

# 1. INTRODUCTION

It is my distinct pleasure to preface this, the latest Biennial Report of the Centre for Labour Studies (CLS) at the University of Malta, covering the years 2013 and 2014.



Unfailingly, the CLS continues to publish this detailed report, in both hard copy and electronic version, to account for its actions and initiatives in line with its basic objectives, which have not changed since the Centre's inception in 1981 – then as the Workers' Participation Development Centre:

- to strengthen the University's link with working persons, employers and the world of work at large; and
- to promote social dialogue, active involvement and the effective participation of workers, and their representatives, in specific workplaces and in labour policy more generally.

In pursuance of this, two-pronged aim of its mission, the Centre for Labour Studies seeks to:

- establish healthy working partnerships and promote synergies between academics, government, trade unions, employers and other actors from civil society involved in the field of labour relations
- organise educational programmes aimed at sensitising people (actively involved or interested in labour issues) to current trends, relevant concepts and analytical tools pertinent in this area
- act as national monitoring agency and clearing house for trends and developments occurring in employment and industrial relations
- carry out research, consultancy and disseminate information on issues related to industrial and employee relations in Malta and abroad.

The 24 months under review were dominated by a root-and-branch strategic review of the educational operations of the CLS. With the unanimous support of our CLS Board, we have carried out a critical overhaul of our programme offering: shifting and focusing on work-related topics in our Gender and

Development Diploma Programme; upgrading our Occupational Health and Safety Diploma course to degree level, and having already secured the prestigious accreditation of the UK-based Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (IOSH) in this task; and repositioning our existing Postgraduate Diploma in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development to Master's level: a first for our Centre. Within all this change, we have been careful to introduce bridging pathways, thus enabling our students, should they want and be able to, to navigate from Diploma up to Master's level by only following CLS programmes of study. Our flagship and anchor offering remains the five-year, evening, part-time programme that leads to a Bachelor's degree in Work and Human Resources, with a record-breaking intake of 73 students secured in October 2014.

With the additional volume of students in different stages of their programmes at the CLS, comes additional work. We have tabled a justification for supplementary support staff which was positively received by the University administration. We have thus welcomed Ms **Jessica Cilia Custò**, a graduate trainee of the CLS. She joins our long-serving executive officer, Ms **Josephine Agius**, providing what is most welcome additional support. The Centre's administrative staff also includes Ms **Stephanie Muscat**, an executive officer, who has also joined the two-year, part-time programme leading to a Diploma in Gender and Development which started in October 2014.

On the academic front, I am pleased to report the successful completion of PhD studies by Ms (now Dr.) **Anna Borg**. Dr Borg, now confirmed as lecturer at the CLS, completed her doctorate at Middlesex University, UK, having successfully defended a thesis entitled: A collaborative interactive action research study in a male dominated ICT company in Malta which looks at work-life issues through the masculine lens. A case of: if it ain't broke, don't fix it?

Mr **Luke Fiorini**, Assistant Lecturer at the Centre, has meanwhile embarked on his own doctoral journey. He is registered with the University of Nottingham, UK, and his doctoral thesis is titled: Predictors and consequences of presenteeism: A multi-method study of nurses in geriatric settings.

Dr **Manwel Debono** has been confirmed as Senior Lecturer at the CLS. He has also stepped down from the position of Director of the Centre in late 2014, having served in that position for the previous five years. Dr Anna Borg has been appointed Director of the CLS with effect from October 2014, becoming the first ever female director of the Centre.

For pioneer and stalwart Mr **Saviour Rizzo**, former Director of the CLS, 2014 was his last lecturing year at the CLS and the University of Malta. He remains involved with the CLS via his research contributions.

At Board Level, we thanked Ms **Angela Callus** and Mr **Michael Parnis** for a long and distinguished service as Board members – the former as representative of the University Council; the latter as the second representative of the General Workers' Union (GWU). We respectively welcomed in their place Mr **Reno Calleja** (a former Minister of Tourism as well as a former student of the CLS) as Council representative; and Mr **Josef Bugeja** (a current, final year student of the CLS) as the second representative of the GWU. Moreover, we also thank Ms **Loranne Avzar Zammit** who was the student representative on the CLS Board.

Apart from the four educational programmes run at University, the CLS continues to be engaged in various **research and documentation** initiatives. Notable amongst these is the Centre's regular work as Malta's national employment observatory for the European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions, based in Dublin, Ireland. The CLS was successful in securing yet another extension of its contract with the Foundation, committing the Centre to provide regular information updates to the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO), the European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO) and the European Restructuring Monitor (ERM) for some years to come. Our **outreach** efforts took on a decidedly more digital approach with our decision to have our own Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/uom.cls?fref=ts>. It has been up and running since June 2013 and is a welcome, less formal addition to our more conventional web-pages at: <http://www.um.edu.mt/cls>

Meanwhile, we have also kept up an annual, more public, activity on the CLS calendar. Social class in Malta was the theme of a stimulating debate held in 2013; while the economic and labour market challenges of environmental change to small island jurisdictions like Malta was the theme chosen for a symposium in 2014 (the latter in partnership with the Institute for Earth Systems). As part of its annual public activity planned for 2015, the CLS will organise a half-day seminar on the subject of Recruitment and Gender Balance in Executive Positions. The plan is to then hold a symposium on island tourism for our 2016 activity (in partnership with the Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture).

Enough said. Enjoy this celebration of the work of the CLS. Do let us know if you wish additional information. Meanwhile, on behalf of the Rector of the University of Malta, and all the members of the CLS Board, I commend the CLS and its staff for their efforts and wish them well. Thank You.

**Professor Godfrey Baldacchino**

Chairperson (Rector's Delegate), CLS Board

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