

Other Educational Activities

The Centre in line with its policy of integrating the world of work continued with its policy of organising educational activities during the two years being review. All these activities were supported by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES).

Think-Tank Discussion Groups

In 2007 the Centre resumed its discussion groups. A core group of a think tank was selected and invited to engage in a critical debate about issues related to the socio-political scenario in Malta.

Two of these discussions held on 2nd March and 25th April 2007 centred on **“Overdevelopment and Tourism: Opportunities and Challenges to Marketing Sustainable Development”**. The developments in the tourist sector were discussed in the context of the environmental issues and the cultural heritage of Malta, the north-south divide and the contribution of tourism to the viability of the Maltese economy.

Another two discussions groups held on 30th May 2007 and 27th June 2007 focused on **Immigration**. The debate that ensued during these discussions developed into a research project which the Centre agreed to undertake in conjunction with the Department of International Relations at the University of Malta. These two discussion sessions were complemented by a half day seminar held later in the year (see below) in order to establish the parameters of the research project.

The last think tank group discussion was held on 21st November 2007. The topic for discussion was “**Developments in Education: Marketisation and Centralisation**”. A critical evaluation was made of the role of the state in the light of the neo-Liberal ideology whose advocates are pointing out the perceived problems of a centralized system of education provided and regulated by the state. The proceedings of this discussion session are reported in an article in ‘The Teacher’ (MUT Number 94 1/2008).

Half Day Tripartite Seminars

On 9th May 2007, the Centre organised a half day tripartite seminar with a view of **submitting proposals concerning labour relations** to the political parties contesting the general elections which was due in a year’s time. Following some of the proposals made during this seminar, the Centre submitted a memorandum to the political parties. Following is an executive summary of this memorandum.

- Government and public corporations should in their sub contracting and outsourcing operations ensure that a call for tenders would include clauses about the conditions of work which the bidder should comply with, if awarded the tender.
- A reduction in non-wage costs to employers can prove more effective towards competitiveness than the lowering of wages.
- There should be further reflection before going ahead with more privatisation of public utilities.
- Rather than specialising in sectors of low technology and skill, Maltese policy makers should strive to create sectors that are more research and knowledge driven.
- Employee involvement in decision making needs to be actively secured rather than passively assumed.
- The tripartite national bodies of social dialogue, and notably the Malta Council for Social and Economic Development (MCESD), need to be supported by an institutional framework that embraces a number of advisory and consultative bodies.
- Amendments to labour law are required to make trade union recognition at the place of work unambiguous.

- The implementation of more family friendly measures at the place of work, including child care support, can go a long way in raising the female participation rate in the labour market.
- Creating a culture that supports the values of an ideal work-life balance should be one of the priorities of social policy.
- Ways and means should be devised to regularise the position of immigrants already in Malta for some time.
- The employers and trade union organisations should become part of the sustainable support that is essential for occupational safety and health educational practical skill strategies.
- A reconstitution of employment relations has to be founded on a holistic, realist and transparent approach.

Another tripartite seminar was organised on 5th December 2007 dealing with “**Irregular Immigrants and the Maltese Labour Market**” This seminar, held in conjunction with the Department of International Relations at the University of Malta, provided an analysis of the level of integration of the irregular immigrants in Maltese society and their impact on the Maltese labour market.

Public Debate

On 19th November 2008, the Centre organised a public debate on “**Workers’ Participation**”. The seminar focused on the role of the employee board level representation. In a span of five years (2003-2008) the posts of employee board level representatives have been abolished either following the privatization process of state run or owned enterprise or by a unilateral decision of the minister. During the discussion, chaired by the ex rector of the University of Malta, Rev Prof. Peter Seraccino Inglott, it was noted that the abolition of this post goes contrary to the Christian Democratic ideology as espoused by the political party which is in office. The panel for this discussion included the Chairperson of Alternattiva Demokratika, the worker director of Bank of Valletta whose post was abolished in December 2008, and officials representing the General Workers’ Union (GWU) and the Union Haddiema Maghqudin (UHM).