sector labour relations. An attempt to include it in a pan-national Confederation of Malta Trade Unions (CMTU), set up in 1959, failed, however, foundering on issues of representation, and leading instead to the formation of 'a stalemate between two blocks' (Attard 1984: 41). A statutory 'fusion' of the trade union with the MLP was formalised between 1978 and 1992. Such an alliance is common in many developing countries. In Malta, however, it disturbed many who may have preferred a more autonomous trade union body. The Cabinet of Ministers under successive Labour governments (1971–87) invited two senior GWU officials to their meetings.

Because of this near monopolistic domination, the GWU's clearly perceived sympathies with the MLP and the encouragement – first by the Catholic Church and later by the (centre-right-leaning) Nationalist Party (NP) – of workers to leave the GWU and join the 'free trade unions', the third and final phase (1978–present) is characterised by a duopoly: the GWU on the one hand and the CMTU on the other. The GWU and the CMTU were explicitly identified in the Industrial Relations Act (IRA) of 1976, which provided for special negotiating machinery for public officials.¹² The *Union Haddiema Magħqudin* (UHM, Union of United Workers, set up in 1978) is by far the largest affiliate within the CMTU and has since become the practical and default alternative to the GWU and the only other all-grades, multi-sector union in Malta.¹³ The third epoch has also seen the highest trade union membership levels ever recorded in Maltese history, though with a significant influx of pensioners as trade union members. The dynamics of the latter two periods can be glimpsed from the shifts in the founding of new trade unions and the dissolution of old ones, as presented in Table 2.

¹². In Section 25, which, however, never came into force.

¹³. The UHM owes its origins to the setting up of the Malta Government Clerical Union (MGCU) in 1966. The MGCU changed into the Malta Government Employees Union (MGEU) in 1974 to recruit all forms of public sector employees. The MGEU then became the UHM in 1978, opening its doors to all potential members.

Table 2 Union foundings and dissolutions by period, 1950–2008

Period	1950–59	1960–69	1970–79	1980–89	1990–99	2000–2008
Average number of unions	31.5	40.8	34.3	17.2	31.5	29.4
Foundings in period	39	37	36	21	24	15
Dissolutions in period	22	40	55	16	17	12

Note: Year with largest number of unions on Register = 1962 (48 unions); years with lowest number of unions on Register = 1983, 1984 and 1985 (13 unions in each). No comprehensive information on circumstances of union foundings and dissolutions is available.

Source: Registrar of Trade Unions, author's calculations

The GWU (again with the CMTU) has enjoyed uninterrupted representation in the MCED (now the MCESD) since 1988. The UHM obtained its own representation in the MCESD in 1991. Meanwhile, the fifth largest union in Malta, the Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses (MUMN), which is not an affiliate of the CMTU, took the initiative in 2004 to set up a loose association of independent trade unions called Forum Unions Maltin (FORUM). A central policy objective of FORUM is to obtain representation within the MCESD, as is already enjoyed by the GWU, CMTU and UHM. To date, this goal has not been achieved.

4. National structure of trade unions

No rational union structure was ever devised and imposed ‘top down’ in Malta, whether by law or in practice. While historically – and especially until the onset of the Second World War – the main basis of trade union affiliation was a craft or trade (pilots, seamen, cigarette workers, stevedores, teachers and so on), reminiscent of the medieval guilds, this changed dramatically with the setting up of the General Workers’ Union (GWU) after 1943, an ‘all-grades multi-sector’ union. House or company unions then started to appear, from the late 1970s,¹⁴ along with the Union Haddiema Magħqudin (UHM): the second and only other ‘all-grades multi-sector’ union. Eventually, enterprise-based, mainly professional unions, targeting narrow ‘occupational categories’ within a particular firm, started to be established from the late 1980s. Most Maltese unions are nationwide organisations and unaffiliated to a confederational body. However, the Confederation of Malta Trade Unions (CMTU) was set up in 1959 with the intention of acting as the legitimate and sole counterpart of the Malta Employers’ Association (itself set up a year earlier). The GWU did not agree to join the CMTU because of disagreements about representation.

The size and organisational complexity of the GWU calls for special mention. The GWU exploded onto the local industrial relations scene in the context of the Second World War, when the British colonial Government was not expected to tolerate any relenting of the war effort (Micallef Stafrace 1998: 5). Citing blatant racial discrimination with regard to the conditions of employment of Maltese and English workers, and the need to set up adequate negotiation and arbitration machinery, a far-sighted team, led by Reginald (Reggie) Miller,¹⁵ organised well attended public meetings in 1943, following which the GWU was born. In May 1946, the GWU had no fewer than 29,600 members, organised into five sections (Table 3), representing over 89 per cent of the total registered national trade union membership of 33,309 (Department of Labour, Emigration and Social Welfare 1947: xxxii). Coming into existence when Malta’s economy was still totally dependent on servicing the British military base, the GWU had its main membership base amongst military service personnel (Army, Navy and Air Force). However, at the end of the Second World War,

14. Since most firms in Malta have only one factory or establishment, there is no difference between establishment and company unions. The only exception is Bluebell (Wrangler) Malta Ltd., which has since closed down: a unionised company which had one factory in Malta and another in Gozo.

15. Reggie Miller had previously been active in both the Civil Service Clerical Association and the Dockyard and Imperial Workers’ Union (Micallef Stafrace 1998: 4).

and with mass emigration to Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States in the face of mass unemployment (1947–52), the union’s membership, at first, fell spectacularly, starting to recover only after 1955, in the build-up to the eventual Suez crisis.

The GWU is currently made up of eight sections¹⁶ and two associations.¹⁷ The eight sections organise within their ranks the Union’s large and widespread membership at sectoral level, mainly according to the nature of the industry. It is the sections which conduct collective bargaining for the benefit of their members. Even though it is not a confederation, the membership base of the GWU continues to exceed that of the CMTU and, indeed, until June 2008, of all the other 27 trade unions put together. The GWU’s Executive Body is the five-member Central Administration. It is elected by the National Congress for a term of four years. It is made up of the President, Vice-President, Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General (Administration and Sections) and Deputy Secretary General (International and Education). The Executive Committee, Group General Meetings, Delegates and Shop Stewards for each section are elected at a biennial general conference. Section Secretaries, however, are elected for a term of four years at alternate general conferences. The GWU is not just a trade union, but an employer in its own right. Its business subsidiaries include Union Press (founded in 1944 and now with 150 employees), a travel service bureau and an insurance agency. The union is affiliated to various European and international trade secretariats. The GWU, now a member of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), is a founding member of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), as well as an affiliate of the Commonwealth Trade Union Council (CTUC) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). The GWU is also the national labour representative for Malta at the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Table 3 Number of sections within GWU and UHM, 1946–2007

	GWU	UHM
1946	5	–
1950	5	–
1960	5	–
1970	8	–
1980	7	2
1990	10	2
2000	9	6
2007	8	6

Note: Pensioners’ sections and youth section are excluded
Source: Registrar of Trade Unions, author’s calculations

16. These are: Chemicals and Energy; Hospitals and Foods; Manufacturing and other Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises; Maritime and Aviation; Metal and Construction; Government and Public Entities; Professionals, Finance and Services; and Technology, Electronics and Communications.

17. These are the GWU Youths and the Pensioners’ Association.

The evolution of the UHM was somewhat different. The union has expanded its membership base since its relatively humble beginnings, as the Malta Government Clerical Union – a union for clerical grade employees in the public service – in 1966 with just 12 members, to become a multi-grade union for all state employees – the Malta Government Employees’ Union – in 1974, before opening up to become the second ‘catch all’, multi-grade, all-sector union in Malta – the UHM – in 1978. It implemented a basic two-section, private–public division of its membership for the first time in 1980, and this structure was maintained until a major reorganisation in 1999 (Table 3). In a pointed reference to the GWU’s history, the UHM’s Constitution declares that the Union ‘shall not affiliate to any political party’. The UHM currently has eight sections¹⁸ and three standing committees.¹⁹ Since 2002, there has been some slippage in the public–private distinction of UHM members within sections. The Health Services Section includes both state and private sector employees, as does the Port and Aviation Section. This is an outcome of (1) the vast expansion of private health services in Malta (including two private hospitals and a private clinic) and (2) the privatisation of such public entities as Malta Freeport and Malta International Airport.²⁰

The CMTU was set up in the late 1950s, somewhat optimistically, to serve as Malta’s equivalent to the British Trades Union Congress and as the natural counterpart to the Malta Employers’ Association, set up at the same time. The CMTU had seven trade union affiliates,²¹ with a total declared membership of 37,496 in 2008, 42.6 per cent of the current total national trade union membership. Especially under the Labour Governments of 1978–87, the CMTU (and, within its fold, the UHM in particular) was increasingly seen as the countervailing institution to the power of the GWU: the latter, statutorily aligned to the Malta Labour Party (MLP), then in government, was seen in certain quarters as having a rather subservient relationship to the MLP at the expense of individual workers’ rights and freedoms.²² Trade union affiliation was also, at that time, being actively encouraged by the two dominant political parties, the MLP and the NP, at a time of intense partisanship that practically split the country into two camps (Baldacchino 1988). The years 1983–85 were a watershed in Maltese trade union history, with just 13 trade unions on the Register (the lowest ever), and with less than 1.5 per cent of trade union

18. These are: Government Employees; Health Services; Manufacturing, Information Technology and Private Sector; Pensioners; Port and Trade; Public Entities; Tourism, Food and Beverages; and Transport and Services.

19. These are for: Gender Equality; Youth; and Health and Safety.

20. My thanks to Gaetano Tanti, UHM President, for this information (e-mail correspondence, 7 January 2009).

21. These are: Union Haddiema Maghqudin (UHM), Malta Union of Bank Employees (MUBE), Malta Chamber of Pharmacists (MCP), the Medical Association of Malta (MAM), the Lotto Receivers Union (LRU), Malta Union of Professional Psychologists (MUPP) and Union of Maltacom Graduates (UGM). See Table 9 below.

22. In those years, it was also common for the same official to hold prominent positions in the GWU, the MLP and the Labour government. One particular minister in Mintoff’s Cabinet (Danny Cremona) was also concurrently the President of the GWU. This practice has now been explicitly prohibited by amendments to the GWU’s statute.

members in Malta not being either within the CMTU or the GWU. The CMTU is affiliated internationally to the CTUC and the ETUC. It was also affiliated to the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), before the latter merged with the ICFTU to form the ITUC in 2006.

Table 4 Map of unions by domain, 2007

Union organisations	Private sector		Public sector
	Industry	Services	
CMTU	UHM	LRU; MAM; MCP; MUBE; MUPP; UGM; UHM	UHM
FORUM		ALPA; AAE; MUMN; MUT; UCC	MUT; UHBC; UMASA; UPAIA; UPISP
GWU	GWU	GWU	GWU
Independent unions	MDU	M&EU; MPA; PSSU; RU	MUTG

UHM's relations within the CMTU have been somewhat strained, given its disproportionate size within the confederation. UHM has demanded, and obtained, its own distinct representation wherever the CMTU had previously enjoyed representation. On the MCESD, for example, the GWU, CMTU *and* the UHM are represented. This is possibly a result of the UHM wanting to be directly represented, while conceding that, as the largest affiliate in the CMTU, its officials are not usually elected to the helm of the CMTU. The Presidency of the CMTU has rotated amongst the leadership of its main constituent unions over time.²³ The current President of the CMTU is the President of the Malta Union of Bank Employees (the fourth largest trade union in Malta and, since 2009, the second largest union within the CMTU) and the current Vice-President is the President of the Medical Association of Malta. Finally, Forum Unions Maltin (FORUM) consisted of eight unions,²⁴ with a total of around 3,000 members, until the end of 2008. The Malta Union of Teachers (MUT), a long-time member of the CMTU, withdrew from the CMTU in December 2008 and joined FORUM in January 2009. With the 'switch' of the MUT from the CMTU to FORUM, the latter has now swelled to a substantial 11,000 members and its clout has certainly increased. The MUT broke away from the CMTU over disagreements about the union's stand with regard to the government's intention to increase water and electricity rates for industrial and commercial consumers.

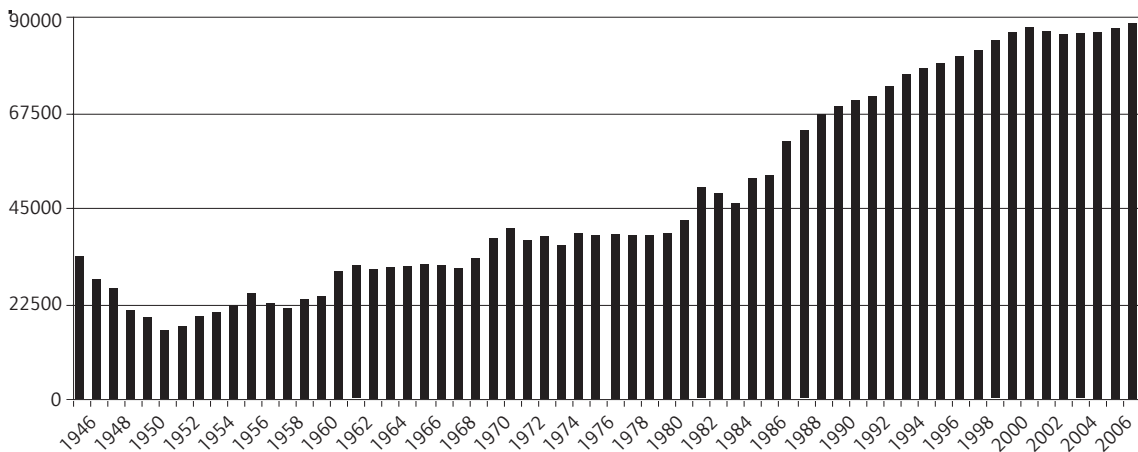
²³. There are no explicit rules governing which trade unions the members of the Governing Body of the CMTU are to be elected from.

²⁴. Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses, University of Malta Academic Staff Association, Airline Pilots Association, Association of Airline Engineers, Union of Cabin Crew, Union Periti u Inġiniera tas-Servizz Pubbliku, Union Professonisti Awtorita' ta' l-Ippjanar u Ambjent, and Union Haddiema Bank Centrali. See Table 9 below.

5. Development of trade union membership and density

With a labour force of 164,000 – of whom 152,000 are wage and salary earners – (both 2007 figures), trade union density in Malta is, roughly, around 54–55 per cent. The percentage would drop to 48 per cent, however, if the pensioner members of the GWU (6,749) and UHM (2,381) were excluded. But the computation of an alternative net trade union density, whereby wage earners who may be barred from trade union affiliation are removed from the total number of wage earners, suggests that: (1) ‘net trade union density’²⁵ has been higher than ‘gross trade union density’²⁶ but only until 1988.²⁷ Gross trade union density peaked at 70.6 per cent in 2003; while net union density peaked in the same year, at 64.5 per cent; and (2) the major shift in net trade union density occurred in the decade 1978–1988, when workers were strongly mobilised to join a trade union by the two main political parties. The net density jumped dramatically from a mean of 45.4 per cent between 1963 and 1978, to a staggering 59.8 per cent between 1983 and 2008 (Baldacchino and Debono 2009).

Figure 1 Union membership, 1947–2007



Source: Registrar of Trade Unions

25. Taken as the percentage of total union members who are wage or salary earners, as a proportion of the unionisable salaried and waged workforce.

26. Taken as the percentage of total union members as a proportion of the total labour force.

27. This is probably because, by that year and thereafter, the number of workers who were barred from joining trade unions reached a very low level in relation to the rest of the labour force.

There has never been any legislation – either in favour of or against – the practice of the ‘closed shop’ in Malta. However, in practice, there can be considerable pressure on individual employees to join one or more trade union organisations in specific places of work.²⁸ With the ‘all-grades multi-sector’ basis of both the GWU and the UHM, any worker in Malta can join either of these two unions, or even both.²⁹ Trade union membership data reveal how the two ‘catch all’ trade unions in Malta have grown and have continued to reinvent themselves in the context of decolonisation and the restructuring involved in moving away from a colonial fortress economy, providing military services, to a diversified economy, based on a wide range of services in an independent sovereign state constitutionally committed to neutrality and non-alignment. The lowest number of trade union members recorded since the start of compulsory registration in 1946 was registered in 1951. In that year, just 16,468 members were reported, half the amount on the register barely five years previously. Trade union membership then rose again with the onset of tensions and military build-up in the Middle East, culminating in the Suez Crisis of 1956. During the mid-to-late 1950s, over 12,000 persons – some 14.2 per cent of the total working population of Malta at that time – were employed at Malta Drydocks alone.

The stage was set for Malta gradually to wean itself off the fortress-dependent economy and invest in private industry, with construction, tourism and manufacturing leading the way, in the run up to independence in 1964. The British Military Base was wound down completely in 1979, as was the relevant GWU Section. That cradle of local trade unionism, the Malta Drydocks workforce – at times referred to also as ‘the aristocracy of labour’ – remained pivotal to the GWU, albeit usually harbouring its most radical elements. It was, for many years, the only workplace in Malta to have its very own GWU section. The rise and fall of the garments and textiles sub-sector, representing the earliest and now elapsed phase of Malta’s export-led industrialisation drive, which revolutionised female employment in the private sector, is mirrored in the GWU’s Textile, Garment and Leather Section, whose peak membership was in 1975. The Pensioners’ Section has been growing uninterrupted since it was set up in 1987. Why pensioners would join trade unions at all is a moot point. The mandate of the Pensioners’ Association of the GWU is ‘to promote the prosperity and welfare of its members by protecting their rights and interests, safeguarding their pension levels and accordingly their standard of living. It also assists its members in solving problems of a collective or individual type.’ The union also ‘organises various cultural, social and educational activities’. Most of the pensioner members of Maltese trade unions would already have been paying members of the same union while they were still members of the labour force.

28. From personal experience, most of the teachers in a particular school may be organised within the GWU; those in another school, within the MUT. New recruits to such schools would be ‘advised’ to join one union or another, thus serving to cement the domination of a particular union. The situation would be repeated in other workplaces which would have various satellite offices – such as banks, and the sprawling public sector.

29. See Section 6 for a discussion of multiple (typically dual) union membership.

Table 5 Number of unions and membership share by major unions, 1971–2006

Year	Number of trade unions	Total trade union membership	GWU (%)	CMTU (%)	Other unions (%)
1971	29	36 841	69.2	20.4	10.4
1976	34	39 132	71.1	22.5	6.4
1981	22	42 415	68.4	26.5	5.1
1986	16	53 008	58.7	40.0	1.3
1991	25	70 704	57.0	40.8	1.2
1996	39	79 217	57.5	40.0	2.5
2001	38	87 332	55.8	40.6	3.6
2006	33	87 414	52.8	42.3	4.9

Source: Registrar of Trade Unions, author's calculations

Since its establishment, the UHM has continued to report increases in its membership – but only if pensioners are included – every year without fail, even if nothing comparable to its spurts between 1981 and 1989. Like the GWU, the UHM has also set up its own pensioners' section, but later on, in 1999. Interestingly, the growth of the UHM does not appear to have been secured at the expense of the GWU. While the UHM increased its membership more than threefold in that seven-year – 1981-89 – span (from 6,160 to 21,603), the GWU's membership increased nevertheless by almost as many members: from 29,432 in 1981 to 38,064. There are probably two explanations for this: (i) a rapidly expanding economy was creating significant new employment, especially in the private sector and the 'parastatal' one (meaning state-owned enterprises or those in which the Maltese state has a controlling stake) and (ii) the intense political rivalry was encouraging the hitherto non-unionised (especially white-collar employees) to take sides, while smaller (and, again, mainly white-collar) unions decided to dissolve and to switch their membership to the UHM. In the mid-1980s to early 1990s, just over 1 per cent of the unionised workforce was within neither the GWU nor the CMTU block (see Table 5). Both unions now appear to have reached saturation point.³⁰ Unless the private sector creates significant jobs in 'unionisable' areas of employment, including encouraging higher levels of female participation in the labour force, it will be difficult to maintain current membership levels, let alone any increases, except among pensioners. The reference to unionisable employment is relevant, given the sharply contrasting differences between different segments of the Maltese labour force with respect to the penetration of trade unions, as described below.

The size of a trade union's membership determines whether it is able to claim the right to negotiate on behalf of its members. Other than nationwide consultations on the MCESD, and multi-union negotiations on conditions of

³⁰. The GWU reported its highest ever membership in 2001.

employment pertaining to public service employees, the basis of negotiating conditions of employment in the private sector is a collective agreement (typically, of three years' duration in the private sector and of five years' duration in the public sector), which covers all employees in a particular company, trade or occupational category. In the only exercise of its nature undertaken so far in Malta, there were found to be some 212 collective agreements in force in the private sector in March 1995.³¹ Of these, 158 had been entered into by the GWU, 42 by the UHM and some 12 others by the remaining, smaller unions;³² 120 of these agreements (60 per cent) concerned enterprises in the manufacturing sector, while the remaining 80 (40 per cent) covered employees in the service sector.³³ Practically *all* workers in the public sector (including those employed in independent statutory bodies) are covered by a collective agreement, along with some 45 per cent of those working in private manufacturing and 23 per cent working in private services (Baldacchino 1996). Within manufacturing, some sectors (such as footwear and clothing, rubber and leather and transport equipment) were heavily unionised and most employees (over 70 per cent) in these sub-sectors had their conditions of employment covered by collective agreements in 1995. Construction and furniture – sectors that would typically be dominated by micro to small-scale, family-owned enterprises, engaging family labour or others on a contract or a precarious temporary basis – were practically non-unionised; less than 10 per cent of their workers benefitted from a collective agreement. In the private (non-state) service sector, only one economic sub-sector had heavy unionisation in the mid-1990s, namely the banking and finance sector (dominated by one bank, recently privatised), with over 95 per cent of its employees having their conditions of employment covered by collective agreements. Most other service based sub-sectors (including retail and wholesale trade, insurance, real estate and personal services) report a maximum of 5 per cent of their employees as covered by collective agreements (Baldacchino 1996).

This analysis allows us to paint an overall national picture of the conditions of employment. The Maltese labour force appears to be divided into three, fairly equally sized segments of around 50,000 workers: (1) a public sector, highly unionised and with 100% coverage of its employees by collective agreements; (2) private sector employees of large (and mainly foreign-owned) firms, the majority of whom are unionised, concentrated in specific manufacturing and banking firms, and covered by collective agreements; and (3) the remaining

31. By law, the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations is entitled to receive a copy of every collective agreement in force. This was, however, not the case when this particular research exercise was undertaken.

32. Zammit and Brincat (2006: 185) estimate that, in 2002, the GWU was responsible for signing 157 collective agreements in the private sector, the UHM 107, the MUT 13 and the other unions 20, for a national grand total of 297.

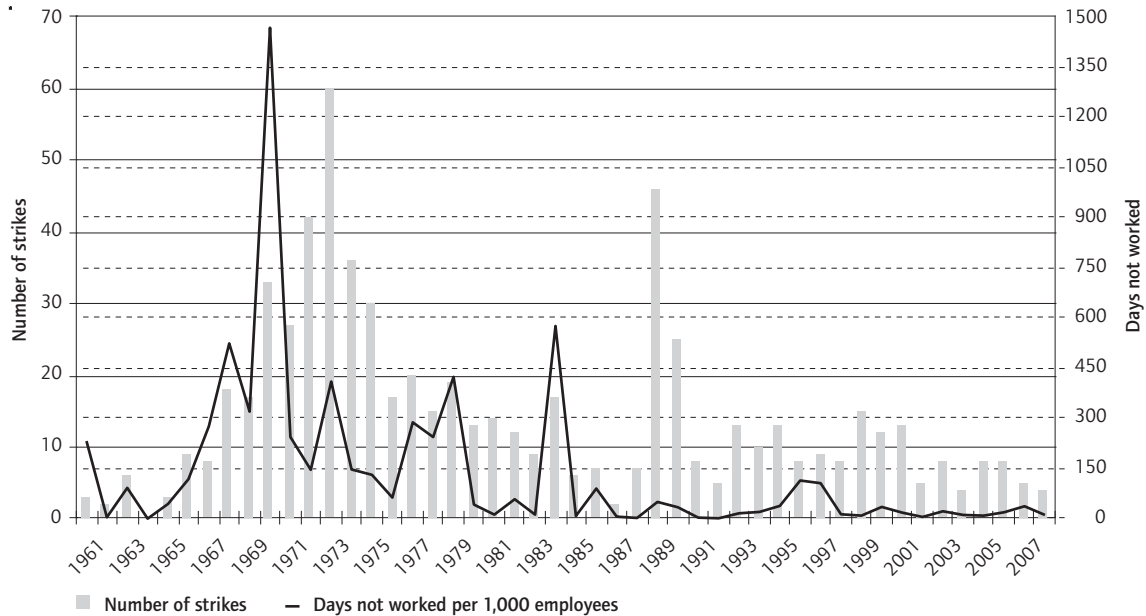
33. There were 6,740 employers registered at the same period in the country. This means that just 3 per cent of all employers in Malta were covered by a collective agreement.

private sector employees, the majority of whom are non-unionised, concentrated in specific, small-scale, locally owned, manufacturing and service-oriented businesses and not covered by collective agreements. The latter tend to have their conditions of employment determined by face-to-face bargaining or management/employer imposition, and with national legislation acting as an official floor. Judging by more recent labour supply and trade union membership figures, the situation has probably not changed much (Baldacchino et al. 2003: 13). As for the future prospects of trade unions in Malta, a decline in membership may be in store. There is, on the one hand, a reduction of employment in areas which have traditionally enjoyed high union density— including job losses in manufacturing as well as a result of voluntary retirement schemes in some large public enterprises. On the other hand, most future expansion in employment opportunities is expected in the private personal services and information technology sectors: workers in such sectors are typically considerably difficult for trade unions to organise.

An awareness of the distribution of trade union membership strength helps one understand both the incidence and the nature of industrial action in Malta. The smaller establishment or company unions may be more liable to register trade disputes, each dealing with singular episodes and situations. The larger unions know that they can cause significant disruption: this latent power is a key strength behind their ability to negotiate and to secure deals with both private employers and the state. However, such actions are invariably dramatised and politicised in a country with such a disproportionately large media presence.³⁴ Also, given Malta's dependence on exports and foreign capital, trade unions are very wary of registering industrial action in the private sector. The GWU had its fingers badly burnt when it resorted to industrial action – a sit-in by kitchen staff – in Malta's oldest luxury hotel, the Phoenicia, then part of the Forte Group, only to see the hotel closed by management and remain so for over a year, only to reopen with a completely new labour force, with the GWU losing recognition to the UHM in the process (Grixti 1994; Borg Bonello 2001). In turn, the UHM refused to concede to terms demanded by Deutsche Welle, a German overseas radio station, only to see the station close down its operations in Malta, with the loss of 35 jobs. Even Malta's so-called socialist governments have always been careful to offer a politico-economic climate conducive to foreign investment (for example, Vella 1994). Strikes in the private sector remain rare and short; when they happen, they are more likely to target Maltese employers than foreign ones – the development of industrial action in Malta is presented in Figure 2.

34. There are currently eight TV stations (two of which are state owned, with one each belonging to the Labour Party (LP) and the Nationalist Party (NP)); 11 national radio stations (of which one is state owned, and one each belonging to the LP and NP); three daily and six weekly newspapers (including a daily and a weekly owned by the GWU, a daily belonging to the NP and a weekly belonging to the LP) – all this in a country of just over 400,000 residents. (Data partly from the Broadcasting Authority (Malta): <http://www.ba-malta.org/stations>.)

Figure 2 Number of strikes and days not worked per 1,000 employees, 1961–2008



Source: Attard (1984: 46, 104); Baldacchino *et al.* (2003, Appendix I); Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (annual reports)

In contrast, the state is a more regular target of industrial disputes, many of which develop into industrial action. Governments have been obliged to negotiate, especially with either the GWU or the UHM – but rarely with both – in order to break deadlocks, often resorting to mediators and other appropriate third parties. The Director of Industrial and Employment Relations, a state functionary, is empowered by law to try to resolve trade disputes, even at a very early stage. Historically, one can safely say that the GWU is more hostile and bellicose when there is a Nationalist Party government. The climax of industrial action in Malta can be said to have been reached in 1970–71: a series of paralysing strikes, especially in the Dockyard, was a prelude to a change of government at the June 1971 national elections. Some 170,000 working days were lost in this period, due to strikes. However, the longest strike action (matched by a government lock-out) – lasted 10 years – and involved medical doctors. It started in 1977 and a change of government in 1987 was needed to bring it to a close (Baldacchino *et al.* 2003, Appendix I: 303–4).

From 1993, trade unions were invited to submit a statistical breakdown of their membership by gender when submitting their annual return. This is entirely voluntary and some trade unions still refuse to comply, but the number is increasing. Table 6 presents a gender breakdown of the membership figures of the GWU, alongside the UHM, the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) and the Malta Union of Bank Employees (MUBE), historically, the four largest trade unions in Malta. The figures (where provided) illustrate a gradual improvement in the female proportion of union members in the ‘catch all’ GWU and UHM: from 13.2 per cent in 1994 to 17.5 per cent in 2007 (for the GWU), and 26.0 per cent in 1993 to 31.8 per cent (for the UHM). With its base

more firmly in the public sector and among corporations where the Maltese state has a controlling ownership, the UHM in 2007 for the first time overtook the GWU (suffering the brunt of redundancies in the private manufacturing sector) as the trade union with the largest number of female members in Malta. The growth of the proportion of female members in the MUT reflects a creeping feminisation of the teaching profession. The gender ratio has not changed so much in the MUBE, which reports a fairly consistent and equal gender ratio throughout the period under review. The only other union in Malta of significant size is the Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses (MUMN): it had 725 males and 1,769 members in June 2007. Its earliest gendered membership statistics, which date from 1998, show 460 male and 817 female members. While nursing and midwifery are traditionally feminised professions, the female membership proportion within the MUMN has increased (from 64 per cent to 71 per cent) over the last 11 years.

Table 6 Share of female membership by major unions, 1993–2007 (%)

	GWU	MUBE	MUT	UHM
1993	n.a.	52.2	n.a.	26.0
1994	13.2	49.7	n.a.	26.1
1995	13.6	49.8	n.a.	25.8
1996	16.2	49.9	n.a.	25.9
1997	17.0	49.9	n.a.	26.0
1998	17.4	49.6	n.a.	25.6
1999	18.5	49.6	63.8	25.5
2000	18.8	49.6	63.9	27.5
2001	18.5	49.6	64.9	28.0
2002	18.5	50.1	65.2	28.2
2003	18.5	50.1	66.2	27.8
2004	18.1	50.0	66.8	31.5
2005	18.2	50.0	68.0	29.3
2006	18.4	n.a.	68.7	31.0
2007	17.5	50.1	69.5	31.8

Source: Registrar of Trade Unions, author's calculations

These figures must be interpreted within the overall context of a very low female participation rate in the labour force. At the end of 2004, Eurostat figures indicated that Malta's female employment rate stood at 32.8 per cent (Caruana 2006: 17). The rate is so low for a variety of reasons, including the involvement of females of working age (1) in looking after aging, sick or frail family members and (2) in managing the home and taking care of the needs of their spouse and children. An element of undisclosed economic activity is also probably responsible for this low rate: a 2003 study suggests that the 'real' female participation rate was closer to 42 per cent, with a margin of error of 3.1 per cent (Baldacchino 2003). Government is taking various measures to improve this state of affairs, including a €1,630 tax credit to women re-entering the world of work after an absence of five years (see, for example,

Vella 2008) Interestingly, only one trade union was set up explicitly to organise female employees, the *Union Impjegati Nisa* (Women Employees' Union), active between 1956 and 1970, which reported a peak membership of 1,289 in 1965.

6. Data sources: the Registrar of Trade Unions

Records of trade union or trade union-like organisations go back as far as the mid-1800s. The registration of trade unions has been practiced since 1930 and trade union membership statistics have been published annually since 1946. Trade unions are obliged by law to keep an up-to-date record of the names and addresses of their members and to submit the list annually to the Registrar of Trade Unions. While the responsibility to do so rests squarely on the unions themselves, the Registrar has the power to inspect such records at any time. The intention is to validate such membership figures and ensure their veracity. In practice, the situation is somewhat more problematic. First, the Registrar is hardly in a position to confirm whether names and addresses represent actual paid up members (especially where thousands of individuals may be involved). Second, this becomes all the more difficult and impractical if trade unions maintain persons who have not paid their dues in full on their membership lists. For most trade unions, members must actively terminate their membership: in the absence of formal letters of resignation they will continue to be considered ‘dormant’ members’.³⁵ Third, since the incumbent is also the Director of Industrial and Employment Relations, the Registrar is engaged in the business of pre-empting and moderating between unions and employers. The task of ‘inspection’, therefore, is somewhat at odds with the trust and respect that must be built with *l-imsieħba soċjali* (‘the social partners’) – trade unions and employers’ associations – in order to facilitate the resolution of – actual or potential – industrial disputes. Nevertheless, the Registrar does report ‘inspections’ as having been carried out in the annual report, although no additional details are provided (Baldacchino 2007).

Only an independent audit may ascertain whether reported figures represent actual membership levels. This leads to deeper questions about the role and importance of trade union membership in contemporary society. In Malta, the ability to prove that a simple majority of employees are affiliated to a particular union as members lies at the basis of that union’s authority and right to negotiate with a particular employer for the purpose of collective bargaining. Maltese law defines a trade union as an association ‘consisting wholly or mainly of workers’. This means that any adult over 16 years of age can join a trade union – including pensioners, students and non-working, often female,

³⁵ Sadly, there is no information on the extent to which ‘dormant members’ dominate either particular trade unions or national trade union membership. Obviously, trade union officials are very sensitive about this issue.

homeworkers – as long as the majority of the members of that union are ‘workers’. This definition reflects the state’s understanding of trade union organisations as social partners whose legitimate interests extend beyond the strict confines of collective bargaining. However, it creates difficulties in determining trade union representation. For example, the two ‘all-grades multi-sector’ unions in Malta – the GWU and UHM – have pensioners’ sections within them: 9,130 of their members in 2007 are listed as being organised in these sections. That makes up 12.5 per cent – one in eight – of their membership base and just over 10 per cent of the total national trade union membership in that year. We have no idea how many other pensioners are members of the other 30 unions on the Register. Nor are there any data about the number of unemployed workers who are also trade union members in Malta.

Moreover, since 1945, Maltese law has stipulated that the minimum number of members necessary for a trade union to register is seven. Such a low membership floor makes it relatively easy to set up a trade union, and so workers threatening to walk out and establish a new union can intimidate established unions. The situation in Malta is rendered more complicated by the fact that the criteria for setting up a trade union are very lax and have subsequently become even more liberal, thanks to the interpretations of industrial tribunals. Seven of the 28 trade unions on the 2007 register report fewer than 100 members. With such a low membership (and revenue) base, only six trade unions – those with the largest membership bases – have paid regular staff. Some unions face difficulties even in rendering complete membership returns, as stipulated by law. Also partly as a consequence of small size, dissolutions, mergers or amalgamations of trade unions on the Register are virtually an annual event. There is no set procedure for union ‘mergers’. In most such cases, a special or annual general meeting is convened and a motion passed. Such a decision, and the procedure for going about it, are covered in most trade union statutes.

Evidence of dual (or multiple) union membership is scant. It surfaces occasionally when the Registrar of Trade Unions is brought in to adjudicate between two trade unions who both claim to have the majority of workers in a particular industry, business or occupational category as members. Although the practice is not pervasive, it is known to exist.³⁶ Those who practise it, consider it to be much like having two insurance policies: something to fall back on.³⁷ This is also possible thanks to the relatively low cost of union membership fees: the annual membership fee for both the GWU and the UHM

36. As far as is known, there has only been one instance in Maltese history where the names of the members of a particular occupational category were published in the local press. This was in 1987, when the MLP weekly Newspaper *Il-Helsien* (Freedom) published the names of all the senior and executive staff at Malta Drydocks, indicating next to each name who was a member of the GWU, who was a member of the Drydocks Senior and Executive Staff Union (DSESU) (an affiliate of the CMTU) and who was a member of both.

37. I myself have been a concurrent member of both the Malta Union of Teachers and the University of Malta Academic Staff Association.

is currently €30. The trade union model under which all the workers in an industry are organised within the same union can be found only in one trade union in Malta: the Malta Union of Bank Employees (MUBE), which organises all workers – from cleaners and messengers to general managers – in the banking sector. A group of at least seven disgruntled individuals, of whom at least four are workers, can adopt a statute and register themselves as a trade union within a few hours.

By 2007, a total of 170 trade unions had been struck off the Register since it was instituted in 1946. On the current Register of trade unions, the oldest trade union is the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT), set up in 1919 and holding Registration Number 1. By June 2008, there had been 293 registrations of employers' associations and trade unions. There are 30 registered trade unions, reporting 84,172 members, on the Register, according to the latest complete statistics, published in the annual report by the Registrar of Trade Unions (data as of 30 June 2008). Of the 30 unions then on the Register, only two – the MUT and the GWU – have been in existence uninterruptedly since the Register was established 62 years ago. The CMTU is not registered as a trade union and therefore does not appear on the Register; only its affiliate members do, as independent associations. The complete database of trade union associations and their membership figures in Malta is based on data published annually: first, in the annual reports by the Director of Labour, Employment and Social Welfare (in 1947, for the previous year); subsequently, as submitted by the Director responsible for Labour, in the Annual Abstract of Statistics (1947 to 1970); and after that in the annual reports submitted to the Minister responsible for Labour and published in the Malta Government Gazette by the Registrar of Trade Unions on the basis of the relevant legislation (since 1971). The database of trade union registrations and reported membership levels in Malta (June 2007) is provided in the Annex.

No other sources of official trade union membership data are available in Malta. There are no survey data, either, other than occasional questions about people's – or members' – perceptions of trade unions (for example, Zammit and Rizzo 2003). Even the above complete database was not available until this research exercise acted as the main spur to its compilation. Micallef Stafrace (2000: xi) is correct in stating that 'no centralized documentation centre incorporating all trade unions exists in Malta'. The only other insights into trade union membership emerge when more than one trade union claims to have majority representation among the workers in a particular industry, business or occupational category, which may occur because, as already mentioned, workers may be members of more than one trade union.³⁸ In such cases, the Registrar of Trade Unions, apart from demanding to inspect any relevant records, can cause a ballot to be held, in which all the employees

38. Recognition has been the cause of a number of disputes amongst trade unions. A recommendation has been made to the Maltese government to legislate on this issue. Several attempts have also been made to set up a UK-style Trade Union Council (TUC) in Malta which, among other things, would deal with disputes related to trade union recognition.

affected are asked to indicate the trade union of their choice. In such cases, not just trade union members are balloted. Luckily, these situations are few and far between; such episodes have not always led to a satisfactory resolution of the representation impasse.

Secondary sources on the unfolding history of trade unions in Malta are few, but include a meticulous postgraduate history thesis, published as Micallef Stafrace (2000), and the semi-autobiographical work of Attard (1984), who spent 37 years working in the Malta Civil Service, the last 16 of which were spent in the field of industrial relations. Additional relevant literature, this time in Maltese, includes Ellul Galea's three-volume review of the history of Maltese unionism (1993, 1995, 1999) and the early history of the General Workers' Union by Fino (1984). A more critical assessment of labour relations in Malta is provided in the collection edited by Zammit (1993), on the occasion of the GWU's 50th anniversary. A comprehensive review of labour law provisions in Malta is provided by Zammit and Brincat (2006). My own principal contribution to the study of industrial relations in Malta is the book I co-authored with my long-time University of Malta colleagues Saviour Rizzo and Edward Zammit (Baldacchino et al. 2003). Written on the verge of Malta's EU accession, *Evolving Industrial Relations in Malta* is a compilation of useful critical essays in a rapidly developing field. My additional key research publications in this area deal with: (1) the history of labour formation, of the manner of its control, and labour's response to that control in Malta (Baldacchino 1988); (2) the significance of the General Workers' Union on the local labour relations scene (in Maltese, as Baldacchino 1993); the penetration of trade unions in the Maltese private sector (Baldacchino 1996); and (4) the role and impact of experts with regard to the EU's *acquis communautaire*, as it affects industrial relations (Baldacchino 2001).

7. Note on methodology

Gross measurements of trade union density in Malta are based on the total number of reported trade union members – gleaned from the annual returns of the Registrar of Trade Unions – as a proportion of the total labour force. This is based on the principle that trade unions are primarily organisations of workers. However, the same annual returns clearly identify many thousands of pensioners as trade union members. Second, although nominally capable of registering as trade union members, most (i) students, (ii) self-employed and (3) unemployed are not likely to do so. Third, there have been various categories of gainfully occupied persons who have been prevented from setting up or joining trade unions. By identifying the characteristics of the Maltese labour force over the decades since the end of the Second World War, a more realistic measure of trade union density in Malta can be developed. This net trade union density is also more comparable to similar data obtained from other countries. Net trade union density represents the total number of trade union members in paid employment (therefore, excluding full-time students, the unemployed and retired persons), divided by the total number of wage earners in the country. For even more accurate measurements, wage earners who may be barred from trade union affiliation should be removed from the total number of wage earners.

In working out net trade union densities since 1953, resort has been made to the complete database of trade union associations and their membership figures in Malta, submitted by the Director responsible for Labour in the Annual Abstract of Statistics (1953 to 1998) and, after that, in the annual reports submitted to the Minister responsible for Labour and published in the Malta Government Gazette by the Registrar of Trade Unions on the basis of the relevant legislation. From such annual tables, the number of pensioners who are members of the two largest trade unions – the GWU and the UHM – can be identified (since 1987, in the case of the GWU, and since 1999, in the case of the UHM). It is not known whether other unions have any pensioner members; if they do, their numbers are unlikely to be nationally significant. Moreover, there are some trade unions which clearly organise self-employed workers. For example, the Malta Union of Tourist Guides has around 630 members, of whom around half are self-employed guides; the UHM includes around 115 Valletta Hawkers (street sellers of goods), who are self-employed; while around 180 Lotto Receivers – who are economically dependent on Maltco Lotteries, but generally classified as self-employed – have their own trade union (Grech and Debono 2009). Other trade unions organise some self-employed members – these include the Medical Association of Malta, the Malta

Chamber of Pharmacists, the Malta Psychological Association and the Malta Union of Professional Psychologists – but there are no data pertaining specifically to self-employed members. As an educated guess, one might suppose that about one-third of the members of these unions are self-employed. This translates to about 350 persons in 2008.

The number of wage earners between 1953 and 1998 was extrapolated from the Annual Abstract of Statistics. This official state publication provides separate figures for the gainfully occupied population and the wage and salary earners in private industry. For the years 2003 and 2008, data were derived from Economic Surveys published by the Economic Policy Division of the Ministry of Finance. Finally, we need to identify all those workers who, while wage earners and therefore part of the labour force, could not affiliate themselves as trade union members because they were thus proscribed by law or by the conditions of military discipline that were integral to their engagement. In the period under review, these workers included: the Maltese workers at HM Forces when Malta was a British Colony, the members of the Armed Forces of Malta, the Malta Police Force, Civil Prisons officers, Department of Civil Protection officers and Detention Services officers. They also included the various workers engaged under military conditions in a series of temporary labour corps, intended mainly to soften the impact of high unemployment. In chronological order, these labour corps were: Dirġhajn il-Maltin and Pijunieri (or Malta Pioneer Corps, both set up in 1973); Bahħar u Sewwi and Iżra u Rabbi (both set up in 1976); Dejma (set up in 1981); and, finally, the Auxiliary Workers' Training Scheme (AWTS) (set up in 1987).

When Malta was still under British rule, a substantial number of Maltese worked in the British Service Departments. The Annual Abstract of Statistics divides such workers into three categories: Industrial, Non-Industrial and HM Forces. The last category includes those who worked in the British Navy, Army and Air Force. In 1958, there were 3,660 persons working in HM Forces. The figure decreased to 306 in 1978, the year before the closure of the British naval base in Malta. The Malta Police Force has been in existence since 1814. In 1842, the police force consisted of 209 officers (Malta Police Corps Online Website). The number of officers increased in line with the increase of the Maltese population. In 1953, there were 1,070 persons working in the police department and by 2008, it had 1,883 serving officers. The Armed Forces of Malta was set up in 1970, its ranks rising steadily until 1973, at which point some 1,000 were split off to set up the Dirġhajn il-Maltin labour corps. In 2008, the AFM comprised a complement of 1,491. There are currently about 94 prison officers in Malta, up from 54 in 1953, mainly reflecting the increase in the number of prisoners. The Department of Civil Protection was set up in 1997. Its number of workers appears to have remained steady throughout the years, with a complement of 113 officers in 2000 and 118 officers in 2008. The Detention Services, set up in 2005 to deal with undocumented migrants, comprised 166 officers in 2008. Both the Malta Pioneer Corps and the Dirġhajn il-Maltin were set up in 1972-73. These were, in turn, replaced by the Dejma Corps, which existed from June 1981 to December 1989. 'Over 15,000 men and women served in the Corps over a period of sixteen years' (AFM 2009). In 1977,

unemployment was officially just 3.2 per cent, 'but there were some 8,000 – 8 per cent of the employed population – in the military-style labour corps doing various jobs in agricultural, industrial and public works fields' (King 1979: 263). The AWTS was the last labour corps to be set up, in the late 1980s. 'Following its election in 1987, the Nationalist government established the Auxiliary Workers Training Scheme in order to absorb a number of unemployed workers to work in government services such as refuse disposal' (Malta Today 2005). In 1988, there were 1,282 persons working in AWTS. The figure increased to 4,322 in 1989, and then diminished to 3,732 in 1990 and 2,522 in 1991 (NSO 2001). Most of the remaining workers were absorbed into public sector employment by the early 1990s.

Table 7 Total and active membership and gross and net densities, 1953–2008

	Total union membership (A)*	Gross dependent workforce (B)	Gross density (A/B) as %	Self-employed members(C)	Pensioners (D)	Employed union members (E) = (A-[C+D])	Excluded workforce (F)**	Net dependent workforce (G) = (B-F)	Net density (E/G) as %
1953	19 304	59 580	32.4	220	415	18 669	4 724	54 856	34.0
1958	21 238	67 250	31.5	240	460	20 538	4 941	62 309	33.0
1963	30 067	63 690	47.2	340	650	29 077	4 239	59 451	48.9
1968	30 205	74 790	40.3	340	650	29 215	3 952	70 838	41.2
1973	38 198	83 127	46.0	430	820	36 948	6 607	76 520	48.3
1978	38 890	95 945	40.5	440	835	37 615	8 522	87 423	43.0
1983	48 609	93 627	51.9	550	1 395	46 664	3 609	90 018	51.8
1988	63 413	109 421	58.0	720	2 667	60 026	7 745	101 676	59.0
1993	73 523	115 979	63.4	830	4 445	68 248	3 397	112 582	60.6
1998	81 703	122 152	66.9	920	5 774	75 009	3 707	118 445	63.3
2003	86 061	122 712	70.1	970	8 207	76 884	3 569	119 143	64.5
2008	84 172	128 250	65.6	950	9 421	73 801	3 873	124 377	59.3

Note: * In the early years, apart from associations of employees or employers, there was a third category of association, consisting of both employers and employees. Such data, which varied from 500 to 2000, were not included. ** Figures based on data derived from the Central Office of Statistics, National Statistics Office, Economic Policy Division and the Armed Forces of Malta.

Source: Baldacchino and Debono (2009)

These details are significant because, for example, in the late 1970s, there were times when over 9,000 workers were prevented from becoming members of trade unions in Malta, at that time almost 10 per cent of the gainfully occupied population. Taking all these details into consideration, we end up with a table which captures, as accurately as possible on the basis of currently available data: (i) the number of workers who are members of trade unions and (ii) the number of workers who are permitted to be members of trade unions. Dividing the first statistic by the second and multiplying by 100 gives the net trade union density, expressed as a percentage. These statistics are collated as Table 7. The two main categories which we could not account for in our calculations are those of students and the unemployed. Maltese trade unions are not prevented from enrolling individuals from such categories as members, but there is no indication of how interested these two categories are in trade union

membership; moreover, they would tend to slip into employment at some point and would therefore be counted amongst wage and salary earners. If it were possible to account for such members, the net trade union density in Malta over the years would be slightly lower.

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Glossary

CERA	Conditions of Employment (Regulations) Act
CMTU	Confederation of Malta Trade Unions
CTUC	Commonwealth Trades Union Council
DSESU	Drydocks Senior and Executive Staff Union
EIRA	Employment and Industrial Relations Act
EIRO	European Industrial Relations Observatory
EU	European Union
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
EWC	European Works Council
FORUM	<i>Forum Unions Maltin</i> (Forum of Maltese Unions)
GWU	General Workers' Union
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IRA	Industrial Relations Act
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
MCED	Malta Council for Economic Development
MCESD	Malta Council for Economic and Social Development
MGCU	Malta Government Clerical Union
MGEU	Malta Government Employees Union
MLP	Malta Labour Party (now <i>Partit Laburista</i> [Labour Party])
MUBE	Malta Union of Bank Employees
MUMN	Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses
MUT	Malta Union of Teachers
NP	Nationalist Party
UHM	<i>Union Haddiema Magħqudin</i> (Union of United Workers)
WCL	World Confederation of Labour

Annex: Set-up (as at 2007)

List of confederations

- (1) CMTU *Confederation of Malta Trade Unions*
History: founded in 1959. Affiliates: 7 unions. Membership: 30,360 (2007).
- (2) FORUM *Forum Unions Maltin*
History: founded in 2004. Affiliates: 9 unions. Membership: 10,492 (2007).

List of major national unions

Taking the report by the Registrar of Trade Unions (data as of June 2007), there were 28 unions on the Register (of which six had not yet submitted their annual returns, as required by law); another three were in the process of being wound up.

(1) CMTU affiliates

- LRU *Lotto Receivers Union*
Type: craft union. Domain: non-professional workers, most of whom are self-employed. History: first registration in 1961. Affiliated to CMTU in 1961. Disaffiliated in 1966. Re-affiliated to CMTU in 1967. Membership: 181 (2007).
- MAM *Medical Association of Malta*
Type: professional association. Domain: health services. History: first registration in 1982. Affiliated to CMTU in 1978. Membership: 705; 31.5% females (2007).
- MCP *Malta Chamber of Pharmacists*
Type: professional association. Domain: health services. History: first registration in 1978. Affiliated to CMTU in 1978. Membership: 90; 68.9% females (2007). Website: www.synapse.net.mt/mcp
- MUBE *Malta Union of Bank Employees*
Type: industry union. Domain: all grades, banking sector. History: first registration in 1972. Affiliated to CMTU in 1972. Membership: 3,020; 50.1% females (2007). Website: www.mube.org
- MUPP *Malta Union of Professional Psychologists*
Type: professional association. Domain: health services. History: first registration in 1993. Affiliated to CMTU in 1993. Membership: 99; 55.6% females (2007).

UGM *Union Gradwati Maltacom Plc* (Union of Maltacom Graduates)
Type: company union. Domain: graduate employees at Maltacom (a privatized telecoms company, now called Go). History: first registration in 1990. Affiliated to CMTU in 1990. Membership: 34; 14.7 females (2007).

UHM *Union Haddiema Magħqudin* (Union of United Workers)
Type: all grades union. Domain: all sectors. Different sections: Port, Transport and Aviation (10.7%); Public Entities (17.5%); Government Employees (23.0%); Health Services (9.2%); Manufacturing, Services and Allied Workers (19.4%); Hotels, Restaurants, Food and Beverages (11.0%); Pensioners (9.1%). History: founded in 1966 as MGCU; became MGEU in 1974 and UHM in 1978. Affiliated to CMTU in 1970. Membership: 26,231; 31.8% females; 9.1% pensioners (2007). Website: www.uhm.org.mt

(2) FORUM affiliates

ALPA *Airline Pilots Association*
Type: professional association. Domain: aviation sector. History: first registration in 1981. Affiliated to FORUM in 2004. Membership: 130 (2007).

AAE *Association of Airline Engineers*
Type: professional associations. Domain: aviation sector. History: first registration in 2002. Affiliated to FORUM in 2004. Membership: 78 (2007). Website: www.aamalta.org

MUMN *Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses*
Type: professional association. Domain: health services. History: first registration in 1991. Affiliated to FORUM in 2004. Membership: 2,494 (2007). Website: www.mumn.org

MUT *Malta Union of Teachers*
Type: occupational union. Domain: white-collar workers in education. History: founded in 1919. First registration in 1946; affiliated to CMTU 1969 from to 2008. Affiliated to FORUM in 2009. Membership: 7,136; 30.5% females (2007). Website: www.mut.org.mt

UHBC *Union Haddiema Bank Centrali* (Union of Employees of the Central Bank)
Type: company union. Domain: all grades in Central Bank. History: first registration in 1993. Affiliated to FORUM in 2004; Membership: 181 (2007).

UCC *Union of Cabin Crew*
Type: blue-collar union. Domain: blue-collar workers in aviation sector. History: first registration in 1989. Affiliated to FORUM in 2004. Membership: 214 (2007). Website: www.uccmalta.com

- UPISP *Union Periti u Inginiera tas-Servizz Pubbliku* (Union of State Employed Architects and Civil Engineers)
Type: professional association. Domain: public sector. History: first registration in 1991. Affiliated to FORUM in 2004. Membership: 64 (2007).
- UPAIA *Union Professjonisti Awtorita' ta' l-Ippjanar u Ambjent* (Union of professional staff employed with the Malta Environment and Planning Authority)
Type: company union. Domain: graduate employees; at Go (privatized telecommunications company, former Maltacom). History: first registration in 1995. Affiliated to FORUM in 2004. Membership: 139 (2007).
- UMASA *University of Malta Academic Staff Association*
Type: professional association. Domain: academic staff at the University of Malta. History: set up after breaking from the MUT. First registration in 2004. Affiliated to FORUM in 2004. Membership: 264 (2007). Website: <http://soc.um.edu.mt/umasa>

(3) Non-affiliated unions

Unions with more than 100 members in peak year.

- GWU *General Workers' Union*
Type: all-grades union. Domain: all sectors. Sections: Energy, Chemical and Printing (14.9%); Pensioners (1987; 14.7%); Public Sector (14.2%); Metal and Construction (11.3%); Telecommunications and Energy (12.8%); Manufacturing and Small Firms (10.0%); Hospitality and Food (8.0%); Maritime and Aviation (7.8%); Services and Media (6.4%). History: founded in 1943. Membership: 45,933; 17.5% females; 14.7% pensioners (2007). Website: www.gwu.org.mt
- RU *Rampa Union.*
Type: blue-collar union. Domain: national airline (Air Malta plc). History: set up after breaking away from the GWU. First registration in 2005. Members: 118 (2007).
- M&EU *Musicians and Entertainers Union*
Type: craft union. Domain: non-professional workers, most of whom are self-employed. History: first registration in 1986. Members: 236 (2007).
- MDU *Malta Dockers Union*
Type: blue-collar union. Domain: dockers at the port. History: set up after breaking away from the GWU. First registration in 2007. Members: 370 (2007).

MPA *Malta Psychological Association*. Type: professional association. Domain: health services. History: first registration in 1999. Members: 143 (2007).

MUTG *Malta Union of Government Licensed Tourist Guides*. Type: occupational union. Domain: white-collar workers. History: first registration in 1981. Members: 216 (2007).

PSEU *Professional and Services Employees Union*. Type: professional association. Domain: private sector, various grades. History: set up after breaking away from the GWU. First registration in 2007. Members: 408 (2007).

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