

1. LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

What started off as a small research unit looking at worker participation in Malta Drydocks is hardly recognisable today. Even its name has changed. But one thing that has survived is the governance structure of the Centre for Labour Studies: it has survived so well that it has spawned dozens of similar institutes and centres at the University of Malta.

It is a structure that has served us well for over 30 years now: obliging us to respect the interests of our non-academic partners, nudging us to focus our research on policy relevant areas, yet helping us to remain faithful to the pursuit of critical inquiry and academic integrity that justify our existence as a university centre. We continue to operate in this manner, after due deliberation, and after having been invited (without obligation) by the University Rector to join the recently set up Faculty for Social Well-being.

The Centre for Labour Studies now comprises five core members of the academic and administrative staff - the largest ever core complement in its history - and is supported by a cadre of other university employees, lecturers, researchers and other sub-contractees. Acting in collaboration with other university bodies, the Centre for Labour Studies is responsible for the running of four distinct university course streams, offering a suite of qualifications that range from undergraduate certificates and diplomas to a full evening degree programme, and a post-graduate diploma. It continues to serve as Malta's national clearing house for information and research on most areas connected to work, and including working conditions, work-life balance, occupational health and safety and industrial relations. And we continue to offer one of the few avenues for the pursuit of tertiary education to part-time and occasional students - and including female home workers - who cannot otherwise afford to read for a university qualification, on a full or part-time basis, in Malta.

We offer this 2011-2012 biennial report as a testimony to the interesting and diverse work of: our many adult students; of the scope of the Centre's media impact, research and publications; and of our evidence-informed contributions to public policy in general, and labour policy in particular.

Feedback on any aspect of its contents is welcome via e-mail to: cls@um.edu.mt

My sincere thanks to all CLS Board Members, past and present, for their unfailing support and wise counsel; as well as to commend CLS Director Dr Manwel Debono and his team for enriching the University of Malta with such a top-notch research, outreach and education institution, of which I am so proud to serve as Chair.

Professor Godfrey Baldacchino
Chair, CLS Board
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